

# TOPIC PAPER: Flood Risk

APPEAL REF: APP/D1265/W/25/3372602

APPEAL by Churchill Living

LPA: Dorset Council

Site: Land to rear of 156-172 South Street, Bridport, DT6 3NP

Date: November 2025

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Appendix A – Updated Sequential Test (September 2025)

Appendix B – Council List of Possible Sequentially Preferable Sites

Appendix C – Flood Warning Emergency Plan (November 2025)

## **1.0 Introduction**

- 1.1 This is a Topic Paper on Flood risk which has been jointly prepared by Dorset Council and Planning Issues Ltd on behalf of the Appellant in respect to an appeal at 'Land to the rear of 156-172 South Street, Bridport, DT6 3NP for redevelopment for a retirement living community comprising 48 retirement living apartments and 25 retirement living cottages, communal facilities, access, car parking, landscaping and associated works.
- 1.2 This topic paper needs to be read in conjunction the Statement of Common Ground and other topic papers where relevant.
- 1.3 The application was submitted on 9<sup>th</sup> August 2024 and included the submission of a sequential test produced by Planning Issues Ltd which the Council determined the application upon. The Appellant updated the sequential test (Appendix A) given the passage of time and changes in national planning policy and provided this document to the Council on 30<sup>th</sup> September 2025. This topic paper is based upon the updated submitted sequential test.

## **2.0 Planning Policy**

- 2.1 There are a number of key policy documents that relate to flood risk and are relevant the appeal scheme. These are:
  - The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (December 2024) and Planning Policy Guidance (PPG) Flood Risk and Coastal Change.
  - West Dorset and Portland Local Plan (2015) - Policy ENV5

### **National Planning Policy Framework**

- 2.2 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (December 2024) Section 14 relates to development, flood risk and climate change. The associated Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) (last updated September 2025) 'Flood risk and coastal change' provides further clarification on the application of the NPPF in practice. Paragraph 170 of the NPPF in respect to flood risk states:

*170. Inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding should be avoided by directing development away from areas at highest risk (whether existing or future). Where development is necessary in such areas, the development should be made safe for its lifetime without increasing flood risk elsewhere.*

- 2.3 In respect to the NPPF and the application of a sequential test to individual applications the relevant paragraphs are 173-175 which states as follows:

*173. A sequential risk-based approach should also be taken to individual applications in areas known to be at risk now or in future from any form of flooding, by following the steps set out below.*

174. Within this context the aim of the sequential test is to steer new development to areas with the lowest risk of flooding from any source. Development should not be allocated or permitted if there are reasonably available sites appropriate for the proposed development in areas with a lower risk of flooding. The strategic flood risk assessment will provide the basis for applying this test.

175. The sequential test should be used in areas known to be at risk now or in the future from any form of flooding, except in situations where a site-specific flood risk assessment demonstrates that no built development within the site boundary, including access or escape routes, land raising or other potentially vulnerable elements, would be located on an area that would be at risk of flooding from any source, now and in the future (having regard to potential changes in flood risk).

2.4 Having applied the sequential test Paragraphs 177-179 introduce the exceptions test stating as follows:

177. Having applied the sequential test, if it is not possible for development to be located in areas with a lower risk of flooding (taking into account wider sustainable development objectives), the exception test may have to be applied. The need for the exception test will depend on the potential vulnerability of the site and of the development proposed, in line with the Flood Risk Vulnerability Classification set out in Annex 3.

178. The application of the exception test should be informed by a strategic or site specific flood risk assessment, depending on whether it is being applied during plan production or at the application stage. To pass the exception test it should be demonstrated that:

- a) the development would provide wider sustainability benefits to the community that outweigh the flood risk; and
- b) the development will be safe for its lifetime taking account of the vulnerability of its users, without increasing flood risk elsewhere, and, where possible, will reduce flood risk overall.

179. Both elements of the exception test should be satisfied for development to be allocated or permitted.

2.5 Paragraph 181 concludes on flood risk;

181. When determining any planning applications, local planning authorities should ensure that flood risk is not increased elsewhere. Where appropriate, applications should be supported by a site-specific flood-risk assessment. Development should only be allowed in areas at risk of flooding where, in the light of this assessment (and the sequential and exception tests, as applicable) it can be demonstrated that:

- a) within the site, the most vulnerable development is located in areas of lowest flood risk, unless there are overriding reasons to prefer a different location;
- b) the development is appropriately flood resistant and resilient such that, in the event of a flood, it could be quickly brought back into use without significant refurbishment;
- c) it incorporates sustainable drainage systems, unless there is clear evidence that this would be inappropriate;
- d) any residual risk can be safely managed; and
- e) safe access and escape routes are included where appropriate, as part of an agreed emergency plan.

### **Planning Policy Guidance – Flood Risk and Coastal Change (Sept 2025)**

2.6 For the purposes of this appeal this topic paper references those parts of the guidance relevant to the sequential test, exception test and overall flood risk.

2.7 In respect to the decision-making process Paragraph 004 (ref ID: 7-004-20220825) states;

- *In decision-making, where necessary, planning authorities also apply the [Sequential Test](#) and, if needed, the [Exception Test](#), to ensure that flood risk is minimised and appropriately addressed.*
- *Where the sequential and the exception tests have been applied as necessary and not met, development should not be allowed.*

2.8 Paragraph 023 sets out the aim of the sequential approach that areas at little or no risk of flooding from any source are developed in preference to areas at higher risk. The paragraph advises;

*Application of the sequential approach in the plan-making and decision-making process will help to ensure that development is steered to the lowest risk areas, where it is compatible with sustainable development objectives to do so, and developers do not waste resources promoting proposals which would fail to satisfy the test. Other forms of flooding need to be treated consistently with river and tidal flooding in mapping probability and assessing vulnerability, so that the sequential approach can be applied across all areas of flood risk.*

2.9 Paragraph 027 was amended in September 2025 and sets out how the sequential test should be applied to planning applications. The Paragraph states;

*In applying paragraph 175 a proportionate approach should be taken. Where a site-specific flood risk assessment demonstrates clearly that the proposed layout, design, and mitigation measures would ensure that occupiers and users would remain safe from current and future surface water flood risk for the lifetime of the development (therefore addressing the risks identified e.g. by Environment Agency flood risk mapping), without increasing flood risk elsewhere, then the sequential test need not be applied.*

*The absence of a 5-year housing land supply is not a relevant consideration in applying the sequential test for individual applications. However, housing considerations, including housing land supply, may be relevant in the planning balance, alongside the outcome of the sequential test.*

2.10 Paragraph 027a was introduced with the September 2025 amendments to the PPG and provides advice on how the area of search for the sequential test should be identified.

*For individual planning applications subject to the sequential test, the area to which the test needs to be applied will be governed by local circumstances relating to the catchment area for the type of development proposed and the needs it is proposing to address. The catchment area should always be appropriate to the nature and scale of the proposal and the settlement it is proposed for. For some developments this may be clear, for example, the catchment area for a school. For a non-major housing development, it would not usually be appropriate for the area of search to extend beyond the specific area of a town or city in which the proposal is located, or beyond an individual village and its immediate neighbouring settlements.....*

*The sequential test should be applied proportionately, focusing on realistic alternatives in areas of lower flood risk that could meet the same development need.*

*For infrastructure proposals of regional or national importance the area of search may reasonably extend beyond the local planning authority boundary. It may also, in some cases, be relevant to consider whether large scale development could be split across a number of alternative sites at lower risk of flooding, but only where those alternative sites would be capable of accommodating the development in a way which would still serve its intended market(s) as effectively.*

- 2.11 Paragraph 028 was also amended in September 2025 and defines what is a 'reasonably available' site stating:

*Sites should be considered 'reasonably available' for the purposes of the sequential test if their location is suitable for the type of development proposed, they are able to meet the same development needs and they have a reasonable prospect of being developed at the same time as the proposal.*

*In considering whether alternative lower-risk sites (which could, where relevant, be a series of two or more smaller sites) would be capable of accommodating the proposed development, such alternative sites do not need to be owned by the applicant to be considered 'reasonably available'.*

- 2.12 Paragraph 029 on the responsibility for determining whether the sequential test is passed advises that relevant decision makers;

*'...need to consider whether the test is passed, with reference to the information it holds on land availability. The planning authority will need to determine an appropriate area of search, based on the development type proposed and relevant spatial policies. The applicant will need to identify whether there are any other 'reasonably available' sites within the area of search, that have not already been identified by the planning authority in site allocations or relevant housing and/or economic land availability assessments, such as sites currently available on the open market. The applicant may also need to check on the current status of relevant sites to determine if they can be considered 'reasonably available'....*

*Ultimately the local planning authority needs to be satisfied in all cases that the proposed development would be safe throughout its lifetime and not lead to increased flood risk elsewhere.'*

- 2.13 Paragraph 031 introduces the exception test and two additional elements to be satisfied;

*It should be demonstrated that:*

- *development that has to be in a flood risk area will provide wider sustainability benefits to the community that outweigh flood risk; and*
- *the development will be safe for its lifetime taking account of the vulnerability of its users, without increasing flood risk elsewhere, and, where possible, will reduce flood risk overall.*

*The Exception Test is not a tool to justify development in flood risk areas when the Sequential Test has already shown that there are reasonably available, lower risk sites, appropriate for the proposed development. It would only be appropriate to move onto the Exception Test in these cases where, accounting for wider sustainable development objectives, application of relevant local and national policies would provide a clear reason for refusing development in any alternative locations identified. Table 2 sets out the circumstances when the Exception Test will be required.*

- 2.14 Paragraph 035 sets out the circumstances when the exception test should be applied to a planning application, it states:

*The Exception Test should only be applied when following application of the Sequential Test, it has been demonstrated that it is not possible for development to be located in areas with a lower risk of flooding (taking into account wider sustainable development objectives). The applicant will need to provide the local planning authority with evidence to demonstrate how both elements of the Exception Test will be satisfied.*

- 2.15 In respect to the first part of the exception test and the demonstration of the wider sustainability benefits to the community to outweigh flood risk Paragraph 036 advises that is for *local planning authorities to set their own criteria for this assessment having regard to the objectives of their Plan's Sustainability Appraisal framework.*
- 2.16 In respect to the second part of the exception test on demonstrating that the development will reduce flood risk overall Paragraph 037 directs *developers to Strategic Flood Risk Assessments and site-specific Flood Risk Assessments to identify opportunities to reduce flood risk overall and to demonstrate that the measures go beyond just managing the flood risk resulting from the development.*
- 2.17 Paragraph 043 introduces emergency plans and when they would be needed. The Paragraph advises:

*One of the considerations to ensure that any new development is safe, including where there is a residual risk of flooding for flood risk management infrastructure, is whether adequate flood warnings would be available to people using the development. An emergency plan will be needed wherever emergency flood response is an important component of making a development safe.*

## **Development Plan**

### **West Dorset, Weymouth & Portland Local Plan 2015**

- 2.18 The relevant policy of the development plan cited in the fourth reason for refusal relating to flood risk is Policy ENV5. Policy ENV5 on flood risk states:

**ENV5. FLOOD RISK**

**i) New development or the intensification of existing uses should be planned to avoid risk of flooding (from surface water run-off, groundwater, fluvial and coastal sources) where possible. The risk of flooding will be minimised by:**

- steering development towards the areas of lowest risk and avoiding inappropriate development in the higher flood risk zones;
- ensuring development will not generate flooding through surface water run-off and/or exacerbate flooding elsewhere.

**ii) In assessing proposals for development in an area with a medium or higher risk of flooding, the council will need to be satisfied that:**

- there are no reasonably available alternative sites with a lower probability of flooding (where a site has been allocated this test will have been satisfied) adequate measures will be taken to mitigate the risk and ensure that potential occupants will be safe, including measures to ensure the development is appropriately flood resilient and resistant; and
- safe access and escape routes are provided where required.

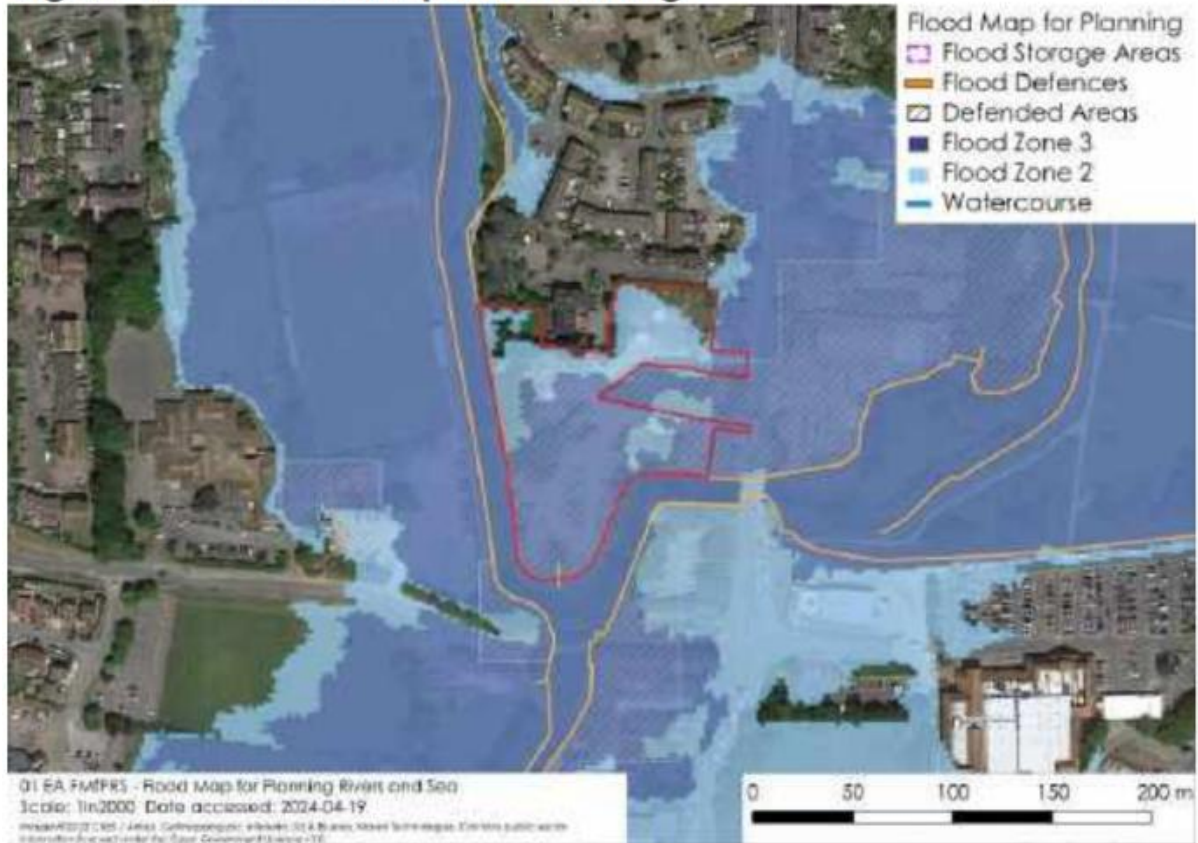
**iii) In the case of major development on unallocated sites, wider sustainability benefits should not remove the need to consider flood risk or surface water management, or the need to mitigate accordingly.**

**iv) Development will not be permitted where it would adversely impact on the future maintenance, upgrading or replacement of a flood defence scheme.**

### 3.0 Appeal Proposal

3.1 The application subject of this appeal was submitted in August 2024 and was accompanied by a Flood Risk Assessment carried out by AWP and a sequential test produced by Planning Issues Ltd. Figure 2.2 of the Flood Risk Assessment duplicated below identifies the flood risk level of the appeal site as FRZ 2 and 3. The site is also at risk of flooding from surface water at a depth of 0.2 – 0.3m.

**Figure 2.2 – Flood Map for Planning**



### 4.0 Timeline

4.1 The brief timeline below sets out the timings of the appeal submission, application and its determination set against the publication of revised national planning policy guidance on flood risk and coastal change.

Date	Event
09/08/2024	Planning Application Submitted
21/03/2025	Planning Application Refused
05/09/2025	Planning Appeal Lodged
17/09/2025	NPPG Flood Risk and Coastal Change amended

30/09/2025	Appellant's Updated Sequential Test submitted to Council
29/10/2025	Council's submission of its Statement of Case
05/11/2025	Appellant submits Flood Warning Emergency Plan to Council

## 5.0 Case Law

- 5.1 The matter of the sequential test has been the subject of recent case law and appeal decisions all of which are material considerations in respect to the determination of this appeal. The cases are referenced below in chronological order.

*Mead Realisations Ltd v SSLUHC [2024] EWHC279 (Issued 12/02/24)*

*Land at Rectory Farm (North), Chescombe Road, Yatton (APP/D0121/W/24/3343144) Allowed (21/03/2025)*

*Bridge Street, Christchurch (APP/V1260/W/24/3351431) (30/03/2025) Allowed.*

*Land at Ham Road, Faversham (APP/V2255/W/24/3350524) (27/06/2025) Allowed.*

*Land east of Colestocks road, Sherwood Cross, Feniton (APP/U1105/W/24/3357849) Allowed*

*Land west of Leighton Buzzard Road, Hemel Hempstead (APP/A1910/W/24/3345435) (05/08/2025) Allowed.*

*Land Northeast of Grove Lane, Lydney (APP/P1615/W/25/3363981) (20/08/20250) Allowed.*

- 5.2 The Mead case and subsequent appeal decisions all predate the change in the PPG on flood risk and coastal change on the 17<sup>th</sup> September 2025.

## 6.0 Matters in Dispute

### Catchment Area for Sequential Test

- 6.1 The Council and the Appellant are agreed (main Statement of Common Ground) that there is an unmet current need and future need for specialist market retirement living accommodation in Dorset and in Bridport.
- 6.2 'The Council considers that as the unmet need for retirement living accommodation is districtwide that the catchment area for the sequential test should be districtwide, considering town centre locations within the district that would be appropriate for retirement living accommodation. The Council considers that this approach is proportionate for a major housing development consisting

of 48 retirement living apartments and 25 retirement living cottages and is consistent with paragraph 027a of the PPG.

- 6.3 The Appellant considers that the revised PPG guidance on sequential test catchment areas (Para 027a) is clear that the catchment area for the proposal should be appropriate to the nature and scale of the proposal and the settlement it is proposed for i.e. Bridport. This is supported by the Bridport Area Housing Need Assessment (March 2025) which identifies an existing and future need for retirement living accommodation in the Bridport Area.

### **Sequential Test**

- 6.4 The Appellant has submitted an updated sequential test (Appendix A) having regard to the revisions in national planning policy guidance, recent case law and the passage of time since the refusal of the application in March 2025. The updated sequential test covered the catchment area of Bridport as designated by the Neighbourhood Plan Area and also extended to and covered the settlement area of Beaminster. The Appellant considers that the appeal proposal passes the sequential test as there are no other 'reasonably available' sites suitable for the type of development proposed able to meet the same development needs with a reasonable prospect of being developed at the same time at a lower flood risk.
- 6.5 The Council, having assessed the updated sequential test (Appendix A), considers that the sequential test is not passed as it has not been carried out over a districtwide catchment area considering town centre locations that would be appropriate for retirement living accommodation.
- 6.6 The Council has not conducted a full sequential test but has reviewed the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) 2024 to see if there are any sites that are sequentially preferable and suitable for the proposed development. The Council has not conducted a full sequential test but has reviewed the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) 2024 to see if there are any sites that are sequentially preferable and suitable for the proposed development. The sites in the SHLAA have been put forward as development opportunities, and the Council considers that the sites set out in Appendix B are sequentially preferable and suitable for the proposed development. The Council has not yet had the opportunity to contact the landowners in order to confirm whether the sites are 'reasonably available'. The Council is in the course of doing so and will update the Appellant with the answers to its enquiries as soon as possible. The Council and the Appellant will identify any remaining areas of dispute in relation to these sites in their respective Proofs of Evidence.


### **Exception Test**

- 6.7 The parties agree that the sequential test needs to be passed to progress to the consideration of the exception test.

- 6.8 in respect to the first part of the exception test the Council accepts at Paragraph 5.25 of its Statement of Case that the wider sustainability benefits of the proposed scheme would outweigh the flood risk on its own. The Appellant agrees with this.
- 6.9 In respect to part two of the exception test the Council at Paragraph 5.25 considers that the Appellant may be able to demonstrate that the development will be safe for its lifetime taking account of the vulnerability of its users following the provision of a Flood Warning Emergency Plan (FWEP) and agreement on conditions. The Appellant has submitted a FWEP (Appendix C) for the Council's consideration on the 5<sup>th</sup> November 2025. Council officers are satisfied based on the provision of the FWEP that the development can be made safe for its lifetime and that the FWEP should be a bespoke condition if permission were to be allowed.
- 6.10 The Lead Local Flood Authority does not object to the appeal proposal subject to conditions and the Environment Agency's objections relating to access to the flood defence wall could be adequately addressed through the landscaping conditions.

**Conclusion**

- 6.11 The Council have set out in Paragraph 6.2 of its Statement of Case that if it can be demonstrated that the development will be safe for its lifetime then it accepts that the fourth reason for refusal on its own does not present a strong reason for refusing the development proposed. The Council as referenced above are satisfied that the development can be made safe for its lifetime subject to the imposition of a condition to the implementation of the FWEP. As such the tilted balance would remain engaged, and if the proposed scheme was considered to fail to pass the sequential test it would need to be weighed in the planning balance.



Signed.....

Mr. Matthew Shellum on behalf of Churchill Living Ltd.

Date.....25/11/25.....



Signed

Mr. Robert Lennis on behalf of Dorset Council.

Date .....25/11/25.....

## **Appendix A**

### **Updated Sequential Test (Sept 2025)**

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# SEQUENTIAL TEST STATEMENT

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Former Hanson and J C Phillips & Sons Depots, Land to the rear of  
156-162 South Street, Bridport, DT6 3NP

**planning***issues*  
TOWN PLANNING AND ARCHITECTURE

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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- I. This Sequential Test Statement has been prepared by Planning Issues Limited, on behalf of Churchill Retirement Living, and is submitted in support of the appeal on this site. A Sequential Test Statement was submitted with the detailed planning application for the proposed retirement living development at the Former Hanson and J C Phillips & Sons Depots, Land to the rear of 156-162 South Street, Bridport, DT6 3NP.
- II. This Sequential Test Statement identifies the flood context, undertakes the sequential test, updating it where necessary, and assesses this against the relevant national, regional and local planning policies. In respect to national planning policy the Government policy guidance on sequential tests changed on the 17<sup>th</sup> September and this is a material planning consideration.
- III. The Applicant is a retirement property house builder based in the United Kingdom. They specialise in developments of purpose-built apartments for older homeowners and currently has more than 200 retirement developments across the United Kingdom.
- IV. The Applicant proposes the demolition of existing building and redevelopment of the site to form 48 retirement apartments, 25 retirement cottages together with communal facilities, access, car parking and landscaping. The application also includes a change of use of the former police station to community or office uses.
- V. *'The aim of the Sequential Test'*, as detailed within the Planning Practice Guidance, is to ensure that a sequential approach is followed to steer new development to areas with the lowest probability of flooding. The flood zones as refined in the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment for the area provide the basis for applying the Test. The aim is to steer new development to Flood Zone 1 (areas with a low probability of river or sea flooding). Where there are no reasonably available sites in Flood Zone 1, local planning authorities in their decision making should take into account the flood risk vulnerability of land uses and consider reasonably available sites in Flood Zone 2 (areas with a medium probability of river or sea flooding), applying the Exception Test if required. Only where there are no reasonably available sites in Flood Zones 1 or 2 should the suitability of sites in Flood Zone 3 (areas with a high probability of river or sea flooding) be considered, taking into account the flood risk vulnerability of land uses and applying the Exception Test if required.
- VI. *'Retirement Living Explained – A Guide for Planning and Design Professionals'* lists twelve essential design characteristics to a successful retirement living accommodation development for older people within the UK. An understanding of these criteria has been used to determine the suitability of sites under the sequential test.
- VII. This sequential test has reviewed the Local Plan, the Neighbourhood Plan, the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment, the Council's Brownfield Land Register, sites within Bridport that have submitted a planning application in the last five years for additional residential development, and any sites being marketed at the current time of writing this report.
- VIII. This assessment concludes that there are currently no available sites in Bridport that are available and suitable for a retirement living development in a lower probability flooding area. Thus the sequential test is considered to be passed for the proposed development at land to the rear of 156-162 South Street

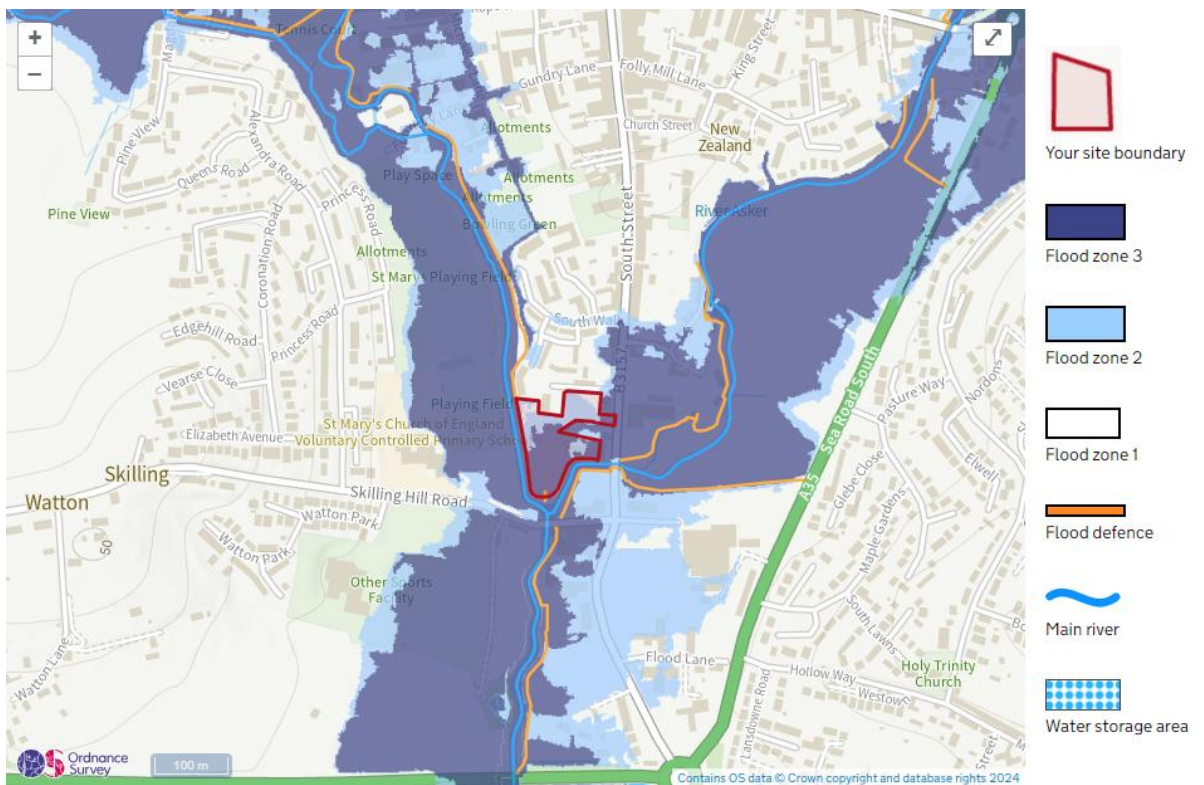
Ref/Rev:	BRIDPORT/application	BRIDPORT/appeal
Date:	June 2024	September 2025
Prepared by:	Laura Coombes-Baker	Matthew Shellum
Checked by:	Matthew Shellum	Stuart Goodwill

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

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- 1.1 This Sequential Test Statement has been prepared by Planning Issues Limited, on behalf of Churchill Retirement Living, and is submitted in support of an appeal for the proposed retirement living development at Former Hanson and J C Phillips & Sons Depots, Land to the rear of 156-162 South Street, Bridport, DT6 3NP
- 1.2 The site comprises the former quarry and paving merchant depots. The northern parcel of the site which was the former quarry depot has been vacated. The southern half of the site remains currently in operation.
- 1.3 The site is located to the south of the Bridport town centre, as well as the medical centre and other local services and facilities. It is in a highly sustainable location.
- 1.4 As set out below part of the site is within Flood Zone 2 and 3. The site does benefit from a flood defence wall around the perimeter of the site.



- 1.5 As set out within the NPPF and Policy ENV5 (Flood Risk) of the adopted West Dorset, Weymouth and Portland Local Plan 2015, development within sites at any risk of flooding will only be acceptable if it is demonstrated that there are no suitable available alternative sites at a lower flood risk. Paragraph 168 of the NPPF sets out that *“development should not be allocated or permitted if there are reasonably available sites appropriate for the proposed development in areas with a lower risk of flooding”*.
- 1.6 This sequential test sets out the requirements for and benefits of older people’s housing. It then sets out national planning policy guidance in respect to flood risk and sequential tests before reviewing the Local Plan, the Neighbourhood Plan, the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment, the Council’s Brownfield Land Register, sites within Bridport that have submitted a planning application in the last

five years for additional residential development, and any sites being marketed at the current time of writing this report.

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## 2. PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

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- 2.1 The application sought permission for the demolition of the existing buildings and redevelopment of the site to form 48 retirement apartments and 25 cottages including communal facilities, access, car parking and landscaping.
- 2.2 The application is made by Churchill Retirement Living, a UK based privately owned family run company. They specialise in developments of purpose-built apartments for older homeowners and currently have more than 170 retirement developments across the United Kingdom.
- 2.3 The development primarily consists of 1 and 2 bedroom apartments and 2 bedroomed cottages which are all restricted to people of 60 years or over, or those of 60 years or over with a spouse or partner of at least 55.
- 2.4 Notwithstanding the age restriction, it is found that the average age of purchasers of the apartments are 79 years old and that they are typically occupied by a widow. The decision to purchase this type of development is predominantly needs based following a significant life event such as a fall or the death of a partner.
- 2.5 The communal facilities which are included within the developments are as follows:
- A lodge manager
  - A video entry system
  - An owners lobby
  - A communal landscaped garden
  - An Owners Lounge
  - A guest suite
  - A communal toilet
  - A communal bin store
  - A communal car parking area
  - Mobility scooter charging store
- 2.6 It is well documented that the UK faces an ageing population. One in four people will be over 65 by 2050, increasing from 19% in 2019. In 2018, there were 1.6 million people aged 85 years and over; by mid-2043 this is projected to almost double to 3 million. As acknowledged above, the recent House of Lords Built Environment Committee Report requires that new homes built must reflect this ageing population, particularly as there will be an increase in older people living alone (January 2022). The Planning Practice Guidance sets out that providing housing for older people is now ‘critical’<sup>1</sup>.
- 2.7 The PPG goes on to acknowledge that offering older people a better choice of accommodation to suit their changing needs can help them live independently for longer, feel more connected to their communities and help reduce costs to the social care and health systems. Therefore, an understanding of how the ageing population affects housing needs is something to be considered from the early stages of plan-making through to decision-taking.

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<sup>1</sup> Planning Practice Guidance, Paragraph: 001 Reference ID: 63-001-20190626. Available here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/housing-for-older-and-disabled-people>

- 2.8 There is a significant national drive to increase housing delivery. Para 61 of the NPPF is clear, the Government intends to significantly boost the supply of new homes. Para 63 of the NPPF was amended in the 2023 version to ensure that local planning authorities assess their requirement for retirement housing with planning policies which reflect the identified need. The PPG is unequivocal in its message that *“the need to provide housing for older people is **critical**”*.
- 2.9 There is a huge need for more housing options for the ageing population both nationally and within Dorset. The PPG is clear: *“where there is an identified unmet need for specialist housing, local authorities should take a positive approach to schemes that propose to address this need”*.
- 2.10 The proposal seeks to deliver 73 no. retirement living dwellings on a brownfield site. In accordance with the NPPF (para 125c) substantial weight should be given to the value of using suitable brownfield land within settlements for homes.
- 2.11 The site is in a highly sustainable location. It offers opportunities for the future residents to walk to a range of services and facilities within the town centre. This is particularly important as people age, with many having to give up driving. It also offers the opportunity to allow residents to remain as active part of their local community.
- 2.12 The provision of retirement housing releases under occupied family homes back into the housing market. This in turn enables moves throughout the whole housing market, benefiting everyone including first time buyers.
- 2.13 Other economic benefits associated with the application include:
- Savings to the NHS and social care services of £3,500 per person per year in retirement living accommodation, totalling £231,000 savings per year.
  - Increased spending in local shops and services of around £875,500 per annum
  - Creation of around 62 construction jobs, 69 supply chain jobs, 4 direct jobs and 8 supported jobs from increased expenditure in the local area from the retirement living scheme.
  - The change of use to the community or employment use of the former police station will also bring wider economic benefits.
- 2.14 Social benefits of the proposed development include:
- Encouraging independence in later life with suitably designed housing. Reducing reliance on residential and nursing care.
  - Providing safety and security and reducing management and maintenance concerns.
  - Companionship, reducing loneliness and social isolation.
  - Entertainment and social gatherings
- 2.15 These social benefits are vital for mental health and quality of life as people age, reducing loneliness and providing safety and security.
- 2.16 The environmental benefits include:
- Efficient use of brownfield land, reducing the need for greenfield release
  - Close proximity to shops and facilities encouraging residents to walk
  - Shared facilities for residents in a single building makes efficient use of energy and resources.
  - Use of renewable energy enabling a reduction of CO<sup>2</sup> emissions
  - Water efficiency standards of 110 litres per person per day.
  - The scheme will deliver a biodiversity net gain.

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## 4. METHODOLOGY

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- 4.1 The PPG sets out '*What is the sequential, risk-based approach to the location of development?*' and the general approach is designed to ensure that areas at little or no risk of flooding from any source are developed in preference to areas at higher risk. It should be noted that the Government policy guidance on the approach to sequential tests changed on the 17<sup>th</sup> September 2022. This is a material change in policy guidance to when the application was determined in March 2025 with the Council citing a failure to meet the sequential test.
- 4.2 '*The aim of the Sequential Test*' is detailed within the PPG. The flood zones as refined in the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment for the area provide the basis for applying the Test. The aim is to steer new development to Flood Zone 1 (areas with a low probability of river or sea flooding). Where there are no reasonably available sites in Flood Zone 1, local planning authorities in their decision making should take into account the flood risk vulnerability of land uses and consider reasonably available sites in Flood Zone 2 (areas with a medium probability of river or sea flooding), applying the Exception Test if required.
- 4.3 For individual planning applications where there has been no sequential testing of the allocations in the development plan, the area to apply the Sequential Test across will be defined by local circumstances relating to the catchment area for the *type of development proposed and the needs it is proposing to address*. This reference to the '*needs it is proposing to address*' is the recent change made by Government to the PPG and the introduction of the new paragraph 27a into the PPG on Flood Risk and Coastal Change. The PPG also has been amended to advise that *catchment area should always be appropriate to the nature and scale of the proposal and the settlement it is proposed for*. For some developments this may be clear, for example, the catchment area for a school. In other cases it may be identified from other Local Plan policies, such as the need for affordable housing within a town centre, or a specific area identified for regeneration. For example, where there are large areas in Flood Zones 2 and 3 (medium to high probability of flooding) and development is needed in those areas to sustain the existing community, sites outside them are unlikely to provide reasonable alternatives. In the context of this application and the appeal the proposed scheme is seeking to address a specific form of local housing need and the catchment area should reflect that need.
- 4.4 When applying the Sequential Test, a pragmatic approach on the availability of alternatives should be taken. For example, in considering planning applications for extensions to existing business premises it might be impractical to suggest that there are more suitable alternative locations for that development elsewhere. For nationally or regionally important infrastructure the area of search to which the Sequential Test could be applied will be wider than the local planning authority boundary.
- 4.5 The West Dorset District Council Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (August 2010) Level 2 and Dorset Council Level 1 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (February 2023) sets out the Environment Agency's procedure for applying the Sequential Test. This is as follows:
- i. State the name and location of the reasonably available site options being compared to the application site
  - ii. Indicate whether flood risk on the reasonable available options is higher or lower than the application site. State the Flood Zone or SFRA classification for each site.

- iii. State the approximate capacity of each reasonably available site being considered. This should be based on; the density policy within a Local Development Document (LDD); the current Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment for the district past performance
- iv. Detail any constraints to the delivery of identified reasonably available options; for example, availability within a given time period or lack of appropriate infrastructure i.e. flood defences which protect the site through its design lifetime. This part of the test should include recommendations on how these constraints should be overcome and when

4.6 Following this procedure, the typical requirements for a successful retirement living development are:

- A high profile location, on active roads with good transport links;
- Within 0.5 miles of town or local centres and amenities;
- On brownfield land;
- 0.4 to 1.5 acres

4.7 The map below sets out the 0.5mile radius around the town centre. Sites must be within this radius to be considered suitable. Residents are often looking to move into town centre locations so that they can give up their car and can still access the goods and services they need within a suitable walking distance. Experience has shown that outside this half mile radius is just too far for residents to consider.



4.8 Paragraph 028 of the which was amended with the recent PPG states that *'Reasonably available sites' are those for the purposes of the sequential if their location is suitable for the type of development proposed, they are able to meet the same development needs and they have a reasonable prospect of being developed at the same time as the proposal.* These could include a series of smaller sites and/or part of a larger site if these would be capable of accommodating the proposed development. Such

lower-risk sites do not need to be owned by the applicant to be considered 'reasonably available'. The advice set out that for a site to be 'reasonably available' it need not only be available for development by the appellant but there does need to be a reasonable prospect of it being available to be developed into the proposed development.

- 4.9 Because of the nature of specialised accommodation for retirement living centred around communal areas it is not possible to disaggregate units over a series of smaller sites, a solitary site of comparable ability to deliver the proposed development is necessary. The issue of disaggregation has been addressed in the recent Mead High Court case . Para 109 of the Mead High Court Case and specifically Para 110 which states (emphasis added);

*'I note that the PPG refers to a 'series of smaller sites'. The word 'series' connotes a relationship between sites appropriate for accommodating the type of development which the decision-maker judges should form the basis for the sequential assessment. This addresses the concern that a proposal should not automatically fail the sequential test because of the availability of multiple, disconnected sites across a local authority's area. The issue is whether they have a relationship which makes them suitable in combination to accommodate any need or demand to which the decision-maker decides to attach weight.'*

- 4.10 The applicant's approach to the provision of sequential test and catchment areas is supported in its recent appeal approval for Christchurch, Dorset in March 2025 (APP/V1260/W/24/3351431)(Appendix 1). The Inspector at Paragraph 43 concluded that *'The Council responded with a list of sites which it considered were potentially sequentially preferable, but it is clear from the submitted evidence that several would be too far from the town centre to support retirement living development; some are unavailable either because they are subject to active development proposals or because they would be unlikely to come forward within the next 5 years; and some would be too small to sustain a viable retirement living development. The Appellant's sequential test and rebuttal evidence are thorough and convincing.'*

- 4.11 Churchill Retirement Living are looking to deliver a development within Bridport to meet local housing needs and the applicant considers it is not appropriate to expand the catchment area borough-wide.

- 4.12 In order to identify a source of sites the following have been used:

- West Dorset, Weymouth and Portland Local Plan
- Emerging Dorset Local Plan Evidence Base
- Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment,
- Brownfield Register,
- the Councils planning register for sites with planning permission for residential development within the last 5 years; and
- sites currently on the market.

- 4.13 The Environment Agency flood map for planning has been used to compare the flood risk between sites, together with an assessment of availability and suitability for retirement living accommodation.

- 4.14 The assessment of the sites is set out within the next chapter together with a conclusion on the availability of other suitable sites.

## 5. ASSESSMENT

5.1 As set out in the Guidance, the area to which the Sequential Test should be applied should be defined by local circumstances relating to the catchment area of the type of development proposed. As set out above the search is being applied to the parish of Bridport and its environs, although more specifically to the 0.5 mile radius from the town centre which is required for a successful retirement living development.

5.2 The sites are considered below, with a table of all the sites considered in Appendix A.

### **Development Plan**

5.3 The adopted West Dorset, Weymouth & Portland Local Plan 2015 includes five housing sites, which are in Bridport. These are:

- BRID1 – Land at Vearse Farm
- BRID2 – Land off Skilling Hill Road
- BRID3 – Land to the East of Bredy Veterinary Centre
- BRID4 – Future Town Centre Expansion
- BRID5 – St Michaels Trading Estate

5.4 There are no housing sites allocated within the Bridport Neighbourhood Plan.

5.5 An assessment of these sites are as follows:

Site	Assessment	Available and suitable as a sequentially preferable site
Land at Vearse Farm	Approval granted in June 2023 and S73 application granted in January 2024 for 760 dwellings. Land secured by national house builder and therefore the site is not available. The site is also in excess of the 0.5m threshold	Discounted
Land off Skilling Hill Road	The site remains operational and is therefore not reasonably available for development. The policy advises that the site could only come forward if Dorset CC education review identifies the Vearse Farm site as a replacement school for St. Mary's Primary	Discounted
Land to the East of Bredy Veterinary Centre	50% of the site is outside of the 0.5m distance as shown in the map above. The site is an 850m walk to the edge of the town centre and 920m to the centre. There are significant levels changes that would not be appropriate for an older person. The site has therefore been discounted.	Discounted
Future Town Centre Expansion	1.8ha site within the town centre however has numerous heritage constraints and is included within the SHLAA for 20 units at a density of 50dph which would not be a sufficient capacity for a flatted retirement living development. The SHLAA site review states the land would be deliverable in 11-15 years. The policy BRID4 also requires the retention of an appropriate amount of public car parking. The site is not considered suitable or reasonably available.	Discounted.

St Michaels Trading Estate	Site falls entirely within Flood Zones 2 and 3. There is a listed building on the site which requires retention which restricts the developable area. The site is not sequentially preferable to the appeal site in terms of flood risk.	Discounted
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Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment

5.6 The Council published an updated Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) in October 2024. 9 sites have been identified in the SHLAA, covering the Bridport area. The sites are:

- Sidney Gale House Site (LA/BRID/001) – Capacity 24 dwellings
- Bradford Builders Merchants (LA/BRID/002) – Capacity 27 dwellings
- Coach Station Square (LA/BRID/003) – Capacity 40 dwellings
- Proto Garage and Works (LA/BRID/004) – Capacity 7 dwellings
- Rope Walks Car Park (LA/BRID/005) – Capacity 20 dwellings
- St Swithins Road - (LA/BRID/006) – Capacity 12 dwellings
- Vearse Farm – (LA/SYMO/007) – Capacity 760 dwellings
- Land West of Coronation Road (LA/SYMO/008) – Capacity 48 dwellings

5.7 An assessment of these sites are as follows:

Site	Assessment	Available and suitable as a sequentially preferable site
Bradford Builders Merchants	The SHLAA assessment advises of a potential dph of 50 and a site capacity of 27 dwellings which would not be practical for a retirement development. Estimated delivery is also 11-15 years and not considered reasonably available. Operations Director of Bradford Building Supplies contacted on 6 <sup>th</sup> August regarding site availability with no response.	Discounted
Coach Station Square	The site is 98% in FZ2, 74% within FZ3 with no defences, so the site is not sequentially preferable in terms of flood risk to the appeal site. A designated Neighbourhood Plan area for primary (and enhanced) use as a transport hub. Estimated delivery is also 11-15 years and not reasonably available.	Discounted
Proton Garage and Works	The site is only 0.21ha with a potential for 7 dwellings in the SHLAA. This site is not of a sufficient size for a flatted retirement living development. SHLAA also advises that it is has anticipated housing delivery between 6-10 years so its not reasonably available as well as being unsuitable.	Discounted
Rope Walks Car Park	1.8ha site within the town centre however has numerous heritage constraints and is included within the SHLAA for 20 units at a density of 50dph which would not be a sufficient capacity for a flatted retirement living development. The SHLAA site review states the land would be deliverable in 11-15 years so not reasonably available as well as unsuitable.	Discounted.
Sidney Gale House Site	The site is in excess of 0.5miles from the town centre. The SHLAA sets out the potential for 24 dwellings with a 50dph potential. There is a forthcoming application for a 56 room with nursing support use by Dorset Council as it is understood to have a covenant on the	Discounted

	land restricting to care provision. The site is not reasonably available. Julian Wain, Strategic Property/Regeneration at Dorset Council contacted 28 <sup>th</sup> July. No response received.	
St Swithins Road	Developable site area of 0.24ha. The SHLAA advises of a potential yield of 12 units with a density of 50dph. This is considered to be too small a site for a flatted retirement development.	
Vearse Farm	A large green field site of 45ha. Parts of the site are within floodzone 2, 3 and 3b so as a site would not be considered sequentially preferable to the appeal site. Site of this scale would require masterplanning and the Council's assessment identifies a housing delivery of between 11-15 years so not considered to be reasonably available.	Discounted
Land west of Coronation Road	Green field site of 2.7ha. Part of the BRID1 allocation from the adopted local plan. Identified for 48 units at a density of 30dph and anticipated to be delivered within years 1-5. The townscape character indicated by the lower level density would not be suitable for a flatted development of retirement living apartments. It might be suitable for retirement living cottages but the site quantum is significantly below the appeal proposal	Discounted

#### The Brownfield Land Register

- 5.8 Dorset Council published their Brownfield Register in April 2020. 6 sites within the Brownfield Register are within Bridport and are all sites which have been previously reviewed above. The sites are:
- Flood Lane (Sidney Gale House)
  - Bradford Buildings Merchants
  - Coach Station Square
  - Proton Garage and Works
  - Rope Walks Car Park
  - St. Swithins Road

#### Annual Position Statement (October 2024)

- 5.9 The Council's 5 year annual housing position statement from October 2024 identifies within it 25 sites within Bridport that have consent for new dwellings. At the time of the report in October 2024 only 10 of these sites were not under construction. They in total will deliver 25 dwellings with the largest sites being of 5 to 6 dwellings (P/FUL/2022/03411 & P/FUL/2021/01209). Even if there was a relationship between these sites they are not of a sufficient quantity or size to deliver the proposed retirement living scheme of 48 apartments and 25 cottages.

#### Other sites considered

- 5.10 A search of Rightmove and other land and property databases has been carried out. At the time of writing this sequential test (September 2025), there are no other sites on the market within the built-up areas of Bridport and its environs with potential for retirement housing.

### Extended Search Area

- 5.11 The Appellant is of the view that its sequential test catchment area focussed on Bridport and environs is appropriate, the reasoning for this is set out in Section 6. This is further supported by the recent PPG changes at Paragraph 027a of Flood Risk and Coastal Change which is a material change from when the Council determined the application. However, if assists the Council further I have extended the sequential test area to the neighbouring settlements of Beaminster and Lyme Regis that might reasonably considered to be in the same housing market catchment area.
- 5.12 The sequential test assessment has considered the alternative sites within the defined development boundaries from the West Dorset, Weymouth and Portland Local Plan 2015, adopted neighbourhood plans where relevant, the Council's Strategic Housing Availability Assessment (October 2024), Council's annual position statement and sources of market information on alternative sites.

### Beaminster

- 5.13 The West Dorset, Weymouth & Portland Local 2015 allocates one site for mixed used development including residential at Land to the North of Broadwindsor Road (BEAM1). Beaminster does not have a neighbourhood plan. The Council's SHLAA identifies one suitable residential site at Land off Cockroad Lane (LA/BEAM/005) this contains land forming part of the BEAM1 development plan allocation. The Council's 5 year annual housing position statement from October 2024 identifies within it 7 sites within Beaminster that have consent for new dwellings. These total 8 dwellings and all bar one are for single dwelling permissions. A search of Rightmove and other land and property databases has been carried out. At the time of writing this sequential test (September 2025), there are no other sites on the market within the built-up areas of Beaminster with potential for retirement housing.
- 5.14 The table below assesses the two sites from the Local Plan and SHLAA.

Site	Assessment	Available and suitable as a sequentially preferable site
Land to the North of Broadwindsor Road (BEAM1)	This is a large greenfield allocation. It is over 0.7 miles from The Square in Beaminster and has not got public footpath access into the town. It is not suitable for a Retirement Living development.	Discounted
Land off Cockroad Lane (LA/BEAM/005)	This site contains part of BEAM1 above. The remainder is outside of the settlement boundary and would not pass the Council's own stated test of looking at sites within development boundaries. It similarly is too far from the town centre to be suitable for a Retirement Living development.	Discounted

- 5.15 It is considered that there are no sequentially preferable sites in Beaminster to the appeal site for a retirement living development scheme.

### Lyme Regis

- 5.16 The Local Plan identifies that development opportunities in and around Lyme Regis are limited due to land instability, highway and landscape constraints. The Local Plan includes one residential site allocation for Lyme Regis at Land at Woodberry Down (LYME1). Lyme Regis does not have an adopted neighbourhood plan. The Council's SHLAA identifies one suitable site within Lyme for further residential development which is the Lyme Regis library (LA/LYME/005). The Council's 5 year annual housing position statement from October 2024 identifies within it 12 sites within Lyme Regis that have consent

for new dwellings. 10 of these sites are for schemes of 1 or 2 dwellings with a combined site total of 26 dwellings. There is one consent for 5 dwellings (WD/D/17/002388) and one consent for 9 dwellings (WD/D/14/002/879). Neither of these sites would be sufficient in size and quantum for a retirement living development. A search of Rightmove and other land and property databases has been carried out. At the time of writing this sequential test (September 2025), there was one other residential land site offered for sale at Land adjacent Regis House, Lyme Road with planning consent (23/1004/FUL) for 7 dwellings.

Site	Assessment	Available and suitable as a sequentially preferable site
Land at Woodberry Down (LYME1)	This site has been consented and built out. Not reasonably available.	Discounted
Lyme Regis Library (LA/LYME/005)	The site is Lyme Regis library it is 0.09ha. and the SHLAA indicates a possible capacity of 8 dwellings. However, this is based on there being no demonstrated need for a library facility locally. The SHLAA identifies a 10-15 year timeframe for delivery. The site is too small and not reasonably available	Discounted
Land adjacent Regis House, Lyme Road (23/1004/FUL)	Small site of 0.142ha with consent for 7 dwellings of which four are apartments. Level concerns and too small for a retirement living development.	Discounted

5.17 It is considered that there are no sequentially preferable sites in Lyme Regis to the appeal site for a retirement living development scheme.

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## 6. COUNCIL'S CONSIDERATION OF THE APPLICATION

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- 6.1 The Council's consideration of the sequential test is set out in the officer's report at Paragraph 12.5.5 – 12.5.25. The Council's consideration that the sequential test was failed would appear to be based on three points:
- The catchment area for the sequential test was too narrow; and,
  - Application of a 0.5 mile buffer is an arbitrary distance; and,
  - Further assessment was required for a number of sites identified in the Council's Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment.
- 6.2 Paragraph 12.5.9 identifies the Dorset and BCP Local Housing Needs Assessment and concluded a need for 2,600 units of retirement housing across Dorset by 2038 with the comment provided at 12.5.10 that the need is from the whole County and not specific to any singular area or settlement. The Appellant submitted with the application an Assessment of need for retirement housing at South Street, Bridport by ThreeDragons. This identified the need for retirement housing in the West Dorset area of the County and specifically in Bridport and its surrounding wards. There is no dispute between the parties in terms of the need for retirement living either at County level, district level and at a local level at Bridport and environs.
- 6.3 The dispute in terms of catchment area is based upon the Council's identification of a County wide need and an area of search refined to the settlement hierarchy in the Local Plan (Policy SU2) and therefore based on accepted wider housing needs for retirement housing the catchment area should cover a wider number of sustainable settlements. The recent Government change to the PPG at Paragraph 27a on catchment area supports the Appellant's position that the catchment area is restricted to the settlement of Bridport. However, to take such an approach would be to ignore the local needs of Bridport for retirement housing which the local planning authority are not disputing. To fail a sequential test because there may be a sequentially preferable site(s) in Dorchester, Weymouth or Shaftesbury is not addressing the need for this accommodation that exists and is accepted by the local planning authority in Bridport. Bridport's housing needs need to be provided in Bridport not moved to other settlements in the County. The local planning authority's identification that the need for retirement housing is countywide means that its needs to be provided across the County and not concentrated in one or two specific settlements. The amount and extent of need for 2,600 units of retirement housing also needs to be factored into considerations based upon the environmental constraints on land within the County and the locational suitability for sites for retirement housing. Opportunities to provide such developments are limited and a proposal for such a use needs to put in the context of national policy.
- 6.4 Paragraph 129(a) of the NPPF advises that planning decisions should support development that makes efficient use of land, taking into account the identified need for different types of housing and other forms of development, and the availability of land suitable for accommodating it.
- 6.5 The NPPG under 'Housing for Older and Disabled People' identifies the need to provide housing for older people is *critical*<sup>2</sup>. Given the Council's identification of a need for retirement housing across the County specific regard should be had to Paragraph 16 of the NPPG;

*Where there is an identified unmet need specialist housing, local authorities should take a positive approach to schemes that propose to address this need.*

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<sup>2</sup> Para 001 Ref ID: 63-001-20190626

- 6.6 I would question whether the Council's approach to the sequential test catchment area complies with national planning policy guidance.
- 6.7 In regard to the second point in respect of the 0.5m radius from local shops and centres this distance is not set down in policy but is in my experience the typical threshold that a retirement housing developer would look for in terms of distance to shops, services and facilities. The nature of the accommodation and average age of residents at 80 years of age means that they require to be within 10-15 minute walk of facilities and with access to public transport. Policy H5 of the Bridport Neighbourhood Plan is broadly reflective of this notion by stating that new retirement living developments be located so as to afford reasonably level and easy access to shopping and social facilities whether on foot or by use of mobility scooter. I consider 0.5m radius or a 10-15 minute walk would have a synergy with this part of the policy.
- 6.8 In respect to the sequential test assessment carried out in Section 5 none of the sites which have been discounted have been solely discounted on the grounds of being further than 0.5 miles away from Bridport town centre and include consideration of SHLAA sites beyond that radius. In the context of this sequential test the Council's comment on the arbitrary nature of the distance is largely irrelevant.
- 6.9 The Council sought further assessment of a number of sites identified on the Council's SHLAA. These have been looked into further and commentary is provided in previous Section 5. It is considered that none of the sites referenced by the Council are suitable and/or available for the proposed development.

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## 7. Appeal Cases in Respect to the Sequential Test

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7.1 As set out in the previous sections the Appellant's case is that the sequential test is passed for this site and the proposed development. However, recent appeal cases have set out precedent in terms of the planning approach to the sequential test and how a failure to pass a sequential test is not necessarily determinative in the appeal proposal being dismissed. This is set out in the recent High Court judgement relating to *Mead Realisations Limited v SSLUHC [2024] EWHC279* which clarifies that a failure of the sequential test is not automatically fatal to a planning application/appeal and clarifies that any such failure does not obviate the need to weigh this in a planning balance. This High Court judgement has been referenced in recent appeal decisions at Hemel Hempstead, Lydney, Feniton, Devon and Faversham. These decisions also accord with the subsequent changes made by Government to its guidance on sequential tests. These appeal decisions are material considerations particularly in terms of that broad approach relating to the sequential test referred to in *Mead*. I consider those appeal decisions below before applying the broad approach to this appeal site at Bridport.

Hemel Hempstead (APP/A1910/W/24/3345435) (Appendix 2)

7.2 The appeal was for an outline application for 390 dwellings at a site at Hemel Hempstead where the impact on flood risk and the sequential test was an identified main issue for the appeal. The Inspector at Paragraph 10 of the appeal decision identified the position of common ground between the parties that the Council's current housing land supply position stood at a maximum supply of 1.03 years which equates to a shortfall of 6,457 dwellings which was agreed as a '*chronic undersupply of both market and affordable housing*'.

7.3 In considering the matter of flood risk the Inspector at Paragraph 63 identified the *Mead Realisations* High Court decision and stated;

*'My attention has been drawn to the Mead Realisations decision. That decision makes it clear that there is a need for realism and flexibility on all sides when applying the sequential test. Furthermore, it confirms that the weight to be given to any failure to satisfy the sequential test can, and, in circumstances like those before me, should be reduced if the extent of the Borough Council's unmet housing needs means that land which is less sequentially preferable than the appeal site would inevitably be required.'*

7.4 Paragraph 64 continues with the Inspector identifying that many more less sequentially preferable sites than the appeal site would be required to meet the future needs of the Borough. The Inspector at Paragraph 67 concludes that the outcome of the sequential test was not a determinative exercise leading to a strong reason for refusal; rather, any risk of harm in the particular circumstances was a matter for planning balance.

7.5 The Inspector in carrying out the planning balance exercise concluded on the flood risk issue at Paragraph 183 stating;

*'Given the level of flood risk post mitigation and the inability of the Borough Council to demonstrate that it can meet the future housing needs of the area on sequentially preferable sites, this matter amounts to a very low level of harm to which I attribute a low level of unfavourable weight.'*

7.6 The Inspector concluded to allow the appeal.

Lydney, Forest of Dean (APP/P1615/W/25/3363981) (Appendix 3)

7.7 The appeal was an outline application for residential development for up to 80 dwellings on a site at Lydney in the Forest of Dean. One of the main issues for the appeal was whether the development

would be safe and avoid the increased risk of flooding elsewhere. Paragraph 34 of the appeal decision identified that the change in the national flood map in March 2025 increased the risk of surface water flooding on the site such that the sequential test is applied. Paragraph 36 of the appeal decision identifies that there was an agreed position that the Council's unmet housing needs both short and long term could not be met by sequentially preferable alternative sites and sites with a similar or worse flood risk will need to be developed to meet the housing needs of the district. Paragraph 37 of the decision identified that the proposed scheme's drainage strategy proposed a SUDS based solution which would avoid an increased risk of flooding elsewhere and the development could be made safe throughout its design life. The Inspector concluded at Paragraph 38 that the appeal proposal failed the sequential test and returned to it in the planning balance.

7.8 Within the Inspector's planning balance at Paragraph 85 the Inspector states;

*'Given that sequentially preferable sites exist, the scheme conflicts with the flood risk objectives of Policy CSP.1 of the Core Strategy. A conflict also arises with the aims of the Framework. However, the total capacity of sites in the District currently known to be available and sequentially preferable is at around 1,568 dwellings which is far short of the 12,000 needed under the standard method over the 20 year period of the Emerging Draft Local Plan and is short of at least 1,840 dwelling housing land supply deficit. When taken together with the nature of the flood risk and anticipated resolution of such through adequate design and SUDs measures within the development itself, although this harm attracts modest weight in the overall planning balance, it does not represent a strong reason for refusal under footnote 7 of the Framework.'*

7.9 The Inspector concludes her planning balance at Paragraph 93 that the adverse impacts of granting permission would not significantly and demonstrably outweigh the totality of the benefits and consent should be granted.

Feniton, East Devon (APP/U1105/W/24/3357849) (Appendix 4)

7.10 The appeal was an outline application for up to 86 dwellings on a site at Feniton, East Devon. The effect of the proposed development on local drainage and flood risk was a main issue. The site was in floodzone 1 but within a critical drainage area and having regard to the Framework and the PPG on Flood Risk and Coastal Change the Inspector concluded at Paragraph 46 that a sequential test was needed. The Inspector concluded at Paragraph 48 that the sequential test is failed and identifies conflict with the Framework but goes on at Paragraph 49 to state;

*'I shall consider my findings on this main issue further in the planning balance, taking account of the High Court judgement relating to Mead Realisations Limited v SSLUHC [2024] EWHC279(Admin) (Mead) which clarifies that a failure of the sequential test is not automatically fatal to a planning application and clarifies that any such failure does not obviate the need to weigh this in a planning balance.'*

7.11 At Paragraph 84 the Inspector in carrying out the planning balance exercise finds that whilst the sequential test fails there would be betterment from the appellants proposed drainage strategy relating to off-site flood risk. He concludes that the betterment in terms of flood risk lessens the weight afforded to the above failures relating to the sequential test and the development plan policy.

7.12 At Paragraph 86 the Inspector in identifying the benefits addresses housing supply and states;

*'Having regard to the Government's objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes, the proposed development would have the benefit of contributing up to 86 new dwellings towards the District's Supply. This is in the context of the need for significantly more housing than is provided for through the adopted development plan and a greater housing requirement than was the case at the time of the 'super inquiry'; and that for the plan period to date, there has been a delivery shortfall of*

*466 homes over that required, with a shortfall of 1,879 homes anticipated over the plan period. The Council is also unable to demonstrate a 5 year housing land supply, with the current figure standing within the range of 2.57 to 3.08 years' worth. This represents a substantial shortfall of between 2,313 and 2,922 dwellings which is anticipated to persist and worsen for the foreseeable future in the absence of a new Local Plan.'*

- 7.13 The Inspector having regard to the Framework and Paragraph 11(d) concluded that the benefits he identified outweighed the flood risk and allowed the appeal.

Faversham (APP/V2255/W/24/3350524) (Appendix 5)

- 7.14 The appeal was for an outline application for up to 250 dwellings on a site in Faversham, Kent. The site is identified as being at risk of tidal flooding and of surface water flooding. At Paragraph 20 & 21 the Inspector identifies that a sequential test was needed and not produced by the appellant such that conflict existed with the Framework. At Paragraph 22 the Inspector identifies that the entire appeal site could be made safe from flooding by land change measures and other flood resistance and resilience measures such as at Paragraph 25 he identifies that *'there is no real-world harm from the failure to undertake a sequential test'*. At Paragraph 26 the Inspector concludes that despite there being no real-world harm the failure to undertake and pass a sequential test would result in conflict with local planning policy and the Framework.

- 7.15 In carrying out the planning balance the Inspector at Paragraph 81 identifies the positives of the scheme and the Council's housing position stating:

*'The provision of housing is one of the key aims of national and local planning policy. A recent written ministerial statement said that the country is in an acute and entrenched housing crisis. The Council can only demonstrate a 3.98 year supply of housing land, representing 1,119 homes that have not been provided. The proposal is for a relatively large development of up to 250 homes, of which 60% would be market housing. It would make a meaningful contribution to the housing supply in the Borough. In this context, I place substantial weight on the provision of market housing.'*

- 7.16 At Paragraph 90 the Inspector identifies the failure to pass the sequential test as a negative attracting significant weight. At Paragraph 100 the Inspector identifies that the tilted balance under Paragraph 11(d) is engaged unless the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provide a strong reason for refusing the development proposed. At Paragraph 101 he continues to consider Footnote 7 of Paragraph 11 of the NPPF and states:

*'Although the proposal has failed to perform the required sequential tests, there would be no real world effects after mitigation is taken into account. A 'strong' reason for refusal based on flooding must, to my mind, go beyond mere technical conflicts, even if they are important. There must be substantive risks and harms that go beyond policy. I do not, therefore, view this as a strong reason for refusing the development proposed.'*

- 7.17 The Inspector goes on to conclude that the benefits including to off-site flooding and particularly to the delivery of housing were such that the adverse impact of the proposal would not significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits of the proposal.

Conclusions

- 7.18 It is clear that there are some consistent points that can be drawn from *Mead* and these subsequent appeal decisions:

- *Mead* identifies that there is a need for realism and flexibility on all sides when applying the sequential test.
- The failure to pass a sequential test is not necessarily terminal for the determination of the proposed development and does not obviate the need to weigh this in the planning balance.
- The weight to be given to any failure to satisfy the sequential test can be reduced if the extent of a Council's unmet housing needs means that land which is less sequentially preferable than the appeal site would inevitably be required.
- The weight to be given to the failure to pass a sequential test can be lessened if the proposed drainage mitigation measures would result in betterment to flood risk.

7.19 All these points are reflected in the recent September 2025 changes made to the approach to sequential tests set out in the PPG in section under Flood Risk and Coastal Change.

Applying the conclusions to this Appeal Proposal.

7.20 Dorset Council's housing land supply position has been most recently set out in the appeal decision of Inspector Jonathan Bore at Land west of Church Hill and Land off Butts Close and Schoolhouse Lane, Marnhull, Dorset in May 2025. At Paragraph 4 the Inspector identified that the local housing need figure under the new standard method is 3,219 dwellings per annum which is an increase of 1,426 homes per annum. The Council can demonstrate a housing land supply of 5.02 years by reference to its Annual Position Statement however this drops to 2.67 years from the 31<sup>st</sup> October 2025 which represents a shortfall of 8,000 homes.

7.21 To put that into context of the four appeal decisions cited above the extent of identified housing shortfall in Dorset exceeds all of those authorities identified by the Inspector in each of those appeals. I would specifically note the Hempel Hempstead's Inspector's classification of a 6,457 dwelling shortfall as a '*chronic undersupply*'. There is no basis to conclude anything other than the same that Dorset Council having a chronic undersupply of housing.

7.22 Having regard to the appeal decisions unless the Council are able to demonstrate that they have sites at lower levels of flood risk than the appeal site for circa 8,000 dwellings then the weight to be given to any suggestion that the sequential test has been failed can be reduced. This has been endorsed by the recent change to the PPG on Flood Risk and Coastal Change at Paragraph 27.

7.23 In addition the Dorset and BCP Local Housing Needs Assessment has concluded a need for 2,600 units of retirement housing across Dorset by 2038. There are no specific adopted development plan allocations for the delivery of retirement housing sites across Dorset. The emerging Local Plan is at an early stage with a current options consultation such that no sites have yet been identified by the Council to meet this unmet local need. In the absence of the Council being able to demonstrate suitable land at a lower level of flood risk than the current appeal site for retirement living accommodation I would suggest the weight to be given to any suggestion that the sequential test has been failed by the Council can be reduced.

7.24 I would also suggest that having regard to the *Mead* High Court judgement that faced with a housing need for 2,600 units of retirement living accommodation throughout Dorset that the Council's approach to the sequential test being countywide lacks the *realism and flexibility* that *Mead* espouses. It is also not consistent with the revised PPG on Flood Risk and Coastal Change which at Paragraph 27 states *the catchment area should always be appropriate to the nature and scale of the proposal and the settlement it is proposed for.*

- 7.25 In respect to the proposed scheme and drainage measures the submitted flood risk assessment proposes on-site attenuation for flood compensation to ensure that the proposal has no impact on flooding on the site or in the wider area.
- 7.26 I conclude that having regard to Government advice in respect to sequential test set out in the amended PPG that the Appellant's approach to catchment area is supported and having assessed local sites the sequential test is passed. Even if the Council consider the sequential test to be failed its breach does not represent a '*strong reason*' for refusal in light of the Council's undersupply of housing and retirement housing, and with a proposed drainage scheme that does not increase flood risk on site or in its environs.

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## 8. CONCLUSION

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- 8.1 This sequential test has been undertaken in relation to the proposed redevelopment of the former Hansons Depot, Bridport for retirement living accommodation. It provides an update to the sequential test submitted with the application.
- 8.2 This assessment has considered alternative sites within Bridport Parish and particularly within 0.5 mile radius of the town centre and has been extended the Beaminster and Lyme Regis area. The distance from facilities is important for retirement living developments to allow residents to walk, or use a mobility scooter, to access local shops and services.
- 8.3 The sequential test has considered the revised Government guidance contained within the PPG, the development plan, the Council's Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment, the Brownfield Land Register, the planning register for sites with planning permission in the last five years as well as a number of other speculative sites that Churchill have considered on the market.
- 8.4 The assessment has shown that there are no reasonably available sites appropriate for the proposed development in areas with a lower risk of flooding in Bridport. The sequential test is therefore considered to have been passed and the proposed development complies with the NPPF.
- 8.5 I conclude that having regard to Government advice in respect to sequential test set out in the amended PPG that the Appellant's approach to catchment area is supported and having assessed local sites the sequential test is passed. Even if the Council still consider the sequential test to be failed its breach does not represent a '*strong reason*' for refusal in light of the Council's undersupply of housing and retirement housing, and with a proposed drainage scheme that does not increase flood risk on site or in its environs.



## **Appendix B**

### **Council List of Possible Sequentially Preferable Sites**

Town Centre	SHLAA site ref	Developable site area (ha)	Potential housing yield	Reasonable distance to TC (x<800m)	Ownership & Point of Contact	Flood risk	Council Comments
Bridport	-	-	-				
	LA/SYMO/008	2.7	48	Yes	Not known Contact DC Planning Ltd (2019)	Surface water risk in northwest corner, a very small area.	The Pine View development immediately to the north of consists of 66no. two-storey terraced dwelling on 1.78ha, as such it is considered that the proposed site could accommodate 73no. dwellings.
Weymouth	-	-	-				
	LA/WEYM/041	0.5	72	Yes	Owned by Dorset CC	Coastal flooding, Flood zone 2, 3, and 3a encroach the northeastern boundary of the site. Surface water flooding encroaching in	Site of old Council Office. Density of all Weymouth Town Centre sites should be considered flexibly to accommodate design

						the northwestern corner.	
Dorchester	-	-	-				
	LA/DORC/004	2.17	78	Yes	Owned by Dorset CC	Surface water, very small pockets identified.	
	LA/DORC/012	1.0	30	Yes	Owned by Wessex Water	Surface water, very small pockets identified.	Old water works site. Multiple storeys possible. Could accommodate proposed development.
Wareham	-	-	-				
	LA/WARE/008	1.4	42	Yes	Owned by Dorset CC	Surface water, not extensive	
Sherborne	-	-	-				
	LA/SHER/010	1.37	50	Yes	Dorset Healthcare University NHS Foundation Trust	Flood zones 2 & 3 affect western boundary. Surface water flooding, minor. Groundwater not shown on map layers.	Hospital site, top of town. Multiple storeys possible.

## **Appendix C**

### **Flood Warning Emergency Plan (Nov 2025)**



## South Street, Bridport

### Flood Warning & Evacuation Plan

Project No.	1348
Revision	Initial Issue
Date	04 November 2025
Client	Churchill Living
Prepared	J Blyth
Checked	R Leever
Authorised	C Yalden
File Ref.	P:\1348 South Street, Bridport\C Documents\1348 - South Street, Bridport - Flood Warning & Evacuation Plan.docx

## 1 Introduction

- 1.1 This Flood Warning & Evacuation Plan (FWEP) has been produced by AWP (Exeter) LLP on behalf of Churchill Living (CL) to support the planning application at the Hanson & Phillips Builders' yard at South Street, Bridport.
- 1.2 The FWEP captures a summary of the site's flood risk, taking into account flood mitigation measures incorporated in the design of the site and properties, and provides relevant information, contact details and procedures to prepare for, respond to and recover from a flood event. It is a living document that should be actively updated and regularly reviewed.
- 1.3 A FWEP does not remove the risk of flooding from a site. The objective of a FWEP is to provide a means by which those living or working at a development shall be made aware of the flood hazard, and to identify any procedures that will enable them to avoid being directly exposed to the hazard in any future flood events that may affect the site.
- 1.4 This FWEP forms part of the site's Health and Safety Management System and shall be maintained in accordance with the Health and Safety at Work

Act 1974 and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999. The plan is a live document and must be reviewed and updated throughout the life of the development.

1.5 Preparedness for future floods can help reduce the impact on people and property.

1.6 AWP has given due regard to the safety of employees, responding organisations, available best practice, relevant legislation and advice provided by the emergency services, the Environment Agency and experience in liaising with Local Authority Emergency Planning Services.

## 2 Objectives

2.1 In the production of this FWEP we have identified the following key objectives to reduce the risk to life and damage to property.

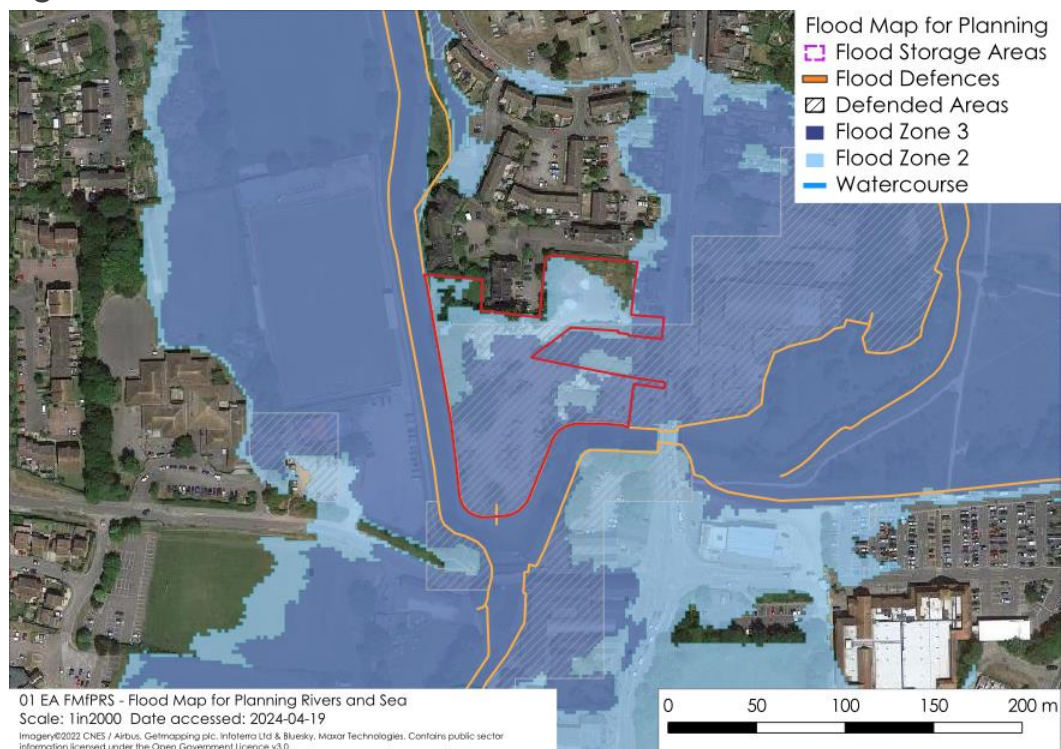
- To capture a brief summary of the key flood risks to the site;
- To sign up for Flood Warnings Direct and Weather Warnings;
- Identify pre-determined evacuation routes and assembly points;
- Identify procedures to monitor numbers of residents with reduced mobility, and an initial triage of residents for potential evacuation or safe refuge;
- Identify actions to be taken upon receipt of Flood Alerts and Flood Warnings;
- Identify a conservative lead time sufficient to enable a full evacuation.
- Prioritise a primary evacuation strategy where time allows and it is safe to do so.
- Identify procedures to prepare for and manage either a full or partial safe refuge ("stay put") strategy.
- Identify procedures for flood recovery, remediation and reoccupation.

## 3 Sources of Flood Risk

3.1 The primary source of flood risk is from rivers (fluvial) with the site expected to flood in extreme fluvial events. Figure 3.1 indicates the red line boundary of the site in relation to mapped flood zones.

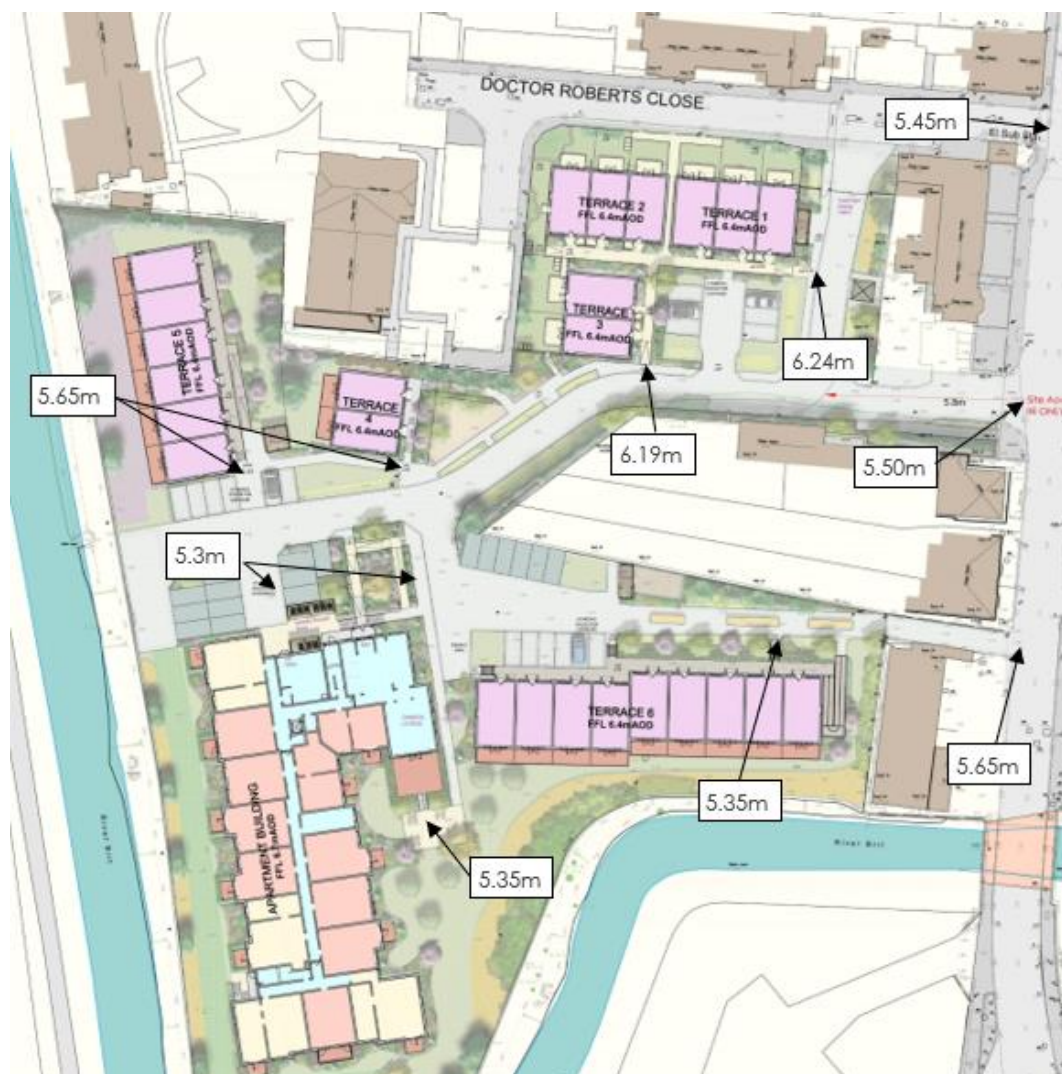
- 3.2 The FRA indicates the design fluvial flood levels at the corner of each building, with the peak near-building design flood level being 6.1m AOD.
- 3.3 The EA has agreed that cottages benefit from a first storey which provides a higher refuge space for residents, allowing a reduced freeboard of 0.3m. Ground floor apartments, that do not have access to a private first storey for safe refuge, require an increased freeboard of 0.6m. Finished Floor Levels (FFLs) for the cottages are set at 6.4m AOD and at 6.7m AOD for the apartment building.
- 3.4 The FRA indicates the FFLs are also set above extreme peak fluvial flood levels in the 1 in 1,000 year event.

**Figure 3.1 – Flood Zone extents**



- 3.5 Figure 3.2 shows the ground levels at key points on the site and demonstrates that Terraces 1, 2 and 3 have a dry route to the edge of the site, at Dr Roberts Close.
- 3.6 Terraces 4, 5, 6 and the main apartment building do not benefit from a dry egress route under extreme flooding. Peak design flood depths local to these buildings are in the range 0.45m-0.8m.
- 3.7 Peak flood depths within South Street, to the east of the site, range from 0.45-0.65m.

**Figure 3.2 – Ground levels at key on-site locations**



- 3.8 Whilst some areas of the site benefit from a dry egress route to the edge of the site, routes away from the site are impacted by flood water to depths that impede safe evacuation.

## 4 Flood Warnings

### Flood Forecasting and Warning Services

- 4.1 The EA operates a flood forecasting and warning service in areas at risk of flooding, known as “Floodline”.
- 4.2 The service operates 24 hours a day, 365 days a year and is a free warning service that provides flood warnings directly by telephone, mobile, email, SMS text message and fax.
- 4.3 In England, building operators and Estates Management Companies (EMC) can register for the Targeted Flood Warning Service, to receive warnings for more than one location. It is recommended this development be added to the Targeted Flood Warning Service for the EMC. This will enable oversight and central co-ordination by the EMC.
- 4.4 The EMC must ensure the development is signed up for Floodline by calling 0345 988 1188 or by visiting the website: <https://www.gov.uk/sign-up-for-flood-warnings>. In addition the EMC is encouraged to sign up to receive weather warnings from The Met Office by visiting the website: [Met Office - https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/UKMETOFFICE/subscriber/new](https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/UKMETOFFICE/subscriber/new)
- 4.5 The site will be staffed, with employees trained on the implementation of the FWEP and able to fulfil the role of 'Flood Response Coordinator'. Additional support would also be provided by the EMC (Churchill Estates Management), who are familiar with the implementation of FWEPs across a number of existing sites.
- 4.6 A member of staff must be designated as the on-shift Flood Response Coordinator and will be responsible for monitoring receipt of flood alerts or warnings and implementation of the FWEP throughout their shift.
- 4.7 As part of any shift change, the responsibility for Flood Response Coordinator must be handed over; this not only transfers the responsibility of the role but must also include a summary of any alerts or warnings received.
- 4.8 Where the on-duty Flood Response Coordinator has implemented the FWEP, they must remain on duty throughout this period, unless their position or ability to fulfil the role becomes compromised, at which point they must complete a thorough handover to a newly designated Coordinator.
- 4.9 Implementation of the FWEP will require support from all on-shift staff, alongside remote support from the EMC. Up-to-date details of all relevant

EMC staff that can be contacted to assist with actioning the FWEP should be kept within the FWEP document; see Appendix A.

- 4.10 Once registered, warnings are issued to the registered contacts. Warnings use a set of four easily recognisable codes. A description of the codes and actions to be taken can be seen in Table 4.1.




#### **Estimated Flood Warning Time**

- 4.11 It is important to know the anticipated lead time before a flood arrives on site. While flood warning codes provide approximate time ranges for anticipated floods, direct communication with Floodline, the emergency services or the local flood warden is recommended.
- 4.12 Each flood event may behave differently so understanding the lead time to flood onset for each event is important and should be clarified at the time of receiving the warning by the Flood Response Coordinator and the EMC.

#### **Flood Preparation & Protection**

- 4.13 The development should be prepared for flooding before a warning is issued by ensuring residents are aware of the FWEP (including assembly points and kit locations) and by exercising evacuation procedures (drills) on an annual basis (co-ordinated and scheduled by the EMC).
- 4.14 Records of each drill or flood event review will be retained in the site Health & Safety file, and the FWEP will be updated following each exercise.

**Table 4.1 – Environment Agency Flood Warning Codes**

<p><b><u>Flood Alert</u></b></p> 	<p><b>Key Message: Flooding is possible. Be prepared</b></p> <p><b>Timing:</b> 2 hours to 2 days in advance of flooding</p> <p><b>Actions:</b> Be prepared for flooding Locate / prepare a flood kit of essential items Monitor local water levels and flood forecasts</p> <p><i>Flood Alerts are to warn people of the possibility of flooding and encourage them to be alert, stay vigilant and to make early preparations for flooding.</i></p>
<p><b><u>Flood Warning</u></b></p> 	<p><b>Key Message: Flooding is expected. Immediate Action Required</b></p> <p><b>Timing:</b> Half an hour to 1 day in advance of flooding</p> <p><b>Actions:</b> Act now to protect your property Block doors with flood boards or sandbags and cover airbricks and other ventilation holes Move people, pets and valuables to a safe place Turn off gas, electricity and water supplies if safe to do so Keep a flood kit ready Move cars, pets, food, valuables and important documents to safety</p> <p><i>Flood Warnings are to warn people flooding is expected and encourage them to take immediate action to protect themselves and their property.</i></p>
<p><b><u>Severe Flood Warning</u></b></p> 	<p><b>Key Message: Severe flooding. Danger to life</b></p> <p><b>Timing:</b> When flooding poses a significant threat to life and different actions are required</p> <p><b>Actions:</b> Stay in a safe place with a means of escape Be ready should you need to evacuate from your site Co-operate with the emergency services Call 999 if you are in immediate danger</p> <p><i>Severe Flood Warnings are to warn people of a significant risk to life or significant disruption to communities caused by widespread or prolonged flooding, and encourage them to take immediate action to protect themselves and follow the advice of the emergency services.</i></p>
<p><b><u>Warnings no longer in force</u></b></p> <p>(no icon)</p>	<p><b>Key Message: No further flooding is currently expected for your area</b></p> <p><b>Timing:</b> When river or sea conditions begin to return to normal</p> <p><b>Actions:</b> Be Careful. Flood water may still be around for several days and could be contaminated If you've been flooded, ring your insurance company as soon as possible</p> <p><i>Warnings are removed to inform people that the threat has now passed.</i></p>

- 4.16 The EMC will maintain a live list of residents with reduced mobility, reviewed on any change of occupancy or mobility, so that an effective evacuation plan, including additional members of staff or hiring of vehicles can be put in place. An up-to-date copy of this list must remain readily available to the on-duty Flood Response Coordinator (recommend use of a central file share system, or similar).
- 4.17 During a flood, the following should also be considered:
- Stay safe at all times; do not put yourself or others in danger;
  - Avoid all contact where possible with floodwater, as it may contain sharp or heavy objects, debris, dust, or biological and chemical substances hazardous to health.
  - Floods can kill, do not attempt to walk or drive through flood water;
    - Vehicles are at risk of floating in depths of 500mm (0.5m);
    - Manholes covers may be displaced and removed by flood water, introducing additional risks to people and vehicles;
    - Flood water may have undercurrents which are stronger than the surface current, creating a hidden risk to people and vehicles.

## **5 Evacuation, Safe Refuge & Reoccupation**

### **Evacuation**

- 5.1 In line with best practice, the FWEP prioritises evacuation as a first response to flood warnings.
- 5.2 Evacuation of the site will be triggered where the site is expected to flood and there is sufficient time available to successfully implement the FWEP and complete the safe evacuation of residents.
- 5.3 An emergency services led evacuation will be triggered in any of the following scenarios:
- If the plan has resulted in full or partial safe refuge, but the Environment Agency or emergency services instruct that evacuation is required due to worsening flood conditions.

- If the plan has resulted in full or partial safe refuge, but the forecast data or observed site conditions indicate that water levels will exceed the building's design protection standard; or
  - If the plan has resulted in full or partial safe refuge, and flood water begins to enter the building or approach the threshold of the entrance to the building.
- 5.4 The decision to evacuate or take safe refuge rests with the Flood Response Coordinator, in communication with the EMC, FloodLine and Emergency Services.
- 5.5 The decision must allow sufficient time to conduct the evacuation before flooding occurs. After receiving a Flood Alert/Warning the Flood Response Coordinator will stay on-site to co-ordinate the development, residents and liaise with the Local Authority, Local Flood Wardens and Emergency Services. They will assist residents that wish to leave to visit friends and relatives during the period of Flood Alerts/Warnings and curate a list of residents staying at the development that will need assistance with evacuation. The list should identify those residents with reduced mobility that cannot evacuate on foot or with others.
- 5.6 The time to evacuate will depend on factors determined in real-time, including the number of residents with reduced mobility; the number of vehicles available and the number of residents requiring transport rather than walking; the number of staff available; time to inform residents and for residents to gather essential items (limited items of warm clothing, suitable shoes, waterproofs, medication, wallets, mobile telephones), and time to obtain hire vehicles or additional staff if necessary. An initial conservative estimate of time to effect a full evacuation is 5-10 hours, and this should be re-evaluated following experience from training and drills.
- 5.7 The Council's preference is always (in circumstances where a Flood Warning and Evacuation Plan would be required) to evacuate occupants before a flood event occurs, not during an event. Safe refuge (staying within the building - above the design flood event levels) should only be considered where dry access and egress from the building to an area/community building not at risk of flooding cannot be achieved.
- 5.8 Evacuation during a flood event should only occur in exceptional circumstances where a Flood Warning has not reached either the occupants or relevant management responsible for triggering the Flood Warning and Evacuation Plan; **and** it is deemed safe to do so by the Emergency Services. It should not be left to the discretion of the occupants

as to whether it is safe to evacuate during a flood event. The preference in this exceptional circumstance would be for the occupants to remain indoors, seek safe refuge and call the emergency services.

- 5.9 It is important to note that evacuation should not be attempted in circumstances where the environmental conditions surrounding the development are dangerous or hazardous. It is recommended that help and assistance is sought from the emergency services in this case.
- 5.10 In the event of an evacuation, occupants within the building or respective grounds should be made to follow the designated evacuation route.
- 5.11 The designated evacuation points include,
- Option 1 - St. Mary's Church, 84 South Street, Bridport, DT6 3NN
  - Option 2 - Bridport Leisure Centre, Skilling Hill Road, Bridport, DT6 5LN
  - Option 3 - Holy Trinity Church, 101 Crock Lane, Bridport, DT6 4BH.
- 5.12 At the time of flooding the Local Authority, Town Council, Local Flood Warden, or Emergency Services may provide alternate safe evacuation points, but those listed above would be the immediate points considered in the absence of other advice – all of these locations offer higher ground, outside the extents of flood water.
- 5.13 Safe walking and vehicular routes to these points are shown in Figures 5.1-5.4.
- 5.14 Option 1 directs residents away from the primary source of flooding, Option 2 directs residents to the west, beyond the extents of flooding. Option 3 is included should surface water flooding prevent evacuation to Options 1 and 2 as it offers a route to refuge least impacted by surface water flooding,
- 5.15 If anticipated weather conditions are safe, any buggies not used for evacuation could be moved to the terrace/walkways above the flood level. If time and opportunity allow, move vehicles to a safe location as they could become hazards if allowed to float during a flood event.

Figure 5.1 – Option 1 - Walking and vehicular evacuation route to St. Mary's Church

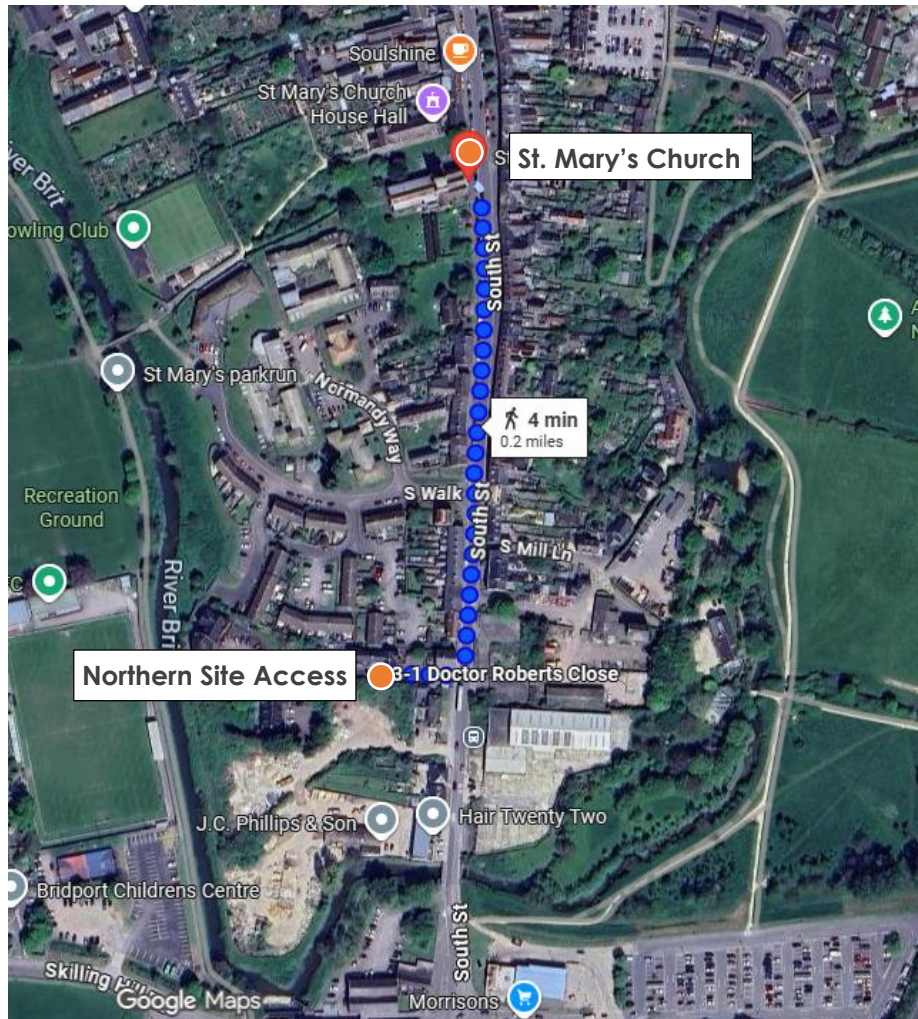


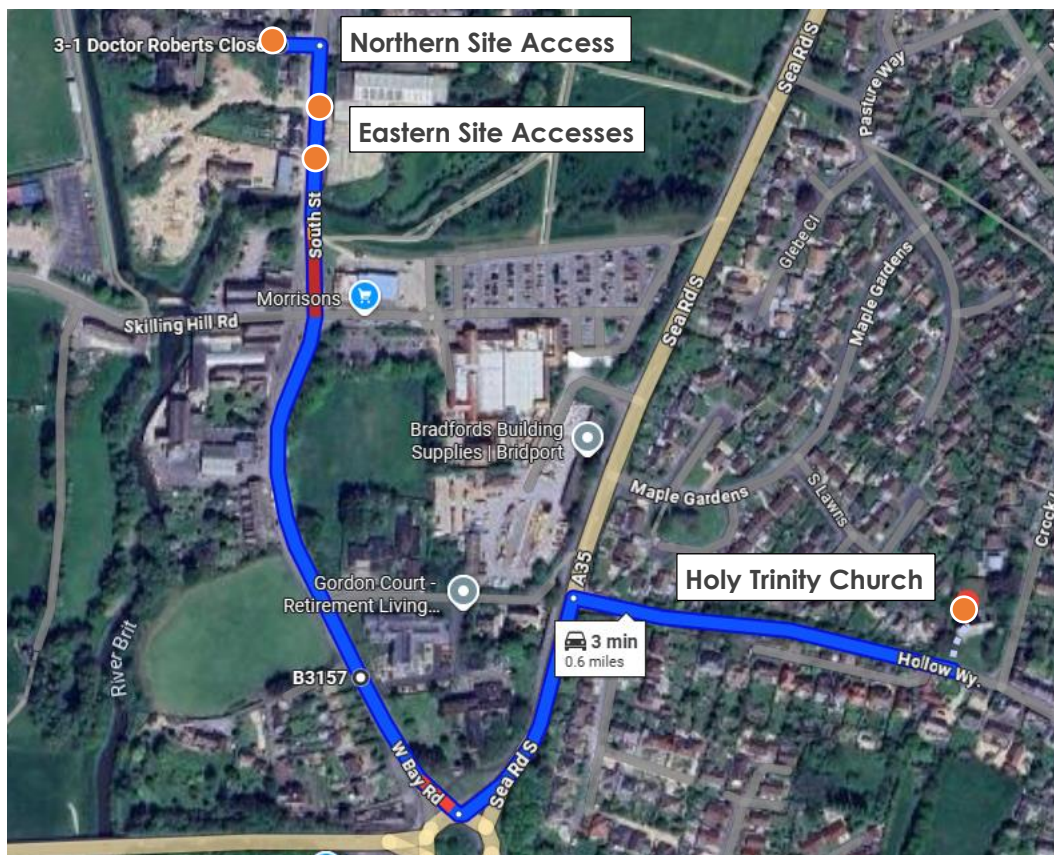
Figure 5.2 – Option 2 - Walking and vehicular evacuation route to Bridport Leisure Centre



Figure 5.3 – Option 3 - Walking evacuation route to Holy Trinity Church (note the walking route includes a flight of steps to the west of the church.)



Figure 5.4 – Option 3 - Vehicular evacuation route to Holy Trinity Church



### Safe Refuge

- 5.16 The building's FFL will be set 0.3m-0.6m above the design flood levels considered in the FRA and can provide safe refuge in the event evacuation of all or some of the occupants is unsafe.
- 5.17 The following measures, beyond elevation of the FFL, will be implemented to ensure 'safe refuge' is achieved.
- 5.18 In order for the development to be a 'safe' refuge, the EMC will need to ensure that all basic facilities (water, electricity and heating) would be maintained in a flood event. The EMC should liaise with National Grid to determine requirements for the on-site sub-station, but it is anticipated it can be flood protected.
- 5.19 The on-duty Flood Response Coordinator will liaise with emergency authorities and ensure residents are aware of and adhere to the 'stay put' policy, if it is implemented.
- 5.20 Unless a full evacuation has been completed, the Flood Response Coordinator must remain on site throughout the implementation of the FWEP.
- 5.21 All staff trained to fulfil the role of Flood Response Coordinator will be provided with first responder first aid training and training in the use of defibrillator equipment as part of their induction process. The development will have a defibrillator provided in a suitable position in proximity to the ground floor communal areas. CL through its EMC will provide continual support for the Flood Response Coordinator and the development in respect to co-ordination and management of the FWEP, before, during and after a flood event.
- 5.22 The EA will issue Flood Alerts in advance of any expected extreme floods. The Meteorological Office (Met Office) would also provide a weather warning for the risk of heavy rain and flooding in advance of the event. This provides an opportunity for the Flood Response Coordinator to advise all residents of the weather warning and flood alert if issued and would assist those residents choosing to visit friends or relatives for the duration of the flood event. The Flood Response Coordinator would produce a list of those residents present at the development for the flood event. The Flood Response Coordinator would also make any residents that are away at the time of the weather warning and/or flood alert aware of the forthcoming flood event so they can plan their journeys home or make the decision to reside in alternative accommodation in advance of the flood event.

- 5.23 Upon the Environment Agency issuing a '**Flood Warning**' the Flood Response Coordinator would implement the FWEP and decide if a full or partial evacuation is possible and implement evacuation procedures. If it is not safe to evacuate all, or some, of the occupants they would implement the 'stay put' strategy for residents and no further movement of people out of the building would take place. During the flood event it is important to note that evacuation will **not** be attempted unless carried out by emergency services.

#### **During the Flood Event**

- 5.24 For the duration of the flood event the Flood Response Coordinator would implement the 'stay put' policy. The ground floor communal areas of Owners' Lounge, kitchenette, and toilet would act as the hub and be available to all residents residing in the main building. Residents of the cottages present on-site during the flood event should be encouraged to relocate to the main building. If residents stay in their cottages, the cottages still offer safe refuge.
- 5.25 If the flood event occurs during night-time hours residents would remain within their apartments/cottages. If the flood event occurs during the day the Flood Response Coordinator would congregate residents in the communal hub for the duration of the flood event. This allows more efficient heating, aids communication with and surveillance of occupants during safe refuge. The main entrance doors to the development will be closed and only operable by the Flood Response Coordinator; preventing any residents from leaving the development.
- 5.26 Hot and cold drinks will be provided from the kitchen facility within the Owners' Lounge. The kitchen facility will have the ability to provide hot food in the event that the length of the flood event requires it. Additional blankets will be provided for residents and stored within communal areas for easy access. The ground floor toilets adjacent to the Owners' Lounge will be available for use during the course of the flood event with this foul sewer connection being fitted with a non-return valve.

#### **Site Reoccupation**

- 5.27 After the flood event, reoccupation of the building by any residents who were not present at the development for the flood event may only occur once it has been deemed safe to do so by the local flood warden, Local Authority or emergency services (if applicable). Once the local flood warden, Local Authority or emergency services have advised the building is safe to be reoccupied, the Flood Response Coordinator will contact

those residents who were not present at the development during the flood event and make plans for their safe and co-ordinated return to the development.

- 5.28 The refuse room shown on the ground floor of the main apartment building is the only part of the building that would be at a level that would flood during a 1 in 100 year event and will be designed and constructed to be flood resilient as far as practicable (this might include use of painted blockwork, concrete floors and electrical points above the 1 in 100 year design flood level). Pumping and dehumidification equipment may be brought in to allow quicker access to these areas depending upon the extent and depth of any standing water. Access to the refuse room during a flood event should be restricted.
- 5.29 Contact details of all residents, utility suppliers, Local Authority members and flood warden(s) must be entered into the Emergency Contact Details within Appendix A. Emergency contacts for all residents should be kept, and only circulated publicly with permission.

## **6 Control and Review**

### **Command and Control**

- 6.1 All staff members will be made aware of their roles and responsibilities. The successful implementation of this plan is dependent on all staff being familiar with its contents.
- There is typically one 'Lodge Manager' on site Monday to Friday (9am to 5pm). During a flood event the duty 'Lodge Manager' becomes the designated Flood Response Co-ordinator.
  - The Flood Response Co-ordinator is supported by a local network of Area Managers as appropriate.
  - Residents will also have access to the 24-hour system (with the operators of this system holding all emergency contact details).
- 6.2 There is an extensive level of support that can be called upon in an emergency - an entire estates management company supports the Flood Response Co-ordinator; this includes 'Careline' – a team of operators available 24/7 and an on-call Area Manager available 24/7. The EMC have a Crisis Management Plan already in place. There is a process that will be followed and directors at Churchill Living will also be informed.

6.3 It is recommended, where possible, the procedures in this plan are practiced at regular intervals with particular consideration given to any requirements of the residents who may have disabilities, mobility problems, or issues with communication.

6.4 Once a Flood or Weather Warning or Flood Alert has been received, EMC staff will discuss the warning, recent weather activity, estimate impact time, and will decide what actions are activated in communication with the Flood Response Co-ordinator.

### **Document Control Procedures**

6.5 The control and updates of this document will be relevant to all occupants of the site and all elements of the development – i.e.:

- Permanent residents,
- Churchill Estates Management - the EMC,
- Visitors.

6.6 This Plan is to be owned, maintained, and updated by the EMC staff who are responsible for management of the site in a flood event. All users are asked to advise the management company of any changes in circumstances that may materially affect the plan in any way. Details of changes should be sent to:

*McCarthy House, Yeoman Road, Ringwood, Hampshire, BH24 3FA,  
01425 888910  
enquiries@cem.co.uk*

6.7 A master copy of all versions of the Plan will be retained by EMC Management Services staff.

6.8 Following construction and occupation of the site, the main point of contact is identified in Appendix A.

6.9 The Plan will be disseminated to staff and residents prior to occupation. It is envisaged that the EMC will make the Plan available as part of any welcome pack / purchase / tenancy package of information at an appropriate time.

6.10 Subsequent amendments or additions to the Plan will be communicated via letter, electronic mail and notices displayed in communal areas of the development.

- 6.11 The Flood Response Coordinator and the EMC should both routinely undertake the following activities:
- Read the Plan and update the contacts list as appropriate.
  - Contact the EA Floodline Service on 0345 988 1188 to check that the flood risk to the development has not changed, for example flood defences may be built in the future.
  - Contact the EA Flood Warning Service on 0345 988 1188 to register to receive flood alerts direct to a designated phone. This information is also on the EA website and is currently available at the following address (this is a free service which provides vital information in the event of a flood). [Sign up for flood warnings - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk/get-flood-warnings\)](https://www.gov.uk/get-flood-warnings).
  - Sign up to weather warning at [Met Office - https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/UKMETOFFICE/subscriber/new](https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/UKMETOFFICE/subscriber/new)
- 6.12 It is recommended that the Plan is reviewed and updated at least every 5-years; or as a result of lessons identified after an activation event or exercise; following major changes of personnel or policy; or following any change to the flood risk or warning process used by the EA, including any change in the standard of protection of flood defence improvements in the area.
- 6.13 Details of changes to the document should be sent to the EMC, who will review this plan to keep all contact details up to date. Changes to the plan are detailed in Appendix B.

## **7 Training & Exercising**

- 7.1 All permanent staff should be made aware of the FWEP and regular training should be undertaken to ensure all staff are aware of the procedures in the event of flooding and who to contact in the event of a flood surrounding the building. The FWEP will be tested annually by the EMC and Flood Response Coordinator to ensure that staff and residents are aware of the plan, and that it can benefit from any advancements in technology or communication. The FWEP should be amended as required.
- 7.2 Health & Safety Records should also be kept, listing trained personnel and noting past exercise (drill) dates. It is recommended the FWEP forms part of the Health & Safety at Work Register.

- 7.3 The Flood Response Coordinator as part of their induction will be provided with first responder first aid training, training for use of a defibrillator and Flood Warden Training.

## 8 Further Advice

- 8.1 In case of injury, contact Emergency Services (999).
- 8.2 This Flood Warning and Evacuation Plan will be overridden by any advice given by competent authorised staff including the Emergency Services or Local Authority responders on the ground or managing a serious flood event.
- 8.3 The response to a major flood event will involve a number of organisations working together at a local level, including the emergency services, local authority (the council), the Environment Agency and utility companies. The Dorset Local Resilience Forum (LRF) have produced the Multi Agency Flood Plan to provide relevant information and outline the response arrangements in place for a co-ordinated multi agency response - <https://dorsetprepared.org.uk/>

### Flood Kit / Grab Bag

- 8.4 A flood kit or 'grab bag' will be available and will be readily accessible for those in command to collect when a flood warning is given or during times of flooding. Cottage residents should also maintain a flood kit or 'grab bag'. The flood kit should include the following items:
- Copy of the Flood Plan;
  - First Aid Kit;
  - Torch and batteries;
  - Blankets/waterproofs;
  - Rubber gloves;
  - Telephone and useful contacts list.

### Organisations & Responsibilities

- 8.5 As flooding of the ground surrounding the building will only occur during extreme flood events, a number of organisations will be expected to work together to minimise the risk and impact on the local community. This includes the emergency services, Environment Agency, utility companies and the Local Authority. The roles and responsibilities of these organisations are detailed below:

### Police

- Coordination of the emergency services at a major flood event, as well as helping to save lives and protect property.
- Establish cordons where practicable to facilitate the work of the other emergency services in saving lives, protecting the public and caring for the public.

### Fire Service

- Saving life and rescuing trapped persons
- Provide monitoring procedures in respect of health and safety of those persons operating within an established cordon.
- Carry out essential damage control measures, including pumping out flood water and salvage work.
- Assist other relevant agencies, particularly the local authority, to minimise the effects of major flooding on the community.

### Local Authority

- Emergency care, if necessary, including feeding, accommodation and welfare for those who have been evacuated from the flooded area.
- Emergency transport for people, equipment and material such as sandbags, and if necessary, evacuation.
- Information services for liaison with the media on the local authority response and for information to the public and to relatives of evacuees.
- Flood alleviation — for flood prevention, such as clearing blocked culverts, for dealing with flooded roads and diversions and for other assistance to the public such as drying-out facilities.
- Emergency environmental health advice for action relating to environmental problems caused by flooding.
- Coordination of the voluntary response.

### Environment Agency

- Issue flood alerts and warnings.
- Responsibility for maintenance and operation of Environment Agency owned flood defences. Checking defences and undertake essential repairs and maintenance on Environment

Agency owned flood defences and advise other owners as their maintenance responsibilities.

- Monitor water levels and flows, assessing the risk, clearing obstructions from known pinch points and advising the emergency services and local authority.
- Once its own systems and flood defences are secure support the police and local authority by providing materials, equipment and manpower as far as resources and other duties permit.

#### Utility Companies

- In the event of a flood, will aim to secure their services and equipment to ensure continuity of supply.
- Aim to repair services disrupted by flood.
- Seek to provide alternative means of supply during service disruption if life and health risks are identified.

## **9 Updating and Review**

- 9.1 It is recommended that the Plan is reviewed and updated at least every 5-years; or as a result of lessons identified after an activation event or exercise; following major changes of personnel or policy; or following any change to the flood risk or warning process used by the EA, including any change in the standard of protection of flood defence improvements in the area.
- 9.2 Details of changes to the document should be sent to the EMC, who will review this plan to keep all contact details up to date. Changes to the plan are detailed in Appendix B.

## Appendix A Contact Details

### Emergency & Support Services

Last Reviewed By:

Date:

Organisation	Telephone (office hours)	Telephone (out of hours)
Floodline (EA)	0345 988 1188	0345 988 1188
Environment Agency	03708 506 506	Use Floodline or 0800 80 70 60 (incident)
Dorset Council	01305 221000	01305 221000
Fire & Rescue Service	999	999
Police	999	999
Ambulance Service	999	999
NHS Direct (non-emergency)	111	111
Wessex Water	0345 600 3 600	0345 600 4 600
National Grid	105	105
Gas Company	TBC	TBC
Telecommunications Company	TBC	TBC
<i>Add any others...</i>		

### Churchill Estates Management

Last Reviewed By:

Date:

Key Contact & Role	Telephone (office hours)	Telephone (out of hours)
<i>To be completed...</i>		



**Resident Contact Sheet**

**Last Reviewed By:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Resident Name</b>	<b>Apartment number</b>	<b>Telephone Number</b>	<b>Requires Mobility Support (Y/N)</b>	<b>Comments (i.e. special provisions, mobility limitations etc)</b>	<b>In-case of Emergency Contact</b>
<i>To be completed...</i>					

