



# North Dorset Local Plan - 2011 to 2026

## Part 1

Pre-submission Document

## Introduction and Policies 1 to 15



# North Dorset Local Plan - 2011 to 2026

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### Pre-submission Document

November 2013

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# North Dorset Local Plan - 2011 to 2026

## Part 1

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# 1. Introduction

## The North Dorset Local Plan

### The National Framework for Local and Neighbourhood Plans

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

### What is a Local Plan?

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

### What is a Neighbourhood Plan?

- 1.5 A neighbourhood plan is a document prepared by the local community (often led by a parish or town council) that sets out more local planning policies, usually for a smaller area within a Borough or District. When adopted, a neighbourhood plan would also form part of the development plan for an area. A neighbourhood plan needs to be in line with national policy and the strategic policies of the relevant local plan.

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

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

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

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

## The Planning Policy Framework for North Dorset

- 1.6 In North Dorset, the planning policy framework will be made up of national policy, the North Dorset Local Plan prepared by the Council and neighbourhood plans prepared by local communities. The Council may also produce other Development Plan Documents (DPDs) and Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) to provide more detailed guidance on specific topics or on the development of specific sites<sup>5</sup>.
- 1.7 Part 1 of the Local Plan (this document) sets out the strategic planning policies for North Dorset. Part 2 (a subsequent document) will allocate specific sites for housing and employment growth in the main towns and will include a review of other land allocations and settlement boundaries. Work will commence on Part 2 of the Local Plan following the adoption of Part 1.
- 1.8 Once adopted, the Local Plan will replace many of the ‘saved’ policies in the North Dorset District-wide Local Plan 2003. Those ‘saved’ policies that will be replaced by new policies in this document and those ‘saved’ policies that will continue to be retained until reviewed in Part 2, are listed in Appendix A.

### What Period Does This Local Plan Cover?

- 1.9 The plan period for the new North Dorset Local Plan is from 2011 to 2026. This 15-year time horizon enables the plan to consolidate development that has taken place since the end of the last plan period and to take into account longer term District-wide needs. However, to ensure the plan remains up-to-date it is likely to be reviewed before the end of the plan period. This could be as a whole or in part to respond to unforeseen circumstances and to ensure that the plan continues to plan positively for the development and infrastructure that the District requires.

### The Structure of the Local Plan Part 1

- 1.10 The Local Plan Part 1 begins by explaining the context within which the planning policies for the District have been developed. Chapter 2:
- describes the spatial characteristics of the local area;
  - identifies the key issues and challenges; and
  - includes a vision and objectives to tackle the issues and challenges.
- 1.11 Topic and place-based policies seek to establish the scale and broad location of future development in North Dorset. The topic-based policies establish an overall sustainable development strategy (Policies 1 and 2) and set out a strategic approach to: environment and climate change; meeting housing needs; supporting economic development; and infrastructure (Policies 3 to 15). A strategic approach to development in the District’s four main towns and in the countryside is provided by

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



policies 16 to 20. The largest single area of development in North Dorset will be the Gillingham Southern Extension. How the development of this site will be taken forward is explained in Policy 21 - Gillingham Strategic Site Allocation.

- 1.12 Part 1 also includes strategic Development Management Policies (Policies 22 to 33) which provide more detail on a range of issues and types of development, including development in the countryside. Part 1 concludes by establishing a framework for monitoring.

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

North Dorset Context	Characteristics of the District Issues and Challenges Vision for North Dorset Objectives for the Local Plan Part 1	
Topic-based Policies	Sustainable Development Strategy Environment and Climate Change Meeting Housing Needs Supporting Economic Development Infrastructure	Policies 1 and 2 Policies 3 to 5 Policies 6 to 10 Policies 11 and 12 Policies 13 to 15
Place-based Policies	Blandford Gillingham Shaftesbury Sturminster Newton The Countryside	Policy 16 Policy 17 Policy 18 Policy 19 Policy 20
Strategic Site Allocation	Gillingham Southern Extension	Policy 21
Development Management Policies	General Policies Countryside Policies	Policies 22 to 27 Policies 28 to 33
Implementation	Monitoring	

- 1.13 Part 1 of the Local Plan as a whole (including all the policies, supporting text and any maps, diagrams and figures) sets out the strategic priorities for the future development of North Dorset. All the policies have been prepared with the objective of contributing to the achievement of sustainable development<sup>6</sup> and are consistent with the principles and policies set out in the NPPF, including the presumption in favour of sustainable development.

<sup>6</sup> Under section 39(2) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 a local authority exercising their plan making functions must do so with the objective of contributing to the achievement of sustainable development.

## Neighbourhood Planning in North Dorset

- 1.14 The Localism Act gives all local communities the power to produce a neighbourhood plan, but whether to do so is a decision that rests entirely with a local community.
- 1.15 In order for a neighbourhood plan to be brought into force as part of the statutory development plan for an area, it must be prepared to:
- have appropriate regard to national policy;
  - contribute to the achievement of sustainable development;
  - be in general conformity with the strategic policies in the relevant Local Plan<sup>7</sup>; and
  - be compatible with human rights requirements and European legislation.
- 1.16 Often a neighbourhood plan would be prepared for a single town or parish, but towns and parishes also have the option of working together to prepare a joint neighbourhood plan.
- 1.17 The first step in preparing a neighbourhood plan is to define a neighbourhood area. At the time this plan was published, there were five designated neighbourhood areas in North Dorset. Two of these are focused on the main towns, which are:
- Gillingham Neighbourhood Area; and
  - Shaftesbury, Melbury Abbas and Cann Neighbourhood Area.
- 1.18 Two are in the countryside, which are:
- Bourton Neighbourhood Area; and
  - Shillingstone Neighbourhood Area.
- 1.19 National policy<sup>8</sup> makes it clear that once a neighbourhood plan has demonstrated its general conformity with the strategic policies of the relevant Local Plan, and has been brought into force, the policies it contains will take precedence over existing non-strategic policies in the Local Plan for that neighbourhood, where they are in conflict.
- 1.20 Local planning authorities have a legal duty to provide ‘advice and assistance’ to communities producing neighbourhood plans<sup>9</sup> and a guidance note is currently being prepared outlining roles and responsibilities.
- 1.21 The duty for a Council to provide advice and assistance does not extend to financial assistance<sup>10</sup>, but the Government has established national sources of funding and professional help for communities engaged in neighbourhood planning.

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<sup>7</sup> All policies in the Local Plan Part 1 are considered to be strategic. The Local Plan Part 2 is likely to include both strategic and non-strategic policies.

<sup>8</sup> Paragraphs 184 and 185, National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (March 2012)

<sup>9</sup> Schedule 4B, paragraph 3(1) of the Localism Act.

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

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

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

- a Sustainability Appraisal (SA);
- an Equality Impact Assessments (EqIA);
- a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA);
- a Statement of Consultation;
- a Duty to Co-operate Statement;
- a series of Background Papers; and
- various ‘Evidence Base’ studies.

### **Sustainability Appraisal (SA)**

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

### **Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA)**

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

### **Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA)**

- 1.26 A HRA is required to ensure that the Local Plan Part 1 will not have any adverse effect upon any internationally important wildlife sites, including Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs). A draft HRA report was published in 2010 with the Draft Core Strategy and Development Management

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<sup>10</sup> Schedule 4B, paragraph 3(2) of the Localism Act.

Policies DPD. It identified key mitigation measures that needed to be implemented. A Final HRA report has been produced for the submission of the Local Plan Part 1.

### Statement of Consultation

- 1.27 The Statement of Consultation has been prepared in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012. The Regulations require that the documents published for pre-submission consultation on a local plan should include a statement setting out:
- which bodies and persons were invited to make representations under Regulation 18;
  - how those bodies and persons were invited to make such representations;
  - a summary of the main issues raised by those representations; and
  - how those main issues have been addressed in the development plan document (the publication version of the Local Plan).
- 1.28 The Statement of Consultation explains how consultation has been carried out at the various stages of preparation of the Local Plan Part 1. It explains the consultations that have been undertaken at each stage of the plan's evolution, including: the methods used; the people involved; the outcomes of the consultations; and how these have influenced the development of planning policies.
- 1.29 In addition there have been on-going and informal discussions and correspondence with a number of key stakeholders and other representatives of the District's communities. These include discussions with adjoining local authorities, District councillors, infrastructure providers, environmental groups, community action groups and representatives of the development industry. This on-going dialogue has helped to inform the preparation of the Local Plan Part 1.

### Duty to Co-operate Statement

- 1.30 The Government introduced a statutory 'duty to cooperate' in the Localism Act, which requires local councils and other bodies to plan strategically across local boundaries. National policy makes it clear that "the Government expects joint working on areas of common interest to be diligently undertaken for the mutual benefit of neighbouring authorities"<sup>11</sup>. A statement has been produced setting out how the Council has met its obligations under the duty to cooperate.

### Background Papers

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

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

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

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

### Evidence Base Studies

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

### Using the Local Plan to Make Planning Decisions

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

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

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

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

1.37 National policy<sup>13</sup> allows weight to be given to emerging policies, such as those in this publication draft of the Local Plan Part 1. The weight given to each draft policy

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

<sup>13</sup> Paragraph 216, National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (March 2012)

will vary depending on whether or not the issue is contentious and to what extent it is consistent with policies in the NPPF.

## Consultation

### What Stage Has the Local Plan Part 1 Reached?

- 1.38 Prior to the introduction of changes to the planning system, the Council was preparing a core strategy, which included a suite of development management policies. In October 2012, the Council consulted on how that draft document should be revised to become a ‘new style’ local plan. The result is the North Dorset Local Plan of which Part 1 has now been published for consultation. The timetable to adoption is set out in Figure 1.2 below.

Figure 1.2 – Local Plan Part 1 - Timetable to Adoption

Consultation Stage	Date
Issues & Alternative Options for the Core Strategy	June – July 2007
Draft Core Strategy and Development Management Policies DPD	March – May 2010
Key Areas for the Revision of the Draft Core Strategy	October – December 2012
Consultation on the Local Plan Part 1 Pre-submission Document	November 2013 – January 2014
Submission of the Local Plan Part 1 to the Secretary of State	Spring 2014
Public Examination	Summer 2014
Adoption	Winter 2014

- 1.39 Many representations were received in response to the previous consultations and as a result changes have been made to the document. Further details can be found in the Statement of Consultation, which also provides more detail on how the document evolved from being a draft core strategy to a ‘new style’ local plan.

### What Happens Next?

- 1.40 You now have an opportunity to make formal representations on the Local Plan Part 1 which, if the Council can’t resolve them, will go forward to be considered at the formal public examination. The purpose of this stage of the consultation is to provide an opportunity for you to comment on the matters that will be considered by the Inspector who conducts the examination, namely, whether the plan:
- has been prepared in accordance with the Duty to Co-operate, legal and procedural requirements, and
  - is ‘sound’<sup>14</sup>.

<sup>14</sup> Paragraph 182, National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (March 2012)



- 1.41 The Council will endeavour to resolve objections through minor changes if necessary, but will then submit the Local Plan Part 1, the Schedule of Changes and any outstanding representations to the Secretary of State (SoS) for Communities and Local Government (CLG) for examination. The SoS will then appoint an independent Inspector to conduct the examination. The Inspector determines what will be discussed at the examination and who should attend.
- 1.42 Following examination the Inspector will produce a report setting out the changes the Council must make to the Local Plan Part 1. The Council will then adopt the Local Plan Part 1 as part of the development plan and local planning framework.

### How Can I Get involved?

- 1.43 The publication version of the Local Plan Part 1 and all related documents are on our website<sup>15</sup> - which also provides full guidance notes on how to make a representation. In summary you can use our on-line form, send an email or write to us at:

Planning Policy  
North Dorset District Council  
Nordon  
Salisbury Road  
Blandford Forum  
Dorset  
DT11 7LL

Telephone 01258 484201  
Email: [planningpolicy@north-dorset.gov.uk](mailto:planningpolicy@north-dorset.gov.uk)

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<sup>15</sup> <http://www.dorsetforyou.com/planning/north-dorset/planning-policy>

## 2. North Dorset Context

### Introduction

- 2.1 North Dorset is a rural district of 61,000 hectares. It is the most northern district in Dorset and its neighbouring local authority areas are:
- East Dorset District to the east;
  - West Dorset District to the west;
  - Purbeck District to the south;
  - Wiltshire Unitary to the north east; and
  - Somerset County and South Somerset District to the north-west.
- 2.2 The 2011 Census figures show that the resident population was 68,600 with just over 50% of the population living in the four main market towns of:
- Blandford (Forum and St Mary) (11,836);
  - Gillingham (11,756);
  - Shaftesbury (7,314); and
  - Sturminster Newton (4,292).
- 2.3 The District's population has grown by 10.8% (6,700) over the last 10 years with most of this growth being focused around the four main market towns.
- 2.4 This chapter explains the context within which the planning policies for the District and the places within it have been developed. It:
- summarises the main **spatial characteristics** of North Dorset, how it interacts at a sub-regional level and functions at a more local level;
  - identifies the **issues and challenges** facing the District; and
  - sets out a **vision** for how North Dorset and the places within it should develop over the next 15 years, together with **objectives** to help achieve this vision and address the issues facing the District now and in the future.

### Spatial Characteristics at the Sub-Regional Level

#### North / South Divide

- 2.5 At the sub-regional level many of the District's spatial characteristics show a 'north-south divide' however, the location of the 'dividing line', which generally runs from north-east to south-west across the central part of the District, depends on the characteristic being examined.

#### Character Areas

- 2.6 The northern part of the District has a mixed geology and topography where limestone and greensand ridges sit alongside rolling farmland and clay vale landscapes. This part of the District primarily falls within Natural England's Blackmore Vale and the Vale of Wardour Character Area.

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

### Housing Markets

- 2.11 At the sub-regional level the northern part of the District (including the main towns of Gillingham, Shaftesbury and Sturminster Newton) tends to look towards the Yeovil and Salisbury functional housing markets. In contrast, the south of the District (including the main town of Blandford) tends to look towards the Bournemouth and Poole functional housing market. There is no clear dividing line between these functional housing markets as they overlap to a certain extent.
- 2.12 For the purposes of preparing a Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA), North Dorset falls entirely within the defined Bournemouth and Poole Housing Market Area (HMA). The recent SHMA Update<sup>16</sup> recognises that the northern part of the District has only a limited functional relationship with the South East Dorset Conurbation.
- 2.13 The Meeting Housing Needs Background Paper provides further detail on this and other housing issues.

### Economic Zones and Retail Catchments

- 2.14 Research for the now revoked Regional Economic Strategy (RES)<sup>17</sup> showed that there is a north-south divide in North Dorset between two of the seven Functional Economic Zones identified in the South West Region.
- 2.15 The northern part of the District, including Gillingham and Shaftesbury, lies within the A303 Corridor Functional Economic Zone, which stretches from Salisbury in the

<sup>16</sup> The Bournemouth / Poole Housing Market Area 2011 Strategic Housing Market Assessment Update, JG Consulting in association with Chris Broughton Associates (January 2012)

<sup>17</sup> Regional Economic Strategy for South West England 2006 – 2015, SWRDA (May 2006)

east to Taunton in the west. The southern part of the District, including Blandford, lies within the South East Coastal Functional Economic Zone, centred on Bournemouth and Poole.

- 2.16 Blandford, Gillingham, Shaftesbury and Sturminster Newton each primarily serve their own local retail catchment area and their town centres all have a limited draw beyond their respective catchment area boundaries. In terms of wider retail catchments, particularly for non-food shopping, the towns in the north of the District (Gillingham, Shaftesbury and Sturminster Newton) mainly look towards Salisbury and Yeovil whereas Blandford mainly looks south-east towards Poole.
- 2.17 More information on economic zones, retail catchments and other issues relating to the economy is provided in the Supporting Economic Development Background Paper.

### Transport Corridors

- 2.18 There are two strategic transport corridors that pass through the northern and southern edges of the District:
- the Exeter to London Corridor, which runs through the northern edge of the District and includes the A303, the A30 (which passes through Shaftesbury) and the Exeter to London Waterloo railway line (which passes through Gillingham); and
  - the Weymouth to London Corridor, which runs through the southern edge of the District and includes the A31 (which clips the very southern edge of the District at Winterborne Zelston) and the A35 (which runs just outside the District to the south of Milborne St. Andrew).
- 2.19 For east-west movements, residents of Gillingham, Shaftesbury and the northern part of the District generally look towards the Exeter to London Corridor whereas residents of Blandford and the southern part of the District generally look south towards the Weymouth to London Corridor.
- 2.20 There is also an important north-south corridor, particularly for freight, linking Bournemouth and Poole with the Bristol area, which includes the A350 and C13.
- 2.21 More information on transport corridors, other transport issues and the provision of all forms of infrastructure is given in the Infrastructure Background Paper.

### Spatial Characteristics at the District Level

#### Market Towns and Rural Hinterlands

- 2.22 At the District level, the pattern of development in North Dorset is one of market towns with surrounding villages set within rural hinterlands. The spatial characteristics of the pattern of development are different in the north and south of the District.

- 2.23 In the north there are four towns and many villages, especially in the Blackmore Vale. Gillingham and Shaftesbury, which are less than 5 miles apart, are the main service centres. Sturminster Newton is located towards the north-western edge of the District together with the smaller town of Stalbridge.
- 2.24 In the south, Blandford is the only town and there are fewer villages linked by a much sparser network of minor roads running across the chalk downs.

### Proximity of Settlements to Facilities and Services

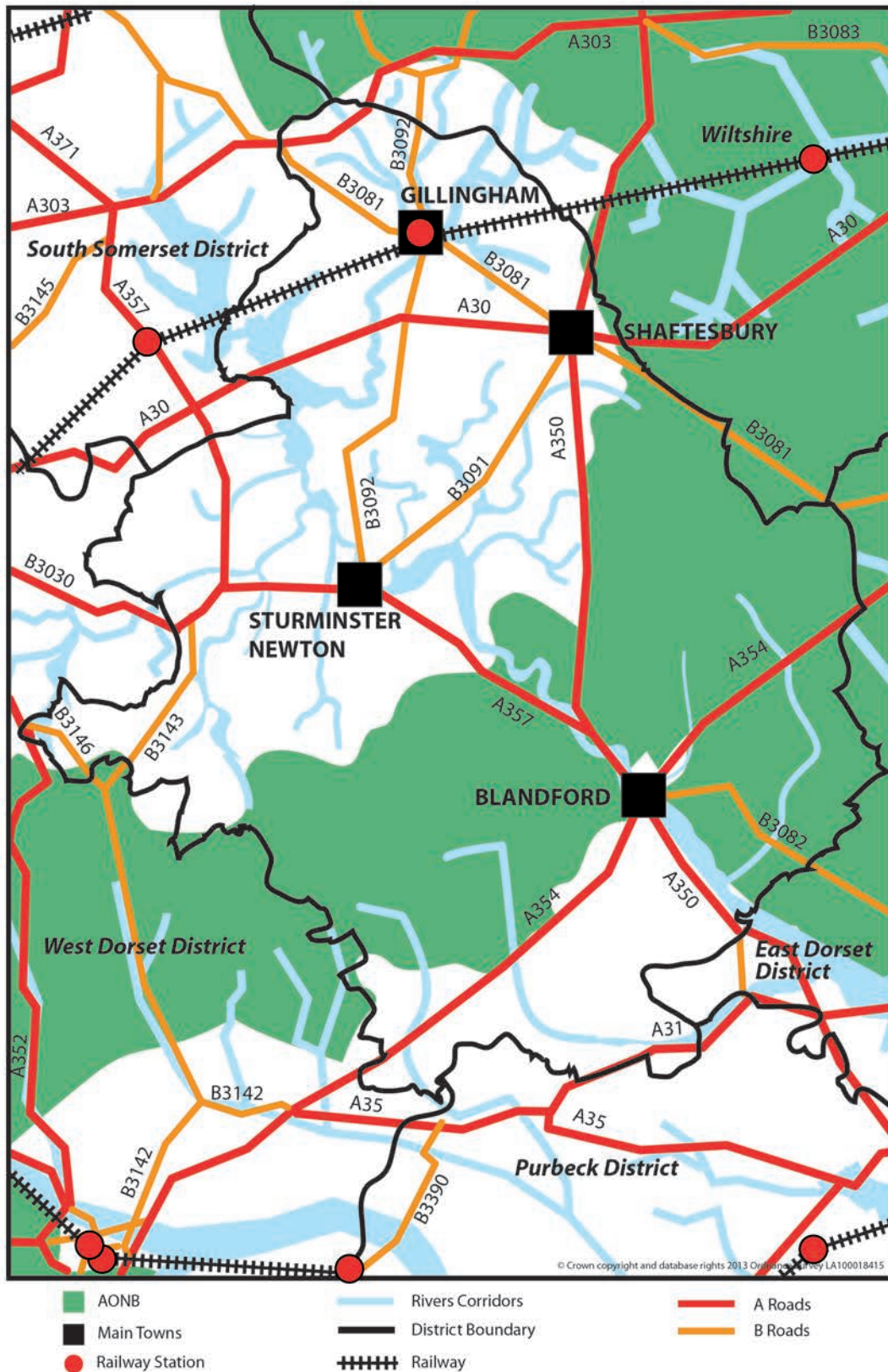
- 2.25 In the north, the relative proximity to services is high around Gillingham and Shaftesbury. There is also a high relative level of proximity in the north-west where Sturminster Newton, Stalbridge and Marnhull (the District's largest village) are clustered together. The denser settlement pattern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

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

- 2.27 Blandford, Gillingham, Shaftesbury and Sturminster Newton each have their own distinctive characteristics, but all are service centres with a good range of shops, jobs and community facilities that serve their respective rural hinterlands.
- 2.28 Blandford primarily serves the south of the District. In the north, the main service centres of Gillingham and Shaftesbury together serve a rural hinterland extending into South Somerset and Wiltshire. Sturminster Newton plays an important role in serving the rural hinterland in the western part of the District.
- 2.29 Over much of the Blackmore Vale, Stalbridge and the villages collectively function as a dense network of small rural communities where day-to-day needs can be met locally through relatively short trips. However, over much of the chalk in the south of the District (and in the Blackmore Vale on the south-west fringes of the District), the villages function more as dispersed 'hubs'. Residents living in close proximity to these 'hubs' can meet their day-to-day needs through relatively short trips, but longer journeys are required from some of the smaller, more isolated communities.
- 2.30 Further more detailed analysis of the spatial characteristics of the District can be found in the Sustainable Development Strategy Background Paper.



Figure 2.1 – Spatial characteristics of North Dorset





## Issues and Challenges

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

### Issues and Challenges from National Policy

2.32 The NPPF states that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. It also identifies a need for the planning system to perform: an economic role; a social role; and an environmental role, if sustainable development is to be achieved<sup>18</sup>. These roles give rise to many issues and challenges for the District. Three key issues are:

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

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

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

2.34 Within planning's overarching roles, plan-making and decision-taking should be underpinned by a set of twelve core planning principles<sup>19</sup>. With regard to the principle of conserving and enhancing the natural environment, there are two key issues where it will be particularly important for the District Council to work collaboratively across local boundaries, which are:

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

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

- ensure that decisions taken locally have regard to the generic national objectives for AONBs and to the specific objectives and policies for each AONB, as set out in their respective Management Plans; and

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<sup>18</sup> Paragraphs 6 and 7, National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (March 2012)

<sup>19</sup> The core planning principles are set out in Paragraph 17, National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (March 2012)

- ensure that internationally important wildlife sites are not harmed, either directly or indirectly, by development proposed in the Local Plan or any other planning document.

### District Issues and Challenges

- 2.36 The major issues facing the rural County are set out in Shaping Our Future – Dorset Sustainable Community Strategy 2010-2020<sup>20</sup>, which is the Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS), both for the County and for North Dorset. It establishes key community priorities across rural Dorset, which are reflected in this Local Plan.
- 2.37 The SCS notes that North Dorset:
- is a very rural and sparsely populated District with vibrant market towns, some of which have experienced recent high population growth;
  - has an ageing population with a high level of migration of young people out of the area. The SCS identifies that across Dorset priorities are to enable children and young people to realise their potential and to ensure that older people are healthy, active and independent in their communities; and
  - has a high quality natural and built environment, which needs to be safeguarded and enhanced now and in the future.
- 2.38 It also sets out the key challenges from parish and community plans in North Dorset as:
- the provision of affordable housing, which is part of the wider challenge for Dorset of seeking to ensure that everyone can live in a good quality home and neighbourhood that meets their needs;
  - improving transport and access to services, including access to vocational and skills training. Across Dorset access to healthcare, essential shopping and leisure opportunities are also important; and
  - ensuring access to high speed broadband to support business growth, which forms part of the wider Dorset priority of trying to foster a strong economy that offers better job opportunities to local people.
- 2.39 Other County-wide priorities identified in the SCS include: narrowing the inequality gap; making people safe and ensuring that they feel safe; giving everyone the opportunity to take part in cultural activities; enabling people to play an active role in community life; and ensuring that people are healthy and that they have access to adequate healthcare.
- 2.40 The key challenges for North Dorset, reflecting the issues identified in the SCS both for rural Dorset and the District, are to:

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<sup>20</sup> Shaping Our Future – Dorset Sustainable Community Strategy 2010-2020, Dorset Strategic Partnership (November 2010)

- improve the quality of life of residents by helping to meet the needs of the older population and enhancing, as far as possible, the life chances of the young;
- deliver growth that does not harm key environmental features; to encourage high quality design that respects the environment; and to safeguard amenity;
- provide sufficient housing, including affordable housing, of a type, design and mix that meets the diverse needs of the District;
- ensure that levels of service provision (both in the towns and the rural area) are maintained and where possible improved; and encourage better public transport that meets the needs of local communities; and
- develop a more competitive economy that reflects wider sub-regional aims, but also recognises the particular economic characteristics of the District and brings greater prosperity to its residents.

### Local Issues and Challenges

- 2.41 The community planning model in North Dorset has four ‘local community partnerships’ (LCPs) focussed on the District’s four largest towns and their rural hinterlands. The four partnerships are:
- DT11 Forum: covering Blandford and the south of the District;
  - Shaftesbury District Task Force: covering Shaftesbury and the surrounding area including parts of Wiltshire;
  - SturQuest: covering Sturminster Newton, Stalbridge and the rural west of the District; and
  - the Three Rivers Partnership: covering Gillingham, the far north of the District and parts of South Somerset.
- 2.42 Each local community partnership has developed its own community strategy which has helped to establish key community priorities at the more local level. Key issues common to all LCPs were identified as being:
- access and transport;
  - healthier communities and older people;
  - economy;
  - environment (including climate change); and
  - culture, sport and leisure.
- 2.43 Two other issues were identified as lower priorities albeit still important, which were:
- health; and
  - safer communities.
- 2.44 Further information can be found in the Vision and Objectives Background Paper.

## Vision for North Dorset

- 2.45 The vision for North Dorset sets out how the District and the places within it should develop over the next 15 years. It draws on: issues derived from national policy; the ‘shared agenda’ for the future in the Dorset SCS; and the common issues identified by the four LCPs. Regard has also been had to the Council’s corporate priorities and to the views expressed by organisations and individuals during the consultation on and development of this document.
- 2.46 The vision for North Dorset is as set out below:
- In 15 years’ time North Dorset will:
- be a District that has played a positive role in addressing the causes and effects of climate change;
  - have more sustainable forms of development that are adequately served by infrastructure (including sustainable transport solutions) and make prudent use of natural resources (including previously developed land);
  - have expanded thriving market towns collectively providing homes, jobs and services for those living within them and within the communities they serve;
  - have sustainable smaller rural communities providing local services which enable day-to-day needs to be met locally;
  - have a conserved and enhanced locally distinctive historic and natural environment that retains the qualities that make the District’s urban and rural areas even more attractive and desirable places to live, work and visit;
  - have more housing, and in particular more affordable housing, that better meets the diverse needs of the District;
  - be a District: that has advanced towards more cohesive communities; that has recognised the needs of the older population; and where the life chances for children and young people have been enhanced;
  - have a more robust and prosperous economy (including sustainable tourism) with high quality jobs and skills, focused in locations that best support the District’s growing population; and
  - have a range of community, leisure, cultural and recreational facilities in locations that are accessible to the local population.
- 2.47 Each LCP has a strategy with a vision, setting out each community’s aspirations for its area. These local visions are set out in full in the Vision and Objectives Background Paper and have informed the policies for the four main towns. In the future neighbourhood plans may also include more local visions for individual towns and villages in the District.

## Objectives for the Local Plan Part 1

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

- ensuring that North Dorset's wildlife, landscape and cultural heritage are protected and well managed;
- encouraging design that maintains the quality of the District's built and natural environment; and
- ensuring that the District's residents are able to enjoy their homes and public places without undue disturbance or intrusion from neighbouring uses.

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

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

- making them the main focus in the District for housing development, including affordable housing;
- enhancing their employment and training opportunities, particularly through the provision of sufficient employment land, to meet the growing needs of the towns and their hinterlands;
- focusing an improved range of retail, cultural and leisure uses within the town centres;

- improving health, education and community services to meet the needs of the towns and their rural hinterlands;
- improving sustainable transport links and accessibility within the towns; between the towns and the villages in their rural hinterlands; and, through improved linkages with strategic transport networks;
- securing the delivery of mixed use regeneration on previously developed land in accessible locations;
- ensuring that housing development is delivered in step with employment opportunities, community facilities and infrastructure; and
- taking account of the effects of any interaction between the towns themselves and with the large towns and cities in neighbouring districts.

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

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

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

### **Objective 5 - Meeting the District's Housing Needs**

2.53 The objective is to deliver more housing, including more affordable housing, that better meets the diverse needs of the District by:

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



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

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

## 3. Sustainable Development Strategy

### Introduction

- 3.1 The purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. National policy indicates that ‘sustainable’ means ensuring that better lives for ourselves don’t mean worse lives for future generations and ‘development’ means growth<sup>21</sup>. This chapter includes two policies that establish an overall strategy which seeks to deliver sustainable development in North Dorset.
- 3.2 Policy 1 reflects the ‘presumption in favour of sustainable development’ in national policy and recognises that the economic, social and environmental roles of planning need to be pursued jointly. Policy 1 sets out how the Council will take planning decisions in accordance with ‘the presumption’ and provides guidance on how it will be applied in the District.
- 3.3 Policy 2 establishes a ‘core spatial strategy’ which will guide the pattern of growth in North Dorset in a sustainable manner. It seeks to concentrate strategic growth at the District’s main towns where homes, jobs and facilities are easily accessible and establishes a ‘light touch’ spatial policy framework elsewhere with the emphasis on local communities using neighbourhood planning and other mechanisms to meet their own local needs.

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<sup>21</sup> Ministerial foreword to the National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (March 2012)

## Policy 1 - Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development

### Introduction

3.4 The Local Plan Part 1 has been prepared having regard to the presumption in favour of sustainable development in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), which should be “seen as a golden thread running through both plan-making and decision-taking”<sup>22</sup>. Policy 1 sets out how the Council will take decisions in the context of ‘the presumption’<sup>23</sup> and the supporting text provides guidance on how this will be applied in North Dorset, particularly in relation to:

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

### A ‘Positive Approach’ to Considering Development Proposals

3.5 National policy does not change the statutory basis on which planning decisions are made, since planning law<sup>24</sup> still requires planning applications to be determined in accordance with the ‘development plan’<sup>25</sup> unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

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

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

3.7 Material considerations in any planning decision may include:

- Draft or emerging DPDs and neighbourhood plans<sup>26</sup>;

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<sup>22</sup> Paragraph 14, National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (March 2012)

<sup>23</sup> Paragraph 15, National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (March 2012) states that all plans should include “clear policies that will guide how the presumption should be applied locally”.

<sup>24</sup> Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and section 70(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

<sup>25</sup> A definition of the ‘development plan’ is given in Annex 2: Glossary of the National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (March 2012)

<sup>26</sup> Weight should be given to relevant policies in emerging plans in accordance with Paragraph 216, National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (March 2012)

- Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs), supplementary planning guidance or other informal planning documents prepared by the Council or local communities;
  - Relevant sections from management plans, such as those for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) or river catchments;
  - Relevant sections in community-based documents, such as Parish Plans; and
  - Evidence base (or research) studies.
- 3.8 Within the context of the development plan and material considerations as referred to above, the Council will take a positive approach to achieving the delivery of sustainable development.
- 3.9 Not all planning decisions in North Dorset will be made by the Council. For example, some decisions could be made by planning inspectors at appeal or by the Secretary of State following a call-in inquiry. It is envisaged that other decision-makers will also take a positive approach similar to that of the Council when considering development proposals.

### **‘Working Proactively’ to Find Solutions**

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

### **Plan-led System**

- 3.11 One of the national core planning principles is that planning should be “genuinely plan-led”<sup>27</sup>. In seeking to jointly find solutions, the Council will work proactively with developers to bring forward proposals that reflect the Council’s approach to delivering sustainable development as set out in the development plan, including the Local Plan Part 1, which sets out the Council’s strategic approach to meeting identified needs for housing, employment and infrastructure until 2026.

### **Delivering Sustainable Outcomes**

- 3.12 National policy states that “to achieve sustainable development, economic, social and environmental gains should be sought jointly and simultaneously through the

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<sup>27</sup> Paragraph 17- National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (March 2012)

planning system”<sup>28</sup>. The Council will look to work proactively with an applicant to jointly and simultaneously seek gains in all three aspects of sustainable development in relation to that applicant’s proposal. This will be particularly important in relation to issues such as climate change, where a long-term perspective is needed, and in relation to potential impacts on environmental assets, especially those that are protected by legislation and / or are considered irreplaceable.

### Viability Considerations

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

### Planning Conditions and Planning Obligations

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

### Protocols, Service Standards and Performance Agreements

- 3.15 During the plan period, various protocols, service standards and performance agreements for individual planning applications may be put in place. The Council will aim to have regard to any extant protocols, standards and agreements that it has adopted as part of its commitment to work proactively with applicants to jointly find solutions.
- 3.16 The Dorset Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) has produced a planning charter<sup>29</sup>, with the aim of creating a business-friendly planning system within the LEP area. The charter is supported by all local authorities across Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole, including North Dorset District Council.

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<sup>28</sup> Paragraph 8 -National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (March 2012)

<sup>29</sup> Working Better Together; Dorset LEP Planning Charter, Dorset Local Enterprise Partnership (March 2013)

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

### **Approving Planning Applications ‘Without Delay’**

- 3.19 The Council will approve applications that accord with the policies in this Local Plan (and any other documents that form part of the development plan) ‘without delay’, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The Council will seek to work with applicants to jointly try and find solutions (as set out above), to achieve this outcome. However, where such solutions cannot be achieved, applications that do not accord with the policies in this Local Plan (and any other documents that form part of the development plan) will be refused, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 3.20 Approving applications ‘without delay’ does not imply that that the Council will make decisions in an unduly hasty manner. It means that the Council will make decisions in a timeframe that reflects the need to follow appropriate planning procedures (such as the requirement to undertake adequate consultation) and ensure adequate and proportionate consideration is given to each proposal.
- 3.21 Approving suitable applications without delay will also be dependent on applicants providing relevant information in a timely fashion to enable the Council to make a judgement about the likely impacts of development. The Council has produced a comprehensive planning application requirements document<sup>30</sup>, which will be reviewed from time to time, setting out the requirements for information to support different types of application. If all the relevant information is not supplied with an application, then it may be rendered invalid and necessitate a re-submission.

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<sup>30</sup> Planning Application Requirements (Validation Checklist), NDDC (July 2011)



## Decision-taking Where There are ‘No Relevant Policies’ or where ‘Relevant Policies Are Out-of-Date’

### No Relevant Policies

- 3.22 There are unlikely to be many situations where there is no development plan policy relevant to a particular planning application in North Dorset, since many policies in the Local Plan Part 1 are generally applicable to all developments. For example, Policy 2 sets out a ‘core spatial strategy’ for the whole District and place-based policies comprehensively cover the four main towns and the ‘countryside’ (that is, the rest of the District outside the four main towns). Other policies (such as those relating to design and amenity) are also generally applicable to all developments.
- 3.23 Whilst the NPPF remains in force, Policy 1 is also likely to be relevant to all development proposals, except those which the Council is not responsible for determining, including nationally significant infrastructure projects<sup>31</sup> and minerals and waste developments<sup>32</sup>. Should circumstances arise when all relevant policies in the development plan (including Policy 1) were determined to be out-of-date (for example as a result of a comprehensive review of national policy<sup>33</sup>), then regard would be had to all relevant material considerations (which would include any new or revised national policy).

### Relevant Policies Are Out-of-Date

- 3.24 At the date of adoption, all the policies in the Local Plan Part 1 were considered to be up-to-date for the purposes of planning decision-making. However, there may be situations where one or more relevant development plan policy becomes out-of-date. When assessing development proposals, the Council will consider whether any policy in the development plan is out-of-date having regard to national policy, which states that “due weight should be given to relevant policies in existing plans according to their degree of consistency with this framework”<sup>34</sup>.
- 3.25 When assessing development proposals, policies that the Council will have regard to include those in the 2003 District-wide Local Plan that remain ‘saved’, as listed in Appendix A. These policies were adopted before the NPPF was published. However,

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<sup>31</sup> Nationally significant infrastructure projects are determined in accordance with the decision-making framework set out in the Planning Act 2008 and relevant national policy statements for major infrastructure, as well as any other matters that are considered both important and relevant (which may include the NPPF).

<sup>32</sup> Planning applications for minerals and waste developments are determined by Dorset County Council.

<sup>33</sup> This issue is discussed in *Edinburgh Council v Secretary of State for Scotland* [1997] 1 WLR 1447 and more recently *Anita Colman v Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, North Devon District Council, RWE Npower Renewables Limited* [2013] EWHC 1138 (Admin)

<sup>34</sup> Paragraph 215 - National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (March 2012)

they form part of the Local Plan for North Dorset<sup>35</sup> and “should not be considered to be out-of-date simply because they were adopted prior to the publication of this Framework” (that is, the NPPF)<sup>36</sup>.

- 3.26 There may be circumstances when some policies relevant to a planning application are up-to-date and others are out-of-date. In such cases the Council will assess and determine the appropriate weight to attach to the different policies, differentiating as necessary between those policies that remain up-to-date and those that are not.

### Assessing Adverse Impacts against Benefits

- 3.27 Where the presumption is applied in the absence of relevant development plan policies, or where relevant development plan policies are out-of-date, the NPPF may require a decision taker to consider whether any adverse impacts of granting permission would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the NPPF as a whole. Policy 1 has been written having regard to this.
- 3.28 For the purposes of this policy, the term ‘significant’ means ‘not insignificant’ (e.g. for adverse impacts, the focus will be on those matters which either individually or collectively would cause material harm sufficient to justify the development not going ahead)<sup>37</sup>.
- 3.29 Reference to ‘demonstrate’ or ‘demonstrably’ means that an evidential approach should be adopted in relation to decision making to enable an assessment as to both the degree and likelihood of impacts (for example the risk of flooding) or scope for actual benefits being delivered.
- 3.30 The Council will also have regard to any conditions or planning obligations that could help overcome any adverse impacts or secure identified benefits.

### Circumstances When Policies Indicate that Development Should be Restricted

- 3.31 Where the presumption is applied in the absence of relevant development plan policies, or where relevant development plan policies are out-of-date, the NPPF gives examples of some of the specific national policies that indicate that

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<sup>35</sup> The definition of Local Plan in Annex 2: Glossary of the National Planning Policy Framework clarifies that the term ‘Local Plan’ includes old policies which have been saved under the 2004 Act. Saved policies from the Council’s 2003 District-Wide Local Plan can be viewed here - <http://www.dorsetforyou.com/396496>

<sup>36</sup> Paragraph 211 - National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (March 2012)

<sup>37</sup> The commentary on the meaning of “significant” reflects the views expressed in oral evidence by John Rhodes, one of the witnesses at the Communities and Local Government Committee on 10 October 2011, which was an initial evidence session in their inquiry into the draft NPPF.

development should be restricted<sup>38</sup>. These are equally applicable for the purposes of Policy 1

- 3.32 In North Dorset, examples include national policies relating to: sites protected under the Birds and Habitats Directives; sites designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest; Local Green Spaces; Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty; designated heritage assets; and locations at risk of flooding.

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<sup>38</sup> Footnote 9 to Paragraph 14 - National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (March 2012)

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

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

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

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

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

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

## Policy 2 - Core Spatial Strategy

### National Policy

- 3.33 Core principles in national policy state that that planning should 'actively manage patterns of growth to make the fullest possible use of public transport, walking and cycling and focus significant development in locations which are or can be made sustainable'<sup>39</sup> and that planning should 'take account of the different roles and character of different areas, promoting the vitality of our main urban areas ... recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside and supporting thriving rural communities within it'.<sup>40</sup>
- 3.34 National policy also states that in order 'to promote sustainable development in rural areas, housing should be located where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities'.<sup>41</sup>

### Core Spatial Strategy for North Dorset

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

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<sup>39</sup> Penultimate bullet point of Paragraph 17, National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (March 2012)

<sup>40</sup> Fifth bullet point of Paragraph 17, National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (March 2012)

<sup>41</sup> Paragraph 55, National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (2012)

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

### **The Four Main Towns**

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

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

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

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

- 3.44 The core spatial strategy envisages neighbourhood planning playing a key role in meeting local needs in the countryside, but neighbourhood plans are also being produced by communities in the towns. National policy clearly establishes that neighbourhood plans cannot be used to undermine strategic policies, so a neighbourhood plan for one of the four main towns would have to accord with the proposals for the growth of that town, as set out in the Local Plan Part 1.
- 3.45 A neighbourhood plan for one of the four main towns could not promote less development than is identified in the Local Plan Part 1, but it could allow greater levels of growth (by allocating additional sites for development) or include specific policies or guidance on how new development should be designed.

## The Countryside (including Stalbridge and the Villages)

3.46 Outside the defined boundaries of the four main towns, in the remainder of the District (including Stalbridge and all the District's villages), development will be more strictly controlled with an emphasis on meeting local and essential rural needs. Such needs may be met through:

- countryside policies;
- neighbourhood planning; or
- by opting in to the Local Plan Part 2 Site Allocations.

### Meeting Essential Rural Needs through Countryside Policies

3.47 Policy 20 establishes that certain types of development are appropriate in the countryside. These types of development are described in the supporting text and are subject to more detailed policies including: Policies 3 and 22 (renewable energy schemes); Policy 9 (rural exception affordable housing sites, including small numbers of market homes); Policies 6 and 33 (essential occupational dwellings); Policies 11 and 29 (the re-use of existing rural buildings, primarily for economic development or community uses); Policies 11 and 31 (rural tourist accommodation); and Policy 14 (new non-commercial community facilities).

3.48 Policy 20 also establishes a test of 'overriding need' which any other form of development would need to meet in order to be considered acceptable in principle in the countryside. The supporting text to the policy sets out some examples, such as agriculture, horticulture or forestry developments and infrastructure projects, including telecommunications installations and outdoor facilities for sport and recreation.

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

3.49 Where a local community wishes to see growth to meet local needs, but those needs cannot be met through countryside policies alone, they have the option of preparing a neighbourhood plan.

3.50 A neighbourhood plan should not put forward strategic levels of growth, as that is the role of the Local Plan. In this context, growth to meet local needs means growth to meet the needs of the community as a whole, in the area for which the relevant neighbourhood plan is being prepared. For example, this could mean a local need for additional market housing (above the small numbers that may be permitted on a rural exception site) to support a local school with falling pupil numbers, or to help deliver a new or improved local community facility, such as a village hall.

3.51 The neighbourhood plan process will enable a local community to: identify local issues and needs; develop a vision and objectives for the future; and consider different options for meeting local needs. Any neighbourhood plan must be in general conformity with strategic policies in the Local Plan and should have



considered the sustainability implications in an accompanying Sustainability Appraisal Report.

- 3.52 The Sustainability Appraisal should be underpinned by an analysis of the economic, social and environmental issues facing the neighbourhood plan area. The Sustainable Development Strategy Background Paper provides an overview of the sustainability of settlements in terms of population size, number of facilities and accessibility. The community profiles of the 28 wards in the District also provide much locally-based information on issues such as facilities, access, the local economy and education<sup>42</sup>.

### Meeting Local Needs in the Countryside by ‘Opting in’ to the Local Plan Part 2

- 3.53 As an alternative to meeting local needs for housing, employment or other forms of development through countryside policies and neighbourhood planning communities in Stalbridge and all the District’s villages will be able to ‘opt in’ to Part 2 of the Local Plan that allocates specific sites for housing and employment growth together with other land allocations.
- 3.54 This option is available to local communities who may recognise that they have local development needs but do not have the resources to take forward growth or have encountered difficulties in getting a neighbourhood plan adopted. In the event that a community chose this course of action, the Council would work closely with local people to develop proposals that enable them to meet their local needs.

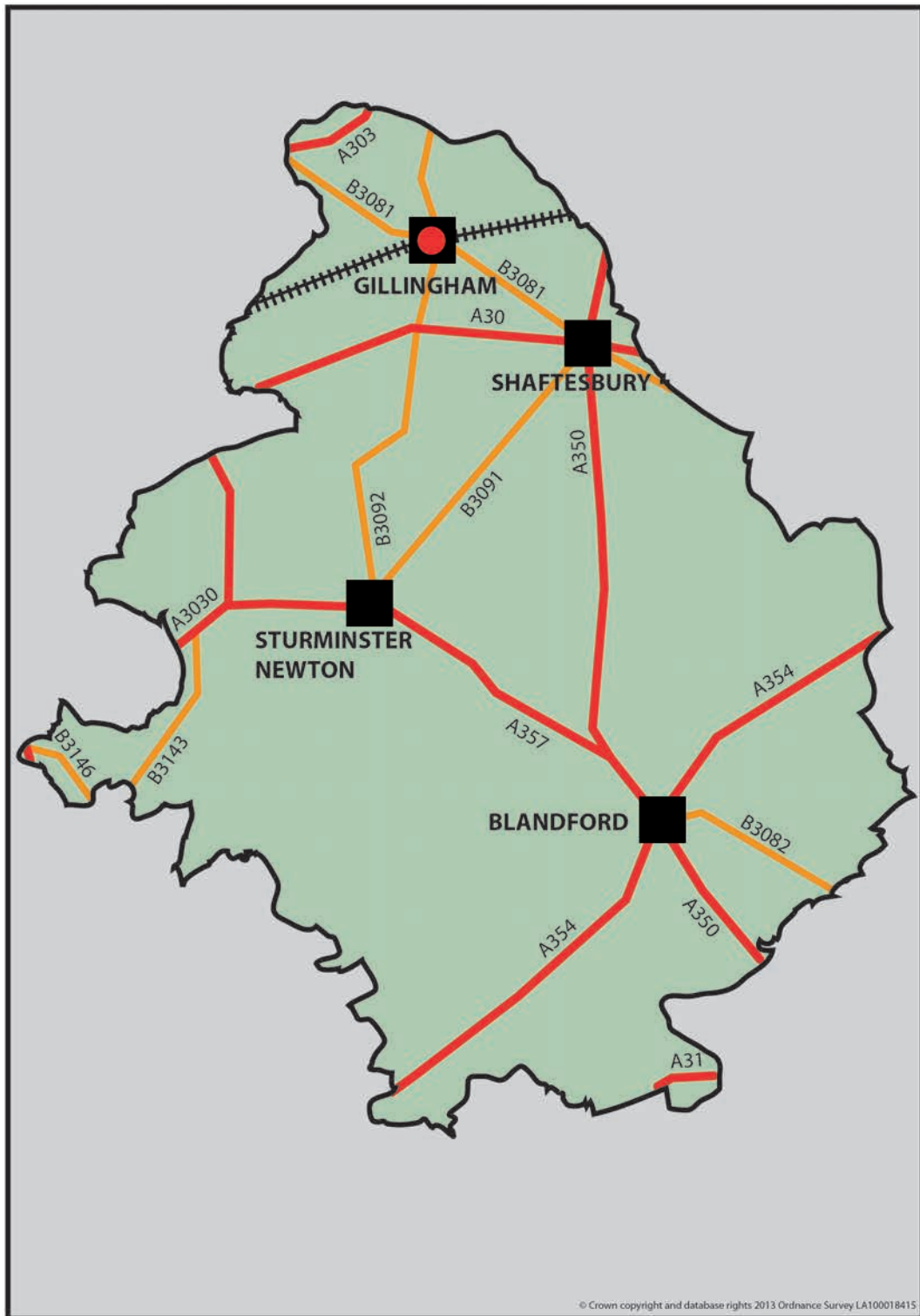
### Settlement Boundaries

- 3.55 The existing settlement boundaries around the four main towns (as shown on the Proposal Maps of the North Dorset District-wide Local Plan 2003) will continue to be used for development management purposes. A settlement boundary will be retained around each of the four main towns, within which infill development can take place. However, the Council will review the precise location of each boundary through the North Dorset Local Plan Part 2, unless it has already been reviewed in a neighbourhood plan.
- 3.56 The settlement boundaries defined around all other settlements in the North Dorset District-wide Local Plan 2003 have been removed. These settlements are subject to countryside policies, although a local community would be able to establish a new settlement boundary (within which infill development could take place) either in a neighbourhood plan, or, if they have ‘opted in’, in the North Dorset Local Plan Part 2.

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<sup>42</sup> North Dorset ward community profiles, DCC (October 2011)

Figure 3.1 - Key diagram for North Dorset



- |                 |                   |         |
|-----------------|-------------------|---------|
| Countryside     | District Boundary | A Roads |
| Main Towns      | Railway           | B Roads |
| Railway Station |                   |         |

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

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

### **The Four Main Towns**

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

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

### **The Countryside (including Stalbridge and the Villages)**

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

In addition to countryside policies, at Stalbridge and all the District's villages, the focus will be on meeting local (rather than strategic) needs, which will be delivered primarily through neighbourhood planning. Communities in Stalbridge and all the District's villages will be able to 'opt in' to the site allocations in Part 2 of the Local Plan, as an alternative to meeting local and essential rural needs through countryside policies and neighbourhood planning.

### **Settlement Boundaries**

The settlement boundaries defined around the four main towns in the North Dorset District-wide Local Plan 2003 are retained and will continue to be used for development management purposes until reviewed either: through site allocations in Part 2 of the Local Plan or a neighbourhood plan. The settlement boundaries defined around all other settlements in the North Dorset District-wide Local Plan 2003 are removed and these settlements will be subject to countryside policies unless new settlement boundaries are defined in neighbourhood plans or site allocations in Part 2 of the Local Plan.

## 4. Environment and Climate Change

### Introduction

- 4.1 In relation to the environment and climate change, the vision for North Dorset states that 'In 15 years' time North Dorset will:
- be a District that has played a positive role in addressing the causes and effects of climate change; and
  - have a conserved and enhanced locally distinctive historic and natural environment that retains the qualities that make the District's urban and rural areas even more attractive and desirable places to live, work and visit."
- 4.2 This section sets out the Council's strategic approach to the natural and historic environment and to climate change and how it intends to meet Objective 1 and Objective 2 of the Local Plan:
- Objective 1 - meeting the challenge of climate change; and
  - Objective 2 - conserving and enhancing the historic and natural environment.
- 4.3 Objective 1 is primarily covered by Policy 3 on Climate Change and Objective 2 is covered primarily by Policy 4 on the Natural Environment and Policy 5 on the Historic Environment.

## Policy 3 - Climate Change

### Introduction

- 4.4 There is now an overwhelming body of evidence accumulated by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) indicating that the global climate is warming. This evidence includes direct observations of temperature, measurements of sea level, snow cover and retreating glaciers. It is becoming increasingly clear that this climatic change is attributable to human activity through emissions of greenhouse gases.
- 4.5 The impacts of climate change will be felt differentially around the globe as the global climate warms. The potential impacts of climate change that are likely to affect the UK include hotter drier summers and warmer wetter winters with more extreme weather events. These will be evident through changes in farming practices and local biodiversity both of which will result in a changing landscape. Climate change will result in more very hot days where vulnerable people may find it difficult to cope and more extreme rain events on the wettest days of the year leading to localised flooding. The UK is already experiencing extreme events such as these.
- 4.6 Residents of North Dorset emitted about 6.0 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent per capita in 2011, in line with the Dorset average<sup>43</sup>. Only by reducing emissions of greenhouse gas emissions can the severity of climate change be controlled.
- 4.7 National policy sets out the role of the planning system<sup>44</sup> in tackling both the causes (mitigation) and effects (adaptation) of climate change. Mitigation includes the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions from all sources through the management of development. Adaptation includes building resilience into urban areas to reduce the severity of the potential impacts of climate change.

### Mitigation of Climate Change

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

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<sup>43</sup> Local Authority CO<sub>2</sub> emissions estimates for 2005-2010, Department of Energy and Climate Change (July 2013)

<sup>44</sup> Paragraph 94, National Planning Policy Framework (March 2012)

- designing developments in a way which facilitate the use of sustainable transport modes;
- incorporating the highest standards of construction into development proposals including the use of renewable energy where appropriate;
- supporting the production of energy from renewable and low carbon sources at both the large scale and the micro scale.

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

### Existing Buildings

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

4.11 Measures to improve the energy efficiency of existing buildings including housing often do not require planning permission. In cases where such retrofitting does require consent, other policies in this Local Plan will apply in particular Policy 22 – Renewable and Low Carbon Energy. Where a building is extended or subject to reuse and requires a planning permission, the proposal will be required to improve the energy efficiency of the whole building unless it can be demonstrated that it is not viable to do so.

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

### Location of New Development

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

### Design of New Developments

4.14 To aid in the mitigation of climate change, developments should consider energy efficiency from the outset. Measures to improve energy efficiency are not reliant on the building fabric alone but can incorporate measures to ensure users of the building can do so in an efficient way. Such measures include:

- The use of walking and cycling to meet everyday needs through establishing safe routes between development sites and the existing built areas within settlements;
  - The provision of sufficient secure cycle storage space within developments to facilitate cycling; and
  - The provision of sufficient clothes drying space within residential developments to encourage clothes drying using less energy.
- 4.15 In addition to these measures the layout of developments, the orientation of buildings and landscaping should be considered to make best use of passive solar design principles to improve the energy performance of the development as a whole. Policy 24 – Design details the Council’s approach to design and how the design elements of building performance should be considered.

### Performance of New Development

- 4.16 New buildings offer opportunities to incorporate energy efficiency measures from an early stage and minimum requirements are set out through Part L (conservation of fuel and power) of the Building Regulations. The Government has set out a timetable for the progressive tightening of building energy performance through its Zero Carbon buildings policy. The Council will rely on this mechanism which will be progressively tightened over time, to achieve improved energy efficiency in new buildings. However developments should look to go further than the requirements of Building Regulations to reduce greenhouse gas emissions as much as possible.
- 4.17 To meet the requirements of the Government’s Zero Carbon policy, developments should first look at measures within the building fabric such as insulation or through passive design features. Secondly, developers should incorporate renewable or low carbon energy technology into the building or through connection to an existing or proposed district heating network. This approach should be the priority for all new developments as it is the most efficient way of meeting the requirements of the Zero Carbon buildings policy.
- 4.18 In certain circumstances, on-site measures to attain the requirements of Zero Carbon policy may be difficult to achieve due to for example, the physical characteristics of the site, the location of the site or for viability reasons. In these instances, contributions towards near-site or off-site measures will be acceptable in line with emerging policy on Allowable Solutions. Where the Allowable Solutions route is appropriate, contributions will be put towards projects on a prescribed list of local projects. If no up to date local list is available, contributions will be put towards national Allowable Solutions projects.
- 4.19 Detailed energy statements are required in support of Building Regulations applications. In many circumstances these energy statements are produced after planning permission has been granted and often result in changes to the scheme approved under the planning permission. These changes then require further



planning applications to be submitted. For this reason, the submission of detailed energy statements will be expected to support planning applications demonstrating what measures have been considered as part of efforts to minimising greenhouse gas emissions from new buildings. Such energy statements will need to set out the expected level of greenhouse emissions resulting from the proposed development and how these will be reduced in line with this policy.

### Renewable Energy

- 4.20 The generation of energy from renewable sources is encouraged by the Government as it helps to reduce greenhouse gas emissions thereby combating climate change. National policy highlights the responsibility of all communities to contribute to the generation of energy from renewable or low carbon sources. The Climate Change Act<sup>45</sup> sets a national target of reducing greenhouse gas emissions to 80% below 1990 baseline levels by 2050. Similarly the UK has signed up to generating<sup>46</sup> at least 15% of its energy requirement from renewable sources by 2020. The delivery of renewable and low carbon energy and contribution towards these targets is clearly an important issue within North Dorset.
- 4.21 The Council will encourage appropriate renewable or low carbon energy schemes that offer a saving in greenhouse gas emissions so that it makes its contribution towards achieving the most up-to-date targets. Whilst encouraging schemes, adverse impacts including cumulative landscape and visual impacts, will need to be satisfactorily addressed. Some renewable or low carbon energy developments may be large scale and may require a countryside location; others may be incorporated into other development proposals. Policy 22 - Renewable and Low Carbon Energy sets out the Council's approach to development proposals for or that incorporate renewable or low carbon energy.

### Adapting to Anticipated Climate Change

- 4.22 The potential impacts of climate change include more frequent extreme weather events resulting in hotter days during the summer and wetter days during the winter. Climate change will also require changes in agriculture and have impacts on wildlife habitats. These changes will affect the District's economy, society and the environment, creating both opportunities (for example, the potential to develop a greener economy) and challenges (for example, the need for more drought-resistant planting).
- 4.23 To adapt to the potential impacts of climate change the Council will seek to reduce the impact of development on vulnerable resources (such as water resources) and reduce the vulnerability of developments to potential impacts (such as flooding). Measures will include:

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<sup>45</sup> Climate Change Act 2008.

<sup>46</sup> The EU Renewable Energy Directive – 2009/28/EC.

- encouraging water efficiency to reduce the impact of drought;
- reduce the impact of flooding including surface water flooding; and
- provide green infrastructure to reduce the impact of warmer weather

4.24 In many instances adaptation measures to tackle one of the impacts of climate change can also help tackle other potential impacts for example the provision of green infrastructure for recreation can also help reduce the runoff of surface water from a development, provide for biodiversity and have a cooling effect within urban areas. This multi-functionality should be exploited wherever practical.

### Water Resources

4.25 One of the likely impacts of climate change is increased instances of drought due to hotter drier summers. This necessitates the careful management of water resources to ensure there is sufficient available to meet everyone's needs and to reduce impacts on biodiversity. Other potential impacts include subsidence due to depleted groundwater, changes in farming practices and soil erosion, all of which have the potential to have an impact on the character of the local landscape<sup>47</sup>. In addition, the clay soils in the north of the district will be susceptible to shrinking and swelling due to long term changes in water levels, resulting in subsidence to buildings.

4.26 To guard against these potential impacts, the use of water in association with buildings needs to be given careful consideration. This is particularly relevant to the consumption of potable water. In all new buildings and in the conversion and re-use of existing buildings, water conservation measures should be utilised. This includes measures such as reduced flow rates on taps, smaller cistern sizes and the use of rainwater or grey water for flushing toilets and watering gardens. Rainwater harvesting can easily be achieved for use in gardens through the provision of water butts.

### Flood Risk

4.27 Climate change is likely to bring about wetter winters and more extreme weather events including increased frequency of heavy rain associated with storms. This increase in rainfall is likely to result in more flooding events from both fluvial and groundwater sources. In addition, the increased intensity of rainfall events is likely to increase the amount of surface water and result in localised flooding during and immediately after rainfall events. The likelihood and severity of flooding events can be increased as a result of developments incorporating features such as increased hard surfacing and canalisation of watercourses. These features should be avoided wherever possible.

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<sup>47</sup> NE116 – Responding to the impacts of climate change on the natural environment: Dorset Downs and Cranborne Chase, Natural England (2008)

- 4.28 Areas liable to fluvial and groundwater are shown in the 'Level 1' Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) for the District<sup>48</sup>. Development proposals should explore all opportunities to reduce the risk and impacts of flooding from all sources especially where development is proposed in an area identified as being at risk of flooding. Measures such as the retrofitting of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) techniques should be considered.
- 4.29 Development proposals should avoid areas at risk from flooding having regard to the sequential and exception tests as set out in national policy<sup>49</sup>. Where development is proposed in an area at risk of flooding or where the site larger than 1 hectare in area, a site level flood risk assessment taking into account the impact of climate change, will be required to accompany the development proposal.
- 4.30 If after applying the sequential and exception tests, development is proposed in areas of flooding, resilience measures will need to be incorporated into buildings with the development not increasing the risk of flooding elsewhere in line with national policy, technical guidance that supports national policy and advice received from the Environment Agency.
- 4.31 Flooding from surface water can occur as a result of heavy rainfall with the instances of such events increasing as a result of climate change. The impacts of surface water flooding not only include direct impacts on property but also pollution from run-off from urban area, combined sewer overflows and soil erosion. SuDS look to avoid, reduce, delay and manage surface water run-off from developments and will be required in line with Policy 13 - Grey Infrastructure.

### Heat Stress

- 4.32 Climate change is likely to bring increasingly frequent and severe heat waves. The result of this will not only be related to the availability of water but there will also be an impact on health. Health effects will include heat stroke and aggravation of heart disease and respiratory diseases such as asthma. Increased heat waves will also increase the reliance on active cooling systems such as air conditioning and the use of fans resulting in increased levels of greenhouse gas emissions.
- 4.33 To adapt to the extreme heat events, there will be a need to include vegetation such as trees, green roofs and green open space within settlements. Inclusion of vegetation reduces man made surfaces which absorb and radiate heat, replacing them with natural surfaces which supply shading from the sun and a cooling effect. A coordinated approach to the provision of multifunctional green space and the incorporation of landscape planting and vegetation within developments is required under Policy 15 – Green Infrastructure.

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<sup>48</sup> Bournemouth, Christchurch, East Dorset, North Dorset and Salisbury Level 1 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment, Halcrow Group Ltd (February 2008)

<sup>49</sup> Paragraph 100 of the National Planning Policy Framework (March 2012)

- 4.34 In addition to the inclusion of green space and vegetation within developments, shading of buildings for example through extended roof eaves, and the incorporation of passive ventilation mechanisms is important. This not only reduces the dependency on active cooling measures, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, but also provides for more comfortable places to live and work. Passive cooling and ventilation methods should be incorporated into the design and layout of developments as set out in Policy 24 Design.

### **Local Community Action**

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

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

Development proposals within the District should seek to reduce greenhouse emissions.

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

Where the proposal includes new buildings they should:

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

Detailed energy statements should be submitted to support development proposals setting out the expected level of greenhouse gas emissions that will arise from the development and measures incorporated to minimise emissions.

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

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

**POLICY 3 (CONT'D): CLIMATE CHANGE**

Many features of a development will be multi-functional and help to adapt to a range of climate change impacts. Multi-functional elements should be considered as part of development proposals ensuring that the primary function of the feature is not lost.

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

## Policy 4 - The Natural Environment

### Introduction

- 4.36 Everyone relies upon the natural environment to sustain everyday life through the services it provides. These ‘ecosystem services’ provide benefits to us in many ways and are multiple and interconnected. A change in one part of the ecosystem will have a knock on effect in another, which in turn will have an impact on the way we live our lives. An example would be climate change where changes in climate patterns resulting from human activity are changing where different species can survive.
- 4.37 The benefits that arise from ecosystem services can be grouped into four main categories:
- Provisioning services are the products we obtain from our ecosystem such as raw materials, fuel, water and food;
  - Regulating services are the processes from which we benefit such as the purification of water, local climate regulation including reducing the urban heat island effect, the pollination of plants, filtering of pollutants by vegetation and flood management;
  - Cultural services are the benefits from our interactions with the natural environment such as our cultural wellbeing, education, health and recreation; and
  - Supporting services which enable the other ecosystem services to function such as photosynthesis, soil formation and nutrient cycling. These are the cycles and interactions that exist between different species within an ecosystem.
- 4.38 Our health, wealth and wellbeing all depend on the existence of these ecosystem services and the multiple interactions between them. Many of these services are in decline and need to be carefully managed. It is therefore important that we work with these natural systems to ensure they still deliver the benefits we need for the long-term. Actions and decisions taken now will have an impact on ecosystem services in the future and this will have an impact on future generations.
- 4.39 National policy highlights the important role of the planning system in recognising the wider benefits of ecosystem services<sup>50</sup> in its role of enhancing the natural environment. As part of this, the protection of the natural environment assets including landscape assets and the provision of gains in biodiversity through an interconnected network of natural features, are key aims.
- 4.40 As we all benefit from ecosystem services, it is in all of our interests to preserve the natural environment and to protect species and habitats from harm. This can be achieved through reducing pressure on existing habitats and species but also

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<sup>50</sup> Paragraph 109, National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (March 2012)



through the creation of new and the connection of existing areas to form coherent ecological networks.

- 4.41 Reducing pressure on existing habitats and species to protect the services they provide will include reductions in development pressure particularly in sensitive locations, minimising the impacts of climate change through mitigation and adaptation, reductions in pollution and traffic and through reductions in recreational pressure on important sites. The provision of new ecological features including the connection of the existing are equally important in the preservation and enhancement of the natural environment, building in resilience to support the range of ecosystem services that we rely upon.

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

- 4.42 North Dorset benefits from a high quality natural environment characterised by dramatic landscapes, agriculture and biodiversity. There are two internationally protected wildlife sites within the District and 12 nationally protected wildlife sites. Within a short distance from the border, there are also a number of other sites which have the potential to be harmed by actions that take place within the District. The landscape of North Dorset is second to none with almost 40% of the District being covered by an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) designation.
- 4.43 The use of land for development can put pressure on wildlife, harm historic assets and increase flood risk. Development in inappropriate locations and of poor design can harm the landscape and erode the character of an area. The management of growth alongside this rich environment is critical to the future prosperity of the area particularly when considering the impacts of climate change.
- 4.44 The high quality natural environment should not however be seen as an absolute constraint on development. It should shape the way that growth is managed within the District rather than the converse being the case. The local economy has been built on the environmental assets that exist and these assets should continue to be utilised sustainably in the future. They can act to attract businesses and visitors to the area, offering opportunities to improve the local economy further.
- 4.45 The protection and enhancement of the natural environment are core objectives of the planning system achieved through the establishment of coherent ecological networks and the creation of multi-functional spaces. The challenge is to ensure that the quality of environmental assets is not undermined by future development resulting in harm to quality of life and the local economy. Development should therefore be utilised to enhance environmental assets and increase biodiversity.

### **Landscape-scale Approach**

- 4.46 Management of the natural environment will be achieved through a landscape-scale approach, developing coherent ecological networks. This offers the best opportunities to enhance the natural environment and integrate it into the way the

district functions. The approach will include the protection of designated sites and actions taken across broader landscape areas including across the AONB.

- 4.47 The designated sites within the District contribute to the provision of many ecosystem services including water purification. The biodiversity that exists on these designated sites and across other parts of the district provides benefits such as nutrient production and plant pollination all of which contribute to the production of the food we eat.
- 4.48 Landscape designations provide for cultural services such as a sense of place and as a result of the protection afforded them; contribute to sustaining regulating services such as water purification and provisioning services such as food production.
- 4.49 Actions that will support this landscape approach will include:
- protecting the highest value habitats through the hierarchy of international, national and local designations and undertaking appropriate management of these sites to prevent harm to them;
  - linking together the designated sites with “stepping stone” sites and “corridors” through the establishment of a Green Infrastructure Network as set out in Policy 15 - Green Infrastructure;
  - where opportunities exist, for example as identified in the Southwest Nature Map Project<sup>51</sup>, enhancement of the value of an area through measures undertaken to improve its biodiversity significance and restore natural habitats; and
  - encouraging the use of buffer zones around the natural environment assets to improve their biodiversity value.
- 4.50 Where the main purpose of a development proposal is to enhance the natural environment and contribute to the objectives of this policy, permission should be granted unless there are significant adverse social or economic effects.

### Landscape Character Areas

- 4.51 The District is divided into two Natural Areas where the underlying geology, landform and biodiversity are broadly similar. This divide runs from the north east to the south west of the district.
- 4.52 The northern part of the District is characterised by rolling hills and vales. The landscape consists of pastures and meadows enclosed by a network of tall thick hedgerows with mature hedgerow trees and ancient woodlands.
- 4.53 The southern part is characterised by rolling downland, river valleys and woodlands with the main influences on the landscape being from agriculture and woodland

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<sup>51</sup> The South West Nature Map produced by Biodiversity South West shows the best areas to maintain and expand terrestrial wildlife habitats at a landscape scale through restoration or recreation measures.

management. This southern area also contains the two landscape designations of the Dorset AONB and the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB.

- 4.54 The landscape provides an important setting for settlements and contributes to local distinctiveness and a sense of place. This has been formed by natural factors such as vegetation and human factors such as the historic management of this vegetation and patterns of settlement.
- 4.55 The District-wide Landscape Character Area Assessment<sup>52</sup> identified 18 landscape character areas and set out the key features of these. If these features were harmed by development, the landscape character would be degraded. It is therefore important that all development is designed to fit with this landscape character including the use of appropriate building materials and in relation to the scale of development.
- 4.56 Where there is likely to be a significant impact on the landscape, development proposals should be accompanied by an assessment of the impact on the landscape character such as a landscape and visual impact assessment. This should demonstrate how important landscape features will be integrated into development proposals and how the visual impact of a development has been mitigated.
- 4.57 Focusing growth on the four main towns will help to protect the landscape character of the district. It is however important that neighbourhood plans have regard to the landscape character to ensure that the character of an area is not degraded through incremental development.

### Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty

- 4.58 Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) are landscapes of outstanding value that are protected due to their national significance. AONB are designated under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 and The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (The CROW Act) confirmed their significance. The primary purpose of the AONB designation, as set out in the CROW Act, is to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the area with the secondary purpose to increase the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the area. There is also a requirement to seek to foster the economic and social wellbeing of local communities.
- 4.59 In relation to AONB, national policy gives the highest status of protection to the landscape and scenic beauty and gives great weight to the conservation of these<sup>53</sup>. There is a presumption against major development within AONB unless it can

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<sup>52</sup> Landscape Character Area Assessment, NDDC (March 2008) and Addendum (July 2008)

<sup>53</sup> Paragraph 115, National Planning Policy framework (March 2012)

clearly be demonstrated that it is in the public interest for the development to go ahead<sup>54</sup>, having regard to:

- the need for the development and the impact on the local economy;
- the scope and costs associated with developing elsewhere, outside of an AONB; and
- the impact on the environment, landscape and recreation opportunities within the area and the extent to which these impacts could be mitigated.

- 4.60 There are two AONBs within the District, covering almost 40% of the land area. The two AONBs both have management plans to encourage a partnership approach to long-term action to protect the AONB's character. In general there is a presumption against large scale development within AONBs unless there is an overriding public need for the development to take place in that location.
- 4.61 The Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB covers an area to the east of the A350 with the boundary running from the District boundary near Spetisbury via Blandford and on to Shaftesbury. The full designated area extends beyond the district boundary into Wiltshire. The part of the AONB within the District is characterised by rolling downland fringed to the west by a steep scarp slope. The agricultural and forestry sectors are the main employers in the area and these have a significant influence over the landscape.
- 4.62 The Dorset AONB covers an area of chalk downland to the west of Blandford and north of the A354. Outside the District the AONB stretches along the majority of the Dorset coast from Poole to Lyme Regis. The part of the AONB within the District is characterised by chalk downland with agriculture being the major land user including mixed arable and livestock grazing. The Dorset AONB also includes the Hambledon Hill National Nature Reserve to the north west of Blandford.
- 4.63 The Management Plans<sup>55</sup> produced for the two AONBs highlight a number of objectives to further the sustainable management of the important landscapes. Local issues identified that have an impact on the landscapes of the AONBs include:
- The need for the distinctive characteristics of the AONBs to be understood and valued including through greater recreational use of the AONBs;
  - The need for the historic and cultural landscape elements to be recognised and conserved;
  - The need for a thriving local economy which provides the facilities for everyday life in a sustainable way including tourism and food and fuel production;
  - The need for good design, appropriate choice of materials and for developments to be of an appropriate scale for their location;

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<sup>54</sup> Paragraph 116, National Planning Policy Framework (March 2012)

<sup>55</sup> The Cranborne Chase & West Wiltshire Downs AONB Management Plan 2009-14 and The Dorset AONB Management Plan 2009-2014.

- The need for assessments of the impacts on the AONB’s landscapes of proposals for tall structures such as communication masts, barns, renewable energy projects and associated energy infrastructure;
  - The impact of non-native tree planting and the lack of management of woodlands;
  - The fragmentation of habitats through changes in land use including agricultural practices including the fragmentation and loss of hedgerows;
  - The increase in equine related developments; and
  - The impact of transport infrastructure on the AONBs including increases in road signage.
- 4.64 The Council will seek advice on landscape impact and other relevant matters from the AONB management teams and have regard to the objectives included in the two AONB Management Plans when making decisions on development proposals. The aim will be to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the designated landscape whilst recognising the social and economic needs of those who live and carry on business in the area.
- 4.65 Where development is proposed within an AONB or that may harm the setting of an AONB and is at a scale above the needs of those who live and work in the area, the Council will require developers to clearly demonstrate that the development is in the public interest.

### International Wildlife Designations

- 4.66 There are a number of internationally designated wildlife sites that contribute to the importance of the local environment. These need to be protected so that they continue to support the biodiversity that relies upon them. They will be protected from harm and in relation to ecology and biodiversity benefits, will form the centre piece of the Green Infrastructure network as set out in Policy 15. The international designations are:
- Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) are designated under the European Union’s Habitats Directive<sup>56</sup>. SACs provide increased protection to a variety of wild animals, plants and habitats and are a vital part of global efforts to conserve the world’s biodiversity.
  - Special Protection Areas (SPA) are sites protected due to their importance for the breeding, feeding or migration of rare or vulnerable bird species. They are designated under the Wild Birds Directive<sup>57</sup>. This directive includes a list of rare and vulnerable birds and established a framework for their protection and for the protection of areas upon which they depend.

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<sup>56</sup> Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora.

<sup>57</sup> Directive 2009/147/EC of 30 November 2009 on the conservation of wild birds.

- Ramsar Sites are wetlands of international importance providing habitats for waterbirds. They are designated under The Ramsar Convention<sup>58</sup> which aims to stop the loss of wetlands.
- 4.67 The European Habitats Directive and the European Wild Birds Directive, along with the SACs and SPAs designated under them, provide for the protection of species of European importance and the habitats which support them through the establishment of a network of protected sites called Natura 2000. The aim of this network is to assure the long-term survival of the most valuable and threatened species and habitats with the emphasis being on sustainable management both economically and ecologically.
- 4.68 The provisions of the Habitats Directive and the Wild Birds Directive have been transposed into UK legislation through a range of acts and regulations with the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2010) being the most recent.
- 4.69 National policy gives equal protection to SAC, SPA and Ramsar sites. This protection prevents development which is likely to have a significant effect on a site by requiring an appropriate assessment of the implications of the proposal for the site. This effect can be either related to a stand-alone project or the cumulative effect of multiple projects. The presumption in favour of sustainable development does not apply where an appropriate assessment is required<sup>59</sup>.
- 4.70 It is essential that development that takes place within the North Dorset area does not result in a significant impact on internationally designated sites unless there are imperative reasons of overriding public interest, having considered alternatives. Where a residual impact including cumulative impact, is expected as a result of development taking place, it is important that that impact is minimised and appropriate mitigation measures put in place to reduce the impact further. Development within the district will be required to demonstrate how it avoids impact on the internationally designated sites and where any residual impact exists, the measures that have been put in place to mitigate this impact.

### Fontmell and Melbury Downs SAC

- 4.71 The Fontmell and Melbury Downs SAC site consists of approximately 260 hectares of species rich chalk grasslands on the scarp slope of the Dorset Downs to the south of Shaftesbury. The area supports large populations of early gentian (*Gentianella anglica*) and is one of the best areas in the United Kingdom for this species. A slightly larger area, encompassing the whole of the SAC is also designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).

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<sup>58</sup> The Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat 1971 (known as The Ramsar Convention)

<sup>59</sup> Paragraph 119, National Planning Policy Framework (March 2012)

- 4.72 Threats to this designated site are from grazing pressure, the impact from adjacent intensive agricultural practices and scrub encroachment onto the site. There is also a public right of way which crosses the site which carries with it the potential for trampling and soil erosion.
- 4.73 The potential impacts on the designated site are likely to result from residential growth in Shaftesbury and the associated increase in recreational pressure. The site is however currently well managed with several measures in place to control recreational pressure and hence the threats to the site are effectively mitigated through this management regime.
- 4.74 Further measures to mitigate the impact on the SAC resulting from growth across the district but primarily at Shaftesbury, should include the provision of suitable and attractive recreational green space within the town.

### Rooksmoor SAC

- 4.75 Rooksmoor SAC is split into two clusters of smaller sites. The first at Lydlinch Common covers approximately 30 hectares at the junction of the A3030/A357 whilst the second area covers approximately 32 hectares to the south at Rooksmoor Copse. The areas designated as a SAC form part of the larger Blackmore Vale Commons and Moors SSSI totalling approximately 296 hectares. The site supports an exceptionally large population of marsh fritillary butterfly (*Euphydryas aurinia*) and supports *Molinia* meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey, silt-laden soils.
- 4.76 The Lydlinch Common area is difficult to manage in the traditional way through light grazing by cattle as it is bisected by the A3030/A357 junction, creating a need for infrastructure. The difficulty in establishing effective management at both parts of the SAC site has resulted in scrub invasion.
- 4.77 Due to the presence of the A3030/A357 through the Lydlinch Common part of the designation, growth in traffic along this road corridor as a result of residential growth could have an impact on the designated site through increases in air pollution. Although the level of residential growth in the area is unlikely to have a significant effect, there will be an increase in air pollution and mitigation should be put in place to minimise this potential impact.
- 4.78 Diversion of traffic away from the A3030/A357 road corridor will help to reduce the impact on the designated site. One way of achieving this will be by making alternative routes available and attractive. The obvious route in this area is the extension of the North Dorset Trailway from Sturminster Newton to Stalbridge, thereby offering a direct, sustainable pedestrian or cycle route between the two towns. Contributions will therefore be sought to help fund this route to help mitigate the potential impact on the designated site.



## Dorset Heaths SAC, Dorset Heaths (Purbeck and Wareham) and Studland Dunes SAC, Dorset Heathlands SPA, Dorset Heathlands Ramsar site<sup>60</sup>

- 4.79 Dorset Heaths SAC comprises a network of sites around Poole Harbour covering approximately 5,730 hectares and stretching from Warmwell Heath in the west, to Hengistbury Head in the east and to Alderholt Common in the north. The Dorset Heaths (Purbeck and Wareham) and Studland Dunes SAC covers the remaining parts of heathland within the District of Purbeck. The Dorset Heathlands SPA and the Dorset Heathlands Ramsar site cover similar areas to the two SAC designations.
- 4.80 The heathland sites together support a wide range of important habitats and species. Habitats present consist of the transition from wet heaths to dry heaths and include wet lowland heathland and mires, woodland, grassland, pools and reedswamps. The Purbeck Dunes also comprise the only large dune site in the south of Britain. There are numerous protected species supported by these habitats including a stronghold of the southern damselfly (*Coenagrion mercuriale*), and great crested newts (*Triturus cristatus*).
- 4.81 The sites that make up the Dorset heathlands have been fragmented by losses to urban expansion, to agriculture and to forestry. Although these pressures have now been halted, the remaining sites are subject to further pressures from recreation, wildfires and cat predation of wildlife. Decline in traditional agriculture on heathland sites has also resulted in scrub encroachment and invasion by other species.
- 4.82 Research undertaken on the Dorset heathlands has identified that residential development within 400 metres of a heathland site is likely to result in significant effects that cannot be successfully mitigated. Outside this region, the zone of influence of residential development has been shown to stretch to 5 kilometres from the heathland site. The southern parts of the District<sup>61</sup> are within 5 kilometres of parts of the Dorset heathlands and hence there is the potential for development in this area to increase recreational pressure on the heathland sites.
- 4.83 As there is a link between development in the southern part of the District and pressure on the Dorset heathlands, mitigation measures will need to be put in place to offset the impact. Mitigation will either take the form of the provision of alternative recreation space in close proximity to the development taking place or through a contribution collected from each new dwelling to directly fund mitigation works on heathland sites such as help funding access management and educational activities to protect and improve the Dorset heathlands. Large scale developments

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<sup>60</sup> Collectively referred to as the Dorset heathlands.

<sup>61</sup> Including parts of the parishes of Anderson, Milborne St Andrew, Winterborne Kingston, Winterborne Whitechurch and Winterborne Zelston.

within 5 kilometres of a Dorset heathland site will be expected to provide sufficient suitable high quality mitigation as part of the development site.

- 4.84 As the Dorset heathland sites are outside of the district, contributions taken from developments will be used to support management works undertaken by the Urban Heaths Partnership<sup>62</sup> or other similar organisation, on the sites within 5 kilometres of the District's boundary. It may also be put towards the provision of alternative recreation space to reduce pressure on heathland sites from recreation. The level of contributions and an indication of appropriate mitigation measures are as set out in the Dorset Heathlands Joint Development Plan Document<sup>63</sup>.

### Poole Harbour SPA and Poole Harbour Ramsar Site

- 4.85 Poole Harbour is a natural harbour, approximately 4,000 hectares in area lying around 11 kilometres to the southeast of the District. The majority of the intertidal areas around the harbour are designated as a SPA, totalling almost 2,275 hectares. These intertidal areas include extensive mud flats, saltmarshes and reedbeds all important for waterfowl. The Poole Harbour SPA and Ramsar designations cover very similar areas and abut the Dorset Heathlands SPA/Ramsar and Dorset Heaths SAC in many areas.
- 4.86 The growth of Poole and the development of a commercial port and marinas along the northern shore of the harbour have had an impact on the designation. The pressure from urban expansion and the recreational pressure that goes with urbanisation are direct threats to it.
- 4.87 Several sewerage treatment plants drain into the harbour along with the River Piddle and the River Frome and contribute to nitrogen levels in the harbour through sewerage treatment plant outflow. Additionally, nitrogen runoff from intensive agricultural practices increases the impact on the harbour, directly and via groundwater. Both of these sources cause growth in green seaweeds creating macroalgae mats. To tackle this issue, a joint strategy has been produced by the Environment Agency and Natural England for managing the nitrogen impact on Poole Harbour arising as a result of intensive agricultural practices and as a result of development.

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<sup>62</sup> The Urban Heaths Partnership is a partnership of agencies involved in the management and conservation of the Dorset heathlands. The partnership consists of the Borough of Poole, Bournemouth Borough Council, Christchurch Borough Council, Dorset County Council, East Dorset District Council, Purbeck District Council, Dorset Fire and Rescue Service, Dorset Police, Dorset Wildlife Trust, Natural England, The Amphibian and Reptile Conservation Trust, The Forestry Commission, The National Trust and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds. It emerged out of the Dorset Heathlands Planning Framework to mitigate the impacts of residential development on the Dorset heathlands.

<sup>63</sup> The Dorset Heathlands Joint Development Plan Document is being produced by the South East Dorset Local Planning Authorities to supersede the Dorset Heathlands Planning Framework.

- 4.88 One of the tributaries of the River Piddle drains more than 3,500 hectares of the district around Milborne St Andrew and Milton Abbas into Poole Harbour. As a result of this there is the potential for development in this area to have a significant impact on the Poole Harbour designation through nitrogen deposition.
- 4.89 To avoid contributing to these adverse effects, where development takes place, there will be a need for developments within the Poole Harbour catchment to be nitrogen neutral in order to be compliant with the legal requirements. There are a number of ways that this could be achieved as set out in the Strategy for Managing Nitrogen for Poole Harbour. An example could be for large scale developments to upgrade sewerage treatment works to reduce the nitrogen impact on the harbour. Alternatively it may be appropriate for smaller scale developments to enable the transfer an area of land from intensive agricultural uses to less intensive grassland or woodland thereby offsetting an equivalent amount to the nitrogen arising from development, resulting in the development becoming nitrogen neutral. The approach will need to be in accordance with the Strategy for Managing Nitrogen for Poole Harbour or alternative mitigation measures which may arise out of joint working with other local authorities and local partners.

### Other Internationally Designated Sites

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

### National Wildlife Designations

- 4.91 The two national designations that fall within the district are Sites of Special Scientific Interest and National Nature Reserves. These sites are designated as nationally important for wildlife or as geological sites and offer opportunities for the study of the natural environment. National Nature Reserves are the best examples of the Sites of Special Scientific Interest network.

## Sites of Special Scientific Interest

- 4.92 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) are examples of the very best wildlife or geological sites and include some of the most spectacular areas for wildlife. Many SSSI's are also subject to an international designation due to their importance.
- 4.93 The Countryside and Rights of Way Act (2000) sets out the provisions in relation to the notification, protection and management of SSSI. The Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) establishes a general duty for local authorities to take reasonable steps to further the conservation and enhancement of the features for which the sites are designated.
- 4.94 National policy sets out the approach to managing development to conserve and enhance biodiversity<sup>64</sup> with permission being refused if significant harm would result from a development which could not be avoided, adequately mitigated or compensated for. Specifically developments which would have an adverse effect on a SSSI should not be permitted unless the benefits of development outweigh the impact on the site and the broader network of SSSIs.
- 4.95 There are twelve SSSI's within the District:
- Cranborne Chase SSSI comprises one of the largest tracts of semi-natural woodland in the area;
  - Sutton Combe SSSI supports unimproved chalk downland with a rich flora and fauna;
  - Bryanston SSSI consists of the large roof space in the derelict 18th Century kitchens at Bryanston is a breeding site for the greater horseshoe bat (*Rhinolophus ferrum-equinum*);
  - Blackmore Vale Commons and Moors SSSI supports a diverse mosaic of semi-natural habitats. Part of the site is also designated as a SAC;
  - Piddles Wood SSSI is a substantial oak woodland to the south of the River Stour supporting diverse communities of plants and animals typical of oak woodland.
  - Breach Fields SSSI comprises three west-facing fields which have been relatively little modified by agricultural improvement;
  - Hod & Hambleton Hills SSSI consists of two prominent hills which rise steeply from the Stour Valley and support chalk grassland and scrub. The Hambleton Hill part of the site is also designated as a National Nature Reserve;
  - Blandford Camp SSSI lies on the dip slope of the chalk outcrop. It supports unimproved chalk grassland on level ground;
  - Fontmell & Melbury Downs SSSI comprises part of the edge of the chalk escarpment and includes unimproved chalk grassland and scrub. Part of the site is also designated as a SAC;

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<sup>64</sup> Paragraph 118, National Planning Policy Framework (March 2012)

- Handcocks Bottom SSSI consists of ancient, semi-natural woodland around the former medieval deer park of Harbins Park. The area supports important lichens and populations of butterflies;
- Shillingstone Quarry SSSI provides a virtually complete section through the chalk; and
- Higher Houghton SSSI covers three dry valleys in chalk with adjacent plateau and supports grassland and woodland.

### National Nature Reserves

- 4.96 National Nature Reserves (NNR) are some of the most important natural and semi-natural ecosystems in the country. They offer opportunities for the research and appreciation of habitats and the species within them.
- 4.97 National Nature reserves are declared by Natural England as the very best of the SSSI network under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 and the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. The designation as SSSI is what gives these sites their statutory protection.
- 4.98 As with SSSI, national policy seeks to conserve and enhance biodiversity by protecting National Nature Reserve sites. The Hambledon Hill part of the Hod and Hambledon Hill SSSI is designated as a National Nature Reserve.

### Managing Nationally Designated Wildlife Sites

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

### Local Designations

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

### Local Nature Reserves

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

### Local Geological Sites

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

### Sites of Nature Conservation Interest

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

### Local Green Space

- 4.105 Local Green Space, where designated through a neighbourhood plan, will be protected from inappropriate development in line with national policy on Green Belt<sup>65</sup> land. New buildings on Local Green Space are considered inappropriate development except in very special circumstances where the harm is outweighed by the benefits.

### Managing Locally Designated Sites

- 4.106 The network of locally designated sites will be enhanced and expanded to aid in the delivery of ecosystem services through the delivery of green infrastructure. These sites will form an important supporting role to the nationally and internationally designated sites through enhanced connectivity. Development proposals should consider facilitating linkages between the existing designated sites to enhance the Green Infrastructure network as set out in Policy 15.

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<sup>65</sup> Section 9, National Planning Policy Framework (March 2012)

- 4.107 The impact on locally designated wildlife sites will be taken into account when arriving at a decision on development proposals. Applicants should clearly assess the likely impact on sites and how the important features of these sites can be enhanced as a result of the development.

### Species

- 4.108 Many ecosystem services are dependent on the species which exist on designated habitats. Protecting habitats alone is not sufficient to reduce pressure on many of the species that exist within the local area. If the species living on designated habitats are harmed for example through air pollution, the benefits of their existence will be lost.
- 4.109 The Habitats Directive lists a number of “European protected species” which are given a high degree of protection by virtue of the Habitats Regulations (1994). These species are also protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981). The Wildlife and Countryside Act also gives great protection to all wild birds and a number of wild animals and plants included on a list. Similarly Badgers are given protection by virtue of the Protection of Badgers Act 1992.
- 4.110 National policy highlights the need to minimise the impacts of development on biodiversity and provide net gains where possible<sup>66</sup>. Many protected species found within or in close proximity to the district are already in decline and the impacts of climate change are likely to put even more pressure upon them. For this reason it is essential that opportunities for linking and buffering habitats are realised to increase resilience and enable species to react to the changing climate. The establishment of these ecological networks is important to the long-term survival of wildlife.
- 4.111 Within Dorset there are a number of rare and scarce species which should be protected where they are found. Development proposals should assess the likely impact including cumulative impact, on nationally protected or locally rare or scarce wildlife both on and in close proximity to the site. Such an assessment should be informed through consultation with the local environmental records centre. Where significant harm is identified which is unavoidable, permission will be refused unless it can be demonstrated that the impact is adequately mitigated or effective compensation can be put in place.
- 4.112 Mitigation measures could include enhancement of the existing biodiversity assets on site through appropriate planting or the provision of a buffer to the biodiversity asset. If mitigation cannot be put in place, the last resort would be for any biodiversity loss to be compensated for through the provision of equivalent, alternative and suitable habitat in close proximity to the area of habitat loss.

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<sup>66</sup> Paragraph 109, National Planning Policy Framework (March 2012)



Compensation for biodiversity loss does not however apply to internationally designated sites or internationally protected species.

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

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

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

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

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

### **Landscape Character**

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

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

Within the areas designated as AONB, development will be managed in a way that preserves the natural beauty of the area by having regard to the objectives of the AONB management plans.

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

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

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

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

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

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

**POLICY 4 (CONT'D): THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT****Locally Designated Natural Environment Sites**

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

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

**Species**

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

## Policy 5 - The Historic Environment

### Introduction

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

### Heritage Assets

- 4.116 The historic environment includes many individual ‘heritage assets’, which contribute to local identity and distinctiveness. A heritage asset is: a building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest. Heritage assets include designated heritage assets and assets identified by the local planning authority (including local listings)<sup>67</sup>.
- 4.117 Heritage assets in North Dorset include:
- archaeological remains including around 180 scheduled monuments;
  - buildings of architectural or historic interest including nearly 2,500 listed buildings;
  - areas of architectural or historic interest including 47 conservation areas; and
  - historic parks and gardens including 8 registered historic parks and gardens.
- 4.118 National policy indicates that planning should conserve heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of this and future generations<sup>68</sup>. Also any positive strategy to secure the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment should recognise that heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource which should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance<sup>69</sup>.

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<sup>67</sup> As defined in Annex 2: Glossary of the National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (March 2012)

<sup>68</sup> Paragraph 17, National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (March 2012)

<sup>69</sup> Paragraph 126, National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (March 2012)

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

### Scheduled Monuments

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

### Listed Buildings

- 4.121 The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 makes provision for the control of development in and relating to buildings of special architectural or historic interest. The Act requires decision makers to have ‘special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses’<sup>70</sup>. Proposed works to listed buildings can require both planning approval and a separate specific listed building consent.
- 4.122 The designation, protection and consent regime for listed buildings enables decisions to be taken about a building’s future having regard to its historic and architectural significance, balancing this significance against other issues such as its function, condition and the viability of its current use.

### Conservation Areas

- 4.123 Conservation areas can also be designated under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as areas of special architectural or historic interest. For the purposes of determining an application within a conservation area, statute requires that ‘special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area’.<sup>71</sup>
- 4.124 The majority of the larger settlements within the District have conservation areas designated to help preserve their character. Within conservation areas, tighter planning controls exist over: the demolition of buildings; felling of or works to

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<sup>70</sup> Section 66 Town and Country Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

<sup>71</sup> Section 72 Town and Country Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

trees; and in relation to minor developments; with such works often requiring planning consent.

### Historic Parks and Gardens

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

### Non-designated Heritage Assets

- 4.127 There are a large number of non-designated heritage assets in North Dorset, which contribute to the unique character of the District, including:
- non-scheduled archaeological remains, including those recorded in Dorset's Historic Monuments Record;
  - non-listed buildings, such as large Victorian farmhouses, late 18<sup>th</sup> Century country houses, cemetery chapels and other locally significant agricultural and ecclesiastical buildings;
  - non-registered parks and gardens identified by the Dorset Gardens Trust<sup>72</sup>; and
  - other historic and cultural features of the landscape, such as sunken lanes, ancient hedgerows and water meadows.
- 4.128 These assets receive no statutory protection, but national policy establishes that the effect of a planning application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining the application<sup>73</sup>.

### The Approach to Decision Making on Proposals Affecting Heritage Assets

- 4.129 National policy<sup>74</sup> indicates that when determining planning applications, local Councils should take account of:
- the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;

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<sup>72</sup> These include Bryanston, Chettle, Fontmell Parva, Hinton St Mary Manor House, Spring Head, Stock House, Shaftesbury Town Walks and Wyke Hall.

<sup>73</sup> Paragraph 135, National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (March 2012)

<sup>74</sup> Paragraph 131, National Planning Policy Framework (March 2012)



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

## Assessing Significance

### Heritage Interest

- 4.133 In relation to heritage assets, significance is defined<sup>75</sup> as ‘the value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. That interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset’s physical presence, but also from its setting.’
- 4.134 In assessing significance the Council will seek to establish the value of a heritage asset on the basis of its heritage interest<sup>76</sup> in terms of:
- its archaeological interest: there will be archaeological interest in a heritage asset if it holds, or potentially may hold, evidence of past human activity worthy of expert investigation at some point. Heritage assets with archaeological interest are the primary source of evidence about the substance and evolution of places, and of the people and cultures that made them;
  - its architectural and artistic interest: These are interests in the design and general aesthetics of a place. They can arise from conscious design or fortuitously from the way the heritage asset has evolved. More specifically, architectural interest is an interest in the art or science of the design,

<sup>75</sup> As defined in Annex 2: Glossary, National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (March 2012)

<sup>76</sup> The definition of archaeological interest is taken from Annex 2: Glossary of the National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (March 2012). The definitions of architectural, artistic and historic interest are taken from Annex 2: Terminology of PPS 5: Planning for the Historic Environment, DCLG (March 2010), which has been cancelled.

construction, craftsmanship and decoration of buildings and structures of all types. Artistic interest is an interest in other human creative skill, like sculpture; and

- its historic interest: An interest in past lives and events (including pre-historic). Heritage assets can illustrate or be associated with them. Heritage assets with historic interest not only provide a material record of our nation's history, but can also provide an emotional meaning for communities derived from their collective experience of a place and can symbolise wider values such as faith and cultural identity.

4.135 In the event that these terms are defined or redefined in national policy or guidance, the Council will seek to establish the value of a heritage asset on the basis of the new or redefined terms.

### Developers' Role in Assessing Significance

4.136 The Council will expect developers to identify any heritage assets that may be affected by their development proposals and describe the significance of the identified assets including any contribution made by their setting<sup>77</sup>. The significance should be described in terms of the heritage asset's archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic interests. The information provided by developers to support a proposal should be proportionate to the significance of the heritage asset (or assets) that may be affected and the potential impact.

4.137 Where a heritage asset is made up of several constituent parts (such as the individual buildings within a conservation area) all of the parts will not have the same heritage interest nor will they all necessarily contribute to the significance of the asset. The importance of these features as part of the whole heritage asset and the contribution they make to its interest and value needs to be taken into account in describing its significance.

4.138 Larger scale developments, such as wind and solar farms, could impact on a number of heritage assets over a wide area and in such cases it will be important that heritage assets both close to the development site and more distant are identified and their significance described.

4.139 Much information about the interest of heritage assets is contained in Dorset's Historic Environment Record and other sources, such as the Historic Landscape Characterisation Study for the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB<sup>78</sup>. Developers should use all sources of available information, including those above, to establish the interest and value of a heritage asset and describe its significance.

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<sup>77</sup> Requirements of developers are set out in more detail paragraph 128 of the National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (March 2012)

<sup>78</sup> Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB Historic Landscape Characterisation Project – E Rouse on behalf of the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB and English Heritage (July 2008)

## The Council's Role in Assessing Significance

- 4.140 Local councils should identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal (including development affecting the setting of a heritage asset) taking account of the available evidence and any necessary expertise<sup>79</sup>.
- 4.141 The starting point for this assessment will be the information provided by developers describing the significance of the heritage assets that may be affected by a proposal. The Council will seek to validate this information to ensure that: all heritage assets that may be affected by a proposal have been identified; their heritage value (in terms of the relevant heritage interests) has been established; and their significance has been adequately and properly described.
- 4.142 The Council will also refer to all sources of available information and use its in-house (and where necessary external) expertise to establish the interest and value of a heritage asset and describe its significance. The Council may require further work to be undertaken by developers, if it is considered that the significance of a heritage asset has not been adequately and properly described in the information they have provided.

## Considering Impacts

- 4.143 The Council will take its assessment into account when considering the impact of a proposal on a heritage asset, with a view to finding a solution that will avoid or minimise conflict between the heritage asset's conservation and any aspect of the proposal<sup>80</sup>. The Council will work proactively with developers to determine whether such conflict is necessary or whether proposals could be taken forward in a different way to sustain, and where possible, enhance the asset.
- 4.144 The Council will encourage developers to take the significance of a heritage asset into account in any development proposal from the outset and, where possible, developers should seek to enhance and better reveal elements that contribute to its significance.
- 4.145 For the purposes of decision-making, the Council will seek to establish the nature of any impact and whether it is:
- positive;
  - neutral; or
  - negative.

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<sup>79</sup> Paragraph 129, National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (March 2012)

<sup>80</sup> Paragraph 129, National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (March 2012)

## Decision Making

### Harm to Significance

- 4.146 National policy recognises that different proposals affecting heritage assets may result in different ‘scales’ of harm to their significance. For the purposes of decision-making, the Council will seek to establish the ‘scale of harm’ associated with any proposal affecting a heritage asset, in terms of:
- the total loss of the heritage asset;
  - substantial harm to the heritage asset; or
  - less than substantial harm to the heritage asset.
- 4.147 Harm to a heritage asset may be as a result of total destruction or direct physical impact, but may also be as a result of a change to its setting.
- 4.148 The Council will expect developers to be able to demonstrate that all reasonable steps have been taken to mitigate the harm a proposal will cause to the significance of a heritage asset. Such mitigation will be taken into account by the Council when seeking to establish the scale of harm associated with the proposal.

### Public Benefits

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

to record such losses should not be a factor in deciding whether such loss should be permitted<sup>81</sup>. Arrangements put in place by developers to record such losses will not be regarded as a benefit in decision making.

### Weighing Public Benefits against Harm

- 4.153 The Council’s approach to decision-making is to weigh the public benefits of a proposal against the harm caused to the significance of a heritage asset.
- 4.154 The greater the significance of a heritage asset and the greater any harm to such significance the greater the amount of public benefit that will need to be demonstrated in order for a proposal to be acceptable. Conversely, the greater the positive contribution a proposal makes to sustaining and enhancing the significance of an asset or securing a consistent viable use, the greater the likelihood of the Council supporting the scheme.
- 4.155 Equally, the extent of impact of a proposal upon the maintenance, securing or safeguarding of a long term viable use for a heritage asset that is consistent with its conservation will also be considered. Proposals that would remove or have a negative impact upon such long term viable use will not be supported in the absence of demonstrable public benefit that would outweigh such harm.
- 4.156 In line with national policy, Policy 5 - The Historic Environment sets out:
- how the Council will assess proposals that would harm a heritage asset;
  - the circumstances where the loss of or substantial harm to a designated heritage asset may be acceptable;
  - the circumstances where less than substantial harm to a designated heritage asset may be acceptable; and
  - the circumstances where harm to a non-designated heritage asset may be acceptable.
- 4.157 In the event that a proposal is permitted that would result in the loss of the whole or part of a heritage asset, the Council will take all reasonable steps to ensure that the new development proceeds, and the associated public benefits are delivered, after the loss has occurred.

### Hidden and Unidentified Heritage Assets

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

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<sup>81</sup> Paragraph 141, National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (March 2012)

- 4.159 This assessment should assess the likelihood of the site containing buried or concealed remains that are of heritage interest, for example due to the location of heritage assets in the near vicinity or where there is evidence of several phases in the evolution of a building. Where there is reasonable evidence to suggest that remains, hidden features or fabric may exist on site, further survey work or limited opening up may be required prior to full works commencing on site and consent or permission may be granted subject to a ‘watching brief’ and provision for recording or mitigation during development of the site.
- 4.160 Furthermore, where remains or hidden features or fabric are found or there is strong evidence to suggest that remains, hidden features or fabric exist, further evaluation work may be required to establish their heritage value and describe their heritage significance. This work should be undertaken prior to determination to enable an informed judgement to be made on the acceptability or otherwise of development and to decide whether the remains or hidden features or fabric should be preserved in situ, or removed.
- 4.161 Remains or hidden features or fabric, which contribute to the significance of a designated heritage asset should be recorded and preserved in situ. When remains or hidden features or fabric are revealed to have sufficient heritage value to demonstrate that the non-designated heritage asset is of equivalent significance to a designated heritage asset, they should also be recorded and preserved in situ.
- 4.162 The Council may permit the recording and excavation of remains or hidden features or fabric of less heritage interest or value, if it can be demonstrated that recording and preservation in-situ is not a reasonable or feasible option.

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

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

### Understanding the Significance of Heritage Assets

- 4.164 The Council has a programme for the preparation of conservation area appraisals. As part of the preparation of an appraisal, the Council will: re-examine conservation area boundaries to ensure that they are fit for purpose; and establish management policies to guide future development.
- 4.165 The Council has worked with local communities to help them to produce Town and Village Design Statements, which characterise and set out development guidelines for towns and villages in the District.
- 4.166 To help people to understand the potential impact of development on heritage assets and to assist them in developing proposals that sustain and enhance their significance, the Council has produced guidance on: alterations to historic buildings<sup>82</sup>; and shop front design<sup>83</sup>.

### Designating and Identifying Additional Heritage Assets

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

### Taking Account of the Historic Environment when Drawing up Plans

- 4.170 The Council has had regard to the historic environment and the potential impact of land-use policies on heritage assets when drawing up the Local Plan Part 1. This issue is discussed in more detail in the background paper relating to the selection of sites for development in the four main towns.
- 4.171 The key features of the historic environment in the four main towns are described in the supporting text to Policies 16 to 19, which seek to ensure that each town’s

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<sup>82</sup> Guidance on Alterations to Historic Buildings in North Dorset (Draft), NDDC (October 2007)

<sup>83</sup> North Dorset Guide to Shop Front Design (Draft), NDDC (June 2007)



natural and historic environment is protected and enhanced. Policy 21 – Gillingham Strategic Site Allocation also identifies a need to retain and enhance the heritage assets that may be affected by the allocation, namely Kings Court Palace Scheduled Monument and Gillingham park boundary bank.

### Heritage-led Regeneration

- 4.172 The Council will work with communities to secure heritage-led regeneration, where suitable opportunities arise. A community-led design and development brief for the Station Road area in Sturminster Newton seeks to secure heritage assets associated with the town's dairy farming and railway past<sup>84</sup>. Other proposals for heritage-led regeneration may be worked up in neighbourhood plans.

### Enabling Development

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

### Emergency Measures

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

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<sup>84</sup> Station Road Area Design and Development Brief produced for SturQuest by the Matrix Partnership (April 2008). Part of the site has since been regenerated and the original Creamery building (a non-designated heritage asset) has been retained and re-used as part of the scheme.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**POLICY 5 (CONT'D): THE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT****Justifying Harm to a Non-designated Heritage Asset**

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

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

**Hidden and Unidentified Heritage Assets**

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

**Enabling Development**

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

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

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

## 5. Meeting Housing Needs

### Introduction

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

## Policy 6 - Housing Distribution

### National Policy

- 5.4 National policy<sup>85</sup> states that local planning authorities should have a clear understanding of the housing needs in their area and should prepare a Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) to assess their full housing needs, working with neighbouring authorities where housing market areas cross administrative boundaries.
- 5.5 They should use their evidence base (including the SHMA) to ensure that their Local Plan meets the full, objectively assessed needs for market and affordable housing in the relevant housing market area, as far as is consistent with the policies in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). They should also identify key sites which are critical to the delivery of the housing strategy over the plan period<sup>86</sup>.
- 5.6 In terms of location, national policy advises that councils should actively manage growth to make the fullest possible use of public transport, walking and cycling, and focus significant development in locations, which are or can be made sustainable. It also states that in order to promote sustainable development in rural areas, housing should be located where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities.

### The District Council's Approach

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

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<sup>85</sup> Paragraph 159, National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (March 2012)

<sup>86</sup> Paragraph 47, National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (March 2012)

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

### **District-wide Housing Provision**

- 5.12 For the purposes of preparing a SHMA, North Dorset falls entirely within the Bournemouth and Poole Housing Market Area (HMA). All the local planning authorities in the HMA commissioned consultants to produce a SHMA in 2008<sup>87</sup>.
- 5.13 In the light of the reforms of the planning system and the economic downturn, the original SHMA was updated in 2012<sup>88</sup>. In relation to North Dorset, the updated SHMA states that “trend-based data suggests household growth of around 273 per annum for the period from 2011 to 2031 and so a housing delivery figure (on the basis of this figure) might be around 280 per annum (to take account of a small vacancy rate”<sup>89</sup>.
- 5.14 280 dwellings per annum equate to 4,200 homes over the fifteen years from 2011 to 2026 and this is the District-wide housing provision figure used in the Local Plan Part 1.

### **District-wide Affordable Housing Provision**

- 5.15 The 2012 SHMA Update used the CLG housing needs model, which estimated that 387 additional units of affordable housing would need to be provided annually over a five year period to meet the identified need.
- 5.16 The 2012 SHMA Update also considered that the provision of 40% of additional housing as affordable would be a sensible level in the context of the role played by the private rented sector<sup>90</sup>. An assessment of viability<sup>91</sup> provided a more fine-grained analysis suggesting that the Council should seek at least 40% affordable

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<sup>87</sup> The Bournemouth and Poole Strategic Housing Market Assessment, including the Housing Need and Demand Survey for North Dorset, Fordham Associates (June 2008)

<sup>88</sup> Bournemouth / Poole Housing Market 2011 Strategic Housing Market Assessment Update, JG Consulting in association with Chris Broughton Associates (January 2012)

<sup>89</sup> This statement appears in Paragraph 5.10 of the summary report for North Dorset, which forms part of the 2012 Updated SHMA.

<sup>90</sup> This statement appears in Paragraph 5.11 of the summary report for North Dorset, which forms part of the 2012 Updated SHMA.

<sup>91</sup> North Dorset District Council: Affordable Housing Provision and Developer Contributions in Dorset – Three Dragons (April 2009)

housing on sites across most of the District; 30% on sites within Gillingham (where residual land values are lower) and, subject to viability testing, 35% on the southern extension to the town.

- 5.17 The provision of affordable housing in line with these percentages would deliver 1,480 additional affordable homes in the four main towns by 2026. The Council will seek to deliver this level of provision, whilst also having regard to any site-based assessments of viability which could, where justified, result in a level of provision below that being sought.

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

- 5.18 A number of factors, many of which reflect aspects of the District's vision and objectives, have influenced the determination of how future housing growth should be accommodated in North Dorset including:

- Policy 2 - Core Spatial Strategy, which establishes the Council's overall approach to the distribution of development in the District;
- the need to deliver thriving self-contained market towns and stronger, more sustainable communities in the rural area;
- the need to protect and enhance the environment and in particular a recognition of the environmental constraints affecting different settlements;
- the availability of developable land at different settlements, as evidenced largely by the Council's Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA)<sup>92</sup>; and
- the need to avoid increasing dispersed populations, as has occurred in the past through high levels of 'oversupply' in rural areas<sup>93</sup>.

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

- 5.19 Figure 5.1 below sets out how the new homes proposed in the Local Plan Part 1 will be distributed in North Dorset. More detail on the background to the spatial distribution of housing development in North Dorset is given in the Sustainable Development Strategy Background Paper.
- 5.20 Gillingham will accommodate about 35% of housing growth in North Dorset over the 15 years between 2011 and 2026 reflecting its economic potential, the availability of suitable sites and the relative lack of environmental constraints<sup>94</sup>. The vast majority of new housing at Gillingham will be built on the southern extension to the town. The figure of 1,490 new homes at Gillingham by 2026 does not reflect the full capacity of the southern extension to the town and assumes that the development of this allocated site will continue beyond the end of the plan period.

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<sup>92</sup> North Dorset Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment, North Dorset District Council (August 2011)

<sup>93</sup> As discussed in the Housing Background Paper, North Dorset District Council (August 2013)

<sup>94</sup> The potential for growth at Gillingham, both in the period up to 2026 and beyond, has been examined in detail in Assessing the Growth Potential of Gillingham, Dorset, Atkins (December 2009)



Policy 21 - Gillingham Strategic Site Allocation, provides detail on how this development will be taken forward to 2026 and beyond, and shows how new housing will be delivered in step with infrastructure and facilities.

Figure 5.1 – Proposed Spatial Distribution of Housing Development

Location	Homes Proposed 2011 to 2026	% of Total
Blandford	About 960	23%
Gillingham	About 1,490	35%
Shaftesbury	About 1,140	27%
Sturminster Newton	About 380	9%
Countryside (including Stalbridge and the Villages)	At least 230	Minimum of 6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>About 4,200</b>	<b>100%</b>

- 5.21 Blandford will accommodate about 23% of housing growth. The figure of 960 new homes by 2026 includes homes on both brownfield sites, such as the Brewery, and greenfield urban extensions. The level of proposed housing growth reflects the town's importance as the main service centre in the south of the District, but also recognises environmental constraints, particularly in the form of protected landscapes, including AONBs, and areas at risk of flooding. At Blandford, the need to encourage self-containment in order to limit levels of commuting to the South East Dorset Conurbation is also important.
- 5.22 Shaftesbury will accommodate about 27% of housing growth. The figure of 1,140 new homes by 2026 includes all those that will be built on the eastern extension of the town. This is currently being developed in a phased manner and is likely to be completed well before 2026. Environmental constraints, such as the town's hill-top location and nearby AONB, together with the proximity of the administrative boundary of Wiltshire, limit the potential for further growth on land within North Dorset.
- 5.23 Sturminster Newton will receive about 9% of housing growth recognising the important role it plays as a service centre in the north west of the District, but also its smaller size. The figure of 380 new homes by 2026 includes homes both on brownfield and greenfield sites near the town centre and small greenfield urban extensions.
- 5.24 Concentrating the vast majority of strategic housing growth at the four main towns means that a different approach can be taken in the countryside (including Stalbridge and the District's villages), where the focus is on meeting local housing

needs. No figure for the approximate scale of housing and affordable housing is given for the countryside (including Stalbridge and the villages).

- 5.25 Of the identified strategic need for 4,200 homes in North Dorset by 2026, 3,970 can be provided at the District's four main towns. This means that in order for the full strategic housing need for North Dorset to be met, a minimum of 230 new homes (or 6% of all housing development) need to be built in the countryside (including Stalbridge and the villages). In the light of the number of new homes that have already been built since 2011 and the number of new homes with planning permission, the level of additional provision required to deliver 4,200 homes District-wide by 2026 is very modest and should be easily achieved.
- 5.26 The figure of 230 new homes should not be seen as a target for, or a cap on, the overall level of housing development that should take place in the countryside (including Stalbridge and the villages). It is simply the amount of housing required outside the four main towns to ensure that the identified District-wide need is met.
- 5.27 In the countryside (including Stalbridge and the villages), the overall level of housing (and affordable housing) provision by 2026 will be the cumulative number of new homes that have been delivered to contribute towards meeting local and essential rural needs identified at the local level. These needs may be identified through: the neighbourhood planning process (for example housing to deliver a new, or support an existing, community facility); local surveys to establish the need for rural exception housing; and assessments to establish the functional need for occupational dwellings.

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

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

**POLICY 6: HOUSING DISTRIBUTION**

At least 4,200 net additional homes will be provided in North Dorset between 2011 and 2026 at an average annual rate of about 280 dwellings per annum. The vast majority of housing growth will be concentrated at the District's four main towns of Blandford (Forum and St. Mary), Gillingham, Shaftesbury and Sturminster Newton.

The approximate scale of housing development at the four main towns during the period 2011 - 2026 will be as follows:

- a Blandford (Forum and St. Mary) – about 960 homes;
- b Gillingham – about 1,490 homes;
- c Shaftesbury – about 1,140 homes;
- d Sturminster Newton – about 380 homes.

The approximate scale of affordable housing development that will be sought at the four main towns during the period 2011 - 2026 will be as follows:

- e Blandford (Forum and St. Mary) – about 380 affordable homes;
- f Gillingham – about 500 affordable homes;
- g Shaftesbury – about 450 affordable homes;
- h Sturminster Newton – about 150 affordable homes.

In the countryside (including Stalbridge and the villages) the level of housing and affordable housing provision will be the cumulative number of new homes delivered to contribute towards meeting identified local and essential rural needs. A minimum of 230 dwellings will be provided in the countryside (including Stalbridge and the villages) during the period 2011 – 2026.

## Policy 7 - Delivering Homes

### National Policy

#### Mix of Housing

- 5.30 National policy encourages local planning authorities to deliver a wide choice of high quality homes, widen opportunities for home ownership and create sustainable, inclusive mixed communities. To do this they should plan for a mix of housing based on current and future demographic trends, market trends and the needs of different groups in the community. Local planning authorities should also identify the size, type, tenure and range of housing required in particular locations, reflecting local demand<sup>95</sup>.

#### Residential Densities

- 5.31 The national indicative minimum residential density standard (of 30 dwellings per hectare) was deleted in an earlier review of national policy and current national policy now indicates that local planning authorities should set out their own approach to housing density to reflect local circumstances<sup>96</sup>.

#### Infilling and Residential Gardens

- 5.32 National policy no longer adopts a 'brownfield first' approach to housing development, but still encourages 'brownfield' development<sup>97</sup>, which may take the form of residential infilling. National policy used to regard residential gardens as 'brownfield' sites; however, they are now expressly excluded from the definition of previously developed land<sup>98</sup>.
- 5.33 In the light of this change, national policy indicates that local planning authorities should consider the case for setting out policies to resist inappropriate development of residential gardens, for example where development would cause harm to the local area<sup>99</sup>.

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<sup>95</sup> Paragraph 47, National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (March 2012)

<sup>96</sup> The June 2011 version of PPS 3: Housing did not include a national indicative minimum density standard. Paragraph 47 of the NPPF encourages local planning authorities to set out their own approach to housing density.

<sup>97</sup> Paragraph 36 of the June 2011 version of PPS 3: Housing indicated that, in relation to housing "the priority for development should be previously developed land..." One of the 'core planning principles' in Paragraph 17 of the NPPF is that planning should "encourage the effective use of land by reusing land that has been previously developed (brownfield land), provided that it is not of high environmental value."

<sup>98</sup> Gardens were not excluded from the definition of previously developed land in Annex B of PPS 3. The definition of previously developed land in Annex 2 of the NPPF excludes "land in built-up areas such as private residential gardens, parks, recreation grounds and allotments."

<sup>99</sup> Paragraph 53, National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (March 2012)

### The District Council's Approach

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

### Housing Mix and Type

- 5.37 Part of the vision for North Dorset is to have more housing, and in particular more affordable housing, that better meets the diverse needs of the District. Objective 5 seeks to achieve this by: ensuring that the type, design and mix of housing reflects housing needs in up-to-date assessments; and ensuring that housing is designed to support the changing needs of its occupants. The right mix and type of housing can also help to address equalities issues, such as the needs of the older population and the young.
- 5.38 All the local planning authorities in the Bournemouth and Poole Housing Market Area (HMA) commissioned consultants to examine future housing needs in a Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA), which was produced in 2008<sup>100</sup>, and a SHMA Update, which was produced in 2012<sup>101</sup>. For the purposes of preparing a SHMA, North Dorset falls entirely within the Bournemouth and Poole HMA and both SHMA studies examined housing needs at the HMA and District level. These studies have been used to inform policies for the mix, type and form of tenure of housing that should be provided in North Dorset.
- 5.39 The 2012 SHMA Update examined the likely size requirements for market housing, splitting the size requirement into 'smaller' (one and two bedroom) and 'larger' (three plus bedroom) homes. The need for smaller and larger market homes across the HMA was examined based on two different scenarios for the delivery of affordable housing (namely, 30% or 40% of all housing delivered as affordable

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<sup>100</sup> The Bournemouth and Poole Strategic Housing Market Assessment, including the Housing Need and Demand Survey for North Dorset, Fordham Associates (June 2008)

<sup>101</sup> Bournemouth / Poole Housing Market 2011 Strategic Housing Market Assessment Update, JG Consulting in association with Chris Broughton Associates (January 2012)

across the HMA). This showed a need for a roughly equal split between the need for smaller and larger market homes across the HMA in both scenarios<sup>102</sup>.

- 5.40 A similar analysis was undertaken for North Dorset, which concluded that “around 59% of market housing should be family-sized housing (3 or more bedrooms) and 41% one and two bedroom homes, with the main focus being on two and three bedroom accommodation”.<sup>103</sup>
- 5.41 The 2012 SHMA Update examined the likely size requirements for affordable housing, using the same ‘smaller’ and ‘larger’ homes split and the same two scenarios for the delivery of affordable housing. Across the HMA the 2012 SHMA Update recommended a policy target for 55 – 60% of future affordable housing provision to be one and two bedroom properties and 40 – 45% to have three or more bedrooms.<sup>104</sup>
- 5.42 A similar analysis was undertaken for North Dorset, which concluded that “around 39%”<sup>105</sup> of new affordable provision in North Dorset should be family-sized housing (3 or more bedrooms), which means that around 61% of new affordable provision in North Dorset would be one and two bedroom homes.
- 5.43 Over the Plan period, the Council will seek to deliver larger and smaller market and affordable homes in the proportions set out above across the District as a whole. These proportions will also be the starting point for negotiations on the sizes of homes to be provided on ‘major’ housing sites (that is, on sites where 10 or more dwellings are proposed), although a different mix of sizes may be permitted if it can be soundly justified by local circumstances.
- 5.44 The council will adopt a more flexible approach on smaller infill sites, where site-specific issues and potential impacts on local character may have a strong influence on the size of dwellings that would be appropriate. On rural exception sites, the sizes of homes to be provided will much more closely reflect local needs, as set out in Policy 9 – Rural Exception Affordable Housing.

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<sup>102</sup> These issues are discussed in detail in Section 7 of the Bournemouth / Poole Housing Market 2011 Strategic Housing Market Assessment Update, JG Consulting in association with Chris Broughton Associates (January 2012)

<sup>103</sup> These issues are discussed in Section 6 of the Bournemouth / Poole Housing Market 2011 Strategic Housing Market Assessment Update – Summary Report for North Dorset District Council, JG Consulting in association with Chris Broughton Associates (January 2012). The quotation comes from paragraph 6.14 on Page 18 of the report.

<sup>104</sup> See paragraph 7.108 on page 119 of the of the Bournemouth / Poole Housing Market 2011 Strategic Housing Market Assessment Update, JG Consulting in association with Chris Broughton Associates (January 2012)

<sup>105</sup> These issues are discussed in Section 6 of the Bournemouth / Poole Housing Market 2011 Strategic Housing Market Assessment Update – Summary Report for North Dorset District Council, JG Consulting in association with Chris Broughton Associates (January 2012). The quotation comes from paragraph 6.14 on Page 18 of the report.

## The Housing Needs of Particular Groups

- 5.45 National policy indicates that local planning authorities should plan for a mix of housing based on current and future demographic trends, market trends and the needs of different groups in the community, including:
- Families with children;
  - Older people;
  - People with disabilities;
  - Service families; and
  - People wishing to build their own homes.
- 5.46 Research shows that in 2007 19% of all households in North Dorset had one or more members with an identified ‘special need’ and 27% of these households were in the social rented sector<sup>106</sup>. The ways in which planning policies assist in meeting the needs of different groups in the community, including those with special needs, is set out below.

### Families with Children

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

### Older People

- 5.48 In 2007, 42% of households in North Dorset included an ‘older person’<sup>107</sup>. More recent studies show that the proportion of people over 60 is likely to increase significantly over the next 20 years. The District’s ageing population will give rise to proposals for elderly persons’ accommodation, including sheltered accommodation, care homes and nursing homes.
- 5.49 The council will support the provision of both additional elderly persons’ accommodation and other specialist forms of housing, to meet this growing need. The planning issues raised by such developments (including issues such as design, amenity and parking) will be considered in the context of the relevant policies of the Local Plan.
- 5.50 In cases where occupancy is age-restricted and there is little or no care, requirements for open space and car parking may be the same as for unrestricted

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<sup>106</sup> The needs of particular groups in North Dorset are discussed in Section 12 of the Dorset Survey of Housing Need and Demand DSHND): Local Authority Report for North Dorset District Council, Fordham Research (June 2008). Special needs categories include: frail elderly; physical disability; learning difficulty; mental health problem; severe sensory disability; and medical condition.

<sup>107</sup> Table 12.7, page 110, Dorset Survey of Housing Need and Demand DSHND): Local Authority Report for North Dorset District Council, Fordham Research (June 2008)



residential accommodation. However, where higher levels of care are offered, reduced standards may be acceptable. The Council will usually seek to control the occupancy of residential accommodation for the elderly by condition or agreement, whatever level of care is offered.

- 5.51 Sheltered accommodation, where the residential units are self-contained, are usually defined as ‘dwellings’ in planning terms, whereas care homes and nursing homes, where the accommodation is not self-contained, are usually defined as ‘residential institutions’. Developers should be aware that the use class within which the development falls may have implications for the levels of affordable housing and developer contributions that the Council will seek.
- 5.52 The Council will also support the adaptation of existing properties or the provision of suitably designed new properties to enable elderly people to stay in their own homes, or to be cared for at home, rather than requiring a care or residential home.

### People with Disabilities

- 5.53 The Council will work with Dorset County Council Social Services and Registered Social Landlords to consider the likely future needs for people with disabilities. When seeking new affordable housing, it may be possible to provide suitably designed new properties for those with an identified special need or those with impaired mobility. New specialist housing provision is not always required for a disabled person and in some cases it may be possible to meet their requirements through the adaptation of their own property.

### Service Families

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

### People Wishing to Build Their Own Homes

- 5.56 People wishing to build their own home can do so either on an infill plot in a town or village, or by replacing an existing dwelling in the countryside. Policy 2 – Core Spatial Strategy allows infilling within the District’s four main towns and, in the event that a local community re-established a boundary around a village in a neighbourhood plan, that would create additional opportunities for infilling, subject to any more detailed, local policies. Policy 29 – Existing Dwellings in the

Countryside also allows existing dwellings outside the four main towns to be replaced.

- 5.57 There is a very high level of need for affordable housing in North Dorset, but partly to recognise that sites for one or two net additional dwellings will often be developed by people wishing to build their own home (or by small local builders), the Council will not seek the provision of, or a financial contribution towards the provision of, affordable housing on such sites. Setting a threshold of three net additional dwellings in Policy 8 - Affordable Housing should reduce the development costs for people wishing to build their own homes on such sites.

### **Density of New Housing Development**

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

- 5.62 In order assess the impacts different densities may have on local character it will be important for developers to understanding the local context, as outlined in Policy 24 – Design. Proposed housing densities should be informed by:
- policies that allocate development on specific sites, such as those that remain saved in the 2003 Local Plan, Policy 21 – Gillingham Strategic Site Allocation and allocations in the Local Plan Part 2;
  - policies in Town and Village Design Statements and other Supplementary Planning Documents that the Council may adopt;
  - informal design and development briefs or master plans produced either by the Council or local communities; and
  - neighbourhood plans, which may allocate specific sites or set density policies that would apply inside defined settlement boundaries.

### **Infilling and Residential Gardens**

- 5.63 National policy used to give priority to the use of previously developed land (the ‘brownfield first’ approach) and set a national indicative minimum density standard (of 30 dwellings per hectare) for housing development. The national definition of previously developed land also formerly included residential gardens (although they are now considered to be ‘greenfield’ sites).
- 5.64 This former national policy framework effectively prioritised infilling within settlements (essentially, built-up areas with defined settlement boundaries) including on residential gardens and reduced the weight that local planning authorities could give to more local concerns, such impacts on the character and appearance of an area, when making planning decisions.
- 5.65 National policy now offers more scope for councils and local communities to develop policies that focus on encouraging more sensitive infilling, including in relation to the development of residential gardens, having regard to more local and site-based concerns.
- 5.66 Policy 2 – Core Spatial Strategy establishes that infilling will be permitted within the settlement boundaries of Blandford, Gillingham, Shaftesbury and Sturminster Newton, as defined in the 2003 Local Plan. Any infilling that takes place within these settlement boundaries, including on residential gardens, should be sensitively designed to its local context and respect the amenity of adjoining properties.
- 5.67 All other settlement boundaries, as defined in the 2003 Local Plan will no longer be retained, which effectively means that Stalbridge and all the District’s villages will be subject to countryside policies, where no infilling is permitted. Outside the four main towns, settlement boundaries could be re-established, through the neighbourhood plan process to allow infilling, if a local community considered that was an appropriate approach to meeting local needs. In such cases, this policy also requires any infilling within newly-created settlement boundaries, including on

residential gardens, to be sensitively designed to its local context and to respect the amenity of adjoining properties.

- 5.68 This policy establishes the general principle that any infilling within a defined settlement boundary should be sensitively undertaken. Local communities may also establish more detailed policies relating to infilling, through the neighbourhood planning process. A neighbourhood plan could establish an approach to infilling within a settlement as a whole, or develop different approaches in infilling in different parts of a settlement.

## **POLICY 7: DELIVERING HOMES**

### **Housing Mix**

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

In the period to 2026, the Council will seek to deliver 40% of market housing in North Dorset as one or two bedroom properties and 60% of market housing as three or more bedroom properties, with an emphasis on the provision of two and three bedroom properties.

In the period to 2026, the Council will seek to deliver 60% of affordable housing in North Dorset as one or two bedroom properties and 40% of affordable housing as three or more bedroom properties.

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

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

The Council will seek to meet the needs of different groups in the community both through the provision of a suitable mix of market and affordable house sizes and by working with partners, including Registered Social Landlords and Dorset County Council.

The Council will support the provision of age-restricted housing for the elderly and will usually seek to control its occupancy by planning condition or planning obligation.

### **Residential Density**

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

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

**POLICY 7 (CONT'D): DELIVERING HOMES****Residential Density (Cont'd)**

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

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

**Infilling and Residential Gardens**

Any infilling that takes place within the settlement boundaries of Blandford, Gillingham, Shaftesbury and Sturminster Newton, including on residential gardens, should be sensitively designed to its local context and respect the amenity of adjoining properties.

In the event that a settlement boundary is established for Stalbridge or any of the District's villages in a neighbourhood plan, any infilling, including on residential gardens, should be sensitively designed to its local context and respect the amenity of adjoining properties.

Where settlement boundaries exist, or are created or modified in neighbourhood plans, local communities are encouraged to develop more detailed policies relating to infilling.

## Policy 8 - Affordable Housing

### Introduction

- 5.69 One of the priorities identified for rural Dorset in the Dorset Sustainable Community Strategy<sup>108</sup> is to ensure that everyone can live in a good quality home and neighbourhood that meets their needs. The provision of affordable housing is also identified as a key challenge for North Dorset<sup>109</sup>. Consequently Objective 5 of the Local Plan Part 1 (in Section 2), is to deliver more housing, including affordable housing, that better meets the diverse needs of the District.
- 5.70 The Council recognises that more affordable housing will not only help to create more sustainable, mixed communities, but will also maintain a supply of labour by providing school leavers, recent graduates and households on lower incomes with greater opportunity to remain in North Dorset. This will help to: tackle the District's growing generational imbalance; provide the labour needed to enable existing firms to expand; and attract new firms to the area.

### National Policy

- 5.71 National policy supports the provision of affordable housing and indicates that local planning authorities should use their evidence base to ensure that their Local Plan meets the full, objectively assessed needs for market and affordable housing in the housing market area, as far as is consistent with the policies in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)<sup>110</sup>.
- 5.72 National policy also seeks to ensure that Local Plans are viable and deliverable particularly in relation to setting requirements for affordable housing provision<sup>111</sup>.

### The District Council's Approach

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

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<sup>108</sup> Page 14, Shaping Our Future – Dorset Sustainable Community Strategy, Dorset Strategic Partnership (November 2010)

<sup>109</sup> Page 10, Shaping Our Future – Dorset Sustainable Community Strategy, Dorset Strategic Partnership (November 2010)

<sup>110</sup> Paragraph 47, National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (March 2012)

<sup>111</sup> Paragraphs 173 and 174, National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (March 2012)



- Establishing a threshold (in terms of the size of site) above which affordable housing will be sought;
  - Setting out the proportion of homes on a site that the Council will seek to be provided as affordable, which varies in different parts of the District;
  - Outlining the Council’s approach to site-based viability considerations and associated issues, such as resolving viability disputes, the provision of affordable housing off-site and off-site financial contributions;
  - Providing guidance on the form of affordable housing tenure (or tenures) that should be provided on sites; and
  - Outlining the key considerations that will apply to the delivery of affordable housing on sites.
- 5.75 The Council’s approach to the provision of affordable housing on rural exception sites is dealt with separately by Policy 9 – Rural Exception Sites.

### **Housing Need**

- 5.76 All local planning authorities in the Bournemouth and Poole Housing Market Area (HMA) commissioned consultants to produce a Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) in 2008, which was updated in 2012. The 2012 SHMA Update used the CLG housing needs model and estimated that 387 additional units of affordable housing would need to be provided annually over a five year period to meet the District-wide need.
- 5.77 This level of provision could not be delivered within strategic viability constraints and the 2012 SHMA Update indicates that attempting to do so would be likely to lead to significant problems within the wider housing market, in particular increased vacancy levels in the private rented sector.
- 5.78 The 2012 SHMA Update recommends that future affordable housing provision should be set against the likely level of additional housing provision required on the basis of projected household growth<sup>112</sup>.

### **Site-Size Thresholds**

- 5.79 A low site-size threshold will enable the Council to seek affordable housing on more sites and increase the overall level of provision, which will help to address the very high levels of need for affordable housing in North Dorset.
- 5.80 The Council commissioned a District-wide viability study, which considered the minimum size of site (in terms of residential units provided) on which the provision of affordable housing should be sought. This report put forward a number of

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<sup>112</sup> As discussed in Paragraphs 5.7 to 5.10 of the summary report for North Dorset, which forms part of the Bournemouth / Poole Housing Market 2011 Strategic Housing Market Assessment Update produced by JG Consulting in association with Chris Broughton Associates (January 2012)

options (including zero, three and fifteen residential units) as the threshold<sup>113</sup>.

Whilst the draft Core Strategy<sup>114</sup> proposed a threshold of zero, a subsequent position statement adopted by the Council<sup>115</sup> has operated a threshold of three, on an interim basis, since early 2011.

- 5.81 Affordable housing will continue to be sought on sites with a capacity for three or more net additional dwellings in order to:
- recognise that smaller development sites often have on-site costs (such as demolition of existing buildings) that are likely to have a proportionately greater impact on issues of viability;
  - recognise that sites for one or two net additional dwellings will often be developed by people wishing to build their own home, or small local builders; and
  - avoid a situation where viability assessments become a requirement for every housing development proposal.
- 5.82 The Council is mindful that such an approach could be subject to abuse. For example, proposals that seek to reduce density below that reasonably appropriate to the site or the submission of piecemeal planning applications for reduced numbers of housing, both aimed at bringing applications below the site-size threshold. Where such situations are identified, then affordable housing provision may still be sought.

### Target Proportions

- 5.83 The 2012 SHMA Update considered what proportion of affordable housing should be sought on sites in North Dorset and suggested that provision of 40% of additional housing as affordable would be a sensible level in the context of the role played by the private rented sector<sup>116</sup>.
- 5.84 The viability study<sup>117</sup> provided a more fine-grained analysis and gave an indication of the levels of affordable housing (having regard to other infrastructure needs) that could be delivered in different parts of the District.
- 5.85 The study suggested that the Council should seek 40% of housing as affordable on sites across most of the District. A target of 30% was suggested for sites within the

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<sup>113</sup> The issue of thresholds is discussed in Paragraphs 6.22 to 6.26 of North Dorset District Council: Affordable Housing Provision and Developer Contributions in Dorset produced by Three Dragons (June 2009)

<sup>114</sup> Draft Core Policy 9 in The New Plan for North Dorset – The Draft Core Strategy and Development Management Policies Development Plan Document, North Dorset District Council (March 2010)

<sup>115</sup> Interim Position Statement on Affordable Housing, North Dorset District Council (January 2011)

<sup>116</sup> This statement appears in Paragraph 5.10 of the summary report for North Dorset, which forms part of the 2012 Updated SHMA.

<sup>117</sup> North Dorset District Council: Affordable Housing Provision and Developer Contributions in Dorset – Three Dragons (April 2009)

existing built-up area of Gillingham, reflecting the lower land and property values in the town (compared with the rest of the District) and the more limited 'residual values' available to fund both affordable housing and infrastructure. The study recognised that viability considerations are likely to be different on the proposed southern extension to the town (which is a greenfield site) and suggested that the Council should seek 35% on this site, subject to site-based viability testing.

- 5.86 The Council will seek the provision of affordable housing in line with the percentages set out above, which, if achieved, would deliver 1,480 additional affordable homes in the four main towns by 2026. The Council will seek to deliver this level of provision, whilst also having regard to any site-based assessments of viability which could, where justified, result in a level of provision below that being sought.

### Viability

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

### Housing Grant and Subsidies

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

### Resolving Viability Disputes

- 5.90 It has not always been possible for the Council to reach an agreed negotiated position with developers on the issue of viability. There have been disputes relating to the way in which an assessment has been carried out and how it should be interpreted. This has resulted in both the applicant and the Council securing their own studies, which even then have not always resolved differences between the parties.
- 5.91 The Council has however found that the use of the District Valuer (an expert independent of the Council), and an 'open book' approach have been helpful in

enabling an agreed negotiated position to be reached with a developer and reducing areas of possible contention.

- 5.92 On a site where viability may be an issue, the Council will consider offering the opportunity for both the applicant and the Council to rely upon a single assessment of viability by the District Valuer. Where such an offer is made, the terms will include the following requirements:
- the applicant will be expected to cover the cost of the assessment reflecting the fact that the purpose of the exercise is to enable the applicant to seek to justify a departure from the normal requirements of the Council;
  - the District Valuer would be instructed by the District Council; both parties would however have the opportunity to provide information to the District Valuer to assist in the undertaking of the assessment; and
  - the applicant must adopt an ‘open book’ approach for the purposes of the assessment.
- 5.93 The parties would agree to rely upon the conclusions of the District Valuer for the purposes of the application, thereby minimising disputes and protracted negotiations, and could refer to the findings of the District Valuer in any subsequent proceedings.
- 5.94 An ‘open book’ approach in relation to any viability assessment, whether solely commissioned by the applicant or otherwise will be required in all cases.

### Viability Clawback

- 5.95 The delivery of affordable housing below the proportions set out in the policy could potentially undermine the Council’s ability to deliver as much housing as possible as affordable. The Council will therefore aim to reclaim any shortfall in provision on a scheme that has been granted permission, but has not yet been completed, if financial conditions improve. In such cases, developers will be expected to enter into a legal agreement requiring further site-based viability assessments to be carried out prior to completion of a scheme. In the event that a more up-to-date assessment shows that a higher level of affordable housing would be viable, the developer would be expected to provide it.

### Off-Site Provision and Financial Contributions

- 5.96 National policy indicates that local planning authorities should, where they have identified that affordable housing is needed, set policies for meeting this need on site, unless off-site provision or a financial contribution of broadly equivalent value can be robustly justified (for example to improve or make more effective use of the existing housing stock) and the agreed approach contributes to the objective of creating mixed and balanced communities<sup>118</sup>.

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<sup>118</sup> Paragraph 50, National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (March 2012)

- 5.97 In North Dorset, affordable housing should be provided on site, but where this is not a feasible or viable option, the Council may permit provision off-site, provided that the housing on the alternative site can be delivered to meet local housing needs and will contribute towards creating mixed, balanced communities. A financial contribution towards affordable housing provision is much less desirable, as suitable serviced land would still need to be found and the homes would still have to be delivered. The Council will, therefore only accept a financial contribution where on- or off-site provision are not feasible or viable options.
- 5.98 On such sites a commuted sum of broadly equivalent value will be sought to contribute towards off-site provision. The same approach will be taken on sites, which can only deliver a partial contribution towards the percentage of affordable housing being sought. For example: 40% affordable housing in a scheme of 3 dwellings would deliver one affordable unit on site (representing 33% of provision). The residual amount would be sought as a commuted sum of a broadly equivalent value as if the affordable housing were being provided on-site.
- 5.99 In cases where the Council considers it acceptable for an off-site financial contribution of ‘broadly equivalent value’ to be made, a level of contribution will be sought based on a realistic assessment of the overall cost of delivering affordable homes. The Council may ask a valuer to periodically calculate the costs of delivering different sizes of affordable units in North Dorset and may seek different levels of off-site contributions based on these calculations.

### Tenure Split

- 5.100 Different types of affordable housing tenure address different requirements reflecting the financial situation of those in housing need. Those most in need are only likely to be able to afford ‘affordable rented’ or ‘social rented’ accommodation. However, others may be able to pay more and afford ‘intermediate’ housing, which may include the purchase of part of the equity in a property<sup>119</sup>.
- 5.101 The original SHMA, which was produced in 2007 before the introduction of the ‘affordable rent’ product, suggested that the proportion of need in North Dorset (as measured by the CLG model) that could be met through intermediate housing was about 30%<sup>120</sup>. The 2012 SHMA Update identified a need for 14% intermediate housing although none of the households were found to be able to afford an

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<sup>119</sup> The terms affordable housing, social rented housing, affordable rented housing and intermediate housing are defined in Annex 2: Glossary of the National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (March 2012)

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

equity-based product (e.g. shared ownership) due to very low levels of capital and mortgage lending restrictions at that time<sup>121</sup>.

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

### **Delivery of Affordable Housing**

- 5.106 Affordable housing must be provided to eligible households in housing need. Proposals incorporating affordable housing should provide the size and type of affordable housing required to meet the identified need having regard to: Policy 7 – Delivering Homes; the 2012 SHMA Update or any subsequent District-wide assessment of housing need; any more local housing need assessments; and the needs identified on the Council's Housing Register.
- 5.107 The delivery of affordable housing should be phased with the delivery of market housing on a development site and this will be controlled by planning condition or

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<sup>121</sup> As discussed in Paragraphs 5.13 to 5.16 of the summary report for North Dorset, which forms part of the Bournemouth / Poole Housing Market 2011 Strategic Housing Market Assessment Update produced by JG Consulting in association with Chris Broughton Associates (January 2012)

planning obligation. Affordable housing should be designed to a high standard and fully integrated with the market housing on a site so that the two elements cannot be told apart.

- 5.108 The provision of affordable housing not only helps to meet local housing needs, but should also contribute towards creating mixed and balanced communities. To help create a more mixed and balanced community on a larger scheme, the affordable housing units should usually be ‘pepper-potted’ amongst the market housing, or where there is a high proportion of affordable housing, grouped in small clusters. On large sites where there is a high proportion of affordable housing the Council may also consider producing a ‘Local Lettings Plan’.

### Low Cost Market Housing

- 5.109 Low cost market housing (LCMH) no longer falls within the definition of affordable housing set out in national policy<sup>122</sup> and therefore does not count towards affordable housing provision. In the past the Council has sought and delivered some LCMH (as part of overall affordable housing provision) however, this has given rise to various problems, which have outweighed any limited benefits that have been achieved. For these reasons, a proposal for LCMH will not be regarded as a justification for reducing the provision of affordable housing that would otherwise be required. Any intention to include LCMH within a scheme should be supported by evidence of need for this particular type of housing in the location proposed.

### Housing for Key Workers

- 5.110 Research<sup>123</sup> shows that 90% of key workers<sup>124</sup> in North Dorset are able to afford entry-level prices in the local housing market. The vast majority of key workers’ housing needs can, therefore be met through the general provision of market housing. The needs of those who are unable to afford to enter the local housing market will be met through the provision of affordable housing across the District.

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<sup>122</sup> Annex 2, National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (March 2012)

<sup>123</sup> See Section 12 of Dorset Survey of Housing Need and Demand: Local Authority Report for North Dorset District Council, Fordham Research (June 2008)

<sup>124</sup> A definition of key workers appears in the Glossary to the Local Plan Part 1.



## **POLICY 8: AFFORDABLE HOUSING**

All development that delivers three or more net additional dwellings, including housing on mixed-use sites, will contribute to the provision of affordable housing.

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

- a within the settlement boundary of Gillingham 30% of the total number of dwellings will be affordable; and
- b within the southern extension to Gillingham 35% of the total number of dwellings will be affordable, subject to any site-based assessments of viability; and
- c elsewhere in the District 40% of the total number of dwellings will be affordable.

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

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

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

- d to secure the maximum level of provision achievable at the time of the assessment; and
- e to enable the level of provision to be increased in the future, subject to a further assessment, in the event of an improvement in the relevant financial circumstances prior to or during the construction of the site.

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

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

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

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

## Policy 9 - Rural Exception Affordable Housing

### National Policy

- 5.111 National policy<sup>125</sup> establishes that in rural areas, councils should be responsive to local circumstances and plan housing development to reflect local needs, particularly for affordable housing, including through rural exception sites where appropriate.
- 5.112 National policy defines rural exception sites<sup>126</sup> as small sites used for affordable housing in perpetuity where sites would not normally be used for housing. Rural exception sites seek to address the needs of the local community by accommodating households who are either current residents or have an existing family or employment connection.
- 5.113 Councils are asked to consider whether allowing an element of market housing would facilitate the provision of significant additional affordable housing to meet local needs<sup>127</sup>. Small numbers of market homes may be allowed on rural exception sites at the local authority's discretion.

### The District Council's Approach

#### The Provision of Rural Exception Sites

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

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

- 5.116 Policy 2 - Core Spatial Strategy focuses strategic growth on the four main towns of Blandford (Forum and St Mary), Gillingham, Shaftesbury and Sturminster Newton. Since provision will be made to meet the overall District-wide need for affordable housing on sites within the four main towns, rural exception sites will not be permitted within, or in the countryside adjacent to, their boundaries.

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<sup>125</sup> Paragraph 54, National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (March 2012)

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

<sup>127</sup> Paragraph 54, National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (March 2012)

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

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

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

requirements (for example those relating to disability). Any survey should also take account of the needs of occupants of any existing affordable housing in the survey area, particularly those seeking to upsize or downsize and those that may wish to relocate to a town or another village.

- 5.123 A survey is unlikely to be considered up-to-date if it is more than 12 months old at the date when an application falls to be determined.

### Selecting Rural Exception Sites

- 5.124 Where a local needs survey for a parish, or group of parishes, identifies a need for rural exception affordable housing a rural exception site should be sought, in the first instance, at the most sustainable settlement in that area / group in terms of population, facilities and accessibility<sup>128</sup>. A site should only be sought at the other settlements in the area / group if no suitable or available sites can be found at the most sustainable settlement.
- 5.125 When searching for a rural exception site at a settlement, the starting point should be to try and identify a site within the existing built-up area in order to keep encroachment into open countryside to a minimum. Where no suitable and available site exists within a settlement, it will be necessary to search for a site adjoining the existing built-up area.
- 5.126 For the purposes of this policy, a settlement is not considered to include collections of dwellings or hamlets. To be considered a settlement it should have:
- at least one essential facility within 1 kilometre of the physical centre of its built-up area ; and
  - an estimated population living within the built-up area of more than 100 people.
- 5.127 Rural exception sites are, by definition, ‘small sites’. The number of dwellings proposed on any rural exception site should reflect (and not exceed) the level of need identified in an appropriate up-to-date local housing needs survey and in any event should not exceed 9 dwellings in total, including any market housing element<sup>129</sup>.
- 5.128 Rural exception schemes are likely to be taken forward by Registered Social Landlords (RSLs), although other developers may be involved with any market housing element. The Council will expect RSLs and any other developers to work closely with parish councils and local people to identify sites for rural exception housing that have the support of local communities. Rural exception schemes should not be located on Local Green Spaces identified in the Local Plan or neighbourhood plans.

<sup>128</sup> The relative sustainability of the settlements in North Dorset, in terms of population, facilities and accessibility is discussed in detail in the Sustainable Development Strategy Background Paper.

<sup>129</sup> Sites for 10 or more dwellings are considered to be ‘major development’ in The Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2010, Statutory Instrument No. 2184.

- 5.129 In most cases it should be possible to provide sufficient rural exception affordable housing to address a local need on a small site. In cases where this is not possible, a local community should consider whether it would wish to prepare a neighbourhood plan to allocate a housing site to meet both affordable and market housing needs, or to 'opt in' to the Council's Local Plan Part 2.
- 5.130 This policy and Policy 20 – The Countryside establish that appropriately located rural exception schemes can be an acceptable type of development in the countryside. Any proposed scheme will however also be considered against all other relevant planning policies, including those relating to sustainability, design, amenity and the protection of the environment, to ensure that it can be sensitively integrated into its local surroundings.

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

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

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

- 5.133 National policy indicates that in order to deliver significant additional affordable housing, small numbers of market homes may be allowed on rural exception sites at a local authority's discretion. The Council will only accept the principle of a rural exception affordable housing scheme on the basis of a demonstrable local need for rural exception affordable housing. The principle of a scheme cannot be justified on the basis of market housing needs.
- 5.134 In this context, 'small numbers' means small numbers in relation to the overall number of housing units proposed on the rural exception site. The number of market homes the Council may permit will depend on individual circumstances and will be assessed on a site-by-site basis. However, it is unlikely that a proposal which exceeds one third of the total number of dwellings being provided as market homes will be acceptable and in many cases the percentage is likely to be less.

- 5.135 Where a market housing element is proposed on a rural exception affordable housing scheme, the Council will look for clear evidence to justify its provision. Viability information will need to be provided to the Council as part of an application on an open book basis and will be subjected to appropriate scrutiny.
- 5.136 Developers will be expected to demonstrate that they have examined all other potential sources of funding to provide the rural exception affordable homes without a market element before the Council would consider allowing any market homes on a scheme. Such sources could include: grant funding (for example from the Homes and Communities Agency); monies a registered social landlord may have collected from the disposals of affordable homes elsewhere in the District; and monies the Council may have collected in contributions from developers towards the off-site provision of affordable homes.
- 5.137 The Council will only accept the principle of small numbers of market homes on a rural exception affordable housing scheme, if they are required to contribute towards closing a funding gap for the provision of the rural exception affordable homes on that scheme. Such provision may not fully close the funding gap in all cases, but where it does, the small numbers of market homes proposed should be the minimum necessary to support the provision of the affordable homes on that site.
- 5.138 Any assessment of viability should set out why a market element is required to contribute towards closing a funding gap for the scheme as a whole. Factors that should be taken into account include:
- the costs associated with providing the number of affordable units proposed;
  - the costs associated with providing affordable units of a size, type and tenure that will address the identified affordable housing needs of the local community;
  - the availability of any grant funding, or other source of funding to meet the costs of providing the affordable units (for example from off-site affordable housing contributions taken elsewhere);
  - the sums likely to be generated from the sale of any market units; and
  - the extent to which the rental and other income from the affordable units could contribute to furnish any borrowing required to deliver the scheme.
- 5.139 In the event that a viability assessment shows that more than a small number of market units are required to make a scheme viable, it will not be granted planning permission. Further, proposals that seek the provision of market housing in excess of the minimum needed to make the proposed affordable element viable, having had regard to all other potential sources of funding, will also not be permitted.
- 5.140 Any market element should be similar in size and type to the rural exception affordable homes proposed on a scheme. Typically these will be smaller dwellings which would be likely to be suitable to local households on lower incomes seeking



to enter the housing market for the first time, or local households (especially of older people) that wish to 'downsize, but still live locally.

- 5.141 Any proposed market housing unit that is: larger in overall floorspace, bedroom or amenity provision than the largest proposed affordable housing unit; or is not comparable in size to similar affordable housing types being proposed on site, will not be permitted. Smaller scale open market housing may be acceptable, particularly where it is shown this could meet existing local demand for open market housing.
- 5.142 Any market element should be integrated with the affordable element and should be designed as part of a single scheme. Proposals seeking to separate the market and affordable elements (for example either side of an area of open space) or schemes that seek to build the market element separately or remotely from the affordable element will not be permitted.

### **Nominations and Occupancy**

- 5.143 The number, size, type and form of tenure of any affordable units on a rural exception affordable housing scheme should reflect currently identified need. However, there will be cases where the level of need exceeds the level of provision made. It is also recognised that local housing needs may change during the period between a scheme being put forward and the completion of the dwellings.
- 5.144 When considering potential occupants for rural exception affordable housing, the Council will usually look to secure arrangements for priority to be given in the following order:
- to a household with at least one person who is an established resident with a demonstrable need for separate accommodation in the parish or parishes to which the local affordable housing needs survey relates;
  - to a household with at least one person who has an established family or employment connection in the parish or parishes to which the local affordable housing needs survey relates;
  - to a household with at least one person who is an established resident with a demonstrable need for separate accommodation in adjoining parishes or households with a family or employment connection to an adjoining parish.
- 5.145 Following construction of the rural exception housing, in the event that there are no potential occupants with an established local connection to the parish or adjoining parishes, consideration will be given to potential occupants with an established local connection who live within the District and finally to potential occupants with an established local connection who live outside the District.
- 5.146 The Council will not seek to control the occupancy of any market housing units on a rural exception site. Developers will be expected to market such properties locally, but local people will have to compete on the open market to acquire them.

- 5.147 National policy<sup>130</sup> requires that affordable housing delivered through a rural exceptions policy remains available to meet local housing need in perpetuity. As part of any consent that is granted for a rural exception site, the Council will expect to secure the occupancy of the housing to meet local affordable housing needs on that basis.

### **Planning Permissions and Renewals**

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

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<sup>130</sup> As defined in Annex 2: Glossary of the National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (March 2012)

**POLICY 9: RURAL EXCEPTION AFFORDABLE HOUSING**

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

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

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

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

A rural exceptions housing scheme will only be permitted if:

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

**POLICY 9 (CONT'D): RURAL EXCEPTION AFFORDABLE HOUSING**

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

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

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

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

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

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

## Policy 10 - Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople

### National Policy

- 5.151 National planning policy, as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)<sup>131</sup>, seeks to provide a supply of housing which meets the needs of present and future generations. This includes meeting the accommodation needs of Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople.
- 5.152 The traditions and culture of these groups means that they typically live in mobile homes or caravans, even if they have ceased travelling, either permanently or temporarily. Such a lifestyle gives rise to particular accommodation needs, not only for permanent residential sites but also for transit sites and emergency stopping places.
- 5.153 Through the national planning policy guidance 'Planning Policy for Traveller Sites'<sup>132</sup> the Government also seeks to ensure fair and equal treatment for Gypsies and Travellers in a way that respects the traditional and nomadic way of life while also respecting the interests of the settled community.
- 5.154 In order to achieve this, the Government's aims are:
- that local planning authorities should make their own assessment of need for the purposes of planning ;
  - to ensure that local planning authorities, working collaboratively, develop fair and effective strategies to meet need through the identification of land for sites;
  - to encourage local planning authorities to plan for sites over a reasonable timescale;
  - that plan-making and decision-taking should protect Green Belt<sup>133</sup> from inappropriate development;
  - to promote more private traveller site provision while recognising that there will always be those travellers who cannot provide their own sites;
  - that plan-making and decision-taking should aim to reduce the number of unauthorised developments and encampments and make enforcement more effective;
  - for local planning authorities to ensure that their Local Plan includes fair, realistic and inclusive policies;
  - to increase the number of traveller sites in appropriate locations with planning permission, to address under provision and maintain an appropriate level of supply;

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<sup>131</sup> Paragraph 7 - National Planning Policy Framework – DCLG (March 2012)

<sup>132</sup> Planning Policy for Traveller Sites - DCLG (March 2012)

<sup>133</sup> There is no Green Belt in North Dorset, although the South East Dorset Green Belt surrounds the Bournemouth / Poole conurbation.

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

### Identifying Accommodation Needs

- 5.155 The Council has a responsibility as the housing authority to assess and meet the needs of Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople. The NPPF requires local planning authorities to identify and update annually a supply of specific deliverable sites sufficient to provide five years' worth of housing against their housing requirements, with an additional buffer of 5%.
- 5.156 This is reiterated in the associated Planning Policy for Traveller Sites, which states<sup>134</sup> that when preparing their Local Plans, local planning authorities should identify, and update annually, a supply of specific deliverable sites sufficient to provide five years' worth of sites against their locally set targets and identify a supply of specific, developable sites or broad locations for growth, for years six to ten and, where possible, for years 11-15.
- 5.157 In order to establish 'locally set targets' for the provision of sites for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople an assessment of their accommodation needs is required. An assessment was produced in 2007<sup>135</sup> based on data from 2005 and earlier, which identified the needs for residential and transit pitches for Gypsies and Travellers in North Dorset and Dorset as a whole for the period up to 2011.
- 5.158 This assessment was produced as part of the evidence base to support the revised Regional Spatial Strategy for the South West. This assessment is now considered to be out-of-date and a new assessment was commissioned in 2013. The results of the new assessment are awaited, but they are likely to show a continuing requirement for sites in Dorset and North Dorset.

### Meeting Identified Needs

- 5.159 National policy relating to the provision of Traveller sites<sup>136</sup> indicates that local planning authorities should consider producing joint development plans that set targets on a cross-authority basis, to provide more flexibility in identifying sites, particularly if a local planning authority has special or strict planning constraints across its area. This reflects the duty to cooperate that local planning authorities have on planning issues that cross administrative boundaries.

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<sup>134</sup> Paragraph 9 (a) and (b) – Planning Policy for Traveller Sites - DCLG (March 2012)

<sup>135</sup> Dorset Traveller Needs Assessment, Anglia Ruskin University (March 2007)

<sup>136</sup> Paragraph 9 (c) – Planning Policy for Traveller Sites - DCLG (March 2012)

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

### **Considering Planning Applications**

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

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

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

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

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



## 6. Supporting Economic Development

### Introduction

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

## Policy 11 – The Economy

### National Policy

- 6.4 The NPPF identifies the economic role of the planning system as contributing to building a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right type is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth and innovation; and by identifying and coordinating development requirements, including the provision of infrastructure<sup>137</sup>. The NPPF highlights that the economic role should not be undertaken in isolation but balanced with the mutually dependent social and environmental roles in pursuit of sustainable development.
- 6.5 National policy indicates that to help achieve economic growth, local planning authorities should plan proactively to meet the development needs of business and support an economy fit for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century<sup>138</sup>. In rural areas, such as North Dorset, planning policies should support economic growth in order to create jobs and prosperity by taking a positive approach to sustainable new development<sup>139</sup>.

### Local Context

- 6.6 The Dorset Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) directs investment to strengthen the Dorset-wide economy and leads on promoting economic growth across Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole. The Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) for Dorset identifies trying to foster a strong economy that offers better job opportunities for local people as a priority for the rural County<sup>140</sup>.
- 6.7 The Council's three-year economic development strategy<sup>141</sup> aims to stimulate the economy, create economic growth and jobs, and attract resources and investment to the area. The Council's role will be to help create an environment in which businesses can thrive.

### Spatial Approach to Economic Development

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

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<sup>137</sup> Paragraph 7, National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (March 2012)

<sup>138</sup> Paragraphs 20, National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (March 2012).

<sup>139</sup> Paragraph 28 of the National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (March 2012)

<sup>140</sup> This priority is set out on Page 15 of the Dorset Sustainable Community Strategy 2010 – 2020, Dorset Strategic Partnership (November 2010)

<sup>141</sup> North Dorset Economic Development Strategy for Action 2012 – 2015, North Dorset District Council (April 2012)

## The Four Main Towns

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

## Economic Development in the Countryside

- 6.12 The key elements of the Council's approach to economic development in the countryside (including Stalbridge and the District's villages) are:
- to enable rural communities to plan to meet their own local needs primarily through neighbourhood planning; and
  - to support certain forms of economic development through countryside policies including those relating to: the reuse of existing rural buildings; the small-scale expansion of existing employment sites; equine-related developments; and the provision of rural tourist accommodation (Policies 29 to 32).
- 6.13 This approach seeks to support and diversify the economy in the countryside to meet local, rather than strategic needs. Neighbourhood plans could allocate specific sites for economic development to enable local communities to meet their own needs, if they cannot be met through countryside policies alone.

## Key Actions to Deliver Sustainable Economic Development

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

## Projected Job Growth

- 6.15 Full time equivalent (FTE) employment growth is projected to increase by around 0.8% per annum over the 20-year period from 2011 to 2031<sup>142</sup>, which translates to a need for 4,400 FTE jobs in North Dorset over the same period.
- 6.16 FTE employment growth has been analysed by sector and projected for the two 10-year periods 2011 to 2021 and 2021 to 2031<sup>143</sup>. Approximately two thirds of the growth of FTE jobs is projected to take place in the first decade (from 2011 to 2021), with the remaining one third projected between 2021 and 2031. On that basis, it is estimated that approximately 3,630 FTE jobs will be required during the plan period (2011 to 2026) with a further 770 FTE jobs required between 2026 and 2031.
- 6.17 The types of jobs in the North Dorset economy are also predicted to change over the next 20 years. In rural Dorset the sectors projected to grow most are: business services; health and social; distribution; hotels and catering; and transport and

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<sup>142</sup> Appendix A, Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole Workspace Study: Employment Land Projections 2012 Update, DCC (March 2012)

<sup>143</sup> Table 12, Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole Workspace Study: Employment Land Projections 2012 Update, DCC (March 2012)

communications. During the first decade from 2011 to 2021 some growth is projected in the manufacturing sector, but it (along with agriculture and construction) is projected to decline in the second period. Public administration and defence are also projected to show significant declines across both periods.

### Providing Sufficient Employment Land

- 6.18 The NPPF indicates that local planning authorities should assess the existing and future supply of land available for economic development and its sufficiency and suitability to meet the identified needs.
- 6.19 All local authorities in Dorset have worked together to assess the future needs for employment land (that is, land primarily for B-Class uses) in the area<sup>144</sup>. Projections have been updated to take account of the recession and have identified a level of need based on 2.5% Gross Value Added (GVA) growth per annum across Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole<sup>145</sup>. The projections also build in additional flexibility allowances of 10 and 20%.
- 6.20 The projections showed a need for 30.5 hectares of employment land for the period 2011 to 2031, including a 20% flexibility allowance. The projections indicate that 21.9 hectares are required between 2011 and 2021 and 8.6 hectares are needed in the period 2021 to 2031. On that basis, the District-wide need for employment land for the plan period (2011 to 2026) is 26.2 hectares. The availability of employment land in North Dorset was also examined and in April 2011, 49.6 hectares were identified as being available across the District, which is more than adequate to meet the overall need for employment land.
- 6.21 It is also important for each main town to have an adequate supply of employment land. Table 6.1 shows that if the overall identified need for employment land is apportioned in accordance with the proposed distribution of housing, this is the case.
- 6.22 Each of the four main towns has at least one key strategic employment site. These sites, which in April 2011 covered 32.8 hectares in total, are:
- Part of the Brewery site, Blandford St. Mary, 3 hectares;
  - Land off Shaftesbury Lane, Blandford Forum, 4.8 hectares;
  - Brickfields Business Park, Gillingham, 11.7 hectares;
  - Land south of the A30 at Shaftesbury, 7 hectares; and
  - North Dorset Business Park, Sturminster Newton, 6.3 hectares.
- 6.23 The availability of more than sufficient employment land at the four main towns means that there is no need for additional employment land in the countryside

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<sup>144</sup> Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole Workspace Strategy, GVA Grimley (2008)

<sup>145</sup> Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole Workspace Study: Employment Land Projections 2012 Update, Dorset County Council (March 2012)

(including Stalbridge and the villages) to contribute towards meeting the identified strategic need. However, in April 2011, 6.7 hectares of employment land was identified as being available outside the four main towns, which can be developed to contribute towards meeting local economic development needs in the countryside.

Figure 6.1 – Need and Availability of Employment Land in North Dorset (in hectares)<sup>146</sup>

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

### Sites for Mixed Use Regeneration

- 6.24 About 40% of the employed population have jobs in non B-Class use sectors such as retail, health, education and tourism. These jobs play an important role in the local economy and the Council supports these employment opportunities even though they are not generally located on employment sites. The Council has identified a number of sites for mixed-use regeneration close to existing town centres. The regeneration of these sites, together with proposals to support and enhance North Dorset's town centres, will help to meet the needs for office and non-B Class employment uses.
- 6.25 Three employment sites were identified as 'requiring further investigation' with regard to their future role (and their potential for mixed-use regeneration) through the Employment Land Review (ELR) process<sup>147</sup>. These sites, which now are (or form part of larger areas) identified for regeneration in this plan, are:
- The Brewery, Blandford. This site has planning permission for a mixed-use scheme including 195 homes, a new brewery complex and about 3 hectares of new / redeveloped B-Class employment land and buildings;
  - Station Road, Gillingham. The ELR site forms part of a larger area identified for regeneration in this plan. Part of the site has planning permission for retail development; and

<sup>146</sup> Figures do not sum due to rounding.

<sup>147</sup> Employment Land Review: Review of Existing Sites, North Dorset District Council (April 2007)

- The Creamery, Sturminster Newton. The ELR site forms part of a wider area identified for regeneration in this plan. The Creamery site, as identified in the ELR, has already been redeveloped with a mix of uses including employment uses in the retained Creamery building, a new care home and housing development. The Creamery site was developed in accordance with the community-led development brief for the wider Station Road area<sup>148</sup>.

6.26 Land between Shaftesbury Town Centre and Christy's Lane, much of which is in public ownership, is also identified as a site for mixed-use regeneration in the Local Plan Part 1 (Policy 12 - Retail, Leisure and Other Commercial Developments and Policy 18 – Shaftesbury).

### Uses on Employment Sites

- 6.27 Uses on employment sites are often limited to those that fall within Class B1 (business), Class B2 (general industrial) and Class B8 (storage and distribution). However, since the level of supply is above the projected level of future need, the Council has adopted a more flexible approach and will permit other uses that provide employment, but do not fall within the B-Class use definitions.
- 6.28 This approach could help to support businesses and encourage the provision of a wider range of jobs, but the Council will not permit inappropriate developments on employment sites, including: retail developments, other than those that are small-scale and ancillary to a B-Class use; any town centre use for which a sequentially preferable site can be found (Policy 12 – Retail, Leisure and Other Commercial Developments); and any form of housing development.
- 6.29 On employment sites, in addition to B-Class uses, the Council may permit:
- community uses, such as community halls;
  - healthcare facilities, such as doctors and vets surgeries (but not any healthcare facility with a residential element, such as a care home);
  - education facilities, including training facilities for businesses and pre-school nurseries; and
  - small-scale retail, which is ancillary to a B-Class use.
- 6.30 Land on Kingsmead Business Park is identified as the preferred location for the local centre for the southern extension of Gillingham. In the event that this site is developed as a local centre, a wider range of uses may be permitted, as set out in Policy 21 – Gillingham Strategic Site Allocation.

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<sup>148</sup> Station Road Area Design and Development Brief, prepared for SturQuest by the Matrix Partnership Ltd (April 2008)



### Ensuring Employment Land is fit for Purpose

- 6.31 The first stage of the Council's ELR<sup>149</sup> identified that the vast majority of employment sites met the needs of the market and were in sustainable locations. A number of sites were identified for review and some of these are now proposed for, or have been developed as mixed-use regeneration schemes, as explained above.
- 6.32 The Council will monitor the effects of its more flexible approach to uses on employment sites and will periodically review the suitability of the employment sites in the District in the context of this approach.

### Sustainable Tourism

- 6.33 Tourism in North Dorset supports 6% of employment and generates £76 million per annum<sup>150</sup>. It also brings in visitors who support the wider rural economy by using local services and facilities. Tourism also raises issues such as limited employment opportunities; low-waged and seasonal jobs; and visitor pressure on attractions (such as the District's landscape and heritage).
- 6.34 Tourists to North Dorset primarily come to enjoy the character of the District's historic settlements and its attractive countryside. The Council intends to build on this market by:
- supporting tourism that enables visitors to enjoy the District's historic market towns and their facilities including town centres, small museums, local exhibitions and tourist shops;
  - supporting local food-based heritage, promotion, employment and training; and
  - supporting rural tourism that enables people to enjoy the District's landscapes and recreational opportunities such as the road-based North Dorset cycleway, The North Dorset Trailway and long distance footpaths such as the Stour Valley Way and Jubilee Trail.
- 6.35 Additional tourist facilities and larger hotels may be considered to be town centre uses and should be located in town centres, where sites are available. Smaller scale tourist accommodation, including guest houses, bed and breakfast establishments and self-catering accommodation are not considered to be town centre uses and may be permitted elsewhere within the settlement boundaries of the four main towns. Proposals for tourist accommodation outside the four main towns will be assessed against Policy 31 – Tourist Accommodation in the Countryside.

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<sup>149</sup> Employment Land Review: Review of Existing Sites, North Dorset District Council (April 2007)

<sup>150</sup> Volume and Value of Tourism, South West Research Council (2009)

## Working with Partners

- 6.36 Over the plan period the Dorset LEP will develop strategies and put in place programmes to deliver growth. The Council will work with the Dorset LEP to support and take forward these strategies and programmes, insofar as they relate to North Dorset.
- 6.37 The Council will continue to work with partners, including landowners, developers, Government agencies (such as the Homes and Communities Agency) and local community partnerships to: develop key strategic employment and mixed-use regeneration sites; to assist in developing existing businesses and attracting new businesses; and to promote the District as a place to do business.
- 6.38 At the local level, the Council will support communities that wish to take forward economic development in their town or village. This may involve supporting local people in the preparation of their neighbourhood plan, or through other initiatives, such as the production of the community-led development brief for North Dorset Business Park at Sturminster Newton, which gives particular support to the local food-based sector<sup>151</sup>.

## Skills and Training

- 6.39 The Council's spatial approach and the key actions it intends to take to deliver sustainable economic development will help to create suitable conditions to attract inward investment. However, in order to attract the right kind of new businesses, particularly knowledge-based companies, a skilled workforce is needed.
- 6.40 Further education in North Dorset is limited, but the Council will work with partners, such as Yeovil College and Equilibrium (who provide vocational skills training for NEETs<sup>152</sup>) to provide better training facilities for young people. Skills can also be enhanced by developing links with existing employers, such as the Royal Signals at Blandford Camp.

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<sup>151</sup> The North Dorset Business Park Design and Development Brief, prepared for SturQuest by the Matrix Partnership Ltd (March 2012)

<sup>152</sup> Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET)

## **POLICY 11: THE ECONOMY**

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

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

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

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

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

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

About 3,630 new jobs will be provided in North Dorset by 2026.

About 49.6 hectares of land will be developed primarily for employment uses in North Dorset between 2011 and 2026. This will include the development of the following key strategic sites primarily for employment uses:

- f Part of the Brewery site, Blandford St. Mary (3 hectares);
- g Land off Shaftesbury Lane, Blandford Forum (4.8 hectares);
- h Brickfields Business Park, Gillingham (11.7 hectares);
- i Land south of the A30 at Shaftesbury (7 hectares); and
- j North Dorset Business Park, Sturminster Newton (6.3 hectares).

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

- k Brewery site, Blandford St. Mary;
- l Station Road area, Gillingham;

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

- m Station Road area, Sturminster Newton; and
- n Land between the Town Centre and Christy's Lane, Shaftesbury.

**Uses on Employment Sites**

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

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

**Sustainable Tourism**

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

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

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

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

### National Policy

- 6.41 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that planning policies should be positive, promote competitive town centre environments and set out policies for the management and growth of centres<sup>153</sup>. Councils should also apply a sequential test to planning applications for main town centre uses that are not in an existing centre and are not in accordance with an up-to-date Local Plan<sup>154</sup>.

### The District Council's Approach

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

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<sup>153</sup> How planning policies should ensure the vitality of town centres when local plans are drawn up is set out in full in Paragraph 23 of the National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (March 2012)

<sup>154</sup> Paragraph 24, National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (March 2012)

## Hierarchy and Network of Centres

- 6.44 The Council has worked with other local authorities in the eastern half of Dorset to define a hierarchy and network of centres. Studies confirm that in North Dorset, Blandford Forum, Gillingham, Shaftesbury and Sturminster Newton all merit classification as ‘town centres’<sup>155</sup>.
- 6.45 Blandford Forum, Gillingham and Shaftesbury each have over 90 commercial outlets (Classes A1 to A5)<sup>156</sup>, including a range of convenience, comparison and service uses. Sturminster Newton has fewer (55) commercial outlets, but has many other facilities, such as a medical centre, a library and a community centre.
- 6.46 The four main towns all primarily serve their own local catchment area and have a limited draw beyond their respective boundaries.<sup>157</sup> Figure 6.2 below shows that in terms of wider retail catchments, particularly for non-food shopping, the towns in the north of the District mainly look towards Salisbury and Yeovil whereas Blandford looks south-east towards Poole.

Figure 6.2 – North Dorset Town Centres and Wider Retail Catchments

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

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

### Defining Town Centre Boundaries

- 6.47 Town centres are the sequentially preferred location for ‘main town centre uses’<sup>158</sup> including: retail development, leisure, entertainment facilities, certain intensive

<sup>155</sup> Paragraph 3.10 (Page 17), Joint Retail Assessment: Christchurch Borough Council and East, North and Purbeck District Councils: Volume 1 Capacity Analysis, Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners (March 2008)

<sup>156</sup> A Class uses are: A1 - Shops; A2 - Financial and Professional Services; A3 - Food and Drink; A4 - Drinking Establishments; and A5 - Hot Food Takeaways.

<sup>157</sup> Paragraphs 5.3 and 5.4 (page 45), Joint Retail Assessment: Christchurch Borough Council and East, North and Purbeck District Councils: Volume 1 Capacity Analysis, Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners (March 2008)

<sup>158</sup> The full definition of ‘main town centre uses’ is set out in Annex 2: Glossary of the National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (March 2012)

sport and recreation uses, offices, arts, cultural and tourism uses. The North Dorset District-Wide Local Plan 2003 does not show any town centre boundaries for Blandford Forum, Gillingham, Shaftesbury and Sturminster Newton. These will be defined as part of the site allocations in the Local Plan Part 2 unless a local community decide to define a boundary for their town centre in a neighbourhood plan. A town centre boundary should be drawn to include the town's primary shopping area and other areas predominantly occupied by main town centre uses within or adjacent to the primary shopping area.

6.48 In the interim, the Council will use available evidence to make judgements for development management purposes about whether a particular site falls within a town centre, including:

- the draft town centre boundaries identified in the Council's 2005 Annual Monitoring Report;
- locally produced evidence base studies, such as the Gillingham and Sturminster Newton Town Design Statements<sup>159</sup>; and
- evidence in earlier planning applications for main town centre uses where the sequential test in national policy has been applied.

### Defining Primary Shopping Areas

6.49 The North Dorset District – Wide Local Plan 2003 does not show any primary shopping areas for Blandford Forum, Gillingham, Shaftesbury and Sturminster Newton. These will be defined as part of the site allocations in the Local Plan Part 2 unless a local community decide to define a boundary for their primary shopping area in a neighbourhood plan. Primary shopping area boundaries should be drawn to define the area of the town centre where retail development is concentrated. In the interim, the Council will use the recommended primary shopping areas, as identified in the Joint Retail Study<sup>160</sup>, for development management purposes.

### Defining Primary and Secondary Shopping Frontages

6.50 The North Dorset District-Wide Local Plan 2003 defines primary and secondary shopping frontages within Blandford Forum, Gillingham, Shaftesbury and Sturminster Newton and these frontages will continue to be used for development management purposes, until reviewed by the Local Plan Part 2 – Site Allocations or in a neighbourhood plan. In the interim, in making judgements about whether a site should be considered to fall within a primary or secondary shopping frontage,

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<sup>159</sup> Gillingham Town Design Statement, Gillingham Town Design Statement Steering Group (June 2012) and Sturminster Newton Town Design Statement, The Matrix Partnership for SturQuest (July 2008)

<sup>160</sup> Recommended Primary Shopping Areas for the four main towns in North Dorset are shown in Appendix C of the Joint Retail Assessment: Christchurch Borough Council and East, North and Purbeck District Councils: Volume 1 Capacity Analysis, Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners (March 2008)

the Council will also have regard to the recommended primary and secondary shopping frontages, as identified in the Joint Retail Study<sup>161</sup>.

### Uses in Town Centres

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

### Uses in Primary Shopping Areas

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

### Uses in Primary and Secondary Shopping Frontages

- 6.56 Within primary and secondary shopping frontages, the Council will seek to retain, and resist the loss of, retail and other A Class<sup>162</sup> units even when they become vacant, as explained in more detail below.

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<sup>161</sup> Recommended Primary and Secondary Shopping Frontages for the four main towns in North Dorset are also shown in Appendix C of Volume 2 of the Joint Retail Assessment: Christchurch Borough Council and East, North and Purbeck District Councils, Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners (March 2008)

<sup>162</sup> References to the different A Class uses and non A Class uses are to those identified in the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 (as amended) or any replacement or re-enactment of that order with or without modification.



### Uses in Primary Shopping Frontages

- 6.57 In the heart of existing town centres (basically, in identified primary shopping frontages), it is particularly important that the overall level of retail provision is maintained and enhanced. In these areas, the ‘retail offer’ should not be undermined by the loss of existing shops (and other A1 Class uses<sup>163</sup>). The Council will also seek to retain vacant units, as bringing such units back into use has a role to play in meeting future needs.
- 6.58 Within the primary shopping frontages, existing shops on the ground floor will be retained in order to maintain the attractiveness of these areas to shoppers. The Council will resist proposals that would result in their loss to other uses, including their loss to other A Class uses.
- 6.59 The Council will seek to retain the total extent of the retail sales area within a primary shopping frontage, in order to maintain the retail offer. The Council will also seek to retain the total extent of retail uses on streets or pedestrian thoroughfares within the frontage, in order to maintain ‘active frontages’, which contribute to the vitality of town centres. In primary shopping frontages, the Council will also seek to bring vacant shops back into A1 Class use.

### Uses in Secondary Shopping Frontages

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

## Enhancing and Expanding Existing Town Centres

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

- 6.62 The Joint Retail Assessment<sup>164</sup> identified District-wide needs for additional retail sales floorspace in the period 2007 to 2026, but the assessment pre-dated the global economic downturn and the identified needs were derived from population projections that have now been superseded. Nevertheless, the assessment highlighted a key issue for North Dorset, which is the lack of comparison goods expenditure.

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<sup>163</sup> Class A1 of the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 (as amended) includes shops, retail warehouses, hairdressers, undertakers, travel and ticket agencies, post offices, dry cleaners and internet cafes etc.

<sup>164</sup> Floorspace projections are discussed in Section 9 of the Joint Retail Assessment for Christchurch Borough and East, North and Purbeck Districts: Volume 2 - North Dorset, Nathaniel Lichfield & Partners (March 2008)

- 6.63 North Dorset is well served by foodstores, which reflects the comparatively high level of convenience goods (largely food) expenditure identified in the Joint Retail Assessment. However, the lack of comparison retail stores and floorspace means that there is a relatively low level of comparison goods (largely non-food) expenditure in the District. An emphasis in future provision on additional comparison retail floorspace would both provide a better balance of uses in town centres and reduce the need to travel outside the District.
- 6.64 The Gillingham Study<sup>165</sup> also evaluated the retail requirements for the town against a number of different scenarios. In the context of the proposed growth of the town, it identified the potential for a significant increase in retail provision, with a strong focus on comparison goods.
- 6.65 Much of the baseline need for B Class uses in North Dorset is predicted to be for offices<sup>166</sup>, which have the potential to be accommodated on employment sites (for which sufficient provision has been made under Policy 11 – The Economy) as well as in town centre locations.
- 6.66 The Joint Retail Assessment examined the potential for additional commercial leisure uses in North Dorset’s towns, but found that it was limited. However, it suggested that there could be scope for small scale facilities, such as health and fitness clubs, a small cinema, restaurants and bars.
- 6.67 There are also needs for additional cultural, recreation and community facilities, as set out in Policy 14 – Social Infrastructure. Some of these proposals, such as new community halls, would be appropriate in a town centre (or edge-of-centre) location and some are also being taken forward as community-based projects.

### Approach to Meeting the Identified Needs

- 6.68 The overall approach to accommodate these needs is:
- To seek to reduce vacancy rates in town centre shops and encourage their occupancy, particularly by comparison good retailers;
  - To encourage the implementation of existing planning permissions for additional retail floorspace, particularly in Blandford and Gillingham;
  - To identify locations in existing town centres and sites for mixed-use regeneration on the edge of centres to meet future needs; and
  - To work with local communities to take forward proposals for town centre enhancement and growth through neighbourhood planning or other local, community-based initiatives.

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<sup>165</sup> Retail needs are discussed in Section 7 of Assessing the Growth Potential of Gillingham, Dorset, Atkins (December 2009)

<sup>166</sup> The Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole Workspace Study Employment Land Projections 2012 Update – Extract for North Dorset identified a baseline need for 8.7 hectares of office use for the period 2011 to 2031

- 6.69 The Joint Retail Assessment identified that a reduction in the vacancy rate to 5% across North Dorset could provide scope to accommodate an additional 1,900 square metres (gross) retail floorspace. At the time the assessment was undertaken (2008), the Safeway store in Blandford was closed. This has since re-opened (as Morrisons) and the former bus station on Salisbury Road has been redeveloped to provide about 3,000 square metres of additional retail floorspace in the town.
- 6.70 In Blandford there are currently planning permissions for an extension of Tesco at Stour Park and a new Asda supermarket and petrol filling station on land off Shaftesbury Lane. In Gillingham there is planning permission for new retail units off Station Road / Le Neubourg Way. The implementation of these schemes will increase significantly the amount of retail floorspace in the District.
- 6.71 Given the historic nature of the four main towns in North Dorset, there is limited scope for additional development within the town centres. The only town centre site identified in the Joint Retail Assessment (other than the closed Safeway - now Morrisons - store) was on the southern side of East Street in Blandford Forum<sup>167</sup>. However, there is potential for the extension to the rear of a wider range of premises on the southern side of Market Place / East Street, including land around the existing Co-op store, as outlined in Policy 16 – Blandford.
- 6.72 There are more significant opportunities for mixed-use regeneration in edge-of-centre locations (as outlined in Policy 11 – The Economy), which could include a significant element of retail development. The main sites are:
- the Station Road area in Gillingham, which has the potential to provide about 7,500 gross square metres of retail floorspace<sup>168</sup>;
  - the land between the town centre and Christy's Lane in Shaftesbury (including the livestock market and the postal sorting office on Angel Square); and
  - the Station Road area in Sturminster Newton which has the potential to provide about 1,250 gross square metres of retail floorspace<sup>169</sup>.
- 6.73 The Brewery site at Blandford St. Mary will also be regenerated, but since this site is separated from Blandford Forum town centre by the floodplain of the River Stour, the main focus will be on meeting employment needs rather than accommodating main town centre uses.
- 6.74 Policies 16 to 19 discuss the opportunities outlined above in more detail on a town-by-town basis.

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<sup>167</sup> Land to the rear of Stour House, 41 East Street, as described in Appendix A of Joint Retail Assessment for Christchurch Borough and East, North and Purbeck Districts: Volume 2 - North Dorset, Nathaniel Lichfield & Partners (March 2008)

<sup>168</sup> Assessing the Growth Potential of Gillingham, Dorset, Atkins (December 2009)

<sup>169</sup> The Station Road Area Design and Development Brief, Matrix Partnership for SturQuest (April 2008)

- 6.75 Neighbourhood plans are being prepared by local communities for Blandford, Gillingham and Shaftesbury and these are likely to tackle town centre issues. In addition, proposals for the regeneration of the edge-of-centre Station Road area in Sturminster Newton are already set out in a community-led design and development brief.
- 6.76 The Council will work with local communities in the towns to take forward proposals for the enhancement of town centres, either in neighbourhood plans, or through other community based initiatives. In the event that a local community decided not to tackle town centre issues in a neighbourhood plan, then the Council would consider allocating appropriate town centre or edge-of-centre sites in the Local Plan Part 2.

### Town Centre Uses Outside Town Centres

- 6.77 The Council will apply the sequential test in national policy to planning applications for main town centre uses that are not in an existing centre and are not in accordance with the development plan, unless the application is for small-scale rural offices, or other small scale rural development<sup>170</sup>.
- 6.78 Applicants will need to demonstrate that such proposals can satisfy the sequential test and will not have a significant adverse impact on any town centres.
- 6.79 The Council will require applications for main town centre uses to be located:
- in town centres;
  - then in edge of centre locations; and
  - only if suitable sites are not available should out of centre sites be considered<sup>171</sup>.
- 6.80 When considering edge of centre and out of centre proposals, preference will be given to accessible sites that are well connected to the town centre. The Council will expect applicants to demonstrate flexibility on issues such as format and scale.
- 6.81 The Council will require a developer to produce an impact assessment for a retail, leisure or office development of 2,500 square metres or more, which is proposed outside a town centre and which is not in accordance with the development plan. This should include assessment of:
- the impact of the proposal on existing, committed and planned public and private investment in a centre or centres in the catchment area of the proposal; and
  - the impact of the proposal on town centre vitality and viability, including local consumer choice and trade in the town centre and wider area, up to five years

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<sup>170</sup> The sequential test in national policy is set out in paragraphs 24 to 27 of the National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (March 2012)

<sup>171</sup> The full definitions of edge of centre and out of centre are set out in Annex 2: Glossary of the National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (March 2012)

from the time the application is made. For major schemes where the full impact will not be realised in five years, the impact should be assessed up to ten years from the time the application is made.

- 6.82 Where an application fails to satisfy the sequential test or is likely to have significant adverse impact on one or more of the above factors, it will be refused.

### Markets

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

Figure 6.3 – Outdoor Weekly Markets in North Dorset

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

- 6.84 In addition, all four main towns support other markets, such as farmers' or country (formerly Women's Institute) markets.
- 6.85 The Council supports the retention and, where possible, enhancement of the existing outdoor weekly markets in North Dorset and will seek to ensure that any proposals (for example town centre enhancements) for the sites where the outdoor weekly markets take place do not prejudice the future operation of these markets.
- 6.86 The design and development brief for the Station Road area in Sturminster Newton proposes a new square at the Station Road, Barnes Close, Market Place junction, which should provide more space for the outdoor weekly market<sup>172</sup>.

### Shop Front Design

- 6.87 The retail industry needs to adapt to changing markets and consumer preferences. However, shop fronts need to be sensitively designed both to retain the architectural integrity of individual buildings (including listed buildings) and to maintain the character of the District's towns and villages (and their conservation areas). The alteration or replacement of shop fronts generally requires planning permission and advertisements may require separate advertisement consent. However, routine maintenance works such as redecoration or straightforward repairs, are 'permitted development' and do not require planning permission.
- 6.88 The Council has produced a draft guide to shop front design<sup>173</sup>, which also covers the issues of shop signage and security shutters. When considering proposals for

<sup>172</sup> Station Road Area Design and Development Brief, prepared for SturQuest by The Matrix Partnership Ltd (April 2008)

the replacement, alteration or restoration of a shop front, the Council will expect applicants to be able to demonstrate that they have had due regard to the Council's advice, such as the advice in the draft shop front design guide.

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<sup>173</sup> North Dorset Guide to Shop Front Design (Draft) – NDDC (June 2007)

**POLICY 12: RETAIL, LEISURE AND OTHER COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENTS****Hierarchy of Centres**

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

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

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

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

**Uses in Town Centres**

Development for retail and other main town centre uses will be supported within a town centre provided that:

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

**Uses in Primary Shopping Frontages**

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

**Uses in Secondary Shopping Frontages**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### **Markets**

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

### **Shop Front Design**

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



## 7. Infrastructure

### Introduction

#### National Policy

- 7.1 The NPPF sees the provision of infrastructure as an integral part of planning fulfilling its economic, social and environmental roles. The provision of infrastructure is a key element of many of national policy's core planning principles and local planning authorities are encouraged to identify and address any lack of infrastructure in developing their planning policies.
- 7.2 The NPPF states that a local plan should 'plan positively for the development and infrastructure required in the area to meet the objectives, principles and policies of this Framework'<sup>174</sup>. It also states that local plans 'should include strategic policies to deliver:
- ...the provision of infrastructure for transport, telecommunications, waste management, water supply, wastewater, flood risk and coastal change management ...;
  - the provision of health, security, community and cultural infrastructure and other local facilities; ...<sup>175</sup>
- 7.3 In North Dorset, the provision of infrastructure and its timely delivery will support housing and economic development, make settlements more self-contained and help to achieve Objective 6 - Improving the Quality of Life. It will also ensure the continued vitality of the District's market towns and help to maintain sustainable communities in rural areas.

#### The District Council's Approach

- 7.4 The Council's overall approach is to ensure that infrastructure is delivered at the right time and in the right place to support the growth proposed in this Local Plan and any other documents that make up the development plan.
- 7.5 This section sets out the Council's policies for the provision of different types of infrastructure, namely:
- 'grey infrastructure' (for example transport, utilities and drainage) (Policy 13);
  - 'social infrastructure' (for example community, leisure, cultural, education and health facilities) (Policy 14); and
  - 'green infrastructure' (for example linked networks of open space including informal recreational areas and wildlife corridors) (Policy 15).

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<sup>174</sup> Paragraph 157, National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (March 2012)

<sup>175</sup> Paragraph 156, National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (March 2012)

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

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

- 7.8 The infrastructure needs of the community have been established from a number of sources including:
- The 2003 Local Plan and interim planning guidance<sup>176</sup>. The 2003 Local Plan established infrastructure requirements to 2011 and the accompanying interim guidance set out the needs and levels for developer contributions towards the provision of education facilities, community buildings, recreational open space, play areas, indoor sports facilities and transport improvements in different parts of the District. Some of these projects have been carried forward in the Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP);
  - The community planning process. Each Local Community Partnership has its own community strategy which establishes community needs for the District's four largest towns and their rural hinterlands. Local communities are active both in formulating concepts and in looking in more detail at specific proposals;
  - Evidence based studies. Studies such as the Audit of Open Space have examined the adequacy of existing provision, whilst others (such as the Gillingham study) have looked at the infrastructure needed to support the growth proposed in the period up to 2026;
  - Negotiations with service providers. The Council has already discussed the need for additional infrastructure to support growth with service providers, such as the Local Education Authority and local Clinical Commissioning Groups.

### **Infrastructure Delivery and Funding**

- 7.9 In line with the NPPF, the Council will work with other authorities, providers and operators to:
- assess the quality and capacity of a range of different types of infrastructure including transport, water supply, wastewater and its treatment, energy

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<sup>176</sup> Planning Guidance Notes: Planning Obligations for the Provision of Community Infrastructure – Edition 7, North Dorset District Council (December 2011 – Revised Costs June 2011) and Interim Planning Guidance: The Development of Areas of Amenity Open Space, Play Areas and Commuted Sums, North Dorset District Council (October 2005).

(including heat), telecommunications, utilities, waste, health, social care, education, flood risk and its ability to meet forecast demands; and

- take account of the need for strategic infrastructure, including nationally significant infrastructure, within the area.

7.10 The IDP provides more detail on how infrastructure projects will be delivered. It aims to set out:

- what infrastructure is required;
- when the necessary infrastructure will be put in place;
- what likely costs are involved;
- how those costs will be met; and
- who will deliver that infrastructure.

7.11 The Council will work with all those agencies, authorities, bodies and others concerned with the provision of infrastructure to support the development envisaged in the Local Plan Part 1. Indeed, many of these have already been involved in the preparatory work for the IDP and will continue to have an involvement as it evolves.

7.12 The provision of infrastructure will require the coordination of funding from a variety of sources. Where development is likely to increase the need for infrastructure, developers may be required to make or fund provision on-site or contribute to the costs of provision off-site or the enhancement of existing facilities, either through the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) or a site-based planning obligation.

### **Infrastructure Provision and the Community Infrastructure Levy**

7.13 Councils have had the ability to implement a CIL since April 2010. The CIL is a charge that local authorities are empowered, but not required, to place on most types of development in their area to support local and sub-regional infrastructure associated with growth.

7.14 Any Council wishing to use the CIL will have to produce a ‘charging schedule’ setting out the amount to be raised from each type of development (charged at £ per square metre of residential or other floorspace). The charging schedule, the contents of which must be examined at a public inquiry, can only be brought into force once a local plan is adopted. The Council has decided to adopt this process and the IDP will provide the fundamental evidence base to support the setting of the CIL through a charging schedule. Proceeds from the CIL will then help fund items of infrastructure identified in the IDP.

### **Infrastructure and Neighbourhood Plans**

7.15 While much work has already been undertaken on infrastructure planning, some uncertainties remain, particularly in relation to the impact of the CIL and the distribution of the element payable to communities. In order to help town and

parish councils fund infrastructure or, indeed, anything else that will help address the demands that development places on the area, the Council is required to pass on a 'meaningful proportion'<sup>177</sup> of Levy receipts to town or parish councils<sup>178</sup> with adopted Neighbourhood Plans.

- 7.16 Communities are able to use these monies to fund projects which the community determines and these may not mesh tightly with the Council's infrastructure objectives. There is also the issue of the spatial pattern of distribution of neighbourhood plans and thus the spatial distribution of funding since it is not known how many neighbourhood plans there will be eventually in North Dorset and where they will be.
- 7.17 The Council will work closely with communities to help determine the most appropriate and effective use of CIL contributions in achieving the infrastructure required to support development in the District's settlements.

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<sup>177</sup> Councils are currently required to pass on 25% of Levy receipts (uncapped) in an area with a town or parish council and an adopted neighbourhood plan. In the absence of a neighbourhood plan, the Council is currently required to pass on 15% of Levy receipts in an area with a town or parish council, capped at £100 per dwelling.

<sup>178</sup> The Council has equivalent wider powers to spend this 'meaningful proportion' of CIL funds on the priorities identified in areas without parish councils, through consultation with local communities.

## Policy 13 - Grey Infrastructure

### Introduction

- 7.18 'Grey infrastructure'<sup>179</sup> describes the physical works required to support development. For the purposes of this Local Plan, grey infrastructure includes:
- transportation - including roads, cycleways, footpaths and measures to facilitate public transport use;
  - utilities - including telecommunications, electricity, gas and water supply, sewerage and wastewater treatment;
  - drainage - including Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) and flood prevention measures;
  - waste - including its collection, transfer and disposal; and
  - public realm - including street art and urban enhancement works<sup>180</sup>.
- 7.19 Each of these elements is essential for the proper functioning of settlements and is crucial to the delivery of growth. Policy 13 is intended to bring about the provision of the grey infrastructure necessary for the effective and efficient working of the communities in North Dorset and the strengthening of the area's economy.
- 7.20 In determining what grey infrastructure is needed, as well as where and when it is required, the Council has worked with other authorities and public bodies together with providers and operators to establish these parameters as accurately as possible.
- 7.21 Some elements are dealt with elsewhere, most notably Local Renewables. Renewable energy and the generation of heat or electricity from renewable or low carbon sources gives rise to a need for appropriate infrastructure. Policy 3 relates to climate change and Policy 22 deals with renewables and low carbon energy.

### Transportation

- 7.22 The NPPF sees transport policies as having an important role to play in facilitating sustainable development and contributing to wider sustainability and health objectives<sup>181</sup>. However, it is appreciated by the Government that different policies and measures will be required in different communities and opportunities to maximise sustainable transport solutions will vary from urban to rural areas. The Government urges local planning authorities, when preparing Local Plans, to look

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<sup>179</sup> Grey infrastructure is defined in terms of the 'constructed' rather than the 'natural' of green infrastructure in Putting the Green in the Grey, Natural Economy North West (2007) and as 'the man-made structures that facilitate transportation, provide housing, and offer services such as water, energy, and telecommunications' in Trees - The Green Infrastructure (IQ Report) Gary Moll (2002).

<sup>180</sup> Depending on its nature, public realm infrastructure can also be seen as social and green infrastructure, containing elements of all three types, just as the Trailway does, for instance.

<sup>181</sup> Paragraph 29, National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (March 2012)

to a pattern of development which, where reasonable to do so, facilitates the use of sustainable modes of transport<sup>182</sup>.

- 7.23 The NPPF also states that developments likely to generate significant movement should be located where the need to travel will be minimised and the use of sustainable transport modes can be maximised. However, this needs to be in the context of policies set out elsewhere in the NPPF, particularly in rural areas<sup>183</sup>.
- 7.24 Overall, planning policies should seek a balance of land uses so that people can be encouraged to minimise journey lengths for employment, shopping, leisure, education and other activities<sup>184</sup>.

### The North and north East Dorset Transport Study

- 7.25 The Council alongside East Dorset, worked closely with Dorset County Council and consultants in the preparation of the North and north East Dorset Transport Study (N&NEDTS)<sup>185</sup>. This examined the capacity of existing roads and public transport in the area and assessed the impact that projected growth would have on these networks. The analysis leads to a number of key transport infrastructure capacity issues and also takes account of constraints, including environmental constraints. The key elements of the transport strategy are:

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

- 7.26 North Dorset is a predominantly rural area and rural transport is consequently of particular importance. The implementation plan for the Local Transport Plan for Dorset<sup>186</sup> (LTP3) embraces a number of key transport priorities, one of which is to support and promote a culture of community driven rural access solutions to

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<sup>182</sup> Paragraph 30, National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (March 2012)

<sup>183</sup> Paragraph 34, National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (March 2012)

<sup>184</sup> Paragraph 37, National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (March 2012)

<sup>185</sup> North and north East Dorset Transport Study: Emerging Transport Strategy, Buro Happold (November 2009) This Study is supported by an Existing Conditions Report (July 2009), together with a Modelling Report (July 2009)

<sup>186</sup> Bournemouth, Poole and Dorset Local Transport Plan 3 (April 2011)

reduce the need to travel. Community Travel Exchange Hubs are seen as one way of achieving that.

- 7.27 All the foregoing elements support Policy 2 - Core Spatial Strategy, which seeks to concentrate development at the District's four main towns with a focus on meeting local needs elsewhere.

### Strategic Highway Network

- 7.28 The Exeter to London and the Weymouth to London strategic transport corridors pass through (respectively) the northern and southern edges of the District. They are discussed in more detail in Section 2 and in the Infrastructure Background Paper. The Highways Agency seeks to make the best use of existing strategic transport infrastructure, which it sees as key to encouraging economic growth, and looks to developers to 'manage down' the impact of development on strategic corridors.
- 7.29 Most of the development proposed in North Dorset is not likely to have a major impact on strategic transport corridors. The exception is development at Gillingham and its possible impact on the Exeter to London corridor, particularly the potential for increased congestion on the A303. Significant development at Blandford would also need to have regard to any potential impacts on the A31/A35 corridor.
- 7.30 Consequently, the following measures will help to reduce the potential for additional trips on the A303:
- ensuring that new development at Gillingham is accessible to the town centre, employment opportunities, the railway station and the relatively frequent Gillingham / Shaftesbury bus service;
  - enhancement of Gillingham Railway Station as a transport hub, including improvements to accommodate the improved services made possible by the construction of the enhanced passing loop at Axminster<sup>187</sup>; and
  - improvement of road links south from Gillingham to encourage the use of the A30 as an alternative to the A303 for trips to Yeovil and Salisbury (notably by construction of the A30/B3018 Enmore Green link road on the edge of Shaftesbury).
- 7.31 The Council will continue to work with developers to ensure that the proposed southern extension of Gillingham is accessible to and connected with the town centre and with public transport services. The Council also will work with the Highways Agency and Dorset County Council to reduce as far as possible the potential for increased trips from development at Gillingham onto the A303.

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<sup>187</sup> Route Specifications 2012 - Wessex, Network Rail (2012). Passenger services now operate direct between Salisbury and Exeter, from Waterloo, hourly. The line is not presently electrified; however, the Network Route Utilisation Strategy – Electrification (October 2009) recommended this section for review to enable electric services from Waterloo to Exeter but there are no current plans for electrification.

## Traffic Management

- 7.32 Demand management in the Exeter to London corridor and the likely general increase in trips associated with growth will increase the amount of traffic on roads in North Dorset but the N&NEDTS indicates that the technical capacity of most roads in the District will not be exceeded during the Plan period. However, the Study suggests that additional traffic could give rise to issues of environmental quality for residents along busy routes and have implications for road safety.
- 7.33 More effective management of movements on existing networks can help to reduce potential impacts, particularly by making sure that existing transport infrastructure is fully and efficiently utilised. Amongst other things, achieving more efficient use of the highway network improves journey times and network resilience and thus brings economic benefits.
- 7.34 Traffic management means making more effective use of the existing road network by improving flows at 'pinch points' and junctions through road improvements, for example, by using up-to-date traffic light phasing systems. In addition, improvements which achieve better road safety can help to reduce delays caused by accidents and encourage use by cyclists and pedestrians. Improvements of this nature will be progressed through the Local Transport Plan process, which aims to achieve long term planning and efficient use of resources delivering local transport, whilst also having regard to the relevant national and more local transport policy frameworks.
- 7.35 In addition, the Council will require developers to deal with the traffic implications of their developments by way of Transport Assessments (TAs) or Transport Statements (TSs). The Council will expect a TA to be prepared and submitted with a planning application for larger scale development and a TS for smaller schemes where the proposed development is likely to have significant transport implications. The TA will set out the transport issues relating to the proposed development, the anticipated impacts and the necessary measures to deal with those impacts. In particular, it will address accessibility and safety issues and show how increased use of alternative modes to the car will be achieved. Consequently, the TA can be used to determine whether the impact of a development on transport is acceptable. Developers will normally be required to produce a TA where the size or scale of a scheme is above the thresholds for different types of development set out in government guidance<sup>188</sup>. The Council will expect developers to pay particular attention to public transport in the TA or TS.

## Public Transport

- 7.36 The NPPF sets out a number of 'core planning principles' which Local Plans must embrace with the objective of contributing to the achievement of sustainable

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<sup>188</sup> Guidance on Transport Assessment, Department for Transport (March 2007).



development. One of these is to 'actively manage patterns of growth to make the fullest possible use of public transport, walking and cycling, and focus significant development in locations which are or can be made sustainable'<sup>189</sup>.

- 7.37 Public transport, particularly buses, can provide an alternative to the car for trips between towns and to key destinations within towns, such as town centres, major employment sites and schools. Public transport is also important in rural areas, particularly for those without other means of accessing facilities. However, in many cases the viability of the public transport service is an issue.
- 7.38 The operation of public transport in and serving North Dorset is currently being reviewed by Dorset County Council and the outcome of this review is likely to have implications for the future provision of bus services in the District. In particular, it is likely that 'demand responsive transport' solutions will be promoted as a way of improving rural public transport services. These could include more innovative and co-ordinated solutions, such as the development of Community Travel Exchange Hubs, which could help bring services to rural settlements and enable residents to travel to other services and facilities outside their village. The N&NEDTS also suggests that some improvements to scheduled services may be possible, particularly serving settlements along the A350, A357 and A30.
- 7.39 In addition, the Council will continue working with the County Council and Network Rail to further enhance Gillingham railway station as a transport hub serving Gillingham and the surrounding area. Policy 17 - Gillingham embraces the enhancement of Gillingham Railway Station as a transport hub.
- 7.40 Travel Plans<sup>190</sup> (TPs) offer a means of managing demand and are often one of the outcomes of a TA. TPs are an important tool for delivering sustainable transport to new development, whatever the use, and help to combat over-dependency on cars by promoting alternatives to single occupancy car use. When considering planning applications involving a significant number of employees or visitors or applications for sites not well served by public transport, the Council will be looking for developers to submit an appropriate TP (or TP Statement) with their application which fully assesses the existing and future role of public transport in relation to the development.

### Walking, Cycling and the North Dorset Trailway

- 7.41 The form and internal layout of a development, together with its relationship and connections with its setting, can significantly influence the balance of trips by different modes of transport. In order to achieve this, Policy 24 - Design promotes

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<sup>189</sup> Paragraph 17, National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (March 2012)

<sup>190</sup> The main types of Travel Plan (TP) are Workplace TPs and Residential TPs and can include measures such as car sharing schemes, a commitment to improve cycling facilities, a dedicated bus service or restricted car parking allocations.

new developments with ‘permeable’ layouts, designed to give priority to pedestrians and cyclists. This approach also gives opportunities for people to incorporate activity into daily lives, which can have health benefits.

- 7.42 The N&NEDTS highlights a number of places where walking and cycling facilities can be improved or provided within and between settlements. Of strategic importance is the conversion of the former Somerset and Dorset railway line to a pedestrian and cycle ‘trailway’. The Council and Dorset County Council have worked together put sections of the Trailway in place; completion of the route will link a number of villages from Spetisbury in the south, through Blandford to Sturminster Newton and towards Stalbridge in the north.
- 7.43 The N&NEDTS identifies a number of schemes to improve facilities for walking and cycling both in the main towns and in rural areas. Links of this nature (for example, the existing footway / cycleway between Blandford and Pimperne) can enable trips to be taken by more sustainable modes.

### Parking Provision and Management

- 7.44 The availability of car parking has a major influence on the choice of mode of transport, even in locations well served by public transport. Consequently, the Council’s overall approach seeks to manage car parking to encourage public transport, walking and cycling to take priority when people consider how to make different trips.
- 7.45 Policy 23 - Parking relates to the Council’s residential parking standards. These were derived from a Dorset-wide residential parking study<sup>191</sup>, which took into consideration expected levels of car ownership and established the principle that residential parking provision should be sufficient to cater for the reasonable needs of the occupants and to enable them to have a choice in the mode of transport they choose for any particular journey.
- 7.46 The Councils in Dorset will also work together to develop guidance and standards for ‘destination parking’, which will enable the provision of sufficient spaces to allow for use of the car but also to encourage other forms of transport. In the interim, current national and local standards and / or guidance will apply, as set out in Policy 23.
- 7.47 The number and type of spaces in off-street car parks and the time for which they can be occupied need to be carefully organised. On-street spaces also need to be similarly managed so that there is appropriate accessibility and turnover. Many car parks in the District are owned and managed either by the Council or by other public bodies. A strategy will be developed to achieve a more effective and sustainable use of this resource.

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<sup>191</sup> Dorset Residential Car Parking Study, WSP Development and Transportation and Phil Jones Associates, (2009)

## Utilities

- 7.48 Various companies are responsible for the provision of gas, electricity, water and telecommunications, together with their means of transmission. These companies have their own delivery plans<sup>192</sup> and programmes for the coming years, which need to ensure that planned growth can be accommodated.

### Gas

- 7.49 The National Transmission System (NTS)<sup>193</sup> is a high pressure, large diameter gas pipeline network running from shoreline terminals via compressor stations to pipeline systems and off-takes which serve consumers. There is a distribution station at Mappowder on the high pressure gas main which runs across the District, in the Local Distribution Zone owned and managed by Welsh and West Utilities. There are numerous gas suppliers who use this system and applications for new connections must be made to them. Depending on the level and location of new development, Transco has indicated that the existing network of medium and low pressure distribution main may need to be extended to support new neighbourhoods.

### Electricity

- 7.50 Electricity supplies are provided by the high-voltage electricity transmission system in England and Wales, which National Grid owns and maintains together with operating the system across Great Britain. The District is traversed by a high voltage transmission line and has various sub-stations and underground lines serving settlements. Scottish and Southern Electric have stated that these may need to be upgraded and extended to serve new developments in the future.

### Water

- 7.51 Water supply in the District is the responsibility of Wessex Water. Some 80% of the water supplied comes from groundwater sources in Wiltshire and Dorset. Policy 3 - Climate Change seeks greater water efficiency in new buildings and encourages the prudent use of water resources. In addition to these measures, Wessex Water has pointed to a potential need to upgrade supply networks during the Plan period to serve new developments, notably west of Blandford St Mary.

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<sup>192</sup> For example, Gas Transportation Ten Year Statement, National Grid, (December 2009); Operating the Electricity Networks in 2020 - Initial Consultation Document, National Grid Electricity Transmission, (June 2009); 2009 GB Seven Year Statement 2009/10 to 2015/16 inclusive, National Grid Electricity Transmission, (May 2009); Water Resource Management Plan, Wessex Water, 2009; Securing Water Supplies, Wessex Water, (June 2008)

<sup>193</sup> Operated and maintained by National Grid Transco.

## Telecommunications

- 7.52 Modern telecommunications play a significant role in the life of local communities, especially in rural areas. They also have a particular role to play in promoting sustainable communities by reducing the need to travel for work, education/ learning, shopping and leisure. The NPPF states unequivocally that 'Advanced, high quality communications infrastructure is essential for sustainable economic growth'<sup>194</sup> and 'In preparing Local Plans, local planning authorities should support the expansion of electronic communications networks, including telecommunications and high speed broadband'<sup>195</sup>.
- 7.53 Broadband availability across North Dorset is not widespread; indeed, a few areas have no access to broadband at all while others have slow or very slow connection speeds. The Council is working with Dorset County Council and others<sup>196</sup> in efforts to remedy the situation but there will still be 'blackspots' to be addressed.
- 7.54 The main aims of national policy are to ensure that people have a choice as to who provides their telecommunications service; have a wider range of services offered from which to choose; and have equitable access to the latest technologies as they become available. The Council will make planning decisions in relation to telecommunications development, including radio and mobile phone masts, in accordance with national planning policy, which supports the growth of existing and new telecommunications systems while minimising environmental impact.

## Drainage and Flood Prevention Measures

- 7.55 It is made clear in the NPPF that development should be directed away from areas at highest risk of flooding<sup>197</sup>. Policy 3 - Climate Change also establishes that new development in North Dorset should not be at risk from flooding. If development is necessary then it should be made safe without increasing flood risk elsewhere. In order to help manage flood risk, there is also a need to use sustainable drainage systems (SuDS)<sup>198 199</sup>.

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<sup>194</sup> Paragraph 42, National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (March 2012)

<sup>195</sup> Paragraph 43, National Planning Policy Framework. DCLG (March 2012)

<sup>196</sup> 'Superfast Dorset' is supported by the Council and the County Council and 'Trailway Broadband' is a community-led project.

<sup>197</sup> Paragraph 100, National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (March 2012)

<sup>198</sup> The Flood and Water Management Act 2012 encourages the uptake of sustainable drainage systems by removing the automatic right to connect to sewers and providing for unitary and county councils to adopt SuDS for new developments and redevelopments. The Act does this by including the requirement that developers include sustainable drainage, where practicable, in new developments, built to standards which reduce flood damage and improve water quality. Also, it makes the right to connect surface water run-off to public sewers conditional on meeting the new standards. It gives responsibility for approving sustainable drainage systems in new development, and adopting and maintaining them where they affect more than one property, to a SuDS approving body, generally the local authorities.

- 7.56 Site level SuDS features should be multi-functional and incorporated into the green infrastructure network on and beyond the site, creating safe amenity features. Permeable surfaces should be laid to facilitate infiltration of surface water whilst enabling disabled access. Where an existing SuDS scheme is within close proximity to a development site, the Council will expect connection to and improvement of the network to be considered, as should the provision of surface water management via SuDS to existing properties.
- 7.57 The NPPF urges local authorities to work with other authorities and providers and to frame strategic policies to deliver the provision of infrastructure for dealing with flood risk<sup>200</sup>. Flood management is the responsibility of the Environment Agency, which deals with flood defences at Blandford Forum, Gillingham and elsewhere. The Agency intends to continue with its current flood risk management policy, which includes assessing the potential for improving current flood defences and seeking to ensure that there is no increase in runoff from new developments while also seeking opportunities to reduce runoff wherever possible.
- 7.58 Generally, surface water should be separated from the foul sewerage system as this minimises the risk of foul water flooding after heavy rainfall and makes more efficient use of the existing foul sewer capacity. Separation may be achieved by discharging surface water to soakaways, to other SuDS or, if necessary, to separately piped surface water drainage systems.
- 7.59 Treatment of the District's urban wastewater<sup>201</sup>, which flows through the system of public and private sewers<sup>202</sup>, is the responsibility of Wessex Water, utilising a number of treatment works in the District. These networks may need to be upgraded during the Plan period to serve new developments. Wessex Water has commented that an anaerobic digestion plant at Gillingham Sewage Treatment Works will require significant investment and that development proposed west of Blandford St Mary would require further engineering appraisal to determine the nature and scope of capacity improvements to sewerage networks.

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<sup>199</sup> It is anticipated that developers will refer to appropriate guidance, especially Designing for Exceedance in Urban Drainage, Construction Industry Research and Information Association (2006)

<sup>200</sup> Paragraph 156, National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (March 2012).

<sup>201</sup> Wastewater is the 'used water' that is discharged by homes, communities, farms and businesses. Wastewater notably includes domestic sewage and industrial waste from manufacturing sources. Urban wastewater is any domestic wastewater, mixture of domestic and industrial wastewater and / or rainwater.

<sup>202</sup> In 2008 the Government announced the transfer of ownership of private sewers and lateral drains from private individuals to water and sewerage companies.

## Waste

- 7.60 The Dorset Waste Partnership<sup>203</sup> (DWP) is responsible for running waste services on behalf of a consortium of five Dorset authorities, including North Dorset District Council. Since April 2011, residents in North Dorset have had their refuse and recycling collections dealt with by the DWP. Household recycling centres, the treatment and disposal of waste and waste reduction promotions across Dorset are also managed by the DWP.
- 7.61 The Council will continue to work with DWP to ensure appropriate arrangements are made to deal with the waste produced by new development.

## Public Realm

- 7.62 Infrastructure in the public realm could be seen as a cultural element of social infrastructure. Similarly, town centre enhancement schemes frequently focus on hard landscaping and surfacing but may also include soft landscaping more usually seen as green infrastructure. However, because of its frequent and usually predominant constructional or 'hard' character, infrastructure in the public realm is dealt with here as grey infrastructure. The design process for these Infrastructure schemes should take full account of the needs of people with disabilities so that all sections of the community are able to gain benefits.
- 7.63 Often seen as public art<sup>204</sup>, public realm infrastructure is not widespread in the District and, as a consequence, the Council will seek to have incorporated in new developments such art elements as may be appropriate and support their introduction into existing developments.
- 7.64 Public art is significant in achieving high quality design and encouraging public art enhances the appearance of buildings and public spaces, can provide local landmarks and promotes a strong sense of place. When the local community is involved in shaping its environment then community pride is also embraced. Increasingly, many aspects of the built environment are seen as legitimate candidates for consideration as, or locations for, public art, including street furniture and lighting and the Council will encourage this in new development. As the main objective of public art is to enhance the quality of a place, it should be an integral part of the design process for the overall development.
- 7.65 Highway roundabouts are very visible in the public realm and offer significant potential for enhancement. While many authorities have placed public art works on roundabouts, many roundabouts also offer scope for attractive hard and/or soft

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<sup>203</sup> The Partnership was formed following the adoption of the Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy for Dorset in 2009 by all seven Dorset councils.

<sup>204</sup> The term 'public art' often refers to works of art in any medium that have been planned and executed with the specific intention of being sited or staged in the public domain. Such works are usually outside and accessible to all and have often been produced with community involvement and collaboration.

landscaping. Dorset County Council has a scheme whereby businesses and others can sponsor a roundabout and take responsibility for the landscaping and maintenance of the roundabout or the placing of a piece of artwork<sup>205</sup>. The Council will work with the County Council in the elaboration of such schemes to enhance the highway environs.

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<sup>205</sup> A recent example is the placing on a roundabout on A354 at Blandford of 3 larger than life badgers within a wildflower area, made by a local artist and sponsored by the local brewery.

## **POLICY 13: GREY INFRASTRUCTURE**

By working alongside developers, agencies, and other partners, the Council will ensure that the necessary grey infrastructure is put into place to support growth, development and North Dorset's economy.

The adequacy, availability and provision of grey infrastructure will be key considerations when planning applications are considered. Development will be expected to maintain, enhance and provide grey infrastructure, as appropriate to the particular development, by way of direct ( on/off site) or indirect ( by way of financial contribution) provision.

### **Transportation**

A more sustainable approach to transport in North Dorset will be developed by:

- a measures to manage demand in the Exeter to London corridor associated with the proposed growth at Gillingham, in particular measures to reduce the potential for increased trips on the A303; and
- b measures to make more effective use of the existing route network including: improvements to traffic flows at 'pinch points' and key junctions; and schemes to improve environmental quality on busy routes or to improve road safety; and
- c the use of Transport Assessments and Transport Statements, which the Council will require to be submitted by developers to assess the impact of new development on the existing highway network, clarify its consequences and put forward mitigation measures, when considering planning applications; and
- d seeking improved scheduled bus services between the main towns in and beyond the District and within the main towns; encouraging community-led transport schemes in rural areas; seeking improved demand responsive public transport services; and improved rail services in Gillingham; and
- e the production of Travel Plans in association with Transport Assessments/Statements with emphasis on public transport and which will be expected from developers; and
- f providing and enhancing walking and cycling facilities in the main towns and in rural areas, particularly between villages and nearby towns; and completing the North Dorset Trailway as a strategic walking and cycling route; and
- g developing and enforcing parking standards and guidance both for residential development and other uses and the development of a strategy for off-street parking, focusing on Council and other publicly owned car parks.



## **POLICY 13 (CONT'D): GREY INFRASTRUCTURE**

### **Utilities**

The Council will work with statutory undertakers, utility companies and other agencies and providers to upgrade and maintain existing utilities, including broadband provision, and provide new utilities to support development.

### **Drainage and Flood Prevention**

The Council will work with the Environment Agency and other relevant bodies to make provision for dealing with flood risk, the transfer and treatment of wastewater and the introduction of sustainable drainage systems.

Sustainable drainage solutions appropriate to the development and underlying ground conditions should be incorporated into all new development of two dwellings or more and connect with the overall surface water management approach for the area.

### **Waste**

The Council will work with the Dorset Waste Partnership to manage and ensure the effective collection and disposal of household waste in North Dorset.

### **Public Realm**

For all major developments proposals, and proposals on prominent sites, the Council will seek the incorporation of public art and will encourage liaison with local artists. Developers should consider the visual impact of infrastructure such as street and other lighting at the development design stage and take full account of the needs of people with disabilities.

## Policy 14 - Social Infrastructure

- 7.66 One of national policy's core principles is for planning "to take account of and support local strategies to improve health, social and cultural wellbeing for all, and deliver sufficient community and cultural facilities and services to meet local needs"<sup>206</sup>.
- 7.67 Policy 14 aims to deliver these principles and to ensure that the social infrastructure that our communities need is planned for positively. In particular it aims to deliver:
- education facilities (including pre-school childcare, primary and secondary, further and community learning and special needs education);
  - health services (hospitals, general surgeries and health centres);
  - emergency services (police, fire and rescue and ambulance);
  - cultural facilities (libraries, art galleries, arts centres and museums);
  - recreation and sport facilities (indoor sports facilities and youth centres); and
  - community facilities (non-commercial facilities such as community halls, places of worship and cemeteries).
- 7.68 To make our towns vibrant places we also need a range of commercial community facilities such as shops, cafes, bars and other activities within our town centres, as discussed in Policy 12 - Retail, Leisure and Other Commercial Developments. Village shops, post offices and pubs also provide a key focus for rural communities and the retention of such commercial facilities is discussed in Policy 27 - Retention of Community Facilities. Community facilities (both commercial and non-commercial) are encouraged in Policy 29 - The Re-use of Existing Buildings in the Countryside as they make the best use of existing resources whilst at the same time improving access to services for local people.
- 7.69 Local communities also have the opportunity to address economic development issues and the provision and retention of commercial and non-commercial community facilities through the neighbourhood planning process and the Government's Community Rights.
- 7.70 The provision of outdoor recreation and sport facilities is discussed in Policy 15 - Green Infrastructure.
- 7.71 The Council has worked with other authorities and providers to assess the quality and capacity of existing social infrastructure, to identify future needs and to ensure that these future needs are met.

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<sup>206</sup> Paragraph 17, National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (March 2012)

## Education Facilities

- 7.72 The Government attaches great importance to ensuring that there is a sufficient choice of school places available to meet the needs of existing and new communities. They require local planning authorities to take a proactive, positive and collaborative approach to meeting this requirement, and to development that will widen choice in education. The Government also give great weight to the need to create, expand or alter schools or education providers<sup>207</sup>.

### Pre-school Childcare

- 7.73 There is a range of childcare provision catering for the needs of pre-school age children in the District ranging from Children's Centres, day nurseries<sup>208</sup>, pre-school/play groups<sup>209</sup> to registered child-minders.
- 7.74 In 2011 the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment<sup>210</sup>, carried out by Dorset County Council Children's Services, assessed the supply and demand of pre-school childcare across the County and whether it met the demands of local families. It identified a key role for Children's Centres in delivering an integrated approach to family support.
- 7.75 There are three Children's Centres in North Dorset and they are located in the main towns of Blandford, Gillingham and Shaftesbury and there is an outreach base in Sturminster Newton. Children's Centres enable all children to have the best possible start in life and act as a central point where families can access information and a range of services. In Blandford and Shaftesbury the Children's Centres also have site day nurseries.
- 7.76 The assessment showed that in North Dorset day nurseries and pre-school/play groups provided the greatest number of places for pre-school child provision and in 2010 there were 39 day nurseries and pre-school/playgroups in the District. The distribution of day nurseries and pre-school/play groups mirrors the distribution of the population with the highest concentration of providers in the market towns.
- 7.77 Child-minders were also part of the assessment and research showed that in 2010 there were 73 registered child-minders providing 330 places in North Dorset. Child-minders are key in providing a service in rural areas where demand is not sufficient for group providers to offer a viable service.
- 7.78 The assessment did not identify any geographical gaps in childcare provision in North Dorset although it did acknowledge the challenges for childcare providers in

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<sup>207</sup> Paragraph 72, National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (March 2012)

<sup>208</sup> Group childcare and are open for a minimum of 45 hours per week over five days or more compared

<sup>209</sup> Group childcare for 0-5 year old but are open for less than 45 hours per week

<sup>210</sup> Childcare Sufficiency Assessment 2011, Dorset County Council (2011)

a rural area where populations are sparse and demand fluctuates and that child-minders could play an important role in meeting needs in these areas.

### Primary and Secondary Education

- 7.79 The Council has worked with Dorset County Council (DCC), as the Education Authority, to assess the likely future schooling needs of the District over the plan period. This assessment, undertaken in July 2013, took into account the likely increase in the school-age population associated with proposed growth. Evidence now shows that there is a need for additional accommodation, both at primary and secondary school levels in all four of the Districts main towns.
- 7.80 At a primary level DCC have provisionally identified a need for two additional forms of entry (2FE) in each of the Districts main towns and their provisional plans are to build a new primary school in each.
- 7.81 More detailed feasibility work shows that the situation in Blandford may be resolved through careful use of the existing capacity in the school pyramid and by extending the existing primary schools in the town. Whilst in Gillingham research shows that a new 2FE primary school is more likely required to accommodate the proposed growth associated with the southern extension, but to accommodate birth-rate increases in the town overall it may also be necessary to expand St Mary the Virgin School to 2FE. In Shaftesbury DCC are now looking to provide a new 2FE primary school within the town, but on a site that is sufficiently large to accommodate a 3FE school if required in the future. Finally, in Sturminster Newton housing growth is likely to produce just under an additional half form of entry and DCC will be considering an expansion of the school possibly on a new site.
- 7.82 There is also a primary school at Blandford Camp to meet the needs of military personnel and their families. Class sizes fluctuate with MOD rotations and DCC will consider expansion needs if and when required.
- 7.83 In addition to the new schools and expansions proposed, the Education Authority is committed to improving existing schools and within the plan period it is anticipated that the primary school at Pimperne will be replaced.
- 7.84 No new secondary schools are proposed in the plan period. Increases in Secondary School enrolments during the plan period will be managed on their existing sites.
- 7.85 In addition to the state funded schools there are also a number of independent schools in North Dorset catering for a wide age range of children from 2 to 16 and beyond. Independent day and boarding schools are important to the rural economy and offer a wide choice of educational providers for local residents and to those from further afield. Many have high quality sports and recreational facilities that are shared with local communities and some offer child care/holiday clubs outside of term times. The continued support and development of independent schools and their links with local communities are encouraged.

## Further Education and Adult Learning

- 7.86 There are no higher education establishments in the District, but further education is offered by a number of providers. In Shaftesbury there is the North Dorset Skills Centre at Wincombe Lane, Shaftesbury, which is part of Yeovil College. In Sturminster Newton there is the EQ Skills Training Base at Butts Pond that helps young people struggling to engage in academic education to gain employment skills and self-confidence. The District also has strong links with Kingston Maurward College, an agricultural college based in Dorchester which provides subsidised transport for a significant number of students in the area. The Council welcomes these ties would react positively to further outreach provision in the District.
- 7.87 Community learning is also available in the form of adult courses at a variety of venues and through work-based learning. These opportunities need to be retained and enhanced so that the existing and future workforce can receive the training they need to meet the changing requirements of local employers.

## Special Education Needs

- 7.88 There are two schools catering for special needs within the District. These are the Yewstock School in Sturminster Newton, a day community school taking pupils from age 2 until 19 years who have profound, multiple or complex learning difficulties; and the Forum in Shillingstone, a special boarding school catering for pupils with autism aged 5-12 years. Both schools are located within existing residential areas and the implications of expansion will need to be assessed in line with other policies within the Local Plan.

## Health Services

- 7.89 As part of the changes to the NHS brought about by the Health and Social Care Act 2012, Primary Care Trusts (PCTs) and Strategic Health Authorities (SHAs) ceased to exist on 31 March 2013. Their responsibilities were taken over by a range of new organisations.

## Hospitals

- 7.90 Under the auspices of Dorset Health Care University NHS Foundation Trust there are two community hospitals in North Dorset. The Trust has a long standing commitment to engaging patients, service users, carers and the wider community in the development and delivery of the services it provides. They believe it is essential that the services they offer are informed and influenced by local peoples' views and participation. The Blandford Community Hospital and the Westminster Memorial Hospital in Shaftesbury provide many services including elderly care inpatient rehabilitation, outpatient appointments, therapy services, radiology and minor injury services. The Council supports the retention and enhancement of community hospitals in the District.

- 7.91 The Council also supports the Trust in joining forces with Dorset County Council, other councils and NHS bodies in looking at ways of delivering health and social care services in Dorset as a whole under the new initiative, 'Better Together' that seeks to make the best use of available resources.

### General Surgeries and Health Centres

- 7.92 At a local level Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) are made up of local GPs, nurses and other professionals who are now responsible for commissioning services for local communities. The Dorset CCG supports people in Dorset to lead healthier lives and it is divided into localities. With the exception of the surgery in Silton, which due to its close proximity to the County boundary is in the Wiltshire CCG, the remaining 12 surgeries in North Dorset are within either the North or Mid Dorset Locality.
- 7.93 Following direct consultation with all surgeries in 2012 a majority confirmed that they had spare capacity or were able to meet the additional need for General Practitioners through expansion of existing facilities. However, in Blandford the Whitecliff Surgery acknowledged that the health provision was already under pressure and that a new or improved/extended surgery is required. A local centre is proposed to meet the needs of the new Southern Extension in Gillingham, with new health facilities including a doctor's surgery, dentist and pharmacy.
- 7.94 Policy 20 - The Countryside may permit a new or relocated surgery or health centre on the edge of the built-up area of a settlement in the countryside to support a rural community, if it can be demonstrated that there is an overriding need for a countryside location.

### Emergency Services

- 7.95 Community safety and emergency services (police, fire and rescue and ambulance) are important elements of social infrastructure. Their capacity and location are vital in supporting sustainable communities. The authorities responsible for providing these services have no immediate plans for expansion within the District however provision in Gillingham is likely to be reviewed as the Southern Extension is delivered.

### Cultural Facilities

- 7.96 The provision of cultural facilities is important for the health and well-being of the community. Over the plan period as the population of the District grows the need for well located, easily accessible libraries, art galleries, art centres and museums will increase. Buildings that are well designed, allow for a range of uses and that complement existing facilities are encouraged in the main towns. Outside the towns cultural facilities and their provision will be a matter for local communities to decide and delivered through the neighbourhood planning process unless an overriding need can be demonstrated.

## Libraries

- 7.97 Library services in the District are currently provided by Dorset County Council. There are four ‘core’ libraries in each of the main towns in North Dorset and a mobile library service that serves the rural areas. There is also a community library in Stalbridge that is run by local volunteers, but supported by the County Council, which also acts as a hub for community activity in the locality. The Council will seek to retain all libraries in the District and supports the sharing of resources and facilities to secure the primary use.

## Art Galleries and Arts Centres

- 7.98 Currently there are no public art galleries in North Dorset, but there are a number of permanent facilities for music and performing arts that also display works by local artists. The two main facilities are the Exchange at Sturminster Newton and the Arts Centre in Shaftesbury. Both function as arts centres as well as a focus for community and leisure activities involving music, theatre and film.
- 7.99 On a smaller scale there is also the Slade Centre in Gillingham that offers art classes, workshops and exhibitions and at the time of preparing this plan The Fording Point project, an arts centre incorporating theatre, cinema and other facilities, is proposed in Blandford town centre.
- 7.100 Outside the main towns the larger village halls such as Durweston and Fontmell Magna are used for Arts Reach Theatre events and the Moviola travels around a number of villages showing films to local audiences.
- 7.101 The Council support existing art galleries and arts facilities and the development of new facilities in the District’s four main towns depending on their scale and the area they serve.

## Museums

- 7.102 There are many small local museums around the District telling stories of rural life in bygone days, battlefield communications through the ages and geological displays. All are valuable educational resources and contribute to the local tourism industry. These types of development are encouraged and supported especially in the main towns where there are good transport links.

## Recreation and Sport

- 7.103 National policy<sup>211</sup> requires local planning authorities to work with public health leads to understand and take account of the health status and needs of the local population (such as for sports, recreation and places of worship).
- 7.104 The Dorset Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA)<sup>212</sup> in its needs assessments for physical activity recognises the need for a joint physical activity strategy in which

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<sup>211</sup> Paragraph 171, National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (March 2012)

existing sport and leisure centres, together with community halls and the natural environment play a key role in ensuring that those who want to be active can find activities they enjoy.

### Formal and Informal Indoor Facilities

- 7.105 There are three indoor sport and leisure centres in Blandford, Gillingham and Sturminster Newton. All are now managed by the local community and provide local residents with an opportunity to participate in formal and informal indoor exercise ranging from recreational swimming to exercise classes. These facilities are also shared with the secondary schools in the towns. In addition to these community run centres many of the District's independent schools also share their indoor facilities with local communities.
- 7.106 There are also Youth and Community Centres in Blandford, Gillingham, Shaftesbury and Sturminster Newton and outreach youth clubs based in village halls and other community halls in Stalbridge and Okeford Fitzpaine.
- 7.107 The Council seeks to retain existing formal and informal indoor sport and recreation providers to inspire as many individuals as possible to take up physically active behaviours. The development of new or expansion of existing facilities in the District's four main towns will be supported depending on their scale and the area they serve. The assessment of future needs and the opportunities for new provision should ideally be identified by local communities through the neighbourhood planning process. Alternatively, if identified, provision could also be made in the Local Plan Part 2

### Formal and Informal Outdoor Facilities

- 7.108 Access to high quality open spaces and opportunities for outdoor sport and recreation can make an important contribution to the health and well-being of communities. In addition, it can contribute to relieving recreational pressure on areas of high wildlife value. Whilst formal and informal outdoor recreation and sport facilities perform a social function, they are primarily covered by Policy 15 - Green Infrastructure.

### Community Facilities

- 7.109 The provision of community halls and places of worship add vibrancy to the District's towns and villages and can provide a focus for activities. For example, a community hall can host a range of activities catering for all ages from young children with mother and toddler meetings to gardening clubs and the Women's Institute. Places of worship and their associated halls are also a focal meeting point for many, especially in more rural areas. Cemeteries and burial grounds are often associated with places of worship but in recent years natural burial sites have

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<sup>212</sup> Health and Wellbeing in Dorset, 2012 refresh of the Dorset Strategic Needs Assessment, NHS Dorset (2012)



become a popular alternative. The Council consider these types of community facilities to be ‘non-commercial’ in relation to policies in the Local Plan.

### Community Halls and Places of Worship

- 7.110 During the plan period the following measures will be taken to ensure that the community venues in the main towns are adequate to cater for planned growth:
- Blandford – the refurbishment of the Corn Exchange, to provide a multi-purpose hall for community use;
  - Gillingham – the provision of a community hall to serve the proposed southern extension to the town and a hall adjoining Riversmeet, both of which will embrace multi-functional space; and
  - Shaftesbury – the provision of a community hall, details of which have not yet been determined.
- 7.111 In Sturminster Newton the multipurpose Exchange is a community centre, arts and learning centre that offers much potential for community, leisure and entertainment activities. Its continued success is important not only to the town, but as a live entertainment venue for the District as a whole.
- 7.112 Outside the four main towns many rural communities already have a village hall, but some are in need of replacement, extension or refurbishment to bring them up to modern standards. The Council is keen for rural and often isolated communities to maintain a communal meeting facility as this not only enhances vibrancy but also minimises the need to travel. A new or relocated community hall may be permitted on the edge of the built-up area of Stalbridge or the District’s villages to support a rural community, if it can be demonstrated that there is a need for the facility and no suitable sites exist within the relevant settlement.

### Cemeteries and Burial Grounds

- 7.113 There are a number of cemeteries throughout the District both in the main towns and the countryside where they are primarily associated with churches. The Council wishes to see the retention of all cemeteries as they form an integral part of the historic character and often contain mature vegetation which is of ecological value.
- 7.114 However, some cemeteries are nearing capacity and during the plan period new cemetery provision will be required. At present there is an identified need for extra capacity in the towns of Gillingham and Shaftesbury.
- 7.115 Town and Parish Councils are responsible for cemetery provision and prior to any allocation of land in the towns, whether through the Local Plan Part 2 or through the neighbourhood planning process, detailed surveys are required to determine the most appropriate location for a new cemetery. In particular the Environment Agency needs to be consulted to ensure that ground conditions are suitable for this purpose and there is no danger of pollution of watercourses or groundwater.

- 7.116 The development of cemeteries, whether an extension to an existing site or a new site including natural burial sites, will be allowed in the countryside provided that they meet the identified needs of local communities and accord with the other policies in the Local Plan, including those relating to the landscape, residential amenity and access.

**POLICY 14: SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE**

The Council will work with partners and developers to ensure that the level of social infrastructure across the District is maintained and enhanced through the retention and improvement of existing facilities and new provision, where required.

Development should support the maintenance and enhancement of existing social infrastructure and the provision of new social infrastructure, through provision on-site and / or contributions to provision off-site, as appropriate.

Through these measures the Council will ensure that:

**Education Facilities**

- a the needs of existing pre-school facilities and providers in the towns and villages are met; and
- b provision is made to accommodate the additional forms of entry required at primary and secondary school levels across the District including, if necessary, new primary schools in Gillingham, Shaftesbury and Sturminster Newton; and
- c further education and community learning opportunities are retained and improved to provide the District's workforce with the skills necessary to meet the changing needs of local employers; and
- d schools catering for children and young adults with special needs are supported.

**Health Services**

- e community hospitals are retained and enhanced; and
- f sufficient general surgeries and health centres are in place with new or expanded surgeries provided in Blandford and Gillingham.

**Cultural Facilities**

- g existing libraries are retained and developed as valuable community hubs; and
- h multi-functional art galleries and arts centres are encouraged in the main towns; and
- i existing museums are protected and enhanced as valuable educational resources for the community as a whole.

## **POLICY 14 (CONT'D): SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE**

### **Recreation and Sport**

- j existing formal and informal indoor facilities are protected and enhanced. Applications for new facilities in the main towns depending on their scale and the area they serve will be supported.

### **Community Facilities**

- k existing community halls, places of worship and other non-commercial community facilities are protected and new facilities provided where there is an identified need. In the countryside, such facilities may be permitted on the edge of the built-up area of Stalbridge or the District's villages to support a rural community, where no suitable sites exist within the relevant settlement; and
- l sufficient land is provided for cemeteries and burial grounds.

## Policy 15 - Green Infrastructure

### Introduction

- 7.117 Green Infrastructure encompasses both the traditional ‘open space’ sites and other environmental features in an area, which should be designed and managed to create an interconnected network that offers a range of benefits to people and the environment. For the purposes of the Local Plan, green infrastructure is defined as the strategic network of accessible multifunctional sites and features (such as trees, parks, gardens, woodlands, formal and informal open spaces and nature reserves) and the linkages between them (such as hedgerows, rivers and their floodplains, footpaths, cycle ways and other transport routes and wildlife corridors) that improve quality of life and enhance the environment, sustaining many of the ecosystem services outlined in Policy 4 - The Natural Environment.
- 7.118 National policy requires local planning authorities to set out a strategic approach to green infrastructure. This approach should positively plan to create, protect, enhance and manage the green infrastructure network<sup>213</sup>. Development should help deliver green infrastructure and biodiversity enhancement as part of a strategy to address climate change mitigation and adaptation<sup>214</sup>. In addition, green infrastructure plays an important role in creating sustainable communities by reducing the negative consequences of urban growth and change, creating places where people want to live, and enhancing the urban environment.

### Green Infrastructure Elements

- 7.119 Green infrastructure incorporates elements at all spatial scales from the town centre to the open countryside. It not only includes a range of different sites, but also the links between them and other green elements of the urban and natural environment such as roadside trees and verges. Each element of green infrastructure has a primary function but it can also function in other ways to improve the quality of life of residents or secure environmental benefits. This ‘multi-functionality’ can be enhanced through the appropriate design and management of individual sites and the overall green infrastructure network. Examples include the planting of fruit trees around sports pitches and play areas.
- 7.120 Green infrastructure elements should ideally be accessible to the whole community and it is important that these community assets are not restricted in their use to their primary owners, unless part of private amenity space such as a private garden. An example could be the use of a school playing pitch by a local football club in addition to its use for school sports activities.

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<sup>213</sup> Paragraph 114, National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (March 2012)

<sup>214</sup> Paragraph 99, National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (March 2012)

7.121 The different types of site that make up the green infrastructure network in North Dorset and their primary functions are set out in Figure 7.1.

Figure 7.1: Types and Functions of Green Infrastructure

Type	Examples	Primary Functions
Outdoor recreation facilities, parks and gardens	Sports pitches and greens, playgrounds, urban parks, formal gardens	Offer opportunities for sports, play and recreation and to enable easy access to the countryside (for example Blandford Leisure Centre and recreation ground)
Amenity greenspace	Informal recreation spaces, housing green spaces, country parks, landscape planting, green roofs, domestic gardens, trees, village greens, urban commons, other incidental space	Creating attractive and pleasant built environments, providing community and private outdoor leisure space (for example The Slopes in Shaftesbury)
Natural and semi-natural urban greenspaces	Nature reserves, woodland and scrub, grassland, heathlands, moors, wetlands, ponds, open and running water, landscape planting	Creating areas for biodiversity, access to education associated with the natural environment (for example Butts Pond Nature Reserve in Sturminster Newton)
Green corridors	Rivers and canals including their banks and floodplains, trees, hedgerows, dry stone walls, road and rail corridors, cycling routes, pedestrian paths, rights of way	Creating a sustainable travel network promoting walking and cycling, enhancements to semi-natural habitats and integrating micro green infrastructure into urban areas (for example up and downstream of Lodden Bridge in Gillingham)
Local character areas	Churchyards, treed areas, roadside verges, landscape screening, setting of a building, open gaps, views	Creates a sense of character within a settlement contributing to the attractiveness of an area or building. (for example Church Field in Shillingstone)
Other	Allotments, community gardens, orchards, cemeteries and churchyards	Providing accessible facilities to meet needs within settlements, enable local food production (for example Pond Walk allotments in Stalbridge)

### A Green Infrastructure Strategy

7.122 The Council will produce a Green Infrastructure Strategy to inform the production of the Local Plan Part 2. This will enable the coordinated provision of an integrated green infrastructure network across the whole district where individual elements

contribute to achieving the wider objectives of the Local Plan. The key benefits that the Green Infrastructure Strategy and the Council more generally will seek to deliver are set out in Figure 7.2. These key benefits of green infrastructure fit within the broad ecosystem services categories as outlined in Policy 4 – The Natural Environment.

- 7.123 An assessment of current resources was prepared in the Council’s Open Space Audit & Assessment of Local Need . This Audit assessed a range of sites including recreational grounds, amenity spaces and formal gardens, allotments, cemeteries and sports pitches. Although the Audit assessed a wide range of sites, not just those with sport and amenity uses, their value was assessed primarily from an open space access and quality perspective, rather than in terms of the wider green infrastructure benefits they could offer.
- 7.124 The Council will use the results of the Audit to aid the development of its Green Infrastructure Strategy by:
- assessing the existing situation;
  - assessing the multi-functionality of sites to capitalise on the benefits of green infrastructure;
  - identifying areas where there are deficiencies in provision or where links can be made through the development of local standards where appropriate;
  - linking to other initiatives and plans (such as the South West Nature Map, the North Dorset Trailway Project and the Local Community Partnerships) to help deliver their objectives; and
  - prioritising areas where development will take place as these offer opportunities for improving green infrastructure provision.
- 7.125 Across the district there are opportunities to enhance green infrastructure provision both quantitatively but also qualitatively, through the Green Infrastructure Strategy and other mechanisms. Enhancement of existing and the provision of new green infrastructure will help to support the needs of the growing population and help to deliver the wider benefits outlined in Figure 7.2.
- 7.126 In the four main towns, the green infrastructure network will be enhanced as a result of the sites identified for growth being developed. In addition, the existing green infrastructure elements will be enhanced and connected to each other to provide a network to deliver wider benefits to the towns and surrounding areas. These linkages will, alongside other benefits, seek to provide safe walking and cycling routes to and from town centres and other key facilities such as schools.

Figure 7.2: Key Benefits of Green Infrastructure

Key Benefits	
Ecology and biodiversity	Enabling the migration of species through urban areas; the creation of habitats within built up areas, enhancement of biodiversity as a whole; reduction in recreational pressure on important designated sites (supporting services)
Climate change mitigation	Absorption of CO <sub>2</sub> by vegetation; wood as a fuel from forests; incorporation of underground pipes for ground source heat pumps in parks or gardens (regulating services)
Access and transport	Cycling and walking routes from within residential areas, increasing the permeability of towns to alternatives to the car; providing safe cycling and walking routes into and out of towns (cultural services)
Climate change adaptation and water management	Storage of flood water in floodplains; SuDS to store rainwater in times of flood; shading and cooling effect provided by trees and other vegetation (regulating services)
Water quality and pollution control	Rainwater permeating through green surfaces into water table; absorption of pollutants by vegetation; SuDS to control diffuse pollution (regulating services)
Community, recreation and leisure	Sports pitches, play grounds, cycling and walking routes for active recreation; places for meeting and community events; provision of allotments within towns; provision of community orchards; provision of alternative, attractive areas for recreation away from important wildlife sites (cultural services)
Education	Exposure to nature and the learning opportunities it offers (cultural services)
Health and well being	Promotion of and access to outdoor exercise opportunities; relaxation; psychological benefits of open space; reduced healthcare costs (cultural services)
Cultural and landscape heritage	Incorporates rural heritage into urban areas; integrates the town into the landscape; screens developments from landscape views (cultural services)
Economic development	Enhanced attractiveness of the urban environment leading to desirable neighbourhoods; benefits for leisure and tourism industry; a happy and productive workforce through an attractive working environment; enhancement of the rural economy (provisioning services)

7.127 Rural communities live in close proximity to the open countryside, but it is not always accessible to local people. Rural communities also require their own sport



and recreational facilities and require safe access to community facilities such as schools and village halls. It is important to provide green infrastructure in rural areas to improve access to the wider countryside for recreation purposes, access to community open space such as village greens and play spaces and access to facilities in towns. Access routes should be established to provide safe and convenient walking and cycling routes as well as helping to delivering the wider benefits that green infrastructure can provide.

- 7.128 The Council will seek to protect and enhance existing open space, character areas, outdoor sport and recreational facilities and to provide new facilities to support growth. This will be particularly relevant in relation to play space for children and young people but also in relation to allotments, cemeteries, nature reserves and the multiple benefits that green infrastructure elements can deliver.
- 7.129 The Council will support the development of new strategic facilities in suitable locations, well connected to centres of population. These may be identified as part of the Green Infrastructure Strategy or may be stand-alone projects. The North Dorset Trailway is an example that provides safe recreational and commuting links for walkers, cyclists and horse riders along the route of the former Dorset and Somerset Railway. There are gaps in the route, areas where the route could be improved and the potential to connect other settlements into the route. The further development of the North Dorset Trailway is supported by the Council and contributions to its improvement will be expected from developments at settlements along its route.
- 7.130 Through the Green Infrastructure Strategy and other mechanisms the Council will look at the potential to provide public access to wildlife sites (for example, through the designation of Local Nature Reserves<sup>215</sup>) and the open countryside for relaxation and educational purposes, utilising natural features such as river corridors where possible whilst ensuring that the reason for any designation is not compromised. Designating further sites as nature reserves will enhance opportunities for biodiversity and the migration of species enabling wildlife to adapt to the impacts of climate change<sup>216</sup>.
- 7.131 In addition to working with local communities to deliver local benefits, the Council will work with neighbouring authorities to deliver strategic green infrastructure objectives. Examples include mitigation of the impact of residential development on Dorset Heathlands either through support for measures taking place in neighbouring authority areas or through connections with strategic proposals such

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<sup>215</sup> Local Nature Reserves have been declared at Woolland Hill and Butts Pond, Sturminster Newton. Further declarations will continue working towards the Natural England target of one hectare per 1,000 population

<sup>216</sup> Important habitats are often scattered and fragmented resulting in species becoming isolated and unable to migrate as evidenced in the South West Nature Map

as the Stour Valley Park<sup>217</sup>. In addition, the council will help to protect and enhance the national long distance footpath and cycle route network. The council will work with other partner organisations (such as the AONBs or the Dorset Wildlife Trust) to facilitate management of the countryside in a sustainable manner.

### Local Green Space

- 7.132 National policy makes provision for local communities to identify green areas of particular importance to them for special protection. These Local Green Spaces<sup>218</sup>, where new development will be ruled out other than in very special circumstances, can only be designated through local or neighbourhood plans and should be small in scale and in close proximity to the communities they serve.
- 7.133 Local Green Space can be designated due to its local significance or the fact that it is demonstrably special to the local community. Designated areas can include areas of historic significance, playing fields, wildlife sites or areas which contribute to the character and appreciation of an area.
- 7.134 Potential sites to be designated as Local Green Spaces will be identified through the Local Plan Part 2 document or through the neighbourhood planning process. Prior to that, the Important Open or Wooded Areas identified in the North Dorset District-wide Local Plan 2003 will continue to be used for development management purposes.
- 7.135 Neighbourhood plans, when produced, should seek the provision and enhancement of green infrastructure in line with this policy. They should also seek to deliver the key green infrastructure benefits (as set out in Figure 7.1), including on Local Green Spaces and Important Open or Wooded Areas, and contribute to the objectives of the Green Infrastructure Strategy.

### Providing and Enhancing Green Infrastructure

- 7.136 All new development will be required to contribute towards the provision, enhancement or management of the multifunctional green infrastructure network in addition to any landscape planting required on a development site.
- 7.137 Development should provide new green infrastructure, enhance or contribute towards enhancing existing green infrastructure to improve the quality of life of residents and deliver environmental benefits. This should be achieved through delivery on-site unless: it is not practical to do so or exceptionally, if greater benefits could be achieved through off-site measures. On- or off-site provision should be delivered in line with the standards set out below, unless a different level

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<sup>217</sup> As proposed in the South East Dorset Green Infrastructure Strategy “Investing in Green Places” consultation draft January 2011

<sup>218</sup> Paragraph 76 of the National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (March 2012)

of provision or standards are set in other planning policies, in the Green Infrastructure Strategy, or locally for example in a neighbourhood plan.

- 7.138 Provision of outdoor sports and play space will be required in line with the Fields in Trust standards<sup>219</sup>. Developments will be expected to deliver to these standards on-site, where practical to do so.
- 7.139 The Council will seek to secure the provision of one standard allotment plot for every 60 people in a settlement. Where development is proposed, the delivery of allotments on-site will be required, where practical to do so, at or above this level in clusters of 15 plots.
- 7.140 Allotments and burial grounds at the four main towns should ideally be provided within settlement boundaries however, where no suitable site exists, a suitable site outside a settlement boundary may be considered. For provision of burial grounds elsewhere, delivery should be in line with Policy 14 - Social Infrastructure.
- 7.141 Other elements of green infrastructure (for example, informal open space, amenity green space and the linkages between such elements) should be provided as part of developments to reduce recreational pressure on areas designated for their biodiversity interest, where practical to do so, having regard to the opportunities on-site for such provision. In addition, developments will be expected to provide, enhance or make a contribution towards the enhancement of other existing elements of green infrastructure off-site.
- 7.142 The Green Infrastructure Strategy will develop a strategic approach to green infrastructure and identify a range of green infrastructure elements. The Strategy will inform the preparation of the Local Plan Part 2 with development sites being required to provide on-site green infrastructure as the default position unless it can be demonstrated that it is not practical to do so or, exceptionally, if greater benefits could be provided through off-site provision. Where necessary the provision, enhancement and management of green infrastructure will be secured through the Infrastructure Delivery Plan.
- 7.143 Prior to the Green Infrastructure Strategy being produced, developers will be required to demonstrate how their proposed schemes would deliver key green infrastructure benefits and would not compromise the realisation of such benefits and objectives in the future. Developers will be encouraged to work with community groups and voluntary organisations to deliver benefits to communities through green infrastructure provision, design and management.

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<sup>219</sup> Current standards are those contained in “Planning and Design for Outdoor Sports and Play”, Fields in Trust (2008)

**POLICY 15: GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE**

The Council will produce a Green Infrastructure Strategy for North Dorset which will set out a strategic approach to the provision, design and management of an integrated network of green spaces, green links and other green elements (including those set out in Figure 7.1). It will examine the potential for the multifunctional use of individual sites and the green infrastructure network as a whole with a view to securing multiple benefits (including those identified in Figure 7.2).

Through the Green Infrastructure Strategy and more generally, the Council will seek to:

- a integrate the new green infrastructure to be provided in association with strategic growth at the four main towns with existing green infrastructure networks; and
- b enhance the provision of green infrastructure in the countryside (including at Stalbridge and the District's villages), especially where it helps to improve recreational opportunities; and
- c protect and enhance existing open space, character areas, outdoor sport and recreational facilities and provide new facilities to support growth; and
- d take forward new and improved strategic facilities, such as the North Dorset Trailway; and
- e promote the public enjoyment of wildlife, where this is compatible with maintaining biodiversity; and
- f identify opportunities to work with partners at the local, district and sub-regional levels to deliver multiple key green infrastructure benefits.

Development will be required to enhance existing and provide new green infrastructure to improve the quality of life of residents and deliver environmental benefits. All elements of green infrastructure should be provided on-site in line with standards of provision set in the development plan or the Green Infrastructure Strategy unless:

- g it can be demonstrated that it would not be practical to do so; or
- h exceptionally, it could be demonstrated that greater benefits could be realised through off-site measures.

**POLICY 15 (CONT'D): GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE**

Where the full requirement for green infrastructure is not provided on-site, development would be expected to provide new green infrastructure off-site, and / or enhance (or make a contribution towards the enhancement of) existing green infrastructure off-site.

Developments will also be expected to deliver, or contribute towards the delivery of:

- i the conservation and management of existing assets; and
- j the creation of new sites and links including new or improved open space for children's play, outdoor sport and recreation; and
- k enhancement to the functionality, quality and connectivity of green infrastructure; and
- l area-specific packages which achieve multiple benefits; and
- m measures which support the delivery of the outputs of the Green Infrastructure Strategy.

Neighbourhood Development Plans should consider measures that assist in delivering key green infrastructure benefits and the objectives of the Green Infrastructure Strategy, including the designation of Local Green Space, where appropriate.







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