

**North Dorset District Council
Local Development Framework**

Consultation Statement

Child Okeford Village Design Statement (VDS)

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1.0 Introduction

The Child Okeford Village Design Statement

- 1.1 In May 2005 Child Okeford Parish Council resolved to produce a Village Design Statement for the village following the completion of the Child Okeford Parish Plan. An open Village Meeting was held in September 2005, where it was unanimously agreed by the community that a Village Design Statement should be produced and adopted by both the Parish Council and North Dorset District Council (the Council).
- 1.2 In January 2006 a draft structure for the VDS process was produced by the Parish and circulated for comment; the final structure was approved by the Parish Council in February 2006. A comprehensive building survey of 513 dwellings in the village was undertaken during April and May 2006.
- 1.3 Consultation with Mr J. Bishop of BDOR, who worked on producing the original format of Village Design Statements for the ODPM, was made during April 2006.
- 1.4 Between May 2006 and January 2007 a number of drafts of the VDS were produced and amended. Advice was sought with the District Council during this period.

The Consultation Statement

- 1.5 The new planning system introduced by the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, requires extensive community involvement in the preparation of Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs).
- 1.6 In the initial preparation, Local Planning Authorities should informally involve local communities and stakeholders in the development of policies. At the latter stage, when formal consultation is undertaken, the Council is required to produce a 'Consultation Statement' which sets out how initial consultation was undertaken and the main issues that emerged from this.
- 1.7 The Council is required to include the following in its Consultation Statement:
 - The names of any persons whom the authority consulted in connection with the preparation of the draft SPD;
 - How those persons were consulted;
 - A summary of the main issues raised in those consultations; and
 - How those issues have been addressed in the draft SPD.

- 1.8 The draft SPD was approved by Cabinet, for the purposes of public consultation, on 24th May 2007. Six weeks formal consultation on the draft SPD will now take place, beginning in June 2007.

2.0 Pre-Formal Consultation Activities

- 2.1 Pre-formal consultation can be said to have begun with the work undertaken following the production of the Child Okeford Parish Plan, which led to the decision to produce a VDS that would be adopted by the District Council.
- 2.2 In May 2000, prior to the production of the Parish Plan, a comprehensive survey of all households in Child Okeford was carried out. The purpose of this survey was to obtain the views of all residents on a number of issues raised in earlier consultations, including at a two day public exhibition, which highlighted the main problems and issues being experienced in the village. A number of these issues were concerned with the future growth of the Parish, further development and the style, character and size of any future housing.
- 2.3 Information that directed the production of the Parish Plan was also provided by the Child Okeford Local Housing Needs Survey which was conducted by the North Dorset Rural Housing Enabler in October 2000.
- 2.4 In 2002 at the Annual Parish Meeting it was agreed to consider the production of a Parish Plan and this was formally agreed at Parish Council on the 10th June 2002. Subsequently, a Public Meeting was held on the 24th July 2002 in which 70 people attended and on the 9th February 2003 a Public Exhibition was held in the village hall in which 135 people attended to discuss the Parish Plan concept.
- 2.5 In May 2003 a household survey of 500 dwellings was undertaken. The survey was comprised of three questionnaires, the first titled 'housing', the second 'personal' and the third 'youth'. In total, 348 'housing', 681 'personal' (from 402 dwellings) and 79 'youth' questionnaires were returned, and these results were used to set the main objectives of the Parish Plan and later the VDS.
- 2.6 In May 2005 the Environment Policy Manager of North Dorset District Council attended the Annual Parish Meeting to discuss the role and function of VDSs. 43 members of the community were present at this meeting, which was advertised in the Parish Magazine and on the Parish noticeboards. Following this Meeting, a Special Parish Meeting was organised in September 2005 to elect the VDS Team. This Meeting was attended by 36 members of the community.

- 2.7 During April and May 2006, 11 members of Child Okeford undertook a housing survey of 513 dwellings to be used as the main evidence base for the development of the VDS. This work has provided a robust basis for the development of the policies in the VDS, which supplement the objectives and policies of the North Dorset District-Wide Local Plan.
- 2.8 A further survey of the opinions of the younger generation was undertaken in June 2006, in order to ascertain their views on what they like and do not like about the place where they live.
- 2.9 The results of these surveys, as well as many more informal discussions with the residents and residents groups within the village have formed the basis of the Child Okeford VDS.
- 2.10 In liaising with Child Okeford Parish Council, North Dorset District Council have been able to appreciate the considerable level of time and effort that has been put into the development of the draft VDS. This work has sought the views of a very large proportion of the people that live and work in the village and has resulted in a well evidenced Design Statement, with a number of policies that aim to deliver the community's wishes concerning new development within their village.

3.0 Issues Raised

- 3.1 The main points that were identified from the informal consultation carried out by the Parish Council are listed below, although a number of these issues, for conformity reasons, could not be incorporated into the SPD:
 - 1) 45% of residents wanted no further growth and the remaining 55% wanted only very modest growth.
 - 2) 80% wanted a greater provision of affordable housing in development and 80% were against larger 'executive' homes.
 - 3) 95% were against the development of any further housing estates.
 - 4) 85% wanted 'in character' housing that reflects the rural nature of the village, replicating the character found particularly in the Conservation Areas.
 - 5) 85% felt strongly that decisions on local planning issues should be made by local people.
 - 6) There is a strong desire to maintain and enhance the village environment and surrounds with particular emphasis on protecting traditional hedgerows. 83% wished to see native species planted when new planting takes place.
 - 7) There was a strong feeling that modern materials and designs are out of place in a rural village and traditional materials should be used whenever possible.

4.0 Addressing the Issues

- 4.1 A number of important issues were raised during the pre-formal consultation stage and these issues have been taken into account in the preparation of the policies in the draft SPD.
- 4.2 One of the main issues raised during the production of both the Child Okeford Parish Plan and the VDS, summarised by a member of the VDS Team, was “how do we maintain the rural character of the village in the face of the current trend for urbanisation, pressure from developers for both infilling and larger ‘executive’ homes, a planning system that goes to the extreme of designating domestic gardens as brownfield sites and the difficulty of getting the local voice to have a meaningful influence on planning decisions?”
- 4.3 The Council has a duty to listen to the communities that it serves and the Child Okeford VDS sets out design principles based on the distinctive local character and requirements of the village to provide guidelines for both developers, councillors, planners and the Planning Inspectorate.
- 4.4 In agreeing to adopt the Child Okeford VDS as a SPD the Council hopes that the formal weight of the policies, once adopted, will meet the specific needs of the community, raised during the comprehensive pre-formal consultation period.