

# **LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK**

## **Shaping the future of North Dorset**

**Results of Raising Awareness Meetings:**

**April 2005**

# CONTENTS

Introduction.....	4.
Summary and Conclusions.....	5.
What Happens Next.....	8.
Appendix 1 (Attendees).....	9.
Appendix 2 (Comments made at the 5 meetings).....	11.



# Shaping the Future of North Dorset

## Results of Raising Awareness meetings: April 2005

### INTRODUCTION

1. North Dorset District Council has begun work on the new process of plan preparation known as the Local Development Framework (LDF).
2. The Local Development Scheme (LDS) published in April 2005 sets out a timetable for the production of the different elements of the LDF.
3. The two elements of the LDF that are currently being worked on are the Statement of Community Involvement and the Core Strategy. The timetable for the preparation of these documents shows that there will be early involvement of interested parties in the process. To this end a series of five exhibition/meetings was held in each of the towns in the District during April 2005, with the intention of raising people's awareness of the new process and inviting discussion on both means of consultation and on the important planning issues facing North Dorset.
4. Five meetings were held between 3.30 and 7.00 at the following locations  
14<sup>th</sup> April - Shaftesbury Christian Centre  
18<sup>th</sup> April - Durweston Village Hall, Blandford  
21<sup>st</sup> April - Sturminster Newton, Royal British Legion  
25<sup>th</sup> April - Gillingham Town Hall  
28<sup>th</sup> April - Stalbridge Methodist Hall
5. Altogether over 100 people attended. They represented a broad range of interest groups from Town and Parish Councils, Community Partnerships, local agents and house builder representatives, CPRE, local businesses and representatives of educational and health interests. A full list of participants is included in Appendix 1.
6. At each meeting, a presentation on the new planning system was given, with an opportunity for general questions. Visitors were then divided up for work groups based on 1) ideas on a core strategy and 2) how to get involved with the planning process. The latter group also considered the draft Development Control Charter which had recently been published for consultation purposes by the Council. At Shaftesbury officers discussed ideas with the smaller group on a one to one basis.

7. The comments made at each meeting have been recorded and are included in Appendix 2. Some comments were made verbally through the discussion groups, others were written and “posted” on the display boards. Each meeting took on its own character and this is reflected in the different styles of write up which follow. The comments made at each meeting are recorded separately under the headings on the exhibition boards / discussion groups as listed below. Common themes are summarised.

- 1) Vision for North Dorset - scale
  - 2) The Strategy - Housing, Access, Rural Facilities, Community Facilities, Health & Safety, Economy and Environment
  - 3) You and the LDF
  - 4) Town Map
  - 5) Focus group sign up – green diagram
  - 6) Focus groups – Questionnaire chart
  - 7) DC Charter
  - 8) Worry bin
- Work Groups - Core Strategy, SCI, Development Control Charter.

## **SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS**

8. The meetings were useful both in raising awareness of local people and interest groups in the new planning process and providing feedback and ideas to help develop the SCI, Development Control Charter and Core Strategy.
9. Many diverse issues were raised, but some of the more common themes on each subject are listed below. These will be considered further in the development of the different documents.

## **Statement of Community Involvement**

*"People do care - need to tap into the way they care."  
"Not everyone can think on their feet."*

- Is more consultation actually required? Is the whole Planning Process too complicated? Spend more time on the solutions rather than devising more complex consultation processes.
- Government policy too often fails to recognise different needs of rural areas.
- Consultation can raise hopes unrealistically. Need to ensure realistic options are spelled out.
- What about the democratic process? Parish and Town Councils still need to have a say, Community Partnerships are not representative of the majority.
- Variety of consultation methods preferred, no one type suits all.

- Times of meetings crucial - evenings preferred by many. Improve advertising of meetings. Consider business needs.
- Questionnaires by post or face to face if resources available.
- Use Parish/Community newsletters - free source of publicity.
- Blackmore Vale Magazine is widely read throughout the District, use it regularly to keep people informed. Start a North Dorset DC news page??
- Community partnerships already doing a good job - use them, but acknowledge they may need more resources.
- Use existing news networks e.g. Gillingham's "Info Exchange" or "Homewatch" Schemes.
- E-mail/Website cheap and easy for NDDC to use, but costly for locals to download information. Keep up to date, ensure user friendly.
- NDDC logo can be a turn off (Too official).
- Involve young people in specific projects, use incentive schemes and rewards.

### **The Development Control Charter.**

- Pre application advice is necessary, especially since so little opportunity to negotiate now. A checklist would be useful (eg relevant policies, past history, necessary consultations etc.) No agreement on whether charges should be levied.
- Developers accept that pre application consultation with local community is beneficial. They are also prepared to enter "open book" discussions (where costs of developing a site are set out.) Experience is showing that early consultation is effective.
- There was no agreement on whether local community consultation should be a requirement above a particular threshold of development. Some sites are so sensitive that even a single new dwelling could be controversial.
- LPA's need to draw attention to Parish Plans where they have policies that are relevant to particular applications.
- Parishes suggested that they need more training on how to make effective comments on applications, but also need to know that their comments are received and considered.
- Parishes are aware of time constraints on applications and try to make comments within time limits. They would appreciate more pre-application involvement.
- Some thought that comments relating to broader issues than purely land use should be considered in deciding applications.
- All planning applications should be available on the website.
- Parishes are keen to be able to use developer contributions to help provide necessary infrastructure. Developers are prepared to pay contributions providing they are fair and set out clearly in advance.
- Concern with the need for effective enforcement and better use of local people as "eyes and ears" of Council. Need for more join up with Building Control in enforcement.

## Core Strategy

*“Let’s go for rural regeneration – stop stopping!”*

*“It’s all very well to have a vision but you need an objective plan of action to get a reality.”*

- The **Vision** was generally thought to be clumsily worded. Suggest it needs to be more simple and positive. Needs to consider historic built and natural environment.
- Concern over **RSS/government context**. One size doesn't fit all.
- Use common sense in applying policy.
- **Population** – lack of wealth-making age group, growth of retirement age groups a concern.
- **Villages** should be living communities – need more facilities - diversify pubs – college outposts – encourage entrepreneurs and enthusiasts!
- More affordable housing is essential. More children are living at home as prices so high. Concerns that some people housed in villages have little or no affinity to the community.
- Second homes – dying villages.
- Concerns re. over-development. Treat density with sensitivity.
- **Businesses** must be involved in the planning process. Need for growth in knowledge based industries to improve wage levels.
- Achieving sustainable communities requires the provision of employment opportunities within every settlement boundary. Need to keep employment and housing growth in balance.
- Concern at HGV growth on inadequate roads if businesses grow.
- Differing views as to whether industry should be close to homes or on outskirts of settlement.
- Consider the full potential of tourism – encourage hotel development.
- Towns each need a focus for future employment development.
- Serviced office space is needed in towns, link with community buildings.
- Concern re the impact of supermarkets on local businesses.
- Need for adequate open space within **housing** developments.
- Allow for flexibility of choice in dwelling types/sizes.
- Need more affordable housing (including low cost homes to buy). Concern at cost of shared equity housing.

- Include homes for those with disabilities in all communities.
- Need to ensure historic rural as well as urban **environment** is protected (eg historic parks.) Respect local character in towns and villages.
- Need to make better use of natural assets in new development (eg trees / rivers.) Protect floodplains.
- Insist all new developments are energy efficient.
- Need to be realistic on **parking** provision or will result in congestion in town centres. Keep some free parking in towns.
- **Public transport** is inadequate - cars are needed, especially in villages.
- Fears of village **school** closures. Concern that school facilities (eg playing fields) often not available out of hours.
- Concern that **Primary Health Trust** needs to be involved and thinking longer term in view of aging population.
- Strong economic base will lead to higher employment levels and less **crime**. Police need to be aware of growth levels proposed to plan their resource needs.

## WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

This report on the Results of the Raising Awareness meetings will be placed on the North Dorset website. All attendees will be informed of its availability, and sent copies on request.

The findings will be used to help steer the Statement of Community Involvement, Development Control Charter and Core Strategy. A summary of the findings will be included in the "Pre-Submission Consultation Statement" required under Regulation 25 of the "Local Development" Regulations 2004.

For further information on the timetable of the Statement of Community Involvement and the core Strategy, please refer to the Local Development Scheme. [www.north-dorset.gov.uk/living/planning&buildingcontrol/planningpolicy/localdevelopmentframework/localdevelopmentscheme](http://www.north-dorset.gov.uk/living/planning&buildingcontrol/planningpolicy/localdevelopmentframework/localdevelopmentscheme).



## **APPENDIX 1 - LIST OF PARTICIPANTS AT THE CONSULTATION WORKSHOPS**

### **Shaftesbury – 14<sup>th</sup> April**

K J Stedman	
Richard Thomas	Shaftesbury Chamber of Commerce
Maria Young	DT11
Simon Firbank	
Derek Stanley	Iwerne Minster Parish Council
Simon Rutter	
David Sekers	Dorset Gardens Trust
Elizabeth John	Elizabeth John
Jill Earnshaw	Motcombe Parish Council
Dominic Coleman	

### **Blandford Forum – 18<sup>th</sup> April**

Oliver Arnold	Savills
Peter Gray	
Susan Bennett	Campaign to Protect Rural England
Sheila Chapman	
C Tillbrook	A J Coke
Angie Schwier	
John Gill	Child Okeford Parish Council
Ken Lindon Trevers	
Alan Reed	
Mike Griffin	Lower Winterborne Parish Council
Andrew Burgess	Humberts
Matthew Witt	Western Design Architects
Nicky Harvell	Business Link (Wessex)
Edward Dyke	Humberts
Piers Chichester	Country Land and Business Association
J Saltmarsh	Farnham Parish Council
Caroline Tory	South Tarrant Valley Parish Council
Phil Easton	
David Staniland	George Wimpey plc
Christine Flemming	
Michael Cox	
Pat Osborne	Charlton Marshall Parish Council

### **Sturminster Newton – 21<sup>st</sup> April**

Michael Rose	
Margaret Knight	Dorset Federation of WI's
Hugh de longh	Sturquest
A M Adkins	Newton Resident's Association
E Horton	Okeford Fitzpaine Parish Council
Alex Sullivan	
Amanda Mullen	
Mike Adkins	Newton Resident's Association
James Martin	Sturminster Newton Open Spaces
Mary May	
Tony Edmonds	Broad Oak Resident's Association

Gill Chapman	Sturminster Newton Hall Committee
Brian Chapman	
David Bacon	
Barry Vardell	Broad Oak Resident's Association
Occupant of Bridleway House	
Betty Cowley	
Vic Fox	
Ann Covell	North Dorset Children's Council
Mr and Mrs Allen	
Alan Harrison	Sturquest
Peter Hallows	

### **Gillingham – 25<sup>th</sup> April**

Peter Crocker	
Vanessa Cockerill	Gillingham Town Council
Anne Beckley	
Richard Wood	
R Belsham	Fifehead Magdalen Parish Council
Julie Hansford	
Sue Matthews	
Ian Stewart	
Jenny Cunliffe	
Clive Hughes	
A J Bellamy	
Val Potheary	Business Link (Wessex)
Bernard de Salis	
Mark Hewett	
Mike Crossley	
David Webb	Three Rivers Partnership
Mark White	
Susi Calder	Three Rivers Partnership
Jo Rose	Shaftesbury Task Force
Michael Purcell	Campaign to Protect Rural England

### **Stalbridge – 28<sup>th</sup> April**

D Murray	
Brian Bottomley	
Charles Fraser	
Doug Neal	Stalbridge Town Council
Andrew Comer	Evans & Co
Mike Burt	
Charlotte Bickerstaff	North Dorset PCT
J W Cowley	
W Dike	Dike & Sons
E J Hudson	Sandhills League of Friends
Stephen Howard	Campaign to Protect Rural England
D Grime	
Ruth Forbes	Surestart

## **APPENDIX 2 - COMMENTS MADE AT THE FIVE CONSULTATION WORKSHOPS**

### **14<sup>th</sup> April - Shaftesbury Christian Centre**

Planning officers were informed that a number of attendees would need to leave early; therefore the meeting was conducted informally with an introductory talk, followed by an opportunity to view the exhibition boards. Informal discussions were held with the officers present, and comments were placed onto the boards.

#### **Comments Posted onto Relevant Boards**

##### 1) Vision for North Dorset - scale

- 1) Very clumsily worked – very politically correct. “Let’s just make North Dorset a happy, healthy, wealthy and attractive place to live, work and play!”
- 2) “Vision” statement not plain English enough...make it simple please.
- 3) Suggest more positive wording required to make draft policy for environment – e.g. “while recognising or enhancing and safeguarding our environment.”
- 4) “Historic and natural environment” please (concerning wording).

##### 2) The Strategy - Housing, Access, Rural Facilities, Community Facilities, Health & Safety, Economy and Environment

- 1) Provide more public transport and advertise it before you will reduce use of cars!
- 2) Encourage more facilities in rural areas as people have to rely on these for basic necessities.
- 3) Speed limits - In many cases it is not necessary to reduce them. It is necessary however, to enforce the existing limits.
- 4) To be consistent with core strategy, this paragraph should say: “safeguard and enhance historic and natural environment sites.”
- 5) Rural rejuvenation – stop stopping!
- 6) Transport - the key to keeping villages accessible.
- 7) Encourage facilities.

##### 4) Town Map

- 1) High Street improvement – help the pedestrians.
- 2) Enhance Christy’s Lane when bypass delivered, if not before.

- 3) Green Space inadequate, unkempt (on Wincombe Lane Rec).
- 4) Bypass needed.
- 5) Where does Shaftesbury go after this? Villages? (North of Westbury/Persimmon site).
- 6) Green Space gone. (Football club/Tesco)
- 7) Green Space going (Barton Hill), not so!
- 8) Travel to Warminster for good secure toddler play area.

#### 7) DC Charter

##### 1) Bourton Parish Council Ideas

- Keep Parish Councils informed of minor changes to applications – by e-mail or through web site in future.
- Encourage pre-application discussion – developers to visit Parishes and explain their proposals.
- Enforcement is essential – talk to Parishes about role they can play.

#### 8) Worry bin

- 1) Regional spatial strategies will be dominant, but incorporate policies affecting or supporting all the issues that North Dorset needs to tackle.

## **18<sup>th</sup> April – Blandford Forum, Durweston Village Hall**

Following the introductory talk the meeting broke up into 3 work groups. Comments were made during the discussion work groups, and issues were posted onto the relevant boards.

### **Comments Posted onto Relevant Boards**

#### 1) Vision for North Dorset - scale

- 1) Prevent deterioration of agricultural land into endless house culture.
- 2) It is all very well to have a vision but you need an objective plan of action to get a reality.
- 3) Encourage some small businesses for local village people.
- 4) Enhance and protect in conjunction with development of new business.
- 5) Protect village landscape from over-development.

#### 2) The Strategy - Housing, Access, Rural Facilities, Community Facilities, Health & Safety, Economy and Environment

- 1) Basically to maintain the status quo, without substantial increase in numbers.
- 2) In many villages there is no room for further development within existing settlement boundaries.
- 3) Because Policy restricts or stops new houses in villages, there is lack of supply or huge demand. Result is soaring house prices and locals cannot afford them. So villages become urban blocks in country for the rich. Disaster!
- 4) Average house prices to average earnings (£) in Dorset.
- 5) Holistic? Approach to employment, housing, social facilities. Infrastructure – community lead.
- 6) Problems of second homes in villages lived in for a few weeks of the year = no community heart = dying village.
- 7) Villages used to be living communities. Living things must be allowed to grow – look at nature. Preservation = applying poison to preserve = death. Parish boundaries are coffins.
- 8) Sensitivity to density of houses in villages. Quality of life is important.
- 9) Need college outposts in villages.
- 10) A laudable aim for large towns but hardly feasible in small remote villages.
- 11) Density of building in village with free facilities – leads to antisocial problems – isolation.
- 12) Affordable housing – more required.

Access – public transport in small villages will never be viable. - More offspring living at home with parents as house prices so high = more cars per household in villages.

- 13) Assistance to maintain /refurbish community facilities.
- 14) Rural deprecation - Rural housing density too high creates problems for health, access, environment and open spaces.
- 15) Impact of home technology. (Income producing hidden economy).
- 16) Affordable housing – needs local employment if not will increase dependency on cars. Car parking spaces per dwelling will increase if there is insufficient affordable housing. People will live at home longer but need to own a car to travel to employment.
- 17) Use league of friends.
- 18) Land for extending “cottage” hospitals/outpatients etc.
- 19) Development Control Chairman has links with Primary care Trust.
- 20) Concentrate more on the health aspects, superiors, hospitals, outpatients?
- 21) Need for access to open space in villages, to maintain health of young and old and disabled.
- 22) Do not let intrusive holiday lets destroy beauty spots.
- 23) Keep North Dorset moving forward = sustainable communities with residents of all ages. Landscape developed through planning management.
- 24) Must allow for flexibility of choice – where to work and where to live. May not be the same (place).

### 3) You and the LDF

- 1) Winterborne Whitechurch – Social Housing
- 2) Natural growth of villages

### 4) Town Map

- 1) North of bypass. Sports fields needed to cater for needs of clubs. Schools are withdrawing use of their fields.
- 2) Keep housing development within Blandford Forum bypass.
- 3) Archbishop Wake CE School – school buildings used as an outreach for Blandford Hospital outpatients, diagnostic etc. (Are or should be)?
- 4) Buy the Gas works – develop as 3 no. storey parking – 2 for residents, 1 for business.
- 5) Resolve problem of taxi parking outside the library.
- 6) Bryanston Park – need better signing for car parking in Blandford town.
- 7) Pressure Town Council to improve Blandford market.
- 8) Car parking and traffic flow in Blandford town centre.
- 9) Improve movement of traffic through Blandford town centre/market place.

- 10) To enter Blandford from the Somerfield car park, via Nightingale Court is a most depressing experience. Can some enforcement action be taken to tidy it up?
- 11) New library in old Safeway plus community facility – cinema, plays etc., like the Tivoli, Wimborne.
- 12) Invite Waitrose to Blandford Safeway – put the heart back into Blandford.
- 13) Magnolia House – developed as a One Stop Shop for youth facilities.
- 14) Publicise Somerfield car park and others. Encourage shoppers to Blandford town centre.
- 15) Nightingale Court – Improve access from Somerfield car park. Make more attractive, remove brambles.
- 16) Electric rail system on the route of the old S & D for inter town visits and out of the area.

### **Work Group's Comments**

#### Core Strategy Work Group

##### Main Issues:

- It was commented whether settlement development needs to move towards continental apartment living, in order to meet the demands of housing whilst retaining open areas and greenfield land.
- There was concern about social engineering, especially where families in social housing are not placed in their first choice location, and therefore have little or no affinity to the community they are living in.
- It was commented that villages need pavements, in order to foster children's independence.
- There was concern that wages in the area are generally low, and that there is a need for employment growth in knowledge based industries.
- It was commented that several areas in the district have no 'buzz' to interest young people, resulting in net migration out of the district.
- There was concern that 'urban' guidance is not applicable to rural areas. For example it was commented that there is a need for more realistic maxima, especially when many households have two or more adults working within or beyond the district.
- It was commented that the task of achieving sustainable communities required the provision of employment opportunities within every settlement boundary.
- There was concern that the political set-up results in short/medium term planning. Long-term planning may not be achievable if policies and procedures constantly change.

SCI Work Group  
Main Issues:

### **Consultation Process**

Different means of public involvement:

- Questionnaires – Citizens panel prefer postal questionnaire. Parishes prefer face to face. (Child Okeford had 57% response to their Parish Plan questionnaire.)
- Newsletters – Parish or Church newsletters go to most households, but not always read by everyone. Long lead in time pre publication could be a problem.
- Blackmore Vale magazine (free) is well read throughout the District, particularly Planning and Letters pages. Copy in this would reach many. Problem of cost of official advertising. Need to use articles/press releases.
- Email/web contact – cheap and easy for LA to use, but passes on costs of downloading to PCs. Assumes all have IT availability and skills. Need to continue to offer hard copies alongside email. (Funding of ego doesn't reach Parishes).

How do we reach a majority? Fears that even Community Partnerships are not representative of the majority (even though they are probably broader than Town or Parish Councils.)

Work on Parish Plans a useful way to get people thinking about/more involved with community issues, but need to be able to make strong links between P Plans and LDF policies e.g. transport/highways needs/ design issues/ need for community facilities.

How can Parishes etc get involved at regional level where important decisions are made?

### **Development Control Charter Issues**

Pre-application discussions.

Wimpey's are holding more "front loading" sessions with communities when considering applications. Starting with a blank sheet of paper and building up a proposal. They do not mind paying contributions providing they know what is involved from an early date and there are no last minute surprises. They are also prepared to enter into "open book" discussions (where the costs of developing a site are set out), providing commercial sensitivity can be protected.



LPA's need to draw developers' attention to Parish Plans (where they exist), to give them status in the Planning system.

Should LPAs charge for pre-application discussions? Other DC's do but advice no better!!

Should a threshold for a requirement for community involvement be set? (E.g. for any application for 5 or more dwellings, the applicant must discuss with PC/TC/Com Partnership before submitting.) General view of all three groups was that this would be difficult. Some sites are so sensitive that a single dwelling can be controversial. Agents also agreed that scale was not an issue and that they are often consulting locally already as well as with Highways and Environment Agency etc. Their experience is showing that Parish consultation is effective.

Agents suggest that a checklist is needed for any pre-application discussion. (I.e. setting out policies applicable, past history, consultations required in a simple form that gives some certainty about what is required.) Agents realise that under requirements for speedy decisions there is no opportunity to negotiate, therefore work pre-submission is required.

Agents not averse to providing affordable housing (even with no public subsidy) providing they can provide a mix of tenure types (rented and shared equity) and requirements are clear.

Parishes suggested that they need more training on how to make valid Planning objections (previous training in 2004 was thought to be good). Parishes are happy to have presentations by developers.

Parishes are very aware of the time limits for deciding applications and try to get their comments back promptly. They try to visit sites prior to making comments. They would appreciate being involved in pre application discussions on major applications (e.g. windfarm) so that they can raise awareness locally before application is submitted.

Parishes need to know that their views are received (by acknowledgement).

Parishes keen to be able to use developer contributions to help fund village facilities.

## **21<sup>st</sup> April - Sturminster Newton, Royal British Legion**

Following the introductory talk the meeting broke up into 2 work groups. Comments were made during the discussion work groups, and issues were posted onto the relevant boards.

### **Comments Posted onto Relevant Boards**

- 2) The Strategy - Housing, Access, Rural Facilities, Community Facilities, Health & Safety, Economy and Environment
  - 1) Housing – Infilling is generally a good thing as are small residential developments which have an element of local need housing i.e. affordable housing for people experienced in living in rural areas. Affordable housing for elderly people should be retained for their use and not let to young people.
  - 2) Housing development does not fit in with roads, main bridge is 500 years old, too many cars using out of date roads.
  - 3) Transport for young people at sensible times i.e. late evening, midday.
  - 4) No to paying car parks.
  - 5) Transport in Sturminster is mainly by car – not environmentally acceptable – global warming. Economy – what can be done to enable wages in this area to rise?
  - 6) Probably impossible to reduce dependency on cars in rural areas since the level of provision of public transport can never be a realistic alternative. Need to retain public transport for those without cars to make essential journeys. NORDCAT good and could be expanded.
  - 7) Look at bypasses for villages like the French do.
  - 8) Pubs, shops and schools are essential for the character of villages and must be strongly defended where they are supported by local people.
  - 9) Protect the jobs in Sturminster and bring in more new firms in the empty business park.
  - 10) Agree
  - 11) Agree but wheelchair access to public rights of way probably a pipe-dream.
  - 12) Yes but consider making it profitable to relocate industry to more appropriate sites. Local small units in villages to reduce need to travel.
  - 13) The development of new employment largely dependant upon road transport – difficulty of ease. Journey times loom large in location decisions – have popularity of Bournemouth/Poole. NDDC has particular problems with its area, and locating new employment in sensible convenient locations is essential.
  - 14) Must give encouragement to small local businesses however wacky.
  - 15) Employment – Money in the area – Local Retail Trade – People meeting

Maintenance of family links not to close not too far!! Because of handing on what previous generations have learnt in order to be happy/supportive. Youth energy requires legal outlets  
Government strategy and its effects on local policy needs to be open and unpleasant choices faced not hidden.

- 16) Update building regulations to insist all new houses are energy efficient.
- 17) More control of run-off water from farms so that roads are not flooded and drains overloaded & much more vigorous control of development on land liable to flooding. Legislation to strengthen the local authorities' control of non-main waterways.
- 18) More open space and urban footpaths in new building development areas.
- 19) Make more space for the use of common sense.
- 20) What makes a community that is cost effective? Committees need to be measured for member's time away from economically productive activity versus positively achieving results.

#### 6) Focus groups – Questionnaire chart

- 1+2) Sources of Employment - in Blandford very difficult for visitors and newcomers to find out what the various units etc. on the industrial estates cover. In fact, a very wide range! How about a directory of what is where?
- 3) A return to active waterway and ditch management so as to reduce run-off on to roads and thereby cut down on flooding.
- 4) HOUSING – Type of housing and density to be “in harmony”!
- 5) Jurassic coast arrangements have worked?

### **Work Group's Comments**

Core Strategy Work Group

Main Issues:

#### **Local facilities**

- Role of village facilities is essential in drawing community together. Even in small suburbs (e.g. Broad Oak,) the limited facilities (chapel and pub) are essential.
- Shops are also needed within large new residential areas – but it is accepted that viability is a problem.
- Some villages (e.g. Child Okeford) can support a range of facilities (2x pubs + 2x shops) whereas others have very little. The enthusiasm /entrepreneurship of the owners is a key factor. Use of internet/mail order shopping can help.
- Sturminster's facilities were generally felt to be good for a town of its size. Hope that the new facilities on the former livestock market site would add to its attractions.

## **Employment**

- Problem of industrial area (Butts Pond) being too close to residential area, +traffic being brought through town to service the site.
- On the other hand, some considered it essential to keep employment sites close to town centres to bring more life into the town during the day. Spin off for local shops/services.
- Butts Pond favoured by some employers to the Rolls Mill site (possibly due to cost of land at Rolls Mill?)
- Need to keep employment and housing development in balance if “sustainable” settlements to be achieved.
- Need to get business interests involved in the planning process.
- Important to maintain/ grow employment opportunities in villages, but in the right locations. HGV traffic on narrow roads is an issue.

## **Traffic/roads/parking**

- Query whether a bypass around Sturminster was a realistic possibility? Most felt unlikely due to limited funds available. The possibility of road tolls being introduced was discussed but not felt to be likely.
- Concern that through traffic should not be going through Stur. But should be directed to better roads (e.g. A350 or A34/A37).
- Concern that free parking in the town centre should remain.
- Also concern at the planning rules that allow new development with limited or no parking in town centres – even though rural towns have very limited public transport. This is already leading to congestion/ difficulties for emergency services.
- Congestion outside the primary school was also a problem at opening/closing times.

## **Housing/environment**

- There was concern with the need to ensure adequate open space within new developments (especially when built at higher densities.)
- It was suggested that residents of recent higher density developments should be questioned as to whether they liked living on that type of development.
- It was suggested that all new developments should be more energy efficient. Some concern that the government didn't do enough to encourage this.
- Local character within Sturminster and surrounding villages was appreciated. Some felt this should be emphasised in Parish Plans.

## **Education/recreation/health**

- There was concern at the difficulty in filling school places (particularly in villages) and fear that some may close.
- There was concern at the lack of facilities to knock a ball around out of school hours. (Sturminster School was not officially available).
- It was noted that some European countries (e.g. Denmark) could provide areas for recreation + a local café in small villages.
- Provision of adequate health facilities was also a concern especially in view of the growth of the District and aging population. The need to get the North Dorset Primary Health Trust involved was noted.

## SCI Work Group

### Main Issues:

## **Consultation Process**

- Issues concerning affordable housing in the area were raised.
- There was a concern that parking in several areas of the town and the surrounding area was becoming an issue.
- Employment issues were commented upon, there was concern that the number of houses being built in the town does not reflect the amount of employment opportunities.
- There was concern that central government policy making was “one size fits all” in its conviction, and that urban-centric policy making was not the solution concerning rural issues.
- There was concern that consultation had already been undertaken, and it was questioned whether more consultation was required.
- There was concern that development in the area was taking place near to the floodplain. It was suggested that more consultation with the Environment Agency and the Highways Agency is required to make the best judgement concerning these grey areas.
- It was commented that an early evening meeting around 7:30 would have been more convenient than one mid afternoon.
- Increased publicity of planning events was suggested as a way of increasing the turnout at subsequent meetings.
- It was suggested that SturQuest could be used to increase community involvement in the new planning process. It was commented that this would require additional funding from North Dorset council.
- The use of the internet as a means of increasing awareness of local planning initiatives was raised, however it was commented upon that not everybody in the area has access or knowledge of the internet.
- It was suggested that correspondence with local businesses was required, perhaps via direct meetings at their place of work.

- It was commented that the area requires increased employment rather than hand-outs.
- There was concern that the consultation process underway would undermine the role of the Town and Parish Councils.
- There was concern about housing on the present Hall site.
- It was commented that design requirements concerning distances between developments needed to be reassessed in order to reduce the potential of overlooking between dwellings.
- There was comment that negotiation on each planning application is needed to improve relations between developers, residents and the council.
- Investigation into 'exception' sites for Resident's Homes was raised. It was commented that care in the local community was vital, with a growing old-aged population.

## **25<sup>th</sup> April - Gillingham Town Hall**

Following the introductory talk the meeting broke up into 2 work groups. Comments were made during the discussion work groups, and issues were posted onto the relevant boards.

### **Comments Posted onto Relevant Boards**

- 2) The Strategy - Housing, Access, Rural Facilities, Community Facilities, Health & Safety, Economy and Environment
  - 1) Is NDDC pro-active enough in attracting business to re-locate to Dorset?  
See how Telford in Shropshire has grown.
  - 2) Affordable housing for older people to retain their independence.
  - 3) Cycleways from outlying villages into Gillingham for youth activities.
  - 4) Attract business to give a wide range of employees.
  - 5) Specialist industries.  
Remote workers (home).  
Education – training.
  - 6) VAT relief for renovation rather than benefiting new build.
  - 7) Environment - Yes to all four.

### **Work Group's Comments**

Core Strategy Work Group  
Main Issues:

#### **Housing/Environment**

- There was concern that the rate of housing construction within the town had occurred at such a pace that the surrounding infrastructure now needed to catch up
- It was noted that the town is fast becoming a 'commuter town'
- Local character in the town and surrounding area was commented upon. In migration needs to be monitored.
- There was concern at the increase in town/village cramming, but it was realized that this helped save Greenfield sites from development.
- There was concern at the levels of social housing being built in the town and surrounding villages.
- There was concern that the costs of shared equity housing can be very high, especially in the villages.

## **Employment**

- There was concern that wages in the area are low.
- Very difficult for the some of the young population to see a future in the area. This was mainly due to a lack of certainty over employment prospects.
- It was stated that there is a lack of 'middle-aged' groups (25-45), which generate the majority of wealth in a community.
- Strengthening the local economy was viewed as the best policy to sustain rejuvenation and wealth creation in the local area.
- It was suggested that certain villages had a large economic potential in the provision of B&B's and small guesthouses.
- It was queried why hotel accommodation was so limited in Gillingham/Shafesbury. (Two former hotels currently have applications for change of use/redevelopment.) It was suggested that there was a demand for a Travel-lodge type facility to provide cheaper accommodation for business or tourist accommodation.
- It was suggested that working from home should be supported. However, some felt this did not help in creating multiple employment opportunities in the local area.
- It was commented that there were not enough skilled workers in the villages surrounding Gillingham.
- It was suggested that local residents had a choice. That they either embrace new industry, both in terms of its type and location (important in such a naturally attractive area), or that they reject any change.
- It was suggested that Gillingham needed a focus for future employment growth. (As Sturminster had agriculture/food production and Shaftesbury had tourism based on its history.) Sustainable development/renewable/energy efficiency suggested as a potential growth area for Gillingham.
- Serviced office space was also thought to be needed for those small businesses that wanted to expand from a home base. Some might be incorporated into the new community building.

## **Police/Education/Young People**

- The view of the Police was that providing a strong economic base was key to providing wealth in the locality and this would help keep vandalism/burglary etc at low levels. North Dorset's crime rate is already one of the lowest in the country. The Police need to be aware of likely growth levels in the area to be able to plan for adequate funding. (Growth in population/jobs leads to growth in traffic and associated problems on roads.)
- There was felt to be a need for an ambulance base in Gillingham (in view of its growth), and that the Fire station might provide a location.



- Providing a skilled workforce is seen as essential if the local economy is to grow. There was concern that school leavers were ill equipped to take on basic office jobs. There is a need to provide more local training in basic literacy/numeracy and IT skills. It is too costly for small employers to send employees to Bournemouth/Yeovil colleges.
- The Youth Centre in Gillingham was thought to do a good job. Villages often lacked enough volunteers to run their own youth clubs, but would be able to transport children into Gillingham.
- Need to involve young people in local projects (e.g. tree planting) to encourage interest in their local environment.
- Need to make better use of Gillingham's assets (the riverside) for walkways/cycleways. (Three Rivers' Open Spaces Group activity).

### **Roads**

- It was stated that the use of the car, especially in the villages was vital for everyday living.

SCI Work Group  
Main Issues:

### **Consultation Process**

- How to get more people involved from the start? A need to get more young people involved with what they want for the future of their region. Incentive schemes were considered in order to get more young people involved.
- The timing of the meeting was criticized. It was suggested that these should be left until the evening in order to enable more people to attend. It was proposed that the meetings should not commence until 19.30 at the earliest.
- A need to work upon improving the advertising process, both of public meetings and of local planning proposals. It was suggested to use the Blackmore Vale on a more regular basis and try to get articles published nearer to the front, instead of in the traditional planning section. It was suggested that the council may wish to produce a page in the Blackmore Vale on a weekly basis, telling people of all the local news with regards to planning issues.
- It was also suggested that articles could also be published in the local parish magazines.
- It was commented that using the North Dorset logo could sometimes be a 'turn-off'; the view that many people would ignore the article immediately if they saw the logo in the newspaper.

- The idea of developing an e-mail information exchange was raised, as was the possibility of creating a chat forum upon the website, for people to create their own ideas and discussion groups.
- It was questioned whether it would be possible for all Planning Applications to be placed upon the website.
- It was suggested that there could be an improvement in communication if planners could possibly visit the local town councils/other partnerships on a more regular basis.
- The tapping into existing networks on a more frequent basis was commented upon. For example using Gillingham town council's 'Info Exchange' and 'Homewatch'.
- There was a complaint that notices and results (in particular meeting minutes and outcomes) were not placed upon the website as quickly as they should be.
- There was a comment that the website needs to be more user-friendly, and that some reports were hard to find.
- It was also raised that there was a need to champion the website more as a major tool for distributing information.
- A few residents commented that they felt the whole planning process was too long-winded, and needed to be simplified if people were to become more interested in shaping their own future.
- There was a general consensus that the needs and desires of the urban and rural areas deviated significantly.

### **Development Control Charter**

- With relation to enforcement, it was suggested that the use of residential groups was crucial in informing the Council of previous correspondence.
- The use of building control officers was also raised, in order to work more closely alongside residents, particularly when it came to enforcement matters.
- A site on the road from Shaftesbury was directly commented upon, it should be hedged, yet only chain link fencing is currently present.
- 'Minor amendments' should be brought back to Town Councils and Parish Councils. Development Control agreed to check Wild Wood where permission for seven dwellings has increased to nine.
- People need to be informed of the processes used in decision making, thus showing how their comments and perceptions were taken into account when reaching a conclusion.
- It was highlighted that many people felt their non-planning comments were not taken into account. It was suggested that Planning should become more holistic/spatial in its approach.
- Parish Councils need more transport comments/advice before they come to a decision.

- It was commented that there is a need for all planning applications to be placed upon the website.
- There was a general agreement that it was difficult to generate interest in certain developments among many in the local population, until the building work actually commenced.

## **28<sup>th</sup> April - Stalbridge Methodist Hall**

Following the introductory talk the meeting broke up into 2 work groups. Comments were made during the discussion work groups, and issues were posted onto the relevant boards.

### **Comments Posted onto Relevant Boards**

3) You and the LDF

1) Limited development until road safety and traffic calming is in place

### **Work Group's comments**

Core Strategy Work Group

Main Issues:

#### **Housing**

- There was concern with the growth in second home ownership. It was identified that central government guidance is required, and perhaps local initiatives to conserve homes for local people.
- It was stated that low-cost market housing needed to be targeted towards those that it is intended for. It was agreed that there is a need to keep low cost housing low cost.
- It was commented that housing rates were too high for those that needed discounted housing. It was suggested that more affordable housing may be required in areas closer to where employment is and where it will be in the future.
- It was commented that house expansion in the villages needed to be realistic and where employment opportunities are present.
- It was commented that a range of house types and densities should be provided to accommodate different requirements.
- There was concern that housing association/social housing schemes in general had a certain reputation. It was noted that the integration of low cost housing into current settlements/communities is vital in achieving the government's aim of integrated communities.
- It was suggested that any further developments of low cost housing/housing association homes would be best in smaller numbers, spreading development over a larger area.
- The development of homes for people with disabilities or within a community was discussed. There was considered to be a good two-way relationship in Stalbridge with residents appreciating the support of local services.

## **Employment**

- It was commented that the lack of employment in many of the villages in North Dorset forces many occupants to leave the area.
- The development of supermarkets along major roads in the district, was commented as a reason for the loss of village shops.
- The issue of low wages was raised.
- It was commented that there is a lack of employment within the knowledge based economy, leading to new graduates looking elsewhere in the country for employment. High property prices were commented on as a factor that resulted in out-migration of young adults.

## **Local Services**

- There was concern that as supermarkets increase their range of services, they can have a highly adverse affect on local shops and services.
- It was commented that the role of local public houses needs to change; diversifying the services they offer to the local community.
- It was suggested that other public buildings could be used to host different events, such as educational and re-training courses.
- It was commented that local access to doctor's surgeries was poor in the area. It was suggested that the boundaries of public services needed to be synchronised, to reduce confusion by residents.

## **Demography**

- There was concern raised that within villages, especially, the population was ageing. Both employment and housing issues were raised as reason for the net loss of young adults.

## **SCI Work Group**

### **Main Issues:**

#### **Consultation Process**

- Ideas of new forms of communication, included providing e-mail addresses and creating a networking system developing community consensus via community representatives, were made.
- There was a concern that there needed to be less consultation and more time and money spent in actually finding solutions. It was commented that the levels of consultation had lead to the government forming a "white elephant" that councils may not be able to finally work with.
- It was commented that there may be a problem in the future of sustaining interest in community planning and partnerships, by residents.

- It was suggested that the current problem with the planning system is not necessarily a lack of interest, but disillusionment with the planning system itself.
- It was suggested that the re-establishment of town and parish councils needed to be championed.
- It was commented that new methods of consultation were required to attain more bottom-up approaches to local issues.
- It was commented that residents felt that their hopes were often unnecessarily raised through the consultation process, and that what was needed was a range of realistic options that should be given to people in relation to different situations. It was suggested that leaflets could be produced with a choice of options to respond to.
- Greater advertising was seen as imperative in broadening interest in planning. It was suggested that local newspapers and the website should be used to a greater degree.
- Incorporating the very young and their parents into the planning process was proposed, and liaison with the Surestart programme was suggested as a way of reaching this hard-to-reach group.

## **North Dorset Map**

These are comments that were 'posted' onto the North Dorset map, covering both local and district-wide planning concerns.

### **Overall Comments**

- Why are exception sites refused when there is an obvious general need for affordable homes?
- Why do we not have a rural housing officer?
- We need a north to south road. Giving Poole a means to link to the Midlands.

### **Bourton and surrounding area**

- Major concern that the planning application for the (old) Milk Factory due to go to NDDC in June/July might receive approval as a brownfield site, against the Local Plan (unsustainable, too large for any village)
- Speeding traffic, no public transport, no jobs.

### **Gillingham and surrounding area**

- Infrastructure needs to catch up before any more development.
- Poor design of some housing estates – lack of play areas. Villages are very good already, play areas and space available.
- Housing spread without adequate infrastructure.
- Too much infringement on the floodplain.
- Hourly bus from Gillingham/Shaftesbury/Sturminster to Blandford.
- How much more of the countryside is going to be swallowed up by development?

### **Stalbridge and surrounding area**

- Stalbridge to be treated as a town in its own right, not attached to Sturminster.
- Policy 1.3 – Towns for Limited growth. Must remain as such until the road system is improved.
- Rural transport. Burial ground. Playing fields.

### **Sturminster and surrounding area**

- How much more housing can a rural area like this sustain?
- More development dispersed amongst villages rather than in big lumps! (e.g. Shaftesbury and Gillingham)

- Absolute ban on any development which impinges on areas liable to flooding.
- More frequent buses needed and better coverage.
- Too much housing being used for people from other areas.
- Movement of travellers to verge site from St James common.

### **Shaftesbury and surrounding area**

- Bypass. How long can we last?
- A350 and C13. Reversal and Melbury bypass is critical. Radical approach.
- Melbury Abbas – bypass now!
- Viaduct from Compton Abbas airfield to Cann Common. Clears the village, does not damage AONB.
- Viaduct would not safeguard outstanding landscape and natural environment!
- Bedchester area. School outgrown village – consider relocation to more urban and accessible area.
- Upgrade C13 – save the villages!

### **Farnham and surrounding area**

- Increasing traffic using Ashmore to Shaftesbury road as a rat run. Further support for bypass?

### **Blandford and surrounding area**

- Lack of affordable housing. Single earning families with one or more children cannot afford £500/month rent or £120,000+ to buy. Not enough housing association housing available.
- No legislation will stop rural people using their own cars, so try to accommodate them for a change.
- Need NDDC to be pro-active regarding old Safeway site.
- Blandford is not a sustainable community.
- Revoke extraction licenses in Winterborne.
- Safe cycling into Blandford. Complete old railway into Blandford.
- Protect vital open landscape for future.
- Possible protection when in private ownership.
- Volume of traffic on A350 getting unbearable – bypass?
- Route of the A350.
- There is an urgent need to use the old Safeway site for something useful, if not another shop then library/cinema.



## **Winterborne Whitechurch and surrounding area**

- Chescombe Court, Winterborne Whitechurch – Providing sheltered housing for elderly in area plus community centre for village and surrounding area. Signpost Housing wants to demolish it and replace with mixed housing. With an increasingly elderly population, is this sensible?
- If Winterborne Whitechurch were to lose the sheltered housing it may put the Doctor's Surgery in difficulty, and they may withdraw one or both weekly surgeries.
- Speeding through villages continues to be a major issue.
- Allow villages to expand and meet the demands of rural housing, because lack of supply is increasing prices and killing villages off.