

# **NORTH DORSET LOCAL PLAN 2011 – 2026 PART 1**

## **VISION AND OBJECTIVES**

### **BACKGROUND PAPER**

**November 2013**

This Background Paper is intended to be read and used in conjunction with the other background papers that support the Local Plan Part 1.

Further advice on these papers can be obtained from the Planning Policy Team at North Dorset District Council.

Tel: 01258 484201

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

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# 1. Purpose

- 1.1 This document is one of a number of background papers produced to support Part 1 of the North Dorset Local Plan that sets out the strategic policies for the District for the period 2011 to 2026.
- 1.2 The Local Plan Part 1 has been developed from the draft Core Strategy and Development Management Policies Development Plan Document (DPD) (that was also known as the New Plan for North Dorset)<sup>1</sup>, which was published in March 2010. The Local Plan Part 1 has been drafted to reflect the major reforms of the planning system and to have regard to the recent global economic downturn.
- 1.3 This background paper provides a general overview of the issues and challenges facing the District and sets out the vision and objectives for the area. It summarises those parts of the evidence base which informed the policies in the Local Plan and sets out the policy background - at national and local levels - against which the plan has been prepared.
- 1.4 This revision takes account of changes to national planning policy, notably through the provisions of the Localism Act, which was enacted in November 2011 and the National Planning Policy Framework<sup>2</sup> (NPPF), which was published in March 2012.
- 1.5 This background paper is a working document which has been updated as evidence is acquired and the consultation process proceeds. It is based on a previous topic paper on the same issue that was published in 2012.
- 1.6 This background paper has been prepared to support the pre-submission publication of the North Dorset Local Plan Part 1.

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<sup>1</sup> The draft DPD, which was published in March 2010, can be viewed here - <http://www.dorsetforyou.com/media.jsp?mediaid=147729&filetype=pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/planningandbuilding/pdf/2116950.pdf>

## 2. Introduction

- 2.1 The NPPF provides guidance for local planning authorities in drawing up plans, but it does not change planning law which still requires planning applications to be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise<sup>3</sup>. The NPPF must also be taken into account when neighbourhood plans are prepared.
- 2.2 This background paper sets out the key issues and challenges facing North Dorset. It discusses the implications of the NPPF on policy formulation; it identifies the issues and challenges that face the District and the Dorset sub-region as outlined in Dorset's Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS)<sup>4</sup>, many of which are inter-related. It also includes those issues and challenges facing the District's towns and villages at the local level based on the strategies for each of the District's four Local Community Partnerships (LCPs).
- 2.3 This background paper proceeds to sets out the vision for North Dorset and the visions for each of the four LCPs. These visions set out how the District and the places within it should develop over the coming years which in turn lead to objectives on which strategic policies of the Local Plan are based.
- 2.4 Individual villages or parishes now also have the opportunity to positively address the issues and challenges they face through the preparation of neighbourhood plans co-ordinated by parish or town councils. Such local visions and objectives are required to reflect the strategic vision for North Dorset and the vision for the relevant Local Community Partnership area.

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<sup>3</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>4</sup> <http://www.dorsetforyou.com/dorsetcommunitystrategy>

### 3. Issues and Challenges

- 3.1 The Localism Act received Royal assent in November 2011 and was quickly followed by the publication of the NPPF in March 2012. The NPPF sets out the approach local planning authorities should adopt when dealing with a wide range of development matters. The Localism Act provides the legislative basis for the abolition of regional planning. A considerable amount of national planning policy, in the form of Planning Policy Statements (PPSs) and Planning Policy Guidance Notes (PPGs) was replaced with immediate effect when the NPPF was published. A full list of the national policy documents replaced is given in Annex 3 of the NPPF (pages 58 and 59).
- 3.2 The simplified national policy framework gives Local Planning Authorities a more pivotal role in setting strategic policies which have greater specific relevance to their local area. Localism and devolution of planning to the district and neighbourhood levels is key to the new approach, as is a full incorporation of the principles of sustainability into all decision making, through the ‘presumption in favour of sustainable development’.
- 3.3 Paragraph 1 of the NPPF states that it is ‘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.’
- 3.4 The Government sees Local Planning Authorities as co-ordinators, which should bring together sectors of the community and private enterprise. Planning should facilitate the creation of a joint vision of how to respond to and address a locality’s problems, needs and ambitions and build a strategy to deliver the vision in a coordinated way.
- 3.5 The NPPF states that the purpose of planning is to help achieve sustainable development where sustainable means ensuring that better lives for ourselves don’t mean worse lives for future generation and development means growth. This presumption runs through all levels of planning.

#### Issues and Challenges from National Policy

- 3.6 The NPPF, taken as a whole, constitutes the Government’s view of what sustainable development in England means in practice for the planning system. It identifies three dimensions to sustainable development: economic, social and environmental.
- 3.7 These dimensions give rise to many issues and challenges, but these wider national challenges give rise to three key issues for the District. These are the need to:
- address the causes and effects of climate change;
  - deliver more sustainable forms of development; and
  - deliver more sustainable patterns of development.

- 3.8 With regard to the challenge of enhancing the environment, there are two key issues where the District Council needs to co-operate with partners and work collaboratively across boundaries, these are the need to:
- conserve and enhance AONBs and to foster the social and economic well-being of their communities; and
  - protect internationally important wildlife sites.

- 3.9 These issues are discussed in more detail below.

### **Addressing the Causes and Effects of Climate Change**

- 3.10 Paragraph 99 of the NPPF states that ‘Local Plans should take account of climate change over the longer term, including factors such as flood risk, coastal change, water supply and changes to biodiversity and landscape. New development should be planned to avoid increased vulnerability to the range of impacts arising from climate change. When new development is brought forward in areas that are vulnerable, care should be taken to ensure that risks can be managed through suitable adaptation measures, including through the planning of green infrastructure.’
- 3.11 Measures such as these will be sought not only by the District Council, but also by all other authorities across the region to help confront the threat of climate change. In Dorset as a whole (and in the District) there is also the potential to help address the causes of climate change through renewable energy projects including: small scale hydro-electric power; biomass boilers; solar technologies; wind turbines; and the generation of energy from agricultural or forestry waste.
- 3.12 Paragraph 95 of the NPPF seeks greater use of renewable energy in developments and the use of sustainable construction techniques. It states that ‘to support the move to a low carbon future, local planning authorities should:
- plan for new development in locations and ways which reduce greenhouse gas emissions;
  - actively support energy efficiency improvements to existing buildings; and
  - when setting any local requirement for a building’s sustainability, do so in a way consistent with the Government’s zero carbon buildings policy and adopt nationally described standards.’
- 3.13 Paragraph 97 of the NPPF also states that ‘to help increase the use and supply of renewable and low carbon energy, local planning authorities should recognise the responsibility on all communities to contribute to energy generation from renewable or low carbon sources. They should:
- have a positive strategy to promote energy from renewable and low carbon sources;

- design their policies to maximise renewable and low carbon energy development while ensuring that adverse impacts are addressed satisfactorily, including cumulative landscape and visual impacts;
- consider identifying suitable areas for renewable and low carbon energy sources, and supporting infrastructure, where this would help secure the development of such sources<sup>5</sup>;
- support community-led initiatives for renewable and low carbon energy, including developments outside such areas being taken forward through neighbourhood planning; and
- identify opportunities where development can draw its energy supply from decentralised, renewable or low carbon energy supply systems and for co-locating potential heat customers and suppliers.’

3.14 The main effect of climate change that needs to be taken into account in North Dorset is the increased risk of flooding, which is seen as a localised threat in the District. The areas at risk are identified in the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment<sup>6</sup> and in North Dorset these include parts of Blandford and Gillingham as well as parts of some villages, such as Bourton.

3.15 The NPPF’s approach to flood risk, as set out in paragraph 100, is that ‘inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding should be avoided by directing development away from areas at highest risk, but where development is necessary, making it safe without increasing flood risk elsewhere<sup>7</sup>. Local Plans should be supported by Strategic Flood Risk Assessment and develop policies to manage flood risk from all sources, taking account of advice from the Environment Agency and other relevant flood risk management bodies, such as lead local flood authorities and internal drainage boards. Local Plans should apply a sequential, risk-based approach to the location of development to avoid where possible flood risk to people and property and manage any residual risk, taking account of the impacts of climate change, by:

- applying the Sequential Test;
- if necessary, applying the Exception Test;

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<sup>5</sup> In assessing the likely impacts of potential wind energy development when identifying suitable areas, and in determining planning applications for such development, planning authorities should follow the approach set out in the National Policy Statement for Renewable Energy Infrastructure (read with the relevant sections of the Overarching National Policy Statement for Energy Infrastructure, including that on aviation impacts). Where plans identify areas as suitable for renewable and low-carbon energy development, they should make clear what criteria have determined their selection, including for what size of development the areas are considered suitable.

<sup>6</sup> Bournemouth, Christchurch, East Dorset, North Dorset and Salisbury SFRA - Halcrow Group (Feb 2008)

<sup>7</sup> Technical Guidance on flood risk published alongside the NPPF sets out how this policy should be implemented

- safeguarding land from development that is required for current and future flood management;
- using opportunities offered by new development to reduce the causes and impacts of flooding; and
- where climate change is expected to increase flood risk so that some existing development may not be sustainable in the long-term, seeking opportunities to facilitate the relocation of development, including housing, to more sustainable locations.'

3.16 The **challenges** will be: to deliver higher standards of sustainable construction and to 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.

### **Delivering More Sustainable Forms of Development**

3.17 The prudent use of natural resources is an important aspect of sustainable development and in North Dorset the two key issues in this respect are the re-use of previously developed land and water use and management.

3.18 National policy no longer adopts a 'brownfield first' approach to housing development, but the re-use of previously developed land is still supported by the NPPF. Paragraph 111 states that 'planning policies and decisions should encourage the effective use of land by re-using land that has been previously developed (brownfield land), provided that it is not of high environmental value. Local planning authorities may continue to consider the case for setting a locally appropriate target for the use of brownfield land.'

3.19 There are significant opportunities for brownfield regeneration in the District's four main towns, which reduce the need for greenfield development. The need for water efficiency and sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) is also an issue particularly in the Shaftesbury area, where such measures are required in order to ensure that development does not have an adverse impact on water flows into the River Avon Special Area of Conservation (SAC).

3.20 The District's main towns are relatively self-contained; however, there are issues, such as levels of out-commuting from Shaftesbury and high levels of car use from Sturminster Newton. Settlements can be made more self-contained if communities are able to meet their needs locally and this can be achieved by ensuring that housing growth is matched by employment growth and that communities are provided with the facilities and infrastructure they require.

3.21 This approach is supported by paragraph 37 of the NPPF, which states 'Planning policies should aim for a balance of land uses within their area so that people can be encouraged to minimise journey lengths for employment, shopping, leisure, education and other activities.'

- 3.22 Delivering a more sustainable approach to transport is important, but achieving this is particularly challenging in rural areas such as North Dorset where poor access to services is a major issue. However, the need to travel can be reduced to some extent by focusing development on existing centres.
- 3.23 This approach is also supported by the NPPF, paragraph 34 of which states ‘Plans and decisions should ensure developments that generate significant movement are located where the need to travel will be minimised and the use of sustainable transport modes can be maximised.’
- 3.24 Encouraging alternative modes of transport through innovative schemes (such as the North Dorset Community Accessible Transport (NORDCAT) initiative) and strategic projects (such as the North Dorset Trailway) also have an important role to play.
- 3.25 The **challenges** are: to 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.

### **Delivering More Sustainable Patterns of Development**

- 3.26 The emerging RSS sought to establish a ‘spatial hierarchy’ across the South West of ‘significant cities or towns’ (SSCTs), ‘market and coastal towns’ and ‘small towns and villages’. The Council initially sought to apply this spatial hierarchy to North Dorset in draft Core Policy 3; however, since the RSS is no longer being taken forward such a proposal has been modified and now the District’s four main towns are identified as centres of growth. This approach, which reflects the NPPF (see below), is considered in greater detail in the Sustainable Development Strategy Background Paper 2013.
- 3.27 The NPPF now provides a much less rigid, higher level, policy framework. Paragraph 17 states 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’ and ‘focus significant development in locations which are or can be made sustainable.’
- 3.28 National policy indicates that in rural areas, the role of housing is primarily to support local communities. Paragraph 55 of the NPPF states that ‘to promote sustainable development in rural areas, housing should be located where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities. For example, where there are groups of smaller settlements, development in one village may support services in a village nearby. Local Planning Authorities should avoid new isolated homes in the countryside unless there are special circumstances ...’
- 3.29 The emphasis is therefore on enhancing or maintaining the vitality of settlements particularly where these are recognised as having an enhanced role to play in the overall life of the District or immediate locality.

- 3.30 In the recent past ‘oversupply’ has been a problem in North Dorset. Housing had been delivered significantly above the planned rate, particularly in rural areas, which gave rise to sustainability concerns. The Council addressed this issue through the preparation of its Managing Housing Land Supply in North Dorset Supplementary Planning Document (SPD), which was published in 2007. Since then the Council has sought to achieve a more sustainable distribution of development in the District. This is reflected in the policy approach now being taken forward which seeks to concentrate the vast majority of strategic housing growth at the District’s four main towns and to have a focus on meeting local (rather than strategic) needs elsewhere.
- 3.31 In the light of the much less rigid higher level policy framework the **challenge** is to: identify the most sustainable distribution of development within the District, for the main towns, and the countryside, whilst also having regard to past concerns relating to ‘oversupply’.

### **Conserving and Enhancing AONB and Fostering the Social and Economic Well-being of their Communities**

- 3.32 The Dorset AONB stretches from Lyme Regis in the west of the County along the coast to Poole Harbour in the east and north to Blandford. North Dorset District also includes part of the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB, which covers much of south-west Wiltshire, parts of eastern Dorset as well as small areas of Somerset and Hampshire.
- 3.33 The need to conserve and enhance AONB is firmly established in national policy. Paragraph 115 of the NPPF states that ‘great weight should be given to conserving landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, which have the highest status of protection in relation to landscape and scenic beauty. The conservation of wildlife and cultural heritage are important considerations in all these areas ...’
- 3.34 There is however the need to balance conservation with some limited appropriate growth in the AONB both in its settlements and rural areas. The need to foster the social and economic well-being of communities in AONBs is established in legislation<sup>8</sup>. Development for these reasons may be acceptable, subject to rigorous assessment of its impact; visually, environmentally and ecologically.
- 3.35 The issues and challenges that face each AONB are set out in their respective Management Plans.
- 3.36 The **challenge** for the District Council is 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.

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<sup>8</sup> Section 87 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000

### Protecting Internationally Important Wildlife Sites

- 3.37 There are two internationally important wildlife sites in the District and a number of others in the surrounding area. These sites form part of a European Union-wide network known as 'Natura 2000' (N2K) which plays a key role in maintaining Europe's biodiversity. This is discussed in more detail in the Environment Background Paper 2013.
- 3.38 The **challenge** for the District Council is to ensure that these sites are not harmed, either directly or indirectly, by development proposed in the Local Plan.
- 3.39 This challenge is achieved through the on-going assessment of the emerging plan, taking into account the special interest features of the European sites, their vulnerabilities, current condition, and requirements to meet their conservation objectives. The Council will only pursue options where it can be demonstrated that any such options will not result in adverse effects upon the integrity of European sites, either within or outside the District.

## District Issues and Challenges

- 3.40 The major issues facing the rural County are set out in Dorset's Sustainable Communities Strategy<sup>9</sup> (SCS), which is also the SCS at the District level.
- 3.41 Through the SCS, the Dorset Strategic Partnership brings together people and partners from the public, private and voluntary and community sectors to realise a **shared vision** of: "a living thriving Dorset where everyone has a part to play in creating a better quality of life".
- 3.42 The SCS sets out the **key local issues** for North Dorset.
- It is a very rural and sparsely populated District with vibrant market towns, some of which have experienced recent high population growth.
  - It has an ageing population and there is a high level of migration of young people out of the area. 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.
  - It has a high quality natural and built environment, which needs to be safeguarded and enhanced now and in the future.
- 3.43 It also identifies the following **key challenges** for the district:
- The provision of affordable housing is a challenge in North Dorset. This 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 is identified as a challenge in North Dorset. Across Dorset access to healthcare, essential shopping and leisure opportunities are also important.
  - In North Dorset ensuring access to high speed broadband to support business growth is a particular issue, which forms part of the wider Dorset priority of trying to foster a strong economy that offers better job opportunities to local people.
- 3.44 Other County-wide priorities identified 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.
- 3.45 A number of these District and County-wide issues and challenges are examined in more detail below, in the context of North Dorset.

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<sup>9</sup> <http://www.dorsetforyou.com/dorsetcommunitystrategy> 2010

### Extensive Rural Areas with Pockets of High Population Growth

3.46 This issue brings together transport, services, communications and the need to adapt future growth to an established but irregular pattern of development. The development of improved broadband facilities could reduce isolation in the rural areas but overall infrastructure may still be limited in these areas and many services and much employment may continue to be concentrated in the market towns.

3.47 The **challenge** is to increase opportunity and seek balanced positive communities throughout the District while still ensuring that the high quality natural and built environment of the District is safeguarded in the future.

### Tackling the Causes and Effects of an Increasing Generational Imbalance

3.48 The Dorset SCS recognises that the county’s older population is growing (as a result of an ageing population and in-migration) and the younger population shrinks (as a result of lower birth rates and out-migration due to low wages and high house prices). Whilst this scenario is relevant to North Dorset, these population trends are less pronounced than in most other parts of the rural county.

3.49 The main reasons for this are the relatively high rate and type of growth in North Dorset in recent years. In the last 10 years the District’s population has grown by 10.8% with a high proportion of family homes, which have attracted younger people to the area. Other contributory factors (which increase the proportion of young people and mask the generational imbalance to a certain extent) are the presence of several large boarding schools and Blandford Camp, a large armed forces base, where many young people receive training.

3.50 Despite these factors North Dorset’s adult working age population is proportionately smaller than England and Wales’ and its retirement age population is proportionately larger, as set out in Figure 3.1 below.

Figure 3.1 - Percentages of the Population in Different Age Groups Based on 2010 Mid-Year Estimates

Age	England and Wales %	Rural Dorset %	Difference Rural Dorset to England & Wales	North Dorset %	Difference N Dorset to England & Wales
0 -17	21.1	19.8	-1.3	23.3	+2.2
18 - 64	62.3	54.6	-7.7	53.9	-8.4
65+	16.6	25.6	+9.0	22.9	+6.3

3.51 The ageing population is a national issue and it is important to ensure that the needs of the older population are met, particularly in respect of health and social

care and access to facilities. Evidence shows that past housing and economic growth has helped to tackle these issues in North Dorset to a certain extent, but the low wage economy and lack of further and higher education opportunities mean that young people, particularly in the 18 to 24 age group, still leave the District.

- 3.52 The **challenge** for North Dorset is to 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.

### **Safeguarding and Enhancing the Environment**

- 3.53 The many environmental designations in the County and parts of North Dorset are a major constraint that is an important influence on the management of growth. However, the quality of the environment also drives the economy and is one of the reasons why people enjoy living and working in the area.

- 3.54 The key environmental features that need to be conserved and enhanced are:

- landscapes, both within and outside AONB;
- wildlife habitats, geological sites and threatened species;
- the historic built environment, including listed buildings, conservation areas, historic parks and gardens; and
- archaeological sites, including Scheduled Monuments.

- 3.55 Development needs to be designed to take account of global issues such as climate change but more local environmental concerns, such as maintaining local distinctiveness; creating visually attractive and safe environments and safeguarding amenity are also important.

- 3.56 All of these elements are recognised in the NPPF as valuable and in need of protection. Paragraph 109 states that ‘the planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:

- protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, geological conservation interests and soils;
- recognising the wider benefits of ecosystem services;
- minimising impacts on biodiversity and providing net gains in biodiversity where possible, contributing to the Government’s commitment to halt the overall decline in biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures;
- preventing both new and existing development from contributing to or being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by, unacceptable levels of soil, air, water or noise pollution or land instability; and
- remediating and mitigating despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated and unstable land, where appropriate.’

- 3.57 The conservation of the historic environment is also covered by the NPPF, paragraph 126 of which states ‘local planning authorities should set out in their Local Plan a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment, including heritage assets most at risk through neglect, decay or other threats. In doing so, they should recognise that heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource and conserve them in a manner appropriate to their significance.
- 3.58 In developing this strategy, local planning authorities should take into account:
- the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;
  - the wider social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits that conservation of the historic environment can bring;
  - the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness; and
  - opportunities to draw on the contribution made by the historic environment to the character of a place.’
- 3.59 The **challenges** in North Dorset are: to deliver growth that does not harm key environmental features; to encourage high quality design that respects the environment; and to safeguard amenity.

### Providing Affordable Housing

- 3.60 Relatively high house prices coupled with relatively low wages mean that the affordability of housing is a serious issue in North Dorset. In 2009 there was a ‘house price income ratio’ (based on average house prices and average incomes) of 12.7<sup>10</sup> (or based on lower quartile house prices to lower quartile earnings ratio) of 9.38<sup>11</sup>.
- 3.61 Studies by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (Can Work – Can’t Buy; Steve Wilcox 2008) have examined house price income ratios across England based on lower quartile property prices and ‘first time buyer’ incomes. These studies show that North Dorset has one of the highest ‘house price to income ratios’ in the country for first time buyers.
- 3.62 The affordability problem has generated a very significant level of need for affordable housing in North Dorset, with the recently updated Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) showing a total net annual need in the District for 387 affordable dwellings<sup>12</sup> which is higher than the average annual housing

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<sup>10</sup> County monitoring report 2010

<sup>11</sup> Dorset for you Statistics and Census information 2010

<sup>12</sup> Bournemouth / Poole Housing Market Area 2011 Strategic Housing Market Assessment Update – JG Consulting (January 2012)

requirement for all dwellings in the District (i.e. 280 net additional dwellings per annum).

3.63 The updated SHMA indicates that in the market sector around 59% of additional homes should be larger (3 and 4 bedroom) units with a lower proportion (39%) in the affordable sector.<sup>13</sup>

3.64 The approach set out in paragraph 47 of the NPPF is: “To boost significantly the supply of housing, 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 set out in this Framework, including identifying key sites which are critical to the delivery of the housing strategy over the plan period.”

3.65 The **challenge** in North Dorset is therefore to: provide sufficient housing, including affordable housing, of a type, design and mix that meets the diverse needs of the District. This should ensure that everyone can live in a good quality home and neighbourhood that meets their needs.

### Improving Transport and Access to Services

3.66 Paragraph 17 of the NPPF states 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.’

3.67 The SCS for Dorset sets out a number of County wide challenges in relation to access and transport:

- About 5,000 people in low income households are not within 30 minutes travel by public transport of a doctor’s surgery; accessing jobs, training, health care, leisure, essential shopping and other services can be difficult for many people;
- Rural people face rising transport costs and the movement of local services into towns. 58 rural post offices have closed since 1991, 77% of villages do not have a local store and almost 60% do not have a pub;
- Bus frequency and accessibility contribute to people’s satisfaction with buses in rural Dorset being among the lowest in England in these respects;
- Those travelling by road face congestion in urban areas and unreliable journey times with high volumes of traffic on unsuitable roads;
- Access problems and lack of suitable transport are among the most frequently raised problems by older and young people, those on low incomes and disabled people;

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<sup>13</sup> Bournemouth / Poole Housing Market Area 2011 Strategic Housing Market Assessment Update Summary Report for North Dorset – JG Consulting (January 2012)

- Road transport in Dorset is not environmentally sustainable enough and is responsible for 31.5% of Dorset’s carbon emissions from the use of fossil fuel energy. There is a need to reduce the need to travel to improve Dorset’s sustainability and to encourage the use of healthier, more sustainable modes of transport;
- High and volatile oil prices have increased transport costs for everyone and with the supply of oil world-wide near its peak, this is likely to continue. Reducing the need to travel will increase sustainability and cut costs for Dorset people and businesses; and
- Dorset has poor telecommunications, mobile phone and broadband communications. Mobile phone network coverage is not consistent. Broadband speeds in the rural areas in the county are slow.

3.68 In 2007 the indices of deprivation in England showed that, in general terms, North Dorset as a whole and the places within it were not very deprived. When 354 district and unitary authorities in England were ranked with the most deprived nationally at 1 and the least deprived at 354, North Dorset was ranked 247. In the 2010 indices of deprivation North Dorset ranked 212. The survey information is also made available for ‘Super Output Areas’ (SOAs), which are much smaller areas containing, on average, a population of 3,000. None of the 20% most deprived SOAs nationally are located in North Dorset, which means that when measured against a general ‘Index of Multiple Deprivation’ (IMD), North Dorset does not have any pockets of severe deprivation.

3.69 The IMD is made up of measures of seven different forms of deprivation one of which is ‘Barriers to Housing and Services’. North Dorset is shown to have a high Level of Deprivation in this category and 57% of North Dorset’s SOAs fall within the 20% most deprived SOAs nationally.

3.70 The SCS notes that older people and the disabled are particularly affected by poor levels of accessibility. It also disadvantages the young and their ability to access employment, training and leisure opportunities

3.71 The **challenges** for North Dorset are: to ensure that levels of service provision (both in the towns and the rural area) are maintained and where possible improved; and to encourage better public transport that meets the access needs of local communities, businesses, shoppers those attending medical facilities and also those requiring access to leisure.

### **Fostering a Strong Economy**

3.72 Paragraph 7 of the NPPF indicates that the ‘economic’ dimension is one of the three dimensions of sustainable development, which gives rise to the need for the planning system to perform (amongst other roles):

- an economic role – 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...’

- 3.73 Past studies<sup>14</sup> suggested that in the future there would be a shift in the employment structure of rural Dorset towards higher skill level occupations, but these studies pre-date recent global economic difficulties. These problems have brought an added degree of uncertainty to the District’s economic prospects, but it seems likely that its economic profile will continue to differ from that of the sub-region as a whole, because of its rural nature and the absence of large towns.
- 3.74 The economic development strategy for Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole (Raising the Game: Economic Development Strategy 2005-2016) was produced to tackle the issues in the sub-region. A series of long-term economic actions were set out in the Multi Area Agreement (MAA). The MAA made a more specific assessment of the economy of North Dorset noting its rural nature and different employment structure with more employment in primary sectors and utilities, manufacturing and construction whereas employment in financial and business services is well below the sub-regional average.
- 3.75 The MAA has since been superseded by the Dorset Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) which was formed in 2011. In addition a Local Economic Assessment (LEA) has been produced. It has identified a number of important issues, including that poor broadband speeds and a lack of connections are a real barrier to economic growth in the rural parts of the County.
- 3.76 In relation to rural Dorset the LEA states that ‘the predominantly rural areas of the sub-region rely upon a series of important settlements, some with good potential for growth. A high reliance upon public sector jobs poses a risk to the economy in the face of cuts, as does the impact this might have upon essential local services and voluntary / community sector support. These threats are tempered to some degree by high levels of enterprise and the quality of the environment, but it is apparent that a growth in businesses and productivity levels, supported by improved broadband speeds, will be essential to future prosperity.’
- 3.77 The LEA also notes that the District has lower wage levels and higher property prices than the national average and 10% of the working age population live over one hour by bus away from main employment centres thereby encouraging high levels of car or private transport use in order to reach work.
- 3.78 The key characteristics of Dorset’s economy (most of which are to a greater or lesser extent apparent in North Dorset’s economy) are outlined on page 15 of the SCS as a set of challenges, which are:

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<sup>14</sup> North Dorset Profile Pages 16/17 Dorset County Council and North Dorset District Council (2004)

- Economic growth and how much people earn are both lower than the regional and national average;
- Some businesses do not consider Dorset a good place in which to invest and do business in. Reasons can include poor transport links, particularly to Bristol and the north, traffic congestion and inadequate telecommunications;
- Young people consider higher education training and career opportunities to be limited in Dorset;
- There will be a loss of skills in the workplace as many Dorset people retire;
- Businesses tend to be small and business start-ups are relatively low;
- While traditional employment in manufacturing and agriculture is declining, skilled manual and technical workers are needed, including those who can support business growth linked to Dorset's environment;
- The Dorset economy is currently heavily reliant on public service jobs. There needs to be a more balanced and resilient economy;
- Dorset's environment and culture have the potential to drive the economy forward while ensuring that economic growth takes place within environmental limits;
- Dorset's businesses are not environmentally sustainable enough; and
- Improved access to high speed broadband to support business growth is crucial in order to foster a stronger economy both in the urban and the rural areas.

3.79 Despite the difficulties set out above North Dorset is well positioned to take advantage of the likely changes to sectors of the economy for a number of reasons:

- It performs well against a number of labour market indicators with a growing working age population, high economic activity rates and high skill levels;
- It has a track record for delivering employment land at above the planned rate; and
- It already has sufficient employment land and a number of key employment sites identified to meet future workspace needs.

3.80 However, there are issues, such as site delivery, efficient broadband delivery and the need to ensure that employees' skills can be developed to adapt to changing business needs.

3.81 The **challenge** for North Dorset therefore is to 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

3.82 The community planning model for North Dorset operates on the basis of the towns of Blandford, Gillingham, Shaftesbury and Sturminster Newton being the main service centres for their surrounding rural hinterlands. Each area has its own

Local Community Partnership (LCP) and it is now likely that a fifth LCP will be formed based on Stalbridge. The existing LCPs are:

- Blandford area - DT11 Forum Partnership;
- Gillingham area - Three Rivers Partnership;
- Shaftesbury area - Shaftesbury and District Taskforce; and
- Sturminster Newton area – SturQuest.

3.83 Following an evaluation in 2007 the Community Partnerships Executive for North Dorset (CPEND) was set up to better enable local priorities to be taken forward to the strategic level.

3.84 In May 2011 CPEND identified four **key issues** common to all the local community partnerships which are:

- Economy (broadband and training);
- Access and Transport (access to services, shared service provision, local services);
- Healthy communities (implications of change in healthcare provisions, access to health services);
- Environment (carbon footprint, open space, built environment);

3.85 Two other issues were identified as lower priorities albeit still important, which were:

- Culture, Sport and Leisure; and
- Safer Communities.

3.86 CPEND and the Local Community Partnerships are now concentrating their work on themes which are themselves anchored in on-going projects rather than being led by issues. In June 2012 areas of work included:

- Broadband;
- Travel surveys;
- Neighbourhood planning;
- North Dorset Business Park;
- High street regeneration;
- North Dorset Trailway;
- Various access to services projects;
- Various health, sport and culture projects;
- Open spaces; and
- Renewable energy.

3.87 Housing and affordable housing still remains an important issue, but is considered to be beyond the scope of CPEND action.

- 3.88 In addition to these common issues, each LCP has a range of more specific issues for their area and many villages have parish plans, which set out the local priorities for individual settlements.
- 3.89 The visions for each LCP are set out in Section 4, together with an explanation of the District-wide vision.

## 4. The Vision

### For North Dorset

- 4.1 The vision for North Dorset sets out how the District and the places within it should develop over the next 15 years (2011-2026). It is based on a shared agenda for the future in the Dorset SCS but also draws on the strategies developed by the four Local Community Partnerships (LCPs).
- 4.2 Regard has also been had to the District Council's corporate priorities and to the views expressed by organisations and individuals during the various stages of development of the Core Strategy (and subsequently the Local Plan Part 1).
- 4.3 The Council's corporate vision for North Dorset<sup>15</sup> is 'where thriving, balanced and environmentally responsible communities in our market towns and surrounding villages build economic prosperity while safeguarding our unique surroundings.'
- 4.4 A broader range of themes emerged from a series of public meetings in summer 2005, where the Council and the community developed a set of strategic aims for the District. This work informed the 'first draft vision' for the Core Strategy.
- 4.5 As part of the 'issues and options' consultation on the emerging Core Strategy in 2007 views were sought on the 'first draft vision' and how it could be expanded to address the needs in different parts of the District.
- 4.6 The vision for North Dorset as set out in the draft Core Strategy and Development Management Policies Development Plan Document, produced in March 2010, embraced the broader agenda set at the County level. It incorporated many of the themes from earlier visioning work (such as the need to support the District's market towns). Some of the more detailed points (such as improving educational opportunities) were captured within the broader scope of the vision that sought to enhance the life chances of children and young people.
- 4.7 The vision has again been modified for inclusion in the Local Plan Part 1, reflecting more recent changes associated with the reforms of the planning system and local circumstances.

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<sup>15</sup> As set out in the Corporate Plan 2012-2016: North Dorset District Council

4.8 The vision for North Dorset, as set out in the Local Plan Part 1 is as set out below:

In 15 years' time North Dorset will:

1. be a District that has played a positive role in addressing the causes and effects of climate change;
2. 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);
3. have expanded thriving market towns collectively providing homes, jobs and services for those living within them and within the communities they serve;
4. have sustainable smaller rural communities providing local services which enable day-to-day needs to be met locally;
5. 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;
6. have more housing, and in particular more affordable housing, that better meets the diverse needs of the District;
7. 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;
8. 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
9. have a range of community, leisure, cultural and recreational facilities in locations that are accessible to the local population.

## Local Community Visions

4.9 Each Local Community Partnership has a strategy with a vision, setting out each community's aspirations for its area. The Local Plan includes policies for the four main towns of Blandford, Gillingham, Shaftesbury and Sturminster Newton (Policies 16 to 19). For each policy, the supporting text sets out the overall strategy for each town, drawing on the community aspirations set out in the local visions.

4.10 Each local vision also relates to the rural hinterland surrounding each main town and should be used to inform neighbourhood plans and other local community-based policies. The Council will also have regard to these local visions when preparing Part 2 of the Local Plan that 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.

- 4.11 Summaries of the most up-to-date local visions are set out below.
- 4.12 The local **vision for Blandford and the south of the District** is set out in Shaping the Future: Community Strategic Plan Document, which was produced by the DT11 Forum Community Partnership in 2008 and revised in March 2011 to identify progress made to date on the Action Plan. It is 'to create a thriving, vibrant and environmentally sustainable future for the town and villages of the DT11 Forum area set in accessible and well managed countryside.'
- 4.13 The local **vision for Gillingham and the north of the District** is set out under the 5 key themes which are taken from the approved Gillingham Area Action Plan Update 2010.
- 4.14 The vision is to 'influence and, in collaboration with partner organisations, manage the development of our community in order to maximise the quality of life and well-being of residents.'
- 4.15 It also contains goals for the five key themes identified within it, which are:
- **Economic Generation** – A thriving sustainable local economy;
  - **Transport** – Improvements in local transport to better meet the needs of local residents; and
  - **Culture, Arts & Sport** – High quality, accessible facilities to enable participation in cultural, artistic and sporting activities;
  - **Our Environment** – Sustainable and managed built and natural environment;
  - **Social Well-being** – A flourishing, safe, healthy and responsible community.
- 4.16 The local community **vision for Shaftesbury and surrounding area** is taken from The View of the Hill: The Shaftesbury Area Community Plan that was produced by the Shaftesbury District Task Force in June 2005. The vision is 'in 2020 the Shaftesbury area will be thriving, centred on its Dorset market town, with a strong and distinctive character, with respect for its past and pride in its diverse built, natural and cultural heritage. It will be an area where the community works together, firmly committed to securing a sustained and prosperous future, with a high quality of life and access to services, providing opportunities of ALL who live and work in the town and the surrounding villages.'
- 4.17 The overall vision for Sturminster Newton, Stalbridge and the west of the District is taken from the Sturminster Newton Area Action Plan, produced by SturQuest in December 2003 and is of 'a community that plans for its own future, rather than one that is planned for by others.'
- 4.18 The visions for the five key themes and areas for action identified in the action plan are:
- **Economy** - A successful local economy based on small to medium sized enterprises providing a diverse range of local employment opportunities;

- **Education, Skills and Learning** – A capable and adaptable workforce to meet the demands of the local economy thus helping individuals, families and the community to benefit from an improving local economy and improved quality of life;
- **Ease of Movement** – A town which is a pleasant environment in which to live and work and take leisure, and one which is not dominated by traffic; an area where people are less dependent on the provision of transport, especially the private car, to participate fully in life; and an area where there is a better integration of land uses and a reduction in the feeling of isolation of both town and country;
- **Environment** – An attractive rural area able to accommodate changes in farming practice and new development, and with well-maintained and managed habitats incorporating high biodiversity; and
- **Enhanced Leisure, Recreation & Community Facilities** – Everyone, whether in town or country, has good access to improved, affordable local recreation, leisure and community facilities.

4.19 The brief summary above shows that there is a similar thrust to all of the local visions, which reflect many of the issues and challenges identified in the Dorset SCS. In the future neighbourhood plans may also include more local visions for individual towns and villages in the District.

## 5. Objectives for North Dorset

- 5.1 The objectives link the vision for North Dorset to the strategic policies in the Local Plan, by focussing on the key issues and challenges that need to be addressed. In some cases a particular aspect of the vision links directly to one specific part of an objective. However, for issues that are cross-cutting in nature (such as economic development, sustainability and access to services) there may be links to parts of one or more objectives.
- 5.2 The District-wide objectives relate to:
- meeting the challenge of climate change
  - conserving and enhancing the historic and natural environment
  - ensuring vitality of the market towns;
  - supporting sustainable rural communities;
  - meeting the District's housing needs; and
  - improving the quality of life.

### Meeting the Challenge of Climate Change

- 5.3 It is now accepted that climate change is a major factor within our lives and future. The NPPF places a great emphasis on sustainability in all forms of land use and development in order to ensure that our solutions to this challenge are, positive, effective and directed to long-term well-being.
- 5.4 Climate change will necessitate the use of a range of sustainable construction techniques which are adapted to their particular location and which make the greatest use of both modern and traditional construction to ensure that climate effects are mitigated and resources best used to meet local needs.
- 5.5 This is a wide ranging approach which is continually developing as technologies are evolving to meet individual situations. The Council will seek to encourage all development to acknowledge sustainability issues. This will involve actively supporting energy efficiency improvements to existing buildings and in the case of new building setting local requirements for sustainability which are consistent with the Government's zero carbon buildings policy and nationally prescribed standards.
- 5.6 The Dorset Energy Partnership advises and guides all Dorset Local Authorities (including North Dorset) on renewable energy matters and the Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole Renewable Energy Strategy to 2020 (2013) promotes energy from renewable and low carbon sources.
- 5.7 This strategy reflects the thrust of the NPPF with new development being expected to adopt decentralised energy supply in design and to take account of landform, layout, building orientation, massing and landscaping to minimise energy consumption.

- 5.8 In addition the Council will seek to identify opportunities and locations where development can draw its energy supply from decentralised, renewable or low carbon energy supply systems.
- 5.9 An important aspect of meeting the challenge is to ensure the wise use of natural resources particularly previously developed land and water. Reuse is a preferable option in many cases but it should offer benefits to future users and the surrounding locality which mitigate climate change. For example: providing shading landscape planting; improving soil and water/river quality on or within sites; and offering development which includes renewable energy technologies potentially providing energy for use within and beyond the site.
- 5.10 Objective 1 aims to ensure that all aspects of development take account of the circumstances and address the potential consequences of climate change. Well considered and sustainable development can lessen the likely detrimental effects of change throughout the District.

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

- 5.11 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.

## **Conserving and Enhancing the Historic and Natural Environment**

- 5.12 The need to protect and enhance the environment is a priority for Dorset residents and a key theme in the Dorset SCS. This was also recognised as being important in the early visioning work on the Core Strategy and in the Council's Corporate Plan. The SCS recognises that the quality of the environment helps to drive Dorset's economy and is also one of the reasons why people enjoy living and working in the County. Development therefore needs to be sensitively designed to maintain environmental quality, our unique heritage and the quality of life of residents.
- 5.13 Objective 2 recognises the need to conserve valued environmental features; and also seeks to ensure that environmental quality is maintained through high standards of design and the protection of amenity.

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

- 5.14 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.

## Ensuring the Vitality of the Market Towns

- 5.15 The importance of the District's market towns was recognised by the local community in the early visioning work on the draft Core Strategy and is also recognised by the Council in its Corporate Plan. The current Local Plan identifies these towns as the main locations for growth in the District. It also recognises that these towns need employment, shopping and other services to support their roles as services centres.
- 5.16 The autumn 2012 public consultation on key issues for the revision of the draft Core Strategy proposes that Sturminster Newton should be identified as a 'main town' alongside Blandford, Gillingham and Shaftesbury. It also proposes that the vast majority of housing growth should be concentrated at these 'main towns'.
- 5.17 The objective recognises the need for housing, employment and shopping for the market towns to prosper. However, growth also needs to be supported by community services (such as health and education facilities) and infrastructure (particularly transport infrastructure), so that the towns will become more self-contained and the quality of life of residents will be improved. In recent years housing development, particularly in Gillingham, has taken place without the necessary facilities and infrastructure and this should not happen in the future.
- 5.18 Regeneration has a positive role to play in creating thriving market towns, but Objective 3 also recognises that the potential effects of growth on other nearby towns needs to be taken into account.

### **Objective 3 – Ensuring the vitality of The Market Towns**

- 5.19 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 nearby towns and cities in neighbouring districts.

## Supporting Sustainable Rural Communities

- 5.20 The early visioning work on the draft Core Strategy showed that there was community concern for the well-being of the District's villages and countryside and this is reflected in the Council's Corporate Plan. The Dorset SCS also recognises that the County's rural nature and attractive environment give rise to a range of problems including poor access to services and a lack of affordable housing.
- 5.21 National policy seeks to achieve more sustainable patterns of development in rural areas by focusing growth at local service centres and by strictly controlling development in the countryside. Paragraph 55 of the NPPF states that 'to promote sustainable development in rural areas, housing should be located where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities. For example, where there are groups of smaller settlements, development in one village may support services in a village nearby. Local planning authorities should avoid new isolated homes in the countryside unless there are special circumstances.'
- 5.22 The current adopted Local Plan (2003) reflects this national approach, but in the past there was strong development pressure resulting in high levels of housing 'oversupply' outside the main towns. More recently, the Council has worked to try and achieve a more sustainable pattern of development by managing 'oversupply'<sup>16</sup>. In autumn 2012, the Council sought views on whether the focus in Stalbridge and the villages should be on meeting local (rather than strategic) needs, delivered primarily through neighbourhood planning.
- 5.23 Part 1 of the new Local Plan has developed a policy framework that contributes to the achievement of more sustainable patterns of development, but which also enables the needs of rural communities to be met. The objective seeks to achieve this by: using neighbourhood planning as the primary means of meeting local needs in Stalbridge and the District's villages; recognising the importance of retaining and enhancing facilities to support the role of settlements as local service centres; and

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<sup>16</sup> Managing Housing Land Supply in North Dorset – North Dorset District Council (July 2007)

recognising the need to apply a general policy of restraint in the countryside to help deliver a more sustainable pattern of development, that also allows some necessary development to address essential rural needs.

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

5.24 The objective is to create 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.

### **Meeting the District’s Housing Needs**

5.25 The Dorset SCS shows that the provision of more affordable housing is a top priority for the people of Dorset. However, across the rural parts of the County there is also a general concern about the potential impacts of new housing development.

5.26 In North Dorset, the Council recognises that there is a need for housing of all types, not just affordable housing. Affordable housing is a corporate priority for the Council and was also identified as a key issue in the early visioning work for the draft Core Strategy.

5.27 The objective seeks to focus both market and affordable housing in the most sustainable locations, but also recognises that, exceptionally, affordable housing may be required in more rural areas to meet strictly local needs. The objective reflects the concerns about the shortage of affordable housing in the Dorset SCS by suggesting that all new dwellings should contribute to meeting affordable housing needs. However, it also recognises the importance of securing the right type, design and mix of housing generally to meet the needs of the whole population. The need to provide for the needs of gypsies and travellers is also highlighted.

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

5.28 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 reflect 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 showpeople in the District.

## Improving the Quality of Life

- 5.29 Quality of life issues go to the heart of the Dorset SCS and are reflected in the strategies of the four Local Community Partnerships in North Dorset. These documents recognise that behind the ‘picture postcard’ image, there are serious issues that need to be addressed, not just in relation to housing and employment, but also in relation to the well-being of the community. Poor access to services, employment and leisure are key issues, as is the ‘demographic challenge’ of having a large elderly population and a decreasing proportion of young people.
- 5.30 Certain aspects of the ‘quality of life agenda’ emerged through the early visioning work on the Core Strategy, which highlighted the need to foster ‘community life’ and to improve education, health and recreational opportunities.
- 5.31 Objective 6 recognises that quality of life issues affect everyone, but that in North Dorset, they are particularly relevant to the young and old. The objective seeks better community, leisure, cultural, health, education, sport and recreation facilities embracing the agendas of a wide range of organisations. It also seeks a more sustainable transport network, highlighting the fact that these facilities not only need to be provided and retained, but that they need to be accessible to the local population as well.

### Objective 6 - Improving the Quality of Life

- 5.32 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.

## 6. Links between Issues, Challenges, Visions, Objectives and Policies

- 6.1 The NPPF in its introduction describes its role as ‘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.’
- 6.2 This background paper provides an overview of the issues and challenges that have informed the District-wide vision and the visions for the Local Community Partnerships. It outlines the objectives that have been set to deliver the vision and in this section shows the links from the issues, challenges, visions and objectives to the strategic policies in Part 1 of the Local Plan.
- 6.3 These strategic policies also provide the ‘high level’ framework for the preparation of neighbourhood plans by local communities.

Figure 6.1 – Shows the relationship between national issues, challenges, vision and objectives

National Issues	National Challenges	Vision	Objectives
Addressing the Causes and Effects of Climate Change	to deliver higher standards of sustainable construction and to 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.	1	1
Delivering More Sustainable Forms of Development	to 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.	2, 3, 4	1, 3, 4
Delivering More Sustainable Patterns of Development	to identify the most sustainable distribution of development within the District, for the main towns, and the countryside, whilst also having regard to past concerns relating to 'oversupply'.	3, 4	3, 4
Conserving and Enhancing AONB and Fostering the Social and Economic Well-being of their Communities	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	3, 4, 5	2, 3, 4
Protecting Internationally Important Wildlife Sites	to ensure that these sites are not harmed, either directly or indirectly, by development proposed in the Local Plan.	5	2

Figure 6.2 – Shows the relationship between District-wide issues, challenges, vision and objectives

District Issues	District Challenges	Vision	Objectives
Extensive rural areas but with pockets of high population growth	to increase opportunity and seek balanced positive communities throughout the District while still ensuring that the high quality natural and built environment of the District is safeguarded in the future.	3, 4, 5	3, 4
Tackling the Causes and Effects of an Increasing Generational Imbalance	to 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.	7	6
Safeguarding and Enhancing the Environment	to deliver growth that does not harm key environmental features; to encourage high quality design that respects the environment; and to safeguard amenity.	5	2
Providing Affordable Housing	to provide sufficient housing, including affordable housing, of a type, design and mix that meets the diverse needs of the District. This should ensure that everyone can live in a good quality home and neighbourhood that meets their needs.	6	5
Improving Transport and Access to Services	to ensure that levels of service provision (both in the towns and the rural area) are maintained and where possible improved; and to encourage better public transport that meets the access needs of local communities, businesses, shoppers those attending medical facilities and also those requiring access to leisure.	2, 9	3, 4, 6
Fostering a Strong Economy	to 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.	8	3, 4

Figure 6.3 – Shows the relationship between District-wide issues and the vision and objectives

Local Issues	Vision	Comments
<p>CPEND identified six <b>key issues</b> common to all the local community partnerships which are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Economy;</li> <li>• Access and transport;</li> <li>• Healthy communities;</li> <li>• Environment;</li> <li>• Culture, sport and leisure; and</li> <li>• Safer communities.</li> </ul>	<p>Local community visions are set out in paragraphs 4.11 to 4.17 and have fed into the overall District-wide vision.</p>	<p>The supporting text to the Blandford, Gillingham, Shaftesbury and Sturminster Newton Policies (16 to 19) set out the overall strategy for each town, drawing on the community aspirations in the local visions. Each local vision also relates to the rural hinterland surrounding the main towns. In this area, outside of the defined boundaries of the four main towns, development will be more strictly controlled with an emphasis on meeting local and essential rural needs through the Countryside Policy (20), neighbourhood planning or by 'opting-in' to the Local Plan Part 2 Site Allocations.</p>

Figure 6.4 – Following tables show the relationship between objectives and strategic policies in Part 1 of the Local Plan.

Objective 1 – Meeting the Challenge of Climate Change		Policy
Objective 1 is to address the causes and effects of climate change by:	encouraging the use of sustainable construction techniques;	3, 24
	encouraging the use of renewable energy technologies appropriate to the local area; and	3, 22
	ensuring the wise use of natural resources, particularly previously developed land and water.	3, 7, 22

Objective 2 - Conserving and Enhancing the Historic and Natural Environment		Policy
Objective 2 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;	4, 5, 24
	encouraging design that maintains the quality of the District’s built and natural environment; and	5, 24
	ensuring that the District’s residents are able to enjoy their homes and public places without undue disturbance or intrusion from neighbouring uses	25

Objective 3 - Ensuring the Vitality of the Market Towns		Policy
Objective 3 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;	2, 6, 16, 17, 18, 19, 21
	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;	11,16, 17, 18, 19, 21
	focusing an improved range of retail, cultural and leisure uses within the town centres;	12, 16, 17, 18, 19
	improving health, education and community services to meet the needs of the towns and their rural hinterlands;	14, 16, 17, 18, 19, 21
	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;	13
	securing the delivery of mixed use regeneration on previously developed land in accessible locations;	7, 11
	ensuring that housing development is delivered in step with employment opportunities, community facilities and infrastructure; and	2, 13, 14, 15, 21
	taking account of the effects of any interaction between the towns themselves and with the large towns and cities in neighbouring districts.	16, 17, 18, 19, 21

Objective 4 - Supporting Sustainable Rural Communities		Policy
Objective 4 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;	2, 6, 9, 11, 20, 28 - 33
	focusing on meeting local (rather than strategic) needs in Stalbridge and the District’s villages;	2, 9, 11, 20
	enabling individual rural communities to plan to meet their own local needs, especially through neighbourhood planning; and	2, 11, 20
	securing the retention, enhancement and future viability of local community facilities and local services.	14, 27

Objective 5 - Meeting the District’s Housing Needs		Policy
Objective 5 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 main towns;	6, 8, 16, 17, 18, 19, 21
	Focusing provision elsewhere on meeting local housing needs, especially the need for affordable housing	6, 9, 20
	ensuring that all new dwellings contribute to overcoming the affordable housing shortfall;	8
	ensuring that the type, design and mix of housing reflects housing needs in up-to-date assessments;	7
	ensuring that housing is designed to support the changing needs of its occupants and users; and	7, 24
	ensuring that sufficient, sustainably-located sites are provided to meet the needs of gypsies, travellers and travelling show people in the District.	10, 26

Objective 6 - Improving the Quality of Life		Policy
Objective 6 is to improve the quality of life of North Dorset’s residents, particularly the older population and the young, by:	encouraging the provision and retention of viable community, leisure and cultural facilities both in the main towns and rural communities;	14, 27
	retaining the current range of healthcare and education services and ensuring that additional healthcare and education facilities are provided in accessible locations;	14
	ensuring that a network of multi-functional Green Infrastructure including sport and recreation facilities, open and natural space, is provided across the district;	15
	securing an integrated approach to private and public transport (including parking provision and management), which improves accessibility to services; and	13, 23
	ensuring that development makes a positive contribution to enhancing existing and providing new transport infrastructure.	13

## 7. Implementation

- 7.1 Part 1 of the Local Plan Chapter 11 sets out how the policies will be monitored. It outlines the Council's approach for regularly assessing and reviewing outcomes against the six District-wide objectives that relate to:
- meeting the challenge of climate change;
  - conserving and enhancing the historic and natural environment;
  - ensuring vitality of the market towns;
  - supporting sustainable rural communities;
  - meeting the District's housing needs; and
  - improving the quality of life.
- 7.2 Assessing outcomes against objectives will enable the Council to monitor the effectiveness of the policies in the Local Plan Part 1. The monitoring framework sets out:
- the intended outcomes to achieve different aspects of each objective;
  - the indicators that will be used to assess the achievement of performance against the intended outcomes;
  - targets that establish the level of performance that is being sought in relation to each relevant indicator; and
  - the policy (or policies) relevant to the delivery of intended outcomes.
- 7.3 The Council intends to set out this information in regularly produced monitoring reports.