

Neighbourhood Planning Guidance

Meeting Housing Needs

Introduction

This guidance note has been produced for communities preparing neighbourhood plans in North Dorset to help them identify and meet their housing needs. It outlines the national policy position for meeting housing needs, the District Council's local context, including how neighbourhood plans relate to the Council's existing policy on housing. The note then sets out the step by step process for reviewing local housing needs and includes example questions and policies to help communities evidence and prepare their neighbourhood plans.

The guidance note considers:

1. Housing distribution;
2. The type of housing needed;
 - a) Affordable housing and rural exception sites,
 - b) Housing for different groups (families with children; older people; people with disabilities; service families; and people wishing to build their own homes);
3. The mix of housing;
4. Regeneration opportunities for housing and employment; and
5. Housing in support of community facilities.

Please note that this guidance has been prepared in the context of the submission version of the North Dorset Local Plan 2011-2026 and could therefore be subject to change resulting from the forthcoming examination and Inspector's report.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

The NPPF states the following:

Delivering a wide choice of high quality housing

"47. 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;"

"50. To deliver a wide choice of high quality homes, widen opportunities for home ownership and create sustainable, inclusive and mixed communities, local planning authorities should:

- plan for a mix of housing based on current and future demographic trends, market trends and the needs of different groups in the community (such as, but not limited to, families with children, older people, people with disabilities, service families and people wishing to build their own homes);
- identify the size, type, tenure and range of housing"

"54. In rural areas, exercising the duty to cooperate with neighbouring authorities, local planning authorities should be responsive to local circumstances and plan housing development to reflect

local needs, particularly for affordable housing, including through rural exception sites where appropriate. Local planning authorities should in particular consider whether allowing some market housing would facilitate the provision of significant additional affordable housing to meet local needs.”

“55. To promote sustainable development in rural areas, housing should be located where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities.

- ...where the development would re-use redundant or disused buildings and lead to an enhancement to the immediate setting;...”

Using a proportionate evidence base

“159. Local planning authorities should have a clear understanding of housing needs in their area. They should:

- Prepare a Strategic Housing Market Assessment to assess their full housing needs, working with neighbouring authorities where housing market areas cross administrative boundaries. The Strategic Housing Market Assessment should identify the scale and mix of housing and the range of tenures that the local population is likely to need over the plan period which:
 - meets household and population projections, taking account of migration and demographic change;
 - addresses the need for all types of housing, including affordable housing and the needs of different groups in the community (such as, but not limited to, families with children, older people, people with disabilities, service families and people wishing to build their own homes); and
 - caters for housing demand and the scale of housing supply necessary to meet this demand;”

Additional guidance is provided in National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG)

<http://planningguidance.planningportal.gov.uk/blog/guidance/housing-and-economic-development-needs-assessments/>

North Dorset Local Plan

Local planning policy includes the ‘saved policies’ of the North Dorset Local Plan 2003 and the emerging North Dorset Local Plan 2011-2026 Parts 1 & 2. Part 1 of the Local Plan was submitted in December 2014 with an examination anticipated in 2015. Part 2 of the Local Plan will include site allocations.

Housing distribution

The emerging North Dorset Local Plan 2011-2026, Policy 6: Housing Distribution, states that “the vast majority of housing growth will be concentrated at the District’s four main towns of Blandford, Gillingham, Shaftesbury and Sturminster Newton.” Whilst figures are given in Policy 6 for the approximate scale of housing development for each of the four main towns, paragraph 5.24 of the Local Plan Part 1 confirms that “no figure for the approximate scale of housing and affordable housing is given for the countryside (including Stalbridge and the villages)”. Policy 6 explains that “in the countryside (including Stalbridge and the villages) the level of housing and affordable housing provision will be the cumulative number of new homes delivered to contribute towards meeting identified local and essential rural needs”. It is, however, recognised in paragraph 5.26 that “at least 230” new homes will need to be provided outside the four main towns to “ensure that the identified District-wide need is met”.

This situation is summarised in the table below, which sets out how the new homes proposed in the Local Plan Part 1 will be distributed in North Dorset.

Figure 1.1 – Proposed Spatial Distribution of Housing Development

Location	Homes Proposed 2011 to 2026	% of Total
Blandford	About 1,110	26%
Gillingham	About 1,490	34%
Shaftesbury	About 1,140	26%
Sturminster Newton	About 380	9%
Countryside (including Stalbridge and the Villages)	At least 230	Minimum of 5%
Total	About 4,350	100%

Housing distribution: the four main towns

The four main towns are considered to be the most sustainable locations for housing development in the District and the amount of housing proposed at each town has been determined following an analysis of the key constraints and opportunities undertaken as part of the preparation of the Local Plan Part 1. This analysis has led to the identification of broad locations for housing growth, which are shown on the ‘inset diagrams’ for each town, which are:

- Figure 8.1 – Blandford Inset Diagram;
- Figure 8.2 – Gillingham Inset Diagram;
- Figure 8.3 – Shaftesbury Inset Diagram; and
- Figure 8.4 – Sturminster Newton Inset Diagram.

The Local Plan Part 1 also formally allocates the Gillingham Southern Extension, as shown in Figure 9.5.

A neighbourhood plan for one of the four main towns needs to recognise the identified broad locations for housing growth (and in the case of Gillingham the proposed southern extension). A neighbourhood plan could not promote less development than is identified in the Local Plan Part 1, or change these strategic locations (and in the case of Gillingham the strategic site allocation), but it could allow greater levels of growth (by allocating additional sites for development) or include specific policies or guidance on how new development should be designed.

Housing distribution: the countryside (including Stalbridge and the villages)

Since the vast majority of the District's growth can be met at the four main towns, the focus in the countryside is on meeting local and essential rural needs. In this context, growth to meet local needs means growth to meet the needs of the community as a whole, in the area for which the relevant neighbourhood plan is being prepared. A neighbourhood plan should not put forward strategic levels of growth, as that is the role of the Local Plan.

Paragraph 5.26 of the Local Plan Part 1 explains that the figure of "at least 230 dwellings" should not be seen as a target or a cap on the overall level of development that should take place in the countryside and that "it is simply the amount of housing required outside the four main towns to ensure that the identified District-wide need is met". Paragraph 5.27 further explains that the level of housing provision in the countryside should reflect what's required to meet "local and essential rural needs identified at the local level".

Reviews of District-wide Housing Provision Figures

The District Council is expected to maintain a rolling 5-year supply of housing land in North Dorset. In the short term this can be affected by local factors, such as development sites stalling and, over a longer time period, by economic conditions including recession. The Government expects local plans to be regularly reviewed to take account of new population and household projections. Periodic review is also required in order to maintain an adequate time horizon, ideally 15 years, with the expectation new housing sites should be identified to meet longer term strategic housing needs, if required, as part of any review. When preparing neighbourhood plans, it is therefore important to recognise that the strategic policy framework may change, as a result of the need to keep housing needs under review. In short, it needs to be recognised that the current situation is not a fixed position.

The most up to date housing monitoring data can be found in the latest Annual Monitoring Report, which is published each year in December.

Affordable housing and rural exception sites

The emerging North Dorset Local Plan 2011-2026, Policy 8: Affordable Housing sets out the affordable housing threshold and proportions for the District's towns and countryside.

Since the Plan's submission, changes in national policy and new viability work suggest the proposed thresholds and proportions should be revised. New Government guidance published on the 28 November 2014, introduces a national minimum threshold of 10 dwellings or less in which affordable housing and tariff style planning obligations (section 106 planning obligations) should not be sought from small scale and self-build development. In designated rural areas (National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty - AONB) Councils can choose to apply a lower threshold of 5-units or less. It is likely that the Council will introduce a 5-unit threshold in those parts of the District that fall within AONB. Where this threshold applies affordable housing and tariff style contributions between 6-10 units in the form of cash payments are commuted until after the completion of units within the development. The restrictions on seeking planning obligations contributions do not apply to development on rural exception sites.

As the general thresholds and percentages for the provision of affordable housing are set in national policy and the strategic policies of the Local Plan Part 1, it would not be appropriate for these to be changed through a neighbourhood plan.

Policy 9: Rural Exception Affordable Housing explains that rural exception schemes will only be permitted within or adjoining the built-up area of Stalbridge or any of the District's villages. Rural exception affordable housing schemes will not be permitted within or adjoining the settlements of Blandford (Forum and St. Mary), Gillingham, Shaftesbury and Sturminster Newton.

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

Where these schemes are proposed they should be located in the built up area of the settlement or if no such site is available a small site adjoining the built up area. The rural exception site should not exceed more than nine dwellings in total of which the proportion of market housing should not exceed a third and should be accompanied by a viability assessment.

Since Policy 9 provides the strategic policy framework for the consideration of planning applications for rural exception affordable housing schemes, there is no need for such schemes to be brought forward through neighbourhood plans.

Housing for different groups (families with children; older people; people with disabilities; service families; and people wishing to build their own homes)

The emerging North Dorset Local Plan 2011-2026, Policy 7: Delivering Homes sets out the Council's position for these particular groups.

Research shows that in 2007 19% of all households in North Dorset had one or more members with an identified 'special need' and 27% of these households were in the social rented sector¹. The ways in which planning policies assist in meeting the needs of different groups in the community, including those with special needs, is set out below.

Families with Children

The analysis undertaken in the SHMA studies looked at household formation rates and used a housing market model that took into account how households of different ages occupy dwellings. The analysis shows a high level of need for 'family housing', which will be sought through this policy. This issue is discussed in greater detail under housing mix below which sets out the Council position for the percentage split of 1-2 bed properties and 3 or more bed properties.

If local evidence is obtained, a neighbourhood plan could seek to modify this percentage to reflect local circumstances.

Older People

Policy 7: Delivery Homes states that "The Council will support the provision of age restricted housing for the elderly and will usually seek to control its occupancy by planning condition or planning obligations".

The 2012 SHMA update illustrates that 30% of the North Dorset population are aged over 60. Studies show that the proportion of people over 60 is likely to increase significantly over the next 20 years.

¹ The needs of particular groups in North Dorset are discussed in Section 12 of the Dorset Survey of Housing Need and Demand DSHND): Local Authority Report for North Dorset District Council, Fordham Research (June 2008). Special needs categories include: frail elderly; physical disability; learning difficulty; mental health problem; severe sensory disability; and medical condition.

The District's ageing population will give rise to proposals for elderly persons' accommodation, including sheltered accommodation, care homes and nursing homes.

Sheltered accommodation, where the residential units are self-contained, are usually defined as 'dwellings' in planning terms, whereas care homes and nursing homes, where the accommodation is not self-contained, are usually defined as 'residential institutions'. Developers should be aware that the use class within which the development falls may have implications for the levels of affordable housing and developer contributions that the Council will seek.

If a local need is identified, neighbourhood plans could seek to allocate land specifically for elderly person's accommodation.

People with Disabilities

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

There are no direct implications for the production of Neighbourhood Plans.

Service Families

Blandford Camp is a large military site located to the north east of Blandford Forum within the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB. The Camp, which is likely to remain a military establishment during the plan period, supports the main concentration of service families in the District.

Blandford Camp has a range of facilities to support service personnel, including a primary school. However, much of the residential accommodation requires modernisation. Some improvements have taken place in recent years and the Council will continue to support further improvements, within the environmental constraints of the site.

There are no direct implications for the production of Neighbourhood Plans at the present time.

People Wishing to Build Their Own Homes

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

To support self-build housing under this approach, communities could seek to re-introduce settlement boundaries around villages with supporting policy criteria for self-build properties; alternatively communities could pursue a specific site allocation or generic exception site policy.

The mix of housing

The submission version of the North Dorset Local Plan 2011-2026, Policy 7: Delivery Homes states that "all housing should to contribute towards the creation of mixed and balanced communities." The policy seeks to deliver 40% of market housing in North Dorset as one or two bedroom properties and 60% of market housing as three or more bedroom properties. In the period to 2026, the Council will seek to deliver 60% of affordable housing in North Dorset as one or two bedroom properties and 40% of affordable housing as three or more bedroom properties. These proportions will be the

starting point for negotiations on the mix of house sizes on all sites where 10 or more dwellings are proposed.

A neighbourhood plan could consider a different mix if it can be soundly justified by local circumstances. In the case of rural exception sites, the mix should reflect identified local needs in accordance with Policy 9 – Rural Exception Affordable Housing.

Regeneration opportunities for housing and employment

The emerging Local Plan Policy 11: Economy, seeks the mixed-use regeneration of sites on the edge of existing town centres with a focus on office and non B-Class employment generating uses.

Economic development in the countryside (including at Stalbridge and the District's villages) will be supported by: enabling rural communities to plan to meet their own local needs, particularly through neighbourhood planning; and countryside policies (Policies 29 to 32) which may permit: the re-use of existing buildings; the retention and small scale expansion of existing employment sites; the provision of certain forms of tourist accommodation; and equine-related developments.

In the countryside Policy 20 encourages the re-use of existing buildings for employment purposes, including commercial community facilities, such as village shops. The Council will work with communities to secure heritage-led regeneration, where suitable opportunities arise.

Housing in support of community facilities

In Stalbridge and the villages Policy 20 supports the provision of new or upgraded non-commercial community facilities (such as village halls, places of worship and cemeteries) which would help to address the issue of poor access to services in the countryside and help to meet the needs of the District's rural communities. Policy 14 – Social Infrastructure encourages such facilities in, or adjacent to, the built-up areas of Stalbridge and the villages. Policy 27 – Retention of Community Facilities also encourages the retention of both commercial and non-commercial community facilities.

Although Policies 20 and 14 are supportive of community facilities in towns and rural areas, neighbourhood plans can be used to allocate sites for enabling development to fund the cost of introducing new facilities. For example, in a rural settlement a small market housing scheme could be allocated on land to pay for a new village hall.

Assessing Housing Need Process

This section outlines the process of assessing housing need.

Process of assessing housing need
Step 1: Evidence gathering
Step 2: Analysis of data & identification of issues
Step 3: Planning policy approaches
Step 4: Draft Policy
Step 5: Consult the community (pre-submission consultation)
Step 6: Submission

Step 1: Evidence gathering

The first step is to identify and analyse existing evidence already produced by the Council and other organisations. There are a variety of sources of evidence that maybe relevant including:

Annual Monitoring Reports (AMRs)

The Council's AMR will set out the housing delivery for each settlement between April – March each year. This document is usually published in December. At key points in the Neighbourhood Plan making process it will be possible to integrate the most recent housing delivery data.

Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA)

The SHMA will identify the future quantity of housing need, including a breakdown by type, tenure and size. The SHMA was originally undertaken in 2008, with a update produced in 2012. A new SHMA is due to be produced in early 2015.

This document is produced at a sub-regional level covering several local authority areas. It is used as the primary evidence for the preparation and review of Local Plan housing policies. The SHMA identifies an objectively assessed need for housing provision for the District as well as giving a breakdown of the need for affordable housing, types and tenures of housing and the needs of specific groups (elderly, the young and people with disabilities). As the scope of this document is sub-regional, it will identify general targets and patterns and will not be specific to individual parish circumstances. For example, a need for affordable housing maybe higher in one town than another because of the local situation, such as a recently completed housing scheme. The evidence in SHMA should, however, be used as the benchmark with which to assess your own housing need against and will be a starting point for negotiations in many cases.

Local demographics / census data

A more bespoke review of each parish can be undertaken through a review of local demographic information principally captured through the latest national census.

Office of National Statistics

<http://neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk/dissemination/LeadHome.do?a=7&i=1001&m=0&r=1&s=1419252265146&enc=1&extendedList=true&nav=A&areaSearchText=>

Dorset 2011 Census – Snapshot

<https://apps.geowessex.com/Census/Data/Snapshot>

The Dorset Snapshot tool for housing in particular provides a review of individual parishes against the North Dorset average, enabling the identification of trends diverging from the average.

For example 'Tenure' statistics may identify an over reliance on rented accommodation or the 'People, Health & Care' statistics may identify an ageing population. In this second example, when the parish age profile is cross checked against the existing 'Housing stock' a mismatch may be identified, for example a high proportion of family homes with very few small smaller properties for down-sizing families or even accommodation suitable for the elderly. In these scenarios it could be appropriate to introduce a policy seeking a preferred mix of housing or even allocate a site for this specific type of accommodation.

Other examples of local issues that could be identified include: the percentage of the housing stock identified as second homes / holiday accommodation; percentage of housing that is over-crowded accommodation; or the housing mix. Each circumstance is unique and will require analysis to identify specific issues.

Housing Questionnaire

In addition to the SHMA and local demographics information it is also beneficial to ask the community what housing needs they think is required. It is suggested that this information can be collected through a housing questionnaire or housing survey. Essentially questions should seek to clarify which demographic the respondent is in and then to identify the needs of the community. To receive well informed answers it is good practice to provide some initial context to the questions. This could be through a background paper or display boards that highlight some of the existing household statistics in the parish. An example housing questionnaire is attached at Appendix 1 to this guidance note.

It is suggested that the initial questionnaire has the widest possible scope so that it can explore a wide range of housing issues. Once a specific issue has been identified a more focused questionnaire could then be carried out to draw out more detail. A common example would be a 'Housing Needs Survey' that is focused at identifying and supporting the needs for a rural affordable housing exception site. Please note that a 'Housing Needs Survey' is not appropriate in urban parishes (e.g. parishes with a population of over 3,000 people). In North Dorset this definition applies to the four main towns.

Site opportunities - In addition to identifying housing need through statistical information there maybe site specific opportunities that could generate a need for future development such as the regeneration of brownfield sites. Potential regeneration opportunities could be identified through a review of the Council's Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA), Local Plan Allocations or Local Development Briefs. Sites could also be identified through a 'call for sites' or through a questionnaire, see Appendix 1 example question.

Enabling development - In some limited circumstances, housing development can be used to cross-subsidise specific community projects that would not otherwise be viable in other scenarios and this issue can be asked as a question, see Appendix 1 example question.

Parish / Town Plan

Many communities will already have asked these types of questions in early public consultations for different purposes, such as an existing Parish Plan or Town Plan and this information can be used to inform the Neighbourhood Plan.

Step 2: Analysis of data & identification of issues

The results of the initial evidence gathering could be collated into a 'background paper' that seeks to draw out housing issues for the parish. It is considered useful if this background paper makes reference to the policy context, evidence base and any community consultation before discussing

the vision and objectives of the neighbourhood plan. The following is a list of common issues that maybe drawn out of the analysis of data. 'Step 3: Planning policy approaches' then seeks to outline possible approaches to some of these issues including references to example policies.

Issues

1. A community in one of the four main towns decides it wants additional housing growth, over and above the level set out in the Local Plan **or a community in one of the villages (or Stalbridge) identifies a need for some housing provision.**
2. Housing questionnaire identifies an under supply of family housing (or other housing tenure such as starter homes, bungalows or flats) in the parish.
3. Housing questionnaire identifies an aging population and under supply of elderly accommodation.
4. Housing questionnaire identifies a number of people wishing to build their own home.
5. Housing Needs Survey identifies a lack of affordable housing in a rural parish.
6. Review of brownfield land through SHLAA / Local Plan allocations identifies sites suitable for economic regeneration.
7. Community facilities survey through Parish Plan / Local Plan allocation identifies an opportunity for enabling development.

Step 3: Planning Policy approaches

For each issue identified 'Step 3' below discusses alternative planning policy approaches to tackling this issue often with links to examples to planning policies in neighbourhood plans.

Issue 1: A community in one of the four main towns decides it wants additional housing growth, over and above the level set out in the Local Plan or a community in one of the villages (or Stalbridge) identifies a need for some housing provision.

Two approaches are suggested; either the reinstatement of the settlement boundary in a rural area / an amendment to the settlement boundary in a town; or alternatively a site allocation.

Approach A: Settlement Boundary

The introduction or amendment of a settlement boundary could be an appropriate solution where small scale infill development could reasonably be anticipated to fulfil the identified future need. The four main towns will retain their settlement boundaries which could be amended to enable future infill development. In the case of Stalbridge and the villages, the neighbourhood plan would need to put a settlement boundary in place to allow small scale 'organic' growth. In both cases a settlement boundary could be used together with an infill policy (or policies) that sought to control the design of new development. The practical measures for introducing or reviewing settlement boundaries are outlined in the complementary guidance note, Managing Growth – Settlement Boundaries & Infill Policy.

Approach B: Site Allocation

A site allocation could be an appropriate approach where a site is known and the plan requires further certainty for delivery. A site allocation is a policy tool used to identify land for development on a proposals map and is usually accompanied by a criteria based policy that sets out the number of residential dwellings that can be expected to be accommodated on the site as well as their type. Additional criteria could address site-based issues, such as access and other on-site mitigation measures, for example; flood risk, landscaping, open spaces, biodiversity and conservation.

Site allocations should usually be undertaken firstly through a 'call for sites' or if available any recent local authority SHLAA. It is suggested that all deliverable sites are consulted upon through an

'options' consultation before preferred sites are finally selected. If triggered, a Strategic Environment Assessment (SEA) will also require this process to consider reasonable alternatives. The practical measures for site allocations are outlined in the complementary guidance note, Managing Growth – Site Allocations.

Issue 2: Housing questionnaire identifies an under supply of family housing (or other housing tenure such as starter homes, bungalows or flats) in the parish

In response to Issue 2; an undersupply of family housing (or other tenure), two methods are suggested: either a generic housing tenure policy; or site allocation with housing tenure criterion.

Approach A: Generic housing tenure policy

The North Dorset Local Plan, Policy 7 sets out an example of a housing mix policy that sets out the breakdown for future housing tenures. This policy approach can be used for towns or villages where specific sites are not known. For example, if there is an identified need for more family housing in the town or village, the policy could seek to secure a higher proportion of 4-5 bed homes. Examples of this type of policy are presented in Appendix 2 under Housing Mix. This same approach can be used for the undersupply of different tenures such as starter homes, bungalows or flats.

Approach B: Allocation with Housing tenure criterion

Where the majority of growth is proposed on a site which is specifically allocated, a tenure criterion could be added to the Site Allocation policy, seeking a different mix to that set out in Policy 7. .

Issue 3: Housing questionnaire identifies an ageing population and under supply of elderly accommodation

To support an aging population there are two different policy approaches that could be introduced; either a generic policy or a site allocation.

Approach A: Generic elderly housing policy with occupancy condition

The purpose of this type of policy is to secure a particular type of tenure through an occupancy condition that is often overlooked due to market factors. An example of a generic policy approach to housing for the elderly is presented in the Kidford Parish Neighbourhood Plan (see Appendix 2, Housing for Older People)

Approach B: Allocation with defined housing type & design criteria / occupancy condition

To secure new housing that is suitable for elderly accommodation it may be appropriate to allocate a site specifically for that tenure, for example elderly accommodation, extra care or dementia-specific. Each type of housing may have specific design criteria such as: single story (bungalows); low maintenance gardens; or access for emergency vehicles that can be included in a policy. Malmesbury Neighbourhood Plan provides a good example of elderly accommodation needs being included in a site allocation Policy (see Appendix 2, Housing for Older People).

Issue 4: Housing Questionnaire identifies a number of people wishing to build their own home

Policy 2 and Policy 29 of the emerging North Dorset Local Plan allow individuals to build or convert houses in the countryside for self-build projects.

The Government has recently consulted on the document "Right to Build: Supporting Custom and Self Build" October 2014.

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/366722/141023_Right_to_Build_Consultation_FINAL.pdf

Within the consultation document the Government want to go further in empowering aspiring self-builders to build their own home in their local area. The Budget 2014 announced that they would consult on a new Right to Build giving prospective custom builders a right to a plot of land from their

local council, and establish a number of vanguards to test the practicalities of operating the Right across England. The intention is then to legislate for the Right – through first the Self Build and Custom Housebuilding Private Members’ Bill and then legislation in the next Parliament – taking into account the outcome of this consultation and the experience from the vanguards.

Due to the experimental nature of this new Government initiative there are a wide range of possible approaches to securing this specific type of building. North Dorset’s preferred approach is set out under Approach A however there are a variety of more innovative approaches being considered across the country, some of which are highlighted below.

Approach A: Re-introduce settlement boundaries in villages

To reflect the Council’s preferred policy approach, communities could seek to re-establish their settlement boundary and allow for self-build infill development. The practical measures for re-introducing settlement boundaries are outlined in the complementary guidance note, Managing Growth – Settlement Boundaries & Infill Policy.

Approach B: Site allocation

A more innovative approach could see a neighbourhood planning group establish a specific site allocation for self-build housing. Cherwell in Oxfordshire has bought and allocated large scale sites for custom build housing in their emerging Local Plan. The practical measures for site allocations are outlined in the complementary guidance note, Managing Growth – Site Allocations.

Approach C: Exception site policy

The Frome Neighbourhood Plan (see Appendix 2: Self-Build) has sought to introduce a policy that allows for ‘Self Build’ housing through exception sites outside the settlement boundary.

Approach D: Generic policy

Teignbridge Local Plan has introduced a policy that seeks to offer a proportion of each allocated site to self-builders before they are returned to the market.

Issue 5: Housing Needs Survey identifies a lack of affordable housing in a rural parish

If there is an identified need for affordable housing in a rural community there are two main options that could be explored, either; an affordable housing exception site or a portion of affordable housing through a market scheme.

Approach A: Affordable Housing Exception Site

An affordable housing exception site is a planning approach that can only be applied to rural settlements (Stalbridge and the villages) and should not be used within the Districts largest towns of Shaftesbury, Gillingham, Sturminster Newton and Blandford.

Note: The Council’s preferred approach is for this need to be met through a planning application process rather than a Site Allocation. The Local Plan Policy 9 allows for exception sites in the open countryside subject to proximity to settlements with a population over 100 and within 1km of a local service. The site selection process expects applications to consider the most sustainable settlements in preference to the least sustainable settlement.

Policy 9 of the North Dorset Local Plan Part 1 supports the use of rural exception affordable housing schemes (including schemes that include small numbers of a market housing units). These will only be permitted if a local need for rural exception affordable housing can be demonstrated in an appropriate up-to date local needs survey. The number of proposed affordable homes should not exceed the identified local affordable housing need identified in the survey and should be a mix, type and form of tenure that will meet / contribute towards the identified need. At the Council’s discretion a small number of market homes (which do need exceed one third of the total number of

homes proposed) maybe permitted. The Council intends to produce a guidance note for commissioning local housing needs surveys .

Approach B: Allocated Market Scheme

Alternatively, a percentage of affordable housing, which reflects the percentages sought in Policy 8 of the Local Plan, can be brought forward through a market-led scheme on a site allocated in a neighbourhood plan. Under new national policy, affordable housing contributions should not be sought on sites of 10 dwellings or less (or 5 or less in AONBs). Any neighbourhood planning group seeking affordable housing in this way would need to identify a site with the capacity for 11 or more dwellings in order to secure its provision. . As more detailed work on allocated sites at planning application stage can sometimes identify additional constraints that reduce capacity, the Council recommends that sites with capacity for 15 dwellings or more are identified in order to guard against subsequent planning applications unexpectedly falling below the 11 (or 5) unit threshold.

Issue 6: Review of brownfield land (through SHLAA / Local Plan allocations) identifies sites suitable for regeneration

In many towns and villages within the District there are redundant / underused sites where their use for their original purposes has since expired. These types of brownfield sites are often poorly maintained or form an eyesore for the local community and would be suitable for regeneration. The regeneration of sites within settlements or in sustainable locations near existing services will generally accord with the principles of the Local Plan Part 1 and the focus of policy development should be on delivery. Other brownfield sites in less sustainable locations, perhaps in the countryside, will need to undergo a more in-depth analysis to consider the wider principle of development alongside sustainability implications specifically if residential development is proposed.

Approach A: Site Allocation with Criteria

Within a neighbourhood plan a community group could seek to simply identify and define a regeneration area through a site allocation policy that also includes specific design or delivery criteria. The practical measures for site allocations are outlined in the complementary guidance note, Managing Growth – Site Allocations.

Approach B: Site Allocation with supporting Development Brief / Masterplan

An alternative, more in-depth, approach to site allocation could be through a development brief or masterplan. This approach may need consultants to undertake the detailed technical work likely to be required.

A masterplan is a comprehensive exercise exploring the site and local issues in detail whereas a development brief is less detailed and sets out some general guidance, for example around what needs to be included on the site and how the site can be accessed. Both exercises should result in a scheme prepared jointly by stakeholders which will form a template for subsequent planning applications at the site.

Although the term ‘masterplan’ is used frequently, there is no generally agreed definition. The CABI Guide “Creating Successful Masterplans: Client Guide” (now superseded) sought to clarify that a spatial masterplan is a sophisticated model.

<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20110118095356/http://www.cabi.org.uk/files/creating-successful-masterplans.pdf>

Masterplans

- Shows how streets, squares and open spaces of a neighbourhood are to be connected
- Defines the height, bulk and massing of buildings
- Sets out suggested relationships between buildings and public spaces
- Determines the activities and uses which will take place in the area
- Identifies the movement patterns for people on foot, or by bicycle, car or public transport, as well as looking at the needs of service and refuse vehicles
- Sets out the basis for the provision of utilities and other infrastructural elements
- Relates the physical form of the site to social, economic and cultural contexts and takes account of the needs of people living and working in the area
- Shows ways in which new neighbourhoods can be integrated into existing communities, and built and natural environments

Although now archived by the Government the document, 'Planning and Development Briefs: A guide to better practice provides' a useful summary of their purpose.

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/7774/156363.pdf

"A site-specific brief forms a stepping stone between the provisions of the development plan and the requirements of a planning application. The process of preparing and implementing a planning brief provides a framework for collecting information about a site, and investigating and evaluating different interests in it."

"A planning brief may be required if the development plan and any existing supplementary planning guidance do not adequately cover site-specific issues which need to be addressed prior to the submission of a planning application. This may arise for a number of reasons, such as:

- a number of different planning and possibly other policies are applicable to a site, and clear and consistent advice for potential developers will advance the development process;
- a site with apparent constraints on development is to be promoted as a development opportunity; or
- there are features of the site or the surrounding area which warrant specific guidance, on issues such as urban design, ecology, archaeology or the preservation of historic buildings and areas."

The note goes on to explain that development briefs have two main objectives; improving the efficiency of the planning and development process; and improving the quality of development. In turn there are three main types of development brief: those which clarify policies and their application to a specific site; those which seek to promote the development of a difficult site or a site in public ownership; and those which provide design guidance responding to particular attributes of a site or its surroundings.

Although a development brief or masterplan would not form part of the development plan, the output of this work could be formalised in a policy within a neighbourhood plan. For example, the development brief may conclude with a set of design criteria that could be formalised in policy or the neighbourhood plan could simply refer to the development brief or masterplan for further information.

[Issue 7: Community facilities survey \(through Parish Plan / Local Plan allocation\) identifies an opportunity for enabling development.](#)

Positive planning can help to support or improve existing or future community facilities. In the first instance new development can be allocated in a neighbourhood plan to cross-subsidise the provision or enhancement of community facilities.

Approach A: Enabling development

Within the framework of the adopted Local Plan, communities could choose to allow some limited development in villages (or in larger settlements more significant growth) that would be able to pay for through Planning Obligations new or enhanced community facilities. For example, such a policy could allow some market housing in a village (which would be considered open countryside in the emerging Local Plan) that could be used to finance, improvements to a village hall, primary school or other non-profit community facility.

Reminder: At this point, once issues have been considered and an approach to resolving them identified; it is important to let the District Council know so that they can carry out the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Screening Opinion to determine if a full SEA is required.

Step 4: Draft Policy

Once sufficient evidence has been collected (Step 1), issues identified (Step 2) and preferred approach selected and undertaken (Step 3), the community group should then seek to draft policies.

Drafting and writing a new planning policy for a neighbourhood plan can be a demanding process as there are a large number of planning hazards that could be triggered for the unwary. Policies in 'made' plans will become part of the development Plan for the area and will be used by Planning Officers and the Council's Development Management Committee to make decisions on planning applications and therefore can be subject to significant legal scrutiny. Creating inadvertent loop holes with unforeseen circumstances is therefore a risk. It is however, more than possible to produce a well-rounded policy that achieves the aims and objectives of the neighbourhood plan by using the following general advice, while discussing and testing options with Planning Policy Officers. Planning policies will also be scrutinised by the community through public consultation and an independent Planning Inspector ensuring sufficient safeguards are in place.

Locality has produced some general guidance on writing planning policies which include the following list of top tips. <http://mycommunityrights.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/Writing-planning-policies-v51.pdf>

Top Tips

- Write in everyday English – try to avoid jargon and stick to common sense language.
- Avoid duplication – there is little point in addressing issues that are already covered by the policies in your Local Plan.
- Be clear – avoid ambiguity and be as precise as you can about the intention of your policy.
- Vision and objectives – each planning policy should stem from a clear vision for your neighbourhood and help deliver at least one of your plan's objectives.
- Stand out – the policies are the centrepiece of your neighbourhood plan – make them stand out by putting them in a box in clear bold text.
- Evidence – you can't just include policies on a whim, they need to be backed up by robust evidence and rooted in the feedback from your public engagement.
- Keep it local – your planning policies cannot conflict with Central Government policy or challenge the strategic elements of your local authority's planning policies or deal with topics such as minerals or waste or nationally significant infrastructure.
- Be positive – word policies to welcome development that meets your expectations instead of turning development away.
- Targets – use your policies to set targets or provide indicators which can be used to monitor success.
- Delivery – your policies need be capable of being delivered within the time frame.

The Locality guidance intimates that there are generally three types of policy;

1. Generic – a simple policy which applies universally to development across the entire neighbourhood plan area.
2. Criteria based – a policy with a series of requirements that should be met by development proposals. These can be set out as separate bullet points.
3. Site specific – this is where a policy applies to particular areas of land. One of the most powerful tools for a neighbourhood plan is to allocate land for a particular type of development.

Remember to also include some supporting text that sets out the justification for your policy.

Although writing policies from scratch can be challenging, a good way to start the process is to review policies already adopted in the District's Local Plan or alternatively policies in the growing list of 'made' neighbourhood plans. Many plans will be seeking to tackle very similar issues and there is no harm in building your draft policy on the foundations of an existing policy. This should give you the general structure of the policy that can then be adjusted to reflect the specific circumstances and local evidence that applies in your parish or neighbourhood area..

Appendix 2 sets out some examples that provide possible ways of structuring a policy. They are not exhaustive or prescriptive and are instead listed to provide ideas on how policies regarding development could be written.

Step 4: Consult the community

The policy(s) and proposals map delineating the designated areas should form a section in the draft (pre-submission) neighbourhood plan which should go out for consultation for at least six weeks.

Step 5: Submission

Any consultation responses received to the consultation should be considered and the policy wording and maps amended before finally being submitted to the Council for a further six week public consultation. The neighbourhood plan will then be examined before going to referendum and formally 'made' by the Council.

Appendix 1: Example Questions for Issues Consultation

The following section sets out an example context and series of questions that could be used in an initial neighbourhood plan issues questionnaire. The questions are not intended to be prescriptive but are instead presented to stimulate debate on this important topic.

Example Context:

North Dorset District Council has allocated in their emerging Local Plan [insert number of homes] in [insert name of settlement] over the next 15 years to the year 2026 (Policy 6). Of these homes [insert number under construction, built or have planning permission] are under construction, built or have planning permission. These homes will expect to be provided as a mix of [insert tenure mix] of one or two bedroom properties and [insert tenure mix] of three or more bedroom properties (Policy7). The emerging Local Plan currently seeks [insert threshold and percentage of affordable sought] as a threshold and percentage of affordable housing (policy 8).

Example Questions:

Q1. Thinking about the above statement, over the next 15 years to 2026 do you agree that there will be a need for more homes in [insert name of place]? (tick only one option)

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't know
Do you think there is a need for more homes?					

Q2. Thinking about a possible number of new homes (irrespective of their type) in [insert name of place] for the next fifteen years and the number already under construction, built or with planning permission, which of these do you think is appropriate in [insert name of place]? (tick only one box)

- There is no additional need (the same as allocated in the Local Plan)
- Small scale growth (an additional X-X dwellings)
- Medium scale growth (an additional X-X dwellings)
- Large scale growth (X+ or more dwellings)

Note: The suggest answers to these question should reflect the scale of the settlement considered.

Q3. If new homes have to be built in [insert name of place], should these be of a particular type? (tick only one box per row)

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't know
Market homes					
Affordable homes					
Housing for the elderly					
Self-build housing					
Starter homes (1-2 bedrooms)					
Family homes (3+ bedrooms)					
Flats					
Bungalows					
Other?					

Q4. Thinking about [insert name of place], are you aware of any underused development sites that would benefit from urban regeneration? (please list)

Q5. Thinking about [insert name of place], if new homes have to be built should they be accommodated:

- a) Through infilling within a defined settlement boundary; or
- b) Through a site-specific allocation (or allocations); or
- c) A mix of (a) and (b) (pick one option only).

Q6. In [insert name of place] are there any non-commercial community facilities that are lacking or in need of repair in the settlement which have not come forward due to lack of funding? (yes / no)
For example;

- Village Hall
- Places of worship
- Cemeteries

Q7. Would you support a market-led housing scheme (or other suitable profit-led development) if it brought with it sufficient planning gain (money / land) to support that local facility? (yes / no)

Appendix 2: Example Policies

The following section presents a series of example policies from recently 'made' or 'submitted' neighbourhood plans. The example policies are not intended to be prescriptive but are instead intended to provide ideas for discussion. Most of these policies will not be directly suitable for neighbourhood plans in North Dorset, as these plans will need to reflect the local context set out in the North Dorset Local Plan Part 1. Neighbourhood planning groups are also encouraged to look at other neighbourhood plans that have reached examination stage or been 'made' for further ideas. As neighbourhood plans in North Dorset progress it is anticipated that this section will be updated with more local examples.

Scale of Housing

Policy H1: Number of New Homes

Planning permission will be granted for a minimum of 73 new homes to be built in Woodcote in the period to 31st March 2027 on the sites specifically allocated in the Woodcote Neighbourhood Plan.

- *Woodcote Neighbourhood Plan, 'made' on the 15 May 2014.*

Policy 1: Housing Growth

To enable managed housing growth in the Parish:

- Proposals involving up to 30 homes will be allowed within or immediately adjacent to the built-up part of Tattenhall village over the period 2010 to 2030;
- Smaller scale development of exception sites will be allowed within the hamlets of Gatesheath and Newton-by-Tattenhall over the period 2010 to 2030.

Exceptions will be made where additional housing development involves the redevelopment of brownfield land (subject to its environmental value), the conversion of existing buildings or affordable housing-led 'exceptions' schemes. 'Exceptions' schemes will be allowed to contain an element of 'enabling' market housing, but no more than 30% in any individual scheme.

All housing proposals should:

- Provide a mix of homes taking into account objectively identified housing needs, and include an element of affordable housing as specified in the Local Plan. The affordable housing will be subject to a S106 Legal Agreement, or planning condition, ensuring that it remains an affordable dwelling for local people in perpetuity.
- Respect and, where possible, enhance the natural, built and historic environment.
- Maintain Tattenhall village's strong and established sense of place.
- *Tattenhall Neighbourhood Plan, Cheshire West and Chester, 'made' on the 4 June 2014*

Policy 3: Development Boundary

The Defined Development Boundary for Cerne Abbas will be retained and extended in its North and West corners as indicated in the map in Appendix 4.

- *Cerne Valley Neighbourhood Plan, 'made' on the 8 January 2015*

Affordable Housing

Policy H8: Provide affordable housing

All proposals for new housing where there is a net gain of three or more homes should provide affordable housing as required by Policy CSH3 of the South Oxfordshire Core Strategy 2012. Affordable homes should be well integrated with market housing. The type and size of affordable homes should meet the specific needs identified for Thame.

- *Thame Neighbourhood Plan, 'made' on the 18 July 2013*

Policy H5: Affordable Housing on Exception Sites

Proposals for the development of small-scale affordable housing schemes on rural exception sites on the very edge of the village where housing would not normally be permitted by other policies, and submitted in accordance with policy H10 of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2011, will be supported, particularly where they can demonstrate the redevelopment of brownfield land.

- *Woodcote Neighbourhood Plan, 'made' on the 15 May 2014.*

Housing Mix

Policy H9: Provide a mix of housing types

On schemes of more than six dwellings, a mix of dwelling types and sizes to meet the needs of current and future households in Thame will be sought. Large areas of uniform type and size will not be acceptable.

Policy H10: Provide a Thame-Specific Affordable Housing and Dwelling Mix Strategy

On schemes where there is a net gain of six or more homes, developers are required to submit a Thame-Specific Affordable Housing and Dwellings Mix Strategy with any planning application. The Strategy must clearly set out identified housing needs within Thame and demonstrate how the proposed development addresses those needs.

- *Thame Neighbourhood Plan, 'made' on the 18 July 2013*

Policy H7: Size of Homes

This policy directs that new development should favour smaller dwellings. Overall up to 10% of new homes on developments of 9 or more new homes should have 1-bedroom, a minimum of 40% should have 2, a minimum of 40% should have 3, and up to 10% can have 4 or more bedrooms unless viability or other material considerations show a robust justification for a different mix.

- *Woodcote Neighbourhood Plan, 'made' on the 15 May 2014.*

Housing for Older People

Policy H.2 – Housing for Older People

Within the SPA, housing developments of four units or more should address the local need for older people's housing. This can occur through the provision of bungalows or other suitable housing types, restricted to occupancy for those local households where one person is over the state retirement age. Where the viability of the proposal permits and in accordance with NPPF 173, the Local Planning Authority may seek affordable housing in addition to housing for older people. Outside the SPA, proposals for general affordable housing will remain the priority. In specific cases anywhere within the Plan Area where an individual dwelling is proposed to directly accommodate a person/persons over the State Retirement Age (or for a person who requires specialist housing by virtue of personal incapacity or impairment) these proposals will be supported where the following criteria are met:

- The dwelling meets the needs of an identified older local person in housing need.
- The dwelling allows the release of an additional dwelling within the Plan Area into the market or for transfer to a family member.
- The dwelling is secured for local occupancy in perpetuity by way of a S106 legal agreement; and
- The dwelling accords with all other policies within the development plan.

- *Kirdford Parish Neighbourhood Plan, 'made' on the 12 June 2014*

Policy 6: The redundant Burnham House site is allocated for redevelopment to provide approximately 50 dwellings as the first choice for Extra Care Housing

Policy 7: Planning Permission will be granted for the development of dementia-specific accommodation on suitable new sites or by the extension of an existing care home or site of older people's housing.

Policy 8: All new accommodation for older people must be well connected with the town.

Policy 9: All new housing for older people must be sustainable.

- *Malmesbury Neighbourhood Plan, past referendum 28 November 2014*

Regeneration Opportunity

Policy KSS4 – Land at Village Hall

The redevelopment of the existing Village Hall site with a residential use will be supported in principle, provided the following criteria can be met:

- A replacement facility of equal or greater size has been provided elsewhere within the village and is now fully open to the community.
 - The proposal makes the most efficient use of the land whilst respecting the rural setting of the site.
 - The proposal provides for a sufficient level of on-site parking and turning in accordance with Policy DS.3 of this Plan.
- *Kirdford Parish Neighbourhood Plan, 'made' on the 12 June 2014*

Self-Build

Policy H6 – Self Build and Community Housing

As an exception to normal policy for the provision of housing set out in Core Policies 1 and 2 of the Mendip District draft local plan, Community Housing may be permitted adjoining the existing development boundary of the town on sites where development would not otherwise be permitted providing:

- a. The development will provide collective land ownership and shared management responsibility.
- b. The development provides an appropriate mix of dwelling types and sizes reflecting identified local need and meets demand based on the current Local Housing Needs Assessment or evidence from local Community Housing Groups and the town council.
- c. The development is energy efficient, and will not have a significant adverse impact on the character of the area and local landscape setting.
- d. Such proposals should not have an adverse or harmful impact on statutorily protected species or habitats.
- e. Prospective residents can demonstrate, through a development management plan, professional and financial capacity and competency in undertaking and completing the development.
- f. The land is held in trust as a community asset in perpetuity.
- g. Housing costs are made affordable by reference to capital costs or rent being no more than 80% of open market value and such discount is protected through succession.

- *Frome Neighbourhood Plan, 'Submitted' on the 3 September 2014*

Community Facilities

Policy H7: Provide new facilities

All proposals for new housing will be required to demonstrate provision of appropriate new facilities on site and provision of, or contributions to, off-site facilities as required by Policy D1 of this Plan.

- *Thame Neighbourhood Plan, 'made' on the 18 July 2013*