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## **14. NORTHERN AREA - SHERBORNE AND SURROUNDS**

### **14.1 Introduction**

- 14.1.1 The Northern Area of the District covers the predominantly rural area extending northwards from Dorchester to the boundary with South Somerset/North Dorset. Sherborne is the only major town within the area but there are a number of villages and isolated hamlets. A chalk escarpment, which includes High Stoy and Bubb Down Hill bisects the area, running east/west approximately mid-way between Dorchester and Sherborne. The majority of the area to the south and west of the escarpment falls within the designated Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The Rivers Frome, Cerne and Piddle flow southwards towards Dorchester in steep-sided flat-bottomed valleys with settlements interspersed along their length.
- 14.1.2 To the north of the escarpment, the land drops steeply to the more enclosed undulating landscape in the south western extremity of the Blackmoor Vale. Although outside the AONB, this area has a distinctive and attractive character which contrasts dramatically with the more open landscape of the chalk uplands. The northern extent of the Vale is demarcated by two limestone ridges, which run roughly parallel to each other, one to the north of the Yeo valley and one to south, with Sherborne situated on the dip slope of the most northerly escarpment.
- 14.1.3 The area is served by the A352, C12 and B3143 running north-south between Sherborne and Dorchester. In addition, the A37 provides direct access between Dorchester and Yeovil. The A356 runs diagonally north-west/south-east between Dorchester and Crewkerne via Maiden Newton. The A30 London to Exeter road passes east-west through Sherborne to Yeovil in South Somerset. The former Great Western Railway follows the Frome valley northwards and provides a rail link between Weymouth, Dorchester and Yeovil and on towards Bristol. Although there are stations at Chetnole and Yetminster, there is no direct rail link between these villages and Sherborne. Sherborne is on the main line between London Waterloo and Exeter St. Davids.

### **14.2 Sherborne**

- 14.2.1 The attractive and historic market town of Sherborne occupies rising land to the north of the River Yeo. Limestone hills to the north and south of the river valley provide a green backdrop to the settlement and attractive views from the town itself. The ruins of the Old Castle, built by Bishop Roger of Salisbury between 1107 and 1135 and destroyed during the Civil War, stand at the south eastern flank of the town at Castleton. The parkland of the 'new' Sherborne Castle, built by Sir Walter Raleigh, provides a landscaped setting to the south and east. Evidence of Roman occupation exists in the locality but the town dates from the Saxon period when Sherborne was established in 705 as the seat of the Bishop of West Wessex, although it was later transferred to Old Sarum (Salisbury).

- 14.2.2 The town has survived the development pressures of the 20th Century relatively unscathed. Its distinctive character remains characterised by the mellow biscuit coloured local Sherborne stone and the more golden Ham Hill stone, used in the construction of many of the town's older buildings. The main thoroughfares of Cheap Street, Long Street, South Street and Half Moon Street converge at the former Market Place at the historic core of the town, which is dominated by the Abbey Church of St Mary. Other important mediaeval buildings are clustered close to the Abbey Church including those of Sherborne School, the St John Almshouses in Trendle Street and the Almshouses in Half Moon Street (now a row of shops).
- 14.2.3 The town is an important service and administration centre, with a population of 9,100<sup>1</sup> and has shopping, recreational, cultural, education and employment functions. The town has a secondary school, served by two primary schools within the town and a further six in outlying villages. There is a museum, an Arts Centre, a public library and community halls within easy walking distance of the town centre, as are the Town Council and District Council offices. There is recreational provision in the form of playing fields and tennis courts at the Terrace Playing Fields and an indoor sports centre at the Gryphon School which is open to the public. Retail activity is focused upon the main shopping area in Cheap Street. The catchment of the town covers a rural hinterland which also includes part of South Somerset and North Dorset. A Town Centre Health Check has been conducted by the District Council, in order to provide additional up-to-date information regarding the impact of development upon the vitality of the town centre.
- 14.2.4 With regard to employment opportunities outside the retail and service sector, the public schools located within the town are major local employers. In addition, the schools provide work indirectly through various building and maintenance work that is contracted out to local companies. Other employment opportunities are offered by the firms located in the well-established South Western Business Park on the southern edge of the town and also the newer Coldharbour Business Park on the site of the former hospital.

### Land for Mixed Use Development at Barton Farm

- 14.2.5 Sherborne is one of the District's three largest towns and needs have been identified for both employment and affordable housing development. Opportunities for major new development at Sherborne are constrained by the River Yeo floodplain, the historic parkland and by areas identified and designated as Land of Local Landscape Importance. One area of farmland that lies to the north west of the town centre does, however, offer an opportunity for expansion. A 14.2 hectare (35.1 acre) area of land at Barton Farm, to the south and east of Sheeplands Lane, has been identified as suitable for a mixed-use development to meet the future needs of the town and help to achieve its greater self-containment. Approximately 5.2 hectares (12.8 acres) of the site is proposed to be developed for housing, 1.7 hectares (4.2 acres) for mixed residential and employment and 3.5 hectares (8.6 acres) for B1 and B2 employment. It is estimated that the development could provide somewhere in the region of 230 dwellings, to include a mix of dwelling sizes and types, including affordable housing.

<sup>1</sup> Ward and Parish mid 2004 Home Population Estimate, Dorset County Council, DCC.

- 14.2.6 The site lies on the lower slopes of the northern limestone escarpment and additional structural landscaping will be important in minimising the impact that any development will have upon the wider countryside and existing residential properties in Sheeplands Lane, Barton Gardens, Yeovil Road and Marston Road. Highway access to the A30 is also a fundamental consideration and any development on this site will require a major improvement to provide a modified signal junction where Sheeplands Lane joins the Yeovil Road A30/Horsecastles Lane (A352). Sheeplands Lane will also need to be widened from this improved junction into the site to allow for two-way traffic. At the eastern end of Sheeplands Lane, it is considered that the limited visibility for vehicles exiting on to the Marston Road would make this junction unsuitable for a significant increase in vehicle movements. Therefore it is anticipated that if access to the site is to be provided via this junction, then the eastern section of Sheeplands Lane should be one-way only. The final arrangements will, however, be subject to detailed consideration at the application stage. In order to ensure good access to the town centre, the development will need to be integrated fully with pedestrian routes, cycle ways and public transport. (See policies in Chapter 9, Transport).
- 14.2.7 It is anticipated that an element of affordable housing will be negotiated as part of the development. Where there is a need for facilities or related development as a result of housing development, such as additional public open space, recreational or community facilities, a planning obligation will be sought to secure those provisions either within the site or, where it is considered appropriate, through a financial contribution towards the cost of provision off site (under the Contributions Policy IN5). The County Council has already identified a shortfall in available school places both at primary and secondary level in Sherborne, so any large new housing development would need to address this issue. It is anticipated that a financial contribution to the provision of additional educational facilities in the area will be required.
- 14.2.8 A development brief will be prepared for this site, in consultation with the local community, in order to guide the phasing and distribution of development, and provide further detail on design, layout and infrastructure provision. Housing development on the site is proposed to contribute towards completions principally in the final phase of the plan period (with completions to start in 2010), unless required earlier as a result of a shortfall in completions on other sites, identified through annual monitoring. The employment development is however needed earlier and its provision in the earlier phase will therefore be encouraged.

### **POLICY NAI LAND FOR MIXED USE DEVELOPMENT: BARTON FARM, SHERBORNE**

Land at Barton Farm, Sherborne, as shown on the Proposals Map, is allocated for a comprehensive mixed use scheme for employment and residential development together with public open space. Development will be phased in accordance with a development brief setting out a master plan for the site and including the following:

- i) comprehensive landscape treatment to the boundaries of the site and within the development or enhancement of the site;
- ii) the land should be developed comprehensively in association with employment uses and the provision of public open space (see Policy IN4);
- iii) the phased development of the land to ensure that the employment facilities and the public open space are brought forward ahead of or in association with the housing development;
- iv) the completion of junction improvements to the Sheeplands Lane/ Yeovil Road A30/ Horsecastles Lane (A352) junction) and the widening of Sheeplands Lane to allow for two way traffic along part of its length;
- v) the provision of pedestrian access routes and cycle ways to the town centre, schools and other local facilities such as bus stops and the train station; and the provision of public transport infrastructure (see Policies TRAN 8 and 13);
- vi) the housing development should include a range of sizes, types and tenures including affordable housing, in accordance with Policy HS3. A planning obligation will be sought to secure this provision;
- vii) the provision of community infrastructure where appropriate (see Policy IN5) to include open space and educational facilities. A planning obligation will be sought to secure such provisions, or an appropriate contribution towards the cost of provision off-site.

### **Further Employment Opportunities**

- 14.2.9 A need has been identified for further employment land in Sherborne, as the two sites allocated for employment use in the previous (1998) Local Plan, at the Coldharbour Hospital site (3.2 ha for Use Classes B1 and B8) and Westernhays Yard (0.3 ha restricted to Use Class B1), have now been largely developed and there is still significant demand. As the majority of demand is for large purpose built B1/B2 units, a reasonable area of land is required, and greenfield land at the site at Barton Farm has therefore been allocated for this purpose. This provision will be complemented by the intensification of employment uses on previously developed sites within the existing Defined Development Boundary, which will be encouraged by the Council, though the development potential of such sites will be more limited due to their small size, fragmentation and range of ownerships. Additional employment and mixed-use allocations have therefore been made in the Plan to provide a variety of types of sites and to make best use of existing previously-developed land. These and other employment allocations in the Plan, as well as the need for additional employment land, will be reviewed in future as part of an Employment Land Review for the whole District.

### Sherborne Hotel

- 14.2.10 Sherborne Hotel occupies an important gateway site on one of the main routes into the town. The hotel use is important in sustaining tourism and accommodating visitors to the local schools and businesses. The building itself is however dated in both structure and design, with the potential for improvement, expansion or redevelopment. The open area of land to the front of the hotel has potential for expansion and could accommodate the introduction of small office units to complement the hotel use. The site is located to the south west of the Yeovil Road A30/Horsecastles Lane A352 junction and is, therefore, visually prominent within the street scene. For this reason it is considered that any development on the site will need to be to a high specification in terms of design and landscaping. The total area of the allocation is 2.2 hectares (5.4 acres).
- 14.2.11 The development will require improvements to the existing vehicular access to the site from Horsecastles Lane such as the enlargement of the radii. In addition, there is currently no pedestrian footway from the site entrance to the A30 Yeovil Road which would provide employees at the site safe access to the site on foot from the proposed development at Barton Farm. Therefore, any development of the site will be required to include the construction of such a footway.

#### **POLICY NA2 LAND AT SHERBORNE HOTEL**

Land at Sherborne Hotel, as shown on the Proposals Map, is a key gateway site where the retention and expansion of the hotel use, and the introduction of office uses, will be encouraged. A high standard of design will be required for any development, including:

- i) improvements to the site entrance at its junction with Horsecastles Lane;
- ii) provision of a footway between the site entrance and the A30 Yeovil Road; and
- iii) comprehensive landscape treatment for the site.

### The Former Gasworks Site

- 14.2.12 An area of land, 0.8 hectares (2.0 acres) in size, at the former gasworks to the south of the London to Exeter railway line, is currently only partially developed. Although there are residential units along the frontage of the site with Gasworks Hill, it is considered that employment development could be accommodated on the western section without harming residential amenities or the wider landscape setting of the town. A site appraisal has, however, drawn attention to restrictions at the existing access and structural problems with the retaining wall along the southern boundary. Any development on the land will, therefore, need to address these issues, in addition to any possible need for de-contamination of the site.

### **POLICY NA3 SITE ALLOCATED FOR EMPLOYMENT USE – THE FORMER GASWORKS SITE, GASWORKS HILL**

Land at the former Gasworks, Gasworks Hill, as shown on the Proposals Map, is allocated for employment use (BI/B2).

Any planning permission will be subject to the investigation of possible contamination on the site and, if necessary, the preparation and implementation of a satisfactory scheme for de-contamination prior to development taking place.

### **Sherborne House Mixed-Use Area**

- 14.2.13 Following the closure of the Lord Digby School for Girls and its amalgamation with the Fosters School on the new Gryphon School site, the former playing fields are no longer used and the former tennis courts are now used as a public garden. A large walled garden/orchard occupies a substantial area of land sandwiched between the northern playing field to the east, and the public car park to the west. The northern boundary follows the back edge of the footpath adjacent to the A30. This land is in separate ownership from the former school and there is no public access to the site. The former school building, the Grade I Listed Sherborne House is currently in use as an Arts Centre and the stables have been converted into an antiques showroom and sales area. To the north and east, Sherborne fire station occupies a large site accessed from the A30. The single storey sectional building fails to make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the locality but is set within substantial open grounds. It is considered that the site has development potential and should, therefore, be considered in conjunction with other possible development sites within the vicinity. Crucially, the existing vehicular access to the fire station could provide access into the land north of Sherborne House.
- 14.2.14 Immediately adjacent to the areas described above, there is a series of long and short stay public car parks, which occupy a linear area of land stretching from the A30 in the north to Hound Street in the south. The car parking is situated between the former school grounds and the backs of the premises in Cheap Street, and is well used. There are a number of well-used pedestrian links from the parking areas through to the shops in Cheap Street via the Somerfield supermarket, Swan Yard and Hound Street. There is also scope for enhancing other more discreet access routes such as the walkway through to George Street and the Green from the Newland North car park.
- 14.2.15 The whole of the area as described above falls within the Sherborne Conservation Area and it is considered that there is a significant opportunity to improve the environment of these car parks, in conjunction with the adjoining areas of vacant land. It is, therefore, proposed to include the area within one comprehensive scheme or 'Mixed-Use Area' to focus upon regeneration and environmental improvements. The allocation of the 'Mixed-Use Area' is seen as a means of highlighting the potential of an area for mixed-use development, which will have social and economic benefits by making a positive contribution to the vitality, variety and accessibility of the town.

- 14.2.16 Due to the sensitivity of the site, development must be carefully planned to ensure that its design and layout preserves or enhances the historic character of the town as well as the settings of a number of Listed Buildings within and adjoining the site. The development should retain any buildings that make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and important views to and from Sherborne House will need to be preserved. The development of these areas will be expected to include a mixture of commercial and residential uses (including affordable housing) together with community or public recreational areas to complement the community/arts use of Sherborne House. It is considered that the development would include the re-establishment of frontage development along Newland and Hound Street.
- 14.2.17 Development will be expected to enhance existing pedestrian links and cycle routes between the Mixed-Use Area and other parts of the town, including the railway station and bus stops. Public car parking will continue to be provided, subject to current needs and management strategies, including the potential for access by other transport modes. Under Policy IN5, contributions towards the provision of necessary transport and community infrastructure will be sought.
- 14.2.18 In order to ensure an appropriate mix of uses and design of development, a more detailed master plan or design brief is desirable, as well as consultation with the local community on the details of the scheme. This will be achieved either through the preparation of a development brief to be adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document in the future; through the preparation of an informal site concept statement by the Council; or through community consultation and the preparation of a master plan by the developers during the preparation of the planning application.

### **POLICY NA4 SHERBORNE HOUSE, NEWLAND MIXED-USE DEVELOPMENT AREA**

A Mixed-Use Area as shown on the Proposals Map is designated for comprehensive mixed-use development to include the following: -

- a) residential development to include a mix of dwelling sizes, types and tenures to include affordable housing;
- b) employment workspace – A2/B1;
- c) community and recreational facilities, including a public garden;
- d) public car parking and cycle parking.

The development of the site will be required to:

- i) preserve and enhance the character and appearance of the Conservation Area;
- ii) reflect the historical street pattern and built form of the town;
- iii) preserve and enhance the setting of Sherborne House and protect important views to and from this listed building; and
- iv) maintain and, where possible, improve pedestrian links to Cheap Street.

There are no Policies NA5 or NA6.

### Public Parking Provision

14.2.19 In Sherborne there is currently no identified major shortfall in off street parking provision. However, it is anticipated that traffic growth will continue. It is, therefore, intended to support the retention of existing car parking spaces and promote alternative measures designed to reduce the general reliance on the private car. In this respect, there may be opportunities for improved access for cyclists between the suburbs and the town centre and between housing areas and the new Gryphon and Abbey Schools.

### Remaining Area

14.2.20 In addition to Sherborne, Defined Development Boundaries are delineated at the following settlements within the Northern area of the District: -, Bishops Caundle, Bradford Abbas, Buckland Newton, Cerne Abbas, Evershot, Piddletrenthide, Thornford, Trent, and Yetminster.

14.2.21 Infill development will be permitted within the boundaries, subject to the development not conflicting with other Local Plan policies. (See Section 5.4, Development within Defined Development Boundaries). However, there are no specific proposals for development in these settlements identified in the Local Plan.

### County Highway Schemes

14.2.22 The Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole Structure Plan includes policies for the provision of new roads to deal with major problems on the strategic highway network for which the County Council is the Highway Authority. One of the functions of a Local Plan is to identify a “preferred route” for these schemes.

14.2.23 Schemes identified in this section are subject to regular review and other improvements may be identified as a result of changes in strategy, circumstance or network management. Such changes will be identified and progressed through the Local Transport Plan Review process. If a scheme identified requires the acquisition of land outside the highway, consultation will also take place with the landowner/occupiers affected at the detailed design stage. Provisional improvement schemes are shown on the Proposals Map.

14.2.24 **C12 Higher Sherborne Road** – It is proposed that the C12 be designated as a County distributor road, to divert traffic away from valley settlements along the existing A352. The C12 Higher Sherborne Road improvements have been identified by the District Council as a top priority. Once completed, these works will enable traffic calming measures to be brought forward in certain villages along the A352. The major C12 improvements identified for completion within the Plan period are:

- (i) junction improvement – Higher Sherborne Road – Cerne Abbas and links to Piddletrenthide and Buckland Newton
- (ii) Middlemarsh junction re-alignment

14.2.26 Notwithstanding these minor junction improvements, reliance on car transport will continue to be high, reflecting the difficulty of serving dispersed populations with public transport and the distances between settlements. However, facilitating attractive, safe and convenient pedestrian and cycle networks and other traffic management measures linking residential areas, employment centres, town centres, schools and colleges and other key destinations, as well as linking smaller settlements to the main town centres identified in the plan's spatial strategy, will help to redress the balance by providing people with greater opportunity to cycle or walk. The broad transport strategy for the area is set out in greater detail in Chapter 9.

### **POLICY NA7 COUNTY HIGHWAY SCHEMES – C12 HIGHER SHERBORNE ROAD**

Improvements to the C12 Higher Sherborne Road are identified for completion within the plan period. Where land is required this will be safeguarded from development:

- i) junction improvement – Higher Sherborne Road – Cerne Abbas and links to Piddletrenthide and Buckland Newton;
- ii) Middlemarsh junction re-alignment.

14.2.27 In association with the upgrading of the C12, it is also intended, in the long term, to improve the C19 road to overcome substandard conditions at Knapps Hill. This would enable the diversion of traffic, and in particular heavy goods vehicles (HGVs), away from the Piddle Valley. However, there are no proposals to undertake a scheme within the Plan period and therefore no details have been shown on the Proposals Map. Nevertheless, the improvement of the C19 is considered to be the only practical solution to the Piddle Valley HGV problem in the long term.

### **Piddlehinton Camp**

14.2.28 The former army barracks to the south of Piddlehinton village have been gradually converted and adapted to commercial and other uses. The main portion of the camp, now known as the Piddlehinton Enterprise Park, has become an established employment site and there has been recent pressure for further development in the form of new industrial buildings.

14.2.29 It is acknowledged that the enterprise park plays an important part in the local economy particularly in providing affordable “seedbed” facilities for business and the Council would wish to see the long-term viability of the site assured. There is support for the reasonable upgrading, refurbishment and in some cases redevelopment of the existing buildings to keep pace with the changing demands of the business market. However, further significant expansion has sustainability implications – particularly in terms of reducing the need to travel, as the site is in a relatively remote rural location. In addition, the B3143 Piddle Valley Road is not considered adequate in terms of accommodating a significant increase in traffic, particularly heavy commercial vehicles. Also of consideration is the prominent elevated position of the site on the eastern side of the Piddle Valley and the fact that the landscape setting of the enterprise park could be improved. Although it does not fall within the designated Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, the site is visible from within the AONB.

14.2.30 Policy ET4 does allow the extension of existing employment units outside Defined Development Boundaries, but only where the development is small in scale. It is however envisaged that the situation could arise at Piddlehinton Enterprise Park whereby a new purpose built employment building could replace existing structures on the site in a less intrusive location, with landscape improvements to the whole site. It is important that such proposals should form part of a long-term management plan for the Enterprise Park. In this respect the site owners will be encouraged to liaise with the Council and the local community in the preparation of the management plan. On this basis it is considered that a specific policy supporting the limited redevelopment and upgrading of the site is justified.

### **POLICY NA8 PIDDLEHINTON CAMP POLICY AREA**

Limited new employment redevelopment will be permitted within the policy area as shown on the proposals map, provided that:

- i) the development forms part of a long-term comprehensive management scheme for the whole site that includes landscape enhancement proposals and the possible relocation of development away from those areas that are prominent in the landscape;
- ii) the development replaces an area of existing workspace and will not result in a significant increase in the overall available workspace within the site;
- iii) the development would not result in harm to the rural character of the area by reason of its scale, massing and visual appearance; or harm residential amenities; and
- iv) the development will not generate an unacceptable increase in vehicle movements