



# Sustainability Appraisal for the Blandford + Neighbourhood Plan Version 2

SA Report to accompany the submission version of the  
Neighbourhood Plan

Blandford+ NP Version 2 Steering Group

January 2019

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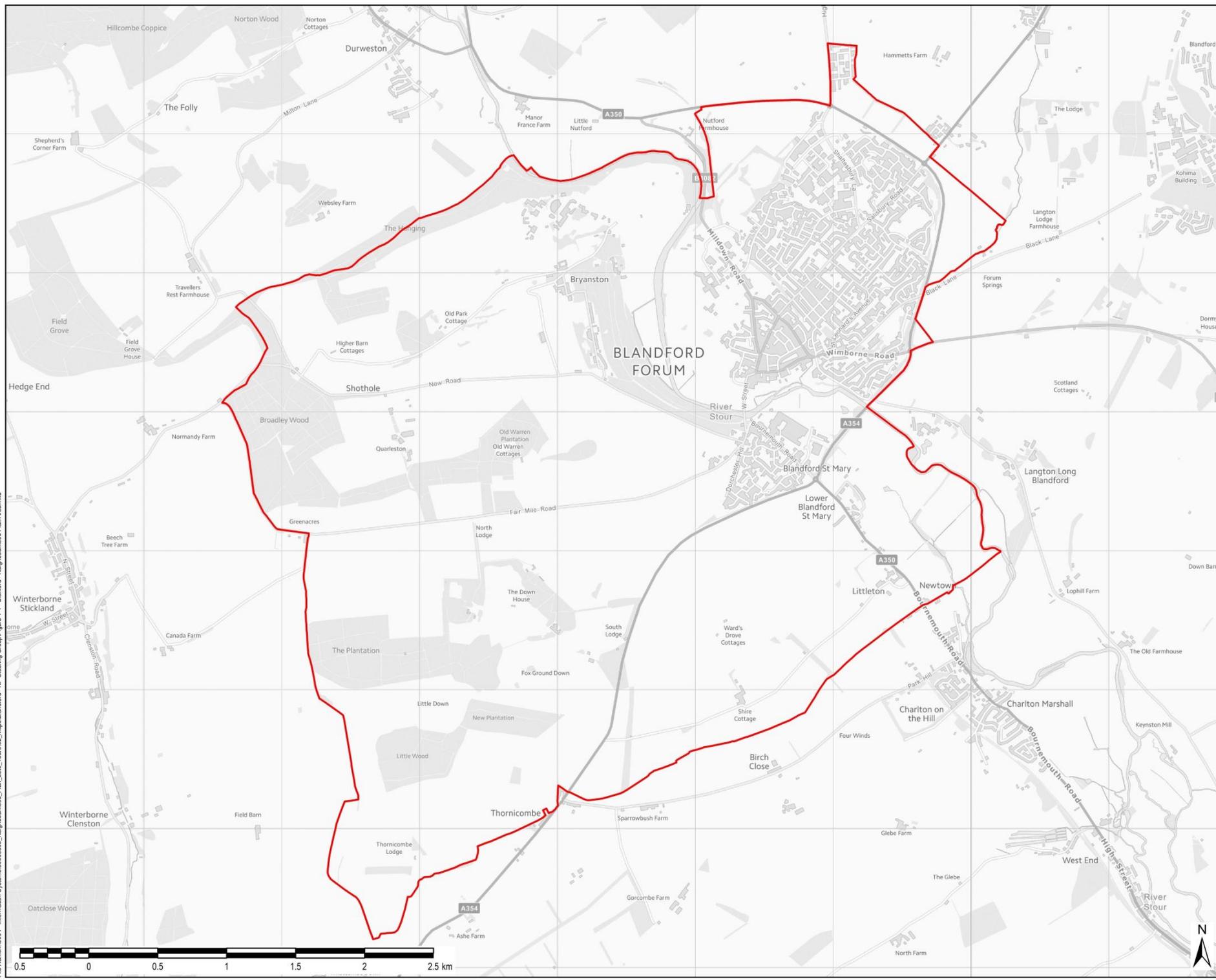
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**LEGEND**

 Blandford+ Neighbourhood Plan Area



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Purpose of Issue **DRAFT**

Client  
**BLANDFORD+ NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN STEERING GROUP**

Project Title  
**SA FOR THE BLANDFORD+ NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN 2**

Drawing Title  
**BLANDFORD+ NEIGHBOURHOOD AREA**

Drawn CN	Checked JW	Approved CMN	Date 01/05/2018
AECOM Internal Project No. <b>60538603</b>		Scale @ A3 <b>1:25,000</b>	

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Drawing Number **FIGURE 1.1** Rev **01**

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# Non-technical summary

## What is a Sustainability Appraisal?

A sustainability appraisal (SA) has been undertaken to inform the Blandford+ Neighbourhood Plan. This process is required by the SEA Regulations.

Neighbourhood Plan groups use SA to assess Neighbourhood Plans against a set of sustainability objectives developed in consultation with interested parties. The purpose of the assessment is to avoid adverse environmental and socio-economic effects through the Neighbourhood Plan, and identify opportunities to improve the environmental quality of the area covered by the Neighbourhood Plan and the quality of life of residents.

## What is the Blandford+ Neighbourhood Plan Version 2?

Blandford + Neighbourhood Plan Version 2 (Blandford+ NP Version 2) presents a plan for the area administrated by Blandford Forum Town Council, Blandford St Mary Parish Council and Bryanston Parish Councils in North Dorset, to the period to 2033. Prepared to be in conformity with the emerging North Dorset Local Plan Review, it sets out a vision and a range of policies for the Neighbourhood Plan area. These relate to a range of topics, including, but not limited to, landscape and townscape character, the quality of life of residents, tourism and the protection and enhancement of the environment.

It is currently anticipated that the Blandford+ NP Version 2 will undergo a referendum later in 2019.

## Purpose of this SA Report

This SA Report, which accompanies the submission version of the Neighbourhood Plan, is the latest document to be produced as part of the SA process. The first document was the SA Scoping Report (June 2018), which includes information about the Neighbourhood Plan area's environment and community. The second document was the SA Report which accompanied Regulation 14 consultation on the Neighbourhood Plan (November 2018).

The purpose of this SA Report is to:

- Identify, describe and evaluate the likely significant effects of the Blandford+ NP Version 2 and alternatives; and
- Provide an opportunity for consultees to offer views on any aspect of the SA process which has been carried out to date.

This SA Report contains:

- An outline of the contents and main objectives of the Blandford+ NP Version 2 and its relationship with other relevant policies, plans and programmes;
- Relevant aspects of the current and future state of the environment and key sustainability issues;
- The SA Framework of objectives against which the Blandford+ NP Version 2 has been assessed;
- The appraisal of alternative approaches for the Blandford+ NP Version 2;
- The likely significant environmental effects of the Blandford+ NP Version 2;
- The measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and as fully as possible offset any significant adverse effects as a result of the Blandford+ NP Version 2; and

- The next steps for the Blandford+ NP Version 2 and accompanying SA process.

## Assessment of reasonable alternatives for the Blandford+ Neighbourhood Plan 2

A key element of the SA process is the appraisal of 'reasonable alternatives' for the Blandford+ NP Version 2. The Neighbourhood Plan has been prepared in conjunction with the provisions of the current Local Plan for North Dorset and emerging Local Plan Review.

As part of this process North Dorset District Council consulted on the Local Plan Review Issues and Options Document, together with its Sustainability Appraisal (SA) from 27th November 2017 to 22nd January 2018. It also issued a new 'Call for Sites' to update the evidence on land availability.

In considering potential future development options at Blandford, the Council has undertaken a 360 degree search around the existing settlement boundary that is defined for the town. The search resulted in the identification of 11 areas (A to K). Unsuitable areas have been discounted through an assessment exercise undertaken for North Dorset which has drawn on, amongst other things, the appraisal work in the LPR Sustainability Appraisal. Following this process, Areas A, B, F and J have been identified by NDDC as possibly having some development potential.

The Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group and NDDC have agreed a strategic land use and quantum specification for the site allocations within the Blandford+ NP Version 2. The 'specification' requires the Blandford+ NP Version 2 to allocate land within the designated Neighbourhood Plan area for the following purposes (agreed with NDDC on the 6th June 2018) and to ensure that these development needs are appropriately located:

- The requirement to allocate land for at least 400 homes over and above commitments and Local Plan Part 1 (LPP1) allocations. This number is in addition to the already committed development in NDDC Local Plan 1.
- At least a 2FE primary school with flexibility for expansion to 3FE (as confirmed by the LEA)
- At least 2 Ha of B1-B8 employment land
- Delivery of the necessary highway and green infrastructure

## Assessment of high level Spatial Options for development

### Spatial options assessed

To support the delivery of the development specification (discussed above), the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group were keen to consider alternative locations for delivering housing, employment and community infrastructure in the Neighbourhood Plan area.

Originally five spatial options were considered by the Steering Group. These Options correspond with the findings of the Local Plan Review Issues and Options SA, which has concluded that Areas A, B, E, F and J are those that may be the location of site allocations (See Section 2.13). Options specifically for the Neighbourhood Plan have been subsequently developed based on a simple capacity assessment of available land to determine the extent to which land could accommodate the specification:

- **Initial Option 1:** Area A + Area B (the full specification)
- **Initial Option 2:** Area F1 + Area F2 (the full specification)
- **Initial Option 3:** Area E (300 homes and primary school only)
- **Initial Option 4:** Area F1 (300 homes and primary school only)
- **Initial Option 5:** Area F2 (300 homes and primary school only)

The Steering Group considered it important to further validate each of these preliminary options prior to testing them and invited interested parties in control of the land within the areas identified to confirm the land will be made available in the plan period for the mix of uses indicated and in a way that can accommodate any necessary landscape, design or access mitigation measures in principle terms.

NDDC confirmed the Options should not include committed land from the Local Plan 1 which in the case of Area E made up the available land to the west of Wards Drove which forms the St Mary's Hill growth area. In validating the remaining land to the east of Wards Drove with sufficient capacity to accommodate the specification, it would result in a significant decrease in the separation between the committed land and the village of Charlton Marshall and also the Grade 11 Littleton House. While this area is not within an AONB it was also not confirmed as available. For these reasons, Area E (Option 3) was not taken forward for further consideration. For all other Options, it was estimated that their housing quantum will be supplemented by at least 100 new homes on sites within the existing built up area of Blandford (Forum and St. Mary). In that way, all exceed the given housing target within the neighbourhood area.

The SA process has considered the following four Spatial Options, with a view to exploring the sustainability implications of delivering the development specification in different broad locations in the Neighbourhood Plan area.

- **Option 1:** Focus growth to the north of Blandford Forum in Area A and B to deliver the full specification
- **Option 2:** Focus growth to the south west of Blandford St Mary in Areas F1 and F2 to deliver the full specification
- **Option 3:** Dispersed approach: Accommodating 300 homes and a primary school in Area F1 to the south west of Blandford with employment land in Area J
- **Option 4:** Dispersed approach: Accommodating 300 homes and a primary school in Area F2 to the south west of Blandford with employment land in Area J

The SA team appraised these four Spatial Options as 'reasonable alternatives' against both the baseline and relatively (i.e. against each other). These were considered through the SA Framework of objectives and assessment questions developed during scoping.

Chapter 4 of this SA report present appraisal findings in relation to the four options introduced above. These are organised by the eight SA Themes. For each SA Theme, a commentary on the likely effects is presented and summarised. Options are also ranked numerically reflecting their relative sustainability performance, with '1' the most favourable ranking and '4' the least favourable ranking.

## Choice of preferred spatial option taken forward for the purposes of the Neighbourhood Plan

Following consideration of the findings of the SA/SEA process, consultation activities, and consideration of suitability and deliverability, the Councils' preferred spatial option to deliver the land use specification agreed with NDDC, is to allocate land defined by Option 1 to the north and north-east of Blandford. The Neighbourhood Plan allocates policies B2 (Mixed-Use Allocation) and B3 (Employment) for this purpose.

This option will deliver the key objective of the Neighbourhood Plan, which is to support early years and primary school provision in a location Dorset County Council (the Education Authority) have confirmed it is most needed<sup>1</sup>; the County Council having exhausted all alternative options for increasing provision to meet Blandford's critical educational needs.

All spatial options have been assessed in this report as having the potential for both positive and negative environmental, social and economic effects, and when taken as a whole, all options assess

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<sup>1</sup> Blandford Pupil Place Planning Statement, Updated January 2019 (DCC)

reasonably evenly - although in overall terms Option 1 assesses marginally better than others. The SA/SEA acknowledges growth in any direction is likely to have effects on the character of one or other AONB, although the effects on heritage assets are greatly reduced in the north of the town.

In reaching this conclusion it is acknowledged that some development will be allocated within the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire AONB – adjacent to the proposed Waste Recycling Centre in the recently examined Dorset Waste Plan – and could only be justified where proposals for development are balanced against the policies set out in the National Planning Policy Framework as a whole. Ultimately, the decision to proceed with Option 1 has been a matter of planning judgement taking a range of factors into account and described more fully in the Site Selection Background Paper<sup>2</sup> which accompanies the Neighbourhood Plan. The Paper includes an examination of the three NPPF paragraph 172 tests (should these be applicable), balancing these with the exceptional circumstances that prevail in Blandford and evidence that demonstrates that the need for school development is in the public interest.

In making this judgement an assessment has also been made that the critical delivery of a new school may only be secured by the comprehensive release of land and that community opinion will decide ultimately whether or not the neighbourhood plan is 'made'.

## Assessment of the current version of the Blandford+ Neighbourhood Plan

The pre-submission version of the Blandford+ NP Version 2 presents 15 planning policies for guiding development in the Neighbourhood Plan area.

Utilising the SA Framework of objectives and assessment questions developed during the earlier scoping stage of the SA, the SA process has assessed the policies put forward through the current version of the Blandford+ NP Version 2. The SA Report has presented the findings of the assessment under the following eight sustainability themes:

- Biodiversity;
- Climate change;
- Landscape and historic environment
- Land, soil and water resources
- Population and community;
- Health and wellbeing
- Economy and enterprise; and
- Transportation.

The assessment has concluded that the current version of the Blandford+ NP Version 2 is likely to lead to significant positive effects in relation to the 'population and community', 'health and wellbeing' and 'economy and enterprise' SA themes. This is due to the housing, employment and associated infrastructure allocated through policies B2 (Mixed-Use Allocation) and B3 (Employment) addressing the identified needs of town and supporting sustainable growth. The Blandford+ NP Version 2 will improve vital infrastructure and deliver a range of housing types and tenure, enhancing the quality of life of residents and meeting local needs. It will support accessibility for residents and visitors, increasing self-containment and therefore improving the uptake of sustainable travel. This will also be facilitated through the protection and enhancement of open space and green infrastructure, leading to minor positive effects on the transportation and biodiversity SA themes.

The Blandford+ NP Version 2 seeks to protect the surrounding landscape and local heritage; however, there is potential for significant long term negative effects on the landscape and historic environment SA theme given the proposed development within and in close proximity to Cranborne Chase AONB. Negative effects are also anticipated in relation to the land, soil and water SA theme due to the permanent loss of best and most versatile agricultural land, and there are uncertain negative effects in terms of the climate change SA theme on account of flood risk.

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<sup>2</sup> B+NP version 2, Site Selection Background Paper Nov 2018 (Updated Jan 2019)

## Next steps

This SA Report has been submitted alongside the Neighbourhood Plan to North Dorset District Council for subsequent Independent Examination. At Independent Examination, the Neighbourhood Plan will be considered in terms of whether it meets the Basic Conditions for Neighbourhood Plans and is in general conformity with the Local Plan.

If the subsequent Independent Examination is favourable, the Blandford+ NP Version 2 will be subject to a referendum, organised by North Dorset District Council. If more than 50% of those who vote agree with the Neighbourhood Plan, then it will be 'made'. Once made, the Blandford+ NP Version 2 will become part of the Development Plan for the Blandford+ area.

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# 1. Introduction

- 1.1 AECOM has been commissioned to undertake an independent Sustainability Appraisal in support the emerging Blandford+ Neighbourhood Plan 2011-2033 (Blandford+ NP Version 2).
- 1.2 The Blandford+ NP Version 2 is currently being prepared as a Neighbourhood Development Plan under the Localism Act 2011 and the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012. The Blandford+ NP Version 2 is being prepared in the context of the emerging North Dorset Local Plan Review.
- 1.3 It is currently anticipated that the Blandford+ NP Version 2 will undergo Independent Examination later in 2019.
- 1.4 Key information relating to the Blandford+ NP Version 2 is presented in **Table 1.1**.

**Table 1.1: Key facts relating to the Blandford+ Neighbourhood Plan 2**

Name of Responsible Authority	Blandford Forum Town Council, Blandford St Mary Parish Council and Bryanston Parish Council
Title of Plan	Blandford+ Neighbourhood Plan 2 (Blandford+ NP Version 2)
Subject	Neighbourhood Plan
Purpose	<p>The Blandford+ NP Version 2 is being prepared as a Neighbourhood Development Plan under the Localism Act 2011 and Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012. The plan will be in general conformity with the North Dorset Local Plan Review Part 1 and will be informed by the reasoning and evidence of the Local Plan Review.</p> <p>The Blandford+ NP Version 2 will be used to guide and shape development within the Blandford+ Neighbourhood Plan area.</p>
Timescale	To 2033
Area covered by the plan	The Neighbourhood Plan area covers the area administrated by Blandford Forum Town Council, Blandford St Mary Parish Council and Bryanston Parish Councils in North Dorset (Figure 1.1).
Summary of content	The Blandford+ NP Version 2 will set out a vision, strategy and range of policies for the Neighbourhood Plan area.
Plan contact point	<p>Sally Gardner, Blandford Forum Town Council</p> <p>Email: <a href="mailto:Sally@blandfordforum-tc.gov.uk">Sally@blandfordforum-tc.gov.uk</a></p>

## SA explained

- 1.5 SA is a mechanism for considering and communicating the likely significant effects of an emerging plan, and reasonable alternatives in terms of key environmental issues. The aim of SA is to inform and influence the plan-making process with a view to avoiding or mitigating negative environmental effects and maximise positive effects. Through this approach, the SA for the Blandford+ NP Version 2 seeks to maximise the emerging Neighbourhood Plan's contribution to sustainable development.
- 1.6 The SA process should be undertaken in compliance with the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (the SEA Regulations) which transpose into national law the EU Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Directive. SA widens the scope of the assessment from focussing on environmental issues to also include social and economic issues. SA is a legal requirement for Local Plans; however a Neighbourhood Plan is not a Local Plan and SA is not therefore legally required.
- 1.7 It has been determined by NDDC through screening that the Blandford+ NP Version 2 requires an SEA. To meet this requirement, the Neighbourhood Plan is undergoing an SA process which incorporates the requirements of the SEA Directive.
- 1.8 The SEA Regulations require that a report is published for consultation alongside the draft plan that 'identifies, describes and evaluates' the likely significant effects of implementing 'the plan, and reasonable alternatives'. The report must then be taken into account, alongside consultation responses, when finalising the plan.
- 1.9 In line with the SEA Regulations this SA Report must essentially answer four questions:
  1. What's the scope of the SA?
  2. What has Plan-making / SA involved up to this point?  
  
'Reasonable alternatives' must have been appraised for the plan.
  3. What are the appraisal findings at this current stage?  
  
i.e. in relation to the draft plan.
  4. What happens next?
- 1.10 These questions are derived from Schedule 2 of the SEA Regulations, which present the information to be provided within the report'. Table 1.2 presents the linkages between the regulatory requirements and the four SA questions.

## Structure of this SA report

- 1.11 This document is the SA Report for the pre-submission version of the Blandford+ Neighbourhood Plan 2 (Blandford+ NP Version 2) and hence needs to answer all four of the questions listed above with a view to provide the information required by the SEA Regulations. Each of the four questions is answered in turn within this report, as follows:

**Table 1.2: Questions that must be answered by the SA Report in order to meet regulatory<sup>3</sup> requirements**

SA Report question	In line with regulations, the report must include... <sup>4</sup>
What's the plan seeking to achieve?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>An outline of the contents, main objectives of the plan and relationship with other relevant plans and programmes</li> </ul>
What's the sustainability 'context'?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The relevant environmental protection <b>objectives</b>, established at international or national level</li> <li>Any existing environmental <b>problems</b> which are relevant to the plan including those relating to any areas of a particular environmental importance</li> </ul>
What's the scope of the SA?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The relevant aspects of the current state of the environment and the likely evolution thereof without implementation of the plan</li> </ul>
	<p>What's the sustainability 'baseline'?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The environmental characteristics of areas likely to be significantly affected</li> <li>Any existing environmental <b>problems</b> which are relevant to the plan including those relating to any areas of a particular environmental importance</li> </ul>
What are the key issues & objectives that should be a focus?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Key <b>problems / issues</b> and <b>objectives</b> that should be a focus of (i.e. provide a 'framework' for) assessment</li> </ul>
What has plan-making / SA involved up to this point?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Outline reasons for selecting the <b>alternatives</b> dealt with (and thus an explanation of the 'reasonableness' of the approach)</li> <li>The likely significant effects associated with <b>alternatives</b></li> <li>Outline reasons for selecting the preferred approach in-light of <b>alternatives</b> appraisal / a description of how environmental objectives and considerations are reflected in the draft plan.</li> </ul>
What are the assessment findings at this current stage?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The likely significant effects associated with <b>the draft plan</b></li> <li>The measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and as fully as possible offset any significant adverse effects of implementing <b>the draft plan</b></li> </ul>
What happens next?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The next steps for plan making / SA process.</li> </ul>

<sup>3</sup> Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004

<sup>4</sup> N.B. This column does not quote directly from Schedule II of the Regulations. Rather, it reflects a degree of interpretation.

## 2. Local Plan context and vision for the Blandford+ Neighbourhood Plan 2

### Local Plan context for the Blandford+ Neighbourhood Plan 2

- 2.1 The Blandford+ Neighbourhood Plan 2 is being prepared in the context of the current Local Plan for North Dorset and emerging Local Plan Review.
- 2.2 The Local Plan for North Dorset consists of the North Dorset Local Plan Part 1 (NDLPP1) (adopted 2016), as well as policies retained from the District-Wide Local Plan (adopted 2003).
- 2.3 The NDLPP1 identifies Blandford Forum as one of the four main towns in North Dorset, alongside Gillingham, Shaftesbury and Sturminster Newton. These four service centres each have their own distinctive characteristics, providing a range of shops, jobs and community facilities to their respective rural hinterlands.
- 2.4 Policy 6 (Housing Distribution) presents the strategy for housing distribution throughout the District, apportioning 1,200 homes (21% of the total for the District) to be delivered in Blandford Forum during the Plan period. The level of proposed housing growth reflects the town's importance as the main service center in the south of the District.
- 2.5 Policy 11 (The Economy) highlights that approximately 3,630 new jobs will be needed in North Dorset by 2031. In this context, 49.6 hectares of land will be developed primarily for employment uses in North Dorset between 2011 and 2031. This will include the development of key strategic sites primarily for employment uses. The following allocated sites are located within Blandford:
  - part of the Brewery site, Blandford St. Mary (about 3.0 hectares); and
  - Land off Shaftesbury Lane, Blandford Forum (about 4.8 hectares).
- 2.6 NDLPP1 Policy 16 (Blandford) states that the housing target for the area will be met through, in addition to infilling and redevelopment within the settlement boundary, the following:
  - mixed-use regeneration of the Brewery site;
  - the development of land to the south east of Blandford St Mary; and
  - The development of land to the west of Blandford St Mary (at Lower Bryanston Farm and Dorchester Hill).
- 2.7 NDLPP1 Policy 16 (Blandford) states that employment will be delivered through:
  - the mixed-use regeneration of the Brewery site; and
  - the development of land off Shaftesbury Lane; and
  - the development of vacant sites on existing industrial estates; and
  - The retention of existing employment sites.
- 2.8 NDLPP1 Policy 16 (Blandford) states that additional retail floor space will be provided through:
  - the extension of the existing Tesco supermarket at Stour Park; and
  - The provision of a new supermarket off Shaftesbury Lane.
- 2.9 North Dorset District Council (NDDC) is undertaking a Local Plan Review for the District, to ensure the Local Plan remains relevant in the face of rapidly changing circumstances. This includes relating to the publication of the Eastern Dorset Strategic Housing Market Assessment

- (SHMA) (2015),<sup>5</sup> and the Government consultation document “Planning for the Right Homes in the Right Places: consultation proposals (2017)” which set out the standardized methodology to assess housing need.<sup>6</sup> These two documents have significant implications for the delivery of housing in the District, identifying the Objectively Assessed Housing Need (OAHN) for the District as 330 and 366 per annum respectively. This is a considerable increase from the 285 stated within the NDLPP1. As such the Local Plan Review (LPR) will consider whether the updated figure of 366 per annum can be met within the District.
- 2.10 As part of this process the Council consulted on an Issues and Options Document, together with its Sustainability Appraisal (SA) from 27<sup>th</sup> November 2017 to 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2018.<sup>7</sup> It also issued a new ‘Call for Sites’ to update the evidence on land availability.
- 2.11 The Issues & Options document states that *“consideration needs to be given to whether there is potential for additional growth at Blandford which could contribute towards meeting the additional housing need figure for the whole of the District. Part of the Council’s deliberations will relate to infrastructure demands that would result from development. New development, however, provides possibilities in terms of improving the existing infrastructure provision in the town. The Council is updating the existing Infrastructure Delivery Plan as part of the LPR to ensure that required infrastructure needs are identified.”*
- 2.12 In considering potential future development options at Blandford, the Council has undertaken a 360-degree search around the existing settlement boundary that is defined for the town. The search resulted in the identification of 11 areas (A to K) (Figure 4.1 below). Unsuitable areas have been discounted through an assessment exercise which has drawn on, amongst other things, the appraisal work in the LPR Sustainability Appraisal.<sup>8</sup>
- 2.13 Following this process, Areas A, B, F and J have been identified as possibly having some development potential. Area E has been removed as an option for development as this is committed land within the LPP1.
- 2.14 The Steering Group have been working with NDDC to increase the scope of the new Blandford+ Neighbourhood Plan so it can pick up the work from NDDC’s Local Plan ‘Issues and Options’ Consultation to move forward with planning options for the Blandford + area. Further detail is provided in Section 4.9 below.
- 2.15 Neighbourhood plans are required to be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the Local Development Framework and can develop policies and proposals to address local place-based issues. In this way the Local Plan, and emerging Local Plan Review, provide a clear overall strategic direction for development in North Dorset District, whilst enabling detail to be determined through the neighbourhood planning process where appropriate.

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<sup>5</sup> GL Hearn (2015) Eastern Dorset Strategic Housing Market Assessment [online] available at: <<https://www.bournemouth.gov.uk/planningbuilding/PlanningPolicy/Local-Plan-Documents/Local-Plan-Documents.aspx>> last accessed 01/05/18

<sup>6</sup> Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (2017) Planning for the right homes in the right places: consultation proposals [online] available at: <<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/planning-for-the-right-homes-in-the-right-places-consultation-proposals>> last accessed 01/05/18

<sup>7</sup> North Dorset District Council (2017) North Dorset Local Plan Review Issues and Options [online] available at: <<https://www.dorsetforyou.gov.uk/article/423247>> last accessed 01/05/18

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

## Vision for the Blandford+ Neighbourhood Plan 2

2.16 The vision for the Blandford + Neighbourhood Area comprises:

1. *“Growing our Community Sustainably;*
2. *Maintaining our Special Heritage and Landscape Character and Addressing the Challenges of Climate Change;*
3. *Meeting Local Housing Needs;*
4. *Creating and Supporting Jobs and Cherishing our Town Centre; and*
5. *Improving Vital Community Infrastructure.”*

## 3. The scope of the SA

### SA Scoping Report

- 3.1 The SEA Regulations require that: “When deciding on the scope and level of detail of the information that must be included in the report, the responsible authority shall consult the consultation bodies”. In England, the consultation bodies are Natural England, the Environment Agency and Historic England. These authorities were consulted on the scope of the Blandford+ Neighbourhood Plan SA in June 2018.
- 3.2 The purpose of scoping was to outline the ‘scope’ of the SA through setting out:
- A context review of the key environmental and sustainability objectives of national, regional and local plans and strategies relevant to the Neighbourhood Plan;
  - Baseline data against which the Neighbourhood Plan can be assessed;
  - The key sustainability issues for the Neighbourhood Plan; and
  - An ‘SA Framework’ of objectives against which the Neighbourhood Plan can be assessed.
- 3.3 Baseline information (including the context review and baseline data) is presented in Appendix A.
- 3.4 Comments received on the Scoping Report, and how they have been considered and addressed, are presented in Table 3.1.

**Table 3.1: Consultation responses received on the SA Scoping Report**

Consultation response	How the response was considered and addressed
<b>Natural England</b> <b>Emily Greaves, Sustainable Development Advisor</b>	
Biodiversity: Proposals within plan area have the potential to affect Blandford Camp SSSI (designated for its chalk downland habitat and associated species) through indirect impacts e.g. air pollution. Assessment of this should be included in the SEA, though is unlikely to be the most important consideration in this topic and therefore it would be acceptable to approach with a reduced level of detail than that given to Bryanston SSSI, for example.	Comment noted. The SA will consider the indirect impact of proposals within the plan area on the Blandford Camp SSSI.
Biodiversity assessment questions: <i>“Protect and enhance the status of the nationally designation Bryanston SSSI.”</i> Proposals to be assessed against this question should include those which may not directly affect the SSSI boundary but may affect supporting habitat as this is an important aspect to the protection and enhancement of the SSSI and its protected Greater Horseshoe Bat population. Include an assessment of the protection and enhancement of Blandford Camp SSSI.	Comment noted. The SA will consider the indirect impact of proposals within the plan area on the Bryanston SSSI supporting habitats.  The SA will consider the protection and enhancement of Blandford Camp SSSI.

Consultation response	How the response was considered and addressed
<p>Landscape assessment questions:  <i>"Conserve the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB and the Dorset AONB?"</i> Natural England recommends that this question include the enhancement of the AONBs to better reflect the duties of Local Planning Authorities under Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act, 2000. Proposals within the setting of the AONBs should be included in the assessment against this question as they have the potential to affect users' experience of the protected landscape.</p>	<p>Comment noted. Landscape assessment question updated to read: <i>"Conserve and enhance the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB and the Dorset AONB?"</i></p>
<p><b>Historic England</b>  <b>David Stuart, Historic Places Advisor</b></p>	
<p>Thank you for your consultation on the SEA Scoping Report for the Blandford + Neighbourhood Plan 2. This is a recast Plan following the outcome at Examination of its predecessor.</p>	<p>Comment noted.</p>
<p>We are happy with the Report and would make the following comments only:            Para 5.42 (p40) refers to 1 entry on the national Heritage at Risk Register. There are in fact 3 more: Church of St Peter and St Paul (LB Grade I); St Leonard's Chapel (Scheduled Monument, LB Grade II); and the Conservation Area.</p>	<p>Comment noted. Para 5.42 updated to include additional Heritage at Risk Register entries.</p>
<p>Guidance on Setting, SEAs and Site Allocations can be found on our website:  <a href="https://content.historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/gpa3-setting-of-heritage-assets/gpa3.pdf/">https://content.historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/gpa3-setting-of-heritage-assets/gpa3.pdf/</a>  <a href="https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/sustainability-appraisal-and-strategic-environmental-assessment-advice-note-8/">https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/sustainability-appraisal-and-strategic-environmental-assessment-advice-note-8/</a>  <a href="https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/historic-environment-and-site-allocations-in-local-plans/">https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/historic-environment-and-site-allocations-in-local-plans/</a></p>	<p>Comment noted.</p>
<p><b>Environment Agency</b></p>	
<p>No response received.</p>	<p>N/A</p>

## Key sustainability issues

3.5 Drawing on the review of the sustainability context and baseline, the SA Scoping Report was able to identify a range of sustainability issues that should be a particular focus of SA. These issues are as follows, presented by eight SA Themes.

### 3.6 Air quality

- There are no AQMAs within the District.
- Air quality in the Neighbourhood Plan area is good, with no significant issues identified.
- Traffic and congestion have the potential to increase emissions and reduce air quality in the area; however, air pollution is at a very low baseline so likely effects are unlikely to be significant.
- Due to the absence of significant and tangible air quality issues in the Neighbourhood Plan area, air quality has been scoped out for the purposes of the SA process.

### 3.7 Biodiversity and geodiversity

- Fontmell and Melbury Downs SAC lies approximately 10 km north of Blandford, consisting of approximately 260 hectares of species rich chalk grasslands on the scarp slope of the Dorset Downs.
- There is an abundance of Ancient Woodland within the Neighbourhood Plan area, amounting to over 100ha.
- Bryanston SSSI is located in Bryanston, central to the Neighbourhood Plan area and to the west of Blandford Forum town. The SSSI consists of large roof space in the derelict 18th Century kitchens at Bryanston and is a breeding site for the greater horseshoe bat *Rhinolophus ferrum-equinum*;
- There are three SNCIs located within the Neighbourhood Plan area, and an abundance of BAP priority habitats.
- Ecological networks extend throughout the Neighbourhood Plan area, providing invaluable connectivity for habitats and species with the District's wider network.

### 3.8 Climate change

- North Dorset emitted 6.2 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> per capita in 2012, which is lower than the regional and national comparators. The rate of emissions has been steadily falling since 2005.
- The domestic sector is responsible for the highest CO<sub>2</sub> emissions in the District. This is in contrast to that of the South West and England, where in both instances the Industrial and Commercial sector is responsible for the highest CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. Emissions of CO<sub>2</sub> from domestic sources in the District primarily originate from electricity consumption.
- An increase in the built footprint of the Neighbourhood Plan area (associated with the delivery of new housing and employment) has the potential to increase overall greenhouse gas emissions.
- The Neighbourhood Plan area has a functional floodplain which is principally Flood Zone 3, separating Blandford Forum from Blandford St Mary.
- The Neighbourhood Plan should seek to increase the Neighbourhood Plan area's resilience to the effects of climate change by supporting and encouraging adaptation strategies.

### 3.9 Landscape and historic environment

- The Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs (CCWWD) AONB lies to the north and east of Blandford Forum and the Dorset AONB to the west and southwest. Small parts of the existing built up area lie within the CCWWD AONB.
- The Neighbourhood Plan area falls predominately within the South Blandford Downs landscape character area, the Mid Stour Valley landscape character area, and the North Dorset Chalk Escarpment landscape character area
- Six Historic Urban Character Areas have been defined for Blandford which align with a significant proportion of the town's Conservation Areas.
- The Neighbourhood Plan area has a rich historic environment, with two Conservation Areas, over 200 listed buildings (10 of which are Grade I listed and 9 are Grade II\* listed), and two Scheduled Monuments in the Neighbourhood Plan area.
- The Neighbourhood Plan area is rich in archaeology. Twenty archaeological events have been recorded for Blandford.
- Future management within the Neighbourhood Plan area should seek to protect the setting of heritage assets and landscape/townscape quality.

### 3.10 Land, soil and water resources

- Agricultural land in the vicinity of the Neighbourhood Plan area comprises areas of land classified as the best and most versatile agricultural land.

- Blandford Household Waste and Recycling Centre (HWRC) is located on Shaftesbury Lane, within the Neighbourhood Plan area.
- The River Stour cuts through the Neighbourhood Plan area, separating Blandford Forum from Blandford St Mary.
- Blandford lies between two SPZs, an inner zone (Zone 1) to the northeast of town and an outer zone (Zone 2) to the northeast and south.
- The Neighbourhood Plan area is situated with two Nitrate Vulnerable Zones: Surface Waters – North Winterbourne NVZ (S688), and Ground Waters – South Wessex NVZ (G151)
- The Neighbourhood Plan area is situated within a Drinking Water Safeguard Zone for Surface Water.

### 3.11 Population and community

- According to the most recently available census data the Neighbourhood Plan area has seen an increase in population between 2011 and 2016. This rate is greater than that identified for the District (+3.5%), and marginally greater than the regional and national figures.
- Blandford has seen a significant expansion in recent years; expanding by 182% between 1971 and 2011. This is the largest growth of any town in rural Dorset.
- The Neighbourhood Plan area is supporting a younger population than North Dorset and the South West. The largest percentage of residents within the Neighbourhood Plan area is those aged 25-44.
- There are seven LSOAs covering the Neighbourhood Plan area. With the exception of North Dorset 007A, all LSOAs which cover the Neighbourhood Plan area fall within the 40% most deprived, 50% most deprived, and 40% least deprived neighbourhoods.
- There is an acknowledged pupil place deficiency in the Neighbourhood Plan area, and therefore a need to deliver an increase in school place capacity.
- A lower percentage of residents either own their home outright or with a mortgage, compared to North Dorset, the South West and England. A higher percentage of residents are in social rented accommodation than all other comparators.
- Within the Neighbourhood Plan area over 1/3 of residents live in households married with/without dependants.

### 3.12 Health and wellbeing

- The majority of residents within the Neighbourhood Plan area consider themselves to have 'very good health' or 'good health'. While this percentage is higher than District trends, it is lower than the totals for the South West of England, and England.
- A larger number of residents within the Neighbourhood Plan area consider themselves to have 'bad health' or 'very bad health' in comparison to the totals for the South West of England, and England.
- Between 7-11% of residents in the Neighbourhood Plan area provide unpaid care.
- The Neighbourhood Plan area is characterised by extensive green spaces.

### 3.13 Economy and enterprise

- The Local Plan Part 1 identifies Blandford as the main service centre for the south of the District.
- Blandford Forum is a market town, providing a range of services and facilities to the Neighbourhood Plan area, and the rural hinterland with fewer, more widely scattered villages.

- The shopping catchment for Blandford (major food shopping) extends about 8 miles in a northeast and southwest direction, but only 5 miles northwest and southeast.
- Based on the 2011 census data the Neighbourhood Plan area is generally less qualified than the District and region on average.
- Generally, there are fewer residents within the Neighbourhood Plan area employed within the managers, directors and senior officials, and associate professional & technical support occupation categories compared to the local, regional and national comparators. Blandford Camp is a significant employer of local people and supports a variety of local businesses.
- About 3,900 people are in employment of which 55% are full time and 45% part-time. Approximately 70% of commuter traffic travels towards the South East Dorset conurbation.
- Access to schools and GP surgeries is an issue for the Neighbourhood Plan area, being located predominately in the south of the town. Dorset County Council has indicated that there is a need for a further 2 forms of entry (2FE) for primary education in Blandford, and a new or improved/extended GP surgery is required.

### 3.14 Transportation

- In terms of access to Blandford Forum, it is easily accessed via 'A' roads. The A350 runs along the north east of the Neighbourhood Plan area, connecting to the A354.
- There is no railway station within the town centre with the nearest railway station is 20km away in Gillingham.
- While there are three bus services which run through the Neighbourhood Plan area, these run infrequently, limiting potential usability for commuters.
- National Route 25 of the National Cycle Network runs through the north and south east of the Neighbourhood Plan area. National Routes 253 and 250 extend into the Neighbourhood Plan area.
- Blandford Forum town centre suffers from vehicular congestion at rush hour.
- A higher proportion of residents have access to at least one car or van, compared to regional and national percentages.
- A higher proportion of residents use a car or van to get to work, compared to local, regional, and national percentages.

## SA Framework

3.15 The issues were then translated into an 'SA Framework'. This SA Framework provides a methodological framework for the appraisal of likely significant effects on the baseline. The SA framework for the Neighbourhood Plan is presented below.

**Table 3.2: SA Framework for the Blandford+ Neighbourhood Plan 2**

SA objective	Assessment questions
<b>Biodiversity and geodiversity</b>	
Protect and enhance all biodiversity and geological features.	Will the option/proposal help to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protect and enhance the status of the nationally designated Bryanston SSSI.</li> <li>• Increase the resilience of biodiversity to the effects of climate change, including through enhancements to ecological networks?</li> <li>• Avoid, or if not minimise impacts on biodiversity, including internationally, nationally, and locally designated sites, and provide net gains where possible?</li> <li>• Protect and enhance Ancient Woodland?</li> <li>• Protect and enhance ecological networks, including multifunctional green infrastructure?</li> <li>• Protect and enhance semi-natural habitats?</li> <li>• Protect and enhance priority habitats, and the habitat of priority species?</li> <li>• Achieve a net gain in biodiversity?</li> </ul> Support access to, interpretation and understanding of biodiversity and geodiversity?
<b>Climate change</b>	
Reduce the level of contribution to climate change made by activities within the Neighbourhood Plan area	Will the option/proposal help to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduce the number of journeys made and reduce the need to travel?</li> <li>• Promote the use of sustainable modes of transport, including walking, cycling and public transport?</li> <li>• Increase the number of new developments meeting or exceeding sustainable design criteria?</li> <li>• Generate energy from low or zero carbon sources?</li> <li>• Reduce energy consumption from non-renewable resources?</li> </ul>
Support the resilience of the Neighbourhood Plan area to the potential effects of climate change, including flooding	Will the option/proposal help to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure that inappropriate development does not takes place in areas at higher risk of flooding, taking into account the likely future effects of climate change?</li> <li>• Improve and extend green infrastructure networks in the Neighbourhood Plan area to support adaptation to the potential effects of climate change?</li> <li>• Sustainably manage water run-off, reducing surface water runoff (either within the plan area or downstream)?</li> <li>• Ensure the potential risks associated with climate change are considered through new development in the Neighbourhood Plan area?</li> <li>• Increase the resilience of biodiversity to the effects of climate change, including through enhancements to ecological networks?</li> </ul>

SA objective	Assessment questions
<b>Landscape and historic environment</b>	
<p>Protect, maintain and enhance the heritage resource, including the historic environment and archaeological assets located within and within the setting of the Neighbourhood Plan area</p>	<p>Will the option/proposal help to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conserve and enhance the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB and the Dorset AONB?</li> <li>• Conserve and enhance the significance of buildings and structures of architectural or historic interest, both designated and non-designated, and their setting?</li> <li>• Conserve and enhance the special interest, character and appearance of the Blandford Forum, Blandford St Mary &amp; Bryanston Conservation Area and its setting?</li> <li>• Support the integrity of the historic setting of key buildings of heritage interest?</li> <li>• Conserve and enhance local diversity and character?</li> <li>• Support access to, interpretation and understanding of the historic environment?</li> <li>• Conserve and enhance archaeological remains, including historic landscapes?</li> <li>• Support the undertaking of archaeological investigations and, where appropriate, recommend mitigation strategies.</li> </ul>
<p>Protect and enhance the character and quality of landscapes and townscapes.</p>	<p>Will the option/proposal help to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support the integrity of the landscape in the Neighbourhood Plan area, in accordance with the North Dorset Landscape Character Assessment?</li> <li>• Conserve and enhance landscape and townscape features, in accordance with the Blandford Conservation Area Appraisal Management Plan?</li> </ul>
<b>Land, soil and water resources</b>	
<p>Ensure the efficient and effective use of land.</p>	<p>Will the option/proposal help to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote the use of previously developed land?</li> <li>• Avoid the development of the best and most versatile agricultural land, which may comprise Grade 2 and 3a agricultural land?</li> </ul>
<p>Promote sustainable waste management solutions that encourage the reduction, re-use and recycling of waste.</p>	<p>Will the option/proposal help to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduce the amount of waste produced?</li> <li>• Support the minimisation, reuse and recycling of waste?</li> <li>• Encourage recycling of materials and minimise consumption of resources during construction?</li> </ul>
<p>Use and manage water resources in a sustainable manner.</p>	<p>Will the option/proposal help to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support improvements to water quality?</li> <li>• Minimise water consumption?</li> <li>• Protect groundwater resources?</li> </ul>

SA objective	Assessment questions
<b>Population and community</b>	
Cater for existing and future residents' needs as well as the needs of different groups in the community, and improve access to local, high-quality schools, community services and facilities.	<p>Will the option/proposal help to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase school place capacity in areas of acknowledged pupil place deficiency?</li> <li>• Promote the development of a range of high quality, accessible community facilities?</li> <li>• Encourage and promote social cohesion and encourage active involvement of local people in community activities?</li> <li>• Minimise fuel poverty?</li> </ul>
Reduce deprivation and promote a more inclusive and self-contained community.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain or enhance the quality of life of existing local residents?</li> <li>• Improve the availability and accessibility of key local facilities, including specialist services for disabled and older people?</li> <li>• Support the provision of land for allotments and cemeteries?</li> </ul>
Provide everyone with the opportunity to live in good quality, secure affordable housing, and ensure an appropriate mix of dwelling sizes, types and tenures.	<p>Will the option/proposal help to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support the provision of a range of house types and sizes?</li> <li>• Support enhancements to the current housing stock?</li> <li>• Meet the needs of all sectors of the community?</li> <li>• Provide quality and flexible homes that meet people's needs?</li> <li>• Promote the use of sustainable building techniques, including use of sustainable building materials in construction?</li> <li>• Provide housing in sustainable locations that allow easy access to a range of local services and facilities?</li> </ul>
<b>Health and wellbeing</b>	
Improve the health and wellbeing of residents within the Neighbourhood Plan area.	<p>Will the option/proposal help to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote accessibility to a range of leisure, health and community facilities, for all age groups?</li> <li>• Provide and enhance the provision of community access to green infrastructure, in accordance with Accessible Natural Greenspace Standards?</li> <li>• Reduce noise pollution?</li> <li>• Promote the use of healthier modes of travel?</li> <li>• Improve access to the countryside for recreational use?</li> </ul>
<b>Economy and enterprise</b>	
Promote a thriving and sustainable local economy	<p>Will the option/proposal help to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote business creation and a diverse and resilient local economy?</li> <li>• Promote Blandford's role at the main service centre in the south of the District?</li> <li>• Support a wide range of jobs and training opportunities?</li> <li>• Create an attractive economically viable town centre?</li> <li>• Provide opportunities for all employers to access: different types and sizes of accommodation; flexible employment space; and high quality communications infrastructure?</li> <li>• Support self-containment in the Neighbourhood Plan area?</li> <li>• Promote and support the rural economy?</li> <li>• Promote the development of tourism in a sustainable manner?</li> </ul>

SA objective	Assessment questions
<b>Transportation</b>	
Promote sustainable transport use and reduce the need to travel.	Will the option/proposal help to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Encourage modal shift to more sustainable forms of travel?</li><li>• Enable sustainable transport infrastructure enhancements?</li><li>• Facilitate working from home and remote working?</li><li>• Improve road safety?</li><li>• Reduce the impact on residents from the road network?</li></ul>

## 4. What has plan making/ SA involved to this point?

### Introduction

- 4.1 In accordance with the SEA Regulations the SA Report must include...
- An outline of the reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with; and
  - The likely significant effects on the environment associated with alternatives / an outline of the reasons for selecting the preferred approach in light of alternatives appraised.
- 4.2 The 'narrative' of plan-making / SA up to this point is told within this part of the SA Report. Specifically, this section explains how preparation of the current version of the Blandford+ NP Version 2 has been informed by an assessment of alternative locations for development in the Neighbourhood Plan area.

### Overview of plan making / SA work undertaken since May 2018

- 4.3 The original B+NP was withdrawn in May 2018, and since then Blandford+ have been working with NDDC to update the scope of the new Blandford+ NP Version 2 so it can respond to NDDC's Local Plan 'Issues and Options' Consultation to move forward with planning options for the Blandford + area. Work to date has included the delivery of a range of consultation events for the Neighbourhood Plan; including evening sessions and survey completion. Consultation events have both engaged the community and enabled their input into the plan making process.

### Assessment of reasonable alternatives for the Blandford+ Neighbourhood Plan 2

- 4.4 A key element of the SA process is the appraisal of 'reasonable alternatives' for the Blandford+ NP Version 2. The SEA Regulations<sup>9</sup> are not prescriptive as to what constitutes a reasonable alternative, stating only that the Environmental Report (i.e. SA Report) should present an appraisal of the '*plan and reasonable alternatives taking into account the objectives and geographical scope of the plan*'.
- 4.5 As discussed in Section 2.1, the Neighbourhood Plan has been prepared in conjunction with the provisions of the current Local Plan for North Dorset and emerging Local Plan Review.
- 4.6 As part of this process North Dorset District Council consulted on the Local Plan Review Issues and Options Document, together with its Sustainability Appraisal (SA) from 27<sup>th</sup> November 2017 to 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2018. It also issued a new 'Call for Sites' to update the evidence on land availability.
- 4.7 In considering potential future development options at Blandford, the Council has undertaken a 360 degree search around the existing settlement boundary that is defined for the town. The search resulted in the identification of 11 areas (A to K) (Figure 4.1). Unsuitable areas have been discounted through an assessment exercise undertaken for North Dorset which has drawn on, amongst other things, the appraisal work in the Local Plan Review SA/SEA.

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<sup>9</sup> Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004

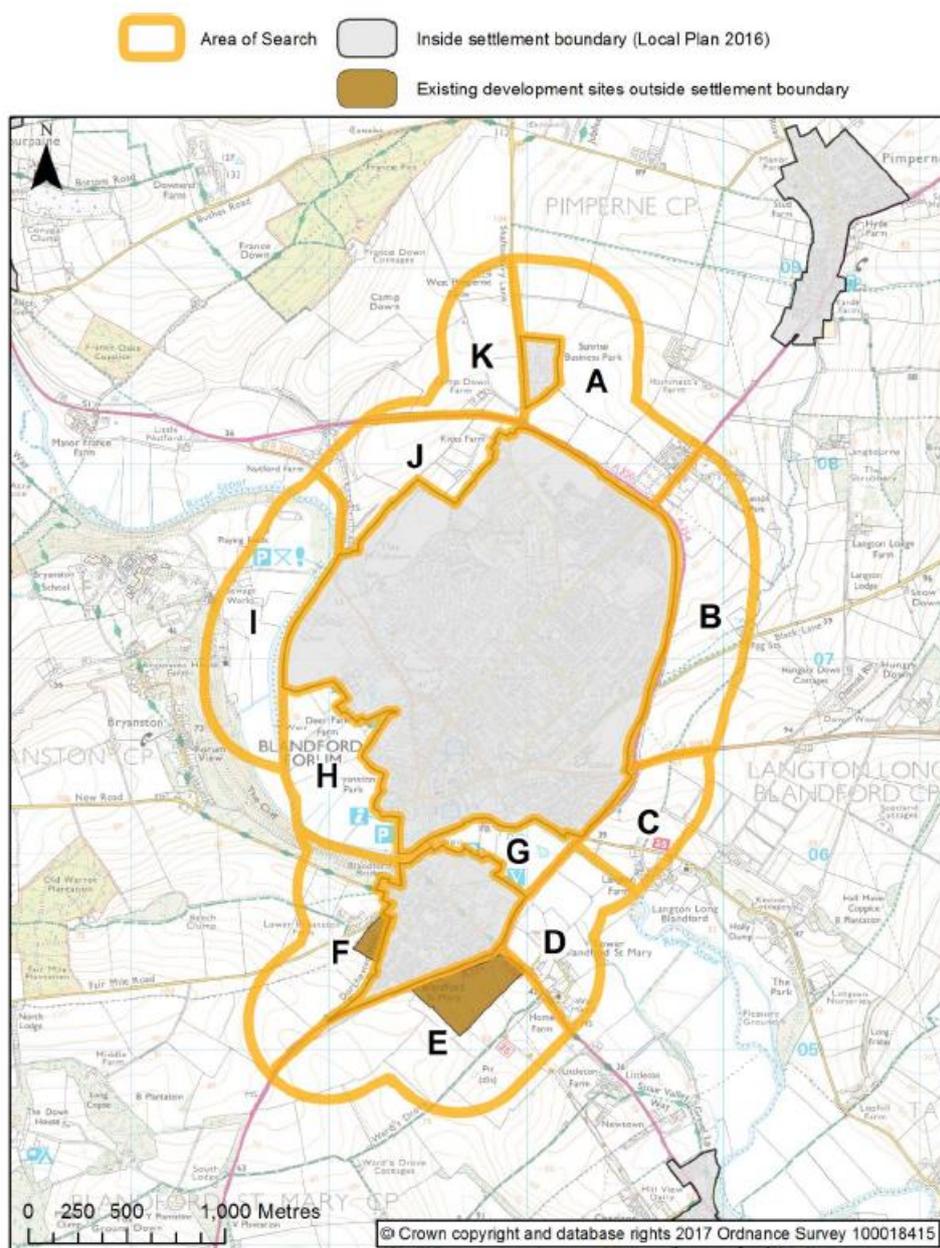


Figure 4.1 Blandford Areas of Search<sup>10</sup>

- 4.8 Following this process undertaken for the Local Plan, Areas A, B, F and J have been identified by NDDC as possibly having some development potential.
- 4.9 NDDC has shared with the Steering Group a summary outcome of the comments received on the consultation and submissions received in respect of the 'Call for Sites'. Using this evidence the Steering Group have been able to identify available land and also review land considered in NDDC's earlier Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment, particularly land within the settlement boundary, and to make an assessment of the quantum of land that could be allocated on brownfield land. This would reduce the need for greenfield land release, particularly given the constraints within and around the designated area.
- 4.10 NDDC has therefore advised that the Blandford+ NP Version 2 should reflect the findings of the Local Plan Review Issues and Options SA, which concluded that Areas A, B, E, F and J are those

<sup>10</sup> North Dorset District Council (2017) North Dorset Local Plan Review Issues and Options [online] available at: <https://www.dorsetforyou.gov.uk/article/423247> last accessed 10/09/18

that may be appropriate for the location of site allocations and subsequent decision making on the Local Plan.

- 4.11 Since May 2018 the Steering Group have been working with NDDC to ensure that the work on the new Blandford+ Neighbourhood Plan dovetails effectively with that of the Local Plan.
- 4.12 The Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group and NDDC have agreed a strategic land use and quantum specification for the site allocations within the Blandford+ NP Version 2. The 'specification' requires the Blandford+ NP Version 2 to allocate land within the designated Neighbourhood Plan area for the following purposes (agreed with NDDC on the 6th June 2018) and to ensure that these development needs are appropriately located:
- The requirement to allocate land for at least 400 homes over and above commitments and Local Plan Part 1 (LPP1) allocations. This number is in addition to the already committed development in NDDC Local Plan 1.
  - At least a 2FE primary school with flexibility for expansion to 3FE (as confirmed by the LEA)
  - At least 2 Ha of B1-B8 employment land
  - Delivery of the necessary highway and green infrastructure

## Assessment of high level Spatial Options for development

### Spatial options assessed

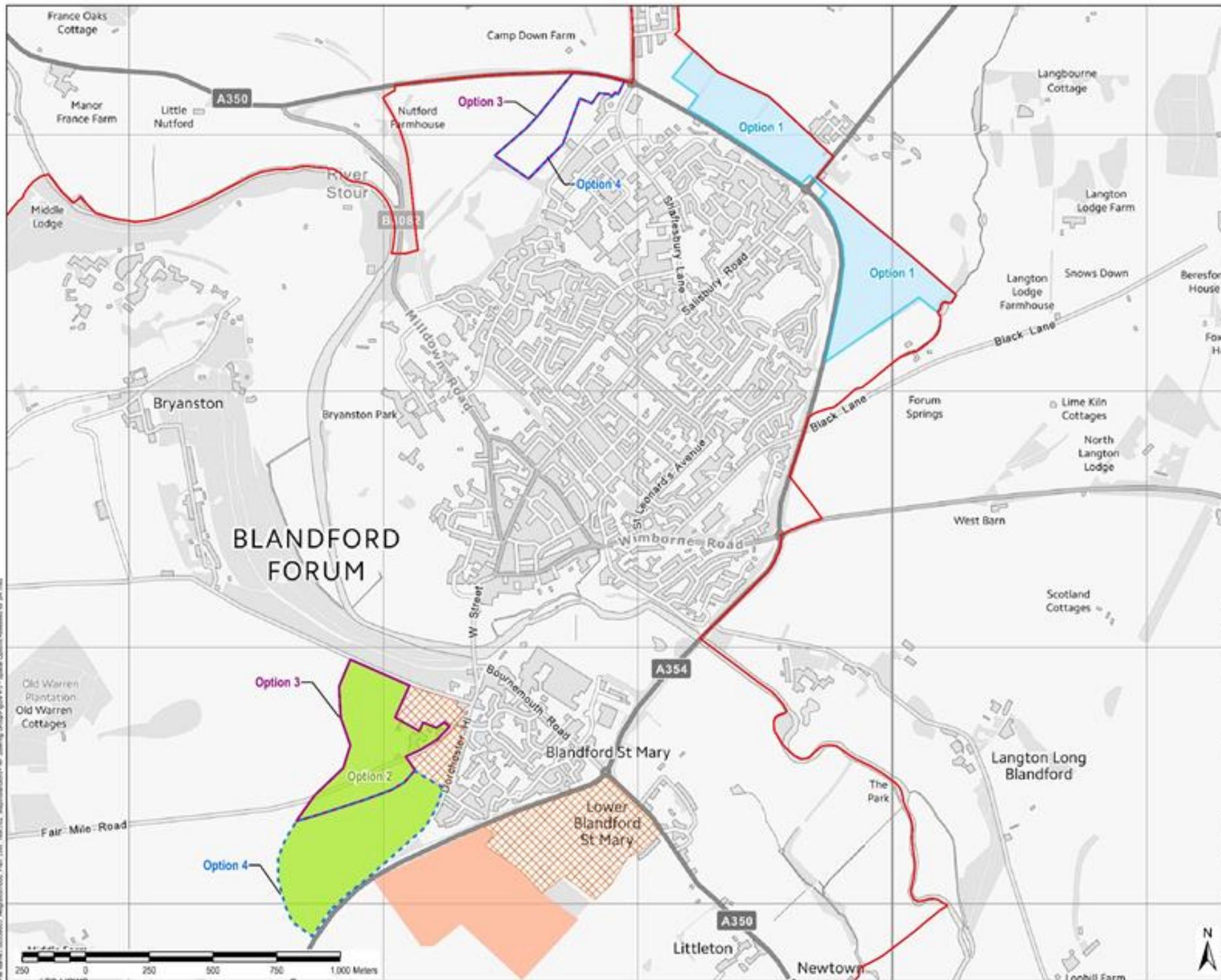
- 4.13 To support the delivery of the development specification (discussed above), the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group were keen to consider alternative locations for delivering housing, employment and community infrastructure in the Neighbourhood Plan area.
- 4.14 Both the Steering Group and NDDC are keen to see the sustainable growth of Blandford to continue to be plan-led and to contribute positively to objectively assessed housing needs of the town, and in meeting the needs for employment and infrastructure. In which case, the Blandford+ NP Version 2 will come forward more quickly than the Local Plan Review, but will be informed by its reasoning and evidence, along with that of the adopted Local Plan.
- 4.15 Originally five spatial options were considered by the Steering Group. These Options correspond with the findings of the Local Plan Review Issues and Options SA, which has concluded that Areas A, B, E, F and J are those that may be the location of site allocations (see Figure 4.1). The options have been subsequently developed based on an assessment of the available land with the required area to accommodate the quantum of development in the 'specification':
- **Initial Option 1:** Area A + Area B (the full specification)
  - **Initial Option 2:** Area F1 + Area F2 (the full specification)
  - **Initial Option 3:** Area E (300 homes and primary school only)
  - **Initial Option 4:** Area F1 (300 homes and primary school only)
  - **Initial Option 5:** Area F2 (300 homes and primary school only)
- 4.16 The Steering Group considered it important to further validate each of these preliminary options prior to testing them and invited interested parties in control of the land within the areas identified to confirm the land will be made available in the plan period for the mix of uses indicated and in a way that can accommodate any necessary landscape, design or access mitigation measures in principle terms.
- 4.17 NDDC confirmed the Options should not include committed land from the Local Plan 1 which in the case of Area E made up the available land to the west of Wards Drove which forms the St Mary's Hill growth area. In validating the remaining land to the east of Wards Drove with sufficient

capacity to accommodate the specification, it would result in a significant decrease in the separation between the committed land and the village of Charlton Marshall and also the Grade 11 Littleton House. While this area is not within an AONB it was also not confirmed as available. For these reasons, Area E (Option 3) was not taken forward for further consideration. For all other Options, it was estimated that their housing quantum will be supplemented by at least 100 new homes on sites within the existing built up area of Blandford (Forum and St. Mary). In that way, all exceed the given housing target within the neighbourhood area.

- 4.18 In relation to Options 4 – 5, it was assumed that the employment land would either be allocated in Area J or be delivered through a criteria-based policy. Area J adjoins the town's main employment areas off Shaftesbury Lane with access to the strategic road network.
- 4.19 It was also not considered necessary to separate Area A and Area B into two options as both areas of land are in single ownership and being promoted by a single developer. Areas F1 and F2 however are in separate ownership but the land owners confirmed they were prepared to work jointly to promote the land and agree equalisation should this be necessary.
- 4.20 NDDC and the Steering Group considered whether an additional 'no growth' Option should be included as a reasonable alternative. After further discussion and on the advice of AECOM it was agreed such an option would suppress the sustainable growth of Blandford and not comprise a reasonable alternative. The UVE CIC Report (Sept CIC) provides a detailed analysis on this point.<sup>11</sup>
- 4.21 Taking the above into consideration, the SA process has considered the following four Spatial Options, with a view to exploring the sustainability implications of delivering the development specification in different broad locations in the Neighbourhood Plan area.
- **Option 1:** Focus growth to the north of Blandford Forum in Area A and B to deliver the full specification
  - **Option 2:** Focus growth to the south west of Blandford St Mary in Areas F1 and F2 to deliver the full specification
  - **Option 3:** Dispersed approach: Accommodating 300 homes and a primary school in Area F1 to the south west of Blandford with employment land in Area J
  - **Option 4:** Dispersed approach: Accommodating 300 homes and a primary school in Area F2 to the south west of Blandford with employment land in Area J
- 4.22 A map denoting the areas covered by the Options is presented in Figure 4.2 below. Figure 4.3 subsequently highlights these areas in conjunction with the key environmental constraints present in the area.

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<sup>1111</sup> Urban Vision Enterprise CIC (2018) Blandford+ Neighbourhood Plan Site Allocations in the AONBs



THIS DRAWING IS TO BE USED ONLY FOR THE PURPOSE OF LOCAL PLAN 11 AND SHOULD NOT BE SUBJECT TO REVISION

**LEGEND**

- Blandford+ Neighbourhood Plan Area
- Committed Land in North Dorset Local Plan
- Littleton Solar Farm

**Site Option**

- Option 1: Focus Growth to the North of Blandford Forum in Area A and B to Deliver the Full Specification
- Option 2: Focus Growth to the South West of Blandford St Mary in Areas F1 and F2 to deliver the Full Specification
- Option 3: Dispersed approach: Accommodating 300 homes and a primary school in Area F1 to the South West of Blandford with Employment Land in Area J
- Option 4: Dispersed approach: Accommodating 300 homes and a primary school in Area F2 to the South West of Blandford with Employment Land in Area J

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Version: DRAFT

Client: BLANDFORD+ NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN STEERING GROUP

Project No: SA FOR THE BLANDFORD+ NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN 2

Drawing No: SPATIAL OPTIONS ASSESSED FOR SA

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CK	JR	CK	11/10/2018

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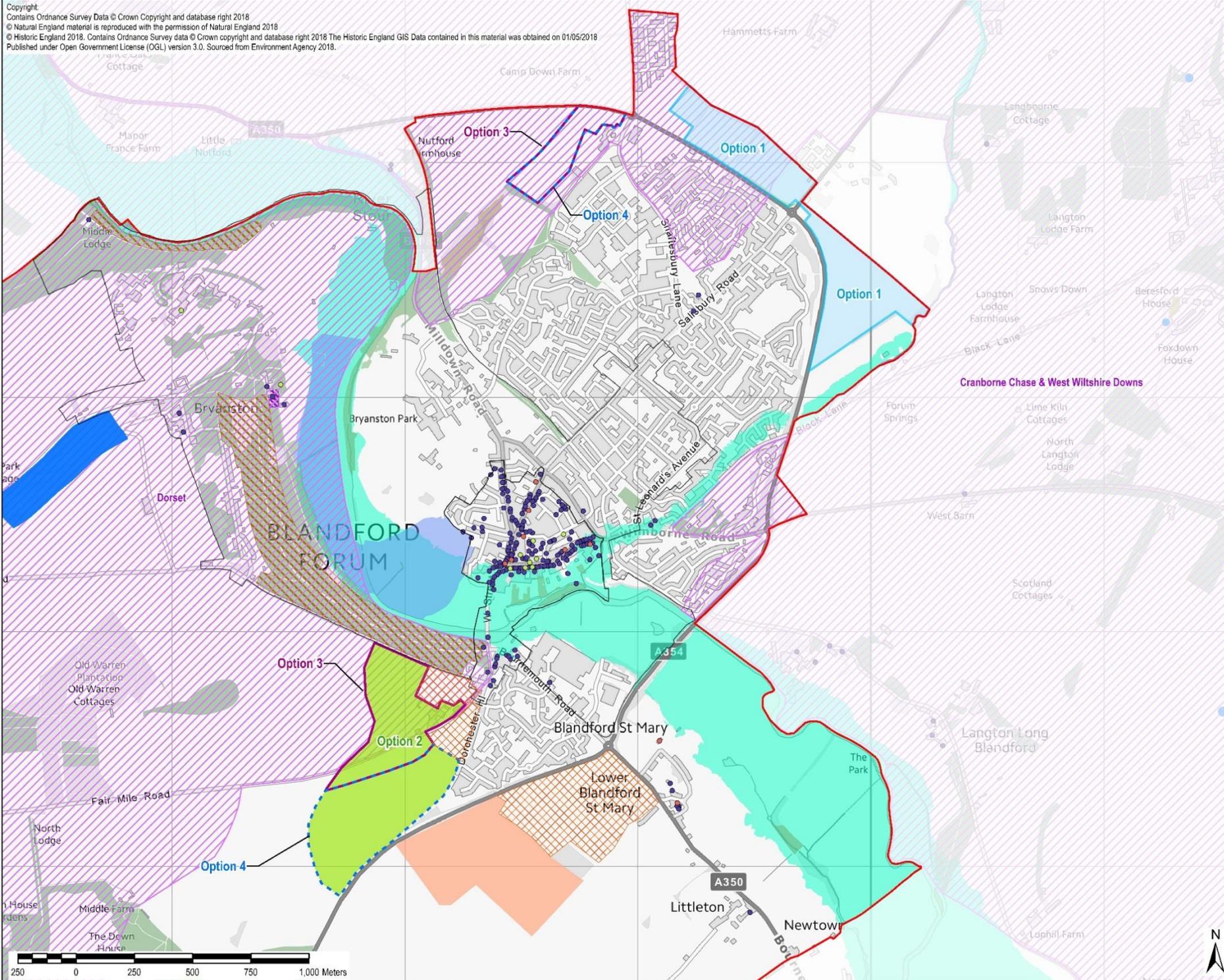
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Figure No: FIGURE 4.3

No: 01

File Name: C:\020801\Blandford+ Neighbourhood Plan - 11\11\2018\Map\Blandford+ SA Steering Group\Fig 4.3 - Spatial Options Assessed for SA.mxd



**LEGEND**

- Blandford+ Neighbourhood Plan Area

**Site Option**

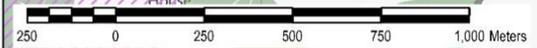
- Option 1: Focus Growth to the North of Blandford Forum in Area A and B to Deliver the Full Specification
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- Option 4: Dispersed approach: Accommodating 300 homes and a primary school in Area F2 to the South West of Blandford with Employment Land in Area J

- Grade I Listed Building
- Grade II\* Listed Building
- Grade II Listed Building
- Record of Scheduled Monument
- Conservation Area
- Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
- Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)
- Ancient Woodland
- Committed Land in North Dorset Local Plan
- Littleton Solar Farm

**Biodiversity Action Plan Priority Habitats**

- Coastal and Floodplain Grazing Marsh
- Deciduous Woodland
- Lowland Calcareous Grassland
- Traditional Orchard
- Flood Zone 3

Purpose of Issue:				DRAFT
Client:				BLANDFORD+ NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN STEERING GROUP
Project Title:				SA FOR THE BLANDFORD+ NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN 2
Drawing Title:				SPATIAL OPTIONS AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONSTRAINTS
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## Appraisal findings

- 4.23 The SA team appraised these four Spatial Options as 'reasonable alternatives' against both the baseline and relatively (i.e. against each other). These were considered through the SA Framework of objectives and assessment questions developed during scoping.
- 4.24 Tables 4.1 – 4.8 below present appraisal findings in relation to the four options introduced above. These are organised by the eight SA Themes. For each SA Theme, a commentary on the likely effects is presented and summarised within Table 4.9. Options are also ranked numerically reflecting their relative sustainability performance, with '1' the most favourable ranking and '4' the least favourable ranking.

**Table 4.1: Biodiversity and geodiversity appraisal findings: reasonable alternatives for broad locations of development**

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**Option 1: Focus growth to the north of Blandford Forum in Area A and B to deliver the full specification**

**Option 2: Focus growth to the south west of Blandford St Mary in Areas F1 and F2 to deliver the full specification**

**Option 3: Dispersed approach: Accommodating 300 homes and a primary school in Area F1 to the south west of Blandford with employment land in Area J**

**Option 4: Dispersed approach: Accommodating 300 homes and a primary school in Area F2 to the south west of Blandford with employment land in Area J**

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### Biodiversity

#### Discussion of potential effects of options

The delivery of housing outside of the built-up part of the Neighbourhood Plan area has increased potential to lead to impacts on sites internationally and nationally designated for their nature conservation value. Fontmell and Melbury Downs Special Area of Conservation (SAC) is a large internationally designed site, comprising of the edge of the north east Dorset chalk escarpment. The SAC lies approximately 8.5km north of the land covered by Option 1 and search area J of Options 3 and 4, and 11km north of Option 2 and search areas F1 and F2 of Options 3 and 4. As such, development of Options 1, 3, 4, and to a lesser extent 2, have some potential to lead to adverse effects on the SAC through the impact of atmospheric nitrogen deposition on the dry grasslands and scrublands on chalk or limestone. This is prioritised as an issue through the SAC Site Improvement Plan (SIP) (2015).<sup>12</sup> However, the areas covered by the options are not within a relevant Impact Risk Zone for the SSSIs which cover the European designated site.

While not within SSSI Impact Risk Zones (IRZ) for residential development, Option 1 to the north east of Blandford Forum has the potential to affect Blandford Camp SSSI (designated for its chalk downland habitat and associated species) through impacts such as air pollution (discussed above), being approximately 2.2km from the site. Additionally, Options 2, 3 and 4 to the east of the town, whilst not leading to the direct loss of habitat on the Bryanston SSSI itself, may affect supporting habitat located outside of the designation, which is an important aspect to the protection and enhancement of the integrity of the SSSI associated with its protected Greater Horseshoe Bat population. Search areas J and F1 of Options 2, 3 and 4 are approximately 1.5km from the SSSI, while search area F2 of Option 4 is approximately 1.7km from the SSSI. Taking forward these Options may therefore lead to indirect adverse effects on the designated sites. However, as highlighted by the sites not being within Impact Risk Zones for the SSSIs, effect are likely to be limited.

In terms of locally designated sites, The Milldown Nature Reserve/ Site of Nature Conservation Importance (SNCI) is located 30m south west of search area J, which forms part of Options 3 and 4. Development has the potential to indirectly adversely impact upon the chalk grassland habitat and associated species, including through disturbance from recreation and noise/light pollution. This may reduce the functionality of the SNCI and its contribution to wider ecological networks, as well as ecosystem services such as pollination. However, it is noted that the nature reserve/ SNCI is located within the urban area, bordered on one side by an industrial estate, on another by housing and another by a main road with a school on the opposite side of the road. As such, any adverse effects from new development at this location are likely to be minor in this context.

In terms of key biodiversity habitats, Search area F1 of Options 2 and 3 are located adjacent to a significant area of deciduous woodland BAP Priority Habitat (also Ancient Woodland), on the other side of New Road. There is

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<sup>12</sup> Natural England (2015) Site Improvement Plan: Fontmell & Melbury Downs (SIP089) [online] available at: <<http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/4927257646727168>> last accessed 05/09/18

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also a parcel of deciduous woodland located adjacent to the southern boundary of search area J of Options 3 and 4. Whilst direct impacts on the woodland from landtake and fragmentation are not anticipated, disturbance may take place from new development at this location from noise, light pollution or trampling from enhanced access. Of the Options, Option 3 is likely to lead to most significant effects given both search areas within the Option are adjacent to woodland, and a substantial part of this is classified as Ancient Woodland. Option 4 is likely to deliver more limited adverse effects due to the woodland not coinciding with Ancient Woodland, and being a smaller area.

There are numerous other areas of Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) Priority Habitat located within the Neighbourhood Plan area, however these areas are predominately located away from the main settlement of Blandford Forum, covering Bryanston and further east.

Taking the above into consideration it is considered that Option 3 is likely to lead to the greatest adverse effects on biodiversity given its location adjacent to an area of Ancient Woodland and The Milldown Nature Reserve/SNCl. However, it is recognised that Options 1-4 all have the potential to have impacts on biodiversity assets if development is located inappropriately and have poor design and layout. Likewise, these four Options have the potential to promote net gains in biodiversity value through the 'necessary green infrastructure' provision included within the Options' specification. In this context, for Options 1-4, potential effects on biodiversity depend on elements such as the retention and incorporation of biodiversity features within development, and the extent of biodiversity net gain delivered.

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**Table 4.2: Climate change appraisal findings: reasonable alternatives for broad locations of development**


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**Option 1:** Focus growth to the north of Blandford Forum in Area A and B to deliver the full specification

**Option 2:** Focus growth to the south west of Blandford St Mary in Areas F1 and F2 to deliver the full specification

**Option 3:** Dispersed approach: Accommodating 300 homes and a primary school in Area F1 to the south west of Blandford with employment land in Area J

**Option 4:** Dispersed approach: Accommodating 300 homes and a primary school in Area F2 to the south west of Blandford with employment land in Area J

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### Climate change

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#### Discussion of potential effects of options

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In terms of climate change mitigation, Options 1 – 4 will lead to an increased overall level of greenhouse gas emissions due to an enlarged built footprint of the Neighbourhood Plan area.

Otherwise, in terms of greenhouse gas emissions, road transport is the significant contributor to emissions in the area. The extent to which the Options have the potential to support climate change mitigation through facilitating a reduced level of car dependency is therefore a key element. The specification for Options 1 – 4 include the “*delivery of the necessary highway infrastructure*”, however the specific details of this are currently not known. While public transport networks within the Neighbourhood Plan area have significant limitations, it is recognised that Options 1-4 have reasonable access to many key facilities due to largely being within 1km of the town centre. As such, Options located along the existing settlement boundary are expected to enable some access to the town centre by sustainable modes of transport such as walking and cycling. Option 1 is located beyond the A350/A354 bypass, which acts as a barrier for walkers and cyclists. However this option seeks to deliver key infrastructure to the north where it is needed, which includes a new school. Option 1 will also promote the re-use of the yellow bridge which spans the bypass to allow safe, sustainable access to and from school.<sup>13</sup> This will help reduce traffic flows through the town at peak times. The delivery of employment space alongside residential development through Options 1 and 2 will also help reduce the need to travel and encourage walking and cycling. This has the potential to limit emissions from transport through reducing the need to travel to key services.

In terms of climate change adaptation, enhancements to Blandford’s green infrastructure networks will be a key means of helping the Neighbourhood Plan area adapt to the effects of climate change. This includes through helping to regulate extreme temperatures and regulate surface water run-off. In this context, Options 1-4 all perform positively, through the “*necessary green infrastructure*” provision included within the Options’ specification. However, it is noted that the extent of green infrastructure delivery through each Option is not known at this stage.

In relation to flood risk, Options 2, 3 and 4 are located in areas of low risk of flooding, meaning that each year this area has a chance of flooding of between 0.1% and 1%<sup>14</sup>. A very small part of Option 1 is partially located in Flood Zone 2, along the south eastern boundary. This is of medium to high risk of flooding. Medium risk denotes that each year this area has a chance of flooding of between 1% and 3.3%. This area within Option 1 is also of medium to high risk of surface water flooding.

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<sup>13</sup> Dorset County Council (2018) Blandford Town Pupil Place Planning Statement

<sup>14</sup> Gov.uk (2018) Flood map for planning [online] available at: <<https://flood-map-for-planning.service.gov.uk/>> last accessed 10/09/18

**Table 4.3: Landscape and historic environment appraisal findings: reasonable alternatives for broad locations of development**


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**Option 1:** Focus growth to the north of Blandford Forum in Area A and B to deliver the full specification

**Option 2:** Focus growth to the south west of Blandford St Mary in Areas F1 and F2 to deliver the full specification

**Option 3:** Dispersed approach: Accommodating 300 homes and a primary school in Area F1 to the south west of Blandford with employment land in Area J

**Option 4:** Dispersed approach: Accommodating 300 homes and a primary school in Area F2 to the south west of Blandford with employment land in Area J

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### Landscape and historic environment

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#### Discussion of potential effects of options

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In terms of landscape character types, Option 1 is located within landscape classified as Wooded Chalk Downland (search area A) and Chalk Valley & Downland (search area B).<sup>15</sup> Wooded Chalk Downland is only found in one location in Dorset, within the Cranborne Chase. The landscape is characterised as a dramatic, distinctive and historic landscape with a deeply eroded topography of steep chalk valleys, dry coombs, upstanding ridges and plateaus with open views.<sup>16</sup> Conserving the distinctive classical English landscape is a key management objective for this area. The Chalk Valley & Downland, is more extensive in area, and generally more elevated than other landscape types in the county with open views from elevated positions. Conserving and enhancing the pattern and character of valley floor 'ribbon development' villages is a key management objective.

Land taken forward through Option 2 would be located wholly within Open Chalk Downland, which also covers a part of Options 3 and 4 (search areas F1 and F2). This area consists of simple, large-scale expansive landscapes of broad rolling open hills with large agricultural estates mainly under arable production. Notably, it is now a relatively sparsely populated area with a network of widely spaced out straight lanes, roads and other public rights of way. The overall management objective for this landscape type is to conserve the distinct downland landscape of broad rolling hills and gentle slopes whilst restoring the condition of many of its characteristic features. Options 3 and 4 are also located partially within Wooded Chalk Downland and Valley Pasture (search area J), discussed above.

It is recognised that given the sensitivity of the landscape in the vicinity of Blandford Forum, growth in any direction is likely to have effects on the character and special qualities of the Cranborne Chase and/or the Dorset AONB, whether land developed through an Option falls inside an AONB boundary or forms part of its setting. Land being considered under all of the Options is located at least partially within an AONB, with only search areas F2 and B being located outside (however still being adjacent to the Dorset AONB). Land considered under Option 3 is located entirely within the Dorset AONB. As such it is considered that development taken forward through this option may be most likely to have impact on the special qualities of the Dorset AONB, impacting upon its intrinsic value and beauty.

Parcel F1, which is included within Options 3 and 2, falls within the Dorset AONB and contains the existing housing allocations at Lower Bryanston Farm and Dorchester Hill. The development of this area would utilise the less elevated land within the eastern part of the AONB and would be relatively contingent with the existing settlement to the east; however, it cannot be overlooked that the land at this location is partly elevated and therefore visually exposed. There is also a PRoW crossing the site from which views would be significantly altered. Views of open areas of undeveloped downland to the west are also likely to be adversely impacted by development; much of which is within the Dorset AONB. This would lead to adverse effects on the setting of the AONB.

It is considered that the development of Option 2 would lead to significant adverse effects on landscape character as this Option seeks to deliver the full specification in one location. This will extend the existing settlement significantly to the south east on rising and open land and will reduce the gap between the existing built form and the Dorset AONB. Option 2 is therefore likely to encroach on the AONB and result in particular effects on views from within, as well as on to, the AONB. The delivery of Option 2 may also set precedent for further urban extension into the open landscape, likely to the south east along the A354.

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<sup>15</sup> Dorset Councils (2018) Landscape character assessment interactive map [online] available at: <<https://mapping.dorsetforyou.gov.uk/Landscape/Map>> last accessed 11/09/18>

<sup>16</sup> Dorset Councils (2018) Landscape character types in Dorset [online] available at: <<https://mapping.dorsetforyou.gov.uk/Landscape/LmgIndex>> last accessed 11/09/18

Options 3 and 4 seek to deliver development to both the north and south of the town. Both options include search area J, to the north of Blandford Forum, which is located within the Cranborne Chase AONB. As such, development of this area would likely lead to some degree of harm to the special qualities of the AONB, with the potential for significant adverse effects on landscape character. Search area J also impacts upon the setting of the Dorset AONB, and is visible from elevated land to the west within the AONB, in the direction of Bryanston and Durweston. New development therefore has the potential to adversely impact upon views from these areas.

Development of the large open field in the south western portion of search area J (Options 3 and 4) would likely lead to significant effects given the sensitivity of the landscape and the openness of the area. Development would alter views and impact upon overall landscape character. The eastern portion of search area J is expected to be less sensitive in relation to Dorset AONB as it is more distant from the designation. Additionally, it is more closely associated with existing built development and benefits from the presence of some existing mature trees along field boundaries, which will mitigate against adverse effects on views.

Option 1 includes search area A which falls wholly within Cranborne Chase AONB. Development would likely lead to some degree of harm to the special qualities of the AONB, with the potential for significant adverse effects on landscape character. Option 1 also includes search area B, which is within the setting of the AONB, and steeply sloping. As such the AONB is highly visible from the site, and it is considered that new development would significantly alter views of the AONB and detract from its character. The Dark Skies and Light Pollution Study undertaken for the CCWWD AONB (2007) identifies areas in close proximity to Option 1 (Blandford Camp and Sunrise Business Park) as problem areas of light pollution affecting the AONB. As such it is expected that the development of Option 1 may further result in impacts on light pollution in the area. It is also noted that search area J is in close proximity to Blandford Camp and therefore Options 3 and 4 also have the potential to lead to cumulative adverse effects in this respect.

Blandford Forum has a rich historic environment, being home to numerous designated historic assets, including over 200 listed buildings. Options 1 to 4 all have the potential to adversely impact upon the setting of Blandford's Historic Urban Character Areas<sup>17</sup>, given their location along the settlement boundary. In this context Option 1, and search area J of Options 3 and 4 are located adjacent to Character Area 5, which is of 'high' sensitivity to major change. Option 2, and search areas F1 and F2 of Options 3 and 4 are located adjacent to Character Area 6, which is of 'medium' sensitivity to change.

However, Options 1 and 4 may lead to more limited adverse effects than Options 2 and 3 on the historic environment given these Options are located further from the historic core of Blandford Forum. Search area F1 of Options 2 and 3 is located adjacent to the south eastern edge of the Blandford Forum Conservation Area and the Blandford, Blandford St Mary and Bryanston Conservation Area. The Blandford Forum Conservation Area is listed on the Heritage At Risk Register<sup>18</sup>, with Historic England evaluating the conservation area as being in a 'very bad' and 'deteriorating' condition.<sup>18</sup> Development through Option 2 and 3 therefore has increased potential to impact upon the fabric and setting of these sensitive areas.

In terms of Blandford St Mary, taking forward Options 2, 3 or 4 would lead to a significant extension of the settlement. This may lead to negative effects on the distinct identity and historic setting of the village.

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<sup>17</sup> Blandford's Historic Urban Character Areas have been defined through the Dorset Historic Town Survey (2011).

<sup>18</sup> Historic England's Heritage at Risk Register <https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/heritage-at-risk/>

**Table 4.4: Land, soil and water resources appraisal findings: reasonable alternatives for broad locations of development**

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**Option 1:** Focus growth to the north of Blandford Forum in Area A and B to deliver the full specification

**Option 2:** Focus growth to the south west of Blandford St Mary in Areas F1 and F2 to deliver the full specification

**Option 3:** Dispersed approach: Accommodating 300 homes and a primary school in Area F1 to the south west of Blandford with employment land in Area J

**Option 4:** Dispersed approach: Accommodating 300 homes and a primary school in Area F2 to the south west of Blandford with employment land in Area J

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#### Land, soil and water resources

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##### Discussion of potential effects of options

In terms of the location of the best and most versatile agricultural land, a detailed classification has not been undertaken in all parts of the Neighbourhood Plan area.

Post-1988 Agricultural Land Classification is available for small sections of the Neighbourhood Plan area, which include search areas J, F2, and the southern extent of F1. This identifies that these areas are of Grade 3a land, which is best and most versatile. As such, development of Options 2, 3, and 4 would lead to the loss of this valuable resource. In terms of Option 1, there is a need to rely on the Pre-1988 Agricultural Land Classification to provide an indication of the land classification. The Pre-1988 classification identifies that land to be taken forward through Option 1 is covered by Grade 2, Grade 3 and some Grade 4 agricultural land. As such it is considered likely that the development of land under all of the Options 1-4 would lead to areas of the best and most versatile agricultural land.

Land to be taken forward through Option 1, located on the north eastern side of Blandford, is the most sensitive from a groundwater perspective since it classified as a Zone 1 Groundwater Source Protection Zone. All other Options are not located within a SPZ.

In relation to water supply, the NPPF states that local plans should plan positively to ensure the provision of infrastructure for water supply, including an assessment of its quality and capacity. In the context of the current assessment, it is anticipated that the Water Resources Management Plans prepared by water supply companies will be expected to address long-term water supply issues associated with growth in the Neighbourhood Plan area.

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**Table 4.5: Population and community appraisal findings: reasonable alternatives for broad locations of development**


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**Option 1:** Focus growth to the north of Blandford Forum in Area A and B to deliver the full specification

**Option 2:** Focus growth to the south west of Blandford St Mary in Areas F1 and F2 to deliver the full specification

**Option 3:** Dispersed approach: Accommodating 300 homes and a primary school in Area F1 to the south west of Blandford with employment land in Area J

**Option 4:** Dispersed approach: Accommodating 300 homes and a primary school in Area F2 to the south west of Blandford with employment land in Area J

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### Population and community

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#### Discussion of potential effects of options

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Accessibility to services and facilities is a key influence on the quality of life of residents and community cohesion. The broadest range of services and facilities in the Neighbourhood Plan area are currently located to the south of Blandford Forum and within the town centre, with the north having a more a limited range, particularly in relation to health services and schools. However it is noted that DCC have confirmed all schools in the south are full and therefore Options 2-4 do not perform more positively in this respect. Given the relatively short distance to the town centre (c.1km) all Options have reasonable access to the town centre, with Option 1 more limited due to the role of the A350/A354 as a barrier to the rest of the town.

Options 1-4 will all deliver community infrastructure, which will contribute towards providing the identified need for the Neighbourhood Plan area. Due to the location of existing services, particular need for such provision is in the north, and as such the delivery of Option 1 would provide existing residents with new infrastructure (2FE primary school, employment land, highway infrastructure). This would reduce the need for existing children in the north of the town to travel to schools in the south and enable the utilisation of the yellow bridge which spans the bypass to allow safe sustainable access to and from school.<sup>19</sup>

The delivery of Options 2, 3 and 4 would provide development areas with good access to services and facilities in the south, however it would do less to manage the existing pressures in the north. In terms of education, a new school in the south, whilst helping to meet the current shortfall in education provision in the town as a whole, will do less to serve the existing requirement in the north. This will stimulate the need to travel to the south of the town, limiting accessibility and increasing congestion at peak times.

It is also recognised that Options 2, 3 and 4 would lead to the significant extension of Blandford St Mary. This may lead to negative effects on the local community; as highlighted by a survey carried out for Blandford St Mary illustrated the importance of the area's distinct identity.<sup>20</sup> The delivery of Option 1 however, whilst adjacent to Blandford Forum, may stimulate a perception of isolation due to the severance effect of the A350/A354.

Options 1-4 seek to include the provision of the necessary infrastructure to meet the needs of residents. This would likely contribute towards community cohesion and vitality. However, consideration is given for the outward movement of residents to the south east towards Poole and Bournemouth conurbation for work and shopping. In this context residents may have improved access to the larger centres under Options 2, 3 and 4.

In terms of the delivery of housing, including affordable housing and housing types and tenures to meet local needs, Options 1-4 all perform similarly, delivering at least 400 homes over and above commitments and allocations in the current Local Plan. This exceeds the given housing target within the Neighbourhood Plan area, and therefore all of these Options are expected to lead to significant long term positive effects against the population objective.

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<sup>19</sup> Dorset County Council (2018) Blandford Town Pupil Place Planning Statement

<sup>20</sup> Blandford St Mary Steering Group (2009) Blandford St Mary Parish Plan [online] available at:

<<https://www.dorsetforyou.gov.uk/planning-buildings-land/planning-policy/north-dorset/local-plan-part-1/submission/local-plan-evidence-base/pdfs/pdfs-market-towns-and-the-countryside/mtc022.pdf>

> last accessed 06/09/18 *In this survey over 2/3<sup>rd</sup> of residents expressed how important their separate identity was to them.*

**Table 4.6: Health and wellbeing appraisal findings: reasonable alternatives for broad locations of development**

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**Option 1:** Focus growth to the north of Blandford Forum in Area A and B to deliver the full specification

**Option 2:** Focus growth to the south west of Blandford St Mary in Areas F1 and F2 to deliver the full specification

**Option 3:** Dispersed approach: Accommodating 300 homes and a primary school in Area F1 to the south west of Blandford with employment land in Area J

**Option 4:** Dispersed approach: Accommodating 300 homes and a primary school in Area F2 to the south west of Blandford with employment land in Area J

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### Health and wellbeing

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#### Discussion of potential effects of options

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There are two medical surgeries within the Neighbourhood Plan area, both located within 400m of each other, and located to the south of Blandford Forum town centre. This limits accessibility to these facilities for residents in the wider Neighbourhood Plan area, and in terms of Options, only search area F1 of Options 2 and 3 is within 800m of the town's surgeries. All other options do not have ready access to these local health facilities. Following direct consultation with all surgeries in 2012, the Whitecliff Surgery in Blandford responded that healthcare provision is already under pressure and that a new or improved/extended surgery is required.<sup>21</sup> Large general hospitals with specialist support services and clinics are located in Dorchester, Bournemouth and Poole.

In terms of the provision of services and facilities, Options 1-4 will all deliver community infrastructure, which will contribute towards providing the identified needs for the Neighbourhood Plan area, supporting health and wellbeing.

As discussed in Table 4.5, whilst new town-wide education provision is required, the current demand for school places is predominately in the north of the town. As such the delivery of Option 1 would provide existing residents with new educational facilities in a location with the largest deficiencies. This will encourage the uptake of healthier modes of travel to school, including walking and cycling.

Options 1 – 4 all include the delivery of new green infrastructure provision. This will help ensure residents have good access to nature, open space, and recreational/leisure opportunities. This is expected to improve people's health and wellbeing through encouraging outdoor recreation and relaxation. This will lead to significant long term positive effects relation to the health and wellbeing SA theme.

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<sup>21</sup> North Dorset District Council (2016) North Dorset Local Plan Part 1 [online] available at: <<https://www.dorsetforyou.gov.uk/northdorsetsubmittedlocalplan>> last accessed 06/09/18

**Table 4.7: Economy and enterprise appraisal findings: reasonable alternatives for broad locations of development**

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**Option 1:** Focus growth to the north of Blandford Forum in Area A and B to deliver the full specification

**Option 2:** Focus growth to the south west of Blandford St Mary in Areas F1 and F2 to deliver the full specification

**Option 3:** Dispersed approach: Accommodating 300 homes and a primary school in Area F1 to the south west of Blandford with employment land in Area J

**Option 4:** Dispersed approach: Accommodating 300 homes and a primary school in Area F2 to the south west of Blandford with employment land in Area J

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### Economy and enterprise

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#### Discussion of potential effects of options

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It is recognised that the town needs to maintain a strong employment base as a key wealth creator for this part of the District. In this context, the specification for Options 1-4 includes the delivery of at least 2 ha of B1-B8 employment land. High value economic development is sought after throughout the District, and in many parts of the District there is a lack of high quality employment provision in competitive locations. There is therefore a current demand to create new high value-added jobs for the benefit of Blandford Forum.

As such, it is anticipated that the delivery of new employment will attract new investment to complement the existing industrial and business areas of the town. In relation to Options 3 and 4, it is assumed by the Steering Group and NDDC that employment land will either be allocated in Area J or be delivered through a criteria-based policy. Area J adjoins the town's main employment areas off Shaftesbury Lane and has good access to the strategic road network. As such, Options 3 and 4 will likely lead to long term significant positive effects through providing new employment land in accessible locations.

Options 1 and 2 will also provide employment to the town, however this may be less accessible to residents in the south under Option 1 and residents in the north under Option 2. Nonetheless it is recognised that there is a current demand to create new jobs which meet the changing needs of the population, and of investors. As such, Options 1 and 2 also represent a long term significant positive effect on the economy and enterprise SA theme.

Benefits are expected to extend further than the Neighbourhood Plan area, with new employment provision likely attracting those living in surrounding settlements. This may contribute towards the growth of the Blandford Forum's economy through higher footfall in the town. Those working in the town are likely to utilise the town's amenities, facilities and services, supporting local businesses that may currently have a high dependence on seasonal, evening, and/or weekend custom. In this respect Options 1-4 are equally positive, given all provide the same level of employment provision.

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**Table 4.8: Transportation appraisal findings: reasonable alternatives for broad locations of development**


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**Option 1:** Focus growth to the north of Blandford Forum in Area A and B to deliver the full specification

**Option 2:** Focus growth to the south west of Blandford St Mary in Areas F1 and F2 to deliver the full specification

**Option 3:** Dispersed approach: Accommodating 300 homes and a primary school in Area F1 to the south west of Blandford with employment land in Area J

**Option 4:** Dispersed approach: Accommodating 300 homes and a primary school in Area F2 to the south west of Blandford with employment land in Area J

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### Transportation

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#### Discussion of potential effects of options

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Options 2, 3, and 4, through promoting housing provision to the south of the town, have increased potential to facilitate the development of new housing at locations which are more integrated with existing services and facilities (including schools and GP surgeries). Option 1 seeks to deliver key infrastructure to the north where it is needed, which includes a new school. This option will also promote the re-use of the yellow bridge which spans the bypass to allow safe, sustainable access to and from school.<sup>22</sup> This will help reduce traffic flows through the town at peak times. The delivery of employment space alongside residential development through Options 1 and 2 will help reduce the need to travel and encourage walking and cycling.

Options 1 and 4 all include the delivery of 'the necessary highway infrastructure' (as identified in the Options' specification). While the specifics of this provision are not yet known, proposed enhancements to transport infrastructure will support accessibility. To a lesser extent new highway infrastructure will also be delivered through Options 3 and 4, as although a more dispersed approach to development is adopted, residents are still expected to be able to access new and existing employment in the town via sustainable transport modes.

In relation to congestion, through delivering significant housing and employment growth, Options 1-4 all have the potential to contribute to existing issues in and around Blandford Forum through increasing traffic flows. The North and North East Dorset Transport Study (2010) carried out modelling which identified that the A350 between Blandford Forum and Poole, and the A357 and A3030 between Blandford Forum and Sherborne, are closest to their design capacity at pinch points by 2026. In particular, the transport study identifies that localised congestion is expected to become a problem at pinch points on those routes with a ratio of flow to capacity nearing 80%. This occurs particularly during the AM peak hour. As such, development to the south (Options 2, 3 and 4) may exacerbate this issue, being located along the A354 which joins the A350 to the south east of Blandford St Mary. However, development to the north (Option 1) is likely to place additional pressure on the A357, being located along the A350 which joins the A357 towards Sherborne to the north west. It is however noted that infrastructure provision provided alongside new development proposed through the Options may help manage potential traffic effects on the road network, though details of these are currently unknown.

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4.25 Table 4.9 presents a summary of the findings of the appraisal of the four Options.

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<sup>22</sup> Dorset County Council (2018) Blandford Town Pupil Place Planning Statement

**Table 4.9 Summary appraisal findings: reasonable alternatives for broad locations of development**

SA Theme	Discussion of potential effects and relative merits of options	Ranking of options			
		Opt 1	Opt 2	Opt 3	Opt 4
Biodiversity and geodiversity	<p>Options 1 – 4 may have some potential to lead to adverse effects on Fontmell and Melbury Downs SAC through air pollution; which is prioritised as an issue through the SAC Site Improvement Plan (SIP) (2015). However it should be noted that the areas considered for development under these options are not within the Impact Risk Zones for SSSIs which cover the SAC. Options 1 – 4 also have the potential to lead to some limited impacts on the Blandford Camp SSSI and Bryanston SSSI.</p> <p>In terms of locally designated sites, The Milldown Nature Reserve/ Site of Nature Conservation Importance (SNCI) is located 30m south west of search area J, which forms part of Options 3 and 4.</p> <p>Options 1 – 4 are also, to some extent, located in close proximity to areas of deciduous woodland BAP Priority Habitat. This coincides with Ancient Woodland in the case of search area F1 of Options 2 and 3. Option 3 is likely to lead to most significant effects given both potential development areas proposed through the Option are adjacent to woodland, with a substantial part of this being Ancient Woodland. Option 4 is likely to lead more limited adverse effects due to the woodland potentially being affected not comprising Ancient Woodland.</p> <p>It is considered that Option 3 is likely to lead to the greatest adverse effects on biodiversity given its location adjacent to an area of Ancient Woodland and The Milldown Nature Reserve/SNCI. However, it is recognised that Options 1 – 4 all have the potential to have impacts on biodiversity assets if located inappropriately and have poor design and layout. Likewise, these four Options have the potential to promote net gains in biodiversity value through the 'necessary green infrastructure' provision included within the Options' specification. In this context, for Options 1 – 4, potential effects on biodiversity depend on elements such as the retention and incorporation of biodiversity features within development, and the extent of biodiversity net gain delivered.</p>	3	3	4	3

SA Theme	Discussion of potential effects and relative merits of options	Ranking of options			
		Opt 1	Opt 2	Opt 3	Opt 4
Climate change	<p>In terms of climate change mitigation, Options 1 – 4 will lead to an increased level of greenhouse gas emissions due to an enlarged built footprint of the Neighbourhood Plan area.</p> <p>Options located along the existing settlement boundary are expected to enable access to the town centre by sustainable modes of transport such as walking and cycling. Option 1 is located beyond the A350/A354 bypass, which acts as a barrier for walkers and cyclists. However this option seeks to deliver key infrastructure to the north where it is needed, which includes a new school. Option 1 will also promote the re-use of the yellow bridge which spans the bypass to allow safe, sustainable access to and from school. This will help reduce traffic flows through the town at peak times. The delivery of employment space alongside residential development through Options 1 and 2 will also help reduce the need to travel and encourage walking and cycling. This has the potential to limit emissions from transport through reducing the need to travel to key services.</p> <p>Options 1 – 4 all perform positively in terms of climate change adaptation through the “necessary green infrastructure” provision included within the Options’ specification. However, it is noted that the extent of green infrastructure delivery through each Option is not known at this stage.</p> <p>In relation to flood risk, Options 2, 3 and 4 are located in areas of low risk of flooding, meaning that each year this area has a chance of flooding of between 0.1% and 1%. A very small part of Option 1 is located in Flood Zone 2, which is located along the south eastern boundary. This is of medium to high risk of flooding.</p>	4	3	3	3
Landscape and historic environment: <i>Landscape</i>	<p>The development areas proposed under all of the Options are located at least partially within an AONB, with only search areas F2 and B being located outside (however still adjacent to an AONB). Option 3 is likely to lead to the most significant adverse effects on landscape character, given land to be taken forward through the Option is located entirely within the Dorset AONB. Parcel F1 falls within the Dorset AONB, which is included within land proposed for development through Options 3 and 2. It is considered that the development of Option 2 would therefore likely lead to some degree of harm to the special qualities of the AONB, impacting upon its inherent value and beauty, with the potential for significant adverse effects. Option 2 is likely to encroach on the AONB and result in undue effects on views from within, as well as on to, the AONB.</p> <p>Both Options 3 and 4 are likely to lead to major development within the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB, and lead to impacts on the setting of the Dorset AONB to the northwest of the town.</p> <p>Option 1 includes search area A which falls wholly within the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB. Development would therefore likely lead to some degree of harm to the special qualities of the AONB, impacting upon its inherent value and beauty, with the potential for significant adverse effects. Option 1 also includes search area B, which is not within, but is within the setting of the AONB to the east of the town. Development at this location would also lead to permanent impacts on views from the AONB.</p>	2	1	4	3

SA Theme	Discussion of potential effects and relative merits of options	Ranking of options			
		Opt 1	Opt 2	Opt 3	Opt 4
Landscape and historic environment: <i>Historic environment</i>	Options 1 and 4 may lead to more limited adverse effects than Options 2 and 3 on the historic environment given these Options are located further from the historic core of Blandford Forum. Search area F1 of Options 2 and 3 is located adjacent to the south eastern edge of the Blandford Forum Conservation Area and the Blandford, Blandford St Mary and Bryanston Conservation Area. The Blandford Forum Conservation Area is listed on the Heritage At Risk Register' with Historic England evaluating the conservation area as being in a 'very bad' and 'deteriorating' condition. Development through Option 2 and 3 therefore has increased potential to impact upon the fabric and setting of these sensitive areas.  In terms of Blandford St Mary, taking forward Options 2, 3 or 4 would lead to a significant extension of Blandford St Mary. This may lead to negative effects on the distinct identity and historic setting of the settlement.	1	4	4	2
Land, soil and water resources	Options 1-4 would all lead to the loss of significant areas of land classified as the best and most versatile agricultural land. Option 1 has increased potential to lead to impacts on groundwater resources, given part of the area is covered by a Zone 1 Groundwater Source Protection Zone. All other Options are not located within a Zone, 1, 2 or 3 SPZ.	4	3	3	3
Population and community	In terms of the delivery of housing, Options 1 – 4 all perform similarly, delivering at least 400 homes over and above commitments and allocations in the current Local Plan. This is expected to meet local need.  Option 1 – 4 will facilitate the provision of new community infrastructure. The delivery of Option 1 would provide existing residents to the north of the town with new infrastructure, where the need is greatest. In particular, this would reduce the need for existing children in the north of the town to travel to schools in the south. <sup>23</sup> The delivery of Options 2, 3 and 4 would provide new residents with good access to the existing services and facilities present in the south, however it is noted that DCC have confirmed all schools in the south are full. Options 2-4 would also do less to deliver the new infrastructure required in the north of the town.	1	4	4	4
Health and wellbeing	In terms of access to health facilities, only search area F1 (which would be taken forward through Option 2 and 3) is within 800m of the town's medical surgeries. All other options are not readily accessible to local health services.  In terms of the provision of services and facilities, Options 1-4 will all deliver community infrastructure, which will contribute towards providing the identified needs for the Neighbourhood Plan area, supporting health and wellbeing.  Options 1 – 4 all include the delivery of new green infrastructure provision. This will help ensure residents have good access to nature, open space, and recreational/leisure opportunities. This is expected to improve people's health and wellbeing through encouraging outdoor recreation and relaxation.	1	2	4	4

<sup>23</sup> Dorset County Council (2018) Blandford Town Pupil Place Planning Statement

SA Theme	Discussion of potential effects and relative merits of options	Ranking of options			
		Opt 1	Opt 2	Opt 3	Opt 4
Economy and enterprise	<p>The specification for Options 1 – 4 include the delivery of at least 2 ha of B1-B8 employment land.</p> <p>Options 3 and 4 will provide employment at search area J, which adjoins Blandford Forum’s main employment areas with good transport links. Options 1 and 2 will also facilitate employment provision; however this may be less accessible to residents in the southern part of the town under Option 1 and residents in the northern part of the town under Option 2.</p>	4	4	2	2
Transportation	<p>Options 2, 3, and 4, through promoting housing provision to the south of the town, have increased potential to facilitate the development of new housing at locations which are more integrated with existing services. Option 1 seeks to deliver key infrastructure to the north where it is needed, which includes a new school. This option will also promote the re-use of the yellow bridge which spans the bypass to allow safe, sustainable access to and from school.<sup>24</sup> This will help reduce traffic flows through the town at peak times. The delivery of employment space alongside residential development through Options 1 and 2 will also help reduce the need to travel and encourage walking and cycling.</p> <p>In relation to congestion, through delivering significant housing and employment growth, Options 1-4 all have the potential to contribute to existing issues in and around Blandford Forum through increasing traffic flows. It is however noted that infrastructure provision provided alongside new development proposed through the Options may help manage potential traffic effects on the road network, though details of these are currently unknown.</p>	4	4	4	4

<sup>24</sup> Dorset County Council (2018) Blandford Town Pupil Place Planning Statement

## Choice of preferred spatial option taken forward for the purposes of the Neighbourhood Plan

- 4.26 Following consideration of the findings of the SA/SEA process, consultation activities, and consideration of suitability and deliverability, the Councils' preferred spatial option to deliver the land use specification agreed with NDDC, is to allocate land defined by Option 1 to the north and north-east of Blandford. The Neighbourhood Plan allocates policies B2 (Mixed-Use Allocation) and B3 (Employment) for this purpose.
- 4.27 This option will deliver the key objective of the Neighbourhood Plan, which is to support early years and primary school provision in a location Dorset County Council (the Education Authority) have confirmed it is most needed<sup>25</sup>; the County Council having exhausted all alternative options for increasing provision to meet Blandford's critical educational needs.
- 4.28 All spatial options have been assessed in this report as having the potential for both positive and negative environmental, social and economic effects, and when taken as a whole, all options assess reasonably evenly - although in overall terms Option 1 assesses marginally better than others. The SA/SEA acknowledges growth in any direction is likely to have effects on the character of one or other AONB, although the effects on heritage assets are greatly reduced in the north of the town.
- 4.29 In reaching this conclusion it is acknowledged that some development will be allocated within the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire AONB – adjacent to the proposed Waste Recycling Centre in the recently examined Dorset Waste Plan – and could only be justified where proposals for development are balanced against the policies set out in the National Planning Policy Framework as a whole. Ultimately, the decision to proceed with Option 1 has been a matter of planning judgement taking a range of factors into account and described more fully in the Site Selection Background Paper<sup>26</sup> which accompanies the Neighbourhood Plan. The Paper includes an examination of the three NPPF paragraph 172 tests (should these be applicable), balancing these with the exceptional circumstances that prevail in Blandford and evidence that demonstrates that the need for school development is in the public interest.
- 4.30 In making this judgement an assessment has also been made that the critical delivery of a new school may only be secured by the comprehensive release of land and that community opinion will decide ultimately whether or not the neighbourhood plan is 'made'.

## Current approach in the Neighbourhood Plan and the development of Neighbourhood Plan policies

- 4.31 To support the implementation of the vision for the Neighbourhood Plan discussed in Section 2.16, the current version of the Blandford+ NP Version 2 puts forward 15 policies to guide development in the Neighbourhood Plan area. Policies have been identified in relation to the Neighbourhood Plan objectives, following extensive community consultation and evidence gathering. The policies are as follows:

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<sup>25</sup> Blandford Pupil Place Planning Statement, Updated January 2019 (DCC)

<sup>26</sup> B+NP version 2, Site Selection Background Paper Nov 2018 (Updated Jan 2019)

**Table 4.2: Blandford+ Neighbourhood Plan 2 policies**

<b>Policy B1</b>	Spatial Plan and Settlement Boundary
<b>Policy B2</b>	Mixed-Use Allocation
<b>Policy B3</b>	Employment
<b>Policy B4</b>	Secondary Education
<b>Policy B5</b>	Community Facilities
<b>Policy B6</b>	Blandford St Mary Community Hall
<b>Policy B7</b>	Health Provision
<b>Policy B8</b>	Supporting a Successful Town Centre
<b>Policy B9</b>	Green Infrastructure Network
<b>Policy B10</b>	Local Green Spaces
<b>Policy B11</b>	Managing Design in the Conservation Area: Blandford Forum
<b>Policy B12</b>	Managing Design in the Conservation Area: Blandford St Mary
<b>Policy B13</b>	Managing Design in the Conservation Area: Bryanston
<b>Policy B14</b>	The River Stour Meadows
<b>Policy B15</b>	Tourism

## 5. What are the appraisal findings at this current stage?

### Introduction

- 5.1 The aim of this chapter is to present appraisal findings in relation to the submission version of the Blandford+ NP Version 2. This chapter presents:
- An appraisal of the current version of the Blandford+ NP Version 2 under the eight SA theme headings; and
  - The overall conclusions at this current stage.

### Approach to the appraisal

- 5.2 The appraisal is structured under the eight SA themes.
- 5.3 For each theme 'significant effects' of the current version of the plan on the baseline are predicted and evaluated. Account is taken of the criteria presented within Schedule 2 of the Regulations. So, for example, account is taken of the probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of effects as far as possible. These effect 'characteristics' are described within the assessment as appropriate.
- 5.4 Every effort is made to identify / evaluate effects accurately; however, this is inherently challenging given the high level nature of the plan. The ability to predict effects accurately is also limited by understanding of the baseline and the nature of future planning applications. Because of the uncertainties involved, there is a need to exercise caution when identifying and evaluating significant effects and ensure all assumptions are explained. In many instances it is not possible to predict significant effects, but it is possible to comment on merits (or otherwise) in more general terms.

### Biodiversity

- 5.5 There are no European Designated sites present within the Neighbourhood Plan area, however Fontmell and Melbury Downs SAC lies approximately 10km north of Blandford, consisting of approximately 260 hectares of species rich chalk grasslands. To accompany the preparation of the Blandford+ NP Version 2, a Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA) was undertaken by AECOM (2018) in order to further consider the potential impacts of the Blandford+ NP Version 2 on Fontmell and Melbury Downs SAC, and a number of other European Designated sites shown to be linked to development within the Neighbourhood Plan area through a known "pathway" (see Table 5.1). The location of these European Sites can be seen at Appendix B of the HRA (2018).

**Table 5.1 European Sites included in the scope of the HRA**

<b>European Designated Site</b>	<b>Reason for Inclusion (Potential Impact Pathways Present)</b>
Fontmell and Melbury Downs SAC	Air pollution and air-borne pollutants
Dorset Heathlands SPA	Outdoor sports and leisure activities, recreational activities Human induced changes in hydraulic conditions
Isle of Portland to Studland Cliffs SAC	Outdoor sports and leisure activities, recreational activities
Rooksmoor SAC	Air pollution and air-borne pollutants
Dorset Heaths (Purbeck and Wareham and Studland Dunes SAC	Human induced changes in hydraulic conditions
Dorset Heaths SAC	Outdoor sports and leisure activities Invasive non-native species Fire and suppression
Poole Harbour SPA/Ramsar	Outdoor sports and leisure activities Air pollution and air-borne pollutants

5.6 Of the thirteen Blandford+ NP Version 2 policies, Policy B2 (Mixed-use allocation) and Policy B3 (Employment) have been screened in 'alone' with regards to atmospheric pollution in relation to Fontmell and Melbury Downs SAC, the Rooksmoor SAC and the Dorset Heath SAC. The HRA concludes that air quality data is required in order to determine the likely significant effect of the Blandford+ NP Version 2 on Fontmell and Melbury Downs. The precautionary approach has therefore been taken and it is assumed that there will be likely significant effects.

5.7 It is recommended through the HRA that the policies identified above are taken forward to the Appropriate Assessment stage for detailed assessment. As a result of the findings of the HRA, it is considered that development proposed through Policies B2 (Mixed-Use Allocation) and B3 (Employment) may lead to minor long term adverse effects in relation to the biodiversity SEA theme. The Parish Council will continue discussions with NDDC to determine the extent to which the Neighbourhood Plan may need to undertake any additional assessment work prior to the submission of the Neighbourhood Plan for examination.

5.8 In this context, it is recommended that Policy B2 (Mixed-Use Allocation) and Policy B3 (Employment) be updated to acknowledge and address the potential adverse effects on the SAC through the impact of atmospheric nitrogen deposition on the dry grasslands and scrublands on chalk or limestone. This is prioritised as an issue through the SAC Site Improvement Plan (SIP) (2015). The robustness of Policy B2 may further be improved by identifying mitigation measures to be included with the "comprehensive outline planning application" required for the mixed-use allocation.

5.9 The draft HRA and SA at this stage cannot rule out the potential impact of atmospheric pollution in relation to the Fontmell and Melbury Downs, Rooksmoor and Dorset Heath SACs. It is therefore recognised that this may have implications for Policies B2 and B3 of the Blandford+ NP Version 2 and further discussions will take place with NDDC to determine the extent to which the

Neighbourhood Plan may need to undertake any additional assessment work prior to the submission of the Neighbourhood Plan for examination.

- 5.10 In terms of nationally designated sites, there is a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) in Bryanston; designated as the only known breeding site for the Greater Horseshoe Bat in Dorset, and one of only seven breeding colony's remaining in Britain. Natural England has confirmed the significance of the colony and its supporting habitat, and as a result the Blandford+ NP Version 2 now provides additional protection for the SSSI through its policy framework. Blandford Camp SSSI is located to the east of the Neighbourhood Plan area, and while not within SSSI Impact Risk Zones (IRZ) for residential development, the mixed-use allocation proposed within Policy B2 has the potential to affect Blandford Camp SSSI (designated for its chalk downland habitat and associated species) through impacts such as air pollution (discussed above), being approximately 2.2km from the site. However, as the allocation is not within an IRZ for the SSSI, effects are likely to be limited.
- 5.11 The proposed extension of Sunrise Business Park (Policy B3 (Employment)) and new small scale commercial redevelopment within Blandford Heights Industrial Estates fall within an IRZ but these are not a type of development identified as requiring consultation with Natural England. Further to this, the employment allocations proposed through Policy B3 are not located within or near any locally designated wildlife sites.
- 5.12 The ancient woodland present within the Blandford+ NP Version 2 area is a Site of Nature Conservation Interest (SNCI) known as The Cliff, along with the ancient woodland The Hanging. The Milldown, a popular recreational area of chalk grassland is also a SNCI and Local Nature Reserve. Policy B2 (Mixed-use allocation) includes the delivery of a Green Infrastructure scheme, which seeks to *"demonstrate how existing environmental assets will be protected and enhanced, and green space will be integrated into the built environment and connected into the wider green infrastructure network."* The delivery of this scheme supports LPP1 Policy 15 (Green Infrastructure) and is reinforced by Policy B9 (Green Infrastructure Network) which requires *"development proposals that lie within or adjoining the Network to have full regard maintaining and improving the Network in the design of their layouts, landscaping schemes and public open space provisions."* This will ensure new development supports the integrity and connectivity of ecological networks in the Neighbourhood Plan area.
- 5.13 Policy B10 (Local Green Spaces) further directly protects open space through designating eleven areas throughout Blandford Forum, Blandford St Mary and Bryanston. Taking a coordinated approach to the protection and delivery of green infrastructure in the Neighbourhood Plan area will positively impact the local and wider biodiversity resource, reinforcing existing green infrastructure connections and/or creating new ones. In this context, Policy B9 (Green Infrastructure Networks) supports development proposals that will *"lead to the extension of the Green Infrastructure network"*, promoting habitats, species and ecological connections.
- 5.14 It is recognised that there is potential for the inclusion of a commitment to 'biodiversity net gain' in Policy B9 (Green Infrastructure Networks) or within Policy B2 (Mixed-Use Allocation). This would seek to improve the biodiversity value of a site through incorporating enhancements to habitats and ecological networks through new development. Securing biodiversity net gain will improve resilience to current and future pressures; as identified through the NPPF (para 170) (2018), and the Governments 25-year Environment Plan (2018).
- 5.15 At the local level, further to the direct effects of policies outlined above, positive indirect effects are anticipated for the biodiversity SA objective in relation to Policy B1 (Spatial Plan and Settlement Boundaries), B5 (Community Facilities), Policies B11-B13 (Managing Design in the Conservation Areas), B14 (Managing Design in Bryanston outside the Conservation Area), and B14 (The River Stour Meadows). These policies provide indirect support for biodiversity by offering further protection of landscape and heritage features, and natural spaces that contribute to ecological connectivity.

- 5.16 Provided that the above recommendation is incorporated into development proposals, the Blandford+ NP Version 2 is predicted to have a residual **uncertain long term minor positive effect** on biodiversity. The Blandford+ NP Version 2 will enhance biodiversity at the local level, taking a strategic approach to maintaining and enhancing networks of habitats and green infrastructure. The uncertainty of effects relates to the implementation of proposed measures, including mitigation in response to the conclusions of the HRA (2018), and overall growth proposed through the Blandford+ NP Version 2.

## Climate change

- 5.17 In terms of climate change mitigation, road transport is proportionally a significant contributor to greenhouse gas emissions in the Neighbourhood Plan area. There is a heavy reliance on the car, with high volumes of traffic utilising the A350/A354 road network. The highways infrastructure scheme proposed within Policy B2 (Mixed-Use Allocation) seeks to manage any associated traffic effects on the road network and will *"encourage and enable safe and convenient walking and cycling to community and employment areas in the town"*. This will be facilitated by the new infrastructure delivery supported through the Blandford+ NP Version 2 policies; including education, health, community and employment space. Supporting the uptake of lower carbon modes of transport and decreasing the reliance on privately owned vehicles within the Neighbourhood Plan area are significant mechanisms for reducing emissions.
- 5.18 Policy B2 (Mixed-use Allocation) and Policy B6 (Blandford Community Hall) require development proposals to include *"design features that improve energy efficiency and reduces carbon dioxide emissions"*. This will further support climate change mitigation.
- 5.19 Regarding climate change adaptation, the provisions of the NPPF (2018) will help address potential flood risk issues in the Neighbourhood Plan area, supported by Local Plan Policy 3 (Climate Change). The Neighbourhood Plan area has a functional floodplain which is principally Flood Zone 3, with the mixed-use allocation being partially located in Flood Zone 2/3, along its south eastern boundary. This is of medium to high risk of flooding. Medium risk denotes that each year this area has a chance of flooding of between 1% and 3.3%. High risk denotes that there is a greater than 3.3% chance. This area within the mixed-use allocation is also of medium to high risk of surface water flooding. In this context, Policy B2 (Mixed-Use Allocation) includes the requirement for *"a flood risk assessment and sustainable drainage strategy to demonstrate how the scheme will not increase surface water or fluvial flood risk on any adjoining land"*. This will to reduce the potential for negative effects. Surface water flooding is also addressed through policies B11 – B13 (Managing Design in the Conservation Area), requiring that proposals use *"permeable surfaces to reduce surface water flooding"*. This will contribute positively towards mitigating adverse effects.
- 5.20 Delivering enhancements to Blandford's green infrastructure networks will be a key means of helping the Neighbourhood Plan area adapt to the effects of climate change. This includes through helping to regulate extreme temperatures and regulate surface water run-off. Policy B2 (Mixed-use allocation) states that *"The green infrastructure scheme should comprise an ecology, sustainable drainage and boundary treatment strategy to demonstrate how existing environmental assets will be protected and enhanced, and green space will be integrated into the built environment and connected into the wider green infrastructure network."* Additional policies that perform positively in this regard include Policy B5 (Community Facilities), Policy B9 (Green Infrastructure) and Policy B10 (Local Green Spaces). These policies will support the ongoing development of high quality multifunctional green infrastructure networks throughout the Neighbourhood Plan area, leading to long-term minor positive effects.
- 5.21 Taking the above into consideration it is predicted that the Blandford+ NP Version 2 will lead to **uncertain minor negative effects** on climate change. While it is recognised that the proposed infrastructure delivered through Policy B2 (Mixed-use allocation) will likely address negative effects associated with the delivery of the mixed-use allocation, there remains some uncertainty in terms of flood risk within the mixed-use allocation.

## Landscape and historic environment

### Landscape

- 5.22 Blandford is located within a very sensitive landscape, at the meeting point of two Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), which encircle the town. The Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB lies to the north and east of Blandford Forum, and the Dorset AONB to the west and southwest. The Blandford+ NP Version 2 identifies that *"incursions into sensitive landscape areas is the reality and will remain so if evidenced local needs are to be met and Blandford is to retain its role as a main service centre."* The Blandford+ NP Version 2 draws on the LPP1 and the North Dorset District Wide Local Plan (1st revision 2003) which also acknowledge this challenge faced by Blandford.
- 5.23 Early consultation responses from the Cranborne Chase AONB management team states that *"development options are likely to fall foul of the basic reasons for AONB designation, which are to conserve and enhance natural beauty."* Similarly, Dorset AONB management team highlights that *"there will be some considerable difficulties in progressing the approach that has been outlined, primarily due to the provisions of National Planning Policy in relation to AONBs."* In this context, the NPPF (para. 172, 2018) states that *"Great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, which have the highest status of protection."* Furthermore, *"The scale and extent of development within these designated areas should be limited. Planning permission should be refused for major development other than in exceptional circumstances, and where it can be demonstrated that the development is in the public interest."*
- 5.24 The Blandford+ NP Version 2 identifies that there is an urgent requirement for a new two form entry primary school in the north of the town, which is critical to the ability of Dorset County Council to fulfil its statutory obligation of providing school places in Blandford, addressing the existing infrastructure weaknesses to the north of the town. As such the plan states that the incursion of the school into the Cranborne Chase AONB is justified *"...in accordance with paragraph 172 of the NPPF"*. The preferred approach taken by the Blandford+ NP Version 2 allocates land for mixed-use development to the north and northeast of Blandford through policies B2 (Mixed-Use Allocation) and B3 (Employment). The proposed allocation is located partially within Cranborne Chase AONB, and partially within its setting. Development therefore has the potential to impact upon the special qualities of the AONB, alter views of the AONB and also detract from its character. The Council are aware that this approach has been challenged by both AONBs, and an opinion on the matters raised has been prepared by UVE CIC (2018).
- 5.25 Policy B2 (Mixed-Use Allocation) and B3 (Employment) outline detailed landscape mitigation requirements for development proposals, which include providing a comprehensive landscape scheme which *"demonstrates how any effects on the AONB are mitigated"*. This will include a dark skies strategy to demonstrate how light spill into the AONB will be minimised (identified by the Dark Skies and Light Pollution Study undertaken for the Cranborne Chase AONB (2007)), as well as a provision which seeks to ensure that the development at the Sunrise Business Park's northern boundary supports the setting of the AONB. These provisions will help reduce adverse effects on the landscape character of the AONB and its setting.
- 5.26 It is noted that there is no individual policy relating to the landscape and/or the Cranborne Chase/Dorset AONB. Given the significance of the AONB designation at a national scale, and that they enclose the Neighbourhood Plan area, a tailored policy would likely provide additional protection for the AONB. This policy may include protection for the landscape from unsuitable development, and may make specific reference to important views and vistas which are valued locally. However, it is also noted that, given the national policy provisions for the AONB, and the provisions of the AONB Management Plans, landscape character in the AONB will nonetheless be provided with a significant degree of protection, particularly when combined with the other policies of the Blandford+ NP Version 2.

- 5.27 Numerous Blandford+ NP Version 2 policies seek to provide a level of protection to the special landscape areas, primarily through supporting high quality design and layout. Where possible, Policy B6 (Blandford St Mary Community Hall), Policy B9 (Green Infrastructure Network), Policies 11-13 (Managing Design in the Conservation Area), and Policy B14 (The River Stour Meadows) all seek to maintain and enhance the visual qualities of the AONBs and their setting. In this context, Policy B12 requires new development to demonstrate *“the retention and protection of trees, front gardens, boundary hedges and other open areas which contribute to the character or appearance of the area”*. This will positively protect the valued landscapes and their setting.
- 5.28 Overall however, given the permanence of the changes to landscape character within the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB resulting from Neighbourhood Plan allocations, potential impacts in relation to the landscape element of this SA theme have the potential to be significant.

## Historic environment

- 5.29 Townscape and the integrity of the historic environment are also addressed through the Blandford+ NP Version 2 policies that support high quality design and layout. Through supporting the ongoing protection and enhancement of high quality multifunctional green infrastructure networks in the Neighbourhood Plan area, Policy B9 (Green Infrastructure) will protect and enhance landscape character and the setting of the historic environment, and support enhancements to the public realm. This will likely lead to minor long term positive effects in relation to the landscape and historic environment SA theme.
- 5.30 The Blandford+ NP Version 2 area contains three Conservation Areas, the protection of which is provided through policies B11 (Managing Design in the Conservation Area: Blandford Forum), B12 (Managing Design in the Conservation Area: Blandford St Mary) and B13 (Managing Design in the Conservation Area: Bryanston). Policies B11- B13 seek to preserve local distinctiveness, encouraging high quality new development which maintains the character and appearance of the Conservation Areas. Policy B11 requires that new development demonstrate *“consistently high standard of design and detailing reflecting the scale and character or appearance of the area, including the layout of the streets, development patterns, burgage plots, building lines and building form”*. It is recommended that Policy B2 (Mixed-Use Allocation) be updated to include similar requirements. The consideration of locally valued aspects of the historic environment within Policy B2 would support conservation and enhancement in the long term, with the potential for significant positive effects.
- 5.31 Policy B11 further requires that development proposals are carried out *“in line with the recommendations of the Character Area Appraisal”* prepared for the Conservation Area. This will provide an additional level of protection and enhancement of the heritage assets.
- 5.32 Overall it is considered that the Blandford+ NP Version 2 will lead to **long term adverse effects** in relation to the landscape and historic environment SA theme. This is given the mixed-use development proposed within the Cranborne Chase AONB and its setting. It is noted that some uncertain effects remain in terms of mitigation to be delivered through the mixed-use allocation via the planning process. This has the potential to reduce residual adverse effects on landscape character in the AONB.

## Land, soil and water resources

- 5.33 The LPP1 establishes policies for the delivery of at least 1200 dwellings in Blandford in the period 2011 – 2031 and acknowledges that in addition to brownfield sites, delivery would require the additional release of ‘greenfield’ land given that options were limited due to the constrained nature of the town. This complies with Paragraph 117 of the NPPF (2018) which states that a *“clear strategy should be made for accommodating objectively assessed needs, in a way that makes as much use as possible of previously-developed or ‘brownfield’ land”*. While the priority of brownfield land will lead to long term positive effects in terms of the local land

resource, the loss of greenfield land nonetheless is expected to lead to long term negative effects.

- 5.34 In terms of best and most versatile agricultural land, there is a need to rely on the Pre-1988 Agricultural Land Classification to provide an indication of the land classification for the mixed-use allocation (Policy B2). The Pre-1988 classification identifies that the mixed-use allocation is identified as Grade 2, Grade 3 and some Grade 4 agricultural land. Grade 2 and Grade 3a is best and most versatile land within the NPPF. As such it is considered likely that the development of the mixed-use allocation would lead to loss of areas of this valuable resource. This would lead to minor long term negative effects in terms of the land, soil and water SA theme.
- 5.35 Policy B2 (Mixed-use Allocation) and Policy B6 (Blandford Community Hall) encourage buildings which will be energy efficient. This will further help limit resource use in the Blandford+ NP Version 2 area.
- 5.36 The Blandford+ NP Version 2's focus on facilitating enhancements to the Green Infrastructure Network will support the quality of land and water resources. This will promote the ability of natural processes to support soil and water quality. Key policies in this regard includes Policy B2 (Mixed-Use Allocation), Policy B9 (Green Infrastructure Network) and Policy B10 (Local Green Space).
- 5.37 Overall the Blandford+ NP Version 2 is predicted to have a **long term significant negative effect** in relation to this SA theme due to the permanent loss of best and most versatile agricultural land.

## Population and community

- 5.38 Both NDDC and the Councils are keen to see the growth of Blandford to be plan-led and for the town to contribute positively to the District's objectively assessed needs in the absence of NDDC being able to demonstrate a 5-year housing land supply. The sustainable development strategy for Blandford as defined by Policy 16 of the LPP1 seeks to ensure that Blandford's role as the main service centre in the southern part of the district is maintained. To conform with the LPP1, Policy B2 (Mixed-Use Allocation) and Policy B3 (Employment) of the Blandford+ NP Version 2 allocate land for:
- at least 400 homes over and above commitments and Local Plan allocations;
  - a 2FE primary school;
  - at least 2Ha of B1-B8 employment land; and
  - the delivery of the necessary highway and green infrastructure.
- 5.39 This mixed-use allocation will support local housing needs, employment and critical social infrastructure needs (particularly primary school place provision and GP services), delivering significant long term positive effects in relation to the population and community SA theme.
- 5.40 Policy B2 (Mixed-Use Allocation) seeks to deliver 400 homes and promotes a mix of housing types and tenures, including *"open market, entry level, care and self-build homes"*. This provision will significantly increase the contribution of the town to meet the additional local housing needs of North Dorset in the period to 2036. Additionally, this will enable the delivery of a number of other vital land uses and infrastructure for the town, particularly targeting the social infrastructure deficit; including access to schools, services and facilities.
- 5.41 In this context, Policy B2 (Mixed-Use Allocation) includes the provision of a new two form entry primary school, with space to expand to a three-form entry primary school, and integrated Early Years provision. This is critical to the ability of DCC to fulfil its statutory obligation of providing school places in Blandford, addressing the existing infrastructure weaknesses to the north of

the town.<sup>27</sup> Policy B4 (Secondary Education) further seeks to improve the educational offer of the town, supporting proposals to upgrade or expand the Blandford School. This would meet the demand for secondary school places in the town over the Plan Period and be consistent with Policy 14 of the LPP1.

- 5.42 The delivery of services, facilities and infrastructure through the Blandford+ NP Version 2 will promote the vitality of the town and provide opportunity for the Neighbourhood Plan area to thrive. Positive effects in this regard are also predicted to result from several other Blandford+ NP Version 2 policies; including Policy B5 (Community Facilities), Policy B6 (Blandford St Mary Community Hall), Policy B7 (Health Provision) and Policy B8 (Supporting a Successful Town Centre). The Blandford+ NP Version 2 is expected to lead to long term positive effects for this SA theme by improving the provision, accessibility, quality and function of key services and facilities, including education, healthcare, retail and leisure.
- 5.43 The Blandford+ NP Version 2 further seeks to protect the quality of the town through Policy B9 (Green Infrastructure Network) and B10 (Local Green Spaces) which designates a series of Local Green Spaces in accordance with paragraphs 76-77 of the NPPF (2018) and with LPP1 Policy 15 (Green Infrastructure). The protection and enhancement of the natural environment will provide long term support for the identity of the town, its local character and setting, providing positive effects for local communities.
- 5.44 Overall, the Blandford+ NP Version 2 is predicted to have a **long term significant positive effect** on the population and community SA theme. This is due to the housing needs within the Blandford+ NP Version 2 area being met, and the type of housing being developed supporting the various needs of the local community. Further to this the Blandford+ NP Version 2 seeks to improve local service provision and accessibility, responding to identified issues to the north of the town.

## Health and wellbeing

- 5.45 The health and wellbeing of residents will be supported by the Blandford+ NP Version 2 policies which support a high quality public realm, local distinctiveness and landscape/townscape character. In this context, Policy B10 (Local Green Spaces) seeks to protect and enhance the Neighbourhood Plan area's characteristic green spaces, designating eleven Local Green Spaces in accordance with paragraphs 76-77 of the NPPF (2018) and with LPP1 Policy 15 (Green Infrastructure).
- 5.46 Access to public open space will be further promoted through the Green Infrastructure Scheme proposed within the mixed-use allocation (Policy B2). Policy B2 identifies that "*green space will be integrated into the built environment and connected into the wider green infrastructure network. This should include the delivery of public open space proposals on both the land to the North and North East including informal open spaces and natural and equipped children's play space*". Access for residents to open space and recreation is further supported by Policy B9 (Green Infrastructure Network), Policy B8 (Supporting a Successful Town Centre), Policy B6 (Blandford St Mary Community Hall) and Policy B5 (Community Facilities). These policies seek to utilise and enhance Blandford's sports clubs, pavilions, and open green spaces, which provide high quality facilities and opportunities across all age groups. This will likely improve mental and physical health, and enhance social engagement between residents.
- 5.47 Policy B5 (Blandford St Mary Community Hall) seeks to deliver a new Community Hall that supports a range of community users. This includes "*societies and other visiting providers of services for health and wellbeing, and individuals or organised groups meeting for study, research or advice.*" Delivering new/improved community facilities through Policy B5 (and the policies discussed above) will lead to significant long term positive effects in terms of health and wellbeing for the community.

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<sup>27</sup> Dorset District Council (2018) Blandford Town Pupil Place Planning Statement

- 5.48 The Blandford+ NP Version 2 is likely to directly improve residents' health through Policy B7 (Health Provision) which supports proposals to expand the existing Whitecliff Surgery. In line with Policy B7 *"all new residential development proposals will only be permitted where they provide or improve essential GP facilities and services required to serve the scale of development proposed."* This will improve accessibility for residents to GP facilities, leading to improved health and reducing pressure on existing healthcare services (namely Whitecliff Surgery and Blandford Community Hospital).
- 5.49 Improved access to local facilities, services, and employment will likely result in the uptake of sustainable travel (walking/cycling). This is promoted through many of the Blandford+ NP Version 2 policies, particularly B2 (Mixed-Use Allocation) and B3 (Employment) and will likely encourage residents to travel by foot for shorter journeys, reducing reliance on the private car. This is expected to enhance the physical and mental health of residents and improve overall quality of life.
- 5.50 The Blandford+ NP Version 2 is predicted to lead to **significant long term positive effects** for this SA theme, mainly through supporting new community and health provisions, and also through green infrastructure enhancements and protected access to open spaces.

## Economy and enterprise

- 5.51 The LPP1 identifies Blandford as the main service centre for the south of the District. In this context, the Blandford+ NP Version 2 seeks to protect and enhance the towns range of shops and other key town centre uses; strengthening the offer of national businesses represented as well as independent traders. Policy B8 (Supporting a Successful Town Centre) complements LPP1 Policy 12 by defining the Town Centre Area and a Primary Shopping Frontage of Blandford Forum. Policy B8 extends the Primary Shopping Area to reflect the development of the town, establishing a *"positive strategy for the growth of the town centre."* Further to this Policy B8 identifies the uses that will be permitted in the town centre, setting guidelines for the economic development of the town centre as evidenced in the Joint Retail and Commercial Leisure Study (2018).<sup>28</sup>
- 5.52 Policy B8 (Supporting a Successful Town Centre) is underpinned by Policy B3 (Employment) which seeks to deliver up to 5 ha of employment land; the specification agreed with NDDC. Policy B3 supports business (B1-B8) use proposals for an extension of Sunrise Business Park, and proposals for new small-scale redevelopment within Blandford Heights Industrial Estate. The redevelopment of sites to provide commercial premises is anticipated to better support the local economy, providing flexible workspace to meet local needs.
- 5.53 Policy B3 (Employment) also seeks to protect existing employment sites, resisting development proposals that will *"result in the loss of employment floorspace"*. This will ensure the longevity of local businesses and provide a wide range of jobs, contributing positively towards meeting the current demand for units as identified by the LPP1 and the wider evidence base.
- 5.54 The delivery of new employment opportunities alongside the mixed-use allocation (Policy B3) will positively link the spatial provision of new homes and jobs through promoting greater self-containment, reducing the need for residents to commute to find suitable employment; and guiding investment to locations where it will have maximum benefit. This will result in significant long term positive effects on the economy and enterprise SA theme, supporting the strength of the town as a main service centre.
- 5.55 The importance of the visitor economy is highlighted within Policy B15 (Tourism) which seeks to resist proposals that will result in the loss of an existing tourist use. The Blandford+ NP Version 2 recognises the existing tourism accommodation sites in the area that currently successfully

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<sup>28</sup> Carter Jonas (2018) Joint Retail and Commercial Leisure Study [online] available at: <https://www.dorsetforyou.gov.uk/planning-buildings-land/planning-policy/west-dorset-and-weymouth-portland/local-plan-review/pdf/evidence/joint-retail-and-commercial-leisure-study-main-report.PDF> last accessed 25/10/18

contribute to local tourism, and therefore Policy B15 (Tourism) supports the “*expansion of any existing tourist use*”. This will support the protection of, and increase in, diverse employment opportunities to further facilitate economic activity, and growth, in the Neighbourhood Plan area.

- 5.56 Overall, the Blandford+ NP Version 2 is predicted to lead to **significant long term positive effects** for this SA theme. This is mainly through the provision of new employment space, and the protection of existing employment space, which will enable Blandford’s economy to grow in a way which supports the role and function of the town.

## Transportation

- 5.57 Policy B2 (Mixed-Use Allocation) of the Blandford+ NP Version 2 seeks to deliver a comprehensive highways infrastructure scheme to support housing delivery and respond to Blandford’s existing needs. In this context, infrastructure is targeted to the north of the settlement where it is significantly lacking, including a new school, which will help reduce traffic flows through the town at peak times. The delivery of employment space alongside residential development through Policy B3 (Employment) will also help reduce the need to travel, reducing levels of out-commuting and encouraging the uptake of sustainable travel (walking/cycling). In line with Policy B2 (Mixed-Use Allocation) the proposed infrastructure scheme will be required to “*manage its traffic effects on the road network and [demonstrate] how it will encourage and enable safe and convenient walking and cycling to community facilities and employment areas in the town.*” This will help improve access throughout the town, reduce safety concerns, and reduce any adverse effects that may result from increased vehicles within the town centre.
- 5.58 In accordance with Policy B2 (Mixed-Use Allocation) the highways scheme should include proposals that will “*enable improvements to the existing bus services to serve the proposals and connecting to the town centre, Blandford School, the Sunrise Business Park, Glenmore Industrial Estate and Blandford Heights Industrial Estate*”. Capitalising on opportunities to connect the mixed-use development with the existing sustainable transport networks will increase accessibility for residents and likely reduce the reliance on the car. This is reiterated through Policy B8 (Supporting a Successful Town Centre) which seeks to increase pedestrian footfall in the town centre through the delivery of public realm enhancements. Additional policies that perform positively in this regard include Policy B5 (Community Facilities), Policy B9 (Green Infrastructure) and Policy B10 (Local Green Spaces). These policies will support the ongoing development of high quality multifunctional green infrastructure networks throughout the Neighbourhood Plan area; which will in turn encourage the uptake of sustainable travel, promoting walking and cycling for short journeys to the town’s amenities and facilities. There is the potential for long term positive effects in this respect.
- 5.59 Overall the Blandford+ NP Version 2 is predicted to lead to **uncertain minor long term positive effects** in terms of the transportation SA theme. This is due to the key service provision proposed (schools, employment, health services) improving accessibility and encouraging sustainable travel, and the benefits likely to be provided by the highways infrastructure scheme. Effects are uncertain at this stage and will be dependent on the phasing of development and associated infrastructure delivery.

## Cumulative effects

- 5.60 Cumulative effects occur from the combined impacts of policies and proposals on specific areas or sensitive receptors.
- 5.61 In the context of SA/SEA, cumulative effects can arise as a result of the in-combination and synergistic effects of a plan’s policies and proposals. Comprising ‘intra-plan’ effects, these

interactions have been discussed above in sections 5.5 to 5.60 which evaluate the in-combination and synergistic<sup>29</sup> effects of the various policies of the Neighbourhood Plan

- 5.62 Cumulative effects can also result from the combined impacts of a plan with impacts of another plan, or the 'inter-plan' effects. These can affect the same receptor, resulting in in-combination or synergistic effects. The Blandford+ NP Version 2 therefore has the potential to combine with other planned or on-going activities in the vicinity of the town to result in cumulative effects.
- 5.63 The Neighbourhood Plan has been prepared in close conjunction with North Dorset District Council and the development of the emerging Local Plan. As such, significant in-combination effects are not anticipated between the Blandford+ NP Version 2 and the provisions of the North Dorset Local Plan. This is due to the Neighbourhood Plan taking forward emerging Local Plan proposals in the Neighbourhood Plan area, and the Neighbourhood Plan being in general conformity with the existing North Dorset Local Plan Part 1.
- 5.64 Whilst the geographic scope of the Neighbourhood Plan only addresses the area covered by the areas administrated by Blandford Forum Town Council, Blandford St Mary Parish Council and Bryanston Parish Councils, the in-combination effects of new development proposed through the adopted or emerging Neighbourhood Plans adjoining or close proximity to the Neighbourhood Plan have the potential to lead to cumulative effects. In this context only Pimperne are preparing a Neighbourhood Plan in the immediate vicinity of Blandford.
- 5.65 Otherwise, the combination of Neighbourhood Plan proposals and other proposals and activities being taken forward in the wider area has the potential to lead to cumulative effects. Examples include:
- Proposed road improvement schemes, such as capacity enhancements or changes in traffic flows on the A350.
  - Proposals to increase visitor numbers in the AONBs.
  - Activities designed to enhance sub-regional green infrastructure networks.
- 5.66 In this context, the potential effects (both positive and negative) which may occur as a result of the in-combination effects of the Neighbourhood Plan and other plans and proposals in the area include the following:
- Incremental erosion of the setting of the two AONBs as a result of the need to deliver objectively assessed need sub-regionally, and associated cumulative impacts on landscape character from new development. This includes views from the AONBs. However the Neighbourhood Plan provides a strong context for protecting and enhancing the landscape character of the AONBs.
  - Increases in traffic flows and congestion from the in-combination effects of development and capacity enhancements, with potential impacts on air and noise quality and landscape character. However the in-combination effects of proposals on enhancing public transport and pedestrian and cycle infrastructure may help limit potential negative effects and secure positive effects in this regard.
  - Cumulative impacts on ecological networks. This is from the in-combination effects of new development and associated infrastructure on habitats and biodiversity corridors. However, enhancements to green infrastructure provision facilitated through Neighbourhood Plan and Local Plan proposals and other projects in the area, as well as an increased focus on biodiversity net gain have significant potential to support local and sub-regional ecological networks.
  - Changes in land uses resulting from the UK leaving the European Union, including associated with the replacement of schemes such the Common Agricultural Policy with new agricultural subsidy regimes.

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<sup>29</sup> Synergistic effects arise between two or more factors to produces an effect greater than the sum of their individual effects.

- Improvements to accessibility resulting from the in-combination effects of enhancements to public transport and walking and cycling networks.
- Impacts on flood risk from the in-combination effects of new development, including relating to surface water and fluvial flooding. However, the provisions of the NPPF and measures and policy approaches implemented through the relevant plans and proposals will limit the significance of effects.

5.67 As highlighted above, for many potential cumulative effects, the policy approaches proposed by the Neighbourhood Plan and the adopted/emerging Local Plan will help reduce the significance of these in-combination impacts. However monitoring for the wider Local Plan will be a key means of ensuring that unforeseen adverse environmental effects are highlighted, and remedial action can be taken where adverse environmental effects arise.

## Conclusions at this current stage

5.68 The assessment has concluded that the current version of the Blandford+ NP Version 2 is likely to lead to significant positive effects in relation to the 'population and community', 'health and wellbeing' and 'economy and enterprise' SA themes. This is due to the housing, employment and associated infrastructure allocated through policies B2 (Mixed-Use Allocation) and B3 (Employment) addressing the identified needs of town and supporting sustainable growth. The Blandford+ NP Version 2 will improve vital infrastructure and deliver a range of housing types and tenure, enhancing the quality of life of residents and meeting local needs. It will support accessibility for residents and visitors, increasing self-containment and therefore improving the uptake of sustainable travel. This will also be facilitated through the protection and enhancement of open space and green infrastructure, leading to minor positive effects on the transportation and biodiversity SA themes.

5.69 The Blandford+ NP Version 2 seeks to protect the surrounding landscape and local heritage; however, there is potential for significant long term negative effects in relation to the landscape and historic environment SA theme given the proposed development within and in close proximity to Cranborne Chase AONB. Negative effects are also anticipated in relation to the land, soil and water SA theme due to the permanent loss of best and most versatile agricultural land, and there are uncertain negative effects in terms of the climate change SA theme on account of flood risk.

## 6. Monitoring programme for the SA

### Monitoring in SA

6.1 The SEA Directive states that '*member states shall monitor the significant environmental effects of the implementation of plans and programmes....in order, inter alia, to identify at an early stage unforeseen adverse effects, and to be able to undertake appropriate remedial action*' (Article 10.1). In addition, the Environmental Report (or SA Report) should provide information on a '*description of the measures envisaged concerning monitoring*' (Annex I (i)). To limit the potential burdens related to monitoring associated with the SA process, monitoring should be undertaken smartly. For this reason, the proposed monitoring framework should focus on those aspects of the environment that are likely to be negatively impacted upon, where the impact is uncertain or where particular opportunities for improvement might arise.

### Proposed monitoring programme

6.2 Table 6.1 outlines suggestions for a monitoring programme for measuring the Blandford+ NP Version 2's implementation in relation to the areas where the SA has identified significant negative effects or significant opportunities for an improvement in sustainability performance to arise. It also seeks to monitor where uncertainties relating to the appraisal findings arose and suggests where monitoring is required to help ensure that the benefits of the Neighbourhood Plan are achieved through the planning process.

6.3 The purpose of monitoring is to measure the significant sustainability effects of a plan, as well as to measure success against the plan's objectives. It is therefore beneficial if the monitoring strategy builds on monitoring systems which are already in place. To this end, the indicators of progress chosen for the SA require data that is already being routinely collected at a District level by NDDC and its partner organisations, or whose collection is already planned. It should also be noted that monitoring can provide useful information for future plans and programmes, including a forthcoming review of the Neighbourhood Plan.

**Table 6.1 Proposed monitoring programme for the SA of the Blandford+ NP Version 2**

<i>Area to be monitored</i>	<i>Indicator</i>	<i>Data source</i>	<i>Frequency of monitoring</i>
Use of land	Percentage of development taking place on previously developed land	North Dorset District Council	Annual
Loss of the best and most versatile agricultural land	Number of hectares of land classified as Grade 1, 2 or 3a land sterilised by new development	North Dorset District Council	Annual
Effect of housing, employment and infrastructure provision on greenhouse gas emissions.	Carbon footprint of the Neighbourhood Plan area	North Dorset District Council	Annual
Effects on landscape and townscape character	Percentage of new developments which are informed by detailed characterisation studies	North Dorset District Council	Annual
Employment in emerging sectors of Blandford Forum's economy	Number of people employed in emerging economic sectors	North Dorset District Council	Annual
Car use	Proportion of people travelling to work by public transport or walking and cycling	North Dorset District Council	Annual

## 7. What are the next steps?

- 7.1 This SA Report accompanies the submission version of the Blandford+ NP Version 2 for subsequent Independent Examination.
- 7.2 At Independent Examination, the Neighbourhood Plan will be considered in terms of whether it meets the Basic Conditions for Neighbourhood Plans and is in general conformity with the Local Plan.
- 7.3 If the subsequent Independent Examination is favourable, the Blandford+ NP Version 2 will be subject to a referendum, organised by North Dorset District Council. If more than 50% of those who vote agree with the Neighbourhood Plan, then it will be 'made'. Once made, the Blandford+ NP Version 2 will become part of the Development Plan for the Blandford+ area.

# Appendix A Context review and baseline

## Biodiversity

### Context review

At the European level, the EU Biodiversity Strategy was adopted in May 2011 in order to deliver an established new Europe-wide target to 'halt the loss of biodiversity and the degradation of ecosystem services in the EU by 2020'.

Key messages from the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) include:

- Contribute to the Government's commitment to halt the overall decline in biodiversity by minimising impacts and achieving net gains in biodiversity wherever possible.
- Promote the 'preservation, restoration and re-creation of priority habitats, ecological networks' and the 'protection and recovery of priority species'. Plan for biodiversity at a landscape-scale across Local Authority boundaries.
- Set criteria based policies for the protection of internationally, nationally and locally designated sites, giving weight to their importance not just individually but as a part of a wider ecological network.
- Take account of the effects of climate change in the long term. Adopt proactive strategies to adaptation and manage risks through adaptation measures including green infrastructure (i.e. 'A network of multi-functional green space, urban and rural, which is capable of delivering a wide range of environmental and quality of life benefits for local communities').
- Plan positively for 'green infrastructure' as part of planning for 'ecological networks'.
- High quality open spaces should be protected, or their loss mitigated, unless a lack of need is established.

Goal 3 'Thriving plants and wildlife' and the policies contained within Chapter 2 'Recovering nature and enhancing the beauty of landscapes' and Chapter 5 'Securing clean, productive and biologically diverse seas and oceans' within the Government's 'A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment' directly relates to the Biodiversity SA theme.

The Natural Environment White Paper (NEWP) sets out the importance of a healthy, functioning natural environment to sustained economic growth, prospering communities and personal well-being. It was in part a response to the UK's failure to halt and reverse the decline in biodiversity by 2010 and it signalled a move away from the traditional approach of protecting biodiversity in nature reserves to adopting a landscape approach to protecting and enhancing biodiversity. The NEWP also aims to create a green economy in which economic growth and the health of our natural resources sustain each other and markets, business and Government better reflect the value of nature. It includes commitments to:

- Halt biodiversity loss, support functioning ecosystems and establish coherent ecological networks by 2020;
- Establish a new voluntary approach to biodiversity offsetting to be tested in pilot areas;
- Enable partnerships of Local Authorities, local communities and landowners, the private sector and conservation organisations to establish new Nature Improvement Areas; and
- Address barriers to using green infrastructure to promote sustainable growth.

Reflecting the commitments within the Natural Environment White Paper and the EU Biodiversity Strategy, 'Biodiversity 2020: A strategy for England's wildlife and ecosystem services' aims to 'halt overall biodiversity loss, support healthy well-functioning ecosystems and establish coherent ecological networks, with more and better places for nature for the benefit of wildlife and people'.

The recently published 25 Year Environment Plan sets out the Government's environmental plan of action over the next quarter century, in the context of Brexit. The Plan aims to tackle the growing problems of waste and soil degradation, improving social justice through tackling pollution and promoting the mental and physical health benefits of the natural world. It also sets out how the Government will address the effects of climate change. These aims are supported by a range of policies which are focused on the following six key areas:

- Using and managing land sustainably
- Recovering nature and enhancing the beauty of landscapes
- Connecting people with the environment to improve health and wellbeing
- Increasing resource efficiency, and reducing pollution and waste
- Securing clean, productive and biologically diverse seas and oceans
- Protecting and improving the global environment

At the regional level, the South West Nature Map (2018) identifies the best areas in the region (and therefore the District) to conserve, create and connect wildlife habitats at landscape scale. The Map should be used at the local level to move from a site-based to a wider landscape scale approach to wildlife protection and enhancement, with spatial planning policies designed to manage future development in a way which links, buffers and re-creates wildlife habitats, rather than further fragmenting them.

The Dorset Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (2003) and subsequent Mid-Term Review Strategy (2010) seeks to ensure that the national targets for species and habitats are met at the local level. It states that although Dorset is one of the richest Counties for wildlife in England, nevertheless it has seen widespread declines in semi natural habitats and populations of rare and common species. The need to reverse this fragmentation is made more urgent by predicted climate change. The UK Biodiversity Strategy lists 45 priority habitats for action; of these 32 occur in Dorset and six in North Dorset.

The Dorset Local Geodiversity Action Plan (2005) is concerned with the geology, geomorphology, soils and landscapes of Dorset. Geodiversity is important to biodiversity but also the local character and the landscape of the area. The strategy aims to conserve and enhance the geological resource and increase appreciation and understanding of the geological heritage of the area.

The NDDC Natural Environment and Climate Change Background Paper (2013) provides a general overview of issues relevant to the District's Natural Environment and Climate Change. It sets out the international, national and more local policy framework, relevant pieces of evidence gathered and the results of consultation in relation to the Natural Environment and Climate Change.

The following North Dorset District-Wide Local Plan (2003) saved policies and adopted NDLPP1 (2016) policies are relevant to the Biodiversity SA theme:

- Policy 4 (The Natural Environment)
- Policy 15 (Green Infrastructure)
- Policy 24 (Design)
- Policy 25 (Amenity)
- Policy 27 (Retention of Community Facilities)
- Saved policy 1.34 (International Wildlife Sites)

- Saved policy 1.35 (National Wildlife Sites)
- Saved policy 1.36 (SNCIs)
- Saved policy 1.38 (Protected Species and Habitats)
- Saved policy 1.41 (Amenity Tree Planting)
- Saved policy 4.5 (The Use of Redundant Railway Lines)

## Summary of current baseline

### European designated sites

#### **Fontmell and Melbury Downs Special Area of Conservation (SAC)**

SACs are protected sites that are designated under the EC Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) and by the UK government<sup>30</sup>. Fontmell and Melbury Downs (263.09 ha) lies approximately 10 km north of Blandford consisting of semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates.<sup>31</sup>

This inland site supports consistently large populations of early gentian *Gentianella anglica*, numbering many thousands of plants. The site also includes large areas of species-rich chalk grassland and is one of three sites selected in the centre of the main range of the species.<sup>32</sup>

### Nationally designated sites

#### **Ancient woodland**

Ancient woodland takes hundreds of years to establish and is important for its:

- wildlife (which include rare and threatened species)
- soils
- recreational value
- cultural, historical and landscape value

It is any area that's been wooded continuously since at least 1600 AD. It includes:

- ancient semi-natural woodland mainly made up of trees and shrubs native to the site, usually arising from natural regeneration; and
- plantations on ancient woodland sites - replanted with conifer and broadleaved trees that retain ancient woodland features, such as undisturbed soil, ground flora and fungi.

Ancient Woodland present within the Neighbourhood Plan area includes:

- Old Park Wood (5.58ha) to the north west of the Neighbourhood Plan area – Ancient Replanted Woodland
- Broadley Wood (51.8ha) to the north west of the Neighbourhood Plan area – Ancient Replanted Woodland
- Little Wood (13.9ha) to the south west – Ancient & Semi-Natural Woodland
- 3.4ha of Ancient & Semi Natural Woodland along the northern boundary of the Neighbourhood Plan area.
- 28.7ha of Ancient & Semi Natural Woodland through the centre of the Neighbourhood Plan area, directly east of Bryanston. This coincides with the Cliff SNCI, later discussed.

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<sup>30</sup> Joint Nature Conservation Committee (no date): Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) [online] available at: <<http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/page-23>> last accessed [09/06/17]

<sup>31</sup> Joint Nature Conservation Committee (no date): Fontmell and Melbury Downs [online] available at: <<http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/ProtectedSites/SACselection/sac.asp?EUCode=UK0012550>>

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

## **Bryanston Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)**

Bryanston SSSI is a 0.3 ha site in Bryanston, relatively central to the Neighbourhood Plan area. The site was designated in 1986 under Section 28 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 for its use as breeding site for the greater horseshoe bat *Rhinolophus ferrum-equinum*.

The large roof space in the derelict 18th century kitchens at Bryanston is the only known breeding site in Dorset and one of only 7 remaining in Britain. In addition to the building being used for breeding in summer, juveniles use the old chimneys and a tunnel during the autumn and winter. The estimated national population of this species is some 2-3,000 animals, confined to south-west England and west Wales.<sup>33</sup>

## **Locally designated sites**

### **Sites of Nature Conservation Interest**

Sites of Nature Conservation (SNCl)s are locally important wildlife sites designated by the Dorset Wildlife Trust in partnership with local authorities for the conservation of locally and nationally threatened species.

The Milldown, Stour Meadows and The Cliff SNCl are located within the Neighbourhood Plan area. The former is an SNCl designated for its area of woodland and species rich grassland; Stour Meadows for its mixture of riverside vegetation, grassland, mature trees and a wildlife pond with numerous dragonflies; and, the latter Ancient Woodland and habitat for protected Greater Horseshoe Bats.

### **BAP Priority Habitats**

There are a number of Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) Habitats located within the Neighbourhood Plan area. These are predominantly located to the north and west, and there are many habitats focused around Bryanston. BAP habitats found here include Coastal and Floodplain Grazing Marsh, Deciduous Woodland and Traditional Orchard.

### **The River Stour**

The River Stour, whilst not designated, notably supports valuable riparian flora and invertebrate fauna, migratory fish species and otters.

### **Green areas**

The Green Space Audit<sup>34</sup> identified 19 green areas around Blandford Forum, 5 in Blandford St Mary and 3 in Bryanston that are either designated as Local Green Space and/or could form a 'green ring' throughout the town.

### **Ecological networks**

Dorset Local Nature Partnership (LNP) and its partners (including Dorset Environmental Record Centre) have published a suite of maps setting out Dorset's Ecological Networks. The Dorset Ecological Network is made up from a series of layers, each incorporating the national sites, local sites, wildlife corridors, stepping stones and buffer areas to create a functioning ecological network.<sup>35</sup>

It is important to note that some areas of valuable habitat such as species-rich hedgerows and road verges, ponds and veteran trees are often too small in area to be shown on the maps. Nevertheless, these are part of the fabric of the ecological network as corridors and stepping stones or in their own right, and where they occur they should be considered part of the network even if they are not recorded on the map.

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<sup>33</sup> Natural England (no date) Designated Sites Citation [online] available at:  
<<https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/PDFsForWeb/Citation/1002561.pdf>> last accessed 02/05/18

<sup>34</sup> (Blandford Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group) (2015) Blandford+ Neighbourhood Plan Community Facilities and Local Green Space Audit

<sup>35</sup> Dorset Local Nature Partnership (2017) Dorset's Ecological Networks [online] available at:  
<<https://www.dorsetlnp.org.uk/hres/Ecological-Networks-Guidance-October-2017.pdf>> last accessed 02/05/18

The Ecological Network can be used to assist in planning the best locations for habitat enhancement, restoration and creation, to meet the objectives for biodiversity conservation and enhancement in national strategies and planning guidance and through Dorset's Natural Capital Investment Strategy<sup>36</sup>.

## Geodiversity

The Dorset Historic Towns Survey (2011) identifies the geology of the Blandford study area.<sup>37</sup> Blandford's geology is predominantly chalk with a band of alluvium along the floodplain of the River Stour. The wider Neighbourhood Plan area also holds these characteristics. Chalk is a poor building material, but traditionally used in cob walling. Flint found within the chalk can be used as walling material, either as rough nodules or knapped.<sup>38</sup>

## Summary of future baseline

The Neighbourhood Plan area is rich in biodiversity. As such, habitats and species will potentially face increasing pressures from future development within the Neighbourhood Plan area, with the potential for negative impacts on nationally, and locally designated sites, in addition to the wider ecological network. This may be exacerbated by the effects of climate change, which has the potential to lead to changes in the distribution and abundance of species, changes to the composition and character of habitats, and damage to valuable ecological corridors and/or the wider network.

When considered together, all sites and areas of wildlife value form a network, some parts of which will be closely interlinked, others less so, which has a value for the natural environment greater than the sum of its parts. To maintain and improve the condition of biodiversity in the future, it will therefore be important to not only protect and enhance important habitats but the connections between them.

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<sup>36</sup> Dorset Local Nature Partnership (2016) A Natural Capital Investment Strategy for Dorset [online] available at: <[https://www.dorsetinp.org.uk/Natural\\_Capital\\_Investment\\_Strategy.html](https://www.dorsetinp.org.uk/Natural_Capital_Investment_Strategy.html)> last accessed 02/05/18

<sup>37</sup> Dorset County Council, North Dorset District Council, & English Heritage (2011) Dorset Historic Towns Survey: Blandford Forum [online] available at: <<https://www.dorsetforyou.gov.uk/article/400851/Blandford-Forum---historic-towns-survey>> last accessed 02/05/18

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

# Climate change

## Context review

The UK Climate Change Risk Assessment is published on a 5-yearly cycle in accordance with the requirements of the Climate Change Act 2008. It required the Government to compile an assessment of the risks for the UK arising from climate change, and then to develop an adaptation programme to address those risks and deliver resilience to climate change on the ground. For both the 2012 and the 2017 UK Climate Change Risk Assessment, the Adaptation Sub-Committee commissioned an evidence report aiming to understand the current and future climate risks and opportunities. The evidence report contains six priority risk areas requiring additional action in the next five years, see below<sup>39</sup> :

- Flooding and coastal change risks to communities, businesses and infrastructure;
- Risks to health, well-being and productivity from high temperatures;
- Risk of shortages in the public water supply, and for agriculture, energy generation and industry;
- Risks to natural capital, including terrestrial, coastal, marine and freshwater ecosystems, soils and biodiversity;
- Risks to domestic and international food production and trade; and
- New and emerging pests and diseases, and invasive non-native species, affecting people, plants and animals

Along with policies contained in Chapter 1 'Using and managing land sustainably' and Chapter 6 'Protecting and improving the global environment', Goal 4 'A reduced risk of harm from environmental hazards such as flooding and drought' and Goal 7 'Mitigating and adapting to climate change' of the Government's 'A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment' directly relates to the Climate Change SA theme.

The UK Climate Change Act<sup>40</sup> was passed in 2008 and established a framework to develop an economically credible emissions reduction path. It also highlighted the role it would take in contributing to collective action to tackle climate change under the Kyoto Protocol, and more recently as part of the UN-led Paris Agreement.

The Climate Change Act includes the following:

- The Act commits the UK to reducing emissions by at least 80% in 2050 from 1990 levels.
- Carbon Budgets. The Act requires the Government to set legally binding 'carbon budgets'. A carbon budget is a cap on the amount of greenhouse gases emitted in the UK over a five-year period. The carbon budgets are designed to reflect the cost-effective path to achieving the UK's long-term objectives. The first five carbon budgets have been put into legislation and run up to 2032.
- The Committee on Climate Change was set up to advise the Government on emissions targets, and report to Parliament on progress made in reducing greenhouse gas emissions. The National Adaptation Programme requires the Government to assess the risks to the UK from climate

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<sup>39</sup> GOV.UK: 'UK Climate Change Risk Assessment Report January 2017', [online] available at: <<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-climate-change-risk-assessment-2017>> last accessed 13/02/2018

<sup>40</sup> GOV.UK (2008): 'Climate Change Act 2008', [online] available at: <<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2008/27/contents>> last accessed 02/03/2018

change, prepare a strategy to address them, and encourage key organisations to do the same. For more detail, visit the UK adaptation policy page<sup>41</sup>.

Key messages from the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) include:

- Support the transition to a low carbon future in a changing climate as a 'core planning principle'.
- There is a key role for planning in securing radical reductions in greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, including in terms of meeting the targets set out in the Climate Change Act 2008<sup>42</sup>. Specifically, planning policy should support the move to a low carbon future through:
  - Planning for new development in locations and ways which reduce GHG emissions;
  - Actively supporting energy efficiency improvements to existing buildings;
  - Setting local requirements for building's sustainability in a way that is consistent with the Government's zero carbon buildings policy;
  - Positively promoting renewable energy technologies and considering identifying suitable areas for their construction; and
  - Encouraging those transport solutions that support reductions in GHG emissions and reduce congestion.
- Direct development away from areas highest at risk of flooding, with development 'not to be allocated if there are reasonably available sites appropriate for the proposed development in areas with a lower probability of flooding'. Where development is necessary, it should be made safe without increasing levels of flood risk elsewhere.
- Take account of the effects of climate change in the long term, taking into account a range of factors including flooding. Adopt proactive strategies to adaptation and manage risks through adaptation measures including well planned green infrastructure.

The Flood and Water Management Act<sup>43</sup> highlights that alternatives to traditional engineering approaches to flood risk management include:

- Incorporating greater resilience measures into the design of new buildings, and retro-fitting properties at risk (including historic buildings);
- Utilising the environment in order to reduce flooding, for example through the management of land to reduce runoff and through harnessing the ability of wetlands to store water;
- Identifying areas suitable for inundation and water storage to reduce the risk of flooding elsewhere;
- Planning to roll back development in coastal areas to avoid damage from flooding or coastal erosion; and
- Creating sustainable drainage systems (SuDS)<sup>44</sup>

Further guidance is provided in the document 'Planning for SuDS'.<sup>45</sup> This report calls for greater recognition of the multiple benefits that water management can present. It suggests that successful SuDS are capable of 'contributing to local quality of life and green infrastructure'.

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<sup>41</sup> Committee on Climate Change (2017): 'UK Adaptation Policy' [online] available at: <<https://www.theccc.org.uk/tackling-climate-change/preparing-for-climate-change/uk-adaptation-policy/>> last accessed 02/05/2018

<sup>42</sup> The Climate Change Act 2008 sets targets for greenhouse gas (GHG) emission reductions through action in the UK of at least 80% by 2050, and reductions in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions of at least 26% by 2020, against a 1990 baseline.

<sup>43</sup> Flood and Water Management Act (2010) [online] available at: <<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/29/contents>> last accessed 02/05/18

<sup>44</sup> N.B. The provision of Schedule 3 to the Flood and Water Management Act 2010 came into force on the 1st of October 2012 and makes it mandatory for any development in England or Wales to incorporate SuDS.

<sup>45</sup> CIRIA (2010) 'Planning for SuDS – making it happen' [online] available at: <[http://www.ciria.org/Resources/Free\\_publications/Planning\\_for\\_SuDS\\_ma.aspx](http://www.ciria.org/Resources/Free_publications/Planning_for_SuDS_ma.aspx)> last accessed 02/05/18

At a local scale, Policy 3 (Climate Change) of the NDLP1 (2016) sets out the role of the Local Plan in tackling both the causes (mitigation) and effects (adaptation) of climate change. Additionally, numerous LPP1 and saved Local Plan (2003) policies set out a range of measures relevant to climate change. These include Policy 15 (Green Infrastructure) and Policy 22 (Renewable and Low Carbon Energy) within the LPP1, and saved policies 2.2 (Sustainable Development Strategy) and 3.12 (Renewable Energy).

## Summary of current baseline

### Potential effects of climate change

The outcome of research on the probable effects of climate change in the UK was released in 2009 by the UK Climate Projections (UKCP09) team<sup>46</sup>. UKCP09 gives climate information for the UK up to the end of this century and projections of future changes to the climate are provided, based on simulations from climate models. Projections are broken down to a regional level across the UK and are shown in probabilistic form, which illustrate the potential range of changes and the level of confidence in each prediction.

As highlighted by the research, the effects of climate change for the south west by 2050 for a medium emissions scenario<sup>47</sup> are likely to be as follows:

- The central estimate of increase in winter mean temperature is 2.1°C and an increase in summer mean temperature of 2.7°C; and
- The central estimate of change in winter mean precipitation is 17% and summer mean precipitation is –20%.

Resulting from these changes, a range of risks may exist for the Neighbourhood Plan area. These include:

- Increased incidence of heat related illnesses and deaths during the summer;
- Increased incidence of illnesses and deaths related to exposure to sunlight (e.g. skin cancer, cataracts);
- Increased incidence of pathogen related diseases (e.g. legionella and salmonella);
- Increase in health problems related to rise in local ozone levels during summer;
- Increased risk of injuries and deaths due to increased number of storm events;
- Effects on water resources from climate change;
- Reduction in availability of groundwater for abstraction;
- Adverse effect on water quality from low stream levels and turbulent stream flow after heavy rain;
- Increased risk of flooding, including increased vulnerability to 1:100 year floods;
- Changes in insurance provisions for flood damage;
- A need to increase the capacity of wastewater treatment plants and sewers;
- A need to upgrade flood defences;
- Soil erosion due to flash flooding;
- Loss of species that are at the edge of their southerly distribution;

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<sup>46</sup> The data was released on 18th June 2009: See: <<http://ukclimateprojections.metoffice.gov.uk/>> last accessed 02/05/18

<sup>47</sup> UK Climate Projections (2009) South West 2050s Medium Emissions Scenario [online] available at: <<http://ukclimateprojections.metoffice.gov.uk/23687?emission=medium>> last accessed 02/05/18

- Spread of species at the northern edge of their distribution;
- Deterioration in working conditions due to increased temperatures;
- Changes to global supply chain;
- Increased difficulty of food preparation, handling and storage due to higher temperatures;
- An increased move by the insurance industry towards a more risk-based approach to insurance underwriting, leading to higher cost premiums for business;
- Increased demand for air-conditioning;
- Increased drought and flood related problems such as soil shrinkages and subsidence;
- Risk of road surfaces melting more frequently due to increased temperature; and
- Flooding of roads.

### **Flood risk**

The town lies in the 'Blandford Gap' where the River Stour cuts through the chalk downland characterised by Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB. The Stour Valley has a wide flood plain which creates a parkland setting between Blandford Forum to the north of the Stour and Blandford St Mary and Bryanston to the south.

The Neighbourhood Plan area has a functional floodplain which is principally Flood Zone 3, separating Blandford Forum from Blandford St Mary (Figure 4.1). Flood Zone 3 is of high risk of flooding, representing that there is a 1% (1 in 100) or greater chance of happening each year. Flood Zone 3 is also seen to the north east of the Neighbourhood Plan area, associated with the presence of Pimperne Brook.

There are areas at of surface water flood risk principally in areas adjacent to the River Stour, Milldown, Angus Wood and Pimperne Brook.

### **Greenhouse gas emissions**

In relation to GhG emissions, source data from the Department of Energy and Climate Change suggests that North Dorset emitted 6.2 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> per capita in 2012, which is lower than the regional and national comparators. The rate of emissions has been steadily falling since 2005 when emissions were at 7.2 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> per capita. Table A.1 shows CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from the three main sectors and indicates that the domestic sector is responsible for the highest emissions. This is in contrast to that of the South West and England, where in both instances the Industrial and Commercial sector is responsible for the highest CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.

For North Dorset; emissions of CO<sub>2</sub> from domestic sources primarily originate from electricity consumption.

Table A.1 Carbon dioxide emissions and sources, plus emissions per capita, 2005-2012<sup>48</sup>

	<b>Industrial and Commercial (t CO<sub>2</sub>)</b>	<b>Domestic (t CO<sub>2</sub>)</b>	<b>Transport (t CO<sub>2</sub>)</b>	<b>Total (t CO<sub>2</sub>)</b>
<b>North Dorset</b>				
2005	2.3	2.6	2.1	7.2
2006	2.3	2.6	2.0	7.1
2007	2.1	2.4	2.1	6.8
2008	2.1	2.5	2.0	6.8
2009	2.0	2.3	1.9	6.4
2010	2.1	2.4	1.9	6.6
2011	1.9	2.1	1.8	6.0
2012	2.1	2.3	1.8	6.3
<b>South West</b>				
2005	3.1	2.5	2.5	8.2
2006	3.0	2.5	2.4	8.1
2007	2.9	2.4	2.5	7.9
2008	2.7	2.3	2.4	7.6
2009	2.3	2.1	2.3	6.8
2010	2.4	2.3	2.2	7.0
2011	2.1	2.0	2.2	6.4
2012	2.3	2.2	2.1	6.7
<b>England</b>				
2005	3.8	2.5	2.3	8.5
2006	3.7	2.5	2.2	8.5
2007	3.6	2.4	2.3	8.2
2008	3.4	2.4	2.1	7.9
2009	2.9	2.2	2.0	7.1
2010	3.0	2.3	2.0	7.3
2011	2.7	2.0	1.9	6.7
2012	2.9	2.2	1.9	7.0

<sup>48</sup> Department of Energy and Climate Change (2011) Official statistics: Local Authority carbon dioxide emissions, UK local and regional CO<sub>2</sub> emissions: subset dataset (emissions within the scope of influence of local authorities) available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/local-authority-emissions-estimates> 2005 to 2012 accessed on 02/05/18

## Summary of future baseline

Climate change has the potential to increase the occurrence of extreme weather events in the Neighbourhood Plan area, with increases in mean summer and winter temperatures, increases in mean precipitation in winter and decreases in mean precipitation in summer. This is likely to increase the risks associated with climate change (including fluvial flooding) with an increased need for resilience and adaptation.

In terms of climate change contribution, GhG emissions generated in the Neighbourhood Plan area may continue to decrease with wider adoption of energy efficiency measures, renewable energy production and new technologies, including electric cars. In this context, while the domestic sector is responsible for the highest CO<sub>2</sub> emissions in North Dorset, both gas and 'other fuels' are mainly used for space heating and cooking and therefore it can be seen that improving energy efficiency of buildings may reduce emissions from this source.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

# Landscape and historic environment

## Context review

Key messages from the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) include:

- Protect and enhance valued landscapes, giving particular weight to those identified as being of national importance.
- Heritage assets should be recognised as an 'irreplaceable resource' that should be conserved in a 'manner appropriate to their significance', taking account of 'the wider social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits' of conservation, whilst also recognising the positive contribution new development can make to local character and distinctiveness.
- Set out a 'positive strategy' for the 'conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment', including those heritage assets that are most at risk.
- Develop 'robust and comprehensive policies that set out the quality of development that will be expected for the area. Such policies should be based on stated objectives for the future of the area and an understanding and evaluation of its defining characteristics'.
- Consider the effects of climate change in the long term, including in terms of landscape. Adopt 'proactive strategies' to adaptation and manage risks through adaptation measures including well planned green infrastructure.

Additionally, the National Planning Policy Guidance states that Neighbourhood Plans should include enough information, where relevant, "about local heritage to guide decisions and put broader strategic heritage policies from the local plan into action at a neighbourhood scale" and "about local non-designated heritage assets including sites of archaeological interest to guide decisions".

Along with the policies contained within Chapter 2 'Recovering nature and enhancing the beauty of landscapes', Goal 6 'Enhanced beauty, heritage and engagement with the natural environment' of the Government's "A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment" directly relates to the Landscape and Historic Environment SEA theme.

The Government's Statement on the Historic Environment for England sets out its vision for the historic environment. It calls for those who have the power to shape the historic environment to recognise its value and to manage it in an intelligent manner in light of the contribution that it can make to social, economic and cultural life.

A number of North Dorset District-Wide Local Plan (2003) saved policies and adopted NDLP1 (2016) policies set out a range of measures which directly and indirectly relate to landscape and historic environment. These include:

- Policy 4 (The Natural Environment)
- Policy 5 (The Historic Environment)
- Policy 15 (Green Infrastructure)
- Policy 25 (Design)
- Policy 28 (Existing Dwellings in the Countryside)
- Policy 29 (The Re-Use of Existing Buildings in the Countryside)
- Policy 30 (Existing Employment Sites in the Countryside)
- Policy 31 (Tourist Accommodation in the Countryside)
- Policy 32 (Equine-Related Developments in the Countryside)

- Policy 33 (Occupational Dwellings in the Countryside)
- Saved policies 1.21 – 1.33

## Summary of current baseline

### Landscape

The landscape of North Dorset is highly valued with almost 40% of the District being covered by AONB designations.

The Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs (CCWWD) AONB covers an area to the east of the A350 with the boundary running from the District boundary near Spetisbury via Blandford and on to Shaftesbury. The Dorset AONB covers an area of chalk downland to the west of Blandford and north of the A354. The Dorset AONB also includes the Hambledon Hill National Nature Reserve to the north west of Blandford.

In terms of the Neighbourhood Plan area, Blandford Forum lies just beyond the limits of both AONBs. The CCWWD AONB lies to the north and east of Blandford Forum, adjoining the built up area of the town, while the Dorset AONB lies to the west and south west. Small parts of the existing built up area lie within both AONBs (see Figure 5.1).

The Dark Skies and Light Pollution Study undertaken for the CCWWD AONB (2007) identifies the negative impact of light pollution from towns (including Blandford and Blandford Camp) on the edge of the AONB.<sup>50</sup> The study highlights that the settlements light the night sky, thus causing a measure of skyglow, and can also be viewed from vantage points and main routes within the AONB. It is expected that the scenic intrusion of their lights at night is as much a pollution problem as their effect on dark skies.

Problem areas of light pollution within or at the edge of towns that have been identified by representatives of the Local Authorities as affecting the AONB include<sup>51</sup>:

- Housing development within bypass on edge of Blandford Forum;
- Sunrise Business Park, north of Blandford Forum; and
- Blandford Camp, north-east of Blandford Forum.

### National Character Areas

National Character Areas (NCAs) are landscape areas which share similar characteristics, following natural lines in the landscape rather than administrative boundaries. Developed by Natural England, NCA profiles describe the natural and cultural features that shape each of these landscapes, providing a broad context to its character. The Neighbourhood Plan area falls within NCA Profile 134: Dorset Downs and Cranborne Chase.<sup>52</sup>

Forming the south-western limb of England's Cretaceous Chalk outcrop, the Dorset Downs and Cranborne Chase National Character Area (NCA) lies across the counties of Dorset, Wiltshire and Hampshire, from east of Bridport to the outskirts of Salisbury. Dorchester and Blandford Forum are the largest settlements in what is a sparsely settled area of lowland England.

This strongly rural and agricultural NCA is characterised by large, open fields of pasture and arable, punctuated by blocks of woodland all draped over the undulating chalk topography. The NCA features one of the densest assemblages of prehistoric sites and monuments in Europe, with areas such as the South Dorset Ridgeway revealing some 8,000 years of human activity. The evolution of the chalk

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<sup>50</sup> Entect UK Limited (2007) Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty: Dark Skies and Light Pollution Study [online] available at: <<http://www.ccwwdaonb.org.uk/publications/planning-related-publications/>> last accessed 03/05/18

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Natural England (2013) NCA Profile: 134 Dorset Downs and Cranborne Chase [online] available at: <<http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/5846213517639680?category=587130>> last accessed 03/05/18

plateau of Cranborne Chase was fundamental to the development of the character of the northern part of the NCA.

A 15 km stretch of the inland section of the South West Coast Path National Trail runs through the south-west corner of the NCA, along the South Dorset Ridgeway.

### **North Dorset Landscape Character Assessment**

The District-wide Landscape Character Assessment and associated addendum (2008) was commissioned by the Council to provide a structured framework for describing the landscapes of North Dorset.<sup>53,54</sup> There are eight landscape character types in the district, which are divided further into 18 landscape character areas. The assessment describes their key characteristics.

The Neighbourhood Plan area falls predominately within the South Blandford Downs landscape character area, the Mid Stour Valley landscape character area, and the North Dorset Chalk Escarpment landscape character area.

The South Blandford Downs landscape character area includes the settlement of Blandford St Mary, and most of the southern and eastern extent of the Neighbourhood Plan area. This area is characterised by:

- An undulating open chalk downland landscape distinctively subdivided by four chalk river valleys
- These river valleys create distinctive sub divisions within the area
- Medium to large scale fields bounded by low, straight and clipped hedgerows
- Intensively farmed and arable landscape.
- Regular-shaped small plantation woodlands dot the landscape.
- Narrow, widely spaced out straight lanes are bounded by continuous clipped hedgerows with the occasional hedgerow trees.
- The urban settlement edges to Milborne St Andrew and Winterborne Whitechurch at the junction of the chalk stream valley and upland landscape form detracting features in places.
- A distinctive linear settlement edge along the eastern side of the area as it dips steeply down to the Stour Valley.
- Blandford St Mary creates a hard urban edge to the north of the area on the outskirts of Blandford and forms a detracting feature.
- Weatherbury Castle, which is an SNCI and SAM, is a key feature.
- The Spetisbury Rings are both an SAM and a SNCI and a feature of interest.
- The Jubilee Trail, which crosses the area, is a key feature.
- Long Falls Wood, which is partly an SNCI and its surrounding tumuli which is a SAM, is also a key feature.
- Some important SNCI woodland copses and plantations.
- Milborne Wood is a key feature and an SNCI
- A distinctive network of straight bridleways and paths, some of historic importance.

The Neighbourhood Plan area is also covered by the Mid Stour Valley landscape character area, which extends along the west of the main settlement of Blandford Forum. This area is characterised by:

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<sup>53</sup> North Dorset District Council (2008) Local Development Framework Evidence Base: Landscape Character Area Assessment [online] available at: <<https://www.dorsetforyou.gov.uk/article/396493/North-Dorset-Local-Plan---Evidence-Base>> last accessed 03/05/18

<sup>54</sup> North Dorset District Council (2008) Local Development Framework Evidence Base: Landscape Character Area Assessment – Addendum [online] available at: <<https://www.dorsetforyou.gov.uk/article/396493/North-Dorset-Local-Plan---Evidence-Base>> last accessed 03/05/18

- A flat and wide flood plain with gently rising sides to the northeast and steeper on the south western side.
- Meandering river and associated sub-channels, ditches and streams.
- Distinctive linear settlement pattern along the sides of the flood plain with locally distinctive use of flint and stone.
- The road network follows either side of the valley floor at the junction with the chalk downland landscape.
- Small copses, wet woodland, tree groups and individual trees follow the river course and the edges of the area.
- Important historic crossing points, for example, at Blandford.
- Provides an important setting and context for Blandford.
- Steep valley side plantation woodland (The Cliff) and the parkland landscape at Bryanston are key features.
- The remnants of traditional river valley features, such as old withy beds, oxbow lakes, mills, weirs and the water meadows are all important features across the area.

The Neighbourhood Plan area is also covered by the North Dorset Chalk Escarpment landscape character area, including Bryanston to the north east of the Neighbourhood Plan area. This area is characterised by:

- A dramatic, exposed, steep and narrow escarpment with rounded spurs and deep coombes.
- A patchwork of small scale pastoral fields on the lower slopes, with scattered farmsteads at the ridge bottom spring line.
- Areas of unimproved chalk grassland on slopes and ridge tops.
- Large, straight-sided arable fields on escarpment top.
- Hanging ancient oak, ash and hazel woodlands on the lower slopes.
- Dense gorse scrub on the steep ridge sides.
- Thin calcareous soils with the underlying geology of lower, middle and upper chalk.
- Panoramic views of the surrounding landscape.
- Bronze Age barrows and prominent hill top forts.
- Ancient, sunken winding lanes with an open character towards the top.
- Ponds on the hill top at Bonsley Common.

The Neighbourhood Plan area also falls, to a lesser extent, within a number of other landscape character areas:

- East Blandford Downs
- North Winterborne Valley
- Cranborne Chase Wooded Chalk Downland

The draft Dorset Historic Landscape Character mapping<sup>55</sup> shows Blandford Forum sitting within a landscape dominated by enclosed fields and comprising primarily planned enclosures. Piecemeal and other enclosures also contribute, as well as a patchwork of coppice, deciduous and mixed woodland. A variety of settlements including historic villages, housing estates and country houses pepper the rural landscape.

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

## Historic environment

Blandford Forum has a strong historic and architectural character, resulting from a combination of the significant historical background and time depth, the positive contribution made by a very high number of historic buildings, the intact medieval town plan and its topographic location within a bend in the River Stour, enabling a resultant visual connectivity with the surrounding landscape.<sup>56</sup>

Blandford Forum is best known as one of the finest examples of a Georgian country town in Britain, recognised nationally as an extremely important example of Georgian brick architecture.<sup>57</sup> Around three quarters of the buildings within the town centre date from the 18th century or earlier. This represents one of the highest concentrations of historic buildings in any of the Dorset towns.<sup>58</sup>

Immediately adjacent to the historic core of the town centre, approximately 78% of the buildings within the remaining part of the appraisal area date from the late 19th century or earlier. This represents one of the highest concentrations of historic buildings outside of the medieval town centre for any of the Dorset towns. In general, evidence of more recent development is set behind the more historic street frontages or located from significant vantage points within the public realm.

The historic core of the town is arranged around a singular main street running parallel to the River Stour with regular burgage plots on both side and back lanes behind. The market place lies at the junction with the road running across the river from Blandford Bridge. To the north, east and west of the town centre, is some ribbon development along a series of radiating roads. The areas between these routes are infilled with suburban housing estates arranged on a linear grid system, or more commonly on looped networks of roads and curvilinear cul-de-sac.<sup>59</sup>

Blandford Forum is divided from Blandford St Mary to the south by the River Stour and its wide floodplain. The suburb of Blandford St Mary is aligned along a route running parallel to the river, with modern suburban housing estates beyond. There are areas of industrial and commercial estates along the south side of the river and at the northwest part of the town.

The Neighbourhood Plan area as a whole is home to numerous designated historic assets, including over 200 listed buildings. The majority of the settlement falls within two Conservation Areas – The Blandford, Blandford St Mary and Bryanston Conservation Area and The Blandford Forum Conservation Area.

## Historic Urban Character Areas

A total of six Historic Urban Character Areas have been defined for Blandford depending on the age of the development. Each area has their own design requirements. They comprise the area of the medieval and post-medieval town (Character Areas 1 and 2); Victorian and early 20th century suburbs on the north and north east sides of the town (Areas 3 and 4) a modern suburb (Area 5) and the historic suburb, together with its modern housing estates, of Blandford St Mary (Area 6).

## Heritage assets

Conservation Areas are designated because of their special architectural and historic interest<sup>60</sup>. Figure 5.6 distinguishes between the Neighbourhood Plan area's Conservation Areas: The Blandford Forum Conservation Area, and the Blandford, Blandford St Mary and Bryanston Conservation Area. The Blandford Forum Conservation Area was first designated in 1972 to conserve and enhance

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<sup>56</sup> Dorset Councils Partnership (2018) Blandford Conservation Area Appraisal Management Plan

<sup>57</sup> Dorset County Council, North Dorset District Council, & English Heritage (2011) Dorset Historic Towns Survey: Blandford Forum [online] available at: <<https://www.dorsetforyou.gov.uk/article/400851/Blandford-Forum---historic-towns-survey>> last accessed 03/05/18

<sup>58</sup> Dorset Councils Partnership (2018) Blandford Conservation Area Appraisal Management Plan

<sup>59</sup> Dorset County Council, North Dorset District Council, & English Heritage (2011) Dorset Historic Towns Survey: Blandford Forum [online] available at: <<https://www.dorsetforyou.gov.uk/article/400851/Blandford-Forum---historic-towns-survey>> last accessed 03/05/18

<sup>60</sup> Historic England (2017): 'Conservation Areas', [online] available to access via: <<https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/what-is-designation/local/conservation-areas/>> last accessed 03/05/2018

Blandford's historic character, and was expanded in 1990 with character areas subsequently identified.<sup>61</sup>

Conservation Area Appraisals are a tool to demonstrate the area's special interest, explaining the reasons for designation and providing a greater understanding and articulation of its character - mentioned within the 'Conservation Area Designation, Appraisal and Management' advice note by Historic England.<sup>62</sup> Ideally, appraisals should be regularly reviewed as part of the management of the conservation area, and can be developed into a management plan.

NDDC is undertaking an on-going review of North Dorset's conservation areas. The quality and interest of each area will be assessed by examining the following matters:

- historic layout of boundaries and routes;
- characteristic materials and forms;
- mix of uses;
- contribution of recent developments; and
- hard and soft landscaping.

A Conservation Area Appraisal Management Plan (CAAMP) (2018) has been produced for the Blandford Forum Conservation Area.<sup>63</sup> The CAAMP identifies the following key characteristics for the Blandford Form Conservation Area:

- Planned medieval market town;
- Strong landscaped Setting;
- Significant proportion of nationally listed buildings;
- Intact medieval burgage plots;
- Nationally important Georgian country town;
- Very high density of historic buildings;
- Post-medieval suburb;
- Rare surviving 17th century buildings;
- Occasional large houses and grounds, partly infilled with later development;
- Mid-19th century suburban villas; and
- Early 19th century terraced housing estate at Dorset/ Orchard Streets.

The CAAMP further identifies the sensitivity of the Conservation Area and the existing threats to the asset, stating that:<sup>64</sup>

*"Given the cohesive 18th and 19th century character of the appraisal area the area is sensitive to change on all levels. The medieval town layout and burgage plots provide a worthy backdrop upon which the Georgian town sits adjacent to the river. The layout essentially dates from the original foundation of the town during the early 12th century and as such is a rare example of an intact planned medieval market town. The burgage plots are extremely vulnerable to large scale development and several have been lost to development and modern housing which has eroded the special interest of the town centre.*

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<sup>61</sup> Dorset Councils Partnership (2018) Blandford Conservation Area Appraisal Management Plan

<sup>62</sup> Historic England (2016): 'Conservation Area Designation, Appraisal and Management Advice Note 1', [online] available to download from: <<https://www.historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/conservation-area-designation-appraisal-management-advice-note-1/>> last accessed 03/05/2018

<sup>63</sup> Dorset Councils Partnership (2018) Blandford Conservation Area Appraisal Management Plan

<sup>64</sup> Dorset Councils Partnership (2018) Blandford Conservation Area Appraisal Management Plan

*Large scale development has the potential to disrupt and overshadow this definitive element of the town's historic character. Large scale modern development also has the potential to disrupt the harmonious Georgian facades and roof lines and intervisibility which extend beyond the confines of the medieval town. Smaller scale development including those forms of development permitted under existing planning legislation have the potential to erode both the character and appearance of the conservation area through loss of historic features and important spaces. Unauthorised development particularly within the town centre also has the potential to undermine the value, quality and significance of the retail centre."*

Historic England is the statutory consultee for certain categories of listed building consent. The Neighbourhood Plan area contains 226 listed buildings, of which 10 are Grade I listed:<sup>65</sup>

- Pump house
- Town Hall and Corn Exchange
- Bryanston School
- Church of St Peter and St Paul
- Greyhound House
- Coupar House
- The Portman Chapel
- The Old House
- 26, Market Place
- 18 and 20 Market Place

Additionally, the following 9 listed buildings are Grade II\* listed:

- 9, Market Place
- The Manor House
- Dale House
- The Church of St Mary
- Eastway House
- 1, Market Place
- Lyston House
- Lime Tree House
- Ryves Almshouse

Scheduled monuments are sites of national importance and protected by the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979. According to the National Heritage List for England, Field system in Old Park Scheduled Monument is located within the Neighbourhood Plan area, in Bryanston Parish.<sup>66</sup> This is identified within Figure 5.7.

Since 2008, Historic England has released an annual Heritage at Risk Register. The Heritage at Risk Register highlights the Grade I, Grade II and Grade II\* listed buildings, scheduled monuments, historic parks and gardens, registered battlefields, wreck sites and conservation areas deemed to be 'at risk'.

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<sup>65</sup> Historic England (2018) Search the list [online] available at: <<https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/results?searchtype=nhleadvanced>> last accessed 03/05/18

<sup>66</sup> Defra (2018) Magic Map Application [online] available at: <<http://magic.gov.uk/MagicMap.aspx>> last accessed 03/05/18

According to the 2017 Heritage at Risk Register<sup>67</sup> and Figure 5.7, there is one heritage asset in the Neighbourhood Plan area at risk. This is Field System in Old Park Scheduled Monument.

However, it is important to recognise that the Heritage at Risk Registers for areas outside of London do not contain information about the status of Grade II listed buildings. Due to this gap in the baseline, it is currently not possible to determine whether any Grade II listed buildings within the Neighbourhood Plan area are at risk.

It should be noted that not all of the area's historic environment features are subject to statutory designations, and non-designated features comprise a large part of what people have contact with as part of daily life – whether at home, work or leisure. Although not designated, many buildings and areas are of historic interest and are seen as important by local communities.

### **Archaeological evidence**

The Blandford CAAMP (2018) identifies that in archaeological terms, Blandford Forum is of great significance. Within the town centre, the relatively low level of modern development within the medieval core means that there is very high potential for important and informative remains of the medieval town and its economy to remain intact.

Although the current layout of the town reflects its Medieval origins, very little secure dating evidence has been recovered to confirm this assumption. The investigations conducted to date suggest that the highest potential for intact remains of Medieval Blandford lie within the rear of burgage plots fronting on to East Street, Market Place and West Street (discussed below). The later largely late 18th or 19th century suburbs appear to have not been incorporated into the urban area of the town until the late 17th century. There is however potential for post-medieval archaeological deposits surviving in the vicinity of Salisbury, Bryanston and White Cliff Mill Streets. Evidence has the potential to reveal detailed information on the economy of the town during the 17th and 18th centuries, as well as confirm the date at which Blandford expanded in to this area.

Furthermore, Blandford lies on well drained gently sloping land with a south westerly aspect. The area is well placed to exploit a variety of resources and likely to have been a preferred site for at least a small settlement during the late prehistoric and Romano-British periods. The potential for remains dating to this period can be demonstrated through the high level of Iron Age and Roman activity in the surrounding area.

The Dorset Historic Towns Survey for Blandford (2011) provides the following details relating to specific archaeological recordings /evidence in the area: <sup>68</sup>

- Twenty archaeological events have been recorded for Blandford. Seven of these have been undertaken within the narrow confines of the medieval and early post-medieval town, with a further six in Blandford St Mary. There were no early antiquarian investigations into Blandford Forum, though evidence for a Roman cemetery was recorded within Blandford during the 19th century, approximately a quarter of a mile due south of Blandford Bridge.
- Archaeological evidence for prehistoric activity within Blandford is forthcoming from three sites. A Bronze Age urned cremation was recovered during an evaluation in advance of the development of the Stour Park retail complex in 1993. This cremation was associated with fragmentary remains of a possible ring ditch. It is possible that further evidence for a more extensive cemetery awaits discovery at Stour Park. A second significant prehistoric site has recently been excavated in advance of the construction of new buildings at Milldown School during 2009 where substantial late Neolithic and early Bronze Age settlement activity was found. A third site, evaluated in 1994 at Blandford St Mary in advance of housing development, revealed

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<sup>67</sup> Historic England (2017): Search the list [online] available at: < <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1002427> > last accessed 08/05/18

<sup>68</sup> Dorset County Council, North Dorset District Council, & English Heritage (2011) Dorset Historic Towns Survey: Blandford Forum [online] available at: < <https://www.dorsetforyou.gov.uk/article/400851/Blandford-Forum---historic-towns-survey> > last accessed 03/05/18

evidence for a rectilinear field system. No dating evidence was found in association with the field ditches, although

- Bronze Age flints were recovered from the spoil heap. There is strong landscape evidence for a rectilinear field system across this part of the Stour valley comprising field, parish boundary and road alignments fossilised in the modern landscape, running perpendicular to the strike of the valley. During the medieval period this landscape pattern was associated with dispersed settlements strung out along both sides of the river, just above the flood plains. The scant dating evidence from Blandford St Mary may suggest that these alignments originated during the Bronze Age. To date no evidence has been found for Iron Age or Romano-British dispersed settlement within the area.
- There have been a number of small archaeological investigations in the area of the medieval town of Blandford Forum, but the only major excavation of medieval archaeology has taken place in Blandford St Mary in advance of the development of the Stour Park retail site. This revealed evidence for a medieval settlement along a hollow way running perpendicular to the river Stour, with some slight evidence that this settlement may have originated during the late Saxon period.

## Summary of future baseline

Baseline information highlights the sensitivity of the landscape and historic environment within and around the Neighbourhood Plan area. New development in the Neighbourhood Plan area therefore has the potential to impact on the fabric and setting of heritage assets; for example through inappropriate design and layout. New development could also have the potential to lead to small, incremental but cumulative changes in landscape and townscape character and quality in and around the Neighbourhood Plan area. This includes from the loss of or damage to features and areas with an important visual amenity value; notably the two AONBs surrounding the Neighbourhood Plan area, and the Conservation Areas present.

It should be noted, however, that existing historic environment designations offer a degree of protection to heritage assets and their settings. The planning system already has in place tools to offer a degree of protection to landscape and heritage assets and their settings and therefore new development will not necessarily result in harm to the significance of these assets. Further to this, there is an opportunity for development to facilitate the enhancement to the fabric and setting of historic environment assets.

# Land, soil and water resources

## Context review

The EU's Soil Thematic Strategy<sup>69</sup> presents a strategy for protecting soils resources in Europe. The main aim of the strategy is to minimise soil degradation and limit associated detrimental effects linked to water quality and quantity, human health, climate change, biodiversity, and food safety.

The EU Water Framework Directive (WFD) drives a catchment-based approach to water management. In England and Wales there are 100 water catchments and it is Defra's intention is to establish a 'framework for integrated catchment management' across England. The Environment Agency is establishing 'Significant Water Management Issues' and recently presented second River Basin Management Plans to ministers. The plans seek to deliver the objectives of the WFD namely:

- Enhance the status and prevent the further deterioration of aquatic ecosystems and associated wetlands which depend on aquatic ecosystems;
- Promote the sustainable use of water;
- Reduce the pollution of water, especially by 'priority' and 'priority hazardous' substances; and
- Ensure the progressive reduction of groundwater pollution.

Key messages from the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) include:

- Protect and enhance soils. The value of best and most versatile agricultural land should also be taken into account.
- Prevent new or existing development from being 'adversely affected' by the presence of 'unacceptable levels' of soil pollution or land instability and be willing to remediate and mitigate 'despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated and unstable land, where appropriate'.
- Encourage the effective use of land' through the reuse of land which has been previously developed, 'provided that this is not of high environmental value'. Whilst there is no longer a national requirement to build at a minimum density, the NPPF requires local planning authorities to 'set out their own approach to housing density to reflect local circumstances'.
- Produce strategic policies to deliver the provision of a variety of infrastructure, including that necessary for water supply.
- With regards to waste, the NPPF does not contain any specific waste policies as waste planning policy will be published as part of the National Waste Management Plan.

Along with the policies contained within Chapter 1 'Using and managing land sustainably' and Chapter 4 'Increasing resource efficiency, and reducing pollution and waste', Goal 2 'Clean and plentiful water', Goal 5 'Using resources from nature more sustainably and efficiently' and Goal 8 'Minimising waste' of the Government's 'A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment' directly relates to the land, soil and water resources SA theme.

Other key documents at the national level include Safeguarding our Soils: A Strategy for England<sup>70</sup>, which sets out a vision for soil use in England, and the Water White Paper<sup>71</sup>, which sets out the Government's vision for a more resilient water sector. It states the measures that will be taken to tackle issues such as poorly performing ecosystems, and the combined impacts of climate change and population growth on stressed water resources. In terms of waste management, the Government

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<sup>69</sup> European Commission (2006) Soil Thematic Policy [online] available at: <[http://ec.europa.eu/environment/soil/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/environment/soil/index_en.htm)> last accessed 04/05/2018

<sup>70</sup> Defra (2009) Safeguarding our Soils: A strategy for England [online] available at: <<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/safeguarding-our-soils-a-strategy-for-england>> last accessed 04/05/2018

<sup>71</sup> Defra (2011) Water for life (The Water White Paper) [online] available at: <<http://www.official-documents.gov.uk/document/cm82/8230/8230.pdf>> last accessed 04/05/2018

Review of Waste Policy in England<sup>72</sup> recognises that environmental benefits and economic growth can be the result of a more sustainable approach to the use of materials.

A new Waste Plan is being prepared to provide for Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole's waste management needs.<sup>73</sup> The new Waste Plan identifies sites for new waste management facilities to meet the county's needs. Once adopted, it will provide the policy framework for determining planning applications for waste management facilities up to 2033.

The Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy for Dorset (2009) sets out the approach to managing waste in Dorset.<sup>74</sup> The objectives of the strategy follow the waste hierarchy and include: reduction of all waste; high recycling and composting rates; residual waste treatment and recovery and; minimal landfill especially of untreated waste.

At a local scale, Policy 3 (Climate Change), Policy 13 (Grey Infrastructure) and Policy 20 (The Countryside) of the NDLP1 (2016) are relevant to the Land, Soil and Water Objective. Additionally, numerous saved Local Plan (2003) policies set out a range of measures important to the Land, Soil and Water Objective. These include saved policies 1.15 (Foul Drainage), 1.16 (Groundwater Source Protection), 1.17 (Sewage Treatment Works Protection), 1.18 (Waste Recycling Centres), and 1.20 (Contaminated Land).

## Summary of current baseline

### Quality of agricultural land

The Agricultural Land Classification classifies land into six grades (plus 'non-agricultural' and 'urban'), where Grades 1 to 3a are recognised as being the 'best and most versatile' land, and Grades 3b to 5 are of poorer quality. In this context there is a need to avoid loss of higher quality ('best and most versatile') agricultural land.

In terms of the location of the best and most versatile agricultural land, a detailed classification has not been undertaken for the entirety of the Neighbourhood Plan area. Post-1988 Agricultural Land Classification is available for small sections of the Neighbourhood Plan area, to the north of Blandford Forum and to the east of Blandford St Mary. This identifies areas of Grade 2 and 3 (uncertain if this is 3a or b), within the Neighbourhood Plan area, which is best and most versatile (if found to be Grade 3a).

For the remainder of the Neighbourhood Plan area, there is a need to rely on the Pre-1988 Agricultural Land Classification to provide an indication of the land classification for Blandford. The Pre-1988 classification identifies that the Neighbourhood Plan area is covered by Grade 4, Grade 3 and some Grade 2 agricultural land along the north eastern boundary. It is unknown at this stage if the Grade 3 land present is grade 3a or 3b. In this context Grade 2 and Grade 3a land is classified as best and most versatile.

### Recycling centres

Blandford Household Waste and Recycling Centre (HWRC) is located on Shaftesbury Lane, within the Neighbourhood Plan area. Commercial waste (rubbish and garden waste only) is accepted at this recycling centre, on Saturday mornings only.

### Watercourses

The main watercourse flowing through the Neighbourhood Plan area is the River Stour. The town lies in the 'Blandford Gap' where the River Stour cuts through the chalk downland, separating Blandford Forum from Blandford St Mary. There are a number of other small waterways present within the

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<sup>72</sup> Defra (2011) Government Review of Waste Policy in England [online] available at:

<<http://www.defra.gov.uk/publications/files/pb13540-waste-policy-review110614.pdf>> last accessed 04/05/2018

<sup>73</sup> Dorset County Council, Bournemouth Borough Council, and Poole Borough Council (2017) Waste Plan Pre-submission draft [online] available at: <<https://www.dorsetforyou.gov.uk/article/406513>> last accessed 04/05/18

<sup>74</sup> Dorset Councils (2009) Joint Municipal Waste Strategy for Dorset [online] available at:

<[https://www.dorsetforyou.gov.uk/media/138125/Municipal-Waste-Strategy/pdf/Municipal\\_Waste\\_Strategy.pdf](https://www.dorsetforyou.gov.uk/media/138125/Municipal-Waste-Strategy/pdf/Municipal_Waste_Strategy.pdf)> last accessed 04/05/18

Neighbourhood Plan area; notably Pimperne Brook tributary feeds into the River Stour, extending from the south of Blandford Forum to the north through Pimperne.

Water supply and drainage in the area is provided by Wessex Water. This water supply network consists of a number of major transmission systems allowing fluid movement from areas of surplus to meet demand in the wider supply area. The Wessex Water Draft Water Resources Management Plan (2017) describes how the integrated network provides customers with a very resilient water supply service. Most recently (2010-2018) the integrated GRID project has added new pipelines to connect sources in the south of our region (Corfe Mullen area) to Salisbury in Wiltshire via Blandford and Shaftesbury.<sup>75</sup> This scheme, first proposed in the 2009 Water Resources Management Plan, allows for reduced abstraction at environmentally sensitive sources in the upper Hampshire Avon Catchment, improving resilience for customers without the need to develop new sources.<sup>76</sup>

Groundwater Source Protection Zones (SPZs) have been defined by the Environment Agency in England and Wales to protect groundwater sources such as wells, boreholes and springs that are used for public drinking water supply. The zones show the risk of contamination from activities that might cause groundwater pollution in the area. Blandford lies between two SPZs, an inner zone (Zone 1 – red) to the northeast of town and an outer zone (Zone 2 – Green) to the north east and south.

The EU Nitrates Directive (91/676/EEC) requires member states to identify areas where groundwater has nitrate concentrations of more than 50 mg/l nitrate or is considered to be at risk of nitrate contamination. These areas are designated as Nitrate Vulnerable Zones (NVZs) and as such are recognised as being at risk from agricultural nitrate pollution. Member states are required to establish Action Programmes in order to reduce and prevent further nitrate contamination. The Neighbourhood Plan area is situated, to some extent, within the following NVZs:

- Nitrate Vulnerable Zones Surface Waters – North Winterbourne NVZ (S688)
- Nitrate Vulnerable Zones Ground Waters – South Wessex NVZ (G151)

Surface Waters are areas of land that drain into a freshwater water body which has or could have is action is not taken, a nitrate concentration greater than 50mg/l. Ground Water is water held underground in the soil or in pores and crevices in rock, which has or could have if action is not taken, a nitrate concentration greater than 50mg/l.<sup>77</sup>

The Neighbourhood Plan area in relation to Drinking Water Safeguard Zones. Drinking Water Safeguard Zones are designated areas in which the use of certain substances must be carefully managed to prevent the pollution of raw water sources that are used to provide drinking water.

The Neighbourhood Plan area is situated within a Drinking Water Safeguard Zone for Surface Water. This area is at risk from Metaldehyde.<sup>78</sup>

## Summary of future baseline

Due to increasing legislative and regulatory requirements, there are increasing pressures to improving recycling and composting rates.

In terms of water quality, the requirements of the Water Framework Directive (and replacement) are likely to lead to continued improvements to water quality in watercourses in the wider area. Water quality has the potential to be affected by pollution incidents in the area, the presence of non-native species and future physical modifications to water bodies.

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<sup>75</sup> Wessex Water (2017) Draft water resources management plan [online] available at: <<https://www.wessexwater.co.uk/waterplan/>> last accessed 08/05/18

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> The Environment Agency (2018) Nitrate Vulnerable Zones (NVZ) [online] available at: <<http://apps.environment-agency.gov.uk/wyby/141443.aspx>> last accessed 08/05/18

<sup>78</sup> The Environment Agency (2018) Check for Drinking Water Safeguard Zones and NVZs [online] available at: <<https://environment-agency.cloud.esri.com/farmers/>> last accessed 08/05/18

New development in the Neighbourhood Plan area has the potential to impact on areas of the best and most versatile agricultural land. In this context there could potentially be opportunities to avoid developing Grade 2 and Grade 3a agricultural land by directing development toward areas of Grade 3 (b) and 4 agricultural land where this is present.

It is considered unlikely that limited development in the Neighbourhood Plan area will have a significant impact on the wider area's NVZ status unless significant land were lost to agricultural use through development.

# Population and community

## Policy context

Key messages from the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) include:

- To 'boost significantly the supply of housing', local planning authorities should meet the 'full, objectively assessed need for market and affordable housing' in their area. Affordable housing is defined within Annex 2 of the NPPF as 'Social rented, affordable rented and intermediate housing, provided to eligible households whose needs are not met by the market. Eligibility is determined with regard to local incomes and local house prices. Affordable housing should include provisions to remain at an affordable price for future eligible households or for the subsidy to be recycled for alternative affordable housing provision.'
- Local planning authorities 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.
- With a view to creating 'sustainable, inclusive and mixed communities' authorities should ensure provision of affordable housing onsite or externally where robustly justified.
- In rural areas, when 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. Authorities should consider whether allowing some market housing would facilitate the provision of affordable housing to meet local needs.
- The NPPF attaches great importance to the design of the built environment. It explains how good design is a key aspect in sustainable development, and how development should improve the quality of the area over its lifetime, not just in the short term. Good architecture and landscaping are important, with the use of design codes contributing to the delivery of high quality outcomes. Design should reinforce local distinctiveness, raise the standard more generally in the area and address the connections between people and places.
- The social role of the planning system involves 'supporting vibrant and healthy communities'.
- The planning system can play an important role in facilitating social interaction and creating healthy, inclusive communities
- Promote the retention and development of local services and community facilities such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship.
- Ensure that developments create safe and accessible environments where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine quality of life or community cohesion. Places should contain clear and legible pedestrian routes, and high quality public spaces, which encourage the active and continual use of public areas.
- Ensuring that there is a 'sufficient choice of school places' is of 'great importance' and there is a need to take a 'proactive, positive and collaborative approach' to bringing forward 'development that will widen choice in education'.

The 'Ready for Ageing?' report, published by the Select Committee on Public Service and Demographic Change warns that society is underprepared for an ageing population. The report states that 'longer lives can be a great benefit, but there has been a collective failure to address the implications and without urgent action this great boon could turn into a series of miserable crises'. The report recognises that the supply of specialist housing for the older generation is insufficient for the demand. There is a need for central and local Government, housing associations, and house builders

to ensure that these housing needs are better addressed, giving as much priority to promoting an adequate market of social housing for the older generation as is given to the younger generation.

Policies contained in Chapter 1 'Using and managing land sustainably' and Chapter 4 'Increasing resource efficiency, and reducing pollution and waste' of the Government's 'A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment' directly relates to the population and community SEA theme.

The North Dorset Local Plan Part 1 Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) (2014)<sup>79</sup> sets out what infrastructure is needed to enable the development proposed in the North Dorset Local Plan 2011 - 2026 Part 1. The IDP will play a key role in co-ordinating the level of local infrastructure and services so that they meet existing and future demands.

A number of North Dorset District-Wide Local Plan (2003) saved policies and adopted NDLP1 (2016) policies set out a range of measures which directly and indirectly relate to the population and community theme. These include:

- Policy 6 – Housing Distribution
- Policy 7 – Delivering Homes
- Policy 8 – Affordable Housing
- Policy 9 – Rural Exception Affordable Housing
- Policy 10 – Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople
- Policy 12 – Retail, Leisure and Other Commercial Developments
- Policy 14 – Social Infrastructure
- Policy 15 – Green Infrastructure
- Saved policies 2.1-2.21
- Saved policies 4.1-4.11

## Summary of current baseline

For the purposes of this Scoping Report, the economic and social baseline for the Neighbourhood Plan area has been presented using the combined data for Blandford Forum Parish, Blandford St. Mary Parish, and Bryanston Parish.

### Population

According to the most recently available census data (Table A.2) the Neighbourhood Plan area has seen an increase in population (+4.48%) between 2011 and 2016. This rate is greater than that identified for the District (+3.5%), and marginally greater than the regional (+4.31%) and national (+4.25%) figures. This reflects Blandford's significant expansion in recent years; expanding by 182% between 1971 and 2011. This is the largest growth of any town in rural Dorset.<sup>80</sup>

The majority of the population within the Neighbourhood Plan area is situated within Blandford Forum Parish, with Blandford St. Mary Parish and Bryanston Parish making up the smaller and more rural areas to the south and west of Blandford Forum. The 2016 data shows that the population for Blandford Forum Parish is 10,927, accounting for 81.9% of the Neighbourhood Plan area's population.

Whilst effectively the three councils (Blandford Forum, Blandford St. Mary, and Bryanston) function as a single area, it is recognised that they each have quite distinct characteristics. In this context, a

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<sup>79</sup> North Dorset District Council (2014) North Dorset Local Plan Part 1 Infrastructure Delivery Plan [online] available at: <<https://www.dorsetforyou.gov.uk/media/215827/The-North-Dorset-Infrastructure-Delivery-Plan-2014/pdf/The-North-Dorset-Infrastructure-Delivery-Plan-2014.pdf>> last accessed 09/05/18

<sup>80</sup> North Dorset District Council (2013) North Dorset Local Plan 2011-2026 Part 1 Market Towns Site Selection Background Paper [online] available at: <<https://www.dorsetforyou.gov.uk/evidence/north>> last accessed 08/05/18

Blandford St Mary residents' survey in 2009 illustrated the importance of the Parish's distinct identity, with over 2/3rd expressing how important this separate identity was to them.<sup>81</sup>

It is noted that due to low numbers the data for Langton Long Blandford Parish have been combined for this dataset, which may lead to a slightly greater population figure for the Parish.<sup>82</sup> However, this is not expected to be significant.

**Table A.2 Population growth 2011-2016<sup>83,84</sup>**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Blandford+</b>	<b>North Dorset</b>	<b>South West</b>	<b>England</b>
<b>2011</b>	12,761	68,583	5,288,935	53,012,456
<b>2016</b>	13,332	70,915	5,516,973	55,268,067
<b>Population Change 2011-2016</b>	+4.48%	+3.4%	+4.31%	+4.25%

### Age structure

The percentage of residents living within the Neighbourhood Plan area aged between 16-24 is 12.26%, which is higher than that of North Dorset, the South West, and England. The largest percentage of residents within the Neighbourhood Plan area are those aged between 25-44, which aligns with the data for England, however for all other comparators residents aged 60+ make up the largest proportion of the population. The Neighbourhood Plan area's residents aged 60+ equates to 24.32%, which is significantly lower than the percentage for North Dorset, where 29.08% of the population is aged 60+.

Based on this data (Table A.3) it is apparent that the Neighbourhood Plan area is supporting a younger population than North Dorset and the South West. However this is slightly older than the age structure for England.

**Table A.3: Age Structure (2011)<sup>85</sup>**

	<b>Blandford+</b>	<b>North Dorset</b>	<b>South West</b>	<b>England</b>
<b>0-15</b>	18.51%	18.01%	17.5%	18.9%
<b>16-24</b>	12.26%	10.18%	11.3%	11.9%
<b>25-44</b>	24.81%	22.32%	24.6%	27.5%
<b>45-59</b>	20.09%	20.41%	20.1%	19.4%
<b>60+</b>	24.32%	29.08%	26.4%	22.3%
<b>Total Population</b>	12,761	68,583	5,288,935	53,012,456

<sup>81</sup> Blandford St Mary Steering Group (2009) Blandford St Mary Parish Plan [online] available at: <<https://www.dorsetforyou.gov.uk/evidence/north>> last accessed 08/05/18

<sup>82</sup> Dorset County Council (2018) Area Profile for Blandford Forum & Langton Long Blandford [online] available at: <<https://apps.geowessex.com/stats/AreaProfiles/Parish/blandford-forum-and-langton-long-blandford>> last accessed 08/05/18

<sup>83</sup> Nomis (2016) Population estimates – local authority based by single year of age [online] available at: <<https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/query/construct/summary.asp?mode=construct&version=0&dataset=2002>> last accessed 08/05/18

<sup>84</sup> Dorset County Council (2018) Dorset statistics and census information [online] available at: <<https://www.dorsetforyou.gov.uk/statistics>> last accessed 08/05/18

<sup>85</sup> ONS (no date): Census 2011: Age Structure 2011 (Table KS102EW)

## Household deprivation

Census statistics measure deprivation across four 'dimensions' of deprivation, summarized below:

- **Employment:** Any person in the household (not a full-time student) that is either unemployed or long-term sick.
- **Education:** No person in the household has at least a level 2 qualification and no person aged 16-18 is a full-time student.
- **Health and Disability:** Any person in the household that has generally 'bad' or 'very bad' health, or has a long term health problem.
- **Housing:** The household accommodation is either overcrowded (with an occupancy rating of -1 or less), in a shared dwelling or has no central heating.

Based on the most recently available census data (see Table A.4) a greater proportion of households are deprived in 2 or more dimensions within the Neighbourhood Plan area (22.21%) in comparison with North Dorset (18.2%). Compared to regional averages, the Neighbourhood Plan area has very similar percentages for all categories. Compared to the national figures, the Neighbourhood Plan area has a higher percentage of households not deprived, and a lower proportion of households deprived in 2 and 3 dimensions.

Table A.4: Relative household deprivation dimensions<sup>86</sup>

	Blandford+	North Dorset	South West	England
<b>Household not deprived</b>	44.6%	47.3%	44.8%	42.5%
<b>Deprived in 1 dimension</b>	33.2%	33.8%	33.2%	32.7%
<b>Deprived in 2 dimensions</b>	17.9%	15.8%	17.6%	19.1%
<b>Deprived in 3 dimensions</b>	3.81%	2.9%	4.0%	5.1%
<b>Deprived in 4 dimensions</b>	0.5%	0.3%	0.4%	0.5%

## Index of Multiple Deprivation

The Index of Multiple Deprivation 2015 (IMD) is an overall relative measure of deprivation constructed by combining seven domains of deprivation according to their respective weights, as described below. The seven deprivation domains are as follows:

- **Income:** The proportion of the population experiencing deprivation relating to low income, including those individuals that are out-of-work and those that are in work but who have low earnings (satisfying the respective means tests).
- **Employment:** The proportion of the working-age population in an area involuntarily excluded from the labour market, including those individuals who would like to work but are unable to do so due to unemployment, sickness or disability, or caring responsibilities.
- **Education, Skills and Training:** The lack of attainment and skills in the local population.
- **Health Deprivation and Disability:** The risk of premature death and the impairment of quality of life through poor physical or mental health. Morbidity, disability and premature mortality are also considered, excluding the aspects of behaviour or environment that may be predictive of future health deprivation.
- **Crime:** The risk of personal and material victimisation at local level.

<sup>86</sup> ONS (no date): Census 2011: 'Households by Deprivation Dimensions 2011 (Table QS119EW)

- **Barriers to Housing and Services:** The physical and financial accessibility of housing and local services, with indicators categorised in two sub-domains.
  6. 'Geographical Barriers': relating to the physical proximity of local services
  7. 'Wider Barriers': relating to access to housing, such as affordability.
- **Living Environment:** The quality of the local environment, with indicators falling categorised in two sub-domains.
  8. 'Indoors Living Environment' measures the quality of housing.
  9. 'Outdoors Living Environment' measures air quality and road traffic accidents.

Two supplementary indices (subsets of the Income deprivation domains), are also included:

- **Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index:** The proportion of all children aged 0 to 15 living in income deprived families.
- **Income Deprivation Affecting Older People Index:** The proportion of all those aged 60 or over who experience income deprivation.

Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) are a geographic hierarchy designed to improve the reporting of small area statistics in England and Wales. They are standardised geographies designed to be as consistent in population as possible, with each LSOA containing approximately 1,000 to 1,500 people. In relation to the IMD 2015, LSOAs are ranked out of the 32,844 in England and Wales, with 1 being the most deprived. Ranks are normalised into deciles, with a value of 1 reflecting the top 10% most deprived LSOAs in England and Wales.

The Neighbourhood Planning area lies within the following seven LSOAs:<sup>87</sup>

- North Dorset 006A
- North Dorset 006B
- North Dorset 007A
- North Dorset 007B
- North Dorset 007C
- North Dorset 007D
- North Dorset 007E

Analysis of the data reveals the following inferences:

### **General trends**

North Dorset 006A covers a small portion of the Neighbourhood Plan area to the north of Blandford Forum. This LSOA is ranked 19,213 out of 32,844 LSOAs in England; where 1 is the most deprived LSOA. This is amongst the 50% least deprived neighbourhoods in the country. This LSOA is particularly deprived in terms of Barriers to Housing and Services, being within the 10% most deprived for this domain. However for the majority of other domains, this LSOA is ranked in the 30% least deprived; notably Income Deprivation Affecting Older People, Health Deprivation and Disability, Education, Skills and Training, Employment Deprivation and Income Deprivation.

North Dorset 006B covers a large proportion of the Neighbourhood Plan area, the rural extent to the southeast of Blandford Forum, including Blandford St. Mary. This LSOA is ranked 18,959 out of 32,844 LSOAs in England; where 1 is the most deprived LSOA. This is amongst the 50% least deprived neighbourhoods in the country. This LSOA is particularly deprived in relation to Housing and Services, being within the 10% most deprived for this domain. The LSOA is also deprived in terms of Education, Skills and Training, being within the 30% most deprived for this domain. However for other domains

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<sup>87</sup> DCLG (2015): 'English Indices of Deprivation Explorer', [online] available at <http://dclgapps.communities.gov.uk/imd/idmap.html> > last accessed 09/05/2018

this LSOA is ranked in the 30% least deprived; notably Living Environment Deprivation, Crime, and Health Deprivation and Disability.

North Dorset 007A covers a small area of Blandford Forum, to the north of the Neighbourhood Plan area. This LSOA is ranked 26,747 out of 32,844 LSOAs in England; where 1 is the most deprived LSOA. This is amongst the 20% least deprived neighbourhoods in the country. This LSOA is deprived in relation to Barriers to Housing and Services, falling within the 30% most deprived in the country. However, for all other domains (with the exception of Education, Skills and Training) this LSOA is among the 30% least deprived in the country.

North Dorset 007B covers the northern extent of Blandford Forum, up to the A350. This LSOA is ranked 20,982 out of 32,844 LSOAs in England; where 1 is the most deprived LSOA. This is amongst the 40% least deprived neighbourhoods in the country. This LSOA is particularly deprived in terms of Barriers to Housing and Services, being within the 10% most deprived for this domain. However in contrast, for Income Deprivation Affecting Older People and Living Environment domain, this LSOA is ranked in the 10% least deprived in the country.

North Dorset 007C covers the east of Blandford Forum, aligning with the eastern boundary of the Neighbourhood Plan area. This LSOA is ranked 20,022 out of 32,844 LSOAs in England; where 1 is the most deprived LSOA. This is amongst the 40% least deprived neighbourhoods in the country. This LSOA is particularly deprived in relation to Education, Skills and Training, being within the 30% most deprived for this domain. However the LSOA is in the 20% least deprived in terms of Income Deprivation Affecting Older People, Living Environment and Crime.

North Dorset 007D covers the southern extent of Blandford Forum, including the Blandford School and the northern half of Crown Meadows. This LSOA is ranked 12,597 out of 32,844 LSOAs in England; where 1 is the most deprived LSOA. This is amongst the 40% most deprived neighbourhoods in the country. The LSOA is within the 50% or above most deprived neighbourhoods for all domains (not including sub-domains).

North Dorset 007E covers a small area central to Blandford Forum, extending along Salisbury Road. This LSOA is ranked 13,110 out of 32,844 LSOAs in England; where 1 is the most deprived LSOA. This is amongst the 40% most deprived neighbourhoods in the country. This LSOA is particularly deprived in relation to Income Deprivation Affecting Older People and the Wider Barriers sub-domain, falling within the 30% most deprived neighbourhoods in the country.

### **Similarities/contrasts between the LSOAs**

- With the exception of North Dorset 007A, all LSOAs which cover the Neighbourhood Plan area are within the 40% most deprived, 50% most deprived, and 40% least deprived neighbourhoods.
- With the exception of North Dorset 007A and North Dorset 006A, all LSOAs which cover the Neighbourhood Plan area are within the 30-50% most deprived neighbourhoods in relation to Education, Skills and Training.
- All LSOAs which cover the Neighbourhood Plan area are deprived in terms of Barriers to Housing and Services, being within the 50% most deprived for this domain.
- With the exception of North Dorset 007D, all LSOAs which cover the Neighbourhood Plan area are within the 40% least deprived neighbourhoods in relation to crime.
- North Dorset 007D and North Dorset 006A are among the 40% most deprived neighbourhoods in relation to Living Environment Domain. In contrast, North Dorset 007A, 007B and 007C are in the 20% least deprived neighbourhoods in the country.
- In terms of Income Deprivation Affecting Older People, North Dorset 007E is among the 30% most deprived neighbourhoods in the country, North Dorset 007D is among the 40% most deprived, and North Dorset 006B is among the 50% most deprived. In contrast, all other LSOAs within the Neighbourhood Plan area are within the 20% least deprived neighbourhoods in the country.

- All LSOAs which cover the Neighbourhood Plan area are within the 30% most deprived in relation to the Outdoors sub-domain. Further to this, with the exception of North Dorset 007D; all LSOAs are within the top 10% most deprived for this sub-domain.

## Crime

With the exception of North Dorset 007D, all LSOAs which cover the Neighbourhood Plan area are within the 40% least deprived neighbourhoods in relation to crime. This low rate of serious crime is seen throughout North Dorset. However, there is a widely held view that crime levels are much higher than the statistics suggest and the “danger” of becoming a victim of crime is prevalent, particularly among older people. Vandalism and anti-social behaviour is seen as a particular problem in the town centre, although there are some issues in the outlying villages. Problems include drunkenness and under-age drinking and acts of vandalism.<sup>88</sup>

## School place provision

The following schools are present in the Neighbourhood Plan area:

- Archbishop Wake Church of England Primary School
- Blandford St Mary Church of England Primary School
- Milldown Church of England Primary School
- The Blandford School
- Bryanston School

The Blandford Town Pupil Place Planning Statement (2016) highlights that the Blandford Town is divided into two catchments.<sup>89</sup> One combined catchment that services Milldown and Archbishop Wake, and the other is Blandford St. Mary. The Blandford Town Pupil Place Planning area has been subject to a significant increase in numbers of children at the 4+ point of entry. In 2010 this was 112 children looking for a reception place against a then capacity of 75. This number has since increased over the years, with 152 children looking for places for September 2017.

The Government set out within Policy statement – planning for schools development (2011) that “the creation and development of state-funded schools is strongly in the national interest and that planning decision-makers can and should support that objective, in a manner consistent with their statutory obligations.” It is expected that “all parties to work together proactively from an early stage to help plan for state-school development and to shape strong planning applications.”<sup>90</sup> In this context, DCC are concerned that the Local Authority’s statutory duty to provide sufficient school places could be at risk, recognising that the growth of Blandford (i.e. the proposed housing identified within the North Dorset District Local Plan) will require improvements to school provision.<sup>91</sup>

Until now, DCC has been managing the additional pressures through an absolute increase in numbers in the two town schools, Milldown (30/ 1FE) and Archbishop Wake (60/ 2FE), as well as a modest increase in the 4+ transfer rate into mainstream schools. The temporary expansion of Milldown Primary currently seen is not a long term solution; DCC identifies that there is a limit for this unplanned expansion of the school using modular temporary buildings, and that this has reached its optimum given the site constraints.

Considering the difficulties that at present cannot be overcome to increase the town capacity by 1FE, and the forthcoming pressure building again in September 2018/2019, it has become apparent that an additional further 1FE of capacity can only be accommodated by a new school.

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<sup>88</sup> DT11 Forum Community Partnership (2008) Shaping the Future Community Strategic Plan consultation document [online] available at: <<https://www.dorsetforyou.gov.uk/evidence/north>> last accessed 09/05/18

<sup>89</sup> Dorset County Council (2016) Blandford Town Pupil Planning Statement [online] available at:

<<https://www.dorsetforyou.gov.uk/article/423350/Blandford-Neighbourhood-Plan-2015-2031>> last accessed 30/05/18

<sup>90</sup> Department for Communities and Local Government (2011) Policy Statement – planning for schools development [online] available at: <<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/planning-for-schools-development-statement>> last accessed 30/05/18

<sup>91</sup> Dorset County Council (2016) Blandford Town Pupil Planning Statement [online] available at:

<<https://www.dorsetforyou.gov.uk/article/423350/Blandford-Neighbourhood-Plan-2015-2031>> last accessed 30/05/18

The options for a school site have been investigated and are set out in the Blandford Town Pupil Place Planning Statement.<sup>92</sup> This concludes that DCC is committed to securing a minimum 2FE school site in Blandford and based on existing analysis, the site north of the bypass is the most appropriate. This site can provide the necessary minimum 2.1ha that are required for 2FE. It can also provide sufficient site for a 3FE should DCC want to secure some additional school provision for developments beyond the end of the current local plan. The site is to the North of Blandford and thus is sited close to where the children are currently coming from. There are already good pedestrian links into the housing provision in the northern part of the town.

The delivery of the new school site is critical to the ability of DCC to fulfil its statutory obligation of providing school places in the town. The Pupil Place Update (June 2017) recognises this, stating that "in the review of Primary provision in the Blandford Town area a site of a minimum of 2.2ha was required to provide for a 2 FE Primary School. The Local Authority was also mindful of the need to secure ongoing capacity and flexibility within the town and looked to secure the additional approximate 1 ha to allow the school to expand to 3FE."<sup>93</sup>

In this context, it is highlighted that there are approximately 18 -20 children in catchment for the Blandford St. Mary's Primary School. At present the school does fill to Pupil Admission Number (PAN) at 30, but in the main these are children from within the combined catchment area of Archbishop Wake and Milldown Primary Schools.

Currently the combined catchment for Milldown and Archbishop Wake has upwards of 160 children in catchment. Along with the 20 for Blandford St. Mary's and 19 at Pimperne, there is a total demand for 199 places prior to any new housing. There is capacity for 150 children per year group across the 4 schools (Milldown, Archbishop Wake, Blandford St. Mary's, Pimperne). There is further overflow capacity to Spetisbury and Durweston though these are not preference places at this stage.

In terms of travel – children currently travel from the combined catchment in the centre of town to Blandford St. Mary, approximately 10-15 per year group, or to Pimperne (10- 12 per year group). Should additional spaces (up to 60 per year group – 7 year groups overall) be provided in or around Blandford St. Mary's, there is a potential that all of those children would be transported by DCC funded transport or by individual private journeys from the combined catchment area into the school in the south.

However, as discussed above, the site on the northern edge of the combined catchment area provides ready and easy access, much of it within walking distance for the families who would otherwise have to look to the south for school provision.

The Pupil Place Update further considers all potential options for the expansion of an existing school, or a new primary school itself within the bypass. Of all options considered the Update concludes none are suitable.<sup>94</sup> This indicates the only viable option remaining is the site to the north east of Blandford.

It is noted that an updated pupil planning statement and response to the proposed spatial growth options (including an additional 660 homes for the whole of Blandford) has been requested from DCC to update their 2017 evidence (which was based on NDLP1 growth). Additionally, the Local Education Authority is updating their pupil yield data which they will apply to the new assessment for Blandford.

## Health services

There are two medical surgeries within the Neighbourhood Plan area; Whitecliff Mill Street Practice and Eagle House. These are both sited in Blandford Forum. Blandford Community Hospital is also located within Blandford Forum, which together with the two medical centres supplies almost all the Neighbourhood Plan area's medical needs.

However, following direct consultation with all surgeries in 2012, the Whitecliff Surgery in Blandford responded that healthcare provision is already under pressure and that a new or improved/extended

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> Dorset County Council (2017) Pupil Place Update

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

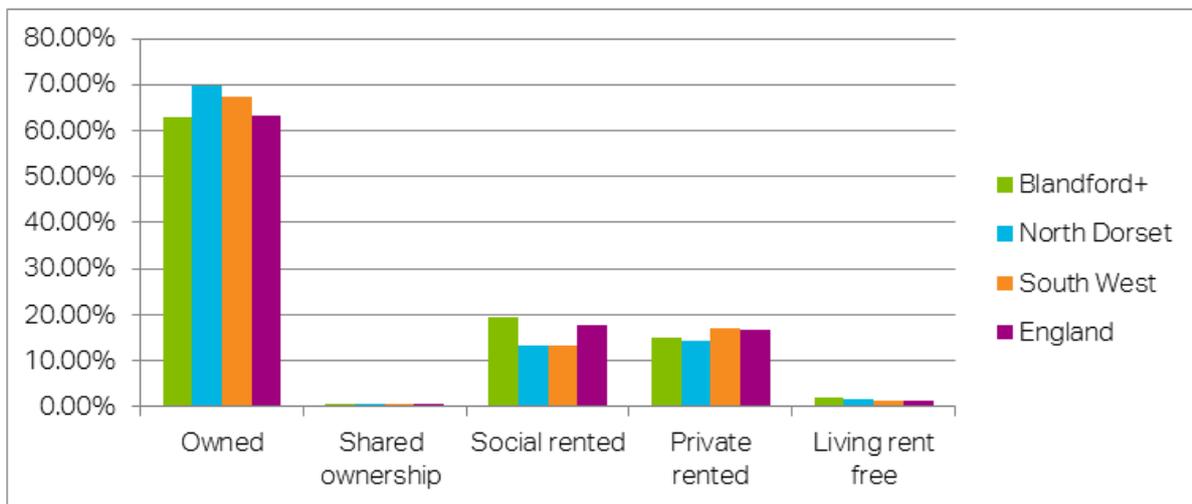
surgery is required.<sup>95</sup> This may be due to the extended catchment to Blandford, extending to smaller rural settlements outside of the town. It is also noted that the two medical centres are located within 400m of each other, to the south of Blandford Forum town centre, limiting accessibility for residents in the wider Neighbourhood Plan area.

Large general hospitals with specialist support services and clinics are located in Dorchester, Bournemouth and Poole. The Foundation Trust Hospital at Salisbury also provides specialist support for some Dorset residents including those from the Neighbourhood Plan area.<sup>96</sup>

## Housing tenure

Within the Neighbourhood Plan area, the 2011 Census data shows that 63% of residents either own their home outright or with a mortgage, compared to 69.8% for North Dorset, 67.4% for the South West and 63.3% for England (Figure A.1). There are also fewer residents within privately rented accommodation in the Neighbourhood Plan area (14.9%) in comparison to the regional (17.09%) and national totals (16.8%). However, the percentage of Neighbourhood Plan residents in socially rented accommodation (19.42%) is considerably greater than the North Dorset (13.48%) and South West (13.31%) percentages, and also greater than that of England (17.7%).

Figure A.1 Tenure by household<sup>97</sup>



## Living arrangements

Combining data from the Blandford Forum & Langton Long, Blandford St. Mary, and Bryanston Area Profiles (produced by Dorset County Council (2018)) provides a strong indication of the living arrangements for the Neighbourhood Plan area (Figure 7.2). It is noted that Langton Long has been included within the Blandford Forum Area Profile due to low numbers. This is not expected to impact significantly upon the data.<sup>98</sup>

Figure A.2 shows that within the Neighbourhood Plan area over 1/3 of residents (35.01%) live in households married with/without dependents. There are also a high percentage of households with one person or couple headed by 65+ (22.85%). Additionally, only 8.2% of households are occupied by lone parents. Whilst house prices are generally lower than neighbouring areas, this may nonetheless reflect the issue of housing affordability. Within the Neighbourhood Plan area salaries are relatively low and a rising population locally is placing a strain on housing, increasing overall demand.

<sup>95</sup> North Dorset District Council (2016) North Dorset Local Plan Part 1 [online] available at:

<<https://www.dorsetforyou.gov.uk/northdorsetsubmittedlocalplan>> last accessed 10/05/18

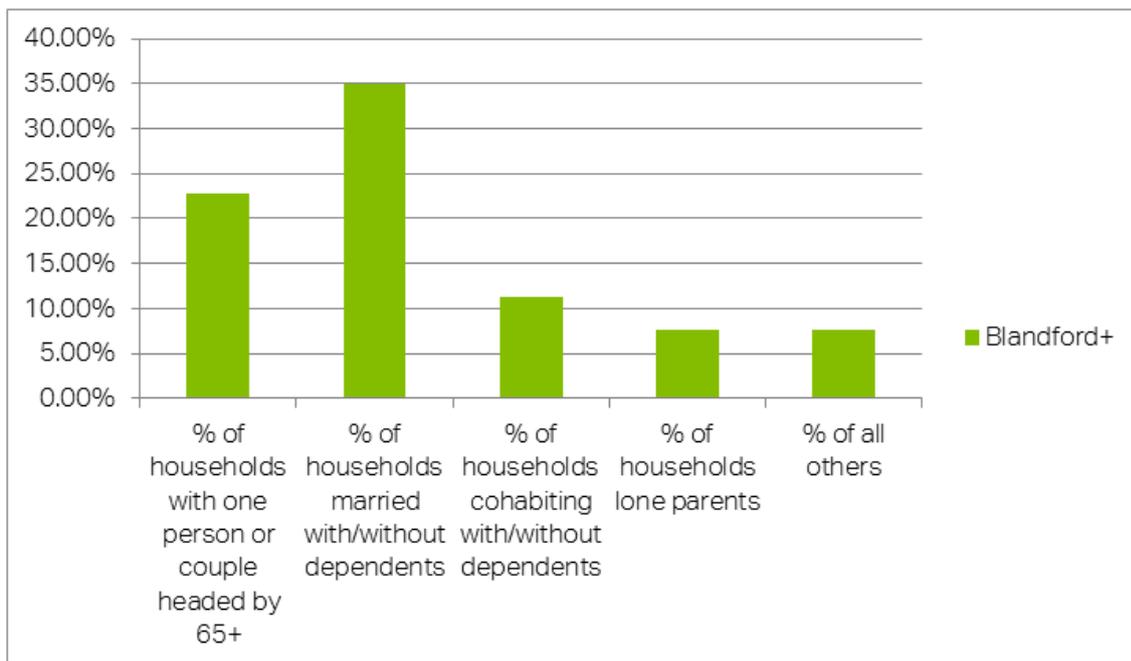
<sup>96</sup> Blandford St Mary Steering Group (2009) Blandford St Mary Parish Plan [online] available at:

<<https://www.dorsetforyou.gov.uk/evidence/north>> last accessed 10/05/18

<sup>97</sup> ONS (no date): Census 2011: Tenure-Households 2011 (Table QS405EW)

<sup>98</sup> Dorset County Council (2018) Dorset Statistics [online] available at: <<https://apps.geowessex.com/stats/>> last accessed 09/05/18

Figure A.2 Living arrangements <sup>99</sup>



### Summary of future baseline

The population of the Neighbourhood Plan area saw an increase between the years 2011-2016, greater than that of the District, and the regional and national averages. This trend of growth is likely to continue, and may place strains on local resources and infrastructure. Additionally, the future growth of the town could encroach upon the less populace areas of Blandford St Mary and Bryanston; both of which highly value their distinct rural identity.

The Neighbourhood Plan area is supporting a younger population than North Dorset and the South West. However, levels of deprivation in the area, combined with local issues of housing affordability and lack of school place capacity, suggest that younger people and families may find it difficult to live in the Neighbourhood Plan area in the future. For example, the majority of LSOAs which cover the Neighbourhood Plan area are within the 30-50% most deprived neighbourhoods in relation to Education, Skills and Training, and all LSOAs which cover the Neighbourhood Plan area are deprived in terms of Barriers to Housing and Services, being within the 50% most deprived for this domain.

It is recognised that the suitability of housing for local requirements depends in part on the successful implementation of policies outlined in North Dorset Local Plan Part 1 (2016) and the emerging North Dorset Local Plan Review.

<sup>99</sup> Dorset County Council (2018) Dorset Statistics [online] available at: <<https://apps.geowessex.com/stats/>> last accessed 09/05/18

# Health and wellbeing

## Context review

Key messages from the NPPF include:

- The social role of the planning system involves 'supporting vibrant and healthy communities'.
- A core planning principle is to 'take account of and support local strategies to improve health, social and cultural wellbeing for all'.
- The planning system can play an important role in facilitating social interaction and creating healthy, inclusive communities'
- Promote the retention and development of local services and community facilities such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship.
- Set out the strategic policies to deliver the provision of health facilities.
- Access to high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and recreation can make an important contribution to the health and well-being of communities.

The policies contained in Chapter 3 'Connecting people with the environment to improve health and wellbeing' of the Government's 'A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment' directly relates to the health and wellbeing SA theme.

In relation to other key national messages in relation to health, Fair Society, Healthy Lives<sup>100</sup> ('The Marmot Review') investigated health inequalities in England and the actions needed in order to tackle them. Subsequently, a supplementary report was prepared providing additional evidence relating to spatial planning and health on the basis that there is: "overwhelming evidence that health and environmental inequalities are inexorably linked and that poor environments contribute significantly to poor health and health inequalities".

The increasing role that local level authorities are expected to play in providing health outcomes is demonstrated by recent government legislation. The Health and Social Care Act 2012 transferred responsibility for public health from the NHS to local government, giving local authorities a duty to improve the health of the people who live in their areas. This will require a more holistic approach to health across all local government functions.

An OpenSpace Audit and Assessment of Local Need was produced for the North Dorset area in 2006. It provides a qualitative assessment of the level of provision of open space for recreational purposes and will act as a starting point for developing the proposed Green Infrastructure Strategy.<sup>101</sup>

A number of North Dorset District-Wide Local Plan (2003) saved policies and adopted NDLP1 (2016) policies set out a range of measures which directly and indirectly relate to the health and wellbeing theme. These include:

- Policy 4 (The Natural Environment)
- Policy 12 (Retail, Leisure and Other Commercial Developments)
- Policy 14 (Social Infrastructure)
- Policy 15 (Green Infrastructure)
- Policy 25 (Amenity)
- Policy 27 (Retention of Community Facilities)

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<sup>100</sup> The Marmot Review (2011) The Marmot Review: Implications for Spatial Planning [online] available to download from: <http://www.apho.org.uk/resource/item.aspx?RID=106106> last accessed 02/03/2018

<sup>101</sup> North Dorset District Council (2006) Open Space Audit and Assessment of Local Need [online] available at: <https://www.dorsetforyou.gov.uk/evidence/north> last accessed 09/05/18

- Saved policies 4.1-4.11
- Saved policies 5.7-5.12

## Summary of current baseline

### Health indicators and deprivation

Deprivation is a significant contributor to poor health and can have adverse effects on wellbeing, with elements related to poor housing quality, living environment, income and employment. As highlighted in Figure A.3 below, 81.9% of residents in the Neighbourhood Plan area consider themselves as having 'very good health' or 'good health', higher than the totals for the South West of England (81.4%) and England (81.4%), however higher than the total for North Dorset (83%). The number of residents in the Neighbourhood Plan area considering themselves to have 'bad health' or 'very bad health' is 4.4%, which is slightly higher than North Dorset (4.2%), but lower than the South West (5.2%) and England (5.4%).

Figure A.3 General health<sup>102</sup>

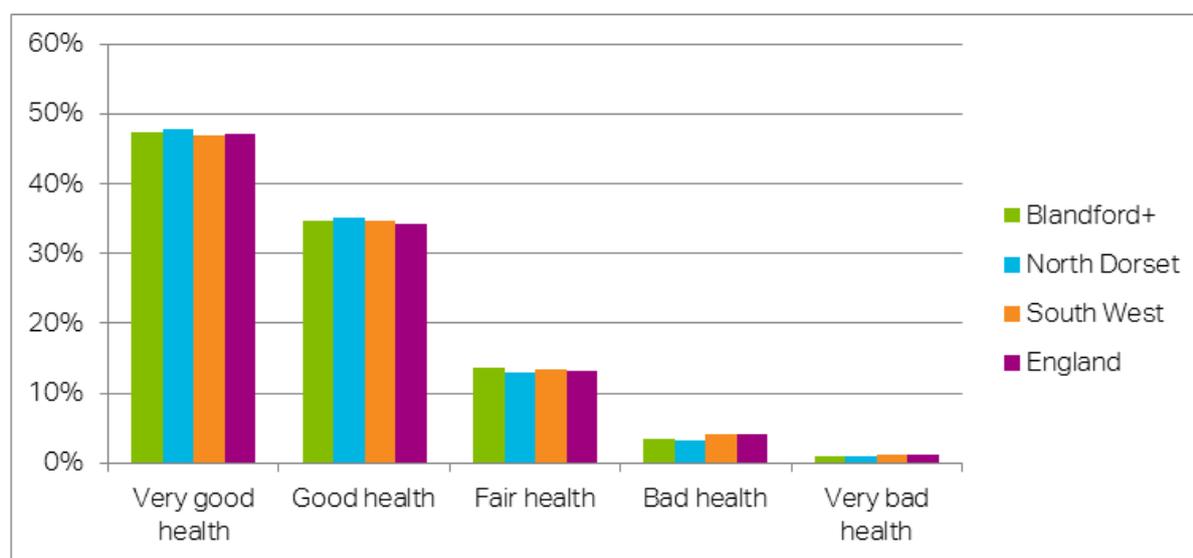


Figure A.3 showed that the percentages of those in 'very good health' and 'good health' in the Neighbourhood Plan area are lower than the District level but higher than regional and national levels. This finding also aligns with the disability data presented in Table A.5. 7.7% of residents in the Neighbourhood Plan area report that their daily activities are limited 'a lot', compared to 7.1% for North Dorset, 8.3% for the South West of England, and 8.3% for England.

Table A.5 Disability<sup>103</sup>

	Blandford+	North Dorset	South West	England
<b>Activities limited 'a lot'</b>	7.7%	7.1%	8.3%	8.3%
<b>Activities limited 'a little'</b>	9.8%	10.4%	10.2%	9.3%
<b>Activities 'not limited'</b>	82.4%	82.5%	81.6%	82.4%

The Dorset Area Profiles (Dorset County Council (2018)) include data relating to unpaid care.<sup>104</sup> Table A.6 shows that of the three Parishes within the Neighbourhood Plan area, residents within Blandford

<sup>102</sup> ONS (no date): Census 2011: 'General Health 2011' (Table QS302EW)

<sup>103</sup> ONS (no date): Census 2011: 'Long-term Health Problem or Disability 2011' (Table QS303EW)

Forum & Langton Long provide the greatest level of unpaid care. Throughout the Neighbourhood Plan area between 7% and 11% of residents provide unpaid care, of which between 7% and 8% is up to 50 hours per week.

Table A.6 Unpaid care<sup>105</sup>

	<b>Blandford Forum &amp; Langton Long</b>	<b>Blandford St. Mary</b>	<b>Bryanston</b>
<b>Total residents providing unpaid care</b>	10.2%	9.3%	7.5%
<b>Residents providing up to 50 hours of unpaid care per week</b>	8%	7%	7.1%
<b>Residents providing more than 50 hours of unpaid care per week</b>	2.2%	2.3%	0.4%

### Open space

The Neighbourhood Plan area is characterised by extensive green spaces. The Hams between the town centre and Blandford St Mary is an important public recreational site, in addition to the North Dorset Trailway which runs through the town.<sup>106</sup> The Stour flood plain to the west of town forms part of Bryanston Park and has the wooded slopes of Bryanston estate as a backdrop. However it is noted that the northern part of this former deer park is now taken up by Blandford School. Milldown comprises a further an important public space and chalk downland nature reserve on the northern edge of the town.<sup>107</sup>

### Summary of future baseline

Health and wellbeing levels within the Neighbourhood Plan area are generally good, with a high percentage of residents reporting 'good' or 'very good' health, and a low percentage of residents reporting that their activities are limited in some way. While the percentages for the Neighbourhood Plan area are higher than the regional and national trends, they are less favourable than the local trend in North Dorset.

A growing population within the Neighbourhood Plan area may place future pressures on health services and valued local green space in the area.

<sup>104</sup> Dorset County Council (2018) Dorset Statistics [online] available at: <<https://apps.geowessex.com/stats/>> last accessed 09/05/18

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

<sup>106</sup> North Dorset District Council (2016) North Dorset Local Plan Part 1 [online] available at: <<https://www.dorsetforyou.gov.uk/localplan/north>> last accessed 10/05/18

<sup>107</sup> Dorset County Council, North Dorset District Council, & English Heritage (2011) Dorset Historic Towns Survey: Blandford Forum [online] available at: <<https://www.dorsetforyou.gov.uk/article/400851/Blandford-Forum---historic-towns-survey>> last accessed 10/05/18

# Economy and enterprise

## Context review

Key messages from the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) include:

- The planning system plays an important economic role to contributing to sustainable development – 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.
- Planning policies should be positive, promote competitive town centre environments and set out policies for the management and growth of centres over the plan period.
- Have a clear understanding of business needs within the economic markets operating in and across the local areas – work closely with the business community to understand their changing needs and identify and address barriers to investment, including a lack of housing, infrastructure or viability.
- Plan proactively to meet the development needs of business and support an economy fit for the 21st century.
- Support economic growth in rural areas in order to create jobs and prosperity by taking a positive approach to sustainable new development.
- Support sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments that benefit businesses in rural areas, communities and visitors, and which respect the character of the countryside. This should include supporting the provision and expansion of tourist and visitor facilities in appropriate locations where identified needs are not met by existing facilities in rural service centre.
- Ensure that there is a 'sufficient choice of school places' is of 'great importance' and there is a need to take a 'proactive, positive and collaborative approach' to bringing forward 'development that will widen choice in education'.

The Bournemouth, Dorset, Poole Employment Land Projections Update (2012) applies a standard methodology to provide estimates that can be used alongside other tools for determining future employment land requirements.<sup>108</sup> The projections assume a return to stable, positive employment and economic growth. Linked to this, North Dorset District Council recently estimated that there is a requirement of 5ha of employment land to be found within the Neighbourhood Plan area during the current Neighbourhood Plan period.

A Joint Retail and Leisure Study (2018) has been carried out for North Dorset District Council, West Dorset District Council and Weymouth & Portland Borough Council, to help inform both plan-making and development management decisions across the three local authority areas.<sup>109</sup> The study:

- provides an assessment of the main centres within the local authority areas, highlighting key trends that are driving the dynamic changes in the retail and leisure sectors at the national and local level
- sets out the results of the market share analysis for convenience and comparison goods shopping and leisure use across the study area,
- sets out the health check methodology and key findings of the health checks for the main centres

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<sup>108</sup> Dorset County Council (2012) Bournemouth, Dorset, Poole Employment Land Projections Update (DCC 2012) [online] available at: <<https://www.dorsetforyou.gov.uk/evidence/north>> last accessed 09/05/18

<sup>109</sup> Carter Jonas (2018) Joint Retail and Commercial Leisure Study for North Dorset District Council, West Dorset District Council, and Weymouth & Portland Borough Council [online] available at: <<https://www.dorsetforyou.gov.uk/planning/north-dorset/planning-policy>> last accessed 05/06/18

- sets out key assumptions and forecasts underpinning the quantitative need ('retail capacity') assessment and the outputs of CJ's in-house CREATE (excel-based) capacity model
- sets out the findings of the commercial leisure and other town centre uses 'gap' assessment,
- provides advice on how the forecast retail and leisure need identified for each local authority area and the main centres over the plan period can be met "in full" in compliance with the NPPF.

North Dorset Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) sets out to summarise what infrastructure is required, when the necessary infrastructure will be put in place, what likely costs are involved, how those costs will be met and who will deliver that infrastructure. <sup>110</sup>The IDP lists the following transport infrastructure needed to support new development in Blandford:

- Bus Interchange and bus stop and cycling improvements in the town and wider area.
- Completion of North Dorset Trailway to Sturminster.

A number of North Dorset District-Wide Local Plan (2003) saved policies and adopted NDLP1 (2016) policies set out a range of measures which directly and indirectly relate to the economy and enterprise theme. These include:

- Policy 11 (The Economy)
- Policy 12 (Retail, Leisure and Other Commercial Developments)
- Policy 13 (Grey Infrastructure)
- Policy 30 (Existing Employment Sites in the Countryside)
- Policy 31 (Tourist Accommodation in the Countryside)
- Saved policies 3.1 – 3.30

## Summary of current baseline

The Western Dorset Economic Growth Strategy (2011) – the joint Economic Growth Strategy of North Dorset District, West Dorset District, Weymouth and Portland Borough and Dorset County Councils – the Western Dorset Economic Growth Partnership – identifies that the principal towns are set within two functional economic areas; Weymouth, Dorchester and Portland in the West; Blandford, Gillingham and Shaftesbury in the North.<sup>111</sup> The economic growth aspiration for these two distinct economic growth areas is to achieve a better balance and more sustainable future for the towns whilst releasing the major housing, employment and investment potential of these two economic areas.

### Local economy

The North Dorset Local Plan Part 1 (2016) designates Blandford Forum as a 'town centre'. It is therefore a sequentially preferred location for main town centre uses including: retail development, leisure, entertainment facilities, certain intensive sport and recreation uses, offices, and arts, cultural and tourism uses. <sup>112</sup>

Blandford town centre provides a range of shops and other services. As defined within the Annual Monitoring Report 2005 for North Dorset, the town centre extends just south of Whitecliff Gardens to the north, along Salisbury Street and Langton Road to the east, to the River Stour in the south, and along River Mews and White Cliff Mill Street to the west. The North Dorset District-Wide Local Plan (Saved Policies) (2003) Proposals Map sets out the following frontages:

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<sup>110</sup> North Dorset District Council (2012) North Dorset Infrastructure Delivery Plan Background Paper [online] available at: <<https://www.dorsetforyou.gov.uk/evidence/north>> last accessed 10/05/18

<sup>111</sup> North Dorset District Council, West Dorset District Council, Weymouth and Portland Borough and Dorset County Councils – the Western Dorset Economic Growth (2017) Western Dorset Economic Growth Strategy [online] available at: <[https://www.dorsetforyou.gov.uk/media/198291/Western-Dorset-Economic-Growth-Strategy/pdf/Western\\_Dorset\\_Economic\\_Growth\\_Strategy\\_v2.pdf](https://www.dorsetforyou.gov.uk/media/198291/Western-Dorset-Economic-Growth-Strategy/pdf/Western_Dorset_Economic_Growth_Strategy_v2.pdf)> last accessed 30/05/18

<sup>112</sup> Ibid.

- Primary Shopping Frontages form an 'L' shape and are concentrated along Salisbury Street and Market Place. PSF also extends along East Street from Sheep Market Hill to Common Lane.
- Secondary Shopping Frontages are located along East Street, West Street, White Cliff Mill Street and Salisbury Street.

In addition, there are a number of side streets, including Greyhound Square, Barnack Walk, Tabernacle Walk and The Plocks, within which retail units are located.<sup>113</sup>

### **Convenience offer**

There are 14 convenience units in the area according to the latest 2017 Experian Goad Category Report, trading from a total floorspace of 5,026 sqm. Although provision as a proportion of total outlets (7.5%) is below the national average (8.8%), floorspace provision (18.0%) is higher than the national average (15.2%).

The centre's food provision is anchored by Morrisons and Marks & Spencer (M&S) which are located on West Street and Langton Road respectively. The M&S offer is predominantly convenience goods (i.e. food and drink). Blandford Forum's convenience offer is also supported 1 baker & confectioners, 2 butchers, 1 CTN (confectionary, tobacco and news), 2 smaller convenience stores, a frozen food store, a greengrocer and 2 health food shops. There is also an out of centre Tesco store situated at Stour Park to the southeast of the town centre, a Co-op store on Salisbury Road to the north east of the town centre, and a Lidl store, which has recently opened on Shaftesbury Lane also to the north east of the town centre.<sup>114</sup> It is noted that several new shops and stores have recently come to Blandford, which highlights the continuous growth of the area (this includes M&S, Screwfix, SpecSavers, and Dominos).

### **Comparison offer**

There are 65 comparison goods retailers located within Blandford Forum Town Centre trading from a total floorspace of 7,051 sqm). The number of outlets represents 35.0% of total units in the centre, which is above the national average of 31.1%. The current floorspace provision represents 25.2% of total floorspace in the centre, which is below the national average of 35.0% and is a decrease from the 2015 figure (29.6%).<sup>115</sup>

Across the different comparison sub-categories, the centre has a high representation of many categories including charity shops, chemists, craft shops, electrical stores, antique shops, art shops, children's wear, DIY and home improvement stores, sports and leisure goods, jewellery and watches, and textiles and soft furnishing stores. Whilst the centre is largely characterised by independent comparison retailers, a number of multiple retailers are also present including WHSmith and Clarks.

There is an overprovision of charity shops. There are currently 10 within the centre which is equivalent to 5.4% compared to a national average of 2.7%. It is also noted that the markets in the town sell a variety of comparison goods.<sup>116</sup>

Blandford Forum has the highest market share within the North Dorset Council area (15.2%) although this figure is still considered to be relatively low. This is most likely a reflection on the limited provision of non-food goods in comparison to other centres outside of the district, such as Poole and Salisbury. However it is considered that the centre has an adequate comparison offer given its size, role and function in North Dorset's network and hierarchy of centres.<sup>117</sup>

### **Service offer**

In terms of the local service offer, there are 95 retail, financial and leisure service outlets in Blandford Forum Town Centre, with a total floorspace of 12,905 sqm. Services account for 51.0% of all units and

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<sup>113</sup> Carter Jonas (2018) Joint Retail and Commercial Leisure Study for North Dorset District Council, West Dorset District Council, and Weymouth & Portland Borough Council [online] available at: <<https://www.dorsetforyou.gov.uk/planning/north-dorset/planning-policy>> last accessed 30/05/18

<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

46.0% of total floorspace, which is above the respective national averages of 48.6% and 39.5%. In summary:<sup>118</sup>

- There are 28 retail services, which represent 15.1% of total outlets and is above the national average of 14.4%. This category is mostly made up of 19 health and beauty outlets; which is equivalent to 10.2% of units and is above the national average of 8.9%. Provision also includes 2 dry cleaners and launderettes, 3 opticians, a post office and a travel agent.
- There are 25 financial services outlets, which represents 13.4% of total units and is marginally above the national average of 10.3%. The Goad report shows that financial services include 12 property services, 4 retail banks, as well as 2 building societies and 2 building supply services.
- There are 42 leisure service outlets, equivalent to 22.5% of total units, which is just below the national average. Leisure provision includes 10 cafes, 10 fast food takeaways, 7 restaurants, 5 clubs, and 4 public houses. According to the consultation with key stakeholders, the centre has a reasonable night time economy, with the main restaurants and public houses attracting people on Friday and Saturday evenings.

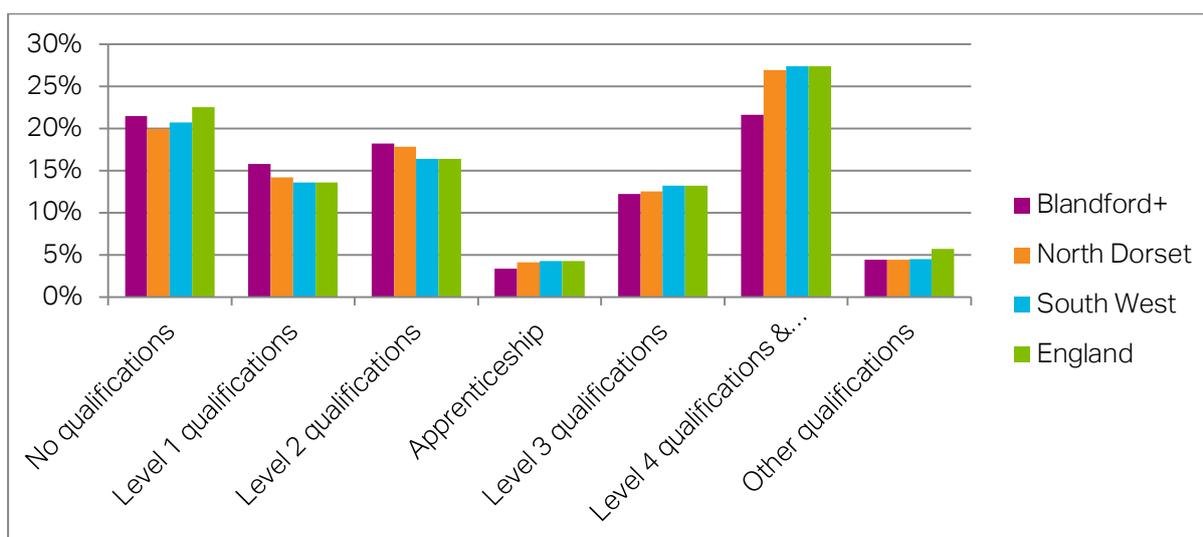
Given the size and role of the town centre, it is considered through the Retail Study (2018) that the overall representation of services is appropriate.<sup>119</sup>

However, despite its role as a main service centre, access to basic services and facilities (schools, employment and GPs discussed below and within Chapter 7) is patchy, with good access in some parts of the area and poor access in others. The shopping catchment for Blandford (major food shopping) extends about 8 miles in a northeast and southwest direction, but only 5 miles northwest and southeast.<sup>120</sup>

## Qualifications

Based on the 2011 census data (Figure 9.3), 21.5% of residents in the Neighbourhood Plan area have no qualifications, higher than the percentages for North Dorset (20%) and the South West (20.7%), and slightly lower than that for England (22.5%). Comparatively, there are a lower percentage of residents with Level 3 qualifications and above within the Neighbourhood Plan area (33.84%), compared with the totals for the District, (39.47%), the South West (40.6%) and England (40.6%). This shows that the Neighbourhood Plan area is generally less qualified than the District and region on average, which broadly supports the occupational trend of the Neighbourhood Plan area (Figure A.4).

Figure A.4 Highest level of qualification<sup>121</sup>



<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

<sup>120</sup> North Dorset District Council (2016) North Dorset Local Plan Part 1 [online] available at: <<https://www.dorsetforyou.gov.uk/localplan/north>> last accessed 10/05/18

<sup>121</sup> ONS (no date): Census 2011: Highest Level of Qualification 2011 (Table QS501EW)

## Employment

With regards to employment in the Neighbourhood Plan area, professional occupations (15.5%), and skilled trades occupations (15.2%) support the most residents (Figure A.5). This is also seen for North Dorset and the South West. However, the Neighbourhood Plan area has fewer residents residing in the professional occupations than the England total (17.5%).

Generally, there are fewer residents within the Neighbourhood Plan area employed within the managers, directors and senior officials, and associate professional & technical support occupation categories compared to all other comparators. There are also a higher percentage of residents within the Neighbourhood Plan area employed within the elementary occupations and the caring, leisure and other service occupations categories compared to the local, regional and national percentages shown in Figure A.5. This suggests that the Neighbourhood Plan area may have a less-skilled workforce, in comparison to the District, region and England.

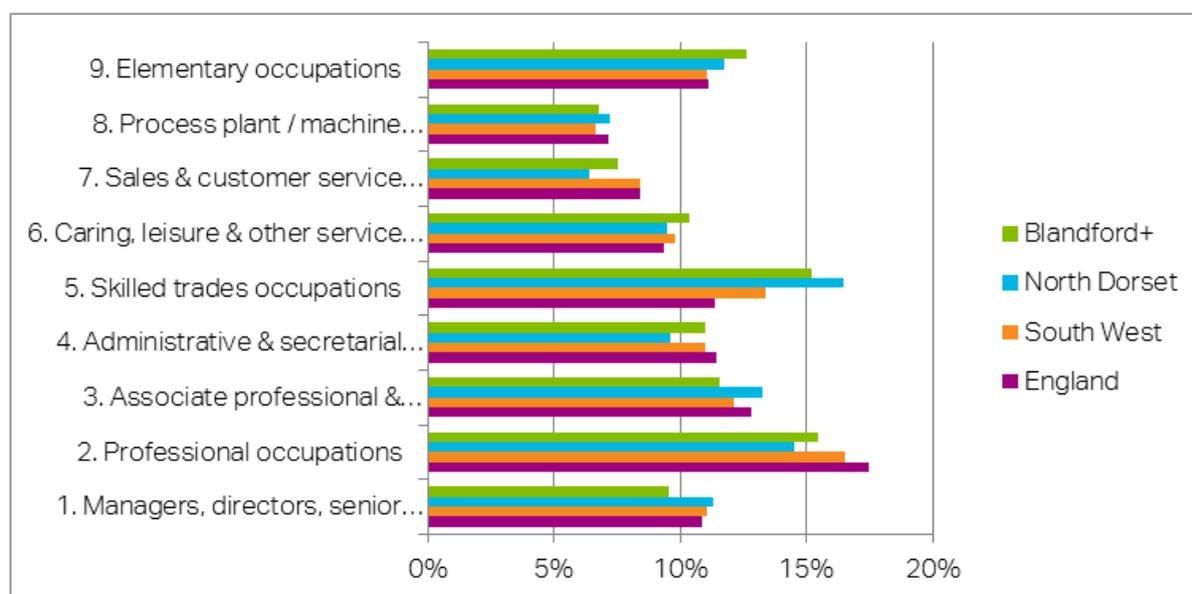
This is reiterated through the Western Dorset Economic Growth Strategy which states that *"in the area currently, the workforce is less skilled than the national average, a relatively high proportion of the workforce is in lower skilled occupations and wages are consequently below regional average."*<sup>122</sup>

Investment in skills and training is a major factor in creating a highly employable, higher skilled local population that can be retained locally, and which can generate economic growth, improved productivity and a sustainable local economy.

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<sup>122</sup> North Dorset District Council, West Dorset District Council, Weymouth and Portland Borough and Dorset County Councils – the Western Dorset Economic Growth (2017) Western Dorset Economic Growth Strategy [online] available at: [https://www.dorsetforyou.gov.uk/media/198291/Western-Dorset-Economic-Growth-Strategy/pdf/Western\\_Dorset\\_Economic\\_Growth\\_Strategy\\_v2.pdf](https://www.dorsetforyou.gov.uk/media/198291/Western-Dorset-Economic-Growth-Strategy/pdf/Western_Dorset_Economic_Growth_Strategy_v2.pdf) > last accessed 30/05/18

Figure A.5 Occupation of usual residents aged 16 to 74 in employment<sup>123</sup>



It is noted that although Blandford has a fairly diverse economic base (Figure 9.2), Blandford Camp (a large military site located to the north-east of the town) is a significant employer of local people and supports a variety of local businesses. It is anticipated that the Camp will remain a military establishment for the foreseeable future but changes to its role during the plan period could have implications for the local economy.

### Access to employment

The Western Dorset Economic Growth Strategy identifies the following strategic outcomes required to ensure sustainable economic growth of the Western Dorset Partnership area:<sup>124</sup>

- Increased proportion of new & surviving businesses;
- more local people in local employment with reduced daily workforce commute out of area;
- improved business sector productivity overall to give an attractive competitive economy;
- increase in total GVA of the economy; and
- sustained low unemployment levels (sector change)

In this context, the North East Transport Study (2010) highlights that that Sturminster Newton has the highest degree of self-containment of the four main towns in North Dorset.<sup>125</sup> Gillingham, Blandford Forum and Shaftesbury are slightly less self-contained but all four towns in North Dorset are significantly more self-contained than the market towns identified in East Dorset, including Corfe Mullen, Wimborne Minster and Three Legged Cross.

However, as discussed in Chapter 7, the Neighbourhood Plan area has expanded significantly in recent years, with more than 1,400 new homes being built between 1994 and 2012, and over 100 being completed in 2017.<sup>126</sup> This rate of growth has given rise to concerns for the local economy. About 3,900 people are in employment of which 55% are full time and 45% part-time. Approximately 70% of

<sup>123</sup> ONS (no date): Census 2011: 'Occupation 2011' (Table KS608EW)

<sup>124</sup> North Dorset District Council, West Dorset District Council, Weymouth and Portland Borough and Dorset County Councils – the Western Dorset Economic Growth (2017) Western Dorset Economic Growth Strategy [online] available at: [https://www.dorsetforyou.gov.uk/media/198291/Western-Dorset-Economic-Growth-Strategy/pdf/Western\\_Dorset\\_Economic\\_Growth\\_Strategy\\_v2.pdf](https://www.dorsetforyou.gov.uk/media/198291/Western-Dorset-Economic-Growth-Strategy/pdf/Western_Dorset_Economic_Growth_Strategy_v2.pdf) last accessed 30/05/18

<sup>125</sup> Buro Happold (2010) North and East Dorset Transport Study [online] available at: <https://www.dorsetforyou.gov.uk/evidence/north> last accessed 10/05/18

<sup>126</sup> North Dorset District Council (2016) North Dorset Local Plan Part 1 [online] available at: <https://www.dorsetforyou.gov.uk/northdorsetsubmittedlocalplan> last accessed 10/05/18

commuter traffic travels towards the South East Dorset conurbation, signifying that self-containment in the area is reducing.<sup>127</sup>

Much of the recent development in the area has taken place on land between the existing built-up area and the bypass. However, this has not always been in the case in places that are accessible to key locations, such as the town centre. As such, the need to encourage self-containment in order to limit levels of commuting to the South East Dorset conurbation is important for the sustainability of the Neighbourhood Plan area.

Key stakeholders acknowledge public transport to be one of the town's key weaknesses and as such there is an interest from the local community to improve such services, which would in turn positively impact upon self-containment though improving access throughout the town. Accessibility is further discussed in Chapter 10.<sup>128</sup>

## Tourism

There is a growing recognition of the importance of tourism to North Dorset's economy and in Blandford specifically. This is suggested by the mix of shops and services in the town.<sup>129</sup>

## Telecommunications

Modern telecommunications play a significant role in the life of local communities, especially in rural areas. They also have a particular role to play in promoting sustainable communities by reducing the need to travel for work, education/ learning, shopping and leisure.

Broadband availability across North Dorset is not widespread; indeed, a few areas have no access to broadband at all while others have slow or very slow connection speeds. The Council is working with Dorset County Council and others<sup>130</sup> in efforts to remedy the situation but there will still be blackspots to be addressed.

Trailway Broadband is a project supported by the Community Partnerships Executive for North Dorset (CPEND) and DT11 Forum, the Blandford area community partnership. The project seeks to use the Trailway between Blandford and Sturminster Newton as the route for a fibre optic cable which will support superfast broadband links to the villages along the way as well as the married quarters at Blandford Camp and the Business Park at Sturminster Newton.<sup>131</sup>

Further to this, the Western Dorset Economic Growth Strategy highlights how vital digital infrastructure is to local economic growth.<sup>132</sup> However, as discussed above, the predominantly rural Western Dorset area is behind the curve compared to competing economic areas. To address this, the 2015 Dorset Digital Infrastructure Strategy which informs the Western Dorset Economic Growth Strategy, aims to stimulate significant economic growth by providing Dorset businesses and learners with access to high speed digital connectivity whilst supporting sustainable rural growth.<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> Blandford Forum Town Council (2015) Blandford+ Neighbourhood Plan: Sustainability Appraisal/Strategic Environmental Assessment Scoping Letter

<sup>128</sup> Carter Jonas (2018) Joint Retail and Commercial Leisure Study for North Dorset District Council, West Dorset District Council, and Weymouth & Portland Borough Council [online] available at: <<https://www.dorsetforyou.gov.uk/planning/north-dorset/planning-policy>> last accessed 30/05/18

<sup>129</sup> Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners (2008) Joint Retail Assessment Volume 2: North Dorset [online] available at: <<https://www.dorsetforyou.gov.uk/evidence/north>> last accessed 10/05/18

<sup>130</sup> Superfast Dorset' is supported by the Council and the County Council and 'Trailway Broadband' is a community-led project.

<sup>131</sup> North Dorset District Council (2012) North Dorset Infrastructure Delivery Plan Background Paper [online] available at: <<https://www.dorsetforyou.gov.uk/evidence/north>> last accessed 10/05/18

<sup>132</sup> North Dorset District Council, West Dorset District Council, Weymouth and Portland Borough and Dorset County Councils – the Western Dorset Economic Growth (2017) Western Dorset Economic Growth Strategy [online] available at: <[https://www.dorsetforyou.gov.uk/media/198291/Western-Dorset-Economic-Growth-Strategy/pdf/Western\\_Dorset\\_Economic\\_Growth\\_Strategy\\_v2.pdf](https://www.dorsetforyou.gov.uk/media/198291/Western-Dorset-Economic-Growth-Strategy/pdf/Western_Dorset_Economic_Growth_Strategy_v2.pdf)> last accessed 30/05/18

<sup>133</sup> Ibid.

## Summary of future baseline

Blandford's role as the main service centre in the southern part of the District is expected to be maintained. However, access to basic services (schools, shops, GPs, employment) is relatively inconsistent throughout the Neighbourhood Plan area, with good access in some parts of the area and poor access in others.

There is a need for housing growth in the area to be matched by employment growth and the provision of supporting infrastructure. Without this, self-containment in the area will likely decrease, resulting increased levels of commuting, particularly to the South East Dorset conurbation.

Blandford Camp provides a significant level of employment to residents within the Neighbourhood Plan area. It is anticipated that the Camp will remain a military establishment for the foreseeable future but changes to its role during the local plan period could have implications for the local economy.<sup>134</sup>

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<sup>134</sup> North Dorset District Council (2016) North Dorset Local Plan Part 1 [online] available at:  
<<https://www.dorsetforyou.gov.uk/northdorsetsubmittedlocalplan>> last accessed 10/05/18

## Transportation

European and UK transport policies and plans place emphasis on the modernisation and sustainability of the transport network. Specific objectives include reducing pollution and road congestion through improvements to public transport, walking and cycling networks and reducing the need to travel. National policy also focuses on the need for the transport network to support sustainable economic growth.

At the local level, each Local Transport Authority in England and Wales has a statutory duty to produce and adopt a Local Transport Plan through the Local Transport Act 2000, as amended by the Local Transport Act 2008.

Bournemouth, Poole and Dorset's third Local Transport Plan (LTP3) (2011) sets out the long term goals, strategy and policies for improving transport in the area over the fifteen year period from 2011 to 2026.<sup>135</sup> The LTP3 covers all modes of transport (including walking, cycling, public transport, car based travel and freight), the management and maintenance of the highway network, and the relationships between transport and wider policy issues such as the economy, environment, air quality, climate change, health and social inclusion.

The Bournemouth, Poole and Dorset LTP3 Implementation Plan (2017) covers a 15 year period, and has therefore been broken down into five Implementation Plans, each covering a three year period. The third of those five Implementation Plans was published in 2017, running from 2017 to 2020.<sup>136</sup> The plan sets out how available funding and resources will be used to deliver the LTP3 strategy and policies during the Implementation Plan 3 (IP3) period. It has been prepared in parallel with the Strategic Economic Plan (SEP), prepared by the Dorset Local Enterprise Partnership (DLEP), and as such is closely aligned with other investment planning for housing, growth and other wider strategic priorities. The plan also recognises the important role of delivery partners such as the Department for Transport, Highways England, Network Rail, Public Transport Operators and Public Health England in bringing forward proposals.

North Dorset Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) (2012) sets out to summarise what infrastructure is required, when the necessary infrastructure will be put in place, what likely costs are involved, how those costs will be met and who will deliver that infrastructure.<sup>137</sup> The IDP lists the following transport infrastructure needed to support new development in Blandford:

- Bus Interchange and bus stop and cycling improvements in the town and wider area.
- Completion of North Dorset Trailway to Sturminster.

The North and North East Dorset Transport Study (2010) is one of three transport studies carried out for Dorset County Council.<sup>138</sup> The studies provide "frontloading evidence" into the Local Development Framework (LDF) process being undertaken by Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) across Dorset. It considers the existing transport networks and travel patterns within North and north East Dorset in the context of the proposed development targets.

North Dorset Local Plan (2011-2026) Transportation Background Paper (2013) has been produced to support the pre-submission publication of Part 1 of the North Dorset Local Plan that sets out the

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<sup>135</sup> Bournemouth Borough Council, Poole Borough, and Dorset County Council (2011) Bournemouth, Poole and Dorset Local Transport Plan 3 [online] available at: <<https://www.dorsetforyou.gov.uk/article/417819/View-the-Local-Transport-Plan>> last accessed 11/05/18

<sup>136</sup> Bournemouth Borough Council, Poole Borough, and Dorset County Council (2017) Bournemouth, Poole and Dorset Local Transport Plan 3: Implementation Plan 3 2017 to 2020 [online] available at: <<https://www.dorsetforyou.gov.uk/article/417819/View-the-Local-Transport-Plan>> last accessed 11/05/18

<sup>137</sup> North Dorset District Council (2012) North Dorset Infrastructure Delivery Plan Background Paper [online] available at: <<https://www.dorsetforyou.gov.uk/evidence/north>> last accessed 10/05/18

<sup>138</sup> Buro Happold (2010) North and North East Dorset Transport Study [online] available at: <<https://www.dorsetforyou.gov.uk/evidence/north>> last accessed 10/05/18

strategic policies for the District for the period 2011 to 2026.<sup>139</sup> The background paper provides a specific focus on transportation in North Dorset. It also refers to those parts of the evidence base which informed the spatial policies and also sets out the policy background – at national, regional and local levels – against which the plan was prepared.

A number of North Dorset District-Wide Local Plan (2003) saved policies and adopted NDLP1 (2016) policies set out a range of measures which directly and indirectly relate to the transportation theme. These include:

- Policy 6 (Housing Distribution)
- Policy 11 (The Economy)
- Policy 13 (Grey Infrastructure)
- Saved policies 5.1 – 5.33

## Summary of current baseline

### Rail network

There are no local railway stations within the Neighbourhood Plan area. The nearest railway station is Gillingham, which is approximately 20km to the north west of Blandford. Gillingham train station provides hourly services to Exeter St Davids, Salisbury and London Waterloo. It is noted that this is the District's only railway station.

### Bus network

Much of Dorset is poorly served by bus routes, apart from services within Dorset's main towns and on key inter-urban routes. Key stakeholders acknowledge public transport to be one of the town's key weaknesses and as such there is an interest from the local community to improve such services.<sup>140</sup>

'Travel Dorset' identifies a number of services which connect Blandford within neighbouring centres. These are listed in Table A.7 below.

There is no intra Blandford bus service. The X8 bus service connects the town to Lidl in the north of the town along Wendal Road, but the local perspective suggests this is not sufficient to serve the area. Additionally, whilst there are services connecting Blandford with surrounding settlements, these do not run frequently and are therefore not likely to be depended on by local residents, particularly commuters. It is also noted that services do not run on the weekend.

In relation to the Neighbourhood Plan area, the North and North East Dorset Transport Study (2010) concludes that:

- Bus improvements are required to encourage commuter trips between Sturminster, Newton, Wimborne Minster, Blandford Forum and Poole;
- Insufficient early morning and late evening bus services between Blandford Forum and Dorchester and between Blandford Forum and Bournemouth; and
- Number 184 service inconvenient for commuters in villages such as Sixpenny Handley to use for commuting to Blandford Forum and Salisbury

### Table A.7 Blandford bus services<sup>141</sup>

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<sup>139</sup> North Dorset District Council (2013) North Dorset Local Plan (2011-2026) Transportation Background Paper [online] available at: <<https://www.dorsetforyou.gov.uk/evidence/north>> last accessed 10/05/18

<sup>140</sup> Carter Jonas (2018) Joint Retail and Commercial Leisure Study for North Dorset District Council, West Dorset District Council, and Weymouth & Portland Borough Council [online] available at: <<https://www.dorsetforyou.gov.uk/planning/north-dorset/planning-policy>> last accessed 30/05/18

Service	Location	Provider	Frequency
20	Blandford forum – Salisbury	Damory Coaches	Mon-Fri, 5 times per day
X12	Blandford forum – Weymouth	Damory Coaches	Mon- Fri, 7 times per day
X8A	Blandford Town Service	Damory Coaches	Mon-Fri, approx. every 30 mins
X3	Blandford forum - Shaftesbury	South West Coaches	Mon-Fri, 8 times per day
X10	Blandford – Sturminster Newton – Yeovil	South West Coaches	Mon- Fri, approx. hourly
X8	Poole – Blandford Forum	More Bus	Mon- Fri, approx. hourly

## Road network and congestion

### A350 corridor

The Neighbourhood Plan area is easily accessed via 'A' roads. The A350 is the major A class road of the region connecting to the south east with the Poole/Bournemouth conurbation and to the north passing through the rural heartland of Dorset and Wiltshire to the A303. The A350 runs along the north east of the Neighbourhood Plan area connecting to the A354 which extends to the north east through Pimperne, and to the south west connecting with the A35 to Dorchester. The A354 is a key route between Dorchester, Blandford Forum and Salisbury.

In terms of volumes of traffic, the Local Plan (2011-2026) Transportation Background Paper (2013) found that Blandford experienced a traffic increase of around 3% on the by-pass section of A354, and an increase of 5% was recorded on A357 between Blandford and Sturminster Newton.<sup>142</sup> However, over the ten year period a decrease of 2% on A354 north east of Blandford was recorded. Use of the rural road C13 as an alternative to the A350 route between Blandford and Shaftesbury has become more noticeable in recent years. Traffic on the former route increased by 3% between 2002 and 2012 while traffic decreased on the Blandford-Shaftesbury section of A350 by 13%.

The North and North East Dorset Transportation Study (2010) was undertaken between 2008 and 2012.<sup>143</sup> It was based on draft regional spatial strategy growth figures that proposed 7,000 new homes in North Dorset by 2026, of which 1,500 were in Blandford. The Transport Study (2010) carried out modelling which identified that the A350 between Blandford Forum and Poole, and the A357 and A3030 between Blandford Forum and Sherborne are closest to their design capacity at pinch points by 2026. In particular, localised congestion is expected to become a problem at pinch points on those routes with a ratio of flow to capacity nearing 80%. This occurs particularly during the AM peak hour.

### Town centre

Blandford Forum town centre suffers considerably from vehicular congestion at rush hour. The main road that runs through the centre has additional roads joining it at several points within the town which also contribute to congestion at peak times. The North and North East Dorset Transportation Study (2010) highlights that some of the congestion could be avoided if drivers entered the town by the access road nearest to their destination and thus reduced their movements through the town centre.

<sup>141</sup> Dorset County Council (2018) Bus and rail in Dorset [online] available at: <<https://www.dorsetforyou.gov.uk/travel-dorset/public-transport-bus-and-rail>> last accessed 11/05/18

<sup>142</sup> North Dorset District Council (2013) North Dorset Local Plan (2011-2026) Transportation Background Paper [online] available at: <<https://www.dorsetforyou.gov.uk/evidence/north>> last accessed 11/05/18

<sup>143</sup> Buro Happold (2010) North and North East Dorset Transport Study [online] available at: <<https://www.dorsetforyou.gov.uk/evidence/north>> last accessed 10/05/18

The majority of vehicular trips generated by the Neighbourhood Plan area are short distance local trips.<sup>144</sup> This is likely due to residents in the north of the town having to travel by car to the south for access to services and facilities, as there is no adequate sustainable transport network available. Within Blandford, the Local Plan Part 1 (2016) states that the emphasis in terms of grey infrastructure will be on providing better facilities for walking and cycling between residential areas and key destinations, such as the town centre, employment sites, schools and other community facilities.<sup>145</sup>

### **Cycle and footpath network**

As discussed above, sustainable transport use in the Neighbourhood Plan area is limited by a number of factors. There is a concern over the lack of alternative transport for those who do not have a car, principally young people. Short-distance local trips offer the biggest opportunity for people to make sustainable and healthy travel choices. Nationally, around two out of every three trips made are less than 5 miles in length, many of which could be easily cycled, walked or undertaken by public transport where it exists.<sup>146</sup>

National Route 25 of the National Cycle Network runs through the north and south east of the Neighbourhood Plan area (Figure 10.2). Route 25 links with Frome and National Route 24 at Longleat and runs south through Gillingham and Poole to Bournemouth on the Dorset coast.

National Routes 253 and 250 also extend into the Neighbourhood Plan area. National Route 253 - formerly Regional Route 41 - runs in a loop off National Route 25, taking in Blandford Forum, Shaftesbury, Gillingham (Dorset), Sturminster Newton and Okeford Fitzpaine. Information on Route 250 is not currently available, however sustrans data shows the route connects Spetisbury with Charlton Marshall and Sturminster Newton with Child Okeford and Shillingstone.

Numerous Public Rights of Way (PRoW) and footpaths extend through the Neighbourhood Plan area., however connectivity between the north and the south is lacking. It is recognised through the LPP1 that cycling and walking links with the surrounding villages (and Blandford Camp) need to be improved in order for Blandford to maintain its function as a service centre for the surrounding area.<sup>147</sup>

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<sup>144</sup> Ibid.

<sup>145</sup> North Dorset District Council (2016) North Dorset Local Plan Part 1 [online] available at: <<https://www.dorsetforyou.gov.uk/northdorsetsubmittedlocalplan>> last accessed 10/05/18

<sup>146</sup> Blandford Forum Town Council (2016) Blandford+ Neighbourhood Plan: Sustainability Appraisal/Strategic Environmental Assessment Scoping Letter last accessed 11/05/18

<sup>147</sup> North Dorset District Council (2016) North Dorset Local Plan Part 1 [online] available at: <<https://www.dorsetforyou.gov.uk/northdorsetsubmittedlocalplan>> last accessed 10/05/18

## Car parking

Car parks in the town include:

- Church Lane (23 spaces);
- Eagle House Gardens (32 spaces);
- Langton Road (124 spaces);
- Marsh and Ham (188 spaces);
- Station Road (37 spaces); and
- Stour Meadows (92 spaces);

Car parks are located mainly to the edges of the town, predominantly located to the rear of East Street and West Street. Furthermore, there is some provision for on street parking on both sides of the road in some areas of the town centre. Whilst car parking provision in the centre is good, it has been recognised by key stakeholders that there is a lack of free parking in the town (aside from Stour Meadows). However, we consider it to be relatively low cost.<sup>148</sup>

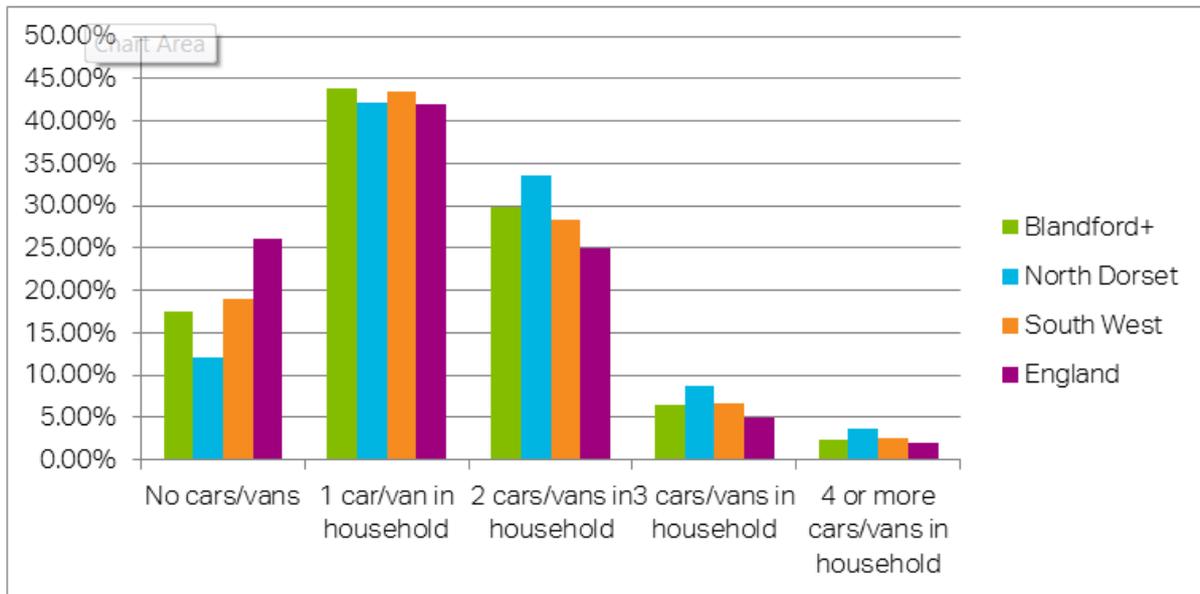
## Availability of cars and vans

Based on the 2011 census data (Figure A.6), 82.5% of households in the Neighbourhood Plan area have access to at least one car or van, which is in line with the percentage for North Dorset (82%), but higher than the percentages for the South West (81.1%) and England (74.0%).

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<sup>148</sup> Carter Jonas (2018) Joint Retail and Commercial Leisure Study for North Dorset District Council, West Dorset District Council, and Weymouth & Portland Borough Council [online] available at: <<https://www.dorsetforyou.gov.uk/planning/north-dorset/planning-policy>> last accessed 30/05/18

Figure A.6 Car and van ownership<sup>149</sup>



### Travel to work

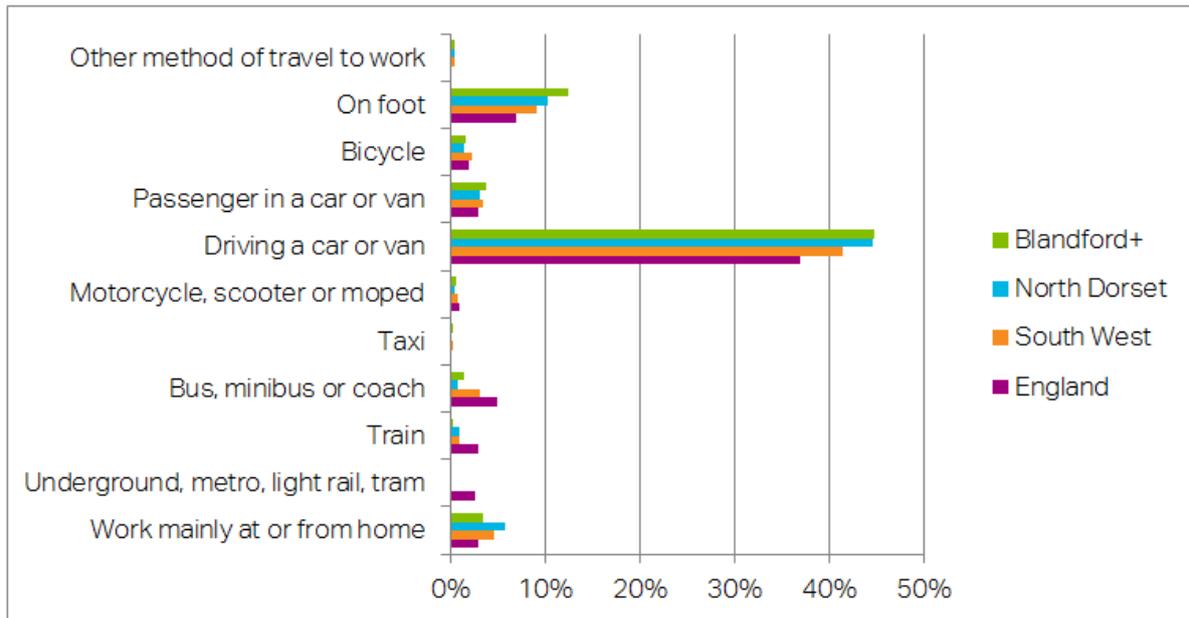
As shown in Figure A.7, the most popular method of travelling to work in the Neighbourhood Plan area is via driving a car or van (44.8%), which is higher than the totals for North Dorset (44.6%), the South West of England (41.4), and England (37.0%). This may be attributed to the increasing level of residents out-commuting for employment, and the lacking sustainable transport network in and around the Neighbourhood Plan area. Additionally, the percentages of residents that travel to work by taxi and as a passenger in a car or van are greater than all other comparators. This reiterates the absence of accessible public transport.

12.40% of residents within the Neighbourhood Plan area chose to walk to work. This is higher than the local (10.27%), regional (9%), and national average (7.0%) which suggests there remains a reasonable level of self-containment in the Neighbourhood Plan area.

Figure A.7 Method of travel to work<sup>150</sup>

<sup>149</sup> ONS (no date): 'Car or Van Availability 2011', (Table QS416EW)

<sup>150</sup> ONS (no date): Census 2011: 'Method of Travel to Work 2011' (Table QS701EW)



## Summary of future baseline

New development has the potential to increase traffic and cause congestion within the Neighbourhood Plan area, particularly within the town centre and along the A350 corridor.

Additionally, public transport use has the potential to remain low compared with private car use; likely to due to the infrequent nature of local bus services, the lack of railway stations and the rural setting of much of the Neighbourhood Plan area.

Negative effects of new development on the transport network are likely to be mitigated in part by the LPP1, the emerging Local Plan Review and also the LTP3. However, there will be a continuing need for development to be situated in accessible locations (preferably limiting further development to the north of the town) which reduces the need to travel by private car.

