**Policy 14 – Social Infrastructure**

Introduction One of national policy’s core principles is for planning ‘to take account of and 7.66 support local strategies to improve health, social and cultural well-being for all, and deliver sufficient community and cultural facilities and services to meet local needs’214. Policy 14 aims to deliver these principles and to ensure that the social 7.67 infrastructure that our communities need is planned for positively. In particular it aims to deliver:  education facilities (including pre-school childcare, primary and secondary, further and community learning and special needs education);  health services (hospitals, general surgeries and health centres);  emergency services (police, fire and rescue and ambulance);  cultural facilities (libraries, art galleries, arts centres and museums);  recreation and sport facilities (indoor sports facilities and youth centres); and  community facilities (non-commercial) (facilities such as community halls, places of worship and cemeteries). To make our towns vibrant places we also need a range of commercial 7.68 community facilities such as shops, cafes, bars and other activities within our town centres, as discussed in Policy 12 - Retail, Leisure and Other Commercial Developments. Village shops, post offices and public houses also provide a key focus for rural communities and the retention of such commercial facilities is discussed in Policy 27 - Retention of Community Facilities. Community facilities (both commercial and non-commercial) are encouraged in Policy 29 - The Reuse of Existing Buildings in the Countryside as they make the best use of existing resources whilst at the same time improving access to services for local people. Local communities also have the opportunity to address economic 7.69 development issues and the provision and retention of commercial and non-commercial community facilities through the neighbourhood planning process and the Government’s Community Rights. The provision of outdoor recreation and sport facilities is discussed in Policy 15 - 7.70 Green Infrastructure. The Council has worked with other authorities and providers to assess the 7.71 quality and capacity of existing social infrastructure, to identify future needs and to ensure that these future needs are met.

 214 Paragraph 17, National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (March 2012)

 Education Facilities The Government attaches great importance to ensuring that there is a sufficient 7.72 choice of school places available to meet the needs of existing and new communities. They require local planning authorities to take a proactive, positive and collaborative approach to meeting this requirement, and to development that will widen choice in education. The Government also give great weight to the need to create, expand or alter schools or education providers215.

Pre-School Childcare There is a range of childcare provision catering for the needs of pre-school age 7.73 children in the District ranging from children’s centres, day nurseries216, preschool/play groups217 to registered childminders. In 2011 the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment218, carried out by Dorset County 7.74 Council Children’s Services, assessed the supply and demand of pre-school childcare across the County and whether it met the demands of local families. It identified a key role for children's centres in delivering an integrated approach to family support. There are three children’s centres in North Dorset and they are located in the 7.75 main towns of Blandford, Gillingham and Shaftesbury and there is an outreach base in Sturminster Newton. Children’s centres enable all children to have the best possible start in life and act as a central point where families can access information and a range of services. In Blandford and Shaftesbury the children’s centres also have on-site day nurseries. The assessment showed that in North Dorset day nurseries and pre-school/play 7.76 groups provided the greatest number of places for pre-school child provision and in 2010 there were 39 day nurseries and pre-school/playgroups in the District. The distribution of day nurseries and pre-school/play groups mirrors the distribution of the population with the highest concentration of providers in the market towns. Childminders were also part of the assessment and research showed that in 7.77 2010 there were 73 registered childminders providing 330 places in North Dorset. Childminders are key in providing a service in rural areas where demand is not sufficient for group providers to offer a viable service.

 215 Paragraph 72, National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (March 2012).

216 Group childcare and are open for a minimum of 45 hours per week over five days or more compared.

217 Group childcare for 0-5 year old but are open for less than 45 hours per week. 218 Childcare Sufficiency Assessment 2011, Dorset County Council (2011).

The assessment did not identify any geographical gaps in childcare provision in 7.78 North Dorset although it did acknowledge the challenges for childcare providers in a rural area where populations are sparse and demand fluctuates and that childminders could play an important role in meeting needs in these areas.

Primary and Secondary Education The Council has worked with Dorset County Council (DCC), as the Education 7.79 Authority, to assess the likely future schooling needs of the District over the plan period. Evidence shows that there is a need for additional accommodation, both at primary and secondary school levels in all four of the District’s main towns. At a primary level DCC has provisionally identified a need for 2 additional forms 7.80 of entry (2FE) in each of the District’s main towns and their provisional plans are to build a new primary school in each. However, more detailed feasibility work shows that the situation in Blandford 7.81 may be resolved through careful use of the existing capacity in the school pyramid and by extending the existing primary schools in the town. In Gillingham expansion of St Mary the Virgin Primary School from a 1FE to a 2FE and capacity for a new 2FE primary school is required to accommodate the proposed growth associated with the southern extension. In Shaftesbury DCC are looking to provide a new 2FE primary school within the town, but on a site that is sufficiently large to accommodate a 3FE school if required in the future. Finally, in Sturminster Newton housing growth is likely to produce just under an additional half form of entry and DCC is considering relocating and expanding the existing primary school and redeveloping the existing site on Bridge Street. There is also a primary school at Blandford Camp to meet the needs of military 7.82 personnel and their families. Class sizes fluctuate with MOD rotations and DCC will consider expansion needs if and when required. In addition to the new schools and expansions proposed, the Education 7.83 Authority is committed to improving existing schools within the plan period. In 2014 work commenced on the replacement primary school at Pimperne. No new secondary schools are proposed in the plan period. Increases in 7.84 secondary school enrolments during the plan period will be managed on their existing sites. In addition to the state-funded schools there are also a number of independent 7.85 schools in North Dorset catering for a wide age range of children from 2 to 16 and beyond. Independent day and boarding schools are important to the rural economy and offer a wide choice of educational providers for local residents and to those from further afield. Many have high quality sports and recreational facilities that are shared with local communities and some offer child care/holiday clubs outside of term times. The continued support and development of independent schools and their links with local communities are encouraged.

Further Education and Adult Learning There are no higher education establishments in the District, but further 7.86 education is offered by a number of providers. In Shaftesbury there is the North Dorset Skills Centre at Wincombe Lane, Shaftesbury, which is part of Yeovil College. In Sturminster Newton there is the EQ Skills Training Base at Butts Pond that helps young people struggling to engage in academic education to gain employment skills and self-confidence. The District also has strong links with Kingston Maurwood College, an agricultural college based in Dorchester which provides subsidised transport for a significant number of students in the area. The Council welcomes these ties and would react positively to further outreach provision in the District. Community learning is also available in the form of adult courses at a variety of 7.87 venues and through work-based learning. These opportunities need to be retained and enhanced so that the existing and future workforce can receive the training they need to meet the changing requirements of local employers.

Special Education Needs There are two schools catering for special needs within the District. These are 7.88 the Yewstock School in Sturminster Newton, a day community school taking pupils from age 2 until 19 years who have profound, multiple or complex learning difficulties; and the Forum in Shillingstone, a special boarding school catering for pupils with autism aged 5-12 years. In 2014 DCC commenced work on a project to improve the 14-19 facilities at Yewstock School by providing a new base on the Sturminster Newton High School site. Both schools are located within existing residential areas and the implications of expansion will need to be assessed in line with other policies within the Local Plan.

Health Services As part of the changes to the NHS brought about by the Health and Social Care 7.89 Act 2012, Primary care trusts and strategic health authorities ceased to exist on 31 March 2013. Their responsibilities were taken over by a range of new organisations.

Hospitals Under the auspices of Dorset Health Care University NHS Foundation Trust 7.90 there are two community hospitals in North Dorset. The Trust has a longstanding commitment to engaging patients, service users, carers and the wider community in the development and delivery of the services it provides. They believe it is essential that the services they offer are informed and influenced by local people’s views and participation. The Blandford Community Hospital and the Westminster Memorial Hospital in Shaftesbury provide many services including elderly care inpatient rehabilitation, outpatient appointments, therapy services, radiology and minor injury services. The Council supports the retention and enhancement of community hospitals in the District. The Council also supports the Trust in joining forces with Dorset County Council, 7.91 other local authorities and NHS bodies in looking at ways of delivering health and social care services in Dorset as a whole under the new initiative, ‘Better Together’ that seeks to make the best use of available resources.

General Surgeries and Health Centres At a local level clinical commissioning groups (CCGs) are made up of local GPs, 7.92 nurses and other professionals who are now responsible for commissioning services for local communities. The Dorset CCG supports people in Dorset to lead healthier lives and it is divided into localities. With the exception of the surgery in Silton, which due to its close proximity to the county boundary is in the Wiltshire CCG, the remaining 12 surgeries in North Dorset are within either the North or Mid Dorset Locality. To accommodate the proposed growth in the District over the plan period new 7.93 or expanded health facilities are required in Blandford and Shaftesbury. The Council is aware of the pressures which a number of medical practices in North Dorset are facing in terms of outdated or undersized premises and of actual or potential increases in the number of patients. The Council will work with local general practitioners, commissioning bodies and other stakeholders to ensure suitable sites for the location of new surgeries or health centres are identified and brought forward for development. In addition, the location of new residential development in Blandford will require careful assessment of the need for, and location of, new facilities in the town. At Gillingham, where this assessment has already taken place, a local centre is proposed to meet the needs of the new southern extension, with new health facilities including a doctors’ surgery, dentist and pharmacy. Policy 20 – The Countryside may permit a new or relocated surgery or health 7.94 centre on the edge of the built-up area of a settlement in the countryside to support a rural community, if it can be demonstrated that there is an overriding need for a countryside location.

Emergency Services Community safety and emergency services (police, fire and rescue and 7.95 ambulance) are important elements of social infrastructure. Their capacity and location are vital in supporting sustainable communities. The authorities responsible for providing these services have no immediate plans for expansion within the District however provision in Gillingham is likely to be reviewed as the southern extension is delivered.

Cultural Facilities The provision of cultural facilities is important for the health and well-being of 7.96 the community. Over the plan period as the population of the District grows the need for well located, easily accessible libraries, art galleries, art centres and museums will increase. Buildings that are well designed, allow for a range of uses and that complement existing facilities are encouraged in the main towns. Outside the towns cultural facilities and their provision will be a matter for local communities to decide and delivered through the neighbourhood planning process unless an over-riding need can be demonstrated.

Libraries Library services in the District are currently provided by Dorset County Council. 7.97 There are four core libraries in each of the main towns in North Dorset and a mobile library service that serves the rural areas. There is also a community library in Stalbridge that is run by local volunteers, but supported by the County Council, which also acts as a hub for community activity in the locality. The Council will seek to retain all libraries in the District and supports the sharing of resources and facilities to secure the primary use.

Art Galleries and Arts Centres Currently there are no public art galleries in North Dorset, but there are a 7.98 number of permanent facilities for music and performing arts that also display works by local artists. The two main performance spaces are The Exchange at Sturminster Newton and the Arts Centre in Shaftesbury. Both function as arts centres as well as a focus for community and leisure activities involving music, theatre and film. On a smaller scale there is also the Slade Centre in Gillingham that offers art 7.99 classes, workshops and exhibitions and at the time of submitting this plan The Fording Point project, an arts centre incorporating theatre, cinema and other facilities in Blandford town centre had been granted planning permission. Outside the main towns the larger village halls such as Durweston and Fontmell 7.100 Magna are used for Arts Reach Theatre events and the Moviola travels around a number of villages showing films to local audiences. The Council supports existing art galleries and arts facilities and the 7.101 development of new facilities in the District’s four main towns depending on their scale and the area they serve.

Museums There are many small local museums around the District telling stories of rural 7.102 life in bygone days, battlefield communications through the ages and geological displays. All are valuable educational resources and contribute to the local tourism industry. These types of development are encouraged and supported especially in the main towns where there are good transport links.

Recreation and Sport National policy219 requires local planning authorities to work with public health 7.103 leads to understand and take account of the health status and needs of the local population (such as for sports, recreation and places of worship). The Dorset Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA)220 in its needs assessments 7.104 for physical activity recognises the need for a joint physical activity strategy in which existing sport and leisure centres, together with community halls and the natural environment play a key role in ensuring that those who want to be active can find activities they enjoy.

Formal and Informal Indoor Facilities There are three indoor sport and leisure centres in Blandford, Gillingham and 7.105 Sturminster Newton. All are now managed by the local community and provide local residents with an opportunity to participate in formal and informal indoor exercise ranging from recreational swimming to exercise classes. These facilities are also shared with the secondary schools in the towns. In addition to these community run centres many of the District’s independent schools also share their indoor facilities with local communities. There are also youth and community centres in Blandford, Gillingham, 7.106 Shaftesbury and Sturminster Newton and outreach youth clubs based in village halls and other community halls in Stalbridge and Okeford Fitzpaine. The Council seeks to retain existing formal and informal indoor sport and 7.107 recreation providers to inspire as many individuals as possible to take up physically active behaviours. The development of new or expansion of existing facilities in the District’s four main towns will be supported depending on their scale and the area they serve. The assessment of future needs and the opportunities for new provision should ideally be identified by local communities through the neighbourhood planning process. Alternatively, if identified, provision could also be made in the Local Plan Part 2

Formal and Informal Outdoor Facilities Access to high quality open spaces and opportunities for outdoor sport and 7.108 recreation can make an important contribution to the health and well-being of communities. In addition, it can contribute to relieving recreational pressure on areas of high wildlife value. Whilst formal and informal outdoor recreation and

 219 Paragraph 171, National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG (March 2012). 220 Health and Wellbeing in Dorset, 2012 refresh of the Dorset Strategic Needs Assessment, NHS Dorset (2012).

Sport facilities perform a social function, they are primarily covered by Policy 15 - Green Infrastructure.

Community Facilities (Non-Commercial) The provision of community halls and places of worship add vibrancy to the 7.109 District’s towns and villages and can provide a focus for activities. For example, a community hall can host a range of activities catering for all ages from young children with mother and toddler meetings to gardening clubs and the Women’s Institute. Places of worship and their associated halls are also a focal meeting point for many, especially in more rural areas. Cemeteries and burial grounds are often associated with places of worship but in recent years natural burial sites have become a popular alternative. The Council considers these types of community facilities to be non-commercial in relation to policies in the Local Plan.

Community Halls and Places of Worship During the plan period the following measures will be taken to ensure that the 7.110 community venues in the main towns are adequate to cater for planned growth:  Blandford – the refurbishment of the Corn Exchange, to provide a multipurpose hall for community use;  Gillingham – the provision of a community hall to serve the proposed southern extension to the town and a hall adjoining Riversmeet, both of which will embrace multi-functional space; and  Shaftesbury – the provision of a community hall, details of which have not yet been determined. In Sturminster Newton the multipurpose Exchange is a community, arts and 7.111 learning centre that offers much potential for community, leisure and entertainment activities. Its continued success is important not only to the town, but as a live entertainment venue for the District as a whole. Outside the four main towns many rural communities already have a village 7.112 hall, but some are in need of replacement, extension or refurbishment to bring them up to modern standards. The Council is keen for rural and often isolated communities to maintain a communal meeting facility as this not only enhances vibrancy but also minimises the need to travel. A new or relocated community hall may be permitted on the edge of the built-up area of Stalbridge or the District’s villages to support a rural community, if it can be demonstrated that there is a need for the facility and no suitable sites exist within the relevant settlement.

Cemeteries and Burial Grounds There are a number of cemeteries throughout the District, both in the main 7.1 13 towns and the countryside, where they are primarily associated with churches. The Council wishes to see the retention of all cemeteries as they form an integral part of the historic character and often contain mature vegetation which is of ecological value. However, some cemeteries are nearing capacity and during the plan period new 7.114 cemetery provision will be required. At present there is an identified need for extra capacity in the towns of Gillingham and Shaftesbury. Town and parish councils are responsible for cemetery provision and prior to 7.115 any allocation of land in the towns, whether through the Local Plan Part 2 or through the neighbourhood planning process, detailed surveys are required to determine the most appropriate location for a new cemetery. In particular the Environment Agency needs to be consulted to ensure that ground conditions are suitable for this purpose and there is no danger of pollution of watercourses or groundwater. The development of cemeteries, whether an extension to an existing site or a 7.116 new site including natural burial sites, will be allowed in the countryside provided that they meet the identified needs of local communities and accord with the other policies in the Local Plan, including those relating to the landscape, residential amenity and access.

**POLICY 14: SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE**

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| The Council will work with partners and developers to ensure that the level of social infrastructure across the District is maintained and enhanced through the retention and improvement of existing facilities and new provision, where required. Development should support the maintenance and enhancement of existing social infrastructure and the provision of new social infrastructure, through provision on site and/or contributions to provision off site, as appropriate. Through these measures the Council will ensure that: **Education Facilities** 1. the needs of existing pre-school facilities and providers in the towns and villages are met; and
2. provision is made to accommodate the additional forms of entry required at primary and secondary school levels across the District including, if necessary, new primary schools in Gillingham, Shaftesbury and Sturminster Newton; and
3. further education and community learning opportunities are retained and improved to provide the District’s workforce with the skills necessary to meet the changing needs of local employers; and
4. schools catering for children and young adults with special needs are supported.

**Health Services** 1. community hospitals are retained and enhanced; and
2. sufficient general surgeries and health centres are in place with new or expanded surgeries provided in Blandford, Gillingham and Shaftesbury.

**Cultural Facilities**1. existing libraries are retained and developed as valuable community hubs; and
2. multi-functional art galleries and arts centres are encouraged in the main towns; and
3. existing museums are protected and enhanced as valuable educational resources for the community as a whole.

**Recreation and Sport**1. existing formal and informal indoor facilities are protected and enhanced. Applications for new facilities in the main towns depending on their scale and the area they serve will be supported.

**Community Facilities (Non-Commercial)**1. existing community halls, places of worship and other non-commercial community facilities are protected and new facilities provided where there is an identified need. In the countryside, such facilities may be permitted on the edge of the built-up area of Stalbridge or the District’s villages to support a rural community, where no suitable sites exist within the relevant settlement; and l sufficient land is provided for cemeteries and burial grounds.
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