**Policy 18 – Shaftesbury**

Introduction

8.97 Shaftesbury together with Gillingham serves the needs of the northern part of the District and the parts of Wiltshire immediately east of the town. The historic core occupies a hilltop location and its attractive town centre supports a good range of shops and is a popular tourist destination. In recent years growth at Shaftesbury has primarily been on land to the east of the town that was allocated in the 2003 Local Plan. Most of the land here has been granted planning permission (679 dwellings in total) and its design and layout has been guided by a development brief265 that was adopted in 2003 following extensive public consultation.

8.98 It has long been recognised that the potential for expansion at Shaftesbury is limited by environmental (mainly landscape and biodiversity) constraints and the limited number of potentially developable sites where the town could expand further266. It is important that the remaining development opportunities are taken forward in ways which support the role, function and identity of the town, particularly in the light of the proposed expansion of nearby Gillingham.

Sustainable Development Strategy

8.99 Shaftesbury’s role, together with Gillingham, is to serve the needs of the northern part of the District and neighbouring parts of Wiltshire and this will be maintained. Its distinctive character will be retained and enhanced in order to build on its growing reputation as a centre for arts, culture and tourism. The expansion of the town, particularly on land to the east, should enhance its scope for self-containment by bringing forward both housing and employment development. 8.100 The key spatial aspects of this strategy will be:  focusing housing largely on the flat plateau land to the east of the town, north of the A30 and on two smaller sites to the north of the town on either side of the A350;  locating B Class employment uses (including offices) on land to the south of the A30;  ensuring that improved public transport, walking and cycling links integrate the new development to the east of the town with the existing built-up area;

265 Development Brief 2003: land to the Eastern Side of Shaftesbury, adopted as a supplementary planning guidance note in 2003. 266 More detail is provided in the Market Towns Site Selection Background Paper.

* making the land to the east of the town centre and the west of Christy’s Lane the focus for regeneration that could include community facilities with supporting retail and housing provision;
* ensuring that all development, including infilling, is accommodated within landscape and biodiversity constraints; and
* ensuring that all development enhances the towns historic character. 8.101 To contribute to meeting the longer-term growth needs of the town the District Council will work with Wiltshire Council, under the duty to cooperate, to bring forward the early consideration of development (residential and/or employment) on land adjoining the identified site to the south-east of Wincombe Business Park.
* 8.102 The strategy for the town will see the building out of sites already allocated or with planning permission for housing in the early years and a more limited amount of additional greenfield land later in the plan period. Growth at Shaftesbury will be supported by the necessary infrastructure and community facilities, both to meet the needs of the expanded town and to ensure that its role and function are not adversely affected by larger scale growth at nearby Gillingham. 8.103 In September 2013 the parish area of Shaftesbury together with the neighbouring parish areas of Melbury Abbas and Cann were designated as a neighbourhood area. The local community are now preparing a neighbourhood plan to address the local issues affecting the town and two parishes immediately to the south.

**Environment and Climate Change**

8.104 The main issues for Shaftesbury resulting from climate change are likely to include surface water flooding and the implications of development on groundwater resources.

8.105 During periods of rainfall, the location and topography of the town mean that water running from the roads and other hard surfaces impacts on the drainage system. New development in the town will need to recognise this and flood mitigation measures such as sustainable drainage systems (in line with Policy 3 – Climate Change) will need to be included in any development.

8.106 Much of Shaftesbury lies within a Groundwater Source Protection Area, which needs to be protected from any threats of pollution and demands for water from groundwater sources will need to be managed. All development in the town will need to comply with the principles of the Environment Agency’s Groundwater Protection: Policy and Practice (GP3) publication267 and water efficiency will be encouraged (in line with Policy 3 – Climate Change).

267 http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/research/library/publications/144346.aspx.

8.107 At over 718 feet (219m) above sea level, Shaftesbury is one of the highest towns in England. The elevated location has been a determining factor in the evolution of the town. Highly visible from the surrounding countryside, the steep, wooded slopes of the escarpment and the surrounding countryside are protected by a number of national and local designations. These include numerous sites of special scientific interest, identified areas of fragmented ancient woodlands, sites of nature conservation importance and a local nature reserve at Castle Hill. Nearby there is also the internationally protected Fontmell and Melbury Down Special Area of Conservation.

8.108 With evidence of a settlement in Shaftesbury as far back as Saxon times it is no surprise that the town contains a number of scheduled monuments and a large range of listed buildings. To protect and enhance its historic character the town centre was designated a conservation area in 1970 and this was subsequently extended and specific character areas were identified268.

8.109 The Council seeks to protect and improve the natural and historic environment of the town and all applications for growth will need to consider the impact on these features and designations.

8.110 Although Shaftesbury is not located within the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB any development will need to consider the potential impacts on the nearby designation and in particular the views to and from the AONB. A landscape impact assessment of potential housing sites at Blandford and Shaftesbury was undertaken in 2010 which considered potential impacts on the setting of the nearby AONB.

**Meeting Housing Needs**

8.111 It is anticipated that at least 1,140 dwellings will be built in Shaftesbury between 2011 and 2031. At the beginning of the plan period housing needs will be met largely through the development of land to the east of the town where planning permission has already been granted. However, increased densities on parts of the site have resulted in the dwellings agreed in the original outline permission and allocation being accommodated without the whole of the site being developed, which has led to an increase in the overall capacity of the site.

8.112 This increased capacity, which is generally to the north of the site, together with the land immediately south of Wincombe Lane (known locally as the ‘Hopkins Land’) will result in additional development on land to the east of Shaftesbury later in the plan period. Two further extensions have also been identified to the north of the town. These greenfield sites are:

* land to the south east of Wincombe Business Park; and  land to the west of the A350 opposite Wincombe Business Park.

268 These Character Areas are identified and described the Shaftesbury section of the 2003 Local Plan.

8.113 Further housing will be delivered through the mixed-use regeneration of land to the east of the town centre together with general infilling and redevelopment within the settlement boundary during the plan period.

**Supporting Economic Development**

8.114 Policy 11 – The Economy outlines the District-wide employment land situation and indicates that in order for job growth to match housing growth at Shaftesbury, there is a need for a minimum of 7.1 hectares of employment land to be provided by 2031. This level of provision will support the town’s employment base and will also help to maintain its low level of out-commuting and give existing and new residents the opportunity to live and work locally.

8.115 A key strategic site for employment is the 7 hectares of land to the south of the A30 that is allocated in the 2003 Local Plan. This site remains fit for purpose as it meets the needs of the market and is in a sustainable location, as demonstrated in the Council’s ELR269, but the Council now support a more flexible approach to non-B Class uses on this and other employment sites in the District, as set out in Policy 11 – Economy.

8.116 In addition to new employment sites the Council will continue to support and will seek to retain the existing industrial estates (which are fully occupied) to provide job opportunities for local people. The Local Plan Part 2 will take forward the allocation of the land to the south of the A30 as a strategic employment site. Additional sites could also be allocated through the neighbourhood planning process.

8.117 In addition to allocated employment land, Shaftesbury has a vibrant town centre that provides a range of shops and services for local people. The historic built environment, including the famous Gold Hill, also makes the town centre a tourist and cultural destination. In the town centre there are a good range of both convenience and comparison shops together with a high proportion of gift related shops. There is one main convenience outlet on the edge of the town centre (Tesco) just off Coppice Street and a smaller supermarket (the Cooperative) in the centre of town on Bell Street. 8.118 A Retail Study270 identified needs for limited additional convenience goods floor-space but a greater need for comparison goods shops in the town. Due to the compact historic layout and topographical constraints of the town there is limited scope for further retail expansion within the town centre itself, however, the retail study indicates that the mixed-use regeneration of the livestock market to the east of the town centre (beyond Tesco) and possibly

269 Employment Land Review: Review of Existing Sites, North Dorset District Council (April 2007). 270 Joint Retail Assessment: Christchurch Borough Council and East, North and Purbeck District Councils, Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners (March 2008).

also the postal sorting office on Angel Square could provide sufficient additional retail floorspace to meet the town’s longer-term needs271.

8.119 The primary and secondary shopping frontages, as defined in the 2003 Local Plan will continue to be used for development management purposes, but will be reviewed in the Local Plan Part 2. A town centre boundary, which is important in relation to national policy and the sequential approach to the location of town centre uses, will be defined as part of the Local Plan Part 2. Alternatively the review of shopping frontages and the definition of a town centre boundary may be issues that the neighbourhood plan group choose to deal with.

8.120 The Council recognises the role of tourism in Shaftesbury and will consider positively opportunities for development that will complement the historic character of the town and will ensure that it remains competitive in the tourist market.

**Infrastructure**

8.121 Two key elements of the strategy for the town are the greenfield expansion to the east and north and the mixed-use regeneration of land to the east of the town centre. To ensure these elements are integrated improved pedestrian and cycle links between the new housing and the expanded town centre are required and measures to make the existing A350 (Christy’s Lane) less of a barrier to pedestrian and cycle movements need to be introduced. Making Christy’s Lane less of a ‘road’ and more of a ‘street’ is identified as an opportunity in the Development Brief for land to the Eastern Side of Shaftesbury.

8.122 The proposed level of development at Shaftesbury for the period up to 2031 can be accommodated without the need for an outer eastern bypass, which would relieve traffic on the existing A350. However, the line of the road (as shown in the 2003 Local Plan) remains protected from development as there is no other realistic option for traffic relief if it is required in the longer term. The route of the road will be reviewed in Part 2 of the Local Plan or through the neighbourhood planning process.

8.123 Proposed growth at Gillingham will increase traffic flows on the B3081 between the town and Shaftesbury. The Gillingham Study272 indicates that the tight bend at the junction with the Motcombe Road limits the overall capacity of the whole route between the two towns. The study recommends the provision of a new link between the B3081 and the A30 at Enmore Green273. This will both make it easier for traffic from Gillingham to gain access to the A30 and improve road safety and amenity at the Shaftesbury end of the B3081.

271 These sites are shown in Appendix A of Volume 2: North Dorset Joint Retail Assessment: Christchurch Borough Council and East, North and Purbeck District Councils, Nathaniel Lichfield & Partners (March 2008). 272 Transport issues are discussed in Section 6 of Assessing the Growth Potential of Gillingham, Dorset, Atkins (December 2009).

8.124 Parking has been identified as an issue by local residents and this will be examined either through the Local Plan Part 2 or in the neighbourhood plan being produced for Shaftesbury, Melbury Abbas and Cann.

8.125 In terms of social infrastructure for the town the need for a new community hall has been identified to serve the whole of Shaftesbury, but predominately to meet the needs of an incoming population. Land to the east of the town centre has the potential for regeneration which could accommodate a community hall. Any regeneration project may wish to rationalise the existing provision of halls in the town that are owned or used by different organisations. The site to the east of the town centre, that includes the livestock market, Shaftesbury Football Club and the Youth Centre, not only benefits from being centrally located but if coupled with enhanced pedestrian and cycle links would help to promote social integration between the new development to the east of the town and the existing community. However other locations for a community hall may be considered if the above approach cannot be taken forward where there is support from the local community.

8.126 The need for improved further education and training facilities, especially for young people, to develop local skills and to reduce the need to travel for such purposes was also identified by the community. Yeovil College currently has a campus in the town at Wincombe Business Park that offers courses in plumbing, security, electrical installation, construction, hairdressing, beauty therapy, health and social care and transition to work (Foundation Learning). The site caters for 14-16 year olds, full-time students, apprentices and adults. Although in recent years the campus has expanded and redeveloped, the Council continues to support the expansion of further education facilities in the town as this would not only serve the local population but would improve further education provision in the District as a whole. The preferred approach for any new facilities is for them to be centrally located, and ideally part of a larger regeneration scheme, but the provision of facilities on separate or in different locations would be considered.

8.127 With the proposed growth of Shaftesbury the extension of existing primary and secondary schools will be required. At the time of preparing this plan the preferred approach of Dorset County Council, the education provider, is for a new 2 forms of entry primary school in the town together with an expansion of facilities at the secondary school. A site for the new primary school has yet to be confirmed but additional capacity at a primary school level will be required by 2016. The site for the new primary school site will be allocated in the Local Plan Part 2.

8.128 The growth in Shaftesbury will also require additional medical provision in the town. This can either be provided through expansion of the existing medical centre or with the development of a new surgery. Any final decision on medical provision will be a matter for the local clinical commissioning group to decide and if necessary land can be allocated through the Local Plan Part 2 or the neighbourhood planning process. The Westminster Memorial Hospital in Abbey Walk will be retained on its current site.

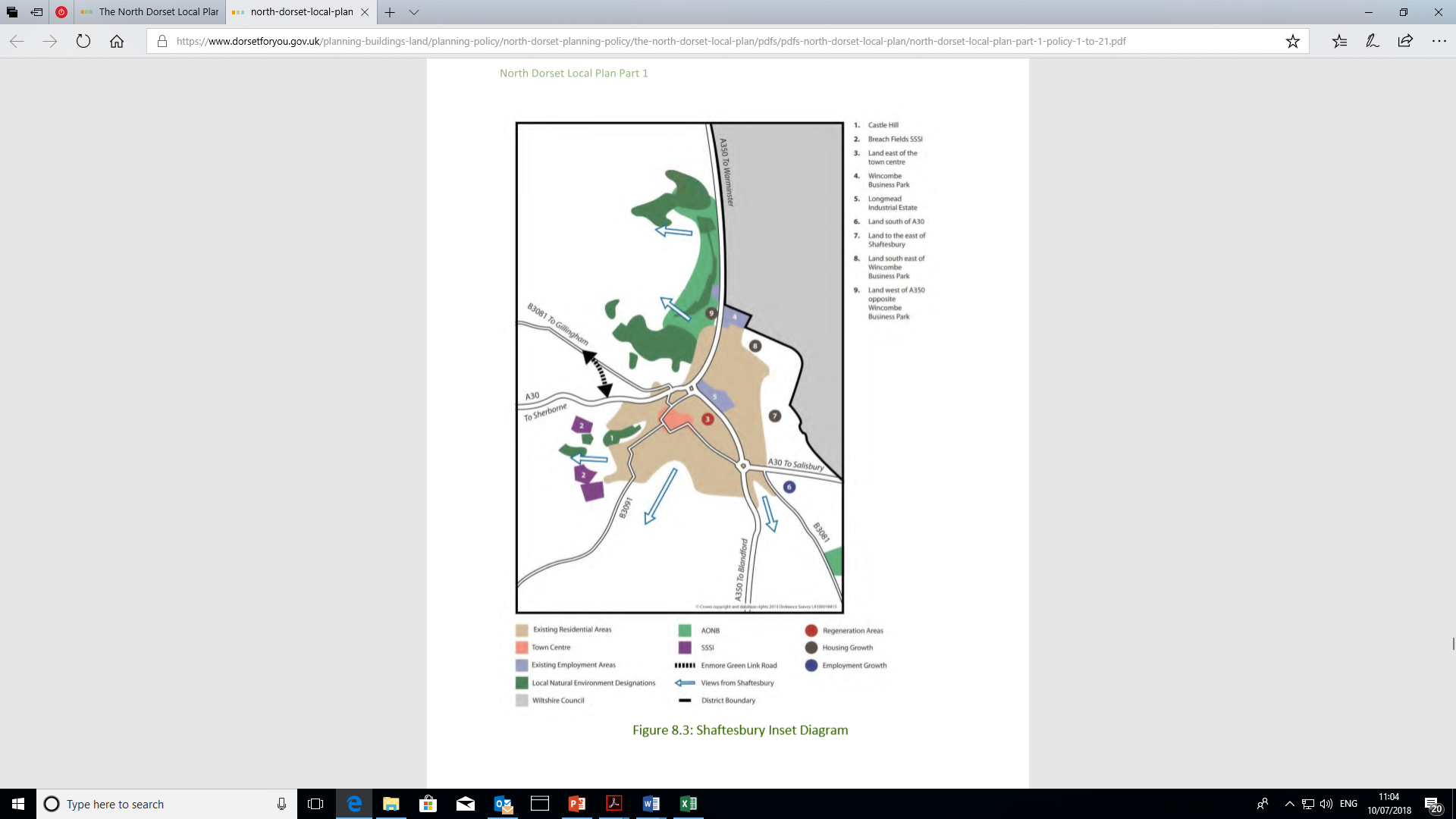
273 This link is currently proposed under Policy SB17 of the North Dorset District-Wide Local Plan 2003

8.129 The multiple benefits of green infrastructure and green spaces in delivering quality of life and quality of place have long been recognised and are explored in more detail in Policy 15 – Green Infrastructure. In Shaftesbury there are a number of attractive and accessible recreational spaces ranging from the centrally located Barton Hill recreation ground to the recreation ground at Wincombe Lane that serves the new development to the east of the town. However, due to the environmental constraints of the town opportunities for new formal recreation are limited, especially for teenagers. The retention and improvement of existing areas for formal recreation will be supported.

8.130 The setting of the town is enhanced by its informal open spaces, with the open and wooded areas around the Slopes being of particular importance to its historic, hill-top character. New areas of open space will be created in association with the development to the east of the town.

8.131 The Council will seek to conserve and manage existing green spaces and aims to improve the connectivity, quality and functionality of such sites particularly in relation to relieving pressure on nearby high value wildlife sites at Shaftesbury in line with Policy 15 – Green Infrastructure.

The Council will work with the neighbourhood plan group in developing a green infrastructure strategy for the town and, if required, additional land will be allocated either through the Local Plan Part 2 document or through the neighbourhood planning process



**POLICY 18: SHAFTESBURY**

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| **Sustainable Development Strategy**  Shaftesbury will maintain its role to serve the needs of the northern part of the District through:   1. development and regeneration within the settlement boundary; 2. extensions, primarily of housing, to the east and north; and 3. an extension to meet employment needs to the south-east.   Growth will be taken forward in ways which respect the town’s environmental constraints, support its role, function and identity, and contribute to making it more self-contained. Shaftesbury’s distinctive natural and historic character will be retained and enhanced and the town’s reputation as a centre for arts, culture and tourism will be reinforced.  **Environment and Climate Change**  The impact of flooding and climate change on the town will be addressed with measures put in place to reduce risk through:   1. the provision of sustainable drainage systems in all developments; and 2. the protection and management of valuable groundwater resources.   The town’s natural and historic built environments will be protected and enhanced.  **Meeting Housing Needs**  At least 1,140 homes will be provided at Shaftesbury during the period 2011 –2031. In addition to infilling and regeneration within the settlement boundary, Shaftesbury’s housing needs will be met through the development of land:   1. to the east of the town (including the Hopkins land); and 2. to the south east of Wincombe Business Park; and 3. to the west of the A350 opposite Wincombe Business Park.   **Supporting Economic Development**  Employment needs of the town for the period up to 2031 will be met through:   1. the development of land to the south of the A30; and 2. the development of vacant sites on existing industrial estates; and k the retention of existing employment sites. 3. the retention of existing employment sites   Mixed-use regeneration will be encouraged on land within and to the east of the existing town centre. Within the town’s settlement boundary, opportunities for tourist-related development that is sensitive to the landscape and historic setting of the town will be considered favourably.  **Infrastructure**  In the period up to 2031, grey infrastructure to support growth will include:   1. the provision of a new road link from the B3081 to the A30 at Enmore Green, north of Shaftesbury; and 2. improved walking and cycling links between the town centre and residential development to the east of the town.   The route of the Shaftesbury Outer Eastern Bypass will continue to be protected from development that would prejudice its implementation in the longer-term.  In the period up to 2031 social infrastructure to support growth will include:   1. the provision of a new community hall for the town; and 2. a new 2 forms of entry primary school, an extension to the secondary school and expanded further and adult education provision in the town; and 3. a new doctors’ surgery, or the expansion or relocation of the existing doctors’ surgery.   A network of green infrastructure will be developed in and around Shaftesbury focusing on linking existing sites, such as the Slopes, and providing new sites and links to serve the residents of both the new and existing development in the town. This will include:   1. informal recreation space associated with the development of sites to the east of the town to reduce recreational pressure on nearby high value wildlife sites |