

# SHAFTESBURY AND MELBURY ABBAS & CANN 2030



v3

The Neighbourhood Plan for Shaftesbury, Melbury  
Abbas and Cann 2017-2030

## Introduction

Shaftesbury, Melbury Abbas and Cann Neighbourhood Plan belongs to the community that lives and works in the three parishes. Once adopted, following consultation, a referendum and examination by an independent inspector, it will become part of the statutory planning framework. Your input will continue to be crucial to its validity and longevity. Please help us to make it relevant, forward thinking and effective.

### Our Plan's overarching theme

*Shaftesbury and the parishes of Melbury Abbas and Cann together make up an outstanding combination of landscape and history focused on the hilltop settlement. Its strengths lie in the diversity of its people and its growing reputation as a centre for arts, culture and tourism. This Neighbourhood Plan intends to work with the various elements of that mix to take our communities forward whilst celebrating and protecting the most important aspects of that landscape and heritage.*

*Based on a theme of sustainable development, our overall approach is to create a forward-looking vision for our town and parishes that delivers an environment where people want to live, work, invest and visit.*

*Shaftesbury is an unique and historic market town. It is a designated conservation area with Saxon roots set upon a hilltop above wooded slopes and surrounded by unspoilt countryside and villages much of it also designated as areas of outstanding natural beauty. There are wonderful views far and beyond the town. Melbury Abbas and Cann are delightful rural communities facing the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.*

*The Neighbourhood Plan will lay down planning guidelines with sustainability at their heart. These will focus on the economic, social and environmental elements that underpin a viable and vibrant community. Informed by our green infrastructure framework, our plan will set out site planning guidelines, suggest ways to form safe and attractive routes through the area and take a view of future development that encompasses conservation in harmony with our protected landscape, access to the countryside and improves the built environment.*

*Examining our town centre, along with the existing developments to the east of Christy's Lane, common spaces both rural and urban and the need for improvements in social and economic infrastructure, in order to strengthen east-west connections will be the main themes of this plan. We shall look at the compatibility of existing and future needs and tailor policies for a planning and design framework that is environmentally, socially and economically focussed.*

## Sustainable Development

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)<sup>1</sup>, lays out the Government's planning policies for England set within the context of its sustainable development strategy<sup>2</sup> in which it quotes the UN General Assembly definition of sustainable development as meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs<sup>3</sup>. It is through the NPPF that our Neighbourhood Plan in conjunction with the Local Plan<sup>4</sup> is able to reflect the needs and priorities of our community.

There are three distinct dimensions to sustainable development: economic, social and environmental.

- **An economic role** – Contributing to building a strong local economy by ensuring that sufficient land of the right type is available in the right place at the right time to support growth and innovation. This requires coordination including the provision of infrastructure.
- **A social role** – Supporting strong, vibrant and healthy communities by providing the supply of housing required to meet the needs of the present and future generations; and by creating a high quality built environment with accessible local services that reflect our community's needs whilst supporting our health, social and cultural well-being.
- **An environmental role** – Contributing to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; and as part of this, helping to improve biodiversity, use of natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigate and adapt to climate change including moving to a low carbon economy.

The NPPF makes it clear that these three roles should not be undertaken in isolation, because they are mutually dependent and to achieve sustainable development economic, social and environmental gains should be sought jointly and simultaneously through the planning system. In summary, pursuing a sustainable development strategy should lead to an improvement in the quality of life of those living in our community including (but not limited to):

- Making it easier for jobs to be created within our neighbourhood area;
- Replacing poor design with better design;
- Improving the conditions in which people live, work, travel and take leisure.

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<sup>1</sup> National Planning Policy Framework - Department for Communities and Local Government - March 2012

<sup>2</sup> The UK Sustainable Development Strategy – *Securing the Future* - 7 March 2005.

<sup>3</sup> UN General Assembly Resolution 42/187 – December 1987.

<sup>4</sup> North Dorset Local Plan.....

## How did the Plan come about?

- Work on this Neighbourhood Plan first started in April 2012 when Shaftesbury Town Council joined with Shaftesbury and District Task Force, our community partnership.
- The Shaftesbury Neighbourhood Plan Group was formed and was joined in the summer of 2013 by Melbury Abbas and Cann Parish Council to write a plan to cover the three parishes and this arrangement was formally accepted by North Dorset District Council in September 2013.<sup>7</sup>
- Much of the work included in this draft Neighbourhood Plan is based on a large survey of local people and businesses undertaken in January 2015. The 1,100 responses have been carefully analysed to provide a locally, representative view.
- The Shaftesbury, Melbury Abbas and Cann Neighbourhood Plan will look forward for 15 years to 2031 and will become part of the Statutory Development Plan for our area sitting alongside the North Dorset Local Plan. Regular reviews will take place once the Plan has been adopted and approved.

## TIMELINES



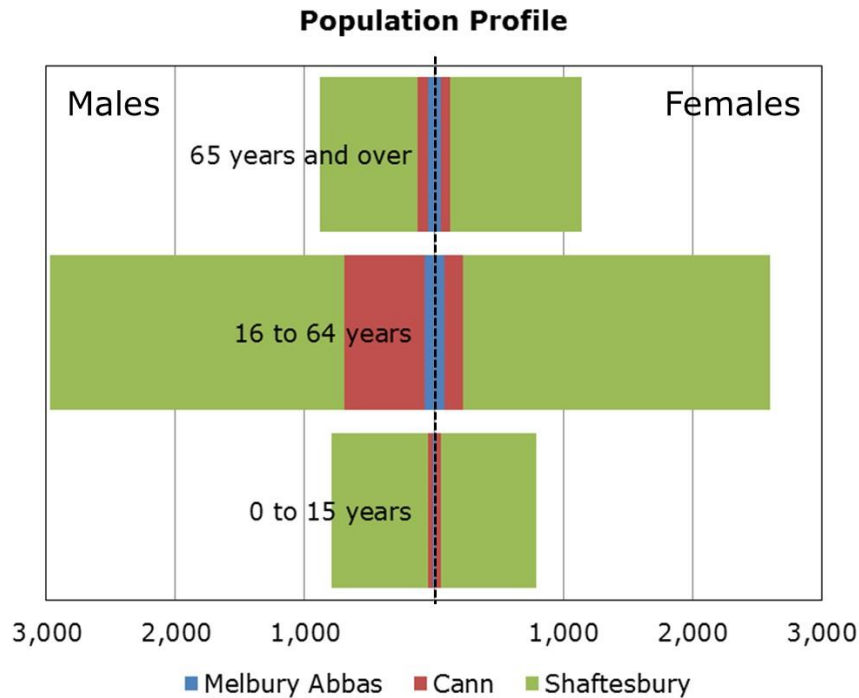
INSERT MAP OF PLAN AREA

## Shaftesbury, Melbury Abbas and Cann – In summary

- Shaftesbury is one of the oldest towns in England and standing over 700 feet above sea level it is also one of the highest. The commanding views over the Blackmore Vale and large areas of Dorset, Somerset and Wiltshire are outstanding, as are the views of the town itself, particularly from the higher points of Cranborne Chase to the south east. The defensive position of the town helps to explain why the settlement of Shaftesbury has a history reaching back over 1,000 years. Perhaps the most important determinant of the past direction of development of the town has been the topographical constraints. The steep scarp slopes which run along the western boundary create a formidable setting for the town.
- These slopes have been instrumental in restricting growth in a westerly direction and the relatively flat 'plateau' land to the north and east of the centre has become the direction of growth in recent years.
- Topographical constraints are reinforced by landscape designations including the Cranborne Chase & West Wiltshire Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty designated in 1983 and which incorporates part of the scarp slope as well as the land immediately within the Wiltshire side of the County Boundary. Despite this modern expansion, the town retains much of the charm and character associated with a Medieval town.
- The three parishes sit largely in an area of outstanding natural beauty in the north-east of North Dorset and on the Wiltshire boundary and have a combined area of 5,300 acres. (2,145 ha)

## POPULATION AND HOUSING

- The three parishes have a population of about 9,180 – 2013 mid-year estimate. With Shaftesbury, the largest : 7,911 , Cann : 990 and Melbury Abbas, the smallest, 280.
- 17% of the population is under 16 years of age, and 22% are over 65 years. There is a particularly high concentration of adult males in Cann Parish, the site of Guys Marsh Prison.
- Of the 3,585 households in the area at the time of the 2011 census, 70% owned their own home, 14% were in public rented housing and a similar number in private rented housing. Of the 4,373 dwellings, just 1.2% were second homes and 1.0% were long-term vacant (2016 Council Tax records).
- Most households, 83%, had one or more cars, with car ownership being higher in the rural area.



## BUSINESS AND EMPLOYMENT

- Businesses – town centre has a good variety of small independent retailers alongside one or two national chains. There is a post office, and a range of professional services are also located in the town centre. Hair, beauty and well-being premises are well represented.
- The hospitality sector is thriving, the town is home to two hotels, several bed and breakfast establishments and 4 public houses. In addition, there are coffee shops, a number of small restaurants and a wine bar.
- There are 5.42 hectares of developed industrial land, with Littledown Industrial Area and Wincombe Business Park being the principle centres. A wide range of small to medium businesses are located within the plan area.
- Farming
- Rural business

## EDUCATION

- The schooling in the area consists Shaftesbury School, a co-educational, comprehensive secondary and one of the few state boarding schools in the country. There are a number of primary schools, Shaftesbury CE Primary and the Abbey in the town and Motcombe, Ludwell, Semley and Fontmell

Magna serving the rural areas. The Southern Academy Trust runs Shaftesbury High School, Shaftesbury CE Primary School and Motcombe Primary.

- Current provision is adequate with Shaftesbury Primary providing extra places for the school year 2017-18 with its early years village.
- Yeovil College run the North Dorset College, catering for further education with a variety of courses.
- There is one, **St Mary's**, private girls school in the plan area and a number of others close by.
- There is good pre-school provision from a variety of providers.
- Shaftesbury has two museums at Gold Hill and the Abbey Gardens.

## TRANSPORT

- Shaftesbury is at the junction of a network of roads, the A350 is the main north-south route connecting the cities of Bath and Bristol across the A303 to the south coast and the east-west A30
- The section of the C13 between Shaftesbury and Blandford through Melbury Abbas is used as an alternative route by many drivers including HGVs, despite it being unsuited for such traffic, especially at Dinah's Hollow, an ancient trackway.
- The West of England main line , from London Waterloo to Exeter, lies to the north just outside the Neighbourhood Plan area, with the closest railway station being at Gillingham (5 miles).
- **Local Bus services run from Shaftesbury to Salisbury, Gillingham, Blandford**
- **National Express service has stops in the town**

## ENVIRONMENT

## HERITAGE

- Today Shaftesbury is best known as a Saxon hill top town and for the iconic Gold Hill with its steep cobbled street and thatched cottages on one side and buttressed walls of the old Benedictine abbey on the other. This is the view made famous by Ridley Scott's TV advert for Hovis bread in the 1970s and since used in posters for English tourism the world over.
- The mediaeval street patterns are retained in the town centre area which together with its many listed buildings are of great historical interest. There are two excellent museums of local history at Gold Hill and as part of the historic Abbey ruins. Unspoilt and largely unchanged views extend from the both the site of the former Abbey and the former Castle over the surrounding countryside.

## COMMUNITY FACILITIES



## ❖ KEY ISSUES FOR LOCAL PEOPLE AS RAISED IN THE 2015 QUESTIONNAIRE

### **A strong and vibrant town centre**

- Most residents would see the future viability of the town centre depending upon a range of largely independent shops, street markets, convenient parking, public toilets and a safe pedestrian environment. Sherborne and Chippenham town centres were good examples from which lessons could be learned.

The Neighbourhood Plan can provide a positive planning framework that should enable the right type of changes to take place. The Bell Street Car Park and Cattle Market sites might offer opportunities for further development that must be shaped by the Neighbourhood Plan process.

### **Future development – the right type of housing including affordable homes for local people**

- When surveyed, most people were happy with their current home although some were looking to move different accommodation. There was consensus that 2 bed starter homes are needed and affordable property was a priority.
- Local people want to see neighbourhoods designed with a mix of uses where people interact with each other. Large suburban estates are not wanted.
- Further housing growth was not welcomed over the current levels planned in the Local Plan. Development on greenfield sites should not be permitted.

### **Healthcare, education and leisure**

- The ability for current GP services to cope with the planned growth of Shaftesbury was the principal infrastructure concern highlighted in the survey. The increase in population in recent years has increased pressure on GP services and the need for new or improved provision seems clear.
- In July 2016 the future of the inpatient beds at Westminster Memorial Hospital has been a key local concern following proposals for the re-organisation of secondary care in Dorset and a great deal of local action has taken place to support the retention of the local bed spaces. The outcome of the Clinical Commissioning Groups survey and conclusions are awaited with considerable concern locally.

- The rising population also raises concerns about the provision of both primary and secondary school places. Discussions about a new primary school have taken place over many years with Dorset County Council.
- The survey highlighted the desire to improve community and leisure facilities, including a leisure centre and swimming pool and more outdoor recreation space. The employment land on the A30 was suggested as one possible site for such facilities.
- Better access to the countryside via the rights of way network was an issue alongside the provision of allotments.

In summary, given that this community infrastructure is important to local people, the Neighbourhood Plan will provide a clearer direction for when and where new provision is required. A 'joined up' approach to planning improvements will address local concerns and provide clear guidance for developers.

**Allocating further housing sites will not feature in this Neighbourhood Plan although it is recognised that the pressures from outside this community through the Local Plan system may lead to further housing being built.**



*Dancing around the Maypole – Abbey Gardens*

**Green Infrastructure: Open spaces, views, wildlife areas, walking and cycling routes**





### Future development – respecting and reinforcing local character

- A strong message from local people is about the importance of the area's heritage and character and design should always be sensitive to location.
- Residents also felt that any new development should be energy efficient

The essentially ancient, rural setting of the Neighbourhood Plan area is rich in both natural and manmade features that contribute to the character and quality of life of those who live and work here. All this needs protection from excessive or unjustified development. Listed buildings already have legal protection but locally important buildings and other features such as drinking troughs, may not qualify for listing but are worthy of preservation. Ancient landscapes also need protection.

The North Dorset Local Plan currently protects a number of green spaces as Important Open or Wooded Areas and these are reviewed through this Neighbourhood Plan process. These green spaces, with their woods, hedgerows and meadow land are important to local people as well as being vital wildlife habitats.

The hilltop setting of the town and the topography of the surrounding landscape require the many important local views from the town outwards and from the countryside towards the town require protection.

**Although the above points encompass most of the issues that local people told us about, it is not by any means a complete list. Some issues raised, such as concerns about the poor public transport services, cannot be readily tackled through the Neighbourhood Plan process. Improvements to the roads, especially Dinah's Hollow and the C13, reducing the level of HGV traffic, and providing superfast broadband are other examples of matters that also fall largely outside the remit of a Neighbourhood Plan. This does not mean that these matters are disregarded and the plan will discuss them and their impact on future development. The Town and Parish Councils will also continue to work with service providers including the Highways Authority to try to get the best solutions for local people.**

## **1 EXAMINING THE KEY ISSUES**

### **1.1 Recent and proposed development**

The 2003 North Dorset Plan anticipated that Shaftesbury would grow by 68 dwellings / year and allocated land for at least 680 homes on the east side of town. Following an 'Enquiry by Design' process, a detailed design and development brief was adopted in 2003 for this "eastern development".

In preparing the 2016 North Dorset Local Plan, North Dorset District Council reviewed potential growth for the town recognising the limited number of sites for further expansion. The revised figure was 57 homes per year but the Planning Inspector has set a target of 1,140 new home by 2031 including all builds from 2011. The North Dorset Local Plan is currently (Spring 2017) under review because of new central government requirements and this review will be considered with the ongoing development of the Neighbourhood Plan, 1140 is now considered to be a minimum target.

In the 5 years (2011-2016) just over 600 homes have been completed. Permissions have been granted for a further 97 on land east of Shaftesbury (parcels 6 & 7), 300 on sites at Littledown and adjacent to

Wincombe Business Park with another 50 on other sites. These sites are due to be built between now and 2021, bringing the total when completed to a total of 1100 between 2011 and 2021.

<b>Year ending March...</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2021</b>
<b>Completions / Permissions</b>	220	62	119	122	85	7	42			
<b>Adj Wincombe Business Park</b>								30	50	50
<b>Land off Littledown</b>								50	60	60
<b>Land SE Wincombe Lane (Hopkins)</b>								17		
<b>Land E of Shaftesbury (Parcel 5)</b>						41				
<b>Land E of Shaftesbury (Parcels 6&amp;7)</b>							10	20	40	27
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>220</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>119</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>117</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>137</b>

<b>Year</b>	<b>Completions in Shaftesbury</b>
2011-12	220
2012-13	62
2013-14	119
2014-15	122
2015-16	85
<b>Total</b>	<b>608</b>

The key spatial aspects of the refreshed Local Plan - THIS SECTION NEEDS DISCUSSION

## Shaftesbury – Housing Need 2016

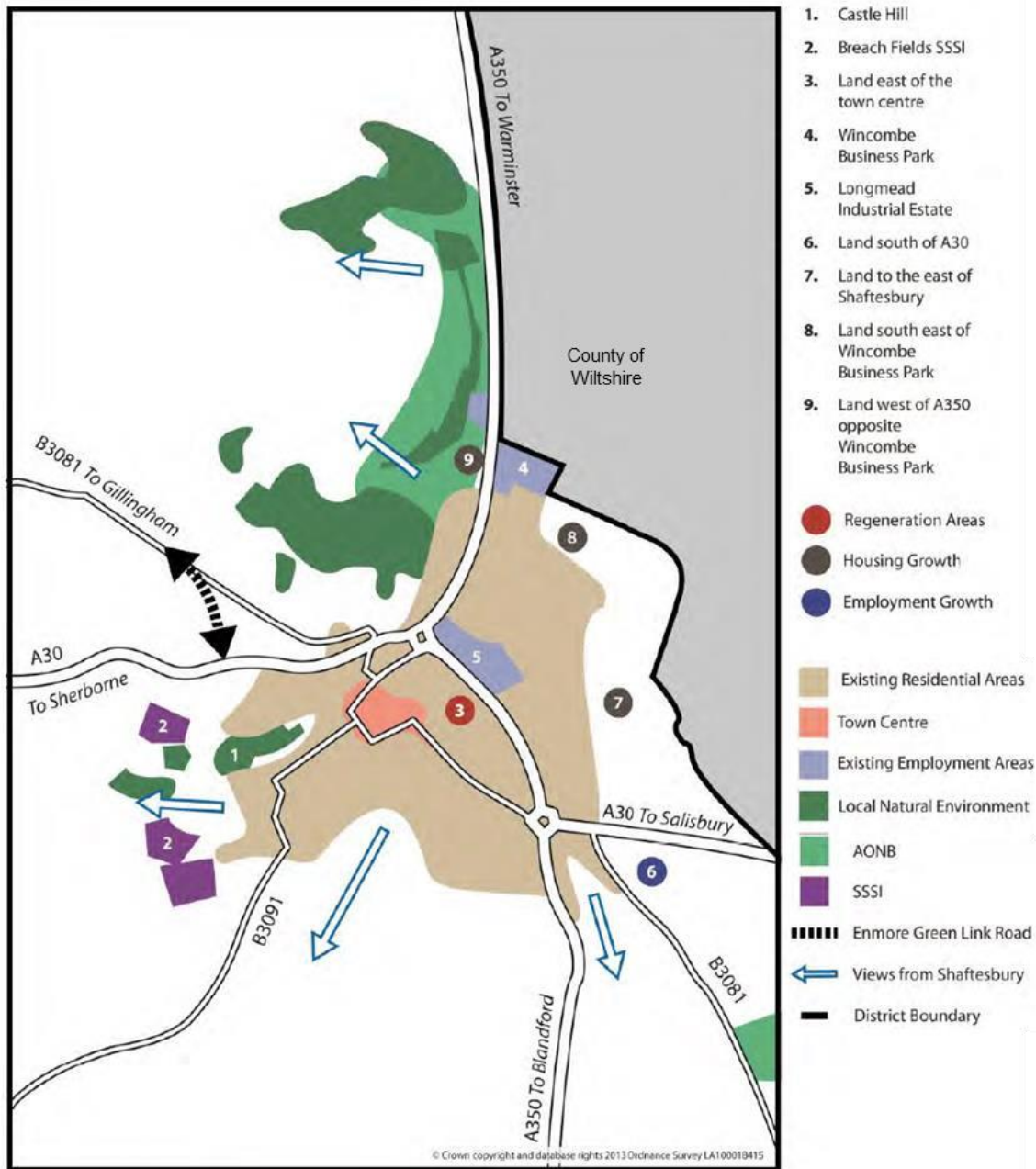
North Dorset Housing Register	Affordable / Social Rented				Affordable intermediate / home ownership			
Type of house required...	1bed	2bed	3bed	4+bed	1bed	2bed	3bed	4+bed
Number of households	120	72	29	5	11	7	1	0
Living in the Neighbourhood Plan Area	64	51	17	4	3	3	0	0
Connection to the Neighbourhood Plan Area	9	2	6	0	0	1	0	0
No connection but would like to be housed in the Neighbourhood Plan Area	47	19	6	1	8	4	1	0

## Melbury Abbas – Housing Need 2016

North Dorset Housing Register	Affordable / Social Rented				Affordable intermediate / home ownership			
Type of house required...	1bed	2bed	3bed	4+bed	1bed	2bed	3bed	4+bed
Number of households	4	2	4	0	0	1	0	0
Living in the Neighbourhood Plan Area	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
Connection to the Neighbourhood Plan Area	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
No connection but would like to be housed in the Neighbourhood Plan Area	3	2	4	0	0	0	0	0

## Cann – Housing Need 2016

North Dorset Housing Register	Affordable / Social Rented				Affordable intermediate / home ownership			
Type of house required...	1bed	2bed	3bed	4+bed	1bed	2bed	3bed	4+bed
Number of households	5	4	3	0	2	0	0	0
Living in the Neighbourhood Plan Area	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Connection to the Neighbourhood Plan Area	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
No connection but would like to be housed in the Neighbourhood Plan Area	4	4	2	0	2	0	0	0



Not sure if this Map the right one? Needs a title



The revision to the adopted Local Plan in 2016 removed the settlement boundary from the built-up area of Cann Common, effectively re-classifying it as countryside, as already applies to Melbury Abbas. Policy 20 of the Local Plan makes clear that development in these rural locations will only be permitted if there is a demonstrable and overriding need or the development meets the following: -

- the appropriate re-use and alteration of existing buildings or heritage assets
- the small-scale expansion of existing employment sites, subject to consideration of possible harm
- caravan / camping sites, under certain considerations
- rural worker's dwellings, if there is a functional need for a worker to live at or near their work
- affordable housing, limited to settlements of at least 100 people with at least one essential local facility such as a community hall or local shop
- community facilities within or on the edge of a village
- a renewable energy scheme, subject to consideration of possible harm.

Permitted development rights exist in relation to agriculture and the re-use of redundant farm buildings, outside the AONB, that provide further scope for development in the countryside.

## 1.2 Healthcare, education and leisure

In an appendix we need comprehensive lists of all current facilities under the three headings

### Healthcare

Primary Care Services are currently delivered by the Blackmore Vale Partnership which consists of main GP surgeries at Abbey View, Shaftesbury and Sturminster Newton and branch surgeries at Fontmell Magna and Marnhull, staffed by 16 GPs, 5 nurse practitioners and practice nurses and health care assistants and clerical staff. Shaftesbury has a list size of 15,200 patients. Current proposals are to re-arrange the more than adequate space at Abbey View to cater for any further increase in patient numbers. There is the capacity for patients to use any of the four surgeries but there is a serious shortage of GPs nationally and recruitment is proving problematical although currently the practice is up to strength. The practice is able to offer its services to a further 5,000 within its present facilities. Car Parking is an issue but the NHS does not offer parking services to its primary care patients only treatment and everyone asking for an appointment the same day gets either a face to face or telephone consultation.

Future of Westminster Memorial Hospital

## Education

- The current provision of Primary School places will be sufficient to meet demand until such time as further large numbers of homes are built at Littledown and behind Wincombe Business Park. Currently Shaftesbury Primary School is commencing work on an early years unit to be built within the campus and this will free up space within the main building for a slightly increased number of children in the academic year 2017-18
- Dorset County Council are monitoring the situation closely and funds from S106 monies should be available for increased education provision when required.
- However, clearly when the town's population increases by some 2000 further provision of both primary and secondary school places will be required. Efforts are underway to identify a suitable site for a further primary school.
- Southern Academy Trust will be a key player in future provision.
- Great care needs to be taken when planning a future school that the site is safely accessible and that the new school works closely with existing provision and does not destabilise Shaftesbury Primary and the Abbey School.

### Leisure – State Needs and gaps

– is the proposed new community hall a valid project, survey says not required ?

## 1.3 The continuing need for a bypass

The A350 currently runs to the east of Shaftesbury town centre along the road 'Christy's Lane' and for most of its length through the town coincides with the east-west A30, carrying large volumes of traffic including HGVs heading to and from Poole and the South Coast ports. This volume of traffic creates a significant barrier for both pedestrian and cycle access that effectively divides the town into two halves already referred to locally as 'East Shaftesbury' and 'West Shaftesbury'. Christy's Lane was originally constructed as the external relief road for the town and is still referred to locally as the "bypass". However, it now has development both to the east and to the west and is acting as a distinct barrier to movement between the two parts of the town.

The 2002-3 Enquiry by Design process expressly sought to prevent this eventuality. It proposed that the role of Christy's Lane should be transformed from a road to a street, through development that would help create a street scene and sense of enclosure. Additional traffic management measures including the provision of improved pedestrian and cycleway crossings would be implemented to facilitate linkages between the town centre and the existing and proposed developments to the east of Christy's Lane.

**Note:-** Bernie to add in Map of BYPASS

## 1.4 The North South Corridor

Much money and time has been spent over many decades to find an acceptable solution to North/South traffic problems in North Dorset. The main solutions offered up in the past have been to provide a by-pass for Melbury Abbas and continue a route to the east of Shaftesbury to connect to the A350 just north east of the Town. Both routes are linked and neither is viable without the other. All the routes around Melbury Abbas pass through the AONB and include land owned by the National Trust. A new traveller's site at a cost of almost a £1million and a solar farm has been built on this proposed route and would be costly to remove and reinstate elsewhere. These routes are no longer fit for purpose.

Taking into account the increasing size, weight and congestion caused by Heavy Goods Vehicles using the south coast ports and travelling north via the M25/M1/M4/A34 to the east and the A38/M5 to the west, a route that will take into account the projected increase in commercial traffic needs to be established.

In order for the Port of Poole to expand and continue to provide employment for local people, the road infrastructure needs to be improved in liaison with surrounding Counties. With current planning for large housing estates to supplement already large estates built in Gillingham and Shaftesbury, there is a severe shortage of employment for residents moving to the area, which will result in many having to commute to obtain work.

To increase the opportunity to develop employment land in North Dorset a route has to be established that:

- a) Will cope with the demands of an increasing traffic flow for the long term, including heavier HGV traffic and the longer commercial units starting to appear on the roads today.
- b) Be accessible to all of the major towns in North Dorset - Blandford, Shaftesbury, Sturminster Newton and Gillingham.

In the short to medium term, limited funds should be used to maximise the existing routes with due regard to their ability to cope. In the North and North East Transport Study of 2010 commissioned by Dorset County Council, it was made clear that the C13 was the road nearing its capacity, being the narrowest road with a mix of HGVs and physical and environmental restrictions. The A357 and the A350, although not ideal, have a greater flow capacity, are wider throughout their lengths, and are currently under capacity. They therefore should be considered as the basis of a one-way system for HGVs to even out the flow of traffic with the C13 taking the majority of the light traffic. Parish Councils should work with Dorset County Council to provide cost effective road safety measures on these roads where needed including a much-needed weight restriction on the C13.

In the longer term a study should be made for a route to the West of the A350/B3081/C13 corridor and to the West and North of Shaftesbury which could include uninhabited stretches of existing roads.

