
Basic Conditions Statement - Shaftesbury Neighbourhood Plan Review



Prepared by: Dorset Planning Consultant Ltd, on behalf of Shaftesbury Town Council

Date of report: June 2025

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1. Introduction

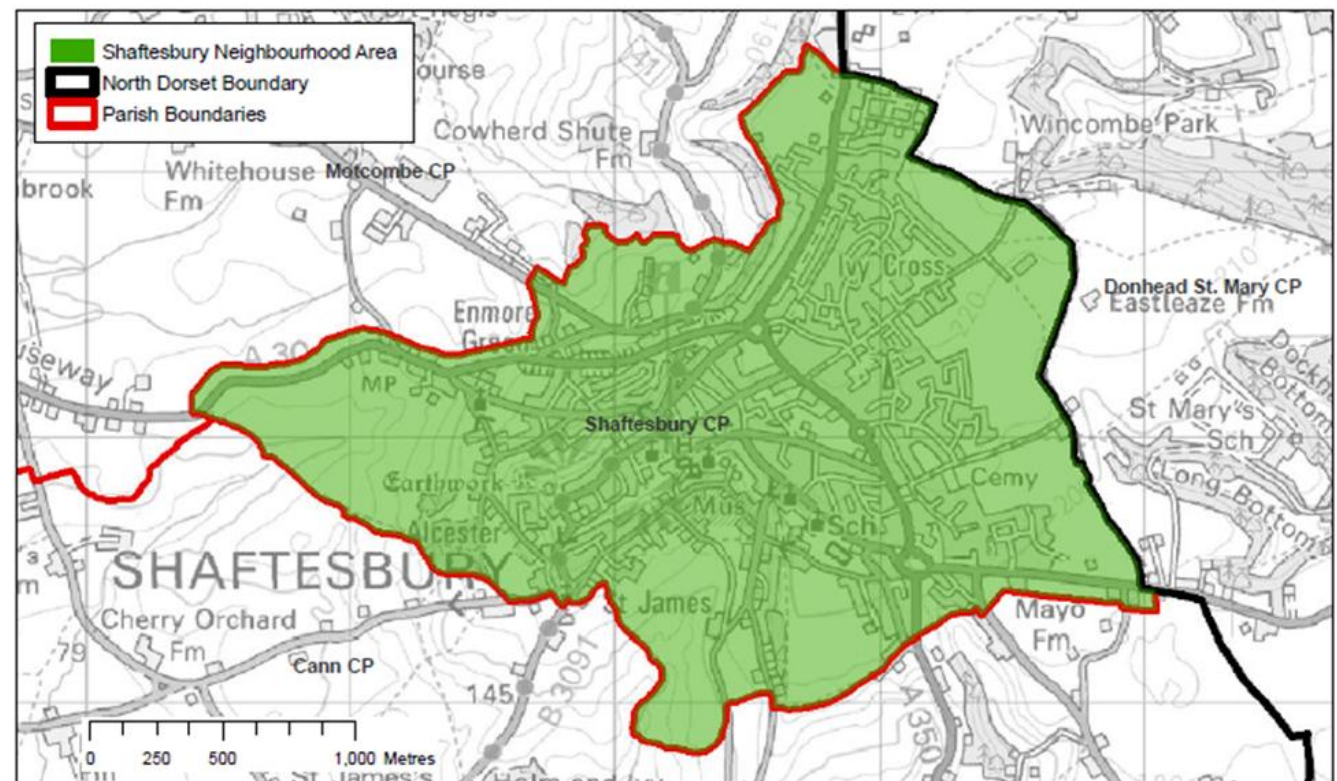
When a Neighbourhood Plan modification proposal is submitted to the Local Planning Authority, it needs to be accompanied by a statement, known as the Basic Conditions Statement, which explains how the neighbourhood development plan as proposed to be modified meets the requirements of paragraph 11 of Schedule A2 to the 2004 Act. This means:

- the legal requirements (as prescribed) have been complied with in connection with the Plan;
- the Plan has had appropriate regard to national policies and advice contained in guidance issued by the Secretary of State, and is in general conformity with the strategic policies in the Development Plan for the area
- the Plan will contribute to the achievement of sustainable development, and would not breach, and is otherwise compatible with, retained EU obligations and the requirements of Chapter 8 of Part 6 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017.

2. Legal Requirements

Have the modification proposals been submitted by a qualifying body?

The modifications proposals have been prepared and submitted for examination by Shaftesbury Town Council, which is the qualifying body. The Neighbourhood Plan Area was designated by the former North Dorset District Council on 29 November 2017. The former District Council was replaced by Dorset Council on 1 April 2019, and this statutory designation was carried over.



| | |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Name of the neighbourhood area | Shaftesbury Neighbourhood Area |
| Designation date | 29 November 2017 |
| Organisation who made the application | Shaftesbury Town Council |



Map 1 – Neighbourhood Plan Designated Area

Is what is being proposed relate to the development and use of land or sites in the Neighbourhood Plan Area?

The Neighbourhood Plan proposal relates to planning matters (the use and development of land) and its policies relate only to the designated Neighbourhood Plan area or parts thereof.

Do any of the policies extend beyond the neighbourhood area or cover an area where there is a neighbourhood development plan already in place?

The Neighbourhood Plan policies relate only to Shaftesbury parish (which is the designated Neighbourhood Plan Area) and to no other area.

Do any of the policies relate to excluded development?

The Neighbourhood Plan policies do not deal with county matters (mineral extraction and waste development), nationally significant infrastructure or other strategic / significant development that falls within Annex 1 to Council Directive 85/337/EEC.

Does the proposed neighbourhood plan state the period for which it is to have effect?

The Neighbourhood Plan makes clear on the front cover that it covers the period from 2019 to 2031, and the end date (2031) is also repeated in section 1.2.

Were the modifications consulted on as per the requirements in Part 5 Section 14 of Neighbourhood Planning Regulations?

As set out in the Consultation Statement, the consultation was publicised, in a manner that is likely to bring it to the attention of people who live, work or carry on business in the neighbourhood area, and included:

- i. two pop-up events in the Town Hall (12th December 2024 and 8th January 2025);

- ii. series of posts shared on the Shaftesbury Town Council social media channels (facebook and Instagram) to raise awareness of the consultation and pop-up events;
- iii. statutory consultees advised of the Regulation 14 consultation via email on 13th December 2024.

The following bodies were considered, and where applicable consulted (taking into account whether their interests may be affected by the modification proposal), as per the list provided in paragraph 1 of Schedule 1

| Potential consultee | Considered as potential interest |
|---|--|
| Mayor of London | n/a |
| Local planning authority, county council or parish council any part of whose area is in or adjoins the area | Dorset Council, Wiltshire Council and the adjoining Parish Councils of Motcombe, Melbury Abbas and Cann, and Donhead St Mary |
| Coal Authority | n/a |
| Homes and Communities Agency | n/a |
| Natural England | Natural England – and including Cranborne Chase National Landscape Partnership |
| Environment Agency | Environment Agency |
| Historic England | Historic England |
| Network Rail Infrastructure Limited | n/a |
| Strategic highways company any part of whose area is in or adjoins the area | Highways England |
| Marine Management Organisation | n/a |

| Potential consultee | Considered as potential interest |
|---|--|
| Electronic communications providers | Planning @ Mobile UK; Open Reach; Cornerstone Telecommunications Infrastructure Ltd and GSSB |
| Health Service providers | Public Health Dorset Planning and NHS |
| Electricity or Gas Infrastructure Providers | SSE, Southern Gas Networks |
| Water or Sewerage undertakers | Wessex Water |

3. Consideration of National and Strategic Policies

The Neighbourhood Plan must have regard to national policy and guidance from the Secretary of State and be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the development plan that covers the area.

National Planning Policy and Guidance

National planning guidance comes primarily from the published National Planning Policy Framework (last updated December 2024), but where appropriate, reference is made to the online National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG) and Ministerial Statements.

Strategic policies are described in the NPPF (para 21) as “those necessary to address the strategic priorities of the area (and any relevant cross-boundary issues), to provide a clear starting point for any non-strategic policies that are needed”.

The NPPG also recommends that any conflicts between policies in a neighbourhood plan and an emerging Local Plan should be minimised, and that the reasoning and evidence informing the Local Plan process may be relevant to the consideration of the basic conditions against which a neighbourhood plan is tested.

| Potential consultee | Considered as potential interest |
|--|--|
| Voluntary bodies some or all of whose activities benefit all or any part of the neighbourhood area | The Garden Trust; Sport England; National Trust; Woodland Trust; Forestry Commission |
| Bodies which represent the interests of different racial, ethnic or national groups; different religious groups; persons carrying on business in the area; and disabled persons in the area. | n/a |

The Development Plan for the Neighbourhood Plan area

The North Dorset Local Plan Part 1, prepared by North Dorset District Council and adopted January 2016, contains the bulk of the strategic planning policies for the area. The development management policies and saved policies in the 2003 Local Plan are generally not considered strategic.

The Local Plan contains a Shaftesbury-specific policy as part of its strategy for development, and this reads as follows:

POLICY 18: SHAFTESBURY**Sustainable Development Strategy**

Shaftesbury will maintain its role to serve the needs of the northern part of the District through:

- a) development and regeneration within the settlement boundary;
- b) extensions, primarily of housing, to the east and north; and
- c) 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:

- d) the provision of sustainable drainage systems in all developments; and
- e) the protection and management of valuable groundwater resources.

The town's natural and historic built environments will be protected and enhanced.

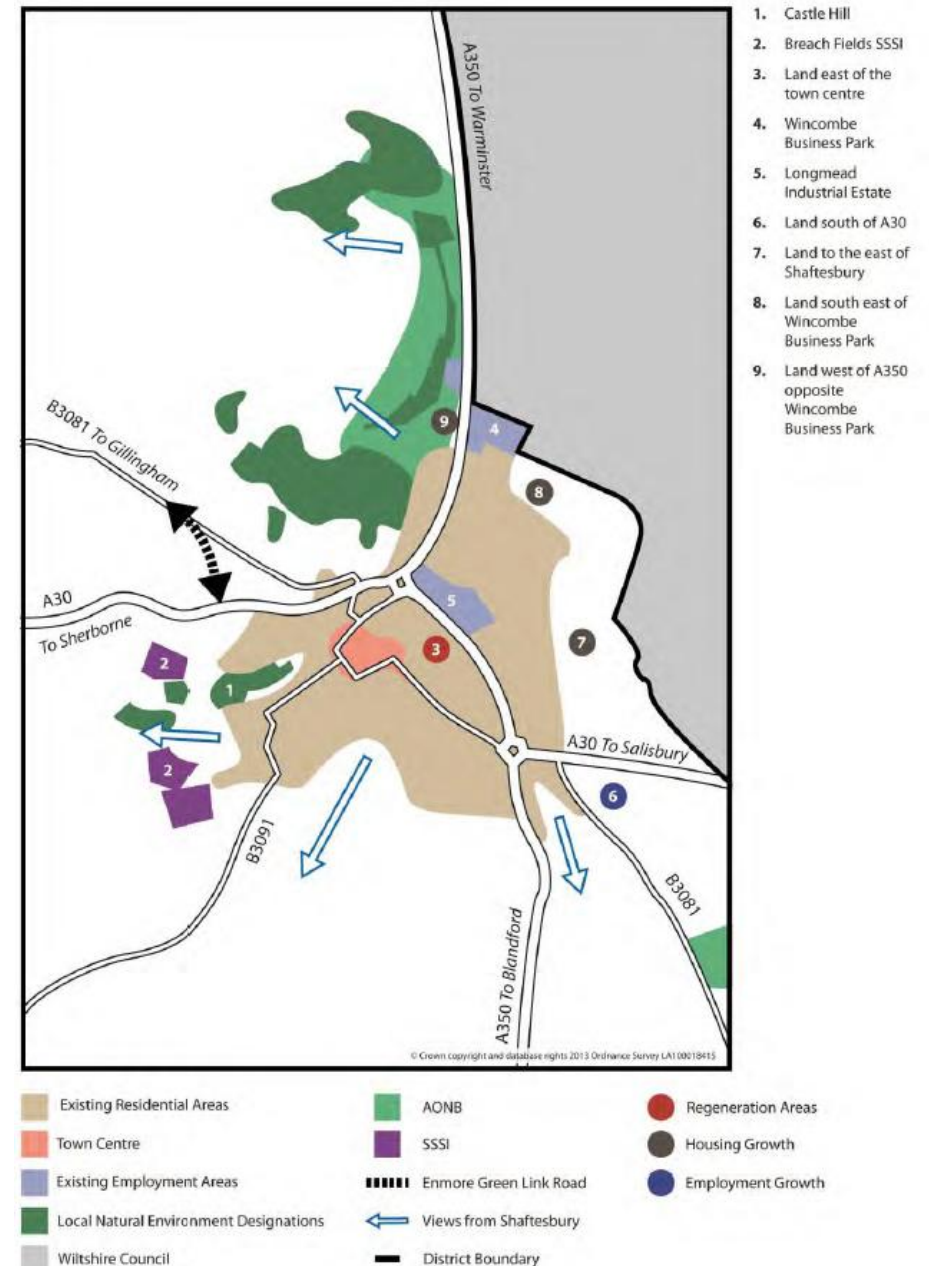
Meeting Housing Needs

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:

- f) to the east of the town (including the Hopkins land); and
- g) to the south east of Wincombe Business Park; and
- h) 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:



- i) the development of land to the south of the A30; and
- j) the development of vacant sites on existing industrial estates; and
- k) 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:

- l) the provision of a new road link from the B3081 to the A30 at Enmore Green, north of Shaftesbury; &
- m) 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:

- n) the provision of a new community hall for the town; and
- o) 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
- p) 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:

- q) 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.

Emerging Policy

A first draft of the new Dorset Council Local Plan was published for consultation in January 2021, and identifies Shaftesbury as a Tier 2 settlement. Draft Policy DEV4, which sets out the development strategy for the northern Dorset functional area, reads as shown:

The supply of employment land from allocated sites is identified as 6.6 hectares on land south of the A30 (extending beyond the Neighbourhood Plan area into Cann parish), with no options sites identified for housing (other than rolling forward the previous Local Plan's allocation of land south-east of Wincombe Business Park). The draft plan's map of proposed development in and around Shaftesbury (Figure 30.1) is also shown here.

At its Cabinet meeting in February 2025, Dorset Council updated its local development scheme setting out the timetable for completing the Local Plan. This includes a further site options consultation (Regulation 18) scheduled for late Summer 2025, that will be required in order to meet the new housing target, with the draft Local Plan produced for consultation (Regulation 19) in late Summer 2026, and the Plan's examination and adoption anticipated in 2027. As such, the Local Plan remains at a relatively early stage and is not being given any significant weight in planning decisions at this time.

Minerals and Waste policies

Dorset Council also has a Minerals Strategy (adopted May 2014) that also forms part of the development plan for the area, together with the more recently adopted Minerals Site Plan and the Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole Waste Plan (the latter replacing the 2006 Waste Local Plan that was in place when the Neighbourhood Plan was made). Neither the waste plan or minerals strategy contain proposals for the Neighbourhood Plan Area, other than defining very limited minerals safeguarding areas around the town, and proposing a replacement facility for the existing Shaftesbury household recycling centre within a combined facility in Gillingham.

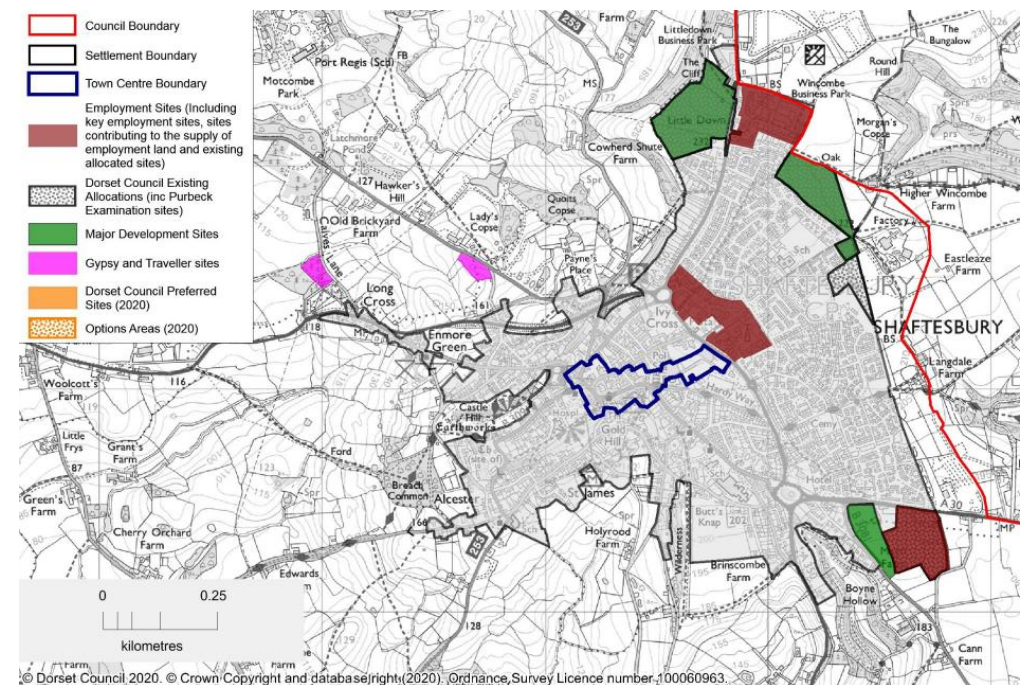
DEV4: Growth in the northern Dorset functional area

In the northern Dorset functional area housing growth will be delivered:

- I. at the market towns of Gillingham and Sherborne, including through major urban extensions to the south of Gillingham and the west of Sherborne;
- II. through the more modest expansion of Shaftesbury and the smaller market towns of Sturminster Newton and Stalbridge; and
- III. through windfall and infilling within existing settlements defined by local plan or neighbourhood plan development boundaries.

Across the northern Dorset functional area, employment growth will be delivered through:

- IV. infilling and intensification within existing employment sites;
- V. the southern extension of Gillingham and existing undeveloped land at Shaftesbury and Sturminster Newton; and
- VI. development of land within the west of Sherborne development.



Approach to the assessment

The following conformity assessment summarises how the Neighbourhood Plan relates to the relevant national planning guidance and strategic development plan policies.

The first version of the Neighbourhood Plan was previously assessed as part of the Examination that took place in Summer 2020. The Plan was assessed against the February 2019 version of the NPPF, and the (unchanged) North Dorset Local Plan Part 1. The Examiner concluded that “subject to the policy modifications set out in this report, the Plan meets the Basic Conditions”. The recommended modifications were made. As such, the assessment focuses on the changes to the policy wording (testing these against the latest NPPF and the strategic policies of the Local Plan); but also considers whether there have been significant changes to the NPPF impacting on the unmodified policies.

Conformity Analysis

The main changes proposed to the plan, and most relevant national and local plan policies, are summarised below:

| Section 2 | The Town Centre |
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| Summary of national policy and guidance noted | <p>NPPF paragraph 90. Planning policies and decisions should support the role that town centres play at the heart of local communities, by taking a positive approach to their growth, management and adaptation. This includes defining the extent of town centres and primary shopping areas, and making clear the range of uses permitted in such locations, as part of a positive strategy for the future of each centre; allowing them to diversify in a way that can respond to rapid changes in the retail and leisure industries, which allows a suitable mix of uses (including housing) and reflects their distinctive characters.</p> <p>NPPF paragraph 109. Transport should be considered from the earliest stages of plan-making, ensuring patterns of movement, streets, parking and other transport considerations are integral to the design of schemes, and contribute to making high quality places; identifying and pursuing opportunities to promote walking, cycling and public transport use, taking into account the environmental impacts of traffic and transport infrastructure.</p> <p>NPPF paragraph 113. In town centres, local authorities should seek to improve the quality of parking so that it is convenient, safe and secure, alongside measures to promote accessibility for pedestrians and cyclists.</p> <p>NPPF paragraph 203. Plans should set out a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment, including heritage assets most at risk through neglect, decay or other threats. This strategy should take into account.</p> <p>NPPF paragraph 212. When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset’s conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be).</p> |

| Summary of potentially relevant adopted development plan policies | <p>Policy 12 Retail, Leisure and other Commercial developments Within the town centre, developments for retail will be supported provided their type and scale will maintain or enhance the role and function of the town and its catchment and respect its historic character. Other main town centre uses will also be supported provided this does not undermine the focus on retailing in primary shopping areas. The loss of retail frontage will be resisted within primary shopping frontages, and change of use away from an A-class uses will be resisted in secondary shopping frontages. The boundaries of town centres, primary shopping areas and shopping frontages can be defined through the Neighbourhood Plan. The Council will work with local communities to take forward proposals for town centre enhancement and will seek to retain and enhance existing outdoor weekly markets. Shop fronts should be designed having had due regard to the Council's advice on shop front design.</p> <p>Policy 11 The Economy Supports the continued improvement of town centres as the main focus for retail, leisure and other commercial activities.</p> <p>Policy 13 Grey Infrastructure Proposes to develop a strategy for off-street parking, focusing on Council and other publicly owned car parks.</p> <p>Policy 18 Shaftesbury 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. Mixed-use regeneration will be encouraged on land within and to the east of the existing town centre.</p> | |
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| Neighbourhood Plan | Main change | Assessment of general conformity |
| SFTC 1 Define the Town Centre and priorities for development | None | There are no significant changes to either the policy or national planning policy to suggest that there may be any conformity issues arising through this review. The policy continues to take a comprehensive approach to supporting the vitality of the town centre which the previous Examiner previously considered to be appropriate. |
| SFTC 2 Define primary shopping area and main frontages | The Town Centre Map primary shopping area has been updated to reflect the lack of retail within the southernmost part of Salisbury Street which is now primarily residential. | The proposed change (in terms of defining the primary shopping area / main frontages) reflects the reality of changes on the ground. Whilst the Lidl store has opened since the plan was last examined, it is not contiguous with or directly linked to the primary shopping area, and therefore although it is in the town centre area it is not included within the primary shopping area. The policy wording remains unchanged and there are no obvious conformity issues with regard to national policy which is largely unchanged. |
| SFTC 3 Preserve and enhance the character and | None | There are no significant changes to either the policy or national planning policy to suggest that there may be any conformity issues arising through this review – post |

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| design of the historic town centre | | Reg14 the text has been amended for greater clarity. The policy contains measures for preserving and enhancing the character of the town centre which the previous Examiner previously considered to be appropriate. |
| SFTC 4 Ensure planning decisions pay regard to congestion and the need for adequate parking in the town centre | The Town Centre Map has been updated to include the Coppice Street Car Park which is now operational. The supporting text notes the lack of a direct link between Lidl store and town centre – and post Regulation 14, the linked policy SFCL3 has been amended to ensure that in the future, enhancing such links is an important consideration. | The changes do not fundamentally alter the nature of the policy which was previously deemed justified and in conformity with NDLP Policy 23. Whilst there is greater emphasis in national planning policy on improving the quality (and not specifically the quantity) of parking so that it is convenient, safe and secure, alongside measures to promote accessibility for pedestrians and cyclists, given the updated text also reflects the need for walking and cycling (linking to SFCL3), this is not considered to raise any notable conflicts. |

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| Section 3 | Housing & Employment |
| Summary of national policy and guidance noted | <p>NPPF paragraph 30. Neighbourhood plans should not promote less development than set out in the strategic policies for the area, or undermine those strategic policies.</p> <p>NPPF paragraph 61. To support the government’s objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes, it is important that a sufficient amount and variety of land can come forward where it is needed, that the needs of groups with specific housing requirements are addressed. The overall aim should be to meet an area’s identified housing need..</p> <p>NPPF paragraph 69-70. Strategic policies should set out a housing requirement for designated neighbourhood areas which reflects the overall strategy for the pattern and scale of development and any relevant allocation. Otherwise, the local planning authority should provide an indicative figure, if requested to do so by the neighbourhood planning body. This figure should take into account factors such as the latest evidence of local housing need, the population of the neighbourhood area and the most recently available planning strategy of the local planning authority.</p> <p>NPPF paragraph 74. Neighbourhood planning groups should give particular consideration to the opportunities for allocating small and medium-sized sites suitable for housing in their area.</p> <p>NPPF paragraph 85. Planning policies and decisions should help create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt. Significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity, taking into</p> |

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| | <p>account both local business needs and wider opportunities for development. The approach taken should allow each area to build on its strengths, counter any weaknesses and address the challenges of the future.</p> <p>NPPF paragraph 111. Planning policies should: (c) identify and protect, where there is robust evidence, sites and routes which could be critical in developing infrastructure to widen transport choice and realise opportunities for large scale development.</p> <p>NPPF paragraph 140. Local planning authorities should also seek to ensure that the quality of approved development is not materially diminished between permission and completion, as a result of changes being made to the permitted scheme (e.g. through changes to approved details such as the materials used).</p> |
| Summary of potentially relevant adopted development plan policies | <p>Policy 2 Core Spatial Strategy</p> <p>All development proposals should be located in accordance with the spatial strategy - which identifies Shaftesbury as one of the four main towns in North Dorset that will function as the main service centres in the District and will be the main focus for growth, both for the vast majority of housing and other development</p> <p>Policy 6 Housing Distribution The approximate scale of housing development during the period 2011 - 2031 will be as follows: c Shaftesbury – at least 1,140 homes</p> <p>Policy 7 Delivering Homes All housing should contribute towards the creation of mixed and balanced communities and seek to meet the needs of different groups in the community.</p> <p>Policy 8 Affordable Housing Development that delivers eleven or more / more than 1,000 square metres net additional dwellings will contribute to the provision of affordable housing (30% within the settlement boundaries of Shaftesbury and elsewhere 40% of dwellings).</p> <p>Policy 9: Rural Exception Affordable Housing Rural exception affordable housing schemes will not be permitted within or adjoining Shaftesbury.</p> <p>Policy 11: The Economy Existing employment sites and sites identified for future employment uses will be protected from other forms of development, but permission may be given for community uses, such as community halls; healthcare facilities, such as doctors' and vets' surgeries; education and training facilities; and small-scale retail, which is ancillary to a B Class use.</p> |

| | <p>Policy 13 Grey Infrastructure The adequacy, availability and provision of grey infrastructure will be key considerations when planning applications are considered. Development will be expected to maintain, enhance and provide grey infrastructure, as appropriate to the particular development.</p> <p>Policy 18 Shaftesbury Shaftesbury will maintain its role to serve the needs of the northern part of the District through: a) development and regeneration within the settlement boundary; b) extensions, primarily of housing, to the east and north; and c) 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. At least 1,140 homes will be provided 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: f) to the east of the town (including the Hopkins land); and g) to the south east of Wincombe Business Park; and h) to the west of the A350 opposite Wincombe Business Park. Employment needs of the town for the period up to 2031 will be met through: i) the development of land to the south of the A30; and j) the development of vacant sites on existing industrial estates; and k) the retention of existing employment sites. The route of the Shaftesbury Outer Eastern Bypass will continue to be protected from development that would prejudice its implementation in the longer-term.</p> <p>Policy 20 The Countryside Development in the countryside outside defined settlement boundaries will only be permitted if: a) it is of a type appropriate in the countryside, as set out in the Local Plan; or b) it can be demonstrated that there is an 'overriding need' for it to be located in the countryside.</p> | |
|---|---|---|
| Neighbourhood Plan | Main change | Assessment of general conformity |
| SFHE 1 Sustainability of new developments, including related policies SFHE1a-d | <p>This policy has been modified and expanded to allocate sites to help meet the identified housing need for the area. The sites are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Land south-east of Wincombe Lane – The former ATS Euromaster site – Barton Hill House and grounds – Land adjoining Lidl, Christy's Lane – Post Office / Police Station site <p>The release of unallocated greenfield sites for housing outside of the settlement boundary is resisted.</p> | <p>The Town Council has worked with Dorset Council to understand the likely housing needs for its area in light of the spatial strategy and more recent national planning policy. An indicative housing target is proposed based on the method supported by Dorset Council, and is considered to be reasonable in light of past delivery rates, the need to boost housing supply and the sustainability and constraints relating to the town. The allocation of sites within the plan, together with an assessment of the extant housing land supply and reasonable windfall rate allowance, evidences that there are sufficient sites to more than meet this indicative target, and therefore it is reasonable to reinstate the plan-led system in these circumstances to give greater confidence in providing the necessary employment and infrastructure alongside the housing growth. The reference to employment provision on major sites is based on the most recent evidence (the March 2024 Dorset and BCP Employment Land Study)</p> |

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| | As a result of feedback at Regulation 14, the main policy includes reference to achieving a balance of housing and employment premises if feasible on major sites, at an equivalent level of 15sqm of employment space per dwelling, and also reflects the possibility that the ATS site may now be developed for town centre parking. The site allocations have also included reference to a new pedestrian / cycle connections where suggested by Dorset Council. | but is not expected to be rigidly applied – which is why the wording uses the phrase ‘if feasible’. The selection of sites has considered potential constraints, all of the sites are within the settlement boundary, and any constraints / potential issues that would need to be considered are reflected in the supporting text and policies. Further detailed consideration of potential impacts on heritage assets was undertaken as part of the SEA screening update as a result of Historic England’s feedback, and no unavoidable harm to heritage assets is anticipated. Dorset Council did suggest that it may be helpful to quantify the amount of homes expected on each site, but this will vary depending on the mix of house types and is not required to meet the basic conditions. Where the sites have been subject to previous permissions / assessment the potential number is reflected in the introductory supporting text. |
| SFHE 2 Approach to housing developments in Shaftesbury | Minor rewording for clarity. No change in general policy approach. | No significant changes to the policy to suggest that there may be any conformity issues arising through this review. The policy seeks a suitable mix of house types taking into account local needs, and that consideration is given to phasing when necessary. This does not raise any clear conflicts with national planning policy. |
| SFHE 3 Encourage conditions for attracting and retaining employment | Updated to align with the planning consent on land to the south of the A30 with further detail added in respect of the design of this site. | The policy is in general conformity with NDLP Policies 11 and 18, and seeks to support economic growth and productivity, taking into account both local business needs and wider opportunities for development, in line with the NPPF. The policy is supported by Dorset Council. |
| SFHE 4 Preservation of the Shaftesbury Eastern Bypass corridor | None | No significant changes to either the policy or national planning policy to suggest that there may be any conformity issues arising through this review. Whilst there remains uncertainty over the schedule for the delivery of the Shaftesbury eastern by-pass, as per the previous Examiner’s consideration until further work is undertaken, it would be premature to delete reference to the potential for a new road as set out in the policy. |

| Section 4 | Green Infrastructure |
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| <p>Summary of national policy and guidance noted</p> | <p>NPPF paragraph 106. The designation of land as Local Green Space through local and neighbourhood plans allows communities to identify and protect green areas of particular importance to them.</p> <p>NPPF paragraph 107. The Local Green Space designation should only be used where the green space is: a) in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves; b) demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance, for example because of its beauty, historic significance, recreational value (including as a playing field), tranquillity or richness of its wildlife; and c) local in character and is not an extensive tract of land.</p> <p>NPPF paragraph 135. Planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments: (b) are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping; (c) are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change</p> <p>NPPF paragraph 187. Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by: (b) recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland; (d) minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity and (e) preventing new and existing development from contributing to, being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by, unacceptable levels of land instability.</p> <p>NPPF paragraph 198. Planning policies and decisions should also ensure that new development is appropriate for its location taking into account the likely effects (including cumulative effects) of pollution on health, living conditions and the natural environment, as well as the potential sensitivity of the site or the wider area to impacts that could arise from the development. In doing so they should: limit the impact of light pollution from artificial light on local amenity, intrinsically dark landscapes and nature conservation.</p> |
| <p>Summary of potentially relevant adopted development plan policies</p> | <p>Policy 4: The Natural Environment The landscape character of the District will be protected through retention of the features that characterise the area. Where significant impact is likely to arise as a result of a development proposal, developers will be required to clearly demonstrate that the impact on the landscape has been mitigated and that important landscape features have been incorporated in to the development scheme.</p> <p>Policy 15 Green Infrastructure Development will be required to enhance existing and provide new green infrastructure to improve the quality of life of residents and deliver environmental benefits. Neighbourhood Plans should consider measures that assist in delivering key green infrastructure benefits, including the designation of Local Green Space, where appropriate.</p> |

| | <p>Policy 18 Shaftesbury 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. 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 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.</p> | |
|--|--|---|
| Neighbourhood Plan | Main change | Assessment of general conformity |
| SFGI 1 Protect the most important and locally valued green spaces | Minor amendments to policy wording so as to be consistent with Green Belt policy. Addition / modification to greenspaces / important treed areas to add two further greenspaces and include treed areas identified through more recent research (previously missed). | The policy has been amended to better align to the requirement in NPPF paragraph 108 that such policies for managing development within a Local Green Space should be consistent with national policy for Green Belts. The additional Local Green Spaces relate to land owned and managed by the Town Council (the allotments) and land provided for public open space as part of the planning obligations for the housing site off Higher Blandford Road (the Owners are required to ensure it is maintained as public open space in perpetuity to the reasonable satisfaction of the Council). Both sites are used by the public, and are evidentially valued (the allotments as shown by the waiting list for these, and the Higher Blandford Road through its previously recognized importance as retaining an important local view and its retention free from development, with the Inspector’s decision noting that the site “holds an important value” and considered it necessary to impose a planning condition “requiring further details in respect of the proposed area of open space, in the interests of the character and appearance of the area”. The changes to the sites had been made clear in the modifications statement and no objections to their inclusion raised. |
| SFGI 2 Respect Shaftesbury’s topography and its position in the landscape | Additional paragraph added to highlight the requirement to address the geological instability of the steep and shallow slopes. | There is no policy in the NDLP relating to land instability, but it is a matter highlighted as important in national policy, and the addition of a requirement to address geological instability in SFGI2 has therefore had due regard to NPPF paragraph 187(e). The areas to which these relate are evidence based. |
| SFGI 3 Respects and enhance the Green Infrastructure network | Minor textual changes for clarity, to draw attention to the importance of wildlife corridors and choice of planting | The previous Examiner concluded that these policies assisted in ensuring that the attractive character and setting of Shaftesbury is retained and further |

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| SFGI 4 Protect our dark skies | Correlated colour temperature (CCT), guide changed from 3,000 to 2,700K as advised by the Cranborne Chase National Landscape team | Enhanced, and met the Basic Conditions. There are no significant changes to either policy or to national policy to suggest that there may be any conformity issues arising through this review. Both policies are supported by Dorset Council as written. |
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| Section 5 | Design and Heritage |
| Summary of national policy and guidance noted | <p>NPPF paragraph 96. Plans should aim to achieve healthy, inclusive and safe places, for example through high quality public space, which encourage the active and continual use of public areas, and layouts that encourage walking and cycling.</p> <p>NPPF paragraph 103. Access to a network of high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and physical activity is important for the health and well-being of communities.</p> <p>NPPF paragraph 132. Plans should, at the most appropriate level, set out a clear design vision and expectations, so that applicants have as much certainty as possible about what is likely to be acceptable. Design policies should be developed with local communities so they reflect local aspirations, and are grounded in an understanding and evaluation of each area's defining characteristics. Neighbourhood planning groups can play an important role in identifying the special qualities of each area and explaining how this should be reflected in development.</p> <p>NPPF paragraph 136. Trees make an important contribution to the character and quality of urban environments, and can also help mitigate and adapt to climate change. Planning policies and decisions should ensure that new streets are tree-lined, that opportunities are taken to incorporate trees elsewhere in developments (such as parks and community orchards), that appropriate measures are in place to secure the long-term maintenance of newly-planted trees, and that existing trees are retained wherever possible.</p> <p>NPPF paragraph 202. Heritage assets range from sites and buildings of local historic value to those of the highest significance, ... and should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance.</p> <p>NPPF paragraph 210. In determining applications, local planning authorities should take account of: (a) the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation; (b) the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and (c) the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.</p> <p>NPPF paragraph 216. The effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining the application. In weighing applications that directly or indirectly affect non-designated heritage</p> |

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| | assets, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset. | |
| Summary of potentially relevant adopted development plan policies | <p>Policy 3 Climate Change Neighbourhood plans will be required to consider local community actions that will help to mitigate and adapt to climate change.</p> <p>Policy 4 The Natural Environment Development should be shaped by the natural environment so that its benefits are enhanced and not degraded. Landscape character will be protected through the retention of the features that characterise the area. Where significant impact is likely that impact must be mitigated and important landscape features incorporated in the development scheme.</p> <p>Policy 5 The Historic Environment Any development proposal affecting a heritage asset (including its setting) will be assessed having regard to the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of that asset. Where a development proposal will lead to harm to the significance of a non-designated heritage asset, regard will be had to: e) the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of the asset; and f) the scale of any harm or loss; and g) the significance of the heritage asset.</p> <p>Policy 7 Delivering Homes Design and layout of housing development should be of a density that respects local character and amenity. Infilling within settlement boundaries, should respect the amenity of adjoining properties, and local communities are encouraged to develop more detailed policies relating to infilling through Neighbourhood Plans.</p> | |
| Neighbourhood Plan | Main change | Assessment of general conformity |
| SFDH 1 Respecting local character | Minor amendments to character zones 4, 6 and 8 to better group areas of consistent character / age and reference recent development where appropriate. | There are no significant changes to either the policy or national planning policy to suggest that there may be any conformity issues arising through this review. Locally based design remain an important element of both national and local planning policy. The policy takes into account the character area assessments and the previous Examiner concluded that it was suitably justified. |
| SFDH 2 High quality designs | Minor amendments to add information about the expectations for sustainable design in new buildings - based on the recently published Dorset Council sustainability checklist. A further addition reflecting the aspiration for tree-planting along the main routes | The amendments to the policy respond to the Local Plan's expectation that neighbourhood plans consider local community actions that will help to mitigate and adapt to climate change. Dorset Council raised concerns at Regulation 14 that the policy may be overly restrictive, and the policy wording has therefore been reconsidered and adapted to reflect the wording deemed acceptable in the Alderholt Neighbourhood Plan, which referenced "where practicable to do so." |

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| | into the town has been added in response to Regulation 14. | It is noted that a recent press release 6 June 2025 https://www.gov.uk/government/news/rooftop-solar-for-new-builds-to-save-people-money advises that the update to the Future Homes Standard should be published this Autumn and that “building regulations [will be] amended to explicitly promote solar for the first time, subject to practical limits with flexibility in place for new homes surrounded by trees or with lots of shade overhead” |
| SFDH 3 The scale, positioning and orientation of buildings | None | There are no significant changes to national planning policy to suggest that there may be any conformity issues arising through this review. The reference to ‘microclimate’ was again questioned by Dorset Council, but this was considered by the previous Examiner who concluded that bearing in mind the topography of the town and the fact that detailed evidence on this is not expected in all development proposals, he was satisfied that such a reference is appropriate. |
| SFDH 4 Creating an attractive public realm | Minor changes to improve clarity, including reference to waste bins, signage and other street furniture, and the inclusion of street trees. | There are no significant changes to either the policy or national planning policy to suggest that there may be any conformity issues arising through this review. The previous Examiner considered the theme of Policy SFDH4 to accord with the advice in national policy which supports the provision of a network of high quality open spaces. |
| SFDH 5 Accommodating vehicles | Minor changes to reference LTN1/20 as the most up-to-date standards regarding cycle parking provision. | There are no significant changes to national planning policy to suggest that there may be any conformity issues arising through this review. The policy is supported by Dorset Council. |
| SFDH 6 Building styles and detailing | Very minor wording changes to improve. | There are no significant changes to either the policy or national planning policy to suggest that there may be any conformity issues arising through this review. The policy is supported by Dorset Council, and was considered reasonable and appropriate by the previous Examiner, bearing in mind the character of the town. |
| SFDH 7 Building materials | The expectation that materials should have high sustainability credentials where feasible has been inserted. | There are no significant changes to either the policy or national planning policy to suggest that there may be any conformity issues arising through this review, and the policy is supported by Dorset Council, who have brought out interim (non-statutory) guidance requiring applicants to complete a checklist to indicate which sustainability objectives the development complies with, including details on whether the development will use sustainable materials and methods in its construction. |

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| SFDH 8 Preserve Shaftesbury's unique and fascinating past | Additional wording has been added to clarify the approach to be taken should an archaeological find be uncovered. | There are no significant changes to either the policy or national planning policy to suggest that there may be any conformity issues arising through this review. The policy was considered reasonable and appropriate by the previous Examiner, bearing in mind the historic nature of the town, and has been made clearer in response to the comments from Dorset Council. |
| SFDH 9 Protect and celebrate locally important buildings | Barton Hill House is proposed to be added to the list of Locally Important Historic Buildings. | There are no significant changes to either the policy or national planning policy to suggest that there may be any conformity issues arising through this review. The NPPG (Paragraph: 040 Reference ID: 18a-040-20190723) acknowledges that non-designated heritage assets may be identified through neighbourhood plan-making processes. The building is described in the Historic Town Survey as the only (surviving) historic building in this character area, an 18th century house, rebuilt in the 19th century, which comprises a square block in two storeys with gabled attic windows and a central bay on the ground floor. The building has been considered against the assessment criteria established by Dorset Council https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/w/nominating-heritage-assets-to-be-added-to-the-local-list and is considered to have architectural value as a local landmark, and communal value relating to its prior use as a boarding house for the town's school. |

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| Section 6 | Community, Leisure and Tourism |
| Summary of national policy and guidance noted | <p>NPPF paragraph 96. Planning policies and decisions should aim to achieve healthy, inclusive and safe places which promote social interaction, including opportunities for meetings between people who might not otherwise come into contact with each other, and enable and support healthy lifestyles, especially where this would address identified local health and well-being needs. Examples of this include mixed use developments, the provision of high quality public spaces, sports facilities, allotments and designing layouts that encourage walking and cycling.</p> <p>NPPF paragraph 98. Planning policies and decisions should plan positively for the provision and use of shared spaces, community facilities (such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, open space, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship) and other local services to enhance the sustainability of communities and residential environments; and guard against the unnecessary loss of valued facilities and services, particularly where this would reduce the community's ability to meet its day-to-day needs</p> |

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| | <p>NPPF paragraph 100. It is important that a sufficient choice of early years, school and post-16 places are available to meet the needs of existing and new communities.</p> <p>NPPF paragraph 104. Existing open space, sports and recreational buildings and land, including playing fields, should not be built on unless specific requirements are met.</p> <p>NPPF paragraph 105. Planning policies and decisions should protect and enhance public rights of way and access, including taking opportunities to provide better facilities for users</p> | |
| Summary of potentially relevant adopted development plan policies | <p>Policy 11: The Economy Tourist facilities and larger hotels will be encouraged in town centre locations in accordance with the sequential approach. Smaller hotels, guest houses, bed and breakfast establishments and self-catering accommodation will be permitted within the settlement boundaries of Shaftesbury.</p> <p>Policy 13 Grey Infrastructure Ensure that the necessary transport infrastructure is put into place to support growth, development and North Dorset's economy. A more sustainable approach to transport will be developed by: providing and enhancing walking and cycling facilities in the main towns and in rural areas, particularly between villages and nearby towns.</p> <p>Policy 14 Social infrastructure Seeks to maintain and enhance the level of social infrastructure through retaining and improving existing facilities, and new provision where required.</p> <p>Policy 15: Green Infrastructure Development will be required to enhance existing and provide new green infrastructure to improve the quality of life of residents and deliver environmental benefits. All elements of green infrastructure should be provided on site in line with standards of provision set in the development plan.</p> <p>Policy 18: Shaftesbury Shaftesbury's reputation as a centre for arts, culture and tourism will be reinforced. 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. A network of green infrastructure will be developed in and around Shaftesbury focusing on linking existing sites, and providing new sites and links to serve the residents of both the new and existing development.</p> | |
| Neighbourhood Plan | Main change | Assessment of general conformity |
| SFCL 1 Improve and increase the range and availability of community facilities | Map SFCL1 has been updated to include the Mampitts Hub project and new areas of play / recreation space. | There are no significant changes to either the policy or national planning policy to suggest that there may be any conformity issues arising through this review. The policy was considered to reflect advice in the NPPF by the previous Examiner, and is supported by Dorset Council. |

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| SFCL 2 Support and grow the tourist economy | Whilst the policy wording has not changed, Map SFCL2 has been updated to remove the former TIC building (which has now been incorporated into the Morrisons supermarket). | There are no significant changes to either the policy or national planning policy to suggest that there may be any conformity issues arising through this review. The policy was considered to reflect advice in the NPPF by the previous Examiner, and is supported by Dorset Council. |
| SFCL 3 Support safe walking and cycling routes that are well connected | Minor change to the policy wording to strengthen the policy regarding the need to provide reasonable footpath and cycle path network connections through a site, connecting to / from the town centre and other community facilities and to the wider countryside. Map SFCL3 has been updated to better reflect the existing routes that have been provided and remaining routes that are proposed. | There are no significant changes to either the policy or national planning policy to suggest that there may be any conformity issues arising through this review. The policy is supported by Dorset Council and was considered appropriate by the previous Examiner, who noted that improvements to the network are supported. |

Conformity conclusions

The analysis of the plan and modification proposals in relation to national planning policy and guidance and the strategic policies of the local plan, as shown in the preceding tables, does not highlight any fundamental conformity issues.

The NPPG makes clear that in considering whether a policy is in general conformity with strategic policies, a view should be taken on whether the neighbourhood plan policy or development proposal supports and upholds the general principle that the strategic policy is concerned with and the degree, if any, of conflict and the rationale and evidence to justify that approach. As such, even where there is a degree of conflict, if the changes are considered to be relatively minor in nature and justified by locally-specific evidence, they should still be considered as being in general conformity.

On this basis, there are no apparent reasons to conclude other than the Neighbourhood Plan as modified would meet the basic conditions of having regard to national policy and guidance from the Secretary of State and being in general conformity with the strategic policies of the development plan for the area.

4. EU and sustainability obligations

The ‘making’ of the Neighbourhood Plan must not breach or conflict, and must be compatible, with EU obligations, must not have a significant effect on a European site, and must contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. It must not breach human rights, within the meaning of the Human Rights Act 1998.

Dorset Council determined that an SEA of the Shaftesbury Neighbourhood Plan (as previously made) was not required. A screening assessment in relation to modifications proposals was undertaken by Shaftesbury Town Council (in consultation with Dorset Council) as part of the Regulation 14 consultation stage. The Environment Agency, Historic England and Natural England were invited to respond to the draft assessment and its conclusions that there are unlikely to be significant adverse environmental effects resulting from the Shaftesbury Neighbourhood Plan, and as such neither a Strategic Environmental Assessment nor a full Habitats Regulations Assessment for the Neighbourhood Plan would be required.

The Environment Agency responded that they had no comment to make. Natural England responded that, in their view, the plan’s proposed policies are unlikely to result in significant effects on statutorily designated nature conservation sites or landscape, or to impact on internationally important habitats. Historic England advised that a rigorous assessment of relevant heritage considerations and an understanding of their significance and sensitivity is required to determine whether a full SEA will be required or not, and highlighted their guidance on SEAs, Site Allocations (applicable to Neighbourhood Plans as well as Local Plans), Setting, and Heritage Significance.

The SEA screening report was therefore updated to include further analysis of the heritage assets that could potentially be impacted by the site allocations, and it is noted that:

- Land south-east of Wincombe Lane (Hopkins Land) – there are no heritage assets in its vicinity or liable to be impacted by the development.
- ATS Euromaster site – has planning permission for 24 dwellings with no harm arising to either the setting of the Conservation Area, nor the settings of listed buildings in the vicinity. A programme of investigative archaeological work was considered sufficient to safeguard and record any archaeological interest on and around the site.
- Land adjoining Lidl, Christy’s Lane – has planning permission for 41 retirement apartments in a manner that was considered to preserve the historic environment of Shaftesbury, including the settings and significance of nearby listed buildings, non-designated heritage assets and the Shaftesbury Conservation Area.
- Barton Hill House and grounds, Barton Hill – includes a Grade II Listed garden wall and gate piers and Grade II Listed Ice House within its grounds. Barton Hill House is not currently identified on the Dorset HER but is an 18th century house, rebuilt in the 19th century, which comprises a square block in two storeys with gabled attic windows and a central bay on the ground floor. Previous investigations in the grounds have also revealed evidence of Roman activity and medieval settlement together with some residual Saxon pottery. These factors have been taken into account, and referenced in the policy, and it is considered that harm can be avoided because: there is no set quantum of development proposed; the re-use of

the existing buildings would not directly impact on their significance; the retention of Barton Hill House is sought; and scope for any further development in the grounds will be influenced by these constraints.

- Post Office / Police Station site – lies within the Shaftesbury Conservation Area, with Grade II Listed Buildings to the south, north-west and north, including the garden wall to the Cedars. The buildings within the site are not Listed, but the Post Office is noted as a key building in the Historic Towns Study, described as “perhaps the most visible and notable modern building”. These factors have been taken into account, and referenced in the policy, and it is considered that harm can be avoided because: there is no set quantum of development proposed; the re-use of the existing buildings would not directly impact on their significance; the retention of the Post Office building is sought; and scope for any further development in the grounds will be influenced by these constraints.

No issues have been raised in relation to the possible contravention of Human Rights in the preceding consultations, and given the conclusions on the plan’s general conformity with the strategic policies of the Local Plan and regard to National Planning Policy, it is reasonable to conclude that the making of the plan should not breach human rights.