

LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

Shaping the future of North Dorset

Report on the Core Strategy Focus Group Meetings, July 2005

15th August 2005

During July a series of five Focus Group meetings, each concentrating on a specific topic of relevance to the Core Strategy, were held within the District. The aim of these meetings was for the NDDC Planning Policy team to facilitate the evening only, allowing the attendees (members of the public, stakeholders and professionals) to identify issues that they considered are currently relevant in the District and those issues which are likely to be relevant in the longer term.

Five focus groups were held on five evenings in July;
Environment – 7th July, NDDC Council Offices, Nordon, Blandford
Living – 12th July, NDDC Council Offices, Nordon, Blandford
Travelling – 14th July, NDDC Council Offices, Nordon, Blandford
Housing – 21st July, Gillingham Town Council Offices, Gillingham
Economy – 25th July, Gillingham Town Council Offices, Gillingham

At each Focus Group a brief introduction to the new planning process and the purpose of the Core Strategy was given

The Focus Groups were organised to allow everyone that attended to voice their own concerns, issues and visions for the District, and then for these to be discussed in small groups of between 3-5 people (depending on the number of people attending). It was then the Planning Officer's task to facilitate the grouping of these issues, with consent from the group as a whole, and later to assist in the naming of the titles of the overarching issues.

The outcomes of all five evenings are displayed in the tables below.

The evenings concluded with an explanation of what would happen next in the development of the Core Strategy, and feedback sheets were handed out. The information gathered was fed into a special meeting of North Dorset's Planning Policy Panel on the 27th July at which a first draft of aims and objectives for the Core Strategy was discussed. For further information on this meeting see Report on Special Meeting of Planning Policy Panel – 27th July 2005.

Outcomes

A large and highly diverse range of key issues were produced in all of the Focus Groups, ranging from Renewable Energy to Waste Management in the Environment Focus Group to Barriers to Business and Quality Tourism in the Economy Focus Group.

The issues that had been formulated in the Community Plans process were very similar to those that were produced in the Focus Groups. In the tables below these community plan issues are highlighted in red.

ISSUES FROM ENVIRONMENT FOCUS GROUP AND SUMMARY OF COMMUNITY PLANS (ENVIRONMENT)

(RED bordered issues from Community Plans)

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|--|--|--|--|---|--|--|-------------------------------------|--|---|
| Renewable Energy | Renewable energy need | Aim: 100% Energy (Renewable) production within District (e.g. wind, biomass, water etc.) | Renewable energy - support it! | Energy production within new developments. E.g. PPS22 needs use of solar power | Community wind should get the support of NDDC | North Dorset has to expect some big wind turbines | Energy sensitive building | County target renewable energy | Hydroelectric power from old mills around Sturminster | The county Renewable Energy Strategy should be adhered to |
| | Community wind turbines should receive the support of NDDC | North Dorset has the renewable energy resources to be carbon neutral | PPS22 allows planning authorities to require a % of energy to be generated on site with all new development. This MUST be a key aspect of any new plan or strategy | | Domestic wall mounted wind turbines within 'permitted development' | | | | | |
| Balanced Rural Development and Employment | Link jobs etc. to housing and vice-versa | Rural employment in absence of agriculture | Infrastructure and economy to condition development | Housing targets ignore local need | Barriers to rural development and employment | Restructuring agriculture - support local produce | Loss of economic base in rural areas | | | |
| Biodiversity Protection and Enhancement | Loss of habitats - impact of agriculture. Policies e.g. uplands mono-culture | Dorset Biodiversity Strategy needs delivering in North Dorset | Mixed, diverse, less intensive agriculture | Protection and enhancement of the biodiversity | Pollution and species survival | Reafforestation to increase carbon capture and reduce flooding | Develop local forests/ community orchards including replanting the Gillingham Royal Forest | Conserve, protect, enhance heritage | Biodiversity protection and enhancement - Wildlife networks PPS9 | Preserving habitats |
| | Tree loss | Light pollution affects biodiversity | Loss of upland management | | | | | | | |
| Lower Carbon Intensive Transport | Reduce car use whilst improving accessibility | Cycle paths and footpaths to practical destinations | Air quality to be safeguarded | | | | | | | |
| Sustainable Construction | Sustainable building mandatory | Flood plains - Love 'em! | Energy sensitive building | Unsustainable construction e.g. uPVC | Energy production within new development | Sustainable construction methods | Encourage sustainable design and construction | | | |
| Landscape Protection | North Dorset's distinctive landscapes at risk | Protect countryside from inappropriate building and industrial development | Pressure of agricultural land for recreational use | Prepare a townscape audit / landscape assessment of local area | | | | | | |
| Waste Management | Waste Management (including litter) | Reduce, Reuse, Recycle waste | | | | | | | | |
| Cultural Heritage and Traditional Skills | Conserve historical environmental assets/skills - vernacular tradition (no uPVC) | Application of inappropriate planning policies for rural areas - loss of identity/fabric | Loss of local identity - poor skills base, loss of vernacular traditions | Loss of rural skills | Develop schemes to preserve / enhance heritage sites | | | | | |
| Dark Skies | Pollution chemical and light | Avoid light pollution (Landscape Issue) | | | | | | | | |
| Cleaner, Safer, Greener | More open space - accessible and relevant and clean | Access to open space / countryside | Undertake an audit of open space and produce management plans for spaces designated as public amenities | Support implementation of town centre enhancements | Encourage provision of accessible open spaces - including disabled access. | Prepare design statements for local areas. | | | | |
| Community Building | Co-ordination of interest groups | Community to resolve conflicts | | | | | | | | |
| Worry Bin | Private land ownership Vs public demands for access | Bottlenecks in the District cause large amounts of pollution | Impact of yet more traffic from S. Dorset's economic expansion | Loss of wild flowers adjacent to urban footpaths | Risk of increased development in Sturminster causing large scale flash floods | Food miles Vs supermarket power | Overall need = careful responsible 'stewardship' | | | |

ISSUES FROM LIVING FOCUS GROUP AND SUMMARY OF COMMUNITY PLANS (SAFETY AND HEALTH, PEOPLE AND LEARNING AND KNOWLEDGE) (RED bordered issues from Community Plans)

| | | | | | | | | | |
|--|--|--|--|---|---|---|--|--|---|
| Overarching Issues | Encourage greater ethnic diversity | Youth voice | Integrated transport systems | | | | | | |
| Youth Services | Youth provision. Travel - access to service/facilities | Professional help on Youth Clubs | Increasing scooter provision | Youth workers allocated part-time to villages | Possible compulsory purchase of suitable land for 'skate parks' and 'bmx cycle track' to help the younger generations | | | | |
| Multi-purpose, Flexible Facilities and Venues | Improved access to facilities and information | Integration of facilities in parish and town | Multi-purpose venues for communities to meet | Multi-purpose facilities | Multi-sport town and village facilities indoor and outdoor | Improved halls in towns and villages | Access to towns - non drivers and low income families | Playing and training facilities for teams such as Blandford FC | Use of village halls for services to be delivered - costs - environment/parking |
| | Shopping Access/costs. Are there village shops where needed? | Pressure on facilities from growing population | Mobile libraries | | | | | | |
| Lifelong Learning | Leisure/education availability across age spectrum | Role and function of schools and other public buildings in future (extended schools) | School building availability for community use | Affordable courses (especially I.T.) for over 60's | Increased life-long learning opportunities and reskilling | Adult education to raise employability | More education facilities and opportunities | Adequate school buildings for increasing population | Workshops for drama and music |
| Health and Care Issues | Respite and carer support | Support for aged and disabled at home | Health education, parenting skills in village halls | Adequately funded medical services...short waiting times | Cycling and walking health. Prevention rather than cure | Home care and district nursing | | | |
| Out and About | Open spaces - high density housing | Greater access to open spaces (Dorset Play Strategy) | Health promotion. Good use of open space. Proper paths and cycleways | Improved sports provision | Play facilities for all age groups of young people | Safer walking routes (Walking Strategy) | Walking needs to be safe - lighting pavements | | |
| Retaining Young People | Affordable housing. Young people | Increased availability of Registered Social Landlord rented accommodation | Flexible approach to re-use of farm buildings to support creative industries | More industrial sites and encouragement of businesses to provide employment locally | | | | | |
| "Feel Good" Towns and Villages | Encouragement of more varied retail opportunities | Attractive town centres | Fear of crime. Education/crime reduction | Larger towns = more crime | Quality of design in built environment | Shaftesbury - seriously lacking large public open space | Protection of sites in natural beauty - not so much 'ad hoc' building | Policing | |
| Living Together | Diversity in the community | Community involvement | Partnership working | Understanding relative poverty | | | | | |
| Worry Bin | Range of housing types | Undesirables' on to small towns and parishes by larger town and county councils | Less paper work and paper mountains | By-passes of 'pinch' sites in towns and villages | Competitive ball games - leagues - all ages | Impact of 750 + homes on Shaftesbury | Dorset Play Strategy - is this fed into bigger plans? Play in 'free' spaces not necessarily parks/playgrounds but wild space | | |

ISSUES FROM TRAVELLING FOCUS GROUP AND SUMMARY OF COMMUNITY PLANS (ACCESS) (RED bordered issues from Community Plans)

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|--|---|--|---|--|
| Integrated Planning | Reduce travel needs live/work units | Cycleways to industrial estates and schools | Reduce the need to travel | Taking services out to the villages, not people in to market towns | Main house build to take place in the four market towns | Provision of suitable employment for all ability levels |
| | Planning must provide incentives to reduce car use | Provision of employment within villages and shops to serve villages | Market towns should act as hubs | Integrate housing plan to support transport solution | Accessibility need not mean better car accessibility | Traffic growth is undermining local economic activities and amenities |
| | Reallocation of road space to encourage less (short) journeys by car | Sustainability means a balance between prosperity and quality of life | Integrate transport - especially rail and buses | | | |
| Appropriately Funded, Flexible Public Transport | Transport available at all appropriate times of day (employment and recreation) | Funding - leading to continuity of services | Demand responsive transport services available to all | Joined up cross ticketing | Better co-ordination of connecting public transport services | Demand led |
| | Response transport to main centres | Transport 'pump priming' from new development | Developers should contribute to new and improved bus services | Developers to work in partnership with public transport | Need improved public transport service | Public transport provision - should look at different options to provide this |
| | Increase use of public transport by increasing fiscal advantage | If allowed NORDCAT could play a larger role | Any 'bus' must run at times people need them | Mini-buses could be better used than the present larger vehicles | | |
| Strategic Infrastructure Improvements | Build up sympathetically A303 axis A35 axis and A350 axis | Road user charging is inevitable | Promotion of 'best quality' roads for strategic travel | Road charges to favour public transport | Reallocation of road space to encourage alternative travel | Build double track on railway Waterloo-Exeter |
| | Dorset has unique countryside - we must protect it from cars and traffic | Not everybody wants accessibility - some fear it! | Promotion of 'best' quality routes for improvement and strategic importance | | | |
| Joined-Up Thinking | Co-ordinate public and school transport | Manage school run - Limit parking / travel plans | Force' (encourage) employers on industrial estates to offer bus transport to workers to and from work | Developers to be encouraged to establish partnerships working with public transport companies | Lower car use encouraged by planning initiatives | |
| Worry Bin | Increasing private cars | More commuting to Bournemouth/Poole, Salisbury due to businesses closing | Present rate of traffic growth is unsustainable - road improvements will damage the countryside and are costly | Residential development with sufficient amenity space to allow cycle storage and parking | Provision of storage facilities at work places | Traffic calming to encourage walking |
| | Increased use of demand responsive transport. Promotion of transport hubs in towns | Roads in North Dorset have not yet reached saturation | Good highway maintenance is essential | You can't force people to car share | Some buses are needed after 6pm | General layout of developments can either promote car use or walking / cycling |
| | Ban parking near schools. Schools should reinstate safe, secure cycle parking and upgrade crossings / pavements | Commitment to new road building is likely to lead to less road maintenance as priorities are shifted | New housing / commercial development to be located on established transport networks or planning obligation to bring all modes to development | Improve town centre pedestrian environment by discouraging / restraining traffic e.g. reduce parking provision in town centres | Concentrate housing and social housing in Principle Urban Areas and to a lesser extent market towns | Appreciation of beauty of isolation, freedom from noise, light pollution |
| | Reducing travel requires more mixed use development and live/work units | Resident parking zones | Avoid uniformity | | | |

ISSUES FROM HOUSING FOCUS GROUP AND SUMMARY OF COMMUNITY PLANS (HOUSING)

(RED bordered issues from Community Plans)

| | | | | | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|--|--|---|--|--|---|--|--|
| Data Collection | How do we make use of existing housing stock - 2nd homes etc | Carry out periodic parish housing needs surveys | Investigate the need for sheltered housing | | | | | |
| Sustainable Building | Energy efficient and solar grant aided | | | | | | | |
| Socially Inclusive Housing | Housing policy for older people (not sheltered) | Supported accommodation is a poverty trap for youth wishing to work | Ageing population. What type of provision re. housing? | There aren't enough supported housing schemes for young people | Right dwellings in right places? | Housing must cater for children and young people | Housing for older people | Not enough single occupancy flats for 18-25 year olds |
| | Health care (ageing population) | | | | | | | |
| Sustaining the Community | Infrastructure and amenity. Lag and deficit | Delivery of community infrastructure? | Creating local employment opportunities (home working?) | How do we create more sustainable communities - more employment and infrastructure | More car parking | Poor transport (any sort) | Housing integrated with economy, education, transport, leisure | Housing must be tied to infrastructure and transport |
| | Housing numbers relating to jobs | Infrastructure (roads, transport etc.) | Health care (ageing population) | How much? 1 - District. 2 - Rural. | | | | |
| Location of development | Cautious expansion of rural settlement boundaries | Greenfield not always bad (sustainable affordable etc.) | Need to provide hope / sustainability for villages including affordable housing | Design / environment - Threat if settlement boundaries removed? | Review development boundaries | Support appropriate infilling that retains local character | Housing mostly in market towns | How much? 1 - District. 2 - Rural. |
| | Less development - much worse for affordable housing | Under supply of market housing. Prices increase, affordability decreases | Right dwellings in right places? | | | | | |
| Affordable Housing | More affordable housing - especially first time buyers | Encourage more affordable housing in new developments | How do we provide more affordable housing that caters for those at bottom of ladder | Lower threshold for affordable housing on development - more stringent policy | Affordable housing - more, protected and allocations local | Shortage of affordable housing | Twin track market | More social rented |
| Worry Bin | More affordable homes for low income larger families | Larger garden areas | Straighter roads in development sites | Ageing population - yes to different types of housing | Village sustainability - growth? | Age skew of population without proper safeguards for local need | Gillingham railway service needs expanding | Small units and more warden assisted with communal rooms - not just centred in major towns |

ISSUES FROM ECONOMY FOCUS GROUP AND SUMMARY OF COMMUNITY PLANS (ECONOMY)

(RED bordered issues from Community Plans)

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|--|--|--|--|---|--|--|
| Green Businesses | Recycling | | | | | | | |
| Agricultural Diversity | Rural business = farming and diversification? | | | | | | | |
| Barriers to Business | Universal business rates | | | | | | | |
| Quality Tourism | Importance of tourism | Tourism emphasising quality and 'hidden Dorset' | Encourage tourism and promote market towns as gateways to known tourist destinations | Encourage the provision of quality tourist accommodation | Encourage / support/ promote local events / festivals | | | |
| Plug Skills Gap | Skilled workforce through apprenticeships and training | Skill / education, business links, technical college | Support small business training and marketing | Training and skills | Talent pool | Retain well qualified young people and provide appropriate local employment opportunities | | |
| Cost Effective, Appropriate Work-Space | Need more industrial units and land | Cost effective business units | Premises and facilities for new and existing businesses | Support the increasing trend towards home working | Encourage provision of appropriate workspace, including attractive business parks, diversification of land-based businesses, incorporate small-scale | | | |
| Affordable Living and Facilities | More affordable housing | Non retail infrastructure - health, social care, education | Balance between development and facilities | Affordability housing and transport (Wage levels) | Balance housing provision with economic development e.g. 'ladder housing' | | | |
| Transport and Access Strategy | Improve transport links | Transport infrastructure | Car parking provision essential to sustain market towns | Improved public transport | Transport and access | Work with public sector organisations to ensure all future developments involve the integration of land use and transport | | |
| Market Town Strategy | Market towns economic drivers (Diversity) | Town centre as focus (retail, employment) Community facilities | Car parking provision essential to sustain market towns | Encourage niche marketing | Niche market to include local produce | Encourage local commerce (not clone towns) | | |
| Vision | Vision? | Sustainable wealth creation with sustainable environmental balance | Deliverable, achievable plans only | Aspirational vision and plans | Diversification and means to achieve it | Representative. Wide interests | Seize opportunities i.e. Olympics 2012 | |
| Worry Bin | Marketing for existing services | Providing adequate space for population growth | Broadband provision is still very patchy in the area | Key worker housing | Mixed use development - sustainable communities | Retention of employment sites for employment uses | Is there enough land available to meet demands of commerce and housing | Small business start-up and set-up provision |
| | Allow infrastructure to catch up with housing development | | | | | | | |

List of Attendees

Environment Focus Group, 7th July

| NAME | ORGANISATION |
|---------------------|--|
| Susan Bennett | CPRE |
| Judith Bennett | Newton Resident's Association |
| Vanessa Cockarill | |
| James Martin | Sturminster Newton Open Spaces |
| Kevin Morris | NDDC Environment Policy Manager |
| Pat Osborne | Charlton Marshall Parish Council |
| Matthew Price | National Farmers Union |
| Michael Rose | |
| David Sekers | Dorset Gardens Trust |
| James Selby-Bennett | Country Land and Business Association |
| Maria Timperley | Dorset Agenda 21 |
| Brian Venison | Lower Winterborne Parish Council |
| Malcolm Venn | Gillingham Town Council |
| David Webb | Three Rivers Partnership |
| Keith Wheaton-Green | |
| David White | REAPinG (Renewable Energy) |
| Sarah Williams | Dorset Wildlife Trust |
| Jacky Kemp | Three Rivers Partnership (Open Spaces Group) |

Living Focus Group, 12th July

| NAME | ORGANISATION |
|------------------------|---|
| Brian Adams | University of the 3rd age, Shaftesbury and Gillingham |
| Tony Baverstock | North Dorset area Youth Worker |
| Vanessa Cockarill | |
| Dominic Coleman | |
| Phil Farmer | DCC Education Officer |
| Agnes Fife | |
| Ruth Forbes | Surestart |
| L S Goldbart | Sturminster Newton Town Council |
| Gary Knight | Dorset County Football Association |
| Fiachra O Mathuna | Active Sports (Dorset) |
| Pat Osborne | Charlton Marshall Parish Council |
| Pat Pryor | DCC Education |
| Jackie Upton | |
| David Webb | Three Rivers Partnership |
| Richard Stewart-Hanney | Blandford Town Council |
| Susan Bennett | CPRE |
| Gary Pattison | DCC Senior Strategic Planner |
| Ben Heath | NDDC Community and Sports Development Officer |

Travelling Focus Group, 14th July

| NAME | ORGANISATION |
|-------------------|--|
| Mike Burt | Okeford Fitzpaine Parish Council and DAPTC |
| Vanessa Cockarill | |
| Berenice Deakin | NDDC Car Park Services Officer |
| Richard Dodson | DCC Planning Liaison Officer County Highways |
| Gerald Good | Dorset & Wilts Bus Company |
| Stephen Howard | CPRE North Dorset |
| P A Johnson | Sturminster Newton Town Council |
| Helen Reed | Spetisbury Parish Council |
| Michael Rose | |
| Andy Shaw | DCC Environmental Services (LTP) |
| David Webb | Three Rivers Partnership |

Housing Focus Group, 21st July

| NAME | ORGANISATION |
|-------------------|--|
| Phil Hull | Westbury Homes (Holdings) Ltd |
| Richard Miller | Symonds & Sampson |
| Cliff Lane | FPD Savills |
| Ian Gillespie | Carter Jonas |
| David Webb | Three Rivers Partnership |
| Fiona Astin | East Dorset Housing Association - Synergy Group |
| Mike Burt | Okeford Fitzpaine Parish Council and DAPTC |
| Vanessa Cockarill | |
| Dominic Coleman | |
| Susan Roake | Sturminster Newton Town Council |
| James Martin | Sturminster Newton Open Spaces |
| C Tillbrook | A J Coke |
| Piers Chichester | Country Land and Business Association |
| Ian Semple | Stalbridge Town Council |
| Sara Jacson | Young Homeless Person's Strategy Group |
| Gerry Chapman | Cllr Blandford Town Council |
| Derek Hardy | NDDC Housing and Community Safety Policy Manager |
| Richard Bailey | Level Consulting Ltd |
| Anne Beckley | Gillingham Town Council |
| Peter Webb | Cllr NDDC |
| Susan Bennett | CPRE |
| Michael Roake | Cllr NDDC |
| Sue Hunt | Cllr NDDC |

Economy Focus Group 25th July

| NAME | ORGANISATION |
|--------------------|---|
| Jo Rose | Shaftesbury Task Force |
| Rod Williams | Blandford & District Chamber of Trade & Commerce |
| Sven Thomas | Blackmore Vale Publishing Company Ltd. |
| Ken Lindon-Travers | |
| Val Porthecary | Business Link Wessex |
| R Belcham | Fifehead Magdalen Parish Council |
| William Dike | Dike & Son Ltd, Stalbridge Town Council |
| Elizabeth Smith | Neal's Yard Remedies |
| Ian Cambrook | Bournemouth Dorset Poole Economic Partnership |
| Philip Rhodes | STURQUEST. Sturminster Newton Community Partnership |
| Peter Crocker | Resident of North Dorset |
| Steve Howard | CPRE |
| Richard Shaw | FPD Savills |
| David Woodhouse | Hall & Woodhouse |
| Brian Miller | Signpost Housing Group |
| Richard Thomas | Shaftesbury and District Chamber of Commerce |
| Pam Bacon | North Dorset District Council |
| Matthew Price | National Farmers Union |
| David Webb | Three Rivers Partnership - Gillingham |
| Colin Jameson | Federation of Small Business |