ECONOMY

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 This paper provides the background to the economy chapter in the joint Local Plan. The purpose of this paper is to bring together guidance and evidence from a wide range of sources on a range of subject areas to inform and support policies on:

- New employment development
- Retention of employment
- Retail and town centre development
- Built holiday accommodation
- Caravan and camping sites
- Tourist attractions and facilities
- Farm diversification
- Equestrian development

1.2 Though a successful economy needs good transport, housing, a skilled workforce and other infrastructure to sustain economic activity and support future growth, these are policy issues addressed through other parts of the plan. Further information and consideration of the policy options for these topics is available in the housing, community and infrastructure background papers. Similarly, the amount and distribution of employment development needed is considered in the Sustainable Pattern of Development background paper.

2 POLICY GUIDANCE

2.1 There is a wealth of international, national and local guidance in relation to the economy reflecting its importance. In plan making these other policies and guidance need to be referred to in order to ensure that the policies set at a local level are consistent with other plans and programmes.

Table 1 Summary of policy guidance

Plan or programme	Key objectives and targets	Implications for the Local Plan
National		
National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2012)	The main aim of the document is to achieve sustainable development. Three dimensions to sustainable development are identified: economic, social and environmental. In performing an economic role the planning system should contribute to building a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right type is available in the right places and at the right time to support innovation; and by identifying and coordinating development requirements, including the provision of infrastructure. Core planning principles include: Proactively drive and support sustainable economic development to deliver the homes, business and industrial units, infrastructure and thriving local places that the country needs. Every effort should be made objectively to identify and then meet the housing, business and other development needs of an area, and respond positively to wider opportunities for growth. Plans should take account of market signals, such as land prices and housing affordability, and set out a clear strategy for allocating sufficient land which is suitable for development in their area, taking account of the needs of the residential and business communities.	The Local Plan should seek to: **Build a strong, competitive economy** - plan proactively to meet the development needs of business and support an economy fit for the 21st century through: a clear vision and strategy which encourages sustainable economic growth; setting criteria or identifying sites to meet anticipated needs; supporting existing and emerging sectors; planning positively for knowledge driven, creative or high technology industries; identification of priority areas for economic regeneration, infrastructure provision and environmental enhancement; and facilitating flexible working practices. **Ensure the vitality of town centre** - promote the vitality and viability of town centres, and meet the needs of consumers for high quality and accessible retail services through: the definition of town centres and primary shopping areas; allocation of a range of suitable sites to meet the scale and type of development needed; use of a sequential approach for town centre uses; and the consideration of the impact of town centre uses which are not in accordance with the development plan. **Support a prosperous rural economy** - raise the quality of life and the environment in rural areas by promoting thriving, inclusive and locally distinctive rural economies

		through: support for growth and expansion of businesses; the development and diversification of agriculture and land based rural businesses; support for rural tourism and leisure development; and the development and retention of local services and facilities
Local		
West Dorset District Council and Weymouth and Portland Borough CouncilCorporate Plans 2013-2017 (2013)	Priorities include: ▪ Facilitating inward investment to create more better paid jobs ▪ Improving infrastructure to enable businesses to grow ▪ Supporting businesses through the recession and recovery ▪ Regenerating and supporting vibrant town centres	The Local Plan should proactively meet the development needs of business and support an economy fit for the 21st century through: a clear vision and strategy which encourages sustainable economic growth; setting criteria or identifying sites to meet anticipated needs; supporting existing and emerging sectors; planning positively for knowledge driven, creative or high technology industries; identification of priority areas for economic regeneration, infrastructure provision and environmental enhancement; and facilitating flexible working practices. Support the development and expansion of existing businesses. Promote the vitality and viability of town centres through: the definition of town centres and primary shopping areas; allocation of a range of suitable sites to meet the scale and type of development needed; use of a sequential approach for town centre uses; and the consideration of the impact of town centre uses which are not in accordance with the development plan.
West Dorset Community Plan (2010) West Dorset Partnership	Key aims include: ▪ Support new and existing local businesses including social enterprises and local services, such as pubs, shops and schools, to act as centres/hubs for the community. ▪ Support a broad range of business types by retaining	The Local Plan should: Support new and existing businesses, including those that provide a local facility or service. Retain employment sites where appropriate Promote the provision of employment through strategic mixed use schemes Support tourism related development where this would not have a

	and developing business parks and industrial estates, mixed use development and other opportunities for employment. ▪ Encourage all year round employment opportunities. ▪ Benefit from the wider economic opportunities from Dorset's hosting of the sailing events as part of the Olympics in 2012. ▪ Support and protect tourism and infrastructure opportunities, including gaining benefit from the World Heritage Site and AONB designation while ensuring that the special qualities aren't harmed. ▪ Support agricultural and rural businesses developing, producing or using local products and encourage communities to support local business, for example farmers markets.	detrimental impact on the environment, landscape and amenity Support for growth and expansion of businesses; the development and diversification of agriculture and land based rural businesses; support for rural tourism and leisure development; and the development and retention of local services and facilities
Community Plan for Weymouth & Portland 2013-2016 (2013) Weymouth and Portland Partnership	i The community Plan sets out a series of aims under four headings including: **Economy**: to encourage a broad range of employers and for them to grow, meet training needs, support regeneration, promoted the borough, develop the cultural environment and specialist tourism..	The Local Plan should plan proactively to meet the development needs of business and support an economy fit for the 21st century, through: a clear vision and strategy which encourages sustainable economic growth; setting criteria or identifying sites to meet anticipated needs; supporting existing and emerging sectors; planning positively for knowledge driven, creative or high technology industries; identification of priority areas for economic regeneration, infrastructure provision and environmental enhancement; and facilitating flexible working practices.
The Business Support Framework for Action 2009-2013 (2009)	Priorities for action include supporting business competitiveness, developing infrastructure and safeguarding the environment. Aims and actions include:	The Local Plan should: Plan proactively to meet the development needs of business. Support tourism-related development where this would not have a

West Dorset District Council	▪ developing initiatives to maximise tourism opportunities ▪ supporting and informing employment land and buildings related enquiries and development ▪ ensuring that economic impacts are a consideration when planning applications are being considered, for example regarding the retention of important employment- providing premises such as hotels in seaside locations.	detrimental impact on the environment, landscape and amenity Protect employment sites (including hotels) from changes of use where appropriate
The Weymouth and Portland Economic & Tourism Development Strategy 2010-2015 (2010) Weymouth and Portland Borough Council	The aim of the strategy is to develop creative opportunities in a world class location. It seeks to upgrade the area's tourism role and diversify its economy. Identified objectives include working with partners to deliver major developments and employment opportunities by ensuring that the built and natural environment is providing for the current and future need for business and the community. Key priorities include town centre regeneration.	The Local Plan should: Make provision for a wide range of businesses. Support tourism related development where this would not have a detrimental impact on the environment, landscape and amenity Identify and meet likely future need for employment land and premises. Support the vitality and viability of the town centres.
The Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP)	The objectives of the Dorset LEP include: ▪ To improve the performance of existing businesses within Dorset, and to encourage the growth of new ones, for example, through inward investment ▪ To create the conditions for enterprise, with an initial focus on establishing an agreed framework for spatial planning At the time of writing the Dorset LEP was in its early stages. However, it has already identified the following	The Local Plan should: Plan proactively to meet the development needs of business. seek to encourage and support the development of a wide range of sectors, including those identified by the LEP.

	sectors where it will intervene, reflecting their perceived growth potential, the need and scope to improve the performance of already significant sectors, and/or the opportunity to enhance environmental performance: ▪ Finance and banking ▪ Tourism, leisure, hospitality and international education ▪ Precision engineering ▪ Food and Drink ▪ Health and social work ▪ Creative industries ▪ Environmental goods and services	
Bournemouth, Dorset & Poole Local Economic Assessment (LEA) (2011) Dorset County Council, Bournemouth Borough Council and the Borough of Poole	The LEA highlights a number of challenges and recommendations intended to offer a suggestion or a steer on issues which could be worth exploring further through the production of future strategies: **Business Formation and Self Employment**: Stronger growth aspirations in high value sectors such as knowledge intensive industries and specialist sectors for which the sub region demonstrates certain competitive advantages **Productivity and Competitiveness**: strategies which are realistic about the structural nature of the economy in terms of its conurbation core and satellite settlements/self-contained towns and which ensure that future priorities, for example in relation to the green knowledge economy and infrastructure, are geared to support and promote enterprise and competitiveness **Productivity and Competitiveness**: strengthening linkages between those areas which enjoy a functional affinity in economic terms, including neighbouring areas, to gain mutual	The Local Plan should: seek to encourage and support the development of a wide range of sectors, including those that are high value, locally important or knowledge intensive. Policies should reflect the structure of settlements in the plan area Set out policies for the whole of the plan area to reflect the economic linkages between Weymouth & Portland and West Dorset. Identify sites suitable for a range of business types and sizes. Retain employment sites where appropriate. Calculate employment land demand to account for a supply based factors in addition to a baseline demand. Support tourism related development where this would not have a detrimental impact on the environment, landscape and amenity Support the growth and expansion of businesses; the development and diversification of agriculture and land based rural businesses; support for

	benefits from growth in neighbouring areas and planning for infrastructure needs. **Knowledge-intensive Sector**: linking relevant threads of strategies which contribute in some way towards knowledge intensive and 'green' sectors **Public Sector**: promoting and supporting the growth and formation of small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) **Employment Land**: take a long term view towards the retention of sufficient suitable land and premises for employment uses when preparing development plans and in determining planning applications/defending appeals **Employment Land:** the conversion of commercial premises (such as offices) to residential use raises some concerns due to the constrained supply of employment land and premises. Whilst there may be cases where this could be supported, it will be important for planning strategies to consider the implications this could have for the long-term supply of business floorspace. **Weymouth and Portland**: maximising benefits to Weymouth and Portland arising from the wider economic area including Dorchester and Winfrith **Weymouth and Portland**: maximising the Olympic legacy benefits including: improvements to digital connectivity and broadband access; exploiting opportunities for development of water based sectors, new marine business, and developing small boat building skills; promoting the area as a tourist destination; transferring of athletes' accommodation for affordable housing; and developing the Green Knowledge Economy particularly sustainable energy technology	rural tourism and leisure development; and the development and retention of local services and facilities

	Rural Dorset: Measures which can assist in supporting business start up rates, growth of small and medium enterprises and improvements in GVA could reap dividends in terms of absorbing the impact of a streamlined public sector. Key measures include ensuring an adequate supply of employment land and premises. The combination of a high quality environment and good enterprise levels in much of rural Dorset complement the attributes of the South East Dorset economy which offers more dynamic levels of economic activity, a diverse economic base and good quality higher education establishments. This combination provides a good basis for promoting synergies between the rural and urban areas, in particular: knowledge-intensive and creative industries, including the green knowledge economy, which have an affinity with the high quality environment; local specialisms for which Dorset has a good name and a strong identity, including high quality foods (farming and fish / seafood); further enhancing the high quality tourism offer of the sub-region as a comprehensive package which includes rural, coastal and urban attractions	
Dorchester and Weymouth Economic Vision (2008) Dorset County Council, Weymouth & Portland Borough Council, West Dorset District Council and South West RDA	Strategic Development Objectives identified include: **The Nature and Location of Economic Growth:** plan to accommodate a step change in economic growth and to stimulate this growth through development in attractive new locations within and around the towns, including key projects to create high value, good quality jobs in key sectors. **Town Centres:** plan to enhance the town centres' facilities and premises to accommodate growth in retail, leisure, cultural facilities, offices,	The Local Plan should: Ensure that sufficient land in available to meet identified demand in the right locations promote the vitality and viability of town centres, through the allocation of suitable sites to meet the scale and type of development needed and the concentration of town centre uses within centres. take account of other strategies, plans and programmes for development.

	housing and other facilities to meet the needs of the growing population and economic change and creating vibrant, dynamic new centres of business and employment. Strategic Economic Growth Objectives Identified include: **Physical infrastructure:** Ensure an adequate supply of suitable sites and premises to meet sector growth needs and opportunities **Business competitiveness, enterprise & innovation:** Cluster development in key industries – particularly marine, advanced engineering, tourism and leisure, creative, cultural and health sectors; Business innovation and networking; Entrepreneurship **Partnership working:** Co-ordination of plans and programmes for development, regeneration and infrastructure in the towns; Prioritising and targeting spend within the towns to maximise sustainable economic benefits; Dialogue and liaison between public and private sectors to implement the Vision	

KEY POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

2.2 The review of policy guidance has identified a number of common aims and objectives, many of which are sought at a local level. Sustainable development is a very important theme, whilst an increasing emphasis on the importance of deliverability in order to promote economic growth is becoming clear. Future policy will need to be more responsive to the market, whilst delivering sustainable development. This general policy direction and following identified key themes need to be given careful consideration:

- Building a strong, responsive, competitive economy in the rural and urban areas
- Looking after the health of the towns
- Supporting, protecting and encouraging tourism opportunities

2.3 Addressing these key issues will require intervention from the Local Plan which should seek to:

- Set out a clear vision and strategy
- Plan positively
- Ensure sufficient land of the right type is available in the right places at the right time
- Set criteria and allocate land to meet demand
- Support existing and emerging sectors
- Support the expansion and growth of existing businesses
- Promote the viability and vitality of town centres
- Define town centres and primary shopping areas

- Apply a sequential approach for town centre uses
- Support the development and diversification of agriculture and land-based rural business
- Support tourism and leisure development
- Support the development and retention of local facilities and services

2.4 Many of these local issues are echoed by the aims and priorities of the National Planning Policy Framework which will be taken into account in making decisions on planning applications. The overarching presumption in favour of sustainable development will mean that whatever policies are taken forward in the Local Plan will need to be planned positively in order to meet the needs of the area. Plans and decisions will need to take local circumstances into account, so that they respond to the different opportunities for achieving sustainable development in different areas.

3 RESEARCH AND EVIDENCE

3.1 It is important that future policy be based on a sound evidence base. A wide variety of research exists which together with the guidance listed above has helped to shape the economy policies in the draft Local Plan. These studies have mostly been undertaken at a local level, helping ensure that future policy addresses the local situation.

Table 2 National Planning Policy Framework Evidence Requirements - Economy

Requirement	Evidence	Where Documented
Work together with county and neighbouring authorities and with Local Enterprise Partnerships to prepare and maintain a robust evidence base to understand both existing business needs and likely changes in the market	The Local Economic Assessment (LEA) provides a profile of the local economy and a common economic evidence base for use by businesses, public sector bodies and the Government. The LEA gives a detailed understanding of economic strengths, opportunities and challenges in Dorset. The Government expects LEAs to play a crucial role in underpinning the work of Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs).	Bournemouth Dorset and Poole Local Economic Assessment June 2011.
	Dorset authorities worked together on the preparation of a Workspace Strategy. The study and update provide a forecast of employment demand and a consideration of economic issues across Dorset.	Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole Workspace Strategy Update 2012
	The Research and Information team at Dorset County Council annually produce and publish a profile of the economy and labour market for each District in the County. This publication includes the latest information on: • Economic Growth including • Changes in GVA • Business Structure including • VAT registrations • Labour market structure including: • Economic activity • Working age population • Commuting in to or out of the area for employment • Employment by sector • Occupational profiles • Job density • Second jobs • Employment growth by sector • Average Income, both workplace and residence based • Relative house prices to income • Qualification levels attained by residents • Vacancies and Skills needs • Deprivation indices • Unemployment.	Economic and Labour Market Profile for West Dorset Sept 2011 Economic and Labour Market Profile for Weymouth & Portland Sept 2011 Summary of key points provided in the Economy Background Paper
	Economic vision for Weymouth and Dorchester supported by a joint evidence base, strategy and	Economic vision for Weymouth and

	action plan.	Dorchester
	The ONS provide a range of useful information and evidence that allows for consideration and comparison across local authority, county, regional and national areas.	Census 2001/2011 Nomis Labour Market Profile for West Dorset Nomis Labour Market Profile for Weymouth & Portland Summary of key points provided in the Economy Background Paper
	Actions from Local Area Partnership and Parish Plans	Summary matrix in the Economy Background Paper
work closely with the business community to understand their changing needs and identify and address barriers to investment, including a lack of housing, infrastructure or viability	Consultation with the local business community through Business surveys, rural business clubs, workshops, review panel, business breakfast meetings and local plan consultation.	Economy background paper Local Plan Consultation Summary Report
	An independent commercial study on economic viability.	Goadsby Study
the needs for land or floorspace for economic development, including both the quantitative and qualitative needs for all foreseeable types of economic activity over the plan period, including for retail and leisure development;	Estimates of employment land requirements to 2031 based on economic/employment projections.	Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole Workspace Strategy Update 2012
	Retail and leisure development needs, including retail demand forecasts.	Joint Town Centre Retail and Leisure Study 2008 Update 2010
	A consideration of recent national retail trends and needs.	Economy Background Paper
	Data on visits to key attractions, the number of businesses in the leisure and tourism industry, number of people employed in the tourism industry, visitor spend, current stock of holiday accommodation.	Survey of visits to visits to visitor attractions, South West Tourism Alliance 2009 Tourism in West Dorset 2008 Value of Tourism 2008 Dorset, South West Tourism Alliance 2010 Volume and value of tourism 2009, the south west research company
the existing and future	Assessment of the economic viability of selected	Goadsby Study

supply of land available for economic development and its sufficiency and suitability to meet the identified needs. Reviews of land available for economic development should be undertaken at the same time as, or combined with, Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessments and should include a reappraisal of the suitability of previously allocated land;	sites with the potential to contribute to the supply of land for economic development in West Dorset.	
	Site assessment of: • previously allocated employment sites • existing employment sites • submitted sites • potential new development sites	Employment Land Review
	Retail sequential test examining the potential to accommodate future retail growth in and around the major towns.	Joint Town Centre Retail and Leisure Study 2008 Update 2010
	Review and assessment of demand and supply patterns in Dorset.	Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole Workspace Strategy Update 2012
the role and function of town centres and the relationship between them, including any trends in the performance of centres;	Advice on the economic needs of Weymouth and Dorchester, their key strengths, strategic opportunities and economic potential.	Economic Vision for Weymouth and Dorchester
		Joint Town Centre Retail and Leisure Study 2008 Update 2010
	Information on how Weymouth town centre functions after dark and a vision of how the centre should work in the evening and night-time.	After Dark Study
the capacity of existing centres to accommodate new town centre development;	Retail sequential test examining the potential to accommodate future retail growth in and around the major towns.	Joint Town Centre Retail and Leisure Study 2008 Update 2010
locations of deprivation which may benefit from planned remedial action; and	Index of multiple deprivation 2010 provides scores for Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) by seven main domains (including employment) and the overall deprivation scores by district, county and nationally.	The indices of deprivation 2010 – a summary report for the Dorset County Council Area. Employment Land Review site assessments.

3.2 Much of this evidence, and its impact on the plan, is summarised below.

ECONOMIC PROFILE

3.3 An important part of that evidence is an understanding of the current context. Dorset County Council produces a set of profiles of the Dorset economy and labour market by local authority area. These profiles bring together key datasets for the area from a variety of different sources. They provide a good summary of baseline information and can be used to compare between areas. Topics covered include employment, unemployment, business structure and commuting. Key statistics for the plan area are presented in the table below.

Table 3 Key Economic Statistics[1]

Key Statistics	Great Britain	Dorset[2]	West Dorset	Weymouth & Portland
TOTAL BUSINESSES - local units (as at 22nd March 2010)		20,415	5,875	2,125
EMPLOYEES IN EMPLOYMENT 2009		156,200	46,300	20,700
GROSS VALUE ADDED (GVA) (millions) 2008	£1,083,289	£6,080	£1,510	£770
GVA PER RESIDENT HEAD 2008	£21, 049	£15,000	£15,600	£12,200
PUBLIC SECTOR EMPLOYMENT (% total employees in employment) 2009	28%	31%	40%	32%
RESIDENT POPULATION (mid-year estimates 2010)	55,240,500	404,800	96,700	63,500
WORKING AGE POPULATION (% total resident population) 2010	64.1%	57.3%	56.1%	61.4%
PENSION AGE POPULATION (% total resident population) 2010	16.6%	25.6%	26.8%	21.5%
EARNINGS - median gross weekly (residence based) 2010	£501.80	£459.90	£490.70	£435.10
EARNINGS - median gross weekly (workplace based) 2010	£500.40	£435.00	£438.60	£393.40
EMPLOYMENT RATE 2009	70.3%	73.0%	71.9%	67.2%
UNEMPLOYMENT RATE 2009	7.8%	4.0%	2.8%	5.1%
CLAIMANT UNEMPLOYMENT RATE Jan 2011	3.7%	1.9%	1.5%	3.4%
BUSINESS EMPLOYING LESS THAN 5 PEOPLE (% of units registered for VAT or PAYE) 2010	68%	70%	70%	66%
BUSINESSES IN THE SERVICE SECTOR	78%	70%	68%	80%
KNIOWLEDGE DRIVEN INDUSTRIES		46%	48%	46%
BUSINESSES IN AGRICULTURE, FORESTRY & FISHING	5%	10%	16%	3%
BUSINESSES AT LEAST 10 YEARS OLD	43%	47%	52%	36%
BUSINESS BIRTHS PER 10,000 POPULATION	62.5	70.3	77.7	54.1
SELF EMPLOYMENT (% OF RESIDENTS IN EMPLOYMENT)	13.5%	19.2%	19.9%	11.7%

[1] Weymouth & Portland Economic and Labour Market Profile, Dorset County Council, September 2011
http://www.dorsetforyou.com/347502
West Dorset Economic and Labour Market Profile, Dorset County Council, September 2011
http://www.dorsetforyou.com/347502

[2] Excluding Bournemouth and Poole

POPULATION DENSITY (population/hectare)	3.7	1.6	0.9	15.2
JOBS DENSITY (jobs per working age resident) 2009	0.79	0.82	1.05	0.57
FULL TIME WORKERS (% of total employees)	68%	60%	58%	53%
RATIO OF CLAIMENTS TO VACANCIES (jobcentre plus)	6.4	5.3	3.3	9.5
YOUNG PEOPLE NOT IN EDUCATION EMPLOYMENT OR TRAINING (NEETs)	5.9%	5.4%	5.3%	8.0%
RESIDENT POPULATION WITH NO QUALIFICATIONS	11%	7%	6%	8%
RESIDENT POPULATION WITH NVQ4+	31%	32%	35%	30%
COMPETITIVENESS INDEX 2010	100	N/A	98.6	80.9

3.4 The Local Economic Assessment for Bournemouth Dorset and Poole also provides a profile of the local economy. It gives a detailed understanding of economic strengths, and provides a steer on opportunities and challenges facing the economy of Dorset.

3.5 Key issues for the plan area are considered in the following paragraphs using the themes and headings identified in the Local Economic Assessment and data from the Economy and Labour Market Profiles:

ECONOMIC COMPETITIVENESS

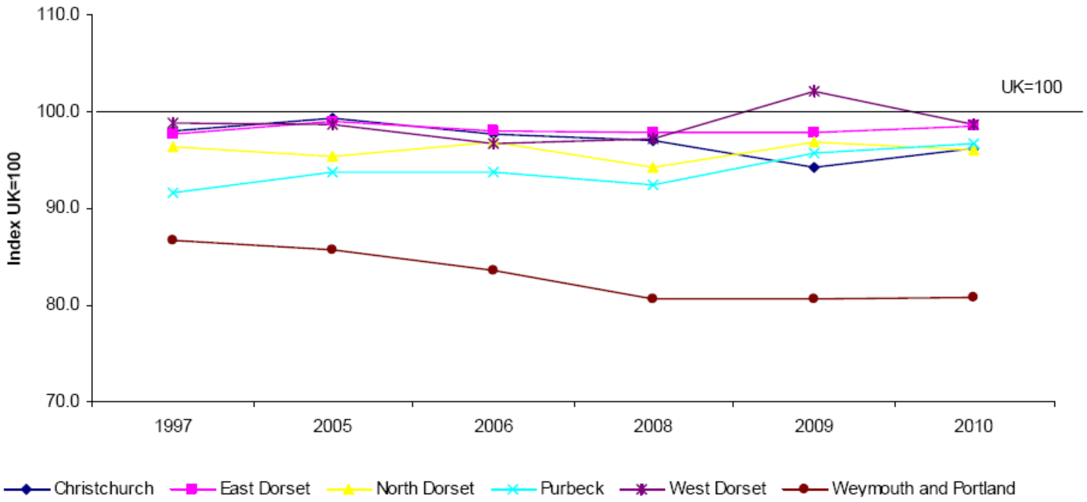
3.6 An indicator of enterprise and dynamism in an economy is the number of businesses starting up and how many of these then survive and grow. The business birth rate for West Dorset is above average for the sub region and nationally, though the rate for Weymouth and Portland is below average.

3.7 Coupled to this, there is a degree of stability amongst firms in West Dorset, with 52% of businesses ten or more years old. In Weymouth and Portland only 36% of businesses are 10 years or older. While this could be seen to demonstrate a lack of certainty it could also provide evidence of enterprise. Younger businesses, for instance, can inject dynamism into the local economy as well as the capacity to react to changing demand.

3.8 A key measure of efficiency and productivity is gross value added (GVA); the value of all goods and services produced less the cost of raw materials and other inputs used in production. At £15,600 the headline GVA for West Dorset was above the Dorset average and at 74% of the headline GVA for England. At £12,000 the headline GVA for Weymouth and Portland was below the DCC Dorset average and at 58% of the headline GVA for England. Inevitably, productivity will have been undermined by the recession, associated cuts in investment, reduced orders and job losses.

3.9 A national measure of competitiveness is the UK Competitiveness Index which ranks all local authorities.

Figure 1 UK Competitiveness Index



3.10 In recent years West Dorset has remained close to the national average. However, Weymouth and Portland has been consistently less competitive. In 2010, the Borough was the 17th least competitive local authority in the UK, out of 379 authorities.

INDUSTRIAL AND BUSINESS STRUCTURE

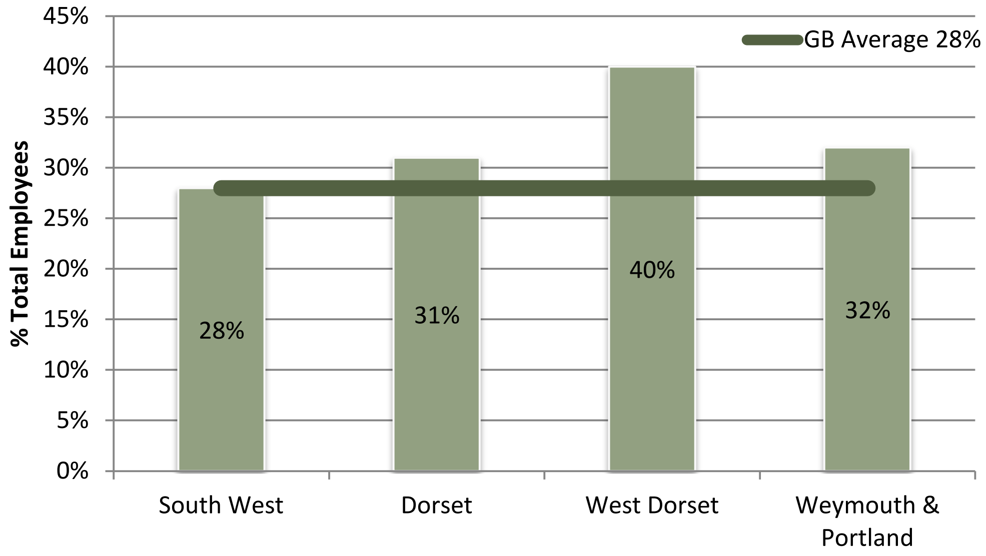
3.11 The two employment sectors in Weymouth and Portland which have the highest number of employees are repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles and accommodation and food service activities. The two employment sectors in West Dorset which have the highest number of employees in employment are human health and social work activities and repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles.

3.12 A large proportion of the workforce of both areas is employed in small businesses. Studies suggest that smaller firms are better equipped to cope with an economic downturn owing to their ability to respond quickly and flexibly to a changing economic climate. Set against this, smaller firms are more vulnerable to cash flow problems and are more likely to cut back on investment training during a recession.

3.13 A promising feature is that about half of all employees in both areas work in the knowledge intensive sector. These industries make a disproportionately high contribution to local gross value added figures.

3.14 However, one significant and concerning feature of the employment structure is the very high reliance on jobs in the public sector. Half of these jobs are part time. The public sector is also an important provider of jobs to women. Cuts in public spending will directly affect many of these workers and will also have a secondary impact on local private sector firms. Impact and modelling suggests that for every 100 full time equivalent jobs shed in the public sector locally there would be an additional 34 jobs lost to the local economy. Public sector employment is particularly high in West Dorset making the authority more vulnerable to the impact of the cuts in public sector funding.

Figure 2 Percentage of total employees in employment working in public services



3.15 The agriculture, forestry & fishing sector is strongly represented in West Dorset compared with the county of Dorset, accounting for 16% of businesses in comparison with 10% in the county as a whole. As you would expect, this sector is not as strongly represented in Weymouth and Portland, accounting for only 3% of businesses.

3.16 A further characteristic feature of the West Dorset economy is the number of people who are self-employed, which at 19.9% is in line with the Dorset average and significantly higher than the national figure. The proportion of self-employed people in Weymouth and Portland however is below average.

3.17 Decentralised working is an important aspect of the economy, especially in rural areas. Working in remote offices, from a room at home or in a live-work unit, is expected to become more common in future. This provides an important source and mode of economic activity in rural areas.

3.18 Both areas have experienced growth in recent years, although data from very recent times of the current recession is not yet available and may show a different picture. Since 2004 the number of businesses operating in West Dorset has risen by around 1,435 units to 5,875 units. Since 2004 the total number of local units in Weymouth and Portland has risen by around 570 units to 2,125 units.

3.19 Growth sectors in West Dorset 2009-2010 were:

- Motor trades
- Wholesale
- Property
- Professional, scientific and technical
- Public administration and defence
- Education
- Arts, entertainment, recreation and other services

3.20 In Weymouth and Portland growth sectors 2009-2010 were:

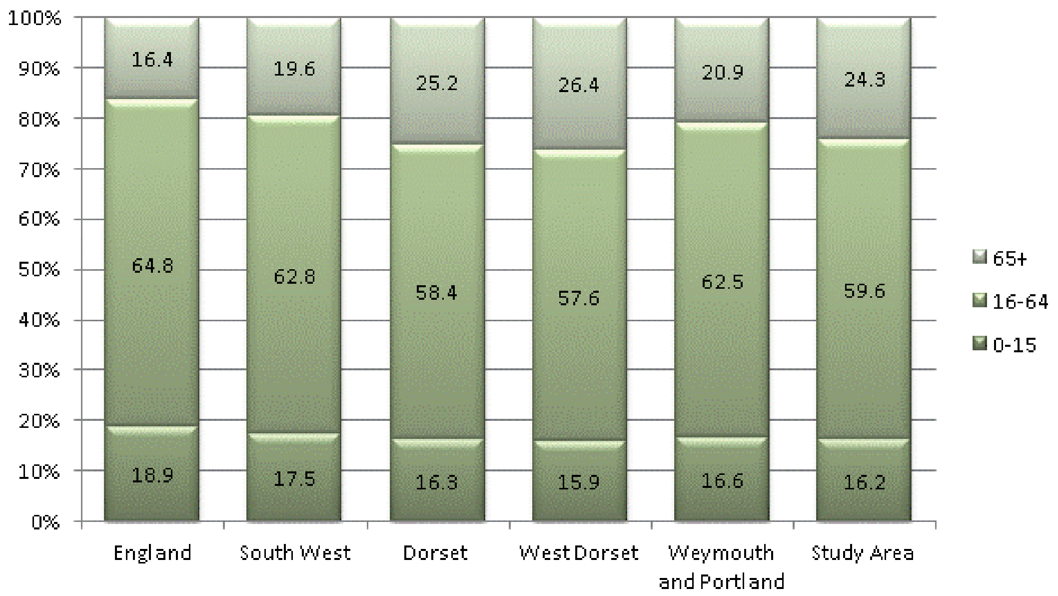
- Agriculture, forestry and fishing
- Information and communication

- Professional, scientific and technical
- Public administration and defence
- Education
- Health
- Arts, entertainment, recreation and other services

LOCAL LABOUR MARKET

3.21 A characteristic of the local economy is the high proportion of the population at or above retirement age. Around a quarter of the population in both areas is of pensionable age. There is a lower than average proportion of working age[3] population which could indicate that economic growth may have to be driven by an increase in value.

Figure 3 Age structure of population



3.22 The measure of people with jobs is the employment rate. This is the percentage of economically active people aged 16-64 who are currently in employment or self-employed. The rate in Weymouth and Portland is below national and county levels. The rate in West Dorset is also below the county average, but is slightly above the national figure. The unemployment rate is below the national figure for both areas, and below the county figure for West Dorset.

3.23 Part time employment is common. In Weymouth and Portland some 47% of employees work part time compared with 32% nationally. In West Dorset the proportion of part time workers is 42%.

3.24 There is national and local concern in the number of young people, between 16 and 18 years, who are not in education, employment or training (NEETs). These have been termed a "lost generation" whose future prospects may be significantly curtailed. At 5.3% West Dorset has a lower than national proportion of young people not in education, employment or training. However 8% of 16 to 18 year olds in Weymouth and Portland are NEETs which is higher than the 5.9% rate for England.

3.25 For people who are in work, earnings in the area are lower than the national average. In Weymouth and Portland workplace-based earnings are some £100 per week lower than

[3] Working age population is defined as the population between 16 and 64 years inclusive

nationally. Workplace-based earnings in West Dorset are £60 per week lower than the national average.

3.26 The working age population has good "high end" skills (NVQ level 3[4] or above). West Dorset in particular has high levels of the population with NVQ4[5] or above. The proportion of people with no qualifications is below that national average in both areas. Despite the good overall level of skills, employers still report difficulties in filling vacancies citing a shortage of appropriate skills. The location of business is affected by its ability to access a suitably skilled workforce. It is essential that in order to attract and retain employers that the area be able to supply skills and training to its population.

EXISTING INFRASTRUCTURE

3.27 Economic activity is supported by a range of existing industrial and business sites. There is a concentration of the larger (0.25ha+) employment sites in the major settlements. A number of existing industrial estates are close to town centres and residential areas, offering reasonably convenient employment opportunities and access to public transport. Some fulfil a wider strategic role such as sites related to marine industries on Portland. Many of the existing employment estates are at or near capacity. Low vacancy rates would seem to suggest a constrained supply of employment land and a limited capacity within existing employment sites to accommodate additional employment uses. However the recession will undoubtedly have had an impact on this which is yet to be reflected in the figures. The table below illustrates take up of employment land for the last 11 years.

Table 4 Take-up of employment land

(Ha)	2001/02	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	TOTAL 2001-11
West Dorset	2.40	2.33	1.23	5.61	3.96	2.59	4.13	4.62	3.31	0.92	2.04	33.14
Weymouth & Portland	0.00	0.00	1.12	0.13	0.00	0.00	1.77	0.39	0.22	0.98	0.64	5.25

3.28 Over the last 11 years 38.391ha of land has been delivered in the plan area for employment uses. This equates to an average completion rate of 3.49ha per annum on both allocated and unallocated sites. However, in some years previous to this delivery has exceeded 10ha in a year.

3.29 The many environmental designations and natural features within the area can limit options for development. High residential land values coupled with low employment prices and rents result in additional pressures on employment land. Historically there have been relatively high losses of employment land to residential uses. Over the period 2004/05-2009/10 in West Dorset, 9.3ha of employment land has been lost. During the same period 5.5ha of employment land were lost in Weymouth and Portland. In order to ensure a continued supply of employment space it may be necessary to protect existing employment uses from changing to non-employment uses.

[4] NVQ level 3: AS/A levels
[5] NVQ level 4: Bachelor degrees; diplomas/certificates of HE

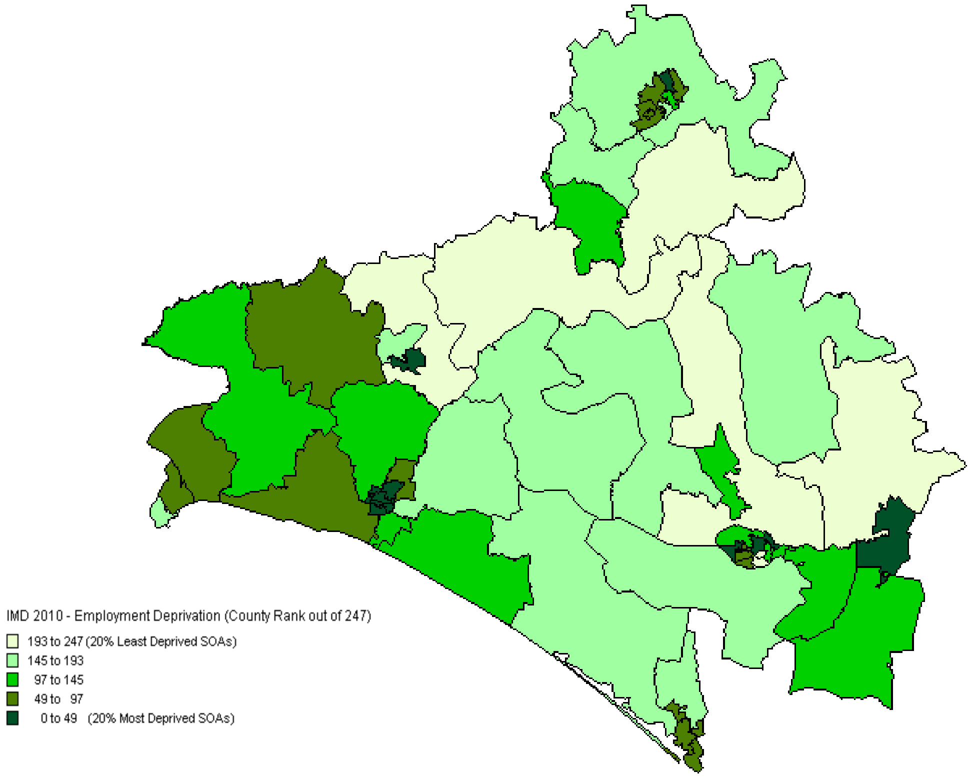
DEPRIVATION

3.30 The Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) 2010 is a measure of deprivation at Lower Super Output Area level (LSOA) I[6]. It contains seven domains which are income deprivation, employment deprivation, health deprivation & disability, education and skills & training deprivations, barriers to housing & services, living environment deprivation and crime.

3.31 There are thirteen areas in Dorset that are within the top 20% most deprived nationally for multiple deprivation. Ten of them are within Weymouth and Portland, and two are within West Dorset.

3.32 One of seven domains measured by the IMD relates specifically to employment deprivation. It measures employment deprivation conceptualised as involuntary exclusion of the working age population from the labour market. In relation to the employment deprivation domain thirteen areas in Dorset fall into the top 20% most deprived nationally. Nine of these areas are within Weymouth and Portland. Three areas are in West Dorset.

Figure 4 Employment Deprivation



COMMERCIAL PROPERTY MARKET REVIEW

3.33 An understanding of the commercial property market in the plan area can be helpful in assessing what kinds of businesses are likely to take up space and what kinds of requirements they may have.

3.34 The Workspace Strategy 2008 was undertaken by GVA Grimley on behalf of the Dorset Local Authorities and the South West Regional Development Agency (SWRDA). The study seeks to ensure there is delivery of sufficient appropriate employment land and quality of employment premises to meet business requirements and ensure the sustainable growth of the sub

[6] A Super Output Area (SOA) is an area containing an average population of 3,000. There are 57 in West Dorset, 247 in DCC Dorset and 32,482 nationally. In rural areas many SOAs are the same as existing wards.

regional economy. The strategy provides a baseline review and assessment of the sub-region and establishes demand and supply patterns.

3.35 The strategy included projections of employment, compiled at a time when the national economy was comparatively buoyant. The national economy has since experienced unprecedented changes. To take account of the recession and the less stable economic conditions, and to ensure that employment policies were supported by robust evidence, Dorset County Council was commissioned to update the 2008 study. In 2012 an addendum was published, updating figures for total jobs and converting these to a B class[7] employment land demand. The update had regard for the change in population forecasts, expenditure and the economic climate and was intended to supplement, not replace the information of the 2008 report.

3.36 The strategy identified that there were a number of distinct sub areas within the Dorset property market, including one at Dorchester and Weymouth which was serving the needs of its own catchment. The Dorchester and Weymouth market area was taken to include Bridport as, although Bridport does not fall within the Dorchester and Weymouth Travel to Work Area (TTWA) the market research indicated that it was perceived as a part of the Dorchester and Weymouth commercial property market area. Sherborne was within a "Rural Market Area". This area was assessed as comprising largely sites meeting their local property market requirements.

3.37 The report found that in common with the south west in general the breakdown of the B Class floorspace in the sub region is dominated by factories and warehousing. West Dorset had the third highest floorspace total for all the Dorset districts, with the second highest warehousing floorspace. Weymouth had the lowest combined total floorspace.

3.38 Outside Poole and Bournemouth the general view of the office stock was one of reasonably low quality with demand predominantly arising from local companies. In terms of the industrial market the industrial areas were thought to be commensurate with the scale and nature of the settlements in which they were situated.

3.39 The Strategy found that across Dorset there appeared to be a reasonable level of availability. However, whilst there is considered to be a reasonable supply of land, agents report that it is not readily available, and there is a perceived shortage of large sites capable of accommodating large inward investment enquiries or major local expansions. In terms of tenure, agents also indicate that traditionally demand has predominantly been for freehold premises, however this is now reverting to leasehold in light of difficulties in obtaining finance. The general consensus was one of high levels of occupancy within existing industrial estates across the study area.

3.40 The update projects a demand for B Class[8] employment land of 60.3ha within the plan area between 2011 - 2031. Dorchester & Weymouth TTWA is highlighted as facing a challenging employment land supply, being largely dependant on a few sites, most of which cater for a very specific market segment and/or face some delivery challenges. Employment land supply in Rural Dorset seems to be adequate. The demand-supply balance of employment premises is discussed in more detail in the Sustainable Pattern of Development Background Paper.

[7] B Class employment uses are those described by the B1, B2 and B8 Town and Country Planning Use Classes Order: Offices, Research and development of products and processes, Light industry, General Industrial and Storage & Distribution

[8] B Class employment uses are those described by the B1, B2 and B8 Town and Country Planning Use Classes Order: Offices, Research and development of products and processes, Light industry, General Industrial and Storage & Distribution

3.41 The update recognised that employment in non B class sectors is currently about 58% in West Dorset and 71% in Weymouth and Portland. It also suggests that a significant part of the projected employment growth will not require B Use Class land.

3.42 The strategy also indicates that where there are urban extensions planned, in principle the feasibility of the provision of employment (B Use Class and other) as part of development should be considered. Specifically in relation to the Dorchester & Weymouth Travel to Work Area it states that employment land provision as part of the urban extensions in Dorchester and Weymouth would help ease the long term supply shortage.

3.43 West Dorset District Council commissioned the consultancy firm, Goadsby & Harding (Survey & Valuation) Ltd, to undertake a district wide study of employment economic viability. An overview of employment land in West Dorset was provided, along with comments on rents and prices in the district and an estimation of potential future demand by settlement. It gave information in relation to the current and predicted employment market in the district. It also provided detailed expert assessment of commercial attractiveness and economic viability.

3.44 The property market in West Dorset is characterised by strong demand for industrial space with relatively weaker demand for office space. Generally the demand experienced is for smaller units. Although a good range of accommodation is provided there are some deficiencies identified; including a lack of purpose built high quality town centre offices, B8 distribution space and 'mixed' employment sites to accommodate a wider range of economic uses. A large proportion of the existing stock is older, with rents and values in the district on the whole lower than those in nearby Poole and Bournemouth. High residential land values have led to pressure on employment land. Business growth in West Dorset has tended to be indigenous, and with the possible exception of Dorchester, the district is unlikely to attract significant inward investment.

3.45 Further work commissioned by Dorset County Council, Weymouth & Portland Borough Council, West Dorset District Council and South West of England Regional Development Agency has provided an economic vision and evidence based strategy for the towns of Weymouth and Dorchester. The Vision is complemented by an Evidence Base report which provides technical research and analysis, and a Strategy and Action Plan to implement the Vision.

3.46 In general West Dorset and Weymouth& Portland have a complementary relationship. The Economic Vision for Weymouth and Portland recognised that the economy of Weymouth and Portland is closely intertwined with that of Dorchester, with high levels of commuting in either direction. Lower house prices in Weymouth and Portland mean that many of Dorchester's workers live there. Addressing the economic needs of Weymouth and Portland needs to take account of this relationship. Weymouth and Portland hosted the sailing events for the 2012 Olympics and this has provided a welcome opportunity to invest in the area and address structural weaknesses. The completed Weymouth Relief Road will help to increase confidence in the area and improve predictability of journey times.

3.47 Reviewing the economic potential of the towns in West Dorset would suggest that Dorchester, Chickerell and Sherborne are the most likely locations for investment as they have the benefit of strategic locations and the ability to build on a sufficiently large labour force. Bridport has the opportunity to grow by building on its role as a local service centre for the western part of the district. The smaller towns of Beaminster and Lyme Regis have more limited future growth potential. However, it is notable that all of the towns suffer from constraints on their ability to expand due to a lack of suitable development sites and/or environmental designations. Elsewhere the conversion of rural buildings, farm diversification schemes and sensitive small scale new premises could provide a number of units that serve the more rural parts of the district.

RETAIL AND TOWN CENTRES

3.48 Town centres and local neighbourhood centres play a vital role in local communities. They are where people can access a wide range of local services and facilities. They are also places that people identify with strongly, as a place to meet and socialise. Many of them have strong links to the past, with Listed Buildings and other historic features or connections. However they can decline through lack of investment, with other centres providing competition for potential customers.

3.49 From 1968-2008 retail spending growth in the UK grew at 2.8%pa. As incomes rose, greater proportions were spent on retail goods and in particular on comparison non-food goods. Growth in spending per head on comparison goods peaked at 6%pa from 2001-2007. This spending fuelled demand for retail floorspace.

3.50 This strong growth was underpinned by numerous factors including low inflation/interest rates, higher borrowing, cheaper imports and competition from the internet forcing prices down. This was reinforced by strong population growth. Many of these trends were unstable and the debt- fuelled boom eventually led to a major recession. This has resulted in much weaker retail growth. The major cuts in public sector spending and employment, plus tax increases to reduce the public debt are likely to result in weaker retail sector growth for many years. This will be reinforced by the aging population and pension concerns.

3.51 These unprecedented changes to the national economy have led to a number of major retailers disappearing from the high streets. Many town centres have suffered from the severe recession with falling rental values and higher vacancies. Less development will be needed as a result of weaker growth.

3.52 The current 'health' of the town centres in the plan area, their capacity for future retail development, and potential sites for future development, were assessed through a Joint Town Centre Retail and Leisure Study undertaken by consultants CB Richard Ellis (CBRE). The final report was published in December 2008, in two parts: Weymouth and Dorchester; and a Supplementary Assessment of other West Dorset Market Towns. In 2010 an addendum was published to the town centre retail study, updating figures for Dorchester and Weymouth having regard for the changes in population, expenditure and the economic climate.

3.53 The study undertook an assessment of future retail and leisure capacity. Its findings form part of the evidence base covering retail and commercial leisure and assist in the preparation of the Local Plan retail and town centre policies. The assessment of capacity is the level of additional floorspace that could be supported in any location by increases in population and expenditure of the area's residents. It is based upon a number of variables which can change over time.

3.54 Retail uses can be divided into two different types, convenience and comparison. Convenience retailing is the provision of everyday essential items including food, drinks, newspapers/magazines and confectionery. Comparison retailing is the provision of items not obtained on a frequent basis including clothing, footwear, household and recreational goods. The table below outlines the capacity for additional floorspace of both types of retail uses within the plan area. The figures need to be interpreted in light of the national changes to the retail sector; as an indication of the likely level of capacity that should be planned for and not treated too prescriptively.

Table 5 Capacity for new retail floorspace

District/Borough wide convenience capacity				
	2012 (sqm net)	2017 (sqm net)	2022 (sqm net)	2026 (sqm net)
West Dorset District	2,167	2,886	3,754	4,445
Weymouth & Portland Borough	739	1,260	1,818	2,288
District/Borough wide comparison capacity				
	2012 (sqm net)	2017 (sqm net)	2022 (sqm net)	2026 (sqm net)
West Dorset District	9,369	24,061	42,014	57,487
Weymouth & Portland Borough	4,949	12,772	22,312	30,503

3.55 The conclusions of the Joint Town Centre Retail and Leisure Study in respect of the health of particular centres and the assessment of future retail capacity are set out in the following paragraphs:

WEYMOUTH

3.56 Weymouth is the primary retail centre within Weymouth and Portland Borough Council's area. The town currently provides approximately 1,552 sqm net of convenience floorspace and a further 20,654 sqm net of comparison floorspace.

3.57 The health check for the town found that Weymouth is a vital and viable centre benefiting from good representation of comparison retailers as well as strong demand from occupiers. There was also a strong representation from the service occupiers which is to be expected given the centre's position as the service centre within the Borough.

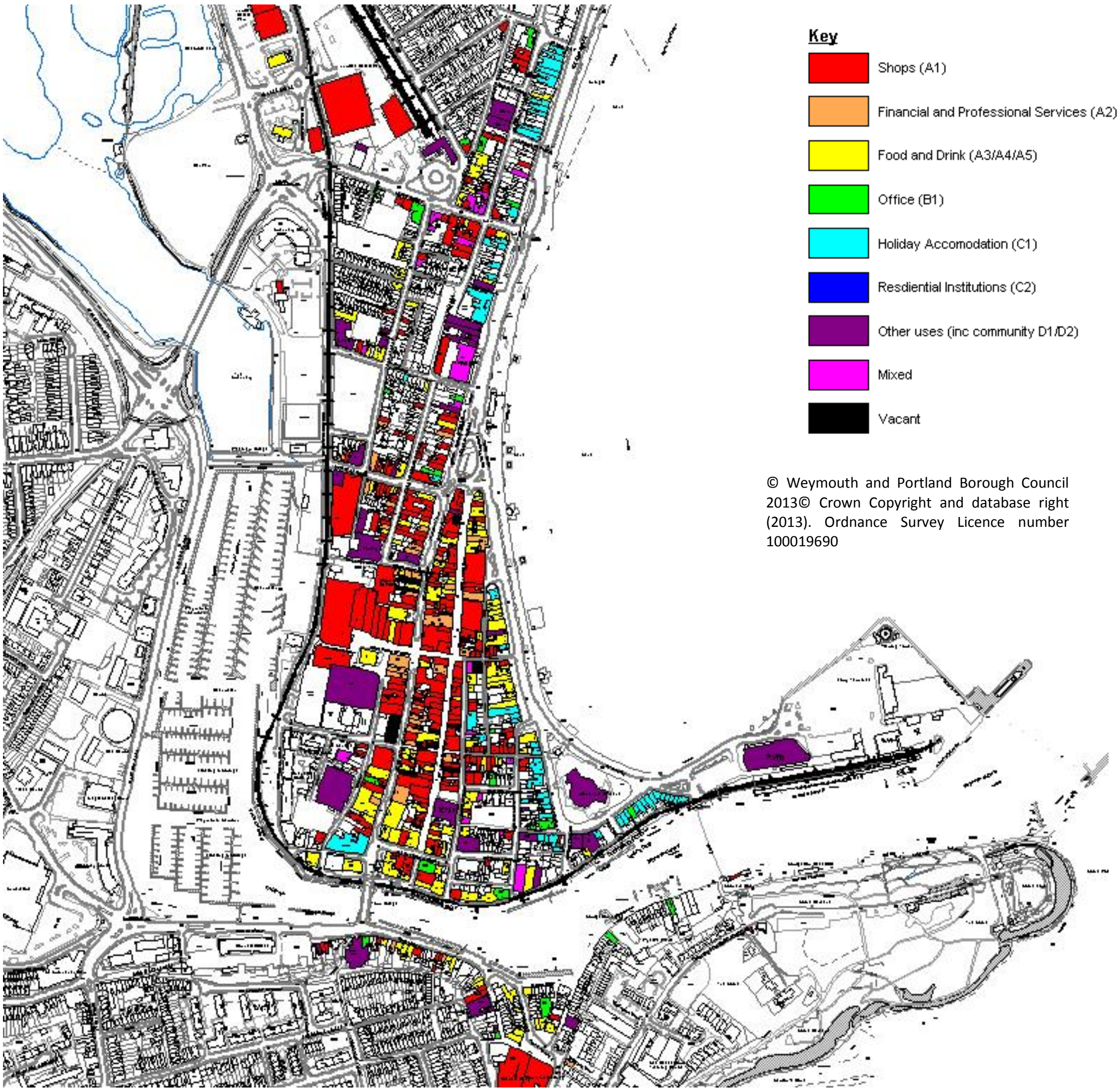
3.58 The assessment identified a below national average provision of convenience representation within the town centre. The existence of free standing, easily accessible food stores beyond the town centre, in particular Asda on Newstead Road, Morrison's and the discount offer of Lidl on Dorchester Road and Aldi on the Jubilee Retail Park, results in considerable levels of expenditure leakage from the town centre. For example, only 5.5% of shoppers in Weymouth undertake their main food shopping in Weymouth town centre. By comparison, 60% and 27% undertake this shopping in Asda and Morrison's respectively. It is therefore not surprising that the town centre food stores appear to be under trading.

3.59 Despite this, the town centre's qualitative provision, consisting of a Tesco Metro, Iceland and Marks and Spencer, offers a good representation and as a result there is no further capacity for convenience provision at this time. In 2008 the health check found that the centre benefited from below national average number of vacant retail units and a decreasing prime rental yield[9] demonstrating confidence in the centre as a whole and particularly for retail.

3.60 Going forward, the study suggests that increases in the representation of quality fashion retailers would be expected to enhance and diversify the centre's offer. The current size of retail units may be detracting national retailers from locating in the town.

[9] The commercial yield on non-domestic property is an indication of the confidence of investors and the rental growth potential of a centre. In broad terms, the yield on a property investment represents a return (in the form of a rent) on a capital to an investor. The greater prospect of future rental growth, the lower the initial yield which an investor will be prepared to expect.

Figure 5 Weymouth Town Centre



3.61 In planning for future growth the 2010 report recommends that the Council seek to make provision within emerging policy to accommodate in the region of 128 sqm net of convenience floorspace and 12,920 sqm net of additional comparison floorspace, sufficient to meet the identified need to 2026. This situation will need to be regularly reviewed to ensure that sufficient sites are being promoted as the plan period progresses.

3.62 Even after allowing for the possibility of refurbishment and redevelopment coming forward in the town centre, for instance the Colwell Shopping Centre, it is likely that the Council may need to consider extending the town centre boundary.

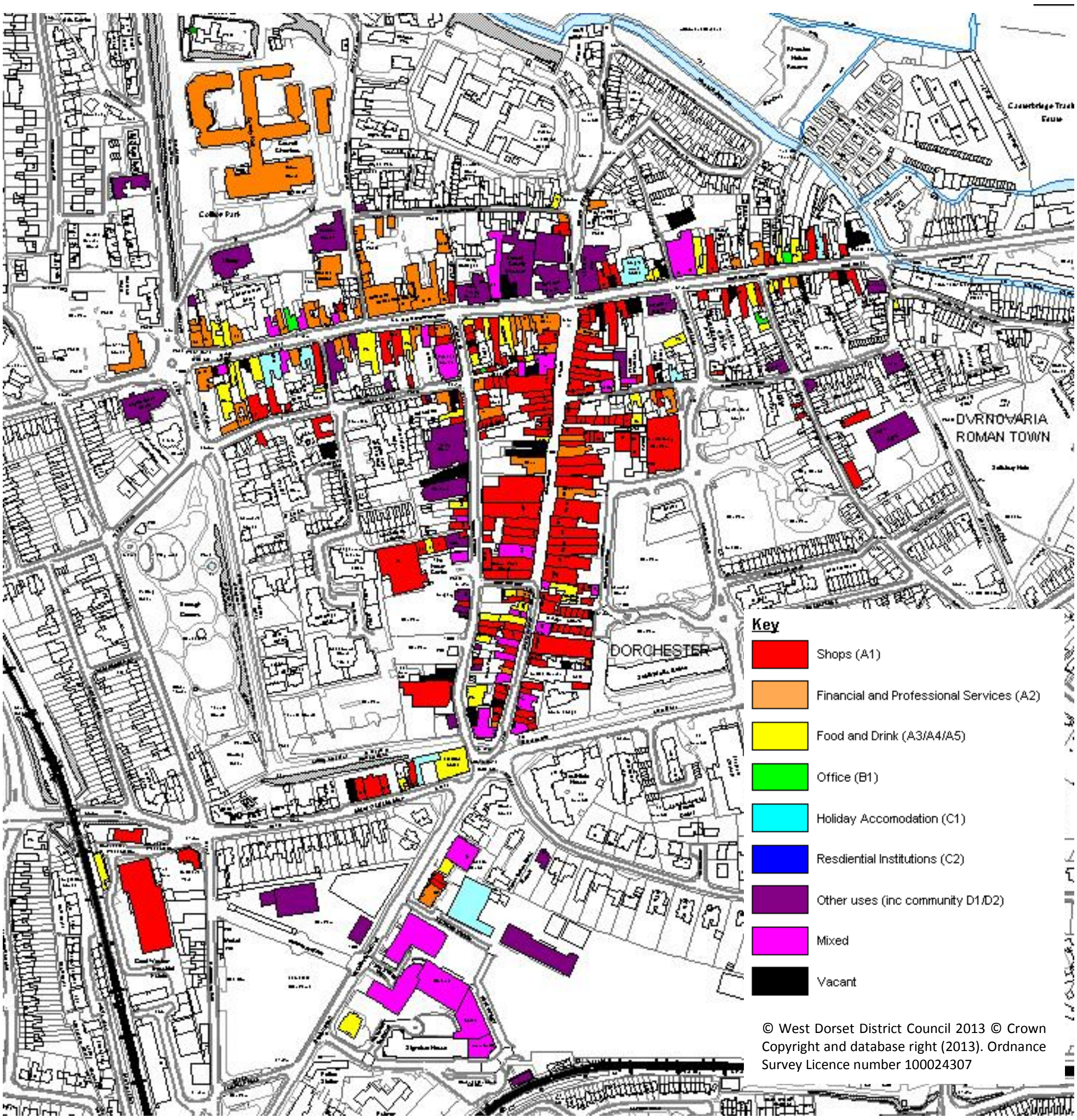
3.63 In considering the leisure provision, the centre of Weymouth clearly benefits from a range of facilities and proposals including the Esplanade, Pavilion Theatre and the hosting of the sailing elements of the 2012 Olympic Games will further enhance the centre's leisure profile. Based upon the assessment the existing provision is considered adequate to meet current and projected requirements.

3.64 Weymouth is considered a healthy centre though the report also recommends that it should seek to evolve and improve if it is to continue to compete effectively with other nearby shopping destinations. Whilst major new retailing development in the town centre is a challenging prospect, much more could be done to integrate the built and waterside settings of Weymouth together. In turn, this could enhance Weymouth's reputation not only as a shopping destination, but also somewhere to combine this with more leisurely pursuits, thus creating a more individual centre.

3.65 Sites to accommodate the level of identified capacity are considered in the background paper for Weymouth.

DORCHESTER

Figure 6 Dorchester Town Centre



3.66 Dorchester is the County Town and the largest centre in West Dorset. The town currently provides about 2,990 sqm net of convenience floor space and a further 19,799 sqm net of comparison floor space. The proposals to provide further retail units at Charles Street, immediately to the east of Cornhill/South Street (the main retail area within Dorchester), will increase the current floorspace in the town centre. It is also pertinent to note that the Tudor Shopping Arcade which links this site to South Street is currently being improved.

3.67 Based upon the health check undertaken, it was concluded that Dorchester has an attractive and healthy shopping core with low numbers of vacancies. Whilst some secondary areas are less appealing this has not detracted from the level of comparison retailers in the town and the high level of demand registered from operators in the town.

3.68 In contrast to Weymouth, Dorchester's leisure offer is limited, serving a more niche market. Based upon the assessment it is concluded that the current level of provision, whilst acceptable could be reinforced by the provision of bars and restaurants. However such uses should not be at the expense of active retail frontages. Once the proposals are progressed at Charles Street and the refurbishment of the area completed, it is expected that that the town centre's offer will improve as well as the attractiveness of the centre. Although not within the centre, the development at Brewery Square is also further extending the leisure provision in Dorchester with a new cinema, theatre and arts centre and restaurants. However, the promotion of the town centre should remain a continuing priority of the Council to ensure that the town remains strong and capable of competing with surrounding higher order centres such as Yeovil.

3.69 Going forward, a total available capacity of 964sqm net and 9,676sqm net convenience and comparison respectively is identified at 2026.

3.70 In terms of convenience provision there is already a range of modern food stores within the town centre including Marks and Spencer, Waitrose and Iceland. In addition there is a large Tesco superstore on the outskirts of the centre and the study shows that within Dorchester 37% of shoppers visit the stores in the town centre with 51% choosing to visit the Tesco on the outskirts of the centre for their main food shopping. It is considered to be realistic that were a food store to be promoted in the town centre it too would 'claw back' expenditure from the existing Tesco foodstore.

3.71 Sites to accommodate the level of identified capacity are considered in the background paper for Dorchester.

NON CENTRAL

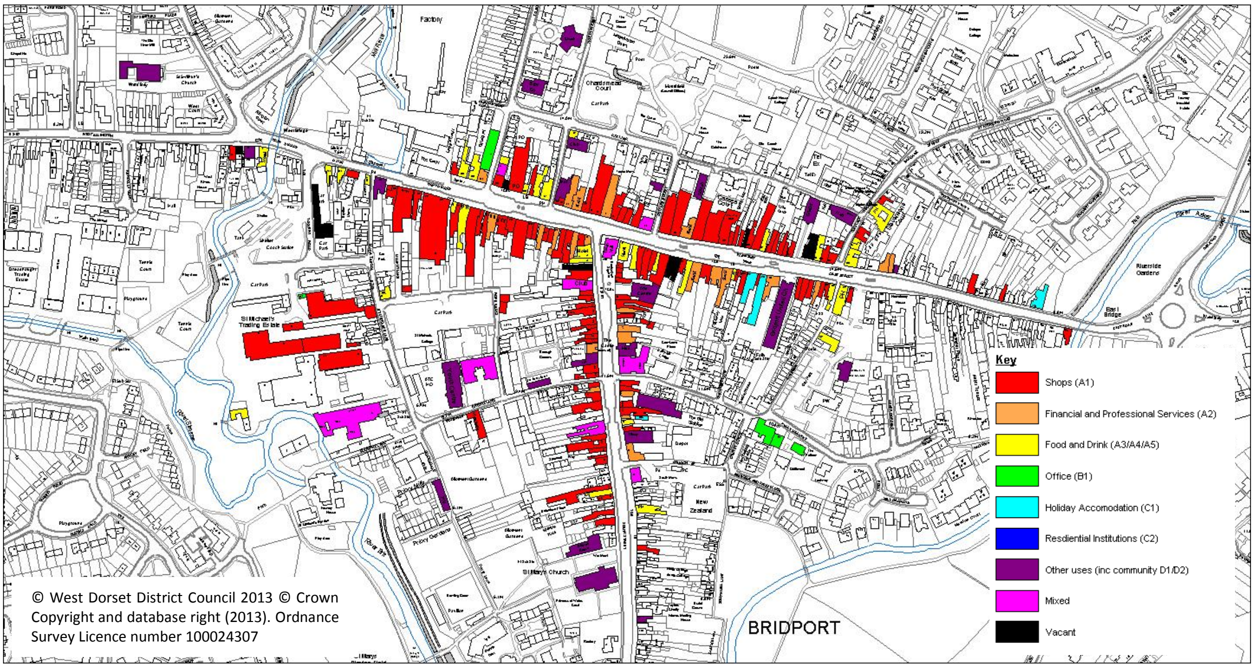
3.72 Those stores falling beyond the town centre are considered as "non central". There are currently approximately 12,323sqm net convenience and 15,149sqm net comparison in non-central locations. This non central retail floorspace is considered to be overtrading when compared against typical figures. The report has made an assessment of the additional retail capacity that may exist if these non central stores were to allow their turnover to reduce to what is considered to be an appropriate level, thereby releasing additional expenditure which could support new retail floorspace.

3.73 The 2010 study identifies a convenience capacity of 4,582sqm up to 2026. Comparison capacity is somewhere in the range 818sqm-15,154sqm depending on the level of turnover out-of- town trade was reduced to. If sales turnover were to be maintained as is (based on the likelihood that stores will try to maximise their profits), there is very low capacity.

3.74 Consequently, the overtrading is only likely to be reduced through future town centre schemes coming forward, in accordance with policy, and 'clawing back' trade from these non-central locations. Should development come forward in a central location which required more floorspace than previously planned for, the overtrading of this non-central floorspace and the ability of a proposal to 'claw back' expenditure leaking from the centre would be a valid argument in promoting such development.

BRIDPORT

Figure 7 Bridport Town Centre



3.75 Bridport operates as a fairly healthy centre. Key findings of the health check identified that the town comprises a national average representation of uses. In fact the town offered an above-average representation of comparison goods retailers and a below-average number of vacant units, both features of a healthy town.

3.76 There are, however a limited number of national multiples in the centre and arguably this could be improved. Nevertheless independent stores add character to the centre and signify the local role the town plays within the area.

3.77 In terms of attracting national multiples, the town will need to bring forward sites and provide units with larger floor plates. While a healthy level of demand has been registered, the retailers’ requirements again demonstrate the demand for larger units, requesting a total of between 139 gross sqm – 4,090sqm gross.

3.78 In terms of future provision the study identified capacity for a small convenience goods store, (690sqm net) by 2026. It is realistic to assume that this modest capacity is the result of the proximity of the out of centre Morrisons store situated within the out-of-town retail park, as this is likely to absorb the existing trade from the town centre. The forecast identified a capacity for comparison goods floorspace of 14,329sqm net by 2026, suggesting that the area’s growth will lead to demand for a larger range and provision of these types of goods.

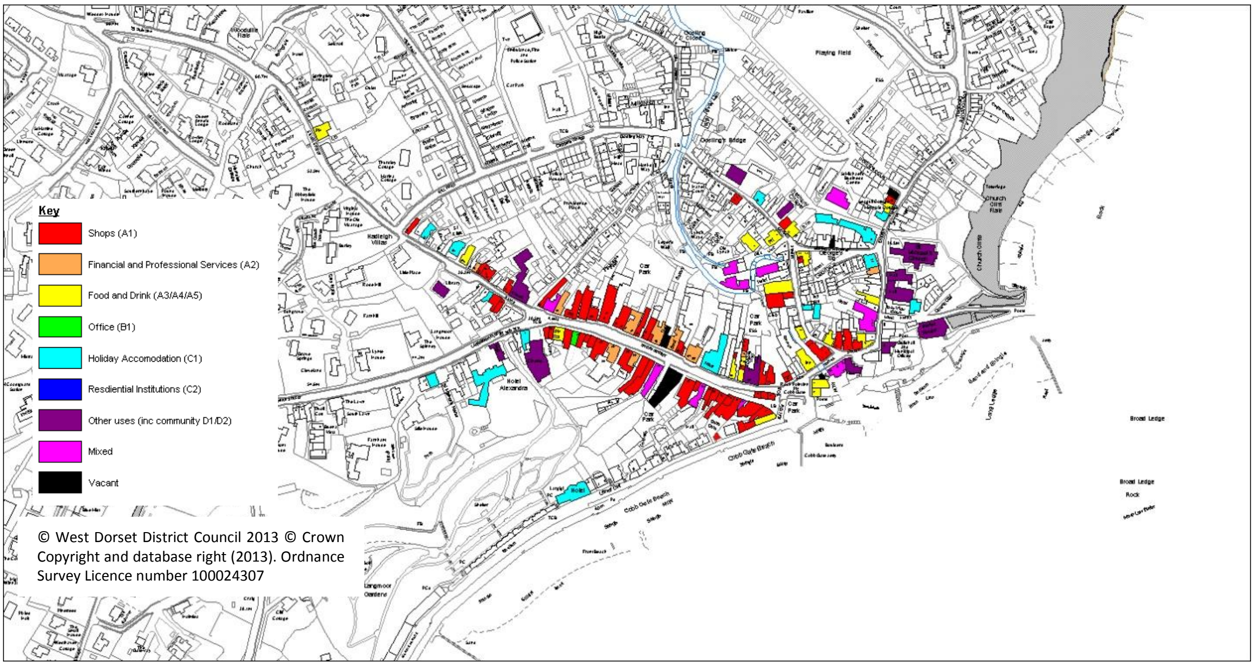
3.79 In the short term it is likely that the capacity identified can be absorbed by sites identified in the town centre and there is no need for the allocation for a site specifically for this use. In the longer term a site may have to be identified to meet the comparison need. Sites to accommodate future growth are considered in the background paper for the Western Area of West Dorset.

LYME REGIS

3.80 The health check identified that the centre of this seaside town operates well, however much of its success rests on tourism. As a result the town’s retail offer is limited and principally serves the tourist market. Nevertheless the small centre has a broadly average representation of retail categories and again, similar to Bridport, has a below average number of vacant units.

Again retailers that are registering requirements to locate to the centre have identified demand for larger units, which are not commonplace in the centre at present. This demand ranges from 370sqm -975sqm gross.

Figure 8 Lyme Regis Town Centre



3.81 In terms of the potential future capacity of the town, the forecast identified a limited amount of convenience floorspace (136sqm net by 2026). While there is no significant provision of convenience stores within the town this is again expected to be due to the attraction and draw of the Morrison's supermarket at Asker Meadows Retail Park on the edge of Bridport. The forecast identified capacity for comparison floorspace of 5,808sqm net by 2026.

3.82 It is likely that areas of the town could be redeveloped to absorb the growth anticipated.

SHERBORNE

3.83 Sherborne has an attractive town centre reinforced by well-maintained historic buildings along the retail core. The centre offers a diverse range of goods principally serving a local need. Although a higher provision of convenience goods within the town would be encouraged, it is understood that this may not be realistic due to the large Sainsbury's on the edge of town. At the time of the study there were no vacant units, and there was a good level of demand to locate in the town which signifies the strength of the town.

3.84 The retail forecast identified 1,970sqm net of convenience floorspace capacity to 2026 and 7,396sqm net of comparison goods floorspace capacity. This level of growth would not easily be absorbed within the town due to the number and size of the historic buildings.

3.85 At the time of the survey it was thought to be critical to the town's success that a suitable site is brought forward and developed in a way which integrates effectively without harming the town's character. Sites to accommodate the future capacity are considered in the background paper for Sherborne.

Figure 9 Sherborne Town Centre

OTHER TOWN CENTRE USES

3.86 Town centres have a wide variety of functions. They enable a range of needs to be met in one trip and serve as a focus for the community and public transport. The concentration of a variety of shopping and other services within a town centre is a major component of maintaining its vitality and viability.

3.87 In addition to retail, other main town centre uses are identified as:

- Leisure entertainment facilities;
- Intensive sport and recreation uses;
- Cinemas;
- Restaurants;
- Drive through restaurants;
- Bars and pubs;
- Nightclubs;
- Casinos;
- Health and fitness centres;
- Indoor bowling;
- Bingo halls;
- Offices (both commercial and those of public bodies);
- Arts, culture and tourism (theatres, museums, galleries and concert halls;
- Hotels and conference facilities

3.88 Arts, creative and cultural development can contribute to healthy and vibrant centres and communities. Buildings open later in the evening, such as theatres, pubs and restaurants, can complement retail uses and add to a centre's viability by encouraging people into the centre after the shops have closed. The conversion of underused upper floors to offices or residential uses can provide appropriate accommodation for such uses in a central and accessible location. They can add vitality to town centres without fragmenting the retail and services on the ground floors. The use of premises above ground floor level can contribute towards the mix of uses in the centre as a whole and can be of benefit in retaining life in the centre throughout the day. Furthermore, the income from such uses can lead to improved maintenance of the fabric of the building, improving the appearance and character of the town centre.

3.89 Although non-retail uses can play an integral role in the functioning of the town centre, such uses can fragment the retail element of the primary shopping area and make it less attractive and convenient. The loss of an active retail use, however, can not be prevented, and non-retail uses will generally preferable to retail units that remain vacant for long periods.

3.90 Unlike assessing retail need, the approach to assessing leisure capacity is less developed. The report focuses on the assessment of need for cinemas, health and fitness centres, bingo halls, bowling alleys, restaurants, bars and clubs:

CINEMAS

3.91 There are three cinemas within the plan area, located in Weymouth, Dorchester and Bridport. These comprise a total of 12 screens. Based on an average participation rate within the United Kingdom of 2.9 visits per person (as identified by Mintel – the UK Cinema Market Report, 2000), the assessment indicated that there were 522,319 cinema visits made in the plan area. The study identified that the current existing facilities in the catchment achieve a market share of 73%. Based on identified statistics the report suggested that 50,900 visits per year per screen are required to achieve the average trading position of cinemas. Accordingly there needs to be an estimated 610,800 users to sustain the existing provision. As a result the report concluded that in line with the national average there was satisfactory existing provision of cinemas within the catchment, in fact as such there was an over-provision of two screens.

3.92 While these findings are noted, the report also identified that it was likely that the number of people visiting the cinema would increase due to peak periods of tourists, trade from out of the plan area and increases to population from additional housing growth. With this in mind it was accepted that there might be some capacity for further provision or the refurbishment of the existing stock over the plan period. However, it is important to recognise that the Plaza cinema at Dorchester has expanded to add more screens since the report was written, and that a further (Odeon) cinema has opened in Dorchester as part of the Weymouth Avenue Brewery development.

HEALTH AND FITNESS CENTRES

3.93 The plan area contains a large number and good variety of private and publicly run health and fitness clubs. At the time of the assessment there were a total of 30 centres identified, 16 of which were public facilities, with the remaining 14 being privately owned. 12% of respondents to the household survey regularly visited a Health and Fitness Centre. The majority went to facilities within Weymouth which attracted 33% of respondents, with 18% using facilities in Dorchester. The remaining business is directed to facilities in Bridport 14% and a number of smaller rural centres across the plan area.

3.94 The study estimated that in line with UK average figures for Health and Fitness centres there is adequate provision to meet the needs of the existing residents in the plan area. However, the estimates of need are indicative and cannot be used as precise assessments. The use of the Health and Fitness Centres is also likely to increase at peak tourist periods from the additional population as well as the estimated rises in population growth.

HOTELS

3.95 Weymouth already has a good provision of hotels, reflecting the tourism demand to stay in the centre. Generally, these are aimed at the mid market, but there is accommodation available to suit all budgets. A large majority of these hotels are located along The Esplanade.

These are mostly independently owned and typically offer more traditional, rather than modern accommodation. The study identifies interest from hoteliers to locate in the town, with demand mostly from budget or luxury operators. There are no mainstream budget hotels in or on the edge of Weymouth town centre. The nearest – a Premier Travel Inn – is at Lodmoor, several kilometres north of the centre. Budget hotels often seek out of centre locations close to major roads or where there is strong demand from businesses (i.e. close to large office developments). They also favour major town centre locations, such as Weymouth, if suitable sites can be found. Potentially, hotels can be stacked above ground floor uses in urban areas. In the case of Weymouth, the report suggests attracting modern hotel operators to the town would be welcome, and would assist in upgrading the quality of accommodation available. The Olympics 2012 sailing events are likely to have enhanced Weymouth's reputation as a tourism destination and therefore increase demand for rooms.

3.96 Dorchester has a more limited hotel offer, with a cluster located on the High Street East and West. Most cater for the mid market (rather than budget or luxury markets) and are of a traditional nature. There are no new hotel developments in the town centre, although since the report was written, a Premier Inn has opened on the Weymouth Avenue Brewery development, and there is also planning permission for a boutique hotel on this site, through the conversion of one of the existing buildings. The historic nature of the centre, together with its administrative/ office sector may be sufficiently attractive to hotel operators to locate in Dorchester town centre. The reputation of the centre will also be enhanced if the retail offer at Dorchester is extended through developing the Charles Street car park. The Charles Street scheme itself has permission to accommodate a hotel. If developed this would serve to improve the quality of accommodation in the town centre, whilst adding to the diversity of Dorchester.

TEN PIN BOWLING

3.97 There is one tenpin bowling alley within the plan area and this is located within Weymouth town centre. Based on UK average numbers of tenpin bowling alleys, the study suggests that there is no additional capacity for tenpin bowling centres within the plan area. The market is however expected to grow, therefore in order to enhance profits, providers will need to offer new locations and designs and encourage both young and old to take up the sport.

BINGO HALLS

3.98 There are two Bingo Halls within the plan area; one on the edge of Weymouth town centre and another within the centre of Dorchester. After examining trends the report considers that further investment and development of Bingo Halls is unlikely. Consequently, it emphasises the need to protect the existing provision as an alternative leisure facility.

NIGHT OUT

3.99 It is difficult to assess the capacity for theatres, pubs and clubs. The survey identifies Weymouth as the most popular place for a night out achieving 43% of trade. By comparison Dorchester achieves 14.3% of the market share.

3.100 Bridport has a limited offer of commercial leisure provision, which is essentially public sector focused, such as the library, arts centre and museum/gallery. These uses do however point towards a more cultural offer, and a role could be encouraged to differentiate the town from other competing centres. This might be coupled with attracting new restaurants/cafes to the centre.

3.101 Lyme Regis's leisure provision is predominantly focused on serving day time trade, however its restaurants, bars and theatre provide a good offer given the relatively small size of the centre.

3.102 In parallel to the forecast retail growth, significant growth in expenditure on eating and drinking and other leisure pastimes is predicted, though the level and rate of this growth is likely to have been affected by the recession. It is difficult to quantify the requirements for these uses however given the existing and identified expenditure and the attraction of tourist expenditure, the study identifies capacity for additional floorspace within Weymouth and Dorchester town centres. It will be important that such uses should not come forward at the expense of existing active retail frontages.

TOURISM

3.103 Tourism refers to all activities of visitors including both overnight visitors and same-day visitors. This includes travel and visits for business purposes as well as for holidays and recreation. There is a wide range of attractions within the Plan area, in the towns, other settlements and countryside. Attractions include historic homes, museums, art/craft galleries, gardens and animal centres (zoos, aquaria, farms etc). The majority of attractions operate on a seasonal basis with many visits taking place during May-September. Some attractions such as Portland Castle and Dorset County Museum receive over 20,000 visits a year, though few attractions reach maximum capacity levels with most receiving much lower levels of visitors. People are often willing to travel considerable distances for high quality, interesting and exciting attractions, and the more successful attractions tend to be those that continue to invest in improvements to maintain or increase their visitor numbers.

3.104 The coast and countryside are attractions in their own right, and visiting the countryside is one of the most popular forms of recreation. The countryside is of value for the wide range of opportunities it provides for informal recreation such as walking and cycling, and there is an extensive network of public footpaths and bridleways throughout the countryside and along the coast with many nature trails and picnic sites. There is also a demand for a range of recreational facilities in the countryside which require special buildings or structures such as equestrian activity. Policy options specifically for recreational facilities are considered in the Community Needs and Infrastructure background paper.

3.105 The Local Economic Assessment identifies the rural areas of Dorset as having a "high quality tourism offer". The "comprehensive package" of rural, coastline and urban attractions is thought to distinguish Dorset's tourism industry and provide an opportunity to secure higher skilled and better paid tourism jobs. In particular the area possesses:

- unique and world-class watersports venues, including the National Sailing Academy and venue for the Olympic sailing events at Portland;
- some of the best beaches in the UK and a micro-climate which is more favourable than most other parts of the country;
- a diverse range of accommodation and catering;
- the Jurassic Coast World Heritage Site;
- beautiful countryside and an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, containing attractive market towns and significant heritage sites;
- an international gateway at Weymouth Port

3.106 According to the Inter-Departmental Business Register 2010, the county of Dorset has approximately 670 firms in the Leisure & tourism industry, which accounts for about 4.5% of all firms in the county.

3.107 In Weymouth & Portland, about 130 businesses are given as being in the leisure & tourism industry, which is 7.4% of total businesses in the borough and greater than the rest of Dorset.

In West Dorset, about 220 businesses are given as being in the leisure & tourism industry, which is 5.3% of total businesses in the district and also more than the Dorset level. Compared to the other boroughs and districts in the county, Weymouth & Portland has the highest proportion of leisure & tourism businesses (as a % of the total in the borough), West Dorset has the third highest. 33.1% of Dorset's total leisure & tourism businesses are situated in West Dorset, which is the largest proportion of the county's districts. 19.0% of Dorset's total leisure & tourism businesses are situated in Weymouth & Portland, which is the second highest.

3.108 There are approximately 8,300 people employed in the leisure & tourism sector in Dorset, which is about 5.6% of total employees in the county. At about 2,500 employees, or 5.7% of the districts total employees, in the leisure & tourism industry West Dorset is much in line with the rest of Dorset. However, Weymouth & Portland has about 1,800 employees in the leisure & tourism industry, accounting for 9.5% of total employees in the borough, giving it the second largest proportion of leisure & tourism employees in comparison with the other districts/boroughs in the county. West Dorset has the largest proportion of total employees in Dorset in leisure & tourism businesses (30.1%), with Weymouth & Portland the second highest (21.7%).

3.109 Data provided by the South West Tourism Alliance for 2009 suggests about 4,400 jobs are supported by tourism, accounting for approximately 18% of total employment in Weymouth & Portland. About 6,500 jobs, accounting for approximately 15% of the total jobs in the district are supported in West Dorset. Tourism spend in Weymouth & Portland accounts for 19% of total tourism spending in Dorset, while tourism spend in West Dorset accounts for nearly a third. This is the highest proportion of the boroughs/districts in Dorset.

Table 6 Key tourism statistics

2009	Dorset[10]	Weymouth & Portland	West Dorset
Staying visitors	2,086,500	434,300	602,200
Total nights	9,451,100	1,711,400	2,942,700
Bedspaces	15,341	6,208	3,041
Tourism day visits	9,625,891	1,196,000	3,003,000
Staying visitor spend	£449,499,000	£98,521000	£138,627,000
Tourism day visit spend	£430,536,439	£67,531,000	£130,098,000
Total tourism spend	£880,035,439	£166,043,000	£268,725,000
GVA (value to economy-£m)	£567,341,000	£108,127,000	£168,089,000
% of employment	13%	18%	15%

3.110 An estimated 37% of staying visitors' total expenditure in both areas is on accommodation. There is a range of different types of tourist accommodation available in both areas. The table below looks at the trips, nights and spend of tourists (domestic and overseas) by accommodation type.

[10] excluding Bournemouth and Poole

Table 7 Tourist spend by accommodation type (domestic and overseas tourists)

Weymouth and Portland						
	Trips	%	Nights	%	Spend £	%
Serviced	149,300	34	446,400	24	39,731,000	43
Self catering	30,100	7	213,800	12	11,460,000	13
Touring caravans /tents	21,100	5	112,400	6	3,992,000	4
Static vans/holiday centres	110,300	25	526,400	29	20,269,000	22
Group/campus	1,200	0	9,300	1	416,000	0
Paying guests in private homes	0	0	0	0	0	0
Second homes	3,300	1	20,800	1	828,000	1
Boat moorings	6,000	1	15,000	1	517,000	1
Other	5,900	1	16,100	1	468,000	1
Staying with friends and relatives (VFR)	117,700	27	484,000	26	13,780,000	15
Total	444,000		1,843,300		91,459,000	
West Dorset						
	Trips	%	Nights	%	Spend £	%
Serviced	116,400	19	363,800	13	32,350,000	25
Self catering	81,900	13	579,100	20	31,095,000	24
Touring caravans /tents	141,500	23	737,200	26	26,131,000	20
Static vans/holiday centres	68,200	11	327,900	11	12,641,000	10
Group/campus	4,900	1	37,000	1	1,580,000	1
Paying guests in private homes	0	0	0	0	0	0
Second homes	14,400	2	96,100	3	3,797,000	3
Boat moorings	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other	8,400	1	23,700	1	701,000	1
Staying with friends and relatives (VFR)	176,000	29	722,800	25	20,605,000	16
Total	611,700		2,889,700		128,900,000	

3.111 A third of visitors to Weymouth and Portland use serviced accommodation, which also accounts for over 40% of the spend in the borough. Static vans/holiday centres are also important as they account for the highest proportion of nights stay and approximately a fifth of the spend.

3.112 The most popular type of accommodation in West Dorset is touring caravans/tents, which also account for the highest number of nights' stay in the district. This type of accommodation, along with serviced and self catering accommodation makes the greatest contribution to spend in the district.

3.113 It will be important to retain a balance of different types of accommodation to appeal to a wide range of visitors.

KEY EVIDENCE CONSIDERATIONS

3.114 The review of the evidence has shown that the area has a number of positive attributes including its high quality environment, a strong enterprise culture with high business start-up and survival rates, and good levels of academic attainment. Overall competitiveness fares reasonably well too, being just below the national average, but a concern for the area is that this is not being reflected in the economic performance with growth in GVA slower than the national average. It may therefore be necessary to encourage higher value sectors. A significant proportion of future employment growth is predicted to be in the non B class sectors[11] and it will be necessary to make adequate provision for these uses in the plan. This will also help diversify the economy which is currently heavily dependent on the public sector. Decentralised working practices are already above average in the area, and are likely to increase with the availability of new technologies. Although the plan area has experienced good rates of delivery of employment uses in the past, options for development can be limited due to environmental designations and natural features. Alongside these constraints on new development there are pressures on existing employment sites from higher value uses. It may therefore be appropriate to protect some employment sites for employment uses. It may also be necessary to supplement the existing employment land supply which currently includes some sites to meet a specialist demand. Weymouth and Portland in particular face some significant challenges in terms of its economy, and demand has been identified for employment sites in the Weymouth and Dorchester Travel to Work Area. In particular, a need for a large employment site capable of accommodating inward investment has been identified and the potential to include employment land as part of a comprehensive mixed use urban extension has been highlighted.

3.115 Overall, the town centres in the plan area are considered to be vital and vibrant. The centres of Weymouth and Dorchester are considered to benefit from their proximity to each other as they perform different roles and benefit from individual characters. While both centres draw on the same catchment area for workforce the retail study suggests that they operate in defined catchments, distinct local populations and different markets. Much of Lyme Regis's success rests on tourism, the key attraction being its seaside setting and built form. Sherborne also benefits from a very attractive town centre, though the historic buildings can limit the potential for development. Bridport centre is considered to function effectively, though its cultural aspects might also be fostered to maintain a sense of individuality. Capacity for additional retail floorspace has been identified at all the town centres. At Lyme Regis it is anticipated that areas of the town could be redeveloped to meet the growth. Elsewhere, new sites are likely to be needed to meet this capacity, though this needs to be considered in the context of the ongoing economic downturn since the reports were prepared.

3.116 From the evidence it would appear there is good provision of key commercial leisure facilities within the plan area. While growth in demand for leisure facilities within the period is anticipated, the existing provision of cinemas, ten pin bowing, bingo halls and health and fitness centres is adequate to meet current and projected requirements based on UK averages. Though it is difficult to accurately forecast the need for increasing the 'evening economy' or cultural facilities, there is scope to improve the evening economy of both Weymouth and Dorchester provided this does not harm the vitality and viability of the centre and its retail function. Weymouth was identified as having greater leisure provision notably due to its large screen cinema, and ten pin bowling and bingo hall located in the heart of the town centre. Dorchester by comparison offers small scale facilities serving a niche market and

[11] B Class employment uses are those described by the B1, B2 and B8 Town and Country Planning Use Classes Order: Offices, Research and development of products and processes, Light industry, General Industrial and Storage & Distribution

although the current level of provision is acceptable it could be reinforced by the provision of restaurants and bars. (Since the studies were undertaken, a significant number of new restaurants have opened on the Brewery site around the station).

3.117 Tourism clearly makes a very important contribution to the area's economy and has a significant role in providing a wide range of holiday/leisure opportunities for day visits by residents and visitors and for staying visitors. It is important that the tourism sector is supported to invest in accommodation, attractions and facilities so as to continue to be vibrant and competitive. The challenge facing planning policy is to encourage and support the tourism economy whilst protecting the environment that is such an important attractor of visitors and guiding new development to sustainable locations where there are existing facilities and more opportunities for travel other than by car.

3.118 Based on the review of background information and research key aims for the Economy policies in the plan area are:

- provision of sites to meet a range of employment needs
- provision for employment growth in the non B class uses
- encouraging economic enhancement
- protecting existing employment uses where appropriate
- protecting the vitality of the town centres
- accommodating the additional retail capacity identified
- enhancing the 'evening economy' of Weymouth and Dorchester centres
- provision for new and enhanced tourist accommodation, attractions and facilities

4 CONSULTATION: WHAT YOU HAVE TOLD US

4.1 Early and meaningful engagement and collaboration with neighbourhoods, local organisations and businesses is an essential component of plan preparation.

4.2 Through the Local Development Framework process, the production of the Community Plan and more recently the joint Local Plan, both councils have already carried out several consultation events gauging local views on the future of the plan area.

4.3 In 2007, both councils undertook 'Issues and Options' consultation which established the vision and objectives for the plan area. In 2009, Weymouth & Portland Borough Council undertook further consultation on a series of policy options, and West Dorset consulted on growth options around Weymouth. These policy options were developed from the findings of the previous consultation stage and the emerging evidence base.

4.4 A comprehensive consultation exercise for the joint Local Plan was held during the autumn and winter of 2011 to identify local issues and peoples views on what is important to them. Consultation covered West Dorset District and Weymouth & Portland. A series of events were held, discussing a range of topics. These included a number of "business breakfast meetings" to encourage the participation of local companies in the process and to ensure that local economic concerns were considered.

4.5 After these events, people got together to put forward their ideas. They formed smaller 'working groups' and met on one or two occasions. 18 working groups comprising local stakeholders and members of the public discussed a wide variety of planning related themes. The working groups took their ideas forward and developed a series of planning solutions. Comments were invited on the suggestions put forward by the working groups. Other key agencies involved in planning such as Natural England, the Environment Agency and the Highways Agency were also asked to comment on these ideas. A summary of the consultation findings in relation to this background paper are given in the table below. For more information on the consultation so far, please see the consultation summary report.

4.6 The working group findings were used to help shape new policies being drafted for the Local Plan. A pre-submission draft Local Plan was prepared during the spring of 2012 and agreed for consultation at the Management Committee of Weymouth and Portland Borough Council on 3 April, and at the Full Council meeting of West Dorset District Council on 17 May 2012. The pre-submission plan contained a number of detailed Development Management policies covering various themed chapters as well as sites specific policies for the main towns and areas of growth. The pre-submission plan was consulted upon during June and July of that year. Full details of this consultation can be found online at www.dorsetforyou.com/newlocalplan/west/weymouth

Table 8 Summary of Consultation

WEST DORSET CORE STRATEGY- ISSUES & OPTIONS 2007
EMPLOYMENT ▪ Considerable support for allowing a range of development types in smaller settlements, with employment the second top priority. ▪ A similar order of priority was expressed when considering development types appropriate in the countryside. ▪ A significant proportion of respondents supported business start up premises being encouraged within the district. There was also strong support for higher value employment sectors (eg IT firms) being encouraged and opportunities for existing firms to expand.

- Concern that much employment is seasonal. Some respondents suggested that all year round employment opportunities should be encouraged, and to increasing the opportunities for young people to be able to be employed locally.
- More live work units and encourage working from home was suggested, along with a more supportive policy for those who want to live and work on small holdings.
- More apprenticeships for young people and assistance to develop small enterprises.
- A small number of responses thought that no more heavy industry should be allowed or encouraged

TOURISM

- Just under half the respondents supported new tourism development such as holiday accommodation and attractions in the smaller settlements; about a third supported it in the countryside. There was some support for more B and Bs and guest houses in the district but little support for more or expanded holiday caravan and camping sites.
- There was a range of different responses regarding what development relating to tourism is needed and should be encouraged in the district and what should not be encouraged or allowed. There was general support for hotels, guest houses and B and Bs, but several negative comments regarding more/expanded caravan sites especially on the Heritage Coast, second homes and holiday lets/ cottages. There were several comments that hotels in Lyme Regis should be retained and support for educational, art, cultural and specialist tourist attractions.
- Holiday park operators consider that policy should recognise fully the importance of the holiday parks industry to the area's tourist economy. They point out that tourism supports local businesses and services that would otherwise be unviable, and provides facilities that would otherwise not be available and that the policy should encourage investment so that the tourism industry continues to be competitive.
- They consider that policies should support and encourage the retention and enhancement/ expansion of existing holiday accommodation, including holiday parks and that policy should support caravan and camping tourism and include policies which encourage development at existing sites that reduces visual harm, provides modern quality facilities, and allows additional pitches where there is no material harm. Also, the policy should acknowledge that there is scope for appropriate development adjacent to sensitive areas. In relation to tourism developments on the coast or within flood risk areas, policies should allow for the specific characteristics of the use to be taken into account and for proposals to be considered in relation to their overall planning benefits.
- Some respondents considered that educational, specialist tourist, arts and cultural attractions are needed or should be encouraged.

RETAIL AND TOWN CENTRES

- Nearly two thirds of respondents considered that shopping provision in the District is adequate.
- There was concern about the loss of shops that provide a range of everyday goods that suit local needs and income, and concern about the lack of balance between ‘basic’ shops and ‘tourist’ shops and between chain stores and individual stores in general.
- Business rates and shop rentals considered to be too high (especially in Dorchester) to allow local companies to survive.
- Chickerell residents have to drive some distance to reach a major retail food outlet. The

congestion caused in Weymouth as a result is not good for tourism or attraction/retention and a large retail store near the Chickerell/Weymouth border is suggested.

- The western part of the District lacks easy access to a good department store and an alternative to Tesco/Morrisons.
- Strong support for shops, Post Offices and mobile shopping facilities in villages.
- Key villages within the District need to plan for local facilities to improve their self-containment, therefore local small scale retail facilities and community facilities to support self-containment of larger villages should be planned for and supported.
- Retail provision is not cost effective in villages. Large stores need to be situated within easy reach of residents on good roads minimising travel journeys to reduce carbon emissions.
- Sherborne is close to Yeovil which is well provided with shopping and other facilities and there is no need to duplicate where everyday facilities are adequate. Furniture and other household items are better obtained out of West Dorset.
- More shops are required for younger people.

WEYMOUTH & PORTLAND CORE STRATEGY - ISSUES & OPTIONS 2007

EMPLOYMENT

- The support for the creation of new jobs in Weymouth & Portland was significant
- There was strong support for the encouragement of jobs in high technology, maritime industries and the tourism and service sector
- Other responses commented specifically on; a lack of employment opportunities, a need for quality employment and better paid jobs, flexibility over homeworking, encouragement of small and high tech businesses, the importance of the environmental quality, the importance of the marine and other niche sectors, promoting the towns assets

RETAIL AND TOWN CENTRES

- The was support for the location of future arts and cultural opportunities to be located within existing museums etc and within Weymouth town centre
- In general respondents wished to keep the current town centre car parking in that use, though there was limited support of some new/partial development of the car park sites.
- Other responses commented specifically on; the potential to extend shopping onto the car parks, loss of town character, redevelopment of inner harbour, problem of empty flats above premises in the town centre, positive development of the pavilion and regeneration of the Esplanade and seafront, the need for greater pedestrianisation, demand for a greater quality of shops, need to protect historic features, demand for more family orientated and wet weather facilities and services.

TOURISM

- There was strong support for the encouragement of jobs in the tourism and service sectors.
- Other responses commented specifically on; the need to protect local guesthouses and shops, encouraging the ”top end” of the tourism market, the need for out of season attractions, demand for a hotel with conference facilities, decline of poorer quality guest houses, the areas lack of attractiveness to large hotel chains, need to improve the quality of camp sites

WEYMOUTH & PORTLAND CORE STRATEGY - PREFERRED OPTIONS 2009

EMPLOYMENT

- The option that the Weymouth urban extension should incorporate land for employment was generally supported.
- The retention of existing allocated employment areas for employment use, and their identification as the location for future employment growth was supported by members of the public, with a mixed response from statutory and other consultees.
- Option to permit some existing employment land to be redeveloped for uses other than employment received objections based on the need to retain and enhance the workforce and reduce levels of out commuting. Other objections included an Identified shortfall in employment land means existing employment land should not be lost.

RETAIL AND TOWN CENTRES

- Concern was expressed in relation to the option that the town centre should be the focus for new retail, cultural, commercial and housing development, with associated improvements to the public realm and the waterfront, to assist heritage led regeneration, and enhance the vitality and attractiveness of the town due to the increase in flood risk. The need for good public transport access was highlighted, and it was suggested that regeneration should include Portland. The potential risks to Radipole Nature Reserve were highlighted. The question was raised of whether the benefits of regeneration would outweigh the costs of flood protection.
- There was limited support for the extension of the town centre through the demolition of existing buildings. There was more support for the extension of the centre by developing on surface car parks and other underused land, and by using existing buildings and sites more intensively. Concerns were raised in relation to the significant loss of car parking and the impacts on Radipole Lake Nature Reserve.
- Significant new retail development to the north of Kings street was generally unsupported because it was too far from the town centre and would cause loss of land for the travel interchange.
- Opinion on whether office, retail and commercial employment should be prioritized in the town centre was divided.

TOURISM

- there should be a new objective to promote tourism, and, in line with the Corporate Plan, seek to improve the quality of the tourist experience, extend the season and attract higher spending visitors
- The retention of major tourist/leisure sites was supported.
- The option to retain services tourist accommodation on the Esplanade, and prevent existing chalets, static and touring caravan and camping sites from converting or expanding to permanent built development uses was largely supported.

WEST DORSET, WEYMOUTH & PORTLAND LOCAL PLAN CONSULTATION 2011

EMPLOYMENT

- General support for wider definition of employment.
- Retail uses which support other employment uses should be permitted
- Unclear about provision through mixed use sites – some compatible development could be

mixed with the majority provided separately?

- Allocate more land for employment
- Reuse of building should be more flexible in terms of location but retain criteria in relation to highways and amenity. No requirement for public transport.
- New buildings for economic development should be permitted in the countryside – need usual safeguards
- Expansion of existing businesses should be supported subject to safeguards in relation to landscape, rural amenity, highways safety etc. Rural business should not be allowed to expand where it would result in unacceptable increases in vehicle movements or have a detrimental impact on the highway network.
- Different approach to employment in the towns that the villages
- Support proposals for education and training facilities
- Retention of employment sites should be flexible and include a consideration of demand and individual circumstances
- Farm diversification for economic uses was supported. Some concern in relation to scale.

RETAIL AND TOWN CENTRES

- Policy should permit and retain a mix of uses in the town centre.

TOURISM

- Tourism policy needs criteria in relation to setting, character etc to establish limits on appropriate development and protect environmentally sensitive areas. There should be no net loss of biodiversity and footpaths should be kept alive.
- Development related to arts and cultural tourism and alternative tourist attractions should be supported.
- Policies should positively promote tourist development
- Tourism uses should be permitted as part of farm diversification schemes
- More flexible approach to temporary structures
- Permit tourist uses in areas allocated for employment
- Split opinion on policy for caravan parks and holiday accommodation being responsive to market changes and considering the demand for and harm from proposals.
- New holiday accommodation should not be required to demonstrate access by public transport

WEST DORSET, WEYMOUTH AND PORTLAND LOCAL PLAN PRE-SUBMISSION CONSULTATION JUNE 2012

EMPLOYMENT

- The contribution of the area's outstanding natural environment to the economy should be noted.
- The approach to live/work development should be less restrictive.
- Potential adverse impacts of economic development need to be highlighted.
- Key employment sites need to have flexibility to meet demand.
- The approach to the change of use of employment buildings to non employment uses should

be less restrictive.

- There should be fewer restrictions on farm diversification, particularly in relation to the provision of new development.

RETAIL AND TOWN CENTRES

- Retail on out of centre sites should be permitted if sufficient centre and edge of centre sites can not be found.
- The concentration of retail uses in primary shopping areas should be protected.
- The sequential test should apply to centres outside the plan area.

TOURISM

- There should be a presumption in favour of tourist accommodation, including through the change of use of rural buildings.
- There should be a vision, objectives and growth targets for the tourist sector.
- Potential adverse impacts of tourism should be highlighted.
- Development should only be permitted within Defined Development Boundaries.
- The approach to the development of chalets is not clear.
- There should be stronger protection of the Heritage Coast/AONB from caravan and camping development.
- Approach to expansions needs to be clearer.
- New holiday accommodation directly linked to an attraction or employment site should be supported.
- Sites should be allocated for new tourist accommodation.

4.7 In addition to the Issues and Options consultation, West Dorset District Council has undertaken stakeholder engagement through the production of its employment evidence base, particularly with the business community and those who manage employment land and premises.

4.8 In August 2006, a survey questionnaire was distributed to nearly 2,000 local businesses which sought to gather information to inform the business needs and future market requirements of firms in the district. In total 522 completed questionnaires were returned, representing a response rate of 27%.

4.9 An informal workshop session was held to which local landowners, agents and developers were invited to discuss issues related to employment land and premises in the district. Discussion focused around the current employment situation in West Dorset and highlighted many issues faced by the local economy and those directly involved with development for employment uses within the district. Attendees were also offered the opportunity to comment on the primary points that emerged from the workshop session and to submit further supplementary information in writing.

4.10 Planning policy officers and economic development officers also attended a number of local business club meetings. WDDC officers attended 4 Business Club meetings to lead facilitated discussions on the implications of planning on businesses and employment. In total approximately 60 businesses were consulted with through this process.

4.11 A panel of local stakeholders (selected representatives of the local business community) were invited to provide feedback on information emerging as part of the evidence base production.

4.12 These various consultations obtained a range of information from the businesses and individuals surveyed. Issues highlighted included:

- a lack of available space and opportunities for expansion,
- a need for small units and grow-on space, viability issues caused by land values and competition from other uses,
- importance of the availability of a range of premises of different sizes and quality,
- need to be responsive to the market, consideration of a change in working practices,
- the important contribution of conversion of existing buildings and farm diversification to supply,
- a need for a wider definition of employment,
- employment sites that meet the needs of business that are available for development.

4.13 Parish plans are being prepared in the plan area, showing how communities want their parish or village to be now and in the future. Many identify priorities that have an economic element. The matrix below summarises actions from Parish Plans and Local Area Partnership Plans within the Local Prosperity theme.

Figure 10 Actions from Local Area Partnership and Parish Plans at May 2013

Action Identified in a plan under a Local Prosperity Theme	No of parish plans in which identified (from a total of 47)	No of LAP plans in which identified (from a total of 5)
Ensure job advertisements are advertised locally	4	0
Make community attractive to small scale businesses / attract business to the area	12	4
Identify and address employment and training issues	2	5
Provide transport of young people to access work and training	0	2
Support local businesses - business directory / business groups	13	4
Provision of range of employment land (affordable)	1	0
Support appropriate re-use of redundant farm buildings where suitable	3	0
Support farm diversification	1	0
Improve utilities services	3	0
Improve television / radio / mobile phone receptions (inc digital) / new coverage	18	0
Improve broadband coverage	15	0
Reinstate / develop local shop / post office / pub	15	0
Maintain / improve village shop / garage / post office / postal services / phone boxes	11	4
LETS Scheme / credit union	1	1
Improve banking facilities	1	0
Install Cash Point	1	0
Support low carbon innovation and development	1	0
Advertise dates of farmers market	2	0
Food box scheme / promote local food / farmers markets	8	3
Develop tourism forum / support tourism	6	3
Promote towns as gateway towns of World Heritage Site	0	1
Control development of caravan parks	1	0
Support cultural and economic events to 2012	0	2

KEY CONSULTATION CONSIDERATIONS

4.14 The review of the comments received through the various stages of consultation has identified a number of common themes that will need to be given consideration in the formulation of the new Local Plan Policy. Many of these issues are echoed in the aims and priorities of the policies reviewed in previous sections.

4.15 The following summarises the issues identified:

EMPLOYMENT

A range of responses were received in relation to what employment development is needed and encouraged. Views on the retention of employment sites were divided. Consultation results support:

- new job creation and more allocations for employment uses
- employment uses in smaller settlements and the countryside as well as the towns
- higher value and local niche employment sectors
- expansion of existing businesses
- year round employment opportunities
- new working practices
- a wider definition of employment
- provision of employment through mixed use sites and urban extensions
- provision of a range of premises to meet a wide variety of needs, including small start up businesses
- Policy should be responsive to the market
- Provision through the conversion of existing buildings and farm diversification schemes

TOURISM

A range of responses were received in relation to what tourism development is needed and should be encouraged. There was support for hotels, guest houses and B and Bs, but some negative comments regarding more/expanded caravan sites especially on the Heritage Coast, second homes and holiday lets/ cottages. In general the consultation results support:

- tourism and service sectors
- educational, art, cultural and specialist tourist attractions
- the retention and enhancement of existing holiday accommodation
- consideration of the benefit of proposal and the characteristics of the area
- improving the quality of the offer and extending the season
- establishing appropriate limits and protecting sensitive areas
- provision of tourism uses through farm diversification
- a more flexible approach to temporary structures
- no requirement to demonstrate access by public transport

RETAIL AND TOWN CENTRE

Consultation results support:

- provision and retention of a balance of shops, meeting different demands
- provision of small scale local shopping facilities
- location of large retail development within easy reach of residents
- provision and retention of a mix of uses in the town centre
- protection of historic features and the consideration of the character of the town
- improvement of Weymouth town centre and inner harbour

5 POLICY OPTIONS AND ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES CONSIDERED

5.1 In plan-making there are usually alternative approaches to any proposed policy. It is important to consider these in order to justify the preferred approach. The following section sets out the reasonable strategic alternative policy options considered in relation to the Economy chapter of the joint Local Plan. In some cases elements within the policy are guided by national / legal requirements and so there are no realistic alternatives to consider, however where local variations are possible alternative options have been explored.

5.2 The Local Plan will need to set out a clear vision and strategy, and plan positively for economic development. The section below assesses some of the general policy options that could be taken in the production of the new Local Plan policy on economy. Due to the significant number of variations possible it does not explore the multiple options available for individual detailed considerations within each policy. However, it does highlight relevant considerations from the review of policy, evidence and consultation that should also be addressed.

5.3 Further consideration of these policy options are given in the Local Plan Sustainability Appraisal where each of the policy options are measured against a set of sustainability objectives.

DEFINITION OF EMPLOYMENT

5.4 Jobs can be created by a number of different uses in a variety of sectors.

Definition of Employment		
Option A	**Option B**	**Option C**
A restrictive approach to definition of employment **sites - Only B1 (light industrial), B2 (general industrial), and B8 (storage and distribution) uses**	**A permissive approach to definition of employment sites – any economic use**	**A Mixed approach – B class uses and non B class uses that provide direct, ongoing local employment**

5.5 The review of the available policy and evidence supports the provision of land to meet a range of employment needs, including those in emerging and high value sectors. It also highlights the important contribution that non B class job generating uses make to the economy. The consultation comments reinforced the need for mixed employment sites to meet a variety of requirements. Comments were supportive of the promotion of local niche employment sectors.

5.6 Although uses like tourist accommodation, farming and housing benefit the economy they have quite different impacts, needs and specific requirements. It would therefore be inappropriate to take the same approach to these types of development.

Option C was the preferred option taken forward in the Local Plan.

PROVISION OF EMPLOYMENT SITES

5.7 Economic development is a key priority for both councils. It is important that the Local Plan support this by creating opportunities for development and investment. If future economic growth is to be successfully delivered it is vital that enough land, and the right kind of land is provided for these uses. A flexible approach and a ready supply of sites in suitable locations are fundamental to the economic performance of the area, and delivering employment development.

Provision of Employment Sites		
Option A	**Option B**	**Option C**
No restrictions to the location of employment site allocations.	**Development is permitted, but only in sustainable locations, such as within other identified settlements, through the expansion of existing sites, as part of a farm diversification scheme, through the reuse or replacement of an existing building.**	**A more restrictive approach with the concentration of development at the settlements with defined development boundaries**

5.8 Option A would permit development in any location, potentially impacting adversely upon features of historic and cultural importance. Development of new employment sites in remote locations, away from existing settlements, may impact adversely upon the landscape. These remote locations may not be accessible by sustainable modes of transport, increasing the emission of greenhouse gases associated with the transport, and reliance on the motor car. Wildlife habitats may be threatened by this approach, impacting upon biodiversity, in addition to geodiversity interests. This approach would have a very positive economic impact, but without appropriate controls it could be to the detriment of the environment.

5.9 Option B would deliver land to meet a wide range of employment needs in terms of quality, size and location which is a fundamental component in attracting investment and enabling the growth and sustainability of businesses. By ensuring development takes place in the most sustainable locations it will help reduce the need to travel (particularly by private car) as well as promote social inclusion, and provide people with the opportunity to meet their employment needs locally while avoiding a dispersed pattern of development and adverse environmental impacts.

5.10 While option C would concentrate development in close proximity to services and public transport, it would not adequately meet rural needs, reducing the opportunities for supporting and diversifying the rural economy.

5.11 The review of the available policy and evidence highlights the need to ensure that sufficient land of the right type is available in the right places, and the need to set criteria and allocate land to meet this demand. It also draws attention to the need to support the growth and expansion of existing businesses and new employment sectors. Comments received during the consultations were supportive of employment uses in smaller settlements and the countryside as well as the towns. The need to include employment uses through mixed use sites and urban extensions was identified.

Option B was the preferred option taken forward in the Local Plan.

RETENTION OF EMPLOYMENT SITES

5.12 Land for traditional employment uses can be hard to identify, and employment uses often find themselves in competition with higher value uses for land and premises. There is increasing pressure for change of use from employment to non employment generating uses. The loss of employment uses can negatively impact on local access to employment and the economic competitiveness of local areas. Although the redevelopment of a site for B class employment uses may not be viable at a particular time, the economics of development may change and its redevelopment for employment uses could become viable in the future.

Retention of Employment Sites		
Option A	**Option B**	**Option C**
A restrictive approach to retention of employment sites - Only B1 (light industrial), B2 (general industrial), and B8 (storage and distribution) uses permitted	**A permissive approach to retention of employment sites - the redevelopment of employment sites for alternative uses is permitted**	**A Mixed approach - Key employment sites identified, where only B1 (light industrial), B2 (general industrial), and B8 (storage and distribution) uses are permitted, but the permissive approach, with fewer restrictions, on other employment sites**

5.13 Option A would ensure a future land supply for B class employment, which can include some potentially unneighbourly uses. However, it would not reflect the important contribution that other uses make to employment and the economy, and may potentially result in a detrimental impact to the viability and vitality of sites as it would not allow for a mix of uses. It could also result in the retention of premises which are no longer fit for purpose and may be more appropriate for alternative uses. This approach therefore does not represent the most effective use of land, and may result in land or buildings being left vacant.

5.14 Option B would provide a great deal of flexibility for the reuse of employment sites but could result in an insufficient future supply of land for employment uses as they would have to compete with higher value uses such as housing for land and premises. This in turn would have a detrimental impact on the economy, but could improve access to housing, services and facilities. Even if the reuse of employment sites were limited to other economic uses, it may result in a shortage of land for the more traditional employment uses, for which it is hard to identify appropriate sites.

5.15 Option C will identify and protect those sites which are considered the most important primarily for traditional employment uses, ensuring a continuing supply of suitable employment land and premises. By allowing the consideration of other appropriate non B class uses on these key sites it is flexible enough not to stifle future growth, and can allow sites to adapt to meet changing needs. However national policy requires the assessment of employment-generating sites to consider whether they may be better used for alternative uses. Therefore, this approach allows the consideration of a wider range of alternative uses on sites considered less important for employment. A first preference for other economic uses above residential uses will help ensure that where possible and appropriate, employment sites continue to generate jobs and make a positive contribution to the economy.

5.16 Option C will ensure a variety of locations are available for a mix of employment uses in the future while allowing for the efficient use of development land by permitting the change of use of those employment sites considered to make a less important contribution to the future employment land supply. It will facilitate a broad range of economic development, which is vital for the future sustainability and development of the local economy. It will ensure that those sites and premises which are no longer fit for purpose can be considered for appropriate alternative uses.

5.17 The review of the available policy and evidence highlights the need to ensure sufficient land of the right type is available in the right places, including the protection of existing employment sites where appropriate. Consultation comments identified the need for policies to be responsive to the market.

Option C was the preferred option taken forward in the Local Plan.

TOURISM ATTRACTIONS AND FACILITIES

5.18 Tourism is very important for the local economy and has a significant role in providing a wide range of holiday/ leisure opportunities for day visits by residents and visitors and for staying visitors. It is important that the tourism sector is supported to invest in improvements, and new attractions and facilities so as to continue to be vibrant and competitive. However, while Government guidance is clear regarding supporting tourism it is also clear in its support for conserving the character of the countryside and having particular regard to proposals in areas or with features with a statutory designation (ie the AONB, Heritage Coast, Conservation Areas, Listed Buildings and Scheduled Monuments). The challenge facing planning policy is to encourage and support the tourism economy whilst protecting the environment that is such an important attractor of visitors and guiding new development to sustainable locations.

Tourism attractions and facilities		
Option A	Option B	Option C
Direct tourism attractions and facilities towards the town centre, but enable some scope for countryside attractions to grow in other locations, such as within defined development boundaries.	**Restrict tourist attractions and facilities to be location within town centre locations only**	**Do not restrict the location of tourist attractions and facilities**

5.19 Option A would guide new development to the more sustainable locations within or near to settlements where it is likely to provide more local benefits and more opportunities for travel other than by car. Town centres, followed by adjoining sites, would be the preferred location for major new attractions as there is greater opportunity for more people to access these locations other than by car. Some new tourist attractions will, by their nature, not be appropriate for a town location; also some existing attractions in countryside locations may need new or enhanced facilities. Such development may be beneficial in increasing quality and diversity of the tourism offer. Significant adverse impacts would be minimised, since the out of town attractions and facilities would generally be located in sustainable locations. There would be a likely positive economic effect allowing the growth of tourism in this sector.

5.20 Option B would protect the landscape, reduce climate change mitigation and vulnerability (through reduced emissions of greenhouse gases from transport sources and reducing vulnerability to flooding, coastal change and sea level rise), protect and enhance conservation interests and geodiversity, and improve access to recreational and leisure facilities by sustainable modes of transport through the provision of tourist facilities and attractions within the towns. While this option would concentrate development at the main settlements where people have the opportunity to access a variety of services and types of transport, there could be a strong negative impact upon the economy, as the development and growth of tourist attractions in out- of-town locations would be prohibited, which would be an unreasonable restriction and stifle economic growth within the tourism sector. It would also serve to constrain tourism by not allowing further or enhanced facilities at existing attractions, which in turn could have a detrimental impact on the local economy.

5.21 Option C could encourage an increase in visitor numbers through the provision of a larger number of new and enhanced facilities which would have a positive effect on the local economy. As new development in the countryside would be enabled it could be particularly beneficial to the rural economy. However, with no limitations on the location of development it may also result in attractions and facilities in unsustainable locations and could have a significant adverse visual and environmental impact, compromising biodiversity and geodiversity.

5.22 Option A is considered to strike a good balance between allowing attractions and new, or enhanced existing, facilities in order to support the tourism offer and seeking to minimise adverse visual impact on the landscape and harm to amenity.

5.23 The review of the available policy and evidence highlights the need to support tourism and leisure development, including through the provision of new and enhanced attractions and facilities. Consultation comments in particular identified the potential for educational, art, cultural and other specialist attractions.

Option A was the preferred option taken forward in the Local Plan.

BUILT HOLIDAY ACCOMMODATION

5.24 Tourist accommodation supports the local economy as users spend money on the accommodation, at tourist attractions, and in local shops, pubs and restaurants. It also increases local employment opportunities for support services. However, such new accommodation needs to be in sustainable locations and there must not be an adverse visual impact on the immediate and wider landscape from the development. Particular care regarding design will be needed within the AONB, Heritage Coast and Conservation Areas.

Built Holiday Accommodation		
Option A	**Option B**	**Option C**
Restrict new built holiday accommodation to defined development boundaries, but with some scope for the reuse and extension of existing premises elsewhere	**Do not restrict the location of new built holiday accommodation to defined development boundaries**	**Restrict new built holiday accommodation to the towns**

5.25 Option A would guide development to locations within the towns and larger settlements where attractions and facilities are concentrated and where there are more opportunities for travel other than by car. It would restrict the development of built holiday accommodation in the countryside, thus minimising the impact on landscape, biodiversity and geodiversity, soil and water (by protecting productive agricultural land) and reducing climate change mitigation and vulnerability (by reducing emissions of greenhouse gases from transport sources and reducing vulnerability to flooding, coastal change and sea level rise). The impact upon the economy is considered to be positive, as this policy approach is likely to increase economic activity in the holiday industry. Hotels are town centre uses and larger hotels are most appropriately located at the town centres. Smaller-scale serviced accommodation may also be appropriate within the larger villages if is targeting tourists who are seeking a more rural location. There are some well-established hotels and inns that provide serviced accommodation in more rural locations, and these add to the tourism offer of locations to stay in the area. To restrict extensions to existing accommodation would be unreasonable and inappropriate. Allowing extensions to such accommodation may help to ensure its viability and/or enhance its standard. However, consideration will need to be given to the size of the extension as a proportion of the existing building, and also the location of the accommodation in relation to nearby settlements. Similarly, additional accommodation from the conversion and change of use of existing buildings could increase the stock and variety of holiday accommodation and can help maintain historic buildings.

5.26 Option B would not restrict the location of built holiday accommodation, which could result in an increased stock of holiday accommodation, in a wider range of locations, which could encourage an increased number of visitors to the area. However, the economic benefits of this approach could come at the cost of the environment. There are likely to be strong negative impacts upon landscape (owing to the likelihood that holiday accommodation would be favourably built in areas of landscape beauty), soil and water quality (through the potential loss of productive agricultural land). This could allow development in rural and isolated locations where there is no opportunity to access attractions, services and facilities, and no opportunity to use public transport. This would be contrary to the aims of achieving sustainable development.

5.27 Option C would restrict the development of built holiday accommodation to the towns, thus conserving landscape, biodiversity and geodiversity, soil and water (by protecting productive agricultural land) and reducing climate change mitigation and vulnerability (by reducing emissions of greenhouse gases from transport sources and reducing vulnerability to flooding, coastal change and sea level rise). It would ensure that development takes place at locations where there is access services and facilities, and there are opportunities to use public transport. However, this policy approach is unlikely to increase economic activity in the holiday industry, or provide the infrastructure to drive growth in this sector. This option could be unduly restrictive on economic growth, and have negative impacts on the local economy.

5.28 Option A is considered to strike a good balance between allowing new built holiday accommodation in order to support the tourism offer and seeking to minimise adverse visual impact on the landscape and harm to amenity.

5.29 The review of the available policy and evidence highlights the need to support tourism and leisure development, including through the provision of new and enhanced holiday accommodation.

Option A was the preferred option taken forward in the Local Plan.

CHANGES AS A RESULT OF PRE SUBMISSION CONSULTATION

5.30 In response to the consultation on the Pre-Submission Local Plan a policy approach similar to policy option 'A' is being taken with allowance for development to come forward within an established settlement of more than 200 population, through the re-use of an existing building or through the replacement, extension or intensification of existing tourist accommodation sites.

CARAVAN AND CAMPING SITES

Caravan and camping sites are key components of the areas stock of self catering holiday accommodation

Caravan and Camping Sites	
Option A	Option B
Restrict development to existing sites or within or on the edge of settlements with defined development boundaries	**Do not restrict new development to settlements with defined development boundaries**

5.31 Option A would restrict development to existing sites or within or on the edge of settlements with defined development boundaries. New sites that are close to existing settlements and other services will generally be more sustainable as there will be more potential for some services to be accessed other than by the private car. This will also have a positive impact on the environment. By restricting development of caravan and camping sites, which by definition require a rural location in most instances, to defined development boundaries, it is likely that growth of new sites would be stifled and the success of existing holiday accommodation sites constrained. This would be unreasonable, given the important role of caravanning and camping in the District's tourism economy.

5.32 Option B, which does not restrict the growth of development of caravan and camping sites would have a positive impact on the economy by allowing the growth of the tourist industry through increased opportunities for the development of caravan and camping sites encouraging more visitors to the area. However, camping and caravan sites, especially the larger coastal ones, can be visually intrusive in the landscape and development related to caravanning and camping can potentially have an adverse impact on the general rural amenity of the countryside and the resident population. Policy should seek to support this sector whilst preventing development that would result in detrimental impacts on landscape, amenity or sustainability through the use of appropriate safeguards. The visual impact of development will need to be carefully assessed, particularly in coastal areas and other landscapes of an open character. Consideration could also be given to the location of sites in relation to the facilities available.

5.33 The review of the available policy and evidence highlights the need to support tourism and leisure development, including through the provision of new and enhanced holiday accommodation.

Option B was the preferred option taken forward in the Local Plan.

RETAIL AND TOWN CENTRE USES

5.34 Town centres and local neighbourhood centres play a vital role in local communities. They are where people can access a wide range of local services and facilities. They are also places that people identify with strongly, as a place to meet and socialise. And many of them have strong links to the past, with Listed Buildings and other historic features or connections. However they can decline through lack of investment, with other centres providing competition for potential customers

Retail and Town Centre Uses	
Option A	Option B
Concentrate the development of retail and other town centre uses at identified centres	**Do not limit the development of retail and other town centre uses to identified centres**

5.35 Option A would support the roles of the existing centres and ensure that retail and other development attracting large numbers of people is centrally located where it is accessible by a range of transport modes. This is in keeping with national policy. Planning for development on sites within or adjoining the centres to meet the likely future need for retail development will help these centres to continue to meet the needs of their catchment populations, and to compete with surrounding centres.

5.36 Option B would be contrary to national planning policy on retail development, which sets out a clear strategy of supporting the vitality and viability of existing town centres. Town centres should be the first priority when locations are being considered for new retail development (or other town centre uses such as hotels, leisure, offices and the arts), and development that could harm the vitality and viability of existing centres should be avoided. However, local centres can also have an important role in delivering small scale development to meet local need.

5.37 The review of the available policy and evidence highlights the need to promote the viability and vitality of town centres and the need to identify sites to accommodate the additional retail capacity identified. It also requires the definition of town centres and primary shopping areas. The research has suggested that the 'evening economy' of Weymouth and Dorchester centres could be enhanced, and it will be important that policy should provide for a mix of uses in centres while still retaining an appropriate concentration of retail frontages.

Option A was the preferred option taken forward in the Local Plan.

FARM DIVERSIFICATION

5.38 With ever-increasing competition from abroad and consumer demands, agriculture has undergone significant changes. The modernisation of traditional farming techniques has meant that many of the processes are less labour intensive, increasing rural unemployment and under-employment, and farmers have to diversify in order to supplement their incomes. The changes in farming techniques and farm mergers, which provide economies of scale, have also resulted in a growing number of redundant farm buildings. Farmers' ability to act as "guardians of the countryside" is under threat. It is important that farm diversification projects that provide alternative employment/supplemental income to support existing farming businesses, provide on-going maintenance of the countryside, help balance the location of rural population and employment opportunities, and provide alternative productive uses for redundant farm buildings be supported.

Farm Diversification	
Option A	Option B
Include a policy specifically about development as part of a farm diversification scheme	**Do not include a specific farm diversification policy and allow development to be assessed against other policies in the plan**

5.39 Farm diversification is just one aspect of the diversification of the rural economy. As farm diversification encompasses a wide variety of possible projects there will be other policies in the plan that will be relevant to their assessment. However, such schemes will be scattered throughout the countryside and it is therefore appropriate to include a specific policy as a starting point for consideration of these projects. It will be important that this policy consider the effect of proposals on the landscape, character and amenity of the rural environment.

5.40 Option A would be consistent with that taken in the current adopted policy which is considered to have been effective in delivering sustainable farm diversification schemes.

5.41 The review of the available policy and evidence highlights the need to support the development and diversification of agriculture and land based rural business. The consultation comments identified that farm diversification schemes can contribute to the rural employment supply.

Option A was the preferred option taken forward in the Local Plan.

NEW AGRICULTURAL BUILDINGS

5.42 A significant proportion of the plan area is in agricultural use. Farming and other land-based rural businesses have a great influence on the landscape and character of the area, although they now employ a relatively small proportion of the population. It is important to support the farming industry and modern farming practices as vital part of the rural economy, and so that farmers can continue to actively manage the countryside.

New Agricultural Buildings	
Option A	Option B
Include a policy specifically about new agricultural buildings	**Do not include a specific agricultural building policy and allow development through permitted development rights and where necessary assess proposals against other policies in the plan**

5.43 New agricultural buildings can be allowed under 'permitted development rights', but in some cases development is controlled under the planning system. To not permit the development of new agricultural buildings would be unreasonable and unduly restrictive on this important sector of the economy. However, some modern agricultural buildings can be large and industrial in appearance. In order to safeguard the environment and amenity it will be appropriate to encourage development that is designed and sited to minimise adverse impacts, while still meeting the operational needs of the enterprise.

Option A was the preferred option taken forward in the Local Plan.

EQUESTRIAN DEVELOPMENT

5.44 Riding and horse keeping are popular leisure activities which generally require a rural location. Equestrian businesses can contribute to the rural economy, and provide opportunities for farm diversification. Equestrian development can range from field shelters and domestic stables to livery yards, riding schools, stud farms and racing stables and can also includes all-weather training areas and gallops. These uses vary in their impact on the surroundings, and in the numbers of people visiting them, and these factors need to be taken into account in assessing proposals. Possible adverse impacts include fragmentation of agricultural land, and harm to the character of the countryside through poor land management the proliferation of stables and other related equipment.

Equestrian Development	
Option A	**Option B**
Include a policy specifically about equestrian development	**Do not include a specific equestrian development policy and assess proposals against other policies in the plan**

5.45 Visiting the countryside is one of the most popular forms of recreation and there is a demand for a range of recreational facilities which require associated buildings or structures. While there are other policies of the plan that would be relevant to the assessment of such proposals, due to their increasing popularity and general requirement for a countryside location it is considered appropriate to include a specific policy for equestrian development. To limit the location of equestrian development would unduly constrain this type of business and its contribution to the local economy. However, in order to safeguard the environment and amenity it will be appropriate to require development to demonstrate viability and be designed and sited to minimise adverse impacts. To avoid additional pressure for new buildings in the countryside it will also be appropriate to retain existing purpose built equestrian development for equestrian use unless it is inappropriate or unviable.

Option A was the preferred option taken forward in the Local Plan.

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