

**North Dorset District Council  
Local Development Framework**

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**Consultation Statement (Regulation 17)**

**Managing Housing Land Supply in North Dorset  
Supplementary Planning Document**

**July 2007**

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**North Dorset District Council**

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## **1 Background to the Supplementary Planning Document**

- 1.1 On 29<sup>th</sup> September 2006 a report was taken to North Dorset District Council (the Council) on the issue of housing land supply. The Council resolved that a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) should be produced, subject to the views of the Government Office for the South West (GOSW). GOSW has since confirmed its support in principle for the production of a SPD.

## **2 Background to the Consultation Statement**

- 2.1 The new planning system introduced by the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, requires that the community are involved in the preparation of a draft SPD.
- 2.2 There is no statutory process for involving the community during this 'pre-consultation' stage. However, when formal consultation is undertaken, the Council is required to set out details of any pre-consultation activities in the form of a 'Consultation Statement'.
- 2.3 The Council is required to include the following in its 'Consultation Statement':
- the names of any persons whom the authority consulted in connection with the preparation of the draft SPD;
  - how those persons were consulted;
  - a summary of the main issues raised in those consultations; and
  - how those issues have been addressed in the draft SPD.
- 2.4 Formal public consultation must be undertaken on the draft SPD and a specified process of advertisement and community involvement must be followed.
- 2.5 The draft SPD was approved by Cabinet, for the purposes of public consultation, on 1<sup>st</sup> March 2007. Formal consultation on the draft SPD will take place during March and April 2007.

## **3 Pre-Consultation Activities**

- 3.1 On 29<sup>th</sup> September 2006 the Council approved the content of a 'Position Statement' describing the facts of the current housing oversupply situation. This position statement has been posted on the Council's web-site. The Council has also given general advice to many local agents, developers and residents on the issue of housing oversupply.
- 3.2 On 18<sup>th</sup> October a workshop session was held for developers and agents at the Council's offices in Blandford Forum. Over 60 agents and developers were invited by letter and / or e-mail and 33 attended

(see list in Appendix 1). The developers and agents at the meeting discussed:

- the oversupply situation;
- the need to manage oversupply;
- the need for a SPD; and
- what the SPD could or should say.

3.3 Two meetings were held for Town and Parish Councils: one in Gillingham Town Hall on 2<sup>nd</sup> November and one in Durweston Village Hall on 7<sup>th</sup> November 2006. All Town and Parish Councils were invited to attend these meetings by letter and / or e-mail. 20 people attended the meeting in Gillingham with 16 attending the meeting in Durweston. Those who attended are listed in Appendix 2.

3.4 At these meetings the Town and Parish Councillors examined the issue of oversupply in the wider context of the emerging Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) and the new planning system. The Town and Parish Councils discussed:

- the Council's response to the draft RSS;
- proposed revisions to the Council's Local Development Scheme (LDS);
- the proposed SPD on managing housing land supply and;
- taking forward the Core Strategy.

3.5 A workshop event was also held at the Council's offices in Blandford Forum for all Council members on 26<sup>th</sup> October 2006, at which the same issues were discussed. Those who attended are listed in Appendix 3.

## **4 Main Issues Raised**

4.1 The main issues (pertinent to the issue of housing land supply) raised during the 'pre-consultation' stage are discussed below:

### **House Prices and the Provision of Affordable Housing**

4.2 Concerns were expressed about the impact that restricting housing land supply would have on house prices in North Dorset and the subsequent effect on affordability, particularly for local people. Concern was also raised about the ability of the Council to deliver affordable housing with a general restriction on overall levels of housing development. It was felt that these effects could increase social inequalities in the District.

### **The Sustainability of Market Towns and Villages**

4.3 Concerns were raised about the potentially far reaching and detrimental effects of restricting housing land supply on the sustainability and vitality of the District's market towns and villages, their communities and their employment prospects. The anticipated effect of restricting housing supply on ancillary industries, in particular

the effect on small businesses and sole traders so prevalent in North Dorset, was of some concern. It was felt that the market towns and villages could be very vulnerable to the adverse effects of a significant slow down in the local economy, caused by a reduction in house building.

#### **Uncertainty of Draft Regional Housing Figures**

- 4.4 The validity of the housing figures in the draft RSS was questioned. It was felt that the strategy of the RSS had too much of an urban focus and that the rural areas within the South West had been ignored. There was concern that low housing figures would directly reduce sustainable levels of growth within the rural areas. Concerns were also raised about the 'top-down approach' of allocating housing figures, without examining the needs of rural areas in more detail. Agents and developers in particular felt that the Council should press for higher levels of housing growth.

#### **The Council's Approach to Managing Housing Land Supply**

- 4.5 Agents and developers in particular felt that the production of a SPD to control housing land supply was a 'knee-jerk reaction'. They also felt that the approach of producing a draft SPD penalised them unfairly. It was suggested that a better approach would be to address the issue of oversupply through the Local Development Framework (LDF). Although the Council had recently won a number of appeals on grounds of oversupply, it had also lost an appeal on land at Bourton Mill, Bourton. The validity of the Council's approach was questioned in the light of the Bourton Mill appeal decision. Enquiries were also made about whether there was potential to 'barter' housing figures with other local authorities, particularly those that were not meeting their current housing provision figures (for example, Purbeck District Council).

#### **Impact on the Provision of Community Infrastructure**

- 4.6 Concerns were expressed that a reduction in house building would hamper the provision of infrastructure through planning gain. Fears were raised that this reduction in community infrastructure provision would severely impact on local communities, particularly where the emphasis is on maintaining facilities through public and private partnerships.

#### **Reasons for Oversupply and Future Strategy Options**

- 4.7 Questions were asked about how the current housing land supply situation arose, what lessons could be learned and what level and pattern of housing development should take place in the future. It was accepted that significantly more development than was planned had taken place within the rural areas and it was recognised that one approach to mitigating against this was to undertake a review of town and village boundaries. However, it was felt that there was an artificial distinction, in sustainability terms, between towns (which are generally considered to be more sustainable) and villages (which are usually seen as less sustainable locations). The validity of a strategy that

directed growth solely towards the towns was questioned. It was felt that such a strategy would adversely affect the sustainability of villages.

#### **Controlling the Release of Allocated and / or Non-allocated Sites**

- 4.8 Notwithstanding some 'in principle' objections to the Council seeking to control oversupply, there was a debate about the way in which oversupply should be controlled in the draft SPD. The main debate centred on whether the Council should seek to control the release of the remaining allocations in the Local Plan or whether the Council should seek to control the release of non-allocated sites, including windfall sites. Agents and developers in particular felt that the Council should control the remaining allocations and encourage development on windfall sites, particularly brownfield sites.

#### **Encouraging Sustainable Design**

- 4.9 It was suggested that the restrictions on house building could be used as an opportunity to encourage innovation and designs of a higher environmental standard.

### **5 Addressing the Issues**

- 5.1 The pre-consultation stage has raised a number of important issues (outlined above) and these issues have been taken into account in the preparation of the SPD, as discussed below.

#### **The Council's Approach**

- 5.2 The approach of producing a draft SPD on housing land supply is not a 'knee-jerk' reaction. The second phase of the Local Plan finished at the end of March 2006 and once the figures for 2005-06 completions and new permissions were known, it became apparent that the figure of 5,900 dwellings in the Structure Plan for the period up to 2011 could be met from these sources. In the light of this situation, Members were asked to consider three options at both Cabinet and Council in September 2006, which were:

- Option 1 – to manage oversupply without further policy guidance;
- Option 2 – to produce interim policy guidance to manage oversupply; or
- Option 3 – to produce an SPD to manage oversupply.

The Council's preferred Option was Option 3.

- 5.3 Some recent appeals have supported the Council's position on oversupply. However, it is recognised that the Council lost the Bourton Mill appeal decision, where oversupply was an issue. The Council will be challenging this decision in the High Court.
- 5.4 It is not appropriate for the Council to seek to 'barter' with other Districts to acquire (or reduce) their housing allocations. These figures have been established following a great deal of technical work and

public consultation. For overall levels of housing development to be altered through such a process is wholly inappropriate.

### **Regional Housing Figures and Future Strategy Options**

- 5.5 It is recognised that the figures in the emerging RSS are draft and that there is concern about the sustainability of market towns and villages in the future. These issues have been addressed in the Council's response to the draft RSS. However, it is a fact that North Dorset is seen as an area of restraint, rather than growth, in the draft RSS and this is unlikely to change. There is an urgent need to respond to this emerging agenda particularly because the RSS period has already started (on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2006). Unless action is taken now to control oversupply, it is likely that draft RSS figures will be significantly exceeded in only a few years.
- 5.6 Whatever level of housing is finally approved for North Dorset through the RSS, it will be for the District to decide how this development should be distributed (within the context of the spatial policies of RSS). The distribution of future development will be addressed in the Council's Core Strategy, but unless housing land supply is more effectively managed in the short term, oversupply is likely to prejudice this process.

### **House Prices**

- 5.7 Concern was expressed that house prices may rise if the supply of housing in North Dorset is restricted. However, the oversupply of housing in the District that has taken place over the last 10 years has not kept prices down. Much of the increase in houses prices across the Country has occurred as a result of cheap debt becoming available to homebuyers. It is very unlikely that continued high levels of housing development in North Dorset would significantly reduce prices, unless this approach was part of a broader County-wide or regional approach to housing.

### **The Provision of Affordable Housing**

- 5.8 It is recognised that a general restriction on the level of housing development is likely to reduce the total amount of affordable housing that will be delivered in the short term. However, the overriding need is to reduce overall levels of housing development so that they are more in line with strategic policy. Within this context the draft SPD refers to the issue of affordable housing.

### **The Release of Housing Land**

- 5.9 The general thrust of the draft SPD is to control the release of the remaining allocations in the Local Plan, although the Council has supported the bringing forward of part of the land east of Shaftesbury at a recent call-in inquiry. The release of part of this site prior to 2011 is supported because it would help to address both the under provision of affordable housing and the under provision of market housing in the town, which is significantly below the Local Plan's sub-area target.

### **Encouraging Sustainable Design**

- 5.10 The Council recognises that sustainable design is important. However, to encourage or prioritise sustainable design through the draft SPD would effectively mean that the Council was trying to introduce 'new' policy in this document. Planning Regulations require that SPDs are supplemental to existing policies and such an approach would be likely to contravene these Regulations.



**Appendix 1 - List of Attendees at the Agents and Developers Pre-Consultation Workshop**

**Meeting Held at the Council Offices, Blandford Forum - 18/10/06**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Organisation</b>
Mike Lawson	
Diccon Carpendale	Brimble Lea
Mr J Pittard	J Pittard Ltd Architects
Anthony Southey	Anthony Southey Architects
Mr D Wheeler	
Lionel Gregory	Lionel Gregory Ltd
Mr David Williams	Tanner & Tilley
Mr R Miller	Symonds & Sampson
Mr S Rutter	Philip Proctor Associates
Mr P Dance	
Ken Morgan	Ken Morgan Architects
Phil Easton	Phil Easton Architects
S J Whitham	S J Whitham Associates
Barrie Taylor	Barrie Taylor Associates
Mr A Heeks	R.R.C
Mr Cliff Lane	Savills Planning
Mr Mike Pennock	Savills Development Team
Mr Paul Spong	Savills Development Team
Mr Paul Bedford	Persimmon Homes
Mr Hamish MacBeth	Cawdor Construction Ltd
Mr Richard Bagnall	
Mr Alan Mash	Chartered Architect
Mr Edward Dyke	
Mr Ron Rogers	Academy Design
Mr Tim James	Academy Design
Mr Martin Street	
Mrs Sue Coke	Jestyn Coke
Mr Gary Slater	
Mr Barry Lewis	
Mr Malcolm Brown	Sibbe H Gregory
Mr Peter Thompson	Architects
Philip Proctor	
John Turnbull	HSHT

## Appendix 2 - List of Attendees at the Town and Parish Councils Workshops

### Meeting Held at Gillingham Town Council Offices - 2/11/06

Name	Organisation
Alan Lloyd	Marnhull PC
Win Harvey	Shaftesbury TC
Vanessa Coeharill	Gillingham TC
Rupert Evill	Gillingham TC
F A Evill	Gillingham TC
Col E Mulley	Shroton PC
Lizzie Kingsbury	Shroton PC
Anne Beckley	Gillingham TC
Ian Stewart	Gillingham TC & NDDC
Michael Lodge	Gillingham TC
Julie Hansford	Gillingham TC
Colin Kay	Melbury & Cann PC & NDDC
Simon Firbank	Bourton PC
Chris Dunton	Stour PC
Julie Watkins	Stour Row PC
Mr R Belsham	Fifehead Magdalen PC
John Bellamy	Buckhorn Weston & Kingston Magna PC
Kevin Aldred	Buckhorn Weston & Kingston Magna PC
Keith Jackson	Hazelbury Bryan PC
Keith Honeybun	Hazelbury Bryan PC

### Meeting Held at Durweston Village Hall - 7/11/06

Name	Organisation
Carrie Lewis	Child Okeford PC
Derek Duke	Child Okeford PC & Sturquest
Mike Foote	Fontmell Magna PC
Janet Isaac	Spetisbury Parish Council
Richard Whitlock	Blandford St Mary PC
Sue Harris	Stourton Candle PC
Paul Lane	Stourton Candle PC
Lesley Gasson	Shillingstone PC
Christine Flemming	Winterborne Whitechurch PC
Peter Slocombe	Pimperene PC
Rachel Brownbridge	Blandford St Mary PC
Lorna Siwek	Blandford St Mary PC
Haydon White	Blandford Forum TC
Crawford May	Lydlinch PC
Susie Bamforth	Shillingstone PC
Dee Stephens	Hilton PC

**Appendix 3 - List of Attendees at the North Dorset District Council's Members' Workshop**

<b>Meeting Held at the Council Offices, Blandford Forum - 26/10/06</b>
Cllr Mr Peter Webb
Cllr Mr Bill Batty-Smith
Cllr Mrs Su Hunt
Cllr Lt. Col. Michael Oliver
Cllr Mr Graham Carr-Jones
Cllr Mr Victor Fox
Cllr Mr John Tory
Cllr Mr Michael Cox
Cllr Mr Michael Roake
Cllr Mrs Sheila Chapman
Cllr Mrs Janet Lowe