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Cabinet

Date: Tuesday, 28 July 2026
Time: 6.30 pm
Venue: Council Chamber, County Hall, Dorchester, DT1 1XJ

Membership: (Quorum 3)
Nick Ireland (Chair), Richard Biggs (Vice-Chair), Jon Andrews, Shane Bartlett, Matt Bell, Simon Clifford, Steve Robinson, Clare Sutton, Gill Taylor and Ben Wilson

Chief Executive: Catherine Howe, County Hall, Dorchester, Dorset.

For more information about this agenda please contact Democratic Services
Meeting Contact 01305 252234 - kate.critchel@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

Members of the public are welcome to attend this meeting, apart from any items listed in the exempt part of this agenda. If you would like to attend this meeting and have any specific requirements please contact the Democratic & Governance Services Officer named above.

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Agenda

Page No

1. APOLOGIES

To receive any apologies for absence.

2. MINUTES 7 - 20

To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 23 June 2026.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

To disclose any pecuniary, other registrable or non-registrable interest as set out in the adopted Code of Conduct. In making their disclosure councillors are asked to state the agenda item, the nature of the interest and any action they propose to take as part of their declaration.

If required, further advice should be sought from the Monitoring Officer in advance of the meeting.

4. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Representatives of town or parish councils and members of the public who live, work, or represent an organisation within the Dorset Council area are welcome to submit either 1 question or 1 statement for each meeting. You are welcome to attend the meeting in person or via MS Teams to read out your question and to receive the response. If you submit a statement for the committee this will be circulated to all members of the committee in advance of the meeting as a supplement to the agenda and appended to the minutes for the formal record but will not be read out at the meeting. The first 8 questions and the first 8 statements received from members of the public or organisations for each meeting will be accepted on a first come first served basis in accordance with the deadline set out below. Further information read Public Participation - Dorset Council

All submissions must be emailed in full to Kate.Critchel@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk by 8.30am on Thursday 23 July 2026.

When submitting your question or statement please note that:

- You can submit 1 question or 1 statement.
- a question may include a short pre-amble to set the context.
- It must be a single question, and any sub-divided questions will not be permitted.
- Each question will consist of no more than 450 words, and you will be given up to 3 minutes to present your question.
- when submitting a question please indicate who the question is for (e.g., the name of the committee or Portfolio Holder)
- Include your name, address, and contact details. Only your name will be published but we may need your other details to contact you about your question or statement in advance of the meeting.
- questions and statements received in line with the council's rules for public participation will be published as a supplement to the agenda.
- all questions, statements and responses will be published in full within the minutes of the meeting.

5. QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS

To receive questions submitted by councillors.

Councillors can submit up to two valid questions at each meeting and sub divided questions count towards this total. Questions and statements received will be published as a supplement to the agenda and all questions, statements and responses will be published in full within the minutes of the meeting.

The submissions must be emailed in full to kate.critchel@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk 8.30am on Thursday 23 July

2026.

Dorset Council Constitution – Procedure Rule 13

6. FORWARD PLAN 21 - 28

To note the Cabinet Forward Plan.

7. DORSET COUNCIL ANNUAL REPORT 2025 - 2026 29 - 66

To consider a report of the Leader of the Council.

8. DORSET LOCAL VISITOR ECONOMY PARTNERSHIP DESTINATION MANAGEMENT PLAN 67 - 102

To consider a report of the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Economic Growth & Strategic Assets.

9. SEND REFORM PLAN 103 - 222

To consider a report of the Cabinet Member for Children, Families & Education.

10. DORSET COUNCIL LOCAL PLAN 223 - 244

To consider a report of the Cabinet Member for Planning and Planning Enforcement.

11. DORSET HISTORY CENTRE - APPROVAL SOUGHT TO PROCEED WITH DEVELOPMENT OF CAPITAL PROJECT 245 - 254

To consider a report of the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Economic Growth & Strategic Assets.

12. PROCUREMENT - DORSET HIGHWAYS CONTRACTOR RESOURCE (LABOUR TOP UP) FRAMEWORK 255 - 258

To consider a report of the Cabinet Member for Place Services.

13. CRISIS AND RESILIENCE FUND 259 - 288

To consider a report of the Cabinet Member for Public Health, Prevention & Communities.

14. E-SCOOTER MICROMOBILITY RENTAL SERVICE 289 - 346

To consider a report of the Cabinet Member of Place Services.

15. EDUCATION, HEALTH AND CARE PLAN (EHCP) WORKING GROUP - FINAL REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS TO CABINET 347 - 372

To consider report of the Cabinet Member for Children, Families & Education.

16. YOUTH JUSTICE PLAN 373 - 446

To consider a report of the Cabinet Member for Children, Families & Education.

17. COOMBE HOUSE SCHOOL - FUTURE SITE OPTIONS 447 - 448

To consider a report of the Cabinet Member for Children, Families & Education.

The exempt appendices associated with this report are available at item 21 below.

18. SHAFTESBURY NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN 2019-2031 - FIRST REVIEW 449 - 636

To consider a report of the Cabinet Member for Planning and Planning Enforcement.

19. URGENT ITEMS

To consider any items of business which the Chairman has had prior notification and considers to be urgent pursuant to section 100B (4) b) of the Local Government Act 1972. The reason for the urgency shall be recorded in the minutes.

20. EXEMPT BUSINESS

To consider passing the following recommendation:

Recommendation

That in accordance with Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 to exclude the public from the meeting for the business specified in item(s) No 21 because it is likely that if members of the public were present there would be disclosure to them of exempt information as defined in paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of schedule 12A to the Act and the public interest in withholding the information outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information to the public.

The public and the press will be asked to leave the meeting whilst the item of business is considered. (Any live streaming will end at this juncture).

Reason for taking the item in private

Paragraph 3 - Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

21. Coombe House School - Future Site Options 637 - 1164

Para 3
Exempt appendices associated with item 17. “Coombe House School - Future Site Options” above.

The exempt report and appendices relating to “The Future Site Options” report to the Shareholder Committee for the Dorset Centre of Excellence – 15 June 2026

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Dorset Council

CABINET

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 23 JUNE 2026

Present: Cllrs Nick Ireland (Chair), Richard Biggs (Vice-Chair), Jon Andrews, Shane Bartlett, Matt Bell, Steve Robinson, Clare Sutton and Ben Wilson

Present remotely: Cllrs Gill Taylor

Apologies: Cllrs Simon Clifford

Also present: Cllr Piers Brown

Also present remotely: Cllr Beryl Ezzard, Cllr Louise Bown, Cllr Simon Christopher, Cllr Richard Crabb, Cllr Spencer Flower, Cllr Jill Haynes, Cllr Sally Holland, Cllr Jack Jeanes, Cllr Stella Jones, Cllr Paul Kimber, Cllr Cathy Lugg, Cllr David Morgan, Cllr David Northam, Cllr Andy Skeats, Cllr Andy Todd and Cllr Kate Wheller

Officers present (for all or part of the meeting):
Sean Cremer (Director - Resources (Section 151 Officer)), Kate Critchel (Senior Democratic & Governance Services Officer), Lisa Cotton (Interim Executive Director - Modernisation and Customer Delivery), Sam Crowe (Executive Director - Housing, Prevention and Communities), Paul Dempsey (Executive Director - Children's Services), Jen Furnell (Corporate Director for Education and Learning), Iain Sim (Interim Corporate Director for Housing), Catherine Howe (Chief Executive), Hannah Brown (Acting Head of Corporate Finance), Paul Scothern (Service Manager Capital Commissioning), Louis Wicks (Democratic Services Officer Apprentice) and Sarah Smith (Housing Strategy Lead)

Officers present remotely (for all or part of the meeting):
Steven Ford (Assistant Chief Executive)

14. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 19 May 2026 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

15. **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest to report.

16. **Public Participation**

There were two questions from the public. A copy of the full questions and the detailed responses are set out in Appendix 1 to these minutes.

17. **Questions from Councillors**

There were no questions from Councillors to report.

18. **Forward Plan**

The Cabinet Forward Plan for July was received and noted.

19. **Draft Outturn Report 2025/26**

The Leader of the Council presented the report, including, in his absence, a video introduction from the Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources. He set out the Council's draft outturn position for 2025/26, noting that, in simple terms, the Council had ended the year in a broadly balanced position, with a small underspend of £0.169 million. This was a notable milestone, as it represented the first underspend achieved since Dorset Council became a unitary authority.

However, the Leader cautioned that this positive headline figure should be viewed in context, as outlined in the report, with several major service areas continuing to experience underlying financial pressures. Members were asked to note the financial performance for the year ended 31 March 2026 and to approve the movement of the £0.169m surplus to the year end to general reserve.

It was proposed by Cllr N Ireland and seconded by Cllr J Andrews

Decision

(a) That the draft revenue and capital outturn and the financial performance for the year ended 31 March 2026, be noted.

(b) That the movement of the £0.169m surplus at the year end to general reserves be approved.

Reason for the decision

Although the report was primarily for noting the outturn position, Cabinet's approval was required for the transfer of the £0.169m surplus to general reserves.

While the report did not seek Cabinet approval of the outturn, the financial position at 31 March 2026 was critical in informing the next Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) update and the development of the 2027/28 and 2028/29 budget strategy, in line with the multi-year settlement announced in 2025/26.

In addition to reporting outturn, with the financial performance for the year materially complete, it was important for Cabinet to review the risks the organisation now faces and to consider areas where it wishes to make strategic investments and/or to repurpose and prioritise its reserves to facilitate these aims.

20. **Capital Programme Review**

The Leader of the Council presented a report on a review of the Capital Programme, which had been undertaken at the request of the Cabinet Member of Finance and Resources. He explained that the purpose of the review was to move away from an extensive list of aspirations and instead reshape the programme to focus on what the Council could realistically deliver within the year. That involved right sizing the programme to reflect organisational capacity and ensure that all capital investment proposals were supported by robust business cases. The report set out in detail how this approach would be implemented.

It was proposed by Cllr N Ireland and seconded by Cllr S Robinson

Recommendation to Full Council

(a) That the new structured approval framework for capital projects, as outlined in Appendix A of the report to Cabinet of 23 June 2026, be approved.

(b) That a fundamental reset of the capital programme, including removal of legacy, stalled, and inactive schemes, be endorsed.

(c) That the “Standing items” to be included in the capital programme, as shown in Appendix B of the report, be approved.

(d) That the revised “Approved capital schemes” to be included in the capital programme, as shown in Appendix of the report, be approved.

(e) That the increase to the Capital Contingency budget from £2m to £10m, funded from the removal of stalled, low-value and legacy schemes with no recent activity, be approved.

Reason for the decision

The decision aimed to ensure the Capital Programme remains deliverable, affordable, and aligned with the Council’s priorities. Over time, the programme has grown in scale and complexity, making it more challenging to manage and increasing pressure on financial planning, borrowing, and governance arrangements.

The proposed reset introduced a more structured approach by removing inactive schemes, clarifying programme categories, and strengthening oversight and approvals. Alongside an increased Capital Contingency and revised approval framework to support more efficient delivery of smaller schemes, this would enable a more sustainable and well-managed programme that reflects organisational capacity and met audit and Member expectations.

21. **SEND Inclusion Hubs Phase 2**

The Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Economic Growth & Strategic Assets set out a report seeking approval and delegated authority to proceed with an additional six inclusion Hub projects in mainstream schools as part of the Council’s Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Capital Programme. The

details regarding these Phase 2 Inclusion Hubs was set out in the exempt business case attached to the report.

It was proposed by Cllr R Biggs and seconded by Cllr C Sutton

Decision

(a) That the capital budget of £4.3 million and funding allocations to projects set out in the Business Case within Appendix A of the Cabinet report dated 23 June 2026 be approved.

(b) That authority be delegated to the Executive Director, Economy and Environment in consultation with the Executive Director, Children's Services, Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Economic Growth and Strategic Assets and Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Education and, together with the Director Resources to procure and award contracts or release agreed funding to third parties delivering projects, for any Phase 2 Inclusion Hub as set out in the Business Case at Appendix A of this Cabinet report, provided the project costs are contained within the programme budget.

(c) That the High Needs Block revenue allocation of £2m per year recurrent, as set out in the Business Case within Appendix A of this Cabinet report dated 23 June 2026 be approved. This has been factored into Dorset's High Needs Block SEND reform modelling. This has been factored into Dorset's High needs Blocl SEND reform modelling.

Inclusion Hub places are approximately £19.5k per annum compared with an independent placement in the region of £64k per annum.

(d) That authority be delegated to the Executive Director, Children's Services, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Education and the Director, Resources to release high needs revenue funding to third parties operating any Phase 2 Inclusion Hub as set out in the Business Case at Appendix A of this Cabinet report, provided the funds are within the high needs revenue allocation.

Reason for the decision

1. To ensure that the projects can move forward at pace, to provide cost savings and improve the sufficiency of SEND placements and support.
2. To ensure appropriate oversight and authority is in place to allow projects to progress through from inception to delivery.
3. To evidence delivery against the SEND Local Reform Plan.

22. **Dorset Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy**

The Cabinet Member for Housing presented a report on the transition from Dorset Council's current Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy, adopted in July 2021 and due to expire in July 2026. She noted that, while work had begun on a

successor strategy the government published its national plan to end homelessness in December 2025, emphasising prevention, accountability, and measurable outcomes. Detailed guidance for local authorities followed in May 2026.

It was therefore proposed to maintain momentum by continuing delivery against existing objectives while developing a new strategy aligned with the national framework and guidance.

In response to a question, the Director for Assurance and Governance advised that failure to publish its successor strategy within the statutory timeframe would pose a legal risk. However, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) had indicated it would not take compliance action where strategies lapsed during the transition provided authorities were actively developing a replacement and intended to publish an updated action plan in autumn 2026.

Addressing a further question, the Interim Corporate Director for Housing noted that the central government toolkit for developing the action plan had been received late, but officers were now progressing this work and remained on track to meet the autumn deadline as set out in the report.

In terms of the timeline for the strategy, external advisors had been engaged to support the development of the strategy in order to meet the July 2027 due date.

In response to a question regarding the Overview Committee's involvement in respect of the development of the plan, the Cabinet Member was happy to discuss this matter with the appropriate Chair.

It was proposed by Cllr N Ireland and seconded by Cllr M Bell.

Decision

That the proposed approach to managing the transition from the current Dorset Council Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy to the next statutory strategy, be approved, and that authority be delegated to the Cabinet Member for Housing and the Executive Director of Housing, Communities and Prevention, to approve the updated interim Action Plan for publication in Autumn 2026.

Reason for decision

Developing our new Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy would provide excellent opportunities to further build upon and expand our Prevention and Communities agenda as part of the newly formed Housing, Communities and Prevention Directorate.

23. **Aspire Adoption Annual Report 2025-26**

Before presenting the report, the Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Education acknowledged the distress caused by the Preston Davey case and its impact on the adoption community social care colleagues and others who followed

the national coverage. The Council would learn from the forthcoming children's safeguarding practise review and while such cases were rare, it remained vital to endeavour to prevent them.

The Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Education presented the annual report which provided a summary of the operational and strategic activity of Aspire Regional Adoption Agency during 2025/26.

It was proposed by Cllr C Sutton and seconded by Cllr A Robinson

Decision

That the activity and performance of Aspire Regional Adoption Agency in 2025/26, as set out in the annual report, be noted.

Reasons for decision

Cabinet was satisfied that adoption statutory duties that the agency discharges on behalf of Dorset Council and the Aspire Annual Report 25/26 satisfies that these activities were discharged to a high standard in the last year.

24. **Procurement of a replacement system for Parking enforcement and permits**

The Cabinet Member for Place Services set out a report seeking approval to proceed with the procurement and contract award of a replacement system for parking enforcement and permit management. He explained that the current system was approaching the end of its operational life and no longer fully met the service requirements or customer expectations.

He advised that the proposed procurement would ensure continuity of service, support future demand and enable the Council to take advantage of digital improvements in permit management and enforcement activity.

It was proposed by Cllr J Andrews and seconded by Cllr N Ireland

Decision

(a) That the procurement of this contract, with an anticipated maximum value of £700,000 and a maximum six-year contract duration, be approved.

(b) That the procurement of a new contract via the Crown Commercial Service Transport Technology Framework RM6347, Lot 3 (Parking Management), be approved.

(c) That authority be delegated to the Executive Director for Economy and Environment, in consultation with the Section 151 Officer, the Monitoring Officer, and the Cabinet Member for Place Services, to approve the final contract terms, award the proposed contract, and approve contract modifications throughout the term where these are compliant with legal advice.

Reason for the decision

To enable the continuity of an essential service via a compliant contract.
To improve efficiency, data integration and customer experience.
To comply with Key Decision governance when the £500k limit is exceeded.

25. **Dorset and BCP Council Local Transport Plan 2026 - 2041**

The Cabinet Member for Place Services presented the Local Transport Plan 2026 to 2041(LTP) and its initial first five-year Implementation Plan, seeking Full Council's approval to adopt it within the Council's strategy framework.

The LTP had also been considered by Place and Resources Overview Committee at its meeting on 4 June 2026.

The recommendation set out in the papers was proposed by Cllr J Andrews with the following addition at the end of recommendation 2, "subject to the equivalent approval by BCP Council". The amended recommendations was seconded by Cllr R Biggs.

Recommendation to Full Council

1. That the Local Transport Plan 2026 – 2041 be adopted

2. That authority be delegated to the Executive Director for Regeneration, Infrastructure and Growth, in consultation the Cabinet Member for Place Services, to approve any necessary minor non-material and non-policy altering changes that such do not materially alter the substance, objectives or strategic direction of the plan before it is published, subject to the equivalent approval by BCP Council.

3. That authority be delegated to the Executive Director for Regeneration, Infrastructure and Growth, in consultation the Cabinet Member for Place Services, to approve timely updates to the Implementation Plan, where the need arises, to take account of changes of national policy, local priorities or funding.

Reason for the recommendation

The Council had a statutory duty under the Transport Act 2000 to prepare and maintain a Local Transport Plan. The current plan (2011-2026) was approaching expiry, and adoption of the new LTP was required to ensure continued compliance.

26. **Dorset National Landscape Defra funding**

The Leader of the Council set out a report on the Dorset National Landscape Partnership, for which Dorset Council acted as the accountable body. The Partnership oversaw management of the designated landscape, covering over

45% of the county, and operated through a Board comprising of Council members and wider stakeholder representatives.

It was noted that the Partnership had received a Defra funding allocation of £1.77m for 2026-27, with indicative funding at the same level for the following two years. This included revenue, capital and farming in Protected Landscapes (FIPL) funding to support delivery of the national Landscape Management Plan.

It was proposed by Cllr N Ireland and seconded by Cllr J Andrews

Decision

(a) That Cabinet accepts (in principle) the funding offered by Defra as the accountable body for the Dorset National Landscape Partnership, subject to the contract/s being found acceptable by officers representing legal and financial interests.

(b) That Cabinet delegates the signing of contracts according to the Constitution's Scheme of Delegation

Reason for the decision

Funding offered supports the discharge of statutory duties and enables positive delivery in alignment with Council Plan priorities.

27. **Dorset Council response to consultation on permitted development rights for onshore wind turbines in England**

The Cabinet Member for Planning presented a report on the retrospective consultation response regarding the proposal introducing a new permitted development rights for small-scale, non-domestic wind turbines. The response, set out in the appendix of the report, supported the proposal and welcomed the streamlined planning process. A member webinar held in May helped to inform the response.

It was proposed by Cllr S Bartlett and seconded by Cllr J Andrews

Decision

That the response submitted (as set out in Appendix A of the report) to the recent Government consultation on the proposed introduction of a new permitted development right for small-scale, non-domestic wind turbines, be endorsed.

Reason for decision

The proposed new permitted development right would streamline the planning process for small-scale non-domestic wind turbines which met certain criteria.

The consultation response set out in Appendix A supported the principle of the new proposed permitted development right whilst also highlighting the importance

of a full assessment of impacts through a planning application for larger scale schemes.

28. **Urgent items**

There were no urgent items considered at the meeting.

29. **Exempt Business**

There was no exempt business considered at the meeting

30. **SEND Inclusion Hubs Phase 2**

The exempt appendix associated with agenda item 18 “SEND Inclusion Hubs Phase 2” was not discussed at the meeting. The report was considered in open business as set out in min no. 21 to these minutes.

Appendix 1 - Public Questions and responses

Duration of meeting: 6.30 - 7.30 pm

Chair

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Public Questions for Cabinet 23 June 2026

1. Question from Karen Tippens

I fully recognise Dorset Council's statutory duties to children with SEND and their families and support the objective of improving local provision and outcomes for children.

Over recent months I have submitted a number of Freedom of Information requests to Dorset Council regarding SEND Home to School Transport costs and the financial pressures associated with SEND provision.

The information disclosed shows that SEND transport expenditure has increased from approximately £10.5 million in 2022 to approximately £18.55 million in 2026, an increase of around 77% in four years.

The Council has confirmed that:

• approximately 95% of this expenditure relates to taxis and minibuses;

• Dorset currently operates 1,032 SEND transport routes;

• 362 of those routes are single-occupancy routes;

• the average annual route cost is approximately £16,373;

• the most expensive route costs £75,710 per year;

• one transport provider received over £1.7 million in a single year; and

• Personal Travel Budgets have averaged around £5,273 per pupil compared with approximately £16,000 for conventional transport arrangements.

The Cabinet report before members today states that Inclusion Hub places cost approximately £19,500 per annum compared with independent placements costing around £64,000 per annum and that the programme will generate savings by supporting more children closer to home.

However, the public report contains no explanation as to whether SEND transport costs have been included in the financial modelling, business case or cost-benefit analysis supporting these proposals, despite transport expenditure now approaching £18.5 million per year. It is therefore unclear from the published report whether the stated financial benefits fully reflect the wider costs of transporting pupils to and from SEND provision.

My question is therefore:

Can the Cabinet Member confirm whether SEND transport costs, taxi and minibus expenditure, and any anticipated transport savings have been included within the financial modelling and business case for the Inclusion Hub programme and, if so,

what level of transport savings are expected to arise from educating more children locally rather than transporting them to specialist placements further away?

Response of the Cabinet Member for Regeneration Economic Growth & Strategic Assets

The financial case for the Inclusion bases has been developed with consideration of the wider SEND system, including the significant pressures associated with home to school transport. While the published report focuses on direct education placement costs and savings, we expect that Inclusion bases will deliver wider benefits and cost avoidance, including a reduction in transport expenditure.

A key aim of the Inclusion base programme is to increase specialist provision within local communities so that more children and young people can access the support they need closer to home. This aligns with both Dorset Council's Belonging Strategy and the national SEND reform, which seeks to provide support locally and reduce the need for children to travel significant distances to access suitable provision.

Although it is not possible to quantify the level of transport savings that will be achieved at this stage, we expect that increasing local provision will reduce travel distances for many children and young people and, over time, reduce reliance on higher-cost transport arrangements. These benefits will emerge progressively as placements in the new bases are made.

2. Question from Chris Pike

On 2 June 2026, the Coastal Learning Partnership opened a public consultation proposing the closure of St George's CE Primary School in Langton Matravers, with pupils to be merged with St Mark's CE Primary School in Swanage. This proposal is presented as a response to falling pupil numbers across Purbeck.
However, despite repeated assurances from CLP that the consultation is open and undecided, the overwhelming view of parents, carers, and the wider Langton community is that the process is biased and predetermined. The consultation materials consistently assume that closure is the only viable solution, frame alternatives as unsustainable, use persuasive rather than neutral language, and position CLP's preferred outcome as both logical and inevitable. This is not the standard of impartiality expected in a statutory consultation affecting children, families, and the school that we consider at the heart of the village.

I would strongly encourage Dorset Council to read Langton Parish Council's consultation reply, which clearly sets out why the consultation appears predetermined and procedurally flawed.

On 7 June 2026, a formal letter was sent to CLP raising serious concerns about the

immediate and damaging consequences of the consultation. Parents highlighted that many families now believe the closure of St George's is already decided. As a result, a significant number are actively seeking places at Corfe Castle, St Marys, and Swanage Primary. Pre-school numbers for 2026/27 are also being affected. This is accelerating the very decline in pupil numbers that CLP claims the consultation is intended to address, and it places the schools stability, and children's wellbeing at risk.

The consultation documents repeatedly state that the purpose of the proposal is to secure a sustainable, high-quality educational future. Yet CLP has not assessed the likely parental response to closure, nor the impact on capacity in neighbouring schools. This omission is inexplicable and undermines the credibility of the process.

Ww as parents are deeply concerned about the emotional impact on our children, many of whom are now anxious and unsettled. These harms could have been mitigated had the consultation followed the Gunning Principles: that consultation must occur at a formative stage, provide sufficient information for meaningful response, allow adequate time, and ensure that responses are considered.

Given these issues, I am here this evening to express serious concern about the level of scrutiny and oversight currently applied to CLP.

Question

My question is this: Will Dorset Council commit to full and independent scrutiny of the CLP consultation process—given the serious concerns raised about bias, predetermined outcomes, and failure to meet the Gunning Principles—and will the Council commit to leading a genuinely collaborative, Purbeck-wide approach to falling pupil numbers?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Children, Families & Education

The consultation regarding the proposed merger of St George's and St Mark's CE Primary Schools is led by the Coastal Learning Partnership, the multi-academy trust responsible for both schools.

The Trust has provided assurance within its published FAQs that this is a genuine and open consultation process. While the consultation document outlines the option that the Trust believes may best secure high-quality education for the future, no decision has been made. The Trust Board has committed to carefully consider all feedback received before determining whether to proceed with, amend, or halt the proposal.

Additional oversight is provided by the Department for Education (DfE) as any proposal of this nature constitutes a significant change and therefore requires their

formal approval. Any application can only be submitted once the consultation has concluded and must include a full account of the consultation outcomes.
The Local Authority does not have the remit to carry out a full and independent scrutiny of the process. Therefore, concerns regarding the consultation process need to be raised with the Coastal Learning Partnership or escalated direct to the DfE.

Local Authorities have a statutory responsibility to ensure sufficient school places for every child of compulsory school age and work collaboratively with school leaders to balance supply and demand in line with changing demographics locally.
There are other areas of Dorset as well as Purbeck where falling pupil numbers is proving challenging for local schools. Dorset Council works with schools to support them to remain viable in ways such as reducing Published Admission Numbers (PAN) and restructuring staff teams to align with reduced numbers. Both schools have already taken actions to manage the impact of falling numbers, including reducing the number of classes and introducing more mixed age teaching. However, the Coastal Learning Partnership has concluded that these actions have not sufficiently addressed the financial and organisational pressures facing the schools. As a result, they are now exploring further options, as set out in the consultation document.

As outlined in Dorset Council's statement within the consultation, we support the need for this process. We encourage all members of the community to engage fully so that final decisions are informed by a broad and representative range of views. We continue to work closely with the Coastal Learning Partnership and the Salisbury Diocesan Board of Education throughout this process.

The Cabinet Forward Plan - August to November 2026
(Publication date – 4 AUGUST 2026)

Explanatory Note:
This Forward Plan contains future items to be considered by the Cabinet and Council. It is published 28 days before the next meeting of the Committee. The plan includes items for the meeting including key decisions. Each item shows if it is 'open' to the public or to be considered in a private part of the meeting.

Definition of Key Decisions
Key decisions are defined in Dorset Council's Constitution as decisions of the Cabinet which are likely to -

a) to result in the relevant local authority incurring expenditure which is, or the making of savings which are, significant having regard to the relevant local authority's budget for the service or function to which the decision relates (***Thresholds - £500k***); or
b) to be significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more wards or electoral divisions in the area of the relevant local authority."

In determining the meaning of *"significant"* for these purposes the Council will have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State in accordance with section 9Q of the Local Government Act 2000 Act. Officers will consult with lead members to determine significance and sensitivity.

Cabinet Members and Portfolios 2026/27

Nick Ireland	Leader and Cabinet Member for Climate, Communications, Performance & Safeguarding
Richard Biggs	Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Economic Growth & Strategic Assets
Jon Andrews	Place Services
Shane Bartlett	Planning
Simon Clifford	Resources& Finance
Matt Bell	Public Health, Prevention & Communities
Steve Robinson	Adult Social Care & Health
Clare Sutton	Children, Families & Education
Gill Taylor	Housing & Homelessness
Ben Wilson	Transformation, Customer & Workforce

Subject / Decision	Decision Maker	Date the Decision is Due	Other Committee(s) consulted and Date of meeting(s)	Portfolio Holder	Officer Contact
2026					
September					
July 2026 (period 4) financial management report 26/27 **Key Decision** - No **Public Access** - **Open** To consider the Period 4 financial management report.	**Decision Maker Cabinet**	**Decision Date 8 Sep 2026**		Cabinet Member for Resources and Finance	*Sean Cremer, Director - Resources (Section 151 Officer) sean.cremer@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk, Sian Hedger, Deputy s151 Officer sian.hedger@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk Director - Resources (Section 151 Officer)*
October 2026					
Review of Financial Assessment and Care Contributions Policy **Key Decision** - Yes **Public Access** - **Open** The policy was due to be reviewed and to update the policy in line with some legal challenges to the Care Act 2014 since its implementation. In doing so we have also amalgamated the Financial Assessment and Care Contributions policy and the Deferred Payment Agreement Policy and the two impact significantly on each other.	**Decision Maker Cabinet**	**Decision Date 6 Oct 2026**	People and Health Overview Committee 21 Sep 2026	Cabinet Member for Resources and Finance, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care & Health, Leader and Cabinet Member for Climate, Communications, Performance & Safeguarding	*Nicola Fowler, Financial Assessments Team Manager nicola.fowler@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk Director - Resources (Section 151 Officer)*

Subject / Decision	Decision Maker	Date the Decision is Due	Other Committee(s) consulted and Date of meeting(s)	Portfolio Holder	Officer Contact
Dorset Safeguarding Children Partnership Annual Report **Key Decision** - Yes **Public Access** - **Open** This is the Dorset Safeguarding Children Partnership's Annual Report 25/26 detailing the Partnership's activity from April 2025-March 2026 and is for Cabinet's information.	**Decision Maker Cabinet**	**Decision Date 6 Oct 2026**		Cabinet Member for Children, Families & Education	*Megan Cameron-Brown, Head of Quality Assurance and Partnerships megan.cameron-brown@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk* *Executive Director - Children's Services (Paul Dempsey)*
Household collection of plastic film and flexible packaging **Key Decision** - Yes **Public Access** - **Open** To set out the legal requirements, operational, financial and environmental considerations associated with the statutory requirement to collect plastic film and flexible packaging from April 2027, and to seek approval to proceed with implementation.	**Decision Maker Cabinet**	**Decision Date 6 Oct 2026**		Cabinet Member for Place Services	*Louise Bryant, Service Development Manager louise.bryant@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk, Lisa Mounty, Service Development Manager lisa.mounty@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk* *Executive Director - Economy and Environment (Jan Britton)*
Void Policy - Housing Solutions **Key Decision** - No **Public Access** - **Open** This policy has been developed to provide an oversight of the requirements in ensuring that vacated units of temporary accommodation are inspected and compliant in a timely manner in order to be relet.	**Decision Maker Cabinet**	**Decision Date 6 Oct 2026**		Cabinet Member for Housing and Homelessness	*Sharon Attwater, Head of Housing sharon.attwater@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk* *Executive Director - Housing, Prevention and Communities (Sam Crowe)*

Subject / Decision	Decision Maker	Date the Decision is Due	Other Committee(s) consulted and Date of meeting(s)	Portfolio Holder	Officer Contact
Placement Policy - Housing Solutions **Key Decision** - No **Public Access** - **Open** This policy provides the oversight regarding factors that need to be taken into consideration when securing temporary accommodation for households.	**Decision Maker Cabinet**	**Decision Date 6 Oct 2026**		Cabinet Member for Housing and Homelessness	*Sharon Attwater, Head of Housing sharon.attwater@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk Executive Director - Housing, Prevention and Communities (Sam Crowe)*
Parking Review and Strategy **Key Decision** - Yes **Public Access** - **Part exempt** To consider the Parking Strategy for Dorset Council.	**Decision Maker Cabinet**	**Decision Date 6 Oct 2026**	Place and Resources Overview Committee 9 Jul 2026	Cabinet Member for Place Services	*David Rosselli, Transport & Parking Strategy Lead david.rosselli@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk, Jack Wiltshire, Corporate Director for Highways and Engineering jack.wiltshire@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk Executive Director - Economy and Environment (Jan Britton)*
Dorset Community Safety Plan 2026 - 2029 **Key Decision** - Yes **Public Access** - **Open** New statutory three-year community safety plan for the Dorset Council area. The plan has been written and agreed by the Council and partners through the Dorset Community Safety Partnership and now requires formal adoption by Dorset Council.	**Decision Maker Dorset Council**	**Decision Date 22 Oct 2026**	Cabinet 6 Oct 2026 People and Health Overview Committee 21 Sep 2026	Cabinet Member for Housing and Homelessness	*Andy Frost, Service Manager for Community Safety andy.frost@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk Executive Director - Housing, Prevention and Communities (Sam Crowe)*

Subject / Decision	Decision Maker	Date the Decision is Due	Other Committee(s) consulted and Date of meeting(s)	Portfolio Holder	Officer Contact
November 2026					
Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) **Key Decision** - Yes **Public Access** - **Open** To consider the adoption of the Rights of Way Improvement Plan	**Decision Maker Cabinet**	**Decision Date 10 Nov 2026**	Place and Resources Overview Committee	Cabinet Member for Place Services	*Russell Goff, Senior Ranger russell.goff@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk* *Executive Director - Economy and Environment (Jan Britton)*
September 2026 (period 6) financial management report 26/27 **Key Decision** - No **Public Access** - **Open** To consider the period 6 financial management report 2026/27.	**Decision Maker Cabinet**	**Decision Date 10 Nov 2026**		Cabinet Member for Resources and Finance	*Sean Cremer, Director - Resources (Section 151 Officer) sean.cremer@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk, Sian Hedger, Deputy s151 Officer sian.hedger@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk* *Director - Resources (Section 151 Officer)*
Crisis and Resilience Fund **Key Decision** - Yes **Public Access** - **Open** The policy to back up the Crisis and Resilience Fund Governance.	**Decision Maker Cabinet**	**Decision Date 10 Nov 2026**		Cabinet Member for Public Health, Prevention & Communities	*Laura Cornette, Business Partner - Communities and Partnerships Laura.cornette@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk* *Executive Director - Modernisation and Customer Delivery (Lisa Cotton)*
December 2026					

Subject / Decision	Decision Maker	Date the Decision is Due	Other Committee(s) consulted and Date of meeting(s)	Portfolio Holder	Officer Contact
Midyear performance update **Key Decision** - No **Public Access** - **Open** To provide an update on mid-year progress in council plan delivery and broader organisational health.	**Decision Maker** **Cabinet**	**Decision Date** **8 Dec 2026**		Leader and Cabinet Member for Climate, Communications, Performance & Safeguarding	*Liz Crocker, Head of Strategy* *liz.crocker@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk, Chris Heighway, Performance and Analytics Team Manager* *chris.heighway@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk* *Chief Executive*
February 2027					
December 2026 Quarter 3 financial management plan 2026/2027 **Key Decision** - No **Public Access** - **Open** To consider the Quarter 3 financial management plan 2026/27.	**Decision Maker** **Cabinet**	**Decision Date** **2 Feb 2027**		Cabinet Member for Resources and Finance	*Sean Cremer, Director - Resources (Section 151 Officer)* *sean.cremer@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk, Sian Hedger, Deputy s151 Officer* *sian.hedger@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk* *Director - Resources (Section 151 Officer)*
Budget & Medium-term financial plan strategy report (MTFP) **Key Decision** - Yes **Public Access** - **Open** To consider the medium Term Financial (MTFP) and budget strategy.	**Decision Maker** **Dorset Council**	**Decision Date** **11 Feb 2027**	Cabinet 2 Feb 2027	Cabinet Member for Resources and Finance	*Sean Cremer, Director - Resources (Section 151 Officer)* *sean.cremer@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk, Sian Hedger, Deputy s151 Officer* *sian.hedger@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk* *Executive Director, Corporate Development - Section 151 Officer*

Private/Exempt Items for Decision
Each item in the plan above marked as 'private' will refer to one of the following paragraphs.

1. Information relating to any individual.
2. Information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual.
3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).
4. Information relating to any consultations or negotiations, or contemplated consultations or negotiations, in connection with any labour relations matter arising between the authority or a Minister of the Crown and employees of, or office holders under, the authority.
5. Information in respect of which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained in legal proceedings.
6. Information which reveals that the shadow council proposes:-
   (a) to give under any enactment a notice under or by virtue of which requirements are imposed on a person; or
   (b) to make an order or direction under any enactment.
7. Information relating to any action taken or to be taken in connection with the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime.

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Cabinet
28 July 2026
Dorset Council Annual Report 2025/26
For Decision

Cabinet Member:
Cllr N Ireland, Leader, Climate, Performance, Communications and Safeguarding

Local Councillor(s):

Senior Leadership Team:
S Ford - Assistant Chief Executive

Report author and job title: Liz Crocker, Head of Strategy
Email: liz.crocker@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

Statutory Authority:

Report status: Public (the exemption paragraph is N/A)

1. Executive summary

1.1 Dorset Council's Annual Report 2025–2026 provides a clear and accessible summary of the council's performance over the period April 2025 to March 2026. It sets out the progress made in delivering the Council Plan (2024–2029), which focuses on four priorities: providing high-quality and affordable housing, growing the economy, supporting communities for all, and responding to the climate and nature crisis.

1.2 The council plan was based around administration priorities and extensive community engagement that created a set of ambitions designed to stretch the organisation over and above its ongoing commitment to delivering the very best statutory services.

1.3 The report highlights strong progress across these priorities. This includes effective early help services for children and families, reduced reliance on temporary accommodation, accelerated support for economic growth and business development, and ongoing action to reduce carbon emissions and support nature recovery.

1.4 The council continues to deliver essential frontline services, including waste and recycling, highways, planning, libraries, regulatory services and customer support, maintaining strong performance and responding effectively to

increased demand and emergency events. Alongside this, the council is progressing an ambitious programme of change and transformation to drive continuous service improvement, strengthen support for communities and enhance delivery of its strategic priorities.

1.5 The report also reflects the context in which the council operates. Like many local authorities across the country, Dorset Council continues to face significant pressures, including rising demand for services, particularly in social care and housing, alongside wider financial constraints. Despite this, the council has maintained strong performance, delivered key services for residents, and achieved a balanced financial position.

1.6 Importantly, the Annual Report provides a balanced view of performance. Alongside achievements, it identifies areas of continued focus, such as improving educational attainment, increasing the supply of affordable housing, strengthening economic productivity, and maintaining momentum in delivering long-term climate and infrastructure ambitions.

1.7 The report forms part of the council's commitment to transparency and accountability, giving residents, partners and stakeholders a clear overview of what has been delivered over the past year and how the council is responding to challenges.

2. Recommendation(s)

2.1 That Cabinet:

- Notes and approves the Dorset Council Annual Report 2025–2026.

3. Reason for the recommendation(s)

3.1 The annual report provides a comprehensive summary of the council's performance and achievements over the past year and demonstrates delivery against the Council Plan priorities. Approval ensures the report can be formally published as part of the council's commitment to transparency, accountability and effective governance.

4. The report

4.1 The annual report 2025–2026 brings together performance information reported throughout the year and presents a single, coherent narrative of progress, impact and areas requiring further focus.

4.2 It highlights delivery across all four Council Plan priorities:

- Provide high-quality and affordable housing
- Growing our economy
- Communities for all
- Respond to the climate and nature crisis

4.3 Alongside progress against the council's strategic priorities, the report highlights the continued delivery of a broad range of essential services that residents rely on every day, including waste and recycling, highways maintenance, planning, libraries, regulatory services and customer support. These services continue to perform strongly and provide vital support to communities across the county. The report also recognises the council's ongoing programme of change and transformation, which is driving service improvement, strengthening organisational resilience and capacity, and enabling the council to deliver more effective, efficient and sustainable services in support of its long-term priorities.

4.4 The report also includes case studies, performance data, and examples of partnership working, demonstrating the collective effort of councillors, employees, partners and communities.

4.5 Performance information is drawn from the council's established performance management framework, including quarterly reporting to the People and Health Scrutiny Committee and the Place and Resources Scrutiny Committee, ensuring structured quarterly oversight and a commitment to continuous improvement.

4.6 Performance is also reported through publicly available dashboards, including the Council Plan performance dashboard, which provides a quarterly view of progress against priorities, alongside wider dashboards covering broader service performance.

4.7 The report is intended to be read alongside other performance and assurance documents, risk reporting updates, including quarterly performance reports, financial outturn reporting, and inspection outcomes. Links to other reports are included in the background papers section of the report.

Annual highlights 2025/26

4.8 Overall, performance during 2025/26 was strong, with positive progress delivered across all four council plan priorities despite continued service demand and financial pressures. The council maintained a strong focus on prevention, partnership working and delivering value for residents, while continuing to provide a wide range of essential services.

4.9 Under providing high-quality and affordable housing, Dorset continued to perform above the national average in preventing homelessness and

supporting residents to remain in their homes. Reliance on temporary accommodation reduced during the year, supported accommodation schemes were expanded, and the council's Empty Homes Strategy successfully brought long-term empty properties back into use.

4.10 Under growing the economy, the council delivered the Dorset Economic Growth Strategy, established a new delivery company for Dorset Innovation Park, secured significant external investment, and continued to support local businesses through Growth Hub programmes, mentoring and Shared Prosperity Fund investment. Our focus on Weymouth 2040 continues with a strong focus on improved economic outcomes for our residents and businesses. These initiatives have strengthened the foundations for longer-term economic growth, investment and job creation.

4.11 Developing communities for all, strong outcomes were delivered for children, families and vulnerable residents. Early help services continued to demonstrate positive impact, supporting families at an earlier stage and reducing demand on more intensive services. Care leaver outcomes exceeded targets, more residents were supported to live independently, and health and wellbeing programmes continued to deliver positive outcomes. Dorset also secured £20m of Pride in Place funding and strengthened community engagement through locality-based and partnership approaches.

4.12 As part of efforts in responding to the climate and nature crisis, there was strong progress in reducing the carbon emissions of the council and Dorset, expanding electric vehicle infrastructure, increasing renewable energy generation and supporting nature recovery. Significant partnership working also delivered programmes such as Switch Together Dorset (solar panels), strong progress in the Farming in Protected Landscape scheme and a successful energy saving campaign called Home Habitats was also delivered. Dorset maintained one of the highest recycling rates in England, expanded support through the Low Carbon Dorset programme and Healthy Homes Dorset programmes and adopted the Dorset Local Nature Recovery Strategy to support long-term environmental improvement.

4.13 Alongside delivery of the council plan priorities, several services achieved notable success during the year. Children's Services were rated Outstanding by Ofsted, Adult Social Care was assessed as Good by the Care Quality Commission, and Dorset Council's Building Control Service received national recognition as Local Authority Building Control Team of the Year. Dorset Council also won a national award for its climate leadership. While planning, highways, libraries and customer services maintained strong performance for residents.

4.14 Taken together, these achievements demonstrate strong overall performance during 2025/26, with the council continuing to deliver positive outcomes for residents while responding effectively to ongoing financial, demographic and legislative challenges.

Risk Management

4.15 During 2025/26, Dorset Council has significantly strengthened and embedded its risk management arrangements through the implementation of a comprehensive Enterprise Risk Management (ERM) Framework. This framework establishes a clear and consistent approach to identifying, assessing and managing risk across the organisation, explicitly aligning all risks with the council's strategic objectives, including delivery of the council plan and the provision of high-quality public services.

4.16 The ERM Framework defines how risk information is governed and flows through the organisation, ensuring that leadership and committee structures receive timely, accurate and relevant insight to support informed, risk-based decision-making. It also sets out the council's approach to risk appetite, providing clarity on the level of risk the organisation is prepared to accept in pursuit of its objectives, thereby strengthening organisational control while improving predictability of outcomes.

4.17 These arrangements have been embedded within the council's Strategic Performance and Risk Frameworks, bringing together performance, risk and assurance information into a coherent system of oversight. This has been supported by the introduction of clearly defined principal and strategic risks, enhanced governance arrangements, and the development of a corporate Risk Dashboard. The dashboard provides a central, accessible platform for recording, monitoring and reporting risk information, improving transparency and enabling more responsive, data-driven management outside of formal reporting cycles.

4.18 As a result of these improvements, the council has achieved full compliance with risk reporting requirements across the year, demonstrating strong organisational engagement and ensuring that risk information is both timely and robust.

4.19 Further progress has been made in strengthening the council's control environment and ensuring a more mature approach to risk management. This includes closer alignment between internal audit activity and the ERM Framework, enabling a more risk-informed and proportionate response to audit actions. By considering factors such as criticality, resourcing and organisational capacity, the council is better

positioned to prioritise and implement improvements that deliver the greatest impact.

4.20 Collectively, these developments have created stronger links between strategic planning, performance management and risk management, resulting in a more consistent, coordinated and effective approach across the organisation.

4.21 The council has also continued to respond proactively to emerging and external risks affecting Dorset's communities. During the year, services worked collaboratively with emergency responders and partners through the Local Resilience Forum to manage the impact of severe weather events and flooding, supporting residents, protecting infrastructure and maintaining service continuity. In addition, the council, working closely with health partners, responded to a public health incident involving an outbreak of meningitis.

4.22 Lessons learned from these events are being systematically captured and used to inform ongoing resilience planning and future mitigation activity, further strengthening the council's preparedness and adaptability in the face of evolving risks.

5. Alternative options considered

5.1 Do not produce an annual report; this would reduce the council's ability to remain transparent and provide timely feedback to residents and stakeholders and would also undermine its commitment to best value standards.

6. Legal considerations

6.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from this report. The publication of an Annual Report supports good governance and aligns with the council's responsibilities around transparency and accountability.

7. Financial implications

7.1 There are no direct financial implications associated with approving the Annual Report.

8. Natural environment, climate and ecology implications

8.1 There are no direct implications arising from this report.

8.2 However, the Annual Report demonstrates progress in responding to the climate and nature crisis, including reductions in emissions, investment in renewable energy, and actions to support nature recovery across Dorset.

9. Well-being and health implications

9.1 There are no direct implications arising from this decision.

9.2 The Annual Report highlights the council's role in supporting residents' health and wellbeing, including delivery of preventative services, support for independent living, and partnership working with health services to improve outcomes.

10. Other implications

10.1 No other implications have been identified.

11. Risk implications

11.1 Not applicable. The report presents information on past performance although it does highlights strengthened approaches to risk management.

12. Equalities

12.1 There are no direct equality, diversity or inclusion implications resulting from this report.

13. Appendices

13.1 Appendix A- Annual Report 2025/26

14. Background papers

- Dorset Council Strategic Performance Management Framework
- Dorset Council Risk Management Framework
- Council Plan dashboard
- Place and Resources Scrutiny dashboard
- People and Health Scrutiny dashboard
- Cabinet Mid-Year performance report 2025/26
- Ofsted - Dorset Council Children's Services SEND
- Care Quality Commission – Dorset Council Adult Social Care

15. Report sign-off

15.1 This report has been through the internal report clearance process and has been signed off by the Director for Assurance and Governance (Monitoring Officer), the Director for Resources (Section 151 Officer) and the appropriate Cabinet Member(s)

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Dorset Council

Working together | ambitious for **Dorset**



Dorset Council's Annual Performance Report

2025-26 Annual Report

Foreword

Leader of the Council



Nick Ireland
Leader of the Council

I am pleased to introduce Dorset Council's annual performance report, which sets out how we have delivered services over the past year and the progress we have made against our Council Plan priorities.

In December 2024, we set out our ambitious Council Plan, outlining our commitments to residents and partners across four key priorities to be delivered to 2029: providing high-quality and affordable housing; growing our economy; supporting communities for all; and responding to the climate and nature crisis. Over the past year, we have made good progress against each of these priorities.

This report is an important part of our commitment to transparency. It provides a clear overview of what we have achieved, where challenges remain, and how we will continue to use evidence to drive improvement. It highlights a range of shared achievements, reflecting the collective efforts of councillors, employees, partners, residents, volunteers, and businesses across our communities.

We are proud of what has been achieved this year, with plenty of optimism for the future, as we continue to work together to create a fairer, more prosperous, and more sustainable Dorset for current and future generations.

Perspective from the Chief Executive



Dr Catherine Howe
Chief Executive of Dorset Council

When I joined Dorset Council in August 2025, I was struck by the strength of its communities, the dedication of its workforce, and the shared ambition to create a fairer, more prosperous, more sustainable Dorset.

Since becoming a unitary authority in 2019, the council has achieved a great deal. We are now at an important point in that journey, focused on realising the full benefits of being a modern, sustainable unitary council that can deliver consistently for residents now and into the future.

This next phase focuses on modernising how we work - acting as one joined-up organisation, reducing complexity, strengthening collaboration, and focusing decisions and resources on the outcomes that matter most to Dorset's communities.

Over the past year, we have continued to embed our Council Plan priorities of housing, economic growth, strong communities, and responding to the climate and nature crisis. We have seen tangible progress in areas such as homelessness prevention, community support, and environmental action while recognising where we need to go further, particularly in speeding up housebuilding and delivering more consistently across the organisation.

A defining feature of this next phase is a stronger focus on working as one council and one system, bringing together services, partners and communities to tackle problems early and deliver shared results for lasting change.

I would like to thank our councillors, employees, partners and communities for their continued commitment and support.

Council Plan delivery

"Working together to create a fairer, more prosperous and more sustainable Dorset for current and future generations"

Our Council Plan (2024–2029) sets out four priorities focused on making a positive difference for residents, communities, and the environment. They are:

- Provide high-quality and affordable housing
- Grow our economy
- Communities for all
- Respond to the climate and nature crisis



Providing high quality and affordable housing

We want to make sure all residents have safe, affordable and good quality housing because it underpins the wellbeing and opportunity of our communities.

This includes:

- reducing homelessness and the need for temporary accommodation
- increasing the supply of affordable homes
- improving housing quality and accessibility
- working with our partners to get the best use from our land, housing and other properties



Target measures

- 30% reduction in the number of households in temporary accommodation over the next 5 years
- eradicate use of bed and breakfasts for family households over the next 5 years
- maintain annual homelessness prevention levels consistently higher than the national average
- achieve the desired balanced position of a smaller but sustainable temporary accommodation stock over the next 5 years
- deliver 450 new affordable homes every year through the housing association development programme
- bring forward new housing supply of 100 new accessible homes and 90 larger family homes per year at affordable rents
- implement approved new models of delivery to increase affordable housing supply, making best use of council assets
- deliver 100 new supported accommodation homes over the next 5 years, secured through grant funding and support from providers



What has gone well

We have made strong progress this year in helping residents to find and keep a home that is right for them, with a continued focus on preventing problems by acting early.

Dorset has performed consistently better than the national average[1] at preventing homelessness and helping people stay in their homes. This early help is reducing the need for more intensive support.

We are reducing reliance on temporary accommodation. Numbers have fallen by 9% compared to last year, with an ambition to achieve a 30% reduction over the term of the Council Plan. Use of bed and breakfast accommodation has also reduced overall, with fewer families having to use it.

Our new Empty Homes Strategy has resulted in 25 long-term empty properties being brought back into use over the year, with over 240 further cases actively being progressed.

Supported accommodation at West Farm in south Dorset has provided safe and stable housing for young people at risk of homelessness, with further schemes in development.

Taken together, these achievements reflect a strong and coordinated focus on prevention, partnership working and making best use of available housing, ensuring more residents have access to safe, secure and sustainable homes.

[1] Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government Live tables on homelessness. Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/live-tables-on-homelessness

Case study

The first 24/7 supported living scheme for 18 to 25 year-olds who are at risk of becoming homeless opened in November 2025, in partnership with new provider, Salvation Army Homes. West Farm is a six-bed temporary accommodation site providing a stable and safe environment for young adults so they can learn how to manage a home of their own and gain new life skills, which will benefit them long-term.



Councillor Gill Taylor, Cabinet Member for Housing and Homelessness, speaking at the opening ceremony at West Farm



Our areas of continued focus

While progress continues to be made in increasing the supply of affordable housing, delivery this year has fallen short of the annual target, with 323 homes completed against an ambition of 450.

In response, we are adjusting delivery timescales to recover this shortfall. The poor weather earlier this year hindered progress, so some developments are now expected to complete in 2026/27.

Despite this, the overall programme of new schemes remains strong. We continue to work closely with our housing association partners, supporting them to build more homes, and we have confidence in meeting our longer-term targets.

This position is further strengthened by the opening of the government's new Affordable Housing Programme, with partners actively preparing bids to secure funding for new social and affordable homes in Dorset. This will help us work together to deliver our housing goals.

As our delivery approach matures, we will deliver priority housing projects faster, including accessible homes, larger family homes and supported accommodation.

We are also exploring new ways to deliver additional affordable housing, such as large leasing arrangements with investors and making better use of smaller, more complex council sites. The council is committed to the expansion of supported and Extra Care housing opportunities across the area by 2029 and is actively working with a range of partners to achieve this.

Grow our economy

A strong economy underpins everything we aim to achieve. We will help businesses grow and support innovation, creating opportunities and helping people get good quality jobs.

We want to create a strong, sustainable local economy that:

- supports job creation
- increases productivity
- encourages entrepreneurship
- maximises Dorset's natural and economic strengths



Target measures

- narrow the Dorset to UK productivity gap by 5% by 2029
- generate over 2,000 jobs and over £500 million of private sector investment in renewable energy projects by 2029
- increase total visitor-related spend in Dorset by 5% by 2029
- by 2029, create 1,000 business start-up courses for 16 to 34-year olds to encourage young people into entrepreneurship
- support community-led masterplans in at least 70% of the coastal and market towns by 2029
- launch a new delivery company for the Dorset Innovation Park, creating 300 jobs by 2029



What has gone well

Good progress has been made this year in strengthening Dorset's economy, with a focus on supporting business growth, attracting investment and developing key sectors. The 2025 Economic Growth Strategy provides a clear long term plan to support growth and investment across Dorset.

The launch of a new delivery company for Dorset Innovation Park was a key milestone to help high value sectors, such as defence and clean energy, to grow faster. The company aims to create 300 jobs and reach a break-even budget by 2029. It has also helped secure Dorset's role in the South West Local Innovation Partnerships Fund, giving access to a share of £20 million to invest in high potential local innovation clusters.

Progress has also been made in exploring future opportunities through the Morwind offshore wind feasibility study, which is assessing the potential for renewable energy development and associated economic benefits. By positioning Dorset to take advantage of emerging clean energy sectors, the study supports longer-term ambitions for sustainable growth, investment and job creation.

This is complemented by the continued progress of major regeneration plans for Weymouth, which will help unlock new jobs, homes and opportunities, while supporting the long-term economic vitality of the area. These works included rebuilding sea walls, significant archaeological investigation and the strategic partnership with Willmott Dixon and Milligan.

Portland has also secured significant external investment, including £20 million government funding for the MEMO project, a major new visitor attraction and environmental education facility located in former stone quarries and mine tunnels. The project will create an immersive experience focused on biodiversity, evolution, and the Jurassic Coast, alongside a stonemasonry training centre. It is expected to generate significant economic benefits through job creation, skills development and increased year-round tourism.

Support for local businesses has remained strong, with over 700 businesses supported through Growth Hub programmes and 248 people taking part in start-up courses, contributing to progress towards the target of supporting 1,000 businesses by 2029.

Dorset Business Mentors marked its 20th year, having supported over 2,500 businesses since 2005 by connecting entrepreneurs with experienced mentors. This impact is reflected in local businesses like CoreFit Health, owned by Gemma Puzas, where mentoring has supported both professional and personal growth.

Over the past two years, UK Shared Prosperity Fund investment has supported more than 100 Dorset businesses across sectors including tourism, food, farming and manufacturing, helping them grow, create jobs, and improve productivity, including in rural areas.

Together, these achievements reflect a positive trajectory, with the building blocks in place to support long-term growth and opportunity across Dorset.



Our areas of continued focus

While Dorset continues to make progress in strengthening its economy, we know there is more to do to realise our full potential. Productivity levels remain below the national average, underlining the need for sustained focus on long-term growth, skills and investment.

Improving productivity is a complex, long-term challenge. It depends on workforce skills, business investment, infrastructure and wider national conditions. As a result, meaningful change will require consistent effort over several years, working closely with partners beyond the current Council Plan.

Whilst early enabling activity is underway, it will take continued effort to translate this into measurable outcomes over the coming years.

By maintaining a clear and sustained focus on these areas, we aim to improve productivity and deliver lasting economic benefits for Dorset's communities over time.

[2] Dorset Local Skills Improvement Plan (2025) Dorset LSIP Progress Report, June 2025. Available at: https://dorsetchamber.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/Dorset-LSIP-Progress-Report_June-2025.pdf
[3] Office for National Statistics Productivity measures. Available at: https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/economicoutputandproductivity/productivitymeasures

Case study

Dorset businesses identify digital skills as a key gap[2] The Weymouth Digital Skills Hub, funded through the Shared Prosperity Fund, piloted local, face-to-face training to help address this.

Hazel Hoskins from Maiden Castle Farm used skills from a two-day digital marketing masterclass (covering design, AI tools, and content planning) to promote the Sunflower Trail near Dorchester.

Over four months, the Hub supported 22 organisations, helping businesses build confidence and improve their digital marketing.



Hazel Hoskins from Maiden Castle Farm

Communities for all

Strong communities are at the heart of a good quality of life. We want to improve residents' lives at every stage by creating places where everyone can thrive, with accessible services and support to live well.

By strengthening community connections and making the most of public money and services, we will work differently with our communities to meet local needs and build a stronger, more inclusive Dorset.

We aim to support Dorset's communities to be places where people:

- feel safe and supported
- can access services locally
- have opportunities to thrive
- live healthy, independent lives



Target measures

- a joined-up model of locality working, delivering through prevention and partnership: measures to be agreed with local partners and linked back to our priorities and the work of the NHS, the Health & Wellbeing Board and the Integrated Care Partnership
- improve educational attainment by working through leadership in the education community: increase Dorset's Key Stage 2 results (55% in 2024) to be as good or better than the national average levels by 2029 (60% in 2024)
- transfer up to £500,000 a year of Dorset Council's apprenticeship levy to increase the number of apprenticeships offered by local businesses and organisations
- be the best Corporate Parent that we can for our children in care and care leavers. Improve levels of engagement in employment, education and training among our care leavers to 65% through provision of good, stable and consistent care and accommodation, good multi-agency wraparound support, and a sufficient number and range of opportunities
- seek internationally recognised accreditation as an 'age-friendly' county
- work specifically with those groups at higher risk, including supporting unpaid carers, those ageing without children and those ageing alone
- increase the number of age and disability friendly environments to enable people to stay in the homes they want for longer, reducing the proportion of people in traditional care settings, as well as creating all-age friendly environments, equally accessible by young parents with pushchairs as they are to older people with walkers or disabled people

What has gone well



This year has seen strong progress in supporting communities to thrive, with a continued focus on early help, inclusion and improving outcomes for residents. An important step this year was establishing a separate public health service for Dorset Council as part of a new directorate, Public Health and Prevention, alongside colleagues working in regulatory services such as environmental health, licensing and trading standards.

Support for children and young people remains a key strength. All families are offered a new birth visit, and over 90% of babies are seen face to face by a health visitor within 14 days of their birth. Families and children are receiving help earlier, closer to where they live, with only a small number (10.29%) needing further referrals, and most families (71%) reporting less conflict at home. This is supported by strong local partnership working and services provided through Family Hubs.

The Best Start in Life programme continues to deliver high-quality results, achieving a 5-star the National Portage Association accreditation for the fourth consecutive year.

Care leaver engagement in employment, education and training continues to exceed targets across all age groups, with 98% in suitable accommodation.

We are also seeing positive results in helping people to live independently and stay connected to their communities. With support, over 1,400 people have been able to stay in their own homes, while 192 working-age adults with learning disabilities or mental health needs have been supported into employment, training or volunteering. Since launching the new Adults' Prevention and Early Intervention Service, over 1,100 people have received early support, with 87% of needs met at first contact and most assessments (72%) starting within 2 days.

What has gone well



Health and wellbeing outcomes have strengthened, with over 4,900 residents supported through LiveWell Dorset, 5,008 NHS Health Checks, and over 2,100 adults supported through drug and alcohol treatment services, with results exceeding the national average[4].

In 2024/25, Dorset was one of only eight councils where over 5% of smokers successfully quit, supported by an innovative digital platform. We continue to seek new ways to reach the 30,000+ residents who still smoke. Quitting improves health, boosts the local economy, and reduces costs of social care. In Dorset, the negative impact of smoking is estimated at £139 million in lost productivity and £117 million on social care[5].

Dorset remains one of the safest areas in the country. Recent years have witnessed a reduction in local instances of both antisocial behaviour and violent crime. In addition, the levels of repeat offending against domestic abuse victims is currently at its lowest level for five years[6].

Partnership working and community engagement have strengthened. Dorset's membership of the UK Age-Friendly Network provides a clear approach to respond to Dorset's rapidly ageing population, while programmes such as Thriving Communities and Age Friendly Dorset and the relaunch of Shared Lives are strengthening participation, local networks and service design.

The Community Conversations programme has been established to shape place-based working and closer collaboration with town and parish councils, voluntary organisations and local partners.

We have strengthened the delivery structures for this work, including member oversight, a dedicated delivery team, and new capabilities in participation, policy design and strategic relationship management.

[4] Office for Health Improvement and Disparities Alcohol and drug misuse and treatment statistics. Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/alcohol-and-drug-misuse-and-treatment-statistics
[5] ASH Ready Reckoner. Available at: https://ashresources.shinyapps.io/ready_reckoner/
[6] In-house research based on Dorset Police data

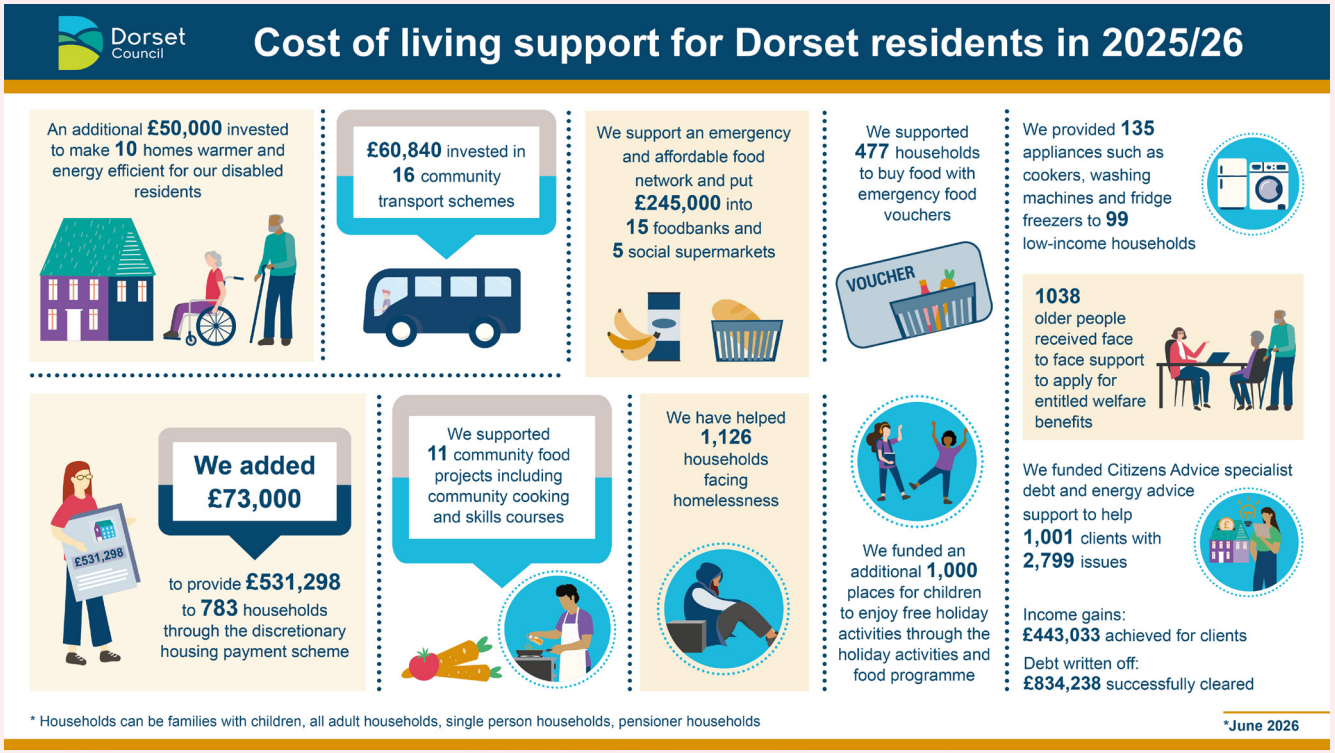
What has gone well



£20 million of Pride in Place funding was secured for Littlemoor and Broadwey in Weymouth, with strong community engagement shaping plans for local regeneration.

Alongside this, targeted support has continued to help residents manage the impact of rising living costs. Over 1,000 residents received specialist advice, generating £1.36 million in financial gains. Housing support helped 783 households through Discretionary Housing Payments and prevented homelessness for 155 households. Wider support reached over 3,200 households through food provision (with 477 households getting emergency food vouchers), while 1,038 older residents received benefits advice, unlocking £1.5 million in additional income.

Taken together, these achievements demonstrate a strong and growing focus on prevention, partnership working, and supporting people to live healthy, independent and fulfilling lives within their communities.



Our areas of continued focus



While strong progress continues to be made across many aspects of work in our communities, there are areas where sustained focus is needed to build on this progress.

Improving education outcomes remains a priority, with Key Stage 2 attainment still below the national average. We are working closely with schools and partners to drive long-term improvement, recognising that school performance is not wholly within the council's direct control and that sustained, system-wide effort will be required beyond the lifetime of this Council Plan[7].

We will also focus on delivering the national SEND reforms and improving outcomes for vulnerable children. By building on better school attendance and reduced exclusions, we aim to improve education participation and future opportunities.

We have made strong progress in supporting more children to stay safely with their families and in their communities, with increases in kinship care (+18%), more children returning home, and high levels of placement stability. We will build on this by further expanding stable, local homes and reducing reliance on moving children out of the area.

Our ambition to use the apprenticeship levy to support local skills and employment opportunities remains strong. We committed our target of £500,000 to local businesses in 2025/26; however, take-up of these funds has been slower than anticipated. For 2026/27, we have committed the full £500k again, and we will work closely with partners to raise awareness, remove barriers and ensure the funding is fully used to give the best benefit possible to local businesses and residents.

Work is continuing to develop a new Health and Wellbeing Strategy, supported by a clear plan that reflects the needs of Dorset's communities and supports us working together across services with partners.

We continue to work alongside health and community partners in the Neighbourhood Health Implementation Programme to move more support for people with health conditions into communities and invest more in prevention. New smoking legislation introduced in April 2026 creates further opportunities to reduce smoking rates.

As with many areas of community delivery, progress is influenced by the wider national context, particularly ongoing health service reform and changes within the NHS. We will continue to work with partners to navigate this evolving landscape and maintain momentum in getting improved results for residents.

Finally, in recognition of the vital role that effective community and public transport networks play in supporting people of all ages, this will be an increased area of focus. Transport is a key enabler across many of the Council Plan's priorities, underpinning community connection as well as access to opportunities, employment, and services.

[7] Department for Education Key stage 2 attainment.
Available at: https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/key-stage-2-attainment

Responding to the climate and nature crisis

Tackling the climate and nature crisis is essential to protect our environment, support strong communities and secure a sustainable future. While global in scale, many solutions are local. Dorset Council has an important role in reducing emissions, restoring nature and adapting to the impacts of climate change across our communities. Action now will protect our natural assets and support sustainable economic growth.

We are working to:

- reduce carbon emissions
- protect and recover nature
- adapt to climate risks
- promote sustainable living



Target measures

- deliver a revised carbon reduction target of 80% from 2019 baseline by 2030 to include:
  - Dorset Council fleet: transition all small vehicles to electric by 2030 and all large vehicles to use alternative low emission fuels by 2026 to reduce our fleet emissions by 70% by 2026
  - generate more of our own energy by installing an additional 5MW of solar PV on our estate by 2030
  - switch all our oil-fired heating systems to non-fossil fuel alternatives by 2028
  - reduce our emissions from staff travelling for business by at least 25% by 2029
  - ensure our services are resilient to climate change by having climate adaptation plans for each service by March 2026
- achieve a 65% recycling and composting rate by 2035 and ensure the optimum use of the recycling and composting services provided
- nature recovery target is for 30% of our land to be in positive management for nature by 2030. Other targets include:
  - 80% of our urban verges will be managed to enhance their value for nature by 2030 (currently 50%)
  - improve 300 miles of the Rights of Way network, making it more accessible to connect people's access to nature by 2030 (30 miles in last 10 years)
  - 70% of our county farms land will be managed using sustainable farming practices that balance food production and nature by 2030 (currently 5%)
  - 79,000 hectares of land Dorset contributes to nature recovery through the Nature Recovery Dorset network by 2030

What has gone well



Good progress has been made this year in delivering Dorset's ambitions to respond to the climate and nature crisis, with continued focus on reducing emissions, nature recovery and building long-term sustainability.

In the latest report (2024/25), the council reduced carbon emissions from its own buildings, energy use and vehicles by 35% compared to 2019/20. When including wider emissions, such as supply chains, this reduction is 31%. Due to reporting timelines, data for 2025/26 will be published in November 2026.

Progress towards carbon reduction is being driven by investment in fleet decarbonisation and renewable energy. All suitable diesel vehicles have been switched to hydrotreated vegetable oil (HVO), cutting emissions by up to 80%, and over a third of the council's small vehicle fleet is now electric. Dorset's EV charging network has also expanded, with 75 new sockets added in 2025/26, bringing the total to 261 council-sponsored chargers.

Work is also progressing to increase renewable energy generation across the council estate. A new solar programme will deliver an additional 2.2MW of capacity, alongside feasibility work on leased properties and wider renewable schemes, including solar and battery storage projects. A Local Area Energy Plan, being developed with partners and due in 2026, will provide a clear roadmap for Dorset's clean energy future.

The Low Carbon Dorset programme continues to support organisations to reduce energy costs and emissions. With UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UK SPF) funding, over 112 organisations received support, resulting in 34 projects and £450,000 in grant funding. Together these projects will have saved over 349 tonnes of carbon each year, generated over £1.2 million in local investment and delivered 2MW of solar capacity. Although external funding ended in March 2026, the programme is continuing with council support.

The Healthy Homes Dorset programme continues to take a preventative approach to cold, damp homes, supporting residents at risk of fuel poverty or poor health. This year, 141 households were supported through insulation, heating improvements and energy advice, helping reduce bills and improve living conditions. Strong delivery led to grant funding increasing from £807,000 to £1.4 million during 2025/26. A total of 53 homes in Dorset were upgraded, including heat pumps, solar panels and insulation measures[8]. A further £1.5 million has been secured for both 2026/27 and 2027/28.

[8] Dorset Council, Healthy Homes Dorset programme monitoring data (2025/26)

What has gone well



Community engagement in Dorset's climate response is also strengthening. A Citizens' Climate Panel was established to bring together residents to explore key challenges and shape future plans, supporting a more inclusive, community-led approach to issues such as flooding, coastal erosion and extreme weather.

Dorset continues to perform strongly in waste and recycling, with 59.4% of household waste reused, recycled or composted reflecting the continued efforts of residents, communities and services.

Progress is also being made in supporting nature recovery. Nearly 29% of council-managed land is now in positive management for nature, against a target of 30% by 2030. In addition, 62% of urban verges are managed to support wildlife, contributing to a target of 80% by 2030. This work is supported by the adoption of the Dorset Local Nature Recovery Strategy, providing a clear framework for coordinated action with partners in the years ahead.

Case study

Dorset Council has stepped up practical action to help nature recover. This work runs across many council services and major projects, from managing verges and parks for wildlife to supporting nature-friendly farming and development.

A strong example of this approach can be seen at Tarrant Keyneston, where Dorset Council has worked with local landowners to create a 100 hectare habitat bank under new Biodiversity Net Gain rules. Known as The Ferals, the former arable land is being transformed into species-rich grassland, scrub, woodland and wetland, creating space for wildlife to recover over the long term.



Conservation volunteers have been collecting monthly air samples at heathland sites in Dorset to pinpoint local pollution hotspots.



Our areas of continued focus

Dorset continues to make good progress in reducing emissions and supporting nature recovery. While some targets have proved more challenging to achieve within the original timescales, action is underway to build on progress made and accelerate delivery in key areas.

Work to expand the electric pool fleet is continuing, supporting our ambition to reduce staff travel emissions. While progress has been slower than planned, new approaches to fleet management are being developed, including more sustainable, efficient and data-driven delivery models, and increased sharing of vehicles across services.

While progress has been made in improving the Rights of Way network, delivery has been slower than planned. In response, we are reviewing our approach and priorities to help accelerate improvements and maximise impact. This will support our ambition to make it easier for residents and visitors to access and enjoy Dorset's natural environment.

Further feasibility work is planned to help complete the transition of the remaining estate heating systems to low-carbon, non-fossil fuel alternatives.

Progress in developing climate resilience plans has fallen behind the original timetable. To address this, a Climate Resilience Officer has been appointed to lead the development of a new Climate Adaptation Strategy, working with Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council and wider partners. This will build on the work from the Climate Citizens Panel to provide a clear framework to align activity, prioritise risks and coordinate action across the whole county.

We will also continue to build on the progress already made in nature recovery, maintaining focus on delivering the actions and ambitions set out in the council's own Biodiversity Duty Report and the county-wide Dorset Local Nature Recovery Strategy.

A year in Dorset

April '25

Dorset rated top nationally for waste recycling again



May '25

Children's Services receives 'outstanding' rating from Ofsted



June '25

New economic strategy launches to drive investment, innovation and high-value jobs for Dorset



July '25

Annual figures show hundreds of new affordable homes built in Dorset



Aug '25

Innovation and investment to tackle homelessness reduces the number of people in temporary accommodation by 50%



Sept '25

Increased funding to help Dorset businesses grow, bringing total to £6.4 million



A year in Dorset

Oct '25

Dorset is the UK's 100th local authority to become an Age Friendly community

Nov '25



£115 million Highways Capital Programme strategy unveiled

Dec '25

New Dorset Local Nature Recovery strategy adopted



Jan '26

Home Habitats campaign helps thousands of Dorset residents take first step to cut energy bills



Feb '26

£16.5 million project announced to bring more than 3,000 on-street charge points across Dorset, supporting the switch to greener travel



Mar '26

Council responds to record number of flood-damaged roads

How we performed



Alongside our Council Plan priorities, we deliver a wide range of services that residents use and value. This section provides a snapshot of performance, highlighting areas of strong delivery and the progress we are making.

This year, Dorset Council has continued to deliver high-quality services for residents, even in the face of increasing demand and significant pressures. Across the area, this has been reflected in both the everyday services people rely on, and in how the council responded when communities needed support most.

One of the clearest examples of strong service delivery has been the national recognition of Dorset Council's Children's Services, which were rated "Outstanding" by Ofsted. This reflects the quality of support provided to children, young people and families, with strong early help services, effective safeguarding, and a clear focus on ensuring children feel safe, supported and able to thrive.

A recent Care Quality Commission (CQC) inspection also rated our Adult Social Care Directorate as Good, highlighting that local authority staff demonstrated a strong commitment to prevention. Practice was recognised as both 'person centred and strengths based', and the inspection noted the 'unbeatable' level of support delivered through close-knit teams and highly collaborative working relationships.

Other frontline services have also been recognised nationally. Dorset Council's Building Control team was named Local Authority Building Control Team of the Year, highlighting the high standards, professionalism and customer focus that residents and local businesses can expect when interacting with the service. The team also successfully completed a rigorous inspection by the Building Safety Regulator (BSR) with no actions required under the Building Safety Act.

Throughout the year, the council has also demonstrated its ability to respond quickly and effectively during challenging situations, working alongside partner agencies as part of Dorset's Local Resilience Forum. During a period of severe winter weather and flooding, services worked alongside emergency responders and local communities to provide immediate support, protect infrastructure, and keep residents safe. Dorset experienced the second wettest January on record for the Wessex area, with around 190mm of rainfall (approximately 200% of the long-term average), culminating in Storm Chandra. The response included a range of road closures, temporary lights, liaison with flood wardens, gully clearance and jetting of drains, alongside supporting the evacuation and rehousing of residents who suffered flooded properties. Building on this, a £9.25 million recovery and resilience programme is now underway to repair damage and help communities better prepare for future extreme weather.

How we performed



Alongside these major events, day-to-day services have continued to perform strongly:

- Planning applications are being processed more efficiently than the national average[9]
- Waste and recycling services remain among the best performing in the country; in 2024/2025 Dorset Council was the 7th best performing council in England with a recycling and composting rate of 59.4%, compared to a national average of 43.8%[10]
- Our roads are in better-than-average condition when compared nationally[11]
- Our greenspaces continue to thrive; we welcomed over 1.6 million visitors to our four country parks and delivered educational content to thousands of school children and visitors on heaths, wildlife and our local environment
- Libraries continue to deliver high impact community services, with over 7,600 events and activities delivered to more than 100,000 attendees, alongside supporting over 117,000 residents with information, advice and signposting.

These achievements reflect the dedication of staff across the organisation, who continue to deliver for residents whether responding to emergencies, supporting vulnerable people, or providing reliable and effective services every day.

[9] Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government Planning applications statistics.
Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/planning-applications-statistics
[10] Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Local authority collected waste management: annual results.
Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/local-authority-collected-waste-management-annual-results
[11] Department for Transport (n.d) Road condition statistics: data tables (RDC).
Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/road-condition-statistics-data-tables-rdc

Spending your money wisely



In 2025/26, the council delivered services through a £417 million budget, balancing investment in priority areas with the need to manage significant financial pressures. This has been made more challenging by Dorset's unfavourable national funding settlement. The council receives very little direct government support, with Revenue Support Grant and Rural Services Delivery Grant together accounting for just 1.2% of the council's income. As a result, the council relies heavily on council tax and business rates, which fund 98.8% of the budget. Further pressures have arisen from funding reforms that have reduced recognition of the additional costs associated with delivering services in rural areas.

Alongside many councils across the country, Dorset is facing rising demand for services, particularly in adult social care, housing and support for children and families; alongside wider pressures such as inflation and increasing costs.

Despite these challenges, the council achieved a small underspend of £169,000 at year-end (its first recorded underspend as a unitary council) reflecting strong financial management in a very constrained funding environment.

A key part of managing the financial challenge has been taking a proactive approach to efficiency. The council has identified around £44 million in savings and efficiencies, including reducing third-party spend, improving how services are delivered, and making better use of resources.

At the same time, Dorset has secured significant additional funding to support local priorities. This includes over £8 million from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund[12] , £19.5 million in Levelling Up funding for Weymouth[13] , and nearly £100 million through Local Growth Fund programmes[14]. Together, this funding is unlocking new opportunities, attracting private investment, supporting economic growth and reducing pressure on core council budgets.

During 2025/26, the council delivered a capital programme totalling £75.7m, supporting investment across infrastructure, housing, schools and corporate assets. The programme continues to be heavily weighted towards highways, transport, and regeneration schemes.

Investment has also been significant in Children's Services, including SEND provision and school modernisation, alongside schemes supporting Adults and Housing. The programme is funded through a mix of external grants, borrowing and capital receipts, with a significant share coming from external funding, reducing the direct pressure on council resources while enabling delivery of priority projects. The programme is funded through a mix of external grants, borrowing and capital receipts, with a substantial proportion supported by external funding streams, helping to reduce the direct call on council resources while enabling delivery of priority projects.

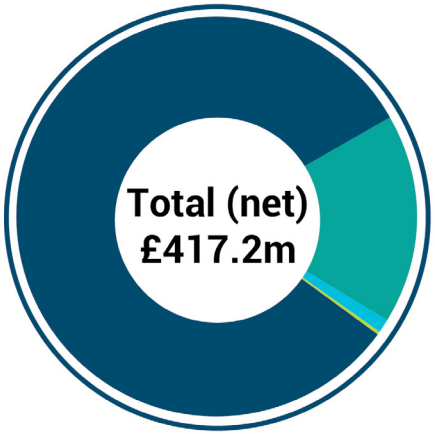
While the financial outlook remains challenging with ongoing pressures and increased demand, the focus remains clear: prioritising spending where it has the greatest impact, protecting essential services, and ensuring that every pound spent delivers value for Dorset's residents.

[12] Dorset Council UK Shared Prosperity Fund 2025 to 2026. Available at: https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/w/uk-shared-prosperity-fund-2025-to-2026
[13] Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government Dorset receives £19.5 million to regenerate Weymouth (Levelling Up Fund Round 2). Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/case-studies/dorset-receives-195-million-to-regenerate-weymouth-levelling-up-fund-2
[14] Dorset Local Enterprise Partnership Local Growth Fund. Available at: https://www.dorsetlep.co.uk/local-growth-fund

Spending your money wisely



2025/26 Dorset Council sources of funding



Council Tax £342m (82%)
The money we receive from our residents to pay for the services we provide

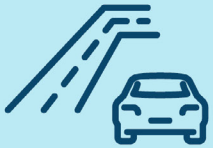
Retained Business Rates £70.2m (16.8%)
The money we receive from businesses such as shops, offices, hotels and factories to pay for the services we provide

New Homes Bonus £3.2m (0.8%)
Specific grant from central government

Revenue Support Grant £1.8m (0.4%)
The funding we receive from central government in the form of revenue support grant

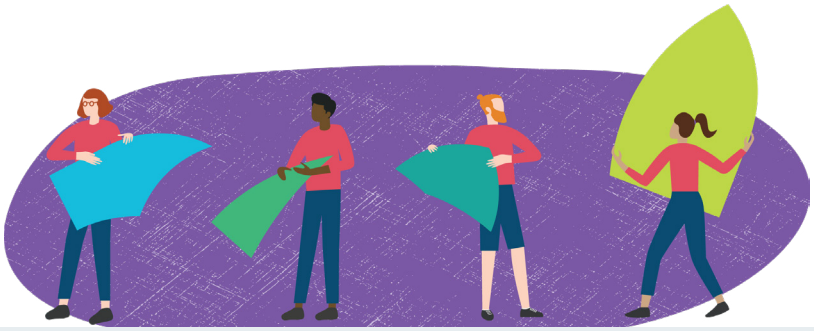
Spending your money wisely

2025/2026 - How will Dorset Council spend its money?

Adult social care	Children's social care	School travel & public transport	Street cleaning, waste collection & disposal	Education & learning
				
£159.6m	£72m	£41.1m	£35.4m	£15.3m
Environment & wellbeing	Customer services, libraries & archives	Housing	Planning	Highways & parking
				
£8.3m	£7.9m	£7.7m	£6.1m	£5.7m
Properties	Communities & Public Protection	Supporting businesses & creating jobs	Corporate Services & Central Finance *	
				Total budget £417.2m
£5.5m	£3.5m	£2.4m	£46.7m	

* Includes Revenues & Benefits, Finance, Procurement, Human Resources, IT, Legal & Democratic Services

Transforming how we work



Over the past year, Dorset Council has continued to transform how it delivers services, taking important steps towards becoming a more modern, sustainable and resident-focused organisation. This work has been central to how the council has responded to increasing demand and financial pressure, while improving outcomes for residents and communities.

Our transformation activity has focused on three priorities:

- making it easier for residents to access services and get the support they need
- improving how the council works behind the scenes to reduce cost and duplication
- building a more joined-up organisation that can deliver change at pace and scale

Over the past year, services have been redesigned to be simpler, more accessible, and more responsive to local needs. This has included improving digital access, reducing hand-offs between teams, and creating a more consistent experience across services.

The Customer Hub has been established to bring together services that respond to enquiries from residents, partners and communities in one place. This has included adult social care and prevention, libraries, school admissions, highways and planning.

This has:

- made it easier for residents to get help in one place
- improved response times and consistency
- reduced duplication across services which saves money

Alongside improvements to customer access, the council has streamlined how it operates behind the scenes.

The Business Support Hub has also been created, bringing together administrative and business support functions.

This has:

- supported better use of staff capacity
- enabled more consistent ways of working
- led to a reduction in duplication which saves money

Over the past year, the council has strengthened how transformation is led and delivered.

The Transformation Management Office (TMO) has been established, providing a single, coordinated approach to managing change. It has brought together previously separate activity, improving oversight, prioritisation and delivery.

This has ensured that:

- change activity has been better aligned to council priorities and financial plans
- resources have been focused on the areas of greatest impact
- progress and benefits have been tracked more consistently

This more disciplined approach has supported the delivery of change at pace while maintaining service stability.

The Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) programme has been launched to modernise how we work, bringing together processes and systems for finance, HR and procurement in a more joined-up way. Once in place, it will simplify everyday tasks and give teams better access to the information they need to work efficiently.



Looking ahead

Looking ahead, Dorset Council will continue to improve how we work in partnership and deliver for our residents. Our focus will remain firmly on what matters most to communities: delivering more homes; improving transport and connectivity; protecting our natural environment; strengthening the resilience of our coastal areas; creating sustainable economic opportunities and ensuring residents have a stronger voice in shaping their future.

This will require us to continue working in a coordinated and strategic way across the organisation and with our partners, embedding preventative approaches and making the best use of resources to deliver lasting outcomes. The examples and case studies throughout this report demonstrate the progress already being made, which we will continue to build on in the year ahead.

As national reforms move forward, the emerging Wessex devolution agenda presents a significant opportunity to strengthen local decision-making and deliver at scale. We will respond proactively to this evolving landscape, managing risks while actively pursuing opportunities to secure the best outcomes for Dorset.

We will also continue to strengthen Dorset's voice at a regional and national level. Through active engagement with government, MPs and partners and by contributing to the Wessex devolution agenda, we will seek to influence policy, remove barriers and unlock investment aligned to our priorities.



Further information

The links below provide further detail on our performance, priorities, and the frameworks that support delivery of the Council Plan:

- How are we performing
- Strategic Performance Management Framework
- Risk Management Framework
- Dorset Council Plan

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Recommendation to Cabinet 28 July 2026

From Place and Resources Overview Committee on 9 July 2026

Dorset Local Visitor Economy Partnership Destination Management Plan

For Decision

Cabinet Member and Portfolio:
Cllr R Biggs, Property & Assets and Economic Growth

Local Councillor(s):
All

Executive Director:
Jan Britton - Executive Director, Environment and Economy

Report author and job title:
Jon Bird, Service Manager, Economic Development and Skills
Email: jon.bird@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

Report Status: Public

Recommendation:

That Cabinet adopts the Dorset local Visitor Economy Partnership Destination Management Plan (DLVEPDM), and consider the following additional recommendations;

That:

(a) additional funding be added to the 2027/2028 budget to meet the aspirations within the plan

(b) the local offerings be recognised in the wording of the DLVEPDM action plan.

Appendices

The report of Place and Resources Overview Committee on 9 July 2026 including the following appendices:

1- Dorset Local Visitor Economy Partnership Destination Management Plan 2026-2035
2- Accessible Table of Climate Impacts and Table of Recommendations.

Background papers

Agenda for Place and Resources Overview Committee on Thursday, 9th July, 2026, 10.00 am - Dorset Council

Decisions for issue Dorset Local Visitor Economy Partnership - Dorset Council

2024_Dorset_Market_Segmentation_SPF_Research_Report_FINAL_51bbd205-30f5-4f1f-8ee5-2dccb2a6a224.pdf

Place and Resources Overview Committee

9 July 2026

Dorset Local Visitor Economy Partnership Destination Management Plan

For Recommendation to Cabinet

Cabinet Member:
Cllr R Biggs, Property & Assets and Economic Growth

Local Councillor(s): All

Senior Leadership Team:
J Britton - Executive Director, Regeneration, Infrastructure and Growth

Report author and job title:
Jon Bird, Service Manager, Economic Development and Skills
Email: jon.bird@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

Statutory Authority: Local Government Act 2000

Report status: Public Choose an item.

1. **Executive summary (maximum of 500 words)**

1.1 "Local Visitor Economy Partnership" (LVEP) is a designation created by VisitEngland. Being part of an LVEP gives Dorset access to VisitEngland support including data, expertise, and marketing opportunities.

1.2 Dorset Council Cabinet approved the creation of Dorset LVEP with Dorset Council as Accountable Body in July 2024, and Dorset LVEP achieved accreditation with VisitEngland in May 2025.

1.3 A condition of all LVEPs is the creation of a Destination Management Plan (DMP).

1.4 The Dorset LVEP DMP 2026-2035 sets out a plan to create a year-round destination: addressing seasonality, enhancing visitor spend, improving perceptions of Dorset, strengthening accessibility, embedding sustainability, and enabling sector-wide collaboration.

2. **Recommendation(s)**

2.1 That Place and Resources Overview Committee recommend the endorsement of the Dorset Local Visitor Economy Partnership Destination Management Plan 2026-2035 to Cabinet

3. Reason for the recommendation(s)

3.1 The Visitor Economy affects tourists, businesses, jobs, the cultural and heritage offer, transport and infrastructure. The Destination Management Plan, developed by businesses, stakeholders, and cultural partners, provides a roadmap for a more resilient, sustainable, and competitive visitor economy that benefits all parts of Dorset year-round.

4. Dorset LVEP Destination Management Plan

4.1 The Dorset DMP sets out a 10-year strategy to establish Dorset as a welcoming, vibrant, year-round visitor destination.

4.2 Developed through extensive consultation with businesses, stakeholders and cultural partners, the plan responds to key challenges including strong seasonality, rising operating costs, limited national awareness, and pressure on local infrastructure.

4.3 Dorset's visitor economy is a major economic driver, attracting over 22 million visitors annually and generating £1.66bn in direct spend, yet 36% of domestic overnight trips occur in July and August, demonstrating the need to spread demand more evenly across the year.

4.4 The DMP focuses on addressing seasonality, enhancing visitor spend, improving perceptions of Dorset, strengthening accessibility, embedding sustainability, and enabling sector-wide collaboration.

4.5 Growth opportunities centre on two high-potential year-round markets identified by recent government funded market segmentation research: the Nature & Culture segment and the Active & Mindful segment. By prioritising these audiences, Dorset can leverage its outstanding natural landscapes, rich heritage, cultural offer and variety of outdoor experiences.

4.6 Key actions include developing off-peak product, targeted marketing, experience mapping, and building cultural programming in quieter months. Improving data quality, empowering local businesses, and increasing Dorset's national profile are critical to unlocking long-term economic, environmental and community benefits.

4.7 Delivery of the DMP will rely on coordinated partnership across the industry, facilitated by the Local Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP).

4.8 This plan provides the roadmap for a more resilient, sustainable and competitive visitor economy that benefits all parts of Dorset throughout the year.

5. Alternative options considered

5.1 The only alternatives to a Destination Management Plan with broad stakeholder support are having a more narrowly focussed Plan involving fewer participants or not having a Plan at all. The value of any plan would be reduced if it was not broadly supported, and it would also likely not meet VisitEngland's LVEP requirements, potentially leading to Dorset losing its LVEP accreditation, and therefore losing access to government-funded support. Having no plan would result in the same outcomes

6. Legal considerations

6.1 The Destination Management Plan is non-statutory and creates no legally binding obligations on any parties.

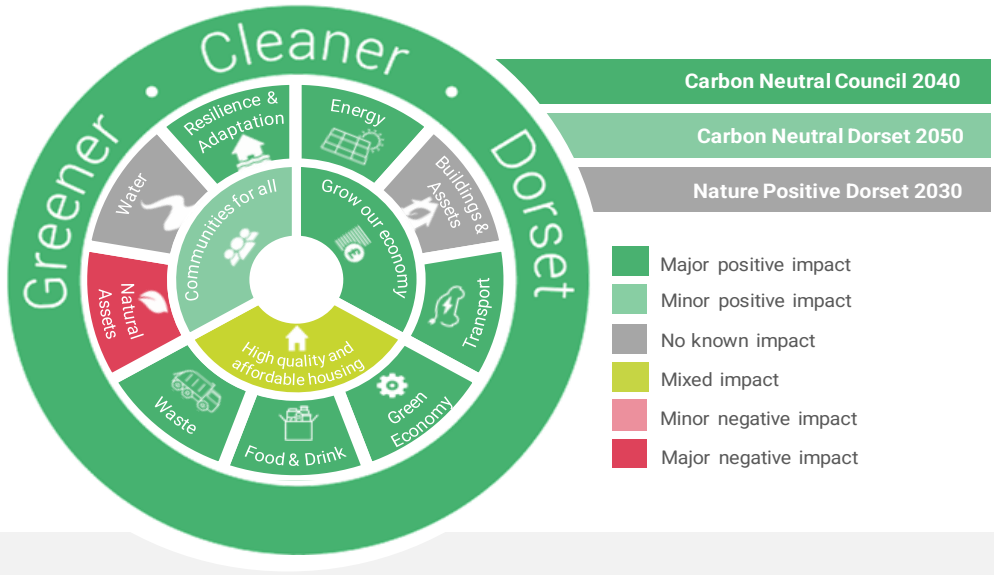
7. Financial implications

7.1 No additional Dorset Council resources are needed for the Plan. While no government funding has been offered to the LVEP, Dorset has already benefitted from non-financial support from VisitEngland due to it having an established LVEP. Having a satisfactory Destination Management Plan in place is a requisite of all LVEPs.

8. Natural environment, climate & ecology implications

8.1 The visitor economy has a significant impact on Carbon emissions and the environment. Focus area five of the Plan is all about sustainability and regenerative tourism. This aligns with Dorset Council's ambitions in the natural environment, climate, and ecology strategy. The Climate wheel shows generally positive impacts and no negative impacts:

Local Visitor Economy Partnership Destination Management



Quantitative Impact on CEE targets (if known)		
	Unit	Number of units (+/-)
2030 - Natural asset extent & condition	Ha	0
2040 - Operational Emissions	CO_2 (tonnes)	

9. Well-being and health implications

9.1 The Plan places particular focus on the *Nature & Culture* and *Active & Mindful* market segments, both of which encourage access to greenspace and exercise, which is known to be beneficial for physical and mental health.

10. Risk implications

10.1 HAVING CONSIDERED: the risks associated with this decision; the level of risk has been identified as:

Current Risk: LOW

Residual Risk: LOW

11. Equalities

11.1 An EQIA screening was conducted as part of approval for the LVEP. “accessibility and welcome” is Focus Area 4 of the Plan, which will have positive implications for people with disabilities and mobility challenges. Improvements may also benefit Dorset residents.

12. Appendices

12.1 Dorset Local Visitor Economy Partnership Destination Management Plan 2026-2035

12.2 Accessible Table of Climate Impacts and Table of Recommendations.

13. Background papers

13.1 Decisions for issue Dorset Local Visitor Economy Partnership - Dorset Council

13.2 2024_Dorset_Market_Segmentation_SPF_Research_Report_FINAL_51bbd205-30f5-4f1f-8ee5-2dccb2a6a224.pdf

14. Report sign-off

14.1 This report has been through the internal report clearance process and has been signed off by the Director for Legal and Democratic (Monitoring Officer), the Executive Director for Corporate Development (Section 151 Officer) and the appropriate Portfolio Holder(s)

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Place and Resources Overview Committee

9 July 2026

Dorset Local Visitor Economy Partnership Destination Management Plan

Accessible Table of Climate Impacts and Table of Recommendations

ACCESSIBLE TABLE SHOWING IMPACTS

Natural Environment, Climate & Ecology Strategy Commitments	**Impact**
Energy	major positive impact
Buildings & Assets	No known impact
Transport	major positive impact
Green Economy	major positive impact
Food & Drink	major positive impact
Waste	major positive impact
Natural Assets & Ecology	major negative impact
Water	No known impact
Resilience and Adaptation	major positive impact

Corporate Plan Aims	**Impact**
Grow our economy	strongly supports it
High-quality and affordable housing	neutral
Communities for all	minor positive impact

TABLE OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations	Responses -will this be incorporated into your proposal? How? And if not, why not?
Energy	
consider opportunities to generate renewable energy on the land	Visitor Economy venues are encouraged to consider sustainable energy improvements including renewable energy generation where appropriate
Buildings & Assets	
No recommendations found for this category	
Transport	
No recommendations found for this category	
Green Economy	
No recommendations found for this category	
Food & Drink	
No recommendations found for this category	
Waste	
No recommendations found for this category	
Natural Assets & Ecology	
Use the opportunity to bring land into positive management	Visitor Economy venues are encouraged to consider bringing land into positive management where relevant
Use the opportunity to increase biodiversity	Visitor Economy venues are encouraged to consider providing conditions conducive to increasing biodiversity where appropriate
Use the opportunity to connect existing habitats using wildlife corridors	Visitor Economy venues are encouraged to consider providing conditions conducive to connecting existing habitats using wildlife corridors where appropriate
Water	
No recommendations found for this category	
Resilience & Adaptation	
No recommendations found for this category	

Funded by
UK Government

Local Visitor Economy Partnership

Recognised by VisitEngland

Dorset

Destination Management Plan
2026 - 2035











Dorset Local Visitor Economy Partnership – creating a year-round destination

The Dorset Destination Management Plan (DMP) sets out a 10-year strategy to establish Dorset as a welcoming, vibrant, year-round visitor destination.

Developed through extensive consultation with businesses, stakeholders and cultural partners, the plan responds to key challenges including strong seasonality, rising operating costs, limited national awareness, and pressure on local infrastructure.

Dorset's visitor economy is a major economic driver, **attracting over 22 million visitors annually and generating £1.66bn in direct spend**, yet 36% of domestic overnight trips occur in July and August, demonstrating the need to spread demand more evenly across the year.

The **DMP focuses on addressing seasonality**, enhancing visitor spend, improving perceptions of Dorset, strengthening accessibility, embedding sustainability, and enabling sector-wide collaboration.

Growth opportunities centre on two high-potential year-round markets: the Nature & Culture segment and the Active & Mindful segment. By prioritising these audiences, **Dorset can leverage its outstanding natural landscapes, rich heritage, cultural offer and variety of outdoor experiences.**

Key actions include developing off-peak product, targeted marketing, experience mapping, and building cultural programming in quieter months. Improving data quality, empowering local businesses, and increasing Dorset's national profile are critical to unlocking long-term economic, environmental and community benefits.

Delivery of the DMP will rely on coordinated partnership across the industry, facilitated by the Local Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP).

This plan provides the roadmap for a more resilient, sustainable and competitive visitor economy that benefits all parts of Dorset throughout the year.

This strategy has been funded by UK Government via the UK Shared Prosperity Fund



Dorset - Visitor Economy Snapshot

22 million visitors

£1.66bn direct visitor spend

22,693 FTE jobs

High seasonality

Vision for a vibrant, sustainable year-round visitor economy

Nature & Culture growth opportunity

Staying visitors
12.3% of visits
42.5% of spend

78% Net promoter score

Strong business confidence

Active & Mindful growth opportunity

Background and introduction



Credit: VisitBritain/Kelsey Harrington

About Dorset Local Visitor Economy Partnership

In 2025 Visit Dorset and Dorset Council were awarded Local Visitor Economy Partnership status (LVEP) for the county of Dorset, covering the Dorset Council and Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole (BCP) Council geographies.

A requirement of the newly formed LVEP was to create a Destination Management Plan (DMP) for the county of Dorset.

Destination Management Plan Methodology

In 2025 Dorset Tourism Association (the LVEP advisory board) commissioned a Destination Management Plan for Dorset. Businesses and stakeholders across the county were consulted on their ambitions for the LVEP and the visitor economy through a series of online business and stakeholder surveys, and in-person workshops held in four locations across Dorset.

This DMP has considered the strategic context of the visitor economy, a review of current performance in the sector, product audit, market trends, competitor analysis and business and stakeholder needs to ascertain the key opportunities and challenges for the visitor economy.

This is the first Destination Management Plan covering the whole County of Dorset.

About Dorset LVEP

Visit Dorset, part of Dorset Council, is the accountable body for the LVEP.

Established as a result of the De Bois Review into Destination Management, LVEPs are officially recognised by VisitEngland as the lead organisation for the development of the visitor economy in England and typically represent counties or core cities.

The Dorset Tourism Association CIC (DTA) covers the whole of Dorset and has representation from the Portfolio Holders for tourism from each local authority and representation of every constituent sector of the visitor economy.

As part of the LVEP development process the DTA has taken on the role of LVEP advisory board. The DTA in partnership with Visit Dorset will oversee the delivery of the DMP and encourage stakeholders to adopt the plan.

About Visit Dorset

Visit Dorset is the official destination management organisation (DMO) for Dorset, responsible for promoting the county as a high-quality visitor destination and supporting the growth of its visitor economy. It works in partnership with over 500 tourism businesses, local and regional stakeholders to deliver marketing campaigns, develop tourism products, and improve the visitor experience.

Visit Dorset's activity includes destination marketing and managing the official www.visit-Dorset.com website and social media channels, industry collaboration, business support, and using data and insights to drive sustainable tourism growth. It aims to increase visitor spend, extend the tourism season, and ensure Dorset remains competitive and attractive.

Visit Dorset is the accountable body for the Dorset LVEP and in this role, leads on destination development, aligning local priorities with national tourism goals, and acting as a key voice for Dorset at a national level.

Dorset's Visitor Economy

Home of the iconic Jurassic Coast - Discover Dorset, a land of epic coastline, rolling hills, and timeless charm. Dorset is your gateway to unforgettable experiences!

Dorset has a strong visitor offer with over 22 million visitors, award-winning products and globally important landscapes.

This snapshot of the Dorset visitor economy highlights the importance of the visitor economy to the county and the quality of the offer to a domestic UK and global audience.*

- Home of the UK's only natural **UNESCO World Heritage site**, the **Jurassic Coast** celebrates its 25th anniversary of World Heritage Status in 2026. It is globally renowned for its near-continuous geological record spanning 185 million years of Earth's history and extends from Old Harry Rocks near Poole to Exmouth.
- **Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole** are home to award-winning sandy beaches, Europe's largest natural harbour, three universities, international language schools, Arts and Conference centres.
- **Dorset National Landscape** covers just over 40% of the county, stretching from Lyme Regis to Poole Harbour and inland to Blandford Forum. This beautiful and thriving landscape is actively protected and regenerated so that everyone can enjoy it and feel connected to it.
- **Purbeck** Heaths is the UK's first "super" National Nature Reserve. Purbeck's key attractions include Swanage Railway, Corfe Castle and internationally recognisable landmarks such as Durdle Door, Lulworth Cove and Old Harry Rocks.
- **Weymouth** has an award-winning beach, adjacent to the unique Chesil Beach and **Portland** cruise port serving international cruise lines.
- **Dorchester** is a thriving county town known for its Hardy connections, Dorset Museum and Art Gallery and the unique Poundbury development.
- North Dorset with its market towns of **Sherborne**, **Shaftesbury** and **Gillingham** are the hidden gems of the county. Encompassing the Cranborne Chase National Landscape and International Dark Sky Reserve.
- West Dorset including **Bridport** and **Lyme Regis** are famous for fossil hunting and popular as film and TV locations.

The impact of the visitor economy is equally impressive. 22.8 million visitors came to Dorset in 2024 generating £1.66bn in spend in the local economy and creating 22,693 full-time equivalent jobs.

- Staying visitors (domestic and international) make up 12% of visits but 42% of all spend.
- International visits account for just 2% of all visits but generate £209m spend (12.5%) and tend to be focussed on the Jurassic Coast.
- It is estimated that there are 29,997 actual jobs related to tourism – equivalent to 22,963 full time jobs or 8% of all Dorset employment.
- There is significant seasonal variation in overnight visitors with 36% of all domestic overnight trips taking place in July and August.
- Business events is a key sector for Bournemouth but represents just 3% of domestic and 6% of international visits for the whole county

22.8 million visitors

£1,663m direct visitor spend

Staying visitors 12.3% of visits and 42.5% of spend

22,693 FTE jobs

*See appendix A for detailed product audit

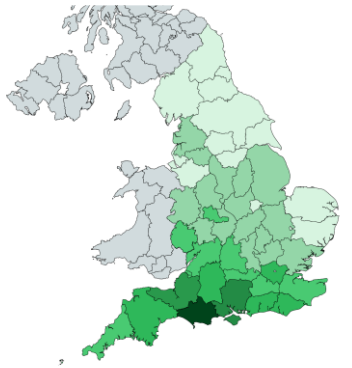
Dorset's Visitor Economy

Understanding our visitors

In 2022 detailed visitor research was undertaken for Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole. This research was than repeated for Dorset in 2024. There was also a consumer survey conducted in 2023 of Visit Dorset's customers. This insight enables us to understand what visitors like about Dorset and how it compares to other areas.

75% of past visitors to Dorset would visit again and 39% of adults living in the South and Midlands have visited Dorset for a day visit or holiday

The map below shows the location of Visit Dorset consumers across England in 2023



Key perceptions of Dorset:

- 51% place of **natural beauty**
- 49% beautiful **beaches**
- 37% can get close to **nature**
- 31% fun, **relaxed** vibe
- 29% significant **cultural** interest

Top Barriers to visiting Dorset

- 38% too far to travel
- 23% **don't know enough** about area
- 18% Unpredictable weather
- 17% too expensive
- 11% prioritise other places

78

Net Promoter Score

Both sets of visitor research identified the current market segments and key growth opportunities. Dorset currently attracts five market segments, but the two that showed the greatest potential for **year-round growth** in Dorset were:

Active and Mindful

This group are physically active, like a challenge and enjoy new experiences. They like a combination of physical, mental and social stimulation as well as opportunities to relax. They tend to be younger (55% under 35), working, with children and higher than average household income. They are more likely to live in urban areas.

Nature and Culture

These are nature lovers with a practical approach to life. They like to explore beauty spots, arts, culture and heritage treasures. Holidays are driven by the destination and activities available. They do lots of research in advance of booking, tend to be older, and are more likely than average to be retired.



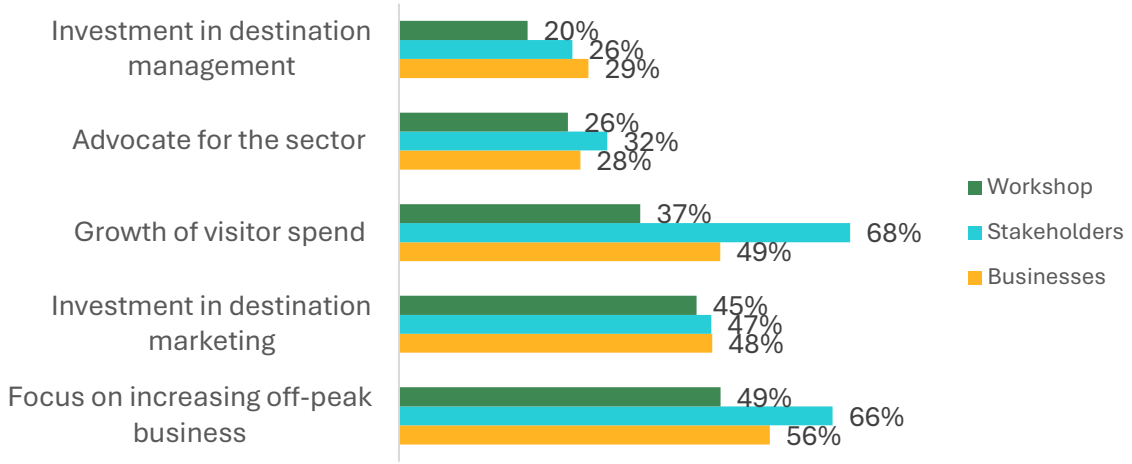
*See appendix B for more detailed visitor profile and all visitor segments

Highlights from the consultation and workshops

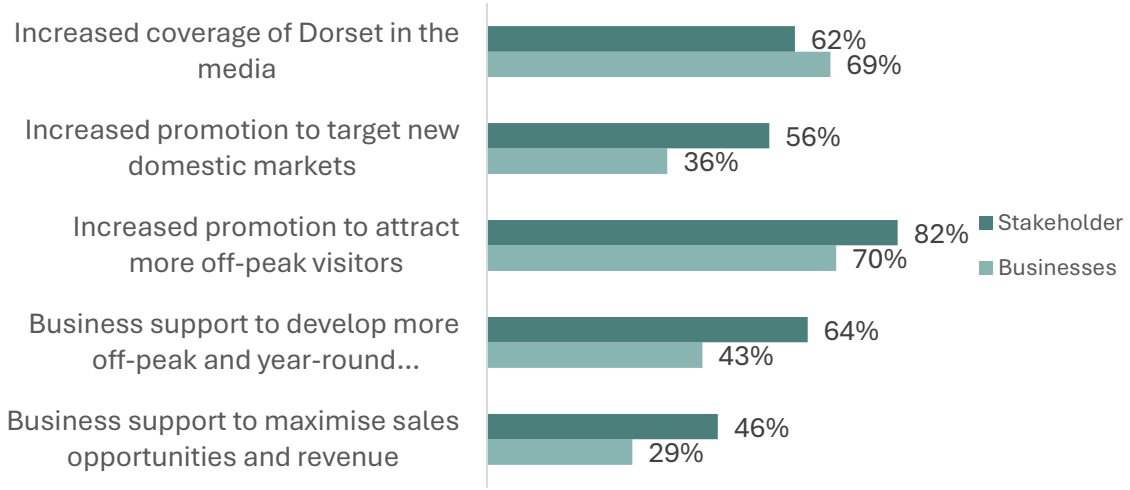
"What are the strengths of Dorset's visitor offer?"



"What should be the key priorities for the visitor economy?"



"What would help your business / sector to grow?"



What investment would you like to see?

64% More products, events and experiences for off-peak visitors

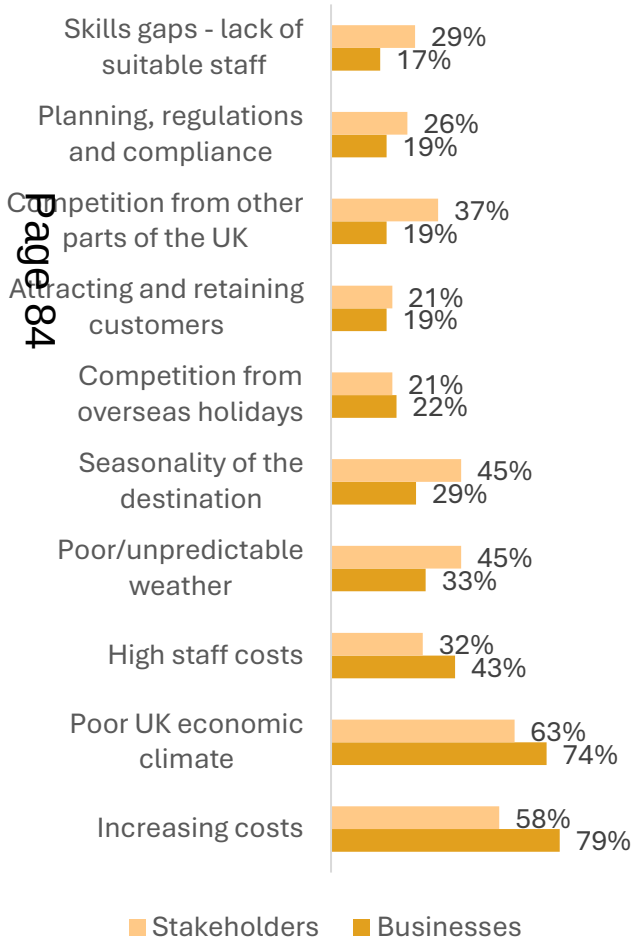
62% Regional / national brand awareness campaigns

58% Better transport

*See appendix C for more detailed consultation responses

Dorset's Visitor Economy

Key challenges facing the visitor economy in Dorset



Business performance in Dorset

Business confidence is relatively strong - two-thirds (66%) are very or somewhat confident about the next year of trading.

Seasonality is a key issue with almost a third (30%) of businesses stating that they take more than 50% of their income in July and August.

The majority of Dorset tourism businesses are open year round (80%), January and February are the key months businesses tend not to be open.

Businesses are "committed to growing and investing in their business" (60%) while 25% say they are "maintaining the current level of performance", just 6% are "Establishing a new business" and 11% are either "planning to downsize" or "planning to sell/retire in next 3 years"

Key challenges (see chart) are increasing costs and the poor UK economic climate. Weather, staff costs and seasonality also get a high response from businesses and stakeholders.

Policy context

The Destination Management Plan takes into account a number of relevant local, regional and national policy and plans that will impact on the Dorset LVEP.

Dorset LVEP works across two local authority boundaries, Dorset Council and BCP Council.

Dorset Council Plan 2024-2029 and Dorset's Economic Growth Strategy 2025 to 2040 include a focus on growing the visitor economy with an aim to increase total visitor-related spend in Dorset by 5% by 2029.

This will be achieved through encouraging more off-peak visits, increasing spend per visitor and spreading the benefits of tourism across the county to ensure tourism provides year-round economic activity.

BCP: Working together to deliver a great destination 2023-2027 prioritises building a year-round economy. It also set the ambition for the industry to take a lead role in destination management, which has now been realised through the BCP Destination Management Board.

At a regional and national level there is a focus on:

- **Increasing visitor spend** and reducing reliance on day visits, as well as spreading the benefits of tourism to all areas of the country.
- Tourism being more **accessible.**
- A shift towards a more **responsible** visitor economy and realising the **social and environmental benefits** of tourism.
- A more **strategic** and **collaborative** approach.

These are also points featured in local policies.

Destination SWOT Analysis

Strengths

- Quality product, nationally and international recognised
- Outstanding natural landscape (UNESCO World Heritage, National Landscapes,
- Well-known brands and icons (e.g. Jurassic Coast, Bournemouth, Weymouth, Gold Hill, Cerne Abbas Giant, Pliosaur, Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra)
- Proximity to London, Bristol and West Midlands
- Strong business confidence and engagement
- Wide range of sustainable tourism products
- Unique access to full range of watersports – via harbours, coast and rivers
- Growing cruise market (Portland)
- Good mix of accommodation, venues and attractions
- Strong cultural offer (Hardy, Blyton, Arts by the Sea, Inside Out, BSO, Lighthouse, Dorset Museum & Art Gallery, Tank Museum, Camp Bestival, BIC events)

Weaknesses

- Low awareness of Dorset among non-visitors
- Diversity and range of product make it challenging to articulate key strength
- Industry believe there is no one stand out "attraction"
- Limited resources for Destination Management
- Investment in tourism (public and private) is lower than competitor locations
- Impact of the reduction in funding for Local Authorities - BCP Council no longer have a tourism function and increased pressure on support for Cultural services and venues
- Reliant on volunteer support from industry to realise benefits of LVEP
- Relatively low level of new business development
- Lots of small and micro businesses to coordinate
- Limited direct access routes from International markets (Bournemouth Airport and the Port of Poole are predominantly outbound traffic)
- Public transport within the county can be limited especially in North and West Dorset

Opportunities

- Priority growth market segments – Nature and Culture, Active and Mindful are aligned to consumer trends and a wide range of products and experiences that are available across Dorset
- Dorset Council identified tourism as high level priority for growth
- Joined up approach across Dorset and BCP Councils
- Wessex Partnership to form a strategic authority strengthening collaboration across the region and should unlock new funding and opportunities for growth
- Government focus on regional dispersal and increasing attention on seaside towns
- Dorset has achieved LVEP status which enables access to support from VisitEngland and engagement with DCMS to raise the profile of the county.
- Strong cultural programme across the county
- Weymouth & Portland regeneration
- Investment in MEMO Portland project will unlock new markets and large-scale interest
- Portland well positioned to benefit from Cruise growth in Northern Europe itineraries

Threats

- Economic climate driving later bookings, limited spend and competitive market
- Competition from international destinations, and reduced investment in domestic marketing, strong competition from city-based UK breaks
- Competitor investment in Tourism is higher than Dorset (e.g. Destination North East, Visit West, Yorkshire, Tees Valley)
- Climate change and rapidly evolving coastline impacting on Dorset experience – especially if trying to grow shoulder and off-peak visits
- Geo-political situation causing fluctuating costs and demand
- Increasing operating costs for businesses making small independent businesses less viable
- No agreed date for Mayoral Strategic Authority that includes Dorset
- Resource needed for coordination and mobilisation of industry engagement
- Government focus on and investment in the North













The ambition

Ambition

Dorset is known as a welcoming and vibrant year-round destination which offers quality experiences

Priorities

- Welcoming visitors to all parts of Dorset all year round
- Increase the spend per visitor encouraging visitors to stay longer, buy local and return
- Improve awareness and perceptions of Dorset - known as the key destination for natural landscapes, heritage, rural and coastal breaks, a culturally vibrant, sustainable and accessible place
- Working collaboratively to deliver exceptional visitor experiences and advocate for the sector at regional and national level

Areas of focus

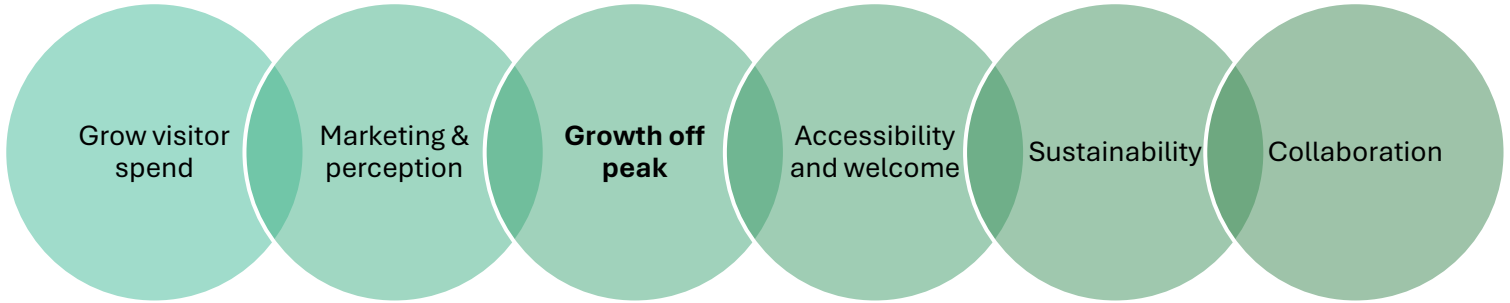






Photo by Freysteinn G. Jonsson on Unsplash

Dorset is known as a welcoming and vibrant year-round destination which offers quality experiences

The key ambition for this destination management plan is that **Dorset becomes a year-round visitor destination.**

Throughout the consultation process for this DMP, businesses and stakeholders **repeatedly stated that the key focus of this strategy must be to tackle seasonality** and support the industry to encourage visitors to come all year round, to all parts of the county and increase the spend of visitors by encouraging them to stay longer, support local suppliers and come back to Dorset.

The county already has a **reputation for being a quality destination** – with high number of entrants into the Dorset Tourism Awards, and many businesses with TripAdvisor Travellers Choice Awards and a high number of top 10% winners. Weymouth and Bournemouth Beaches are consistently ranked amongst the best in the World. Dorset has also had three winners in VisitEngland Awards for Excellence 2025 and two winners in VisitEngland Awards for Excellence 2024.

Visitor research showed that Dorset is known as a friendly place, where visitors feel welcome.

Dorset has a strong cultural offer creating **a vibrant place** for people to visit, live, work and invest.

The destination management plan aims to cement Dorset's position as a welcoming, vibrant and quality destination but drive growth in shoulder and off-peak period so that visitors can have that experience all year round.

How will this be achieved?

Dorset is known as a welcoming and vibrant year-round destination which offers quality experiences

In order to achieve the ambition of this destination management plan over the next 10 years, key priorities have been identified alongside specific areas of action that the Dorset LVEP can support.

These priorities and areas of action have been informed through data and consultation, and it is that data that will help provide an understanding of how the ambition can be realised.

In the next section of this report each area of focus will be explored to show why it matters and how it can support the ambition and priorities of the DMP. Presenting a roadmap to realising the ambition of the DMP.

















Areas of focus

Focus area 1

Delivering a year-round destination

Growth off-peak

Addressing seasonality to encourage more visitors to come in the shoulder and off-peak period and supporting more business to create experiences that can be enjoyed and viable all year round is the key priority of the DMP.

Priority:

Welcoming visitors to all parts of Dorset all year round

Why?

- There is huge seasonal variation in overnight visitors with 36% of all domestic overnight trips taking place in July and August.
- The recent VisitBritain report "Economic Value of tourism in the United Kingdom" highlighted Dorset as the 5th most seasonal county for international visits.
- Almost a third (30%) of businesses state that they take more than 50% of their income in July and August.

Where to focus?

In order to reduce the seasonality of visits to Dorset the LVEP will need to work with partners and businesses to tackle key issues of awareness, product offer and experience. Using data to guide and shape decisions.

1. Improving data to inform decisions

The Dorset Economic Impact data shows January - April are the quietest months in terms of overnight visitors to the county, then May, June and October, November perform similarly with c. 6-7% of visits.

However, occupancy data provided by a selection of key businesses across the county shows us this data may contain inaccuracies that are misleading. Whilst there is no doubt that Dorset is a seasonal economy, variations within the county are likely to be much more nuanced than the data implies.

Once the LVEP has a greater understanding of where the potential for growth exists both in terms of months of the year, parts of the county and days of the week an action plan can be developed to target markets with a high propensity to travel at those times.

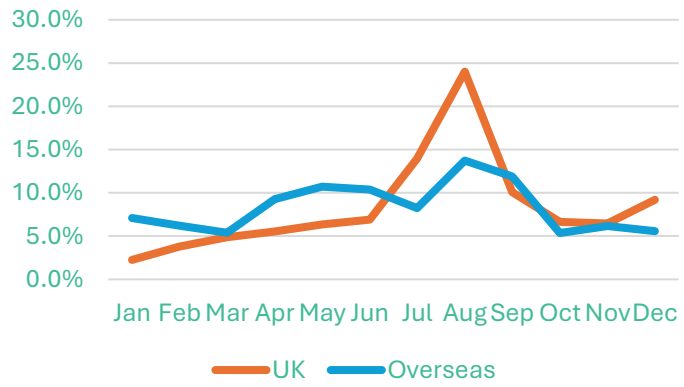
Recommended actions:

Work with businesses to develop a more accurate understanding of visits and seasonality. Monitor annually to track progress

2. Experience mapping

Whilst a more in-depth understanding of the data is gathered the focus could be on understanding the current and potential product offer for the shoulder and off-peak period. Being realistic about what visitors can expect to experience and how to ensure that visitors that do come in the shoulder and off-peak period have the best possible experience.

Seasonality of overnight stays (2024)



Focus area 1

Delivering a year-round destination

Growth off-peak

2. Experience mapping cont.

Working with businesses, initially those that have expressed interest in developing their year-round availability, Dorset can facilitate product development by providing insight on the growth markets and their interests and encouraging businesses to work together to create packages and cross-promote their products to visitors.

In addition, Dorset stakeholders can utilise the information gathered to adapt their current marketing activities to reflect the current product available.

Recommended actions:

Review current product offer in off-peak

Hold regular networking and workshops across the county to share insights and facilitate networking to develop new products.

3. Raising awareness

The visitor research undertaken in 2022 and 2024 identified the two key visitor segments for growth across the county as "Nature and Culture" and "Active and Mindful". Both of these segments are aligned to the product available and have potential for all year-round visits.

Focussing marketing efforts on these two segments and encouraging businesses that are open all year round to do the same will grow reach and awareness with these segments.

The new **Culture strategy** for the county highlights the importance of growing the economic impact of Culture and encouraging more cultural visitors to the county. Working in partnership with the Cultural sector, Dorset can increase the profile of the heritage and cultural offer and develop new products and experiences that appeal to the Nature and Culture segment.

Recommended actions:

Prioritise existing or new marketing activity on Nature and Culture and Active and Mindful segments. Encourage businesses open year-round to do the same.

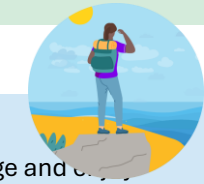
Work with Cultural sector to build events, festivals, heritage and cultural programme in shoulder and off-peak period including an innovative cultural and arts offer that will appeal to a wide range of ages and interests beyond traditional cultural programming.



Nature and Culture

These are nature lovers with a practical approach to life. They like to explore scenic landscapes, heritage, arts and cultural attractions and events. They state weather matters less because they like learning, culture and nature. Specifically, 27% would visit off-peak. Market size is 7 million in Dorset drive-time regions.

- 65% Visit parks and gardens
- 56% Visiting Museums and Art Galleries
- 55% Visiting Historic or Heritage sites
- 54% Hiking or Walking
- 52% Visit street markets
- Accommodation is not important its just a base to explore the destination
- 27% have children so are looking for family activities



Active and Mindful

This group are physically active, like a challenge and enjoy new experiences. Many of their favourite activities can be enjoyed in Dorset in the shoulder and off-peak period and 15% would visit off-peak. Market size is 6.4 million in Dorset drive-time regions.

- Running (37%), walking (35%), cycling (26%) and swimming (34%) are popular
- 46% enjoy cooking and 44% prioritise healthy eating
- 47% visit parks and gardens
- 35% prioritise self-improvement
- 32% Visiting museums and art galleries
- Attracted to accommodation and activity providers who support environment initiatives
- Over half this segment have children

*See appendix D for more detailed information about Nature and Culture and Active and Mindful off-peak appeal

Focus area 1

Delivering a year-round destination

Growth off-peak

4. Additional opportunities:

Other key markets that travel all year round are Business & Conference visitors, Groups and Travel trade and increasingly cruise visits. These three sectors are important in varying degrees across the county depending on the product and facilities available, but working collaboratively and enabling those stakeholders and businesses to take advantage of the support the LVEP can access will be key to delivering growth.

Business & Conference visitors represent 6% of International visits and 3% of Domestic visits to the county, but with key facilities in Bournemouth and Poole in particular it is a market that could be expanded to deliver year-round growth.

The growing trend for "Bleisure" and Association travel presents opportunities to showcase attractions and towns across the county for days out around the business visit.

Research conducted by BVA BRDC in 2022 identified the key opportunities as:

promote accessibility of the location, engage with planners, and broaden awareness of the offer.

Groups and travel trade – partners across Dorset have been working together over the last few years to represent Dorset at domestic and international group and travel trade events focused on growing leisure coach groups and tour operator engagement.

Supporting those businesses and enabling access to the opportunities made available to the LVEP will be key to delivering growth in this market.

Cruise – Portland has seen significant cruise growth in recent years achieving almost 100,000 passengers and more than 60 calls in 2025. Predominantly German, USA and UK visitors with an average spend of £100 per day, cruise tourism is a high-value sector that operates year-round and offers an opportunity to give international markets at taste of Dorset and encourage them to return to the county for a longer holiday.

Recommended actions:

Enable businesses and stakeholders to realise the full benefits of LVEP status and encourage engagement with VisitEngland for support.

Identify "lead" contacts / volunteers for Business Events, Travel trade and Cruise for the LVEP to maximise opportunities made available through the LVEP within resource constraints.

Explore opportunities to work in partnership to build dedicated content on Visit Dorset website for these markets to support growth of these key sectors.



Focus area 2

Delivering a year-round destination

Growth in visitor spend

Add value by encouraging visitors to spend more, spend differently and support local

Priority:

Increase the spend per visitor encouraging visitors to stay longer, buy local and return

Why?

Dorset Council and Visit Dorset have an objective to increase visitor spend by 5% by 2029

68% of stakeholders and 49% of Businesses said growing visitor spend was one of their top three priorities for the Destination Management Plan

Where to focus?

Growing spend from all visitors is a top priority for the DMP, gaining maximum economic benefit with minimal environmental impact. Adjusting the mix of tourists can also deliver growth in spend.

Key areas of focus could include:

- **Encouraging day visitors to stay overnight**
- **Encouraging existing overnight visitors to stay longer**
- **Encouraging visitors to spend differently** prioritising local businesses and supporting the local economy. Highlighting local markets, featuring local businesses in communications and considering initiatives that enable visitors to easily recognise Dorset products.
- **Supporting local producers** (especially food and drink) to meet visitor businesses and collaborate so that more local businesses stock local products.
- **Attracting more international visitors** – international visitors stay longer than domestic visitors and on average spend £6.45 more per person per day than a domestic overnight visitor and £16.79 more per day than a day visitor. Key markets for growth are Netherlands, Germany and other near European countries alongside long-haul English speaking countries.

Delivering growth off-peak will also contribute to a growth in visitor spend.

Recommended actions:

Review marketing activity to encourage overnight stays and buy local messaging

Facilitate networking events between local producers and visitor economy businesses

Utilise VisitEngland opportunities to grow international markets aligned to Dorset product



Focus area 3

Delivering a year-round destination

Marketing and Perceptions

Raise awareness of the Dorset visitor offer to target audiences and build brand awareness of key themes whilst maintaining existing visitor markets

Priority:

Improve awareness and perceptions of Dorset - known as the key destination for natural landscapes, heritage, rural and coastal breaks, a culturally vibrant, sustainable and accessible place

Why?

Almost half of all respondents to the DMP surveys and workshops (47%) said one of their top 3 priorities was “Investment in destination marketing”

Visitor research identified that 47% of non-visitors would consider a visit to Dorset. However, 23% of non-visitors said a key barrier to visiting was “I don’t know enough about the area” this rose to 29% of non-visitors to Bournemouth.

Where to focus?

Dorset has an enviable position of having a wide range of high-quality visitor experiences and products. However, this can make it more difficult to achieve a clear brand position for Dorset.

During the consultation the key strengths of the county visitor offer were identified as:

- **Natural landscapes**
- **Heritage and Culture**
- **Food and drink**

With the key USP for **new visitors** (especially international visitors) being **the Jurassic Coast World Heritage Site**. Using this hook to attract new visitors to the county and then encouraging visitors to explore all areas of the county is key.

Consumer marketing

Develop a clear brand narrative for the overall visitor offer for the whole of Dorset as a vibrant place for outstanding natural landscapes, culture and heritage.

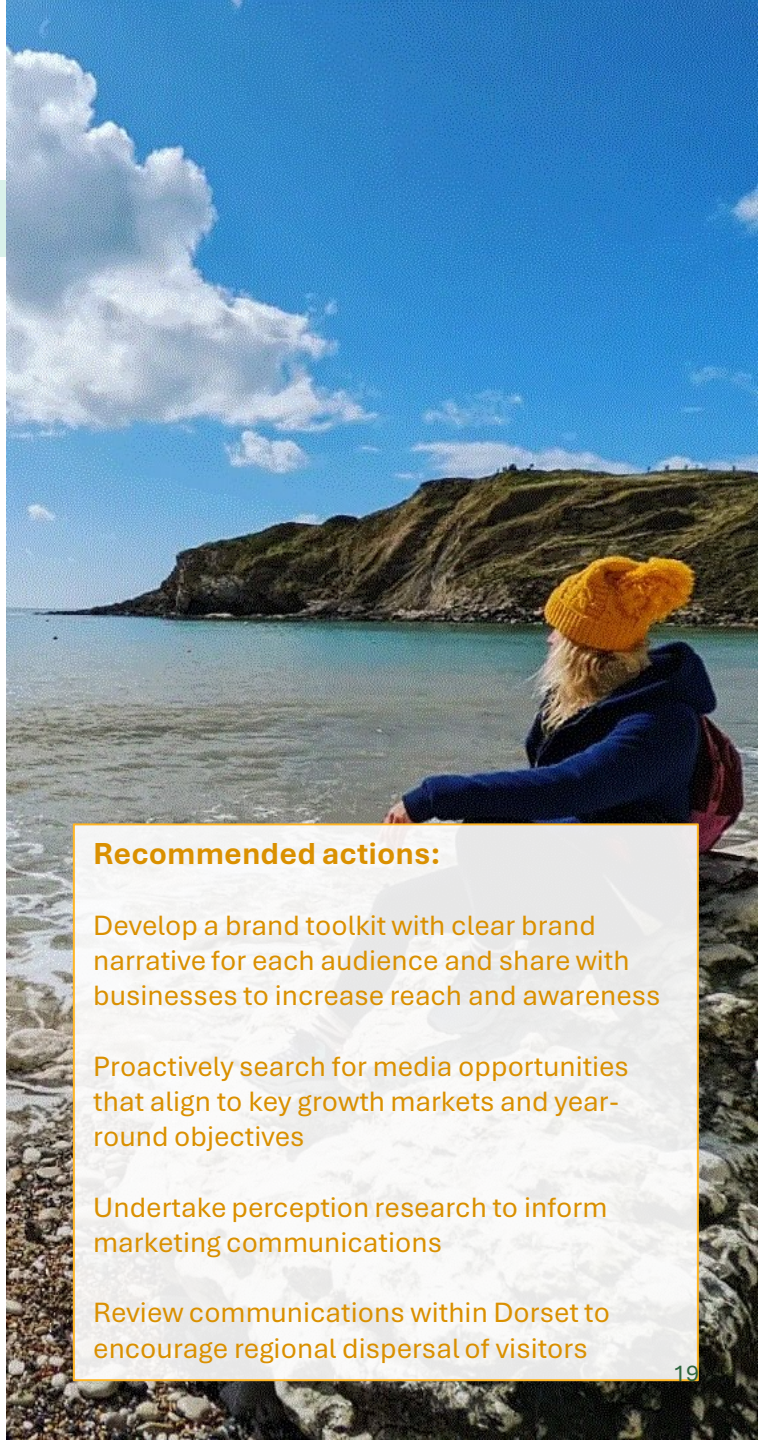
Focus targeted marketing messages with key audiences to increase awareness of the Dorset visitor offer year-round.

Consider creating a brand toolkit that can be shared with businesses to ensure Dorset is promoted in a consistent style and tone of voice.

Proactively seek and maximise opportunities to gain free media exposure with press visits, influencers and media aligned to the priority growth segments.

Undertake research to understand the perceptions of Dorset as a year-round destination and test the strength of Dorset’s associations with the key themes compared to competitor locations.

Review communications within the county to **encourage visitors to explore ALL parts of Dorset**, especially the north and west of the county. Work with Town Councils and provide tools and copy to enable businesses to spread the word.



Recommended actions:

Develop a brand toolkit with clear brand narrative for each audience and share with businesses to increase reach and awareness

Proactively search for media opportunities that align to key growth markets and year-round objectives

Undertake perception research to inform marketing communications

Review communications within Dorset to encourage regional dispersal of visitors

Focus area 4

Delivering a year-round destination

Accessibility and welcome

Inspiring growth across Dorset through local exemplar businesses

Priority:

Improve awareness and perceptions of Dorset - known as the key destination for natural landscapes, heritage, rural and coastal breaks, a culturally vibrant, sustainable and accessible place

Why?

The accessible Tourism market is worth £14.6bn in the UK and improving the accessibility and inclusivity of the visitor economy is a national and regional priority.

26% of stakeholders and 20% of businesses in Dorset stated it was a key priority.

Accessible visitors travel all year round so growth in this market can support the ambition to grow year-round demand.

Where to focus?

Businesses and stakeholders identified key areas of support needed to improve their accessibility and inclusivity:

- Accreditation and legal compliance
- Funding or financial incentives to invest
- Inspiration and best practice from other businesses

In addition, the consultation highlighted a need to support businesses to understand what is the minimum standard and inspire them to see what it means to be truly accessible and inclusive as well as understand the market potential to providing accessible facilities.

The **Dorset National Landscape** (DNL) has invested nearly £500,000 in improving access with further funding secured for more activity.

The **Coast For All** project aims to position Dorset as the UK's most inclusive blue space, ensuring beaches and coastal environments are fully accessible to visitors and residents with a wide range of access needs, enabling them to fully participate in beach and water-based activities.

The LVEP should work in partnership with initiatives like DNL and Coast For All to help realise product development and promote accessibility improvements to visitors.

Recommended actions:

Use local "exemplars" to showcase and inspire businesses to invest

Signpost businesses to support available via the LVEP

Utilise VisitEngland expertise and support through the LVEP to understand Dorset's current position and key areas to improve

Encourage investment in accessibility improvements and work in partnership with initiatives like DNL and Coast For All to enable product development and support with promotion to visitors.



Credit: Marsham Court Hotel

Focus area 5

Delivering a year-round destination

Sustainability and regenerative tourism

Tourism can be a force for good in Dorset

Priority:

Improve awareness and perceptions of Dorset - known as the key destination for natural landscapes, heritage, rural and coastal breaks, a culturally vibrant, sustainable and accessible place

Why?

65% of businesses in Dorset said improving Sustainability was very important and 59% are actively progressing their approach to sustainable or regenerative tourism.

Improving the environmental, social and community benefits of tourism is a key national priority.

32% of consumers claim they look for sustainable accommodation

Where to focus?

Businesses in Dorset have made great progress improving their sustainability over the last few years, but as the industry moves towards aspirations of more regenerative tourism, the key areas of support businesses and stakeholders in Dorset would like are:

- Inspiration and best practice from other businesses (76%)
- Funding or financial incentives to invest (69%)

Just 15% of businesses said sustainability was fully embedded in their businesses so there is still a lot of work to be done.

Recommended actions:

Use local "exemplars" to showcase and inspire businesses to invest

Signpost businesses to support available via the LVEP

Utilise VisitEngland expertise and support through the LVEP

What is regenerative tourism?

Going beyond minimising impacts of tourism, tourism should leave places better than they were before actively improving places, communities, and ecosystems.



Regenerative tourism helps businesses to build resilience, integrate sustainability and support long-term economic, community and environmental benefits.

Focus area 6

Delivering a year-round destination

Collaboration

In order to deliver change Dorset LVEP must work collaboratively within and across the sector

Priority:

Working collaboratively to deliver exceptional visitor experiences and advocate for the sector at regional and national level

Why?

Dorset LVEP is a partnership of businesses, stakeholders and organisations involved in the visitor economy. Resources are limited but collaboration creates a shared ownership of the DMP and enables the LVEP to access a wide range of skills in the sector to deliver change.

Businesses and stakeholders highlighted collaboration as key to delivering change.

Where to focus?

The Dorset LVEP have a clear leadership role in the county, but with resources limited the sector needs to work in partnership to deliver the ambitions of the DMP.

Gaining support for change

Visit Dorset working in partnership to deliver the LVEP have access to a wide range of expertise in the advisory board and supporting groups and associations. With representatives from each sector of the industry the LVEP can ensure that the industry is kept informed and involved in the delivery and development of the DMP.

Regular engagement events and workshops to inform priorities for action and gain support for deliverables will be key to realising the DMP, alongside a committed board and working groups focussed on key areas.

Advocating for Dorset

A third of businesses and stakeholders prirotised a greater focus on advocating for Dorset's visitor economy at a regional and national level.

Achieving LVEP status creates an opportunity for the County to raise its profile with VisitEngland and DCMS at a national level but also highlight the importance of the visitor economy at a regional level. Dorset is also a key partner in the Great South West Tourism Partnership. However, these partnerships place greater demands on the Visit Dorset team to attend and engage with events, conferences and meetings.

In order to realise the full benefits of the LVEP and raise Dorset's profile there is a need to create a network of "Ambassadors" who can represent the county at key events, conferences and meetings.

Working in partnership

The LVEP will work in partnership with other organisations to ensure that the Visitor Economy is represented on issues such as skills development, transport infrastructure, innovation and inward investment.

Recommended actions:

Regular engagement events to inform and engage the sector in the delivery and development of the DMP.

Create a network of "Ambassadors" who can represent Dorset at key events and are well informed about the industry's priorities, challenges and performance.

Work in partnership with other sectors and specialists to influence investment in skills, transport and economic development.

How will we monitor progress and change?

In order to understand whether the ambition of this plan has been met, the LVEP must monitor progress. **Action plans should be developed in three-year cycles with progress reviewed annually.**

Measuring change in the visitor economy is not without its challenges though, national data is often slow to be published and can be inaccurate at county level and below. It does however provide a consistent benchmark of performance and the ability to track trends. The table below identifies ways in which key performance indicators can be measured, this is not intended as an exhaustive list as research techniques are continually improving. Therefore, an additional recommendation of this DMP must be that there is continued investment in data and improving the quality of the data.

What to measure	How
Seasonality	National surveys (GBTS, GBDVS, IPS) Accommodation occupancy and Visits to attractions
Visitor spend	Cambridge economic impact research, national surveys, visitor surveys (in-situ and / or online), VE card spend data
Length of stay	Cambridge economic impact research, national surveys, Business survey
Dispersal of visits	Visitor survey (in-situ and / or online), footfall
Accommodation occupancy	Business survey, T-Stats, software providers (e.g. Amadeus)
Perception and awareness	Visitor survey (in-situ and/or online), National omnibus survey
Marketing impact	Campaign performance, website stats, perception research, visitor numbers
Type of visitor	Segmentation research, business surveys

Budgets permitting, utlising more than one method for each measure helps provide a more robust view of performance and reduce the inaccuracies of national data where sample size at county level is often relatively small.





Photo by Jemima Whyles on Unsplash

Delivery of this DMP requires partnership working

This Destination Management Plan has been created to identify the role and priorities of the Local Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP). Although the LVEP is coordinated through Visit Dorset it is responsibility of the whole tourism sector in Dorset to contribute to the delivery of the DMP. The Dorset Tourism Association CIC acting as the advisory board for the LVEP will oversee progress on delivery of the ambitions of the DMP across all parts of Dorset.

Key performance indicators

Delivery of the DMP will me measured by the following KPIs

- Change in seasonal spread of visits – reduction in the dependence on summer visits by 10%
- 5% growth in visitor spend by 2029
- Growth in visitor numbers to North & West Dorset

Next steps

The DMP will be published and shared with the industry then workshop(s) and engagement events will take place across the county to inform an Action Plan for the first 3 year of delivery.

Action plans will be set for a three-year period with progress monitored annually via the LVEP advisory board.

With thanks to our supporters and contributors

Visit Dorset – lead for Dorset LVEP, Dorset Council's Tourism Team

Dorset Tourism Association - Advisory board for the Dorset LVEP

Local Authorities

- Dorset Council (accountable body for the LVEP)
- BCP Council

Town Councils and BIDs

Sector organisations

- Arts Development Company, Dorset
- Best of Dorset Attractions
- BH Area Hospitality Association
- Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Destination Management Board
- Dorset Food and Drink
- Dorset Museum Group
- Dorset National Landscape
- National Trust

The consultation involved online responses from 124 business and 45 stakeholders.

Four workshops were then delivered across Dorset in November 2025. These were attended by 83 businesses, stakeholders and interested parties.

With thanks to the businesses that hosted the workshops: The Grosvenor, Shaftesbury, The Kings Arms, Dorchester, Marsham Court Hotel, Bournemouth and Highlands End, Eype, Bridport.

This strategy was funded by the UK Government via the UK Shared Prosperity Fund

Funded by UK Government













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Supported by:

Dorset Council

BCP Council

VISIT DORSET

Dorset Tourism Association

DMB Destination Management Board

BAHA BH Area Hospitality Association

museum development md south west

BEST OF DORSET ATTRACTIONS

Arts Development Company

Dorset Food&Drink

Dorset National Landscape

Discover Dorchester The Heart of Dorset

We are Weymouth

Cabinet
28 July 2026
SEND Reform Plan
For Review and Consultation

Cabinet Member:
Cllr C Sutton, Children, Families & Education

Local Councillor(s):

Senior Leadership Team:
P Dempsey - Executive Director, Children's Services

Report author and job title:
G Hayman – SEND Reform Programme Lead (Interim)

Statutory Authority:

Report status: Public (the exemption paragraph is N/A)

1. Executive summary

1.1 Dorset Council, working with partners across education, health and care, has developed and submitted a Local Area SEND Reform Plan (2026–2029) to the Department for Education (DfE) on 19 June 2026, in line with the national requirement for all local areas to set out a clear programme of SEND system reform.

1.2 This report presents the Reform Plan to Cabinet for endorsement. The plan sets the strategic framework for transforming Dorset's SEND system over the next three years.

1.3 Central government have advised that approval of the plan by the DfE will result in a write-off of 90% of Dorset Council's High Needs Block (HNB) deficit, which stood at approximately £150 million at the end of 2025/26. We have been told by the DfE that we will be notified in September 2026 as regards to whether our plan has been approved or not. If it is not approved, we will have a second chance to submit a revised plan in November 2026.

1.4 Alongside this financial reset, the plan sets out a clear pathway to improving outcomes for children and young people with SEND by enabling them to

achieve their potential, experience greater inclusion, and access timely, effective education and support within their local communities.

1.5 Dorset enters this reform programme from a position of strength, with outstanding Children's Services, strong co-production with families, and established investment in inclusive provision. However, the system is under significant and growing pressure. Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) have increased by 136% since 2015/16 (compared with 93% nationally), alongside increasing complexity of need and continued reliance on high-cost independent and non-maintained specialist placements. The cost of supporting children and young people placed in independent and non-maintained special schools sits at a projected £34.1 million in 2026/27, representing approximately 25% of total High Needs Block expenditure. These pressures are impacting outcomes, parental confidence and the long-term financial sustainability of the system.

1.6 The SEND Reform Plan has been developed and formally approved through Dorset's established partnership governance arrangements, with sign-off from senior leaders across education, health and care. These include the Local Authority Chief Executive, the Director of Children's Services, the Section 151 Officer (Chief Financial Officer), the Integrated Care Board Chief Executive, and the NHS Place Director for Children and Young People and Maternity, alongside endorsement from the Chair of the Dorset Parent Carer Council and the Chair of the Alliance for Inclusion and Excellence in Education. The plan has been subject to review and challenge by the DfE SEND Advisor, and the DFE Finance Advisor, before submission of the final version, providing additional external assurance on its robustness and alignment with national expectations.

1.7 The Dorset model is built around three core system shifts:

I. Strengthening mainstream inclusion and workforce capability

II. Delivering earlier, locality-based support through the "Dorset Expertise Offer" (Experts at Hand model

III. Reconfiguring specialist provision, including expansion of Inclusion Bases in mainstream schools and repositioning Alternative Provision as a short-term intervention

These system shifts are designed to create a more inclusive and preventative model of support, reducing escalation into statutory processes and high-cost provision, while improving outcomes and experiences for children and young people.

1.8 Key outcomes expected by 2029 include:

- EHCP growth reduced to c.2% annually, equating to around 900 fewer plans than projected without reform
- Increased numbers of children supported without statutory plans
- Reduced reliance on independent and out-of-area placements
- Improved attendance, stability and outcomes for children and young people
- A more sustainable High Needs Block financial position

1.9 These outcomes directly support Dorset's ambition to improve educational attainment, reduce disadvantage, and ensure more children are supported successfully in their local communities.

1.10 The plan also delivers against key Dorset Council Plan priorities, including strengthening the local workforce, improving educational attainment and reducing disadvantage, expanding inclusive and early intervention support, and ensuring sufficient, sustainable local provision.

2. Recommendation(s)

2.1 Cabinet is asked to:

I. Note the content of Dorset's Local Area SEND Reform Plan (2026 2029).

II. Endorse the plan submitted to the Department for Education.

III. Support the proposed programme of reform and associate transformation activity.

IV. Agree that further updates on delivery, performance and financial impact are brought back to Cabinet at key milestones.

3. Reason for the recommendation(s)

3.1 The Reform Plan is a key area of our work and a very important responsibility for the council. Successfully delivering our plan, and approval of the plan by the DfE, will alleviate significant financial risk for the council and deliver improved outcomes for our children and young people, with more of them educated in local schools in their local communities. Without

reform, demand and costs are forecast to continue rising and become unsustainable.

3.2: Submission of a local area Reform Plan is a mandatory requirement as part of the Government's drive to reform the SEND system nationally.

3.3 The Reform Plan sets out a clear ambition to move from a reactive, high-cost system to a more inclusive, preventative and locally responsive model. This includes a deliberate shift away from reliance on independent and out-of-area provision towards stronger mainstream inclusion and expanded local capacity.

4. The Report

4.1 Dorset's SEND system demonstrates strong performance and leadership. However, it faces significant structural challenges, including:

- Rapid growth in EHCPs
- Increasing complexity of need
- Variability in mainstream inclusion
- Rural pressures affecting sufficiency and transport
- High reliance on independent placements (£30k–£64k per pupil)

4.2 These pressures are impacting outcomes, parental confidence and financial sustainability.

4.3 The vision is for a coherent 0–25 system in which all children and young people with SEND are healthy, safe and included, achieve meaningful outcomes, and are supported earlier and closer to home through strong mainstream inclusion and integrated multi-agency working. This vision directly supports Dorset Council Plan priorities by enabling stronger local workforce capability, improving outcomes for disadvantaged children, and ensuring support is delivered earlier and closer to home through inclusive mainstream provision.

4.4 As part of this, the number of independent school placements is expected to reduce over time, with projections showing a decrease from 527 placements in 2026 to around 463 by 2029/30 as additional local provision comes online. This reduction is a key indicator of both improved local sufficiency and better outcomes for children and young people, who will increasingly be educated closer to home.

4.5 The plan will be delivered through a phased approach over three years, under strong multi-agency governance led by the Alliance for Inclusion and Excellence in Education. The programme also underpins Dorset's eligibility for significant national financial support linked to High Needs sustainability and system reform

4.6 Key Components of the Reform Model will include:

I. **Stronger Mainstream Inclusion,** including a shared Inclusion Charter and consistent standards, enhanced Ordinarily Available Provision, workforce development and training, and improved transitions between phases. This includes a sustained focus on workforce development and recruitment, recognising the critical role of a skilled and stable education workforce in delivering inclusive practice and improving outcomes.

II. **Earlier, Locality-Based Support,** involving the introduction of "Dorset's Expertise Offer" (Experts at Hand), multi-disciplinary teams supporting schools without requiring EHCPs, strengthened early identification via Family Hubs, effective use of Valuing SEND and a clear focus on prevention and reducing escalation. The locality model aligns with the Council's ambition for community-based services, including Family Hubs and early help, ensuring children and families can access support within their local communities.

III. **Reconfigured Continuum of Support,** featuring an expansion of Inclusion Bases across Dorset, Alternative Provision repositioned as a short-term intervention (3-tier model) and increased outreach from specialist services. Expansion of Inclusion Bases contributes to a more sustainable local estate, reducing reliance on distant placements and supporting children to remain within their communities.

4.7 In terms of expected impact, by 2029, the plan will deliver:

- Slower EHCP growth (to c.2% annually)
- Reduced EHC needs assessments over time
- Around 900 fewer EHCPs than projected without reform
- Reduction in independent school placements
- Improved attendance, attainment and placement stability
- Increased parental confidence and reduced disputes

4.8 The programme will be implemented over three years:

Year 1 (2026/27): Establish

- Launch Expertise Offer
- Agree Inclusion Charter

- Begin expansion of Inclusion Bases
- Introduce AP 3-tier model

Year 2: (2027/28) Embed

- Scale early intervention
- Strengthen mainstream capability
- Demonstrate early impact

Year 3: (2028/29) Sustain

- Fully embedded inclusive system
- Measurable improvements in demand and finance

4.9 Governance of the programme will be delivered through:

- the Alliance for Inclusion and Excellence in Education (providing strategic oversight)
- the ECAT Partnership Group (overseeing delivery)
- Dorset Expertise Offer Group (overseeing development of the offer)
- ultimate oversight of the Executive Director Children's Services as Senior Responsible Officer (SRO).

5. Alternative options considered

5.1 The option to maintain the current system with incremental improvements would not have addressed rising demand and cost pressures, nor delivered required national reforms or secured long-term financial sustainability.

6. Legal considerations

6.1 The plan responds to national SEND reform expectations and statutory duties under the Children and Families Act 2014. It reflects partnership responsibilities across education, health and care and will inform future statutory and legislative changes expected through the national reform programme.

7. Financial implications

7.1 The SEND system is currently under significant financial pressure, particularly within the High Needs Block (HNB), where sustained growth in Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs), increasing complexity of need, and reliance on high-cost independent placements have resulted in a substantial accumulated deficit.

7.2 The Department for Education (DfE) has indicated that, subject to approval of Dorset's SEND Reform Plan, 90% of the Local Authority's High Needs

Block deficit will be written off. This represents a significant financial reset and provides a critical opportunity to move towards a sustainable system.

7.3 The financial strategy underpinning the plan is based on a fundamental shift in investment from reactive, high-cost provision to earlier intervention, mainstream inclusion and locally delivered support. Central to this is the implementation of Dorset's Expertise Offer ("Experts at Hand"), supported by an initial investment of approximately £2.2m in 2026/27. The confirmed Year 1 allocation totals £2,212,875, with the majority directed to frontline delivery through multi-agency teams, alongside funding for programme delivery and administrative support.

7.4 This investment enables the recruitment and deployment of a strengthened specialist workforce, including Educational Psychologists, Speech and Language Therapists, Occupational Therapists and Specialist Teachers, providing earlier, locality-based support directly to mainstream settings. The model is designed to intervene earlier, build capacity within schools, and reduce escalation to statutory processes and specialist provision.

7.5 The plan also aligns with national proposals for an Inclusive Mainstream Fund, which will provide direct funding to schools to meet additional needs without reliance on EHCPs. This will strengthen Ordinarily Available Provision, support inclusive practice, and enable more children and young people to be successfully supported in mainstream education.

7.6 Central to the plan is a fundamental shift in how resources are used, moving investment from reactive, high-cost provision to earlier intervention, mainstream inclusion and locally delivered support. This is expected to reduce cost pressures within the High Needs Block over time by slowing EHCP growth, reducing demand for statutory intervention and avoiding escalation into higher-cost school placements.

7.7 Early modelling indicates that reductions in independent placements alone will deliver cost reductions of around £1 million per annum by 2028/29, with further cost avoidance achieved as the model embeds and local capacity increases. This will support a transition from a system where costs are rising rapidly to one that is more stable, sustainable and better able to deliver value for money over the medium term. We are projecting that the growth in spend in the High Needs Block will reduce from £21m in 25/26 to £3m in 28/29

7.8 These financial benefits will be realised alongside improved outcomes, not instead of them. The plan is designed to ensure that children and young people with SEND are supported earlier, more consistently and more inclusively, enabling them to achieve their potential and experience greater stability in education. By strengthening mainstream provision and

expanding local specialist capacity, more children will be supported successfully within their communities, improving outcomes while reducing reliance on high-cost placements.

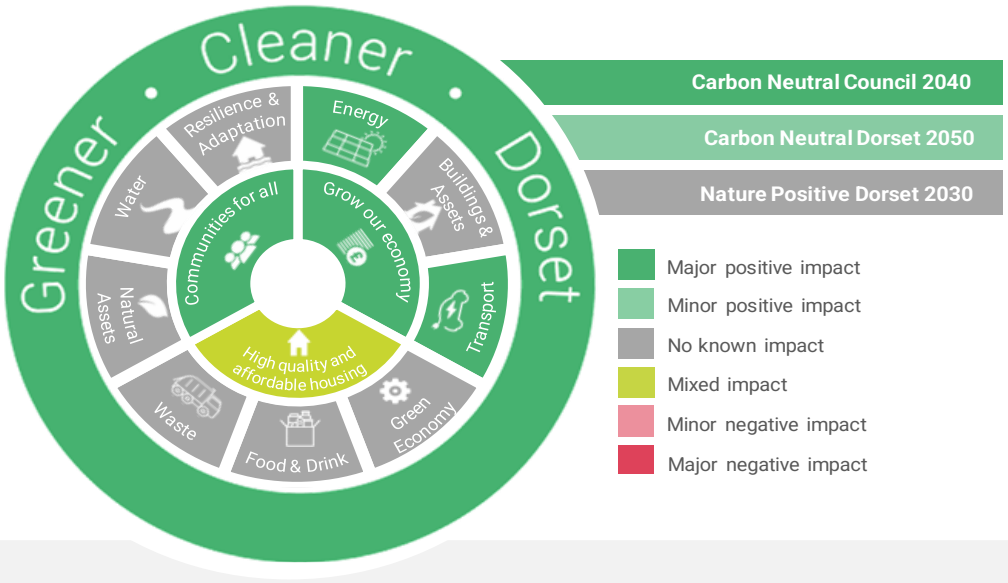
7.9 Over time, the combined impact of these reforms is expected to reduce reliance on high-cost independent placements, slow the growth in EHCPs and associated costs, and shift expenditure towards more sustainable, locally delivered provision. This supports the Council's objective of improving outcomes while delivering better value for money and strengthening long-term financial sustainability.

7.10 Delivery of these financial benefits is dependent on successful implementation of the reform programme, including workforce recruitment, system-wide adoption of inclusive practice, and continued alignment with national policy and funding. While there is a risk that demand may continue to rise in the short term, this is mitigated through phased implementation, strong governance and ongoing monitoring of demand, cost and impact.

8. Natural environment, climate & ecology implications

8.1 The expansion of local provision (e.g. Inclusion Bases) is expected to reduce travel distances for children and families and lower transport-related environmental impact.

SEND Reform Plam



Quantitative Impact on CEE targets (if known)		
	Unit	Number of units (+/-)
2030 - Natural asset extent & condition	Ha	0
2040 - Operational Emissions	CO_2 (tonnes)	

9. Well-being and health implications

9.1. The plan will support earlier identification of need, improve emotional wellbeing through inclusive settings, reduce anxiety linked to school transitions and placement instability and strengthen integrated health support.

10. Other implications

10.1 The reforms align with:

I. Dorset Council Plan priorities

II. Children and Young People's Plan

III. National SEND reform policy

11. Risk implications

11.1 HAVING CONSIDERED: the risks associated with this decision; the level of risk has been identified as:

- Current Risk: High
- Residual Risk: Medium

11.2 Key risks include

- Loss of parental confidence
- Workforce shortages
- Partner engagement
- Demand outpacing reform
- Delivery complexity

11.3 Mitigation includes strong governance, co-production, workforce planning, and robust monitoring.

12. Equalities

12.1 The plan promotes equality by improving access to support, reducing variation in provision, increasing inclusion within mainstream settings, and supporting disadvantaged and vulnerable groups. This is central to the council's duty to promote equality of opportunity.

13. Appendices

I. Appendix 1: Dorset SEND Reform Plan (2026–2029)
II. Appendix 2: Member webinar presentation (16 June 2026)
III. Appendix 5: Accessible Table of Impacts and Table of Recommendations (below)

14. Background papers

I. Appendix 3: Schools White Paper (2026)
II. Appendix 4: DfE SEND Reform guidance (2026)

15. Report sign-off

15.1 This report has been through the internal report clearance process and has been signed off by the Director for Assurance and Governance (Monitoring Officer), the Director for Resources (Section 151 Officer) and the appropriate Cabinet Member (s)

Appendix 5: Accessible Table of Impacts and Table of Recommendations

ACCESSIBLE TABLE SHOWING IMPACTS

Natural Environment, Climate & Ecology Strategy Commitments	Impact
Energy	major positive impact
Buildings & Assets	No known impact
Transport	major positive impact
Green Economy	No known impact
Food & Drink	No known impact
Waste	No known impact
Natural Assets & Ecology	No known impact
Water	No known impact
Resilience and Adaptation	No known impact

Corporate Plan Aims	Impact
Grow our economy	strongly supports it
High-quality and affordable housing	neutral
Communities for all	strongly supports it

TABLE OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations	Responses -will this be incorporated into your proposal? How? And if not, why not?
Energy	
No recommendations found for this category	
Buildings & Assets	
No recommendations found for this category	
Transport	
No recommendations found for this category	
Green Economy	
No recommendations found for this category	
Food & Drink	
No recommendations found for this category	
Waste	
No recommendations found for this category	

Natural Assets & Ecology	
No recommendations found for this category	
Water	
No recommendations found for this category	
Resilience & Adaptation	
No recommendations found for this category	

Annex A: Local SEND Reform Plan

Developing a Local SEND Reform Plan is an important first step for local areas to set out how they will lay the foundation for reform, and design an approach tailored to their local context. A shared plan which focuses on co-designing the local approach as system partners and with children, young people and families will help foster collective responsibility for delivering the reforms.

It is critical that all system partners, including health, education and childcare settings, work together to design and deliver the Local SEND Reform Plan, under the local authority's leadership. It is also crucial that representative family carers e.g. the local Parent Carer Forum, are involved in the development of the plan.

The expectation is that this plan is discussed, agreed, and signed off at your relevant SEND Governance Board. As a minimum, the plan must be formally signed off by the Local Authority Chief Executive (CEO), the Integrated Care Board (ICB) Chief Executive – **Jonathan Higman** , the Local Authority Director of Children's Service (DCS), the Integrated Care Board NHS Place Director **Dr Dean Spencer /Lucy Baker**, and the Local Authority Chief Financial Officer (CFO/Section 151 Officer). We encourage other colleagues and partners who have contributed to also review and sign-off the plan, particularly early years, school, college and trust leaders.

Name of Local Authority: Dorset Council

Name of Integrated Care Board: BSW, Somerset and Dorset ICB

Local SEND Reform Plan SRO: Paul Dempsey, Director of Children's Services (DCS)

Signatories

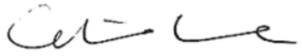
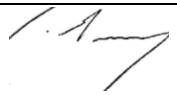
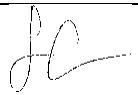
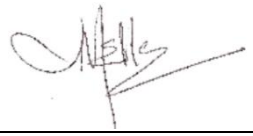
Role	Name	Signature	Email contact	Date
LA Chief Executive	Catherine Howe		catherine.howe@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk	18/06/2026
ICB Chief Executive	Jonathan Higman		jonathan.higman@nhs.net	16/06/2026
LA Director of Children's Services	Paul Dempsey		Paul.Dempsey@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk	19/06/2026
LA Section 151 Officer	Sean Cremer		Sean.Cremer@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk	18/06/2026
Place Director and Commissioning SRO for Children and Young People and Maternity (BSW, Somerset and Dorset)	Lucy Baker		lucy.baker8@nhs.net	16/06/2026
Chair of Dorset Parent Carer Council	Lesley Mellor		dpcc@dorsetparentcarercouncil.co.uk	15/06/2026
Chair of Alliance for Inclusion and Excellence in Education	Stephen Twigg		Stephen.Twigg@cpahq.org	12/06/2026

Table of Contents

Within this document

The key sections of this document are linked below:

- Executive Summary
- Section 1 – Vision and Goals
- Section 2 – Strategy
- Section 3 – Monitoring and evaluation
- Section 4 – Governance
- Section 5 – Central Government Support

Appendix

The appendices are provided as separate attachments to accompany and support the SEND Reform Plan.

Appendix #	Document name	Description
Appendix 1	**Glossary**	This document provides an overview and definition of key terms and acronyms used throughout Dorset's SEND Reform Plan.
Appendix 2	**Core Minimum Requirements key**	This document sets out the Core Minimum Requirements from the SEND Reform Plan guidance. Each requirement is assigned a reference number, which is used throughout the plan as an orange superscript to indicate the most relevant section where each requirement has been addressed.
Appendix 3	**Dorset's strengthened Universal Offer**	This appendix provides additional detail on Dorset's strengthened Universal Offer, expanding on the ambition set out in the main SEND Reform Plan to give a fuller picture of how the offer will work in practice. It covers the core components of the offer alongside the practical detail of what settings can expect, how the offer connects to Dorset's Expertise Offer and how impact will be monitored and evidenced.

Appendix 4	**Dorset's Expertise Offer**	This appendix provides additional detail on Dorset's Expertise Offer (the local delivery model for Experts at Hand) expanding on the ambition set out in the main SEND Reform Plan to give a fuller picture of how the Expertise Offer will work in practice. It covers the design principles of the offer, the proposed menu of support, how the offer will be delivered and accessed by settings and how impact will be measured and evidenced.

Executive Summary

A brief summary of your local system 'change story' – your local context, where you are now, where you want to get to in the next 3 years, how you know you are succeeding and how you will know you have achieved your vision for the next 3 years. Please include a brief qualitative summary. This summary should also include your assessment of current and forecast performance against the headline metrics.

Please structure your 'change story' using the following aims:

- *Build a 0-25 system where children and young people receive support to achieve and thrive through (a) more inclusive settings and (b) stronger local partnerships*
- *Improve capacity and capability of the mainstream and specialist workforce to identify and meet need*
- *Improve confidence of children, families, and stakeholders in reform and readiness of the system*
- *Stabilise finances and improve value for money*

500 words

- ***Dorset enters this reform programme from a strong position**, with foundations in partnership working and inclusive practice, strong Early Years provision, capital investment and a history of co-design with children and families. The latest Area SEND Inspection awarded the highest grading, Children's Services were rated outstanding in the 2025 Ofsted ILACS inspection, and Dorset was a Wave One Pathfinder in the Families First programme.*
- ***Dorset's rural character brings real pressures that directly shape the SEND challenge.** With 49% of schools classed as rural against 18% nationally, many children begin their education in small, close-knit primary settings where needs are closely supported. The move to larger secondary settings can be a significant step, with both settings and families seeking the reassurance of statutory support in response to uncertainty about how needs will be met in a different environment. This is a significant factor in Dorset's EHCP growth of 136% since 2015/16 against 93% nationally, with the proportion in secondary settings rising to 33% against 24% nationally.*
- ***Local sufficiency gaps and limited local market competition drive reliance on high-cost independent placements**, while uneven inclusive practice across mainstream settings contributes to escalation into specialist provision.*
- ***Dorset's Local Partnership Maturity Assessment reinforces these pressures**: unintegrated data limits need identification; uneven mainstream capability, particularly for school moves, is contributing to EHCP growth and loss of parental confidence; neurodevelopmental and mental health pathways face capacity pressures; and value for money analysis is not consistently embedded.*
- ***Dorset has already begun to shift the system.** Phase 1 of the Inclusion Bases programme is complete, Phase 2 is underway, an inclusive classrooms pilot is active, and the Valuing SEND tool is supporting earlier identification of need. Outcomes for children with an EHCP at Key Stage 2 rose by 8-9 percentage points last year.*
- ***Over the next three years, Dorset will build a stronger 0-25 system anchored in locality-based Family Help and underpinned by Dorset's Expertise Offer (our local Experts at Hand).** Mainstream settings will meet a wider range of need, Inclusion Bases will expand, AP will operate as an intervention rather than a destination, and early identification will be strengthened through Family Hubs, Valuing SEND and the Reception Ready model. Dorset's Birth to Settled Adulthood service provides an important foundation, and the reform programme will build on this existing infrastructure.*
- ***By 2029, EHCP growth is expected to slow to 2%, resulting in 5,559 EHCPs** – over 800 fewer than the unmitigated trajectory. New EHCNAs are expected to reduce to 609 from 632 and HNB growth will reduce significantly as the new model embeds.*
- ***Dorset's Expertise Offer will build capability** through consultation, training and outreach, supported by clear career pathways, agreed standards and a refreshed sufficiency strategy.*
- ***Confidence, co-production and value for money will be core measures of success.** We'll know reform is succeeding when families report clearer pathways, settings show greater confidence, more children are supported locally, and data shows a more sustainable HNB. The key measure of financial success will be reduced reliance on independent and out-of-area placements.*

Section 1 – Vision and Goals

1. **What the local area partnership is trying to achieve?**

   Please set out your goals for your local system. These should be clear, aligned to the vision set out in the Schools White Paper, small in number and measurable. These goals should include clear reference to:

   - Outcomes for children
   - Confidence of parents, carers and young people in the system
   - Management of finances to secure value for money

250 words

Our Vision:

In Dorset, we want children and young people to be healthy, happy and safe, feel valued and understood, and achieve meaningful outcomes that enable them to lead fulfilling, independent lives. Through inclusive education, high-quality support and a strong partnership, we will ensure all children and young people are empowered to reach their full potential.

Dorset will deliver this vision by establishing a more inclusive, preventative and locally responsive system, underpinned by Dorset's Expertise Offer (our local Experts at Hand model), building confidence and capability across settings to identify and meet needs earlier.

Our goals are to:

- ***Identify needs earlier and deliver timely support in the right setting:*** *increasing the proportion of children with SEND whose needs are met through SEN support, measured by a reduction in EHCNA requests, slowing EHCP growth and improved attainment and attendance.*[3.3]
- ***Strengthen inclusive, local provision****: education settings meeting a wide range of needs confidently and consistently, evidenced by reduced variation in inclusive practice, increased access to key practitioners and fewer children in out-of-area or high-cost placements.*
- ***Improve outcomes and experiences for children, young people and families:*** *measured through co-produced parental confidence metrics, reduced disputes, improved school move experiences and direct feedback from children and young people.*
- ***Ensure long-term sustainability and effective use of resources:*** *evidenced by reduced spend on independent and distant placements, a stabilising High Needs Block and improved cost-effectiveness of early intervention.*

Progress will be owned by the ***Alliance for Inclusion and Excellence in Education****, providing accountability for delivery and improvement.*

Section 2 – Strategy

2. Where the local area partnership expects to be in the next 3 years

A description of what your local system would look like in the next 3 years in line with the national vision set out in the Schools White Paper and set within the context of where you are starting from as a local system.

In particular, as commissioning system partners, you should reflect on and agree what your fully fledged **Experts at Hand Offer** model should be and how this will be deployed via mainstream settings and providers (including those not based in your area – e.g. further education colleges attended by your young people) to build their capacity as well as identify and meet the needs of children and young people earlier and without the need for a statutory assessment for Education, Health and Care.

To help you fully consider the scope and scale of change required, you may find it useful to structure your response using these 4 building blocks of an inclusive system, reflecting on what is working well in your system, what you are most worried about, what needs to change, and how the enablers will help you achieve your 3 year vision.

When summarising where your local area partnership currently is, please include an assessment of where you are in reference to the core minimum requirements above and how you bridge the gap, making reference to and attaching additional documents that provide underlying evidence for your summary.

Strengthening inclusion across education settings– organising places and provision to meet as many needs as possible, as close to home as possible, with all settings and providers moving towards a shared understanding and consistent practices around inclusion.

System leadership, local partnership collaboration and co-production – putting in place the enabling conditions across a local area that ensures planning and provision reflects the local area & is joined up, including strategic co-production with parent carers and children and young people.

Access to specialist support and local placements – improving collaboration between settings and deploying expertise from a range of specialist and expert sources, to support schools and settings to meet the needs of children and young people earlier and locally.

Encouraging inclusive culture & behaviours – using funding and shared accountability towards a system that works for children and families while achieving value for money.

Overview

Note: *superscript numbers in orange refer to the Core Minimum Requirements, as set out in Appendix 2, and show where the plan addresses each requirement. The roadmap in Q5 provides the primary audit trail for CMR coverage, with Q2 setting out the strategic rationale and Q6 showing how relevant Year 1 actions will be delivered.*

Dorset starts from a strong base for SEND reform, with established accountability, governance and performance arrangements across the council and wider partnership[4.1]. The proposed three-year blueprint below builds on the Dorset SEND Strategy 2024 to 2027 and the partnership vision that was agreed with children, young people, families, Education, Health and Care partners. It is also aligned to the Council Plan and our Babies, Children, Young People and Families Plan 2023-2033, ensuring that SEND reform is part of Dorset's wider commitment to children thriving, inclusive communities and effective use of public resources.

There is clear political and corporate support for this work: Ofsted recognised that "ambitious, family focused and child-centred senior leaders, including political and corporate leaders alongside multi-agency partners, have demonstrated an unwavering commitment to children." It also found that senior leaders have a "robust understanding" of practice and performance through strong management information, sophisticated reporting and multi-agency oversight.

This commitment is further reflected in Dorset Council's emerging North Star vision, which places better co-production with communities, prevention at scale and deep modernisation of practice at its heart, alongside a commitment to becoming a more inclusive and adaptive organisation. This SEND reform plan is a direct expression of those principles in action: shifting the system towards earlier support, stronger mainstream inclusion and more genuine partnership with families and communities. Specifically, the reform programme will benefit from, and contribute to, three corporate enablers that are central to the North Star vision: a council-wide move towards data-led decision-making, which will strengthen how Dorset plans, commissions and evaluates SEND provision; the developing corporate landlord model, which will support more strategic and joined-up oversight of property and asset development to enable the expansion of Inclusion Bases and specialist provision across place; and the council's commitment to locality and place-based delivery, which directly underpins the design of Dorset's Expertise Offer and the wider ambition to ensure children and young people receive the right support closer to home.

Dorset's delivery model will be LA-led and jointly governed with the ICB, with delivery integrated through existing locality Family Help arrangements. This is the optimal model for Dorset because it builds on established local relationships, reflects the county's rural geography, avoids creating a parallel service, and enables specialist education and health expertise to be targeted through shared data on need, setting readiness and local pressure points.[1.1, 1.9, 1.10]

Over the next three years, these foundations will be built upon through the newly formed Alliance for Inclusion and Excellence in Education, which will hold the partnership to account for delivery, outcomes and financial sustainability. Regular progress updates will be provided to our political leadership through existing democratic accountability. Dorset will also build on its strong Children's Services performance and quality assurance framework, clear commissioning arrangements and recognised workforce development approach to deliver reform with grip, pace and shared ownership.

Since 1st April 2026, NHS Dorset Integrated Care Board has been clustered with Bath and North East Somerset, Swindon and Wiltshire (BSW) ICB and Somerset ICB, ensuring that improvements for children and young people with SEND are embedded within the future operating model of the system. As the ICB strengthens the role of place-based partnerships and transitions toward a strategic commissioning function, SEND services will increasingly be shaped and delivered through neighbourhood level, multidisciplinary teams[1.1]. This alignment enables more consistent decision making, clearer accountability and earlier, more coordinated support for families. By situating SEND within the emerging place architecture and neighbourhood model, we will create a more responsive, integrated system that delivers the right support at the right time, closer to home.

Local blueprint for the next 3 years

Building blocks	Where we are *(a short summary of where you are now including a reflection on what is working well, what needs to change and the status of the enablers that underpin your system)*	Where we will be in the next 3 years *(a short summary of the vision for your local system in the next 3 years including the system enablers, reflecting how your Experts at Hand Offer model will underpin this vision, helping you scale and enhance what is working well and change what is not working so well)*

Strengthening inclusion across education settings	***What are we currently achieving?*** *Dorset has a clear and system-wide commitment to strengthening inclusion across educational settings, with strong foundations across all phases of education:* • ***The Early Years sector is particularly strong**, providing high-quality provision that prepares children for the compulsory stages of education, underpinned by strong professional oversight and a well-functioning Best Start in Life dashboard. Best Start in Life Advisors, working as part of Dorset's Birth to Settled Adulthood service, play an important role in early identification and family support, working closely with families of pre-school children with complex needs to reduce barriers, promote inclusion and connect families to the right support at the earliest opportunity. In addition, the SEND Lead roles and health roles within the Best Start programme are well embedded within local 0-19 and SaLT teams and were highlighted in the BCP Inspection as great examples of our ability to evidence the early identification of SEND need. [3.6] This provides a strong platform for Dorset to strengthen 0-5 childcare sufficiency for children with SEND, including a clearer understanding of place availability, gaps for children with complex and emerging needs, and the role of Best Start Family Hubs in supporting inclusive access to early education and childcare.* • ***The Dorset Families First model also provides an integrated, locality-based approach** across six local areas, with well-embedded team structures and matrix management supporting consistent practice closer to communities. Furthermore, the Families First model also informs our Children and Young People's Mental Health Transformation Programme developing an integrated consultation and conversation based front door and integrated locality-based support.* • ***A comprehensive proposition for mainstream staff is in place as part of Dorset's Ordinarily Available Provision offer, which includes training and workforce development opportunities**. This offer recently moved online to improve reach and engagement, and early evidence shows that this is helping to build inclusive practice across settings, with bespoke offers such as Therapeutic Thinking already showing clearly visible individual impact. However, take-up is varied and the system-wide impact on inclusive practice will need to be monitored going forward.* • ***There is a growing outreach offer from Learning Centres and Special Schools who deliver research-led, high-quality provision***	***What is our ambition for strengthening inclusion across education settings?*** *Dorset's ambition is for every education setting to be resourced and confident to meet the needs of its pupils, and clear on escalation routes for those with the most complex needs, so that children and young people with SEND can learn close to home and alongside their peers. By the end of the plan period:* • *Every education setting will be able to clearly articulate the support available at universal level and confident in recognising appropriate access routes where more targeted support is required* • *A shared, co-produced definition of inclusion, reflecting the government's seven principles, will underpin practice, expectations and accountability across all settings and system partners* • *Early identification and intervention will be consistent and equitable across all education settings* • *School moves at key stages and into adulthood will be well-planned and consistently delivered.* • *Post-16 pathways to adulthood will be clearly articulated, consistently navigated and supported by timely specialist input with more young people accessing further education, training, employment and supported internships in mainstream settings close to home, and fewer requiring independent or non-maintained specialist placements.[3.9]* ***System enablers*** • ***Workforce**: Dorset's existing workforce (including EP, SALT and OT services) already operating without significant waiting list pressures, which provides a strong foundation on which to strengthen inclusion across settings through the new Expertise model. This, alongside additional investment in workforce sufficiency and development, will further support mainstream settings to have the confidence and capability to deliver inclusive practice consistently.* • ***Data and digital solutions:** the Valuing SEND tool, already demonstrating strong impact in Early Years, will enable further support to mainstream practice, a stronger grip on our inclusion baseline among settings, and robust monitoring and evaluation processes. This will integrate and complement additional local data indicators and processes.* • ***Capital**: investment through the Inclusive Classroom programme will ensure the physical environment of mainstream settings actively supports inclusive practice, complementing the skills and confidence being*

and play an important role within the wider continuum of support, with a growing opportunity to expand and strengthen their outreach role to further develop mainstream inclusion across all phases, shifting the focus from individual pupil support towards whole-setting capacity building that develops mainstream inclusion across all phases.

- ***The Valuing SEND tool and approach is providing an innovative digital way for educational settings to self-assess their provision and better understand the needs of pupils at the individual and cohort level.*** *Launched in summer 2025, it is already demonstrating strong impact in Early Years, supporting more children to remain in mainstream settings and providing a useful mechanism for targeting support. There is now a clear opportunity to expand its use across more settings to support system-wide improvements, particularly to support school moves, in recognition of this growing challenge across Dorset and in alignment with the intention that from 2029/30 children with EHCPs will be assessed against the new threshold before moving to the next phase of education.*

- ***Monitoring arrangements are starting to be strengthened****, supported by changes to Ofsted inspections and local quality assurance of funded provisions.*

- ***Early Years and school-age data dashboards provide a detailed and comprehensive view of need****, supporting evidence-based practice and planning. Additionally, our Dorset Intelligence & Insights service includes a SEND report that enables broader health and care data, strengthening our understanding of children and young people's needs and partnership planning alongside our health SEND datasets available at Place level.*

- ***The Children and Young People's Public Health Nursing Service (CYPPHNS), commissioned by Dorset Council through the Public Health grant, delivers the Healthy Child Programme across Dorset*** *– including Health Visitors and School Nurses. While a universal service for all children and families, the CYPPHNS plays an important role in the early identification and support of emerging needs, particularly in the early years before school. Health Visitors are already well-connected to early years teams on the ground, acting as trusted professionals who support families, advocate on their behalf and link them into the wider system. This existing infrastructure provides an important foundation for the early identification and intervention ambitions set out in this plan and aligns closely with Dorset's Best Start in Life plan.*

- ***Dorset's Preparation for Adulthood team, operating within the***

developed across the workforce.

How will we achieve our ambition over the next 3 years?
Achieving this ambition will require coordinated action, building on Dorset's strong existing foundations and the distinctive advantages of its locality-based Family First model:

1) Strengthening our Universal Offer for all settings
A strengthened Universal Offer will address the variation in inclusive practice identified in the Local Partnership Maturity Assessment, ensuring every mainstream setting has the confidence, capability and shared expectations needed to meet a wide range of needs – reducing escalation, building parental confidence in mainstream provision, and enabling more children and young people with SEND to be successfully supported locally, with a particular focus on key school moves.[3.3]

- ***Building on the National Inclusion Standards and an early version of the Inclusion Charter*** *developed by school leaders including MAT CEOs, Dorset will further develop and agree an ambitious, system-wide Inclusion Charter in partnership with school leaders, MAT CEOs, health and care partners, post-16 and further education providers, and the Dorset Parent Carer Council*[3.1, 3.2]*. The Charter will establish clear and shared expectations for inclusive practice across the full 0-25 range – from Early Years through to further education and the move into adulthood – ensuring that the commitment to inclusion does not diminish as young people move through and beyond the education system. Involving the Parent Carer Council centrally in this process will ensure the Charter reflects family perspectives and builds trust in what the whole system is committed to delivering.*

- ***A quality inclusion framework will be introduced alongside a clearly articulated Universal and Ordinarily Available Provision Offer –*** *including pathways, support available and access routes – with gaps identified and addressed and existing good practice shared and scaled across the system. The framework will incorporate a broader set of inclusion indicators, including attendance, exclusions, EBSA, EHE, placement stability and parental confidence, used consistently at whole area governance and locality cluster levels to understand the impact of the Universal Offer, identify variation and inform decision making.*

- ***The Universal and Ordinarily Available Provision Offer will be reviewed and refreshed,*** *anchored in the National Inclusion Standards as the shared framework for what mainstream settings are expected to provide, informed by robust local needs analysis to ensure it is explicitly targeted at the most commonly occurring and growing areas of need. This will include embedding and scaling well-evidenced early intervention*

Birth to Settled Adulthood service, supports young people aged 14-25 to develop independence and access the right information, advice and planning as they approach adulthood *– including Care Act assessments and Preparation for Adulthood Plans[3.9]. This existing offer, alongside Dorset's Birth to Settled Adulthood service's Outcomes Framework, developed in partnership with young people and families, provides a strong foundation for the system-wide ambition to embed preparation for adulthood as a consistent expectation across all settings from the earliest stages.*

What are our current challenges in strengthening inclusion across educational settings?
Building on these strong foundations, Dorset's local data and Local Partnership Maturity Assessment have identified some clear areas where focused development will help us drive further improvement in strengthening inclusion across educational settings as part of this reform programme:

- ***There is an opportunity to develop a shared, co-produced local definition of inclusion across the system****. This will underpin consistent expectations, practice and accountability across all education settings.*

- ***There is also a need to develop a more systematic view of 0-5 childcare sufficiency for children with SEND.*** *While Dorset has strong Early Years practice, the partnership needs a clearer locality-level picture of inclusive childcare availability, specialist support, gaps for children with complex and emerging needs, and the actions required to ensure families can access suitable early education and childcare close to home.[3.6]*

- ***There is evidence of strong inclusive practice across mainstream settings, but this is still too varied****, with confidence and capability still uneven in places, contributing to differences in the experiences of children and families and a rise in statutory requests and escalation to specialist provision. Reducing this variation is a priority. There is also a recognition that post-16 and further education settings are not yet consistently engaged within the inclusion agenda, and there is a clear opportunity to bring them closer into the system, ensuring that the ambition for consistent, high-quality inclusive practice extends across the full 0-25 range and that young people with SEND experience the same quality of support as they move into and through post-16 education.*

- ***The primary to secondary school moves are a notable pressure point in Dorset, with data indicating an increase in statutory***

approaches across mainstream settings, building on Dorset's existing strong foundations, including the Balanced System approach for speech, language and communication, the Partnerships for Inclusion of Neurodiversity in Schools (PINS) programme to support neurodevelopmental needs including autism spectrum disorder, and the practice developed within Learning Centres to support social, emotional and mental health needs.[3.4]

- ***Strengthening school moves, particularly from primary to secondary and into post-16, will be a central focus of the strengthened universal offer, directly responding to the pressure on EHCP demand identified at these key stages.*** *Building on the strong foundations already established in Early Years, the Valuing SEND tool will be extended to primary and secondary settings and embedded as the consistent mechanism for assessing setting readiness, understanding individual need and sharing information at key stage moves. This will ensure that both the sending and receiving setting have a clear, shared picture of a child's needs ahead of school moves, building confidence across phases and giving families the reassurance they need that support will be in place from the outset, reducing the uncertainty that can drive demand for statutory assessment. The Reception Ready model will be scaled to support early years to primary school moves, with an equivalent approach developed for the primary to secondary and secondary to post-16 stages over the course of the plan period.[3.8]*

- ***The secondary to post-16 transition will be a particular focus****, with a new post-16 sufficiency strategy (referenced in more detail in the Enabling Inclusive Culture and Behaviour building block) informing how pathways are clarified, how information flows consistently between settings and how additional support is available in a timely way to support young people and families at this critical stage.[3.10]*

- ***The refreshed offer will also ensure that the learning and expertise from these approaches is accessible to all settings from Early Years to further education****, with clear guidance on deployment, supported by Dorset's Expertise Offer and the training and workforce development programme. Settings will be supported to identify which approaches are most relevant to their context through the Valuing SEND tool setting readiness data, enabling a more targeted and evidence-informed approach to early intervention across all phases.*

- ***The refreshed universal offer will reflect a whole-system understanding of inclusion****, extending beyond education settings to encompass the wider network of universal support available to children, young people and families including Health Visiting, community prevention services and family support. This recognises that inclusion begins long*

	assessment requests around this stage. *Dorset's high proportion of small rural primary settings is likely to be a contributing factor: where children with SEND have been successfully supported in close-knit, smaller environments within primaries, there can be uncertainty, among families and settings alike, about whether those needs can be met with the same consistency and responsiveness in a larger, more complex secondary setting. This uncertainty, compounded by the natural complexity of moving between very different educational environments and variation in how needs present across phases, has led to increased demand for statutory assessment as a means of formalising and securing support ahead of (or shortly following) a school move, even where the underlying level of need has not changed. Strengthening cross-phase communication, building shared understanding of need across settings, and ensuring that all parts of the system feel confident and well-supported to meet need at every stage is therefore an important priority within this reform programme.* • ***The take-up of our Ordinarily Available Provision Offer and staff training is varied and the system-wide impact on inclusive practice is not yet monitored****. Building on the strong individual impact already visible, the next step is to track and evidence impact more systematically to enable targeted and evidence-based workforce development across educational settings.* • ***The outreach role of Learning Centres and Special Schools, while valued, is not yet consistently embedded or equitably accessed across all localities and phases****. There is a clear opportunity to strengthen and extend this as part of a coherent inclusion continuum, and to align this with Dorset's Expertise Offer for educational settings.* • ***Local self-evaluation frameworks can be further developed to identify and address variation in inclusive practice consistently across settings*** *– strengthening these, alongside a shared understanding of what good inclusive practice looks like in Dorset, will support more confident and consistent improvement.* • ***Early Years and school-age data are not yet integrated, limiting their use as a proactive, system-wide planning tool.*** *Combining these strong existing datasets presents a significant opportunity to better understand children's needs and journeys through the SEND system.*	*before a child enters a formal education setting, and that the conditions for successful inclusion are shaped by the quality of support available across the whole system from the earliest stages.* • *By the end of the plan period, the system will confidently demonstrate a sustained shift towards mainstream inclusion. All settings will be able to clearly articulate and evidence the impact of universal support, parental confidence in mainstream provision will have demonstrably increased – with families feeling informed, reassured and actively involved in decisions about their child's support – and the data will evidence a reduction in escalation to statutory assessment as confidence in the system grows.*[3.5] ***Further details about the Dorset's strengthened Universal Offer are included in Appendix 3.*** ***2) Dorset's Expertise Offer (our local Experts at Hand model)*** *Strengthening inclusion across educational settings requires a fundamental shift in how specialist expertise reaches mainstream settings. Dorset's Expertise Offer directly responds to the maturity assessment's identification of uneven confidence and capability across mainstream settings, providing a coordinated, locality-based model that builds school capability from within, reducing reliance on escalation and ensuring that specialist expertise reaches all settings equitably, so that more children and young people with SEND can be successfully supported locally.* • ***The Expertise Offer will support early years settings, mainstream schools and further education providers across the 0 to 25 age range****, including out-of-area mainstream FE settings attended by Dorset young people with SEND*[1.11, 4.4]*. The offer will focus on whole-setting support, tailored guidance, strategic advice, coaching and some group-level intervention, and will be additional to existing statutory and 1:1 support.*[1.3, 3.3] • ***The offer will integrate within the existing locality model****, ensuring support is delivered in an equitable and coordinated way, based on need and evidence of setting readiness, with the Valuing SEND tool and other relevant integrated datasets directly informing how the offer is targeted and delivered across localities. This means that Early Years data will be fully integrated with school-level data to support proactive, system-wide inclusion planning and ensure the Expertise Offer responds to emerging need across all phases, including post-16 and further education, which are recognised as a central part of the education system.*[1.1] • ***The Expertise Offer will align with and strengthen the Healthy Child Programme****, ensuring that Health Visitors and School Nurses are connected to the locality-based model and that their early identification and*

		family support work is integrated within the wider inclusion infrastructure. • ***Initial focus will be on aligning the existing offer from across key practitioners to mainstream settings*** *with local analysis identifying priority areas where mainstream settings most need support to strengthen inclusion, including waiting times in neurodevelopmental pathways, growing need in speech, language and communication, social, emotional and mental health, and an increase in emotionally based school avoidance.* • ***The Expertise Offer will be rolled out across all Dorset localities during Year 1, ensuring consistent monitoring, evaluation and iterative improvement as the model embeds***[1.8]***.*** *Recruitment to posts across all localities will begin in Year 1, with the full offer operational across Dorset in Year 2. The offer will be integrated within Dorset's multi-disciplinary Families First locality model, building on the trust, professional networks and ways of working already well established across Dorset's communities through the Families First programme. This integration ensures a coherent and joined-up response across SEND and family support, strengthening early identification and intervention across localities. The model will be designed to learn and improve continuously by actively monitoring parental confidence of the offer and using this to inform ongoing development. By the end of Year 2, all localities will have a fully functioning and embedded Expertise Offer, tailored to local need and starting to evidence clear impact on mainstream confidence, escalation rates and outcomes for children, young people and families.* • ***The composition of multi-disciplinary teams across each locality will be informed by a detailed needs analysis*** *and supported by a refreshed SEND workforce sufficiency strategy, ensuring the right mix of expertise is in place to deliver outreach, advisory and specialist input, build mainstream capability through consultation, coaching and training, and make support available without the need for a formal diagnosis.*[1.7] • ***Alignment with delivery of the Children and Young People's Mental Health Transformation Programme*** *will ensure a no-wrong-door approach to emotional wellbeing and mental health, integrated within localities and Dorset's Expertise Offer, further strengthening early intervention for one of Dorset's most prevalent areas of need in social, emotional and mental health.* • ***Dorset's Family First place-based locality model will be used to ensure equitable access****, allocating a notional capacity per locality rather than allowing demand-led pull from the most proactive settings*[1.11]*. Each locality multi-disciplinary team will provide a guaranteed universal minimum offer per setting, with additional targeted input triggered by Valuing SEND*

		data, EBSA and attendance indicators, and school move pressure points. • ***Dorset's Expertise Offer will include a dedicated strand of support for post-16 and preparation for adulthood**, providing additional expertise to mainstream settings, including schools and FE colleges, to support young people aged 14+ across the four Preparation for Adulthood outcomes: health, employment, independent living and community inclusion. This will include training and coaching for settings, support for improved Annual Reviews and forward planning, guidance on navigating the post-16 landscape, and tools to support risk assessment and family engagement. Building on the expertise of Dorset's Birth to Settled Adulthood service, this element of the offer will make specialist knowledge accessible to mainstream settings supporting young people with less complex needs, ensuring more young people can access and sustain mainstream further education and supported pathways to adulthood.* • ***The Expertise Offer will be commissioned as a shared system infrastructure rather than a traditional service contract**, jointly overseen by the LA and ICB with shared outcomes, shared performance oversight and pooled or aligned budgets where possible[1.1]. It will integrate specialist support, inclusive practice and locality-based working into a single coherent system, avoiding fragmentation between EPs, SALT, OT, Specialist Teachers, mental health inputs and other key practitioners, and align explicitly with the sufficiency strategy, Inclusion Base outreach expectations and the AP three-tier model[1.3]. Included in this model will be two Advanced SALT Practitioners, expected to be at least NHS Agenda for Change Band 8a and HCPC registered, who will work across the ICB Cluster to provide clinical oversight, support consistent practice and ensure quality of delivery[1.7]. The roles will be developed by the Local Area Leadership Team during the first half of 2026 and are expected to be in line with the recently received guidance and the four pillars from the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists, which are: clinical leadership; enhancing support into education; strategic leadership; leading on research, innovation and improvement. These posts will be hosted in the ICB under the Chief Nursing Officer and will work closely with the DCO team.* • ***Commissioning will focus on outcomes and system behaviours rather than volume of activity,** with core commissioned outcomes including improved mainstream confidence and capability, earlier identification without statutory escalation, reduced variation in inclusive practice across localities and reduced reliance on EHC needs assessments and specialist placements over time. Aligned to this, the Local Authority and ICB will continue to work closely together to move to outcomes-based strategic commissioning models which include health outcome improvements.*

		• ***Clear career pathways for the SEND workforce will be defined,*** *alongside well-articulated and agreed minimum standards, supporting development, retention and the consistent quality of practice needed to drive inclusion across all settings. Governance of workforce development will be held by the Children's Workforce Board, reporting to the council's Children's Senior Leadership Team.* • ***The workforce, at all levels, will be supported to interpret and act on inclusion data*** *through targeted development and practical tools, ensuring that data-informed decision making about inclusive practice is embedded across the system rather than concentrated at a strategic level.* • ***The Expertise Offer has been, and will continue to be, co-designed with partners across the system****, including health, DPCC, SENDIASS and education settings. A robust engagement plan will ensure continued co-production throughout planning and delivery.*[1.2] ***Further details about the Dorset's Expertise Offer are included in Appendix 4.*** ***3) Strengthening collaboration between settings*** *Strengthening inclusion across educational settings cannot be achieved by individual schools working in isolation. Building on Dorset's existing locality structures and early positive examples of collaborative working, this workstream will develop a culture of shared ownership and collective responsibility for inclusion across the system, ensuring that expertise, resources and accountability are distributed more equitably.* • ***Building on existing locality relationships and early examples of education setting clusters****, Dorset will establish a shared vision and clear principles and expectations for collaboration across settings, supported by the new Inclusion Charter and Quality Inclusion Framework and underpinned by robust governance structures.* • ***Existing resources, expertise and system pressures will be mapped to identify opportunities for more effective joint working*** *and pooling of resources, building on what is already working well across localities.*[2.3, 4.4] • ***Early collaborative models – including shared specialist staff, pooled resources and cluster-based peer support – will be developed and tested before being scaled into formalised cluster arrangements, fully aligned with Dorset's Expertise Offer and Quality Inclusion Framework****. An initial focus of this collaborative work will be on supporting school moves, particularly from primary to secondary, directly responding*

		to the pressure on EHCP demand identified at this stage. By bringing together feeder and receiver settings within cluster arrangements, Dorset will build the shared understanding, relationships and confidence needed to support children and young people more effectively across key stage boundaries – reducing the uncertainty that can drive statutory assessment requests and ensuring that more children move across key stages successfully without the need for an EHCP. • ***Formalised collaborative models will include pooled funding arrangements, shared services and multi-setting support teams**, with regular communication, oversight and accountability mechanisms embedded as routine practice[2.3, 4.4]. The Valuing SEND tool will be central to this, providing a consistent, shared picture of individual need and setting readiness that travels with the child through school moves.* • *By the end of the plan period, collaborative models will be embedded as business-as-usual practice across Dorset, with impact regularly evaluated and acted upon, and a consolidated culture of shared ownership and system-wide responsibility for inclusion firmly established.*
Access to specialist support and local placements	***What are we currently achieving?*** *Dorset has well-established locality arrangements that enable many children and young people with SEND to access specialist support close to home and within their local communities:* • ***Early identification is a particular strength**, supported through effective practice across Family Hubs, digital Section 23 notifications and two-year checks, where participation rates exceed the national average. The CYPPHNS, including Health Visitors and School Nurses, plays a central role within this early identification infrastructure, providing universal reach to all families in Dorset and acting as a trusted first point of contact for families with emerging concerns, connecting them to the right support at the earliest opportunity.* • ***Dorset's integrated front door, delivered through the Family Support and Advice Line, provides a single point of access** for families and practitioners seeking safeguarding support, Family Help and advice on the SEN graduated approach. This model is continuing to evolve through the integration of a dedicated SEND team and with strong collaboration with the Designated Clinical Officer for SEND and health partners, strengthening county-wide approaches to new assessment requests and improving access to SEND expertise through close links with Family Hubs and the Early Support offer.*	***What is our ambition for strengthening access to specialist support and local placements?*** *Dorset's ambition is for every child and young person with SEND to receive the right support at the right time, as close to home as possible, within a joined-up and efficient inclusive ecosystem where expertise is shared across settings and specialist provision is used earlier, more flexibly and more effectively. By the end of the plan period:* • *Support and Specialist Inclusion Bases, Special Schools and Learning Centres, will play a clearer, more connected role within the system, with outreach and capacity-building to mainstream settings embedded as a core expectation* • *Alternative Provision will be firmly repositioned as a time-limited intervention rather than a destination, with clear and consistently applied reintegration pathways* • *Local sufficiency will have improved significantly, with fewer children and young people relying on out-of-area or high-cost independent placements* • *A culture of shared responsibility will be established, where education settings collaborate consistently to improve outcomes for children and young people with SEND.* • *Dorset's Expertise Offer will ensure specialist expertise is coordinated,*

- ***At a locality level, Dorset has embedded multi-agency working*** *across Inclusion, SEND, Youth Work, Best Start in Life Advisors, Educational Psychologists, Specialist Teachers, Education Challenge Leads, the Virtual School, Social Workers and Family Workers, enabling coordinated support for children, young people, families and education settings, supporting earlier problem-solving and more joined-up access to specialist advice and intervention.*

- ***Dorset's Birth to Settled Adulthood (B2SA) service also provides a joined-up, multi-agency offer for children and young people with complex additional needs,*** *bringing together Best Start in Life Advisors, locality social care teams, paediatric occupational therapy, short breaks, a Preparation for Adulthood team and a keyworker service. Co-designed with families, B2SA provides a single point of contact and consistent, coordinated support from birth through to adulthood. For those with the most complex needs, the B2SA Keyworker Team supports children and young people with a learning disability and/or autism on the Dorset Dynamic Support Register or at risk of mental health hospital admission, reducing unnecessary hospital admissions and ensuring care takes place in the community wherever possible. Together, B2SA represents a strong existing platform on which the reform programme will build, directly complementing the ambition to strengthen local specialist capacity and reduce reliance on high-cost and distant provision.*

- *Unlike many areas,* ***established Educational Psychology, Speech and Language Therapy and Occupational Therapy services are already operating without significant waiting list pressures****, alongside specialist teachers and education advisers*[1.7]*. Speech and Language Therapy pathways are timely, with the Balanced System approach fully embedded in Dorset, helping to build capability within education settings alongside direct specialist input. Educational Psychologists and Specialist Teachers work closely alongside Dorset's Family Offer to provide regular locality-based support for schools and settings.*

- ***Learning Centres and Special Schools deliver high-quality specialist support*** *for children and young people with more complex needs, while contributing outreach expertise to mainstream settings to strengthen inclusive practice across the system.*

- ***Analytical and sufficiency work has been undertaken*** *to understand current and future demand, particularly to support the implementation of Inclusion Bases, including detailed demand and cost modelling, locality-level analysis, travel impact assessment and*

consistently accessible and equitably deployed across all localities, building mainstream capability and reducing the need for formal escalation into specialist provision.

System enablers

- ***Workforce****: existing workforce and multi-agency work arrangements provide a strong platform for the expanded specialist offer. Additional investment in workforce sufficiency and creative role design will ensure that as local provision grows, the right practitioners are in place to staff, sustain and extend it.*

- ***Capital****: investment through the Capital Programme will enable expansion of Specialist Inclusion Bases, directly reducing reliance on out-of-area and independent placements.*

- ***Data and digital solutions****: local data and insights will be our basis for building, updating and strengthening the existing sufficiency analysis. This will enable us to ensure that investment is targeted on where it will have the greatest impact on local access, outcomes and value for money.*

How will we achieve our ambition?

Achieving this ambition requires coordinated action across the system, building on Dorset's strong existing foundations while addressing the sufficiency, capacity and consistency challenges identified in the Local Partnership Maturity Assessment.

1) Dorset's Expertise Offer

Dorset's Expertise Offer will act as the connective tissue of this building block, ensuring that specialist input is coordinated, consistently accessed and equitably delivered across all localities, directly addressing the maturity assessment's finding that local provision does not yet consistently meet demand across all pathways and phases.

- ***The Expertise Offer will integrate specialist support, inclusive practice and locality-based working into a single coherent system****, reducing duplication and strengthening clarity of roles across the partnership.*

- ***It will be commissioned to build capability, not replace responsibility****, specifying that experts deliver consultation, coaching, modelling and joint problem-solving rather than take-over interventions, with time-limited involvement, clear exit points and explicit links to the Inclusion Charter, Quality Inclusion Framework and SENCO professional development pathways.*

- ***Special Schools and Learning Centres will have a clearer and more***

identification of priority areas for development, providing a strong evidence base for future investment decisions.[2.8]

- ***Significant work has also been undertaken to strengthen system infrastructure**, including clear specifications for Inclusion Bases, strengthened admissions criteria, workforce training and support arrangements and quality assurance frameworks, creating a more consistent and scalable foundation for future development.*

What are our current challenges in ensuring access to specialist support and local placements?

Building on these strong foundations, Dorset's self-assessment and Local Partnership Maturity Assessment identify several areas requiring focused development:

- ***Dorset faces significant sufficiency pressures**, with EHCP demand projected to grow by 33% to around 1,964 plans requiring specialist provision by 2032*[2.1]*. Support gaps, particularly in Cognition and Learning, are driving "mis-pathwaying" into higher-cost provision, with around £31 million spent annually on independent placements at an average of £63,000 per pupil and only 174 Inclusion Base places currently commissioned across Communication and Interaction and SEMH. Dorset's rural geography compounds these pressures through higher transport costs and reduced local access to timely support.*[2.7]

- ***Dorset's rural context also shapes the local specialist provision market in ways that create additional cost pressure.** With fewer special school places available locally than in more urban areas, there is limited local market competition, which can contribute to higher placement costs and fewer alternatives available to the local authority when seeking to meet complex needs. Developing a stronger and more diverse local sufficiency offer is therefore not only an inclusion priority but an important lever for achieving better value from the High Needs Block. The opening of Osprey Quay special free school in 2029 will begin to address this, providing much-needed additional local capacity, but in the meantime this market dynamic continues to place pressure on both placement decisions and high needs expenditure.*

- ***Increasing demand for specialist provision**, particularly across neurodevelopmental and mental health pathways, is creating pressure on capacity and timeliness in some areas, limiting early intervention and affecting the system's ability to sustain mainstream placements.*

- ***consistently embedded outreach role integrated with the Expertise Offer**, with outreach expectations embedded within commissioning arrangements to ensure system-wide rather than site-based impact.*[1.6]

- ***Workforce design** will move away from a narrow focus on hard-to-fill posts towards a more flexible and creative approach, commissioning roles and skill mixes that strengthen both specialist and mainstream capability, including assistant and associate roles working under qualified practitioners, and rotational posts across specialist and mainstream settings to strengthen shared understanding and workforce flexibility.*

- ***Investment in training and development** will support the expansion of Inclusion Bases, strengthen the outreach role of Special Schools and Learning Centres, and embed the Expertise Offer across the system by the end of Year 2, ensuring a skilled and adaptable workforce is in place across all tiers of provision.*

- ***Investment in workforce training and development will be a critical enabler of this building block**, equipping Inclusion Base staff, specialist setting workforces and Expertise Offer practitioners with the skills and confidence needed to build mainstream capability across all localities. A refreshed SEND workforce sufficiency strategy will underpin this, mapping current strengths and gaps to ensure that the training and development offer is targeted and aligned to the new model, and that it sets out clear career pathways, agreed minimum standards and a creative approach to workforce design (including assistant and associate posts and rotational opportunities across specialist and mainstream settings). Together, this will build sustainable system-wide capacity and ensure the workforce is ready to support the growth of local sufficiency over the plan period.*

2) Inclusion Bases

Expanding and strengthening the Inclusion Base network directly addresses the maturity assessment's finding that local sufficiency does not yet consistently meet demand, resulting in ongoing reliance on out-of-area and independent placements. As part of the Dorset SEND reforms, two distinct types of Inclusion Base will be developed, reflecting different commissioning arrangements and levels of need.

- ***Specialist Inclusion Bases (LA-commissioned):** These will be commissioned and funded by Dorset Council and will deliver specialist, high-intensity support for children and young people with more complex needs. They are designed for those who can continue to access aspects of the mainstream curriculum but require a stable, bespoke combination of specialist provision and mainstream inclusion. These bases form the initial priority in the delivery plan, addressing current sufficiency gaps and reducing reliance on high-cost placements. LA colleagues are*

	• ***Post-16 data in Dorset indicates increasing use of independent and non-maintained specialist settings, growing NEET figures and high levels of AP use for young people with SEND**, pointing to a significant opportunity to strengthen mainstream inclusion and local pathways for young people as they transition into adulthood. The post-16 landscape is complex and multi-faceted, and mainstream settings reporting that they lack the capacity and expertise to navigate it confidently with young people and families.* • *While Dorset has established local infrastructure and specialist expertise, **local sufficiency does not yet consistently meet demand across all pathways and phases**, resulting in ongoing reliance on out-of-area and independent placements driven by both need and parental preference.* • ***The outreach role of Learning Centres and Special Schools, while valued, is not yet consistently embedded** or equitably accessed across all localities. There is a clear opportunity to strengthen and extend this reach as part of a coherent inclusion continuum.* • *While strong sufficiency data and analytical work exists, **demand and cost modelling and long-term scenario planning are not yet fully embedded** as core planning tools across the partnership.* • ***Value for money analysis across inclusion interventions, AP and external placements is not yet consistently informing investment** decisions, making it harder to demonstrate the impact of local provision and make the case for further investment in local sufficiency.* *Reducing reliance on out-of-area placements and strengthening local sufficiency is therefore a key strategic priority for the partnership, ensuring more children and young people can be supported effectively within their local communities.*	*collaborating with MAT leaders on the specialist inclusion base programme with the 6 bases proposed for 2026/27 being planned and delivered in partnership with 4 of Dorset's largest MATs.[2.3]* • ***Support Inclusion Bases (school-commissioned):** These will be developed, commissioned and delivered by mainstream schools and MATs and will provide targeted support for commonly occurring SEND, including small group work, evidence-based interventions and reasonable adjustments. These bases will support children whose needs go beyond the Universal Offer but do not require specialist placement. The development of this model will be phased across the plan period, building on the capacity, expertise and confidence generated through the initial rollout of specialist bases.* • ***The LA and local MATs will continue to work collaboratively by sharing data on local need, available estates and projected pupil demand to jointly identify the most appropriate sites for inclusion bases**. Building on the strategic planning forums and co-produced feasibility work already underway, the LA and MATs will continue to seek opportunities to align resources, expertise and long-term sufficiency plans to design provision that meets local inclusion priorities and supports earlier intervention.* • ***A finalised and agreed SEND Sufficiency and Inclusion Base Delivery Plan**, aligned to SEND reform and the capital programme, will provide a clear framework for this phased expansion, setting out the sequencing from specialist to broader mainstream-led provision, alongside established governance, delivery oversight and partnership engagement mechanisms.* • ***Inclusion Bases will be expanded in phased tranches across localities and phases,** with Phase 2 already commissioned and early phases prioritising LA-commissioned specialist bases to address immediate gaps in Cognition and Learning and SEMH provision. Subsequent phases will increasingly support mainstream schools and MATs to develop Support Inclusion Bases, ensuring a sustainable system-wide model of graduated support.[2.3]* • ***The network will provide high-quality, cost-effective provision closer to home**, with existing and new Inclusion Bases operating as stable, predictable provision embedded within locality planning and school improvement conversations.* • ***Inclusion Bases will increasingly function as centres of expertise, outreach and system leadership for inclusion,** with specialist inclusion bases and Learning Centres supporting workforce development, and support bases strengthening inclusive practice across mainstream settings.*

		• ***The Inclusion Base network will ultimately cover all Dorset localities and key phases**, including post-16 pathways where appropriate, with robust quality assurance mechanisms in place and impact on inclusion, placement stability and outcomes regularly evaluated and shared across the system.*[2.4] • ***A post-16 sufficiency analysis** (referenced in more detail in building block 'encouraging inclusive culture and behaviour') will inform where and how Inclusion Base capacity extends into post-16 pathways, ensuring the network covers the full 0-25 range and that young people do not face a cliff-edge in local provision as they move beyond secondary education.* ***4) Align AP practice and provision to the three-tier model*** *Recommissioning Alternative Provision to align with the three-tier model responds to the maturity assessment's finding that the role of AP as part of an inclusion continuum is not yet fully articulated, embedded or consistently understood by all partners.*[1.4] • *A **dedicated strategic lead for AP** will be in post and embedded within the AP system, with clear system-wide expectations for the three-tier model established and understood across all settings.* • ***Learning Centres will sit at the centre of this approach**, recognised as central to the delivery of inclusive AP – providing targeted intervention, a robust outreach offer as part of Tier 1 and a clear expectation of reintegration into mainstream as part of routine practice.* • *The shift to the three-tier model will be actively supported, with a **focus on promoting short-term placements and strengthening reintegration** pathways, so that AP is no longer seen as a "destination" by settings, families or children and young people.* • ***Commissioning of AP will be strengthened**, with stable, aligned and routinely reviewed delivery arrangements, underpinned by robust governance and joint working between the local authority and AP providers.*[1.5] • *By the end of the plan period, the three-tier model will be embedded as a core element of Dorset's inclusive ecosystem, with Learning Centres' outreach role firmly established and the system able to demonstrate clear impact on inclusion, reintegration and outcomes.*

System leadership, local partnership collaboration and co-production	***What are we currently achieving?*** *Dorset has strong system leadership foundations, with well-established governance, a shared vision across partners and effective multi-agency arrangements that consistently lead to good outcomes for children and young people:* • ***The recent creation of the Alliance for Inclusion and Excellence in Education*** *– merged from the SEND and Inclusion Partnership Board and Dorset Education Board to simplify system leadership and bring inclusion to the centre – reflects Dorset's vision for mainstream inclusion and provides a stronger foundation for strategic oversight and joined-up working. At a strategic level, the Alliance brings together education (including MATs and post-16 settings), health, care, parent carers, voluntary and community sector and youth voice groups to set shared priorities and ensure joint accountability.*[4.2] • *At an operational level,* ***multi-agency delivery groups lead co-design and implementation across key workstreams****, with locality forums and community networks enabling continuous feedback and supporting consistent inclusive practice at a local level – providing a clear golden thread from strategic leadership to frontline practice.* • ***These arrangements have strong external validation****: the most recent Ofsted inspection evidence reflects effective multi-agency working and positive outcomes for children and young people with SEND.* • ***Co-production is a recognised strength at a strategic level****, with the Dorset Parent Carer Council embedded across governance and delivery at all levels, and SENCO networks and termly partnership forums providing established mechanisms for engaging settings, maintained schools and MATs in co-owning the inclusion agenda.*[5.1] • ***Dorset's Birth to Settled Adulthood service was co-designed in direct response to feedback from families****, who asked for a single point of contact, earlier planning for adulthood, practitioners who listen and work together, and less repetition of their story. This is a strong existing example of co-production translating into genuine service redesign, and provides a model for the co-production approach that will underpin the wider reform programme.*	***What is our ambition?*** *Dorset's ambition is for education, health and care services to work in genuine partnership with one another, alongside families, children and young people and other system partners, to deliver better outcomes for children and young people with SEND. By the end of the plan period:* • *System leadership will operate with clarity, consistency and trust across all levels – from strategic governance to frontline practice – with education fully represented alongside health and care partners* • *Educational settings (including schools, MATs, further education providers and early years settings) will play a more active and consistently embedded role in system leadership, moving beyond operational delivery to shared strategic ownership of the inclusion agenda, with educational leaders regularly engaged in governance, commissioning decisions and system-wide accountability for outcomes.* • *Co-production will be embedded as a standard part of service design and review, with clear and evidenced impact of participation on commissioning decisions and strategic priorities* • *Joint commissioning arrangements will be refreshed and underpinned by high-quality shared data, supporting more responsive and sustainable decision-making across the partnership* • *A robust communications and engagement strategy will have built trust and transparency across the system, ensuring all partners, families and young people understand their role and what they can expect* ***System enablers*** • ***Workforce****: development at leadership level will build on Dorset's already strong track record of multi-agency working, deepening data literacy, co-production skills and collective confidence to drive reform consistently across the system.* • ***Data and digital solutions****: existing datasets and the development of the integrated data dashboard will enable us to move to a more robust shared evidence base that makes genuine joint accountability and commissioning possible across all partners.* ***How will we achieve our ambition to further strengthen system leadership, local partnership collaboration and collaboration?*** *Achieving this ambition requires coordinated action across all partners, building on Dorset's strong existing governance foundations while addressing the*

- ***Dorset is committed to transparency about the nature of involvement at each stage**, distinguishing clearly between engagement, co-production and collaboration so that partners, families and young people understand their role and what they can expect.*

- ***Dorset has well-established mechanisms to support early resolution of concerns**. The Family Support and Advice Line provides a strengthened front door through which families can seek advice and support, as well as raise concerns, at the earliest opportunity through a conversational model, incorporating the Dorset Education Advice Line for parents, carers and professionals supporting children with SEND. In addition, the Family Information Service signposts families to the wider network of support including SENDIASS (Family Action), which together reduce the likelihood of concerns escalating to formal processes such as EHCP assessments or tribunal. Early resolution pathways are already embedded, including mediation, disagreement resolution and 'next steps' meetings with locality SEND workers for decisions relating to EHC needs assessments.*

- ***A robust performance management framework is already in place**, with a comprehensive SEND performance dashboard tracking timeliness across EHCP processes, dispute resolution rates and outcomes, reviewed weekly at operational level and monitored monthly through the Children's Services performance board and partnership governance forums.*

What are our current challenges with regards to system leadership, local partnership collaboration and co-production?
Building on these strong foundations, Dorset's self-assessment and Local Partnership Maturity Assessment have identified a set of areas that can help us further strengthen practice across this building block:

- *While the system leadership architecture is strong, there is **a recognised need to bring education more fully into strategic governance** – particularly MAT CEOs and school leaders, whose consistent engagement at system leadership level will be essential for driving inclusion as a shared priority across all settings. The new Alliance for Inclusion and Excellence in Education is starting to address this at strategic level, but further efforts are required to ensure engagement is strong across the board.*

- ***Joint commissioning arrangements need refreshing in light of ongoing ICB restructures**, to ensure that the renewed partnership consistency, participation and data challenges identified in the Local Partnership Maturity Assessment.*

1) Strengthening system leadership and partnership
Strengthening system leadership and partnership directly addresses the maturity assessment's finding that while governance structures are strong, education is not yet fully embedded at a strategic level and joint commissioning arrangements need refreshing – both of which are essential for driving inclusion as a genuinely shared system-wide priority.

- ***The Alliance for Inclusion and Excellence in Education will provide strategic leadership and challenge**, bringing together education, health, care, parent carers and youth voice to oversee progress, risks and outcomes across the system – with school leaders and MAT CEOs consistently engaged at this level, ensuring education is fully represented alongside health and care partners. Post-16 and further education providers are formally represented within the Alliance, ensuring that the post-16 agenda is embedded within system leadership and governance.*

- ***The Dorset Every Child Achieving and Thriving (ECAT) Partnership Group will provide regular operational leadership,** coordinating delivery across workstreams and using shared performance, demand and financial data[4,3] to support responsive decision-making, with all commissioned elements, including Dorset's Expertise Offer, Inclusion Base outreach and AP reform, required to demonstrate contribution to cost avoidance, demand reduction and inclusive outcomes, provide data to support return on investment analysis, and participate in shared evaluation rather than stand-alone reporting.*

- ***Multi-agency delivery groups will lead implementation** across key reform workstreams, with locality arrangements embedding inclusive practice at community level and ensuring that insight from practitioners, children, young people and families feeds directly into continuous improvement and strategic decision-making.*

- ***Joint commissioning arrangements will be refreshed to reflect the new partnership architecture,** ensuring leadership, co-production and accountability are experienced consistently across all levels of the system, underpinned by an integrated SEND dashboard bringing together financial data (High Needs Block, placements, AP, transport), demand data (EHCNAs, EHCP trends), Valuing SEND intelligence (setting readiness, child profiles), outcomes (attendance, exclusions, placement stability) and experience (parent and practitioner confidence).*

- ***Return on investment and value for money will be reviewed through local democratic scrutiny processes**, the ECAT Partnership Group for*

	architecture is reflected in how services are planned and delivered together across education, health and care. • *While co-production is a strength at a strategic level, **participation approaches are not yet consistent across all areas of delivery**, and there is a recognised opportunity to strengthen contributions from seldom-heard groups – including children and young people who do not attend an educational setting.* • ***System-wide data on the reach and impact of co-production and participation is not routinely collated**, making it harder to evidence progress and identify gaps – particularly for those groups least likely to engage through traditional participation routes.* • ***While strong datasets exist across the partnership, these are not yet consistently used to inform joint commissioning and strategic decision-making**, and workforce confidence in interpreting and acting on data for inclusion planning remains variable.*	*operational grip and the Alliance for Inclusion and Excellence in Education for strategic assurance, with an annual value for money statement produced as part of the SEND reform review. Headline value for money indicators will include: spend on the Expertise Offer per locality against reduction in EHCNA growth, EHE and EBSA, and escalation to specialist provision; cost per child supported without an EHCP; cost variance between local and independent placements; and change in transport spend per pupil with SEND. Decisions to scale, continue or stop initiatives will be explicitly linked to value for money evidence.* • ***Dorset will strengthen its approach to dispute resolution by improving the consistency of early resolution pathways across all localities.** This will include ensuring mediation and disagreement resolution opportunities are clearly communicated and consistently offered, and that 'next steps' meetings with locality SEND workers are standard practice for all EHC needs assessment decisions. Relationships and communication with families will be improved through a consistent conversational approach, working in close partnership with the Dorset Parent Carer Council to ensure concerns are heard, addressed and responded to consistently, reducing the likelihood of escalation to formal processes and tribunal. Partnership decision-making will be further strengthened through locality forums and multi-agency resource panels, with the Alliance for Inclusion and Excellence in Education holding an explicit responsibility within its Terms of Reference to strengthen strategic governance, assurance and local accountability, monitoring system performance, risks and pressures, and escalating key issues to Dorset Council and national partners as required.*[4.5] • ***The SEND performance dashboard will be refreshed and expanded to incorporate the full suite of performance measures identified through the SEND Reform Plan,** including dispute resolution rates, timeliness across EHCP processes and outcomes. Performance will continue to be reviewed weekly at operational level with clear escalation processes and monitored monthly through the Children's Services performance board and partnership governance forums. Data will be used proactively to identify trends, drive improvement and support earlier intervention – providing clear and transparent accountability across the partnership and enabling continuous improvement over the plan period.*[5.6] • *The workforce at all levels will be supported to interpret and act on data through targeted development and practical tools, ensuring data-informed decision-making is embedded across the partnership rather than concentrated at a strategic level.* ***2) Strengthening co-production and participation*** *Strengthening co-production and participation responds to the maturity*

		assessment's finding that while co-production is a strategic strength, participation approaches are not yet consistent across all areas of delivery and qualitative insight from families and young people is not yet consistently embedded in planning and commissioning decisions. • *Building on existing good practice in co-production and participation across SEND and Best Start in Life services, **shared co-production principles will be agreed and socialised across partners and stakeholders**, providing a clear and transparent framework that distinguishes between engagement, co-production and collaboration so that all partners, families and young people understand their role and what they can expect at each stage.* • ***Dorset will draw on the NHSE co-production guidance and agree a local co-production benchmark** in partnership with families, children and young people, self-assessing against it in year one to identify priority improvement actions and establish a baseline against which to measure progress across the plan period.*[5.4] • ***Current feedback mechanisms and participation activity will be mapped across services**, with gaps, duplication and opportunities for improvement identified – particularly in relation to seldom-heard groups – ensuring that participation reach is expanded to ensure diverse and representative voice across the system.* • ***Family Hubs and SENDIASS will play a strengthened role in capturing and acting on lived experience**, with SENDIASS properly resourced and able to evidence adherence to the National Minimum Standards, including how independence and perceived independence are understood by families, supporting families with a confidential, impartial and accessible service which provides information, advice and support in relation to SEN.*[5.3] • ***Dorset will develop more innovative approaches to engagement that meet children and young people where they are** – including through social media, with a potential work experience placement for a young person to help shape an engagement strategy that genuinely speaks to young people's experiences and perspectives.*[5.2] • *Building on the mature relationship with the Dorset Parent Carer Council and existing participation groups**, co-production will be embedded as a standard part of service design and review**, with a "you said, we did" approach in place as routine practice.* • ***A robust communications and engagement strategy** will build trust, confidence and transparency across the system, ensuring that reform is*

		understood and owned across all levels of the partnership. • *By the end of the plan period, children, young people and families will recognise their active role in shaping and improving services, with clear and evidenced impact of participation on commissioning decisions and strategic priorities – and lived experience demonstrably informing how the system plans, commissions and delivers support.*
Encouraging inclusive culture and behaviours	***What are we currently achieving?*** *Dorset has strong cultural foundations for inclusion, with clear commitment across the council and partners to listening to and acting on the voices of children, young people and families:* • ***Children and young people report high levels of trust, safety and encouragement*** *from the practitioners who support them, reflecting a system built on strong relational practice.* • *Co-production is well embedded across the education* ***system as reflected*** *in our Dorset partnership agreement, with the council's Youth Voice team playing a key role in facilitating meaningful participation through well-established mechanisms including Let's Talk events.* • ***Participation approaches are grounded in the Lundy Model,*** *ensuring children have space, voice, audience and influence within decision-making processes – in line with Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.* • ***Education settings are increasingly engaging with inclusive practice*** *through initiatives such as the UNICEF Rights Respecting Schools Award, reflecting a growing culture of rights-based, relational practice across the system.* • ***Dorset is actively building workforce understanding and capability around inclusive culture****, co-production and children's rights, supporting schools and partners to adopt and embed the principles of the Lundy Model into everyday practice.* • ***Families are supported to access independent advice and guidance through Dorset's SENDIASS service****, commissioned through Family Action, with locality-based SEND staff available for regular face-to-face sessions through Best Start Family Hubs and the Dorset Parent Carer Council working alongside the local authority to capture and respond to parent carer views. Where concerns escalate, Dorset uses Global Mediation as part of a South West partnership to*	***What is our ambition?*** *Dorset's ambition is for inclusion to become a consistent expectation across the whole system – embedded in how services are commissioned, how the workforce is developed and how settings are held to account – so that every child and young person with SEND experiences the same high quality of inclusive practice regardless of where they live or which setting they attend. By the end of the plan period:* • *Inclusive design principles will be embedded across commissioning, workforce development and service design, with a shared and co-produced definition of inclusion underpinning practice and accountability across all settings and partners. The principles will be developed with partners and will include: starting with strengths and needs, not labels; planning early and prevent escalation; making support easy to access and understand; designing with children, families and practitioners; using evidence and data to improve.* • *The lived experience of children, young people and families will routinely shape how services are designed, delivered and evaluated, with co-production embedded in everyday operational practice rather than isolated examples of good work.* • *Clear accountability and funding levers will actively incentivise inclusive behaviour across settings, with a robust framework for measuring return on investment and demonstrating the value of inclusive practice.* • *The system will be able to confidently evidence a sustained shift towards inclusive culture across all settings and localities.* • *Dorset will have a clear and regularly updated 0-5 childcare and specialist SEND sufficiency picture, with priority gaps identified, actions agreed with Early Years, health and Family Hub partners, and progress tracked through sufficiency planning and the integrated data dashboard.* ***System enablers*** • ***Data and digital solutions****: Dorset's growing evidence base including the*

provide independent mediation, giving parent carers and young people a direct opportunity to reach mutual decisions – with the local authority continuing to work with families to find solutions beyond the formal process where needed.[5.5]

What are our current challenges in encouraging inclusive culture and behaviours across Dorset?
Dorset's Local Partnership Maturity Assessment has identified that there are opportunities to strengthen inclusive culture and behaviour, whilst building on the strong foundations and enablers already in place:

- ***There is a recognised need to revisit and agree a shared definition of inclusion and what it means across the system*** *– without this, it is difficult to establish consistent expectations, hold the system to account or measure progress meaningfully.*
- ***Inclusive culture, while strong in pockets, is not yet experienced consistently across all settings and localities*** *– there remains variability in how inclusion is defined, reinforced and prioritised at an operational level.*
- ***There are currently no consistent accountability or funding levers that actively incentivise inclusive behaviour across settings*** *– developing these will be important for driving culture change beyond willing early adopters.*
- ***Participation approaches, while strong at a strategic level, are not yet consistent across all areas of operational delivery****, and there is no consistent system-wide approach to measuring how inclusion is experienced across settings.*
- ***Workforce development around inclusive culture and children's rights is developing but not yet consistent across all settings****, and shared expectations for inclusive practice have not yet been clearly articulated or embedded across the workforce.*

integrated dashboard, co-produced parental and children and young people confidence metrics and Valuing SEND data will enable culture change to move from aspirational to evidenced, measurable shifts demonstrating return on investment in a way that is credible and compelling.

- ***Workforce****: Dorset's existing commitment to workforce development around inclusive culture and children's rights provides a strong foundation for the workforce to become the primary vehicle through which the shared definition of inclusion is embedded into everyday practice.*

How will we achieve our ambition for further encouraging inclusive culture and behaviours?
Achieving this ambition requires us to address the cultural, structural and financial conditions needed to drive consistent inclusive behaviour across the system – directly responding to the maturity assessment's findings around uneven practice, the absence of consistent accountability frameworks and the need for stronger value for money analysis.

1) Refreshing the sufficiency strategy
A refreshed sufficiency strategy will provide the structural foundation for inclusive culture and behaviour – ensuring that the system's investment in places, provision and capacity is explicitly aligned to inclusion outcomes and actively drives more equitable access to local, high-quality support.

- ***The sufficiency strategy will be refreshed and aligned to the reform programme****, ensuring that decisions about where and how provision is developed are explicitly linked to inclusion outcomes, local need and transport impact.*[2.1, 2.2, 2.7, 2.8]
- ***Sufficiency planning will be underpinned by medium to long-term demand modelling****, embedded as a core planning tool across the partnership and used to inform capital investment, workforce planning and commissioning decisions.*
- ***The strategy will ensure that the expansion of Inclusion Bases, the recommissioning of AP and the development of the Expertise Offer are coherently aligned****, creating a planned and sustainable continuum of provision that reinforces inclusive behaviour across the system.*
- ***As part of the refreshed strategy, a dedicated assessment of 0-5 childcare sufficiency will be undertaken****, examining the availability of early years places across Dorset's localities, the availability of specialist SEND early years places, and any gaps for children with complex and emerging needs.*[3, 6] *This assessment will be co-produced with Early Years,*

health and Family Hub partners, with Best Start Family Hubs playing a central role in identifying where provision is absent or inaccessible for families with the most complex needs. A clear plan to address identified gaps will be agreed across partners, with actions, responsibilities and timescales confirmed and progress tracked through the integrated data dashboard and sufficiency governance arrangements.

- ***As part of this work, a dedicated post-16 sufficiency analysis will be undertaken**, examining current and projected need across mainstream, targeted and specialist provision including pathways into education, training, employment and supported internships[2.6, 3.9, 3.10]. This will produce a full commissioning proposal, including procurement arrangements, provider specifications and quality standards aligned to the national reforms set out in the post-16 Education and Skills White Paper. The analysis will be co-produced with young people, families, practitioners and providers, and will address the full range of sufficiency considerations including quality, quantity, value for money, geographic accessibility and the dependencies that affect young people's ability to access and benefit from the right provision.*

- ***Progress will be tracked through regular performance monitoring and programme governance**, with sufficiency data informing commissioning decisions, scaling and prioritisation across the partnership.*

2) Developing an integrated data dashboard

Dorset has strong datasets and a growing evidence base that already supports effective planning and decision-making. This workstream will build on these foundations to bring data together into a single, integrated picture that gives the whole system a shared and trusted evidence base, enabling more confident, consistent and transparent decisions about how to strengthen inclusive practice across all settings and localities.[4.3]

- ***An integrated dashboard** providing robust data at child and setting level will be developed, beginning with merging the current Early Years and SEND and inclusion dashboards and Valuing SEND data to create a more coherent, system-wide picture.*

- ***The dashboard will bring together financial data, demand trends, Valuing SEND intelligence and lived-experience measures**, enabling the system to triangulate evidence and make more informed decisions about where to target support and investment.*

- ***The workforce at all levels will be supported to interpret and act on inclusion data** through targeted development and practical tools, ensuring data-informed decision-making is embedded across the system rather than*

		concentrated at a strategic level. This will be overseen strategically by the Children's Workforce Development Board. • ***The dashboard will be used routinely** through performance monitoring and programme governance to inform commissioning decisions, track progress against inclusion metrics and provide transparent evidence of system-wide improvement* ***3) Return on investment and accountability levers*** *Dorset has strong cultural foundations and a clear commitment to inclusion. This workstream will build on these to establish the accountability frameworks, funding levers and return on investment measures needed to embed inclusive behaviour consistently across the system, ensuring that the values already evident in Dorset's culture are reflected in how resources are deployed and how the system holds itself to account.* • ***A shared, co-produced definition of inclusion will be developed in partnership** with educational settings, health and care partners, families and children and young people through a structured programme of engagement workshops and co-design sessions. This will underpin practice and accountability across all settings and partners. Once agreed, inclusive design principles will be embedded across commissioning frameworks, service specifications, workforce processes and induction programmes, ensuring that inclusion becomes a clear and consistent expectation across the whole system.* • ***Funding flows and commissioning arrangements will be actively aligned to inclusion outcomes, shifting investment towards earlier intervention and away from reactive, high-cost escalation**[3.5, 4.3]**.** All commissioned provision – including Inclusion Bases, the Expertise Offer and Alternative Provision – will be expected to demonstrate impact on sustained mainstream placement, reintegration and reduced escalation, with commissioning decisions increasingly linked to evidence of effective inclusive practice rather than activity volumes. Schools and partners will be supported and incentivised to participate in the two-tier Inclusion Base system, with specialist bases providing high-intensity support and system leadership, and support bases enabling earlier intervention within mainstream settings. Inclusion expectations will be embedded within MAT and school governance arrangements, ensuring that accountability for inclusive practice is shared consistently across all types of providers and that MAT CEOs and school leaders have a clear and explicit role in driving inclusive behaviour across their settings.* • ***Dorset will operate a high-support, high-challenge model**. Through Dorset's Expertise Offer, the strengthened universal offer and the collaborative working arrangements set out in this plan, mainstream*

		settings will be actively supported to build confidence and capability to meet a wider range of needs. In alignment with the direction of Ofsted's new inspection framework, the local authority will also work transparently with educational settings and Ofsted to identify and address non-inclusive practice where it exists, ensuring that high support is matched by clear expectations across the system. • ***Dorset will assess value for money and return on investment through a balanced framework*** *that considers financial impact, system efficiency and outcomes for children and families. Value for money is not defined as lowest cost – it is evidenced where earlier, coordinated support improves inclusion and outcomes, reduces escalation and instability, and avoids higher future costs. Dorset will not claim return on investment where costs fall but outcomes and confidence deteriorate.* • ***Direct financial return*** *will be monitored through cashable impacts – including reduction in independent and out-of-area placements, emergency AP placements and transport costs – and non-cashable but attributable impacts, including reduced repeat EHCNA requests, tribunal and mediation costs, and fewer short-term exclusions leading to escalation.* • ***System efficiency will be tracked by measuring the average cost per child supported without an EHCP****, the proportion of children whose needs are met at universal, targeted and targeted-plus levels, and the cost per sustained mainstream or local placement – with the expected signal being increasing support at lower tiers, with flat or falling cost per child, while outcomes improve****.*** • ***Prevention and demand management will be evidenced through leading indicators,*** *including rates of EHCNA and EHCP growth, EBSA and EHE levels, and exclusions and persistent absence for pupils with SEND, recognising that slowing demand growth is a measurable return on preventative investment, even before budgets reduce****.*** • ***Quality and outcome return will be measured through co-produced parental confidence metrics, SENCO and setting confidence, placement stability and attendance,*** *ensuring value for money is only claimed where quality and experience improve alongside financial impact****.*** *Inclusion metrics, drawn from the integrated dashboard, Valuing SEND setting readiness data and the Quality Inclusion Framework, will be embedded into performance monitoring at locality cluster and whole area governance level, with transparent benchmarking enabling the system to identify and address variation in inclusive practice, and funding decisions increasingly aligned to evidence of effective inclusive practice and system contribution.*

		• ***Inclusion expectations will be consistently embedded across workforce processes,*** *commissioning arrangements and service delivery frameworks, with inclusion principles embedded within job descriptions, recruitment processes, induction programmes and ongoing workforce development.* • ***Dorset will draw on NHSE co-production guidance to develop and agree a local co-production benchmark*** *in partnership with families, children and young people, using this to strengthen consistency and accountability across the system. The Lundy Model of Participation will continue to provide the framework for ensuring children and young people have meaningful opportunities to influence decisions.* • ***Engagement and participation will be central to how services are developed and improved****, including through the continuation of Let's Talk events, with children, young people and families routinely shaping the design, delivery and evaluation of services and clear mechanisms in place for capturing feedback and acting on lived experience.* • ***Families will be offered information, advice and support at arm's length from the local authority, ICB and host organisation***[5,3]***.*** *This will be free, accurate, confidential and in accessible formats and provided through Dorset's SENDIASS service, commissioned through Family Action. Locality-based SEND staff will be available for regular face-to-face sessions through Best Start Family Hubs, and the Dorset Parent Carer Council will work alongside the local authority to capture and respond to parent carer views. Dorset SENDIASS will continue to provide clear, lawful and balanced information, advice and support, helping service users understand their rights, options and next steps so they can make informed decisions, monitored through quality assurance processes and adherence to the National Minimum Standards for SENDIASS services.* • *By the end of the plan period, the system will be able to demonstrate clear return on investment from its inclusive education approach – with financial data, outcomes evidence and lived-experience measures providing a coherent and compelling picture of the value of inclusion for children, young people, families and the system as a whole.*
Success measures	***Baseline*** *(outline the baseline for your success measures reflecting where you are now – these should be drawn from the metrics in the data template)*	***Target Metrics*** *(outline the target metrics that will demonstrate you have achieved the vision summarized above – these should be drawn from the metrics in the data template)*
	Dorset's SEND Reform Plan is underpinned by a clear understanding of where the system is starting from. The baseline position, drawn from the most recent data return and additional relevant local indicators, reflects a	*Dorset's SEND Reform Plan sets out an ambitious but realistic trajectory for change, that builds on our strong foundations and focuses efforts on a set of clear opportunity areas. This comprehensive programme of reform activities will*

	system under increasing pressure but with strong foundations on which to build.	*enable us to identify needs earlier, build confidence across settings to see and meet needs and ensure that support for children, young people and families is available closer to home.* *Dorset has undertaken a modelling exercise to understand the potential impact of the reform programme and set ambitious but realistic targets for improvement. The targets below reflect our assessment of what is achievable over the plan period, grounded in local data and demand projections, and represent a genuine commitment to driving measurable and significant change across the system.*
	EHCPs • *Number of EHCPs: 4,719 EHCPs in 2025 in Dorset, projected to rise to 5,035 in 2026, an overall growth rate of 6% over two years* • *EHCP growth rate since 2015/16: 136% in Dorset, compared to 93% nationally and 104% across the South West. Dorset was below the national average in 2015/16 and is now above it.* • *33% of EHCPs in Dorset are held in state-funded secondary schools, compared to 24% nationally and 27% regionally.*	***EHCPs*** • *EHCP growth expected to slow to 2% by 2029, resulting in 5,559 EHCPs – over 800 fewer than the unmitigated trajectory of 6,360*
	EHCNAs • *632 new EHCNAs in 2025, with notable pressure at key school move points* • *EHCNAs are expected to decrease by 1% a year*	***EHCNAs*** • *New EHCNAs expected to stabilise before gradually reducing to 609 by 2029, as a higher proportion of needs are met without escalation to statutory assessment*
	EHE and EOTAS • *85 children and young people with EHCPs in Elective Home Education (EHE) in 2025, forecast to rise to 90 in 2026* • *EHE change over time* • *180 children and young people in other LA-arranged provision forecast to rise to 191 in 2026* • *EOTAS change over time*	***EHE and EOTAS*** • *Children and young people with EHCPs in EHE reducing from 90 in 2026 to 75 in 2029* • *Children and young people in other LA-arranged provision including EOTAS reducing from 191 in 2026 to 175 in 2029*
	Attendance • *37% (% of persistent absentees – pupils with SEN statement or EHCP (10% of session) 24/25*	***Attendance*** • *5% reduction in the % of persistent absentees – pupils with SEN statement or EHCP – from 37% in 24/25 to 32% in 28/29*
	Suspensions and exclusions • *11% of pupils with an EHCP had one or more fixed exclusions in 23/24* • *30% of pupils with an EHCP have been suspended at some point in 2023/24*	***Suspensions and exclusions*** • *5% reduction in the % of pupils with EHCPs that have 1 or more fixed exclusions – from 11% in 24/25 to 6% in 28/29* • *5% reduction in the % of pupils with EHCPs have been suspended at some point in the academic year – from 30% in 24/25 to 25% in 28/29*
	Number of children without EHCPs supported by key professionals • *SALT: 2,176* • *OT: 763* • *EP: 344*	***Number of children without EHCPs supported by key professionals*** • *SALT: 2,869* • *OT: 1230* • *EP: 539*
	Independent placements • *There are 468 INMSS EHCP placements currently maintained by Dorset.*	***Independent placements*** • *Independent school placements forecast to reduce from 527 in 2026 to 508 in 2029, resulting in a spend reduction of around £1M in 28/29*

	• *527 independent special school placements expected in 2026/27 at a total cost of £34.1M, representing 25% of High Needs Block expenditure*	*compared to 27/28 estimated. By 29/30 we expect the number of independent school placements to reduce further to 463 (in part due to the opening of Osprey Quay special school), resulting in further cost avoidance.*
	Parental confidence and feedback *A parent carer survey was undertaken in 2023, receiving 399 responses from parents and carers of children and young people with SEND. Key findings included:* • *43.1% of respondents reported being happy with the information and communication they received.* • *41.5% expressed confidence that their child was receiving the right level of support to meet their needs.* • *40.5% agreed that they felt listened to and involved in decisions about their child's education and support.* *Following the 2023 survey, formal surveys were discontinued at the request of the parental community. Since then, feedback has been gathered through a range of established channels, including the Dorset Parent Carer Council, direct engagement through education settings, Family Hubs, and other participation and co-production activities. While these approaches have provided valuable qualitative insight, partners recognise the need to develop a more coherent and systematic approach to understanding parental confidence and experience across the SEND system.* ***Children and young people confidence and feedback*** *Engagement with children and young people with SEND was undertaken by the Dorset Unstoppables Youth Voice group in 2026, consulting 4 young people across mainstream and specialist settings. Due to the small sample size and qualitative nature of the consultation, findings are not statistically representative but provide meaningful insight into lived experience. Key themes included:* • *Young people consistently reported inconsistent experiences of feeling listened to and having their needs understood by adults in educational settings.* • *All participants identified gaps between support recorded in their EHCPs and support received in practice.* • *Young people expressed a strong desire to be more directly involved in decisions affecting their lives, with needs addressed on a person-led rather than funding-led basis.* *This engagement demonstrates a strong commitment to youth voice, and partners are committed to building on this foundation to develop a more systematic and measurable approach to capturing children and young people's confidence and experience across the SEND system.*	***Parental and children and young people confidence and feedback*** • *Following feedback from the parent carer and children and young people community, formal surveys have been discontinued. However, Dorset recognises the importance of maintaining a robust and shared understanding of confidence and satisfaction levels across families and young people, and of being able to evidence this meaningfully over the plan period.* • *A co-produced set of metrics to holistically measure parental and children and young people's confidence, satisfaction and experience of the system will therefore be developed in partnership with the Dorset Parent Carer Council and Dorset Unstoppables Youth Voice Group, agreed and baselined in Year 1, providing the foundation against which progress will be tracked and evidenced across the three years of the plan.*

INSERT DOCUMENT UPLOAD LINK

3. **What is the local area partnership's strategy for delivering on the above?**

   A brief summary of your local system's theory of change or reform strategy. Reflect on the output of your **Local Partnership Maturity Assessment Tool**, particularly your *Local System 'change story.'*

250 words

Evidence from the Local Partnership Maturity Assessment and the recent outstanding-rated Area SEND Inspection reflects a system with strong foundations and a clear commitment to improvement. Dorset recognises that rising levels of need, pressure on educational settings and over-reliance on specialist provision provide the impetus for reform. Our change story is one of genuine ambition, addressed by building on existing strengths and reshaping system behaviours rather than pursuing short-term fixes.

Dorset's theory of change is built on three interdependent shifts:

- ***Building mainstream confidence and capacity*** *– inputs: a strengthened Universal Offer underpinned by our Inclusion Charter, Dorset's Expertise Offer and cluster-based arrangements to support collaboration between settings; outcomes: settings equipped with skills, tools and targeted support; impact: more children supported locally, reduced escalation and improved parental confidence in mainstream education*
- ***Moving support earlier and closer to home*** *– inputs: stronger early identification, integrated locality-based working and expanded Inclusion Bases; outcomes: timely intervention reaching children before needs escalate; impact: more stable placements, improved attendance and wellbeing and reduced demand for crisis responses*
- ***Ensuring specialist provision is planned, predictable and outreach-facing*** *– inputs: sufficiency planning, recommissioned AP and clearer roles for Learning Centres and Special Schools; outcomes: specialist expertise flowing back into mainstream settings; impact: reduced reliance on out-of-area placements and improved value for money*

Overall ambition*: over the longer term, the system will become more inclusive, equitable and financially sustainable, with better outcomes for children and young people, stronger parental confidence and fewer children requiring high-cost or out-of-area provision.*

4. **Please upload a completed copy of the Local Partnership Maturity Assessment Tool.**

   INSERT DOCUMENT UPLOAD LINK

5. **What is the local area partnership roadmap for the next 3 years?**

   Reflecting on the broad timescales and expectation for deliverables set out in the Schools White Paper, key documents and core minimum requirements set out in this document, please provide a high-level roadmap for the next 3 years. Please highlight key milestones and a trajectory to the target metrics identified above, including leading indicators.

In the 2026-27 column, in particular, please reference how you plan to meet the core minimum requirements in your narrative, including details and evidence in supporting documents.

You can insert or upload supporting documents including graphics/visuals that illustrate your data trajectory.

Overview
Dorset's three-year roadmap, as set out below, has been developed in detail to translate the partnership's vision into a sequenced programme of reform. It builds on strong foundations, including locality-based working, established Early Years practice, existing specialist expertise, learning hubs, Valuing SEND, and a clear commitment to co-production with children, young people, families and education settings. The sequencing of the activity has been carefully considered to ensure successful, visible and measured progress over the course of the implementation of the reforms. ▪ **Year 1 will focus on establishment and early implementation.** Dorset will agree the Inclusion Charter, define in detail and start implementing Dorset's Expertise Offer, strengthen Valuing SEND, expand Inclusion Bases, align AP to the three-tier model, and develop the integrated data dashboard. This first year will put the core infrastructure, governance and delivery capacity in place. ▪ **Year 2 will focus on refining and embedding.** Lessons from rolling out the Expertise Offer in Year 1 will be used to enhance and embed it further, and the system will begin to show measurable progress through stronger mainstream confidence, improved collaboration, increased local capacity and better use of shared data. ▪ **Year 3 will focus on sustained impact.** The partnership expects a more consistent, inclusive system, wider access to local support, reduced reliance on independent special placements and stronger parental confidence.

Local roadmap for the next 3 years					
Building blocks	**Activity & enablers**	**2026/27 milestones**	**2027/28 milestones**	**2028/29 milestones**	**Link to CMR**
Strengthening inclusion across education settings	***A Strong Universal Offer for Mainstream settings*** *Enablers:* • *National inclusion standards*	• *Current Universal and Ordinarily Available Provision offer mapped and reviewed, with gaps identified and priorities agreed with settings including post-16, FE, MATs and the Parent Carer Council. Key areas of focus include school moves.*	• *Refreshed Universal Offer launched across all settings, with clear pathways, access routes and deployment guidance in place and communicated system-wide*	• *Universal offer fully embedded across all settings and phases, with all mainstream settings able to clearly articulate the support available and evidence its impact on outcomes*	*1.11, 3.1, 3.2, 3.4, 3.9, 3.10, 4.4*

	• *Existing Universal Offer and training offer, hosted on the Nexus online platform* • *Early version of Dorset's Inclusion Charter developed by school leaders* • *Previous version of Dorset Quality Inclusion Framework, BCP Quality Inclusion Framework and Ofsted Inclusion Framework* • *Valuing SEND tool* • *Inclusive Mainstream Fund for Schools* • *High Needs Provision Capital Allocation Grant*	• *Refreshed Universal and Ordinarily Available Provision Offer drafted, incorporating well-evidenced approaches across speech and language, neurodevelopmental needs and SEMH (e.g. PINS pilot, Balanced System Programme etc.), with clear guidance on deployment for mainstream settings.*	• *Well-evidenced early intervention approaches – including Balanced System Programme, PINS pilot and SEMH approaches from Learning Centres – scaled across mainstream settings, supported by Dorset's Expertise Offer and targeted workforce development.*	• *Well-evidenced early intervention approaches operating consistently at scale across Dorset, with settings confident in deploying the right approaches for their context, informed by Valuing SEND setting readiness data and the Quality Inclusion Framework.*	*3.1, 3.3, 3.4, 3.5*
		• *A clear articulation of the current universal and targeted inclusion offer, including pathways, support available, and how settings can access it.*	• *Education settings can clearly articulate the available support at universal level, how it is used, and its impact on outcomes for their children and young people.*	• *The system can confidently demonstrate an increase in setting and parental and carer confidence in mainstream provision.*	*3.1, 3.3, 4.4*
		• *Agreement with settings on the expectations around the Universal Offer, ensuring there is clarity about when and how to access for additional support for children and young people with more complex needs (e.g. Dorset's Expertise Offer).*	• *Settings are clear on the expectations around the universal offer and are increasingly confident in how and when to access additional support.*	• *There is system-wide clarity on the parameters of the universal offer, and settings are confident in accessing additional support at the appropriate time where required.*	*1.11, 3.1, 3.2, 3.3*
		• *Development and agreement of an ambitious Inclusion Charter and Quality Inclusion Framework in partnership with school leaders*	• *The Inclusion Charter is recognised and adopted across settings. The Quality Inclusion Framework is used to monitor inclusion practice and consistency across settings.*	• *The Inclusion Charter and Quality Inclusion Frameworks are established and routinely used for embedding and monitoring inclusion practice across settings.*	*3.1, 3.2, 4.4*
		• *Local needs analysis completed, drawing on EHCP data, Valuing SEND setting readiness data and locality intelligence, to identify the most commonly occurring and growing areas of need across all phases*	• *A set of established indicators (including the Quality Inclusion Framework and Valuing SEND setting readiness scores) are used to assess and review variation of practice across settings and help effectively target support where needed.*	• *Established indicators are used as routine practice within operational and strategic discussions to review and monitor inclusive practice and proactively target support.*	*3.1, 3.4, 4.3*
		• *Training and workforce development programme aligned to the refreshed offer; with Year 1 delivery focused*	• *Training and workforce development programme is expanded further, and uptake and impact monitored.*	• *Established and varied training and workforce programme available, underpinned by strong*	*1.7, 1.8, 3.3, 3.4*

		on the highest priority areas of need.		*engagement and impact monitoring processes.*	
		• *The Valuing SEND tool is embedded in Early Years settings and rolled out further to primary and secondary settings to support setting readiness and individual profile assessments.*	• *The Valuing SEND tool offer has rolled out to all settings across Dorset and is used consistently to support setting readiness and individual need assessments.*	• *All settings are trained and confident using the Valuing SEND tool to assess setting readiness and individual need*	*1.11, 3.3, 3.7, 4.3*
		• *Completed pilot of the Valuing SEND tool to support and strengthen key stage school moves, with focus on primary to secondary, and post-16 school moves.*	• *Clear results from the Valuing SEND school move pilot and agreement on an extension.*	• *Valuing SEND is used consistently across settings to support key stage school moves and is a core method for sharing information consistently between settings.*	*3.8, 3.10, 4.4*
Access to specialist support and local placements	***Dorset's Expertise Offer*** *Enablers:* • *Existing locality structures and relationships* • *Balanced System & PINS pilots* • *Experts at Hand Guidance* • *Experts at Hand Principles and Pathways developed by ICB* • *Integrated data dashboard*	• *Refined core principles and operating model of Dorset's Expertise Offer, with input from across the partnership. Offer launched across all localities in alignment with existing local initiatives and structures*	• *Expertise Offer fully operational across all localities, with targeted elements tailored to the structures, needs and characteristics of each area*	• *Refined Expertise Offer is embedded as business-as-usual across all six localities, firmly integrated within Dorset's Multi-disciplinary Families First Locality Family Help Services and tailored to the distinct needs and characteristics of each area*	*1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.7, 1.8*
		• *Defined and embedded strategic and operational ownership, jointly held by the LA and NHS Dorset, underpinned by a memorandum of understanding or equivalent agreement, with clear governance, commissioning and accountability arrangements in place*	• *Strategic and operational ownership firmly embedded, with joint LA and ICB oversight functioning effectively*	• *Strategic and operational ownership fully embedded and self-sustaining, with clear accountability, commissioning and performance oversight routinely informing commissioning and governance decisions*	*1.1, 1.9, 1.10, 4.1*
		• *Recruitment to key priority posts across all localities underway or completed, with the offer on track to be fully operational by the start of Year 2*	• *Full complement of posts recruited across all localities, with any remaining vacancies filled through the creative workforce design approach, including assistant roles*	• *Workforce is stable, sustainable and operating at full capacity across all localities, with clear career pathways and minimum standards embedded in recruitment and development practice*	*1.7, 1.8*

		• *Offer integrated within Dorset's multi-disciplinary Families First locality arrangements, building on existing relationships and ways of working*	• *Delivery model refined based on Year 1 learning, with locality-specific adaptations in place to reflect the different structures, needs and characteristics of each area*	• *Locality model reviewed and, where necessary, refined to ensure it continues to align with the new support delivery model and meets the needs of settings and communities*	*1.1, 1.3, 1.7, 3.3*
		• *Post-16 strand of Expertise Offer developed and launched, with training and coaching for settings on PfA outcomes and the post-16 landscape*	• *Post-16 strand fully operational, with evidence of improved Annual Reviews, stronger PfA planning and increased uptake of mainstream FE and supported internships*	• *More young people with SEND sustained in mainstream further education and supported pathways to adulthood, with NEET figures reducing and parental confidence in post-16 provision demonstrably improved*	*3.9*
		• *Robust monitoring and evaluation framework in place from the outset, tracking equity of access, reach and early impact*	• *Use of data strengthened through the integrated data dashboard and Valuing SEND intelligence, enabling more targeted and evidence-informed deployment of the offer across localities.*	• *Impact evidenced across all key inclusion indicators, with demonstrable improvements in mainstream confidence, reduced escalation, improved placement stability and stronger parental confidence*	*1.8, 1.9, 1.10, 4.3*
		• *Y1 evaluation and Year 2 operational plan agreed, informed by early learning and refined in response to locality feedback*	• *Mid-point evaluation completed, with findings shared across the partnership and used to confirm Year 3 plans*	• *Sustainability plan confirmed and the offer operating as an integral part of Dorset's inclusive education system*	*1.8, 4.3*
		• *Clear and consistent access routes to the Expertise Offer established across all localities, with equitable access mechanisms in place to ensure less proactive settings and out-of-area mainstream FE settings are actively reached and a baseline measure of setting confidence established*	• *Evidence that the Expertise Offer is being accessed equitably across all settings and localities, with setting confidence scores improving against the Year 1 baseline and less proactive settings demonstrably reached*	• *All mainstream settings consistently report confidence in meeting a wider range of needs, with evidence of reduced escalation to specialist provision and statutory assessment across all localities*	*1.11, 4.4*
		• *Development of a strong communications plan to support engagement across the system, in particular with settings and families.*	• *Parents and carers understand, and are confident in, how the offer is delivering support. There are consistent measures to monitor confidence.*	• *Parental confidence metrics demonstrate sustained improvement year on year, with families reporting clear understanding of the support available, trust in mainstream provision and active*	*1.2, 4.4, 5.1, 5.2*

				involvement in decisions about their child's support	
		• *Neurodiversity tool is developed and piloted to support earlier identification and needs-led support without reliance on diagnosis*	• *Learning from the neurodiversity tool pilot is used to scale and shift towards a needs-led model of care*	• *A needs-led neurodiversity model of care is embedded which supports earlier identification, reduced waiting times and high confidence from across the system, reinforced through embedded co-production*	*1.7, 3.3, 3.4*
		• *SEND workforce sufficiency analysis completed, mapping current strengths and gaps to inform the training and development offer for Dorset's Expertise Offer practitioners and underpin career pathway and minimum standards development in Year 2*	• *Clear career pathways for the workforce defined, alongside a set of well-articulated and agreed minimum standards*	• *SEND workforce development is embedded as business-as-usual, with clear career pathways, agreed minimum standards and a creative approach to role design sustaining system-wide capacity and reducing reliance on hard-to-fill specialist posts*	*1.7, 1.8, 3.4*
Encouraging inclusive culture and behaviours	***Strengthen collaboration between settings*** *Enablers:* • *Existing locality structures and relationships, including early examples of education setting clusters*	• *A shared vision is established, with principles and expectations set across settings, which is supported by clear governance and partnership structures.*	• *Collaborative models in place and aligned to Dorset's Expertise Offer.*	• *Collaborative models are embedded as business-as-usual practice*	*2.3, 3.2, 4.1, 4.4*
		• *Pilot small-scale collaborative approaches, such as shared specialist staff, pooling of resources and cluster-based support models, are identified and operating.*	• *Pilots have been scaled into formalised collaborative arrangements, including pooling funding models, shared services and multi-settings support teams.*		*2.3, 3.5, 4.4*
		• *Existing resources, expertise and system pressures mapped to identify opportunities for more effective joint working and pooling of resources, building on existing good practice in Dorset.*	• *Joint working practices have demonstrably strengthened across settings.*	• *A culture of shared ownership and system-wide responsibility is consolidated across Dorset*	*2.1, 2.3, 4.3*
		• *Governance structures and accountability mechanisms for collaborative working agreed.*	• *Regular communication oversight and accountability mechanisms are embedded.*	• *Impact is regularly evaluated and acted upon to ensure refinement of delivery models*	*1.10, 4.1, 4.4*
System leadership, local partnership		• *Consolidated and standardised Early Years needs identification tools and*	• *Evidence-based identification and intervention approaches (e.g. Valuing SEND) have been rolled out at scale and a*	• *Recognised consistency and equity of provision across all Early Years settings in Dorset*	*3.7, 3.8, 4.3*

collaboration and co-production	***Improve Early Years identification and strategies*** *Enablers:* • *Best Start in Life, Family Hubs* • *Integrated data dashboard* • *Valuing SEND tool*	*approaches (including Valuing SEND tool)*	*'Reception Ready' model has started to be embedded across EY settings*		
		• *0-5 childcare and specialist SEND sufficiency assessment completed, including availability of places, gaps for children with complex and emerging needs, and the role of Best Start Family Hubs*	• *System-wide agreement on 0-5 sufficiency gaps and prioritisation is in place, with a clear implementation plan agreed across partners and targeted interventions actively underway. Most pressing gaps will have begun to close over the course of the year.*	• *Gaps, as set out in the 0-5 sufficiency assessment, are closed and impact evaluated. A new assessment is undertaken to identify newly emerging gaps which can then be prioritised*	*3.6*
		• *A targeted training programme delivered as part of the Universal Offer to support earlier identification and trauma-informed practice.*	• *Assessment of impact of Y1 training and identified additional opportunities to strengthen the early years and prevention workforce development offer.*	• *Workforce training and development programme is aligned with the wider Dorset offer and embedded as business as usual.*	*3.3, 3.7*
		• *'Reception Ready' model is developed, including through use of the Valuing SEND tool.*	• *The 'Reception Ready' model is increasingly established across settings, demonstrating early evidence of impact.*	• *All Early Years settings have adopted the 'Reception Ready' model and are confident in supporting pupil school moves.*	*3.8*
		• *Strengthened integration between Family Hubs, Health Visiting and Early Years settings*	• *Integration between Family Hubs, Health Visiting and Early Years settings is mature.*	• *Integration between Family Hubs, Health Visiting and Early Years settings embedded.*	*1.1, 1.2, 3.6, 3.7*
		• *Agreed and implemented clear pathways, access routes and indicators for further support.*	• *Pathways, access routes and indicators for further support are clear and embedded across most settings.*	• *Pathways, access routes and indicators for further support are clear and embedded across all settings.*	*3.7, 3.8*
		• *Early Years data is integrated with school-level data.*	• *Quality and consistency of implementation is being monitored, including through the integrated data dashboard.*	• *Data is being used consistently to evaluate impact of interventions, and to refine identification and support pathways.*	*3.7, 4.3*
Strengthening inclusion across education settings	***Increase and strengthen inclusion bases*** *Enablers:* • *SEND sufficiency and Inclusion Base Delivery Plan*	• *Finalised and agreed SEND Sufficiency and Inclusion Base Delivery Plan, aligned to SEND reform and capital programme. Site planning includes existing school premises, falling rolls, rural viability and travel impact assessment, with findings used to inform prioritisation.*	• *SEND Sufficiency and Inclusion Base Delivery Plan well underway, and strategy reviewed and updated in response to Y1 data and demand trends.*	• *SEND Sufficiency and Inclusion Base Delivery Plan fully implemented, and strategy routinely reviewed and refined in response to changing demand and emerging evidence.*	*2.1, 2.2, 2.6, 2.7, 2.8*

	• *National guidance* • *Delivery model distinguishing LA-commissioned specialist bases and school-led support bases*	• *Established governance, delivery oversight, partnership engagement and evaluation mechanisms.*	• *Governance structures fully operational and routinely used to oversee delivery and performance. Completed review of Y1 impact, including early evaluation of impact on inclusion, placement stability and outcomes, and alignment to Y2 plan*	• *Governance and accountability arrangements embedded as business-as-usual, with robust quality assurance mechanisms in place and impact on inclusion, placement stability and outcomes evidenced, evaluated and shared across the system.*	*2.4, 2.6, 4.1*
		• *Initial delivery phase focused on commissioning and opening LA-funded Specialist Inclusion Bases to address sufficiency gaps and reduce reliance on high-cost placements*	• *Delivery plan expands to support establishment of Support Inclusion Bases in mainstream settings.*	• *A fully established two-tier Inclusion Base system recognised and trusted by the system, with specialist bases providing high-intensity provision and support bases embedded across mainstream settings*	*2.1, 2.2, 2.6*
		• *Early engagement with schools and MATs to define the model, expectations and support offer for developing Support Inclusion Bases in later phases*	• *Structured programme in place to support mainstream schools and MATs to establish Support Inclusion Bases, including funding clarity, workforce development and access to outreach from specialist bases*	• *Mainstream schools and MATs routinely commissioning and delivering Support Inclusion Bases as part of their core inclusion offer*	*2.3, 2.5*
		• *The second phase of LA-commissioned Specialist Inclusion Bases has been commissioned.*	• *Third phase of specialist bases commissioned continuing expansion where needed while initiating rollout of support school-led Inclusion Bases*	• *Final phase of Specialist Inclusion Bases delivered, including remaining C&L and SEMH gaps*	*2.2, 2.6*
		• *Clarity across the system on the two-tier model of Inclusion Bases, including the distinct roles of LA-commissioned specialist bases and school-led support bases*	• *Both specialist and Support Inclusion Bases operating as stable, predictable provision, embedded within the graduated response and locality planning*	• *Inclusion Base network fully covers all Dorset localities and key phases, including post-16 pathways, where appropriate. Learning Centres operating as a resource for schools/CYP with acute SEMH needs.*	*2.4, 2.6, 3.9, 3.10*
		• *Quality standards for ensuring consistency in the quality of provision defined and adopted.*	• *Review of provision against adopted quality standards, with clear plans for changes where needed*	• *Reviewed and updated quality assurance standards and mechanisms in place*	*2.4, 2.6*
Access to specialist support and local placements		• *Established strategic and operational ownership of AP practice and provision.*	• *A strategic lead for AP is in post and well embedded within the AP system.*	• *Strategic and operational ownership of AP fully embedded and self-sustaining.*	*1.4, 1.9, 4.1*

	Align AP practice and provision to the three-tier model *Enablers:* • *Learning Centres* • *National guidance and evidence of good practice*	• *Clarified system-wide expectations for a three-tier model of AP across settings.*	• *The plan is defined and the shift to the three-tier model underway across the system.*	• *The three-tier model is embedded across the AP system, and a core element of the inclusive ecosystem.*	*1.4*
		• *Agreed plan to support the shift to the three-tier model, with a focus on promoting short-term placements and strengthening reintegration into mainstream.*	• *The principles and pathways of the AP three-tier model are well understood by the wider system, and the role of Learning Centres is demonstrably embedded in practice*	• *AP is no longer seen as a destination by settings, families and children and young people, with outreach and/or reintegration forming a core part of AP practice.*	*1.4*
		• *Clarification of the role and purpose of Learning Centres within this process, and their outreach role to support Tier 1 provision.*	• *Learning Centres' role and purpose within the three-tier model clearly articulated and understood across the system, with outreach to mainstream settings as part of Tier 1 actively being delivered and early evidence of impact on inclusion and reintegration emerging*	• *Learning Centres recognised as being central to the delivery of inclusive AP and provide a robust outreach offer as part of Tier 1.*	*1.4, 1.6*
		• *Consolidated governance structures and joint working arrangements agreed between providers and the Local Authority*	• *Governance and joint working between the Local Authority and AP providers is seen as robust, underpinned by joint working and decision making.*	• *Governance and joint working arrangements between the local authority and AP providers fully embedded and routinely reviewed, with stable, aligned commissioning and delivery arrangements demonstrating collective accountability across system*	*1.4, 1.9, 4.1*
		• *Current AP commissioning arrangements reviewed and gaps identified, with a clear plan agreed for strengthening commissioning in line with the three-tier model and documented good practice. AP capacity constraints reviewed, with agreed route for contracting, regional partnership or expertise-sharing where local capacity is insufficient.*	• *Strengthened commissioning of AP is in place*	• *Commissioning and delivery arrangements are stable, aligned and routinely reviewed.*	*1.4, 1.5*
System leadership, local partnership		• *Identification and consolidation of existing good practice in co-production and*	• *Good practice in co-production consolidated and shared across SEND and Best Start in Life services, with consistent*	• *Co-production and participation approaches consistently embedded across all services, with clear*	*5.1, 5.2, 5.4*

collaboration and co-production	***Strengthen Co-production and Participation*** *Enablers:* • *Strong starting point and relationships* • *Active engagement with participation groups* • *Family Hubs* • *SENDIASS* • *National minimum standards*	*participation across SEND and Best Start in Life services*	*approaches being adopted across delivery*	*evidence of impact on decision-making and outcomes for children, young people and families.*	
		• *Agreed and socialised shared co-production principles across SEND and Early Years partners*	• *Co-production principles are recognised and routinely adopted*	• *Co-production principles fully embedded as a consistent expectation across all partners and services, with adherence routinely evidenced through governance processes*	*5.1, 5.4*
		• *Building on the mature relationship with Dorset Parent Carer Council and existing participation groups ensures input is robust across decision-making, design and delivery. This includes a completed review of SENDIASS, mediation and dispute resolution arrangements, with metrics agreed for timeliness, resolution rates, effectiveness and family confidence.*	• *A "you said, we did" approach is developed and embedded as routine practice alongside agreed and measurable mediation and dispute resolution metrics which are being tracked*	• *Clear impact of co-production and participation in decision-making and outcomes for children, young people, and families, along with reduction in number of mediation and disputes*	*5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 5.5, 5.6*
		• *Mapping complete of current feedback mechanisms and participation activity across services, with identified gaps, duplication, and opportunities for improvement, particularly from seldom-heard groups.*	• *Co-production is embedded as a standard part of service design and review*	• *Children, young people, and families recognise their active role in shaping and improving services*	*5.2, 5.4*
		• *Strengthened role of Family Hubs in capturing and responding to lived experience*	• *Participation reach is expanded to ensure diverse and representative voice, and previously seldom-heard groups are better represented*	• *There is evidence how lived experience directly informs commissioning decisions and strategic priorities*	*5.1, 5.2, 5.3*
		• *Research complete on how to make better use of social media to support engagement and co-production, including through a potential work experience placement for a young person*	• *The use of social media to support young people's engagement and input is developing*	• *The use of social media to support young people's engagement and input is established*	*5.2*
		• *Early resolution pathways reviewed and strengthened, with mediation, disagreement*	• *Evidence of earlier resolution of disputes, with reduction in escalation to formal processes*	• *Dispute resolution and decision-making processes fully embedded, with*	*4.5*

		resolution and 'next steps' meetings consistently offered across all localities and SEND performance dashboard refreshed to include SEND Reform Plan metrics	*and tribunal, and dispute resolution data routinely informing improvement activity*	*transparent escalation routes consistently experienced across the system and performance data evidencing sustained improvement in timeliness and resolution rates*	
Access to specialist support and local placements	***Refresh and update SEND sufficiency strategy*** *Enablers:* • *First draft of SEND sufficiency strategy* • *Integrated data dashboard*	• *Sufficiency strategy refreshed and aligned to the reform programme, rural viability and locality variation, with provision decisions explicitly linked to inclusion outcomes, local need and transport impact*	• *Sufficiency strategy implementation well underway, with Inclusion Base expansion, AP recommissioning and Expertise Offer progressing in alignment*	• *Sufficiency strategy fully embedded, with investment demonstrably aligned to inclusion outcomes and driving equitable access to local, high-quality support across all phases and localities*	*2.1, 2.2, 2.6, 2.7, 2.8*
		• *Baseline of current and projected need established across all phases, localities and need types, with demand modelling embedded as a core planning tool.*	• *Demand modelling routinely informing capital investment, workforce planning and commissioning decisions*	• *Inclusion Base expansion, AP recommissioning and Expertise Offer operating as a coherent, planned and sustainable continuum of provision*	*2.1, 4.3*
		• *Post-16 sufficiency analysis initiated, with current provision mapped (including post-16 pathways into and out of settings) and co-production with young people, families, providers underway*	• *Post-16 sufficiency analysis complete, with full commissioning proposal agreed*	• *Post-16 commissioning arrangements implemented, with young people accessing education, training, employment and supported internships closer to home*	*2.4, 2.6, 3.9, 3.10, 4.4*
		• *Early evidence of reduced reliance on out-of-area and independent placements, with value for money analysis demonstrating cost avoidance*	• *Reduced reliance on out-of-area and independent placements is becoming visible in placement trends, with value for money analysis used to inform scaling and commissioning decisions*	• *Impact on sufficiency, inclusion outcomes and financial sustainability evidenced and used to refine delivery on an ongoing basis*	*2.2, 2.8, 3.5*
System leadership, local partnership collaboration and co-production	***Develop an integrated data dashboard*** *Enablers:* • *Existing BI dashboards for Early Years and school-age* • *Valuing SEND data* • *DiiS, SEND partnership scorecard/reporting*	• *Early Years, school-age and Valuing SEND data integrated into a single dashboard, providing a more coherent system-wide picture of need, provision and outcomes*	• *Dashboard further developed with additional datasets integrated, providing a comprehensive evidence-based view of outcomes, inclusion and progress against reform milestones*	• *Integrated dashboard fully established and embedded as the system's primary shared evidence base, routinely informing commissioning, sufficiency planning and strategic priorities across all partners*	*3.1, 3.7, 4.3*
		• *Additional system data mapped for future integration, such as from DfE, NHS, HM Courts and Tribunals service etc.*	• *Dashboard is starting to be used routinely at the operational and strategic level to guide evidence-based decision-making*	• *Data is routinely reviewed and acted upon at operational and strategic level*	*4.3*

		• *Key inclusion metrics agreed across partners and aligned to the Inclusion Charter and Quality Inclusion Framework, with baselines established*	• *Effectiveness of reform activities – including the Expertise Offer, Inclusion Base expansion and universal offer – actively tracked through the dashboard*	• *Dashboard used consistently to evidence value for money, cost avoidance and return on investment across the reform programme*	*1.8, 1.10, 2.1, 3.1, 4.3*
		• *Dashboard socialised with frontline professionals and governance forums, with initial training delivered to support data interpretation and decision-making*	• *Dashboard insight demonstrably informing commissioning decisions and service improvements, evidenced through governance records*	• *Continuous improvement process in place, with the dashboard regularly updated and refined in response to emerging need and system changes*	*1.10, 4.3, 4.4*
Strengthening inclusion across education settings	***Embed the Valuing SEND tool across settings*** *Enablers:* • *Existing and developing Valuing SEND practice across Early Years settings* • *Evidence from other local areas and settings who have successfully used the tool*	• *Clear cross-partnership strategic leadership in place to support use of Valuing SEND*	• *Strategic leadership for Valuing SEND fully embedded, with consistent oversight and challenge of usage and impact across all localities and phases*	• *Strategic leadership for Valuing SEND embedded as business-as-usual, with usage and impact routinely reported through governance and commissioning processes*	*3.7, 4.1, 4.3*
		• *Updated needs descriptors which align to the definitions within the White Paper and the three-tier model*	• *Further refinement of needs descriptors based on feedback from settings and use in discussions between SENCOs, parents and carers*	• *Needs descriptors stable, consistently applied across all settings and phases, and routinely reviewed in response to national policy changes and local learning*	*3.1, 3.7, 3.8*
		• *Updated insight layer that provides clear understanding of needs and setting readiness, aligned with the integrated data dashboard*	• *Processes updated to make use of Valuing SEND data as part of discussion and decision making, and are understood*	• *The Valuing SEND dataset is consistently being used at both an individual (child) and strategic (commissioning) level, informing and supporting decision making based on evidence*	*1.11, 3.7, 4.3*
		• *Consistent use of Valuing SEND across the majority of Early Years settings*	• *Consistent use of Valuing SEND across Early Years, primary and secondary schools, focused on phase / setting transfers*	• *Consistent use of Valuing SEND across all age ranges, with profiles being updated on a regular basis*	*3.7, 3.8, 3.10*
		• *Suite of training documents and case studies in place to show impact and support use of the tool*	• *Training and case study suite updated based on Year 1 learning, with uptake and impact monitored and additional development needs identified*	• *Established and varied training and case study offer in place, underpinned by strong engagement and impact monitoring*	*3.3, 3.7*
		• *Impact framework agreed, making it easy to identify children and settings who would most benefit from proactive, focused support*	• *Impact framework routinely used to identify and prioritise support, with early evidence of improved outcomes for children and settings receiving proactive input*	• *Clear, regular feedback from parents and carers show greater confidence in decision making* • *Regular monitoring shows Valuing SEND data being*	*3.3, 4.3, 5.1*

				used to inform and update the other initiatives within Dorset's SEND Reform Plan	
SUCCESS MEASURES ***Drawing on metrics from the accompanying data template*** *E.g.* *Improve attendance of pupils in all maintained schools (mainstream and special) with SEN* *Reduce spend on ISS places* *Increase # children and young people supported by Education Psychologists/SALT/OT in maintained provision* *Improve overall effectiveness of provision* *NEET data* *Leading indicators*		*Year 1 (2027) will be a period of establishment and early implementation. The pace of change in the system will be slower as new structures, offers and frameworks are put in place, and we recognise that the system will be navigating uncertainty and adjustments that come with significant reform. Progress against metrics may be limited, but the foundations for sustained change will be firmly in place.* • *EHCNA rates will begin to stabilise from a baseline of 632 EHCNAs to around 616* • *As a baseline, in 2025 we estimate around 3,283 children with SEN but without EHCPs were supported by these key practitioners. By the end of Year 1 we expect this number to increase to 3,706 as Dorset's Expertise Offer comes online.* • *Parental and children and young people confidence metrics agreed and baselined with the Parent Carer Council, Youth Voice and other key partners, providing a foundation for measuring improvement across the plan period* • *Independent special placements stabilised at 523 against 527 in 2026 to ensure better value for money and that more children and young people*	*By year 2 (2028), early interventions will begin to gain traction, and the system will start to see measurable movement against key indicators. Confidence in the reform programme will be growing, and the benefits of earlier intervention and stronger mainstream capability will begin to show in the data.* • *Rate of EHCP increases slowing to 3%* • *As Dorset's Expertise Offer is embedded within the local system, we expect the number of children and young people with SEN but without EHCPs supported by key practitioners to increase to 4,172 as more staff are recruited in to post.* • *First parental and children, young people confidence data available* • *Independent special placements reducing from 523 to 508, beginning to demonstrate better value for money and an increase in the number of children and young people who are educated close to home and their community.* • *KS4 Attainment 8 scores for CYP with EHCPs: maintain at 15, with early indicators of improvement emerging*	*By year 3 (2029), the key elements of the reform will be embedded, and Dorset expects to see a shift towards a more inclusive, sustainable and financially resilient system. The data will begin to reflect the cumulative impact of earlier intervention, stronger mainstream capability and more coherent specialist provision.* • *Rate of EHCP increases slowing to 2%* • *By year 3, we expect the implementation of the new Expertise Offer to have increased the number of children in Dorset with SEN but without an EHCP supported by these key practitioners to 4,638.* • *Parental and children and young people confidence metrics showing sustained improvement* • *Independent special placements reducing from 508 to 463 and Osprey Quay comes online, demonstrating better value for money and a marked increase in the number of children and young people who are educated close to home and their community.* • *KS4 Attainment 8 scores for CYP with EHCPs improve from 15 (2024/25) to 16 to remain above National (15) and SW (15).*	

	• *are educated closer to home and their community* • *KS4 Attainment 8 scores for CYP with EHCPs = 15 (2024/25)*		

INSERT DOCUMENT UPLOAD LINK

6. **What will the local area partnership deliver in the first year?**

Please outline the key workstreams, milestones and trajectory your local area partnership will deliver and achieve in 2026-27 as well as how you plan to spend the investment allocation that will help fund this year's delivery. Please share key milestones and anticipated dates, success measures, cost breakdown and category. These should incorporate the core minimum requirements, be mapped to the building blocks above and should reflect a more detailed trajectory to the narrative, milestones and target metrics outlined in the 2026-27 column above.

Overview
Our first-year plan will move the reform programme from design into delivery. The focus will be on building the core infrastructure for change, while starting practical work in the areas that will improve inclusion, earlier support, local provision and confidence across the system. ▪ **Q2 will focus on mobilisation.** The partnership will establish cross-partner delivery groups, confirm accountable leads, develop detailed project plans, agree baselines, map current provision and gaps, and begin engagement with settings, families and wider partners. ▪ **Q3 will focus on testing and early implementation.** Core models, pathways and frameworks will be developed and socialised, pilot activity will begin, recruitment and workforce activity will progress, and early data will be used to refine delivery. ▪ **Q4 will focus on evaluation and scaling decisions.** Dorset will review the impact of early delivery, confirm year two priorities, strengthen governance and reporting, and use evidence from pilots, data and stakeholder feedback to adapt the plan.

The partnership expects that, by the end of year one, Dorset will have the delivery grip, shared evidence base and confidence across the broader system needed to move into wider implementation.

2026-27 Local delivery plan		Q2		Q3		Q4	
Workstream outline – mapped to building block ***Outcome -*** *what you want to achieve with this workstream* ***Success measures –*** *how you measure progress drawing on metrics from the accompanying data template*	***Responsible lead per workstream*** *– accountable for the delivery of the workstream and the identified outcome.*	***Milestones per workstream*** *What key milestones will enable you achieve your targeted trajectory*	***Target trajectory per workstream*** *Where do you expect your data to be?*	***Milestones per workstream*** *What key milestones will enable you achieve your targeted trajectory*	***Target trajectory per workstream*** *Where do you expect your data to be?*	***Milestones per workstream*** *What key milestones will enable you achieve your targeted trajectory*	***Target trajectory per workstream*** *Where do you expect your data to be?*
Developing a strong Universal Offer for mainstream settings **Building block:** strengthening inclusion across educational settings ***Outcome****: there is a shared language and expectations across the system about what universal provision is and what it entails, settings are confident in delivering inclusive practice consistently for all pupils, and parents, carers and children and young people understand and trust the support available at universal level.* ***Year 1 success measures:*** *Core data metrics (linked to metrics outlined in Year 1 success measures as defined in question 5):* • *Improved parental confidence in mainstream inclusive practice* • *Reduction in EHC needs assessment (EHCNA) requests* *Workstream specific targets:*	***Corporate Director for Education and Learning & Education setting leaders***	• *Operational working group is formed and established.* • *Detailed project plan is developed, with clear timelines and ownership of activities.* • *Local needs analysis is completed, and current Universal and Ordinarily Available Provision Offer is mapped, and key gaps are identified, including training and workforce programme.* [3.1, 3.4] • *Engagement plan is agreed and finalised.* [3.2, 4.4] • *Plan for developing the Inclusion Charter and Quality Inclusion Framework are agreed, including engagement sessions to ensure widespread participation and co-production.* • *Work continues to embed Valuing SEND across Early Years settings.*	*No anticipated measurable progress against core data metrics in Q2, as this quarter is focused on mapping, planning and early engagement activity* *20 new settings recruited to deliver school move Valuing SEND pilot*	• *Working group and project plan are finalised and consolidated.* • *Relevant workstreams are underway to further develop the Universal Offer, following gaps identified in Q2. Training and workforce programme is established and launched.* • *Targeted engagement underway to ensure clear articulation of the offer across the system* • *Inclusion Charter and Quality Inclusion Framework are being developed, in partnership with wider system partners.* • *Work continues to embed Valuing SEND across Early Years settings.*	*No anticipated measurable progress against core data metrics in Q3 as programmes embed* *At least 40% of settings report improved clarity on the Universal Offer, access routes and indications for further support* *Valuing SEND actively used in 75% of Early Years settings*	• *Working group is established and planning begins for Year 2.* • *Comprehensive Universal Offer programme is in place and demonstrating early impact. Training and workforce programme is established and impact is reviewed.* • *There is evidence of a strengthening Universal Offer across settings, with clarity around expectations, access routes and indicators for when further support is required.* • *Inclusion Charter and Quality Inclusion Framework are finalised and socialised.* • *Valuing SEND is well embedded across Early Years settings and*	*Evidence of stabilisation towards the Year 1 target of 616 EHCNAs* *At least 60% of surveyed parent carers report improved confidence in and understanding of mainstream inclusive practice* *Valuing SEND actively used in 80% of Early Years settings* *At least 60% of participating settings report improved clarity on the Universal Offer, access routes and indicators for further support*

• *Expansion of Valuing SEND use across mainstream settings* • *Improved confidence of mainstream settings in delivering inclusive practice*		• *Valuing SEND pilot is planned to expand use of Valuing SEND to primary and secondary settings, with a focus on supporting school moves (including to post-16 and FE).* • *Governance structures are established and baseline measures for tracking increase in parental and setting confidence are agreed.*[5.1, 5.2]		• *Valuing SEND pilot focused on school moves is launched with a select number of settings across primary, secondary and post-16.* • *Monitoring system is in development to track use and impact of strengthening Universal Offer across settings, with targeted support delivered as required. Valuing SEND data begins to be used to monitor setting readiness and guide the delivery of support. Parental confidence is tracked.*		*routinely used to support identification of need.* • *School moves pilot is completed, impact evaluated and plans for Y2 developed.* • *Monitoring system to track parental and settings confidence begins to be more established, with Valuing SEND setting readiness scores providing a growing picture of confidence to meet needs across settings.*	
Dorset's Expertise Offer (our local Experts at Hand model)[1.8] **Building block:** strengthening inclusion across educational settings ***Outcome:*** *to deliver outreach, advisory and specialist input, build education setting capability through consultation, coaching and training, and make support available without the need for a formal diagnosis. Mainstream settings are resourced and confident to meet a wider range of needs and are clear on access routes for additional targeted and specialist input where children have more complex needs.* ***Year 1 success measures:*** *Core data metrics (linked to metrics outlined in Year 1 success measures as defined in question 5):*	***Corporate Director for Education and Learning***	*Operational working group is formed and established. Draft LA and ICB governance, commissioning and accountability arrangements agreed in principle, including a proposed memorandum of understanding or equivalent partnership agreement.* *Core principles and operating model of the offer are refined, based on local need and sufficiency evidence, as well as insights from other areas (e.g. Change Programme trials) and with input from across the Partnership. Existing initiatives and services are aligned to the offer, to ensure effective use of resources and avoid duplication.*[1.3] *Post-16 and PfA strand of Expertise Offer scoped and agreed through dedicated working group, with settings*	*No anticipated measurable progress expected against core data metrics in Q2. This quarter is focused on establishment and planning activity. The baseline position across all metrics will be confirmed and validated during this period.* *At least 25% of new roles have been recruited to increase the expected capacity to deliver the Expertise Offer*	*Working group and project plan are finalised and consolidated. Memorandum of understanding or equivalent partnership agreement finalised, confirming joint ownership, deployment, reporting, escalation and review arrangements.*[1.1, 1.9, 1.10] *Chosen operating model is consolidated and socialised across the partnership. Clear and consistent access routes are established across localities.* *Training and coaching programme for settings on post-16 landscape and PfA outcomes launched, with*	*No anticipated measurable progress expected against core data metrics in Q3, although delivery baselines, recruitment progress, access routes and early reach will be tracked.* *At least 40% of new roles have been recruited to increase the expected capacity to deliver the Expertise Offer* *At least 50% of surveyed settings understand what Dorset's*	*Working group and links to governance are well established. Y2 plan is being developed.* *Operating model is established and reviewed to align with emerging evidence of impact.* *Initial impact data collected, including feedback from young people, families and*	*Number pupils without EHCPs supported by key professionals increases to 3,706* *At least 60% of surveyed parent carers report improved confidence in and understanding of mainstream inclusive practice* *1% reduction in permanent exclusions of pupils with EHCPs from 23/24 baseline* *1% reduction in persistent absence of children with SEN statements or EHCPs from 24/25 baseline*

• *Increased access to specialist expertise* • *Improved parent and carer confidence and children and young people satisfaction in mainstream provision* *Workstream specific targets:* • *Reduced suspensions and permanent exclusions* • *Improved attendance* • *Reduced reliance on out-of-area placements* • *Improved confidence of mainstream settings in delivering inclusive practice*		*identified for initial engagement and digital PfA planning tool development initiated*		*Annual Review support and family engagement guidance available to all settings*	*Expertise Offer provides, how to access it and when it should be used.*	*settings on confidence and experience of post-16 planning and provision*	*2% reduction in travel to out-of-area placements* *At least 50% of settings across all localities regularly access Dorset's Expertise Offer* *At least 70% of participating settings understand what Dorset's Expertise Offer provides, how to access it and when it should be used*
		Joint mapping session completed between Expertise Offer leads and CYP Mental Health Transformation Programme leads; current overlap, gaps and referral friction points identified		*No-wrong-door SEMH referral model agreed across localities; roles of SEMH Specialist Teachers within the Expertise Offer and mental health practitioners clarified and communicated*		*Integrated model operating in all localities; early qualitative feedback from practitioners on clarity of SEMH pathways gathered and used to refine Year 2 plans*	
		Recruitment is completed for key roles required to deliver the model across localities.[1.8]		*Recruitment continues for any outstanding key posts.*		*Recruitment of key roles is completed and continues for additional posts required for Y2 expansion.*	
		SWOT analysis of Dorset's localities is undertaken, alongside targeted engagement. Some localities begin rollout of the offer.[1.2, 1.7, 1.11]		*Work begins to deliver offer across all localities, in alignment with existing initiatives and services.*		*All localities have an established and functioning offer.*	
		Training and development offer for practitioners is being planned, informed by SEND workforce sufficiency analysis.		*Training and development offer is launched and monitoring arrangements are agreed.*		*The training and development offer is consistently accessed and impact is monitored.*	
		A robust engagement and communications plan is developed to ensure system-wide co-production and build confidence in the system about how the model will support strengthened support and inclusive practice. This will support baselining of setting and parental understanding and confidence in the proposed changes.[1.2, 5.1]		*Communications and engagement are underway across the system with all relevant stakeholders.*		*There is clarity about the offer across the system. Engagement plan is reviewed in line with feedback and Y2 plan.*	
		Scoping work completed, with the purpose, design principles and target cohort for the Neurodiversity Tool agreed across education and health partners		*Neurodiversity tool developed and tested with a small group of settings, with initial feedback gathered to refine the approach ahead of wider piloting, aligned to work of Dorset's Expertise Offer*		*Pilot of neurodiversity tool launched across a defined cohort of settings, with a monitoring framework in place to evaluate impact on early identification and needs-led support*	
		Impact monitoring and governance processes are established to ensure equity of access, reach and early		*Early impact is closely evaluated through governance structures to*		*Y1 impact is evaluated. Y2 plan for further rollout and expansion is consolidated.*	

		impact, alongside increased system confidence.[1.8]		*track progress against measures.*		*Evidence of impact is consolidated and socialised, as part of communications and engagement plan.*	
Strengthen collaboration between settings and pooling resources **Building block:** strengthening inclusion across educational settings & access to specialist support and local placements ***Outcome:*** *ensuring that there is more effective use of resources among settings, building on existing strengths and expertise to consolidate consistent inclusive practice.* ***Year 1 success measures:*** *Core data metrics (linked to metrics outlined in Year 1 success measures as defined in question 5):* • *Improved parent and carer confidence and children and young people satisfaction in mainstream provision* *Workstream specific targets:* • *Measurable increase in the number of settings within locality clusters* • *Reduced duplication of effort across settings and services* • *Increased consistency, effectiveness and confidence of mainstream settings in providing early support*	***Corporate Director for Education and Learning***	• *Operational working group is formed and established. Detailed project plan is developed, with clear timelines and ownership of activities.*	*No anticipated measurable progress expected against core data metrics in Q2. This quarter is focused on establishment and planning activity.*	• *Additional settings and partnerships are identified and engaged to support future phases of cluster expansion and rollout.*	*No anticipated measurable progress expected against core data metrics in Q3 as pilot sites begin delivery as collaboration models are tested.* *At least three pilot locality clusters are active, with participating settings agreeing shared priorities, target cohorts and impact measures* *At least 10% of Dorset settings are engaged in a pilot cluster, locality collaboration or resource-sharing activity*	• *Year 2 expansion plans are agreed, including additional localities, participating settings and priority areas of focus informed by pilot outcomes and emerging system need.*	*At least 60% of surveyed parent carers report improved confidence in and understanding of mainstream inclusive practice* *Progress against workstream specific targets:* *At least 20% of Dorset settings are engaged in a defined locality cluster or pilot collaboration model* *At least 60% of pilot site settings report improved confidence, more joint working and reduction in duplication, captured through practitioner feedback and evaluation*
		• *Clear governance structure is agreed, including maintained settings and MATs.*		• *Governance groups receive regular progress, impact and risk reporting, with learning from pilot activity used to refine the Dorset Cluster Collaboration Framework and inform wider implementation planning.*		• *Refined operational guidance, governance arrangements and support materials are developed to support more consistent implementation across future clusters.*	
		• *A Dorset-wide audit of specialist expertise, inclusion resources and existing collaborative practice is completed to identify strengths, gaps and priority localities for pilot delivery.*		• *Early examples of effective collaborative practice and system impact are captured and shared through the communications and engagement plan to support wider system learning and engagement.*		• *Evidence of impact from Y1 pilots is consolidated and socialised.*	
		• *Initial pilot clusters are identified and confirmed, including agreement on participating settings, locality priorities and targeted areas of focus (e.g. SEMH, C&I, attendance, school moves).* • *A shared Dorset Cluster Collaboration Framework is developed and agreed, clearly defining the purpose of clusters, expectations for participation, principles for resource sharing, and the role of settings in supporting inclusion locally.*		• *Pilot locality clusters are formally established across identified areas, with participating settings agreeing shared priorities, delivery models and mechanisms for collaborative working, building on existing partnerships and locality structures.*		• *Pilot locality clusters complete their first full cycle of delivery, with evaluation undertaken against agreed measures of impact, including inclusion practice, workforce confidence, access to support and placement stability.*	

		• *A communications and engagement plan is launched to support awareness, participation and consistent understanding of the cluster model across schools, partners and families.* • *A monitoring and evaluation framework is implemented to measure the impact of cluster working, including indicators linked to inclusion practice, workforce confidence, sharing of expertise, local placement stability and reductions in escalation to specialist pathways.*		• *Early impact is shared through the communications and engagement plan, with interest gathered from additional settings that may wish to join later pilots.* • *Baseline and ongoing monitoring data is collected across pilot sites, including measures linked to workforce confidence, access to specialist expertise, inclusion practice, attendance, and local placement stability.*		• *Participating settings and partners jointly review pilot learning and agree which collaboration models should be scaled, adapted or embedded as part of Dorset's longer-term locality approach.* • *A formal impact and learning report is produced and shared across the wider system, highlighting effective practice, implementation challenges and recommendations for wider rollout.*	
Improve EY identification and strategies **Building block:** Strengthening inclusion across educational settings ***Outcome:*** *Needs are identified and met earlier through consistent and aligned practice across Early Years settings, services and initiatives, with a clearer understanding of 0-5 childcare and specialist SEND sufficiency informing Year 2 commissioning and support priorities.* ***Year 1 success measures:*** *Core data metrics (linked to metrics outlined in Year 1 success measures as defined in question 5):* • *Reduction in EHC needs assessment (EHCNA) requests* *Workstream specific targets:*	***Corporate Director for Education and Learning***	• *Operational working group is formed and established.* • *Detailed project plan is developed, with clear timelines and ownership of activities.* • *Baseline of early identification practice and data is reviewed (including with evidence from Valuing SEND tool).* • *0-5 childcare and specialist SEND sufficiency assessment scoped, including place availability, gaps for children with complex and emerging needs, and links to Best Start Family Hubs.*[3.6] • *Early identification pathways are mapped across the system.*	*No anticipated measurable progress expected against core data metrics in Q2. This quarter is focused on establishment and planning activity.*	• *Early intervention initiatives operate in a coordinated way, alongside other activities like Dorset's Expertise Offer.* • *Early identification practice data is more consistently reviewed and monitored.* • *Assessment completed and reviewed with Early Years, health and Family Hub partners.* • *Standardised early identification pathways and access routes for further support are formally agreed and communicated.*	*No anticipated measurable progress expected against core data metrics in Q3. This quarter is focused on agreeing standardised pathways and launching the workforce training programme.* *At least 40% of Early Years settings confirm understanding of standardised early identification pathways and access routes for further support*	• *Early intervention initiatives are fully integrated with other aspects of the reform plan.* • *Improved early identification data systems embedded, with consistent reporting across settings* • *Priority gaps agreed and incorporated into Year 2 sufficiency and commissioning plans.* • *Early intervention pathways operating consistently across Early Years settings and partners*	*Evidence of stabilisation towards the Year 1 target of 616 EHCNAs* *At least 60% of settings report increased confidence in their understanding of pathways, captured through practitioner survey and feedback* *At least 70% of practitioners who have participated in training offer report improved confidence in delivering practice, captured through pre and post training evaluation*

• *Improved timeliness of identification of need and access to support* • *Increased confidence across EY settings and practitioners*		• *'Reception Ready' model planning gets underway.*		• *'Reception Ready' model delivery continues.*		• *'Reception Ready' is increasingly embedded.*	*50% of EY settings are confident in Reception Ready model*
		• *Integrated working model agreed between Family Hubs, Health Visiting and EY settings.*		• *Integration between Family Hubs, Health Visiting and EY settings continues to strengthen.*		• *Integration between Family Hubs, Health Visiting and EY settings is well embedded and recognised across the system.*	
		• *Workforce training analysis is undertaken.*		• *Workforce training programme is launched. Uptake and impact are monitored.*		• *Workforce training programme is established and impact begins to emerge.*	
		• *Targeted training programme is developed as part of the Universal Offer to support earlier identification of trauma informed practice.*		• *Targeted training programme is launched and aligned with wider offer for practitioners.*		• *Targeted training programme underway and aligned with Universal Offer and Expertise Offer workforce development programme.*	
Increase and strengthen Inclusion bases **Building block:** Access to specialist support and local placements ***Outcome:*** *Inclusion Bases are developed into a two-tier network of provision: LA-commissioned specialist bases addressing complex need, and a growing model of school-led support bases supporting earlier intervention within mainstream. Existing capacity is increased as a cost-effective way of delivering specialist provision in mainstream settings, supported by investment in training and workforce development. Inclusion Bases and special schools will offer greater outreach to mainstream settings as part of Dorset's Expertise*	***Corporate Director for Commissioning and Partnerships***	• *Confirm and communicate the two-tier Inclusion Base model, including commissioning, funding and placement criteria for specialist and support bases*	*No anticipated measurable progress expected against core data metrics in Q2.* *1 additional specialist inclusion base established - total number of specialist inclusion bases increases to 19*	• *Specialist Inclusion Bases begin to be embedded as part of the graduated response, not a specialist escalation route.*	*No anticipated measurable progress expected against core data metrics in Q3.* *2 additional specialist inclusion bases established - total number of specialist inclusion bases increases to 21* *At least four MATs or school groups are actively involved in co-designing the Support*	• *Confirm Year 2 sites and phases for September 2027 openings of Specialist and Support Inclusion Bases.*	*Number of INMSS placements limited to 527* *2 additional specialist inclusion bases established - total number of specialist inclusion bases increases to 23* *1% reduction in permanent exclusions of pupils with EHCPs from 23/24 baseline* *1% reduction in persistent absence of children with SEN statements or EHCPs from 24/25 baseline*
		• *Specialist Inclusion Bases are mapped and communicated across the system, with admissions criteria, referral pathways and guidance for settings reviewed and aligned to the graduated response, establishing shared understanding of Inclusion Bases as part of a graduated two-tier system: specialist bases for high-intensity support and Support Inclusion Bases for earlier, mainstream-led intervention*		• *Co-design with schools and MATs a clear delivery model for Support Inclusion Bases, including expectations, funding approaches, workforce requirements and links to the graduated response.*[2.3]		• *First tranche of Specialist Inclusion Bases are established. A clear plan for Support Inclusion Bases is agreed with mainstream settings, with initial number of support bases coming online.*	

Offer, with their role clearly articulated.
 	
Year 1 success measures:
Core data metrics (linked to metrics outlined in Year 1 success measures as defined in question 5):
• *Reduced reliance on out of area and high-cost placements*
 	
Workstream specific targets:
• *Increase in number of Specialist and Support Inclusion Bases*
• *Reduced exclusions and persistent absence*
• *Reduced transport usage, especially to out-of-area placements*
		• *Open first wave of LA-commissioned Specialist Inclusion Bases from September 2026 (as per Sufficiency Plan)* [2.6]*, focused on addressing immediate gaps in C&I, C&L and SEMH provision:*
		  • *Secondary C&I Hub (Chesil)*
		  • *Primary SEMH (West)*
		  • *Primary SEMH (North)*
		  • *C&L First & Middle (Dorchester)*
		  • *C&L Secondary (West)*
				• *Begin structured collaboration with mainstream settings to establish Support Inclusion Bases. This includes mapping of existing good practice.*	*Inclusion Base model*	• *Begin workforce development and outreach from Specialist Inclusion Bases to build capacity in mainstream settings ahead of support base rollout in Years 2–3.*	*2% reduction in travel to out-of-area placements*

		• *Finalise countywide SEND Sufficiency & Inclusion Base Delivery Plan aligned to SEND Reform and capital programme.*		• *Year 1 delivery prioritises Specialist Inclusion Bases to stabilise the system, reduce reliance on high-cost placements and establish centres of expertise. Specialist Inclusion Bases begin to be embedded as part of the graduated response, not a specialist escalation route.*		• *Report impact on transport usage, placement stability and demand for Learning Centre places.* [2.8]	
		• *Agree governance and accountability for Inclusion Base roll-out through SEND Partnership / Alliance for Inclusion and Excellence in Education.*		• *Publish clear referral pathways, placement criteria and quality standards for Specialist and Support Inclusion Bases.* [2.4, 2.6]		• *Governance arrangements are established and referral pathways and criteria and quality standards for Inclusion Bases are clear and adopted.*	
		• *Align EP, SALT and specialist teacher input to schools hosting Inclusion Bases (ensuring it aligns with Dorset's Expertise Offer).*		• *Specialist Inclusion Bases are aligned to Dorset's Expertise Offer and other specialist input across the system.*		• *Specialist Inclusion Bases are fully embedded within Dorset's Expertise Offer and other specialist pathways. Support Inclusion Bases begin to align as they come online.*	
Align AP practice and provision to the three-tier model	***Corporate Director for Commissioning and Partnerships***	• *AP strategic lead is recruited* [1.8] • *Detailed project plan is developed, with clear*	*No anticipated measurable progress expected against core*	• *AP strategic lead begins to embed within local system. Delivery of plan is underway.*	*No anticipated measurable progress expected against core*	• *AP strategic lead is well-embedded and recognised across the system. Year 2 planning underway.*	*Number of INMSS placements limited to 527*

Building block: access to specialist support and local placements ***Outcome:*** *AP is recommissioned to align with the three-tier model and documented good practice, with clear referral and reintegration pathways. AP is recognised by the system as an intervention not a destination, and pupils are supported to reintegrate into mainstream settings wherever possible and appropriate. AP expertise is shared consistently across the system, reducing permanent exclusions, supporting inclusion and building confidence in settings, parents, carers and young people.* ***Year 1 success measures:*** *Core data metrics (linked to metrics outlined in Year 1 success measures as defined in question 5):* • *Reduced reliance on out of area and high-cost placements* • *Improved parental confidence* *Workstream specific targets:* • *Improved practitioner confidence and understanding of the AP three-tier model and reintegration* • *Improved attendance* • *Reduced exclusions and suspensions* • *Improved reintegration from AP into mainstream*		*timelines and ownership of activities.* • *Ambition and vision for AP in Dorset is agreed and consolidated with key partners. Engagement plan is developed.* • *Agree governance and accountability structures for this workstream, alongside AP providers.* • *Learning Centres are involved as key stakeholders in this workstream to review role and outreach offer, including as part of Dorset's Expertise Offer.*[1.6] • *Three-tier AP model is locally defined, and engagement activity is undertaken to socialise this across the system.*	*data metrics in Q2. This quarter is focused on recruitment of the AP strategic lead and establishing governance and accountability structures alongside AP providers.*	• *Communication and engagement gets underway to build confidence and understanding across the system.* • *Joint LA/provider governance structure established for AP commissioning. Current AP commissioning arrangements reviewed and gaps identified, with a clear plan agreed for strengthening commissioning.* • *Role, purpose and offer of Learning Centres is clearly articulated.* • *Access routes, referral indicators and reintegration pathways mapped and agreed.* • *Capacity constraints reviewed, with options agreed for contracting, regional partnership or expertise-sharing where local capacity is insufficient.*[1.5]	*data metrics in Q3. This quarter is focused on refining the local system's alignment to the three-tier model and delivering engagement activity.* *At least 30% of surveyed practitioners report improved clarity around AP roles, SEMH pathways and reintegration expectations*	• *There is a strengthening consensus and understanding of the role of AP across the system, with evidenced improvements in settings and families' confidence in this intervention.* • *Commissioning and operational alignment between LA and providers in place.* • *Learning Centres' role, purpose and offer is clear, and outreach is being delivered consistently.* • *There is consistent application of AP pathways and access routes aligned to the three-tier model, with evidence of Learning Centres providing Tier 1 outreach, AP used as a short-term intervention, and reintegration planning embedded from the point of entry.*[1.4]	*At least 60% of surveyed parent carers report improved confidence in and understanding of Alternative Provision* *At least 60% of surveyed practitioners report improved clarity around roles and pathways for SEMH* *1% reduction in permanent exclusions of pupils with EHCPs from 23/24 baseline* *1% reduction in persistent absence of children with SEN statements or EHCPs from 24/25 baseline* *Reintegration from AP to mainstream increases by 5% against baseline*
Strengthening Co-production and Participation **Building block:** System leadership, local partnership collaboration and co-production	***Corporate Director for Education and Learning***	• *Operational working group is formed and established.* • *Detailed project plan is developed, with clear timelines and ownership of activities.*	*No anticipated measurable progress expected against core data metrics in Q2. This quarter*	• *Partnership arrangements with the Dorset Parent Carer Council and participation groups formalised, with clear expectations and roles agreed*	*Limited progress against core data metrics in Q3, as partnership arrangements*	• *Robust working arrangements in place. Y2 planning underway.*	*At least 50% of parent carers participating in agreed lived-experience activity report that co-production has*

& encouraging inclusive culture and behaviours ***Outcome**: enhanced, evidenced co-production and active participation from across the partnership and from critical stakeholder groups, including seldom-heard families, with deliverables incorporating co-produced input as standard.* ***Year 1 success measures:*** *Core data metrics (linked to metrics outlined in Year 1 success measures as defined in question 5):* • *Improved parental confidence and satisfaction* *Workstream specific targets:* • *Expectations of collaboration, co-production and engagement are clear across the system*		• *System-wide co-production principles are formally agreed and published.*	*is focused on establishing the working group, agreeing co-production principles and mapping current participation activity.*	• *Shared co-production principles formally agreed and socialised across SEND and Early Years partners.* • *"You said, we did" approach piloted in at least one governance forum, with early examples of lived experience influencing decisions documented*	*are formalised and the "you said, we did" approach begins to establish* *At least 40% of key delivery stakeholders have adopted the agreed co-production principles and can evidence how lived experience is informing delivery*	• *Shared co-production principles recognised and routinely adopted across governance and delivery forums, with evidence of consistent application*	*improved, using a method agreed with DPCC and evaluated alongside qualitative feedback* *At least 60% of key stakeholders report strong understanding of Dorset's co-production principles and how they should be applied*
		• *Baseline mapping of current participation and co-production activity completed across SEND and Best Start in Life services, identifying gaps, duplication and opportunities for improvement – particularly for seldom-heard groups. Good practice identified and consolidated.*		• *Co-production benchmark developed, with self-assessment process underway and initial findings shared with partners. Family Hubs and SENDIASS roles in capturing lived experience strengthened and clearly defined*		• *Co-production benchmark self-assessment completed, with improvement actions identified and agreed.* • *Participation reach expanded, with early evidence of more diverse and representative voice – including from seldom-heard groups and children and young people not attending a setting*	
		• *Scope review of SENDIASS, mediation and dispute resolution arrangements, including independence, family understanding and current performance data.*[5.3, 5.5, 5.6]		• *Review is completed with families, SENDIASS, mediation provider and statutory decision-makers; draft improvement actions and metrics agreed.*		• *Metrics baselined, reporting route agreed, and family-facing explanation of SENDIASS, mediation and decision-making roles published.*	
		• *If possible, planning for social media work experience placement gets underway*		• *Social media work experience placement confirmed and underway, with early outputs informing engagement approach*		• *Social media engagement approach agreed, informed by work experience placement, with implementation plan for Year 2 confirmed*	
		• *Early resolution pathways reviewed across all localities, with mediation, disagreement resolution and 'next steps' meetings confirmed as standard practice and consistently communicated to families*		• *SEND performance dashboard refreshed to incorporate dispute resolution rates, timeliness metrics and SEND Reform Plan performance measures, with weekly operational*		• *First data available on dispute resolution rates and timeliness, with early evidence of consistent application of early resolution pathways across localities and findings*	

				review and escalation processes confirmed		*used to inform Year 2 planning*	
		• *Dorset Unstoppables Youth Voice Group engaged; scope of CYP confidence metrics agreed with the group, including what good looks like and how it will be measured*		• *Co-design of CYP confidence metrics completed with the Unstoppables group; draft metrics shared with partners for comment*		• *CYP confidence metrics finalised, baselined and agreed alongside parental metrics; reporting route into governance confirmed*	
Review and update the SEND sufficiency strategy **Building block:** Encouraging inclusive culture and behaviours ***Outcome:*** *enough suitable places, in the right locations and of the right type, to meet the needs of children and young people with SEND across all phases of education, reducing reliance on out-of-area and independent specialist provision. More children access support close to home, within a planned and sustainable continuum of provision that is responsive to changing demand.* ***Year 1 success measures:*** *Core data metrics (linked to metrics outlined in Year 1 success measures as defined in question 5):* • *Reduced demand for high-cost specialist placements* • *Children and young people engagement and satisfaction* *Workstream specific targets:* • *Increased proportion of children and young people supported locally*	***Corporate Director for Commissioning and Partnerships***	• *Full system baseline of current and future SEND need completed and agreed with partners. Provision map and gap analysis signed off, identifying sufficiency pressures by need type, phase and locality – including highest areas of need and spend – to ensure a clear, evidence-based understanding of where effort and resource should be targeted.*[2.1, 2.7, 2.8]	*No anticipated measurable progress expected against core data metrics in Q2. This quarter is focused on completing a full system baseline of current and future SEND need, including provision map, gap analysis, rural viability, locality variation, transport impact and highest areas of need and spend, and agreeing shared strategic priorities across education, health and care partners.*	• *Immediate pressure points identified with agreed "quick win" mitigations in place.*	*Post-16 sufficiency priorities are tested with young people, families and providers, with at least 70% of involved young people saying they've been genuinely heard* *Quick-win mitigations are agreed for the highest-pressure areas, with at least two targeted cohorts or localities showing reduced escalation against the agreed Q2 baseline.*	• *Commissioning activity initiated against identified gaps and pressures*	*Number of INMSS placements limited to 527* *Travel to out-of-area placements reduces by 2% against baseline* *At least three sufficiency commissioning or capital decisions are demonstrably informed by the refreshed sufficiency analysis*
		• *Post-16 sufficiency analysis initiated, with current provision, pathways into and out of settings, and known locality gaps mapped.*		• *Co-production with young people, families, providers and post-16 partners underway, with emerging priorities tested through the post-16 partnership group.*[3.9, 3.10, 4.4]		• *Initial post-16 sufficiency findings agreed, with priority gaps, quick-win actions and Year 2 commissioning requirements identified.*	
		• *Shared strategic priorities agreed across education, health, and care partners.*		• *Implementation plan agreed and signed off across partners.*		• *Sufficiency Strategy implementation formally mobilised across the system*	
		• *Sufficiency strategy governance is developing and commissioning framework is drafted*		• *Sufficiency Strategy governance and commissioning framework formally established.*		• *Governance structures fully operational, with regular performance and delivery oversight in place*	

• *Commissioning decisions are informed by sufficiency analysis*							
Develop an integrated data dashboard **Building block:** Encouraging inclusive culture and behaviours ***Outcome:*** *a shared, system-wide picture of SEND and inclusion that prioritises monitoring and iterative improvement and enables evidence-informed and reflective conversations across the partnership. Insights inform strategic planning, commissioning and sufficiency and align system partners around a single, trusted evidence base.* ***Year 1 success measures:*** *Workstream specific targets:* • *A single integrated dashboard providing child-level and setting-level data which supports commissioning decisions* • *Increase in the number of practitioners actively using the dashboard for planning and decision-making* • *Increase in workforce confidence in interpreting and acting on inclusion data*	***Corporate Director for Commissioning and Partnerships***	• *Operational working group is formed and established.* • *Detailed project plan is developed, with clear timelines and ownership of activities.*	*This quarter is focused on set up and operationalising the workstream*	• *New dashboard is socialised with frontline practitioners and governance structures. Training is delivered to support understanding of data insights and decision-making.*	*At least 50 practitioners and governance users have accessed dashboard training*	• *Progress is reviewed to support development of Y2 plan. Training is reviewed and updated.*	*At least 50% of identified dashboard users are regularly using the updated dashboard* *Dashboard evidence is used in at least three governance or commissioning decisions*
		• *Early Years, school-age BI dashboards and Valuing SEND data are aligned.*		• *Early Years, school-age BI dashboards and Valuing SEND data are integrated into new dashboard.* • *Additional datasets (including from system partners) are mapped and reviewed to develop integration plan.*		• *The new dashboard begins to be used routinely by frontline practitioners and governance forums, with evidence of it informing decision making and iterative improvements to services.*	
		• *Key inclusion metrics are reviewed and aligned with Valuing SEND setting readiness data, the Inclusion Charter and the Quality Inclusion Framework.*		• *Key inclusion metrics are agreed across the partnership in alignment with the locally agreed definition of inclusion.*[3.1, 4.3]		• *Key inclusion metrics are integrated into the dashboards.*	
		• *Number of practitioners actively using available dashboards baselined, and workforce confidence in using dashboard for planning baselined.*		• *KPIs agreed against baseline.*		• *KPIs are reviewed as part of Y2 plans.*	
		• *Additional system data mapped for future integration, such as from DfE, NHS, HM Courts and Tribunals service etc.*		• *Mapping of additional data continues in alignment with plans for integration.*		• *Proposal for integration of additional datasets is finalised and agreed.*	
		• *VFM indicators scoped in partnership with Finance, Commissioning and data leads*		• *Baseline values established for each agreed VFM indicator; indicators integrated into the dashboard development plan; reporting format agreed with governance forums*		• *VFM baseline dashboard view live and socialised with ECAT Partnership Group and Alliance; first narrative VFM statement drafted for Year 2 reporting*	
Embedding the Valuing SEND tool	***Corporate Director for***	• *Detailed project plan is developed, with clear*	*Valuing SEND embedded in 70% of all Early*	• *Working group established and*	*Valuing SEND embedded in*	• *Y1 impact is reviewed and Y2 planning underway.*	*Valuing SEND embedded in 80%*

Building block: Strengthening inclusion across educational settings ***Outcome:*** *The majority of Early Years and primary settings are using Valuing SEND consistently and confidently to help better understand the strengths and development needs of all settings. Valuing SEND is aligned to the objectives and principles of the reforms, allowing data from the tool's use to inform the decision making required within other workstreams, such as for individual planning and strategic commissioning.* ***Success measures (across the 3 years):*** *Workstream specific targets:* • *Valuing SEND embedded consistently across the majority of EY settings* • *Valuing SEND data begins to inform other initiatives across Dorset's SEND Reform Plan* • *Early evidence of positive impact on school moves and reintegration through small-scale pilot*	***Education and Learning***	*timelines and ownership of activities.* • *Existing needs descriptors reviewed against White Paper definitions and three-tier model* • *Gap analysis completed between current Valuing SEND insight layer and integrated dashboard requirements* • *Existing training materials reviewed and gaps identified* • *Draft impact framework criteria outlined and shared with key partners for feedback* • *Rollout plan for remaining Early Years / primary settings agreed, with support offer in place (aligned to EY intervention workstream) and school move pilot is launched (in alignment with Universal Offer workstream)*	*Years settings, with quality and consistency of implementation monitored* *20 new settings recruited to deliver school move Valuing SEND pilot*	*embedded into other reform workstreams.* • *Updated needs descriptors drafted and shared for partner consultation* • *Revised insight layer scoped and development plan agreed with BI team (aligned to integrated data dashboard workstream)* • *Updated training materials drafted and piloted with a small group of settings* • *Case studies from early adopter settings collected, compiled and shared to show impact and encourage further settings to engage* • *Impact framework drafted and agreed with operational working group* • *EY rollout continues* • *School move pilot underway and impact monitored*	*75% of Early Years settings* *School-move pilot is active with 10 settings* *At least 50% of training pilot participants report improved confidence in using Valuing SEND*	• *Updated needs descriptors finalised, edited within Valuing SEND platform and communicated across the partnership* • *Revised insight layer developed and integrated into dashboard development plan* • *Full suite of training materials and case studies finalised and published* • *Impact framework formally agreed and baselined, with first cohort of priority children and settings identified and aligning to Expertise Offer workstream* • *Consistent use of Valuing SEND achieved across most Early Years settings, with usage data regularly reviewed*	*of Early Years settings* *At least 70% of pilot participants report improved confidence in using the tool to support setting readiness and school moves*

Projected Investment Spend per quarter

Please specify funding source for each category

Example categories:
Programme oversight/additional leadership capacity.
Workforce
Recruitment
Workforce training and development
Data/Digital

LA SEND Transformation Fund – Year 1

Overview

- Dorset has been allocated £2,212,875 to spend in year 1 as part of the Experts at Hand & Local Authority SEND Transformation Fund
- At least 80% must be spent on Experts at Hand direct delivery for all settings, staff and their children and young people – for Dorset this is equivalent to £1.7703M
- No more than 10% of funding can be spent on admin costs for delivering the Experts at Hand offer – for Dorset this is equivalent to £221,287.50

Total Spend

- No more than 10% of funding can be spent on local authority transformation costs, including staff or other associated costs – for Dorset this is equivalent to £221,287.50

Experts at Hand delivery (80% of LA SEND Transformation Fund)

Category	Item	Notes	Q2	Q3	Q4
Workforce	Specialist Senior Educational Psychologist (1 FTE) Educational Psychologists (2 FTE) Assistant EPs (3 FTE)	Additional capacity to enable delivery of Dorset's Expertise Offer (Experts at Hand)	£101.9K	£101.9K	£101.9K
	Advanced SALT Practitioners* (2 FTE)		£1.5K	£1.5K	£1.5K
	Speech and Language Therapists (2x Band 6 FTE, 2x Band 7 FTE)		£90.8K	£90.8K	£90.8K
	Occupational Therapists (2x Band 5 FTE, 2x Band 6 FTE)		£76K	£76K	£76K
	Specialist Teacher (communication and interaction) • C&I specialist teachers (1 FTE) • C&I Assistants - HTLA or equivalent (2 FTE)		£58.7K	£58.7K	£58.7K
	Specialist Teacher (cognition and learning) • SPLD specialist teachers (1 FTE) • C&L Assistants - HTLA or equivalent (2 FTE)		£59.2K	£59.2K	£59.2K
	Specialist Teachers (Social, Emotional and Mental Health) • SEMH Specialist Teacher (1 FTE) • SEMH Assistant - HTLA or equivalent (2 FTE)		£58.7K	£58.7K	£58.7K
	Additional specialist teacher capacity for Learning Centres' (AP) contribution to Expertise Offer		£71.9K	£71.9K	£71.9K
	Additional specialist teacher capacity for special schools' contribution to Expertise Offer		£71.9K	£71.9K	£71.9K
TOTAL EAH DELIVERY					**£1.772M**

Administration costs for Experts at Hand (10% of LA SEND Transformation Fund)

Category	Item	Notes	Q2	Q3	Q4
Workforce	Dorset Expertise Delivery Officers (Experts at Hand Offer) (Grade 12, 2 FTE)	Key coordinators for the offer at locality level. Working alongside EPs, SALTs, OTs, other expert practitioners and educational settings they will ensure that the offer is targeted, coordinated and triaged as needed, adapting to the needs of each locality	£42K	£42K	£42K
	Project Officer – SEND Reform Programme (Grade 10, 0.8 FTE)	To support project management and coordination of SEND Reform Programme and Dorset's Expertise Offer	£14K	£14K	£14K
Recruitment	Agency costs	To support recruitment of key posts for Dorset's Expertise Offer		£25K	£25K

TOTAL ADMIN					£218K
Additional Transformation costs (10% of LA SEND Transformation Fund)					
Category	**Item**	**Notes**	**Q2**	**Q3**	**Q4**
Workforce	Principal Lead – SEND Reform Programme (Grade 16, 1 FTE)	Additional capacity to provide strategic leadership of SEND Reform Programme	£32.7K	£32.7K	£32.7K
	Finance and Governance	Additional finance and governance support for the SEND Reform Programme	£4K	£4K	£4K
	Commissioning and Transformation Lead (Grade 12, 1 FTE)	Additional capacity to support commissioning duties related to the delivery of the SEND Reform Programme	£17K	£17K	£17K
	Integrated data, performance and dashboard operational lead (Grade 12, 2.5 days)	Additional capacity to lead delivery of Integrated Data Dashboard workstream	£8.4K	£8.4K	£8.4K
	Communications Apprenticeship (Grade 5 or 6, 1 FTE)	Apprenticeship for young person to support wider communications and engagement with the SEND Reform Programme and related initiatives	£12K	£12K	£12K
Engagement and co-production	Venue costs	Venue hire for training delivery, engagement, conferences etc. related to the SEND Reform Programme	£1K	£1K	£1K
	Marketing costs	For design and publication of material and outputs related to the SEND Reform Programme		£2K	£2K
TOTAL TRANSFORMATION					**£221.2K**
OVERALL TOTAL FOR YEAR 1					**£2.211M**

Dorset will use this funding to build on and enhance existing local capacity, not to replace current provision, fund provision already named in EHCPs, fund EHC needs assessments or meet support that schools should provide through ordinarily available provision.

The proposed Year 1 spend has been structured to comply with the Experts at Hand and Local Authority SEND Transformation Fund conditions, with at least 80% directed to the direct delivery of Dorset's Expertise Offer, and administration and transformation costs each held within the 10% limits.

*Two Advanced SALT Practitioner posts (Band 8A) will be established across the NHS BSW, NHS Dorset and NHS Somerset ICBs, with salary costs shared proportionally across the constituent local authorities.

INSERT DOCUMENT UPLOAD LINK

7. **How will the local area partnership deliver the first-year plan?**

Please set out how you will ensure the required capacity and capability is in place from organisational corporate functions to support implementation of the plan. This could include reference to how you plan to build or bring in project delivery capability to manage delivery against the plan, support prioritisation, and effective use of resources; and how you plan to build the capacity and capability in data and analytics to support effective tracking against the measures in the plan and reporting that informs decision making.

250 words

Dorset will deliver the Y1 plan through a strengthened programme management approach. The SRO retains overall accountability, supported by the Alliance for Inclusion and Excellence in Education for strategic oversight and the ECAT Partnership Group for implementation, risk management and escalation. Multi-agency delivery groups will lead each workstream, with named leads, milestones, delivery plans and success measures. This governance architecture will ensure strong programme grip.

In 2026/27, Dorset will put in place additional capacity to move from planning to delivery, combining existing and new resource across the workstreams, including strategic leadership and programme management capacity to steer direction, coordinate delivery and manage interdependencies. This mitigates the risk of workforce capacity and ensures that deployment and delivery are actively managed and escalated as needed.

Corporate functions will be aligned to the programme from the outset: Finance and Commissioning to ensure investment delivers value for money; HR to support recruitment and capacity planning; Estates and Capital to support the Inclusion Base programme; and Communications to manage the risk of loss of trust through clear messaging to schools, families and partners.

Data and analytics capacity will be strengthened, bringing together existing dashboards and Valuing SEND data to provide early warning of demand and cost pressures outpacing reform impact, mitigating this risk through timely identification of emerging pressures and swift activity adaptation.

Residual risks remain around workforce availability and demand pressures, which will be actively monitored through the ECAT Partnership Group and reported to the SRO and Alliance on a regular basis.

8. **Other funding** .

Block Transfers: If you have made a block transfer (Schools Block to High Needs Block) for 26-27, please set out how your plans for this funding align with the activities outlined above.

250 words

The block transfer will align with the seven inclusion principles:

- ***Leadership and governance****: the Alliance for Inclusion and Excellence in Education will focus funding on Dorset's Inclusion Charter and Quality Inclusion Framework, ensuring inclusion is a core expectation across schools, MATs and localities.*
- ***Evidence-based early intervention****: investment will support the strengthened Universal Offer through approaches such as Balanced System, PINS and the SEMH practice of Learning Centres.*
- ***High-quality teaching for all learners****: funding will train staff to deliver inclusive classroom practice, curriculum access and reasonable adjustments, supported by Dorset's Expertise Offer, Valuing SEND and workforce development.*
- ***Accessible and enriching provision beyond the classroom****: investment will support inclusive pastoral and curricular opportunities, helping settings respond to attendance, EBSA and belonging needs before they escalate.*
- ***A safe and respectful culture****: funding will embed relational, trauma-informed and rights-based practice and engage settings with the Rights Respecting Schools Award, placing children's rights at the centre of school life and strengthening behaviour, attendance and placement stability.*
- ***Strong partnerships with families and wider services****: investment will align with Family Help, Family Hubs, DPCC and locality working, ensuring clear routes to advice and specialist input.*
- ***Inclusive environments****: the transfer will complement the Inclusive Classrooms pilot and Inclusion Bases, supporting physical and curricular accessibility including flexible seating and assistive equipment.*

Spend and impact will be monitored through the SEND dashboard, Schools Forum reporting and programme governance, tracking setting confidence, attendance, exclusions, placement stability and family feedback, informed by emerging findings from the Expert Panel for National Inclusion Standards.

Capital: We have announced at least £3 billion in high needs capital between 2026-27 and 2029-30 to support children and young people (CYP) with SEND, or those requiring alternative provision (AP). This funding is intended to support place delivery across the full 0-25 age range, including early years and post-16. We expect funding to support the following outcomes:

a. Inclusion at the core of high needs sufficiency strategy, resulting in more children and young people with SEND accessing suitable places in mainstream settings, across all phases of education

b. Every child or young person who needs a place in an inclusion base can access one

c. Fewer children and young people with SEND needing to travel a long way to access a suitable placement

d. Improved suitability of the mainstream estate to support children and young people with SEND, with adaptations to improve inclusivity and accessibility of the physical environment

We also welcome innovative uses of high needs capital to drive inclusion, for example, investment in assistive technology for use in mainstream settings.

Please outline your strategy for how this funding will meet the outcomes above, with reference to the core minimum requirements and other workstreams in this reform plan where appropriate. We would like to see detail around your plans to increase capacity for inclusion bases (formerly known as SEN units, resourced provision and pupil support units – SU/RP/PSUs), such as schools, colleges or early years providers identified, engagement with relevant settings and trusts, and target cohort of needs.

If your plans include increases to places in special schools or specialist post-16 institutions, please include a clear rationale, showing the need that is being met, and why it cannot be met through other types of provision, such as inclusion bases.

If you are receiving additional capital funding to replace one or more planned special or AP free schools, please set out how this funding will meet need in your area, and plans for engaging relevant trusts in your sufficiency planning.

500 words

Inclusion at the core of the high needs sufficiency strategy
An inclusive model of high needs provision has been developed across localities, responding to gaps identified through sufficiency analysis. The core response is to accelerate the Specialist Inclusion Base programme, which has wide support across the partnership[2.2]. The plan adds 17 new specialist bases by 2029, with some existing bases expanded, increasing capacity to 479 places from 195 in April 2026, primarily funded through the High Needs Capital Programme[2.6]. Locating bases within mainstream schools will enable pupils to remain in mainstream settings across all phases, while providing graduated pathways that stabilise needs earlier. The LA is collaborating with MAT leaders on the programme with the six bases proposed for 2026/27 being planned and delivered in partnership with four of Dorset's largest MATs[2.3].

Every child or young person who needs an Inclusion Base place can access one
New provision is targeted at areas of unmet need, particularly Cognition and Learning. The programme ensures capacity grows in line with need while maintaining quality, reducing reliance on exceptional funding and crisis placements. Estate opportunities, including those arising from falling rolls, have been identified with school and MAT leaders [2.3, 2.5]. An estimated capital cost of up to c£50K per base has been used for planning purposes, reducing to c£40K for later bases.

Fewer children and young people travelling long distances
Reducing travel is a consistent driver throughout the sufficiency plan[2.8]. Specialist Inclusion Bases are distributed so each locality has a continuum of provision, limiting reliance on Learning Centres, special schools, out-of-area placements and non-school AP. This is key in Dorset's rural context, where long journeys contribute to disengagement, attendance challenges and high transport costs.[2.7]

Improved suitability of the mainstream estate
£1m per year of capital investment will enhance universal inclusion and accessibility in mainstream and may also support targeted contributions for school-commissioned support bases[2.6]. This will be developed with the local area partnership to ensure it is additional to school and trust investment in estate condition. Funding will support schools to adapt physical environments and will complement the Inclusive Classrooms pilot, supporting investment in inclusive classroom resources, furniture and staff training to build confidence in more inclusive teaching approaches.

Special and AP schools
Dorset's sufficiency intent is that improved mainstream inclusion will allow special schools to focus on low incidence and high support needs that cannot be supported in Inclusion Bases, reducing reliance on high-cost independent placements[2.2, 2.6]. Where capital investment is required, this will be right-sized to complement the mainstream programme. A new primary-age AP school funded by our Modernising Schools Programme is under construction, with capital costs to be incurred into 2027. The opening of Osprey Quay special school will make a significant contribution to local sufficiency, providing much-needed specialist capacity. Osprey Quay is funded separately from this capital programme but is closely aligned to the sufficiency strategy. Beyond the provision set out in this plan, Dorset will not develop additional specialist places over the course of the next three years.

9. **System partner and stakeholder engagement, and co-production.**

Please outline how the local area partnership plans to engage system partners and stakeholders to develop and implement the plan – include planned engagement with schools and early years settings, alternative providers, FE and post-16 providers (including those your young people attend that are not within your local area), Parents and Carers and children and young people with SEND, with reference to the core minimum requirements. Consider changing roles and responsibilities in the context of the Schools White Paper and how you work collaboratively to manage the transition. Please indicate where additional support is required to engage partners or stakeholders - senior officials at the Department for Education will be available to contribute to summer term events with education leaders and parent carer forum leaders.

500 words

Dorset takes a system-led, co-produced approach to engagement, ensuring that partners, children, young people and families are active participants in shaping, delivering and evaluating this plan. Co-production is embedded throughout, with feedback loops demonstrating how lived experience directly informs decisions and outcomes. Dorset is committed to being transparent about the nature of involvement at each stage, distinguishing clearly between engagement, co-production and collaboration.

This approach is also reflected in the extensive engagement undertaken to develop this SEND Reform Plan, including a weekly partnership group, a series of multi-agency workshops, dedicated working groups, engagement with parent carers and children and young people, alongside system-wide communications to shape priorities and direction.

Our approach operates at three connected levels, providing a golden thread from strategic leadership to frontline practice:

- ***Strategic**: The Alliance for Inclusion and Excellence in Education brings together education, health, care, parent carers and youth voice to provide system leadership, set shared priorities and ensure joint accountability for delivery and outcomes*
- ***Operational**: Multi-agency delivery groups aligned to key workstreams – inclusion, sufficiency and preparation for adulthood – lead co-design and implementation, monitoring impact against outcomes and system demand*
- ***Local/practice**: Engagement through settings, locality forums and community networks enables continuous feedback, supports consistent inclusive practice and ensures frontline insight feeds into strategic decision-making*

Education and system partners
Education settings are central to delivering inclusion and managing demand[4.4]. Through strengthened SENCO networks, termly partnership forums and engagement with school leaders, partners will co-own the inclusion agenda, building on the existing Inclusion Charter to establish a shared definition of inclusive practice.[2.3] Settings will be fully integrated into delivery – including early identification in Early Years, co-designed AP pathways focused on prevention and reintegration, and a dedicated post-16 partnership group shaping preparation for adulthood. We welcome the offer of DfE senior official support to engage education leaders during summer term events to build momentum around the reform programme.

Parents, carers and children and young people
The Dorset Parent Carer Council is embedded across governance and delivery at all levels, ensuring co-production is integral to planning, implementation and review[5.1]. Regular communication – including a SEND engagement calendar of Let's Talk SEND events and "you said, we did" reporting – will build trust and transparency across the system. Dorset has strong foundations for children and young people's engagement through Dorset Youth Voice, the Dorset Unstoppables, Youth Council and Youth Parliament[5.2]. The focus will be on extending representation to seldom-heard groups and ensuring the impact of young people's involvement is clearly evidenced. Innovative approaches, including work-placed involvement for young people with SEND to help shape a social media strategy and strengthened engagement through the Dorset Careers Hub, will extend reach beyond traditional participation routes. To hold itself to account, Dorset will draw on NHSE co-production guidance to agree a local benchmark, self-assessing against it in Year 1 to identify improvement actions and establish a baseline for measuring progress.

Delivering system change
Partners will operate within a shared accountability framework, supported by clear agreements, place-based working, joint leadership development and integrated performance measures.

10. Risks and Mitigations

What are the key risks that could affect the successful implementation of your Local SEND Reform Plan, and what mitigation strategies are in place to manage these risks? Please include a maximum of 5 risks with impact and likelihood RAG for each risk. See Annex C for suggested risk matrix.

Risk	Impact	Likelihood	RAG	Mitigation	Residual RAG
Loss of trust from families if reform is not well communicated or does not lead to visible change *The plan depends on improved confidence from parents, carers and young people. If families do not understand Dorset's Expertise Offer, inclusion bases, AP changes, pathways, access routes or indicators for support, reform may be seen as a service reduction rather than better support. Loss of trust could also drive increased demand for EHCPs, independent placements and dispute resolution – adding significant cost pressure to the High Needs Block at the point when the system needs demand to stabilise.*	*Critical*	*Possible*	*Red*	*Develop a clear communications and engagement plan, co-produced with Dorset Parent Carer Council, children and young people, SENDIASS and frontline partners. Use simple messages, publish clear pathways and "you said, we did" updates, involve families in service design and review, strengthen feedback loops through Family Hubs and locality forums, and track parental confidence as a core measure.*	*Green*
The wider system partnership model for collaboration does not successfully support consistent engagement with the reform work, including due to change fatigue and the volume of concurrent system change *Our model depends on mainstream school confidence, MAT and school leader buy-in, use of Valuing SEND, adoption of the Inclusion Charter and willingness to collaborate or pool resources. Dorset's system is navigating a significant volume of concurrent change – across SEND reform, the Schools White Paper, NHS restructuring, devolution and wider children's services transformation – and there is a recognised risk, that the cumulative weight of this change could affect partner capacity, confidence and engagement. Without sustained buy-in across the system, escalation into specialist and independent provision will continue, sustaining the*	*Crisis*	*Possible*	*Red*	*Early engagement with system partners, in particular school leaders, SENCOs and post-16 providers; co-produced inclusion expectations that give settings a genuine stake in the agenda; clear articulation of the benefits for settings of engaging with the reform programme; locality-based support and challenge to maintain momentum and address concerns close to the ground; active monitoring of change fatigue and partner capacity as a standing item in programme governance; an early and sustained communications plan that celebrates progress and wins to build confidence and maintain momentum across the system; and explicit recognition of the concurrent change landscape in all partner engagement, with sequencing and pacing of reform activity managed*	*Amber*

financial pressures the reform programme is designed to address and limiting the return on investment from the High Needs Block.				*carefully.*	
Insufficient delivery capacity and programme grip *The plan has many linked workstreams, including Dorset's Expertise Offer, inclusion bases, AP reform, sufficiency, data, co-production and early years. Without strong programme management, milestones may slip, delaying the point at which reform activity begins to reduce demand and cost – extending the period of High Needs Block pressure and increasing the risk of the projected financial trajectory not being realised.*	*Critical*	*Possible*	*Red*	*Dedicated programme capacity, named workstream leads, clear milestones, regular ECAT oversight, risk log and escalation to the SRO and Alliance for Inclusion and Excellence in Education.*	*Green*
Workforce capacity and specialist availability *Delivery relies on EPs, SALT, OT, specialist teachers, AP leadership, data capacity and project roles. Dorset is starting from a strong foundation, but demand is expected to rise and neurodevelopmental and mental health pathways face pressure. Other areas will also be recruiting into their Experts at Hand model at the same time. Failure to recruit and retain the right workforce will delay delivery, limit the reach of the Expertise Offer and sustain reliance on high-cost external provision – with direct cost implications for the High Needs Block.*	*Critical*	*Likely*	*Red*	*Workforce sufficiency plan, phased rollout, prioritised recruitment, use of locality teams, clearer deployment of existing specialist capacity, targeted training, and a creative approach to workforce design including the development of assistant roles working alongside qualified practitioners, rotational posts across specialist and mainstream settings that build capacity across the system.*	*Amber*
Demand and cost pressures outpace reform impact *We want to reduce reliance on independent, distant and high-cost provision, but demand for EHCPs, specialist placements, AP and transport may keep rising before prevention has impact. If demand growth is not contained, the High Needs Block deficit will widen, limiting Dorset's ability to invest in the mainstream and early intervention infrastructure that underpins the reform programme – creating a compounding financial risk that becomes increasingly difficult to reverse.*	*Moderate*	*Possible*	*Amber*	*Robust sufficiency strategy, phased inclusion base expansion, strong commissioning, financial tracking, clear pathways, access routes and indicators for further support, early warning data on EHCNAs, exclusions, EBSA and placements.*	*Amber*

11. Dependencies

Please detail the key areas of the local area partnership's proposed SEND future state and roadmap that may be impacted by wider reforms nationally and locally and outline how you will manage these. We expect these will include but not be limited to:

- NHS reforms
- Local Government Re-organisation
- Reforms to Children's Social Care
- Best Start in Life, including Family Hubs
- Best Start In Life Strategy
- Curriculum and Assessment Review

500 words

Dorset's plan is being delivered within a wider programme of national and local reform. The local area partnership recognises that these changes are aligned to our vision of a more inclusive, preventative and locally responsive system, and will be actively coordinated to ensure they are mutually reinforcing.

Our approach is to proactively align and integrate these reforms through shared governance, joint commissioning and locality-based delivery, ensuring a coherent system that supports earlier identification, stronger inclusion and improved outcomes.

Key Reform Areas and Alignment:

- **NHS Reforms:** Dorset is aligning SEND reform with health system transformation through integrated pathways, joint commissioning and locality-based multidisciplinary working. The delivery of integrated neighbourhood teams for children, as part of the NHS Ten Year Plan's neighbourhood health agenda, is a key enabler of this alignment – providing a stronger infrastructure for joined-up, community-based support that complements Dorset's locality model and the ambitions of this reform programme. Dorset's Expertise Offer brings together education, health and care practitioners to support settings in real time, reducing escalation to statutory assessment and improving confidence in mainstream inclusion.

- **Wessex Devolution:** The emerging Wessex local government collaboration and potential introduction of mayoral devolution could influence transport, access to services and community capacity for children and young people with SEND. Dorset Council has strengthened working relationships across the Wessex geography, recognising the area as well placed for a strategic authority, and is a key driver of regional alignment through its devolution and regional aspirations. This leadership will be critical in navigating future opportunities, and Dorset will ensure SEND outcomes remain central to how this agenda develops.

- **Children's Social Care Reform**: As a Wave 1 Pathfinder, Dorset is advanced in embedding social care reform through integrated locality working and shared accountability, building on the locality model. Locality-based joint planning ensures system partners collectively respond to children's needs, reducing duplication and ensuring timely support.

- **Best Start Family Hubs**: Family Hubs provide a key platform for early identification and multi-agency support[3.7]. Early Years SEND support, health visiting and family support services are being aligned within hubs to support earlier identification and reduce escalation into statutory services, with the Best Start in Life Strategy strengthening workforce capability and joined-up moves into education.

- **Curriculum and Assessment Review**: Dorset is working with education partners to strengthen ordinarily available provision and inclusive practice, ensuring settings are supported to meet a wider range of need within mainstream.

Managing Alignment and Delivery
To ensure these reforms support one another effectively, Dorset will:

- Align governance through the Alliance for Inclusion and Excellence in Education and ECAT Partnership Group
- Coordinate delivery by actively managing dependencies, risks and sequencing across programmes
- Strengthen joint accountability across education, health and care, aligned to shared outcomes[1.10]
- Integrate data and insight through a shared evidence base to inform decision-making
- Embed co-production, ensuring children, young people and families shape implementation and review impact

This coordinated approach ensures reforms are mutually reinforcing and focused on shared outcomes, supporting the shift towards earlier identification, inclusive mainstream provision and support delivered closer to home.

Section 3 – Monitoring and Evaluation

12. **How will the local area partnership know delivery is on track?**

Please set out how you will monitor and track progress referencing:

- ***Monitoring tools and processes*** - the specific tools, systems, and data you will use to track delivery milestones and measure the impact on outcomes.

> *Some Local Area Partnerships hold data in a central SEND operational dashboard. This is used by teams on a weekly basis to identify trends in demand or inform conversations with local school or setting leaders.*
>
> *In some Local Area Partnerships, a view of the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) is reviewed monthly by a SEND Board to take decisions on prioritisation, resourcing and delivery of services informed by regular data.*

Please set out how you will use data to track demand (e.g., EHCP applications for assessment), Service delivery (e.g., Speech and Language Specialists deployment; places created), Service quality (e.g., parental satisfaction) and outputs (e.g., pupil attendance; pupil exclusions)

- ***Feedback and adaptation mechanisms*** - what feedback loops and stakeholder input you will use to review progress and adjust your approach.

500 words

Dorset's partnership will maintain strong oversight of delivery through an integrated performance management framework, combining data, structured governance, quality assurance and continuous feedback. This will ensure that delivery remains on track and progress is measured against defined KPI trajectories aligned to this plan.

Monitoring Tools, KPIs and Trajectories
The Children's Services Performance Management Framework will be supported by a central SEND operational dashboard, drawing on systems including Synergy, Mosaic, DiiS and PowerBI. An integrated dashboard will provide a single, shared evidence base aligned to the plan's expected trajectories and outcomes.[4.3]

The dashboard and reporting framework will track progress against baseline and target trajectories, to measure whether delivery is achieving the intended system shift.

KPIs are aligned to four key areas:

- ***Demand:** EHCP requests for assessment, conversion rates, tribunal activity, and overall EHCP volumes. Trajectories will reflect a planned reduction in demand growth over time, demonstrating the impact of earlier intervention and strengthened inclusion.*
- ***Service Delivery**: Delivery of Dorset's Expertise Offer, therapy deployment, and creation of additional inclusive provision. Milestones and capacity trajectories will ensure provision expands in line with need and reduces reliance on high-cost placements.*[1.8, 2.6]
- ***Service Quality:** Timeliness of EHCP processes, audit outcomes, parental feedback and complaints. Service quality reporting will also include mediation and dispute resolution metrics, including timeliness, resolution rates, repeat issues, tribunal escalation and family feedback. Quality measures will track improvement in experience, ensuring reforms lead to improved confidence in the system.*[5.6]
- ***Outcomes:** Attendance, exclusions, placement stability and preparation for adulthood outcomes. These will evidence increased inclusion within mainstream settings and improved long-term outcomes.*

Data will be reviewed weekly at operational level and monthly through Programme Board and Partnership governance, ensuring performance against trajectories is regularly assessed. Where data indicates variance from expected trajectories, corrective actions will be agreed and implemented at pace.

Monitoring will provide assurance that grant funding is being spent in line with the government policy objectives and that the offer is delivering the expected changes in reach, access, setting confidence, early support, reduced escalation and improved outcomes.[1.8]

Feedback and Adaptation[5.6]
Dorset will triangulate quantitative data with qualitative insight, ensuring a full understanding of performance and impact:

- ***Performance and practice review:** Monthly performance meetings will analyse KPI trends and trajectories, focusing on the "story behind the data" and agreeing actions to maintain progress.*
- ***Co-production**: Engagement with DPCC and youth voice groups will ensure lived experience informs both delivery and refinement of interventions.*[5.1, 5.2]
- ***Operational insight**: Feedback from education settings, locality forums and practitioners will identify emerging pressures and test whether changes are working in practice.*
- ***Continuous improvement cycle:** The Dorset ECAT Partnership Group will review data and feedback on a regular basis, enabling adjustment to delivery, refinement of interventions, and escalation where required.*

Impact
This approach provides a clear line of sight from activity to outcomes, with KPI trajectories evidencing progress towards reduced demand, improved inclusion, and better outcomes. By integrating data, professional insight and lived experience, Dorset will ensure delivery remains on track and achieves sustainable system change and financial resilience.

13. **Reporting to DfE**

Using the attached data template, the local area partnership is required to provide quarterly data returns to DfE against selected key metrics. DfE will, in turn, provide quarterly data reports with visualised analysis and benchmarking that will support your local delivery, monitoring and evaluation. This will include data the department holds on **Attendance**, **Exclusions**, and **Unauthorised absence**.

Please use the attached data template to upload your initial data return to DfE.

INSERT DOCUMENT UPLOAD LINK

Section 4 – Governance

14. **How will the local area partnership ensure delivery of plans remain on track?**

Please outline the governance structures in place to oversee delivery. Clearly set out who is responsible for overseeing reform delivery, what each governance group or individual is accountable for, and how these arrangements ensure progress is monitored and decisions are made transparently. Please identify where the named SRO for the Local SEND Reform Plan sits within the governance structure and ensure your response incorporates the core minimum requirements.

Governance of the Local SEND Reform Plan provides clear accountability, strong multi-agency leadership and robust oversight of delivery. Data is brought together across education, health and care to support reporting, decision-making, escalation and continuous improvement, with the Plan reviewed annually.

Governance Mechanism	**Purpose/ Responsibilities** *What is the function of this governance mechanism? What are they accountable for overseeing? What information is*	**Membership** *Who does this governance mechanism comprise of? [should include health and PCF representation] What*	**Cadence** *How regularly does this governance mechanism meet?*	**Decision Rights** *What decisions can this governance mechanism make?*	**Escalation Route** *Where can this governance mechanism escalate issues or decision to?*

This may be a governance group, or an individual (e.g. SRO).	*reported to this governance mechanism?*	*stakeholders are represented at this governance mechanism? Please indicate who chairs this.* *(Include n/a if an individual).*			
Senior Responsible Officer (SRO) – Paul Dempsey – Executive Director, Children's Services[1.9, 4.1, 4.6]	*Overall accountability for delivery of the Local SEND Reform Plan. Ensures alignment with statutory responsibilities and system priorities. Oversees delivery against milestones, financial sustainability and outcomes. Monitors performance, risk and system alignment, and receives regular reporting on progress, KPIs, risks and financial trajectory, ensuring data-led assurance of delivery and system performance across the partnership.*	*The SRO sits within the senior leadership team of Dorset Council and reports directly to the Chief Executive, Catherine Howe, and wider partnership governance.*	*Ongoing oversight, with formal reporting cycles aligned to programme governance.*	*Accountable for key delivery decisions and overall direction of the programme. Has authority to escalate risks and direct resources and interventions where delivery is off track.*	*Escalates issues and decisions to the Senior Leadership Team comprising of Executive Directors, Directors and Assistant Chief Executive), with further escalation to the Chief Executive where required, and the Chief Executive of the ICB*
Dorset Alliance for Inclusion and Excellence in Education[1.9, 4.1]	*Provides strategic oversight, challenge and support for SEND reform delivery, overseeing progress, risks and system pressures (including inclusive education, school places, standards, attendance, exclusions and disadvantaged learners). Oversees priority actions and outcomes, and supports effective partnership working across education, health, care and partners. Receives and scrutinises integrated performance reporting across education, health, care and partnerships using shared data to monitor system performance, identify pressure points and drive collective accountability for outcomes.*	*Independent Chair* *Senior leaders*[4.2]*:* • *Elected members for Children's and Parenting Board* • *Director of Children's Services* • *Corporate Director of Education & Learning* • *ICB Commissioning SRO for children and young people and maternity* • *Health partners – Dorset Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust* • *Designated Clinical Officer for SEND* • *Education community – leaders from all phases* • *Public Health* • *Dorset Council Place* • *Schools Forum*	*Every two months or termly, aligned to programme governance cycles.*	*Approves strategic direction, key policy decisions and major changes to delivery approaches. Holds partners to account for delivery commitments.*	*Escalates issues and decisions to senior Dorset Council Executive Directors and the CEO where required.*

		• *Lead school governors and trustees* • *Youth Justice (Pan Dorset)* • *Voluntary and Community Sector* • *Dorset Parent Carer Council (DPCC)* • *Dorset SEND Information, Advice and Support Service (SENDIASS)*[5.1, 5.2, 5.3] • *Birth to Settled Adulthood (B2SA) Chair* • *Youth Voice* • *DfE*			
Dorset ECAT Partnership Group[1.10, 4.1]	*Provides regular operational leadership of the SEND Reform Programme, coordinating delivery across workstreams, resolving risks and partner disputes in real time*[4.5]*, and escalating strategic issues through the Alliance to ensure pace, alignment and accountability. Oversees integrated operational data across workstreams, including performance, demand, activity and financial data, enabling real-time decision-making, identification of emerging risks and alignment of delivery.*	*Local Authority:* • *Corporate Director for Education & Learning* • *Corporate Director for Commissioning & Partnerships* • *Senior Accountant – Children's* • *Principal Lead Best Start in Life* • *Head of Service – Best Education for All* • *Head of Service – Children Thriving & Virtual School* • *Head of Locality & Strategy – SEND* • *Head of Service Health Education and SEND Commissioning* • *Health Education & SEND Commissioning* • *Principal Educational Psychologist* • *BI & Performance Manager* • *Consultant SEND & Inclusion* • *Youth Voice Manager* *Health* • *DCO for SEND*	*Initially three-weekly; frequency to be reviewed in Q3*	*Makes decisions on operational delivery issues across workstreams, including sequencing and prioritisation of activity, resolution of cross-cutting delivery blockers, and refinement of plan content, data assumptions and modelling inputs within agreed strategic direction, using shared data and insight to inform decisions.*	• *Escalates issues and decisions to the Alliance and SRO and ICB Place Director for Dorset and Bath & North East Somerset.*[4.5]

		• *Deputy DCO* • *Mental Health Schools Team Clinical Lead* • *Lead for Families First Partnership Programme* • *Place Director – Bath, North East Somerset* *Parent and Families* • *DPCC* • *SENDIASS* *Other partners* • *IMPOWER* • *Council for Disabled Children*			
Multi-agency Delivery Groups (workstreams)	*Responsible for designing and delivering interventions across key reform priorities, including inclusion, sufficiency and preparation for adulthood. Leads core workstreams to strengthen inclusive provision, early identification, collaboration and Dorset's Expertise Offer.* *Monitors implementation and impact, providing regular reporting on progress, risks and outcomes, supported by shared data to inform system-wide performance and decision-making.*	*Operational leads from education, health, care, finance and data, with parent carer and youth voice representation.*	*Monthly during mobilisation, then frequency agreed by ECAT according to delivery risk*	*Makes operational decisions within agreed workstream scope, aligned to overall programme direction.*	*Escalates key issues and decisions to the Dorset ECAT Partnership Group.*
Locality	*Delivery of SEND reform at a place-based level, linking strategic governance with frontline practice and enabling joined-up working across education, health and care. Implementation of the Local SEND Reform Plan locally, using data to identify needs, coordinating partners, supporting inclusion and early intervention, and escalating*	*Operational leads from:* • *Learning & Belonging Service* • *Contextual Safeguarding* • *Targeted Youth Work* • *Inclusion and SEND* • *Educational Psychology* • *Virtual School* • *Specialist Teaching* • *Early Years* • *Best Start in Life Advisors*	*Termly*	*Influences delivery and continuous improvement within the workstream, with no formal programme decision-making authority.*	*Escalates issues and decisions to Delivery Groups and the Dorset ECAT Partnership Group.*

	issues where needed, while providing regular insight and reporting into programme governance.	• *Family Help Teams* • *Post 16 and Dorset Careers Hub* • *Birth to Settled Adulthood*			

If you have a diagram to show the relationship between these governance mechanisms, please upload this here.

INSERT DOCUMENT UPLOAD LINK Strategic Governance September 2026 May

Section 5 – Central Government Support

15. **How can we help you?**

Please outline any practical support you need from central government to implement your plan effectively.

This may include:

- Access to specialist expertise or advisory support
- Help with workforce development or recruitment challenges
- Tools or templates to support data collection, reporting, or evaluation
- Facilitation of peer learning or regional collaboration
- Support with system-level coordination across education, health, and care
- Guidance on navigating regulatory or policy barriers

250 words

Dorset welcomes the offer of support and would find the following particularly helpful in implementing the plan effectively:

- ***Legislation**: prompt progression of the legislative programme is essential and will help Dorset and partners plan with confidence and manage the pace of change*
- ***Guidance and communications**: relevant national guidance is needed, particularly around SEND assessment pathways and the Experts at Hand model. Nationally produced communications materials and messages that can be adapted locally would be valuable to support with communications to partners and families to provide clarity and manage anxiety*
- ***Funding**: meaningful and sustained investment in mainstream inclusion – including through the Mainstream Inclusion Fund – is needed to support schools to build the confidence and capability required to meet a wider range of needs*
- ***Osprey Quay**: delivery of the Osprey Quay special school is a priority for Dorset, providing much-needed additional local capacity and directly supporting the ambition to reduce reliance on high-cost and distant independent placements*
- ***Ofsted:** the inspection framework should actively support and reinforce inclusive practice, providing a consistent signal to schools and settings about the importance of inclusion*
- ***Driving culture change:** central government has an important role in driving the culture change needed across the system: supporting local areas to bring partners, schools and MATs on the journey and reinforcing the inclusion agenda at a national level*

- ***Peer learning:*** *facilitation of regional collaboration, particularly with areas further ahead in implementing the Experts at Hand model, would help Dorset learn from emerging good practice and avoid duplication of effort*

Annex B - Supporting Documents

Document	Link
The Schools White Paper	Every Child Achieving and Thriving
SEND Consultation Document	SEND reform: putting children and young people first.
LA and Schools Budget 2026-27	Schools Operational Guide 2026-27
Local Partnership Maturity Assessment Guidance and Tool	Included in commission pack
Local SEND Reform Plan – Data template	Included in commission pack
Local SEND Reform Plan Quality Assessment Framework	Included in commission pack
Local Inclusion Partnership Grant 2026-27	To be published Spring 2026
Experts at Hand Guidance	To be published Spring 2026
High Needs Capital Allocations 2026-27	To be published Spring 2026
Guidance on Inclusion bases	To be published Spring 2026

Annex C – Risk Matrix

IMPACT DESCRIPTION	IMPACT LEVEL	PROBABILITY/LIKELIHOOD				
		< 10%	>10% - <30%	>30% - <60%	>60% - <90%	>90%
		Very Unlikely	Unlikely	Possible	Likely	Very Likely
Cannot deliver Reform Plan; Failure of mission critical activity.	**Crisis**					
Significant impact to objectives; Significant and sustained disruption to activity.	**Critical**					
Delivery targets are compromised; Project delay / budget overrun.	**Moderate**					
Limited impact on delivery targets; Deviations from project resource, timescale or targets.	**Marginal**					
Minimal impact on delivery targets; Minimal impacts to project / programme efficiency.	**Negligible**					

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Dorset Council

Member Webinar

Dorset Local SEND Reform Plan

16 June 2026



Introduction

- Government driven – White Paper ‘Every child achieving and thriving’ published 23 February 2026 setting out a long-term plan to improve inclusive education and outcomes for all children.
- Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) reform consultation to shape legislation – closed 18 May 2026.
- Under the Local Authority’s leadership all system partners are required to design and deliver a Local SEND Reform Plan and submit to the Department for Education (DfE) for approval.
    - Draft submitted 15 May
    - Final submission 19 June
- The DfE have committed to clearing 90% of High Need Block deficits if the plan is approved – total deficit for Dorset is £150m, 90% is £135m.

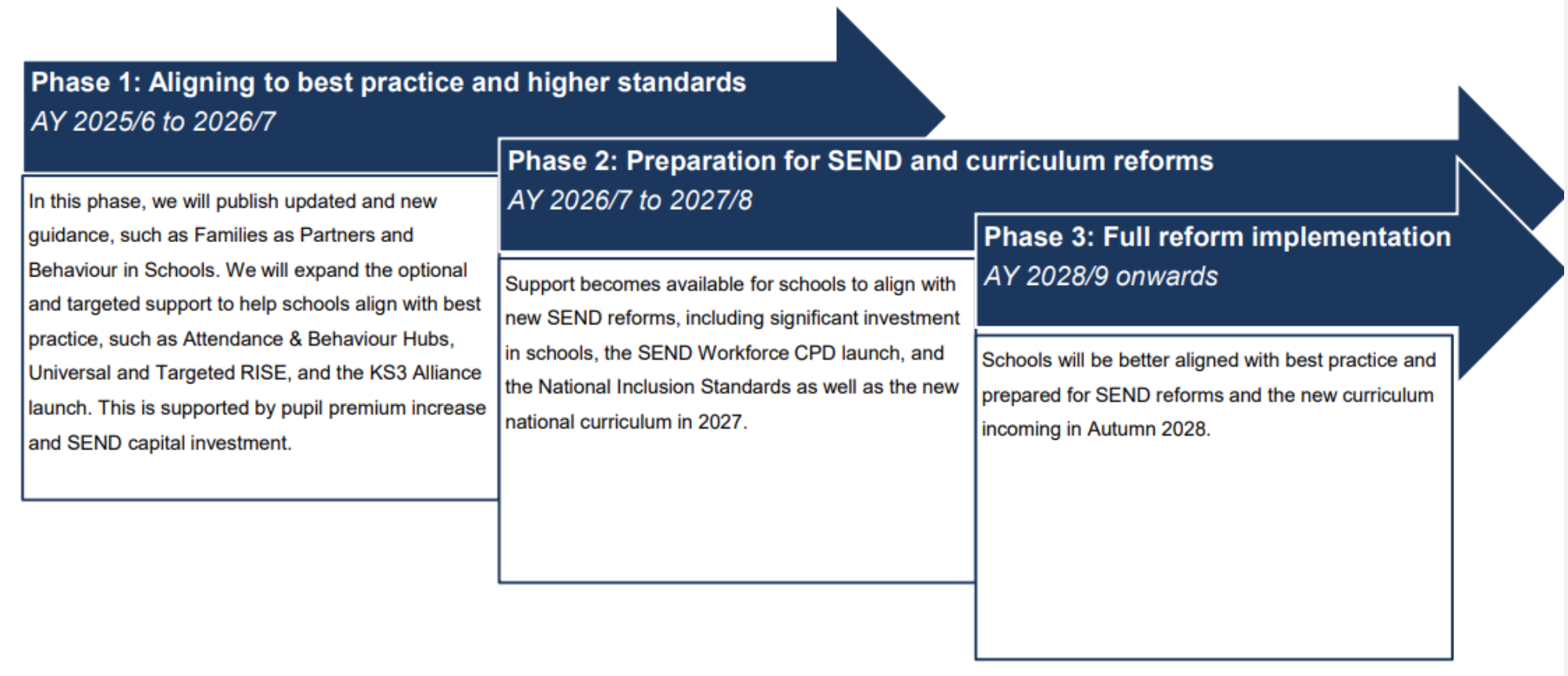
Purpose of this session

- Raise awareness of SEND reforms
- Note what all councils have been directed to do
- To share our plan's vision and goals
- To note the governance routes

Schools White Paper and SEND Reform – key points

- Addresses national challenges in attainment, disadvantage, SEND, and attendance.
- Government aims for all education settings and schools to be inclusive and able to support children with SEND and those facing disadvantage.
- Introduces three layers of SEND support:
  - Targeted support (school-led)
  - Targeted Plus (with education/health input)
  - Specialist support via an Education Health Care Plan (EHCP)
- Expectation that more support will be delivered in mainstream schools without needing an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP).
- Children with existing EHCPs will keep their plans until they complete their current phase of education; new assessments begin from 2029–30 transition points.

Schools White Paper – Every child achieving and thriving timeline



2026	**Phase 1 Alignment to best practice**
2026-2027	**Preparation for curriculum & SEND reforms**
2028-2029	**Full implementation phase**

Investment in the system

An additional £4b in reforms between 2026-27 and £3.7b in Capital (2025-26 to 2029-30)

Inclusive Mainstream Fund - £1.6bn
For to schools, colleges and early years settings, to spend on targeted support for children with additional needs, such as small group support for literacy or numeracy.

National training for all EY, School and Post-16 staff – over £200m
To ensure that all staff get new training to support children with SEND.

Experts at Hand - £1.8bn
For LA and health services to give EY settings, mainstream schools and colleges direct access to expert support - 40 days per average primary school and 160 days per average secondary school.

Education Psychologists and Speech and Language Therapists - over £40m
To fund training for over 200 more educational psychologists per year from 2026 and 2027 and ensure there is a SaLT advanced practitioner in every Integrated Care Board (ICB) area.

Support for local areas to deliver the new system - £200m
To transform local SEND services and build a cohesive, child-focused, inclusive system. This funding will strengthen LAs' strategic planning, commissioning, leadership capacity and engagement with the education sector.

Best Start in Life Family Hubs – over £200m
For every Best Start Family Hub to enable each hub to have a SEND practitioner to offer direct support to children and families.

High Needs Capital - £3.7 billion
To create 60,000 new specialist places, including tens of thousands of places in inclusion bases and new special school places.

Dorset Council Plan Alignment

 Provide high quality and affordable housing	 Grow our economy	 Communities for all	 Respond to the climate and nature crisis
Workforce, Inclusion & Local Collaboration	**Raising attainment & reducing disadvantage gaps, trust-led system, workforce development**	**Inclusion, Early Intervention, Universal Offer** (three-tiered support offer)	**Estate Management and sustainable school environments**
• Good homes for families that allow for continuity of education. • Availability of local affordable housing for teachers, SEND specialists supporting recruitment, retention and stability.	• Strong education outcomes are directly linked to economic growth. • Higher workforce skills, improved attainment. • Reduction in disadvantage gap. • Skilled workforce to support children.	• Local inclusive mainstream provision, early help, and community-based SEND support. • Best Start Family Hub in every community to support the whole community – babies upwards.	• Sustainable school buildings • Transport arrangements

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5 principles of SEND Reform

Early

- Needs should be identified and supported sooner to improve outcomes and prevent escalation into more costly provision.

Local

- Children and young people with SEND should, where possible, learn in their local school. Special schools continue, but for those with the most complex needs.

Fair

- Schools should be properly resourced to meet common and predictable needs, without families having to fight for support.

Effective

- Reforms should be grounded in data and evidence, with all interventions grounded in effective practice.

Shared

- Education, health, and care services should work in genuine partnership with families, teachers, experts and representative bodies

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Where we are and how we got here

Strong foundations and recognised system leadership

1. Ofsted "*Children in Dorset received exceptional services"* and *Children and young people with SEND and their families are placed at the heart of all that leaders do… This culture of working together results in continual improvement to secure the best possible outcomes for children, young people and their families…The voice of children and young people with SEND is highly valued."*
2. Selected as Wave 1 Families First for Children Pathfinder – national recognition of innovation
3. Mature, well managed system with strong and improving multi-agency partnerships and co-production

What we have already delivered

- ✓ Inclusion Hubs (phase 1 complete) reducing reliance on distant / high-cost placements
- ✓ Strengthened SEND Coordinator (SENDCO) and Early Years Practice including Valuing SEND (VSEND) rollout for earlier identification of need
- ✓ Established locality-based model and family help offer enabling integrated support
- ✓ Strong specialist workforce (Educational Psychologists, Speech and Language Therapists, Occupational Therapists) forming the basis of the Expertise at Hand Offer

Where we are and how we got here

Some of the impact so far

1. Key Stage 2 outcomes for EHCP pupils above national average
2. Measurable improvement in attainment (8-9% increase across core subjects)
3. Increasing ability to support children locally

Challenges we must now address

1. Rising EHCP demand and complexity
2. Pressure on High Needs Block and independent placements
3. Variability in inclusive practice across education settings
4. Growing Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA) and Elective Home Education (EHE) trends

DfE four Building Blocks of the plan

Strengthening inclusion across education settings– organising places and provision to meet as many needs as possible, as close to home as possible, with all settings and providers moving towards a shared understanding and consistent practices around inclusion.

System leadership, local partnership collaboration and co-production – putting in place the enabling conditions across a local area that ensures planning and provision reflects the local area & is joined up, including strategic co-production with parent carers and children and young people.

Access to specialist support and local placements – improving collaboration between settings and deploying expertise from a range of specialist and expert sources, to support schools and settings to meet the needs of children and young people earlier and locally.

Encouraging inclusive culture & behaviours – using funding and shared accountability towards a system that works for children and families while achieving value for money.

This is where we are going (data and finance projections / ambitions)

Our ambition (next 3 years)

1. A coherent 0-25 inclusive system where more children thrive in mainstream settings
2. Support delivered earlier locally and without escalation wherever possible
3. Stronger workforce confidence and consistency across all settings
4. Improved parental confidence and experience

Key system shifts (outcomes)

1. Slower growth in EHC Plans through earlier intervention
2. Reduction in Education Health Care Needs Assessment (ECHNA) requests over time
3. More children supported at SEN Support Level in mainstream
4. Reduction in Elective Home Education (EHE) and Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA)
5. Increased access to specialist support with diagnosis

This is where we are going (data and finance projections / ambitions)

Financial ambition

1. Reduce spend on independent specialist placements (ISP)
2. Reduce reliance on out of area provision
3. Shift investment to local inclusion (bases and mainstream capability)
4. Deliver a sustainable High Needs Block and improved value for money

What success looks like

1. More children educated close to home
2. Consistent inclusive practice across all settings
3. Improved attendance, stability and outcomes
4. A system that is financially sustainable and trusted by families

Data projections / ambitions

Projected without reform

- EHCPs **6360** unmitigated trajectory
- Education Health and Care Needs Assessment (EHCNA) requests **1021** each year
- Children and Young People in Elective Home Education (EHE) **90** in 2026
- Other local authority arrangements, including Education Other than at School (EOTAS) **191** in 2026
- Increase spend to HNB of **£21m** between 2025/26 and 2026/27

Dorset SEND Reform Plan

Projected with reform

- EHCPs **5559** by 2029 **2%** slow in growth
- Education Health and Care Needs Assessment (EHCNA) requests **970** each year - **5% reduction**
- Children and Young People in Elective Home Education (EHE) **75** in 2029
- Other local authority arrangements, including Education Other than at School (EOTAS) **175** in 2029
- Reduction of HNB increase to **£6m** between 2026/27 and 2027/28
- Reduction of 23 placements in special schools and 64 in independent special schools

Our vision for inclusion and excellence in education

In Dorset, we want all babies, children and young people to be healthy, happy and safe, feel valued and understood, and achieve meaningful outcomes that enable them to lead fulfilling, independent lives. Through inclusive education, high-quality support and a strong partnership, we will ensure all children and young people are empowered to reach their full potential.

Dorset will deliver this vision by establishing a more inclusive, preventative and locally responsive system, underpinned by Dorset's Expertise Offer (our Experts at Hand model), building confidence and capability across settings to identify and meet needs earlier.

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This is how we are going to do it

Our goals are to...

Identify needs earlier and deliver timely support in the right setting

- increasing the proportion of children whose needs are met through SEN support, evidenced by improved attainment, attendance and a reduction in ECHNA requests as confidence in mainstream provision grows.

Strengthen inclusive, local provision

- education settings meet a wide range of needs confidently and consistently, with more children and young people supported locally, reduced variation in inclusive practice and improved access to key professionals.

Improve outcomes and experiences for children, young people and families

- delivering clearer pathways and improved communication so families understand and have confidence in the support available, measured through improved satisfaction, reduced disputes and more positive transition experiences.

Ensure long-term sustainability and effective use of resources

- shifting towards prevention and inclusion, reducing reliance on high-cost and distant placements and securing better value for money over time.

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Revision to SEND practice

Children & young people	The new offer	Child's experience
All children	**Universal**	• Newly trained, upskilled teachers • First of kind National Inclusion Standards
	Layers of support	
Children who require some additional support from their setting, e.g. personalised materials, outlined in an Individual Support Plan	**Targeted**	High quality support, on demand, in mainstream: • Individual Support Plans • Support for transitions
Children who require additional support from their setting, with input from education and health care professionals, e.g. a speech and language therapist.	**Targeted Plus**	Improved access to external expertise: • Inclusion Bases • Experts at Hand
Children with the most complex needs, which cannot be met in the mainstream classroom	**Specialist**	• Specialist provision packages • EHCPs (in mainstream & specialist schools) • Specialist bases • Special school places

Developing a strong universal offer for mainstream settings

Our ambition

- Every child to achieve and thrive in mainstream education wherever possible
- A preventative, inclusive and locally delivered system

What is changing

- Inclusive Mainstream Fund directly to schools from central government
- Stronger expectations on mainstream inclusion and accountability
- Earlier support for education settings to support inclusive practice



Experts at Hand



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Inclusion Bases

Growing our Local Specialist Provision

- Adding ~300 Inclusion Base places across all phases and localities across Dorset between now and 2030
- Increasing provision for Communication & Interaction and Social Emotional Mental Health needs
- Developing new provision for Cognition & Learning needs to create capacity in Special Schools and reduce use of INMSS
- Phased expansion aligned to SEND sufficiency analysis, with ~6 new bases commissioned each year
- Focus on early, local access and reduced travel times and expense

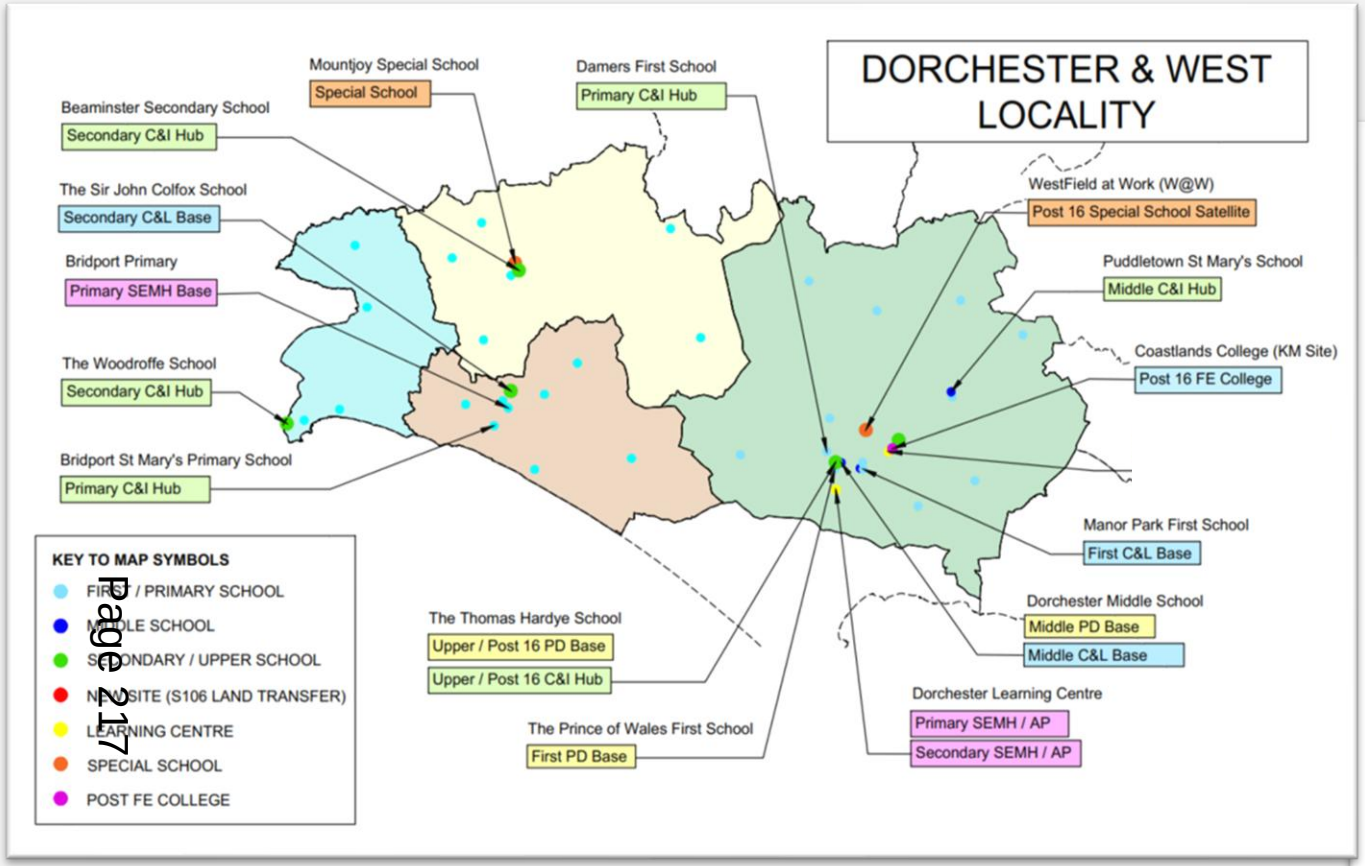
Capital approach

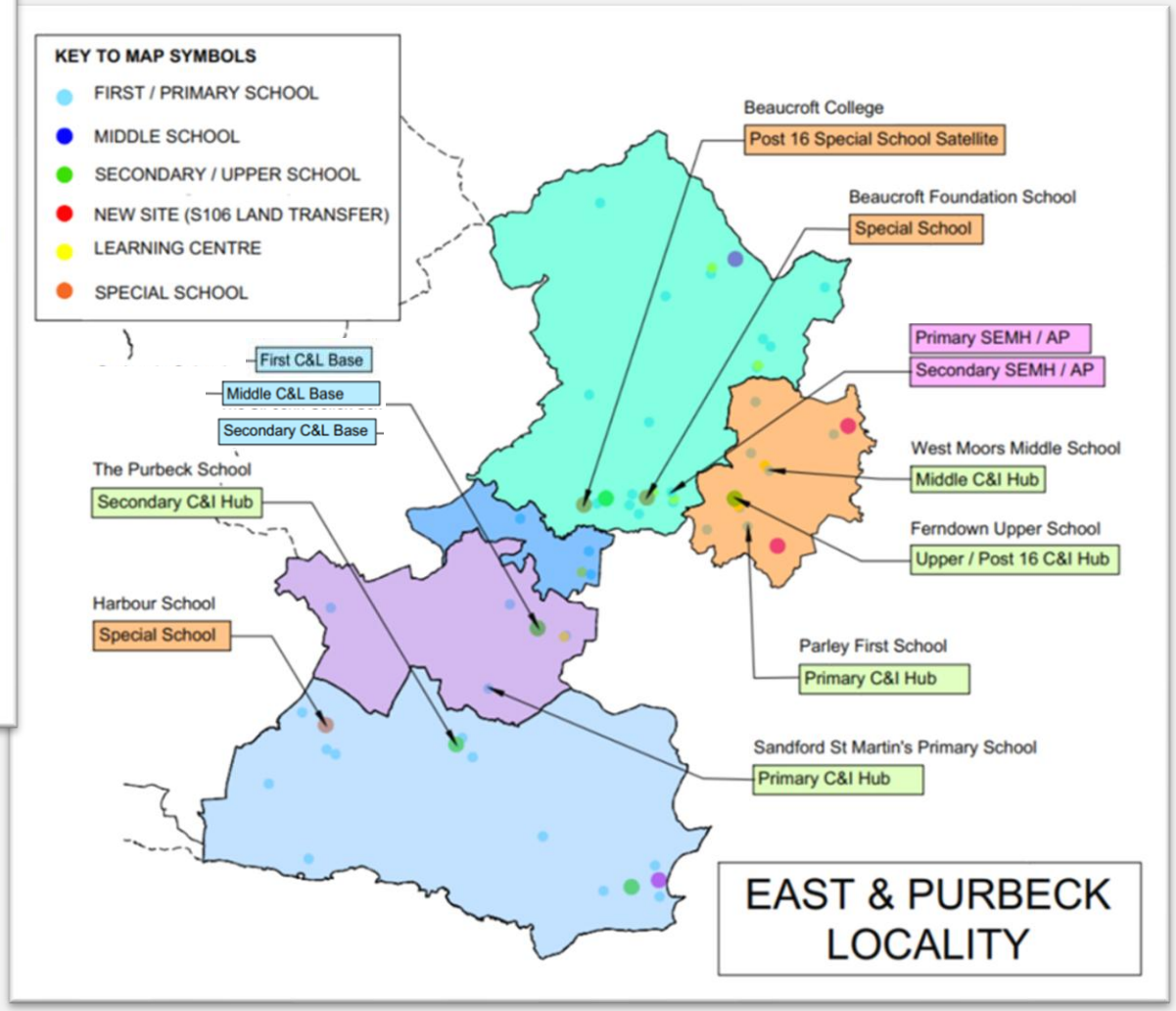
- Primarily estate adaptation within mainstream schools
- Some targeted new build where required
- Capital requirement finalised through feasibility work, aligned to sufficiency need and value for money
- Assumed capital cost of each base is c£800k in 26/27 falling to £650k in 27/28

Why this works

- Builds mainstream confidence and capacity
- Reduces escalation and cost over time
- Creates planned continuum, not reactive placements

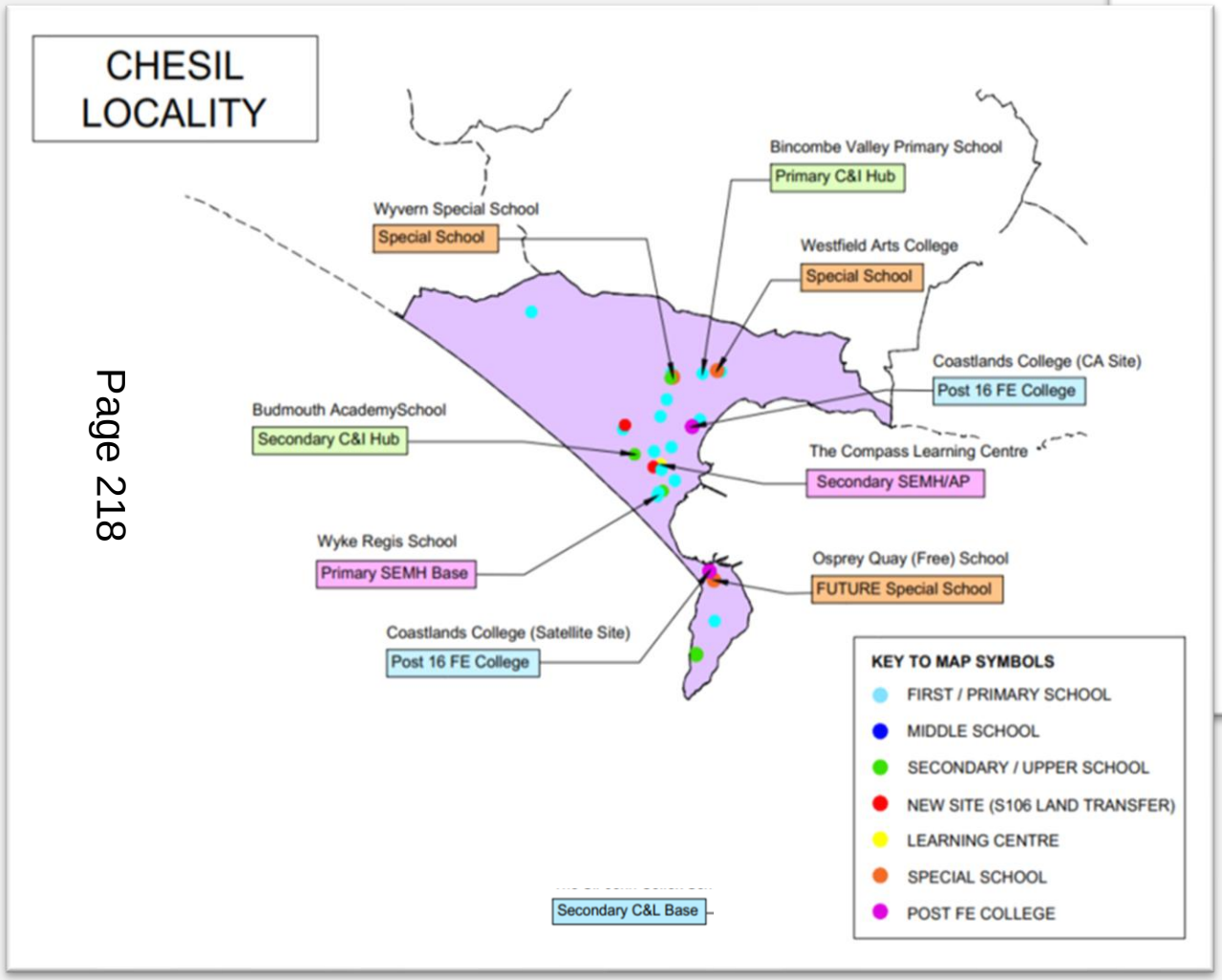
Specialist Provision

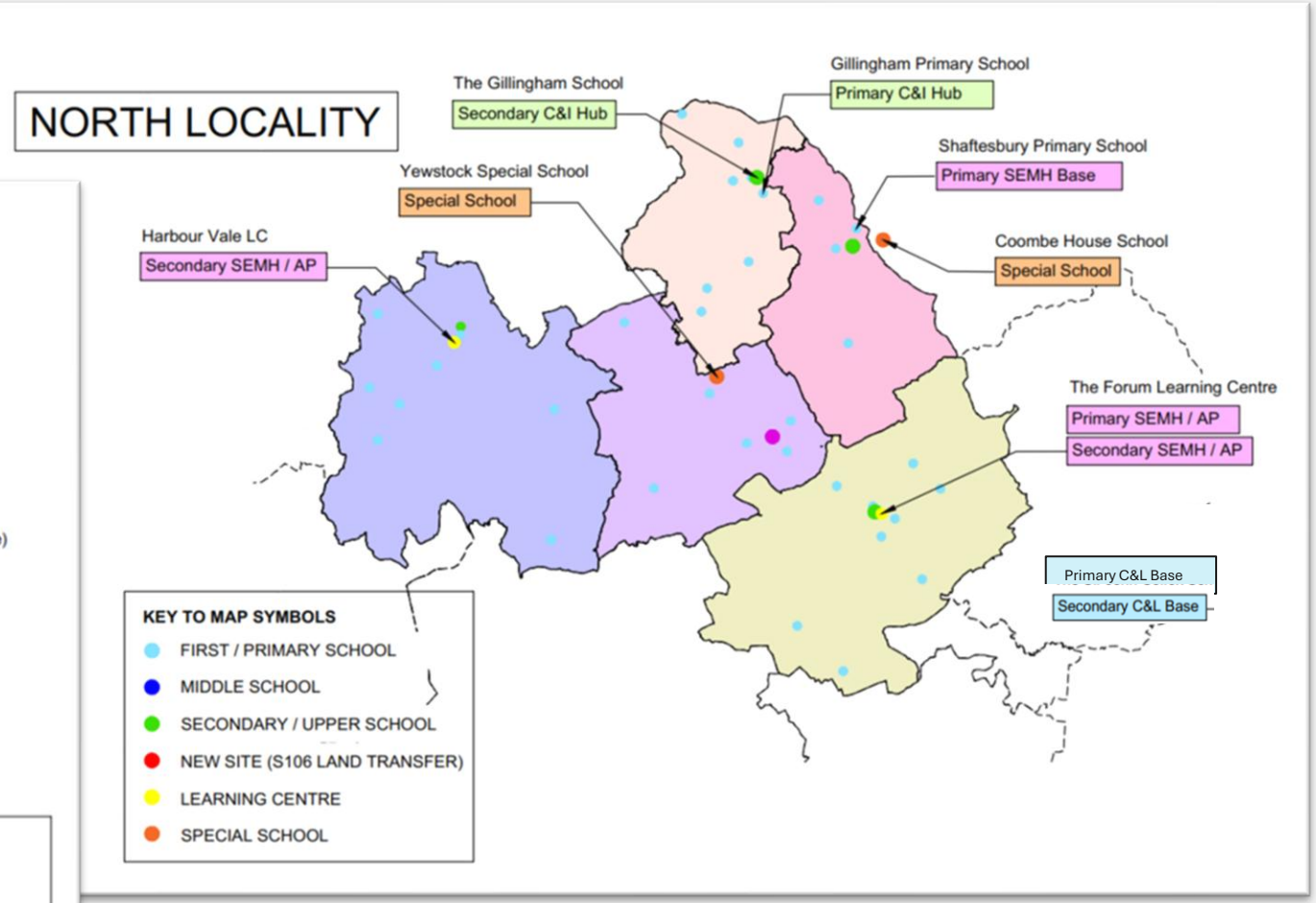




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Specialist Provision





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Governance and oversight

- The Alliance for Inclusion and Excellence in Education, providing accountability for delivery and improvement.
- Political oversight - Cabinet 28 July.
- The multi-agency 'Every Child Achieving and Thriving' group will drive the 3-year implementation plan.
- Dorset's Expertise Offer – co-ordinated by a new core LA team - linked to localities and delivered by a range of professionals.
- Commissioning arrangements tbc.

Dependencies

- NHS reforms
- Wessex Devolution
- Reforms to Children's Social Care
- Best Start Family Hubs and Best Start in Life Strategy
- Curriculum and Assessment Review
- Capital delivery outside of LA control
- Ofsted framework to recognise good inclusion

Questions



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Cabinet
28 July 2026
Dorset Council Local Plan
For Decision

Cabinet Member:
Cllr S Bartlett, Planning and Planning Enforcement

Local Councillor(s): **All**

Senior Leadership Team:
J Britton – Executive Director, Economy and Environment

Report author and job title: Terry Sneller, Strategic Planning Manager
Email: terry.sneller@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

Statutory Authority: Planning and Compulsory Purchase act 2004

Report status: Public (the exemption paragraph is N/A)

1. Executive summary

1.1 The national planning context for preparing the Local Plan is undergoing rapid and fundamental change, with significant implications for Dorset's current plan-making approach. The Government is reforming both the planning system and national policy, creating significant risk to continuing under the existing ("legacy") system.

1.2 A new plan-making framework is being introduced, requiring Local Plans to be prepared within an ambitious 30-month timeframe set by Government. This system includes structured "Gateway" stages to track and secure progress and introduces Spatial Development Strategies (SDS) to address strategic issues across local authority boundaries. Compared with the legacy system, this approach is more streamlined, proportionate, and reduces the risk of late-stage failure.

1.3 The Government's 2024 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) significantly increased Dorset's housing requirement, almost doubling the calculated Local Housing Need, and imposed a December 2026 submission deadline for legacy plans. Recent consultation on potential sites to meet the development needs generated over 9,000 responses, raising issues that need resolution. Further assessments of landscape impact within the National Landscapes are needed alongside further consideration of heritage impact.

1.4 As a result, it is no longer possible to produce a sound Local Plan under the legacy system by the Government-imposed deadline of December 2026. This position is reflected nationally, with many other local planning authorities transitioning to the new system. Additional risk arises from the pending 2026 NPPF, as any legacy plan would need to align with both the 2024 and 2026 Frameworks, with policies that are not compliant with the 2026 NPPF becoming redundant immediately upon adoption.

1.5 The new system offers key advantages: clearer focus on local priorities and sites, earlier weight for emerging plans in decision-making, and the introduction of Spatial Development Strategies at the regional level which will address much of the strategic matters covered by the duty to cooperate. Alignment with Wessex regional partners, who are already progressing under the new system, is critical to ensure coordinated planning, influence over strategic decisions, and optimal outcomes for Dorset.

1.6 Arrangements for moving ahead under the new plan-making system are set out in the report including delegation to the Corporate Director for Planning in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Planning for various parts of the plan-making process. The process begins with a formal Notice of Intent to Commence Plan making and a minimum four-month scoping phase. Cabinet and Full Council approval will be required for the two key consultation stages and for adoption.

1.7 Effective project management and resourcing will be essential to meeting the challenging timetable. To support delivery, it is requested that additional funding of up to £1 million is made available to secure external consultancy support.

2. Recommendations

2.1 It is recommended that:

a) A decision is made to progress the Dorset Council Local Plan via the new plan-making system;
b) The governance arrangements outlined in the report are agreed delegating the detailed arrangements to Cabinet Member for Planning in consultation with the Corporate Director for Planning;
c) The indicative timetable for the production of the local plan in Appendix 1 is agreed with the detail delegated to the Cabinet member for Planning and the Corporate Director for Planning to review and vary this timetable and update and publish when necessary;
d) The content and publication of the formal Notice of Intent to Commence Plan Making included in Appendix 2 is agreed;
e) The outline of the focused Scoping Consultation and Consultation Strategy in Appendix 3 is noted with the detail to be agreed with the Cabinet Member for Planning;

f) The spend of up to £1,000,000, initially funded from Local Plan Reserves, to bring in additional support to the project as and when needed is agreed;

3. Reason for the recommendations

3.1 To put the necessary arrangements in place to enable the Dorset Council Local Plan to be prepared as quickly and efficiently as possible under the new plan-making system.

4. The Dorset Council Local Plan

4.1 The national planning context within which the Local Plan is prepared, is undergoing fundamental and rapid change. The Government is both reforming the plan-making system itself and significantly revising national policy. These changes have direct and substantial implications for how and indeed whether it is appropriate to continue progressing our Local Plan under the existing, or “legacy” plan-making system.

4.2 The Government is introducing a new plan-making system, with an expectation that local plans will be prepared within a 30-month timeframe. It also introduces Spatial Development Strategies (SDS) that are produced at a more strategic level, across local authority boundaries. The new local plan-making system incorporates a series of formal Gateways, enabling local planning authorities to “bank” progress at key stages and reduce the risk of failure late in the process. This represents a more structured, streamlined approach compared to the current system.

4.3 At the same time, the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) published by the Government in 2024 had a significant effect on the evidence base requirements and plan strategy. The NPPF almost doubled Dorset’s calculated Local Housing Need and imposed a strict deadline of December 2026 for submission under the legacy system. In response, the Council ran a round of consultation in mid-2025 on housing opportunity sites to meet this significantly increased requirement.

4.4 That consultation generated over 9,000 representations and raised new and complex issues that must be properly addressed for the local plan to be found sound. These include the strengthened legal duty in relation to National Landscapes, which came into force on 23 October 2023 and places greater emphasis on their protection and enhancement. Addressing these matters requires further evidence gathering, analysis and policy development including the testing of potential transport impacts. The testing of transport impacts should be iterative, but the government’s deadline only allows sufficient time for the testing of a single development scenario.

4.5 Advice from the Planning Inspectorate has identified additional areas where further work is needed to address specific national policy requirements. This includes the need to agree a position statement with statutory bodies on specific issues such as the implications for the strategic road network. In addition, several of the evidence studies resulting from the consideration of additional sites need to be undertaken sequentially.

4.6 Taken together, this further work means it is no longer realistic or deliverable to prepare a sound plan under the legacy system within the Government's prescribed deadline. Many other local planning authorities, including our Wessex partners in BCP, Wiltshire and Somerset Councils are in the same position, moving to continue their plan preparation under the new system.

4.7 A new version of the NPPF is expected in 2026. Any local plan prepared under the legacy system would need to demonstrate conformity not only with the 2024 NPPF but also with this emerging 2026 version (when published). Policies that fail to align with the updated framework would risk becoming immediately out of date upon adoption, undermining the value of the plan and the significant resources invested in its preparation.

4.8 By contrast, the regulations for the new plan-making system, laid on 25 March 2026 introduce a more proportionate and streamlined process, with a clearer focus on meeting needs and other local issues and a reduced risk of plans failing at examination. They enable the emerging strategy to carry greater weight earlier in the plan preparation process, strengthening our ability to manage development in the interim until the final local plan is adopted.

4.9 Importantly, the new system also reshapes how strategic, cross-boundary issues are addressed. The current "Duty to Cooperate," which has been a frequent cause of plan failure, will largely be replaced by Spatial Development Strategies (SDS). This means that the local plan only needs to consider local cross-boundary matters with wider strategic issues such as housing distribution and major infrastructure, being addressed at the broader geographic scale through the SDS.

4.10 All Wessex partners are progressing under the new plan-making system. Alignment with our Wessex partners on the new plan-making system is therefore critical. This will enable coordinated plan preparation and consideration of strategically significant growth and infrastructure provision across the wider area. Choosing not to align would significantly diminish our ability to influence these discussions and secure the best outcomes for Dorset.

5. Arrangements for moving ahead on the new plan-making system

5.1 The preparation of the Local Plan under the new plan-making system will follow a series of statutory stages, beginning with early scoping and progressing through consultation, gateway assessments, submission, examination and adoption. The Government require Local Planning Authorities to prepare a local plan over a 30-month period after the conclusion of at least a four-month scoping period. There is a need to follow the regulatory requirements of the new plan-making system; however, much of the work that has been undertaken to date can be used to inform the local plan as it passes through each stage.

5.2 Stage 1 – Scoping: The process will commence with publication of a 'Notice of Intent to Commence Plan making', which provides formal notification of the Council's intention to prepare a Local Plan. A Local Plan timetable must be published at this stage, setting out key milestones and consultation periods to meet the 30-month requirement. The timetable must be reviewed and updated as necessary and updated following each key stage in the process.

5.3 The 30-month timetable represents a significant challenge for all involved. Many factors are outside of Dorset Council's control such as further changes to National Planning Policy or capacity of the Planning Inspectorate to provide timely input at each Gateway stage and at examination. The new plan-making process is also untried and untested and therefore it is unclear whether it is possible to prepare a local plan within 30-months. It is anticipated that the timetable will require regular updating to reflect this challenge and will be subject to change.

5.4 A draft Notice of Intent to Start Plan-making is included in Appendix 2 of this report, and an indicative Local Plan Timetable is included in Appendix 1. It is proposed that responsibility for agreeing and publishing the timetable along with any future updates, is delegated to the Cabinet Member for Planning in consultation with the Corporate Director for Planning.

5.5 The scoping stage must run for a period of at least four months from the point of publishing the Notice of Intent to Commence Plan-making. During this period a scoping consultation must be run. This consultation is focused on the specific and general consultees and will seek views on the scope and content of the local plan. Although the target audience is the specific and general consultees, it will be open to all interested parties to input.

5.6 It is anticipated that the local plan will include a vision for the future of the area supported by no more than ten measurable outcomes to monitor the delivery of the vision, aims and objectives for the local plan area and a spatial strategy for managing growth. It will also include the level of growth that is expected to take place over the period of the local plan with site allocations and policies to achieve this growth and an approach to deliver the necessary

infrastructure to support the growth. Supporting infrastructure may include, but is not limited to, playing pitches and other sports facilities, schools, local waste management facilities, active travel infrastructure, health facilities, community buildings, and other social and community infrastructure.

5.7 In addition to the content and scope of the local plan, the scoping consultation will ask about how to engage with the specific and general consultation groups during the plan preparation. This will help inform the consultation and engagement strategy for the local plan.

5.8 A summary of consultation responses will be prepared and published to inform the later stages of plan-making.

5.9 Stage 2 – Gateway 1: Following the scoping stage, the Council must publish a Gateway 1 self-assessment statement confirming readiness to proceed with plan preparation. This assessment will consider governance and project management arrangements, the updated local plan timetable, the details of the approach to consultation and engagement, the anticipated content of the plan and the arrangements for undertaking environmental assessments of the plan as it progresses. The publication of the Gateway 1 self-assessment statement is the formal start of the 30-month timeline for the production of the local plan.

5.10 Stage 3 – Local Plan Content and Evidence Consultation: Once the Gateway 1 statement has been published, a consultation on the local plan content and evidence is required. This consultation is open to everyone who may have an interest in the local plan to comment on and must run for at least six weeks. The consultation must include as a minimum, a draft vision for the area, measurable outcomes, any aims and objectives of the local plan, the amount and type of development and any local policies needed. It is likely that this content will include more detail than the minimum required including proposed sites for meeting the development needs of the area.

5.11 This is a key stage in shaping the Local Plan. A report will be brought to Cabinet for approval of the consultation material prior to publication.

5.12 Stage 4 – Gateway 2: After completion of the Content and Evidence Consultation and the publication of the responses received, the Council must seek observations and advice on the work undertaken from an appointed person, most likely a Planning Inspector. This stage provides an early independent review of the progress towards the creation of a sound plan. The advice received will be published and used to inform preparation of the draft plan.

5.13 Stage 5 – Consultation on the proposed Local Plan: The proposed draft local plan will be subject to consultation for a minimum period of 8 weeks. The draft local plan will include a vision, outcomes and strategy for the area, a full set of proposed policies and sites to meet the development needs of the area

to achieve the vision, a policies map showing the spatial extents of policies and allocations, and the necessary evidence and supporting material.

5.14 This stage represents an important opportunity for all those with an interest in the local plan to comment on the detailed content of the proposals. This draft Local Plan will be presented to Cabinet and Full Council for approval prior commencement of consultation. It would also be intended to seek delegated authority to the Cabinet Member for Planning in consultation with the Corporate Director for Planning to submit the local plan for Gateway 3 assessment and then examination subject to there being no significant issues raised through the consultation that materially change the content of the local plan.

5.15 Stage 6 - Gateway 3: Prior to submission for examination, the Council must pass through Gateway 3, where the appointed person (likely to be a Planning Inspector) assesses whether the prescribed requirements have been met. The prescribed requirements include an assessment of the content of the proposed draft local plan, whether the correct process has been followed in the preparation of the local plan, whether the submission documents have been prepared and meet the requirements, and that the necessary arrangements are in place to enable the examination of the local plan.

5.16 The results of this assessment will be published. Where the appointed person concludes that the requirements are not met, the Council will need to undertake further work to address the issues raise and repeat Gateway 3.

5.17 Stage 7 – Submission, Examination and Adoption: Following a successful Gateway 3 assessment, the Local Plan will be submitted for independent examination. The examination will test whether the local plan is sound. If necessary, the examination may be paused to allow further work to be undertaken. If the Local Plan is found sound at examination, it will be brought to Full Council for formal adoption.

5.18 To ensure effective delivery of the Local Plan within the required timeframe, it will be important for appropriate governance arrangements to be put in place alongside the necessary resources.

5.19 Detailed governance arrangements will be prepared and agreed with the Cabinet Member for Planning.

5.20 It is proposed that authority is delegated to the Corporate Director for Planning in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Planning to update and publish the local plan timetable, to submit information for each of the Gateway Assessments, and to publish the statutory notices and other relevant documentation such as the outcomes of consultation.

5.21 It is proposed that the content of the proposed scoping consultation will be delegated to the Corporate Director for Planning in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Planning. The Stage 3 – Local Plan Content and

Evidence Consultation material will be brought to Cabinet for approval prior to commencing consultation.

5.22 The Stage 5 – Consultation on the proposed Local Plan will be brought to Cabinet and then Full Council for agreement prior to the start of the consultation. Delegated authority will also be sought at the same time to submit the relevant material for Gateway 3 assessment and if successful at Gateway 3, to submit for Examination subject to the consultation and Gateway 3 assessment not raising any issues that materially affect the content of the local plan.

5.23 Once the local plan is found sound at examination, it will be brought to Full Council for formal adoption.

5.24 Additional resources will be required specifically to assist with processing consultation responses, to assist with some evidence gathering and to support the writing of the Local Plan. An external consultancy has been engaged to provide support under existing delegated arrangements. However, it is anticipated that the overall cost of this support will exceed current approved limits. At the point of drafting this report, spend against the agreed budget as part of this contract are zero but 'tasks' are due to start shortly with a value of up to £225,000. Cabinet is therefore requested to approve additional expenditure of up to £1,000,000 to support delivery of the Local Plan as part of this contract.

6. Alternative options considered

6.1 A thorough examination of the option of continuing to prepare the local plan under the legacy system has been undertaken. However, due to the significant increase in calculated Local Housing Need, the issues raise through the consultation, the need to gather further evidence to be able to demonstrate a deliverable local plan, and the need to address some policy issues highlighted by the Planning Inspectorate, it is not possible to meet the Government's hard deadline of December 2026. As such, the only option is to proceed with preparing a local plan under the new plan-making system and to put arrangements in place to proceed at pace.

7. Legal considerations

7.1 The arrangements for plan-making under the new plan-making system are set out in the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2026. The process outlined in the report summarises the key stages of plan-making set out in these regulations. It is for Dorset Council to consider which approach to take to preparing the local plan but getting complete coverage of local plans across the whole country as quickly as possible is a government priority.

8. Financial implications

8.1 In order to proceed rapidly with the production of the local plan, additional resources are needed. Additional resource is already in place with the ability to spend up to £500,000 however it is possible that this value may be exceeded through the 30-month timetable. For this reason, and to avoid future delay, it is requested that this limit is raised to £1,000,000. This will be in addition to the existing local plan budget and resourcing.

9. Natural environment, climate & ecology implications

9.1 Producing a local plan has far reaching implications. It provides a framework to guide decisions on planning applications directing development to locations that are the least sensitive and that reduce reliance on car-based travel. It helps to balance growth with the conservation of biodiversity and landscape impact, mitigating any impact.

9.2 The local plan will play a role in both mitigation and adaptation of climate change. Directing development to locations where there are alternatives to car travel not only reduces greenhouse gas emissions but also reduces congestion on the roads. It will steer development to locations with lowest risk of flooding and coastal change and build green infrastructure into developments to help with urban cooling.

10. Well-being and health implications

10.1 Having a decent and secure home is key to good health and well-being and the local plan will provide a framework for the delivery of housing of all types and employment opportunities to meet needs. Active lifestyles will be enabled through well designed places and the local plan, alongside the emerging Dorset Design Code will set the policy framework for requiring good design.

11. Other implications

11.1 Due to the wide-ranging nature of the local plan, its production will contribute towards many Council objectives.

11.2 The timetable to adopt the local plan under the new plan-making system would result in a short delay of around six months over that anticipated under the legacy system. However, as the likelihood of preparing a sound plan under the legacy system is minimal, it is considered more appropriate to move on to the new system.

12. Risk implications

12.1 The risks associated with trying to meet the Government's deadline of submitting a local plan under the legacy system are considered so significant that it is not possible to proceed on this basis.

12.2 However, the new system is untried, and it is uncertain how long each stage will take. Multiple local planning authorities are moving onto the new plan-making system meaning that there may be resource constraints at statutory consultees and at the Planning Inspectorate which may impact the timetable. By putting in place governance arrangements, delegated authority for parts of the plan-making process and securing additional external resources, the risks are reduced.

12.3 HAVING CONSIDERED: the risks associated with this decision; the level of risk has been identified as:

Current Risk: High

Residual Risk: Medium

13. Equalities

13.1 This report focuses on the timetable and process for producing a local plan rather than the content of the local plan itself. As such, an Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) is not considered necessary. An EqIA will be produced for the local plan during its production so that the implications of the proposed policy framework can be fully considered

14. Appendices

Appendix 1: Indicative Local Plan Timetable

Appendix 2: Notice of Intention to Commence Plan-making

Appendix 3: Scoping Consultation Outline and Local Plan Engagement Strategy Preparation

15. Background papers

Timetable for the production of the Dorset Council Local Plan under the legacy system: The Local Development Scheme for Dorset Council March 2025 - Dorset Council

Report sign-off

This report has been through the internal report clearance process and has been signed off by the Director for Assurance and Governance (Monitoring Officer), the Director for Resources (Section 151 Officer) and the appropriate Cabinet Member(s)

Dorset Council Local Plan

Indicative Local Plan Timetable

1. Introduction

The Dorset Council Local Plan timetable will come into effect on 31 July 2026, at the point it is published on the Local Plan website. It will replace the Local Plan timetable shown in the Local Development Scheme (March 2025). All other timetables and schedules in the Local Development Scheme (March 2025) are valid until reviewed.

Once adopted, the Dorset Council Local Plan will cover the whole of the Dorset Council area. It will include policies and allocations to guide the development of land in Dorset except for strategic waste infrastructure and minerals developments. Minerals developments and strategic waste facilities will be addressed through separate Minerals and Waste plans.

2. The Timetable

Dorset Council is required to review this timetable on a monthly basis and update it as and when necessary and when each stage in the plan-making process is reached. The Local Plan timetable will therefore change over time. This indicative timetable sets out the intended dates for key early stages in the plan-making process for the local plan along with broad timetables for the latter stages.

Stage	Date
Publication of Local Plan Timetable	31-Jul-2026
Publish notice of Intention to Commence Local Plan Preparation	31-Jul-2026
Publish notice of Scoping Consultation – start of consultation (including consultation with the statutory consultation bodies on the Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report)	21-Sep-2026
Date by which Scoping Consultation comments must be received – close of consultation	25-Oct-2026
Gateway 1: Self-assessment	30-Nov-2026
Publish summary of Scoping Consultation	Mar/Apr-2027
Publish notice of Local Plan Content and Evidence Consultation – start of consultation	Mar/Apr-2027
Date by which Local Plan Content and Evidence Consultation comments must be received – close of consultation	Apr/Jun-2027

Gateway 2: Seek observations and advice from Planning Inspectorate	Jul/Sep-2027
Publish notice of Proposed Local Plan Consultation – start of consultation	Jan/Mar-2028
Date by which Proposed Local Plan Consultation comments must be received	Mar/May-2028
Gateway 3: Seek advice from Planning Inspectorate on whether prescribed requirements have been met	May/Aug-2028
Submit Local Plan for Examination	Jul/Oct-2028
Adopt Local Plan	Feb/Aug-2029

Notice of Intention to Commence Plan-making

On 31 July 2026, **Dorset Council** gives Notice of its Intention to Commence the production of the **Dorset Council Local Plan.**

This notice is a required stage in the new plan making system and marks the formal start of the Dorset Council Local Plan process. Publication of this notice is required by Regulation 19 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2026.

Title of the plan: **Dorset Council Local Plan**

The Dorset Council Local Plan will not cover any strategic Minerals or Waste matters. All strategic Minerals and Waste matters will be covered in a separate Dorset Council Minerals and Waste Plan(s) however the Dorset Council Local Plan will identify and allocate sites for one or more local waste facilities such as household recycling centres where there is an urgent need for such a facility.

Local Plan timetable

The Local Plan Timetable sets out the key milestones for preparing the plan. It can be accessed at the following locations:

- https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/planning-buildings-land/planning-policy/dorset-council-local-plan
- County Hall, Colliton Park, Dorchester, DT1 1XJ

The Local Plan timetable will be reviewed monthly and updated when necessary, including at key stages throughout the plan-making process. **We expect to pass through Gateway 1 on 30 November 2026.**

What geographic area will the Local Plan cover

The Dorset Council Local Plan will cover the **administrative area of Dorset Council (ONS E06000059)**. This area is shown on the map below. The GIS boundary of the area can be downloaded here

Published: 31 July 2026



Dorset Council Local Plan

Scoping Consultation Outline and Local Plan Engagement Strategy Preparation

1. Introduction

As part of the new plan-making system councils are expected to spend time preparing before formally starting work on their new local plan. This is to ensure that councils are ready to start the 30-month plan making process and is part of the broader aims for new local plans to be prepared faster and for the process of engaging on local plans to be more accessible.

There are several preparatory tasks that need to be undertaken, including scoping the anticipated content of the new local plan and the preparation of an engagement strategy. The scoping stage must run for a minimum of 4 months during which a scoping consultation must be undertaken. The scoping consultation takes place in advance of Gateway 1 of the plan making process when the 30-month plan making process formally begins.

2. The Scoping Consultation

2.1. Purpose of the scoping consultation

Councils retain discretion of the precise content of the consultation provided the matters are relevant to the preparation of the local plan. The new local plan making regulations do however stipulate that the purpose of the scoping consultation is primarily to inform:

a) the content of the local plan;
b) how councils should engage with interested parties as part of the plan making process.

2.2. Content of the scoping consultation

The consultation is scheduled at the start of the new plan making process. It will not include the detail of development or policy proposals, but the outcomes from the scoping consultation should allow the council to:

- start to define the main areas or locally specific subject matters which will be addressed in the new local plan;
- form a draft a vision and to begin to define measurable outcomes which can be used to determine progress towards fulfilling the vision;
- identify and scope the evidence which needs to be gathered to guide the plan's preparation;

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- understand need for different types of development in the Dorset Council area;
- set out spatial options and strategies to meet needs and local plan content.

2.3. Issues that will not be covered in the scoping consultation

At this early stage in the plan making process we will not be:

- presenting any details of sites which could be developed to meet the area's needs – the consultation will not seek views on detailed site allocations or present preferred development sites as site-specific matters will be considered at later stages of plan preparation;
- seeking views on sites for development;
- setting out spatial development strategies to meet Dorset's development needs;
- setting out detailed planning policies.

2.4. Issues that will be covered in the scoping consultation

As part of the consultation, we will be seeking views on:

- how we should engage as part of the plan making process.
- the broad topics which should be addressed in the new local plan – as part of this we will outline the scope of National Decision Making Policies in the emerging National Planning Policy Framework and the areas which are likely to fall within the remit of local plan policies.

  For example emerging National Decision Making Policy 'PM13: Setting standards' defines a restrictive approach for local plan policies on quantitative standards, and clarifies that plan policies should not cover matters which are already addressed by Building Regulations other than in relation to accessibility standards or water efficiency. This means that the new local plan is not likely to include locally specific quantitative standards relating to environmental performance of buildings.
- the locally specific issues which need to be addressed in the local plan, such as those relating to approaches to the mitigation of habitats sites impacts.
- the scope of evidence needed to support statutory environmental assessment (including Strategic Environmental Assessment and Habitats Regulation Assessment)

The formal notice of scoping consultation will identify the matters on which representations are invited and the date by which representations must be received. It will be made available in accordance with the statutory publication requirements, including publication on the council's website and availability for inspection.

2.5. Next steps

Following the consultation, the council will publish a summary of the scoping consultation (including the bodies invited), the main issues raised and how the council has had regard to

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the representations at that stage. The outcomes of the scoping consultation will inform the preparation of the local plan.

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3. Engagement Strategy

3.1. Introduction

The new planning system requires the preparation of a strategy for engaging the community and other key stakeholders in the preparation of the local plan. This appendix sets out key community engagement principles, the stages of consultation that will be undertaken, who will be consulted and methods that may be used. This will be developed into a full draft engagement strategy with input from the consultation and engagement team.

We will then seek input on the engagement strategy through the scoping consultation and invite people to help shape this strategy. The final engagement strategy will define target audiences and set out clear objectives for consultation.

3.2. Community Engagement Principles

Good quality engagement is essential to provide a strong foundation for the local plan. It is important to engage with a diverse range of groups and people, including bodies with roles such as environmental, housing and transport, parish councils, businesses, voluntary groups and members of the public.

Key principles of good engagement include:

- Starting engagement early
- Being proactive
- Helping people to understand the plan making process and how their feedback will be used
- Using mixed methods of engagement to gather a broad range of insights and ensure consultations are accessible for all

Equalities Act

Under the Equalities Act, the Council must pay “due regard" to the need to the following considerations when preparing the local plan:

1. Eliminate unlawful discrimination.
2. Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic[1] and those who do not.
3. Foster good relations between different groups.

These considerations will be of particular importance at public consultation stages.

[1] Protected characteristics include age, disability, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, pregnancy and maternity, and gender reassignment

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Digital first

The Government strongly advocates a 'digital first' approach to engagement and presentation of documents. Local planning authorities should prioritise digital formats and comply with defined data standards.

3.3. Stages of local plan consultation

There are three stages of consultation under the new planning system, as set out below.

Scoping Consultation (Regulation 20)

When?

This consultation stage takes place after the council publishes a notice of intention to commence local plan preparation, and before 'Gateway 1'.

Purpose

The purpose of this consultation is to invite early engagement around what the local plan should contain and how the local planning authority should engage with people and organisations when preparing the local plan.

Length of consultation

Minimum of 21 days.

Who should be invited to take part?

- Specific consultation bodies that the council considers may have an interest in the preparation of the local plan
- General consultation bodies the council think appropriate
- Other residents or people can also respond

Post consultation

A summary of the outcomes of the scoping consultation will be prepared. The community engagement strategy will be reviewed and finalised. The scoping consultation will inform the content of the proposed local plan.

Consultation on proposed local plan content and evidence (Regulation 23)

When?

This consultation stage takes place after 'gateway 1'.

Purpose

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The purpose of this consultation is to share the proposed content of the local plan and evidence that has been prepared to support the local plan. This would include:

- a proposed vision and measurable outcomes
- any proposed aims and objectives
- proposed spatial strategy
- summary of evidence we intend to gather and details of any evidence we already have

This is also an opportunity to engage on site options.

Length of consultation

Minimum of 6 weeks.

Who should be invited to take part?

- Specific consultation bodies that the council considers may have an interest in the preparation of the local plan
- General consultation bodies the council think appropriate
- Residents or people carrying out business in the area the council considers appropriate
- Anyone who requested to be notified of this consultation

Post consultation

A summary of the outcomes of the consultation will be prepared. This will inform the content of the proposed local plan.

Consultation on the proposed local plan (Regulation 27)

When?

This consultation stage takes place 'Gateway 2'.

Purpose

The purpose of this consultation is to publish the final proposed local plan. A map of proposed local plan policies and any evidence reports are also published, as well as any other supporting documents that will be submitted to the Planning Inspectorate.

Length of consultation

A minimum of 8 weeks.

Who should be invited to take part?

- Specific consultation bodies that the council considers may have an interest in the preparation of the local plan
- General consultation bodies the council think appropriate
- Residents or people carrying out business in the area the council considers appropriate
- Anyone who requested to be notified of this consultation

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Post consultation

A summary of the outcomes of the consultation will be published. The council will make any updates necessary to the local plan and supporting evidence and will then move on to 'gateway 3', before submitting the local plan to the Planning Inspectorate for examination.

3.4. Engagement methods

A mix of methods can be used to enable engagement at each stage of consultation. The engagement will follow that outlined in the community engagement strategy, will be published following the scoping stage.

For each stage this will include:

- Publishing the consultation and questionnaire on a digital platform
- Inviting consultees to respond as set out under 'Who should be invited to take part'
- Publishing a notice on our website and at county hall

Other methods of engagement may include the following, which can be selected as appropriate depending on the consultation stage and content:

- Use of map based platforms
- Press releases
- Social media
- Digital storytelling
- Displaying information in libraries
- Public exhibitions or drop in events
- Engagement with Dorset Youth Council and other specific under-represented groups

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Cabinet

28 July 2026

Dorset History Centre – approval sought to proceed with development of capital project

For Decision

Cabinet Member:
Cllr R Biggs, Regeneration, Economic Growth and Strategic Assets

Local Councillor(s): All

Senior Leadership Team:
J Mair - Director, Assurance and Governance

Report author and job title: Sam Johnston, Service Manager for Archives and Records
Email: sam.johnston@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk
Statutory Authority: Local Government Acts 1962 &1972; Public Records Act 1958; Freedom of Information Act 2000; Environmental Information Regulations 2004; Data Protection Act (GDPR) 2018.

Report status: Public (the exemption paragraph is N/A)

Executive summary: This report provides an update to the Cabinet on the work of the Joint Archives Service (Dorset History Centre) further to the positive result of the service's application to the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF). The 5 March decision and the £603,000 of funding it provided means that development work needs to start on a major project *Past Lives, Future Proofed* which it is expected will result in major capital investment in the Dorset History Centre and a significant programme of public engagement lasting into 2031. The total cost of the project (2 phases) is £5.28 million and is contingent upon a successful Stage 2 application to NLHF. Dorset Council has pledged £540,000 match funding built into the capital programme. This report therefore is seeking the Cabinet's approval to proceed with the development of the project in preparation for the Stage 2 application in November 2027. The project will provide another 30 years of collections storage and extend the working life of Dorset History Centre by decades.

Recommendations: It is recommended that that the Cabinet:

1. Approves Dorset History Centre's request to proceed with externally funded development work on its capital project *Past Lives, Future Proofed* further to the anticipated submission of a Stage 2 application to the National Lottery

Heritage Fund in November 2027 for £3.8 million and subsequent Delivery Phase of the project whose total value over both phases is £5.28 million.

2. Delegates authority to the Executive Director for Economy and Environment, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Economic Growth and Strategic Assets to approve spend decisions, including procurement, contract award, and payment of invoices, within the Total Scheme Budget for the Dorset History Centre capital project as detailed in paragraph 4.2. All activity will be undertaken in accordance with Dorset Council's Contract Procedure Rules, Financial Regulations, Scheme of Delegation and applicable law. Procurement of services for the Delivery Phase of the project is contingent upon a successful Stage 2 application to NLHF.
3. Acts as financial guarantor: DHC intends to bridge the current budget gap of £110,000 (see para 4.3) by fundraising from a variety of sources. Work is already underway and we are confident that we will meet our target. However, in the event that this proves challenging, it is requested of Dorset Council that it meets the budget shortfall to ensure the viability of the project and the securing of the large capital grant from NLHF.

Reason for the recommendation: To support and endorse the development of a project that will result in significant inward investment in Dorset's cultural infrastructure through the provision of capital improvements to Dorset History Centre and a pan-Dorset public engagement programme.

1. Introduction and background

1.1 Dorset History Centre (DHC) is the home of the Joint Archives Service for Dorset Council and BCP Council. Its application *Past Lives, Future Proofed* to the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) was submitted in November 2025 with a four-month assessment period. The London and South of England committee met on 5 March and a decision was taken to support the project's Development Phase with a grant of £603,000. This has been matched by £80,000 from the Joint Archive Service's (JAS) own funds – drawn partly from its service reserve and partly from its donations reserve – funds which had been deliberately ringfenced over a significant period for this purpose with the permission of the Joint Archives Board. Additional in-kind contributions through volunteer time have been included in the overall application's financial calculation.

1.2 The project represents a long-standing and acknowledged need on the part of DHC. The building was constructed in 1991 with an estimated 25 years of collections' expansion space, and it is now at 96% capacity. The project will provide additional accommodation for physical archives which still come into the service in significant quantities. Work on the project originally commenced in 2013 with an options appraisal and feasibility study. This culminated in an unsuccessful application to the Heritage Lottery Fund in 2017. A series of events (LGR, full-service review and new joint agreement with BCP, Covid and financial reviews) meant that it was some years before DHC was in a position to reapply to the NLHF. Dorset Council has pledged

£540,000 towards the project through its capital programme, contingent upon a successful Stage 2 application. The service now has the means to deliver the project but necessarily requires Cabinet approval to proceed given the size of the budget involved.

2. Project development and delivery

2.1 DHC has entered the 18-month Development Phase of the project which will result in a second stage application to NLHF intended for submission in November 2027. If successful, this in turn will result in a further grant of £3.8 million which will fund the majority of the Delivery Phase of the project and the capital improvements to Dorset History Centre. The project budget has both inflation and contingency allowances built into it as NLHF is very keen to ensure that projects do not exceed the grant originally request and thus seek additional budget from them as key funder.

2.2 The project has three key ambitions and will:

- Create a new two-storey repository block accommodating c. 22,000 boxes of physical archives adjacent and linked to the current building. This should provide at least 30 years of expansion space.
- Improve the public spaces including a new entrance and reception area;
- Deliver a major programme of public engagement focussing on collections and audiences, building partnerships and long-term collaboration.

3. Project personnel and responsibilities

3.1 During the Development Phase various additional staff and contractors will be employed in order to assist the core DHC team in testing and refining the project proposals and in preparing the Delivery Stage application. These are:

- Project Archivist (18 months) 1.0 fte
- Project Community Engagement Officer (18 months) 0.8 fte
- Design team (consultants) including project manager, architect, quantity surveyor, mechanical, structural and electrical engineers and a fire specialist.
- Evaluation consultant

3.2 The NLHF has also appointed two external project monitors whose role it is to support the project team, act as ‘critical friends’ and to report back to the NLHF to ensure that the project is delivering to specification, time and budget.

3.3 DHC is working closely with Dorset Council’s Assets and Regeneration Service which is acting in the ‘intelligent client’ role to facilitate and support the design work and to ensure quality and value for money. It will also be important for example to plan for a period of closure of the DHC building whilst construction works are undertaken – and whether an alternative, temporary service model can be provided instead.

3.4 DHC staff will, along with Assets and Regeneration colleagues engage with the appointed consultants to ensure that the final design proposal which will inform the next application to NLHF is both visually and practically appropriate for the service as well as ensuring that it falls within the cost envelope available to the project.

3.5 The service will also be responsible for composing the second-stage application to NLHF and liaising with the Lottery officers throughout the process. In addition, DHC will need to raise the match fund requirement to ensure that the full budget for the project is in place before the commencement of the Delivery Phase in mid-2028. Two internal staff groups have been created to work on the repositories/staff areas of the building and the public spaces respectively. NLHF retrospectively funds projects in quarterly arrears so there will be regular requests made of it for costs incurred throughout the life of the project.

3.6 The Development Phase of the project will provide an opportunity to explore the costs, risks and outcomes proposed for the Delivery Phase including the volunteer input and digital outputs. It is important that the proposals outlined initially stand scrutiny and that the audiences we engage with view identified priorities in the same way as the service. Above all, the project must align with the NLHF's Investment Principles and deliver high-quality outcomes whilst embedding sustainable practices and long-term organisational health within DHC.

4. Project funding

4.1 There are two phases of the project and two separate but linked budgets:

- Development – cost £684,000 (fully funded)
- Delivery – cost £4.6 million (subject to funding decisions all contingent upon a successful Stage 2 application to NLHF)

4.2 In terms of fundraising, the JAS has a significant but realistic target to meet in order to generate the full cash sum needed to complete the Delivery Phase of project. This is normal in projects such as this and NLHF expects the service to work to raise the balance of the funds. Project funding is detailed below:

Development Phase Funds (committed)		
Source	**Amount**	**Status**
NLHF (Development Phase grant)	£603,000	Confirmed
DHC service reserves	£80,000	Ringfenced
Sub-total	**£683,000**	
Delivery Phase Funds (committed in principle)		
Source	**Amount**	**Status**

NLHF (Delivery Phase grant)	£3,800,000	NLHF committee decision March 2028
Dorset Council	£540,000	Subject to NLHF successful Stage 2 bid
Dorset Council Community Infrastructure Levy	£50,000	As above
Dorset Archives Trust	£50,000	As above
Dorchester Town Council	£5,000	As above
Dorset Council Section 106	£45,000	As above
Funds still to raise	*£110,000*	*TBC*
Sub-total	**£4,600,000**	
Total	**£5,283,000**	

4.3 As can be seen, all the additional or 'match' funding is contingent upon a successful second stage application to NLHF – which is viewed by other bodies as the 'gateway funder'. This means that there currently remains a gap of **c. £110,000** to bridge. DHC will seek support from a range of sources in order to ensure that full project funding is in place. We have consulted with the leaders of other recently delivered cultural capital projects to find out how they were able to meet the funding challenge and have benefitted from their advice and experience. Without in any way wishing to appear complacent or over-confident, we are optimistic that the service will be able to meet the full funding requirement before the Delivery Phase of the project begins. However, in the unlikely event that it should prove impossible for the service to raise the full match sum outstanding then the contribution from Dorset Council would be increased (as a maximum) from £540k to £650k.

4.4 There is in addition, an 'in-kind' contribution element which relates to volunteer input. This is calculated based on anticipated volunteer activity and the equivalent cash value to the service using a formula provided by NLHF. The value of the in-kind volunteer contribution will provide a notional additional £150,000 resourcing to the project.

4.5 The service will be working closely with its support charity the Dorset Archives Trust. The latter can apply for funds that are not open to local authorities and in the case of personal giving, DAT is able to harvest Gift Aid. The service will be applying to a number of charitable trusts and foundations as well as approaching depositors and a wider range of stakeholders.

4.6 Based on the above calculations, it can be seen that this project (over the two phases) offers an approximately 1:9 return on investment for Dorset Council, although it should be noted that the council's match fund contribution was an essential part of securing NLHF investment as it was seen by the latter as a sign of commitment and belief on the part of DC to the project and the county's cultural infrastructure.

5. Next steps

5.1 In order to submit a high-quality application in November 2027, the DHC team will need to focus first and foremost on *Past Lives, Future Proofed* so that both the capital and engagement elements of the project have been well scoped with ample evidence of need and demand, alongside rigorous analysis of costs and risks. In this way, we hope to be able to move seamlessly into the Delivery Phase of the project in mid-2028 with a three-year plan of action.

5.2 The proposal will be discussed at the Property Asset Management Group on the 2nd July and Capital Strategy Asset Management Group on the 13th July for review.

5.3 If Cabinet approves the spending profile and schedule for this project, the team is ready to start work on the development of the second stage application. It is hoped that the service has made a compelling case for this endorsement.

1. Alternative options considered

There is no alternative model for delivering archive services currently under consideration.

2. Legal considerations

All work within this project will be undertaken in compliance with the applicable law, Contract Procedure Rules and relevant governance requirements.

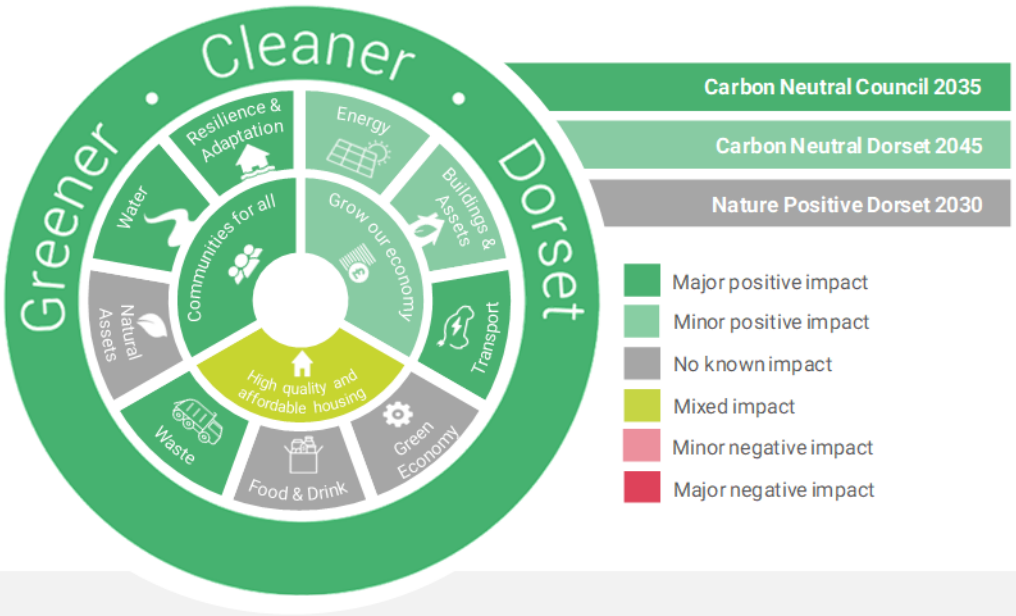
3. Financial implications

All activities described in this report are covered by either the JAS revenue budget, capital resources, reserves or an externally sourced grant.

4. Natural environment, climate & ecology implications

DHC has significantly improved its energy performance through a major project (2017-18) funded in part by Low Carbon Dorset to reduce consumption whilst ensuring the maintenance of high-quality environmental controls. This, combined with the generation of solar energy through PV panels on roof elevations has rendered the building highly energy efficient. Please see below for 'climate wheel' analysis of the project's environmental impact (where known).

Dorset History Centre capital project



Quantitative Impact on CEE targets (if known)		
	Unit	Number of units (+/-)
2030 - Natural asset extent & condition	Ha	0
2035 - Operational Emissions	CO_2 (tonnes)	

ACCESSIBLE TABLE SHOWING IMPACTS

Natural Environment, Climate & Ecology Strategy Commitments	Impact
Energy	minor positive impact
Buildings & Assets	minor positive impact
Transport	major positive impact
Green Economy	No known impact
Food & Drink	No known impact
Waste	major positive impact
Natural Assets & Ecology	No known impact
Water	major positive impact
Resilience and Adaptation	major positive impact

Corporate Plan Aims	Impact
Grow our economy	minor positive impact
High-quality and affordable housing	neutral
Communities for all	strongly supports it

TABLE OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations	Responses -will this be incorporated into your proposal? How? And if not, why not?
Energy	
Replace fossil fuel boilers with low carbon heating systems.	This was scheduled via AMP but is now not deemed a priority. A&R may seek to review this subject to budget availability - boilers are the originals fitted in 1991.
Find out energy use of any new build buildings that are being added to the Dorset Council carbon footprint, as this will affect our ability to hit our carbon reduction targets	Will be done as part of the design work - undertaken before 2nd stage submission to NLHF in November 2027.
Ensure new builds are fitted with low carbon heating systems	The project will seek to use latest and most energy-efficient plant possible.
Buildings & Assets	

Design the building to be zero carbon, running costs will be greatly reduced and retro fitting later will cost much more	Key principle of the project was always to be as energy and carbon efficient as possible. Passive preservation lies at the heart of the proposal with as little mechanical intervention as possible.
Transport	
No recommendations found for this category	
Green Economy	
No recommendations found for this category	
Food & Drink	
No recommendations found for this category	
Waste	
No recommendations found for this category	
Natural Assets & Ecology	
No recommendations found for this category	
Water	
No recommendations found for this category	
Resilience & Adaptation	
No recommendations found for this category	

5. Well-being and health implications

The JAS/DHC contributes to wellbeing outcomes for both councils and improving the quality of life for residents of BCP and Dorset Council areas and attracting visitors to the county lie at the heart of its work.

6. Other implications

None

7. Risk implications

HAVING CONSIDERED: the risks associated with this decision; the level of risk has been identified as:

Current Risk: Medium
Residual Risk: Medium (due to pressure on archive accommodation – although mitigated by the recent NLHF decision).

8. Equalities

The JAS/DHC has completed a full EQIA. Areas for further consideration include working with younger people and with black and ethnic minority groups and religious

minorities. Improved digital provision will also assist in providing greater access to collections for people living at some distance from Dorchester.

9. **Appendices**
None

10. **Background papers**
Dorset History Centre Business Case

11. Report sign-off
This report has been through the internal report clearance process and has been signed off by the Director for Assurance and Governance (Monitoring Officer), the Director of Resources (Section 151 Officer) and the appropriate Cabinet Member(s).

Cabinet

28 July 2026

Procurement - Dorset Highways Contractor Resource (Labour Top up) Framework

For Decision

Cabinet Member: Cllr J Andrews, Place Services

Local Councillor(s): All Councillors

Senior Leadership Team:
J Britton - Executive Director, Economy and Environment

Report author and job title:
David Blackburn, Waste and Recycling Manager; Highways, Engineering and Transport
Email: david.blackburn@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

Statutory Authority:

Report status: Public (the exemption paragraph is N/A)

1. Executive summary

Re-procurement of the Highways Contractor Resource (Labour Top up) was approved by Cabinet as part of the Procurement Forward Plan Report considered at its meeting on 12 March 2024. Cabinet agreed to begin each of the procurement procedures, as listed at Appendix 1 to the Cabinet report of 12 March 2024. The table set out in the Appendix erroneously set the 'Estimated DC Total Spend over Contract Term' value at £20million over an 8-year contract term.

This report seeks Cabinet's approval to amend the 'Estimated DC Total Spend over Contract Term' value in Appendix 1 of this report from £20m to £60m over the same 8-year contract period as the previous decision could have the unintended effect of materially constraining the use of the framework and creates risks of non-compliance, interruption to service provision, and the need for an unplanned re-procurement exercise.

The amendment is required to correct a drafting error in the original report and is necessary to ensure the procurement documentation accurately reflects the intended scope and value of the framework. This correction must be made before the tender can be issued to the market and is not related to any expenditure having been incurred or any financial threshold being reached.

2. **Recommendation**

2.1 That the 'Estimated DC Total Spend over Contract Term' value of £20m in Appendix 1 to the Cabinet report of 12 March 2024 be replaced with a value of £60m.

3. **Reason for the recommendation(s)**

3.1 To ensure compliant spend in line with the Council's Contract Procedure Rules.

4. The report

4.1 At its meeting on TUESDAY 12 MARCH 2024 the Cabinet Member for Finance, Commercial and Capital Strategy presented a report seeking Cabinet's consideration of the contents of the report in respect of proposed over £500k procurement activity for 2024-25 that are listed in Appendix 1 and to agree to begin each of the procurement procedures listed in Appendix 1 to the Report.

4.2 Appendix 1 to the Report was as follows:

Appendix 1: 2024-25 procurement forward plan where the contract value is expected to exceed £500,000

Contract Description	Directorate / Portfolio Lead	Executive Director	Contract Term (max)	Estimated DC Total Spend over Contract Term	Sourcing Strategy	Risk
Self-drive Vehicle Hire	Place / Cllr Ray Bryan	Jan Britton	4 years	£1.6m	Call off from framework	Low
Dorset Waste Commercial ICT System	Place / Cllr Laura Beddow	Jan Britton	7 years	£900k	Call off from framework	Low
Site Investigation & Materials Testing Services	Place / Cllr Ray Bryan	Jan Britton	4 years	£2m	Tender	Low
Plastic Wheeled Bins, Recycling Containers and Plastic Sacks	Place / Cllr Laura Beddow	Jan Britton	4 years	£3m	Call off from framework	Low
Dorset Highways Contractor Resource (Labour Top – Up) Framework	Place / Cllr Ray Bryan	Jan Britton	8 years	£20m	Tender	Low
~~Country Park Food and Drink Provision~~ *(*This will be a concession / lease contract therefore no DC spend but £10m potential opportunity to the market)*	~~Place / Cllr Laura Beddow~~	~~Jan Britton~~	~~10 years~~	~~*Refer to **~~	~~Tender~~	~~Low~~

4.3 The decisions minuted were:

(a) To begin each of the procurement procedures, as listed at Appendix 1 to the Cabinet report of 12 March 2024.

b) That in each instance the further step of making any contract award be delegated to the relevant Portfolio Holder, in consultation with the relevant Executive Director.

Reason for the decision: Cabinet was required to approve all key decisions with financial consequences of £500k or more. It was good governance therefore to provide Cabinet with a summary of all proposed procurements, that individually were estimated to be total value of £500k or more, prior to procurement procedures formally commencing.

4.4 The effect of the original decision has been to set the estimated Dorset Council (DC) total spend over the contract term at a lower value than is now required.

4.5 Dorset Council delivers its Highways service through a mixed economy model, with Dorset Highways working alongside private sector suppliers.

4.6 There is an ongoing requirement for supplementary labour resources, including traffic management operatives, highway maintenance staff, and HGV drivers. This framework ensures sufficient resilience and flexibility to meet fluctuating demand and fulfil statutory highway maintenance duties.

4.7 Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole (BCP) Council has previously participated as a named user on this Framework, increasing its overall value and attractiveness to suppliers. This collaborative approach supports Dorset Council in securing and maximising highway maintenance funding from central government and is proposed to continue.

4.8 Allowing for inflation, the estimated annual Framework value (including BCP Council) is £7.5m (£3.95m Dorset Council and £3.55m BCP Council). This equates to a projected total spend of £31.6m for Dorset Council and £28.4m for BCP Council over the full eight-year term.

4.9 While this exceeds the value approved in the Cabinet Procurement Forward Plan (March 2024), the scope and duration of the contract remain unchanged.

4.10 This report therefore seeks Cabinet approval to revise the previously approved contract value to £60m, covering combined Dorset Council and BCP Council expenditure over the eight-year period.

5. Alternative options considered

5.1 Not amending the estimated maximum contract value would have the unintended effect of materially constraining the use of the framework. The current maximum value would be reached in under 3 years creating a potential risk of non-compliance, possible interruption to service provision, and the need to unnecessarily undertake a further procurement exercise.

6. Legal considerations

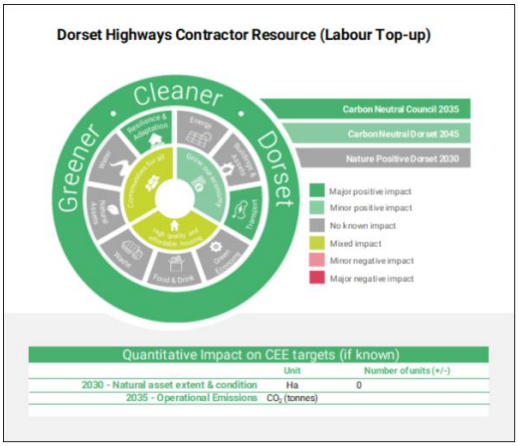
6.1 None

7. Financial implications

7.1 None. This Framework Contract does not commit to any expenditure (as there is no guarantee as to the value or volume of work awarded to any supplier). In this way, it is a flexible solution that can adapt to any changes in budgets and programmes of work.

7.2 There is sufficient provision within existing highway maintenance budgets to support the value of this contract. While costs have risen in recent years due to external factors (e.g. geopolitical events and changes to employer National Insurance contributions), this is balanced by the confirmed four-year central government funding settlement (2026–2030).

8. Natural environment, climate & ecology implications



ACCESSIBLE TABLE SHOWING IMPACTS

Natural Environment, Climate & Ecology Strategy Commitments	Impact
Energy	No known impact
Buildings & Assets	No known impact
Transport	major positive impact
Green Economy	No known impact
Food & Drink	No known impact
Waste	No known impact
Natural Assets & Ecology	No known impact
Water	No known impact
Resilience and Adaptation	major positive impact

Corporate Plan Aims	Impact
Grow our economy	minor positive impact
High-quality and affordable housing	neutral
Communities for all	neutral

9. Well-being and health implications

9.1 None.

10. Other implications

10.1 None.

11. Risk implications

11.1 HAVING CONSIDERED: the risks associated with this decision; the level of risk has been identified as:

Current Risk: **Medium**- we have insufficient numbers of employed staff to carry out our most critical services including winter maintenance, carriageway defect repairs and safety critical improvement works.

Residual Risk: **Low**- additional labour resource can be easily and quickly hired in to deal with peaks in demand, we then have flexibility to off-hire resources once those peaks in workload have tailed off.

12. Equalities

12.1 None

13. Appendices

13.1 None

14. Background papers

14.1 PID / Sourcing Plan

15. Report sign-off

15.1 This report has been through the internal report clearance process and has been signed off by the Director for Assurance and Governance (Monitoring Officer), the Director for Resources (Section 151 Officer) and the appropriate Cabinet Member(s)

Recommendation to Cabinet
28 July 2026

From People and Health Overview Committee on 6 July 2026

Crisis and Resilience Fund

For Decision

Cabinet Member and Portfolio:
Cllr M Bell, Public Health, Prevention & Communities

Local Councillor(s):
All

Senior Leadership Team:
L Cotton - Executive Director, Moderisation and Customer Delivery

Report author and job title: Laura Cornette Business Partner – Communities and Partnerships
Email: laura.cornette@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

Report Status: Public

Recommendation:

That:

1. Interim governance of the Crisis and Resilience Fund programme is provided through the Communities and Prevention Delivery Board, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Public Health, Prevention and Communities and the Cabinet Member for Housing.
2. An annual report on Crisis and Resilience Fund spend and impact is presented to the People and Health Scrutiny Committee.
3. The proposals set out in Appendix 2 for the allocation of Crisis and Resilience Fund funding to the resilience services and projects identified be agreed.

Appendices

Crisis and Resilience Fund report to People and Health Overview Committee, which includes the following appendices:

Appendix 1 – Summary of the Crisis and Resilience Fund

Appendix 2 – Proposal for further/extension of investment in resilience services

Appendix 3 – Equality Impact Assessment

Please note that following the People and Health Overview Committee meeting, paragraph 5.3 of the report has been updated to provide more information about how the impact of the investment would be monitored.

Background papers

Agenda and minutes of the People and Health Overview Committee – 6 July 2026.

People and Health Overview Committee
6 July 2026
Crisis and Resilience Fund
For Recommendation to Cabinet

Cabinet Member:
Cllr M Bell, Public Health, Prevention & Communities

Senior Leadership Team:
L Cotton - Interim Executive Director, Modernisation and Customer Delivery

Report author and job title: Laura Cornette Business Partner – Communities and Partnerships
Email: laura.cornette@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

Statutory Authority:

Report status: Public (the exemption paragraph is N/A)

1. Executive summary

1.1 On 1 April 2026, the Crisis and Resilience Fund (CRF) replaced the Household Support Fund (HSF) to support Dorset residents experiencing financial crisis. The new CRF also included the existing Discretionary Housing Payment provision under a new single funding strand. Cabinet approval on 3 March 2026 enabled a compliant “day one” offer, ensuring continuity of support and no loss of essential welfare support services. All initially authorised projects are now operational, as summarised in Appendix 1.

1.2 This fund helps Dorset Council deliver its key community and housing priorities and strengthens our prevention work alongside the council’s cost of living programme as well as helping to deliver Communities for All in the Corporate Plan. It provides direct support to the most vulnerable residents, helping them manage immediate pressures while building greater independence and resilience. By investing in people and communities now, we are creating the conditions for stronger, more self-reliant communities and supporting Dorset Council’s ambition to become a modern, sustainable council.

1.3 Following a successful launch, the crisis resilience fund is now moving from mobilisation into ongoing delivery. To support this next phase, an interim governance and decision-making arrangement is proposed to provide clear oversight and coordinated decision-making across the programme and its connected services. It is proposed that this is provided through the Communities and Prevention Delivery Board, as part of the council’s senior leadership delivery arrangements, with relevant

Cabinet Member involvement. This will ensure future investment aligns with corporate priorities and delivers maximum impact for residents.

1.4 A crisis resilience fund policy is currently in development and will be presented through the committee system in Autumn 2026. This will set out the longer-term policy and governance framework for the fund. In the meantime, the interim governance arrangements described in this report will support delivery and decision-making, alongside the interim use of the Discretionary Housing Payments Policy, which has been adopted temporarily in line with Department for Work and Pensions guidance.

1.5 In parallel, work has progressed to strengthen the council's resilience offer. A review of existing support across Dorset Council, voluntary and community sector organisations has identified opportunities to improve coordination and address gaps in provision.

1.6 Appendix 2 sets out proposals for additional and extended resilience projects that meet CRF criteria. Members are asked to review these proposals and consider the proposed allocation of funding in order to make recommendations to Cabinet.

1.7 Over the three-year programme, the CRF aims to move from reactive crisis response approach to a more preventative, resilience-focused approach. This aims to reduce the number of residents experiencing financial crisis and improve overall wellbeing and individual financial wellbeing through more integrated and effective support services.

2. Recommendation(s)

2.1 For members of the committee to consider and recommend that interim governance of the Crisis and Resilience Fund programme is provided through the Communities and Prevention Delivery Board, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Public Health, Prevention and Communities and the Cabinet Member for Housing.

2.2. For members of the committee to consider and recommend that an annual report on Crisis and Resilience Fund spend and impact is presented to the People and Health Scrutiny Committee.

2.3 For members of the committee to review the proposals set out in Appendix 2, consider the proposed allocation of Crisis and Resilience Fund funding to the resilience services and projects identified, and make recommendations to Cabinet.

3. Reason for the recommendation(s)

3.1 To provide clear interim governance and decision-making for the Crisis and Resilience Fund through the Communities and Prevention Delivery Board, as part of the council's senior leadership delivery arrangements.

3.2 To ensure the People and Health Overview Committee receives ongoing assurance on Crisis and Resilience Fund spend and impact.

3.3 To enable the committee to review the proposals in Appendix 2 and make recommendations to Cabinet on the proposed allocation of Crisis and Resilience Fund funding.

4. Background and current position

4.1 On 1st April 2026 the Crisis and Resilience Fund (CRF) replaced the Household Support Fund to support residents experiencing a financial crisis. On 3rd March Cabinet approved Dorset Council's day one offer to ensure we were legal and compliant with no loss of essential support services. Detail is available in background papers. All those authorised projects are now operational. A summary of the CRF programme is available in Appendix 1.

4.2 Over the past three years, the core-funded Cost of Living programme has complemented the HSF. We are now well placed to build on this sustained investment, strengthening the resilience and community connection outcomes of the CRF, as the two funds continue to operate alongside one another.

4.3 While there is some level of oversight, formal governance and decision-making processes for further programme direction and spend are required.

4.4 The Household Support Fund (HSF) programme spend was authorised by the Children's Directorate Senior Leadership Team (SLT) as the host directorate for the fund, along with the Children's Lead Cabinet Member after sign-off after initial Senior Leadership Team agreement. The complementary Cost-of-Living programme direction is authorised by the lead Cabinet Member for Public Health, Prevention and Communities and S106 sign off with 6 monthly People and Health Scrutiny.

4.5 The CRF programme is increasingly being delivered through a joined-up resilience approach that spans a number of services, delivery partners and routes into support for Dorset residents. It is therefore proposed that interim governance is provided through the Communities and Prevention Delivery Board, as part of the council's senior leadership delivery arrangements, rather than through a single directorate.

4.6 A CRF Policy is currently under development and will be brought through the committee system in the Autumn. This will replace the stand-alone Discretionary Housing Payments Policy which has been temporarily adopted by the CRF programme under the DWP guidance.

5. Resilience Development Work

5.1 Following from the day 1 programmes authorisation, work has progressed with reviewing the current wrap around resilience support available within Dorset Council and local voluntary community organisations (VCSO) and gaps are currently being identified.

5.2 Appendix 2 lays out proposals for additional or extended resilience projects which meet the requirements of the CRF criteria, including proposals to move some appropriate cost of living project spend across to the CRF. Members are asked to review these proposals, consider the proposed allocation of funding, and make recommendations to Cabinet.

5.3 The impact of the investment in resilience will be measured not just by how much money is spent or how many awards are made. The emphasis is on whether support has helped people avoid or recover from financial crisis and become more resilient in the future. We will undertake this by creating a clear streamlined experience within both the council's customer and VCS front-door for residents experiencing crisis or in need of resilience support. By the end of the 3-year programme, fewer residents should experience crisis; reduced material deprivation; reduced reliance on emergency food aid; increased access to advice services and improved financial resilience.

6. Legal considerations

6.1 There are several legislative and national policy changes that interact with the CRF. These are summarised in Appendix 2 of the background Cabinet paper. All resilience development work is considering these elements.

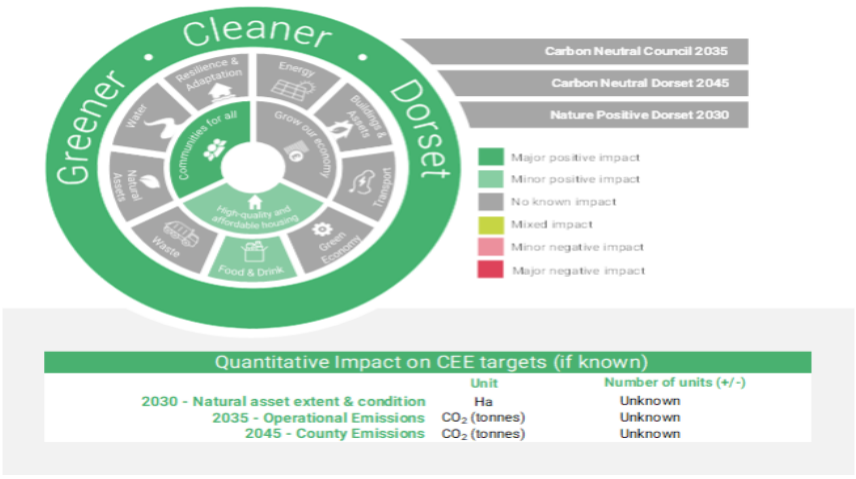
7. Financial implications

7.1 The CRF grant for Dorset Council has been awarded at £4.1m per annum for 3 financial years; 2026/27, 2027/28 and 2028/29.

7.2 For years 1 and 2 the Housing Payment element (previously known as DHP) is set within the grant award at a **minimum** £458,298. It is for Local Authorities to set the level of their housing payment for year 3.

8. Natural environment, climate & ecology implications

8.1



ACCESSIBLE TABLE SHOWING IMPACTS

Natural Environment, Climate & Ecology Strategy Commitments	**Impact**
Energy	No known impact
Buildings & Assets	No known impact
Transport	No known impact
Green Economy	major positive impact
Food & Drink	minor positive impact
Waste	major positive impact
Natural Assets & Ecology	No known impact
Water	No known impact
Resilience and Adaptation	major negative impact
Corporate Plan Aims	**Impact**
Prosperity	strongly supports it
Stronger healthier communities	strongly supports it
Sustainable Development & Housing	neutral
Responsive & Customer Focused	strongly supports it

TABLE OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations	**Responses -will this be incorporated into your proposal? How? And if not, why not?**
Energy	
No recommendations found for this category	
Buildings & Assets	
No recommendations found for this category	
Transport	
No recommendations found for this category	
Green Economy	
No recommendations found for this category	
Food & Drink	
Use the opportunity to improve resilience of food & drink supplies to climate change and global food system shocks	

Waste	
No recommendations found for this category	
Natural Assets & Ecology	
No recommendations found for this category	
Water	
No recommendations found for this category	
Resilience & Adaptation	
No recommendations found for this category	

9. Well-being and health implications

9.1 The CRF grant will support a broad spectrum of individuals affected by poverty in the Dorset Council area. This includes children, adults, and those of pension age, as well as other priority cohorts impacted by the complex and multi-dimensional effects of poverty - such as care leavers, individuals involved with social care, and those with SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities).

Tackling poverty and mitigating the impacts of low income is an important aspect of reducing inequalities in health as these disproportionately impact people living on low incomes.

11. Risk implications

11.1 HAVING CONSIDERED: the risks associated with this decision; the level of risk has been identified as:

Current Risk: Medium

Residual Risk: Medium

12. Equalities

12.1 An Equality Impact Assessment is in Appendix 3.

13. Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Summary of the Crisis and Resilience Fund
- Appendix 2 – Proposal for further/extension of investment in resilience services
- Appendix 3 – Equality Impact Assessment

14. Background papers

14.1 Crisis and Resilience Fund Day one Cabinet paper

14.2 Cost of Living People and Health Scrutiny paper 2026

14.3 Cost of Living People and Health Scrutiny Paper June 2025

14.3 Crisis and Resilience Fund Department of Work and Pensions Guidance document

15. Report sign-off

15.1 This report has been through the internal report clearance process and has been signed off by the Monitoring Officer and Section 151 Officer and the appropriate Portfolio Holder(s)

Appendix 1 Summary overview of the Crisis and Resilience Fund

From 1 April 2026, the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) will introduce the Crisis and Resilience Fund (CRF). This new fund replaces short-term crisis grants and consolidates housing-related discretionary support.

'*The primary objective of The Fund is to both provide a safety net for those on low incomes who encounter a financial shock and to invest in building local financial resilience to enable individuals and communities to better deal with crises in the long-term, reducing crisis need*'. (DWP 2026)

The ringfenced grant will enable local authorities in England to:

- Provide a safety net for low-income households experiencing financial shocks
- Invest in local financial resilience, helping individuals and communities better withstand crises in the longer term

The fund is built around three main outcomes:

1. **Effective crisis support** – Providing timely, needs based assistance to prevent crises from occurring or escalating. This includes ensuring that people receive the right support at the right time through person-centred and resilience building services.

2. **Improving financial resilience** – Enabling residents to better manage financial shocks and reduce the likelihood of recurring crises—for example, reducing reliance on food parcels and crisis payments.

3. **Strengthening support networks** – Developing a more connected, visible welfare landscape. The CRF emphasises joined-up local support networks as essential to building long-term financial resilience.

The CRF provides a three-year framework (2026–2029) and requires councils to deliver four integrated elements:

1. **Cash-first crisis payments**
2. **Housing payments** (replacing Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP))
3. **Resilience services**
4. **Community coordination**, delivered through by person-centred, needs-led, and trauma-informed practice

There will be a phased transition for Housing Payments, with an expectation that councils maintain DHP-equivalent spend in Years 1 and 2.

Area	Key Points
Crisis Payments Providing support to those in crisis	Required to offer 'crisis payments' to support those on low income who experience a financial shock, such as sudden income loss or unexpected expenses. Features include: • **Broad eligibility** – which maintains local authority discretion • **Person-centred and needs based approach** in assessment and award of payments • **Cash first approach** with vouchers and goods in-kind as alternatives with wrap around support to improve resident resilience • **No routine use of Free School Meals (FSM) vouchers** - eligibility for benefits does not create automatic entitlement; support will be based on assessed need. • **Wraparound support** – use crisis support as a gateway for people to access resilience services, where appropriate • **Accessible support** – range of application methods must be offered and the support offer should be easy to find and up to date. Crisis Payments are intended to meet occasional or short-term needs and cannot provide an alternative source of regular income. Crisis Payments and Housing Payments should be used as a gateway to wider support.
	The housing payment replicates DHPs to provide financial support to those in receipt of a qualifying benefit to help with rent or moving costs. The **integration of housing support** will take a phased approach:

Housing Element Providing financial support towards housing needs, to those who face a shortfall in meeting their housing costs - replicating Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP)	1. In years 1 &2 the current allocation status is maintained. Admin funding also remains at the current level to allow for a smooth transition. 2. In year 3, Local authorities will receive all CRF funding including the housing element and admin funding. Updated data will also be used to determine allocation amounts. This will: • Continue to provide housing support to those most at risk of rent arrears and eviction • Retain the ability of housing support to mitigate welfare reforms (e.g. local housing allowance) • Streamline the delivery of support for residents • Investment in CRF Housing Payments supports Dorset Council's commitment to a sustainable future by reducing reliance on more costly emergency and temporary housing provision.
Resilience Services Programmes to improve financial resilience	We are required to use a significant part of the funding on services and programmes that increase local **financial resilience** to enable communities to better deal with crises in the long term. A person-centred, outcomes-based approach will be taken to resilience services to offer strong wraparound support in alignment with the Fund's intent to address root causes, not just crisis symptoms. These services must demonstrate they are meeting the resilience outcomes on: • Increased savings • Reduction in priority debt • Reduced need for emergency food parcels • Reduced experiences of material deprivation • Maximising individuals' income • Increased access to appropriate and quality advice services.

	Examples include: **Budget maximisation** e.g. by funding community supermarkets or advice services **Income maximisation** e.g. benefits application support, CV building services **Income smoothing** e.g. access to affordable credit or supporting saving behaviours **Financial capability** e.g. supporting future planning services and education Resilience Services will be available to all residents, not only those receiving crisis payments or housing-related support. A strong, two-way referral pathway must operate between services and grant support, ensuring a consistent **'no wrong door'** approach. The fund will prioritise food aid providers that integrate with, or are co-located alongside, Resilience Services. This may include connections with advice services, support with benefit applications, and assistance for utility and other household debts.
Community Funding Investment in activities that connect and enhance the local support landscape	Building strong partnerships and referral pathways is essential to creating a more integrated welfare system—one that supports both immediate crisis responses and longer-term resilience building. This approach directly contributes to the fund's intended outcomes: • **Provision of effective crisis support** • **Improving individuals and local communities' financial resilience** Effective community support may include: • **Strong awareness of local support offers** – forming the foundation of a *"no wrong door"* approach and improving community access to Resilience Services. • **Integrated and holistic support** – ensuring individuals receive coordinated help that addresses multiple needs.

	• **Colocation of services** – placing different services or professional groups in the same space to deliver more joined up, accessible support. • **Strong partnerships and collaborative working** – including co-location and shared approaches that strengthen consistency and referral pathways across organisations.

Reference: Crisis and Resilience Fund: Guidance for local authorities in England (1 April 2026 to 31 March 2029) - GOV.UK

Appendix 2 – Proposal for further/extension of investment in resilience services

	Project	Detail	Day 1 authorised amount from CRF	Yr1 additional funding request	Yr 2 request	Yr 3 Request	CRF Pillar
1	Housing Payments (formally Discretionary Housing Payments)	Due to the change in legislation for housing (Renters Reform Act), we are experiencing unprecedented demand for our housing payments support to prevent homelessness of vulnerable residents. CRF has stated a minimum level of £458,298. Last FY an increase of £73,000 from CoL was provided, this FY £89,800 has been committed but it is felt it should be provided from CRF.	NA – supported by CoL	Up to £100,000	Up to £100,000	NA - Yr 3 requires separate authorisation for DC to set our own amount.	2
2	Homelessness prevention service	Continuation of current service and move this project off the Cost-of-Living programme as better aligned with CRF for years 2 and 3.	NA – supported by CoL	NA	£359,000	£359,000	1,3
3	CA Debt Advisors	Continuation of current service with 3% uplift for inflations and move this project off the CoL programme as better aligned with CRF for years 2 and 3.		NA	£223,201	229,897	1,3,4
4	Emergency and Affordable Food	Continuation of current provision, review for year 3	£125,000	NA	£125,000	To be reviewed	1,3
5	CA resilience Discretionary fund	Continuation of current provision, review for year 3	£100,000	NA	£100,000	To be reviewed	3,4

6	Disability Facilities Grant	Continuation of current service	£100,000	NA	£100,000	£100,000	3
7	Affordable food projects and wrap around	Enabling our food projects to develop their resilience wrap around resilience offer by providing a fund for them to apply into, then combining the yr 1 previously authorised £70,000 into this for yrs 2 and 3	£70,000	£75,000	£150,000	£150,000	3,4
8	Adults/carers hospital to home one off support	Continuation of current service	£25,000	NA	£25,000	To be reviewed	3
9	Extension to the Holiday and Activities Fund	Booster up current provision to include additional offer to yr7+ especially YP with SEND. HAF has been cited by Government to support the removal of the Free school meals holiday vouchers (FSMHV)	£10,000	£250,000	£500,000	£500,000	3,4
10	Lantern Trust Resilience wrap around	comprehensive wrap around to address the root of crisis and offer long term support in a holistic way for their specialised cohort	NA – new request	£30,000	£30,000	£30,000	3,4
11	Community Transport Fund	previously supported under HSF, proposal to extend the current fund. Essential for CT orgs to support residents to medical and wellbeing appointments where other rural transport links are non-existent by supporting their core costs such as insurance, vehicle maintenance, volunteer expenses etc.	NA	£60,000	£60,000	To be reviewed	3,4
12	Financial Education and Support	One of the key priorities for the CRF resilience wrap around is the provision of financial education. We are currently exploring local VCS options to provide bespoke sessions and courses with some of our vulnerable cohorts inc care leavers, low-income families (in schools	NA	£100,000	£100,000	To be reviewed	3,4

		and community settings) and a wider campaign for any residents needing to engage as part of resilience support					
13	Community Managed Libraries	We have 8 Community Managed Libraries (CML) which are charitable entirely self-funding entities but supported by DC with ICT systems. Funding would enable participation in essential programmes such as the Summer Reading Challenge, supporting early literacy, confidence and school readiness, alongside initiatives such as Warm Welcome spaces during winter, helping to reduce isolation and vulnerability therefore increasing individuals resilience. It would also support delivery of wider campaigns such as 'All In', improving access to information, advice and community support and continue to play a vital role in supporting community resilience and reducing demand on statutory services.	NA	£16,000 (£2,000/ library)	£16,000 (£2,000/ library)	£16,000 (£2,000/ library)	3,4
14	Gambling Support	UNDER DEVELOPMENT – Hidden gambling addictions are one of the most dangerous addictions which can reduce household stability. Public Health have been given a grant of £70,000 to develop a needs assessment and to research a programme of support, we may be able to use some CRF funds to add greater impact to this agenda once the local data is available.	NA		To be reviewed		3,4

Dorset Council

Appendix 3 - Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA)

1. Initial information

Name of the policy, project, strategy, project or service being assessed:

Community Resilience Fund (CRF) - Programme 2026/27 (and to 2029)

2. Is this a (please delete those not required):

New policy or service

3. Is this (please delete those not required):

Both internal and external (residents, communities, partners)

4. Please provide a brief overview of its aims and objectives:

The CRF aims to provide crisis support for low-income households facing financial shocks and to build financial resilience through services and community coordination. It includes four strands:

- Crisis Payments (cash-first approach for urgent needs)
- Housing Payments (replacing Discretionary Housing Payments)
- Resilience Services (advice, income maximisation, debt support)
- Community Coordination (strengthening local support networks)

5. Please provide the background to this proposal.

The CRF runs from April 2026 to March 2029, replacing Discretionary Housing Payments and complementing Local Welfare Assistance. It is funded by DWP and delivered by local authorities under Section 31 of the Local Government Act 2003. The initial

CRF offer has been in place since April, following approval by Cabinet of an earlier report that set out the immediate approach required to mobilise the fund. This subsequent report builds on that position by seeking approval for a further programme of projects to be funded through the CRF. It also proposes a revised governance structure to support ongoing decision-making, ensuring that future allocations of CRF funding are made in a consistent, transparent, and accountable way.

What sources of data, evidence or research has been used for this assessment? (e.g. national statistics, employee data):
Data sources:

- Local deprivation indices and Experian modelling
- UC/HB claimant data (via DWP monthly data share)
- Learning from Household Support Fund evaluations
- Engagement with VCS partners and advice networks

Consultation:

- Internal teams (Housing, Welfare, Financial Inclusion)
- Voluntary and community sector organisations
- Residents via previous HSF feedback

Further info needed:

- Equality monitoring data from CRF applications
- Insights from local advice providers on barriers for protected groups

6. What did this tell you?

Duration: CRF is multi-year (2026–2029) vs HSF short-term.

Scope: CRF combines crisis support with resilience-building; HSF focused on emergency relief.

Approach: CRF introduces trauma-informed practice, cash-first principle and mandatory referral pathways.

Accessibility: CRF guidance requires multiple application routes and formats (Easy Read, Braille, offline).

Housing Support: CRF replaces DHPs with Housing Payments.

7. Who have you engaged and consulted with as part of this assessment?

Internal stakeholders

- Cabinet Member for Public Health, Prevention and Communities
- Assistant Chief Executive / Chair of the Cost of Living working group - Dorset Council
- Head of Revenues & Benefits
- Service Manager, Housing Advice & Homelessness
- Executive Director for Modernisation and Customer Delivery
- Strategy and Policy Lead

External stakeholders including VCS and Statutory Sector Partners

- Ridgewater Energy
- Citizens Advice in Dorset
- Friendly Food Club
- The Lantern
- Age UK North, South and West Dorset
- The You Trust
- Age Concern North Dorset
- Island Community Action
- Volunteer Centre Dorset
- Wessex Water

8. Is further information needed to help inform decision making?

Is an EQIA required? Yes

Impacts on who or what?	Choose impact	How
Age	Positive impact	Older adults and families with children benefit from targeted support (e.g., pension credit advice, affordable food, warm spaces). Offline routes help digitally excluded older residents.
Disability	Positive impact	CRF guidance requires accessible formats and fast-tracking for terminal illness. Disabled households benefit from crisis support and referrals to specialist services.
Gender reassignment and Gender Identity	Neutral Impact	No barriers identified; CRF is inclusive and person-centred.
Marriage or civil partnership	Neutral Impact	No barriers identified; eligibility is based on need, not marital status.

Impacts on who or what?	Choose impact	How
Pregnancy and maternity	Positive impact	Financial stress during pregnancy and maternity leave is mitigated through crisis support and referrals.
Race and Ethnicity	Neutral/Positive impact	The cost-of-living crisis has a disproportionately negative impact on black and ethnic minority communities. The CRF mitigates this through crisis and housing support alongside referrals to support services.
Religion and belief	Neutral Impact	No barriers identified; CRF works with faith-based organisations delivering food aid.
Sex (consider men and women)	Positive impact	Both men and women benefit from mitigated financial pressures; CRF supports gender-neutral access.

Impacts on who or what?	Choose impact	How
Sexual orientation	Neutral Impact	No barriers identified; CRF is inclusive.
People with caring responsibilities	Positive impact	Carers benefit from crisis support and referrals to advice services.
Rural isolation	Positive impact	Offline application routes and community coordination reduce barriers for rural residents.

Impacts on who or what?	Choose impact	How
Socio-economic deprivation	Positive impact	CRF directly targets low-income households and aims to reduce material deprivation.
Single parents	Positive impact	CRF mitigates financial stress for single-parent households, who are disproportionately affected by poverty.
Armed forces communities	Positive Impact	CRF includes signposting to specialist support for veterans and service families.

Please provide a summary of the impacts:

Programme overview

The Community Resilience Fund (CRF) is a three-year programme (April 2026–March 2029) designed to provide both immediate crisis support and longer-term resilience-building for low-income households. It replaces Discretionary Housing Payments and complements Local Welfare Assistance schemes. The CRF is structured around four key strands:

1. **Crisis Payments**
    - Cash-first approach to meet urgent needs such as food, energy, essential household items, and transport costs.
    - Available year-round, with multiple application routes (online, phone, face-to-face) to ensure accessibility.
2. **Housing Payments**
    - Financial support for housing costs for those entitled to Housing Benefit or Universal Credit housing element.
    - Includes rent in advance, deposits, and shortfalls caused by benefit caps or under-occupancy rules.
3. **Resilience Services**
    - Investment in advice and support services to help households build financial resilience.
    - Includes income maximisation (benefit checks), debt advice, budgeting support, and access to affordable credit.
    - Delivered through local authority teams and voluntary/community sector partners.
4. **Community Coordination**
    - Strengthening local support networks to create a “no wrong door” approach.
    - Activities include mapping services, building referral pathways, co-location of advice services, and outreach to rural and digitally excluded communities.

It should also focus on three main outcomes:

1. **Provision of effective crisis support**. By delivering effective crisis support is intended to prevent the occurrence or escalation of individuals’ crises.

2. **Improving individuals’ financial resilience**. By strengthening financial resilience among individuals and empowering residents to better manage financial shocks and mitigate the occurrence, recurrence and escalation of crises.

3. **Bolstering the local level support landscape**. By providing a joined-up, visible local support network to build financial resilience

The CRF adopts a person-centred, needs-based, and trauma-informed approach, ensuring dignity, choice, and flexibility for applicants. It aims to reduce material deprivation, prevent crises from escalating, and foster long-term financial stability.

Overall, CRF is expected to have a positive impact on most protected groups by reducing financial hardship and improving resilience. Risks relate mainly to accessibility and awareness, which can be mitigated through inclusive design and proactive outreach.

Evidence Base

Local Data and Insight

- Dorset Intelligence & Insight Service (DIIS) modelling using Experian data to identify areas of significant need.
- Indices of multiple deprivation (November 2025)
- Revenue and Benefits Team data highlighting households in financial hardship.
- Housing Advice and Homelessness Team data on rising housing insecurity.
- Feedback from Dorset Together Cost of Living Working Group (since 2022), which includes internal council teams and external partners.
- Evidence and data from the network of foodbanks, social supermarkets and affordable food projects across Dorset, including testimony and insight collected at the ‘Pathways to Resilience’ event in April 2026.

Previous Programme Learning

- Household Support Fund (HSF) evaluations and monitoring reports, which identified:
    - High demand for emergency food and energy support.
    - Barriers for digitally excluded residents.
    - Increased need for advice services and wraparound support.

National Research

- Citizens Advice national reports on cost-of-living impacts.
- House of Commons Library briefing (Dec 2024) on inflation and low-income households.
- Rapid evidence review (BMC Public Health, Feb 2024) on health impacts of financial hardship.
- LSE Business Review on widening inequality due to rising costs.
- Runnymede Trust report on the disproportionate impact the CoL crisis is having on black and ethnic minority communities.

Community and Voluntary Sector Insight

- Dorset Community Foundation's *Hidden Dorset Impact Report*.
- Feedback from local VCS organisations (Citizens Advice, Help & Kindness, Age UK, Volunteer Centre Dorset).
- Input from foodbanks, social supermarkets, and grassroots charities.

Protected Groups

- Data from Citizens Advice Dorset showing 66% of clients are disabled or have long-term health conditions.
- Maternity Action survey (2024) highlighting financial stress during pregnancy and maternity leave.
- Joseph Rowntree Foundation research on carers and poverty risk.

Action Plan

Summarise any actions required as a result of this EqIA.

Issue	Action to be taken	Person(s) responsible	Date to be completed by
Digital exclusion	Provision of offline application routes (telephone, postal, face-to-face) and outreach through libraries and Family Hubs will be defined within the CRF policy.	CRF Delivery Lead	December 2026

Language barriers	Translation of key materials into community languages and the provision of interpretation support for applications will be set out in the CRF policy.	Communications Team	December 2026
Accessibility	Ensuring application forms and guidance are available in Easy Read, Braille, large print, and audio formats and the use of an accessibility checker for all documents will be specified within the CRF policy.	Inclusion Champion	December 2026
Awareness	The CRF policy will set out expectations for inclusive communications, including the use of non-digital channels to support accessibility.	Communications Team	December 2026
Referral pathways	Warm referral processes between Crisis Payments, Housing Payments, and Resilience Services as well as a trauma-informed delivery approach will be established and defined within the CRF policy.	CRF Programme Manager	December 2026
Monitoring equality impacts	The approach to the collection and analysis of equality monitoring data from CRF applications to	Business Intelligence Team	Ongoing

	identify gaps and adjust deliver will be set out within the CRF policy.		

Sign Off

Officer completing this EqIA: Fiona Thomas, Communities Team Leader

Officers involved in completing the EqIA: Laura Cornette, Business Partner, Communities and Partnerships

Date of completion: 12/6/2026

Version Number: 2

EqIA review date:

Equality Lead Sign Off:

Next Steps:

- the EqIA will be reviewed by Communications and Engagement and if in agreement, your EqIA will be signed off.
- if not, we will get in touch to chat further about the EqIA, to get a better understanding.
- EqIA authors are responsible to ensuring any actions in the action plan are implemented.

Please send to Diversity and Inclusion Officer

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Recommendation to Cabinet 23 June 2026

From Place and Resources Overview Committee on 4 June 2026

e-Scooter Micromobility Rental Service

For Decision

Cabinet Member and Portfolio:
Cllr J Andrews, Place Services

Local Councillor(s):
All

Executive Director:
Jan Britton - Executive Director, Environment and Economy

Report author and job title: Christopher Whitehouse (Projects Team Manager)
Email: christopher.whitehouse@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

Report Status: Public

Recommendation:
The Place and Resources Overview Committee recommended that Cabinet commence the proposed e-scooter rental services in:

- Weymouth, Dorchester, Portland and Chickerell (via a competitively procured operator); and
- Corfe Mullen and Upton (via an extension of the existing BCP scheme);

The Place and Resources Overview Committee endorsed the proposed delivery model, including the practical, legal and operational arrangements required to implement the scheme in accordance with Department for Transport (DfT) trial requirements.

The Place and Resources Overview Committee provided additional recommendations that geofencing arrangements should be co-produced with Ward Members, Town and Parish Councils to ensure local concerns and priorities are reflected in the scheme design and that Dorset Council engages

with the Department for Transport regarding the provision of appropriate warning signage to support public awareness and safety.

Appendices

Report to the Place and Resources Overview Committee on 4 June 2026, including the following appendices:

Appendix 1: Maps of proposed E-scooter trial areas

Appendix 2: e-Scooter Briefing Report to Dorset Police

Appendix 3: Dorset Police response to the e-scooter proposal

Appendix 4: Police and Crime Commissioner Response

Appendix 5: e-Scooter Proposal Draft EqIA (as amended) *

Appendix 6: table of climate wheel outcomes (set out in the body of the report of 4 June 2026)

Appendix 7: Dorset e-scooter risk assessment

Appendix 8: E-scooter operating principles

*Please note that following the Place and Resources Overview Committee of 4 June 2026 the EqIA was amended to the version shared in Appendix 5 above.

Background papers

Agenda for Place and Resources Overview Committee on Thursday, 4th June, 2026, 10.00 am - Dorset Council

Place and Resources Overview Committee

4 June 2026

e-Scooter Micromobility Rental Service

For Recommendation to Cabinet

Cabinet Member:
Cllr J Andrews, Regeneration, Infrastructure and Growth

Local Councillor(s): Councillors for the Dorchester, Weymouth, Portland, Chickerell, Corfe Mullen and Upton areas of Dorset

Senior Leadership Team:
J Britton, Executive Director for Place Services

Report author and job title: Christopher Whitehouse, Transport Planning Projects Team Manager
Email: christopher.whitehouse@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

Statutory Authority: Dorset Highways

Report status: Public (the exemption paragraph is N/A)

1. Executive summary

1.1 This report outlines a proposal for Dorset Council to participate in the Department for Transport (DfT) sanctioned national e scooter rental trial in two defined areas: Weymouth, Dorchester, Portland and Chickerell; and Corfe Mullen and Upton.

1.2 In Corfe Mullen and Upton, the scheme would operate as an extension of the existing Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole (BCP) e-scooter scheme delivered by Beryl Bikes. In Weymouth, Dorchester, Portland and Chickerell, the Council would tender for an operator to ensure best value and alignment with local priorities.

1.3 The introduction of regulated e scooter rental schemes would provide Dorset Council with a controlled and lawful alternative to existing illegal private e-scooter use, whilst supporting wider transport, climate and accessibility objectives and offer an additional low carbon transport option to help address a number of existing transport challenges, including short car trips, congestion, carbon emissions, and access to employment and services in

areas where public transport options can be limited. Evidence from national trials and neighbouring authorities shows that well designed schemes can deliver meaningful modal shift from private car journeys, contributing to reduced emissions, improved air quality and increased transport choice.

1.4 However, this report also recognises that the scheme presents risks, particularly in relation to safety, equality impacts and reliance on external enforcement.

1.5 E-scooters are particularly suited to journeys of 1–5km, which account for a significant proportion of everyday trips currently made by car. When integrated with walking, cycling, e-bike schemes and public transport, they can support first and last mile journeys and help widen travel choice for people who do not have access to a private car. This includes young working people, apprentices, students, and people in lower paid or shift based employment, for whom transport costs and limited-service availability can be a barrier to accessing jobs, training and education opportunities.

1.6 For these groups, e-scooters can provide a flexible and affordable way to reach workplaces, transport hubs and town centres, particularly outside standard commuting hours when bus services may be infrequent. Improving access to employment and training supports inclusive growth, reduces reliance on lifts or car ownership, and helps retain younger people within local communities by improving access to opportunity.

1.7 Participation in the DfT trial would enable Dorset Council to actively manage e-scooter use within a regulated framework. While private e scooters remain illegal on public roads and spaces, they are already present in communities, creating unmanaged safety and enforcement challenges. A regulated rental scheme provides a legal, insured and speed limited alternative, with geofencing, parking controls and clear operator accountability.

1.8 The report considers safety, policing, equality and community impacts in more detail. Dorset Police support progression in principle, subject to strong safety controls. The Police and Crime Commissioner has raised concerns regarding public safety and policing impacts, which are acknowledged and addressed through proposed scheme conditions and governance arrangements. Both schemes would be fully funded by operators, with no capital or revenue cost to Dorset Council.

1.9 This report is presented to Place and Resources Overview Committee to enable detailed consideration, challenge and direction prior to any decision by Cabinet.

2. Recommendation(s)

2.1 It is recommended that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

2.2 Review and comment on the proposal to introduce e-scooter rental services in:

- Weymouth, Dorchester, Portland and Chickerell (via a competitively procured operator); and
- Corfe Mullen and Upton (via an extension of the existing BCP scheme);

2.3 Examine the proposed delivery model, including the practical, legal and operational arrangements required to implement the scheme in accordance with Department for Transport (DfT) trial requirements;

- Provide direction and challenge on key aspects of the proposal including:
- The sustainability of the proposed operating areas;
- The adequacy of proposed controls relating to safety, parking and equalities impacts;
- The extent to which reliance on police enforcement presents an acceptable risk.

3. Reason for the recommendations

3.1 The introduction of regulated e-scooter rental schemes supports Dorset Council's adopted strategic objectives, including those set out in the Local Transport Plan, Climate and Ecological Emergency Strategy and Sustainable Transport Plan. These strategies prioritise reducing car dependency, cutting carbon emissions, improving accessibility, and expanding affordable low carbon travel choices, *including improved access to employment and training opportunities for people without access to a private car*

3.2 The recommended approach allows Dorset Council to shape and control e-scooter use through a regulated framework, rather than leaving existing illegal use unmanaged. A targeted concession model minimises financial and legal risk to the authority while allowing local learning ahead of potential national legislation.

3.3 The proposed approach enables the Council to test and evaluate the role of e-scooters in Dorset's transport network, contributing to national evidence ahead of any future legislative change.

4. Background

4.1 Dorset Council has received provisional permission from the Department for Transport (DfT) to participate in the national rental e scooter trial, currently scheduled to run until May 2028.By taking part in the trial Dorset Council will

make a vital contribution to shaping future legislation by examining how rental e scooters operate in real world conditions, including impacts on travel behaviour, carbon emissions, accessibility, safety and public perception.

4.2 The proposal is to introduce regulated e scooter rental schemes in two defined and targeted areas, selected because trip lengths, population density and existing infrastructure are most compatible with micromobility use. Participation in the trial enables Dorset Council to actively shape and control e-scooter use locally and may help reduce illegal private e-scooter use.

4.3 DfT guidance confirmed that rental e-scooters are only lawful within authorised trial areas and where operated through agreements with local authorities. Operators may only deploy vehicles where appointed by a local authority and with DfT approval.

4.4 E-Scooters within the trial must:

- Be insured and maintained by the operator.
- Require users to hold a valid driving licence.
- Meet national technical and safety standards.
- Operate within defined areas and under local control measures.

4.5 Trials are currently authorised to continue until May 2028. A recent letter from the Simon Lightwood MP, Minister for Roads and Buses to Cllr Nick Ireland, Leader of Dorset Council has reinforced the Government's intention to legislate for micro-mobility but hints that there may be a delay to the current expected schedule from which it could be concluded that the trial period could be extended.

5. Operating Principles of the Scheme

5.1 The proposed rental e-scooter scheme will operate in accordance with Department for Transport guidance, permitting use on roads and cycle lanes where authorised, but prohibiting use on pavements and most cycle tracks unless these are formally redesignated and supported by amended Traffic Regulation Orders, requiring a review of existing infrastructure and legal frameworks to enable implementation.

5.2 Two delivery models are identified—a potential extension of the existing BCP Beryl scheme and a separately procured concession model for Weymouth, Dorchester and surrounding areas—supported by core operational controls including geofencing, speed limits, designated parking, mandatory driving licence validation and data sharing. Effective operation will depend heavily on well-managed parking arrangements and behavioural controls to minimise obstruction, alongside a combination of operator-led compliance measures

and statutory enforcement. However, the Council has limited direct enforcement powers, particularly in relation to offences such as pavement riding, creating reliance on Dorset Police and highlighting enforcement as a key risk, to be mitigated through technology, partnership working and operator sanctions

6. Strategic Case for Regulated E Scooters in Dorset

6.1 Reducing Short Car Trips, Congestion and Emissions

6.2 A high proportion of everyday car journeys in Dorset are under 5km. E scooters are well suited to this distance range and can provide an effective alternative where walking is impractical, cycling is unattractive, or bus services are infrequent. Supporting mode shift for short trips can reduce congestion in town centres, ease parking pressure and lower tailpipe emissions, directly contributing to Dorset Council's climate commitments.

6.3 Improving Access, Opportunity and Transport Choice

6.4 Evidence from national trials shows that rental e scooters are frequently used for first and last mile journeys to bus and rail hubs, commuting to employment not well served by public transport, and accessing education and local services. They can widen travel choice for people without access to a private car, including young workers, apprentices, students and people in lower paid or shift based employment.

6.5 Supporting Town Centres, Tourism and Local Economies

6.6 In Weymouth, Portland, Dorchester and Chickerell, tourism and seasonal activity place pressure on the transport network. Regulated e scooters can support local trips without adding to traffic volumes, reduce pressure on short stay parking, and facilitate movement between transport hubs, attractions and town centres, complementing walking and cycling.

6.7 Managing Existing E Scooter Use Through Regulation

6.8 Although private e scooters are illegal on public roads and spaces, they are already present in Dorset communities. A regulated rental scheme provides a legal, insured and speed limited alternative, with geofencing, parking controls and clear operator accountability. National evidence indicates that the vast majority of serious incidents have involved private, unregulated e scooters rather than rental schemes operating under DfT controls, reinforcing the safety case for managed provision.

7. Evidence from Comparable Schemes

7.1 As of 2025–2026, there are 17–18 Department for Transport (DfT)–sanctioned rental e-scooter trial schemes currently operating in England. All trials are operating under the national DfT framework and are currently

authorised to continue until May 2028, subject to compliance with strict safety, legal and monitoring requirements.

7.2 The neighbouring Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole (BCP) e-scooter scheme, in operation since 2023, provides a highly relevant comparator. The scheme has supported hundreds of thousands of trips, with user surveys indicating substantial replacement of short car journeys and measurable carbon savings. Its performance places it among the strongest performing DfT trial areas nationally, demonstrating that risks associated with rental e-scooters are manageable where strong controls, geofencing, maintenance and governance are in place.

8. Proposed Delivery Approach

8.1 Corfe Mullen and Upton

8.2 Corfe Mullen and Upton are currently served by a Beryl operated e-bike scheme forming part of the wider BCP micromobility network. Due to its limited scale, the area is not commercially viable as a standalone e-scooter scheme. It is therefore proposed that e-scooters are introduced as an extension of the existing BCP scheme, delivered by Beryl Bikes, enabling seamless cross boundary travel and operational efficiency.

8.3 Weymouth, Dorchester, Portland and Chickerell

8.4 In Weymouth, Dorchester, Portland and Chickerell, an existing bikeshare scheme already operates under concession. It is proposed that the Council tenders for an e-scooter operator, with procurement requirements placing strong emphasis on safety controls, parking management, data sharing, community engagement and responsiveness to local concerns.

9. Safety, Policing and Stakeholder Views

9.1 Dorset Police

9.2 Dorset Police support progression of a regulated rental e-scooter scheme in principle, subject to strong and enforceable controls. Key requirements include reduced speeds and no ride zones in busy pedestrian areas, robust parking arrangements, clear operator responsibility for managing misuse, licence verification and structured data sharing and governance arrangements.

9.3 National evaluation evidence indicates that safety outcomes for regulated rental schemes differ significantly from private e scooter use, with the majority of serious incidents nationally involving private, unregulated vehicles. This supports the position that a managed rental approach can reduce overall risk compared to existing unmanaged use.

9.4 Police and Crime Commissioner

9.5 The Police and Crime Commissioner has raised concerns regarding potential impacts on policing resources, antisocial behaviour, enforcement clarity and the indirect encouragement of private e-scooter ownership. These concerns are acknowledged and addressed through proposed scheme conditions, including clear accountability for operators, strong governance, ongoing engagement with Dorset Police, and the ability to amend or withdraw the scheme if impacts prove unacceptable.

9.6 Special Interest Groups including Disability Groups

9.7 An Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) has been completed for the e-scooter proposal (appendix 5).

9.8 The EqIA identifies that the scheme has the potential to give rise to both positive and adverse impacts on persons with protected characteristic, in particular disabled people, including those who are blind, partially sighted or have mobility impairments.

9.9 Engagement with Dorset disability organisations, including Dorset Blind Association members, Royal National Institute for the Blind, (RNIB) Guide Dogs and local Equality, Diversity and Inclusion group representatives, highlights significant concerns regarding the potential impacts of rental e scooter schemes on the safety of blind, partially sighted and mobility impaired highway users. Key issues raised include the safety risks posed by fast moving and largely silent vehicles, inconsistent rider behaviour, and obstruction of footways caused by poorly parked e scooters and e bikes, which can restrict independent movement and increase anxiety, risk of collision and avoidance of journeys altogether.

9.10 National disability organisations, including RNIB and Guide Dogs, have consistently raised similar concerns in areas where e scooter trials are operating, calling for strong mitigations such as enforced bans on pavement riding, clearly defined and enforced parking locations, audible alerts, lower speed limits in pedestrian heavy areas, accessible reporting mechanisms, and meaningful early engagement with disabled people. While some individuals locally reported no negative experiences and noted that e bikes are more detectable than e scooters, the overall feedback emphasises that any introduction of e scooters in Dorset would need to be accompanied by robust design, enforcement and governance arrangements to ensure schemes do not disproportionately impact disabled residents or undermine accessibility and inclusivity.

9.11 National evidence from Department for Transport approved e scooter trials indicates that, for some people with limited mobility, rental e scooters can provide a practical and inclusive travel option where walking longer distances, cycling, or using conventional public transport may be difficult. Evaluations show that e scooters are commonly used by individuals who do not feel able to cycle due to balance, stamina or joint issues, but who can stand for short periods and benefit from throttle assisted, low effort travel.

9.12 Users report that e scooters can enable first and last mile journeys to bus stops, workplaces and local services, reducing reliance on lifts or taxis and increasing independence. Local authority evaluations, including in the West of England and London trials, have found that some users with limited mobility conditions value e scooters for their step free access, ease of hire, and ability to make short, time efficient journeys that would otherwise be a barrier, particularly in hilly or car dependent areas.

While e scooters are not suitable for all disabled people and do not replace the need for accessible public transport or adapted cycles, the evidence suggests that, when well regulated, they can form part of a broader, inclusive transport offer that expands choice and independence for certain groups who are currently underserved by existing modes.

10. Alternative options considered

Option	Description	Reason discounted
1. Do nothing	No participation in DfT trial	Leaves illegal use unmanaged; foregoes benefits
2. Dorset-wide scheme	Countywide rollout	Unsuitable for rural areas; higher safety risk
3. Council-operated scheme	Council owns and runs service	High cost and significant operational risk
4. Council-funded scheme	Public subsidy model	Not affordable; unnecessary
5. Delay participation	Await legislation	Users would miss out on the positive benefits of e-scooters. Missed opportunity to shape outcomes. No guarantee of how the legislation evolves.

11. Legal considerations

11.1 The scheme will operate within a defined legal framework comprising DfT trial regulations, Highway legislation and contractual arrangements. Key points include:

- Rental scooters are lawful only within DfT trial parameters.

- Use is restricted to roads and cycle lanes.
- In some cases, Traffic Regulation Orders must be updated to permit use in cycle lanes.

11.2 Provision of Facilities

11.3 The legal basis for parking and infrastructure will depend on the delivery model:

- Section 115B of the Highways Act 1980 will be engaged where infrastructure is provided directly by the Council.
- Section 115E of the Highways Act 1980 will be engaged where infrastructure forms part of a concession agreement.

11.4 Both routes may require frontager consultation.

11.5 Contractual Arrangements

11.6 The Council will require a contract or a variation to an existing contract for the delivery of the services with a service provider. Legal advice will be taken on the most suitable contractual arrangement to deliver the trial.

11.7 The Council intends to go out to tender for the Weymouth, Portland, Chickerell and Dorchester trial to ensure best value is achieved for the authority. The commercial concession contract position is generally that the Council would not make a payment to the provider directly but would allow the provider to generate income by charging the users. A concession contract must be procured in accordance with the Council's Contract Procedure Rules. The contract value shall be calculated on the anticipated income to the provider.

11.8 Through the contract with the provider, the Council shall determine appropriate sites for parking. In some situations these can be permitted within the highway providing the requirements of Section 115E of the Highways Act 1980 are complied with.

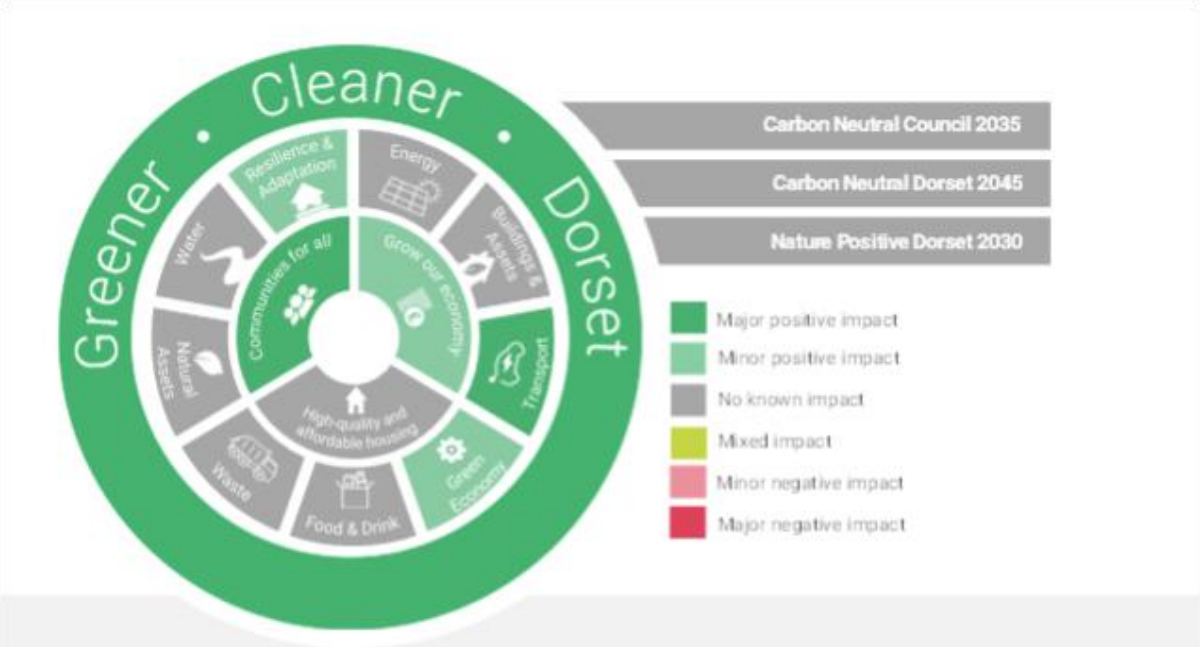
11.9 Where S115E does not apply, the Council may consider contractual licenses on land that is not highway. Parking bays not on the highway or Council land may require the supplier to enter into a separate arrangement with the land owner.

12. Financial implications

12.1 Both schemes would operate on a concession basis and be fully funded by operators. Dorset Council would incur officer time costs associated with procurement, governance, monitoring and the implementation of legal

requirements including any traffic regulation orders which incur a direct cost. Any revenue share is expected to remain modest and is not a determining factor in the recommendation.

13. Natural environment, climate & ecology implications



Quantitative Impact on CEE targets (if known)		
	Unit	Number of units (+/-)
2030 - Natural asset extent & condition	Ha	Unknown
2035 - Operational Emissions	CO_2 (tonnes)	Unknown
2045 - County Emissions	CO_2 (tonnes)	Unknown

13.1 Regulated e-scooters can support reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and improvements in air quality by replacing short car trips. Environmental benefits will be maximised through careful management of fleet operations, vehicle lifespans and redistribution activity.

14. Well-being and health implications

14.1 Positive impacts include improved access, reduced travel costs and increased independence for some users. Risks relating to safety and pedestrian confidence are recognised and will be mitigated through speed limits, geofencing, parking controls, enforcement and ongoing monitoring.

15. Implications

15.1 No additional implications have been identified.

16. Risk Implications

16.1 The introduction of regulated e-scooter rental schemes presents a medium current risk, primarily associated with safety, compliance, public perception and operational oversight. With proposed mitigations and governance arrangements in place, the residual risk is considered low and manageable.

16.2 HAVING CONSIDERED: the risks associated with this decision; the level of risk has been identified as:

Current Risk: Medium

Residual Risk: Low

17. Equalities

17.1 A full Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken in line with the Public Sector Equality Duty and has informed the development of the proposed e-scooter scheme. The assessment identifies that the scheme is likely to have both positive and negative impacts across protected groups. While it has potential to improve access to affordable, flexible transport—particularly for younger people and those without access to a private car—it also raises significant concerns for disabled people, especially in relation to pavement obstruction, collision risk and reduced confidence in using public spaces.

17.2 The Council recognises that these risks could result in a disproportionate adverse impact on disabled users if not effectively managed. A package of mitigation measures is proposed, including designated parking, geofencing, speed controls, user education and operator-led enforcement, alongside ongoing engagement with disability groups. However, there are limitations to the Council's direct enforcement powers, with reliance on Dorset Police and user compliance representing a key residual risk.

17.3 The Public Sector Equality Duty will therefore continue to be applied throughout the trial, with ongoing monitoring of impacts, complaints and feedback. The scheme may be capable of meeting the Council's equality duties if mitigation measures are effectively implemented and maintained, but Members are asked to note that a residual risk remains, particularly relating to enforcement and unlawful use, and to consider whether this is acceptable in determining whether to proceed.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Maps of proposed E-scooter trial areas

Appendix 2: e-Scooter Briefing Report to Dorset Police

Appendix 3: Dorset Police response to the e-scooter proposal

Appendix 4: Police and Crime Commissioner Response

Appendix 5: e-Scooter Proposal Draft EqIA

Appendix 6: table of climate wheel outcomes

Appendix 7: Dorset e-scooter risk assessment

Appendix 8: E-scooter operating principles

Background papers

19.1 National Evaluation of E-Scooter Trials – Findings Report (DfT, 2022)
19.2 Link: DfT Findings Report
Summary: Provides evidence from UK-wide trials on safety, modal shift, and public perception. Highlights benefits such as reduced car use and improved transport equity, while identifying risks like collision rates and pavement riding—informing mitigation strategies for Dorset.

19.3 National Evaluation of E-Scooter Trials – Technical Report (DfT, 2022)
19.4 Link: DfT Technical Report
Summary: Offers detailed data analysis on usage patterns, environmental impact, and safety outcomes. Useful for benchmarking Dorset's scheme against national performance indicators.

19.5 Beryl E-Scooter Share – Bournemouth, Christchurch & Poole (BCP) Council
19.6 Link: BCP E-Scooter Scheme
Summary: Demonstrates strong operational performance, high usage, and significant CO_2 savings in a neighbouring area, supporting the case for Dorset's scheme viability.

20. Report sign-off

20.1 This report has been through the internal report clearance process and has been signed off by the Director for Legal and Democratic (Monitoring Officer), the Executive Director for Corporate Development (Section 151 Officer) and the appropriate Portfolio Holder(s)

21. **Appendix 6**

ACCESSIBLE TABLE SHOWING IMPACTS

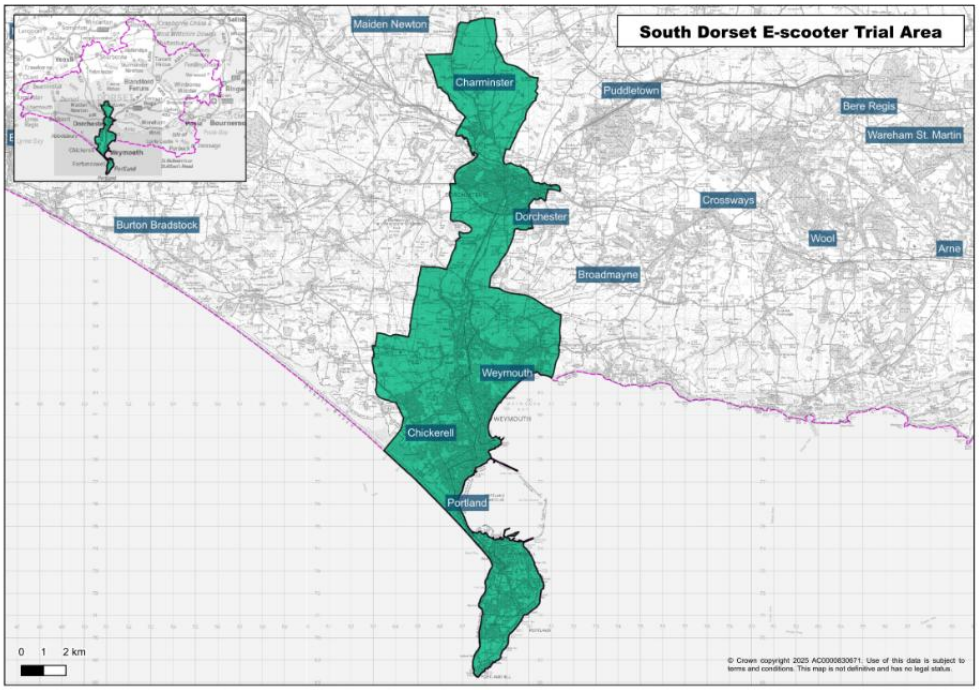
Natural Environment, Climate & Ecology Strategy Commitments	**Impact**
Energy	No known impact
Buildings & Assets	No known impact
Transport	Major positive impact
Green Economy	Minor positive impact
Food & Drink	No known impact
Waste	No known impact
Natural Assets & Ecology	No known impact
Water	No known impact
Resilience and Adaptation	Minor positive impact

Corporate Plan Aims	**Impact**
Grow our economy	Minor positive impact
High-quality and affordable housing	Neutral impact
Communities for all	Major positive impact

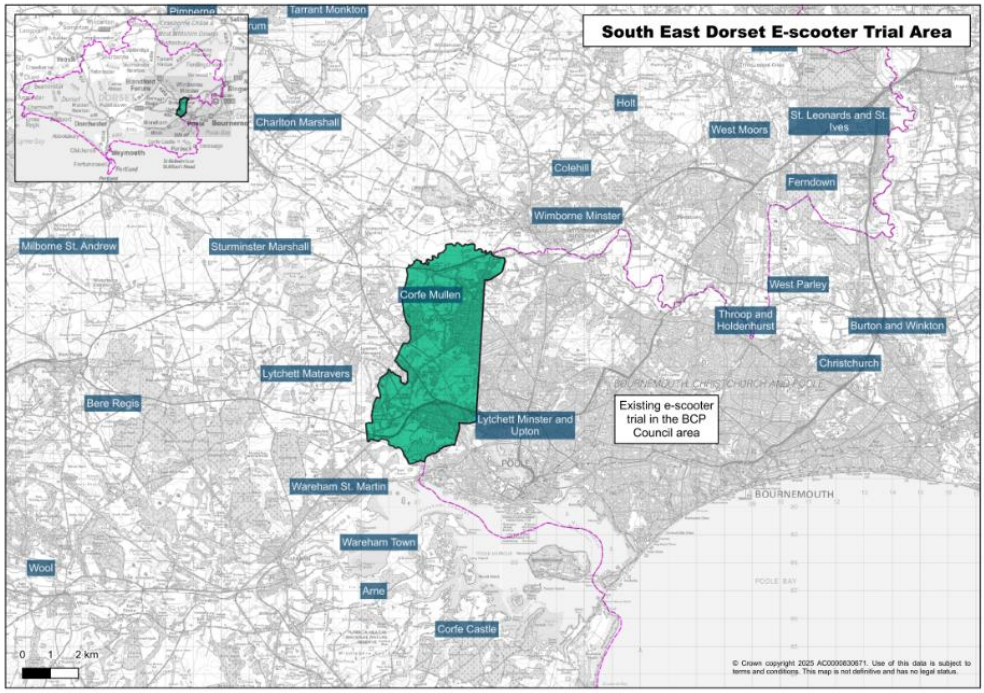
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Appendix 1

Proposed extent of e-scooter use. The maps designate the proposed areas where rented e-scooters may be legally used (subject to DfT approval). They do not necessarily reflect where parking bays will be located.



Weymouth, Dorchester, Portland and Chickerell extent of proposed e-scooter usage area.



Corfe Mullen and Upton extent of proposed e-scooter usage area.

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DfT Trial of e-Scooters in Dorset

Prepared by: Christopher Whitehouse

5th March 20226

Executive Summary

Dorset Council is considering the introduction of DfT-approved rental e-scooter trials in two areas—Corfe Mullen & Upton and Weymouth, Dorchester, Portland & Chickerell—to build on existing shared-mobility schemes and improve sustainable transport options. The trial requires evidence of engagement with Dorset Police and disability groups, along with mitigation plans for issues raised.

National and local rental e-scooter trials have demonstrated high demand, strong modal shift from cars, and positive environmental outcomes, including major CO_2 savings and high trip volumes in neighbouring BCP's scheme. However, trials also show increased collision risks and behavioural issues that must be carefully managed.

For Dorset Police, the introduction of rental e-scooters presents several operational challenges, including antisocial behaviour, crime opportunities, road safety risks, and increased enforcement demands, especially around misuse, under-age riding, and the illegal use of private e-scooters. The trial will also require robust data-sharing, clear enforcement protocols, and close partnership working with Dorset Council and the chosen operator to ensure community safety and effective response mechanisms.

Overall, the scheme offers transport and environmental benefits but will require coordinated planning and policing to minimise risk and ensure safe adoption across Dorset

1. Background

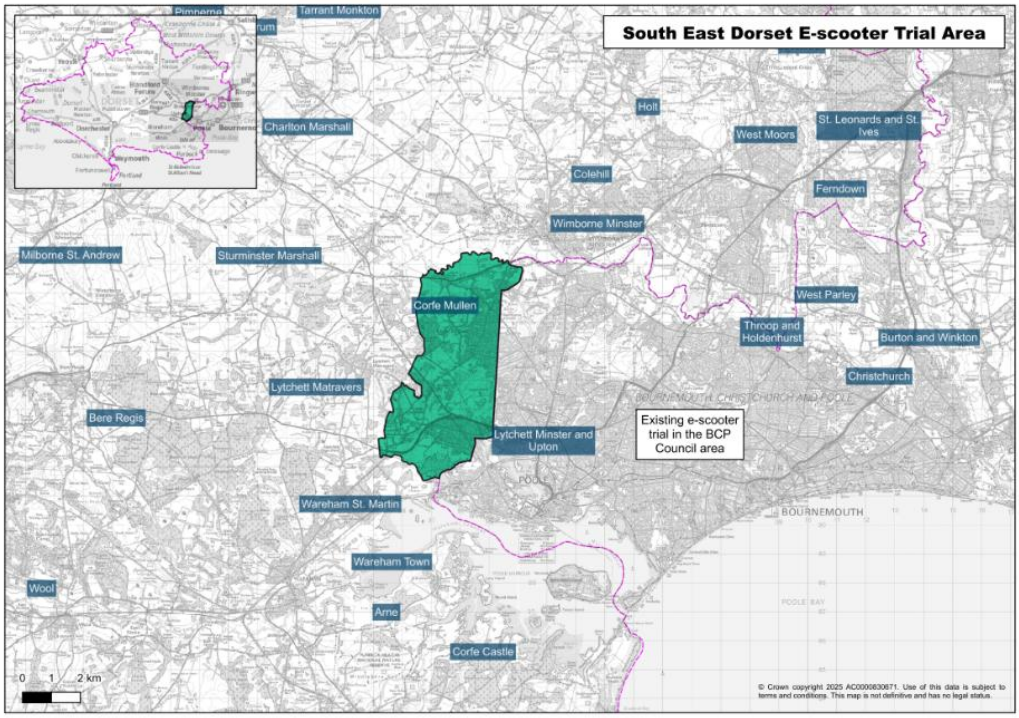
1.1 Dorset Council has been authorised by the Department for Transport (DfT) to introduce a rental e-scooter trial in two defined areas of the Dorset Council region. Permission is contingent on the Council demonstrating active engagement with Dorset Police and disability groups, providing a summary of concerns raised, outlining mitigation measures, and obtaining a confirmation of no objection or conditional support from the police. This report has been prepared to support Dorset Police in forming an informed response for submission to Dorset Council and subsequently the DfT. The proposed trial areas include:

- **Evidence of engagement with the police and disability groups, in the form of e-mail exchanges, meeting minutes, or equivalent.**
- **A summary of any concerns or issues raised by the police and disability groups, and how you have addressed each one.**
- **An email or letter from the police confirming either that they are satisfied with the agreed measures or that they have no objections to the proposed roll-out.**

1.2 This paper seeks to provide an outline of the proposal so that Dorset Police can provide an informed response to Dorset Council's Transport Planning Team that can be shared with the DfT and with Dorset Council members. Any response from the Police will form part of the evidence presented to Dorset Council Cabinet to enable them to make an informed decision about whether or not to allow the e-scooter trial to go-ahead.

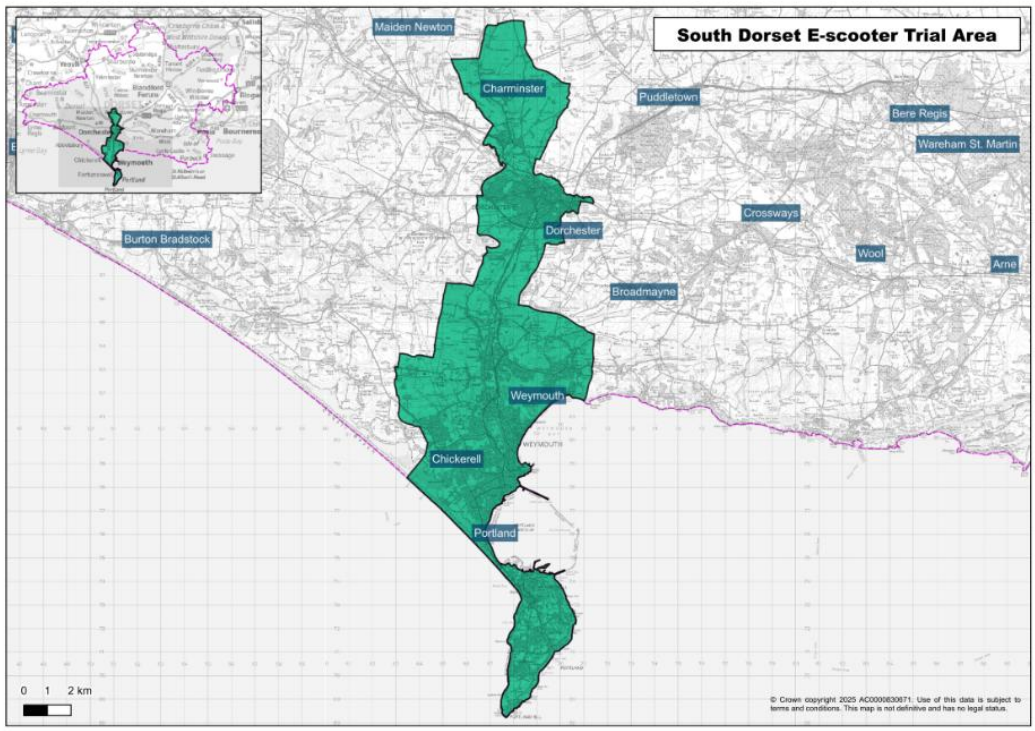
1.3 The two geographic areas for consideration are:

Corfe Mullen and Upton – an e-bike rental service run by Beryl bikes has been operating in the area since June 2023. The scheme is part of a wider Beryl run service operating in the BCP Council area. The BCP scheme has been licensed by the DfT for e-scooters since 2023 and they have been successfully operating since then. This scheme if approved will be operated by Beryl.



Above: Upton and Corfe Mullen Scheme area which is coterminous with the existing BCP scheme operated by Beryl.

Weymouth, Dorchester, Portland and Chickerell – a bike rental service run by Beryl under a concession contract has been operating in the area since July 2024.



Above: *Portland, Weymouth, Dorchester and Chickerell – proposed scheme area. Beryl already operate a bikeshare scheme in the area.*

If the Corfe Mullen/Upton scheme goes ahead Beryl will be the appointed operator. Dorset Council will go out to tender to find an operator for the Weymouth, Dorchester, Portland and Chickerell scheme. Even though Beryl currently operates an ebike scheme in the locality and have expressed an interest in adding e-scooters to their portfolio, it is not a given that they will be the future operator.

2. The Law and Use of Private E-Scooters

2.1 Public use of private e-scooters is illegal. Riding a privately owned e-scooter on roads, cycle lanes, pavements, parks, or public spaces is against the law. Penalties include a fine, penalty points, and possible seizure of the scooter. They may be used only on private land with the landowner's permission.

2.2 E-scooters are illegal because under the Road Traffic Act 1988, e-scooters are categorized as "motor vehicles," which legally require MOT, licensing, insurance, registration, and tax—requirements that private e-scooters cannot currently meet. Privately owned e-scooters used publicly may be seized under Section 165 of the Road Traffic Act 1988. Users risk fines, penalty points, and prosecution for driving without insurance or a licence.

3. Rental E-Scooter Trials

3.1 E-scooters are legal within trial zones: Since July 2020, rental e-scooters are allowed in designated trial areas across England and Wales, and these trials have been extended until May 2028. E-scooters in the trial areas are permitted on public roads and cycle lanes in trial zones—but not on motorways or pavements. An e-scooter rental scheme has been in operation in the BCP Council area since 2022.

3.2 E-scooters must meet DfT-approved standards which limits the maximum speed to 15.5 mph, motor power no greater than 500 W, mass to be no greater than 55 kg, and two wheels aligned front-to-back. Telematics restrict e-scooter use to the designated usage area which can include areas within the usage zone such as Weymouth sea front.

3.3 Riders must have at least a provisional UK driving licence (categories Q, AM, A, B), may be aged 16+ or 18+ depending on provider, and must have third-party insurance arranged by the operator.

4. Future Outlook for e-scooters

4.1 The government is assessing trial data (second evaluation due 2026) to inform possible permanent legislation. Upcoming legal reforms may define categories, speed limits, equipment rules, insurance, and the pathway to legalising private e-scooters—potentially in force by 2027–2028

5. Why Consider the Introduction of an E-scooter Rental Service for Dorset?

5.1 With e-scooter trials all across the UK and globally, Dorset has the benefit of learning from the experience of those trials. In the UK:

- **14.5 million rental trips** were completed by December 2021 across 32 trial areas, demonstrating strong user adoption. [gov.uk], [assets.pub...ice.gov.uk]
- **Mode shift from cars**: As trials matured, there has been a progressive shift from private vehicles to e-scooters, particularly for commuting and purposeful trips. [gov.uk], [assets.pub...ice.gov.uk]
- **Increased access and equity**: Regular e-scooter usage was higher among ethnic minorities and low-income individuals, enhancing transport inclusion. [gov.uk], [assets.pub...ice.gov.uk]
- **Positive public sentiment**: Most residents in trial locations viewed the introduction of e-scooters favourably. [gov.uk], [assets.pub...ice.gov.uk]
- **More collisions vs bikes**: Collision frequency was higher than for pedal cycles, especially among inexperienced riders; however, injury types were similar to those seen in cyclists. [gov.uk], [assets.pub...ice.gov.uk]
- **Technical and behavioural issues**: Concerns were raised about e-scooter visibility, audibility, acceleration, pavement riding by riders, and pedestrian conflict. [roadsafety...tre.org.uk], [pacts.org.uk]

5.2 Collaborative Mobility UK (CoMoUK) is the national charity dedicated to the social, economic and environmental benefits of shared transport. A CoMoUK April 2023 Report identified the following:

- **Trip demographics and purpose**: E-scooters were frequently used for commuting and essential travel. [assets-glo...-files.com]

- **Enhanced equity**: Programmes successfully engaged women and lower-income groups by adapting service design and communications. [assets-glo...-files.com]
- **Anti-social concerns and parking**: Highlighted the need for clear parking guidance and enforcement to prevent pavement clutter.

5.3 Closer to Dorset, the BCP Council (Bournemouth, Christchurch & Poole) e-scooter scheme has reported:

- **High usage**: Over **936,000 journeys**, spanning more than **3.15 million km**, in just three years. [beryl.cc]
- **CO_2 savings**: Approx. **122 tonnes of carbon** were avoided via modal shift. [beryl.cc]
- **Car journey replacement**: Rider surveys show over **318,000 trips** substituting private vehicle journeys. [beryl.cc]
- **Strong trial performance**: BCP ranked second across all 32 UK trial areas, averaging four trips per scooter per day. [beryl.cc]

6. E-Scooter Trial: Considerations for Dorset Police

6.1 Inevitably a rental e-scooter trial will bring with it a range of challenges for Dorset Police. This section highlights the potential issues. If the scheme goes ahead Dorset Council will ensure that the Operator provides a community impact assessment or mitigation plan in conjunction with the relevant stakeholders to help reduce concerns and address the issues. With an e-scooter scheme already operating in parts of the Dorset Police area the constabulary is well placed to form a view on which issues need to be addressed and prioritised.

6.2 **Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB)**

- Irresponsible riding: Fast riding in pedestrian zones, parks, and coastal areas; weaving between pedestrians; riding in prohibited areas.
- Groups engaging in nuisance behaviour: Youths using scooters to intimidate, gather, or carry out ASB in town centres.
- Vandalism and tampering: Damage to scooters, removing trackers, dumping or throwing scooters into rivers/harbours.
- Noise or disturbance: Late-night use causing complaints from residents in hotspots such as Weymouth seafront or Dorchester town centre.

6.3 Crime & Criminal Opportunity

- Use of scooters for quick getaways: Good mobility and speed make scooters appealing for minor thefts, shoplifting, or low-level drug dealing.
- Theft of scooters: Despite being GPS-locked, rental scooters can be targeted for parts, batteries, or resale attempts.
- Use in acquisitive crime: Riders may snatch bags or target phones due to manoeuvrability and ease of escape.
- Identity issues: Riders may share accounts or use false details if verification controls are weak.

6.4 Road Safety

- Collisions involving riders: Young and inexperienced riders unfamiliar with road rules; accidents at junctions, roundabouts, and rural-urban interface roads.
- Impact on other road users: E-scooters mixing with vehicles at 30–40 mph roads poses risk; near misses with cyclists.
- Serious injury potential: Head injuries are common; helmet use remains voluntary in UK trials.
- Inappropriate infrastructure: Lack of segregated cycle lanes in many Dorset towns increases risk; narrow or uneven pavements and heritage areas present hazards.

6.5 General Policing & Resource Requirements

6.6 Enforcement demand:

- Stopping and educating riders, particularly early in the trial.
- Issuing warnings, fines, or seizing scooters when required (e.g., misuse, intoxication, road traffic offences).
- Operational pressures:
- More calls for service from residents complaining of misuse.
- Requirement for officers to understand enforcement powers specific to rental vs private e-scooters.
- Training: Officers may need updated guidance on legislation, trial rules, and evidence handling (e.g., collisions involving rental vehicles).

6.7 Costs (Direct and Indirect)

- Direct policing workload: Time spent on enforcement, investigations, accident responses, and community engagement.
- Indirect costs: Administration, additional signage recommended to reduce misuse, and officer training time.
- Opportunity cost: Time redirected from other policing priorities (rural crime, domestic abuse, neighbourhood concerns).

6.8 Illegal Use of Private E-Scooters

- Confusion among public: Legal rental scooters may increase private scooter use, despite private ones remaining illegal on public roads.
- Increased enforcement complexity: Officers must differentiate rental scooters (legal) from private ones (illegal).
- Potential surge in private scooter prevalence: Residents may incorrectly assume all e-scooter riding is now permitted.

6.9 Data & Evidence Management

- Access to operator data: Dorset Police must ensure clear protocols for:
- Rider identification
- Journey logs
- GPS tracking
- Incident video (if fitted)
- Data-sharing agreements: With operators for real-time or near-real-time access during incidents

6.10 Emergency Services Interaction

- Obstruction of emergency response: Poorly parked scooters blocking pavements, fire exits, ambulance access points.
- Collision response: Increased workload for ambulance crews and police attendance at serious accidents, especially involving young riders.

6.11 Public Perception & Community Relations

- Mixed local reaction: Some view scooters positively (transport solution), others associate them with disorder.
- Community tension: If ASB rises, communities may feel policing is inadequate without visible enforcement

6.12 Environmental & Geographic Challenges in Dorset

- Seaside/resort misuse: Scooters used on promenades or beaches.
- Tourist hotspots: High seasonal visitor numbers increase collisions and ASB risk.
- Rural road risks: Poor lighting, higher vehicle speeds, and fewer cycle lanes increase danger for riders.

6.13 Partnership & Governance

- Coordination with Dorset Council & DfT: Participation in data monitoring, trial evaluation, and mid-trial adjustments.
- Operator responsibilities: Ensuring they implement parking controls, speed-limited zones, geofencing, and rapid recovery of abandoned scooters.

6.14 Safeguarding & Youth-Related Concerns

- Underage use: Children borrowing adult accounts or finding ways to unlock scooters.
- Riders under the influence: Alcohol-related misuse, especially around nightlife areas.

6.15 Legal & Liability Considerations

- Collision investigations: Clear processes for investigating serious incidents involving rental scooters.
- Insurance clarity: Ensuring operators' insurance fully covers third-party risks and injury claims

7. Timeline

Following is a draft timeline – subject to change and dependent on several decisions.

Milestone	Action	Who
10 April 2026	Evidence/support gathering complete	Input from Dorset Police, disability and other groups
19 May 2026	Decision on whether to allow e-Scooters	Dorset Council Cabinet
20 May 2026	Submission of evidence/decision outcome to DfT	Dorset Council Transport Planning Team
Subject to Dorset Cabinet Decision		
May/June 2026	Confirmation of go-ahead with any conditions	DfT
June 2026	Upton/Corfe Mullen scheme roll-out	Beryl
June-September 2026	Tender process for the Weymouth, Portland, Chickerell, Dorchester area scheme	Dorset Council Transport Planning Team
October 2026	Tender award and contract	Dorset Council Transport Planning Team
Oct-Dec 2026	Mobilisation	Appointed operator

8. Conclusion

8.1 The introduction of a rental e-scooter scheme within the Dorset Council area presents both opportunities and challenges for local policing. While the scheme offers clear potential benefits in terms of sustainable travel, congestion reduction and improved mobility, it will also require Dorset Police to prepare for increased demand relating to enforcement, public engagement, road safety and the management of anti-social behaviour. By ensuring that appropriate controls, data-sharing mechanisms, mitigation measures and joint-working arrangements are in place from the outset, Dorset Police, Dorset Council and the appointed operator can work collaboratively to deliver a scheme that maximises public benefit while minimising risk and harm. This briefing aims to support that process and enable Dorset Police to provide an informed, evidence-based response to the proposed e-scooter introduction as part of the DfT trial programme.

Useful Links and Information

1. National Evaluation of E-Scooter Trials – Findings Report (DfT, 2022)

Link: DfT Findings Report
Summary: Provides evidence from UK-wide trials on safety, modal shift, and public perception. Highlights benefits such as reduced car use and improved transport equity, while identifying risks like collision rates and pavement riding—informing mitigation strategies for Dorset.

2. National Evaluation of E-Scooter Trials – Technical Report (DfT, 2022)

Link: DfT Technical Report
Summary: Offers detailed data analysis on usage patterns, environmental impact, and safety outcomes. Useful for benchmarking Dorset's scheme against national performance indicators.

3. Beryl E-Scooter Share – Bournemouth, Christchurch & Poole (BCP) Council

Link: BCP E-Scooter Scheme
Summary: Demonstrates strong operational performance, high usage, and significant CO_2 savings in a neighbouring area, supporting the case for Dorset's scheme viability.

Appendix 3 – Formal response from Dorset Police regarding the e-scooter scheme proposal

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the proposal to introduce a hire e-scooter scheme in Dorset. I sit on the working group for BCP and was part of Beryl e-scooters into Christchurch,

Research shows that hire e-scooters could provide useful transport benefits. They offer an alternative for short journeys without relying on cars, which may help reduce congestion and emissions. They can also improve access to public transport and support travel in areas where bus services are limited. In addition, a regulated hire scheme may reduce illegal private e-scooter use by providing a safer and lawful alternative. However, these benefits must be balanced against important safety and community concerns.

Key Safety Concerns

Collisions are a significant issue. E-scooters operate in spaces shared with both vehicles and pedestrians, increasing the risk of incidents. A further concern is under reporting: many collisions, particularly those involving minor injuries, are not reported to police, meaning the true scale of harm may not be fully understood. Antisocial behaviour is another concern. Experience in other areas shows problems such as pavement riding, poor parking that blocks footways, and irresponsible riding in pedestrian areas and around the nighttime economy. These behaviours disproportionately affect vulnerable people, particularly Dorset's large elderly population. Many town centres also have narrow pavements and historic layouts, increasing the likelihood of conflict between pedestrians and e-scooters. The operator in BCP deals with anti-social riding by way of a ban or a warning but the reporting of offences is low, and work needs to be done to increase reporting to operator.

Safety Controls and Risk Reduction

If the scheme proceeds, strong safety measures should be introduced. Geo-fencing should ensure scooters automatically slow in higher risk areas, reduced speeds in busy pedestrian zones, and 'no ride' zones where necessary.

High risk locations should be clearly identified in partnership with neighbourhood policing teams and local stakeholders. Areas with higher collision rates, vulnerable road users, or persistent antisocial behaviour should have targeted speed restrictions and controls to reduce the risk of serious injury. It should also be agreed from the offset that speed reduction will be put in place in the immediate footprint of large scale event which attract a high amount of foot traffic. Time of day restrictions should also be

considered, particularly to reduce the risk of intoxicated riding late at night. I would suggest e-scooters are not available between the hours of 2200 – 0500 hours. E-scooters should only be permitted on roads with a speed limit of 30mph or less.

Ride scheme operators tend to use bays already in place for the hire bikes, sometimes these are not appropriate for e-scooters as they are within a prohibited zone, this should be considered when deciding on rental bays. The hierarchy of road users puts pedestrians at the top and this should be considered when implementing the scheme.

Roles and Responsibilities

Clear accountability is essential. The hire operator should take the lead in handling minor offences such as underage riding, pavement riding, and other minor careless or inconsiderate riding. Council and police websites should direct such reports to the operator in the first instance so problems can be resolved quickly without creating unnecessary demand on police resources. Police representatives should sit on the scheme panel and regularly review usage levels, collision data, complaints, and emerging safety concerns, with review periods agreed by the local authority.

Licensing and Eligibility Checks

Licensing processes require greater clarity. When users upload a driving licence, it must be clear what checks are undertaken, how authenticity is verified, and whether follow up checks occur after account creation. There have been cases where disqualified drivers have still accessed hire e-scooters. This risk should be addressed at the point of hire. Ongoing eligibility checks should also be considered so users who later become disqualified cannot continue riding.

Education and Communication

Public information will be critical if the scheme is introduced. Clear guidance should explain where e-scooters can legally be used, the rules and responsibilities for riders, and how collisions or safety concerns can be reported. Simplifying reporting processes may also help address current under reporting. Seasonal safety campaigns would further reduce risk. For example, winter campaigns encouraging riders to be visible and use appropriate clothing would be beneficial.

Hire e-scooters could deliver transport benefits and help reduce illegal private use. However, implementation should only proceed with strong safety controls, protection

for vulnerable and elderly residents. With the above safeguards in place, risks can be better managed while enabling potential benefits.

PC LEONARD 2772

Road Casualty Reduction Officer (Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole)

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DORSET POLICE & CRIME COMMISSIONER DAVID SIDWICK

20th April 2026

Dear Dorset Council,

I write in my capacity as Police and Crime Commissioner for Dorset to formally raise concerns regarding the proposed introduction of Department for Transport (DfT) approved rental e-scooter trials, to be operated by Beryl, across the areas of Corfe Mullen & Upton and Weymouth, Dorchester, Portland & Chickerell.

I recognise the Dorset Council's ambition to expand sustainable transport options and to build upon existing shared mobility schemes. Evidence from national and local trials, including the neighbouring BCP area, clearly demonstrates strong public uptake, notable modal shift away from private car use.

However, it is essential that these benefits are weighed against the practical realities and risks associated with implementation—particularly from a policing and public safety perspective.

From a policing standpoint, the proposed trials present several significant challenges. Dorset Police is likely to face increased demand linked to antisocial behaviour, road safety incidents, and new crime opportunities associated with misuse of the vehicles. Additional areas of concern is the unintentional promotion of illegal use of private e-scooter riding which complicates enforcement efforts further.

Of additional concern is the ongoing lack of clear identification measures on Beryl-operated e-bikes and e-scooters. The absence of easily visible and enforceable identification plates presents a tangible barrier to effective policing when vehicles are used unlawfully. This issue has been raised previously and remains unresolved by Beryl.

Furthermore, Beryl's complaints process continues to lack clarity and accessibility. A transparent, responsive, and well-publicised reporting mechanism is essential—not only for public confidence but also to support timely enforcement and issue resolution. At present, this remains insufficient.

While I acknowledge that the proposal includes a requirement for engagement with Dorset Police and disability groups, I must stress that it should result in clearly defined mitigation strategies, adequate resourcing, and enforceable safeguards that address the concerns raised by both policing and vulnerable road users.

In its current form, the proposal risks placing additional strain on already stretched police resources. Without firm commitments to address enforcement challenges, identification

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DORSET POLICE & CRIME COMMISSIONER DAVID SIDWICK

issues, and public reporting mechanisms, there is a significant risk that the burden of managing the scheme's negative consequences will fall disproportionately on Dorset Police.

In summary, while the scheme offers clear environmental and transport benefits, I am not satisfied that sufficient measures are presently in place to mitigate the associated risks. I therefore urge Dorset Council to reconsider progressing the trials until these concerns are fully addressed, with particular focus on:

- Ensure Beryl has a robust, transparent, and user-friendly complaints and reporting process and enforceable e-scooter identification measures
- Dorset Council works closely with Dorset Police define enforcement expectations
- Comprehensive mitigation plans addressing antisocial behaviour, misuse, and road safety risks

I remain committed to working collaboratively with Dorset Council and partners to support innovative transport solutions. However, this must not come at the expense of public safety or place unsustainable demands on policing.

Yours sincerely,



David Sidwick
Police and Crime Commissioner for Dorset

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Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA)

Proposal for the introduction of e-scooter rental services

1. Initial information

Dorset Council have been granted provisional permission by the Department for Transport (DfT) to take part in the national rental e-scooter trial. The two areas under consideration are:

Corfe Mullen and Upton – an e-bike rental service run by Beryl bikes has been operating in the area since June 2023. The scheme is part of a wider Beryl run service operating in the Bournemouth, Christchurch, and Poole (BCP) Council area. The BCP scheme has been licensed by the DfT for e-scooters since 2023 and they have been successfully operating since then.

Weymouth, Dorchester, Portland and Chickerell – a bike rental service run by Beryl under a concession contract has been operating in the area since July 2024.

2. This is a new project (with links to an existing e-bike hire scheme)

This is external (residents, communities, partners), and has great potential to support carbon reduction targets set by both Dorset Council and the Central Government Net Zero strategy. It applies to specific parts of the county.

3. Aims and objectives:

Aims

- **Enhance Sustainable and Low Carbon Transport Options**
    - Provide residents and visitors with additional sustainable travel choices that reduce reliance on private cars and support the authority's long-term climate and transport strategies.
- **Improve First- and Last Mile Connectivity**
    - Strengthen the local transport network by offering flexible, accessible micromobility options that support public transport usage and improve travel links between key destinations.
- **Reduce Road Congestion and Improve Air Quality**
    - Encourage modal shift from short car journeys to low emission alternatives, helping to reduce congestion, carbon emissions, and local air pollution.
- **Support Economic Activity and Access to Opportunities**

    - Enable easier access to employment, education, retail and leisure destinations through affordable, convenient transport options.
- **Deliver an Integrated, Well Managed Micromobility System**
    - Ensure e-scooters complement the existing e-bike scheme, creating a seamless, safe and efficient shared transport offer.

Objectives

- **Launch a Managed E-Scooter Hire Trial**
    - Introduce a fleet of rental e-scooters by May 2027, operating under a controlled trial framework with clear geofencing, speed limits, and safety rules.
- **Integrate E-Scooters with the Existing E-Bike System**
    - Implement unified infrastructure (parking bays), pricing structures, and app-based access so users can switch easily between e-bikes and e-scooters.
- **Improve Network Coverage and Accessibility**
    - Expand micromobility coverage to areas underserved by public transport, ensuring more micromobility parking bays are installed allowing easier access to the scheme for residents.
- **Achieve Modal Shift from Private Vehicles**
    - Reduction of short car journeys by providing e-scooters for journeys
- **Ensure Safe Operation and Responsible Use**
    - Ensure robust safety measures including designated parking zones, mandatory user verification, incident reporting mechanisms are in place.
- **Gather Data to Inform Future Policy Decisions**
    - Collect and analyse usage, safety, environmental and economic data throughout the trial period to evaluate long-term suitability and inform decisions on permanent adoption.
- **Promote Social Inclusion and Affordable Mobility**
    - Maintain affordable pricing structures, concession options, and targeted outreach to ensure e-scooters are accessible to residents with varying needs and income levels.
- **Support Local Economic Growth**
    - Encourage increased footfall in local centres by improving transport links, and create local operational jobs through scheme delivery, maintenance and customer support.
- **Align with the Authority's Climate and Transport Strategies**
    - Demonstrate measurable contributions toward emissions reduction targets, improved air quality, and sustainable travel goals set in local transport plans.

4. Please provide the background to this proposal

The Department for Transport have given conditional approval for Dorset Council to take part in the national trials of e-scooter rental services.

Dorset Council are considering implementing an e-scooter scheme to run alongside the current e-bike hire schemes already in place. At present, Dorset Council has two e-bike only schemes. One located in the east of the county that borders the Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council e-bike and e-scooter scheme run by Beryl, and a standalone scheme covering Dorchester, Weymouth and Portland which is also operated by Beryl.

BCP council, who border with the Dorset Council area, already participate in the e-scooter trial initiated by the government in January 2021. Reports from BCP have indicated that their scheme was assessed as one of the safest in the country, valued by users and delivers against many desirable outcomes including carbon reductions and increased access to affordable mobility.

- National evaluation of rental e-scooter use indicates that these legal schemes reduce the number of car journeys being undertaken (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-evaluation-of-e-scooter-trials-report)
- Shared e-scooter schemes increase both access to employment, and greater high street spending, which in turn indirectly supports and sustains local jobs (https://eu-central-1-shared-euc1-02.graphassets.com/AMcYXQcgeRNu5q0szWSm1z/Tu3ILtOSRZiZtusAKIlK
- Beryl report that their scheme in the BCP area has a higher level of mode shift: On average, 27% of e-scooter trips replace a car/van/taxi trip, which is 3% higher than e-bikes (24% mode shift). (Internal Beryl report data 2025)
- An inclusive mode of transport: On average, 12% of Beryl e-bike riders report having a disability, and for e-scooters, this figure increases to 13%. (Internal Beryl report data 2025)

A rental e-scooter scheme has the potential to deliver mixed but manageable health and well-being impacts. Positively, e-scooters can support everyday physical activity, widen access to affordable transport, and improve independence for people who may find walking longer distances, cycling, or using public transport difficult. By enabling short trips to be made without a car, the scheme may also contribute to reduced traffic congestion and improved air quality, with associated public health benefits.

However, there are recognised risks, particularly in relation to collisions and potential interaction with pedestrians, which could negatively affect perceived safety and confidence. These risks can be mitigated through strong scheme design, including speed limits, geofencing, appropriate parking arrangements, clear rider guidance, enforcement, and ongoing monitoring. Overall, when introduced as a regulated rental scheme with appropriate safeguards, e-scooters can offer a net positive contribution to health and well-being.

Improved Mobility & Equity: Both schemes enhance transportation options in areas with limited public transport (e.g., rural routes across Weymouth to Dorchester).

Evidence gathering and engagement

5. What sources of data, evidence or research has been used for this assessment? (e.g national statistics, employee data):

The Department for Transport's independent National Evaluation of E-Scooter Trials (2022) provides the primary national evidence base. This evaluation examined usage, safety, accessibility, and wider social impacts across trial areas in England. [gov.uk] https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-evaluation-of-e-scooter-trials-report

- The evaluation identified significant concerns from pedestrians, particularly relating to pavement riding, rider behaviour, parking and street clutter. [roadsafety...tre.org.uk] https://www.roadsafetyknowledgecentre.org.uk/national-evaluation-of-e-scooter-trials-findings-report/
- It also highlighted concerns about vehicle characteristics, including low audibility, rapid acceleration and visibility, which can create safety issues for vulnerable pedestrians. [roadsafety...tre.org.uk] https://www.roadsafetyknowledgecentre.org.uk/national-evaluation-of-e-scooter-trials-findings-report/
- The report specifically notes that these issues disproportionately affect blind and partially sighted people and those with mobility impairments. [roadsafety...tre.org.uk] https://www.roadsafetyknowledgecentre.org.uk/national-evaluation-of-e-scooter-trials-findings-report/

  This national evidence establishes that e-scooters introduce new risks in shared pedestrian environments, with particular relevance for disabled groups.

  a. Operational and performance data from the Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole (BCP) Council shared micromobility scheme, including usage levels, car trip replacement, CO_2 savings and safety records.
  b. National road safety and casualty analysis, including PACTS research on private versus rental e-scooter safety outcomes.
  c. Dorset Council's adopted policies, including the Local Transport Plan, Climate and Ecological Emergency Strategy, and Sustainable Transport Plan.
  d. Feedback from local and national disability organisations, including Dorset Blind Association members, RNIB and Guide Dogs.
  e. Professional input and formal responses from Dorset Police and the Dorset Police and Crime Commissioner.
  f. Equality impact assessments and learning from other UK local authority trials (e.g. Transport for London, York and Portsmouth).

6. What did this tell you?

The evidence demonstrates that regulated e-scooter rental schemes can deliver both positive and negative equality impacts, depending on how they are designed and managed:

- Positive impacts
    - Improved access to affordable, low-carbon transport for some groups, including people who find walking longer distances, cycling, or conventional public transport difficult.
    - Increased independence and first-/last-mile connectivity for certain users with limited mobility who are able to stand but cannot cycle.
    - Benefits for younger adults, people without access to a car, shift workers and those accessing employment, education or services in areas with limited bus provision.
    - Wider community benefits through reduced car use, lower emissions and improved access to town centres.
- Negative or adverse impacts
    - Evidence consistently highlights disproportionate impacts on blind, partially sighted and mobility-impaired pedestrians, particularly where scooters are ridden on pavements or poorly parked.
    - Anxiety, reduced confidence and avoidance of journeys may occur for some disabled residents if footways are obstructed or vehicle movements are unpredictable.
    - The requirement for a driving licence and minimum age means that under-17s are excluded, limiting access for this age group.
- Key mitigating insight
    - National evidence shows that risks are significantly lower in regulated rental schemes than with illegal private e-scooters, provided there are strong controls such as geofencing, speed limits, designated parking, enforcement, and clear accountability.
    - Equality impacts are not fixed outcomes; they are highly dependent on scheme governance, design, enforcement and ongoing engagement with affected groups.

7. Who have you engaged and consulted with as part of this assessment?

Engagement and consultation has included:

- Internal Dorset Council officers, including transport, highways, legal and equalities leads, contributing to the EqIA and scheme design.
- Dorset Police, who have provided a formal response and ongoing advice focused on safety, enforcement, vulnerable road users and governance.
- The Dorset Police and Crime Commissioner, who has raised concerns and set expectations around mitigation, enforcement clarity and resource impacts.

- Local disability organisations and representatives, including Dorset Blind Association members, RNIB, Guide Dogs and local Equality, Diversity and Inclusion group representatives which includes representatives from:
    - Kushti Bok
    - Homestart Blackmore Vale
    - Dorpip
    - Space Youth Project
    - DREC
    - SENDMe2Work
    - Weymouth Town Council (Community)
    - Encompass Care
    - The Harmony Centre
    - Weymouth Access Group

- Consideration of feedback and findings from national disability organisations and consultation undertaken in other UK trial areas.
- Review of user surveys and evaluation data collected through national and neighbouring local authority trials.

This engagement has directly informed the identification of risks, mitigation measures and conditions recommended for any scheme introduction.

8. Is further information needed to help inform decision making?

It is the view of Transport Planning Officers that sufficient information has been provided for Dorset Council Cabinet members to reach a decision. However, should further information come to light or be required as the result of a recommendation from the Place and Resources Overview Committee and/or Dorset Council Cabinet then this EqIA will be amended accordingly.

Is an EQIA required? **Yes**

Key to impacts

Positive Impact	• the proposal eliminates discrimination, advances equality of opportunity and/or fosters good relations with protected groups.
Negative Impact	• protected characteristic group(s) could be disadvantaged or discriminated against
Neutral Impact	• no change/ no assessed significant impact of protected characteristic groups
Unclear	• not enough data/evidence has been collected to make an informed decision.

Impacts on who or what?	Choose impact	How
Age	Positive and Negative	**Positive:** Evidence from national trials shows strong take-up among **young adults (18–35)**, supporting access to work, education and services, particularly for those without access to a car. **Negative: Children and young people under 16/17** are excluded due to age and licence requirements, limiting transport options for this group. **Older people:** Some older adults benefit where walking longer distances or cycling is difficult, but others may feel less confident around faster micromobility modes in pedestrian areas.
Disability	Positive and Negative	**Positive:** National EqIAs (DfT, TfL) show some people with **limited mobility, stamina or balance issues** who cannot cycle can benefit from e-scooters, particularly for short, step-free journeys. **Negative:** Strong evidence from RNIB, Guide Dogs and local disability groups highlights **adverse impacts on blind, partially sighted and mobility-impaired pedestrians**, including footway obstruction, anxiety and reduced independence.
Gender reassignment and Gender Identity	Neutral	There is **no evidence from published EqIAs or other sources** to indicate differential impacts specific to gender reassignment or gender identity. Use, access and safety issues mirror those experienced by the wider population. Insufficient evidence exists to indicate either positive or negative differential impacts.

Impacts on who or what?	Choose impact	How
Marriage or civil partnership	Neutral	No evidence suggests that marital or partnership status affects access to, or impacts from, an e-scooter rental scheme. Published EqIAs consistently record no differential effects.
Pregnancy and maternity	Neutral	E-scooters maybe considered by some to be generally unsuitable during pregnancy due to balance, comfort and safety considerations; most operators advise against use. Pregnant people may also experience increased anxiety around interactions with e-scooters as pedestrians. However, evidence is limited and largely cautionary rather than quantitative.
Race and Ethnicity	Neutral	Evidence from DfT and TfL trials shows higher usage among ethnically diverse populations in urban areas, particularly where public transport accessibility is limited or unaffordable. However, there is no evidence that this nationally observed behaviour translates to the areas of Dorset where the trial will take place. No evidence of disproportionate negative impacts by race or ethnicity has been identified, provided enforcement and communications are fair and accessible. Overall impact is neutral
Religion and belief	Neutral	There is no evidence that e-scooter use or availability interacts directly with religion or belief.

Impacts on who or what?	Choose impact	How
		Indirect issues (e.g. clothing or dress affecting use) are speculative and not evidenced in published EqIAs
Sex (consider men and women)	Neutral	National data shows **higher usage by men**, consistent with patterns seen for cycling and other micromobility modes. Women report **greater safety concerns**, particularly around traffic interaction and behaviour of other users. While women benefit from improved access, perceived safety may reduce uptake relative to men.
Sexual orientation	Neutral	There is **no available evidence** indicating differential impacts based on sexual orientation. Experiences reflect broader personal safety and public space issues rather than scheme-specific impacts.
People with caring responsibilities	Positive and negative	**Positive:** Carers undertaking short, time-pressured journeys may benefit from faster, low-cost trips where pushing a buggy or walking long distances is difficult. **Negative:** Carers with young children, pushchairs or dependants generally cannot use e-scooters directly and may experience reduced footway accessibility if parking is poorly managed.
Rural isolation	Positive and negative	**Positive:** In towns and edge-of-urban areas, e-scooters can improve connectivity for short trips where bus services are infrequent.

Impacts on who or what?	Choose impact	How
		Negative: Benefits are **limited in rural areas** due to distance, road speeds and infrastructure, meaning impacts are spatially uneven.
Socio-economic deprivation	Positive	Strong evidence from national trials indicates e-scooters are used by people **without access to a car**, lower-income households and shift workers. Pay-as-you-go pricing can offer a more affordable alternative to taxis or multiple bus fares for short journeys. Care must be taken to avoid digital or payment exclusion.
Single parents	Positive and negative	**Positive:** Single parents without car access may benefit for solo trips (e.g. commuting). **Negative:** E-scooters are **not suitable when travelling with children**, and poor parking can impede movement with pushchairs. Evidence is limited and impacts vary by circumstances.
Armed forces communities	Neutral	No evidence of adverse impacts. Potential benefits include improved access to employment sites, training and services, particularly for younger service leavers without a car. Impacts align with the general population.

Impact Summary:

- **Positive impacts** are most evident for: people on lower incomes, some disabled people, young adults, carers undertaking short trips, and some rural/edge-of-urban communities.
- **Negative impacts** are most clearly evidenced for: blind and partially sighted people, some mobility-impaired pedestrians, pregnant people, and groups excluded by age or licensing requirements.
- **Many characteristics show neutral or unclear impacts**, reflecting a lack of specific evidence rather than confirmed absence of impact.

The evidence consistently shows that outcomes depend on scheme design, enforcement and ongoing engagement, and that impacts should be reviewed and mitigated throughout operation rather than treated as static.

Action Plan

Summarise any actions required as a result of this EqIA.

Issue	Action to be taken	Person(s) responsible	Date to be completed by
Footway obstruction causing risk to blind, partially sighted and mobility-impaired pedestrians	Require mandatory use of designated parking bays only, enforced through geofencing that prevents trip completion outside approved locations. Introduce rapid-response removal times for obstructive scooters and contractual penalties for poor compliance. Impose fines for users for leaving e-scooters out of bay.	Transport Planning Team and Operator	At implementation/by May 2027
Pavement riding and unpredictable rider behaviour	Implement hard geofencing to enforce no-ride and low-speed zones in pedestrian-heavy areas, with automatic speed reduction and trip termination for repeated misuse. Limit e-scooter speed.	Transport Planning Team and Operator	At implementation/by May 2027
Anxiety and reduced confidence among disabled pedestrians	Co-design parking layouts and no-ride zones with local disability groups prior to launch. Establish ongoing review points where routes and controls can be adjusted based on lived experience feedback.	Transport Planning Team and Operator	Prior to launch/by May 2027
Low detectability of e-scooters for blind and partially sighted people	Require operators to explore audible alerts or sound cues at low speeds, subject to national guidance and technological feasibility, and to clearly label vehicles with tactile and high-contrast features.	Transport Planning Team and Operator	At implementation/by May 2027
Age-related exclusion of under-16s / under-17s	Clearly communicate age and licence requirements and ensure the scheme is promoted as complementary to, not a replacement for, youth transport modes (walking,	Transport Planning Team and Operator	At implementation/by May 2027

Issue	Action to be taken	Person(s) responsible	Date to be completed by
	cycling, buses). Monitor equity impacts as national regulations evolve.		
Lower uptake by women due to safety concerns	Restrict use to roads with lower speed limits and cycle infrastructure where possible, apply reduced maximum speeds, and include visible parking in well-lit, overlooked locations to improve personal safety perceptions.	Transport Planning Team and Operator	At implementation/by May 2027

Sign Off

Officer completing this EqIA: Christopher Whitehouse

Officers involved in completing the EqIA: Rachel Thistlewood, Darren Orchard, Christopher Whitehouse

Date of completion: 10th June 2026

Version Number: V1

EqIA review date: 26 February 2027

Equality Lead Sign Off: James Palfreman-Kay

Next Steps:

- the EqIA will be reviewed by Communications and Engagement and if in agreement, your EqIA will be signed off.
- if not, we will get in touch to chat further about the EqIA, to get a better understanding.
- EqIA authors are responsible to ensuring any actions in the action plan are implemented.

Please send to Diversity and Inclusion Officer

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Risk Assessment for E-Scooter Rental Service (Concession Model)

Prepared by : Christopher Whitehouse, Transport Planning Team

8th May 2026

Risk Scoring Assumptions

- Likelihood: Low / Medium / High
- Impact: Low / Medium / High
- Overall Risk reflects **post-mitigation residual risk**, consistent with Cabinet reporting.

1. Safety and Public Protection Risks (existing – expanded)

1.1 Collisions involving riders, pedestrians or vehicles

Risk: Injury or fatality involving e-scooters, including to vulnerable road users.
Likelihood: Medium
Impact: High
Risk Type: Public safety / Legal / Reputational

Mitigation:

- Speed caps, geofencing and no-ride zones in pedestrian areas.
- Licence checks and age restrictions.
- Mandatory operator insurance and maintenance regimes.
- Ongoing monitoring of collision and near-miss data with Dorset Police.

Residual Risk: Medium

1.2 Pavement obstruction and accessibility impacts

Risk: Poorly parked scooters obstruct footways, disproportionately impacting disabled pedestrians.
Likelihood: Medium
Impact: High
Risk Type: Equality / Reputational

Mitigation:

- Mandatory designated parking bays.
- App-based parking validation and rapid removal SLAs.
- Engagement with disability groups to review locations.
- Penalties for repeat misuse.

Residual Risk: Medium

2. Reputational Risks (new)

2.1 Public backlash and loss of confidence in the Council

Risk: Negative public perception due to safety incidents, perceived inaction, or comparison with private illegal e-scooter misuse.
Likelihood: Low–Medium
Impact: High
Risk Type: Corporate reputation / Political

Mitigation:

- Clear public communications distinguishing regulated rental scooters from illegal private use.
- Transparent reporting of performance, incidents and corrective actions.
- Phased rollout with visible enforcement and early wins.

Residual Risk: Medium

2.2 Perceived disregard for disabled residents' concerns

Risk: Damage to Dorset Council's reputation as an inclusive authority if disabled people's concerns are not seen to be taken seriously.
Likelihood: Medium
Impact: High
Risk Type: Equality / Reputational

Mitigation:

- Early and ongoing engagement with RNIB, Guide Dogs and local disability groups.
- Publication of accessibility mitigations and monitoring outcomes.

- Willingness to amend or withdraw scheme elements if impacts are unacceptable.

Residual Risk: Medium

3. Financial Risks (new)

3.1 Unplanned revenue costs to the Council

Risk: Officer time, complaints handling, monitoring and legal oversight exceed anticipated levels, creating financial pressure.
Likelihood: Low–Medium
Impact: Medium
Risk Type: Financial / Operational

Mitigation:

- Clear contractual allocation of responsibilities to the operator.
- Cost-neutral concession model with no Council subsidy.
- Review capacity requirements at set milestones.

Residual Risk: Low–Medium

3.2 Operator financial failure or withdrawal

Risk: Operator becomes insolvent or exits the market, disrupting service and requiring Council intervention.
Likelihood: Medium (industry-wide)
Impact: Medium–High
Risk Type: Financial / Service continuity

Mitigation:

- Due diligence during procurement.
- Step-in and termination clauses.
- Limiting Council exposure through concession (not ownership) model.

Residual Risk: Medium

3.3 Reputational impact of low value for money

Risk: Public or Member concern that scheme delivers limited benefit relative to effort or risk.
Likelihood: Low
Impact: Medium
Risk Type: Financial / Reputational

Mitigation:

- Clear articulation of wider social, environmental and accessibility benefits.
- Benchmarking performance against BCP and national trials.

Residual Risk: Low

4. Legal and Compliance Risks

4.1 Non-compliance with DfT trial conditions

Risk: Failure to meet DfT requirements results in withdrawal of trial permission.
Likelihood: Low-medium
Impact: High
Risk Type: Legal / Strategic

Mitigation:

- Regular compliance audits.
- Dedicated liaison with DfT and Police.
- Clear contractual obligations on the operator.

Residual Risk: Low

4.2 Legal challenge linked to equality or accessibility impacts

Risk: Challenge under Equality Act duties if impacts on disabled people are not adequately mitigated.
Likelihood: Low
Impact: High
Risk Type: Legal / Equality

Mitigation:

- Comprehensive EqIA and mitigation plan.
- Evidence-based decision-making and monitoring.
- Proportionate, responsive adjustments.

Residual Risk: Low–Medium

5. Operational and Delivery Risks

5.1 Inadequate enforcement capacity

Risk: Misuse (pavement riding, antisocial behaviour) persists due to unclear enforcement responsibilities.
Likelihood: Medium
Impact: Medium
Risk Type: Operational / Reputational

Mitigation:

- Operator-led enforcement and graduated sanctions.
- Clear reporting routes for public and Police.
- Regular review of hotspots.

Residual Risk: Medium

5.2 Integration issues with existing transport and public realm

Risk: Conflict with pedestrians, cyclists or existing bike hire schemes.
Likelihood: Medium
Impact: Medium
Risk Type: Operational

Mitigation:

- Integrated parking design.
- Clear signage and user education.
- Ongoing coordination with highways and town centre teams.

Residual Risk: Low

6. Strategic and Policy Risks (new)

6.1 National legislation changes mid-trial

Risk: Future legislation restricts or materially alters e-scooter use.
Likelihood: Medium
Impact: Medium
Risk Type: Strategic

Mitigation:

- Participation in the national trial to shape evidence.
- Flexible concession terms allowing scheme adjustment or exit.

Residual Risk: Low–Medium

6.2 Failure to deliver policy objectives

Risk: Scheme does not meaningfully contribute to modal shift, carbon reduction or access objectives.
Likelihood: Low–Medium
Impact: Medium
Risk Type: Strategic

Mitigation:

- Targeted deployment in appropriate locations.
- Monitoring of car-trip replacement and accessibility outcomes.

Residual Risk: Low

7. Partnership and Stakeholder Risks (new)

7.1 Breakdown in relationship with Police or PCC

Risk: Loss of support due to perceived enforcement or governance failures.
Likelihood: Low

Impact: High
Risk Type: Partnership / Reputational

Mitigation:

- Formal governance arrangements.
- Regular data sharing and review meetings.
- Clear escalation routes.

Residual Risk: Low

Overall Risk Position

- **Current Risk Rating:** Medium
- **Residual Risk Rating (post-mitigation):** Low

The **concession-based, regulated model**, combined with strong governance, engagement and the ability to adapt or withdraw elements of the scheme, means risks are **manageable and proportionate** for a Dorset Council trial approach.

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Rental E-Scooter Scheme – General Operating Principles

1. **E-Scooters May Be Used**

1.1 In accordance with DFT guidance:

- E scooters may be used on roads (Excluding motorways).
- E scooters may be used in cycle lanes (cyclist provision on carriageways) where permitted
- E scooters may not be used on pavements.
- E scooters may not be used on cycle tracks (cycle and shared use paths distinct from the carriageway) unless those tracks are redesignated.

1.2 Importantly:

- Cycle tracks created under existing legislation cannot automatically be used by E scooters.
- To enable use, such infrastructure must be redesignated as cycle lanes.
- Where use of cycle lanes is regulated by Traffic Regulation Order, the order must be amended to explicitly permit use by E scooters.

1.3 As such, implementation of this scheme will require a review of all existing cycle infrastructure within the proposed trial areas. This review will need to identify where TROs Are absent or insufficient and where a programme of TRO amendments are required.

2. **Practical Operation of the Scheme**

<u>Operating Model</u>

2.1 Two delivery models are proposed:

- Extension to existing BCP Beryl Bike Scheme in the Corfe Mullen and Upon area.

- A concession model in the Weymouth, Dorchester, Portland, Chickerell with the operated to be appointed via procurement.

3. **Core Operational Controls**

3.1 The scheme will incorporate the following practical controls, consistent with DfT guidance:

- Geofencing to define permitted riding areas and help enforce no ride zones.
- Speed controls including reduced speeds in high footfall areas.
- Parking controls use of designated bays to encourage safety and reduce potential trip hazards that may arise from e-scooters abandoned on the highway or elsewhere.

- Mandatory driving licence validation.
- In-app safety instructions and user education.
- Operator provision of data to the Council and the DfT.

4. Parking Arrangements

4.1 Parking will be a critical component of scheme design. Designated parking bays will be required to prevent on street obstruction. On street bays will require DfT authorization where specific markings are used or new bays are established. The proposed scheme is a dockless model using existing –bike bay locations, so enforcement mechanisms such as incentives, penalties and geofencing must ensure that scooters are not left in obstructive locations.

5. Enforcement and Compliance

5.1 Effective enforcement will rely on a combination of operator controls and statutory enforcement.

5.2 Operators will be required to:

- Monitor usage and respond to misuse.
- Suspend or remove users who breach rules of use.
- Provide data to the Council and Dorset Police to assist enforcement.
- Manage parking compliance and redistribution.

5.3 Certain offences, including pavement riding and dangerous use, are matters for police enforcement. The council acknowledges that it does not have direct enforcement powers over these behaviours and that this creates a degree of reliance on Dorset Police Resources and priorities. This is a known limitation and risk in the scheme.

5.4 Mitigation will include close working with Dorset Police., the use of technology such as geofencing and speed limiting. And operator led sanctions to reduce reliance on policing. However, it is recognised that enforcement cannot be fully controlled by the Council.

Cabinet
28 July 2026
Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) Working Group – Final Report and Recommendations to Cabinet
For Decision

Cabinet Member:
Cllr C Sutton, Children, Families and Education

Senior Leadership Team:
P Dempsey - Executive Director, Children's Services

Report author and job title:
Email: Jen Furnell, Corporate Director, Education and Learning

Report status: Public

1 Executive summary

1.1 The People and Health Scrutiny Committee undertook an inquiry into Education, Health and Care (EHC) Assessment and Planning, culminating in a presentation of the Committee's findings in a report discussed at the Scrutiny Committee meeting on 16th April 2026.

1.2 The Children's Services Leadership Team were able to respond verbally to the report at the Scrutiny Committee meeting on 16th April and have since considered the recommendations made.

1.3 It is recommended that Cabinet accept all the recommendations in full, except for recommendation 2 in relation to the specific target that is set for the issuing of EHC Plans within 20 weeks – see 4.2 below. Children's Services and partners were already practicing in line with most of the recommendations and have since implemented additional measures to address them further.

1.4 One of the key avenues of investigation in the inquiry was the timeliness of drafting of EHC Plans. It is worth noting that performance improved considerably through the latter part of the inquiry period, from 22% of plans being issued within 20 weeks in September 2025 to 58% for quarter 1 in 2026/27. The performance in September 2025 was impacted by a high volume of work at a time when the service was facing the challenges of implementing a new case management system. The national average performance on this measure is 46% of EHC Plans being issued within 20 weeks.

1.5 It is also of note that the national system for meeting the needs of children and young people with SEND has been widely accepted as failing. It is financially unsustainable, has not improved outcomes for children, and results in far too many children being subject to statutory EHC Plans, and far too many children being educated in special schools which are high cost and often at a distance from a child's home, instead of being educated in well supported mainstream schools within or close to their communities. This is the context we have been working in. The Schools White Paper published in February 2026 introduced a national SEND Reform plan designed to address these national issues and transform the SEND system.

1.6 Elsewhere on the agenda for this Cabinet meeting is a report advising that the Local Area Partnership in Dorset submitted our local SEND Reform Plan on 19th June in line with the national requirement for all local areas to do so. Much of the work set out in our Reform Plan will support us with addressing the recommendations of the Scrutiny Committee below.

2 Recommendation(s)

2.1 To agree the responses to the recommendations from the People and Health Scrutiny Committee.

3 Reason for the recommendation(s)

3.1 The Scrutiny Committee recommendations align with actions the service has already taken or understand we do need to take in order to improve how children and families experience our service, and we understand and accept that the Scrutiny Committee has a role in holding us to account for our performance in this area.

4 The report

The following recommendations are those made by the Scrutiny Committee:

4.1 **Recommendation** 1 – Cabinet thanks the People and Health Scrutiny Committee for the work of their inquiry into Education, Health and Care (EHC) Assessment and Planning.

Cabinet Response:

Cabinet supports this recommendation

4.2 **Recommendation 2** - EHCP Statutory Timeliness

Dorset Council should implement a clear recovery plan to ensure that an absolute minimum 75% (current target) of Education, Health and Care Plans are issued within the statutory 20-week timeframe, but with regard

to compliance with the statutory duty of all plans being delivered within the set timescales with actions to achieve full compliance.

The plan should include:

- workforce capacity requirements
- performance monitoring arrangements
- monthly reporting to senior leadership

Progress updates should be reported to the People and Health Scrutiny Committee.

Context and progress to date:

The EHCP growth rate since 2015/16 is 136% in Dorset, compared to 93% nationally and 104% across the South West. Dorset was below the national average in 2015/16 and is now above it.

The number of EHCPs was 4,719 EHCPs in 2025 in Dorset, projected to rise to 5,035 in 2026, an overall growth rate of 6% over two y*ears.* The latest figure is 5003.

Due to the projected increase additional capacity was considered in summer 2025 alongside changes to the Dorset Thrive model that included:

- Bringing together Family Help and Child Protection teams
- Introducing Lead Child Protection Practitioner role withing the Multi-Agency Child Protection Team
- Reviewing our EHCP, school improvement and quality assurance offer to better meet the needs of schools and children.

Additional temporary capacity within the team, has supported an increase in the number of EHCPs issued within the statutory deadline in the interim period before the changes above in the final bullet point are implemented. At the time of the inquiry period 22% of plans were being issued within 20 weeks (September 2025). This has increased to 58% of plans issued within 20 weeks for quarter 1 in 2026/27. The national average performance on this measure is 46% of EHCPs being issued within 20 weeks.

Cabinet Response:

Cabinet accepts the recommendation for the service to implement a plan that ensures improving and consistent performance but does not agree that the 75% target is realistic to achieve consistently at this stage. We are mindful that the national average performance on this indicator is 46%, the southwest average is 34%, and the statistical neighbour performance is 28%. The latest performance in Dorset for quarter 1 in 2026/27 was 58%. Given the above we think it appropriate to set an initial target of 65% on this measure, significantly higher than those comparator group averages, with a stretch target of 75% being applied from January 2027, once the

service developments described in this report have been implemented and embedded.

Cabinet asks and expects Children's Services Senior Leadership Team to implement this revised recommendation.

4.3 **Recommendation 3** - Caseload Management and Workforce Capacity

Dorset Council should review the caseload levels of SEND Provision Leads to ensure workloads are manageable and consistent with good practice.

The Council should:

- establish appropriate caseload benchmarks
- ensure sufficient staffing levels to meet statutory duties
- monitor workforce capacity through quarterly reporting.

A summary of actions taken should be presented to the People and Health Scrutiny Committee.

Context and progress to date:

As with all of our work, Children's Services were already monitoring caseloads and staffing capacity**.**

From 1st Sept 26, following planning and consultation in summer and autumn 2025, there will be a dedicated team, based alongside the Family Support and Advice Line team, which will solely focus on new assessment requests and the 6- to 20-week statutory deadlines. This will bring greater consistency to decision making during the assessment process, but it will take time to embed and be fully operational. We will continue with interim additional capacity until the new team is embedded.

We are also working to introduce a new AI solution which will have the ability to support the drafting of new plans, bringing a considerable time saving element. We will be piloting this with the new assessment team in the autumn of 2026.

Cabinet Response:

Cabinet accepts this recommendation and asks and expects Children's Services Senior Leadership Team to implement it.

4.4 **Recommendation 4** - Communication with Families

Dorset Council should develop and implement a clear communication standard for families involved in the EHCP process.

This protocol should include:

- clear points of contact for each case
- defined response times for communications

- proactive updates to families during the EHCP process
- guidance for practitioners on maintaining effective communication with parents and carers.

The Council should report back to the People and Health Scrutiny Committee on how this protocol is being implemented and monitored.

Context and progress to date:

We continue to use the Dorset Council published customer service promise Our customer promise - Dorset Council as our standard for service delivery.

We aim to respond to communications (telephone/emails) within 5 working days, consistent with Dorset Council expectations. We accept that workload and capacity issues have meant we fell short of these standards in a small number of cases. Recruitment activity has taken place to successfully fill vacancies alongside the work to implement changes following a staff consultation and subsequent restructure within some teams.

There is work underway in Children's Services to review Practice Standards, which will include expectations around clear and timely communications with parents and carers. This will be socialised with the SEND teams from autumn 2026 in the light of the changes we are making.

We continue to hold the well established 'Let's Talk SEND' events for parents and carers that provide an opportunity for officers to share information with parents and carers and answer individual questions.

Cabinet Response:

Cabinet accepts this recommendation and asks and expects Children's Services Senior Leadership Team to implement it.

4.5 **Recommendation 5** - Digital Systems and Case Management

Dorset Council should review the effectiveness of its current digital case management systems used for EHCP administration to ensure they support:

- efficient case management
- improved communication with families
- accurate performance monitoring.

The review should identify any improvements required to digital systems and provide a clear implementation plan where necessary.

Context and progress to date:

The new Case Management System was introduced to support EHCP administration. The challenges that have arisen were unpredictable. Officers in our Information and Communication and Technology, Performance and Learning and Belonging teams have worked tirelessly to ensure accuracy of data by checking and inputting data manually during the interim period. This work has improved the accuracy of the data and work with the Case Management System provider continues to ensure that they are delivering the expected service we require.

Cabinet Response:

Cabinet accepts this recommendation and asks and expects Children's Services Senior Leadership Team to implement it.

4.6 **Recommendation 6** - Annual Reviews of EHCPs

Dorset Council should ensure that annual reviews of Education, Health and Care Plans are completed in accordance with statutory requirements.

The Council should

- monitor the timeliness of annual reviews
- ensure that relevant partners are invited and able to participate
- establish clear processes to ensure review outcomes are recorded and acted upon.

Performance data relating to annual reviews should be reported to the People and Health Scrutiny Committee on a regular basis.

Context and progress to date:

The current position shows an improving trend in the spring term 2026 with 69% of annual reviews completed on time.

When the dedicated team working on the assessment requests and the 6- to 20-week statutory deadlines (see Recommendation 2) is fully operational this will remove this workload from locality-based teams therefore releasing capacity to focus on annual reviews.

We expect the AI solution that we are piloting in autumn 2026 will have the ability to support the drafting of new plans and capture amendments. This will have a positive impact on annual review timeliness.

Cabinet Response:

Cabinet accepts this recommendation and asks and expects Children's Services Senior Leadership Team to implement it.

4.7 **Recommendation 7** - Health Partner Participation

Dorset Council should work with the NHS Integrated Care Board to improve the involvement of health partners in the EHCP process.

This should include:
- ensuring appropriate health input into EHCP assessments
- improving attendance or contribution to annual reviews
- establishing clear joint working protocols between education and health services.

The Council and Health Partners should jointly report to the People and Health Scrutiny Committee on progress made.

Context and progress to date:

Ofsted recognised during the Area SEND inspection of Dorset Local Area Partnership in 2024 that, *'the established culture of collaborative working across the partnership is a real strength'.*

Officers continue to work closely with NHS Dorset colleagues to ensure good quality and timely advice is provided throughout the EHCP process. Since the inquiry the request for advice form has been updated, in co-production with NHS Dorset and parents/carers.

The SEND Reform plan was co-produced with partners including health who contributed significantly to its development and are fully committed to the implementation of the plan.

Cabinet Response:

Cabinet accepts this recommendation and asks and expects Children's Services Senior Leadership Team to implement it.

Cabinet would add the qualification that the Council and Children's Services cannot guarantee and be responsible for the actions of the ICB and Health partners.

4.8 **Recommendation 8** - Reducing Tribunal and Complaint Levels

Dorset Council should analyse the causes of SEND tribunal cases and formal complaints, in order to identify opportunities to resolve issues earlier and reduce escalation.

This should include:
- reviewing patterns of tribunal outcomes
- identifying recurring issues raised by families
- improving early resolution processes.

Findings and proposed actions should be shared with the People and Health Scrutiny Committee.

Context and progress to date:

The most recent available data shows that Dorset's appeal rate is lower than the national average.

The current SEND system enables parents/carers to appeal any decision that the Local Authority takes and to date there are no patterns that we have been able to establish related to tribunals.
The planned changes to our staffing arrangements will support workload for officers in our Locality Teams and therefore support better communications with families (more time to work relationally). We believe this will have a positive impact on parental confidence and satisfaction. Monitoring will continue to identify any emerging themes. A key aim of our SEND Reform Plan is to increase support to children and parents, to increase the options parents have for their children's schooling, and to increase parental confidence in the system, so that parents do not feel the need to use the tribunal process.

Cabinet Response:

Cabinet accepts this recommendation and asks and expects Children's Services Senior Leadership Team to implement it.

4.9 **Recommendation 9** - Engagement with Children and Young People

Future SEND service reviews and scrutiny work should include direct engagement with children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities.

Dorset Council should consider how the voices of children and young people can be more consistently included in service design and evaluation.

Context and progress to date:

Dorset has a dedicated Youth Voice team that continues to work with our children and young people to ensure they have the right to be heard. Officers use the Lundy Model of Participation which is a rights-based framework that reflects the United Nation Convention on Rights of the Child.

The team supported members of the Youth Council in their presentation to full Council on 15 May 2025, about the United Nations Convention of Rights of the Child and what it means to children and young people in Dorset. Following the presentation Councillors unanimously voted to

support a motion making Dorset Council a rights respecting council reflecting the convention. Dorset Council was the first unitary authority in the country to make this commitment to children and young people.

Cabinet Response:

Cabinet accepts this recommendation and asks and expects Children's Services Senior Leadership Team to implement it.

Cabinet would expect this recommendation to be implemented with the advice and support of our Youth Voice Team.

The Direct engagement with children and young people who have SEND, requires additional consideration and time, to enable them to meaningfully participate, and children and young people are always given choice on whether they wish to take part.

To fully uphold article 12 of the UNCRC, the Youth Voice team are guided by best practice illustrated in the Lundy Model.

4.10 **Recommendation 10** - Ongoing Scrutiny Oversight

The People and Health Scrutiny Committee should receive a formal progress report outlining:

- actions taken in response to each recommendation
- progress made
- any further steps required

Cabinet Response:

Cabinet accepts this recommendation and asks and expects Children's Services Senior Leadership Team to implement it.

Alternative options considered

No alternative options considered

Legal considerations

No legal implications of this report

Financial implications

Financial resources within Children's Services budget have been reallocated to fund additional staff capacity to support our SEND work.

Natural environment, climate and ecology implications

Well-being and health implications

Timely support for children with special educational needs and disabilities will promote their health and wellbeing

Other implications

Risk implications

HAVING CONSIDERED: the risks associated with this decision; the level of risk has been identified as:

Appendices

Appendix 1 - People & Health Scrutiny Committee – Provision of EHCP Support Inquiry Final report.

Appendix 2 – Inquiry Day Timetable and Attendance List

People & Health Scrutiny Committee

Provision of EHCP Support Inquiry Final Report Date: March 2026

1. Foreword from Chair
2. Panel Membership
3. Aims of the Inquiry
4. Witnesses
5. Inquiry Approach
6. Evidence Base and Further Lines of Inquiry
7. Conclusion and Recommendations
8. Next Steps

1. Foreword from the Chair

Having a child with additional health and education needs can be daunting in a challenging and difficult time, Dorset Council should be providing the best support that it can for these families.

Under the SEND Code of Practice (0-25) the Council has a statutory duty to identify, assess and meet the needs of children and young people with SEND.

As elected members, we frequently hear from parents and carers who face significant obstacles in securing the support their children need. These families already manage the daily demands associated with SEND and should not experience further stress navigating complex systems.

The Dorset Council Plan 2024-2029 identifies “Communities for All” as a key priority, including improving educational attainment and delivering joined-up locality services partnership with the NHS, Health & Wellbeing Board and the Integrated Care Partnership. Dorset is a trailblazer for the Families First for Children Pathfinder, committing to place families at the centre of service design and delivery.

Ensuring timely and effective support for vulnerable children and young people is essential to help them achieve their potential.

Data driven analysis highlighted the need for the Scrutiny Committee to undertake a comprehensive review of EHCP processes, from initial assessment through to delivery and annual review.

At the outset of the inquiry, Dorset’s performance on EHCP timeliness aligned with national benchmarking at 63%. However, this still meant that more than one in three children were not receiving plans on time, leaving families increasingly frustrated and anxious.

Performance data indicated that there were significant issues both in terms of demand, capacity and service quality. The scrutiny function is aimed at providing critical friend challenge to decision makers in our county and supporting residents by providing a route through which their voice and concerns can be heard.

The review has been affected by delays in arranging stakeholder meetings and the implementation of the new case-management system. This contributed to a decline in EHCP timeliness (22.6% in Sept 2025) and a period without reliable performance data. Although Q4

2025 data showed an improvement to 35.82% against a 75% target, performance remains below the level that originally triggered the inquiry, meaning that two out of three children are not receiving their plans on time. In the view of the panel the target should be 100% to ensure all children have the appropriate educational support in place.

Annual reviews issued on time stood at 50% in September 2025, with no Q4 2025 data currently available.

In May 2025, Dorset Council reaffirmed its commitment to the UN Rights of the Child, aiming to be a Rights Respecting Council and embedding these principles into local policy. Despite this, the panel was not able to directly engage with children and young people despite several requests. We are grateful to the Parent Carer Forum for facilitating a focus group of parents with lived experience to meet with the us allowing for a better understanding of the issues they face.

Following the scrutiny inquiry we have identified key areas for improvement including:

- ensure statutory timelines for assessments and reviews are met
- reviewing caseloads and workforce capacity
- strengthening communication protocols
- evaluating the effectiveness of digital modernisation
- Improving partnership working with health partners
- analysing complaints and tribunals outcomes
- embedding the voice of children and young people in service design and evaluation

Meeting statutory duties is essential to improving the quality, timeliness, and accuracy of support. Getting it right early gives families and children the best start and ultimately delivers longer-term efficiencies for the Council.

I would like to thank all contributors including the senior leadership and staff within the Children's Services Directorate, the Dorset Parent Carer Council, SENDIASS, Schools and the NHS. Progress is being made and we remain committed to monitoring improvements, providing constructive challenge and ensuring that services meet the needs of children and young people across Dorset.

Councillor Toni Coombs
Chair of the Panel and the People & Health Scrutiny Committee

2. Panel Membership

The panel consisted of three members drawn from the membership of the People and Health Scrutiny Committee.

Cllr Toni Coombs chaired the panel and is the Chairman of the People and Health Scrutiny Committee. She was previously Cabinet Member for Young People between 2004-2014 at Dorset County Council.

Cllr Jane Somper is the Vice-Chairman of the People and Health Scrutiny Committee. She has previous experience as Cabinet Member for Adults and Housing from 2023-2024 and as Lead Member for Safeguarding from 2020-2023.

Cllr Bridget Bolwell is a member of the People and Health Scrutiny Committee and is Chair of the Corporate Parenting Board. Previously she has been a SENCO at a local school.

3. Aims of the Inquiry

The People and Health Scrutiny Committee undertook this inquiry to examine the effectiveness of the Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) process in Dorset.

The inquiry was prompted by:

- concerns raised by families regarding delays and communication
- performance data relating to EHCP timeliness
- the increasing demand for SEND services locally and nationally.

The aim of the inquiry was to understand the challenges facing the system, consider the experiences of families and practitioners, and identify areas where improvements could support better outcomes for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities.

4. Witnesses

At the Inquiry Day on 12 May 2025, the panel met with a wide range of witnesses from local organisations. The full list of witnesses and the timetable for the Inquiry Day is appended to this report.

Following the inquiry day, the panel held further evidence gathering and follow up sessions with parents and NHS Dorset.

The session with parents took place on 21 November 2025 and included the following witnesses:

- 3 parents of children with EHCP's
- Cllr Andy Todd, as a parent with a lived experience of EHCP's
- Lesley Mellor – Chair, Dorset Parent Carer Council

The session with NHS Dorset took place on 26 January 2026 and included the following witnesses:

- Chloe Morley – Designated Clinical Officer for SEND
- Pam O'Shea – Chief Nursing Officer
- Tanya Hamilton-Fletcher – Operations Manager

5. Inquiry Approach

The panel considered evidence relating to EHCP services through a series of scrutiny meetings and evidence sessions.

These included:

- presentations from council officers
- discussion of performance information and service data
- engagement with parents and carers, schools SENCOs, NHS Dorset
- consideration of national SEND policy and statutory guidance.

This approach enabled the panel to examine the EHCP process from multiple perspectives and identify areas where improvements may be required.

6. Evidence Base and Further Lines of Enquiry

The panel gathered evidence from a range of sources including:

- performance reports on EHCP timeliness
- evidence from council officers and service leads
- feedback from parents and carers
- feedback from schools and SENCOs
- feedback from NHS Dorset
- information relating to tribunal cases and complaints
- national policy and statutory guidance relating to SEND

This evidence informed the panel's findings and the recommendations set out in this report.

a. Communication with Parents and Children

The panel met with parents on two occasions through the Dorset Parent Carer Council. The panel have been unable to meet directly with children and young people to hear their lived experience directly, despite several requests. In May 2025 Dorset Council reaffirmed its commitment to the principles and provisions of the UN Rights of the Child and aiming to be a Rights Respecting Council; and that it would integrate these into local policies and practices.

Issue Raised	Current Response / Position	Gap Identified	Impact / Consequence
Parents feel 'fobbed off', especially around EHCP decisions and annual reviews.	A new case management system and parent portal are being introduced.	The portal is still in internal rollout and not yet accessible to parents. Staff report regular updates but parents report the opposite.	Parents feel poorly informed and frustrated, reducing trust in the system.
Feedback on amended plans	Decision letters are issued following amendments.	Amended plans are not always provided	Risk of not meeting case law requirements (Devon ruling) and

		alongside decision letters.	delaying parents' right of appeal.
Listening to the views of children	The panel attempted to gather views during the inquiry.	The panel was unable to hear directly from children and young people.	Lack of direct lived experience informing the inquiry.

b. Early Years and Practitioner Engagement

Issue Raised	Current Response / Position	Gap Identified	Impact / Consequence
Communication in early years	Health visitors often act as the first point of contact for parents.	Parents report inconsistent or unclear early information about the EHCP process.	Parents feel unprepared and unsure how to navigate the system.
Speech & Language and Portage support	Services exist across health and education partners.	Parents report long gaps between actions and poor communication with caseworkers.	Parents must coordinate information themselves and support may be delayed.
Accuracy of EHCPs	Assessments involve multiple professionals.	Some conditions are not properly recognised and referrals may not occur.	EHCPs may not fully reflect the child's needs.
Practitioner attendance at reviews	Reviews are arranged by schools.	Practitioners do not always attend due to workload pressures.	Risk that the full understanding of a child's needs is not captured.

The panel met with health partners on two occasions. This enabled the panel to do a deeper dive into the concerns relating to health provision.

c. Health Advice and Annual Reviews

Issue Raised	Current Response / Position	Gap Identified	Impact / Consequence
Generic health advice within EHCPs	A template for health contributions is being developed.	No timeline or monitoring mechanism for quality of input.	Inconsistent quality of health advice across cases.
NHS attendance at annual reviews	Health services can provide written input without attending.	No defined process for when attendance or contribution is required.	Health insights may not be fully integrated into updated EHCPs.

d. Diagnostic Waiting Times

Issue Raised	Current Response / Position	Gap Identified	Impact / Consequence
Autism diagnostic waiting times	Recognised nationally as a demand issue.	No clear interim support strategy for children awaiting diagnosis.	Children may wait extended periods without appropriate support.
Delays for Children in Care placed outside the county	Different providers involved in assessments.	Unclear ownership of responsibility for ensuring timely assessments.	Children may experience lower service standards.

e. Joint Commissioning and Funding

Issue Raised	Current Response / Position	Gap Identified	Impact / Consequence
Joint commissioning between NHS and Local Authority	Joint commissioning arrangements are described as existing.	No joint budget or clear accountability framework.	Limited practical integration of services.

f. Health Inequalities

Issue Raised	Current Response / Position	Gap Identified	Impact / Consequence
Uneven availability of Mental Health Support Teams	Transformation plans referenced.	No timeline or expansion plan described.	Variation in access across Dorset.

g. Medical Absence Certificates

Issue Raised	Current Response / Position	Gap Identified	Impact / Consequence
GPs issuing school absence certificates without seeing the child	Recognised as problematic.	No coordinated engagement between education and health services.	Inappropriate absence certification disrupts education access.

h. SEND Provision and Education Settings

Issue Raised	Current Response / Position	Gap Identified	Impact / Consequence
Growth in home education linked to dissatisfaction with mainstream provision	Emotionally based school avoidance is increasingly recognised.	Limited confidence among parents in the SEND support system.	Increased demand for alternative provision.
Capacity pressures in schools	Schools face staffing and training pressures.	Limited support for SENCOs and pre-schools writing EHCPs.	Delays in identifying and supporting children with high needs.
Parents report issues regarding ability and willingness of schools to provide the support identified in EHCP due to league tables and budget restraints.	Schools facing budgetary pressures.	SEND funding needs review, however all partners should be working to minimise the impact of this.	Impact on learning outcomes for all children, given drive to include more SEND children in mainstream schooling.

i. Complaints and Tribunals

Issue Raised	Current Response / Position	Gap Identified	Impact / Consequence
Declining EHCP timeliness and rising complaints	Seasonal staffing pressures and vacancies cited as factors.	No consistent improvement in performance across locality teams.	High tribunal volumes and parental dissatisfaction.

j. Budgets and Staffing

Issue Raised	Current Response / Position	Gap Identified	Impact / Consequence
High caseloads (around 250 cases per officer)	Directorate managing a vacancy rate of around 7%.	Limited capacity to maintain communication with families.	Staff burnout and delays in supporting children.

7. Conclusion and Recommendations

We have made the following recommendations and key areas for improvement include implementing modernising services through digital approaches, ensuring that engagement and communication is improved both in terms of providing updates and on EHCPs themselves, and reducing the use of tribunals to reach EHCP outcomes. It is vital that the Council meets its statutory commitments moving forward and that in turn services are quicker, more accurate and meet the needs of children and young people across Dorset.

The Committee expects Dorset Council and partner organisations to consider these recommendations carefully and to provide a formal response outlining actions to be taken.

Recommendation 1 - EHCP Statutory Timeliness

Dorset Council should implement a clear recovery plan to ensure that an absolute minimum 75% (current target) as of Education, Health and Care Plans are issued within the statutory 20-week timeframe, but with regard to compliance the statutory duty of all plans being delivered within the set timescales with actions to achieve full compliance.

The plan should include:

- workforce capacity requirements
- performance monitoring arrangements
- monthly reporting to senior leadership

Progress updates should be reported to the People and Health Scrutiny Committee.

Recommendation 2 - Caseload Management and Workforce Capacity

Dorset Council should review the caseload levels of SEND Provision Leads to ensure workloads are manageable and consistent with good practice.

The Council should:

- establish appropriate caseload benchmarks
- ensure sufficient staffing levels to meet statutory duties
- monitor workforce capacity through quarterly reporting.

A summary of actions taken should be presented to the People and Health Scrutiny Committee.

Recommendation 3 - Communication with Families

Dorset Council should develop and implement a clear communication standard for families involved in the EHCP process.

This protocol should include:

- clear points of contact for each case
- defined response times for communications
- proactive updates to families during the EHCP process
- guidance for practitioners on maintaining effective communication with parents and carers.

The Council should report back to the People and Health Scrutiny Committee on how this protocol is being implemented and monitored.

Recommendation 4 - Digital Systems and Case Management

Dorset Council should review the effectiveness of its current digital case management systems used for EHCP administration to ensure they support:

- efficient case management
- improved communication with families
- accurate performance monitoring.

The review should identify any improvements required to digital systems and provide a clear implementation plan where necessary.

Recommendation 5 - Annual Reviews of EHCPs

Dorset Council should ensure that annual reviews of Education, Health and Care Plans are completed in accordance with statutory requirements.

The Council should

- monitor the timeliness of annual reviews
- ensure that relevant partners are invited and able to participate
- establish clear processes to ensure review outcomes are recorded and acted upon.

Performance data relating to annual reviews should be reported to the People and Health Scrutiny Committee on a regular basis.

Recommendation 6 - Health Partner Participation

Dorset Council should work with the NHS Integrated Care Board to improve the involvement of health partners in the EHCP process.

This should include:

- ensuring appropriate health input into EHCP assessments
- improving attendance or contribution to annual reviews
- establishing clear joint working protocols between education and health services.

The Council and Health Partners should jointly report to the People and Health Scrutiny Committee on progress made.

Recommendation 7 - Reducing Tribunal and Complaint Levels

Dorset Council should analyse the causes of SEND tribunal cases and formal complaints, in order to identify opportunities to resolve issues earlier and reduce escalation.

This should include:

- reviewing patterns of tribunal outcomes
- identifying recurring issues raised by families
- improving early resolution processes.

Findings and proposed actions should be shared with the People and Health Scrutiny Committee.

Recommendation 8 - Engagement with Children and Young People

Future SEND service reviews and scrutiny work should include direct engagement with children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities.

Dorset Council should consider how the voices of children and young people can be more consistently included in service design and evaluation.

Recommendation 9 - Ongoing Scrutiny Oversight

The People and Health Scrutiny Committee should receive a formal progress report outlining:

- actions taken in response to each recommendation
- progress made
- any further steps required

8. Next Steps

The People & Health Scrutiny Committee expects Dorset Council and relevant partner organisations to consider the recommendations set out in this report and provide a formal response outlining the actions that will be taken.

The committee will continue to monitor progress through its work programme and will request further updates on the implementation of these recommendations at six month intervals.

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Appendix 2 – Inquiry Day Timetable and Attendance List

Session 1 – Introduction Time: 10.10 – 10.25	
Name	**Job Title**
Cllr Clare Sutton	Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Education and Skills
Paul Dempsey	Executive Director of People – Children
Beth Whittaker	Corporate Director – Education and Learning
Kath Saunders	Head of Locality and Strategy
Lesley Mellor	Chair – Dorset Parent Carer Council

Session 2 – Data Time: 10.25 – 11:15	
Name	**Job Title**
Kath Saunders	Head of Locality and Strategy
Doug Gilbert	Strategic Education Information Lead
Rowena Wrixon	Business Intelligence & Performance Manager, Children's Services
Gaynor Howlett	Learning & Belonging Service Manager, Dorchester / West
Emma Adlem	Safeguarding Standards Advisor (SEND QA Lead)
Liz Curtis-Jones	Principal Lead for Best Start in Life
Rachel Meyrick	Senior Educational Psychologist, Chesil
Louise Ryan	Head of Service – Birth to Settled Adulthood
Carlton Wilson	Management Information Officer

Session 3 – Parent Carer Voice Time: 11.15 – 12.00	
Name	**Job Title**
Lesley Mellor	Chair, Dorset Parent Carer Council
Lucy Holliday	Dorset SENDIASS

Session 4 – Children and Young People's Voice Time: 12.00 – 12.30

Name	**Job Title**
Simon Fraiz-Brown	Head of Service – Family Help & Young and Thriving
Kaye Wright	Team Manager – Youth Voice
Kath Saunders	Head of Locality and Strategy

Session 5 – Settings' Perspectives Time: 12.30 – 13.00	
Name	**Job Title**
Esther Gardner	Senior Educational Psychologist (Dorchester / West)
Bethan West	SENDCO, Gryphon School
Oliver Greenaway	Inclusion Lead
Hannah Oram	SENDCO, Manor Park First School
Nadine Dawson	Inclusion Leader / Assistant Head, Upton Infants School
Claire Corrie	SENDCO, Hillside First School
Sam Branson	Deputy Head, Dorchester Learning Centre
Emma Gould	SENDCO, Dorchester Learning Centre
Kirsty Cowley	SENDCO, Lytchett Minster First School
Claire Aiken	SENDCO, Parley First School
Phil Jones	Chair of Schools Forum

Session 6 – NHS Services Time: 13.30 – 14.30	
Name	**Job Title**
Chloe Morley	Designated Clinical Officer, NHS Dorset
Sarah Lerigo	Associate Designated Clinical Officer, NHS Dorset
Ross Bowell	Head of Education, Health and SEND Commissioning
Miriam Leigh	Head of Children Thriving in Education / Principal Educational Psychologist

Session 7 – Quality Time: 14.30 – 15.00	
Name	**Job Title**
Kath Saunders	Head of Locality and Strategy
Emma Adlem	Safeguarding Standards Advisor (SEND QA lead)

Gaynor Howlett	Learning & Belonging Service Manager, Dorchester / West
Sarah Allan	SEND Team Manager – Purbeck Locality
Leigh Hudson	SEND Provision Lead – North Locality
Liz Curtis-Jones	Principal Lead for Best Start in Life

Session 8 – Complaints Time: 15.00 – 15.30	
Name	**Job Title**
Kath Saunders	Head of Locality and Strategy
Gaynor Howlett	Learning & Belonging Service Manager, Dorchester / West
Antony Bygrave	Senior Assurance Officer - Complaints
Samantha Oak	Safeguarding Education Service Manager
Annabel Mitchell	Safeguarding Standards Advisor

Session 9 – Future Opportunities Time: 15.30 – 16.00	
Name	**Job Title**
Miriam Leigh	Head of Children Thriving in Education / Principal Educational Psychologist
Louise Taylor	Relationship Manager, Children's Commissioning
Ross Bowell	Head of Education, Health and SEND Commissioning
Beth Whittaker	Corporate Director – Education & Learning
Paul Dempsey	Executive Director of People – Children

Session 10 – Summing Up & Close Time: 16.00 – 16.30	
Name	**Job Title**
Beth Whittaker	Corporate Director – Education & Learning
Kath Saunders	Head of Locality and Strategy
Paul Dempsey	Executive Director of People – Children

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Recommendation to Cabinet
28 July 2026

From People and Health Overview Committee on 6 July 2026

Youth Justice Plan 2026/2027

For Recommendation to Council

Cabinet Member and Portfolio:
Cllr. C Sutton, Children, Families & Education

Local Councillor(s):
All

Executive Director:
P Dempsey - Executive Director, Children's Services

Report author and job title: David Webb, Head of Service, Dorset Combined Youth Justice Service
Email: david.webb@bcpcouncil.gov.uk

Report Status: Public

Recommendation:
To recommend to Full Council that the Youth Justice Plan 2026/2027 be approved.

Appendices
Report to the People and Health Overview Committee on 6 July 2026, which included the following appendix:

Appendix 1 – Youth Justice Plan 2026/27

Background papers

Agenda and draft minutes of the People and Health Overview Committee – 6 July 2026.

People and Health Overview Committee
6 July 2026
Youth Justice Plan 2026/2027
For Recommendation to Cabinet

Cabinet Member:
Cllr C Sutton, Children, Families and Education

Local Councillor(s):

Senior Leadership Team:
P Dempsey, Executive Director – Children's Services

Report author and job title: David Webb, Head of Service, Dorset Combined Youth Justice Service
Email: david.webb@bcpcouncil.gov.uk

Statutory Authority:

Report status: Public (the exemption paragraph is N/A)

1. **Executive summary (maximum of 500 words)**

1.1 The Crime and Disorder Act (1998) places a statutory requirement on local authority youth offending teams to publish an annual Youth Justice Plan which must provide specified information about the local provision of youth justice services. This report summarises the Youth Justice Plan for 2026/27, with a copy of the Plan appended. The Youth Justice Plan needs to be approved by the full Council.

1.2 The Youth Justice Plan shows strong performance in Dorset. Achievements include diverting children from the justice system, avoiding the use of custody for children, and the quality of work to reduce the likelihood of reoffending and to repair the harm caused to victims.

1.3 Priorities for the year ahead are to respond to national and local reform programmes, enhancing 'Child First' practice, developing work with victims, reducing the over-representation of some groups of children in the justice system, and making best use of available resources.

2 Recommendation(s)

2.1 For the People and Health Overview Committee to endorse the Youth Justice Plan so that Cabinet can recommend its approval to Full Council.

3 Reason for the recommendation(s)

3.1 Youth Justice Services are required to publish an annual Youth Justice Plan which should be approved by the Local Authority for that Youth Justice Service. Dorset Combined Youth Justice Service works across both Dorset Council and Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council. Approval is therefore sought from both Dorset Council and from Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council.

4. The report

4.1 The Crime and Disorder Act (1998) requires Youth Offending Teams (now more widely known as Youth Justice Services) to publish an annual Youth Justice Plan. The Youth Justice Board provides detailed and prescriptive guidance about what must be included in the Plan. The draft Youth Justice Plan for the Dorset Combined Youth Justice Service is attached at Appendix One. A brief summary of the Youth Justice Plan is provided in this report.

4.2 The Youth Justice Plan provides information on the resourcing, structure, governance, partnership arrangements and performance of the Dorset Combined Youth Justice Service. The Plan also describes the national and local youth justice context for 2026/27 and sets out our priorities for this year.

4.3 Dorset Combined Youth Justice Service was rated ‘Good’ in its most recent inspection report, which was published in January 2023. Dorset Combined Youth Justice Service (DCYJS) was also inspected, in February 2025, as part of a national thematic inspection of work with children on ‘Out of Court Disposals’. The report from this inspection was published in October 2025. The inspection report refers to good practice in Dorset in the partnership work between DCYJS and Dorset Police, in the work to engage victims and to provide restorative justice, and in YJS Speech and Language work.

4.4 The Youth Justice Board continues to publish data for three ‘key performance indicators’ for youth justice. National performance data is published as a combined figure for the two local authorities within the Dorset Combined Youth Justice Service partnership.

4.5 The first indicator relates to the rate of young people entering the justice system for the first time. Overall local performance in this area, across both local authorities, has improved significantly in recent years. In the year before the pandemic, 2019/20, 78 Dorset Council children entered the justice system. In the past year, 2025/26, 48 Dorset Council children entered the

justice system. Pages 11-18 of the Youth Justice Plan provide more data and analysis about the children entering the justice system and about local work to divert children from the justice system.

4.6 The second indicator relates to the rate and frequency of reoffending. The national reoffending rate fluctuates, partly because of the counting rules for this measure. Analysis of local data, summarised on pp18-21 of the Youth Justice Plan, provides more insight into how many children are reoffending and the characteristics of those who reoffend.

4.7 The third national performance indicator looks at the number and rate of children receiving a custodial sentence. There continue to be very low numbers of Dorset Council children who receive a custodial sentence. Analysis on pp 21-22 of the Youth Justice Plan shows some of the common characteristics of children who are sentenced to custody. It is notable that these children have difficulties across the range of social care, education and health issues.

4.8 The Youth Justice Board promotes a good practice approach to youth justice work, known as ‘Child First’. The Youth Justice Plan shows how the principles of Child First practice are applied in the work of the Dorset Combined Youth Justice Service.

4.9 Dorset Combined Youth Justice Service continues to face resourcing pressures. Section 5.2 of the Youth Justice Plan explains the funding outlook for DCYJS. Making best use of available resources is a service priority for the year ahead.

4.10 The government published new Knife Crime Guidance in February 2026, for implementation from April 2026. Section 5.6 of the Plan shows how DCYJS and Dorset Police will ensure compliance with the new guidance.

4.11 It is recognised nationally that some groups of children are over-represented in the youth justice system. Children from minority ethnicities are not over-represented in the Dorset Council are. Children in Care and children with an EHCP continue to be over-represented. There is also evidence to show that almost all children in contact with the youth justice system have speech, language and communication needs, which are almost always identified for the first time when an assessment is completed by a YJS Speech and Language Therapist. The Youth Justice Plan provides more information about which groups of children are over-represented in the justice system and about actions being taken in response.

4.12 YJS work with victims, and work with children to help them to repair the harm from their offences, is described in 6.6 of the Plan. This work will be one of the service priorities in the year ahead.

4.13 In addition to the Knife Crime Guidance mentioned in paragraph 4.10, the government is also initiating other youth justice reforms during 2026. Responding to these reforms, and to other reform programmes in children's services and health services, forms another priority for the YJS in the year ahead.

4.14 The DCYJS Strategic Partnership Priorities for 2026/27 are:

- Respond to national and local reforms in youth justice and children's services
- Enhance Child First Practice
- Develop YJS and Partnership work with victims
- Reduce the Over-Representation of some groups of children in the justice system
- Make best use of available resources

5. Alternative options considered

5.1 It is a statutory requirement to publish a Youth Justice Plan, and the Youth Justice Plan must adhere to the Youth Justice Board's Guidance document. Locally, the Youth Justice Service Partnership Board oversees the contents of the Youth Justice Plan and the selection of service priorities. The Executive Director of People – Children chairs the YJS Partnership Board. The draft Youth Justice Plan was approved by the YJS Partnership Board on 16 April 2026.

6. Legal considerations

6.1 The Crime and Disorder Act (1998) sets out legal requirements for a multi-agency 'Youth Offending Team' in each local authority area and for the publication of an annual Youth Justice Plan. The Youth Justice Plan for 2026/27 shows how Dorset Council fulfils the requirements of the Crime and Disorder Act.

7. Financial implications

7.1 Section 5.2, and Appendix Two, of the Youth Justice Plan shows the resourcing of the Youth Justice Service. Local authority funding contributions remain frozen at 2022/23 levels. The Ministry of Justice announced in February 2026 that the national Youth Justice Grant will be frozen at 2025/26 levels until at least 2029. The Youth Justice Service achieves a balanced budget through a combination of staffing reductions and additional fixed-term funding streams.

8. Natural environment, climate & ecology implications

8.1 No adverse environmental impact has been identified. The Covid-19 pandemic, and subsequent reduction of office space, led to an increase in

YJS staff members working from home, with a consequent reduction in staff travel. YJS work with children includes some activities in the natural environment, such as the 'Discover You' project at Upton Country Park, which is described on pp 44-46 of the Youth Justice Plan.

9. Well-being and health implications

9.1 Young people in contact with youth justice services are known to be more likely than other young people to have unmet or unidentified health needs. The Youth Justice Service includes seconded health workers who work directly with young people and who facilitate their engagement with community health services. The Youth Justice Plan includes an update on health provision for children in the justice system (see pages 46-50).

10. Other implications

10.1 No other implications have been identified.

11. Risk implications

11.1 HAVING CONSIDERED: the risks associated with this decision; the level of risk has been identified as:

Current Risk: Low

Residual Risk: Low

12. Equalities

12.1 The Youth Justice Plan does not relate to a new strategy, policy or function so an Equalities Impact Assessment has not been undertaken. Some information about equalities issues is included in the report. No adverse equalities impacts have been identified.

12.2 Paragraph 4.11 of this report addresses the concern that some groups of children are over-represented in the youth justice system.

13. Appendices

13.1 Appendix One – Youth Justice Plan 2026-27

14. Background papers

14.1 None

15. Report sign-off

15.1 This report has been through the internal report clearance process and has been signed off by the Director, Assurance and Governance (Monitoring

Officer), the Director, Resources (Section 151 Officer) and the appropriate Cabinet Member(s).

DORSET COMBINED Youth Justice Service

YOUTH JUSTICE PLAN 2026/27

Service	Dorset Combined Youth Justice Service
Head of Service	David Webb
Chair of YJS Board	Paul Dempsey

Contents

1 Executive Summary 3
2 Introduction, vision, strategy, and local context 4
2.1 Foreword 4
2.2 Dorset Combined Youth Justice Service Statement of Purpose 4
2.3 Who We Are and What We Do 4
2.4 Local Context 5
3 Governance, leadership, and partnership arrangements 6
4 Update on the previous year 8
4.1 Progress on priorities in last year's plan 8
4.2 Performance 10
4.3 Risks and issues 22
5 Plans for the year ahead 23
5.1 'Child First' practice 23
5.2 Resources and Services 28
5.3 YJS Partnership Board Development 29
5.4 Workforce Development 30
5.5 Knife Possession Guidance 31
5.6 Evidence-based practice, innovation and evaluation 32
5.7 Standards for work with children in the youth justice system 34
5.8 Response to inspections, reviews and audits. 34
6 Local and National Priorities for 2026/27 35
6.1 Over-representation 35
6.2 Prevention 40
6.3 Diversion 41
6.4 Education, Training and Employment 42
6.5 Health and Communication Needs of Children in the youth justice system 44
6.6 Restorative Justice and Victims 48
6.7 Serious Violence and Extra-Familial Harm 50
6.8 Policing and Detention of children in police custody 51
6.9 Transitions to Probation 52
6.10 Remands 52
6.11 Custodial Sentences and Resettlement 54
6.12 Working with Families 54
6.13 National Youth Justice Reforms 2026 55
6.14 DCYJS Priorities and Plans for 2026/27 55
7 Sign off, submission and approval 57
8 Appendix 1 – Service Structure Chart 58
9 Appendix 2 – Budget Contributions 2026/27 62
10 Appendix 3 – Local Authority Demographic Information 63
11 Common youth justice terms – national glossary 65

Youth Justice Plan 2026/27

1 Executive Summary

Dorset Combined Youth Justice Service (DCYJS) works across the Dorset Council and BCP Council areas in a multi-agency partnership between the local authorities, Dorset Police, NHS Dorset and the Probation Service.

DCYJS helps children to make positive changes, keeping them safe, keeping other people safe, and repairing the harm caused to victims. When possible, we do this work outside the formal justice system, to avoid criminalising the child.

During the past year, DCYJS has made progress on the priorities set out in last year's Plan:

Continue to divert children from the formal justice system: the number of children across Dorset and BCP who received a first caution or court order dropped to 104 in 2025/26. This is the 6th consecutive year which has seen a significant reduction on the previous year.

Reducing over-representation of minority groups in the youth justice system: there was a small reduction in the proportion of children in care on the YJS caseload by March 2026. No children with Black, Asian or Mixed Heritage ethnicity were sentenced to custody in 2025/26.

Improve education outcomes for children in the justice system: DCYJS expanded its Discover You project at Upton Country Park, supporting young people to become ready for college or employment. Outcomes from this project are listed in section 6.4 of this document.

Earlier identification of speech, language and communication needs for children at risk of school exclusion: 152 children have now been referred to the Re-Engage project from 26 schools across both local authorities. From 90 completed assessments, 78% of children have been found to have communication needs.

Increasing public awareness and confidence in work undertaken by children to repair the harm from their offence: the YJS 'repairing the harm' team now works with an increased number of community projects. Over £2,000 was raised from the sale of items made by children as part of their work to repair the harm from their offence. This money is donated to charities and local community organisations.

The DCYJS Partnership Strategic Priorities for 2026/27 are*:*

- Respond to national and local reforms in youth justice and children's services
- Enhance Child First Practice
- Develop YJS and Partnership work with victims
- Reduce the Over-Representation of some groups of children in the justice system
- Make best use of available resources.

These priorities sit alongside ongoing commitments to help children in the youth justice system to achieve positive outcomes and to repair the harm caused to victims.

2 Introduction, vision, strategy, and local context

2.1 Foreword

This document is the Youth Justice Strategic Plan for the Dorset Combined Youth Justice Service (DCYJS) for 2026/27. It sets out the key priorities and targets for the service for the next 12 months as required by the Crime & Disorder Act 1998. This Plan adheres to the Youth Justice Board's document 'Youth Justice Plans: Guidance for Youth Justice Services'.

This Plan has been developed under the direction and oversight of the DCYJS Partnership Board, alongside consultation with DCYJS staff and feedback from children, parents and victims working with DCYJS.

The Youth Justice Strategic Plan:

- summarises the DCYJS structure, governance and partnership arrangements.
- outlines the resources available to the DCYJS.
- reviews achievements and developments during 2025/26.
- identifies emerging issues and describes the partnership's priorities.
- sets out our priorities and actions for improving youth justice outcomes this year.

Paul Dempsey, Executive Director People – Children, Dorset Council
Chair, Dorset Combined Youth Justice Service Partnership Board.

2.2 Dorset Combined Youth Justice Service Statement of Purpose

Dorset Combined Youth Justice Service works with children in the local youth justice system. Our purpose is to help those children to make positive changes, to keep them safe, to keep other people safe, and to repair the harm caused to victims.

We support the national Youth Justice Board Vision for a 'child first' youth justice system:

A youth justice system that sees children as children, treats them fairly and helps them to build on their strengths so they can make a constructive contribution to society. This will prevent offending and create safer communities with fewer victims.

2.3 Who We Are and What We Do

Dorset Combined Youth Justice Service (DCYJS) is a statutory partnership between Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council, Dorset Council, Dorset Police, The Probation Service (Dorset) and NHS Dorset Integrated Care Board.

We are a multi-disciplinary team which includes youth justice officers, restorative justice specialists, parenting workers, education and employment workers, police officers, a probation officer, mental health nurses, a psychologist, speech and language therapists and a volunteers and activities coordinator.

More information about the Youth Justice Service (YJS) partnership and the members of the YJS team is provided later in this document.

The team works with children who have committed criminal offences to help them make positive changes and to keep them safe and to keep other people safe. We also work with parents and carers to help them support their children to make changes.

We contact all victims of crimes committed by the children we work with. We offer those victims the chance to take part in restorative justice processes so we can help to repair the harm they have experienced. We also seek other ways to provide support to victims, particularly victims who are children.

The organisations in the YJS partnership also work together to prevent children entering the youth justice system, to improve the quality of our local youth justice system and to ensure that young people who work with the YJS can access the specialist support they need for their care, health and education.

The combination of direct work with children, parents and victims, and work to improve our local youth justice and children's services systems, enables us to meet our strategic objectives to:

- Reduce the number of children in the youth justice system.
- Reduce reoffending by children in the youth justice system.
- Improve the safety and well-being of children in the youth justice system.
- Reduce and repair the harm caused to victims and the community.
- Improve outcomes for children in the youth justice system.

2.4 Local Context

Dorset Combined Youth Justice Service (DCYJS) is a partnership working across two local authorities: Dorset Council and Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council.

Dorset Council covers a large geographical, predominantly rural area with market towns and a larger urban area in Weymouth and Portland. Dorset Council has a population of about 389,947 (ONS 2024 mid-year estimates).

Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole together form a conurbation with a population of 408,967 (ONS 2024 mid-year estimates).

Other members of the DCYJS Partnership, such as Dorset Police, the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner, NHS Dorset, Dorset HealthCare Trust and the Probation Service (Dorset) also work across both local authorities.

The following table provides comparative demographic information about young people in both local authorities at the start of 2026. Fuller versions of this data, including data source information, can be found in Appendix 3:

Population Age 10-17	**Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole**	**Dorset**
Number of Children[1]	35,978	34,575
Male[1]	51.3%	51.0%
Female[1]	48.7%	49.0%
Pupils eligible for Free School Meals[2]	21.6%	22.3%
Pupils with SEN Support[2]	15.9%	14.7%
Pupils with an EHC Plan[2]	5.7%	7.1%
Pupils from Non-white Minority Ethnic groups[3]	17.8%	6.3%
Children living in Poverty after housing costs	27%	25.70%

Safeguarding Age 10-17		
Number of Children in Need[5]	385	582
Male[5]	53.2%	53%
Female[5]	46.8%	47%
Number of Children with a Child Protection Plan[7]	179	132
Number of Children in Care[6]	388	341
Male[6]	54.9%	60%
Female[6]	44.8%	40%
Indeterminate[6]	0.3%	
Number of children and young people at risk of exploitation		
High Risk/Significant	43[8]	19[7]
Medium Risk/Moderate	54[8]	46[7]
Low Risk/Emerging or Reducing	118[8]	43[7]

Although the two local authorities differ in geographical size and demography, they have similar population sizes for 10-17 year-olds. Dorset Council has slightly higher rates of children eligible for free school meals and slightly lower rates of children living in poverty after housing costs.

The proportion of 10-17 year-olds identifying as being from non-white ethnicities is higher in BCP Council (17.8%) than in Dorset Council (6.3%).

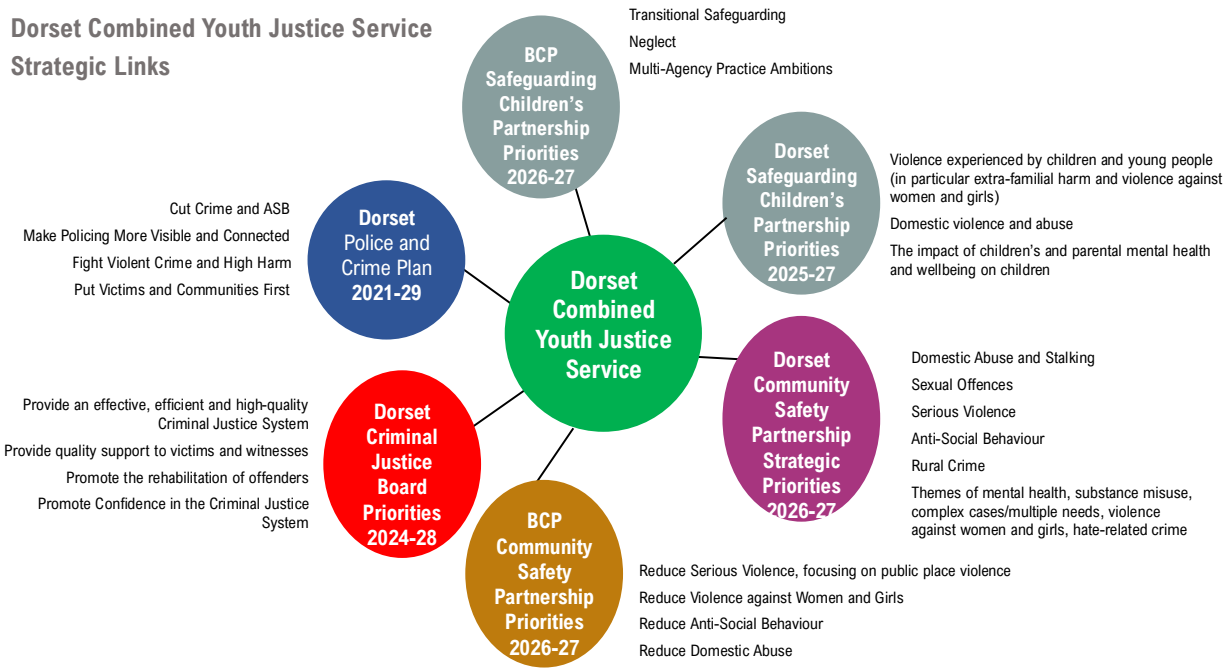
3 Governance, leadership, and partnership arrangements

The work of the Dorset Combined Youth Justice Service is managed strategically by a Partnership Board. The Partnership Board consists of senior representatives of the statutory partner organisations, together with other relevant local partners.

Membership:

- Dorset Council (chair)
- Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council (vice-chair)
- Dorset Police
- The Probation Service (Dorset)
- NHS Dorset Integrated Care Board
- Public Health Dorset
- Dorset Healthcare University Foundation Trust
- Dorset Magistrates' Youth Panel
- Youth Justice Board for England and Wales
- Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner.

The Partnership Board oversees the development of the Youth Justice Plan. Board members and the DCYJS Head of Service sit on other strategic partnerships, helping to ensure that the Youth Justice Plan and other local strategic plans and priorities are integrated and that other plans consider the needs of children and victims in the local youth justice system. The links between DCYJS and local strategic groups, and their overlapping strategic priorities, are illustrated below:



Representation by senior leaders from the key partners enables the DCYJS Head of Service to resolve any difficulties in multi-agency working at a senior level and supports effective links at managerial and practitioner levels.

The DCYJS participates in local multi-agency agreements for information sharing, for safeguarding and for the escalation of concerns. The DCYJS Partnership Data Sharing Agreement underpins local multi-agency work to prevent offending and to reduce reoffending.

The DCYJS Partnership Board oversees activities by partner agencies which contribute to the key youth justice outcomes, particularly in respect of the prevention of offending.

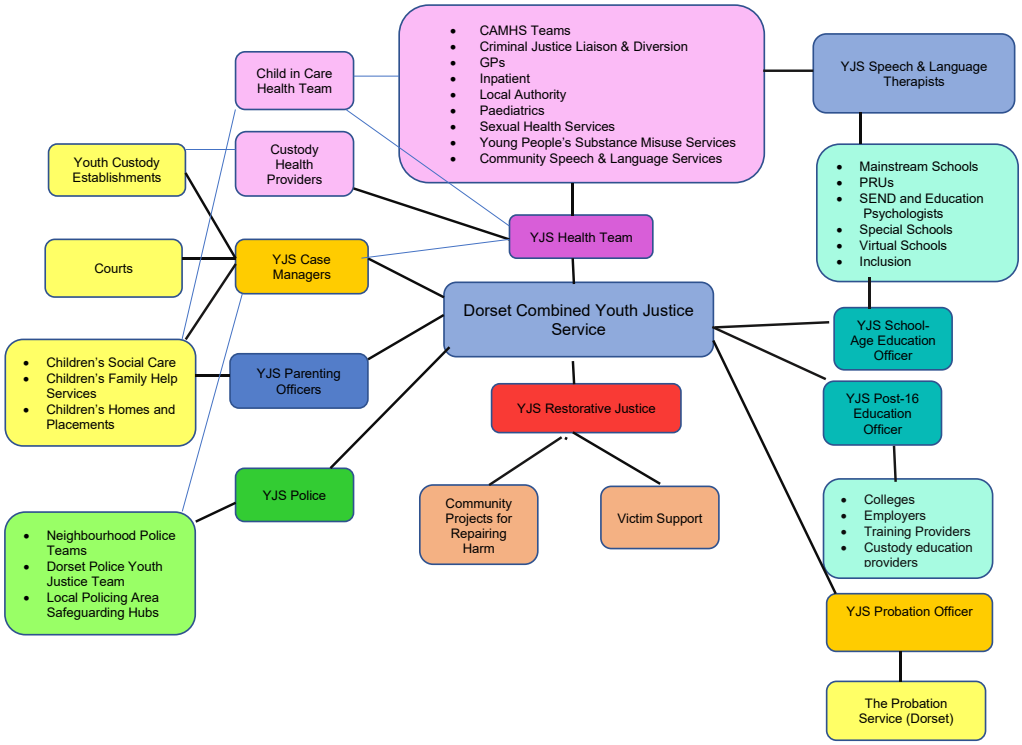
The Partnership Board also provides oversight and governance for local multi-agency protocols in respect of the criminalisation of children in care and the detention of children in police custody. The DCYJS Manager chairs multi-agency operational groups for each protocol and reports on progress to the DCYJS Partnership Board.

DCYJS is hosted by Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council. The Head of Service is a Tier 3 Manager, reporting to the Director of Children's Social Care. The Head of Service also reports to the Corporate Director for Care and Protection in Dorset Council.

Appendix 1 includes the structure chart for DCYJS and structure charts showing where the YJS sits in each local authority.

DCYJS meets the statutory staffing requirements for youth justice services, set out in the Crime and Disorder Act 1998. Specialist staff members are seconded into the service by Dorset Police, the Probation Service and Dorset HealthCare University Foundation Trust. These workers have line managers in both the YJS and their employing organisation. They have direct access to their own organisation's case management systems, to enable the prompt and proportionate sharing of information. More details about the staffing and financial contributions from YJS partners are provided in Appendix 2.

The YJS multi-disciplinary team also includes education specialists, parenting workers and restorative justice practitioners. The team works closely with other local services, as illustrated below:



4 Update on the previous year

4.1 Progress on priorities in last year's plan

The following section gives a brief summary of progress made against our strategic priorities for 2025-26:

Continue to divert children from the formal justice system:

- The rate of first-time entrants in 2025 was 7.6% lower than in 2024, and 58% lower than the rate in 2018, showing the progress that has been made in the past year and over a longer period.
- The Ministry of Justice Turnaround programme grant was used to fund an additional YJS worker, a Restorative Justice Practitioner and a Speech and Language Therapist to strengthen the offer to children on the cusp of the justice system.
- The Turnaround programme has enabled local implementation and consolidation of the police crime disposal option 'Outcome 22' for children with low level offences, as an alternative to a formal justice outcome.
- The YJS Speech and Language team's 'Re-Engage' programme provided speech and language assessments and support for children at risk of school exclusion. Funding was extended for a third year, to July 2027.
- Plans to establish local diversion options for children with motoring offences have not yet been finalised. 12% of First-Time Entrants in 2025/26 had motoring offences only.

Reducing over-representation of minority groups in the youth justice system:

- YJS performance data reporting is broken down by disadvantaged groups to check for any over-representation.
- Children in Care continue to be over-represented in our local youth justice system, in both local authorities. The proportion of Children in Care on the YJS caseload in March 2026 was 18.5% (compared to 22% in September 2025). Good practice in multi-agency work with Children in Care in the justice system has been identified and is being shared to ensure that it is applied consistently.

- Children from minority ethnicities are under-represented in the youth justice system in the Dorset Council area.
- In the second half of the past year, the percentage of children from minority ethnicities in the youth justice system in the BCP Council area has exceeded the percentage in the population (based on 2026 school census data). This data is being analysed and monitored to understand if this is a temporary issue and to look for possible reasons.
- Children from minority ethnicities are no longer over-represented among local children receiving custodial sentences.
- Amongst children remanded in custody, 1 out of 5 had mixed ethnicity and another had White European ethnicity.
- The DCYJS Head of Service represents DCYJS and other local YJS Managers in the Local Criminal Justice Boards' 'Wessex Disproportionality Group'.
- Dorset Police report annually to the YJS Partnership Board on the local use of stop and search and of strip search for children.
- Analysis of YJS Speech and Language assessments, explained later in this document, has improved understanding and responses to children's specific communication needs.
- Although girls are not over-represented in the justice system, they have specific needs which require tailored support. The YJS successfully ran its first 'Girls Group' in 2025, with more groups planned for 2026.

<u>Improve education outcomes for children in the youth justice system:</u>

- During the past year we have expanded the Discover You project at Upton Country Park. The project supports children and young people who are not in employment, education or training. Young people have worked on Maths and English qualifications, prepared for their CSCS card assessments, gained AQA awards, developed an allotment area, and worked on conservation.
- The use of AQA awards to certificate learning by young people during YJS activities has continued to develop, with the award moderation process now established.
- YJS Education Officers, and their line manager, now meet regularly with the allocated worker for all YJS children to review the child's education, training or employment and to take actions as required.
- The weekly ETE Allocations meeting enables a swift response to emerging issues, such as the risk of exclusion.

<u>Earlier identification of speech, language and communication needs for children at risk of school exclusion:</u>

- The 'Re-Engage' project offers speech and language assessments, alongside an offer of coaching and training for school staff, for children at risk of school exclusion, before they are known to the YJS.
- 152 children have been referred to the project, from 26 schools across both local authorities, by the end of March 2026.
- 90 assessments had been completed by March 2026. 78% of the children assessed were identified as having communication needs. These needs had not previously been identified.
- 29% were identified as having significant communication needs, such as Developmental Language Disorder.
- Support and training had been provided to 24 schools.
- 48 children had received additional coaching, delivered jointly with a member of the school's teaching staff.

Increasing public awareness and confidence in work undertaken by children to repair the harm from their offence

- The YJS Community Resources team have increased the number of local community projects and settings where children undertake activities to repair the harm from their offence
- We now work with 12 community organisations across the BCP Council and Dorset Council areas
- Over £2,000 was raised from the sales of items made by children as part of their repairing the harm work in 2025. Donations will be made to charities and organisations to benefit our communities, directed when possible by the victims of the children's offences.
- Community projects and children have given positive feedback about their experience with our repairing the harm activities.

4.2 Performance

DCYJS was inspected in late 2022 under the HMI Probation 'Full Joint Inspection' framework. The inspection report was published in January 2023, rating the service as 'Good'. The inspection report can be found at this link: A joint inspection of youth offending services in Dorset (justiceinspectorates.gov.uk).

DCYJS was also inspected in February 2025 as part of a national thematic inspection of work with children on 'Out of Court Disposals'. The inspection report, published in October 2025, highlighted good practice in Dorset in respect of partnership work between Dorset Police and DCYJS, local evaluation of Out of Court Disposal, work to engage victims, and support for children's speech, language and communication needs.

The three primary key performance indicators for youth justice partnerships are:

- The rate of first time entrants to the criminal justice system.
- The rate and frequency of reoffending by children in the criminal justice system.
- The use of custodial sentences.

The YJB publish quarterly performance data for youth justice services, compiled nationally, in relation to these three indicators. The information reported below is drawn from the data published in March 2026 for the period ending December 2025.

First Time Entrants

A 'First-Time Entrant' is a child receiving a formal criminal justice outcome for the first time. A Youth Caution, a Youth Conditional Caution or a court outcome all count as a formal criminal justice outcome.

Dorset Police and DCYJS look for opportunities to divert children from the justice system, by using informal justice outcomes, which do not make the child a First-Time Entrant. It is recognised that receiving a formal justice outcome is in itself detrimental for children.

Dorset Police, DCYJS and other children's services work closely together to decide the appropriate outcome for a child who has committed a criminal offence. Whenever possible we seek to use an informal option which does not criminalise the child.

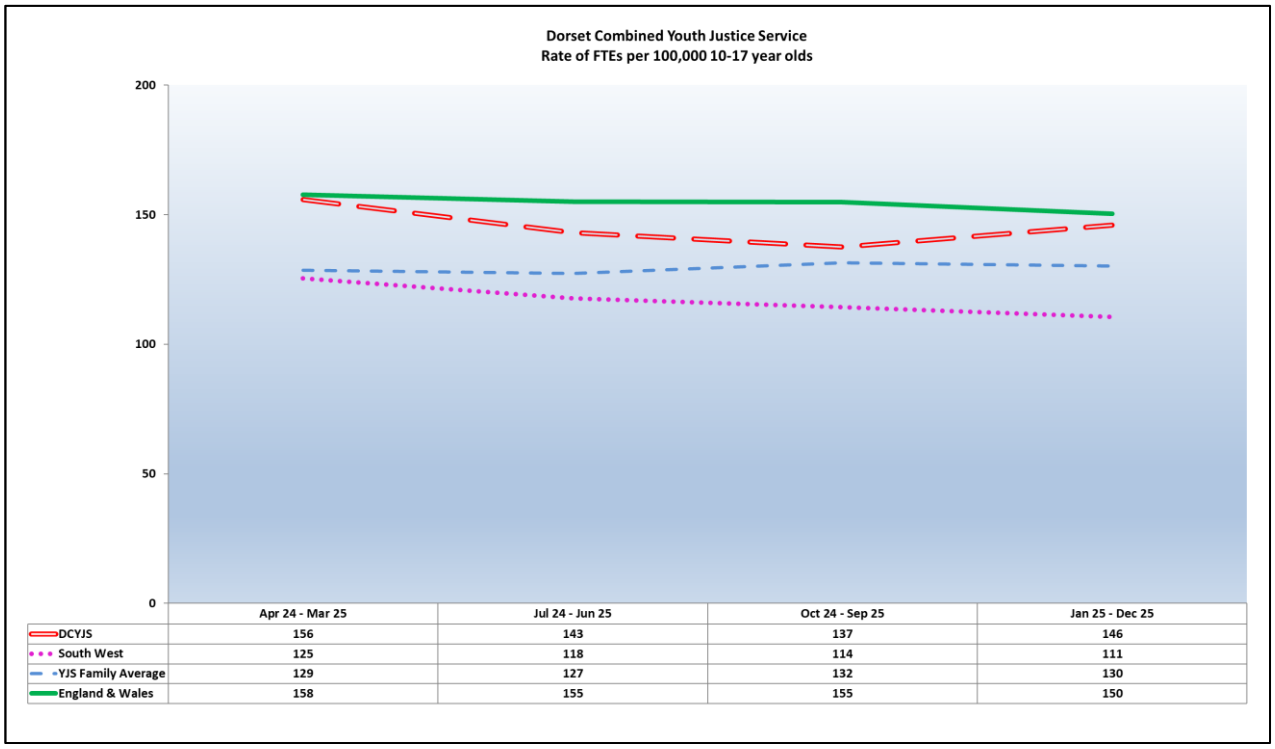
HMI Probation published an Effective Practice Guide in October 2025, as part of their thematic inspection of work with children on Out of Court Disposals. The Effective Practice Guide identified our local joint-decision making arrangements as an example of good practice. The Guide stated that the Dorset decision-making model "*provided a consistent, auditable, and child-centred approach to OoCDs, balancing the needs of the child, the victim, and public safety*".

National Performance Data

National performance data for First-Time Entrants is drawn from the YJB's uploads of information from YJS case management systems.

In the past, DCYJS had a noticeably higher rate of First-Time Entrants than the national and regional averages. In recent years there has been a consistent and sustained reduction in local First Time Entrants, with DCYJS now having a lower rate than the national average.

The following chart shows the last four quarters of national First-Time Entrants data, with a consistent rate of around 145 First-Time Entrants per 100,000 10-17 year-olds. This compares to a rate of 234 First-Time Entrants per 100,000 10-17 year-olds in the year to December 2022.



	Apr 24 - Mar 25	Jul 24 - Jun 25	Oct 24 - Sep 25	Jan 25 - Dec 25
DCYJS	156	143	137	146
South West	125	118	114	111
YJS Family Average	129	127	132	130
England & Wales	158	155	155	150

Local Performance Data

DCYJS tracks data on its own case management system to monitor the number and characteristics of children entering the justice system. Local data shows a significant reduction in the number of children entering the justice system compared to the year before the pandemic:

Year	BCP First Time Entrants	Dorset First Time Entrants	Total DCYJS First Time Entrants	% Difference from previous year
2019-20	104	78	**182**	
2020-21	78	48	**126**	-30.8%
2021-22	77	47	**124**	-1.6%
2022-23	79	39	**118**	-4.8%
2023-24	52	56	**108**	-8.5%
2024-25	58	49	**107**	-0.9%
2025-26	56	48	**104**	-2.8%

The overall trend of reducing numbers of First-Time Entrants continued in 2025/26, though there may be limited scope for further reductions.

There was a notable reduction in First-Time Entrants in BCP in 2023-24, which has been sustained since then.

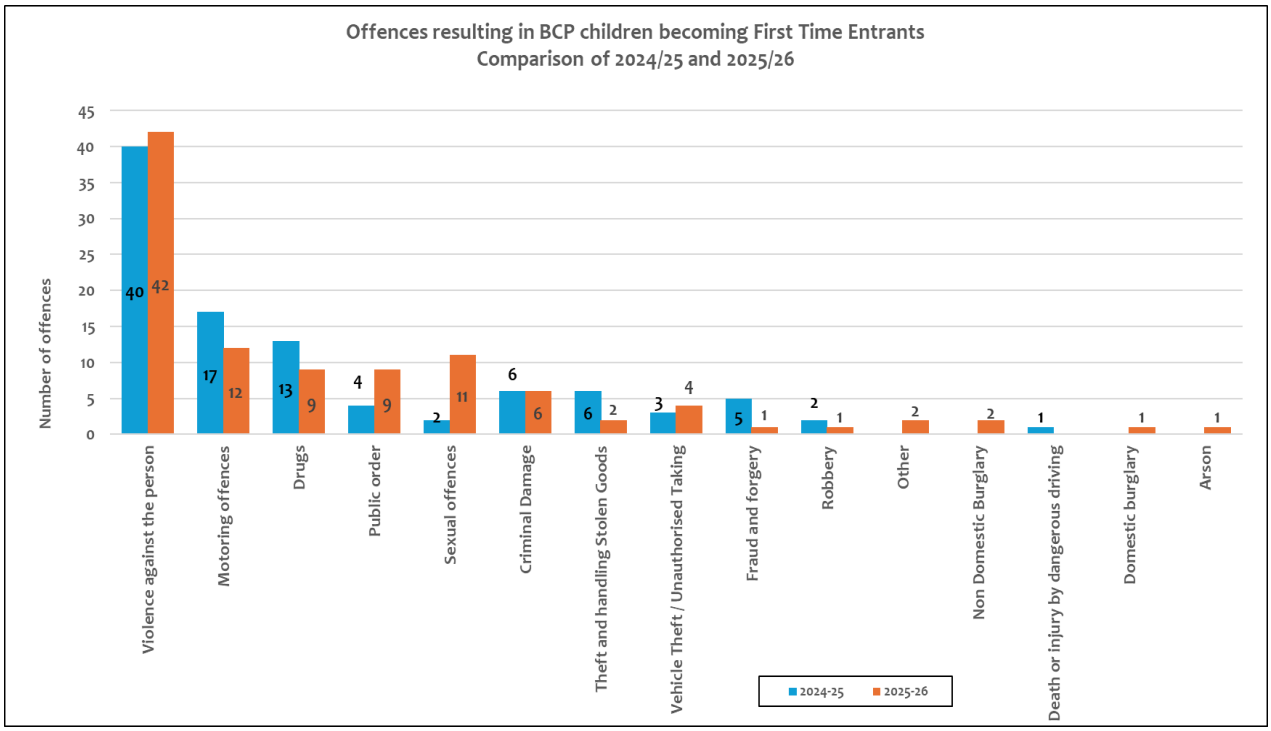
The increase in Dorset First-Time Entrants in 2023-24 reflected delays in the previous year in dealing with some older offences. Numbers of First-Time Entrants have been stable in Dorset since a significant reduction in 2020/21.

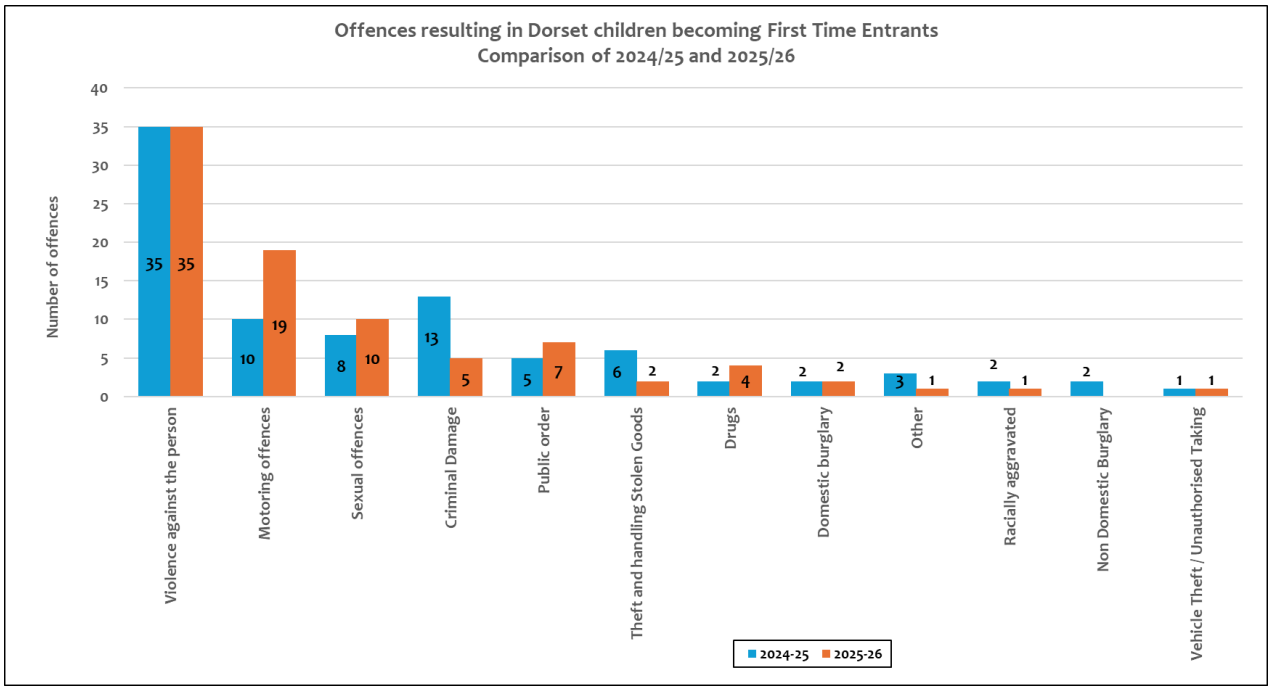
Offences Leading to Children Entering the Justice System

Decisions about whether to offer a diversion option, instead of a caution or court appearance, depend to some extent on the type of offence committed by the child.

If a child is found in possession of a weapon they will receive a formal outcome in almost every instance, unless significantly exceptional circumstances apply. The new Knife Crime Guidance which applies from April 2026 requires almost all children with a knife possession offence to receive either a Youth Conditional Caution or a court outcome. In practice this does not represent a significant change of policy in Dorset, whereas some other areas have been using diversion options for knife offences. Those areas are likely to see an increase in their First-Time Entrants rate from April 2026.

The following charts shows the offences which led to children in each local authority becoming First-Time Entrants during the past year. The number of offences exceeds the number of children because some children committed multiple offences.





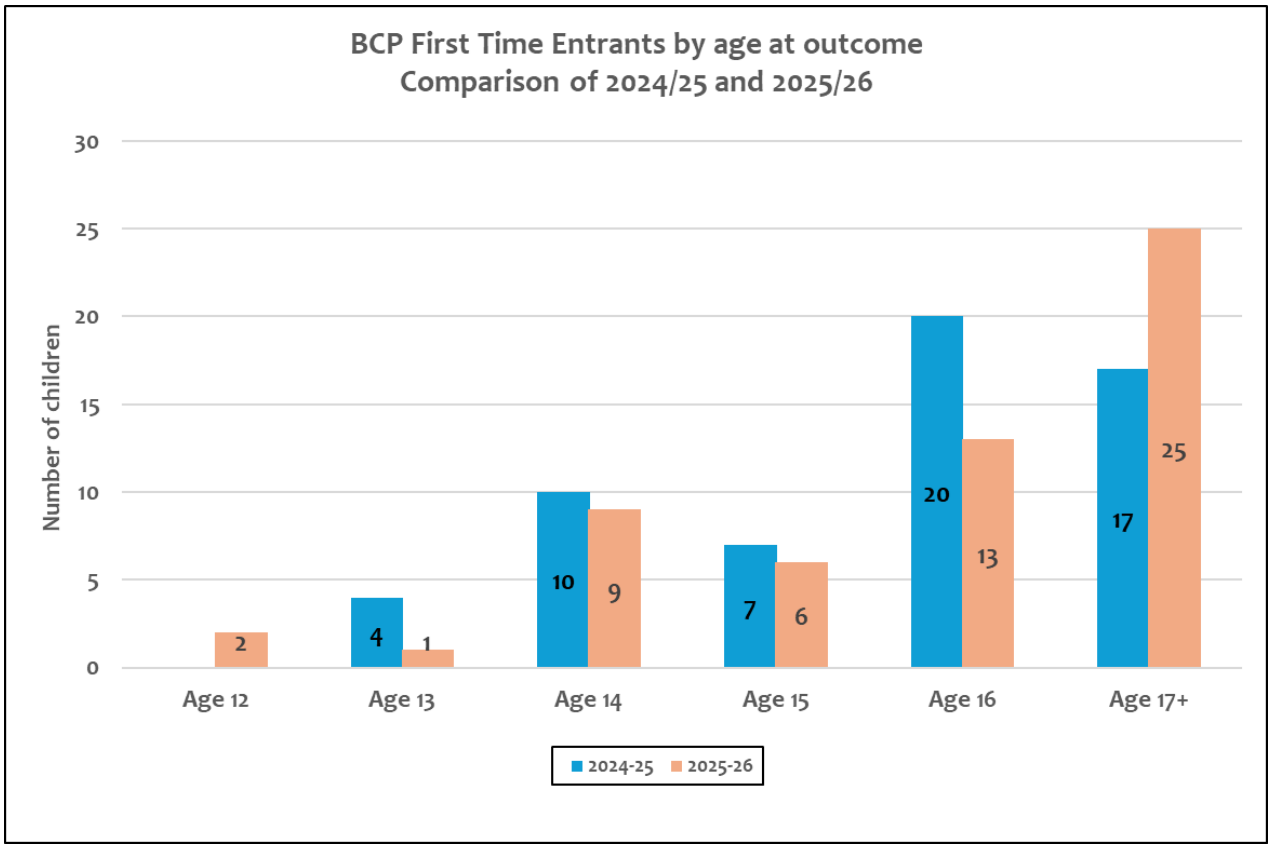
Offences involving possession or use of a weapon, or assaults on emergency workers, are included in the 'Violence against the Person' category and in almost all cases result in a caution or court disposal. Diversion options for these offence types are only considered in exceptional circumstances. The numbers of Violence against the Person offences leading to children becoming First-Time Entrants has remained stable in both local authorities over the past two years, after a notable reduction compared to 2023/24.

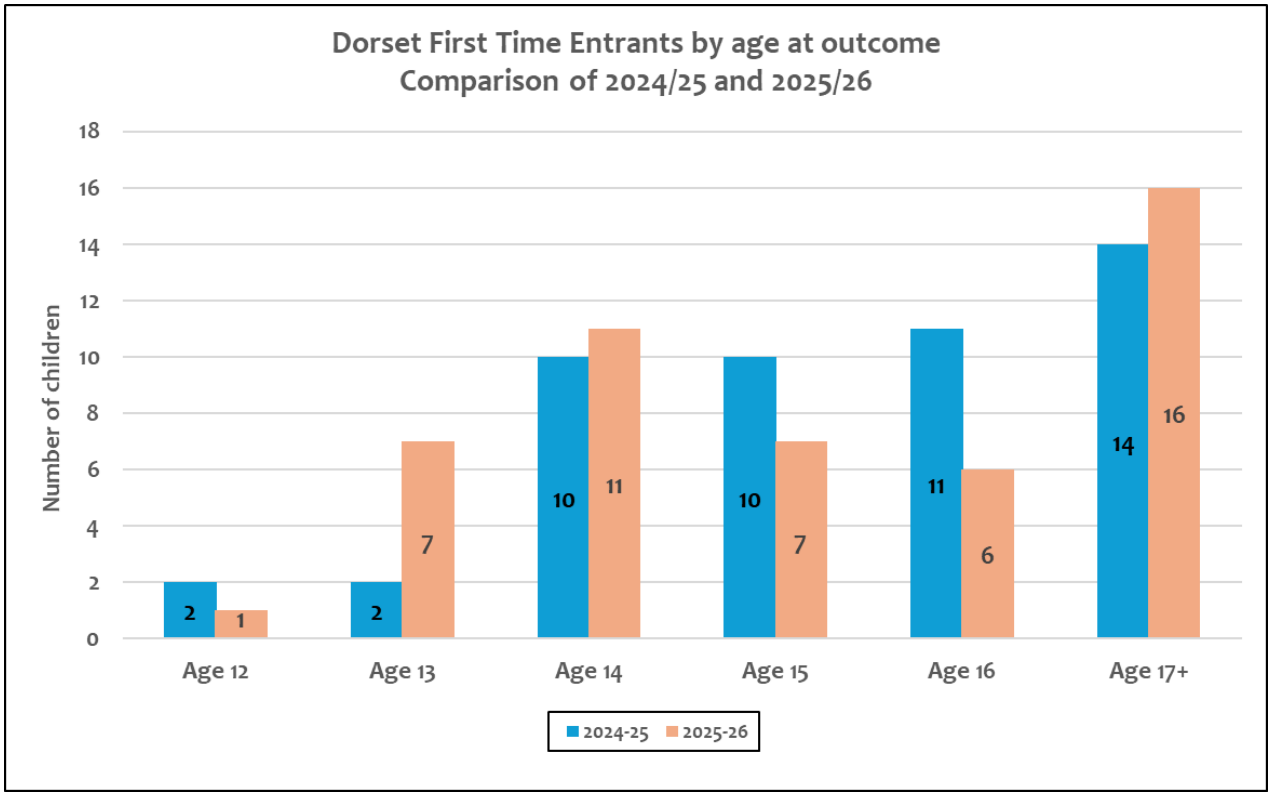
There was an increase in sexual offences in 2025/26. 6 children committed a total of 21 offences across both local authorities. 3 of the children committed contact sexual offences, the other 3 committed offences involving indecent images.

Some children are counted as entering the justice system for motoring offences which result in a court appearance for points to be added to the young person's driver's licence. DCYJS and Dorset Police are working locally and regionally, with support from the Youth Justice Board, to agree diversion options for young people with motoring offences.

Age of Children Entering the Justice System

The following charts show the ages of First-Time Entrants in each local authority in the past two years. There has been a shift in recent years in that the age of First-Time Entrants in the BCP Council area has been rising, so that 68% of BCP First-Time Entrants are now aged 16 or 17. Conversely, the age for First-Time Entrants in Dorset has been falling, so that 46% are aged 16 or 17, and 40% are aged 14 or under.

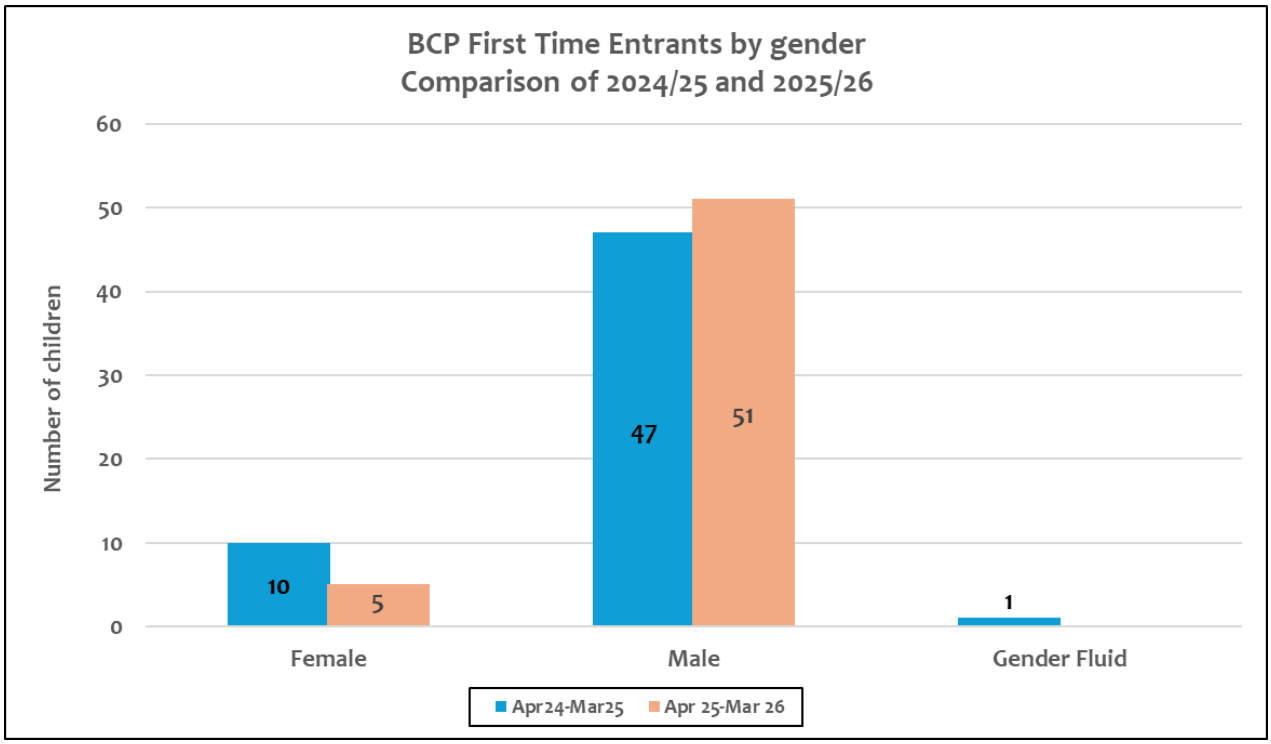


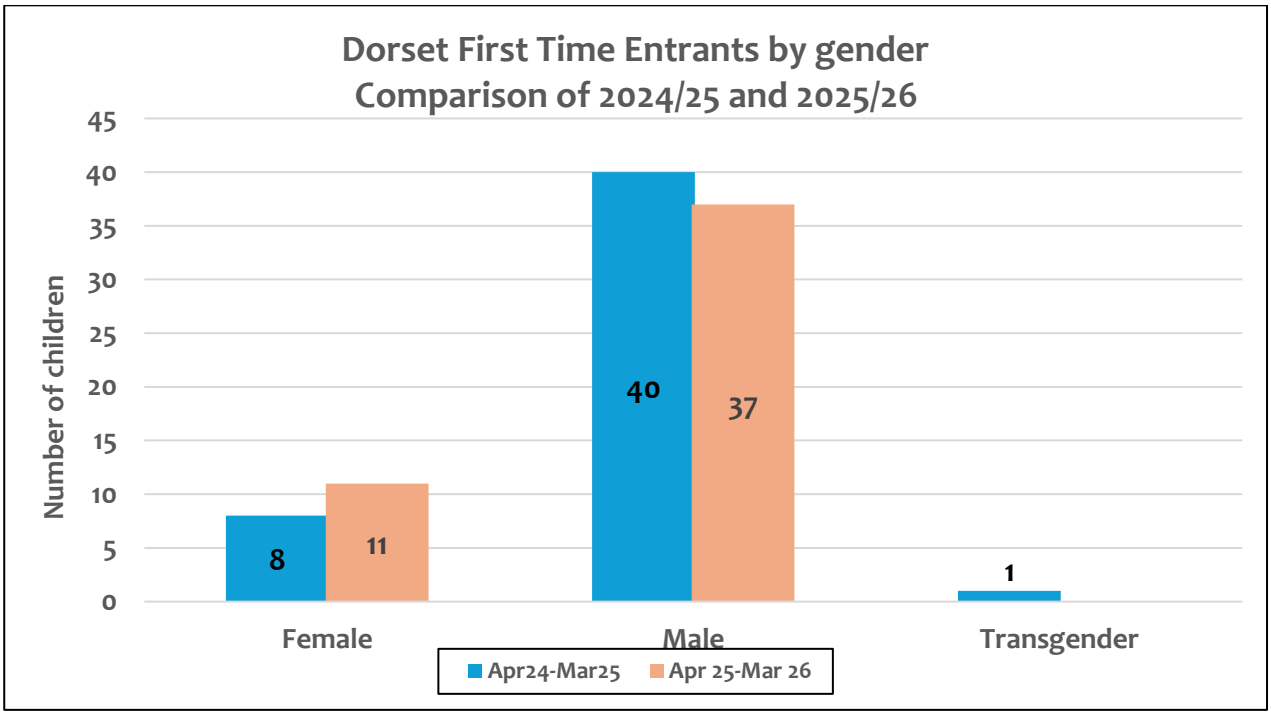


Previous analysis has shown that children who enter the justice system before the age of 14 are likely to have complex needs and may go on to commit further, more serious offences. During 2024-25, a total of 8 children under the age of 14 entered the justice system across our two local authorities. This year, 2025-26, saw a total of 11 children under the age of 14 who entered the justice system, with a notable increase in young First-Time Entrants in the Dorset Council area.

Gender of Children Entering the Justice System

The following charts show the gender of First-Time Entrants in each local authority over the past two years.

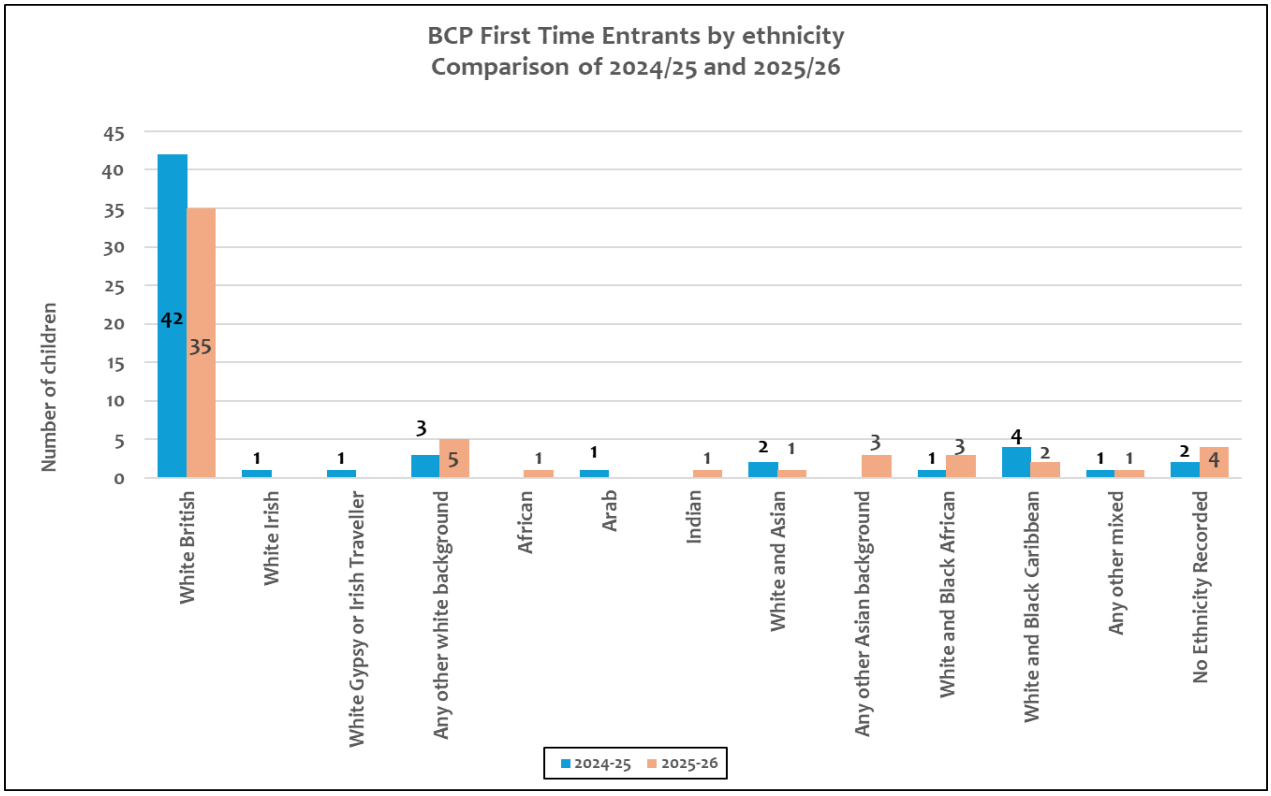




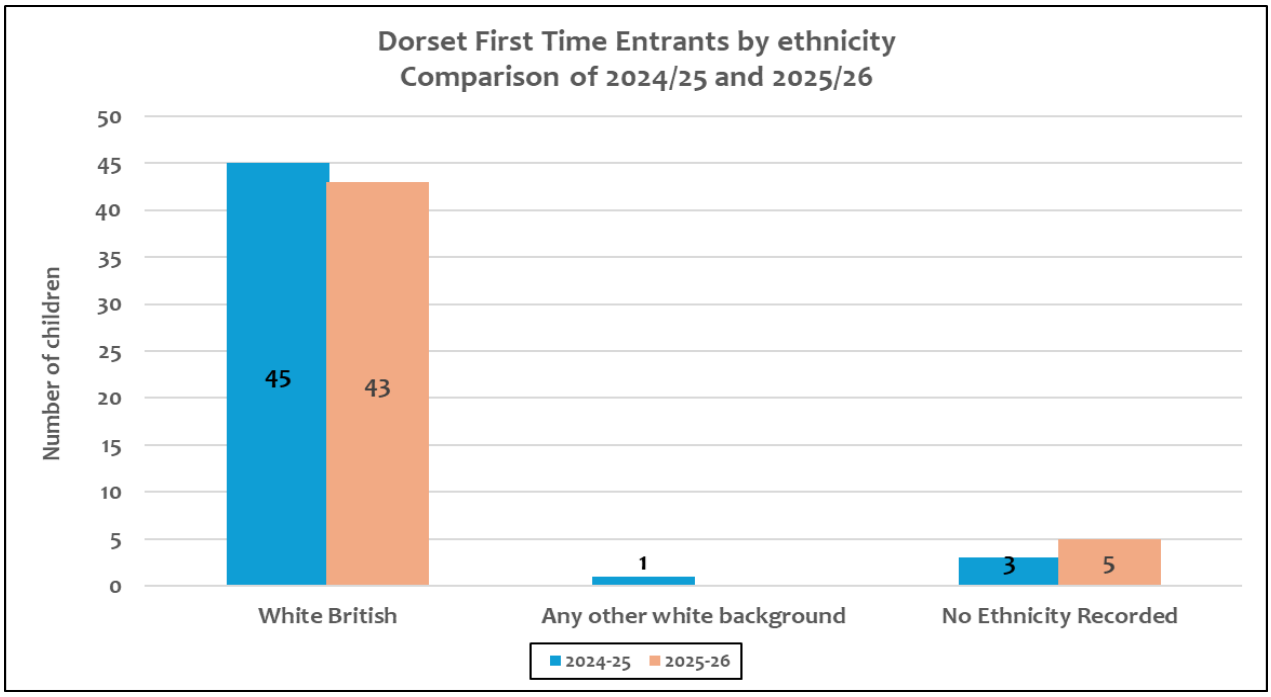
The proportion of girls on the YJS caseload is usually around 18-20%. The low numbers of First-Time Entrants mean that small shifts in numbers can disproportionately affect the percentage figures. The charts show that there has been a drop in the numbers and proportion of girls among BCP Council First-Time Entrants, making up 9% of the total in the past year. There has been an increase in the numbers and proportion of girls among Dorset Council First-Time Entrants, making up 23% of the total in the past year.

Ethnicity of Children Entering the Justice System

The following charts show the recorded ethnicity of children entering the justice system. Ethnicity recording is taken from the child's self-definition. In some instances the YJS has no contact with the child, such as when a child is taken to court for a motoring offence and receives a fine or a discharge. In this situation, ethnicity is based either on information from the Police or is described as No Ethnicity Recorded.



The proportion of First-Time Entrants with Black, Asian or mixed ethnicity has risen in the BCP Council area from 16% in 2024/25 to 21% in 2025/26, an increase from 8 to 11 children. Data from the January 2026 school census shows that 17.8% of BCP children are from 'non-white backgrounds'. There is therefore now a slight over-representation of these children amongst those entering the justice system. Section 6.1 of this document provides more analysis of the ethnicity of children on the YJS caseload.



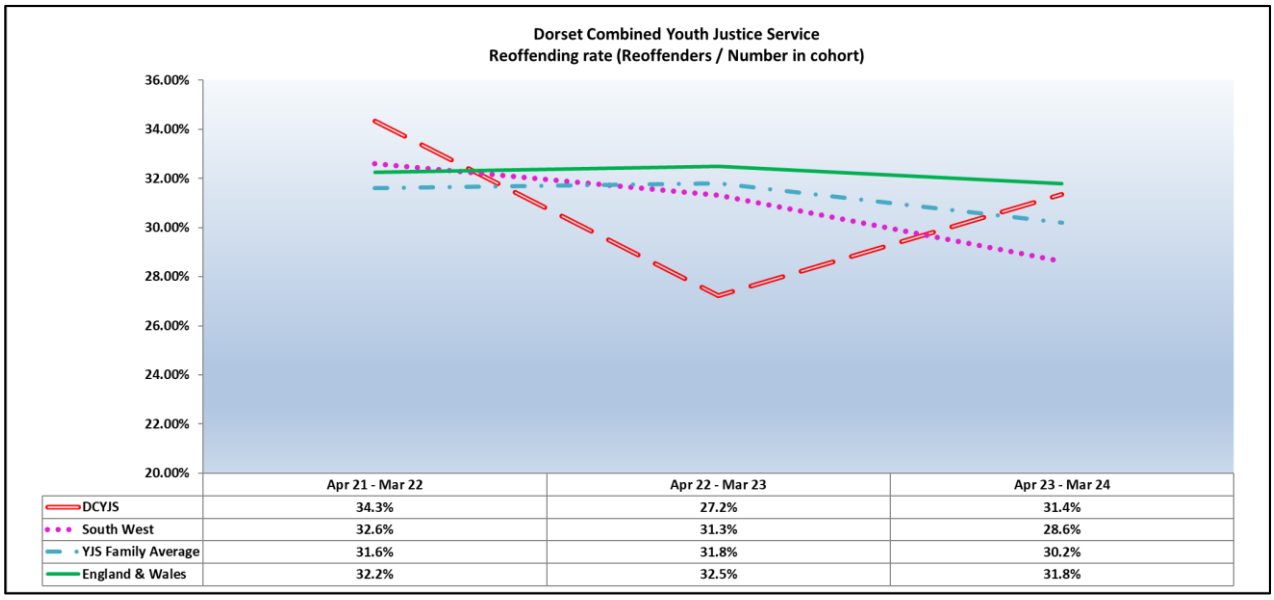
In the Dorset Council area, the January 2026 school census shows that 6.3% of children are from 'non-white backgrounds'. This compares to 100% of Dorset First-Time Entrants either identifying as White British or having No Ethnicity Recorded.

Rate of Proven Reoffending

National re-offending data is published in two formats: the 'binary' rate shows the proportion of children in the cohort who go on to be convicted for subsequent offences in the 12 months after their previous justice outcome; the 'frequency' rate shows the average number of offences per reoffender.

Reoffending data is necessarily delayed in order to allow time to see if the child is reconvicted and for that later outcome to be recorded. The following data therefore relates to children with whom the service worked up to March 2024.

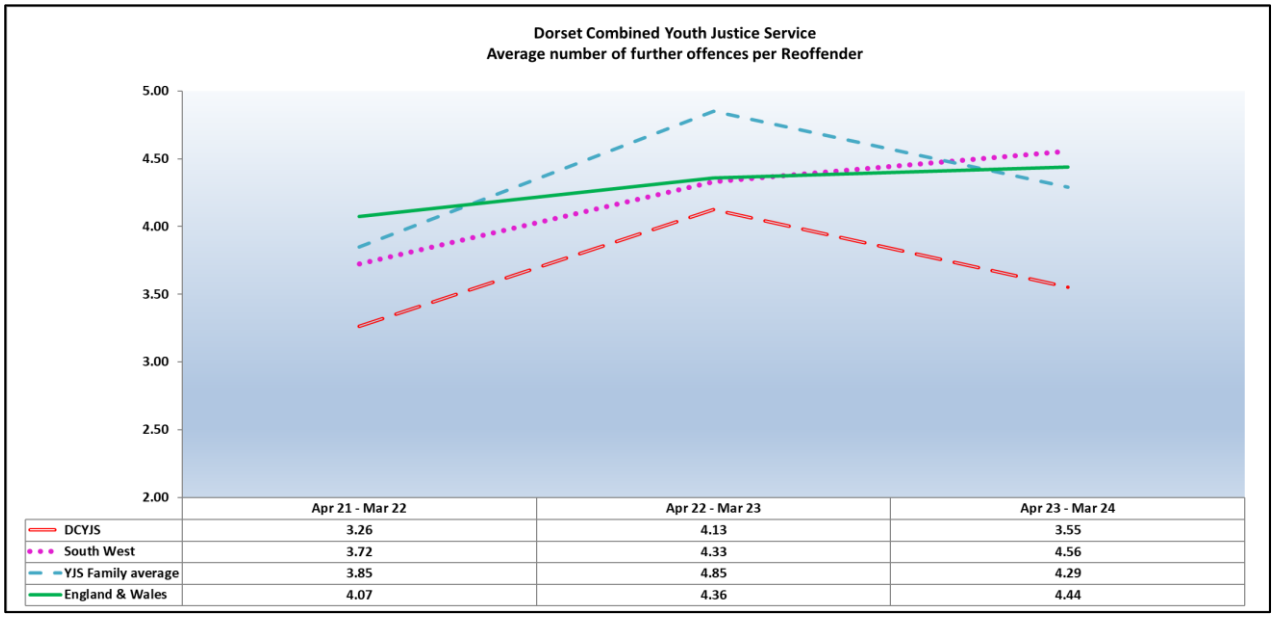
Reoffending rate (Reoffenders/Number in cohort)



	Apr 21 - Mar 22	Apr 22 - Mar 23	Apr 23 - Mar 24
DCYJS	34.3%	27.2%	31.4%
South West	32.6%	31.3%	28.6%
YJS Family Average	31.6%	31.8%	30.2%
England & Wales	32.2%	32.5%	31.8%

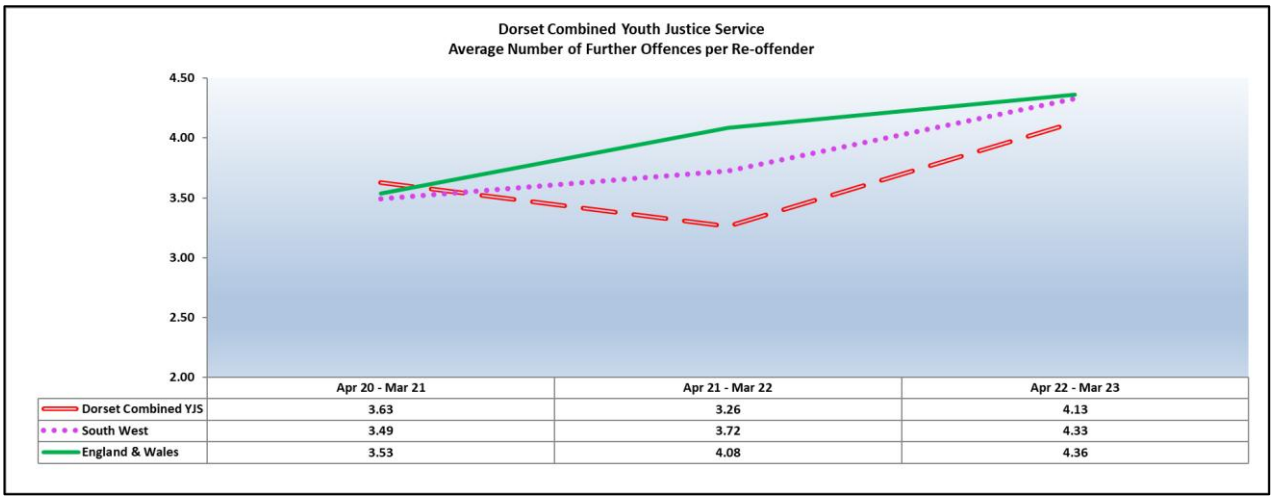
The binary reoffending rate for the most recent year, to March 2024, shows an increase on the previous year, reflecting the fluctuations in this data measure. DCYJS performance sits between the regional, national and 'YJS Family' averages.

Reoffences/Reoffenders



	Apr 21 - Mar 22	Apr 22 - Mar 23	Apr 23 - Mar 24
DCYJS	3.26	4.13	3.55
South West	3.72	4.33	4.56
YJS Family average	3.85	4.85	4.29
England & Wales	4.07	4.36	4.44

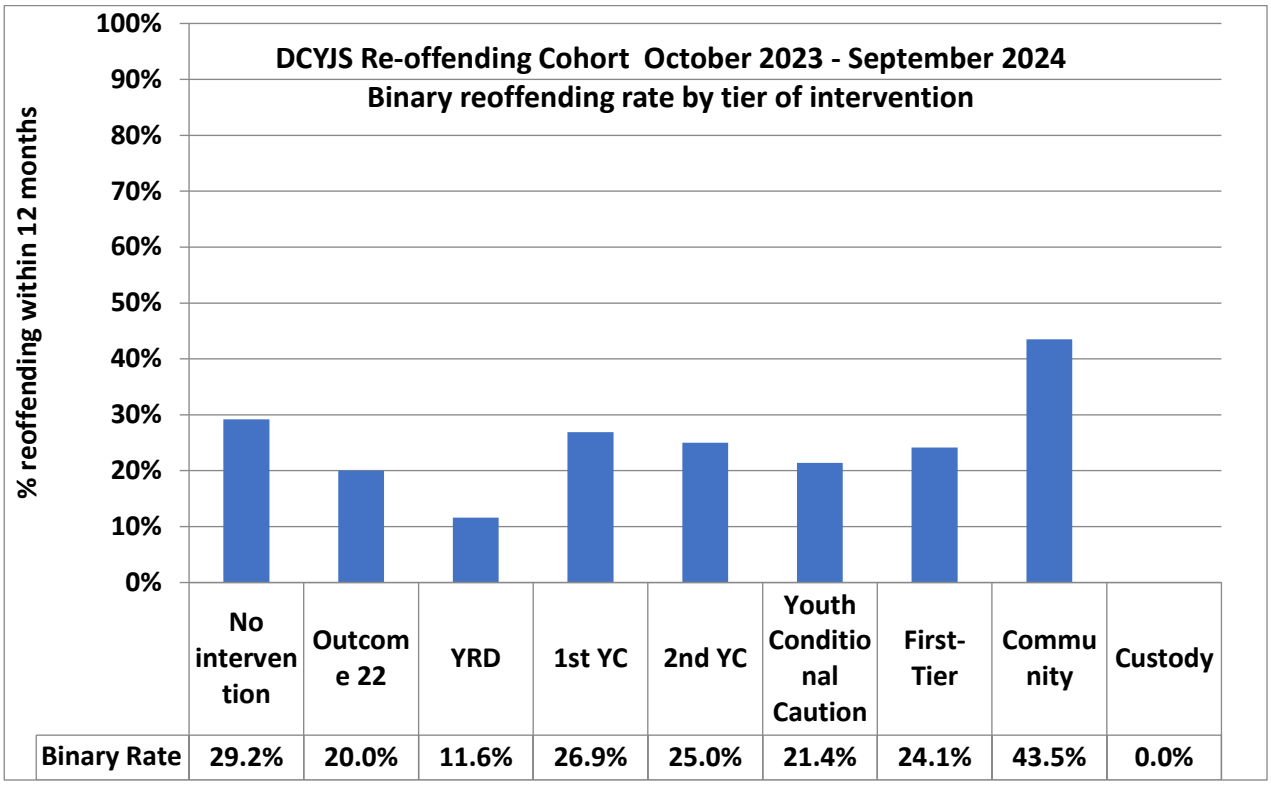
There has been a reduction in the average number of offences per reoffender. DCYJS has remains below the regional, national and YJS Family averages for this measure.



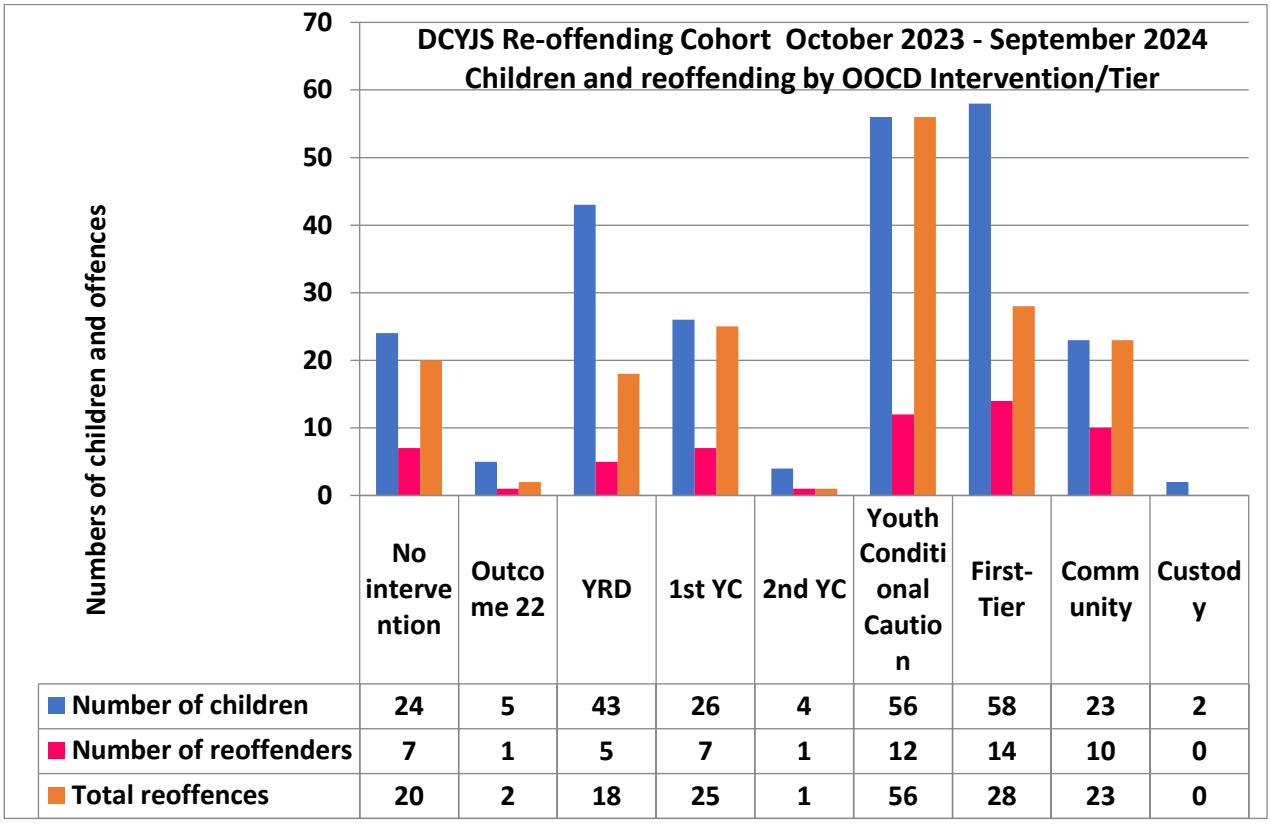
	Apr 20 - Mar 21	Apr 21 - Mar 22	Apr 22 - Mar 23
Dorset Combined YJS	3.63	3.26	4.13
South West	3.49	3.72	4.33
England & Wales	3.53	4.08	4.36

Local data, stored on the DCYJS case management system, can also be scrutinised to show information about reoffending. Our latest analysis, in March 2026, looked at children on the DCYJS caseload between October 2023 and September 2024, giving us a more detailed understanding of reoffending by local children and showing outcomes for children who have had more recent contact with the justice system.

Analysis of reoffending by disposal type, on the following charts, shows that informal, diversion options have the lowest rate of reoffending (nb 'Outcome 22' is a police recording code, showing that no further action was taken but the child received an intervention to prevent future offending; 'YRD' refers to a Youth Restorative Disposal, the local name for a Community Resolution, which is also known as Outcome 8). It should be noted, however, that diversion options may be more likely for children with a lower risk of reoffending.



	No intervention	Outcome 22	YRD	1st YC	2nd YC	Youth Conditional Caution	First-Tier	Community	Custody
Binary Rate	29.2%	20.0%	11.6%	26.9%	25.0%	21.4%	24.1%	43.5%	0.0%



	No intervention	Outcome 22	YRD	1st YC	2nd YC	Youth Conditional Caution	First-Tier	Community	Custody
Number of children	24	5	43	26	4	56	58	23	2
Number of reoffenders	7	1	5	7	1	12	14	10	0
Total reoffences	20	2	18	25	1	56	28	23	0

Local reoffending data in March 2026 also shows that:

- 10-14 year-olds are more likely to reoffend than other age groups. The rate of reoffending drops each year as children get older.
- Boys are more likely to reoffend than girls (26.9% of boys reoffended, compared to 7.5% of girls).

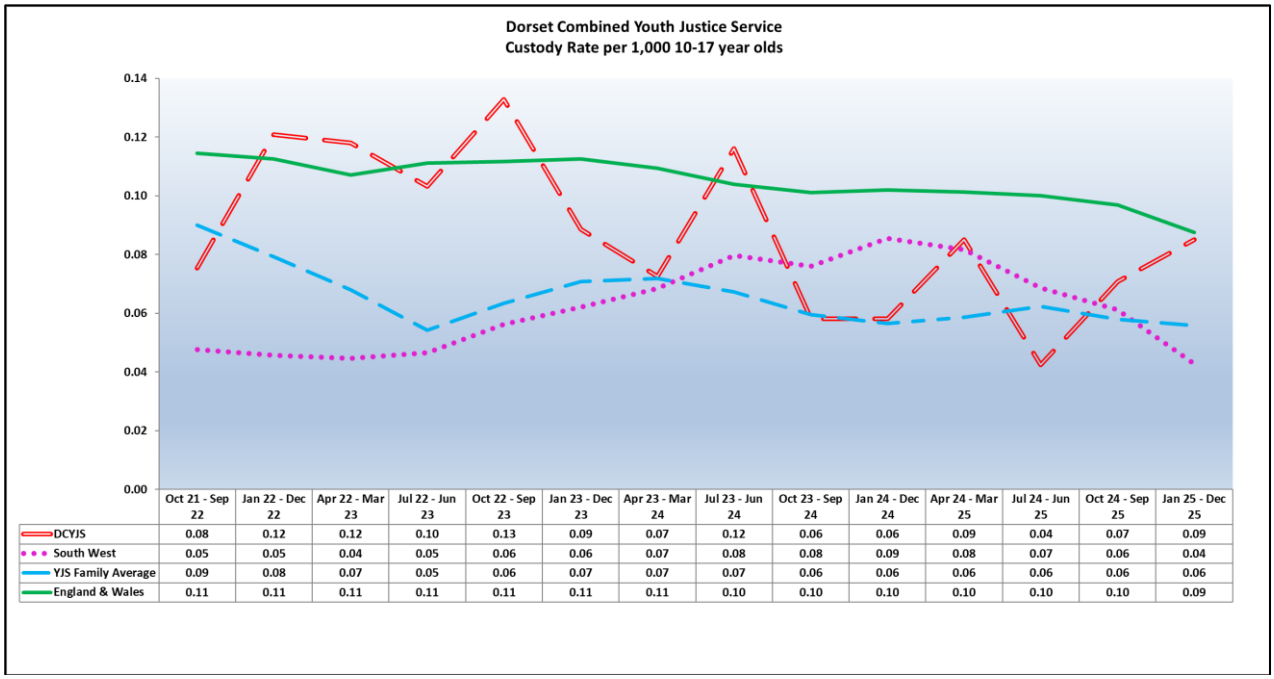
- Although fewer girls reoffend, the average number of further offences per reoffender is higher for girls (5.67 further offences) than for boys (2.89 further offences)
- Black and mixed heritage children show a lower reoffending rate and frequency than white children, but the numbers of black and mixed heritage children are low, meaning each child has a greater impact on the percentage rates.
- Children in the Dorset Council area had a higher reoffending rate and frequency than children in the BCP Council area.
- Children who were currently or previously in care were more likely to reoffend (44%) than children who had never been in care (19%).
- Children who committed criminal damage, non-dwelling burglary, robbery, or theft offences had higher rates of reoffending than children who committed other types of offence.
- Children who committed violence against the person offences had the lowest rates of reoffending amongst offence types that saw further offending
- 39% of reoffenders committed less serious further offences, 28% committed offences of the same seriousness and 33% committed more serious offences.

Analysis of local reoffending data helps the YJS to focus its work and to identify groups who may need additional attention.

Use of Custodial Sentences

DCYJS continues to see low numbers of children sentenced to custody.

The latest national data is copied below. The context of this data is a large reduction over recent years in the number of children in custody in England and Wales. This means that small changes in numbers can have a noticeable effect on the local and national rates.



	Oct 21 - Sep 22	Jan 22 - Dec 22	Apr 22 - Mar 23	Jul 22 - Jun 23	Oct 22 - Sep 23	Jan 23 - Dec 23	Apr 23 - Mar 24	Jul 23 - Jun 24	Oct 23 - Sep 24	Jan 24 - Dec 24	Apr 24 - Mar 25	Jul 24 - Jun 25	Oct 24 - Sep 25	Jan 25 - Dec 25
DCYJS	0.08	0.12	0.12	0.10	0.13	0.09	0.07	0.12	0.06	0.06	0.09	0.04	0.07	0.09
South West	0.05	0.05	0.04	0.05	0.06	0.06	0.07	0.08	0.08	0.09	0.08	0.07	0.06	0.04
YJS Family Average	0.09	0.08	0.07	0.05	0.06	0.07	0.07	0.07	0.06	0.06	0.06	0.06	0.06	0.06
England & Wales	0.11	0.11	0.11	0.11	0.11	0.11	0.11	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.09

The above chart shows the latest available national data. Our own YJS data shows that a total of 7 children and young people received custodial sentences during 2025/26 (5 from BCP Council, 2 from Dorset Council).

The trauma-informed approach to youth justice work encourages us to ask “what happened to you?” rather than “what’s wrong with you?”. In this context, it is interesting to look at some of the common experiences of these 7 children and young people, illustrated in the following table.

Characteristics of children sentenced to custody during 2025/26

Gender	Ethnicity	Age at sentence	Remand in custody pre-sentence	Age at 1st justice disposal	Number of past justice disposals	Social care status pre-sentence	CE status	SLCN	SEND status	Perm Exclusion	CAMHS contact pre-sentence	Substance use	Local authority
M	White British	18	Y	15	5	CiC	Sig	Y	EHCP	Y	Y	Y	Dorset
M	White British	17	N	14	8	CiC	Sig	Y	EHCP	Y	Y	Y	Dorset
M	White British	17	Y	14	6	CP	Sig	Y	EHCP	Y	Y	Y	BCP
M	White British	17	N	13	5	CiC	Sig	Y	SEN support	Y	N	Y	BCP
M	White British	15	N	11	10	CP	Sig	Y	EHCP	Y	Y	Y	BCP
M	White British	18	Y	12	5	CiC	Sig	Y	EHCP	Y	Y	Y	BCP
M	White Other	18	Y	14	1	CiC	Mod	Y	EHCP	Y	Y	Y	BCP

CE = Child Exploitation
SLCN = Speech, Language and Communication Needs
SEND = Special Educational Needs and Disabilities
CAMHS = Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service
CiC – Child in Care
CP = Child Protection
EHCP = Education, Health and Care Plan

This table shows clearly that children receiving custodial sentences are boys who have experienced harm in their earlier lives, who have special educational needs and communication needs, leading to permanent exclusion from school, mental health difficulties, substance use, experiencing harm outside the home and recurring youth justice involvement from a young age. The combination of multiple disadvantages, alongside the absence of protective factors, increases the chances of children experiencing negative outcomes such as spending time in custody. This information also helps the YJS and its partners to direct their work and resources for children at earlier stages of YJS involvement, and perhaps before YJS involvement.

Section 6.1 of this document provides further analysis of the over-representation of some groups of childre in the local youth justice system, and actions being taken.

New Youth Justice Key Performance Indicators

The Youth Justice Board introduced a new set of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to be collected from April 2023. The following measures are reported:

- Accommodation – the percentage of children in suitable accommodation.
- Education, training and employment (ETE) – the percentage of children attending a suitable ETE arrangement.
- SEND – the percentage of children with SEND who are in suitable ETE with a current, formal learning plan in place.
- Mental healthcare and emotional wellbeing – the percentage of children identified as needing an intervention to improve their mental health or emotional wellbeing and the percentage being offered and attending interventions.
- Substance Use – the percentage of children identified as needing an intervention to address subtance misuse and the percentage being offered and attending interventions.
- Out of Court Disposals – the percentage of out of court disposals that are completed or not completed.
- Management Board attendance – the attendance of senior representatives from partner agencies and if partners contribute data from their services to identify ethnic and racial disproportionality.

- Wider services – the percentage of YJS children who are currently on an Early Help plan, on a Child Protection Plan, classified as a Child in Need or a Child in Care.
- Serious Violence – the rates of children convicted for a serious violence offence on the YJS caseload.
- Victims – the percentage of victims who consent to be contacted by the YJS; of those, the percentage who are engaged with about restorative justice opportunities, asked their views prior to out of court disposal decision-making and planning for statutory court orders, provided with information about the progress of the child's case (when requested) and provided with information on appropriate support services (when requested).

The new KPIs have required significant additional work to adapt recording systems and to adjust recording practices. The consistency, accuracy and usefulness of this data remains a work in progress. The YJB stated in March 2025 that the data collected nationally in 2023/24 and 2024/25 is 'low quality and cannot be used for analysis, reporting, and decision-making'. The data from 2025/26 remains problematic in respect of accuracy, consistency and usefulness. It is hoped that usable data will eventually become available.

4.3 Risks and issues

Like other youth justice services, DCYJS operates in a context of system challenges and resource pressures.

Current issues and future risks being faced by DCYJS include the following:

Issue/risk facing DCYJS	Actions being taken in response
Resource pressures – YJ Grant frozen for 4 years to 2029, local authority contributions frozen, costs rising.	Seek staffing reductions when posts become vacant. Look for savings on non-staffing budgets. Seek additional income sources.
Adverse changes to YJB data recording requirements and removal of YJB 'YDS' data reports. Case management system changes which lead to reduced system agility and increased cost.	Use links with the YJB to promote better decision-making on data recording and reporting. Review system procurement. Implement local mitigations to protect against deficits caused by YJB and supplier decisions.
Flawed YJB instructions regarding the use of national assessment tools, conflicting guidance on risk and safety between the two tools, no ability to pull assessments through from one assessment tool to the other.	Decide local approach to selection of which assessment tool to use. Implement local guidance for consistency and defensibility of risk and safety assessments. Stick with same assessment tool for the child rather than swapping when justice disposal changes.
Children on bail/RUI during lengthy police investigations for complex offences, such as weapon offences and sexual offences.	Use Serious Violence Duty funding to add resources, to enable work with children during the investigation phase for weapon, violent or sexual offences. Use Bridges project to complete speech and language assessments alongside this work.
White Paper on Youth Justice Reforms leads to setbacks on the progress made in youth justice in recent years.	Support and contribute to advice to ministers from the Association of YOT Managers. Make early plans for implementation of reforms, working with local partners in criminal justice and children's services.

5 Plans for the year ahead

5.1 'Child First' practice

DCYJS applies 'Child First' practice principles to underpin its work. The Child First approach is embedded in the YJB national guidance documents 'Standards for Children in the Youth Justice System' and 'Case Management Guidance'. These documents direct the work of youth justice services.

The Child First approach is built on evidence demonstrating its effectiveness to prevent offending by children who are at risk of entering the justice system and to reduce offending by the small number of children who do enter the youth justice system. The research evidence is summarised in this document: https://www.lboro.ac.uk/subjects/social-policy-studies/research/child-first-justice/.

DCYJS supports these principles and promotes them in its own work and in its interactions with local partners in children's services and the youth justice system.

The Child First approach has four tenets, listed below.

The ABCD of Child First practice	Examples of how DCYJS implements this in our work
As children: recognise how children are developmentally different from adults and require different support.	*DCYJS interactions with children are adapted to each child, based on the child's developmental stage and communication needs, using trauma formulations and Speech and Language assessments.*
Building pro-social identity: promote children's individual strengths and capacities to develop a pro-social identity, focusing on positive child outcomes rather than just trying to manage offending.	*During the past year, the DCYJS Activities Coordinator has helped the service to expand the range of positive activities available for children in the YJS and to build links with community organisations.* *DCYJS provides the 'Discover You' project at Upton Country Park, aimed at building children's skills, confidence and employability.* *The DCYJS 'Repairing the Harm' team has increased the number of community projects, such as the Big Yellow Bus Garden Project in Shillingstone, for children to feel valued for making a positive contribution to their community. One child said "It was fun to build something I thought I wouldn't be able to build".*
Collaborating with children: involve children meaningfully to encourage their investment, engagement and social inclusion.	*During the past year, the team has been working on how to involve the child meaningfully in shaping the plan for our work with them. A new Girls Group was started in 2025, designed with the girls who attended the group. Children identified that the YJS rooms at the East Howe Community Centre needed an overhaul. YJS workers and children jointly designed and decorated the rooms to create a child-friendly space.*
Diverting from stigma: promote supportive diversion from the criminal justice system where possible, or minimising stigma within	*The 'Turnaround' programme has helped us to embed the use of Outcome 22 to divert children from formal justice outcomes.*

it, as we know that stigma causes further offending	*YJS Speech and Language assessments are written on Dorset HealthCare documentation, without reference to the YJS, to avoid stigmatising the child.* *YJS AQA awards for children are registered under 'Dorset Understand Achieve Succeed'.*

The YJS is holding whole service workshops in April 2026 to review our progress in implementing Child First practice and to agree our next steps.

Appraisals objectives for YJS practitioners and managers for 2026/27 will be structured around the four tenets of Child First practice, to help to further embed these principles in our day-to-day work.

One of this Plan's strategic priorities for 2026/27 is to enhance Child First practice in our YJS partnership.

Voice of the child

DCYJS works collaboratively with children to hear their voice during their contact with our service. Case records are addressed to the child and quote their words, to ensure the child's voice is prominent.

The team's Speech and Language Therapists offer assessments of each child's communication needs, to help YJS workers to the child's voice and to adapt their work. The Speech and Language Therapists also advise colleagues in the YJS about how to work with each child.

'Talking Mats' are one of the resources which the Speech and Language team provides for YJS colleagues. Below is an example of a Talking Mat for good sleep habits:



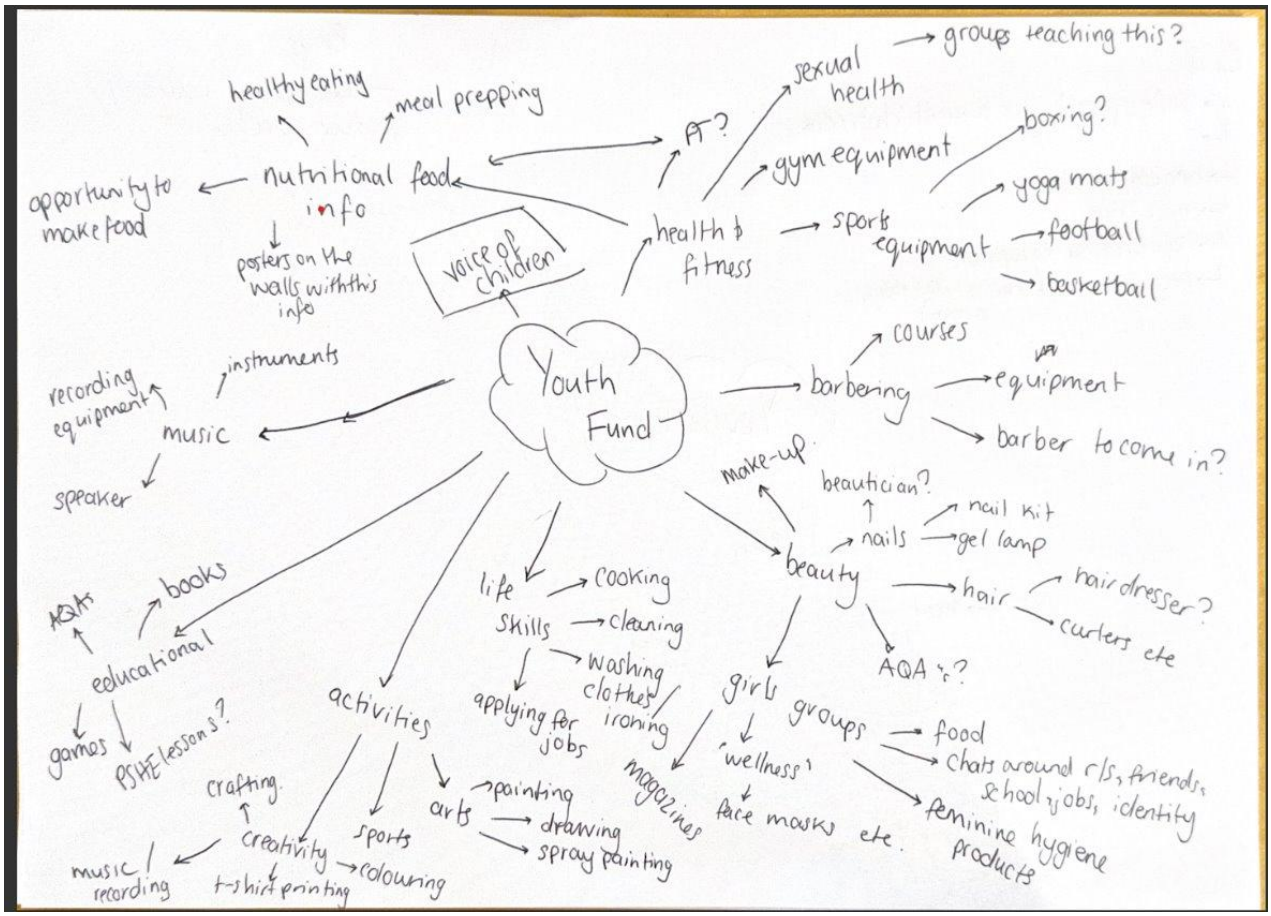
The following extracts from case records show how the use of Talking Mats can help to elicit information and reflections from children:

We discussed your sleep – you reported that you always have problems sleeping and often wake up before your alarm. You completed a good sleeping habits talking mat – sorting the options between 'I do this' , 'I don't do this', 'sometimes/not sure' and 'I can try'. A photo of this completed talking mat is saved in your file. You were quite willing to put a few things in the I can try section – such as physical activity and avoiding blue light in the evening. It seemed that you would be happy to give these things a try to help your sleep. We gave you a sleep hygiene tips handout which you took home with you.

I'd brought out a Talking Mat about communication, and I showed you the different cards and asked if you would give it a go. You didn't want to hold the cards yourself and said for me to read them out which I did. Many of the cards you said you found easy i.e. Talking to family, Remembering things and Talking to a teacher. You said you were able to ask questions at Innovate if you didn't understand something. The things you said were more difficult were: Telling someone how I feel, understanding how other people are feeling, and paying attention for longer periods of time.

Over the past year, the YJS has also been developing its collaboration with children to design our projects and spaces. These developments will be continued in 2026/27.

Two team members set up a new Girls Group, starting with a joint session with the girls to plan the group. This image captures the ideas generated by the girls, which formed the basis of the group's sessions:

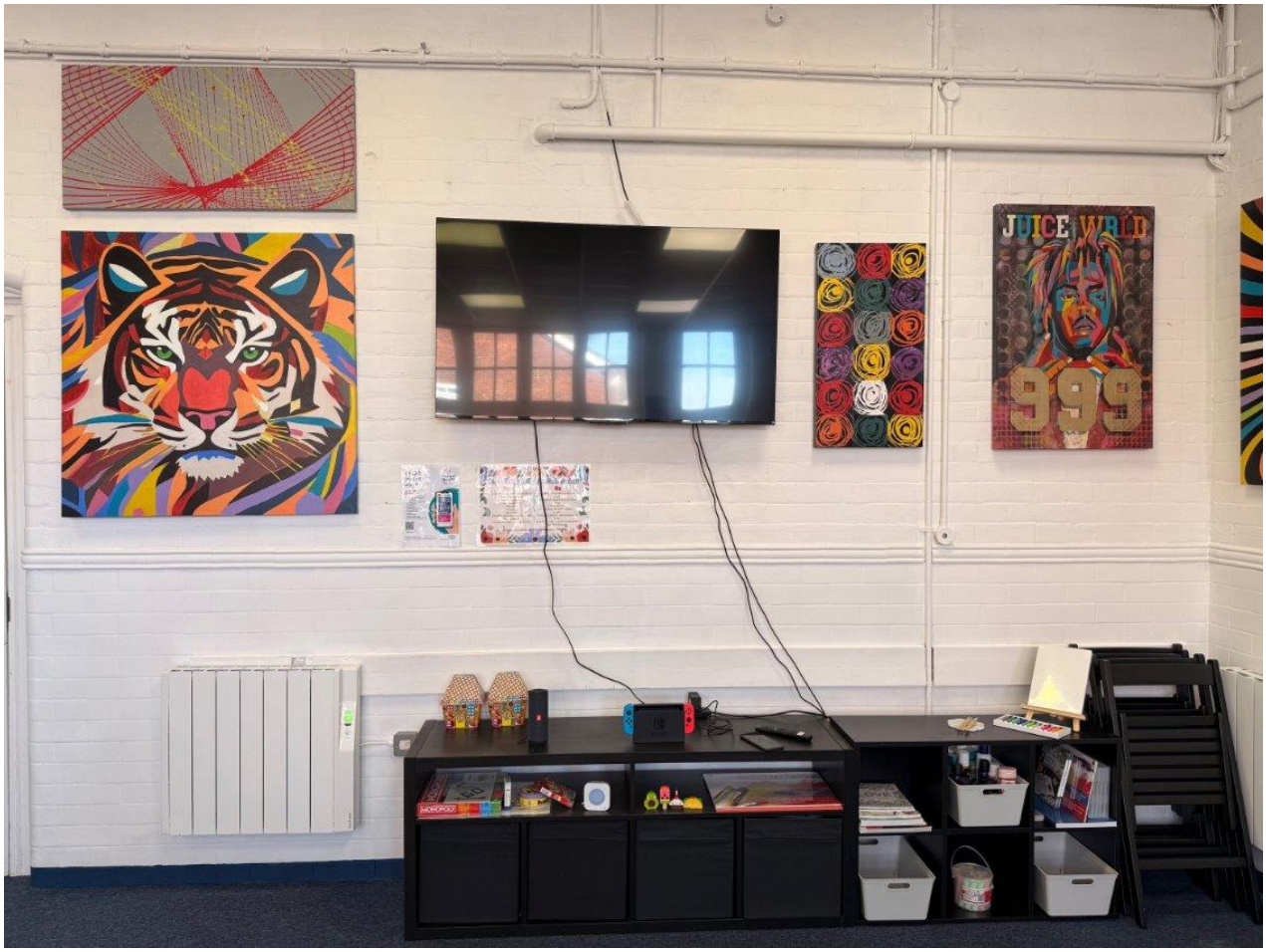


Children working with the YJS also helped us to transform one of our bases into a welcoming space for children, illustrated in these 'before and after' pictures:


DREAM DINER


THE HUB





As well as hearing the child's voice in the team's day to day practice, YJS workers also gather the views of children and other service users about their experience of the service's work.

Spontaneous comments from service users about their experience of our service are recorded and analysed, using a data report from our case management system.

Examples of recent comments from service users include:

YJ involvement is obviously not something we envisaged. When X was first arrested and referred to his worker, L, we were in a very bad place. He was out all the time, using Ketamine regularly, and it was all getting rapidly worse. He was becoming very unwell. To start with, the benefits of L's involvement were probably limited because of X's addiction: it was stronger than anything else. However, despite this L quickly built a very good rapport with X from her very first visit. She is approachable, easy to understand, and is excellent at presenting information in a way that is simplified but not at all patronising. X knew he had to see her, and he understood the process well thanks to her explanations. Things ramped up when our house was raided by police at 5am one day and X was taken into custody. L was at the end of the phone at 7:30am to explain things to me and calm me down! This was the day X stopped taking drugs - the day in custody was much-needed and perhaps even life-saving, such was his Ketamine use. So L's involvement was thankfully extended. She was there for X, but her involvement benefited me too. I think her major strength is communication, being approachable (informal clothes, demeanour and language) but with a steely focus on the facts and the legal process. A fine balance! She is compassionate, kind, fair, straight-talking and genuinely wants the best for the kids she works with. Ongoing, if we enter hard times again, L is the first person I would call for some advice. I hope I won't need to.

Today I made a second planter. I enjoyed making things with wood again and completed it thoroughly and with care. I enjoyed talking with A about things and working physically with my hands.

Another YJS have thanked us for a plan that was "out of the box" and gave something different for them to focus on. They liked how it clearly matched with the child's strengths and likes, and the plan had been tailored to using these strengths for things like reparation but also building on positive activities.

Built a flower box for the school. I learned how to use a drill and had a lot of fun. Making me change my mind and I want do woodwork for the future.

Each year the YJS undertakes a case audit on a priority area of YJS work. In 2025 the audit focused on our work with children in care. As part of the audit, we talked with some of the children in the audit sample.

When asked about joint work by YJS workers and social workers, one child commented that:

They work together and try to help me as best they can…I feel like they are good people, most of them, who care and want to help. Good people in a bad system".

A YJS nurse spoke with another child to gain his views. She recorded their conversation as follows:
I didn't ask you for a rating, but you decided to give one. You rated 3/5 but you weren't sure why. I asked what people supporting you should do differently to make this a 4 or a 5 to which you said, "don't push your luck, that's a good score".

5.2 Resources and Services

The funding contributions to the DCYJS partnership budget in 2026/27 are listed in Appendix Two. Local authority contributions remain frozen at the 2022/23 levels. The Ministry of Justice announced in February 2026 that Youth Justice Grant allocation and the Turnaround Grant allocation for DCYJS for the following 3 years, to March 2029, will remain frozen at the allocations for 2025/26.

93% of the DCYJS budget is allocated to staffing costs. Annual cost of living pay awards add to the staffing costs each year, without a corresponding increase in partner contributions.

All local authority staff in DCYJS are employed by Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council. Other DCYJS staff are employed by Dorset Police, the Probation Service (Dorset) and Dorset HealthCare University NHS Foundation Trust. A DCYJS Structure Chart is included in Appendix

One, showing the posts provided through our partnership resources. DCYJS has a strong multi-agency and multi-disciplinary identity, meeting the staffing requirements of the Crime and Disorder Act (1998).

Like all public services, DCYJS operates in a context of reducing resources. Ensuring value for money and making best use of resources is a high priority for the service. The combined service, working across Dorset's local authorities since 2015, has enabled the YJS to maintain high practice standards while managing real terms budget reductions over that period.

One of this Plan's strategic priorities for 2026/27 is to make best use of the resources available to our YJS partnership.

The Youth Justice Board Grant is paid subject to terms and conditions relating to its use. The Grant supports the front-line delivery of essential youth justice services for children. The Grant may only be used towards the achievement of the following outcomes:

- Reduce the number of children in the youth justice system;
- Reduce reoffending by children in the youth justice system;
- Improve the safety and wellbeing of children in the youth justice system; and
- Improve outcomes for children in the youth justice system.

The conditions of the Grant also refer to the services that must be provided and the duty to comply with data reporting requirements.

The Youth Justice Grant contributes to the Partnership's resources for employing practitioners who work with children to prevent and reduce offending and to keep children and other members of the community safe from harm. Resources from the Youth Justice Grant are also used to provide restorative justice and reparative activities, to promote pro-social activities for children building on their strengths and to improve the education, training and employment opportunities of young people in the local youth justice system. The Youth Justice Grant contributes to the performance achievements described in section 4.2, reducing the number of children entering the justice system, reducing reoffending by those who do enter the justice system, and maintaining low numbers of children being sentenced to custody.

In addition to the service outcomes listed above, the Youth Justice Grant and other Partnership resources are used to achieve the strategic priorities set out later in this Plan. Progress against those priorities is reported to the DCYJS Partnership Board, with oversight also provided by the relevant scrutiny committees of the two local authorities.

5.3 YJS Partnership Board Development

HMI Probation's Joint Inspection of Dorset Combined Youth Justice Service was published in January 2023. The inspection included scrutiny of the Board's work. The inspection report rated the service's Governance and Leadership as 'Good'.

HMI Probation also met with members of the DCYJS Partnership Board in February 2025 as part of their thematic inspection of work with children on Out of Court Disposals. Inspectors identified a strategic commitment to diverting children from the justice system wherever possible.

The YJS Partnership Board has an established cycle of performance review, strategic oversight and forward planning. During the past year, the Board has scrutinised topics including:

- Learning and actions from the thematic inspection of work with children on out of court resolutions
- Delays to investigations – impact on children and victims, support options for children on bail or released under investigation

- Developing YJS work with victims, including the wider partnership response to the needs of victims
- Integration of the Dorset Integrated Non-Custodial Service with the YJS health offer and other local health provision for children in contact with the justice system
- Child in Care over-representation and actions to address this
- New Focused Deterrence programme, with OPCC funding, to reduce the risk of weapon offences
- Education, Training and Employment offers and outcomes for YJS children.

The YJS Partnership Board's plans for 2026-27 include further oversight of the local offer for victims, and alignment of YJS service developments with reform programmes such as Families First Partnerships, SEND reforms, the national Youth Strategy, and local plans for CAMHS Transformation. The YJS Board will consider whether more work is needed to coordinate the different sub-groups and activities which support and oversee the operational work of the YJS Partnership. The YJS Board will also ensure its alignment with the new inspection criteria for Leadership and Governance in youth justice services.

5.4 Workforce Development

The YJS is committed to good practice, using staff supervision, peer support, team workshops and external training courses to develop the skills, knowledge and confidence of our workers.

Informal feedback from HMI Probation, after their 2025 inspection of our work with children on Out of Court Disposals, noted that *"YJS staff are skilled, knowledgeable, and feel well supported. There is a strong capacity for reflection at all levels of the service."*

The DCYJS Workforce Development Policy identifies core training for different roles in the team. As well as refresher training in child safeguarding, extra-familial harm and information governance, team members are also trained in Motivational Interviewing, AIM3 Harmful Sexual Behaviour assessments, and Restorative Justice with complex and sensitive cases.

Team members will continue to attend training and development activities in these approaches in 2026/27.

A Motivational Interviewing Development Group was established in 2024, facilitated by an expert external trainer. This will continue in 2026/27.

The team's work with children showing Harmful Sexual Behaviour is supported by a quarterly YJS HSB Practitioner's Group, which sometimes includes contributions from external speakers.

A quarterly YJS Weapons Offences Practitioner's Group is now well-established, enabling team members to hear about and share evidence-based interventions to reduce weapon-based offending.

In recent years the YJS has been embedding and developing its application of the Child First approach to youth justice work. Whole service workshops are scheduled in April 2026 to review our progress with Child First practice, and to agree our next steps.

Volunteers play an important role in the work of the YJS, especially as Referral Order community panel members. We appreciate their engagement during 2025/26 in training sessions and whole service meetings. Our volunteers are included in the YJS whole service Child First workshops.

DCYJS also supports individual career progression plans for team members, service resilience and succession planning. Plans for 2026/27 include:

- a Youth Justice Worker completing his social work qualification through the Social Work Apprenticeship with BCP Council and Solent University.
- A Practice Manager studying for the ILM Level 5 Certificate in Leadership and Management through the Association of YOT Managers
- A Youth Justice Worker studying for the Level 5 Youth Justice Practitioner Apprenticeship.
- A Business Support Manager starting a Level 3 apprenticeship in Data and Insights for Business Decisions
- A Youth Justice Officer working towards her Practice Educator qualification
- Two Youth Justice Officers working towards the Placement Supervisor qualification.

DCYJS also hosts student placements for students studying for social work qualifications and for trainee Speech and Language Therapists.

5.5 Knife Possession Guidance

The government published new guidance on Child Knife Possession Offences in February 2026, for implementation from April 2026 (child knife possession offences). The new guidance brings in some changes for responding to children who are found in possession of a knife, including:

- In almost every case, the child must either receive a Youth Conditional Caution or be taken to court
- In very exceptional cases, which the National Police Chiefs Council will only apply for 10-15 year-olds, a Deferred Prosecution can be applied
- Police must notify the YJS within 1 working day of a child being found with a knife
- When the police investigation is complete, with evidence to support prosecution, the YJS must assess the child and set out an intervention plan within 4 weeks
- Interventions with children for knife crime offences must fit with the evidence base compiled by the Youth Endowment Fund
- A new multi-agency scrutiny panel should oversee the local application of the guidance for Child Knife Possession Offences.

Dorset Police and DCYJS worked together during March 2026 to agree an implementation plan for the new guidance. The implementation plan sets out: how Police will introduce the option of Deferred Prosecution in Dorset; how Deferred Prosecutions will be managed between Dorset Police and DCYJS; a process for Dorset Police to notify DCYJS of children being found in possession of a knife, using the seconded YJS police officers; the decision-making process to select the appropriate disposal for a child found in possession of a knife; the selection of appropriate interventions; arrangements for scrutiny and oversight, including the creation of a new knife crime scrutiny panel and its links to the YJS Partnership Board. The scrutiny panel will oversee adherence to the knife crime guidance, including any instances when the guidance has not been followed

DCYJS submitted successful bids for Serious Violence Duty funding in the BCP Council and Dorset Council areas. These bids will enable DCYJS to make immediate contact with a child after they have been found in possession of a knife, without waiting for completion of the police investigation. The focus of YJS work during the investigation phase will be to complete an assessment of the child's strengths and needs, to develop a plan with the child to engage them in positive activities, to complete a speech and language assessment with the child, and to use YJS multi-disciplinary workers to help the child to access appropriate education and health provision.

DCYJS developed a structured response to knife crime in 2025/26, forming the basis for its work under the new knife crime guidance. Our response to knife crime includes:

- Guidance for YJS workers on assessing and managing knife crime risks
- DCYJS weapon-offences group for practitioners to find out about and share evidence of effective practice
- Focused Deterrence work with children assessed as posing the highest risk of harm to others through weapon offences (more information in section 6.7)

- First Aid sessions with YJS nurses
- Restorative Justice activities including the option of a meeting with a representative of the local knife crime charity, Changes Are Made
- Repairing the harm activities at local hospitals.

5.6 Evidence-based practice, innovation and evaluation

Evidence shows that the best predictor for positive change is a pro-social relationship with a trusted adult. The primary focus for effective practice in DCYJS is therefore the quality of workers' relationships with children, alongside positive relationships within the team and with other professionals. The emphasis on relational practice also reflects feedback from children on the DCYJS caseload about what is most important to them in their experience of the service.

YJS practice developments during the past year include establishing a Girls Group, expanding the range and accessibility of positive activities for children, and offering First Aid sessions run by YJS nurses for children who have committed weapon offences. More information about these initiatives is provided in section 6.

The YJS now provides two innovative Speech and Language projects.

Early identification of speech and language needs for children at risk of school exclusion

Around 90% of children in the youth justice system have speech, language and communication needs. Most of these children have experienced permanent or fixed-term exclusions from school. The communication needs of these children have only been identified when they have contact with the YJS and they receive a structured speech and language assessment.

The DCYJS Partnership Board allocated funding for a three-year project, known as 'Re-Engage', to identify and support the speech, language and communication needs of children at risk of school exclusion.

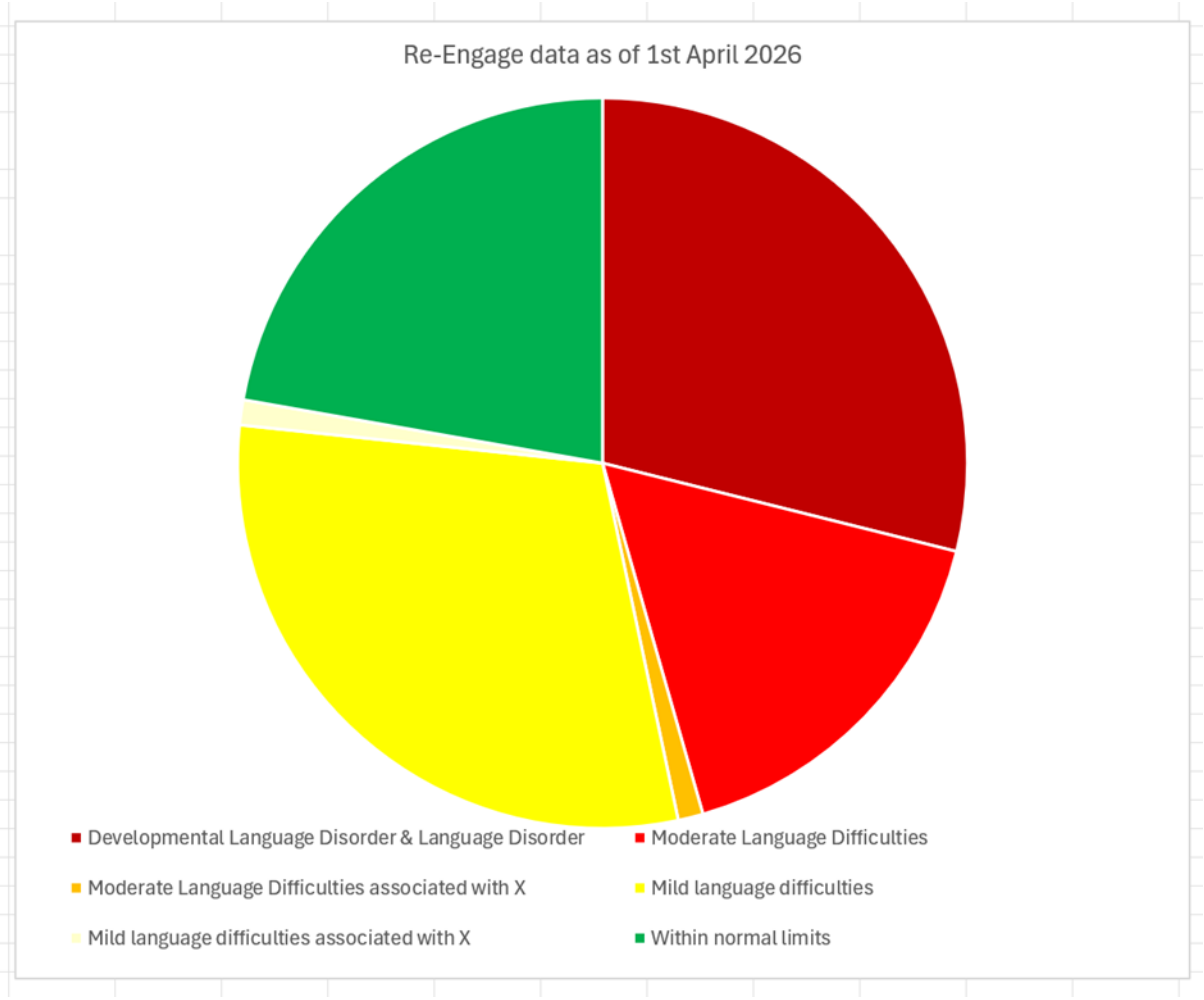
The Re-Engage project works with schools to focus on children in Key Stage 3 who are at risk of permanent exclusion and whose behaviour indicates a risk of future offending. The aim is to identify the child's communication needs at an earlier stage, to prevent school exclusion and future offending.

The project is staffed by a Speech and Language Therapist and a Speech and Language Associate Practitioner. Their roles are to assess the communication needs of children who are at risk of school exclusion and to support schools to respond to the child's specific needs. Training sessions are also offered to schools as part of their staff development.

The Re-Engage project was cited by HMI Probation as an example of good practice in the Effective Practice Guide which was published as part of the thematic inspection of work with children on Out of Court Disposals: "*This proactive, school-based model aimed to prevent children from entering the YJS altogether".*

By the start of April 2026, the project had received 152 referrals from 27 schools across BCP and Dorset. Speech and Language assessments had been completed for 90 children, uncovering significant levels of previously unidentified communication needs.

Language Profiles of 90 children with completed reports:
Developmental Language Disorder & Language disorder – 26
Moderate Language difficulties – 15
Moderate Language difficulties associated with another diagnosis - 1
Mild language difficulties – 27
Mild language difficulties associated with another diagnosis - 1
Within normal limits – 20.



The Re-Engage team also provide training and coaching to schools and to other services, such as the Child in Care health team, to raise awareness and confidence in responding to children's communication needs.

Expanding speech and language support in the justice system

NHS England has partnered with DCYJS for a 'Proof of Concept' project to spread speech and language expertise beyond the Youth Justice Service. The 'Bridges' project commenced in late 2025, with the flow of work developing from March 2026. The Bridges team consists of two part-time Speech and Language Therapists and a Speech and Language Associate Practitioner

The project will provide speech and language assessments for children who are under investigation for serious offences, before they reach the YJS. The project will also work with children who have been referred to the Dorset Police Safer Schools and Communities Team by local schools, and with children who have been identified as being at risk of 'extra-familial harm' and possible offending. A support offer is also being developed for children who are victims of offences committed by the children who are working with the YJS.

The Bridges project is also working with the Probation Service in Dorset to support their work with young adults aged 18-25. As well as the offer of speech and language assessments for individual young adults, the Bridges team can assist in making the service more communication-friendly. Examples of this work would include the creation of Easy Read versions of post-custody licence conditions, to help young adults to understand what they can and cannot do while subject to post-custody supervision.

Evaluation of this project is an integral part of the project design with NHS England.

5.7 Standards for work with children in the youth justice system

All Youth Justice Services are required to comply with the Youth Justice Board's 'Standards for work with children in the youth justice system' (2019). The Youth Justice Board has previously overseen a programme of self-assessments to monitor compliance. Responsibility for oversight of YJS compliance may transfer to the Ministry of Justice during 2026/27, as part of the overhaul of the role of the YJB.

The last YJB self-assessment exercise took place in 2023, when all services were directed to audit their work under 'Standard 2: Work in Court'. The YJB provided an audit tool, comprising 22 questions. The DCYJS self-assessment rated our work in court as Good, with most of the audit questions being rated Good or Outstanding. The quality of YJS court work reflects the strong partnership between DCYJS and our local youth courts. The chair of the Dorset Magistrates Youth Panel sits on the DCYJS Partnership Board, enabling other partners to hear the views of magistrates.

The YJB did not require Youth Justice Services to complete a National Standards audit in 2024/25 or 2025/26. The YJB has indicated that there will also be no requirement for a National Standards audit in 2026/27.

5.8 Response to inspections, reviews and audits.

Inspection reports, learning reviews and case audits all contribute to our service planning.

The most recent full inspection of our service was published in January 2023, rating the service as 'Good'. The inspectors made 6 recommendations, which were followed up through an action plan, overseen by the YJS Partnership Board. Actions have been completed for all of the recommendations.

Dorset Police and DCYJS were jointly inspected in February 2025 as part of a national thematic inspection of work with children on Out of Court Disposals. This thematic inspection was conducted by HMI Probation and HMI Constabulary, Fire and Rescue Services. The report was published in October 2025, alongside an Effective Practice Guide.

The two inspectorates identified examples of good practice by Dorset Police and by DCYJS, including the strength of the partnership between our two services. The inspection report noted that our joint decision-making model "*provided a more consistent, fair, and effective approach to decision-making"* than the examples which they saw in other Police forces.

The Effective Practice Guide for the OOCD inspection also cited good practice in our Speech and Language work and in our Restorative Justice activities and our engagement with victims.

The thematic inspection report made 18 recommendations, for the Home Office, the Ministry of Justice, the Youth Justice Board, the National Police Chief's Council, Chief Constables, Youth Justice Partnership Boards and Youth Justice Services. The DCYJS Head of Service is a member of the national steering group which oversees the implementation of these recommendations.

There were no new Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews in the past year involving DCYJS.

The YJS initiated two local learning reviews during 2025 in respect of young adults who entered custody shortly after turning 18. Actions taken from these reviews included the provision of guidance notes to colleagues in Children's Social Care about the care status and entitlements of children who are remanded to secure accommodation, and the YJS health team has strengthened its links with custody healthcare providers.

YJS learning from local CSPRs and multi-agency learning reviews is included in the team's development plans, and is reported annually to the YJS Partnership Board.

DCYJS undertakes thematic case audits, linked to the service's priorities. The focus in 2025 was on our local multi-agency work with Children in Care. National and local evidence shows that Children in Care are over-represented in the justice system and are likely to progress further into the justice system.

DCYJS coordinated a multi-agency audit of work with 16 Children in Care (8 from each local authority) who started youth justice interventions between September 2024 and March 2025. One of the themes emerging from the audits was that there were notable examples of good practice and good joint working between YJS workers and social workers, as well as health and education professionals, but this good practice was not embedded consistently across the whole audit. An action plan has been devised which includes steps to make good multi-agency working more consistent and less dependent on individual practitioners and managers.

Audit plans for 2026/27 include a case audit to apply the new casework inspection criteria, an updated review of work with Children in Care, and completion of the 'Section 11' audits for the Safeguarding Children Partnerships in each local authority.

6 Local and National Priorities for 2026/27

This section of the Plan reviews issues of local and national priority for youth justice which contribute to our service priorities for 2026/27.

6.1 Over-representation

National data shows that some groups of children, such as those with diverse ethnic heritage, children in care and children with Special Educational Needs are over-represented in the youth justice system. DCYJS monitors caseload information for children from minority and disadvantaged groups to identify over-representation and actions that may be needed. It is also recognised that some children experience multiple disadvantages, exemplified by the common characteristics of boys receiving a custodial sentence, as shown in section 4.2.

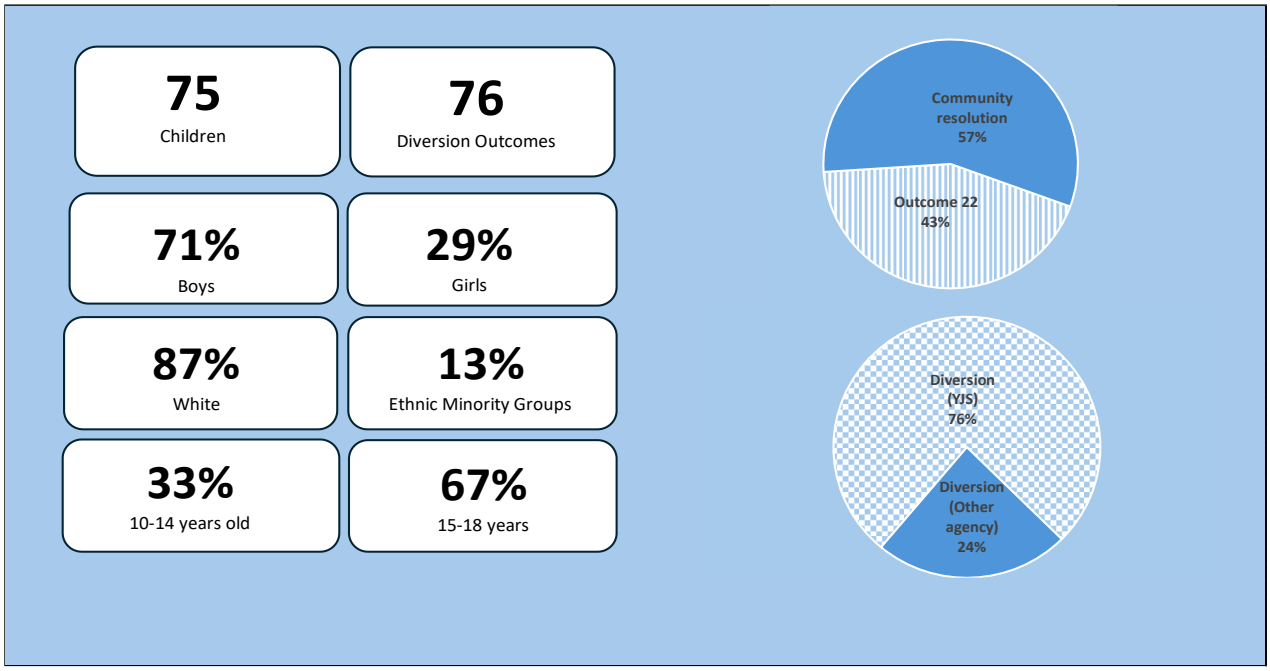
Ethnic Disparity

Data from the January 2026 School Census shows that 17.8% of 10-17 year-olds at schools in the BCP Council area identify as not having a white ethnicity. The equivalent figure for schools in the Dorset Council area is 6.3%. This data helps us compare the rate of children on our caseload from different ethnicities with proportions in the local population.

The following charts provide information about the children in the youth justice system in each local authority, separating them by children who were diverted and children who were cautioned or sentenced.

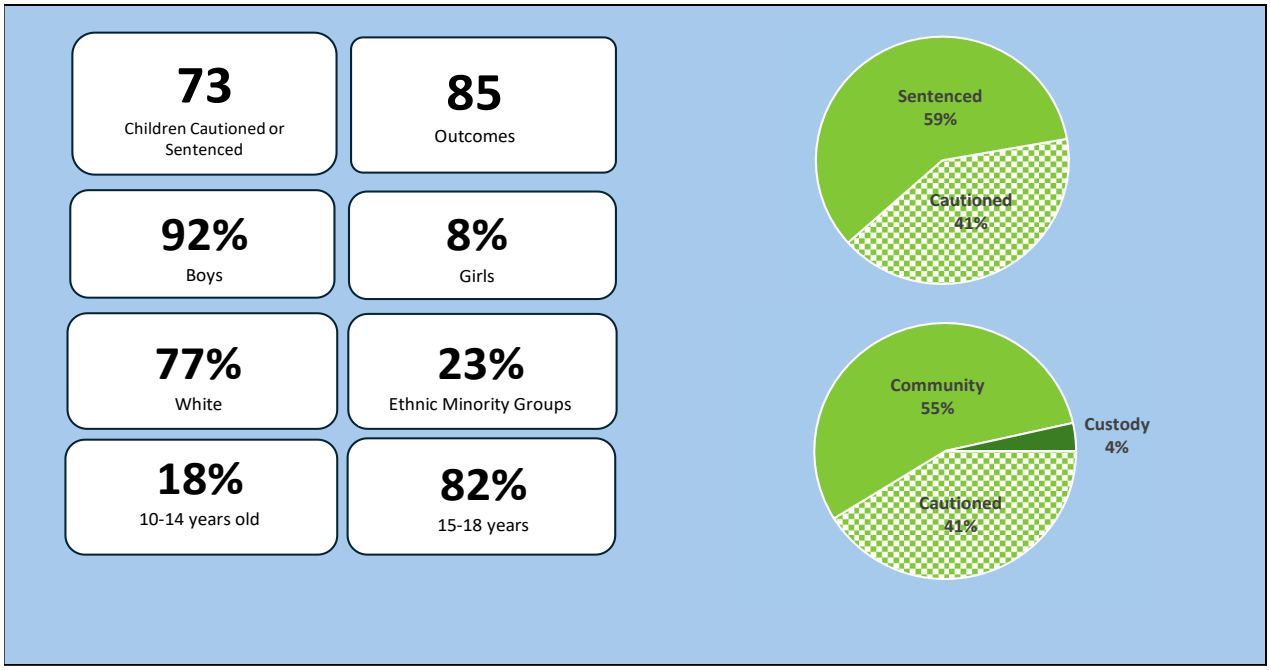
BCP Council children who were diverted from the justice system in 2025/26

BCP Outcomes (Diversions) from 1st April 2025 to 31st March 2026

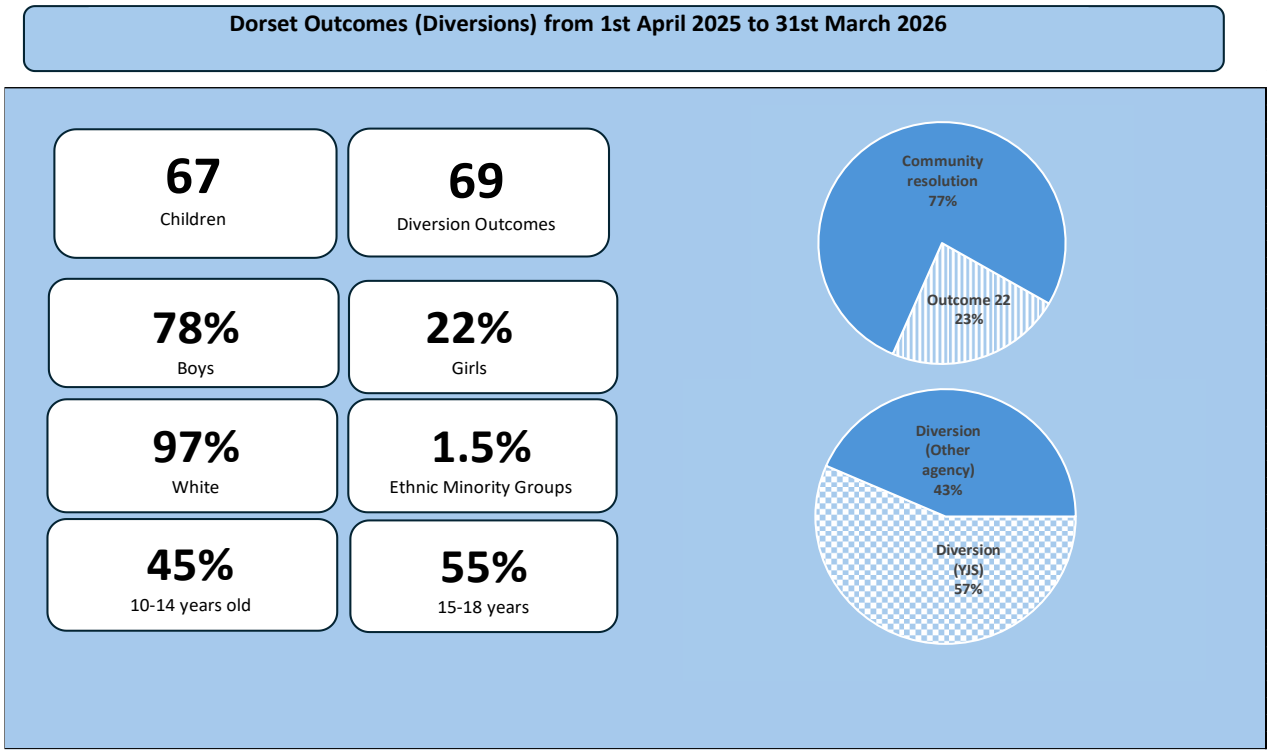


BCP Council children who were cautioned or sentenced in 2025/26

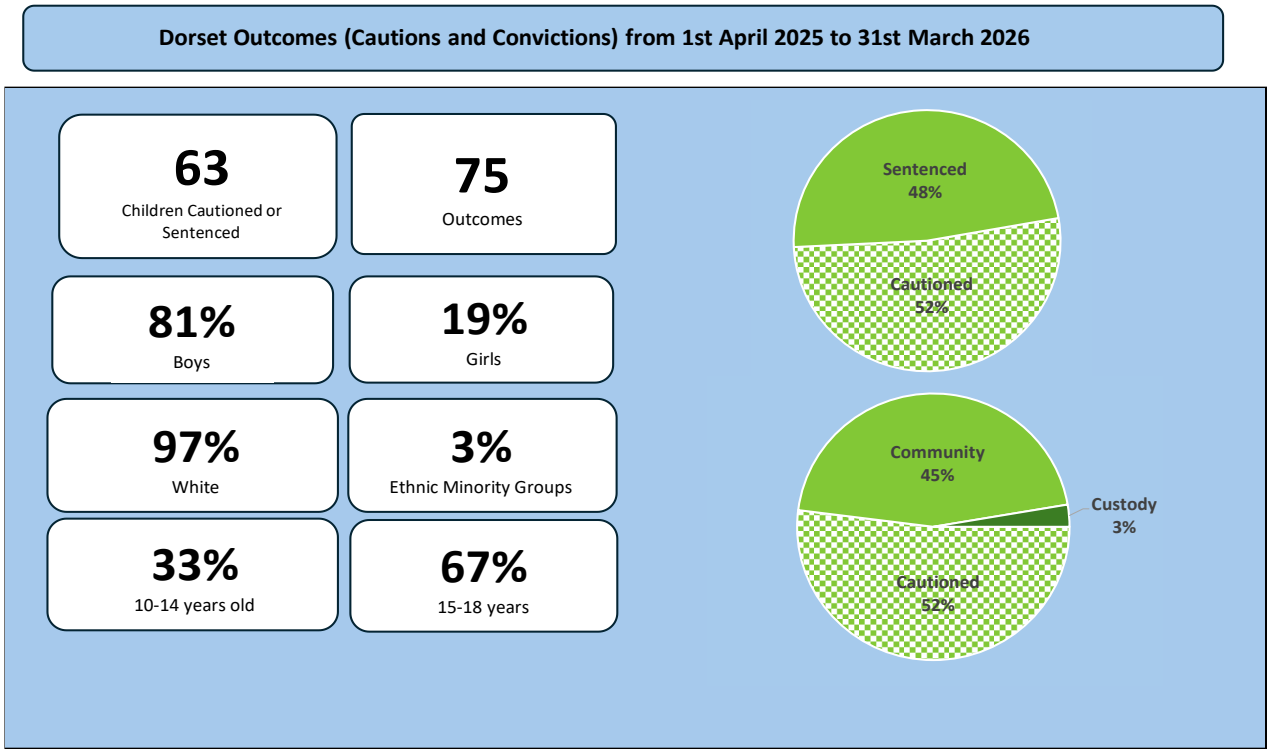
BCP Outcomes (Cautions and Convictions) from 1st April 2025 to 31st March 2026



Dorset Council children who were diverted from the justice system in 2025/26



Dorset Council children who were cautioned or sentenced in 2025/26



Comparison of these charts shows that:

- There is a notably higher proportion of girls among the children diverted from the justice system compared to the proportion of girls in the groups who were cautioned or sentenced.
- The proportion of children with non-white ethnicity is lower among the children who were diverted than among the children who were cautioned or sentenced, with a more significant difference in the BCP Council area.

- Children who do not identify as white are not over-represented in Dorset, or among children in BCP who are diverted, but they are over-represented among children sentenced or cautioned in BCP.
- In both local authorities, there is a higher proportion of younger children among those who were diverted.
- There is a higher proportion of younger children in contact with the YJS in Dorset than in BCP.

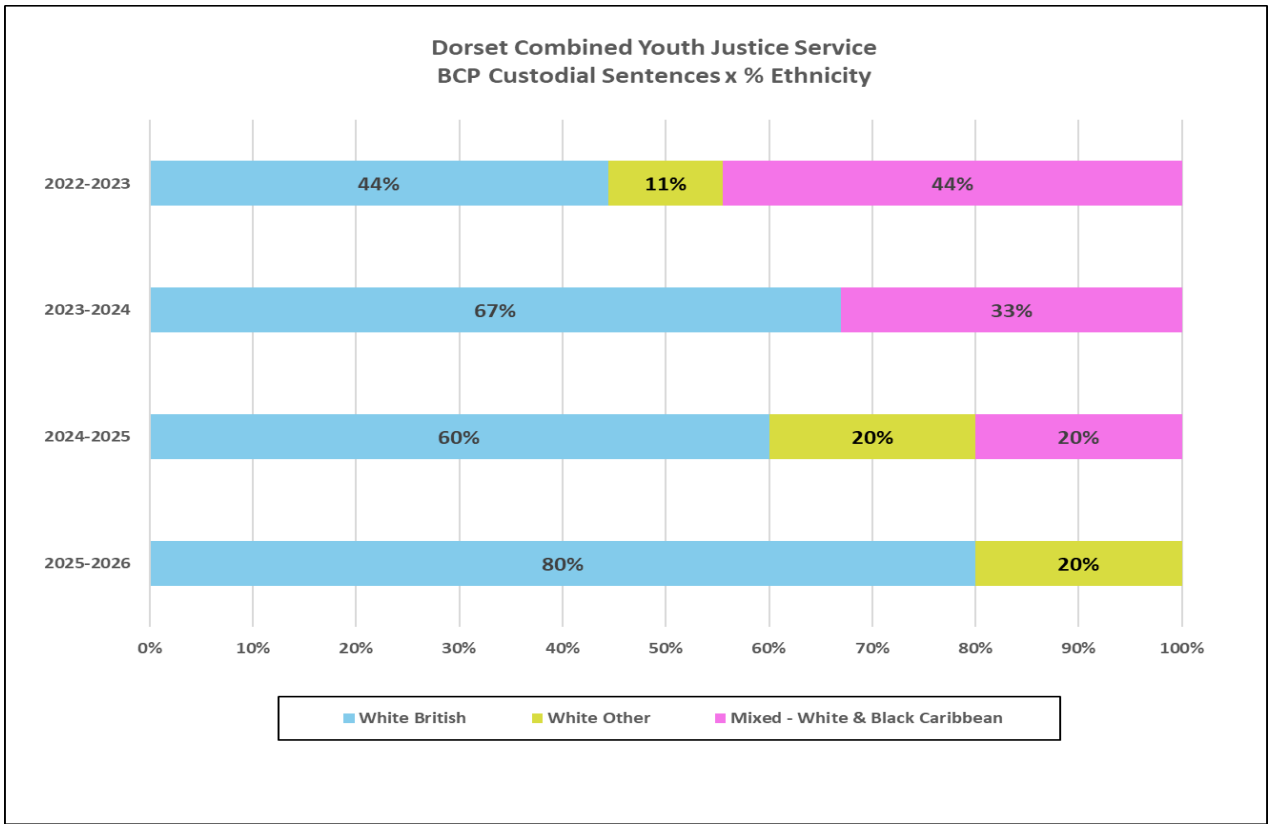
Information about the ethnicity, gender and age of First-Time Entrants is presented and analysed earlier in this document, in section 4.2.

As well as monitoring possible over-representation among First-Time Entrants, we also track how far children 'progress' into the youth justice system.

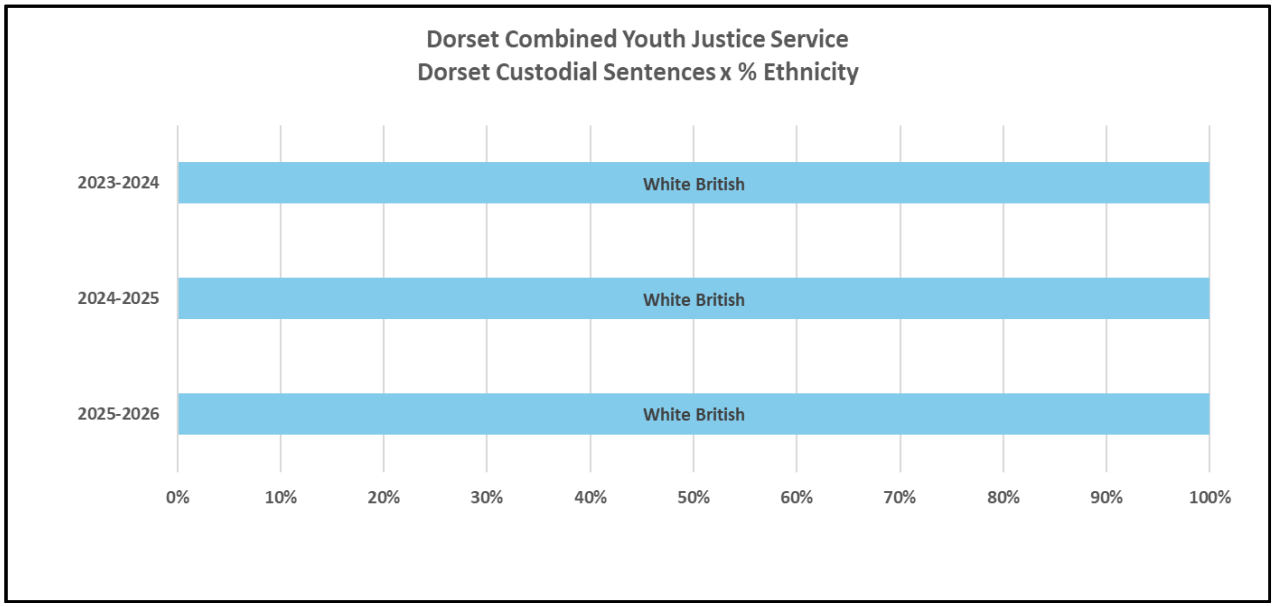
The charts showing the numbers of children cautioned or sentenced in 2025/26 indicate that children from ethnic minority groups in the BCP Council area are over-represented amongst those receiving a caution or court order. The reasons for this over-representation, and the response to it, are likely to spread beyond the justice system, noting that DCYJS and Dorset Police also work with Dorset Council children, where children from ethnic minority groups are not over-represented.

Ethnicity of children sentenced to custody

At a national level there are enduring concerns about the over-representation of Black and mixed heritage boys amongst children in custody. Low numbers of local children being sentenced to custody make it hard to analyse data based on percentages. The following charts show custodial sentences by ethnicity in each local authority in recent years.



There has been a welcome reduction in recent years in the over-representation of black and mixed heritage children in BCP receiving custodial sentences. No children from these ethnic groups in BCP received custodial sentences in 2025/26.



In the past three years, a total of 6 Dorset children have been sentenced to custody (8 custodial sentences). All of them define their ethnicity as White British.

In summary, there is a nuanced and varied picture locally for over-representation by ethnicity. Overall, looking at the service as a whole, local children from global majority ethnicities are not more likely to be criminalised and are not over-represented. There are some subtleties to the data though, such as how children from different groups progress through the justice system, and differences between BCP Council and Dorset Council, which require further attention.

Gender

We also monitor the gender breakdown of our caseload and the distribution by gender at different stages of the youth justice system. There is a higher proportion of girls among children who are diverted from a formal outcome, with lower proportions of girls amongst those who receive a community or custodial sentence.

At a national and local level there is evidence that boys are significantly over-represented among children in custody. This is also the case locally, where no girls have been remanded or sentenced to custody in the past 9 years.

The proportion of girls on the DCYJS caseload fluctuates but usually stays within a range of about 15%-20% of the total caseload, consistent with national rates. Girls accounted for 15% of our First Time Entrants in 2025/26, down from 17% in both 2024/25 and 2023/24.

It is recognised that girls can have different needs and experiences from boys, requiring differentiated responses from YJS workers. Worker allocation decisions are taken carefully to be sensitive to each girl's needs.

YJS workers set up a new Girls Group in 2025. The aim was to create a safe space for girls, to support them to build confidence, positive self-identity and behaviours. The group also enabled them to think about what they look for in healthy relationships, in the context of concerns about Violence Against Women and Girls.

One of the girls who attended the Girls Group provided this feedback:

- *It was fun*
- *You get to build bonds with people*
- *You get to enjoy yourself*
- *You feel free*

- *You don't have to go there glammed up – no one will judge you*
- *We get to make meals.*

Children in Care

Local data shows that Children in Care are over-represented in our youth justice system. Numbers fluctuated a little during 2025/26, but the proportion of Children in Care on the YJS caseload was usually around 20%.

Analysis commissioned by the YJS Partnership Board for its meeting in October 2024 identified some common features of Children in Care in the youth justice system, leading to a multi-agency audit in 2025 of joint work with 16 Children in Care who started youth justice interventions between September 2024 and March 2025.

The multi-agency audit identified examples of good practice involving YJS workers, social workers, Virtual School staff, YJS nurses and Speech and Language Therapists, and the Child in Care health team. This good practice was not consistent in the work with all the children in the audit sample. Actions have been agreed to make the quality of work more consistent, including:

- Complete a written agreement between the YJS worker and the social worker for joint working arrangements at the start of YJS work with a Child in Care
- YJS and social work plans for each child to specify the work being done by other professionals
- Review joint working between the YJS and the Virtual Schools
- Maintain close links between YJS nurses and Child in Care nurses
- Include the Virtual School in consent process for sharing YJS speech and language assessments
- YJS transitions work to adult services to include the social worker/PA for care experienced young people
- Complete a follow-up review in autumn 2026 to check on progress.

SEND

DCYJS caseload information shows that children in the local youth justice system are likely to have Special Educational Needs and Disabilities. In March 2026, 22.5% of school-age children on the caseload had an Education, Health and Care Plan and a further 19.7% had the status of 'SEN Support'. This means that 42.2% of school-age children were identified as having Special Educational Needs and Disabilities, compared to about 21.6% in the local populations for their age group (see section 2, 'Local Context' data).

It should be noted that the YJS was still collecting SEND information for some of these children, and there are others who are likely to have unidentified needs, meaning that the figure of 42% is probably an under-estimate of the level of SEND. These concerns fit with evidence collected by the DCYJS Speech and Language Therapists, showing high levels of communication needs amongst children in our local youth justice system and indicating the need for YJS workers to adapt their work to the needs of each child.

The YJS has worked with our two local authorities to establish a reliable process for each child's EHCP to be shared with the YJS, to enable the YJS to apply the advice in the EHCP when working with the child.

6.2 Prevention

The rate of children entering the justice system is influenced by the effectiveness of local prevention and diversion activities. 'Prevention' refers to work with children who have been identified as being at risk of going on to commit offences in future if they do not receive additional

help. ‘Diversion’ describes the response to children who have committed an offence but who can be diverted from the justice system.

DCYJS does not directly undertake prevention work, focusing its activities on children who have committed a criminal offence. As described in section 5.5, however, the YJS is currently providing a three-year prevention project, known as Re-Engage, to identify the speech, language and communication needs of children in Key Stage 3 who are at risk of permanent exclusion from mainstream school.

Each of our local authorities provides early help services, working with other local organisations like schools, the Dorset Police Safer Schools and Communities Team and the voluntary sector.

In the Dorset Council area oversight of prevention activities sits with the Strategic Alliance for Children and Young People, supported by more detailed work at locality level. The DCYJS Head of Service is a member of the Strategic Alliance and team members participate in locality meetings to identify and respond to children at risk. ‘The Harbour’ is a Dorset Council multi-disciplinary service which works with children who need additional support to prevent negative outcomes such as being taken into care or entering the justice system. DCYJS and The Harbour have close links, including joint work with children who have entered the justice system.

In the Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council area, preventative work occurs within the Community Safety Partnership (CSP) and Early Help. Both services use local data to determine the needs in the area and to then provide preventative services to meet those needs. Governance for the Community Safety work sits with the Community Safety Partnership Executive Board. The Board’s role includes scrutiny of the work undertaken. It can also agree to commission further services. The YJS Head of Service sits on the CSP Executive board. Targeted early help services are overseen by the Early Help Partnership Board (a multi-agency partnership which also incorporates Family Hubs). The Board agrees what services may be needed and which to provide/ commission. Services are provided based on the *Continuum of need,* with clear pathways in relation to how to access the support and services. Performance monitoring for the Early Help Partnership Board includes data on the rate of first-time entrants to the youth justice system.

6.3 Diversion

As mentioned above, DCYJS and Dorset Police were inspected in February 2025 as part of the joint national thematic inspection of work with children on Out of Court Disposals. The inspectors noted, in their informal inspection feedback, that *“There is a clear focus and shared commitment across the partnership both strategically and operationally to divert children from the criminal justice system wherever this is possible.”*

Diversion work is undertaken locally on a partnership basis. Dorset Police, DCYJS and local authority Early Help services meet weekly as an Out of Court Disposal Panel to decide the appropriate youth justice outcome for children who have committed criminal offences. The panel looks for opportunities to divert chldren from a formal justice outcome when possible. This fits with the local priority to reduce First Time Entrants, described above in section 4.2.

Diversion activities usually involve additional support for the child and, when appropriate, some form of restorative response in respect of the criminal offence. The Dorset Police Safer Schools and Communities Team, DCYJS, Early Help Services, and Children’s Social Care Services each provide support at the diversion stage. The appropriate service for each child is decided on the basis of the child’s needs, risks and existing relationships with professionals.

During 2025/26 a total of 142 children received diversion options for a criminal offence, rather than a formal justice outcome. 95 of them received interventions from the Youth Justice Service. 48 received interventions from other services, principally the police Safer Schools and Communities Team.

Since 2022/23 the Ministry of Justice has funded the 'Turnaround' programme, aimed at 'children on the cusp of the youth justice system'. Locally we used this programme to divert children from the justice system and to reduce our rate of First Time Entrants. With the benefit of Turnaround funding, our partnership has established the use of 'Outcome 22', a Police recording code which indicates no further police action, provided that the YJS offers support to the child.

Turnaround funding is now used to employ an additional Youth Justice Worker, an additional Restorative Justice Practitioner and a half-time Speech and Language Therapist. Each child on the Turnaround programme is allocated to a Youth Justice Worker who works with the child and their family to agree a support plan to help them avoid further offending. The Restorative Juatice Practitioner contacts the victim to identity their needs and to promote Restorative Justice options. The Turnaround Speech and Language Therapist assesses the child's communication needs and provides advice for the child, their family and professionals about the child's individual needs and how best to respond to them.

The local Turnaround programme is overseen by the Youth Justice Service Partnership Board. The Ministry of Justice sets targets for the number of children successfully completing Turnaround interventions each year. DCYJS exceeded its completions target in 2025/26.

Funding for the Turnaround programme has now been confirmed until 2028/29, albeit frozen at a reduced level compared to the original allocation.

6.4 Education, Training and Employment

Children in the youth justice system are less likely to stay in mainstream schools, to achieve good educational outcomes and to access education, employment or training after Year 11.

In March 2026, 22.5% of school-age children on the caseload had an Education, Health and Care Plan and a further 19.7% had the status of 'SEN Support'. There are also likely to be other children whose additional needs have not been identified or who would have been categorised as needing SEN Support if they were on roll at a mainstream school.

Most children in contact with the justice system have communication needs which have not previously been identified (see sections 5.5 and 6.4 for more details on YJS Speech and Language work). The YJS shares information about a child's Speech and Language needs with schools, PRUs, mentors, tutors and other education professionals. This helps to ensure that the child's individual needs are understood and met, supporting their engagement in education.

In recent years DCYJS has worked with local authority colleagues to improve the accuracy of the recording and reporting of school exclusions experienced by children on the caseload. In March 2026, 13 out of 71 school-age children on the caseload had been permanently excluded from school in the past 2.5 academic years, and 31 of the 71 children had experienced at least one fixed-term exclusion during that period.

Improving education provision and outcomes for children in the youth justice system is a service priority.

Each local authority's Director of Education is a member of the DCYJS Partnership Board. The headteachers of the BCP Council Virtual School and College and the Dorset Council Virtual School are also members of the DCYJS Partnership Board.

DCYJS employs two Education Officers, one focusing on school-age children and one supporting the post-16 age group. They provide advice to DCYJS case managers and work directly with young people to understand their needs and to support their attendance and engagement. They also work with schools and local authorities to increase the suitability of provision, maintaining strong links with colleagues in the local authority Virtual Schools, the SEND teams and Inclusion services.

When a child is remanded or sentenced to custody, the appropriate YJS Education Officer is allocated to ensure that the child's education needs are understood and met during and after the period in custody. It is a requirement of the SEND Code of Practice, for children in custody with an EHCP, that an up to date EHCP is shared with the custody education provider to enable the child's specific educational needs to be met. The YJS Education Officers liaise with custody education providers and local authority colleagues to ensure that all relevant information is shared.

Each local authority has a multi-agency group which monitors and acts on inclusion in education for the school-age children causing most concern in respect of their access to education. The DCYJS Education Officer attends these groups and represents the needs of children who are open to the YJS.

DCYJS occasionally works with children who are receiving Elective Home Education. The YJS Education Officer follows up each case where a child receives Elective Home Education to review the adequacy and safety of the arrangement and to offer more support if needed.

In March 2026, 34.5% of YJS children in the post-16 age group were recorded as being not in employment, education or training (NEET). This reflects the limited opportunities for YJS young people, who can lack the necessary attainment levels to access the available provision.

The YJS runs the Discover You project at Upton Country Park to improve young people's self-esteem, practical skills and employability, to increase their chances of accessing employment and training.

31 young people attended the project between September 2025 and March 2026. Some of the positive outcomes for these young people included:

- Support towards Maths and English Functional Skills – one young person has completed his English Level 2 qualification. A number of other young people will be sitting their exams before the end of the academic year
- Other Support towards qualifications - CSCS Practice and completing exams – 7 young people have completed their Level 1 Health and Safety in the Construction Environment Award. They are now preparing for the second stage – the CITB Health, Safety and Environment Test, which they will complete in the coming weeks. Upon passing both, they will be eligible to obtain the Labourers Green Card, opening the door to employment and apprenticeship opportunities within the construction sector.
- AQA Certificated Learning –most young people complete around 5-10 awards, depending on how long they attend and what they engage in. Awards include Team Building, Employment and Training, Practical Tasks, Communication Skills, Health and Safety and Gardening.
- ETE and Careers – Careers Information Advice and Guidance – Career Action Planning, CV work, Applications for College and Jobs, Interview Skills.
- Work Experience options around Upton Country Park within the Welcome Centre and Café, opportunities also available for young people to help at open events.
- Conservation Volunteering Activities – Working with the Ranger Team onsite to complete practical activities around the site like planting trees, taking out hedgerows, coppicing, painting, creating woodwork items, filling potholes, putting up a stag beetle loggery (different things available at different times of the year).
- Team Building – different opportunities like den building and orienteering available.
- Life skills – budgeting/managing money, dealing with bills, communication skills.
- Raising money for local charities by making items to sell at Upton Country Park, e.g. Halloween items, Christmas items, nature-themed items and outdoor objects such as planters, bird boxes, bug hotels, bird feeders.
- Developing an Allotment Area – young people have helped to create an allotment space, designing and constructing a wooden greenhouse and raised bedding/planters to support growth of plants, fruit and vegetables. Young people are enjoying being able to learn and develop further through tasks like planting a variety of seeds and building knowledge around looking after them and seeing them grow. Some vegetables that were grown last summer were donated to a project that supports families in need.

- Development into mentoring opportunities for young people who continue to volunteer at Upton Country Park after attending the Discover You project. One young person is now part of the Upton Country Park Volunteer Team.
- Practical tasks for Upton Country Park – Since January 2026 the project has been tasked with working on a refurbishment of a dedicated picnic area at Upton Country Park, creating an improved, welcoming space for families and visitors to enjoy. This is planned to be completed ahead of the summer season. Young people are enjoying the process of starting the task from planning stages, to working out a schedule, through to looking at materials needed and costings, to then actually building, creating and finishing items.
- Support has also been given to a small number of young people that were school age for a period of time, to help engage them in learning and practical tasks whilst more permanent education was being arranged. This helped build structure and routine and get them ready for their new education provision.

The Discover You Project successfully applied for funding from the BCP Youth Fund in summer 2025 to help meet the cost of exams/qualification, new tools and equipment and gardening materials.

Young people who attended Discover You in 2025/26 shared these views on the project:

Being able to use the project has allowed me to gain qualifications to help me progress.

Everyone sees the mistakes, but here they see the potential.

Out here no one is judging you, it is just you, the work and what you create and build.

Before this I had never built anything, now I know I can and I am proud of that achievement.

The project gives me structure and is helping me to build/develop and that is what I need.

Getting my CSCS card means I have options.

6.5 Health and Communication Needs of Children in the youth justice system

Evidence shows that children who have contact with the justice system are likely to have significant health needs, including difficulties with mental health, physical health and substance use. DCYJS has a strong health team, reflecting the commitment of NHS Dorset and Dorset HealthCare to meeting the health needs of children in the youth justice system. The DCYJS health team comprises 2.8 full-time equivalent CAMHS nurses, a 0.8 Clinical Psychologist and 1.4 Speech and Language Therapists.

Health professionals in the YJS work directly with children and provide consultation and advice to YJS colleagues and other professionals. The YJS nurses meet regularly with colleagues in the Child in Care health team and the Dorset Integrated Non-Custodial Service (previously called the Criminal Justice Liaison and Diversion Service) to ensure the integration of healthcare support for children in the youth justice system.

The specialist skills and knowledge of the YJS nurses and psychologist underpin the DCYJS commitment to trauma-informed practice through the Trauma Recovery Model. Children who will be under YJS supervision for more than 6 months are considered for the Enhanced Case Management (ECM) multi-agency formulation model, led by the YJS Psychologist.

During 2025/26, the YJS nurses launched First Aid sessions for children who have committed weapon offences, as part of the YJS response to knife crime. The sessions focus on urgent action which the child can take in the event of witnessing a weapon injury or other health emergency. As well as providing important information to children, these sessions also enable reflection about the

impact of weapon injuries. The child's contact with the nurse can also give them confidence to meet again with the nurse for support with their own emotional or physical health needs.

The First Aid sessions include an activity on resuscitation, using a model which lights up when enough pressure is applied, as illustrated in this picture:



A YJS nurse is allocated to all children who are remanded or sentenced to custody. The aim is to ensure the continuity and effectiveness of health care for the child as they move into custody, during the custodial period and as part of their post-release planning. The YJS nurses liaise with the healthcare provider in the custodial establishment to resolve issues such as continuity of access to prescribed medication for children in custody. The YJS health team has strengthened links with custody healthcare providers in Feltham, Oakhill and Parc over the past year.

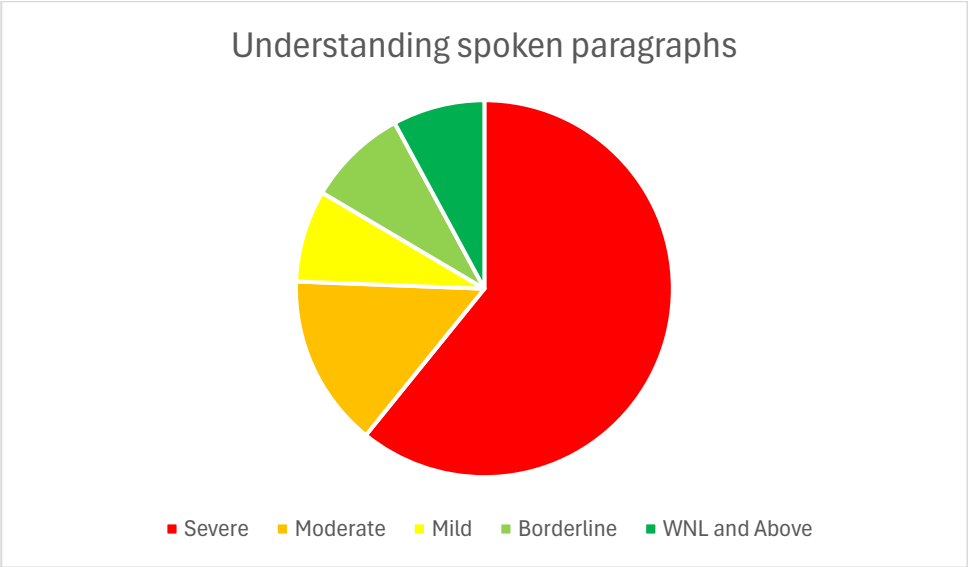
Speech and Language Therapists have been based in the YJS since 2018. Data has been reported in previous Youth Justice Plans to show that around 90% of children in contact with the justice system locally have speech, language and communication needs (SLCN).

YJS Speech and Language Therapists contributed to an MSc Dissertation in 2025 by a Masters student at Health Sciences University on 'Missed diagnosis of Developmental Language Disorder in youth offenders'. One of the comments in the dissertation noted that "*The children we work with…are really accurately able to tell us exactly what they find hard with communication but nobody's asked them that question before in a way that they can access".*

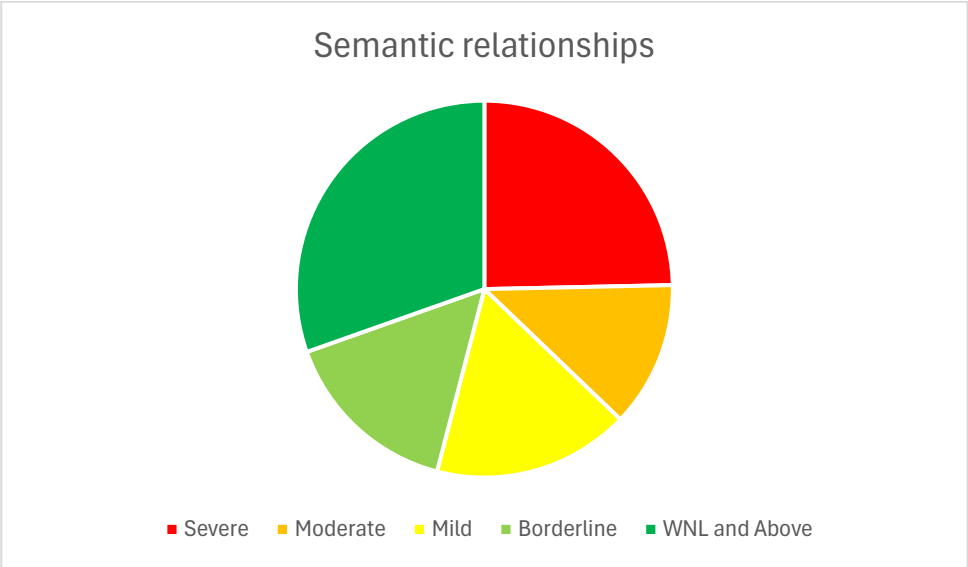
The YJS Speech and Language Therapists use the formal language assessment 'Clinical Evaluation of Language Fundamentals – v5' (CELF) as part of their assessments, alongside assessment of Language for Behaviour and Emotions. Each assessment involves several sub-tests, to investigate different aspects of communication.

The YJS Speech and Language team collates and analyses the results of all assessments of children known to the YJS in recent years. This data shows specific patterns of need among children in the youth justice system. Almost all the children struggle to understand spoken language. This has important implications for the way that professionals should interact with these children, moving away from talking-based contacts to using visual resources such as Talking Mats.

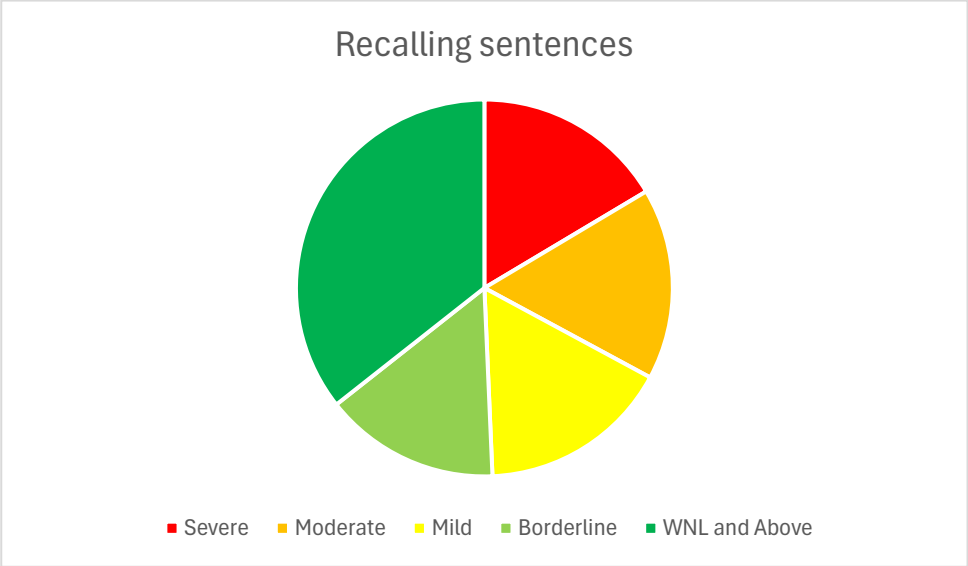
A total of 296 assessments had been completed by the end of March 2026, providing a robust sample size. The following charts show the aggregated results for each sub-test in the CELF assessment (NB 'WNL' = Within Normal Limits).



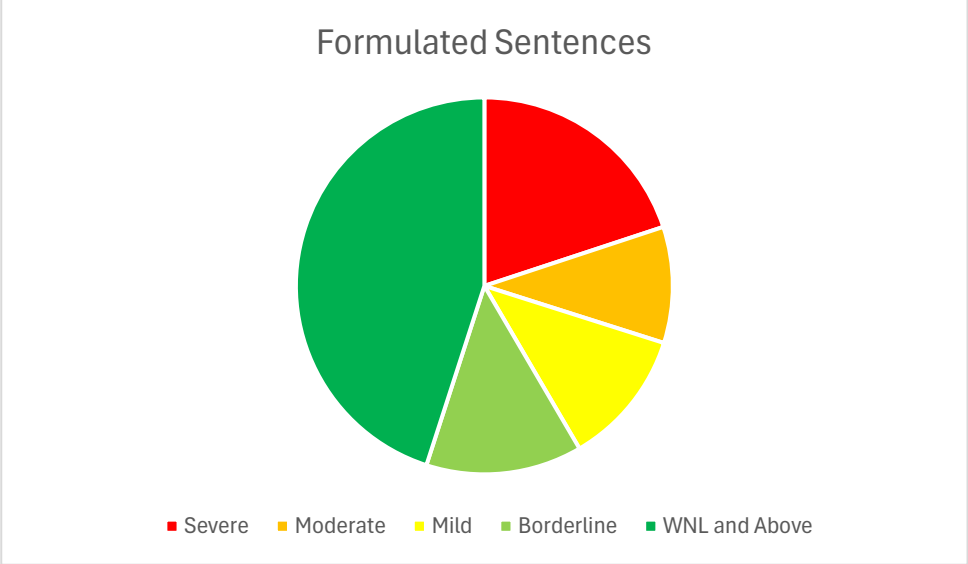
Only 8% of children were rated within normal limits for this test. 61% of children were rated to have severe needs in this area. Children with low scores are likely to have difficulty understanding inputs in lessons or meetings with professionals, understanding and remembering longer explanations/instructions, following stories in conversation, understanding when there is a lot of information, such as in court or in Referral Order panel meetings.



70% of children have some level of difficulty understanding sentences that express a relationship. Children with low scores in this subtest are likely to have difficulty with understanding information about where, when and what order things are in (all of which can be needed when being interviewed about a suspected offence). Children will also find it hard to understand passive sentences ('the bag was found by the police' instead of 'the police found the bag').



64% of the children had some level of difficulty in recalling sentences. Children with low scores in this subtest are likely to have difficulty with sentence structure; vocabulary; recalling spoken information accurately.



55% of children were not rated within normal limits for this sub-test. Children with low scores in this subtest are likely to have difficulty with communicating thoughts and opinions clearly; explaining more complicated things; keeping up in conversation/ responding quickly.

It is worth noting that these tests are carried out in a safe environment by a skilled practitioner. A child's communication abilities will deteriorate in more stressful situations such as police interviews or court hearings.

The receptive language skills of children in the justice system tend not to be as strong as their expressive language skills. This may partly explain why these children's communication needs are not identified until they enter the justice system and they receive a structured assessment from a YJS Speech and Language Therapist.

After completing a Speech and Language assessment for a child in the YJS, the Speech and Language Therapist writes up a one-page 'Communications Passport' for the child, along with a full written assessment report. The Communicatons Passport is shared with Dorset Police, to help them communicate effectively with the child in the event that they have further contact with the

child. The child is asked to consent for their full assessment report to be shared with other professionals such as social workers and education providers.

6.6 Restorative Justice and Victims

Alongside the 'Child First' approach, Restorative Justice is a core principle underpinning the work of DCYJS.

Whenever DCYJS works with a child whose offence harmed a victim, the DCYJS Restorative Justice Practitioners contact the victim to find out about the impact of the offence, to explain the opportunities for Restorative Justice activities, and to ask about any vulnerabilities for which the victim might need support. This work helps us to meet our obligations under the Victims Code.

Delays in the youth justice system, which are more common in cases that go to court, make it harder to engage victims in activity to repair the harm they have experienced. Contacting the victim many months after the offence requires tact and sensitivity, emphasising the victim's choice in whether or how much they engage with our service.

HMI Probation cited DCYJS work with victims in the Effective Practice Guide which they published in October 2025 alongside their thematic inspection report on work with children who received OOCDs. The inspectors commented that '*In DCYJS, a structured and victim-centred approach to restorative justice was embedded within the delivery of OoCDs'*.

Restorative Justice can take different forms, and it is not always possible to bring the child and their victim together for a restorative meeting. When such meetings do take place, they can be beneficial for both the victim and the child. The following example from 2025 illustrates the benefits of Restorative Justice meetings and the flexibility that can be required to achieve a successful meeting:
We completed an RJ Conference with one of the Heathland Mitigation Rangers for BCP with a young person who had committed Arson, albeit it seemed accidental.

We held a session with a presentation delivered by the Ranger, where we looked at the effects of fire on the heathland and the future impact it can have on the whole ecosystem of that area. This was held in a classroom environment, and we then followed it up with a visit to the scene of the incident. Whilst walking around Talbot Heath we held an RJ conference between them.

The young person said that he found the session informative, and he had learnt more about the heathlands near him. The Ranger felt that everything went well and he would like the opportunity to work with us again in the future.

During the past year, YJS work with victims has expanded to identify and respond to the victim's needs. Examples include support to take part in positive activities and the provision of speech and language assessments for child victims. One of our Restorative Justice Practitioners provided this example of support for a child who has been the victim of an offence:

I worked with a young victim who had been assaulted, which knocked her self-confidence and affected her wellbeing. Through our conversations I discovered she loved horses and had attended a Horse Therapy session in the past which she found beneficial for her mental health, which she had struggled with. I spoke with the YJS Activities Coordinator and we were able to source and fund 3 Horse Therapy sessions which gave her the boost she needed. Her parents, having seen the difference in her, have agreed to continue the sessions privately.
Her mum was very grateful for all that we had done for her and her daughter.

YJS victim work in 2026/27 will continue to strengthen our offer to child victims and will develop our use of data to provide insights and direction for our victim work.

Another aspect of the team's Restorative Justice work is undertaking 'repairing the harm' activities with children, to help them make amends for their offence.

The YJS has now established regular 'repairing the harm' catch-up meetings which were recognised by HMI Probation in their OOCD inspection Effective Practice Guide:
"A key strength of the DCYJS model was the 'repairing harm meeting', held in every case. This brought together the case manager (who gave the child's views), the reparation coordinator; and the restorative justice practitioner (who gave the victim's views), to co-design meaningful interventions linked to the harm caused by the offence. Activities were risk-assessed and tailored; for example, knife-related offences may involve hospital-based sessions. Where direct reparation was not requested, community impact work was undertaken, such as fundraising for emergency services charities."

YJS priorities for the past year included a focus on strengthening links between our communities and children working with the YJS. There are currently 12 community projects where we undertake repairing the harm activities. This feedback from a community centre in BCP shows the mutual benefits of these projects:
"Angie brings a young person to the Centre every so often to help with litter / leaf clearing in the garden and car park at the Community Centre. They sometimes also do some gardening, weeding, & have helped clear the patio of weeds. This partnership works well for us, they always do a fantastic job for which we are very grateful, and we often get to have a little chat and catch up with Angie & the young person, allowing us to thank them for their hard work and show our appreciation.

The wooden planters, decorations, boxes etc that the young people make are sold at our annual craft fair & follow on orders have been made. We were very grateful to receive a donation to the Community Centre following the sale."

These sessions also benefit the children, as shown in this comment:
"I've worked with drills and screws to make something that may benefit the Community. I enjoyed the sessions as I've learnt some new skills."

From January to December 2025 the YJS reparation team successfully held stalls in the community, to sell items made by children, raising a total of over £2,000. The money is donated to charities and community organisations, chosen by victims, as a further way to repair the harm caused by children's offences, and to raise the profile of the good work being completed by children working with the YJS. Donations this year include £300 to the Blue Light Foundation, for offences of Assault Emergency Worker, and £250 to a local charity tackling knife crime, Changes Are Made.



Stall at County Hall in Dorchester

6.7 Serious Violence and Extra-Familial Harm

Tackling extra-familial harm and reducing serious violence are priorities for strategic partnerships in both our local authority areas (as described in section 2 of this Plan).

DCYJS uses the 'Trauma Recovery Model' in its work. One of the benefits of this approach is to understand and respond to the issues which may underlie a child's exploitation or their use of violent behaviour. As described in section 6.5, the YJS Psychologist leads multi-agency formulations under the 'Enhanced Case Management' approach for children showing the highest levels of trauma and concerns for the safety of them and others.

The Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2021 introduced a Serious Violence Duty for specifed authorities, including youth justice services, to work together to share data and knowledge, allowing them to target their interventions to prevent serious violence. The specified authorities in Dorset and BCP agreed to use our two Community Safety Partnerships to lead this work. DCYJS contributes to the Serious Violence Needs Assessment in each local authority, and to the subsequent action planning.

The Dorset Police and Crime Commissioner's 'Head of Violence Reduction and Prevention' is a member of the YJS Partnership Board and works actively with YJS managers and practitioners to ensure that the YJS is integrated into local initiatives to reduce and prevent violence.

In August 2025 the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) started funding 'Focused Deterrence' work in the YJS. This approach is summarised by the Youth Endowment Fund as being 'a strategy that combines communicating the consequences of violence with support for developing positive routes away from it'. The Youth Endowment Fund rates Focused Deterrence as having High impact for preventing violence: Focused deterrence | YEF Toolkit.

The additional funding from the OPCC has been used to enhance the YJS response to children with weapon offences who are assessed as posing a high risk of serious harm to others. Work with these children now includes engagement in positive activities on additional YJS sessions, Restorative Justice inputs and First Aid sessions on the consequences of weapon injuries. This approach is provided in partnership with Dorset Police, who provide pro-active policing to these children.

Serious Violence Duty funding has been secured for 2026/27 to enable the YJS to work pro-actively with children who have been found in possession of a knife, while the investigation is ongoing, rather than waiting for the investigation to be completed before commencing YJS involvement. The Police will notify the YJS within one day of the child being found with a knife and the YJS will make immediate contact with the child.

Extra-familial harm occurs across the pan-Dorset area, with DCYJS seeing instances of exploitation and National Referral Mechanism (NRM) referrals for children in both local authorities. DCYJS plays an active role in the partnership arrangements in both local authority areas to address child exploitation, participating in strategic and tactical groups as well as other multi-agency initiatives such as the 'Missing, Exploited, Trafficked' (MET) Panel in BCP Council and the Dorset Council Extra-Familial Risk of Harm (EFRH) panels.

Although it is rare for children to become radicalised or involved in violent extremism, the harms from such behaviours are significant for individuals and for the community. The YJS Head of Service is a standing member of the 'Channel Panel' in each local authority. The YJS also engages actively as a member of the local Prevent Partnership. The new YJS Speech and Language project, 'Bridges', is working with the National Security Division of the Probation Service to identify and meet the communication needs of young adults with Terrorism Act offences.

6.8 Policing and Detention of children in police custody

DCYJS and Dorset Police work together closely on issues affecting children in the justice system. As well as the seconded police officers in the YJS, there is active police representation on the DCYJS Partnership Board. At an operational level there is daily contact between YJS Team Managers and the Sergeant in the police Youth Justice team.

Dorset Police has developed a Child Centred Policing Delivery Plan, adhering to the 9 areas of focus in the 2024 national Children and Young People's Strategy. Dorset Police hold a monthly internal meeting, chaired by a Superintendent, to focus on their work with children and young people. A benchmarking exercise against the 9 areas of focus will take place in 2026.

A 'Voice of the Child Scrutiny Panel' oversees the operational implementation of the strategy. The YJS Head of Service is a member of this panel, along with police leads from across the force.

Dorset Police is committed to reducing the numbers of children who are detained in police custody, as part of its Child-Centred Policing Strategy. A multi-agency 'Child Custody Detentions' group, led by the DCYJS Head of Service, monitors and addresses the use of police custody for children. The aim of the group is to reduce the number of children being arrested and, when an arrest is appropriate, to reduce the time the child stays in custody.

Data on child arrests is also reported to the YJS Partnership Board. The following table shows the child arrests in Bournemouth, Weymouth and Poole during 2025/26, with the corresponding information below for 2024/25.

2025/26	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
Auth Detention	42	38	34	39	21	21	14	26	24	31	26	37
Det Not Auth	5	3	3	3	9	2	1	1	1	2	2	1
10-13 Y/O	1	1	2	2	1	2	2	0	2	2	2	0
Overnight	20	14	21	14	7	5	2	4	11	15	15	19
ches / Clothing Changes	4 / 3	1 / 0	3 / 0	3 / 3	0 / 1	0 / 3	0 / 0	0 / 5	0 / 4	3 / 1	5 / 1	3/1
Remand/warrant	2 / 1	2 / 0	5 / 0	1 / 2	0 / 0	0 / 1	0 / 0	1 / 0	0 / 0	0 / 1	1 / 1	1
C114 requested	2	2	3	3	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	1

2024/25	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
Auth Detention	21	27	19	29	35	25	39	24	17	13	29	28
Det Not Auth	4	2	1	1	6	2	4	2	1	3	4	1
10-13 Y/O	0	0	0	1	2	3	1	2	0	0	2	1
Overnight	9	8	6	10	11	7	22	11	7	5	15	17
Strip searches / Clothing Changes	3/0	1 / 0	3 / 1	4 / 5	4 / 3	2/3	2 / 0	3 / 3	1 / 2	0 / 1	5 / 0	2 / 1
Remand/warrant	0/4	0 / 0	0 / 0	0 / 0	2 / 2	1/4	0 / 1	0 / 2	0 / 0	0 / 0	5 / 0	0 / 1
C114 requested	0	0	0	0	3	1	0	1	0	0	5	0

The number of child arrests in Dorset has declined in the past 4 years, from a total of 501 arrests in 2021/22 to a total of 329 arrests in 2025/26.

These figures show the success of Dorset Police's active work to reduce the numbers of children being arrested locally. Custody managers have strengthened the challenge on whether the detention is justified, evidenced by the monthly figures showing the number of 'Detentions not Authorised'. This means a child has been brought to the custody suite but the custody sergeant has refused to authorise the detention.

Dorset Police have changed their approach to custody arrivals during the evening to reduce the numbers that are detained overnight. The numbers of children detained overnight has dropped from 242 in 201/22 to 147 in 2025/26.

The Child Custody Detentions group previously identified a number of factors which can prolong a child's detention in police custody, including the availability of Appropriate Adults (AAs) and the

time of day when the child arrives in the custody suite. The timeliness of Appropriate Adult attendance has improved overall since 2021, when the service was commissioned externally from 'The Appropriate Adult Service' (TAAS). In recent months there have been some delays in the provision of Appropriate Adults by TAAS, linked to staffing shortages and absences. Contract monitoring processes have been used to address these issues, with assurance from TAAS that additional recruitment and reduced staff absences have addressed this issue.

When the police remand a child, ie charge them with an offence and refuse to grant the child bail, there is a legal requirement (under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984) to transfer the child to local authority accommodation until their appearance at the next available court. A child arrested on a warrant or for breaching bail must remain in police custody.

The Child Custody Detentions group reviews every instance of a child being remanded, to check that the procedures and decision-making were correctly applied. The table above shows that there were only 13 instances of a child being remanded in 2025/26 across all local custody suites. There were 8 instances of a child being remanded in 2024/25.

6.9 Transitions to Probation

The seconded Probation Officer post in DCYJS was vacant from September 2024 until September 2025. The Probation Officer plays an important role in supporting transitions for young people who are moving from the YJS to Probation. Improvements to local transition arrangements in recent years include:

- New process for Probation to request YJS information for young adults committing new offences who were previously known to the YJS.
- Extending the transition process for young people transferring from YJS to Probation, with additional joint meetings.
- Training sessions delivered by YJS Speech and Language Therapists to Probation staff to help them respond to the communication needs of young adults.
- YJS attendance at MAPPA Level 2 or 3 meetings for new cases aged 18-21 when the YJS previously supervised the young person.

The remit of the new 'Bridges' Speech and Language project includes support for the Probation Service's work with young adults on Probation. The Bridges team provided training to the Dorset Probation Service in March 2026. Plans for 2026/27 include the offer of speech and language assessments for 18-25 year-olds on Probation and support for Probation colleagues to develop communication-friendly practice. This is likely to include producing Easy Read versions of documents such as post-release licence conditions.

6.10 Remands

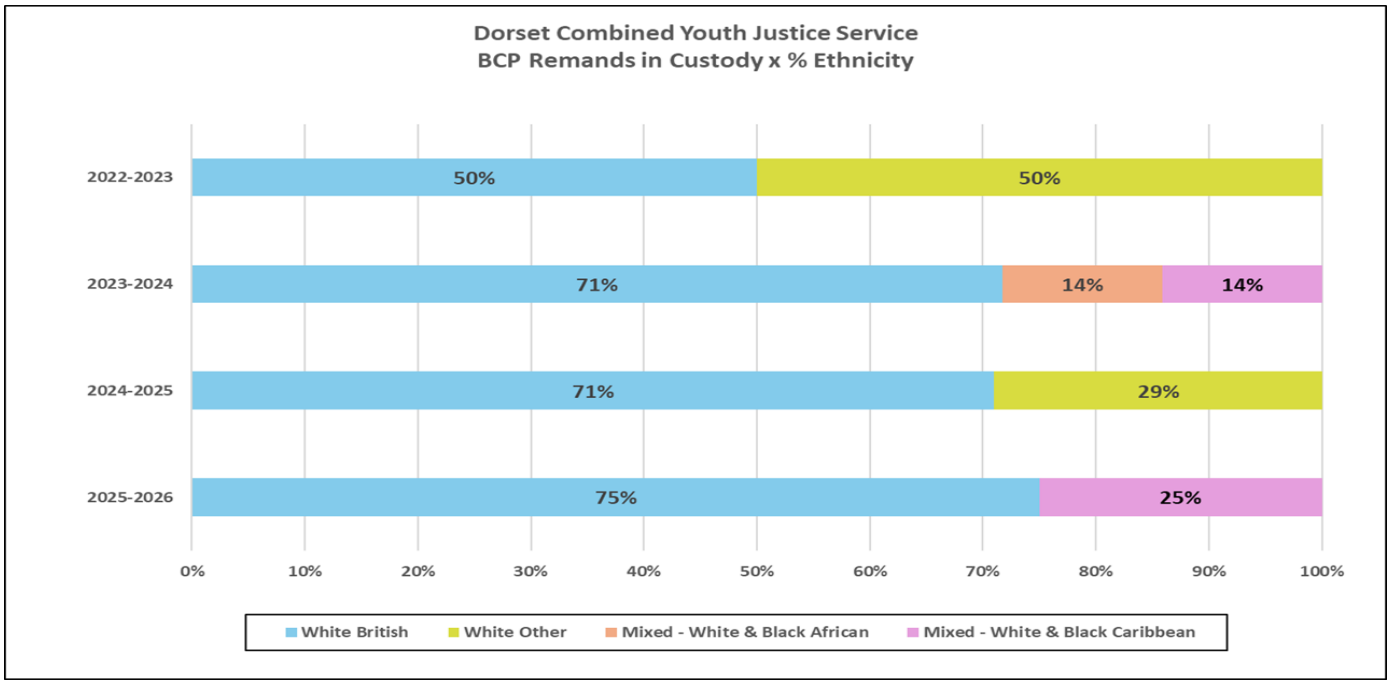
Six children were remanded in custody during 2025/26, compared to seven children in each of the two previous years. Four of the six children were from BCP Council, two were from Dorset Council.

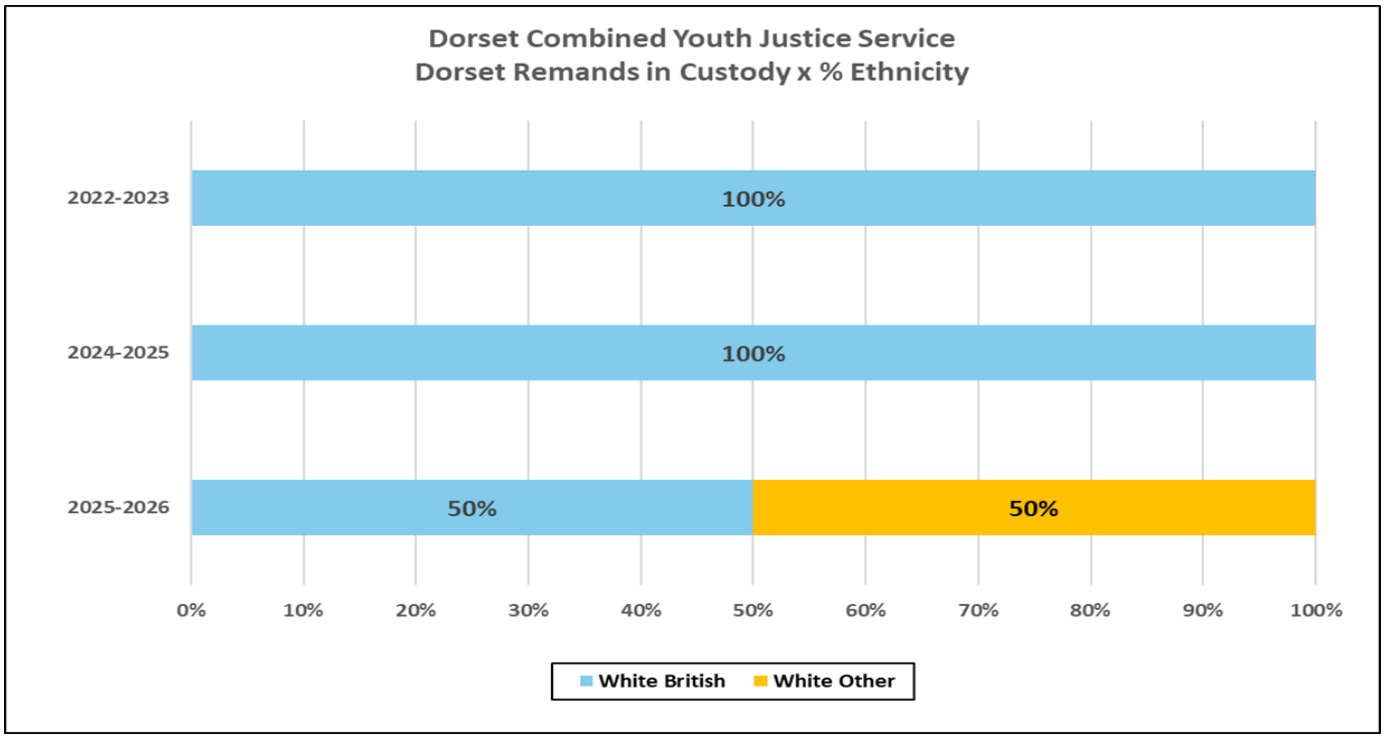
All six children were male.

Children who are remanded in custody gain 'child in care' status if they are not already a child in care. Two of the six children were already a child in care before being remanded into custody.

One of the children was aged 15 when he was remanded into custody; the other five were all aged 17.

Four of the children defined their ethnicity as White British, one defined his ethnicity as White Other and one defined his ethnicity as Mixed – White and Black Caribbean. The following charts show the ethnicity of children remanded in custody in recent years.





Low numbers of children remanded into custody means that each child has a significant impact on the percentage figures.

One of the children was remanded in custody in 2025 after a successful appeal against his previous conviction and custodial sentence, pending a re-trial. After nearly 6 months on remand, and a few days before the scheduled re-trial, the CPS decided to offer no evidence and the child was acquitted.

Two of the children who were remanded in custody did not go on to receive a custodial sentence, including the child mentioned in the previous paragraph whose re-trial did not go ahead.

Each remand in custody is reviewed in team meetings to consider if alternative options could have been taken. In most cases the remand decision reflects the seriousness of the alleged offence, and may also reflect patterns of offending and previous non-compliance with court orders and bail conditions.

The Ministry of Justice invited bids in March 2026 for regional remand partnerships. Local authorities in the south-west region decided not to submit a bid. There is still scope, though, to strengthen local partnerships across criminal justice agencies and childrens services to ensure that remands to custody are avoided whenever possible.

6.11 Custodial Sentences and Resettlement

Seven local children received custodial sentences during 2025/26 (compared to six in each of the two previous years). Information about custodial sentences and analysis of the young people is included in section 4.2 of this document. Information about the support for the health needs and education needs of children in custody is included in sections 6.4 and 6.5.

In recent years very few children have been released from custody before their 18th birthday. Of the seven children sentenced to custody in 2025/26, five of them will turn 18 before being released. The Probation Service takes over case responsibility if a young person turns 18 while serving a custodial sentence.

Finding suitable accommodation for children leaving custody can be challenging. DCYJS contributes to local authority care planning processes, promoting the early identification of the child's release address. The DCYJS Manager reports to the DCYJS Partnership Board on the timeliness of accommodation being confirmed for children being released from custodial sentences. This measure is also included in the new youth justice Key Performance Indicators. The release address for children leaving custody is sometimes not confirmed until the last few days before release. The final release address may be in another local authority area. As well as causing the child a lot of anxiety and distress, late confirmation of release address and local authority area makes it difficult to plan the child's resettlement, affecting access to education, health care and constructive activities.

With low numbers going into custody, and most of them becoming adults before they are released, the approach to resettlement for each child is planned individually.

6.12 Working with Families

DCYJS parenting staff provide support to the parents and carers of children on the YJS caseload. Support can be provided under a Parenting Order but in practice it is always achievable on a voluntary basis. Most contact is provided on a one to one basis, focusing on communications, relationships, setting boundaries and applying consequences. The workers remain alert to risk and safeguarding issues, attending multi-agency meetings, and supporting parents in their interactions with other services.

When appropriate, separate parenting workers can be allocated to a child's father and mother, in order to enable engagement with both parents.

Plans for 2026/27 include re-launching the YJS Living With Parents workshops to strengthen relationships and to reduce conflict between the parent and child; developing other ways to facilitate joint work with children and parents, with support from other YJS workers; and establishing an internal process to review all new child allocations for possible parenting referrals.

6.13 National Youth Justice Reforms 2026

The Ministry of Justice is engaged in an active programme of youth justice reform during 2026. Announcements have been made, or are expected, for the following areas:

- Knife Crime Guidance
- A Modern Youth Justice System
- Regional Remand Partnerships
- Preventing the drivers of youth custody
- Youth Justice White Paper (expected in May 2026).

National and local reform programmes in the wider YJS partnership include:

- Families First Partnerships
- SEND reforms
- Youth Strategy
- Violence Against Women and Girls strategy
- CAMHS Transformation (local reform programme).

DCYJS planning for 2026/27 will include taking action to align and develop our work in line with these diverse reform programmes.

6.14 DCYJS Priorities and Plans for 2026/27

This document shows the range and scope of YJS activities. The YJS will continue to seek improvements in all areas of its work. During 2026/27 the following strategic priorities will receive additional focus:

- Respond to national and local reforms in youth justice and children's services
- Enhance Child First Practice
- Develop YJS and Partnership work with victims
- Reduce the Over-Representation of some groups of children in the justice system
- Make best use of available resources.

The following table shows the priorities and plans for DCYJS in 2026/27. This is a dynamic plan which will continue to be updated, recognising that other priorities will arise during the year.

DCYJS Partnership Priority or Risk	Area for Development	Partners and Staff Providing Support	Benefits
Respond to national and local reform programmes	Implement Knife Crime Guidance from April 2026	Dorset Police DCYJS managers and practitioners Local authority children's services	Reduction in knife crime
Respond to national and local reform programmes	Start working with children while they are under investigation for weapon offences	DCYJS managers and practitioners Dorset Police	Earlier intervention leads to reduced weapon offending and other offending
Respond to national and local reform programmes	Advise on, seek to influence and prepare for national Youth Justice reforms	DCYJS Head of Service DCYJS Board	Workable and beneficial reforms are put in place
Respond to national and local reform programmes	Align YJS, and needs of YJS children/victims, with local implementation of Families First	DCYJS Head of Service BCP Council and Dorset Council	Effective joint work to meet the care and education needs of children in the YJS

	Partnerships and SEND reforms	Children's Services senior leaders	
Respond to national and local reform programmes	Ensure YJS mental health team is well-located to work effectively after local CAMHS Transformation	DCYJS Head of Service Dorset HealthCare Trust	Effective joint work to meet the health needs of children in the YJS
Respond to national and local reform programmes	Explore options for partnership work locally to reduce remands to custody	YJS Head of Service Dorset Police CPS HM Courts BCP and Dorset Children's Services	Fewer children are remanded into custody
Enhance Child First Practice	Whole YJS workshops to review Child First practice and agree further improvements	DCYJS managers, staff and volunteers	Enhancement of Child First practice to achieve better outcomes for children
Enhance Child First Practice (Diverting from stigma)	Continue to work with Dorset Police to develop alternative non-court options for motoring offences	Dorset Police DCYJS HoS, DCYJS Team Managers	Avoid first-time entrants for motoring offences such as speeding
Enhance Child First Practice (Diverting from stigma)	Monitor the lower age of First-Time Entrants in the Dorset Council area and identify remedial actions	DCYJS managers Dorset Police Dorset Council	Preventing or delaying entry to the justice system
Enhance Child First Practice (Building pro-social identity)	Continue to expand range and access to positive activities for children, including nature-based projects	DCYJS Activities Coordinator	Children build pro-social identity and build links with their community
Enhance Child First Practice (Collaborating with Children)	Develop new ways to engage children in contributing to service design	DCYJS managers DCYJS Activities Coordinator	Build children's positive identity, improve YJS service delivery
Child First Practice (Building pro-social identity)	Build team members' knowledge and confidence to work with children on the impact of their online experiences and identity	DCYJS practitioners and managers	Children's online activity supports positive identity and reduces harm arising from online activity.
Reducing over-representation	Investigate and agree actions in response to black or mixed heritage children being over-represented in the BCP Council area	DCYJS practitioners and managers BCP Children's Services	Reduce the over-representation of black or mixed heritage children from BCP in the justice system
Reducing over-representation	Further analysis of children receiving custodial sentences, to enhance YJS and partner offer to children entering the justice system under age 15 with multiple needs	DCYJS managers Local authority Children's Social Care and Education Services	Fewer of these children progress through the justice system and reach custody

Reducing over-representation	Complete the actions arising from the audit of work with Children in Care and review progress	DCYJS managers and practitioners Local authority children's services and Virtual Schools Child in Care health team	Reduction in the numbers of children in care entering the justice system or reoffending
Develop YJS and partnership work with victims	Continue work to identify and respond to victim vulnerabilities, especially child victims	DCYJS managers and RJ practitioners YJS partnership services	Children who have been the victims of crime receive support to address their vulnerabilities
Develop YJS and partnership work with victims	Improve YJS victim data recording and reporting to support service improvement	DCYJS Managers, Performance and Information Manager, RJ practitioners	More accurate and comprehensive data for YJS victim work helps to identify areas needing more resource or improvement
Make best use of available resources	Agree plans to balance budget through increase income and/or reduced costs	DCYJS Head of Service DCYJS Board BCP Children's Services Management Accountant	YJS delivers high-quality work while coping with budget reductions
Make best use of available resources	Streamline data recording processes to reduce duplication. Improve data reporting to show areas for targeting limited resources, such as children with multiple forms of disadvantage/need.	DCYJS managers DCYJS Business Support Officers and practitioners	YJS gathers and uses accurate data to help direct the use of limited service resources

7 Sign off, submission and approval

This Youth Justice Plan has been approved by the YJS Partnership Board in April 2026.

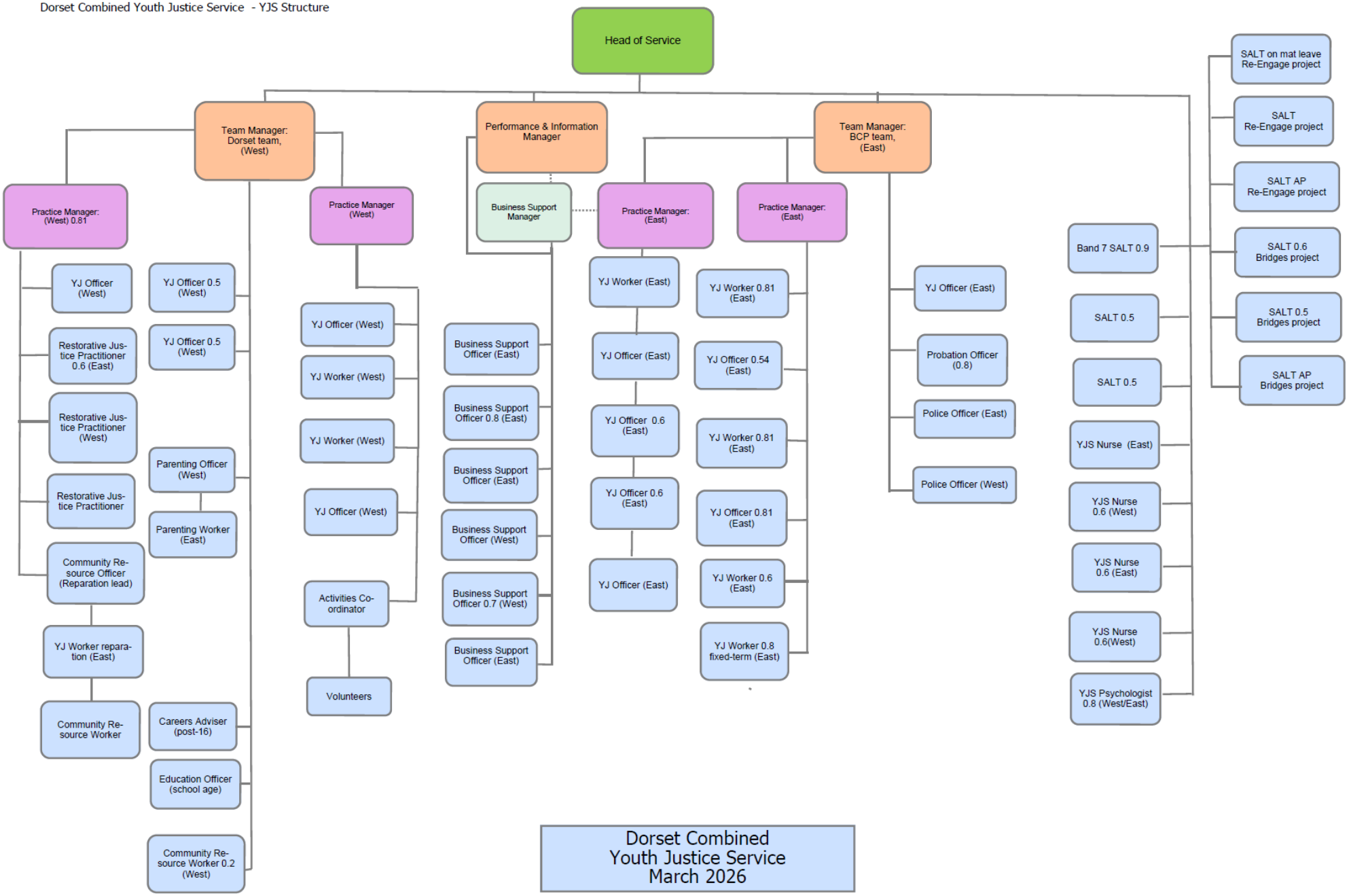
In accordance with 'Regulation 4 of the Local Authorities (Functions and Responsibilities) (England) Regulations 2000', Youth Justice Plans must be approved by the full council of the local authority. This Youth Justice Plan is subject to the scrutiny and approval processes of our two local authorities. It will be considered for approval by the full council of Dorset Council in July 2026 and by the full council of Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council in July 2026.

Chair of YJS Board - name	Paul Dempsey
Signature	
Date	

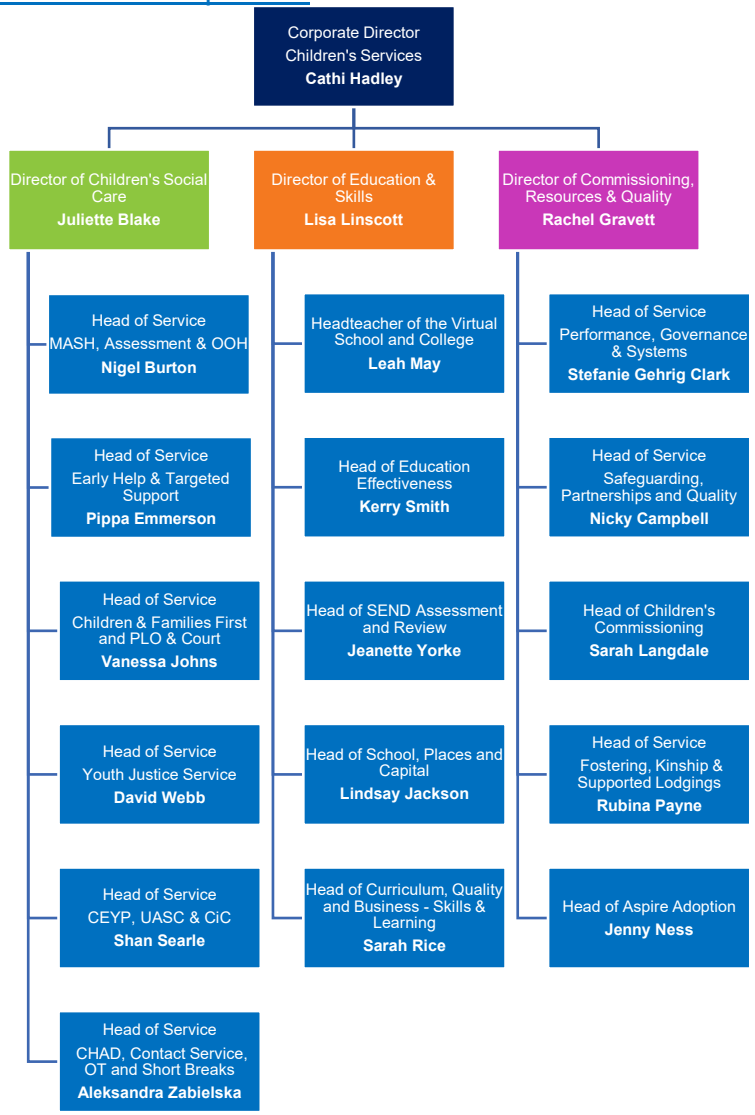
8 Appendix 1 – Service Structure Chart

The following structure charts show the staffing structure of Dorset Combined Youth Justice Service and where the service sits in the two local authorities.

Dorset Combined Youth Justice Service - YJS Structure



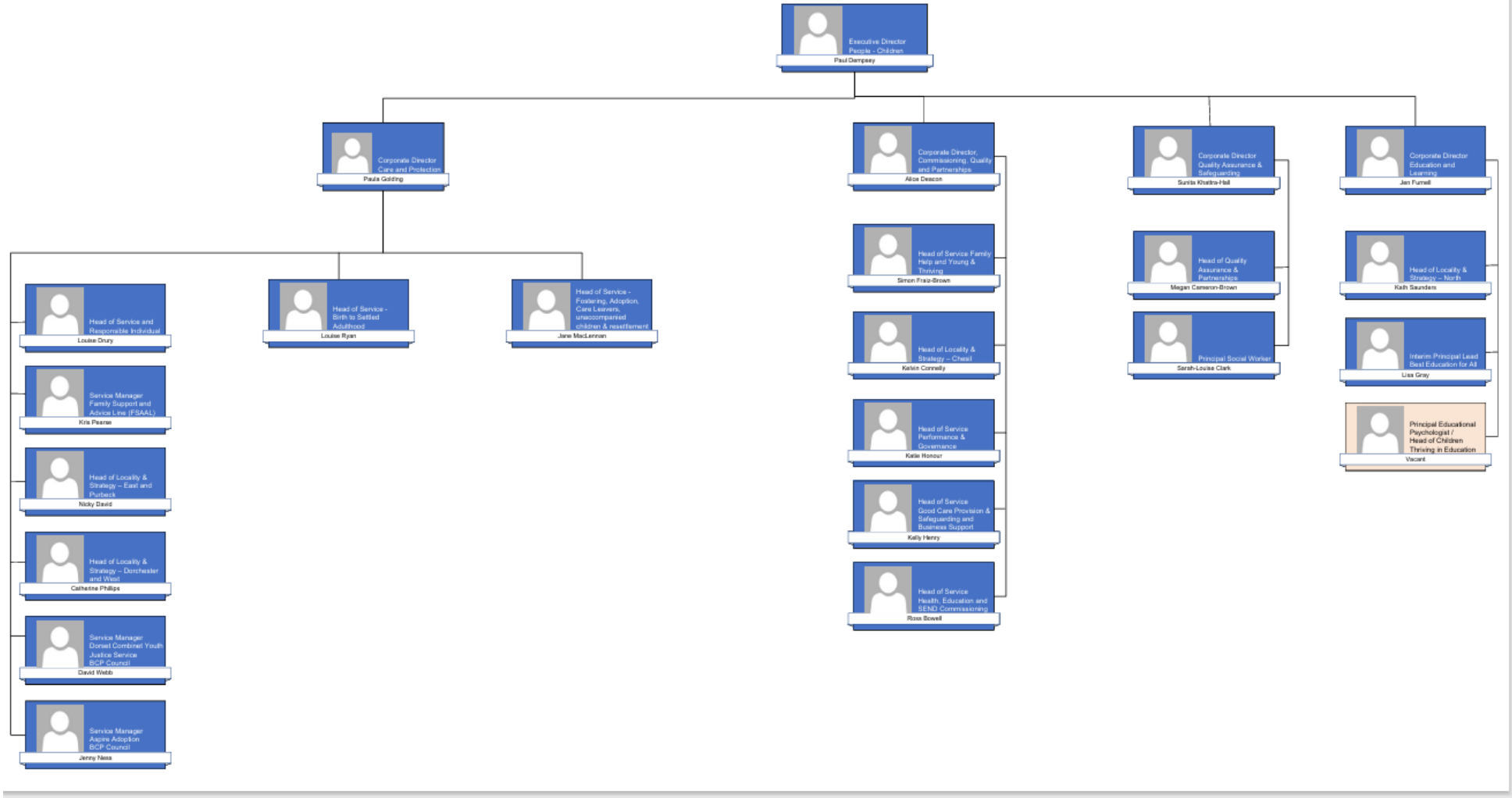
BCP Council Children's Services Extended Leadership Team



[Dorset Council Children's Services Extended Leadership Team]

Dorset Council People - Children

Children's Services Extended Leadership Team



DCYJS Staff and Volunteers:

The following table shows the gender, ethnicity and disability status of DCYJS staff members and volunteers:

DCYJS Staff 25 March 2026			
Ethnicity	**F**	**M**	**Grand Total**
White	47	9	56
White Irish		1	1
White Other	1		1
Mixed	2		2
Prefer not to say	2	1	3
Grand Total	**52**	**11**	**63**

Five staff members in DCYJS are recorded as having a disability.

Insert volunteers info

9 Appendix 2 – Budget Contributions 2026/27

Partner Agency	**25/26 Revenue** (excluding recharges)	**Staff**
Dorset Council	£536,164	
Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council	£628,622	
Dorset Police and Crime Commissioner	£84,794	2.0 Police Officers
The Probation Service (Dorset)	£5,000	0.8 Probation Officer 0.3 Probation Service Officer
NHS Dorset Clinical Commissioning Group	£22,487	2.8 FTE Nurses, 0.8 Psychologist, 1.4 Speech and Language Therapists
Youth Justice Grant	£767,922	
Turnaround Grant	£123,184	
Total	**£2,179,302**	

10 Appendix 3 – Local Authority Demographic Information

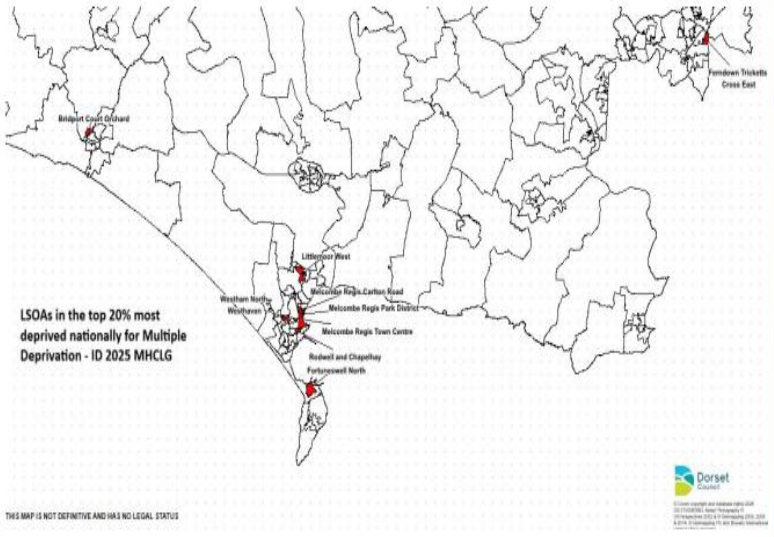
Dorset Council

Population	Age 10-17
Number of Children[1]	34,575
Male[1]	51%
Female[1]	49%
Pupils eligible for Free School Meals[2]	22.3%
Pupils with SEN Support[2]	14.7%
Pupils with an EHC Plan[2]	7.1%
Pupils from Non-white Minority Ethnic groups[3]	6.3%
25.7% children living in Poverty after housing costs[4]	

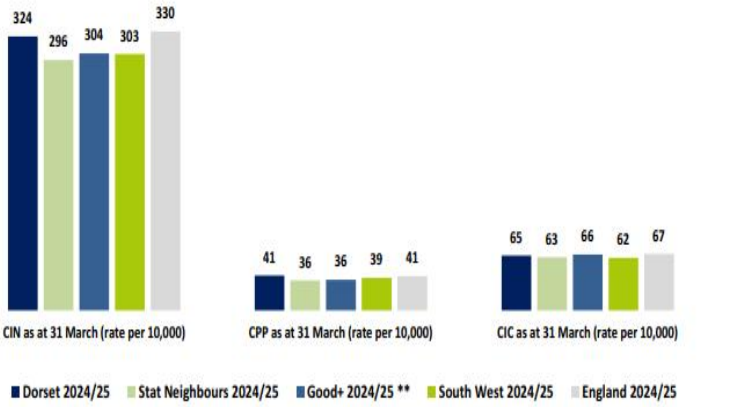
Safeguarding	Age 10-17
Number of Children in Need[5]	582
Male[5]	53%
Female[5]	47%
Number of Children with a Child Protection Plan[7]	286
Number of Children in Care[6]	341
Male[6]	60%
Female[6]	40%
Number of children and young people at risk of exploitation[7]	
Significant	19
Moderate	46
Emerging/Reducing	43

1. Dorset mid-year 2024 population estimates (published September 2025).
2. October 2025 School Census (includes all pupils at a Dorset School aged 10-17: ages as at 31 August 2025).
3. January 2025 School Census (all non-white pupils at a Dorset School, excluding 'Refused' and 'Information not yet obtained').
4. Based on the DWP/HMRC statistics "Children in low income families: local area statistics" (March 2024).
5. From MOSAIC, as at 28 February 2026. Excluding CP and CIC. Recorded by Sex, not Gender
6. From MOSAIC, as at 28 February 2026. Recorded by Sex, not Gender
7. From MOSAIC as at 28 February 2026. Includes CCE, CSE, Modern Slavery, Peer to Peer Abuse, Radicalisation and Youth Violence

LSOAs in Dorset within the top 20% deprived nationally



Note: The Indices of Deprivation are not designed to be compared backwards, they are a snapshot in time.



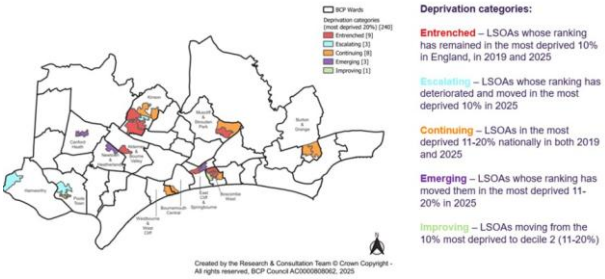
** Good+ Local Authorities are: Derbyshire, Essex, Kent, North Yorkshire, Shropshire, Somerset and Worcestershire

Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole

Population[1]:	Age 10-17
Number of Children[1]	35,978
Male[1]	51.3%
Female[1]	48.7%
Pupils Eligible for Free School Meals[2]	21.6%
Pupils with SEN Support[2]	15.9%
Pupils with an EHC Plan[2]	5.7%
Pupils from Non-white Minority Ethnic groups[3]	17.8%
27% children living in poverty after housing costs[4]	
Safeguarding	Age 10-17
Number of Children in Need [5]	385
Male [5]	53.2%
Female [5]	46.8%
Number of Children with a Child Protection Plan[7]	179
Number of Children in Care[6]	388
Male[6]	54.9%
Female[6]	44.8%
Indeterminate[6]	0.3%
Number of children and young people at risk of exploitation[8]	
High Risk[8]	43
Medium Risk[8]	54
Low Risk[8]	118

1. Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole population estimates (published July 2025)
2. January 2026 School Census (includes all pupils at a BCP School aged 10-17 ages as at 31st August 2025)
3. January 2026 School Census (all non-white pupils at a BCP School, excluding 'Refused' and 'Information not yet obtained')
4. Local child poverty indicators 2022/23. From DWP "Children in low income families: local area statistics" (March 2024).
5. From MOSAIC, as at 28 February 2026. Excluding CP, CIC, CEYP, PF, Open to Assessment. Gender figures exclude Unknown.
6. From MOSAIC, as at 28 February 2026. Gender figures exclude Unknown.
7. From MOSAIC, as at 28 February 2026.
8. From MOSAIC, as at 28 February 2026.

Which BCP areas are most deprived – IMD 2025



Deprivation categories:

Entrenched – LSOAs whose ranking has remained in the most deprived 10% in England, in 2019 and 2025

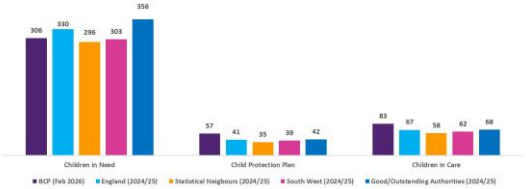
Escalating – LSOAs whose ranking has deteriorated and moved in the most deprived 10% in 2025

Continuing – LSOAs in the most deprived 11-20% nationally in both 2019 and 2025

Emerging – LSOAs whose ranking has moved them in the most deprived 11-20% in 2025

Improving – LSOAs moving from the 10% most deprived to decile 2 (11-20%)

Need comparison (rate per 10,000 0-17 year olds)



11 Common youth justice terms – national glossary

ACE	Adverse Childhood Experience. Events in the child's life that can have negative, long-lasting impact on the child's health and life outcomes
AIM 3	Assessment, Intervention and Moving on; an assessment tool and framework for children who have instigated harmful sexual behaviour
ASB	Anti-social behaviour
AssetPlus	Assessment tool to be used for children who have been involved in offending behaviour
CAMHS	Child and adolescent mental health services
CCE	Child Criminal exploitation, where a child is coerced, through threats of violence, or induced to take part in criminal activity
Children	We define a child as anyone who has not yet reached their 18th birthday. This is in line with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and civil legislation in England and Wales. The fact that a child has reached 16 years of age, is living independently or is in further education, is a member of the armed forces, is in hospital or in custody in the secure estate, does not change their status or entitlements to services or protection.
Child First	A system wide approach to working with children in the youth justice system.
Child in Care	Child in Care; where a child is looked after by the local authority
CME	Child Missing Education
Constructive resettlement	The principle of encouraging and supporting a child's positive identity development from pro-offending to pro-social after release from custody
Contextual safeguarding	An approach to safeguarding children which considers the wider community and peer influences on a child's safety
Community resolution	An informal disposal, administered by the police, for low level offending where there has been an admission of guilt
EHCP	Education Health and Care plan; a plan outlining the education, health and social care needs of a child with additional needs
ETE	Education, training or employment
EHE	Electively home educated; children who are formally recorded as being educated at home and do not attend school
EOTAS	Education other than at school; children who receive their education away from a mainstream school setting

FTE	First-Time Entrant. A child who receives a statutory criminal justice outcome for the first time (youth caution, youth conditional caution, or court disposal)
HMIP	Her Majesty Inspectorate of Probation. An independent arms-length body who inspect Youth Justice services and probation services
HSB	Harmful sexual behaviour, developmentally inappropriate sexual behaviour by children, which is harmful to another child or adult, or themselves
JAC	Junior Attendance Centre
MAPPA	Multi agency public protection arrangements
MFH	Missing from Home
NRM	National Referral Mechanism. The national framework for identifying and referring potential victims of modern slavery in order to gain help to support and protect them
OOCR	Out-of-court resolution. All recorded disposals where a crime is recorded, an outcome delivered but the matter is not sent to court
Outcome 22/21	An informal disposal, available where the child does not admit the offence, but they undertake intervention to build strengths to minimise the possibility of further offending
Over-represented children	Appearing in higher numbers than the local or national average
RHI	Return home Interviews. These are interviews completed after a child has been reported missing
SLCN	Speech, Language and communication needs
STC	Secure training centre
SCH	Secure children's home
Young adult	We define a young adult as someone who is 18 or over. For example, when a young adult is transferring to the adult probation service.
YJS	Youth Justice Service. This is now the preferred title for services working with children in the youth justice system. This reflects the move to a child first approach
YOI	Young offender institution

Referral to Cabinet
28 July 2026

From the Shareholder Committee for the Dorset Centre of Excellence on 15 June 2026

Coombe House School – Future Site Options

For Review and Consultation

Cabinet Member:
Cllr. C Sutton, Children's Services, Education & Skills

Senior Leadership Team:
P Dempsey, Executive Director of People - Children

Report Author and job title: Ross Bowell, Head of Service – Health, Education and SEND Commissioning

Report Status: Part Exempt Para 3

Reason for referral

In the meeting of the Shareholder Committee for the Dorset Centre of Excellence (DCOE) held on 9 June 2025, Dorset Council officers provided the shareholders with an overview of the key considerations for the council in respect of potential additional capital expenditure at Coombe House School and at other locations. Consideration was also given to commercial opportunities in relation to the wider use of the site. Consequently, shareholders requested a report on the longer-term intentions for Coombe House School.

A structured options appraisal report was provided to the Shareholder Committee for the Dorset Centre of Excellence (DCOE) meeting held on 15 June 2026.

The options appraisal report was considered by shareholders in the context of the Schools' White Paper published in February 2026, Every Child Achieving and Thriving, the linked national consultation on Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) reform, and the re-commitment of the Department for Education to deliver the Special Free School at Osprey Quay in Portland. Further detail of the reforms and implications for Dorset is set out in the Local SEND Reform Plan report also on the agenda of this Cabinet meeting.

In recognition that any decisions about the future options for the wider site and asset including Coombe House School will be for Cabinet, shareholders determined that the options appraisal report should be referred to Cabinet along with three recommendations for instructions to Dorset Council officers.

Recommendation:

The Shareholder Committee for the Dorset Centre of Excellence recommends to Cabinet that:

1. Cabinet instructs the Executive Director Children's Services to work with the Company to model the impact of the 2026 Schools' White Paper and the impact of the proposals relating to Osprey Quay.

2. Cabinet instructs the Chief Executive to establish a working group to review the commercial options for the site, with the Company.

3. Cabinet recognises the need for a short-term investment plan for the site to ensure it is being maintained, (whilst acknowledging the work required in respect of the long-term plan for the site) and instructs the Executive Director Economy and Environment, to prepare the short-term investment plan.

Appendices

1) Report to Shareholder Committee for the Dorset Centre of Excellence, Agenda item 12, 15 June 2026 – Future Site Options - **Exempt**

2) Coombe House Options Appraisal May 2026 – **Exempt**

Background papers

None

Cabinet

28 July 2026

Shaftesbury Neighbourhood Plan 2019-2031 - First Review

For Decision

Cabinet Member:
Cllr S Bartlett, Cabinet Member for Planning & Planning Enforcement

Local Councillors: Cllr D Beer and Cllr J Jeanes

Executive Director:
J Britton, Executive Director for Place Services

Report author and job title: Ed Gerry, Community Planning Manager
Email: ed.gerry@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

Statutory Authority: Localism Act 2011
Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023
Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended)

Report status: Public (the exemption paragraph is N/A)

Executive summary

1. The neighbourhood plan review has been subject to independent examination and the examiner has recommended that the Council should make (adopt) the plan with the modifications specified in his report (Appendix B). (The examiner has concluded that there is no statutory requirement for a referendum in this instance given the limited nature of the changes proposed to the plan). The purpose of this report is to formally make the modified plan part of the development plan for use in planning decisions in the Shaftesbury Neighbourhood Area.

2. **Recommendations**

2.1 The following recommendations are made:

a) That the Council 'makes' the Modified Shaftesbury Neighbourhood Plan 2019-2031 (as set out in Appendix A) part of the statutory development plan for the Shaftesbury Neighbourhood Area.

b) That the Council offers its congratulations to Shaftesbury Town Council and members of the Neighbourhood Plan Group for producing a successful neighbourhood plan review.

3. Reason for the recommendations

3.1 To formally make the modified neighbourhood plan part of the statutory development plan for the Shaftesbury Neighbourhood Area. In addition, to recognise the significant amount of work undertaken by the Town Council and members of the Neighbourhood Plan Group in preparing the plan review and to congratulate the Council and the Group on their success.

4. Shaftesbury Neighbourhood Plan Review

4.1 The neighbourhood plan area for Shaftesbury was designated by North Dorset District Council in November 2017. Following significant amounts of consultation and research Shaftesbury Town Council (the Qualifying Body) submitted the Shaftesbury Neighbourhood Plan, and associated documents, to Dorset Council[1] in January 2020. The submitted plan was subject to consultation, independent examination and then a referendum. The referendum was held on 6 May 2021 and a majority of those who voted in the referendum voted in favour of the plan. Consequently, the neighbourhood plan was formally made by Dorset Council on 22 June 2021.

4.2 In 2024, Shaftesbury Town Council decided to review the made plan to ensure that it remains up to date given significant national and global challenges—such as Brexit, the Covid pandemic, political shifts, and serious environmental concerns—since the original plan was made. Full details regarding the changes proposed are outlined in the Modifications Statement which is available via the link set out at the end of this report.

4.3 The modified plan, and its associated documents, were subject to formal consultation from 12 December 2025 to 30 January 2026. Dorset Council subsequently made arrangements for an independent examination of the plan review as required by The Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended).

4.4 The examination was conducted by Andrew Mead BSc (Hons) MRTPI MIQ. As part of the examination, and following a request from the examiner, a consultation took place between Friday 20 March 2026 and Tuesday 7 April 2026 regarding changes to the legal compliance and Basic Conditions requirements relating to neighbourhood plans.

4.5 The Examiner's Report on the plan review was published on 29 May 2026. The report concludes that subject to a number of modifications, and other minor non-material amendments, the modified plan should proceed to be made (adopted) by Dorset Council. (The examiner has concluded that there is no statutory requirement for a referendum in this instance given the limited nature of the changes proposed to the plan). The modified plan, once made, will replace the existing Shaftesbury Neighbourhood Plan, which was made in

[1] On 1 April 2019 the county's nine councils were replaced by two new organisations. Dorset Council became the local authority for the area previously covered by North Dorset District Council.

June 2021, as part of the development plan for the Shaftesbury Neighbourhood Area.

5. Alternative options considered

5.1 In this instance there are no reasonable alternative options available to the Council following the outcome of the examination. The Council is legally required to 'make' (adopt) the modified neighbourhood plan.

6. Legal considerations

6.1 A legal challenge could be made against the decision to **'**make' the modified Shaftesbury Neighbourhood Plan. Such a challenge could be made on the basis that the neighbourhood plan does not meet the basic conditions, is not compatible with the Convention rights or because it does not comply with the definition of a neighbourhood development plan. However, the independent examiner who examined the plan has considered these matters in light of the consultation responses made to the plan. The Council has also considered these matters and is of the view that there is no basis for reaching a different view to the examiner.

7. Financial implications

7.1 Under existing rules, Dorset Council is eligible to claim a grant of £10,000 after the revised plan comes into force following examination. This grant is intended to cover the costs associated with the Council's input into the production of the modified neighbourhood plan including the costs associated with the examination.

8. Natural environment, climate & ecology implications

8.1 The neighbourhood plan review has been prepared in accordance with national planning policy and guidance which seeks to deliver sustainable development through planning decisions including by improving biodiversity and mitigating and adapting to climate change. The independent examiner who conducted the examination of the plan considers that the modified plan contributes to the achievement of sustainable development.

8.2 As this report is pertaining to the Shaftesbury Neighbourhood Plan Review, there is no specific requirement for including a climate decision-wheel in this instance.

9. Well-being and health implications

9.1 The plan review has been prepared in accordance with national planning policy and guidance which seeks to deliver healthy, inclusive and safe places.

10. Other implications

10.1 The neighbourhood plan review will form part of the development plan for the Shaftesbury Neighbourhood Area alongside other current adopted plans

including the North Dorset Local Plan Part 1 (2016). Planning applications, which will be considered by Dorset Council, will be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

11. Risk implications

11.1 HAVING CONSIDERED: the risks associated with this decision; the level of risk has been identified as:

Current Risk: LOW

Residual Risk: LOW

12. Equalities

12.1 Part of the independent examiner's role was to consider whether the neighbourhood plan review would breach or otherwise be incompatible with any of the Convention rights within the meaning of the Human Rights Act 1998. No issues were raised by the examiner in this regard.

13. Appendices

Appendix A: Shaftesbury Neighbourhood Plan 2019-2031 - First Review
Appendix B: Examiner's Report

14. Background papers

14.1 Documents relating to the Shaftesbury Neighbourhood Plan Review can be accessed via the following webpage:

Shaftesbury Neighbourhood Plan 2019 to 2031 - Dorset Council

15 Report sign-off

15.1 This report has been through the internal report clearance process and has been signed off by the Director for Assurance and Governance (Monitoring Officer), the Executive Director for Resources (Section 151 Officer) and the appropriate Portfolio Holder.



SHAFTESBURY TOWN COUNCIL

Shaftesbury Neighbourhood Plan 2019–2031

First Review by Shaftesbury Town Council

July 2026

Original 2019 document designed by Andy Hargreaves

This 2025 update designed by Graham Palmer, Shaftesbury Town Council

Photos kindly provided by:

Burfitt & Garrett Ltd
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Contents

1. Introduction 5



1.1 Foreword 6
1.2 What is a Neighbourhood Plan? 7
1.3 Why should I read it? 8
1.4 How to read this document 9
1.5 Index of policies 10
1.6 Our population 11
1.7 The Neighbourhood Plan area 12
1.8 Aims, objectives and vision 13
1.9 Community views on planning 16
1.10 Climate change 17

2. The Town Centre 19



2.1 The Town Centre: Key messages and aims 20
2.2 What is the Town Centre? 21
2.3 Development within the Town Centre 22
2.4 Uses allowed within the Primary Shopping Area 24
2.5 Town centre shop fronts and public realm design 25
2.6 Town Centre parking 26

3. Housing & Employment 27



3.1 Housing and Employment: Key messages and aims 28
3.2 Meeting local housing needs 33
3.3 Housing sites: Key principles of development 39
3.4 Meeting local employment needs 41
3.5 The Shaftesbury Eastern Bypass corridor 43

4. Green Infrastructure 45



4.1 Green Infrastructure: Key messages and aims .. 46
4.2 Local Green Spaces and Important Treed Areas 49
4.3 Shaftesbury's slopes, views and rural setting ... 51
4.4 Landscaping requirements 58
4.5 Dark skies and lighting proposals 60

5. Design & Heritage 61



5.1 Design and Heritage: Key messages and aims 62
5.2 Shaftesbury Character Zones 65
5.3 Shaftesbury Conservation Area 75
5.4 Policies SFDH1 to SFDH7 76
Respecting Local Character in Designs 76
Incorporating sustainability in designs 76
The scale, positioning and orientation of buildings 77
The design of outdoor spaces 78
Parking provision 80
Scale, design and detailing of buildings 80
5.5 Archaeological assessment and preservation ... 83
5.6 Locally important historic buildings 85

6. Community, Leisure & Tourism 87



6.1 Community, Leisure and Tourism: Key messages and aims 88
6.2 The range and availability of community facilities 90
6.3 Tourist facilities and attractions 93
6.4 Provision of walking and cycling routes 95
Monitoring and Review 97

7. Appendices 99



7.1 Index of Appendices 100
7.2 Other documents to accompany the Neighbourhood Plan Document 100
7.3 Appendix A – Projects: Town Centre 101
7.4 Appendix B – Projects: Housing and Employment 102
7.5 Appendix C – Projects: Green Infrastructure 103
7.6 Appendix D – Projects: Community, Leisure & Tourism 104
7.7 Appendix E – Projects: Design and Heritage 105
7.8 Appendix F – Shaftesbury Views Audit 106
7.9 Appendix G – Health 116
7.10 Appendix H – Education 117
7.11 Appendix I – Community Venue Utilisation Report 118
7.12 Appendix J – Shaftesbury Trees 120
7.13 Appendix K – Locally Important Buildings – List and Maps by Zone 123
7.14 Appendix L – List of Local Green Space (LGS) and Important Treed Areas (ITA) 131
7.15 Appendix M – Schedule of evidence sources 141
7.16 Appendix N – Housing Target and Population Statistics 144
7.17 Appendix O – Explanation of the new use classes described by SFTC2 152
7.18 Appendix P – British Geological Survey data 154



1. Introduction

1.1 Foreword

A Neighbourhood Plan is a community's vision for how its town or parish should evolve. It is not a static document but an ongoing journey—one that adapts as times and priorities change. Shaftesbury's Neighbourhood Plan, initiated in 2018, has steadily progressed, shaped by the dedication of local residents. This latest update, reviewed in 2025 and finalised in July 2026, builds upon previous work, ensuring the town's future remains guided by informed public input and a commitment to sustainability.

The 2018 plan, made in 2021, captured a comprehensive reflection of public opinion on Shaftesbury's future at the time. However, the past five years have presented significant national and global challenges—spanning Brexit, the Covid pandemic, political shifts, and serious environmental concerns—which have necessitated critical updates. This latest version, reviewed in 2025, reinforces and expands upon the earlier vision, ensuring Shaftesbury's priorities remain forward-looking and resilient.

Throughout this journey, collaboration between the town council and volunteers has added practical detail to Shaftesbury's response to the climate and nature emergency. As part of this commitment, Shaftesbury Town Council has declared Shaftesbury to be Britain's first *Nature Friendly Town* and, more specifically, an *Orchard Town*. This means that our vision includes enhanced biodiversity within the town—such as orchards in public places, wildlife corridors linking the urban landscape to the countryside, and the establishment of a developer-free *Green Wheel* to protect natural spaces.

Whilst this Neighbourhood Plan celebrates Shaftesbury's rich history, its true purpose is to shape the town's future and ensure that sustainability and the recovery of the natural world is at the heart of all future development .

To quote Sir David Attenborough: 'We must always remember in defining any human activity that we are a part of nature and not apart from it.'

Shaftesbury Neighbourhood Plan Advisory Committee



1.2 What is a Neighbourhood Plan?

The Neighbourhood Plan is a set of guidelines that will ensure that planners consider Shaftesbury's heritage and setting and the needs and aspirations of residents when assessing new development.

The government does not allow Neighbourhood Plans to block development. We can't say that we don't want any more houses built, for example. Instead, our plan will help ensure that any new development is appropriate to its setting and is sustainable.



Neighbourhood Plans have no power to demand that new facilities are built, either. We have no authority to request another doctors' surgery, school or car park, for example. But a Neighbourhood Plan can highlight the need for such facilities, and give guidance on where these could be developed and what they might look like, if they do get built.

The 'planners' are the 'decision makers' who determine planning applications. These decision makers include planning officers, members of the Planning Committee, planning inspectors, and even the Secretary of State. Planners can easily be interpreted as just the planning officers at the Council who, although they make the majority of planning decisions, are not the only ones who can do so.

People want to live in Shaftesbury. We enjoy a strong community spirit. There's a thriving arts sector, interesting independent shops, our lively street market, and good schools. Shaftesbury's setting is stunning. Green slopes, ancient woodlands and the chalk downs surround us. As you climb up through the ancient, tree-lined holloways to reach our historic Saxon hilltop town, you get a sense that this really is a special place.

You probably care passionately about Shaftesbury. That's why you are reading this document. A team of volunteers who feel the same way has created this Neighbourhood Plan, and has also been involved in its review. We're all residents, we all love our town and we want to protect the unique aspects of Shaftesbury life that make this an exceptional place to live.

This plan is a blueprint, a guide for planners when they make decisions about our town's future. The plan is different to any strategy that has been prepared before and it's based on what you've told us. We've surveyed fellow residents to find out what needs to happen to make life better here. Each and every one of the policies in this plan is based on research, evidence gathering and consultation.



The policies in this document should be used when planners assess applications for new individual homes, housing estates and commercial or community premises in Shaftesbury. The plan should also guide the planners when they need to decide whether property owners may change the use of their premises, from shops to living accommodation, for example. The plan runs to 2031, although it may be reviewed and the plan period extended in the future. The first Neighbourhood Plan was adopted in June 2021 following a local referendum, when over 85% of those voting in Shaftesbury voted 'yes' to this plan.



1.3 Why should I read it?

Some Shaftesbury developments have used high quality building materials, appropriate to their setting within the town or countryside. At the other end of the scale, some projects have paid little reference to their location and their construction and finish has not been well received.

A Neighbourhood Plan can inform planners what our town's residents expect from the style and design of new developments. People who make the decisions which impact on Shaftesbury are not necessarily based here. They may be unfamiliar with our town and our aspirations. With a Neighbourhood Plan in place, developers or local government officials will quickly understand what Shaftesbury people want.

It is important to understand that the Shaftesbury Neighbourhood Plan policies cannot block development that is already part of the wider Local Plan which covers the whole of the former North Dorset district. But Shaftesbury's Neighbourhood Plan can shape where that development will go and what it will look like.

Again, we need to stress that we are not allowed to say 'NO' to any more development. We know that many Shaftesbury residents have strong views about more building. This plan cannot promote less development than set out in the strategic policies for the area or undermine those strategic policies. But it can highlight those undeveloped green spaces which are especially important to the local community and should be protected. It can also set out what the community expects from any new development.

The wide-ranging policies in the Shaftesbury Neighbourhood Plan touch on nearly every aspect of Shaftesbury life. If you shop or socialise, play sport, work, walk or drive in or around our town, we think that you will find at least one policy which addresses your concerns or experiences.

This Neighbourhood Plan is not a publication that will be forgotten about. It won't sit on a shelf, gathering dust. It may need to be updated as circumstances change in the future. Just like our town, it will need to be adapted to cater for new demands and to embrace fresh ideas.

Through the first review of this Plan, we identified some elements that needed updating or strengthening, and we asked the community for feedback on these changes, which were then considered by an Independent Examiner. With a few minor updates, he felt that the updated Plan 'should continue to prove to be a useful tool for future planning and change within Shaftesbury over the coming years.' Our hope is that it can continue to preserve the character of our small, unique Dorset town and keep it vibrant. Not just for us, but for the next generation of Shaftesbury residents.

Gold Hill



1.4 How to read this document

We have split the Neighbourhood Plan into two separate parts.

Part 1—Sections 1 to 6 will be of interest to most people who care about Shaftesbury. It explains how Shaftesbury has developed through time and outlines some of the challenges we face today as the town continues to grow.

Part 2—Appendices and Supporting Information contains more technical information, references and evidence. If you are interested in the background behind some of the ideas, you may find it useful.

The plan follows themes. We have colour-coded each section in the hope that it makes it easier to follow.

The **Town Centre** section is blue

The **Housing and Employment** section is yellow

The **Green Infrastructure** section is green

The **Design and Heritage** section is purple

The **Community, Leisure & Tourism** section is pink

Quick Read

We understand that not everyone has the time to read this entire document. It is large! So, we've created a Quick Read option like this. On each page, we have summarised each of our policies or explained technical terms that you might be unfamiliar with. If you're in a rush, you can get an understanding of what we hope to achieve by browsing the quick read notes.

POLICY

The actual planning policies (which are what planning applications are tested against) are shown in shaded panels coloured for the section, like this.

You might be interested in reading more about your local area and seeing how consultants have compared it to other districts of Shaftesbury. You will find separate mini chapters in **Design and Heritage** on:

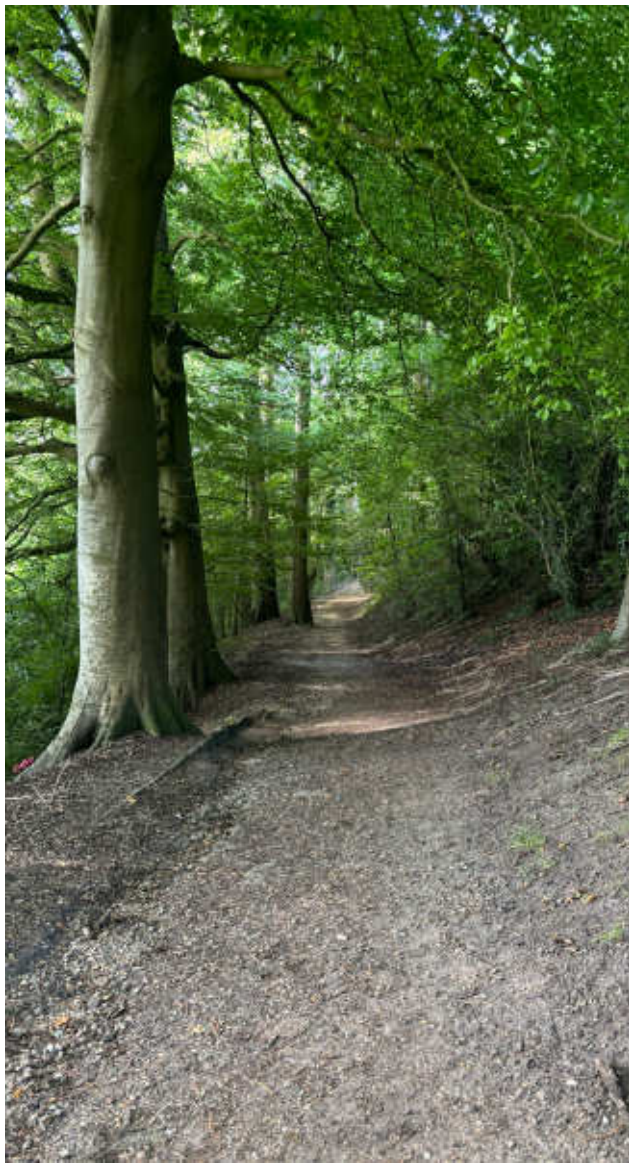
- Bimport
- The Town Centre
- St James
- Grosvenor Road, Barton Hill and Cockram's Field
- Layton Lane
- Cann
- Enmore Green
- East of Christy's Lane

Policies in this plan are written to cater for a wide range of planning applications, which means that some flexibility needs to be built into the policy tests on occasion.

Where words such as '**will**' or '**must**' have been used, this means that the policy test must be complied with and it is not expected that there will be exceptions made to this policy.

Where words such as '**should**' or '**is encouraged**' are used, this means in general it is expected that the policy test will be met, but recognises that there may be exceptions made due to specific circumstances. It does not imply that the policy is optional. If an applicant considers that their case is an exception, then they should include information explaining the reasons why they consider such an exception should be made.

Pine Walk



1.5 Index of policies

SFTC 1	Development within the Town Centre	22
SFTC 2	Uses allowed within the Primary Shopping Area	24
SFTC 3	Town centre shop fronts and public realm design	25
SFTC 4	Town Centre parking	26
SFHE 1	Meeting local housing needs	33
SFHE 1a	Land south-east of Wincombe Lane (Hopkins Land)	34
SFHE 1b	Land adjoining Lidl	35
SFHE 1c	Barton Hill House and Grounds	36
SFHE 1d	The Police Station and Post Office sites	37
SFHE 2	Housing sites—key principles of development	40
SFHE 3	Meeting local employment needs	41
SFHE 4	The Shaftesbury Eastern Bypass corridor	43
SFGI 1	Local Green Spaces and Important Treed Areas	49
SFGI 2	Shaftesbury's slopes, views and rural setting	57
SFGI 3	Landscaping requirements	58
SFGI 4	Dark skies and lighting proposals	60
SFDH 1	Respecting local character in designs	76
SFDH 2	Incorporating sustainability in designs	77
SFDH 3	The scale, positioning and orientation of buildings	78
SFDH 4	The design of outdoor spaces	79
SFDH 5	Parking provision	80
SFDH 6	Scale, design and detailing of buildings	81
SFDH 7	Building materials	82
SFDH 8	Archaeological assessment and preservation	83
SFDH 9	Locally important historic buildings	85
SFCL 1	The range and availability of community facilities	90
SFCL 2	Tourist facilities and attractions	93
SFCL 3	Provision of walking and cycling routes	95

1.6 Our population

The first population Table in **Appendix N** shows the anticipated population growth in the town from 2011 to 2031 and this equates to about a 45% increase. This has been updated based on more recent housebuilding rates (to 2022), projections and the 2021 Census data that is now available.

The second Table in **Appendix N** highlights a 25% increase in Shaftesbury's population from 2011 to 2021, which is the highest in North Dorset (the second highest being a 5% increase at Blandford).

3,234 more people in 2031 v 2011	Equates to **45% increase**
1,468 more houses in 2031 v 2011	

Strategic Planning Policies

In preparing the 2016 Local Plan, North Dorset District Council looked to its main towns (including Shaftesbury) to function as the main service centres and to be the main focuses for growth. As part of this work, consideration was given to the amount of development that was needed and would be appropriate for each town. Local Plan Policy 2: Core Spatial Strategy identifies Shaftesbury as one of the four main towns in North Dorset, where growth will be focused.

For Shaftesbury, it has long been recognised that the potential for expansion is limited by the landscape and biodiversity constraints. There are steep 'slopes' to the south, west and north of the town centre, and further development in these directions would either be impracticable, harmful to valuable landscape views or harmful to the heritage of the town. There are also areas protected for their biodiversity value on these slopes. The boundary with Wiltshire Council lies to the east of the town, and edge of the Cranborne Chase National Landscape runs close to this boundary. There are only a limited number of potentially developable sites where the town could grow.

The main planning objectives for the town are included in Policy 18 of the Local Plan, whilst Policy 12 of that document supports town centre enhancement and growth.

A number of more detailed (non-strategic) policies from the earlier 2003 Local Plan have been saved, for example in relation to safeguarding the character of the town.

The Neighbourhood Plan has to work within the strategic framework provided by the adopted Local Plan. Our aims very much fit within this framework and should ensure that changes to the town and surrounding area are positive ones that respect the environment and unique history of the area.

Emerging Dorset Local Plan

In early 2021 Dorset Council published the first draft of its new Local Plan, which will eventually replace the North Dorset Plan. A further draft is likely to be issued in Summer 2026, and the plan should be finalized by the end of 2027. Whilst the first draft is not given any significant weight in planning decisions, it is worth noting that it does not propose any further growth around Shaftesbury other than the sites already planned.

Basic Conditions

Legislation requires Neighbourhood Plans to be accompanied by a Basic Conditions Statement which confirms, for example, that the document meets legal requirements, has regard to national and strategic policies; and will contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. This will be checked as part of the Examination of this Plan. A copy of the Statement accompanying the original Neighbourhood Plan can be found on Dorset Council's web-site. https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/w/shaftesbury-neighbourhood-plan-2019-2031

1.7 The Neighbourhood Plan area

The Shaftesbury Neighbourhood Plan can only influence decisions on planning and development within the boundaries of the parish of Shaftesbury, the Town Council's area.

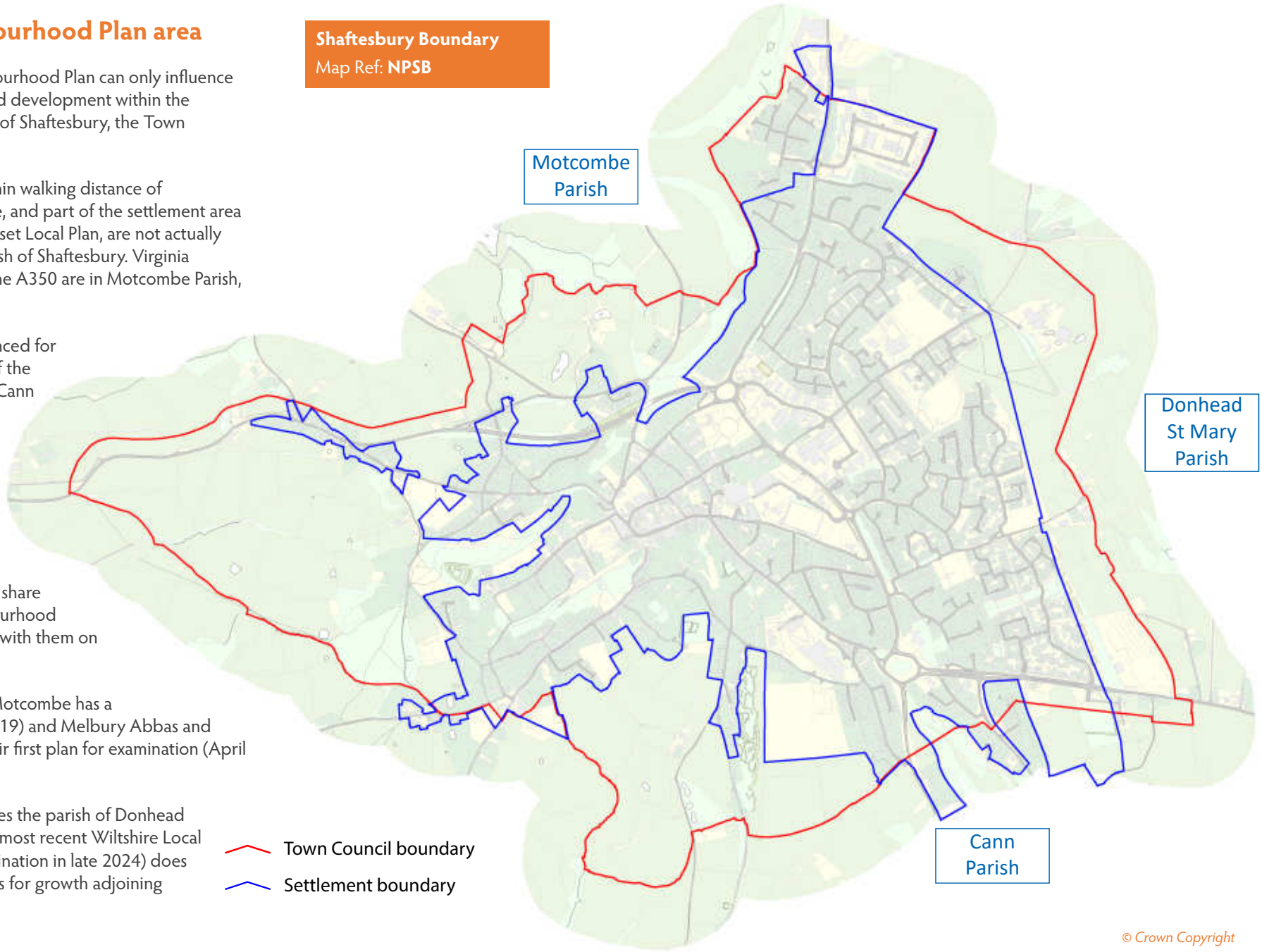
Some places that are within walking distance of Shaftesbury Town Centre, and part of the settlement area defined in the North Dorset Local Plan, are not actually in the administrative parish of Shaftesbury. Virginia Hayward's premises on the A350 are in Motcombe Parish, for example.

Some of the land ring-fenced for employment use south of the A30 Salisbury Road is in Cann Parish. Parts of the Lower Blandford Road, Higher Blandford Road and Coyle Hill are also in Cann Parish.

We have and will continue to liaise with neighbouring councils to share the Shaftesbury Neighbourhood Plan policies and engage with them on the content of the plan.

The adjoining parish of Motcombe has a Neighbourhood Plan (2019) and Melbury Abbas and Cann have submitted their first plan for examination (April 2025).

To the east of the town lies the parish of Donhead St Mary in Wiltshire. The most recent Wiltshire Local Plan (submitted for examination in late 2024) does not contain any proposals for growth adjoining Shaftesbury."



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1.8 Aims, objectives and vision

Vision for 2031: "Shaftesbury is the best example of how an historic, hilltop market town adapts and thrives in the 21st century, working towards net-zero emissions whilst keeping its unique identity and character and respecting its beautiful countryside setting and nationally renowned views."

Shaftesbury is one of England's most historic settlements and was established around the Abbey in the year 888. The town we love today has been shaped by its history as a place of pilgrimage and as a successful market town.

Our street layout reveals a great deal about our heritage. Different areas of our town have their own unique feel and character. Retaining that sense of place and individuality is really important to the Neighbourhood Plan.

The historic 'core' comprises a single main street, the High Street, and parallel lanes, like Bell Street and Bleke Street.

The Medieval market town to the east is made up of an irregular grid of streets and lanes, including Muston's Lane and Angel Lane. A pattern of roads spreads out from the town to nearby settlements.

Below the hilltop is St James, an early 'suburb' of the town. The settlement follows one long street.

Historic buildings form a major part of the character of Shaftesbury. The majority of modern suburban development is largely concentrated to the east of the historic town. Smaller areas of modern housing are found on the edges of Enmore Green, St James and Cann.

Modern suburban development in Shaftesbury is typical of its period. It has little local distinctiveness.

Open and wooded areas on Shaftesbury's historic hilltop and on the steep slopes around the town include Abbey Park and Castle Hill, both settings for ancient monuments. These, and the long views across the Blackmore Vale to the north, west and south, contribute significantly to the distinctive rural hilltop character of the town and are a magnet for many British and overseas visitors.

The nationally important landscape of the Cranborne Chase National Landscape, designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, wraps around the north, east and south sides of the town, which has international acclaim for its dark night skies.

Our work has comprehensively covered all aspects of the town relevant to neighbourhood planning. We have used five different themes to present this:

- The Town Centre
- Housing and Employment
- Green Infrastructure
- Design and Heritage
- Community, Leisure & Tourism

"We must always remember in defining any human activity that we are a part of nature and not apart from it"

Sir David Attenborough

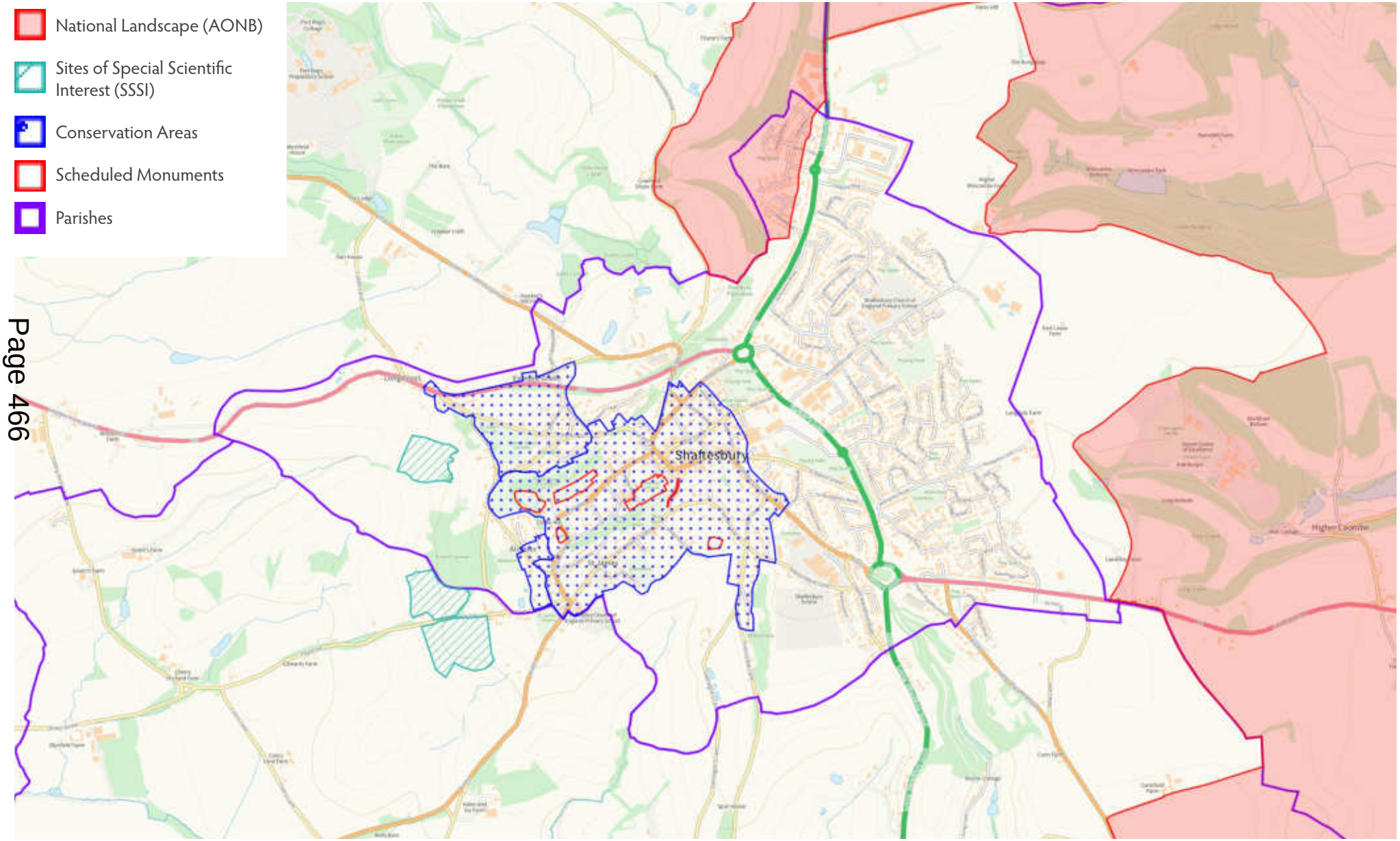
There are a number of policies within these headline themes, that will be used to guide planning decisions. These policies aim to:

- Support projects and proposals that go beyond the current standards for sustainable development, including zero carbon, significant biodiversity benefits and the take-up of sustainable transport modes
- Support the vibrancy of the town centre, with its independent shops and markets, and strong association with arts/crafts
- Ensure further housing and employment provision reflects the needs of local residents and businesses – in this review we have added in specific policies to ensure the sites that are likely to come forward within the town are sensitively developed
- Protect important green spaces and corridors, and maximise their potential for recreation, walking and cycling links and as wildlife areas
- Make sure that new buildings are of high quality that complement the best of Shaftesbury whilst being environmentally friendly
- Establish that the social, educational, healthcare and road infrastructure is sufficient for future needs, and that any improvements are delivered in a timely manner.

Enmore Green



Key environmental constraints



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Vision map

Protecting the town's green spaces, trees and countryside

- Important green spaces and tree groups
- Visually sensitive slopes

Protecting the town's heritage and key views

- The town's historic core
- Viewpoints

Strengthening the town centre and local facilities, such as at Mampitts

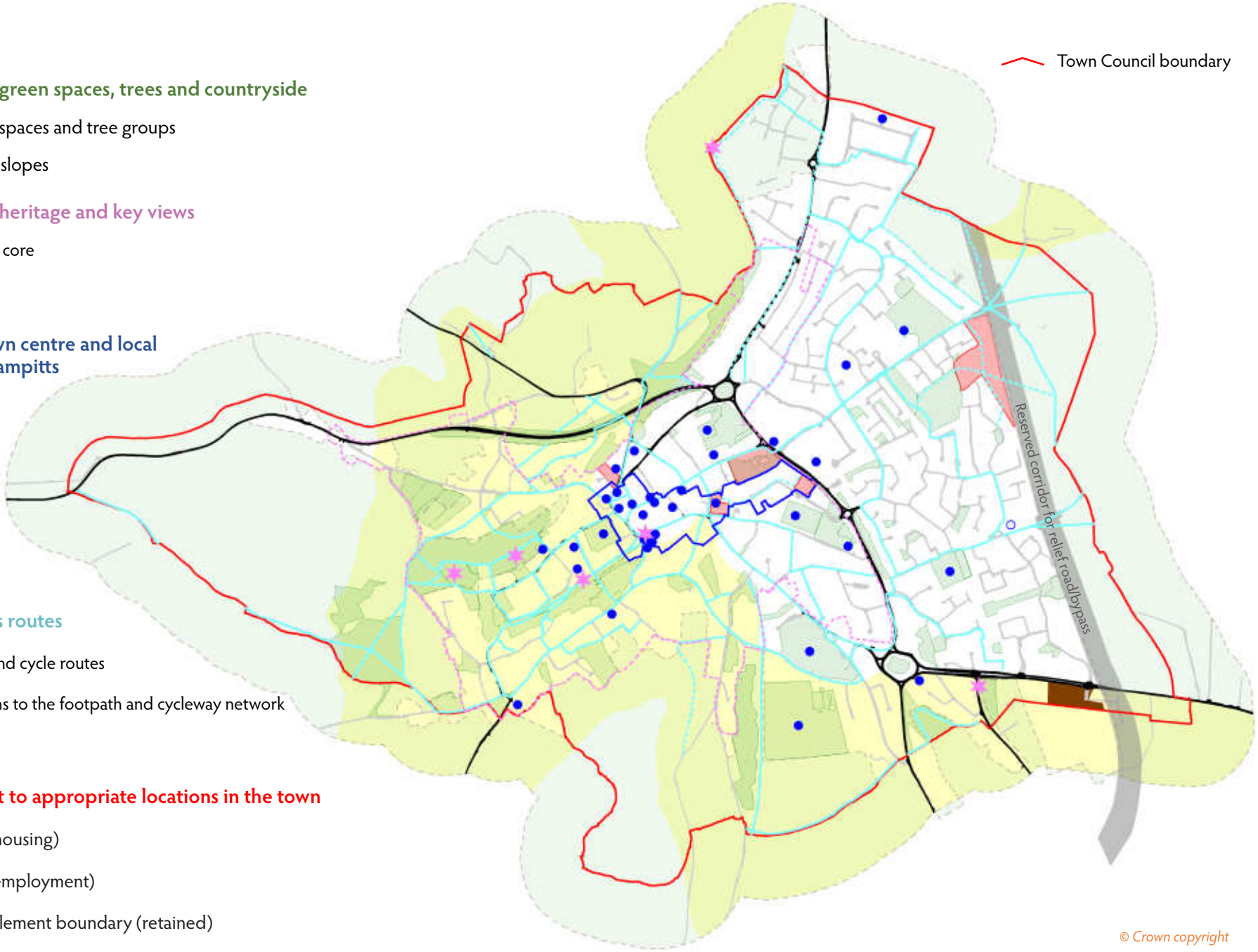
- Town centre
- Key community facilities
- Key community facilities (planned)

Improving local access routes

- Public footpaths and cycle routes
- Proposed additions to the footpath and cycleway network
- Public bridleways

Steering development to appropriate locations in the town

- Site allocations (housing)
- Site allocations (employment)
- Area outside settlement boundary (retained)



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1.9 Community views on planning

We have read and assessed the feedback from 'free form' comments from the previous Shaftesbury, Melbury Abbas and Cann Neighbourhood Plan questionnaire (2014), particularly focusing on the questions with the highest response. Free form comments are when someone writes down their ideas or suggestions without answering a specific question, so they are able to raise any topics they are concerned about.

Following on from this, we have run three more consultations. A mini survey was run in June 2018. This checked that the results of the earlier 2014 still held true. In February 2019, we consulted on our draft policy ideas to check that they were generally supported. And finally, in August and September 2019, we consulted on the first full version of this plan.

There were two questions in the February 2019 consultation that resulted in policy amendments (where a high percentage of respondents disagreed with the policy intentions we had suggested).

Even though many people agreed with the option to accept small scale affordable housing developments outside of the settlement boundary (which could mean building on green fields) over 60% of responses indicated no support for this policy.

We have listened to the community. As a result of this consultation feedback there is no specific policy on affordable housing. There is, however, insight relating to the needs of local people as defined in the Dorset Council housing register and therefore a project is included in **Appendix B**.

Another of our earlier draft policies suggested adding an additional floor to certain buildings in the town centre to create accommodation. Whilst nearly 60% of people agreed or felt neutral with upward extension of single storey buildings in the town centre, there were still a significant amount of responses that did not support this policy intention, so we have not encouraged this change.

Feedback from initial consultation in 2015—*summary of key points:*

Key Point	Number of responses	Additional comments in free-form text
The importance of protecting and enhancing the quality of housing development	752	205
Concerns about infrastructure, such as roads, public transport, community buildings **	828***	220
Concerns regarding healthcare and medical facilities	967	232
The importance of protecting and enhancing our open spaces and views	967	305
The need to improve the walking and cycling network	666	289

*** Includes questions relating to parking, traffic congestion, education provision, road safety, outdoor space, public transport and leisure facilities.*

**** An average of 828 responses based on a total of 10 questions relating to infrastructure.*

Percentage of residents concerned and personally affected by:

Key Point	Number of respondents concerned	% of responses
GP and health facilities: Had an unacceptable wait for an appointment within the last year	113	73%
Frequently unable to park within reach of where I need to go	68	44%
Traffic congestion: Frequent Delays on Shaftesbury's Roads	73	47%

Feedback from phase 1 consultation (February 2019)—*summary of key points:*

Key Point	Number of responses	Number of residents	% Residents
Residents who broadly agreed with the Town Centre Policy intentions	160	125	78%
Residents who broadly agreed with the Town Centre Policy intentions	232	132	57%
Residents who broadly agreed with the Housing and Employment Policy intentions	164	143	87%
Residents who broadly agreed with the Design and Heritage Policy intentions	142	118	83%
Residents who broadly agreed with the Community, Leisure & Tourism Policy intentions	158	128	81%

1.10 Climate change

During the drafting of our Neighbourhood Plan, the need for an urgent response to climate change has become more widely acknowledged. Public concern about the impact of a changing climate and the loss of biodiversity is increasingly apparent globally, nationally and in Shaftesbury.

Parliament, Dorset and many other councils, as well as Shaftesbury Town Council, have all declared a 'Climate Emergency'. The UK Government has committed to the achievement of net-zero carbon emissions by 2050.

Shaftesbury Town Council prepared its own Sustainable Communities action plan in 2020. This aims for the Town Council to be carbon neutral by 2030 and explores opportunities for the community of Shaftesbury to also attain that target.



Bug & Hedgehog Hotel at Queen Mother Garden

Feedback from the consultation on Shaftesbury's draft Neighbourhood Plan in the Summer of 2019 highlighted an over-arching issue was whether enough had been done to mitigate and adapt to climate change. This is an integral part of all the themes within the plan, so we have taken the opportunity to look again at our policies and projects, reinforcing them where possible.

Since that time, the Town Council has adopted the Sustainable Shaftesbury Action Plan 2023–31.

What can this Neighbourhood Plan help with?

Shaftesbury's townspeople have a high dependence on nearby towns and cities for services and employment, rely on car transport to a significant extent, and are vulnerable to rising energy prices.

Climatic changes and past farming practices have adversely impacted local wildlife and biodiversity.

Our characteristic tree cover is vulnerable to extremes of weather that are becoming more frequent.

The surrounding countryside is known for beef and dairy farming with relatively few local producers of fruit and vegetables. Areas of higher grade farmland lie primarily to the east of the town (including areas of Grade 2 farmland, which is amongst the best and most versatile agricultural land in the country). Farming can also help support wildlife and sustainable local food production.

We have a substantial elderly population whose health is at risk during heat-waves. Some of our older housing stock is not particularly well insulated or energy efficient.

Cutting carbon emissions can be achieved through reducing our need to travel and by reducing the fossil fuel-derived energy we use in our homes and our businesses. For a more sustainable future we'll need to be:

- Buying more locally sourced seasonal food, and reducing food and other waste
- Walking or cycling short distances, and using public transport or electric cars when travelling further
- Cutting down unnecessary business travel, for example by home-working, working locally and using video conferencing instead of travelling to meetings
- Retrofitting and decarbonising buildings, so that old and new buildings retain warmth in winter and remain cool in the summer
- Fitting renewable energy and water- saving devices, and generating more of our energy requirement locally using renewables
- Managing green spaces for biodiversity and creating places where wildlife can thrive
- Planting trees and managing pasture to increase carbon capture



1.10 Climate change *(continued)*

Many of the policies and projects in the Shaftesbury Neighbourhood Plan will help our transition to a low-carbon future. Our policies will have an impact on any new development, whilst our projects relate to existing buildings and green spaces or focus on making climate-smart lifestyle choices more accessible. Many of these projects align with Sustainable Shaftesbury Action Plan.

The relevant policy and project contributions as refreshed as part of the 2024 update are outlined by themes below:

The Town Centre:

- Developing the town centre as a safe and pedestrian-friendly public space—**Policy SFTC1** and **Project TC5**.
- Supporting our vibrant town centre so that people can shop locally—**Policy SFTC2**.
- Supporting the installation of electric (or other ultra-low emission) vehicle charging points—**Policy SFTC4**.

Housing and Employment:

- Making environmental sustainability a key consideration if development of new housing is proposed—**Policy SFHE1**.
- Reducing the need for commuting by requiring housing development to include provision for those working from home and by supporting local employment opportunities—**Policies SFHE2** and **SFHE3**.

Green Infrastructure:

- Protecting or promoting a network of biodiverse green spaces and green corridors, conserving established trees and hedgerows, planting more trees and ensuring appropriate species are used in new tree and other planting—**Policies SFGI1** and **SFGI3**, **Projects GI1** and **GI3**.
- Requiring energy-efficient lighting that protects dark skies and reduces light pollution that is harmful to insects—**Policy SFGI4** and **Project GI4**.
- Encouraging community-supported renewable energy generation—**Project GI5**.

Design and Heritage:

- Promoting green, environmentally sustainable building standards—**Policies SFGI2**, **SFGI3**, **SFGI4** and **SFDH7**.



Solar Panels on the Town Hall roof

Community, Leisure & Tourism:

- Supporting increased provision of allotments—**Policy SFCL1**.
- Giving proper consideration to routes for buses, cyclists, footpaths and green infrastructure in our housing developments—**Policies SFHE2** and **SFCL3**, **Projects CL2, CL3**, **CL4**.
- Improving connections with cycle routes beyond the town—**Project CL6**.





2. The Town Centre

2.1 The Town Centre: Key messages and aims

The context

Shaftesbury has some powerful advantages that set our town centre apart. It has a unique hilltop location with iconic views from Gold Hill. Shaftesbury centre is historic and picturesque and enjoys a range of independent shops. Economically, it is holding up reasonably well compared to other towns.



High Street

However, if our town centre is to continue to thrive, it will need to adapt and make the most of its benefits. Shaftesbury town centre needs to remain distinctive and to retain its appeal to both residents and visitors. There could be more leisure activities offered in the town centre.

Surveys have highlighted concerns with traffic congestion and parking. Although the Neighbourhood Plan cannot solve traffic problems, we do cover parking and we have recommended some projects that could help.

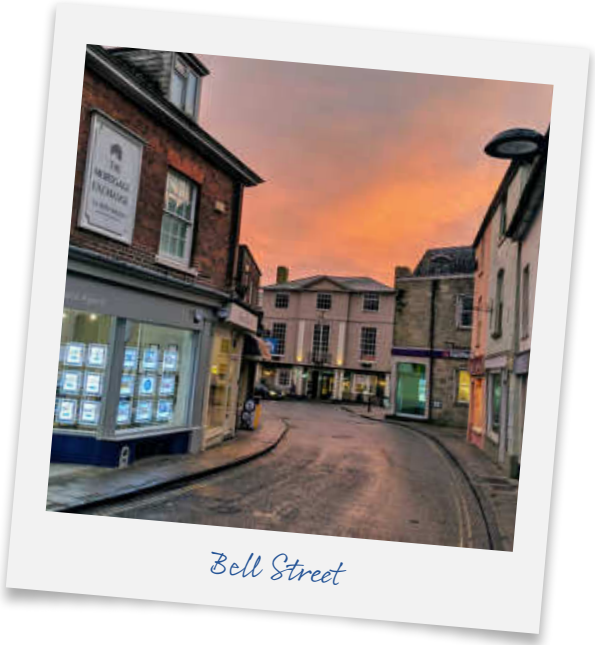
Key feedback from consultation

The policies developed have tried to take account of all the earlier consultations undertaken.

Key themes from these were:

- There is support for a varied selection of shops with independent stores and the market.
- Residents want to keep our distinct character and heritage.
- There are concerns about parking and congestion.

The initial consultation, conducted in February 2019, tested our draft policies, which indicated that people were in favour of the four draft policies for the town centre, but were not keen on the idea of allowing the upward extension of buildings in the town centre. So that idea was dropped.



Bell Street

What has changed since this plan was first made?

Business and shopper surveys carried out in 2020 indicated a strong level of support for the partial pedestrianization of High Street, which had been trialled during that year. An Artisan Market was trialled in 2023 and is now a permanent visitor experience on the second Sunday of each month.

The new Lidl Store on Christy's Lane was opened in late 2021—it is unfortunate that a direct pedestrian link from there through to the Town Centre could not be provided. Three banks in the town centre closed their doors during 2022/2023.

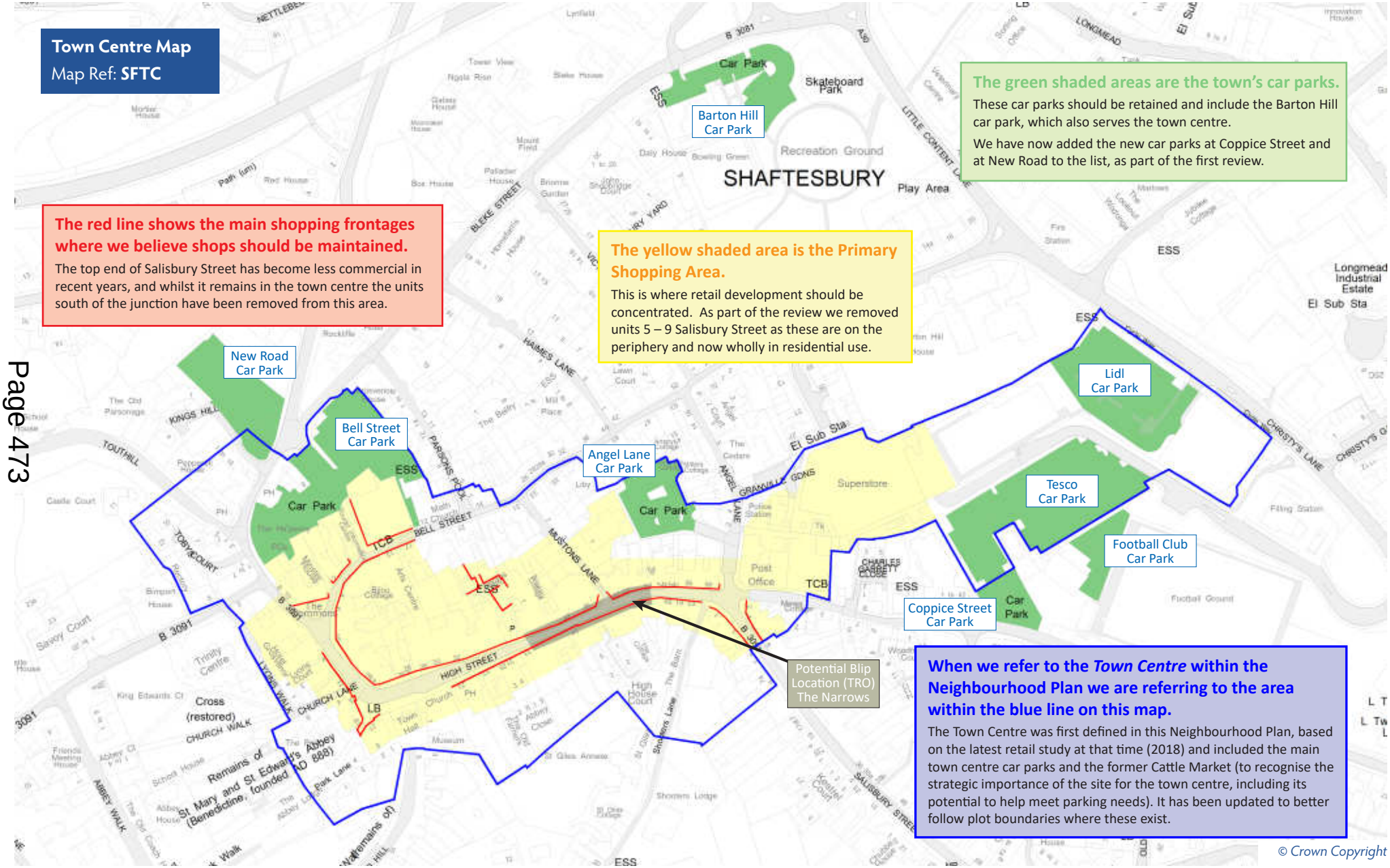
Land in Coppice Street, owned by the Town Council, was laid out to provide a further 32 long stay parking spaces to serve the town centre. An additional 70 spaces have been added with the opening of a privately run car park off New Road.

Dorset Council published a new retail and leisure study (2022), which made a number of suggestions on how planning policies can support our town centres. The evidence does not suggest any need to expand Shaftesbury town centre, recognising that sites in more peripheral locations may be more economical as housing.

Key messages for the town centre

- Retain a variety of retail businesses and a strong presence of independently owned shops
- Strengthen leisure-based opportunities and be a vibrant social centre for the whole community.
- Enhance the centre's attractiveness and character for visitors and residents alike
- Improve its accessibility, balancing the needs of pedestrians, cyclists and car users.

2.2 What is the Town Centre?



2.3 Development within the Town Centre

What does Policy **SFTC1** set out to do?

To define the Town Centre and our priorities for development in that area.

This includes independent shops, enhanced leisure and tourism, the potential for commercial offices and flats above shops, and a welcoming and charming historic environment.

Details:

Our survey has told us what you value from our town centre and what could be made better.

In line with national and local plan policies, any retail development outside of this area must not adversely affect the vitality and viability of the town centre. The latest Dorset Council retail study advises applications for new shops or other town centre uses outside of the town centre with a floorspace over 280m^2 will therefore need to be accompanied by an impact assessment.



High Street Shop

POLICY SFTC1

Development proposals within the town centre area (the area within the blue line on Map SFTC) will be supported if they meet one or more of these following aspirations and do not undermine others:

- maintain a strong and vibrant retail presence within the town centre area.
- enable the continued presence of a varied range of small independent shops.
- ensure the continued operation of the street markets.
- enhance the leisure activities for both residents and tourists. These could include cultural, arts and community venues, additional overnight accommodation and food or drink establishments.
- provide opportunities for office-based employment, which complement and support the town centre's vitality and viability.
- offer opportunities for housing on otherwise underused upper floors where these are shown to be no longer suitable for commercial use.
- protect and enhance the town centre's historic and architectural charm.
- create a safe and pedestrian-friendly public space.
- provide sufficient public and private car parking for the town centre and the parking provision caters for forecast future needs.

Why is enhancing leisure important?

Leisure uses, such as cafés and restaurants, cultural and recreation facilities all bring people into the area and strengthen the commercial viability of the town centre as a whole.

The range of leisure services offered in Shaftesbury is limited and in 2018 made up only 13.9% of total outlets compared to the UK average of 23.9%.


Town Hall



High Street Shop

Why do we need to maintain a vibrant town centre?

The findings of the 2018 'health check' for Shaftesbury town centre painted a largely positive picture. On most measures Shaftesbury fared better than national averages and other towns in rural Dorset. For example, the shop vacancy rate was recorded as 3.9% compared with a national average of 11.2%.

The Covid pandemic posed the most significant challenge to the commercial leisure industry in recent years, challenging businesses to rethink how best to connect to their customers. This has, if anything, reinforced the importance of flexibility (supporting changes in how businesses can best meet customer needs), and the importance of the outdoor environment in creating attractive and healthy places.

During public consultation, many members of the Shaftesbury community raised concerns about the level of traffic in the High Street. A project is underway to look at the potential of the partial pedestrianisation of the town centre (limited to certain times/days). This, however, will need to consider practicalities, cost feasibility, and impact on deliveries, footfall and retailers.

When people were asked what they most liked about Shaftesbury Town Centre, the two key features most frequently mentioned were "attractive environment/nice place" (29.4%) and "good range of independent shops" (17.1%).

Why is tourism important?

Tourism is important to Shaftesbury's economy. Each year, our town receives 472,000 day visitors and 19,000 people stay overnight. Visitors spend £18.3 million locally each year and that supports 370 local jobs.



Grosvenor Arms Hotel



Artisan Market

Quick Read

What does this policy mean and why is it important?

The term 'town centre' means different things to different people. This is a planning document and we need to make sure we are clear about the precise area that we are referring to.

It also sets the scene in terms of what is important to consider when planning decisions are made.



Busy High Street, Fringe Festival

2.4 Uses allowed within the Primary Shopping Area

What does Policy **SFTC2** set out to do?

To define the primary shopping area and main frontages, and the different uses/changes allowed that should support the vitality of the town centre.

Whilst shops remain important, other uses that bring people to, and generate activity in, the town centre will also be encouraged.

Within the section known as The Narrows, the restricted width causes major difficulties for deliveries and collections.

POLICY SFTC2

For the main shopping frontages within the primary shopping area (as shown by the red line on **Map SFTC**), the use of ground floor or street level units should fall within one or more of the following use classes:

- Commercial, Business or Service (Class E)
- Learning and non-residential institutions (Class F1)
- Local community (Class F2)
- Other sui generis uses deemed compatible, including: public house or drinking establishments; hot food takeaway establishments (except within the section known as The Narrows, as shown on **Map SFTC1**); live music venues; theatres; cinemas; concert halls; bingo halls; and dance halls.



Bell Street Shop



Thursday Market

Quick Read

What does this policy mean and why is it important?

If all of the shops in the High Street became offices or residential properties, the town centre would soon feel very different.

Local jobs and our town's economy could be affected. We don't feel that a row of offices should be allowed to replace retail shops in the High Street, for example.

However—because there are national permitted development rights, not all changes require planning permission. A short explanation of the Use Classes and Permitted Development Rights are provided in Appendix O.

A minor change has been made to the primary shopping area at the top end of Salisbury Street, to reflect the fact that it has become less commercial in recent years.



Bell Street Shop

2.5 Town centre shop fronts and public realm design

What does Policy **SFTC3** set out to do?

To preserve and enhance the character and design of our historic town centre through the application of character and design guidance to any proposed future development or redevelopment.

The historic buildings and character of the town centre already have a high degree of protection because of the large proportion of Listed buildings and because much of the area is also part of the Shaftesbury Conservation Area (since 1970). The Dorset Historic Towns Survey of Shaftesbury (2011) usefully describes the town's historical development and how this has shaped its character.

An important emphasis is that any new building will be of very high quality, that enhances the town centre, both in its architecture and materials used. This does not mean that it must reference the surrounding historic architecture or local building materials, but that in its heritage-led design and realisation, it is a development of which the town can be proud.



High Street Signage

As part of the review, we have included a Shop Front audit under Project TC3 to help monitor changes to shop fronts and inform future decisions on how to improved the High Street.

POLICY SFTC3

In Shaftesbury Town Centre any street lighting, street signs, litter bins or benches should be consistent with the guidance set out in the Shaftesbury Design Guidelines.

Shopfronts need to retain entrances and openings so people can access them from the street and so they appear connected with, and provide interest to, the street.

The loss of historic shopfronts will be resisted. They should be maintained and enhanced through adopting the following principles:

- Shop front signage should preserve and enhance the historic character of the shopfront—painted fascias and swing signs will normally be preferred; plastic signs are discouraged
- The introduction of solid or perforated external security shutters that would have a detrimental impact will be resisted
- Any alterations or replacements of windows and doors should favour painted timber as the primary material. Doors and windows should retain the traditional design and glazing, where possible, although more energy-efficient glazing options may be supported, including where this would help improve visibility into retail units.
- The merging of adjoining shops or units together may be favourably considered provided that the external integrity and historic nature of the front of the building(s) is preserved. The design must be reversible.

The redevelopment of late 20th and early 21st century buildings that detract from the historic character of the town centre will be encouraged where this would enhance the historic character of the area.


High Street

Quick Read

What does this policy mean and why is it important?

Shaftesbury is unique. If our town centre streets are altered without consideration for their heritage, they will be ruined, perhaps forever.

However sometimes changes may be necessary for a variety of good reasons—such as where more energy-efficient glazing would overcome issues relating to condensation or poor visibility within the shop premises. Where this is the case, the design can still aim to reflect the traditional shop fronts as far as practical.

2.6 Town Centre parking

What does Policy SFTC4 set out to do?

To ensure that planning decisions pay full regard to congestion and the need for parking in the town centre, as the provision of sufficient and affordable parking is critical to the centre's continuing success.

National planning guidance recognises the need to improve the quality of parking in town centres so that it is convenient, safe and secure, alongside measures to promote accessibility for pedestrians and cyclists. The Government also sees a role for plans to take a 'vision-led approach to identify transport solutions that deliver well-designed, sustainable and popular places'.

Whilst this plan fully supports the provision of a well-connected network of safe and attractive walking and cycling routes that connect the town centre to the outlying residential areas (see **Policy SFCL3**) and the Sustainable Shaftesbury Action Plan proposals for Travel and Transport, the town's topography, rural hinterland and tourist economy all contribute to the fact that many people using the town centre will continue to arrive by car.. The Shaftesbury Parking Study provides further evidence of the importance of retaining sufficient parking spaces for the town's vitality.

With increasing levels of take-up of electric vehicles, it is also important to ensure provision is made for electric/ ultra-low emission vehicle charging points. Where and how these are installed to serve the town centre should be carefully considered, to best meet parking demands.

Since the Neighbourhood Plan was created, the Cattle Market site has been redeveloped by Lidl and includes 119 spaces, but with poor pedestrian links to the town centre. The Town Council has provide a further 32 long-stay spaces on land at Coppice Street (and acquired a further 30 at the rear of the Football Club on a long lease). The old ATS site off New Road is now a car park with 70 spaces.

POLICY SFTC4

Proposals that increase the level of parking provision for the town centre should be strongly supported.

Developers may be required to provide financial contributions to help fund the provision of additional off-street parking spaces and improvements to parking management. This would apply if the development, cumulatively with other planned developments, would increase parking pressures in the Town Centre area causing an unacceptable level of harm.

Proposals that reduce the number of off- street parking spaces to serve the town centre will be resisted.

Proposals for installation of electric/ultra-low emission vehicle charging points should be supported. This should not harm existing heritage assets or the roots of protected trees.



Coppice Street Car Park

Planning policies that seek to increase parking provision are unlikely to be sufficient on their own. Practical measures are needed to manage demand and congestion. The recent Shaftesbury Parking Study proposes options including using signposting, altering the length of stay and better enforcement. This needs to be done in partnership with Dorset Council, alongside wider transport considerations.

Community, Leisure & Tourism Policy 3 also sets out to achieve safe walking and cycling routes that are well connected with the town centre and other key areas.

Quick Read

What does this policy mean and why is it important?

The Neighbourhood Plan commissioned the Shaftesbury Parking Study. Data collection and surveys were undertaken in late 2018 for the four car parks serving the town centre at the time—Bell Street, Angel Lane, Tesco and Barton Hill.

Observations were also undertaken of on-street parking.

The main conclusions of the study are:

- **Car parking is in high demand in Shaftesbury.**
- **Car parks are heavily used.**
- **Demand has increased since the previous survey in 2005.**

The Town Council will continue to monitor the impacts of changes to parking serving the Town Centre.

3. Housing & Employment



3.1 Housing and Employment: Key messages and aims

The context

Policy 6 of the North Dorset Local Plan advises that the scale of housing development in Shaftesbury will be at least 1,140 homes between 2011 and 2031. That figure is not an upper limit.

The Local Plan is the North Dorset area blueprint for development. It covers the future use of land and planned infrastructure changes for a much bigger area than just Shaftesbury.

The Local Plan deals with Shaftesbury, Gillingham, Blandford, Sturminster Newton, Stalbridge and places in-between. If you think of the Local Plan and Neighbourhood Plan in terms of a hierarchy, or a 'pecking order', then the Local Plan sits above this Neighbourhood Plan in that it sets out the strategy for a much wider area.

The Neighbourhood Plan cannot change a Local Plan policy. But the Neighbourhood Plan can create a policy which offers more local flavour to a Local Plan policy, in order to meet Shaftesbury's specific needs.

In 2017, when the first version of this Neighbourhood Plan was prepared, the Local Planning Authority announced that there was not enough land with (or likely to get) planning permission which could then be built on to meet potential housing requirements over the next five years. Because of that, the Local Planning Authority was under immense pressure to allow more housing, and sites that were outside settlement boundaries and which would normally be refused were allowed. In October 2024 Dorset Council was finally able to demonstrate a 5-year housing land supply (a position confirmed by the Planning Inspectorate), but by December 2024 the Government had changed the way housing targets are to be calculated, nearly doubling Dorset's housing requirement. When there is a housing shortfall, sites outside the settlement boundary may get planning permission more easily, because the policy of restricting development in the countryside outside of this boundary is given less weight. However, the policies in the Neighbourhood Plan can be strengthened if we can identify suitable sites to meet our identified housing requirement.

Shaftesbury people have been very clear in their response to our previous consultations that they do not want housing developments on the countryside, or slopes that surround our town. That's why we are not altering the settlement boundary.

In the initial consultation we asked whether locals would agree or disagree with the construction of affordable housing outside the settlement boundary. Even when considering building homes that would provide accommodation for essential workers or local people, the message was clear. 61% of respondents opposed building on fields and open land.



New Build North at Littledown



Development Land near Lidl

What's the settlement boundary?

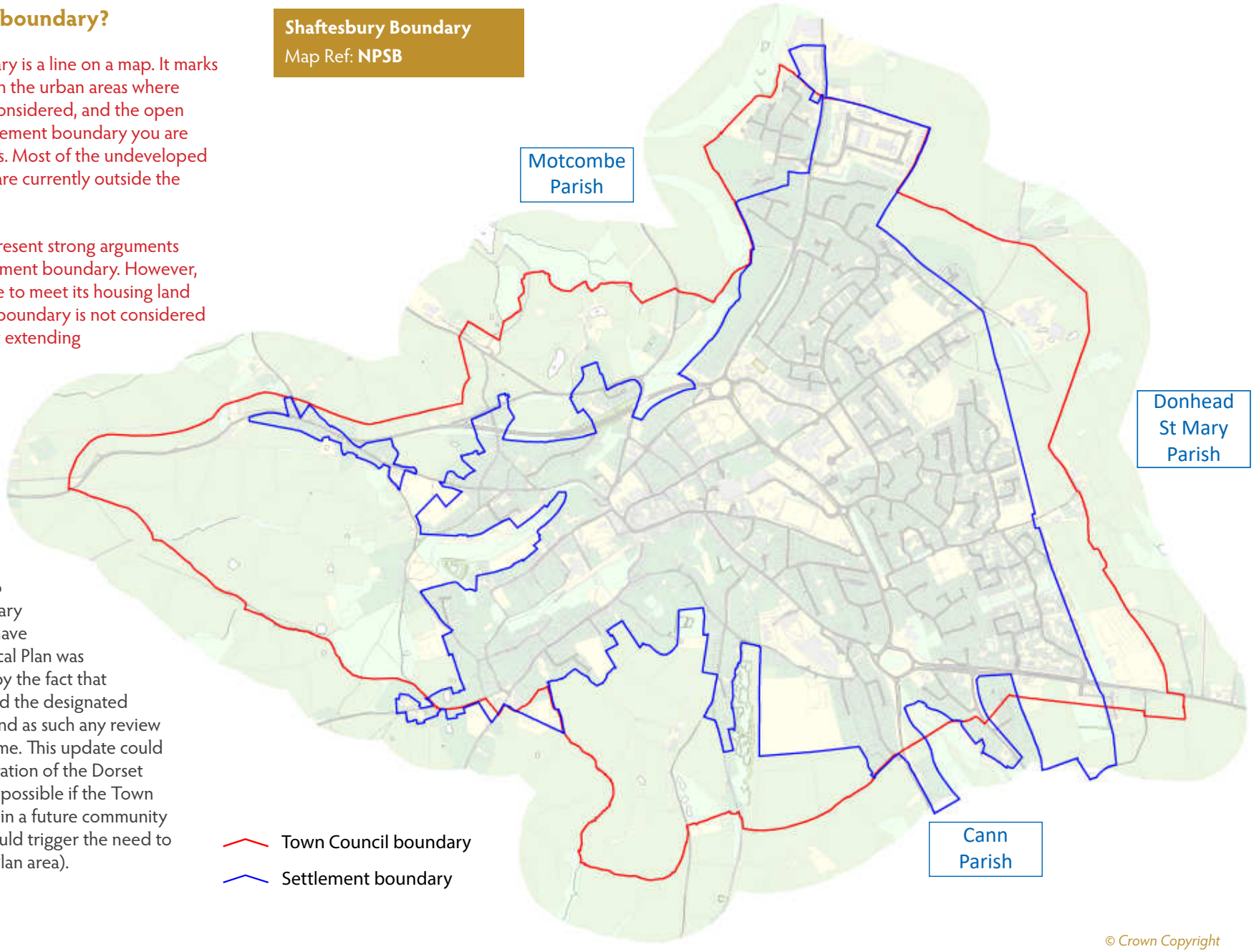
The settlement boundary is a line on a map. It marks the separation between the urban areas where building would normally be considered, and the open countryside. Outside the settlement boundary you are more likely to find green fields. Most of the undeveloped areas of Shaftesbury's slopes are currently outside the settlement boundary.

Usually, developers have to present strong arguments for building outside the settlement boundary. However, when Dorset Council is unable to meet its housing land supply target, the settlement boundary is not considered a firm barrier to development extending beyond into open spaces.

An example of where this boundary was breached during the period that Dorset Council could not meet its housing target is the land off Higher Blandford Road.

Whilst it would be possible to update the settlement boundary to include those areas which have been developed since the Local Plan was adopted, this is complicated by the fact that the town area expands beyond the designated Neighbourhood Plan area—and as such any review could only be partial at this time. This update could be done as part of the preparation of the Dorset Council Local Plan, or may be possible if the Town Council boundary is changed in a future community governance review (which would trigger the need to update the Neighbourhood Plan area).

Shaftesbury Boundary
Map Ref: **NPSB**



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Shaftesbury has taken its fair share of new homes

The Local Plan requires 285 new homes for North Dorset for each year, from 2011 to 2031, and Shaftesbury's equivalent target was 57 new homes each year (1,140 homes in total). Homes could mean houses, bungalows or flats.

If we factor in an uplift to take account of updates to how housing needs are calculated, and taking account of the completions between 2011–2019, an appropriate housing target for our area would be about 600 homes over the plan period. This takes into account the Government's latest method for establishing the housing requirements which was updated in December 2024. The housing target for Shaftesbury for 2024 onwards no longer relies on the adopted North Dorset Local Plan strategy, but instead is based on Shaftesbury taking a proportionate share of the Dorset-wide figure (as it is not yet known how the Local Plan strategy will need to be adjusted to accommodate the higher Dorset-wide housing target it now has to meet). This has been agreed by Dorset Council as a reasonable interim housing target, and the calculations underpinning this are included in **Appendix N**.



Our research, which is based on the latest housing monitoring reports published by Dorset Council, shows that with the homes that have been built since 2019, the sites that have been granted planning consent, and other opportunities within the settlement boundary, the town should deliver more than 670 new homes during this period. For more detail on this please refer to **Appendix N**. This supply is likely to be an underestimate based on the additional infill sites identified in this Plan coming forward. Therefore, until such time as the new Local Plan is prepared, the evidence suggests that Shaftesbury will have more than met its quota, including a reasonable uplift based on the most recent Dorset-wide housing target, without amending the settlement boundary.

Balancing housing and employment

The *Dorset and BCP Employment Land Study (March 2024)* has considered the need to balance housing and employment land provision, as the housing provides the basis for labour supply, and impacts on where businesses may choose to locate and wider travel patterns. The report recommends that "It would be reasonable for Dorset's market towns to be seeking to achieve closer to or above 15 sqm of employment space per dwelling in the round" (having fallen to averages well below this) and that it is important to ensure that each market town "has the ability to expand its employment land provision to support the local economy".

Why does this matter?

When the Local Planning Authority cannot meet its 5-year land supply quota, the Neighbourhood Plan cannot simply say 'no' to further housing, especially if it is affordable housing for local people.

In order to give our Neighbourhood Plan more strength, particularly in the scenario that the housing land supply falls below 5 years' worth, we are including site allocations for those sites within the settlement boundary which have not yet been built, but are likely to come forward in the near future and meet our housing needs. Without these allocations the plan would have less weight in decision making.

This is because paragraph 14 of National Planning Policy Framework requires our Plan to contain policies and allocations to meet the identified housing needs for our area, if the Plan is to be adhered to at such times.

As we have said, we are not looking to change the settlement boundary and we are not intending to identify further greenfield sites for housing. We feel strongly that any decision to release more housing land outside of the settlement boundary should be after the existing housing growth has been completed. We feel there is much to learn from how recent large-scale developments have been handled. Our emphasis is on making sure that what is built is something we can all be proud of.

The Local Plan process is intended to ensure that the wider impacts of significant further growth are properly assessed. This cannot easily be done for individual unplanned housing sites, in the scenario when the 5-year housing land supply quota is not met. The overall impact of several individual developments, when added together, can easily be missed. For example, the adjoining Donheads parishes have highlighted their vulnerability to poorly managed drainage systems (including lagoons) that could cause flooding—yet they are not consulted on planning applications in Shaftesbury unless it abuts their parish boundary.

In the first draft of the emerging Dorset-wide Local Plan (published in January 2021), Dorset Council did not suggest allocating any more sites for housing around Shaftesbury, recognizing that further development is likely to have significant impact on the town's character.

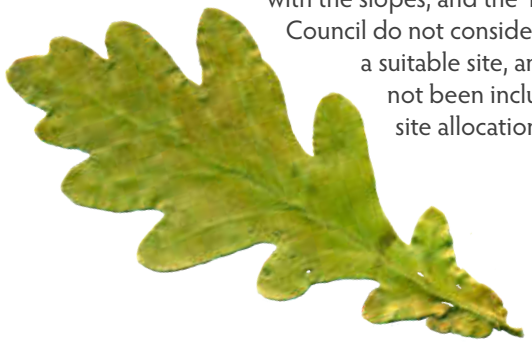
Where could new homes be built?

In addition to small-scale infilling of one or two dwellings, the following sites have been identified as part of work on the review of this Plan as having potential to contribute towards meeting Shaftesbury's housing needs:

- Land west of Littledown (Redrow Homes)
- Land adjoining Wincombe Business Park (David Wilson Homes) and south-east of Wincombe Lane
- Land at Higher Blandford Road and south of the A30 (Persimmon Homes)
- Barton Hill House and grounds, Barton Hill
- Land adjoining Lidl, Christy's Lane
- The Police Station and Post Office sites, Angel Lane

These sites were identified through a review of Dorset Council's Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment, the latest housing supply monitoring reports and local knowledge. More details on these are given on the following pages.

Land north of Enmore Court, outside of the settlement boundary, was granted outline planning permission for 23 affordable homes on appeal, but the reserved matters application was refused and the permission lapsed. There is likely to be significant construction costs associated with the underlying geology and land slip potential associated with the slopes, and the Town Council do not consider it to be a suitable site, and it has not been included as a site allocation.



Land within the settlement boundary at Boynes Hollow on the A350 was granted outline permission for 7 homes in February 2024. The southern part of the site falls outside of the Neighbourhood Plan area and therefore cannot be included as a site allocation. The development should not compromise the main wooded corridor and further planting is proposed as part of the permission.

Planning permission was granted for 24 dwellings at the former ATS site in March 2023 (P/FUL/2021/01338), but this permission has now lapsed and the site has been acquired by a new owner, and is now in active use as a car park to serve the town centre.



New Build west of Littledown

Land west of Littledown (Redrow Homes)

Land west of Littledown was initially given outline planning permission for up to 170 dwellings in March 2017. It has been brought forward in phases and is now nearing completion. Given its advanced build stage, it is not necessary to allocate this site.

Land adjoining Wincombe Business Park (David Wilson Homes) and south-east of Wincombe Lane

This area is one of the strategic growth areas set out in the Local Plan. The area closest to the Business Park was given planning permission in February 2022 for 162 dwellings (P/FUL/2021/01429), and is currently being built out. There is scope for about 60 more dwellings in the remaining undeveloped area east of the Recreation Ground, south of Wincombe Lane, west of the reserved bypass corridor (locally known as the Hopkins Land), alongside any remaining community infrastructure requirements for this area.

Whilst the site was part of the much larger allocation in the 2003 Local Plan saved Policies SB8-10, for the avoidance of doubt the remaining area is allocated for mixed-use development through this Neighbourhood Plan.



Affordable New Build Housing at East Shaftesbury

Land at Higher Blandford Road and south of the A30 (Persimmon Homes)

Land south of the A350, including the parcel of land east of Higher Blandford Road, have been granted planning permission on appeal. The southern part of both of these sites lies beyond the Neighbourhood Plan area, within Cann parish. The 55 homes on the site adjoining Higher Blandford Road have been constructed, and Persimmon Homes have now commenced construction of houses on the site further to the east. This area was allocated for employment uses only, but was given permission for an employment led, mixed-use scheme in February 2022 (2/2018/1773/OUT). This included industrial starter units, flexible commercial uses to include a combination of hotel and non- food retail or a residential care home, a primary school, and up to 135 dwellings, together with car parking, sport pitches, public open space and associated works. The land use parameter plan shows only the commercial and industrial starter units in the area within Shaftesbury parish. So in terms of housing, this could include a residential care home. A reserved matters application for the housing was approved in November 2024 (P/RES/2023/05407), but detailed permission for the employment area and school site have yet to come forward.

Land adjoining Lidl, Christy's Lane

A planning application for 41 retirement apartments was submitted by Churchill Retirement Living in September 2023 (P/FUL/2023/05051) and granted on appeal in June 2024. Whilst in many ways this site could be better used for parking or employment (as it is bounded by a supermarket car park, a main road (A30), a 24 hour petrol station, and a service road to a supermarket), it is now likely to come forward as housing.

This site is appropriate for town centre compatible uses, which could include housing, and has been allocated on this basis should the current plans fall through.

Barton Hill House and Grounds, Barton Hill

Barton Hill House, the boarding complex of Shaftesbury School, closed in 2023 due to the falling demand for student accommodation. The property was leased from Dorset Council, who have yet to make a decision on its future.

Whilst the site has several constraints, including the Grade II Listed Ice House in the grounds and many mature trees, the accommodation has the potential to be re-purposed, and there is scope to accommodate further buildings in the grounds. In this location it would be suitable for residential use.

The Police Station and Post Office sites, Angel Lane

With the closure of public 'front desks' at the police station (in 2015), and underutilised elements of the Post Office site, there is scope for some degree of redevelopment within this part of the town centre, which could bring forward a small amount of housing as part of a mixed use scheme.

The Post Office building is locally listed, and as such should be retained (although alterations sensitive to its historic importance are possible), rather than redeveloped.

At the current time whilst the landowner's intent is uncertain, the Neighbourhood Plan has allocated this site in order to highlight its potential for development, which could include housing.

What about the cumulative impacts of development?

We have, as part of the work, obtained data on growing levels of traffic on Christy's Lane, which continues to strengthen the need for the Eastern Bypass to be built .

Policy SFHE4 continues to protect the route of the Shaftesbury Eastern Bypass corridor.

Section 6 and **Appendices G, H and I** deal with community, leisure & tourism infrastructure needs. These will largely serve the town's population and should be accessible on foot/by bicycle and potentially also by bus.



New Build Housing at Nivens Walk

3.2 Meeting local housing needs

What does Policy **SFHE1** set out to do?

To ensure that the local need for housing is met, and that the sustainability of any further unplanned development is carefully considered. There is already a substantial housing supply in Shaftesbury (houses with planning permission but not yet built), and no clear need to develop on greenfield sites outside the established settlement boundary.

Additional unplanned houses and people increase traffic on the road network and put additional pressure on our infrastructure. A growing population also need local employment opportunities, which may require more employment land. All of these changes will potentially impact on the town's sensitive environment and for that reason inappropriate development outside the settlement boundary will be resisted. Where development outside the boundary is proposed it will have to be accompanied by detailed supportive evidence, as referred to in the following policy.

There are additional problems associated with developing on land outside of the settlement boundary, due to the topography and underlying soil conditions. These are detailed further in **Chapter 5 (Policy SFGI2)**.



Post Office Land

POLICY SFHE1

Sufficient land has been identified within the Neighbourhood Plan which, if delivered, together with the extant planning consents and potential for further sensitive infill within the settlement boundary, should meet the identified housing target of about 600 dwellings for Shaftesbury over the period 2019–2031.

Site allocations that include the potential for housing are as follows:

- Land south-east of Wincombe Lane (Hopkins Land) as part of a mixed-use development
- Land adjoining Lidl, Christy's Lane
- Barton Hill House and grounds
- Post Office/Police Station site

Given the identified supply exceeds the current housing need requirement, applications for residential development outside the settlement boundary will only be supported where they are consistent with policies in the development plan.

In circumstances where it can be clearly demonstrated that the Local Plan housing supply policies are not up-to-date, and an application for housing outside the settlement boundary is received, this should be accompanied by a clear assessment of the social, economic and environmental impacts of the development on its own and cumulatively with other planned developments, including the likely impact on the capacity of the town's infrastructure and highway network, wildlife corridors and opportunities to expand and enhance these, historic character and important views.

On major development sites where housing is proposed, it is considered appropriate for the site to include some provision for employment premises if feasible, at an equivalent level of 15sqm of employment space per dwelling.

Further detail on key requirements for the larger site allocations sites which do not currently benefit from planning permission are set out in the following policies **SFHE1a–c**. It is important that we take the opportunity to allocate sites for housing to ensure that our Neighbourhood Plan is taken seriously when development is proposed.

Quick Read

What does this policy mean and why is it important?

We think that Shaftesbury has shouldered its share of North Dorset's housing quota to 2031.

We have identified a number of sites within the settlement boundary that are expected to provide further housing, and either have planning permission or would otherwise be acceptable. By allocating these sites we show that we are meeting our housing needs.

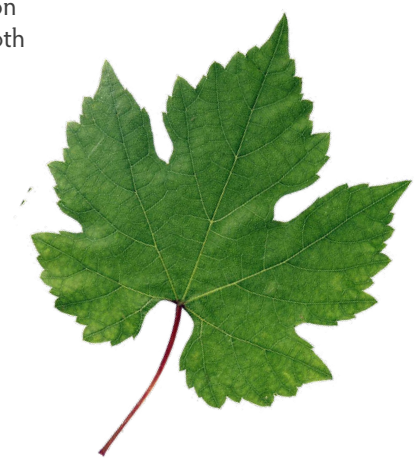
There are no plans or need to extend the settlement boundary. Unplanned, additional growth is not a good idea.

3.2 Meeting local housing needs *(continued)*

Land south-east of Wincombe Lane (Hopkins Land)

This site is one of the last greenfield sites within the town boundary that was part of the proposed eastward expansion of the town. It extends to approximately 2.8ha in total. The expansion of the town has been guided Policies SB8-11 from the 2003 North Dorset Local Plan, together with the 2003 Development Brief, which are still in use but may be considered out of date, and as such the elements specific to this site are 'refreshed' through this site allocation. In particular, Policy SB9 refers to including a road network which links the A30, Mampitts Lane and Wincombe Lane—and this parcel of land is critical to provide the last component of this road, as well as improving footpath and cycleway connections.

The design of this site will be guided by the policies in **Chapter 5**—the area lies within the character zone 8—East of Christy's Lane, which highlights the importance of referencing the local vernacular, use high quality materials, and incorporation of areas of open green space, and avoiding past mistakes in regard to issues such as poor quality detailing and featureless grassed areas. Given the importance of the link road in enhancing legibility, consideration should be given to both the placement of any landmark buildings along this route, and the inclusion of street trees. The eastern edge of the development, should also be landscaped, taking into account its interface with the countryside and safeguarded bypass corridor, with green pedestrian/cycle corridors linking through the site to connect with the recreation/play areas to the south and west, and, if feasible, to Shaftesbury Primary School.



Consideration will need to be given as to how the site integrates with the SUDS corridor to the eastern edge which is an accessible green space. This provide opportunities for greater pedestrian/cycle connectivity and well as landscape and wildlife improvements.

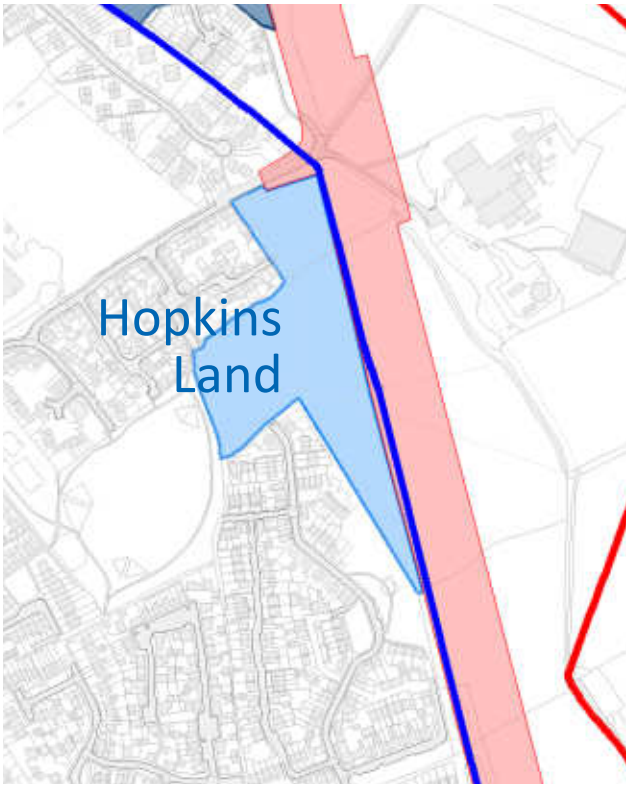
POLICY SFHE1a

Land south-east of Wincombe Lane (Hopkins Land) is allocated for mixed use development to include predominantly housing, with potential for some small-scale employment/community uses and open space.

The design and layout of the development should ensure the provision of a link road from the northern end of Maple Road to Wincombe Lane, together with footpath and cycleway connections. This should be designed to be legible, with street tree-planting and appropriately placed and designed landmark buildings.

Green corridors with footpath/cycleway corridors should be included to provide safe and attractive connections to the adjoining play/recreation areas to the south and west, and to access the countryside to the north-east. They should link through and work with the SuDS corridor to the east. The provision of direct, safe and attractive walking and cycling routes to Shaftesbury Primary School should also be considered and included if feasible.

Detailed design should accord with Policies SFDH1–7 of this Plan.



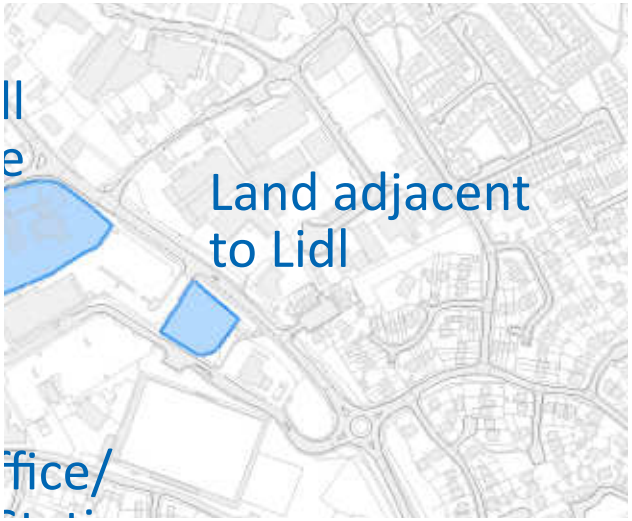


Land adjoining Lidl

This site lies within the defined town centre area, with vehicular access from Christy's Lane. It is therefore appropriate for a range of uses provided that these help maintain a strong and vibrant retail presence within the town centre area. **Policy SFTC1** recognises that this can and should include opportunities for housing on otherwise underused upper floors.

The plans that have been put forward for retirement apartments should indirectly support the town centre (through increasing the local population using the shops and services), although the adjoining roads, car park and petrol station are not particularly good neighbours. The applicant has provided a noise impact assessment that suggests a 2m acoustic fence to the south-east and south-west sides of the site, and acoustic double glazing and alternative means of ventilation (so that the windows do not need to be opened) to ensure that noise within habitable rooms as a result of the road traffic is kept to an acceptable level.

The Town Council consider this to be a missed opportunity for something that would be much more relevant to and link through to the town centre. Leisure and commercial development such as indoor bowling, soft play area, climbing walls, training centre, food and retail outlets would work well in this location.



It is also unfortunate that it does not propose to directly provide more affordable housing.

For these reasons, whilst planning consent for the retirement homes has been granted, should this not happen the preferred approach would be to provide commercial/community uses on the ground floor appropriate to a town centre (or alternatively town centre parking), with the potential for flats/apartments above to ensure the efficient use of the site. This should be designed to increase the permeability of this part of the town, including provision for a footpath/cycle link through to Tesco's car park (with best endeavours made to deliver this—which will be dependent on negotiations with Tesco, who it is hoped will not put its own profits over providing for a better access for the town's shoppers and residents).

There are also a number of mature beech trees within the site (along Christy's Lane), which are now protected through a Tree Preservation Order. As such, any development should be set back from the road in order to ensure that these trees can be retained, and to mitigate the potential noise impacts on any residential occupants.

The design of this site will also be guided by the policies in **Chapter 5**—the area lies within the character zone 4—Grosvenor Road, Barton Hill and Cockram's Field, which highlights the importance of the mature trees along Christy's Lane, and the generally Inter-war and early post-war character of the built form, and seeks to avoid place-less larger buildings (typically designed for commercial uses) that lack local identity.

POLICY SFHE1b

Land adjoining Lidl is allocated for either retirement apartments, or as a mixed use development to include town centre uses, which may include residential uses predominantly on the upper floors.

The design and layout of the development should ensure the retention of the avenue of beech trees along Christy's Lane, and residential amenity of occupants, without compromising the detailed design that should accord with Policies SFDH1–7 of this Plan.

Provision should also be made for a footpath/cycleway link through to Tesco's car park (allowing connections to the Town Centre), with best endeavours to secure its delivery.


Development Land near Lidl

3.2 Meeting local housing needs *(continued)*

Barton Hill House and Grounds

The original Barton Hill House dates back to the Victorian period, and although extended is of some local historic interest (and has now been proposed to be locally listed) and should be retained and re-used. The more recent student accommodation blocks are of little architectural merit, but consideration should be given to their embodied energy and materials in any redevelopment. Vehicular access into the grounds is from Barton Hill, with parking provision existing on-site.

The total area of the site is 1.2ha. However there are a number of constraints that will limit the overall amount of development that can be accommodated. The garden wall and gate piers that run along part of the boundary with Barton Hill are Grade II Listed, as is the largely underground Ice House towards the southern boundary, there is also an area Tree Preservation Order dating back to the 1980s, giving protection to the many mature trees within the grounds.



Barton Hill House

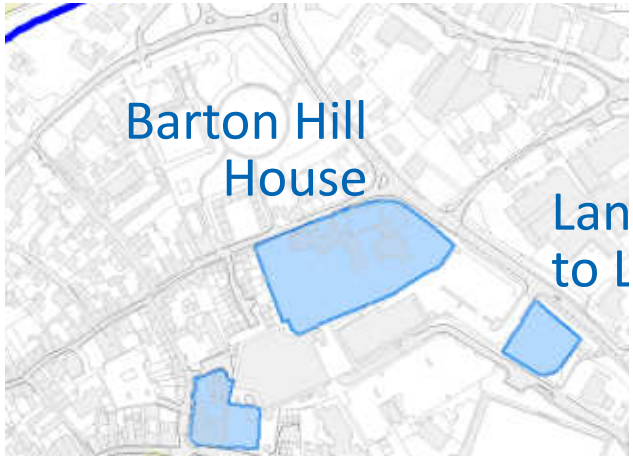
POLICY SFHE1c

Barton Hill House and Grounds are allocated for residential use. The original Victorian building should be retained, in accordance with Policy SFDH9. Any new buildings should respect and enhance the design of the original Victorian building and the setting of the Listed wall and Ice House within the grounds.

An arboricultural assessment should be undertaken to ascertain the importance of the many mature trees within the grounds, and the design should ensure that those most important to the character of the area and boundary landscaping are retained.

An archaeological assessment shall be required in accordance with Policy SFDH2. Detailed design should accord with Policies SFDH1–7 of this Plan.

An ecological assessment should be undertaken to ascertain the presence or otherwise of bat roosts within trees and buildings onsite. Where possible, bat roosts should be retained. Lighting of the site should respond to the presence of roosting bats and the location of any identified flight paths and foraging areas.



The Police Station and Post Office sites

Whilst the Town Council consider it important to have a police presence in the town, there may be the possibility of combining/reconfiguring how this site works that could release some or all of the site for redevelopment. Currently, the Post Office runs a counter from the ground floor (a critical facility for the town), with the BT telephone exchange using the upper floors, and the yard used by Open Reach.

This site extends to about 0.4ha, and is on an important junction that effectively marks the south-eastern gateway into the town centre. The Post Office is recognized as an important local building—noted in the Historic Towns Survey as "perhaps the most visible and notable modern building" in the town centre, and because of its appearance and cultural associations from long public use, should be retained. However the yard area to the rear and potentially underused upper floors may present an



Police Station



opportunity for further development. The Police Station is typical of its time (1960s), set well back from the street, of little architectural merit and doesn't make effective use of the site. Whilst it would be possible to consider the two sites separately, it makes sense to consider whether they could be more effectively re-developed as a whole, and how any new buildings can present a positive frontage onto to both Coppice Street and Angel Lane.

Both Angel Lane and the lower end of Coppice Street have predominantly greensand buildings (mainly designed for residential use) that reinforce the special character of this area.

Given the site's central location it is appropriate to consider whether it could improve pedestrian/cycle connections into the town centre, and the opportunity to link through the site from Angel Lane to the entrance of the Tesco store could usefully be explored.

The design of this site will also be guided by the policies in **Chapter 5—**the area lies within the character zone 2—Shaftesbury Town Centre, which highlights the importance of the tightly developed street frontages, and historic character of the townscape with quality signage and detailing on shop fronts. It is important that any new frontage is locally distinctive, and if spaces are retained (for parking/servicing), these do not result in large areas of tarmacadam but accommodate trees.

POLICY SFHE1d

The Police Station and Post Office sites are allocated for town centre uses, and may include residential uses predominantly on the upper floors. Whilst the sites may be developed separately, consideration should be given to ensuring the efficient use of the site as a whole.

The Post Office building should be retained, and any new buildings should respect its landmark status and present a positive frontage onto Coppice Street/Angel Lane.

A pedestrian/cycle connection through the site from Angel Lane to the Tesco entrance should be secured if feasible in accordance with Policy SFCL3.

Detailed design should accord with Policies SFDH1–7 of this Plan.


Post Office Building



3.2 Meeting local housing needs *(continued)*

Map of development areas

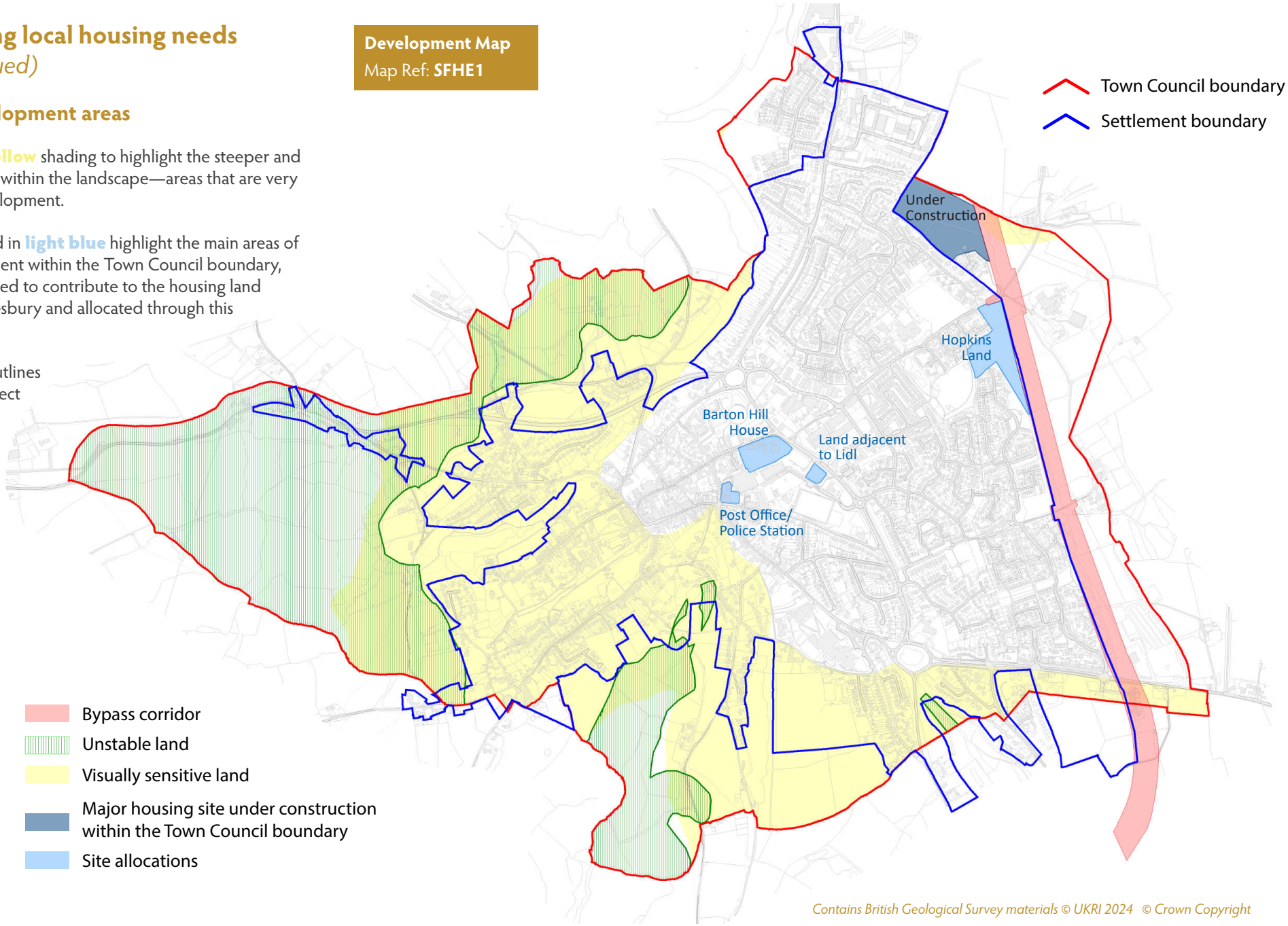
This map uses **yellow** shading to highlight the steeper and shallower slopes within the landscape—areas that are very sensitive to development.

The areas shaded in **light blue** highlight the main areas of future development within the Town Council boundary, which are expected to contribute to the housing land supply for Shaftesbury and allocated through this Plan.

Policy SFHE4 outlines the need to protect the bypass corridor.

Policy SFGI2 outlines the protection of the slopes.

Development Map
Map Ref: **SFHE1**



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3.3 Housing sites: Key principles of development

What does Policy **SFHE2** set out to do?

To learn from the issues that have arisen from previous large-scale housing developments in Shaftesbury.

In some cases, particularly with larger schemes which may take more than a year to build, the quality of development has been lower than was expected. Not all developers have done everything they said they would do when they were originally granted planning permission (large schemes are often approved as 'outline' permission, with detailed matters dealt with incrementally through later phases). Sometimes important parts of the scheme have been significantly delayed, and in some cases failed to materialise. This can mean long periods of disruption and that the finished development is of a lower quality and the overall scheme has been 'watered down'.

Dorset Council is responsible for making sure that planning conditions and obligations are followed. Active monitoring as building works progress can flag up problems at an early stage so that these can be resolved and are less likely to be repeated. On larger sites, Dorset Council can charge developers a fee, as part of a section 106 planning obligation, to cover the costs of Dorset Council monitoring the delivery of the infrastructure promised by the developer.

One example of an issue that needs to be addressed is the timely adoption of highways and related traffic management measures, which has been a cause for concern in some recent developments. The timeframe for adoption should be clearly specified at the outset, and Dorset Council can use their powers under the Highways Act to get funds from the developer that allows them to remedy the situation if the proposed roads are not made-up to a suitable standard to be adopted.

Whilst we don't anticipate the need for large sites to come forward within the plan period, the following policy nonetheless considers the need for phasing, and the benefits of a comprehensive approach to masterplanning.



Bramble Patch

addition, it would be appropriate to ensure that key workers for the area are also given priority in finding affordable housing. For the purpose of this plan, a Key Worker means a person employed in Shaftesbury (i.e. the Neighbourhood Plan area and adjoining built-up areas) or with a confirmed job offer related to employment here, as a front-line worker in: health/social care; education and training; emergency services; or in other front-line public service employment.



Mampitts Lane

In terms of house types, our research has specifically highlighted affordable housing as a priority for the local community, and also the housing needs of our older residents (given that 24% of the population is in the 65+ age group and the overall number of elderly residents in the town is forecast to increase). Innovative forms of housing designed to meet the specific needs of older people (who may be less mobile and have a higher reliance on care and social support networks) should be encouraged. In



Allen Road

3.3 Housing sites: Key principles of development *(continued)*

According to the 2021 Census, about 1 in 5 workers worked from home. This figure reflects the impacts of the Covid-19 restrictions/furlough arrangements at that time, but it is unlikely that this will have fallen back to 2011 levels when only about 1 in 18 workers worked from home.

Updated Building Regulations now require all new homes to be designed to support fast broadband connections of up to 1,000 megabits per second. Having some homes that include ground floor space which could be used as a home office, workshop and storage area is also desirable.

POLICY SFHE2

The following key principles should be applied to any future housing sites:

- **The development should be designed to sensitively integrate with the surrounding area;**
- **The mechanisms that will be used to ensure that planning obligations and conditions are monitored and complied with should be set out clearly;**

On sites of 10 or more dwellings:

The mix of housing should include dwelling types likely to be suitable for older people and those working from home, and avoid being any one type in order to promote social integration.

Any affordable housing should be pepper-potted and indistinguishable from open market housing, and delivered in tandem or advance of the open market housing.

The delivery of affordable housing should address the needs of the local community (i.e. those with a local connection to the town, including key workers engaged in frontline services in Shaftesbury, such as health and social care, education and training, and emergency services).

The use of a suitable delivery vehicle, such as a Community Land Trust (CLT) should be secured where possible to manage the allocation of affordable housing and give priority to those with a local connection in housing need.

Development should be phased when necessary to ensure the provision of any employment land, community facilities and infrastructure (including bus-friendly routes, pedestrian routes and cycle routes/ cycle-friendly streets, shared parking areas and onward highway connections) as well as green infrastructure is delivered in tandem and each phase is fully completed in a timely manner.

Information on the variation in scale of building heights (including information on the impact of local topography and views); all landscape features to be retained; and proposed green spaces, corridors and landscaping; should be clearly identified prior to the commencement of development.

ⓘ A Community Land Trust or CLT is a not-for-profit organisation. CLTs must benefit a specific community. The Trust owns the land on which affordable homes are built. CLTs can work in partnership with Housing Associations or landowners who want to promote affordable housing. The CLT manages the homes when they are ready to live in. The CLT must make sure that the homes remain affordable, and the houses or flats remain exempt from the right-to-buy rules.

Quick Read

What does this policy mean and why is it important?

What has been actually built in some of Shaftesbury's new larger developments has drifted from what was originally agreed by the planners. We want developers to be bound by their proposals, so their designs don't change greatly, and they get built in a timely manner.

Smaller developments, on smaller sites, 'fit in' and work better. In our extensive consultation, 85% of the people who responded felt that we should encourage more small sites rather than larger scale developments to meet future housing needs.

There should be footpaths, green space and environmental measures included.



Mampitts Lane

3.4 Meeting local employment needs

What does Policy SFHE3 set out to do?

To encourage conditions for attracting and retaining employment.

The availability and attractiveness of employment sites is a key factor for Shaftesbury's future success. Our research showed that there were very few vacant employment units. It often takes time to develop new employment land, particularly in recent years when policies and funding have been more focused on housing delivery. As new housing areas are built, the town's workforce grows, and we want to provide opportunities for businesses to locate here so residents won't necessarily have to commute out from Shaftesbury for work.

Land to the south of the A30 was identified as employment land in the Local Plan. The western end was developed first, and was home to four businesses sharing over 550 sqm of retail, warehouse and storage space when the Neighbourhood Plan was first prepared. The remaining area now has outline planning permission (E/2018/1773), with a mix of commercial uses and industrial starter units proposed in the part of the site within our Neighbourhood Plan area but most of the remaining site now to be development as housing. As a result, the total area of potential employment land around the town (including Cann parish) has reduced significantly, diminishing the town's ability to be self-sufficient in jobs.

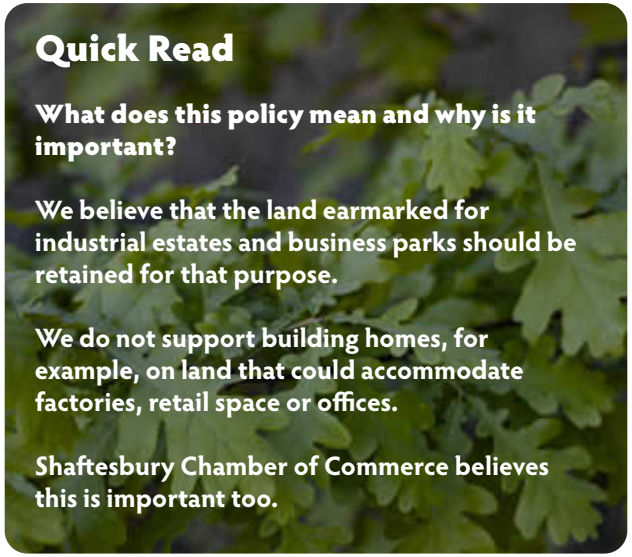
The part of the site fronting onto the A30 will be seen by many visitors travelling into the town from the east, and as such it is important that its design provides a positive image suitable to Shaftesbury's unique character, and conveying a sense of pride in the town and its heritage. The provision of standard industrial 'boxes' should not be accepted in this location. Whilst a boulevard of street trees can and should line the road frontage, this should not be used to justify poor quality designs.

POLICY SFHE3

Existing employment areas will be protected, including Longmead, Wincombe, land south of the A30 (existing) and Blackmore Vale Dairy (as shown on Map SFHE3) for future employment needs.

Protected employment land to the south of the A30 (as shown on Map SFHE3) will be developed for employment uses. This should include an area of industrial starter units, and may include, commercial uses such as non- food retail, hotel and/or a residential care home. The design of premises and associated areas fronting onto or clearly visible from the A30 should reflect the historic character of the town, and be suitably set back to accommodate large-scale street trees along the A30 (and such tree planting should be provided in line with Policy SFGI3).

Development that would bring vacant or underused parts of existing buildings back into economic use should be supported.



Quick Read

What does this policy mean and why is it important?

We believe that the land earmarked for industrial estates and business parks should be retained for that purpose.

We do not support building homes, for example, on land that could accommodate factories, retail space or offices.

Shaftesbury Chamber of Commerce believes this is important too.

In addition, **Policy SFHE1** seeks to ensure that a balanced approach to the provision of housing and employment is taken should new housing sites come forward.

Which areas are employment land?

The key employment areas in Shaftesbury as recorded when the Neighbourhood Plan was first prepared are:

- The town centre, which had 162 businesses and covers approximately 21,000 sqm.
- Wincombe Business Park, which had 86 businesses and covers over 11,600 sqm of employment premises including mainly office, factory and warehouse space.
- The Longmead site, where there were 48 businesses including factory, warehouse and office space with 23,000 sqm of premises.
- Ivy Cross, where there were 8 businesses in approximately 4,600 sqm of premises, including a garage, shops, depot and take away.
- The Blackmore Vale Dairy which has premises of over 4,600 sqm in general industrial use.

Whilst employment areas include those falling within traditional 'B' Class uses (business and general industrial premises), in practice we need to consider a much wider range of employment types—the education and training sector, leisure and tourism, healthcare, etc, where the use of that land or building directly supports jobs. Research undertaken by the Homes and Communities Agency in 2015 calculated that a typical office environment may support the equivalent of one full time employee (FTE) for every 10–13 sqm of internal floorspace. Light industrial units, in contrast, will generate less employment—typically one FTE for every 47 sqm. Care homes that employ an equivalent number of staff as a typical office/light industrial use will be considered as an employment use. However, they should not be located on industrial

3.4 Meeting local employment needs *(continued)*

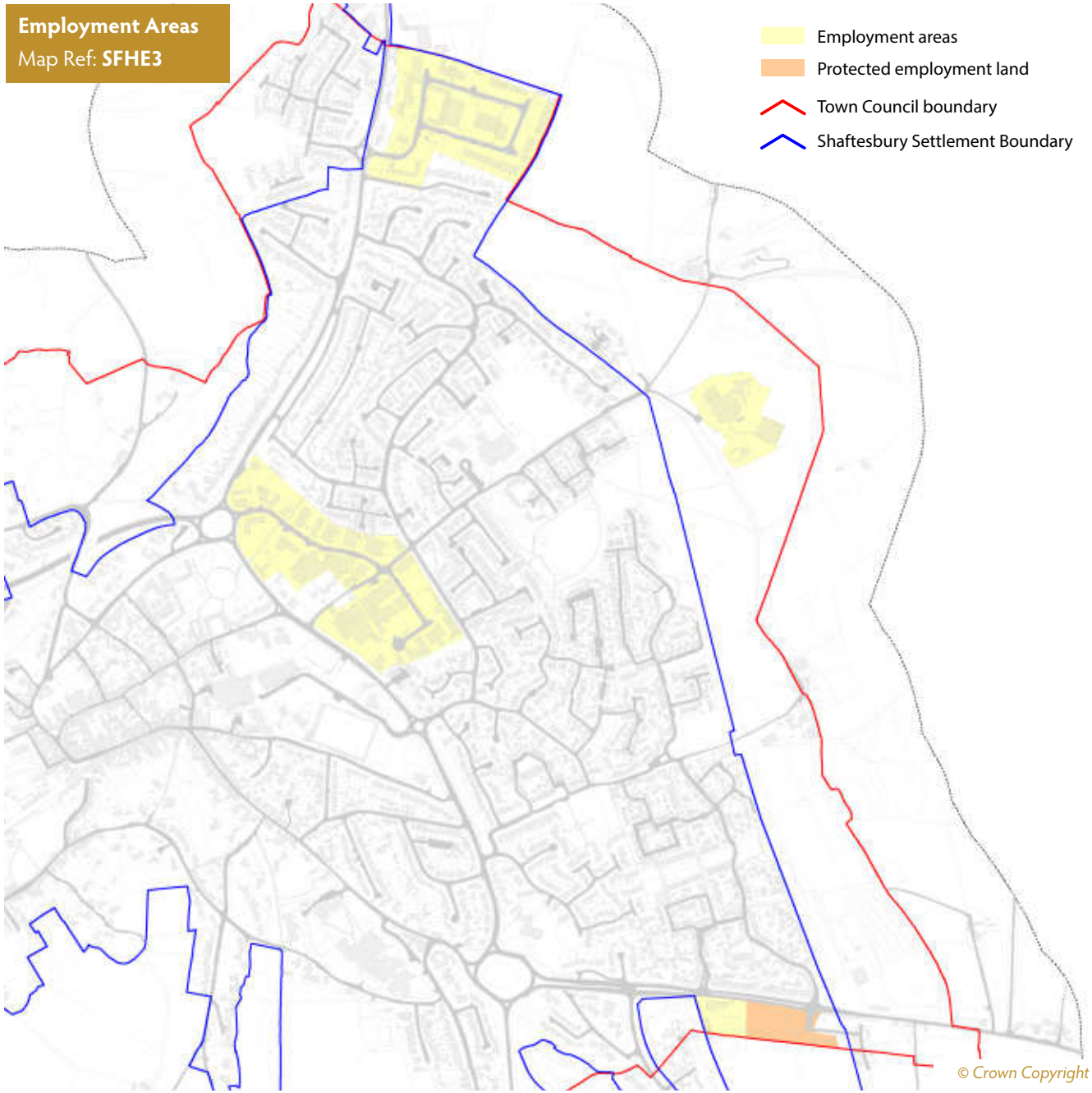
estates where their occupants would be disturbed by the associated noise etc.

Littledown Business Park is outside the Neighbourhood Plan area in Motcombe parish.

Map of employment areas

This map shows the main areas of employment land (existing and proposed) within the settlement boundary of Shaftesbury.

Employment Areas
Map Ref: **SFHE3**



Cross reference to **Policy SFTC1** for other employment areas.

Other employment areas generating uses, such as healthcare, schools and community facilities are protected under **Policies SFCL1 and SFCL2**. Where these become vacant, alternative community/employment uses compatible with that area would be supported.

3.5 The Shaftesbury Eastern Bypass corridor

What does Policy **SFHE4** set out to do?

To support the provision of the much needed eastern route, and ensure that it is not prevented from being built because the land that is needed to deliver it has been built on.

POLICY SFHE4

The bypass corridor to the eastern side of the town will be protected and its provision supported.

Development will be strongly resisted that would jeopardise the construction of the bypass.

Insight into Shaftesbury's road network

The A350 currently runs to the east of Shaftesbury town centre along the road 'Christy's Lane.' For most of its length, through the town, coincides with the east- west A30, carrying large volumes of traffic including HGVs heading to and from Poole and the South Coast ports.

This volume of traffic creates a significant barrier for both pedestrian and cycle access that effectively divides the town into two halves—already referred to locally as 'East Shaftesbury' and 'West Shaftesbury'.

Christy's Lane was originally constructed as the external relief road for the town. However, the eastward growth of the town has meant that it is now acting as a distinct barrier to movement between the two parts of the town.

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

In 2019, the Neighbourhood Plan group conducted the first phase of wider public engagement relating to the Shaftesbury- specific Plan. There were 241 responses relating to the question asking residents about the preservation of the bypass corridor to the east of the town. 199 responders answered yes, which represents 82% of the responses received, so the majority are in favour of preserving the bypass corridor.

Christy's Lane has seen a 22% increase in traffic since 1996 according to Dorset Council's figures. On an average day in 2017, 20,600 vehicles used this short stretch of road. More recent statistics from 2022 indicate these levels remain broadly the same. The number of HGVs on Christy's Lane and Grosvenor Road has remained relatively constant at around 600–700 vehicles a day.


Christy's Lane

More more detail on traffic levels can be found online at these sites:

https://roadtraffic.dft.gov.uk/manualcountpoints/6318

https://roadtraffic.dft.gov.uk/manualcountpoints/73419

It is likely that Christy's Lane will become busier, as the remaining housing developments are completed. Residents of the new estates at Littledown and at Wincombe will need to drive along Christy's Lane when travelling north or north-east. The expansion of Gillingham is also likely to increase traffic on Christy's Lane.

Having some form of road that connects from the A30 Salisbury Road to the A350 heading north out of the town would reduce pressure on Christy's Lane and Grosvenor Road. The new road, when built, should also link into the eastern side of the town as far as this is feasible, so that less traffic from the eastern expansion has to use Christy's Lane, which would help integrate the eastern part of the town with the town centre and other areas, particularly for pedestrians and cyclists.

Whilst the Neighbourhood Plan cannot allocate funds or decide transport policy, we believe that a route must be safeguarded, for reasons of safety and to encourage community social cohesion by preventing our town being further split in two by increased traffic.



3.5 The Shaftesbury Eastern Bypass corridor *(continued)*

Funding for a bypass could have been secured if the A350/C13 formed the strategic route between the M4 and Dorset Coast. Whilst this now seems unlikely, the need for a road linking from the A30 Salisbury Road to the A350 heading north out of the town still exists, and the Town Council will continue to lobby for such a route through the Local Plan, and Local Transport Plan.

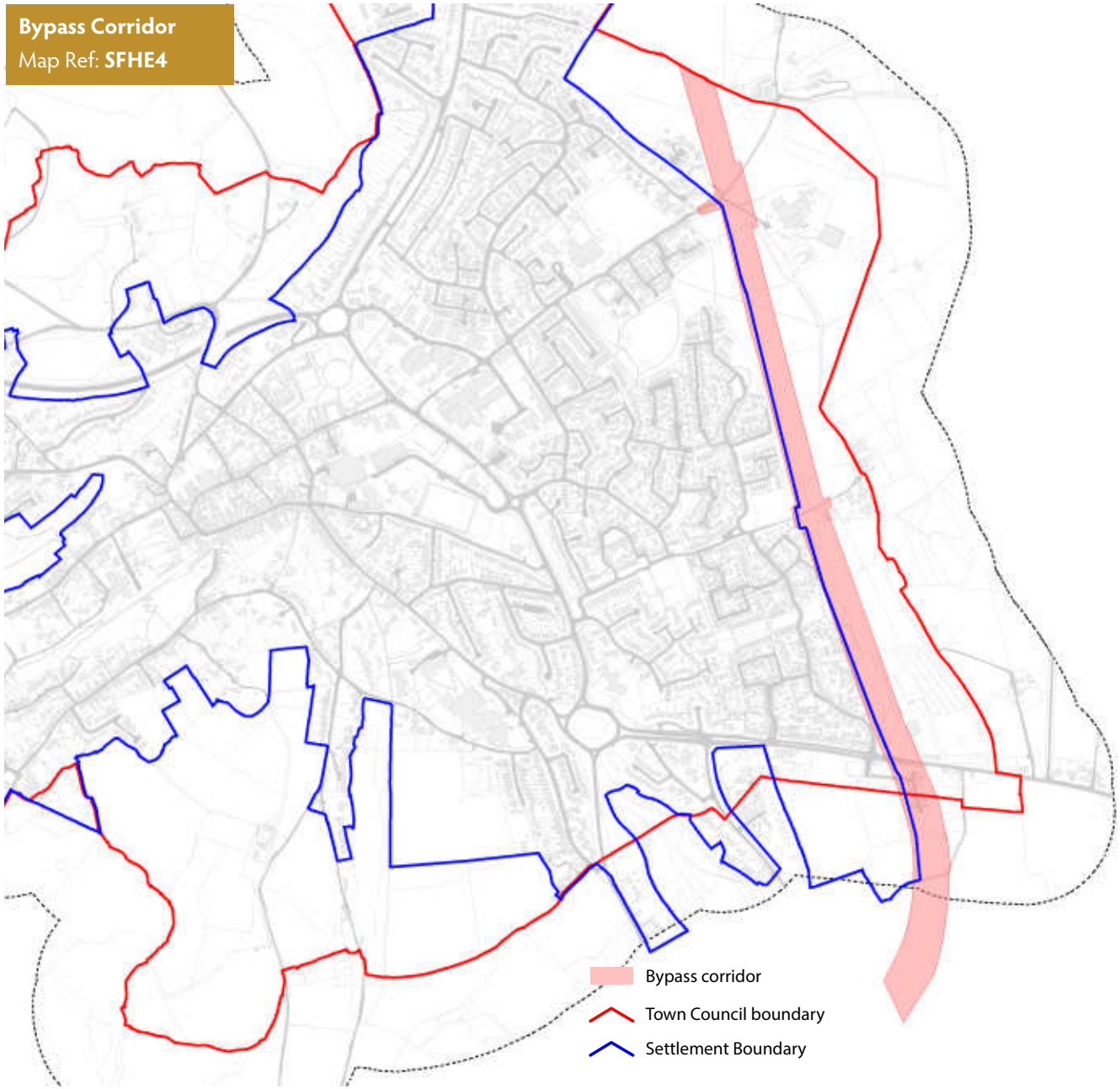
To the west of Shaftesbury, the Local Plan also proposes the construction of a link road between the A30 and B3018 (known as the Enmore Green link road) as part of wider improvements of road links south from Gillingham to encourage the use of the A30 as an alternative to the A303 for trips to Yeovil and Salisbury. This is largely within Motcombe parish, and is also dependent on significant funding becoming available.

Route of the Shaftesbury Eastern Bypass corridor

The preferred line of the road (red hatched area—as shown in the 2003 Local Plan) should remain protected from development as there is no other realistic option that has been identified.

The route of the road may be reviewed in the next Local Plan.





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4. Green Infrastructure

4.1 Green Infrastructure: Key messages and aims

The context

Green infrastructure is the network of natural and semi-natural features, green spaces and waterways that intersperse and connect villages, towns and cities. It ranges from pastures and woodland to playing fields and street trees. Within a town, each green infrastructure element may have an obvious primary function but will also bring many other benefits. For example, street trees can enhance a residential area but also serve to reduce airborne pollution, provide shade and shelter, support insects and birds, and mitigate climate change.

Shaftesbury's distinctiveness comes from its elevated position above undulating countryside characterised as 'rolling vales' to the north, west and south. Our historic hilltop town boasts some outstanding open views yet from the surrounding countryside much of Shaftesbury is hidden, nestling amongst the extensive tree cover. Breach Fields to the west of the town is designated as a nationally important wildlife site, being a rare example of a species-rich neutral grassland. Further to the south, the chalk grassland habitats on Fontmell and Melbury Downs are internationally important.

For townspeople and visitors alike, the experience of walking around the town is marked by hedgerows alive with noisy sparrows, lichen-marked stone walls, footpaths that descend through 'hangings' of mature trees or out into the countryside of the Cranborne Chase National Landscape, which wraps around the north, east and south sides of our town.

Any new developments in Shaftesbury should allow residents to move around the town and access schools by foot or by bicycle—safe and accessible walking and cycling routes that enable residents to experience our town's rural setting. New projects should ensure that opportunities for walking cycling and exercising in the fresh air are facilitated, leading to an enhanced sense of wellbeing.

Key characteristics of the wider countryside, as described in the Dorset Landscape Character Assessment, relate to its diverse pattern of trees, woodland, hedgerow and small-scale fields, watercourses and narrow lanes, and the generally rural and tranquil nature of the area.



The SuDS Corridor

We have carried out a survey of green spaces within the Neighbourhood Plan area on foot, with notebook and camera to hand. This is described within the Green Infrastructure Audit (see **Appendix L**).

We have applied the national Fields in Trust standards formula to the amount of green spaces that a community could expect, to assess what is currently provided for; formal sports grounds, equipped play areas, parks and gardens, allotments and accessible open areas. Shaftesbury falls short of the recommended national Fields in Trust standards. That means it is really important to protect the existing open spaces close to where people live.



View of Shaftesbury from Melbury

The Town Council declared Shaftesbury as a *Nature Friendly Town* in April 2025. The Sustainable Shaftesbury Advisory Committee (SuSAC) is progressing further initiatives, and hopes to work with local landowners to establish a 'Green Wheel' around the town as well as a wildlife hub and corridor. Any relevant policy implications arising from these initiatives can be considered in the next review.

Key feedback from consultation

In our consultation exercise on our draft policy ideas, the community told us they wanted the Neighbourhood Plan to protect our slopes and the green and open spaces in and around our town.

86% of respondents to that survey said that they broadly agreed with our green spaces policy intentions. A similar view was expressed in an earlier Neighbourhood Plan survey, carried out in 2014 and 2015. Then, over 85% of people said that protecting and/or enhancing our green infrastructure was important.

Key messages

Based on what local people have told us, we have identified the following aims:

Landscape and topography:

To conserve and enhance the sense of place by ensuring new development integrates with the patchwork of wooded areas, hedgerows, slopes and pathways across the landscape and respects important views both from the town and from vantage points in the wider area.

History and culture:

To protect and enhance the environment around Shaftesbury's historic sites.

Ecology and biodiversity:

To enhance sustainability in its widest sense by promoting and providing habitats that boost biodiversity; mitigate climate change, noise and air pollution; help with management of surface water and drainage; and provide opportunities for education, recreation and play.

Health and wellbeing:

To protect and enhance a green infrastructure network that sustains wellbeing and incorporates green spaces and amenity areas interconnected by new and improved footpaths and cycleways.

To improve access to open countryside and walking/cycling routes to local towns and villages.

To ensure that there are adequate and easily accessible formal and informal sports provision and play areas for all residents.

To ensure that there is adequate provision of allotments and communal spaces with opportunities for community growing.



White Hart Link



Bluebells on Pine Walk

Protecting Shaftesbury's special green spaces

A Neighbourhood Plan can protect many of the green spaces that are particularly special to local people. This protection could be because of their historic or cultural significance, their recreational value, their intrinsic beauty or tranquillity, or for their richness of wildlife.

Provided areas are local in character, within the Neighbourhood Plan area, and not needed for development, they can be designated as Local Green Spaces (or LGS). The rules on what can and can't be designated are defined by National Planning Policy.

Within Shaftesbury's development boundary there are a number of green spaces with tree cover that are important for their contribution to the character of Shaftesbury, but they have either limited or no public access. Historically, many of these were classed as Important Open or Wooded Areas (IOWAs) and these have been identified as Important Treed Areas (ITAs) in this plan.

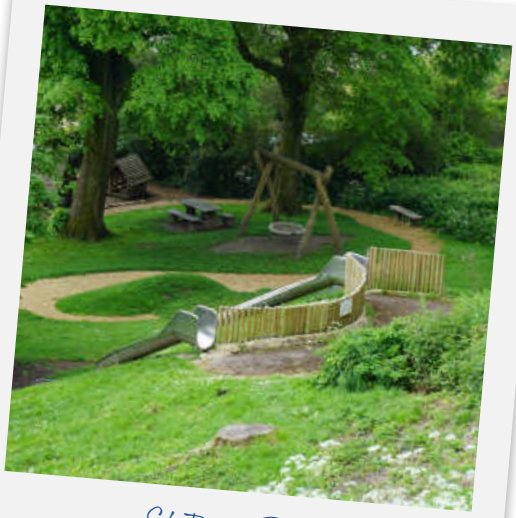
The trees will have additional protection from felling where they are within the conservation area or have an existing Tree Preservation Order.

The justification for designation of spaces as LGS or ITA is given in **Appendix L**, and more detail is provided in the separate Audit document.

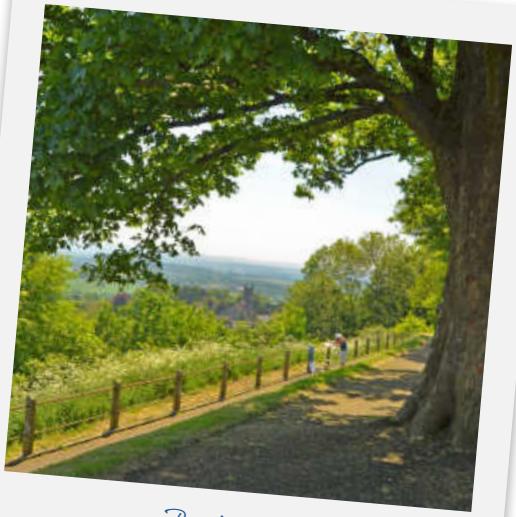




Rott Millennium Green



St James Park



Park Walk



A Shaftesbury Allotment

4.2 Local Green Spaces and Important Treed Areas

What does Policy **SFGI1** set out to do?

To protect the important and locally valued green spaces.

Shaftesbury has green spaces that are linked to highly valued historic sites, wooded spaces that contribute to the character of the town and mitigate climate change, and spaces that give access to long views. Other spaces are valuable to nearby residents because they offer play or other recreational opportunities. Such spaces have been designated for protection from development, where they qualify as Local Green Spaces—a designation similar to Green Belt (but at a more local level) based on criteria set out in the National Planning Policy Framework.

Some important spaces could not be designated at this time. For example, new development at Littledown, to the north of the town, will provide a significant area of parkland giving long views over Gillingham Royal Forest. This will become an important landscape feature and leisure area but cannot be said to be 'valued' until public access is made available. It may, however, be eligible for LGS designation in the next review of this Neighbourhood Plan.

A further important space is the semi-natural area with ponds that has been created by the sustainable urban drainage system on the south-eastern edge of the town. This is used for play and dog-walking and is becoming an important asset for the many people living nearby, for whom there is currently no readily accessible alternative. However, part of the area sits within the by-pass corridor (see **Policy SFHE4**) and this potential future development means that protection is not appropriate, as Local Green Space designations are expected to endure beyond the plan period.

POLICY SFGI1

The areas shown on Map SFGI1 and listed in Appendix L are designated as Local Green Spaces (LGS). Other than in very special circumstances, these spaces will be protected from inappropriate development that would reduce their open character or otherwise harm their green character and the reason for their designation.

Development adjoining a Local Green Space should not cause substantial harm to its character (taking into account the reason for its designation) and continued use.

Any reduction in the recreational amenity or ecological value of a Local Green Space must be replaced through, for example, the provision of an alternative green space of equal or better value and as accessible to the surrounding community.

The Important Treed Areas, as shown on Map SFGI1 and identified within the Green Infrastructure Audit (as referenced in Appendix L) should retain their treed character. Where the loss of trees is unavoidable, replacement planting will be sought in order to maintain the treed character of the local area.



Bury Litton



Queen Mother Garden

Quick Read

What does this policy mean and why is it important?

A Neighbourhood Plan can protect some green spaces. We have identified those in Shaftesbury that are special for their historic or cultural significance, their beauty, their recreational value to people nearby or because they are rich in wildlife.

These spaces that are to be protected have been listed and mapped and the list can be added to when the Neighbourhood Plan is reviewed.

4.2 Local Green Spaces and Important Treed Areas *(continued)*

Map of audited Local Green Spaces (LGS) and Important Treed Areas (ITA)

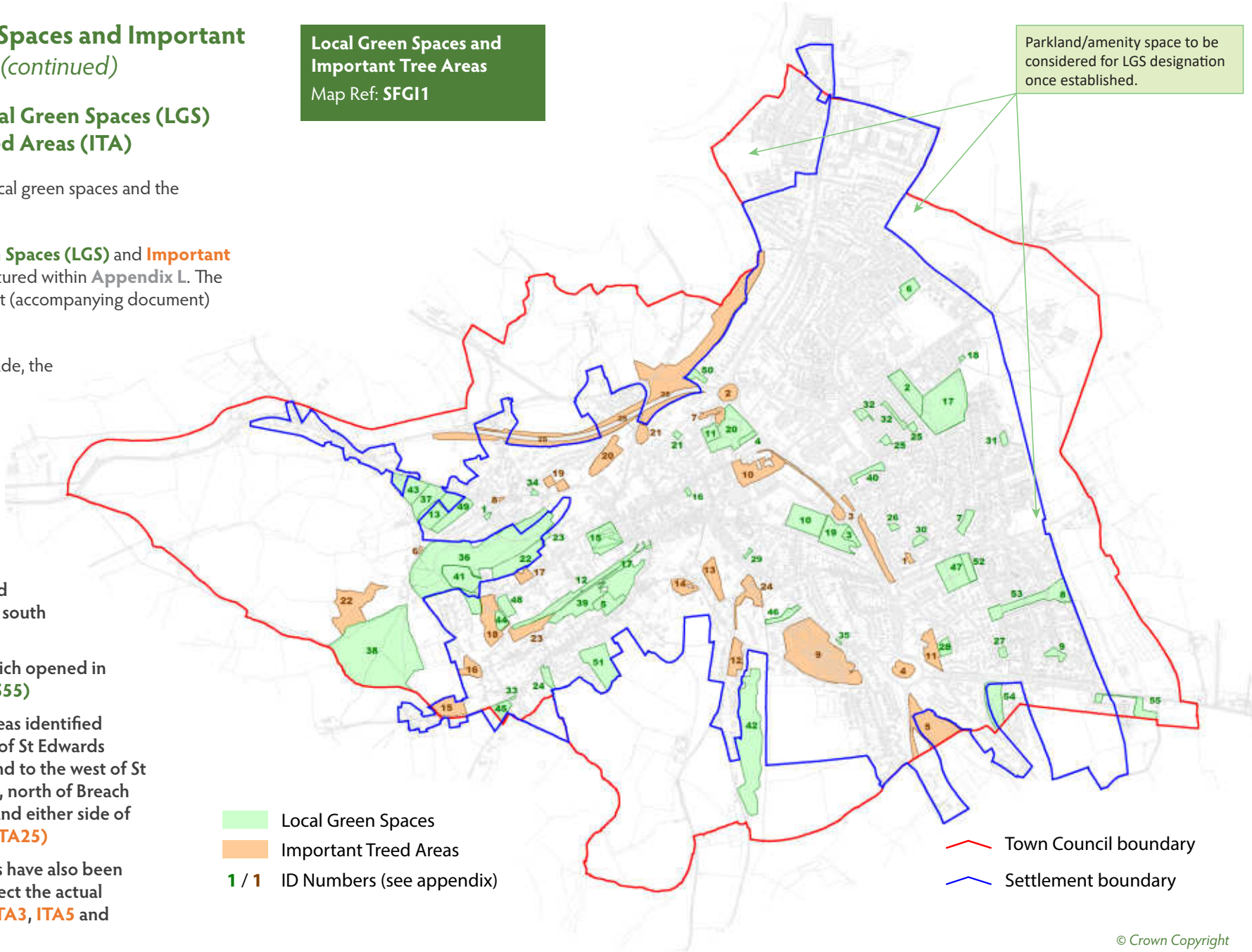
This map highlights the local green spaces and the important treed areas.

The index of **Local Green Spaces (LGS)** and **Important Treed Areas (ITA)** is featured within **Appendix L**. The Green Infrastructure Audit (accompanying document) provides further details

Since the Plan was first made, the following Green Spaces and Important Treed Areas have been added:

- **Land east of Higher Blandford Road, providing open views to Compton Down and Melbury Hill to the south (LGS54)**
- **A30 Allotments which opened in October 2021 (LGS55)**
- **Important treed areas identified on land to the rear of St Edwards Church (ITA24), land to the west of St James Park (ITA23), north of Breach Common (ITA22) and either side of the A30 corridor (ITA25)**
- **Minor amendments have also been made to better reflect the actual coverage of areas ITA3, ITA5 and LGS41**

Local Green Spaces and Important Tree Areas
Map Ref: **SFGI1**



4.3 Shaftesbury's slopes, views and rural setting

What does Policy **SFGI2** set out to do?

To ensure development respects Shaftesbury's topography and its position in the landscape.

Details:

North Dorset's Local Plan has historically offered protection to Shaftesbury's unique setting through what have been called the Slopes Policies. This Neighbourhood Plan updates these policies and the areas it covers, through its new Slopes **Policy Map (SFGI2)**. This provides clarity as to which areas are part of 'The Slopes' – a designation that dates back to the 2003 North Dorset Local Plan. To produce the map, we have looked at both the landscape character areas (based on assessments undertaken in 2003 and 2008 for Cranborne Chase National Landscape and North Dorset) with additional detail provided by the changing topography (based on contour information to calculate the degree of slope).

View of Shaftesbury and Caterpillar Hill from Win Green



4.3 Shaftesbury's slopes, views and rural setting *(continued)*

For the detailed slope analysis map, a contour map was used to identify areas where the gradient is 1:15 or steeper (with those areas of 1:5 or steeper comprising the steep slopes).

The analysis used a combination of the 150m contour line and trackways to define the lower boundary of these shallow slopes, after an assessment of the area's topographic and visual prominence.

A further factor regarding the slopes that was not previously considered, is the underlying geology. One of the reasons that little building work has taken place on many parts of the slopes is due to the potential for landslips to occur, primarily beneath the escarpments of the Corallian Group and the Upper Greensand. A geological study undertaken by two members and former member of the British Geological Survey in the 1990s describes the landslips as 'spectacular'.

For further information can be found in Geology of the country around Shaftesbury: Memoir for 1:50000 geological sheet 313 (England & Wales), 1995

https://pubs.bgs.ac.uk/publications.html?pubID=B01692

The authors describe the majority of the slopes in the area known as Shaftesbury Undercliff as based in land-slipped Gault, with shallow, successive rotational slips up to 6m deep in places. They also note that there are disturbed slopes below the undercliff which are flatter and more convex. They go on to state that "extensively landslipped slopes of the undercliff are close to limiting equilibrium. Reactivation could easily be caused by cut and fill on the undercliff".

It is therefore critical that the potential instability of our area is fully understood in order to ensure that development does not trigger new, or reactivate old, landslips, and the costs of any remediation measures to ensure slope stability is fully understood. Areas of unstable land have therefore been identified from the GeoSure layers comprising:

- **Landslides—areas where slope instability problems may or probably are present (see Appendix P GeoSure Landslides for further detail)**
- **Shrink-swell—areas where ground conditions are predominantly medium to high plasticity (see Appendix P GeoSure Shrink Swell for further detail)**

Being on the lower hillside slopes, the settlements of St James and Enmore Green are visible both from the hilltop and from distant viewpoints in the surrounding countryside. The steep slopes, the top of the spur, and these lower settlements are all highly sensitive to development as a result.

Tree cover is an important consideration for any new development on the shallower slopes, including on the shallow slopes below the hilltop to the south east of the town.

Developers must make sure that planned development respects Shaftesbury's contours, landscape and 'lie of the land'.



Extract of Slopes Analysis map

A slopes analysis map shows the influence of topography on the settlement pattern of Shaftesbury; how the town has developed on the flat land of the greensand plateau with limited development on steep slopes to the north, west and south. It shows the distinctive spur of the land to the west upon which the Saxon town was founded and the Medieval town from which the settlement and development has spread on flat land to the east.



Slopes analysis map (source: Bernard Ede)

Medieval settlements such as Enmore Green and St Emes were located on flatter shoulders of land below the steep slopes. The plateau edges and spur form critical edges which, where tree cover permits, gives Shaftesbury its distinctive panoramic views over the low-lying Blackmore Vale and to the elevated Chalk Downs and Greensand ridges forming skylines to the north and south. Conversely, these edges and slopes are sensitive to development due to ground instability and visual impact

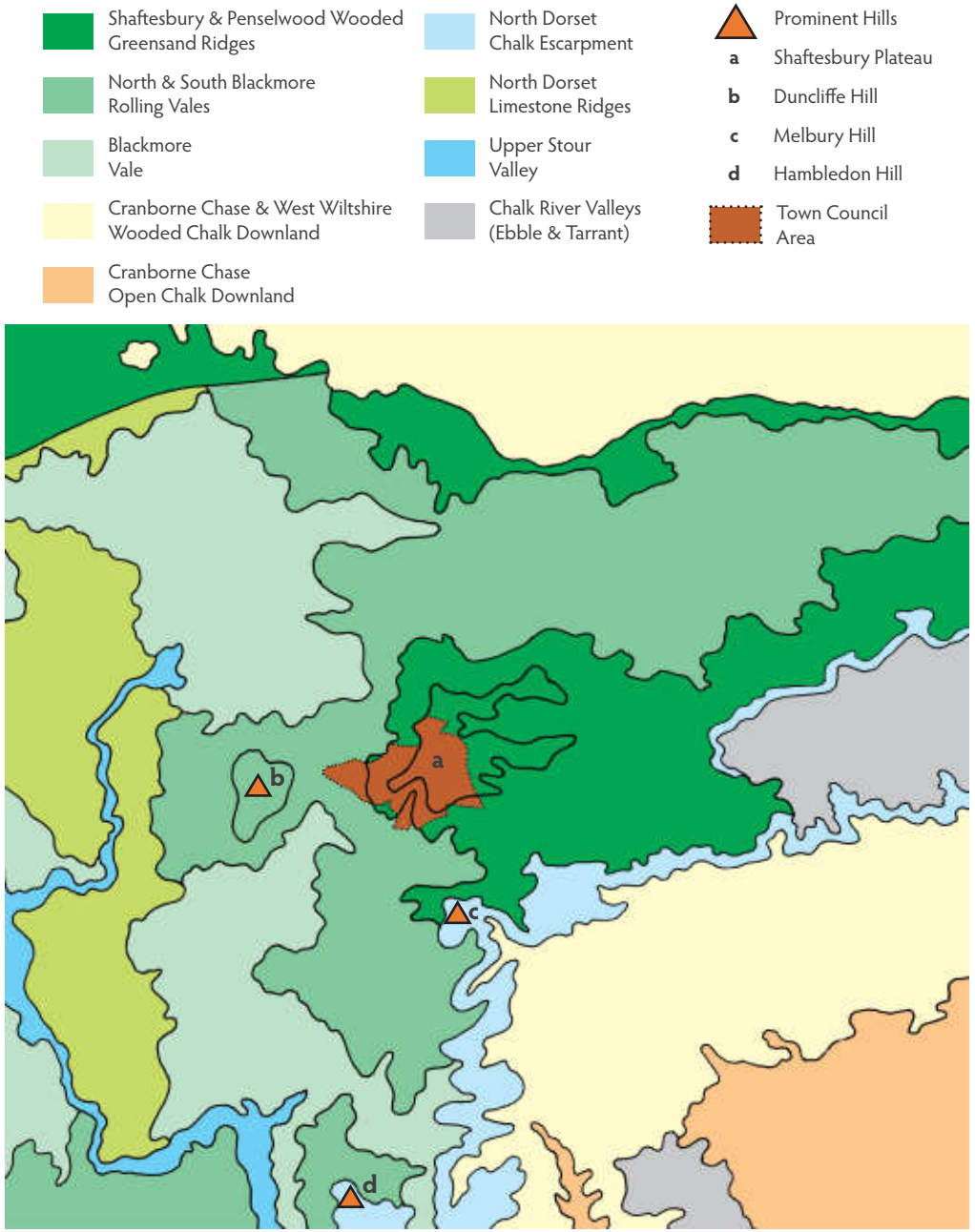
North Dorset and South Wiltshire Landscape Character map

This shows the variety of character areas forming the setting of the town and how the parish occupies land on elevated Shaftesbury Greensand ridge and lower-lying rolling clay vales.

Sources:

Landscape Character Areas for North Dorset (amended), Dorset County Council

Wiltshire Landscape Character Assessment Land Use Consultants Final Report December 2005



North Dorset and South Wiltshire Landscape Character

4.3 Shaftesbury's slopes, views and rural setting *(continued)*

Viewpoints

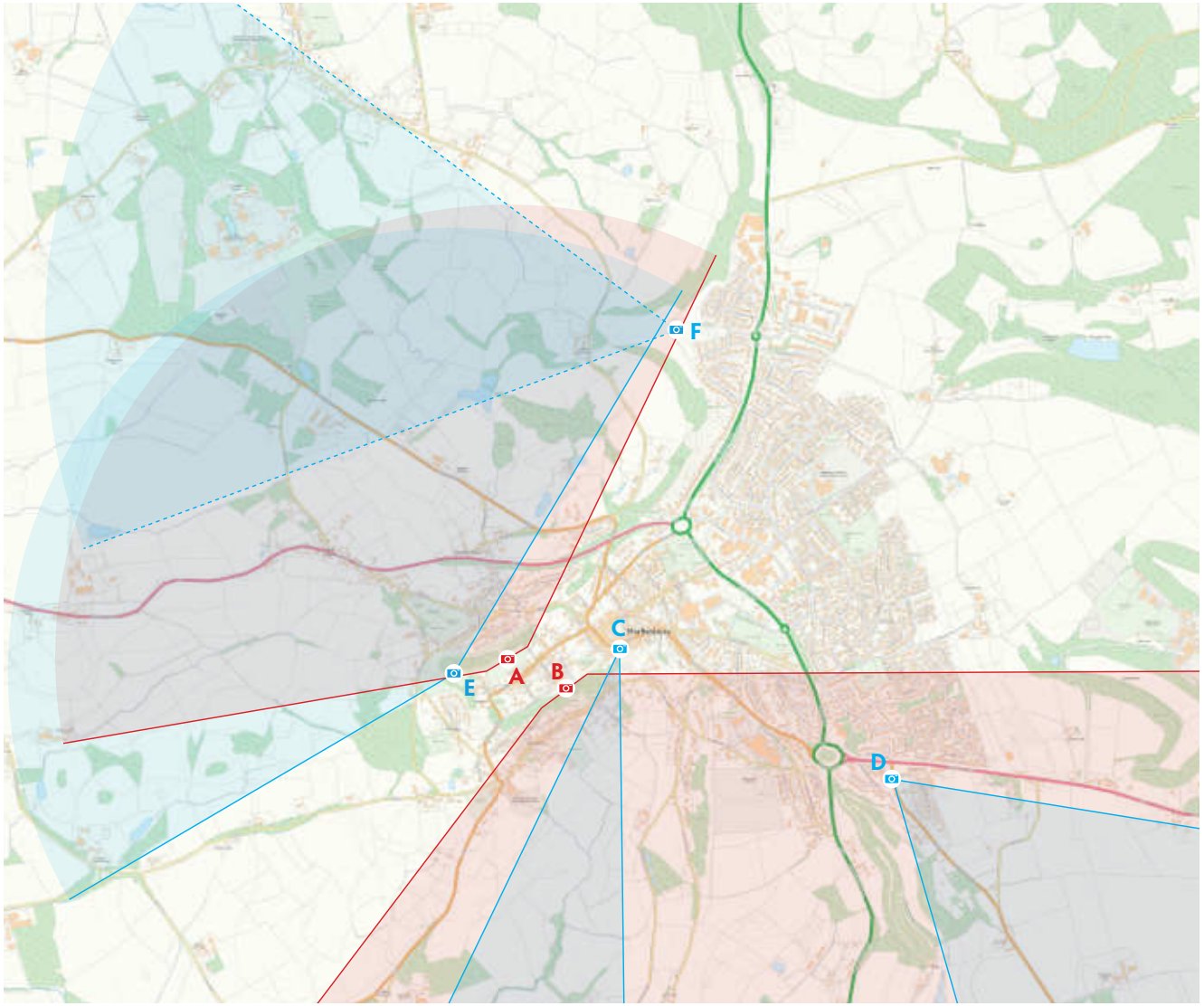
Shaftesbury's distinctive topography (**Map SFGI2a**) provides outstanding views from the town.

Shaftesbury's best-known view, famous not just in Dorset but also of national and international renown, is that available from Gold Hill (viewpoint **C** on **Map SFGI2a**). This historic cobbled street runs down the steep slope behind the Guildhall and from the top, the view across Blackmore Vale is framed by picturesque cottages and part of Shaftesbury Abbey walls.

A short walk away there are more open views to the south (**B**), and north (**A**) of the spur, and views limited by more extensive tree cover to the west. New development to the north of the town will give public access to further outstanding long views (**F**).

To the south and east of the town, where the land slopes more gradually, there are still notable views. A popular feature of glimpsed views looking south from eastern parts of the town is 'the caterpillar', a group of trees on raised ground that appear on the skyline. Whilst development south of the A30 has partially obscured this view, the relationship between the town and downs to the south can still be appreciated from viewpoint **D**.

Views from Shaftesbury
Map Ref: **SFGI2a**



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- **A** Wide viewpoint from Castle Hill green
- **B** Wide viewpoint from Park Walk
- **C** View from top of Gold Hill
- **D** View from Higher Blandford Road
- **E** View from Castle Hill Mound
- **F** Assigned view from Littledown Development

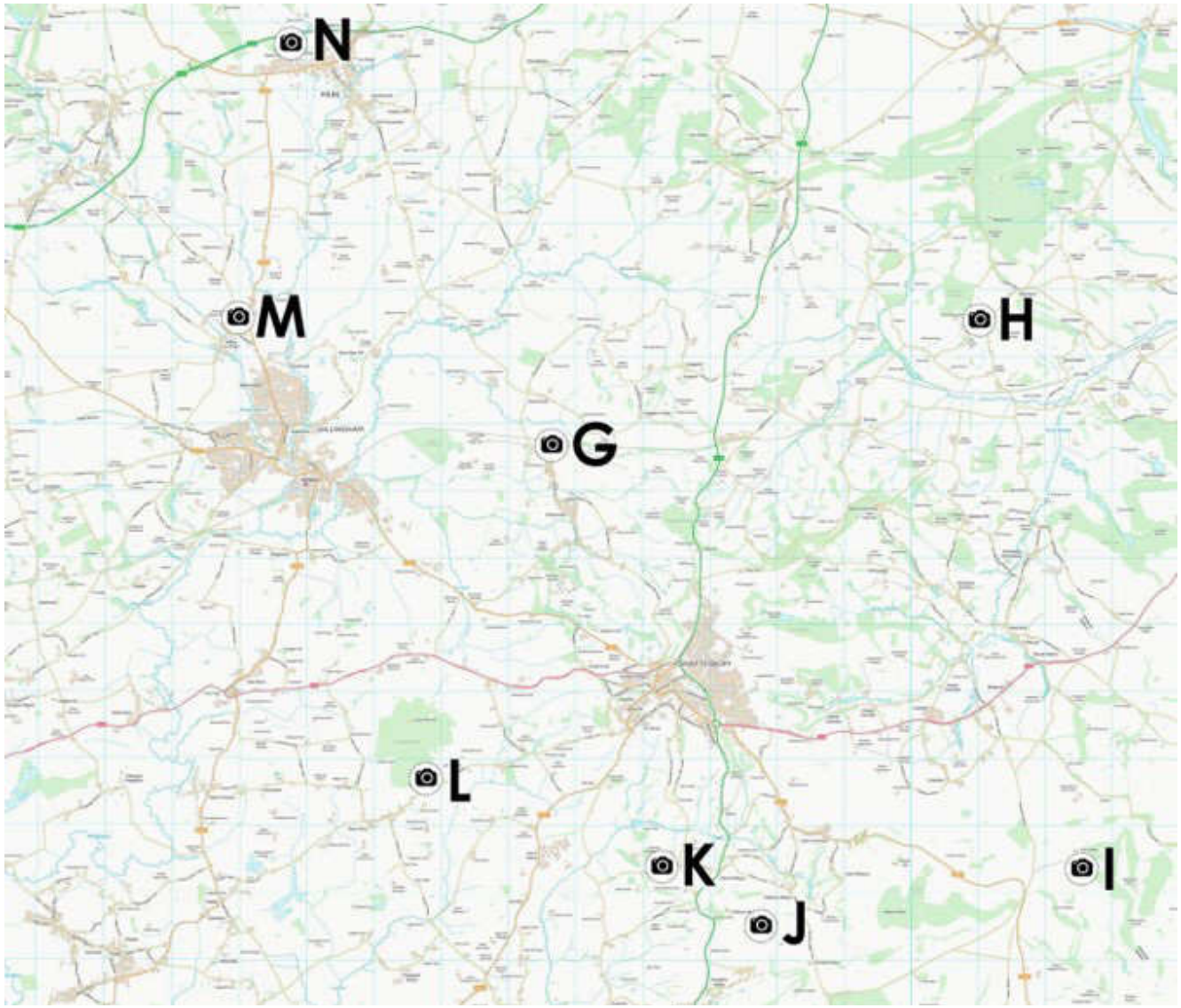
Full details of map in **Appendix F**

Shaftesbury features on the skyline from many places in the surrounding countryside and a selection of these are indicated on **Map SFGI2b**.

The view of Shaftesbury from Hatch House Hill (**H**) serves to illustrate the importance of tree cover for development around the edge of the town.

Appendix F documents the accessible views, looking both out of and towards the town as seen from the viewpoints on maps **SFGI2a** and **SFGI2b**.

Views of Shaftesbury from the surrounding landscape
Map Ref: **SFGI2b**



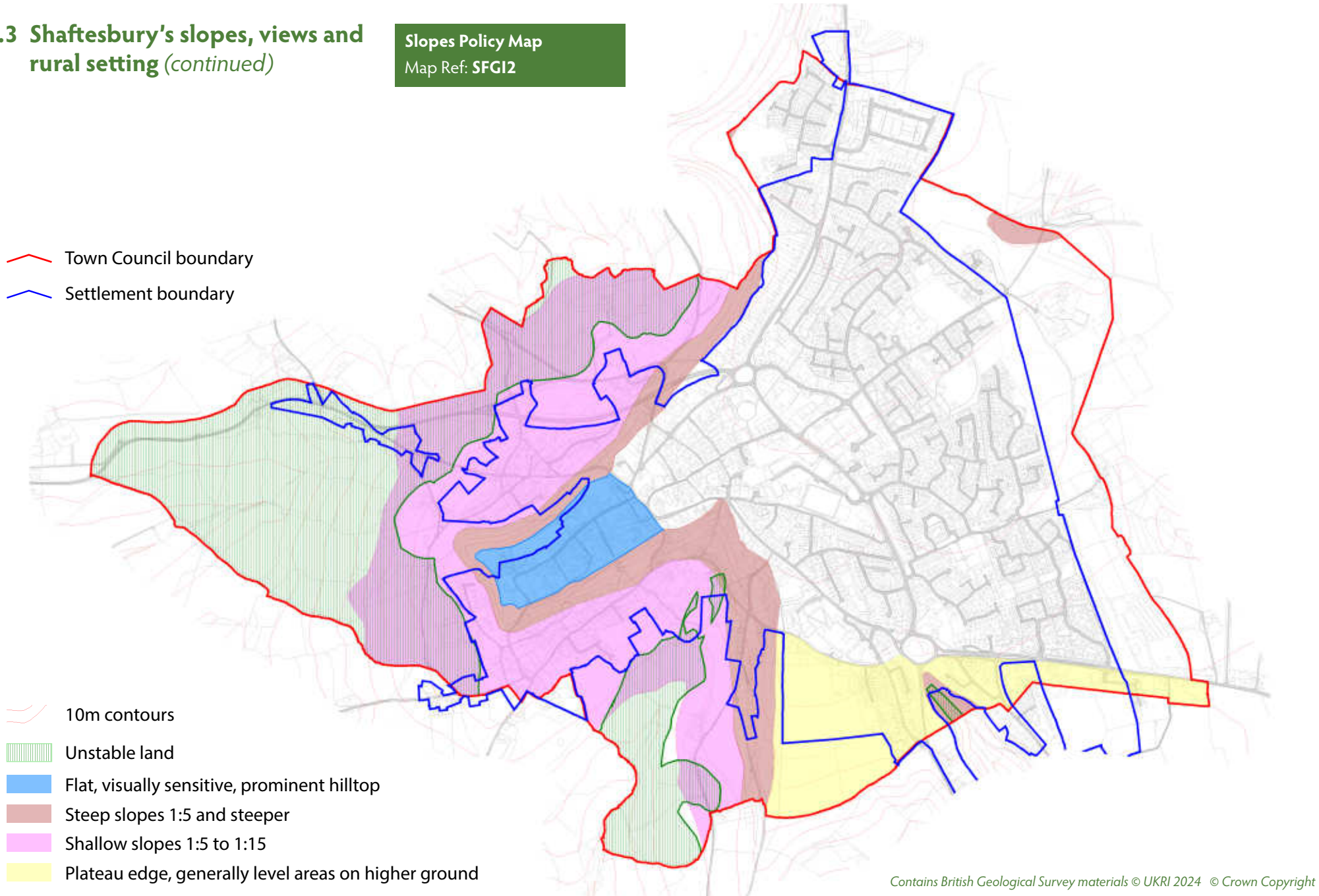
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G Motcombe
H Hatch House
I Win Green
J Melbury Beacon (Compton Down)
K Writh Farm
L Stour Row
M Milton on Stour
N Mere

Full details of map in **Appendix F**

4.3 Shaftesbury's slopes, views and rural setting *(continued)*

Slopes Policy Map
Map Ref: **SFGI2**



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POLICY SFGI2

The outstanding character of Gold Hill, and views from the flat hilltop and other key locations as shown on map maps **SFGI2a** and **SFGI2b** will be protected.

On the steep slopes (as shown on Map **SFGI2**) any development that does not preserve the remaining open or wooded areas and their distinct rural character, will generally be resisted.

On the shallow slopes and plateau edge (as shown on Map **SFGI2**), the design, scale and location of the development should not adversely affect the generally undeveloped character of the slopes and should respect the highly sensitive nature of the plateau edge. It should not negatively impact on views from higher and lower ground.

Road-bearing development within areas of unstable land (as shown on Map **SFGI2**) will be required to demonstrate that the site is stable or could be made stable, and that the development is unlikely to trigger landsliding within or beyond the boundaries of the site.

Development on the edge of the town will be expected to respect the environmental context, including green infrastructure, that draws the rural landscape into the settlement and provides a soft edge to the town.

There should be public access to the countryside via footpaths (and where appropriate, bridleways or cycle paths), connected to the wider countryside rights of way.


Grass Verges



Quick Read

What does this policy mean and why is it important?

The slopes surrounding our town are really important to residents. These frame the many important views, whether looking down from the hilltop or looking up towards the town. Gold Hill's view is particularly iconic and must be protected.

There are also areas where land stability is a real problem, which has significant costs for development that need to be taken into account.

New developments on the edge of town should blend in with the countryside. The use of trees and hedgerows will help retain that sense of rural setting.

4.4 Landscaping requirements

What does Policy **SFGI3** set out to do?

To ensure development respects and enhances the Green Infrastructure network—its green spaces and green corridors—and the contribution this makes to the character of the town, its sustainability and biodiversity, and the general well-being of its residents.

Details:

Shaftesbury's distinctiveness comes from its place in the landscape and its green spaces and corridors, trees and hedgerows. New development must integrate with the existing green infrastructure network across and beyond the town. For example, the original masterplan for the eastern development included proposals for an avenue of trees on each side of the main road to create a 'boulevard', and as a principle this tree-planting strategy should be applied to all the main route corridors into the town.

The map on the following page shows the tree canopy of the town as a starting point in helping identify existing green/wildlife corridors through the town. Whilst work has been undertaken by the Dorset Local Nature Partnership to identify existing and potential ecological networks across Dorset (https://dorsetlnp.org.uk/dorsets-ecological-networks/), this does not appear to identify many corridors within the town, and more work on this is proposed as a project in this Plan. Whilst there are fewer opportunities for greening the town centre, even here (for example) more trees could be planted in our car parks. The planting of fruit trees is particularly encouraged (as this forms part of the Shaftesbury Tree Plan and Orchard Town initiative).

Green infrastructure is vital to health and well-being. At the same time, it is a crucial element of adapting to climate change and protecting and improving biodiversity. It provides wildlife habitat, routes for walking and cycling, space for food growing, enhanced regulation of the climate at a local scale, and contributes to flood water retention and reduced surface water runoff.

It is also important to ensure that landscape schemes are of a suitably high quality and delivered in a timely fashion and in accordance with the approved plans and specifications.. The Town Council will work with Dorset Council to help ensure that this is suitably monitored and enforcement action taken where necessary.

POLICY SFGI3

Outside of the town centre, comprehensive landscape proposals should provide buildings with an attractive, verdant setting, having regard to the character of the area, views into and out of the area and potential to connect with other green/wildlife spaces and corridors.

Existing mature trees, native hedgerows, habitats associated with ponds and watercourses and green/wildlife corridors should be retained and included within a landscaping scheme for all new developments, to avoid harm to biodiversity.

Tree planting along the main route corridors into the town should be provided where feasible.

The design of green spaces within a development must:

- **Contribute to the character of the town.**
- **Mitigate climate change, contribute to the achievement of net-zero carbon emissions, and provide opportunities for sustainable drainage.**
- **Protect and enhance biodiversity.**

In addition, where practical, these spaces should:

- **Enhance tree cover.**
- **Provide new habitats to enhance the town's ecological network, connecting to existing wildlife corridors where feasible.**
- **Enable local food production.**
- **Provide educational opportunities.**
- **Provide opportunities for play and recreation including walking and cycling.**

Planting schemes should use local species appropriate to the site's size and location, taking into account resilience to climate change (a list of tree species that are likely to be appropriate is provided in Appendix J).

Measures should be taken to ensure future maintenance of any landscaping scheme and green spaces. This could be through the use of conditions or a legally binding agreement that takes account of possible changes in design, planting or maintenance routines, in line with the need to promote nature recovery and mitigate climate change.



Quick Read

What does this policy mean and why is it important?

Planting and open spaces as part of any new housing or other development are important. It should be considered from the outset and done right.

It's important to retain features like ponds, trees and hedgerows that are valuable for local wildlife and mitigate climate change. Suitable arrangements must be put in place so that it's clear who is responsible for maintenance.

Extract from Friends of Earth Tree Canopy Map overlay with aerial photograph

https://friendsoftheearth.uk/nature/trees-map-where-could-we-create-woodland-england

This provides a starting point in helping identify green/wildlife corridors through the town alongside the work undertaken by Dorset Local Nature Partnership (https://dorsetlnp.org.uk/dorsets-ecological-networks/)"



4.5 Dark skies and lighting proposals

What does Policy **SFGI4** set out to do?

To protect our dark skies, particularly considering the adjoining Cranborne Chase National Landscape (CCNL) and its International Dark Skies Reserve status.

Details:

One of Cranborne Chase's special qualities is that it does not suffer greatly from light pollution, the glow you get from street lights which means you cannot see the stars in many towns. Cranborne Chase is one of the best places in southern England for viewing the Milky Way and you can often see it with the naked eye.

If we work to keep our night skies dark, then Shaftesbury's economy could benefit from astro- tourism. Stargazing visitors have helped boost the tourism economy of Exmoor, which is also very dark.

Dark skies are also better for animals and bird life, too. Wildlife can become confused, stressed and suffer disrupted sleep patterns when they mistake bright artificial lighting for the sun.



Dark Skies

POLICY SFGI4

Development should be designed to conserve and enhance the quality of the dark night skies and prevent glare affecting the Cranborne Chase National Landscape (CCNL). It should also ensure any lighting arising from the development minimises impacts on biodiversity. In particular:

- External lighting should be avoided unless required for security or safety reasons.
- Where lighting is considered necessary, its design should minimise its impact, both on the amenity of the occupants of neighbouring properties, and in terms of light spillage and glare.
- Light sources should be fully shielded and pointed downwards, so that light is not emitted above the horizontal.
- Movement sensitive and timed PIR lights, down- lighters or 'wall washers' are examples of lighting schemes that generally have less adverse impact whilst providing appropriate illumination.
- Any lighting scheme within or visible from the CCNL should meet or exceed the level of protection appropriate to Environmental Zone 1 (as defined by the Institution of Lighting Professionals), with the addition that external LED lighting should not exceed a correlated colour temperature (CCT) of 2,700K.



Astronomy Workshop

Quick Read

What does this policy mean and why is it important?

The Cranborne Chase National Landscape, an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) begins just one mile east of Shaftesbury Town Hall.

Maintaining dark skies is not about turning lights out; it's all about, 'the right light, in the right place, at the right time'.



5. Design & Heritage

5.1 Design and Heritage: Key messages and aims

Context—A brief history of the town

Thomas Hardy was fascinated by Shaftesbury and, 'its three mints, its magnificent apsidal abbey, the chief glory of South Wessex, its twelve churches, its shrines, chantries, hospitals, its gabled freestone mansions' set within a 'limitless landscape'.

Almost a century after his death, Hardy would recognise a lot of the town he admired. To understand the present-day shape, design and style of Shaftesbury streets, open space and buildings, a quick reminder of the town's long history might be useful.

The history of Shaftesbury owes everything to its location on a promontory and can clearly be seen from (and enjoys views out towards) Glastonbury Tor and Hambledon Hill as well as other Neolithic and Iron Age sites. Alone amongst them, and as a rarity in England, it has persisted as a town in part thanks to King Alfred.



Abbey Gardens Statue of King Alfred

Alfred founded a Benedictine nunnery around 880 AD. A hundred years later, Shaftesbury had become a major religious destination with pilgrims coming to visit the remains of King Edward the Martyr, which were kept at the Abbey. This influx of visitors saw the Saxon town, that was centred on Bimport, extend in the 10th and 11th centuries to an area to the east of the Abbey.

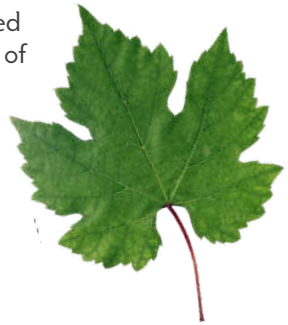


At this point Shaftesbury was so prosperous it had its own money mints and twelve parish churches.

The street pattern of an irregular grid of streets and lanes that we walk or drive around today was literally set in stone during the medieval period. By the 13th and 14th centuries, Shaftesbury's location on the Great West Road further added to its popularity and its influx of visitors.

The town had the largest population in Dorset—but this success was due almost entirely to the size and prestige of the Abbey.

When the Abbey was destroyed during Henry VIII's Dissolution of the Monasteries, Shaftesbury's importance declined.



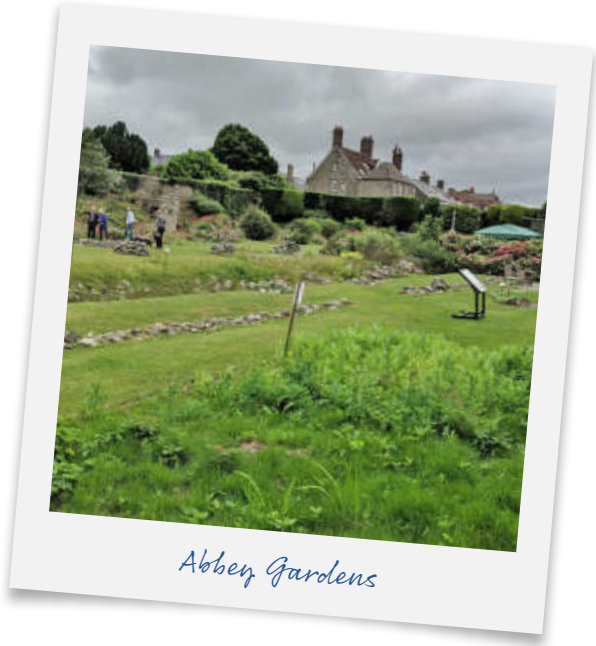
Park Walk in Shaftesbury (to the south of the Shaftesbury Abbey ruins) is a locally listed park. This was originally open pasture for the Abbey.

It is notable for both the terrace and mature sycamore tree line, with exceptional views over the Blackmore Vale countryside and St James Park, with the winding path linking upper and lower town. The Jubilee steps were restored in 1937 to celebrate the 1935 Silver Jubilee.

Lord Stalbridge owned Shaftesbury and in 1918 he decided to sell his Dorset estates. Our town was bought by three prominent Shaftesbury residents in 1919. This is when the famous 'Sale of Shaftesbury' happened.

They sold over 300 individual buildings to the tenants and shopkeepers who occupied them, giving ordinary citizens control over their homes, their businesses and their futures. Importantly, these men donated Castle Hill to the town. We enjoy those special green spaces today because of their legacy and Robert Dyneley's gift.

The most recent notable event was the 1973 filming of a Hovis (bread) advert by the world-renowned film director Ridley Scott. It showed a boy in working Victorian dress pushing his bicycle up the steep cobbles of Gold Hill with the sweep of the green sandstone buttresses of the old Abbey on the right and the tiled and thatched roofs of the cottages on the hill to the left, all framed by the breath-



Abbey Gardens

taking views of the valleys and downs beyond. A recent national press report described the Hovis advert as 'the most noteworthy of all time'.

Today, the fame of Gold Hill and Shaftesbury's outstanding views continue to attract a considerable number of visitors.

Together with a vibrant, independent High Street and many successful local businesses, Shaftesbury continues to thrive.

Our Neighbourhood Plan aims to address some of the challenges of life in an expanding market town without sacrificing the special qualities of a town that has evolved well over millennia.



Park Walk and the Abbery Wall

Quick Read

What does this policy mean and why is it important?

History has shaped the appearance of our town.

The neighbourhood plan team wants to make sure that planners understand how each different area of Shaftesbury looks and feels. That will help them make informed decisions when they decide whether to give planning permission to a new development.

That development could be a single house, a business conversion or a larger housing estate, but the style and shape of the building must be appropriate for Shaftesbury and it must not look odd in its setting.

Development has to fit in.

Gold Hill





Hovis Bike on Gold Hill

5.1 Design and Heritage: Key messages and aims *(continued)*

Key feedback from consultation

Of 152 respondents to our Neighbourhood Plan survey in January and February 2019, 142 agreed that: We need to set clear design guidelines to preserve and enhance the different character areas throughout our town

- 98% of respondents agreed that they should include attractive open spaces and trees.
- 95% of respondents agreed that all new developments should be built using high quality materials in keeping with the historical context of the town.
- 92% of respondents agreed that the design of signage, benches, bins etc. should be consistent.
- 92% of respondents agreed that new developments should be accessible to people of all ages and abilities.
- 89% of respondents agreed that we should accommodate parking requirements.
- 88% of respondents agreed that new development should employ renewable and low carbon technology.

Key messages

The design of Shaftesbury's homes, shops, public buildings and landmarks give our town its character.

The combination of the height of buildings, the shape of roofs, the style of windows, the use of certain materials and even the road surfaces all play a part in creating our distinctive place to live or work.

This section of the Shaftesbury Neighbourhood Plan identifies the design elements in our buildings and the spaces around them that make them special enough to save and conserve. We also set out design guidelines that we would like house-builders to meet when planning future housing developments in our town. We want Shaftesbury to remain special and distinguished.

Up until 2021, Shaftesbury was the only town in North Dorset that did not have its own adopted design guidance. The 2004 Eastern Development Masterplan, including a design statement, was agreed. However, this document has not been followed and the plan is very different to the reality.

The Neighbourhood Plan seeks to give clear guidance to the Planning Department of Dorset Council when they receive a planning application in Shaftesbury.

Our intention is to ensure that anyone reading the Neighbourhood Plan understands what residents consider is important to conserve, so that new ideas and development works in harmony with our historical Town Centre and our important conservation areas.

A French architect once said, 'Architecture is a very dangerous job; if a writer makes a bad book, people don't read it. But if you make bad architecture, you impose ugliness on a place for 100 years'.

This plan offers clear and concise guidance, including reference nationally accepted standards, to ensure undesirable architectural design and materials do not blight our beautiful town.





Traditional Cottages



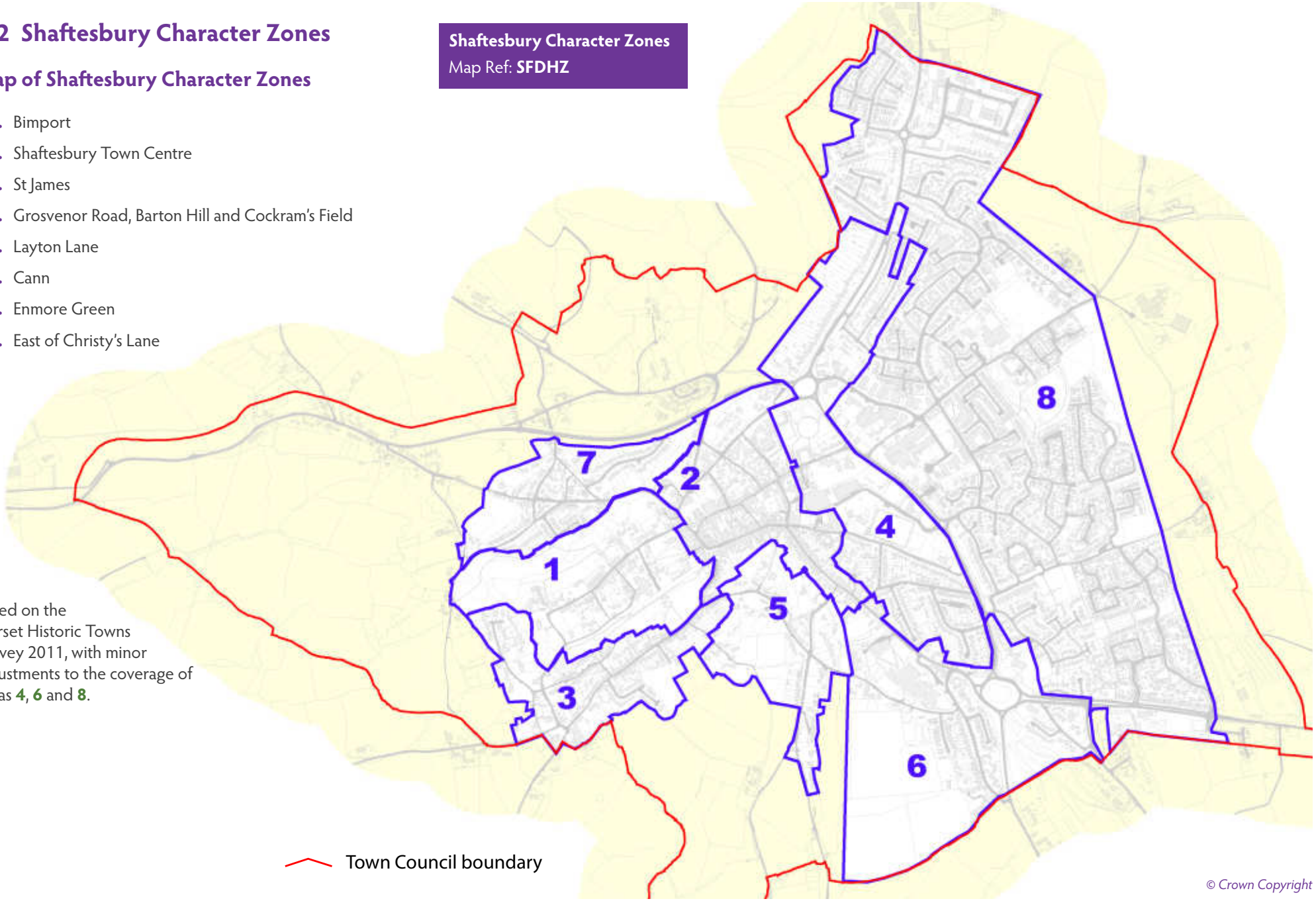
Traditional Cottages

5.2 Shaftesbury Character Zones

Map of Shaftesbury Character Zones

1. Bimport
2. Shaftesbury Town Centre
3. St James
4. Grosvenor Road, Barton Hill and Cockram's Field
5. Layton Lane
6. Cann
7. Enmore Green
8. East of Christy's Lane

Shaftesbury Character Zones
Map Ref: **SFDHZ**



Based on the Dorset Historic Towns Survey 2011, with minor adjustments to the coverage of areas **4**, **6** and **8**.

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5.2 Shaftesbury Character Zones *(continued)*

1. Bimport

Description

Bimport contains the jewels of Shaftesbury's hilltop heritage—the ruins of England's first dedicated nunnery, the beauty of Pine Walk, the 15th century Edwardstowe, Shaftesbury's oldest house, and the incomparable views south and west from Park Walk and north from Castle Green.

This character area also includes Castle Hill at the western end of the spur and the common beneath it to the north, together with St James Park to the south, the distinctive tower of Trinity Church, the Westminster Memorial Hospital and Shaftesbury's most famous landmark, the stunning cobbled Gold Hill.

This area includes the site of Shaftesbury's first known Saxon burgh, or settlement. The plots still form the shape of the hilltop's residential layout, with all the charm of ancient lanes.

Key characteristics

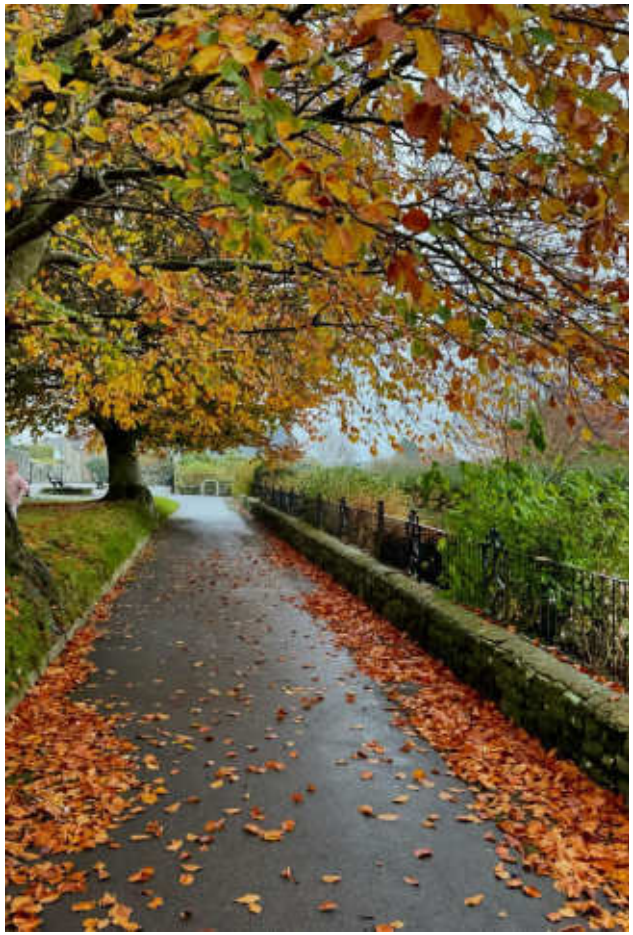
- Distinctive hilltop location on green sandstone spur. The location of properties and public space located on high points in the landscape afford panoramic views of the extensive low- lying countryside of the Blackmore Vale.
- A historic area representing the initial settlement of the town. Includes former Saxon burgh and late Saxon and Medieval abbey and precinct. The architectural detailing on the surviving historic buildings is of high quality. The irregular street pattern and historic buildings provide intrigue and diversity.
- Relatively open settlement pattern including large building plots.
- Holy Trinity Church tower—a town landmark.
- Park Walk and The Park with wooded slopes provide a sense of openness and draw the rural landscape into the townscape.
- 12th century 'castle' earthworks at Castle Hill surrounded by public open space.
- Large gardens and mature trees strongly contribute to the leafy character of this area—the ancient yew tree is of pre- Christian time.
- St John's churchyard.
- Stone boundary walls.

Issues to be addressed

- Large areas of tarmacadam and a lack of consistency and quality of street furniture reduces the quality of the area of open space on Park Walk.
- Modern street lights are not in keeping with historical aspect of this area.
- Poor quality materials, hard surfaces and edging. Sunken and sinking areas of tarmacadam on Park Walk.
- In places the road edge is poorly defined.







2. Shaftesbury Town Centre

Description

One of England's highest market towns, Shaftesbury's Town Centre boasts an array of architecture through the ages, with 124 listed buildings, all set in the distinctive horseshoe layout of the original Medieval setting.

At the centre of the town is The Commons, the top of the horseshoe. The buildings in The Commons are mainly Georgian. It turns into the High Street as it skirts the top of Gold Hill going east. Here there is a mix of mainly Victorian architecture, apart from St Peter's, the only remaining example of Shaftesbury's twelve Medieval churches.

When you look back along the High Street to the west you see the highly distinctive roof tops of King Alfred's Kitchen silhouetted against the sunset. This is an iconic view.

The top of The Commons going east becomes Bell Street, where the individual shops soon merge into residential cottages of 17th and 18th century origins.

The horseshoe becomes a circular route at its eastern end as Angel Lane joins the High Street and Bell Street. All roads meet outside the highly distinctive building that has housed Shaftesbury's Post Office for over 70 years.

Key characteristics

- Historic commercial centre of Shaftesbury, possibly from late Saxon period onwards. Tightly developed street frontage is an important characteristic of this historic market town environment.
- Historic street grid of near parallel roads, with lanes linking them. The labyrinth of passageways, open public spaces and connections to larger open spaces provide permeability and interest through the area.
- Medieval and post-Medieval market areas at the High Street and The Commons. The marketplace is a focal area of the High Street.
- Land plots from the High Street to the south east have a unique characteristic, with gardens featuring burgage plots. A burgage was a town rental property owned by a King or a Lord, usually and distinctly consisting of a house on a long and narrow plot of land.
- Large number of surviving historic buildings and intact street frontages. The Post Office is an example of a high- quality historic building and a reminder of the importance of Shaftesbury on the A30 Great West Road. This is the old post route however one of the best post war buildings in the town; it was built in the 1940s.
- Range of houses and cottages in the local style with varied building lines along some streets and lanes.
- Cottages and houses of 17th to 19th century in the local style are located along Gold Hill and Bell Street and contribute to the historic character of the townscape.







5.2 Shaftesbury Character Zones *(continued)*

- Georgian and Victorian buildings are widespread, but particularly evident along the High Street.
- Quality signage and detailing on shop fronts contribute to the character of the area.

Issues to be addressed

- Twentieth century houses and commercial properties that lack local distinctiveness are scattered throughout the area.
- Traffic and on-street parking reduce the quality of the area.
- The car park behind Bell Street is a large area of open tarmacadam which contradicts the tight spacing of buildings and quality of the rest of the area. There is an opportunity to introduce trees within the car park to soften the landscape in this area and create other environmental benefits.
- Shop frontages with modern additions and materials such as plastic signage reduce the quality of the area.
- Mixture of stone, concrete block and tarmacadam. Therefore, an uncoordinated mixture of surfacing.
- Poor quality of hard surfaces and utility apparatus covers e.g. Swan's Yard.
- Modern street lights are not in keeping with historical aspect of this area.
- Problem of two-way flow of larger vehicles along the narrower sections of the High Street causing congestion and fumes.

















3. St James

Description

Arguably, St James Street defines Shaftesbury's best-preserved conservation area. It features 17th & 18th century cottages, many of them thatched. The cottages line each side of the narrow road.

To the west is St James Church and the narrow roads and lanes leading to the area known as Alcester, which looks west over the Blackmore Vale. The South side of St James Street offers wonderful views of the lower Shaftesbury slopes with the North Dorset downs behind them.

Running from halfway down Kingsman's Lane, towards open fields and the back of St James' last remaining pub, is the original Tudor wall of a former Elizabethan estate, the stones from which have been used to clad the four cottages that sit on the site. The Tudor coat of arms can still be seen to this day.

Key characteristics

- Distinctive position along the base of the southern side of the green sandstone spur.
- The linear route of the Medieval (or late Saxon) St James street sinuously follows the grain of the topography of the spur towards a triangular green and the church at its western end. The street is largely built up with small attached 18th and 19th century houses set directly on the street frontage. Occasionally the street frontage opens out into small courtyards or several houses set back from the street.
- High proportion of historic buildings, mainly 18th and 19th houses and cottages, built in the local style featuring cast iron casements. A small number of earlier houses dating from the 16th and 17th centuries are also present and there are relatively few modern houses.
- The consistency and quality in the scale of buildings and the use of local building materials provide a high-quality urban environment.
- The widespread use of local materials and a range of different building heights and slight variations in architectural details give coherence.
- The grassed and wooded slopes of the spur, together with the mature trees and gardens at the west end of the area, and the St James allotments, provide a significant green element to the character of the area. There are also small but significant green spaces in front of the church and at the Rolt Millennium Green.
- The underlying geology of the southern slopes below St James are formed of running green sandstone, which has always constrained development.
- A number of surviving stone boundary walls of 18th or 19th century date and cast-iron railings make a positive contribution to this area.

Issues to be addressed

- The inter-war and modern houses generally do not respect the earlier building lines. The small modern housing estates have a cul-de-sac arrangement running off the historic roads.
- St James is a rare English example of a 'suburb'. Its integrity has already been breached in a few places with culs-de- sac. It is very important to hold the development line to the south and west or the Continental feel of the high town and its 'underburg' will be lost.
- These houses are typical of their period and lack local distinctiveness.
- Loss of period windows in non-listed buildings erodes the character of the conservation area.



5.2 Shaftesbury Character Zones *(continued)*

4. Grosvenor Road, Barton Hill and Cockram's Field

Description

Originally the ancient manor of Barton belonged to Shaftesbury's medieval abbey, but the modern Barton Hill boasts few architectural landmarks, having been extensively redeveloped over the years.

Situated due east of the town centre the area extending to Christy's Lane provides many key facilities for the town, having one of the oldest, open air swimming pools in the country, and a large recreational space with skate boarding and exercise areas, as well as the town's bowling club and two large supermarkets.

The area continues up along Grosvenor Road, with the houses in that area of a similar style and material to those found in the southern part of the character area.

Key characteristics

- The large recreational areas provide significant green open spaces within this area.
- The mature trees in the grounds of Barton Hill House and Christy's Lane contribute to the leafy character of the area.
- The importance of the large mature trees along the northern edge of Grosvenor Road contributing to the local skyline
- Inter-war and early post-war houses that predominate this area are mainly a mixture of semi-detached and short terrace suburban house types, typical of their time.
- The houses and layout have a welcome coherence. Houses are built in Gillingham bricks, produced in Dorset.
- The avenue of beech trees along Christy's Lane were planted for the Queen Mothers 80th birthday.

Issues to be addressed

- Commercial buildings with a lack of local identity on large plots are surrounded by large open car parks with extensively tarmacadam surfaces.
- The supermarket closest to the centre of the town (Tesco) is a large modern building, with brick and artificial stone banding. The other supermarket (Lidl) on part of the former Cattle Market site is a large red brick 'shed' with a grey metal roof, typical of such supermarket models and having little design relationship to the area. Both are served by large areas of tarmacadam car parking, and not designed to make it easy for pedestrians to get about.
- The remaining part of the Cattle Market site is available to be redeveloped (and received planning permission for retirement apartments in 2024).
- The potential loss of trees along would impact on the streetscape and skyline. There is an opportunity to extend the tree line further along Christy's Lane.







5. Layton Lane

Description

Layton Lane itself is an extension of St James Street, running east from the bottom of Gold Hill, while the character area extends up Hawkesdene Lane to the east and down Frenchmill Lane to the south.

The layout is more open with a variety of architecture that spans Georgian, Victorian, 1920s and modern.

A defining feature of the Layton Lane area is its proximity to the lower Shaftesbury slopes, with open fields and farmland.





There is one scheduled monument—the ancient fishponds of Shaftesbury Abbey. All that remains is a sea of briars, a perfect wildlife habitat which can be viewed from Snakey Lane.

Key characteristics

- Trees and hedges form a significant component in the semi-rural, leafy character of this area.
- Well preserved ancient lanes and boundaries—the street frontage is defined by a mixture of stone walls and hedges.
- Housing density is low with dispersed historic cottages and bungalows and large houses set on generally large plots along the road. The majority of buildings are set well back from the frontage.
- Distinctive position below the historic town.
- There are a number of open spaces within the area and good views of countryside to south.

Issues to be addressed

- Large scale properties out of proportion with historic properties in the area. This should not be seen as a precedent and further intensification of a similar nature would not be appropriate.





5.2 Shaftesbury Character Zones *(continued)*

6. Cann

Description

Cann is a former medieval parish to the south-east of the main town, with 19 listed buildings, although Shaftesbury's main school and the Royal Chase Hotel are the most distinctive landmarks.

The Royal Chase roundabout dominates the area, with the character area extending out to include all the residential streets, lanes and farmsteads on the edge of town.

This area offers very mixed architecture, from modern infill to Victorian and Edwardian villas, old green sandstone houses, through to rural cottages, with beautiful views to the south, towards the Cranborne Chase National Landscape.

Key characteristics

- Formerly part of the medieval parish of Cann.
- The southern approach to the town along the A350 is wooded with no obvious development until Royal Chase roundabout.
- Along the Salisbury Road are several large villas and country houses, including the former parish church of St Rumbold's.
- Strong 'building line' and good example of early ribbon development along streets such as Lower Blandford Road.
- The Shaftesbury School and playing fields form an extensive part of the western side of this area.

Issues to be addressed

- Small Incremental changes to the post- war houses over time has reduced the overall character of those of the original design.
- The area is dominated by modern road developments, including the Royal Chase roundabout.
- Many of the larger historic houses have been significantly altered or have been obscured by 20th century suburban housing.
- The potential loss of the woodland approach to the town along the Lower Blandford Road would impact on the streetscape.









7. Enmore Green

Description

Enmore Green is situated on the lower Shaftesbury slopes immediately north of Castle Hill, with stunning views towards Motcombe and Gillingham and west towards the ancient Duncliffe Woods.

A charming jumble of ancient lanes, Enmore Green is famous locally for supplying Shaftesbury with its water, characterised by a procession called The Byzant Ceremony. The townsfolk would process down the very steep Tout Hill to meet the Enmore Green residents who would supply them with water from their individual wells.

From 17th century thatched cottages to small Victorian terraces, Enmore Green has its own very distinct charm.

Key characteristics

- Post-Medieval rural settlement site enclosed from former common. The settlement pattern is largely informal with low density, detached, rural cottages and short terraces mainly set back from the street, and a small triangular green in the centre of the village.
- Historically the site of Shaftesbury's town water supply.
- The17th to 19th century historic cottages and houses in the village centre make a major contribution to the local character.
- The consistency and quality in the scale of buildings and the use of local building material provides a high-quality urban environment.
- Slight variations in architectural details provide diversity and interest to the streetscape.
- The area has a semi-rural character as a result of its location as a backdrop to the wooded green slopes of the green sandstone plateau to the south, mature trees and hedges and network of ancient lanes.
- Views over the surrounding countryside.

Issues to be addressed

- Modern 20th century housing estates and infill development lack local distinctiveness and quality materials.
- Traffic and on-street parking on minor roads and rural lanes.
- Modern development is large in scale to small historic properties.
- Modern street lights are not in keeping with historical aspect of this area.
- The underlying geology of the southern slopes below St James are formed of running green sandstone which has always constrained development.







5.2 Shaftesbury Character Zones *(continued)*

8. East of Christy's Lane

Description

This part of Shaftesbury comprises modern, residential estates built over the last 70 years and is still the main focus for new development.

Together with the industrial estates of Wincombe and Longmead, this area provides the bulk of Shaftesbury's residential and commercial accommodation and is bordered to the east by rural fields and the border with Wiltshire.

Key characteristics

- Some modern residential developments show reference to the local vernacular and use high quality materials, making a positive contribution to the area.
- Some 19th century cottages at Little Down, together with a small amount of late Victorian and inter-war suburban housing, represent earlier development in this area.
- Areas of open green space, the cemetery, allotments and linear woodland strips provide relief to the built settlement.

Issues to be addressed

- Many of the 21st century housing estates are comparatively high-density and developed to a standard design, providing little or no reference to the local character or vernacular.
- Poor quality detailing and management of residential developments, including low quality surfaces and edges, poor design of external spaces and limited pedestrian network.
- The loss of front gardens to hard surface has a negative impact on the streetscape.
- Inappropriate boundary treatments, particularly on front lawns of residential developments, restrict the appearance of open green spaces which surround key roads through the area.
- Most of the open space is typical featureless grassed areas within the modern estates—green infrastructure corridors have not been created or enhanced.
- Community facilities are sparsely spread through the residential estates and as a result there is no central community hub within this area.
- Modern industrial and commercial estates contain typical steel-framed units and warehouses.











5.3 Shaftesbury Conservation Area

Map of the Conservation Area

The Conservation Area is shaded in **light orange**.

Local Planning Authorities have the authority to designate as Conservation Areas, 'areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance'.

This designation gives control over the demolition of buildings, trees and other alterations.

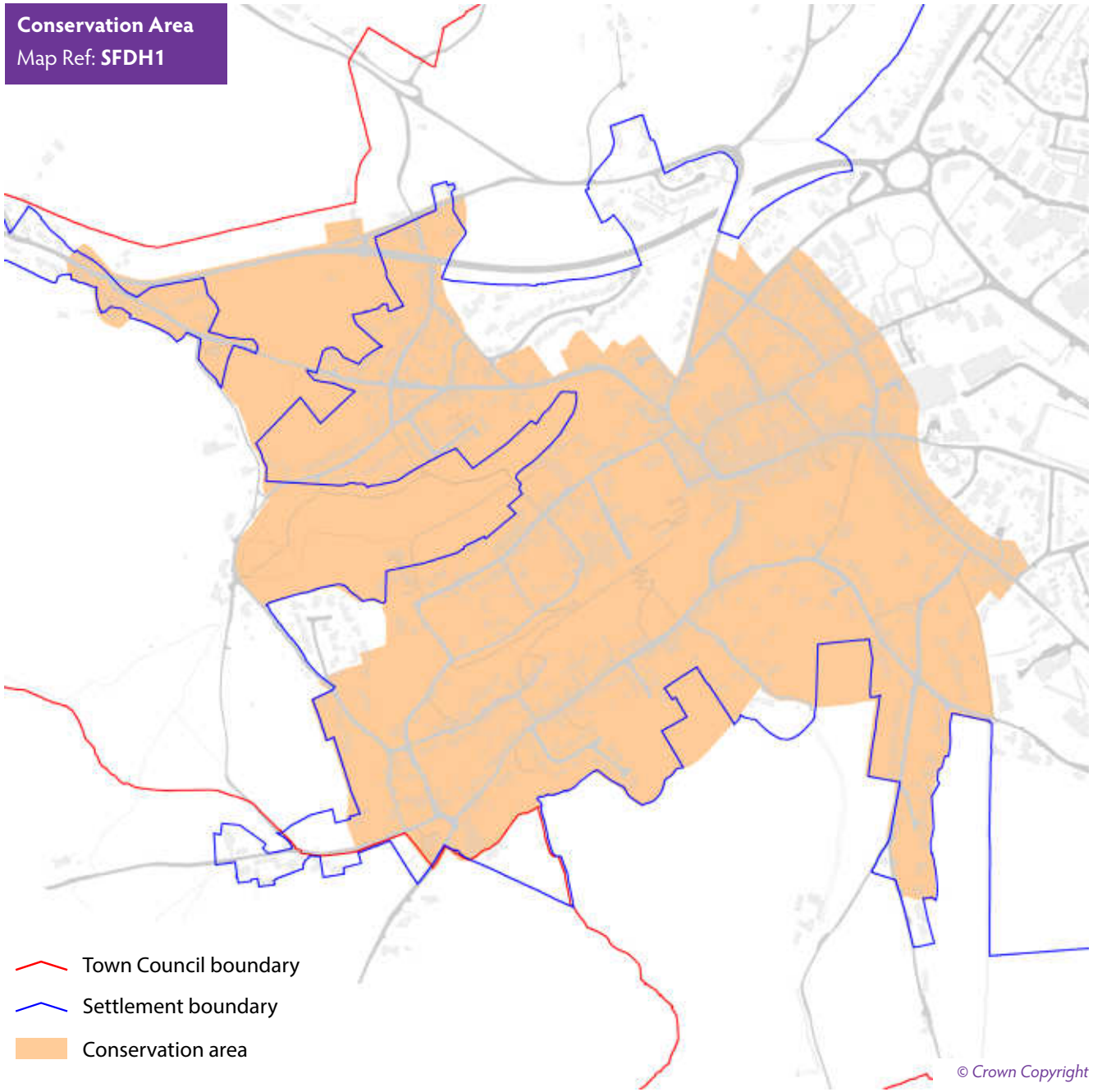
Conservation Areas have additional protection under the law from the normal planning controls.

The Shaftesbury Conservation Area is located within the Neighbourhood Plan area.

Whilst the Historic Towns Survey provides a wealth of useful information, a Conservation Area appraisal has not yet been produced.

Development, including both new buildings and alterations to existing buildings, must not negatively impact on:

- a listed building or its setting;
- the conservation area or its setting;
- non-designated heritage assets including locally listed buildings and structures and their settings;.
- a Scheduled Monument and its associated setting.



5.4 Policies SFDH1 to SFDH7

What do Policies SFDH1 to SFDH7 set out to do?

To preserve and enhance the character and design of our historic town and the different character areas.

To encourage high quality design that ensures development complements and contributes positively to Shaftesbury's character and engenders a sense of civic pride and social inclusion.

To make sure the natural environment is properly considered in the design process.

Respecting Local Character in Designs

The character of, and the issues associated with, each area of the town are described in the sections above, with more detail provided in the Historic Towns Survey and 2019 Shaftesbury Design Guidelines. By taking into account what aspects help underpin an area's character, and opportunities to remove or reduce those elements that weaken the character, we can be sure that Shaftesbury and its constituent parts will have a strong and positive identity.



Bell Street

Rooflines



POLICY SFDH1

Development in a Character Zone (as shown on Map SFDHZ) will respect and respond to the positive aspects of character associated with the specific area of Shaftesbury where the development is planned and not repeat (and where possible reduce) the negative issues as set out in section 5.2.

Incorporating sustainability in designs

Since the Neighbourhood Plan was first made, the Government has updated its Building Regulations. As of June 2022 any new homes that have been approved have had to be built to a higher standard to produce 30% less carbon dioxide than previous (2013) standards. Further changes to Building Regulations are proposed, through the Future Homes and Buildings Standards, increasing this reduction to 75–80% by 2025 and ensuring all new homes will be 'zero-carbon ready'. The consultation on how this achieved, launched in December 2023, is considering matters such as whether and under what circumstances solar panels should be required—balancing the costs and benefits and taking into account that, in due course, all electricity supplied by the National Grid will be zero carbon. So, whilst it is not appropriate for this Neighbourhood Plan to set different standards, we continue to encourage developers to challenge themselves to deliver zero carbon designs sooner if at all possible.

The Home Quality Mark is an industry standard that looks in detail at the design of new homes, including aspects such as air circulation, insulation and ventilation, energy and water resources, responsible sourcing of materials (including their wider environmental impacts and their durability), practical living arrangements (such as drying space and accessible and adaptable designs), quality assurance and aftercare.

Building for a Healthy Life is another industry-recognised standard for well-designed homes and neighbourhoods. To be eligible for accreditation under this scheme, developments have to achieve nine of the twelve design requirements, which cover aspects such as:

- A locally inspired or otherwise distinctive character based either on contemporary architecture or local traditions in building materials and landscaping.
- Good connections (footways and paths) to the surrounding area.
- Welcoming, well managed and attractive streets and spaces, with low traffic speeds.
- Easy to find your way around.
- Uses the existing topography, landscape features (including water courses), wildlife habitats, existing buildings, site orientation and microclimates.
- Includes adequate external storage space for bins and recycling as well as vehicles and cycles.
- Personal space (such as private garden areas) are protected and respected.

A number of these principles have been incorporated into the following Neighbourhood Plan policies, so that in meeting these standards, developers may well be able to promote the quality of their developments during sales and marketing activity.

Dorset Council now require a sustainability statement and checklist to accompany planning applications involving new buildings. Our policy has been updated to reflect the information this covers in relation to those elements that will impact most on the appearance of the building and its on-going affordability. New dwellings are encouraged to exceed the target emission rates of the current Building Regulations in place at that time, and to achieve Building for Life accreditation and a Home Quality Mark rating to demonstrate their sustainability credentials. BREEAM assessments are encouraged to demonstrate sustainability for non-residential development.

POLICY SFDH2

Development should be sustainable, safe, inclusive, and accessible in design. The following measures should be incorporated into new buildings and extensions where practicable to do so and in keeping with local character:

- **air or ground source heating;**
- **solar panels on southerly-facing roofs in a manner in keeping with the colour and symmetry of the roof;**
- **collection of surface water to reuse, either through a water butt or rainwater harvesting system;**
- **shading to avoid overheating;**
- **features to support wildlife such as the incorporation of swift bricks, bird, bat and bee boxes.**

The above features should be clearly annotated on the plans or justification for their omission provided.

The scale, positioning and orientation of buildings

The height and positioning of new buildings can make a real difference to how a place feels to the person on the street. Important buildings or structures with cultural or historic importance should be integrated into the visual appearance of the town to reinforce a strong 'sense of place' or Shaftesbury's identity. Whilst new or replacement buildings may be taller than typical for that area (to make good use of the building land available), it is important that they don't overshadow or block views of local landmark buildings that help define the area.

Poorly defined corners, high walls and narrow alleyways can make pedestrian routes and links difficult to find, dank and miserable. There should be regular breaks in the built-up areas to enable views and connections to public rights of way.



New Build at Nircus Walk

5.4 Policies SFDH1 to SFDH7 *(continued)*

Sometimes the character of the area is very much defined by a strong pattern of regular buildings—particularly some of the Victorian, Edwardian and early 20th century suburbs. Where this is the case, the way in which building layouts have been planned, either set back from the road or built against the pavement, should be respected. Development that deviates from this pattern can otherwise jar with, and diminish, that area's character.

In new developments, there will be more opportunity to focus on how the layout and orientation of buildings can maximise the potential benefits from solar energy and insulation and create pleasant outdoor spaces (both private gardens and public areas).

Entrances will benefit from being on north or east sides, with gardens to south or west sides, roofs designed for solar panels, and windows with suitable shades to make the most of sunlight without overheating.



Seating on Park Walk

There are also likely to be more opportunities to include taller buildings in these areas, to make more efficient use of land, and this is particularly important in places where there is good access to local facilities and jobs. However, bulky and unimaginative designs will not be supported.

Given Shaftesbury's hilltop location, the impact of wind on buildings and people also needs to be considered, in addition to the potential benefits in terms of orientation for sunlight and shade. In particular, the scale and orientation should avoid the creation of public areas that may act as wind tunnels. The resulting microclimates may also impact on the success or otherwise of any planting schemes.

POLICY SFDH3

The scale, positioning and orientation of buildings will:

- **Respect the scale of adjoining development.**
- **Allow for views of buildings that are important in the street scene (due to their function or landmark characteristics).**
- **Create a safe and attractive public realm (taking into consideration the legibility and surveillance of the main pedestrian routes.)**
- **Maximise the potential benefits from sunlight and shading to reduce the consumption of energy in heating and cooling new buildings, unless this would significantly harm local character.**
- **In new areas, seek to create visual interest within a more cohesive character, and consider including some taller buildings in locations where there is very good access to local facilities, provided that this would reinforce and add interest to the area's character and legibility.**



Public Street Art

The design of outdoor spaces

Although the way we design buildings impacts on how public spaces feel, there are many other factors that also need to be considered, which we touch on here. The design of these spaces should not, as a rule, be left to be conditioned, but should be an integral element of the initial design.

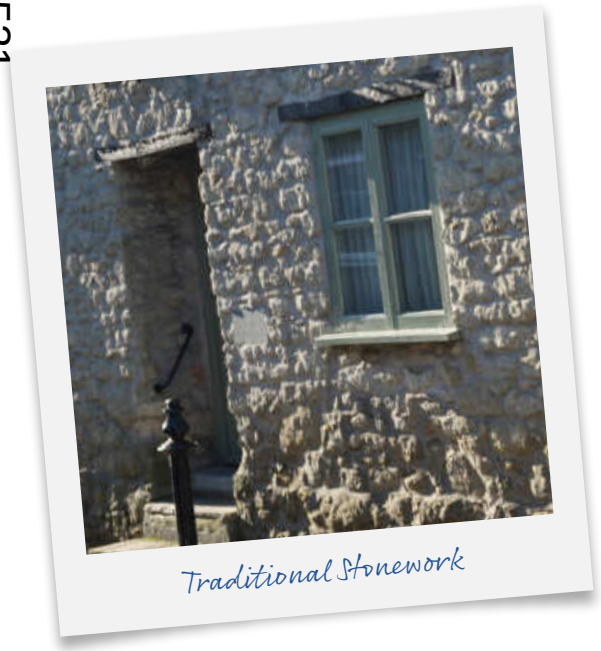
An important consideration is the need to avoid unintended clutter, whilst incorporating those features that make public areas safe, accessible and practical. For example, street lighting should be fixed to buildings to reduce the clutter of lamp posts. Litter bins should be provided adjacent to recreation spaces and at intervals so as to be convenient for use and waste collection. New developments should include Royal Post boxes and community noticeboards unless these exist nearby, to encourage social interaction. The Town Council should be involved in the design of street furniture to ensure that these reflect and reinforce the town's branding/image.

Surfacing materials are also important. Whilst in historic quarters traditional materials should be considered, the surfacing needs to be suitable for wheelchairs and pushchairs (and where allowed, bicycles and scooters).

Consideration should also be given to the practicality of further works (for example accessing underground utilities or installing new street furniture).

Boundary treatments facing the street and public areas should reflect the best examples in Shaftesbury—walls made of green sandstone, ironmongery (wrought iron railings are typical) or hedgerows in semi-rural areas and some estates (such as The Maltings), or a combination of these. Bin stores should be located to be convenient for the intended users, close to the refuse collection points yet screened from the street.

The inclusion of planting areas within the design should also be considered at an early stage, as some elements (such as trees) will require space, and there may be opportunities to link a series of green corridors together for wildlife and sustainable drainage benefits. Over recent years there has been increasing recognition of the multiple benefits of street trees. Formal avenues are not common in Shaftesbury, St Rumbold's Road being an exception, but there are clusters of trees along many of our roads and further tree planting is encouraged. The 80 beech trees planted along Christy's Lane to mark the Queen Mother's 80th birthday are intended to form an avenue of trees. Car parking areas should also be landscaped with planting.



Traditional Stonework

Standards of workmanship can have the greatest impact on the quality of public spaces. Therefore, it is vital that surface treatments and street furniture are installed with care and attention to detail.

For most applications involving a new building, a 10% increase in biodiversity is required by law, and even where development are exempt, the Council still expects applicants to achieve net gain and other biodiversity enhancements, in line with the relevant development plan policy. Wherever possible this biodiversity net gain should be achieved on-site, and if this is not possible then as close to the site as reasonably possible. How this biodiversity net gain is achieved may vary, but should be influenced by the local landscape character where possible. A new project has been added to help identify local opportunities for off-site biodiversity gains.

Street furniture, surface and boundary treatments should be of high quality, designed to endure and easy to maintain. Designs and materials should respect the area's historic character, where possible reinforcing this through a consistency of approach. The installation of new street furniture should be located so as to avoid clutter, with measures put in place to ensure that superfluous or redundant items of street furniture are removed.

Please also refer to **Policy SFCL3** in relation to improvements to the footpath and cycle path network

POLICY SFDH4

A range of open areas and enclosed public and private spaces, including areas designed to encourage play and social interaction within an attractive, uncluttered environment, should be incorporated into the design of new places. Street furniture, including waste bins and signage, should be designed to be in keeping with the street furniture designs found in Shaftesbury, and the Town Council can be approached to advise on how to help achieve this.

Pedestrian routes should be convenient, lit, safe and pleasant. They should be designed to cater for all users, including wheelchairs and mobility scooters.

Attention should be paid to the inclusion of sufficient planting, including street trees, to enhance biodiversity, provide opportunities for shade and promote clean air (particularly near trafficked areas). Outside of the town centre, soft landscaping should be of equal importance (to built elements) in the overall design, reinforcing local character and providing attractive green corridors for pedestrian/cycle links.

5.4 Policies SFDH1 to SFDH7 *(continued)*

Parking provision

While this plan places a lot of emphasis in improving opportunities to walk, cycling and for public transport to work, many residents and visitors will continue to rely on their cars for at least some of the trips they make. Electric cars and other low-energy fuels are likely to become more widespread, and with this the need for charging points (and in recognition of this, Building Regulations now require charging points to be provided for all new houses).

Communal parking areas can make more efficient use of land, but large expanses of parking are not attractive. More thought will also need to be given as to how users might access vehicle charging points in such areas.

Car charging points installed on buildings will need to be close to the parking spaces.

As cars have become larger, parking spaces and garages need to be wider. As a guide, parking spaces need to be 2.8m in width, unless there is a 0.4m clearance immediately to the side of the space, when the width can be reduced to 2.4m (with slightly greater clearance in the case of parking spaces for disabled people) and garages 3m (internally) and ideally 6m deep to allow for some storage, such as cycle/mobility scooter storage (which will also need to be provided), and motorcycle parking also considered.

POLICY SFDH5

Provision must be made for cars, motorcycles and bicycles in line with the adopted parking standards and taking account of Chapter 11 of LTN 1/20 guidance on cycle parking provision, where appropriate.

Communal car parking areas, if proposed, should not result in extensive areas of uninterrupted parking, and will need to be landscaped with planting including provision for mature trees. Similarly, continuous areas of uninterrupted car parking in front of buildings should be avoided.

Parking spaces must be of adequate size for the range of vehicle types and users (including disabled drivers). Car charging points should also be clearly shown on the plans, to demonstrate sufficient provision will be available for both occupants and visitors.



St James Street

Scale, design and detailing of buildings

Building styles and detailing should reflect the intended use and status of the building within the street scene. Not every building can or should be a local 'landmark', but they all contribute to the overall character of an area and how it is perceived. Design ideas can be taken from local buildings that clearly and positively contribute towards the enhancement of that area's character.

Consideration should be given to key aspects, such as elevations, symmetrical layout, detailing, use of materials and proportions. However, although they may be designed within local traditions or with sustainable building credentials in mind, a complete imitation (pastiche) or a broad eclectic mix (from all styles and periods) is not what is needed.

Architectural detailing in new development should typically display elements that balance with those of existing traditional buildings in terms of interest, scale, texture and form. For example, Shaftesbury has a strong tradition of 450mm wide cast iron casements set into timber frames, which generates window widths a little narrower than the national standard sizes.



Architectural Detailing

Windows in new buildings should complement the vertical pattern, dimensions and scale of windows reflected in local architectural detailing. The style and proportions for any new or replacement dwellings and extensions should respect local styles and traditions. Wrought iron work to window box cradles is typical.

Consideration should also be given to supporting local wildlife and other opportunities to increase the environmental credentials of the buildings. For example, roof overhangs with exposed rafters offer the possibility of roosts for birds. Openings to roof spaces where bats can roost can be designed into the plans. Rainwater harvesting can reduce water consumption. These features are included in **Policy SFDH2**.

All of these considerations need to work alongside improvements in energy efficiency and our ambition for a zero-carbon future. It is important that these are shown in the plans rather than assuming that they can be added at a later stage.

Traditional elements used in new and existing buildings include:

On formal buildings:

- Detailing around windows including lintels and sills
- Quoins and masonry detailing
- Door surrounds and porches
- Timber sash windows with small panes
- Symmetrical facades
- Windows and doors set back from brick face
- Stonework at entrances including classical pillars, pediments and porches
- Decorative iron railings
- Shallow pitched roofs and defined eaves
- Decorative mouldings

On informal buildings:

- Timber sash or casement windows with small panes
- Wide door frames with canopy porches
- Asymmetrical facades
- Windows set closer to the wall face
- Steeper pitched roofs, possibly with accommodation in the roof with modest dormer windows—casements 450mm wide, dormer roofs with minimal fascias detailed to avoid a heavy appearance.



Architectural Detailing

POLICY SFDH6

Development should be designed with attention to architectural quality and detailing, reflecting the level of detail typically found in traditional local buildings of similar form and function.

As a general principle, proposed building façades should be designed to indicate the importance of each storey through a combination of composition of building elements. There may be increased height for the most prominent floor and the level of architectural detailing used. The scale and design of entrances should be appropriate to the function—commercial properties will be grander in design than individual residential properties.

The design and access statement (if required) should clearly explain the design rationale and how local building traditions and sustainability benefits have influenced the design. Windows (including their positioning within their reveals), doors, eaves and ridgelines (including associated gutters and flashing), chimneys and flues should be clearly detailed in the submitted plans and elevations. Where alarm boxes, meter boxes, flues and other paraphernalia are intended to be installed, these should be shown clearly on the plans and care taken to ensure that these do not unduly detract from the building's appearance.



5.4 Policies SFDH1 to SFDH7 *(continued)*

Building materials

Materials proposed for use in new development and building extensions should match or be guided by those used in the existing buildings, taking into account how these vary subtly by street.

A typical materials palette in the Shaftesbury area includes:

- Green sandstone—'prepared' before use either as ashlar, squared rubble, coursed rubble or random rubble. Mortar joints need to be kept under 10mm using a white sand and lime to provide a satisfactory appearance.
- Bricks matching those made by the Motcombe brick works (which are of a warmer multi-colour than the stark orange appearance of Gillingham bricks).
- Timber painted windows.
- Slate or plain tiles, or pantiles for single storey buildings.

It goes without saying that alterations to a listed building must respect its character and preserve its features of special architectural or historic interest. Extensions may match or contrast, depending on the character of the building being extended, its relationship (in form and function) to the extension, and how important it is to be able to distinguish the original building from more recent changes. Even where developments may not be listed, the historic character of Victorian, Edwardian, or 1930s buildings have merits which should be respected. Care needs to be taken to ensure that the character of the original building is not needlessly harmed. For example, replacing slate roofs with modern concrete tiles tends to destroy the character and should be avoided. Low quality UPVC front doors with poor proportion and detailing should be avoided.

As mentioned earlier, Dorset Council now require a sustainability statement and checklist to accompany planning applications involving new buildings. This includes a requirement to consider whether existing materials on-site could be re-used, whether materials are locally produced and sourced, and their overall sustainability (for example with reference to the BRE Green Guide Specification).

Care should be taken in the preparation and use of the materials, as details such as the preparation of the stones and the mortar joints can dramatically alter a building's appearance. In particular, consideration should be given to the prevailing wind direction (particularly on exposed sites) and associated weathering, as well as how materials may react to strong sunlight (when orientated in a southerly direction).


Green Sandstone

Timber sash windows that perhaps have lasted over 100 years may eventually be beyond economic repair, but their replacement with (for example) low maintenance UPVC windows can still be well designed so that the building retains the character created by the original sash windows.

POLICY SFDH7

Development should use materials that respect the area's heritage, are high quality, are appropriate to the building and its setting, and are durable and, where possible, local or recycled. Attention should be paid to the sustainability and embodied carbon of the materials used, favouring options that will conserve energy and other resources taking into account the lifespan of the building, and minimise risks from the impacts of climate change, such as through appropriate insulation qualities to avoid overheating.

Quick Read

What does this policy mean and why is it important?

These policies encourage developers to adopt good design principles. They need to consider the impact on the environment and the overall appearance of the properties when they work on their plans.

What may appear to be minor aspects of a building project, such as gutters and flues, and meter boxes, are just as important as windows and chimneys in adding to the overall appearance and positive impact of the development. Developers should pay attention to these elements.

5.5 Archaeological assessment and preservation

What does Policy **SFDH8** set out to do?

To ensure that thorough archaeological assessments are undertaken for developments taking place on any sites of potential historic interest and, where possible, we preserve Shaftesbury's unique and fascinating past that lies hidden beneath our houses, gardens, shops and streets.

History is important for our sense of local community as well as tourism. Shaftesbury has more Scheduled Monuments (6) than any other town in North Dorset, including the ruined Abbey, a nationally significant Royal nunnery founded in Saxon times by Alfred the Great.

But much still remains to be discovered, including where buildings stood, and where underground tunnels may be. Every development proposal involving surface or subsurface works could put at risk archaeological assets, but, properly managed, this is an opportunity to find out more.

Of 154 respondents, 145 agreed that archaeological assessments should be made for developments on sites of potential historic interest, so that we can preserve and learn more about Shaftesbury's history.

Details:

Shaftesbury is rich in historic sites. They form part of the town's distinctiveness. Our six

Scheduled Monuments are protected in law. They are:

- Castle Hill mound
- Site of St John's Church (Bury Litton)
- Shaftesbury Abbey ruins including Park Walk
- Fishponds south of Layton Lane
- Gold Hill—the Abbey precinct wall
- Castle Green

With over 1,000 years of settlement there may be archaeological riches that we do not know about under our town. That's why we believe it is important to highlight the need to preserve elements of our, as yet undiscovered, past.

The Historic Towns Survey concludes that there is much still to learn about the origins of Shaftesbury and how it developed. We still don't know how the town was planned and we don't understand the full impact of the Abbey and its later dissolution. The following character areas as shown on **Map SFDH8** were considered to have high archaeological potential:

- Bimport
- Town Centre
- St James
- Barton Hill and Cockram's Field

The Abbey's SAVED project has been trying to get answers to some of the questions that remain. They have been using equipment that sends radar pulses down into the ground to see whether they can identify buildings, structures or street patterns below the surface. More information about this project can be found in the Shaftesbury Abbey Museum and online https://www.shaftesburyabbey.org.uk/saved-project.

The survival of pits, buildings, boundaries and other features, particularly in back plot areas behind town centre buildings, has the potential to reveal more about the economy, diet, craft industry and other aspects of life in the centre of historic Shaftesbury, according to the Historic Towns Survey.

There are some well-established procedures that developers must follow when their works uncover items of potential historic interest.

Not all planners and project managers may be aware of Shaftesbury's significant Saxon and Medieval heritage, including what is believed to be a network of underground tunnels. It is important that any finds are reported to Shaftesbury Abbey Museum who hold a lot of valuable information on the early origins of the town, and may wish to record relevant findings.

This policy makes sure that there is an understanding of the potential for archaeological finds.

POLICY SFDH8

Archaeological assessment shall be required for sites where historic remains may be present, prior to the determination of a planning application, if the development would disturb or prevent future access to such remains.

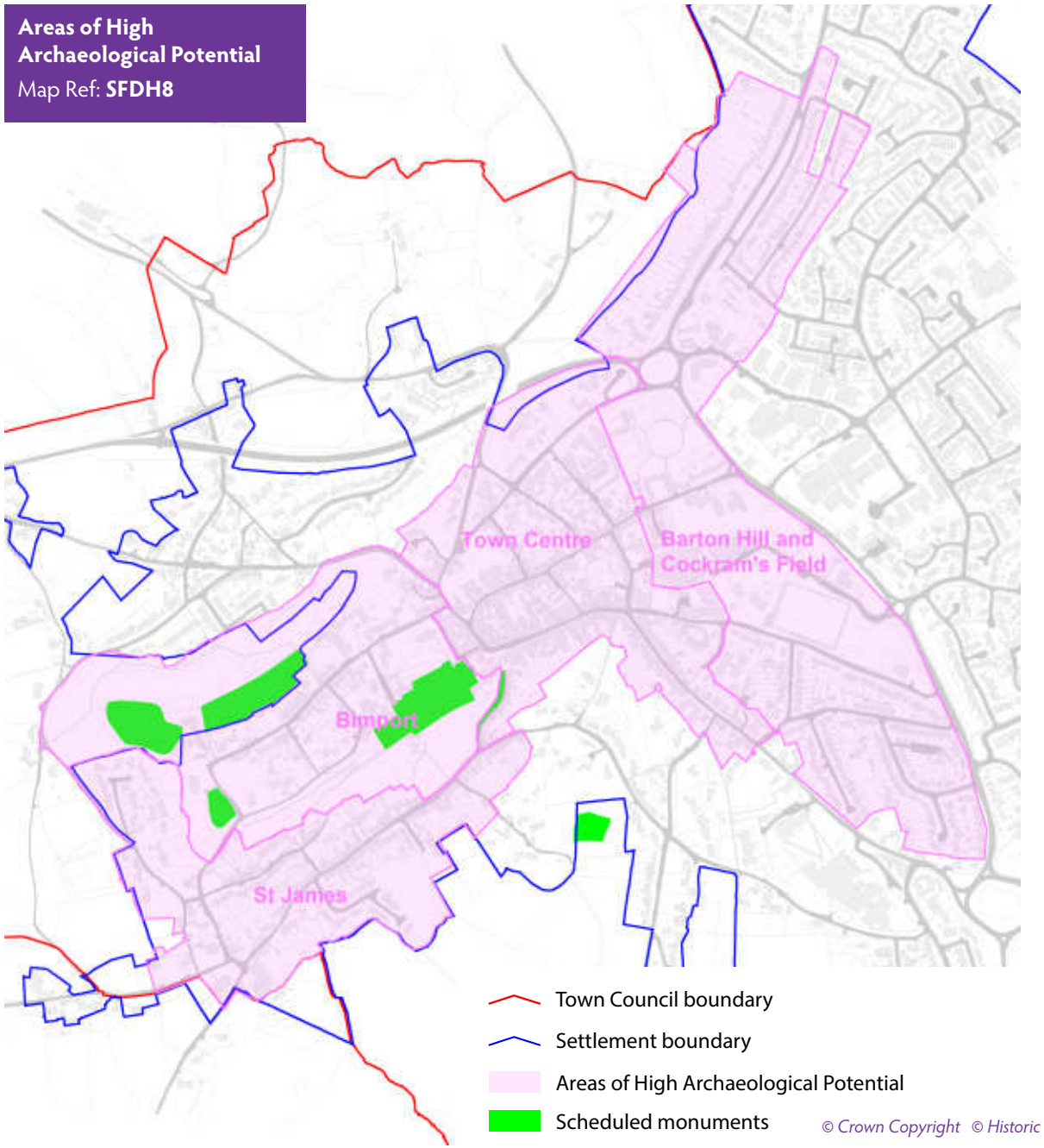
Appropriate procedures will be required to ensure preservation of the remains in place or the recording of the find prior to development. Where a site is identified as being of archaeological interest during the course of works, Dorset Council's Archaeological department and the Shaftesbury Abbey Museum must be notified, and further works that would impact on those finds paused to allow agreement to be reached with Dorset Council as to how these finds should be recorded. Proposals to sensitively manage archaeological finds for education (including as a visitor/ tourist attraction) will be supported.

5.5 Archaeological assessment and preservation *(continued)*

Map of Areas of High Archaeological Potential

The *Shaftesbury Historic Towns Survey* identifies the Town Centre and adjoining areas of Barton Hill and Cockrams, Bimport, and St James as having high archaeological potential. These are shown here, but with minor revisions to the boundaries included in the survey to incorporate the area of land to the east of Christys Lane and the western end of Grosvenor Road which was developed around the same period.

Areas of High Archaeological Potential
Map Ref: **SFDH8**



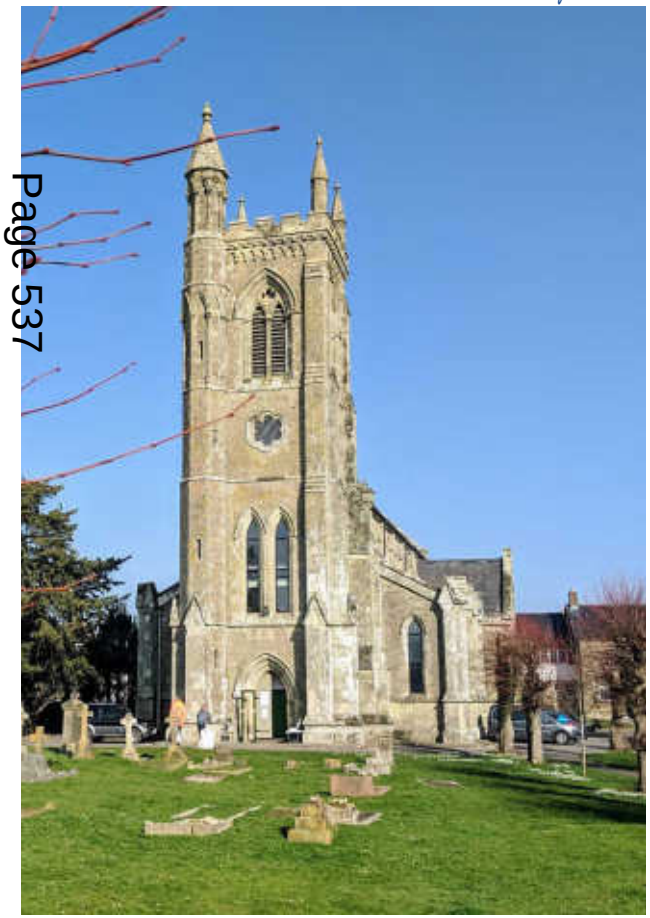
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5.6 Locally important historic buildings

What does Policy **SFDH9** set out to do?

To ensure locally important historic buildings are given proper consideration in how development is planned and how views are considered.

Trinity Tower



Details:

There are 275 listed buildings within the Neighbourhood Plan area.

A locally listed heritage asset is a building, structure or designed space that is deemed to be of local architectural or historic interest and is included on the local heritage list drawn up by Dorset Council. Whilst Dorset Council started the process of establishing a Dorset-wide local heritage list in early 2022, this work is still on-going and there is no such list as yet for Shaftesbury.

Local Listing is a local designation and completely separate from national listing (which is undertaken by Historic England on the government's behalf). Local listing does not affect the requirements for planning permission. However, by identifying locally important historic buildings, and where possible adding these to the Local Heritage List, it is more likely that any impacts on that building or its setting will be more carefully considered because of their local importance.

It is possible for communities preparing Neighbourhood Plans to identify buildings of local importance and these can be added to a 'local listing' held by Dorset Council in due course. This doesn't offer the powerful protection of being on the National Heritage List but does mean that their local importance will be considered in planning decisions.

Having reviewed the Historic Towns Survey, which identifies many 'key buildings', and working with Shaftesbury Civic Society, we identified 116 buildings that would merit local listing. The list can be found in **Appendix K** and these are shown on **Map SFDH9** on the following page. As part of the review, Barton Hill House has been added to this list.

POLICY SFDH9

Locally important historic buildings, identified in this Plan, should be conserved and enhanced.

Quick Read

What does this policy mean and why is it important?

Historic England keeps a database of structures that are special because of their architecture or historic nature.

Special permission is required to undertake work on listed buildings, because they are considered so important. Most of the listed buildings in Shaftesbury are grade 2 listed. Park Walk and the Abbey remains are grade 1, meaning that they are of exceptional interest.

It is also possible to include buildings of local importance on a 'local list' held by Dorset Council. This doesn't offer the powerful protection of a national listing but does mean that their historic importance is considered in planning decisions.

We have identified 116 buildings that would merit local listing.

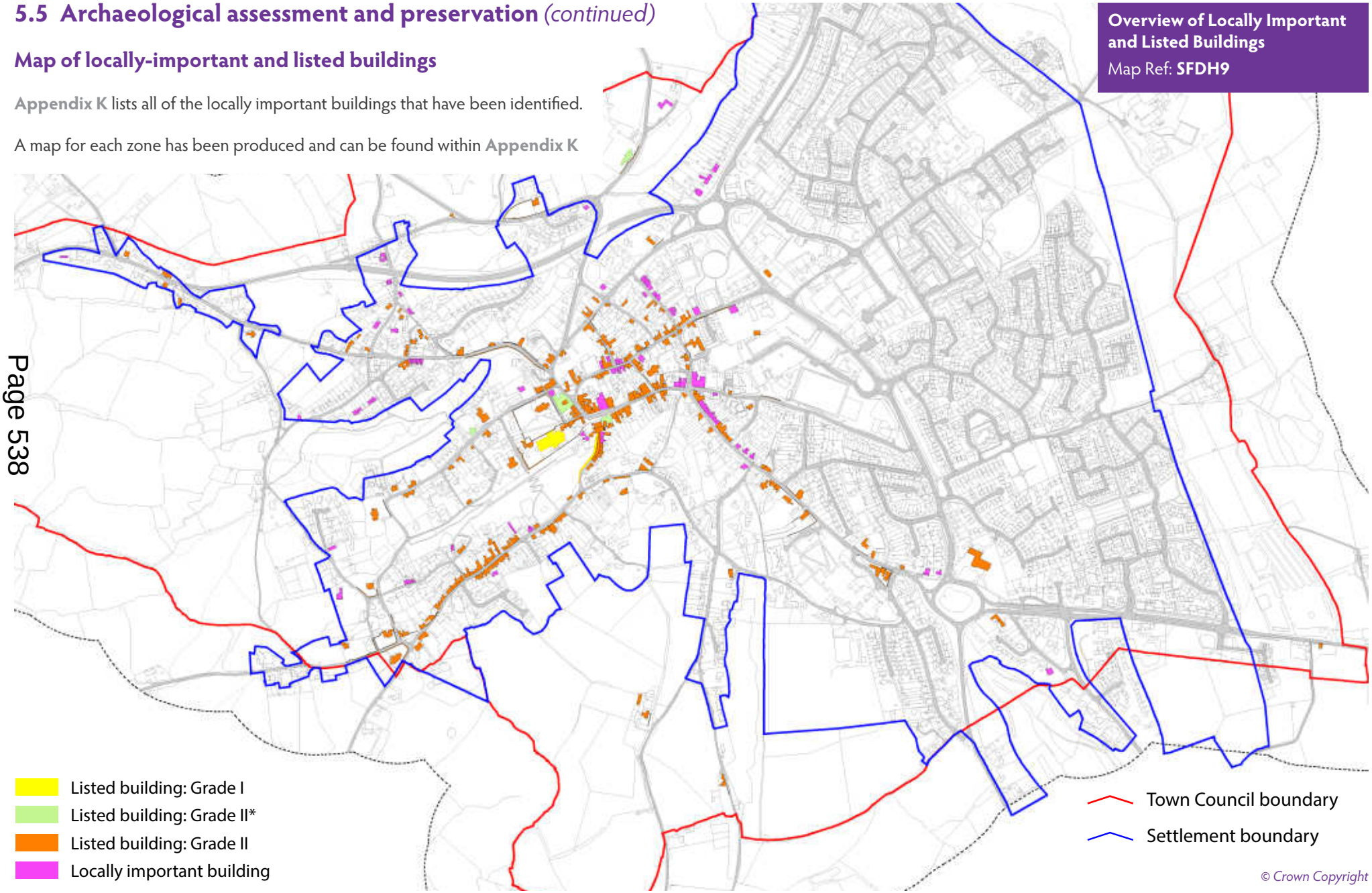
5.5 Archaeological assessment and preservation *(continued)*

Map of locally-important and listed buildings

Appendix K lists all of the locally important buildings that have been identified.

A map for each zone has been produced and can be found within **Appendix K**

Overview of Locally Important and Listed Buildings
Map Ref: **SFDH9**



6. Community, Leisure & Tourism



6.1 Community, Leisure and Tourism: Key messages and aims

Context

When we began preparing the first Neighbourhood Plan, we knew that there was a strong desire to improve community, leisure and tourism facilities in the town.

Our survey in June 2018 also revealed that local people were concerned about healthcare and education provision. We therefore spoke with the organisations that run the medical centre and schools. We are told that there is no immediate need to plan for a new school or surgery based on projected population growth. However, this is not to say that the service providers would turn down an opportunity for improved provision if this were to be offered in the future.

Our research at that time also showed that the community halls had plenty of availability for their current levels of usage, with 118 groups operating from 18 different venues and providing a multitude of social and leisure activities. Venues include Shaftesbury Arts Centre, which is used by more than 20 separate groups, The Royal British Legion Hall and Shaftesbury Youth Centre. See **Appendix I** for more details

These activities include adult and young people's education, health, sport and leisure, social well-being and musical activities, including Shaftesbury Silver Band and the Ukulele Group!

However, there is a clear demand for a community facility in the east of Shaftesbury. Plans for the development of a new community hub on land off Mampitts Lane were approved by Dorset Council in October 2024. Other projects in the pipeline include continuing improvements to the Lido, and improving youth facilities, MUGA.

We have compared the amount of outdoor recreation spaces to the suggested national standards, and we fall short. So it is important that we retain and add to these areas. A Play Spaces Appraisal was undertaken in 2022 and a Playground Masterplan has been commissioned to put in place the recommendations for each play park over the coming years

Tourism and leisure are important to Shaftesbury's economy. Each year, our town receives over 410,000-day visitors and 17,000 people stay overnight, many staying with friends and relatives, but also in serviced accommodation (2022 data).

Visitors spend £18.5 million locally each year and that supports 310 local jobs. The sector has seen a slight decline—but still plays a significant role in the town's economy. It is important that our policies help support local tourism.

We also want to make sure that we have safe and attractive walking and cycling routes around the town for both our residents and our visitors, and in 2021 the Shaftesbury Loop—a safe walking and cycling route around the town—was created. This crosses over with our Town Centre and Green Infrastructure themes.



Shaftesbury Byzant Ceremony

Key feedback from initial consultation in February 2019

81% of responses indicated broad agreement with our policy intentions for this theme. 79% of people who replied said that the most important community facilities that need to be protected had been identified.



Fringe Festival



Eat Festival

Key messages

Based on what local people have told us, we developed the following aims for the town's Community, Leisure & Tourism infrastructure:

- To ensure that Shaftesbury becomes 'A historic market town with a range of high-quality sports, leisure, education and social facilities to meet the needs of the whole population, making best use of the town's qualities and the energy of the community, whilst ensuring that children can choose to walk safely to school'.
- To ensure that the required health, education, leisure and community infrastructure is in place to accommodate the needs of new residents.
- To maximise leisure opportunities for all ages, including new and improved facilities in the best locations to meet changing demand.
- To promote safe primary and secondary school walking and cycling routes and improving these routes where required.
- To ensure that the health needs of the whole population are met, and to plan for future levels of provision and service to accommodate our expanding and aging population.

Summary findings from the Retail and Commercial Leisure Study in 2018 noted that Shaftesbury's leisure offer was below the national average.

The Study recognized that the town not only supports a good range of shops, but is also a tourist and cultural destination. Environmental quality within the town was considered to be good, but suggested there may be opportunities to increase provision of recreational open spaces, and items such as benches and litter bins.

A Playing Pitch Strategy was produced for the county in 2019, with its main recommendations highlighting the need to protect and where possible enhance the existing provision for the town, following which the Town Council has installed a 3G pitch facility at the Football Club, which has proven extremely popular, with over 200 children training weekly, a women's and men's teams, plus a VETS team and walking football.

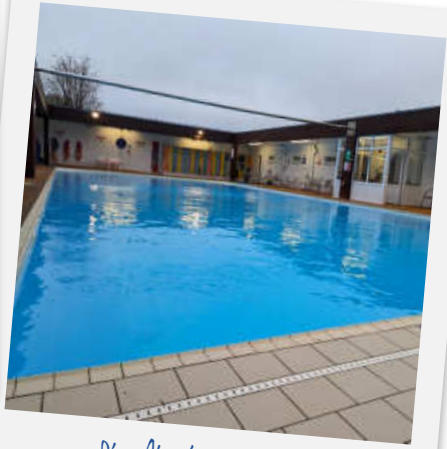
The Retail and Leisure Study was updated in 2022, and whilst it didn't focus specifically on Shaftesbury, it did consider how the pandemic impacted on this sector and viability. It reported that the sector is recovering, but did not forecast any signficant growth in leisure provision through market trends at this time.

Developers can be required to make financial contributions to key local services and infrastructure improvement projects after they gain planning permission. This levy can result in payments of hundreds of thousands of pounds, according to the scale of development.



Shaftesbury Arts Centre


Shaftsbury Football Club


Shaftesbury Lido


Royal British Legion Hall

6.2 The range and availability of community facilities

What does Policy **SFCL1** set out to do?

To improve and increase the range and availability of community facilities, sports, and leisure opportunities where these bring benefits to the community.

Everyone should have easy access to such facilities—and although the number of places which are available is generally good, some facilities are lacking (such as youth facilities), some could be better advertised (and the Town Council is hoping to work collaboratively on a Marketing Strategy for tourism), and facilities in easy walking distance of the area to the east of Christy's Lane are extremely limited (for which plans are underway).


Outdoor Circuit Training

POLICY SFCL1

Locally important community buildings and facilities for sports (as shown on Map SFCL1) and the land associated with recreation should be retained and allowed to modernise and adapt to continue to meet the community's needs. This could be either in their current location or on a suitable alternative site in the Neighbourhood Plan area.

Their loss (in whole or part) will be resisted, unless it can be shown that the current site is no longer suitable or viable to retain and that any loss is offset by equal or better improvements elsewhere.

New community facilities, including recreation facilities, local shops, pubs and education and health services, will be strongly supported, particularly in the eastern area of the town, where they meet the identified needs of the community and are in line with the wider provisions of this Neighbourhood Plan.

New housing developments will be expected to have access to outdoor green space for sports, play and recreation, at least in line with the standards and recommended distances defined by the Local Plan/ Fields- in-Trust, which means that these spaces should be within easy reach of homes. These should be provided either at the same time as the development is built or beforehand.

Shaftesbury Town Council has been awarded £876,278 (October 2024) in S106 developer contributions to establish a Community Hub in East Shaftesbury, known as the Mampitts Hub. This funding, facilitated by Dorset Council, will support the creation of community facilities aimed at addressing the needs identified through extensive community consultation. The proposed Community Hub will feature spaces dedicated to social activities, a coffee shop or café, fitness facilities, and adaptable community space.

Additionally, the project includes outdoor recreational spaces, such as a walking trail, community gardens, wildlife areas, and a picnic space. Other play facilities throughout Shaftesbury are also being enhanced as part of the Town Council's Play Master Plan.

A new primary school site is also proposed on land just outside of the Neighbourhood Area in Cann Parish, as part of the development to the south of the A30.

Quick Read

What does this policy mean and why is it important?

The existing community facilities in Shaftesbury are valued by the majority of local people.

59% of the residents who responded to the first consultation felt that improving the existing community halls in Shaftesbury should be prioritised over providing a new venue.

The first part of our community consultation highlighted that there are more community facilities on the west of Christy's Lane than the eastern side. This imbalance is being addressed by the creation of the Mampitts Hub in the east of the town.

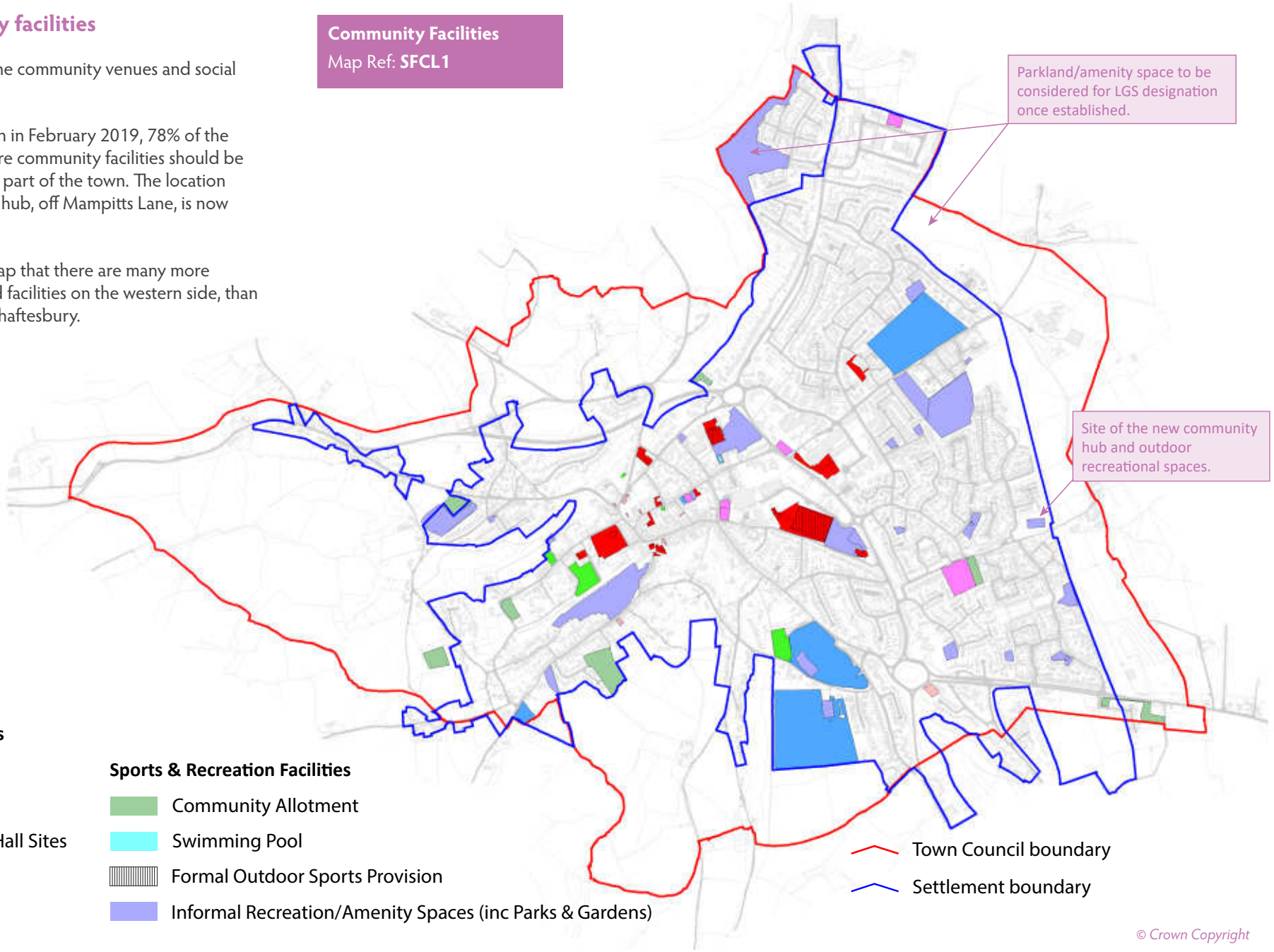
This will help boost the number of public green spaces in our town, to being it more in line with government standards (known as the FiT standard).

Map of community facilities

This map illustrates all the community venues and social infrastructure facilities.

In our initial consultation in February 2019, 78% of the community felt that more community facilities should be provided in the eastern part of the town. The location for the new community hub, off Mampitts Lane, is now indicated on the map.

You will see from the map that there are many more community services and facilities on the western side, than on the eastern side of Shaftesbury.



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6.2 The range and availability of community facilities *(continued)*

Shaftesbury Open Space Provision

	Recommended Standard (area and/or accessibility)	Shaftesbury Provision Based on 2021 population: 9,158, Projection for 2031: **10,556**
Formal outdoor sports provision, primarily (75%) as sports pitches but also games courts, bowling greens, running tracks and trails.	1.60ha per 1,000 people, within 1,200m of people's homes Current target: 14.2ha 2031 target: 16.9ha	**Current target:** 14.2ha **2031 target:** 16.9ha **Current provision:** 8.7ha The current provision covers only facilities within the town and includes the pool (0.02ha) and Shaftesbury School (5.49ha, currently restricted access). The shortage of flat land has led the Cricket Club to be based southwest of the town, more than 2,500m away.
Equipped play areas and informal play spaces	0.55ha per 1,000 people, with about half as equipped play areas **For very young children:** Small play area within 100m **For children who can go out to play independently:** Locally equipped area for play (LEAP) within 400m **Other provision for young people:** (e.g. skateboard park, MUGA) within 700m	**Current target:** 5.0ha **2031 target:** 5.8ha **Current provision:** 3.3ha Provision for very young children is patchy but most areas have adequate access to a LEAP. Other provision for young people is concentrated at Barton Hill and Wincombe Rec, which are more than 700m from housing south of Meles Mead or southwest of Stoney Path. The measured size of play areas that are within a larger amenity space has been subtracted from the amenity area given below.
Informal recreation/ amenity spaces	1.4ha per 1,000 people of parks, gardens and amenity green space, within 700m of people's homes	**Current target:** 12.4ha **2031 target:** 14.8ha **Current provision:** 8.4ha Accessibility is adequate
Allotments	At least 16 allotments (about 0.4ha) per 1,000 people	**Current target:** 3.5ha **2031 target:** 4.2ha **Current provision:** 3.1ha Includes all current allotments plus the additional capacity for local food growing at the Community Farm (0.4ha). Includes the new allotment site south of A30 (0.4ha).
Accessible natural green space	1.8ha per 1,000 people, within 700m of people's homes	**Current target:** 15.9ha **2031 target:** 19.0ha **Current provision:** 23.2ha This total provision excludes the two natural spaces in the GI audit that are not publicly accessible: The Cliff, Pensbury Plantation and Meles Mead wildlife corridor. Most of the accessible natural green space within the town is concentrated to the west. There is accessible open countryside beyond the town boundaries, particularly to the north and east, but this is more than 700m from dwellings and there are issues with some of the rights of way at certain times of year.

Calculations based on FIT Green Space Calculator https://fieldsintrust.org/insights/standards/standards-calculator



6.3 Tourist facilities and attractions

What does Policy **SFCL2** set out to do?

To support the growth of the tourist economy by encouraging development proposals that are likely to have a positive impact on tourism and that respect and reinforce the different character areas of the town.

Details:

The Abbey Museum, Gold Hill Museum, and Shaftesbury Arts Centre are key tourist facilities, together with the main hotels, such as the Grosvenor Arms and Royal Chase, as well as numerous smaller hotels and bed and breakfast providers such as the Fleur de Lys. The various long-distance recreational trails that run from and through the town are also important visitor attractions.



Gold Hill Museum Garden



Gold Hill Museum

POLICY SFCL2

Existing key tourist facilities (as shown on Map SFCL2) should be protected. Proposals that would result in the loss of existing hotels, large guesthouses, pubs and tourist attractions will be resisted, unless it can be demonstrated that their continued use is no longer viable.

The development of new tourist attractions and serviced tourist accommodation (such as a hotel) is supported, provided that:

- The development is in keeping with or enhances the area's character.
- Any new buildings are within the settlement boundary.
- The site is readily accessible by sustainable modes of transport (a travel plan is likely to be required in most cases).
- The proposed use would not adversely impact on the amenities of the occupants of nearby properties.



Grosvenor Arms Hotel

Quick Read

What does this policy mean and why is it important?

Tourism brings employment and ensures that the High Street remains as vibrant as possible

We want to protect what we have and keep our tourists coming back, as it helps our town to be healthy and economically viable.

77% of responses from the initial consultation in February 2019 highlighted that our community feel that the Neighbourhood Plan needs to feature policies to encourage new tourist attractions that would respect Shaftesbury's character.

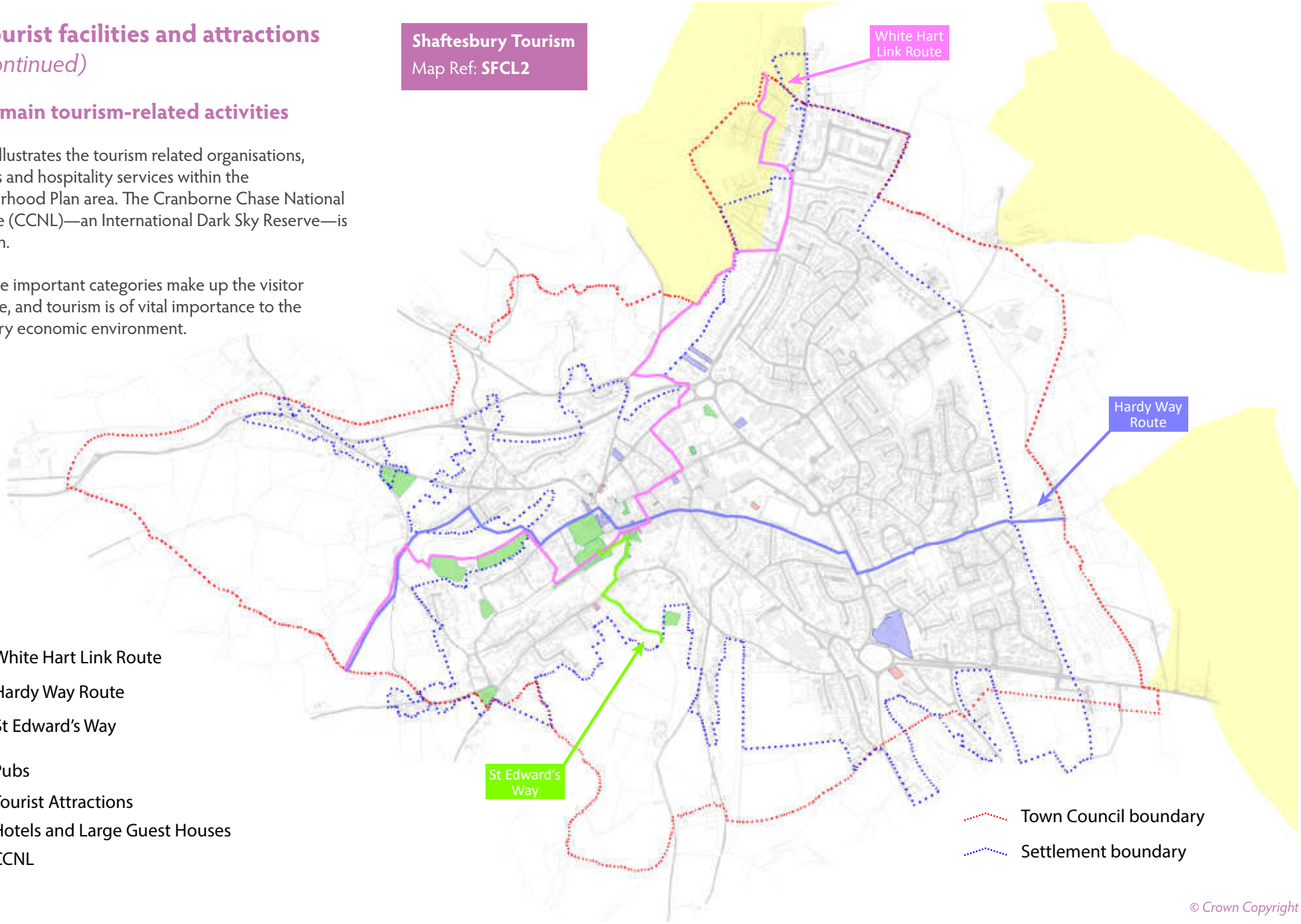
6.3 Tourist facilities and attractions *(continued)*

Map of main tourism-related activities

The map illustrates the tourism related organisations, attractions and hospitality services within the Neighbourhood Plan area. The Cranborne Chase National Landscape (CCNL)—an International Dark Sky Reserve—is also shown.

All of these important categories make up the visitor experience, and tourism is of vital importance to the Shaftesbury economic environment.

Shaftesbury Tourism
Map Ref: **SFCL2**



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6.4 Provision of walking and cycling routes

What does Policy **SFCL3** set out to do?

To support safe walking and cycling routes that are well connected with the town centre and other key areas or that provide access to the countryside, and encourage improvements to this network, including where opportunities arise within developments to create new links or make existing routes more attractive.

The compact size of Shaftesbury means that almost all of the town is within 15 minutes walking distance of the town centre. Many daily journeys have the potential to be made on foot or by cycle, reducing road traffic, pollution and helping us keep healthy.

In the initial consultation in February 2019, 75% of respondents felt the need for safer walking and cycling routes through the town. 71% of residents felt that there is a need to improve cycle and footpath networks which link to other towns and villages.

POLICY SFCL3

Support will be given to proposals that improve and extend the existing footpath and cycle path network (as indicated on Map SFCL3). This will allow better access between housing areas and to the town, recreation areas and the wider countryside on paths that are safe, attractive and easy to navigate. Proposals that fail to provide reasonable footpath and cycle path network connections through a site, connecting to/from the town centre and other community facilities and to the wider countryside, or that result in the loss or downgrading of existing paths, should be resisted.

New developments will be expected to link into the existing footpath and cycle path network and provide connections through the site. This would help to create a wider walking and cycling network. Contributions towards the costs of maintaining and improving the network of footpaths and cycle paths will be sought from developers where reasonable and related to that development.



Castle Hill Green

Quick Read

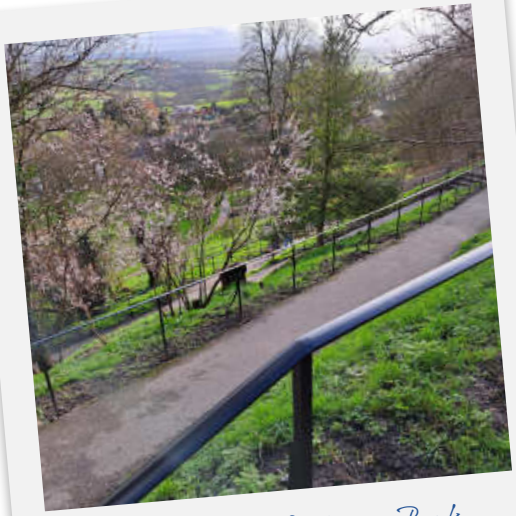
What does this policy mean and why is it important?

The current cycle network is limited to main roads. There is currently no safe route for children to cycle to school.

Proposals to add routes to the proposed network will be encouraged.

The Neighbourhood Plan group has worked with walking and cycling experts to help shape the proposed plan using a comprehensive audit of the existing footpaths and shaping the proposals based on local in- depth knowledge.

The proposals would use funding that developers are required to offer the community when their planned developments are approved.



Jubilee Steps, St James Park



Castle Hill Green

6.4 Provision of walking and cycling routes *(continued)*

Map of existing and proposed networks of footpaths and cycle routes

The **orange line** illustrates the existing footpath and cycleway network. This includes the public footpaths (as indicated on Dorset Explorer, please refer to the definitive map for their exact route), the on-road advisory cycle routes suggested by Dorset Council, and the Shaftesbury Loop, which is a waymarked route promoted by the Town Council to residents and visitors. The aim of the Shaftesbury Loop is to provide a safe and attractive network for walking and cycling around the town, for recreation and to see many of the historic sites and places of interest.

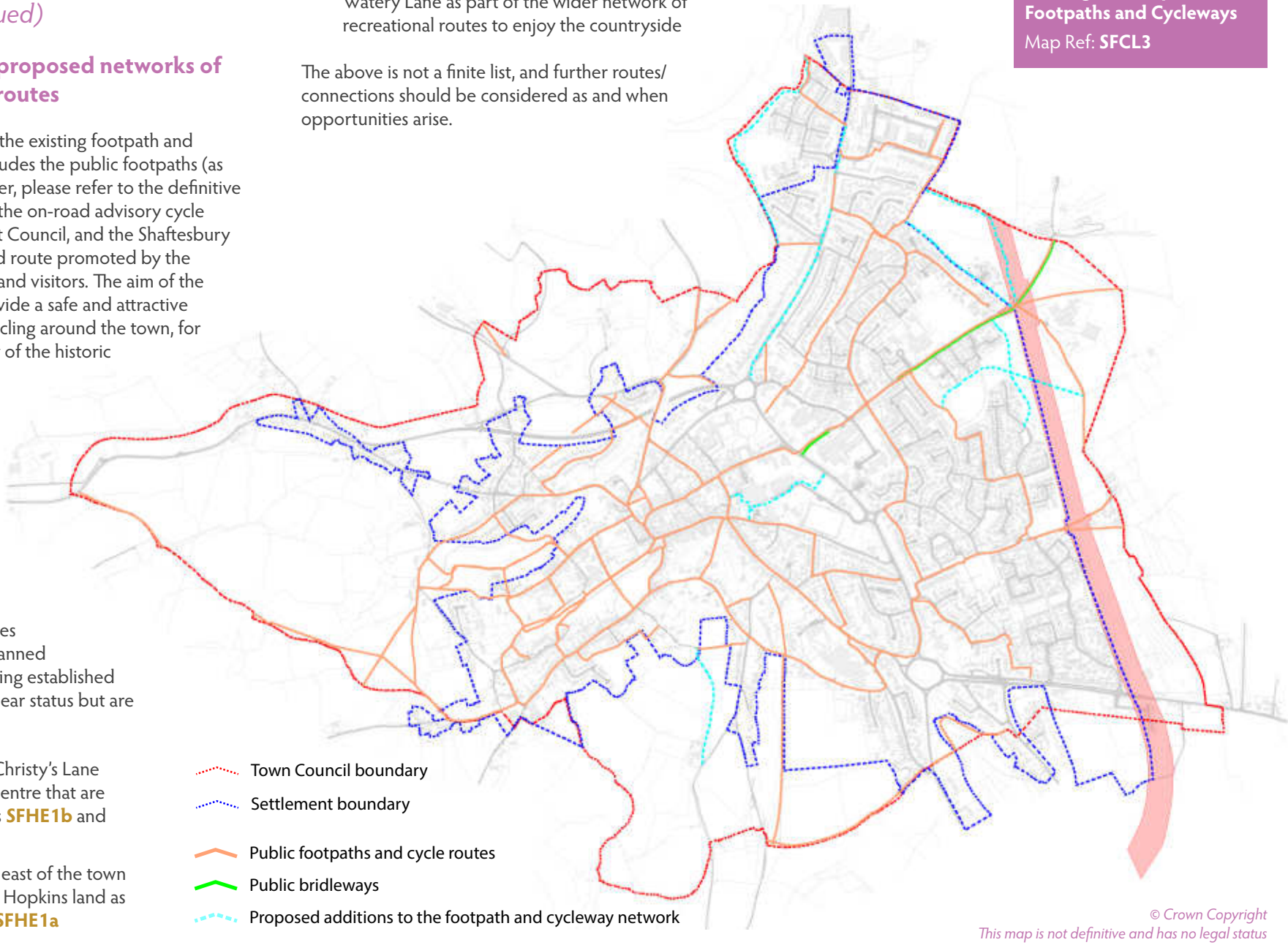
The **green line** illustrates the public bridleways—which are limited within the town council area.

The **light blue broken line** highlights how the footpath and cycleway network can be enhanced to create more opportunities for connections through planned developments and confirming established routes that do not have a clear status but are well-used. This includes:

- Improved links from Christy's Lane through to the town centre that are highlighted in policies **SFHE1b** and **SFHE1d**
- Improved links to the east of the town including through the Hopkins land as highlighted in policy **SFHE1a**
- Confirming the established public right to use Watery Lane as part of the wider network of recreational routes to enjoy the countryside

The above is not a finite list, and further routes/ connections should be considered as and when opportunities arise.

Existing and Proposed Footpaths and Cycleways
Map Ref: **SFCL3**



© Crown Copyright
This map is not definitive and has no legal status

Monitoring and Review

Shaftesbury Town Council, as the body responsible for leading the Neighbourhood Plan process, will consider the need to update this plan on a yearly basis. As part of this process the Town Council will consider the progress made on the preparation of the Dorset Council Local Plan; whether there have been any significant changes to National Planning Policy; and the views of local residents and businesses.

Progress on the various projects identified in this Plan, together with the effectiveness of the policies, will also be assessed in correlation with the Town Council's Strategic Plan and Sustainable Shaftesbury Plan. It is likely that a review of this Plan in partnership with Dorset Council will commence when the new Dorset Council Local Plan has been adopted, as this will update the overarching strategy for how Shaftesbury will develop in the future.





7. Appendices

7.1 Index of Appendices

A Projects – Town Centre

B Projects – Housing and Employment

C Projects – Green Infrastructure

D Projects – Community, Leisure & Tourism

E Projects – Design and Heritage

F Views Audit

G Health

H Education

I Community Venue Utilisation Report

J Shaftesbury Trees

K Locally Important Buildings List and Zone Maps

L Local Green Space (LGS) and Important Treed Areas (ITA) List of Sites

M Schedule of Evidence Sources

N Housing Target and Population Statistics

O Explanation of the new use classes described by SFTC2

P British Geological Survey data maps

7.2 Other documents to accompany the Neighbourhood Plan Document

A Green Infrastructure Audit

B Housing and Employment – Background Paper

C Transport Appendix

D Parking Study

E AECOM Design Statement

F Consultation Statement

7.3 Appendix A – Projects: Town Centre

How could we make things better?

The Neighbourhood Plan believes that these projects, already identified, will address some of the issues raised by residents.

Project TC1 – Making better use of empty shops

Turnover is inevitable as high streets evolve, but empty shops create a bad impression of Shaftesbury. A project to encourage more creative use of empty shops should be investigated. A scheme would help to establish short-term leases for pop-ups. This could benefit business start-ups, not-for-profit organisations and also landlords. The project would need to work with landlords and would be led by the Chamber of Commerce supported by Shaftesbury Town Council.

Project TC2 – Market day review

Many local residents value the traditional High Street market on Thursday. A project is proposed to review the market and the monthly Sunday markets and whether more could be done to support them and enable the markets to flourish. Shaftesbury Town Council would oversee this.

Project TC3 – Tidying and decluttering

Regular monitoring of the state of the High Street, including the state of shop fronts and street furniture, can help identify opportunities to enhance the appearance and attractiveness of our town centre.

Previously Shaftesbury Civic Society undertook audits of the High Street focusing on the many signs, posts and other structures that were redundant, poorly placed or were poorly maintained.

Whilst the Civic Society has folded, there remains a need for such an audit, extended to include shop fronts, to provide clear evidence as to how Town Centre is performing and identify opportunities to improve the public's experience of the High Street.

This project may then be expanded to include more active liaison with landlords on shopfront designs, helping to raise understanding of where the design guidance can help achieve the relevant permissions and what can be done without needing permission.

Project TC4 – Managing congestion and parking demand

Planning policies that seek to increase parking provision are unlikely to be sufficient on their own. Practical measures are needed to manage demand. The Shaftesbury Parking Study proposes options including using signposting, altering the length of stay and better enforcement.

A project is proposed, led by the Town Council, in collaboration with the Shaftesbury Transport Forum, with the following aims:

- Work with Dorset Council to review parking restrictions and enforcement in locations such as 'The Narrows' on the High Street.
- Work with Dorset Council to introduce signage that include real-time information to guide users to a car park with spaces
- Work with Dorset Council and site owners to keep under review the pricing structure and length of stay for town centre car parks and on street provision

Project TC5 – Create pedestrian friendly public spaces

A project is proposed to look at the potential of pedestrianising or reducing traffic in the town centre. A feasibility assessment will be needed to consider practicalities, cost, impact on deliveries, footfall and retailers.

Work on this has now started, with Dorset Council agreeing to undertake an study into the feasibility of a partial closure to traffic.

7.4 Appendix B – Projects: Housing and Employment

Background: Affordable Homes for Local People

The median price paid for a home in Shaftesbury in 2023/24 was £340,000.

The average earnings for employees living in the South West of England was around £34,500 in 2023. However this varies by pay, with those in their mid to late 20's typically earning 25% less than the average.

If you consider that mortgage lenders often consider up to four times combined household salaries, then an household with a young family, with one full-time and one part-time worker, might support a £155,000 loan. This illustrates the need for affordable housing is apparent.

Published data suggests that there is a local need for homes for rent or affordable means of purchase. As of November 2024 there was an assessed need for just over 200 affordable dwellings in Shaftesbury, primarily for 1 and 2 bedroom homes.

Whilst the Housing Register does not specifically target households looking for affordable home ownership, those in Band D (Low Housing Need) are more likely to fall within that category.

One way in which the community can be more involved in how affordable housing is managed and allocated locally, is if this is done through a Community Land Trust..

Project HE1 – Community Land Trust

Explore the viability and potential need for a Shaftesbury specific Community Land Trust.

What is a Community Land Trust?

A Community Land Trust or CLT is a not-for- profit organisation. CLTs must benefit a specific community. The Trust owns the land on which affordable homes are built.

Recently, the government announced funding to support CLTs. This could be in partnership with Housing Associations or landowners who want to promote affordable housing. The CLT arranges the building works and then manages the homes when they are ready to live in.

These houses or flats remain exempt from the right-to-buy rules. The CLT must make sure that the homes remain affordable.

Households with a local connection to Shaftesbury on the Housing Register	Affordable dwellings needed					
November 2024	1 bed	2 bed	3 bed	4 bed	5 bed	Total
Band A—Urgent Housing Need	6	1		3		**10**
Band B—High Housing Need	14	4	1	3		**22**
Band C—Medium Housing Need	11	11	21	12	2	**57**
Band D—Low Housing Need	55	35	12	2		**104**
n/k (submitted online and waiting to be assessed)	10	9	2	1		**22**
	96	**60**	**36**	**21**	**2**	**215**



7.5 Appendix C – Projects: Green Infrastructure

In the compilation of the Green Infrastructure Audit, a number of issues and concerns were raised. These are highlighted alongside each entry and will provide a basis for actions and desired outcomes from the following projects:

Project GI1 – Conserve and enhance the Green Infrastructure

Continue to protect eligible open spaces through Fields in Trust where suitable and where compliant wth the Deed of Dedication criteria.

Project GI2 – Make best use of our green spaces

Where new green spaces become accessible to the community, use the national standards for space provision, compared with what exists in the town, alongside the need for climate change mitigation and biodiversity enhancement, to determine priorities for use and management of the space and to decide on funding allocation.

Project GI3 – Development of suitable maintenance planting schemes

Work with local landowners, developers, relevant local groups and experts to manage and maintain our green infrastructure in ways that mitigate climate change and enhance biodiversity. This will include tree and other planting schemes and provision for the care of mature trees made vulnerable by changing environmental conditions.

Where practical, planting and maintenance will also enhance the appearance of the town—screening recent development or managing trees that may otherwise block an important view.

Amongst other initiatives, this project will continue work to identify sites and then plant and nurture many new trees and, working alongside the Tree Group and other local experts, will maintain up-to-date guidance on appropriate species for planting around the town (as provided in Appendix J of the Neighbourhood Plan).

Project GI4 – Protection of our dark skies

Town Council premises should be reviewed to ensure they are using Dark-Sky compliant lighting.

By collaborating with Cranborne Chase National Landscape, ensure that people and businesses in Shaftesbury know how to convert existing lighting to become dark skies compliant, thereby reducing light pollution from their homes and workplaces.

Project GI5 – Renewable energy project

Explore the feasibility of setting up a Shaftesbury community renewable energy project. This could be in the form of a cooperative, to identify a suitable scheme (or schemes), develop the project and raise funds through running share offers within the locality.

Project GI6 – Wildlife corridor research

Identify existing and potential wildlife corridors within the town and wider parish, to supplement the information held by the Dorset Local Nature Partnership.

Project GI7 – Biodiversity net gain research

Research data to ascertain whether there is a case for a higher degree of biodiversity net gain to be required (than the nationally mandated 10%), and where opportunities may exist for such gains to be delivered locally at reasonable cost.

Project GI8 Biodiversity Net Gain

Work with local landowners to identify areas where off-site biodiversity enhancements may be possible as part of a long-term project, to provide a local solution to achieving the now mandatory biodiversity net gains, where this cannot be done on-site.

7.6 Appendix D – Projects: Community, Leisure & Tourism

How could we make things better?

The Neighbourhood Plan believes that these projects, already identified, will address some of the issues raised by residents

Project CL1 – Investigate the potential for improving existing venues

Nearly 60% of respondents in the initial consultation in February 2019 thought it important to improve the existing community halls in Shaftesbury and this approach should be supported over providing a new venue.

The Neighbourhood Plan Advisory Committee recommends that further research is undertaken to scope out the potential opportunity for improving existing venues. Use the assessment of existing provision against standards to guide decisions on project funding to improve and make the best use of existing community facilities.

Project CL2 – Improve signposting to key tourist facilities

Work with Dorset Council to improve signposting of key pedestrian and cycle routes from the car parks to key tourist facilities.

Project CL3 – Improve signposting within the town

Work with Dorset Council to improve signposting of existing and potential key pedestrian and cycle routes within the town.

Project CL4 – Improve diversity and attractiveness of existing footpaths and cycle routes

Work with Dorset Council and local landowners to make the existing footpath and cycle path network more biodiverse and attractive and introduce bicycle wheeling ramps in stepped areas across the town.

Project CL5 – Develop and improve cycleways to extend the network to the hinterland and beyond

Work with Dorset Council and Sustrans to develop an extended network of cycle routes for locals and visitors to enjoy routes beyond the Shaftesbury boundary.

Project CL6 – New Play Experiences

Work with Dorset Council to create play experiences with are consistent with the Shaftesbury Play Masterplan using the 10 Design principles formed a core element in the 'Design for Play: a guide to creating successful play spaces' document

7.7 Appendix E – Projects: Design and Heritage

Project DH1 – Article 4 direction

As part of the consultation on this plan, concerns were raised that the increased use of plastic windows was generally degrading buildings.

The Town Council will continue to monitorwhen Dorset Council is likely to undertake a review of the Conservation Area, and whether they would consider making an Article 4 direction to prohibit the use of UPVC type windows and doors within the conservation area.

An article 4 direction is made by the local planning authority. It restricts the scope of permitted development rights either in relation to a particular area or site, or a particular type of development anywhere in the authority's area. Where an article 4 direction is in effect, a planning application may be required for development that would otherwise have been permitted development. Article 4 directions are used to control works that could threaten the character of an area of acknowledged importance, such as a conservation area.

7.8 Appendix F – Shaftesbury Views Audit

Views from Shaftesbury

Because of their long, ranging nature, some of the views that we enjoy include land that is outside of the Neighbourhood Plan area. However, the views from Shaftesbury are spectacular and much valued by residents and visitors. It is therefore essential to conserve the viewpoints and the tree cover, dwellings and walls that frame the views, and that the design, scale and layout of any development within the Neighbourhood Plan area should minimise adverse impact on these views and preserve and enhance such views wherever possible.

A – Castle Hill Green

From the popular footpath along the northern edge of Castle Hill Green are long panoramic views over Enmore Green at the foot of the slopes, beyond Gillingham to Somerset and its Quantock and Mendip Hills (70km and 50km away respectively), and beyond Motcombe to the Wiltshire Downs. The path has several seats looking north and a viewpoint pointing out landmarks, which include Glastonbury Tor visible on a clear day and Alfred's Tower.



View of Duncliffe Hill (210m) looking west from Castle Hill Green.



View of Duncliffe Hill (210m) looking west from Castle Hill Green.

B – Park Walk

From this very popular walkway along the southern edge of the western spur there are long panoramic views over St James and across the rolling landscape of the Blackmore Vale. There are seats looking south and a viewpoint pointing out landmarks such as Win Green Hill, Melbury Beacon, Hambledon Hill with its Iron-Age hill fort and Bulbarrow Hill. On a clear day you can see the Isle of Purbeck, 59km away.

When considering the impact on views from higher and lower ground (both within Shaftesbury and in the surrounding countryside), it should be remembered that often we are looking at the rear of historic houses, especially in St James.

Another aspect of the views looking out of town are the patchwork of small fields, surrounded by ancient hedgerows and interspersed with large trees (typically beech, oak and ash), important and attractive features which should be conserved.



Win Green Hill (277m), Breeze Hill (237m) and Melbury Beacon (263m) looking south east from Park Walk.



St James and the Blackmore Vale looking south-west from Park Walk, towards Bulbarrow Hill (274m) in the distance.

C – Gold Hill

This historic cobbled street descends steeply from behind Shaftesbury's Town Hall. From the top of the street, the view south over the Blackmore Vale is framed by picturesque old cottages and the substantial stone wall of Shaftesbury Abbey (a scheduled monument). This iconic view brings very many visitors to the town and is omnipresent in promotional material, not just locally, but also as an image of the English countryside used overseas.



Gold Hill from the Town Council Chamber



Gold Hill: Street level view.

D – Higher Blandford Road

The view was originally identified prior to the development of Melbury Beacon View. Photographs were taken from the roadside on the C13 Higher Blandford Road, to show how they provided the best view of the chalk downs of the Cranborne Chase, and the distinctive group of trees on Breeze Hill silhouetted against the skyline, known locally as 'The Caterpillar'. Whilst development has meant that the view of 'The Caterpillar' is no longer readily discernable from the A30, the green gap nonetheless allows views out towards the downs within Cranborne Chase. A more limited view of 'The Caterpillar' can still be enjoyed from the 'dead-end' section of the Blandford Road

These glimpsed views contribute to the character of this area, otherwise poor in many 'green' respects, and help orientate locals and visitors within the landscape, helping to reinforce Shaftesbury's sense of place as a hilltop town surrounded by distinctive countryside.



Edge of Melbury Beacon View and gap looking south into Cranborne Chase. Right: distant view of Breeze Hill, also known as 'Caterpillar Hill, still visible from the older section of Blandford Road.



Distant view of Breeze Hill, also known as 'Caterpillar Hill, still visible from the older section of Blandford Road.

E – Castle Mound

The western edge of the spur is quite densely wooded, and the ridge here does not have the open views that exist to the north and south. However, these images looking west (left—with Duncliffe Hill middle distance) and north (right) from the Castle Mound scheduled monument show that, where trees permit, there is still a spectacular wide-ranging view from here.





F – Littledown

As part of the green space provision the views from Littledown have become much more accessible. The first photograph (top) is looking towards Duncliffe Hill. Looking right from this edge it is possible to see King Alfred's Tower in the far distance.





Views of Shaftesbury from the surrounding countryside

The promontory on which Shaftesbury stands can be seen from all surrounding compass points apart from due east, the A30 'corridor'. From most of these points, the town itself is hidden by trees. However, the town is clearly visible from the south-east (clockwise) around to the south west, which makes this side of the promontory especially sensitive to any development, as the following views from Win Green Hill and Melbury Beacon (and Compton Down) clearly illustrate.

G – Win Green Hill

Win Green Hill, with its distinctive clump of windblown trees, is a National Trust property east-south-east of Shaftesbury. This view of Shaftesbury shows the gently sloping land below the southern escarpment. Win Green Hill is amongst the stargazing locations promoted by the Cranborne Chase National Landscape, and its highest point.

The patchwork of smaller fields with hedgerows and trees, and sparse rural development characteristic of the shallower slopes, can be clearly seen.

These photographs also show why Breeze Hill, located between Melbury Beacon and Win Green Hill, is visible from many places within the new developments to the east of Shaftesbury.



View from Win Green Hill, showing the whole promontory. To the left can be seen part of Breeze Hill



A 'close-up' of Shaftesbury, showing how visible from here are the eastern developments.

H – Melbury Beacon (and Compton Down)

Melbury Beacon is within walking distance (3km) of the south of Shaftesbury and offers a commanding view of the town. From here, the buildings on top of the western spur in Bimport, the oldest part of town, are hidden amongst the trees. Older buildings in the middle of town become increasingly more visible moving east as the tree cover reduces. Trinity Church is a prominent landmark.

The most visible parts of town are the new developments on the eastern edge of Shaftesbury. The settlement of St James on the shallower slopes below Bimport is also clearly visible, once again demonstrating that when considering any development in St James, not only the front but also the rear aspect of buildings can be an important factor.

Nearby Fontmell and Melbury Downs are amongst the stargazing locations promoted by the Cranborne Chase National Landscape, and together with Compton Down are popular walking areas. Clearly, light pollution from Shaftesbury must be minimised.

Apart from the settlement of St James, the shallow slopes are generally undeveloped with the same characteristic patchwork of smaller fields with hedgerows and trees, and sparse rural development, mentioned earlier. It is evident from this view the way in which a development of any size would change that character, indicating that scale of development and tree cover must be important considerations for any further development.



I – Writh Farm

Glimpses of Shaftesbury from the south are possible through farm gates and over hedges on the road between West Melbury and Guy's Marsh, east of its intersection with the southern end of French Mill Lane. These photographs show again the tree cover 'hiding' the oldest part of town, and how prominent is the settlement of St James on the shallower slopes, being still relatively higher than the surrounding countryside, and thus very sensitive to further development.



Shaftesbury seen through a gateway near Writh Farm.



Shaftesbury viewed over a roadside hedge nearby, the western escarpment with its wooded steep slopes can be clearly seen, with St James nestling at its foot.

J – Motcombe

Motcombe, a village that lies north-west of Shaftesbury and visible from Castle Hill Green, has views typical of those from other places to the west (clockwise) around to the north-east of a heavily wooded promontory, with barely a hint of the town of Shaftesbury—views that are worthy of preservation.



The heavily wooded northern end of the promontory.



Shaftesbury's distinctive wooded skyline with only the Longmead Communications Tower and Trinity Church visible above the trees and culminating with its western escarpment.

Four other examples of this type of view are:

K – Hatch House

Hatch House is north-east of Shaftesbury and the view from here also shows the significant tree cover on higher land north of the town.



L – Stour Row

Stour Row is west of Shaftesbury and from here the western end of the promontory is shown to be narrow and heavily wooded.



M – Milton on Stour

The view here from Milton on Stour is similar to that from the town of Gillingham, Shaftesbury's largest neighbour, and again shows the distinctive skyline of Shaftesbury and the western escarpment.



N – Mere

Mere is north west of Shaftesbury and although offering a similar view to that from Motcombe, it is sufficiently distant to see the whole of the promontory and the western escarpment clearly, left of the church tower.



7.9 Appendix G – Health

The Primary Care Services in Shaftesbury are currently delivered by the Blackmore Vale Partnership, which consists of two main medical centres, one at Abbey View, Shaftesbury and the other at Sturminster Newton and a branch surgery at Marnhull.

These are currently (2024) staffed by 17 GPs, 11 enhanced care practitioners, practice nurses, health care assistants, medicine technicians, social prescribers, mental health workers etcwith support from domestic and clerical staff. At the time of writing, The Blackmore Vale Partnership has 26,772 patients.

The space at Abbey View to cater for any further increase in patient numbers, is stretched. There is capacity for patients to use any of the two medical centres and branch surgery, however, GP recruitment nationally is proving problematical, the practice has introduced a multi-disciplinary workforce with a rich skill mix of clinical and non-clinical staff to support the needs of the population, but the practice is not up to strength.

The Blackmore Vale Partnership has the capacity to offer its services to more patients within its present facilities. We clinically triage all requests for care and therefore we offer on the day appointments for those that need it. We have good access to clinical support on the day and throughout the week.

Car parking is an issue, but the NHS offers primary care treatment only, not parking services.

The ability for current medical services to cope with the planned growth of Shaftesbury was the principal infrastructure concern highlighted by the 2014 and 2018 surveys. The rising population in recent years has increased pressure on medical services. Whilst we recognise that many members of the community feel that it is difficult obtaining an appointment or immediate access to some healthcare services, it means that patients may need to go to either site depending on their clinical need.

Since July 2016, the future of the inpatient beds at Westminster Memorial Hospital has been a key local concern, following proposals for the re-organisation of secondary care in Dorset. A great deal of local action has taken place to support the retention of the local bed spaces.

The aim is for the Westminster Memorial Hospital to be registered as an Asset of Community Value (ACV). This would not guarantee that this site remains a hospital, but it would give the community the chance to bid to buy the building if it was facing sale.

There are a number of social uses that could be considered within the building should the hospital be relocated, which could consist of community education and health-related uses and possible changes to alternative community uses that would be of benefit.

The Blackmore Vale Partnership are working closely with Dorset Healthcare and the voluntary sector to evaluate if a leg ulcer clinic held in the community would be of benefit to patients and the NHS. The setting would be outside of the health care premises and supported and run by the voluntary sector.

Should a longer-term opportunity emerge to grow the Shaftesbury health facility in collaboration with key health and well-being partners, the BV Partnership, who operate Abbey View Medical Centre, say they would look upon this favourably.

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

7.10 Appendix H – Education

Secondary schooling for the area is provided by Shaftesbury School, co-educational, comprehensive and of Church of England faith. There are two primary schools in the town—Shaftesbury Church of England Primary and the Abbey Church of England Primary School. A site for a third primary school (2FE) is proposed as part of the development to the south of the A30, within Cann parish, which Dorset Council confirmed would be needed and which has been secured from the developer through the S106 agreement. Funding has also been collected to provide additional school places at Shaftesbury School required as a consequence of development.

Sherborne Area Schools Trust (SAST) runs Shaftesbury Secondary School and Shaftesbury Primary School and there are eighteen further schools in the trust with Motcombe Primary, in the adjoining parish, and St Andrew's Primary, located in Fontmell Magna, some five miles to the south of Shaftesbury.

There are two public school close by, Clayesmore and Leweston, both situated in Blandford and Leweston and the Sherborne Private girls and boys' schools in Sherborne.

There is adequate pre-school provision from a variety of providers. There are four pre- school nurseries and eight registered childminders.

Shaftesbury has two museums at Gold Hill and the Abbey Gardens.

All schools are managing their pupil numbers in line with the national standards. Both Shaftesbury School and Shaftesbury Primary School have not experienced any significant rise in pupil numbers per year group, with numbers remaining steady for the last five years and this trend is not forecast to increase, based on the current demographics of the town.

Shaftesbury Secondary School has a PAN (Pupil Admission Number) of 200 pupils per year group in order to provide for any student wishing to attend and do not operate at full PAN.

The Abbey School has a capacity for 210 pupils and generally has an annual intake of 30 pupils. The expectation is that the pupil numbers will remain steady and therefore sustainable in the short, medium and long term.

Predicted growth in terms of education infrastructure within any given town is based on ONS (Office of National Statistics) data and new housing estimates. There is a fine balance between current need, predicted future need versus trend data relating to population growth.

Having secured a site for a new primary school to serve the town, there is now much greater certainty that this critical infrastructure will be provided when required.

Shaftesbury School is a mixed 11–18 school with excellent facilities on the edge of the town. The school offers a boarding house within the town that is popular both nationally and internationally. The oldest part of the building is Grade II listed and dates back to 1873. The school is on a hill with views across the Blackmore Vale towards Melbury and Compton Abbas. The school's catchment area is part of Shaftesbury including St. James and Enmore Green plus the villages of Cann, Melbury, East and West Orchard, Guy's Marsh, Hartgrove, Margaret Marsh and part of Twyford.

Shaftesbury Church of England Primary School serves the town of Shaftesbury and is the largest primary school in the area with great local links, excellent facilities, wonderful grounds and dedicated staff. It is very much a community school and the children are at the heart of everything the school does. Inspiration and aspiration are values that are instilled in the children in this school early on. Its pupils get to experience a variety of activities daily with the facilities including an IT suite, a library, extensive outdoor grounds and a dedicated early years village.

The Abbey Church of England Primary School serves the southern part of the town and some out- lying villages. The school is fortunate to have great indoor facilities and extensive grounds with hard play areas, a wildlife pond, play trails and a Forest School site. The grounds have been extended into an area called the stomping ground, with a new play area, extension to the Forest School site, and a beautiful sensory garden set out in the shape of the school shield.

7.11 Appendix I – Community Venue Utilisation Report

Community venue	Utilisation rate	Number of groups using the facility	Name of groups hiring the facility	Space estimate (sq. ft)	Other details
Town Hall (Guildhall)	52%	12	New Forest fairs, Community Choir, Country Market, Vintage and Eco Fair, Shaftesbury Emporium, Flower Arrangers, Palida Choir, Dorset Farmers Market	2,100 sq. ft	
Royal British Legion	45% Summer 62% Winter	10	RBL Bridge Club, Dancing lessons, Carnival Bingo, Shaftesbury Bridge, Pregnancy Yoga, RAFA, Tai Chi, Legion Coffee Morning, Fitness Group, Ukulele Rehearsals, Memorial Committee, Memory Café, U3A Folk Dance, Jim Oliphant Rehearsal, Friends of Hospital Quiz, Dorset Healthcare, Blind Association, ND Quilters, Rockies Football Club, Poppy Appeal Bingo.	2500 sq. ft	60 seated, 70 standing
Shaftesbury Arts Centre	55%	11/18 on a regular basis	Pilates with Tamzin, Pilates with Mark, Yoga with Nicki, Elevated Tap, Bell Street School of Dance, Barclays Bank, Rock Choir, Scribblers Writing group, Jiu Jitsu, Drama therapy, Graceful/ disgraceful makeup, Willow weaving **Arts centre run groups:** 3x Youth Theatre, Music and Drama, Film society, Art Group, Reading group, folk group, keep fit	Building total – 4100 sq. ft (3 rooms plus theatre)	Rutter Room – 60 seated Phoenix Room – 60 seated Dance studio – 20 moving Theatre – 157 raked seating
Lindlar Hall	40%	8+	Karate, Taekwon-do, Tai Chi, Moo Music, Yoga, Bingo, Guides.	1,000 sq. ft	50 people seated/ 75 people standing Kitchen and 2 x WC
Youth Club	100%	9	Caron Parry School of Dance, Youth Club, Little giants, Happy hearts, Toddler tennis, Keep fit, Taekwondo, Little city, BBCA drop in group	Building total – 4,200 sq. ft	
Football Club Sports Bar – Function Room	21%	3	Skittles and Baby Group, yoga	Building total – 4,000 sq. ft	100 seated/150 standing
Silver Band Hall	24%	4	Silver Band, Bonsai, Bell Street School of Dance, Boxercise	1,000 sq. ft	
Bowling Club	25%	1	April – Sept. Bowling Club. Oct – March Curling (on carpet), Whist, Crib League, Guides (Curling), Flower Group Christmas Meal, Lunch group each month.	800 sq. ft	Kitchen, bar and toilets. April – September NOT available for hire. October – March 75% available booking time.
Trinity Centre	30%		Cubs, Beavers and Scouts, Yoga and Musical Theatre	Total building – 4,500 sq. ft	Not available for general hire Monday to Thursdays 5pm to 10pm

Community venue	Utilisation rate	Number of groups using the facility	Name of groups hiring the facility	Space estimate (sq. ft)	Other details
Shaston Social Club	40%	10	Skittles, Darts, Pool, Zumba, Cribbage, private hire.	5,000 sq. ft	2 x Bar Areas, Function Room, several smaller rooms.
Gold Hill House – St Peter's Church	5%	3	Yoga, Tai Chi, Scottish Dancers	Total building 603 sq. f	Around 80 seated
Masonic Hall – Heritage Suite	12%	4	Housing Association, Persimmon Homes, Freemasons, Private Parties	Total building 3,400 sq. ft	Around 100 Seated, 150 standing
Quaker Meeting House	40–50%	12	Yoga, Pilates, Fitness, Mediation, Support groups, counselling, Writing, Talking Newspaper	Total building – 753 sq. ft	2 rooms: Large Room approx. 5m x 9m Small Room 5m x 5m
Gold Hill Museum – Garden Room	35%	6+	Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council; Shaftesbury Fringe; Shaftesbury Camera Club; North Dorset Lib Dem committee; book club; various local artisans	200 sq. ft	Equates to 60 people standing, 48 seated in rows, 36 seated at table
Father's House	Not Available for commercial hire	5	Open House drop-in (outreach), Open Fridge, Drop-in coffee morning, Little Monkeys play group, Little Acorns, Knit and Stitch group, Re-think group (not open to public), NHS carousel clinic (NHS Invitation only), NHS blood donors (Bookings through NHS)	Main Hall – 3,300 sq. ft (350 pple) Meeting Room – 740 sq. ft (50 pple) Baby Creche – 224 sq. ft.	
Bell Street United Church	24%	8	Alcoholics anon (x2), Bright Beginnings Mother & Baby Group, Community Café, Clothing exchange, Sunshine Hour, Singing Bowls, Massage Sessions monthly, Bereavement Drop-in Sessions monthly.	2,250 sq. ft	
Library	28%	9	CAB, Knit and Natter, Reminiscence Group, Shared Reading, Community Policing, Community Drop-in Sessions with Dorset Councillors, Carer's Support Group **Library run groups:** Rhyme Time Digital Champion sessions	Building total – 2,500 sq. ft	15 sitting in reference area 30 sitting in main area 1 x WC Garden area
Armoury Yard – Cadet Unit	<5%	1	MOD – Shaftesbury Army Cadets	1,000 sq. ft	
The Lodge, Shaftesbury Abbey Museum & Gardens	11%	9	Julie Wood Wild Healing Garden workshops x 8 per season Dorset Buttons workshop x 1 North Dorset Museum Group x2 meetings Dorset Volunteer Group Day workshops x2 Adam Masters Craft Workshop x1 British Pilgrim Trust hospitality x1 Theatre Group green room x1 Fringe Festival Venue x2 sessions Shaftesbury & District Archaeology Group x 10 meetings	50 sq. metre	The lodge is used weekly by the various Abbey teams Library Circle, Education Facility, Collections Team and for in-house meetings

7.12 Appendix J – Shaftesbury Trees

A list of native and non-native trees suitable for planting locally. Given changing environmental conditions, expert advice should be sought as to what and where it is best to plant. Research into trees and climate resilience is developing all the time:

1. Woodland type

Largely ecologically based with early colonisers and sheltering 'nurse' species.

Dominant (climax) species:

- Sessile Oak (Quercus petraea)
- Common, English or Pedunculate Oak (Quercus robur)
- Ash (Fraxinus excelsior) due to Ash Dieback Disease, Hornbeam (Carpinus betulus) is recommended as a substitute
- Silver Birch (Betula verrucosa)
- Wild Cherry/Gean (Prunus avium)
- Bird Cherry (Prunus padus)

Sub-dominant (sub-climax/understorey) species:

- Holly (Ilex aquifolium)
- Rowan (Sorbus aucuparia)
- Small-Leaved Lime (Tilia cordata)
- Field Maple (Acer campestre)
- Hazel (Corylus avellana)



Rapidly growing sheltering 'nurse' species (*nitrogen-fixing):

- Birch (Betula pendula) on dry sites, (Betula pubescens) on damp sites
- Grey Alder (Alnus incana)* on dry sites
- Common Alder (Alnus glutinosa)* on damp/wet sites
- Robinia (Robinia pseudoacacia)*

Coniferous species:

- Scots Pine (Pinus sylvestris) on sandy soils
- Corsican Pine (Pinus nigra var. maritima) on clay soils
- Austrian Pine (Pinus nigra austriaca) on chalky soils

Woodland 'edge' species:

- Hawthorn (Crataegus monogyna)
- Field Maple (Acer campestre)
- Hazel (Corylus avellana)
- Spindle (Euonymus europaeus)
- Dogwood (Cornus sanguinea)
- Cherry or Myrobolan Plum (Prunus cerasifera)
- Viburnum (Viburnum lantana) shrub
- Wild privet (Ligustrum vulgare) shrub

2. Parkland type

Individual, groups and avenues of clear-stemmed trees in grassland.

- Common, English or Pedunculate Oak
- Small-leaved Lime (Tilia cordata)
- Beech (Fagus sylvatica)
- Hornbeam (Carpinus betulus)
- Sycamore (Acer pseudoplatanus)
- Field Maple (Acer campestre)
- Horse Chestnut (Aesculus hippocastanum)
- Sweet Chestnut (Castanea sativa)
- Common Walnut (Juglans regia)
- Tulip Tree (Liriodendron tulipifera)



- Scots Pine (Pinus sylvestris)
- Austrian Pine (Pinus nigra austriaca)

3. Street and car park trees

Generally, drought, heat and pollution tolerant. Clear-stemmed, upright or spreading canopy form and tolerant of formative pruning.

Crown-spread/height 15–20m:

- Norway Maple (Acer platanoides)
- Sycamore (Acer pseudoplatanus)
- London Plane (Platanus x hispanica)
- Pin Oak (Quercus palustris)
- Sessile or Durmast Oak (Quercus petraea)
- Common Lime (Tilia x europaea 'Pallida')

Crown-spread/height 10–15m:

- Swedish Whitebeam (Sorbus intermedia)
- Silver Lime (Tilia tomentosa)
- Tree of Heaven (Ailanthus altissima)
- Pagoda Tree (Sophora japonica)
- Honey-Locust (Gleditsia triacanthus)

Crown-spread/height 6–10m:

- Italian Alder (Alnus cordata)
- Norway Maple (Acer platanoides 'Emerald Queen')
- Field Maple (Acer campestre 'Elsrijk')
- Sugar Maple (Acer saccharum)
- Small-Leaved Lime (Tilia cordata 'Glenleven' and 'Greenspire')
- Honey Locust (Gleditsia triacanthos 'Skyline')





- Robinia (Robinia pseudoacacia 'Bessoniana')
- Crabapple (Malus trilobata)

Crown-spread/height 4–6m:

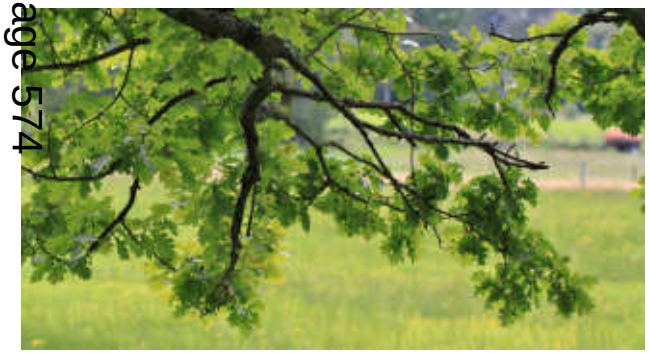
- Norway Maple 'Globosum' (Acer platanoides 'Globosum')
- Swedish Whitebeam 'Brouwers' (Sorbus intermedia 'Brouwers')
- Cockspur Thorn (Crataegus crus galli/prunifolia 'Splendens')
- Umbrella Black Locust/Robinia (Robinia pseudoacacia 'Umbraculifera')
- Dogberry (Sorbus decora')

Fastigiate form:

- Sycamore/Maple 'Erectum' (Acer pseudoplatanus 'Erectum')
- Hornbeam (Carpinus betulus 'Fastigiata')
- Oak (Quercus robur 'Fastigiata')
- Maidenhair Tree (Gingko biloba 'Fastigiata Blagon')
- Callery Pear (Pyrus calleryana 'Chanticleer')
- Black locust/Robinia (Robinia pseudoacacia 'Stricta')

4. Wind-tolerant trees

- Beech (Fagus sylvatica)
- Sycamore (Acer pseudoplatanus)
- Field Maple (Acer campestre)
- Oak (Quercus robur)
- Hornbeam (Carpinus betulus)
- Swedish Whitebeam (Sorbus intermedia)
- Grey Alder (Alnus incana)
- Birch (Betula pubescens)
- Hawthorn (Crataegus monogyna)
- Scots Pine (Pinus sylvestris)



5. Trees attractive to birds and bees

- Maple (Acer)
- Small-Leaved Lime (Tilia cordata)
- White Willow (Salix alba)
- Crack Willow (Salix fragilis)
- Goat Willow/Sallow (Salix caprea)
- Juneberry/Snowy Mespilus (Amelanchier lamarckii)
- Wild service Tree (Sorbus torminalis)
- Bullace/Damson Plum (Prunus domestica insititia)
- Wild Pear (Pyrus pyraster)
- Crab Apple (Malus sylvestris)
- Bird Cherry (Prunus padus)
- Alder Buckthorn (Rhamnus frangula)
- Purging Buckthorn (Rhamnus cathartica)
- Guelder Rose (Viburnum opulus)
- Cultivated fruit trees

6. Trees for gardens

- Rowans (Sorbus tschonoskii & Sorbus hupehensis
- Amelanchier 'Robin Hill'
- Himalayan Birch (Betula jacquemontii)
- Malus 'John Downie'
- Medlar (Mespilus germanica)





- Thorn (Crataegus lavallei 'Carrierei')
- Thorn (Crataegus laevigata 'Plena)
- Pear (Malus 'Hillieri')
- Cherry (Prunus sargentii, serrulata 'Kanzan' and 'Shimidsu')
- Cultivated and wild fruit trees

7. Trees showing adaptability to climate change

This list may expand based on further research into trees and their climate resilience.

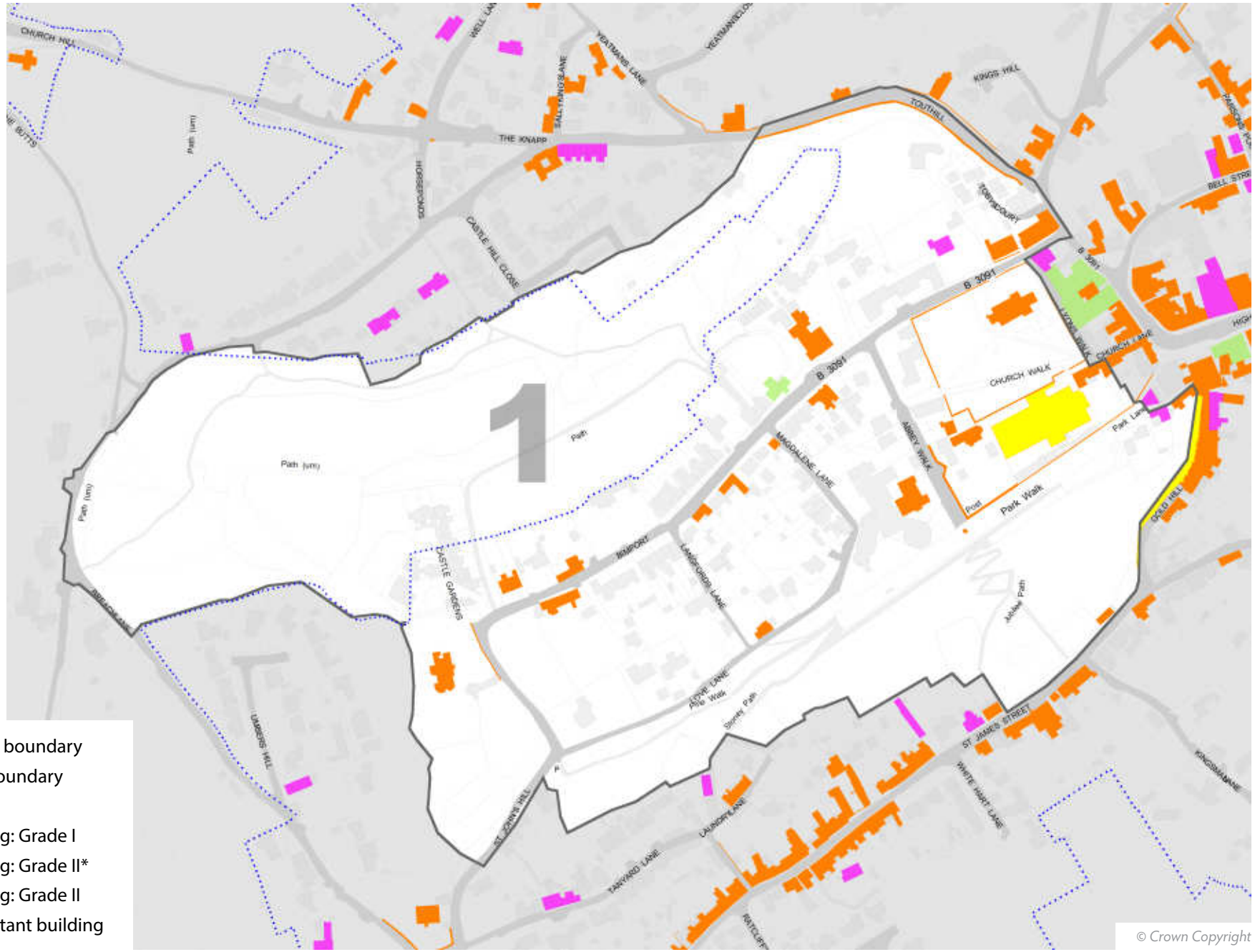
- Field maple
- Hornbeam
- Sweet chestnut
- Cockspur thorn
- Ginkgo
- Medlar
- Scots pine
- Turkey oak
- Sessile oak
- Whitebeam

7.13 Appendix K – Locally Important Buildings – List and Maps by Zone

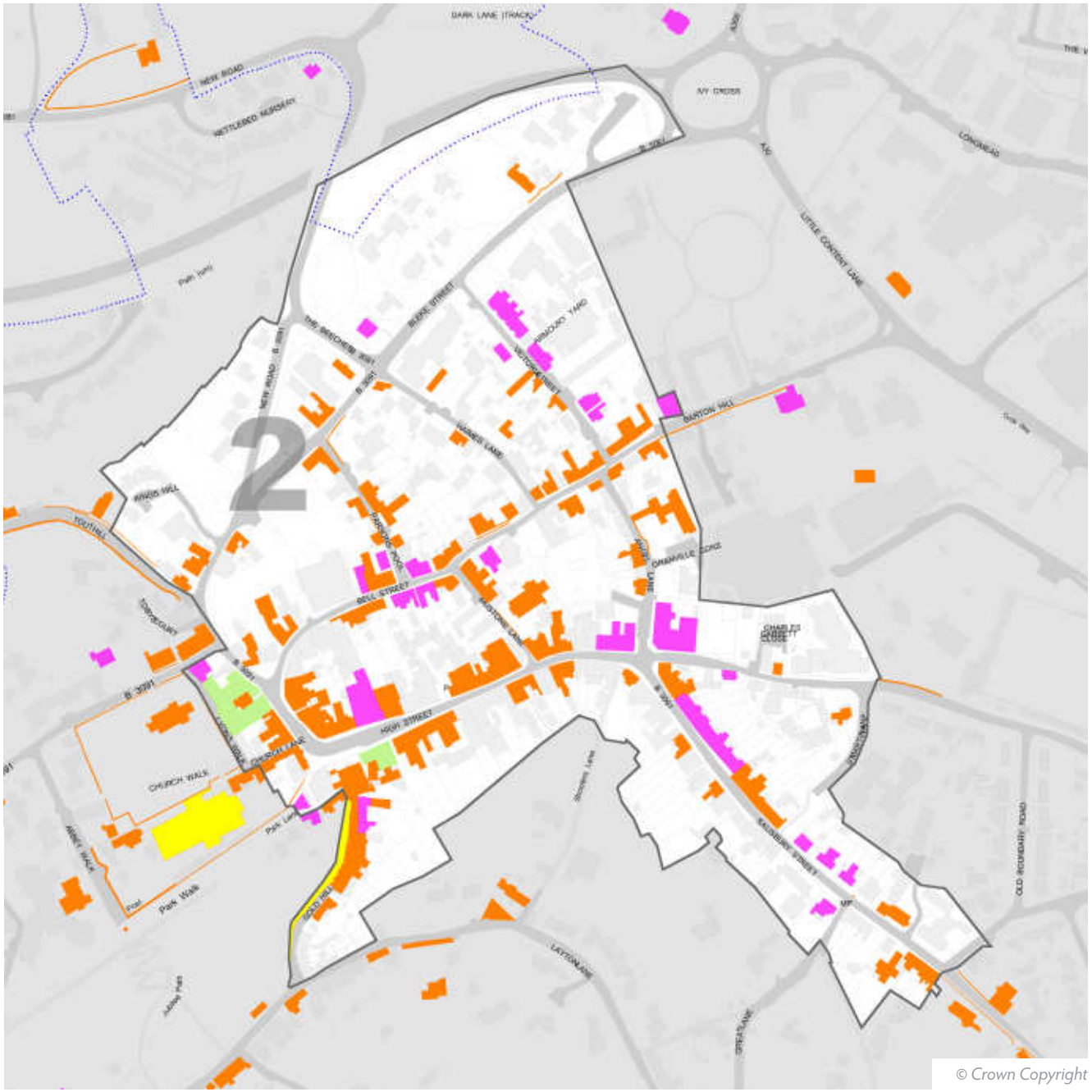
List of locally important buildings (not listed building status)	Description
The Old Granary Barton Hill (opposite swimming pool)	Former granary building featuring sack pulley housing. Local Motcombe bricks
Rutters Office	A character building including unusual iron railings to boundary. Important corner
28 High Street—Hine and Parsons	Upper parts are fine Queen Anne interior
7-9 St James	Attractive pair of brick and stone houses
11-17 St James	Old stone cottages
92 St James	Old stone cottage
1-3 Stoney Path	
25-27 Tanyard Lane	Old stone cottages that should have been listed
8-26 Salisbury Street	Attractive row of houses in Motcombe brick
37 Salisbury Street	Attractive stone house
46-54 Salisbury Street	Westminster estate houses in greenstone and Motcombe brick
1-9 Bell Street	Includes the old Fire Station and Midland Bank passage
56-58 High Street	Stone and slate business premises with attractive rounded corner to Angel Square. 54B was the original cinema
2 Bell Street—Friths opticians	Was the church house.
14-16 and 18 Bell Street	Stone and slate commercial buildings
21-27 Bell Street	Westminster estate houses in brick and stone
35 Bell Street	Substantial estate house, former solicitors' offices
1-6 Ivy Cross	Substantial Edwardian houses in stone and slate
Well Lane 8-10, 18, 20, 26, 28, 3, 21, 23 and 7-15	Victorian and older cottages that contribute to local character, including stone boundary walls
1 and 3 Yeatmans Lane	Pair of stone cottages
9-18 Tout Hill	Terraced cottages contributing to the local character
22 Long Cross	Stone cottage
4–8 and 14–18 Breach Lane	Estate cottages in two sets of four
31 Breach Lane	Stone cottage
The Old Coach House, Breach Lane	Stone built, mullioned windows
53 Breach lane	Very high Victorian brick house with outbuildings
3 Coppice Street	One of the last old stone cottages in Coppice Street

List of locally important buildings (not listed building status)	Description
15 Bimport (Bimport House)	A substantial Westminster estate house. Unusual windows and detailing
4 Park Lane	A key house facing Park Walk with unusual plan
3 Park Lane	Former manse
5 Gold Hill	Former Quaker Meeting House
6-7 Gold Hill	Although a modern roof, important location should justify protection. School House (Old Grammar School) is the former Blue Coat School, built as the boys Grammar School
5-9 and 11-27 Victoria Street	Attractive Victorian houses
14-16 Victoria Street	Attractive Victorian houses
1 Parsons Pool	Attractive stone and slate building
2-4 Parsons Pool	Stone cottages
Melbury Down House, Upper Blandford Road	Unusual and substantial brick house. Focal point building that contributes to setting of the Royal Chase Hotel (opposite)
Lower Pensbury—on Motcombe Road	Stone house, 17th century
10 Nettlebed Nursery	Victorian stone house
The Post Office	The PO was built in time of dire austerity just post WW11. Known locally as probably the best consciously designed building in the town
Barton Hill House	The original Barton Hill House dates back to the Victorian period (a rebuild of an 18th century property), and comprises a square block in two storeys with gabled attic windows and a central bay on the ground floor.

1. Bimport


1
Town Council boundary
Settlement boundary
Listed building: Grade I
Listed building: Grade II*
Listed building: Grade II
Locally important building
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2. Shaftesbury Town Centre

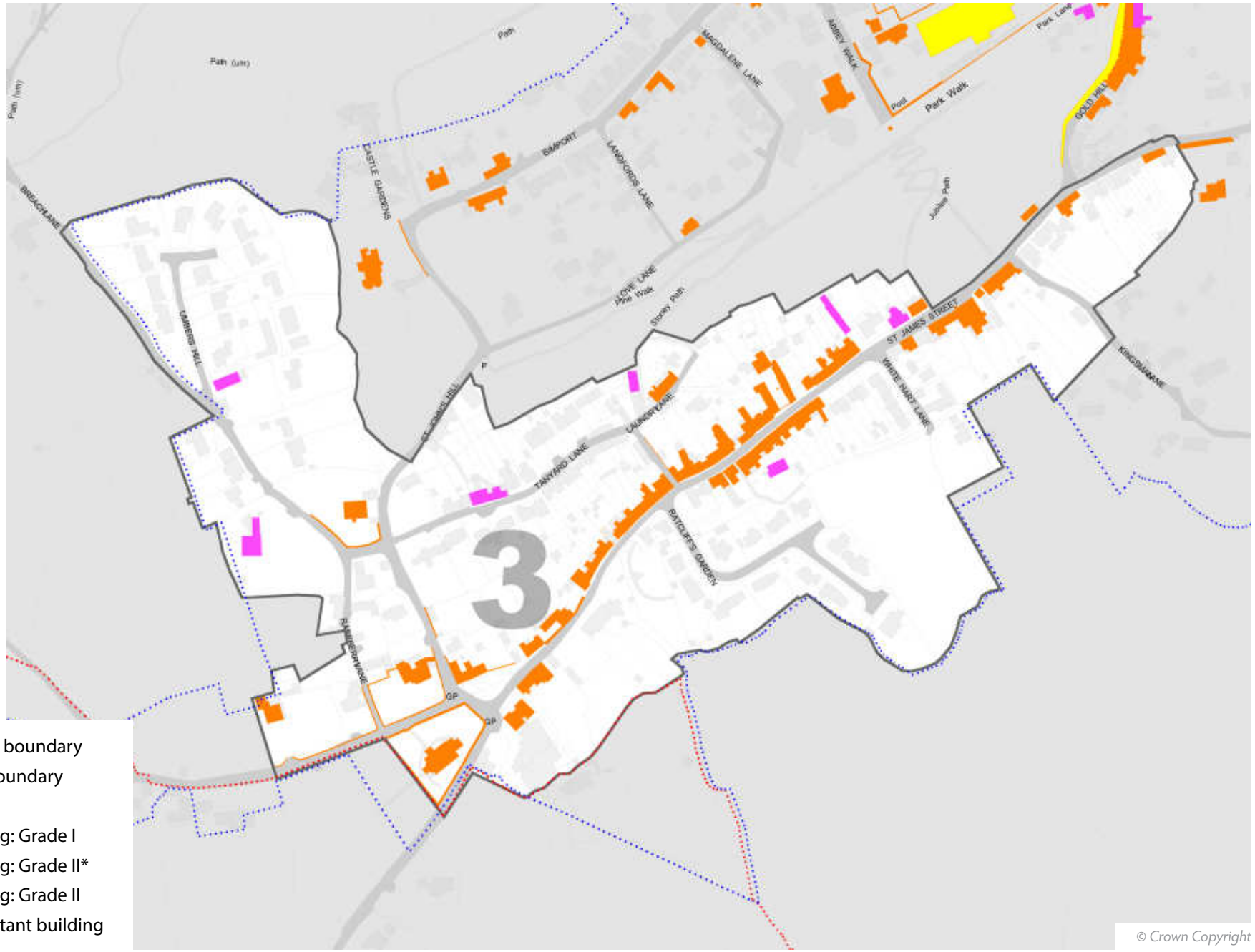


Town Council boundary
Settlement boundary

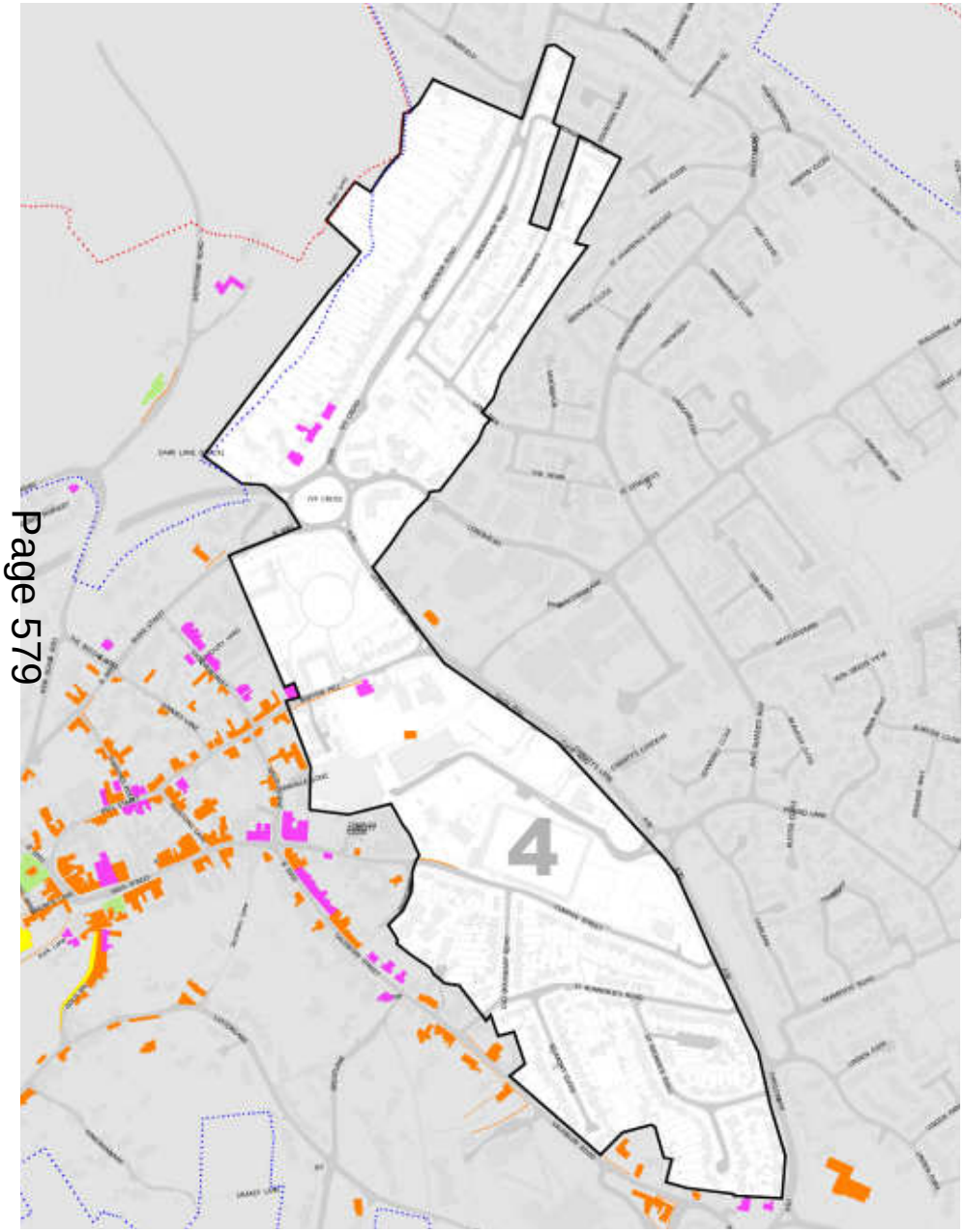
Listed building: Grade I
Listed building: Grade II*
Listed building: Grade II
Locally important building

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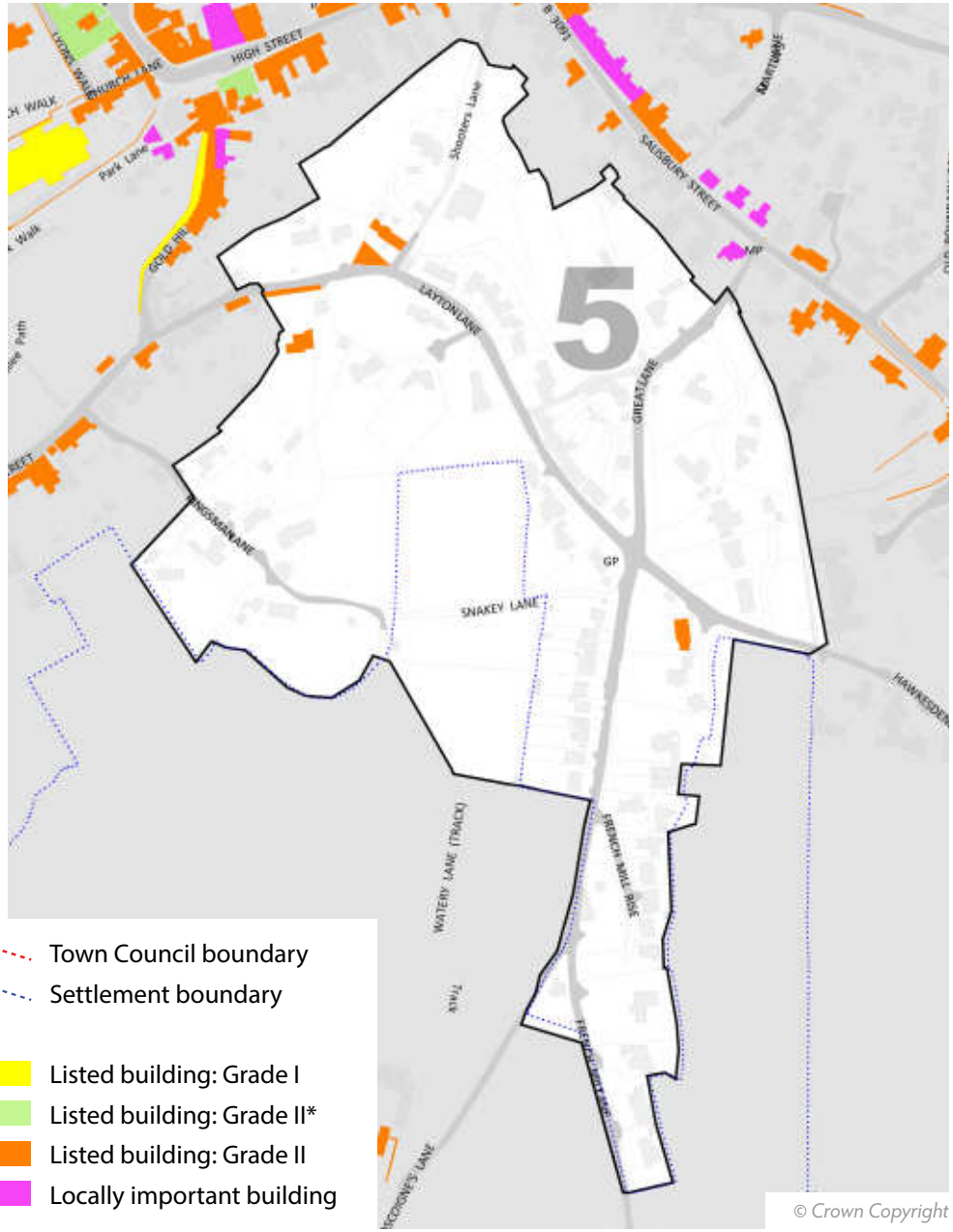
3. St James


3
Town Council boundary
Settlement boundary
Listed building: Grade I
Listed building: Grade II*
Listed building: Grade II
Locally important building
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4. Barton Hill and Cockram's Field



5. Layton Lane

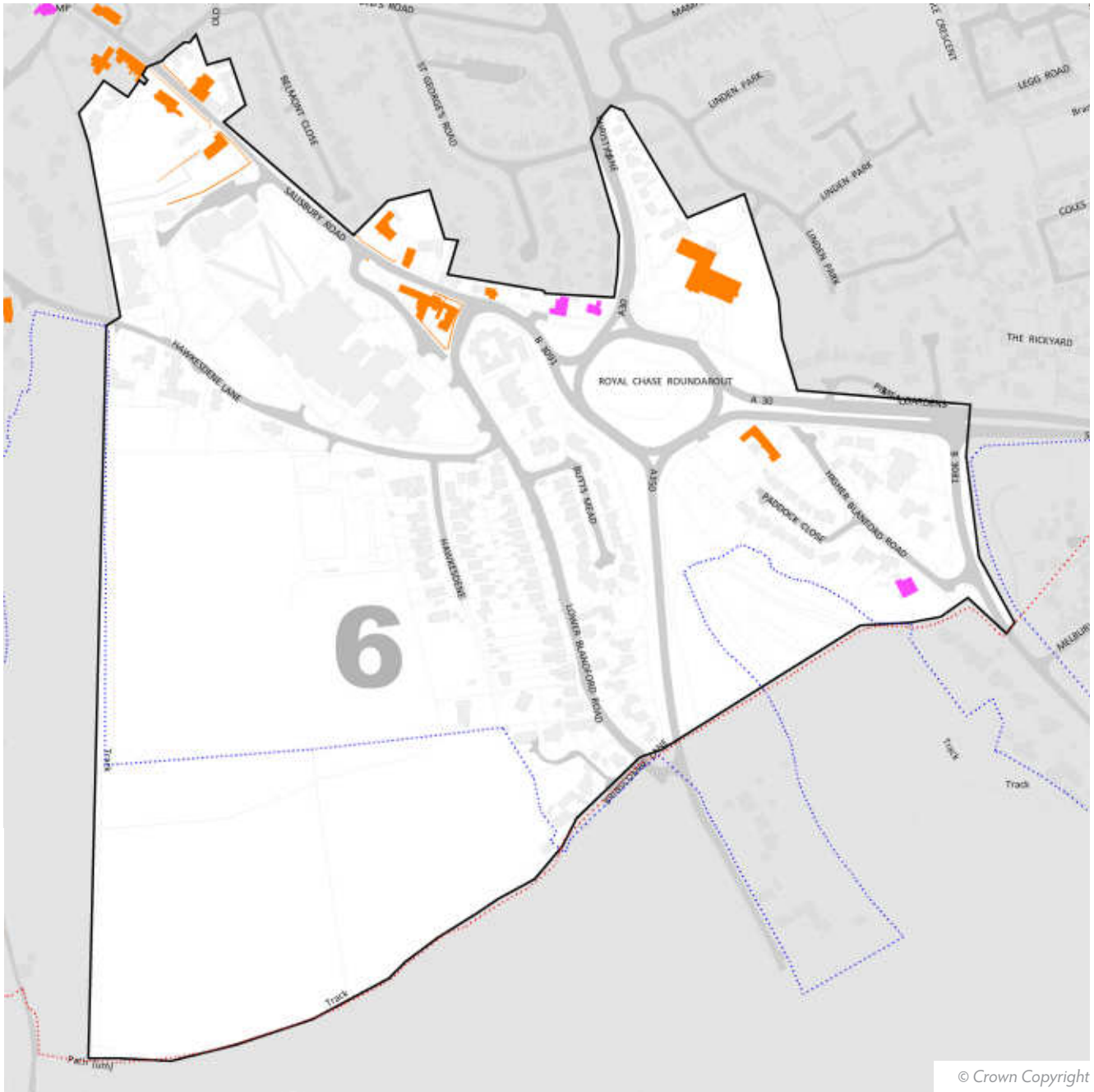


Town Council boundary
Settlement boundary

Listed building: Grade I
Listed building: Grade II*
Listed building: Grade II
Locally important building

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6. Cann

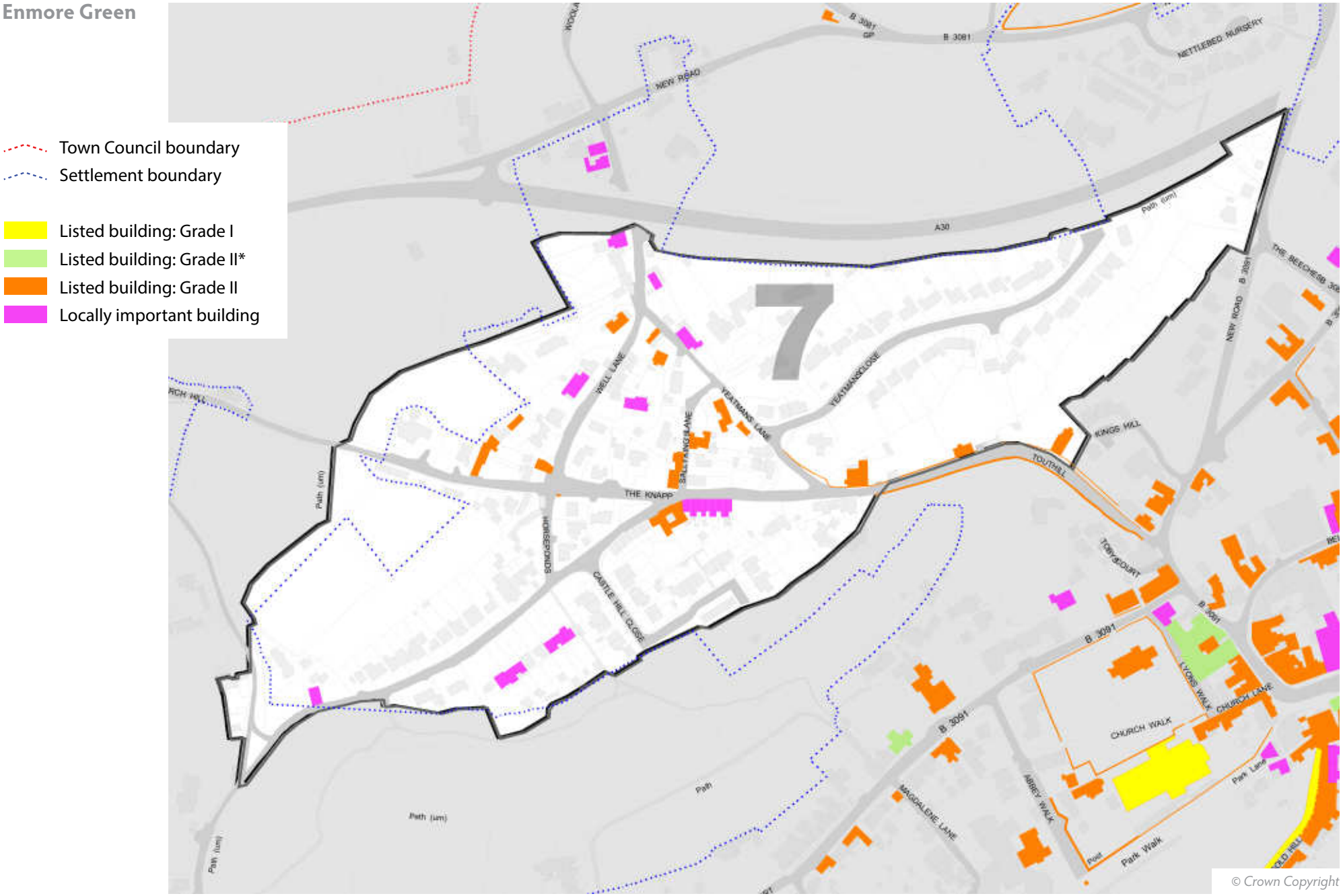


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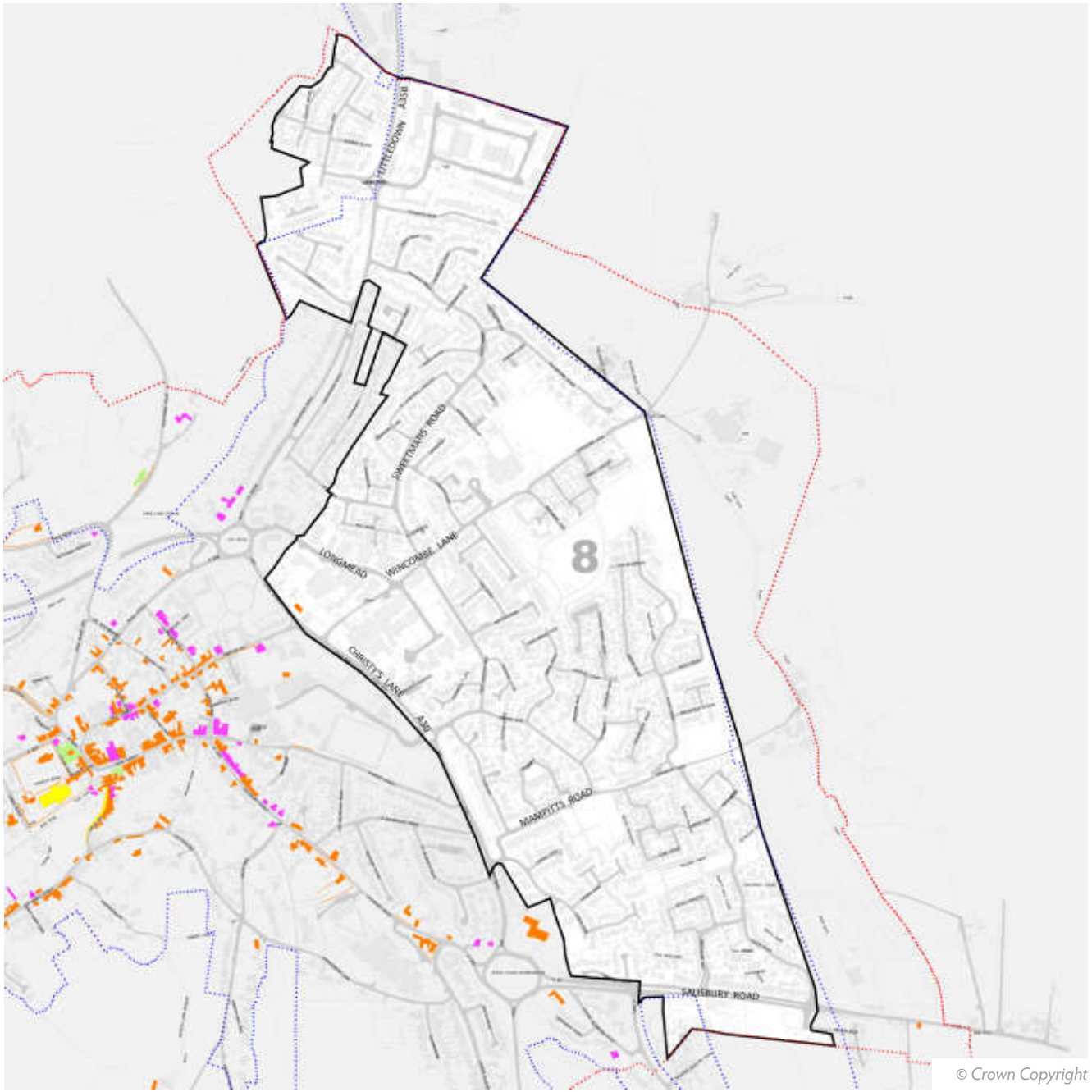
Town Council boundary
Settlement boundary

Listed building: Grade I
Listed building: Grade II*
Listed building: Grade II
Locally important building

7. Enmore Green



8. Land of Christy's Lane including Grosvenor Road



Town Council boundary
Settlement boundary

Listed building: Grade I
Listed building: Grade II*
Listed building: Grade II
Locally important building

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7.14 Appendix L – List of Local Green Space (LGS) and Important Treed Areas (ITA)

Local Green Space (LGS)

as shown on **Map SFGI1**.

Further details and rationale for designation as Local Green Space is available in *Shaftesbury's Green Infrastructure Audit document*.

				Particular Local Significance					
	Green Space	Area (ha)	Local importance & use of the space	Landscape value	Heritage value	Recreation value	Wildlife value	Public access	Land-owners
LGS1	Castle Hill Close play area	0.03	Equipped, overlooked, fenced play area for young children in Enmore Green where there is no other provision. A beech hedge has been planted around the perimeter. This in time will hide the unattractive fencing and provide important cover for wildlife. Under the Town Tree Plan planting schedule further planting here is planned which will increase its landscape, wildlife and recreation value.			HIGH		Yes – inc Play Area	STC
LGS2	Wincombe Rec (N section)	0.69	Popular facility with range of children's play equipment suitable all ages, includes ball court, adult outdoor gym, space for 5-a-side football. Well placed as opposite primary school, near to dense housing and overlooked by a well-used pedestrian route. A green corridor that connects the trees and hedgerows of Wincombe Lane with those of the amenity area. Under the Town Tree Plan planting schedule further planting is planned here which will increase its landscape, wildlife and recreation value.	Medium		HIGH	Medium	Yes – inc Play Area	STC
LGS3	Cockram's Play Area	0.17	Equipped children's play area adjoining basketball court, adjacent to youth club and with some parking. Central to the town. Only play area serving either side of Christy's Lane south of Tesco. Mature boundary hedge. Under the Town Tree Plan planting schedule further planting is planned here which will increase its landscape, wildlife and recreation value.			HIGH		Yes – inc Play Area	STC
LGS4	Barton Hill play area	0.20	Children's play area, MUGA, skate park, adult outdoor gym within a highly popular and attractive green open space. Formally designated as an IOWA in the 2003 Local Plan. Next to bowling club and green and adjacent to outdoor swimming pool. Bounded in part, and separated from neighbouring main roads, by a mature hedge. Under the Town Tree Plan planting schedule further planting is planned here which will increase its landscape, wildlife and recreation value.	Medium		HIGH	Medium	Yes – inc Play Area	STC

				Particular Local Significance					
	Green Space	Area (ha)	Local importance & use of the space	Landscape value	Heritage value	Recreation value	Wildlife value	Public access	Land-owners
LGS5	St James' Park	0.40	The space is designed as an open play area, with natural wooden equipment for all ages and a small flat area for ball games within this much used larger space very popular with young families. The only such play space that is readily accessible to residents of St James and to people visiting historic core of the town. The areas for play are well integrated within the biodiverse park on this south side of the spur and look over the historic settlement of St James. The only such play space that is readily accessible to residents of St James and to people visiting historic core of the town. Identified as being of historic interest as part of a former Deer Park in the Dorset HERS. Formally designated as an IOWA in the 2003 Local Plan.	HIGH	Medium	HIGH	Medium	Yes – inc Play Area	STC
LGS6	Ash Close Play Area	0.26	Green space with range of play equipment for different ages, space for informal ball games, two new wooden picnic benches and a seat. Enclosed by fencing and accessed on four sides from parking areas serving residential estates. This is the only play area currently serving children on the far northeast side of the town, an area that is particularly short of publicly-accessible green space. Under the Town Tree Plan planting schedule further planting is planned here which will increase its landscape, wildlife and recreation value. Formally designated as an IOWA in the 2003 Local Plan.	Medium		HIGH	Medium	Yes – inc Play Area	STC
LGS7	Gower Road Play Area	0.21	Open and overlooked play area with space for ball games. Equipment for young children located on one side of the area. Young trees to the sides and bordered by a conserved hedgerow on northern edge. Well used by local residents from the area immediately north of Mampitts Lane. Under the Town Tree Plan planting schedule further planting is planned here which will increase its landscape, wildlife and recreation value.	Medium		HIGH	Medium	Yes – inc Play Area	STC
LGS8	Meles Mead play area	0.27	Enclosed and overlooked sitting area, small area of amenity grass, shrubs, trees and play equipment. Links to footpaths/cycleways (and conserved hedgerow) running north/south through adjacent development as well as connecting with the east/west wildlife corridor. Adjacent to informal access to semi-natural SUDS corridor to the east.	Medium		HIGH	HIGH	Yes – inc Play Area	DC (S106)
LGS9	East Green	0.16	Three trees, a conserved hedgerow and a green open space with an enclosed young children's play area at one end. Overlooked & surrounded by houses in one of the more densely developed parts of this estate. Very well used by local residents of all ages who have no readily accessible alternative provision.	Medium		HIGH	Medium	Yes – inc Play Area	Mgmt. Co. (S106)
LGS10	Shaftesbury Football Club	0.86	Adjoins Cockram's Recreation Ground. Popular 3G football pitch with floodlights, changing rooms, Sports Bar and parking. Formally designated as an IOWA in the 2003 Local Plan.			HIGH		Club members and community activities overseen by the club	STC
LGS11	Barton Hill Bowling Green	0.23	Bowling club & green bounded by a substantial hedge of wildlife value. Adjacent to outdoor swimming pool, play areas and amenity space. Formally designated as an IOWA in the 2003 Local Plan.			HIGH	Medium	Club members	STC

				Particular Local Significance					
	Green Space	Area (ha)	Local importance & use of the space	Landscape value	Heritage value	Recreation value	Wildlife value	Public access	Land-owners
LGS12	Park Walk & Pine Walk	0.39	Park Walk is a very popular walking (Right of Way N1/18) and seating area used by both residents and visitors. Mature trees and all-weather surface, which overlies archaeology of the Abbey (SAM) and has led to issues with selection & planting of new trees here. Close to the High Street with stunning views across Blackmore Vale to the south. Regularly used for fairs, markets and civic events and provides access to Rose Garden, St James' Park and paths leading across the top of the hill to Castle Hill Green. Pine Walk (RoW N1/22) leads off the far end of Park Walk, the gravel footpath leads on to St John's Hill. Beech trees and snowdrops grow on the banks and there are a few remaining Scots Pines. Important local wildlife habitat/corridor.	HIGH	HIGH	HIGH	HIGH	Publicly owned and crossed by definitive RoW	STC
LGS13	Enmore Green Recreation Ground	0.49	Small recreation ground enclosed by fence and equipped with one set of goal posts. It sits between allotments and the Donkey Field where there is a community orchard, thus it is part of a biodiverse group of interconnected green spaces. The ground is well supported by the local community and used for junior football. Managed by a local group and there is no alternative level space within 700m. The recreation ground and adjacent green spaces are overlooked from Castle Hill Green.	Medium		HIGH	Medium	Open to all	STC
LGS14	Rose Garden (Park Walk Gardens)	0.11	Enclosed and very attractive garden with both formal & informal planting (supporting many pollinating insects), in a visually sensitive location on the edge of the spur and close to the town centre. Adjacent to Park Walk, St James Park & Abbey. Popular with visitors as well as locals and often used for picnics. Dog free and safe for small children.	HIGH	Medium	HIGH	Medium	Open to all	STC
LGS15	Trinity Churchyard	0.75	Setting for Trinity Church, a feature of Shaftesbury's skyline. The former parish church is now deconsecrated and the churchyard has become an important park. Pollarded Lime Avenue, thousands of snowdrops and seating. Included in circular walks around the old town. Identified as Ecological Network local space.	HIGH	HIGH	HIGH	Medium	Open to all	STC/Trinity Centre Trust
LGS16	Library garden	0.04	A 'pocket-park' adjacent to Library with 4 well-used seats, attractive planting with small trees and raised sensory garden that is maintained by volunteers. People walking between Post Office/Angel Lane and Bell Street use this as a short-cut. In this part of the conservation area most houses front straight onto the pavement so the garden provides a green infrastructure 'stepping stone' for pedestrians and birdlife.	Medium		HIGH	Medium	Open to all	DC
LGS17	Wincombe Rec Gnds Southern section	2.06	Popular large open green space surrounded by mature trees & hedgerows, some additional tree planting, all- weather footpaths, and linked to play area in northern section making this facility popular with all ages. The only recreation ground serving the large community in housing east of Christy's Lane, and an important open space providing visual interest in this built-up area. On route to large primary school on opposite side of Wincombe Lane and accessible from housing to the north, south and west. Under the Town Tree Plan planting schedule further planting is planned here which will increase its landscape, wildlife and recreation value.	Medium		HIGH	Medium	Open to all	STC

				Particular Local Significance					
	Green Space	Area (ha)	Local importance & use of the space	Landscape value	Heritage value	Recreation value	Wildlife value	Public access	Land-owners
LGS18	Great Ground Garden	0.02	Small enclosed area adjacent to Wincombe Rec, access from Great Ground Rd. Local residents often comment on the importance of this locally valued community space.			HIGH	Medium	Open to all	STC
LGS19	Cockram's Field Recreation Ground	0.73	Central sports/amenity space accessible to residents from whole of Shaftesbury and the only facility close to housing south of Tesco. Basketball court, youth club, some parking on site. Bounded by a mature hedgerow (Coppice St) and trees (Christy's Lane). Under the Town Tree Plan planting schedule further planting is planned here which will increase its landscape, wildlife and recreation value. Formally designated as an IOWA in the 2003 Local Plan.			HIGH		Open to all	STC
LGS20	Barton Hill Rec	1.18	Highly popular green open space which contains children's play area, MUGA, skate park, outdoor gym, bowling club & green. Adjacent to outdoor swimming pool. Also used by visiting fairgrounds and for community events. Complements Cockram's Field and is readily accessible, in particular for people living north of the town centre and in estates to the north east of Ivy Cross roundabout. The downside of this central location is that the whole park is very exposed to traffic pollution, alleviated only to a degree by the boundary hedge and trees. Under the Town Tree planting schedule further planting is planned here which will increase its landscape, wildlife and recreation value. This land was purchased by the town prior to 1950s. Formally designated as an IOWA in the 2003 Local Plan.	Medium		HIGH	Medium	Open to all	STC
LGS21	Brionne Garden (corner of Bleke St and Victoria St)	0.04	A 'pocket park' with mixed planting and seats, well used by local people who cut through or rest here. Is next to sheltered housing complex and accessible to residents. Named for and linked to twin town, Brionne. Attractive espaliered hedging. Exposed to traffic pollution.			HIGH	Medium	Open to all	STC
LGS22	Castle Hill Green	0.83	Open amenity green space adjacent to the town centre with seating and five picnic benches, an all-weather path, and a large informal games and walking area. Stunning views to the north. Very well used and popular with dog walkers/teenagers/families. Provides access to paths to Castle Hill slopes, Castle Mound and Queen Mother's Garden. There are some mature trees and the space connects with the wilder areas of the slopes to north and west. This is a scheduled monument because it overlies a late Saxon urban area, recently explored through a radar survey.	HIGH	HIGH	HIGH	Medium	Open to all	STC
LGS23	Queen Mother Garden	0.06	An attractive nature-focussed garden with bee-friendly planting. Enclosed quiet space with friendship bench seating and long countryside views. Adjoins Castle Hill Green and the pathway between Castle Hill slopes & Bimport.	Medium	Medium	HIGH	HIGH	Open to all	STC
LGS24	Rolt Millennium Green	0.20	Attractive community garden with open country views to south. Mixed planting & fruit trees with a grassed area and all-weather path. The southern section of the garden is informally planted and wildlife friendly. Managed by local charity.	HIGH		HIGH	Medium	Open to all	The Rolt Millennium Green Trust

				Particular Local Significance					
	Green Space	Area (ha)	Local importance & use of the space	Landscape value	Heritage value	Recreation value	Wildlife value	Public access	Land-owners
LGS25	Ten Acres Southeast section and 13.1.2 Ten Acres Southwest Section	0.14	These two housing green spaces with added amenity value are within a housing estate off Nettlecombe. Both grassed, one (SW) providing possibility of ball games, one (SE) with uneven surface which provides access to Wincombe Rec. The houses here have only small gardens and the degree of over-looking makes these spaces safe for play. Formally designated as an IOWA in the 2003 Local Plan.	Medium		HIGH		Open to all	Sovereign Housing association
LGS26	Rutter Close Green	0.06	Small public open space with maturing trees, grass and seating alongside well-used pedestrian access to Pound Lane and Tesco. Surrounded by housing in an area with limited other public green space.	Medium		HIGH	Medium	Open to all	STC
LGS27	The Rickyard	0.08	Small landscaped green space with seating, curved pathways, small trees, surrounded by beech hedge. Overlooked by surrounding houses—like a small village green. Connected with well-used pedestrian routes and right of way N1/8.	Medium		HIGH	Medium	Open to all	DC
LGS28	Linden Park Green	0.19	Popular green space surrounded by mature trees and overlooked by some of the homes on Linden Park estate. Rear of the space is adjacent to the biodiverse wooded grounds of the Royal Chase Hotel. Used for informal play and ball games, by dog walkers, and hosts community 'get-together'. It's the only community recreation space within the Linden Park development. Formally designated as an IOWA in the 2003 Local Plan.	Medium		HIGH	Medium	Open to all	STC
LGS29	Salisbury St. green	0.03	A linear open space with grass and trees and well-used footpath leading from Salisbury Street to St Martin's Lane, at the end of a long line of Listed Buildings. This area has its own management plan, consisting of bee-friendly planting and other improvements to support biodiversity.	Medium	Medium	HIGH		Open to all	STC
LGS30	Trinity Road green	0.10	Small unfenced public open space with grass and young trees surrounded by housing and enhancing the attractiveness of this development. As the trees mature the value to wildlife will increase further. Formally designated as an IOWA in the 2003 Local Plan.	Medium		HIGH	Medium	Open to all	STC
LGS31	Maple Road/Hoeller Close	0.08	Mature copse of trees (subject to TPO), formerly hedgerow trees, next to recent residential development to the west where there are very few such large trees. Will face a new green space and play area to the east. Some young trees have been planted to supplement this copse.	Medium		Medium	Medium	Open to all	
LGS32	Ten Acres West Section	0.26	These are the two northernmost spaces that are part of Ten Acres estate with close packed houses set around amenity grassed areas ('green lungs'). The west section comprises a wide verge alongside King Alfred's Way with an all-weather path diagonally across it. This adds amenity to housing that is close to Longmead industrial area. The second space is a long narrow strip of grass with seats and two raised beds totally surrounded by dense housing.	Medium		HIGH		Open to all	Sovereign Housing Association
LGS33	St James' green	0.02	This small triangular green is an important character feature at the eastern edge of the settlement of St James. It is opposite the school and church and has an old finger post (as well as some more modern signs)and forms the setting to a number of Listed Buildings.	Medium	HIGH	HIGH	Medium	Open to all	DC

	Green Space	Area (ha)	Local importance & use of the space	Particular Local Significance					
				Landscape value	Heritage value	Recreation value	Wildlife value	Public access	Land-owners
LGS34	Enmore Green triangle	0.03	A grassed triangle in the centre of Enmore Green at the junction between The Knapp, Tout Hill and Yeatman's Lane. Site of a medieval well (as recorded in the Dorset HERS) There is a small notice board and a seat—all contributing to Enmore Green's village 'feel'. Under the Town Tree Plan planting schedule further planting is planned here which will enhance its landscape, and wildlife value.	Medium	HIGH	Medium		Open to all	STC
LGS35	Butts Knapp (triangle opposite Shaftesbury School)	0.01	This wide verge with large mature trees and grass, bounded by a stone wall along Salisbury Street, is opposite the secondary school and close to a bus stop. It contributes to the character of Salisbury Road, frames the school entrance and has local significance—evident in the new memorial bench and war memorial. Trees subject to TPO. Setting of a number of Listed Buildings.	Medium	Medium	HIGH	Medium	Open to all	DC
LGS36	Castle Hill slopes	5.09	This semi-natural green space occupies the northern slopes of the spur. There are wooded areas and some important trees, footpaths and steps connecting the hilltop to Enmore Green and the countryside beyond. The slopes are popular with dog walkers, teenagers, & families. Managed as a local nature reserve and designated as an Ecological Network local space. High recreational value, slopes of historic significance as setting for the Saxon hilltop town and Castle Mound, value to wildlife & biodiversity.	HIGH	Medium	HIGH	HIGH	Open to all but steep sided slopes make access difficult however there are well-maintained footpaths	STC
LGS37	Enmore Green Donkey Field Community Orchard	0.57	Very attractive orchard, wildlife garden and open space with views just beyond the settlement boundary. Leased to a local community group. Being between the allotments /playing field and churchyard, it provides a transition between the settlement and farmland beyond.	HIGH		HIGH	Medium	Open to all	STC
LGS38	Breach Common	4.19	Natural space with many mature trees. Since grazing rights are no longer exercised this is becoming an important site for biodiversity. Hardy's Way goes through the Common and other footpaths link to open countryside. Identified as an Ecological Network local site, adjoins the Breach Fields SSSI. During 2020 a community group, the Friends of Breach Common, has re-formed and embarked on some pond restoration and path clearance including an ancient hollow way.	Medium		HIGH	HIGH	Registered common land, Open to all with several footpaths but some parts inaccessible due to undergrowth	
LGS39	St James' Park	1.60	Green public space with play equipment (documented separately) on slope between Park Walk and historic settlement of St James. Very popular with families, many trees, biodiverse, wildlife. Well-used path and Jubilee Steps up the slope. Identified as being of historic interest as part of a former Deer Park in the Dorset HERS. Formally designated as an IOWA in the 2003 Local Plan.	Medium	Medium	HIGH	Medium	Open to all	STC
LGS40	Jeanneau Copse	0.21	Band of mature trees separating industrial estate from housing off King Alfred's Way—acts as a welcome buffer zone. Gate (locked) separates access path from the pedestrian footpath but this has recreational potential and there has been public access in the past. Also potential for community use (Forest School interest) if maintained appropriately.	Medium		Medium	HIGH	Currently access is limited for health and safety reasons.	STC
LGS41	Castle mound	0.72	Castle Mound is a scheduled monument on the 'At Risk' register of Historic England. Set high on the edge of Castle Hill Slopes it is now being managed more sympathetically by rangers.	HIGH	HIGH		Medium	Open to all	STC

				Particular Local Significance					
	Green Space	Area (ha)	Local importance & use of the space	Landscape value	Heritage value	Recreation value	Wildlife value	Public access	Land-owners
LGS42	The Wilderness	2.67	Public access via a right of way (N1/11) that runs north/south over the top of this densely wooded extremely steep slope. From this path there are striking views to the west through the trees. Part of The Slopes, the trees here are an important element in the Shaftesbury landscape and subject to an area TPO. The Wilderness has historic significance as the likely quarry providing stone for the Abbey. STC with a high level of public support tried unsuccessfully to secure the Wilderness for the town by auction late 2018.	HIGH	Medium	Medium	HIGH	Limited to RoW that crossed the area	Private owner
LGS43	St John's Churchyard, Enmore Green	0.65	Churchyard on the NW edge of the town, between The Donkey Field and St John the Evangelist's church, slopes steeply down to the church so that it overlooks the church tower. The particular attraction of this space is the way it integrates with the Donkey Field, recreation ground and allotments which together meet all needs. Formally designated as an IOWA in the 2003 Local Plan.	Medium	HIGH	Medium	Medium	Open to all	Church Commis-sioners
LGS44	Bury Litton—old churchyard of St John	0.18	Ancient yew tree (The Shaston Yew) recognised as significant and is possibly pre-Christian. In the past this tree would have been an important and very visible feature on the hillside. Gravestones, including some from 17th century and two rare mushroom shaped stones, amongst other trees. Evidence of St John's church is elusive. Scheduled Monument. Formally designated as an IOWA in the 2003 Local Plan.	Medium	HIGH	Medium	Medium	Open to all	St James PCC
LGS45	St James churchyard	0.24	Just west of the church, this is still in use as a graveyard. Peaceful and welcoming with lovely views and also visible from distant viewpoints. Large field next to the church is used for overflow parking. A hard surface was created at the top of this field (Dec 2018). Formally designated as an IOWA in the 2003 Local Plan.	HIGH	HIGH	HIGH	Medium	Open to all	Church Commis-sioners
LGS46	St Rumbold's	0.21	Access around school buildings from Salisbury Road. Attractive quiet space next to school. It is not obvious Churchyard (Cann) that the churchyard is in the public domain and adjoins the Listed church. Boundary hedge adjoining footpath severely cut back recently. Formally designated as an IOWA in the 2003 Local Plan.	HIGH	HIGH		Medium	Access over private land of the Academy Trust.	Academy Trust
LGS47	Mampitts Cemetery	1.06	This cemetery off Mampitts Road is expected to meet the needs of local people for some time to come. There are allotments on eastern side. Surrounded by low hedge and housing development. Has an open feel with small number of mature trees. Also site of Neolithic/Bronze Age pits (Dorset HERS). Under the Town Tree Plan planting schedule further planting is planned here which will enhance its landscape and wildlife value. Formally designated as an IOWA in the 2003 Local Plan.	Medium	HIGH	Medium		Open to all	STC
LGS48	Wrightson Allotments	0.23	Enclosed allotment site off Bimport with 14 half allotments and six people on the waiting list (October 2024).	Medium		HIGH	Medium	Allotment holders	Wrightson Allotments Trust

	Green Space	Area (ha)	Local importance & use of the space	Particular Local Significance					
				Landscape value	Heritage value	Recreation value	Wildlife value	Public access	Land-owners
LGS49	Enmore Green Allotments	0.78	Allotments are owned by the town council but very well managed by the Enmore Green Allotment Assn. Attractive site adjacent to recreation ground and Donkey Field with its community orchard. Overlooked from Castle Hill Green. Formally designated as an IOWA in the 2003 Local Plan.	Medium		HIGH	Medium	Allotment holders	STC
LGS50	Bray Allotments	0.14	Small site, hidden away and difficult to access because of traffic at Ivy Cross roundabout.			HIGH	Medium	Allotment holders	STC
LGS51	St James allotments	0.94	Well-used allotments on the southern edge of the settlement of St James with a right of way (N1/16) along one edge and bisected by a popular path. Visible from outside the town. Formally designated as an IOWA in the 2003 Local Plan.	Medium		HIGH	Medium	Open to all via RoW	STC
LGS52	Mampitts Allotments	0.25	Allotments between cemetery and new housing development, bounded by reinstated hedgerow to east. Formally designated as an IOWA in the 2003 Local Plan.	Medium		HIGH	Medium	Allotment holders	STC
LGS53	Meles Mead—wildlife corridor/ reserve	0.91	Natural space & east/west wildlife corridor for badgers with central part enclosed by metal railings to protect wildlife and not therefore regarded as accessible natural green space. Bordered to north and south by grass verges with some small trees and overlooked by housing. At the western end there are extensions to these verges which have no apparent amenity function. Pathways alongside the grassed areas have an urban feel (hard surface, straight lines) and signs on the railings tell people to 'beware' of the protected site. Treated more sympathetically this natural space could be a distinctive landscape and recreation feature within the estate.	Medium			HIGH	Part enclosed, excluding access. Footpaths along outer edges open to all.	DC
LGS54	Land off Higher Blandford Road (immediately east of the junction with the A30)	0.71	This land slopes away to the south and there are views both from the A30 and across the site to the scarp slopes of the Cranborne Chase National Landscape. The green character of this space, and retention of trees and hedgerows, provides a green finger connecting the town (as experienced from one of the main routes) with its rural hinterland. This green space has long been valued by the community (and the development of the site was the subject of much objection by local residents), and the retained area (subject to the LGS designation) is now dedicated for public use as part of the Saxon Grange development, ensuring that its qualities can be appreciated by future generations.	HIGH		Medium	Medium	Open to all	Persimmon
LGS55	A30 Allotments	0.41	A30 Allotment plots adjacent to A30 and Orchid View with car parking area with a height restriction barrier and lockable swing gate. The site opened in October 2021 and serves residents in the south-eastern part of the town where there is demonstrable unmet need.	Medium		HIGH	Medium	Allotment holders	STC

Important Treed Areas (ITA)

Further details and rationale for designation as Important Treed Area is available in Shaftesbury's Green Infrastructure Audit document.

	Location	Description
ITA1	Trinity Rd West Verge	Three mature trees in a grassed area divided by a hedge from the verge of Trinity Road. A chain and sign prohibit public access.
ITA2	Ivy Cross Roundabout & Verges	Busy junction with five exits. Both the roundabout and surrounding verges are substantially green with natural verges (including triangle opposite the bowling club), some cultivated beds and impressive collection of mature trees in the centre. These trees help to mitigate risks from traffic pollution. Provides access to filling station and fast food outlets—used by through traffic, local industrial estate, and nearby residents. Difficult for pedestrians to cross the A350 here.
ITA3	Little Content Lane/Christy's	This road carries the A350 north-south traffic and in the past served as a by-pass of the town centre. Now it separates the historic core of the town in the west from more recent residential development to the east. There are many mature trees,(including a line of 80 beech trees which were planted to commemorate the 80th birthday of the Queen Mother following an idea put forward by the mayor at that time) and generous grass verges on the roadsides, with notable green elements being: trees/verge at the north-east side of Little Content Lane where it meets the Ivy Cross roundabout; trees associated with Barton House opposite the junction with Wincombe Lane; trees/verge on east of the road as it runs parallel with Fairlane to a wide verge with new planting at the end of Mampitts Road; trees on the west side of the road with copses near the entrance to Tesco (IOWA, 12.10), along the verge and then a copse with several substantial trees at the end of Coppice Street; and many mature trees associated with the Royal Chase Hotel at the south-eastern end of Christy's Lane. There are several crossing points well-used by pedestrians and cyclists moving east/west. Just south of the Ivy Cross roundabout a footpath from Laneside (southern part of right of way N1/3) emerges alongside Longmead veterinary practice and users seek to cross into Barton Hill Rec which offers a pedestrian/cycle route through to the town centre. There is no controlled or marked crossing here. Further south there is another popular crossing point between Wincombe Lane and Barton Hill, this served by pedestrian lights. Still further south is another traffic-light-controlled crossing close to Pound Lane and the roundabout giving access to Tesco. A third set of lights control the crossing for people moving between Mampitts Road/Linden Park and Coppice Street. The many substantial and mature trees help to mitigate risks from traffic pollution.
ITA4	Royal Chase Roundabout & Verges	Large roundabout with central copse of mature trees, some beds of cultivated shrubs amongst grass verge, and further trees and grass at junctions. Maintenance regime leaves grass long under and around the trees, but short around the cultivated beds at certain times of year. As Ivy Cross roundabout, these trees help to mitigate risks from pollution and merit protection. Pedestrians and cyclists moving between homes to the south east of the town and Shaftesbury School/the medical practice/the town centre must cross the roads here. The crossing points are marked but not controlled (except for a warden on Salisbury Road at the start and end of the school day).
ITA5	A350 South	This main but narrow road is lined with trees and attractive verges and passes a more extensive wooded area (IOWA) to the east as it heads south of the town through Cann. It is crossed by a popular edge-of-town footpath (N1/9 right of way through Boyne Hollow from the east becomes N1/12 to the west).
ITA6	The Butts Triangle, Enmore Green	A delightful green triangle with grass, wildflowers and three maturing trees at the leafy junction between The Butts and Breach La. and close to one of the access points for the open space at Castle Hill slopes. This feature on the edge of Enmore Green contributes to its rural village character.
ITA7	Bleke St/Barton Hill car park	Free car park a short walk from the town centre and adjacent to Barton Hill Rec. Trees at one side of the car park contribute to the character of the area and that part is designated as an IOWA. The trees help to mitigate risks associated with climate change

	Location	Description
ITA8	Enmore Green car park	Small roadside parking area opposite Fountain Inn and between Breach Lane and The Knapp. Trees, hedge and grass verge of the car park are opposite trees and shrubs in garden of private house on The Knapp (IOWA). Together these add to the rural village feel of Enmore Green.
ITA9	Shaftesbury School – Main Site. Salisbury St	The school site encompasses an IOWA to the north west and is bounded by mature trees along Lower Blandford Road, and Hawkesdene Lane. The trees are important to the character of this town edge location where the land slopes gently away to the south. (The sports facilities on this site have been listed separately see 1b 15.1 and these are proposed for LGS designation).
ITA10	Shaftesbury School, Barton Hill House	This residential accommodation for boarders at the school stands in a IOWA off Christy's Lane where the mature trees in the grounds add to the green corridor that carries traffic through the town. Grounds have no public access.
ITA11	Royal Chase Hotel grounds	The hotel grounds have many substantial trees that affect the character of this part of the town—whether for car users navigating the Royal Chase roundabout or for residents of Linden Park, the development behind the hotel. Designated as an IOWA.
ITA12	French Mill Lane	Mature trees in private gardens at the top of the lane add to the character of The Slopes and are designated as IOWA.
ITA13	Layton Lane (between Shooters Hill & Great La.)	This wooded area on the slope behind Layton Lane houses and between Shooters Hill and Great Lane is designated as IOWA for its contribution to the character of The Slopes.
ITA14	Layton Lane	These private gardens opposite the end of Shooters Lane. are designated as IOWA for their contribution to the character of The Slopes.
ITA15	Foyle Hill	Private land/gardens designated as IOWA on right going downhill past Raspberry Lane. Contributes to the character of the lower slopes on this edge of the town.
ITA16	Breach La. /Raspberry La.	Private land/gardens opposite the end of Tanyard Lane. Designated as IOWA. Contributes to the character of the lower slopes on this side of the town.
ITA17	Bimport	Private gardens adjoining Castle Hill with mature trees that contribute to the distinctive character of the hilltop conservation area.
ITA18	St John's Hill	Private land/gardens adjoining ancient graveyard (SM) have mature trees and are designated as IOWA for their contribution to the character of the Slopes.
ITA19	Between Tout Hill & Yeatman's Close	Private land/gardens that contribute to the character of the lower slopes north of the spur.
ITA20	New Road/Yeatman's Close	Private land/gardens that contribute to the character of the lower slopes north of the spur.
ITA21	The Beeches (B3081) opposite New Road junction	Private land where the hedgerow and trees contribute to the character of the steep slope at the side of this main road at the edge of the town.
ITA22	Land to the north of Breach Common	This site is an important area for wildlife and its natural space provides a rich variety of habitats that supports a wealth of wildlife including many invertebrates.
ITA23	Land to the west of St James Park	Private land where the hedgerow and trees contribute to the character of the steep slope adjacent to Great Lane
ITA24	Land to the rear of St Edwards Church/off Great Lane	This site is an important area for wildlife and its natural space provides a rich variety of habitats that supports a wealth of wildlife including many invertebrates.
ITA25	Land either side of the A30 corridor	Trees/woodland that run alongside the A30. Not regarded as accessible natural space however there is limited public access.

7.15 Appendix M – Schedule of evidence sources

Core Evidence	Origin	Date
023422—North and North East Dorset Transport Study: Working Towards a Transport Strategy www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/w/evidence-to-support-the-north-dorset-local-plan	Buro Happold	March 2010
A Peoples' Manifesto for Wildlife, Chris Packham et al http://www.chrispackham.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/Peoples-Manifesto-Download.pdf	Peoples' Manifesto for Wildlife	September 2018
A Starting Vision for Shaftesbury's High Street and Beyond www.shaftesbury-tc.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/A-Starting-Vision-for-Shaftesbury-report-from-SCS.pdf	Shaftesbury Civic Society	July 2019
Active Dorset and Sport England Strategy www.activedorset.org/active-dorset-strategy	Active Dorset	2020
Active Dorset: Sport and leisure facilities needs assessment North Dorset District Council www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/w/sport-and-leisure-facilities-needs-assessments	Active Dorset	April 2017
Cranborne Chase National Landscape Management Plan cranbornechase.org.uk/our-work/publications/aonb-management-plan/	Cranborne Chase NL Partnership	2019
CSE Low-carbon neighbourhood planning guidebook neighbourhoodplanning.org/wp-content/uploads/low-carbon-neighbourhood-planning-guidebook.pdf	Centre for Sustainable Energy	January 2018
Dorset Historic Town Survey www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/libraries-history-culture/local-history-heritage/historic-towns/historic-towns/shaftesbury-historic-towns-survey.aspx	Dorset Historic Towns Survey	February 2011
Dorset's Ecological Networks dorsetlnp.org.uk/dorsets-ecological-networks/	Dorset Local Nature Partnership	September 2020
Feasibility Study – cycle network www.shaftesbury-tc.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/MX-2310U_20200116_1414061.pdf	Dorset County Council	May 2012
Fields in Trust guidance for outdoor sport and play updated fieldsintrust.org/content/images/FIT-Standards-2024-Accessible-version.pdf	Field in Trust	2024
HM Government Industrial Strategy www.gov.uk/government/topical-events/the-uks-industrial-strategy	HM Government	2017
International Journal of Climatology: State of the UK Climate 2018 rmets.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.1002/joc.6213	The Royal Meteorological Society Journal of Climate Science	July 2019

Core Evidence	Origin	Date
Joint Retail and Commercial Leisure Study—(2018) and more recent Dorset Retail & Leisure Study—2022 Update www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/w/joint-retail-study www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/w/dorset-council-local-plan-evidence-and-background-papers	Carter Jonas and Lambert Smith Hampton for Dorset Council and its predecessors	2018 & 2022
Land to the Eastern side of Shaftesbury Development Brief (including Design Statement and Masterplan) www.shaftesbury-tc.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/development-on-the-land-east-of-shaftesbury-spg-1.pdf	North Dorset District Council	January 2003
Landscape Institute. Green Infrastructure. An integrated approach to land use. landscapewpstorage01.blob.core.windows.net/www-landscapeinstitute-org/2016/03/Green-Infrastructure_an-integrated-approach-to-land-use.pdf	Landscape Institute	March 2013
Natural England 133: Blackmore Vale and Vale of Wardour. http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/5858996464386048?category=587130	Natural England	March 2014
Natural England Green Infrastructure Framework—Principles and Standards for England designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/GreenInfrastructure/Home.aspx	Natural England	October 2024
North Dorset Guide to Shop Fronts www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/documents/35024/282798/North+Dorset+Guide+to+Shopfront+Design+%282014%29.pdf/d46b9f35-42b4-955f-ddf5-eca3777e190a	North Dorset District Council	2014
North Dorset Local Plan Part 1 and saved policies of the North Dorset District-wide Local Plan.(1st Revision) www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/planning-buildings-land/planning-policy/adopted-local-plans/north-dorset-adopted-local-plan	North Dorset District Council	2016 (and 2003)
Dorset Strategic Land Availability Assessments www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/w/land-availability	North Dorset District Council	Various
NPPF (National Planning Policy Framework) www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2	HM Government	Dec 2024
Shaftesbury Design Guidelines www.shaftesbury-tc.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/Shaftesbury-Design-Principles-High-Resolution-20191101.pdf	AECOM	February 2019
Shaftesbury Parking Study www.shaftesbury-tc.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/Shaftesbury-Parking-Study-V4.pdf	AECOM	March 2019
Shaftesbury Tourism statistics www.shaftesbury-tc.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/Shaftesbury-2017-statistics.pdf	South West Research Company	2017

Core Evidence	Origin	Date
Sports Facility review (Internal analysis) www.shaftesbury-tc.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/1b-Community-and-Leisure-Activities-Formal-Outdoor-Sports-Provision.pdf	Shaftesbury Town Council	2018
Wiltshire Local Plan Review Statement of Common Ground www.wiltshire.gov.uk/media/14465/SOCG8-Dorset-Wiltshire-SoCG-Nov2024-Redacted/pdf/SOCG8_Dorset_Wiltshire_SoCG_Nov2024_Redacted.pdf?m=1732885003690	Dorset Council	November 2024
Strategic Landscape and Heritage Study (North Dorset Area) www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/w/landscape-and-heritage-studies	LUC	October 2019
The Policy Exchange, Building More, Building Beautiful policyexchange.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Building-More-Building-Beautiful-for-print.pdf	Policy Exchange	June 2018
Zero Carbon Britain: Rising to the Climate Emergency, Executive Summary www.cat.org.uk/rising-to-the-climate-emergency-executive-summary/	Centre for Alternative Technology	November 2019

7.16 Appendix N – Housing Target and Population Statistics

	Existing households at 2011	Additional dwelling(s) Act: 2011–2019 Est: 2020–2031	Total completed dwelling(s)	Headcount per household		Population
Year 2011	3235*		3235	2.26	Average of 2.25 people per household	7314
Year 2012		220	3455			
Year 2013		62	3517			
Year 2014		119	3636			
Year 2015		122	3758			
Year 2016		85	3843			
Year 2017		36	3879			
Year 2018		55	3934			
Year 2019		69	4003			
Year 2020		30	4033			
Year 2021		51	4084	2.24		9158**
Year 2022		46	4130	2.24	Expected population based on applying the 2021 headcount per household	9261
Year 2023		46	4176	2.24		9364
Year 2024		91	4267	2.24		9568
Year 2025		124	4391	2.24		9846
Year 2026		55	4446	2.24		9969
Year 2027		40	4486	2.24		10058
Year 2028		0	4486	2.24		10058
Year 2029		75	4561	2.24		10226
Year 2030		85	4646	2.24		10417
Year 2031		62	4708	2.24		10556
Total		1468	4708			

This table shows the population growth from 2011 to 2021 using the census 2011 and 2021 data.

The 2022 data onwards is estimated based on the expected population, using the housing trajectory report (as published 19 February 2024) plus average headcount per household.

3,424 more people in 2031 v 2011

1,473 more houses in 2031 v 2011

Equates to **45% increase**

* 2011 Census data ** 2021 Census data

Age (years)	2011	%	2021	%	2031 (projected)	%	Change 2011 to 2031***
0-15	1314	18	1664	18	1918	18	604
16-64	4387	60	5336	58	6149	58	1762
65+	1613	22	2160	24	2489	24	876
Total	7314		9160		10556		3242

*** based on retaining 2021 proportions (Dorset-wide predictions have slightly lower growth in younger cohort and higher growth in retirement-aged persons)

	Year 2011	Year 2021	Additional	% Inc/Dec
Shaftesbury (parish)	7314	9158	1844	25%
Blandford (Forum and St Mary)	11836	12453	617	5%
Gillingham (parish)	11756	11506	–250	–2%
Stalbridge (parish)	2698	2667	–31	–1%
Sturminster Newton (parish)	4292	4408	116	3%

Source: 2011 Census Local Area Reports and 2021 Census data

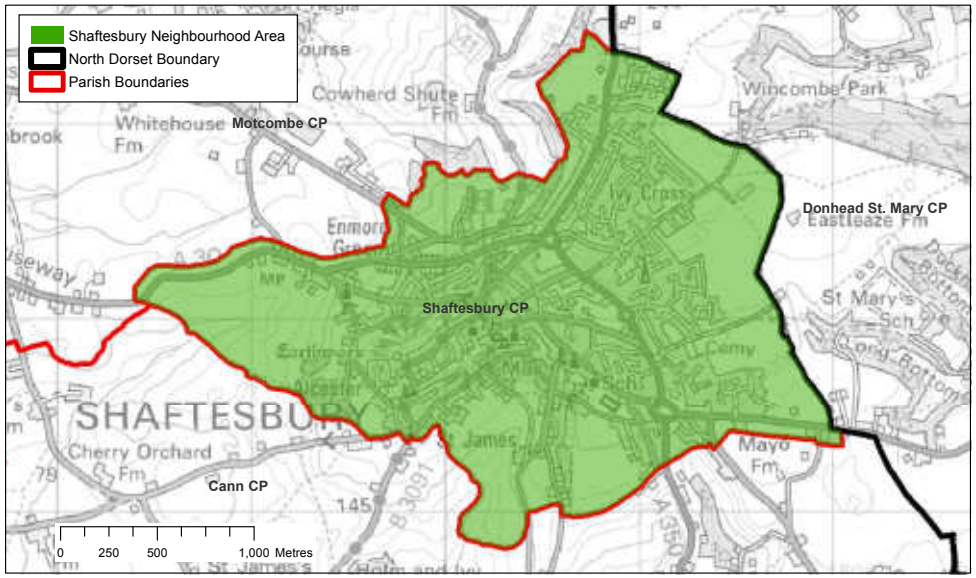
This table highlights a **25% increase** in Shaftesbury's population from 2011 to 2021 which is the highest increase in any town across North Dorset.

25% increase

Housing Target Paper

This paper looks at assessing whether the housing target for the Shaftesbury Neighbourhood Plan remains a robust basis for the plan. It replaces the previous (November 2024) draft.

Neighbourhood Plan Area (designated November 2017)



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

North Dorset District Council

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Neighbourhood Plan Period

The Plan period runs from 2019 to 2031 (12 years in total).

Adopted local plan and housing requirement adjustments

Using the 2012 SHMA that informed the Local Plan

The current adopted North Dorset Local Plan (2016)[1] is based from 2011, and sought to address the housing needs of the area for the period to 2031. The Plan was examined in 2015, based on a housing needs assessment dating from 2012[2].

The Local Plan's spatial strategy focused development on the four main towns (Blandford Forum, Gillingham, Shaftesbury and Sturminster Newton) and included a specific housing need figure for each town. Policy 18 states that over the period 2011 to 2031, at least 1,140 homes will be provided at Shaftesbury, through infilling and regeneration within the settlement boundary (including land to the east of the town centre), and development of land to the east of the town (where planning permission had already been granted but could potentially be developed more intensively in parts of the site), to the south-east of Wincombe Business Park, and to the west of the A350 opposite Wincombe Business Park. This equates to an annualised rate of 57 dwellings.

The Plan also noted "that the potential for expansion at Shaftesbury is limited by environmental (mainly landscape and biodiversity) constraints and the limited number of potentially developable sites where the town could expand further" (paragraph 8.98), and that "The strategy for the town will see the building out of sites already allocated or with planning permission for housing in the early years and a more limited amount of additional greenfield land later in the plan period." (paragraph 8.102).

Adjustments using the 2015 SHMA (2015–2017)

The Inspector that examined the North Dorset Local Plan in 2015 was aware that a more recent housing needs assessment had been published during the examination period – known as the 2015 SHMA[3]. This suggested a higher housing target (of 330 as opposed to 285 dwellings per annum) but the Inspector did not consider it necessary at that time to modify the plan's housing numbers, given a number of factors including the proposed early review of the plan, the flexibility embedded within the policies and confirmation that the Council would not seek to restrict the supply of additional housing, provided any proposal would accord with the agreed spatial approach.

The housing targets for this period are therefore based on the original (adopted) housing target for Shaftesbury, with an uplift applied to the period from 2015/16 (with the publication of the new 2015 SHMA).

Using the Issues and Options Proposed Target (2017–2021)

Work started on the early review of the Local Plan, and in the November 2017 Issues and Options consultation, a higher target of 366 dwellings per annum was proposed, based on the Government's proposed standard method (which had not at that point been confirmed)[4].

2019/20 and 2020/21 were affected by Covid restrictions/lockdowns. The Government recognised that this would have an impact on housing delivery and reduced the requirement for 2019/20 by 1 month (1/12) and for 2020/21 by 4 months (4/12). These discounts have been applied to those years.

Using the 2021 Local Housing Needs Assessment (2021–2022)

Following the merger of North Dorset District Council into Dorset Council, work on the review of the North Dorset Local Plan was halted, in order to more quickly progress work on the Dorset Council Local Plan. The housing needs were subsequently re-assessed to inform this work. Data from the November 2021 Local Housing Needs Assessment calculated a potential housing figure for the North Dorset area as 332dpa[6] based on the standard method as introduced in Summer 2018[7].

Using the Housing Land Supply Updates (2022–2025)

The standard method at that time was based on a formula using the 2014-based ONS household projections, and an adjustment factor taking into account the ratio between the median house price and median workplace-based earnings for the area[8]. The resulting requirement could therefore be updated as and when the house price and earnings data were updated. The housing requirement was therefore refreshed through the various Housing Land Supply papers produced by Dorset Council for the North Dorset area[9].

The 2022/23 calculation as published used the ONS 2014-based household projections for 2022 and 2032 for North Dorset of 32,009 and 34,631 respectively, resulting in an annualised change of +262.2. The most recent published affordability ratio at that time was 11.00[10] for the North Dorset area, giving an adjustment factor of 1.44. The annual need was therefore calculated as 262.2 x 1.44 = 376.9 (377 dwellings).

The 2023/24 calculation as published used the ONS 2014-based household projections for 2023 and 2033 for North Dorset of 32,274 and 34,864 respectively, resulting in an annualised change of +259.1. The most recent published affordability ratio at that time was 11.04 for the North Dorset area, giving an adjustment factor of 1.44. The annual need was therefore calculated as 259.1 x 1.44 = 373.1 (373 dwellings).

For 2024/25, the same approach can be taken (in the absence of a published HLS target), based on the ONS 2014-based household projections for 2024 and 2034 in North Dorset are 32,541 and 35,089 respectively, resulting in an annualised change of +254.8. In March 2024 ONS affordability ratio for North Dorset which relates to 2023 was updated to 10.87, giving an adjustment factor of 1.43. 254.8 x 1.43 = 364.4 (364 dwellings).

Using the updated standard method formula (2025–2031)

The Government introduced a new standard formula for calculating the housing requirements in December 2024, based on the housing stock in an area with a 0.8% increase per annum applied, and a revised adjustment factor based on the five year average of the affordability ratio between, and applying a 0.95% increase for each 1% the ratio is above 5. New estimates of housing stock are published annually (usually in May) and updated affordability ratios are published annually (usually in March).

The most up-to-date figure for Dorset is therefore calculated as follows:

Housing Stock-based baseline: 187,122 dwellings[11] x 0.8% = 1,497 dwellings

Five year average affordability ratio = 11.06

Affordability adjustment =
((Five year average affordability ratio[12] – 5) / 5) × 0.95 + 1 = 2.1514

Housing target = baseline x affordability adjustment = 1,497 x 2.1514 = 3,221 (rounded)[13]

Based on a 'policy off' proportionate approach for the Neighbourhood Plan area[14], the target would equate to 0.02371 x 3,221 = 76.4

Resulting Housing Target

	Basis	North Dorset LP target	Proportional uplift[15]	Shaftesbury annual target (equivalent)	Cumulative target
2011/12	2012 SHMA	285	n/a	57.0	57.0
2012/13	2012 SHMA	285	n/a	57.0	114.0
2013/14	2012 SHMA	285	n/a	57.0	171.0
2014/15	2012 SHMA	285	n/a	57.0	228.0
2015/16	2015 SHMA	330	15.8%	66.0	294.0
2016/17	2015 SHMA	330	15.8%	66.0	360.0
2017/18	2015 SHMA	330	15.8%	66.0	426.0
2018/19	2017 NDLP I&O	366	28.4%	73.2	499.2
2019/20	2017 NDLP I&O	366 x 11/12	17.7%	67.1	566.3
2020/21	2017 NDLP I&O	366 x 8/12	–14.4%	48.8	615.1
2021/22	2021 LHNA	332	16.5%	66.4	681.5
2022/23	2022/23 HLS	377	32.3%	75.4	756.9
2023/24	2023/24 HLS	373	30.9%	74.6	831.5
2024/25	2024/25 HLS	364	27.7%	72.8	904.3
2025/26	Standard method	n/a	35.1%	77	981.3
2026/27	Standard method	n/a	35.1%	77	1,058.3
2027/28	Standard method	n/a	35.1%	77	1,135.3
2028/29	Standard method	n/a	35.1%	77	1,212.3
2029/30	Standard method	n/a	35.1%	77	1,289.3
2030/31	Standard method	n/a	35.1%	77	1,366.3

This would suggest a revised target =
1,366 dwellings for the period 2011–2031

1,366

Emerging Local Plan

Only limited weight can be afforded to the emerging Dorset Local Plan[16] at present, given its early stage (the plan is not expected to be examined until 2027[17]). Nonetheless, it is useful to consider the early draft plan to understand whether it would suggest a different strategy.

The first draft of the emerging Dorset Local Plan includes an indicative housing requirement figure for Neighbourhood Plans areas such as Shaftesbury, for the plan period (2021 to 2038). The figures are based on the existing completions and commitments, any adopted housing allocations (including those in made Neighbourhood Plans), proposed allocations (no new allocations proposed for Shaftesbury), capacity on major sites (of 10 or more dwellings) within development boundaries as evidenced through the SHLAA, plus a windfall allowance based on past trends on small sites (i.e. excluding major development and based on the data from 2013/14 onwards, projected forward for Year 4 onwards). The published draft plan (Appendix 2) gives a figure of 544 dwellings for the Shaftesbury Neighbourhood Plan area using this method – equivalent to an annualised requirement of 32 dwellings.

The spatial strategy states that "The town of Shaftesbury, where more modest expansion is proposed, is more constrained due to its hill-top location and proximity to the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB" (paragraph 2.6.12) and the policy (DEV4) references 'more modest expansion of Shaftesbury' with no additional option sites identified. Section 30 of the plan, which deals specifically with Shaftesbury, similarly notes that "There are now limited opportunities left without having significant impacts on the town's character" (paragraph 30.3.3), noting the existing sites which have planning consent, and the potential for brownfield sites to be redeveloped during the plan period.

It is recognised that the emerging Dorset Local Plan target will be revised in the next version of the plan based on the latest available housing figures and standard methodology. However it is also noted that no proposals were considered as appropriate options for additional housing sites at Shaftesbury outside of the current development boundaries in the first draft of the Local Plan.

Affordable Housing Needs

Affordable housing is defined in the National Planning Policy Framework[18] and includes a range of affordable housing types, from social rented through to starter homes and discounted sale (where the property is sold at a discount of at least 20% below local market value, and this discount is carried forward in future sales). There is also an overlap between affordable and open market housing due to the role of the private rented sector in meeting the housing needs of those that can afford such private rented homes (with or without housing benefit) but are unable to afford the deposit or qualify for a mortgage to be able to become a home owner.

At around the time that the Neighbourhood Plan was being produced (2019/20), Dorset Council's Housing Register had identified 215 households in affordable housing need with a connection to Shaftesbury. The mix of house types needed was primarily 1 and 2 bedroom dwellings (accounting for about 80% of the demand).

Dorset Council undertook a major overhaul of their Housing Register in late 2021 following a refresh of the allocation policy, which required households to re-register (therefore eliminating households that were on the register but no longer in actual need). An update from the Register was requested in Spring 2023, and this identified 203 households who would qualify for an affordable home and who had declared a connection to Shaftesbury. The mix of house types needed was again primarily for 1 and 2 bedroom homes.

Households with a local connection to Shaftesbury, DC Register

	Affordable dwellings needed					
31 March 2023	1 bed	2 bed	3 bed	4 bed	5 bed	**Total**
Band A – Urgent Housing Need	5		1			**6**
Band B – High Housing Need	15	1	2	2	1	**21**
Band C – Medium Housing Need	5	9	12	6		**32**
Band D – Low Housing Need	30	27	6	3		**66**
n/k (submitted online, to be assessed)	32	24	15	7		**78**
Total	**87**	**61**	**36**	**18**	**1**	**203**

A further update to these figures was requested in Autumn 2024, with the need at this time recorded as 215 households, with the mix of house types needed still primarily for 1 and 2 bedroom homes.

Households with a local connection to Shaftesbury, DC Register

4 November 2024	Affordable dwellings needed					
	1 bed	2 bed	3 bed	4 bed	5 bed	Total
Band A - Urgent Housing Need	6	1		3		**10**
Band B - High Housing Need	14	4	1	3		**22**
Band C - Medium Housing Need	11	11	21	12	2	**57**
Band D - Low Housing Need	55	35	12	2		**104**
n/k (submitted online, to be assessed)	10	9	2	1		**22**
Total	**96**	**60**	**36**	**21**	**2**	**215**

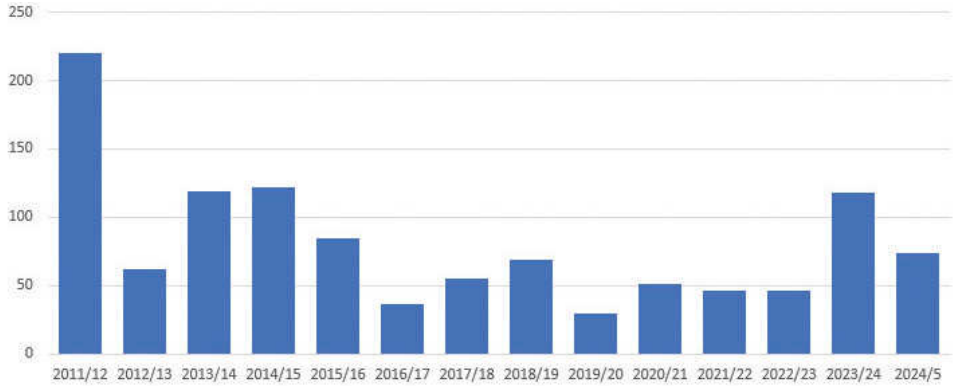
The majority of those on the housing register are looking for affordable rented accommodation. It is difficult to assess how many households may need affordable home ownership tenures, but this is likely to come primarily from those currently housed in the private rented sector, and there may be some overlap with those in Band D (lowest housing need) which is the largest sector.

The latest viability evidence[19] suggests that, within the Dorset North and South areas (which Shaftesbury falls within), major development sites (of 10 or more dwellings) should be sufficiently viable to provide 20% of the housing mix as affordable homes, including 30% social rented homes for those in greatest need, 40% affordable rent and 30% affordable home ownership typologies, and allowing for higher standards of design and sustainability. This is lower than the current 30% affordable housing requirement for Shaftesbury as tested under the adopted Local Plan. Increasing the level of affordable home ownership typologies and reducing the proportion of social rented homes as part of this mix would improve viability.

Housing Completions and Extant Supply

Detailed monitoring records on dwelling completions are available from 2011/12, which coincides with the base date of the adopted Local Plan[20]. At the time the Neighbourhood Plan was being prepared, some 768 dwellings had been completed for the period up to March 2019, and a further 432 dwellings had been permitted or were under construction.

Dwelling Completions



Monitoring data is now available for the North Dorset area for 2019/20 to 2024/25[21]. This has added 365 completions to the total built dwellings, and the updated records indicate that there are now extant permissions for a further 236 dwellings on large sites, and 60 dwellings are still anticipated to come forward as part of the existing site identified through the Local Plan as an area of growth, on land south-east of Wincombe Lane.

In addition to this, small infill sites have permission for a further 20 dwellings. It would also be reasonable to include a windfall allowance in the supply for the last 3 years of the plan period. Based on recent windfalls (over the past 5 years), such windfall has contributed on average to 5 dwellings per annum.

Address	Application Ref	Granted	Dwellings
Completions 2011 to 2019			**768**
Completions 2019 to 2025			**365**
2019/20 completions			30
2020/21 completions			51
2021/22 completions			46
2022/23 completions			46
2023/24 completions			118
2024/25 completions			74
Extant consents (large sites)			**236**
Land adjoining Wincombe Business Park	P/FUL/2021/01429	28/02/2022	88
Land to the east of Lidl, Christy's Lane	P/FUL/2023/05051	22/01/2024	41
Land south of A30[23]	P/RES/2023/05407	07/11/2024	107
Extant consents (small sites)	**APS Appendix E**		**20**
Windfall allowance	**5 dpa 2029–2031**		**10**
Allocation (2015 NDLP)	**SE of Wincombe Lane**	**Pending**	**60**
Total			**1,459**

Housing Target Conclusions

The current Neighbourhood Plan period runs from 2019 – 2031, but is derived from the Local Plan target for Shaftesbury (and includes those parts of Cann parish that are part of town's expansion).

The proposed housing target has been based on the Local Plan target, adjusted to take into account the latest housing needs information, with the completions for the period 2011–2019 then deducted, as follows:

- Local Plan target for Shaftesbury for the period 2011–2031: at least 1,366 dwellings
- Adjusted target for Shaftesbury for the period 2011–2031: at least 1,363 dwellings
- Completions for the period 2011–2019: 768 dwellings
- **Adjusted target for Shaftesbury for period 2019–2031: at least 598 dwellings**

This target is on track to be exceeded on the following basis:

- Completions for the period 2019–2025: 365 dwellings
- Extant consents as at April 2025: 236 dwellings
- Local Plan allocated site (Hopkins Land): 60 dwellings
- Windfall allowance, 5dpa between 2029–2031: 10 dwellings
- **Total supply for the period 2019–2031: 671 dwellings**

The above calculation does not include the site allocation comprising Barton Hill House and Grounds that features in the Neighbourhood Plan and may well deliver a significant number of homes, and there is also the possibility that the land south of the A350 (for which outline planning permission has been granted) may bring forward part of the employment area as a residential care home (in addition to the 107 dwellings currently anticipated), further adding to the above supply.

These facts and figures demonstrate that the supply of housing based on the current permissions and opportunities within the settlement boundary will comfortably exceed the proposed housing target of about 600 dwellings, and is further bolstered by the additional sites allocated in the Plan and other opportunities. Therefore Shaftesbury is on track to more than meet its quota, including an allowance to help absorb the Dorset-wide changes in how housing needs are calculated. On this basis there is no need to allocate or release any additional greenfield site allocations to meet the overall housing need for the town for the current plan period.

Footnotes

1 North Dorset Local Plan Part 1 2011 -2031, January 2016, North Dorset District Council www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/planning-buildings-land/planning-policy/adopted-local-plans/north-dorset-adopted-local-plan

2 Bournemouth / Poole Housing Market 2011 Strategic Housing Market Assessment Update, January 2012, JG Consulting in association with Chris Broughton Associates www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/documents/35024/285432/Summary+Report+for+North+Dorset+District+Council.pdf/d2f99ec9-4da0-3d6b-6442-0aac54a78480

3 Inspector's Report, December 2015 www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/documents/35024/282223/North+Dorset+Local+Plan+Part+1+-+Inspector%27s+Final+Report.pdf/178e2325-55f4-1817-1f6b-771e0bc7000d

4 North Dorset Local Plan Review - Issues and Options - Consultation, November 2017 (paragraph 3.10) www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/documents/35024/282149/Issues+and+Options+Consultation+Document.pdf/ade6576e-a7d2-3233-f982-399b2c710911

5 Dorset and BCP Local Housing Needs Assessment, Iceni Projects Limited on behalf of Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole and Dorset Council, November 2021

6 The household growth figure (set out in Table 5.2) is 264 dwellings per annum. The report then factors in an affordability adjustment (set out in Table 5.3), which raises the figure to 332. It then considers whether this exceeds the 40% 'cap' at that level (Table 5.4), which it does not do.

7 This is set out in Housing and economic needs assessment - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

8 The adjustment calculation applied to the household projections is based on the formula ((affordability factor – 4) ÷ 4) x 0.25 + 1).

9 www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/w/nd-annual-monitoring-report-and-development-statistics Table 125: dwelling stock estimates by local authority district (latest estimate 2023)

10 This was later re-based to 10.86

11 www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/live-tables-on-dwelling-stock-including-vacants

12 Data as updated March 2025 taken from www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/housing/datasets/ratioofhousepricetoworkplacebasedearningslowerquartileandmedian

13 This is similar to the government's published figure Dorset of 3,219. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/675aaeca9f669f2e28ce2b91/lhn-outcome-of-the-new-method.ods

14 Using data on number of dwellings (Census table RM204) gives the following figures: Shaftesbury = 4,354, Dorset = 183,571, ratio = 0.02371

15 Based on the difference between the proposed target and the 285dpa basis of the adopted Local Plan

16 The first (and only) draft to be published is the Dorset Council Local Plan Options Consultation, January 2021, Dorset Council www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/planning-buildings-land/planning-policy/dorset-council-local-plan/about-the-dorset-council-local-plan-january-2021-consultation

17 The Local Development Scheme for Dorset Council, March 2025, Dorset Council www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/w/the-local-development-scheme-for-dorset-council

18 www.gov.uk/guidance/national-planning-policy-framework/annex-2-glossary

19 Dorset Local Plan Viability Assessment, May 2022, Three Dragons www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/-/dorset-council-area-viability-assessment - where the Neighbourhood Plan area falls within the Dorset West and Central market area

20 The data for the period up to 2018/19 was researched as part of the previous work undertaken for the made Neighbourhood Plan.

21 www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/w/nd-annual-monitoring-report-and-development-statistics with the latest 2023/24 data available at www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/w/annual-position-statement

22 Access position varied via P/VOC/2024/00766, reserved matters application P/RES/2024/05119 validated 06/09/2024

23 Whilst this includes dwellings in Cann parish, as this site relates directly to the expansion of Shaftesbury (i.e. Land south of A30 ref 2/2018/1773/OUT) it is considered appropriate to include this in its entirety within the monitoring data.

7.17 Appendix O – Explanation of the new use classes described by SFTC2

Description of Use class	Explanation
Class E– Commercial, business and service	
(a) for the display or retail sale of goods, other than hot food, principally to visiting members of the public,	Previously A1 (Shops)
(b) for the sale of food and drink principally to visiting members of the public where consumption of that food and drink is mostly undertaken on the premises,	Previously A3 (Restaurants and cafes)
(c) for the provision of the following kinds of services principally to visiting members of the public: ► financial services, ► professional services (other than health or medical services), or ► any other services which it is appropriate to provide in a commercial, business or service locality,	Previously A2 (Financial and professional services). The original Policy SFTC2 had a clause in order to limit the predominance of A2 which now looks impossible to enforce. However, previously A1, A3 and A5 uses could change to A2 without planning permission under permitted development rights.
(d) for indoor sport, recreation or fitness, not involving motorised vehicles or firearms, principally to visiting members of the public,	Previously part of D2 (Assembly and leisure)
(e) for the provision of medical or health services, principally to visiting members of the public, except the use of premises attached to the residence of the consultant or practitioner,	Previously part of D1 (Non-residential institutions)
(f) for a crèche, day nursery or day centre, not including a residential use, principally to visiting members of the public,	Previously part of D1 (Non-residential institutions)
(g) for: ► an office to carry out any operational or administrative functions, the research and development of products or processes, or ► any industrial process, being a use, which can be carried out in any residential area without detriment to the amenity of that area by reason of noise, vibration, smell, fumes, smoke, soot, ash, dust or grit	Previously B1 (Business). B1 use was not previously covered by the original Policy SFTC2. However, under the old system permitted development rights allowed A1, A2 and A5 uses to change to B1(a) with prior approval consent.

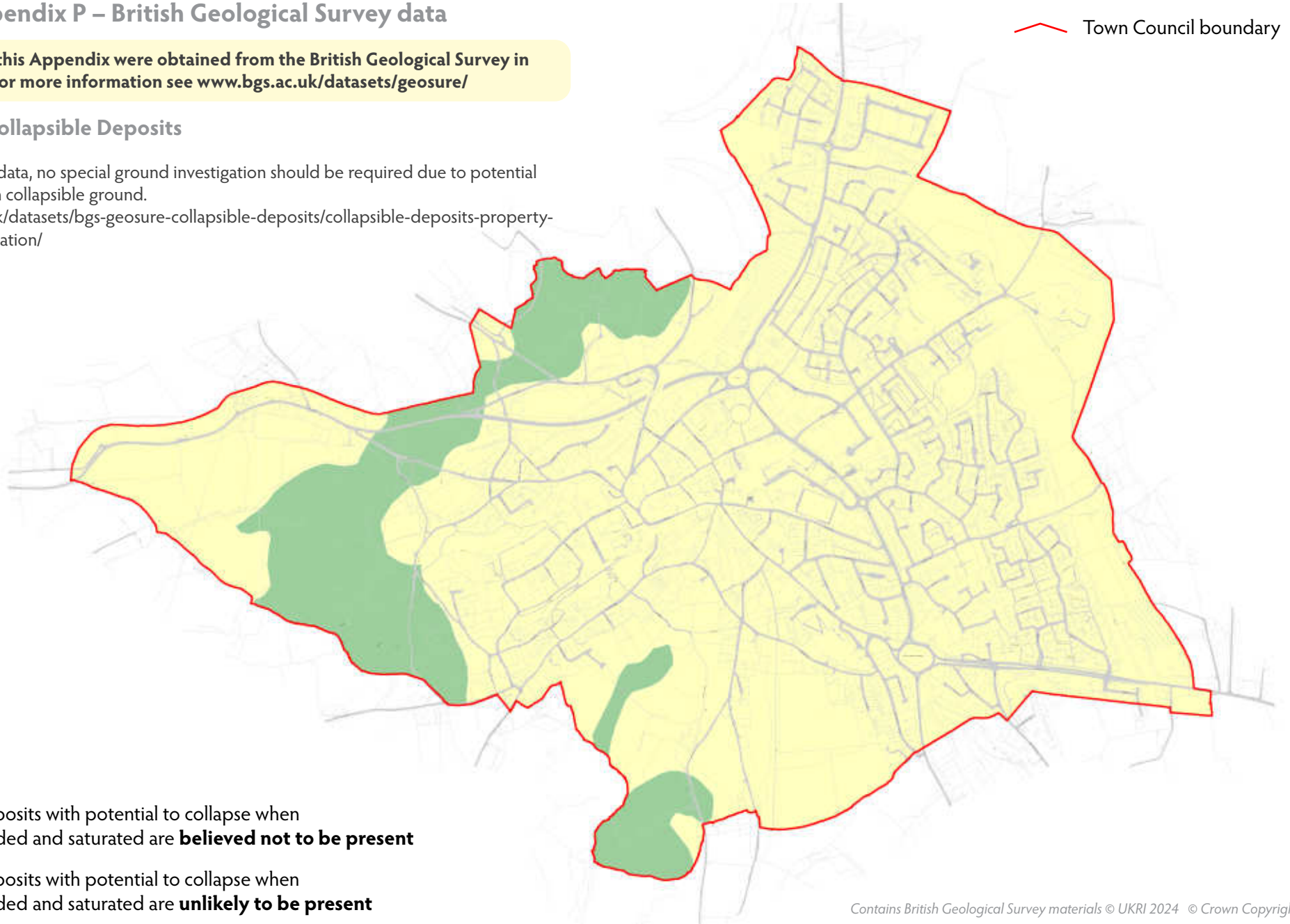
Description of Use class	Explanation
Class F.1 – Learning and non-residential institutions	
Any use not including residential use: (a) for the provision of education, (b) for the display of works of art (otherwise than for sale or hire), (c) as a museum, (d) as a public library or public reading room, (e) as a public hall or exhibition hall, (f) for, or in connection with, public worship or religious instruction, (g) as a law court	Covers the remaining parts of D1 not covered by Class E(e) and E(f).
Class F.2 – Local community	
(a) a shop mostly selling essential goods, including food, to visiting members of the public in circumstances where: (i) the shop's premises cover an area not more than 280 metres square, and (ii) there is no other such facility within 1000 metre radius of the shop's location,	This is entirely new and seems to be intended to protect village shops and other convenience stores where there is no nearby alternative. It is therefore unlikely to be applicable to the town centre.
(b) a hall or meeting place for the principal use of the local community,	This is also new, but is likely to have some overlap with the public hall described by F1(e)
(c) an area or place for outdoor sport or recreation, not involving motorised vehicles or firearms,	Previously part of D2 (Assembly and leisure)
(d) an indoor or outdoor swimming pool or skating rink	Previously part of D2 (Assembly and leisure)
Selected sui generis uses (no use class)	
(a) Theatre	Previously sui generis. A similar use to cinemas and concert halls.
(p) Public house, wine bar, or drinking establishment	
(q) Drinking establishment with expanded food provision	Previously use class A4. Note that the 'Drinking establishment with expanded food provision' was a description added to A4 in order to prevent pubs that serve food from declaring themselves restaurants and thereby taking advantage of permitted development rights granted to A3.
(r) Hot Food takeaway establishment	Previously use class A5
(s) Venue for live music performance	New – intended to help protect such venues. A similar use to cinemas and concert halls.
(t) Cinema	Previously part of D2 (Assembly and leisure)
(u) Concert hall	Previously part of D2 (Assembly and leisure)
(v) Bingo hall	Previously part of D2 (Assembly and leisure)
(x) Dance hall	Previously part of D2 (Assembly and leisure)

7.18 Appendix P – British Geological Survey data

The maps in this Appendix were obtained from the British Geological Survey in early 2024. For more information see www.bgs.ac.uk/datasets/geosure/

GeoSure Collapsible Deposits

Based on this data, no special ground investigation should be required due to potential problems with collapsible ground.
www.bgs.ac.uk/datasets/bgs-geosure-collapsible-deposits/collapsible-deposits-property-hazard-information/

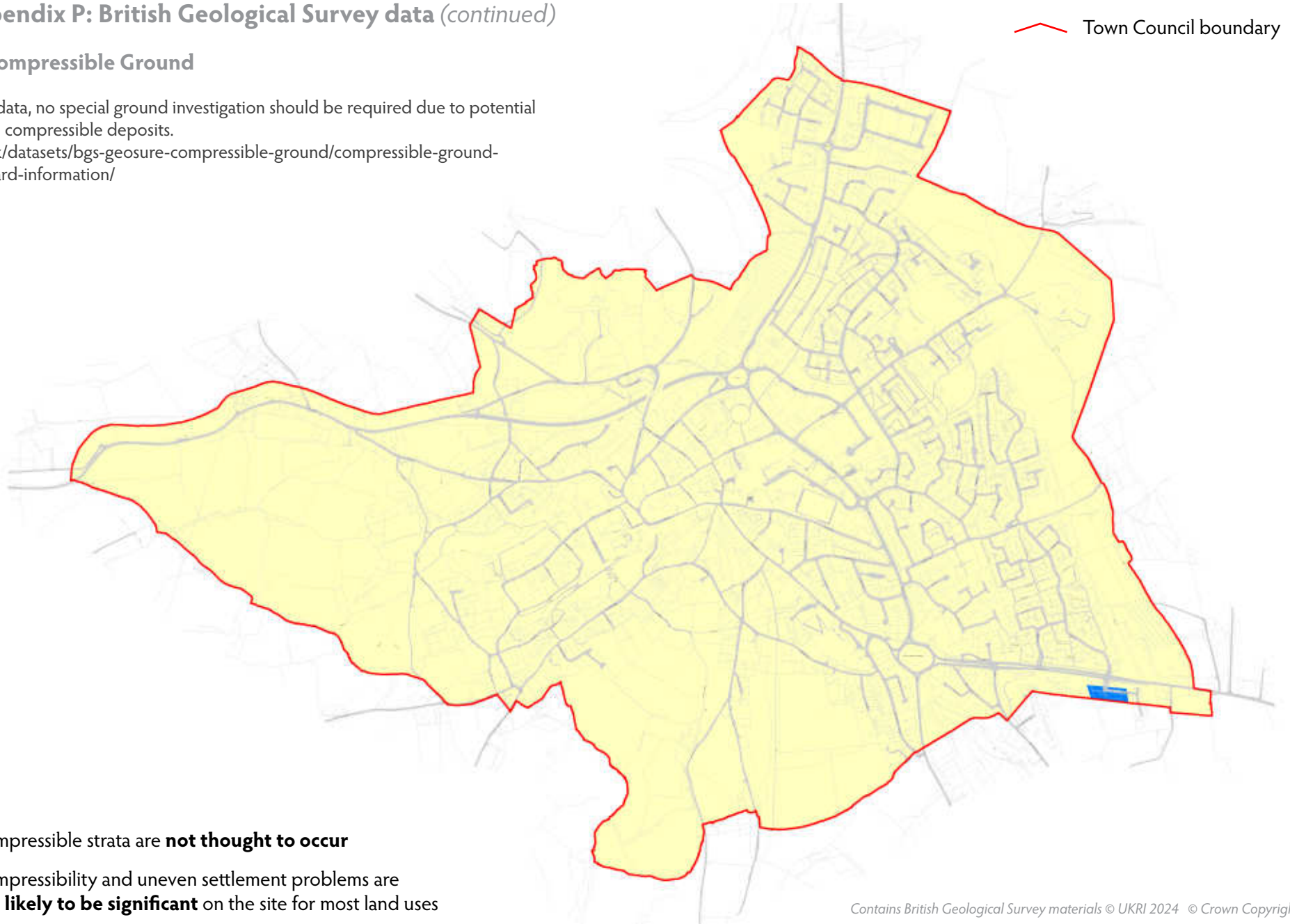


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7.18 Appendix P: British Geological Survey data *(continued)*

GeoSure Compressible Ground

Based on this data, no special ground investigation should be required due to potential problems with compressible deposits.
www.bgs.ac.uk/datasets/bgs-geosure-compressible-ground/compressible-ground-property-hazard-information/

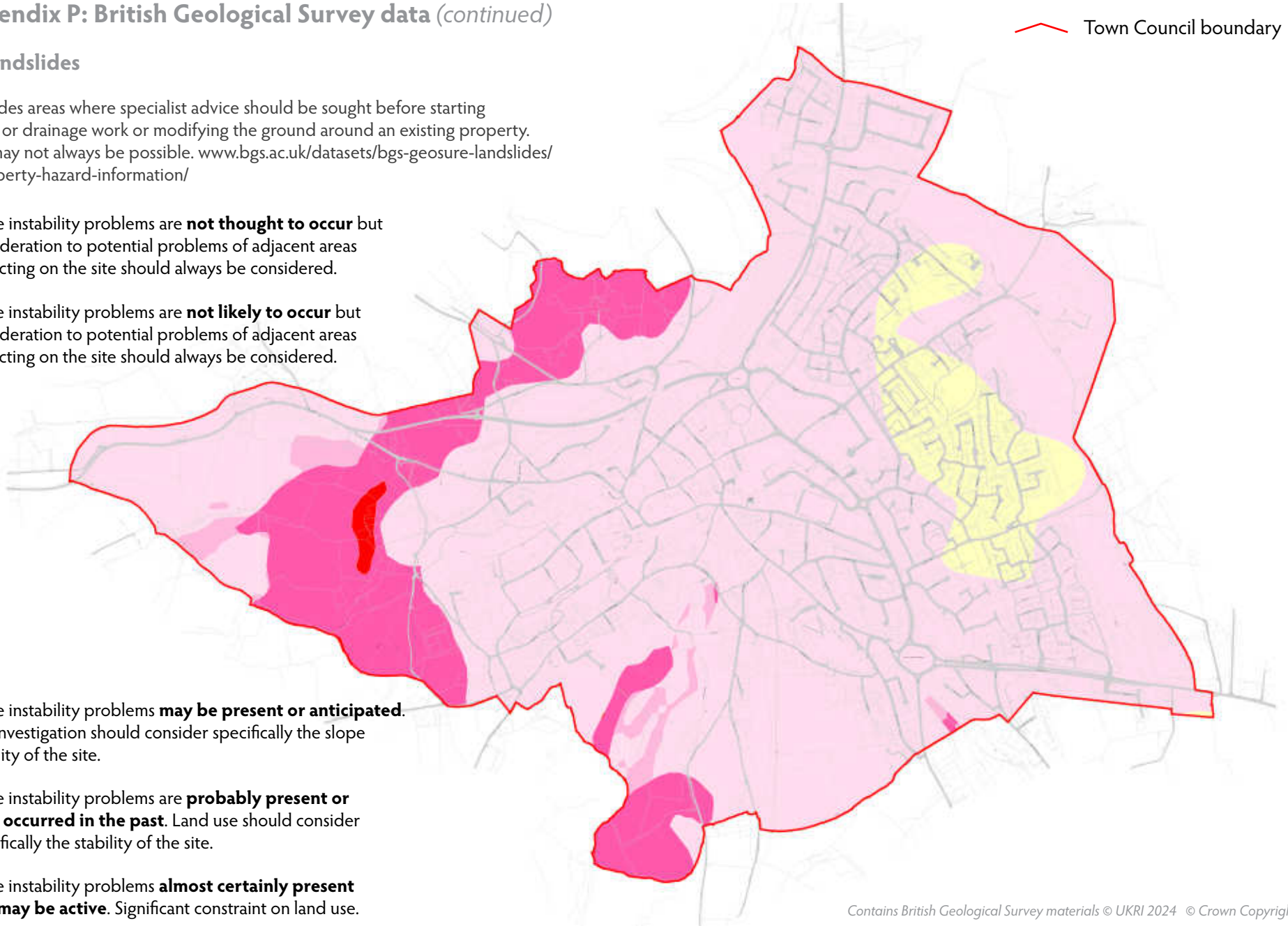


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7.18 Appendix P: British Geological Survey data *(continued)*

GeoSure Landslides

This layer includes areas where specialist advice should be sought before starting major building or drainage work or modifying the ground around an existing property. Construction may not always be possible. www.bgs.ac.uk/datasets/bgs-geosure-landslides/landslides-property-hazard-information/



Slope instability problems are **not thought to occur** but consideration to potential problems of adjacent areas impacting on the site should always be considered.

Slope instability problems are **not likely to occur** but consideration to potential problems of adjacent areas impacting on the site should always be considered.

Slope instability problems **may be present or anticipated**. Site investigation should consider specifically the slope stability of the site.

Slope instability problems are **probably present or have occurred in the past**. Land use should consider specifically the stability of the site.

Slope instability problems **almost certainly present and may be active**. Significant constraint on land use.

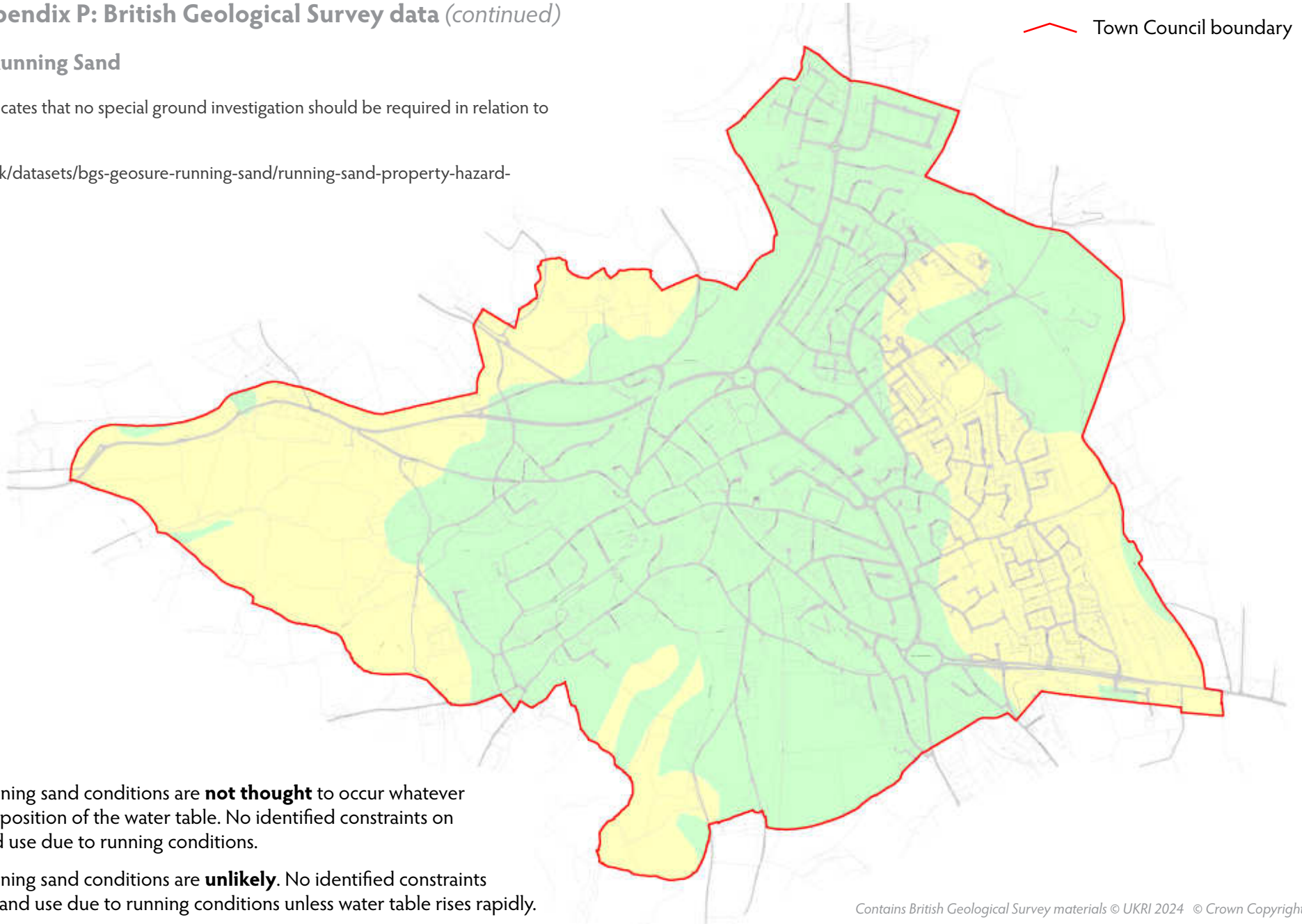
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7.18 Appendix P: British Geological Survey data *(continued)*

GeoSure Running Sand

This layer indicates that no special ground investigation should be required in relation to running sand.

www.bgs.ac.uk/datasets/bgs-geosure-running-sand/running-sand-property-hazard-information/



Running sand conditions are **not thought** to occur whatever the position of the water table. No identified constraints on land use due to running conditions.

Running sand conditions are **unlikely**. No identified constraints on land use due to running conditions unless water table rises rapidly.

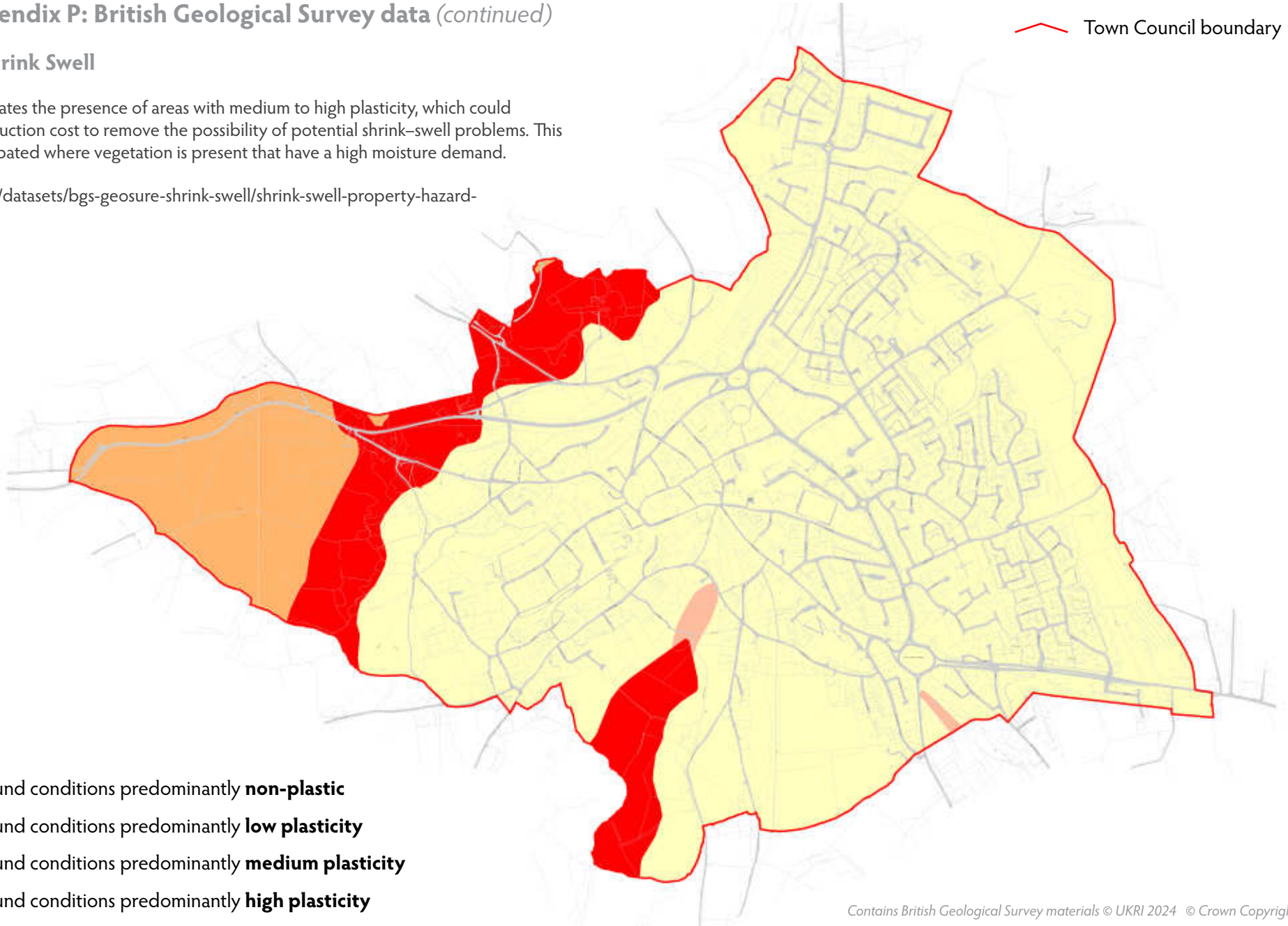
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7.18 Appendix P: British Geological Survey data *(continued)*

GeoSure Shrink Swell

This layer indicates the presence of areas with medium to high plasticity, which could increase construction cost to remove the possibility of potential shrink–swell problems. This may be exacerbated where vegetation is present that have a high moisture demand.

www.bgs.ac.uk/datasets/bgs-geosure-shrink-swell/shrink-swell-property-hazard-information/



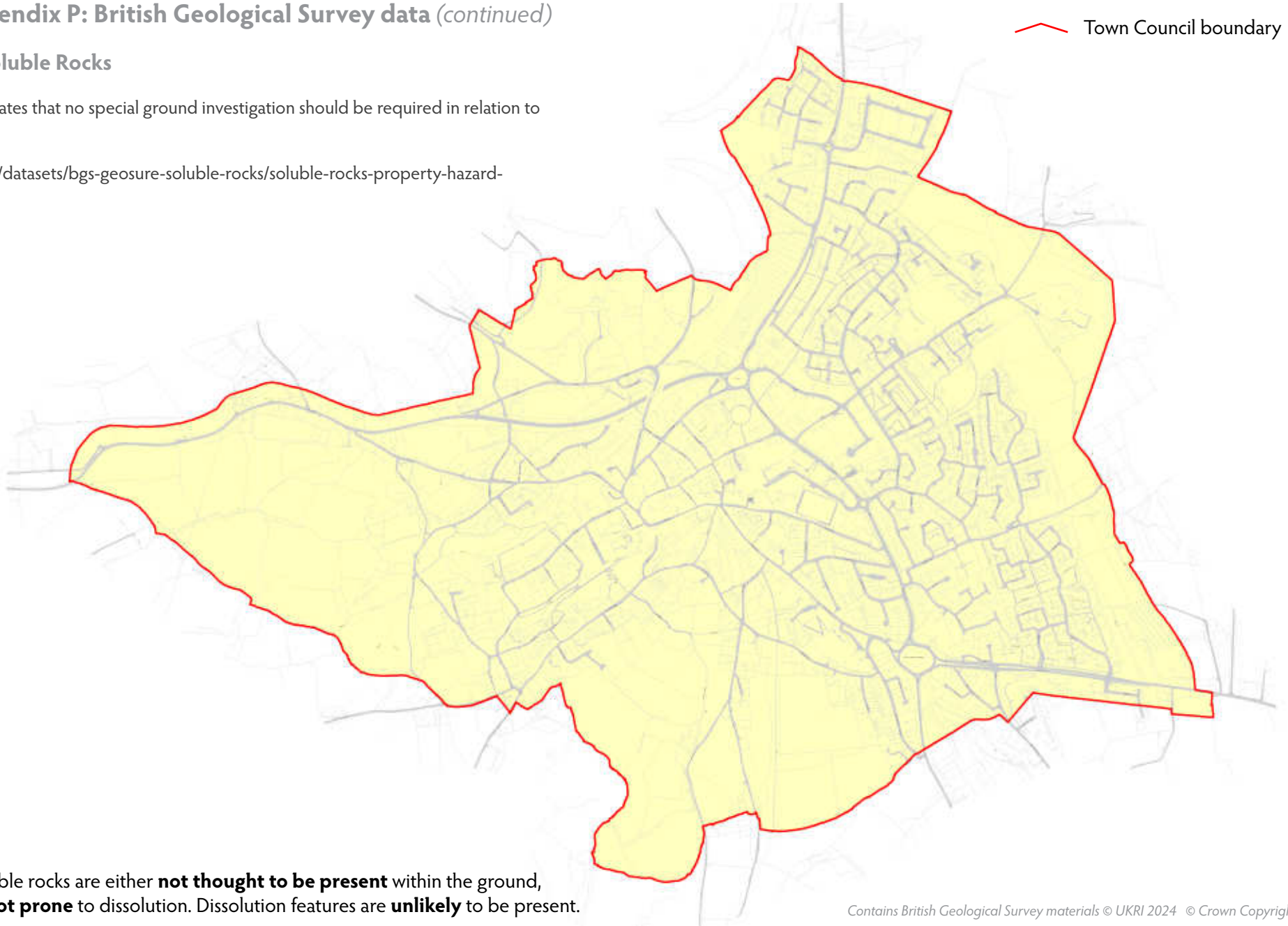
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7.18 Appendix P: British Geological Survey data *(continued)*

GeoSure Soluble Rocks

This layer indicates that no special ground investigation should be required in relation to soluble rocks.

www.bgs.ac.uk/datasets/bgs-geosure-soluble-rocks/soluble-rocks-property-hazard-information/



Soluble rocks are either **not thought to be present** within the ground, or **not prone** to dissolution. Dissolution features are **unlikely** to be present.

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SHAFTESBURY
TOWN
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Report on Shaftesbury Neighbourhood Plan 2019-2031 First Review

An Examination undertaken for Dorset Council with the support of Shaftesbury Town Council on the November 2025 submission version of the Review Neighbourhood Plan.

Independent Examiner: Andrew Mead BSc (Hons) MRTPI MIQ

Date of Report: 29 May 2026

Contents

Main Findings - Executive Summary 3
1. Introduction and Context 3
Shaftesbury Neighbourhood Plan 2019 – 2031, First Review 2025 3
The Independent Examiner 4
Submitted Documents 4
Planning Policy Context 5
2. Procedural Considerations 5
Initial Determination 5
The Scope of the Examination 7
The Basic Conditions 8
Site Visit 9
Written Representations with or without Public Hearing 9
Examiner Modifications 10
3. Compliance Matters and Human Rights 10
Qualifying Body and Neighbourhood Plan Area 10
Plan Period 10
Neighbourhood Plan Preparation and Consultation 10
Development and Use of Land 11
Excluded Development 11
Local Nature Recovery Strategy 11
Climate Change 11
Human Rights 11
4. Assessment of the Basic Conditions 12
Assimilated Obligations 12
Main Issues 12
Policy Modifications and New Policies (Policies SFTC1, SFTC2, SFTC3, SFHE1, SFHE1a, SFHE1b, SFHE1c, SFHE1d, SFHE2, SFHE3, SFGI1, SFGI2, SFGI3, SFGI4, SFDH1, SFDH2, SFDH4, SFDH5, SFDH6, SFDH7, SFDH8 & SFLC3). 13
Unchanged Policies (Policies SFTC4, SFHE4, SFDH9, SFCL1 and SFCL2) 17
Alterations to the Text 18
All Other Matters 18
5. Conclusions 18
Summary 18
Examiner Recommendation 19
Overview 19
Appendix: Examiner Modifications 20

Main Findings - Executive Summary

I made an initial determination on 18 February 2026 that the modifications contained in the Shaftesbury Neighbourhood Plan 2019-2031, First Review 2025 (the Review Plan/First Review Plan) are not so significant or substantial as to change the nature of the extant Neighbourhood Plan which the Review Plan would replace.

From my examination of the Review Plan and its supporting documentation, including the representations made, I have concluded that subject to the Examiner Modifications (**EMs**) set out in this report, the Review Plan meets the Basic Conditions.

I have also concluded that:

- The Review Plan has been prepared and submitted for examination by a qualifying body – Shaftesbury Town Council (STC);
- The Review Plan has been prepared for an area properly designated – the parish of Shaftesbury as shown at Map Ref: NPSB on page 12 of the Review Plan;
- The Review Plan specifies the period to which it is to take effect – 2019-2031; and
- The policies relate to the development and use of land for a designated neighbourhood area.

Therefore, I recommend that Dorset Council (DC) should make the Review Plan with the **EMs** specified in this report (there will be no statutory requirement for a referendum).

1. Introduction and Context

Shaftesbury Neighbourhood Plan 2019–2031, First Review 2025

1.1 Shaftesbury is an attractive historic hill-top town, which sits within a beautiful countryside setting. The slopes around the town provide long views across the rural hinterland, particularly the Blackmore Vale, whilst within the town itself there are numerous examples of historic buildings and inviting open spaces. The designated Neighbourhood Plan Area covers the parish of Shaftesbury. The parish population in 2021 was 9,158.[1] It is the subject of the Shaftesbury Neighbourhood Plan which was "made" (approved and adopted) in June 2021 by Dorset Council (DC).

1.2 In the following years, the main source of Government planning policy, the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) has been updated. The Plan has been reviewed to ensure that it remains up to date and reflects the needs and aspirations of parish residents.

[1] 2021 Census: page 144 Appendix N of the Plan.

The Independent Examiner

1.3 As the Review Plan has now reached the examination stage, I have been appointed as the examiner of the Shaftesbury Neighbourhood Plan 2019-2031, First Review 2025 by DC with the agreement of the STC.

1.4 I am a chartered town planner and former government Planning Inspector. I am an independent examiner, with experience of examining many neighbourhood plans and do not have an interest in any of the land that may be affected by the Review Plan.

Submitted Documents

1.5 I have considered all policy, guidance and other reference documents relevant to the examination, including those submitted which comprise:

- the Shaftesbury Neighbourhood Plan 2019-2031, First Review 2025, as proposed to be modified (November 2025);
- the summary of proposals and reasons for the modifications as set out in the Plan[2];
- the Shaftesbury Neighbourhood Plan Review Modifications Statement (November 2025);
- the statement from DC on the nature of the proposed modifications (January 2026);
- a map on page 12 of the Plan area, which identifies the area to which the proposed Neighbourhood Plan Review relates;
- a copy of the extant Shaftesbury Neighbourhood Plan 2019-2031, as made;
- the Consultation Statement (undated);
- the Basic Conditions Statement (June 2025);
- the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) Screening Report (December 2024, updated May 2025);
- the Green Infrastructure Audit (undated);
- the Housing and Employment – background paper (undated);
- the Transport Appendix (undated);
- the Parking Study (March 2019);
- the AECOM Design Statement (February 2019);
- all the representations which have been made in accordance with the Regulation 16 consultation; and
- the responses from STC and DC received on 18 March 2026 in answer to my questions of clarification dated 25 February 2026, including the additional five comments received on 8 April 2026 in relation to the changes to the legal compliance requirements and the Basic Conditions.[3]

[2] See paragraphs 2.4 – 2.8 below.
[3] View all the listed document at: https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/w/shaftesbury-neighbourhood-plan-2019-2031

Planning Policy Context

1.6 The Development Plan for this part of Dorset Council, not including documents relating to excluded minerals and waste development, includes the North Dorset Local Plan Part 1 (NDLP) adopted in 2016 and saved policies from the North Dorset District-Wide Local Plan 2003. The Local Plan was produced by the former North Dorset District Council. The NDLP is being replaced by the Dorset Council Local Plan (DCLP). The Local Development Scheme[4] for DC suggests an adoption date for the Local Plan in winter 2027. In August 2025, DC began an Options Consultation exercise for the Local Plan which ended in October 2025.[5] Given the emerging DCLP is at a relatively early stage, I afford only limited regard to the relevant advice in the PPG for the purposes of this examination.[6]

1.7 Planning policy for England is set out principally in the NPPF and is accompanied by the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) which offers guidance on how this policy should be implemented. A revised NPPF was published in December 2024. All references in this report are to the latest iteration of the NPPF and the accompanying PPG.

2. Procedural Considerations

Initial Determination

2.1 As the proposal has been submitted as a modification of the made Neighbourhood Plan, I undertook an initial determination under Paragraph 10(1) of Schedule A2 to the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended) ("the 2004 Act"). This concerned whether the modifications contained in the Review Plan are so significant or substantial as to change the nature of the Neighbourhood Plan which the Review Plan would replace.

2.2 If there is no change to the nature of the made Plan, the modification proposal can be examined under the streamlined process set out in Schedule A2 of the 2004 Act (no referendum). Otherwise, the examination would proceed under Schedule 4B of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended), whereby an examination and referendum would be required.

2.3 STC and DC are required to publish statements setting out their reasoned views on this matter. For STC, the provision is contained in Regulation 15(1)(f) of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as

[4] View at: https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/w/the-local-development-scheme-for-dorset-council
[5] View at: https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/w/dorset-council-local-plan-options-consultation-2025
[6] Relevant advice is set out in PPG Reference ID: 41-009-20190509.

amended) ("the 2012 Regulations"). For DC, the provision is at Regulation 17(e)(ii).

2.4 The views of STC were publicised at the Regulation 14 stage[7] (see the first three pages of the Consultation Statement and the Introduction to the Shaftesbury Neighbourhood Plan First Review (December 2024) and also an earlier version of the Modifications Statement dated November 2024). The reasons for the review are further publicised in the Conformity Analysis tables in the Basic Conditions Statement (pp 7 – 20). This information indicates that the modifications made require examination but not a referendum.

2.5 To inform the determination, I considered all the relevant submitted documents and representations. In particular:

- the Consultation Statement, which demonstrates that STC alerted respondents to the nature of the changes being made to the Plan through the review;

- the comments throughout the submission draft Neighbourhood Plan First Review (Regulation 15), which explain very briefly the reasons for reviewing the Neighbourhood Plan, along with the more detailed Shaftesbury Neighbourhood Plan First Review Modifications Statement, November 2025[8];

- the written statement on this matter provided by DC to comply with Regulation 17(e)(ii).

2.6 The draft Plan does not propose any significant changes, the main ones being focused changes to the maps accompanying:

- Policy SFTC1 (Development within the Town Centre) and SFTC2 (Uses allowed within the Primary Shopping Area);
- Policy SFTC3 (Town Centre shop fronts and public realm design);
- Policy SFHE1 (Meeting local housing needs);
- Policies SFHE1a – d (Housing allocations);
- Policy SFHE2 (Housing sites – key principles of development);
- Policy SFHE3 (Meeting local employment needs);
- Policy SFGI1 (Local Green Spaces and Important Treed Areas);
- Policy SFGI2 (Shaftesbury's slopes, views and rural setting);
- Policy SFGI3 (Landscaping requirements);
- Policy SFDH2 (Incorporating sustainability in designs);
- Policy SFDH4 (The design of outdoor spaces);
- Policy SFDH5 (Parking provision); Policy SFDH6 (Scale, design and detailing of buildings);
- Policy SFDH7 (Building materials);
- Policy SFDH8 (Archaeological assessment and preservation); and
- Policy SFCL3 (Provision of walking and cycling routes),

[7] Regulation 14(a)(v).
[8] I consider, in essence, STC has sought to substantially comply with the requirements of Regulations 14(a)(v) and 15(1)(f).

together with factual updates since the Plan was first drafted and occasional improvements to the clarity of phrasing.

2.7 The Modification Statement (page 10) states that the STC "considers that the proposed modifications are not so significant or substantial as to change the nature of the Plan". Similarly, DC has compared the policies in the made Plan with those of the Review Plan, summarised the key differences in the Regulation 16 response (pages 14 – 19) and concluded that the changes constitute material modifications which do not change the nature of the Plan and would require examination but not a referendum.

2.8 Having assessed all the written documents submitted, including the representations and relevant statements, I am content that the modifications proposed in the draft Plan are material but do not change the nature of the made Plan. I set out my determination in my procedural letter of 18 February 2026 to DC and STC. Therefore, the examination can proceed under the terms of Schedule A2 to the 2004 Act which I set out below and, as a consequence, should I recommend that the draft Plan be made (with or without Examiner Modifications), a referendum stage will not be a necessary part of the statutory process.

2.9 I note that the made Neighbourhood Plan identifies a clear succinct vision with broad objectives broken down into more detail and which supported the policy areas. The vision in the Review Plan adds "respecting … its nationally known views" and the objectives remain very similar. The overall nature of the Review Plan including its scope, issues, aims and policy context is similar to the made Plan.

The Scope of the Examination

2.10 As the independent examiner, I am required to produce this report and recommend either:

(a) that the local planning authority should make the draft plan; or

(b) that the local planning authority should make the draft plan with the modifications specified in this report; or

(c) that the local planning authority should not make the draft plan.

2.11 The scope of the examination is set out in Paragraph 11(1) of Schedule A2 to the 2004 Act. The examiner must consider:

- Whether the plan meets the Basic Conditions.
- Whether the plan complies with provisions under s.38A and s.38B of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended) ('the 2004 Act'). These are principally:

- it has been prepared and submitted for examination by a qualifying body, for an area that has been properly designated by the local planning authority;
- it sets out policies in relation to the development and use of land and does not go beyond the scope of what may be included in a draft plan[9];
- it specifies the period during which it has effect;
- it is the only neighbourhood plan for the area and does not relate to land outside the designated neighbourhood area;
- it does not include provisions and policies for 'excluded development';
- so far as the qualifying body considers appropriate, having regard to the subject matter of the neighbourhood development plan, it is designed to secure that the development and use of land in the neighbourhood area contribute to the mitigation of, and adaptation to, climate change[10]; and
- so far as the qualifying body considers appropriate, having regard to the subject matter of the neighbourhood development plan, it takes account of any local nature recovery strategy, under section 104 of the Environment Act 2021, that relates to all or part of the neighbourhood area.[11]

- Whether the referendum boundary should be extended beyond the designated area, should the plan proceed to referendum.
- Such matters as prescribed in the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended)('the 2012 Regulations').

2.12 I have considered only matters that fall within Paragraph 11(1) of Schedule A2 to the 2004 Act, with one exception. That is the requirement that the draft Plan is compatible with the Human Rights Convention.

The Basic Conditions

2.13 The 'Basic Conditions' are set out in Paragraph 11(2) of Schedule A2 to the 2004 Act. In order to meet the Basic Conditions, the draft Plan must:

[9] See s.38B(A1) and s.38B(2C)(a) of the 2004 Act.
[10] This additional requirement was commenced on 25 March 2026 by virtue of *The Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023 (Commencement No. 11 and Saving and Transitional Provisions) Regulations 2026*, which brought into force section 98 of the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023.
[11] See footnote above.

- Have regard to national policies and advice contained in guidance issued by the Secretary of State;
- Contribute to the achievement of sustainable development;
- Not result in the development plan for the area of the authority proposing that less housing is provided by means of development taking place in that area than if the draft plan were not to be made;[12]
- Be compatible with, and not breach, assimilated obligations[13]; and
- Meet prescribed conditions and comply with prescribed matters.

2.14 Regulation 32 of the 2012 Regulations prescribes a further Basic Condition for a neighbourhood plan. This requires that the making of the Neighbourhood Plan does not breach the requirements of Chapter 8 of Part 6 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017.[14]

Site Visit

2.15 I made an unaccompanied site visit to the Neighbourhood Plan Area on 17 February 2026 to familiarise myself with the Plan area and visit relevant sites and locations referenced in the Review Plan and evidential documents.

Written Representations with or without Public Hearing

2.16 This examination has been dealt with by written representations. At the Regulation 16 stage, no representors suggested that a hearing would be necessary. Sufficient written evidence has been provided which I have supplemented by my site visit. In all respects, the representations clearly articulate their submissions to the Review Plan. There are no exceptional reasons to justify convening a public hearing.[15]

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[12] This Basic Condition applies from 25 March 2026 by virtue of *The Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023 (Commencement No. 11 and Saving and Transitional Provisions) Regulations 2026*, which brought into force section 99 of the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023. This replaces the former Basic Condition which required a neighbourhood plan to be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the development plan for the area.

[13] See: The Retained EU Law (Revocation and Reform) Act 2023 (Consequential Amendment) Regulations 2023, which replaced the previous reference to 'EU' obligations.

[14] This revised Basic Condition came into force on 28 December 2018 through the Conservation of Habitats and Species and Planning (Various Amendments) (England and Wales) Regulations 2018.

[15] See Paragraph 12(2)(a) of Schedule A2.

Examiner Modifications

2.17 Where necessary, I have specified Examiner Modifications (**EMs**) in this report in order that it meets the Basic Conditions and other legal requirements. For ease of reference, I have included this modification separately in an Appendix.

3. Compliance Matters and Human Rights

Qualifying Body and Neighbourhood Plan Area

3.1 The Shaftesbury Neighbourhood Plan 2019 – 2031, First Review 2025, has been prepared and submitted for examination by STC, which is a qualifying body for an area that was designated by the former NDDC in November 2017. NDDC was replaced by DC on 1 April 2019 which carries over the statutory designation.

3.2 It is the only Neighbourhood Plan for the area and does not relate to land outside the designated Neighbourhood Plan Area.

Plan Period

3.3 The Review Plan clearly specifies the period to which it is to take effect, which is from 2019 to 2031 and is unaltered from the existing made Plan.

Neighbourhood Plan Preparation and Consultation

3.4 Details of the Review Plan preparation, events, activities and consultation are set out in the STC Consultation Statement (CS), as submitted to DC.

3.5 Regulation 14 consultation took place between 2 December 2024 and 31 January 2025. The main issues and concerns raised by residents and statutory consultees and how they were considered by STC are included as a table on pages 4-24 of the CS.

3.6 At the Regulation 16 stage, between 12 December 2025 and 30 January 2026, ten representations were received, including one from DC, and are provided in the submitted Regulation 16 Consultation Schedule.

3.7 During the examination, changes were made to the legal compliance requirements and Basic Conditions, applying from 25 March 2026. In order to provide an opportunity for the qualifying body, the local planning authority and any other interested parties to comment, DC contacted those who had made representations at the Regulation 16 stage.

3.8 A 2-week period was advertised on Dorset Council's website inviting further comments, focused only on the legislative changes. Five responses

were received including those from DC and STC. I have taken these into account in my assessment.

3.9 I confirm that the legal requirements have been met by the consultation process. In addition, there has been regard to the advice in the PPG on plan preparation and engagement.

Development and Use of Land

3.10 The Review Plan sets out policies in relation to the development and use of land in accordance with Section 38A of the 2004 Act and does not exceed the appropriate scope of a neighbourhood plan.[16]

Excluded Development

3.11 The Review Plan does not include provisions and policies for "excluded development".[17]

Local Nature Recovery Strategy

3.12 DC has confirmed that the Dorset Local Nature Recovery Strategy was not published until December 2025, after the submission of the Plan in November 2025. However, DC considers that STC has discharged the legal requirements as thoroughly as it could reasonably do so given the circumstances. I consider that none of the Plan's policies are in direct conflict with the strategy.

Climate Change

3.13 Having regard to the responses received to my letter of 16 March 2026, I am satisfied that, overall, the Plan as proposed to be modified does not conflict with the aims of securing development which contributes to the mitigation of, and adaptation to, climate change.

Human Rights

3.14 The Basic Conditions Statement (BCS) advises that no issues have been raised in relation to the possible contravention of Human Rights in the preceding consultations and given the conclusions on the Plan's regard to national planning policy, it is reasonable to conclude that the making of the Plan should not breach human rights. I have considered this matter independently and I have found no reason to disagree with the statement in the BCS and I am satisfied that the policies will not have a discriminatory impact on any particular group of individuals.

[16] See s.38B(A1) and s.38B(2C)(a) of the 2004 Act.
[17] The meaning of 'excluded development' is set out in s.61K of the 1990 Act.

4. Assessment of the Basic Conditions

Assimilated Obligations

4.1 The Shaftesbury Neighbourhood Plan First Review was screened for Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) by DC, following a report compiled on behalf of STC, which found that it was unnecessary to undertake a full SEA or HRA. Having read the Strategic Environmental Assessment and Habitats Regulations Assessment Screening Report, December 2024 (updated May 2025), I support this conclusion. The statutory consultees raised no objections to the Review Plan. From my independent assessment of this matter and having read the Review Plan, the supporting information and the summaries of the representations, I have no reason to disagree. Therefore, I am satisfied that the Shaftesbury Neighbourhood Plan First Review is compatible with the assimilated obligations that are relevant to this Plan.

Main Issues

4.2 Having considered whether the First Review Plan complies with various procedural and legal requirements, it is now necessary to deal with whether it complies with the remaining Basic Conditions, particularly the regard it pays to national policy and guidance and the contribution it makes to the achievement of sustainable development. I test the First Review Plan against the Basic Conditions by considering specific issues of compliance of all the Plan's policies.

4.3 As part of that assessment, I consider whether the policies are sufficiently clear and unambiguous, having regard to advice in the PPG. A neighbourhood plan policy should be drafted with sufficient clarity that a decision maker can apply it consistently and with confidence when determining planning applications. It should be concise, precise and supported by appropriate evidence.[18]

4.4 Accordingly, having regard to the Shaftesbury Neighbourhood Plan First Review, the consultation responses, other evidence and the site visit, I consider that the main issues in this examination are whether the draft Plan's policies: (i) have regard to national policy and guidance; (ii) do not result in the development plan for the area proposing less housing development than would have been the case if the plan were not to be made; and (iii) would contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. I shall consider firstly the modified policies and, secondly, the unchanged policies to ensure they remain compliant.

[18] PPG Reference ID: 41-041-20140306.

Policy Modifications and New Policies (Policies SFTC1, SFTC2, SFTC3, SFHE1, SFHE1a, SFHE1b, SFHE1c, SFHE1d, SFHE2, SFHE3, SFGI1, SFGI2, SFGI3, SFGI4, SFDH1, SFDH2, SFDH4, SFDH5, SFDH6, SFDH7, SFDH8 & SFLC3).

4.5 ***Policy SFTC1*** supports development proposals within the town centre area. Superficial focussed grammatical alterations have been made to the list of aspirations within the policy and additional focused changes to the boundary of the town centre area. The policy continues to have regard to national guidance[19] and meet the Basic Conditions.

4.6 ***Policy SFTC2*** defines the primary shopping area (PSA) and main frontages and lists the uses which are allowed within the PSA. No changes have been made to the policy but focussed changes have been proposed to the main shopping frontages and PSA. The policy continues to have regard to national guidance[20] and meets the Basic Conditions.

4.7 ***Policy SFTC3*** aims to preserve and enhance the character and design of the town centre. Focussed alterations have been proposed to improve the clarity of the policy. The policy continues to have regard to national guidance[21] and meets the Basic Conditions.

4.8 ***Policy SFHE1*** allocates five sites with the potential for housing, four of which (Land south east of Wincombe Lane; Land adjoining Lidl; Barton Hill House and grounds; and the Post Office/Police Station site) are then considered by ***Policies SFHE1a – SFHE1d*** each of which has regard to national guidance[22], would not result in the development plan for the area proposing less housing development, and meets the Basic Conditions, subject to alterations to Policy SFHE1c for reasons of clarity and to recognise the possible presence of bat roosts. **(EM1)**

4.9 The list of housing allocations also includes "the former ATS Euromaster site in the town centre (if not retained as town centre car parking)". However, I note the Regulation 16 response from the landowner that the land will, in due course, pass to the Shaftesbury Charitable Trust to be held "forever" as a car park and its income used for charitable purposes. STC commented that, taking into account the observed car park usage by shoppers/visitors to the town, the site would be more appropriately included within the town centre car parks notated on Map SFTC. I agree.

4.10 Therefore, the former ATS Euromaster site should be deleted from Policy SFHE1 (and the list on page 31) and the Map SFHE1 (page 38), together with the comment about the site on page 32. A new paragraph should be added after the Boynes Hollow paragraph on page 31 as follows: *"Planning permission was granted for 24 dwellings at the former ATS site in March 2023 (P/FUL/2021/01338), but this permission has now lapsed and the site has been acquired by a new owner, and is now in active use*

[19] NPPF: paragraph 90.
[20] NPPF: paragraph 90.
[21] NPPF: paragraphs 203 & 212.
[22] NPPF: paragraphs 30, 61, 69, 74, 70 and 85.

as a car park to serve the town centre." In addition, the site should be deleted from page 32, the New Road car park should be added to Map SFTC (page 21), the green box on Map SFTC should be updated and the supporting text on page 26 should include a reference to the New Road car park.

4.11 As a further update, the final sentence of the first paragraph on page 32 should be amended and merged with the first sentence of the second paragraph as follows: *"The 55 homes on the site adjoining Higher Blandford Road have now been constructed, and Persimmon Homes have now commenced construction of houses on the site further to the east. This area was allocated for employment uses only …"*.

4.12 Additionally, taking into account representations by DC and further comments from STC, I shall rephrase Policy SFHE1 by amending the first paragraph to: *"Sufficient land has been identified within the Neighbourhood Plan which, if delivered, together with the extant ..."* and amending the third paragraph to: *"Given the identified supply exceeds the current housing need requirement, applications for residential development outside the settlement boundary will only be supported where they are consistent with policies in the development plan."* **(EM2)** With these modifications, Policy SFHE1 would have regard to national guidance[23], would not result in the development plan for the area proposing less housing development, and would contribute to sustainable development.

4.13 I raised with STC and DC the desirability of updating the Shaftesbury Settlement Boundary where development has occurred and where planning permissions have been granted. STC supplied detailed maps showing a revised boundary, but logically the boundary changes necessary should extend beyond the Plan area, as the settlement boundary extends into adjoining parishes each with their own made Neighbourhood Plans: Melbury Abbas and Cann; and Motcombe. As DC correctly states, the updating of the settlement boundary is not required to meet the Basic Conditions. Therefore, I shall not update the Settlement Boundary and it may be that this is done in the emerging Dorset Local Plan.

4.14 A representation was received from Nightingale Land promoting land at Wincombe Lane for residential development. However, as DC indicates, the majority of the land is outside the Plan area in the adjoining county of Wiltshire and it would be unreasonable to expect the Neighbourhood Plan to address strategic cross boundary issues. I agree with STC that the eastward expansion of Shaftesbury, together with the future of the related Shaftesbury Eastern Bypass corridor is a strategic matter appropriately considered through the Local Plan.

[23] NPPF: paragraphs 30, 61, 69, 70, 74, 85, and Annex 1; and in accord with the December 2024 updated *Housing need* section of the PPG standard method calculation.

4.15 ***Policy SFHE2*** sets out the key principles of development at housing sites. ***Policy SFHE3*** aims to encourage conditions for attracting and retaining employment. When compared to the made Plan, focussed alterations simplify the operation of Policy SFHE2[24] and clarify the application of Policy SFHE3.[25] Each policy has regard to national guidance as referenced and meets the Basic Conditions.

4.16 ***Policy SFGI1*** identifies Local Green Spaces (LGS) and Important Treed Areas (ITA) shown on Map SFGI1 (page 50). There has been a slight rewording of the policy compared to the made Plan and a small number of ITA and LGS have been added or modified. None of these designations have been proposed for housing through the development plan and therefore would not result in the development plan for the area proposing less housing. The policy has regard to national guidance[26] and meets the Basic Conditions.

4.17 ***Policy SFGI2*** seeks to protect the slopes of Shaftesbury and is similar to the made Plan but with the addition of a paragraph dealing with land stability. The policy has regard to national guidance[27] and meets the Basic Conditions.

4.18 ***Policy SFGI3*** aims to ensure that development respects and enhances the Green Infrastructure Network. There are a small number of focussed changes which strengthen the wildlife/biodiversity elements of the policy, to which DC suggests adding a phrase seeking the protection of biodiversity in the design of green spaces within development. STC supports the amendment and I agree. **(EM3)** The policy would have regard to national guidance[28] and would meet the Basic Conditions.

4.19 ***Policy SFGI4*** aims to protect dark skies. The policy is similar to the made Plan other than altering Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty to National Landscape and changing 3,000K to 2,700K. A suggestion by DC to add a phrase seeking to avoid and minimise impacts on biodiversity is supported by STC and to which I agree. **(EM4)** The policy would have regard to national guidance[29] and would meet the Basic Conditions.

4.20 ***Policy SFDH1*** is unchanged in the draft Review Plan. The Plan identifies Character Zones) in which certain identified issues are to be addressed through Policy SFDH1. Following discussions between DC and STC about minor adjustments to Character Zones 4 (Grosvenor Road, Barton Hill and Cockram's Field), 6 (Cann) and 8 (East of Christy's Lane) (See Map Ref: SFDHZ – page 65), the parties agreed that the policy should be amended to: *"Development in a Character Zone (as shown on Map SFDHZ) will respect and respond to the positive aspects of character associated with*

[24] NPPF: paragraphs 61, 69, 74 and 140.
[25] NPPF: paragraph 85.
[26] NPPF: paragraphs 106, 107, 135 and 136.
[27] NPPF: paragraphs 187 and 196.
[28] NPPF: paragraphs 187 and 192.
[29] NPPF: paragraph 198.

the specific area of Shaftesbury …". I agree with the suggestion. The policy would have regard to national guidance[30] and would meet the Basic Conditions. **(EM5)**

4.21 ***Policy SFDH2*** aims to include sustainability in design. Focussed additions to the policy help to amplify it and which then has regard to national guidance[31] and meets the Basic Conditions.

4.22 ***Policy SFDH3*** considers the scale, positioning and orientation of buildings. I agree with the deletion of the reference to microclimates suggested by DC due to it being an unreasonable requirement for the likely development scenarios in Shaftesbury. **(EM6)** Subject to that change, the policy would have regard to national guidance[32] and meet the Basic Conditions.

4.23 ***Policy SFDH4*** considers the design of outdoor spaces. The policy includes focussed additions to the made Plan of which one, concerning street furniture, waste bins and signage, has attracted an objection from DC with which I agree. Therefore, I shall amend the second sentence of the policy which would then have regard to national guidance[33] and meet the Basic Conditions. **(EM7)**

4.24 ***Policy SFDH5*** deals with parking provision for cars, motorcycles and bicycles. DC noted that the policy includes a reference to the lengthy local transport note LTN 1/20 on cycle infrastructure design and has suggested altering the policy to refer specifically to Chapter 11 of the guidance. I agree and shall modify the policy which would then have regard to national guidance[34] and meet the Basic Conditions. **(EM8)**

4.25 ***Policy SFDH6*** considers the scale, design and detail of buildings and, when compared to the made Plan, "local" has been added within the phrase "traditional local buildings" as a focussed alteration. The policy has regard to national guidance[35] and meets the Basic Conditions.

4.26 ***Policy SFDH7*** considers building materials and includes using those with "high sustainability credentials", a term questioned by DC and which culminated in an alteration to the policy agreed with STC which is detailed in the Appendix. **(EM9)** The policy would then have regard to national guidance[36] and would meet the Basic Conditions.

4.27 ***Policy SFDH8*** seeks an archaeological assessment at proposed development where historic remains may be present. The policy has a focussed change which would require notification of the Dorset Council's

[30] NPPF: paragraph 135.
[31] NPPF: paragraph 132.
[32] NPPF: paragraphs 135 and 162.
[33] NPPF: paragraphs 96 and 103.
[34] NPPF: paragraph 111.
[35] NPPF: paragraph 131.
[36] NPPF: paragraph 131 and 167.

archaeologist and Dorset Museum. The policy has regard to national guidance[37] and meets the Basic Conditions.

4.28 ***Policy SFCL3*** considers the provision of walking and cycling routes and has a focussed change to strengthen it. The policy has regard to national guidance[38] and meets the Basic Conditions.

Unchanged Policies (Policies SFTC4, SFHE4, SFDH9, SFCL1 and SFCL2)

4.29 Five other policies in the made Plan remain unchanged. Each policy has regard to national guidance, would contribute to the achievement of sustainable development and would meet the Basic Conditions.

4.30 The following table sets out the details of how these five policies have regard to national guidance to enable the Basic Conditions to be met.

Table 1.

Policy	Subject	National guidance (NPPF paragraph number)
SFTC4	Town Centre Parking	113
SFHE4	Shaftesbury Eastern bypass corridor	111
SFDH9	Locally important historic buildings	202, 216
SFCL1	Community facilities	96, 98, 103, 104
SFCL2	Tourist facilities and attractions	85, 88

4.31 In addition, the term Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) was changed to National Landscape (NL) in November 2023.[39] The Plan recognises this in most of the references, but several have "escaped". Therefore, on pages 72, 103 and 112, the phrase "Cranborne Chase AONB" should be replaced by "Cranborne Chase National Landscape". On page 94, the note alongside the map of tourist related facilities should be amended to "The Cranborne Chase National Landscape (CCNL) – an International Dark Sky Reserve – is also shown". And on page 111, "Cranborne Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty" should be replaced by "Cranborne Chase National Landscape". **(EM10)**

[37] NPPF: paragraph 207.
[38] NPPF: paragraph 111.
[39] Notwithstanding this rebrand is a matter of policy, since relevant statutes continue to reference 'Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty'.

Alterations to the Text

4.32 A consequence of the acceptance of the recommended modifications would be that amendments might have to be made to the explanation within the Plan in order to make it logical, such as the corrections to calculations of car park space and available housing land as a result of the change to the former ATS Euromaster site. Other amendments might also include minor contextual updates correcting minor inaccuracies (for example the typo in Policy SFHE3 and the corrections to the references to Town Centre Map SFTC), cross referencing and any renumbering of paragraphs and policies. None of these alterations would affect the ability of the Plan to meet the Basic Conditions and could be undertaken as minor, non-material changes.[40]

4.33 I also canvassed with STC and DC the possibility of updating Appendices L and N. Appendix L describes the Local Green Spaces (LGS) and Important Treed Areas (ITA). The description of LGS 54: Land off Higher Blandford Road (immediately east of the junction with the A30) is out of date. The updating detail is not required for the Plan to meet the Basic Conditions but may be undertaken as a non-material change. (See paragraph 4.32 above).

4.34 Appendix N deals with the calculations underpinning the Housing Targets and Population Statistics which lead to a consequent revision to figures in the main body of the report. The overall conclusions about Housing in the Plan remain unaltered. The updating details are not required for the Plan to meet the Basic Conditions and I consider they may be undertaken as non-material changes.[41]

All Other Matters

4.35 In this examination, I have focussed on differences in the policies between the made Neighbourhood Plan and the Review Plan. Nevertheless, I have considered afresh the whole of the draft Plan. I have reviewed each policy in terms of its consistency with national policy and guidance. Other than the issues that are discussed above, I am satisfied that there are no other matters which affect the Basic Conditions.

5. Conclusions

Summary

5.1 The Shaftesbury Neighbourhood Plan 2019–2031 First Review 2025 has been duly prepared in compliance with the procedural requirements. My examination has assessed whether the Review Plan meets the Basic Conditions and other legal requirements. I have had regard for all the

[40] PPG Reference ID: 41-106-20190509.
[41] See paragraph 4.32 above.

responses made following consultation on the Review Plan and the evidence documents submitted with it.

5.2 I have set out modifications to Policies SFHE1, SFHE1c, SFGI3, SFGI4, SFDH1, SFDH3, SFDH4. SFDH5 and SFDH7 to ensure the Review Plan meets the Basic Conditions and other legal requirements.

Examiner Recommendation

5.3 I recommend that DC should make the Review Plan with the modifications specified in the Appendix to this report.

Overview

5.4 Inevitably, considerable time and effort has been devoted to the development and production of this very well written and illustrated Review Plan and I congratulate those who have been involved. I appreciated the comprehensive documentation which was submitted from both Councils at the various stages of the examination, lengthened by the revision to the Basic Conditions and legal requirements; and especially the constructive comments made in response to my questions. The Review Plan should continue to prove to be a useful tool for future planning and change within Shaftesbury over the coming years.

Andy Mead

Examiner

Appendix: Examiner Modifications

Examiner Modification number (EM)	Policy/other reference	Modification
EM1	Policy SFHE1c	Amend the first paragraph to: **"Barton Hill House and Grounds are allocated for residential use. The original Victorian building should be retained, in accordance with Policy SFDH9. Any new buildings should respect and enhance the design of the original Victorian building and the setting of the Listed wall and Ice House within the grounds."** Add a fourth paragraph: **"An ecological assessment should be undertaken to ascertain the presence or otherwise of bat roosts within trees and buildings onsite. Where possible, bat roosts should be retained. Lighting of the site should respond to the presence of roosting bats and the location of any identified flight paths and foraging areas."**
EM2	Policy SFHE1	The former ATS Euromaster site should be deleted from Policy SFHE1 (and the list on page 31) and from the Map SFHE1 (page 38). The comment about the site on page 32 should also be deleted. A new paragraph should be added after the Boynes Hollow paragraph on page 31: ***"Planning permission was granted for 24 dwellings at the former ATS site in March 2023 (P/FUL/2021/01338), but this permission has now lapsed and the site has been acquired by a new owner, and is now in active use as a car park to serve the town centre."***

		The New Road car park should be added to Map SFTC (page 21), the green box on Map SFTC should be updated and the supporting text on page 26 should include a reference to the New Road car park. The final sentence of the first paragraph on page 32 should be amended and merged with the first sentence of the second paragraph as follows: ***"The 55 homes on the site adjoining Higher Blandford Road have been constructed, and Persimmon Homes have now commenced construction of houses on the site further to the east. This area was allocated for employment uses only …".*** Amend the first paragraph of the policy to: ***"Sufficient land has been identified within the Neighbourhood Plan which, if delivered, together with the extant …".*** Amend the third paragraph to: ***"Given the identified supply exceeds the current housing need requirement, applications for residential development outside the settlement boundary will only be supported where they are consistent with policies in the development plan."***
EM3	Policy SFGI3	Amend the third bullet point to: **"Protect and enhance biodiversity."**
EM4	Policy SFGI4	Amend the first paragraph to: **"Development should be designed to conserve and enhance the quality of the dark night skies and prevent glare affecting the Cranborne Chase National Landscape (CCNL). It should also ensure any lighting**

		arising from the development minimises impacts on biodiversity. In particular:…"
EM5	Policy SFDH1	Amend the policy to: ***"Development in a Character Zone (as shown on Map SFDHZ) will respect and respond to the positive aspects of character associated with the specific area of Shaftesbury where the development is planned and not repeat (and where possible reduce) the negative issues as set out in section 5.2.".***
EM6	Policy SFDH3	Delete from the third bullet point: "the microclimates formed and …".
EM7	Policy SFDH4	Replace the second sentence with: **"Street furniture, including waste bins and signage, should be designed to be in keeping with the street furniture designs found in Shaftesbury, and the Town Council can be approached to advise on how to help achieve this."**
EM8	Policy SFDH5	Amend the first sentence to: **"… and taking account of Chapter 11 of LTN 1/20 guidance on cycle parking provision, where appropriate."**
EM9	Policy SFDH7	Amend the policy to: **"Development should use materials that respect the area's heritage, are high quality, are appropriate to the building and its setting, and are durable and, where possible, local or recycled. Attention should be paid to the sustainability and embodied carbon of the materials used, favouring options that will conserve energy and other resources taking into account the lifespan of the building, and**

		minimise risks from the impacts of climate change, such as through appropriate insulation qualities to avoid overheating."
EM10	AONB references	On pages 72, 103 and 112, the phrase "Cranborne Chase AONB" should be replaced by **"Cranborne Chase National Landscape".** On page 94, the note alongside the map of tourist related facilities should be amended to **"The Cranborne Chase National Landscape (CCNL) – an International Dark Sky Reserve – is also shown"**. On page 111, "Cranborne Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty" should be replaced by **"Cranborne Chase National Landscape"**.

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