

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

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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 Council¹ 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.