



North Dorset Local Plan Review
Issues and Options Consultation

November 2017
- January 2018



What is the Local Plan?

The Local Plan sets out a vision and framework for the development of the area. It identifies land to meet future needs and guides decisions about development. The most recent local plan was adopted by North Dorset District Council in January 2016.

Why do we need to review the plan?

Although it's only a short time since the Local Plan came into effect, the Inspector who examined the plan said that we should prepare an early review. One of the main issues behind this review is the need to identify additional land capable of meeting housing needs.



Do we know where this growth will go?

Currently, Blandford (Forum & St Mary), Gillingham, Shaftesbury and Sturminster Newton, as the four largest towns, are identified as the locations for the majority of growth in the district. This approach helps to protect the countryside from unnecessary development, and directs development to the most sustainable locations, where there are shops and services. This strategy is likely to continue, but this consultation will allow us to understand better the capacity for further growth at these locations. We are also consulting on whether Stalbridge can accommodate a limited level of growth.

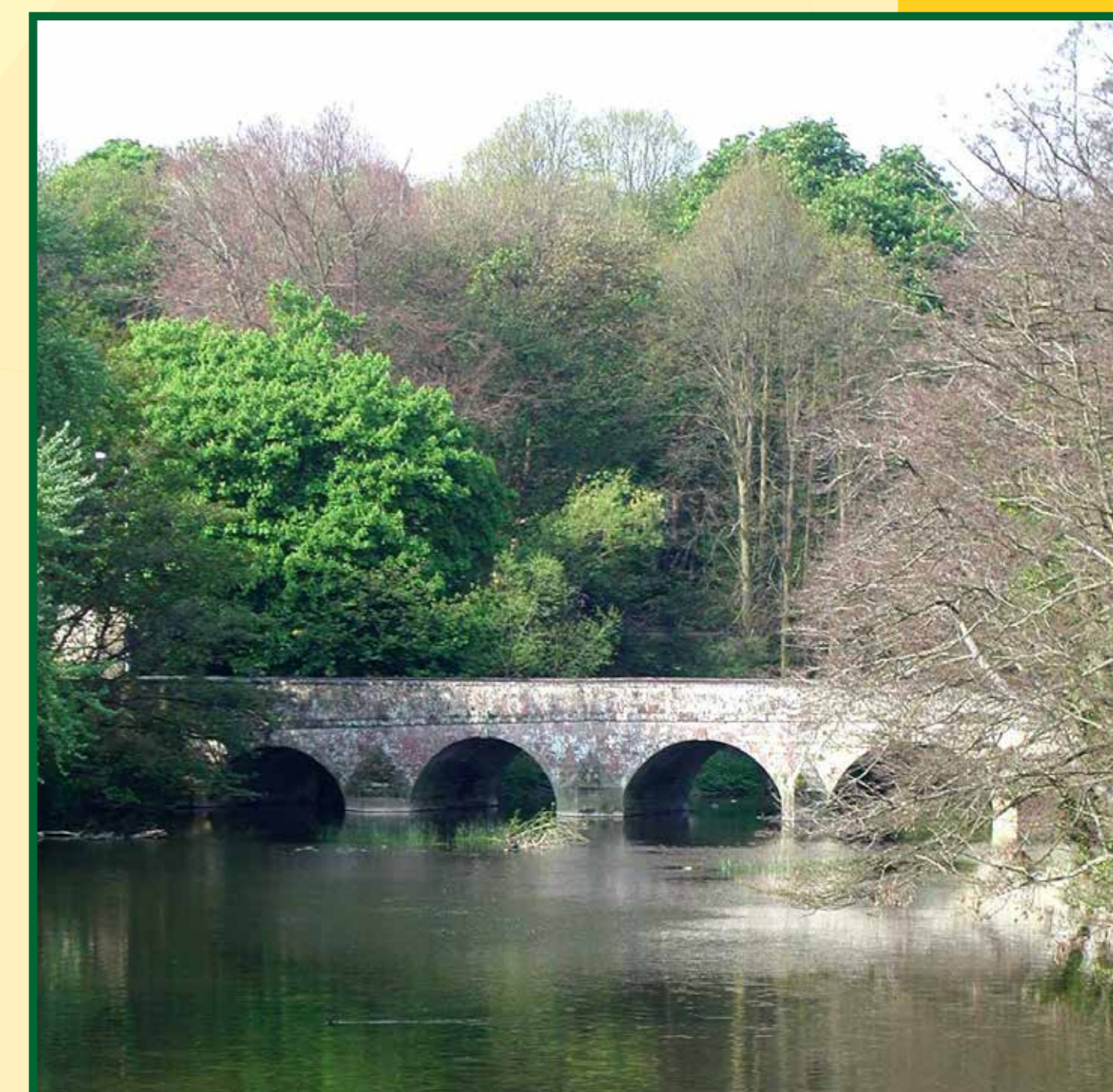


Is it too late to put forward an alternative idea or site?

Alternative ideas, including sites for housing and employment can be submitted as part of the consultation process.

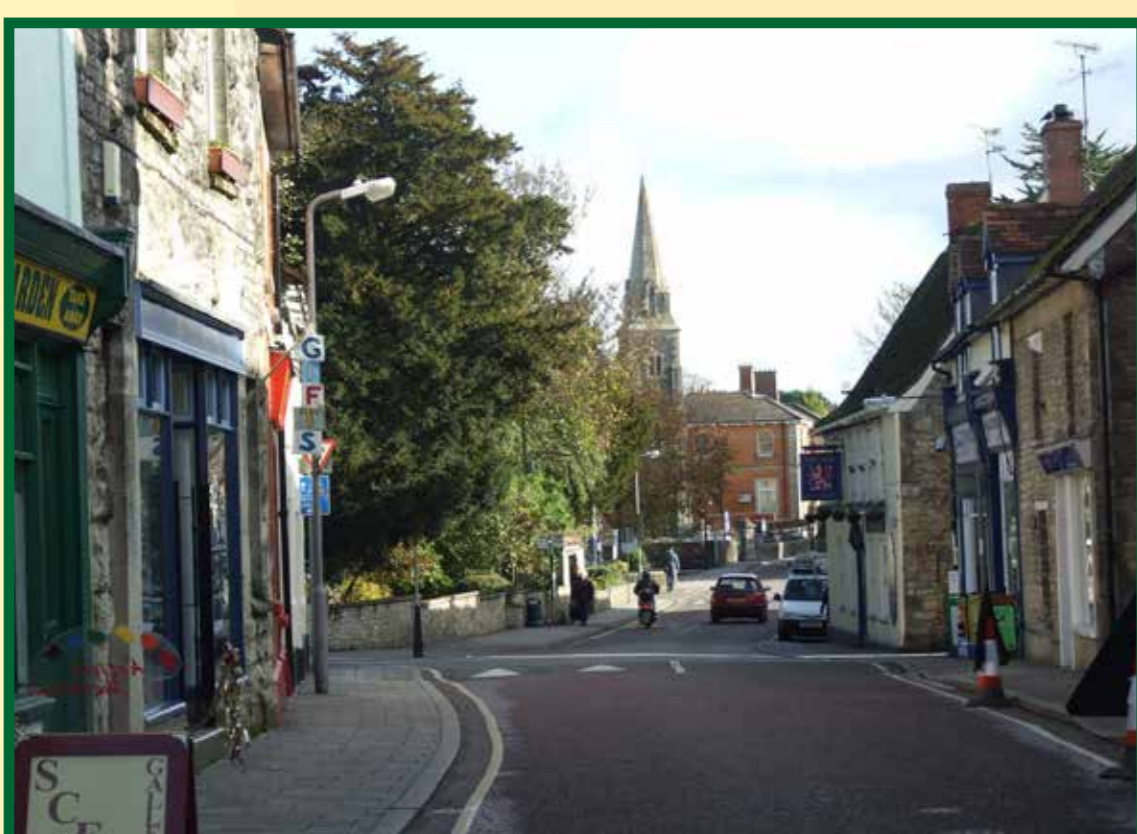
What would happen if we didn't review the Local Plan?

If we don't review the Local Plan it becomes out of date and the council would have less control in determining where development goes.



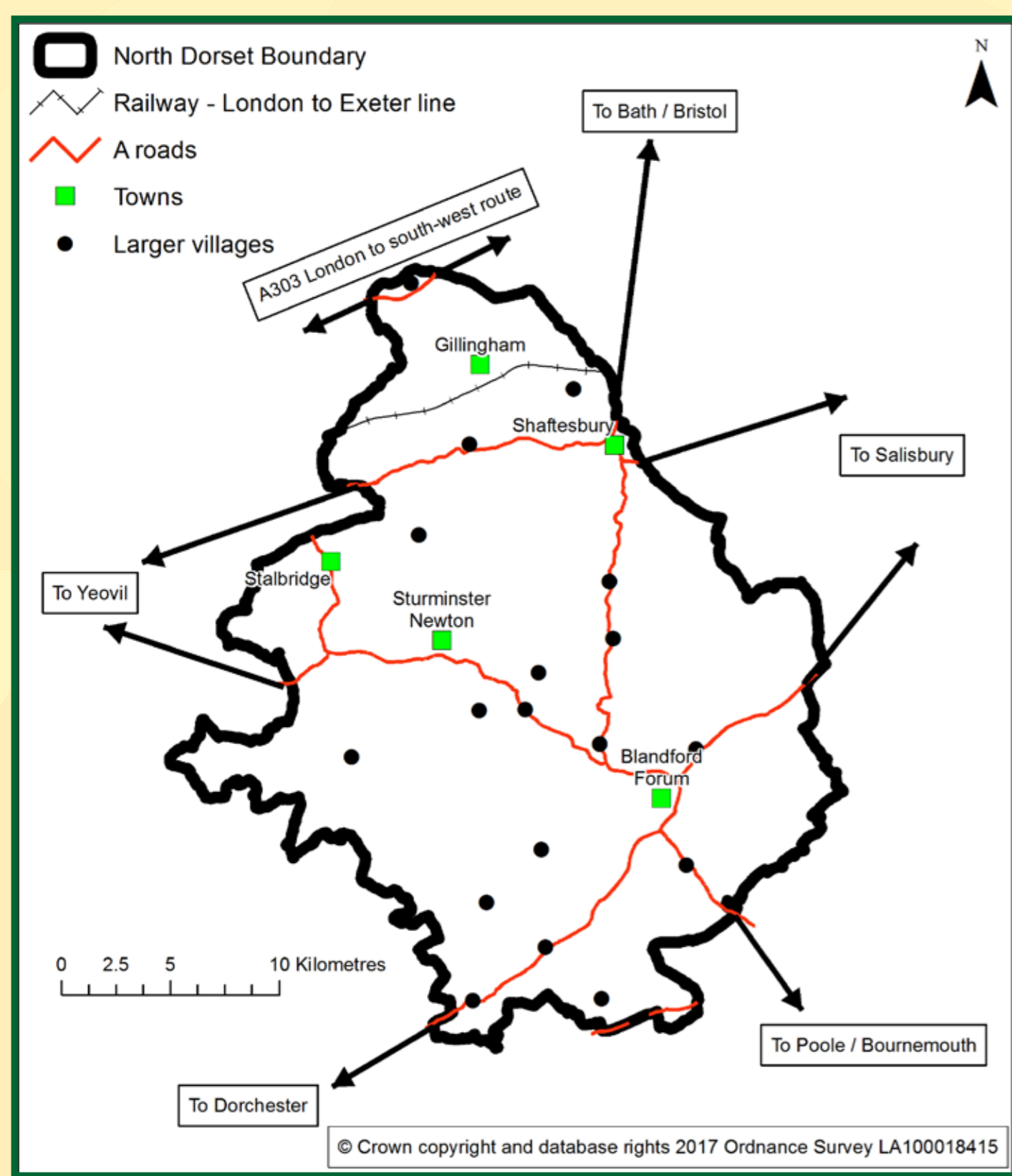
Why should I comment?

The review of the plan is at an early stage and we are keen to seek as many different views as possible before we go any further. There is no commitment to any one solution at this point, these are potential 'options' and the feedback we receive will influence the decisions that are made.



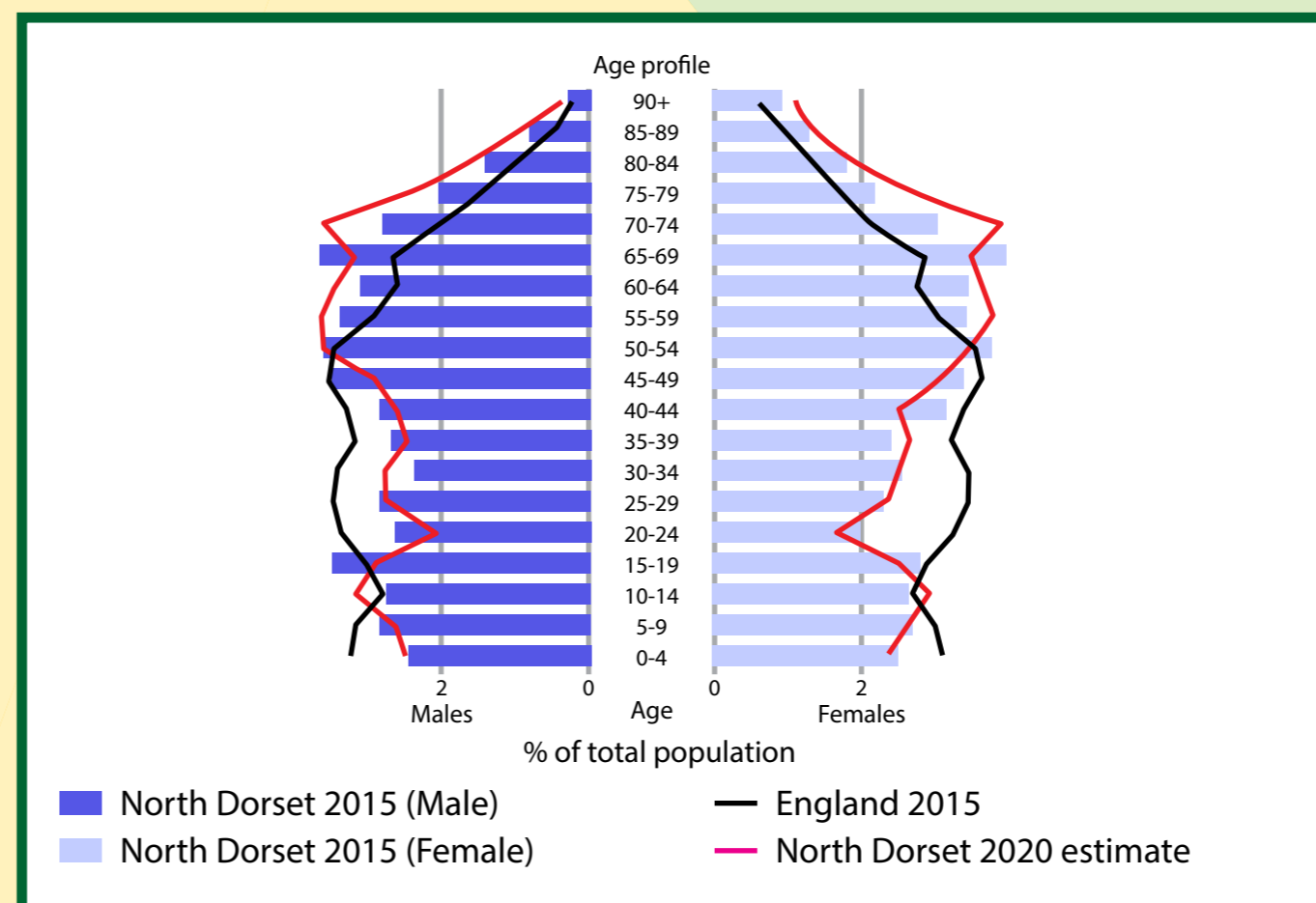
Context

North Dorset is a rural district of some 61,000 hectares and 71,000 residents. Its four main settlements are Blandford, Gillingham, Shaftesbury and Sturminster Newton. Other settlements include Stalbridge and a large number of villages and hamlets. There are several links between the district and settlements outside the district including Poole, Bournemouth, Dorchester, Yeovil and Salisbury.



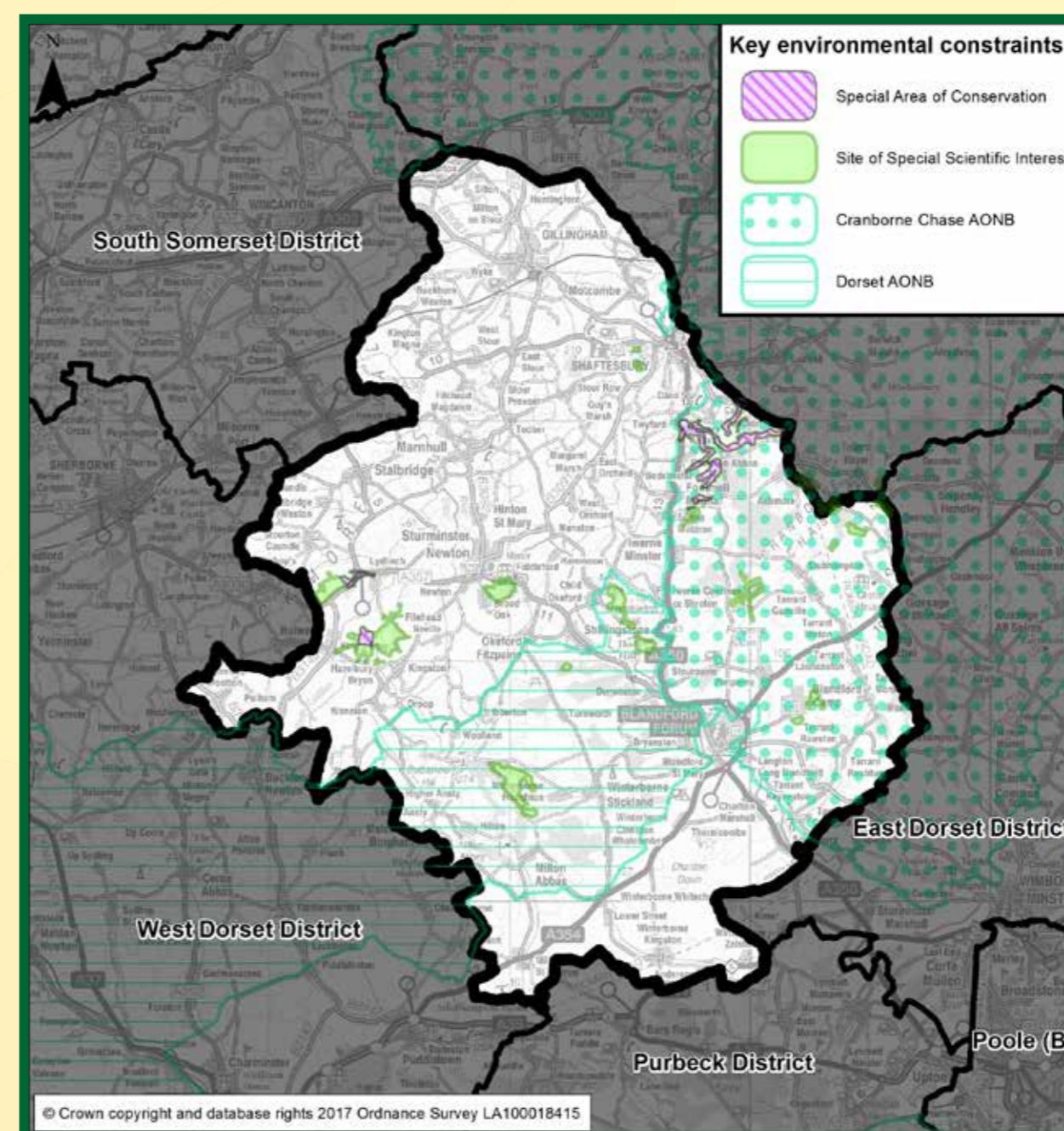
Environmental issues

- Two areas of outstanding natural beauty (AONBs) cover almost 40% of the land area.
- Diverse range of wildlife habitats and species and a large number of environmental designations, including two areas of European importance.
- Extensive green networks including the Trailway and the River Stour.
- 180 scheduled monuments, 2,500 listed buildings, 48 conservation areas and 8 registered historic parks and gardens.
- Land around the waterways at flood risk.



Social issues

- Population growing and this trend is predicted to continue.
- House price to income ratio is 9.5, significantly higher than average.
- High proportion of people aged 65+ (24% compared to 18% nationally)
- Higher life expectancy compared to national averages.



Economic issues

- Low unemployment rate.
- Below average Gross Value Added (GVA).
- High proportion of work force nearing retirement age.
- Tourism generates £76 million a year.
- Majority of businesses are small, employing 0–4 people.
- High proportion of businesses within the agricultural sector.

Housing

How many dwellings should be built over the plan period?

Planning authorities must plan for the required levels of housing within their respective areas in order to contribute towards the aims of sustainable development.

We have been required to work with our neighbours to assess the housing needs for the eastern Dorset housing market area. The current Local Plan uses evidence from a 2011 study to set a target of 5,700 dwellings over 20 years, or 285 dwellings a year. Over the last six years, the completion rate has averaged 214 dwellings a year. As a result, a shortfall has accumulated. The completion rate would need to rise substantially to address this shortfall (up to around 370 dwellings a year).

The government issued a consultation this autumn on assessing housing needs. It indicates that all local authorities will be expected to use a standard methodology for calculating housing need. The methodology uses a formula that takes into account household projections and the affordability ratio of dwellings. Figures published alongside the government consultation suggest that the housing target for North Dorset should be **366 dwellings a year**.

- *Do you consider that a housing need figure of 366 dwellings a year is an appropriate figure on which to plan for housing growth in North Dorset?*

Employment

How much land should be developed for employment uses over the plan period?

We must plan for sufficient land of the right type available in the right places and at the right time to support economic growth and innovation. The Local Plan Review will consider the forecast level of employment growth using the Western Dorset Economic Growth Strategy (2017 to 2033) and the revised Dorset Workspace Strategy (2013 to 2033).

While the Workspace Strategy suggests that there is sufficient employment land across the eastern Dorset area, North Dorset District Council consider it important that the district maintains a sufficient supply of employment land. Recent monitoring suggests that there is 15 hectares of land available at Gillingham, 7 hectares at Shaftesbury, and 5 hectares at Sturminster Newton. These are considered sufficient. However, there is only approximately 3.5 hectares available at Blandford. This is considered low and may need addressing.

- *Do you consider that additional employment land should be allocated for development at Blandford as part of the Local Plan Review?*
- *Do you consider that there is a need to allocate additional employment land in any other part(s) of the district?*

Spatial strategy

Where should future development be located within the district?

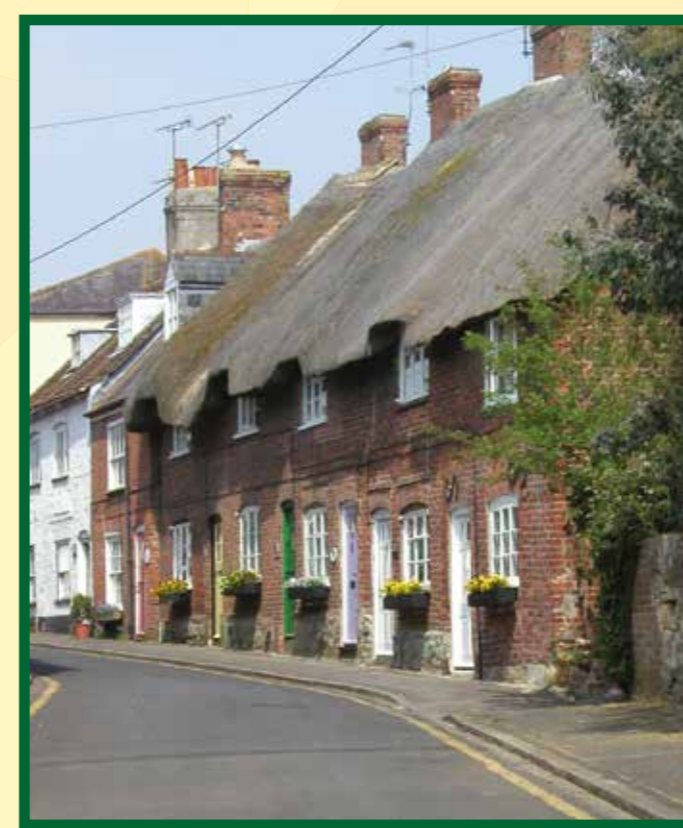
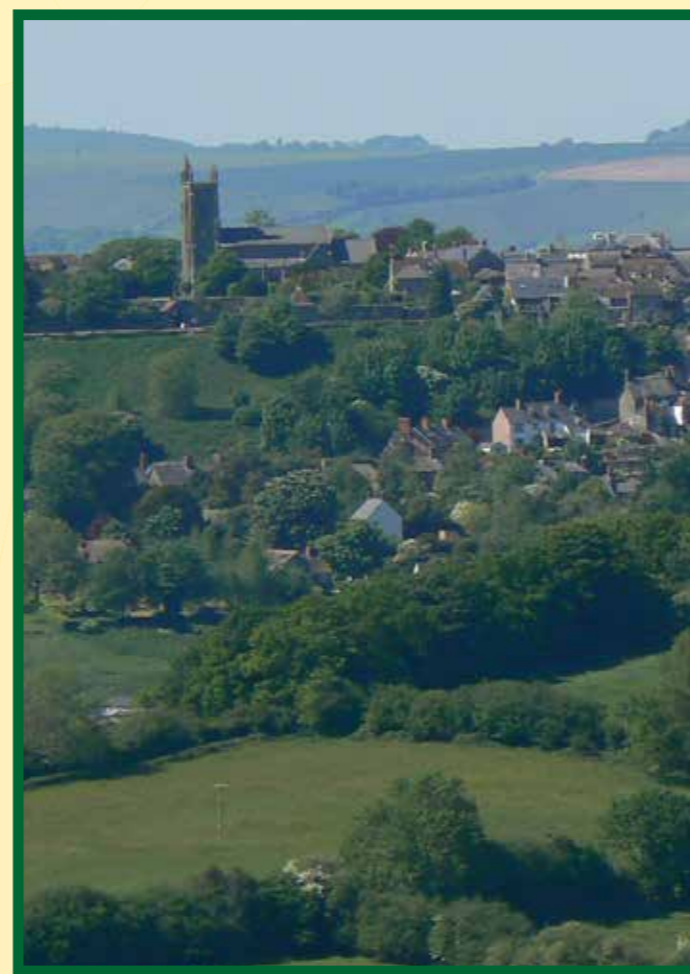
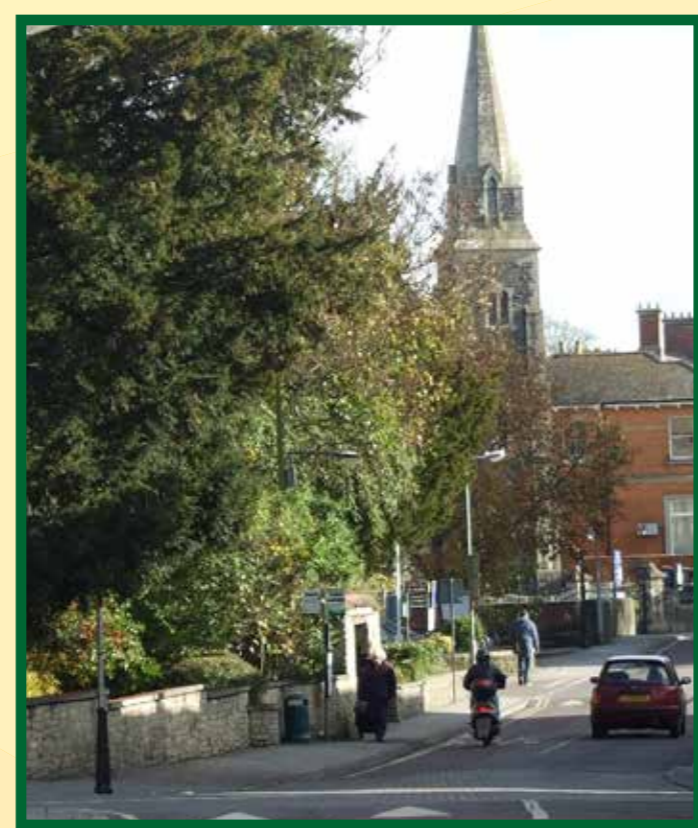
Due to increased housing and employment needs and having to plan for further into the future, the Local Plan Review is likely to have to find more land for development. The spatial strategy set out in the current Local Plan directs the majority of this increased growth to Blandford, Gillingham, Shaftesbury and Sturminster Newton. As the four largest towns, these are considered the most sustainable locations, and so this approach is likely to continue.

In addition, Stalbridge and the 18 larger villages are identified as suitable locations to meet 'local needs'. Here, we consider that residential needs should be mostly met through affordable housing schemes on exception sites. Employment needs will be addressed through the re-use of existing buildings in the countryside or the small-scale expansion of existing employment sites in the countryside.

However, Stalbridge, as the fifth largest settlement in the district, may be able to play an increased role. We are consulting on whether an increased, but still limited amount of growth, would be acceptable at this location.

The remainder of the district is subject to countryside policies where development is strictly controlled. We are proposing to continue this approach largely unchanged.

- *Do you consider that the existing spatial strategy should be amended to allow for some limited growth at Stalbridge, beyond just meeting local needs?*
- *Do you think we should consider implementing any other alternative spatial strategy?*



Assessing growth capacity in the five towns

To gauge the growth capacity of the five towns in the district (Blandford, Gillingham, Shaftesbury, Sturminster Newton, and Stalbridge) we have undertaken a full 360 degree appraisal on land around the existing settlement boundaries. Physical boundaries such as rivers and roads have been used to subdivide the search areas. We have considered major constraints such as flood risk, heritage assets and environment designations in order to conclude whether there is development potential.

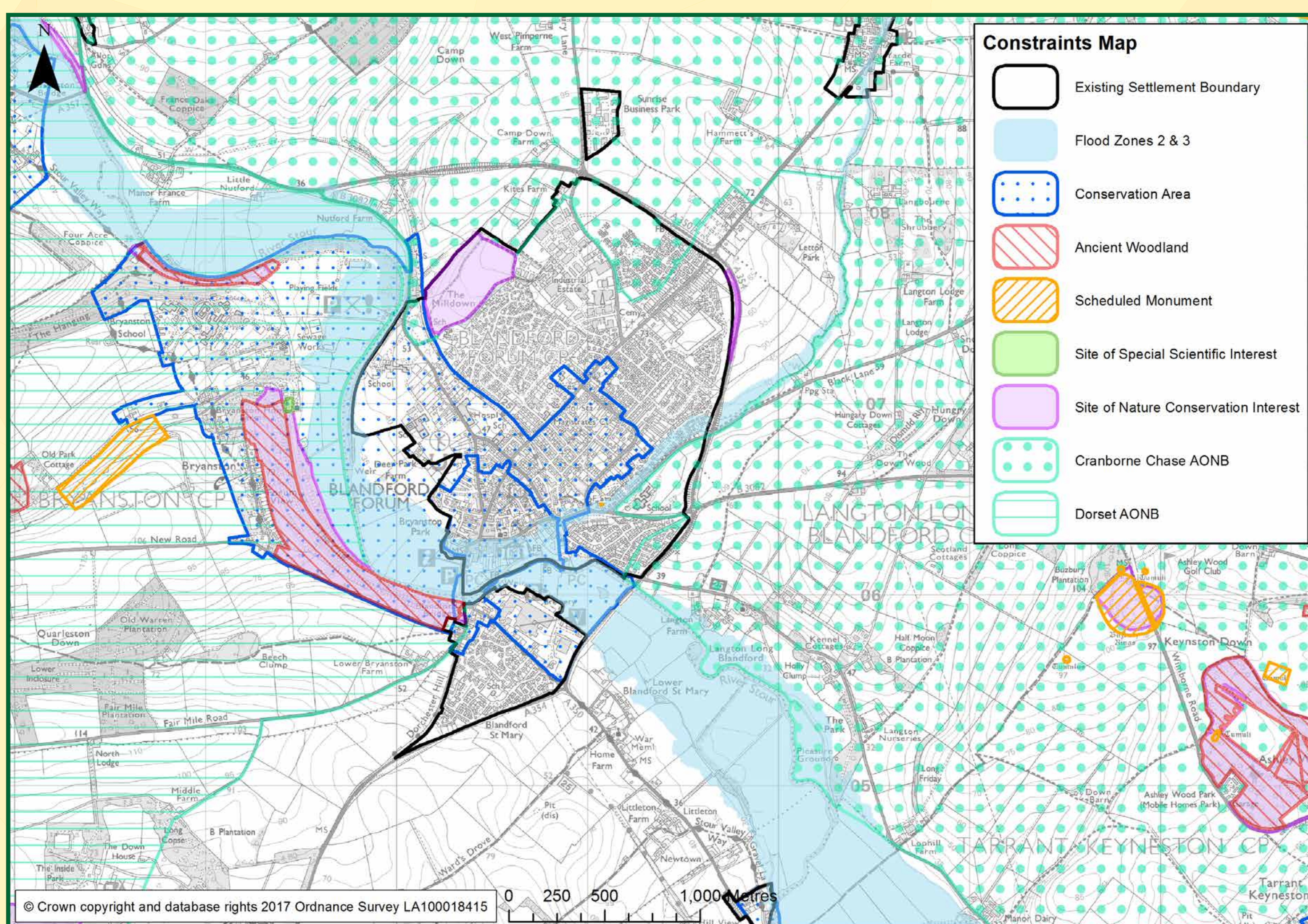
Blandford (Forum and St Mary)

Where should future development be located in Blandford?

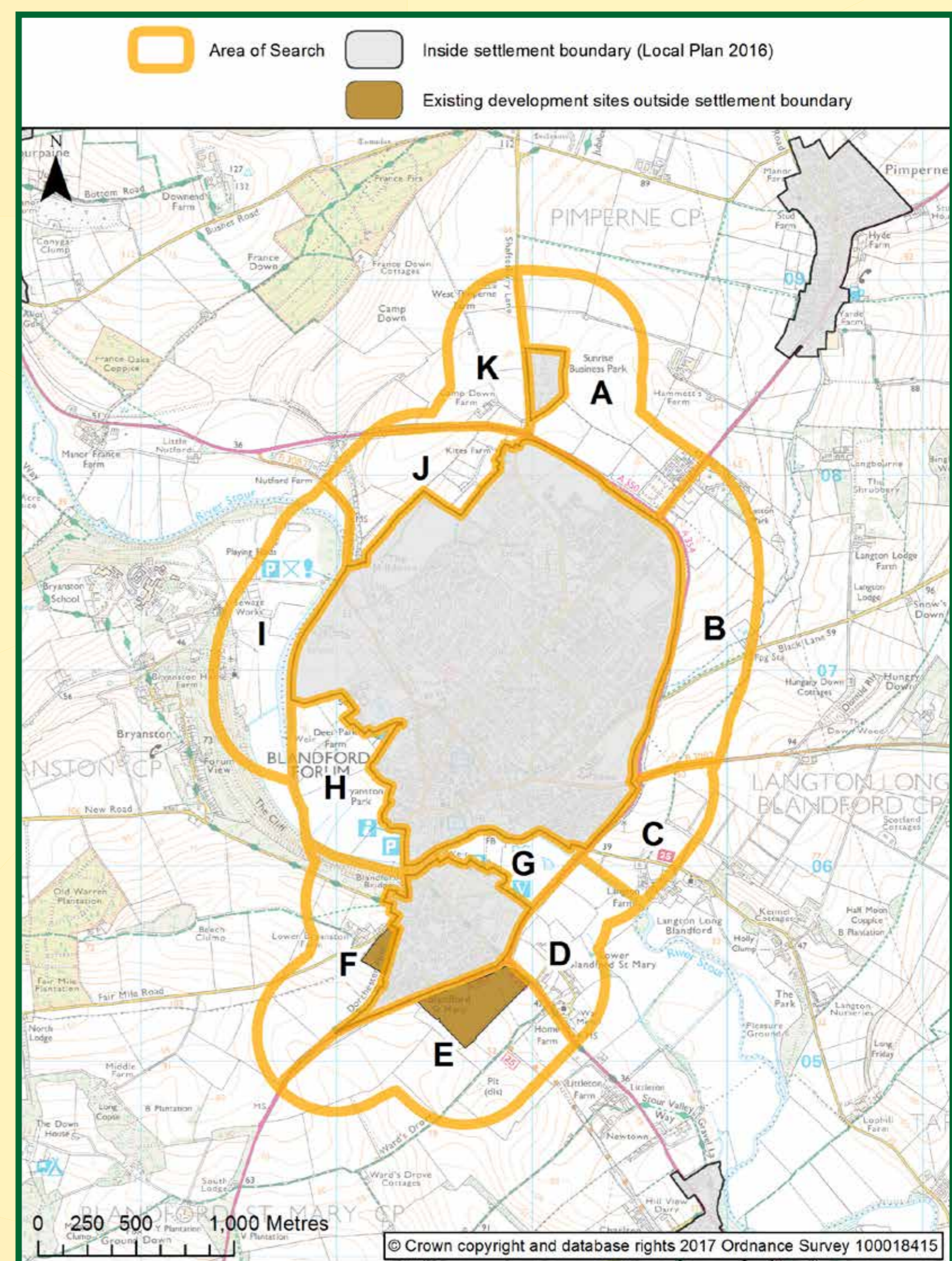
Blandford comprises the main town of Blandford Forum to the north of the River Stour and the smaller built-up area of Blandford St Mary to the south. The town provides services and facilities for those living across the southern part of the district. The town is enclosed almost completely by two areas of outstanding natural beauty (AONBs). Two important roads, the A350 and A354, intersect around the edge of the town.

The current Local Plan aims for at least 1,200 dwellings to be built in Blandford between 2011 and 2031. To meet this aim, the plan identifies residential growth at land at Lower Bryanston Farm, Dorchester Hill, and land south-east of Blandford St Mary, and through the redevelopment of the Hall & Woodhouse brewery site.

Between 2011 and 2017, 309 dwellings have been completed in Blandford. A further 500 dwellings are estimated to be completed over the next five years. Currently there is planning permission for 61 dwellings at Dorchester Hill, 350 at land south-east of Blandford St Mary, and 180 at the brewery site.



Area	Issues	Possible development potential?
A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Impacts on the AONB and the landscape. Possible highways/access constraints. The distance to local services and facilities located within the town centre. 	✓
B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Impacts on the AONB/setting of the AONB, the landscape and water quality. Possible highways/access constraints. Part of this area is at risk of flooding. 	✓
C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Impacts on the AONB, the landscape and water quality. Small part of this area is at risk of flooding. 	✗
D	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Impacts on the setting of the AONB, the landscape, water quality and heritage assets. Large part of this area is at risk of flooding. 	✗
E	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Impacts on the landscape. Part of this area is currently in use as an operational solar farm (Littleton Solar Farm) and part it is currently safeguarded for a proposed bypass. Part of this area is identified as a housing growth area in LPP1 and has been granted outline planning permission for residential development. There is potential that further land, to the south-east of the land subject to planning permission, could be identified for possible development. 	✓
F	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Impacts on biodiversity, the AONB/setting of the AONB, the landscape and heritage assets. Parts of this area (land at Lower Bryanston Farm and Dorchester Hill) form a housing growth area as set out in the Local Plan. Land at Dorchester Hill has been granted planning permission for residential development (shown on the Areas of Search map). There is further land, to the south-west of the land subject to planning permission, which could possibly be allocated for residential development. 	✓
G	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Impacts on the landscape, water quality and heritage assets. Vast majority of this area is at risk of flooding. 	✗
H	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Impacts on biodiversity, the landscape, water quality and heritage assets. Large part of this area is at risk of flooding. 	✗
I	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Impacts on biodiversity, the AONB, the landscape, water quality and heritage assets. Large part of this area is at risk of flooding. 	✗
J	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Impacts on biodiversity, the AONB and the landscape. Possible highways constraints relating to the adequacy of Tin Pot Lane. Likely to be ground contamination issues in relation to part of the area. There may be some scope for development in relation to the parcels of land that front on to Tin Pot Lane. 	✓
K	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Impacts on the AONB and the landscape. The distance to local services and facilities located within the town centre. 	✗



■ Do you agree with the conclusions regarding the Areas of Search identified at Blandford?

■ Are there any further issues relating to the areas of search that you think should have been considered as part of the assessment process?

■ What are the additional infrastructure requirements that are likely to result from potential future development at Blandford?

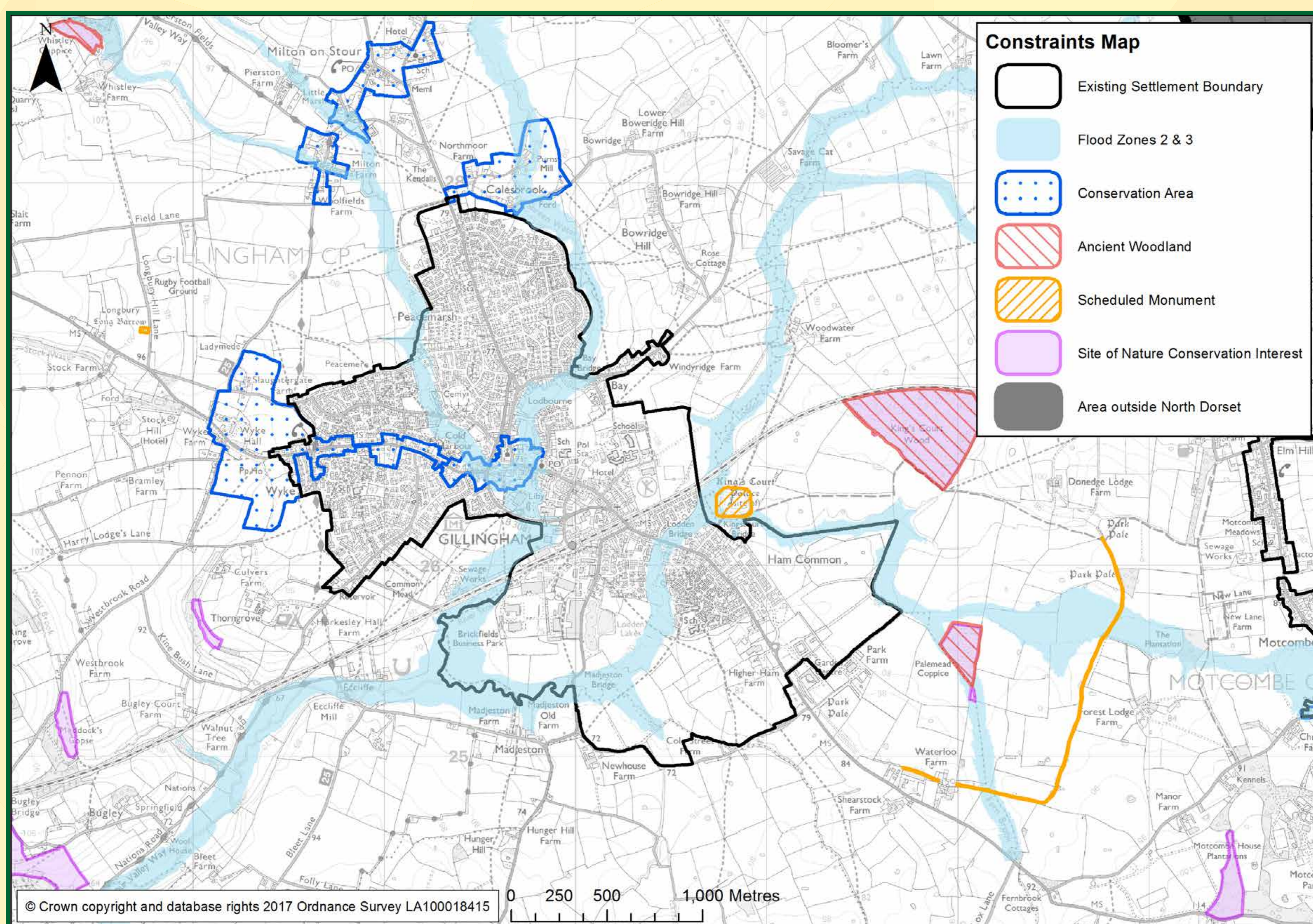
Gillingham

Where should future development be located in Gillingham?

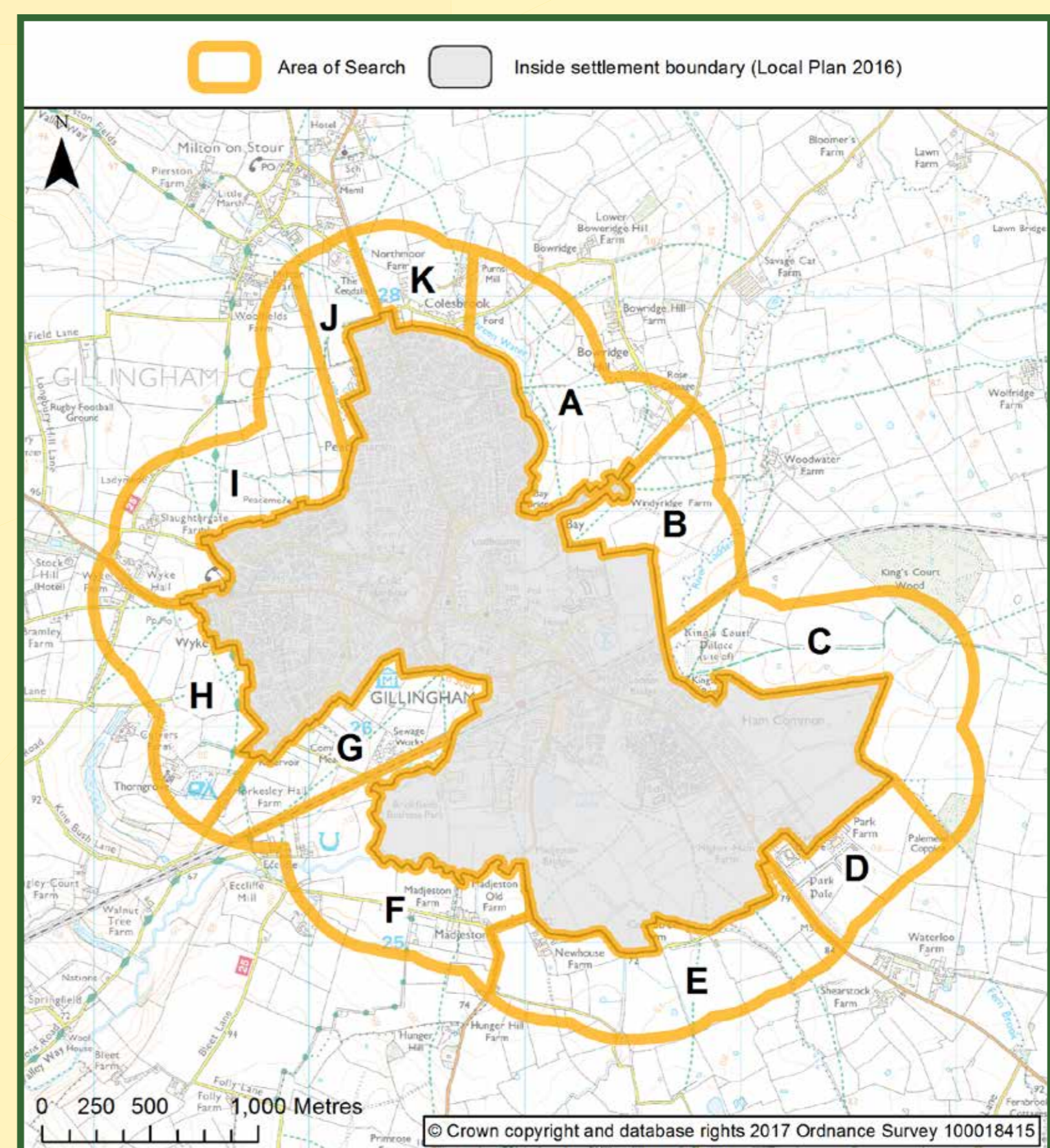
Gillingham is one of the main service centres in the north of the district. Being near to the county boundary, it also serves rural populations in Somerset and Wiltshire. The town is considered to have fewer environmental constraints than other towns in the district, with the main issue being the flood risk associated with the three rivers flowing through it. It has the only railway station in the district (on the London–Exeter mainline), and is approximately 5km from the A303.

The current Local Plan aims for at least 2,200 dwellings to be built in Gillingham between 2011 and 2031. A strategic site allocation was made to the south of the town for around 1,800 dwellings. In addition, it is planned for land at Bay to be developed, and land at Station Road to undergo mixed-use regeneration.

Between 2011 and 2017, 52 dwellings have been completed in Gillingham. A further 250 dwellings are estimated to be completed over the next five years. Currently there is planning permission for 50 dwellings on land east of Barnaby Mead, and 90 at land east of Lodden Lakes. An 'extra care facility', providing 60 homes, is being planned for on the site of St Martin's residential home and former adult learning centre.



Area	Issues	Possible development potential?
A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Impacts on the landscape and water quality. Part of this area is at risk of flooding. 	X
B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Impacts on the landscape and water quality. Possible highways/access constraints. Part of this area is at risk of flooding. 	✓
C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Impacts on biodiversity, the landscape, water quality and heritage assets. Part of this area is at risk of flooding. 	X
D	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Impacts on biodiversity, the landscape, water quality and a heritage asset. 	✓
E	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Impacts on the landscape. Surface water flooding. 	X
F	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Impacts on the landscape and water quality. Large part of this area is at risk of flooding. Odour issues relating to the sewage treatment works north of the railway line. Part of the area is within a Health and Safety Executive (HSE) consultation zone which is related to a use at Brickfields Business Park. 	X
G	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Impacts on biodiversity and water quality. Part of this area is at risk of flooding. Odour issues relating to the sewage treatment works located within this area. Part of the area is within a Health and Safety Executive (HSE) consultation zone which is related to a use at Brickfields Business Park. 	X
H	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Impacts on the landscape, water quality and heritage assets. Possible highways/access constraints. Possible development potential relates to the southern part of this search area and therefore not within close proximity of the Wyke Conservation Area. 	✓
I	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Impacts on the landscape, water quality and heritage assets. Possible highways/access constraints. Part of this area is at risk of flooding. Potential issue regarding coalescence with Milton on Stour. Possible development potential in this area relates to land north of Wavering Lane West. 	✓
J	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Impacts on the landscape, water quality and heritage assets. Part of this area is at risk of flooding. Potential issue regarding coalescence with Milton on Stour. 	X
K	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Impacts on the landscape, water quality and heritage assets. Part of this area is at risk of flooding. Potential issue regarding coalescence with Milton on Stour. 	X



- *Do you agree with the conclusions regarding the Areas of Search identified at Gillingham?*
- *Are there any further issues relating to the areas of search that you think should have been considered as part of the assessment process?*
- *What are the additional infrastructure requirements that are likely to result from potential future development at Gillingham?*

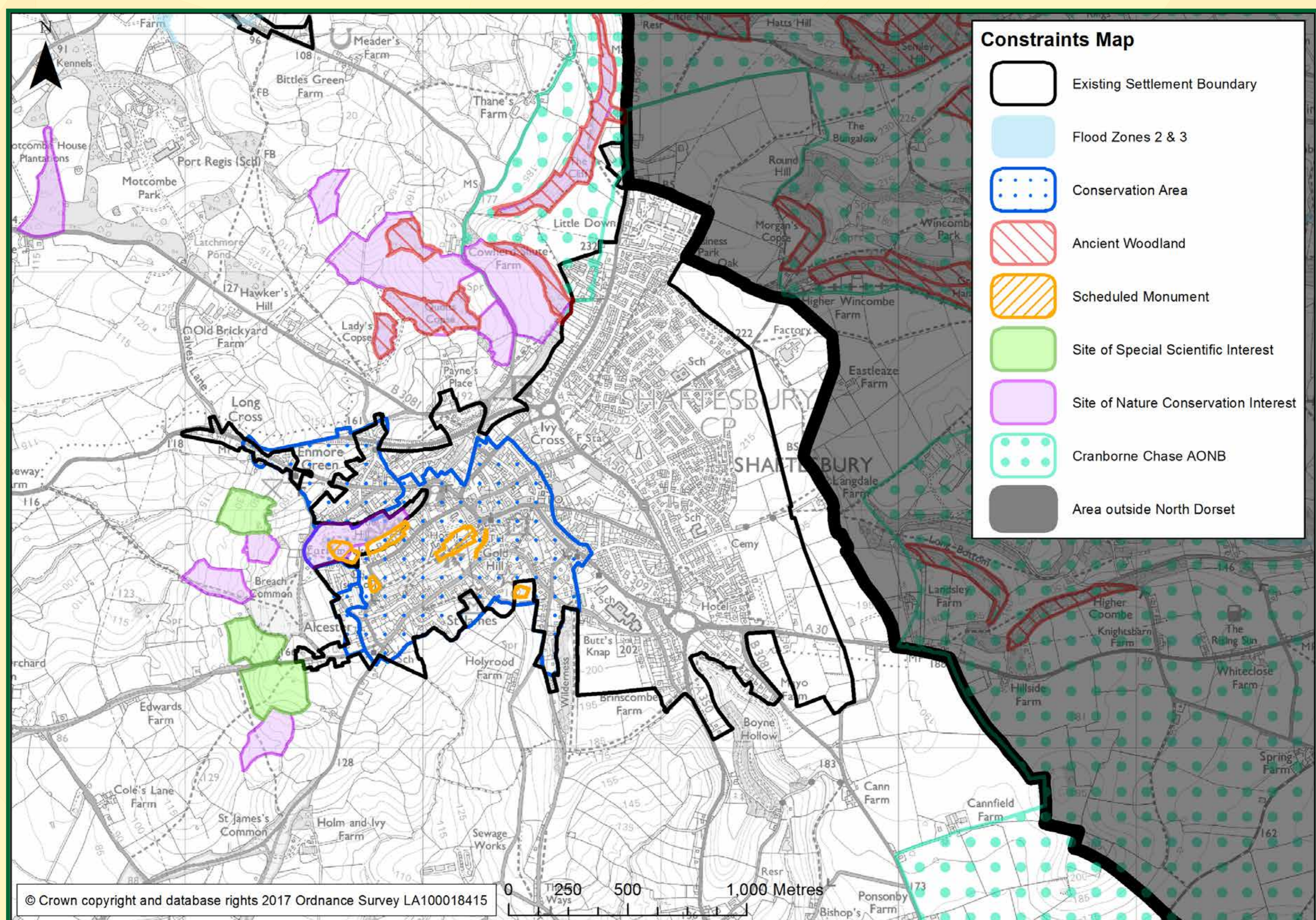
Shaftesbury

Where should future development be located in Shaftesbury?

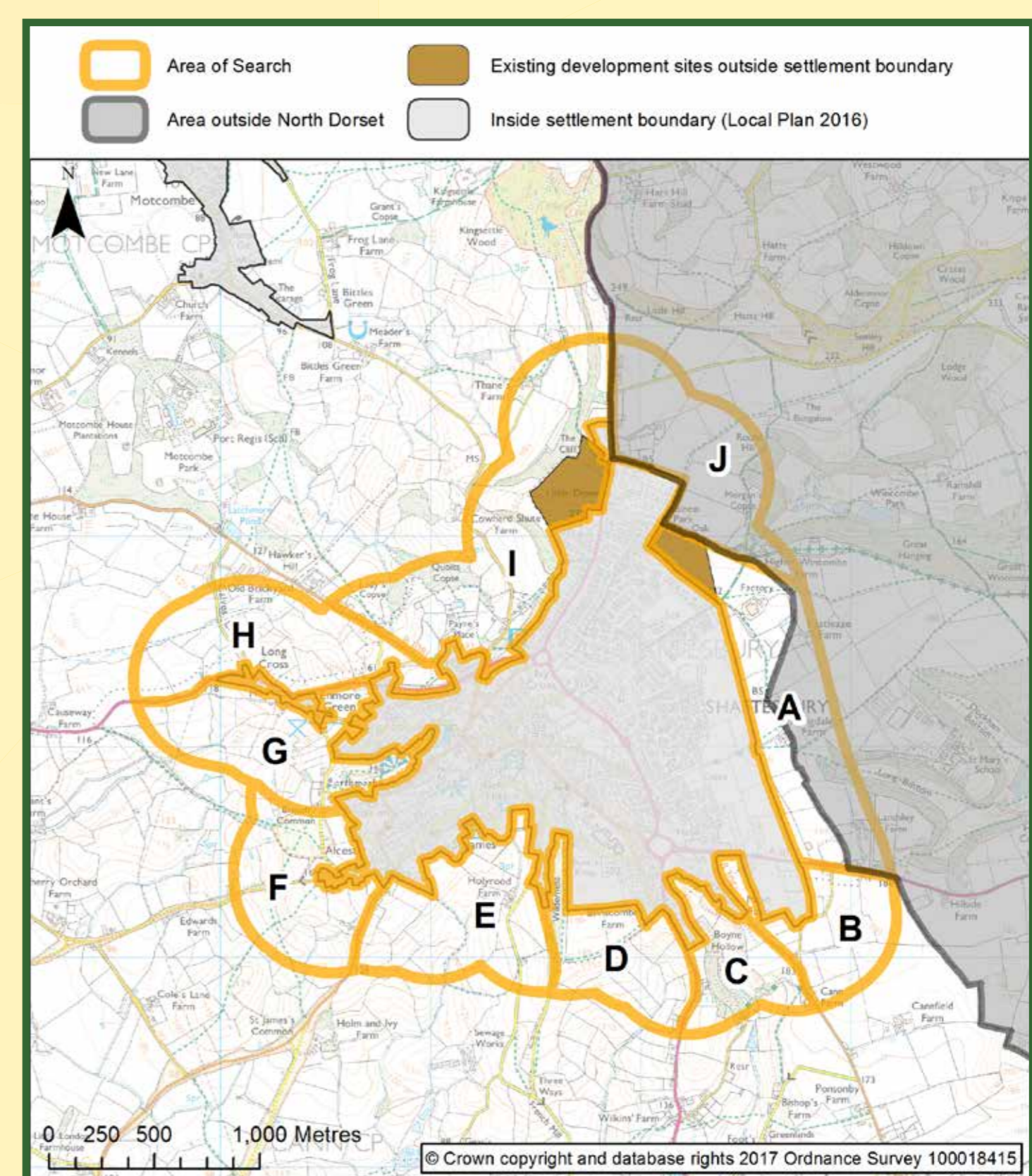
Shaftesbury is one of the main service centres in the north of the district. Being adjacent to the county boundary, it also serves rural populations in Wiltshire. The town is famed for being a hilltop town, and key features, such as Gold Hill, make it a popular tourist destination. In relation to the road network, both the north–south A350 route and the east–west A30 route pass through the town.

The current Local Plan aims for at least 1,140 dwellings to be built in Shaftesbury between 2011 and 2031. Between 2011 and 2017, 644 dwellings have been completed. A further 400 dwellings are estimated to be completed over the next five years.

Currently there is planning permission for 191 dwellings on land adjacent to Wincombe Business Park, 97 dwellings on the Persimmon land east of Shaftesbury, and 170 dwellings on land west of Littledown. A retirement complex for 32 dwellings is currently under construction on Coppice Street, and another for 28 dwellings has permission on the former ATS Euromaster site on New Road.



Area	Issues	Possible development potential?
A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Impacts on the setting of the AONB and the landscape. The distance to local services and facilities situated within the town centre. Part of area is identified for housing growth and has been granted outline planning permission for residential development. Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) have been dug along the western edge to serve the recent residential estate on the east of the town. Part of area is currently safeguarded for an outer bypass. Wiltshire County boundary runs through this area. NDDC is only able to allocate land within its administrative area. 	✓
B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Impacts on setting of the AONB and the landscape. The distance to local services and facilities situated within the town centre. Noise and disturbance from possible future employment uses on the land to the south of A30 may impact on the living conditions of future occupiers of a residential development. 	✓
C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Impacts on the landscape. Important views from Shaftesbury. Significant number of large trees. Contains Boyne Hollow and the topography is particularly uneven. 	✗
D	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Impacts on the landscape. Important views from Shaftesbury. Topography is uneven. May be development potential on land south of Shaftesbury School Playing Fields. This would be dependent on the land not be required for education purposes. Possible access/highways constraints relating to this land. 	✓
E	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Impacts on the landscape and heritage assets. Important views from Shaftesbury. Topography is uneven. 	✗
F	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Impacts on biodiversity, the landscape and heritage assets. Important views from Shaftesbury. Topography is uneven. 	✗
G	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Impacts on biodiversity, the landscape and heritage assets. Important views from Shaftesbury. Topography is uneven. 	✗
H	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Impacts on the landscape and heritage assets. The topography is uneven. Includes land needed for the construction of the Enmore Green Link Road. 	✗
I	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Impacts on biodiversity, AONB/setting of the AONB and the landscape. Important views from Shaftesbury. The topography is uneven. Part of this area is identified for housing growth and has been granted outline planning permission for residential development. No land suitable for large-scale development beyond that. 	✓
J	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Land in Wiltshire. NDDC is only able to allocate land within its administrative area. 	



- Do you agree with the conclusions regarding the Areas of Search identified at Shaftesbury?
- Are there any further issues relating to the areas of search that you think should have been considered as part of the assessment process?
- What are the additional infrastructure requirements that are likely to result from potential future development at Shaftesbury?

Sturminster Newton

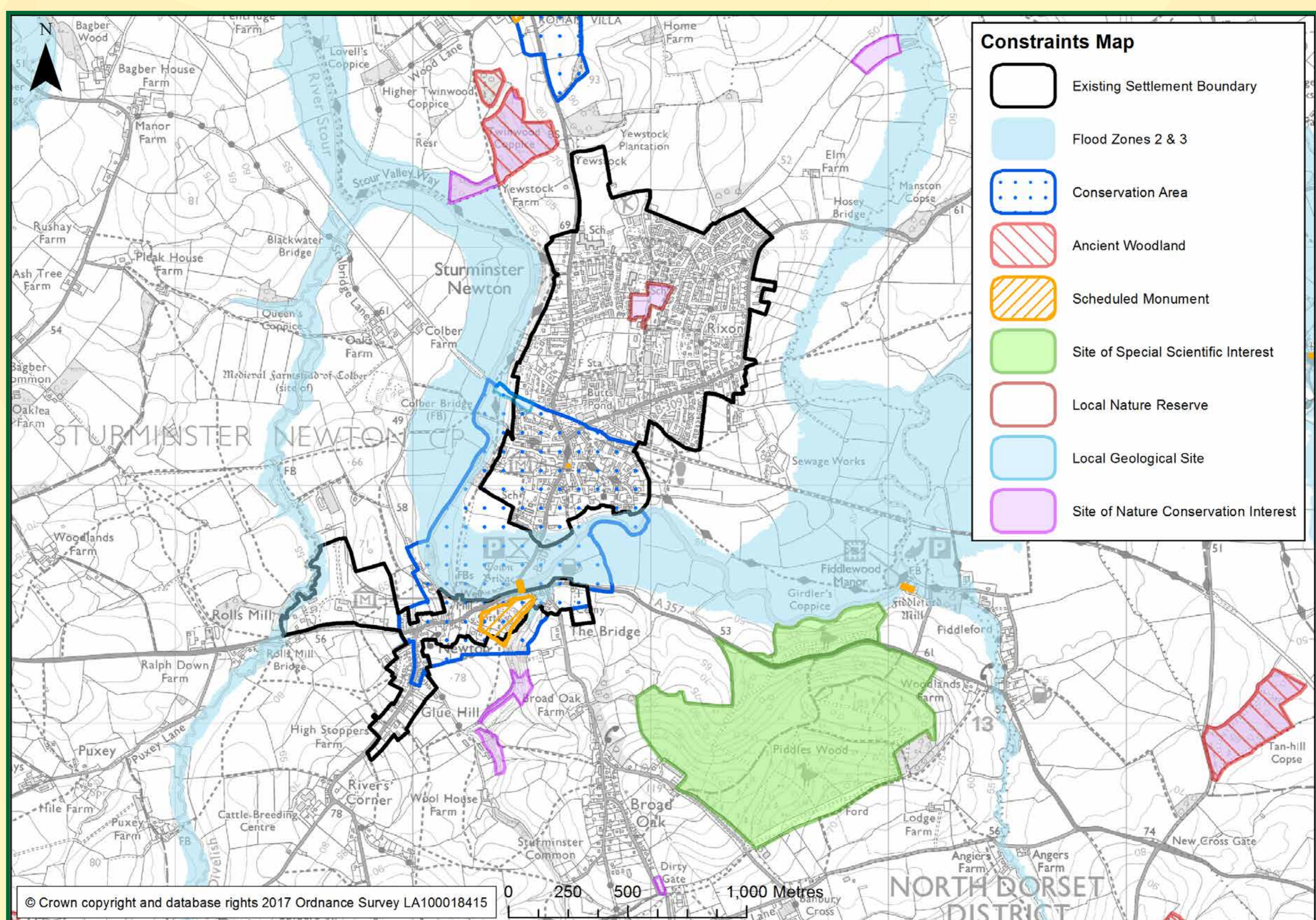
Where should future development be located in Sturminster Newton?

Sturminster Newton is the smallest of the four main towns in the district. It sits in the heart of the Blackmore Vale and provides services and facilities that serve residents who live in the western part of the district. It consists of the main town on the northern side of the River Stour, and the village of Newton to the south.

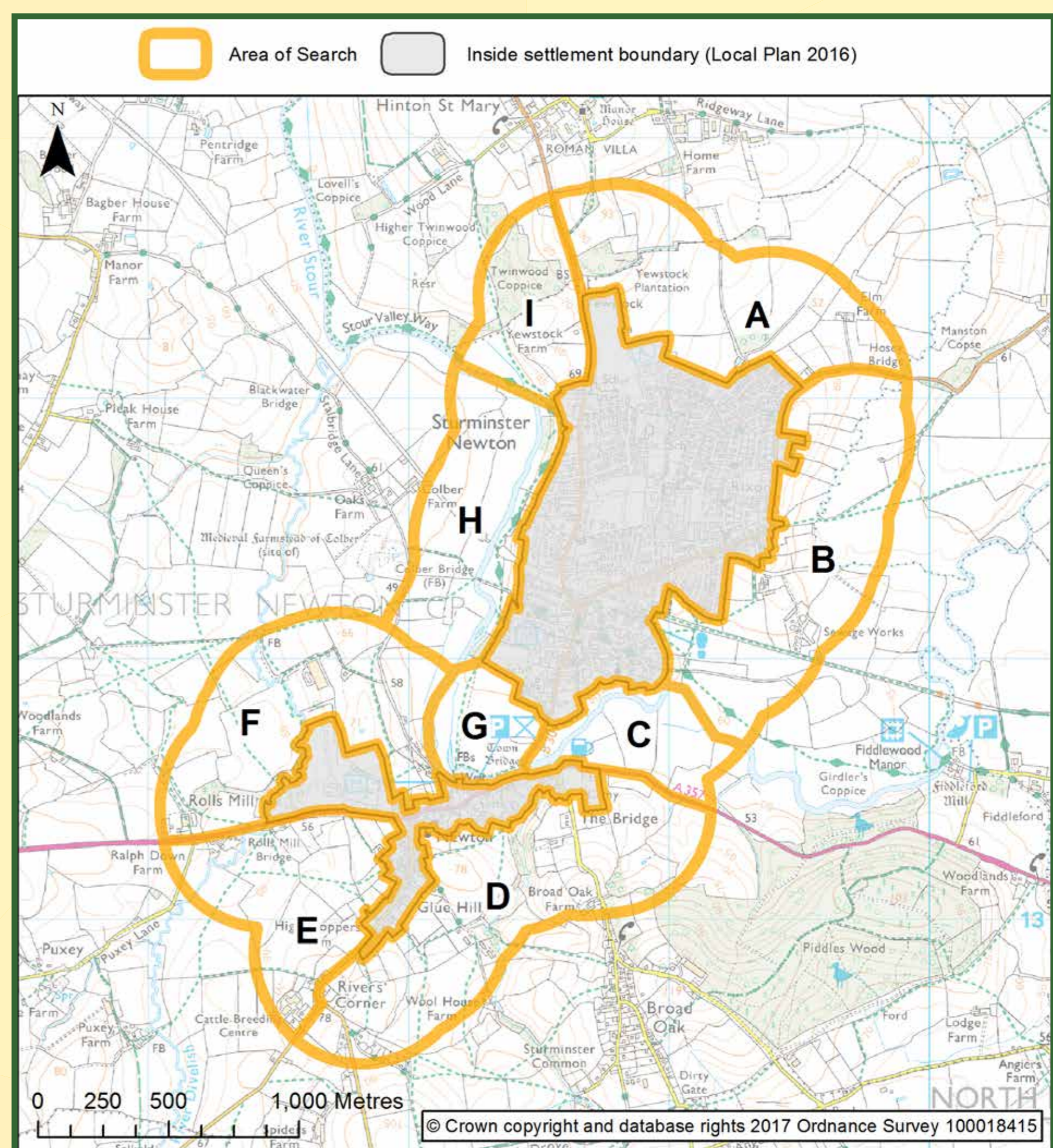
The current Local Plan aims for at least 395 dwellings in Sturminster Newton between 2011 and 2031. Greenfield sites

highlighted for housing growth include land north of the former livestock market, land north of Northfields, and land east of the former Creamery. In addition, homes are expected to be delivered as part of a redevelopment scheme in the Station Road area.

Between 2011 and 2017, 29 dwellings have been completed in Sturminster Newton. A further 70 are estimated to be completed over the next five years. Currently there is planning permission granted for 29 dwellings at the former Clarkes Yard site on Bath Road, and 28 apartments on the Old Market Site, next to the Exchange.



Area	Issues	Possible development potential?
A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Impacts on the landscape, water quality and heritage assets. Part of area is identified as a housing growth area (Land north of Northfields) in the current Local Plan. 	✓
B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Impacts on biodiversity, the landscape and water quality. Part of area is at risk of flooding. Odour issues relating to the sewage treatment works off Bull Ground Lane. Highways/access constraints in respect of Bull Ground Lane. Part of area is identified as a housing growth area (Land east of the former Creamery) in the current Local Plan. May be potential for further development to the north-east of this housing growth area. Large part of this area is considered unsuitable for development. 	✓
C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Impacts on biodiversity, the landscape, water quality and heritage assets. Large part of area is at risk of flooding. Poor accessibility to local services and facilities situated within the town centre. 	X
D	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Impacts on biodiversity, the landscape and heritage assets. Poor accessibility to local services and facilities situated within the town centre. 	X
E	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Impacts on the landscape and water quality. Poor accessibility to local services and facilities situated within the town centre. 	X
F	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Impacts on the landscape, water quality and heritage assets. Part of area is at risk of flooding. Living conditions/amenity issues relating to locating residential development adjacent to employment uses. 	X
G	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Impacts on the landscape, water quality and heritage assets. Large part of area is at risk of flooding. 	X
H	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Impacts on the landscape and water quality. Highways/access constraints. Large part of area is at risk of flooding. 	X
I	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Impacts on biodiversity, the landscape, water quality and a heritage asset. Small part of area is at risk of flooding. 	X



- *Do you agree with the conclusions regarding the Areas of Search identified at Sturminster Newton?*
- *Are there any further issues relating to the areas of search that you think should have been considered as part of the assessment process?*
- *What are the additional infrastructure requirements that are likely to result from potential future development at Sturminster Newton?*

Stalbridge

Where should possible future development be located in Stalbridge?

Stalbridge is the fifth largest settlement in the district. It is located in the western part of North Dorset, close to the border with Somerset. Because of this, it provides services and facilities to residents who live in the western part of the district, but is also closely related with the settlements of Henstridge and Templecombe in Somerset.

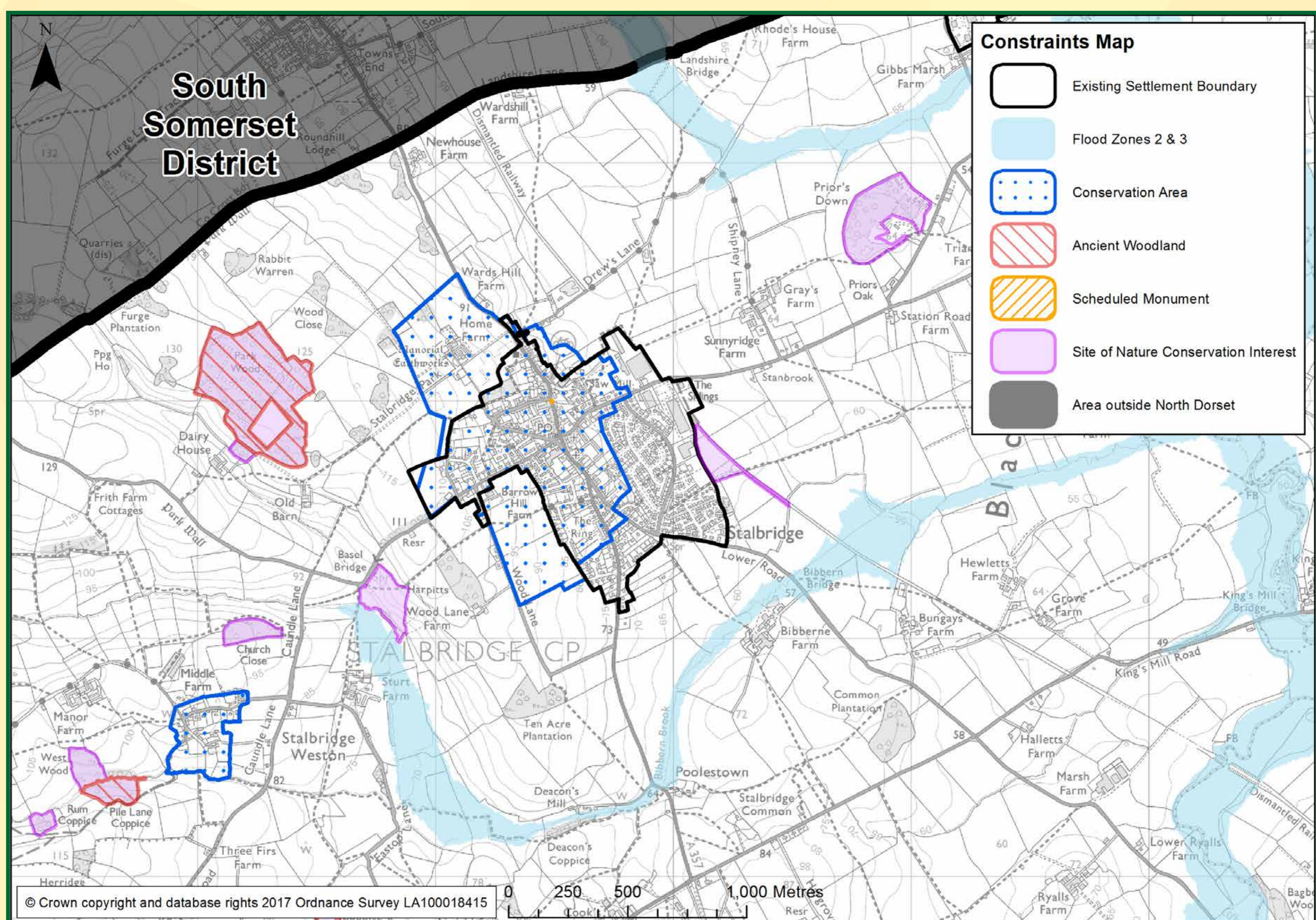
In terms of its spatial strategy, the current Local Plan places Stalbridge in the same group as the 18 larger villages. This should limit development to only meeting identified 'local needs'. However, due to recent low completion rates, the council can no longer demonstrate that it has a 'five-year housing land supply' which is required by the Government. As a result, developers have submitted speculative planning applications for large scale residential developments at Stalbridge. These are contrary to

Local Plan policy, but because the Government puts considerable weight on building sufficient homes, the council will have to consider these applications in the context that it does not currently have a five-year housing land supply. Planning applications currently under consideration include:

- 60 dwellings on land at Thornhill Road;
- 98 dwellings on land at Barrow Hill;
- 120 dwellings on land north of Lower Road.

These schemes, either individually or in combination, would have an impact on the infrastructure of Stalbridge. We are working to ensure that if one or more of the applications were approved the developers contribute towards the improvement of infrastructure in the town.

Because we do not know if any of these applications will be approved, we have undertaken a 360 degree search around Stalbridge to identify which areas (if any) are possibly suitable for future development.





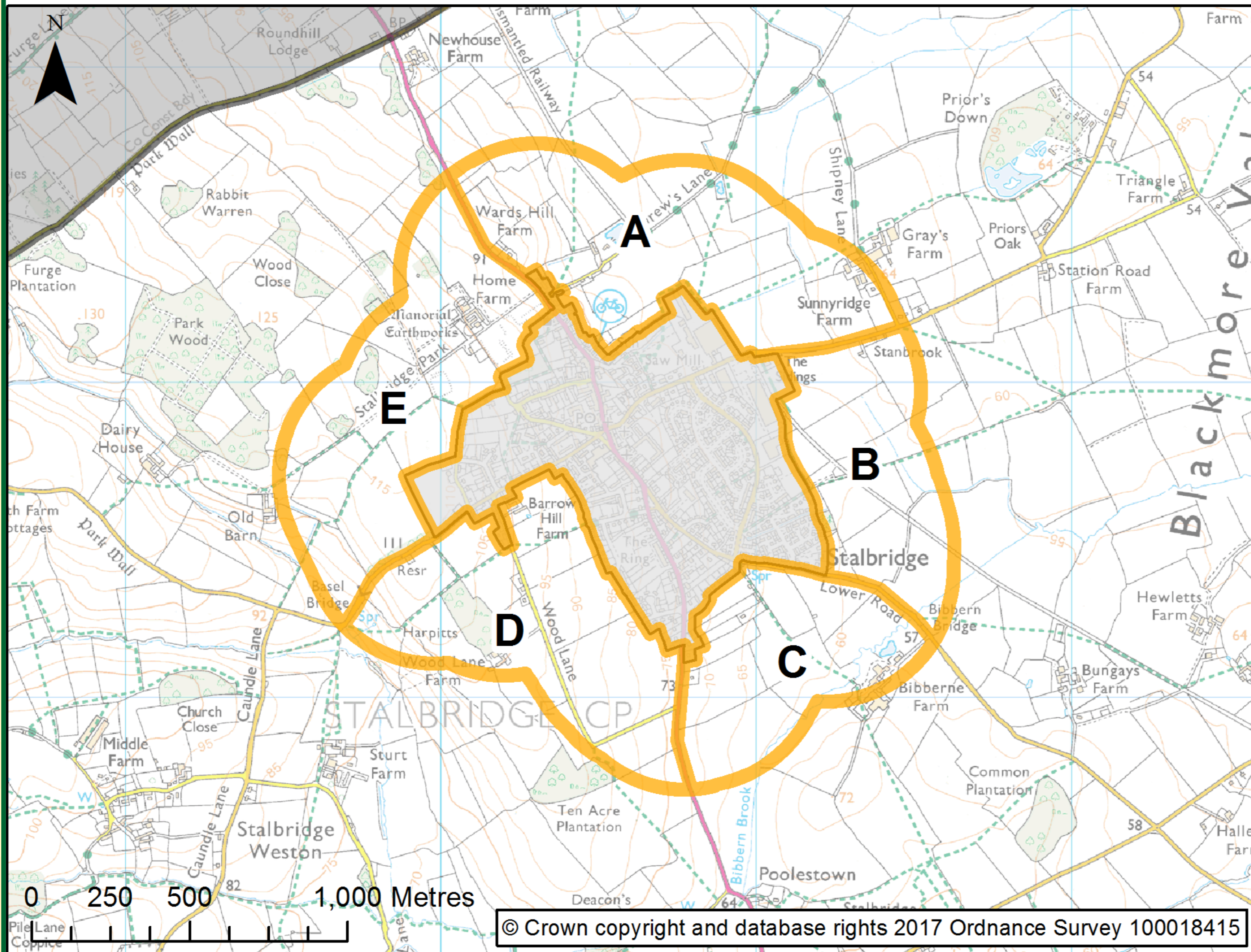
Area of Search



Inside settlement boundary (Local Plan 2016)



Area outside North Dorset



Area	Issues	Possible development potential?
A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Impacts on the landscape. Possible highways constraints relating to the capacity of the highway network at Stalbridge. 	✓
B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Impacts on biodiversity and the landscape. Possible highways constraints relating to the capacity of the highway network at Stalbridge. 	✓
C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Impacts on the landscape. Possible highways constraints relating to the capacity of the highway network at Stalbridge. 	✓
D	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Impacts on biodiversity, the landscape and a heritage asset. Possible highways constraints relating to the capacity of the highway network at Stalbridge. 	✓
E	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Impacts on the landscape and heritage assets. Possible highways constraints relating to the capacity of the highway network at Stalbridge. 	✗

- Do you agree with the conclusions regarding the Areas of Search identified at Stalbridge?
- Are there any further issues relating to the areas of search that you think should have been considered as part of the assessment process?
- What are the most important infrastructure requirements that are likely to result from potential future development at Stalbridge?

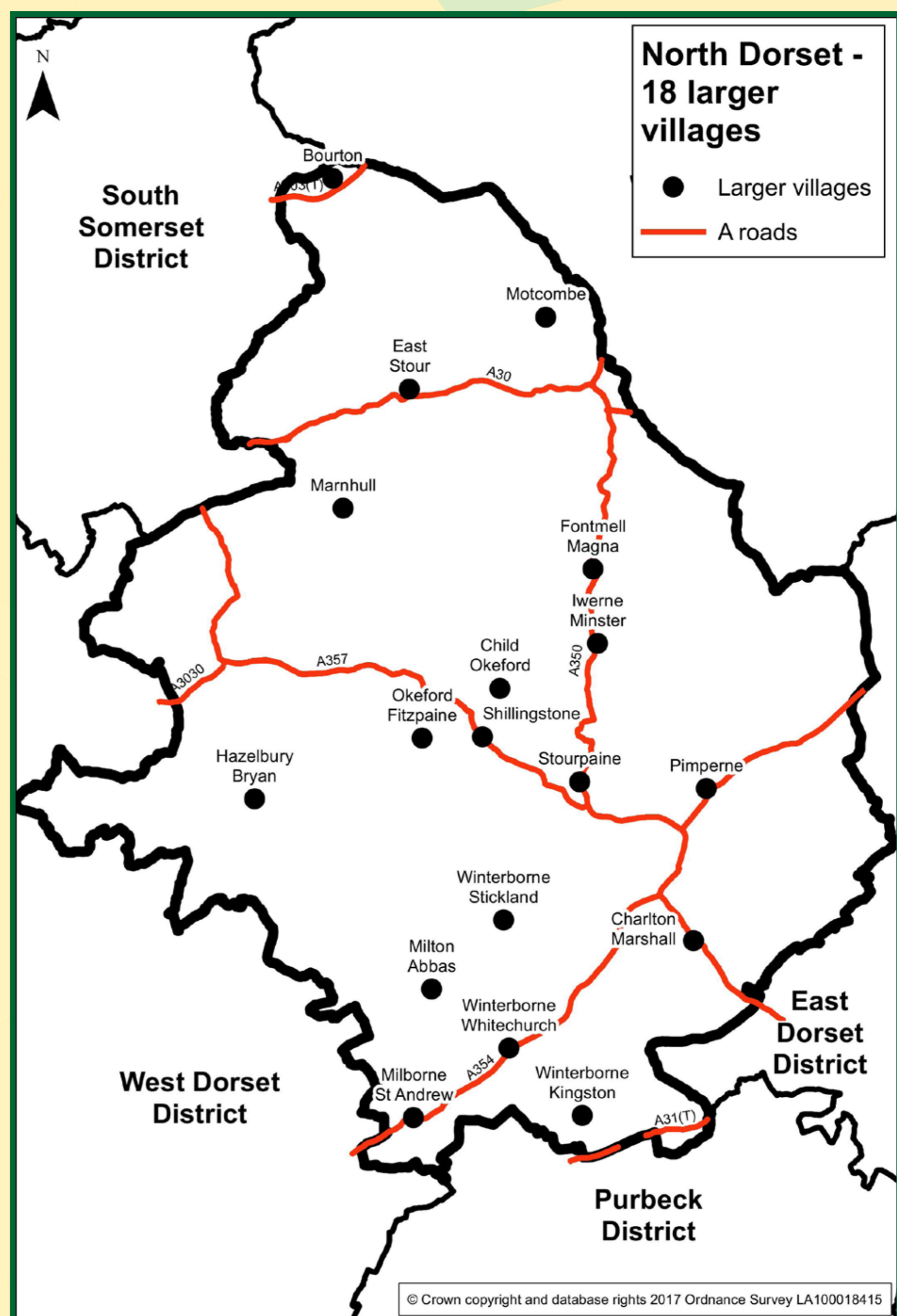
The Villages

North Dorset is largely rural in character. National planning policy recognises the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside and the need to support thriving rural communities within it. There are a substantial number of villages located within North Dorset. Eighteen of these are defined as larger villages in the current Local Plan – shown on the map opposite.

The current Local Plan maintains the settlement boundaries at the 18 larger villages and states that the focus at these locations should be on meeting local needs. Wider, strategic needs should be directed towards the district's towns. It is envisaged that this approach should continue, albeit possibly with an increased role for the town of Stalbridge (see the Spatial Strategy board).

In terms of residential development, the intention is that local needs will be met primarily through rural exception affordable housing schemes. Employment needs will be addressed through the re-use of existing buildings in the countryside or the small-scale expansion of existing employment sites in the countryside.

A large number of neighbourhood plans are being progressed across the district, many of which relate to the larger villages. Neighbourhood plans give local communities the opportunity to assess the needs for their area and to identify suitable sites to meet those needs.



■ *Do you agree with our proposed approach in relation to future development at the eighteen larger villages within the district?*

Affordable housing and exception sites

The supply of affordable housing is an important issue in North Dorset. The 'exception sites' policy means that affordable housing can be built in locations where market housing would not normally be permitted.

In order to try to increase the number of affordable houses, we are considering matters relating to the size of exception sites, where exception sites can be located and whether we should continue to allow market housing on exception sites.

■ *Do you consider that the existing reference to nine dwellings in Policy 9 of LPP1 should be removed from the policy to allow larger schemes to come forward where there is evidence of local need in excess of that which could be met by the provision of nine dwellings?*

■ *Do you consider that the existing policy approach, which seeks to prevent exception sites coming forward adjacent to the four main towns within the district, should be amended?*

■ *Do you consider that the council should continue with its existing policy approach, which allows for a small number of market homes on rural exception sites?*

Self and custom build housing

Local authorities maintain a register of individuals and associations who are looking for serviced plots of land for self and custom build. The current Local Plan does not contain a specific policy on self and custom housebuilding. We are considering how self and custom housebuilding can best be promoted in the district.

■ *Do you consider that we should facilitate the provision of self-build housing by any, some, or all of the following options?*

- a. Allowing serviced plots to come forward under the current development plan policies.
- b. Updating Policy 7 (Delivering Homes) in the Local Plan Part 1 to promote the provision of serviced plots of land for self-build housing.
- c. Requiring on sites above a certain size that serviced self-build plots should be made available as a proportion of the total number of dwellings permitted (with or without a minimum number being specified) on-site.
- d. Allowing a proportion (up to 100%) of self-build plots on exception sites (with controls over the resale value of the properties).
- e. Identifying land in public ownership which would be sold only for self-build development.
- f. The use of Local Development Orders to facilitate self-build development.

■ *Are there any other approaches that could be used to meet the demand for self-build housing?*

Town Centres

New retail developments should be located in or close to town centre boundaries where possible. This helps prevent unnecessary out-of-town retail schemes which harm existing centres.

Town centre boundaries are currently identified for Blandford Forum, Gillingham, Shaftesbury and Sturminster Newton. A study is underway to advise on how to update the boundaries, as well as other aspects of the town centre policy. We are also considering defining the centre of Stalbridge as a 'local centre'.

■ *Do you consider that the existing hierarchy and network of centres should be amended to include Stalbridge as a 'local centre'?*

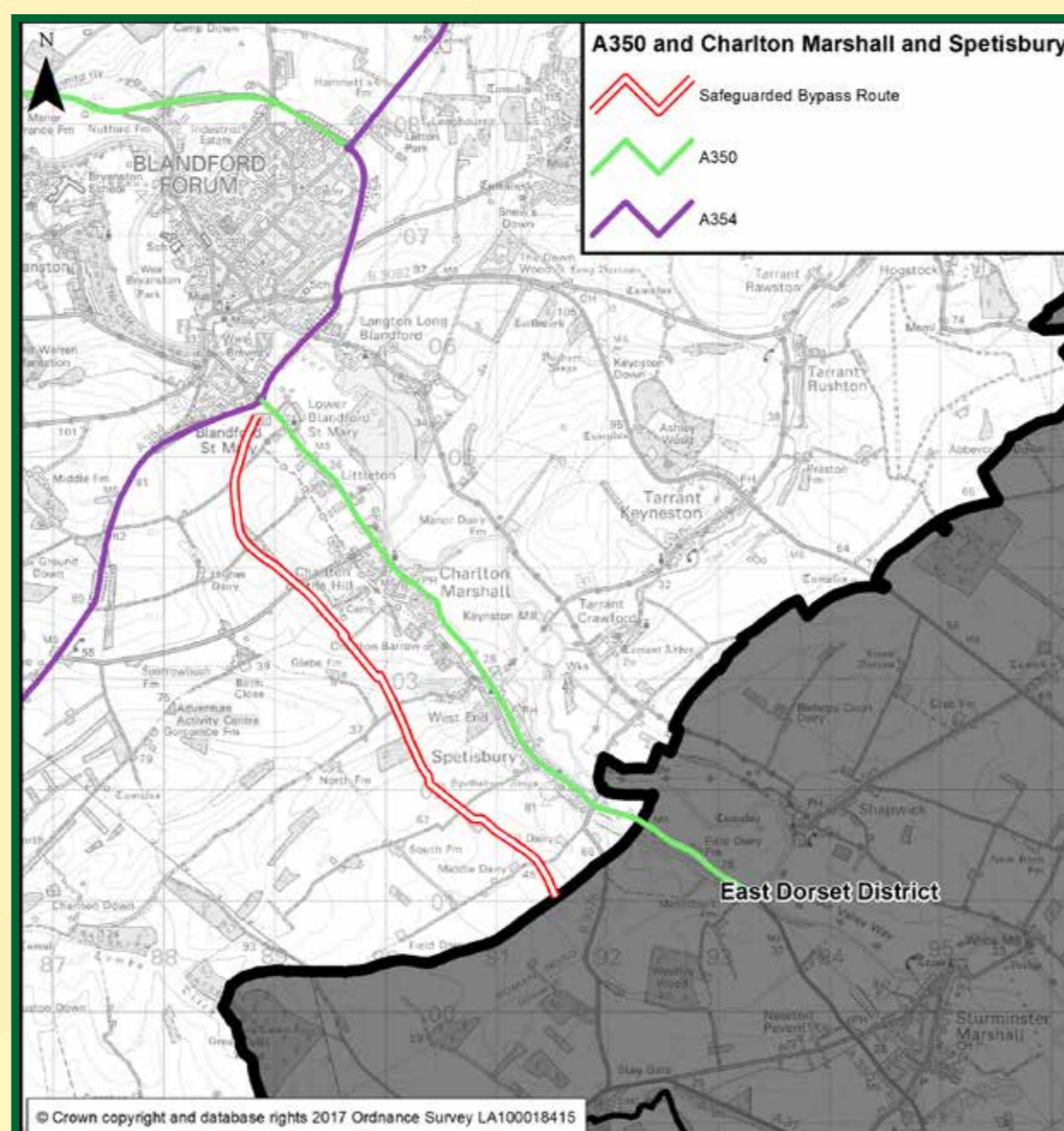
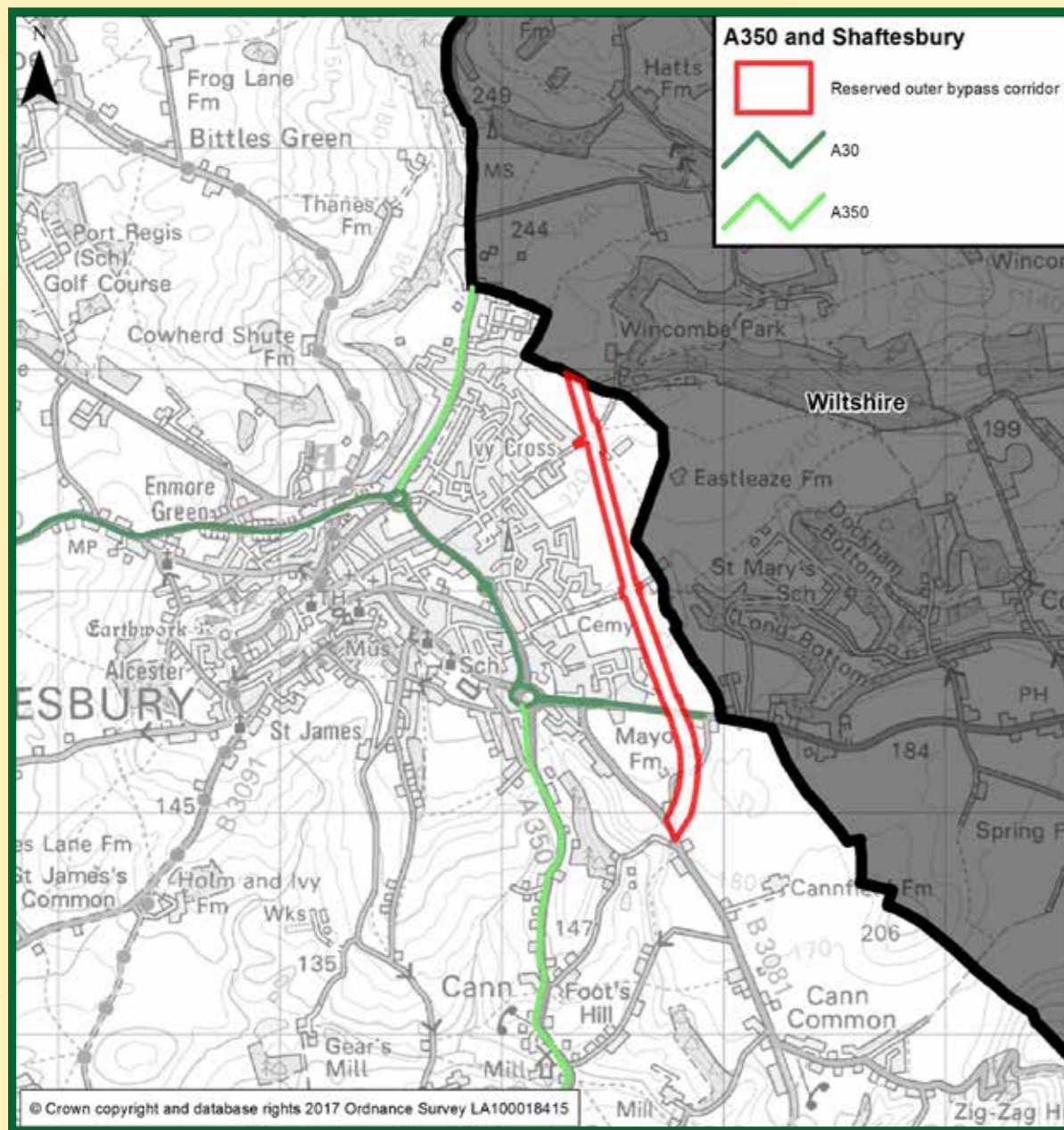
Important Open or Wooded Areas

The Important Open or Wooded Area (IOWA) designation dates from 2003. It was intended to protect important areas of land within settlements. There are approximately 350 IOWAs covering public and privately owned land. The council is currently reviewing the IOWA sites. Consideration is being given to whether all, some or none of the IOWAs require specific designation in a future Local Plan.

■ *Do you consider that the existing hierarchy and network of centres should be amended to include Stalbridge as a 'local centre'?*

The A350

The A350 is an important north–south route through the district, and provides a strategic link between the M4 and the south coast ports. However, the route goes through a number of settlements in North Dorset. There are two long-standing reservations of land for bypasses: east of Shaftesbury, and south of Charlton Marshall and Spetisbury (shown on the maps below).



Local authorities along the A350 route are working with Highways England to make the case for a major route study to be undertaken. A route study would help in trying to secure funding for improvements on the route. However, given the scale and significant nature of the improvements that are required, funding to support delivery of the improvements is uncertain at this stage.

The council needs to demonstrate that improvements relating to the A350 are deliverable. If we are unable to demonstrate this, it is likely we would need to consider alternative uses for these areas of land. Lobbying is underway for A350 route improvements, so we will continue to assess the likelihood of either scheme going ahead during the plan period.

- *Do you consider that the land which is identified and safeguarded for the Shaftesbury Outer Bypass and the Charlton Marshall and Spetisbury Bypass should continue to be identified and safeguarded for such purposes?*

Where can I find out more?

This consultation brings together a large amount of policy, research and evidence. The full Issues and Option document and further information can be found online at:

dorsetforyou.gov.uk/planning/north-dorset/planning-policy

How can I comment?

Complete the response form and email it to us at **planningpolicy@north-dorset.gov.uk**

Or post to: **Planning Policy (North Dorset), South Walks House, South Walks Road, Dorchester, DT1 1UZ**

What is the sustainability appraisal?

Sustainability Appraisal helps us assess how the Local Plan will achieve sustainable development and ensure proposals in the plan are the most appropriate given any reasonable alternatives. It lets us consider ways the plan can contribute to environmental, social and economic improvements, as well as identifying potential adverse effects that the plan might have. More information on the Sustainability Appraisal and how you can comment on the document is available at:

dorsetforyou.gov.uk/planning/north-dorset/planning-policy

How will you use what I've told you?

We will analyse your comments and put them on our website. Your feedback will be used alongside other evidence to prepare a Preferred Options Document which will be consulted on in due course. The Preferred Options Document will identify potential sites for development.

Neighbourhood planning

A number of neighbourhood plans are being progressed across the district. So long as they are in general conformity with the Local Plan, they give communities the opportunity to identify sites for development or protection in their area.