

Shaftesbury Neighbourhood Plan

Basic Conditions Report

Prepared by: Dorset Planning Consultant Ltd, on behalf of Shaftesbury Town Council

Plan period: 2019-2031

Date of report: December 2019

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1. Introduction

When a neighbourhood plan proposal is submitted to the local planning authority, it needs to be accompanied by a statement, known as the basic conditions statement, which explains how:

- the plan meets the legal requirements in terms of its contents and coverage
- the plan has had appropriate regard to national policy and is in general conformity with the strategic policies in the development plan for the area
- the plan will contribute to the achievement of sustainable development, is compatible with EU obligations, and would not be likely to have a significant effect on a European site (as defined in the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2012) or a European offshore marine site (as defined in the Offshore Marine Conservation (Natural Habitats, etc.) Regulations 2007) (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects).

2. Legal Requirements

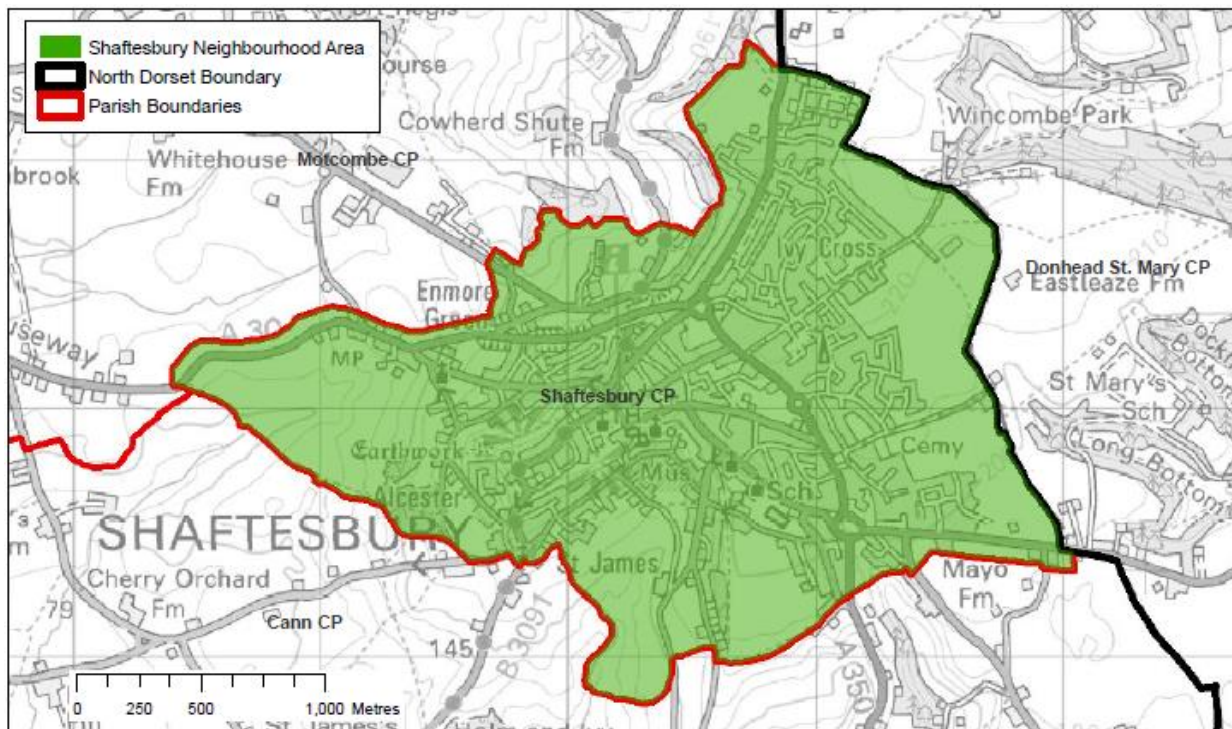
Has the draft plan been submitted by a qualifying body?

Yes – Shaftesbury Town Council agreed the submission of the draft plan and supporting documents at its meeting on 26 November 2019.

Is what is being proposed a neighbourhood development plan making provision in relation to land or sites in the Neighbourhood Plan Area? And do any of the policies extend beyond the neighbourhood area or cover an area where there is a neighbourhood development plan already in place?

The Neighbourhood Plan policies relate only to Shaftesbury parish (which is the designated Neighbourhood Plan Area as of 29 November 2017) and to no other area.

Map 1 – Neighbourhood Plan Designated Area



Name of the neighbourhood area	Shaftesbury Neighbourhood Area
Designation date	29 November 2017
Organisation who made the application	Shaftesbury Town Council



There are no other neighbourhood plans relating to Shaftesbury Parish. The adjoining parish of Motcombe (to the north) has also recently had its Neighbourhood Plan officially ‘made’ by Dorset Council (10 December 2019)¹. Whilst Cann Parish to the south is designated part of the Melbury Abbas and Cann Neighbourhood Plan Area (as of 29 November 2017), no plan has yet been published. To the east Donhead St Mary parish in Wiltshire has not as yet been designated for neighbourhood planning².

There are some areas where designations made through the Local Plan also fall into the adjoining parish (the settlement boundary is one such example) and these are shown on the maps as covering those areas where appropriate. Where there are local sites that straddle the boundary (the important treed area off Lower Blandford Road where the trees do not stop at the parish boundary) the site has been mapped but the area outside of the Neighbourhood Plan area shaded in a lighter washed-out tone and annotated to make clear that that part is not with the Neighbourhood Plan area.

Do any of the policies relate to excluded development?

There are no specific policies covering minerals and waste matters or nationally significant infrastructure projects, or dealing specifically with the type and scale of development described in Schedule 1 to the EIA Regulations 2011 such as power stations and major manufacturing / processing plants.

The policies contained in the plan set out to:

- SFTC 1 define the Town Centre and priorities for development
- SFTC 2 define primary shopping area and main frontages, and the different uses/changes allowed that should support the vitality of the town centre
- SFTC 3 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
- SFTC 4 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
- SFHE 1 ensure that the need for and sustainability of new developments is carefully considered in the context of the existing supply in Shaftesbury (houses with planning permission but not yet built) and the latest traffic information and implications of further planned growth
- SFHE 2 learn from the issues that have arisen from previous large-scale housing developments in Shaftesbury
- SFHE 3 encourage conditions for attracting and retaining employment
- SFHE 4 preserve the Shaftesbury Eastern Bypass corridor, and support its early provision
- SFGI 1 protect the important and locally valued green spaces and treed areas
- SFGI 2 ensure development respects Shaftesbury’s topography and its position in the landscape, recognising that the steep slopes, hilltop and the lower settlements of St James and Enmore Green are all highly sensitive to development, and their importance in views from to and across the slopes
- SFGI 3 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
- SFGI 4 protect our dark skies, particularly considering the adjoining Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and its potential International Dark Sky Reserve status

¹ <https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/planning-buildings-land/planning-policy/north-dorset/neighbourhood-planning/submitted-plans/motcombe-neighbourhood-plan.aspx>

² <http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/downloads/20495> Neighbourhood Planning activity map dated 29 October 2019

- SFDH 1 to 7 collectively set out 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; and to make sure the natural environment is properly considered in the design process.
- SFDH 8 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
- SFDH 9 ensure locally important historic buildings are given proper consideration in how development is planned and how views are considered
- SFCL 1 improve and increase the range and availability of community facilities, sports, and leisure opportunities where these bring benefits to the community
- SFCL 2 support the growth of the tourist economy by encouraging development proposals that are likely to have a positive impact on tourism and that respects and reinforce the different character areas of the town
- SFCL 3 support safe walking and cycling routes that are well connected with the town centre and other key areas and 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

Does the proposed neighbourhood plan state the period for which it is to have effect?

Yes – the plan makes clear on the front cover that it covers the period from 2019 to 2031, and the end date (2031) is also repeated in section 1.2.

3. Consideration of National and Strategic Policies

The Neighbourhood Plan must have regard to national policy and guidance from the Secretary of State and be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the development plan that covers the area.

The following conformity assessment summarises how the Neighbourhood Plan relates to the relevant national planning guidance and strategic development plan policies.

National Planning Policy and Guidance

National planning guidance comes primarily from the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) as issued in February 2019, but where appropriate, reference is made to the online National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG) and Ministerial Statements.

The Development Plan for the Neighbourhood Plan area

The North Dorset Local Plan Part 1, prepared by North Dorset District Council (now part of Dorset Council) and adopted January 2016, contains the bulk of the strategic planning policies for the area. It includes topic-based policies, place-based policies and development management policies that together are considered to provide the strategic policy framework. The saved policies in the 2003 Local Plan are not considered strategic - in many cases the Local Plan Part 1 makes clear that these can be reviewed through Neighbourhood Plans.

The Local Plan contains a Shaftesbury-specific policy which reads as follows:

POLICY 18: SHAFTESBURY

Sustainable Development Strategy

Shaftesbury will maintain its role to serve the needs of the northern part of the District through:

- a) development and regeneration within the settlement boundary;
- b) extensions, primarily of housing, to the east and north; and
- c) an extension to meet employment needs to the south-east.

Growth will be taken forward in ways which respect the town's environmental constraints, support its role, function and identity, and contribute to making it more self-contained. Shaftesbury's distinctive natural and historic character will be retained and enhanced and the town's reputation as a centre for arts, culture and tourism will be reinforced.

Environment and Climate Change

The impact of flooding and climate change on the town will be addressed with measures put in place to reduce risk through:

- d) the provision of sustainable drainage systems in all developments; and
- e) the protection and management of valuable groundwater resources.

The town's natural and historic built environments will be protected and enhanced.

Meeting Housing Needs

At least 1,140 homes will be provided at Shaftesbury during the period 2011–2031. In addition to infilling and regeneration within the settlement boundary, Shaftesbury's housing needs will be met through the development of land:

- f) to the east of the town (including the Hopkins land); and
- g) to the south east of Wincombe Business Park; and
- h) to the west of the A350 opposite Wincombe Business Park.

Supporting Economic Development

Employment needs of the town for the period up to 2031 will be met through:

- i) the development of land to the south of the A30; and
- j) the development of vacant sites on existing industrial estates; and
- k) the retention of existing employment sites.

Mixed-use regeneration will be encouraged on land within and to the east of the existing town centre. Within the town's settlement boundary, opportunities for tourist-related development that is sensitive to the landscape and historic setting of the town will be considered favourably.

Infrastructure

In the period up to 2031, grey infrastructure to support growth will include:

- l) the provision of a new road link from the B3081 to the A30 at Enmore Green, north of Shaftesbury; &
- m) improved walking and cycling links between the town centre and residential development to the east of the town.

The route of the Shaftesbury Outer Eastern Bypass will continue to be protected from development that would prejudice its implementation in the longer-term.

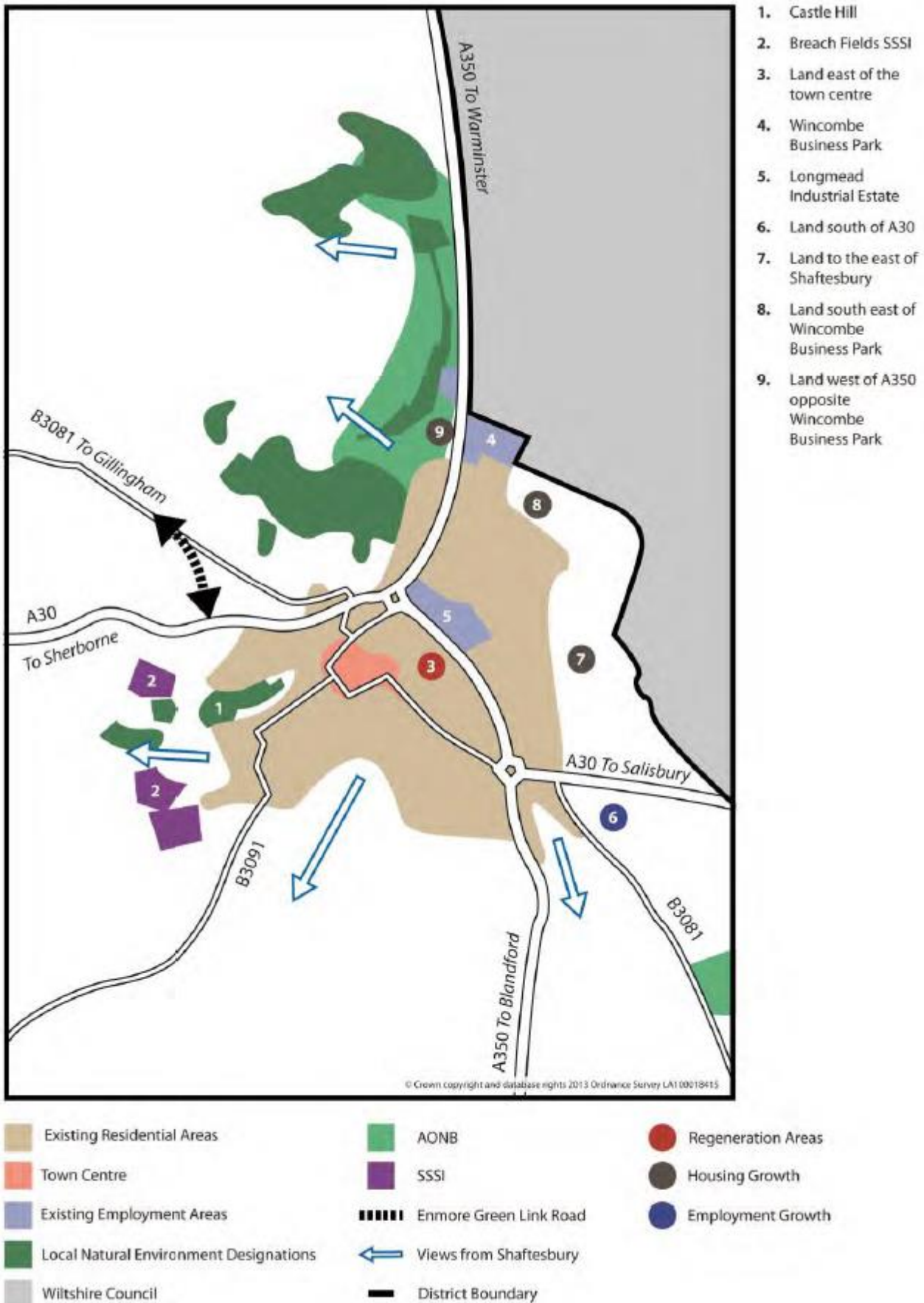
In the period up to 2031 social infrastructure to support growth will include:

- n) the provision of a new community hall for the town; and
- o) a new 2 forms of entry primary school, an extension to the secondary school and expanded further and adult education provision in the town; and
- p) a new doctors' surgery, or the expansion or relocation of the existing doctors' surgery.

A network of green infrastructure will be developed in and around Shaftesbury focusing on linking existing sites, such as the Slopes, and providing new sites and links to serve the residents of both the new and existing development in the town. This will include:

q) informal recreation space associated with the development of sites to the east of the town to reduce recreational pressure on nearby high value wildlife sites.

And also a diagram mapping some of the above key components:



Dorset Council also has a Minerals Strategy (adopted May 2014) that also forms part of the development plan for the area, together with the Waste Local Plan (adopted 2006). A revised Waste Plan was formally adopted by Dorset Council in July 2019, and the Minerals Site Plan in October 2019. None of the minerals and waste plans contain specific proposals for the Neighbourhood Plan Area, other than defining very limited minerals safeguarding areas around the town, and proposing a replacement facility for the existing Shaftesbury household recycling centre within a combined facility in Gillingham.

Strategic policies are described in the NPPF (para 21) as “those necessary to address the strategic priorities of the area (and any relevant cross-boundary issues), to provide a clear starting point for any non-strategic policies that are needed”.

The NPPG also states that it is important to minimise any conflicts between policies in a neighbourhood plan and an emerging Local Plan, and that the reasoning and evidence informing the Local Plan process may be relevant to the consideration of the basic conditions against which a neighbourhood plan is tested. Whilst work did progress on a review of the North Dorset Local Plan, in June 2019 Dorset Council’s Cabinet considered whether to continue progress with the North Dorset (and other) Local Plan Reviews or whether to focus its resources on the production of a Dorset-wide Local Plan. The decision favoured the latter, with the proposed timescales including the publication of a draft plan in September 2021. As such there is currently no clear steer on the emerging local plan policies.

Conformity Testing

The NPPG makes clear that in considering whether a policy is in general conformity, a view should be taken on whether the neighbourhood plan policy or development proposal supports and upholds the general principle that the strategic policy is concerned with and the degree, if any, of conflict and the rationale and evidence to justify that approach.

The following table considers each policy in turn, against the relevant national and local policies for that particular topic.

Vision and Overview of Plan	The plan’s vision for Shaftesbury is set out in Section 1.8 and the plan is divided into 5 topic areas. Climate change is specifically dealt with in the introduction in Section 1.10 as this is seen to be an over-arching issue that is picked up on all the policy areas.
Summary of relevant national policy and guidance	Assessment of general conformity
Plan making Plans should provide a positive vision for the future of each area; a framework for addressing housing needs and other economic, social and environmental priorities; and a platform for local people to shape their surroundings	The Neighbourhood Plan includes a vision for the area. Its development has very much been guided by the expressed wishes of the community, as explained in section 1.9 of the plan and detailed in the consultation statement. Policy wording has been chosen with the aim of being clear and unambiguous, and where necessary a simpler explanation has been included in the supporting text.
Town Centre	SFTC 1 Priorities for development in the defined Town Centre area SFTC 2 The primary shopping area, main frontages, and uses to support the Town Centre SFTC 3 Character and design guidance for the Town Centre SFTC 4 Parking provision in the Town Centre
Overview of national policy	Overview of development plan policies

<p>NPPF</p> <p>85. Planning policies and decisions should support the role that town centres play at the heart of local communities, by taking a positive approach to their growth, management and adaptation. Planning policies should:</p> <p>(b) define the extent of town centres and primary shopping areas, and make clear the range of uses permitted in such locations, as part of a positive strategy for the future of each centre;</p> <p>(c) retain and enhance existing markets and, where appropriate, re-introduce or create new ones;</p> <p>(d) allocate a range of suitable sites in town centres to meet the scale and type of development likely to be needed, looking at least 10 years ahead.</p> <p>(f) recognise that residential development often plays an important role in ensuring the vitality of centres and encourage residential development on appropriate sites.</p> <p>102. Parking and other transport considerations should be considered from the earliest stages of plan-making so that they are integral to the design of schemes, and contribute to making high quality places</p> <p>105. If setting local parking standards, policies should take into account: a) the accessibility of the development; b) the type, mix and use of development; c) the availability of and opportunities for public transport; d) local car ownership levels; and e) the need to ensure an adequate provision of spaces for charging plug-in and other ultra-low emission vehicles.</p> <p>125. Plans should, at the most appropriate level, set out a clear design vision and expectations, so that applicants have as much certainty as possible about what is likely to be acceptable. Design policies should be developed with local communities so they reflect local aspirations, and are grounded in an understanding and evaluation of each area's defining characteristics. Neighbourhood plans can play an important role in identifying the special qualities of each area and explaining how this should be reflected in development.</p> <p>126. The level of detail and degree of prescription should be tailored to the circumstances in each place, and should allow a suitable degree of variety where this would be justified.</p>	<p>Policy 12 Retail, Leisure and other Commercial developments</p> <p>Within the town centre, developments for retail will be supported provided their type and scale will maintain or enhance the role and function of the town and its catchment and respect its historic character. Other main town centre uses will also be supported provided this does not undermine the focus on retailing in primary shopping areas.</p> <p>The loss of retail frontage will be resisted within primary shopping frontages, and change of use away from an A-class uses will be resisted in secondary shopping frontages. The boundaries of town centres, primary shopping areas and shopping frontages can be defined through the Neighbourhood Plan. The Council will work with local communities to take forward proposals for town centre enhancement and will seek to retain and enhance existing outdoor weekly markets</p> <p>Shop fronts should be designed having had due regard to the Council's advice on shop front design.</p> <p>Policy 11 The Economy</p> <p>Supports the continued improvement of town centres as the main focus for retail, leisure and other commercial activities.</p> <p>Policy 13 Grey Infrastructure</p> <p>Proposes to develop a strategy for off-street parking, focusing on Council and other publicly owned car parks.</p> <p>Policy 18 Shaftesbury</p> <p>Shaftesbury's distinctive natural and historic character will be retained and enhanced and the town's reputation as a centre for arts, culture and tourism will be reinforced.</p> <p>Mixed-use regeneration will be encouraged on land within and to the east of the existing town centre.</p> <p>Development Management Policies (non strategic)</p> <p>Policy 23 Parking</p> <p>Policy 24 Design</p>
<p>Assessment of general conformity</p>	
<p>Policies SFTC 1 and SFTC 2 follow the general approach in both national and local policies that seek to support and allow for the growth, management and adaptation of this key area. The definition of the town centre and primary shopping areas is encouraged through the NPPF and is not defined in the adopted Local Plan, and the areas used are based on the latest retail evidence commissioned by the Local Planning authority, supplemented by local knowledge (so that the town centre includes those car parks that are considered of key importance to the town centre's vitality, and the rear of the primary shopping areas follows a more logical boundary). The</p>	

active frontages are based on a review of the Local Plan's primary and secondary frontages, the suggested amendments in the retail study, local knowledge and have also taken into account that the NPPF no longer seeks the definition of such zones. Policy SFTC1 also picks up on the importance of the markets and both policies reflect the importance of the cultural, arts and tourism as the town's particular strengths.

Policy SFTC 3 provides additional guidance on design including shopfronts and public realm enhancements, which are particularly relevant given the Conservation Area and many Listed Buildings present. Consideration has been given to the 2015 shop front guidance (but the detail this contains is too prescriptive for inclusion in the Neighbourhood Plan).

Policy SFTC 4, the final policy in this section, has been informed by the parking study undertaken specifically for the Neighbourhood Plan, which has highlighted the heavy usage of the car parks, and that reductions in parking would adversely impact on the centre's continuing success. It also recognises the need to accommodate electric/ultra-low emission vehicle charging points to ensure that sufficient provision is available in the Town Centre.

Housing and Employment	SFHE 1 Further development in the context of the existing supply in Shaftesbury SFHE 2 Key principles to be applied to any future housing sites SFHE 3 Attracting and retaining employment SFHE 4 Shaftesbury Eastern Bypass corridor
Overview of national policy / guidance	Overview of development plan policies
<p>NPPF</p> <p>29. Neighbourhood plans should not promote less development than set out in the strategic policies for the area, or undermine those strategic policies.</p> <p>59. To support the government's objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes, it is important that a sufficient amount and variety of land can come forward where it is needed, that the needs of groups with specific housing requirements are addressed</p> <p>61. Within this context, the size, type and tenure of housing needed for different groups in the community should be assessed and reflected in planning policies</p> <p>65. Strategic policy-making authorities should establish a housing requirement figure for their whole area. Within this overall requirement, strategic policies should also set out a housing requirement for designated neighbourhood areas which reflects the overall strategy for the pattern and scale of development and any relevant allocations.</p> <p>66. Where it is not possible to provide a requirement figure for a neighbourhood area, the local planning authority should provide an indicative figure, if requested to do so by the neighbourhood planning</p>	<p>Policy 2 Core Spatial Strategy</p> <p>All development proposals should be located in accordance with the spatial strategy - which identifies Shaftesbury as one of the four main towns in North Dorset that will function as the main service centres in the District and will be the main focus for growth, both for the vast majority of housing and other development</p> <p>Policy 6 Housing Distribution</p> <p>The approximate scale of housing development during the period 2011 - 2031 will be as follows: c Shaftesbury – at least 1,140 homes</p> <p>Policy 7 Delivering Homes</p> <p>All housing should contribute towards the creation of mixed and balanced communities and seek to meet the needs of different groups in the community.</p> <p>Policy 8 Affordable Housing</p> <p>Development that delivers eleven or more / more than 1,000 square metres net additional dwellings will contribute to the provision of affordable housing (30% within the settlement boundaries of Shaftesbury and elsewhere 40% of dwellings).</p> <p>Policy 9: Rural Exception Affordable Housing</p> <p>Rural exception affordable housing schemes will not be permitted within or adjoining Shaftesbury.</p> <p>Policy 11: The Economy</p> <p>Existing employment sites and sites identified for future employment uses will be protected from other forms of development, but permission may be given for community uses, such as community halls; healthcare facilities, such as doctors' and vets' surgeries; education and training facilities; and small-scale retail, which is ancillary to a B Class use.</p> <p>Policy 13 Grey Infrastructure</p>

<p>body. This figure should take into account factors such as the latest evidence of local housing need, the population of the neighbourhood area and the most recently available planning strategy of the local planning authority.</p> <p>69. Neighbourhood planning groups should consider the opportunities for allocating small and medium-sized sites suitable for housing in their area.</p> <p>80. Planning policies and decisions should help create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt. Significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity, taking into account both local business needs and wider opportunities for development. The approach taken should allow each area to build on its strengths, counter any weaknesses and address the challenges of the future.</p> <p>104. Planning policies should: (c) identify and protect, where there is robust evidence, sites and routes which could be critical in developing infrastructure to widen transport choice and realise opportunities for large scale development.</p> <p>130. Local planning authorities should also seek to ensure that the quality of approved development is not materially diminished between permission and completion, as a result of changes being made to the permitted scheme (e.g. through changes to approved details such as the materials used).</p>	<p>The adequacy, availability and provision of grey infrastructure will be key considerations when planning applications are considered. Development will be expected to maintain, enhance and provide grey infrastructure, as appropriate to the particular development.</p> <p>Policy 18 Shaftesbury</p> <p>Shaftesbury will maintain its role to serve the needs of the northern part of the District through: a) development and regeneration within the settlement boundary; b) extensions, primarily of housing, to the east and north; and c) an extension to meet employment needs to the south-east. Growth will be taken forward in ways which respect the town’s environmental constraints, support its role, function and identity, and contribute to making it more self-contained.</p> <p>At least 1,140 homes will be provided during the period 2011–2031. In addition to infilling and regeneration within the settlement boundary, Shaftesbury’s housing needs will be met through the development of land: f) to the east of the town (including the Hopkins land); and g) to the south east of Wincombe Business Park; and h) to the west of the A350 opposite Wincombe Business Park.</p> <p>Employment needs of the town for the period up to 2031 will be met through: i) the development of land to the south of the A30; and j) the development of vacant sites on existing industrial estates; and k) the retention of existing employment sites.</p> <p>The route of the Shaftesbury Outer Eastern Bypass will continue to be protected from development that would prejudice its implementation in the longer-term.</p> <p>Policy 20 The Countryside</p> <p>Development in the countryside outside defined settlement boundaries will only be permitted if: a) it is of a type appropriate in the countryside, as set out in the Local Plan; or b) it can be demonstrated that there is an ‘overriding need’ for it to be located in the countryside.</p>
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Assessment of general conformity

Policy SFHE 1 has been drafted in the recognition that Shaftesbury has either had completed or has land consented to fulfil the Local Plan quota of at least 1,140 dwellings for the period 2011 to 2031 (more than 10 years before the anticipated end date of the plan), but that it was fully recognised in the Local Plan that Shaftesbury’s development would be ‘front loaded’ and as such should reduce in the latter period to enable the town to absorb what is a significant level of growth. Given this, and the significant level of outstanding housing land with consent in the town, the release of further land in advance of a strategic decision on the level and distribution of development through the Dorset Local Plan (which will be adopted by 2024) any further release of housing is not something that is encouraged. However, because of the shortfall in delivery elsewhere in North Dorset, the Local Plan is not considered up to date and as such landowners are promoting further development across the North Dorset. Should such applications be made in Shaftesbury, it is important that the cumulative impact of all of the development on the capacity of the town’s infrastructure and highway network is properly considered in the planning balance. The Neighbourhood Plan does not seek to allocate additional sites suitable for housing (given the amount of land currently permitted for housing and the lack of community support for revising the settlement boundary, or even for the concept of allowing affordable housing sites outside of the settlement boundary) - however such allocations are not required by national policy or the local

plan's strategy.

Policy SFHE 2 seeks to address the issues that have been raised through previous large-scale housing developments to make sure the same mistakes are not made in the future. This largely relates to the phasing of development, and the associated delays in delivery when only one housebuilder is responsible for the bulk of the strategic development on one or two large sites. The policy includes some additional guidance for housing types on larger sites based on locally-specific information of need.

Policy SFHE 3 considers employment provision, and reflects the strategy set out in the Local Plan (Policy 18). Consideration has been given to whether the safeguarded employment areas still need to be protected, and whilst the delivery of the employment land to the south of the A30 has been slow in coming forward, its release for housing is not justified and would compromise the self-containment of the town given the amount of housing in the pipeline and lack of alternative options for employment growth.

Policy SFHE 4 reconfirms the need for outer bypass as referenced in Policy 18 of the Local Plan. This route is considered to be critical in developing infrastructure to realise opportunities for large scale development as evidenced by the limited capacity on the existing route.

Green Infrastructure	SFGI 1 Local Green Spaces and Important Treed Areas SFGI 2 The sensitive slopes, views and settlement edge treatment SFGI 3 Landscaping SFGI 4 Dark night skies
Overview of national policy and guidance	Overview of development plan policies
<p>NPPF</p> <p>99. The designation of land as Local Green Space through local and neighbourhood plans allows communities to identify and protect green areas of particular importance to them.</p> <p>100. The Local Green Space designation should only be used where the green space is: a) in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves; b) demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance, for example because of its beauty, historic significance, recreational value (including as a playing field), tranquillity or richness of its wildlife; and c) local in character and is not an extensive tract of land.</p> <p>127. Planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments: (b) are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping; (c) are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change</p> <p>170. Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by: (b) recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland; and (d) minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity.</p> <p>180. Planning policies and decisions should also ensure</p>	<p>Policy 4: The Natural Environment</p> <p>The landscape character of the District will be protected through retention of the features that characterise the area. Where significant impact is likely to arise as a result of a development proposal, developers will be required to clearly demonstrate that the impact on the landscape has been mitigated and that important landscape features have been incorporated in to the development scheme.</p> <p>Policy 15 Green Infrastructure</p> <p>Development will be required to enhance existing and provide new green infrastructure to improve the quality of life of residents and deliver environmental benefits. Neighbourhood Plans should consider measures that assist in delivering key green infrastructure benefits, including the designation of Local Green Space, where appropriate.</p> <p>Policy 18 Shaftesbury</p> <p>Within the town's settlement boundary, opportunities for tourist-related development that is sensitive to the landscape and historic setting of the town will be considered favourably.</p> <p>A network of green infrastructure will be developed in and around Shaftesbury focusing on linking existing sites, such as the Slopes, and providing new sites and links to serve the residents of both the new and existing development in the town. This will</p>

<p>that new development is appropriate for its location taking into account the likely effects (including cumulative effects) of pollution on health, living conditions and the natural environment, as well as the potential sensitivity of the site or the wider area to impacts that could arise from the development. In doing so they should: limit the impact of light pollution from artificial light on local amenity, intrinsically dark landscapes and nature conservation.</p>	<p>include informal recreation space associated with the development of sites to the east of the town to reduce recreational pressure on nearby high value wildlife sites.</p> <p>Development Management Policies (non strategic)</p> <p>Policy 24 Design</p> <p>Policy 25 Amenity - Artificial Light Intrusion</p>
<p>Assessment of general conformity</p>	
<p>Policy SFGI 1 deals with the designation of Local Green Spaces and Important Treed Areas. The former has been assessed against the criteria set in the NPPF (included in the audit), landowners were consulted, and the policy reflects the strong level of protection intended for such sites. The important treed areas, whilst potentially of LGS quality are specifically designated for their wooded quality and the policy basis differs in that replacement planting may be sought to maintain the treed character of the local area if the loss of trees is unavoidable.</p> <p>Policy SFGI 2 reviews and takes forward the previous non-strategic policies in the 2003 Local Plan that sought to protect the unique character of the Slopes. The policy has provided the opportunity to review the underpinning evidence and provide clearer guidance on where and how the slopes protection policy should be applied, including the consideration of views from and across these areas. Views are not specifically referenced in either National Policy or the strategic policies. However the policy is considered to be in general conformity with those policies seeking to protect and reinforce local character.</p> <p>The protection applied to the various areas does not prevent the development of the strategic sites from being delivered, but will require the design and layout of the employment area to the south of the A30 (as far as it likes within the Neighbourhood Plan Area) to be sensitively designed and landscaped.</p> <p>Policy SFGI 3 deals with landscaping in general and seeks to protect and reinforce the benefits of landscaping, including those features that contribute to an area’s local character and biodiversity. No obvious conformity issues have been identified.</p> <p>Policy SFGI 4’s although the approach on lighting is more detailed than the Local Plan Development Management policy (a non-strategic policy), this is justified by the sensitivity of the landscape and AONB designation. The policy does not prohibit all lighting but requires that it is necessary and appropriately designed.</p>	
<p>Design and heritage</p>	<p>SFDH 1 to 7 on various aspects of design cover local character (with area-specific descriptions); high quality designs; scale, positioning and orientation of building; public realm; parking design / layout; building styles and detailing; and respecting heritage</p> <p>SFDH 8 Archaeological assessments</p> <p>SFDH 9 Locally important historic buildings</p>
<p>Overview of national policy and guidance</p>	
<p>NPPF</p> <p>125. Plans should, at the most appropriate level, set out a clear design vision and expectations, so that applicants have as much certainty as possible about what is likely to be acceptable. Design policies should be developed with local communities so they reflect local aspirations, and are grounded in an understanding and evaluation of each area’s defining characteristics. Neighbourhood plans can play an important role in identifying the special qualities of each area and explaining how this should be reflected in development.</p> <p>126. The level of detail and degree of prescription should be</p>	<p>Policy 4 The Natural Environment</p> <p>Development should be shaped by the natural environment so that its benefits are enhanced and not degraded. Landscape character will be protected through the retention of the features that characterise the area. Where significant impact is likely that impact must be mitigated and important landscape features incorporated in the development scheme.</p> <p>Policy 5 The Historic Environment</p>

<p>tailored to the circumstances in each place, and should allow a suitable degree of variety where this would be justified.</p> <p>130. Permission should be refused for development of poor design that fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area and the way it functions, taking into account any local design standards or style guides in plans or supplementary planning documents.</p> <p>184. Heritage assets range from sites and buildings of local historic value to those of the highest significance, ... and should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance.</p> <p>192. In determining applications, local planning authorities should take account of: (a) the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation; (b) the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and (c) the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.</p> <p>197. The effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining the application. In weighing applications that directly or indirectly affect non-designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.</p>	<p>Any development proposal affecting a heritage asset (including its setting) will be assessed having regard to the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of that asset. Where a development proposal will lead to harm to the significance of a non-designated heritage asset, regard will be had to: e) the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of the asset; and f) the scale of any harm or loss; and g) the significance of the heritage asset.</p> <p>Policy 7 Delivering Homes</p> <p>Design and layout of housing development should be of a density that respects local character and amenity. Infilling within settlement boundaries, should respect the amenity of adjoining properties, and local communities are encouraged to develop more detailed policies relating to infilling through Neighbourhood Plans.</p> <p>Development Management Policies (non strategic)</p> <p>Policy 23 Parking</p> <p>Policy 24 Design</p>
<p>Assessment of general conformity</p>	
<p>Policies SFDH 1-7 cover local character (with area-specific descriptions); high quality designs; scale, positioning and orientation of building; public realm; parking design / layout; building styles and detailing; and respecting heritage. The policies are considered to be in line with the general approach in national and local plan policies to set out the quality of development that will be expected based on an understanding and evaluation of the area's defining characteristics. This was supported by an independent analysis of the area's character undertaken by AECOM, in addition to a review of other studies and consultation with local residents. The policies have been worded to allow some flexibility for different approaches to be taken provided that the deviation from the guidance can be justified as reinforcing the distinctive character of the area.</p> <p>Policies SFDH 8-9: identify aspects of the built environment that are likely to be considered as un-designated heritage assets. The policies as worded are intended to reflect the balanced judgement to be given to their protection under national policy, and the fact that (for example) permitted development rights would allow their demolition and potential alteration to a degree.</p>	
<p>Community and Leisure</p>	<p>SFCL 1 Improve and increase the range of community facilities</p> <p>SFCL 2 Key tourist facilities</p> <p>SFCL 3 The footpath and cycle path network</p>
<p>Overview of national policy and guidance</p>	<p>Overview of development plan policies</p>
<p>91. Planning policies and decisions should aim to achieve healthy, inclusive and safe places which promote social interaction, including opportunities for meetings between people who might not otherwise</p>	<p>Policy 11: The Economy</p> <p>Tourist facilities and larger hotels will be encouraged in town centre locations in accordance with the sequential approach. Smaller hotels, guest houses, bed and breakfast establishments and self-catering accommodation will be permitted within the settlement boundaries of</p>

<p>come into contact with each other, and enable and support healthy lifestyles, especially where this would address identified local health and well-being needs – for example through the provision of sports facilities, local shops, allotments and layouts that encourage walking and cycling.</p> <p>92. Planning policies and decisions should plan positively for the provision and use of shared spaces, community facilities (such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, open space, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship) and other local services to enhance the sustainability of communities and residential environments; and guard against the unnecessary loss of valued facilities and services, particularly where this would reduce the community's ability to meet its day-to-day needs</p> <p>94. It is important that a sufficient choice of school places is available to meet the needs of existing and new communities.</p> <p>96. Access to a network of high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and physical activity is important for the health and well-being of communities. Planning policies should be based on robust and up-to-date assessments of the need for open space, sport and recreation facilities (including quantitative or qualitative deficits or surpluses) and opportunities for new provision.</p> <p>97. Existing open space, sports and recreational buildings and land, including playing fields, should not be built on unless specific requirements are met.</p> <p>98. Planning policies and decisions should protect and enhance public rights of way and access, including taking opportunities to provide better facilities for users</p>	<p>Shaftesbury.</p> <p>Policy 13 Grey Infrastructure Ensure that the necessary transport infrastructure is put into place to support growth, development and North Dorset's economy. A more sustainable approach to transport will be developed by: providing and enhancing walking and cycling facilities in the main towns and in rural areas, particularly between villages and nearby towns.</p> <p>Policy 14 Social infrastructure Seeks to maintain and enhance the level of social infrastructure through retaining and improving existing facilities, and new provision where required.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – the needs of existing pre-school facilities and providers in the towns and villages are met – provision is made to accommodate the additional forms of entry required at primary and secondary school levels across the District including, if necessary, new primary schools in Shaftesbury – further education and community learning opportunities are retained and improved to provide the District's workforce with the skills necessary to meet the changing needs of local employers – community hospitals are retained and enhanced – sufficient general surgeries and health centres are in place with new or expanded surgeries provided in Shaftesbury. – existing libraries are retained and developed as valuable community hubs – multi-functional art galleries and arts centres are encouraged in the main towns – existing museums are protected and enhanced as valuable educational resources for the community as a whole. – existing formal and informal indoor facilities are protected and enhanced – existing community halls, places of worship and other non-commercial community facilities are protected and new facilities provided where there is an identified need <p>Policy 15: Green Infrastructure Development will be required to enhance existing and provide new green infrastructure to improve the quality of life of residents and deliver environmental benefits. All elements of green infrastructure should be provided on site in line with standards of provision set in the development plan.</p> <p>Policy 18: Shaftesbury Shaftesbury's reputation as a centre for arts, culture and tourism will be reinforced. Within the town's settlement boundary, opportunities for tourist-related development that is sensitive to the landscape and historic setting of the town will be considered favourably.</p> <p>A network of green infrastructure will be developed in and around Shaftesbury focusing on linking existing sites, and providing new sites and links to serve the residents of both the new and existing development.</p> <p>Development Management Policies (non strategic)</p> <p>Policy 27 Retention of community facilities</p>
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	Policy 31 – Tourist Accommodation in the Countryside
Assessment of general conformity	
<p>Policy SFCL 1 is broadly in line with the Local Plan and national policy, in that it makes clear those facilities that the community consider should be safeguarded, and the likely requirements in terms of new / expanded facilities. The audit table provides evidence of the current level of open space provision against the desired standards.</p> <p>Policy SFCL 2 reflects the Local Plan policy, but also looks to resist the loss of these facilities which are recognised as an important element of Shaftesbury’s economy, unless it can be demonstrated that their continued use is no longer viable. The sequential test included in the general Local Plan on new tourist attractions and serviced tourist accommodation is relaxed in favour of transport sustainability considerations (noting that the sequential approach is not reflected in Policy 18).</p> <p>Policy SFCL 3 recognises the importance of walking and cycling as the most practical and sustainable modes of transport for getting around the town and also for recreation opportunities and access to the countryside. It identifies important improvements to the network that have been developed in discussion with the Highways Authority and local users.</p>	

Conformity conclusions

The Neighbourhood Plan includes a positive vision for the future of the area and explains how this translated into objectives and in turn relate to the relevant policies.

The analysis of the plan in relation to national planning policy and guidance and the strategic policies of the local plan, as shown in the preceding tables, does not highlight any fundamental conformity issues. Where the plan does vary, the changes are considered to be relatively minor in nature and justified by locally-specific evidence, and therefore still in general conformity.

On this basis, there are no apparent reasons to conclude other than the Neighbourhood Plan meets the basic condition of having regard to national policy and guidance from the Secretary of State and being in general conformity with the strategic policies of the development plan for the area.

4. EU and sustainability obligations

A screening assessment in relation to potential requirements for a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) under the European Directive 2001/42/EC and for a Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA) under Article 6(3) of the EU Habitats Directive and with Regulation 61 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (as amended), was undertaken by Dorset Council (then North Dorset District Council) and a report produced in July 2019.

This report³ concluded that an SEA of the Shaftesbury Neighbourhood Plan is not required – and this view was echoed by the statutory consultees:

- Natural England stated in their response that there are unlikely to be significant environmental effects from the proposed plan;
- Historic England stated in their response that they tend to focus on whether a Plan allocates sites for development. The Shaftesbury Plan has not such intentions, so in their view an SEA is not required;
- The Environment Agency responded to say that they agreed with the conclusion that the plan is unlikely to have a significant effect on the environment.

³ <https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/planning-buildings-land/planning-policy/north-dorset/neighbourhood-planning/pdfs/20190702-shaftesbury-sea-determination-and-appendices-redacted-v2.pdf>





Dorset Council (then North Dorset District Council) also consulted Natural England as to the requirement for a Habitats Regulation Assessment. Natural England’s response acknowledged that there are unlikely to be significant environmental effects from the proposed plan. Based on these considerations, Dorset Council determined that the proposed Neighbourhood Plan is not likely to have a significant effect on a European site, and therefore an HRA of the Shaftesbury Neighbourhood Plan is not required.

The Neighbourhood Plan’s policies have also been assessed against the three overarching objectives considered in achieving sustainable development as identified in the NPPF (paragraph 8), ie:

- **an economic objective** – to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth, innovation and improved productivity; and by identifying and coordinating the provision of infrastructure;
- **a social objective** – to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by fostering a well-designed and safe built environment, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities’ health, social and cultural well-being; and
- **an environmental objective** – to contribute to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, helping to improve biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy.

The assessment is summarised in the following table. This allows an overview of the combined impacts of the plan’s policies. It demonstrates that the plan’s policies should help contribute towards sustainable development, and that no significant adverse impacts have been identified.

Key:	 positive impact likely	 adverse impact likely
	 neutral impact likely	 impact less certain but unlikely to be significantly adverse

Neighbourhood Plan Policies	Economic	Social	Environmental	Notes / Explanation
SFTC 1	✓	✓	✓	Balances economic, social and environmental objectives for the centre
SFTC 2	✓	-	-	Provides flexibility for a range of active economic uses of the high street
SFTC 3	-	-	✓	In particular respects the historic character of the town centre
SFTC 4	✓	-		Whilst this supports car-based travel, provision is made for low-emission cars
SFHE 1	-	-	-	Reflects need to balance economic, social and environmental issues
SFHE 2	-	✓	✓	Should address the social and environmental issues experienced
SFHE 3	✓	-		Supports economy, although south of the A30 is in a sensitive location
SFHE 4	✓	✓		Road link key to supporting growth but supports car-based travel
SFGI 1	-	✓	✓	Protecting green spaces for biodiversity and social benefits
SFGI 2	-	-	✓	The slopes and view are important to the town’s distinct character
SFGI 3	-	✓	✓	Enhancing green spaces for biodiversity and social benefits
SFGI 4			✓	Important to the AONB character, but notes security or safety reasons for lighting
SFDH 1 to 7	-	✓	✓	High quality design for environmental / character and social benefits

Neighbourhood Plan Policies	Economic	Social	Environmental	Notes / Explanation
SFDH 8 to 9	-	-	✓	Protecting buildings and archaeology of local historic important
SFCL 1	-	✓	-	Protecting and enhancing socially important community buildings and facilities
SFCL 2	✓	-	-	Supporting sustainable tourism is important to the town's economy
SFCL 3	-	✓	✓	Enhancing the footpath / cycle network provides social and environmental benefits

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 general conformity with the strategic policies of the Local Plan and regard to National Planning Policy, it is reasonable to conclude that the making of the plan should not breach human rights.