

**North Dorset District Council
Local Development Framework**

Consultation Statement

Sturminster Newton Town Design Statement (TDS)

December 2007

Contact:

Trevor Warrick
Planning Policy
Tel: 01258 484211
Fax: 01258 484230

North Dorset District Council

Nordon
Salisbury Road
Blandford Forum
Dorset
DT11 7LL

1.0 Introduction

The Consultation Statement

- 1.1 The new planning system introduced by the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, requires extensive community involvement in the preparation of Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs).
- 1.2 In the initial preparation, Local Planning Authorities should informally involve local communities and stakeholders in the development of policies. At the later stage, when formal consultation is undertaken, the Council is required to produce a 'Consultation Statement' which sets out how initial consultation was undertaken and the main issues that emerged from this.
- 1.3 The Council is required to include the following in its Consultation Statement:
 - The names of any persons whom the authority consulted in connection with the preparation of the draft SPD;
 - How those persons were consulted;
 - A summary of the main issues raised in those consultations; and
 - How those issues have been addressed in the draft SPD.
- 1.4 Formal consultation must be undertaken on the draft SPD and a specified process of advertisement and community involvement must be followed.
- 1.5 The draft SPD was approved by Cabinet, for the purposes of public consultation, on 10th December 2007. Formal consultation on the draft SPD will take place during January and February 2008.

Background to the Sturminster Newton Town Design Statement

- 1.6 Sturminster Newton has a proud track record of community led involvement in the planning of changes to the town. The concept of being able to have some influence over what happens to the town in the future is keenly encouraged and the outstanding success of the redevelopment of the former livestock market site is a visible sign of the benefits of partnership working between the community and the local authority.
- 1.7 The TDS process began in Sturminster Newton in 2003 when the consultants, Halcrow, assisted the town in preparing an Action Plan. Halcrow consulted extensively with the community, local and regional authorities, and the business community. An important strand of the Sturminster Newton and surrounding area Action Plan was the recognition of the need for a comprehensive design statement.
- 1.8 Picking up the need for a Design Statement, and consideration of a development brief for the redundant sites from the Action Plan, funding was sought and gained from the South West Regional Development Agency to further the project.

2.0 Pre-Formal Consultation Activities

- 2.1 In May 2006 SturQuest organised a consultation exercise “What makes Stur so special?” An exhibition was mounted in the community office and responses invited from the general public. An encouraging response was gained and the results analysed. This information formed the basis of discussions between SturQuest and the District Council and it was agreed to appoint consultants to carry out a TDS.
- 2.2 Planning Policy and SturQuest designed a brief for consultants and then Matrix Partnership was appointed in June 2007 to carry out the studies on behalf of the town. Their task was to take a twin track approach to the challenges of producing both a Town Design Statement and a brief for the re-development of the Creamery and adjacent sites south of the re-development on the former market site.
- 2.3 The main informal consultation event was held at the Exchange on 17th July 2007. Responses to questionnaires given out at the meeting (attended by 90 people) were analysed and used to inform the document. Attendees included the Chamber of Trade, et al, There were also facilitator lead discussions and the results of which also contributed to the report. The draft TDS was displayed at the two-day Sturminster Newton Cheese Festival event held on 8th and 9th September 2007, which was visited by over 11,000 people. Matrix Partnerships and the Community Development Worker were able to talk to visitors at the stand and a further collection of questionnaires were completed and subsequently analysed.
- 2.4 Publicity for the project has been gained by using the local community newsletter on a number of occasions to keep the local community aware of the project. Informal responses have also been recorded at the community office (where the display has been retained) and these responses included where possible and fed back to Matrix Partnership.
- 2.5 Within NDDC the Policy & Performance Manager, Rural Regeneration Manager, Environment Manager, and Community Projects Officer have been consulted on the draft Sturminster Newton Town Design Statement. An initial draft TDS (produced in August 2007) was considered by the District Council’s Planning Policy Panel on 19th September 2007. The general outline of the draft was welcomed by Members. A meeting was subsequently held between Matrix, SturQuest and Planning Officers from the Council on 25th September 2007 when a number of changes were agreed to be made on the basis of the informal consultation exercises.
- 2.6 This work has provided a robust basis for the development of the policies in the TDS, which supplement the objectives and policies of the North Dorset District Wide Local Plan.

3.0 Issues Raised

- 3.1 The questionnaires used by the Matrix Partnership and SturQuest for the informal consultations were structured to include a number of headings, under which comments were invited. The main findings that were identified from the informal consultation are listed below, broadly under the relevant questionnaire headings.

Things that make Sturminster unique: (Positive)

- 3.2 The organic way the town developed 'pre-planning' is attractive. The variety and character of old buildings and the way they are set together with narrow winding lanes and passages that 'reveal'. When you drive into Stur over the bridge you feel as if you have left the hassle of modern life behind. The sense of place is created by a historic core and character allied to its restrained size and scale in a pleasant landscape setting including the River Stour and with countryside walks. The town has grown throughout history and has not just been created. There are a variety of building styles at different levels and positions which add to the visual interest. The traditional shopfronts add to the character.

Things that make Sturminster unique: (Negative)

- 3.3 The organic design of the road network should discourage heavy and speeding traffic; however this has not worked and has resulted in blight. The overdevelopment of recent development detracts from the antiquity of a market town and destroys the sense of place. There has been a lack of attention to detail in development within the Conservation Area, and insufficient use of trees to soften new development throughout the town.

Aspects of the town that are lacking or weak, and issues that need to be addressed

- 3.4 The quantity and design of car parking, along with the volume of traffic and weight (type) of traffic blights the town. There is too much concrete and asphalt, which creates a highly urbanised feel, and insufficient amount of trees to soften development.

Aspects of development that should be controlled

- 3.5 The size and scale of development should be locally distinctive, whereas the density and overdevelopment of the recent development is out of character. On street parking in narrow lanes should be controlled, and traditional shop frontages should be continued.

Aspects that are thought to be successful

- 3.6 The town centre enhancement promotes good connectivity, and the Exchange building and craftsmanship is thought to be exceptional. The changes of direction, materials, footpaths and squares are all welcomed.

Aspects thought to be disappointing

- 3.7 The recent development is not of local character. The height, scale and bulk are uncharacteristic and out of place. The tall buildings are changing the appearance of the town with a negative impact. The recent

development looks very congested and gives the impression of overdevelopment. The tall buildings and high density are reminiscent of the tenements. The high density housing has created a concrete jungle resulting in cramped parking and lack of space for residents and children. There is insufficient visual splay for pedestrians, coupled with unsafe and intimidating motor vehicle dominance. The development on the edges of the town is not considered as sympathetic to the interface with the countryside.

Controls to infill development

- 3.8 Encourage: local character and variety of materials; sympathetic design; sufficient off road parking provision; retention of views; green corners and resting places. Discourage: tall buildings and high density.

Sufficiency and appropriateness of open space

- 3.9 There is enough open space already provided, and it is complemented by the connections to the open countryside. Although better provision of facilities on open space, and across the town generally, would be of greater benefit. There should be further connection of the Trailway, and more green links across the town with resting places designed in. Improvement to access and planting at Railway Gardens would improve the environment.

- 3.10 Therefore, the main points that were identified from the informal consultation carried out by the Matrix and SturQuest are:

- 1) the historic core, with its quirky nature, is attractive;
- 2) the recent developments are out of character with the locality, particularly in terms of height, mass, bulk and density;
- 3) greater emphasis should be given to the needs of the pedestrian as opposed to motor vehicles;
- 4) green infrastructure, to work as both linkages and to soften the built environment, would be welcome;
- 5) future development should not result in the impression of town cramming and overdevelopment;
- 6) future development should be in keeping with the character of the town.

4.0 Addressing the Issues

- 4.1 The important issues that were raised during the pre-formal consultation stage are set out above and these issues have been taken into account in the preparation of the draft SPD. The draft TDS identifies a series of Character Areas within the town, which describe the key features that make different parts of the settlement distinctive. The Character Area descriptions can be used as a benchmark for assessing the merits of new development. The draft TDS also includes development-related, landscape-related and transport-related Design Guidelines, which seek to address the issues raised during informal consultation.

- 4.2 For example, one of the main issues raised was that perceived overdevelopment had taken place. Consequently, a development policy within the TDS proposes that, within particular Character Areas as evidenced, development proposals for a density below the indicative minimum in national policy (i.e. 30 dwellings per hectare) may be appropriate. This is in accordance with PPS3, where proposals must be justified on grounds which include the characteristics of the area.
- 4.3 The Council has a duty to listen to the communities that it serves and the Sturminster Newton TDS sets out design principles based on the distinctive local character and requirements of the town to provide guidelines for developers, councillors, planners and the Planning Inspectorate.

Appendix 1 – List of Attendees at the Public Meeting Held at The Exchange on 17th July 2007



90 People attended this meeting. Those that recorded their names are listed below.

Mike Read	Gwen Morris	Tim & Helen Lacey
Neil Watson	Jenny Wilson	Thelma Wall
Len Goldbart	John Hammond	Anne Tootek
Jillian Goldbart	Michael Roake	David Fox
Charles Gardner	Ann Baseden	Jackie Upton
Gerald Brady	Graham Baseden	Mr & Mrs G Rossling
Jenny Powell	John Billen	Mr Paul Bennett
Norman King	Pat Johnson	Mrs H. Belbem
Judith Bennett	Pat Austin	Mr Phillip Black hall
Alan Bennett	Lou Austin	Mr Kevin Knapp
Peter Hurst	Lyn Wilton	Miss Karen Knapp
Debbie Hurst	Peter Hallowes	Ann & Alan Bradford
Carol Levett	Gail & Godfrey Maidment	Roger Lowman
Victor Fox	Sue Stroud	Adam Neil
Liz Fox		Trevor Warwick

Appendix 2 - List of Respondents at the Cheese Festival 8th & 9th September 2007 and in the SturQuest Community Office



Mrs Iris Gosling

Mr J Read

Mr Mrs R Weaver

Mr John & Mrs Ros West

Mr B Howlett

Mr A Harrison

Mr Mrs Blackman

Leah Lowinger

Anne Davis

Mrs Sheila Squire

J.C.Watson

J Davies

Mr Richard Davies

Mr David Frost

Mr John & Mrs Rosalind West

3 Response Forms were received with no names

