



Charles Street, Dorchester
PLANNING BRIEF

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1. Introduction

Purpose of the Brief

- 1.1 This planning brief has been issued by West Dorset District Council (hereafter named “the Council”) in its statutory role as local planning authority, to provide detailed planning guidance for the development of the Charles street site in Dorchester town centre. The Council will issue a separate development brief setting out its requirements as landowner and the process for selecting a development partner.
- 1.2 This planning brief builds upon the relevant development plan policies contained in the Dorset (excluding South East) Structure Plan and Deposit West Dorset Local Plan. It established planning, access, urban design and implementation parameters for the development. The brief also identifies the constraints to development.
- 1.3 This document provides supplementary planning guidance in line with the advice provided in paragraphs 3.18 and 3.19 of Planning Policy Guidance Note 12 (PPG 12) – *Development Plans and Regional Planning Guidance*.

The Site

- 1.4 The limits of the Charles street site, as they relate to this brief, and its position relative to the existing town centre are illustrated on the plans contained within Appendix A.
- 1.5 The site itself extends to an area of approximately 1.7 hectares (4.15 acres) and is roughly rectangular in shape. It is situated to the east of South Street, Dorchester’s existing main shopping thoroughfare, and to the south of a large food store currently occupied by Waitrose.
- 1.6 The majority of the site is used as short-stay public car parking, currently providing 488 spaces. A small part of the site in the north-east corner is occupied by the Acland Road Evangelical Church.
- 1.7 The site has frontages with South Walks to the south, Acland Road to the east and Charles Street to the north and west.
- 1.8 Charles street now functions principally as a service road, providing vehicular access to a proportion of the 488 spaces referred to above, as well as access to additional parking contained in the lower levels of the Waitrose development to the north. Charles Street also provides access for commercial

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vehicles servicing Waitrose and the rear of other retail units in South Street.

- 1.9 The main pedestrian links with South Street are through Tudor Arcade to the north and Nappers Mite and Hardye Arcade to the south. Access to South Street via Tudor Arcade emerges close to the prime shopping frontage, but requires a climb of 19 steps if following the obvious route in front of Waitrose. Access to South Street via Nappers Mite and Hardye Arcade is effectively level, but both emerge away from the prime pitch and into the currently non-pedestrianised area.
- 1.10 The whole of the Charles Street site lies within the Dorchester Conservation Area.
- 1.11 The site is of significant archaeological interest. The South Walks boundary coincides with the line of a Roman wall – a scheduled Ancient Monument – that marked the southern perimeter of the Roman town of *Durnovaria*. Another important feature of this boundary is the double avenue of chestnut trees which enclose a wide footpath.

The Site in context

- 1.12 The Charles Street site has long been recognised as the most important development site in Dorchester town centre. In terms of its central location, accessibility and size, Charles Street is truly a strategic site and pivotal to the future vitality and viability of the town.
- 1.13 The Council has demonstrated a long-standing commitment to the planning and development of the site. Through active use of its planning and compulsory purchase powers, the Council has prepared planning policies and assembled land to enable the site to be comprehensively developed. In particular, the Council requires the Charles Street site to be fully integrated with the town centre.
- 1.14 It is important that the future of Charles Street is considered in the context of opportunities presented by other significant sites. The most important at the time of preparing this brief is the former County Hospital site which is highlighted on the location plan in Appendix A. This is a site of approximately 2.8 hectares (7 acres), currently with a single vehicular access off Princes Street.
- 1.15 The former County Hospital site is subject to a planning brief published in 1991. The brief sees the site as being developed for a mix of appropriate town centre uses, although '*no major shopping provision will be permitted*'. At the time of preparing this

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brief the Council is negotiating a redevelopment of the former County Hospital site with its new owners.

Site history

- 1.16 The Charles Street site has a long planning history. In particular, outline planning permission for 125,000 ft² of retail floor space was granted in 1988. This scheme, promoted by the Council and its former partner MEPC was not implemented, although various site works were undertaken. The MEPC scheme comprised a covered shopping mall, associated multi-storey car parking and the creation of a new pedestrian link to South Street.
- 1.17 A compulsory purchase order was confirmed for the MEPC scheme by the Secretary of State for the Environment in October 1991. The CPO has now lapsed.
- 1.18 More recently a decision to redevelop the Charles Street site was taken at a meeting of the Dorchester Town Centre Sub-Committee of the District Council on 3 June 1997 when it was resolved:

‘That sensitive, comprehensive redevelopment of the Charles Street area of Dorchester Town Centre predominantly based on Retailing, but including a good proportion of other uses be supported in principle, subject to the proviso that a multi-storey car park not be positioned against the South Walks boundary of the site.’

- 1.19 Members of the Sub-Committee also requested the preparation of a planning brief and this was subsequently authorised by a meeting of the District Council’s Planning Committee on 26 June 1997.

Land ownership and compulsory purchase

- 1.20 The District Council is the freehold owner of the majority of the Charles Street site and the limit of the Council’s ownership is illustrated in Appendix A.
- 1.21 It is pre-requisite of development that the Charles Street site is fully integrated with the town centre and South Street in particular. In order that a comprehensive scheme is achieved the Council has resolved to use its compulsory purchase powers as appropriate.

2. Background

The District Council's Objectives

- 2.1 The District Council's objectives for the development of the area are to:
- bring forward the redevelopment of the site for the benefit of the town and its catchment area;
 - secure new and additional commercial floor space in the town to maintain and enhance the vitality and viability of the town centre;
 - achieve a quality mixed-use scheme in keeping with Dorchester; and
 - ensure a comprehensive development which integrates fully with the town centre.
- 2.2 These objectives have developed over a number of years in the context of:
- the Council's planning policies which in turn have developed in the context of evolving national planning policy guidance on retail and town centre developments;
 - local aspirations as expressed through an on-going commitment to public consultation;
 - advice from specialist external consultants on retail planning; commercial; access and archaeological issues.

Public Consultation

- 2.3 An integral part of the Council's fresh look at Charles Street has been a commitment to public consultation. Key stages in the consultation process to date have been:
- an Open Day, held on 13 January 1996, when a number of local interest groups presented their own ideas for the future of Charles Street. The open day was visited by 1200 people who subsequently returned over 400 completed questionnaires;
 - an analysis of the completed questionnaires which revealed that public aspirations for Charles Street

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could be expressed through nine 'themes'. These themes are contained within Appendix B to this brief;

- confirmation of strong local support for a redevelopment of the Charles Street site with 83% of returned questionnaires favouring a redevelopment of the site 'for greater benefit of the town';
- continuing public participation with workshops and presentations;
- a resolution from the Dorchester Town Centre Sub-Committee at its meeting on 3 June 1997 to formally adopt the nine themes as a guide to the future development of Dorchester town centre.

2.4 The public consultation process has shown support for a high quality, mixed use and innovative scheme for the Charles Street site. This is reflected in the brief and the presumption is that all requirements if this document will be met in any proposed redevelopment of the site. However, the Council maintains an open mind where it can be persuaded that alternative and innovative approaches can meet the same objectives.

Consultancy Advice

2.5 In April 1996 Drivers Jonas were appointed to advise on the development potential of the Charles Street site. The consultants' key findings were:

- there is trade diversion from Dorchester, which if left unchecked could undermine the vitality and viability of the town centre;
- there is capacity in Dorchester and its catchment area for a new retail and mixed use scheme;
- Charles Street is in planning and commercial terms, the appropriate site to accommodate this capacity;
- Charles Street should be developed for a retail leisure led mixed use scheme;
- the scheme should be linked to the existing prime shopping area to ensure the vitality of the whole town centre.

2.6 Transport planners Colin Buchanan and Partners were appointed in October 1997 to advise on accessibility, car parking and

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highway impact issues associated with a new development on Charles Street. Their work is reflected in this brief.

- 2.7 Archaeological consultants Wessex Archaeology have been retained since April 1996 to advise on the archaeological issues involved in redevelopment. Their work is also reflected in this brief.

3. Planning policy

- 3.1 The planning policy framework for the Charles Street site is set out in the Dorset (Excluding South East) Structure Plan and the Deposit West Dorset District Local Plan.
- 3.2 The Structure Plan was approved by the Secretary of State in May 1993. The Deposit Local plan was the subject of a public inquiry between 31 October 1995 and 19 March 1996. The Inspector's report was received by the Council at the beginning of July 1997. The Local plan is expected to be adopted in 1998.
- 3.3 Local Plan policy SC7 sets out the Council's overall approach for Charles Street and states that:

LAND AT CHARLES STREET, DORCHESTER, AS INDICATED ON THE PROPOSALS MAP, IS A KEY TOWN CENTRE SITE WHERE SHOPPING AND COMMUNITY USES WILL BE PERMITTED. PIECEMEAL DEVELOPMENT WHICH WOULD PREJUDICE A COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH WILL NOT BE PERMITTED.

- 3.4 The local plan inspector considered three objections to this policy.
- 3.5 The first objection promoted another site in Dorchester in preference to Charles Street. The Inspector gave no support to this and concluded that Charles Street is far more appropriately sited for major retail development. The District Council concurs with this finding.
- 3.6 A second objection was made to prevent any further out-of-town retail development taking place around Dorchester. The Inspector concluded that this objective would be supported by the adoption of policy SC7 i.e. the comprehensive development of the Charles Street site. Again the District Council concurs with this finding.
- 3.7 The final objection, from Government Office for the South West (GOSW), proposed wording changes to make the policy clearer. GOSW's proposed changes were included in the text of the policy before the inquiry and appear in the version reproduced above. The local plan Inspector recommends that the wording above be adopted and the Council supports this.
- 3.8 There were also town objections to the wording of paragraph 6.31 of the local plan which introduces policy SC7. Both these objections were lodged by English Heritage. Firstly, English Heritage has requested that the local plan should include a requirement to comply with a design brief that it believed would be produced. The Inspector recognised the advantage of some

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form of brief, but concluded that there would be little or no benefit from referring to it in the plan.

- 3.9 English Heritage was also concerned that the supporting text should recognise the national archaeological importance of the Charles Street site. This was accepted by the Inspector and he recommends that paragraph 6.31 be amended accordingly. The amended text is reproduced below with the additional sentence recommended by the Inspector being highlighted.
- 3.10 *'Land at Charles Street, Dorchester has the benefit of planning permission for a shopping centre scheme, including an additional 11,616 m² (125,000 ft²) of retail floor space, together with other facilities, although this scheme is likely to be subject to re-negotiation. This policy is included in order to identify this key town centre site on the Proposals Map, for which a comprehensive approach is required. **This is a key site, in design terms, in the historic town centre and is of national importance archaeologically and it will therefore be essential to reconcile environmental and development factors in any development scheme'**.*

The District Council supports these wording changes.

- 3.11 The Local Plan has not yet been adopted and therefore it is not an approved development plan for the purposes of section 54A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. However, the plan is at a very advanced stage of preparation and in accordance with advice given at paragraph 48 of Planning Policy Guidance Note 1 (PPG 1), *General Policy and Principles*, the Council will attach considerable weight to policy SC7 and the other relevant policies quoted in this brief in determining development proposals for the Charles Street site.
- 3.12 In addition to policy SC7, there are other policies relevant to the future development of Charles Street and these are considered in the appropriate sections of this brief.

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Mixed Use Development

- 4.1 Government advice for the planning of town centres is set out in Planning Policy Guidance Note 6 (PPG 6) – *Town Centres and Retail Developments*. Paragraph 1.1 states that the main objectives are:
- to sustain and enhance the vitality and viability of town centres;
 - to focus development, especially retail development, in locations where the proximity of businesses facilitates competition from which all consumers are able to benefit and maximises the opportunity to use means of transport other than the car;
 - to maintain an efficient, competitive and innovative retail sector; and
 - to ensure the availability of a wide range of shops, employment, services and facilities to which people have easy access by a choice of means of transport.
- 4.2 PPG 6 establishes a presumption in favour of new retail development being located in town centres as a first choice, rather than in ‘edge-of-town’ or ‘out-of-town’ locations. PPG 6 also notes that town centres are part of our *‘national and civic heritage’* and that the bulk of activity and investment in town centres results from shopping.
- 4.3 Where significant amounts of retail floor space have developed ‘out-of-town’, the vitality and viability of adjoining centres has suffered. Therefore, the Local Plan support for shopping uses, the local support for additional retail space and the Dorchester Town Centre Sub-Committee’s decision to support a scheme *‘predominantly based on retailing’* are all entirely consistent with Central Government advice.
- 4.4 However, PPG 6 also recognises that there are considerable advantages to encouraging a diversity of uses in town centres. *‘Different but complementary uses, during the day and in the evening, can reinforce each other, making town centres more attractive to local residents, shoppers and visitors. Leisure and entertainment facilities, museums and libraries, hotels and conference centres, street markets, restaurants, pubs, bars and cafes, universities and colleges all add variety’.*

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- 4.5 The local support for a mixed-used approach is therefore also consistent with the advice in PPG 6, where such uses are complementary to the retail function. Housing, which is not expressly included within Local Plan policy SC7, is recognised by PPG 6 as having a role to play. In particular, *‘the occupation of flats above shops can increase activity and therefore personal safety while ensuring that buildings are kept in good repair’*.
- 4.6 The Council has not set out to dictate the precise mix of uses that must be included in the development of the site. However, in line with national planning policy, the Council’s guidance on the mix of uses sought is set out below.

Retail and Leisure uses

- 4.7 The Council’s development consultants note that Dorchester offers limited choice to comparison shoppers and is losing trade to out-of-town locations and other centres. The consultants conclude that if left unchecked this situation will undermine the vitality and viability of Dorchester.
- 4.8 Retail studies demonstrate that Dorchester has capacity to accommodate additional retail development. Comparisons with towns of a similar size and catchment also suggest that Dorchester has fewer shops than one would expect of a County town.
- 4.9 The Council concludes that Dorchester could substantiate new and additional retail space and that Charles Street is the appropriate site. Given retail capacity, size, layout, design and access considerations, the Council considers the Charles Street site could accommodate a scheme in the order of 100,000 ft² net. However, this should be regarded as a guide rather than a fixed minimum or maximum level.
- 4.10 Shopping is still the core town centre function and the benefits that flow from a healthy retail sector are considerable. More consumer choice means more people and that means a greater turnover of business for shops and associated uses. This promotes investment in the historic fabric of the town. The town centre is also at the hub of public transport services, which means that shoppers and other visitors have the opportunity to gain access by means other than the motor car.
- 4.11 However, the Council recognises that increasingly leisure is mixed with traditional retail uses in town centre development schemes. The Council also notes that the retail and leisure sectors are dynamic responding to consumer requirements. The

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Council will therefore welcome mixed retail and leisure proposals for the Charles Street site.

- 4.12 In particular, the Council has in mind to improve the range of activities provided in the town. There is a desire that proposals should encourage activity beyond conventional shopping hours and this could be achieved by the inclusion of uses such as night club, public houses, restaurants, cafes and other leisure-related uses. This list is not exhaustive. Proposals that include a special emphasis on youth provision will be particularly welcome.
- 4.13 To demonstrate flexibility and to encourage innovative proposals, the Council will not prescribe the precise nature or proportion of retail and leisure facilities to be provided on the site. The Council will treat all proposals on their merits, although it will expect to see a predominance of retail uses within proposals.
- 4.14 The Council is also keen to ensure that the uses proposed are compatible and fully integrated with the existing function and fabric of the town centre, as opposed to freestanding units. Development of the site should not be designed as a closed experience and anybody visiting the scheme should be made well aware of other attractions in the town.

Housing

- 4.15 The Council recognises the benefit of providing housing within the town centre. Housing can help provide an after hours economy, improve safety within the centre, add to the mix of uses and provide accommodation for a range of households.
- 4.16 Through its planning policy and the preparation of planning briefs for development sites such as the former County Hospital, the Council supports housing development in Dorchester Town Centre. The Council is also meeting its housing targets through its district wide allocations.
- 4.17 The Council will therefore welcome an element of housing on the Charles Street site. However, the inclusion of housing is not a prerequisite to redevelopment of the site and the Council will not support housing proposals which would compromise the overall objective of Policy SC7, which is to have a comprehensive retail/community use led development of the Charles Street site.

Community Uses

- 4.18 The Council has commissioned specialist market research into the requirement for arts facilities in Dorchester. This has shown there is demand for a major new performance facility in the town.

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- 4.19 It is the Council's intention to seek the provision of a new community arts centre in Dorchester and it is currently considering the funding and location of such a facility.
- 4.20 Given the size and nature of the facility likely to be required, the Council is not seeking the inclusion of a major arts facility in the Charles Street development. The Council is currently reviewing other sites in Dorchester for this purpose.
- 4.21 However, the Council does seek innovative proposals for the Charles Street site, which recognise and promote Dorchester's unique arts, cultural and archaeological heritage. The Council does not prescribe the nature or extent of such facilities, but will welcome for example provision for the display, presentation, and promotion of artefacts, events and attractions within the Charles Street development. However, it is essential that these facilities complement and support existing commitments, and in particular the role performed by Dorset County Museum.

Other uses

- 4.22 The site currently houses a church and public conveniences. Both of these facilities will need to be maintained or re-provided on-site or in a suitable town centre location nearby. Any redevelopment of the site should also provide a town 'square'. Such a feature is discussed in more detail in Section 6.

5. Parking and Access

- 5.1 Planning Policy Guidance Note 6 (PPG 6) – *Town Centres and Retail Developments* suggests that development is focused in locations which have the opportunity to use means of transport other than the car, and that shops, employment, services and other facilities are available to people by a choice of means of transport. Similarly, Planning Policy Guidance Notes 13 (PPG 13) – *Transport* states that “Shopping should be promoted in existing centres which are most likely to offer a choice of access, particularly for those without the use of a private car”. However, both of these statements are balanced by a recognition within PPG 6 that “...if town centres are to compete effectively...they must remain attractive to people who arrive by car”. Consequently, in promoting development on Charles Street the Council will balance the legitimate needs for car parking with access by a range of other modes.
- 5.2 The conclusions of this brief are based upon a long period of public consultation which has taken place within the context of Central Government planning advice as expressed through the versions of PPG 6 and PPG 13 which are still valid as of March 1998. However, the Council is also conscious of the fact that Central Government guidance on planning and transport may change in the near future with the forthcoming publication of the Government’s White Paper on integrated transport and associated changes to PPG 13. Consequently, the Council will require potential developers of the Charles Street site to demonstrate that their proposals accord with all current and relevant Central Government advice on planning and transport issues. Where that advice contradicts the guidance provided by this brief then the presumption is that the former will prevail.

Parking

- 5.3 Dorchester serves the needs of large rural population which has a relatively poor network of public transport and has become heavily dependent upon the car. In the interests of sustainability it is important that Dorchester continues to meet the needs of its rural population, particularly if the alternative is longer car journeys to other centres. In short, any redevelopment of Charles Street which incorporates the mix of uses supported by this brief will need to include car parking.
- 5.4 A traffic study commissioned by the Council has concluded that a redevelopment of the Charles Street site with approximately 100,000 ft² of retail floor space should include the on-site replacement of the existing short-stay spaces with up to 550 spaces, but this will need to be supported by additional short-stay

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capacity within 300m of the site. However, these conclusions are based upon a great many assumptions and the developer of the site will be required to commission a full traffic impact assessment (TIA) in support of the nature and scale of development he proposes.

- 5.5 Reflecting the comments in paragraph 5.2 above, it is essential that any TIA is set within the context of current Central Government planning and transport guidance, even if that guidance differs from that which has influenced the conclusions of this document. Furthermore, in addition to the standard requirements of a TIA the Council requires the assessment to address the needs of cyclists and in particular the relationship with the National Cycle Network.
- 5.6 The existing car parking spaces on Charles Street are immediately adjacent to Dorchester's existing primary shopping area and are regarded as a major asset to the town. Consequently, any redevelopment of the Charles Street site needs to replace this existing resource within the scheme. It should also attempt to accommodate some of the extra demand created by the development itself, but always recognising that the visual impact of any parking solution is a critical constraint. Indicative design capacity work suggests that 550 spaces will be an upper site limit whatever approach is adopted.
- 5.7 Additional short-stay capacity could be provided by a redesignation of the Wollaston Fields car park, and the Council has already resolved to accept this in principle should the scale and nature of the final development require it. However, the Council's preliminary traffic study suggests that 100,000 ft² of retail floor space is likely to require the provision of a further 75 short-stay spaces within 300m of the site. If a developer's TIA also demonstrates a need for additional off-site parking then it will be the developers responsibility to satisfy this requirement.
- 5.8 There is the prospect of between 150 and 200 spaces becoming available with the construction of the new public car park planned at the southern end of the former County Hospital site. The latter is proposed by Local Plan policy TR21 which has now been supported by the Local Plan Inspector. The Council is, independently, seeking the early release of this site and is currently negotiating with the new site owner.
- 5.9 The Council accepts that the on-site replacement of up to 550 car parking spaces will inevitably result in a multi-storey scheme. The Council has rejected the principle of underground parking because of the archaeological constraint and has rejected the

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option of lower level parking across the entire site as unsustainable. The Council now requires parking to be provided an independent multi-storey structure, designed to (i) wherever possible leave archaeological remains in situ and (ii) be capable of redevelopment in isolation should the need arise. However, it is also a requirement that wherever that structure is placed it should be shielded from significant public views by other buildings designed to meet the design criteria established in Section 6. The Council will accept single-aspect development as an acceptable solution. The Council will reject any scheme which exposes multi-storey car parking to significant public views.

Public transport

- 5.10 Although the Council has accepted that redevelopment of the Charles Street site can include a significant amount of car parking, it is still determined to accommodate and encourage access by other modes of transport in accordance with the guidance offered by PPG 13.
- 5.11 Dorchester is serviced by two railway stations and is at the hub of a number of bus services. Bus services currently terminate and depart from a number of locations in the town, including Acland Road immediately to the east of the Charles Street site. However, a redevelopment of Charles Street with the mix of uses proposed by this brief provides an opportunity to promote Acland Road as more of a focus for bus services. Proposals for the development of the Charles Street site must therefore address this issue and schemes which fail to meet this objective without very strong justification will be rejected.

Access for cyclists

- 5.12 Policy TR15 of the local plan supports the provision of facilities for cyclists as part of a new development. Accordingly proposals for the development of Charles Street should include:
- direct and easy access from the existing street level to the main trading level via the use of shared and/or exclusive surfaces; and
 - cycle parking at the main trading level to meet the guideline requirements of the currently adopted Dorset County Council parking guidelines.

Schemes which fail to meet these objectives without very strong justification will be rejected.

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Pedestrian Access

- 5.13 The main shopping areas, and any other significant areas of public access within a scheme, shall be designed in such a way that there is total segregation of vehicles and pedestrians during normal shopping hours. Furthermore, any redevelopment must include strong pedestrian links, particularly with the existing shopping areas in South Street, but also for those approaching the site from different directions. Given the Council's desire to promote Acland Road as more of a focus for bus services it is particularly important that any redevelopment should accommodate easy and inviting pedestrian links on this frontage.
- 5.14 The Council considers that a new pedestrian link through to the prime part of South Street would be highly desirable to ensure that the Charles Street site is fully integrated with South Street. The Council does not wish to prescribe the precise location of this additional link, but considers that it should be between the existing pedestrian links of Tudor Arcade and Nappers Mite. If proposals do not include a new pedestrian link to South Street, the Council will need to be convinced that existing links will meet the need for the new development to be fully integrated with South Street.
- 5.15 Whether a new pedestrian link is proposed or not, the Council expects the existing pedestrian links of Tudor Arcade, Hardye Arcade and Nappers Mite to be connected to a redevelopment of the Charles Street site, facilitating a circulation of pedestrian movement around the town centre.
- 5.16 Policy TR16 for the local plan requires that the provision of access for people with disabilities will be considered as an integral part of any development proposal, and consequently this will be a key consideration when the Council determines any planning application. Proposals which fail to take account of the need to provide strong pedestrian linkages, accommodating the needs of the disabled, will be rejected.

Vehicular access

- 5.17 There are currently two vehicular access points to the site from Acland Road. The local highway authority has indicated neither access is necessarily fixed in terms of position or configuration. However, vehicular access from South Walks will not be permitted. Proposals for vehicular access must be designed to be as safe and convenient as possible and do not compromise either:

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- the potential of Acland Road to act as a focus for public transport as discussed in section 5.8 above, or
- the design objectives established in section 6.

5.18 The traffic study commissioned by the Council concludes that a redevelopment of Charles Street with approximately 100,000 ft² of retail floor space will not add significantly to capacity problems at any key junctions in Dorchester. Nevertheless, 2 of the surveyed junctions (Great Western Cross and Maumbury Cross) do suffer significant levels of congestion and the Council will therefore expect all detailed proposals to be accompanied by a TIA, the scope of which will address the effects on all the arterial links into Dorchester. Furthermore, proposals must demonstrate how they have addressed any potential problems identified in the TIA. This could extend to off-site highway works.

Servicing

5.19 Charles Street currently services the rear of a number of commercial units in South Street and Tudor Arcade. Servicing provision to South Street units must be maintained and where possible enhanced.

5.20 It is desirable that Charles Street should also act as the main servicing area for any new commercial floor space, although Acland Road could also be used on the understanding that it did not compromise either:

- the potential of Acland Road to act as a focus for public transport as discussed in section 5.8 above, or
- the design objectives established in section 6.

6. Design

- 6.1 The Charles Street site occupies a very sensitive position within an historic town centre and within a designated conservation area. Whatever is built on the Charles Street site will be a landmark feature for many years to come and the Council attaches a very high priority to the achievement of an outstanding design. The Council has been promoting quality design particularly strongly in recent years and is proud to be associated with what has been achieved within the Poundbury development.

Overall approach

- 6.2 Policy C18 of the Structure Plan and policy CD1 of the Local Plan both establish a general presumption in favour of high quality design. This is reinforced by policies C17 and CD5 which repeat the Council's statutory obligation to ensure that development within conservation areas either preserves or enhances their existing character.
- 6.3 Planning Policy Guidance Note 1 (PPG 1), *General Policy and Principles*, attaches significant importance to the issue of design and in paragraph 16 states that *'Applicants for planning permission should be able to demonstrate how they have taken account of the need for good design in their development proposals and that they have had regard to relevant development plan policies and supplementary planning guidance. This should be done in a manner appropriate to the nature and scale of the proposals'. Paragraph 17 continues by stating that 'Local planning authorities should reject poor designs, particularly where their decisions are supported by clear plan policies or supplementary planning guidance which has been subjected to public consultation and adopted by the local planning authority. Poor designs may include those inappropriate to their context, for example those clearly out of scale or incompatible with their surroundings'.*
- 6.4 In the context of this general guidance and advice the Council has established a number of important design principles which are set out below .

Scale and character

- 6.5 Any redevelopment of the Charles Street site must respect the predominant scale and character of this part of the historic town centre. It must recreate the friendly and inviting character produced by the scale of buildings and the nature of public spaces which currently exists in South Street and beyond.

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- 6.6 Consequently, a standard enclosed shopping mall would be totally out of character in this context. Furthermore, and of fundamental importance, the proposed arrangement of buildings and public spaces must clearly appear to be an 'organic' extension of the existing townscape, presenting a seamless interface with surrounding development to the west and north. With this in mind the Council considers that it would also be highly desirable to establish a new pedestrian link with the prime shopping frontage in South Street (see also paragraph 5.11) and it has resolved to use its compulsory purchase powers in pursuit of this objective.
- 6.7 Any scheme must recreate the ambience of walking through a series of streets laid out as a 'natural' extension of Dorchester's established road pattern. For example, it will not be acceptable for the layout of buildings and spaces to have been determined by an underlying construction grid, perhaps dictated by the need to accommodate lower level servicing and car parking. Sympathetic townscape will be the priority and the engineering of any construction grid must reflect this.
- 6.8 Creating a natural extension of Dorchester's established street pattern can also take advantage of the variation in levels across the site. Changes of level are as important to the character of Dorchester as changes in plan alignment and this must be reflected in the redevelopment of the Charles Street site. Any changes in level across pedestrian thoroughfares should be accommodated primarily by slopes and not steps. This requirement not only reflects the predominant character of Dorchester, but also eases access for those with disabilities.
- 6.9 The prevailing height of individual buildings within the scheme will be two storeys, but a significant number should rise higher. There will also be a considerable variation in storey heights to reflect Dorchester's existing roofspace. A limited amount of single storey building will be acceptable, but only where it appears as a visually subservient extension to a larger building. The inclusion of a number of significant larger buildings is encouraged, but they need to be direct and honest expressions to their function. The only exception to this rule will be the use of single-aspect development as a means of shielding any multi-storey car parking. This is discussed in more detail in section 6.13 below.

Materials

- 6.10 The Council expects all buildings and hard surfaces to be finished in materials selected from the local palette. For walls and facades this means brick (with a good proportion reflecting the traditional

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Broadmayne brick), render, flint and stone (predominantly Purbeck and Portland). For roofs the choice will be natural slate or clay tile. Hard groundscape should be predominantly brick, stone or a very high quality reconstituted material in sympathy with the established practice in the town centre. There are no rules on the proportions in which these materials are to be mixed, but every scheme must demonstrate a sensitivity to, and compatibility, with the established character of the town.

Parking

- 6.11 In section 5 of this brief the Council has rejected the option of basement-level parking across the site and now requires on-site parking to be provided as a low-rise multi-storey structure, designed to (i) wherever possible leave archaeological remains in situ and (ii) be capable of redevelopment in isolation should the need arise. However, this is qualified by a statement that any such multi-storey parking will be unacceptable to the Council if it is not shielded from all key public viewpoints by other buildings which respect the design criteria presented in this section.
- 6.12 Appreciating the potential difficulties that this presents, the Council is prepared to accept single-aspect development as a means of shielding the car park. The single-aspect structure would need to be physically separate in order to facilitate natural ventilation and to follow for the future possibility of the car park being redeveloped in isolation. The treatment of this ventilation gap will be a challenging assignment and the Council will only accept a scheme in which this opportunity has been dealt with imagination and skill.
- 6.13 The Acland Road boundary beyond its immediate return from South Walks is of a different character, although façade. This is particularly important given the Council's desire to promote Acland Road as a focus for bus services to any scheme. Development which turns its back on Acland Road will not be acceptable.

Town Square

- 6.14 A redevelopment of the Charles Street site must include a town square, although street pattern being promoted by this brief would, in itself, create interesting and varied public spaces, but in addition the Council will expect to see a single large public space which will act as both an architectural and social focus for the scheme.
- 6.15 The 'square' should be designed in such a way that it can accommodate and encourage a wide range of activities. Such
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6. Design

activities could include 'street' performances, arts presentations, band concerts, occasional market stalls and the opportunity for 'al-fresco' dining in association with adjoining coffee cars, cafes and restaurants. Full use should be made of changes in level, terracing, seating areas, opportunities for strategic tree planting and other features so as to encourage the types of activity listed above. Particular attention should be given to hard-paved areas making the maximum use of surface designs to incorporate 'street games' and to identify particular areas for particular activities.

The Acland Road Evangelical Church

- 6.16 While it is not a prerequisite of this brief, the Council's expectation is that the Acland Road Evangelical Church will be relocated on site. The Council takes the view that this should be seen as an opportunity to introduce a well designed community building into a prominent position. That position need not be geographically central, but it certainly needs to be at the focus of an axis or given due visual weight.

Landscaping

- 6.17 The most important existing landscape feature is the row of mature trees which run along the South Walks boundary of the site. These trees have been surveyed in the course of the preparation of this brief and the conclusion of this work shows them all to be in very good condition with an average useful life expectancy in excess of 75 years.
- 6.18 No redevelopment of the Charles Street site should threaten the future of these trees and all proposals should include independent expert advice demonstrating the design and construction techniques which will be used to overcome any direct and indirect impacts. The Council will reject any scheme in which the historic significance of this boundary and the amenity value of the trees has been treated as an asset rather than as a constraint.
- 6.19 There are a number of other significant trees within the site. Recognising the challenge imposed by other constraints within this brief there is no presumption in favour of retaining these trees, although retaining them or even relocating them as part of any redevelopment would be desirable.
- 6.20 Some additional landscaping is also desirable, but respecting the fact that the established character of Dorchester's town centre is strongly urban. The most appropriate approach to landscaping will be the creation of an number of strategic locations in which
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6. Design

significant tree species will have the long term prospect of developing to their full potential. A plethora of planting beds is considered to be out of character and therefore inappropriate.

7. Archaeology

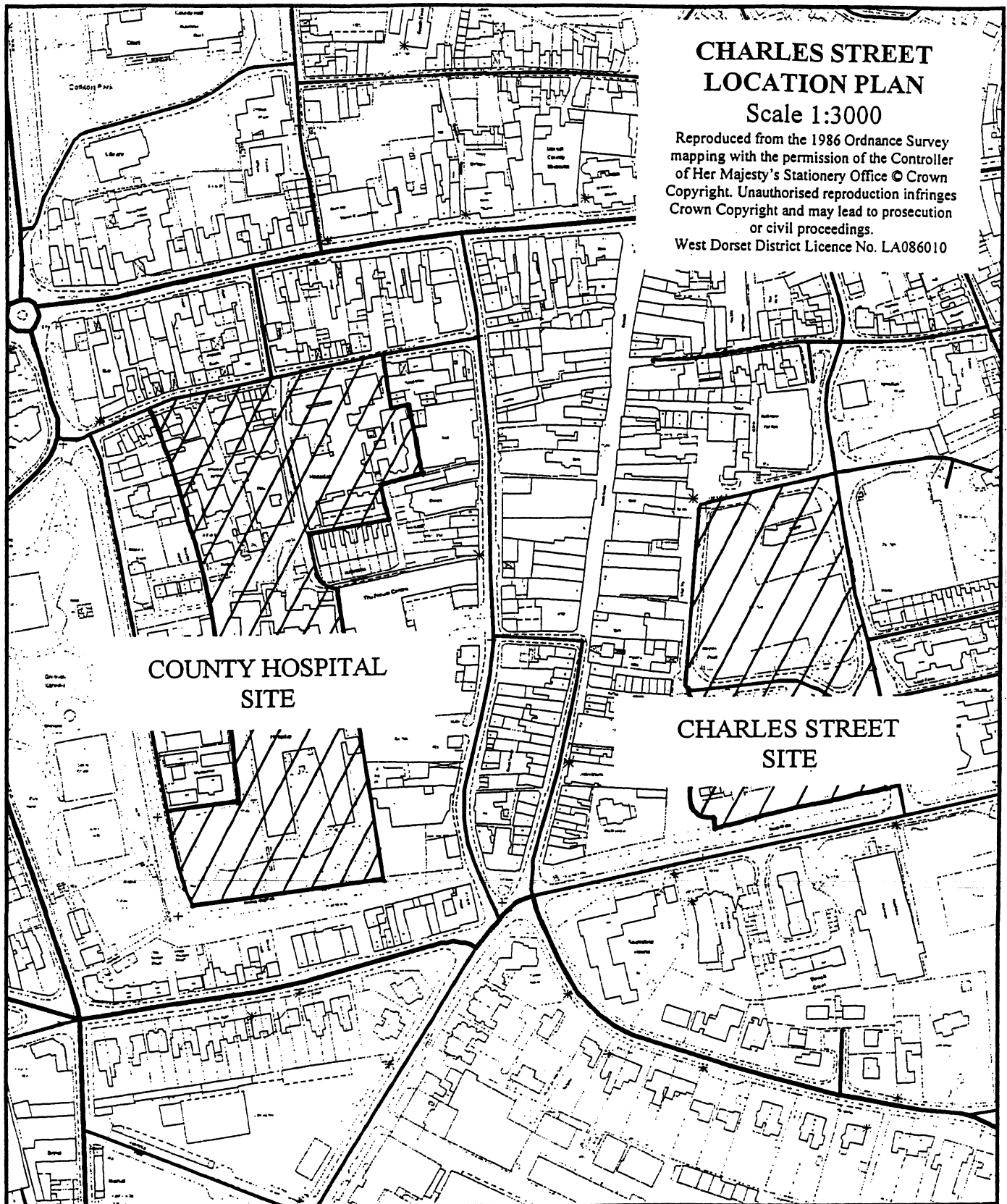
- 7.1 The Charles Street site lies within and immediately adjoining the southern boundary wall of the Roman town of Durnovaria. Consequently, the site is of considerable archaeological interest.
- 7.2 The protection of archaeological is an important planning consideration. Planning Policy Guidance Note 16 (PPG 16) – *Archaeology and Planning* sets out Government policy on archaeological remains. It acknowledges the potentially fragile and finite or irreplaceable nature of such remains (paragraph 6), and sets out the desirability of preservation of archaeological remains as a material consideration within the planning process (paragraph 18).
- 7.3 Structure Plan policy C21 and Local Plan policies CD17 and CD18 stress the importance of archaeology and outline the approach to be adopted where development is proposed within areas of archaeological sensitivity.
- 7.4 An archaeological evaluation of the Charles Street site was undertaken in 1989 and 1990 by Wessex Archaeology. This evaluation consisted of the excavation of trial trenches and a survey by ground radar. Significant remains from the Roman and post-Roman periods were identified, including several buildings. The relevant research archive is on deposit at the Dorset County Museum and other reports can be consulted at the Dorset Sites and Monuments Record.
- 7.5 These archaeological remains are an important constraint upon any redevelopment. The Dorset County Archaeological Officer's view is that these remains should ideally be left in situ and this might be achieved by appropriate construction methods. Where the archaeological remains are threatened by the development then provision must be made for the remains to be fully recorded prior to their destruction, by means of a programme of archaeological excavation, followed by analysis and publication of the results.
- 7.6 The Council's presumption is that archaeology will remain in situ and schemes must clearly demonstrate how this is to be achieved. However, if the authority is persuaded that archaeological excavation is in the best interests of a high quality scheme for the site, then it will be permitted subject to a programme of work having first been submitted and approved. Whatever approach is adopted, the Council considers it highly desirable that the final development should include a facility to promote Dorchester's archaeological heritage. However, it is essential that such a facility complements and supports existing

7. Archaeology

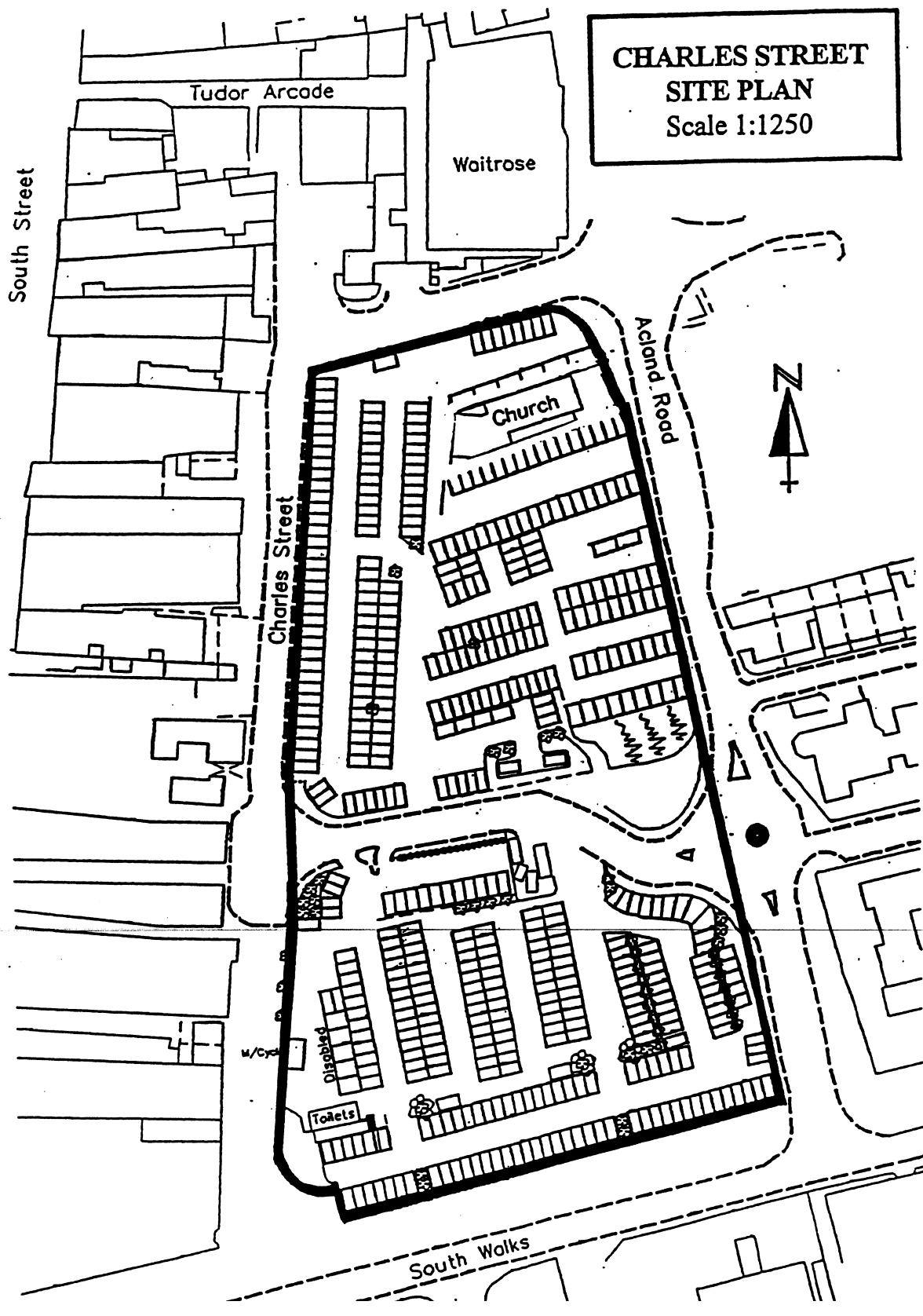
commitments to this objective, and in particular the role performed by Dorset County Museum.

- 7.7 Schemes which do not satisfactorily address the archaeological constraint will be rejected.

Appendix A. Location and site plans



Appendix A. Location and site plans



Appendix B. The nine ‘themes’

1. The Charles Street site should be redeveloped for the greater benefit of the town.
2. Whilst recognising and accommodating the continuing popular use of the private motor car for the foreseeable future, any redevelopment of the Charles Street site should facilitate easy public access by a variety of means and should actively encourage access by means other than the car.
3. In any redevelopment, replacement car parking will need to be multi-storey, but preferably underground. Car parking should be kept away from the visually sensitive southern end of the site.
4. A redevelopment of the Charles Street site should accommodate a focus for the promotion of arts, cultural and leisure uses within the town. Such a facility should complement existing opportunities, but also compensate for any demonstrable shortfall.
5. A redevelopment of the Charles Street site should include retail uses, preferably featuring one or two larger stores and a greater number of smaller units. Dorchester should try and develop an image of specialist and quality retailing, thereby presenting an alternative to the offer made by the Poole/Bournemouth conurbation.
6. A redevelopment of the Charles Street site should include some housing. This should combine accommodation above commercial premises with a more ‘prestigious’ development of the boundaries of the site with South Walks and Acland Road.
7. A redevelopment of the Charles Street site should accommodate a focus for Dorchester’s entire archaeological heritage. Such a focus should be an attraction in its own right, but should also promote interest in existing archaeological artefacts and attractions within and around the town. Interpretation of the Roman Baths under the Wollaston Fields car park should be a priority, but the site should only be excavated if it can be demonstrated that such a move would add value to the general public’s experience of the town’s archaeological heritage.
8. A redevelopment of the Charles Street site should feature a ‘town square’.
9. The style of any redevelopment should be ‘traditional’, reflecting the predominant character of the town.