

Burnham and Highbridge Area Neighbourhood Plan 2014 - 2032

Burnham-on-Sea and Highbridge

Town Council

Burnham Without Parish Council

Summer 2018

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Burnham and Highbridge area Neighbourhood Plan

Introduction

1. The area covered

The area covered by the Neighbourhood Plan is that shown inside the boundary of the map below and includes the administrative area covered by the Town Council plus the part of Burnham Without Parish which lies to the west of the M5 motorway.



Map 1

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2. The rationale behind producing the plan

The purpose of the Burnham-on-Sea and Highbridge Neighbourhood Development Plan ('the Neighbourhood Plan') is to guide and shape development in the two towns. It has been produced in response to the Localism Act, which came into force in April 2012 setting out the Government's new approach to planning and giving local people more say in what happens in their area. The Neighbourhood Plan is based on robust evidence from a variety of sources.

The process of producing the Neighbourhood Plan began when the District Council successfully applied for the Town Council to be a Neighbourhood Planning Front Runner. The Town Council supported this in September 2011. In summary they saw a Neighbourhood Plan as a way to involve local residents to address issues such as public realm improvement and regeneration. Initial public meetings had shown an appetite to do this and recent experience on other local issues gave them confidence that people would come forward to help in the process. Administration support for the project could be provided through the Deputy Clerk.

For a number of reasons the start of the formal process of producing the plan was delayed and the Area Designation was not made until 2nd September 2014 following a six-week consultation period in accordance with the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012.

The reasons for the final choice of the area to be covered were stated in the formal letter from the Town Council Clerk to Sedgemoor District Council. In outline these were that, further discussions at the Neighbourhood Planning Working Party, at the Town Council and with Burnham Without Parish Council – together with advice from Sedgemoor District Council – had come to the conclusion that the urban area of Burnham and Highbridge extended into Burnham Without and future developments in the Burnham Without Parish, which would impact on the town area, were likely. The M5 provided a fixed boundary to possible developments and so made the logical extent of the plan area. This was agreed by both the Town Council and Burnham Without Parish Council.

The request was considered by the District Council and approval of the designation was given, after the end of the statutory consultation on August 11th 2014.

The Neighbourhood Plan builds on existing policies, both national and local. Four policy documents occur frequently. To eliminate the need to write out their full titles on every occasion, they are listed here.

1. NPPF – the National Planning Policy Framework.
2. Core Strategy - Local Development Framework, CORE STRATEGY, Published Version, "Shaping the Future of Sedgemoor 2006-27", May 2013.
3. Section 18 consultation – Sedgemoor District Council 2015 Local Plan Regulation 18 consultation.
4. Proposed Submission Local Plan- Sedgemoor District Council proposed submission Local Plan Regulation 19, January 2017.

There are a number of references throughout this Plan to the emerging policies in the Proposed Submission Local Plan. As these are emerging policies, they could still be subject to change.

The decision to produce the plan arose from the desire of local people and the two local Councils (Burnham and Highbridge TC and Burnham Without PC) to have a say in future development in the area. For some time it had been Sedgemoor DC's intention to produce a supplementary planning document for the area but, due to lack of staff resources, this had not happened. As a five year review of the Core Strategy was imminent it seemed an ideal opportunity to develop a Neighbourhood Plan instead – a line of action encouraged by the DC and supported by them e.g. by the Front Runner application.

3. Some basic statistics

The statistics which follow are taken from the 2011 Census and refer to the whole of the two parishes, including 59 properties in Burnham Without which lie outside the plan area. However as they are such a small proportion of the whole (0.6%), the difference they make is insignificant. Of the remaining 595 houses in Burnham Without, 467 are part of the urban extensions of Burnham and Highbridge while most of the remainder are in the hamlet of Edithmead. Overall, around 9400 houses are in the urban area and 150 outside it. Only one house (in the parish of Burnham and Highbridge) is to the east of the M5.

All households: 9607 (including the 59 not in the NP area)

Population: 10159 Males and 11053 Females

Age structure	0-15	16-29	30-44	45-59	60-74	75+
%	16.3	14.2	16.9	19.8	19.8	13.1

Ethnicity	White British	Other white	Mixed – white + other	Indian. Pakistani, Bangladeshi	Chinese & other Asian	Black African & Caribbean	Other
%	95.5	2.5	0.6	0.4	0.5	0.2	0.1

There are 7361 males and 7630 females aged 16-74. Their economic status is:

Category	Employed	Unemployed	Students	Long term sick or disabled	Retired	Other
Males %	65.2	4.3	3.0	5.4	17.4	4.7
Females %	54.8	3.4	2.7	5.0	22.6	11.5

Hence:

The vast majority of the population is white with no other significant ethnic groups.

Unemployment is low.

There is a significant elderly population, 32.8% aged 60 or over. The figure for Sedgemoor quoted in the Strategic Housing Market Assessment for 2015/16 is 29%, and for England is 23%. The higher figure for the neighbourhood plan area is partly due to the popularity of Burnham for retirement. The SHMA also predicts a 36.3% increase in over 60's by 2032 for Sedgemoor as a whole.

4. Community involvement and method of working

The Steering Group began with three awareness-raising sessions in local parks between June and September 2014 where residents were asked to identify the things they liked and disliked about the area and what they considered the most important issues. Around 200 people responded. These initial responses were used to produce the first leaflet which was distributed to all the households in the area and also placed on line using “survey monkey”. This leaflet asked some questions about the area in general but also some targeted at three specific issues which had arisen – the two town centres (Burnham and Highbridge) and new housing. Some 420 responses were received, 150 on paper and the rest online.

The steering group considered these responses and it was decided that the best way forward was to set up a series of working parties to consider the issues. This approach was tested by beginning with one on Central Burnham as this was an area where there had been a number of regeneration proposals in the past and hence a number of existing documents (see “Evidence” section later).

Invitations to attend an initial walk around the town centre and public meeting were publicised in the local media – both print and radio – and these occurred in November 2014. The working party was then set up to consider the issues and prepare a draft vision, policies and community proposals/recommendations for public consultation as before. This was carried out from March 2015 and received 529 responses, 239 on paper, 222 directly on line and 68 via our Facebook page. *(By this stage a Facebook page, a web site and an e-mail mailing list – which eventually grew to around 320 people – and which we used to alert people to what was going on – had been set up. The web site <http://www.burnhamandhighbridgeneighbourhoodplan.org/> contains all the most significant documents that have been considered, as well as links to the local planning authority’s documents.)* In addition a second town centre walk to look at the proposals on the ground was carried out in March 2015.

The responses received to the draft were overwhelmingly favourable and individual comments enabled it to be amended appropriately.

As the process had worked well, it was decided to use it for two further working parties – one on Highbridge (where it was decided, in the light of the responses to the initial survey, to consider the whole of the town, rather than just the centre) and one on Housing.

The Highbridge group took some time to focus but, after some changes of personnel, produced a draft plan for consultation in February 2016. This had followed an exercise with the local Secondary school where students had been asked how they saw Highbridge in ten years’ time. Their answers – almost 500 of them, together with those from the initial survey, helped to frame the vision, questions and draft policies. This time 153 responded, with about two-thirds of those on line. As before, the responses were used to amend the draft.

Concurrently with the Highbridge group, a Housing group was set up. By this stage Sedgemoor DC had begun to consult on its 5 year review of the local plan which, in the end, had a significant impact on the outcomes of the group. The group decided to begin by considering the principles behind any developments and then, when there were suggested housing sites, to look at the possible locations put forward to see if it made sense to consult on alternative sites with a view to making a suggestion in the Neighbourhood plan as regards locations. In the event, when sites were

put forward by the District Council, it was decided not to put forward alternative suggestions for housing locations. The consultation on the development principles took place from March 2016 and produced 183 responses, 116 online.

Once the Draft Local Plan was published in December 2016 and revised in January 2017, amendments to the draft policies were made to take account of any alterations in policy from the Core Strategy. The draft neighbourhood plan (Regulation 14 consultation version) was published in March 2017 following which the responses were considered and it was revised to produce the submission plan (Regulation 15).

A fuller description of the community involvement and the work of the various Neighbourhood Planning groups is to be found in the Consultation Statements.

5. Evidence base

As stated above, the preparation of the neighbourhood plan has coincided with the 5 year review of the Core Strategy by the planning authority – Sedgemoor District Council. This has meant that we were able to rely on their work as a reliable evidence base and did not need to commission additional research.

In order to simplify matters for members of the working groups, abstracts of the appropriate sections of the planning documents were prepared for them and these, together with the results of the community involvement mentioned in the previous section, became the basis of the draft visions, policies and recommendations (community proposals) on which we consulted. Our aim, in each case, was to “add value” to the existing policies.

In addition to these documents, the Central Burnham group also considered documents relating to the previous regeneration bids. The Highbridge group considered the two consultation documents from SDC on their proposed extension to the Isleport industrial estate – being pleased to note that a number of the initial comments to the first consultation document were reflected in the second version.

In a number of cases, rather than re-invent the wheel, where a new policy was required because it did not exist as part of the local plan, a search of other approved local plans was undertaken to see if there were existing policies elsewhere which could be used or adapted. As well as saving time and effort it was thought that using approved policies from other authorities would increase the chances of producing ones that were acceptable in planning terms. Where this has been done it is referenced in the list of documents. These documents are available on the relevant local authorities’ web sites and are available via links on our web site.

As with consultation, a full Evidence Base Summary document is available on our website. It is at <http://www.burnhamandhighbridgeneighbourhoodplan.org/final-submission-documents>

The majority of the documents used as the evidence base are also available on our web site, either directly or via links, or on that of SDC www.sedgemoor.gov.uk/planning.

6. How the Plan is structured

The plan is structured into chapters dealing with the themes which were identified by residents as most important in the preliminary consultation. They are:

- Chapter 1 Highbridge
- Chapter 2 Central Burnham-on-Sea
- Chapter 3 Housing




Although other issues were identified in this consultation they were either deemed not to be planning matters or, on investigation, to be adequately addressed in existing SDC policies.

In addition to this Neighbourhood Plan, other documents have been produced. Among these are:

1. A basic conditions statement. This outlines how the plan conforms to planning policies and confirms that it has been produced following appropriate designation of the area by the District Council.
2. An Evidence Base Summary. This outlines the process involved in drawing up the document; the evidence used; and the documents considered. It does not include the documents themselves but signposts them as being on appropriate web sites e.g. the Neighbourhood Planning Group's own website <http://www.burnhamandhighbridgeneighbourhoodplan.org/> or that of Sedgemoor District Council <http://www.sedgemoor.gov.uk/>
3. A document which gives the rationale behind the designation of particular areas as "Local Green Spaces."
4. Two Consultation Statements. One outlines the consultation up to the draft (regulation 14) stage. The other is the formal statement covering how the responses to that were dealt with.
5. A Sustainability Checklist. This assesses each proposal on a matrix of sustainability indicators and gives them a green, yellow or red coding dependant on their effect on sustainability.
6. A Site Assessment matrix covering the four sites identified for potential development.
7. An Equalities Impact Assessment.

7. Colour coding

In the chapters which follow, vision statements are placed in  boxes,

policies in  recommendations in  and guidance in 

Chapter 1

Highbridge

1. Introduction

1.1 An overview of Highbridge

Highbridge is the smaller of the two towns included in this Neighbourhood Plan and is often perceived as the poor relation to Burnham-on-Sea. To quote from the responses from residents to the Highbridge consultation:

"Highbridge seems to have been a "forgotten" place for quite a long time."

"New housing developments in Highbridge have been cramped, over-crowded, without landscaping and utterly out of keeping with the individual units they have been built among or near."

"Facilities are poor and unattractive".

"The last time I looked it's lost its heart as a place to live and work. It's become a place to build houses."

"It's tired to the point of exhaustion, and it looks in danger of being a ghost town as far as commerce is concerned. Some of the shop fronts are the worst kind of low rent big window ugliness that spells the death knell for anything quality."

Despite this view of the town in some quarters, there is a fierce pride within it which, if able to be harnessed, has the potential for transformation. As one resident has remarked – "Highbridge is a town which has had things done to it, rather than for it".

Highbridge is, in fact, a mosaic of communities, rather than a single community. It contains two of the most deprived areas in the country according to the Index of Multiple Deprivation <http://dclgapps.communities.gov.uk/imd/idmap.html>. Although once a thriving market town and a centre for engineering based on the Somerset and Dorset railway works, the closure of these sources of employment has left a gap in the town which the peripheral industrial estates have only partly filled. The pattern of its development since the Second World War has been the construction of areas of similar housing, rather than of mixed tenure and design, and with limited community facilities. The Morlands and Poplar estates were constructed in the 50s in response to the need for social ("Council") housing at that time. The Morlands Community Hall dates from that period and is showing its age. Later, private housing was constructed alongside the new road of Pepperall Way. Sites were developed as land became available e.g. the Radio Station (now Mulholland Park), The Somerset and Dorset Railway workshops (now Somerset Way and Dorset Close), ASDA and the Caxton Drive development on the old Springfield Industrial estate, and the Highbridge Quay area. The type of housing has largely been blocks of flats in Highbridge Quay, Mulholland Park and Caxton Drive (the latter two also containing terraced housing) and estates of semi/detached private housing e.g. the new developments off Lawrence Close. Apart from Highbridge Community Hall in Market Street (which was a replacement for the Highbridge Town Hall), no further community facilities have been provided in the central area of the town – though a new YMCA is being

constructed on the site of the Highbridge Hotel and it is anticipated that some of its facilities will be available for public use.

Despite Sedgemoor District Council's policy of integrating affordable and market housing in new developments "wherever possible" (Core Strategy Policy D6), the latest housing in Highbridge does not conform to this. Developments like the recent Market site would have been expected to be primarily market housing but in reality there was no commercial interest. However, HCA funding was secured to enable the redevelopment of this site for 100% affordable housing. A similar outcome was secured at Morlands. A side effect of this has been to perpetuate the division in people's minds between "social" and "private" housing in the town. It is often said, with some justification, that people do not visit the "other" parts of Highbridge but remain in their own neighbourhood.

As time has passed, employment patterns have changed and there is now only limited employment, mainly retail, in the centre of Highbridge. Instead employment is concentrated on the peripheral industrial estates of Walrow and Isleport (where plans are being drawn up for expansion). As former commercial sites become available in the town centre they continue to be redeveloped for housing e.g. Delta Engineering and the old Morland Industrial estate. This possibly has had the side-effect of reducing footfall from workers in the local shops, making it harder for them to remain viable. The opening of the ASDA store in 2007, far from revitalising the existing retail offer in Market Street and Church Road, has added to the pressure on this area and the traditional centre of Highbridge is now perceived by many to be run down and unattractive. The recent granting of planning permission for an ALDI store at the northern entrance to the Isleport industrial estate may place further pressure on the town centre.

Highbridge does, however, have some major advantages:

- It has its own railway station with good mainline communications and an hourly local service to both Bristol and Taunton.
- Bus services to Burnham, Weston, Bridgwater and Taunton are frequent during the day (but not in the evening.)
- It is just off Junction 22 of the M5.
- The industrial estates provide employment opportunities.
- It is well served by major open spaces – Apex Park, Burnham Road playing fields (Cassis Close), Southwell House/Crescent playing field and the Rosewood Farm play area. In addition new spaces are planned to serve the Caxton Drive and Brue Farm developments.
- There is good pedestrian access to the surrounding countryside e.g. the Brue river paths on the Huntspill side of the river; footpaths across the Burnham levels from Pople's Bow.
- It has its own Secondary school and a newly rebuilt Primary school (with another one planned as part of the Brue Farm development).
- There are a number of community facilities – Churches, community halls and young people's groups – Scouts, Guides, Cadets (Sea, Air and Army). New community facilities are planned at the YMCA building on the former Highbridge Hotel site.

The aim of this chapter is to address, where possible, the present situation that Highbridge finds itself in and to utilise its advantages.

1.2 The planning context

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) emphasises that the purpose of the planning system is to achieve sustainable development – economic, social and environmental – and further emphasises that these are mutually dependent. It illustrates these themes by a number of examples. In particular it:

- recognises town centres as the heart of their communities and the need to pursue policies to support their viability and vitality.
- promotes competitive town centres that provide customer choice and a diverse retail offer and which reflect the individuality of town centres.
- identifies priority areas for economic regeneration, infrastructure provision and environmental enhancement.
- states that developments should give priority to pedestrian and cycle movements, and have access to high quality public transport facilities.

In Sedgemoor's Proposed Submission Local Plan there are a number of policies and statements relevant to Highbridge. It sets out the context for Highbridge:

By 2032 Highbridge will have established its role as a town providing homes, jobs and community facilities for its local and wider population. New housing development will have improved the physical appearance of the town through high quality and innovative design and the delivery of necessary infrastructure. This will have acted as a catalyst for the social and economic regeneration of the town, making it a more pleasant place to live and work.

The town centre, focused on Market Street and serving primarily the needs of the local community, will provide a better shopping environment. New and improved public realm will have been delivered focusing on the Market Street Car Park area. The existing railway station will also have been improved and additional parking provided, enhancing it as a convenient destination whether commuting to and from work or visiting the area.

The investment into and expansion of Isleport Business Park will have increased the range and diversity of jobs available that are easily accessible to Highbridge and Burnham as well as surrounding villages. This will have encouraged local working, higher wage opportunities and reduced levels of commuting to other centres to the benefit of the local economy.

In addition, within the Local Plan, as submitted:

- Historic buildings and open spaces are safeguarded to an extent by Policy D27 – as are existing employment sites by Policy D17.
- Policy BH8 safeguards the Railway Station from inappropriate development.
- Policy D2 promotes high quality and inclusive design.
- The Market Street retail area is designated by Policy D19 as a “district centre” i.e. one which serves local needs.

Policy BH1 is the specific “place-making” policy for Burnham-on-Sea and Highbridge and sets out the objectives for developments in the two towns. To summarise: developments should increase self-containment; enhance the town centres; meet the needs of the local community and address

known areas of deprivation; promote regeneration and improvement of the public realm; consolidate and enhance existing local services, facilities and infrastructure including education, open space and other social infrastructure.

In the Core Strategy there are also a number of comments (summarised below), most of which were reflected during the course of the consultation by local residents:

6.48 states that the existing centre has a poor built environment and, alongside pockets of deprivation, contributes to the relatively poor image of Highbridge.

6.49 acknowledges that redevelopment of brownfield sites has led to piecemeal development with a perception of poor housing mix and design quality.

6.61 suggests the town centre should focus on serving the local population rather than the wider district.

The proposed submission Local Plan has this to say:

Highbridge District Centre

5.96 Highbridge centre has contracted significantly in recent years and is now concentrated on Market Street and the southern end of Church Street. The relatively new Asda supermarket located outside of the district centre boundary provides local convenience shopping but has had some impacts on the vitality of the centre as a whole. The centre also suffers from a relatively poor public realm and localised traffic congestion. However, there have been some recent improvements and a reduction in the vacancy rate.

5.97 Policies therefore seek to retain and enhance the existing district centre role extending it slightly to include the retail and other town centre uses along the southern end of Church Street. There are opportunities to enhance existing footpaths along Market Street and to rationalise the existing Bank Street car park area. Detailed enhancement projects are likely to be progressed through either neighbourhood planning or future design briefs.

It follows this with Policy BH10 which encourages regeneration, improvement of the public realm, and enhanced facilities for pedestrians.

2. Vision and Objectives

An initial discussion document (available on the website at <http://www.burnhamandhighbridgeneighbourhoodplan.org/highbridge-group>) was drawn up and discussed at the Highbridge topic group meeting in November 2015. Following further discussion in January 2016, a draft vision and policies were put together and a consultation via a household leaflet and online survey was carried out in March 2016. The survey and responses can also be found on the web site. 78% agreed with the vision on the next page.

2.1 Vision for Highbridge

Our Vision for Highbridge

By 2032 Highbridge will have passed through a period of change which will have seen the construction of new housing both within the built-up area and on the periphery. It will also have seen the expansion of the Isleport business estate which will have brought significant employment opportunities to the local area.

As a consequence of the new housing, the flood defences on the River Brue will have been improved, a new Primary school established on the Brue Farm development, and expansion of King Alfred's school and local health facilities will have taken place. In addition, the physical linking of the Brue Farm development to Market Street, plus the investment of \$106 money and Community Infrastructure Levy in that area, will have led to an improvement in the retail offer in this, the traditional town centre of Highbridge. Off-street car parking will have been preserved in order to ensure the shops are adequately served. The improvements will have acted as a stimulus to the greening of the town and to a general improvement in the street scene. Important historical buildings in the town will continue to be protected. The YMCA development of the Highbridge Hotel will have provided additional community facilities and will act as a focus at the important junction of Market Street and Church Street. At the other end of Market Street, the railway station will be an increasingly important link to Bristol, Taunton and further afield and, via good bus connections, with Burnham and the surrounding villages.

The investment into, and expansion of, Isleport Business Park will have increased the range and diversity of jobs available that are easily accessible to Highbridge and Burnham as well as surrounding villages. This will have encouraged local working, higher wage opportunities and reduced levels of commuting to other centres to the benefit of the local economy. In addition, the retention and expansion of small industrial/craft units within the town itself will have enabled businesses to thrive which cannot afford the higher costs of the peripheral industrial estates.

The town's role in supporting Burnham-on-Sea's tourism function will be more readily recognized through the development of green linkages to encourage walking and cycling between the towns and into the wider surrounds. Apex Park will remain the prime open space for the town but it will be augmented by the proposed new open spaces at Brue Farm and adjacent to the Isleport ponds. In addition, the opportunity to create toddlers' play areas in new or existing housing developments will have been taken.

2.2 Achieving the Vision.

Many of the basic planning policies to achieve this vision are already included in Sedgemoor District Council's Core strategy and the Proposed Submission Plan. The role of the Neighbourhood Plan policies is to "add value" to this process where appropriate. For example, Sedgemoor's policy on

safeguarding important historic buildings is adequate to the task and so does not need amplification. However, other policies could be usefully strengthened and given local detail.

The following Neighbourhood Plan objectives have been identified for Highbridge to help deliver the above vision.

Objectives for Highbridge Policies.

- 1. To maximise employment and retail opportunities in the town centre.**
- 2. To improve the usage of the Railway station.**
- 3. To maximise the employment opportunities for local people from the extension to Isleport Business Park.**
- 4. To set out an appropriate strategy for the enhancement and eventual redevelopment of the Poplar and Morlands estates.**
- 5. To safeguard and enhance recreational opportunities.**
- 6. To maintain a strategic overview for the area.**

3. Employment and infrastructure

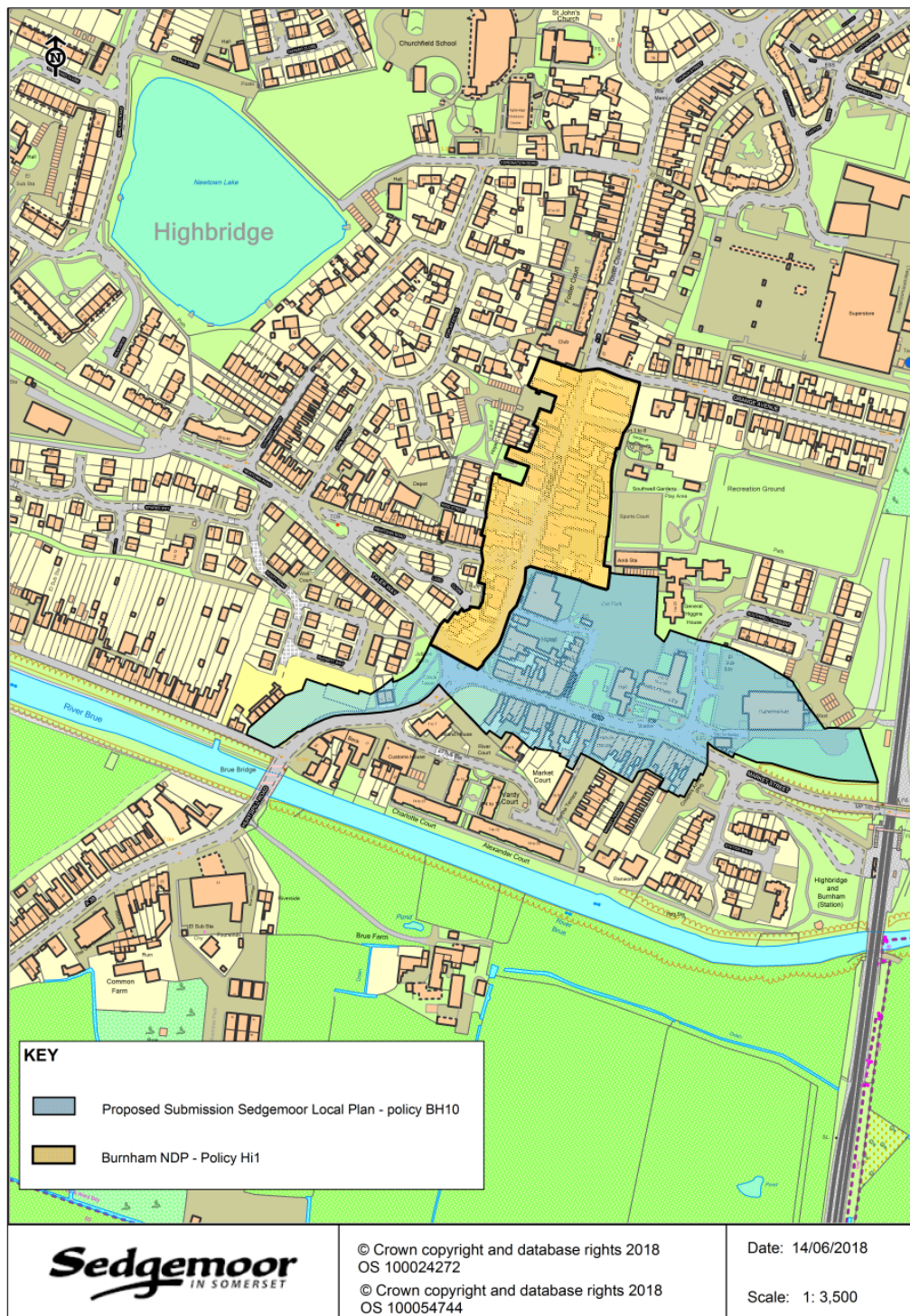
3.1 Employment and retail in the Town Centre.

Objective 1: To maximise employment and retail opportunities in the town centre.

Market Street is defined in the Proposed Submission Plan as a District Centre and the boundary is defined in Map 5 of that plan. The Town Council acknowledged in its response to the Local Plan review (The Local Plan Review Stage 1 Consultation – Scope and Approach (regulation 18)), that the southern end of Church Street (south of Grange Avenue) contains a number of shops and they are an important adjunct to Market Street. The importance of these shops is noted in the Proposed Submission Local Plan (para 5.96). It is the contention of this Neighbourhood Plan that these Church Street properties should be included in the District Centre. There are actually twenty two retail units in this part of Church Street (with a further four between Grange Avenue and Foster Court). This compares with twenty one in Market Street itself. Restricting the District Centre to Market St. alone ignores half of the retail units in the town centre.

The fact that Church Street is still regarded as an important part of the retail centre is exemplified in the recent decision of an entrepreneur to redevelop the redundant George Hotel – one of the largest premises – into a new furniture store. (<http://www.burnham-on-sea.com/news/2016/george-hotel-highbridge-plans-revealed-12-12-16.php>). This has been partly acknowledged by the District Council in that the district centre has been extended into Church Street. However, we are proposing a further extension as far as Grange Avenue as shown on Map 2.

Market Street and Church Street – proposed extension to the district centre



Map 2

Policy Hi 1: The District Centre boundary is extended to include the southern end of Church Street, up to the junction with Grange Avenue.

Within the District centre, the Proposed Submission Local Plan Policy D 19 applies:

“Within the district centres, support will be given for appropriate retail and complementary uses that meet the needs of the local community. Retail (A1) and non-retail uses (A2-A5) at ground floor level will be supported within the defined district centre boundaries and the loss of such uses will only be allowed if an overriding justification can be demonstrated.”

The Government has recently relaxed the planning regulations as regards redevelopment of peripheral retail areas so that other uses can occur. The NPPF says:

“Where there is no reasonable prospect of a site being used for the allocated employment use, applications for alternative uses of land or buildings should be treated on their merits having regard to market signals and the relative need for different land uses to support sustainable local communities.”

It goes on: *“In drawing up Local Plans, local planning authorities should recognise town centres as the heart of their communities and pursue policies to support their viability and vitality.”*

The retail area of Highbridge is small and any diminution of it would result in a gradual withering away of shopping and the eventual loss of the area. Policy BH 10 in the Proposed Submission Local Plan encourages proposals that contribute to the regeneration of this central area. Without an Article 4 direction, it is not possible to remove permitted development rights. The following policy encourages the retention of retail use wherever possible.

Policy Hi 2: District Centre redevelopment.

Small-scale retail development and public realm improvements will be supported in order to make this area a clearer focal point for the town's shopping function and public realm improvements.

Proposals for change of use from retail to non-retail within the District Centre, or for retail use outside the District Centre boundary, will be required to demonstrate that they will have no adverse impact on the viability and vitality of the District Centre.

(The reference to “viability and vitality” above is a direct quote from the NPPF, paragraph 23.)

Market Street is the main shopping area but it is vehicle dominated. Through traffic can make shopping an unpleasant experience; parked cars obscure the visibility of shops; the footpaths are inadequate and need resurfacing and widening. Adjacent is the Millennium Green and behind it is the large Bank Street car park which lacks landscaping and character (see Map 3). In addition the car park is poorly signposted and has poorly defined pedestrian accesses. Paragraph 5.97 of the Proposed Submission Local Plan acknowledges these factors and suggests that enhancement is likely to come via neighbourhood planning or future design briefs.



Map 3 © Crown copyright. All rights reserved.

With the linking of the Brue Farm development by footbridge to this area, and with the new housing on the Highbridge Hotel/ Cattle Market site, a significant number of additional shoppers could be attracted to Market Street if it were to undergo a comprehensive redevelopment. Funding could be provided for an appropriate study from CIL money accruing to the Town Council or, with agreement by Sedgemoor DC, from the S106 money secured from the Brue Farm development for this area. Alternative sources such as the Coastal Community Fund, Community Impact Mitigation Fund etc. could also be explored. The Highbridge Chamber of Trade has expressed interest in exploring these options, working with local residents and Councillors. Approaches such as “Planning for Real” could be used to engage the local community in the process.

Statement of Intent 1: The enhancement of the Market Street area.

Under the auspices of the Town Council and other relevant bodies, a development and design brief, which could lead to a Supplementary Planning Document, will be drawn up which:

Changes Market St into a people focused town centre for Highbridge by giving pedestrians priority using appropriate traffic management measures and re-engineering of the road and pavements.

Enhances both the car park and Millennium Green to provide an improved public realm and improved short stay car parking. Consider the installation of solar panel “car ports” and the provision of electric car charging points in the car park.

Considers whether the usage of the car park gives scope for landscaping it and building on part of it to fund the above improvements and possible other facilities such as a Health Centre, additions to the Community Hall, (subject to the approval of the Trustees), or further community uses of the Library.

In addition to the retail and office employment in the town centre there are a number of small garage/engineering and other employers in the surrounding central urban area. Recently a number

of these have been lost to residential schemes e.g. Morlands Industrial Estate, Delta Engineering and the Cattle Market. If this trend were to continue and, for example, the industrial estate on the Huntspill Road be redeveloped, the employment opportunities in central Highbridge would be limited to the retail area. The problem is acknowledged in the Core Strategy in paragraph 5.137 which also highlights the decline in smaller and affordable units suitable for start-up businesses. In the Proposed Submission Local Plan paragraph 7.137 emphasises the critical importance of retaining and enhancing local employment opportunities and Policy D16 deals with employment in general and the importance of retaining employment on existing sites as the first option on redevelopment.

Redevelopment of employment sites is covered by Policy D17.

“Safeguarding Existing Employment Land and Buildings

Proposals to change the use, redevelop or convert existing employment sites and buildings to non-employment uses will not be supported unless it can be demonstrated that there is no likelihood of a viable employment (including redevelopment for employment use); and It would be preferable for the existing activity, as a result of adverse environmental impact, to be relocated to a more suitable site and its reuse for employment is not feasible or appropriate; or no suitable alternative provision for the proposed use has been made elsewhere in the Local Plan.

The same principle applies to sites with planning permission for employment uses that have not been implemented.

Where it is accepted that employment use or redevelopment for employment use of such sites is not viable, priority will be given to alternative uses in the following order:

Mixed use schemes; Residential only schemes.

This is supported by paragraphs 7.140 and 7.141.

Although both policies oppose the loss of employment sites, recent development history suggests that they will not prove strong enough to resist further loss of employment sites in Highbridge. An additional policy is therefore needed to further encourage retention of employment, while recognising the limits to policy given current permitted development rights. The intention of this policy is to seek to ensure that the total supply of employment land remains at or above the 2015-16 level.

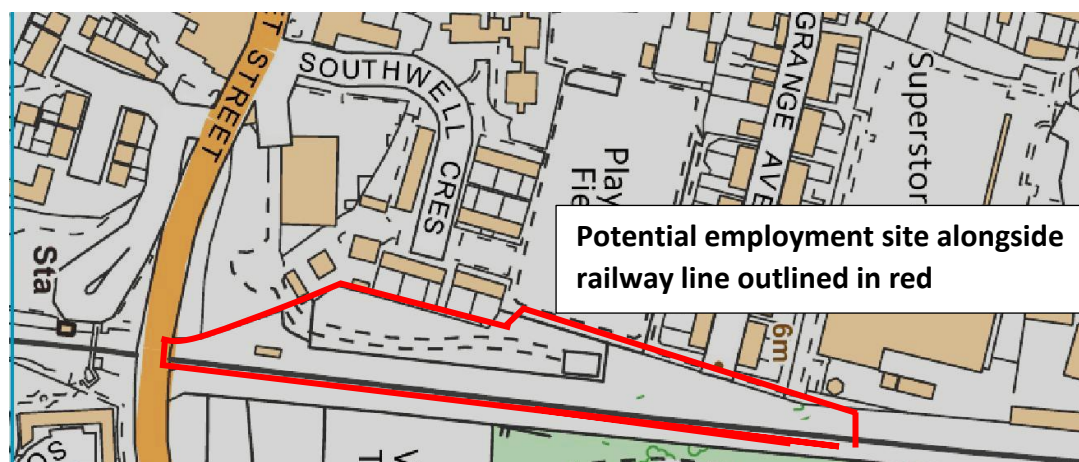
Policy Hi 3: Redevelopment of employment sites in the urban centre of Highbridge.

Proposals for the redevelopment of employment sites within the Highbridge urban area should seek to retain the existing employment on site. Where this is considered not viable, developers will need to demonstrate that all reasonable options have been considered, including:

- a) relocation of the employment use to a suitable alternative site within the urban area**
- b) a mixed use scheme retaining some employment use**

As has been said above, there has been a loss of employment sites recently in the centre of Highbridge. In such a built up area there are limited new opportunities available. However, there is

one – the land alongside the railway behind the Co-op store in Southwell Crescent and extending to Grange Avenue, shown on Map 4. Although the site contains two sewers and an underground washout chamber, it is still possible to develop it, observing a protective easement.



Map 4

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This site has potential for small low cost workshops, possibly in two storey buildings with associated office accommodation or live/work units on the first floor. The need for this is demonstrated by the fact that when the Morlands Industrial estate was redeveloped in 2016, a number of companies had to relocate outside the town due to lack of suitable premises locally. Development of this site would help address the problem of the decline in smaller and affordable units suitable for start-up businesses noted above.

Policy Hi 4: Redevelopment of the brownfield site adjacent to the railway line.

The site shown on map no 4 is allocated for development to include a minimum 50% employment use.

Delivery of this site is expected to be in partnership with the Town Council and may include:

- a) small workshop/start up units
- b) office space
- c) live-work units

Development schemes will be expected to show building designs that are sympathetic to the existing two-storey housing in Southwell Crescent.

A site specific Flood Risk Assessment, having regard to the advice in the Environment Agency's specific advice for Sedgemoor in the Wessex Area Local Standing Advice for Sedgemoor District (2013), will be required as part of a planning application.

3.2 Highbridge Railway Station

Objective 2: To improve the usage of the Railway Station.

The Railway station is essential to the economic vitality of Highbridge and Burnham – both for in- and out-commuting and also as a gateway to the coastal area for visitors. The Core Strategy Policy TM6 safeguarded it from inappropriate development in its vicinity but is not repeated per se in the Proposed Submission Local Plan. Parking is limited – though it is not far from the large Bank Street carpark which serves the Market Street area. Co-ordination of bus and train services is not always ideal and there is opportunity for improvement.

The Proposed Submission Local Plan deals with the station in paragraph 5.93 and particularly mentions the parking issue. Policy BH 8 lists proposals related to the station as priorities.

To assist in this process, the following is proposed.

Statement of Intent 2: Improving the viability of the railway station.

The Town Council will work collaboratively with the relevant bodies to ensure the viability of the railway station and will carry out consultation with Network Rail on the possibility of expanding the parking area and improving access. Integration of rail and bus services will be sought where possible – as will improvement to bus services linking the station to the Isleport estates, Burnham, and surrounding villages and settlements. In addition, the Town Council will work with Cross Country Trains to explore the opportunities for additional services to stop at Highbridge.

3.3 The extension to Isleport Business Park

Objective 3: To maximise the employment opportunities for local people from the extension to Isleport Business Park.

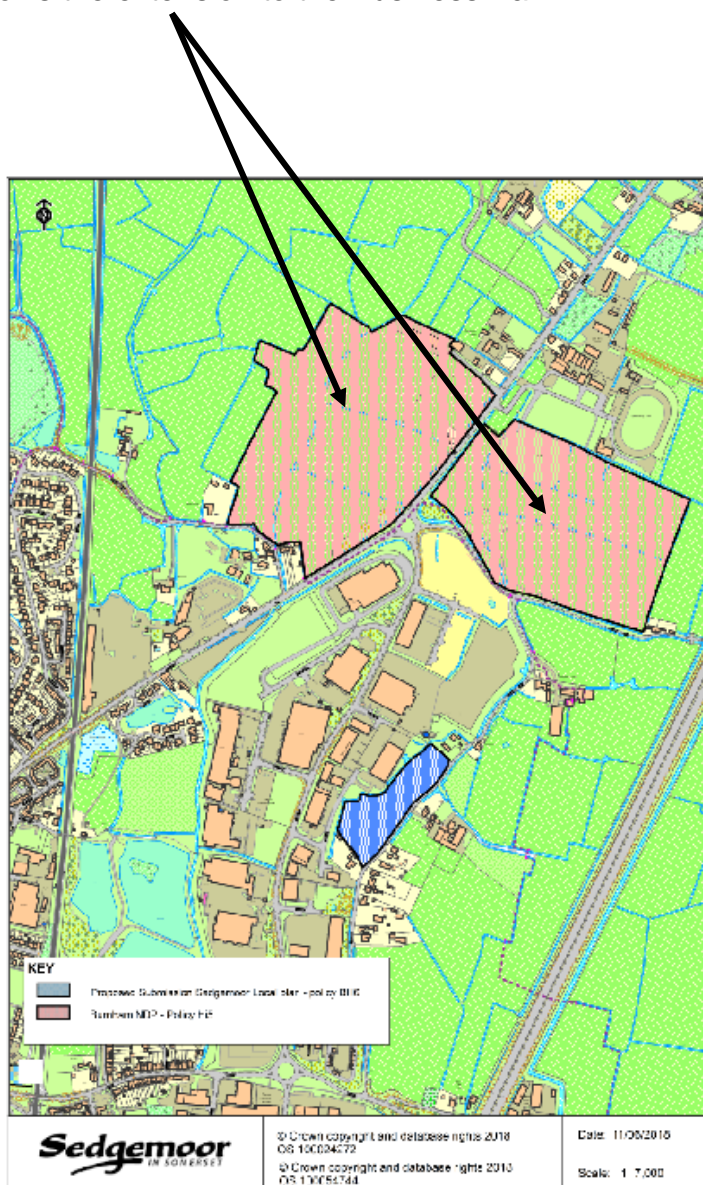
The major employment opportunities in Highbridge are in the peripheral industrial estates – Walrow, Isleport and the proposed Isleport extension. The Proposed Submission Local Plan includes Policy BH 7 to update the Walrow industrial estate and a supplementary planning document (SPD) has been drawn up for the Isleport extension. The Neighbourhood Planning Group submitted comments on the first draft of this and the second consultation draft reflected many of the points that were raised.

The introduction to the adopted SDP says the vision is to:

*Enable local opportunities for higher skilled jobs;
Develop an attractive and successful business park to encourage new companies to locate and existing companies in the district to expand;
Attract businesses in manufacturing and advanced engineering, research and development, education and training, logistics and nuclear energy supply chain;*

Ensure development proposals incorporate renewable and low carbon energy generation technology and other energy related or complimentary uses;
Create pleasant and attractive working environments essential to the success of the businesses and the health and well-being of employees;
Generate a significant boost to the economic and social prosperity of the locality delivering benefits for existing and future residents in Highbridge and the wider district;
Build upon the success of Isleport Business Park and further raise the image and economic profile of Highbridge adding to the reputation of the town and wider District as a good place to live, work and invest.

Map 5 (below) shows the extension to the Business Park.



Policy Hi 5: To ensure that there are benefits to the local community in the plan area from the extension to Isleport Business Park, new development in the Business Park, as identified on Map 5, should have regard to the following:

- 1. That as far as possible, the new employers are covered by local labour agreements, for employment developments that propose 10 or more jobs in total, so that residents benefit from the new employment opportunities.**
- 2. That the development takes the opportunity to provide higher value jobs where possible.**
- 3. That steps are taken to maximise the generation of renewable energy on site and that buildings are designed to minimise their energy usage. These steps could include the use of solar panel “car ports” and bicycle sheds and the provision of electric car charging points for employees.**
- 4. That physical connections between the development and Highbridge are improved where appropriate and necessary.**
- 5. Delivery of appropriate and necessary highway improvements identified within the submitted Transport Impact Assessment.**
- 6. That the needs of existing residents adjacent to the development are taken account of in the detailed design of, for example, the “green” environment.**
- 7. That development proposals have regard to guidance in The Isleport 2 Business Park Supplementary Planning Document (2016)**

This is in accord with the Proposed Submission Local Plan Policies BH 5 and D16 which deal with employment issues; BH 8 which deals with the Edithmead junction; and D3 and D4 which cover sustainability and energy (including renewable energy generation) in developments.

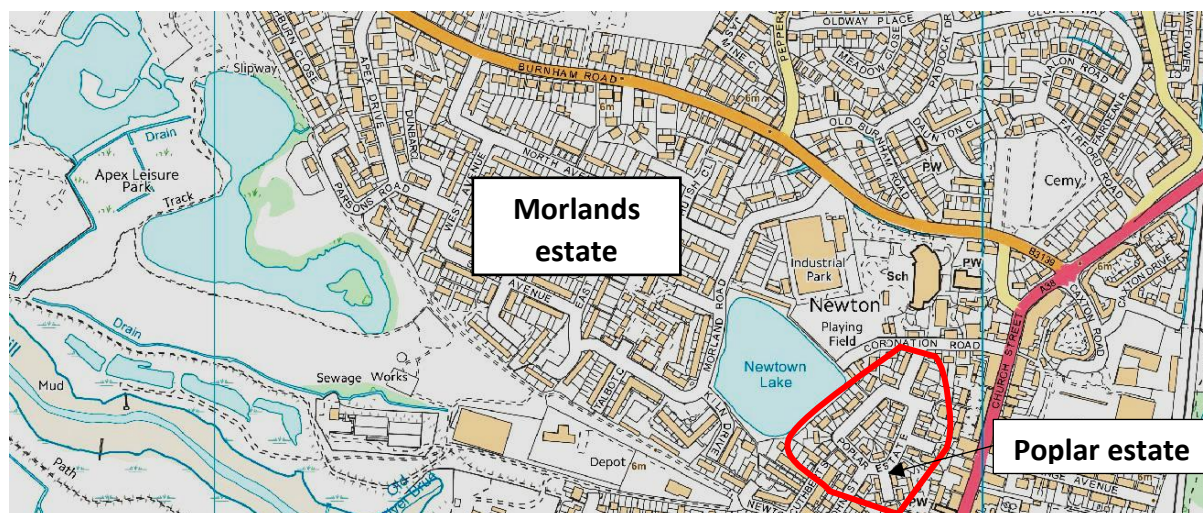
4. The Poplar and Morland estates

Objective 4: To set out an appropriate strategy for the enhancement and eventual redevelopment of the Poplar and Morlands estates.

Significant amounts of housing in the Highbridge area have been provided in recent years –and more is in the pipeline at the moment. The initial review of the local plan suggested that no new housing additional to this is needed in the immediate future. This was welcomed by the Town Council as it was felt that time was needed to integrate the new residents into the existing communities. However the Draft Local Plan identifies two sites for housing in the Highbridge area at some time in the plan period. One is within the Neighbourhood Plan area and will be governed by the policies outlined in the housing chapter of this plan. The other is in West Huntspill Parish and so will not be covered by the Neighbourhood Plan.

Within Highbridge itself the Poplar and Morlands estates (see Map 6) are now over 60 years old and pre-date the Apex Park. This means that much of the Morlands housing only links to the park by alleyways rather than more prominent routes. Both estates are of good quality housing, built to Parker Morris standards. The Morlands estate, in particular, has good sized houses and gardens. The blocks of flats are also of a suitable scale and have not given rise to the sort of social problems sometimes associated with larger blocks in inner cities. The Morlands Community Hall fulfils an important function but is showing its age.

Although there are no redevelopment proposals at the moment for either estate, it is possible some may arise within the period of time covered by the Neighbourhood Plan. It is therefore appropriate to set out a strategy to address redevelopment of the estates should it occur. In its Core Strategy, Sedgemoor DC set out in Policy P1 proposals for housing renewal areas in Bridgwater. This has been followed up in the Proposed Submission Local Plan with a similar policy, BH 4, to cover the Morlands estate. This is welcomed and the following statement of intent is designed to extend it to the Poplar estate as well.



Map 6 © Crown Copyright. All rights reserved.

Statement of Intent 3: The improvement of the Morlands and Poplar estates.

The Town Council will encourage Sedgemoor DC to extend Policy BH 4 in the Proposed Submission Local Plan statement to the Poplar estate.

5. Open spaces and recreation

Objective 5: To safeguard and enhance recreational opportunities.

5.1 Major Open Spaces

Highbridge benefits from a number of major open spaces. In the town centre there are Southwell Gardens and playing field. On the periphery there are Apex Park, the Burnham Road (Cassis Close) playing fields and the new children's play area adjacent to the Lawrence Close/Wallace Wells area (Rosewood Farm). In addition land adjacent to the Isleport ponds is proposed as a new open space. The Brue Farm development is also planned to include a public park.

In 2009, Sedgemoor DC commissioned a Burnham-on-Sea, Berrow and Highbridge Green Space Strategy. This identified Apex Park as having the highest quality score of 62, while Southwell Gardens scored 32 and Burnham Road playing fields 29. (The Rosewood Farm play area was not constructed at this time.) In addition, Apex Park has “Green Flag” status.

In its comments to the strategy, Burnham-on-Sea and Highbridge Town Council said:

“that the amount of green space in their area had decreased over the last ten years along with the overall quality of the spaces. There was concern that the quantity of provision is insufficient and that the scale of recent residential development, which the Council indicated was predominantly medium and high density apartments has increased the pressure on recreational and leisure facilities. Burnham-on-Sea and Highbridge Town Council would like to see improvements to the facilities within green spaces including the provision of multi-use games areas, play and youth facilities, improvements to sports pitches and better horticultural features. The Council would like further support to help develop funding bids for improvements”. (Page 31)

The Core Strategy has this to say in Policy D20:

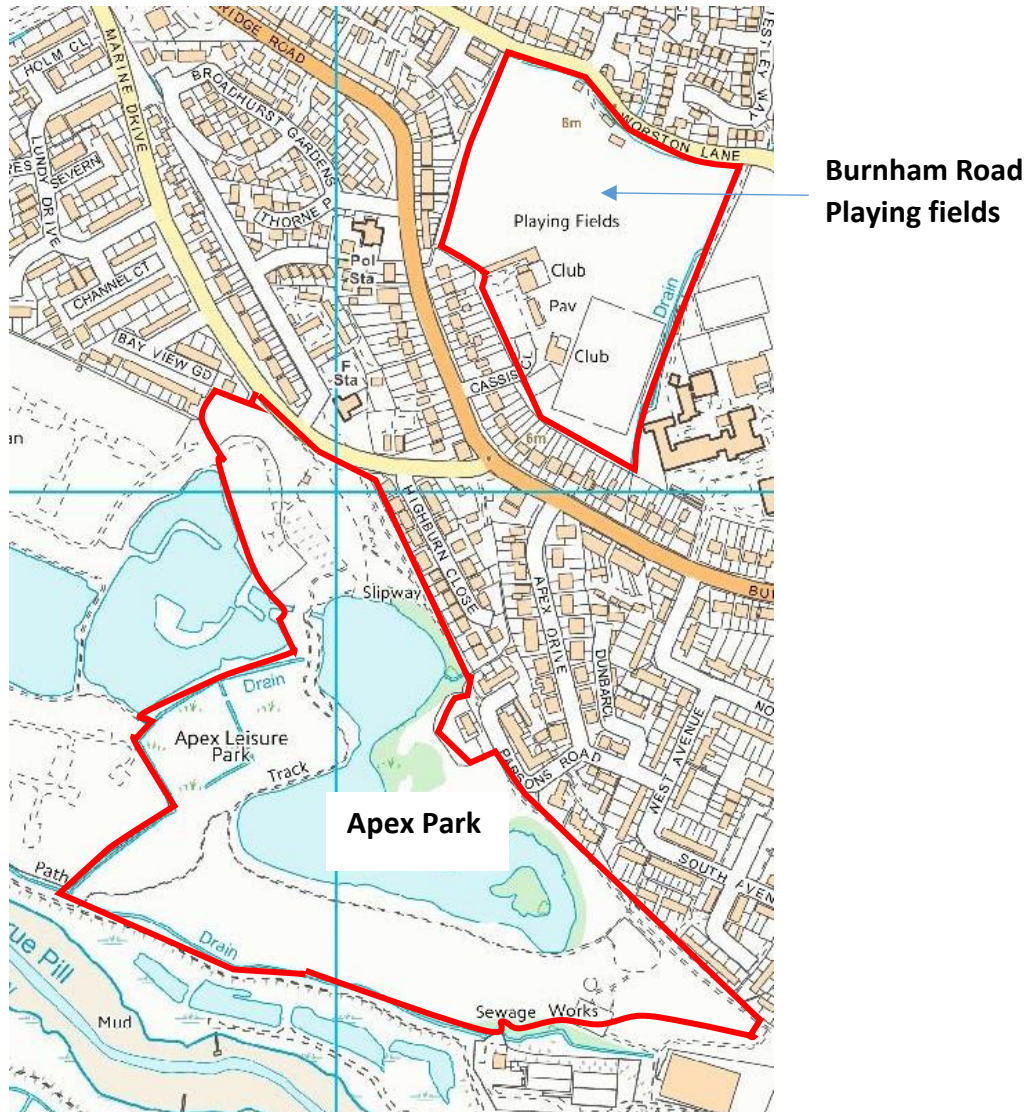
“Priority will be given to the protection and enhancement of parks and gardens, play areas, sports pitches, recreation grounds and allotments. Development proposals that would result in the loss of land of recreational and/or amenity value or unacceptably impact upon the residential amenity of occupants of nearby dwellings and any potential future occupants will not be supported.”

However, recent proposals for the transfer of part of Apex Park to Bourne Leisure (now abandoned) suggest that the District Council interprets this in a broad way so that it is not considered a “loss” of land if alternative provision is made elsewhere. This runs the risk of “salami slicing” with existing major open spaces becoming smaller. The Town Council does not find this acceptable.

The Proposed Submission Local Plan contains Policy D36 which is designed to protect existing public recreational outdoor space and which only permits development under certain conditions.

The Government gives the power to Neighbourhood Plans to designate “Local Green Spaces” to provide special protection against development for green areas of particular importance to local communities. It is considered appropriate to designate three of the four areas mentioned above in such a way. The need for this is reinforced by the recently completed ANGSt study which shows that the new housing in the Highbridge area is reliant on these open spaces in order to reach the national standards. The detailed justification for the designation as Local Green Spaces is set out in the accompanying document “Local Green Spaces in Burnham-on-Sea and Highbridge.” In this chapter only the maps and summaries of the case made are included.

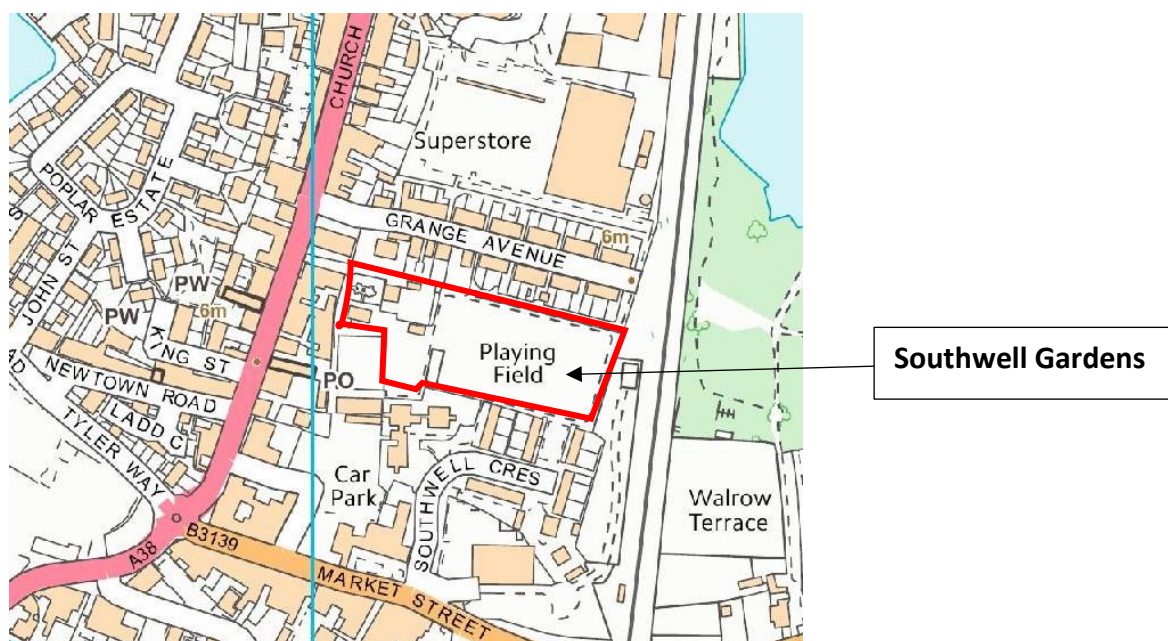
Apex Park and Burnham Road Playing fields



Map 7

© Crown copyright. All rights reserved

Southwell Gardens



Map 8 © Crown copyright. All rights reserved

5.1.1. Apex Park

Reasons for designation as a “Local Green Space”

- The park is centrally situated between Burnham and Highbridge and, as such, is easily accessible to the whole community. It has a large car park, is on a ‘bus route, and is adjacent to the Morlands housing estate (an area of social deprivation) to which it is linked by paths. It is also accessible from the riverside walk which forms part of the National Cycle Path and the South West Coastal Path.
- The park is by far the largest in the area and provides an important local facility. It is also large enough to host events e.g. National Play Day which draw in people from a wider area. A Neighbourhood Planning stall at the National Play Day in 2015 revealed most attendees were from the local area but some had travelled as much as 10-15 miles to attend.
- The park is demonstrably special to many in the area. It was frequently mentioned in the responses to Neighbourhood plan consultations as one of the top attractions in the area and a proposal (now dropped) to redevelop the BMX track as part of the adjacent holiday village received overwhelmingly strong opposition from the local population.
- The park is a very attractive area. The walks around the lakes and through the woodlands and onto the riverside give a variety of views and habitats with the lake walks, in particular, enhanced by the bird life around, and on, the lakes.
- As an example of a restored clay pit, the park has historical significance – a point emphasised by a historical information board adjacent to the car park. In addition, it still contains on its edge the original crossing- keeper’s cottage from the railway line.

- The recreational value of the site is highly significant to the local area. Play is catered for by the children's play area, the skateboard park and the BMX track. Angling is possible on the lakes and the new outdoor gym and the weekly Park Run cater for those seeking to improve or maintain their fitness. The paths – all wheelchair accessible - provide for those who wish to walk and the lakes provide for those who wish to observe wildlife. In the spring the wildflower meadow enables people to enjoy a variety of plants not usually seen in an urban environment.
- Schools visit the park and a number of events are held throughout the year.
- During the summer months, refreshments are available adjacent to the toilets at the northern end of the large car park.
- Despite the number of people using the park, it is sufficiently large for areas of tranquillity to be found and, for example, picnics to be enjoyed.
- There is a rich variety of wildlife and plants on the site and it is adjacent to the protected River Brue conservation sites, with which it links.
- The park has good level disabled access.

5.1.2. Burnham Road Playing Fields

Reasons for designation as a "Local Green Space".

- The playing fields are in the heart of the community, being at the junction of Burnham, Highbridge and Burnham Without and adjacent to the local Secondary School. They have been used as playing fields for well over 50 years.
- There are good pedestrian links from two sides and good vehicular access from Burnham Road onto a good-sized car park. The site is close to the junction of Burnham Road and Marine Drive which means there is also good access by 'bus.
- The site is level so disabled access is good. The separate buildings also have disabled access.
- The playing fields are the home sites of two local football clubs, both of which have a number of teams. The site also houses their club facilities as well as other clubs.
- The football pitches are important to the local community. As the site is not gated it also acts as an informal recreational site to the area.
- The site hosts a number of community events through the year and club facilities are used by the public at these times.

5.1.3. Southwell Gardens

Reasons for designation as a “Local Green Space”

- The site is centrally situated in Highbridge and has unrestricted access. It is level and accessible by disabled. It is an important recreational area to the surrounding high density housing. It is the only significant area of green space in this part of Highbridge.
- The site was purchased by the people of Highbridge as a memorial to those who lost their lives in the Second World War and is protected by covenants. The memorial garden is of historic importance, which is recognised by its registration of charitable status under the War Memorials Trust. It is a tranquil area with seating where people come for a moment's respite.
- The playing field, children's play area and informal hard play area form an important neighbourhood facility in this densely populated area of Highbridge which contains two of the most deprived areas in the country according to the Index of Multiple Deprivation <http://dclgapps.communities.gov.uk/imd/idmap.html>.
- A number of community events are held on the site e.g. free music concerts.
- The football pitch is used by Highbridge Town FC who have changing rooms on site.
- Plenty of parking is available in the adjacent Bank Street car park.

There is nothing in the Core Strategy or Proposed Submission Local Plan statements relating to the type of buildings acceptable on such open spaces. Accordingly the following policy is proposed.

Policy Hi 6. Protection of open spaces by designation as “Local Green Spaces”.

Apex Park, Burnham Road playing fields and Southwell Gardens are designated as Local Green Spaces.

Development on designated Local Green Spaces will only be permitted in very special circumstances.

5.2 Toddlers' play areas (LAPs).

The present policy governing children's play areas is Core Strategy RLT2. This gives criteria for the provision of LAPs (Local areas for Play), LEAPs (Local Equipped Play Areas) and NEAPs (Neighbourhood Equipped Area for Play). RLT2 does, however, allow for off-site provision “where the requirement for play space cannot be fully met on site”. The Proposed Submission Local Plan also allows for this in Policy D 37. This has allowed situations such as the housing in Tylers Way/ Sparks Way and Highbridge Quay to occur where there are no toddlers' play spaces (LAPs) within the developments even though contributions to off-site provision may have been secured. Accordingly the following policy is proposed:

Policy Hi 7: Toddlers' play areas (Local Areas for Play).

Proposals that include the provision of toddlers' play spaces in appropriate locations on site as a result of residential redevelopment will be supported and encouraged by the Town Council.

This would be in keeping with the revised provision for new developments in the Proposed Submission Local Plan Policy D37.

5.3 Footpaths and cycleways

Highbridge is linked to Burnham via the riverside footpath/cycleway, which also forms part of the extension to the South West footpath from Minehead to Brean Down. The Wallace Wells and Thorndike Way areas also link in to the Burnham cycleway network. There are a number of paths which link to the open countryside e.g. on the Huntspill side of the Brue; from Walrow and the northern section of Worston Road and Mulholland Park. However the routes are not well signposted and, as a consequence are under-used. In addition, links to Burnham Moor and the villages on the Levels are restricted by the physical barriers of the A38, M5 and the railway line. Proposed Submission Local Plan Policy BH 8 deals with the new footpath/cycleway across the River Brue linking the Brue Farm housing to Market Street. The Proposed Submission Local Plan also includes a comprehensive section on Green Infrastructure (paragraphs 7.247 to 7.264) and suggest that one of the priorities for CIL funding should be the development of footpaths, bridleways and cycle routes (para 7.262, fourth bullet point). The following statement of intent is designed to contribute to this.

Statement of Intent 4: Footpaths and cycleways.

The Town Council will undertake a comprehensive review of existing and proposed footpaths and cycleways with a view to improving their signposting and filling in any gaps in the network. The aim should be to achieve a comprehensive coverage of the wider Highbridge area and to improve appropriate routes across the A38, M5, railway and river – including links to neighbouring communities.

6. Maintaining a strategic overview

Objective 6: To maintain a strategic overview for the area.

The lack of an existing overall plan for Highbridge is recognised by the planning authority. Indeed, it has been the case for a number of years that a Supplementary Planning Document for Burnham and Highbridge has been in the offing. The Core Strategy, published in 2011, says in paragraph 6.71:

The Council working with landowners, developers and the local community will prepare a Supplementary Planning Document (or Development Plan Document if following scoping the project this is more appropriate) for Burnham and Highbridge that will provide a detailed framework for the delivery of key regeneration projects and public realm improvements.

No work on this has taken place and, following the advent of this Neighbourhood Plan, the SPD has not been progressed as it is intended that the Neighbourhood Plan will provide this strategic overview.

Planning permission for the first phase of the Brue Farm housing development has already been granted. When completed there will be around 550 houses, a new primary school, community facilities, public open space and a pedestrian link to the Market Street/Railway station area. The second phase of this site will lie outside the Neighbourhood Plan area as it will be in West Huntspill parish. However the area is considered to be a Highbridge site in the Proposed Submission Local Plan and is even included in the Burnham-on-Sea and Highbridge Place-Making Policies at BH 2.

As mentioned before, paragraph 6.49 of the Core Strategy refers to development in Highbridge as being “piecemeal”. The Neighbourhood Plan, in this chapter, has attempted to deal with some of the consequences of this legacy. It is important to build on past regeneration and development to ensure the best outcomes for Highbridge as a whole through a comprehensive and positive vision for the future.

Accordingly:

Statement of Intent 5: A positive vision for the future.

The Town Council will seek to ensure that any future development in the wider Highbridge area, within the Neighbourhood Plan area, will support the aims of the Neighbourhood Plan and contribute positively to the vision for Highbridge.

Chapter 2

Central Burnham-on-Sea

1. Introduction.

The town centre of Burnham stretches from the largely 14th Century church of St. Andrew's at the north end of Victoria Street to the large car park on the corner of Pier Street and South Esplanade. It consists of the spine roads of Victoria Street and High Street, punctuated at intervals by east-west roads and alleys, most of which lead to Oxford Street on the east or the Esplanade at the west. In addition, the area between Manor Road, Victoria Street and Princess Street is included in the town centre boundary as defined by Sedgemoor District Council in the Core Strategy 2013.

A number of regeneration studies over the years have been carried out. They are:

1. Burnham-on-Sea and Highbridge MCTI Final report April 2003 (Landscape Design Associates).
2. "Making a community by the sea" – A strategic plan for Burnham and Highbridge – Sept. 2003.
3. Outline proposals for the redevelopment of Tuckers Garage and the development of the new Civic Quarter – apgarchitects – September 2005.
4. Burnham-on-Sea and Highbridge regeneration strategy – the case for investment (Sedgemoor DC, prepared by EKOS consulting) – September 2006.
5. The Princess – Regeneration – a brief prepared by Nigel Grainge for the Burnham-on-Sea Learning and Cultural Quarter Partnership – January 2008.

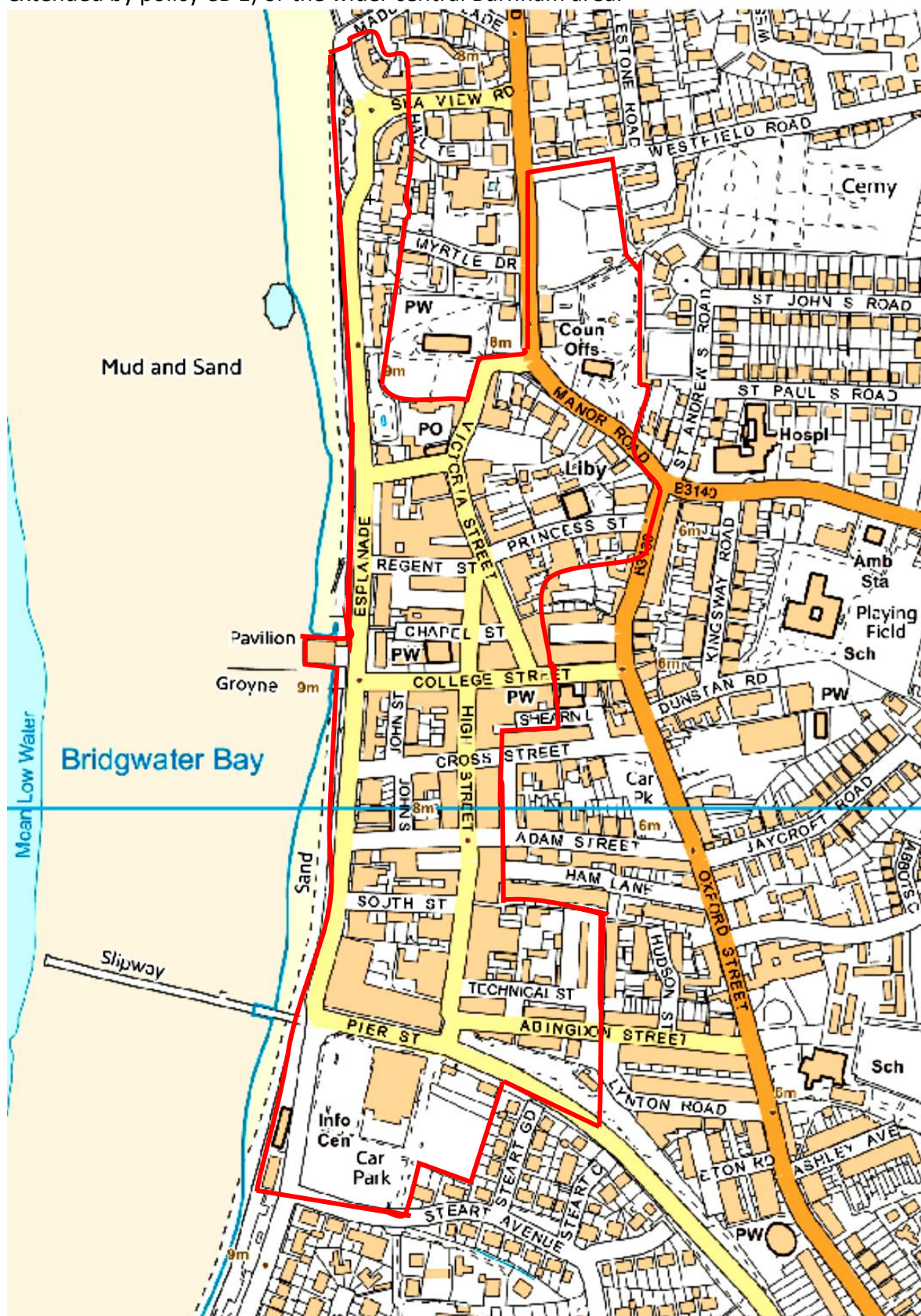
Among other things, these studies have stressed the importance of the links between the High Street and the Esplanade. In recognition of this, the area covered by this chapter has been extended to include the Esplanade. Another addition to Sedgemoor DC's town centre area made for the purpose of this chapter is to include the area bounded by South Terrace on the north, Phoenix Terrace on the east, properties in Technical Street on the south and the rear accesses to 15-25 High Street on the west. This contains one of three sites (Pople's Yard) dealt with in this chapter where specific planning ideas are discussed. The other two sites are: the "Cultural Quarter/Town Square" (see later for definition) and the Pier Street/ South Esplanade car park.

A further addition is to include Manor Gardens and the adjacent Crosses Pen. Together with Marine Cove on the Esplanade, these form important formal gardens and enhance the traditional seaside appeal of the town. Their value as the "green lungs" of the central area of the town is recognized by their designation as Local Green Spaces (policy CB 7).

The primary shopping area, as defined by Sedgemoor DC, is subdivided into primary and secondary retail frontages. The primary retail frontage consists of Pier St. and High St. south of College St. The secondary frontage consists of Abingdon St. between High St. and Technical St.; parts of College St.; Victoria St.(from College St.to Vicarage St.); Regent St.; Vicarage St. and High St. north of College St. This leaves a small group of shops opposite St .Andrew's churchyard undesignated. This plan proposes extending the primary shopping area to include them in the secondary retail frontage.

The original town centre area, primary shopping area and shopping classification as defined by Sedgemoor DC is shown on P212 of the Core Strategy (2011) in Map 12.2. The map on the next

page shows the expanded area outlined in the previous paragraphs. Within the chapter it will be made clear if reference is being made to the primary shopping area (as defined by SDC and extended by policy CB 1) or the wider central Burnham area.



Map 9. Area covered by this chapter outlined in red.

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2. Policy Framework

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) Section 2 requires planning policies to promote competitive town centres; place them at the heart of their community and support their viability and vitality; distinguish between primary and secondary shopping areas and set appropriate policies for them; provide customer choice and a diverse retail offer; and reflect the individuality of town centres.

Sedgemoor District Council in its 2013 Core Strategy deals with retail centres as part of its district wide policies in Chapter 5. Based on a major document “Sedgemoor Town Centres and Retail Study” produced in 2009, it proposes Policy D13 which outlines the criteria under which town centre uses will be supported. Although some eight years have elapsed since this survey the basic situations described in it have not changed significantly and so Policy D13 remains relevant and does not need additions. The policy recognises the need for retaining the primary frontage as predominately A1 while allowing an appropriate mix of other ground floor uses if they add viability to the town centre. It proposes a more flexible strategy for the secondary areas.

The Local Plan Review Stage 1 Consultation – Scope and Approach (regulation 18) document says: *The general approach currently set out will be retained and the identified town centre, main retail frontages and secondary retail frontages will be retained. The policy will need to be amended and simplified to reflect the recent changes to permitted development rights that now provide greater flexibilities to enable town centres to more rapidly respond to changing market demands. The focus will be on positive responses to uses that support and enhance the role of the town centre.*

The Proposed Submission Local Plan sets out in Policy BH 9 the objectives of enhancing the service centre role of the town; promoting regeneration of the built environment and improvements to the public realm; and strengthening the area’s role as a tourist destination. In Policy D19 it sets out the policies governing the retail hierarchy and the different treatments of primary and secondary retail frontages.

The thrust of all these policies is to encourage positive attempts to maintain and enhance retail areas of a distinctive nature which act as a focus for their local community.

3. Vision and objectives for Central Burnham-on-Sea

3.1 Developing the vision

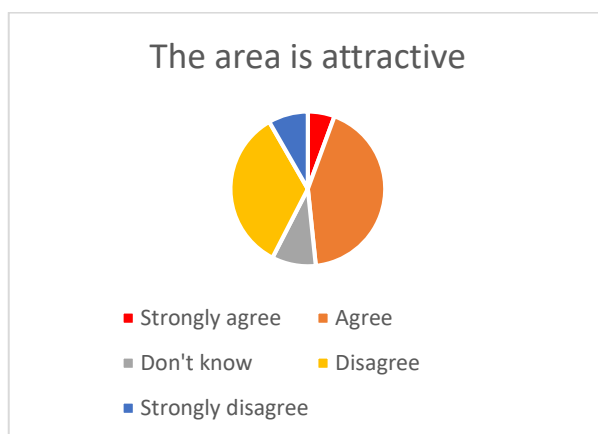
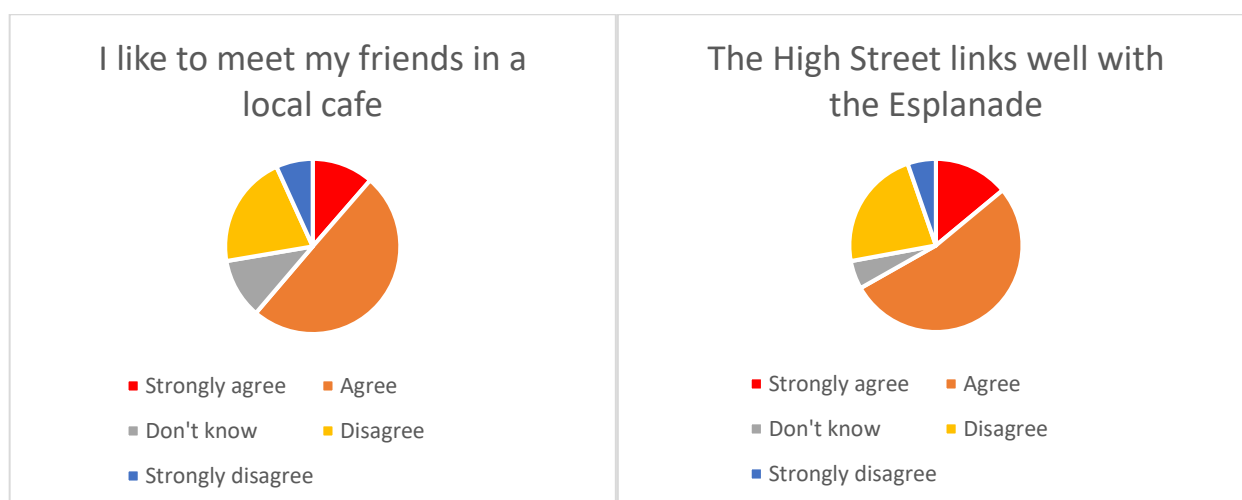
The regeneration proposals already mentioned have highlighted a number of recurring themes:

- The importance of creating northern and southern nodes to the town centre - the “Cultural Quarter/Town Square” and the “Visitor Gateway”.
- The necessity for high quality public realm – open spaces and street scenes.
- The importance of the appearance of shopfronts and of the scale of the town centre.
- The improvement of east/west links to the Esplanade.
- The car/pedestrian balance.

The proposals also contained a number of vision statements, as does the SDC Core Strategy. An e-mail request to interested people in December 2014 for their visions produced a number of responses. Principal points were that the town centre should be central to community life; made

more attractive; celebrate the Victorian past but not forget young people and their needs. These are summarised in “Burnham Town Centre vision statements” in the documents to be found on the website <http://www.burnhamandhighbridgeneighbourhoodplan.org/burnham-town-centre>.

Consultation in January 2015 with local residents specifically sought opinions on the town centre. Over 350 responded, predominately from Burnham and in the older age range. Although 95% shop locally only 32% described the shops as “good” or “excellent” and 83% also shop elsewhere. Responses to specific statements are shown below.



Other issues raised by respondents included: dog mess, litter, traffic and pedestrianisation, lack of clothes shops, concern over public toilets and the dominance of charity shops, cafes and takeaways. There has been a conscious decision by the Town Council to build on the Victorian heritage of the centre by providing heritage-style street furniture and by changing modern lights to heritage-style in Victoria Street to match the existing Victorian lights in the High Street. This has been broadly welcomed by residents. Reports from the visitor information centre also indicate that the heritage of the town is one of the aspects most appreciated by tourists.

3.2 The vision statement

Taking all these factors into consideration, a vision statement was produced, together with draft policies and suggestions. They were subjected to a further survey in mid-2015. This time over 500 people responded, the majority in favour of each idea varying from 66% to 86%. Comments were also invited and considered, following which amendments were made. The amended vision is:

Our Vision for Central Burnham.

By 2032, the area will be central to all aspects of community life. A centre not just for retail, business and eating out but, in addition, for cultural and social, recreational and leisure pursuits.

It will recognise that there are an increasing number of town centre residents whose quality of life needs to be balanced with the town's retail and leisure offer.

It will celebrate its Victorian heritage, preserving what is the best and building on this by redevelopments which are sympathetic to the scale and style of the existing built environment, whilst not hindering the establishment of a modern shopping and leisure experience. It will recognise that shopping habits have changed and that a successful centre needs the right mix of shops, restaurants, leisure and cultural facilities – all within an improved public realm which enhances the appeal to customers. This mix creates the ambience of the area – charm, friendliness, character and accessibility.

By improving the experience of residents and visitors, the area will have become a “destination” – a place worth visiting for the quality of the retail area and the walks along the Esplanade, which will be better linked to the retail area.

The Princess Theatre will be the hub of cultural life in the centre and, potentially, be part of a group of public buildings with the adjacent Learning Centre and Library linked by a new public space, thus creating a northern focus to the Town Centre – the “Town Square”.

At the southern end of town the Pier St. /South Esplanade car park is the entrance to the town for many visitors. There is potential for mixed-use redevelopment while preserving car and coach parking.

The Esplanade will be attractive to residents and visitors, emphasising the quality of the historic environment and implementing the policies of the approved Conservation Area management plan to improve the street scene.

A town that balances being a “sea side town” with being a “town by the sea”.

3.3 Achieving the vision.

To achieve this vision, a number of objectives are proposed, from which flow policies and recommendations.

Objectives for policies for Central Burnham.

- 1. Maintain the viability of the shopping area.**
- 2. Prevent Central Burnham becoming characterless and bland.**
- 3. Promote appropriate redevelopment in Central Burnham.**
- 4. Promote appropriate redevelopment of specific sites.**
- 5. Preserve the formal gardens.**

4. The viability of the shopping area

Objective 1. Maintain the viability of the shopping area.

4.1 The extent of the Primary shopping area

The Core Strategy Policy P3 and the Proposed Submission Policy BH 9 define the primary and secondary retail frontages of the town centre. As has been stated in the introduction, it is considered necessary that the secondary retail frontage is extended to include the northern end of Victoria Street i.e. the buildings from Vicarage Street to the corner opposite Tregunter. The revised primary shopping area and secondary retail frontage is shown on Map 10. The extension is marked in yellow.

Policy CB 1 - Extend the primary shopping area to include the northern end of Victoria Street as part of the secondary retail frontage.



4.2 The provision of public toilets

To maintain the viability of the retail centre it is important that an appropriate mix of uses is maintained. This is supported by Sedgemoor's Core Strategy policy D13, Retail Hierarchy and Centres. This covers the issue adequately and it was decided that there was no need to add to it, nor to amend it. However, one issue not covered by the policy is that of public toilets.

There is significant public concern that public toilets are under threat of closure. At the moment two sets are open all year (South Esplanade and Oxford Street Car Park) and one is open during the summer months (Crosses Pen recreational area). The costs are shared between the District and Town Councils. In addition a small number of public houses make their facilities available in return for payment from the District Council. Public toilets are essential for a seaside resort as visitors rely on them. For many who arrive by coach it is the first facility they seek out. The importance of tourism is highlighted in the Proposed Submission, paragraph 5.98 and Policy BH 11.

Accordingly:

Statement of Intent 6: Monitoring the provision of public toilets.

The Town Council will monitor the provision of public toilets in the Town Centre area and work with the District Council to ensure that it is always sufficient both for residents and tourists.

5. The appearance of the Central Burnham area

Objective 2. Prevent Central Burnham becoming characterless and bland.

5.1 Design of shops and other commercial premises in the area

The Conservation Area

Part of the town centre – the northern part and the Esplanade – is in a conservation area. This was designated in 1988 and extended in 2007.

"The Esplanade is the sea front of the resort town. The Esplanade gives the conservation area a strong linear character; the various stuccoed buildings along the front form an attractive overall composition framed by two quadrant terraces to the north and the Queen's Hotel to the south. The Esplanade Pavilion provides the central focus for the Esplanade walk, which is an important public open space. Development along the Esplanade is dense, usually of two or three storeys, with few opportunities for infill but several for sympathetic redevelopment.

The Town Centre: The east side of Victoria Street and the south side of College Street define an area of the town centre with significant historic importance and some attractive architecture. Development throughout the town centre is dense, usually of two or three storeys, with few opportunities for infill but several for sympathetic redevelopment." (SDC Conservation Officer 2014)

The NPPF requires Local Planning authorities to take into account 'the wider social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits that conservation of the historic environment can bring' (para. 126), and SDC recognises that 'the standard of the built heritage, particularly at coastal towns, can make a valuable contribution to the holiday experience and the character and quality of the resort' (Conservation Areas of Sedgemoor' SDC 1993). Policy D17 in the Core Strategy and Policy D27 in the Proposed Submission Local Plan give support to the maintenance and enhancement of the historic environment, especially conservation areas, but place-specific criteria are lacking in District policy.

One of the more attractive features of the Burnham primary shopping area, especially (but not exclusively) north of College Street in the conservation area, is the number of traditional shop fronts which make a significant contribution to the character of the area, whilst not preventing the shops and commercial premises now occupying them from developing modern internal layouts. The following policy seeks to prevent this area becoming characterless and bland - a shopping area that could be anywhere, by adding local detail to the policies above. It also responds to paragraph 7.25 in the Proposed Submission which deals with local character and existing structures. In addition, paragraph 7.40 of the same document commits Sedgemoor District Council to support Neighbourhood Plans in including robust design considerations. The aim is to preserve traditional features of shop fronts and other buildings where they still exist and so conserve the character of what is still an essentially Victorian/Edwardian area – a feature much appreciated by both local residents and visitors. It builds on existing conservation area policy but is not exclusive to the conservation area itself. It accords with the District Council's policies on the historic environment (above). The policy is based on the Sidmouth Shopfront practice notes from East Devon.

Policy CB 2 – Non-retail premises and shop fronts in the primary shopping area

Proposals for changes to shop fronts or new shop fronts will be considered in accordance with the following criteria:

- 1. Traditional style shop fronts which have remained unaltered and are worthy of conservation should be retained.**
- 2. Where traditional features such as stall risers, columns, pilasters or cornices exist these should be retained and further alteration should seek to upgrade the shop front in a manner sympathetic to any of the existing traditional features. If lost they should be incorporated in new designs where appropriate to the character of the area.**
- 3. Shop fronts including signs and fasciae should be designed to complement the character and individuality of the building in which they are set.**
- 4. Materials used should be sensitive to the character and appearance of the building and surrounding properties. In the conservation area, only materials which are in keeping with the character or appearance of the area will be permitted.**
- 5. Large expanses of undivided glass will not be permitted where they are alien to the character of the building in which they are set.**
- 6. Where two or more adjoining buildings form part of the same premises they should be treated as individual shop fronts.**
- 7. Where features such as stall risers, columns, pilasters or cornices make a significant contribution to the character of the immediate area or the individual building, new shop fronts should provide these features in order to maintain such character.**

The upper storeys of commercial premises play an important role in the overall street scene. Proposals that enhance the appearance of the building will be supported.

Design and materials used must be sensitive to the surrounding properties.

5.2 The colour of facades

When the conservation area was extended in 2007, action was considered to restrict the colour of facades but, after consultation, it was decided to not to do so and, consequently, no part of the conservation area (nor any other part of the Town Centre) is covered by restrictions on paint colour. What seems to have happened is that, when grants were available for re-painting of the Esplanade, colour restrictions were imposed on properties that received grants. As many properties took advantage of the scheme the result is the fairly homogeneous colour palette we see today. It is acknowledged that the colour treatment of the Esplanade, which largely consists of residential properties of a similar age, should differ from that of the commercial centre of the town where properties show a greater variety of style and shops, in particular, may have corporate images. Nevertheless, as most of these properties are restricted to ground floor premises, it is appropriate to give some guidance about any painted/stuccoed sections of the first floor and the ground floor (where they exist).

The following guidance note is aimed at owners, tenants and developers of town centre commercial premises.

Guidance. Colours of facades.

Although a variety of colours can add to the attractiveness of the area, it is also true that a choice of garish ones can distract from this. A previous grant-aided re-decoration scheme on the Esplanade has produced the fairly homogeneous colour palette we see today.

The sensitive use of colour offers enormous scope for improving the street scene but the choice of colour scheme must take account of the building and its setting. Corporate colour schemes may be attractive in isolation but can be inappropriate in the wider street scene. Minor variations in a retailer's corporate colours may be desirable. As the majority of the buildings in the Town Centre are constructed of matt finished, non-reflective materials there is a general presumption, especially in the conservation area and listed buildings, against using plastics, and acrylic sheets. Accordingly landlords are encouraged to consider carefully their colour schemes when redecorating and to avoid ones which would clash with the surrounding premises and/or be too prominent in the street scene.

6. Redevelopment

Objective 3. Promote appropriate redevelopment in central Burnham.

6.1 Principles of redevelopment

Redevelopment in the central area has been limited over the years, and not wholly sympathetic. If the area is to thrive it is important that its character is reinforced as it is this which is one of the main attractions both to residents and visitors. In addition, to minimise conflict between delivery lorries and pedestrians, rear accesses should be preserved or, if possible, created, where this would be advantageous and appropriate.

Sedgemoor's Core Strategy policy D2 (also D2 in the submission document) promotes high quality and inclusive design. It requires that new development responds to the local characteristics of the site; does not harm the amenity value of the occupiers of nearby buildings; reduces the potential for crime and contributes to the quality of the public realm.

Policy CB 3 is proposed to augment Core strategy policy D 2 by interpreting it in the context of Central Burnham, introducing a specific reference to rear accesses (helping to reduce traffic in the streets) and also to the historical or architectural character of the area. On consultation, it was supported by 85% of responders.

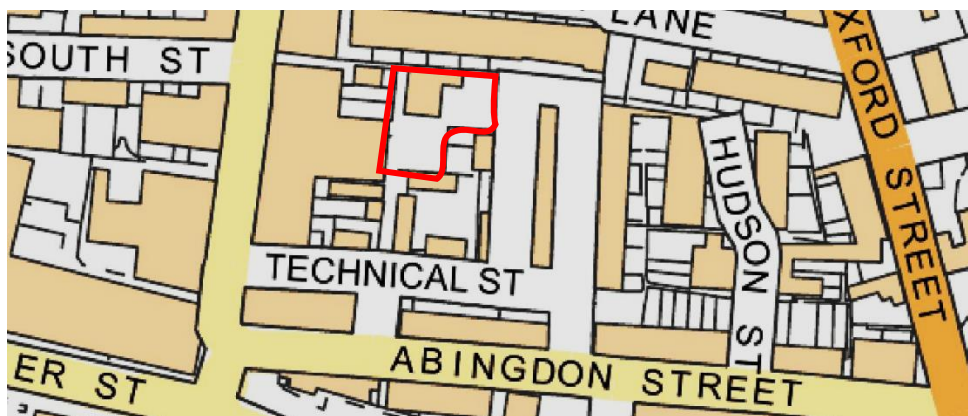
Policy CB 3 - Redevelopment in Central Burnham

Proposals will be supported if they fit the following criteria:

- 1. Reinforce the key characteristics and special qualities of the area;**
- 2. Ensure that the scale, massing, height, fenestration and materials of buildings relate well to their context;**
- 3. Where appropriate, retain rear access where it exists or, if possible, create a new one;**
- 4. Do not adversely affect:**
 - i. the amenity of occupiers of adjoining residential properties;**
 - ii. the distinctive historical or architectural character of the area;**
- 5. Maintain or enhance existing building frontages in the conservation area (if relevant):**
and
- 6. Have due regard for important aspects of detail and quality, incorporating:**
 - i. secure and attractive layouts with safe and convenient access for the whole community, including disabled users;**
 - ii. measures to create a safe environment for the community and reduce the potential for crime;**
 - iii. use of appropriate building materials and techniques respecting local tradition and vernacular styles.**
 - iv. for non-residential developments, use of appropriate building materials contributing to low embodied energy and CO₂ reduction.**

6.2. Redevelopment of specific sites

6.2.1. Pople's Yard



Map 11

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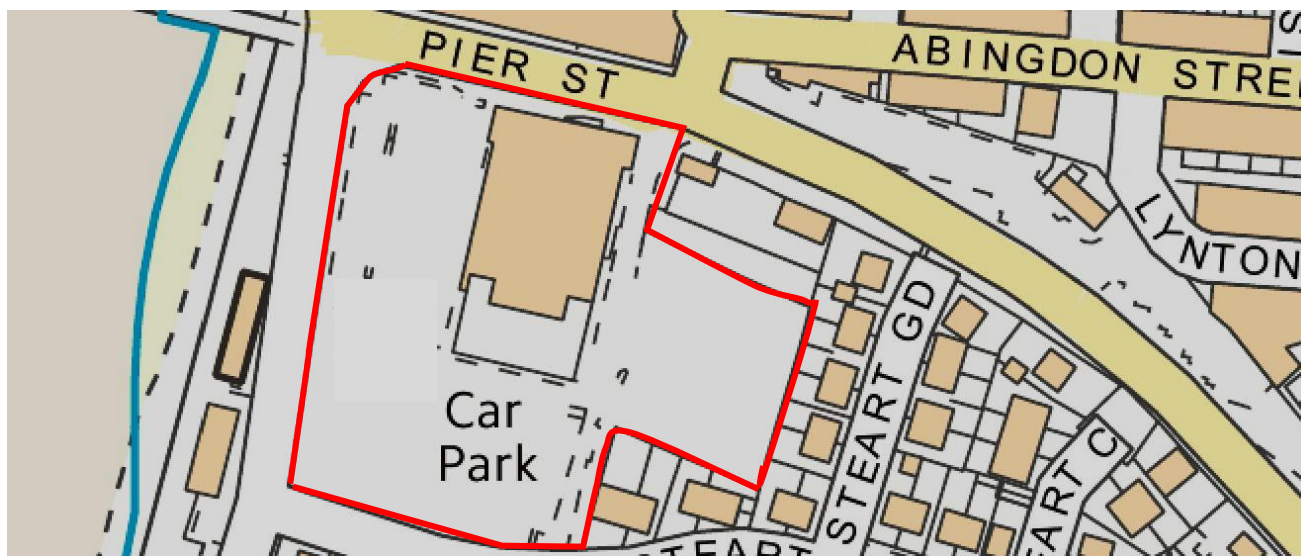
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Pople's Yard is part of the site bounded by South Terrace on the north, Phoenix Terrace on the east, properties in Technical Street on the south and the rear accesses to 15-25 High Street on the west. It consists of a storage building and an area of associated parking. Situated as it is, the yard has limited potential for commercial development but does have potential for residential development, provided it is sympathetic to the surrounding houses – the majority of which are two storied terraced properties dating to around the beginning of the 20th Century. It could provide an attractive small scale development with the potential to improve the environment of the terrace to the north. Informal discussions have taken place in the past regarding this site and it is regarded as suitable for residential use by Planning officers and the owner. It is the only such site in the central area of Burnham.

Policy CB 4 - Pople's Yard.

A residential development on this site will be supported, provided it is in accordance with policy CB 3. A site specific Flood Risk Assessment, having regard to the advice in the Environment Agency's specific advice for Sedgemoor in the Wessex Area Local Standing Advice for Sedgemoor District (2013) will be required as part of a planning application.

6.2.2. Pier Street car park.



Map 12

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This car park occupies a prominent site at the southern end of town. Within its boundaries is situated a supermarket, the freeholders of which own the majority of the car park and lease it back to Sedgemoor District Council. The Council itself owns the section of the car park to the east side of the supermarket. Visitors are very likely to park in this car park as it is the largest and most prominent in the town. For these visitors, their first impression of the town is therefore of an utilitarian supermarket and a windswept large car park – not the most welcoming or attractive prospect.

While there are no proposals for redevelopment at the present time, it is possible that some may arise in the future. In the past it has featured prominently in the various regeneration studies previously mentioned. The 2003 report proposed a new mixed development (cafes/shops, apartments etc.) and the Regeneration Strategy of 2006 built on these ideas. However no developer has yet come forward to implement them. Nevertheless, given the importance of the site, both to the built environment and the economy of the town centre, it is appropriate to outline some development principles to be taken into consideration.

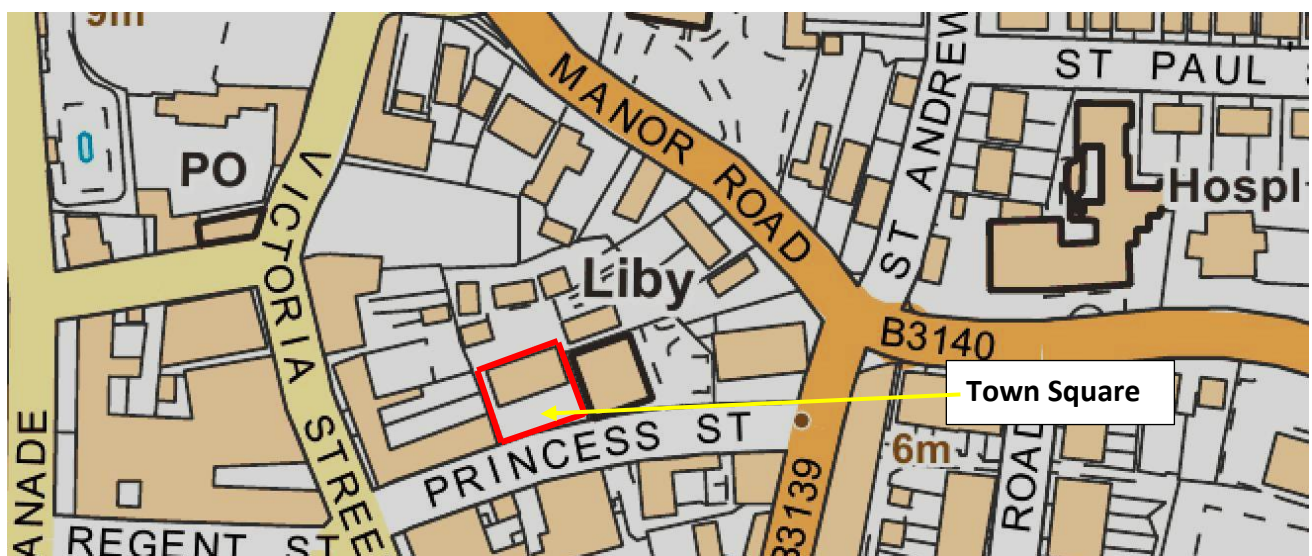
Policy CB 5 - Pier Street Car Park

Any future development of this site should work to a comprehensive master plan and seek to achieve a gateway to the Town Centre which is attractive and welcoming. In doing so it should:

- 1. Preserve sufficient car and coach parking to support the town's economy in the peak summer months.**
- 2. Incorporate, if feasible, solar panel "car ports" and electric vehicle charging points.**
- 3. Provide attractive frontage to South Esplanade/Pier Street, as appropriate, by development of mixed-use buildings. The ground floor of these buildings could be used to support facilities such as indoor leisure, shops and restaurants while the upper stories may provide residential units.**
- 4. Enhance the public space around and within the site by appropriate soft landscaping such as trees and sensitive planting and hard landscaping such as paving, seating and signage.**

An adequate site specific Flood Risk Assessment detailing appropriate mitigation measures is required as part of any planning application.

6.2.3. The "Cultural Quarter/Town Square"



Map 13

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The terms “Cultural Quarter” and “Civic Precinct” have been used in a number of regeneration proposals to describe the combination of three contiguous sites: Princess Theatre and Arts Centre; Somerset Skills and Learning Centre & Library; the site of the former Tucker’s Garage.

The term “Town Square” is used here as an alternative term to “Civic Precinct” in order to emphasise that the intention is for people to feel that this area is theirs – not part of a separate municipal sector.

Proposals for this area have ranged in ambition and cost from

1. public realm improvements (including the creation of public spaces, enhanced educational/leisure facilities, residential units) to:
2. creation of a pedestrian friendly “Town Square” in Princess Street (wider pavements, traffic table, possible one-way traffic system) to:
3. creating pedestrian links between Victoria Street, Princess Street and Manor Road and a new Town Square in front of the Learning Centre, incorporating and pedestrianising that section of Princess Street between it and the Princess Theatre and Arts Centre.

The Tucker’s Garage site now has planning permission for the erection of retirement flats so has been excluded from further consideration. The Learning Centre, although not in the conservation area, is a building of historic significance – beginning its life as an Infant School in 1915. If any redevelopment of it is proposed it should result in a building which has an active ground floor and is sympathetic to the Princess Theatre, which itself dates from the mid-19th Century and is one of the most important buildings in the town centre. Any development in this area would need to take account of the District Council’s policies on the historic environment (Core Strategy Policy D 17, submission document Policy D 27). Whether or not redevelopment proposals do occur, there exists potential for public realm improvement to create a “Town Square”. The Town Council is committed to collaborative working to achieve this. The forecourt of the Learning Centre (or a replacement building if it were redeveloped) could be opened up to Princess Street to create an attractive square and Princess Street itself could be pedestrianised between the Centre and the Theatre, while retaining the vehicular accesses to either side of the Princess Theatre. As an alternative to full pedestrianisation of this section, the street could be made pedestrian friendly by wider pavements, a speed table and a possible one-way traffic system.

There are a number of options to achieving the Town Square and it is proposed that the best way forward would be by the production of a detailed development brief. This could be a priority for CIL funding or a bid to the Coastal Community Fund or alternative source of finance.

Accordingly, it is proposed that:

Policy CB 6 - The Learning Centre and the Town Square, Princess Street.

The redevelopment of the area identified in Map 13 as a Town Square in Princess Street is supported where it enhances the setting of the public buildings there and provides a northern focus to the Town Centre. The development of this site should work to a detailed development brief that identifies the following:

Public realm improvement;

Traffic management;

The formal and informal use of the space;

Landscaping; and

How the space links together the surrounding buildings and relates to the town centre.

Any redevelopment of the Learning Centre should result in a building which is:

sympathetic in design and scale to the Princess Theatre and Arts Centre;

retains and enhances the forecourt area for the establishment of a Town Square;

has active ground floor uses with mixed uses on the upper floors.

A site specific Flood Risk Assessment, having regard to the advice in the Environment Agency's specific advice for Sedgemoor in the Wessex Area Local Standing Advice for Sedgemoor District (2013) will be required as part of a planning application.

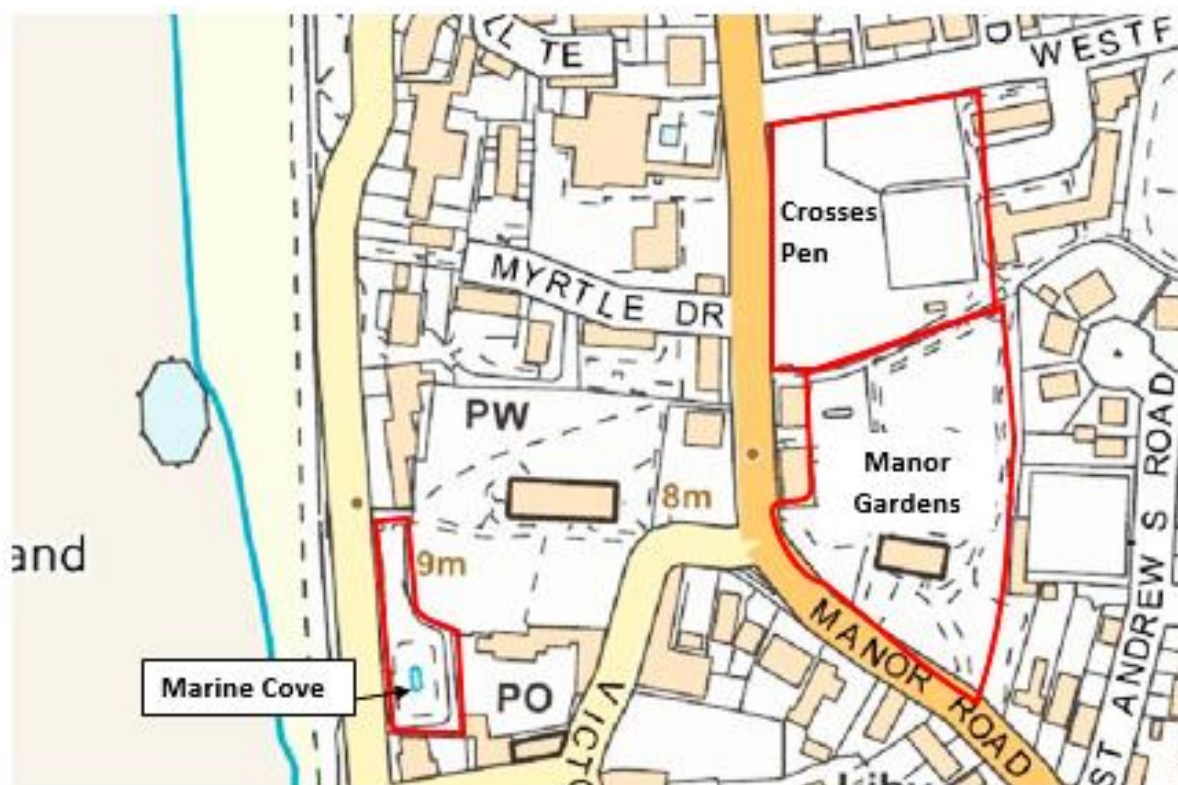
7. The gardens in, and adjacent to, Central Burnham

Objective 5. Preserve the formal gardens.

The formal gardens in the central area – Marine Cove, Manor Gardens and Crosses Pen – are an important part of the attraction of the area to visitors and residents alike. In addition, the lawns along the South Esplanade form an important recreational function. Rather than add a separate section, the proposal to designate the South Esplanade Lawns as a Local Green Space is included here, although outside the main area dealt with in this chapter.

Marine Cove benefits from an active Friends group and a management plan and has attracted significant investment. It would be advantageous to the other areas for future/further enhancements to be considered. To give two examples: the South Esplanade Lawns would benefit from a comprehensive management plan for improvement which included planting and leisure proposals; Crosses Pen tennis courts could be considered for upgrading.

The benefits of each area are discussed more fully in the supporting document "Local Green Spaces in Burnham and Highbridge". In recognition of their importance it is proposed to formally designate them as "Local Green Spaces". What is included here are the maps and summaries of reasons for each site.



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Maps 14 (above) and 15 (below)

Policy CB 7.

Designate Marine Cove, Manor Gardens, Crosses Pen and the South Esplanade Lawns as “Local Green Spaces”.

Development on designated Local Green Spaces will only be permitted in very special circumstances.

7.1 Marine Cove

Reasons for designation as a “Local Green Space”.

- The site is in good proximity to the centre of Burnham. Parking is available along the Esplanade and in the Community Centre car park, some 200m away. ‘Bus routes are close by. Access on foot is good as is access by wheelchair. It is valued as a tranquil place to visit and has plenty of seating within the Cove and in the two shelters which also face out on to the Esplanade as well as into the Cove itself.
- The site is a very attractive Italianate-style garden of historical importance to Burnham. It is adjacent to St.Andrew’s Church which is Grade II listed and forms part of the attractive Victorian Esplanade within the town centre conservation area.
- The site has full public access, including for disabled, and is used for a number of small scale community events throughout the year. It is maintained by a volunteer group of people under the direction of a paid Co-ordinator.
- The site is the only park and garden on the Esplanade and, as such, is used extensively by both residents and visitors.
- The site has a “Green Flag” award.

7.2 Manor Gardens

Reasons for designation as a “Local Green Space”.

- The site is in good proximity to the centre of Burnham and the Esplanade, which is a short walk away through St.Andrew’s churchyard. Parking is available in the Community Centre car park, some 50m away. Access on foot is good as is access by wheelchair and a pedestrian- controlled crossing links the gardens to the car park and St.Andrew’s.
- Within the gardens there are a number of seats around the perimeter walks, including one in a shelter. The formal planting makes for pleasant walks around the garden and, when the gardens are not being used for events, they are valued for their tranquillity. Families and groups will picnic on the grass during the warmer months. In addition, people walking between Berrow and Manor Roads will cut through the gardens, rather than following the pavements outside.
- The site is an important local example of a formal urban park – the only one in Burnham and Highbridge - and contains the historically important Manor House; is flanked by a Georgian terrace; and is in the town centre conservation area. Unlike many other such parks it is not gated but open to the public at all hours.

- The gardens form an important function in the life of the town as a venue for the Memorial Hospital Fete and open air musical events such a “Jazz in the Park” where families can enjoy a free event and a family picnic.

7.3 Crosses Pen

Reasons for designation as a “Local Green Space”.

- The site is in good proximity to the centre of Burnham and the Esplanade, which is a short walk away through St.Andrew’s churchyard. Parking is available in the Community Centre car park, some 20m away. Access on foot is good as is access by wheelchair and a pedestrian- controlled crossing links the site to the car park, the Community Centre, the swimming pool and fitness centre and St.Andrew’s.
- It forms an important recreational function and has done so for generations. The tennis court is the only public one in Burnham and Highbridge and has been available for over 100 years. The children’s play area is the only significant one in the central area of Burnham, and the only one which serves visitors to the beach and town centre. The informal area is valued by the fitness centre as a training space; by local youngsters as a kick-about area; and by people generally as an informal area to sit, chat and picnic. It also acts as an overspill area when Manor Gardens are being used for events. In particular, it contains the public toilets which serve both facilities.
- Like Manor Gardens, Crosses Pen is not gated and so remains open 24 hours a day.

7.4 South Esplanade Lawns

Reasons for designation as a “Local Green Space”:

- There are good, level pedestrian links from the centre of Burnham and from surrounding housing. This enables easy access for wheelchair and mobility scooter users.
- Vehicular access, including disabled access, is available with a large amount of parking alongside on the road and in the Pier Street car park.
- The area is used extensively by picnickers, families playing games and walkers - particularly those with dogs.
- The formally planted flower beds provide a focus in summer months.
- The asphalted area with plants in tubs is used for games by people of a wide age range, by children riding small bicycles and for general relaxation. It is popular with those using mobility scooters.
- The site is used for community events (such as ESCAPE day and the SEADOGS event) that attract local people and visitors.
- A large number of visitors are resident at Burnham Holiday Village during the summer months and walk along the South Esplanade into town. It is therefore their first experience of Burnham itself and it is important that this should be pleasurable.

Chapter 3

Housing in Burnham-on-Sea and Highbridge

1. Introduction

As the second biggest urban area in Sedgemoor, the Neighbourhood Plan Area plays an important role in providing for the strategic housing needs of the District. Both the Sedgemoor Core Strategy 2011 and the Draft Local Plan direct new development firstly to Bridgwater and secondly to Burnham-on-Sea and Highbridge. They identify the number of new homes that should be built at the towns, and allocate sites to accommodate them. The Neighbourhood Plan supports the approach set out in the Local Plan, and therefore does not seek either to assess housing need, or to allocate housing sites. Instead, the focus of the policies in this chapter are on adding detail to Local Plan policy in order to positively influence the delivery of new housing in line with the vision and objectives set out below.

There are significant differences between Burnham and Highbridge both in the recent development of new housing and in the opportunities likely to be available over the Neighbourhood Plan period. Highbridge has seen several large housing developments in recent years, including those at Mulholland Park and the former Morlands industrial estate. Further developments are underway at the time of writing, including at Brue Farm (550 dwellings adjoining the urban area) and the former Cattle Market and Boatyard (Newton Rd 105 dwellings and Clyce Road 85 dwellings). The sites allocated in the emerging Local Plan are in addition to these sites.

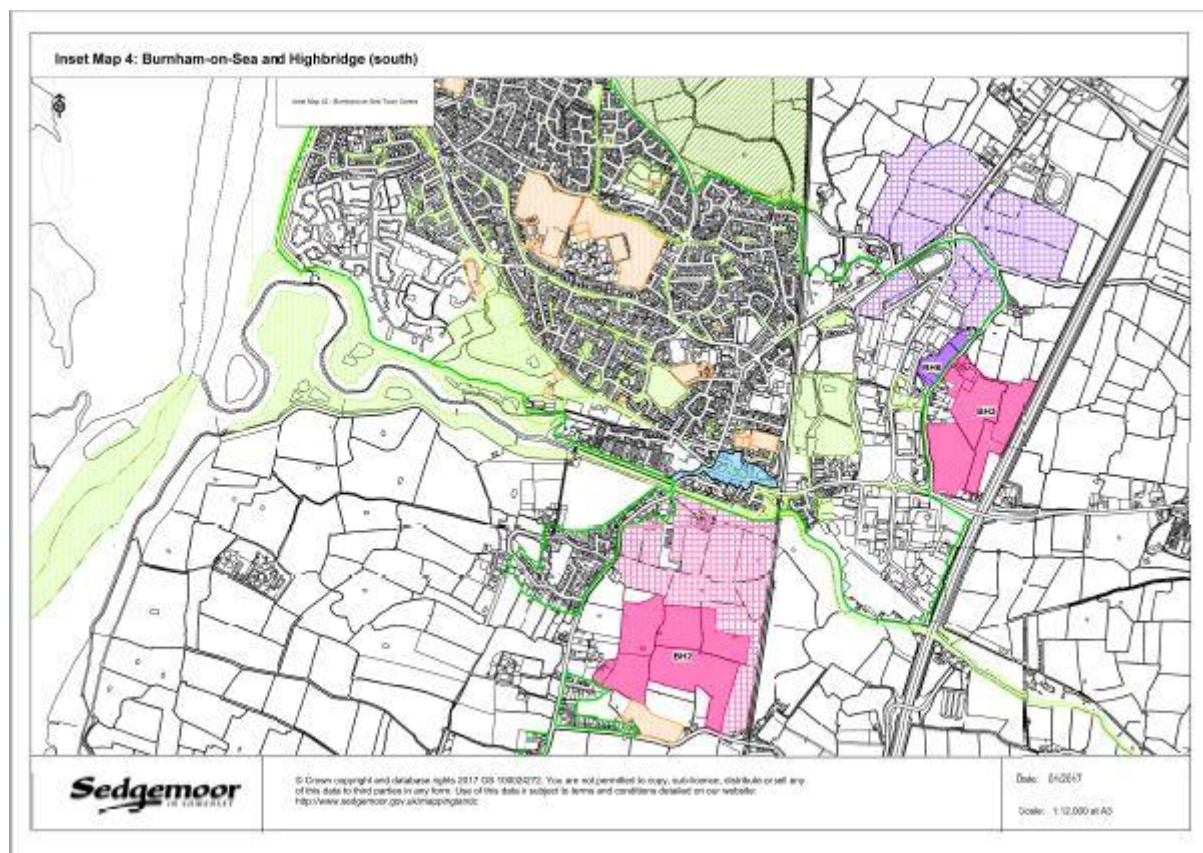
Burnham-on-Sea, by contrast, has seen only limited development in recent years, largely due to the constraints of flood risk and the lack of developable greenfield or brownfield sites. There are no housing sites allocated in Burnham in the emerging Local Plan, although an area north of the town has been identified for possible future development.

This difference means that some of the Neighbourhood Plan housing policies will apply primarily to Highbridge as the location for most major housing developments over the coming years. This is appropriate given that the policies largely seek to mitigate the impact of such development on the relatively small community of the town. However, many will also apply to Burnham, where smaller infill sites are expected to come forward.

1.1. Existing Planning Policy

Government policy in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) emphasises the need for local planning policy to assess and provide for the housing needs of the area. This has been adequately done by Sedgemoor District Council in the Core Strategy 2011, and recently updated in the emerging Local Plan and its supporting evidence. The NPPF also states very clearly in Paragraph 184 that 'Neighbourhood plans and orders should not promote less development than set out in the Local Plan or undermine its strategic policies.' It has therefore not been considered necessary during the neighbourhood plan process to assess local housing needs or to allocate housing sites. However, it is appropriate for neighbourhood plans to set out locally relevant criteria to guide the development of housing, including, for example, on design, the size of gardens or the mix of tenures to meet local needs.

The emerging Local Plan Spatial Strategy identifies the residual requirement for housing in the Burnham and Highbridge housing area between 2015 and 2032 as 850 dwellings, and Policies BH2 and BH3 allocate two strategic housing sites on greenfield land to accommodate about 670 of these dwellings during this period. They are shown in solid pink on the map below.



Map 16

The smaller of these sites, Land to the East of Isleport Lane, is within the Neighbourhood Area and accommodates 270 dwellings. The larger site for 400 dwellings is an extension to the recent Brue Farm development and is within West Huntspill Parish, outside but adjoining the Neighbourhood Area. The remainder are expected to be delivered on smaller brownfield sites or on sites identified as 'opportunity' sites in the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment September 2016.

Sedgemoor District Housing Requirement as set out in the Proposed Submission Local Plan 2017 (Regulation 19 version). Table 4.3, Page 20.

Settlement	Housing Requirement 2011-2032	Completions 2011-2015	Commitments as of 1st April 2015	Residual Requirement (2015-2032)
Principal Town (Bridgwater)	8118	1523	2,875	3,720
Towns (Burnham and Highbridge)	2030	262	918	850
Other Settlements	3383	587	517	2280
Sedgemoor Total	13,530	2,372	4,310	6,848

In addition, Policy BH4 identifies the existing Morlands housing estate as in need of renewal and sets out the intention for SDC to work with relevant partners to deliver such renewal along with appropriate criteria that it should aspire to.

Development management policies in the Local Plan are applicable across the District. In terms of housing development in the Neighbourhood Plan Area, they:

- set out broad design criteria (Policy D2)
- encourage sustainable construction methods and the use of low carbon energy (Policies D3 and D5)
- set out the needed mix of housing in terms of tenure and size in line with figures in the Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2016 (Policy D6)
- provide targets for percentages of affordable housing to be provided on developments of different sizes, in line with the Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2016 (Policy D7)
- set out criteria for Care Homes and Specialist Accommodation (Policy D8)
- set out criteria for Gypsy and Traveller Sites and measures to encourage the provision of self-build plots (Policies D9 and D10)

District wide policies also set out measures to:

- encourage the provision of sustainable transport schemes and to help manage the transport impact of development (Policies D14 and D15)
- help conserve landscape quality, biodiversity, ecological networks, protected trees and woodland (Policies D20, D21, D22 and D23)
- help manage the pollution impacts of development and to conserve residential amenity (Policies D25 and D26)
- protect the historic environment, archaeological sites and areas of archaeological potential (Policies D27, D28 and D29)
- ensure that new development addresses educational and health needs (Policies D30 & D31)
- protect and enhance green infrastructure and encourage the provision of appropriate new green spaces and recreation areas in new development (Policies D32, D33, D36)

Existing planning policy and its relevance for the Neighbourhood Plan is discussed in more detail in the Evidence Base Summary, available at

<http://www.burnhamandhighbridgeneighbourhoodplan.org/final-submission-documents> and, where appropriate, in the text supporting the policies below.

1.2. Background evidence

The chief evidence used in the formation of housing policies has been provided by the evidence base for the Sedgemoor Core Strategy and Draft Local Plan. Key documents include:

- Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) September 2016
- Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) September 2016
- Levels of Growth 2011-2032
- Five Year Housing Land Supply 2016 to 2021
- Annual Monitoring Reports

All the above documents are available on the SDC website at www.sedgemoor.gov.uk/ldf and summaries are provided in the neighbourhood plan Evidence Base Summary, available at <http://www.burnhamandhighbridgeneighbourhoodplan.org/final-submission-documents>

Given that the Neighbourhood Area is a strategic urban area within the District, the documents above frequently address locally specific issues and have proved largely adequate as sources of evidence for the Neighbourhood Plan without the need to undertake further studies. However, there are instances where it has become clear that more local evidence is needed in order to adequately address perceived local issues through Neighbourhood Plan policy. Rather than delay production of the Neighbourhood Plan, these instances have been highlighted in the sections below and a commitment made to commission further evidence to feed into a future review of the Neighbourhood Plan.

1.3. Consultation

The key concerns raised about housing during consultation for the Neighbourhood Plan were:

- Building on flood plain and green fields.
- Ensuring good quality housing.
- Recent development in Highbridge has been of poor quality and not led to improved infrastructure.
- New housing should be accompanied by expansion in health care facilities such as GP and dentists surgeries, and school places.
- New housing needs be justified by new job opportunities.
- New housing needs to have the right mix of dwellings i.e. a variety of sizes and types.
- New housing needs to integrate with existing developments and to contain green spaces. We need to build communities, not estates.
- New housing should not exacerbate traffic problems.

Further detail on the consultation undertaken for the Neighbourhood Plan is set out in the Regulation 14 Consultation Statement, available at <http://www.burnhamandhighbridgeneighbourhoodplan.org/draft-consultation-documents>.

The Neighbourhood Plan as a whole, and particularly this chapter, seek to address the above housing issues as far as possible, while recognising that some are beyond its ability to affect, either because they are not planning related or because policy is set at a district or national level.

2. Vision and Objectives

The following vision has been developed following consideration of the available evidence, the policy context and consultation undertaken for the Neighbourhood Plan and was consulted on in March 2016, when it was endorsed by over 70% of respondents.

2.1. Vision for Housing

Our Vision for Housing in Burnham-on-Sea and Highbridge

The demand for new housing is well established – people are living longer, family make-up changes, and employment generates demand. Our aim is to provide homes, not just houses; in communities, not just estates. Places where people have sufficient space to live in harmony with their neighbours: where children can play in safety and where pedestrians and cyclists take preference over cars. Open spaces will be provided so that there is opportunity for recreation and exercise for all.

Flood prevention will be key and all development will have to satisfy the relevant authorities that it will be safe from flooding for its lifetime.

In these communities there will be a mix of types of housing and tenures, which will be integrated, not segregated. Homes will be constructed to the highest possible standards of design and energy efficiency, with no distinction between owner-occupied and tenanted. We will create attractive safe and socially inclusive environments where crime is “designed out.” Lifetime homes are our goal – homes that are designed to be more easily adaptable for lifetime use at minimal cost without the need for rebuild, conversion or the need to move, especially in later life.

Links to existing communities and to open countryside will be strong – cycle ways and footpaths will predominate. Traffic speeds within the developments will be limited by design and the effects of increased traffic on the surrounding area will be mitigated by appropriate measures such as new or improved roads and the enhancement of public transport.

The new communities will be supported by appropriate healthcare and education facilities – either onsite (if justified) or by expansion of existing provision.

2.2. Achieving the Vision

A number of objectives for the housing policies in the Neighbourhood Plan have been developed in order to help achieve this vision:

Objectives for Housing Policies

1. To ensure a mix of types of housing and tenures, which will be integrated, not segregated and with no distinction between owner-occupied and tenanted.
2. To provide places where people have sufficient space to live in harmony with their neighbours in attractive environments with good links to existing communities and the open countryside.
3. To build safe communities.
4. To build sustainable communities.
5. To provide access to attractive open spaces so that there is opportunity for recreation and exercise for all.
6. To limit traffic speeds within developments.
7. To encourage the use of more sustainable transport.
8. To ensure appropriate education and healthcare provision.

3. Dwelling size, type, tenure and affordability

Objective 1: To ensure a mix of types of housing and tenures, which will be integrated, not segregated and with no distinction between owner-occupied and tenanted.

National planning policy requires local planning authorities to identify local needs in terms of the size, type, tenure and range of housing that is required in particular locations, and to plan accordingly to meet that need.

3.1. Size and type of dwellings

SDC have identified need across the District in the Strategic Housing Market Assessment, updated in September 2016, which suggests targets levels of particular dwelling sizes as follows:

SHMA 2016 target mix:

Type of dwelling	1-bed	2-bed	3-bed	4+ bed
Market	5-10%	30-35%	40-45%	15-20%
Social/Affordable Rented	30-35%	30-35%	25-30%	5-10%
Intermediate/Starter Homes	15-20%	50-55%	25-30%	0-5%

The Annual Monitoring Report 2014/15 showed the actual build in 2014/5 for market housing in line with the updated SHMA profile (2016) but with an increase required in 3 bedroom properties at the expense of 4 bedroomed ones by 2031:

AMR 14/15:

Dwelling Size	Suggested SHMA Profile 2016 (market housing)	Actual profile 14/15 (13/14)	Estimated dwelling requirement as provided for by SHMA review (2031)
1 bedroom	5-10%	5.3% (9.0%)	7.5%
2 bedrooms	30-35%	33.7% (27.8%)	33.5%
3 bedrooms	40-45%	35.4 (44.0%)	43.5%
4+ bedrooms	15-20%	25.6% (19.3%)	15.5%

A particular factor in the neighbourhood plan area is the significant elderly population, 32.8% aged 60 or over in the 2011 census. The figure for Sedgemoor quoted in the SHMA 2016 is 29% and for England is 23%. The higher figure for the neighbourhood plan area is partly due to the popularity of Burnham for retirement. The SHMA 2016 also predicts a 36.3% increase in over 60's by 2032 for Sedgemoor as a whole. This sector of the market is particularly interested in bungalows, usually one or two bedroomed – whether “market” or “affordable”.

Historically in the Neighbourhood Plan Area, there has been over-provision of flats/maisonettes and terraced housing at the expense of bungalows, semi-detached and detached housing. This has certainly been the case in Highbridge where recent developments at Caxton Drive, Mulholland Park, Highbridge Quay, the Morlands Industrial site and the Highbridge hotel are predominately of this type. The Brue Farm development partially redresses the balance, although the provision of bungalows is still below that suggested appropriate by market demand.

Policy D6 in the Draft Local Plan requires housing development proposals to provide an appropriate mix of housing based on the best available evidence, including the SHMA, monitoring reports and Local Housing Needs Assessment. Types and sizes of dwellings should meet locally identified need and be appropriate to the established character and density of the neighbourhood. Evidence for local needs should be assessed by the developer, although local stakeholders, including town and parish councils and community groups can also provide additional information as part of pre-application engagement to ensure locally relevant schemes are taken forward.

Starter homes currently feature prominently in Government targets. Policy D6 requires that they should be provided on new housing developments in accordance with the national policy and regulations in place at the time of the planning application. It also states that exception sites for starter homes will be considered where they are on under-used or unviable industrial and commercial land that has not currently been identified for housing.

3.2. Affordable housing

The NPPF sets out a definition of affordable housing to be used in planning policy (Annex 2: Glossary), which includes social rented, affordable rented and intermediate housing. Local planning policy is required to set policies for meeting local need for affordable housing on site, except in exceptional circumstances.

The need for affordable housing is high across Sedgemoor, and SDC uses a target based approach to seek to address this need. Draft Local Plan Policy D7 requires affordable housing to be provided on sites of 11 or more houses in Burnham and Highbridge with percentage targets as follows:

Total dwellings (net)	Site typology	% of total number of new units to be affordable
11 and above	Brownfield	15%
	Greenfield	30%

These targets form a basis for negotiation: exceptional circumstances may justify a different number of affordable units or off-site provision.

3.3. Justifying Local Policy

At the time of writing, the SHMA is the key evidence for housing need within the Neighbourhood Area, and there is no clear picture how local housing needs within the Neighbourhood Area may differ from the District wide need. The Neighbourhood Plan seeks to fill that gap by committing the Town Council to commission evidence to ascertain the local need for affordable housing and for the size, type and tenure of dwellings. It may also investigate possible need for Local Letting Agreements that prioritise local people in allocation of affordable housing. In line with Draft Local Plan Policies D6 and D7, this may then be used to guide future housing developments. If appropriate, it may also be used to set out local targets in a future review of the Neighbourhood Plan.

Statement of Intent 7: Identifying and assessing housing need.

The Town Council will commission work at the appropriate time to identify and assess housing needs within the Neighbourhood Area in terms of:

- affordable housing;
- type, size and tenure of new dwellings;
- the need for, and feasibility of, Local Lettings Agreements for new affordable housing.

CIL receipts are likely to be an appropriate source of funding for such work.

This work will be used to influence future housing developments and to set local targets where needed.

Objective 2: To provide places where people have sufficient space to live in harmony with their neighbours in attractive environments with good links to existing communities and the open countryside.

4. High quality and inclusive design

The Government attaches great importance to the design of the built environment. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, is indivisible from good planning, and should contribute positively to making places better for people.

Both the NPPF and the Sedgemoor Local Plan emphasise the importance of good design, and both provide lists of criteria that design of new development should aspire to, including:

- A commitment to high quality, attractiveness, safety and accessibility.
- Promotion of enjoyment, social interaction and healthy lifestyles.

- Quality of the public realm – safe, attractive, secure.
- Accessibility by all transport modes.
- Reflecting the characteristics of the local area and taking into account climate change.

However, despite the emphasis on good design in existing planning policy, it is a common perception that the quality of design in new housing developments is poor. This is reflected locally and the design of new housing emerged as a key concern during consultation undertaken for the Neighbourhood Plan. 70% of respondents agreed with an embryonic policy on design that sought to strengthen existing policy. The following policies address the various aspects of design that were raised during consultation.

4.1. Street scene design

There is particular concern around the design of streets and other public areas, and that new development should be made, as far as possible, safe from crime. Neither of these concerns are considered to be adequately addressed in national or district policy.

Aspects of design that should be considered in designing new streets and public spaces include:

- Access and movement: places with well-defined routes, spaces and entrances that provide for convenient movement without compromising security
- Structure: places that are structured so that different uses do not cause conflict
- Surveillance: places where all publicly accessible spaces are overlooked
- Ownership: places that promote a sense of ownership, respect, territorial responsibility and community
- Physical protection: places that include necessary, well designed security features

The following criteria are based on approaches to design taken elsewhere¹, which focus particularly on ways in which crime can be ‘designed out’ (see also section 4.2 below). However, they also encourage design which promotes harmony within and between communities in attractive public spaces.

They are considered particularly relevant to Highbridge, where recent developments have not always been perceived to promote a good sense of community, but they will be applicable to all new major housing developments across the Neighbourhood Plan Area. Policy H1 requires promoters of all major housing developments to show how these criteria have been considered in the design of the development. The definition of ‘major’ is that used by Sedgemoor District Council: i.e. developments of ten or more dwellings, or a site area of 0.5 hectares or more.

Mole Valley District Council 2011 ‘Designing out Crime SPD’ www.molevalley.gov.uk/media/pdf/j/a/Designing_Out_Crime_SPD.pdf

Street Scene Design Guidance Criteria

1. *The aim is to create networks of streets, paths and accesses which are pleasant to use, take people where they want to go and do not feel isolated from their surroundings. Developers also need to avoid creating easy escape routes from criminal activity.*
2. *Good movement networks have direct routes that lead where people want to travel, by whatever means, including on foot, by cycle or public transport. Street layouts should be well connected to increase opportunities for interaction between different users. They should not cause neighbouring areas to be segregated, for example by transport routes that are difficult to cross.*
3. *Clearly delineating between private and public space gives people the opportunity to personalise their own space. This helps to foster the perception of a well-kept and loved environment. It also makes it easier for intruders to be challenged.*
4. *The way that landscaping is designed can encourage, or discourage, levels of activity. Well-designed street furniture and art can be effective in creating an attractive and more distinctive environment. Seats, bus stops, taxi ranks and bins should be positioned to encourage their use, and in positions that will not obscure views of users, obstruct pedestrian movement, encourage anti-social behaviour or assist unauthorised entry.*
5. *Trees and shrubs can be highly beneficial in creating attractive spaces that draw in plenty of legitimate activity. However, they can also create hiding spaces and reduce visibility, which may discourage people from using a space or pathway. To avoid this, landscaped areas such as parks, footpaths and open spaces should be designed to maintain a good level of natural surveillance, as well as being visually appealing. Trees and other landscaping features should be positioned so that they do not create hiding spaces or obscure lighting. Clear sightlines should be maintained over long distances (25 metres or over). There will be greater visibility if trees in public areas do not have foliage below 2 metres from the ground, while low level planting should not exceed 1 metre in height.*

Policy H1 Street scene design

All major housing proposals should show in the Design and Access Statement how the above street scene design guidance criteria have been taken into account.

4.2. Designing out crime

Objective 3: To build safe communities

Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 places a duty on local authorities to exercise their functions with due regard to likely effect on crime and disorder, and the need to do “all that the authority reasonably can” to prevent crime and disorder.

The National Planning Policy Framework states that Councils should have “robust and comprehensive” design policies in their Local Plans. Policies should set out the quality of development that will be expected, while avoiding being over-prescriptive. The objectives include creating “safe and accessible environments where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine quality of life or community cohesion”. Core Strategy Policy D2 also has this to say: *That development promotes safety and security through design, location and layout in a way that reduces the incidents of anti-social behaviour, vulnerability to crime, the fear of crime and distinguishes between spaces which are private or public*, while the emerging Local Plan endorses this approach, but provides no more detail.

On the whole, Burnham-on-Sea and Highbridge has a relatively low crime rate, but this does not reduce the importance of taking opportunities to tackle crime where they arise. The crimes that have the highest impact on residents and businesses are burglaries, theft of motor vehicles, theft from motor vehicles and anti-social behaviour.

Crime, fear of crime and anti-social behaviour can all harm community well-being and quality of life. Crime has obvious direct consequences for victims, but even where actual crime rates are low, the fear of crime can undermine quality of life, particularly for vulnerable groups. Many of the issues can be addressed via the planning process, and “designing out crime” is one way of helping to reduce the risk and fear of crime. The aim is to design a physical environment that positively influences human behaviour. This should help people feel safe and secure within their built environment, while simultaneously make criminals at greater risk of being caught, and therefore less inclined to offend.

The following criteria are intended to add detail to national and district policy in order to help achieve Neighbourhood Plan Objective 3 ‘To build safe communities’. Policy H2 requires developers to show how these criteria have been taken into account on major development sites.

Design Guidance Criteria for Designing out Crime.

1. Development schemes should take account of the opportunities to reduce the incidence of crime in the design and layout, and where necessary, use of buildings and spaces about and between buildings.
2. Activity: places where the level of human activity is appropriate to the location and creates a reduced risk of crime and a sense of safety at all times
3. Management and maintenance: places that are designed with management and maintenance in mind, to discourage crime in the present and the future
4. Crime and anti-social behaviour are more likely to occur if the people involved are confident they will not be seen. Developers can help by making sure buildings and structures are designed to maximise natural surveillance. This helps to encourage positive interaction among legitimate users of space whilst limiting the number of escape routes for potential offenders.
5. Buildings should provide “active frontages” in which windows and doors face onto streets, footpaths and public spaces. Room and window orientations should provide views to and from the street, with at least one habitable room fronting the street at ground floor level. Private rear gardens should be back to back wherever possible and avoid backing onto service roads or footpaths.
6. External structures including extensions, outbuildings, fences and trees should not obscure entrances from view, provide hiding places or allow easy access to upper floor windows or over boundaries. Developing these solutions alongside landscaping plans will enable screening to soften any negative impact of development without affording cover for nefarious activities.
7. When planning green landscaping the use of defensive genus such as berberis, colletia or pyracantha should be considered
8. Good external lighting can also help to promote natural surveillance.

Policy H2 Designing out Crime.

All major housing proposals should show in the Design and Access Statement how the above Design Guidance Criteria for Designing out Crime have been taken into account.

5. Sustainability of housing

Objective 4: To build sustainable communities.

The sustainability of new housing emerged as a strong theme during consultation for the Neighbourhood Plan, and nearly 80% of respondents agreed with an embryonic policy seeking to improve sustainability in new developments. Sustainability is usually defined as meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. In terms of housing, this can mean minimising the extent that new housing contributes to climate change and other environmental problems, plus making sure that it can cope with environmental changes that are likely due to climate change. In Burnham-on-Sea and Highbridge this especially means making residential development safe from flood risk.

5.1 Making residential development safe from flood risk

National and District planning policy aim to direct new development away from high risk zones. Where this is not possible and development is considered necessary due to wider sustainability objectives, it must be demonstrated that development will be made safe throughout its lifetime, without increasing flood risk elsewhere.

Due to the local geography, large parts of Sedgemoor District lie in high flood risk areas, including much of the Neighbourhood Area, and in both Burnham-on-Sea and Highbridge there are very limited development opportunities outside of Flood Zone 3a (high risk). It is therefore considered necessary to allow development in flood risk areas, and both housing sites allocated at Highbridge in the emerging Local Plan are within Flood Zone 3a. Both towns are currently adequately defended, and at Highbridge improved flood defences are planned as part of developments at Brue Farm and the Boatyard. However, concerns remain about the possibility of breaching of flood defences, and the future impact of climate change on flood risk in the area.

Local Plan Policy D1 adds detail to NPPF policy and guidance setting out the protocol for a) directing development to areas at lower flood risk where possible (using the Sequential Test) and b) where this is not possible, ensuring development will be safe and not increase flooding elsewhere (using appropriate site-specific Flood Risk Assessments). The supporting text advocates using advice produced by the Environment Agency (*Wessex Area Local Standing Advice for Sedgemoor District*) to aid this process.

Policy H3 Making residential development safe from flood risk

In addition to relevant Local Plan and NPPF policy, all residential development proposals must have regard to advice in the Environment Agency's "Wessex Area Local Standing Advice for Sedgemoor District" (2013).

6. Open space and play area provision

Objective 5: To provide access to attractive open spaces so that there is opportunity for recreation and exercise for all.

Consultation for the Neighbourhood Plan revealed concern about access to open green spaces and the provision of children's play areas in areas of new development. Over eighty percent of respondents agreed with draft policies seeking to address these issues.

6.1. Informal Outdoor Space and Sports Pitches

The Neighbourhood Plan includes policies in Chapters 1 and 2 to protect existing green spaces as designated Local Green Space. However, there is a need to ensure that new development contributes to providing new green space so that pressure is not increased on existing facilities.

National standards commonly used for judging the provision of outdoor green spaces are provided by Fields in Trust (formerly the National Playing Fields Association). These identify three types of 'informal outdoor space':

- **Parks and gardens** - formal green spaces including urban parks, country parks, forest parks, and formal gardens
- **Amenity Greenspace** - informal recreation spaces, communal green spaces in and around housing and village greens
- **Natural and Semi-Natural green space** - woodland, scrub, grassland, wetlands, open and running water, and open access land

The distribution of informal outdoor space varies considerably within the Neighbourhood Plan area. Burnham North has around 5.6 ha per 1000 population, Highbridge 4.3 and Burnham South only 1.0, compared with the Fields in Trust target of 3.2ha per 1000. The Burnham North figure is boosted by the beach and sand dunes and the Highbridge figure by Apex Park.

Also used are Natural England's Accessible Greenspace Standards (ANGSt) which suggest that everyone should have access to a natural greenspace of at least 2 hectares in size, no more than 300 metres (5 minutes' walk) from home. Although Burnham-on-Sea has the beach, this is not the case for the majority of Highbridge where the only space conforming to this standard is Apex Park.

The Sedgemoor Annual Monitoring Review 2013/4 acknowledges compliance with the ANGSt is a problem. It also questions whether SDC has the resources to map the District's natural green spaces.

However, it is important that the difficulties of compliance with the ANGSt do not result in a lack of open space provision. In other areas, the opportunity has been taken to work with developers of adjacent new housing sites to plan their developments so that the informal open space requirement of each is combined where appropriate to provide one large central area rather than separate smaller ones. If such an opportunity arises here it is recommended that this option is explored.

Sports provision in the area is better. Overall, outdoor sports pitches amounted in 2009 to 1.47 ha per 1000 population, compared with the Fields in Trust target of 1.6 ha. However there has been significant further building since then and no additional sports space has been provided so this gap will have widened.

Despite these concerns, it is considered that access to green space and the provision of sports pitches is adequately addressed by SDC in the emerging Local Plan in line with ANGSt and FiT standards. However, this will need careful monitoring, and the following commitment is made by the Town Council.

Statement of Intent 8: Updating the Green space strategy.

The Town Council will commission an update of the Green Space Strategy for Burnham-on-Sea and Highbridge in line with a review of the Neighbourhood Plan, with the aim of monitoring the impact of Local Plan policy on the provision and accessibility of informal green spaces and sports pitches in the Neighbourhood Plan Area.

CIL receipts are likely to be an appropriate source of funding for this work.

6.2. Children's Play Spaces

Children's play spaces, on dedicated sites or as part of other facilities, total 1.86 ha, or 0.09 ha per 1000 population. This is well below the Fields in Trust standard of 0.55 ha per 1000. The figure has improved due to the recent Rosewood Farm play area but still remains significantly below the FiT standard.

There are no equipped play areas in Burnham-on-Sea Town Centre and only one small play area north of Crosses Pen on the Berrow Road and the Winchester Drive area adjacent to the Infant school. Aside from a small play park in Coleridge Gardens, the next play area to the north is, in fact, in Berrow itself. The new development in the Tylers Way area of Highbridge, abutting the Sparks Way estate, has no children's play areas in it – nor does the Sparks Way estate itself.

Emerging Local Plan Policy D37 includes criteria for children's play areas and requires developers to provide outdoor playing space as part of new residential developments of over 8 dwellings, in line with FiT standards. However, it includes the caveat,

“Where the requirement for play space cannot be fully met on site, the developer will be expected to make provision for appropriate new or improved off-site facilities.

Local experience has shown that where off-site provision is permitted, as in the Tyler's Way development, access to play areas is inadequate. This is particularly true of toddlers' play areas (LAPs). This issue is addressed in respect of residential redevelopment in Highbridge in policy Hi 7.

7. Sustainable transport and movement

Traffic issues featured prominently in our consultation exercise. 71% of respondents listed their car as their primary transport mode and 83% travel outside the area to access facilities such as large shops and recreational facilities.

Objective 6: To limit traffic speeds within developments.

Objective 7: To encourage the use of more sustainable transport.

The nature of the estates on the outskirts of Burnham and Highbridge is such that many of the houses are occupied by young people who commute for employment. It is not unknown for it to take 30 minutes to reach the Edithmead roundabout along Queen's Way in the morning rush hour. Not surprisingly, traffic issues were highlighted by a significant number of responders to our initial survey as one of the three worst things about living in the area. They are also one of the issues always brought up when any new development is proposed – "how are the roads going to cope? They are too busy already". The issue is recognised by Sedgemoor District Council and is addressed in emerging Local Plan Policy P28, which prioritises various transport improvement schemes including at the Edithmead roundabout. In more general terms, the NPPF promotes sustainable transport in section four, while Policies D14 and D15 of the emerging Local Plan support sustainable transport and address the transport impacts of new development.

However, there are possible remedies to transport issues not covered by existing policy, and given the importance of the issue locally, this Neighbourhood Plan incorporates some of these into the policies below.

7.1 Design of circulation within developments

Good movement networks have direct routes that lead where people want to travel, by whatever means, including on foot, by cycle or public transport. Street layouts should be well connected to increase opportunities for interaction between different users. They should not cause neighbouring areas to be segregated, for example by transport routes that are difficult to cross.

However, there may be cases where it is desirable to separate footpaths and cycle ways from motor traffic, for safety purposes or to encourage walking and cycling. In these cases, footpaths or cycle ways should be carefully designed to provide good visibility and avoid potential hiding places or dark corners. Care should be taken to avoid sharp bends that restrict visibility. As far as practicable, pathways should be overlooked and under surveillance from surrounding properties. Subways, footbridges and underpasses can be isolated and intimidating spaces, which should be avoided wherever possible. Where unavoidable, they should be designed with good visibility from surrounding land, to minimise the risk of criminal activity.

Across the UK, the interest in and use of Home Zones is growing. Through the design of highways and their associated spaces, Home Zones provide a more attractive local environment, where quality of life is given priority over vehicle movement and where the social interaction and safety of residents is paramount. Streets in a Home Zone are designed for residents' uses whilst encouraging very low vehicle speeds and careful driving. The Neighbourhood Plan seeks to encourage Home Zones within new developments.

The County Council Parking Strategy (published September 2013), SDC's Travel Planning SPD and emerging Local Plan Policies D14 and D15 can together be considered to adequately cover the management of the transport impacts of development. However, layout design within new developments is not specifically addressed, and this is considered important to help minimise traffic speed and create communities where children can play outside in safety. The following policy deals with this.

Policy H4 Design of circulation within developments

Within new developments, circulation should be designed to give preference to pedestrians and cyclists over cars and other motorised transport and road design and layout should minimise the speed of cars.

Developments that include Home Zone schemes will be supported where other relevant policy is complied with.

7.2 Sustainable transport

Reduction of CO₂ emissions is one of the Government's and the District Council's aims. The latter's Annual Monitoring Report 2014/5 shows the progress being made:

M13	Per capita CO ₂ emissions (tonnes)	A significant reduction in per capita CO ₂ emissions	Decrease of 0.5t in 14/15 to 9.3t Decrease of 2.1t since 2006
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Policy H 5 has two specific objectives to help in this process:

1. To promote car clubs through travel planning. Car clubs, where vehicles are shared by members, reduce car ownership and therefore result in lower demand for parking spaces. To make these clubs viable, links may need to be made with neighbouring development. Information is available from Carplus, the national charity promoting responsible car use.
2. To encourage the use of electric cars which are increasing in both range and availability. The Government is already piloting preferential treatment for electric cars in some cities and is proposing a ban on the sale of new petrol and diesel cars by 2040 and other European countries are proposing similar measures. Volvo have announced that they will cease production of purely petrol or diesel vehicles in the next decade. Making electric car charging facilities more common on residential sites will help the public reduce its anxieties about

batteries running down and the take-up of electric cars will increase. In addition, provision of such facilities will send a signal from the developers that they are building quality, forward looking communities and will be a selling point which fully justifies the expense.

Policy H5 – Sustainable transport

- Where Travel Plans are required for development proposals that will have a significant transport impact, car clubs should be included in the Travel Plans where appropriate for the location.
- Wherever feasible, 16 amp charging points (or any future standardized equipment) for electric cars should be provided in all developments, as an integral part of the design.

8. Education and Healthcare

Objective 8: To ensure appropriate education and healthcare provision.

A key concern to arise from consultation for the Neighbourhood Plan was around the strains that new development can put on existing infrastructure, in particular education and healthcare facilities.

8.1. Education

The Sedgemoor 2015/6 Annual Monitoring Report (available at <http://www.sedgemoor.gov.uk/amr>) acknowledges that early years and primary places in schools remains an area of concern but maintains that there is sufficient provision of secondary places. Certainly in the Neighbourhood Area there is a potential shortage of the former. The recently opened Churchfield School in Highbridge already has temporary classrooms; the Burnham and Berrow primary/infant schools are at capacity and the proposed new Brue Farm primary school is designed only to take the children from this development – not to ease the burden elsewhere. There are also doubts locally as to whether there is sufficient secondary provision as there is only the single secondary school, King Alfred's, for students to attend and it has grown significantly over the years. Given the increasing complexity and demands of employment – which will only intensify as Hinkley C proceeds – this is a worrying trend.

The 2015/6 Annual Monitoring Report indicates that SDC intends to work closely with the County Council to ensure sufficient educational provision is made for housing development. Emerging Local Plan Policy D30 requires new development to meet identified shortfalls and supports proposals for new education facilities where appropriate.

8.2. Healthcare

The NPPF recognises that spatial planning can have a significant positive impact on individual's health and wellbeing. Overall design of new housing, particularly in terms of space standards can be a positive influence upon overall health, particularly mental health. Access to local green space, play space and recreational facilities promotes healthy lifestyles. Walking and cycling infrastructure

similarly promotes exercise as well as encouraging people to use their cars less. In part and in combination these can all reduce the need and demands upon primary health care facilities.

Burnham-on-Sea and Highbridge contains areas of deprivation and a higher than average proportion of elderly people. One consequence of both of these is increased demand for primary health care. Recently the Highbridge Medical Centre has expanded its premises and the Burnham-on-Sea practice has built a new medical centre on Brent Road, Berrow, just outside the plan area. Despite these developments there is concern locally that provision is inadequate for the present population. There are 13,365 patients already registered at Highbridge Medical Centre and 16,064 at the Burnham & Berrow Centre². Publicity and reporting of a shortage of trained NHS staff is increasing and the ability of these surgeries to meet the expected demand of the new housing developments is not evident.

Emerging Local Plan Policy D31 requires that developers meet any identified shortfall for healthcare facilities caused by the development, and that contributions will sought via Section 106 agreements. CIL receipts will be used to fund strategic provision.

² Source: NHS Choices 08/01/2016