

Bridport Area Neighbourhood Plan

Evidence Base and Policy Development
Final Report

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Quality information

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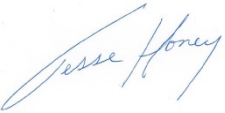

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Disclaimer

This document is intended to aid the preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan, and can be used to guide decision making and as evidence to support Plan policies, if the Qualifying Body (QB) so chooses. It is not a neighbourhood plan policy document. It is a 'snapshot' in time and may become superseded by more recent information. Bridport Town Council is not bound to accept its conclusions. If any party can demonstrate that any of the evidence presented herein is inaccurate or out of date, such evidence can be presented to the Neighbourhood Plan at the consultation stage. Where evidence from elsewhere conflicts with this report, the QB should decide what policy position to take in the Neighbourhood Plan and that judgement should be documented so that it can be defended at the Examination stage.

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Abbreviations used in the report

Abbreviation

BANP	Bridport Area Neighbourhood Plan
BTC	Bridport Town Council
EBPD	Evidence Base and Policy Development
LPA	Local Planning Authority
NA	Neighbourhood Area
NPPF	National Planning Policy Framework
PPG	Planning Practice Guidance
SPD	Supplementary Planning Document
WDDC	West Dorset District Council

Executive Summary

Introduction

Bridport, which lies in West Dorset district in the south-west of England, is developing a Bridport Area Neighbourhood Plan (BANP).

As part of the development of the neighbourhood plan and its evidence base, Bridport Town Council (BTC) applied successfully to Locality for support from AECOM as part of its Supporting Communities in Neighbourhood Planning project.

This document comprises the final report of an Evidence Base and Policy Development (EBPD) study provided by AECOM to BTC. There has been close communication between BTC and AECOM throughout its development and, as such, feedback from BTC has informed the final report, including BTC's comments on the draft final version.

This EBPD covers two main topic/policy areas, as advised by BTC, namely Housing and Town Centre. The aim of the EBPD is to review the existing evidence base, identify any gaps within it, and then present policy options and recommendations based not only on the existing evidence base but also on any additional relevant information that applies.

Report structure and methodology

Where draft policy text already exists, as is the case for both of the topic areas covered within this report, the aim of the EBPD is to review and comment on those policies, in particular in terms of any amendments that may be required to ensure that the policy meets the Basic Conditions of Neighbourhood Planning.

The review of existing policies is comprehensive, in that it will assess not only the policy text itself but also the evidence upon which that policy is based.

If the AECOM review finds that the draft policy or the evidence on which it is based has any potential for strengthening or improvement, recommendations in this regard will be clearly set out.

The exercise is carried out with full regard to the local planning policy and evidence base available at both West Dorset and the Neighbourhood Plan levels.

Appendix 1 is our detailed review of each policy using the methodology described above which considers the draft policies alongside the policies of the adopted Local Plan, relevant evidence base documents and the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). It aims to provide an answer to the questions raised above. Recommendations are provided in terms of actions the Parish should take to gather further evidence and/or develop policies.

Appendix 2 lists policies in 'made' (i.e. adopted) neighbourhood plans from across England that are relevant to some of the policies that have been assessed at Bridport. The value of assessing a 'made' plan policy is that it has passed Examination and thus must be in full conformity with the Basic Conditions of Neighbourhood Planning.

Appendix 3 briefly sets out further information on neighbourhood plan policy drafting, including links to resources that may be helpful in this regard.

Conclusions and Recommendations

In developing planning policies for the emerging Neighbourhood Plan, BTC should ensure that they do not merely repeat existing national and local planning policies. In a robust neighbourhood plan, neighbourhood policies would either increase the effectiveness and/or specificity of local plan policies (i.e. by adding local criteria and/or taking local context into account) or propose a policy where there was previously a policy void.

However, when the Forum supports the LPA's existing policy approach this can simply be referenced in supporting text rather than comprising a policy in its own right. Equally, developing measurable metrics (targets or indicators) to monitor effects of implementation is another way of ensuring the neighbourhood plan can add value over and above local and national policies.

All evidence that the Forum rely on in developing their planning policies should be properly documented within the Neighbourhood Plan. The supporting text to each policy must refer to the evidence base used to inform that policy approach, summarising the key points which will help demonstrate how robust the policy is. The supporting text should explain why the policy is required and signpost the reader to the plan's evidence base where they can find additional information. Policy justifications should also refer to WDDC's evidence bases and policies, as these help support the policies and provide further justification.

Additional evidence work in some cases may be required to enhance the robustness of policies. As a general rule, the more a policy departs from or goes beyond the local plan (e.g. in terms of standards), the more evidence is required. It is recommended that the Town Council conduct a further check of their draft final policies to ensure they are adding value to the Local Plan and are locally specific to the neighbourhood. Ideally this should be done with the LPA Neighbourhood Planning officer.

Summary of Policy Specific Findings (further detail in Appendix 1)

BTC6

AECOM consider that the policy should cover the whole neighbourhood plan area, which would make it far more effective, proportionate and user-friendly.

The Neighbourhood Plan Consultation Report, Neighbourhood Plan Shop Survey and Bridport Conservation Area Appraisal (2010, which includes multiple references to shop fronts and their contribution to the town centre) should all be referenced in the supporting text, as should West Dorset's forthcoming (or, by the time of neighbourhood plan adoption, 'adopted') Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) on shop front design.

AECOM agrees with West Dorset District Council (WDDC) comments that the policy should apply to new as well as to altered shopfronts. As such, this component of the policy, and indeed Appendix A, should be reworded.

The section on temporary advertising in Bridport Conservation Area could be spun off into a new Town Centre policy, given that it does not relate directly to shopfronts, and indeed that it relates only to Conservation Areas, whereas AECOM recommends that the rest of policy BTC6 could be extended to cover the whole neighbourhood plan area.

BTC7

The requirement in a) 1 for the current amount of public car parking to be retained as part of any redevelopment is justified on the basis of evidence collected and would not breach the Basic Conditions of neighbourhood planning. However, AECOM considers that WDDC do have a point in terms of requiring re-provision on-site.

While recognising that this will be disappointing to BTC, AECOM agrees with the WDDC comments on b) based on the constraints of the local and neighbourhood planning systems. Given that the first half of b) restates an existing requirement at WDDC level, and that the second part of b) appears to breach the Basic Conditions it is recommended that b) be deleted entirely.

Part c) of the policy, covering smaller retail floorplates, should specify, as suggested by WDDC, the size of a 'smaller' retail floorplate.

At AECOM's recommendation, the Town Council have carried out a survey to determine the proportion of units of 280 square metres or smaller in Bridport town centre currently, which as of December 2018 it is understood as being 91% of all shops.

The survey results (as well as the Government definition of 'small-scale' as per the text above) should be set out in supporting/justification text to the policy, and used as a basis for setting a specific proportion of small-scale units in any retail development at Ropewalks Car Park and Bus Station Car Park.

H1

While provision is made within the NPPF for developers to demonstrate viability in the event they are advancing a non-policy compliant scheme, the requirement to divulge construction methods and details are too intrusive. It is not the role of planning policy to intervene in this way in the management processes of development companies.

In the event the group wishes to prepare an evidence base to make the case there is no need for Starter Homes AECOM would advise identifying up-to-date data that is specific to the Neighbourhood Area (NA) to examine how

Starter Homes are unaffordable to their intended buyers, newly forming households on incomes around the median who would otherwise be unable to access entry level dwellings, and would otherwise be forced to rent.

H2

This policy is currently advanced without supporting evidence; reference to community engagement support, as well as authoritative studies would help justify the policy. The policy itself could be re-worded and simplified and Appendix 1 provides recommendations in this regard.

H3

The policy might more logically be included as a criterion within Policy H1 rather than a policy in its own right. However, the policy is clear on what it sets out to do, but could benefit from revised wording to make interpretation simpler. It should also be considered whether the policy might have the effect of obstructing future development on appropriate sites because the burden falls disproportionately on the subsequent developer.

H4

This policy is an important one, which covers a lot of ground, and so will be challenging to get exactly right. Though it is significantly improved from previous iterations in terms of specificity, its evidence base is not as strong as it could be, and there is a degree of confusion around its structure and how it fits in with the other NP policies.

We recommend splitting out criterion 4d into a separate policy covering residential care accommodation, and removing sub-criterion 4d1 as it repeats LP policy,

Take additional care with the wording of criteria 4a, 4b, and 4c so that there is no ambiguity around how a planning officer is to interpret “preferred mix” when making decisions. It is our view that 4c should be removed.

We would suggest revisiting the Bridport HNA to develop more robust evidence bases for housing tenure, and type and size.

Forecasts relating to the housing needs of the elderly would be a means of generating more ambitious policy in this area.

H5

Overall, the various criteria set out in policy H5 may either be removed or combined with other policies so as to introduce greater clarity within the NP.

H6

The policy is clear in its intent and presents a reasonable policy response to identified local requirements that are different than those identified and addressed in the Local Plan.

The policy makes good use of the evidence base provided in its Housing Needs Assessment, although this evidence could be better referenced in the text of the policy and supporting information, and there is potential to consider additional layers of information to make the evidence (and policy response) more compelling.

Specifically, showing that Bridport has a particularly high level of demand for self-build housing would help to justify a policy approach that diverges from that favoured in the LP. In order to confirm this policy will not undermine scheme viability, we would recommend carrying out a viability assessment.

H7

The policy is useful in its additional support for community-led housing as a means to address local need. However, it requires a more robust evidence base to justify the clear departure it makes from Local Plan policy in terms of supporting development on sites that would otherwise not be permitted for development. A viability assessment would be required to justify the 25% limitation on open-market housing as an appropriate and workable level rather than an arbitrary figure.

Additionally, there is ambiguity in the wording of criteria a) and b) that should be addressed in order for planning officers to understand exactly how to respond when considering applications.

H8

BTC has suggested that second-home ownership is not evenly distributed across the area. This points to a 'character area' approach to policy making – with policy applying to certain areas, but not others. This would require robust statistical evidence to show substantially different conditions prevailing in different parts of the NA.

An obstacle the group would face to this approach would be that if there are parts of the NA unaffected by the policy, second homes would become more popular in these areas over time.

The concern about placing occupancy conditions on dwellings is the un-intended consequences. WDDC has commented on the impact of tourism. It will also have a substantial impact on the viability of proposed schemes, and therefore their capacity to deliver both general market housing as well as Affordable Housing. Were development to fall in the NP area, this may increase house prices, making dwellings less affordable to residents.

On balance, we feel it is unlikely the evidence exists to support policy H8.

H9

The policy is clear and effective in its intention of encouraging affordable housing provision through exception sites. The policy could benefit from clarification around the need that "cannot be otherwise met" in criteria 9a, the merging of criteria 9b and 9c (or deletion of 9b) due to redundancy, and more supporting evidence for the decision to set the open market proportion limit at 25% in criteria 9c. Further improvements are outlined in Appendix 1.

1. Introduction

1.1 About this document

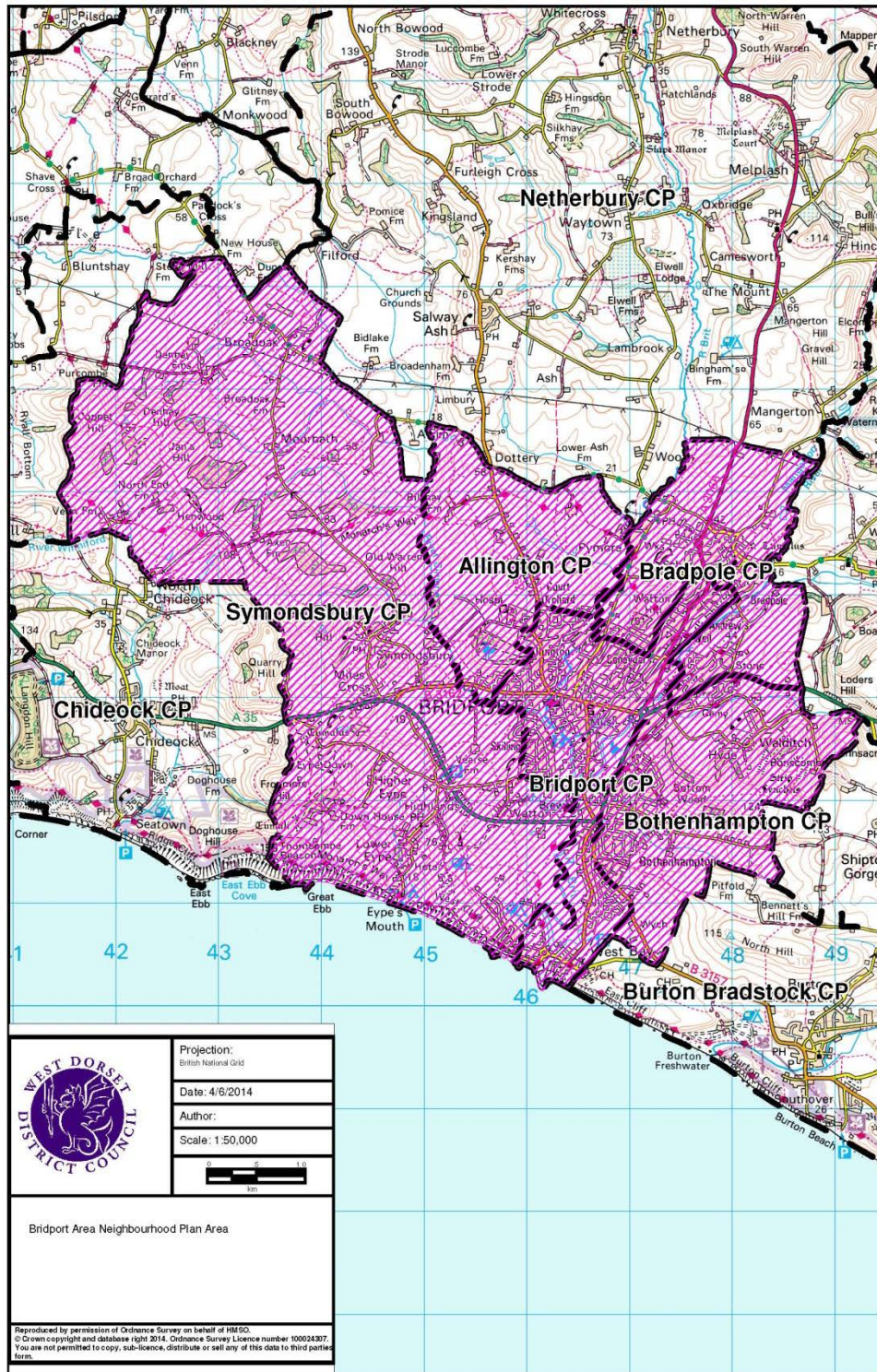
1. The 2011 Localism Act introduced Neighbourhood Planning, allowing parishes or neighbourhood forums across England to develop and adopt legally binding development plans for their neighbourhood area.
2. Bridport, which lies in West Dorset district in the south-west of England, is developing a Bridport Area Neighbourhood Plan (BANP).
3. The BANP is being developed through a Joint Councils Committee working with a Community Steering Group. The Neighbourhood Plan area covers; Allington, Bothenhampton and Walditch, Bradpole, Symondsburry, Bridport and West Bay.
4. AECOM advice was requested by Bridport Town Council as the qualifying body but the advice is to be provided to the Joint Councils Committee.
5. As part of the development of the neighbourhood plan and its evidence base, BTC applied successfully to Locality for support from AECOM as part of its Supporting Communities in Neighbourhood Planning project.
6. This document comprises the final report of an Evidence Base and Policy Development (EBPD) study provided by AECOM to BTC. There has been close communication between BTC and AECOM throughout its development and, as such, feedback from BTC has informed the final report, including BTC's comments on the draft final version.
7. This EBPD covers two main topic/policy areas, as advised by BTC, namely Housing and Town Centre. The aim of the EBPD is to review the existing evidence base, identify any gaps within it, and then present policy options and recommendations based not only on the existing evidence base but also on any additional relevant information that applies.
8. Where draft policy text already exists, as is the case for both of the topic areas covered within this report, the aim of the EBPD is to review and comment on those policies, in particular in terms of any amendments that may be required to ensure that the policy meets the Basic Conditions of Neighbourhood Planning.¹
9. The review of existing policies will be comprehensive, in that it will assess not only the policy text itself but also the evidence upon which that policy is based. It seeks to verify that:
 - Evidence has been assembled from robust sources;
 - Stakeholder-derived evidence has been considered in an inclusive way;
 - Relevant third-party comments/issues have been addressed;
 - Reasonable conclusions have been drawn from that evidence;
 - All useful evidence available has been referenced;
 - There are no evidence gaps that need to be filled;
 - The draft policy is clearly written, distinct from and in general conformity with the Local Plan; and
 - The policy meets the Basic Conditions.
10. If the AECOM review finds that the draft policy or the evidence on which it is based has any potential for strengthening or improvement, recommendations in this regard will be clearly set out.

¹ Available at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/neighbourhood-planning--2#basic-conditions-for-neighbourhood-plan-to-referendum>

1.2 Local context

11. Figure 1 below illustrates the Neighbourhood Plan area. It covers not only Bridport town itself, but also the surrounding parishes of Allington, Bothenhampton and Walditch, Bradpole, Symondsburry and West Bay.

Figure 1: Bridport Area Neighbourhood Plan Area



Source: West Dorset District Council

1.3 Planning Policy and Evidence Base

12. This sub-section summarises the local planning policy and evidence base available at both the West Dorset and the Neighbourhood Plan levels.

1.3.1 Adopted Local Plan

13. West Dorset District Council (WDDC) and Weymouth & Portland Borough Council's joint Local Plan was adopted on 22 October 2015 (henceforth referred to as 'the Joint Local Plan', or JLP). It forms the main basis for making decisions on planning applications.
14. The JLP sets out a long term planning strategy for the area to 2031, including detailed policies and site-based proposals for housing, employment, leisure and infrastructure.
15. When adopted, neighbourhood plans become part of the development plan. They will sit alongside the Local Plan adopted at the time and be considered in deciding whether or not planning permission should be given.
16. The JLP will be referred to as appropriate within this report.

1.3.2 Emerging Local Plan

17. WDDC is now reviewing the JLP and has recently (October 2018) completed a Preferred Options consultation on the emerging Local Plan. The Preferred Options version of the emerging Local Plan, with its accompanying maps, will be referred to as appropriate within this report.

1.3.3 Neighbourhood Plan activity

18. At project inception, BTC provided AECOM with a range of relevant policy and evidence documents relating to the neighbourhood plan. These comprise:
 - The pre-submission (Regulation 14) version of the Bridport Area Neighbourhood Plan (June 2018);
 - The WDDC response to the draft Neighbourhood Plan at pre-submission stage;
 - Commentary from BTC on draft policy BTC7, which was highlighted as a policy requiring amendment by WDDC;
 - BTC's Regulation 14 Consultation Response;
 - The most recent draft of the emerging Neighbourhood Plan Consultation Statement;
 - The Housing Needs Assessment supporting the Neighbourhood Plan;
 - BTC's comments on changes made to Neighbourhood Plan housing policies post-Regulation 14 consultation;
 - A draft of the emerging Regulation 15 housing policies;
 - The results of the Neighbourhood Plan shops survey; and
 - The results of the Neighbourhood Plan town centre car parks survey.
19. These policy and evidence base documents have been reviewed as appropriate throughout this report.

2. Assessment methodology

2.1 Assessment of evidence base

20. The evidence base for neighbourhood planning needs to be 'proportionate', i.e. relating well in terms of breadth, depth and scope to the policy being proposed. In line with this approach, the Government's Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) expects most evidence in neighbourhood planning to be 'secondary' (i.e. already collected by another party, making evidence gathering more of an exercise in assembling, interpreting and showing understanding of existing data).
21. Any evidence used should be clearly referenced and presented in an accessible way to justify policies, both for the purpose of examination and for the benefit of residents reading a plan as well as interested parties such as landowners and developers – all of whom may be impacted.
22. Evidence can come from several sources, including:
- The adopted or emerging Local Plan (from a policy conformity perspective²);
 - Local Plan evidence base studies that inform policy documents (e.g. the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment or equivalent, Employment Land Review);
 - Technical primary evidence generated or commissioned by the Parish Council itself (e.g. flood risk assessment, housing needs assessment);
 - Stakeholder-derived primary evidence generated or commissioned by the Parish Council or Neighbourhood Group (e.g. a survey of local households and businesses); and
 - Relevant national reports, studies and data such as the 2011 Census.

2.2 Assessment of evidence base (see also Appendix 1)

23. AECOM's evidence review focuses on three lines of enquiry:
- **Policy understanding**, which summarises what assessors think the policy intent is and follows on from an inception call with the group.
 - **Evidence assembly**, which covers basic checks including:
 - Whether your evidence has been gathered from verifiable and reputable sources;
 - Whether any third party comments have been taken into account (e.g. from developers, landowners, statutory bodies): and
 - Whether there are any gaps and obvious sources not referred to (e.g. Local Plan background studies).
 - **Evidence analysis**, which considers whether the evidence referred to has been appropriately understood, analysed and reasonable conclusions reached in drawing up policy. A distinction is made between stakeholder derived (e.g. from local household or business surveys) and technical evidence in terms of how well the evidence was analysed, although both are treated as equally important. This stage of the review also considers:
 - Whether evidence is, on balance, proportionate; and
 - Whether the evidence has already had a degree of external scrutiny (e.g. from the Local Planning Authority, LPA) in which case such comments are considered.

² In applying basic condition 'e,' 'general conformity' relates to the adopted, not emerging Local Plan (see PPG, Paragraph: 065 Reference ID: 41-065-20140306). However, the evidence behind any emerging Local Plan is part of the evidence base for the NDP and it is important the NDP takes account of policy development within it given that, once adopted the new Local Plan policies will supersede those in the NDP.

2.3 Policy review (see also Appendix 1)

24. After examining the evidence that underpins each policy, the review considers the following questions in terms of meeting the Basic Conditions of a neighbourhood plan:

- Is the policy spatial in nature and therefore within the scope of a development plan or is it supporting a community project?
- Can the policy be reasonably implemented by planning officers (within planning legislation) when deliberating on planning applications?
- Does the policy have due regard to national policy and guidance?
- Does the policy comply with human rights law?
- Is the policy in general conformity with adopted strategic local plan policy? Does it add value to that policy, rather than reiterate policy principles?
- Is the policy clearly written and easy to understand?

2.4 Policy wording

25. Planning practice guidance³ states:

“A policy in a neighbourhood plan should be clear and unambiguous. It should be drafted with sufficient clarity that a decision maker can apply it consistently and with confidence when determining planning applications. It should be concise, precise and supported by appropriate evidence. It should be distinct to reflect and respond to the unique characteristics and planning context of the specific neighbourhood area for which it has been prepared.”

26. Precise wording of policies is, broadly speaking, considered a matter more for the neighbourhood group itself than for AECOM, based not only on the conclusions and recommendations of this report, but also taking into account feedback from other relevant stakeholders, including the LPA.

27. Nevertheless, in cases where minor changes to policy wording may have the effect of increasing soundness and robustness, we have set out any changes we recommend (which, as with all our conclusions and recommendations, comprise non-binding advice).

28. Where significant re-drafting of policy wording is required we have sign-posted useful toolkits and Examiners' comments. See Appendix 3.

29. We have undertaken a review of the evidence available to support the draft policies emerging in the documentation sent to AECOM by the Town Council. From this, we have identified any gaps within the evidence base that has been gathered to date by the Parish and also provided comment on future work or actions needed to ensure a robust policy approach.

2.5 About Appendix 1

30. Appendix 1 is our detailed review of each policy using the methodology described above which considers the draft policies alongside the policies of the adopted Local Plan, relevant evidence base documents and the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)⁴. It aims to provide an answer to the questions raised above. Recommendations are provided in terms of actions the Parish should take in terms of further evidence gathering and/or policy development.

31. The column headings in the Appendix 1 table can be explained as follows:

³ Paragraph: 041 Reference ID: 41-041-20140306, available online at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/neighbourhood-planning--2>

⁴ Available online at

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/740441/National_Planning_Policy_Framework_web_accessible_version.pdf

- **Policy name, number and theme:** The policy name and number as it appears in the Draft Plan. Wherever possible, policies are grouped into themes;
- **Policy intent:** This column summarises AECOM's understanding of the policy intent;
- **Evidence source and type:** This column identifies and checks the source of evidence and whether it is technical evidence or based on local surveys and engagement;
- **Evidence analysis:** This column analyses whether the evidence has been appropriately analysed and reasonable conclusions drawn;
- **Proportionality and gaps:** This column indicates, in AECOM's view, whether the evidence is proportionate and where further potentially useful evidence in support of the policy, theme or objective could be found and referenced;
- **Effectiveness of the policy:** This column analyses whether the evidence is clearly written, easy to understand and implementable;
- **Conformity:** This column provides AECOM's assessment of the extent to which the policy conforms with the relevant policies or provisions of the Local Plan, the NPPF and/or the local plan evidence base as well as with human rights and European law; and
- **Conclusion and recommendations:** This column summarises our thoughts on the policy, and indicates our overall recommendations for any necessary policy or evidence changes and whether specific issues need to be discussed with third parties to develop the policy further (e.g. the Highways Authority or LPA). If we consider that a policy should be deleted entirely, for example because it duplicates Local Plan policy, we state this here.

2.6 About Appendix 2

32. Appendix 2 lists policies in 'made' (i.e. adopted) neighbourhood plans from across England that are relevant to some of the policies that have been assessed at Bridport. The value of assessing a 'made' plan policy is that it has passed Examination and thus must be in full conformity with the Basic Conditions of Neighbourhood Planning.
33. In most cases, the examples of policies from 'made' plans have been taken from those where AECOM advised the group, but in cases where a relevant policy can only be found in a 'made' plan that AECOM had no involvement in, the policy has been quoted nonetheless.
34. If any of the policy examples in Appendix 2 are considered of particular interest or relevance, then it may be helpful to search online for the relevant Neighbourhood Plan Examiner's Report, which should in every case be available online (if it is not, contact the relevant Local Authority). The Examiner's report may show how and why the policy in question was amended to conform with the Basic Conditions, unless the draft policy was considered to meet the Basic Conditions without amendment.

2.7 About Appendix 3

35. Appendix 3 briefly sets out further information on neighbourhood plan policy drafting, including links to resources that may be helpful in this regard.

3. Conclusions and Recommendations

3.1 General Findings

36. In developing planning policies for the emerging Neighbourhood Plan, BTC should ensure that they do not merely repeat existing national and local planning policies. In a robust neighbourhood plan, neighbourhood policies would either increase the effectiveness and/or specificity of local plan policies (i.e. by adding local criteria and/or taking local context into account) or propose a policy where there was previously a policy void.
37. However, when the Forum supports the LPA's existing policy approach this can simply be referenced in supporting text rather than comprising a policy in its own right. Equally, developing measurable metrics (targets or indicators) to monitor effects of implementation is another way of ensuring the neighbourhood plan can add value over and above local and national policies.
38. All evidence that the Forum rely on in developing their planning policies should be properly documented within the Neighbourhood Plan. The supporting text to each policy must refer to the evidence base used to inform that policy approach, summarising the key points which will help demonstrate how robust the policy is. The supporting text should explain why the policy is required and signpost the reader to the plan's evidence base where they can find additional information. Policy justifications should also refer to WDDC's evidence bases and policies, as these help support the policies and provide further justification.
39. Additional evidence work in some cases may be required to enhance the robustness of policies. As a general rule, the more a policy departs from or goes beyond the local plan (e.g. in terms of standards), the more evidence is required. It is recommended that the Town Council conduct a further check of their draft final policies to ensure they are adding value to the Local Plan and are locally specific to the neighbourhood. Ideally this should be done with the LPA Neighbourhood Planning officer.

3.2 Summary of Policy Specific Findings (further detail in Appendix 1)

BTC6

40. AECOM considers that WDDC's suggestion that the policy cover the whole neighbourhood plan area would make it far more effective, proportionate and user-friendly. All references to the Town Centre and/or the Bridport Conservation Area could be removed.
41. The Neighbourhood Plan Consultation Report, Neighbourhood Plan Shop Survey and Bridport Conservation Area Appraisal (2010, which includes multiple references to shop fronts and their contribution to the town centre) should all be referenced in the supporting text, as should WDDC's forthcoming (or, by the time of neighbourhood plan adoption, 'adopted') Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) on shop front design.
42. AECOM agrees with the WDDC comments that the policy should apply to new as well as to altered shopfronts. As such, this component of the policy, and indeed Appendix A, should be reworded in these terms.
43. The section on temporary advertising in Bridport Conservation Area could be spun off into a new Town Centre policy, given that it does not relate directly to shopfronts, and indeed that it relates only to Conservation Areas, whereas AECOM recommends that the rest of policy BTC6 could be extended to cover the whole neighbourhood plan area.

BTC7

44. The requirement in a) 1 for the current amount of public car parking to be retained as part of any redevelopment is justified on the basis of evidence collected and would not breach the Basic Conditions of neighbourhood planning. However, AECOM considers that WDDC do have a point in terms of requiring reprovision on-site. This requirement does have the

potential to significantly reduce the effectiveness of the policy as site developers could legitimately claim it makes the scheme unviable/undeliverable.

45. While recognising that this will be disappointing to BTC, AECOM agrees with the WDDC comments that part b) of the policy is problematic based on the constraints of the local and neighbourhood planning systems. Given that the first half of b) restates an existing requirement at WDDC level, and that the second part of b) appears to breach the Basic Conditions it is recommended that b) be deleted entirely. Having said this, there is the potential for replacement b) text to be drafted with similar provisions that can go as far as it is possible to go given the constraints of the neighbourhood planning system.
46. Part c) of the policy, covering smaller retail floorplates, should specify, as suggested by WDDC, the size of a 'smaller' retail floorplate.
47. At AECOM's recommendation, the Town Council have carried out a survey to determine the proportion of units of 280 square metres or smaller in Bridport town centre currently, which as of December 2018 it is understood as being 91% of all shops.
48. The survey results (as well as the Government definition of 'small-scale' as per the text above) should be set out in supporting/justification text to the policy, and used as a basis for setting a specific proportion of small-scale units in any retail development at Ropewalks Car Park and Bus Station Car Park. It is for BTC to themselves determine the exact proportion of 'small-scale' retail units that should be provided as part of the development- the results of the survey need to be interpreted and applied. Finally, it is noted that BTC has assembled a significant amount of evidence and data on future retail trends, including how industry analysts currently forecast a future shrinkage of town centres in the face of online retailing. This information is crucial in terms of supporting BTC's case for redeveloping the car park sites for smaller floorplate retail. As such, it should be referenced, in an appropriately condensed form, in the supporting text to the policy.

H1

49. While provision is made within the NPPF for developers to demonstrate viability in the event they are advancing a non-policy compliant scheme, the requirement to divulge construction methods and details are too intrusive. It is not the role of planning policy to intervene in this way in the management processes of development companies.
50. In the event the group wishes to prepare an evidence base to make the case there is no need for Starter Homes AECOM would advise identifying up-to-date data that is specific to the Neighbourhood Area (NA) to examine how Starter Homes are unaffordable to their intended buyers, newly forming households on incomes around the median who would otherwise be unable to access entry level dwellings, and would otherwise be forced to rent.

H2

51. This policy is currently advanced without supporting evidence; reference to community engagement support, as well as authoritative studies would help justify the policy.
52. The policy itself could be re-worded and simplified and Appendix 1 provides recommendations in this regard.

H3

53. The policy might more logically be included as a criterion within Policy H1 rather than a policy in its own right.
54. The policy is clear on what it sets out to do, but could benefit from revised wording to make interpretation simpler. It should also be considered whether the policy might have the effect of obstructing future development on appropriate sites because the burden falls disproportionately on the subsequent developer.

H4

55. This policy is an important one, which covers a lot of ground, and so will be challenging to get exactly right. Though it is significantly improved from previous iterations in terms of specificity, its evidence base is not as strong as it could be, and there is a degree of confusion around its structure and how it fits in with the other NP policies.
56. We recommend splitting out criterion 4d into a separate policy covering residential care accommodation, and removing sub-criterion 4d1 as it repeats LP policy,
57. Take additional care with the wording of criteria 4a, 4b, and 4c so that there is no ambiguity around how a planning officer is to interpret “preferred mix” when making decisions. It is our view that 4c should be removed.
58. We would suggest revisiting the Bridport HNA to develop more robust evidence bases for housing tenure, and type and size. In order to address the apparent deficiencies in the evidence base, this would benefit from the delivery of the life-stage modelling process developed by AECOM to identify misalignments between current and future housing stock and demand for housing.
59. Forecasts relating to the housing needs of the elderly would be a means of generating more ambitious policy in this area.

H5

60. Overall, the various criteria set out in policy H5 may either be removed or combined with other policies so as to introduce greater clarity within the NP.

H6

61. The policy is clear in its intent and presents a reasonable policy response to identified local requirements that are different than those identified and addressed in the Local Plan.
62. The policy makes good use of the evidence base provided in its Housing Needs Assessment, although this evidence could be better referenced in the text of the policy and supporting information, and there is potential to consider additional layers of information to make the evidence (and policy response) more compelling.
63. Specifically, showing that Bridport has a particularly high level of demand for self-build housing would help to justify a policy approach that diverges from that favoured in the LP.
64. In order to confirm this policy will not undermine scheme viability, we would recommend carrying out a viability assessment.
65. Additionally, greater specificity in the wording of criterion b) could help to strengthen the policy.

H7

66. The policy is useful in its additional support for community-led housing as a means to address local need. However, it requires a more robust evidence base to justify the clear departure it makes from Local Plan policy in terms of supporting development on sites that would otherwise not be permitted for development. A viability assessment would be required to justify the 25% limitation on open-market housing as an appropriate and workable level rather than an arbitrary figure.
67. Additionally, there is ambiguity in the wording of criteria a) and b) that should be addressed in order for planning officers to understand exactly how to respond when considering applications.

H8

68. BTC has suggested that second-home ownership is not evenly distributed across the area. This points to a 'character area' approach to policy making – with policy applying to certain areas, but not others. This would require robust statistical evidence to show substantially different conditions prevailing in different parts of the NA; it would also be helpful if feedback from the community were obtained to illustrate the impact on residents' lives.
69. An obstacle the group would face to this approach would be that if there are parts of the NA unaffected by the policy, second homes would become more popular in these areas over time.
70. The concern about placing occupancy conditions on dwellings is the un-intended consequences. WDDC has commented on the impact of tourism. It will also have a substantial impact on the viability of proposed schemes, and therefore their capacity to deliver both general market housing as well as Affordable Housing. Were development to fall in the NP area, this may increase house prices, making dwellings less affordable to residents.
71. On balance, we feel it is unlikely the evidence exists to support policy H8.

H9

72. The policy is clear and effective in its intention of encouraging affordable housing provision through exception sites. The policy could benefit from clarification around the need that "cannot be otherwise met" in criteria 9a, the merging of criteria 9b and 9c (or deletion of 9b) due to redundancy, and more supporting evidence for the decision to set the open market proportion limit at 25% in criteria 9c. Further improvements are outlined in Appendix 1.

3.3 Recommendations for Next Steps

73. This neighbourhood plan evidence base and policy review has aimed to provide the Forum with recommendations on policy approaches to undertake in the Bridport Area Neighbourhood Plan. We recommend that the Town Council should, as a next step, discuss the contents and conclusions with West Dorset District Council with a view to finalising draft policies, taking the following into account during the process:
- the contents of this report, including but not limited to Appendix 1;
 - Neighbourhood Planning Basic Condition E, which is the need for the neighbourhood plan to be in general conformity with the strategic development plan;
 - the (further) views of West Dorset District Council;
 - the views of local residents on draft policies and other potential policy themes; and
 - the views of other relevant local stakeholders, including, for example, landowners.

Appendix 1: Detailed Evidence and Policy Review

Policy number and name	BTC6 – Shopfront Design
AECOM understanding of policy intent	The intent of the majority of the policy (parts a), b), c 1) and c2)) is to establish and maintain the high quality of shopfronts. As originally drafted, the policy covers only Bridport town centre, but WDDC, in their officer comments on the Regulation 14 version of the BANP, suggest rationalising the policy by expanding it, together with its accompanying Appendix A (Draft Shopfront Design Guidance), to cover the entire neighbourhood plan area. AECOM agrees with this recommendation, as this will clarify and simplify the policy intent. Part c 3) of the policy relates to temporary advertising in the Bridport Conservation Area and as such does not relate directly to shopfronts.
Evidence source and type	The introductory text to the Town Centre chapter of the Neighbourhood Plan forms the supporting text for all seven Town Centre policies, including BTC6. That text, though rich in factual description, does not include many references to relevant evidence gathered to support the policies, though it does reference the Sunday Times calling Bridport one of the best places to live as evidence supporting policy aimed at maintaining existing quality and amenity. BTC have provided separately to AECOM evidence not currently referenced in the chapter that is relevant for underpinning BTC6, including the Consultation Report and the Shop Survey.
Evidence analysis	The Consultation Report and the Shop Survey are considered good quality, clear support for the need for policies like BTC6 that will help Bridport maintain a distinct retail offer and quality of place. The Sunday Times reference is also helpful, as it places the quality of Bridport in a national context.
Proportionality and gaps	<p>Appendix A, which links to Policy BTC6 (see comments provided separately) is relatively prescriptive, but in their comments on the draft policy and the Appendix, WDDC did not highlight this as a problem of proportionality; as such, this prescriptiveness is not considered to be problematic. The proportionality of Policy BTC6, which is long and detailed, will be enhanced if it is extended to cover the whole neighbourhood plan area as recommended by WDDC rather than just Bridport Town Centre.</p> <p>As noted above, Part c 3) of the policy does not relate directly to shopfronts and as such its inclusion could be deemed disproportionate (or less relevant) to the broad policy intent.</p> <p>The policy text itself is long, detailed and, together with Appendix A, quite prescriptive; as such, it is not considered to have any gaps. However, there are gaps in the supporting text; see Recommendations below for how these could be filled.</p>
Effectiveness of policy	The policy is less effective if it is confusing to users and/or it applies only to a small part of the neighbourhood plan area. For these reasons, AECOM agrees with WDDC's suggestion that the policy should apply across the whole of the neighbourhood plan area, as otherwise the length of the policy, its relationship with Appendix A, and the distinction (if any) between Bridport Town Centre and its conservation area becomes extremely confusing.
Conformity check	The policy, alongside Appendix A, appears to be in conformity with adopted West Dorset Local Plan policy ENV14, but this should be stated for the avoidance of doubt. The fact that ENV14 does not itself reference conservation areas is another good reason to expand the scope of BTC6 and Appendix A to the whole neighbourhood plan area.

Conclusion and recommendations

AECOM considers that WDDC's suggestion that the policy cover the whole neighbourhood plan area would make it far more effective, proportionate and user-friendly. All references to the Town Centre and/or the Bridport Conservation Area could be removed.

The Neighbourhood Plan Consultation Report, Neighbourhood Plan Shop Survey and Bridport Conservation Area Appraisal (2010⁵, which includes multiple references to shop fronts and their contribution to the town centre) should all be referenced in the supporting text, as should WDDC's forthcoming (or, by the time of neighbourhood plan adoption, 'adopted') SPD on shop front design. All of these references will strengthen the policy by making its evidence base more explicit.

If BTC agrees with WDDC's and AECOM's view that the policy should be expanded to cover the whole neighbourhood plan area, West Bay Conservation Area Appraisal⁶, which also mentions shop fronts and their relationship with the historic environment, should also be referenced in the supporting text.

AECOM considers that 'including street numbering on new shopfronts' should be deleted in section 5 of the policy as it is not relevant for disabled access. However, the words could instead be inserted in an appropriate place within a) 2, and add after these words 'in order to improve legibility of the urban environment'.

AECOM agrees with the WDDC comments that the policy should apply to new as well as to altered shopfronts. As such, this component of the policy, and indeed Appendix A, should be reworded in these terms.

The policy text reference to 'the shopfront guidance contained in this neighbourhood plan' presumably refers to Appendix A. This should be cross-referenced more clearly for the avoidance of doubt. WDDC have provided separate comments on Appendix A, which appear sensible and reasonable.

The section on temporary advertising in Bridport Conservation Area (BTC6 c) 3 only) could be spun off into a new Town Centre policy, given that it does not relate directly to shopfronts, and indeed that it relates only to Conservation Areas whereas AECOM recommends that the rest of policy BTC6 could be extended to cover the whole neighbourhood plan area.

The WDDC comments on Part 3 of Policy BTC6 advise clearer and more explicit alignment with national planning policy on advertisements, including mentioning potential impacts on public safety, and AECOM agrees. AECOM also agrees with WDDC that there appears to be no reason for it not to apply to other conservation areas within the neighbourhood plan area as well as Bridport town centre.

The BTC response to consultation states that the Town Council would value advice on defining temporary advertisements. The clearest definition for town planning purposes is within the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007⁷, specifically in Class 3: Miscellaneous Temporary Advertisements. A much more accessible, user-friendly presentation of the 2007 Regulations, including Class 3 advertising, appears in the guide 'Outdoor advertisements and signs: a guide for advertisers', which is available online⁸.

As such, perhaps the policy itself simply needs to add after the words 'other forms of temporary advertising' the words '(i.e. Class 3 advertising in the 2007 Regulations)', with a footnote reference to the regulations and the Outdoor Advertisements and Signs guidance.

⁵ Available at <https://www.dorsetforyou.gov.uk/planning-buildings-land/planning/planning-constraints/conservation-areas/west-dorset/pdfs/bridport-conservation-area-appraisal-revised-2010.pdf>, with accompanying map at <https://www.dorsetforyou.gov.uk/planning-buildings-land/planning/planning-constraints/conservation-areas/west-dorset/pdfs/bridport-conservation-area-appraisal-townscape-and-sub-area-map-revised-2010.pdf>

⁶ Available at <https://www.dorsetforyou.gov.uk/planning-buildings-land/planning/planning-constraints/conservation-areas/west-dorset/pdfs/west-bay-conservation-area-appraisal.pdf>

⁷ Available at http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2007/783/pdfs/uksi_20070783_en.pdf

⁸ See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/outdoor-advertisements-and-signs-a-guide-for-advertisers>

Policy number and name	BTC7 – Ropewalks Car Park and Bus Station Car Park
AECOM understanding of policy intent	BTC7 states that the mixed-use redevelopment of the Ropewalks Car Park and Bus Station Car Park sites will be supported only on condition that the current amount of public car parking is re-provided on site, that redevelopment improves public transport provision between Bridport and surrounding villages, that there is demonstrable community support for the development proposals, and that retail units should be designed to meet the needs of small, local and/or independent traders.
Evidence source and type	The introductory text to the Town Centre chapter of the Neighbourhood Plan forms the supporting text for all seven Town Centre policies, including BTC7. That text, though rich in factual description, does not include many references to relevant evidence gathered to support the policies, though it does reference the Sunday Times calling Bridport one of the best places to live as evidence supporting policy aimed at maintaining existing quality and amenity. BTC have provided separately to AECOM evidence not currently referenced in the chapter that is relevant for underpinning BTC7, including the Consultation Report and the Car Park survey.
Evidence analysis	<p>The Car Park survey in particular is compelling, and gives a clear, robust picture of how busy the existing car parks given the limited public transport provision across the neighbourhood plan area. The Consultation Report also clearly supports the policy. Though WDDC are suggesting that they would prefer a softer line to be taken in terms of parking space reprovision following car park redevelopment, they have not challenged the principle of reprovision or produced alternative evidence on car parking.</p> <p>Though BTC has not itself used it as evidence, because it disagrees with its conclusion, in additional papers supplied to AECOM, the Carter Jonas Joint Retail and Commercial Leisure Study 2018⁹ has been quoted, specifically its conclusion that the car parks site could be suitable for additional comparison retail. However, WDDC do not themselves reference that study and indeed in their comments seem open to the idea of smaller retail units, meaning either that they also do not agree with the Carter Jonas report or do not see its conclusions as incompatible with requiring smaller retail floorplates. As such, the fact that WDDC have not referenced the study themselves can itself be used as evidence that there appears to be no necessity for BTC7 to align with its conclusions.</p>
Proportionality and gaps	<p>In their comments on BTC7, WDDC stated that it is too prescriptive (i.e. disproportionate) in terms of its requirements for the current number of spaces to be retained on site and pointed to the relative flexibility of their corresponding adopted policy BRID4, which requires an ‘appropriate’ amount of car parking to be retained, and does not specify the location of that car parking.</p> <p>WDDC further note that the submission of a Design and Access Statement, also required by BTC7, is already a requirement at Local Plan level and thus does not need to be restated here.</p>
Effectiveness of policy	<p>AECOM note that the requirement in part a), for the re-provided parking to be retained on site could negatively affect the effectiveness of the policy, as it could mean that developers could claim that the site is not developable or viable with this requirement, and the policy might not be implemented.</p> <p>WDDC state concerns, which AECOM agrees with, that part b) of the policy may not be effective, i.e. deliverable, due to a lack of clarity over the definition of ‘majority support’ for any scheme. See Conformity check and Conclusion and recommendations sections below for further details.</p>

⁹ Available at <https://www.dorsetforyou.gov.uk/planning-buildings-land/planning-policy/west-dorset-and-weymouth-portland/local-plan-review/pdf/evidence/joint-retail-and-commercial-leisure-study-main-report.PDF>

	<p>WDDC also note that the requirement in part c) of the policy to provide a ‘significant number’ of smaller retail floorplates is imprecise, thus negatively affecting policy effectiveness. Again, AECOM agrees with this point based on experience of policy elsewhere, and also WDDC’s point that a specific area in square metres should be specified is considered justified.</p>
<p>Conformity check</p>	<p>WDDC state that they consider BTC7 to be in conformity with Policy BRID4 of the Local Plan. However, they are concerned, and AECOM agrees, that the current provisions set out in part b) of the policy (requiring ‘majority support’ for the scheme at consultation stage) would breach legal conformity, for the reasons WDDC states. Paragraph 2 of the NPPF, with which the policy must be in conformity to meet Basic Condition a) of Neighbourhood Planning¹⁰. Paragraph 2 requires applications for planning permission to be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise, and WDDC are correct that there are multiple reasons why consultees may be opposed to any application that do not form material considerations for the purposes of planning law.</p> <p>Additionally, it appears to be common ground between WDDC and BTC that Policy BRID4 is not a strategic policy, meaning that there is no legal requirement for BTC7 to be in conformity with it. As such, BTC7 is free in terms of the Basic Conditions to present a form of words stronger than ‘appropriate amount of public car parking’.</p> <p>However, the fact that BRID4 is not strategic does not, unfortunately, mean that BTC are free to require redevelopment proposals to command majority support (see below for details)</p>
<p>Conclusion and recommendations</p>	<p>The requirement in a) 1 for the current amount of public car parking to be retained as part of any redevelopment is justified on the basis of evidence collected and would not breach the Basic Conditions of neighbourhood planning. It is analogous to the approach used in other areas of planning policy- for example the NPPF supports the loss of open space for redevelopment only if equivalent or better provision is provided elsewhere (paragraph 97). This suggests that keeping the existing level of parking spaces (whether phrased as ‘broadly equivalent’ or otherwise) is not in itself an unreasonable aim in the circumstances, and, reading between the lines of all the information provided to AECOM, it is possible that WDDC might agree. However, AECOM considers that WDDC do have a point in terms of requiring reprovision on-site. This requirement does have the potential to significantly reduce the effectiveness of the policy as site developers could legitimately claim it makes the scheme unviable/undeliverable. As such, it is suggested that the flexibility and hence effectiveness of the policy could be enhanced by adding the words ‘or within Bridport Town Centre, or within walking distance of the Town Centre’ to the end of a) 1.</p> <p>While recognising that this will be disappointing to BTC, AECOM agrees with the WDDC comments on b) based on the constraints of the local and neighbourhood planning systems. Given that the first half of b) restates an existing requirement at WDDC level, and that the second part of b) appears to breach the Basic Conditions it is recommended that b) be deleted entirely. Evidence supporting this conclusion can be found in the Examiner’s report for the Wyese Neighbourhood Plan in Herefordshire¹¹, where the examiner could not support the draft plan’s requirement in Policy WH.01 for proposals to demonstrate community support (see paragraphs 4.17-4.18), because ‘<i>how consultation is undertaken is an entirely procedural matter, not a land-use one. The PPG advice is that non land-use matters can be included in a neighbourhood plan but should be clearly distinguishable from statutory policy, for example in an annex. As a community aspiration, the [Parish Council’s] desire that any proposal should receive community support could be included in such an annex....the fact that the community did not support a particular proposal and the reasons for that lack of support, or opposition, would undoubtedly be a material consideration for the LPA which might well influence the eventual decision but there would have to be sound planning reasons for any refusal.</i>’ The Examiner concluded that the text as drafted would breach Basic Condition A and would need to be deleted.</p> <p>Having said this, there is the potential for replacement b) text to be drafted with similar provisions that can go as far as it is possible to go given the constraints of the</p>

¹⁰ See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/neighbourhood-planning--2#basic-conditions-for-neighbourhood-plan-to-referendum>

¹¹ Available at https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/11637/examiners_report.pdf

neighbourhood planning system. For example, b) could require the development to demonstrate compliance with Appendix A, to have detailed regard to the Bridport Conservation Area Appraisal and WDDC design policies, to ensure design has regard to best practice guidance¹² and, as suggested by WDDC in their comments, could require that any scheme should show how any relevant planning issues identified through consultation would be satisfactorily addressed. Indeed, these requirements could cumulatively even be stronger than b) as it stands. They would still set the bar high for any redevelopment, but with a lesser impact in terms of viability. AECOM's suggested rewording of Policy BTC7b is as follows:

The proposed redevelopment of these sites must:

- Be fully described and illustrated through a Design & Access Statement that has been subject to a wide consultation with residents and businesses in the Bridport area; and
- Demonstrate compliance with Appendix A of this Plan (Shopfront Design Guidance); and
- Have detailed regard to the Bridport Conservation Area Appraisal and relevant West Dorset Local Plan design policies; and
- In its approach to replacement car parking, have appropriate regard to best practice design guidance such as 'Car Parking: What Works Where' (English Partnerships, 2006); and
- Demonstrate how any relevant planning issues identified through community engagement and consultation would be satisfactorily addressed.

Part c) of the policy, covering smaller retail floorplates, should specify, as suggested by WDDC, the size of a 'smaller' retail floorplate. The Government defines 'small shops' as those with a floor area not exceeding 280 square metres for the purposes of the Sunday Trading Act 1994¹³, and this definition has now been adopted by others, including the Association of Convenience Stores¹⁴ and is also used in Local Plans, for example the adopted Teignbridge Local Plan¹⁵ (policies EC6: Large Scale Retail Development and EC10: Local Shops). BTC also advise that they have been advised to use 'small' (less than 280 square metres) in planning policy rather than 'very small' (less than 140 square metres); based on the evidence assessed in reviewing this policy, AECOM agrees.

Part c) of the policy should replace the phrase 'significant number' with a specific percentage, based on robust data. At AECOM's recommendation, the Town Council have carried out a survey to determine the proportion of units of 280 square metres or smaller in Bridport town centre currently, which as of December 2018 it is understood as being 91% of all shops.

The survey results (as well as the Government definition of 'small-scale' as per the text above) should be set out in supporting/justification text to the policy, and used as a basis for setting a specific proportion of small-scale units in any retail development at Ropewalks Car Park and Bus Station Car Park. It is for BTC to themselves determine the exact proportion of 'small-scale' retail units that should be provided as part of the development- the results of the survey need to be interpreted and applied.

While on the face of it, the survey suggests that the proportion of smaller scale units could be as high as 90%, the higher the proportion, the more of an impact on

¹² For example, the case studies of car parking combined with retail development in the 'Car Parking- What Works Where' design guidance (English Partnerships, 2006), available at https://www.ipswich.gov.uk/sites/default/files/ncd42_-_car_parking_what_works_where.pdf

¹³ Available at <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1994/20/contents>

¹⁴ As cited in Retail in London: Working Paper C, Grocery Retailing (GLA Economics, October 2005), available at https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/gla_migrate_files_destination/retail_in_london_wpc_grocery_retailing.pdf

¹⁵ Available at <https://www.teignbridge.gov.uk/planning/local-plans-and-policy/teignbridge-local-plan-2033/>

development viability. Equally, BTC might consider that the knowledge that 91% of existing retail units in Bridport are small-scale gives a degree of reassurance that this will remain the case into the future and that the percentage requirement in the new development could be relaxed slightly (for example, to 60-80%) to allow for a limited number of larger 'anchor' units that could underpin the centre's economic viability, while at the same time providing BTC certainty that it will include significantly more small-scale and/or independent retail than the average English shopping centre.

Note also that the retail survey has the potential to uncover examples of comparison retailers occupying units of 280 square metres or less; if so, this means policy BTC7 could support the provision of small-scale comparison retail and thus cite the Carter Jonas report as part of its evidence base.

Finally, it is noted that BTC has assembled a significant amount of evidence and data on future retail trends, including how industry analysts currently forecast a future shrinkage of town centres in the face of online retailing, and data gathered by the R3 Intelligence Unit at Northumbria University on changes in retail floorspace and rateable value in West Dorset, that tends to support this conclusion. This information is crucial in terms of supporting BTC's case for redeveloping the car park sites for smaller floorplate retail. As such, it should be referenced, in an appropriately condensed form, in the supporting text to the policy. As AECOM is not assessing policies BTC1-5, it is not clear if additional supporting text would also be needed for those, but as normal practice is to provide supporting text on a policy-by-policy basis, and as AECOM has identified a need for additional supporting text for both BTC6 and BTC7, it may be advisable to split the existing supporting text at the start of the chapter into seven individual supporting sections by policy.

<p>Policy number and name</p>	<p>H1: General Affordable Housing Policy</p>
<p>AECOM Understanding of Policy Intent</p>	<p>This is a criteria based policy: Criterion a) seeks to treat the 35% target for Affordable Homes (AH) in District policy in Bridport as a minimum and, Criterion b) will enhance the Town Council's ability to monitor the delivery of AH so it's in a stronger position to influence the outcome of section 106 negotiations between the Local Authority and developers. In such a way it is seeking to maximise the influence it has on the proportion of AH within new build development. Criterion c) requires developers to provide information relating to the construction techniques that are used in the delivery of new homes. The assumption behind this is that such techniques will improve efficiencies, thereby cutting costs, and feeding through into greater financial headroom to deliver AH without threatening viability. In d) the policy is seeking to exclude Starter Homes from tenures of Affordable Housing that come through new development.</p>
<p>Evidence Source and Type</p>	<p>The evidence presented is set out in the Housing Needs Assessment assembled by the group.</p>
<p>Evidence Analysis / Proportionality and Gaps</p>	<p>Criterion a) takes into account the change in national policy described in WDDC's advice as regards thresholds to be observed when applying AH policy. It also retains the proportion of new build development that should be AH set out in Local Plan Policy HOUS1. While 35% is expressed as a 'minimum' proportion in policy H1, and policy HOUS1 describes this proportion as a 'requirement', NP policy is not, in practice, more stringent than the Local Plan policy. For this reason, no additional evidence is required to support this policy.</p> <p>Criterion b) is not controversial, and WDDC have indicated they are comfortable with the proposed requirement.</p> <p>Criterion c) is inappropriate as it requires developers to provide information that is potentially commercially sensitive; they are likely to be extremely reluctant to provide this information. In addition, no clear definition of innovative and modern methods of construction exist, making this a difficult policy to enforce. Moreover, questions relating to reasonable construction costs would be covered in a viability assessment. Also, construction methods are not a land-use planning matter and are therefore outside the jurisdiction of planning officers.</p> <p>Criterion d) is controversial given it potentially conflicts with national policy, as set out in the advice provided by WDDC. We have nothing to add to this advice, feeling it is accurate and well-expressed. In the event the group wishes to prepare an evidence base to make the case there is no need for Starter Homes AECOM may be able to assist with identifying up-to-date data that is specific to the NA to examine how Starter Homes are unaffordable to their intended buyers, newly forming households on incomes around the median who would otherwise be unable to access entry level dwellings, and would otherwise be forced to rent. This would reinforce the evidence cited in the HNA that is drawn from the SHMA part 2 and provide a more robust evidence base from which to shape national policy to suit local circumstances. We are also concerned that the data cited in the SHMA (2014) is out of date; while SHMA data may be appropriate, and may be taken as a suitable proxy for the NA, locally specific household income data would be preferable. This would strengthen a policy that may not otherwise survive examination on the basis of the evidence provided.</p>

<p>Effectiveness of Policy</p>	<p>Criterion a) provides a clear test for compliance Criterion b) has to some extent been superseded by Paragraph 57 of the NPPF that requires a developer to produce a viability assessment in the event they are seeking permission for a non-policy compliant scheme. Criterion c): given the absence of meaningful definitions around ‘demonstrate all options have been applied’, this will be near impossible for an applicant to comply with without re-consideration and re-drafting. Criterion d) As discussed, the current evidence base does not convincingly make the case that Starter Homes would not assist some households to access suitable housing and fulfil their ambition for home ownership.</p>
<p>Conformity Check</p>	<p>The adopted Local Plan was written before the advent of Starter Homes, and therefore does not mention them specifically. The emerging Local Plan does not yet present policies; however, the feedback from WDDC highlights the potential conflict with national planning policy.</p> <p>To quote NPPF paragraph 64: <i>“Where major development involving the provision of housing is proposed, planning policies and decisions should expect at least 10% of the homes to be available for affordable home ownership, unless this would exceed the level of affordable housing required in the area, or significantly prejudice the ability to meet the identified affordable housing needs of specific groups.”</i></p> <p>The Bridport Area Neighbourhood Plan is being brought forward in the context of a Local Plan that does not reflect national policy and its revised definitions of affordable housing. There is therefore an opportunity to influence the direction of travel of the new Local Plan.</p>
<p>Conclusion and Recommendations</p>	<p>While provision is made within the NPPF for developers to demonstrate viability in the event they are advancing a non-policy compliant scheme, the requirement to divulge construction methods and details are too intrusive. It is not the role of planning policy to intervene in this way in the management processes of private development companies.</p> <p>In the event the group wishes to prepare an evidence base to make the case there is no need for Starter Homes, AECOM would advise identifying up-to-date data that is specific to the NA to examine how Starter Homes are unaffordable for intended buyers (newly forming households on incomes around the median who would otherwise be unable to access entry level dwellings), and would otherwise be forced to rent. If the group wish to go further and exclude ‘other affordable routes to home ownership’ on the basis that the priority should be on Social Rented and Affordable Rented dwellings the evidential challenge would be substantially greater.</p>

<p>Policy number and name</p>	<p>H2: Design of Affordable Housing</p>
<p>AECOM Understanding of Policy Intent</p>	<p>Policy H2 expresses the community's desire for tenure blind communities and clarity as to the layout of Affordable Housing (AH) units so as to achieve greater social cohesion.</p>
<p>Evidence Source and Type</p>	<p>The policy asserts that the blending of AH and market housing will encourage more harmonious co-existence among people of different income levels; while this is broadly in conformity with Local Plan policies, it does raise the bar by indicating that developments that do not demonstrate sufficient integration of market and affordable housing will not be supported. No specific evidence has been advanced to support this assertion.</p>
<p>Evidence Analysis / Proportionality and Gaps</p>	<p>This position is broadly supported by national policy, and represents a common policy objective for plan-makers; however given this policy is more stringent than Local Plan policy, reference to community engagement support, as well as to authoritative studies, would help justify it.</p>
<p>Effectiveness of Policy</p>	<p>We would suggest the policy could be simplified; it is important policy is as clear and succinct as possible, without including in the policy box any statements of community intent. The best place for this is as part of the reasoned justification. On this basis b) could be removed. As regards a) this is clearly expressed and provides a clear test that planning officers will be able to implement. Criterion c) could however be simplified to avoid ambiguity.</p>
<p>Conformity Check</p>	<p>Policy H2 is in conformity with Local Plan policy HOUS1; this policy seeks 'tenure-blind' development. However, it adds to Policy HOUS1 by, in effect, supplying a definition of 'tenure blind' in criterion a), that 'quality and location differences are indiscernible'. National Policy is silent on this issue and does not provide guidance.</p> <p>The feedback received from WDDC is supportive of criterion c) and the policy has been modified in line with their comments.</p>
<p>Conclusion and Recommendations</p>	<p>This policy is currently advanced without supporting evidence. Given Policy H2 qualifies Local Plan policy in this area, it would help to cite relevant studies, for example 'Developing and sustaining mixed tenure developments'¹⁶. Also, the Government has recently published its green paper, 'A new deal for social housing', which cites not only qualitative evidence that residents of social housing prefer tenure-blind schemes¹⁷, but also the case study of Derwenthorpe¹⁸ where this has been delivered in practice. Evidence from community engagement activity showing the wider community in support of this policy would also assist.</p> <p>In AECOM's view however, Policy H2 could be re-worded and simplified to read as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) At outline planning stage, the number of Affordable Housing units will be stated setting out the size, type and tenure of each of the units.' That AH should have regard for housing need is dealt with elsewhere in the plan (Policy H4). b) The location of Affordable Housing will be stated at the reserved matters or full stage of the planning application. c) Affordable housing and open market housing will be fully integrated into all developments in such a way that, once completed, any quality and location differences are indiscernible.

¹⁶ Bailey, N and Manzi, T, 'Developing and sustaining mixed tenure housing developments', September 2008, Joseph Rowntree Foundation/University of Westminster

¹⁷ MHCLG, A new deal for social housing, p52

¹⁸ Ibid, p54

Policy number and name	H3: Phased Development and Affordable Housing
AECOM Understanding of Policy Intent	The policy seeks to ensure that multiple small developments on the same site or adjoining sites do not sidestep the AH requirements imposed on larger developments – which such sites may eventually become.
Evidence Source and Type	The policy does not appear to refer to any external evidence.
Evidence Analysis / Proportionality and Gaps	As a logical extension of the AH policies set out previously in the document, the policy does not require its own separate evidence base.
Effectiveness of Policy	The policy is effective in the conditions it sets out, which are clear, logical, and represent a reasonable response to the problem identified.
Conformity Check	LP policy, though very detailed on the subject of AH, makes no specific provision around the topic of phased development, so this policy is a valuable addition. It is also better-suited to inclusion at the scale of a neighbourhood plan than a local plan, since Bridport is more likely to experience multiple small developments than large ones. So it is considered proportionate to apply the minimum requirement of affordable housing to the small-scale development that is expected at the neighbourhood level.
Conclusion and Recommendations	<p>The policy might more logically be included as a criterion within Policy H1 rather than a discrete piece of policy in its own right.</p> <p>The policy is clear on what it sets out to do, but could benefit from revised wording to make interpretation simpler. The policy is about planning applications for developments on sites that have recently or previously been developed, so beginning by referring to the original development of a site as a “proposed development” is confusing. The policy might be clearer if re-framed around subsequent developments, e.g. “where a development of open-market housing is proposed on or adjacent to the site of a previous development that fell below the threshold...”</p> <p>Locality guidance on the composition of NP policy encourages positive wording – setting out what kind of development will be supported, encouraged, and permitted, rather than indicating what development will be opposed, denied, or rejected. This guidance could be applied to this policy to lend it a more positive tone.</p> <p>It should also be considered whether the policy might have the effect of obstructing future development on appropriate sites because the burden falls disproportionately on the developer, and whether perhaps the affordable housing requirement of 35% might be applied to the new development rather than the cumulative total. If so, certain exceptions or conditions under which the policy might be made less stringent could be beneficial.</p> <p>For example, if a 5-unit development were to be added to an existing 5-unit development, the original development would have included no affordable housing and paid no financial contribution, but the new development will need to include 3 affordable homes out of a total of 5 or a (presumably) substantial cash payment. This may be fair, but it could also have the unintended consequence of constraining new development badly needed in Bridport, as very few 66% affordable developments will be financially viable. Imposing a 35% minimum (or equivalent financial contribution) on all future development rather than the cumulative total would negate that risk.</p>

Policy number and name	H4: Housing Mix and Balanced Community
AECOM Understanding of Policy Intent	<p>The policy seeks to ensure that both individual and cumulative developments across the NA provide a balanced mix of housing types, tenures, and sizes that reflect the need identified in the most up-to-date research.</p> <p>Criterion a) specifies that large developments must supply a range of sizes, types, and tenures in order to allow all members of the community to access some form of housing appropriate to their needs.</p> <p>Criterion b) supports, in particular, those developments that provide a housing mix aligned with the findings of the most recent HNA, or any future review of its findings in line with new population projection evidence.</p> <p>Criterion c) seeks to clarify that the need identified across the entire NP area should be considered when assessing the mix delivered by any individual development.</p> <p>Criterion d) sets out conditions guiding the delivery of residential care developments.</p> <p>Criterion d1) intends to make sure residential care developments are geographically defined and limited in scale by their surroundings.</p> <p>Criterion d2) addresses the need for sufficiently level pedestrian routes between the development and the town that meet the needs of elderly and disabled residents. This is deemed necessary because Bridport is particularly hilly and may pose difficulties for older residents.</p> <p>Criterion d3) seeks to ensure that only residential care developments that can demonstrate sufficient need or meet demand from within the NA and surrounding parishes (as opposed to the wider district) receive planning permission.</p>
Evidence Source and Type	<p>The Bridport HNA has identified a housing need figure and a breakdown by size, type, and tenure. This evidence is employed to justify policies that seek to ensure development meets that identified need. The policy refers explicitly to the HNA as evidence for the “preferred mix”.</p> <p>The need for policy to ensure appropriate access in d2) is evidenced by the “hilly terrain” mentioned in the surrounding text.</p> <p>No other points appear to mention or require additional evidence.</p>
Evidence Analysis / Proportionality and Gaps	<p>Criterion a) touches on a range of policy topics and implicitly relies on the evidence set out in the HNA.</p> <p>Criterion b) relies on highly relevant evidence in the HNA and sets out a clear rationale for how that evidence should be reviewed and treated in future; however we do have some concerns as to the robustness of this data.</p> <p>As a separate note, the methodology in the HNA is difficult to follow. Where data is being manipulated for the purposes of producing conclusions that are relied on in</p>

	<p>policy development, it is important the process is split up into clear logical steps and explained in assessable terminology. Also, 'graph D2' could not be identified in the HNA.</p> <p>Criterion c) is redundant (see Effectiveness of Policy below).</p> <p>Criterion d1) restates LP policy and should be removed (see Conformity Check below).</p> <p>Criterion d2) is a reasonable policy response to the local situation, and is not something that requires further evidence to justify.</p> <p>Take care with the phrase "existing need" in d3). It would be unclear to a planning officer whether applications must demonstrate that the existing community already requires residential care accommodation or whether they could also demonstrate that such accommodation will be needed in the near future (which, with the ageing population, would be more appropriate). AECOM may be able to produce forecasts setting out need over the plan period for specialized housing for the elderly.</p>
<p>Effectiveness of Policy</p>	<p>The latest draft of the policy has very successfully implemented the amendments proposed in the WDDC response to the previous draft.</p> <p>Criterion a) is clear in what it is seeking to achieve, however it is written more as an objective or aspiration than as a clear test that applications need to meet; there are also areas of ambiguity that need to be cleared up.</p> <p>Criterion b) is extremely clear and specific in what evidence needs to be consulted when making planning decisions.</p> <p>It is unclear how a planning officer should interpret a) and b) together when making decisions. The policy states that proposals "will contain a mix" and "the preferred mix will be as defined in the HNA..." There is uncertainty around whether: a) for applications to be successful they must contain an exact reflection of the ideal mix set out in the HNA, or b) merely that they should be mixed (i.e. not entirely homogenous) and will be looked upon more favourably the closer that mix is to the ideal mix described in the HNA. The latter is probably more realistic, and if that is the intention, the policy could benefit from re-wording around the terms "will" and "preferred" with the decision-making process for a planning officer kept in mind.</p> <p>In addition, a policy that addresses the topics of tenure as well as housing mix (type and size) is trying to do too much, and risks losing a clear and direct relationship with relevant evidence. For this reason, this policy could be simplified by removing the reference to tenure, and rolling this into Policy H1. As a general rule, the policies should correspond with a clearly defined body of evidence that supports them.</p> <p>Criterion c) should be removed.</p> <p>The entirety of d) would be clearer if it were separated out into a distinct policy dealing with residential care development.</p> <p>Criterion d1) is redundant and should be deleted (as explained in Conformity Check below).</p> <p>Criterion d2) is clear and effective, although there is some ambiguity in the term "reasonably level and easy". AECOM's view is that, for the purpose of determining planning approvals, this is sufficient to direct a planning officer to this locally-specific issue and to enable the officer to make a reasoned interpretation.</p>

	<p>Criterion d3) is clear and effective, subject to clarification about the term “existing need” (see Evidence Analysis above).</p>
<p>Conformity Check</p>	<p>The policies in the LP that deal with housing mix are confined to the mix of affordable housing types, sizes, and tenures. So the NP policies add an appropriate and useful level of nuance by setting out requirements for mixed communities for all development (affordable or otherwise), and make good use of the findings of the Bridport HNA. Criteria a), b), or c) are considered in conformity with the policies set out in the LP.</p> <p>Criterion d1) repeats LP policy HOUS5.i and should be deleted.</p> <p>Criterion d2) usefully adds to LP policy to address a locally-specific condition (hilly terrain) that might otherwise cause difficulties for the segment of the community that residential care development is designed to serve.</p> <p>Criterion d3) applies the intention of the second criteria in LP policy HOUS5.i (new accommodation and extensions should demonstrate “a need for the service in the locality”) to the NP area level, so that future developments are required to meet Bridport community needs in addition to the needs of the wider district.</p>
<p>Conclusion and Recommendations</p>	<p>This policy is an important one, which covers a lot of ground, and so will be challenging to get exactly right. Though it is significantly improved from previous iterations in terms of specificity, its evidence base is not as strong as it could be, and there is a degree of confusion around its structure and how it fits in with the other NP policies. AECOM recommends:</p> <p>Criterion a) is clear in what it is seeking to achieve, however it is written more as an objective or aspiration than as a clear test that applications need to meet. It is also somewhat vague in its reference to a “range of needs”, although this is fleshed out in the next criterion (see below). One further suggestion would be to change the usage of the word “household” when referring to “household types and sizes”. Household, in the Census and related usage, refers to a group of people living at the same address rather than the dwelling itself. Suggest changing to “dwelling types” or “housing types”.</p> <p>Criterion b) is extremely clear and specific in what evidence needs to be consulted when making planning decisions. However, while it relies on highly relevant evidence sets out a clear rationale for how that evidence it should be used, from a review of the evidence supplied and analysed in the HNA, the evidence itself should be made more robust. NP policy should reflect the most accurately assessed need over the plan period. The current HNA applies future household projections to the current demographic profile and housing patterns, and so misses an opportunity to consider how current demography will age and evolve over the plan period, and what housing mix would be best suited to that future need profile. Undertaking further work to improve the evidence base would help to address misalignments between the current housing mix and the ideal future mix.</p> <p>Criterion c) should be removed. It appears not to add anything beyond what is stated in b), which already stipulates that the preferred mix be informed by the Bridport HNA. Since the HNA describes the mix required for the overall NP area, it is not necessary to restate the point here. If the policy does provide additional value that we have missed in our reading and is to be kept, we would recommend addressing the following points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How a planning officer is to implement a “preference” for a specific housing mix. Policy is weakened if it permits a great deal of discretion as to how it will be applied, unless giving planning officers a reasonable degree of discretion is its purpose.

- “Overall need” is also ambiguous at present. It may mean that any individual development must be composed of a mix that reflects the need identified for the whole area, or that the development could, for example, target one particularly acute segment of need identified by the HNA. Depending on the intention, this should be clarified.
- The phrase “with respect to mix of” requires attention.

We recommend revisiting the Bridport HNA to develop more robust evidence bases for housing tenure, and type and size. In order to address the apparent deficiencies in the evidence base, this would benefit from the delivery of the life-stage modelling process developed by AECOM to identify misalignments between current and future housing stock and demand for housing.

Furthermore, forecasts relating to the housing needs of the elderly would be a means of generating more ambitious and locally specific policy in this area.

Policy number and name	H5: Housing Development Requirements
AECOM Understanding of Policy Intent	<p>The policy puts in place a number of criteria, to be applied to different scales of development. In summary:</p> <p>Criterion a) requires that developers make clear in advance any on-costs associated with the scheme;</p> <p>Criterion b) sets four conditions that would make proposed scheme of 10 or more homes acceptable in planning terms; b)4) introduces an urban design principle that public amenities must be introduced in a timely way to ensure residents are able to access key services;</p> <p>Criterion c) requires a 'binding agreement' to be in place such that a scheme of 50 or more dwellings will provide 35% Affordable Housing (AH), and that each phase will be required to deliver a minimum of 35% AH;</p> <p>Criterion d) requires that, at Reserved Matters stage, where applicable, the location of serviced plots will be clarified and shown to be properly integrated into the overall scheme.</p>
Evidence Source and Type	<p>The reasoned justification does not explicitly mention evidence to support this policy. It is reasonable to assume therefore that the policy relies on the Bridport Area Neighbourhood Plan HNA.</p>
Evidence Analysis / Proportionality and Gaps	<p>Condition 4 of b) is an important policy in its own right and should be supported by its own 'reasoned justification'.</p> <p>Criteria a), b) (bar condition 1 and 4), c) and d) should either be removed or amalgamated with other policies; it is therefore unnecessary to assess the quality of the evidence base in respect of these parts of Policy H5. As regards b) 1 and 4, no evidence is presented to support this policy; we would recommend identifying exemplar projects that have been designed with this principle in mind, and showing the success that has been achieved in terms of resident well-being and design quality.</p>
Effectiveness of Policy	<p>Criterion a) is not a land-use planning matter and would not be enforceable through planning policy; it does not feature in Local Policy or National Planning Policy Guidance.</p> <p>Criterion b) sets out a number of conditions:</p> <p>b) 1) provides a principle of urban design that should be applied to all schemes for 10 or more homes. This is loosely worded and would need to be developed into a fuller urban design policy that explains in clear terms what qualities such a development would need to possess in order to be 'integrated' and 'connected' with neighbouring communities. In its current form it is insufficiently precise to be implementable by planning officers.</p> <p>b) 2) please refer to commentary on Policy H4;</p> <p>b) 3) please refer to commentary on Policy H4;</p> <p>b) 4) is clearly expressed and would be possible for planning officers to implement;</p> <p>Criterion c) is expressed in clear terms and would be enforceable through planning conditions. However, it represents a cost implication for developers. As such, it may impact on viability and make it more difficult for the developer to meet AH targets.</p> <p>Criterion d) we feel could be combined with Policy H6, dealing with Custom and Self-Build dwellings.</p>
Conformity Check	<p>Criterion a) is not a land-use planning matter and does not feature in Local Policy or National Planning Policy Guidance.</p> <p>Criterion b) sets out a number of conditions;</p> <p>b) 1) is a loosely worded policy, and provides a principle of urban design that should be applied to all schemes for 10 or more homes. Given the Local Plan does not provide policy in this area, this is new and should be supported by its own evidence base and reasoned justification;</p> <p>b) 2) please refer to commentary on Policy H4;</p>

	<p>b) 3) please refer to commentary on Policy H4;</p> <p>b) 4) provides a principle of urban design that should be applied to all schemes that include the provision of public amenities. The Local Plan does not provide policy in this area; as such this is new and should be supported by its own evidence base and reasoned justification;</p> <p>Criterion c) repeats Policy H1 a) as regards the proportion of development that is affordable; to this extent it is in conformity with Local Plan policy HOUS1. It adds a further requirement however, that each phase delivers a minimum of 35% AH. This is an extension of Local Plan policy.</p>
<p>Conclusion and Recommendations</p>	<p>Our recommendation overall on Policy H5 is that where relevant the components of the policy may be removed, or amalgamated with other policies.</p> <p>Criterion a) is not a land-use planning matter and should not be included in planning policy.</p> <p>Criterion b): as regards conditions 2) and 3) of this policy, as with Policy H4, we would suggest separate policies relating to tenure (including Affordable Housing) and type and size of dwellings so as to introduce greater clarity into the neighbourhood plan. We note 3) is a statement of community intention, and may be removed from the policy box. Conditions 1 and 4 are principles of urban design, and may form an expanded policy setting out in clear terms what qualities development should/must possess to be supported by planning officers. Given the Local Plan does not offer policies relating to urban design, this is an interesting and appropriate policy area for the Bridport Area Neighbourhood Plan to move into, and offers a way of adding substantial value to the Local Plan. For this to be effective, an evidence base identifying successful new settlements and urban extensions where these principles have been employed should be assembled and cited in a reasoned justification that is specific to this policy.</p> <p>Criterion c) seeks to put in place more stringent criteria than District policy for the delivery of Affordable Homes on schemes of 50 or more dwellings. We feel this policy would more naturally sit with Policy H1, and may be combined with it.</p> <p>Criterion d) we feel could be combined with Policy H6, dealing with Custom and Self-Build dwellings.</p>

Policy number and name	H6: Custom-Build and Self-Build Homes
AECOM Understanding of Policy Intent	The policy seeks to encourage the provision of plots for self- and custom-build within residential developments, in order to address a perceived increase in demand for such dwellings. The method it employs is to establish a mandatory minimum provision of self- and custom-build plots in large development sites. Criterion b) is intended to exempt developers from the policy if sufficient demand does not arise within one year, so as not to prevent self-build requirements from unduly holding up housing delivery.
Evidence Source and Type	<p>It is stated in the supporting text that the policy “reacts to the amount of interest shown by potential self-builders in the NP area”.</p> <p>There is no evidence beyond this statement provided within the policy or reasoned justification. However, the policy is informed by the findings of the HNA, and follows a specific recommendation within the HNA that states: “To eliminate the backlog during the currency of the Neighbourhood Plan therefore requires provision of 4% serviced plots on larger new developments as described in Section 2.4 above, which would be applied to developments of over 25 units.”</p> <p>The evidence cited within the HNA is the number of entries on the WDDC self-build register. The method by which the total figure for the NP area is arrived at is to divide the total Bridport and Lyme Regis entries by three – which is relatively crude. However, the closeness of the 4% figure to a 5% figure for a nearby area which underwent a more detailed analysis of self-build demand is helpful.</p>
Evidence Analysis / Proportionality and Gaps	<p>The policy is a reasonable response to the evidence set out in the HNA, though the NP could benefit from citing the evidence (or at least indicate where it can be found) explicitly in the text accompanying the policy.</p> <p>Imposing a specific minimum target for self- and custom-build provision on development sites is, however, a relatively stringent requirement that may undermine scheme viability.</p>
Effectiveness of Policy	<p>Criterion a) is concise and relatively clear in how it should be implemented. However, it could be improved if the policy was framed as a test that applications need to meet (“applications will be only supported where...”) rather than a statement or objective (“plots will”).</p> <p>Criterion b) is also clear in its intent and scope. However, there is significant ambiguity in the terms “marketed appropriately” and “reasonable price”. Making these conditions more specific would strengthen the policy and reduce room for interpretation and potential avoidance.</p>

Conformity Check

The policy clearly adds value to the policies of the Local Plan, in that it appends specific requirements for the provision of plots and sets out the conditions by which the new policy may lapse. The policy includes no unnecessary repetition of the policies set out in the Local Plan, and so their guidance on defined development boundaries, exception sites, and design codes will hold in the Bridport area.

Though the addition of a minimum requirement is not in full conformity with the scope of the policies set out in the Local Plan, if further work is undertaken to strengthen the evidence base it would not be deemed disproportionate.

The policy is in conformity with the revised NPPF, which calls for “sufficient amount and variety of land” to be brought forward to address the needs of groups with specific housing requirements, including “people wishing to commission or build their own homes” (paras 59-61).

**Conclusion and
Recommendations**

The policy is clear in its intent and presents a reasonable policy response to identified local requirements that are different from those identified and addressed in the Local Plan.

The policy makes good use of the evidence base provided in the HNA, although this evidence could be better referenced in the text of the policy and supporting information, and there is potential to consider additional layers of information to make the evidence (and policy response) more compelling.

Additional forms of evidence that this policy could benefit from include:

- a survey of either those who have made entries on the register or all households in the area, which would produce a more exact figure for local demand for Bridport itself, thereby improving upon the relatively rough measure of dividing the wider area into thirds.
- more thorough comparison between the number of entries for the NP area and other areas within the wider district (that 113 of 187 entries are seeking sites in Bridport and Lyme Regis would suggest that there is a particularly high level of demand in this area).
- evidence of an increase in the number of entries in the self-build register over time.
- any indication of the speed of take-up of available self-build sites by people who have made entries on the register.
- consideration of any other information collected about entrants on the register, such as their financial position (i.e. whether an entry demonstrates need or simply aspiration) and how many other registers they have made entries for.

In order to confirm this policy will not undermine scheme viability, however, we would recommend carrying out a viability assessment.

Additionally, greater specificity in the wording of b) could help to strengthen the policy in terms of preventing avoidance through poor marketing. The following are suggested:

- A stronger alternative to “marketed appropriately” might involve a requirement that the plot is clearly demarcated on site and available to view by potential purchasers, as well as listed through at least one local estate agent and presented to entrants on the self-build register and any relevant community groups or forums, for the period of at least one year.
- “Reasonable price” could be qualified to require that pricing per square foot is within a particular percentage margin of recently completed purchases of self-build plots nearby, or that pricing is set at one-third (or another more appropriate, and justified, fraction) of the cost of built homes in the development (i.e. so that build costs and profit margin on same are subtracted).

<p>Policy number and name</p>	<p>H7: Community-Led Housing</p>
<p>AECOM Understanding of Policy Intent</p>	<p>The policy comprises three criteria:</p> <p>Criterion a) seeks to go further than the policy set out in the LP and specifies that applications for community-led housing will also be supported for sites where development would <i>not</i> otherwise be permitted (the LP stops at encouraging community-led housing in sites where housing <i>would</i> otherwise be acceptable). The sub-criteria of a) describe the following intentions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - a1) ensures that such applications must still comply with the mix of housing types and sizes required in other NP policies and the demand identified in the HNA or other appropriate evidence. - a2) specifies that such applications must pertain to land held in a Community Land Trust. <p>Criterion b) intends that the mix of housing in community-led schemes which include government-defined affordable housing will abide by the need (type, size and tenure) identified in the Bridport HNA for the entire plan area, rather than on a parish-by-parish basis.</p> <p>Criterion c) seeks to limit the provision of open market housing through community-led schemes, while acknowledging that some open market housing may be necessary to make the scheme financially viable.</p>
<p>Evidence Source and Type</p>	<p>The policy does refer to any specific evidence underpinning it.</p>
<p>Evidence Analysis / Proportionality and Gaps</p>	<p>The policy represents a departure from LP policy (see Conformity Check below). As such, it should seek to further justify why this departure is necessary through evidence of specific local conditions that need to be addressed. That community-led development is intrinsically good is not sufficient justification.</p> <p>Criterion a) In seeking to permit community-led housing development on sites where development would not otherwise be permitted, the policy should at minimum point to the severity of housing need in Bridport as justification that normal rules can be sidestepped. Yet more robust evidence might include demonstrating that certain forms of specialist housing cannot be delivered by the market through any other route than community-led schemes. Or that affordability or viability constraints are preventing community-led schemes from progressing on sites that are otherwise acceptable for housing (e.g. they cannot compete with other buyers of such sites).</p> <p>The reasoned justification could also benefit from reference to government statements in support of community-led housing. Housing Minister Alok Sharma, for example, gave a November 2017 speech in praise of community-led housing in which he specifically says that communities “see the potential of small sites. Difficult sites. Sites that are <i>off limits</i> or of no interest <i>to developers</i>” – a sentiment that represents the direction of travel in government policy and accords with the intent of this policy.</p> <p>Criterion b) This evidence is proportional. Note that the methodology for determining Affordable Housing need in terms of quantity, type, and tenure as set out in the HNA is being considered in our review of policies H1-3.</p> <p>Criterion c) 25% appears to be a reasonable figure, but this will need to be validated through a viability assessment.</p>

<p>Effectiveness of Policy</p>	<p>Criterion a) is clear in what it is trying to achieve but problematic in its scope and wording. At issue are small-scale sites where development would not otherwise be permitted, for whatever reason. Giving support to applications for community-led schemes in such sites introduces ambiguity for planning officers around how to weigh up the support they are supposed to give against the existing reasons why development would not be permitted.</p> <p>The two sub-criteria for a) are both clear and effective.</p> <p>Criterion b) could benefit from clarification.</p> <p>Criterion c) is clear and would be understood by officers considering planning applications.</p>
<p>Conformity Check</p>	<p>The LP does not have a policy pertaining to community-led housing, but it does state that “community-led housing (including co-operatives) does have a role to play in meeting housing needs” (para 5.1.4). This NP policy is in alignment with this statement.</p> <p>However, the Local Plan continues that “this will be encouraged in locations where housing would otherwise be acceptable”. This NP policy sets out to make an exception in also supporting community-led schemes on sites “where development would <i>not</i> otherwise be permitted”.</p> <p>Otherwise, the policy is in broad conformity with Local Plan policy, and makes valuable additions that are aligned with locally-specific priorities.</p>
<p>Conclusion and Recommendations</p>	<p>The policy is useful in its additional support for community-led housing as a means to address local need. However, it requires a more robust evidence base to justify the clear departure it makes from Local Plan policy in terms of supporting development on sites that would otherwise not be permitted for development. A viability assessment would be required to justify the 25% limitation on open-market housing as an appropriate and workable level rather than an arbitrary figure.</p> <p>It would be helpful to make sure every criterion is framed in terms that can be understood as guidance for planning decision-makers rather than guidance for planning applications themselves. Additionally, the “overall housing need within the neighbourhood plan area” in b) is clear, but the addition of “that cannot otherwise be met” introduces ambiguity. It is unclear whether the developments in question need to refer to overall housing need when determining mix, or just the remainder of the need that has not been met through other schemes.</p>

Policy number and name	H8: Principal Residence Requirement
AECOM Understanding of Policy Intent	The intention is to prevent the sale of any newly built homes to people seeking to use them either as a holiday home and/or as an investment.
Evidence Source and Type	The HNA cites evidence from the SHLAA which suggests there are a higher proportion of dwellings in the Neighbourhood Area that are second homes compared with the Dorset average at the time of the 2001 census (4.6% as against 2.8%). More recent data (2017) from Dorset County Council suggest this has increased to 5.5% in the Neighbourhood Area.
Evidence Analysis / Proportionality and Gaps	<p>In order to achieve this policy, evidence is needed showing significant distortion of the local property market (that people seeking to buy dwellings for use as their primary home are unable to access suitable homes) is required. In addition, the evidence base should consider the impact on residents from alternative angles, for example the effect on the viability of local services. It is important to note that second home policies have failed at examination due to lack of evidence. The Stogumber NDP in Somerset failed to meet the required evidential tests, although this did not prevent the plan being made, subject to this revision.</p> <p>The weakness in the evidence advanced is that, firstly, house prices have only been growing modestly in the NA in recent years; secondly that, relatively speaking, second homes constitute a relatively small proportion of the overall housing stock compared with other designated areas that have successfully introduced such a policy. The St. Ives example is mentioned, but, here 25% of homes are classified as second homes. Another example is the Thurlstone Neighbourhood Plan; their evidence suggests 39% of dwellings in the Parish were second homes compared with a figure across the district of 15%¹⁹.</p> <p>The policy could be advanced as a pre-emptive one on the basis of Bridport's growing popularity as a place for people to buy second homes. The high proportion of home transactions that show stamp duty paid on second homes may support this argument, particularly if a steady increase over time can be shown. If these trends could be projected forward, and the data limited to new homes, this could assist in making the case.</p>
Effectiveness of Policy	In order to make this more enforceable, in line with the Thurlstone example, rather than rely on planning conditions, it would be preferable to use Section 106 agreements between the Local Authority and developer. A section 106 agreement binds the developer and has the backing of a potential injunction if there is a breach.
Conformity Check	The Local Plan does not have a policy introducing occupancy conditions; as such, the feedback provided by WDDC asserts the need to build a more substantial evidence base to support this policy, or it should be deleted. The National Planning Policy Framework does not provide guidance on this area.
Conclusion and Recommendations	<p>BTC has suggested that second-home ownership is not evenly distributed across the area. This points to a 'character area' approach to policy making – whereby certain policy applies to some areas, but not others. This would require robust statistical evidence to show substantially different conditions prevailing in different parts of the NA; it would also be helpful if feedback from the community were obtained to illustrate the impact on residents' lives.</p> <p>A potential obstacle to this approach would be that if there are parts of the NA that are, relatively speaking, unaffected by the restrictions, second homes would become more popular in these areas over time.</p> <p>The concern about placing occupancy conditions on dwellings is the un-intended consequences. WDDC has commented on the impact of tourism. It will also have a substantial impact on the viability of proposed schemes, and therefore their capacity to deliver both general market housing as well as Affordable Housing. Were</p>

¹⁹ Thurlstone Parish Neighbourhood Plan, 2015-2034, Paragraph 2.4 page 8

development to fall in the NA, this may increase house prices, making dwellings less affordable to residents.

On balance, we therefore feel it is unlikely the evidence exists locally to support policy H8 at present, but this may change in future iterations of the neighbourhood plan.

Policy number and name	H9: Affordable Housing Exception Sites
AECOM Understanding of Policy Intent	<p>Criterion a) specifies that the affordable housing need identified at the NP level, rather than the parish level, will apply when considering exception sites.</p> <p>Criterion b) permits in principle the inclusion of a limited amount of market housing within a development scheme on an exception site.</p> <p>Criterion c) outlines the specific limits and conditions that apply to the inclusion of market housing within such schemes.</p>
Evidence Source and Type	<p>The policy justifies its inclusion by pointing to LP policy in support of exception sites, which in turn refers to national policy. Regarding the admittance of market housing within exception sites, the policy does not refer to any specific evidence about why this is especially appropriate to Bridport or why the proportion of 25% was selected.</p>
Evidence Analysis / Proportionality and Gaps	<p>Criterion a) has been judged to be helpful by the WDDC response to the draft policy and does not demand further justificatory evidence.</p> <p>The policy's goal is to bring forward development of affordable housing. Permitting an allocation of market housing on exception sites in order to do so is reasonable, and does not require additional evidence.</p> <p>However, the decision to limit the proportion of open market housing at 25% of any development on an exception site requires further justification. The WDDC response to the draft policy requests greater clarity about how that figure has been justified, and the subsequent draft of the supporting text for this policy includes such an explanation.</p>
Effectiveness of Policy	<p>There is some ambiguity in the wording of a), around the need that “cannot be otherwise met”. It is not fully clear whether the overall neighbourhood need figure and mix should be followed, or whether that figure and mix should have subtracted from them the housing that could be or otherwise has been met. It is also not clear how a planning officer should respond to this statement when determining an application.</p>
Conformity Check	<p>The criteria establishing affordable housing need at the NP level has been deemed helpful by WDDC.</p> <p>With regard to the question of whether to permit a proportion of open market housing within exception sites, national and local planning policy essentially pass down the question to the neighbourhood level, and so this policy is useful and proportionate. The NPPF, in its definition of rural exception sites, states that “a proportion of market homes may be allowed on the site at the local planning authority’s discretion” (Annex 2: Glossary). The LP in turn states that “small numbers of market homes may be included . . . only where this is permitted under a policy in an adopted neighbourhood development plan” (HOUS2.ii).</p>
Conclusion and Recommendations	<p>The policy is clear and effective in its intention of encouraging affordable housing provision through exception sites.</p> <p>Criterion a) could benefit from clarification around the need that “cannot be otherwise met”.</p> <p>Criterion b) is abundantly clear, although c) effectively renders it redundant. So this criterion should be deleted. If so, ensure that c) amends “such a site” to the full label</p>

“an affordable housing exception site”.

Criterion c) could benefit from reference to supporting studies or successful schemes that have been conducted elsewhere, such as Transition Town Totnes (referenced in the HNA) – a 27-unit site made possible by a 30% allocation of market housing for cross-subsidy. That said, similar policies in other LPs and NPs have imposed even stricter limits on the proportion of market housing on exception sites, such as that of the Tandridge District Council, which imposes a 10% limit.

An alternative that would introduce an element of flexibility and lessen the requirement for supporting evidence would be to re-fashion the policy so that it limits the proportion of open market housing to the minimum amount required to make the scheme viable (as demonstrated through viability evidence), and no higher than 25% of the total floorspace unless exceptional circumstances can be demonstrated.

One further improvement might be to shift the burden of demonstrating that an element of market housing is required onto the developer by making that language more specific. For example, “Where an *application can demonstrate* that a proportion of open market housing is required to help fund the development of an affordable housing exception site, that proportion...”

Appendix 2: Relevant ‘made’ neighbourhood plan policies

Alongside the advice presented in this report, BTC may find it helpful to refer to the following neighbourhood plans that have now been ‘made’ or adopted, and many of which AECOM advised as the neighbourhood planners developed their plans. All of the neighbourhood plans listed are available online.

‘Made’ neighbourhood plan	Relevant policy/policies	Corresponding Bridport policy
Hayle, Cornwall	HB2 Traditional Shopfronts	BTC6
North Northumberland Coast, Northumberland	6: Shopfront Design	BTC6
Ponteland, Northumberland	PNP 8: Building Security	BTC6
Selston, Ashfield (Nottinghamshire)	NP 6: Supporting Jacksdale’s Local Shopping Centre	BTC6
Truro and Kenwyn, Cornwall	C5: Shopfronts and Signs	BTC6
Wyeside, Herefordshire	WH01- New Housing Development ²⁰	BTC7
East Coker, Somerset	ECH4: Affordable Housing	H1
Woodcote, Oxfordshire	H2: Tenancy Mix	H1
Wincanton, Somerset	Policy 8. Starter Homes for Local People	H1
Bude-Stratton, Cornwall	P2: Mixed Development Schemes	H2
Wyeside, Herefordshire	WH02 – New Housing Development	H2
Frome, Somerset	H1 – Building A Balanced Community	H4
Wincanton, Somerset	Policy 10. Custom and Self-Build Homes	H6
Frome, Somerset	H3 – Self Build and Community Housing	H7
Stogumber, Somerset	C3- Affordable Housing Provision ²¹	H8
Thurlstone, Yorkshire	TP6 – Principal Residence Requirement	H8
St Ives, Cornwall	H2: Full-Time Principal Residence Housing	H8
Tandridge, Surrey	TLP13: Rural Housing Exception Sites	H9
Woodcote, Oxfordshire	H5: Affordable Housing on Exception Sites	H9

²⁰ In this case, it is less the policy itself that has relevance for BTC7, more the Examiner’s comments in the Examination Report; for details, see Appendix 1.

²¹ Most relevant is paragraph 4.39 in the Examiner’s report, available at <https://www.westsomersetonline.gov.uk/Docs/Neighbourhood-Planning/Stogumber/REF07---Independant-Examiner-s-Report.aspx>

Appendix 3: Further guidance on Neighbourhood Planning policy

Further advice can be found in the following places:

- The full range of technical support packages available through Locality can be found at: <https://neighbourhoodplanning.org/about/technical-support/>
- Advice on writing planning policies is can be found by following the link below: <https://neighbourhoodplanning.org/toolkits-and-guidance/write-planning-policies-neighbourhood-plan/>
- Advice on drafting Neighbourhood Development Orders and bringing forward community-led housing is available on the Locality website: <https://neighbourhoodplanning.org/toolkits-and-guidance/neighbourhood-development-orders-community-right-build-orders/>

These best practice toolkits, together with a final health check, which is available free of charge, will aid the Forum in ensuring the Plan meets the Basic Conditions that enable a draft plan to proceed to referendum.

