



District Executive

Thursday 4th March 2021

9.30 am

**Virtual Meeting
using Zoom meeting software**

The following members are requested to attend the meeting:

Jason Baker
Mike Best
John Clark
Adam Dance
Sarah Dyke

Peter Gubbins
Henry Hobhouse
Val Keitch
Tony Lock
Peter Seib

Any members of the public wishing to address the meeting at Public Question Time need to email democracy@southsomerset.gov.uk by 9.00am on Wednesday 3rd March 2021.

The meeting will be viewable online at: <https://youtu.be/RbytMYZPULk>

For further information on the items to be discussed, please contact democracy@southsomerset.gov.uk

This Agenda was issued on Wednesday 24 February 2021.

Alex Parmley, Chief Executive Officer

**This information is also available on our website
www.southsomerset.gov.uk and via the mod.gov app**

Information for the Public

The District Executive co-ordinates the policy objectives of the Council and gives the Area Committees strategic direction. It carries out all of the local authority's functions which are not the responsibility of any other part of the Council. It delegates some of its responsibilities to Area Committees, officers and individual portfolio holders within limits set by the Council's Constitution. When major decisions are to be discussed or made, these are published in the Executive Forward Plan in so far as they can be anticipated.

Members of the Public are able to:-

- attend meetings of the Council and its committees such as Area Committees, District Executive, except where, for example, personal or confidential matters are being discussed;
- speak at Area Committees, District Executive and Council meetings;
- see reports and background papers, and any record of decisions made by the Council and Executive;
- find out, from the Executive Forward Plan, what major decisions are to be decided by the District Executive.

The Council's Constitution is also on the web site and available for inspection in Council offices. The Council's corporate priorities which guide the work and decisions of the Executive are set out below.

District Executive

Meetings of the District Executive are usually held monthly, at 9.30am, on the first Thursday of the month (unless advised otherwise). However during the coronavirus pandemic these meetings will be held remotely via Zoom video-conferencing. For more details on the regulations regarding remote/virtual meetings please see the Local Authorities and Police and Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 as part of the Coronavirus Act 2020.

The Executive Forward Plan and copies of executive reports and decisions are published on the Council's web site: <http://modgov.southsomerset.gov.uk/ieDocHome.aspx?bcr=1>

Agendas and minutes can also be viewed via the mod.gov app (free) available for iPads and Android devices. Search for 'mod.gov' in the app store for your device, install, and select 'South Somerset' from the list of publishers, then select the committees of interest. A wi-fi signal will be required for a very short time to download an agenda but once downloaded, documents will be viewable offline.

Public participation at meetings (held via Zoom)

Public question time

We recognise that these are challenging times but we still value the public's contribution to our virtual meetings. If you would like to participate and contribute in the meeting, please join on-line through Zoom at: <https://zoom.us/join> You will need an internet connection to do this.

Please email democracy@southsomerset.gov.uk for the details to join the meeting.

If you would like to view the meeting without participating, please see: <https://youtu.be/RbytMYZPULk>

The period allowed for participation in Public Question Time shall not exceed 15 minutes except with the consent of the Chairman and members of the Committee. Each individual speaker shall be restricted to a total of three minutes.

If you would like to address the meeting at Public Question Time, please email democracy@southsomerset.gov.uk by 9.00am on Wednesday 3rd March 2021. When you have registered, the Chairman will invite you to speak at the appropriate time during the virtual meeting.

Virtual meeting etiquette:

- Consider joining the meeting early to ensure your technology is working correctly.
- Please note that we will mute all public attendees to minimise background noise. If you have registered to speak during the virtual meeting, the Chairman will un-mute your microphone at the appropriate time.
- Each individual speaker shall be restricted to a total of three minutes.
- When speaking, keep your points clear and concise.
- Please speak clearly – the Councillors are interested in your comments.

District Executive

Thursday 4 March 2021

Agenda

1. Minutes of Previous Meeting

To approve as a correct record the minutes of the District Executive meeting held on 4th February 2021.

2. Apologies for Absence

3. Declarations of Interest

In accordance with the Council's current Code of Conduct (as amended 26 February 2015), which includes all the provisions relating to Disclosable Pecuniary Interests (DPI), personal and prejudicial interests, Members are asked to declare any DPI and also any personal interests (and whether or not such personal interests are also "prejudicial") in relation to any matter on the Agenda for this meeting.

Members are reminded that they need to declare the fact that they are also a member of a County, Town or Parish Council as a Personal Interest. Where you are also a member of Somerset County Council and/or a Town or Parish Council within South Somerset you must declare a prejudicial interest in any business on the agenda where there is a financial benefit or gain or advantage to Somerset County Council and/or a Town or Parish Council which would be at the cost or to the financial disadvantage of South Somerset District Council.

4. Public Question Time

5. Chairman's Announcements

Items for Discussion

6. **District-wide Strategic Grants - funding arrangements with CASS and SPARK 2021/2022** (Pages 5 - 19)
7. **The Martock Parish Neighbourhood Plan Referendum** (Pages 20 - 130)
8. **Private Sector Housing Grant Policy** (Pages 131 - 155)
9. **Investment Assets Quarterly Update Report** (Pages 156 - 170)
10. **Octagon Theatre Development** (Pages 171 - 234)
11. **District Executive Forward Plan** (Pages 235 - 240)
12. **Date of Next Meeting** (Page 241)



District-wide Strategic Grants – funding arrangements with CASS and SPARK 2021/2022

Executive Portfolio Holder: Cllr Mike Best - Health and Wellbeing Portfolio
Director: Nicola Hix – Director, Strategy and Support Services
Service Manager: Peter Paddon, Lead Specialist – Strategic Planning
Lead Officer: David Crisfield, Specialist – Strategic Planning
Contact Details: kirsty.larkins@southsomerset.gov.uk
peter.paddon@southsomerset.gov.uk (01935 462060)
david.crisfield@southsomerset.gov.uk (01935 462240)

Purpose of the Report

1. This report seeks the approval of District Executive on the funding of our two strategic voluntary sector partners, Citizens Advice South Somerset (CASS) and Spark Somerset for the period 2021/2022

Forward Plan

2. This report appeared on the District Executive Forward Plan with an anticipated Committee date of March 2021.

Public Interest

3. SSDC supports a range of voluntary and community sector groups, organisations and projects via its one-off community grants programme, administered by the Area Committees. It also supports, through regular funding, a small number of strategic district-wide organisations approved by District Executive. This financial investment in the sector not only provides direct support to groups working in the local community but also assists the council in the delivery of the council plan.

Recommendations

4. That District Executive -
 - a) Agrees to a further one year core funding agreement for the period April 2021 to March 2022, for Citizens Advice South Somerset and Spark Somerset.
 - b) Agrees to a one-off uplift of **£11,335** for CASS to fund an additional 22.5 hours a week Adviser to support the significant increase in service demand due to Covid19 for the period April 2021 to March 2022

- c) Agrees to a one-off inflationary uplift of **£1,500** for Spark Somerset for the period April 2021 to March 2022
- d) Agrees that the funding of CASS for 2022/23 and beyond will be subject to the outcome of the package of support work described in paragraph 8.1.3 below.
- e) Agrees that the future funding of Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) infrastructure for 2022/23 onwards will be subject to the outcome of a commissioning process, based on an updated assessment of the future needs of the VCS post Covid.

Background

5. South Somerset District Council has maintained a long-term service delivery and funding relationship with the above two organisations over many years.

The organisations are considered strategic voluntary sector partners for the District Council delivering services across the whole district that support some of the most vulnerable residents and contribute to a resilient and thriving voluntary and community sector.

In January 2020 District Executive agreed that one year agreements be awarded for the period 2020/2021 and that the funding of voluntary sector will be subject to the outcome of a wider piece of commissioning activity to be determined in line with emerging council priorities.

Funding of both organisations has been subject to District Executive approval with performance also reported to District Executive.

6. CASS

- i. CASS is an independent charity and part of the Citizens Advice network across England and Wales. They work in partnership with other agencies and groups.
- ii. CASS provides free, confidential, advice to help people resolve their problems and also campaign to raise awareness about the big issues that affect people's lives.
- iii. They provide advice on a wide range of issues including benefits, debt, employment, consumer, housing and family relationships. Their goal is to help everyone find a way forward no matter what problem they face.
- iv. CASS is the major provider of free, confidential, independent and impartial advice in the South Somerset area. Advice services are quality assured under the national Citizens Advice Membership Scheme
 - In addition, the organisation aims to improve policies and practices that affect people's lives
 - CASS has been serving the community of South Somerset since 1961

- v. With the arrival of Covid19 the current operating environment remains very demanding and the future extremely challenging.

7. Spark Somerset

- i. Set up in 1981, Spark Somerset was part of a national network of Councils for Voluntary Service (now commonly called Voluntary & Community Action. These are civil society, development organisations whose main purpose is to support the work of other organisations in the VCS; particularly smaller and volunteer run community groups.

Its role includes:

- Helping new initiatives to develop and new organisations to form
 - Providing advice and information on all aspects of running and managing the organisations they work with, including effective governance, recruiting volunteers and accessing sustainable funding or generating income.
 - A leadership role within the sector, encouraging organisations to work together in collaboration and partnership.
 - Representing the views of its members to statutory bodies and others.
- ii. With closure of the voluntary sector support provided by Engage earlier this year, Spark Somerset is now the only remaining countywide VCS infrastructure organisation, funded by all the councils, whose principal purpose is to support the wider voluntary and community sector.
 - iii. It was agreed by SLT and approved by District Executive Committee in January 2020 that Spark Somerset would be funded, with a small inflationary uplift, for a further 12 months (April 2020 to March 2021) and that a Voluntary Sector Infrastructure Service would be newly commissioned with effect from 1st April 2021.

8. Impact of Covid19

8.1. CASS

- i. As a consequence of Covid19 all the Somerset CA's have been compelled to undertake a process of service transformation in order to be able to continue the delivery of services whilst unable to open offices and provide one-to-one advice work. Many traditional CA volunteers are older people and have been required to self-isolate, therefore impacting directly on organisational capacity.
- ii. Staff and volunteers have worked remotely from home using telephone, email and web chat as the principal channels for the public to access help.
- iii. In particular there has been a significant refocusing on digital transformation with a single Somerset customer online advice portal (supported with funding

from Somerset Community Foundation) <https://citizensadvicesomerset.org.uk/>

This has also required significant investment in the Somerset Adviceline – a single telephone access number that has enabled residents from anywhere in Somerset to access information and advice irrespective of which particular Citizens' Advice picks up the service request.

- iv. Critically Covid19 has been the catalyst to facilitate much greater collaboration between the 5 local CA's in Somerset delivering all manner of benefits in terms of both service delivery (see point iii above) and efficiencies in back office functions – all ambitions of the package of support work that the District and County Councils have been working on during the latter part of 2019 and 2020.
- v. As a direct consequence of Covid19 CASS has seen a **44%** Increase in Demand for General Advice (the core service) as compared with the same period last year (April to December).
- vi. The Freephone Adviceline and email advice are now the main routes into advice for the people of South Somerset. This is the core service and is distinguished from separately funded specialist projects.
- vii. At the same time as this increase in demand CASS saw a huge drop in active volunteers from 52 to a current figure of 23 and in order to maintain service levels staff have been re-deployed into Adviceline.
- viii. As a result of the significantly increased demand an additional **£11,335** uplift has been requested for 2021/22. This will enable CASS to fund an additional 22.5 hours a week Adviser for the 2021/22 year (alongside the 2 funded by CASS reserves). This post would boost capacity by handling approximately **920** clients, deployed on Adviceline and the proposed Priority Towns Project.
- ix. The Priority Towns Project has been set up to address a recorded drop in client numbers from Wincanton, Crewkerne, Yeovil (Westfield) and Martock as a consequence of the changes to service delivery precipitated by Covid19. These are all areas where high numbers of low income and/or disabled people live.
- x. A more detailed dashboard of performance data is attached at Appendix A.

8.1.2. Post Covid Recovery

As can be seen from the service demand figures during the pandemic, the requirement for Citizens Advice services has escalated significantly and is expected to rise further with the anticipated increase in people losing their jobs, the end of furlough, indebtedness and problems accessing welfare and benefits.

Even once the pandemic officially comes to an end, the demand for services will continue to be high due to the legacy impacts on people. Therefore the continued funding of CASS is essential to ensure that people's advice needs are being met. Without CASS, demand would most likely transfer to the council

which it would be unable to meet within its existing staff and financial resources, infrastructure and expertise.

8.1.3. Future Transformation

- i. The transformation work undertaken in response to Covid has shifted the focus of the original objectives of the package of support agreed by the Somerset Councils and has had the unintended consequence of moving the transformation agenda on at a rapid pace. The focus of the work, due to start in March 2021, will concentrate on the following
 - Developing a core service offer and standard operating procedure (SOP);
 - Developing the capacity and scope of Somerset Adviceline as the main point of access to the core advice service in Somerset

The costs of delivering this programme of work will be met from the contributions agreed by all the respective councils in the last financial year at the level of £5,000 per council.

- ii. The outcome of this programme of work will be reported on next year as part of the core funding decision for 2022/23 and onwards.

8.2. Spark Somerset

- i. Following the January 2020 DX committee decision to commission VCS Infrastructure for 2021/22 a commissioning timetable was produced and preparatory work begun, in consultation with our Procurement Specialist, when the Covid19 lockdown began.
- ii. The Covid-19 crisis had an immediate impact on the VCS sector, and the resultant explosion of grass roots community activity which arose in response required Spark to 'drop everything' and respond as quickly and flexibly as they could to the emerging needs.
- iii. Spark's exemplary role during Covid19 has been well documented with their ability to respond quickly and proactively in the support of all the Covid19 community groups that sprung up across the county. Examples of Spark's Covid19 activity can be found in Appendix 2.
- iv. Alongside the response to Covid19 Spark have attempted to continue with as much Business as Usual but this has been seriously curtailed, with activity limited to what can be achieved over the phone and online.
- v. As a consequence of the above, the plans to undertake a VCS Infrastructure commissioning exercise were postponed given the shift in priorities for both Spark and SSDC.

8.2.1. Post Covid Recovery

- i. Given the documented impacts that have been inflicted on the local VCS due to the Covid pandemic, and the pre-pandemic issues as identified in the 2020 State of the Sector survey (see Appendix 2), having a secure well-funded VCS infrastructure organisation able to meet the support needs of local community groups and voluntary organisations will be crucial to the sector's recovery and growth.
- ii. The voluntary and community sector will be a key partner in helping with the recovery post Covid and in delivering the council's areas of focus, particularly under the Healthy and Self-reliant Communities theme addressing the key challenges facing Somerset as identified through the work undertaken on Stronger Somerset.
- iii. In addition to supporting the activity of individual organisations and groups who can contribute to the Stronger Somerset agenda, Spark itself is funded to deliver projects in the areas of health and wellbeing such as Social Prescribing and the Open Mental Health project (one of only a small number of national pathfinder projects funded by Central Government).
- iii. It is only by guaranteeing the core funding of organisations such as Spark that they are able to attract external funding and successfully tender for services/projects that enhance the offer available to the community.

8.2.2. Commissioning for the Future

- i. Whilst it is likely that all the councils will continue to agree their own funding arrangements with Spark, during Covid19 there has been significant collaboration between the County and District Councils and the CCG regarding the longer term funding of VCS infrastructure.
- iii. A more strategic approach to funding VCS infrastructure will help to support post Covid recovery for the VCS whilst strengthening and developing community action.
- iv. Through the joint discussions a core set of five Infrastructure functions have been agreed by all the parties which will form the basis of future funding arrangements and will support a common reporting framework.
- v. Spark are in the process of collecting and bringing forward evidence to help inform what the needs of the VCS sector will be post Covid and where therefore the emphasis of Infrastructure work is most likely to be needed.
- vi. Working with the Lead Specialist – Communities, the role of the wider VCS sector in Covid19 recovery and supporting the council's key Themes and Areas of Focus, (particularly those relating to Healthy and Self Reliant Communities) will be scoped.



South Somerset District Council

- vii. All of the above will then inform the commissioning process and look to provide circa three year funding in order to give financial stability, particularly through Covid recovery and in the transition to whatever new local government arrangements are agreed for Somerset.

Constitutional implications

9. Grants to Outside Bodies are covered by SSSDC's Financial Regulations (15.3).

Financial Risks

10.1. CASS

- The CASS Trustees have approved a deficit budget in 2020/21, drawing on **£32,300** of reserves in order to continue to fund 2 salaried posts on Adviceline in readiness for the next expected demand in service due to Covid19.
- However despite a deficit budget and the withdrawal of reserves, CASS would remain a solvent organisation operating in 2021/22 with total reserves of **£198,635**, of which **£90,635** are free reserves. This would provide a minimum of 3 months operating costs in a worst case scenario of the organisation being wound down.
- **£34,334** of new funding has been secured by CASS during 2020/21 from the National Lottery Community Fund for a Somerset Advice Academy training 60 new telephone advisers who will graduate into service from May 2021 onwards. A **£30,000** anonymous donation has also been secured which will be utilised specifically to support families experiencing financial hardship as a result of Covid19.

10.2. SPARK

- Trustees are in the process of setting their 2021/22 Budget.
- Decisions on core funding from the Somerset councils are all expected in February or March 2021. It is anticipated that core funding levels will either be at the same level as 2020/21 or, as in the case with Sedgemoor, and possibly Mendip, subject to an increase.
- Additional funding secured in 2020 includes £137k Grant from the Lottery to support community development and volunteering legacy in 3 areas of Somerset (Chard in South Somerset). £36,835 for 6 months from December 2020.

Financial Implications

11. The recommendation to Members is to approve a one-year extension to the agreements with CASS and SPARK, including an inflationary uplift for Spark and one-off Covid mitigation uplift for CASS.

11.1. CASS

- In addition to the core contribution of £121,730, it is proposed to increase CASS's funding for 2021/22 by **£11,335** to fund an additional 22.5 hours a week Adviser post that would boost capacity by handling approximately 920 clients, deployed on Adviceline and supporting the proposed Priority Towns Project (see paragraph 8.1.1(ix))

11.2. Spark

SPARK's core funding of **£75,520** funding will continue for a further year at the current level plus an inflationary increase of **£1,500**.

Current and proposed payments to these two organisations are summarised in the following table:

Organisation	2020/21			2021/22		
	Core Grant	One Off Uplift/Inflation	Total	Core Grant	One Off Uplift/Inflation	Total
CASS	£121,730	£23,305	£145,035	£121,730	£11,335	£133,065
SPARK	£74,260	£1,260	£75,520	£75,520	£1,500	£77,020
Total	£195,990	£24,565	£220,555	£197,250	£12,835	£210,085

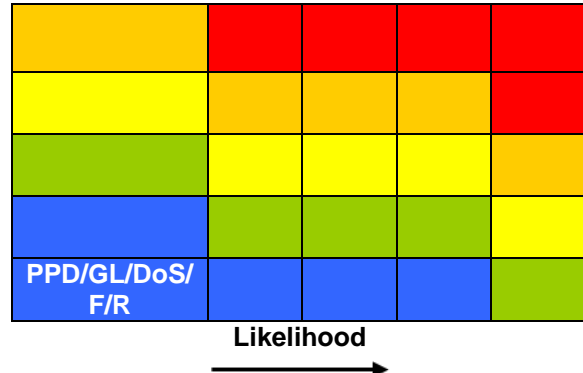
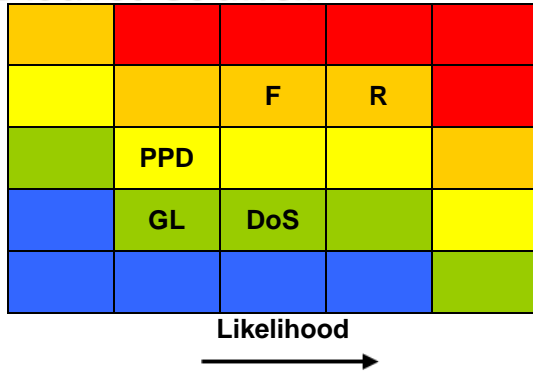
In addition to the above there is a further **£9,000** in the Corporate Grants budget which is allocated to support SSDC's contribution to the county-wide Disability Consultation and Engagement Service.

11.3 Summary

- The 2021/22 budget for strategic district-wide voluntary and community sector grants is **£229,590**.
- The proposed levels of funding for 2021/22 for CASS and Spark Somerset, including uplifts, totals **£210,085**.
- In addition there is a **£9,000** allocation towards the Somerset Disability Engagement and Consultation service.
- All of the above can be met from within the 2021/22 Grants budget i.e. the total of the above commitments in 2021/22 is **£219,085**. This will leave a balance of **£10,505**

Risk Matrix

Risk Profile before officer recommendations Risk Profile after officer recommendations



Key

Delivery of Services – DoS	Catastrophic impact and likelihood certain
Health and Safety - HS	
overnance and Legal – GL	
Financial - F	
Project/Programme Delivery - PPD	
Reputation - R	Significant impact and likelihood probable
SC - Staffing and Capacity	Moderate impact and likelihood possible
	Limited impact and likelihood unlikely
	Minimal impact and likelihood remote

Council Plan Implications

12. The work of both CASS and Spark helps the Council deliver on the following values and priorities in the 2020/24 Council Plan:

The work of both CASS and Spark contributes to the following elements of the council Corporate Plan

Aim: Delivering for our communities

Values: Working collaboratively - Working with partners to enhance outcomes for our communities

Theme: ‘Healthy and Self Reliant Communities’ and the following priorities

- Work with partners to keep, and help our residents feel safe in their homes and communities
- Work with partners to reduce the impact of social isolation and create a feeling of community
- Work with partners to support people in improving their own physical and mental health and wellbeing
- Enable quality cultural, leisure and sport activities
- Proactively support residents facing hardship
- Help tackle the causes of economic exclusion, poverty and low social mobility
- Support older people to live and age well by increasing independence, reducing loneliness, and improving financial security

1. Lead the recovery and revitalisation of our economy and communities to be stronger, more resilient and more vibrant than before Covid-19.
4. Address child poverty, social isolation and low levels of social mobility across the district

By contributing to an effective Voluntary and Community Sector, Spark can also be shown to make a contribution to the priority of making SSDC a cost effective organisation through building a mature voluntary sector which the council can confidently do business with and thereby achieve greater Social Value.

Carbon Emissions and Climate Change Implications

13 None

Equality and Diversity Implications

13.1 Working with the voluntary sector is one of the Council's means of providing services to hard to reach groups and engaging with communities and individuals who otherwise find it hard to access public services. CASS and Access for All deliver services to some of the most vulnerable people in the district whilst SPARK contributes to a thriving and resilient voluntary and community sector. Supporting the VCS increases community engagement and participation.

13.2 If members support the recommendation then there will be no negative impacts in respect of the Protected Characteristics covered by the Equality Act.

13.3 If members are minded to recommend either a reduction in the value, or to not support any of the recommended levels of funding, a full Equality Analysis will need to be carried out and reported to DX before recommendations are implemented.

Privacy Impact Assessment

14. None

Background Papers

District-wide strategic grants – funding arrangements with CASS and SPARK 2020-2021; Funding for Citizens Advice South Somerset (CASS) February 2019; District-wide strategic grants – Proposal for new two -year funding agreements with Access for All, CASS and SPARK 2018-2020; District-wide Voluntary Grants 2017-18; District-wide Voluntary Grants 2016-17; District-wide Voluntary Grants 2015-16;

Citizens Advice South Somerset Client Activity Data April 2020 – 31st December 2020

Key Statistics

South Somerset (member)

01/04/2020 31/12/2020



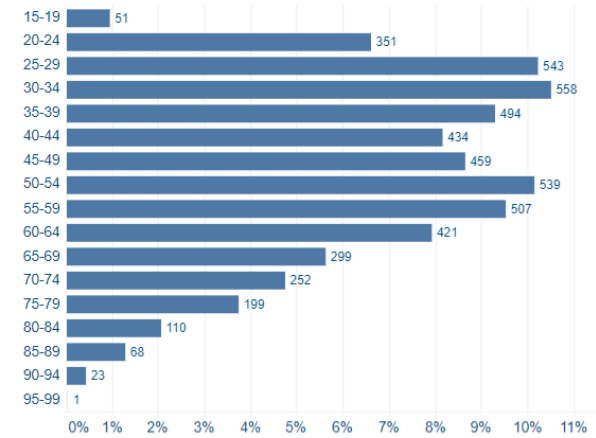
Summary

Clients	5,786
Quick client contacts	299
Issues	18,367
Activities	19,568
Cases	5,900
Outcomes	
Income gain	£2,114,933
Re-imbursments, services, loans	£1,000
Debts written off	£300,589
Repayments rescheduled	£85,594
Other	£48,028

Issues

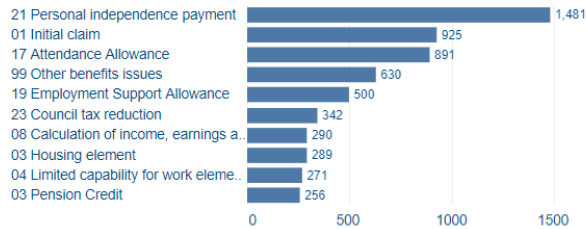
	Issues	Clients
Benefits & tax credits	5,122	1,731
Benefits Universal Credit	2,271	1,014
Consumer goods & services	625	380
Debt	2,813	689
Discrimination & Hate & GVA	145	95
Education	36	29
Employment	1,733	880
Financial services & capability	323	218
Health & community care	233	140
Housing	1,528	817
Immigration & asylum	159	98
Legal	569	392
Other	537	410
Relationships & family	1,127	645
Tax	78	62
Travel & transport	430	290
Utilities & communications	638	222
Grand Total	18,367	

Age

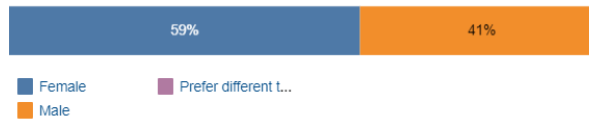


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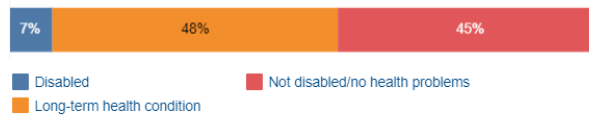
Top benefit issues



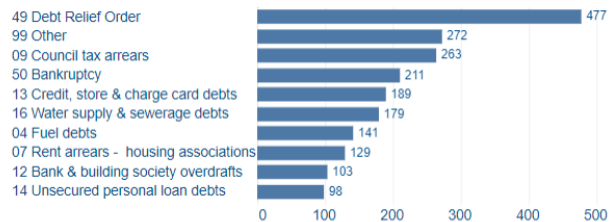
Gender



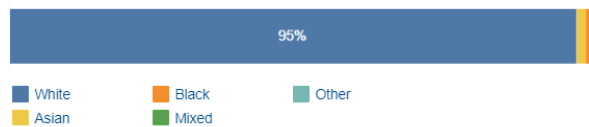
Disability / Long-term health



Top debt issues



Ethnicity



Spark COVID19 ACTIVITIES

Since the Covid19 lockdown Spark has, amongst other things,

- Mapped the emerging Covid-19 groups around the county achieved in part by researching newly set up Facebook pages and messaging administrators to establish contact.
- Established a central point on the Spark website to offer quick and easy access to all the latest guidance and best practice guidelines for newly emerging Covid19 response groups. Range of topics covered included safeguarding, health and wellbeing support, cash handling options and practical safety advice for volunteers.
- Created a dedicated Funding Portal focusing initially on Covid19 funding opportunities,
- Ran webinars for Covid19 groups and foodbanks e.g. 'In at the Deep End' and 'Alternatives to Handling Cash'
- Established an online chat facility and created a confidential telephone support service for COVID-19 Group Coordinators (109).
- Established a confidential telephone support service for COVID-19 Group Coordinators, delivered by a qualified coach seconded to work with Spark.
- Developed the Covid Champions programme.
- Brought Covid-19 groups and churches in Yeovil together to collaborate and better coordinate their response and launch a single contact number for support requests - Corona Response Yeovil.
- Administered a Covid-19 Essentials Fund (£1,000) for small un-constituted Covid-19 support groups to apply to for basic essentials. This was particularly aimed at groups with immediate need who didn't have an official bank account.
- Ran a Forum for Food Banks, in partnership with the Trussell Trust
- Developed a Volunteer Pack containing guidance for Covid-19 groups:
<https://www.sparksomerset.org.uk/sites/default/files/u5/Spark%20Somerset%20Volunteer%20Pack%202020.pdf>
- Produced a list of outdoor venues that are happy to host other groups for socially-distanced meetings.
- Worked with partners from SCC, CCG and the LPC to trouble-shoot issues related to pharmacy deliveries and volunteers.
- Linked furloughed HPC staff with Somerset Care to carry out improvements in the grounds of care homes.
- Webinar on volunteer management for Covid Groups
- Working with players and staff from Somerset County Cricket Club to run the 'Cuppa Campaign'; packing and sending out care packages to 2000 volunteers during volunteers week.
- Produced a thank you video for Covid-19 volunteers across the county. Viewed by 1000+ users on YouTube:

<https://youtu.be/Elc0ddBotj0>

- Participated in the local Covid19 Governance arrangements through the Community Resilience and Brokerage cells
- Participated in regional and national VCSE Covid19 discussions including representing Somerset on the national VCS Emergencies Partnership.
- Implemented their brand new bespoke Volunteering platform 'Spark a Change'

Covid Challenges to the VCS

As COVID-19 continues, the voluntary and community sector in Somerset continues to work hard to respond to the needs of the local population. However, there are a number of immediate challenges faced by the sector (which were highlighted in a Covid19 survey undertaken by Spark) which Spark is seeking to address. These can be summarised as:

- **Financial sustainability** - The ability to access future funding has been reduced, including a much-reduced ability to fundraise or generate income through services provided.
- **Reduced capacity and volunteer fatigue** - A loss of current skilled and experienced volunteers, due to self-isolation, other commitments or a requirement to return to their paid roles.
- **Changes in demand** – some organisations are seeing a reduction in demand for their services, whilst others are reporting an exponential increase in need and requests for help and support.
- **Service delivery** – The ability to deliver in the traditional way is severely curtailed and there is a need to flexibly respond to an unknown landscape with an increasing emphasis on digital or other forms of delivery as opposed to face-to-face.
- **Mental health and wellbeing** - There is an increasing need to consider wellbeing implications, in that a lot of voluntary sector organisations can lack resources for staff supervision and volunteer wellbeing support at a time when the need for it is likely to be greater, especially for those frontline services.

Business as Usual Performance

- i. The following performance headlines (taken from the April to September 2020 monitoring report) are **in addition to** the plethora of achievements related specifically to Spark's Covid19 activities (see section 8.2(iv) above)
- One-to one support and guidance to 46 community groups in South Somerset
 - Published 31 Spark Somerset newsletters/bulletins
 - 10 General/funding bulletins
 - 5 training and events
 - 16 targeted
 - Published 8 Mental Health Hub newsletters
 - Published 10 VCSE Strategic Forum newsletters
 - Ran 5 South Somerset specific VCS online forums (the focus of which was on providing immediate peer support, networking and reassurance for groups as they grappled with the impact of lockdown)
 - Ran 6 open county-wide themed forums on Men's Sheds, Food Banks and Covid response.
 - Ran 20 online training events covering subjects such as Marketing, Volunteer Management, Safeguarding, Dementia Friends and Mental Health First Aid.
 - Launched a free, funding website resource. This received 2,854 visits during this period. Covid specific funding received 1,651 visits.
 - Launched a brand new Volunteering Platform, 'Spark a Change' replacing its former volunteering brokerage database with a new digital platform developed by Dutch company Deedmob. 435 organisations and 1474 volunteers registered.
 - Published the 2020 Somerset VCS State of the Sector survey (Headline findings Infographic below) **Please note that this survey preceded the outbreak of the Covid pandemic, therefore some of the more optimistic views expressed will have changed.**

Somerset State of the VCSR Sector 2020

2760

registered charities and 100s more community groups and social purpose organisations

73%



are 'micro' or 'small' organisations

87%

of the workforce are volunteers



77%



anticipate funding for this year will be the at least the same, or more than last year, but 65% feel that funding and sustainability is their main future challenge

98%

plan to maintain or increase the level of service or activity they provide next year



68%



are currently working in partnership to share expertise and resources

67%



have seen an increase in the number of people accessing their service or group in the last year, of which 80% have been able to meet their needs

42%



feel more confident or optimistic about their organisation than 12 month prior, with 48% feeling about the same

The Martock Parish Neighbourhood Plan Referendum

Executive Portfolio Holder:	Val Keitch – Strategy and Housing
Ward Member(s)	Martock – Neil Bloomfield and Louise Clarke
Strategic Director:	Nicola Hix; Director, Strategy and Support Services
Service Manager:	Peter Paddon; Lead Specialist – Strategic Planning
Lead Officer:	Jo Wilkins; Specialist – Strategic Planning
Contact Details:	jo.wilkins@SouthSomerset.Gov.Uk or 01935 462588

Purpose of the Report

1. To agree the Independent Examiner's report and recommendations for Proposed Modifications; and to set out the process for 'making' the Plan in the event that there is a favourable outcome to the local referendum to be organised by the District Council.

Forward Plan

2. This report appeared on the District Executive Forward Plan with an anticipated Committee date of March 2021.

Public Interest

3. The Neighbourhood Plan represents the views of Martock Parish Council and other stakeholders on the preferred approach to future development in the Parish. This Plan has been the subject of Independent Examination by a qualified person and, if the Council agrees with the Examiner's report and recommendations for Proposed Modifications, the Plan will be then subject to a referendum of all those in the community on the Electoral Register. The referendum will ask whether local residents agree with the modified Plan's content and if it should be used in the determination of planning applications. Regulations linked to the Coronavirus Act 2020 mean that no elections or referendums can take place until 6 May 2021. This includes neighbourhood planning referendums. These provisions will be kept under review by the Government and may be amended or revoked in response to changing circumstances.
4. The Neighbourhood Plan has been the subject of various events and meetings which have been used to engage with interested parties and public consultations. The Parish also have a website dedicated to local matters called Martock Online and this includes a section on the Neighbourhood Plan: <https://martockonline.co.uk/>

Recommendations

5. That the District Executive:

- a. agrees the Examiner's report and accepts in full her recommendations for Proposed Modifications to the Martock Parish Neighbourhood Plan.
- b. agrees to officers organising a referendum later this year for local people on the Electoral Register. The aim of the referendum is to ascertain whether local residents want South Somerset District Council to use the Neighbourhood Plan for Martock to help it decide planning applications in the neighbourhood area.
- c. delegates responsibility to the Director for Strategy and Commissioning to make any final minor text amendments to the Neighbourhood Plan, in agreement with the Martock Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group.

Background

6. Neighbourhood planning helps local communities play a direct role in planning for the areas in which they live and work. The plan can show how the community wants land in its area to be used and developed. If a plan is 'made' following a successful referendum, it becomes part of the development plan for that area. Planning applications are determined by local planning authorities in accordance with the adopted development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
7. The Martock Neighbourhood Area designation was approved by the District Council in April 2016. Since then, the Neighbourhood Plan for the area was prepared and a 'Pre-Submission' Plan was consulted upon by the local Steering Group in July 2019 (Regulation 14). This initial consultation was followed by formal submission of the Plan in January 2020 and the District Council carried out formal consultation in line with procedures set out in the relevant Regulations (Regulation 16), and in accordance with Covid-19 regulations. The Plan has now been the subject of independent examination and this report relates to the District Council's decision on the Examiner's recommendations and the next step of a local referendum. In the meantime, Planning Practice Guidance¹ states that neighbourhood plans awaiting referendums can be given significant weight in decision-making.

The Martock Parish Neighbourhood Plan

8. The Martock Neighbourhood Plan sets out an overview of the parish today and the strategic context along with a vision, objectives and main aims for the Parish and stakeholders. The Plan also includes policies seeking to guide future development in the Parish relating to Natural Environment, Built Environment and Heritage, Housing, Local Economy, Transport and Travel and Community Wellbeing.
9. No sites are allocated for development in the Plan but the Settlement Area Boundary has been amended from that shown in the adopted Local Plan, March 2015.
10. The Neighbourhood Plan sets out the following main aims:

¹ [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): planning update - GOV.UK](#)

Topic	Aims
Natural Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect and enhance our natural environment • Improve flood resilience • Support responsible change in the countryside
Built Environment and Heritage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respect the heritage and character of the area • Ensure new development has a positive impact • Support wider use of renewable energy
Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure housing meets local needs • Encourage innovative housing solutions
Local Economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitate the growth of local employment opportunities
Transport and Travel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce the impact of the motor vehicle • Improve safety and accessibility
Community Wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure community infrastructure meets local needs • Encourage healthy leisure and recreation activities

11. On receipt of the Submission Documents, the District Council carried out the required public consultation for a period of seven weeks under Regulation 16 in August - October 2020; this included a notice in the press, and hard copies of the Submission documents were available on request via the Parish Council. The District Council also wrote to all authorities, utility providers, a wide range of stakeholders and other bodies considered to have an interest in the Plan, including those that the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group had consulted itself. The submission documentation was also made available on the Council's website.
12. A total of sixteen responses were received; South Somerset District Council also made comments these were all sent to the Examiner.
13. The Examiner's Report concludes that the correct procedure for the preparation and submission of the Martock Parish Neighbourhood Plan was followed and that it meets the 'Basic Conditions', subject to the proposed modifications being made. The Examiner has proposed 22 modifications in all. The Examiner's Report (Appendix A) and amended document in accordance with these proposed changes (Appendix B) are appended to this report. The original Submission Plan, supporting documents and summary of representations received are all available on the District Council's website [here](#)
14. The Neighbourhood Plan Settlement Area Boundary includes the site MB2 – Land south of Coat Road which is identified for housing growth in the South Somerset Local Plan Review Preferred Options, 2019. The Examiner has recommended that Local Plan Review sites MB1 – Land north of Coat Road and MB3 – Land south of Hills Road are identified on Map 6 of the Neighbourhood Plan. These sites lie outside of



South Somerset District Council

the Settlement Area Boundary. Modifications to the supporting text are proposed in order to recognise their status.

15. The Parish Council agreed to accept the Examiner's recommendations and Proposed Modifications at its meeting on 9 February 2021.
16. If the District Council accepts the Examiner's recommendations, the next stage would be to hold a local referendum in Martock. The prescribed question that needs to be asked is:

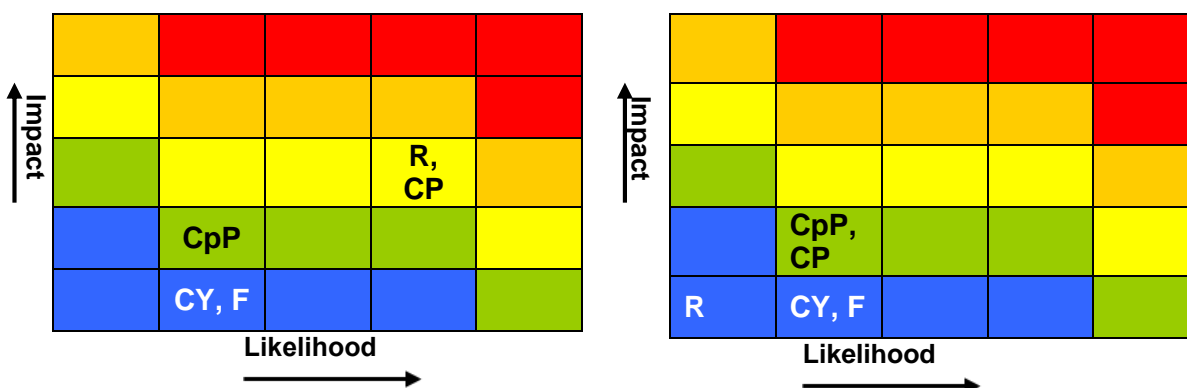
"Do you want South Somerset District Council to use the Neighbourhood Plan for Martock to help it decide planning applications in the Neighbourhood Area?"
17. If more than 50% of those who vote say Yes, the Neighbourhood Plan is 'made' (or adopted); and it becomes part of the statutory Development Plan for the District Council and needs to be taken account of in the determination of planning applications. Despite the currently delay to the holding of the local referendum, the neighbourhood plan can be given significant weight in decision making in advance of the referendum.
18. Under the Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations, 15% of Community Infrastructure Levy receipts are generally passed directly to those parish and town councils (in England) where development has taken place. In England, communities that draw up a neighbourhood plan and secure the consent of local people in a referendum, will benefit from 25% of the levy revenues arising from the development that takes place in their area.
19. The District Council does not have the option to decline to hold the Referendum as this is required by legislation; and the associated costs will need to be absorbed into existing budgetary arrangements. However, Planning Authorities have been advised that, in order to minimise the financial impact of any delays to neighbourhood planning referendums, the Government will allow local planning authorities in 2020/21 to submit claims for New Burdens grant, instead of when the date of the referendum is set, at an earlier point in the neighbourhood planning process. A claim can be made at the point when the local planning authority issues a decision statement (as set out under Regulation 25 of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 detailing its intention to send the plan to referendum. The Council will therefore claim a grant of up to £20,000 towards the costs of progressing the Neighbourhood Plan from the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) once the formal decision has been issued.

Financial Implications

20. There are no additional financial implications as the £20,000 grant claimable from MHCLG will be sufficient to cover the costs of the referendum. It should be noted that if the referendum were not to progress the costs incurred to date will be funded from an existing Strategic Planning budget.

Risk Profile before officer recommendations

Risk Profile after officer recommendations



Key

Categories	Colours (for further detail please refer to Risk management strategy)
R = Reputation	Red = High impact and high probability
CpP = Corporate Plan Priorities	Orange = Major impact and major probability
CP = Community Priorities	Yellow = Moderate impact and moderate probability
CY = Capacity	Green = Minor impact and minor probability
F = Financial	Blue = Insignificant impact and insignificant probability

Council Plan Implications

21. The Martock Neighbourhood Plan accords with the Council’s aims to increase the focus on jobs and economic development, protect and enhance the quality of our environment; and to enable housing to meet all needs. The District Council’s values include supporting people and communities, enabling them to help themselves; and the Neighbourhood Plan has been prepared by the local community who wish to have an influence on future development in the Parish. The Council Plan states that it will focus on supporting communities to develop and implement Neighbourhood Plans.

Carbon Emissions and Climate Change Implications

22. The Martock Neighbourhood Plan does not directly address carbon emissions or climate change but does include Policy Mart16 which seeks achieve high levels of sustainable development where appropriate.

Equality and Diversity Implications

23. No significant changes to a Service, Policy or Strategy are proposed, directly and, therefore, it is not necessary to undertake an Equality Impact Assessment.

Privacy Impact Assessment

24. It is not necessary to process personal data so, therefore, a Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) is not needed.



South Somerset
District Council

Background Papers

Appendix A – Examiner's Report

Appendix B – Martock Neighbourhood Plan (amended)



Intelligent Plans
and examinations

Report on Martock Parish Neighbourhood Plan 2018-2028

An Examination undertaken for South Somerset District Council with the support of Martock Parish Council, on the January 2020 submission version of the Plan.

Independent Examiner: Jill Kingaby BSc (Econ) MSc MRTPI

Date of Report: 21 January 2021

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Main Findings - Executive Summary

From my examination of the Martock Parish Neighbourhood Plan (the Plan/MNP) and its supporting documentation including the representations made, I have concluded that subject to the policy modifications set out in this report, the Plan meets the Basic Conditions.

I have also concluded that:

- The Plan has been prepared and submitted for examination by a qualifying body – the Martock Parish Council;
- The Plan has been prepared for an area properly designated – Martock Parish as illustrated in Map 1 of the Plan;
- The Plan specifies the period to which it is to take effect – 2018-2028; and
- The policies relate to the development and use of land for a designated neighbourhood area.

I recommend that the Plan, once modified, proceeds to referendum on the basis that it has met all the relevant legal requirements.

I have considered whether the referendum area should extend beyond the designated area to which the Plan relates and have concluded that it should not.

1. Introduction and Background

Martock Parish Neighbourhood Plan 2018-2028

1.1 The Parish of Martock is a rural area in South Somerset, on the southern edge of the Somerset Levels and Moors. The A303 trunk road forms the southern boundary of the Parish and provides access towards the town of Yeovil, some 7 miles to the south-east. The Parish's main settlement is Martock which is separated from the village of Bower Hinton by Madey Mill Stream and Hurst Brook. The main road extending from north to south (the B3165) through Martock, Hurst and Bower Hinton is aligned by many historic buildings which are at the heart of the Joint Conservation Area. Martock and Bower Hinton are situated in a bowl surrounded by undulating hills in an attractive landscape. Smaller villages of Coat and Stapleton are located in the north of the Parish, and Coat includes a designated Conservation Area.

1.2 The River Parrett marks the Parish's western boundary, and a significant part of the Parish is susceptible to flooding. Land close to the Parrett, to Madey Mill Stream and Hurst Brook is shown on the South Somerset Local Plan Policies Map as at high risk of flooding, being located in Flood Zones 2 and 3. Martock accommodates many small businesses, principally on Martock Industrial Estate, and at the Parrett Works on the Parish's

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western edge. Designated as a Rural Centre in the South Somerset Local Plan, Martock/Bower Hinton includes a range of shops and community facilities including places of worship, a primary school, post office, library, farmers' market, doctors and pharmacy. An extensive footpath network gives good access for local residents across the Parish to the surrounding countryside. Facilities for sports and recreation and children's play are available, notably along the eastern side of Bower Hinton and Martock.

- 1.3 The MNP has been prepared by a Steering Group comprising members of the local community and Parish councillors, on behalf of Martock Parish Council. The Parish was formally approved as a Neighbourhood Area by South Somerset District Council (SSDC) on 7 April 2016. The MNP was developed with the participation of local people in working groups, and through regular community consultation. The Plan was framed around a number of aims and objectives, identified as important by the local community. These cover the matters of natural environment, built environment and heritage, housing, local economy, transport and travel, and community wellbeing.

The Independent Examiner

- 1.4 As the Plan has now reached the examination stage, I have been appointed as the examiner of the MNP by SSDC, with the agreement of Martock Parish Council.
- 1.5 I am a chartered town planner and former government Planning Inspector, with prior experience of examining neighbourhood plans. I am an independent examiner, and do not have an interest in any of the land that may be affected by the draft Plan.

The Scope of the Examination

- 1.6 As the independent examiner, I am required to produce this report and recommend either:
- (a) that the neighbourhood plan is submitted to a referendum without changes; or
 - (b) that modifications are made and that the modified neighbourhood plan is submitted to a referendum; or
 - (c) that the neighbourhood plan does not proceed to a referendum on the basis that it does not meet the necessary legal requirements.
- 1.7 The scope of the examination is set out in Paragraph 8(1) of Schedule 4B to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended)('the 1990 Act'). The examiner must consider:
- Whether the plan meets the Basic Conditions.

- Whether the plan complies with provisions under s.38A and s.38B of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended) ('the 2004 Act'). These are:
 - it has been prepared and submitted for examination by a qualifying body, for an area that has been properly designated by the local planning authority;
 - it sets out policies in relation to the development and use of land;
 - it specifies the period during which it has effect;
 - it does not include provisions and policies for 'excluded development'; and
 - it is the only neighbourhood plan for the area and does not relate to land outside the designated neighbourhood area.
- Whether the referendum boundary should be extended beyond the designated area, should the plan proceed to referendum.
- Such matters as prescribed in the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended)('the 2012 Regulations').

1.8 I have considered only matters that fall within Paragraph 8(1) of Schedule 4B to the 1990 Act, with one exception. That is the requirement that the Plan is compatible with the Human Rights Convention.

The Basic Conditions

1.9 The 'Basic Conditions' are set out in Paragraph 8(2) of Schedule 4B to the 1990 Act. In order to meet the Basic Conditions, the neighbourhood plan must:

- Have regard to national policies and advice contained in guidance issued by the Secretary of State;
- Contribute to the achievement of sustainable development;
- Be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the development plan for the area;
- Be compatible with and not breach European Union (EU) obligations; and
- Meet prescribed conditions and comply with prescribed matters.

1.10 Regulation 32 of the 2012 Regulations prescribes a further Basic Condition for a neighbourhood plan. This requires that the making of the neighbourhood development plan does not breach the requirements of

2. Approach to the Examination

Planning Policy Context

- 2.1 The Development Plan for this part of South Somerset, not including documents relating to excluded minerals and waste development, is the South Somerset Local Plan, adopted in 2015. SSDC is currently undertaking a review of the Local Plan, and consultation on Preferred Options was carried out in 2019. The Local Plan Review, initially covering the period 2016-36, is expected to relate to 2020-40 at its next iteration. The MNP confirms that the Parish Council has been mindful of the Local Plan Review's contents and has "*striven to ensure that the policies in the Neighbourhood Plan are in general conformity with the strategic policies of the new emerging Local Plan as well as the adopted Local Plan*".² Although I shall not test the MNP for general conformity with the policies in the emerging Local Plan Review, the reasoning and evidence informing that Plan is likely to be relevant to the consideration of the Basic Conditions for this MNP.³ It is on that basis that I have taken account of the emerging Local Plan.
- 2.2 The planning policy for England is set out principally in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) offers guidance on how this policy should be implemented. A revised NPPF was published on 19 February 2019, and all references in this report are to the February 2019 NPPF and its accompanying PPG.

Submitted Documents

- 2.3 I have considered all policy, guidance and other reference documents I regard as relevant to the examination, including those submitted which comprise:
- the draft MNP 2018-2028, January 2020;
 - Map 1 of the Plan, which identifies the area to which the proposed Neighbourhood Development Plan relates;
 - the Consultation Statement, January 2020;
 - the Basic Conditions Statement, January 2020;
 - all the representations that have been made in accordance with the Regulation 16 consultation;
 - the Strategic Environmental Assessment and Habitats Regulations Screening Report prepared by SSDC, May 2019;

¹ This revised Basic Condition came into force on 28 December 2018 through the Conservation of Habitats and Species and Planning (Various Amendments) (England and Wales) Regulations 2018.

² Martock Parish Neighbourhood Plan paragraph 3.5.

³ Planning Practice Reference (PPG) ID: 41-009-20190509.

- Martock Local Green Space Assessment Report, November 2020; and
- the requests for additional clarification sought in my letters of 11 and 12 November 2020 and the response of 19 November from the Parish Council.⁴

Site Visit

2.4 I made an unaccompanied site visit to the Neighbourhood Plan Area on 3 November 2020 to familiarise myself with it, and visit relevant sites and areas referenced in the Plan and evidential documents.

Written Representations with or without Public Hearing

2.5 This examination has been dealt with by written representations. I considered hearing sessions to be unnecessary as the consultation responses clearly articulated the objections to the Plan and presented arguments for and against the Plan's suitability to proceed to a referendum. In addition, Martock Parish Council provided answers to questions which I raised in my letters of 11 and 12 November 2020, and I have taken account of these in my examination.⁵

Modifications

2.6 Where necessary, I have recommended modifications to the Plan (**PMs**) in this report in order that it meets the Basic Conditions and other legal requirements. The numbering of the PMs follows the sequence in which the changes are recommended relating to the Plan's pages. For ease of reference, I have listed these modifications separately in the Appendix.

3. Procedural Compliance and Human Rights

Qualifying Body and Neighbourhood Plan Area

- 3.1 The MNP has been prepared and submitted for examination by Martock Parish Council, which is a qualifying body for an area that was designated by SSDC on 7 April 2016.
- 3.2 It is the only Neighbourhood Plan for Martock Parish, and does not relate to land outside the designated Neighbourhood Plan Area.

Plan Period

3.3 The Plan specifies clearly the period to which it is to take effect, which is from 2018 to 2028.

⁴ View at: <https://www.southsomerset.gov.uk/your-council/your-council-plan-and-strategies/planning-policy/neighbourhood-planning/>

⁵ Examiner's letter of 11 and 12 November 2020 and Martock Parish Council's reply of 19 November 2020.

Neighbourhood Plan Preparation and Consultation

- 3.4 Martock Parish Council agreed to produce a neighbourhood plan in December 2015. A drop-in event in March 2016, the Parish newsletter, social media, and a Martock Plan website were used to publicise the proposed Neighbourhood Plan and engage local people in its preparation. The Parish Council then established a steering group of community volunteers alongside Parish councillors. An initial survey was carried out and a launch event held to establish the scope and issues to be addressed. Some 200 questionnaires were distributed and 87 were completed and returned, providing information as to what people most liked and disliked about Martock, how frequently they used local facilities, and their views about transport provision and aspects of the environment.
- 3.5 In October 2017, the steering group approved a set of draft aims and objectives for consultation with the Parish community. A public event, coinciding with the local farmers' market, and publicity on the Parish website, via a newsletter, social media and posters, were used to inform the community of the MNP vision, aims and objectives. Based on the comments received, the steering group considered revisions and refinements to the draft aims and objectives, which were agreed at the group meeting on 6 November 2017.
- 3.6 In April 2018, the steering group carried out a "call for sites" to engage the attention of all landowners and gain an understanding of the availability of local land for development and options. A policy approach for future development was put to the steering group in September 2018, and informal consultation on a first draft version of the MNP was carried out between September and November 2018. The Plan, and key evidence documents, were publicised by way of a newsletter, email, social media and posters; they were available on the MNP website or in hard copies. 16 written responses were received, with 3 submissions from task group spokespersons, and additional verbal comments from the Farmers' Market. Landowners whose land was proposed for designation as either Local Green Gap or Local Green Space in the emerging Plan were consulted, as described on Page 9 of the MNP Consultation Statement.
- 3.7 Consultation in accordance with Regulation 14 of the 2012 Regulations was carried out on the Pre-Submission version of the MNP between 13 July and 13 September 2019. All residents and businesses within the Parish, SSDC and a range of statutory bodies were notified of the consultation exercise. Online and hard copies of the Plan were made available, and responses were received by email, post or drop-off at the Market House. A total of 57 relevant comments were received from members of the general public and businesses, including returns from agents of landowners or developers. Changes were made to the MNP resulting from the Regulation 14 exercise and agreed by the steering group on 11 November 2019. The Submission Version of the Plan was submitted to SSDC on 28 January 2020, and consultation in accordance with Regulation 16 was conducted between 13 August and 1 October

2020. Sixteen responses were received, and I have taken these into account in my examination. I confirm that the consultation process has met the legal requirements i.e. procedural compliance and has had regard to the advice in the PPG on plan preparation.

Development and Use of Land

- 3.8 The Plan sets out policies in relation to the development and use of land in accordance with s.38A of the 2004 Act.

Excluded Development and Human Rights

- 3.9 The Plan does not include provisions and policies for 'excluded development'. In its Basic Conditions Statement, the Parish Council explains that the Plan's contents and preparation process have had regard to Human Rights (within the meaning of the Human Rights Act 1998). From my independent assessment of the MNP, I see no reason to disagree.

4. Compliance with the Basic Conditions

EU Obligations

- 4.1 The MNP was screened for Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) by SSDC, which found that it was unnecessary to undertake full SEA. Consultation with Historic England, Natural England and the Environment Agency was carried out. Although the Environment Agency initially questioned whether Policy No. Mart13 could potentially impact on the natural environment, a further assessment led it to accept the SSDC decision that a SEA was not necessary. Having read the SEA screening report, I support this conclusion. The MNP was further screened for Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA).⁶ Natural England agreed with the findings of SSDC that there were unlikely to be significant environmental effects on European sites from the proposed Plan, and therefore the MNP did not require an HRA.
- 4.2 However, in November 2020 SSDC issued a briefing to Parish and Town Councils on the issue of phosphates, following a letter it had received from Natural England about the high levels of phosphates in the Somerset Levels and Moors, which represents a risk to the designated Special Protection Area (SPA) and Ramsar site. Natural England provided updated advice to guide the approach to future development in the Ramsar site catchment area. The catchment area covers most of South Somerset District, including Martock Parish. Natural England advises that certain types of development proposal in the catchment area will need to be subject to a HRA, proceeding to an Appropriate Assessment, before they

⁶ SSDC – Martock Parish Neighbourhood Plan 2018-34 Strategic Environmental Assessment and Habitats Regulations Screening Report May 2019.

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are submitted as planning applications. Developments which will result in a net increase in population served by a wastewater system or increased nutrient loading from agriculture will be affected. SSDC is working with other Councils across the County to develop a Nutrient/Water Quality Strategy, so that water quality issues are fully understood, mitigation measures to offset phosphate pollution are devised, and mechanisms to deliver future housing growth in a sustainable way are set out. In response to my question to the Parish Council of 12 November 2020 on this matter, the Parish Council indicated its willingness for modifications to be made to Policy No. Mart1 Protecting and Enhancing Biodiversity, and to its Flood Guide. Alterations to the Flood Guide document are not a matter for me, but I propose to modify the supporting text to Policy No. 1 Protecting and Enhancing Biodiversity so that developers are alerted to the phosphate issue. **PMs 4 & 6** should be made to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. I note that Natural England has not amended its earlier conclusion that HRA is not required for the MNP. As the Plan does not propose allocations for new development in the Parish, I agree with this conclusion.

Main Issues

- 4.3 Having considered whether the Plan complies with various procedural and legal requirements, it is now necessary to deal with whether it complies with the remaining Basic Conditions, particularly the regard it pays to national policy and guidance, the contribution it makes to the achievement of sustainable development and whether it is in general conformity with strategic development plan policies. I test the Plan against the Basic Conditions by considering specific issues of compliance of all the Plan's policies.
- 4.4 As part of that assessment, I consider whether the policies are sufficiently clear and unambiguous, having regard to advice in the PPG. A neighbourhood plan policy 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.⁷
- 4.5 There are two overarching, principal issues relating to the MNP's general compliance with the Basic Conditions which I wish to deal with before considering the other specific policies in the Plan. These are:
- The role and use of companion documents in support of the Plan's policies (Policy Nos. Mart2-Mart4, Mart8, Mart9 & Mart11); and
 - The proposed settlement area boundary and its effect on the ability of the MNP to meet requirements for future new housing and other development (Policy Nos. Mart13 and Mart17).

⁷ PPG Reference ID: 41-041-20140306

The Role and Use of Companion Documents (Policy Nos. Mart2-Mart4, Mart8, Mart9 & Mart11)

- 4.6 Paragraph 5.8 of the MNP refers to the Flood Guide, Village Design Statement and Environment Manual, to aid developers and help ensure that development proposals will satisfy the Plan's requirements. SSDC pointed out that these documents have not been "submitted" under Regulation 15 and cannot form part of a statutory neighbourhood plan. SSDC advised that the Village Design Statement is wrongly described (on its Page 2) as a "Supplementary Planning Document". SSDC commented that the appendices to the document were incomplete but acknowledged that relevant contents of the documents could be translated into specific policies in the Plan. In themselves, the documents carry limited weight and it should be clear that they offer guidance only. I have no authority to recommend modifications to the wording in the Village Design Statement. However, I consider that paragraph 5.8 of the MNP should be modified to clarify the status of the background documents, having regard for national planning policy, as in **PM2**.
- 4.7 Policy No. Mart2 aims to protect established landscape and wildlife corridors from development, and where possible enhance or extend them. Paragraphs 7.11 and 7.14 advise that the Martock Environment Manual identifies and analyses the important wildlife corridors, but no information is given in the MNP as to their location within the Parish. I am concerned that users of the Plan may not appreciate what are the "important established Landscape and Wildlife Corridors". The policy could, in my view, be perceived as onerous, and likely to hold back sustainable development due to this lack of precision. The supporting text advises that the Martock Environment Manual identifies the established wildlife corridors of the Parish. Page 10 of the Manual includes a map without a title, but which shows five areas described as distinct from each other in their landscape and biodiversity. It refers to two important corridors that bisect the Parish, the disused railway line and the Hurst Brook Valley.
- 4.8 As paragraph 7.12 of the MNP states, the NPPF requires protection and enhancement of biodiversity where possible. I consider that Policy No. Mart2 has appropriate regard for this aspect of national planning policy, but more information is needed so that readers and users of the Plan understand more precisely which parts of the Parish are important or vulnerable, in terms of landscape and wildlife. I therefore propose that the map, on Page 10 of the Environment Manual, with its descriptive notes, is included in the MNP and titled "Landscape and Biodiversity Areas and Corridors". A reference to it should be added to paragraph 7.11. The Parish Council advised me, in response to my preliminary questions, that work is ongoing on identifying significant wildlife corridors, so I recommend that the map should include a note stating that it is "illustrative only". Then, this map with its descriptions of the areas and its existing footnote entitled "Martock Diversity", should assist readers and users, and contribute to the achievement of sustainable development.

Paragraph 7.14 should also be modified to explain the map's relationship to Policy No. Mart2, as I recommend in **PM5**.

- 4.9 Policy Nos. Mart3 & 4, which address flood management and flood risk, similarly provide the reader with limited detailed information as to where flood risk is most acute, although the supporting text explains that flooding is a matter of great concern in the Parish. However, I note that the SSDC Local Plan and the MNP Strategic Environmental Assessment and Habitats Regulations Screening Report include maps showing broad areas at risk of flooding in the Parish. Also, the Parish Council advised me, in its November 2020 response to my preliminary questions, that the Environment Agency's flood maps are complex and would require "constant updating". The Martock Parish Flood Guide for Developers, referenced in paragraph 7.23 of the MNP, directs readers to links for up-to-date flood maps, and to relevant management authorities. I am satisfied that the Flood Guide provides readers with access to useful technical information which should contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. I consider that the Plan gives due attention to flood risk in Martock from future development and therefore Policies Mart3 & 4 meet the Basic Conditions and need not be modified.
- 4.10 Policy No. Mart8 states that key panoramas, views and vistas should not be compromised. The Key Views shown on Map 4 are described in the Martock Environment Manual and referenced in the supporting text. SSDC questioned Policy No. Mart8 – Views and Vistas - because it offers no detail as to the scope and extent of the views and the principal features requiring protection. Moreover, viewpoint 1, south from Coat Road, faces a construction site for 120 new dwellings, as was evident at my site visit. I agree that, as written, the policy could be difficult to implement in a consistent and transparent fashion. As the Parish Council advised, the Martock Environment Manual includes more detailed information on the views and vistas. I consider that some of this should be included in the supporting text of the MNP, to describe the significant features at each of the key views on Page 24, which appear below Map 4. View 1 should be removed from Map 4. **PM7** is needed for the achievement of sustainable development.
- 4.11 Page 25 of the MNP provides a helpful overview of the history of Martock and its architectural heritage, noting that there are some 200 listed buildings and structures in the Parish. Paragraph 8.6 refers to the Martock and Coat Conservation Areas, and more recent work to review the Martock Conservation Area boundary and its special character. SSDC, in its Regulation 16 consultation exercise response stated that "*no such review has taken place to date*". The Parish Council explained that a re-appraisal involving the Parish Council and Conservation Team at SSDC was interrupted by staffing changes at SSDC. I understand that the Parish Council wishes the re-appraisal to start again but recommend that the reference to the 2018 exercise in paragraph 8.6 be removed.

- 4.12 A reference to the designated conservation areas, as shown on the Local Plan's Policies Map and in the Martock Village Design Statement, should be added to paragraph 8.6. It would also be helpful to remind readers that conservation areas are designated by local planning authorities, under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, because of their special architectural or historic interest; the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance. The Parish Council's willingness to take part in any future appraisal of the local conservation areas could be mentioned too. Modifications to paragraph 8.6 should be made as in **PM8**, having regard for national planning policy and for general conformity with strategic policies in South Somerset Local Plan.
- 4.13 In relation to Policy No. Mart9 – Heritage Assets – SSDC suggests it pays insufficient attention to the significance of particular heritage assets and could be read to give undue weight to locally designated heritage assets. I consider that some clarification of terminology and the hierarchy of assets is needed. Designated heritage assets are defined in the NPPF as including scheduled monuments, listed buildings and conservation areas. These must be distinguished from any locally recognised assets (non-designated heritage assets), which will carry less weight in decision-making on planning proposals. A schedule of Locally Listed Buildings is a matter for local planning authorities, and SSDC has not yet compiled one. I agree with SSDC that the inference in paragraph 8.13 (and 8.11) that the Parish Council will establish its own local heritage schedule, and apply Policy No. Mart9 to development proposals which might affect them, does not have regard for national planning policy.
- 4.14 It seems to me that many buildings and other features which have local significance in the Parish will have protection because of their location within the Martock Conservation Area, and Policy No. Mart9 would be strengthened by the addition of a reference to the Parish's conservation areas. I have had regard for the Parish Council's response to my preliminary questions and its suggested policy re-wording. I recommend modifications to Policy No. Mart9 and the supporting text, so that regard is had for national planning policy (NPPF section 16) as in **PM8**.
- 4.15 Policy No. Mart11 – Local Character and Design – appropriately, in my opinion, seeks high quality design in new development and has regard for section 12 (Achieving well-designed places) of the NPPF. However, I consider that the policy and its supporting text should be modified in two ways. Firstly, paragraph 8.37 should be re-written to provide confirmation that the Martock and Coat Conservation Areas are existing designations of significance. The policy itself should refer to the requirement to preserve or enhance the character and appearance of its two conservation areas and have regard for the presence and setting of the Parish's listed buildings. Secondly, the policy expectation for proposals to demonstrate how they have followed the Martock Design Statement should be softened. As SSDC pointed out, it does not form part of the statutory Neighbourhood Plan with which proposals must

comply and should be referenced for general guidance only. **PM10** is necessary to meet the Basic Conditions for neighbourhood planning.

- 4.16 As long as the above modifications are made, I conclude that the MNP will comply with the Basic Conditions in relation to the role and use of companion documents in support of the Plan's policies.

The Proposed Settlement Area Boundary (Policy Nos. Mart13 and Mart17)

- 4.17 I turn now to the second issue of general compliance: The proposed settlement area boundary and its effect on the ability of the MNP to meet requirements for future new housing and other development. Policy No. Mart13- Accommodating Growth - supports proposals for development within the settlement area boundary for Bower Hinton/Martock, and the settlement area boundary is illustrated on Map 6. The supporting text explains that Policy No. Mart13 is designed to control growth so that it is gradual, incremental and safeguards the unique character of the area, including the local countryside. I consider that the thrust of this approach is in general conformity with the adopted South Somerset Local Plan's strategic policy for Rural Centres. The MNP policy allows for small-scale development on land adjoining the settlement boundary which has regard for national policy on rural housing (paragraphs 77-79 of the NPPF). Policy No. Mart13 implies that any major development must take place within the settlement boundary. Major development is defined in the NPPF as housing development of 10 or more homes or an area of 0.5 hectares or more. In view of the tightness of the settlement area boundary, I am uncertain how Martock would meet its future requirements for new development over the Plan period, especially for new housing provision.
- 4.18 The supporting text to Policy No. Mart13 explains that the Local Plan required Martock to provide for some 230 new dwellings between 2006 and 2028. The supporting text to Policy No. Mart17 provides additional information about the adopted Local Plan housing policy, indicating that the "*housing target for Martock/Bower Hinton has already been exceeded (by completions and commitments) by 2019*" and "*It is felt inappropriate to set an alternative target.....*". However, the text following Policy No. Mart13 states that the emerging Local Plan Review seeks 330 new dwellings for Martock/Bower Hinton for the period 2016-36. With 45 completions between 2016 and 2018, and 75 new units committed for development, there is a residual housing requirement of 210 dwellings. I recognise that the Parish Council does not wish to allocate specific sites in the MNP. However, the Plan should not block the provision of new housing development to meet the SSDC's calculation of housing requirements. Some housing development of a major scale (10 or more dwellings) should be feasible for Martock in future if it is to meet SSDC's targets.
- 4.19 SSDC pointed out that its emerging Local Plan Review includes three land allocations in Martock, in its Policies MB1, MB2 and MB3. None of these

are referenced in the MNP, and two of the sites are outside the settlement area boundary. Paragraph 8.45 of the MNP states that community consultation has established little support for large scale development in Martock. The Parish Council, in reply to my preliminary questions, advised that the community is divided in its opinion about individual sites. In my experience, the need for new housing is not always appreciated by established communities, but this does not invalidate it. I consider that the MNP should set out a clear policy position for accommodating growth, especially in the light of national planning policy to boost housing supply. Comment on the MNP at the Regulation 16 stage included the observation that recent closure of the Parish's bank and a village pub, the limited selection of shops, and strained capacity at the school and surgery are matters of local importance. I agree that developer contributions could secure investment in affordable housing, education and other necessary infrastructure, whilst a growing population should increase footfall for shops and other community facilities.

- 4.20 SSDC contends that all the three areas subject to emerging Policies MB1, 2 & 3 should be included in the settlement area boundary to avoid the need for an early review of the MNP when the new Local Plan is adopted, most likely in 2022. Having read the section on Martock and Bower Hinton in the Local Plan Review (paragraph 8.36 onwards), I note the finding that the western edge of Martock seems to be the most sustainable and unconstrained location for growth. The appeal decision, Ref APP/R3325/W/16/3143789, and dismissal of a proposed housing development on land at Ringwell Hill, provides evidence of poor accessibility to community facilities for some land at the southern end of the settlement. Having regard for major constraints in the Parish, including flood risk along the Hurst Brook and Madey Mill streams, the designated conservation areas, and areas of high landscape sensitivity, I understand the line of argument in the Local Plan Review.
- 4.21 Summerfield Developments advised, in their Reg 16 consultation response, that a revised scheme for 25 new dwellings at Ringwell Hill is being drawn up. Although the dwellings could be provided within the Settlement Area Boundary, Summerfield requested that the boundary be amended to include all its site in order to secure a viable development. The Parish Council, in answer to my questions in November 2020, confirmed its view that the site is not a sustainable one for residential development. It observed that the site was not included in SSDC's latest land supply document. I am satisfied that the MNP should not amend its Settlement Area Boundary or allocate land at Ringwell Hill for future housing development.
- 4.22 I recognise that the site north of Coat Road (Policy MB1) is included in the proposed Local Green Gap between Martock and Coat in the MNP, where Policy No. Mart14 would prohibit development. However, paragraph 8.44 of the Local Plan Review comments on Policy MB1 that "*The separation to Coat would be retained by a substantial field and long gardens remaining undeveloped*". I have taken account of the Regulation 16 response from

Martock LVA LLP, and the illustration indicating how a defensible buffer between Martock and Coat could be preserved, and the land used for drainage, public open space and landscaping if necessary. I am satisfied that separation between the two settlements and the character of the setting to Coat Conservation Area should be appropriately protected if the MB1 site were developed for housing.

- 4.23 The Parish Council stated that it had defined the settlement boundary to include sites with planning permission, and this would explain the inclusion of the land south of Coat Road (Policy MB2). However, I conclude that Map 6 should show, in addition to the existing settlement boundary, the land north of Coat Road (Policy MB1), and land south of Hills Lane (Policy MB3). These should be named as potential development sites outside the settlement boundary. Also, Policy No. Mart13, its supporting text as well as the supporting text for Policy No. Mart17, should be modified so that current housing requirements and how they might be met through new development are explained more fully. These modifications, in **PM12 & 15**, should be made having regard for national planning policy to boost housing supply, and to minimise any conflicts between policies in the MNP and those in the emerging Local Plan Review. Both existing and future Local Plans define Martock/Bower Hinton as a Rural Centre capable of growth.
- 4.24 As long as the above modifications are made, I conclude that the MNP will be in general compliance with the Basic Conditions in relation to the proposed settlement area boundary and its effect on the ability of the MNP to meet requirements for future new housing and other development.⁸

Specific Issues of Compliance of the Plan's Remaining Policies

Plan Context

- 4.25 Paragraph 2.3 of the MNP states that the population of the Parish is approximately 4,200 whereas paragraph 12.1 cites a figure of 4,766 from the 2011 Census. The Parish Council advised that the most recent South Somerset Local Plan Review gave a figure of 4,188, as a 2018 estimate. Clearly, the Parish population has been fluctuating over time. I recommend that a footnote is added to Page 5 to clarify the source of the figure in 2.3, as in **PM1**.
- 4.26 Section 6 of the MNP sets out a vision, aims and objectives for the Parish over the Plan period. SSDC argued that the vision in this case "Living in harmony with our surroundings" was perhaps a little ambiguous with no clear physical outcomes described. However, the aims and objectives which follow the vision are set out under six specific topic headings, and these form the subsequent chapters and policies in the MNP. It is clear that the vision, aims and objectives are the result of extensive

⁸ There is a supplementary issue with Policy No. Mart17, which I deal with below in paragraph 4.39.

engagement with the community and assessment by the steering group. I consider that they provide the framework for a clearly structured Plan, with policies related to physical outcomes.

- 4.27 Paragraph 7.3 of the MNP refers to Map 2, stating that three landscape character areas are delineated on it, and paragraph 7.1 describes those areas. Although Map 2 shows areas of high and moderate landscape sensitivity, it does not show the landscape character areas. The Martock Neighbourhood Plan Local Evidence Report includes at Figure 2 a map showing four local landscape character areas, and I consider that these character areas should be added to Map 2, with amended wording to paragraph 7.1. The Parish Council advised, in its response to my preliminary questions about Map 2, that it had omitted the areas of low landscape sensitivity so as not to imply that, in the context of the “natural environment”, areas of low sensitivity have no value worth protecting. I accept that position but conclude that Map 2 should be modified to show the landscape character areas, as in **PM3**, to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development.

Policy No. Mart1

- 4.28 I am satisfied that Policy No. Mart1 has regard for the NPPF’s aim to protect and enhance biodiversity. The supporting text identifies two designated local wildlife sites, and a number of other areas with interesting habitats and wildlife features, which should assist the achievement of sustainable development.

Policy Nos. Mart5–Mart7

- 4.29 Policy No. Mart5 seeks to improve accessibility for pedestrians and cyclists and enhance the green infrastructure network. It will contribute to the achievement of sustainable development and have regard for national policy on sustainable transport. Policies Mart6 & Mart7 support development in the countryside and farm diversification subject to specified criteria. These policies have regard for paragraph 83 of the NPPF, which supports sustainable business growth in rural areas. I queried whether Policy No. Mart7, requiring converted business space to be marketed for 2 years before a change of use would be allowed, would be overly restrictive. However, the Parish Council explained its concern that conversion to business space should not be a temporary device for change of use to residential or inappropriate use, and the need for any short-term inertia in the market to play out. I accept this position and consider that the policies contribute to the achievement of sustainable development.

Policy No. Mart10

- 4.30 The MNP proposes to designate 14 areas as Local Green Space (LGS), in line with paragraphs 99-101 of the NPPF. Paragraph 8.18 of the MNP helpfully sets out the NPPF criteria which LGSs should meet, and 8.19

provides a useful summary of the grounds for designating each site. SSDC pointed out that several of the proposed sites are situated within Martock Conservation Area and are already afforded protection from inappropriate development. The Council queried whether it was necessary, therefore, to designate them also as LGSs. The PPG, to which the Plan should have regard, advises that if land is already protected by designation, then consideration should be given to whether any additional local benefit would be gained by designation as Local Green Space.⁹ I appreciate the Parish Council's concern that omitting sites B, E, F, H, M & N from the list of LGSs could imply that their significance as green areas to the community was being downplayed. However, I consider that their status as sites within the conservation area, and in some instances within the setting of listed buildings, should ensure their protection. I propose, therefore, to omit the above sites from the list of LGSs, but to make reference to their position and importance as green spaces within the conservation area. **PM9** to Policy No. Mart10 and supporting text in paragraphs 8.16 to 8.33, and to Maps 5a and 5b should be made, having regard for national planning policy.

- 4.31 I have taken account of the comments which were made at the Regulation 16 consultation stage with reference to Middle Street Field (site N). I saw at my site visit the fence which has been erected adjacent to the highway, and which residents advise me has been the subject of a request for a Lawful Development Certificate from SSDC. I note the comment that this fence is "unsightly and unnecessary" and out of place in the Conservation Area. However, the matter of a Lawful Development Certificate is not for me to consider. I have also been informed that a planning appeal for housing development on the field was dismissed in April 2014 (APP/R3325/A/13/ 2206348), when the Inspector concluded that the field makes an important contribution to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area, being considered by the Council to be the last remaining open field space in Bower Hinton.
- 4.32 Those opposed to the designation of a LGS on the field referred to the LGS Assessment Report Nov 2019, arguing that the site is not in proximity to the community it serves, because a gate and walls, and now a boundary fence, prohibit access; it was suggested that it therefore fails criterion a) in paragraph 100 of the NPPF. The site includes a parking area and gateway to paddocks, and the owner of this patch contests its inclusion within the proposed LGS site. I accept that LGS designation of Middle Street Field is not perceived as demonstrably special to the local community by everyone. However, the Field is not such an extensive tract of land, within the context of Martock and Bower Hinton, that it should fail criterion c) of paragraph 100, in my opinion. I conclude that Middle Street Field should not be designated as an LGS because it has appropriate protection due to its position within the Conservation Area. Map 5a should be modified in accordance with **PM9**, and the boundary to

⁹ PPG Reference ID: 37-011-20140306.

Middle Street Field should not include the access and parking area of 123 Middle Street.

Policy No. Mart12

- 4.33 SSDC explains that the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) took effect in South Somerset in April 2017, and is used when planning permission is granted, alongside s106 agreements, to provide infrastructure and mitigate harm from developments. I agree with SSDC that the supporting text to Policy No. Mart12 – Infrastructure should refer to the role of CIL in funding infrastructure projects. **PM11** should be made so that Policy No. Mart12 contributes to the achievement of sustainable development and has regard for national planning policy.

Policy No. Mart14

- 4.34 I have already described modifications which should be made to Policy No. Mart13 and Map 6¹⁰, to refer to a potential development site on land north of Coat Road. This would conflict with Policy No. Mart14 and the proposed Local Green Gap as illustrated on Map 7. I support the aim of Policy No. Mart14 to prevent the coalescence of Martock with Coat and/or Stapleton but recommend that Map 7 is modified to exclude the land covered by Policy MB1 of the Local Plan Review. **PM13** is necessary for the achievement of sustainable development and so that the MNP minimises any conflicts with the strategic policies in the SSDC Local Plan Review.
- 4.35 I have considered the arguments advanced by those with interests in the land in the proposed Local Green Gap to the north and east of Martock. I appreciate their concerns that the policy would restrict the scope for new development, but this is land in the countryside with landscape of high and moderate sensitivity, where national planning policy expects planning policies to contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment. I shall not propose modifications to the Local Green Gap to the north and east of Martock. I am satisfied that the wording of Policy No. Mart14 meets the Basic Conditions and should remain as written.

Policy No. Mart15

- 4.36 Policy No. Mart15 supports renewable energy proposals for micro-regeneration installations within settlement areas. In view of the importance of the need for measures to tackle climate change, I support the Parish Council's aim. SSDC drew my attention to paragraph 154 of the NPPF and footnote 49, and argued that the policy should not enable the development of on-shore wind energy, unless it is within an area identified as suitable for wind energy development in the Development Plan. Then, following consultation, it must be demonstrated that identified planning impacts can be addressed; the affected local community should give its full backing. Chapter 13 of the SSDC Local

¹⁰ See PM12.

Plan (2006-28) addresses climate change and the promotion of renewable energy and low carbon energy. Policy EQ1 fully supports the delivery of renewable and low carbon energy, consistent with national policy. However, it cautions that there may be unacceptable impacts such as large wind turbines impeding bird flight paths in or around the Somerset Moors and Levels (SPA)/Ramsar site; visual harm to Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty; or designated heritage areas. The presence of airfields in South Somerset means that large wind turbines could cause electromagnetic interference and be harmful to radiation radar.

- 4.37 The supporting text to Policy. No Mart15 refers to a Sustainable Development Plan “adopted” by the Parish in 2013. This document includes sections on highways, education, water supply, flood risk, drainage and sewerage, health and welfare, employment and emergency services. Whilst these are important topics related to sustainable development, there is no detailed assessment of renewable energy infrastructure. I have also read South Somerset’s Infrastructure Delivery Plan 2016 but have been unable to find any specific analysis of renewable energy infrastructure and its suitability for the Martock area. I consider that Policy No. Mart15 should remain, in order to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. However, paragraphs 8.54 & 8.55 should be modified having regard for the NPPF and to achieve general conformity with the Local Plan. I have also amended the reference to the Parish’s Sustainable Development Plan so that readers are clear as to its status as guidance and not adopted planning policy. **PM14** should be made accordingly.

Policy No. Mart16

- 4.38 Policy No. Mart16 – Sustainable Design – also has my support. It should contribute to the achievement of sustainable development and is in general conformity with policies in the South Somerset Local Plan on Environmental Quality. I recommend modified wording to the first sentence of paragraph 8.56, as in **PM14**, to clarify the status of the Martock Sustainable Development Plan, having regard for national planning policy.

Policy No. Mart17 (Supplementary)

- 4.39 I have dealt with Policy No. Mart17 above in the context of examining the proposed settlement area boundary. However, in addition, SSDC stated that it would be helpful if the MNP provided a standard or referred the reader to some guidance as to what constituted “adequate external amenity space, refuse and cycle storage”. A reference to the Martock Village Design Statement should be added to the supporting text to assist readers and contribute to the achievement of sustainable development, in my opinion. I have already recommended modifications to the supporting text so that it aligns better with the text following Policy No. Mart13. **PM15** should be made accordingly. However, the wording of Policy No. Mart17 need not be modified.

Policy No. Mart18

- 4.40 SSDC requested that Policy No. Mart18 – Housing Mix – should make very clear what is meant by small dwellings. I agree that this is necessary for the achievement of sustainable development and recommend that the first sentence is extended to explain that “small” means 1, 2 and 3 bedroom homes. I also consider that it would be onerous to expect every developer to carry out individual surveys of housing requirements, as implied in paragraph 9.14. The text, as well as the policy, should be modified as in **PM16** so that the Basic Conditions are met.

Policy No. Mart19

- 4.41 Regarding Policy No. Mart19, Affordable Housing, I consider that this sets out the expectations for affordable housing to meet local needs on major development schemes in the Parish. However, the supporting text should be modified in two ways. Firstly, it should explain the recent change in national planning policy exempting non-major development and the relationship to Policies HG3 & 4 of the adopted Local Plan more clearly. Secondly, it should make reference to the Local Plan Review and the South Somerset Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2016. The latest estimated need for affordable housing is 29%, which is lower than the target in the adopted Local Plan of 35%. However, SSDC monitoring showed that in 2017/18, only 14% of new housing provision was affordable. A plan-wide viability assessment will be undertaken prior to the Local Plan Review being adopted, and this is expected to secure 29% as affordable housing. Paragraphs 9.16 onwards should be modified, as in **PM17**, to provide the most up-to-date information on affordable housing, having regard for national planning policy, and to minimise conflicts with the emerging Local Plan Review.

Policy Nos. Mart20 & Mart21

- 4.42 SSDC proposed changes to the wording of Policies Mart20 and Mart21, on Community Housing and Self-Build Housing. I propose modifications **PM18** and **PM19** so that ambiguities are avoided, and so that regard is had to national planning policy on the definition of major development and the avoidance of isolated homes in the countryside.

Policy No. Mart22

- 4.43 Policy No. Mart22 Energy Efficiency meets the Basic Conditions.

Policy Nos. Mart23 & Mart24

- 4.44 Section 10 on the Local Economy gives a brief overview of Martock’s significant economic base with some 250 businesses employing almost 1,000 people. The four principal business areas are shown on Map 8, although Sparrows Works and Stoke Road are shown as C and D, when they should be D and C. SSDC commented that paragraphs 10.6 and

10.16 contain references to the Local Plan Review at the “Issues and Options” stage, whereas more recent information is available in the Preferred Options document. The latter sets a requirement for 3.0 hectares of new employment land in the Parish over the Plan period, in Policy SS3, and does not allocate the site at Ringwell Hill for this purpose. Concern was expressed through the Regulation 16 consultation responses that the settlement area shown on Map 6 does not include part of the land owned by William Sparrow Ltd, previously allocated for industrial use. However, land at Sparrow Works outside the settlement boundary is not precluded from business development by Policy Nos. Mart23 & Mart24. I am satisfied that no modification is needed to address this point. However, I consider that Policy No. Mart23 (describing sites C and D) and the supporting text to Mart23 & 24 should be modified, as in **PM20**, so that the text better reflects the emerging new Local Plan policy, and will contribute to achieving sustainable development.

Policy No. Mart25

- 4.45 Policy No. Mart25 supports the development of high speed broadband and meets the Basic Conditions.

Policy Nos. Mart26–Mart30

- 4.46 Section 11 gives a helpful overview of Transport and Travel in the Parish, highlighting problems associated with (i) through traffic on the B3165, which runs north-south through the linear settlement of Martock/Bower Hinton, and (ii) the proliferation of on-street parking. The scope for more sustainable travel with increased walking and cycling is also discussed. Policy Nos. Mart26, Mart27 & Mart28 seek to encourage better Public Transport, more Off-Road Parking and wider and safer Footpaths and Cycleways. They have regard for the NPPF (section 9 Promoting sustainable transport) and should be retained. I am also satisfied that Policy No. Mart30, Disabled Access, meets the Basic Conditions. In response to my preliminary question as to how the second criterion of Policy No. Mart29 could be met, the Parish Council put forward some revised wording for the policy and paragraph 11.16. New traffic management measures would require consultation with the community and the backing of the Parish Council. I consider that the revised wording would give greater clarity to developers, and should be made to contribute to sustainable development, as in **PM21**.

Policy Nos. Mart31–Mart33

- 4.47 Section 12 Community Wellbeing describes the community facilities and services available in the Parish, including sports’ and recreational facilities which contribute towards health and wellbeing. Policy Nos. Mart31, 32 & 33 have regard for national policy (sections 7 & 8 of the NPPF), and are in line with paragraphs 8.48 to 8.52 of the Local Plan Review Preferred Options document, on planning for retail and infrastructure in Martock and Bower Hinton. The Government introduced changes to the Use Classes

Order in England on 1 September 2020, notably with the introduction of a new E class, incorporating the old A1, A2, A3, B1 and some D1 uses. These changes will mean that, for example, change of use from shop or clinic to office will no longer require planning permission. I appreciate the Parish Council's wish to protect all its community assets and facilities as long as they are needed and agree with their suggestion that it should suffice to add the phrase "where planning permission is required" to Policy No. Mart31. Reference to the changes in the Use Classes should be added to paragraph 12.9. Then, with **PM22** in place, regard will be had for current national planning policy.

- 4.48 Providing all the above modifications are made, I conclude that all the MNP policies, maps and text will meet the Basic Conditions for neighbourhood planning.

Monitoring

- 4.49 The final section of the MNP concerns monitoring and advises readers, correctly, that there is no statutory requirement for the Parish Council to carry this out. However, I consider that "plan, monitor and review" is one of the keys to good planning and achieving sustainable development, and I commend the Parish Council for setting out its intended approach within the Plan.

5. Conclusions

Summary

- 5.1 The MNP has been duly prepared in compliance with the procedural requirements. My examination has investigated whether the Plan meets the Basic Conditions and other legal requirements for neighbourhood plans. I have had regard for all the responses made following consultation on the Neighbourhood Plan, and the evidence documents submitted with it.
- 5.2 I have made recommendations to modify a number of policies and text to ensure the Plan meets the Basic Conditions and other legal requirements. I recommend that the Plan, once modified, proceeds to referendum.

The Referendum and its Area

- 5.3 I have considered whether or not the referendum area should be extended beyond the designated area to which the Plan relates. The MNP as modified has no policy or proposals which I consider significant enough to have an impact beyond the designated Neighbourhood Plan boundary, requiring the referendum to extend to areas beyond the Plan boundary. I recommend that the boundary for the purposes of any future referendum on the Plan should be the boundary of the designated Neighbourhood Plan Area.

Overview

- 5.4 I appreciate the hard work that has been carried out over a number of years by the Parish Council and its Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group to prepare the Plan for submission. It is clear that much technical work has been undertaken to produce the background evidence on matters as diverse as flood risk, village design and the environment. In addition, a number of consultation exercises have taken place so that the local community could be actively engaged and supportive of the Plan. I have put forward some modifications to the MNP, but these are designed to strengthen and build on the strong base which forms the submitted Martock Parish Neighbourhood Plan. Following adoption, the Plan should provide an effective tool for managing development and enhancing the attractiveness of Martock Parish.

Jill Kingaby

Examiner

Appendix: Modifications

Proposed modification number (PM)	Page no./ other reference	Modification
PM1	Page 5	<p>Paragraph 2.3</p> <p>The population of Martock is approximately 4,200.</p> <p>Add a footnote as follows:</p> <p><i>The 2011 Census recorded a population of 4,766 in the Parish of Martock. More recent estimates for 2018 give a population of 4,188.</i></p>
PM2	Page 10	<p>Paragraph 5.8</p> <p>Add a new sentence at the end:</p> <p><i>These documents represent guidance only but are specific to Martock Parish and are based on local evidence and knowledge.</i></p>
PM3	Pages 14-15	<p>Paragraph 7.1 Despite having a dense residential corethe Parish comprises three four distinct landscape character areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Silts and Marls • Northern Escarpments..... • River Corridor.....grazing pasture. • <i>A - Shallow hillsides North and North East of Martock</i> • <i>B - The Hurst Brook Vale</i> • <i>C - Bower Hinton Low Hills</i> • <i>D - Parrett Vale</i> <p>Modify the map on Page 14 so that it shows four distinct character areas, as described in paragraph 7.1, as well as areas of high and moderate landscape sensitivity. Figure 2 – Landscape Sensitivity Martock in the Martock Neighbourhood Plan Evidence Report June 2017 should be used.</p>

		7.3 The three four landscape character areas
PM4	Page 16 Policy No. Mart1	<p>Add to the end of the policy:</p> <p><i>Due to the high levels of phosphates in the Somerset Levels and Moors, which represent a risk to the designated Special Protection Area (SPA) and Ramsar site, Natural England advises that, within certain types of development area, proposals will need to be subject to a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA), proceeding to an Appropriate Assessment, before they are submitted as planning applications. Developments which will result in a net increase in population served by a wastewater system or increased nutrient loading from agriculture will be required to undertake an HRA at an early stage, and to put forward mitigation measures to offset any anticipated phosphate pollution.</i></p> <p>Add a new paragraph after 7.10 as follows:</p> <p><i>As Martock lies within the catchment area of the Somerset Levels and Moors, a designated SPA and Ramsar site, development proposals should respond to current guidelines from SSDC, Natural England and the Environment Agency on preventing pollution from phosphates. Developers should investigate the need for, and carry out HRA/Appropriate Assessment, before submitting a planning application. Developments which will result in a net increase in population served by a wastewater system or increased nutrient loading from agriculture will be affected. SSDC is currently working with other Councils across the County to develop a</i></p>

		<i>Nutrient/Water Quality Strategy, so that water quality issues are fully understood, mitigation measures to offset phosphate pollution are devised, and mechanisms to deliver future housing growth and other development in a sustainable way, are set out. Natural England has provided updated advice to guide the approach to future development in the Ramsar site catchment area. The catchment area covers most of South Somerset District, including all of Martock Parish.</i>
PM5	Page 17	<p>Paragraph 7.11 Wildlife corridors railway line. Those considered important are identified and analysed in the Martock Environment Manual. <i>The Map labelled 'Martock Biodiversity' from that document provides an overview of landscape and biodiversity and locates the important corridors.</i></p> <p>7.14 second sentence should read:</p> <p>Policy Mart2 places emphasisin the Martock Environment Manual, <i>and shown on Map xx of this Plan</i>, which should be protected</p> <p>Insert Map labelled 'Martock Biodiversity' from Page 10 of the Martock Environment Manual and add a title <i>Landscape and Biodiversity (illustrative only)</i>.</p> <p>Retain the footnote: Martock Biodiversity. Map showing five different areas around the village and the two important corridors that bisect the parish, the disused railway line and the Hurst Brook valley.</p>
PM6	Page 18	<p>Add a new paragraph following 7.17:</p> <p><i>In the light of the new guidance from Natural England, regarding the concern of phosphate effluent from new developments affecting the Somerset Levels and Moors, which is</i></p>

		<p><i>a Ramsar site, each development should now include a Habitats Regulations Assessment, carried out by a competent authority (eg. the local planning authority), proceeding to an Appropriate Assessment. This has to be addressed prior to submission of a planning application; it will not be acceptable simply to impose a condition on a planning permission to address the issue.</i></p>
PM7	Pages 24	<p>Remove View 1 from Map 4</p> <p>Modify the text below the map as follows:</p> <p>Key Views (shown on Map 4 above)</p> <p>Modify the description of these views to highlight their main features as follows:</p> <p>1 South from Coat Road</p> <p>2 South west from East Street Drove towards Hurst and Bower Hinton</p> <p><i>Views towards Hallett's Hill of open countryside and higher ground around the village of Martock. The church tower; row of 4 mature oak trees in front of the Blackdown Hills.</i></p> <p>3 East from Moated Manor Field towards Old Village centre</p> <p><i>View of Grade 1 listed church with mature trees in foreground.</i></p> <p>4 West from the low land around and east of Madey Mill towards the church</p> <p><i>Flat grassland around Madey Mill (Grade II* LB).</i></p> <p>5 South west from Foldhill across the village towards Burrow Hill</p> <p><i>Spire of Wesleyan Chapel; wooded hills in middle distance beyond village; Blackdown Hills on distant horizon.</i></p>

		<p>6 North from Ringwell Hill towards east edge of Martock village</p> <p>Whole village in green and rural setting; old railway line marked by row of trees and bushes; Mendip Hills on distant horizon.</p> <p>7 North from Cripple Hill towards Parrett Vale</p> <p>Extensive flat area of rural landscape; Victorian Parrett Works chimney; Kingsbury Episcopi church tower.</p> <p>8 West from Ham Hill, with Martock largely hidden in the foreground</p> <p>Panorama of lowlands from the Blackdowns to the Mendips; Martock church tower.</p> <p>Renumber the views as a result of the deletion of View 1.</p>
PM8	Pages 26 and 27	<p>Paragraph 8.6</p> <p>Both Martock and Coat have designated Conservation Areas, identified by the local planning authority under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. The Conservation Areas were designated because of their special architectural or historic significance, and because it is desirable to preserve or enhance their character and/or appearance. The Martock Conservation Area ...designated in 1981. A fresh Conservation Area appraisal exercise is taking place (during 2018) for Martock ...and development matters in Martock. would be supported by the Parish Council to re-appraise the boundaries of the Conservation Areas and update the description of key features of architectural and historic importance. The extent of the Conservation Areas for Martock and Coat is shown on the South Somerset Local Plan Policies</p>

		<p>Map, and in the Martock Village Design Statement.</p> <p>8.11 There are many buildings ...are provided with an appropriate level of protection which reflects their status.</p> <p>8.13 The Local Plan offersThe Parish Council intends to establish and maintain a schedule of local heritage value (not designated heritage assets). that should be subject to Policy Mart9. It is hoped</p> <p>Policy No. Mart9 Heritage Assets</p> <p>Proposals for development within the Conservation Areas of Martock and Coat should preserve or enhance these areas' special architectural or historic interest and safeguard their settings.</p> <p>Development proposals will be supported that maintain or enhance the character and setting of a heritage structure- listed buildings and structures.</p> <p>Development proposals that affect a listed heritage asset must demonstrate how they have taken account of the significance of the asset in protecting or enhancing the said building or structure for the appreciation of existing and future generations.</p> <p>Any renovations or alterations ... architectural interest and setting.</p> <p>Development.... design approach taken.</p> <p>Development proposals should avoid any harmful effect on non-designated heritage buildings and features, where possible.</p>
PM9	Pages 27-31	<p>Policy No. Mart10 Local Green Space</p> <p>The areas listed below</p> <p>A. Bracey Road Recreation Area</p>

		<p>B. Church Close Amenity Area</p> <p>C..... D.</p> <p>E. Martock Churchyard</p> <p>F. Old Methodist Churchyard</p> <p>G. ..</p> <p>H. Pair Trees</p> <p>I, J, K, L</p> <p>M. The Village Green</p> <p>N. Middle Street Field</p> <p>Development proposals</p> <p>Paragraph 8.19 Each designated site ...sufficiently the criteria of the NPPF....</p> <p>Remove paragraphs 8.21, 8.24, 8.25, 8.27, 8.32 and 8.33.</p> <p>Add a new paragraph after 8.31 Steppes Crescent Green, as follows:</p> <p><i>The Martock Conservation Area includes a number of green spaces which meet the criteria in the NPPF for local green spaces but have not been defined as such because of their existing status. The following areas should be preserved or enhanced, and their green character conserved:</i></p> <p>Add back paragraphs 8.21, 8.24, 8.25, 8.27, 8.32 and 8.33.</p> <p>Maps 5a and 5b</p> <p>The sites named B, E, F, H, M and N should not be shown as Local Green Spaces. They should be shown in a different colour (eg. blue rather than green) and the key to the maps should describe them as: Sites within Martock Conservation Area which should remain as green spaces, to preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the area.</p>
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		Site N on Map 5a should exclude the driveway and parking area for 123 Middle Street.
PM10	Page 32	<p>Policy No. Mart11 Local Character and Design</p> <p>Development proposals should, where appropriate, provide an assessment of the character of the site and its context (including landscape character and relationship to heritage assets) and show how</p> <p>Wherever appropriate, development proposals should demonstrate how they have followed be designed in accordance with the guidance of the Martock Design Statement.</p> <p>8.37 Development proposals should ensure that they will preserve or enhance the architectural and historic character of the designated conservation areas. The Parish's conservation areas are overdue an appraisal would benefit from a fresh appraisal. Once completed we would expect the revised appraisal documents</p>
PM11	Page 33	<p>Paragraph 8.40</p> <p>Add a new second sentence as follows:</p> <p><i>The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) took effect in South Somerset in 2017. It is used alongside funds from s106 obligations to provide infrastructure and mitigate any harm arising from developments. SSDC will use receipts collected via CIL to fund infrastructure. This need not be directly linked to the development from which CIL money has been collected. Once the Neighbourhood Plan has been made, however, Martock Parish will receive 25% of the receipts collected within its area</i></p>

		for expenditure on infrastructure which the Parish Council considers necessary. Policy Mart12 requires developers
PM12	Pages 34, 35 & 36	<p>Policy No. Mart13 Accommodating Growth</p> <p>The Settlement Area Boundary</p> <p>A. ...</p> <p>B.</p> <p>C. Development on land adjoining the Settlement Area Boundary north of Coat Road and south of Hills Lane, as shown on Map 6, which meets local housing needs, achieves good design standards, does not compromise the landscape character and setting of Martock/Bower Hinton and has no adverse impact on the setting of the Conservation Areas and Listed Buildings, will be supported; and</p> <p>C. D. Small-scale development on land</p> <p>Map 6 – Martock/Bower Hinton Settlement Area Boundary</p> <p>This map should also illustrate two sites west of the settlement area, which have been put forward in the Local Plan Review Preferred Options document as:</p> <p>Land north of Coat Road (Policy MB1) and Land south of Hills Lane (Policy MB3).</p> <p>A key should be added to the map to show that the red line is the Settlement Area Boundary, and the other (new) coloured line illustrates the Potential Development Sites from the South Somerset Local Plan Review Preferred Options document.</p> <p>Paragraph 8.46</p> <p>Add a new sentence at the end:</p> <p><i>The Local Plan Review - Preferred Options document proposes two sites for new housing development outside</i></p>

		<p><i>the Settlement Area Boundary west of Martock/Bower Hinton. These are illustrated on Map 6 as potential sites for new housing development though they should not be regarded as allocations until the new Local Plan has confirmed their status and been adopted.</i></p> <p>8.49 modify the second sentence to read:</p> <p>To be consistent with our strategy of gradual and incremental growth, any such development proposals should <i>either seek to align with Policies MB1 and MB3 of the emerging Local Plan Review and be located on the sites North of Coat Road or South of Hills Lane or</i> be small in scale and constitute a logical extension of the current built-up area. It <i>All proposed development contiguous with the settlement boundary</i> should have a positive effect</p>
PM13	Page 37	<p>Martock NP Map 7 – Stapleton and Coat Local Gap</p> <p>Modify the map so that the land north of Coat Road, which is the subject of Policy MB1 of the Local Plan Review Preferred Options document, is excluded from the Local Gap.</p>
PM14	Page 38	<p>Paragraph 8.54</p> <p>The NPPF (paragraph 151) addressed satisfactorily. The Parish adopted <i>produced</i> a Sustainable Development Planconservation areas. <i>Footnote 49 to paragraph 154 of the NPPF cautions against commercial scale renewable and low carbon development outside areas specifically identified as suitable for wind energy development in the development plan. Martock has not</i></p>

		<p>been identified as suitable for commercial scale development.</p> <p>8.55 Policy Mart15 reflectsprovides provision for</p> <p>8.56 The Martock Sustainable Development Plan was adopted–produced by</p>
PM15	Page 41	<p>Paragraph 9.8 should be deleted, and replaced with:</p> <p>As explained in paragraph 8.46, some 210 new homes will be required in Martock/Bower Hinton to contribute to South Somerset District’s housing target for 2036. Three possible sites for new development are identified in the emerging Local Plan Review Preferred Options document. All are located on the western edge of the existing Martock/Bower Hinton settlement. The site subject to emerging Policy MB2 - Land south of Coat Road lies within the Settlement Area Boundary, as shown on Map 6. Policies MB1- Land north of Coat Road, and MB3 – Land south of Hills Road are also shown on Map 6, but they lie outside the defined Settlement Area Boundary.</p> <p>9.9 It is felt amenity of the local area. The Martock Village Design Statement should help determine what is an adequate external amenity space, and whether satisfactory space has been provided for refuse and recycling storage.</p>
PM16	Page 42	<p>Policy No. Mart18</p> <p>New residential development should favour small dwellings, meaning dwellings with 1, 2 or 3 bedrooms.</p> <p>Development proposals ...</p> <p>9.14 Policy Mart18..... On larger developments of 10 or more dwellings,</p>

		there should be a mix of dwelling types and sizes which includes a majority of smaller dwellings ie. with one, two or three bedrooms. Developers should provide evidence that are encouraged to demonstrate that the proposed housing mix
PM17	Page 43	Paragraph 9.17 should read: The Local Plan endeavours ...The Government's new policy, referenced in paragraph 63 of the NPPF , is that no affordable should be placed on non-major development schemes of 10 9 dwellings or less or sites of less than 0.5 hectares. The Local Plan policies on all sites remains. Policies HG3 and HG4 of the current Local Plan have not been applied by the District Council to non-major developments since the change in Government policy. The Local Plan Review Preferred Options document requires major development schemes to include provision for 29% affordable housing.
PM18	Page 44	Policy No. Mart20 Community Housing Community Housing schemes may be supported outside (but adjacent or well-related to) the settlement area boundary
PM19	Page 45	Policy No. Mart21 Self-Build Housing The provision of plots on major larger housing developments 9.26 Regardless of the current lowplots on larger major housing developments (ie. developments of 10 or more dwellings or sites of 0.5 hectares or more) being offered to local self-builders.....
PM20	Pages 47 and 48	Paragraph 10.6

		<p>The current Local Plan (2006-28) sets a minimum...The recent Local Plan Review 'Issues and Options' report employment land by the Review. Preferred Options Document sets a requirement for 3.0 ha of new employment land in the Parish. This does not allocate the site at Ringwell Hill, where outline planning permission was granted for industrial use in 2006, but never developed.</p> <p>10.16 The Local Plan (2006-28) allocates a site of 2.8hadevelopment. The Local Plan Review will consider....with this allocation Preferred Options document does not allocate this site. The allocation of large</p>
PM21	Page 54	<p>Policy No. Mart29</p> <p>Where appropriate</p> <p>ii. demonstrated to have the backing of the community have been subject to consultation with the local community.</p> <p>11.16 Last sentence to read:</p> <p>We expect the community, and the proposed scheme to have the backing of the Parish Council.</p>
PM22	Page 57	<p>Policy No. 31 Existing Community Facilities</p> <p>Development proposalssupported.</p> <p>Proposals for the redevelopment or change of use of community facilities, which require planning permission, will only</p> <p>12.9 The NPPF (paragraph 92)day-to-day needs". The Government introduced changes to the Use Classes Order in England on 1st September 2020, notably with the introduction of a new Use Class E, incorporating shops, financial and</p>

		<i>professional services, cafe/restaurants, offices, research and development businesses, clinics, health centres, day nurseries, day centres and gymnasiums. As a result, not all changes of use of community facilities now require planning permission.</i>
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Martock Parish Neighbourhood Plan

2018-2028



Post Examination Version

(Version 4.3)

Martock Parish Council

February 2021

Date of versions:	
Initial draft	March 2018
1st consultation version	September 2018
Pre-submission version	July 2019
Submission version	January 2020
Post Examination Version	February 2021
Approved version (made)	

Martock Parish Neighbourhood Plan

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Foreword

Welcome to the Post Examination Version of The Martock Parish Neighbourhood Plan. This Plan has been developed by the community as a response to an increasing number of controversial planning applications in the Parish and a desire to exert more influence over how the parish of Martock develops in future. Four years ago, I asked the Parish Council to consider the merits of a Neighbourhood Plan and it was agreed to set up a Steering Group made up of local people to formulate ideas whilst involving the whole community in the Plan's preparation.

This Plan has been created through the hard work of several local people. Many parishioners have helped by engaging with the regular consultations at the monthly farmers' markets and attending the several formal consultation events. Whilst the Neighbourhood Plan is not in any way a bar to future building, it does allow Martock to exercise more control and direction over the future development, not only of housing but commercial sites and other aspects of importance to our community, including the conservation areas, the design of future buildings and access to leisure and recreation opportunities.

I would like to place on record my thanks to the members of the Steering Group for having the stamina and determination to complete the challenge of producing a Neighbourhood Plan; to everybody with an interest in the future of Martock who has contribute their thoughts and ideas to the process; and to South Somerset District Council for its encouragement and generally positive response to our many queries and questions.

Neil Bloomfield

Chairman

Martock Parish Council

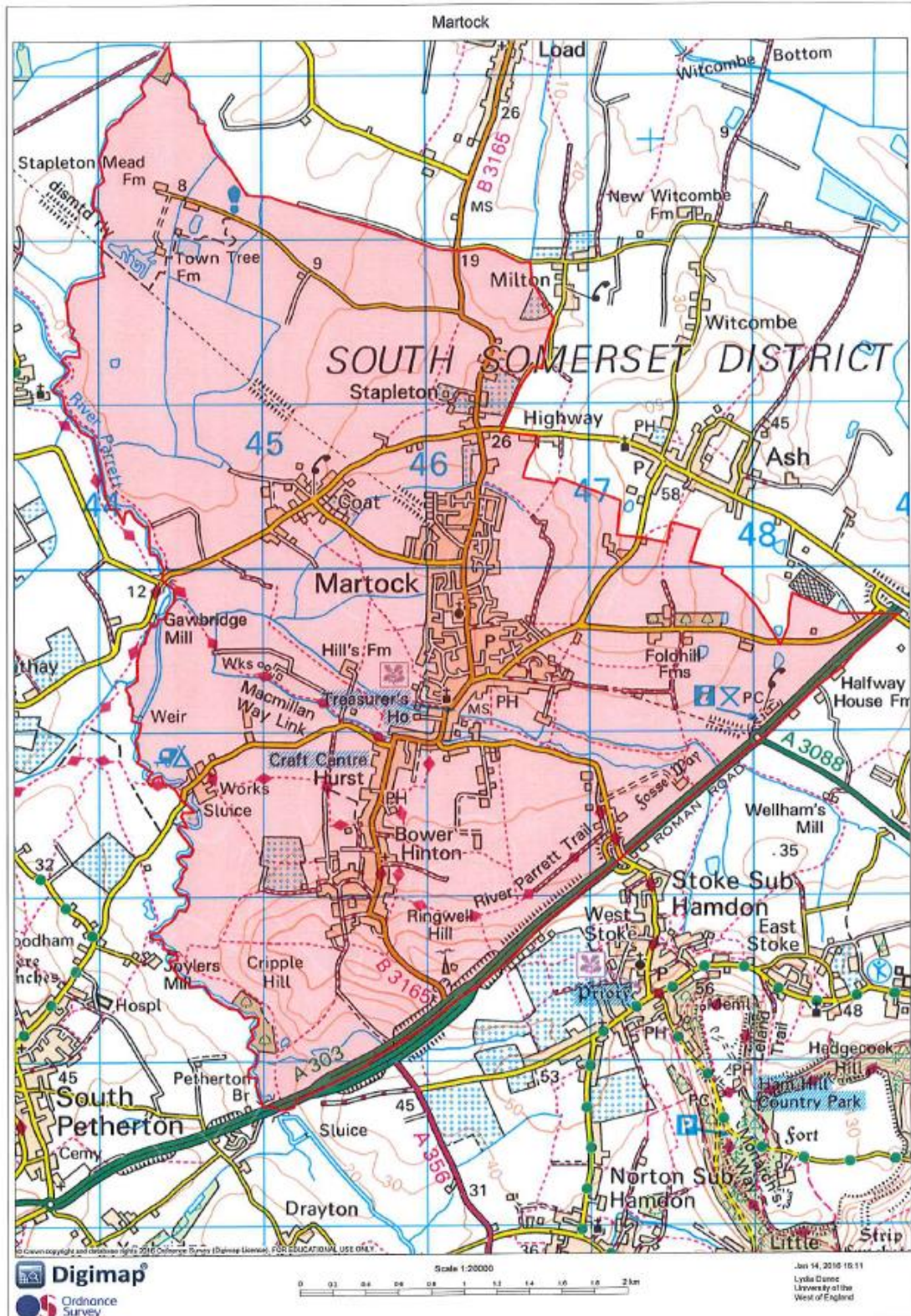
February 2021

1. Introduction

The Plan Area

- 1.1 The Martock Parish Neighbourhood Plan applies to the parished area that is under the jurisdiction of Martock Parish Council. The plan area, which was designated as a neighbourhood area by South Somerset District Council on 7th April 2016, is shown on Map 1 below.
- 1.2 In the interest of clarity, all references to 'Martock' in this document apply to the whole of the Parish. The Village of Martock, the main settlement area in the Parish, is referred to throughout the document as 'Martock village'. Other settlement areas are referred to by their name.

Martock NP Map 1 – Neighbourhood Area



2. Martock Parish Today

Our Parish

- 2.1 Martock is an attractive Parish in central South Somerset, on the southern edge of the Somerset Levels and Moors and alongside the busy A303 trunk road. Madey Mill Stream and Hurst Brook flow between Martock and Bower Hinton to the South, before joining the River Parrett to the west. The main settlement of Martock is surrounded by gradual undulating hills that are regarded as having high landscape value. The local road network links Martock to Yeovil, seven miles to the southeast, although travel times vary considerably according to road conditions.
- 2.2 Martock village and the adjoining settlements of Hurst and Bower Hinton have a joint Conservation Area incorporating various listed buildings along the main road between the two settlements. Listed buildings are concentrated at the historic centres of Martock village, Hurst and Bower Hinton. Areas of significant flood risk run through the centre from east to west between Martock and Bower Hinton. The land either side of the streams has been identified as part of the functional flood plain.
- 2.3 The population of Martock Parish is approximately 4,200¹. The village has a good variety of services. However, self-containment and sustainability, is an issue. The travel to work data for instance indicates that around 80% of the working population out-commute², mainly to Yeovil, Taunton Deane, Crewkerne, and Ilchester and surrounds, even though the village of Martock is home to scores of small businesses that are clustered principally at Martock Industrial Park and the, out of town, Parrett Works. Redevelopment of sites, such as the former Paull's Sailcloth factory, has resulted in a loss of employment land.
- 2.4 An overwhelming number of respondents to the recent Community Plan Household Survey 2017³ shared their opinion on what made them most proud of living in Martock. The friendliness, sense of community, willingness of volunteers and village atmosphere were high on the list. A large number also appreciated the beauty, architecture and history of the area, particularly the Church. The good range of shops, the post office, local independent businesses, the farmers' market, and library are all popular, as well as the convenience of having doctors, dentist and a pharmacy in the Parish. Facilities such as the recreation ground, the shopping precinct, school, community rooms, fire station were all cited as things to be proud of.

¹ The 2011 Census recorded a population of 4,766 in the Parish of Martock. More recent estimates for 2018 give a population of 4,188.

² From South Somerset Local Plan Review, Preferred Options Consultation Paper, South Somerset DC, Jun 2019

³ <http://www.martockonline.co.uk/UserFiles/File/1528.pdf>

3. The Strategic Context

- 3.1 In preparing the Neighbourhood Plan we are obliged, by law, to:
- have regard to national policies and advice contained in guidance issued by the Secretary of State
 - ensure the Plan is in general conformity with the strategic policies contained in the Local Plan

National Planning Policy Framework

- 3.2 In preparing the Neighbourhood Plan we have been cognisant of the current national planning framework. The 2019 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)⁴ sets out the Government’s planning policy to which all plans and proposals for development should comply. The NPPF includes, at its heart, a “*presumption in favour of sustainable development*” (NPPF para. 11). It states that “*neighbourhood plans should support the delivery of strategic policies contained in local plans or spatial development strategies; and should shape and direct development that is outside of these strategic policies*” (NPPF para. 13). The NPPF goes on to say that “*strategic policies [in the Local Plan] should not extend to detailed matters that are more appropriately dealt with through neighbourhood plans*” (NPPF para. 21). Outside of strategic policies therefore, we are encouraged to shape and direct sustainable development in our area through our Neighbourhood Plan. “*Neighbourhood planning gives communities the power to develop a shared vision for their area. Neighbourhood plans can shape, direct and help to deliver sustainable development, by influencing local planning decisions as part of the statutory development plan*” (NPPF para. 29).

South Somerset Local Plan

- 3.3 The South Somerset Local Plan (2006 - 2028) sets out the long-term planning framework for the district up to the year 2028. “*It represents the starting point for decisions on where development will be located in the district and will be used to reach conclusions on planning applications across South Somerset. It sets out the Council’s objectives for providing enough homes, jobs and services, in an environmentally friendly and sustainable way to make the district prosperous both now and in the future.*”⁵ South Somerset District Council adopted the South Somerset Local Plan on the 5th March 2015. We are obliged to ensure that the policies of the Neighbourhood Plan are in general conformity with the strategic policies of the adopted Local Plan.
- 3.4 South Somerset District Council committed itself to an early review of the Local Plan (following concerns raised by the Inspector at the examination phase, regarding the housing and employment land allocations at Wincanton). The review (currently in progress at the time of writing) is being used as an opportunity to ensure that the whole Local Plan remains effective and up to date and will result in a new Local Plan covering the period 2014-2034.
- 3.5 During the summer of 2019, the Local Plan Review was at the ‘Preferred Options’ consultation stage. It is expected, by the District Council, that a new draft Local Plan will be ready for examination and subsequent adoption during 2021. The Martock Parish Neighbourhood Plan has been prepared in parallel with the Local Plan review process. We have endeavoured to ensure that the two plan-making exercises, particularly the local consultation aspects, have informed each other. We have been mindful of the emerging policies of the Local Plan review and striven to ensure that the policies in the Neighbourhood Plan are in general conformity with the strategic policies of the emerging new Local Plan as well as the adopted Local Plan.

⁴ National Planning Policy Framework, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, February 2019

⁵ <https://www.southsomerset.gov.uk/your-council/your-council-plan-and-strategies/planning-policy/local-plan/>

- 3.6 The implication of new development on Martock's sustainability is a matter that is taken very seriously. In 2013 Martock Parish Council adopted a Sustainable Development Plan⁶, which sought to provide a *"strategic approach to the consideration of future planning applications for multiple residential dwellings over the short, medium and long term"*. The Sustainable Development Plan was based on research which indicated that development scale is a significant factor in terms of impact on the current infrastructure.
- 3.7 At the time, it was agreed there was a need for *"a realistic limitation being imposed on the number of units in any residential development and in terms of location of future residential development there are certain locations (areas) within the Parish that would have greater or lesser impact on the infrastructure and the existing residents"*.
- 3.8 The Sustainable Development Plan set out a framework (based on a holistic approach) for the objective consideration of future planning applications. It included being fully cognisant of the local issues and opportunities, which are still pertinent at the time of preparing the Neighbourhood Plan:
- the number of 'pinch points' caused by a combination of highway infrastructure evolution and design together with relatively high traffic volume and/or on-street parking – with implications for congestion, and public safety in particular
 - flood control and management concerns
 - The present and forecast capacity levels and constraints of the schools, surgery and other community resources
 - the location of recreational and welfare facilities e.g. surgery, pharmacy, schools, library services
 - The implication of the nature and scale of development on the rurality and vibrancy of the area and its communities.
- 3.9 It has been established through the consultation process undertaken for the, recently refreshed, Martock Community Plan⁷ and the Neighbourhood Plan that these matters remain important to the local community. The list of matters that people were *"least proud of"*, which came out of the 2017 Community Plan Household Survey⁸, were traffic and parking in and around the village/Parish; the GP surgery with a critical lack of capacity, because it is unable to recruit enough doctors; the pharmacy, that is in need of improvement; the closure of public facilities, such as the bank and village pub; and the limited selection of shops and condition of the precinct, considered by some to be poorly designed and maintained.
- 3.10 The Community Plan Household Survey also established that a *"large majority of respondents feel over the next 10 years, the Parish most needs more low-cost/starter homes for purchase (74%). This is closely aligned with those who feel that more affordable housing for local people who can't afford open market housing will be needed (68%). While low carbon/eco-friendly housing is perceived as a need by the majority of 6 in 10 respondents (61%)"*.
- 3.11 The neighbourhood planning agenda for Martock is therefore focussed on dealing with future development needs, protecting our special historic, built and natural environment, and addressing those matters of concern to the parishioners that can be affected by a land use plan.

⁶ <http://www.martockonline.co.uk/Pages/152/Sustainable-Development-Plan.html>

⁷ <http://www.martockonline.co.uk/Pages/70/Local-Community-Plan.html>

⁸ <http://www.martockonline.co.uk/UserFiles/File/1528.pdf>

4. Purpose of the Neighbourhood Plan

- 4.1 Neighbourhood planning is intended to give communities direct power to develop a shared vision for their neighbourhood and shape the development and growth of the local area. The PPG says that, in accordance with the Localism Act 2011, the Parish Council, as a qualifying body is able to “*choose where it wants new homes, shops and offices to be built, have our say on what those new buildings should look like and what infrastructure should be provided, and grant planning permission for the new buildings it wants to see go ahead*”.

The Neighbourhood Planning Process

- 4.2 We approached the task with an open mind as to what the Martock Parish Neighbourhood Plan would cover and what its themes and purposes would be. We understood from the outset that it would have to meet some basic conditions:
- have regard to national policies and advice contained in guidance issued by the Secretary of State
 - contributes to the achievement of sustainable development
 - is in general conformity with the strategic policies contained in the development plan for the area – the South Somerset Local Plan
 - does not breach, and is otherwise compatible with, EU obligations
- 4.3 With these conditions in mind, we have consulted widely and engaged with our local community to understand what is needed and determine what it is possible to influence and effect via a set of neighbourhood planning policies. We have considered carefully the policies of the Local Plan and assessed, on the basis of our agreed objectives, whether a more localised or detailed neighbourhood plan policy is necessary. In several instances, we have concluded that the Local Plan policy is sufficient. We have only introduced a neighbourhood plan policy where it will contribute to ensuring the area develops in the way we wish it to.
- 4.4 The Martock Parish Neighbourhood Plan sets out how we would like to see the area developed over the next 15 to 20 years and, through its policies, shape and direct sustainable development that will benefit those that live, work or visit in our area.
- 4.5 The development and preparation of the Martock Parish Neighbourhood Plan has been undertaken by a Steering Group comprised of local people and parish councillors, under auspices of Martock Parish Council.
- 4.6 It was understood from the outset that for the Plan to be truly representative of the planning issues of relevance in the area and to be *the community’s plan*, we needed to carry out a thorough and on-going consultation process with those who live and work in the area and those that visit here on a regular basis. We also recognised that the Plan could not be properly developed without the input of organisations and agencies with a district, county, sub-regional or national remit and an interest in the area.
- 4.7 The process and the types of consultation exercise and discussion that we have gone through is documented in detail in a **Consultation Statement**. The key methods we have used have included:
- Public exhibitions, meetings and events
 - Regular, monthly, farmer’s market stall and topic-focussed consultation programme
 - Articles in the parish newsletter
 - Website and pages on parish website
 - Noticeboards and established poster sites
 - Focus groups and workshops
 - Surveys and discussions with local businesses and community groups
 - Correspondence with wider-than-local organisations and agencies (strategic stakeholders) which have an interest in our planning issues
 - Two formal consultations during which comments have been invited on draft documents

- 4.8 The development of the Martock Parish Neighbourhood Plan was based on a desire to be open and to welcome comments and contributions from all quarters. The intention has been to encourage and foster discussion and debate within the community about the issues and opportunities that face us and strive to achieve a community consensus. This Plan represents the product of this process.

The Plan's Status

- 4.9 The Neighbourhood Plan, once 'made', will be a statutory development plan. That means that its policies will have significant influence when being used by the local planning authority to help determine proposals for development submitted through planning applications. It will form the local tier of planning policy in our Parish. It sits with the district-wide Local Plan, produced by South Somerset District Council (also a statutory development plan) and underneath the umbrella of national planning policy in the Government's NPPF, as the main planning policy documents relevant to the Martock parish area. Other important planning documents which govern specific issues are the Minerals and Waste Plans produced at the county-wide level.
- 4.10 The Neighbourhood Plan's policies cannot guarantee that a development proposal will be refused nor be granted permission, but the policies will carry significant weight, alongside policies of the NPPF and the South Somerset Local Plan when weighing up the appropriateness of the development proposal in question.

5. The Structure of Our Plan

- 5.1 The Martock Parish Neighbourhood Plan sets out the neighbourhood planning aims and objectives for the neighbourhood area shown on Map 1. These have been developed following a dialogue with the community and shaped by existing planning policies, plans and contributions of key organisations and agencies.
- 5.2 Having explained our rationale for these, the Plan sets out planning policies for Martock Parish on a topic-by-topic basis. Under each topic heading we summarise the characteristics of that topic and the key issues which have been identified. The introduction to each topic is based on the findings of the research, surveys and consultations that have taken place as part of the neighbourhood planning process. More detail can be found in the Local Evidence Report 2016⁹.
- 5.3 For each neighbourhood plan policy that follows we set out the policy statement; and our explanation of and justification for the policy, including reference to the other planning policies in national and district planning documents which relate to that policy.
- 5.4 We have given due consideration to the policies of the adopted South Somerset Local Plan. We are wholly in accord with the Local Plan's (Policy SS1) recognition of Martock/Bower Hinton, together, as a rural centre "*with a local service role where provision for development will be made that meets local housing need, extends local services and supports economic activity appropriate to the scale of the settlement*"¹⁰. We have introduced a neighbourhood plan policy only where we feel it strengthens or brings local specificity to the strategic approach and the policies in the Local Plan.
- 5.5 It is important to note that, while we have set out policies under topic headings, when development proposals are being assessed, the whole plan (i.e. all policies) should be considered, as policies in one topic may apply to proposals which naturally fit under another.
- 5.6 The Plan finishes with an explanation of how we will monitor and review the Neighbourhood Plan, and a glossary which seeks to demystify some of the planning terminology used in the Plan.

Companion Documents

- 5.7 Several documents accompany the submitted version of the Neighbourhood Plan. We are obliged to produce a **Consultation Statement** and a **Basic Conditions Statement**.
- 5.8 The Parish Council has also had prepared a **Flood Guide**, a **Village Design Statement** and **Environment Manual** that are all available online¹¹ to aid developers and help ensure that development proposals will satisfy the requirements of the Neighbourhood Plan. These documents represent guidance only but are specific to Martock Parish and are based on local evidence and knowledge.
- 5.9 The Neighbourhood Plan has been subject to testing as it developed to help determine its positive or negative impact on the social, environmental and economic character of the neighbourhood area. A 'screening opinion' on the environmental effects of the Neighbourhood Plan and its policies was sought from, the local planning authority, South Somerset District Council. The initial 'screening opinion' from South Somerset District Council¹² concluded "*in the light of the District Council's findings and the responses from the statutory consultees it is concluded that there is no requirement for a full Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) or Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) to be undertaken*". Historic England and Natural England concurred with the local planning authority's conclusions. This opinion has been re-affirmed by the local planning authority based on the Submission Version of the Martock Parish Neighbourhood Plan.

⁹ See full report at: <http://www.martockplan.org.uk/Planpages/Documents/LocalContextReport.pdf>

¹⁰ <https://www.southsomerset.gov.uk/your-council/your-council-plan-and-strategies/planning-policy/local-plan/>

¹¹ <http://www.martockplan.org.uk/>

¹² <http://www.martockplan.org.uk/Drafts/Downloads/Screening%20Report%20Final%202019%20-%20ISSUE.pdf>

6. Vision, Aims and Objectives

Establishing a Neighbourhood Plan Framework

- 6.1 The framework for the Martock Parish Neighbourhood Plan comprises:
- a **vision** - for the long-term future of Martock;
 - the **aims** - that it is hoped that the Plan can help achieve; and
 - the **objectives** - that we expect the Plan to attain by the application of appropriate neighbourhood planning policies

Our Vision

- 6.2 A neighbourhood plan should set out a vision for the future of its neighbourhood. The vision should reflect a desired end state that is consistent with the values and overall priorities of the community. This is encapsulated in our vision statement below:

Living in harmony with our surroundings

The Aims and Objectives of the Neighbourhood Plan



- 6.3 The process of arriving at an agreed set of aims and objectives started with discussions at the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group, which considered the evidence and the response received to surveys and other consultation activities. Much of the community-based evidence came from the results of a community consultation undertaken during the Spring of 2017¹³.
- 6.4 A draft set of aims and objectives was the focus of community consultation activity in the Parish during November 2017. The response we received was positive and encouraging. As a result of the community's reaction and comments, several revisions were made to the draft aims and objectives. The final set (see overleaf) was agreed in December 2017. We believe it reflects the community's neighbourhood planning and development agenda. It is this agenda that underpins the Neighbourhood Plan's policies.

¹³ Martock Community Plan Household Survey 2017, prepared by the Community Council for Somerset, Report date 5 May 2017 <http://www.martockonline.co.uk/UserFiles/File/1528.pdf>

Agreed Aims and Objectives

6.5 The following set of aims and objectives was adopted by the Steering Group following community consultation at the Martock Farmers Market on the Saturday 11th November 2017. As a result of the community consultation, a few minor changes and additions were made to the consultation set agreed at the Martock Steering Group meeting of the 6th November 2017¹⁴.

Natural Environment	
<i>Aims</i>	<i>Objectives</i>
<i>Protect and enhance our natural environment</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect and enhance sensitive areas and habitats • Further the creation of a network of wildlife corridors • Prevent harm from development
<i>Improve flood resilience</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support flood prevention measures • Prevent development on land liable to flooding or development that might increase flood risk elsewhere
<i>Support responsible change in the countryside</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extend and enhance public access to the countryside • Enable necessary farm diversification • Responsible stewardship of the countryside • Protect valued landscapes and views

Built Environment and Heritage	
<i>Aims</i>	<i>Objectives</i>
<i>Respect the heritage and character of the area</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect and enhance historic buildings and their settings • Protect historical and archaeological sites • Safeguard valuable green spaces within the settlements • Retain the sense of villages and rurality
<i>Ensure new development has a positive impact</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish the limits of development • Influence the design of new development • Support sustainable development practices • Ensure adequate infrastructure is in place
<i>Support wider use of renewable energy</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support small-scale renewable energy generation • Encourage low carbon development

Housing	
<i>Aims</i>	<i>Objectives</i>
<i>Ensure housing meets local needs</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a sustainable level of housing development • Ensure new housing development is suitably mixed and reflects local needs • Ensure housing offers realistic affordable options for local people
<i>Encourage innovative housing solutions</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support locally-based housing initiatives • Support self-build projects • Support energy-efficient housing design

Local Economy	
<i>Aims</i>	<i>Objectives</i>
<i>Facilitate the growth of local employment opportunities</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect and enhance existing business and commercial areas • Support a wide variety of new business development • Facilitate high-speed electronic communication

Transport and Travel	
<i>Aims</i>	<i>Objectives</i>
<i>Reduce the impact of the motor vehicle</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase safe cycling and walking routes • Support public transport initiatives • Increase off-road parking opportunities
<i>Improve safety and accessibility</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve pedestrian routes • Support traffic management initiatives • Improve accessibility to services and facilities

Community Wellbeing	
<i>Aims</i>	<i>Objectives</i>
<i>Ensure community infrastructure meets local needs</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect existing community facilities • Ensure community infrastructure is commensurate with changing needs and demands • Facilitate the local delivery of services
<i>Encourage healthy leisure and recreation activities</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect and enhance existing sport recreational and cultural facilities • Support the provision of new facilities that meet local demands • Ensure the needs and demands of all age groups are considered

7. Natural Environment

Overview

- 7.1 Despite having a dense residential core, Martock Parish is predominantly rural in character with extensive areas of countryside. In terms of ‘landscape character’, the South Somerset Landscape Character Assessment, of 1993, determined the Parish comprises four distinct landscape character areas:
- A. Shallow hillsides North and North East of Martock
 - B. The Hurst Brook Vale
 - C. Bower Hinton Low Hills
 - D. Parrett Vale
- 7.2 Agricultural land in the Parish is mostly classified as grade 3b, with some 3a; several valley bottoms are grade 2. A feature of the Parish is the number of small farms, with many small land ownerships.
- 7.3 The four landscape character areas are delineated on Map 2 below, which also shows the key findings of a landscape sensitivity assessment published by South Somerset District Council in 2008. Its purpose was to assess the capacity of the fringe areas of Martock/Bower Hinton to accommodate new development in a landscape-sympathetic manner. The extent of land in the vicinity of the built-up area that was categorised as an area of high or moderate landscape sensitivity is notable. This assessment provides a valuable contribution in evaluating and minimising the environmental impact of development proposals.
- 7.4 Whilst the Parish has not internationally or nationally designated sites, it is an area of diverse wildlife habitats straddling, as it does, the edge of the wetlands associated with the Parrett vale to the west and the higher land to the east beset with a variety of habitats that have evolved from the traditional land use patterns such as ridge and furrow fields, old orchards, old droves with their ditches and hedgerows and remnants of ancient woodland. There are two designated ‘local wildlife sites’ in the Parish. There are other areas of the Parish that have been identified by local interest groups as being important wildlife areas, such as Coathay Common, Parrett riverside and Cartgate Nature Area – their ecological significance and value is still to be fully established.
- 7.5 The Parish is a very biodiverse area. The Somerset Environmental Records list many EU-protected species and many of conservation concern, both plants and animals. Examples of protected species are the nightingale, long-eared bat, yellowhammer, brown hairstreak butterfly and, in our streams, otter and water vole, all indicating a rich diversity of important habitats that the Parish is actively engaged in identifying, conserving, and developing.
- 7.6 The community generally enjoys good access to the countryside via an extensive footpath network, which is well mapped (see Map 4) and regularly maintained (stiles, signposting, etc). The village is surrounded by a network of 38 public footpaths, and recent consultation showed that these are well used. Unfortunately, we do not have many bridleways. Many of the popular paths are not public but are farm tracks. Some are permissive paths. Accessibility for the elderly and those requiring assisted mobility is not good and there is a shortage of seats along popular routes. Paths generally are inadequate for those with mobility problems. Cycleways do not exist and cycling in the village and along many of the lanes can be hazardous.
- 7.7 Flooding and the risk of flooding is a matter of major concern in the Parish. The flood risk situation around Martock village is complex. Within Martock village, there are pinch points that cannot cope at times of high rainfall.

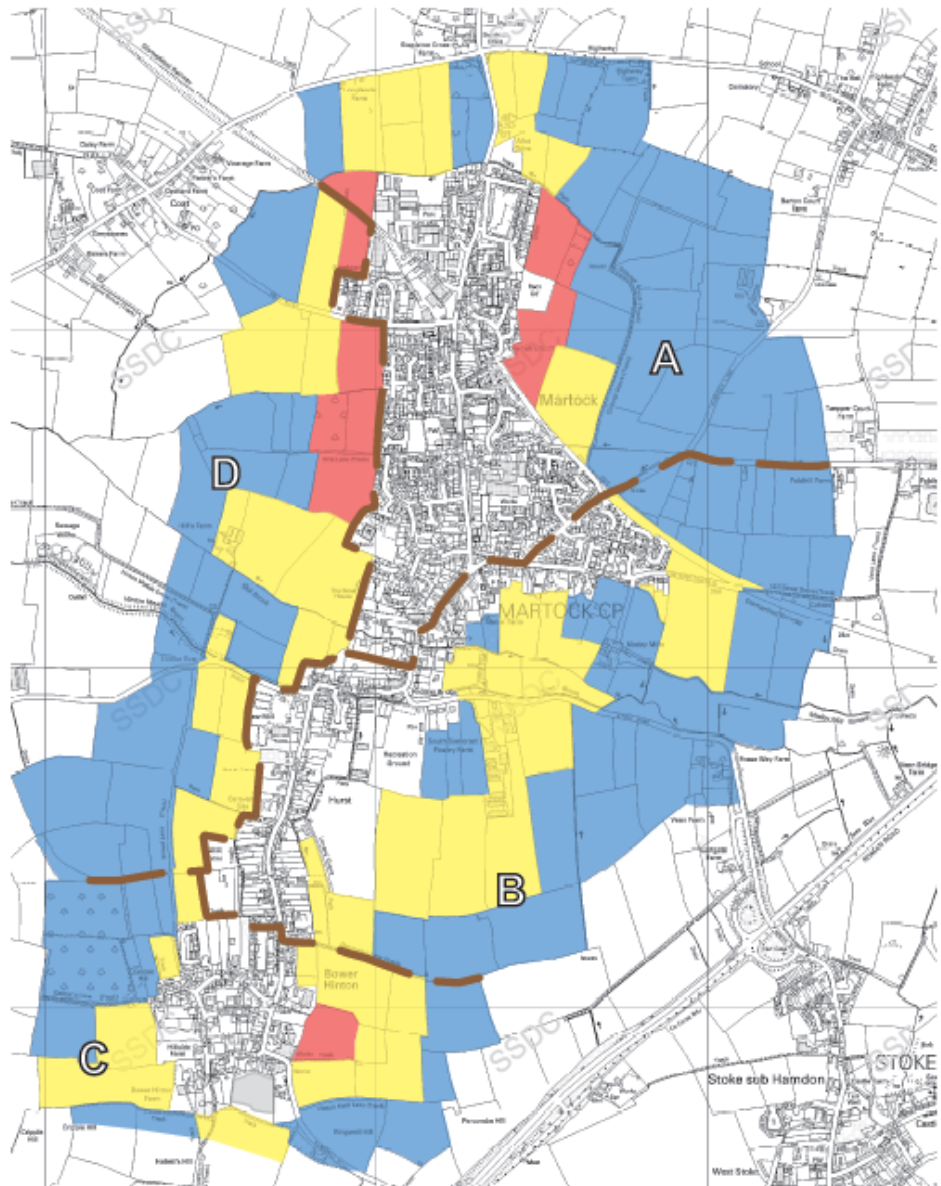
7.8 The Martock Emergency Plan¹⁵ confirms that the following locations have been designated flooding hotspots in the Parish:

- Parrett Works (Carey's Mill Bridge area - River Parrett)
- Stoke Road from Frickers Bridge eastwards along road by Hurst Brook)
- Hurst Bow Bridge (B 3165 - Hurst Brook)
- Gawbridge Bow

Flash flooding caused by drainage from agricultural land is common and not easy to predict.

Martock NP Map 2 – Landscape Sensitivity Assessment

Taken from the Martock Peripheral Landscape Study¹⁶



¹⁵ <https://martockonline.co.uk/UserFiles/File/2341.pdf> Page 80

¹⁶ https://www.southsomerset.gov.uk/media/1814/peripheral-landscape-study_martock.pdf

Policy No. Mart1 Protecting and Enhancing Biodiversity

Development proposals will be required to demonstrate how the design has taken into account its potential impact on local wildlife habitats and species and realises opportunities for biodiversity net gain and enhancing important habitats.

Development proposals that would result in either the loss of or unacceptable harm to an existing area of natural habitat will not be supported unless proposed mitigation measures would result in an effective solution to ensure that the integrity of the habitat continues after the implementation of the development.

Due to the high levels of phosphates in the Somerset Levels and Moors, which represent a risk to the designated Special Protection Area (SPA) and Ramsar site, Natural England advises that, within certain types of development area, proposals will need to be subject to a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA), proceeding to an Appropriate Assessment, before they are submitted as planning applications. Developments which will result in a net increase in population served by a wastewater system or increased nutrient loading from agriculture will be required to undertake an HRA at an early stage, and to put forward mitigation measures to offset any anticipated phosphate pollution.

7.9 The NPPF (para.174) requires us to “*promote the conservation, restoration and enhancement of priority habitats, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of priority species; and identify and pursue opportunities for securing measurable net gains for biodiversity*”. The South Somerset Local Plan places protection on the sites of regional and local biodiversity, nationally and internationally protected sites and sites of geological interest within the district.

7.10 Whilst there are not any internationally or nationally designated sites, the Parish is not without areas of ecological or historical interest, such as ridge and furrow fields, old orchards, ancient woodland and important hedgerows. The neighbourhood area also includes two designated ‘Local Wildlife Sites’ at **Bulsom Bridge Fields** and **Town Tree Farm**. Our own recent surveys¹⁷ have identified a variety of natural habitats in the neighbourhood area of varying characteristics. These include:

- **Land alongside the river Parrett and its tributaries.** This land is regularly flooded and includes ponds, wetlands, riverine woodland, and semi-improved grassland. It has a significant population of the larger mammals such as deer and badger, and also breeding populations of otter, water vole and water shrew which are of conservation importance, as are some of the molluscs in the streams. Birds include nesting swans, mallard, Canada geese, moorhen and kingfisher.
- **The track of the old Somerset Railway.** This mixture of cuttings and embankments with its impoverished and well-drained soil has yielded a wide variety of flowering plants and scrub with associated bird and invertebrate species, some quite are such as the nightingale.
- **The old footpaths and droves around the village.** Many of which were once used mainly for moving cattle. They are wide with drainage ditches on both sides and edged with hedges, which in many cases are now woodland avenues. These are important wildlife corridors.
- **Bat habitats.** Old buildings, trees and old hedgerows around the village have long been important bat habitats. Recent surveys noted 11 of the 18-native species in and around Martock, including all seven on the UK priority list.
- **Cartgate Nature Area.** A small area containing a pond, wetland, woodland and scrub including a section of the old railway. It is managed as a nature area jointly by the village and Highways England in a manner to attract rare species, particularly invertebrates.

¹⁷ [http://www.martockplan.org.uk/Documents/Supporting Documents/Manual.pdf](http://www.martockplan.org.uk/Documents/Supporting%20Documents/Manual.pdf)

- 7.11 A detailed appraisal of the neighbourhood area's natural environment and its ecological networks, together with guidance for developers is set out in the Martock Environment Manual. Policy Mart1 requires developers to avoid causing damage or loss to local wildlife habitats whenever possible. It also encourages developers to consider how they can help increase local biodiversity through the use of appropriate streetlighting that will not adversely affect wildlife and the installation of robust swift bricks, bat and owl boxes, and incorporating native local species in landscaping schemes.
- 7.12 As Martock lies within the catchment area of the Somerset Levels and Moors, a designated SPA and Ramsar site, development proposals should respond to current guidelines from SSDC, Natural England and the Environment Agency on preventing pollution from phosphates. Developers should investigate the need for, and carry out a HRA/Appropriate Assessment, before submitting a planning application. Developments which will result in a net increase in population served by a wastewater system or increased nutrient loading from agriculture will be affected. SSDC is currently working with other Councils across the County to develop a Nutrient/Water Quality Strategy, so that water quality issues are fully understood, mitigation measures to offset phosphate pollution are devised, and mechanisms to deliver future housing growth and other development in a sustainable way, are set out. Natural England has provided updated advice to guide the approach to future development in the Ramsar site catchment area. The catchment area covers most of South Somerset District, including all of Martock Parish.

Policy No. Mart2 Landscape and Wildlife Corridors

Important established Landscape and Wildlife Corridors will be protected from development, other than that required to maintain, enhance or interpret their landscape or wildlife purposes. Where appropriate, development proposals should demonstrate they take the opportunity to enhance and extend the network of Landscape and Wildlife Corridors as a means of mitigating development impact with a focus on increasing biodiversity, wildlife value and general amenity value of these corridors.

Where Landscape or Wildlife Corridors are disrupted as an unavoidable consequence of adjacent or nearby development, developers will be required to minimise the impact and to carry out remedial action in accordance with a scheme that shall be secured by way of planning condition or planning obligation as appropriate.

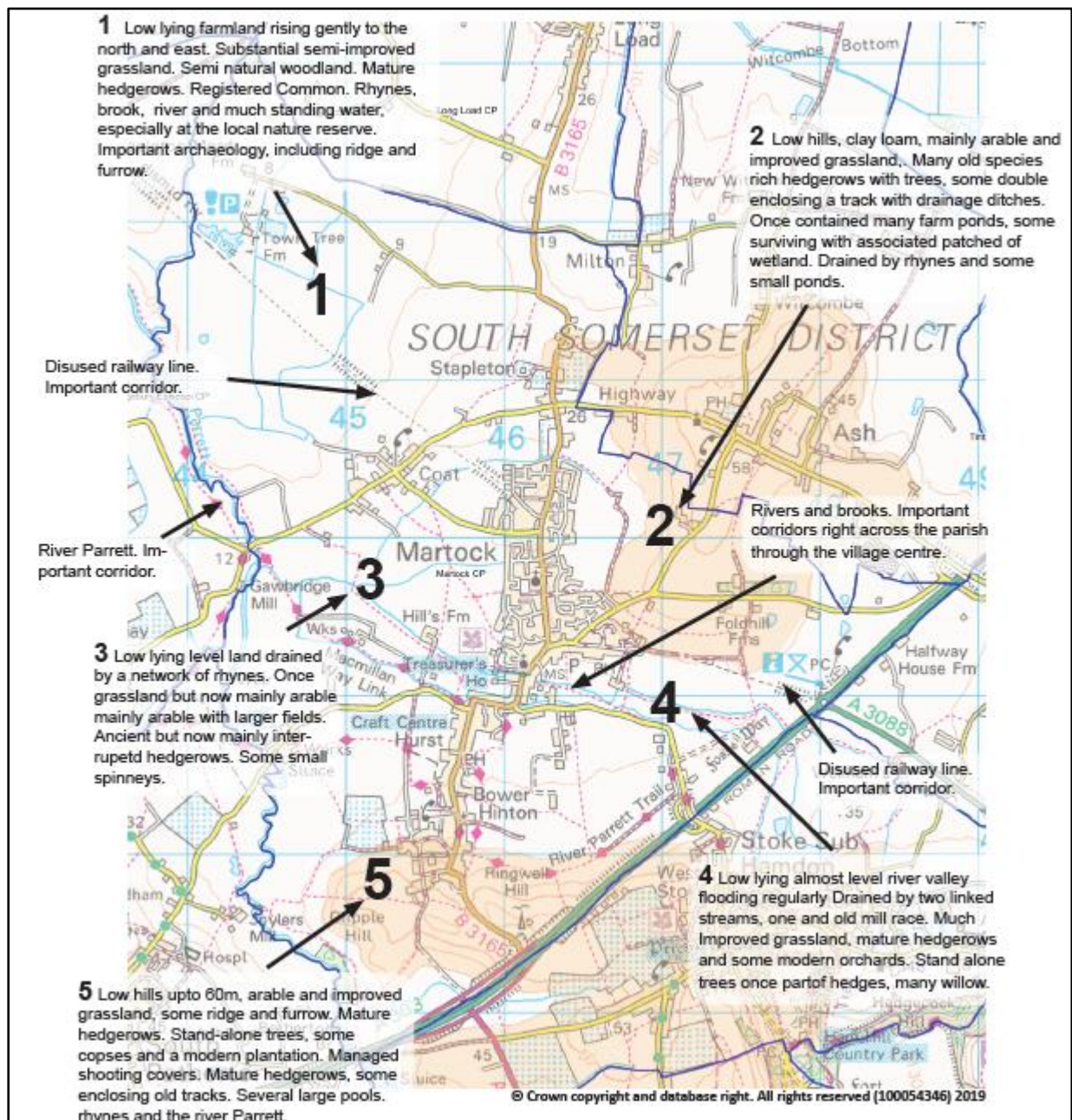
- 7.13 Wildlife corridors are habitats that also connect wildlife populations and facilitate their movement. There are many different kinds within the Parish, the more significant ones are the rivers and rhynes, the old droves, important hedgerows and the disused railway line. Those considered important are identified and analysed in the Martock Environment Manual¹⁸. The Map labelled 'Martock Biodiversity' from that document provides an overview of landscape and biodiversity and locates the important corridors.
- 7.14 The NPPF (para. 174) requires us to minimise impacts on biodiversity and provide net gains in biodiversity where possible and contribute to stemming the overall decline in biodiversity by safeguarding *"components of local wildlife-rich habitats and wider ecological networks, including... wildlife corridors and stepping stones that connect them"*. The wildlife corridors of the Parish are part of an interlinked network of natural green spaces that stretches across the entire county and beyond; and described as *"the biodiversity equivalent of the national grid"* by the Somerset Biodiversity Strategy¹⁹. It states that *"the bedrock of the network should be the conservation and management of the remaining wildlife sites, with extensive habitat restoration and creation increasing the connections between them."*

¹⁸ <http://www.martockplan.org.uk/Documents/Supportingdocs/EnvManual.pdf>

¹⁹ The Somerset Biodiversity Strategy 2008-2018 **Page 82**
<https://modgov.southsomerset.gov.uk/Data/District%20Executive/20081106/Agenda/8B.pdf%2006-11-2008.pdf>

- 7.15 The South Somerset Local Plan Policy EQ5 is aimed at ensuring the county’s green infrastructure network is protected and enhanced by new development. It does recognise “green corridor links and river corridor” as part of the wider network.
- 7.16 A coherent and resilient ecological network comprises “high quality sites, protected by buffer zones, and connected by wildlife corridors and smaller, but still wildlife-rich, stepping-stone sites”²⁰. Policy Mart2 places emphasis on the established wildlife corridors of the Parish as identified in the Martock Environment Manual and shown on Map 3 of this Plan, which should be protected to allow species to move and ensure our ecosystem functions properly. Development proposals should avoid causing damage to these vital corridors and every opportunity should be taken within a new development to enhance the network and include ‘stepping stone’ sites.

Martock NP Map 3 – Landscape and Biodiversity (illustrative only)²¹



Nb. A larger-scale version of this map can be viewed in the Martock Environment Manual

²⁰ Biodiversity 2020: A Strategy for England’s Wildlife and Ecosystem Services, DEFRA, 2011
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/69446/pb13583-biodiversity-strategy-2020-111111.pdf

²¹ Martock Biodiversity Map showing five different areas around the village and the two important corridors that bisect the parish, the disused railway line and the Hurst Brook valley.

Proposals to improve the management of water courses and construct new defences to minimise flooding will generally be supported.

In improving flood defences, opportunities shall be taken to enhance biodiversity.

- 7.17 There is only one river in the Parish which flows south to north, whereas ‘main river’, (Hurst Brook and Hinton Meads Brook), flows east to west and then into the River Parrett. There are numerous streams, brooks, rhynes and other water courses which impact on flooding in the Parish. Several areas of the Parish are very prone to flooding and flooding is becoming a more regular occurrence. Following major flood incidents in 2012 and over the winter of 2013/14, Martock has maintained an Emergency Plan²² and a Flood Warden Management Scheme, which has authority to close roads when, in the opinion of the flood wardens, safety is a concern. The flood risk situation around the main settlement area is complex and worsened by an old, undocumented and unexamined drainage system. The Martock Flood Alleviation Scheme, which is maintained by the Environment Agency, was constructed in the 1970's to a 1 in 10 standard with the intention of protecting properties from flooding. The Scheme was designed to direct flood water on to the main route to/from the village and the A303 dual carriageway, with the potential danger and disruption to road users. The authorities have not notified of any critical drainage areas²³ in the Parish.
- 7.18 Martock has always suffered from periodic flooding and steps are continually being taken to reduce this risk. Climate change has, however, increased both the amount of rainfall and the frequency of heavy storms. In consequence the Parish has developed robust strategies for addressing the issue and minimising flood damage. Prevention and the reduction of flood risk is a critical aim, that has been recognised by the Neighbourhood Plan. Policy Mart3 is supportive in principle of all types of measures that will reduce flood risk, including the construction of new permanent flood defences. It is part of a comprehensive local strategy to reduce floods and the risk of flooding. Martock Parish Council will seek to ensure that existing flood prevention measures are adequately maintained by the respective authorities and landowners, including, sustainable drainage systems (SuDS), penstocks, weirs, dams, trash screens etc., together with the required annual maintenance of all those water courses in areas which are susceptible to flooding. The Parish Council will maintain liaison with parishes in the upper reaches of the Martock rainfall catchment area, with a view to reducing the impact of flooding downstream, by introducing structures compatible with the Hills to Levels aims. Agricultural practices which increase the run-off from land and overload the local drainage network will be discouraged and landowners requested to follow accepted farming principles of land management which minimise the flood risk to the community.
- 7.19 All water courses provide shelter and feeding opportunities for a wide range of plants and animals. The Government advises that “*physical modification is one of the main reasons why many rivers do not support thriving wildlife. Engineering and other changes to natural river forms have damaged habitats, reducing populations of plants and animals and reducing their ability to cope with extreme low and high river flows*”²⁴. Advice should be taken by those carrying out flood defence works, from bodies such as the Farmers Wildlife Action Group, (FWAG), Natural England, (NE), together with Somerset Wildlife Trust, on how they can avoid damaging habitats and include measures to improve and enhance local biodiversity, by working with nature not against it.
- 7.20 In the light of the new guidance from Natural England, regarding the concern of phosphate effluent new developments affecting the Somerset Levels and Moors, which is a Ramsar site, each development should now include a Habitats Regulations Assessment, carried out by a competent authority (e.g. the local planning authority), proceeding to an Appropriate Assessment. This has to be addressed prior to submission of a planning application; it will not be acceptable simply to impose a condition on a planning permission to address the issue.

²² <http://www.martockonline.co.uk/UserFiles/File/1623.pdf>

²³ as defined by the Town and Country Planning (General Development Procedure) (Amendment) (No. 2) (England) Order 2006

²⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/improving-river-habitats-to-support-wildlife-during-low-flows>

Where appropriate, development proposals shall demonstrate that they do not increase local flood risk, with particular regard to locations of known surface, fluvial and reservoir flooding, identified on up-to-date flood risk maps; or heighten flood risk further downstream.

Wherever practicable and appropriate, development proposals should incorporate a Sustainable Drainage System (SuDS) to minimise flood risk. Where sustainable drainage systems are introduced, a satisfactory management plan must be put in place for future maintenance of the system.

- 7.21 Flooding and the risk of flooding is a matter of great concern to the parishioners of Martock, as it is for much of South Somerset. In facilitating good sustainable development, we have been keen to ensure that local planning policies:
- steer development to areas of lower flood risk as far as possible
 - promote the use SuDS
 - maximise the use of ‘natural’ SuDS features
 - promote water efficiency in new development
 - encourage measures such as tree planting, street trees, rain gardens and green roofs through new development (see Martock Design Statement)
- 7.22 The Parish has been building its data-base and understanding of the local ‘flood issues’ and the complex causes of floods in the area; and potential solutions. There is no panacea. The PPG advises that *“new development should only be considered appropriate in areas at risk of flooding if priority has been given to the use of sustainable drainage systems”*²⁵.
- 7.23 Flooding has always been commonplace in the village and is likely to worsen in the future. All development on greenfield land and on brownfield land where the development will alter the existing drainage patterns should incorporate proposals such as a SuDS that will ensure that surface run-off is not increased by the proposal and where possible, decreased.
- 7.24 SuDS should be considered for all new developments and may be the answer in many locations. But their success is very dependent on soil type and permeability, which can vary seasonally and varies considerably throughout the area. For this reason, flood risk assessors should carry out on-site assessments of permeability rather than using online data which, for this area, is insufficiently well-defined. Any SuDS system needs to be designed with its specific location in mind and include an adequate management plan to ensure it remains functional and fit for purpose and takes account of seasonal and long-term climate change. The use of automatic mechanisms for releasing flood water from sustainable drainage retention ponds will not be supported as they tend to release water downstream at the moment when downstream flood risk is greatest. Policy Mart4 supports the use of a relevant and effective SuDS system wherever it is practicable to do so.
- 7.25 Most importantly, given that much of the area is at risk, all relevant development proposals need to demonstrate that they have considered drainage in the context of the identified local flood risk and included the necessary measures to avoid contributing to the flood risk. Development at or within close proximity of Flood Zones 3 or 2, or at areas at risk of flooding, should be avoided whenever possible, together with sites of 1 hectare or more, as advised by the PPG²⁶, developers must undertake a site-specific flood risk assessment to accompany applications for planning permission (or prior approval for certain types of permitted development).
- 7.26 Martock Parish Council has produced the Martock Parish Flood Guide for Developers²⁷, based on local knowledge and experience. We hope it will inform the development of efficient and effective sustainable drainage systems wherever possible. The Guide emphasises the need to ensure that a site-specific maintenance plan is considered from the outset and its preparation is part of the SuDS planning and design process. The Maintenance Plan should be in place by the time the development takes place.

²⁵ PPG Paragraph: 079 Reference ID: 7-079-20150415

²⁶ PPG Paragraph: 001 Reference ID: 7-001-20140306

²⁷ <http://www.martockplan.org.uk/Documents/Supportingdocs/FloodGuide.pdf>

Development proposals to improve accessibility and extend local footpaths, bridleways and cycle paths and help connect them to the wider networks will be supported.

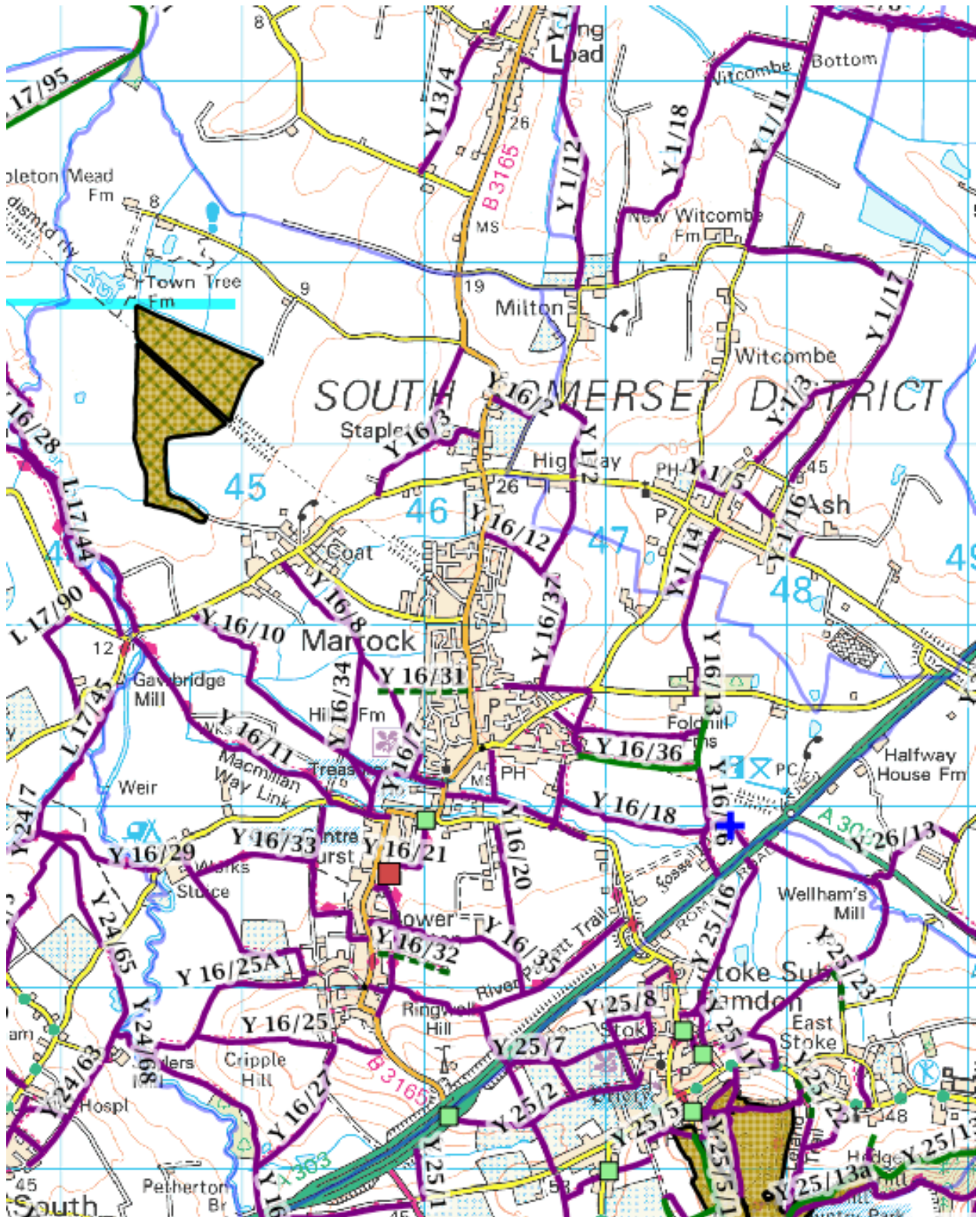
The construction and appearance of new paths, tracks or links must be appropriate and sensitive to the character of the locality and enhance the green infrastructure network wherever possible.

- 7.27 The community generally enjoys good access to the countryside via a ubiquitous and excellent footpath network, which is well mapped and regularly maintained (stiles, signposting, etc). It includes the long-distance footpath, the Parrett Trail. The recent M3CP²⁸ survey has identified the paths around the recreation ground as the most popular. Many popular paths are not public but are farm tracks; some are permissive paths. Unfortunately, we only have two bridleways. The NPPF (para. 98) makes plain that policies and decisions should “*protect and enhance public rights of way and access, including taking opportunities to provide better facilities for users*”.
- 7.28 The current network of paths and bridleways in the countryside is shown on Map 4. They are all mapped and described in detail on the Martock Online website²⁹. Many rights of way also serve as vital wildlife corridors through the agricultural landscape and give people contact with the natural world which contributes to their own wellbeing.
- 7.29 There are no off-road cycle routes in the Parish. A third of respondents to the Martock Community Plan Household Survey 2017³⁰ wanted to see some footpaths made into cycleways.
- 7.30 Access to the countryside for the elderly and those requiring assisted mobility is not good and there is a shortage of seats along popular routes. Paths generally are inadequate for those with mobility problems. Policy Mart5 supports measures to improve accessibility and extend the rights of way network in the countryside as long as it can be done without causing long-term harm to local biodiversity in contravention of Local Plan Policy EQ4 and policy Mart2 in the Neighbourhood Plan. If done sensitively improvements could also help extend the wildlife corridors and network of green infrastructure.
- 7.31 Public rights of way are an important part of our cultural heritage and enable young and old alike to explore the local countryside and experience its rich and diverse history, wildlife and landscape. They also an important means of helping people to escape the hustle and bustle of modern life, to get back to nature and keep physically and mentally fit. The Parish Council encourages local volunteers and groups who give up their time to help Somerset County Council look after the footpath network. The Parish Council would be a willing participant in a district-wide improvement strategy to ensure the public rights of way network continues to function properly.

²⁸ M3CP = Martock Community Partnership

²⁹ [http://www.martockonline.co.uk/Pages/159/ParishFootpathsand-map.html](http://www.martockonline.co.uk/Pages/159/Parish%20Footpaths%20and-map.html)

³⁰ <http://www.martockonline.co.uk/UserFiles/File/1528.pdf>



Development in the countryside will be supported if:

- i. it is necessary for the purposes of agriculture, farm diversification or outdoor recreation;
- ii. it demonstrates a positive contribution to the preservation and enhancement of the countryside, its landscape and its biodiversity;
- iii. it facilitates responsible use and enjoyment of the countryside by the public;
- iv. it does not cause harm to publicly accessible open space, footpaths or bridleways;
- v. it does not impact negatively on important views and vistas to/from settlements;
- vi. it does not cause harm to scheduled ancient monuments and other sites of archaeological interest, including ridge and furrow; and
- vii. it does not impact negatively on the best and most versatile agricultural land, or the integral character, beauty and tranquillity of the countryside.

- 7.32 Development in the countryside, i.e. outside of the confines of the settlement areas, is restricted but will be supported if it is necessary for those purposes for which the countryside is normally used such as equestrian and farming-related activity and outdoor recreation. The NPPF (para. 170) says *“planning policies should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by protecting and enhancing valued landscapes and recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services”*.
- 7.33 Policy Mart6 recognises that development may be necessary to ensure that an existing farming business can continue to function, and the countryside is an appropriate location for some types of outdoor recreation activities. Community surveys have shown support for responsible use of the countryside for recreation purposes.
- 7.34 Policy Mart6 is supportive of development and uses that will not cause harm to the rural character of the area or result in the loss of countryside assets such as public rights of way, higher grade (2 and 3A) agricultural land, key biodiversity features such as wildlife corridors, rhynes and ponds, important hedges, unimproved grassland, and heritage features and buildings such as milestones, boundary stones, fingerposts and old railway features. Its purpose is to ensure that development that does take place is relevant and necessary and does as little harm to our countryside assets as possible.

The conversion of existing agricultural buildings for business or business-related purposes will be supported where it is justified in the interests of ensuring the continued viability of the farming business and where the proposal can demonstrate that there would be:

- i. no harmful impact upon the surrounding rural landscape;
- ii. no unacceptable conflicts with agriculture and other land-based activities;
- iii. no harmful impact on the local road network;
- iv. no harmful impact on the amenities of neighbouring residents or businesses; and
- v. no requirement for rebuilding or a disproportionate extension.

Converted business space permitted by this policy must remain as its approved use unless it has been actively marketed for two years and it can be demonstrated that no demand exists for its continuation for employment purposes. In such cases, the redundant space should revert to its former use.

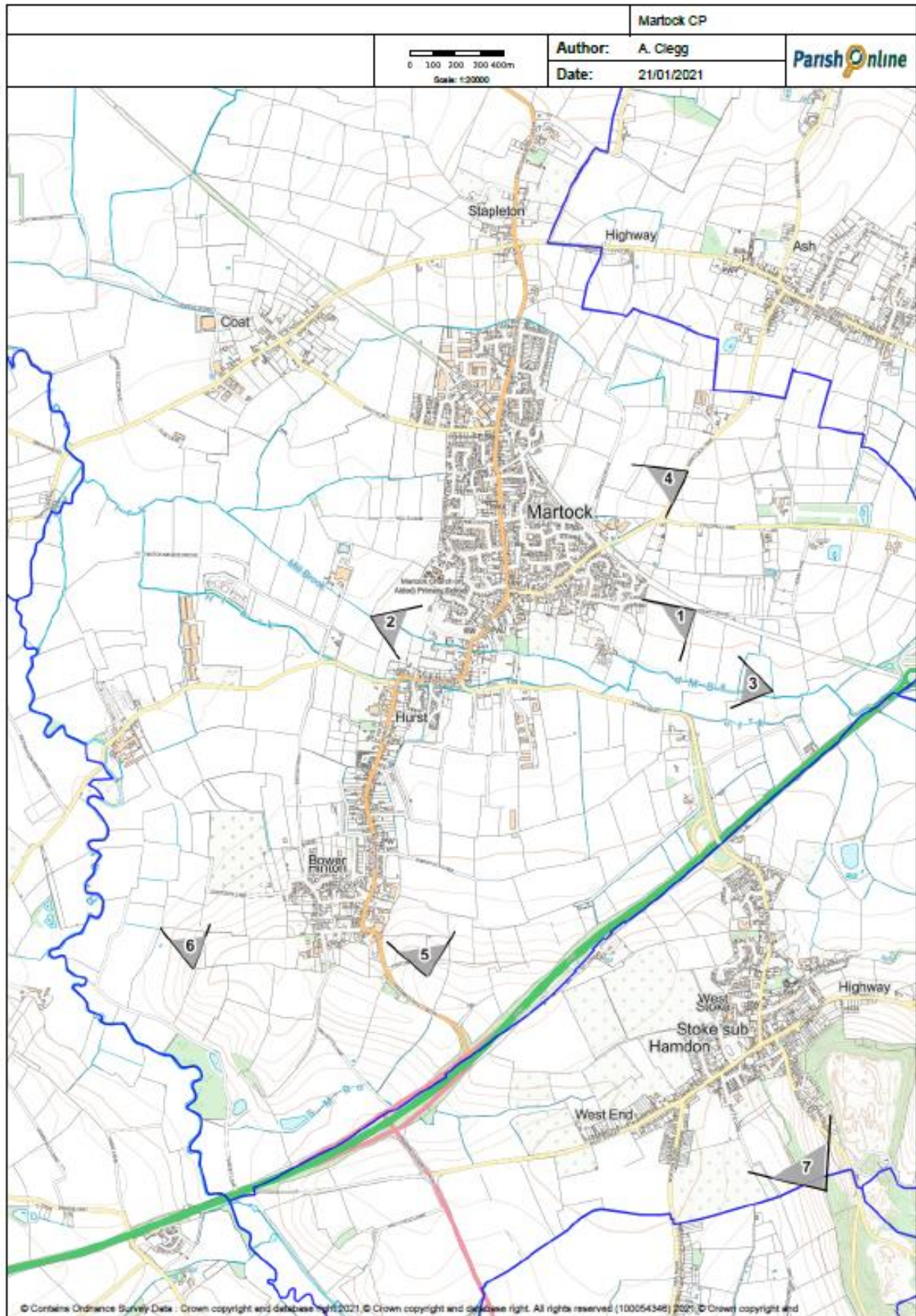
- 7.35 Farming is still important to the Parish. A feature of Martock is the number of small farms, made up of even smaller land ownerships, which has helped to describe the character of the local landscape. We wish to ensure that farming continues to prosper not least because it will help to maintain the landscape we so enjoy. The NPPF (para. 83) says *“planning policies and decisions should enable the development and diversification of agriculture and other land-based rural businesses”*.

- 7.36 Whilst we will continue to resist major development in the countryside, we are prepared to facilitate small-scale change in the interests of ensuring that farming in Martock Parish remains viable and the use of farmland and buildings is compatible with the local landscape.
- 7.37 Policy Mart7 facilitates the conversion of existing agricultural buildings for business or business-related purposes where diversification is in the interest of ensuring the continued viability of a farming business. Such conversions should not lead to the permanent change of use of agricultural buildings to dwellings or uses that are not compatible with their farm setting.

Policy No. Mart8 Views and Vistas

Key panoramas, views and vistas should not be compromised. Development proposals that would detract from the visual qualities of the rural landscape and setting of the Parish will be resisted.

- 7.38 The NPPF (para. 170) says “*planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by... recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside*”. We regard the open views across the Parish as an important part of the area’s essential character and worthy of protection.
- 7.39 The settlement areas of the Parish are largely hidden on all sides even from most raised positions, because they are in a valley bottom and because views of all but the tallest (and often newest) buildings are often further obscured by the tops of mature trees. Conversely, looking out from the village towards the nearby higher land, the skyline is a natural one. To date, no buildings, other than the odd farm building, have significantly intruded on this space characterised by the gentler slope of the rising land that forms a natural rim around the village. On three sides, a second skyline is often formed by views of more distant and higher hills– Ham Hill, the Mendips and the Blackdowns. Views looking west, by contrast, emphasise the place of Martock on the edge of a different rural Somerset, the flat land of the Moors and Levels punctuated by the occasional characteristic mound such as Burrow Hill and its tree and the church towers of neighbouring and distant parishes. Map 5 overleaf indicates some of the most important views.
- 7.40 Development that takes place should not harm the rural character and appearance of the area. We may object to development proposals on the basis that they threaten to ruin a significant view or vista.
- 7.41 A detailed assessment of the quality and value of these, and other, views and vistas can be found in the Martock Environment Manual. We believe that the views should not be compromised by development and could, where appropriate, be used to improve the overall quality of new development that takes place. The Parish Council will use criteria based on this to evaluate the visual impact of a development proposal.
- 7.42 We expect designers and developers to be sensitive to the visual setting of Martock by referring to the Martock Environment Manual and, where development is likely to impinge on the rural character inherent in views of the uplands around the village, to take whatever mitigation measures are necessary and acceptable to the local planning authority to minimise their visual impact and intrusion.



For the Map Key see overleaf

Key Views (shown on Map 5):

1. South west from East Street Drove towards Hurst and Bower Hinton
Views towards Hallett's Hill of open countryside and higher ground around the village of Martock. The church tower; row of mature trees in front of the Blackdown Hills.
2. East from Moated Manor Field towards Old Village centre
View of Grade 1 listed church with mature trees in foreground.
3. West from the low land around and east of Madey Mill towards the Church
Flat grassland around Madey Mill (Grade II LB).*
4. South west from Foldhill across the village towards Burrow Hill
Spire of Wesleyan Chapel; wooded hills in middle distance beyond village; Blackdown Hills on distant horizon.
5. North from Ringwell Hill towards east edge of Martock village
Whole village in green and rural setting; old railway line marked by row of trees and bushes; Mendip Hills on distant horizon.
6. North from Cripple Hill towards Parrett Vale
Extensive flat area of rural landscape; Victorian Parrett Works chimney; Kingsbury Episcopi Church tower.
7. West from Ham Hill, with Martock largely hidden in the foreground.
Panorama of lowlands from the Blackdowns to the Mendips; Martock Church tower

8. Built Environment and Heritage

Overview

- 8.1 The history of Martock as a settlement area can be traced back to before the Domesday Book. At that time Martock was recorded as being a royal estate, owned by Queen Edith until the Conquest. It is likely to have had a minster church, which administered to the population of the nine settlements in Martock Hundred (Martock, Hurst, Bower-Hinton, Milton, Witcombe, Ash, Coat, Stapleton and Load). The Church is first mentioned in 1156, when it was in the possession of the Abbey of Mont St. Michel. The 'Martock Bean'³¹ is an important legacy of the medieval period.
- 8.2 The Martock area was at its zenith of prosperity in the 16th century, which has provided it with a wealth of fine buildings of the period, constructed to a high standard using local hamstone³². Three main factors have given rise to this substantial built heritage: freehold ownership, a good economy and good building stone. Together they have created a strong visual impression of quality that has lasted down the centuries. Small terraces of housing (mainly of three houses) were built in almost every street in the Parish, except Stapleton, to house the burgeoning workforce as industrialisation occurred.
- 8.3 When the industrial and agricultural revolutions came, a large population was already in place to 'feed' them. In the 18th century, the wealthiest parishioners were the big clothiers making cloth and linen from wool and flax. The soil, geology and climate in the Parish lent itself to growing flax and hemp. Twine, rope and canvas manufacture, together with gloves made from the skin of the sheep, became dominant industries in the 18th and 19th centuries. In addition, the railway, arriving in 1852, enabled two iron foundries to have a big impact. Today these two metal-working complexes, Sparrows and Parrett Works, make excellent and characterful small industrial estates.
- 8.4 1853 was a key year in the development of Martock village; the Yeovil to Taunton line finally opened. This triggered a 40-year epoch of industrial and domestic building. It led to some fine Victorian terraces, particularly in North Street. Up to seventy shops were trading in the village at one point. The early 20th century estate housing, developed at the north end of the village, reflected some of the ideals of the Arts and Craft and Garden City movement of the day with communal areas, gardens large enough for family subsistence and a simple cheap 'box with a roof' architectural style with internal plumbing. This was also reflected in many of the Council built houses throughout the village from the turn of the twentieth century, the earliest being built near the station in the first decades of the twentieth century.
- 8.5 Our built heritage is reflected in the 200 or so listed structures that exist in the Parish. Two are Grade I and six are Grade II*. Included amongst the grade II listed buildings and structures are 29 monuments, 4 churches, chapels and halls, 2 schools and halls, 2 factories (Parrett Works), and about 156 houses. Martock Parish is not short of other buildings and structures of note, which do not have the protection that comes with a statutory listing/designation but contribute much to the special character of Martock's built environment. Also, very significant to the character of the built environment are the spaces between the buildings that provide the setting and allow the glimpses and views that parishioners appreciate.

³¹ The cultivar *Vicia Faba* 'Martock' is probably the last of the truly local varieties of field bean. It dates from the medieval period and was grown extensively in England in the Middle Ages. It was first mentioned in parish records as early as the 12th century. "*It is named after the village of Martock in Somerset, where it was grown in the 12th century, where it was dried and used for bean feasting*" (Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh)

³² 'Hamstone' is the name given to stone from Ham Hill, Somerset

- 8.6 Both Martock and Coat have designated Conservation Areas, identified by the local planning authority under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. The Conservation Areas were designated because of their special architectural or historic significance, and because it is desirable to preserve or enhance their character and/or appearance. The Martock Conservation Area was designated in March 1971. It covers the historic areas of Martock, Hurst and Bower Hinton. The Conservation Area at Coat was designated in 1981. A fresh Conservation Area appraisal exercise would be supported by the Parish Council to re-appraise the boundaries of the Conservation Areas and update the description of key features of architectural and historic importance. The extent of the Conservation Areas for Martock and Coat is shown on the South Somerset Local Plan Policies Map, and in the Martock Village Design Statement.
- 8.7 Growth and development in the second half of the twentieth century has resulted in over 500 new dwellings being added to the stock and business/employment areas being consolidated. The industrialised area around the station expanded, particularly when, post-Beeching³³, redundant railway space became available. Nearby, private housing estates developed on both sides of North Street, close to the industry, where land was relatively flat and well-drained areas. During this period, neither estate plans nor the house styles reflected any of the elements of design and character that over the ages had come to give Martock village its particular sense of place.
- 8.8 The most recent housing estates have been built on more challenging sites in the flood plain or resulted from the redevelopment of the sites of formerly large houses or redundant factory sites. The central site of Paull's Sailcloth factory, adjacent to the shopping centre, which was turned into a relatively high-density housing estate at the turn of the millennium, was the first major development in the village in recent times where an attempt was made to reflect traditional Martock's architectural styles and building materials.
- 8.9 In common with all villages, Martock has seen a lot of infill and garden building in the last few decades generating a mix of housing from individual buildings to mews developments of up to 16 or so houses. The success of these in blending into the Martock environment has been very mixed.

³³ The 'Beeching Cuts' were a reduction of route network and restructuring of the railways, according to a plan outlined in two reports written by Dr Richard Beeching in 1963 and 1965.

Policy No. Mart9	Heritage Assets
<p>Proposals for development within the Conservation Areas of Martock and Coat should preserve or enhance these areas’ special architectural or historic interest and safeguard their settings. Development proposals will be supported that maintain or enhance the character and setting of listed buildings and structures.</p> <p>Development proposals that affect a listed heritage asset must demonstrate how they have taken account of the significance of the asset in protecting or enhancing the said building or structure for the appreciation of existing and future generations.</p> <p>Any renovations or alterations of buildings or structures identified as heritage assets requiring planning permission should be designed sensitively, and with careful regard to the heritage asset’s historical and architectural interest and setting.</p> <p>Development proposals in the setting of a heritage asset should provide a clear assessment of the significance and impact of the proposal on the asset and its setting and justify the design approach taken.</p> <p>Development proposals should avoid any harmful effect on non-designated heritage buildings and features, where possible.</p>	

- 8.10 The listed buildings and structures in the Parish are afforded statutory protection by way of listed building consent, which is required for all works of demolition, alteration or extension to a listed building that affect its character as a building of special architectural or historic interest. They are also subject to Local Plan Policy EQ3, which is designed to safeguard a heritage asset.
- 8.11 There are many buildings and structures in the Parish that we regard as having a local historic or heritage value that are not listed by Historic England. Policy Mart9 is intended to recognise both statutory and non-statutory heritage assets of the Parish and ensure that they are provided with an appropriate level of protection which reflects their status.
- 8.12 The NPPF (para. 184) says we should recognise that heritage assets are *“assets are an irreplaceable resource and should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of existing and future generations”*. We should *“set out a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment, including heritage assets most at risk through neglect, decay or other threats”* (NPPF para. 185). The area is steeped in history, considerable archaeology and many buildings of note representing the various epochs of development and growth. A recent audit of ‘non-designated’ heritage assets, which contribute to Martock’s character identified industrial premises, a range of dwelling types, gateways and railings, bridges and walls, early drainage and street furniture as potential entries on a locally approved schedule of local heritage value.
- 8.13 The Local Plan offers *“support for communities to identify locally significant historic buildings and in their preparation of neighbourhood plans”*. The Parish Council intends to establish and maintain a schedule of local heritage value (not designated heritage assets). It is hoped that buildings and structures on the ‘Martock Schedule of Local Heritage Value’ will be included on the South Somerset List of Local Heritage Assets once it has been created.
- 8.14 In accordance with the NPPF (paras. 195-197) consideration of a development proposal should take account of the significance of the heritage asset and apply a balanced judgment regarding the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset and the value placed on it by the community.
- 8.15 The Conservation Area Appraisal and the Martock Design Statement provide important guidance on the architectural and historic significance of the area’s buildings and spaces and how they should be regarded.

The areas listed below and identified on Maps 6a and 6b are designated as Local Green Spaces and will be protected from development due to their particular local significance and community value:

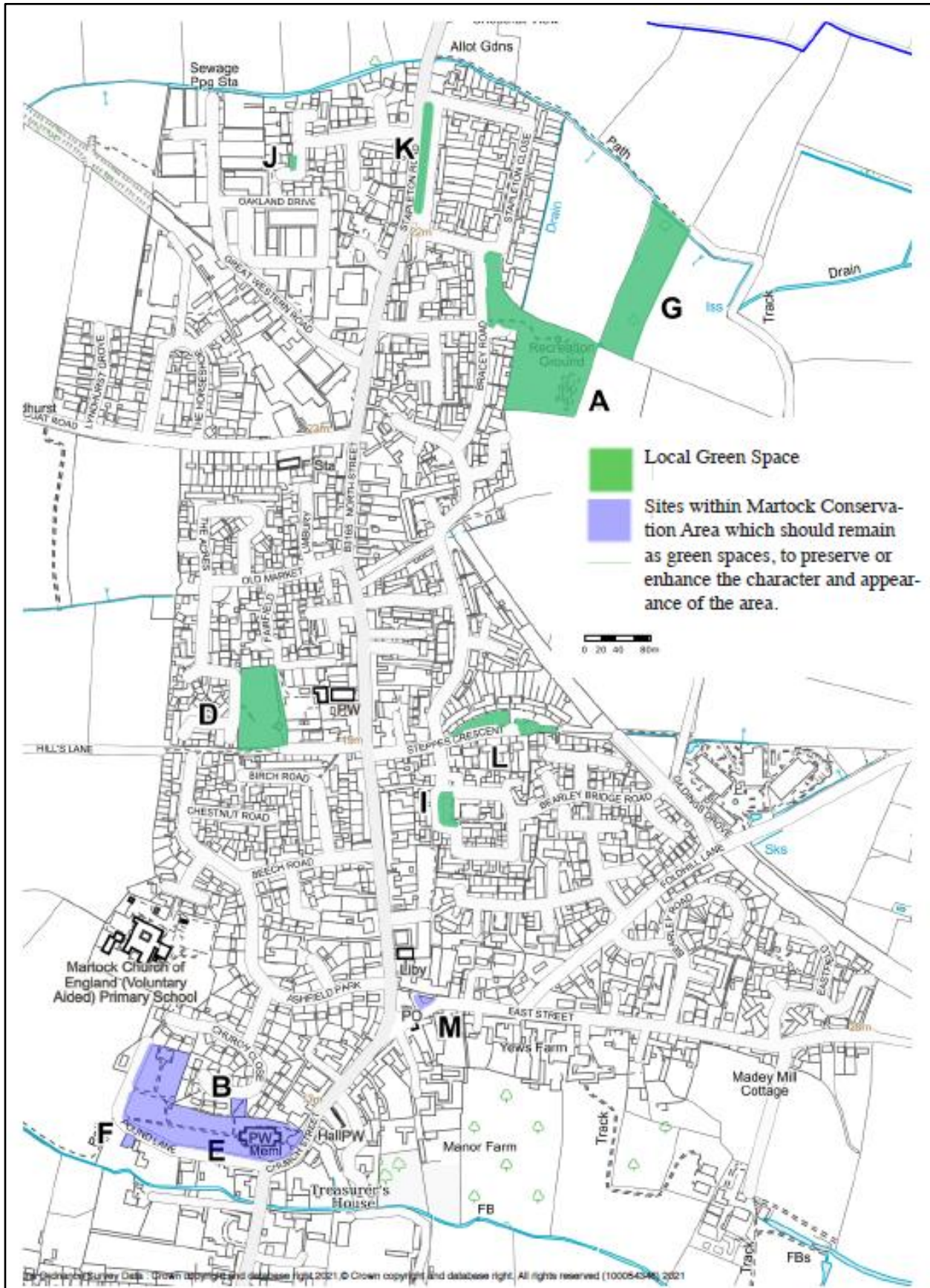
- A. Bracey Road Recreation Area
- C. Higher Orchard
- D. Hills Lane Park
- G. Old Orchard, adj. Bracey Road Rec.
- I. Paulls Close/Vincent Way
- J. Play Park, Lavers Oak
- K. Stapleton Road/Stapleton Close
- L. Steppes Crescent Green

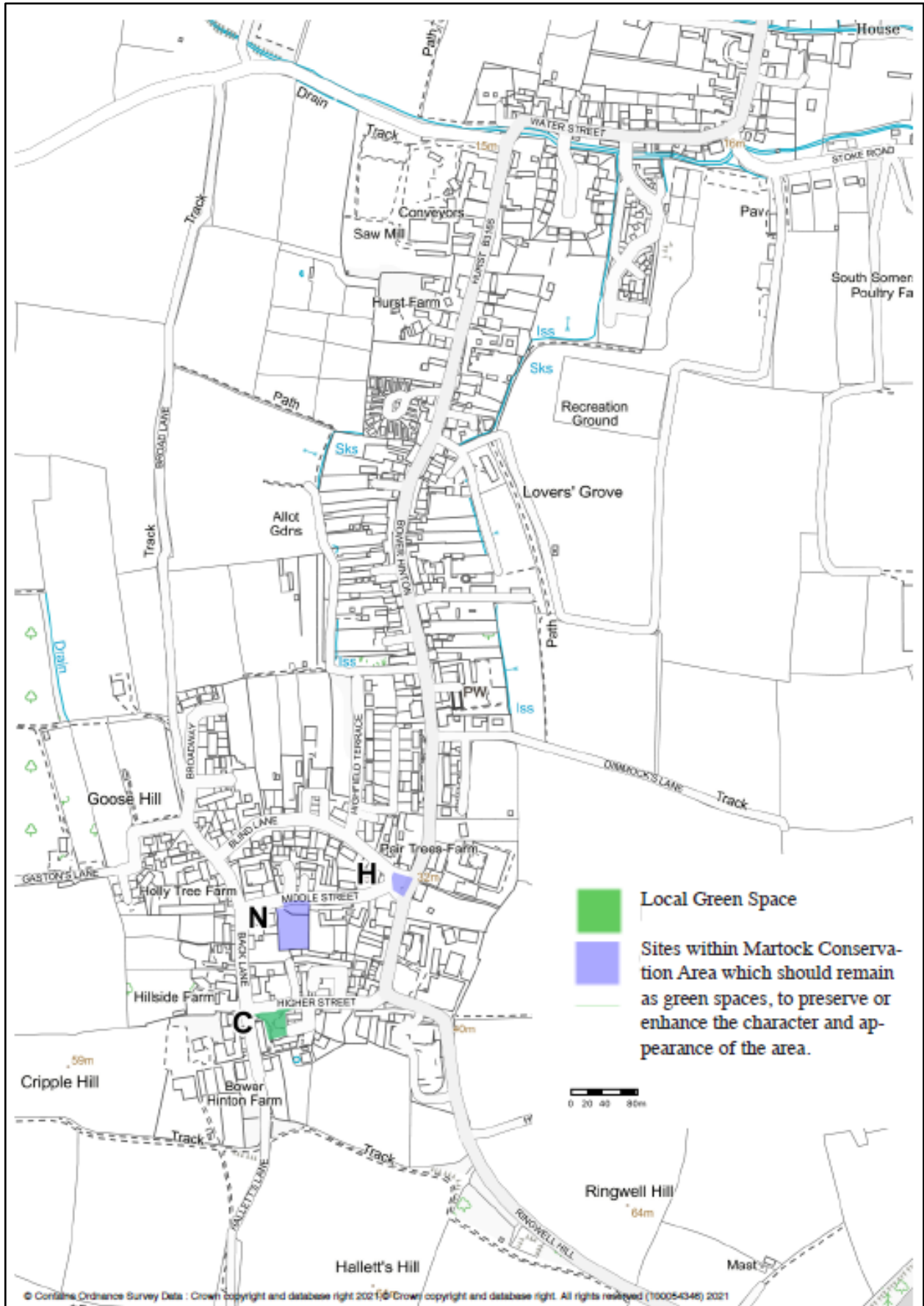
Development proposals which lead to the loss of, damage to or adverse impact on these local green spaces will not be supported.

- 8.16 An appraisal of local play areas, parks and amenity spaces was carried out by a task group on behalf of the Parish Council. It took a view on their role, use and value to the local community and their eligibility to be designated as 'local green space'. The conclusions from this assessment are reflected in the list of local green spaces in Policy Mart10 and identified on Maps 6a and 6b.
- 8.17 The NPPF (para. 99) enables us to identify for special protection green areas of particular importance to the community. We are pleased to recognise that the Parish has several small green areas that contribute significantly to the appearance and character of the local area and provide for a range of informal community leisure activities of the local population, not least providing somewhere safe for young children to play, as many of them do. Martock Parish Council will be exploring how to reinforce their value as part of a network of green infrastructure throughout the town.
- 8.18 The areas identified in policy Mart10 meet the criteria of the NPPF (para. 100) which enables them to be designated as 'local green space'. These criteria are:
- *where the green space is in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves;*
 - *where the green area is demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance, for example because of its beauty, historic significance, recreational value (including as a playing field), tranquillity or richness of its wildlife; and*
 - *where the green area concerned is local in character and is not an extensive tract of land.*
- 8.19 Each designated site has been subject to an assessment to establish whether it meets the criteria of the NPPF. This assessment can be viewed on the website³⁴. In summary:
- 8.20 **Bracey Road Recreation Area** (site A) is the location of a popular play area for the young people of the Parish. It includes a BMX track. The formal recreation area is one of only three 'parks' in the area and serves the varied recreation needs of the nearby residential area. The area designated as Local Green Space includes the amenity area that provides entrance to the Recreation Ground. It is considered an integral part of the community's green space in this locality and a valuable and safe play area for younger children.
- 8.21 **Higher Orchard** (site C) is a grassed and well-maintained amenity space with mature trees that provides a green setting for the nearby retirement homes. It is being protected for its amenity value.

³⁴ See more information and 'Local Green Space Assessment Report' at <http://martockplan.org.uk/Environment/GreenSpaces.html>

- 8.22 **Hills Lane Park** (site D) is another local park that provides for a range of informal recreation activities for the residents of the area. It has a range of young children’s play equipment. It is being protected for its recreation value.
- 8.23 **Old Orchard, adj. Bracey Road Rec’** (site G) is a tranquil space, in contrast to the adjoining Recreation Ground, which is used by the community for quiet leisure activities. It has significant wildlife value.
- 8.24 **Pauls Close/Vincent Way** (site I) is a newly created garden area at the heart of a new development where several of the dwellings do not have their own private garden. It includes a lawn and planted with trees. It is being protected for its amenity value.
- 8.25 **Play Park, Lavers Oak** (site J) is a well maintained and well-used children’s play area with planting in middle of residential area, which provides a safe communal location for young families and children to meet. It is being protected for its recreation value.
- 8.26 **Stapleton Road/Stapleton Close** (site K) is a wide strip of boundary hedging and mature trees that forms a visual barrier between the main road and the residential area. It has the effect of bringing the countryside into the village from the north and helps form part of the settlement areas green infrastructure. It is being protected for its amenity value.
- 8.27 **Steppes Crescent Green** (site L) is a green just south of Steppes Crescent. It was created as a public space when the nearby houses were built in the early 1920’s by Yeovil Rural District Council as ‘Homes for Heroes’. An attractive area, it is integral to the design of the crescent, which is sufficiently fine to get a specific mention by name in Pevsner’s Somerset volume of ‘Buildings of England’. Despite some loss to provide necessary parking spaces, it is still a substantial green area that provides local amenity and is used for informal recreation. It is maintained by the Parish Council.
- 8.28 The Martock Conservation Area includes a number of green spaces which meet the criteria in the NPPF for local green spaces but have not been defined as such because of their existing status. The following areas should be preserved or enhanced, and their green character conserved:
- 8.29 **Church Close Amenity Area** (site B) with mature trees adds significantly to the setting of the new residential development. It provides a safe pedestrian route to the Church and churchyard.
- 8.30 **Martock Churchyard** (site E) is an important green space at the heart of the village it provides an accessible and tranquil amenity space for public enjoyment. It also provides an important green setting for the Church and other historic buildings in the vicinity and serves as a transition area between town and country.
- 8.31 **Old Methodist Churchyard** (site F) is a historic site that is now a wildlife garden maintained by a group of local volunteers. It provides a tranquil and attractive green environment and enhances the setting of the Parish Church. It is being protected for its amenity and historic value.
- 8.32 **Pair Trees** (site H) is a long-established amenity space with mature trees that is much appreciated by residents for its amenity value.
- 8.33 **The Village Green** (site M) is a small pocket park that provides a popular refuge and waiting area in the centre of the village. It is being protected for its amenity and recreation value.
- 8.34 **Middle Street Field** (site N) is considered by the community to be a valuable open green space adjacent to Bower Hinton Manor, a Grade II Listed Building. It is also within the Martock and Bower Hinton Conservation Area. Development here has been refused previously, as recently as 2013, because of the harm it would cause to the setting of the listed buildings and character and appearance of the conservation area. (Note, for clarification, site N does not include the gateway and parking area to the east of the field belonging to 123 Middle Street.)





Development proposals should, where appropriate, provide an assessment of the character of the site and its context (including landscape character and relationship to heritage assets) and show how the development fits in with these specific characteristics.

Development proposals within the confines of existing settlement areas will usually be supported provided they:

- i. are of a scale, massing, density and design in keeping with the local character of neighbouring buildings;
- ii. have access and parking arrangements that do not result in an unacceptable impact on road and pedestrian safety;
- iii. do not have an adverse effect on residential amenity;
- iv. will not cause nuisance to neighbouring uses; and
- v. will not have any other unacceptable environmental impact.

Wherever appropriate, development proposals should be designed in accordance with the guidance of the Martock Design Statement.

Development proposals should be of a high-quality design which:

- vi. uses locally appropriate materials and colours;
- vii. complements, and enhances where appropriate, existing development in the vicinity;
- viii. relates to the existing character of the locality; and
- ix. provides an appropriate level of landscaping, which complements and enhances the character of the local area.

- 8.35 Policy Mart11 recognises that development proposals requiring planning permission will come forward for additions, alterations, new building and redevelopment within each of the villages and hamlets in the Parish.
- 8.36 There is no doubting the unique character of Martock village “*a village of golden glowing stone*”³⁵ but, having a distinct character and much charm also applies to all the other settlements of the area. Many parishioners appreciate the beauty, architecture, diversity and history of the area, as was highlighted by the Martock Community Plan Household Survey 2017.
- 8.37 The NPPF (para. 124) tells us that “*good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities*”. We expect very high standards of design for new development, but the community feels it has often been let down by the development industry. Policy Mart11 requires new development to be sympathetic and complementary to its location and neighbours rather than harmful. To guide developers the Martock Design Statement³⁶ has been prepared by a task group of parishioners, on behalf of the Parish Council.
- 8.38 The purpose of the Design Statement is to guide developers, in the interests of sustainable development, to make sure that new development respects the distinctive visual character of its location and the area generally. It is not about preventing development nor preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation. The Martock Design Statement considers the detailed design references, materials, finishes, street scenes, and landscapes that collectively define the Martock sense of place and how these may be reflected in new developments.
- 8.39 Development proposals should ensure that they will preserve or enhance the architectural and historic character of the designated conservation areas. The Parish’s conservation areas would benefit from a fresh appraisal. Once completed we would expect the revised appraisal documents to provide an influential source of guidance and control to development within or adjacent to the conservation areas.

³⁵ [http://www.picturesofengland.com/England/Some Pet/Martock](http://www.picturesofengland.com/England/Some%20Pet/Martock)

³⁶ <http://www.martockplan.org.uk/Documents/Supportingdocs/VDS.pdf>

Development should be phased in tandem with the timely provision of infrastructure to help support sustainable growth. Proposals for new development that cannot demonstrate adequate measures to deliver appropriate infrastructure provision to offset its impacts will not be supported.

- 8.40 *“The growth in population will be matched with growth in the economy in conjunction with the infrastructure provision needed to make this happen”* - says the Vision Statement³⁷ of the adopted Local Plan for South Somerset. A major concern to the local community is the capacity of local infrastructure (transport, water supply, wastewater and its treatment, energy (including heat), telecommunications, utilities, waste, health, social care, education, flood risk etc) to cope with growth. Infrastructure capacity is a significant limiting factor that needs addressing in the context of new development so not only can it cope, but it does not lead to any deterioration in the quality of life we currently enjoy.
- 8.41 The Somerset Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) in 2016³⁸ identifies the key strategic issues for Martock as being:
- flood risk and drainage, particularly where the river travels through the settlement
 - utilities - short term issues associated with a lack of electricity capacity
 - open space and community facilities - new housing will generate a need for additional open space and outdoor play space, sports, community and cultural facilities
- The IDP does not indicate any specific concerns about education and healthcare locally.
- 8.42 According to the IDP, delivery of this infrastructure will be dependent on securing contributions from development (where viable), along with obtaining other funding streams. The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) took effect in South Somerset in 2017. It is used alongside funds from s106 obligations to provide infrastructure and mitigate any harm arising from developments. South Somerset District Council will use receipts collected via CIL to fund infrastructure. This need not be directly linked to the development from which CIL money has been collected. Once the Neighbourhood Plan has been made, however, Martock Parish will receive 25% of the receipts collected within its area for expenditure on infrastructure which the Parish Council considers necessary. Policy Mart12 requires developers to work with the local planning authority to ensure that the infrastructure needs, and the consequences of a development proposal are fully recognised. The infrastructure requirements to serve the development should be delivered without having a negative impact on the capacity and quality of infrastructure elsewhere in the Parish. Visual impact is also an important consideration so as not to be intrusive or harm the character of the location. The design of infrastructure should be informed by the Martock Design Statement.
- 8.43 Concern over the capacity of existing community infrastructure to cope with growth and further development has been expressed by several people during consultations on the Neighbourhood Plan. It is often a major discussion topic at the regular neighbourhood planning consultations carried out at the monthly Martock Farmers’ Market. Representations made by the Parish Council and other community interests in 2019 against major planning applications highlighted local concerns about the already over-subscribed primary school, the pressure being experienced by Martock Surgery and the lack of local job opportunities. These must be addressed in advance of a significant increase in the population to ensure that not only are new residents adequately provided for, but existing parishioners are not further disadvantaged.

³⁷ <https://www.southsomerset.gov.uk/your-council/your-council-plan-and-strategies/planning-policy/local-plan/>

³⁸ https://www.southsomerset.gov.uk/media/1214/j-plan_pol-web-site-2018-cil-idp_2015_16_part_2_issue.pdf

The Settlement Area Boundary of Bower Hinton/Martock is shown on Map 7.

- A. Development proposals within the Settlement Area Boundary will be supported provided that the proposal:**
- i. makes an appropriate use of a brownfield site; or**
 - ii. is infill and surrounded by existing development; and**
 - iii. in other ways complies with the policies in the development plan.**
- B. The inappropriate development of residential gardens, where such development would harm local character, will not be supported.**
- C. Development on land adjoining the Settlement Area Boundary north of Coat Road and south of Hills Lane, as shown on Map 7, which meets local housing needs, achieves good design standards, does not compromise the landscape character and setting of Martock/Bower Hinton and has no adverse impact on the setting of the Conservation Areas and Listed Buildings, will be supported; and**
- D. Small-scale development on land adjoining the Settlement Area Boundary will be supported if:**
- i. there is a demonstrable local need for the development; and**
 - ii. it forms a logical extension to the existing built-up area; and**
 - iii. it is appropriate to a village setting in terms of scale, height and massing; and**
 - iv. it does not constitute ribbon development or lead to the coalescence of Martock/Bower Hinton with other settlements; and**
 - v. it does not compromise the special landscape character and setting of Martock/Bower Hinton; and**
 - vi. there is no adverse impact on the Conservation Area and Listed Buildings; and**
 - vii. in other ways it complies with policies in the development plan.**

- 8.44 The further growth of Martock/Bower Hinton should be a gradual, incremental process to ensure the unique character of the area is safeguarded, and we remain a sustainable settlement and community. This overall approach to development is consistent with the Local Plan's settlement strategy for rural centres³⁹.
- 8.45 We have concluded that the use of a settlement area boundary as a policy device is appropriate to exercise some control on growth and to protect local countryside and the extensive areas of moderate to high landscape sensitivity in the area. Map 7 shows the settlement area boundary for Martock/Bower Hinton as redefined by a recent review exercise⁴⁰. The boundary is a policy device, consistent with the NPPF, to focus and facilitate growth on the sustainable settlement area of Martock/Bower Hinton, thus ensure housing and other development is located "*where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities*" (NPPF para. 78). Policy Mart13 supports development within the settlement area boundary, provided it is appropriate i.e. complies with policies in the Neighbourhood Plan, the Local Plan and, wherever necessary, takes full account of the latest Conservation Area Management Plan.
- 8.46 The Local Plan requires the Parish of Martock to provide for a share of the district's strategic growth in housing and employment land. Regarding new housing, the Local Plan sets a housing requirement figure of 230 dwellings over the plan period (2006 – 2028). The Neighbourhood Plan must accommodate this scale of growth as a minimum.

³⁹ As a 'Rural Centre', "*Development in smaller but still sizeable settlements is likely to be less sustainable and so should be geared to meet local needs and address affordable housing issues. Small scale economic activity is not considered out of keeping in these settlements in order to: support economic activity that is appropriate to the scale of the settlement; extend the range of services to better meet the needs of the settlement and immediate surrounds; and meet identified local needs.*" Para. 5.21, South Somerset Local Plan (2006 – 2028)

⁴⁰ <http://martockplan.org.uk/Documents/Housing/Settlement%20boundary%20criteria.pdf>

- 8.47 Community consultation has established that there is little community support for large-scale development or growth in excess of the Local Plan target. It is considered judicious however to allow for a modest excess, above the strategic target, that will help satisfy both needs and demands and avoid the housing market over-heating through a severe constraint on supply.
- 8.48 The Local Plan is undergoing a review and taking a longer-term perspective, up to 2036. We are informed by “*emerging work*” on the Local Plan Review that 330 new dwellings for Martock/Bower Hinton for the period 2016-2036⁴¹ would be an acceptable contribution to the overall district target. At 30th October 2018, there had been 45 completions between 2016 and 2018 and there were 75 commitments (in planning approvals). “*The residual housing requirement is 210 dwellings.... this would equate to 10.5 (11) new homes per year over the 20-year LPR period*”⁴². This rate does not conflict with our preferred development strategy of gradual and incremental growth. The ‘Local Plan Review Preferred Options’ document proposes two sites for new housing development outside the Settlement Area Boundary west of Martock/Bower Hinton. These are illustrated on Map 7 as potential sites for new housing development though they should not be regarded as allocations until the new Local Plan has confirmed their status and been adopted.
- 8.49 The community’s position, established through local consultation, is that development should focus on the defined settlement area as described on Map 7. This is in accordance with the Local Plan Policy SS1 that recognises Martock/Bower Hinton as a Rural Centre “*where provision for development will be made that meets local housing need, extends local services and supports economic activity appropriate to the scale of the settlement*”. Accordingly, we shall support appropriate development within the settlement area boundary.
- 8.50 Our judgement, based on recent land availability assessments⁴³ and our own local ‘call for sites’, is that land outside the settlement area boundary may also be needed to provide additional housing within the next ten years to satisfy the on-going strategic requirements of the Local Plan. The community does not favour encouraging development at other rural settlements in the area. In accordance with Local Plan Policy SS2 development in rural settlements (not market towns or rural centres) should be strictly controlled and limited and “*proposals should be consistent with relevant community-led plans and should generally have the support of the local community*”.
- 8.51 To ensure a continued supply of housing land throughout the plan period, Policy Mart13 provides conditional support for development contiguous with the settlement area boundary. To be consistent with our strategy of gradual and incremental growth, any such development proposal should either seek to align with Policies MB1 and MB3 of the emerging Local Plan Review and be located on the sites North of Coat Road or South of Hills Lane or be small in scale and constitute a logical extension of the current built-up area. All proposed development contiguous with the settlement boundary should have a positive effect on the character of the local area. Land that is recognised for its moderate or high landscape sensitivity should be avoided. The Martock Peripheral Landscape Assessment of 2008⁴⁴ (see Map 2) provides a useful guide, which should be supplemented by an up-to-date assessment of landscape sensitivity for individual applications whenever appropriate.
- 8.52 Policy Mart13 does not set a numeric limit on the scale of any particular housing scheme as this may be seen as being overly prescriptive and potentially preventing otherwise acceptable development and the meeting of identifiable local housing needs. Small scale should be seen in general terms as applying to a scheme that is modest and limited in scope or extent. In the absence of any other national or local policy-based definition it is expected that the scale of development will be judged having regard to

⁴¹ Para. 8.41, ‘Preferred Options Consultation’ Report, (Reg. 18), South Somerset Local Plan Review 2016-2036

⁴² Email letter from Specialist – Strategic Planning, South Somerset DC, Oct 2018

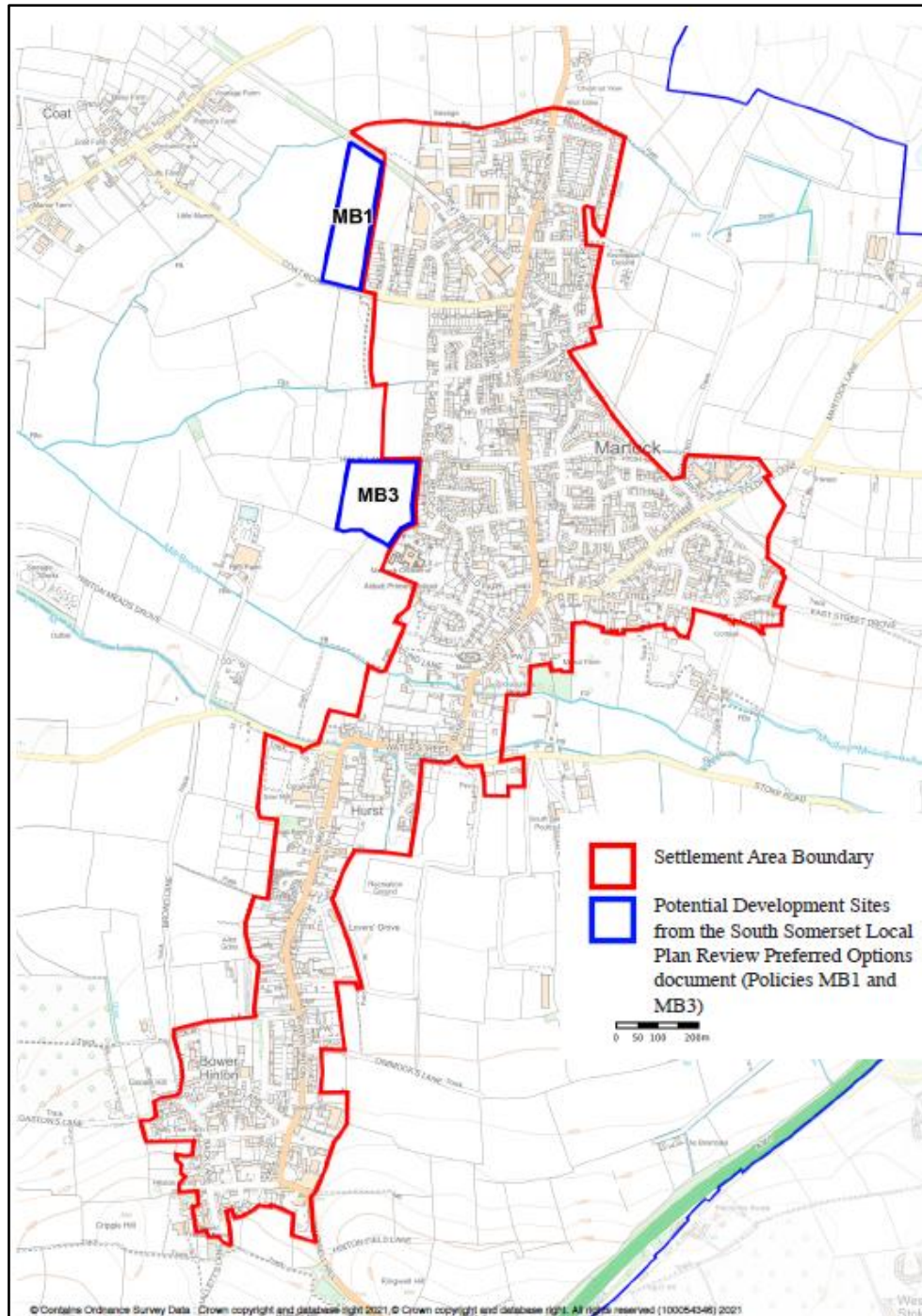
⁴³ Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment Report, South Somerset District Council, Feb 2017

⁴⁴ <https://www.southsomerset.gov.uk/media/1965/hela-report-2017-final.pdf>

⁴⁴ https://www.southsomerset.gov.uk/media/1814/peripheral-landscape-study_martock.pdf

Government criteria established for differentiating between ‘major’ and ‘minor’ developments⁴⁵. Schemes larger than nine dwellings are classed as ‘major’ development. Such schemes should not normally be regarded as small scale for the purpose of interpreting policy Mart13. A development of 10 or more dwellings will only be acceptable if the number of dwellings is justified primarily by locally identified need and in the interests of achieving a viable and coherent scheme. All major development proposals should demonstrate how the infrastructure needs of the development will be adequately addressed.

Martock NP Map 7 – Martock/Bower Hinton Settlement Area Boundary



8.53 The definition of the settlement area as a focus for development, is also intended to ensure that future development does not encroach on land essential to maintain a separation with neighbouring settlements such as Stapleton and Coat and Ash.

⁴⁵ Government guidance for residential development defines ‘minor’ development as one where the number of dwellings to be constructed is between 1 and 9 inclusive. Where the number of dwellings to be constructed is not given in the application, a site area of less than 0.5 hectares should be used as the definition of a minor development.

To ensure that Coat and Stapleton maintain their separate identity, setting in the landscape and local built character and extent, a local green gap (as indicated on Map 8) will be maintained to prevent coalescence.

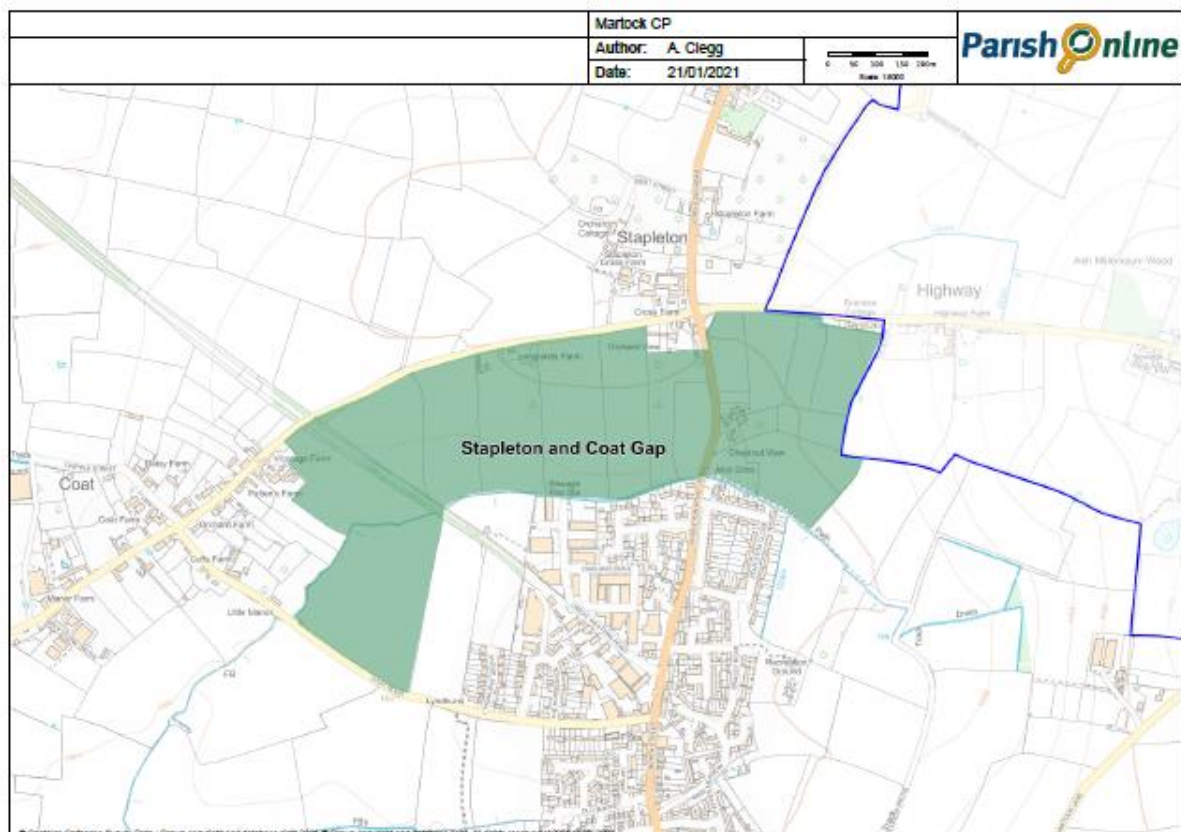
Proposals for development within the local green gap will only be supported where they:

- i. are for measures to prevent flooding; or,
- ii. propose improvements to access to the countryside; or,
- iii. are for essential agricultural uses; and,
- iv. do not compromise the visual openness and landscape character of the gap; and,
- v. do not compromise the character or setting of important local heritage assets.

8.54 We have indicated the importance of the local countryside and the need to keep the sprawl of settlements to a minimum by defining a Settlement Area boundary policy that places focus on new development being in Martock/Bower Hinton and on its built edge. However, we are keen to reinforce this principle with a specific policy that seeks to maintain an adequate buffer or ‘local green gap’ between both Coat and Stapleton and Martock/Bower Hinton, specifically to prevent coalescence. The principle of a buffer to prevent coalescence or urban sprawl and protect the integrity of the settlements was raised in comments received during consultations on the Neighbourhood Plan. The value in preventing coalescence is recognised by the Landscape Sensitivity Assessment⁴⁶, which identifies that the open countryside which provides the setting of Martock and other rural settlements is a key characteristic of the area and very sensitive to change. The whole of the local gap area shown on Map 8 is ‘rated’ as high or moderate landscape sensitivity.

8.55 Proposals in the local gap area will only be supported for uses or development that are essential because of their location or need on the site proposed. Notwithstanding this, proposals that qualify for development in these local green gaps must not take place at the expense of the quality of the landscape or setting. Policy Mart14 seeks to ensure this is taken fully into account.

Martock NP Map 8 – Stapleton and Coat Local Gap



Proposals for micro-generation within settlement areas that require planning permission will be supported where:

- i. any negative impacts on the built, natural or historical environments can be acceptably mitigated; and**
- ii. there are no unacceptable impacts on neighbouring properties.**

- 8.56 The NPPF (para. 151) calls for a provide a positive strategy for energy from renewable sources, that maximises the potential for suitable development, while ensuring that adverse impacts are addressed satisfactorily. The Parish produced a Sustainable Development Plan⁴⁷ in 2013, to promote energy efficiency and encourages renewable energy. We recognise however that there are local concerns about the impact of large-scale installations on the landscape and also on the built environment, particularly the conservation areas. Footnote 49 to paragraph 154 of the NPPF cautions against commercial scale renewable and low carbon development outside areas specifically identified as suitable for wind energy development in the development plan. Martock has not been identified as suitable for commercial scale development.
- 8.57 Policy Mart15 reflects that as a community we support an increase in renewable energy use and provision for the development of micro-generation installations within the settlement areas. We would include small-scale solar panel or tile installations, small, single wind turbines, biomass systems and geo-thermal installations, as long as their scale and design are appropriate to their location and acceptably sensitive to the character of the area. Guidance is offered in the Martock Village Design Statement, which should be taken into account by applicants for planning permission.

Wherever appropriate, new development should seek to achieve high standards of sustainable development, and demonstrate in proposals how design, construction and operation will:

- i. reduce the use of fossil fuels;**
- ii. promote the efficient use of natural resources, the re-use and recycling of resources, and the production and consumption of renewable energy;**
- iii. promote water efficiency and the use of natural SuDs systems and features;**
- iv. adopt and facilitate the flexible development of low and zero carbon energy through a range of technologies; and**
- v. where possible, link the provision of low and zero carbon energy infrastructure in new developments to existing buildings.**

- 8.58 The Martock Sustainable Development Plan⁴⁸ was produced by the Parish Council in 2013 to influence the future growth of residential development in a controlled way. Rather than solely by the consideration of individual applications on a one-off ‘piecemeal’ basis, it presents a guide to developers and to the Parish on how to judge the sustainability credentials of a development proposal. It includes a Sustainability Appraisal checklist, based on a South Somerset District Council Sustainability Appraisal framework, that is used by the Planning Committee of Martock Parish Council to assess the credentials all planning applications for residential and industrial development.
- 8.59 Policy Mart16 encapsulates the sustainability appraisal objective of “*reducing contribution to climate change and vulnerability to its effects*” and places it in a policy setting. Local Plan Policy EQ1, requires climate change aspects to be considered in the design of new development. Consistent with the NPPF (para. 148) to “*support the transition to a low carbon future*”, policy Mart16 requires all major

⁴⁷ <http://www.martockonline.co.uk/UserFiles/File/264.pdf>

⁴⁸ <http://www.martockonline.co.uk/UserFiles/File/260.pdf>

development proposals to demonstrate, through design, construction and operation, that they will achieve a high standard of energy efficiency and an acceptably low carbon footprint. How this can be done in an area where design and character issues are significant is addressed in the Martock Design Statement⁴⁹. For major housing developments we are encouraging the adoption of the principles of passive solar design and the habitual installation of renewable energy technologies and low energy systems (see policy Mart21).

- 8.60 Policy Mart16 is also consistent with the parish approach to flood risk minimisation as reflected in the Martock Parish Flood Guide for Developers⁵⁰. It encourages the use and application of natural drainage systems that will not only avoid flooding but also contribute to: improving water quality; increasing biodiversity; providing amenity benefits, such as additional public open space; providing additional habitats; and contributing to the character of the 'new place'. The Environment Agency is keen that water efficiency measures should be incorporated into development as this conserves water for the natural environment and allows cost savings for future housing occupants. It has expressed support⁵¹ for policy Mart15.

⁴⁹ <http://www.martockplan.org.uk/Documents/Supportingdocs/VDS.pdf>

⁵⁰ <http://www.martockplan.org.uk/Documents/Supportingdocs/FloodGuide.pdf>

⁵¹ Comments on Pre-Submission Version of the Neighbourhood Plan, Env. Agency, 20 Sep 2019

9. Housing

Overview

- 9.1 The demand for housing in the Martock area remains buoyant. It is particularly popular with mature house purchasers because it offers an ‘escape to the countryside’ yet provides easy access to a range of amenities in the village. Larger detached 4-bedroom houses are always in demand. Smaller dwelling units are also sought after, which puts in-comers in direct competition with local households trying to get on the housing ladder. We expect an increased demand for specialist housing from elderly parishioners as the resident-population ages, if current trends continue.
- 9.2 Whilst we lack a recent local housing needs survey, the response to the 2017 Household Survey identified that a high proportion of parishioners feel that more affordable housing, for local people who cannot afford open market housing, is needed and the Parish is most in need of more low cost/starter homes for purchase. This is confirmed by the latest Strategic Housing Market Assessment⁵², which identified the significant issue that is affordability. South Somerset District Council has an overall target for 35% affordable housing on new developments, although this is under review and likely to be reduced⁵³ to reflect the reality that affordable housing contribution within developments is regularly reduced following an ‘open book’ viability testing process. Wherever possible, the Local Plan says, two thirds of affordable housing should be provided as social-rented. The remaining third should be other forms of affordable housing, such as intermediate rent, affordable rent, shared ownership or other affordable home ownership products.
- 9.3 We are guided by the local planning authority on the minimum provision of dwellings to meet future housing needs and demands over the period of the adopted Local Plan. The majority of new housing development in the district is to be focused on Yeovil, as the principal town in South Somerset. Martock/Bower Hinton, being categorised as a third-tier settlement, i.e. a ‘rural centre’ according to the Local Plan, is expected to contribute a fair share of the overall total of new dwellings allotted to the rural settlements. The confirmed Housing Requirement Figure set in the Local Plan is 230 dwellings between 2006 and 2028. This has already been exceeded (at winter 2019). The target continues to shift and move forward, however. The Local Plan Review has proposed that 330 new homes should be built in the Martock/Bower Hinton area between 2016 and 2034.
- 9.4 With regard to the provision of housing in rural areas, the NPPF (para. 78) states that to “*promote sustainable development in rural areas, housing should be located where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities. Planning policies should identify opportunities for villages to grow and thrive, especially where this will support local services. Where there are groups of smaller settlements, development in one village may support services in a village nearby.*” In accordance with the NPPF, housing development in Martock Parish should be focussed on Martock/Bower Hinton.
- 9.5 To achieve the strategic housing target of the Local Plan and to ensure that the supply of housing continues to meet local needs, we are supportive of new residential development of an appropriate scale and type taking place throughout the plan period. The housing policies in the Martock Parish Neighbourhood Plan are aimed at ensuring that the housing needs and aspirations of local people have primacy in future housing development.

⁵² Mendip, Sedgemoor, South Somerset and Taunton Deane Strategic Housing Market Assessment Final Report, JG Consulting, Oct 2016 https://www.mendip.gov.uk/media/14834/SHMA-October2016/pdf/Somerset_final_SHMA_Oct2016.pdf?m=636250098321907000

⁵³ Comments on Pre-Submission Version of the Neighbourhood Plan, SSDC, 20 Aug 2019

Policy No. Mart17	Housing Development
Development proposals for residential developments will be supported provided they:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="164 237 1034 271">i. contribute to meeting an objectively assessed housing need; <li data-bbox="164 282 1177 315">ii. contribute positively to the built environment in the vicinity of the site; <li data-bbox="164 327 1126 360">iii. incorporate separate and satisfactory access and parking provision; <li data-bbox="164 371 1177 405">iv. provide adequate external amenity space, refuse and recycling storage; <li data-bbox="164 416 1377 495">v. incorporate measures to minimise water consumption and an appropriate sustainable drainage scheme; and <li data-bbox="164 506 1070 539">vi. conforms to other relevant policies in the Neighbourhood Plan. 	

- 9.6 The Neighbourhood Plan is required to conform to the strategic policies of the Local Plan. The adopted South Somerset Local Plan regards Martock/Bower Hinton as a rural centre with “*a local service role where provision for development will be made that meets local housing need*” (Local Plan Policy SS1).
- 9.7 The Local Plan states provision should be made for sufficient development to meet an overall district requirement of at least 15,950 dwellings in the plan period April 2006 – March 2028 inclusive. The majority of new housing is being directed towards Yeovil as the principal town in the district, followed by a reduced level at each of the market towns, and then a smaller allocation for each of the ‘rural centres’, of which Martock/Bower Hinton is one. A total housing requirement is allocated for rural settlements; with decisions on how much, and where, to be determined in conjunction with the aims of Policy SS2, which “*strictly controls*” development in rural settlements. Neighbourhood planning for Martock has provided an opportunity for the community to consider what is the appropriate scale of development for our Parish and where such development should take place.
- 9.8 As explained in paragraph 8.48, some 210 new homes will be required in Martock/Bower Hinton to contribute to South Somerset District’s housing target for 2036. Three possible sites for new development are identified in the emerging Local Plan Review Preferred Options document. All are located on the western edge of the existing Martock/Bower Hinton settlement. The site subject to emerging Policy MB2 - Land south of Coat Road lies within the Settlement Area Boundary, as shown on Map 7. Policies MB1- Land north of Coat Road, and MB3 – Land south of Hills Road are also shown on Map 7, but they lie outside the defined Settlement Area Boundary.
- 9.9 It is felt inappropriate to set an alternative target, but rather to have a policy approach that is based on an appreciation of local needs and the availability of suitable land, whilst ensuring development is of a scale, amenity and design commensurate with the rural character of the area. Accordingly, policy Mart17 supports high-quality residential development, of an appropriate scale in suitable locations as determined by other policies in the development plan, which is satisfactorily served by local infrastructure and sufficiently self-contained so as not to harm the amenity of the local area. The Martock Village Design Statement should help determine what is an adequate external amenity space, and whether satisfactory space has been provided for refuse and recycling storage.
- 9.10 The adequacy of off-road parking provision for new housing development is a significant matter given the widespread concerns about the congestion and safety on local roads. New developments should conform to the current highway access and parking guidance of South Somerset District Council⁵⁴ unless there is a very good reason not to do so.

⁵⁴ <https://www.southsomerset.gov.uk/media/2184/highwayaccessandparking.pdf>

New residential development should favour small dwellings meaning dwellings with 1, 2 or 3 bedrooms.

Development proposals on sites for 10 or more dwellings must contain an appropriate mixture of house types and sizes and show how they contribute to meeting current local housing needs of the neighbourhood area by referring to an up-to-date assessment of local housing need.

- 9.11 The latest Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) carried out on behalf of South Somerset District Council⁵⁵ guides strategic housing policy and allocations. However, at the “local level” it recommends “*in applying these [district-wide mix of affordable and market homes] to individual development sites regard should be had to the nature of the development site and character of the area, and to up-to-date evidence of need as well as the existing mix and turnover of properties at the local level*”. Local Plan Policy HG5 seeks to achieve a range house types and sizes across the District, particularly on large sites of ten or more dwellings. On small sites, the type and size of homes should be taken in the context of the surroundings and contribute towards sustainable development. The current indicative targets for market housing by type and size, based on the SHMA, is for 5-10% 1-bedroomed, 30-35% 2-bedroomed and 40-45% 3-bedroomed.
- 9.12 The NPPF (para. 61) requires us to assess the size, type and tenure of housing needed for different groups in the community and for them to be reflected in planning policies. This is particularly important when it is evident that there is a local housing need that should be met, and limited opportunities to do so.
- 9.13 The community informed us via the 2017 Community Survey that there is a recognised need for small dwellings including accessible housing for disabled people, sheltered housing for older or disabled people and to a lesser extent retirement housing. It was also made plain that large houses (4+ beds) and flats are considered in plentiful supply by a large majority and not a priority for development.
- 9.14 Policy Mart18 places emphasis on the provision of small dwellings in all residential developments. On larger developments, of 10 or more dwellings, there should be a mix of dwelling types and sizes which includes a majority of smaller dwellings i.e. with one, two or three bedrooms. Developers are encouraged to demonstrate that proposed housing mix of sizes and types is locally relevant and takes account of the re-housing needs and aspirations of the existing parishioners of Martock.
- 9.15 Unless viability or other material considerations, such as the character of the surrounding area, show a robust justification for larger dwellings, we favour smaller dwellings on smaller sites, whether the development is for affordable or open-market dwellings or a mix. The Martock Village Design Statement should be used to inform decisions as to what mix of housing types and sizes may or may not be appropriate in any specific location in the Parish.

⁵⁵ Mendip, Sedgemoor, South Somerset and Taunton Deane Strategic Housing Market Assessment Final Report, JG Consulting, Oct 2016

Where the threshold for affordable housing requirements applies, development proposals will be supported where:

- i. They contribute to meeting the local housing needs of Martock as defined in the most up-to-date Housing Needs Assessment in terms of type, size and tenure; and,
- ii. Are provided principally for occupancy by a person or persons (household) with a local connection who:
 - a) do not have access to open market housing;
 - b) is a resident of Martock Parish, or has a local connection with the Parish because of family ties or a need to be near their workplace.

In the event that an occupier who fulfils both (or either) of criterion (a) or (b) cannot be found within a reasonable period of time, then (b) will be widened:

- 1) firstly, to a person(s) with a local connection to the neighbouring parishes of Ash, Long Sutton, Tintinhull, Stoke Sub Hamdon, South Petherton, Kingsbury Episcopi and Muchelney because of family ties or a need to be near their workplace;
- 2) secondly, to a person(s) with a connection to Ilminster, Crewkerne, Ilchester, Yeovil and their neighbouring parishes because of family ties or a need to be near their workplace; and,
- 3) thirdly, to a person(s) with a connection to the wider South Somerset District.

Affordable housing should be provided in perpetuity, (in accordance with the most up-to-date Government policy), for example, through a Community Land Trust or other community housing scheme which retains stock for the benefit of the local community at an accessible cost.

- 9.16 The NPPF (para. 61) requires us to be responsive to the need of different groups in the community and plan housing development to reflect local needs, particularly for affordable housing. The community informed us via the 2017 Community Survey that more affordable housing for local people who can't afford open market housing is needed.
- 9.17 The Local Plan endeavours to maximise affordable housing delivery, with an *“objective to include all residential development in the affordable housing contribution process, thereby capturing a significant proportion of developments that would otherwise be exempt, without threatening viability or reducing housing delivery”*. However, the District Council's objectives, set out in Local Plan Policies HG3 and HG4, were rendered out of date by a major change in Government policy on the delivery of affordable housing. The Government's new policy, referenced in paragraph 63 of the NPPF, is that no affordable housing obligation should be placed on non-major development schemes of nine dwellings or less or sites of less than 0.5 hectares. Policies HG3 and HG4 of the current Local Plan have not been applied by the District Council to non-major developments since the change in Government policy. The 'Local Plan Review Preferred Options' document requires major development schemes to include provision for 29% affordable housing.
- 9.18 Policy Mart19 is intended to ensure that any gain from affordable housing is appropriate for the Parish in terms of meeting an identifiable need; meeting the key criteria of being the right tenure, so as to be genuinely affordable to the right people; be allocated to households that qualify as being local; and remain part of the affordable housing stock of the Parish and regarded as a Parish asset in the long-term.
- 9.19 To ensure consistency and fairness in housing priority in the local area, policy Mart19 mimics the affordable housing policy of the neighbouring South Petherton Neighbourhood Plan. It recognises that we are part of a wider, but still local, housing market. Martock Parish Council will maintain a liaison with adjoining parishes regarding local housing need.

Community Housing¹ schemes may be supported outside (but adjacent or well-related to) the settlement area boundary of Martock/Bower Hinton on sites where housing would not otherwise be permitted, providing the development:

- i. provides an appropriate mix of dwelling types and sizes reflecting identified local need and meets demand based on the current Local Housing Needs Assessment or evidence from local community housing groups and the Parish Council;**
- ii. contributes to a wider mix of housing tenures, types and sizes in the area;**
- iii. meets the allocation and occupancy requirements of policy Mart18;**
- iv. preserves or enhances the character and appearance of the area;**
- v. does not result in the development of isolated homes in the countryside;**
- vi. does not have a significant negative impact the geodiversity, biodiversity, landscape and character of the area; and**
- vii. the land is held in trust as a community asset in perpetuity.**

Footnote

¹ Community Housing is defined as residential development by a group who build on land that is held in common ownership or trust for the benefit of the residents.

- 9.20 The Parish Council will be pro-active in the provision of housing to meet local needs. This includes encouraging the involvement of community housing providers. Policy Mart20 opens up the possibility that a community housing development project of the right type, could be supported on land where market housing development would not be supported or permitted. This is known as exception-site development. The NPPF (para. 77) supports “*opportunities to bring forward rural exception sites that will provide affordable housing to meet identified local needs*”.
- 9.21 To meet the exception site requirements of Policy Mart20, the development proposal would need to be made by a bona fide ‘community housing’ body. It would need to demonstrate that it is meeting a specific and identifiable local housing need and a substantial majority of the dwellings on the site should meet an acceptable definition of ‘affordable in the local context. A small proportion of open market housing may be permissible on the development but only if it is shown to be necessary to make the development viable and priority is given to purchasers with a local connection that are seeking a permanent local residence.
- 9.22 Any site brought forward for exception-site development must be in relatively close proximity to a settlement area and the development proposal must demonstrate that it will contribute positively to the sustainability of the area and community whilst minimising any harmful impacts on the environment. Development proposals within areas of higher landscape sensitivity such as those categorised as moderate or high, shown on Map 2, are unlikely to be supported.

The provision of plots on major housing developments for local self-builders registered on the South Somerset list is supported.

- 9.23 The Government has, as recently as 2015, introduced legislation to promote and facilitate self-building and custom housebuilding as part of the national strategy to widen affordable housing solutions.
- 9.24 South Somerset District Council, along with other district and county councils in England, is required to keep a self-build and custom housebuilding register. South Somerset has set up a Register⁵⁶ of individuals, and associations of individuals, who are seeking to acquire serviced plots of land in South Somerset for their own self-build and custom housebuilding. At July 2018, the Council's database held a list of 86 interested parties who have applied to be on the Register; a substantial rise from 23 on the Register in May 2016. The number of local registrations, at July 2018, is few. Only a couple of persons, of the 86 on the South Somerset Register, expressed a preference for a site in the Martock area. Numbers are expected to grow as awareness of the Register and the opportunities become known. The Parish Council will play its part in encouraging local self-builders.
- 9.25 The legislation also states that "*relevant authorities must give suitable development permission to enough suitable serviced plots⁵⁷ of land to meet the demand for self-build and custom housebuilding in their area. The level of demand is established by reference to the number of entries added to an authority's register during a base period*".
- 9.26 Regardless of the current low level of interest there is community support for the prospect of a proportion of plots on major housing developments (i.e. developments of 10 or more dwellings or sites of 0.5 hectares or more) being offered to local self-builders. Policy Mart21 puts in place a policy that expresses that support, if the resultant development conforms with other policies in the Neighbourhood Plan.

⁵⁶ <https://www.southsomerset.gov.uk/your-council/your-council-plan-and-strategies/planning-policy/self-build-and-custom-build-houses/>

⁵⁷ A serviced plot of land is a plot of land that either has access to a public highway and has connections for electricity, water and waste-water, or, in the opinion of a relevant authority, can be provided with access to those things within the duration of a development permission granted in relation to that land.

The principles of passive solar design and the use of renewable energy technologies and low energy systems should be encouraged for all new housing developments.

Dwellings should be built whenever possible with the orientation of the principal habitable rooms taking account of passive solar gain and energy efficiency maximised whilst ensuring that the site layout provides acceptable standards of privacy and amenity to all residents.

Roof-mounted solar panels and photovoltaic panels should be designed to minimise visual impact.

- 9.27 Consistent with our approach to low energy, more sustainable development, we expect developers of housing schemes to use design and layout take advantage of the solar-gain that could be achieved on any particular housing site as long as the development proposals confirms with other policies in the Neighbourhood Plan and where necessary, complies with Conservation Area policies and guidance.
- 9.28 Local Plan Policy EQ1 says *“climate change should be considered in the design of new development, incorporating measures such as solar orientation, maximising natural shade and cooling....”*. Policy Mart21 encourage serious consideration and application, wherever appropriate in the design and layout of new housing developments, of the principles of passive solar design and the use of renewable energy technologies and low energy systems on all new housing developments.
- 9.29 Passive solar design refers to making use of the sun’s energy for the heating and cooling of living spaces. Passive solar design is the siting and design of buildings to maximise the use of the sun’s energy for heating and cooling. Passive solar design takes advantage of natural characteristics in building materials and air to help reduce the additional energy needed for heating and cooling. The PPG says that *“policies can encourage sites to be planned to permit good solar access to as many buildings as possible. The potential benefits of passive solar design can only be realised by careful siting and layout..... It is important that passive design considers the potential for overheating in the summer, as well as reducing need for heating in the winter.”*⁵⁸

10. Local Economy

Overview

- 10.1 Martock has long had a vibrant and successful local economy, which was initially agrarian based. It became 'industrialised' in the 18th century with clothiers making cloth and linen from wool and flax. Twine, rope and canvas manufacture, together with gloves made from the skin of the sheep, became dominant industries in the 18th and 19th centuries. The remnants of this industrial period can still be seen today in the buildings and industrial areas that remain, such as the two Victorian iron foundries, Sparrows and Parrett Works. Its legacy is the almost 250 businesses that are based in Martock today, employing thousand or so local people.
- 10.2 Parrett Works and Sparrows Works are thriving small industrial estates today. The former railway station area is now the location of the largest local industrial estate in the area, Martock Business Park, which comprises over 90 units and fully occupied. There is one smaller estate on the Stoke Road based on former farm buildings, which is developing.
- 10.3 Many local businesses are small. Martock Parish has a high number of sole traders and small business owners. Martock has a tradition of supporting small specialist entrepreneurs such as engineering companies that have spun off from the local aircraft industry and also the numerous art and craft businesses. The requirement for a continued supply of small business units is considered essential to sustain the local economy. However, when opportunities such as the recent closure of the glove factories arise, the commercial pressure has been towards a change to residential use.
- 10.4 There is also a growing hospitality industry. In 2018 there are two hotels, the chalet and caravanning site at Parrett Works, and a number of houses offering bed and breakfast. As well as addressing the needs of business visitors to Yeovil and Yeovilton they serve the A303 passing trade and holidaymakers visiting both coasts.
- 10.5 According to the 2011 Census there was approaching 2,500 people in the Parish who were in employment. Despite being home to around 250 local businesses, a substantial proportion of the Parish's working population (over 50%) commutes out of the Parish for work. Ironically, Larger employers too often report local skills shortages. The need to sustain the local jobs market and increase skills amongst the workforce is being addressed by the Martock Job Club, which is funded primarily by the Parish Council.
- 10.6 The current Local Plan (2006-28) sets a target of 3.19 hectares of employment land to be developed in Martock over the plan period. The recent 'Local Plan Review Preferred Option' Document sets a requirement for 3.0 ha of new employment land in the Parish. This does not allocate the site at Ringwell Hill, where outline planning permission was granted for industrial use in 2006, but never developed.
- 10.7 Martock's retail function remains a significant facet of the local economy. Martock village is designated as one of the district's 'secondary centres' by the Local Plan, having shops that primarily serve the "day to day needs of their catchment areas". Martock is fortunate to have two convenience stores as well as a Post Office. Martock's shopping is 'centred' around the Moorlands Shopping Centre, with its nearby car park and adjacent to the Library. The availability of local shops and services is appreciated by the local community. Many parishioners say they would like to see more shops and better shops.
- 10.8 The new Martock Community Plan includes a commitment to "re-establish a business forum in Martock to promote local businesses and give a voice to retailers and employers"⁵⁹. We shall use this forum to monitor the wellbeing of the local economy and assess the impact that planning policies are having business growth and employment.

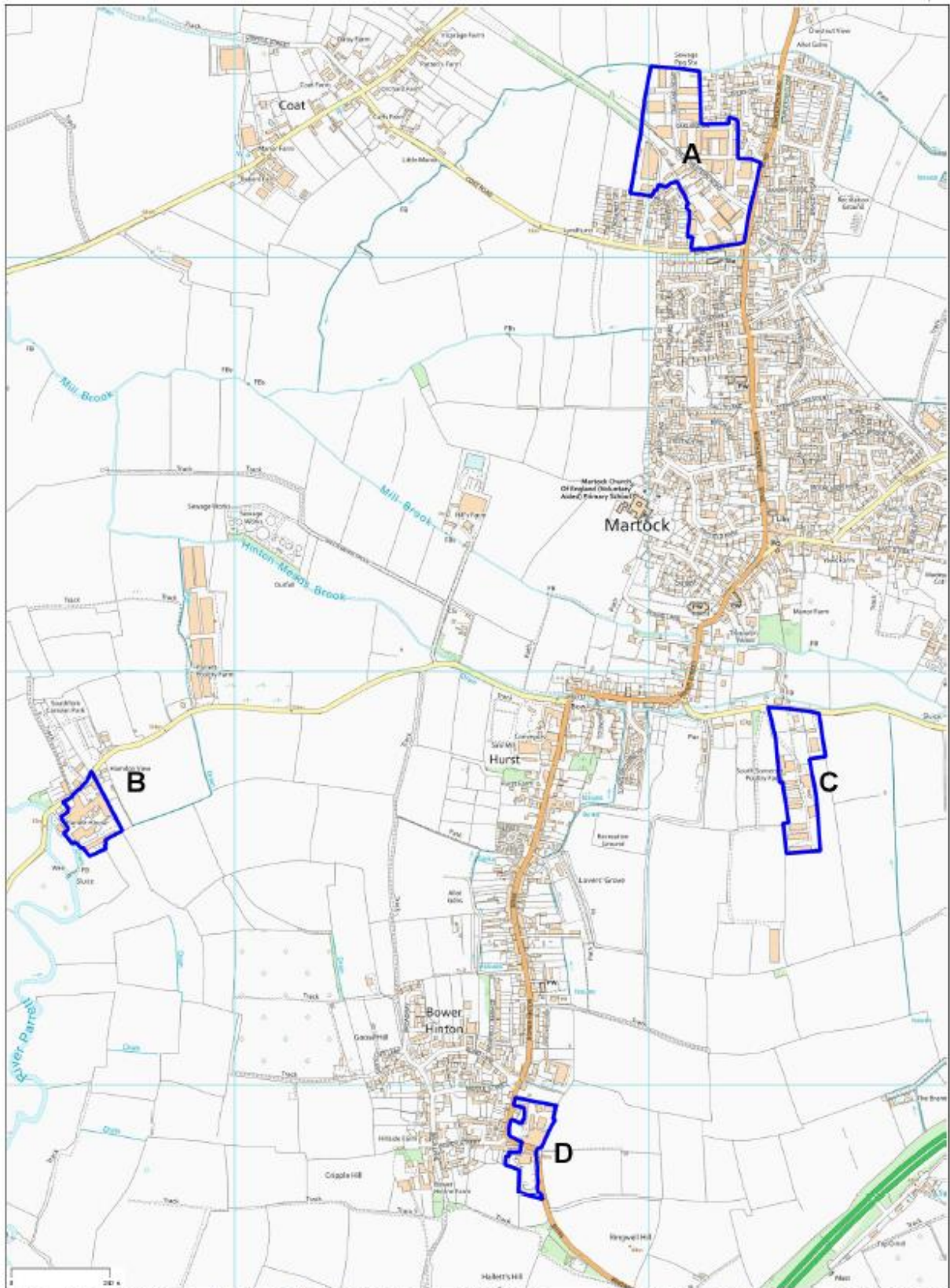
⁵⁹ <http://www.martockonline.co.uk/UserFiles/File/1802.pdf>

Policy No. Mart23	Business Areas
<p>Business development in the following business areas (identified on Map 9), including a proportionate outward expansion of the sites:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Martock Business Park B. Parrett Works C. Stoke Road D. Sparrows Works <p>will be supported provided the development:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. is in keeping with those uses and business activity already on the site; ii. respects the character of its surroundings by way of its scale and design; iii. does not have an adverse effect on its neighbours; iv. does not have an adverse impact on the natural environment (landscape, biodiversity and habitats) or that negative impacts will be satisfactorily mitigated; v. does not have an unacceptable adverse impact on the transport network and parking; and vi. safeguards residential amenity and road safety. 	

- 10.9 The defined business areas of the Parish are very important to our local rural economy and the overall sustainability of the area. The NPPF (para.83) is strong in its support for economic growth in rural areas. It states that we should support *“the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business in rural areas, both through conversion of existing buildings and well-designed new buildings”*.
- 10.10 The Local Plan Review Preferred Options Consultation document⁶⁰ recognised that *“self-containment is an issue”* for Martock. *“The travel to work data shows that over 80% of the population out-commute, with many going to Yeovil but also the Ilchester area”*. The Parish Council’s strategy is based firmly on supporting local business and creating more and better jobs for local people.
- 10.11 The focus of industry and enterprise in the Parish should remain the defined business areas shown on Map 9. They are long-established locations and provided accessible local employment to successive generations of parishioners. Policy Mart23 supports future business development at these locations shown on Map 9 provided the development is appropriate in scale and does not cause any unacceptable nuisance or harm to its surroundings or nearby land users.
- 10.12 South Somerset District Council has commented that by supporting an appropriate scale of business development and expansion at four well-established key sites, Policy Mart23 will assist one of the Local Plan’s objectives for the area i.e. to provide further employment opportunities as a means of securing greater self-containment⁶¹.
- 10.13 In concentrating industrial development at the established business areas, we are also seeking to ensure that the over-riding rural character of the Parish is safeguarded. However, these business areas are close to residential areas and sensitive wildlife habitats, which should not be adversely affected by any form of pollution resulting from the expansion of industrial activity at these locations.

⁶⁰<https://modgov.southsomerset.gov.uk/documents/s25316/7%20LPR%20Appendix%203%20Local%20Plan%20Review%20Preferred%20Options%20Document.pdf>

⁶¹ Comments on Pre-Submission Version of the Neighbourhood Plan, SSDC, 20 Aug 2019



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The development of new businesses and the expansion of existing businesses on brownfield sites or through the sympathetic conversion of redundant buildings will generally be supported subject to such development respecting local character and residential amenity, and the residual cumulative impacts on highway safety and the local transport network not being unacceptable.

- 10.14 With over 250 locally based businesses, Martock is far from a dormitory area, and nor should it be so. The area has a long history of industrial activity that has underpinned its sustainability. It is a key aim to facilitate local enterprise in the interests of ensuring the local economy remains in good health and creating more and better local job opportunities. We are proud of the efforts and achievements of the Parish Council-sponsored Job Club to this end.
- 10.15 The NPPF says we should support the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business and enterprise and planning policies should enable *“the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business in rural areas, both through conversion of existing buildings and well-designed new buildings”* (NPPF para. 83). We are keen to broaden the business base and appreciate that the policy approach espoused by the NPPF (para. 81) requires policies to be flexible enough to accommodate a variety of needs and changing business practices.
- 10.16 The Local Plan (2006-28) allocated a site of 2.8ha for employment purposes on land to the West of Ringwell Hill. This site was originally allocated in the 1991 Local Plan and it has still not come forward for development. The Local Plan Review Preferred Options document does not allocate this site. The allocation of large employment/business sites is a matter for the Local Plan.
- 10.17 Policy Mart24, is supportive in principle of business development on brownfield sites and through the redevelopment of redundant buildings in the neighbourhood area, provided it does not cause unacceptable nuisance or harm to the character or amenity of the locality.
- 10.18 Recent studies of the South Somerset economy have identified a reliance on the manufacturing sector, which is forecast to decline, and recognised how *“incredibly important micro-businesses are to the area”*⁶². In the hope that it will encourage and enable small enterprises, policy Mart24 offers support for new business development outside of the defined and allocated business areas, particularly through the conversion of redundant and other buildings, as long as it can be achieved without any unacceptable nuisances or harm to nearby land users and the local environment.

The development of a super-fast communication infrastructure to serve the area will be supported where it is sensitively sited and sympathetically designed.

All new residential, educational and business premises development should endeavour to make adequate, appropriate and effective provision for high speed broadband and other communication networks.

- 10.19 Access to a high-speed first-class communication service is no longer a privilege but a necessity. The NPPF (para. 112) wants to see plans “*support the expansion of electronic communications networks, including next generation mobile technology (such as 5G) and full fibre broadband connections*”.
- 10.20 The main settlement areas of Bower Hinton and Martock village have superfast broadband available. Coat, Stapleton and the rural areas however still, at 2018, rely on standard broadband of up to 10Mbs⁶³. The Government has stated that high speed internet speeds will be a legal right by 2020⁶⁴. Mobile phone services coverage has improved gradually over the past few years. A recent (July 2018) interactive coverage map, produced by OpenSignal⁶⁵, shows that the strength of coverage is strong in the south of the Parish but markedly weaker for some providers in the north and more rural areas of the Parish.
- 10.21 The Martock Local Community Plan 2018-23 includes amongst its key topics ‘Connecting Martock’, which has a vision statement that includes “*first class communication networks to keep residents informed and advised, to meet family, social, business and leisure needs*”.
- 10.22 Policy Mart25 is aimed at enabling the necessary infrastructure to be provided in a suitably non-intrusive manner and ensuring that the required infrastructure and ducting is in put place so that all parts of the Parish have a satisfactory connection to the nation’s communication network and ensure all new development can be satisfactorily linked to the local/national network.

⁶³ Mbs = megabits per second

⁶⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/high-speed-internet-to-become-a-legal-right>

⁶⁵ <https://www.which.co.uk/reviews/mobile-phone-providers/article/mobile-phone-coverage-map>

11. Transport and Travel

Overview

- 11.1 Martock is made up of several small communities, several of which are effectively joined-up along the B3165, which runs North to South creating a large village with a distinctly linear format. The B3165 connects the village directly to the A303 trunk road. The A3088 provides a direct route to Yeovil, the regional centre and a major employment source, seven miles away.
- 11.2 The main settlement area experiences two main traffic problems. The road through Bower Hinton, as a designated B-class road, brings both cars and HGVs through this part of the village from the A303. However, the road often narrows and bends, with cars parked along it in the residential areas. This frequently creates a bottleneck. Vehicles regularly mount the pavement to pass one another, which puts pedestrians at risk. The second main traffic problem is the volume of traffic and size of vehicles passing along North Street in Martock village. Many HGVs use this route to access the industrial estate at the north end of village. Too often the consequence has been damaged roads, footpaths, bollards and garden walls. Traffic problems on the major routes mean that a high proportion of car traffic chooses to exit Martock via Foldhill Lane, Stoke Road or through the neighbouring parish of Ash. None of these routes has the capacity to cope with increased volumes nor provide a B-road standard junction onto the A303.
- 11.3 Many residents have to park their cars on the main road through the village. The road is lined with residential properties with no garages, driveways or front gardens. This is particularly the case through Bower Hinton and along North Street from Beech Road to Mow Barton.
- 11.4 A lack of off-road parking has not deterred car ownership or use. The motor car predominates local travel. Public transport services are not as comprehensive or as convenient as people would wish them to be, but they probably reflect the fact that only 13% of households have no access to a car or van and almost 80% of the working population who commute to work find it most convenient to do so by car or van⁶⁶.
- 11.5 There is little doubt that the impact of traffic on daily life is a major concern to many parishioners. It is usually the most discussed issue at any consultation forum. The community is not without ideas of how things could be improved. Many of the potential solutions however are beyond the scope of a neighbourhood plan. Traffic management and human behaviour when in a motor vehicle, are matters to be pursued by the Parish Council.
- 11.6 Motor transport use could be reduced by the promotion of cycling and walking, as well as the promotion of the use of public transport and car sharing. The volume of cars using local roads could be reduced considerably if people were persuaded to walk to local shops, schools etc. Much of the main settlement area has pavements, although there are some notable exceptions, mainly Bower Hinton, East Street and Foldhill Lane. A recent study highlighted several deficiencies in Martock village, such as insufficient width and a lack of drop-kerbs, that make things difficult for people with disabilities or mobility problems.
- 11.7 Cycling could be encouraged by safer routes and the installation of secure cycle parking facilities. There are no dedicated on-road, and very few off-road, cycleways within Martock. A designated cycle route exists between Martock village and the village of Ash, but this is just a country lane with signage to indicate a cycle route.

⁶⁶ At the time of the 2011 Census

Policy No. Mart26 Public Transport

Development proposals to help maintain and enhance existing public transport provision or further sustainable transport modes will be supported.

- 11.8 As a community we recognise that we should be reducing the use and impact of the private motor car. For many however the motor car is considered essential because education and health facilities are located elsewhere in the district. However, the cost of owning/running a car and the limitations of the public transport service places limitations on the lives of too many parishioners. 25% of respondents to the Martock Community Plan Household Survey 2017⁶⁷ said that they were affected by a lack of public transport.
- 11.9 The NPPF (para. 84) says plans should “*exploit any opportunities to make a location more sustainable (by improving the scope for access on foot, by cycling or by public transport)*”. There are limits to what can be done in a land use plan. The Parish Council promotes sustainable transport options. The Martock Community Plan 2018-23 includes the following actions: “*undertake a review of bus services and work with the County Council to improve evening and weekend services; create a voluntary/commercial passenger service running between South Petherton Bower Hinton and the north Martock; and improve cycle parking facilities near services and transport links*”⁶⁸.
- 11.10 Policy Mart26 indicates that, should development proposals come forward specifically to foster public or community sustainable transport modes, such as an interchange area or facilities for charging plug-in and other ultra-low emission vehicles, they will be welcomed.

Policy No. Mart27 Off-Road Parking

Development proposals to provide additional off-road parking spaces will be supported where they do not have an adverse impact on:

- i. the character of the local built environment**
- ii. the quality of the surrounding natural environment**
- iii. the visual amenity of the area**
- iv. the safety of pedestrians and other road users**
- v. flood risk (including local surface water flooding)**

Permeable materials for surface parking areas should be used where practicable.

- 11.11 The historic development pattern that still prevails in the settlement areas means that most roads are narrow in width and lined with residential properties with no garages, driveways or front gardens. On-road car parking is an obstacle to emergency vehicles, an impediment to travel and, too often, a danger to road users. The Martock Community Plan Household Survey 2017 showed that a large proportion of parishioners are unhappy with the traffic and parking in and around the village/Parish. Many homeowners would like to be able to park their car off-the road, but the historic development pattern is often a constraint to change. Adequate off-road parking provision is required for all new development (see policy Mart17).
- 11.12 Policy Mart27 recognises that it would be good to reduce on-road parking. It supports proposals to create off-road parking spaces if they can be provided in an acceptable manner, which includes respecting the integrity of the historic environment. How this could be achieved, along with guidance on appropriate materials, is addressed in the Martock Village Design Statement⁶⁹.

⁶⁷ <http://www.martockonline.co.uk/UserFiles/File/1528.pdf>

⁶⁸ <http://www.martockonline.co.uk/UserFiles/File/1892.pdf>

⁶⁹ <http://www.martockplan.org.uk/Documents/Supportingdocs/VDS.pdf>

Measures to provide wider and safer footpaths and improved pedestrian and cycling routes within and between local settlement areas will be supported provided they do not result in unacceptable harm to local character.

- 11.13 Whilst most of the main settlement area of Martock/Bower Hinton is generally well served by pavements, we are aware that much of it is below the minimum acceptable width of 1.8m and, for significant lengths of footway, it is below the width required for wheelchair users. There are no dedicated on-road, and very few off-road, cycle routes within the Parish. A designated cycle route exists between Martock village and the village of Ash, but this is just a country lane with signage to indicate it is a recognised cycle route.
- 11.14 The NPPF (para. 110) says we should “*give priority first to pedestrian and cycle movements, both within the scheme and with neighbouring areas*”. The new Martock Community Plan 2018-23 includes the following action: “*survey the pavements and paths throughout the urban area to review the difficulties caused to mobility scooters*”⁷⁰.
- 11.15 Policy Mart28 supports development that is aimed at making walking and cycling in and between the settlement areas easier and safer. Consultations have shown that the community is supportive of the provision of safe cycling routes from the periphery of the main settlement area to the centre, particularly the school. There is general support for improvements to footpaths too, although this needs to be considered in the context of the historic fabric of the settlement area and the inappropriate loss of old pavements.

Where appropriate, development specifically to implement traffic management measures that will improve highway safety will be supported providing the measures are:

- i. of a design that is in keeping with the character and appearance of the area with regards to scale, layout and materials; and**
- ii. have been subject to consultation with the local community.**

- 11.16 In the interest of giving priority to pedestrian and cycle movements and creating safe and secure layouts, policy Mart29 offers support to development required to implement traffic management measures that are sympathetically designed and have the support of the community. Traffic management is a matter that causes much debate and potential traffic management measures are several. We expect any development proposal that affects a long-term change in traffic behaviour to be the subject of a full consultation with the community and the proposed scheme to have the backing of the Parish Council.
- 11.17 Guidance on what would be appropriate in an area of special architectural and historic character can be found in the Conservation Area Appraisal and the Martock Village Design Statement⁷¹.

⁷⁰ <http://www.martockonline.co.uk/UserFiles/File/1892-2016>

⁷¹ <http://www.martockplan.org.uk/Documents/Supportingdocs/VDS.pdf>

The provision of improved disabled access arrangements to public buildings will be strongly supported.

- 11.18 Too many of the public buildings of the Parish have inappropriate access arrangements that discriminate against those with disabilities. We recognise that tackling this problem is not easy for some of the historic buildings of the Parish. However, we do believe that safe and suitable access to for all people should be the aim.
- 11.19 Policy Mart30 provides in principle support, for improved disabled access arrangements to public buildings throughout the Parish. Further guidance will be found in the Martock Village Design Statement⁷².

12. Community Wellbeing

Overview

- 12.1 Martock comprises the historic settlement areas of Bower Hinton, Hurst, Martock, Coat, Highway, Parrett Works and Stapleton. At first appearance, it seems a traditional long South Somerset village (about 2.5 miles from north to south), but it also comprises some large housing estates to the east and west of the main settlement that have been built within the last 50 years. The 2011 Census put the total population of Martock parish at 4,766 - the size of a small town. Since 1964 the population of the UK has grown by approximately 18.7%. In comparison, the population of Martock has grown by 114% since 1961.
- 12.2 However, it lacks many of the facets that normally characterise a town, such as a definable town centre, a bank, secondary school, hospital, police station, DWP job centre or large supermarket. The lack of local services in Martock is in part due to the fact that over 50% of parishioners in employment and 100% of young people over the age of 11 commute out of Martock every weekday for work or school. Martock remains a large village, a status that most parishioners wish to retain.
- 12.3 The growth of Martock as a community has not been matched with the necessary growth in infrastructure. As a community, we are very reliant on major towns, particularly Yeovil, for the provision of key services such as education and health.
- 12.4 As regards education for younger children, there are several successful local pre-school groups that serve the Parish. Martock's primary education needs are met largely within its parish boundaries, by Martock Church of England Primary School and, within a mile, at Ash Church of England Primary School. The local primary school is popular and was over-subscribed (winter 2018/19). The network of support groups for younger families is considerable, but largely voluntary.
- 12.5 Within the boundaries of the Parish there is a GP surgery, dentist, chemist and an optician. The Martock Practice also has a surgery at the new health complex at South Petherton, which includes South Petherton Community Hospital and a chemist. Access to other health and wellbeing services require parishioners to travel. Yeovil District Hospital provides acute admissions and supports most out-patient's appointments. Yeovil also provides access for Adult and Children Social Care, Mental Health Support, Job Centre Plus and provision for Training and Work Programmes.
- 12.6 The Parish has a very active community and social life, this is reflected in the wide range of clubs, societies and community groups that are active in the Parish⁷³. The array of suitable places and spaces available for community activity is a contributory factor. The 'Our Place Martock' team were asked if they considered current leisure facilities and spaces in the Parish fit for purpose. The reply we received was *"yes, facilities are looked after by the Parish Council and are kept to a high standard. There is a specific sub-committee 'Buildings and Open Spaces' that look after these facilities. Keeping them fit for purpose is part of their role. Recently the pavilion has been re-decorated, changes to the Parish hall have been made and the outdoor spaces are always being discussed to enhance them for the residents"*.
- 12.7 Martock Recreation Ground, off Stoke Road, is the focus of organised recreation/sport in the Parish. It serves the recreation needs of a much wider area and hosts some district-wide events. It covers 22 acres of parkland and is easily accessible, with a large car park. It is one of the largest village-located recreation spaces in Somerset. It has long needed additional sports club facilities, which remains the focus of a fund-raising campaign.

Policy No. Mart31	Existing Community Facilities
<p>Development proposals to ensure that locally valued community facilities remain viable and suitable for community use will usually be supported.</p> <p>Proposals for the redevelopment or change of use of community facilities, which require planning permission, will only be supported where:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. there is no reasonable prospect of viable continued use of the existing building or facility which will benefit the local community; ii. they have been subject to consultation with the local community; and, iii. it will provide an alternative use for which there is local support. 	

- 12.8 The community facilities such as the Parish Hall, the Market House, the Library, Martock Youth Centre, the churches and church halls serve a range of community functions and purposes. They provide space for health and wellbeing surgeries and groups. They host many social activities and are used for a range of indoor leisure and recreation purposes. The community facilities and spaces we have play an important part in sustaining community life and cohesion.
- 12.9 The NPPF (para. 92) encourage us to *“guard against the unnecessary loss of valued facilities and services, particularly where this would reduce the community’s ability to meet its day-to-day needs”*. The Government introduced changes to the Use Classes Order in England on 1st September 2020, notably with the introduction of a new Use Class E, incorporating shops, financial and professional services, cafe/restaurants, offices, research and development businesses, clinics, health centres, day nurseries, day centres and gymnasiums. As a result, not all changes of use of community facilities now require planning permission.
- 12.10 Policy EP15 in the Local Plan focusses on local shops, post office, public house, community or cultural facility and protects them from loss unless they are proven to be *“unviable as demonstrated by a viability assessment”*. The Local Plan also recognises the value of community halls, which are multi-purpose buildings often provided by the community for the community. *“They provide space and facilities for a range of local activities and increasingly for community services. It is therefore important that community halls are maintained and enhanced and where new communities are being formed or expanded through new development, there is an intention to ensure adequate provision of community hall space”*.
- 12.11 Policy Mart31 protects existing community halls and community facilities unless they are deemed as being no longer required or suitable for community use. In recognition that community interests and demands can change over-time, the policy supports necessary alterations or extensions to community facilities to ensure that they can continue to provide for community activity and services, so long as they conform with other policies in the Neighbourhood Plan.
- 12.12 South Somerset District Council is *“pleased to note recognition of retail and service functions as significant facets of the local economy”*⁷⁴. The stance towards maintaining and enhancing community facilities through Policy Mart31, and Policy Mart32, has been welcomed by the District Council and confirmed as being in accordance with Policy EP15 of the adopted Local Plan.

⁷⁴ Comments on Pre-Submission Version of the Neighbourhood Plan, SSDC, 20 Aug 2019

Development proposals to facilitate new or additional community services and facilities within the area will be supported where they meet a need identified by the community, or by a body with statutory responsibility for a particular service, providing:

- i. they do not undermine the viability or vitality of existing facilities;
- ii. they do not create unacceptable noise, fumes, smell or other disturbance to neighbouring residential properties;
- iii. they do not cause traffic congestion, adverse traffic impact upon local amenity or adverse impact on traffic flow on local roads; and
- iv. access and off-street parking can be satisfactorily provided without harming existing residential and other uses.

- 12.13 Our sustainability as a community would be much enhanced by the availability and delivery of local services, not least because it would reduce the need to travel distances by motor vehicle. At present parishioners must add to the traffic travelling to Yeovil for most health services, for instance. The Community Plan Household Survey 2017⁷⁵ identified how important health facilities are to local people (93%, 172 respondents, finding them 'extremely/very important'). The 'Our Place Martock'⁷⁶ project highlighted how many parishioners are disadvantaged because of distance from health, social, welfare and other services. The Project is working hard to reduce dependency on many of these services. This does require providing local support, improving access to services, tackling loneliness and social isolation and improving employment opportunities and prospects. It does require having accessible services and facilities available in the local area.
- 12.14 The NPPF (para.92) encourages us to plan positively for the provision and use of shared space, community facilities. The Martock Community Partnership brings together a range of service providers *"to work together to build a safe, vibrant, fully inclusive and thriving community, in which we are all proud to live and work"*⁷⁷.
- 12.15 We are proud of the community facilities we have (see paragraph 12.8) but recognise they have their limits and constraints, particularly as several of them are also historic buildings on confined sites. The new Martock Community Plan, for instance, recognises the limitations of the Youth Centre and includes a commitment to explore *"realistic options appraisal to provide a new youth centre that will meet the future needs of Martock for youth provision in a cost-effective manner"*⁷⁸. Policy Mart32 is supportive of the development of additional community facilities if there is an identifiable local need.

⁷⁵ <http://www.martockonline.co.uk/UserFiles/File/1528.pdf>

⁷⁶ The 'Our Place' initiative now continues under the more general heading of 'Community Services'

⁷⁷ 'Making the Most of Martock', Community Partnership Constitution

<http://www.martockonline.co.uk/UserFiles/File/18.pdf>

⁷⁸ <http://www.martockonline.co.uk/UserFiles/File/1802.pdf>

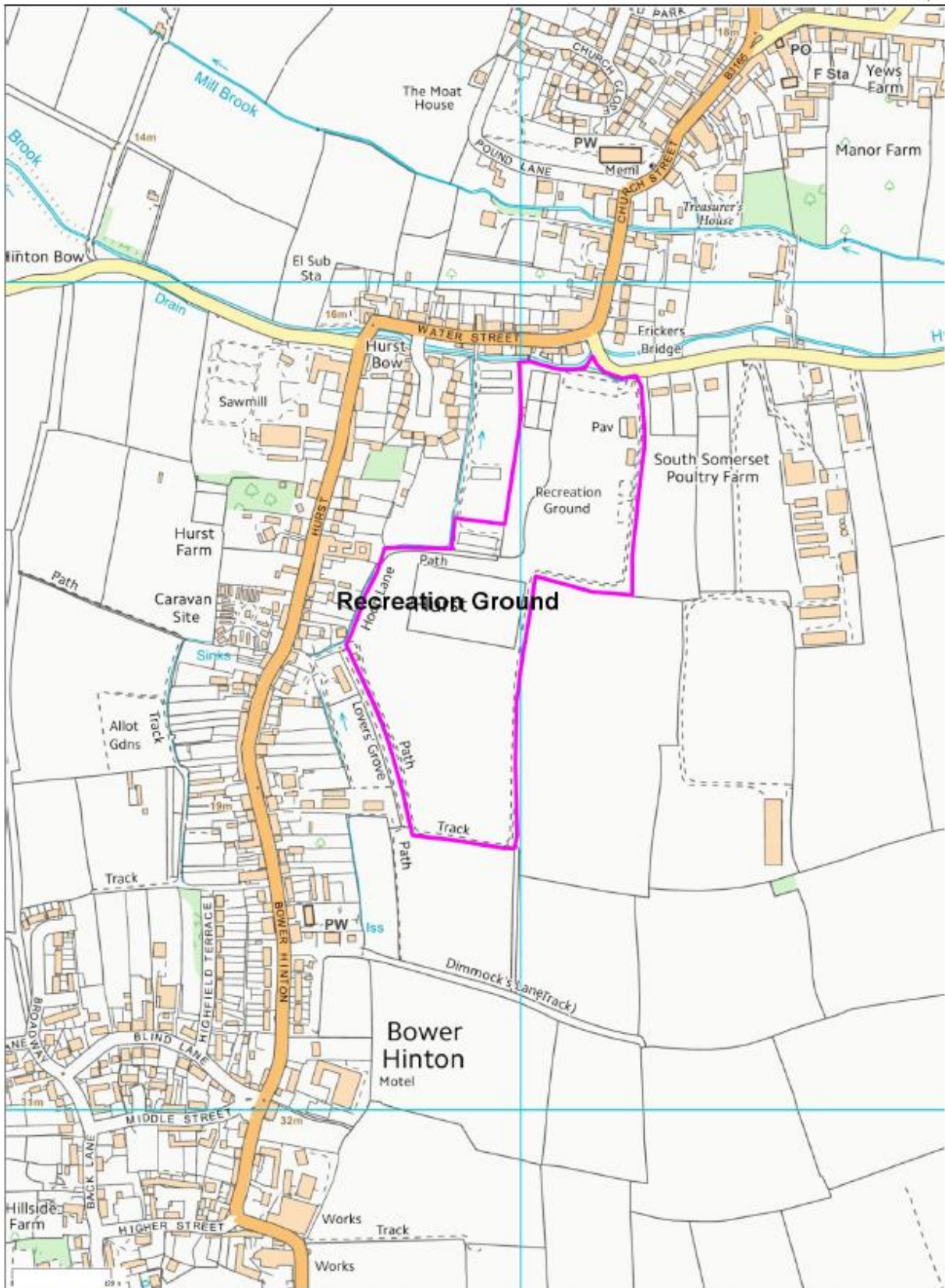
- 1. Sports and recreation facilities and pitches at Martock Recreation Ground will be safeguarded. Proposals which result in a loss of sports and recreation facilities and pitches and/or their capacity and/or their availability for community use at the site (shown on Map 10) will only be supported where the development is for alternative sports and recreational provision, the need for which clearly outweighs the loss. Proposals which replace existing facilities and pitches should demonstrate that they benefit the community and there is secured community access.**
- 2. Proposals to provide additional outdoor sports and recreational facilities that meet identified local needs and broaden recreation opportunities are supported where they comply with other policies of this Plan.**

- 12.16 The NPPF (para. 97) makes it plain that existing open space, sports and recreational buildings and land, including playing fields, *“should not be built on unless they are proven to be surplus to requirements or they are being replaced by something equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity and quality in a suitable location”*.
- 12.17 Martock Recreation Ground is the focus of recreation and sports activity in the Parish. It covers 22 acres of parkland and includes facilities for a wide range of outdoor activities such as football, rugby, cricket and tennis. It has a MUGA⁷⁹ and several types of children’s play facilities. It also has a pavilion with changing and showering facilities, which does need up-grading. The new Martock Community Plan 2018–2023 has identified some key improvements and enhancements to ensure the Recreation Ground continues to meet modern recreation demands.
- 12.18 Policy Mart33 puts protection in place for this important area of sporting and other recreational activities, delineated on Map 10. However, we are not just intent on protecting it from loss of area or facilities as a result of development. We are supportive of improvements and additional facilities on the site that help meet local recreational needs and promote increased participation.
- 12.19 The provision of sufficient community infrastructure in the Parish to encourage healthy leisure and recreational activities and meet the growing and changing leisure needs and demands of the population is an important aspect of the community’s agenda. The NPPF (para. 96) recognises that *“access to a network of high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and physical activity is important for the health and well-being of communities”*.
- 12.20 The Parish Council will work closely with the local planning authority and other appropriate bodies to maintain a robust and up-to-date assessment of the local needs for open space, sports and recreation facilities and opportunities for new provision, taking into account the latest levels and standards of provision.
- 12.21 Policy Mart33 supports development proposals to provide additional outdoor sports and recreational facilities should the need be identified. We expect the local community to be involved in the detailed planning of sports facilities, which should be informed by the design guidance on offer from Sport England⁸⁰ to ensure they are fit for purpose.

⁷⁹ MUGA = Multi Use Games Area

⁸⁰ Active Design, from Sport England, provides ten principles to help ensure the design and layout of development encourages and promotes participation in sport and physical activity

<https://www.sportengland.org/media/3964/spe003-active-design-published-october-2015-high-quality-for-web-2.pdf>



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13. Monitoring the Neighbourhood Plan

- 13.1 There is no statutory requirement for the impact of the Neighbourhood Plan and its policies to be monitored.
- 13.2 Martock Parish Council will monitor the impact of policies on change in the neighbourhood area by considering the effectiveness of the policies in the planning application decision-making process. We will do this by referring to this Plan when reviewing planning applications. We will keep a record of the application, any applicable neighbourhood plan policies, and comments from the Parish Council, together with the eventual outcome of the application.
- 13.3 A full or partial review of this Plan may be triggered by changes to legislation, changes to national or county-wide or district planning policies or significant planning issues being raised by the local community which cannot be dealt with effectively by a combination of national, district and/or existing neighbourhood plan policies. Five years from the date the Plan is made, we will consider the need and value in undertaking some form of Neighbourhood Plan Review.

14. Glossary

The following terms may be used in the Martock Parish Neighbourhood Plan:

Affordable Housing - Social rented, affordable rented and intermediate housing, provided to eligible households whose needs are not met by the market.

Ancient Woodland – a woodland which has existed since the year 1600 or earlier.

Biodiversity - is the term used to describe the whole variety of life on Earth. It includes not only all species of plants and animals, but also the complex ecosystems they live within. It ranges from species and habitats which are considered commonplace to those considered critically endangered.

Biodiversity Net Gain - is an approach to development which aims to leave the natural environment in a measurably better state than beforehand.

Bridleways - are footpaths, but additionally users are permitted to ride or lead a horse and ride bicycles. Horse drawn vehicles are not allowed. Cyclists must give way to pedestrians and horse-riders. Motorcycling is not allowed.

Brownfield Land and Sites - Previously developed land which is or was occupied by a permanent structure, including the curtilage of the developed land and any associated fixed surface infrastructure.

Character - A term often used in relation to Conservation Areas or Listed Buildings, but also to the appearance of any rural or urban location in terms of its landscape or the layout of streets and open spaces, often giving places their own distinct identity.

Climate Change - Long-term changes in temperature, precipitation, wind and all other aspects of the Earth's climate. Often regarded as a result of human activity and fossil fuel consumption.

Conservation Area – is an area of special architectural or historic interest, designated under the Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Act 1991, whose character and appearance it is desirable to preserve and enhance. There are special rules on some development in conservation areas.

County Geological Site - sometimes also called a Regionally Important Geological Site (RIGS) County Geological Site. The geological or geomorphological equivalent of a CWS. They are non-statutory and identified by a group of experts.

County Wildlife Site (CWS) - an area of significance for its wildlife in at least a county context i.e. it may be of county, regional or even national importance.

Curtilage - The area normally within the boundaries of a property surrounding the main building and used in connection with it.

Economically Active - Persons in work or actively seeking work.

Flood Risk Assessment - An assessment of the likelihood of flooding in a particular area so that development needs and mitigation measures can be carefully considered.

Flood Zones - have been created by the Environment Agency to be used within the planning process as a starting point in determining how likely somewhere is to flood. A flood zone is predominantly a planning tool and doesn't necessarily mean somewhere will or won't flood.

General Permitted Development Order (GPDO) - The Town and Country Planning GPDO 2015 provides permitted development rights for a specified range of development, meaning that those activities do not require an application for planning permission. However, agricultural buildings and certain telecommunications equipment covered by permitted development rights are also subject to a prior approval procedure.

Green Infrastructure - is a strategic network of multi-functional green space, both new and existing, both rural and urban, which supports natural and ecological processes and is integral to the health and quality of life in sustainable communities. It provides habitats for and aids migration of wildlife, flood water storage, urban cooling and local access to shady outdoor space as well as creating attractive spaces for recreation.

Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) - A HRA tests the impacts of a proposal on nature conservation sites of European importance and is a requirement under EU legislation for land use plans and projects.

HELAA: Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment – previously SHLAA (Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment) a Government requirement of local planning authorities. Its purpose is to identify sites with potential for housing and employment purposes; assess their development potential; and assess when they are likely to be developed.

Infrastructure - the necessary supporting ‘infrastructure’ of utility services, transport, schools, open space, community, health and leisure services.

Infrastructure Delivery Plan – is a framework for private and public investment. It identifies as far as possible the infrastructure needs of growth and/or new development, and the associated costs, phasing, funding sources and responsibilities for delivery.

Landscape Character Area (LCA) - Single unique areas that are the discrete geographical area of a specific landscape type.

Listed Buildings - Buildings which have been recognised by Historic England (formerly English Heritage) as having special architectural or historic interest.

Local Green Space - Green areas of particular importance to local communities, which meet the criteria of the NPPF (para. 100), designated as ‘local green space’ to provide special protection against development.

Local Plan - A portfolio or folder of documents (Development Plan Documents (DPDs) and Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs), setting out the planning strategy for a local planning authority area.

Local Planning Authority - The public body whose duty it is to carry out specific planning functions for a specific area. All references to local planning authority apply in this Plan to South Somerset District Council

NPPF - The National Planning Policy Framework sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. It sets out the Government's requirements for the planning system only to the extent that it is relevant, proportionate and necessary to do so. It provides a framework within which local people and their accountable councils can produce their own distinctive local and neighbourhood plans, which reflect the needs and priorities of communities.

Neighbourhood Plan - A plan prepared by a town or parish council or a neighbourhood forum for a specific neighbourhood area (made under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004).

PPG - National Planning Practice Guidance is a web-based resource which brings together planning guidance on various topics into one place. It was launched in March 2014 and coincided with the cancelling of the majority of Government Circulars which had previously given guidance on many aspects of planning.

Permissive Paths - It is possible for landowners to allow access over their land without dedicating a right of way. These accesses are called permissive paths. To the user, they are often indistinguishable from normal highways, but there are some important differences:

- a permissive path must have some sign or similar indication that it is not intended to be a right of way
- the landowner can close off or divert the path if they wish to do so, without any legal process being involved
- the landowner can make restrictions which would not normally apply to highways, for example to allow horse riding but not cycling, or the other way around

Public Right of Way - is a highway over which the public have a right of access along the route.

Ridge and Furrow – is an archaeological pattern of ridges and troughs created by a system of ploughing used in Europe during the Middle Ages, typical of the open field system.

Qualifying Body - Either a parish/town council or neighbourhood forum, which can initiate the process of neighbourhood planning.

Section 106 - The section of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 that provided for the creation of planning obligations, now replaced by Section 46 of the 2004 Act. Section 106 agreements allow local authorities to ensure that developers provide the infrastructure needed to support new developments. Often referred to as “planning gain”.

Scheduled Monument - is an historic building or site of national importance that is included in the Schedule of Monuments kept by the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport. The regime is set out in the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979 (1).

Stepping Stones - unconnected areas of semi-natural habitat close to corridors, allowing more mobile species to move through the landscape.

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) - A procedure (set out in the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004) which requires the formal environmental assessment of certain plans and programmes which are likely to have significant effects on the environment.

Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) - is a study of the way the housing market works in any particular area. It looks into the type of households living in the area, where they work and what sort of housing they live in. It attempts to estimate future housing needs across the area, broken down by tenure and size of housing.

SuDS - A solution which manages surface and groundwater sustainably by mimicking natural drainage regimes and avoiding the direct channelling of surface water through networks of pipes and sewers to nearby watercourses. SuDS aim to reduce surface water flooding, improve water quality and enhance the amenity and biodiversity value of the environment.

Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) - Documents which add further detail to the policies in the Local Plan. They can be used to provide further guidance for development on specific sites, or on particular issues, such as design. Supplementary planning documents are capable of being a material consideration in planning decisions but are not part of the development plan.

Sustainability Appraisal (SA) - The consideration of policies and proposals to assess their impact on sustainable development objectives.

Sustainable Development - is development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

Use Classes - The Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 put uses of land and buildings into various categories. Planning permission is not needed for changes of use within the same use class.

Wildlife Corridor - Areas of habitat connecting wildlife populations.



Private Sector Housing Grant Policy

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Purpose of the Report

1. For Members to consider amendments and adopt the Policy for Awarding Private Sector Housing Grants/Loans and other Financial Assistance in Appendix 1 of this report.

Forward Plan

2. This report appeared on the District Executive Forward Plan with an anticipated Committee date of 4th March 2021.

Public Interest

3. With increased housing pressures the Government continues to see working with the private sector as being increasingly important in order for local authorities to meet their statutory responsibilities to deal with empty properties, disrepair, homelessness, overcrowding and other related housing matters. This is even more relevant after the impacts of Covid 19. The provision of financial assistance is considered an integral part of any strategy to improve housing conditions, maintain the current housing stock and encourage vacant premises to be brought back into use. In addition there is a need to save money in the NHS/Social services by helping disabled people to continue living in their homes and by accelerating hospital discharge.
4. There is a clear link between poor housing and ill health and the Council has had a policy of offering loans and grants to improve housing conditions for many years now. This report presents some revisions to that policy to reflect changes that will address the current needs. These grants and loans also support energy efficiency measures which will contribute to the carbon reduction targets set by the Council in its Environment Strategy.

Recommendations

5. That the District Executive



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- a) Agrees the amendments to the existing policy concerning the provision of financial assistance for private sector housing and associated matters, including disabled facilities grants, to be adopted as the future policy of the Council. The changes are highlighted in yellow in the Policy document Private Sector Housing Grants/Loans and other Financial Assistance.

Background

6. The last Policy for Awarding Private Sector Housing Grants/Loans and other Financial Assistance was adopted in January 2020. This is a revised version of the previously agreed policy and whilst much of it remains the same there are a number of small changes to make the use of the Better Care funding more flexible, fine tune the measures and update information. The updated policy changes are highlighted for ease of reference. The adoption of this policy does not commit nor imply that any funds will be available to be spent on the grants, loans or other financial assistance outlined but rather sets out the criteria which will be applied when providing such financial assistance if and when funds are available.
7. It is pleasing to report that the changes made to the Policy last year have generated more interest in landlords taking up grants and loans to bring empty properties back into use. The empty property grant with the amended conditions is now encouraging professional landlords/property developers to identify vacant premises with a view to providing new units of accommodation and the portion of the grant exclusively for energy efficiency/carbon reduction actively promotes improvements in this. The increase in the maximum loan has also positively enhanced the likelihood for take up of loans. The maximum loan that is now available means that landlords can generally access enough funding to complete the project whereas previously the loan amount would be unlikely to cover all works.

Report Detail – policy changes

8. There are various changes to the layout and minor wording changes to clarify meaning and allow easier reading and reference. These do not change the policy regarding what grant or amount would be awarded and so these changes are not highlighted in the attached policy document. Changes to the criteria or amount of grant or loan are all highlighted in yellow to assist identifying the revised policy proposals.
9. Section 3 outlines the Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) policy. The only change in this section is at 3.1.4 c. Fast track. This proposal is to allow the specialists to agree funding in urgent cases without the need for a means test. The reason for this is that the means testing process significantly slows down the application process and can cause problematic delays where there is an urgent medical need for an adaptation. These circumstances are not common but do occur and this change will allow some flexibility to address these challenging cases.
10. It has been recognised for some years that allowing additional discretionary DFG elements is highly beneficial to provide flexibility to address the adaptations needs of some individuals preventing hospital admission and drain on NHS resource. The



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proposals introduce some additional discretionary measures which can be included as part of DFG work subject to funding and suitability assessment. These include dealing with cold homes known to contribute to poor health, dangerous living conditions which create trip and fall hazards and maintenance of equipment seen as crucial to safety of adaptations.

11. The first change in section 3.2 is to allow the decision for a discretionary DFG to be taken by the lead specialist and Case Services Manager without the need for referral to the exceptions and appeals panel. Previously only a set number could be agreed in this way. The limit for mandatory DFGs has not changed for many years and we are seeing an increasing need for top up elements as the cost of works has increased without the mandatory element allowing for that. The discretionary elements are all capped at £10,000 or less and any request beyond that would still be referred to the exceptions and appeals panel.
12. To reflect the increase in cost of works an increase to the Discretionary prevention DFG is also proposed in section 3.2.2 from £4,000 to £5,000
13. A new discretionary element is proposed at section 3.2.3 to allow funding up to £10,000 to be allocated without a means test in situations where applicants are of working age with dependants and are trying to remain in employment for as long as they can, but with rapidly deteriorating conditions. This situation can impact their financial eligibility for a DFG but does not take into account the needs and circumstances of the wider family unit. Funding the adaptations themselves can significantly impact on that family.
14. A further new proposal is at section 3.2.7 to assist with energy improvement works. Cold homes are known to contribute to ill health and helping maintain a warmer environment will assist the prevention of problems and hospital admissions. We are working with the other Somerset Districts to introduce a system to assess the energy performance of a home subject to a DFG using EPCs and then to offer funding for identified improvements in poorly rated homes.
15. The final addition is at section 3.28 which allows for funding to cover a number of smaller items which collectively with the DFG adaptations will provide a safer and more resilient home environment for the client.
16. Other grants are covered in section 4. In section 4.1 the amount of repair grant that can be allocated is proposed to increase from £2,000 to £3,000, to reflect the increase we have seen in the cost of works. The increase to £5,000 where a loan cannot be accessed remains the same.
17. Section 5 relates to loans and this section has been updated to reflect the name change of Wessex Resolutions CIC to Lendology. This change does not affect the loans offered. We have also clarified that all loans offered must be approved by the Council. Minor changes are proposed to clarify what loans can be offered for, extending the previous restrictions of category 1 hazards to significant hazards. Smart control systems are also added to the list of potential energy measures. The



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addition of 5.1 (7) also addresses the ability to offer a loan for expanding households.

18. The loan criteria in 5.1 bullet 3 has been amended to clarify the assessment of vulnerability as financial vulnerability as assessed by Lendology.
19. Item 5.2 (8) has been amended to clarify that nomination rights will only apply if a loan is offered in conjunction with an empty property grant. Nomination rights would be overly restrictive and not appropriate in others circumstances.
20. The final change is a minor amendment to the House in Multiple Occupation (HMO) schedule of works in Appendix 3 simply to include initiatives for contributing towards air source and ground source heating systems in the grant offer. No change has been made to the maximum grant of £7,500 as a whole for each HMO property regardless of the amendment.

Consultation

21. Consultation discussions have taken place with Lendology who administer the loans. They have actively supported these changes to encourage more uptake of the loans and to bring our policy more in line with many others in the scheme.
22. The changes relating to the use of DFG funding are mainly to clarify what is already in place. Ongoing discussions have taken place with other districts in terms of DFG provision and how the Better Care funding is spent across our services for prevention works. Similar ongoing discussions take place with the occupational therapists.

Financial Implications

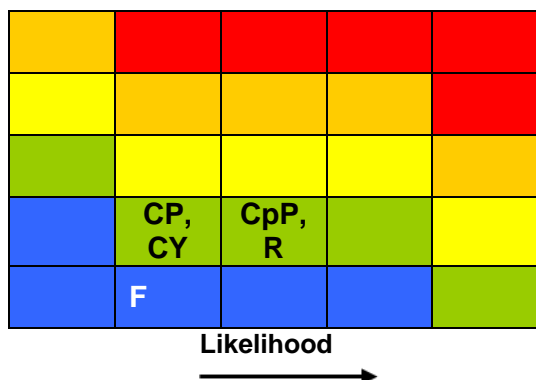
23. All capital spending associated with this updated policy are subject to the usual capital bidding process. No new money is being asked for at this time

Legal implications (if any) and details of Statutory Powers

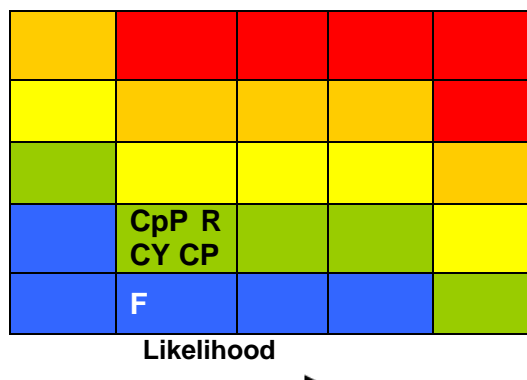
24. The grants, loans and other financial assistance are awarded under the provision of the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002 and in accordance with the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 and other relevant legislation.

Risk Matrix

Risk Profile before officer recommendations



Risk Profile after officer recommendations



Key

Categories	Colours (for further detail please refer to Risk management strategy)
R - Reputation	High impact and high probability
CpP - Corporate Plan Priorities	Major impact and major probability
CP - Community Priorities	Moderate impact and moderate probability
CY - Capacity	Minor impact and minor probability
F - Financial	Insignificant impact and insignificant probability

Council Plan Implications

25. This revised policy supports the Council Plan themes across Protecting Core Services, Environment, Places Where We Live and Healthy, Self-reliant Communities, within these areas of focus:

- Promote a high-quality built environment in line with Local Plan policies
- Match life long independent living with appropriate property solutions
- Support older people to live and age well by increasing independence, reducing loneliness, and improving financial security
- Work with partners to support people in improving their own physical and mental health and wellbeing
- Deliver a high quality, effective and timely service to our customers and communities

Carbon Emissions and Climate Change Implications

26. The adoption of this policy aligns with the climate change agenda, supporting actions in the Environment Strategy to help reduce carbon emission with the private sector housing stock. All grant aided works will meet the latest building Regulation requirements and therefore help reduce carbon emissions. Energy efficiency work will also reduce the need for heating and hence reduce fossil fuel use contributing to the Councils carbon reduction targets for the district.

Equality and Diversity Implications



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27. A stage 1 Equality Analysis (EqA) has previously been completed and as this report does not pose any significant change that would impact on any of the protected characteristics a further impact analysis is not required.

Privacy Impact Assessment

28. The policy which is the subject of this report does not in itself involve the processing or handing of personal data. The provision of specific grants and loans in accordance with this policy would involve the handling of personal data a privacy impact assessment is being carried out on the procedures and service design of this service.

Background Papers

Private Sector Housing Strategy 2015-19
Empty Homes Strategy



South Somerset District Council

Private Sector Housing Grants/Loans and Other Financial Assistance Policy

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1. Introduction

This Policy replaces the current version and describes the purpose for which grants, loans and other financial assistance will be provided by South Somerset District Council for private sector housing in compliance with the above requirement. This is to meet both targets set down in the Council plan and legal requirements as well as any strategic direction given by the Health and Wellbeing Board and/or Clinical Commissioning group in particular with regard Better Care fund allocation

Such grants, loans and other financial assistance are awarded under the provision of the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002 and in accordance with the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 and other relevant legislation. Grant aid will be available for the provision of Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs), Home Repair Grants, Empty Property Grants and HMO Grants. Loans will also be available for similar purposes. Wherever possible loans will be used in preference to grants as it is clearly more cost effective to do so. All grants awarded are discretionary, with the exception of DFGs, and will only be awarded subject to the funds available within the capital programme.

2. Grant and Loan Amounts

Type	Min	Max	Repayment Period/Condition
DFG – mandatory	-	£30,000	<£5,000 = 5 years >£5,000 = 10 years
– fast track		£5,000	5 years
DFG - discretionary		£10,000	<£5,000 = 5 years >£5,000 = 10 years
- Prevention		£5,000	5 years
- Working age with dependants		£10,000	<£5,000 = 5 years >£5,000 = 10 years
- Relocation		£5,000	-
- Energy		£5,000	-
Repair Grant	-	£3,000	5 years
Empty Property Grant	-	£12,000	2 years
HMO Grant	-	£7,500	5 years
Loan	£1,000	£25,000	Varies with each case
Loan (gypsies & travellers)	£1,000	£15,000	Secured
Loan (gypsies & travellers)		£5,000	Unsecured

Table 1 - showing grant maximum amounts, loan maximum and minimum amounts along with condition of period where grant repayment is required where there is a breach of the future occupation or if a relevant disposal of the property takes place

3. Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) – Helping Disabled People in Need

The Better Care Fund (BCF) provides funding to the Council to deliver disabled adaptations. It is a programme spanning both the NHS and local government designed to join-up health and social care services so that people, often the most vulnerable in society, can manage their own health and wellbeing, live independently and benefit from integrated services. This partnership approach is very much in line with the Council's vision, resulting in an improved experience and better quality of life for South Somerset residents.

Increased funding for Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) has continued over the last few years through this Fund. DFGs are awarded to disabled applicants to provide specialist facilities to enable them to remain in their homes. Typically these include stair lifts, handrails, bathroom/kitchen adaptations and heating as well as larger scale extensions for more complex needs. It is recognised that by providing such facilities the need for re-housing is reduced, as is the need for lengthy hospital stays or more complex care packages.

3.1 Mandatory DFGs

Subject to a test of financial resources, DFGs are subject to an assessment and referral by Somerset Social Care. Typically, an Occupational Therapist (OT) will identify the works that are necessary and appropriate to the person's disability. The Council will then make an assessment of what work is reasonable and practicable (to the circumstances of the case) and consider an application for grant funding. As appropriate to demand, referrals from Social Care may be prioritised in order to target limited resources to those most at risk. The Council may fund minor aids and adaptation without the need for a high level assessment.

The policy regarding mandatory DFGs is as follows:

- a. There is currently a limit of £30,000 for each mandatory DFG approval.
- b. DFGs are mandatory and in all cases are subject to an assessment of need by Social Care, usually an Occupational Therapist.
- c. The works have to be necessary and appropriate, reasonable and practicable as specified by legislation and guidance.
- d. The purposes for which a DFG must be approved (subject to eligibility and to the test of resources) are specifically defined in section 23 of the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 (as amended), summarised as follows:
 - (1) Grants are provided for one of the following reasons:
 - (2) Facilitating access to and from the dwelling or building, including the garden, by the disabled occupant
 - (3) Making the dwelling or building safe for the disabled occupant
 - (4) Access to the principal family room by the disabled occupant
 - (5) Access to or providing a bedroom for the disabled occupant
 - (6) Access to or providing a room containing a bath or shower for the disabled occupant or facilitating the use by the disabled occupant of such a facility
 - (7) Access to or providing a room containing a WC for the disabled occupant or facilitating the use by the disabled occupant of such a facility

- (8) Access to or providing a room containing a wash hand basin for the disabled occupant or facilitating the use by the disabled occupant of such a facility
 - (9) Facilitating the preparation and cooking of food by the disabled person
 - (10) Improving or providing a heating system for the disabled person
 - (11) Facilitating the use of power, light or heat by the disabled person by altering same or by providing additional means of control
 - (12) Facilitating access and movement around the dwelling to enable the disabled person to provide care for someone
 - (13) Making the dwelling or building suitable for the accommodation, welfare of employment of the disabled person
- e. The disabled person and any partner are means tested to determine the amount of their contribution towards the cost of the works. Applicants are exempt from a financial assessment and will receive a full grant if either the disabled person or their partner receive a means tested benefit as follows:
- income support,
 - income based Job Seekers Allowance,
 - Working Tax Credits with a maximum income that is subject to national periodic review,
 - housing benefit,
 - Disabled Persons Tax Credits,
 - Employment & Support Allowance income related,
 - Universal Credit,
 - Guaranteed Pension Credit.
 - Council tax reduction will now be considered as a passporting benefit along with the income related benefits above
- f. If the disabled person is a child or qualifying young person, the parents are not means tested.
- g. The applicant must be either an owner or a tenant and must agree that it is their intention to remain in the property for the period of the grant condition (usually 5 years from completion of the works).
- h. The property owner must give their permission for the work to be carried out.
- i. An application is only approved by the Council if it is considered reasonable and practicable to carry out the relevant works having regard to the age, character, location and condition of the dwelling or building concerned and the overall complexity and costs of works.
- j. A DFG cannot be approved for work that has already taken place.

3.1.2 Prevention work and fast tracking

Prevention is a term used to describe work and services required to be delivered quickly to improve health outcomes for people and reduce the need for extra medical care or assistance. Grant funding towards works, equipment and functions may be made available to assist people in order to prevent future occurrences of ill-health, hospital admissions and on-going difficulties.

Due to the nature of these requirements and the need to act quickly, these will be administered outside of the usual DFG process allowing social care professionals to quickly facilitate essential adaptations to enable people to leave hospital and remain in their own homes, subject to availability and funding.

3.1.3 Minor adaptations

SSDC will support the prevention agenda in partnership with Somerset County Council to enable minor adaptations to be provided for disabled and vulnerable residents, and to support vulnerable people to remain living safely and independently. This may be for a grab rail, specialist equipment or minor alterations to the framework of the building to enable wheel chair access.

This funding could also be used for clearing cluttered rooms to allow access to facilitate rapid hospital discharge. The list is not exhaustive. The following policy applies:

- a. Minor adaptations are subject to a maximum grant of £1000
- b. These grants are not subject to a means test
- c. Eligibility is based upon an assessment and recommendation by an Occupational Therapist from Somerset County Council or from the hospital.
- d. Funding will be provided, following prior agreement, to the Joint Community Equipment Service managed by Somerset Social Services using Trusted Assessors who work with the Occupational Therapists.

3.1.4 Hospital discharge and admission prevention

Funding will continue to be available from the Better Care Fund for the provision of services and equipment that will help facilitate early release from hospital or prevent admission to hospital. Where advised by a hospital OT / health care professional / partner agency of the need to quickly for these reasons, SSDC may facilitate this by funding relatively small works to allow a patient to safely and quickly return home or prevent admission to hospital.

The following specific policy applies:

a. Ramps

1. Where a request for a ramp is received via an Occupational Therapist, in the first instance modular ramping is the preferred method.
2. All ramping requests will be agreed by the duly appointed officer and Quality Assurance Officers at Somerset County Council.
3. Concrete ramps will only be considered where it is not practicable to install modular ramps.
4. Adequate funding will be provided to conjointly procure modular ramping with Somerset County Council as part of the Community Equipment Service.

b. Stair lifts

1. Any urgent request (hospital discharge etc.) for a straight run stair lift via an Occupational Therapist will be supplied by an agreed provider to ensure prompt installation to meet the urgent need.
2. Due to the need to act quickly requests as in a. above will not be subject to means-testing.
3. The stair lift will be sourced from recycled stock where available, or failing that, a new one will be provided.
4. A curved or non-urgent stair lift will be subject to the full DFG process. We will provide an amount to be agreed each year to fund this work.

c. Fast Track

Where there is an urgent exceptional need to progress works, usually due to medical circumstances, work up to the value of £5,000 will not be means tested. This will be at the discretion of the Specialist Environmental Health Officer along with the Lead Specialist Environment

3.2 Discretionary DFGs

In addition to mandatory DFGs, the local authority will consider an application for assistance falling outside of the mandatory categories of work. Each case will be determined on its own merits and is subject to available resources

The decision to award the discretionary DFG will be made by the Specialist Environmental Health Officer along with the Lead Specialist, Environment along with the Case Services Manager. Any request for funding other than this will be referred to the Exceptions and Appeals Panel

3.2.1 Discretionary top-up DFG

- a. A discretionary top up of up to £10,000 will be offered where the cost of eligible works exceeds the mandatory grant limit.
- b. Any request for funding other than this will be referred to the Exceptions and Appeals Panel

3.2.2 Discretionary prevention DFG

1. A grant of up to £5,000 will be considered in limited circumstances for disabled or vulnerable occupants

- a. whose needs have been approved by the Social Care OT or referred from a partner agency;
- b. whose needs do not fall within the mandatory DFG criteria;
- c. who cannot raise sufficient funds by other means and there is no realistic probability of the person's needs being met other than by a discretionary grant;
- d. whose situation is such that having to pay a contribution/self-fund would have a severe, adverse and detrimental effect on their wellbeing and family life.

2. We will expect other sources of funding to have been explored prior to agreeing any discretionary grant and will consider each case on its own merits.

3. DFGs will be available to the occupants of mobile homes as well as traditional houses.

4. DFGs will be available to adapt a dwelling to enable a disabled person who lives or proposes to live in the dwelling as his or her only or main residence to be cared for (this allows for a situation where someone wishes to bring an elderly disabled relative to come and live with them).

3.2.3 Discretionary DFG for Applicants of working age with dependants

Applicants of working age with rapidly deteriorating or terminal conditions (such as Motor Neurone Disease [MND]) can find themselves ineligible financially for a DFG due to remaining employed for as long as they can, sometimes on sick leave. The long term loss of income and pension can have a substantial impact on the family and may still have significant outgoings including mortgage payments and child care.

Disabled applicants of working age with a dependent child or young person, on the recommendation of Social Care, will not be means tested for grants of up to £10,000. This will facilitate the urgent provision of adaptations such as stairlifts, wash dry toilets and accessible showers subject to available resources.

3.2.4 Discretionary Relocation DFG

When a disabled person and their family are eligible for a DFG, the cost of relocating to a more suitable property will be considered where it is more cost effective than adapting an applicant's current home. The amount of funding will be assessed in the same way as a DFG/Discretionary DFG and an OT must assess the new home to meet or potentially meet the needs of the disabled occupant. This could also include the cost of providing temporary mobile home accommodation in situations where someone's house was beyond the cost of economic repair.

Funding will be considered on a case by case basis and will be limited to the actual cost of moving. Costs that may be covered include: legal, estate agent and survey fees; stamp duty and removal costs. Funding of up to £5,000 will be provided for this purpose.

Note: Extra DFG funding is available for certain Ex Service personnel.

3.2.5 Discretionary funding to Lendology

It is proposed to provide Lendology with funding from the Better Care Fund to increase the ability for some applicants to be able to afford repayments on loan packages who otherwise would not be able. If for instance an applicant could only afford to service a loan for £5,000 and the works cost £6,000 then a top up grant of this amount could be given. It is intended to allocate £10,000 for this purpose.

Loans are available up to a maximum of £25,000 to assist disabled residents who either fall outside of the mandatory DFG criteria, to top-up a DFG, to cover an applicant's contribution (if they have one) or as an alternative option. For more information, refer to Loan policy.

3.2.6 Funding to pay for Housing Occupational Therapists (OTs)

One of the matters causing delays in hospital discharge in the past has been the lack of OTs to organise and stipulate the care packages and equipment required. To address this problem funding will be provided (£40,000, or other amount agreed each year) to assist the provision of a Housing OT to help assess applicants for DFGs and speed up the DFG process. This Housing OT would only be working in South Somerset to assist our local residents. Further funding may be allocated subject to availability and will be from the Better Care Fund and subject to availability.

3.2.7 Discretionary Energy Efficiency with DFG

Subject to contractors being sourced and funding being available recipients of DFGs will be offered a free EPC as part of the DFG process (where there is not a current EPC in place). Where the EPC rating is D or lower (D, E, F, G), and where external grant funding is not available, in appropriate circumstances a contribution of up to £5,000 towards the recommended works and works to improve the energy efficiency of the property may be offered, as part of the DFG process. This is subject to DFG criteria, grant limits and available funding.

3.2.8 Additional discretionary provision

1. **Warranties:** Where appropriate, we will include (as appropriate) extended warranties as part of the tendering process. This is likely to cover equipment such as stair lifts, through floor lifts, step lifts and intercom systems for particularly vulnerable people.

2. **Assistive technology:** Where assistive technology can be used to enhance independent living, this will be included as part of the disability grant (subject to Social Care recommendation).
3. **Home safety:** Where additional safety concerns become apparent through the DFG process which go beyond the disabled adaptations, as appropriate and subject to available resources and funding, these works may be funded through the grant in order to make the property safe. Additional works may include but not limited to, making the electrical installation safe and clearing hoarding.
4. **Disability and wider social care initiatives:** where SSDC have sufficient funding available from the Government Better Care Fund, additional funding options will be considered that benefit local communities.

4. Housing Grants

4.1 Repair Grants - Dealing with Minor Essential Repairs

Repair Grants of up to £3,000 will be available to prevent poor housing conditions having an adverse effect on people's health. They will be provided to enable vulnerable people keep their homes weatherproof, minimise or eliminate significant hazards and meet the "Decent Homes" standard.

To be eligible for this type of assistance an applicant must:

- 1) Be an owner of a dwelling or a legal tenant who lives in the dwelling as his/her only or main residence.
- 2) Be aged 18 or over on the date of application
- 3) Have an owner's interest in the dwelling, alone or jointly with others, or be occupying the dwelling under a right of exclusive occupation granted for life with at least five years to run.
- 4) Tenants who have a legal duty or power to carry out the works in question
- 5) Be in receipt of one of the following income related benefits; income support, income based Job Seekers Allowance, Working Tax or Child Tax Credits with a maximum income that is subject to national periodic review, Housing Benefit, Council Tax Reduction, Disabled Persons Tax Credits, Employment & Support Allowance income related, Universal Credit or Guaranteed Pension Credit.
- 6) As an alternative to 3) above, an applicant may be an occupier of a mobile/park home who is presently living on a permanent licensed residential site and is liable to pay Council tax.

The purposes for which Repair Grants can be used are outlined below. All applications would be prioritised with those with the most pressing needs being dealt with first.

- a) General Repairs - for urgent and essential repairs to make sure properties are weatherproof and prevent them being a danger to the occupant. To deal with other repairs and improvements concerning matters that could adversely affect the safety and health of the occupant such as significant hazards e.g. inadequate heating, penetrating dampness, dangerous electrics and gas fittings or missing standard amenities.
- b) Radon Remediation-for works to reduce radon levels in domestic property where it exceeds the radon action level (200 Bqm³).
- c) Energy Efficiency - to contribute towards the making of properties more energy efficient where cost effective in situations where full funding from other sources is not available. This form of grant aid would allow people to apply for the cost of gas condensing and other energy efficient boilers, cavity fill, double glazing as well as more usual things, such as loft insulation, lagging of cylinder tanks, thermostatic radiator controls and energy saving fittings etc.
- d) Home Security - to pay for works to improve the security of homes not covered by other Home Security Schemes. This could include items such as deadlocks to front and rear doors, patio door locks, window locks, security spy holes, the toughening up of substandard doors and the installation of smoke alarms.
- e) In partnership with other agencies providing support to the client, we will consider requests to clear hoarding within properties and gardens to enable occupiers to live safely and independently in their homes and maintain public health.

The amount of Grant awarded will be as follows:

The maximum amount of Repair Grant awarded will be of £5,000 in any three-year period.

When offering grant aid an initial grant offer of £3,000 will be made. The client will be offered a loan to pay for any outstanding work costing more than this. In emergency situations however a full £5,000 grant may be offered.

4.2 Empty Property Grants – Creating Affordable Accommodation Units

Empty properties are of no use to anyone and therefore SSDC encourages them being brought back into use to provide accommodation and for the New Homes Bonus they attract. Therefore, the Council has a scheme where grant aid of up to £12,000 per unit can be awarded to create flats or other accommodation in property that has been standing empty for at least six months. To be eligible for an empty property grant the landlord will be required to give the Council nomination rights for two years to re-house tenants from the South Somerset Housing Register. The property will also have to be let at the LHA rent level. The grant is subject to availability.

The maximum figure of £12,000 is available but the level of award up to that amount needs to be flexible. Specialist Environmental Health and Housing Officers will have discretion to decide the amount based on the size of the unit, its value to the housing need in the area, plus the condition of the existing structure and facilities. Higher rates of grant may be available in exceptional circumstances in exchange for longer nomination rights.

The policy is that grants will be offered to owners of empty properties for renovation and/or conversions, subject to:

- 1) The amount of grant being based on a percentage of the actual cost of the works. A grant of 80% of the cost of the agreed works will be awarded until the maximum amount is reached.
- 2) It being clearly demonstrated, prior to application that the property has been stood empty for at least 6 months. Where property has been empty for less than 6 months applications can be referred to the Exceptions and Appeals Panel where they will be considered.
- 3) Agreement that rents charged during the two-year letting period would not exceed the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rate plus £50.
- 4) The property being let to tenant(s) nominated by the Council from the South Somerset Housing Needs Register for two years from the certified completion date of the grant.
- 5) The property meeting the Decent Homes Standard once all grant and other works are complete and prior to letting of the property.

In addition to this grant being awarded in 1 above, up to an extra £2,000 can be awarded for energy efficiency measures.

Empty property grants will also be available where an empty property is demolished and replaced with a new building.

4.3 HMO Grants – Creating & Improving Small Rented Accommodation Units

HMO Grants are grants designed to provide and upgrade facilities, deal with disrepair and provide and upgrade the means of escape in case of fire in houses in multiple occupation. HMOs are the lowest cost of any housing tenure and are key providers of rented accommodation for single people, often housing the young, the vulnerable and transient workers who support essential businesses/services and the local economy. Housing benefit caps means they will continue to meet an essential and increasing need. HMOs are in fact the main type of accommodation used to deal with single person housing need, and demand for HMOs has remained high.

The Council has a published HMO document that outlines the standards expected and the steps being taken to upgrade HMOs. The Housing Act 2004, as amended, requires the licensing of all HMOs with five or more occupants in two or more households. In the SSDC area this is in the region of 150 premises with more than 800 units of accommodation in the licensed properties alone. This does not include those with less than 5 occupants or those that are managed by registered landlords such as housing associations and the NHS that are exempt from requiring a licence.

Experience has shown that when trying to upgrade HMOs, it is best to have a policy of coupling firm enforcement action with the provision of grant aid where appropriate. It is therefore proposed that our existing policy be continued whereby the Council gives HMO Grants as an incentive to assist good landlords to improve HMOs.

HMO Grant levels.

To enable the upgrading of HMOs the following grant policy will apply. The grant aid offered will enable the upgrading of existing HMOs but could also be used towards the creation of new HMOs. The grant is subject to availability. The policy means:

- 1) Grant aid will be available up to a maximum of £7500 in accordance with the agreed schedule of rates in Appendix 2. Any items not on the agreed schedule will not be eligible for grant aid.
- 2) Grant aid will only be available if the HMO is/or is in process to be licensed, where required, and has planning permission or building regulation approval, where appropriate.
- 3) HMO landlords can also apply for loans on top of an HMO grant in accordance with the loan section of this Policy.

Grant aid will not be offered in situations where reasonable attempts have been made to positively engage with a landlord and where formal action is required to resolve inadequate housing conditions.

5. Loans

The Council has been running the Home Loan Scheme in partnership with Lendology (formerly Wessex Resolutions/ Wessex Resolutions CIC) since 2006. The organisation rebranded in 2020 under the new name Lendology but offering the same functions. A variety of loan products are available at a 4% fixed interest rate. Under the contractual arrangements, Lendology can provide loans to clients referred by SSDC and any South Somerset residents can make direct contact with them but the loans must be approved by SSDC. Under the scheme Lendology provide low cost loans using capital provided by SSDC and therefore have to have authorisation from the Council before lending money on a particular project. The Government has been keen to promote loan schemes and in effect replace grants with loans, where possible, so as to recycle available funding. It is recognised however that grant aid in some form or other will always be needed as a safety net for vulnerable people where loans are not an appropriate option and as an incentive for various types of work. In certain cases a combination of grants and loans may be awarded. The following forms of loans will be available:

5.1 Loans for Homeowners

Loans will be available to homeowners for the following purposes:

- 1) To bring privately owned properties up to the Decent Homes standard (see definition at end of report) or to work towards the Decent Homes standard ensuring all **significant hazards** are dealt with under the Housing Health & Safety Rating System (HHSRS).
- 2) To bring homes purchased by first time buyers up to the decent homes standard or to work towards the Decent Homes standard ensuring that all **significant hazards** (under HHSRS) are remedied.
- 3) To **promote and** improve energy efficiency measures and assist in carbon reduction measures within the home environment, including the provision of energy efficient heating measures and renewable energy products.

The types of works potentially considered are listed below, although it will be made clear people need to have usual eligibility check first and provide partners with reports before proceeding if needed:

- Solar Panels
 - Solar Thermal Systems
 - Air Source Heat Pumps
 - Ground Source Heat Pumps
 - Biomass Heating Systems
 - Solid Wall Insulation
 - **Smart Control Systems**
- 4) To top up Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) where the cost of works exceed the combined maximum and discretionary grant limit (currently £40,000), to fund discretionary DFG work or to help pay for the clients contribution towards the overall cost of the works.
 - 5) To improve the condition of mobile/park homes on permanent licensed residential sites including energy efficiency measures.
 - 6) To assist in the purchase of mobile homes for local residents on permanent residential sites.
 - 7) **To carry out home improvements for expanding households to maintain, improve and enhance existing housing stock**

Where loans are provided in conjunction with other SSDC grants, they shall be provided to meet the purposes of the grant in question.

Lendology will generally provide loans where the following criteria are met:

1) The applicants must own and occupy the property/land as their sole residence and as their only or principal home and must be over 18.

2) The applicants must have sufficient disposable income to cover the loan repayments and/or must have sufficient equity in their property to secure the loan.

3) The applicants must be **Vulnerable homeowners, as defined by a low disposable income (determined by Lendology financial assessment); or, financially excluded from other borrowing.** However, the Council and Lendology have to recycle the pot of money and make it work in a commercial market, particularly when considering points 3 and 7 above

4) Where applicants are living in non-decent accommodation or in the case of mobile homes in similar substandard accommodation.

The criteria defining decency require of a home that:

- a) It meets the current statutory minimum standard for housing (HHSRS);
- b) It is in a reasonable state of repair;
- c) It has reasonably modern facilities and services; and
- d) It provides a reasonable degree of thermal comfort.

5) In the case of 2 above, provided the applicants are vulnerable they need not have an equity stake in the property. In such cases the Council may underwrite the loan. If the criteria in 2 above cannot be met zero percent loans may be available. In all other cases a 4% interest loan product will be offered.

6) Loans will only be offered in cases where the applicant have no known serious disputes or outstanding debt owing to the Council or any other Local Authority.

The maximum loan available will be £25,000 for traditional houses, or £10,000 for a Park Home. The minimum loan for either will be £1,000.

It is not intended that the loans scheme available from the Councils should be used as a cheap alternative to a commercial loan, and evidence of non-availability of finance from a commercial provider may be required before a referral can be made to Lendology.

5.2 Loans for Landlords

Loans will be available to landlords for the following purposes:

- 1) To bring rented accommodation up to the Decent Homes standard.
- 2) To enlarge property to create extra living space to prevent or minimise the risk of overcrowding.
- 3) To improve conditions in houses in multiple occupation (HMO's) to meet statutory requirements and SSDC standards regarding amenities and minimising or eliminating significant hazards.
- 4) To improve the energy efficiency and reduce the carbon footprint of the property.
- 5) To bring empty property back into use or to convert under-utilised property into units of accommodation.

Loans will only be available where the landlord:

- 6) Has sufficient disposable income to cover loan repayments and has sufficient equity in the property to secure the loan.
- 7) Will or intends to charge rent up to and no more than £50.00 above the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rate

- 8) Will be expected to provide nomination rights only when a loan is acquired in conjunction with an Empty Property Grant.

The maximum loan available will be £25,000 and the minimum loan £1,000.
Landlord loans will only be available at a 4% fixed interest rate.

5.3 Loans for Gypsies and Travellers

1) Loans will be made available to Gypsies or Travellers to either provide services to their land (e.g. mains water, electricity or sewage connections), to assist in the purchase of land with planning permission or to purchase mobile homes.

2) Loans will only be offered in cases where the Gypsies or Travellers have no known serious disputes or outstanding debt owing to the Council or any other Local Authority.

3) Loans of up to £15,000 may be offered to Gypsies or Travellers in cases where the loan can be secured against their land.

4) Loans of up to £5,000 only will be offered in situations where the loan cannot be secured against land. This situation will normally apply where SSDC owns the site and will usually only be for the purchase of mobile homes. The loan offered to assist with the purchase of a mobile home will be secured, in principle, against the value of the mobile home in question.

5) It is agreed that SSDC will underwrite all such loans and will meet any outstanding payments should the Gypsies or Travellers default on their loans (otherwise Lendology will not be prepared to offer loans). Recovery of these amounts will be treated as a civil debt. In all cases the provision of unsecured loans will be at the discretion of the appropriate Director and Portfolio Holder.

6) In order to restrict potential losses to SSDC, in the event of default on loans by Gypsies or Travellers, no more than £45,000 worth of unsecured loans in total is to be agreed by SSDC.

Appendix One

Exceptions and Appeals Panel

In framing any grant policy there will inevitably be exceptions to the rules and it is possible that there will be appeals made against officer's decisions concerning grants. It is proposed that the Portfolio Holder, Places Where We Live, Service Delivery Director and Portfolio Holder, Protecting Core Services make up the Exception and Appeals panel and be given delegated authority to deal with any exceptions to the agreed policy and deal with any appeals concerning grants made by the public. It is also recommended that the Leader be given delegated authority to select new members for the Exception and Appeals Panel as and when members retire from the panel.

Whilst the Council will have an agreed policy in place, it is suggested that the Exceptions and Appeals Panel be given the authority to consider any grant applications that falls broadly in line with the policy. This would allow financial and other assistance to be given in exceptional circumstances where it is clearly to the benefit of the Council and the applicant to do so.

Repayment of Grant

Grants will be entered as a charge on the Land Charge Register. The grant shall normally be repaid in full if the house/mobile home is sold/disposed of within the period referred to in Table 1. The Council demands the repayment of grants where the future occupation and/or associated conditions of the grant are breached. Any requests for the waiving of repayment conditions will be referred to the Exceptions and Appeals Panel. The agreement to waive such conditions will only be given in exceptional circumstances.

Return of Equipment

Where grant aid is provided for specialist medical equipment (e.g. stair lifts etc.) and it becomes surplus to the needs of the client during the clawback period the council will exercise its right to reclaim the equipment and allocate it for the use of another individual with similar needs.

Fees

The council will pay fees of up to 12% for home improvement agency or other professional fees (architects, surveys etc.) for the preparation of grant/loan applications.

Grant processing

The processing of all grants should comply with the most up-to-date national guidance where not covered elsewhere in this policy.

Appendix Two

Decent Homes Standard

A property is considered a decent home if it is;

- a) Free from Category one hazards
- b) In reasonable repair
 - i. Dwellings which fail to meet this criterion are those where either:
 - ii. one or more of the key building components are old and, because of their condition, need replacing or major repair; or
 - iii. need replacing or major repair; or
 - iv. two or more of the other building components are old and, because of their condition, need replacing or major repair.
- c) Has modern facilities
 - i. Dwellings which fail to meet this criterion are those which lack three or more of the following:
 - ii. a reasonably modern kitchen (20 years old or less);
 - iii. a kitchen with adequate space and layout;
 - iv. a reasonably modern bathroom (30 years old or less);
 - v. an appropriately located bathroom and WC;
 - vi. adequate insulation against external noise (where external noise is a problem); and
 - vii. adequate size and layout of common areas for blocks of flats.
 - viii. A home lacking two or fewer of the above is still classed as decent, therefore it is not necessary to modernise kitchens and bathrooms if a home meets the remaining criteria.
- d) Is thermally comfortable

This criterion requires dwellings to have both effective insulation and efficient heating. It should be noted that, whilst dwellings meeting criteria b, c and d are likely also to meet criterion a, some Category 1 hazards may remain to be addressed. For example, a dwelling meeting criterion d may still contain a Category 1 damp or cold hazard.

Appendix Three

Schedule of rates for HMO grants

Item	Fixed grant contribution	Certificates to be provided
LD2 Grade A	£650.00	commissioning certificate
LD2 Grade D	£550.00	commissioning certificate
Emergency Lighting	£350.00	commissioning certificate
FD30 plus frame each	£150.00	
30 minute stud per m2	£40.00	
Thumb turns only each	£30.00	
Sprinkler system	£3,000.00	commissioning certificate
Shower	£100.00	electrical certificate
Shower cubicle	£180.00	
Bath and fittings	£150.00	
WC and fittings	£100.00	
WHB and fittings	£80.00	
New boiler	£800.00	commissioning certificate
Heating system inc boiler	£1,500.00	commissioning certificate
Air or ground source heating system	£3,000	commissioning certificate
Electric heating per heater	£300.00	electrical certificate
Bathroom heater	£20.00	electrical certificate
PVR each	£30.00	
Loft insulation to BR per m2	£20.00	commissioning certificate
Electrical rewire – up to two storey	£1,200.00	Electrical certificate
Electrical rewire – three or more storeys	£1,500.00	Electrical certificate
Kitchen sink and unit	£150.00	
Kitchen worktop (1.5 – 3m)	£50.00	
Kitchen cupboard (one per room) each	£50.00	
Socket with USB each	£15.00	Electrical certificate
Escape window each	£100.00	BR cert

Investment Assets Quarterly Update Report

Executive Portfolio Holder: John Clark, Economic Development inc Commercial Strategy
Strategic Director: Clare Pestell, Commercial Services and Income Generation
Service Manager: Robert Orrett, Commercial Property Land and Development Manager
Contact Details: Robert.orratt@southsomerset.gov.uk or 01935 462075

Purpose of the Report

1. To provide a quarterly update to members on progress with implementing the commercial investment component of the Commercial Strategy agreed by Council.

Forward Plan

2. This report appeared on the latest District Executive Forward Plan with an anticipated Committee date of March 2021. This report provides a quarterly update between the half-yearly reports, the frequency being increased in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Public Interest

3. The Council's commercial strategy forms an important part of the Council's Corporate Plan ("Council Plan") and its Financial Strategy. Delivery of the Commercial Strategy enables the council to protect services to residents in the light of reductions in funding and to deliver its ambitions for South Somerset, for example the regeneration of town centres and high streets.
4. This report is to update members on progress made to date on the Property Investment component of the Commercial Strategy. The Council originally agreed to receive updates on progress every six months with the most recent update being reported in December 2020. District Executive decided to receive quarterly summary update reports on Investment Assets until further notice in light of the economic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. These reports have reduced levels of detail.
5. The report includes updates on rent collection, tenancies, the financial performance of investments, the purchasing of new commercial investments, and progress with projects.
6. These contribute to delivery of the objectives of SSDC's Financial Strategy originally agreed in September 2017 and the Commercial Strategy agreed in

August 2017, and updated with the review by District Executive and Full Council of the Financial Strategy and Commercial Strategy in September 2019.

7. The aim of this report is to give Members and the public an update on the performance and impact of the commercial investment to date including its contribution to mitigating the impact of reductions in Government funding and protecting services.
8. Due to the sensitive commercial nature of investment acquisitions, and the need to manage risk and protect the value of the Council's investments over the long term, **certain detailed information is included in a confidential appendix and not to be disclosed.**

Recommendations

9. That the District Executive:
 - a. Note the resilience of the property investment portfolio thus far in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.
 - b. Note progress made to date in acquiring new commercial investments and the asset management following acquisition.
 - c. Note continued rent collection averaging in excess of 95% over the last three Quarters despite the pandemic.
 - d. Note the return being achieved across the portfolio which is slightly below the Council's target of 7% as a result of lease renewals, securing the future of the asset.
 - e. Note progress being made in securing income from our existing assets and the contribution to the revenue budget towards the revised £3.35m target.

Background

10. While presenting the "Commercial Services Income Update" report to District Executive in February 2018, members requested regular updates to show progress made in meeting the Commercial Strategy (approved by Council in August 2017). These detailed reports have normally been provided at six monthly intervals but are now to be presented quarterly with a summary report in between the full six monthly reports.
11. This report is a succinct update of high level figures for new investments since November 2020, updated to 31 January 2021 with commentary on the management of the investment property assets.
12. The Commercial Property Team has been stable in terms of staffing since the last report.

COVID-19

13. The impact of the pandemic on all of society and affecting economies across the world is well known. The UK saw GDP fall by 9.9% in 2020. The fall in 2020 was more than twice the next largest fall of 4.0% in 2009, driven by significantly weaker growth from services. The economy grew by 1.2% in December, after shrinking by 2.3% in November, as some restrictions eased. January 2021 is expected to show a further fall due to the latest lockdown but recovery may then start to occur. Forecasts are currently suggesting that the economy will revive in 2021 but that full recovery may not be achieved until the end of 2022. This suggests that economic growth would return to trend after that.
14. Headlines about the economic situation have pointed to a period which sees recession of a scale that would be measured as being one of the worst ever. However, the economy is hugely complex. The extent of fall in GDP is undeniably a vital measure but the pandemic and lockdowns as reasons for the fall also point to the potential for the recovery to be swifter than some past recessions and the impact in property investment market terms to be less severe than the stark headlines might suggest.
15. The property investment market, like much of the economy, closed down to a large degree in Q2 2020 with the volume of investment overall being reduced by 79% below the 5-year quarter average. Since then, volumes have progressively recovered. The overall position for the year in 2020 was that investment volumes were 22% down on 2019 which shows a relatively strong performance later in the year.
16. Investment property values and prices have moved with the changing markets. The industrial and distribution sector continues to be strongly sought after by investors. There has been major take-up of floorspace, often by online retailers. Investment prices have risen appreciably – which makes it harder for us to achieve purchases where risk is acceptable whilst meeting our target yield. Offices overall have held their values stable with the best opportunities rising in price but secondary values weakening against an expectation there will be an overall reduction in demand due to the acceleration of flexible working. Within retail, supermarkets have strengthened in value, bulky goods retail warehousing held stable but high street retail has continued to lose value – a trend that has continued for several years, and is likely to continue as lease contracts take time to expire.

Rent collections

17. Most commercial property leases provide for rent to be paid quarterly in advance in March, June, September and December. We have therefore had four rent quarter days since the initial outbreak. The March quarter day (25th March) was only two days after the initial lockdown began. A number of retail and leisure based funds and landowners were substantially affected by major reductions in the proportion of contracted rents actually being paid.
18. Our rent collection across the investment property portfolio in total was broadly unaffected, with collection figures of 98%, although the timing for payments has been longer and there has been a need for much more liaison with tenants. Our team has focussed attention on the connection with our tenants. We have sought to show appropriate flexibility as part of a supportive attitude, but also to protect the Council's investments.
19. The December 2020 quarter collections are not yet completed with around 76% collected thus far. Our analysis leads us to forecast that we will again collect 98% of the rents due in total.
20. We will continue to maintain close contact with tenants and help where we reasonably can.

New Assets

21. We have not acquired any commercial properties over the course of the last six months.
22. Borrowing of up to £150m has been agreed and there is a strategy in place for a portfolio of that size. The development of a commercial investment fund as a means of generating income is agreed by the Council and we will continue to seek new opportunities for investment. Including Battery Energy Storage Sites (BESS), the total sum invested and committed stands at £120m. This figure includes two properties where we have approval in principle. We are completing detailed due diligence and legal work required to conclude the purchases. The market remains quieter, although, with progress with the vaccine, there are indications that it may improve. We are aware of a number of properties being offered to the market in the coming months.
23. Net Gain to Revenue contribution for 2020/21 from this programme is forecast to be about £2m.
24. Where properties are coming to the market, we have noticed a discount on leisure, office, and in particular High Street retail assets. Conversely, the demand for



industrial properties has seen yields harden, to the point where it is difficult to find any quality at our required net initial yield of 7%.

25. The portfolio has a full allocation of offices, industrial/distribution property is strongly competed for at rising prices, and High Street retail property has hidden risks as we cannot see how far the rental market will fall. Therefore, we have been focusing on alternative sectors. We currently have a data centre in the Midlands under offer at circa £2.5m, a leisure facility within an industrial building on the South Coast under offer at circa £2.5m and a food production facility in the South West under offer at circa £6.5m.
26. Any investment we do make will undergo rigorous due diligence due to market conditions, including close attention to the tenant covenant.
27. We have contractually secured a further renewable energy asset - a 40 MW Battery Energy Storage Site at Fareham. The investment is structured in the form of a loan to our JV company SSSC Opium Power Limited and will be project managed through the construction phase, and then operated and managed by the JV company. Despite the additional regulations brought about by the pandemic, work has commenced on site in January. Future reports will provide an update on progress. The facility is expected to be completed and trading before the end of the year.
28. Half yearly reports have included graphs indicating actual progress against budget for income and for capital invested. These are not produced for the quarterly updates in order to save the officer time involved in updating. Tables of financial detail are included in the confidential appendix.

Portfolio Management Update

29. A number of specific management transactions are included in the Confidential Appendix. The information is provided there to protect not only the council's commercial position but also recognising the involvement of other parties in these matters.

Financial Implications

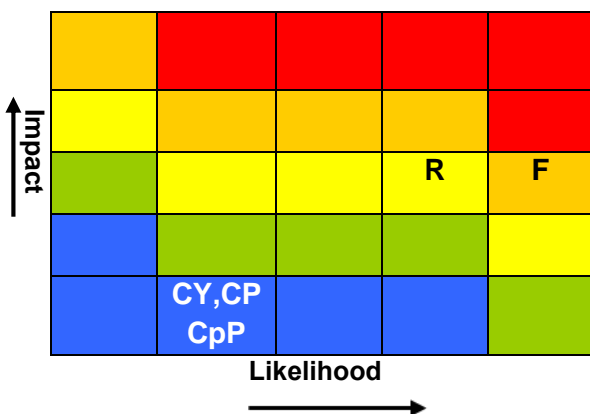
30. The financial implications for the progress with commercial investments are set out above within the report and also in further detail in the Confidential Appendix.
31. SSSC has approved a large sum for commercial investment. The commercial strategy has been operating for 42 months, and excellent progress has been made, ahead of target timeframes.
32. The Marlborough residential development has been considerably delayed against original programme as reported previously, COVID-19 disrupting both completion

of outstanding work and marketing activity. We have appointed new selling agents. Two houses are close to sales being concluded. We are hopeful that the end of lockdown will see the market pick up, and Marlborough as a location is expected to perform well. We will report back with progress in due course.

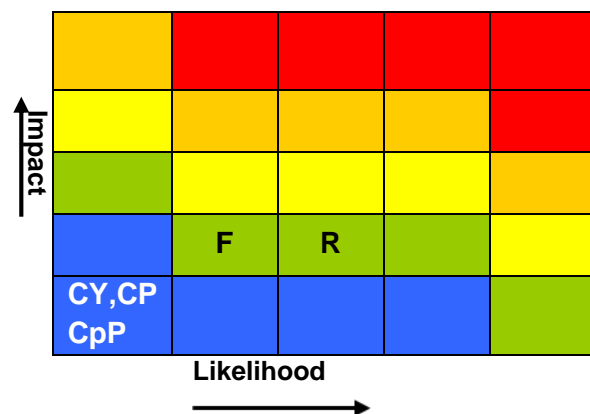
33. The summary position is gross receipts were achieved for 2019/20 financial year of £3,456,525 producing a net gain to revenue of £491,709. The estimate for 2020/21 financial year is gross receipts of £5,129,051 and net gain to revenue of £1,959,182. For the completed Fideoak BESS project, net income is currently over £100,000 per month with increases expected as Phase 2 comes online in February 2021 and in March when the new Dynamic Containment market starts. Dynamic Containment is an improvement to the electricity supply industry which helps improve performance as more reliance is placed on renewable energy, and provides an additional market for BESS storage infrastructure.
34. Detailed and robust due diligence has been completed with extensive involvement of SSDC's finance and legal specialists together with external advisors (e.g. valuers, tax specialists, legal advisers, sector specialists) to support the property team in completing robust business cases that underpin recommendations and investment decisions. The decisions made have been through the agreed governance arrangements as approved by SSDC with the Investment Assessment Group providing deferrals, refusals and unanimous recommendations to the Council Leader and Chief Executive for final decisions. Arrangements have been reviewed by Internal Audit and the minor improvements recommended have been implemented.
35. The financial implications of completed acquisitions including costs, income and funding arrangements will continue to be incorporated in budget setting and monitoring processes, in line with SSDC's financial procedures framework.

Risk Matrix

Risk Profile before officer recommendations



Risk Profile after officer recommendations



Key

Categories	Colours <i>(for further detail please refer to Risk management strategy)</i>
R = Reputation	Red = High impact and high probability
CpP = Corporate Plan Priorities	Orange = Major impact and major probability
CP = Community Priorities	Yellow = Moderate impact and moderate probability
CY = Capacity	Green = Minor impact and minor probability
F = Financial	Blue = Insignificant impact and insignificant probability

Council Plan Implications

36. This report links to the following Council Plan objectives:

- Protecting Core Services
- Take a more commercial approach to become self-sufficient financially
- Supporting the Regeneration of Chard, Yeovil and Wincanton
- Supporting local businesses

Carbon Emissions and Climate Change Implications

37. The council reviews energy performance as part of its purchase due diligence and seeks opportunities for improvement of this with assets it owns. We are prioritising work to identify projects of environmental benefit.

Equality and Diversity Implications

38. This report does not involve any equality or diversity implications

Privacy Impact Assessment

39. There is no personal information included in this report

Background Papers

- SSDC Commercial Strategy 2017 and 2019

By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
of the Local Government Act 1972.

Document is Restricted

Octagon Theatre Development

Executive Portfolio Holders:	Cllr Mike Best, Health and Well-Being Cllr Peter Seib, Finance and Legal Services
Strategic Director:	Clare Pestell, Commercial Services and Income Generation
Service Manager:	Adam Burgan, Lead Specialist, Arts & Entertainment Venues Manager
Lead Officer:	Adam Burgan, Arts & Entertainment Service
Contact Details:	Adam.burgan@southsomerset.gov.uk or 07971 111 951

Purpose of the Report

1. The purpose of this report is to seek Member's approval to refurbish and develop The Octagon Theatre and underwrite the full value of the project, up to £23.01 million (excluding VAT that is recoverable in respect of this project), subject to the successful application for various forms of grant funding which would partially offset the overall project costs.
2. The aim of the proposal and funding is to ensure that the development would:
 - a. Provide a significantly enlarged and much improved facility, enabling a more varied selection of shows and acts with added commercial areas. This would in turn bring new revenue streams to pay back the costs of the works, which would benefit audiences, artists and visitors and include additional facilities and services to those currently provided.
 - b. Eliminate the need in future for SSDC to subsidise the theatre, at best Year 6 of the development, by generating an overall profit and increasing the contribution to the ticket levy, at a prudent rate.
 - c. Generate additional revenue benefits in future for SSDC that will support the development of our Arts Engagement and Outreach work, covering the areas of health and education.
 - d. Resolve accessibility issues around the venue making Front Of House (FOH) and backstage areas accessible for wheelchair users and those with limited mobility, to ensure inclusivity of all
 - e. Meet the highest modern environmental standards, contributing to our net zero target
 - f. Maximise opportunities for energy efficiency and use of renewable/low carbon energy, also contributing to our net zero targets

Forward Plan

3. This report did appear on the District Executive Forward Plan for 4th March 2021.
4. On Thursday 7th January 2021 the District Executive resolved to:



South Somerset District Council

- a. agree in principle to progress the development of the project and the underwriting of the total project costs by SSDC, of up to £23.01m, with a further report brought to Executive once full financial implications including VAT were confirmed.
- b. note the intention to partially offset the project costs with future grant funding applications, which can be progressed if the project is approved in principle to proceed.
- c. note the confidential appendices, namely the Executive Summary by Charcoal Blue, and the initial financial assessment of the business case to refurbish the existing site and facilities; and to extend the site with both additional educational and commercial income earning facilities; which will assist in repaying the proposed project costs.
- d. note the current financial forecast in the business plan, which is awaiting VAT advice. (This is to be presented in a final report for approval in due course).

Reason: To approve in principle to refurbish and develop The Octagon Theatre and underwrite the full value of the project, up to £23.01 million (excluding VAT), subject to the successful application for various forms of grant funding which would partially offset the overall project costs. Confirmation of VAT implications for the Council are being sought by a specialist tax advisor.

5. This report has now been brought forward following the completion of SSDCs retained VAT consultants that the project would be able to be accommodated within our partial exemption and we would be able to reclaim the VAT on the project. All the financial implications for proceeding with the project have now been confirmed and SSDCs capital accountant has assessed the project proposals and business plan (Appendix 2 – Confidential). SSDCs capital accountant has also prepared a matrix report (Appendix 3 – Confidential) that explores the difference scenarios for paying back the loan that includes 180 different scenarios based on interest rates and the amount borrowed.
6. Charcoal Blue was commissioned by the Arts & Entertainment service, with support from Senior Leadership Team to provide a detailed and comprehensive appraisal of the existing building, the economic potential, proposed development and costings. The full report is available to Members upon request but an Executive Summary of the report has been compiled to highlight the key matters and conclusions (Appendix 1 – Confidential).
7. The business plan (Appendix 4 – Confidential) covers the first 10 years of operation based on the proposed designs and facilities. The existing operation, actual figures and programme from 2019/20 are used as the basis for the plan.
8. This proposed project supports the themes and priorities in the Corporate Plan in terms of healthy communities, regeneration of our towns, protecting core services and improving our environment.

Public Interest



South Somerset District Council

9. This report considers the proposal to refurbish/develop The Octagon Theatre, Yeovil including:
 - the construction of a fly tower
 - a circle in the main auditorium that would take the seating capacity from 622 to 900
 - two new smaller cinema/studio spaces
 - a dance studio
 - a community studio
 - a café bar and restaurant
 - improved front of house and customer facilities
 - an educational outreach Arts facility
10. This follows a review led by Charcoal Blue consultants of the existing facilities and an appraisal of the current performance and use of the theatre, regional competition and assessment of the potential opportunities that such a development could bring to the area, as well as added footfall to a cultural area of the town centre.
11. The Charcoal Blue report, appendices and background papers are confidential as they contain commercially sensitive information on future charges, estimated procurement costs in a competitive market situation for construction and other costs, as well as proposed artists market fees and forecast sales.

Recommendations

12. That District Executive:
 - a. Note the confidential appendices, including the report by Charcoal Blue and associated business case documents, to refurbish the existing site and facilities; and to extend the site with both additional educational and income earning facilities, which will assist in repaying the costs of the proposed project over time.
 - b. Recommend to Full Council to approve the underwriting of the total project costs by SSDC, of up to £23.01m, to be partially offset by successful future grant funding applications, yet to be applied for; with the remainder of the capital sum to be repaid as proposed in the business plan attached to this report.
 - c. If approved, recommend to Full Council to give delegated authority to a Project Board that consists of the Portfolio Holder for Health & Well-Being (Chair), the Leader of the Council, the Portfolio Holder for Economic Development, the Director of Commercial Services and S151 Officer to progress the project, take appropriate decisions for the project governance set up and reporting arrangements to District Executive on project progress.
 - d. Recommend to Full Council to approve the cashflow forecast in the business plan.



13. South Somerset District Council (SSDC) own, manage and fund The Octagon Theatre, the Council's flagship arts venue for the district as part of The Arts & Entertainment Service that aims to provide access to high quality cultural events across South Somerset. For a detailed report on the operation and achievements of the service please see the District Executive Report from 07/01/21 that is included as Appendix 5.

Report Detail

14. Attendance at the theatre has increased from 78,546 in 2009/10 to 125,331 in 2019/20, with an average attendance of 83% across the year that is significantly above the industry average of 50-60%. Of the 250 performances the theatre stages each year 100 of those were sold out or over 90% of capacity. Therefore, the theatre is often oversubscribed.

15. The Octagon Theatre and Arts Development is subsidised by South Somerset District Council by £298,780 per annum (budget 2019/20). Between 50-70% of the population of South Somerset use the theatre throughout the course of the year and satisfaction levels are consistently high (80-90%).

16. The venue is suffering from the increased level of use and does not meet environmental or accessibility standards. There is poor access backstage with no access for wheelchair users to the stage and difficulty for disabled audience members, staff and artists or those with limited mobility. The front of house areas are looking tired and often feel cramped, dated and lack air conditioning. The popular and profitable café bar is hampered by the small kitchen that restricts the menu and number of covers while tables are placed around the outside of the auditorium with diners' meals interrupted by the arrival of other audience members.

17. The popular Octagon Academy classes take place in a small studio that is obstructed by a supporting pillar in the middle of the room, with no windows, no air cooling and a lack of ceiling height for dance classes.

18. The majority of patrons travel to the theatre by car, parking in Petters Way Car Park and then taking a short walk down a steep sloped path and steps to reach the main entrance. The route is not accessible for those with limited mobility and the path becomes slippery when wet or during icy conditions.

19. The stage does not currently have a fly tower (used for flying scenery and a requirement for most touring musical, plays and pantomime). The auditorium and stage has a metal roof and drainpipes in the walls of the auditorium that means that when experiencing heavy rain or hail it can be heard during the performance. There are no sound lobbies or sound proofing around the auditorium which means during quiet shows and classical music concerts audiences can hear doors closing or staff preparing for the interval. The site lines are generally very good, with good leg room; and artists like the intimacy of the space. However, the current auditorium looks very tired and dated and the seats are in need of replacement. Therefore, a



significant amount of refurbishment and expenditure is required in any event, whether or not this proposal proceeds.

20. The theatre is well placed geographically to serve the south west and build on the success of the existing operation. There is relatively little competition in the region with the nearest venues in Weymouth Pavillion (29.3 miles) to the south, Exeter Northcott (49.6 miles) to the east, the Playhouse Theatre Weston-Super-Mare (40.1 miles) to the north and Salisbury Playhouse / Town Hall (47.1 miles) to the west. Of equal distance or further would be Poole Lighthouse, or theatres and concert halls in Bath and Bristol. There is some crossover with audiences for The Brewhouse Theatre in Taunton (27 miles west) but the theatre is smaller – seating 350.
21. The future success of The Octagon Theatre, despite the current limitations of the building, are down to the ongoing support and use of the facilities by patrons and customers, the strong and experienced leadership from the management team, with the support of the Commercial Services Director, Chief Executive, Portfolio Holder and Leader of the Council.
22. The report was commissioned to provide an options appraisal and needs analysis for the Octagon Theatre. It was led by Charcoal Blue consultants working with architects, catering consultants and business planners. The feasibility study for the development of the theatre, shows that the proposal will resolve the current and dated issues holding back the Theatre noted above. The proposal will also take the theatre to a different level to create a truly regional destination. This proposal would benefit the towns economy, footfall, environment and wellbeing for communities locally and across the region for decades to come.

Summary of Charcoal Blue (Consultant) Report

23. The full report, including architects plans and drawings, is available to members upon request. A summary has been included as Appendix 1 – (Confidential).
24. The report from the consultants note:
 - The scale of overall audience is impressive with consistent growth in tickets over a ten year period.
 - Catering and trading performance is strong but there is significant potential to drive up average spends per visitor, increasing profitability.
 - Analysis of the current programme and market competition shows that there is significant demand already for new and extended facilities
 - There is a clear and evidenced demand for all aspects of the preferred scheme in the existing and extremely strong performance of the Octagon.
 - There is a substantial and under-served population, already partly being reached by the venue, but with potential to attend in much greater numbers, in a 60 minute catchment in which there is limited competition for the interest of any particular audience.
 - This population has a strong propensity to enjoy and consume culture and in particular to demand the genres of activity, which the extended and



improved Octagon will be particularly well placed to grow – for instance in musicals, drama and film.

- There is strong evidence, in part from exemplar projects around the country that this strong market potential for performing arts programmes can be matched and in turn supported by the market for, and new provision of, cinema and food and drink offers.
- In addition, the evidence shows this type of project can be a catalyst for regenerating a town, bringing further investment, footfall, improving the economy, as well as increased health and wellbeing opportunities.

Benefits of the Proposed Development

25. The enhanced auditorium would see the addition of a circle that will increase the capacity to 900 seats whilst retaining excellent site lines and similar leg room. A well-equipped stage, with flexible Orchestra Pit, and full flying facilities will be suitable for a wide-range of arts and entertainment events. The additional capacity and facilities will open up to a new range of companies and events to our programme from larger orchestras, leading theatre companies, touring musicals to offer a much improved experience for existing popular shows and our thriving amateur and community companies. Improved acoustics and sound lobbies will give audiences, performers and stage crew a much improved experience that is accessible both front of house and backstage. The developed auditorium will allow us to 'step up' our programming and bring a new range of shows to South Somerset.
26. The extension to the front of the building would see two additional theatres with seating of 124 and 64. These spaces are designed to predominantly screen films (with the film programme moving from Westlands Ballroom to purpose built spaces) showcasing Live Events (National Theatre Live, Royal Opera House Live etc.) and the best of mainstream films, British, independent and foreign language films. The auditoriums will house luxury seating, Dolby 5.1 sound and purpose built facilities that are fully accessible and offer an enhanced film experience. The larger space will also be suitable for comedy events, acoustic live music, with both spaces designed for lectures, conferences and spoken word events that host Yeovil Literary Festival events. The smaller Film Theatre will be a luxury boutique cinema with sofa seats, foot stools that is a 'destination cinema' offering an exceptional experience.
27. The participatory programme 'The Octagon Academy' would expand with two studios that will be available for hire, in addition to staging our own classes and workshops.
28. The Dance Studio is a large fully equipped dance studio with a sprung dance floor, mirrors, sound equipment and full ceiling height that will become a creative hub for dance in the region.
29. The community studio offers an alternative space for classes and rehearsals including our popular choir, theatre groups, writers circle and arts and craft workshops. Our participatory programme brings communities together, improving



South Somerset District Council

the health and well-being of residents. They are also key to our engagement programme where workshops can be delivered by the companies performing in the Main Auditorium.

30. The proposed development of Front of House (FOH) will offer attractive foyers for use throughout the day with excellent supporting bars and eating opportunities. Customers would now enter on the first floor level with Petters Way Car Park with no need to use the sloped path or steps.
31. The development of the venue will also seek to enhance the gateway to Yeovil Country Park, providing the link from the town to Ninesprings. The development will give the opportunity to architecturally mark the gateway and create a more attractive building that is sympathetic to the surrounding area. Audiences on the night will have a well-lit route to Goldenstones car park, as an alternative to Petters Way Car Park, in addition to covered bike shelters.
32. The Front of House areas will be fully accessible with accessible toilets on every level and an adult changing facility (the first one in Yeovil Town Centre – the nearest being in the supermarket ASDA, Yeovil). The venue will offer views of the town and the country park from two complementary food areas. On the first floor, directly in front of the main entrance and at the ‘heart’ of the new venue would be a relaxed café bar. This would be open throughout the day for hot and cold food options, barista style coffee, cakes and open to the public to meet friends and family whether attending a performance, film screening, arts or dance class, or the free Wi-Fi for an informal meeting. This hub will be a valuable income source for the venue and create a destination in its own right. On the second floor would be a formal dining restaurant, away from busy congregation areas. We will continue to use local and regional food and drink producers and will seek to expand this approach highlighting the excellent food and drink producers in the South West and directly supporting the local circular economy.
33. When developing The Octagon Theatre, improving environmental standards will be at the forefront of the work, building a venue that is greener and puts sustainability at the heart of how we operate. Utilising modern building approaches that will reduce our carbon footprint through construction. The intention is that some grant funding could be used for some of these improvements.
34. The redeveloped venue will be fully accessible, addressing and resolving the current access inadequacies and offering much improved facilities for those with physical disabilities including visual and audio impairments.
35. The venue will be a flagship arts venue for the south west where inspiration and creativity can be found every day. It will create a ‘cultural quarter’ for Yeovil with new opportunities for residents that will help raise aspirations, and attract new businesses and investment to the area, driving new job creation and building the local economy. The report from Charcoal Blue (appendix. 1) states that:

‘Even after cautiously discounting for effect that could have happened anyway, for leakage from the local economy, and for ‘optimism bias’ – so that the forecast



South Somerset District Council

is conservative - we can see that the renewed Octagon will generate at least £9.3m of locally retained activity per annum'.

36. The theatre will generate additional income for local car parks, hotels, restaurants, and attract visitors to the town.

Summary of Business Plan

37. The business plan (Appendix 4 – Confidential) covers the first 10 years of operation based on the proposed designs and facilities. The existing operation, actual figures and programme from 2019/20 are used as the basis for the plan. All income and expenditure has been adjusted in line with income and trading assumptions with premises and operating costs increased in line with the enlarged building. Operating staff, marketing and house management have been increased.
38. The full forecasts are set out in the business plan, but in summary, the subsidy currently required by the Octagon Theatre and Arts Development Service (£335,832 budgeted for in 2019/20) is estimated to be reduced and no longer required in later years (potentially by year 6 of operation) after completion of the works. The forecast then shows that the service should then return a small surplus to the Council in years to follow after this time.
39. There is potential to match additional investment made by the Council from the new income streams generated by the project with investment by other organisations. Commitment to a significant growth in participation and engagement not only has the potential to significantly improve quality of life, wellbeing and life chances for citizens of the District, and particularly young people, but also to enable the case to be made for substantial investment by Arts Council England in the capital costs of making the new facilities.

Additional Financial and Well Being Benefits

40. Following this, there is also the potential for regular funding that will support the development of the existing Arts Development Service year after year. This would lead to an expanded Arts Engagement and Outreach Service that will serve the district with an extensive range of projects, activities and events, designed to broaden the experience and enjoyment of seeing and creating.
41. We will work with individuals, communities, and educational groups across South Somerset with a commitment to entertain, enlighten and inspire our current and future residents and visitors.
42. The Arts Engagement & Outreach Service plan is laid out in more details in appendix 5. In summary the aims of the service are linked to the Council Plan focusing on supporting our residents leading happy and healthier lives using the arts to increase engagement and participation in activities that support their physical and mental well-being. Working with leading arts organisation (e.g. Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra) and local community artists we will focus on issues of child poverty, rural isolation, supporting elderly residents to live



South Somerset District Council

independent lives, raising aspirations and increasing skills and training for young people.

43. Our programme would attract national funding into South Somerset to deliver an innovative programme that will address the challenges our district faces. The combination of a developed Octagon Theatre and Art Engagement and Outreach service would see increased engagement in the arts and significantly increase opportunities for residents to benefit.
44. The COVID-19 pandemic has had a severe impact on the global economy and theatres have been severely affected. The need to substantially renew, theatres like The Octagon will urgently increase the imperative to deliver the most sophisticated environmentally controlled theatre, with greater generosity of space in both auditorium and public areas. When the pandemic has been brought under control the need for venues like The Octagon will see an even greater need to bring communities back together and arts events that will help with improving health and wellbeing.
45. The financial impact of the pandemic is likely to see an economic recession. However, theatre and cinema admissions do not tend to be affected by economic recessions and usually an increase in attendance occurs, as audiences seek affordable means of entertainment and escapism. Cultural developments have also been a highly effective means of regeneration for town centers looking to attract new businesses to their area.

Project Management Board

46. To take the matter forward it is proposed to set up a Project Management Board comprised of Cllr. Mike Best (Arts & Entertainment Portfolio holder), Cllr. Val Keitch (Leader of SSDC, Cllr. John Clarke (Portfolio Holder for Economic Development), Adam Burgan (Arts & Entertainment Venues Manager), Clare Pestell (Director, Commercial Services and income Generation), Ross Eaton (Specialist Finance) and other officers as required and deemed necessary by the Project Management Board. The detailed governance and reporting arrangements of this board are to be approved by the SLT. The Board will be tasked with the development of the project plan and the overseeing of the tendering/procurement arrangements. The planning and delivery of this project will take approximately three years to the point of practical completion.

Financial Implications

47. In support of this report a **confidential** Capital Appraisal is included as Appendix 1 compiled by lead consultants Charcoal Blue. Appendix 4 provides a **confidential** 10 year detailed business plan that estimates the SSDC Revenue Budget implication written by DCA consultants. A detailed appraisal of the Capital Proposals and Business Plan has been completed by SSDC's Capital Accountant (Appendix 2 – **confidential**). The appraisal assesses the impacts of three possible outcomes for the catering income stream. The report also details options for funding the capital development and the outcome matrix (Appendix 4 - **confidential**)



South Somerset District Council

presents the various impacts on loan variables (interest rate, length of term), and the ticket levy contribution..

48. Confidentiality, is important at this time, as the plans contain commercially sensitive information regarding the cost estimates for the project which will be subject to competitive procurement. Elements of the Appraisal relate to the funding of the project and the anticipated revenue benefits are included in this part of the report for clarity of the estimated budgetary impact on SSDC.
49. It is expected that following approval, a 12-month period would be required to appoint and procure project management specialists and contractors before building work would actually commence. The Octagon Theatre would be closed for the build period that is likely to require 18-24months of works. During this period the majority of programmed events and activity can be staged at Westlands Entertainment Venue that is managed within the service. This will bring benefits to the development of Westlands Entertainment Venue and the management team will work to retain audiences, artists and provide performance opportunities for amateur and community groups.
50. Consideration will be given to balance the long-term needs of both venues particularly over the busy Christmas season when The Octagon Theatre stages the popular annual pantomime and Westlands is busy with Christmas parties. A separate financial plan will be written for the closure period when it is determined the point at which The Octagon Theatre will need to close for works, which is not yet known precisely and dependant on approval of this proposal.
51. The revenue impact / costs will vary greatly dependent on when the period of closure falls; for example, whether this means that The Octagon is closed for one or two festive periods. We are confident that a worst case scenario (two Christmas closures) would require less than the current cost of service. A temporary staffing structure will be required to ensure we operate efficiently and retain key skills and knowledge to develop the project. This will be developed and implemented alongside the financial plan once the closure period has been established.
52. The recommendation within this report is to agree to the proposals and proceed with a £23.01m capital budget provision for investment (excluding VAT which is recoverable in respect of the project) to refurbish and develop the facilities at The Octagon Theatre. This will require funding for up front capital costs being provided by SSDC, and includes a contingency element for unforeseen costs.

Legal implications (if any) and details of Statutory Powers

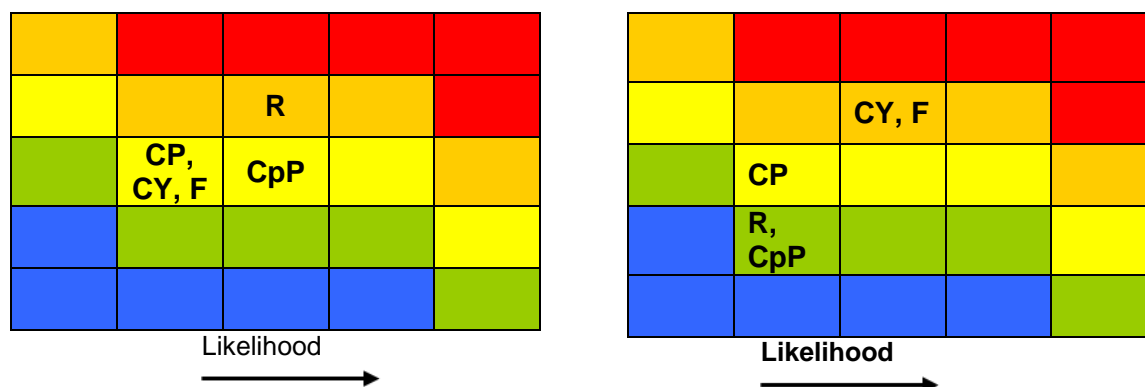
53. **Statutory Authority S.145 Local Government Act 1972 Provision of entertainments**

Under the above provision the Council has the power to arrange or finance the doing of anything necessary or expedient for the provision of entertainment of any nature or the provision of a theatre, concert hall, dance hall or other premises suitable for the giving of entertainments or the holding of dances.

Risk Matrix

54. The risk matrix shows risk relating to the Corporate Plan headings. This should assist officers and members in making a more informed decision, in relation to Risk Management.

Risk Profile before officer recommendations **Risk Profile after officer recommendations**



Key

Categories	Colours (for further detail please refer to Risk management strategy)
R - Reputation	High impact and high probability
CpP - Corporate Plan Priorities	Major impact and major probability
CP - Community Priorities	Moderate impact and moderate probability
CY - Capacity	Minor impact and minor probability
F - Financial	Insignificant impact and insignificant probability

Council Plan Implications

55. This project will contribute towards the following council aims;

- To deliver high quality cost effective services
- Actively manage assets and resources to ensure the best financial or community return.
- Healthy, Self-reliant Communities
- Contribute and support to the refresh of Yeovil Town Centre
- Develop proposals to support struggling families and help address child poverty and low rates of social mobility in the district
- Work with partners to achieve economies, resilience and influence.

Carbon Emissions and Climate Change Implications

56. The development of the building will seek to incorporate state of the art, efficient building processes and environmentally efficient operating practices that will have a very positive effect on recycling, carbon emissions and pollution levels.



South Somerset District Council Equality and Diversity Implications

57. Access throughout the building and to access the site will be significantly improved. An Access consultant has worked on the initial designs and will be employed as part of the project team to maximise opportunities for improvements to create a more accessible and welcoming venue. A full equality assessment report will be undertaken as part of the planning and build process.

Privacy Impact Assessment

58. There are no adverse personal data implications to this report.

Background Papers

- Arts & Entertainment Service Annual Report 2019-20
- Octagon Theatre Development Proposal January 2021 District Executive Report

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of the Local Government Act 1972.

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Arts Engagement & Outreach Service Proposal

This proposal is linked to the proposed capital development of The Octagon Theatre, the funding generated by the redeveloped theatre and new facilities in the development are imperative to the proposals laid out here for a successful arts engagement and outreach service to be created.

Background

The Arts Development Service is based at The Octagon Theatre with an annual budget of £57,180 (2020/21). The majority of the budget is used to support one part-time member of staff and to make annual grants (£19,000) to four key arts organisations who deliver work across South Somerset – Take Art, Somerset Art Works (SAW), Somerset Film and Actiontrack. The work delivered by these organisations include the Village Performance Scheme (Take Art) and Somerset Arts Weeks (SAW). The remaining resources are used to support arts projects and activities around the district with recent recipients including Wassail Theatre Company, OD Arts Festival and artists who live and work in the district. With recent appointments to the service this has expanded to take on outreach projects that were previously led by the Arts and Entertainment Venues Manager. This includes funding from Arts Council England and Yarlington Housing Group to support the dance based ‘Move To Improve’ project (£55K) and led the applications for the Cultural Recovery funds with £333K awarded from Arts Council England. The service co-ordinates the Octagon Theatre participatory programme – The Octagon Academy – that hosts 17 classes per week, co-ordinates community shows like SHiNE and A Festival of Song. The service also programmes the visual arts exhibitions at The Octagon Theatre and provides advice and support for artists and arts organisations in the district.

Report

The redevelopment and extension of The Octagon Theatre offers the opportunity to develop the Arts Engagement and Outreach service with increased funding and improved facilities that will:

- Deliver an innovative and creative programme of arts engagement and outreach work that will focus on helping to achieve SSDC’s priorities as laid out in the Council plan
- Support the business plan and development of audiences at the redeveloped Octagon Theatre
- Attract additional funding and investment into the district from trusts, foundations and bodies including the Arts Council
- Raise the profile of arts in South Somerset and offer increased opportunities for artists working in the district and for residents to engage regularly with arts activity benefiting from an improving quality of life

An innovative programme of Arts Engagement and Outreach work would be an innovative way help to address SSDC priority areas:

- High rates of children growing up in poverty and poor social mobility
- Large numbers of struggling families
- Growing numbers of older people who are increasingly living in poor health
- The climate emergency
- Homelessness and the lack of genuinely affordable housing
- The economy including productivity, skills and wage levels

Projects and initiatives based in the creative arts that focus on raising aspirations, building self-confidence, improving mental and physical well-being, developing skills and supporting community cohesion will help us support our communities and develop audiences for events at the theatre. We will seek additional funding from trusts, foundations and other sources using our core and project funding from SSDC to leverage external funding. We will look to make our Arts Engagement and Outreach Service an Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation receiving annual funding on the three year basis. The NPO goals from ACE align very well with the priorities for SSDC and the aspirations of the organisation.

ACE NPO Goals 2018-2022:

Goal 1: Excellence is thriving and celebrated in the arts, museums and libraries

Goal 2: Everyone has the opportunity to experience and be inspired by the arts, museums and libraries

Goal 3: The arts, museums and libraries are resilient and environmentally sustainable

Goal 4: The leadership and workforce in the arts, museums and libraries are diverse and appropriately skilled

Goal 5: Every child and young person has the opportunity to experience the richness of the arts, museums and libraries

With the commitment to redevelop the Octagon Theatre, accompanying business and need for capital funding from ACE to support the project, we will develop an Arts Engagement and Outreach Strategy with a 10 year business plan that includes a revised staffing structure and delivery plan. It is anticipated that the Arts Engagement and Outreach Service budget would increase to £150,000 per year that would be paid for by increased income generated by The Octagon Theatre. It is also projected that as audiences/users and income develops the theatre will be generating enough income that it will be able to invest further income into the Arts Engagement and Outreach Service to deliver additional projects and be used as 'seed funding' to attract additional investment. The amount of money available for these projects will depend on the financial performance of the theatre and this approach will limit financial risk to the authority. With the increased core funding and ambitious plans in place we would

be applying to become an NPO for the Arts Council and our application would be in the region of £125,000 per year to support our core programme.

Core activity we are already exploring as part of this plan would include:

- Supporting artists and arts activity across the district by providing advice, support and grant funding to Arts Organisation(s) who deliver work that meets our objectives.
- To provide advocacy, support and leadership for the arts in South Somerset
- Deliver an innovative and creative programme of arts engagement and outreach work that ties in with the programme of events taking place at The Octagon Theatre, Westlands Entertainment Venue and other events taking place across the district that supports audience growth and the understanding and appreciation of the arts.
- Support artists, graduates and those seeking a career in the creative arts with advice, support and networking opportunities.
- Raise the profile of arts in South Somerset and offer increased opportunities for artists working in the district and for residents to engage regularly with arts activity benefiting from an improving quality of life
- Developing our relationship with Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra (BSO) to commit to three public concerts per year when the redeveloped Octagon Theatre opens. An education project giving schools access to specially curated concerts to introduce children to a live orchestra.
- Develop a programme linked to Yeovil District Hospital (YDH) and the Somerset NHS Foundation as part of an 'arts on prescription' initiative, to improve the health and wellbeing of residents across South Somerset, and to reduce hospital admission rates e.g. falls prevention
- Building on the success of our Octagon Academy we would like to expand the range of classes providing new opportunities for participants and employment for teachers. We would like to expand our range of music, dance and drama classes with satellite classes setup across the district.
- Build on the success of our 'Move To Improve' Dance Development projects to develop audiences and appreciation for dance, provide opportunities for professional dance artists. It is widely acknowledged that dance can reduce loneliness and alleviate depression and anxiety.

To complement our core work would be an exciting and ever changing range of projects centred around the creative arts, using our venues as a creative hub to deliver excellent opportunities across the district and extend to the region.



District Executive Forward Plan

Executive Portfolio Holder: Val Keitch, Leader, Strategy and Housing
Strategic Director: Nicola Hix, Strategy and Support Services
Lead Officer: Angela Cox, Democratic Services Specialist
Contact Details: angela.cox@southsomerset.gov.uk or (01935) 462148

Purpose of the Report

1. This report informs Members of the current Executive Forward Plan, provides information on Portfolio Holder decisions and on consultation documents received by the Council that have been logged on the consultation database.

Public Interest

2. The District Executive Forward Plan lists the reports due to be discussed and decisions due to be made by the Committee within the next few months. The Consultation Database is a list of topics which the Council's view is currently being consulted upon by various outside organisations.

Recommendations

3. That District Executive is asked to:
 - a) approve the updated Executive Forward Plan for publication as attached at Appendix A
 - b) note the contents of the Consultation Database as shown at Appendix B.

Executive Forward Plan

4. The latest Forward Plan is attached at Appendix A. The timings given for reports to come forward are indicative only, and occasionally may be re scheduled and new items added as new circumstances arise.

Consultation Database

5. The Council has agreed a protocol for processing consultation documents received by the Council. This requires consultation documents received to be logged and the current consultation documents are attached at Appendix B.

Background Papers

6. None.

Appendix A - SSDC Executive Forward Plan

Date of Decision	Decision	Portfolio	Service Director	Contact	Committee(s)
April 2021	Annual review of the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA)	Portfolio Holder - Finance, Legal & Democratic Services	Director Strategy and Support Services	Paula Goddard, Specialist (Legal Services)	District Executive
April 2021	Recovery Strategy	Portfolio Holder - Economic Development including Commercial Strategy	Director Commercial Services & Income Generation	James Divall, Income Opportunity Development Manager	District Executive
April 2021	Rural Designation of areas in South Somerset	Portfolio Holder - Strategy & Housing	Director Service Delivery	Jo Calvert, Housing Development Officer	District Executive
April 2021	Creation of additional designated blue badge bays - Peter Street Car park, Yeovil	Portfolio Holder - Economic Development including Commercial Strategy	Director Commercial Services & Income Generation	Ian Timms, Yeovil Refresh Project Manager	District Executive
April 2021	Future Management of the Council's Leisure Facilities	Portfolio Holder - Health & Well-Being	Director Strategy and Support Services	Lynda Pincombe, Specialist - Strategic Planning	District Executive
April 2021	Review of Key Performance Indicators (KPI's)	Portfolio Holder - Strategy & Housing	Director Strategy and Support Services	Cath Temple, Specialist (Performance)	District Executive
April 2021	Remote Meeting Protocol for SSDC	Portfolio Holder - Finance, Legal & Democratic Services	Director Strategy and Support Services	Angela Cox, Specialist (Democratic Services)	District Executive

Date of Decision	Decision	Portfolio	Service Director	Contact	Committee(s)
May 2021	Negotiation Strategy for Planning	Portfolio Holder - Protecting Core Services	Director Service Delivery	Barry James, Interim Planning Lead Specialist	District Executive
May 2021	Capital & Revenue Budget Outturn reports for Quarter 4	Portfolio Holder - Finance, Legal & Democratic Services	Director Strategy and Support Services	Jo Nacey, Section 151 Officer	District Executive
May 2021	Quarterly Corporate Performance Report	Portfolio Holder - Strategy & Housing	Director Strategy and Support Services	Cath Temple, Specialist (Performance)	District Executive
June 2021	Investment Assets update report	Portfolio Holder - Economic Development including Commercial Strategy	Director Commercial Services & Income Generation	Robert Orrett, Commercial Property, Land & Development Manager	District Executive
June 2021	SSDC Commercial Strategy	Portfolio Holder - Economic Development including Commercial Strategy	Director Commercial Services & Income Generation	Robert Orrett, Commercial Property, Land & Development Manager	District Executive
June 2021	Update on Proposals from the Planning Re-imagined Workshops	Portfolio Holder - Protecting Core Services	Director Service Delivery	Kirsty Larkins, Director (Service Delivery)	District Executive
July 2021	Review of SSDC Commercial Strategy	Portfolio Holder - Economic Development including Commercial Strategy	Director Commercial Services & Income Generation	Clare Pestell, Director (Commercial Services & Income Generation)	District Executive
TBC	Allowenshay mains water connection	Portfolio Holder - Health & Well-Being	Director Service Delivery	Tim Cook, Locality Team Manager	District Executive

APPENDIX B - Current Consultations – March 2021

Purpose of Document	Portfolio	Director	Response to be agreed by	Contact	Deadline for response
<p>National Planning Policy Framework and National Model Design Code: consultation proposals</p> <p>A consultation on draft revisions to the National Planning Policy Framework and a new draft National Model Design Code.</p> <p>This consultation seeks views on draft revisions to the National Planning Policy Framework. The text has been revised to implement policy changes in response to the Building Better Building Beautiful Commission “Living with Beauty” report.</p> <p>A number of other changes to the text of the Framework are also set out and explained in this consultation document, but we are not proposing a review of the National Planning Policy Framework in its entirety at this stage. A fuller review of the Framework is likely to be required in due course, depending on the implementation of the government’s proposals for wider reform of the planning system.</p> <p>This consultation is also seeking views on the draft National Model Design Code, which provides detailed guidance on the production of design codes, guides and policies to promote successful design. We made a commitment to seek views on the National Model Design Code as we expect it to be used to inform the production of local design guides, codes and policies and want to ensure it is as effective as possible.</p> <p>National Model Design Code: testing programme – expressions of interest</p> <p>The government is inviting expressions of interest from local planning authorities in England to test the National Model Design Code.</p>	<p>Health and Well-Being / Economic Development</p>	<p>Nicola Hix, Strategy & Support Services</p>	<p>Officers in consultation with Portfolio Holder</p>	<p>Tessa Saunders, Specialist, Strategic Planning</p>	<p>27 March 2021</p>

Purpose of Document	Portfolio	Director	Response to be agreed by	Contact	Deadline for response
https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/national-planning-policy-framework-and-national-model-design-code-consultation-proposals?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=govuk-notifications&utm_source=4527fe3b-fa20-494e-ac8e-2341be70afb8&utm_content=daily					
<p>The Future of the New Homes Bonus consultation</p> <p>The New Homes Bonus was introduced in 2011 to provide an incentive for local authorities to encourage housing growth in their areas. The aim of the bonus was to provide a financial incentive to reward and encourage local authorities to help facilitate housing growth.</p> <p>The consultation covers a number of options for reforming the programme to provide an incentive which is more focused and targeted on ambitious housing delivery, complements the reforms outlined in the government's Planning White Paper, and dovetails with the wider financial mechanisms the government is putting in place, including the infrastructure levy and the Single Housing Infrastructure Fund.</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/the-future-of-the-new-homes-bonus-consultation?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=govuk-notifications&utm_source=bb718755-65e1-4d03-8c96-f5617b6df99e&utm_content=daily</p>	Finance and Legal Services	Service Delivery / Strategy and Support Services	Officers in consultation with Portfolio Holder	Jo Nacey, Section 151 Officer	07 April 2021

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Purpose of Document	Portfolio	Director	Response to be agreed by	Contact	Deadline for response
<p>Proposals for locally-led reorganisation of local government in Cumbria, North Yorkshire and Somerset</p> <p>Councils in Cumbria, North Yorkshire and Somerset have submitted proposals for the reorganisation of local government in their area by creating a single tier of local government. We are seeking views on these proposals to help the Secretary of State form a judgement on which, if any, proposal best meets the criteria for implementing these reforms.</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/proposals-for-locally-led-reorganisation-of-local-government-in-cumbria-north-yorkshire-and-somerset?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=govuk-notifications&utm_source=832ccc21-de93-40c0-880f-914e575559af&utm_content=daily</p>	Strategy and Housing	Chief Executive	Officers in consultation with Portfolio Holder	Jan Gamon, Business Case and Implementation Planning, Stronger Somerset	19 April 2021



Date of Next Meeting

Members are asked to note that the next scheduled meeting of the District Executive will take place on Thursday, 1st April 2021 as a virtual meeting via Zoom meeting software commencing at 9.30 a.m.
