

15. North of Dorchester Masterplan

15.1. Introduction

15.1.1. Dorchester is the county town and an important centre for Dorset, providing jobs and services for a wide area. It acts as a focal point for many services and activities in the locality, including shopping, education, healthcare and library services. The town has grown rapidly over the past few years, and it has more jobs than residents of working age. A lot of people commute in to Dorchester from other towns and villages across Dorset. The range of services and facilities in the town and the imbalance between jobs and homes create a significant demand for homes.

The story so far

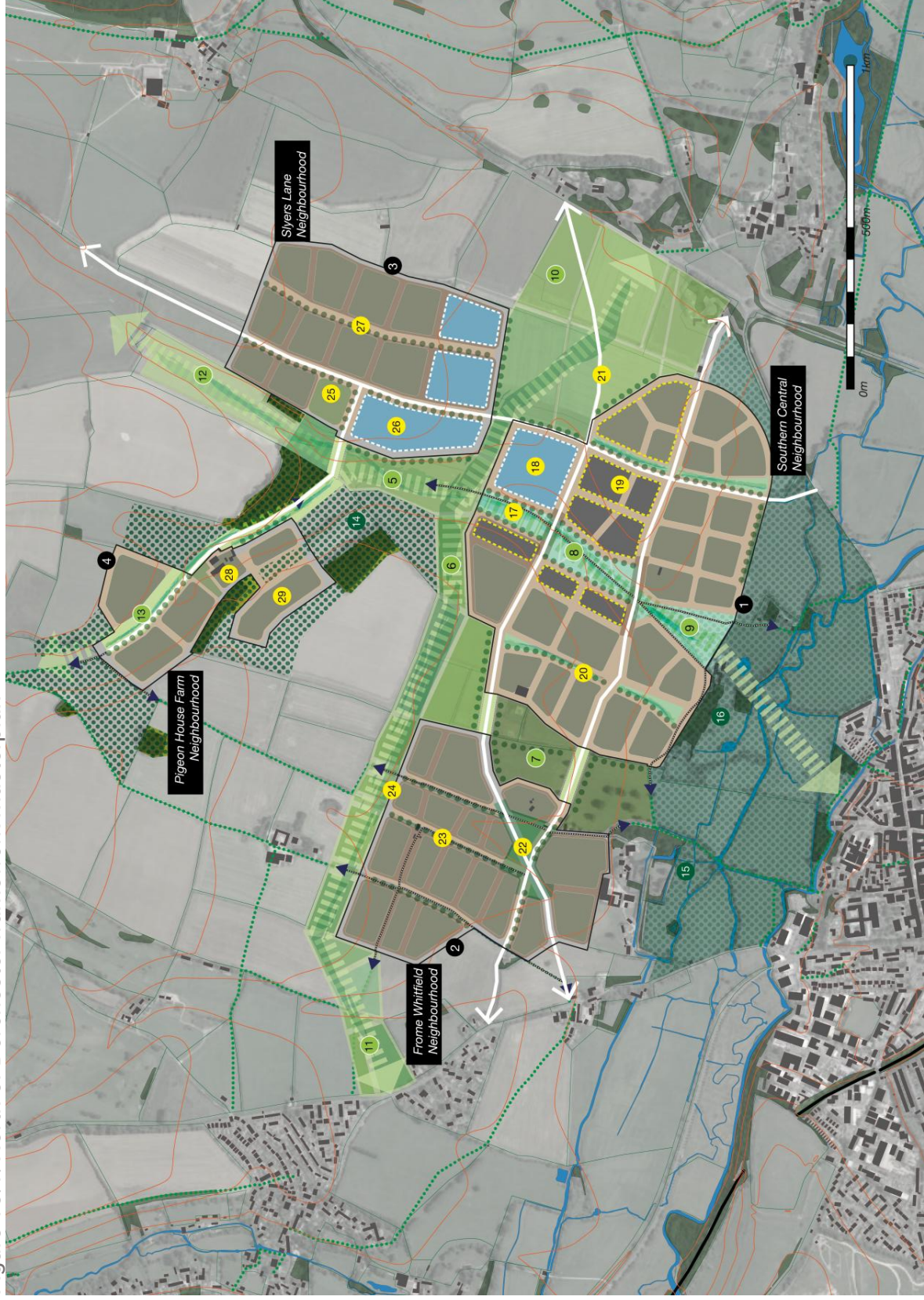
- 15.1.2. The adopted local plan identifies a number of development opportunities at the town but acknowledges the sites fall short of meeting the needs for housing and employment towards the end of the plan period (2031). The inspector for the adopted Local Plan considered it “imperative that an early review is undertaken to identify additional land” highlighting the need to consider options for growth at Dorchester.
- 15.1.3. Consultation on the ‘preferred options’ for the West Dorset, Weymouth & Portland Local Plan Review was undertaken in the summer of 2018. This included a preferred option to develop land north of Dorchester for a mixed-use urban extension.
- 15.1.4. Following the formation of Dorset Council in 2019, work on a new Dorset Local Plan began, and we identified land north of Dorchester as a proposed mixed use development site in the 2021 consultation.
- 15.1.5. The site to the north of Dorchester was successful in a bid for inclusion in the Government’s Garden Communities Programme and we have been preparing a masterplan framework that reflects the garden communities’ principles and qualities.

15.2. The draft masterplan for the North of Dorchester Garden Community

- 15.2.1. Further to the previous consultations, and as part of the Garden Communities Programme, we have now published a draft masterplan for the North of

Dorchester Garden Community. The masterplan document sets out an approach for the comprehensive development of the site to deliver a sustainable mixed-use extension to Dorchester. The proposed development would meet the needs of the town over the longer term, providing additional homes, employment land, school provision, a local centre, and significant areas of green space. Figure 15.1 shows the Masterplan Framework Illustrative Plan, extracted from the masterplan document.

Figure 15.1: North of Dorchester framework masterplan



Key for the North of Dorchester framework masterplan

Neighbourhoods:

- 1 Southern Central Core Neighbourhood
- 2 Frome Whitfield Neighbourhood
- 3 Slyers Lane Neighbourhood
- 4 Pigeon House Farm Neighbourhood

Green Infrastructure:

- 5 North-South central Green Corridor
- 6 East-West Green Corridor
- 7 Frome Whitfield Park Landscape, neighbourhood separation
- 8 Central Public Realm and green space
- 9 Green space transition to the Frome River corridor
- 10 Eastern restored natural landscape area, linking to Kingston Maurward Estate
- 11 E-W green corridor western link to Charminster
- 12 N-S green corridor extends north with new public route into surrounding countryside
- 13 North west branch of N-S green corridor connects with existing footpath route into upper dry valley
- 14 New woodland compliments existing isolated woodland blocks, enclosing the upper dry valley
- 15 New woodland compliments existing depleted woodland blocks, enclosing Frome Whitfield
- 16 New woodland compliments existing depleted woodland blocks along Frome valley edge

Development Form & Mix:

- 17 A Mixed Core to the Southern Central Neighbourhood
- 18 Education use within the Southern Central Neighbourhood
- 19 Varied employment space integrated within the Southern Central Neighbourhood
- 20 New green routes through development areas reflect existing landscape patterns
- 21 Preferred route for Primary Street (accesses the heart of development)
- 22 Public realm and mix of uses establish a centre to the Frome Whitfield Neighbourhood
- 23 Development form incorporates existing hedgerows and footpaths
- 24 Development has direct relationship with green corridors as key active travel routes
- 25 Public realm and mix of uses establish a centre to the Slyers Lane Neighbourhood
- 26 Education use within the Slyers Lane Neighbourhood
- 27 Development form responds to the contouring of the local topography
- 28 Existing farm cluster, public realm and mix of uses establish a hub within the Pigeon House Farm Neighbourhood
- 29 Development form responds to existing woodland features and remains enclosed within the valley topography

The vision for North of Dorchester

15.2.2. The masterplan will set out our expectations and ambitions for the site in more detail and should guide and support future decision making. It will be based on a strong vision that sets out the aspirations for the development of the site. From this vision, the following key drivers have been developed which set out how the place should respond to its context and function alongside Dorchester as a sustainable settlement:

- The Town in the Landscape
- Rich Past, Bright Future
- Dorset Living and Working
- The Landscape in the Community

Where to read the masterplan and further information

15.2.3. The draft masterplan and supporting material, including information on the vision, the key drivers, and the process so far can be found via the [Council's North of Dorchester Garden Community webpage](#).³⁸

What we are asking

- 15.2.4. The North of Dorchester proposal extends from the edge of the A35 in the east to fields that surround Charminster in the west. On its eastern side, the site also extends to the north toward Higher Kingston Farm. The emerging masterplan sets out a framework for the site's development, including those areas where new homes and employment land will be provided in addition to the areas needed to provide infrastructure and mitigation measures (e.g. green spaces and soft landscaping). The proposed approach to the development of the site is for the area to be developed as a series of distinct but interconnected neighbourhoods. The broad layout presented in the masterplan takes account of key planning and environmental considerations.
- 15.2.5. However, we have identified four matters that we think need specific further consideration through the masterplan process, and we are seeking feedback on these through the focused questions presented below.

³⁸ www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/gardencommunities

- 15.2.6. You can also submit more general comments in relation to the North of Dorchester site via the 'Housing opportunity sites' section of the consultation (see Appendix A or view the consultation online).

15.3. Matter 1: Eastern edge

- 15.3.1. We're considering how far development should extend toward the A35 and what kind of edge the town should have. Options range from keeping the area mostly undeveloped, to creating a green gateway, or allowing limited development with careful landscape design. The goal is balancing delivery, landscape quality, and character.

Question 42: Since Roman times, the centre of Dorchester has had a prominent position in the landscape. One of the threats to this identity is at the eastern edge of the potential development area (near the A35). Would you support keeping this eastern area more green and open, even if that means fewer homes, facilities and jobs?

- a. Agree
- b. Partially agree
- c. Disagree
- d. Partially disagree
- e. Neutral

Please provide any further comments or reasoning...

15.4. Matter 2: Employment locations

- 15.4.1. The site at the North of Dorchester has the potential to create a range of local employment jobs, helping to enhance and deliver a more diverse economy. Our evidence suggests that there is a need for around 8ha of 'business park' employment space (manufacturing, storage & distribution, hi-tech research & development, medical/quasi medical, traditional offices, trade counter uses of the type typically found on business parks). We would like your views on options for how employment should be distributed across the development area.
- 15.4.2. We're exploring how to deliver job spaces in a way that supports local living. This could include retaining a town-centre focused approach, introducing small

employment clusters, or a larger business park near the A35. We're also testing whether employment can be more flexibly woven through neighbourhoods.

Question 43. Supporting jobs, homes and services all in one place is an essential part of the health of a town. Do you see new workspaces that are integrated into walkable neighbourhoods and local centres as an attractive part of Dorchester in the future?

- a. Agree
- b. Partially agree
- c. Disagree
- d. Partially disagree
- e. Neutral

Please provide any further comments or reasoning...

15.5. Matter 3: Pigeon House Farm neighbourhood

The area around Pigeon House Farm is enclosed by the steeper sided north-western part of the dry valley, in the north western part of the site. We're testing how this valley area can best contribute to the masterplan – as a small neighbourhood, a visitor wildlife hub, or a mix of both. Options include a low-density hamlet, a larger valley neighbourhood, or using the area solely for landscape, recreation education and nature interpretation without any housing.

Question 44: We believe that the valley at Pigeon House Farm can play an important role in encouraging access to nature and celebrating local landscape – What type of development, if any, do you think could help support this in a sustainable way?

- i. A smaller scale of development
- ii. A larger scale of development
- iii. The use of the area as an undeveloped landscape buffer, for recreation, education and nature interpretation, without any housing development.
- iv. A mixture of the above

Please provide any further comments or reasoning...

15.6. Matter 4: Main east to west route

15.6.1. Development at North of Dorchester will include good links between the different parts of the development and to Dorchester itself. There will also be an

important east to west route to allow walking, cycling and driving through the site and connect the A37 to the A35.

- 15.6.2. We have received lots of feedback that new connections across the north of Dorchester are needed, but they should also help create welcoming, walkable, and sociable neighbourhoods. We're reviewing how the key east-west road should be designed and routed. Options include making it more central to enhance placemaking, adapting the existing route to improve public realm, or using several lower-capacity routes instead of one main road. Each option has trade-offs for travel, design and community feel.

Question 45: What are your priorities for a new east–west route?