



DT11 FORUM

Community Partnership

Action Plan
Version 4.1
FORUM

20th September 2006

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Background

The DT11 area covers the market town of Blandford Forum and the surrounding 26* parishes and villages and is set in the Dorset and Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONBs (Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty).

Blandford Forum is a fine example of a Georgian town and has a population of 10,000+ when Blandford St. Mary is included. Between 1991 and 2001 the population grew at above county and national levels at a rate of 11%. Blandford Forum is the administrative centre and principal urban area in North Dorset.

This area is primarily serviced by the A350 and the A354. The former runs along the Stour river valley joining the northern and southern parishes and places the Bournemouth/Poole conurbation within 40 minutes of Blandford. The A354 links Dorchester to Salisbury through Blandford. There are no rail links in the area.

Although the death rate in the area is higher than the birth rate, the population continues to grow at a pace above the national (4%) and county (6%) rates due to people choosing to move into the area.

The Blandford area has the highest ratio of people aged 0–44 years (57%)¹, but the lowest share of people aged 60–85+ (22%) in the district. The younger age structure is also a result of people choosing to move into the area. Interestingly the share of non-white population in the Blandford area is higher than that of the county and 1.5 times that in three other towns in the district.

Parameters	Dorset	Blandford	Gillingham	Shaftesbury	Sturminster
Age Structure					
0 -15	17.9	19.5	18.4	18.4	17.8
16 – 17	2.4	2.3	2.3	2	1.9
18 – 44	29.6	35.1	32.5	33.4	29.2
45 – 59	20.8	20.7	16.8	19.3	17.7
60 – 85+	29.3	22.4	30	26.9	33.4
Ethnicity					
Non-British pop	1.3	1.6	0.9	1.0	0.9

¹ The Bryanston and Milton Abbas boarding schools impact heavily on the 0 – 15 age group, while the Royal Signals School at Blandford Camp accounts for the bulge in the 18 – 44 age group.

At 18.6% Blandford Forum and the adjoining parish of Blandford St Mary has the highest percentage of residents in rented accommodation in the district. This level of rented accommodation is more than 6% above county level.

Over 80% of the economically active population is in part time or full time employment. This level of employment is above the 75% county level and underlines the critical role of the Royal School of Signals/Blandford Camp in the local economy. It is therefore worth noting that Blandford area has both the lowest level of self employed people, some 6% below county level, and the second highest level of unemployed people.

The largest sectors in the area are manufacturing (17%), wholesale & retail trade and motor vehicle repairs (17%), while the major employers are Hall & Woodhouse Brewery, Royal Signals, Bryanston School, Signpost Housing and the district & county councils.

Parameters	Dorset	Blandford	Gillingham	Shaftesbury	Sturminster
Economically Active					
% employed: part time	20.9	21.3	19.9	19.2	17.7
% employed: full time	55.3	61.8	59.1	59.8	59.1
% self-employed	17.6	11.0	15.8	16.3	17.2
% unemployed	3.1	2.8	2.4	2.6	3.8

The Blandford pyramid of schools has recently changed from a three to two-tier system with primary schools in both the town and the surrounding villages feeding into the Blandford School. A few villages in the west of the DT11 area such as Milborne St Andrew feed into the Dorchester pyramid, while other primary schools, such as the one at Shillingstone, feed into the Sturminster Newton pyramid. With the exception of the Royal School of Signals there are no tertiary education facilities.

* The 26 parishes/villages surrounding Blandford Forum are:

Blandford St Mary	Bryanston	Charlton Marshall
Chettle	Child Okeford	Durweston
Hanford	Hilton	Iwerne Courtney (Shroton) and Stepleton
Langton Long	Lower Winterborne	Milborne St Andrew
Milton Abbas	Pimperne	Shillingstone
Spetisbury	Stourpaine	Tarrant Gunville
Tarrant Hinton	Turnworth	Winterborne Clenston
Winterborne Houghton	Winterborne Whitechurch	Winterborne Stickland
Tarrant Monkton and Launceston		
South Tarrant Valley (Crawford, Keynston, Rushton, Rawston)		

Tabular summary of key actions of existing parish plans and key outcomes from consultation held at the Hall & Woodhouse Brewery with residents of Blandford Forum and Blandford St Mary.

Sources:

Child Okeford & Hanford Parish Plan 2004

Hilton & Melcombe Horsey 2005

The Lower Winterborne Parish Plan October 2004

Milton Abbas Parish Plan 2003

Pimperne – Past, Present and Future The Vital Village Plan 2003.

Durweston Village Plan 2005

South Tarrant Parish Plan 2005

Tarrant Monkton & Launceston Parish Council Parish Plan September 05

Village Survey and Shroton Parish Plan 2005

Charlton Marshall Action Plan 2006

Summary of feedback from the three-day consultation at Hall & Woodhouse brewery as a result of the proposed redevelopment of the brewery site (172 visitors: 49% residents of Blandford Forum and 30% residents Blandford St Mary).

Table 1

Housing	Blandford/ Bland St Mary H&W consult	Child Okeford	Hilton	Lower Winterbornes	Milton Abbas	Pimperne	Durweston	Shroton	South Tarrants	Monkton & Launceston	Charlton Marshall
Support affordable housing											
Investigate housing needs											

Table 2

Transport	Blandford/ Bland St Mary H&W consult	Child Okeford	Hilton	Lower Winterbornes	Milton Abbas	Pimperne	Durweston	Shroton	South Tarrants	Monkton & Launceston	Charlton Marshall
Encourage car sharing											
Support development of Nordcat											
Improve transport information											
Press for better public transport provision											
Talk to neighbours about minibus service											

Table 3

Community safety	Blandford/ Bland St Mary H&W consult	Child Okeford	Hilton	Lower Winterbornes	Milton Abbas	Pimperne	Durweston	Shroton	South Tarrants	Monkton & Launceston	Charlton Marshall
Improve Homewatch											

Table 4

Traffic, parking, highways, road safety	Blandford/ Bland St Mary H&W consult	Child Okeford	Hilton	Lower Winterbornes	Milton Abbas	Pimperne	Durweston	Shroton	South Tarrants	Monkton & Launceston	Charlton Marshall
Investigate solutions to speeding traffic: reduction in speed limits, traffic calming measures etc.											
More pavements/ cycle tracks											
Support for C13 becoming main Blandford to Shaftsbury road											
Improve state of roads including hedges, verges											
Encourage off road parking, car park extensions on suggested sites etc											

Table 5

Health	Blandford/ Bland St Mary H&W consult	Child Okeford	Hilton	Lower Winterbornes	Milton Abbas	Pimperne	Durweston	Shroton	South Tarrants	Monkton & Launceston	Charlton Marshall
Lobby for more accessible emergency service											
Lobby for evening surgery											

Table 6

Children and Young People	Blandford/ Bland St Mary H&W consult	Child Okeford	Hilton	Lower Winterbornes	Milton Abbas	Pimperne	Durweston	Shroton	South Tarrants	Monkton & Launceston	Charlton Marshall
Provide/improve children's play areas inc. kick about areas											
Develop plans for skate park											
Build youth shelter											
Provide/improve youth club											
Improve range of after-school and holiday clubs											
Organise transport to leisure facilities											
Mag/web by/for young people											
More facilities ie. Cinema, bowling, alcohol-free bar											

Table 7

Leisure and recreation	Blandford/ Bland St Mary H&W consult	Child Okeford	Hilton	Lower Winterbornes	Milton Abbas	Pimperne	Durweston	Shroton	South Tarrants	Monkton & Launceston	Charlton Marshall
Increase amount of land available for sport and recreation											
Improve sports provision eg. tennis courts, pavilion etc											
Encourage participation & recruit volunteers for sport & leisure activities)											
Form new groups eg. gardening, computer											

Table 8

Community buildings	Blandford/ Bland St Mary H&W consult	Child Okeford	Hilton	Lower Winterbornes	Milton Abbas	Pimperne	Durweston	Shroton	South Tarrants	Monkton & Launceston	Charlton Marshall
Improve/extend/build village hall or similar community building											
Encourage wider use (non-religious) of church building											
New library											
Large scale cultural/arts centre											

Table 9

Communication	Blandford/ Bland St Mary H&W consult	Child Okeford	Hilton	Lower Winterbornes	Milton Abbas	Pimperne	Durweston	Shroton	South Tarrant	Monkton & Launceston	Charlton Marshall
Develop parish website/magazine											
Improve reception of TV, radio mobile phones											

Table 10

Education	Blandford/ Bland St Mary H&W consult	Child Okeford	Hilton	Lower Winterbornes	Milton Abbas	Pimperne	Durweston	Shroton	South Tarrant	Monkton & Launceston	Charlton Marshall
Support the provision of new pre-school facilities											
Develop a community learning plan											
Encourage lifelong learning											
Change catchment boundaries											

Table 11

Economy/ Employment	Blandford/ Bland St Mary H&W consult	Child Okeford	Hilton	Lower Winterbornes	Milton Abbas	Pimperne	Durweston	Shroton	South Tarrant	Monkton & Launceston	Charlton Marshall
Support local business eg publish local business directory											
Encourage small-scale business development providing local employment											
Encourage creation of a village shop											
Promote small scale tourism											
Encourage better retail in town centre											

Table 12

Environment, planning & tourism	Blandford/ Bland St Mary H&W consult	Child Okeford	Hilton	Lower Winterbornes	Milton Abbas	Pimperne	Durweston	Shroton	South Tarrants	Monkton & Launceston	Charlton Marshall
Prepare a Parish Design Statement											
Plant more trees											
Flood warning/flood alleviation											
Improvements to general local environment eg benches, litter bins, trees											
Provide footpath map/walks/information boards etc.											
Monitor planning applications for their environmental impact/develop guidelines											
Explore possibility of Visitor Centre											
Establish environment group/countryside task group to consult on footpaths & bridleways, promote recycling, maintain existing countryside features etc.											
Change stiles to kissing gates											

An initial draft action plan based on the research tabulated above and an on-going process of consultation and discussion with members of the DT11 Forum and the wider community was drawn up. This was then taken out for further public consultation and prioritisation and the action plan amended accordingly.

Some actions expressed here are far from new and represent hopes for change yet to be achieved. Some actions are directly for the DT11 Forum to achieve, others are in the domain of other partners such as the Town Council, or a particular parish council. Others are actions for partnership working. The partnership understands that in many instances its role will be one of influencing the decisions of others rather than directly undertaking the action itself.

The reason for bringing the actions all together here in one document is to create a comprehensive blueprint for the area – enabling us to think and act strategically making the most of resources and making the most impact.

Additional sources on which this Action Plan is based:

Blandford Pathfinder Youth Survey findings 2006

Public consultations at the Georgian Fayre, May 2006 and outside Somerfields, Blandford Leisure Centre, Blandford Library, Blandford Hospital, Blandford Opportunity Group, Blandford Older People's Forum, Pimperne Mother & Toddler Group, Durweston Village Hall coffee morning, Tarrant Keyneston Village Fete, Child Okeford PTA Summer fete, Winterborne Kingston parish lunch over the course of the summer months 2006. (169 respondents, 44% residents of Blandford Forum, 55% residents of other parishes in DT11 area, 1% resident elsewhere but work or use services in the area)

Vision for the DT11 area:

To create a thriving, vibrant market town as a cultural, retail and economic hub surrounded by sustainable villages set in carefully managed countryside enjoyed by all.

Key themes:

Leisure & recreation (incorporating community buildings, children and young people, communications)

Transport and access

Community safety (incorporating traffic, road safety, health)

Economy (incorporating car parking, housing, education and skills)

Environment and heritage

1. Leisure and Recreation

A) Community buildings

Adequate leisure facilities are seen by many living in the DT11 area as a key indicator of sustainability (not having to travel to neighbouring towns/villages), economic success and a driver of social cohesion (all sectors of the community catered for). There are many examples in North Dorset where community buildings such as village halls and community centres are put to multiple uses to create a range of leisure opportunities.

With a rural spread of sometimes quite isolated villages in the DT11 area it is clear to see why many have aspirations to update, extend or create a village hall. The situation is probably further exacerbated by a lack of leisure facilities in the central market town.

A1

- Support Blandford Forum Town Council in their negotiations with English Heritage and plans to refurbish the Grade 1 Listed Corn Exchange to create a cultural venue and focal point for civic events

Key players: Blandford Forum Town Council (BFTC), Corn Exchange Promoters Group

A2

- Support the creation of a network of outlying community halls that can be used for smaller scale theatre, film and arts events as well as community learning, sports, lunch clubs and other social activities. Coordinate parish community hall projects so that complementary and not competing facilities are created in neighbouring parishes.

Key players: BFTC and parish councils: Blandford St Mary, Shroton, Stourpaine, Tarrant Launceston & Monkton, Lower Winterbornes, Charlton Marshall, Child Okeford and Pimperne

A3

- Create a directory of halls and meeting facilities in the area; detailing the facilities available, costs and booking procedures.

Key players: DT11 Forum, parishes, BFTC, churches

A4

- Support the creation of a new library building that meets the needs of readers and learners in the 21st century and acts as a focal point for learning.

Key players: DCC/NDDC/BFTC

A5

- Lobby for and actively facilitate the creation of venues/facilities of particular appeal to young people such as bowling alley etc.

Key players: BFTC/NDDC/Blandford St Mary PC

A6

- Working with the Blandford Youth Pathfinder Project, create a Young People's Forum (made up of young people) to act as a consultation and feedback group for community planning issues.

Key players: DT11 Forum, Blandford Youth Pathfinder project team,

B) Outdoor play (children and young people)

Outdoor play is an important aspect of life for children and young people and there are a number of good examples of provision in the DT11 area including the skate park in Stour Meadows. There are an increasing number of small-scale skate parks across the area too. A number of younger children's play areas across the DT11 are desperately in need of upgrading – most notably Larksmead and Blandford St Mary. In some of the smaller isolated villages on the patch there is a need for a safe open space for children away from traffic.

B1

- Support the refurbishment of play areas at Larksmead, Blandford Forum and Chettel Way, Blandford St Mary.

Key players: BFTC/Larksmead Community Group/Blandford St Mary Parish Council/Blandford St Mary Play Area Action Group

B2

- Ensure that there is adequate outdoor play provision for children of all ages, especially in areas of dense housing and isolated villages by mapping gaps in provision of equipped play areas, informal open spaces, skate parks, ball courts and youth shelters.

Key players: DT11 Forum/CDW/NDDC

B3

- Support the creation of a BMX track in Blandford Forum.

Key players: BFTC/NDDC/Blandford St Mary PC

C) Sports facilities

There are a large number of thriving sports clubs in the area. Although there are a number of good pitches/courts/facilities across the area, there is a strong need for more to accommodate the number/range of active sports clubs. In addition there is a need to ensure enough capacity so that informal/ad hoc matches can also thrive.

C1

- Create a working group to fund and oversee the creation of sports pitches and facilities on the land north of the bypass.

Key players: Blandford Football Club (incorporating Youth Football)/Blandford Rugby Club/BFTC/NDDC

C2

- Audit pitch facilities across the area working closely with sports clubs to create strategic picture of needs.

Key players: DT11 Forum/parishes/BFTC/NDDC

D) TV reception/broadband access

Due to the rural nature of the Blandford area there are still pockets of poor TV and mobile phone reception and no broadband access.

D1

- Map pockets of poor TV and mobile phone reception and lack of broadband access and lobby appropriate service providers for solutions.

Key players: DT11 Forum/CDW/parishes

E) Recreational/craft/hobby evening classes – see Learning and Skills

2. Transport and Access

F) Public and community transport

DT11 is a rural patch and car ownership is comparatively high even among lower income groups. Yet public transport remains the only option for many residents. Even among those with access to a private car there is a desire to use public transport for particular types of journeys or for reasons of sustainability.

F1

- Encourage the use of existing bus routes by publishing localised/targeted bus timetables for particular parishes, interest or age groups. Lobby against reduction in bus numbers/routes.

Key players: DCC/parishes/DT11 Forum

F2

- Pilot youth transport service based on research findings so that young people across the DT11 area can safely get to the places they want to go at evenings and weekends.

Key players: NORDCAT/DT11 Forum

F3

- Encourage wider use of Nordcat community transport scheme by targeted marketing to specific user groups.

Key players: NORDCAT/DT11 Forum

F4

- Lobby for more safe cycle routes – especially key routes into the town.

Key players: DT11 Forum, NDDC, DCC

G) Access to services

While transport can resolve some issues of access for rural residents, for certain 'hard to reach' groups mobile services that come to the user are the answer.

G1

- Promote the use and development of the Dorset Youth and Community Service mobile 'Youth Bus' service across the DT11 area to bring professional youth workers to young people who may not otherwise be able to get to Youth Centre in Blandford Forum.

Key players: Blandford Youth Service/DT11 Forum

H) Transport networks – roads

The DT11 area has no rail networks but is bisected by the A350, a major trunk road connected the South Coast to the M4. Although heavily used by lorries and tankers, it still meanders through the heart of many villages in the DT11 area.

H1

- Support a revised C13 route becoming the major link between Blandford Forum and Shaftsbury

Key players: DCC/NDDC/BFTC/DAPTC/Highways Agency/DT11 Forum

H2

- Lobby for implementation of an effective by-pass route for the A350 south of Blandford Forum to intersect with the A31 at Sturminster Marshall.

Key players: DCC/NDDC/BFTC/DAPTC/Highways Agency/DT11 Forum

H3

- Improve traffic flow through Blandford Forum town centre by providing better signage from bypass into town via both Bournemouth Road and Wimborne Road.

Key players: DCC/BFTC/Chamber of Trade/DT11 Forum/NDDC

3. Community Safety

I) Traffic and road safety

As with many other parts of the country traffic volumes are steadily increasing across the DT11 area and speeding is a real issue. Even where adequate speed limits are in place, there are issues around speeding cars and subsequent road safety.

I1

- Support individual parishes in their efforts to introduce traffic calming measures in key areas.

Key players: DT11 Forum

J) Vandalism/Anti Social Behaviour

Vandalism and anti-social behaviour is a particular problem in the town centre, although there are some issues in the outlying villages. Problems include drunkenness and under-age drinking and acts of vandalism. It is important to see these issues in the context of other parts of Dorset and the UK and realise that our problems are relatively minor. However coordinated actions have had positive results in the past. The Blandford Local Action Group is best placed to coordinate and implement these actions.

J1

- Support Blandford Local Action Group with its problem-solving approach to community safety issues.

Key players: BLAG/DT11 Forum/Police/NDDC

L) Crime/policing

Crime in the DT11 area is relatively low compared with other parts of the County and the UK. However there is still a lot that can be done to both maintain these low levels and improve things.

L1

- Community intelligence is useful to the Police in both detecting crime and also in preventing crime. The accurate and appropriate reporting of minor incidents should be encouraged through the creation and promotion of a minor incident reporting form for use across DT11.

Key players: Police/CDW

L2

- Homewatch has patchy coverage across DT11, but where it is effective, it pays dividends in reducing crime. Encourage the setting up/revitalisation of Homewatch in communities across DT11.

Key players: Police/BFTC/BLAG/NDDC/Homewatch/parishes

M) Health

M1

- There is a lack of NHS dentists in Blandford Forum and surrounding area resulting in inequalities in dental care. Identify local reasons for this and seek solutions.

Key players: PCT/NDDC/DT11 Forum

N) Social inclusion

N1

- Support plans to provide information, guidance and language tuition for refugees, asylum seekers and minority ethnic people living in the DT11 area.

Key players: various

4. Economy (incorporating housing, education and skills)

O) Retail

Blandford Forum has a good mix of independent retailers including butchers, bakers and greengrocers, plus some High Street groups. It is the shops that make Blandford Forum a town but the pressures on independent retailers in particular are enormous. There are some larger retailers (Tesco, Homebase) in an out-of-town development in Blandford St Mary.

O1

- Develop a range of local shopping events to encourage residents and visitors to use the town for their shopping needs.

Key players: Chamber of Commerce/DT11 Forum

O2

- Support the production of a town guide.

Key players: Chamber of Trade/BFTC/NDDC/CDW

O3

- Closely monitor the Hall & Woodhouse redevelopment plans – particularly in relation to retail provision – to ensure that threats to Blandford Forum town shops are minimised.

Key players: DT11 Forum/Blandford St Mary PC/ BFTC/NDDC

O4

- Support village shops, post offices and pubs particularly those that are at risk of closure and support campaigns to keep them open.

Key players: DT11 Forum

P) Tourism

Tourism is a major aspect of the economy in Dorset but is relatively under-developed in DT11 area. Existing marketing support for this is under threat due to funding cuts; yet marketing is precisely what is needed to leverage the potential of this sector of the local economy.

P1

- Explore ways to support and maintain a Blandford TIC.

Key players: NDDC/BFTC/RDTA/Chamber of Trade/DT11 Forum/parish councils

P2

- Explore ways to leverage existing tourist attractions/themes/events in the area for increased local benefit.

Key players: NDDC/RDTA/Chamber of Trade

Q) Business

Major employers include Hall & Woodhouse Brewery, Hospital Metalcraft, NDDC and the Environment Agency. Alongside these there are a number of business/industrial units based in and around Blandford. The Army presence at Blandford Camp also has a significant impact on the local economy.

Q1

- Support the creation of an extended Chamber of Commerce incorporating the industrial parks in and around the Blandford area.

Key players: Chamber of Trade/NDDC

R) Learning and skills

R1

- Create a Local Learning Plan that maps the demand for vocational and recreational learning across the DT11 area.

Key players: DT11 Forum/LSC

S) Housing

S1

- Consider alternative ways of funding and supporting affordable housing projects in order to create sustainable communities.

Key players: DT11 Forum/DSP/town & parishes/NDDC

5. Environment and heritage

T) Trailway

The longstanding project to convert the old railway line running from Sturminster Newton down to Sturminster Marshall (and beyond) will have significant impact for Blandford Forum when it is completed, as it will provide an alternative route into the town from the surrounding villages. It is likely that not only will it bring benefits to local residents, but will provide a boost to tourism as well.

T1

Campaign to speed up the land deals required in order join-up the missing links in the trail.

Key players: DCC/NDDC/Countryside Rangers/RDTA/Stourpaine PC/Shillingstone PC/Charlton Marshall PC/Spetisbury PC

U) Historic churches

Blandford Forum and the surrounding parishes have a wealth of beautiful and historic churches between them, yet many are under threat because of rising maintenance costs and dwindling church attendance.

U1

- Support fundraising for repairs to the cupola of St Peter and St Paul Church in Blandford Forum as a landmark building for the town.

Key players: Parish Church/BFTC/DT11 Forum

U2

- Explore ways of supporting the rural historic churches in the area through recreational/tourism/cultural campaigns.

Key players: parishes/PCCs/DT11 Forum

V) Stour Meadows

The Stour Meadows is one of the key open spaces in Blandford St Mary and has lots of scope for improvement. It adjoins an area which is likely to be one of the most significant redevelopments in the area for many years.

V1

- Look at environmental improvements required at Stour Meadows and draw up action plan.

Key players: NDDC/DT11 Forum/Blandford St Mary Parish Council



Priorities September 2006 – August 2008

The above represents a summary of the main actions identified as necessary to move forward the vision for the DT11 area as “a thriving, vibrant market town as a cultural, retail and economic hub surrounded by sustainable villages set in carefully managed countryside enjoyed by all”. Consultations on priorities (report available separately to document how these were arrived at) reveal the highest priorities to be

- Improved provision of NHS dental care
- Provision of a new library building
- Venues and facilities for young people
- Support for village shops, pubs and post offices
- Affordable housing.

The Forum will therefore concentrate its efforts particularly on these five priorities. Whilst recognising the overriding importance of these five priorities, the Forum also recognises that its main role in moving forward these priorities is in lobbying and pressurising others.

It intends therefore additionally to focus attention on other actions in the Plan that are also considered important and may also impact on the above. For example a focus on the transport issues will also assist young people to access a range of facilities. It therefore will also focus on

- Encouraging the use of existing bus routes
- Piloting a youth transport service
- Encouraging the use of Nordcat buses.

Since support for the maintenance of the Tourist Information Centre (TIC) was also high and the development of tourism should improve the viability of rural shops and pubs, the Forum will also focus on

- Supporting and maintaining the Blandford TIC

Also since support for a Young People's Forum is similarly likely to assist the development of facilities that young people really want as well as giving young people a voice in their own right the DT11 Forum will also actively promote

- Creation of a Young People's Forum

The above is not intended to be prescriptive. Unforeseen developments (such as the relocation or closure of a major employer, changes in government policy or funding allocation) may mean that priorities are re-adjusted in this new light.

