

South Somerset District Council

Settlement Profile: Chard

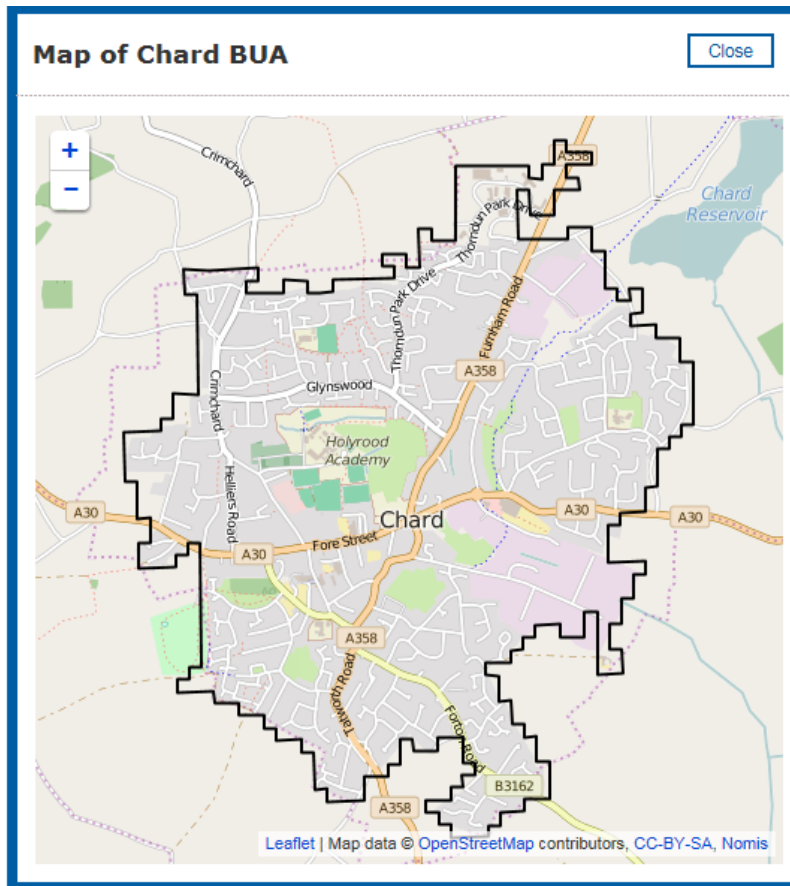


October 2017

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. The Settlement Profile has been produced using 2011 Census data for the 'Built-up Area' (BUA) of Chard (Figure 1.1) unless stated otherwise.

Figure 1.1: Map of Chard BUA



Source: Partnership Intelligence Unit, Somerset County Council

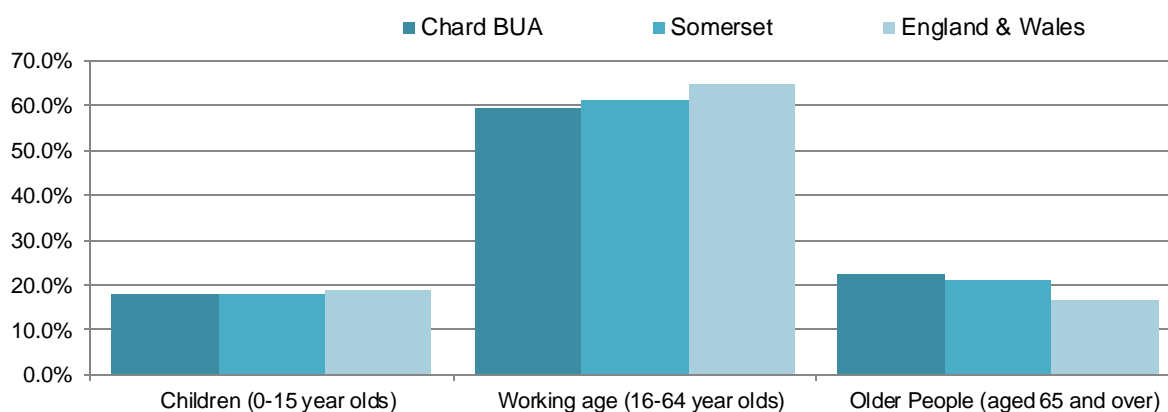
- 1.2 Chard is located in the west of South Somerset, close to the Devon and Dorset Borders. The town is surrounded by attractive countryside and in particular the Blackdown Hills AONB to the west and north of the town. Chard is closely linked to the regional trunk road, the A303, the A30 and A358.
- 1.3 The town's location close to the Devon border means it has a functional relationship with the market town of Axminster, where there is a railway station.
- 1.4 Chard has a history of being closely involved in the wool trade, with mills in and around the town producing bobbin lace net which was exported worldwide; and this continued into the middle of the 20th century, when a thriving engineering industry grew up alongside the lace mills. Recognition of Chard's employment heritage, coupled with the high proportion of major manufacturers still operating in Chard, means that the town is still an important centre for employment, manufacturing and innovation.

2. POPULATION

2.1 Figure 2.1 shows the age profile of Chard's resident population, with the number and percentage of residents in each of the following groups: children; working age; and older people. It then compares the percentages against those for Somerset, and England & Wales.

Figure 2.1 Chard's Age Profile Compared to Somerset, and England & Wales

	Chard BUA		Somerset	England & Wales
		%	%	%
Total usually resident population	13,074	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Children (0-15 year olds)	2,359	18.0%	17.8%	18.9%
Working age (16-64 year olds)	7,806	59.7%	61.1%	64.7%
Older People (aged 65 and over)	2,909	22.3%	21.1%	16.4%



Source: Partnership Intelligence Unit, Somerset County Council, using 2011 Census statistics from ONS

2.2 Chard has a resident population of 13,074; it has a lower ratio of 'Working age' residents than Somerset as a whole or nationally; and a considerably greater proportion of 'Older People'.

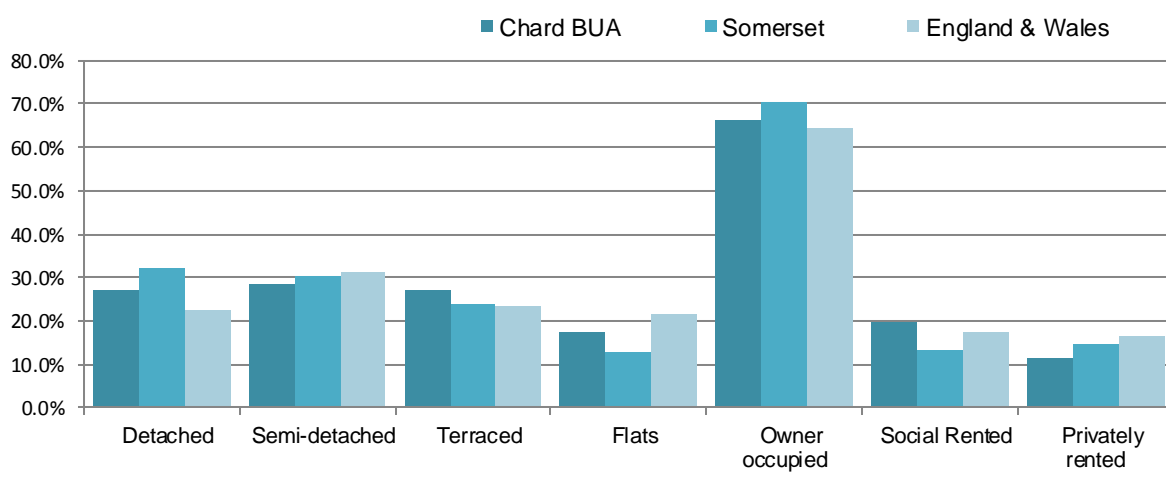
2.3 The settlement profile is fairly well balanced when compared to Somerset. However, both Chard and Somerset's older population and lower proportion of working age people is likely to result in higher levels of economically inactive people and put a greater pressure on services.

3. HOUSING

3.1 Figure 3.1 shows the number and percentage of dwellings by dwelling type and households by tenure. It also presents a comparison of dwelling types and tenure profiles for Chard, Somerset, and England & Wales.

Figure 3.1: Chard's Accommodation and Household Profiles

	Chard BUA		Somerset	England & Wales
		%	%	%
Total number of dwellings	6,066	100.0	100.0	100.0
Detached	1,636	27.0	32.3	22.6
Semi-detached	1,725	28.4	30.4	31.1
Terraced	1,639	27.0	23.7	23.6
Flats	1,063	17.5%	13.0%	21.6%
Tenure		%	%	%
Total number of households	5,782	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Owner occupied	3,832	66.3%	70.2%	64.3%
Social Rented	1,147	19.8%	13.5%	17.6%
Privately rented	673	11.6%	14.7%	16.7%



Source: Partnership Intelligence Unit, Somerset County Council, using 2011 Census statistics from ONS

- 3.2 Figure 3.1 suggests that Chard offers a reasonable range of accommodation types, although the proportions of terraced housing and within the social rented sector are higher than in Somerset or nationally. Owner-occupation is lower than across the County but corresponds to the country as a whole.
- 3.4 The Local Plan¹ states that 1,852 dwellings should be provided in Chard over the Plan period; and this includes development within and outside of the 'Chard Eastern Development Area' (CEDA). However, monitoring² shows that so far, delivery has been below the annualised housing target, with 655 completions to March 2017; 201 dwellings with planning permission; and applications pending for a further 600. If these developments progress, Chard would start to be more 'on track' with housing delivery.

¹ Policy SS5

² SSDC Monitoring Database

4. ECONOMY

The Economy in General

- 4.1 The employment rate in Chard is slightly higher than nationally, but lower than in Somerset as a whole (See Figure 4.1). However, the proportion of the population with no qualifications is much higher than in either of these other areas; and those qualified to NVQ level 4 or above is significantly lower. Figures 4.2 and 4.3 show that, by a very substantial margin, the vast majority of those in work do so in the manufacturing sector (over 43%); whilst the next largest sector is health (nearly 13%). The comparative ratios in the higher order activities such as Information & communication, Property; and Professional, scientific & technical, are all very low, which suggests that Chard has a relatively low wage economy. It also means that its economy could be vulnerable to potential future changes in the manufacturing sector.

Figure 4.1: Chard's Economic Activity Compared to Somerset, and England & Wales

	Chard BUA		Somerset	England & Wales
		%	%	%
Total number of people aged 16 to 74	9,183	100.0	100.0	100.0
People who are economically inactive	2,737	29.8	29.2	30.3
Employed	5,901	64.3	65.2	61.9
Unemployed	314	3.4	3.0	4.4
People aged 16+ with no qualifications	2,958	27.6	22.4	22.7
People aged 16+ with Level 4 or above qualification(s)	1,632	15.2	25.6	27.2

Source: Partnership Intelligence Unit, Somerset County Council, using 2011 Census statistics from ONS

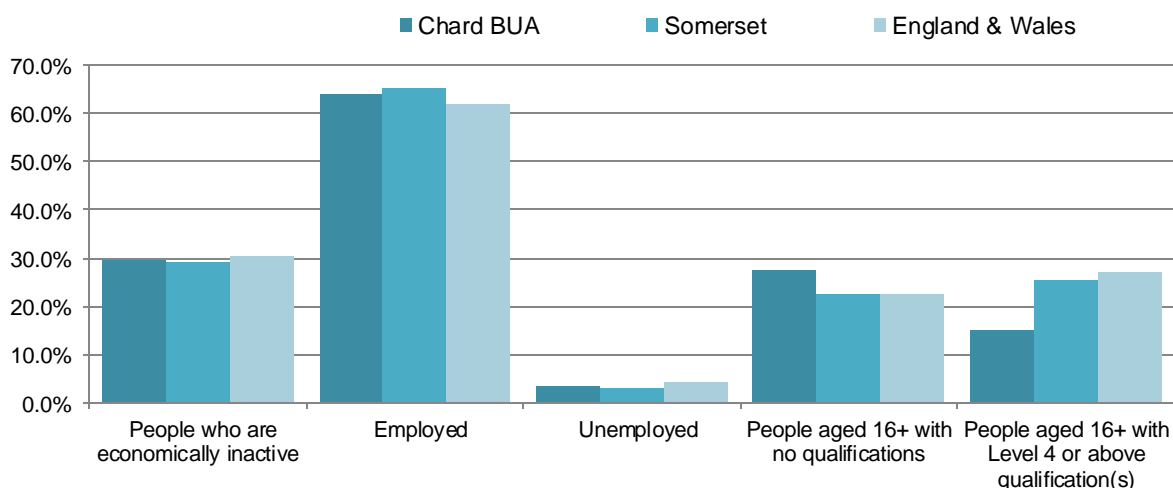


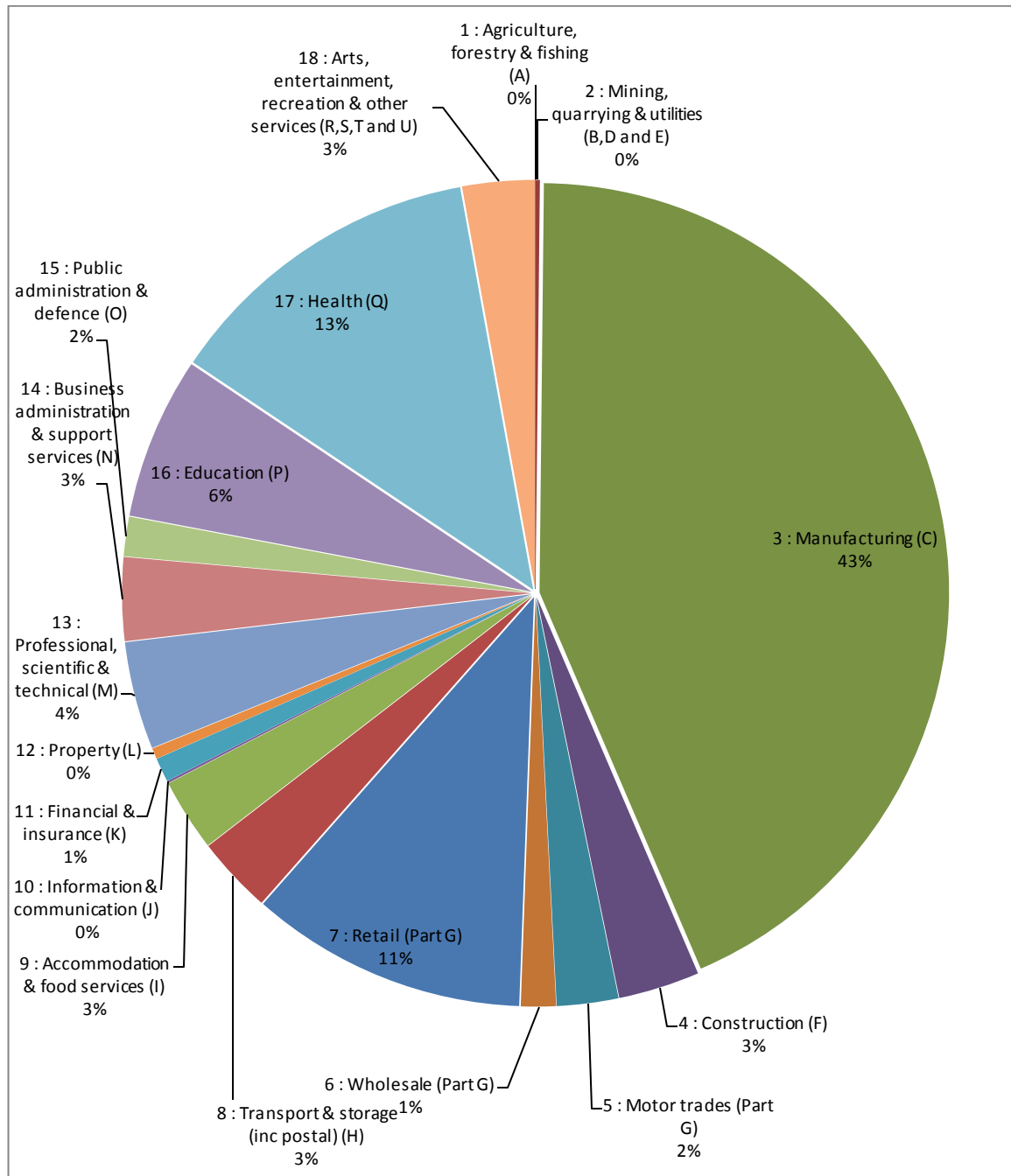
Figure 4.2: Employment Provision in Chard 2015

Sector	Chard		South Somerset
	No of Jobs	%	%
1 : Agriculture, forestry & fishing (A)	0*	n/a	n/a
2 : Mining, quarrying & utilities (B,D and E)	10	0.2	0.9
3 : Manufacturing (C)	2500	43.4	20.3
4 : Construction (F)	185	3.2	5.5
5 : Motor trades (Part G)	140	2.4	(All G) 18.8
6 : Wholesale (Part G)	80	1.4	
7 : Retail (Part G)	630	10.9	
8 : Transport & storage (inc postal) (H)	175	3.0	3.5
9 : Accommodation & food services (I)	165	2.9	6.2
10 : Information & communication (J)	5	0.1	2
11 : Financial & insurance (K)	55	1	0.9
12 : Property (L)	25	0.4	1.4
13 : Professional, scientific & technical (M)	245	4.2	7
14 : Business administration & support services (N)	190	3.3	5.5
15 : Public administration & defence (O)	90	1.6	2.3
16 : Education (P)	370	6.4	7.8
17 : Health (Q)	735	12.7	14.1
18 : Arts, entertainment, recreation & other services (R,S,T and U)	165	2.9	3.9
Total	5765	100	

Source: Business Register and Employment Survey, NOMIS, 2015

The BRES data does not include farmagriculture (SIC subclass 01000).data at settlement level; it is only available at region and country level. This is Open Access data that has been rounded to make it publishable; as such, the figures do not tally to an exact 100%. Chard is comprised of Super Output Areas E36005237, E36005238, E36005239, E36005240, and E36005241.

Figure 4.3: Employment Provision in Chard 2015



4.2 Significant recent new commercial developments in Chard include extensions to Oscar Mayer and to Brecknell Willis; redevelopment of Numatic International, development at Chard Business Park and an extension to Cerdic Foundries. The Council's monitoring³ shows that these have contributed to a large increase in Economic Development floorspace of 24,432m², even though the amount of new land has been relatively low and far less than anticipated in the Local Plan.

³ SSDC Monitoring Database

The Town Centre

- 4.3 Chard is designated as a Market Town in the adopted Local Plan. It has a modest range of retail and service uses, and primarily functions as a day to day shopping and service centre for local residents⁴. Its key roles include:
- **convenience shopping** – the main food store is the edge-of-centre Tesco supermarket on Tapstone Road (1,854 sq. m net). In the town centre, there are a number of other food stores, including Lidl (871 sq. m net), Sainsbury's (996 sq. m net) and a number of other smaller convenience shops.
 - **comparison shopping** – there is a limited range of comparison goods retailers within the centre, comprising predominantly independent retailers with a few national multiples.
 - **services** – there are a variety of service uses, including a post office, estate agents, hairdressers, accountants, restaurants and solicitors.
 - **entertainment/ leisure** – this is limited to a social club, public houses and restaurants.
 - **other uses** – there are other (non A Class uses) such as a dry cleaner, tattoo studio, dentists, osteopath, hotels and offices, that assist in providing a valuable town centre offer.
- 4.4 The diversity of Class A uses present in the centre is set out in Figure 4.4 and the results are compared with the national average⁴.

Figure 4.4: Chard Use Class Mix by Unit

Type of Unit	Number of Units 2010	Number of Units 2017	% of Total Number of Units	
			Chard	UK Average
A1 Comparison	52	36	30.0	33.4
A1 Convenience	12	13	10.8	10.4
A1 Service	43	24	20.0	13.0
A2 Service		19	15.8	11.8
A3 (Restaurants and Cafes)		7	5.8	9.5
A5 (Hot Food Takeaways)		6	5.0	6.0
A4 (Pubs/Bars)		2	1.7	4.6
Vacant	19	13	10.8	11.2
Total	126	120	100	100

Source: South Somerset Retail and Main Town Centres Uses Study 2017

- 4.5 The centre has a lower number of comparison units when compared with the national average; whilst the average number of convenience units is slightly higher. Consistent with its role as a market town, Chard has a significantly above average proportion of A1 and A2 services, but considerably below average proportions of A3/A4/A5 units when compared with the national average. It has a below average proportion of vacant units when compared with the national average, suggesting reasonable demand for units.

⁴ South Somerset Retail and Main Town Centres Uses Study; Lichfields July 2017

- 4.6 The Retail and Main Town Centre Uses Study estimates that Chard will have the capacity to accommodate the further retail and food/beverage floorspace shown in Figure 4.4. In the medium and longer terms, the requirements for additional floorspace for all types of outlet are relatively limited.

Figure 4.4: Projected Retail Floorspace Capacity in Chard

Type	Additional Floorspace (Square Metres) (Gross)		
	By 2024	By 2029	By 2034
Convenience	152	319	478
Comparison	264	616	974
Food and Beverage	70	197	320
Total	486	1,132	1,772

Source: South Somerset Retail and Main Town Centre Uses Study, 2017

- 4.7 There are a number of convenient and public car parks located in close proximity to the Town Centre; and Chard is an attractive market town, with a number of historic buildings in its centre. However, the centre has a relatively poor higher order comparison offer, attracting a limited market share of comparison goods spending within Somerset District; and has a low proportion of national multiple retailers.

5. INFRASTRUCTURE

- 5.1 The 'Millfield Link' forms part of the CEDA proposals and is identified as being vital to solving the capacity issues at the Convent Link. This alternative 'orbital' road route running north to south between the A358 north, A30 and A358 south (through CEDA) it is to be delivered in phases over the short, medium and long term alongside new development; and is identified in the Infrastructure Delivery Plan⁵ (IDP) as being Priority 1 and 2. The Council's commitment to its delivery is demonstrated by its inclusion in the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Regulation 123 list⁶.
- 5.2 Greater permeability for cyclists travelling within and across the town could be achieved by extending the traffic free section of the Stop Line Way from Chard to Tatworth in the medium term, initially following the old railway line (*Priority 2*). However, at present, there is a lack of identified or secured funding for this scheme.
- 5.3 In addition, the Local Plan aspires (Policy TA3) to the creation of a sustainable transport interchange in the town, and identifies that contributions will be sought for this solution (*Priority 3*).
- 5.4 Policies PMT1 and PMT2 make provision for a new primary school within the plan period, although SCC do not currently have plans for a new primary school. The implications of any additional housing growth on school capacity and education infrastructure will, however, need to be monitored and managed.
- 5.5 In terms of water supply and waste water, Wessex Water is upgrading the Chard Spine Main (*Priority 1*) and off-site sewers (*Priority 2*). Wessex Water has also

⁵ South Somerset Infrastructure Delivery Plan Update January 2016

⁶ [https://www.southsomerset.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning-permission/community-infrastructure-levy-\(cil\)/](https://www.southsomerset.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning-permission/community-infrastructure-levy-(cil)/)

indicated a treatment works scheme may be required in the medium term, subject to growth and water quality objectives. (*Priority 2*).

- 5.6 New housing generates a need for additional open space and outdoor play space, sports, community and cultural facilities; although the achievement of these infrastructure items is not fundamental to delivering planned development (*Priority 2 and Priority 3*). Specific priorities that have been identified through the Chard Regeneration Scheme / Chard Eastern Development Area include two new sports grounds and changing facilities (catering to the football and rugby clubs), youth facilities and equipped play areas (*Priority 2*).
- 5.7 Based upon current available information, development proposed at Chard in the Local Plan is unlikely to result in abnormal or fundamental infrastructure constraints relating to flood risk and drainage, telecommunications, waste and recycling, health care, or emergency services.

6. TRAVEL

- 6.1 There are no direct trains serving Chard, but services are available relatively nearby in Axminster or Crewkerne. Bus services do offer a reasonable level of public transport accessibility to the most of the main centres in Somerset.

Figure 6.1: Public Transport Provision in Chard

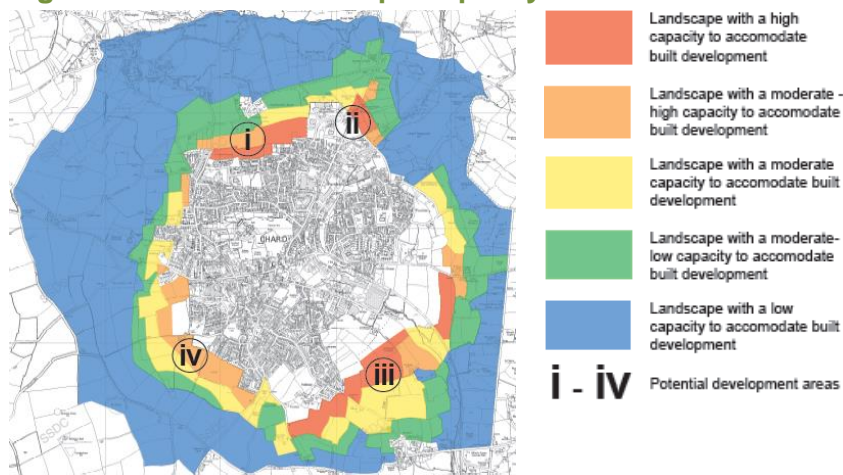
Buses		
Operator	Principal Destinations	Frequency (approx.)
Buses of Somerset	30 Axminster Railway Station - Axminster – Ilminster -Taunton	90 mins
	99 Taunton – Combe St Nicholas -	2-hourly
Dorset Community Transport	14 Chard – South Chard - Thorncombe	Thursdays only
Hatch Green Coaches	624 Bridgwater College - Chard	College days only
South West Coaches	96/96A/96C Winsham – Crewkerne – Crewkerne Rail Station - Yeovil	Multiple Daily
Train Services		
Operator	Service	Frequency (approx.)
South Western Railway – Axminster (7 Miles/ 11.3 km South)	London Waterloo to Exeter via Basingstoke, Andover, Salisbury, Gillingham, Templecombe, Sherborne, Crewkerne, Axminster & Honiton	Hourly
South Western Railway – Crewkerne (8 Miles/ 12.8 km East)	London Waterloo to Exeter via Basingstoke, Andover, Salisbury, Gillingham, Templecombe, Sherborne, Crewkerne,	Hourly

- 6.2 The absence of a viability study indicating that there is a business case for the reopening of Chard Junction means that there is not yet sufficient evidence to protect the land for future rail use within the Local Plan, although the Plan does allow for this should a business case that meets Network Rail’s criteria be made.

7. ENVIRONMENT

- 7.1 The Peripheral Landscape Study⁷ shows that, from a landscape standpoint, there is land to accommodate growth. Figure 7.1 shows the landscape capacity of land on the periphery to accommodate built-form.

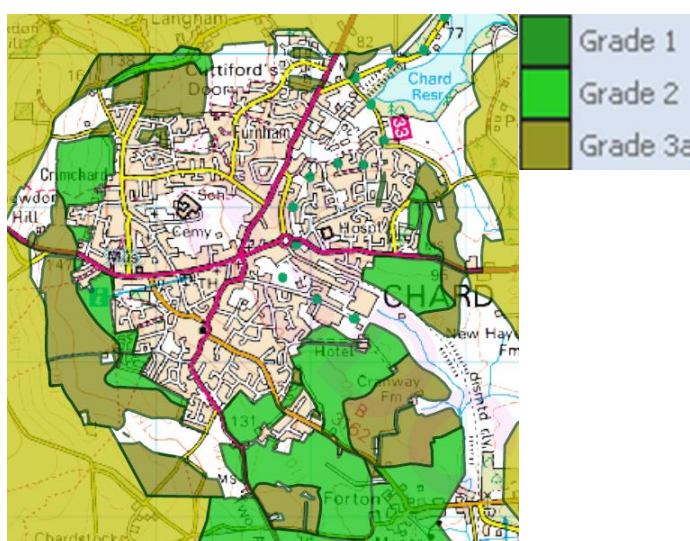
Figure 7.1: Chard Landscape Capacity



Source: Peripheral Landscape Study (2008)

- 7.2 Best and Most Versatile (BMV) agricultural land (Grades 1, 2 & 3a)⁸ is a key environmental constraint according to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF⁹). As Figure 7.2 shows, large areas of Grade 2 and 3a land surround Chard.

Figure 7.2: BMV Land around Chard



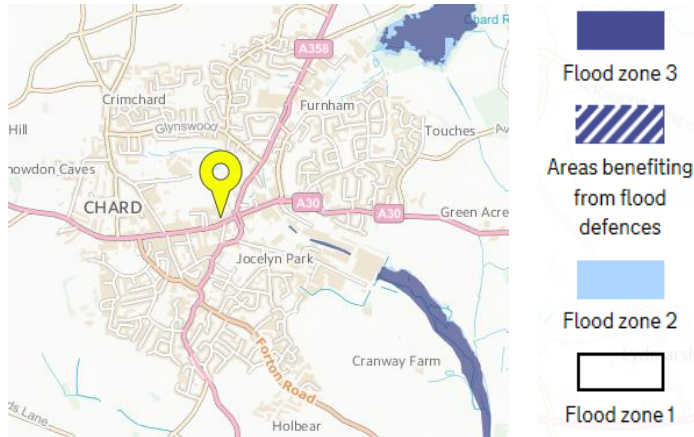
⁷ Peripheral Landscape Assessment, March 2008

⁸ Defined in the NPPF, (DCLG) 2012 – Annex 2

⁹ DCLG, 2012

- 7.3 Another environmental constraint to be taken into account in Chard's growth is flood risk, shown below in Figure 7.3. The River Isle and its headwaters, plus the tributary headwaters of the River Axe have associated areas prone to flooding in immediate proximity (identified as flood zone 2 by the EA) particularly below Chard Reservoir, and between the Millfield employment site and Forton.

Figure 7.3: Chard Flood Map



Source: Environment Agency Flood Map for Planning

8. CONCLUSION

- 8.1 The strategic approach to development at Chard is underpinned by the Chard Regeneration Framework (CRF)¹⁰, a set of documents that considers how the long term growth and regeneration of the town should be directed. The CRF consists of four core documents that address future growth of the town:
- A Vision for Chard, September 2010;
 - The Chard Regeneration Plan, September 2010;
 - The Chard Implementation Plan, October 2011; and
 - The Strategic Transport Appraisal Report, 2010.
- 8.2 Chard's Regeneration Scheme and growth is focussed on the Chard Eastern Development Area (CEDA) and other areas of Chard including the Boden Mill site and the East End regeneration area. Town Centre projects such as the ACI Boden site also fall under the umbrella of the CRS.
- 8.3 The delivery of CEDA has been an on-going issue. The Chard Football Club is particularly keen to see proposals come forward as part of the scheme includes the relocation of the existing ground and the provision of new facilities. Whilst small areas of the CEDA have planning permission the non-delivery of the majority of the allocation has led to pressure to develop other land around the town, potentially further affecting the viability of the CEDA.

¹⁰ <https://www.southsomerset.gov.uk/business/the-economic-development-service/current-projectsschemes/chard-regeneration-scheme/>

- 8.4 One of the key issues is the capacity of the central 'convent link' junction. The CRS identified the need for the 'Millfield Link' to provide an alternative route and ease traffic impact on that junction. Whilst the Strategic Transport Assessment identified the 'convent link' junction as being at or near to capacity, Somerset County Council Highways has raised little or no objection to development proposals outside of the allocation.
- 8.5 A project manager has been appointed by South Somerset District Council to bring forward the Chard Regeneration Scheme, initially focusing on the town centre.

Key Issues

- 8.6 The key issues that will need to be taken into account in planning the future of Chard include:
- The Town has a high proportion of more elderly people, which could place pressure on public transport and services.
 - Housing delivery in line with Local Plan expectations is heavily reliant on the eventual delivery of the Chard Eastern Development Area, which to date has not been brought forward.
 - Local employment is very significantly skewed towards the manufacturing sector, with relatively little representation in the higher order activities. Whilst attracting substantial amounts of new industrial investment, this means that the economy could be vulnerable to potential changes in the manufacturing sector and probably has a low wage economy.
 - The town centre appears to be performing well, but has a limited comparison offer with few national multiple retailers.
 - The capacity issues of the Convent Link junction need to be solved.