



LOCAL PLAN CONSULTATION EVENT SUMMARY OF RESPONSES

INTRODUCTION

This summary document brings together the comments raised by members of the community at the Local Plan consultation event held on 14 September at Comrades Hall, as well as feedback received via subsequent emails and conversations. These views will feed into the Parish Council's discussions and shape our final response to Dorset Council. The Parish Council would like to thank all those who took the time to attend the event, read the draft Local Plan and draft Local Transport Plan and share their considered feedback.

TRANSPORT AND CONNECTIVITY

- The Local Plan and Local Transport Plan (LTP4) are not aligned.
- No clear provision is made for new or improved bus services in West Dorset despite significant housing growth proposals. Commitments to bus services appear insecure, as they could be withdrawn at short notice.
- Rail links are inaccurately represented in consultation material (e.g. omission of Crewkerne station), raising concerns over the quality of the evidence base.
- The transport focus appears centred on the Dorchester to Weymouth corridor, with limited provision for rural West Dorset.
- Local roads are already under pressure; additional traffic from construction and new housing will increase congestion, particularly in towns such as Beaminster and Bridport.
- Infrastructure (roads, public transport, parking, cycle routes) must be planned and delivered in advance of further development.
- Dorset Council cannot guarantee improved public transportation without clear commitment from public transport providers.

HOUSING SCALE, LOCATION AND SETTLEMENT POLICY

- Dorset has been set a housing target of 3,246 homes per year - 55,000 over the 17 year life of the plan. This is almost double the previous target and nearly three times what has actually been delivered in recent years. This as a huge and unrealistic escalation.
- Broadwindsor is classified as a Tier 3 settlement. This classification applies to larger villages with a population above 500 and a basic range of local services (e.g. primary school, shop, church, some community facilities, limited bus services).
- Dorset Council Officers have questioned some proposed sites. If sufficient representations are submitted highlighting concerns, these sites may be removed from the Local Plan or reconsidered.
- The proposal for 89 homes in Broadwindsor is disproportionate in scale, representing nearly one-third of the existing village size.
- The identified land for housing 'Land adjacent to Folly Cottage' was classed as 'an unsustainable location with potential for AONB impact. An unsuitable site' in Dorset Council's Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) in 2024. Landowner not informed that the site was to be included.
- The site's elevated location would dominate the village approach and undermine rural character.
- Proposed development would result in the loss of productive farmland, contradicting the Local Plan's stated commitment to protecting agricultural land.
- Unclear whether land for proposed housing would be acquired through voluntary sale or compulsory purchase. Greater transparency is needed on how sites are brought forward and whether landowners can withdraw an offer of land.
- Appropriate development is supported, but large, speculative schemes are not. Smaller-scale development would better match local needs.
- The "presumption in favour of sustainable development" creates a risk of speculative, large-scale proposals outside local control if housing targets are not met.
- Removal of settlement boundaries under the "flexible settlements policy" risks piecemeal expansion without sufficient infrastructure.
- Housing delivery should be appropriate and prioritise affordability, social housing, and types of homes that meet local needs. Proven delivery through community land trust.
- Important to recognise that the Local Plan allocates housing across Tier 1, 2 and 3 settlements. However, developments that come forward outside these tiers under national planning policy do not count towards the Local Plan housing targets.

- Brownfield-first development should remain the priority; the argument that this would exacerbate the housing crisis is strongly rejected.
- Recognition that new housing is needed and should be welcomed, particularly to help address homelessness.

INFRASTRUCTURE AND SERVICES

- GP surgeries and pharmacies are already at capacity.
- Access to specialist healthcare services should be available locally without the need to travel to Poole or Bournemouth. Access to NHS dentists must be safeguarded for children and young people under 16.
- Local energy grid capacity is insufficient to support new housing and widespread electric vehicle charging.
- Sewerage and drainage systems are stretched.
- New development must not proceed without clear and funded commitments to address these deficiencies.
- Residents are urged to look beyond the Grouped Parish boundaries, as significant development in nearby towns such as Beaminster and Bridport will have direct impacts on local infrastructure, roads, health services, and schools.
- When replying to the consultation it is important to be site specific in terms of where new infrastructure is needed.

ENVIRONMENT, CLIMATE AND LANDSCAPE

- The Local Plan does not adequately reflect the area's designation as a National Landscape (AONB). Large-scale, elevated development would be visually intrusive and contrary to this protection.
- The Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) system raises concerns that losses could be offset elsewhere, leaving local biodiversity degraded. This should be challenged.
- Legal challenges elsewhere (e.g. Somerset) raise questions about the enforceability of BNG obligations.
- Nutrient neutrality proposals appear unconvincing in their ability to mitigate runoff impacts locally.
- Renewable energy policy should favour building-integrated solutions (solar panels, air-source heat pumps) rather than large-scale solar farms or poorly sited turbines. Sustainable resources should be put on all public buildings. Lack of detail provided in the Plan.

- The electricity grid cannot accommodate significant additional renewable generation without major upgrades.

DESIGN AND QUALITY OF DEVELOPMENT

- A Design Code is welcomed, but risks remaining aspirational unless enforced.
- Development should be of high quality, locally distinctive, and tailored to meet local housing needs (affordable homes, smaller homes, social housing).
- New housing must be energy efficient and equipped with renewable technology as standard.

EMPLOYMENT, ECONOMY AND AGRICULTURE

- The Local Plan lacks clear proposals for employment growth. Housing growth is not matched by job creation.
- Dorset's rural economy relies on agriculture, yet farmland continues to be lost to development.
- Expectations that villages "support the tourist offer" of towns such as Bridport and Lyme Regis are unclear and unrealistic.

OTHER ISSUES

- Concern that the Local Plan is primarily a tick-box exercise to satisfy central government housing demands, rather than a locally responsive strategy.
- Local Transport Plan appears aspirational and lacks detail on timelines and costings. Delivery is uncertain, with reliance on third parties such as bus companies and developers.
- National planning policy is perceived to prioritise developer profit over local need.
- Greater co-ordination across parish and town councils through associations such as DAPTC would help amplify rural concerns.
- Comments should be planning relevant.

NEXT STEPS

The Parish Council has requested an extension to the consultation deadlines for both the Local Plan and the Local Transport Plan; a decision is pending. This will allow the final draft response to be discussed, approved, and amended as necessary at the next Parish Council meeting on 13 October. Members of the community are encouraged to continue forwarding their comments to the Parish Council and are also reminded to submit their views individually to Dorset Council as part of the consultation process.