

Joint Local Plan Review for West Dorset, Weymouth and Portland

VISION BACKGROUND PAPER
ISSUES AND OPTIONS CONSULTATION VERSION

FEBRUARY 2017

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1. Introduction

PURPOSE OF BACKGROUND PAPER

- 1.1 This document is one of a number of background papers produced to support the West Dorset, Weymouth & Portland Local Plan Review. It provides information about the Vision for the area and how this could be amended and updated taking on board new strategies and information.

LOCAL PLAN AND THE REVIEW

- 1.2 In October 2015, West Dorset District Council and Weymouth & Portland Borough Council adopted their Joint Local Plan¹. Planning decisions are made in accordance with the adopted Local Plan which forms the main basis for making decisions on planning applications.
- 1.3 In his report on the examination of the Joint Local Plan², the Inspector indicated that he considered it to be *"imperative that an early review is undertaken"* and that the review should be in place by 2021. The objective of the review is to identify additional housing land capable of meeting housing need to 2036, identify a long-term strategy for development in the Dorchester area; and reappraise housing provision in Sherborne.

REASON FOR BACKGROUND PAPER

- 1.4 Since the adoption of the joint local plan to 2031, new initiatives have been developed and information has come into play which will have an influence on growth in the area. In addition, as the local plan review will form a strategy to guide development over the longer term (to 2036) there is a need to update the vision.

¹ <https://www.dorsetforyou.gov.uk/jointlocalplan/west/weymouth>

² <https://www.dorsetforyou.gov.uk/article/421782/West-Dorset-Weymouth--Portland-Adopted-Local-Plan-Inspectors-Report>

2. National Guidance

- 2.1 When preparing or reviewing local plans, national policy (CD/OKP1) sets out that early and meaningful engagement with a wide section of the local community is essential. This will help to ensure that local plans *"as far as possible, reflect a collective vision and a set of agreed priorities for the sustainable development of the area"*³.
- 2.2 Guidance set out in the Planning Practice Guidance indicates that the local plan for an area should include *"a vision and a framework for the future development of the area, addressing needs and opportunities in relation to housing, the economy, community facilities and infrastructure – as well as the basis for safeguarding the environment, adapting to climate change and securing good design."*
- 2.3 A vision is therefore an important part of a local plan that guides the approach to development within the area. It's about identifying the future of a place responding to local needs and circumstances and is translated into a framework to guide future development.
- 2.4 A vision should be aspirational but realistic setting out in broad terms what is intended to happen in different parts of the area over the longer term. The vision should be translated into objectives for the area which explain how the key elements of the vision will be dealt with. The vision and objectives should be locally specific and based on an understanding of the characteristics and function of the area.

³ DCLG (March 2012), National Planning Policy Framework, paragraph 155

3. Current Approach

- 3.1 The adopted joint local plan for West Dorset and Weymouth & Portland has separate visions for each of the council areas. These visions are specific to each geographical area and were produced independently reflecting the characteristics and priorities of each local authority. The visions were drawn up early on in the preparation of the adopted local plan.

A VISION FOR WEST DORSET

The spectacular landscapes of West Dorset, from the panoramic chalk ridges to the wooded valleys and undeveloped coastline, the picturesque settlements and variety of natural habitats, are something that set it apart from the rest of the country. We are proud of this, and want to be able to say the same in 20 years' time.

West Dorset has many communities of different sizes, from the small, rural villages to the larger market towns. It is important to us that we have a thriving economy, decent affordable homes and a network of community facilities, so that local people of all ages and abilities can enjoy living here and playing an active part in their community.

A VISION FOR WEYMOUTH & PORTLAND

We want the next 20 years to be an exciting time for the Borough, with significant investment and regeneration of key sites and infrastructure, making this a place where people of all ages will be engaged with their local community, feel a real sense of belonging and civic pride.

Weymouth and Portland are special places, set within the World Heritage Coast and the Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The relationship with the sea is key to our identity, past, present and future, from the beach to the port and harbours, the sailing opportunities, and all the related maritime industries.

We want to keep the individual identities of the communities that make up our area, linking to our maritime heritage and the beautiful coastal and rural landscapes, but always looking to the future.

- 3.2 The two visions contain some similar themes. Some elements seek to preserve the rich environmental and cultural heritage of the area whilst others look to establish the aspirations for the area's future, setting the context for future growth and development.

A VISION FOR WEST DORSET	KEY ELEMENTS
The spectacular landscapes of West Dorset, from the panoramic chalk ridges to the wooded valleys and undeveloped coastline, the picturesque settlements and variety of natural habitats, are something that set it apart from the rest of the country. We are proud of this, and want to be able to say the same in 20 years' time.	Environmental quality – landscape, coastline, natural habitats, picturesque settlements
West Dorset has many communities of different sizes, from the small, rural villages to the larger market towns.	Differing communities – rural villages, market towns
It is important to us that we have a thriving economy, decent affordable homes and a network of community facilities, so that local people of all ages and abilities can enjoy living here and playing an active part in their community.	The future: thriving economy, affordable homes, community facilities, inclusiveness

A VISION FOR WEYMOUTH & PORTLAND	
We want the next 20 years to be an exciting time for the Borough, with significant investment and regeneration of key sites and infrastructure, making this a place where people of all ages will be engaged with their local community, feel a real sense of belonging and civic pride.	The future: investment & regeneration, inclusiveness, sense of belonging & civic pride
Weymouth and Portland are special places, set within the World Heritage Coast and the Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The relationship with the sea is key to our identity, past, present and future, from the beach to the port and harbours, the sailing opportunities, and all the related maritime industries.	Environmental quality – coast and countryside, maritime links
We want to keep the individual identities of the communities that make up our area,	Differing communities – each with their own identity
Linking to our maritime heritage and the beautiful coastal and rural landscapes, but always looking to the future.	Connection of the past to the future – maritime heritage

4. Reasons for Change

- 4.1 The adopted local plan covers the two areas of West Dorset District Council and Weymouth & Portland Borough Council. These two areas make up the entirety of the Western Dorset Housing Market Area and therefore are considered the most appropriate area on which to draw up a local plan. This view was supported by the local plan inspector.
- 4.2 Since the local plan was adopted, there has been recognition that there is growth and investment potential within the plan area and specifically within the Weymouth, Dorchester and Portland area. Similarly, there has been a greater recognition of the importance of growth at other market and coastal towns to support the local economy.
- 4.3 Although the implications of the ageing population have been understood for a while, the importance to the local economy in terms of available workforce is becoming more apparent.
- 4.4 This growth potential along with the demographic concerns associated with the ageing population has been captured in the Western Dorset Economic Growth Strategy. The main challenges identified in the strategy are:
- Housing completion rates below target
 - Housing affordability issues
 - High numbers of elderly people, declining numbers of working age and young people – ‘the demographic crunch’
 - Low skill levels, high proportion of lower value sectors – the ‘productivity challenge’
 - High dependence on sectors in decline
- 4.5 These issues were not fully reflected in the separate visions for each local authority area despite the jointly prepared local plan. With the review of the local plan, the opportunity has arisen to combine the two visions into a single vision for the whole plan area, capitalising on the similarities that exist between the two separate visions and taking on board the recognised need for growth within the area. This single vision would aid in developing revised objectives to guide development.

5. Proposed Approach

- 5.1 The key elements of the two separate visions have been drawn together to provide a single vision for the whole plan area. The combined vision highlights the important characteristics of the area and the aspirations for how growth will be accommodated.
- 5.2 The proposed vision builds in the growth potential within the Weymouth, Dorchester and Portland area and reflects the potential at other market and coastal towns. The revisions also seek to tackle the 'demographic crunch' through increased growth levels with the intention of providing more homes for working age people.

PROPOSED COMBINED VISION

The environmental quality of the area – its landscape, coastline and its picturesque settlements – is what makes the area special and an attractive place to live and do business.

The settlements in the area each have their own character – from small rural villages in West Dorset to the larger market towns with links to their past and coastal communities such as Weymouth with extensive maritime and tourist heritage.

Looking forward, the rich natural environment, heritage and links to the past need to be considered and respected, and where possible enhanced.

Within this context, in 20 years time, we want to be proud of the area in which we live.

We want more and better paid jobs, more affordable homes and a network of community facilities that enable all ages and abilities to contribute to their community enabling a real sense of community belonging and engagement.

We wish to see significant investment and regeneration providing infrastructure to encourage businesses across the area to start and grow.

It is important that we have a thriving and resilient economy, capitalising on the linkages between Weymouth, Dorchester and Portland as the key driver of the local economy and capitalising on the opportunities at the market and coastal towns to provide for sustainable growth to serve the more rural areas.

- 5.3 As part of the consultation at Issues and Options stage, the following consultation question was asked.

3-i. Do you agree with the proposed single vision being used to develop objectives and guide the strategy for development within the Local Plan area?

- 5.4 Once the results of the consultation have been analysed, the proposed vision will be refined and used to develop objectives for the local plan review. These objectives will form part of the preferred options consultation.