

Joint Local Plan Review for West Dorset, Weymouth and Portland

DESIGN BACKGROUND PAPER
ISSUES AND OPTIONS CONSULTATION VERSION

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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.

LOCAL PLAN AND THE REVIEW

- 1.2 In his report on the examination of the Joint Local Plan¹, the Inspector indicated that he considered it to be "imperative that an early review is undertaken". 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 by 2021; and reappraise housing provision in Sherborne.
- 1.3 If a review is absent, or the Local Plan becomes silent or out of date because of a lack of progress, the presumption in favour of sustainable development applies and the councils would have less control in determining where development goes. Failure to undertake a review or even start it promptly would be likely to increase the risk of developers submitting planning applications at an early stage.
- 1.4 On 25th March 2015 the government introduced a new approach for setting technical standards for new housing development². This offered the opportunity to have enhanced standards for access and water, plus an optional nationally described space standard, where there is evidence of need.

¹ <https://www.dorsetforyou.gov.uk/article/421782/West-Dorset-Weymouth--Portland-Adopted-Local-Plan-Inspectors-Report>

² <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/housing-optional-technical-standards>

2. National Policy and Guidance

- 2.1 National policy regarding design is set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (CD/OKP₁) with further guidance provided in the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG).

NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK (NPPF)

- 2.2 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that *"Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, is indivisible from good planning, and should contribute positively to making places better for people."*
- 2.3 The NPPF also states that local planning authorities *"should identify the size, type, tenure and range of housing that is required in particular locations, reflecting local demand"*.
- 2.4 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states *"Local planning authorities should take account of evidence that demonstrates a clear need for housing for people with specific housing needs and plan to meet this need."* With this in mind, the evidence of need for accessibility, water efficiency and internal space within new dwellings is explored.

PLANNING PRACTICE GUIDANCE (PPG)

- 2.5 Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) emphasises the need for planning to promote access and inclusion, stating *"An inclusive environment is one that can be accessed and used by everyone. It recognises and accommodates differences in the way people use the built environment."* The guidance further states that *"Planning can help break down unnecessary physical barriers and exclusions caused by the poor design of buildings and places."* Whilst these statements are concerned with accessibility they are equally as relevant to internal space.
- 2.6 A key component of design in relation to internal space is the consideration of *"how the completed building will be occupied and managed can overcome many barriers experienced by some users. Too often the needs of users, including disabled people, older people and families with small children, are considered too late in the day."*
- 2.7 The wider setting of the building is a fundamental consideration when designing accessible housing. The PPG sites the following as issues to consider;
- proximity and links to public transport
 - parking spaces and setting down points in proximity to entrances
 - the positioning and visual contrast of street furniture and the design of approach

- routes to meet the needs of wheelchair users and people with visual impairments
 - whether entrances to buildings are clearly identified, can be reached by a level or gently sloping approach and are well lit.
- 2.8 The PPG (paragraph 13) makes reference to water in relation to efficient use of natural resources, stating that "*The structure, layout and design of places can help reduce their resource requirements in terms of energy demands, water and land.*" The text goes on to state "*The layout and design of buildings and planting can reduce energy and water use and mitigate against flooding, pollution and over heating.*"
- 2.9 Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) recommends predominant reliance on secondary data for the methodology of assessing the housing need. Therefore Census data and national surveys have been consulted during the assessment.

3. Evidence and Research

ACCESSIBILITY, ADAPTABLE HOUSING AND INTERNAL SPACE

- 3.1 The evidence base for accessibility and adaptability is also applied to internal space as data relating to mobility is a key factor in whether there is evidence of need for enhanced standards.
- 3.2 The following tables from the Office for National Statistics show age structure data from 2001 for West Dorset (Figure 2.1) and Weymouth and Portland (Figure 2.3) plus population profile data from 2015 mid-year estimates for West Dorset (Figure 2.2) and Weymouth and Portland (Figure 2.4). These tables allow comparisons to be made to demonstrate how, if at all, the population is changing.
- 3.3 The combined total from the categories 'People aged 65-74', 'People aged 75-84', 'People aged 85-89', 'People aged 90 and over' for West Dorset in 2001 is 22,603 which equates to 24.47% of the total population. When compared to the 2015 mid-year estimate of 29.4% the tables show an increasing elderly population. This is also the case for Weymouth and Portland, whose combined total of people who are 65+ from 2001 is 12,313 which equates to 19.34%, compared with 24.1% in the 2015 mid-year statistics.

Figure 2.1: Population age structure for West Dorset, 2001 Census

	WEST DORSET	SOUTH WEST	ENGLAND
All People	92,360	4,928,434	49,138,831
People aged 0-4	4,365	270,006	2,926,238
People aged 5-7	2,968	173,155	1,838,668
People aged 8-9	2,080	120,924	1,283,851
People aged 10-14	5,767	313,752	3,229,047
People aged 15	1,171	60,733	623,767
People aged 16-17	2,346	118,865	1,231,266
People aged 18-19	1,676	113,828	1,177,571
People aged 20-24	3,112	264,173	2,952,719
People aged 25-29	3,929	282,280	3,268,660
People aged 30-44	17,388	1,049,175	11,127,511
People aged 45-59	19,310	982,263	9,279,693
People aged 60-64	5,645	260,165	2,391,830

People aged 65-74	11,252	463,709	4,102,841
People aged 75-84	8,285	332,615	2,751,135
People aged 85-89	2,031	81,106	63,7701
People aged 90 and over	1,035	41,685	316,323

Source: Office for National Statistics (2004)

Figure 2.2 – Population Profile for West Dorset alongside comparators Dorset and England and Wales

	TOTAL	PERCENTAGE	DORSET	ENGLAND & WALES
All Persons	100,750		420,950	57,885,410
All Males	48,520	48.2%	48.8%	49.3%
All Females	52,230	51.8%	51.2%	50.7%
0-15 years	15,670	15.6%	16.0%	18.9%
16-64 years	55,460	55%	56.1%	63.2%
65+ years	29,610	29.4%	28.0%	17.9%

Source: 2015 Mid Year Estimates, Office for National Statistics

Figure 2.3 – Population age structure for Weymouth and Portland, 2001 Census

	WEYMOUTH & PORTLAND	SOUTH WEST	ENGLAND
All People	63,648	4,928,434	49,138,831
People aged 0-4	3,226	270,006	2,926,238
People aged 5-7	2,109	173,155	1,838,668
People aged 8-9	1,574	120,924	1,283,861
People aged 10-14	4,065	313,752	3,329,047
People aged 15	793	60,733	623,767
People aged 16-17	1,574	118,865	1,231,266
People aged 18-19	1,506	113,828	1,177,571
People aged 20-24	3,050	264,173	2,952,719
People aged 25-29	3,493	282,280	3,268,660

People aged 30-44	13,297	1,049,175	11,127,511
People aged 45-59	13,187	982,263	9,279,693
People aged 60-64	3,461	260,165	2,391,830
People aged 65-74	6,091	463,709	4,102,841
People aged 75-84	4,448	332,615	2,751,135
People aged 85-89	1,181	81,106	63,7701
People aged 90 and over	593	41,685	316,323

Source: Office for National Statistics (2004)

Figure 2.4 – Population Profile for Weymouth and Portland alongside comparators Dorset and England and Wales

	TOTAL	PERCENTAGE	DORSET	ENGLAND & WALES
All Persons	65,170		420,950	57,885,410
All Males	32,210	49.4%	48.8%	49.3%
All Females	32,950	50.6%	51.2%	50.7%
0-15 years	10,730	16.5%	16.0%	18.9%
16-64 years	38,700	59.4%	56.1%	63.2%
65+ years	15,730	24.1%	28.0%	17.9%

Source: 2015 Mid Year Estimates, Office for National Statistics

3.4 Figure 2.5 shows the numbers of people living with limiting long-term illness in Weymouth and Portland and West Dorset, comparing the figures in both areas to national figures. The most commonly reported impairments in terms of limiting long-term illnesses are those that affect mobility, lifting or carrying. As demonstrated in Figure 2.5, 14,101 people in Weymouth and Portland have a limiting long-term illness. This equates to 21.6% of the population which is significantly higher than the national (17.9%) percentage. The 20,113 people that suffer from limiting long-term illness represent 20.3% of the West Dorset area which again is significantly higher than the national percentage.

Figure 2.5 – Population of people living with Long-term limiting illness in West Dorset and Weymouth and Portland in comparison to England and Wales.

AREA	TOTAL POP	DAY-TO-DAY ACTIVITIES LIMITED A LOT	DAY-TO-DAY ACTIVITIES LIMITED A LITTLE	PEOPLE IN THE AREA LIVING WITH LONG-TERM LIMITING ILLNESS	OVERALL % AGAINST TOTAL POP
England and Wales	56,075,912	4,769,712	5,278,729	10,048,441	17.9%
West Dorset	99,264	8,645	11,468	20,113	20.3%
Weymouth and Portland	65,167	6,315	7,786	14,101	21.6%

Source: Table compiled from 2011 Census data (Nomisweb)

WATER EFFICIENCY

- 3.5 All new homes already have to meet the mandatory national standard set out in Building Regulations of 125 litres per person per day. Where there is clear local need, local planning authorities can set out Local Plan policies requiring new dwellings to meet the tighter Building Regulations optional requirement of 110 litres per person per day.
- 3.6 The map in Figure 2.6 shows that Wessex Water serves the vast majority of the plan area with the exception of Lyme Regis and Uplyme which are served by South West Water.

Figure 2.6 – Map showing water body catchment areas for the South of England



3.7 Figure 2.7 shows that the water companies serving the region (Wessex Water and South West Water) are classified as Medium Stress areas both currently and in each future scenario. The table also demonstrates that this is in keeping with the average level which is Medium Stress for current and all future scenarios.

Figure 2.7 – The Environment Agency Water Stressed Areas Classification (2013)

WATER COMPANY AREA	CURRENT STRESS	FUTURE SCENARIO 1	FUTURE SCENARIO 2	FUTURE SCENARIO 3	FUTURE SCENARIO 4	FINAL STRESS
South West Water	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium	Not Serious
Wessex Water	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium	Not Serious

4. Current Approach

- 4.1 West Dorset and Weymouth and Portland Local Plan policies regarding internal space, accessibility and water efficiency are set out below.

THE DESIGN AND POSITION OF BUILDINGS: POLICY ENV12

- 4.2 Policy ENV12 – The Design and Position of Buildings places a high level of significance on the ability of dwellings to fulfil their purpose, both initially and for future needs. The policy states that design *"encompasses how capable developments are of fulfilling their purpose initially and into the future as needs of occupants change."*
- 4.3 In terms of internal space ENV12 states that *"Dwellings as a minimum should have sufficient internal space for a high level of functionality so that day to day tasks and activities can be carried out."*
- 4.4 These considerations are particularly relevant to the plan area of West Dorset and Weymouth and Portland due to the increasingly older population plus *"a greater proportion of the population with their day to day activities limited by long term health issues compared with England as a whole."*
- 4.5 The Plan states its intentions to work alongside stakeholders and the local community to develop an approach for adaptable and accessible development that complies with government guidance.

ACHIEVING LEVELS OF ENVIRONMENTAL PERFORMANCE: POLICY ENV13

- 4.6 The supporting text to Policy ENV13 – Achieving Levels of Environmental Performance lists methods of achieving high standards of environmental performance in new development. Those relevant to water efficiency include;
- Putting in place system to collect rainwater for use
 - Sustainable Urban Drainage principles

5. Reason for Change

ACCESSIBILITY AND ADAPTABLE HOUSING

- 5.1 In terms of accessibility and adaptable housing the evidence suggests that enhanced standards should be adopted. The population statistics in figures 2.1-2.4 show an increasingly elderly population within the plan area in comparison with England and Wales. Future predictions show that the plan area will be home to an increasingly older population, as this population bracket is *"set to grow by 50% over the next 25 years"*. This further supports the need for enhanced accessibility or adaptability of new dwellings, in order to produce inclusive and flexible design to meet current and future needs.
- 5.2 This evidence demonstrates a current demand for a greater level of accessibility whilst the fact that the elderly population is increasing supports the need for enhanced levels of accessibility in new housing.
- 5.3 The evidence in conjunction with the Local Plan policy ENV12 stating that developments are required to fulfil their purpose *"initially and into the future as needs of occupants change"* provides comprehensive support for the adoption of higher technical standards.

INTERNAL SPACE

- 5.4 The statistics from Public Health England demonstrate that a significantly higher proportion of people in the plan area have long term limiting illness compared to England and Wales. When considering this data and reiterating policy ENV12 *"Dwellings as a minimum should have sufficient internal space for a high level of functionality so that day to day tasks and activities can be carried out"* there is strong evidence for a requirement for a proportion of wheelchair accessible housing or wheelchair accessible housing in site specific circumstances.

WATER EFFIECENCY

- 5.5 The evidence regarding water efficiency in West Dorset and Weymouth & Portland is that both water companies are classified as medium stress areas. This suggests that the national standard for water efficiency should be applied to West Dorset and Weymouth & Portland.

6. Proposed Approach

- 6.1 The review of the local plan provides the opportunity to examine the evidence to establish if any enhanced standards are justified.
- 6.2 The adoption of any higher technical and space standards will have an impact on the build costs and subsequent affordability of new build properties. It may also have an impact on the overall viability of schemes and therefore before any additional standards are introduced, viability assessments of different options will need to be carried out.
- 6.3 There are a number of ways that enhanced standards could be applied and at this stage it is intended to seek views on possible options to take forward and test for viability.

MODULAR HOUSING

- 6.4 In addition, over recent years modular housing has been gaining in popularity as a way of meeting housing need in a relatively quick and inexpensive way. Modular housing is generally manufactured off-site, then transported to and assembled on-site.

23-i. Should modular housing play a more important role in meeting housing needs within the area?

ACCESSIBILITY AND ADAPTABLE HOUSING

- 6.5 Accessible and adaptable standards mean making reasonable provision for most people to access a dwelling and incorporating features that make it potentially suitable for a wide range of occupants such as those with reduced mobility, older people, and some wheelchair users.
- 6.6 Within the plan area there is a higher proportion of people within the older age groups than in the country as a whole and that population is becoming increasingly significant. In addition, Weymouth & Portland has 21.6% of its population with long term illness or disability and West Dorset has 20.2% compared with 17.7% within England as a whole³.
- 6.7 This suggests that consideration should be given to the need to provide dwellings with enhanced accessibility to ensure the needs of an increasing proportion of the population are met in new developments.

³ Public Health England 2013.

23-ii. Should there be a requirement to provide a proportion of new houses at the enhanced accessibility and adaptability standards? or

23-iii. Should the requirement for enhanced accessibility and adaptability standards in new housing apply in certain site specific circumstances only? For example sites in town centres or sites with level access to facilities most suitable for people with reduced mobility.

WHEELCHAIR ACCESSIBLE HOUSING

6.8 The standard for wheelchair accessible housing would require new dwellings to make reasonable provision, either at completion or at a point following completion, for a wheelchair user to live in the dwelling and use any associated private outdoor space, parking and communal facilities that may be provided for the use of other occupants.

6.9 These standards can only be applied where the local authority is responsible for allocating or nominating a person to live in a dwelling.

23-iv. Should a requirement for a proportion of new houses to be suitable for wheelchair users be included within the Local Plan?

23-v. Should a requirement for new homes to be suitable for wheelchair users be introduced in certain site specific circumstances? Examples might be sites in town centres or sites with level access to facilities.

NATIONALLY DESCRIBED SPACE STANDARDS

6.10 In pursuing sustainable development in line with the NPPF we also need to ensure that homes provide adequate space to undertake typical day to day activities, and to avoid the health and social costs that arise where space is inadequate.

Figure 5.1: Minimum gross internal floor areas and storage (m²)

NUMBER OF BEDROOMS (B)	NUMBER OF BED SPACES (PERSONS)	1 STOREY	2 STOREY	3 STOREY	BUILT-IN STORAGE
		DWELLINGS	DWELLINGS	DWELLINGS	
1b	1p	39 (37)*			1.0
	2p	50	58		1.5
2b	3p	61	70		2.0
	4p	70	79		
3b	4p	74	84	90	2.5
	5p	86	93	99	
	6p	95	102	108	
4b	5p	90	97	103	3.0
	6p	99	106	112	
	7p	108	115	121	
	8p	117	124	130	
5b	6p	103	110	116	3.5
	7p	112	119	125	
	8p	121	128	134	
6b	7p	116	123	129	4.0
	8p	125	132	138	

WATER EFFICIENCY

6.11 In relation to water efficiency, Environment Agency data shows that the water companies serving the region (Wessex Water and South West Water) are classified as Medium Stress both in current and future scenario. It is therefore suggested that currently national standards for water efficiency in West Dorset and Weymouth & Portland area are appropriate and there is no evidence to suggest that optional enhanced standards should be required.

23-vii. Is there any evidence not considered above which would support the inclusion of enhanced standards for water efficiency within the local plan?