



Dorset Council

Local Plan Options Consultation

August 2025

dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/dorset-is-changing

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1. Introduction

- 1.1.1. This consultation document sets out opportunities for meeting the development needs of the Dorset Council area over the next 17 years.¹ It will help form the Dorset Council Local Plan which will be used when making planning decisions in Dorset.
- 1.1.2. The Local Plan will be Dorset Council's response to the Government's commitment to addressing the shortage of housing, to enable economic growth and deliver essential infrastructure to enable this growth. It will also set out how planning decisions will seek to conserve and enhance the environment, including measures to address climate change.
- 1.1.3. We are seeking feedback on the identified opportunities to help us prepare for the next round of the local plan production process.

1.2. How to comment

- 1.2.1. The consultation is open from 18 August to 13 October 2025. All comments must be received by the end of Monday 13 October 2025.
- 1.2.2. The online consultation is available at the [Dorset Council Local Plan webpage](http://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/dorset-is-changing) – www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/dorset-is-changing. Here you can access the consultation material and complete the online survey.
- 1.2.3. The online survey will give you the chance to comment on all the matters that are set out within this document, as well as all of the opportunity sites for homes and employment land development. You will need to provide your name, email address, and postcode to submit a response.
- 1.2.4. The consultation documents are also available to view in hard copy in the reception of County Hall, Colliton Park, Dorchester, DT1 1XJ, as well as local libraries.
- 1.2.5. We strongly encourage you to use the online survey to provide a response as this will help to ensure that all responses are submitted consistently, which will also help us to analyse responses in an efficient and timely manner. If you are unable to use the online survey, you can complete a paper survey form, you can email planningpolicyconsult@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk, or write in to the Spatial

¹ Consultation held under Regulation 18 of The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012

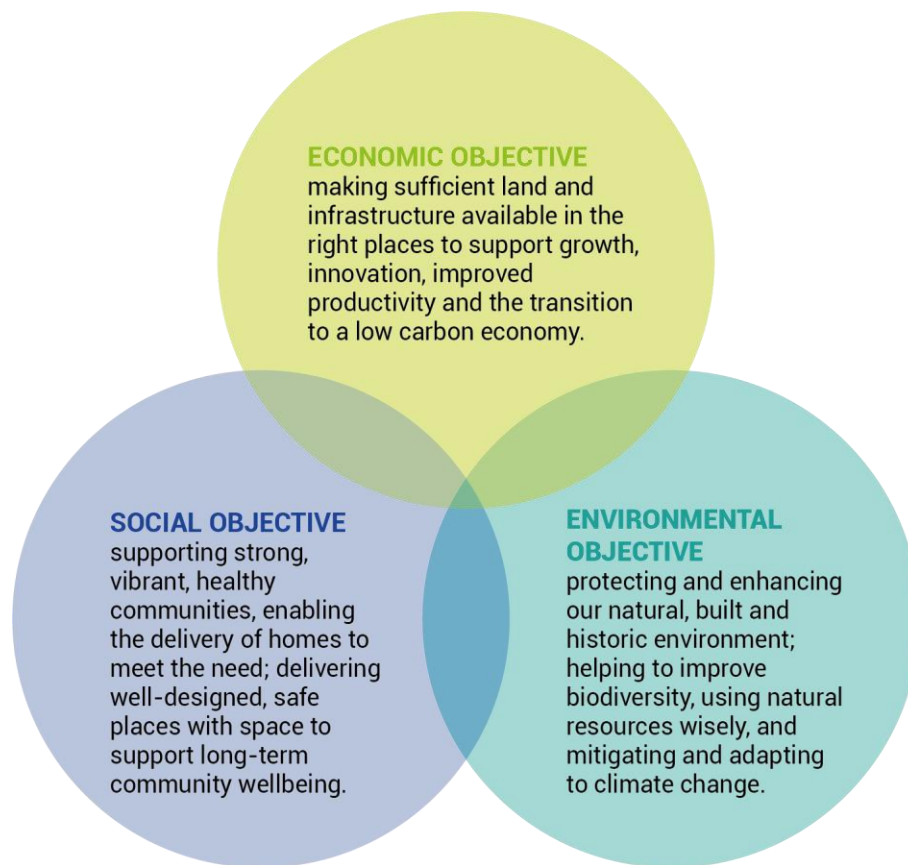
Planning team, Dorset Council, County Hall, Colliton Park, DT1 1XJ. Please mark any correspondence clearly as relating to the Dorset Council Local Plan consultation 2025 and include the site reference number if referring to a specific opportunity site.

- 1.2.6. All opportunity sites can be viewed either online or in the accompanying appendices to this document: Appendix A – Opportunity sites for housing; Appendix B – Opportunity sites for employment, Appendix C – Opportunity sites for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople and Appendix D – Opportunity sites for renewable energy.
- 1.2.7. The content of the consultation is designed to be fully accessible. If you are having difficulty accessing the material and would like to speak to us about this, please email planningpolicyconsult@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk or call us on 01305 838334.

1.3. Background to the Local Plan

- 1.3.1. Planning involves making decisions about the use and development of land. It influences which new buildings will be built and where, so is important for the future of our towns, villages and countryside. The purpose of the planning system is to contribute to sustainable development and local councils are expected to plan positively for the needs of their area.
- 1.3.2. The Local Plan will set out a strategic approach to enabling growth within Dorset, directing it to the most appropriate locations in order to conserve and enhance Dorset's highly valued natural environment. The Plan's overarching objective is to contribute to the delivery of sustainable development in Dorset.
- 1.3.3. Sustainable development is 'development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs'. In planning terms sustainable development has three objectives which need to be pursued together. These are economic, social and environmental objectives, as shown on Figure 1.1 below.
- 1.3.4. In January 2021 Dorset Council undertook an options consultation on a draft Local Plan for Dorset. The draft plan was shaped by the evidence and strategies that the former district councils had produced in reviewing their adopted Local Plans.

Figure 1.1: Sustainable Development Objectives



- 1.3.5. The 2021 consultation generated a significant response and helped highlight and identify issues to take into consideration on the site options presented. Feedback also highlighted that there was a need to gather further evidence on the risk of flooding in Weymouth Town Centre. There was also a need to identify a clearer strategy for meeting the needs of Gypsies and Travellers including the identification of more sites. In addition to these issues, Natural England updated their advice on the impact of nutrient pollution in protected estuarine and freshwater habitats sites. Five of these sites affect Dorset and therefore it was necessary to review and develop nutrient neutrality measures to address the impact.
- 1.3.6. Whilst work to address these issues was underway, there have been some significant changes to national policy.
- 1.3.7. In December 2024, a revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published. This included a new, binding approach to calculating housing need for local planning authorities which has resulted in a significantly higher housing target for Dorset. Through the Local Plan production process, the housing requirement for the area will be established.

- 1.3.8. There have also been various reforms to the planning system proposed including a new process for preparing Local Plans and the anticipated introduction of national development management policies. These policies would cover topics such as landscape and heritage and would be applicable across the country.
- 1.3.9. Transitional arrangements have been put in place for those local plans currently being prepared, with a target of submitting the Local Plan for examination by December 2026. Although challenging, this is the target that Dorset Council are working towards meeting as set out in the latest Local Development Scheme (March 2025)².

1.4. The purpose of this document

- 1.4.1. When adopted, the Dorset Council Local Plan will replace the current adopted local plans that cover the Dorset Council area.
- 1.4.2. The preparation of the Local Plan needs to follow a process set out in regulations. The key stages that the council must follow in producing the local plan are set out in Figure 1.2 and include several points where consultation and engagement enable interested people and organisations to help shape its content.
- 1.4.3. Similar to the consultation that was undertaken in January 2021, we are seeking feedback on opportunities for meeting the housing and employment needs of Dorset. The responses received in the January 2021 consultation, alongside new evidence gathered, have been used to identify the options presented in this consultation as a possible way of meeting the higher housing target for Dorset set by Government.
- 1.4.4. This consultation document includes a proposed vision and strategic priorities for Dorset (Section 2), providing a framework for:
- An overarching strategy for achieving a significant boost in the delivery of new homes, including a significant number of opportunity sites of varying sizes (Section 4 and associated site opportunities). The strategy also proposes a more flexible approach to smaller scale development opportunities adjacent to the built-up area of the listed, more sustainable

² [The Local Development Scheme for Dorset Council March 2025 - Dorset Council](#)

settlements (Section 5). In the longer term, delivery will be enhanced through the identification of one or more 'new towns'.

- An overarching strategy for enabling economic growth across the area to provide jobs for those who live in Dorset (Section 6 and associated site opportunities). The focus of this strategy will be on protecting important key employment sites and allocating new areas at appropriate locations close to the more sustainable settlements. Another part of the strategy may involve a requirement for large scale residential development sites to provide employment space as part of the development. Where a proposed employment use needs a specific location, this will be enabled through a flexible policy.
- An approach to enabling town centre regeneration and to encouraging development on brownfield sites.
- An approach and sites for meeting the needs of the Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Show-people community (Section 12)
- Identifying broad areas where there is technical feasibility for locating wind, stand-alone solar and battery storage facilities to help support the provision of renewable energy (Section 14).
- An underlying commitment running throughout the final Local Plan, to conserve and enhance the natural environment, address climate change and contribute to healthy places.

1.4.5. Government expects us to use their Standard Method to assess local housing needs. We are responsible through the local plan for establishing a housing requirement and preparing the strategies and policies for addressing this requirement. We have gathered our own evidence around the need for employment land and traveller pitches and plots. The proposed approaches that we set out in this document are a starting point for a discussion as to how we could meet the growth needs of Dorset. This consultation provides an opportunity for alternative proposals to be suggested. The final draft Local Plan must be prepared with the aim of meeting the growth needs of Dorset whilst conserving its highly valued natural and built environment.

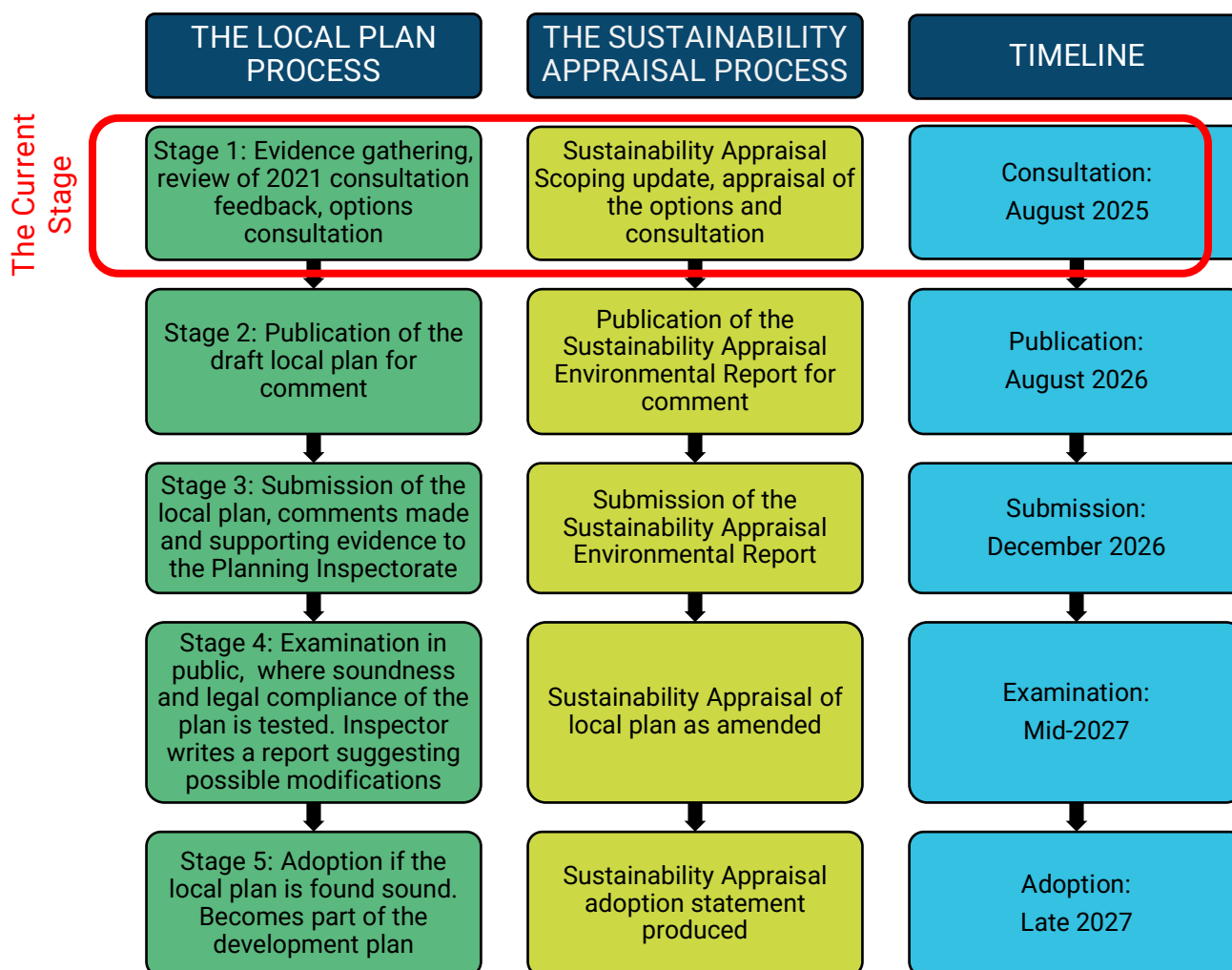
What happens next?

1.4.6. Following this consultation, we will review responses and take this into account when preparing a final draft of the Local Plan. This will include our strategy for meeting development needs and policies to guide decisions, including those to conserve and enhance the environment and help respond to climate change.

The Plan will identify sites to deliver the homes and employment space needed and the necessary infrastructure to support this growth.

- 1.4.7. As Figure 1.2 shows, there will be an opportunity to comment on the draft Local Plan prior to it being submitted to the Planning Inspectorate for Examination.

Figure 1.2: Stages in producing the Dorset Council Local Plan



1.5. Climate change and the natural environment

Introduction

- 1.5.1. Global warming and biodiversity loss are two of the most pressing challenges facing our planet today. Dorset Council declared a climate and ecological emergency in 2019, and our Natural Environment, Climate & Ecology Strategy (NECES) 2023 sets a clear vision for the Council and wider Dorset to rapidly

become carbon neutral, halt the loss of nature and resilient to the changing climate.

- 1.5.2. The Local Plan will respond to the NECES with a commitment to tackling climate change and biodiversity loss which will run through the vision, strategic priorities and the policies of the Local Plan.
- 1.5.3. While this consultation focuses mainly on opportunity sites for development, it also contains information about some potential future policy approaches linked to climate change and the natural environment.
- 1.5.4. One of the key approaches to addressing climate change is managing the location where development takes place. By focusing development on those locations where the need to travel is minimised and where sustainable travel options exist, greenhouse gas emissions can be reduced. The settlement hierarchy (outlined in Section 3) will be the key tool for managing the distribution of development in this context.
- 1.5.5. Other measures we are considering in this consultation document include the provision of renewable energy through wind, solar and battery storage (Section 14) and the provision of ways to reduce recreational pressures on protected heathlands (Section 13).

Climate change

- 1.5.6. National policy emphasises the role of the planning system in supporting the transition to net zero by 2050, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, minimising vulnerability, and improving resilience to climate impacts. Local planning policies should proactively mitigate and adapt to climate change, ensuring the health and resilience of communities and infrastructure.
- 1.5.7. Although this consultation does not include specific climate policies, climate change is a core consideration when developing the proposed strategies and options. One of our key actions will be to direct development to sustainable locations to reduce travel distances. We will also consider climate impacts like flooding and coastal change in site options, and the potential for identifying suitable areas for renewable energy development.
- 1.5.8. Climate change considerations will be at the heart of planning policies and site allocations as they develop, with emphasis on sustainable design and construction. Our commitment to tackling climate change will also underpin the Dorset Design Code.

Biodiversity loss

1.5.9. The Environment Act 2021 places a duty on us as a local authority to further the conservation of biodiversity. This is carried forward in National Policy which is clear that we must include policies in the Local Plan to conserve and enhance biodiversity.

1.5.10. The final draft of the Local Plan will include or be informed by:

- Green infrastructure (for example parks and woodlands) plays a vital role in our strategy to address climate change and biodiversity loss. Integrating green infrastructure into developments will help create multifunctional spaces that support local people's health and wellbeing as well as conserving and enhancing biodiversity and helping us mitigate and adapt to climate change.
- Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS) are part of the Government's response to the ecological emergency, required under the Environment Act. The Dorset LNRS covers the Dorset Council and Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council areas and will be adopted later this year (2025). It will inform the Local Plan by mapping areas with high potential for nature recovery and setting out specific proposals for how to achieve this. The LNRS does not restrict development but will be used to encourage actions to conserve and enhance biodiversity in areas where this will be most effective within developments, helping to promote environmentally sustainable development.
- Biodiversity net gain (BNG) was introduced under the Environment Act and is an approach to development that aims to leave the natural environment in a measurably better state than it was beforehand. Most planning applications are now required to achieve a 10% biodiversity gain, ensuring that development has a net positive impact on biodiversity rather than contributing to any losses. This can be through providing new habitat on site or contributing to off-site habitat provision. We have published BNG guidance and are actively progressing the establishment of habitat 'banks' within Dorset where biodiversity gain units are available for developers to buy if BNG can't be achieved within the development site. This will ensure that the Local Plan protects and enhances biodiversity while enabling the growth needs of the area to be met.

1.6. The Dorset Design Code

- 1.6.1. Securing high quality, sustainable design that is resilient to climate change, appropriate to its context, attractive and functions effectively, whilst enabling healthy lifestyles is a priority for Dorset Council.
- 1.6.2. As well as the Local Plan, we are also preparing a design code and guidance to set out clear direction and requirements for the physical development of a site or area. Our code will facilitate locally distinctive, high-quality and sustainable development that responds to the Natural Environment, Climate & Ecology Strategy (NECES) 2023. Through understanding and clearly defining Dorset's character and design preferences, our code and guidance will be highly focused on the local context and issues to deliver sustainable placemaking.
- 1.6.3. We have identified some common recurring challenges for the design code to address. These are:
 - Tackling climate change
 - Respecting local character and context within the need to make best use of land
 - Managing visual impact through design
 - The use of green infrastructure including street trees and the relationship with street lighting, the use of sustainable urban drainage systems and incorporating nature into urban areas
 - Integrating sustainable travel and healthy placemaking into developments
- 1.6.4. Following the National Model Design Code (NMDC) template, our Dorset Design Code and Guidance will build on national and local policy, to directly support our priorities for high quality development and placemaking. It will be landscape led, informed by the Dorset landscape and townscape, coastline, local heritage, and rich biodiversity. Sustainable design will be at the heart of our guidance giving clear instruction and recommendations on how we expect future development to meet these challenges. It will also need to consider viability and the emerging National Development Management Policies.
- 1.6.5. Work is starting on the production of the Design Code and Guidance, and we expect that the programme will closely follow the Local Plan. We will undertake some initial public engagement early on to help define the scope of the code and guidance with further engagement at a later date. We anticipate the Design Code will be adopted towards the end of 2026 and once adopted, will complement the policies and proposals within the Dorset Council Local Plan.

2. Vision and Strategic Priorities

2.1. The Local Plan Vision

- 2.1.1. We want our Local Plan to have a clear and positive vision for the future of Dorset. This vision will set the overarching ambition of what Dorset will be like in 15 years. It will also reflect on the special characteristics of Dorset and identify how these will change to bring benefits to the area.
- 2.1.2. National Policy recognises that the planning system should be plan led, with local plans providing a positive vision for the future of each area. This vision forms a framework for meeting housing needs, and addressing other economic, social and environmental priorities.

The Vision for Dorset:

Dorset will be a fairer, more prosperous and more sustainable place for current and future generations.

The environmental quality of the area – its rural landscapes, its biodiversity, its rich heritage, its coast and its picturesque towns and villages – is what makes Dorset a special place to live, work and visit. The settlements in Dorset all have their own distinct character – from rural market towns to coastal towns; from small hamlets to the larger villages; and those settlements on the edge of Bournemouth and Poole – all perform important functions that contribute to Dorset's prosperity, health and wellbeing.

By 2043 this will be enhanced with high quality, well-designed, accessible developments that bring the homes, jobs and supporting infrastructure that Dorset needs. We will reduce our carbon footprint and seek to enhance our natural environment.

The main centres for economic activity of the Dorchester to Weymouth corridor and south-east Dorset will be enhanced with improved prosperity for Dorset's residents. Excellent employment opportunities will exist at the towns

across the whole of Dorset with sustainable travel opportunities provided to them from surrounding villages.

The towns and larger villages across the area will act as hubs for their rural hinterlands providing many of the services that people need on a frequent basis.

The character of the rural areas will be maintained and enhanced where opportunities arise. The area's rich heritage, hedgerows, trees and the character of the landscape will be respected where development takes place. The large areas of significance for biodiversity will be protected and real enhancements to the natural environment will be realised, guided by the Local Nature Recovery Strategy.

Question 1: Do you have any comments on the proposed vision for Dorset?

2.2. Strategic priorities

- 2.2.1. Using this vision, we have defined strategic priorities to help form the basis for the policies that will eventually form the Local Plan. These strategic priorities draw inspiration from the Dorset Council Plan and set out the aims for the Local Plan strategies and policies which will guide decisions on planning applications. Delivery of the strategic priorities will involve working alongside partner organisations with interests in the environment, the delivery of homes (including social housing), infrastructure delivery and economic growth.

Provide affordable and high-quality homes

We will work with the development industry, town and parish councils, registered housing providers, community land trusts and local housing partners to deliver high quality homes, including affordable homes, that meet Dorset's needs.

How the Local Plan will help meet this priority:

- 2.2.2. The delivery of new homes is one of the key outputs of the Local Plan. Housing, including accessible and affordable housing, will be provided across the plan area to meet the needs of those who wish to live and work in Dorset. Over the lifetime of the Local Plan new homes will be provided with a range of types, sizes and tenures to meet Dorset's diverse needs. The focus for provision of housing will be on the most sustainable towns and villages where everyday needs can be met locally, reducing the need to travel.

Grow our economy

We will work with businesses and the development industry, town and parish councils and local communities to support sustainable economic growth and improved infrastructure across the whole of Dorset, increasing wealth, creating more jobs and supporting regeneration of our town centres.

How the Local Plan will help meet this priority:

- 2.2.3. The Local Plan can help to deliver economic growth by enabling sustainable economic development in the right locations and providing homes for those who work in the area. Infrastructure provision to meet the area's needs is important to facilitating this growth. Our Plan will help to create new jobs across the area and over the Plan period. The focus for provision of employment space will be on the most sustainable towns so they act as hubs, reducing the need to travel.
- 2.2.4. Sustainable renewable energy will be supported on the principle of the right energy, in the right location.

Communities for all

We will work to build and maintain strong, healthy communities where everyone thrives, and essential services are accessible.

How the Local Plan will help meet this priority:

- 2.2.5. The Local Plan will enable communities to thrive by providing community facilities, infrastructure and green space, giving opportunities for people to meet and be active in their community, creating healthy and inclusive places and reducing health inequalities. Our plan will encourage sustainable development in towns and villages where there is good access to essential services and facilities, or by ensuring that new services and facilities are secured as part of the development.

Responding to the climate and nature emergency

Addressing the climate and nature emergencies will protect lives, livelihoods, and ecosystems. The Local Plan has a role to play in helping tackle climate change and by supporting nature recovery at a local level. In doing so, we can strengthen community resilience, protect and support health and wellbeing, and stimulate economic growth, by focussing on halting nature's decline and being prepared and resilient for climate change.

How the Local Plan will help meet this priority:

- 2.2.6. Through managing where and how development takes place, the Local Plan will minimise the distance people need to travel and encourage active travel and use of public transport. Measures will be required to mitigate impact from development on important ecological sites and improve biodiversity, guided by the Local Nature Recovery Strategy to ensure spaces for nature are bigger, better and more connected. Design and construction that mitigates the impacts of climate change will be integrated into new developments. The impacts of climate change will be reduced by avoiding areas at risk of flooding & coastal change and incorporating green infrastructure (including space for biodiversity) into developments.

Question 2: Do you have any comments on the proposed strategic priorities for the Local Plan?

3. The strategy for sustainable development

- 3.1.1. The Dorset Council Local Plan's overarching objective is to contribute to achieving sustainable development. This means pursuing economic, social and environmental aims in mutually supportive ways.
- 3.1.2. Using the Dorset Council Local Plan in planning decisions will influence future patterns of development to help make Dorset more sustainable. This chapter proposes the strategic approach that will enable sustainable growth to meet the needs of Dorset up to 2043. It establishes the broad strategy for this growth, aiming to minimise the need to travel and protect the important environment of Dorset.

3.2. The Strategy for Dorset

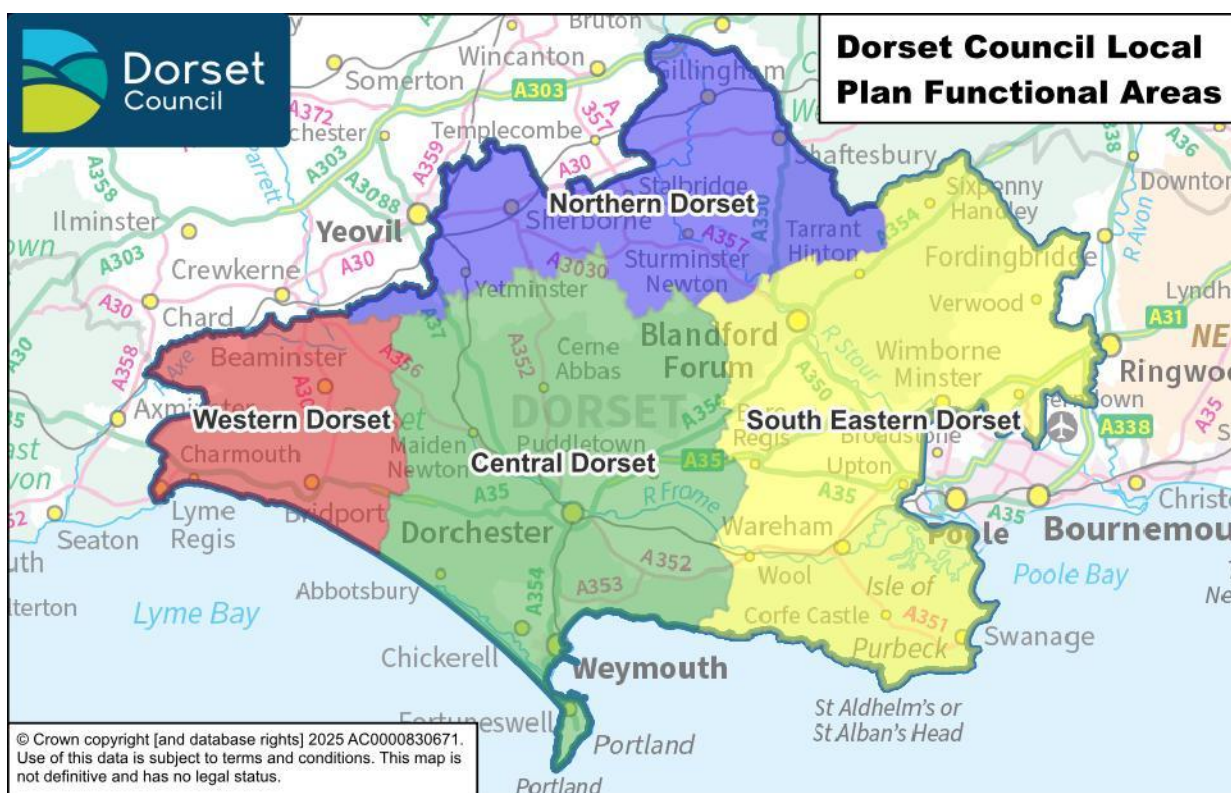
- 3.2.1. The Dorset Council area is predominantly rural, containing many environmentally sensitive places which we need to protect and enhance for their wildlife and scenic beauty. Many of these places are significant both nationally and internationally, including the Jurassic Coast World Heritage site and protected habitats sites.
- 3.2.2. The plan sets out how we will deliver growth across Dorset to benefit those living here, focusing on the most sustainable locations that minimise the need for travel. Different parts of Dorset are influenced by different physical, economic and social influences. Our development strategy takes account of these local influences by recognising that different parts of Dorset function separately from each other³. The four broad functional areas across Dorset are represented in Figure 3.1.
 - The South Eastern area. The parts of Dorset that fringe the built-up area of Bournemouth and Poole and extends to the Isle of Purbeck and northwards towards the Wiltshire border. This area of Dorset has the strongest relationship with the built-up areas of Bournemouth and Poole. The influence of Bournemouth and Poole is stronger in the areas within the Green Belt, such as Wimborne and Ferndown but weaker further away in places such as Blandford and Swanage.
 - The Central area. This focuses on the corridor between Portland, Weymouth and Dorchester but includes the settlements close to them. Weymouth is the

³ [DCLP Jan 2021 Functional areas background paper](#)

largest town in the Dorset Council area and its links to both Portland and Dorchester are strong.

- The Northern area. This area focuses on the strategic rail and road corridor between Yeovil in Somerset and Salisbury in Wiltshire. In Dorset, this corridor contains a number of market towns including Gillingham, Shaftesbury, and Sherborne.
- The Western area. This part of Dorset functions separately from the majority of Dorset due to its largely rural nature and its lack of connectivity. The area is dominated by the town of Bridport but also includes Beaminster and Lyme Regis.

Figure 3.1: Functional areas in Dorset



- 3.2.3. Taking account of the role and function of the existing settlements, the strategy outlined here for consultation would lead to growth around the towns and some of the larger villages, reflecting accessibility to facilities. Significant growth is proposed at some of the most accessible locations, and where there are opportunities to invest and deliver services and facilities efficiently alongside new development. All the strategies that are presented in this consultation take account of the hierarchy of settlements across the Dorset Council area.

Settlement Hierarchy

- 3.2.4. We have ranked the towns and villages in Dorset as to their relative sustainability, based on the size of settlements, their facilities, and the travel time to the closest higher order town by public transport and by car.⁴ This is set out in the settlement hierarchy background paper that was prepared as part of our January 2021 Local Plan consultation. A summary of the position of the towns and villages in the different 'Tiers' of the hierarchy is set out below. Growth will be focussed on those settlements listed.
- 3.2.5. Tier 1 – Large built-up areas: In South Eastern Dorset this comprises the parts of the Bournemouth and Poole conurbation that cross into Dorset, and in Central Dorset, the county town of Dorchester and the coastal town of Weymouth.
- South Eastern Dorset: Upton and Corfe Mullen connected with the built-up area of Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole.
 - Central Dorset: Dorchester and Weymouth
- 3.2.6. Tier 2 – Towns and other main settlements: This comprises the market and coastal towns across Dorset and 'other main settlements' within the Green Belt and close to the large built-up area of Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole.
- South Eastern Dorset: Blandford, Ferndown and West Parley, St Leonards and St Ives, Swanage, Wimborne Minster and Colehill, Verwood, West Moors and Wareham.
 - Central Dorset: Chickerell, and the Portland settlements of Castletown, Chiswell, Easton, Fortuneswell, Grove; Southwell, Wakeham and Weston
 - Northern Dorset: Gillingham, Shaftesbury, Sherborne, Sturminster Newton and Stalbridge.
 - Western Dorset: Beaminster, Lyme Regis and Bridport.
- 3.2.7. Tier 3 – Larger Villages: These are typically larger villages which generally have a population of around 500 and a reasonable level of facilities enabling some day-to-day needs to be met locally. These are listed in the Figure 3.2.
- 3.2.8. All other areas are either rural in character or comprise small villages/hamlets that do not have a sufficient services or facilities for everyday needs to be met

⁴ dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/documents/35024/290430/DCLP-Jan-2021-settlement-hierarchy.pdf/14d7fb06-89b3-f76c-feba-e1fda4508ad0

locally. These areas are unlikely to be suitable for growth in line with National Policy⁵.

Figure 3.2: Settlements within Tier 3 of the Hierarchy

South Eastern	Central	Northern	Western
Aldersholt	Broadmayne & West Knighton	Bishop's Caundle	Burton Bradstock
Bere Regis	Cerne Abbas	Bradford Abbas	Broadwindsor
Bovington	Charlton Down	Bourton	Charmouth
Charlton Marshall	Charminster	Child Okeford	Mosterton
Corfe Castle	Crossways & Moreton Station	Fontmell Magna	Salway Ash
Cranborne	Maiden Newton & Higher Frome	Hazelbury Bryan	
Harmans Cross	Vauchurch	Iwerne Minster	
Langton Matravers	Milborne St Andrew	Marnhull	
Lytchett Matravers	Milton Abbas	Motcombe	
Lytchett Minster	Piddletrenthide	Okeford Fitzpaine	
Pimperne	Portesham	Shillingstone	
Sandford	Puddletown	Thornford	
Sixpenny Handley	Winterbourne Abbas & Winterbourne Steepleton	Yetminster	
Stoborough	Winfrith Newburgh		
Stourpaine			
Sturminster Marshall			
Three Legged Cross			
West Lulworth			
Winterborne Kingston			
Winterborne Stickland			
Winterborne Whitechurch			
Wool & East Burton			

⁵ National Planning Policy Framework, December 2024, paragraph 110.

New Settlements

- 3.2.9. Our proposed approach to meeting growth needs is focused on allocating new sites for housing alongside a new, more flexible strategy for delivering homes on smaller sites. This will deliver growth in the short and medium term, but we are also considering a longer-term strategy for meeting needs. This longer-term approach will explore opportunities for new or significantly expanded settlements. Due to the scale of the development being considered, it is likely to be at least 10 years before any new homes are delivered.

Question 3: The proposed settlement hierarchy lists the towns and villages that will be the focus for new homes. Are there other settlements where we should plan for new homes? Do you have any comments on whether a settlement is in the right Tier or not?

3.3. South Eastern Dorset area

- 3.3.1. The South Eastern Dorset area interacts strongly with the towns of Bournemouth and Poole both economically and from a housing market perspective. The towns of Wimborne and Ferndown are desirable places to live and provide important services and employment opportunities. There is significant demand within the area for additional employment space and homes. The affordability of housing is a major issue.
- 3.3.2. Much of the area is extremely environmentally sensitive, with many areas having multiple habitats and species, as well as landscape designations. The South Eastern functional area supports significant areas of national and international importance for nature conservation, notably the Dorset heathlands and including Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), Special Protection Areas (SPAs), Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Ramsar sites. This restricts the suitable land for development and places mitigation requirements on the development that does take place.
- 3.3.3. Parts of the area are designated as National Landscapes, including the Dorset National Landscape in the south of the area and the Cranborne Chase National Landscape in the north. In addition, the coast is designated a heritage coast and part of Jurassic Coast World Heritage Site. The coast is at risk of erosion and land instability, and some of the settlements are at significant risk of fluvial and surface water flooding.

- 3.3.4. The South East Dorset Green Belt is also a consideration in this area. Release of Green Belt will help to meet the needs of the area, linking in closely to the towns of Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole. However, traffic congestion is a major issue despite the A31 trunk road running through the area. This means that encouraging a shift to active forms of travel and public transport is important.
- 3.3.5. Towns close to the conurbation will continue to grow to reflect their function as service centres for the wider area. Further away from the conurbation, towns such as Blandford and Verwood will be the focus for growth for both housing and employment supported by the network of larger villages.

Question 4: Do you have any comments on the proposed strategy for the south eastern area?

3.4. Central Dorset area

- 3.4.1. The Dorchester – Weymouth – Portland corridor acts as a significant economic hub for the central part of Dorset. These towns are supported by the centres of Chickerell and Crossways. The Dorset Innovation Park at Winfrith also creates a focus for continued growth.
- 3.4.2. The area sits within a particularly attractive environment that includes parts of the Dorset National Landscape and the Jurassic Coast World Heritage Site. There are multiple areas of national and international importance for nature conservation including large parts of Portland, the Chesil and the Fleet to the west of Weymouth, and Dorset Heathlands. Alongside the ecological assets, there are a significant number of important heritage assets including Maiden Castle which sits just to the south of Dorchester. Both Dorchester and Weymouth are affected by flood risk connected with the Rivers Frome and Wey. Weymouth is also particularly affected by the risks associated with sea level rise resulting from climate change.
- 3.4.3. The area has good rail connections to South East Dorset area and beyond, as well as Bristol. It also has good connections onto the trunk road network. However, the frequency and reliability of the rail connections, and the congestion on the road network can be problematic. Promoting active travel, and use of public transport is important to realising the area's future growth potential.

- 3.4.4. Recognising the role and function of the settlements within the area, Central Dorset will be the focus for growth away from the Bournemouth Christchurch and Poole conurbation. Within the bounds of the important environmental assets, there are significant opportunities for further growth along the Portland – Weymouth - Dorchester corridor to support and enhance the continued value of the central Dorset area to the wider Dorset economy.
- 3.4.5. Together the settlements in this area create a large population, benefiting concentrations of local employers and supporting town centre activities. The area has opportunities to attract significant international investment in 'green energy' generation. Investment and delivery in this sector of the UK economy closely aligns with the Council's objectives and priorities around the ecological and climate emergencies and the Dorset Economic Growth Strategy.
- 3.4.6. The Dorset Clean Energy Super Cluster includes offshore wind in the English Channel, a deepwater offshore wind-hub associated with Portland Port to service the renewable sector, carbon dioxide capture and storage, hydrogen production and storage, and potentially Nuclear Small Modular Reactors. While much of the development in the super cluster will need to be assessed against the policies, and through the processes, for Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs), the local plan should set a positive framework to help build upon the opportunities that these infrastructure projects will provide to generate prosperity and increase standards of living for people in the local area.
- 3.4.7. Opportunities for smaller scale growth at villages in the area will complement the potential for significant growth to the north of Dorchester and at Crossways. The regeneration of Weymouth Town Centre will also be significant in the future prosperity of the area.
- 3.4.8. The large-scale opportunities at Dorchester, at Crossways and at Weymouth will create new, high-quality places of exceptional design. Ensuring the local facilities are provided and that active travel and public transport are priorities will be important to the area's success.

Question 5: Do you have any comments on the proposed strategy for the central area?

3.5. Northern Dorset area

- 3.5.1. The Northern Dorset area is largely rural but includes a number of significant market towns, with Gillingham, Shaftesbury and Sherborne being the largest.

The area sits within the corridor connecting Yeovil in Somerset and Salisbury in Wiltshire via the London to Exeter railway line, the A303 trunk road and the A30. There are mainline railway stations at Sherborne and Gillingham providing easy links between these towns and the wider area. To the south, transport is less convenient and hence, although connected, the area functions independently from the rest of Dorset with a greater reliance on Yeovil and Salisbury.

- 3.5.2. Although there are fewer designated wildlife sites than in other parts of Dorset, the area has a rich environment. The Fontmell & Melbury Downs, Rooksmoor and Holnest Special Areas of Conservation are all recognised for their ecological importance. The heart of the area is characterised by the attractive, undulating Blackmore Vale landscape with the River Stour flowing through it. In the west the River Yeo flows westwards from Sherborne towards Yeovil and the Somerset Levels.
- 3.5.3. The focus for growth in the Northern Dorset area will be at the three main towns alongside growth at the smaller market towns and larger villages. Development at these settlements will support existing services and enhance their role as hubs for the wider rural area. Improvements to active travel and public transport provision will be important to support growth.
- 3.5.4. The three main towns will also provide the main drivers of the economy in the northern area. Gillingham is already host to a number of major manufacturing employers. Similarly, Shaftesbury and Sherborne, both historic and attractive towns with significant tourist economies, also host some significant businesses. Expansion of these businesses will be something that the Local Plan will seek to enable.
- 3.5.5. The smaller market towns and villages are more rural in character with both Stalbridge and Sturminster Newton having economies that reflect their agricultural heritage. Both towns were on the old railway line that connected to Poole in the south and this route now offers opportunities for enhanced active travel provision between the towns through provision of the North Dorset Trailway, potentially linking to Templecombe Railway Station. Growth at these towns and villages will complement that at the larger towns and will support their roles as local service centres for the surrounding rural area.

Question 6: Do you have any comments on the proposed strategy for the northern area?

3.6. Western Dorset area

- 3.6.1. The natural environment of Western Dorset is one of its greatest assets. The strategy prioritises the protection and enhancement of environmentally sensitive areas particularly the gently undulating landscape and coastline of this part of the Dorset National Landscape whilst also supporting the communities that live there.
- 3.6.2. Despite the challenges associated with a rural economy and relatively poor connectivity, the area has strong potential, particularly through the cultural and economic vitality of Bridport. Growth will be directed towards improving digital infrastructure and rural mobility and supporting local enterprise. Large sections of the coast are however susceptible to coastal change and flood risk.
- 3.6.3. Within the area, the towns of Bridport, Beaminster and Lyme Regis form the main centres for service provision. Growth will be focused on these centres with the aim of minimising impact and reducing the need for travel. Development at the larger villages will be aimed at enhancing the resilience of the rural and coastal communities.
- 3.6.4. Economic development will need to build on the strengths of each town. Bridport has a long history of manufacturing, and this continues today with several businesses working in the manufacturing sector. Alongside Bridport, Lyme Regis has significant connections with the sea both as a fishing port but also for tourism whereas Beaminster has a focus on the agricultural industry and food production. The villages in this area will support the three towns by strengthening their tourist offer and building on local skills and rural enterprise.

Question 7: Do you have any comments on the proposed strategy for the western area?

3.7. Infrastructure Delivery

- 3.7.1. Infrastructure is a key component of sustainable development. We will work with infrastructure providers to establish and deliver the infrastructure needed to support growth. The planning system enables local authorities to secure

infrastructure in different ways, but the starting position is in the creation of policies that can anticipate where investment is likely to be necessary.

- 3.7.2. Growth through a local plan places direct and indirect pressure on existing facilities. Development should contribute towards the provision of infrastructure but in a way which is appropriate. National planning policy expects policies within local plans to set out the financial contributions expected from development; such policies should not undermine the delivery of the plan.
- 3.7.3. We encourage respondents to indicate where there are infrastructure needs, both for specific sites and wider areas. This will allow us to plan for the needs of development and to secure infrastructure provision through the most appropriate methods.
- 3.7.4. We currently use a combination of planning obligations and the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) to secure infrastructure when development takes place. Understanding future needs will enable us to progress a revised Community Infrastructure Levy charging schedule alongside the preparation of the Local Plan.

Question 8: Is there any important infrastructure that needs to be delivered alongside new homes in the Western/Central/South Eastern/Northern area?

4. Housing Delivery Strategy

- 4.1.1. National policy emphasises that the Government's aim is to boost the supply of new homes. We are required to plan to meet need for all types of homes and ensure that there is a sufficient amount and variety of land available to meet these needs. In addition to this, we want to meet local needs in well-designed sustainable communities.

4.2. Local Housing Need and Housing Delivery

- 4.2.1. National policy requires us to plan to meet the need for new homes in Dorset using a local housing needs assessment as a key part of the evidence. Planning for new homes should be based on a local housing need figure calculated using the Standard Method set out in national planning practice guidance.

- 4.2.2. A joint Dorset Council and BCP Council Local Housing Needs Assessment was produced in 2021⁶ but in December 2024, a change to the Standard Method was introduced. This change means we will need to refresh the housing needs assessment before the Local Plan is submitted for examination.
- 4.2.3. Using the new Standard Method, we need to plan for 3,246 homes a year, which equates to 55,182 homes in total between April 2026 and March 2043. This figure is just over an 80% increase compared to what we were previously planning for. It also requires the development industry to effectively double past delivery rates⁷. We therefore need to identify a significant amount and variety of land to meet this new target, whilst also ensuring that the necessary supporting infrastructure is delivered and that valuable environmental and heritage assets are protected.
- 4.2.4. Achieving the target will require a step change in approach from both us and the development sector. Our approach will involve a series of actions.

Site allocations

- 4.2.5. The settlement hierarchy identifies the towns and villages that will be the focus of new development and is set out in Section 3 of this report. We consulted on the hierarchy for Dorset in January 2021, as well as a number of sites mostly at the Tier 1 and Tier 2 settlements. In this consultation we have looked again at opportunities to identify sites to allocate for development at Tier 1 and Tier 2 settlements and expanded the search to the Tier 3 settlements.
- 4.2.6. We have identified over 240 opportunity sites across the Dorset Council area at these settlements that together could deliver around 33,000 new homes.
- 4.2.7. The opportunity sites being considered as potential new housing sites are included in Appendix A – Opportunity sites for housing, which accompanies this document. They can also be viewed in the relevant section of the online consultation. The site location, size and other relevant planning information is set out. The list of option sites, and their boundaries, may be revised in light of consultation feedback or on the basis of additional evidence.
- 4.2.8. These sites will take time to deliver, in part due to the need for sites to gain planning permission. In addition, not all the new homes would be delivered over the plan period.

⁶ Available from <https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/w/dorset-council-local-plan-evidence-and-background-papers>

⁷ Average annual net additional new homes built between 2021 and 2024 was 1,662

- 4.2.9. We also intend to work with landowners and local communities to deliver larger allocations for new communities which together could deliver a total of around 12,000 new homes. These include the new communities proposed to the north of Dorchester (see Section 15), the area to the north of Crossways, and at Bere Farm to the south of Lytchett Matravers.

Flexible settlements policy

- 4.2.10. We are proposing a new policy framework for the delivery of homes on small to medium sized sites at the more sustainable settlements (those in Tier 1, Tier 2 and Tier 3). This approach could enable incremental, organic growth of these settlements without having a significant impact on their character. It would also support smaller, local builders, enabling a new stream of housing supply. Details of this proposed flexible settlements policy are included in Section 5.

Development of new settlements

- 4.2.11. Over the longer term, we will be working to identify possible future locations for significant new settlements in Dorset. These will be longer term projects that will put in place a strategic approach to meet housing and other development needs.

Other policy measures

- 4.2.12. Making best use of land and ensuring good design are fundamental to the delivery of homes that people want to live in whilst minimising their environmental impact and giving us the best chance of meeting the housing target. We are therefore interested in suggestions for other approaches that could help us meet housing targets that could be included in policies. Potential options include:
- optimising levels of development on sites in the most sustainable locations by setting housing density requirements through planning policies. This approach would need to ensure that development still responds to the character of the area, making sure appropriate levels of green infrastructure are provided but also making best use of the developable land.
 - ensuring that developments are built out in a timely manner after the granting of planning permission, by including implementation timescales through planning conditions.

Question 9: The Local Plan sets out a strategy to meet the area's housing needs through allocating sites for new homes, the flexible settlements policy, new settlements and the efficient use of land. Are there any other measures could help to meet housing needs?

4.3. Housing supply

- 4.3.1. It is estimated that new site allocations, including the significant larger sites being considered as new allocations for the local plan, could deliver a total of around 45,000 homes. However the opportunity sites being considered through this consultation may not all be allocated and additionally, some of these are likely to be delivered beyond the end of the plan period. There is also likely to be an increased supply from the flexible settlements policy but as this will be a new approach to managing development, it is unclear what the delivery rate will be over the plan period. Similarly, new settlements will deliver few if any new homes within the period to 2043.
- 4.3.2. It is likely that in the short term, the delivery rate will not be at the target established through the Standard Method. It may be that a stepped housing requirement could be proposed in the Local Plan.

Figure 4.1: Housing supply and expected delivery

Housing Supply category	Supply estimate	Delivery period
Existing permissions (includes full and outline consent)	10,000	Short to medium term
Adopted Local Plan allocations	4,000	Medium term
Adopted Neighbourhood Plan allocations	1,500	Short to medium term
New site allocations	45,000	Medium to long term
Flexible settlements policy	Unknown	Throughout plan period
Development of new settlements	Unknown	Longer term
Identified large sites	2,500	Throughout plan period
Minor windfall (sites of less than 10 dwellings)	7,000	Throughout plan period
Total	70,000	

Question 10: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the Plan including a lower housing target for the first few years and a higher figure towards the end of the plan period to meet housing needs?

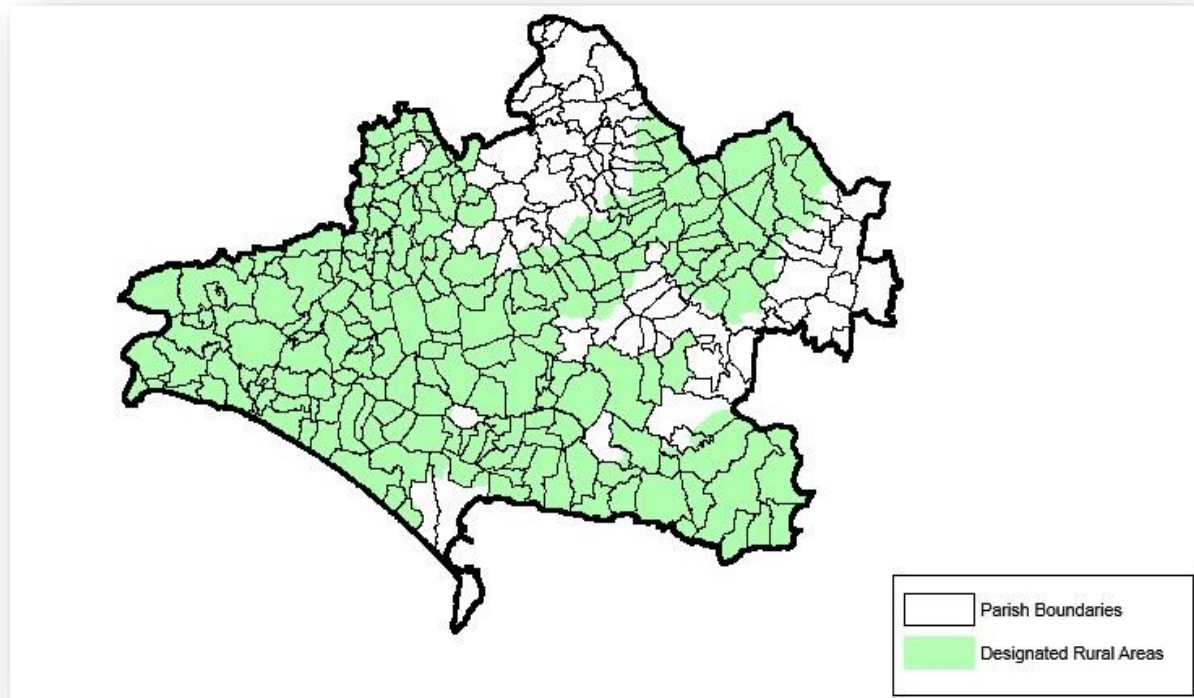
- a. Agree
- b. Disagree
- c. I have another suggestion

4.4. Meeting housing needs of specific groups

- 4.4.1. Although we can calculate the overall housing need for the plan period using the Standard Method, we need to update the local housing needs assessment to understand what this means for the needs of current and future residents in Dorset so that we can plan for the correct size, type and tenure of new homes.
- 4.4.2. National policy identifies some specific groups whose needs should be considered. These are: those who require affordable housing; families with children; looked after children; older people; students; people with disabilities; service families; travellers; people who rent their homes; and people wishing to commission or build their own homes. The need for self-build housing is covered in Section 10 and the needs of Gypsies and Travellers is covered in Section 12.
- 4.4.3. The consultation we undertook in January 2021 outlined an approach to meeting the needs of these groups. We will need to refresh the evidence that informed the approach in response to the new housing targets. This will include consideration of the need for accessible homes, the need for care and nursing homes and the need for affordable housing.
- 4.4.4. We recognise that the need for affordable housing is significant across Dorset. We will therefore be seeking to secure the maximum viable number of affordable homes on market led housing sites where 10 or more homes are proposed. The minimum number of new affordable homes per site that we will require through policy will be informed by an assessment of development viability. We will also be exploring the option to require affordable housing on

sites of between 5 and 9 homes in 'designated rural areas'⁸ in line with national policy as shown in Figure 4.2.

Figure 4.2: Designated Rural Areas in Dorset



- 4.4.5. Where providing affordable housing is not possible or appropriate on a development site, we will look at collecting financial contributions from developers to provide affordable housing off-site.
- 4.4.6. Market led housing developments may not always deliver affordable housing in the locations where it's most needed. We will therefore explore the use of an exceptions site policy to enable schemes for wholly affordable housing to be permitted on sites not allocated in the Local Plan, where there may be a particular need. This could apply across the whole of Dorset, be focused on specific 'more sustainable' settlements, or restricted to Green Belt locations only where the flexible settlements policy (in Section 5) would not apply.

⁸ Designated rural areas include areas within the two National Landscapes as well as areas designated by the Secretary of State as 'rural' under Section 157 of the Housing Act 1985.

Question 11: Where should a policy allowing sites for only affordable homes apply?

- a. All of Dorset
- b. Only around those towns and villages listed in the proposed settlement hierarchy
- c. Only in the Green Belt

5. Flexible Settlements Policy

5.1. Introduction

- 5.1.1. The strategies for managing development in adopted local plans tend to focus on supporting delivery of homes through site allocations and encouraging 'windfall development'⁹ within settlements. The plans draw boundaries around the built-up areas of each settlement, with windfall development normally acceptable within the boundaries. The local plans then include policies to restrict development outside these settlement boundaries¹⁰.
- 5.1.2. We feel this approach could mean that we will not be able provide the number of homes needed given the significant increase in housing targets (see Section 4). In order to significantly boost the supply of new homes, we are proposing a new approach which gives more flexibility for development to take place adjacent to sustainable settlements, without the need for defined settlement boundaries.
- 5.1.3. The 'presumption in favour of sustainable development'¹¹ in national policy means that, in planning decisions, less weight is given to restrictive policies such as settlement boundaries when the supply of housing sites is insufficient. Even with the options for site allocations that we are considering through this consultation, there is a real risk that not enough homes will be delivered, especially in the first few years. Any site allocations will take time to be permitted and built. If not enough homes are being delivered, 'the presumption

⁹ Windfall sites are sites not specifically identified in the local plan (National Planning Policy Framework, December 2024, Glossary)

¹⁰ Note that the various local plans use slightly different names for the same approach. North Dorset and Purbeck use the term 'settlement boundary', West Dorset, Weymouth & Portland use 'defined development boundary' or 'DDB', and Christchurch and East Dorset use 'village envelope' or 'village infill policy envelope'.

¹¹ National Planning Policy Framework, December 2024, paragraph 11

in favour of sustainable development' will come into play when assessing planning applications.

- 5.1.4. When the presumption in favour of sustainable development has been applied in the past, it has resulted in speculative planning applications for larger housing developments being submitted, and in many cases allowed, that are not consistent with the delivery strategies in the adopted local plans.

5.2. Proposed approach – Flexible settlements policy

- 5.2.1. We are proposing to remove the adopted settlement / development boundaries around all Dorset's settlements to support delivery of homes through the flexible settlements policy.
- 5.2.2. The flexible settlements policy would enable the development of new homes either within or adjacent to the edge of the 'continuous built area' of certain named settlements (up to a maximum number of homes). All the usual planning considerations such as those relating to wildlife sites, flood risk, access, landscape and heritage impacts, etc. would continue to apply. The new approach would involve removing existing settlement / development boundaries that are defined in the adopted Local Plans.
- 5.2.3. The flexible settlement policy will be limited to new 'bricks and mortar' homes only¹². We are proposing separate policies to support the delivery of development to meet the needs of travellers, for employment uses, community facilities and services, and for infrastructure. Parameter
- 5.2.4. The policy will be drafted to clearly establish the locations where the flexible approach would apply and the criteria for permitting new homes. Our approach to each of these criteria is outlined below and we are seeking feedback as to whether the approach we're suggesting is appropriate.
- 5.2.5. We do expect that developments permitted through the flexible settlements policy will meet all other policy requirements and specifically will:
- be well designed and attractive,
 - respect the appearance and character of the settlement that it relates to,
 - will provide safe and attractive active travel routes (i.e. cycle/walking paths) between the site and the settlement that it relates,

¹² Class C3 of the Use Classes Order 1987 (as amended)

- will include a suitable, safe access onto a highway, and
- will provide affordable homes and the mix and types of homes needed in Dorset.

Question 12: We have suggested that the Local Plan will not include clear boundaries to define the edges of towns and villages. Instead, the flexible settlements policy would allow new homes to be built around certain towns and villages. How much do you agree or disagree with this approach?

- a. Agree
- b. Partially agree
- c. Neutral
- d. Partially disagree
- e. Disagree

Please provide any further comments or reasoning...

5.3. The scale of development

- 5.3.1. Within Dorset, many smaller windfall sites (under 10 new homes) are permitted by the current settlement boundary-based approach. There are also a reasonable number of larger sites (more than 30 homes), including those allocated in Local Plans and Neighbourhood Plans. However, there is a gap in the supply of sites that deliver between 10 and 30 homes. As a consequence, we don't see as many sites being developed which deliver smaller scale housing developments in this range.
- 5.3.2. Smaller sites of up to 30 homes are often built by small and medium sized builders, often local to Dorset rather than the larger national firms who tend to build the large sites, something that is acknowledged in national policy¹³. We wish to encourage smaller, local builders by enabling these smaller sites to come forward more easily. In addition, smaller sites lead to controlled, organic growth of settlements and are often more sympathetic to the character of the settlement.

¹³ National Planning Policy Framework, December 2024, paragraph 73

Question 13: We propose that the flexible settlements policy will include a limit of 30 homes per site. To what extent do you agree or disagree with this threshold?

- a. The limit of 30 homes is about right
- b. There should be less homes
- c. More homes per site should be allowed

Please explain your reasoning

5.4. Number of sites at each settlement

- 5.4.1. We have considered whether the number of sites permitted by the flexible settlements policy around a particular settlement over the plan period should be restricted. This might help to limit any significant change in character of a settlement. However, it may also artificially restrict the reasonable growth of some settlements – where well-designed new development could be successfully integrated with the existing character of the settlement. So, to avoid unnecessarily restricting the opportunities for growth we don't think that a restriction should be applied to the number of schemes that can be permitted at any one settlement.
- 5.4.2. This approach would however run the risk that a development site could be consented on the edge of a settlement and then for another development site to be permitted adjacent to it and then built first - which could leave a gap. We therefore consider that once a development has been permitted at a settlement, construction must commence (or the permission expires) before another site can be permitted through the flexible settlements policy.

Question 14: At a town/village, should one flexible settlement policy site be started, before another one is permitted?

a. Yes

b. No

Please provide any further comments

5.5. Settlements where the flexible settlements policy would apply

5.5.1. We do not think that it is appropriate to allow development across the whole of Dorset as this would potentially result in increased reliance on car travel to meet everyday needs. Doing so would not fit with national policy¹⁴ or the strategy for managing travel in the emerging Local Transport Plan. We think that the policy should only apply to those settlements that have a reasonable access to facilities and/or reasonable access to public transport. We are suggesting that it would therefore apply equally to those settlements listed in Tier 1, Tier 2 and Tier 3 of the settlement hierarchy detailed in Section 3 (excluding those in the Green Belt). It would not apply elsewhere in Dorset.

Question 15: We have suggested that the flexible settlements policy will only apply to the areas around certain towns and villages, these are those ranked as 'Tier 1, Tier 2 or Tier 3' in our settlement hierarchy. What do you think about the locations where we have suggested that the flexible settlements policy should apply?

5.6. Continuous built-up areas and edge of continuous built-up areas

5.6.1. As outlined above, we are proposing to remove the adopted settlement / development boundaries around all Dorset's settlements. Where certain criteria are met, the flexible settlements policy will enable the delivery of sites of up to 30 new homes within or adjacent to the edge of the continuous built-up area of the settlements listed in Tier 1, Tier 2, and Tier 3 of the settlement hierarchy.

¹⁴ National Planning Policy Framework, December 2024, paragraph 109

5.6.2. In order to be clear what we mean by ‘adjacent to a settlement’ in the context of this policy proposal, we are using the term ‘continuous built-up area.’ We define this as:

- ‘...a densely populated area with a high concentration of buildings, infrastructure, and paved roads. The built-up areas in Dorset include the listed Tier 1, Tier 2 and Tier 3 settlements. It does not include other settlements not listed or isolated dwellings and farms.’

5.6.3. We are suggesting the following definition should be used for the ‘edge of the continuous built-up area’ when applying the flexible settlements policy:

- ‘...a clear interface between the edge of a built-up area and open countryside normally defined by the curtilages of buildings, roads and field boundaries.’

Question 16: We have suggested that the flexible settlement policy should only be applied around the ‘continuous built-up areas’ (i.e. ‘densely populated areas with high concentrations of buildings, infrastructure and paved roads’) of certain towns and villages. Do you have any comments on our definition of this ‘continuous built-up area’?

5.7. Green Belt

5.7.1. We do not consider that the flexible settlements policy should be applied to towns and villages within the Green Belt. This is because national policy indicates that new buildings in the Green Belt are generally inappropriate, as they fail to maintain its openness and prevent urban sprawl. Applicants can still justify development in the Green Belt where they can show that there are ‘very special circumstances’ or where they can demonstrate they meet the grey belt criteria in national policy¹⁵. In addition, if a development meets one of the exceptions listed in national policy¹⁶ including for limited affordable housing provision, development may be permitted.

¹⁵ National Planning Policy Framework, December 2024, paragraph 155

¹⁶ National Planning Policy Framework, December 2024, paragraph 154

Question 17: We have suggested that the flexible settlements policy should not be applied in the Green Belt. What are your thoughts on this?

5.8. Approach to countryside development and urban intensification

- 5.8.1. National policy is clear that planning policies should direct development to sustainable locations and avoid isolated homes in the countryside.¹⁷ So, alongside the flexible settlements policy, we are intending to draft a countryside policy that will place restrictions on development in the countryside (i.e. away from the continuous built-up area of Tier 1, Tier 2 and Tier 3 settlements where the flexible settlements policy would not apply). This policy will support the emerging spatial strategy and encourage sustainable patterns of growth around the more sustainable towns and villages in the settlement hierarchy.
- 5.8.2. There may however be exceptional circumstances where development in the countryside could be supported, for example where this is related to:
- agriculture
 - equestrian
 - housing for rural workers
 - affordable housing
 - reuse of existing buildings
 - recreation, leisure or tourism
- 5.8.3. Neither the flexible settlements policy nor the countryside policy will specifically restrict development in existing built-up areas. National planning policy promotes effective use of land, giving substantial weight to the value of using suitable brownfield land within settlements and promoting the development of under-utilised land and buildings¹⁸. The local plan will include an urban intensification and / or brownfield land policy to ensure land is used effectively and to promote redevelopment of brownfield sites.

¹⁷ National Planning Policy Framework, December 2024, paragraphs 83 and 84

¹⁸ National Planning Policy Framework, December 2024, paragraph 125

Question 18: Away from the towns and villages listed in the settlement hierarchy, there may be types of development that we could support. Do you have any comments on this approach and on the types of development that could be supported in the countryside?

5.9. Neighbourhood plans and the flexible settlements policy

- 5.9.1. Many communities in Dorset have prepared neighbourhood plans that set out local requirements for development in their area and these often include their own settlement boundaries, and site allocations for new housing development. It is important that these policies interact with policies in the local plan in a logical and fair way.
- 5.9.2. Applying the flexible settlements policy in areas where there is already a neighbourhood plan, which defines local settlement boundaries and allocates housing sites, could have implications for local community strategies and policies. This issue could be addressed if we include criteria in the flexible settlements policy which limits its application in those neighbourhood plan areas where sites have been allocated to meet identified housing needs in a recently made plan. However, this may also restrict the Council's ability to deliver enough new homes.

Question 19: We have suggested that the flexible settlements policy should not be applied in places with a recently made neighbourhood plan which includes allocations for new homes. What are your thoughts on this?

5.10. Flexible settlements policy and habitat sites

- 5.10.1. Dorset has many important protected wildlife sites, including habitat sites¹⁹ many of which are under pressure from the impacts of development and population growth. The protection of these sites is given great weight in planning decisions due to national policy and legislation.

¹⁹ 'Any site which would be included within the definition at regulation 8 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 for the purpose of those regulations, including candidate Special Areas of Conservation, Sites of Community Importance, Special Areas of Conservation, Special Protection Areas and any relevant Marine Sites.' (National Planning Policy Framework, December 2024, Glossary)

- 5.10.2. We have developed strategic approaches to delivering mitigation measures to avoid adverse impacts on these habitat sites. Many of these strategic approaches can be applied effectively to the development delivered through the flexible settlements policy and we will continue with this approach.
- 5.10.3. There may however be instances where there is no strategic approach in place, or where the approach may not be as effective as it needs to be (e.g. due to potential cumulative impacts). In these situations, the flexible settlements policy may need to be temporarily suspended in some areas, until we can be confident that suitable mitigation measures can be delivered.
- 5.10.4. We will need to keep this under review and monitor delivery of homes through the flexible settlements policy and consider whether new approaches to mitigation are needed.

6. Employment Strategy

6.1. Introduction

- 6.1.1. National policy establishes that one of the three objectives of the planning system is to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy. Significant weight is placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity, with local plans providing a framework for addressing economic priorities. Strategic policies should make sufficient provision for employment and be underpinned by relevant evidence.
- 6.1.2. Planning Practice Guidance directs councils in how to determine their economic need. It sets out that we should develop an idea of future needs based on a range of data which is current and robust. This data could include assessments of labour demand, labour supply, past take-up of employment and relevant consultation.

Employment need in Dorset

- 6.1.3. Our Employment Land Study was completed in 2024 and considers the employment land demand and supply in the area. It provides an assessment of employment needs within the Functional Economic Market Area (FEMA)²⁰ from 2021 to 2039. It highlights which employment sectors are expected to see

²⁰ The Functional Economic Market Area that forms the basis for the Employment Land Study included both the area covered by Dorset Council and the area covered by BCP Council

strong growth and those which are predicted to decline. The work looked at the strategic need for employment space across the whole area rather than by individual settlement but does identify a range of future requirements for Dorset Council.

- 6.1.4. For the Dorset Council area, the study suggested that between 2021 and 2039, there is an overall requirement for between 111.8 to 162.8ha land (375,200 to 532,300 sqm floorspace) to be delivered.
- 6.1.5. An analysis of the delivery of employment land and based on previous projections, the average amount of employment land needed has led us to estimate that between approximately 110ha and 165ha of employment land might be required over the period to 2043.
- 6.1.6. Since the completion of the Employment Land Study there have been revisions to national policy including new housing needs assessments and support for specific employment sectors. Further review is needed to consider the implications of these revisions on our projections of employment land demand.
- 6.1.7. We will update the employment demand forecasts again before the next stage of plan preparation to consider the impacts of revisions to national policy, new growth strategies, local plan timeframe and increased housing numbers. This will ensure that policy to identify and protect sufficient and appropriate land for employment purposes in the local plan will be based on the most up to date evidence on the amount and type of employment land needed.

6.2. Employment Strategy

- 6.2.1. A prosperous local economy is vital to achieving the strategic priorities of Dorset Council. The Dorset Council Plan seeks to encourage growth, foster innovation, support businesses and help create new jobs. The Economic Growth Strategy for Dorset builds on these ambitions, setting out a focussed approach to how Dorset will use its strengths and assets to grow the economy.
- 6.2.2. The Local Plan will help support economic growth and meet identified employment needs by providing a framework for delivering sufficient employment land uses in the right place, of the right type at the right time to meet the needs of Dorset's economy.
- 6.2.3. The focus of the Local Plan's employment strategy will be on protecting the important existing employment sites and allocating opportunities for new development at locations close to the more sustainable settlements. Alongside this, we are seeking to maximise the delivery of employment space through the

use of flexible policies to allow appropriate development in other suitable locations.

6.3. Employment allocations

- 6.3.1. The adopted local plans in the Dorset Council area contain a number of employment allocations, some of which are not yet developed. As existing allocations, we expect that most of these sites will contribute to future supply, and they will be reallocated in the new Local Plan.
- 6.3.2. However, there may be barriers to development which are blocking delivery on some existing employment allocations despite being identified for many years. We will work to identify the barriers to their delivery, to understand why they have not come forward despite policy support. Where these issues cannot be overcome, and there is no reasonable prospect of a site being developed, we may decide to 'release' them for other uses in the new Local Plan.
- 6.3.3. To meet future need, the Dorset Council Local Plan will also identify sites as new employment allocations. These areas will be primarily reserved for offices, research and development, industrial processes and storage and distribution (uses within the E(g), B2 and B8 classes) as these uses are those where there is a need and that support new jobs in the areas.
- 6.3.4. The larger settlements have a key role to play in the delivery of new employment opportunities because of their accessibility to labour, support services and infrastructure. We have identified new site opportunities in locations close to the more sustainable settlements.
- 6.3.5. To allow the expansion of existing sites and businesses we have also identified options adjacent to existing industrial estates and business parks. We will continue to work with employers to understand their operational requirements, and future expansion plans, and where possible seek to identify space to respond to these needs.
- 6.3.6. At this stage, as further work is needed on the projection figures, we have not limited the proposed site opportunities so that they align with Employment Land Study assessments of need. Instead, we have presented a range of all realistic potential opportunity sites so that when demand figures are finalised at the next stage of plan production, provision can be made in the most appropriate locations.
- 6.3.7. The opportunity sites being considered as potential new employment sites are included in Appendix B – Opportunity sites for employment, which accompanies

this document. They are also shown in the relevant section of the online consultation. The site location, size and other relevant planning information is set out. The list of option sites, and their boundaries, may be revised in light of consultation feedback or on the basis of additional evidence.

Question 20: The Local Plan will retain and protect existing key employment sites, identify new employment sites at locations close to more sustainable settlements, allow for expansion of existing employment sites and allow for new employment sites in suitable locations. Do you have any comments on this approach?

6.4. Employment development away from allocated sites

- 6.4.1. As Dorset's population grows, employment opportunities are vital to maintain balanced, sustainable and prosperous communities. We will encourage delivery of allocated sites to meet the area's employment needs.
- 6.4.2. However, there may be a specific need for employment space that is not met by or identified in the Local Plan allocations and therefore we are considering a more flexible approach. Allowing flexibility will help to ensure a varied and responsive supply to support other suitable opportunities to deliver employment space and jobs. This will enable employment land to be developed outside of allocated sites subject to various criteria.
- 6.4.3. We think that the scale and type of new employment development should be controlled to reflect its location, and focused on places where it will provide people with the opportunity to work locally. This will help to promote social inclusion and reduce the need to travel.
- 6.4.4. For this reason, we are suggesting that settlements within Tier 1, Tier 2 and Tier 3 of the settlement hierarchy detailed in Section 3, will be a focus for growth as the most sustainable locations. We also think that the policy should encourage employment development on previously developed land and the re-use or replacement of suitable existing buildings. We will look to develop a policy that enables this more flexible approach.
- 6.4.5. While development should generally be concentrated in the areas which are most sustainable, we acknowledge that some businesses may have specific requirements that could justify development in a particular location. The plan will recognise and respond to this.

- 6.4.6. The economy and the environment are closely linked. The outstanding natural and historic environment of Dorset contributes to the economy by making it an attractive place to live and work and supports the tourist economy. Reflecting this, we think that there is a need to enable employment development in locations away from the Tier 1, Tier 2 and Tier 3 settlements where the need is justified and all normal planning considerations have been adequately addressed.
- 6.4.7. We think that it is particularly important in rural areas to ensure that development is sensitive to its surroundings, does not have unacceptable impacts on local roads and exploits any opportunity to make a location more sustainable.

Question 21: The Local Plan will enable employment land to be developed outside identified sites at certain towns and villages, subject to certain considerations. Do you agree with this approach?

6.5. Mixed use development

- 6.5.1. In addition to the 'stand-alone' employment allocations, we think there are opportunities for employment land provision as part of 'mixed use' sites where space for jobs is provided in conjunction with new housing developments.
- 6.5.2. When developing sites national policy encourages effective use of land and exploration of whether multiple benefits can be achieved, including through mixed use schemes to help secure sustainable patterns of development.
- 6.5.3. Mixed use schemes can also help overcome some of the barriers to the delivery of employment sites such as the provision of utilities infrastructure.
- 6.5.4. Our evidence suggests that in mixed use developments the employment component should be brought forward alongside the residential element, preferably with the homes facilitating the infrastructure requirements of the whole scheme including connections to utilities and transport infrastructure. It also suggests that the employment provision on mixed use developments is generally considered to be best positioned adjacent to but separate from the residential areas.
- 6.5.5. We are suggesting that larger housing sites (allocated and unallocated) will be required to provide employment land in addition to the new homes, thus making them mixed use. We think that it would be reasonable to seek around 0.25ha of

employment land for every 100 homes developed. This requirement would apply on a proportionate basis to all proposals for 300 or more homes meaning that for a scheme of 400 homes, around 1ha of employment land should be provided.

- 6.5.6. We do not think that the requirements should be applied to smaller housing developments as this would result in a very dispersed distribution of small quantities of employment land spread across the council area. We don't think this dispersed approach would be attractive to businesses and the market and could have other implications for development viability and amenity.
- 6.5.7. There may be strategic reasons for requiring a greater or lesser proportion of employment uses on particular local plan allocations than that suggested by the above approach. Where this is the case, any requirements will be clearly specified by the site policy.

Question 22: We have suggested that larger scale housing sites should be required to provide land for employment uses. Proposals for 300 homes or more would be mixed residential and employment developments, with a ratio of 0.25ha of employment space for every 100 homes. How much do you agree or disagree with this approach?

- a. Agree
- b. Partially agree
- c. Neutral
- d. Partially disagree
- e. Disagree

Please provide any further comments or reasoning...

6.6. Protecting employment sites

- 6.6.1. Alongside supporting delivery of new employment land, we also think that the Local Plan should include controls to retain and protect existing employment uses in suitable locations.
- 6.6.2. Existing employment sites may come under pressure for change of use to non-employment uses. The loss of employment sites can reduce local job opportunities and impact negatively on economic competitiveness, potentially undermining economic growth.

- 6.6.3. We consider that Local Plan policies to retain important employment sites will help to provide opportunities to meet employment needs locally, to reduce the need to travel, and to promote economic growth and social inclusion.
- 6.6.4. As part of our strategy, we propose that the most important existing employment sites are identified and rigorously protected. We will call these 'key' sites for employment uses.
- 6.6.5. There are also other less important employment sites. Although they have a role in providing jobs for local people, a more flexible approach will be taken to the development of these 'non-key' employment sites.
- 6.6.6. To maintain employment opportunities for businesses and to help to provide jobs, employment development provided on new Local Plan employment allocations will be protected as 'key' sites. Areas of employment land delivered through mixed-use allocations may also be designated as 'key' sites, with requirements set out in the accompanying site policy.
- 6.6.7. There are a number of industrial sites and business parks in Dorset which have been provided through, and protected by, employment allocations of the adopted local plans. These allocated sites will be reviewed to assess their contribution to the supply of employment land/jobs and determine whether they are 'key'.
- 6.6.8. The existing allocated employment sites being evaluated are shown on the maps within Appendix B – Opportunity sites for employment. Sites that have already been redeveloped, allocated in for housing or have residential uses permitted are not presented. Where part of a site has been redeveloped for other uses, but some employment space remains, the allocation has been retained to allow for a consideration of the residual economic area.
- 6.6.9. The site areas shown are those defined by the adopted local plans. Boundaries of any employment sites selected as 'key' will be reevaluated during the next stage of plan preparation and revisions made as necessary to ensure they remain appropriate.
- 6.6.10. We intend to primarily restrict the types of uses on 'key' employment sites to offices, research and development uses, uses involving industrial processes and storage and distribution uses²¹.

²¹ i.e. uses within the E(g), B2 and B8 classes of the Use Classes Order 1987 (as amended)

- 6.6.11. To provide flexibility to respond to the economy, we are also suggesting that some other uses may be appropriate on 'key' sites so long as they are directly compatible with and complementary to the employment function and they enhance job provision, the effective operation and appeal of the site. Uses that do not provide direct and ongoing employment opportunities, such as residential development or retail development, would not be permitted.
- 6.6.12. Employment development will continue to be supported on other 'non-key' employment sites, but it may also be possible to consider the provision of alternative uses. When assessing planning applications for this development we will consider the appropriateness of the proposed use as well as the acceptability of the scheme on the remainder of the site and the wider area. Factors for consideration will include whether the proposed use would result in the loss of jobs; the delivery of important community or environmental benefits; and the viability or suitability of alternative employment uses.

Question 23: We have suggested that the Local Plan should include policies to protect the most important existing 'key' employment sites.

- a) Do you have any views on the strategy we have suggested for protecting employment sites?
- b) What criteria should we consider when defining 'key' and 'non-key' employment sites?
 - a. Site size
 - b. Location
 - c. Employment use type
 - d. Accessibility
 - e. Contribution to meeting economic objectives/needs
 - f. Market attractiveness
 - g. Opportunities for growth/expansion
 - h. The site's status in previous local plans
 - i. Other

7. Town centre development

7.1. Town centres

- 7.1.1. Town centres are at the heart of our communities and provide a focus for shopping, leisure and cultural activities. Although we will continue to promote town centres as the focus of each town, the way they are used is changing – in part due to changes in shopping patterns with more people now shopping online.
- 7.1.2. This shift in shopping patterns means that there are more empty units in town centres and a greater variety of uses other than traditional retail. There is also a greater use of town centres for social, community and cultural activities. We surveyed town centres during 2024 and produced maps showing the shops that were in use, what they were being used for and those that were vacant. Rather than allocating land for additional shops it is likely that we will need to manage the reduction in size of town centres and develop policies to allow the traditional main town centre uses to change whilst maintaining their focus for commercial and leisure activity.
- 7.1.3. Our Retail and Leisure Study (carried out in 2022) shows that there is no forecasted growth in demand for further retail development, and limited growth forecasted in leisure uses throughout the plan period. Due to the passage of time, changes in shopping patterns and the increase in development needs, we are currently updating this study.
- 7.1.4. As the Local Plan moves forward, we will reflect the latest projections of need for the main town centre uses to plan for our towns. We will also work with town councils to develop a strategy for each town centre reflecting their strengths and the activities they wish to focus on. These strategies will reflect the town council's vision for their town centre along with the function and position in the retail centre hierarchy. The strategy will inform policies that enable change whilst maintaining their viability as town centres.

Question 24: How do you think we should plan to support town centres in the future?

Question 25: What types of use do you think will be most important for the future of our town centres?

- a. Shops
- b. Cafes/restaurants
- c. Leisure (e.g. cinemas)
- d. Offices
- e. Cultural (e.g. museums)
- f. Community (e.g. libraries)
- g. Hotels
- h. Other...

7.2. Managing town centre development

- 7.2.1. Allowing change in town centres whilst maintaining their vitality will require a managed approach. We will need to ensure that core areas remain the focus for the main town centre uses whilst enabling appropriate alternative uses and enabling peripheral areas to diversify, including for housing development.

Sequential test and impact assessment

- 7.2.2. The main town centre uses should be directed towards town centres. To be consistent with national policy, we need to apply the sequential test to planning applications for main town centre uses which are not located in a designated town centre. This means that the main town centre uses should be located in town centres first, then on the edge of town centres, and only if suitable sites are not available should out of centre sites be considered.
- 7.2.3. We will also require any proposals for shops over 280 sqm (net) outside of designated town centres to be accompanied by a retail impact assessment so that the potential impact on existing centres can be understood. This local threshold reflects the typical scale of retail development in Dorset and is based on the definition of a 'large shop' in the Sunday Trading Act 1994.

Question 26: We are suggesting that retail impact assessments should be undertaken for retail development proposals outside the town centres defined in the Plan, that are over the size of a small food store (280 square metres net). How much do you agree or disagree with the introduction of a threshold of 280 square metres for retail impact assessments?

- a. Agree
- b. Partially agree
- c. Neutral
- d. Partially disagree
- e. Disagree

Please provide any further comments or reasoning

Question 27: Should the threshold also apply to leisure uses that are net 280 square metres? Yes/No

Change of use

- 7.2.4.** The main town centre uses should be directed towards town centres, and in some cases the centres of sustainable villages listed in Tier 3 of our settlement hierarchy where it would substantially improve the sustainability of a settlement. Due to changes to Permitted Development Rights and the Use Class Order, changes of use are taking place that result in loss of floorspace for main town centre uses. This loss of existing main town centre uses is in turn harming the vitality of town centres. In those instances where planning permission is required for a change from an existing main town centre use (including retail and leisure uses) to something else (such as a home) we will seek evidence from the applicant to justify the loss.
- 7.2.5.** We would expect applicants to submit marketing information to show why full and proper marketing of the unit for its current use has not been successful. We propose that evidence would need to be submitted that demonstrates full and proper marketing, including the following:
- Marketing tools: that the site has been marketed using a variety of methods that are likely to attract future occupiers,

- Rental prices / sales values: that the site has been marketed at a price which is considered reasonable (using recent and similar transactions) for the existing use and other suitable alternative uses agreed with the Council,
- Length of time it was marketed: that the site has been marketed for its existing use for 12 months unless otherwise agreed with the Council,

7.2.6. In recognition that some occupiers of rental properties break their lease before it ends, owners may wish to find new tenants as soon as practicable. For this reason, sites do not have to be vacant in order for them to be marketed.

Promoting the vitality and viability of town centres

7.2.7. As required by national policy, we will define a retail hierarchy for the Dorset Council area. We are also considering whether we could introduce policies to improve the town centres' vitality and viability. Any such policies would require a partnership with town councils and local landlords.

7.2.8. We could encourage street markets in town centres, recognising that markets attract additional footfall which in turn increases vitality and encourages spending or use of other services in the town centre.

7.2.9. We could introduce a 'meanwhile use' policy (interim and temporary uses) until a more permanent use can be delivered. Landlords will be encouraged to offer rents on vacant units at a reduced rate during the marketing period to encourage new businesses to move into a centre, thereby decreasing the number of vacant premises.

Question 28: We are considering whether the Local Plan should include a policy which supports interim or temporary uses pending a permanent use for a vacant town centre building - we have called these 'meanwhile uses'. To what extent do you agree with the introduction of a meanwhile uses policy?

- Agree
- Partially agree
- Neutral
- Partially disagree
- Disagree

Please provide any further comments or reasoning

8. Brownfield Land

- 8.1.1. Planning should promote the effective use of land to meet housing and other needs, while protecting the environment and ensuring healthy living conditions. Policies should prioritise previously developed or brownfield land and set clear strategies for meeting assessed needs.
- 8.1.2. A key theme to emerge from the January 2021 Local Plan consultation process was a request for a greater emphasis on the use of brownfield sites and buildings to minimise greenfield development. This reflects national policy to make effective use of land. National policy also has a brownfield first policy in relation to the release of Green Belt.
- 8.1.3. The definitions of 'previously developed land' and 'brownfield land registers' are outlined in national policy²². In summary, previously developed land (often referred to as brownfield land) is land which is or was occupied by a permanent structure, including the curtilage of the developed land (the boundary around it), and any associated fixed surface infrastructure. Previously developed land excludes land that has since blended back into the natural landscape such as restored quarry workings. It also excludes parks, recreation grounds, allotments, agricultural or forestry buildings and resident gardens in built up areas.
- 8.1.4. We have explained in more detail below how we have sought to identify previously developed land in the area and explore the opportunities to provide development on this brownfield land to meet the area's needs, including the need for homes and employment land.

8.2. Brownfield land register

- 8.2.1. Our brownfield land register provides an up-to-date and consistent list of brownfield sites that we consider are appropriate for residential development.
- 8.2.2. As well as being previously developed land, to be entered onto the brownfield register sites must also be over 0.25ha in size, suitable, available and achievable for residential development.
 - To be suitable for entry onto the register, sites must be either allocated in a local development plan, have planning permission for residential development, have a grant of permission in principle, or be, in the opinion of

²² National Planning Policy Framework, December 2024, Glossary

the local planning authority, appropriate for residential development, having had regard to any adverse impact on the natural and local built environment including heritage assets. In assessing potential brownfield sites, local planning authorities must consider the NPPF and have regard to relevant policies in their development plan documents.

- To be available, the relevant owner or developer has expressed an intention to sell or develop the land, or in the opinion of the local authority, there are no ownership issues that might prevent residential development from taking place.
- To be achievable, the development is likely to take place within the next 15 years.

8.2.3. These assessment criteria mean that many previously developed sites don't qualify for entry on the Brownfield Land Register and the sites that have been entered are likely to already benefit from planning permission and therefore already contribute towards housing land supply.

8.2.4. We also identify regeneration opportunities on previously developed land through the Dorset Council Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA). This identifies sites of at least 0.5ha that meet the national definition of previously developed land. Delivery of these sites is less certain but due to their larger size, greater opportunities exist for planning interventions such as master planning, site remediation or for funding opportunities.

8.3. Brownfield land delivery

8.3.1. National planning policies suggest that local plans and planning decisions should give substantial weight to the reuse of suitable brownfield land within settlements for homes and other uses that will contribute toward meeting identified needs.

8.3.2. A common argument is that brownfield land should be developed in advance of greenfield sites. This expectation is however not realistic as the overall need for housing in the short term (next 5 years) far outstrips the supply of brownfield sites available in Dorset. By way of illustration, Dorset Council must grant permission for at least 16,000 homes over the next five years while the Dorset Council Brownfield Land Register only contains sites with capacity for around 2,500 homes. Consequently, any brownfield first phasing policy would simply constrain the supply of land and exacerbate the current housing crisis.

Question 29: How else can we encourage development on brownfield land, whilst also planning positively to meet our needs for homes and employment land?

9. Green Belt Review

9.1. Introduction

- 9.1.1. A significant area of south-east Dorset falls within the South East Dorset Green Belt. The fundamental aim of the Green Belt is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence. Once a Green Belt boundary is established, it should only be altered where exceptional circumstances are fully evidenced and justified through the preparation or updating of local plans.

9.2. Our approach to Green Belt release

- 9.2.1. Our approach to identifying opportunity sites for development has reflected the approach in national policy, that ‘all other reasonable options²³’ for accommodating growth need to be considered before releasing Green Belt. This includes making as much use as possible of suitable brownfield sites, maximising the density of development in town centres and locations well served by public transport and having discussions with neighbouring authorities about the distribution of development. The assessment of reasonable options also needs to be undertaken in the context of the need to promote sustainable patterns of development²⁴.
- 9.2.2. We are looking to promote the reuse of brownfield land as set out in Section 8 however as this section explains, there is insufficient brownfield land in Dorset to meet the needs of the area. We therefore need to consider undeveloped land to meet the area’s needs. We have identified a number of opportunities for development outside the Green Belt as set out in Section 4 of this report and within the accompanying Opportunity sites for housing (Appendix A). However, as we want to promote sustainable patterns of development, we anticipate that we will want to release some land from the Green Belt.
- 9.2.3. Recent revisions to national policy have introduced grey belt land. Grey belt land is defined as land in the Green Belt that is either previously developed or which does not contribute strongly to the purposes of the Green Belt.

²³ National Planning Policy Framework, December 2024, paragraph 147

²⁴ National Planning Policy Framework, December 2024, paragraph 148

- 9.2.4. Grey belt excludes land where the application of the policies relating to the areas or assets of particular value²⁵ (other than Green Belt) would provide a strong reason for refusing or restricting development. The emphasis within national policy is that grey belt land should be released as a priority over land elsewhere in the Green Belt that strongly contributes to Green Belt purposes.
- 9.2.5. We are working with BCP Council to review the boundaries of the Green Belt, following the recent updates to national policy. This review will identify land that could be identified as grey belt and therefore inform where we might sustainably release Green Belt to meet our increasing housing need. Sites included in this consultation are currently regarded as sustainable locations for development but the final sites that we propose to release from the Green Belt will be informed by the review that we are undertaking and the application of National Policy.

Question 30: To what extent do you agree with taking land out of the Green Belt to help meet our development needs?

- a. Agree
- b. Partially agree
- c. Neutral
- d. Partially disagree
- e. Disagree

Please provide any further comments or reasoning...

²⁵ As set out in footnote 7 of the National Planning Policy Framework, December 2024

10. Self-build and custom-build housing

- 10.1.1. National policy requires local plans to consider the housing needed for different groups in the community, including people wishing to commission or build their own homes.

10.2. Self-build register

- 10.2.1. We are also obliged to maintain a register of those who wish to buy a plot of land to build their home in the Dorset Council area. Optionally, the self-build register can be divided into two parts. Part 1 can have criteria associated with entry onto the register whereas Part 2 must be open to all. We are required to grant planning permissions for serviced plots of land to meet the demand for self-build as established through Part 1 of the register. We are then required to monitor self-build demand against supply to demonstrate that sufficient plots have been granted consent to meet the demand.
- 10.2.2. The Dorset Council self-build register was introduced on 31 October 2020 and was divided into two parts. There is 'a local connection test' applied to Part 1 meaning that people need to have a connection to the local area to be on the register. We monitor the supply of self-build housing through the issuing of Self Build Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) exemptions (Part 1). To date, as demonstrated through the CIL exemptions, we have granted planning permission for enough plots to meet the need. We must also have regard to the Part 2 register in our planning, housing, land disposal and regeneration functions.

10.3. Self-build plot delivery

- 10.3.1. In the January 2021 Local Plan consultation, we proposed that self-build homes could be delivered within settlement boundaries, through the redevelopment of existing dwellings or as rural workers' dwellings. We also proposed that self-build homes could be delivered as affordable housing on rural exception sites.
- 10.3.2. Responses to the January 2021 Local Plan consultation were generally supportive of this proposed approach to self-build plot delivery. Town and parish councils, the public and the development industry were all supportive of the specific site allocations. However, some responses suggested that additional smaller sites for self-build homes should be identified.

10.3.3. In this consultation, we propose a Flexible Settlements Policy (Section 5) which we consider will improve the delivery of self-build developments and enable the need to be met more easily. It would allow developments of up to 30 dwellings adjacent to listed settlements meaning that delivery of self-build homes would be enabled through this policy.

Question 31: We have suggested that the Local Plan should include a flexible settlements policy which would allow new homes around certain towns and villages. What impact, if any, do you think the proposed flexible settlements policy might have on opportunities for self-build homes?

- a. High impact
- b. Some impact
- c. No impact

Please provide further comments or reasoning.

Question 32: Is there anything else we should do to increase the supply of self-build plots?

11. Neighbourhood Plans

- 11.1.1. Communities can have a greater role in shaping the areas in which they live and work by establishing statutory policies through neighbourhood plans. There is no legal requirement for a community to prepare a neighbourhood plan, but it is a right which communities in England can choose to use.
- 11.1.2. Neighbourhood planning has the potential to bring together a local community, landowners and developers, service providers and Dorset Council to build a consensus about the future of an area. Where a town or parish council exists, they should lead on neighbourhood planning. Elsewhere a 'neighbourhood planning forum' must be designated to lead the process.
- 11.1.3. A neighbourhood plan forms part of the development plan for an area and sits alongside the Local Plans and other development plan documents we might prepare. Planning applications will be determined using both the Local Plan (once adopted) and any neighbourhood plans that have been 'made' part of the development plan; and by having regard to any other material considerations.

11.2. Strategic priorities and strategic policies

- 11.2.1. National policy indicates that neighbourhood plans should be aligned with the strategic needs and priorities of the wider area. Section 2 of this consultation document establishes a Vision for the Dorset Council Local Plan area and identifies a set of Strategic Priorities. Neighbourhood plans should be prepared to positively contribute to the Local Plan's Vision and Strategic Priorities. The final version of the Dorset Council Local Plan will contain a series of strategic policies which will aim to deliver against the strategic priorities.
- 11.2.2. National policy also indicates that neighbourhood plans must be prepared in general conformity with the strategic policies of a local plan. As a result, a neighbourhood plan should not promote less development in the neighbourhood area than is set out in the local plan or undermine the local plan strategic policies.
- 11.2.3. The strategic policies in the Local Plan will be those that contribute towards the delivery of the Strategic Priorities set out in Section 2. All of the proposed housing allocations in the final version of the Local Plan will be strategic in that they will all play a role in contributing towards meeting the housing needs of the plan area. The strategic employment allocations will be those identified as 'key

employment sites'. A few policies may have both strategic and non-strategic aspects.

11.3. Housing requirement figures for neighbourhood plans

- 11.3.1. We are required to set out housing requirement figures for designated neighbourhood plan areas. National policy does not prescribe a methodology for doing this at the neighbourhood level, but explains that strategic policies, such as those that will be included in the Dorset Council Local Plan, should set out *'a housing requirement for neighbourhood areas which reflects the overall strategy for the pattern and scale of development, and any relevant allocations'*²⁶ set out in the local plan.
- 11.3.2. The 'housing need' for a local plan area should be determined using the Standard Method. For the Dorset Council area this figure, as set out in Section 4 of this consultation document, is currently 3,246 net additional homes per annum. Over recent years, around 1,660 new homes have been built in Dorset, so this is a significant increase.
- 11.3.3. We outlined the overarching strategy for meeting housing need in this document but the amount of housing that will be required in each neighbourhood plan area is yet to be finalised. As the Local Plan progresses towards adoption, this detail will be fixed.
- 11.3.4. We are likely to present details of housing requirements for neighbourhood plan areas at the point of pre-submission consultation (regulation 19) on the new Local Plan that is scheduled for August 2026. Prior to August 2026, we will take a bespoke approach to providing neighbourhood planning bodies with an indicative housing requirement figure when requested to do so.
- 11.3.5. It is likely that the methodology that will be used to produce housing requirement figures for neighbourhood areas will be similar to the method which we presented as part of the January 2021 Local Plan Consultation. The 2021 consultation document detailed that the proposed housing requirement figures for neighbourhood areas should be the sum of:
- completions since the beginning of the plan period;
 - extant planning permissions;
 - housing allocations – both existing and proposed;

²⁶ National Planning Policy Framework, December 2024, paragraph 69

- capacity on major sites (10 or more dwellings) within development / settlement boundaries as evidenced through the SHLAA; and
- a windfall allowance on minor sites (less than 10 dwellings) based on recent completion levels

11.3.6. For the purposes of this public consultation, the local plan period is anticipated to begin on 1 April 2026 and, therefore, no completions have yet been recorded. If we use the method which has been outlined, the housing requirement figures will include known allocations in submitted or made neighbourhood plans as well as adopted and emerging local plan allocations. A windfall allowance on minor sites will also be estimated and projected forward to 2043, the end of the local plan period as currently proposed. All data sources will need to be updated as the plan progresses through the plan making process.

Question 33: We have suggested that housing requirements for neighbourhood plan areas should be finalised at the next stage of preparing the Local Plan. This is likely to involve consideration of sites with planning permission, local plan allocations and unplanned development. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed approach?

- a. Agree
- b. Partially agree
- c. Neutral
- d. Partially disagree
- e. Disagree

Please provide any further comments or reasoning...

11.4. Flexible Settlements Policy

- 11.4.1. As set out in Section 5 of this consultation document, we propose to introduce a flexible settlements policy that would allow for development of sites up to 30 dwellings adjacent to the built-up edge of settlements that are in Tier 1, Tier 2 or Tier 3 of the settlement hierarchy, subject to certain criteria being met. It is proposed that this policy would apply across the whole of the Dorset Council plan area except for settlements in the Green Belt.
- 11.4.2. We also propose that the policy would not apply in instances where a neighbourhood plan has been made (adopted) within 5 years of a planning

application being determined and which contains policies and allocations to meet their identified housing requirement.

- 11.4.3. The neighbourhood plan housing requirement figures that we prepare as part of the new Local Plan should be taken as a minimum for a neighbourhood plan area and can therefore be exceeded. However, the scope of a neighbourhood plan is up to a neighbourhood planning body. There is no requirement for neighbourhood plans to allocate sites or identify any additional land to meet housing needs. Nevertheless, there may well be a strong basis for neighbourhood plans allocating sites particularly if there is evidence of local housing need in the neighbourhood plan area. Allocations proposed in neighbourhood plans should be in accordance with the thrust of the spatial strategy set out in the Local Plan and not be strategic in nature.

Question 34: Should the housing requirement figures for neighbourhood plan areas outside the Green Belt, include an allowance for sites that could come forward through the flexible settlements policy?

- a. Yes
- b. No

Please provide any further comments or reasoning.

12. Sites for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople

12.1. Introduction

- 12.1.1. Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople are people (irrespective of their race or origin) with a nomadic lifestyle who travel to work or members of a group which is organised to hold fairs, circuses or shows. The formal planning definitions for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople are provided in 'Planning policy for traveller sites'. The Local Plan is required to provide sufficient 'pitches' to meet the needs of this group. A recent update to national policy has broadened the definitions of both Gypsies and Travellers and Travelling Showpeople. We will need to apply these definitions when taking decisions on planning applications and preparing our Local Plan.
- 12.1.2. Through the application of national policy²⁷, we have a responsibility to prepare 'fair and effective' strategies to meet the need for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople (collectively referred to as Travellers in this consultation document) and this duty²⁸ extends to the needs of those who actively chose to live in caravans.

12.2. Need for Traveller pitches and plots

- 12.2.1. In order to plan to meet the needs of Travellers, we have to understand how many pitches for single Gypsy or Traveller households²⁹ and plots for a single Travelling Showpeople household³⁰ are needed. In 2022, we undertook an assessment of need based on the previous planning definitions of Travellers³¹. This concluded that there was a need for 113 pitches for those which meet the then 'planning definition' of Gypsies and Travellers and 40 pitches for those

²⁷ National Planning Policy Framework, December 2024, paragraphs 61 & 63 and Planning Policy for Traveller Sites, December 2024, paragraphs 4 b) and 10

²⁸ Under section 8, (3) of the Housing Act 1985, and for those groups of distinct ethnic groups defined in the Equality Act 2010

²⁹ Typically including at least one static caravan, a touring caravan, a day room and vehicle parking space.

³⁰ Typically including area to store and maintain equipment and machinery (potentially including fairground rides) and a residential area.

³¹ Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople accommodation assessment or GTAA

which did not meet the then 'planning definition' of Gypsies and Travellers. This gave a total of 153 pitches.

- 12.2.2. In addition, applying the earlier 'planning definition', the assessment identified a need for 13 plots for Travelling Showpeople which meet the 'planning definition' and 3 plots for other Travelling Showpeople'.
- 12.2.3. There is a need for transit sites which provide accommodation for Travellers on a short-term basis. The assessment identified a need for a 25-pitch transit site to provide accommodation for Travellers on a short-term basis.
- 12.2.4. As the definition of Travellers has now been broadened, we will be re-evaluating the needs in Dorset for pitches and it is likely that the need will increase. For the purposes of this consultation, we have outlined a positive approach to meeting the needs as currently identified, and a suggested mechanisms that gives flexibility for meeting the need in the longer term.

12.3. Strategy for meeting Traveller needs

- 12.3.1. There are a number of permanent Travellers' pitches in Dorset but our evidence shows that there is a clear need for more. Some of the existing pitches do not have any formal planning status and therefore there is no certainty for the occupiers about their ability to stay in the area.
- 12.3.2. We therefore need to address this issue and respond to the duty placed on us as Dorset Council to meet the needs of the Travelling community. Reflecting this duty, our Local Plan objectives for meeting the needs of Travellers are to:
 - reduce the number of unauthorised sites, and provide opportunities for Traveller households to grow in suitable locations
 - encourage development in suitable locations for new Traveller sites, which give occupiers of sites the opportunity to access key services and facilities
 - provide opportunities for Travellers to deliver their own sites in suitable locations
- 12.3.3. In response to the identified need for pitches, our proposed strategy for meeting the needs of Travellers will include:
 - The allocation of existing Traveller sites which do not have planning permission, but which we consider are suitable locations for this type of development.

- The intensification of existing Traveller sites (i.e. an increase in the number of pitches on a particular site) where we consider there is capacity to do so without significant harmful impacts.
- Allocating extensions to existing Traveller sites where we consider that there is an opportunity to expand the current site without significant harmful impacts.
- Allocations for new Traveller sites in suitable locations.
- A criteria-based policy for Traveller site planning applications to be considered against.

- 12.3.4. We have therefore identified a number of opportunity sites to consider for inclusion in the Local Plan. Further information is set out later in this chapter and the sites detailed within the included in Appendix C – Opportunity sites for Gypsies, Travellers, and Travelling Showpeople, which accompanies this document. They are also shown in the relevant section of the online consultation. The opportunity sites identified give us a total of 118 pitches, however this consultation and further assessment will help us consider their suitability. Based on our initial calculations of pitch and plot yields from the site opportunities presented in this consultation, we think that there is still likely to be shortfall of around 35 pitches for Gypsies and Travellers and 9 plots for Travelling Showpeople.
- 12.3.5. At this stage in the process there is still uncertainty around the numbers of pitches and plots which could be delivered through the proposed site opportunities as we will need to consider all responses to the consultation and further review the site options. The shortfall in the supply of pitches and plots could therefore increase.
- 12.3.6. Further Traveller sites are therefore likely to be required to secure delivery of sites to meet the need. It may be that planning applications for pitches will be consented through our criteria-based policy (Section 12.5) however at this stage, this is unknown. It is however unlikely that this policy will deliver many sites in the short term.
- 12.3.7. As the provision of pitches to meet the needs of Travellers is an important part of the Local Plan, not having a deliverable strategy in place for meeting needs may result in the Local Plan being found unsound at examination. We have explored many opportunity sites through this consultation and previous consultations and have been unable to identify sufficient sites to meet the need.

- 12.3.8. An additional way of meeting the need for Traveller pitches is to deliver them alongside bricks and mortar homes. We are therefore considering policies that would require the delivery of pitches for the Travelling communities alongside bricks and mortar homes. Our current thinking is that sites of greater than 500 homes, whether allocated through the local plan or presented to the council as stand-alone planning application, would be required to also provide 5 pitches for the Traveller community.
- 12.3.9. This approach could provide the further pitches and plots that are likely to be required to provide a deliverable supply of sites to meet the area's needs. This would add a resilience to the supply and delivery of sites for both the short and longer term.
- 12.3.10. We need to develop and work on the details of the policy and how it will be applied. Taking account of any final shortfall between the need and the final supply of deliverable Traveller sites, this will involve considering the detailed policy criteria relating to appearance, layout, design and phasing of mixed residential developments for the settled and Travelling communities.

Question 35: We have suggested that our Local Plan objectives for Travellers should be:

- to reduce the numbers of unauthorised sites,
- to provide opportunities for sites to expand,
- to encourage new Traveller sites in sustainable locations, and
- to provide opportunities for Travellers to deliver their own sites.

Do you have any comments on the objectives for meeting the need for Traveller sites?

Question 36: To help ensure that enough pitches are provided to meet Dorset's needs, Traveller pitches could be delivered alongside homes for the settled community on large scale residential development. Are there any issues which you think we need to consider in locating Traveller pitches alongside new built homes for the settled community?

Question 37: We are suggesting that 5 Traveller pitches should be provided for every 500 homes on large development sites. Is this threshold correct?

- a. Yes
- b. No-it should be higher
- c. No-it should be lower

Please provide any further comments or reasoning.

12.4. Traveller opportunity sites for consultation

- 12.4.1. Since the GTAA was completed, we have given full planning permission for a seasonal transit site for Travellers at Piddlehinton³². The current need for Transit pitches has therefore been met.
- 12.4.2. Most of the site opportunities for Travellers' sites presented in the accompanying Opportunity sites for Gypsies, Travellers, and Travelling Showpeople' document (and within the online consultation) relate to existing sites that are already used by Travellers. Some of these sites have been used over extended periods, and are in suitable locations, but do not formally have planning permission. In other cases, there might be planning issues relating to an existing site which mean we are not able to grant planning permission until the issues have been overcome.
- 12.4.3. We also consider that there is scope for the use of existing Traveller sites to be intensified or expanded in suitable locations. :
- Existing sites which do not have planning permission: around 51 pitches on 13 separate sites
 - Expansion of existing Traveller sites with planning permission: around 7 pitches on 5 separate sites
 - New Traveller site proposals: around 60 pitches and 7 plots on 10 separate sites
- 12.4.4. Alongside existing sites, we have also identified some options for new Traveller sites. The new Traveller opportunity sites presented in this consultation are generally closely related to existing Tier 1, Tier 2 and Tier 3 settlements in the

³² 'Permanent retention of gypsy & traveller transit site for 25no. caravans'

settlement hierarchy, where community services and facilities tend to be focused.

- 12.4.5. We estimate that the Traveller opportunity sites could deliver around 118 pitches for Gypsies and Travellers, and 7 plots for Travelling Showpeople. Following changes to national policy, and because of our duty under the Housing Act, we are seeking to meet the entire identified need for plots and pitches (i.e. 153 pitches and 16 plots).

12.5. Criteria based policy for Traveller sites

- 12.5.1. To support delivery of Traveller sites, and to give Travellers the opportunity to deliver their own sites, we think that the Local Plan should include a criteria-based Traveller policy.

- 12.5.2. We think that this policy should include criteria relating to the:

- Location: specifically the relationship between the site and the nearest accessible services and facilities in a town or village
- Access: arrangements for access, turning, parking and storage of equipment and vehicles
- Neighbouring development: the relationship between the site and neighbours, and the need to safeguard the amenity of existing uses
- Environmental Impact: landscape character and the appearance and character of settlements
- Management of Traveller sites

Question 38: To encourage Travellers to deliver their own sites, we are suggesting that the Local Plan should include a criteria policy which takes account of the site's location, access, neighbouring development, environmental impact and management of the site. Do you think we need to add or change any of the suggested criteria?

13. Strategic Heathland Recreation Mitigation

13.1. Background

- 13.1.1. The Dorset Heaths³³ are located across South East Dorset and Purbeck and are designated as internationally important habitat. The heaths are a particularly rare type of habitat that have dramatically declined over the last 100 years due to a rise in population, changes in land use and human activity. The remaining heathland habitat sites are fragmented and under pressure from residential development. Harm to heathland can be caused by disturbance and predation by domestic pets, disturbance by visitors including dog walkers and equestrian-related development.
- 13.1.2. Jointly with BCP Council, we have had an approach in place to mitigating for significant effects from residential development since 2007. The evidence that informs this approach indicates that most visitors to the heathland live within 5km and that there is a more significant impact arising from homes located within 400m of a heath.
- 13.1.3. Our strategy does not permit most types of residential development within 400m of a heathland site. For residential development beyond 400m but within 5km of heathland, mitigation is required to avoid potential harm to the habitat. Mitigation involves managing and encouraging appropriate behaviour from those visiting heathland sites and providing alternatives areas for recreation, known as Heathland Infrastructure Projects (HIPs).
- 13.1.4. HIPs can include new areas of public open space that are convenient and dog friendly, and facilities like multi-use games areas, skate or bicycle parks. Larger HIP sites that comprise new areas of public open space are known as Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG). The aim of HIPs is to divert visitor pressure away from the protected heathland habitat sites to ensure that there is no net increase in recreation pressure.
- 13.1.5. As our approach has been in place for a number of years, we commissioned Footprint Ecology³⁴ to assess its effectiveness. Since this review was

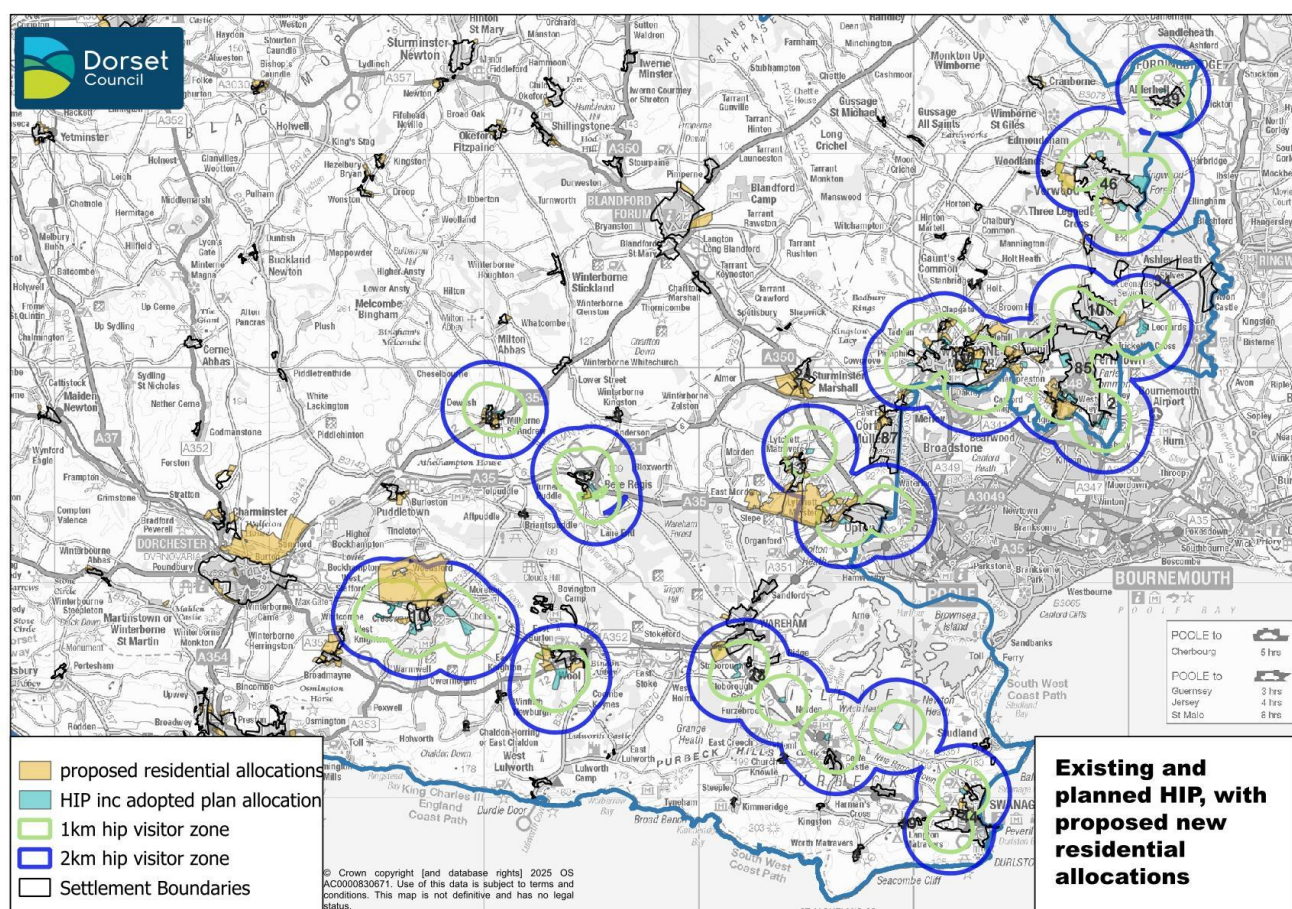
³³ These sites are protected under the Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019 and European law.

³⁴ 'Urban development and the Dorset Heaths: long term analysis & evidence base review', Footprint Ecology, November 2022

completed, a number of additional HIPs have been delivered, are due to be delivered as part of a development proposal or are identified as part of recently adopted plans. Monitoring shows that most people visiting HIPs live within 1km of the site but some people travel as much as 2km to visit a SANG.

- 13.1.6. Figure 13.1 shows the distribution of existing HIPs alongside those proposed as part of development or in adopted plans with a 1km and 2km buffer around each. The map also shows proposed development locations where mitigation measures would need to be delivered.

Figure 13.1: Distribution of existing and proposed HIPs



- 13.1.7. The review found that despite a 6.4% increase in dwellings within 5km of heathland between 2007 and 2021, there was no meaningful change in visitor numbers to the heathland sites. The review also found that those heaths where access levels had increased had not had greater levels of housing growth in their vicinity.

- 13.1.8. The data in the review suggests that the strategy and the provision of HIPs / SANGs is effective and deflects recreational pressure from the heaths. While

each HIP / SANG is different in character, the data shows they are well used and their use has been increasing over time and relative to heath access.

- 13.1.9. At the time of the review both councils estimated a potential increase in new homes within 5km of the heaths of around 19% up to 2038. As noted in Section 4, changes to the Standard Method for assessing housing needs in December 2024 means that these numbers are likely to increase further. Consequently, the need to manage visitors and mitigate the recreational impact of development on the heaths is likely be greater.

Question 39: We have identified opportunity sites which could deliver more homes to help meet Dorset's housing needs. Do we need to change the approach to mitigating impacts on protected Dorset Heaths habitat sites as part of planning to meet increased housing needs?

- a. Yes
- b. No

Please provide further comments or reasoning.

13.2. The strategic need for heathland mitigation

- 13.2.1. Our approach to mitigation requires larger developments within the 400-metre to 5km impact zone to provide HIPs on site, and in many instances to also contribute towards strategic access management and monitoring. Smaller developments also need to mitigate their impact, but this is often through financial contribution towards mitigation projects that Dorset Council delivers.
- 13.2.2. The Footprint Ecology review of our strategy recommends a range of HIPs to mitigate the increased number of homes, including strategic approaches funded by contributions from smaller, windfall development. These included:
- Enhancements to the performance of existing HIPs by the creation of path links, new parking and wider path network around existing SANGs, providing better links and connectivity. For example:
 - where a settlement is likely to have several development-related SANGs the creation of links between the SANGs and the wider countryside would enhance the visitor experience considerably.
 - strategic approaches such as The Stour Valley Park, running from Hengistbury Head in the east to Sturminster Marshall and Kingston

Lacy in the west. These can provide a range of lengths and types of walks and offer the opportunity for existing and potential future HIPs to sensitively link into the footpath network offering enhancement.

- A greater role for HIPs and small-scale infrastructure to improve green infrastructure to join existing SANG and connect greenspaces, providing for more variation in recreation experience;
- A new large HIP, such as Wild Woodbury, to provide a range of routes and destinations, potentially able to cope with different activities and types of access. This could be provided as part of a large-scale development opportunity where the HIP provision could have the opportunity to provide mitigation for additional development.

13.2.3. Depending on the location and size of smaller developments and in those instances where there are no opportunities to enhance the capacity of existing green space, there may be a requirement for additional infrastructure. Mitigation of dispersed housing might also be more effectively achieved by managing access to the heathlands themselves, for example by managing scattered parking locations and roadside parking.

13.2.4. It is not always straightforward to identify the type and most appropriate location for new HIPs for smaller developments. Unsurprisingly, most smaller scale residential windfall development is expected in the larger towns, many of which are already reasonably well served by HIPs. There are likely to be opportunities to enhance or connect these HIPs to mitigate for small windfall developments.

13.2.5. We will consider all these options as well as opportunities to deliver strategic mitigation for smaller scale developments.

13.2.6. At the moment, we do not think that there is a need for a significant stand-alone new HIP to be provided to mitigate impacts arising from smaller scale developments that do not provide on-site mitigation. We consider that enhancements to existing HIPs and other strategic green infrastructure sites can meet the mitigation need of new smaller scale developments.

13.3. Shapwick, Kingston Lacy and the Stour Valley Park

13.3.1. The National Trust's Kingston Lacy Estate sits at the western end of the Stour Valley Park. The House and parkland are a significant visitor attraction in the south east Dorset area with over a million visitors each year. There are opportunities to develop the estate further to provide significant public benefits

including the conservation of the grade one listed house and enhanced cycle and walking access to the estate from nearby towns. In addition, the National Trust have plans for wider nature restoration on the estate, an improved visitor experience at Badbury Rings and improved visitor experience at the parkland. However, there is a need for these enhancements to be funded.

- 13.3.2. The Trust own much of the nearby Shapwick village where there are opportunities for limited levels of development to assist with the funding of the enhancements on the wider estate. Although development in this location would not typically be permitted, due to the way the estate is managed the Trust are legally obliged to reinvest the funds from any new homes back into the Kingston Lacy Estate. Initial proposals have identified a number of potential small-scale development opportunities at Shapwick village alongside some additional community facilities (such as a shop or village hall) but this would require further evaluation given the historic nature of the village and its location close to the National Landscape. A masterplan to demonstrate how the village would change and the public benefits that would be realised would be required should we take this approach forward

Question 40: To what extent do you agree or disagree with development at Shapwick to enable the delivery of public benefits from investment in the Kingston Lacy Estate?

- a. Agree
- b. Partially agree
- c. Neutral
- d. Partially disagree
- e. Disagree

Please provide any further comments or reasoning

14. Onshore Wind, Solar, and Battery Energy Storage

14.1. Introduction

- 14.1.1. Dorset Council declared a climate and ecological emergency in 2019, and our Natural Environment, Climate & Ecology Strategy (NECES) sets a clear vision for the council and wider Dorset to rapidly become carbon neutral, nature positive and resilient. Providing a positive strategy for renewable energy development through the Local Plan whilst ensuring that adverse impacts are addressed appropriately is key and can help tackle climate change.
- 14.1.2. There are many renewable energy resources that could be harnessed in Dorset, both through stand-alone schemes and as part of other built development. The Local Plan will include appropriate policy for guiding development proposals and securing renewable energy that is integrated into new developments, supported by the Dorset Design Code referenced in Section 1.6.
- 14.1.3. National policy suggests that local plans should consider identifying suitable areas for renewable energy and low carbon development, where this would help secure their development. Additionally, our NECES includes an objective to identify suitable sites in the Local Plan, whilst having regard to landscape, the historic environment, amenity, ecology, productive farmland impacts and other constraints. Responses to our consultation in January 2021 suggested the Local Plan should go further to address the climate crisis. Identifying opportunities for renewable energy infrastructure is one step towards responding to this feedback.

14.2. Identifying suitable areas

- 14.2.1. Taking into account the characteristics of Dorset and the renewable energy projects already delivered in the area, we have looked at where there may be potential for wind turbines, ground-mounted solar farms and battery energy storage systems (BESS) development. We have carried out a strategic assessment of the potential for these three types of development, including technical considerations such as wind speed and grid connection, and excluding areas of land with physical constraints such as built-up areas. We

have also undertaken an assessment of landscape sensitivity to these types of development at various scales.³⁵

- 14.2.2. We propose to identify areas that are broadly suitable for onshore wind turbines, ground-mounted solar and battery energy storage development in the new Local Plan. These broad areas will direct individual proposals to the locations that we consider to be most appropriate whilst still allowing for flexibility in planning for future renewable energy development. Flexibility is needed because many proposals for renewable energy are informed by site specific considerations, availability of a connection to the national grid and the specific technology being used.
- 14.2.3. The broad areas of opportunity proposed are based on the two strategic level assessments outlined above. We have combined what is considered technically feasible with areas that are not of higher landscape sensitivity.³⁶
- 14.2.4. Detailed evidence would need to be provided the time of a planning application in order to determine the suitability of individual sites or proposals.
- 14.2.5. The broad areas of opportunity are based on a wide range of considerations including:
 - Excluding land within designated ecological sites, designated heritage assets³⁷, existing and future development, watercourses and woodland
 - Landscape sensitivity
 - Minimum development sizes, to reflect the practicalities of large scale developments
 - For wind, technical considerations such as wind speed, turbine sizing and spacing; and consideration of noise impacts
 - For solar, exclusion of higher quality agricultural land
 - For battery storage, exclusion of land more than 4km from a transmission substation
- 14.2.6. As development of these technologies can come forward in different scales, broad areas of opportunity are identified for each of the following categories:

³⁵ www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/renewable-energy-strategic-assessments

³⁶ More detail on the method undertaken is available in the background paper: Wind, Solar and Battery Energy Storage Systems (available on our website).

³⁷ World Heritage Sites, Registered Parks and Gardens, Scheduled Monuments, Listed Buildings, and Conservation areas

- Wind energy development in size categories between 25 and 220 metres in height (to blade tip)
- Ground mounted solar development in site area categories up to 120 hectares
- Battery storage development in site area categories up to 10 hectares

14.2.7. At this stage we do not have detailed evidence of land availability for renewable energy development. Identifying broad areas of opportunity gives a positive approach in line with national policy, providing flexibility for future provision of renewable energy and enabling landowners and developers to pursue sites that are the most suitable.

14.2.8. The areas of opportunity for onshore wind, solar and battery storage are shown on the online consultation and in Appendix D.

Question 41: We have outlined some areas which could be appropriate for wind turbines, ground mounted solar panels and battery energy storage. To what extent do you agree or disagree with identifying broad areas of opportunity for wind, solar and battery energy storage?

- a. Agree
- b. Partially agree
- c. Neutral
- d. Partially disagree
- e. Disagree

Please provide any further comments or reasoning

15. North of Dorchester Masterplan

15.1. Introduction

15.1.1. Dorchester is the county town and an important centre for Dorset, providing jobs and services for a wide area. It acts as a focal point for many services and activities in the locality, including shopping, education, healthcare and library services. The town has grown rapidly over the past few years, and it has more jobs than residents of working age. A lot of people commute in to Dorchester from other towns and villages across Dorset. The range of services and facilities in the town and the imbalance between jobs and homes create a significant demand for homes.

The story so far

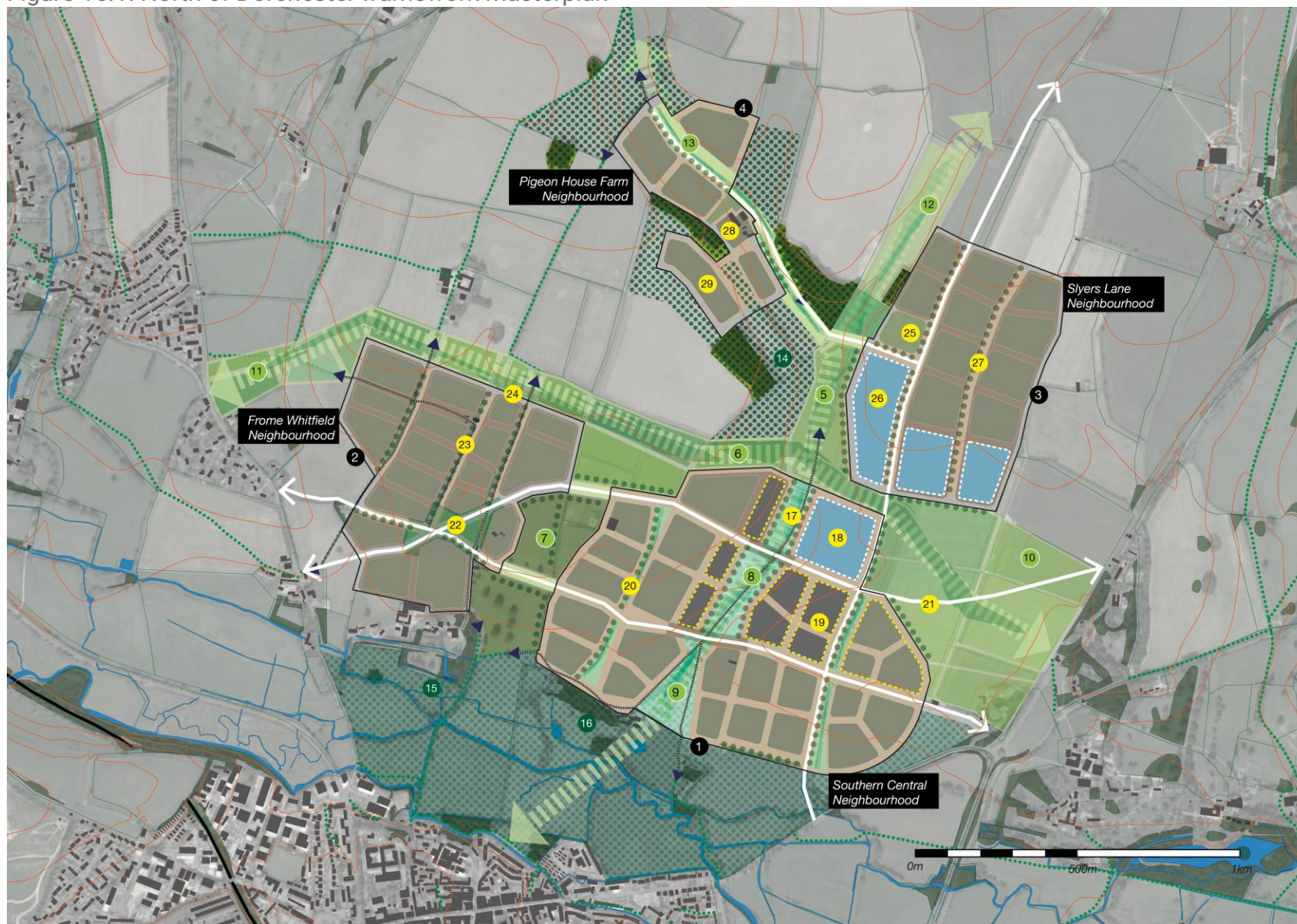
- 15.1.2. The adopted local plan identifies a number of development opportunities at the town but acknowledges the sites fall short of meeting the needs for housing and employment towards the end of the plan period (2031). The inspector for the adopted Local Plan considered it “imperative that an early review is undertaken to identify additional land” highlighting the need to consider options for growth at Dorchester.
- 15.1.3. Consultation on the ‘preferred options’ for the West Dorset, Weymouth & Portland Local Plan Review was undertaken in the summer of 2018. This included a preferred option to develop land north of Dorchester for a mixed-use urban extension.
- 15.1.4. Following the formation of Dorset Council in 2019, work on a new Dorset Local Plan began, and we identified land north of Dorchester as a proposed mixed use development site in the 2021 consultation.
- 15.1.5. The site to the north of Dorchester was successful in a bid for inclusion in the Government’s Garden Communities Programme and we have been preparing a masterplan framework that reflects the garden communities’ principles and qualities.

15.2. The draft masterplan for the North of Dorchester Garden Community

15.2.1. Further to the previous consultations, and as part of the Garden Communities Programme, we have now published a draft masterplan for the North of

Dorchester Garden Community. The masterplan document sets out an approach for the comprehensive development of the site to deliver a sustainable mixed-use extension to Dorchester. The proposed development would meet the needs of the town over the longer term, providing additional homes, employment land, school provision, a local centre, and significant areas of green space. Figure 15.1 shows the Masterplan Framework Illustrative Plan, extracted from the masterplan document.

Figure 15.1: North of Dorchester framework masterplan



Key for the North of Dorchester framework masterplan

Neighbourhoods:

- 1 Southern Central Core Neighbourhood
- 2 Frome Whitfield Neighbourhood
- 3 Slyers Lane Neighbourhood
- 4 Pigeon House Farm Neighbourhood

Green Infrastructure:

- 5 North-South central Green Corridor
- 6 East-West Green Corridor
- 7 Frome Whitfield Park Landscape, neighbourhood separation
- 8 Central Public Realm and green space
- 9 Green space transition to the Frome River corridor
- 10 Eastern restored natural landscape area, linking to Kingston Maurward Estate
- 11 E-W green corridor western link to Charminster
- 12 N-S green corridor extends north with new public route into surrounding countryside
- 13 North west branch of N-S green corridor connects with existing footpath route into upper dry valley
- 14 New woodland compliments existing isolated woodland blocks, enclosing the upper dry valley
- 15 New woodland compliments existing depleted woodland blocks, enclosing Frome Whitfield
- 16 New woodland compliments existing depleted woodland blocks along Frome valley edge

Development Form & Mix:

- 17 A Mixed Core to the Southern Central Neighbourhood
- 18 Education use within the Southern Central Neighbourhood
- 19 Varied employment space integrated within the Southern Central Neighbourhood
- 20 New green routes through development areas reflect existing landscape patterns
- 21 Preferred route for Primary Street (accesses the heart of development)
- 22 Public realm and mix of uses establish a centre to the Frome Whitfield Neighbourhood
- 23 Development form incorporates existing hedgerows and footpaths
- 24 Development has direct relationship with green corridors as key active travel routes
- 25 Public realm and mix of uses establish a centre to the Slyers Lane Neighbourhood
- 26 Education use within the Slyers Lane Neighbourhood
- 27 Development form responds to the contouring of the local topography
- 28 Existing farm cluster, public realm and mix of uses establish a hub within the Pigeon House Farm Neighbourhood
- 29 Development form responds to existing woodland features and remains enclosed within the valley topography

The vision for North of Dorchester

15.2.2. The masterplan will set out our expectations and ambitions for the site in more detail and should guide and support future decision making. It will be based on a strong vision that sets out the aspirations for the development of the site. From this vision, the following key drivers have been developed which set out how the place should respond to its context and function alongside Dorchester as a sustainable settlement:

- The Town in the Landscape
- Rich Past, Bright Future
- Dorset Living and Working
- The Landscape in the Community

Where to read the masterplan and further information

15.2.3. The draft masterplan and supporting material, including information on the vision, the key drivers, and the process so far can be found via the [Council's North of Dorchester Garden Community webpage](#).³⁸

What we are asking

15.2.4. The North of Dorchester proposal extends from the edge of the A35 in the east to fields that surround Charminster in the west. On its eastern side, the site also extends to the north toward Higher Kingston Farm. The emerging masterplan sets out a framework for the site's development, including those areas where new homes and employment land will be provided in addition to the areas needed to provide infrastructure and mitigation measures (e.g. green spaces and soft landscaping). The proposed approach to the development of the site is for the area to be developed as a series of distinct but interconnected neighbourhoods. The broad layout presented in the masterplan takes account of key planning and environmental considerations.

15.2.5. However, we have identified four matters that we think need specific further consideration through the masterplan process, and we are seeking feedback on these through the focused questions presented below.

³⁸ www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/gardencommunities

- 15.2.6. You can also submit more general comments in relation to the North of Dorchester site via the 'Housing opportunity sites' section of the consultation (see Appendix A or view the consultation online).

15.3. Matter 1: Eastern edge

- 15.3.1. We're considering how far development should extend toward the A35 and what kind of edge the town should have. Options range from keeping the area mostly undeveloped, to creating a green gateway, or allowing limited development with careful landscape design. The goal is balancing delivery, landscape quality, and character.

Question 42: Since Roman times, the centre of Dorchester has had a prominent position in the landscape. One of the threats to this identity is at the eastern edge of the potential development area (near the A35). Would you support keeping this eastern area more green and open, even if that means fewer homes, facilities and jobs?

- a. Agree
- b. Partially agree
- c. Disagree
- d. Partially disagree
- e. Neutral

Please provide any further comments or reasoning...

15.4. Matter 2: Employment locations

- 15.4.1. The site at the North of Dorchester has the potential to create a range of local employment jobs, helping to enhance and deliver a more diverse economy. Our evidence suggests that there is a need for around 8ha of 'business park' employment space (manufacturing, storage & distribution, hi-tech research & development, medical/quasi medical, traditional offices, trade counter uses of the type typically found on business parks). We would like your views on options for how employment should be distributed across the development area.
- 15.4.2. We're exploring how to deliver job spaces in a way that supports local living. This could include retaining a town-centre focused approach, introducing small

employment clusters, or a larger business park near the A35. We're also testing whether employment can be more flexibly woven through neighbourhoods.

Question 43. Supporting jobs, homes and services all in one place is an essential part of the health of a town. Do you see new workspaces that are integrated into walkable neighbourhoods and local centres as an attractive part of Dorchester in the future?

- a. Agree
- b. Partially agree
- c. Disagree
- d. Partially disagree
- e. Neutral

Please provide any further comments or reasoning...

15.5. Matter 3: Pigeon House Farm neighbourhood

The area around Pigeon House Farm is enclosed by the steeper sided north-western part of the dry valley, in the north western part of the site. We're testing how this valley area can best contribute to the masterplan – as a small neighbourhood, a visitor wildlife hub, or a mix of both. Options include a low-density hamlet, a larger valley neighbourhood, or using the area solely for landscape, recreation education and nature interpretation without any housing.

Question 44: We believe that the valley at Pigeon House Farm can play an important role in encouraging access to nature and celebrating local landscape – What type of development, if any, do you think could help support this in a sustainable way?

- i. A smaller scale of development
- ii. A larger scale of development
- iii. The use of the area as an undeveloped landscape buffer, for recreation, education and nature interpretation, without any housing development.
- iv. A mixture of the above

Please provide any further comments or reasoning...

15.6. Matter 4: Main east to west route

15.6.1. Development at North of Dorchester will include good links between the different parts of the development and to Dorchester itself. There will also be an

important east to west route to allow walking, cycling and driving through the site and connect the A37 to the A35.

- 15.6.2. We have received lots of feedback that new connections across the north of Dorchester are needed, but they should also help create welcoming, walkable, and sociable neighbourhoods. We're reviewing how the key east-west road should be designed and routed. Options include making it more central to enhance placemaking, adapting the existing route to improve public realm, or using several lower-capacity routes instead of one main road. Each option has trade-offs for travel, design and community feel.

Question 45: What are your priorities for a new east-west route?

16. Weymouth Town Centre Masterplan

16.1. Background

- 16.1.1. Weymouth has the largest town centre in the Dorset Council area. It is the main shopping area in the south of Dorset, a significant tourist and recreation destination, and is a place where a range of businesses are based including those related to the harbour. It also has many listed buildings and an attractive seafront. In the adopted Local Plan, a strategy area was defined to support regeneration opportunities across several brownfield sites.
- 16.1.2. Following on from the adoption of the Local Plan, a Town Centre Masterplan was adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document in 2015. This provided more detailed policy guidance on the design, movement, and general distribution of development within the town centre, as well as focus on five key regeneration sites.
- 16.1.3. The 2015 masterplan was a ten-year plan. Circumstances have changed over the years with several unprecedented factors playing a part in shifting the needs of Weymouth Town Centre and preventing the delivery of key sites.
- 16.1.4. In the period since the 2015 masterplan was adopted, Dorset Council has been successful in securing the award of £19.5m of Levelling Up Funding to help enable the redevelopment of sites around the town and act as a catalyst for future development.
- 16.1.5. Now more than ever, the town centre has a significant opportunity for regeneration and enhancement. This needs to be planned in a coordinated way to deliver enhanced benefits to the town.
- 16.1.6. Work has commenced on a refresh of the town centre masterplan to make it more delivery focused, and to create a framework where development can be coordinated to deliver the necessary infrastructure investment and regeneration. The refreshed masterplan will be a key part of a broader focus on Weymouth and south Dorset, helping to re-energise the local economy.
- 16.1.7. You can find out more about the town centre masterplan and associated engagement from our dedicated [Weymouth Town Centre Masterplan webpage](http://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/weymouth-town-centre-regeneration)³⁹.

³⁹ www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/weymouth-town-centre-regeneration

17. Glossary

Affordable housing: Housing for sale or rent, for those whose needs are not met by the market (including housing that provides a subsidised route to home ownership and/or is for essential local workers); and which complies with one or more of the following definitions:

- a) **Social Rent:** Meets all of the following conditions: (a) the rent is set in accordance with the Government's rent policy for Social Rent; (b) the landlord is a registered provider; and (c) it includes provisions to remain at an affordable price for future eligible households, or for the subsidy to be recycled for alternative affordable housing provision.
- b) **Other affordable housing for rent:** Meets all of the following conditions: (a) the rent is set in accordance with the Government's rent policy for Affordable Rent, or is at least 20% below local market rents (including service charges where applicable); (b) the landlord is a registered provider, except where it is included as part of a Build to Rent scheme (in which case the landlord need not be a registered provider); and (c) it includes provisions to remain at an affordable price for future eligible households, or for the subsidy to be recycled for alternative affordable housing provision. For Build to Rent schemes affordable housing for rent is expected to be the normal form of affordable housing provision (and, in this context, is known as Affordable Private Rent).
- c) **Discounted market sales housing:** Is that sold at a discount of at least 20% below local market value. Eligibility is determined with regard to local incomes and local house prices. Provisions should be in place to ensure housing remains at a discount for future eligible households.
- d) **Other affordable routes to home ownership:** Is housing provided for sale that provides a route to ownership for those who could not achieve home ownership through the market. It includes shared ownership, relevant equity loans, other low cost homes for sale (at a price equivalent to at least 20% below local market value) and rent to buy (which includes a period of intermediate rent). Where public grant funding is provided, there should be provisions for the homes to remain at an affordable price for future eligible households, or for any receipts to be recycled for alternative affordable housing provision, or refunded to Government or the relevant authority specified in the funding agreement.

Biodiversity loss: When plant or animal species decrease or completely disappear from a specific area. There is a reduction in biological diversity in a given area. The decrease can be temporary or permanent.

Biodiversity net gain (BNG): Is an approach that aims to ensure that development projects result in an overall increase in biodiversity. It requires that new developments in England deliver at least a 10% net gain in biodiversity, as mandated by the Environment Act 2021.

Brownfield land: Previously developed land which is or was occupied by a permanent structure, including the boundary around it and any associated fixed surface infrastructure.

Climate change: The long-term change of climate typically measured over decades or longer. This is different to weather, which is short-timescale variation.

Climate change adaptation: Adjustments made to natural or human systems in response to the actual or anticipated impacts of climate change, to mitigate harm or exploit beneficial opportunities.

Climate change mitigation: Action to reduce the impact of human activity on the climate system, primarily through reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL): A charge that local authorities can impose on new developments in their area. Its purpose is to help fund the infrastructure needed to support growth.

Conurbation: A region consisting of a number of large towns and other urban areas, which through population growth and physical expansion, have merged to form one continuous urban or industrially developed area.

Defined development/settlement boundary: The boundary drawn on a planning policy map that marks the edge of a town or village's built-up area. It separates the urban area from the surrounding countryside.

Dorset Clean Energy Super Cluster: A variety of clean energy initiatives including offshore wind in the English Channel, a deepwater offshore wind-hub associated with Portland Port to service the renewable sector, carbon dioxide capture and storage, hydrogen production and storage, and potentially Nuclear Small Modular Reactors.

Dorset Design Code - A set of illustrated design requirements that will provide specific, detailed parameters for the physical development of a site or area. The Dorset Design Code is currently being prepared.

Ecological emergency: The urgent need for action to address the environmental challenges caused by human actions on nature and biodiversity, by the burning of fossil fuels, which release greenhouse gases and trap heat in the atmosphere, which has caused global temperatures to rise. This has led to fewer species and less abundance of natural life.

Ecosystems: A system formed by the interaction of living organisms (plants, animals and micro-organisms) with their non-living environment (weather, earth, sun soil, climate, atmosphere).

Estuarine habitat: The downstream part of a river valley that is subject to tidal influence, extending from the limit of brackish water to the open sea.

Flexible settlements policy: A policy which would allow for development of sites up to 30 dwellings adjacent to the built-up edge of settlements that are in Tier 1, Tier 2 or Tier 3 of the settlement hierarchy, subject to certain criteria being met, with the exception of settlements in the Green Belt.

Fluvial flooding: Flooding caused by rivers and streams overflowing their banks due to excessive rainfall or snowmelt.

Freshwater habitat: Any natural or semi-natural area where water with low salt concentration (fresh water) occurs, supporting a wide range of aquatic and semi-aquatic species.

Functional areas: Four areas within Dorset Council for the purposes of the local plan – South Eastern Dorset area, Central area, Northern area and Western area.

Green Belt: A specifically designated area of land around cities and large towns where strict planning controls are in place to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open.

Greenhouse gas emissions: The release of certain gases into the Earth's atmosphere which absorb and release heat and maintain the Earth's temperature. Whilst some emissions are natural, such as water vapour, carbon dioxide, methane, nitrous oxide and ozone, some human activities increase these gases, such as burning of fossil fuels for energy and transportation.

Greenfield site: Land which has never been previously developed or built upon, typically found in rural or semi-rural areas. These sites are often used for agriculture, forestry or left in their natural state.

Green infrastructure: A network of multi-functional green and blue spaces, urban and rural, which is capable of delivering a wide range of environmental, economic, health and wellbeing benefits for nature, climate and local communities.

Grey Belt: Land in the Green Belt comprising previously developed land and/or any other land that, in either case, does not strongly contribute to any of purposes (a), (b), or (d) in paragraph 143 of the NPPF. 'Grey belt' excludes land where the application of the policies relating to the areas or assets in footnote 7 (other than Green Belt) would provide a strong reason for refusing or restricting development.

Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople: Gypsies and travellers are people with a nomadic way of life and heritage (whatever their race or origin) who travel from place to place with no fixed accommodation. Travelling showpeople are defined as members of a group organised for the purposes of holding fairs, circuses or shows who travel from place to place with no fixed accommodation.

Heritage assets: A building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because

of its heritage interest. It includes designated heritage assets and assets identified by the local planning authority (including local listing).

Heathland Infrastructure Projects (HIPs): Alternative areas for recreation to mitigate for potential harm to the Heathland habitat.

Housing Delivery Test: Measures net homes delivered in a local authority area against the homes required, using national statistics and local authority data. The Secretary of State will publish the Housing Delivery Test results for each local authority in England annually.

Main town centre uses: Retail development (including warehouse clubs and factory outlet centres); leisure, entertainment and more intensive sport and recreation uses (including cinemas, restaurants, drive-through restaurants, bars and pubs, nightclubs, casinos, health and fitness centres, indoor bowling centres and bingo halls); offices; and arts, culture and tourism development (including theatres, museums, galleries and concert halls, hotels and conference facilities).

Masterplan: A plan setting out a strong vision and aspirations for the development of a site, with key drivers of how the place should respond to its context and function. A framework including areas where new homes and employment land will be provided in addition to infrastructure and green spaces.

Meanwhile uses: Use of business premises for interim and temporary uses until a more permanent use can be delivered, in order to decrease the number of vacant premises in a town centre.

Mixed use developments: Residential housing and adjacent employment sites on the same development site.

National Landscapes - Areas legally designated as areas of outstanding natural beauty under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 and Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000.

Net zero: Achieving a balance between the greenhouse gases emitted into the atmosphere and those removed from it.

Nutrient neutrality: A means of ensuring that a development plan or project does not add to existing nutrient burdens within catchments, so there is no net increase in nutrients as a result of the plan or project.

Nutrient pollution: The presence of excessive levels of nutrients - particularly nitrogen and phosphorus - in water bodies, which disrupts natural ecosystems and harms biodiversity.

Permitted development rights: A national grant of planning permission which allows certain types of building work and changes of use to be carried out without the need to apply for full planning permission from the local planning authority.

Ramsar sites: Wetlands of international importance, designated under the 1971 Ramsar Convention.

Renewable energy: Energy for heating and cooling as well as for generating electricity. Renewable energy covers energy that occurs naturally and repeatedly in the environment – the wind, the fall of water, the movement of the oceans, the sun and also from biomass and deep geothermal heat.

Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG): An alternative greenspace which deflects recreational pressure from the heaths.

Surface water flooding: Flooding that occurs when rainfall overwhelms the drainage capacity of an area, leading to water pooling on the surface.

Self-build and custom-build housing: Housing built by an individual, a group of individuals, or persons working with or for them, to be occupied by that individual. Such housing can be either market or affordable housing.

Settlement hierarchy – Ranking of towns and villages as to their relative sustainability, based on the size of settlements, their facilities, and the travel time to the closest higher order town by public transport and by car. The rankings of towns and villages in Dorset are placed in three Tiers – Tier 1 is large built up areas, Tier 2 is towns and other main settlements, Tier 3 is larger villages.

Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs): Sites designated by Natural England under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

Special Protection Areas (SPAs): Areas classified under regulation 15 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 which have been identified as being of international importance for the breeding, feeding, wintering or the migration of rare and vulnerable species of birds.

Special Areas of Conservation (SACs): Areas defined by regulation 3 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 which have been given special protection as important conservation sites.

Standard method – identifies the minimum number of homes that a local planning authority should plan for in its area. It is a method used for calculating housing need in a given area, using a formula that incorporates a baseline of local housing stock, which is then adjusted upwards to reflect local affordability pressure to identify the minimum number of homes needed to be planned for in that area. The Government has introduced a revised formula for the standard method and authorities should use the standard method as the starting point when preparing the housing requirement in their plan, unless exceptional circumstances justify an alternative approach.

Strategic Heathland Recreation Mitigation: A co-ordinated set of measures designed to avoid and mitigate the recreational impacts of new residential development on protected heathland habitats.

Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA): A study that every Local Authority must undertake to provide an overview of the potential residential development sites within the authority boundary, that identifies land which is suitable, available, and achievable for housing development over the plan period.

Sustainability appraisal: A systematic process that assesses the environmental, social, and economic effects of a Local Plan or spatial development strategy to ensure it promotes sustainable development.

Sustainable design and construction: The integration of environmental, social, and economic sustainability principles into the design, construction, and operation of buildings and infrastructure.

Sustainable development: Meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

Sustainable economic development: Development that supports long-term economic growth while ensuring environmental protection, social equity, and the responsible use of resources—so that future generations can also meet their needs.

Sustainable settlements: A community that is economically, environmentally, and socially healthy and resilient, meeting the needs of current and future generations while minimising the environmental impact.

Sustainable travel: Any efficient, safe and accessible means of transport with overall low impact on the environment, including walking and cycling, ultra low and zero emission vehicles, car sharing and public transport.

Tenure: The legal and financial arrangements under which housing is occupied. It is a key concept used in development plans to ensure a mix of housing types that meet local needs. Common tenure types include:

1. Owner-occupied – Homes owned outright or with a mortgage.
2. Private rented – Housing rented from private landlords.
3. Social rented – Typically provided by local authorities or housing associations, with rents set according to national policy.
4. Affordable rented – Rents are at least 20% below local market rates, often part of affordable housing provision.
5. Shared ownership – A part-buy, part-rent model aimed at helping people onto the property ladder.
6. Build to Rent – Purpose-built housing developments that are entirely for rent, often professionally managed.

Windfall development/sites: Sites not specifically identified in the development plan.



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