

Dorset CAN
Dorset Climate Action Network
Press Release

For immediate release, 17 March 2021

Green groups call on Dorset Council to re-think the Local Plan

Twenty environmental and community organisations with a combined membership of 3,500 from across Dorset have called on Dorset Council to think again about its draft Local Plan, which has just closed for public comments.

They are united in their opposition to the Plan's proposal to build over 39,000 new houses and other development within the next 17 years. They believe the Plan would gravely damage the landscape and wildlife of the county and seriously impede the Council's own efforts to cut carbon emissions and mitigate climate change.

Professor Michael Dower, of Dorset Climate Action Network which has coordinated the groups' response, said: "The Council has made a heavy rod for all our backs by choosing - quite unnecessarily - a method which exaggerates the number of new houses and workspaces that are needed. Before we are all dragged by this false start into a deeply damaging scale of new development, we plead with the Council to think again."

The Council's estimate of need for over 39,000 new houses is based on a standard method of assessment used by the Government, plus a deliberate policy of over-supply adopted by the Council.

But Dorset CAN says that Government rules, set out in the National Planning Policy Framework, allow local authorities to adopt an alternative method if they face 'exceptional circumstances'. It urges the Council to use the unique richness of the county's landscape, wildlife, historic and coastal heritage to justify a different approach, focused truly on local need for housing and workspace.

This would cut the number of new houses to between 20,000 and 25,000, while still providing for the affordable homes that are greatly needed in many parts of the county. In this way, the Plan could meet what is truly needed without encroaching on the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty or on the Green Belt west of Poole. The large housing estates in green fields, which are attracting strong public opposition, would not be needed. And the Council's own aim to cut carbon emissions and reverse the loss of wildlife would become far easier to achieve.

Prof Dower added: "The uniquely rich heritage of Dorset enhances all our lives. It underpins the County's economy. It alone is ample justification for taking up the Government's offer to use a different model for the Local Plan. In this way, we can limit the new development to what we truly need, with minimal damage to the heritage".

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Notes to Editors

1.Attached is the response to the draft Local Plan submitted by Dorset Climate Action Network and supported by 20 organisations with a combined membership of 3,500 people (see list at end of the Response)

The response to the Dorset CAN Dorset Local Plan is online [here](#).

The short link is: <http://bit.ly/DcanLocal>

2.Professor Michael Dower, member of the core team of Dorset Climate Action Network, can be contacted at 01308 863515, email mdower6@btinternet.com