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Submitted to Dorset Council Local Plan options consultation 2025

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Your details

What is your name?

Name:

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What is your email address?

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I give consent for my name and email address to be added to the mailing list for the Dorset Council Local Plan:

Yes

What type of responder are you? (Please select the most applicable responder type)

Local organisation

What is your organisation? (if applicable)

Organisation:

Dorset Climate Action Network

What are your client's details? (if applicable)

Client's details:

What is your post code?

Post code:

DT20NX

Demographic questions

Please select your age group

Prefer not to say

What is your sex?

Prefer not to say

The Equality Act 2010 describes a person as disabled if they have a longstanding physical or mental condition that has lasted or is likely to last 12 months; and this condition has a substantial adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. People with some conditions (cancer, multiple sclerosis and HIV/AIDS for example) are considered to be disabled from the point that they are diagnosed. Do you consider yourself to be disabled as set out in the Equality Act 2010?

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If you stated on the previous question that you consider yourself to have a disability. Please state the type of disability which applies to you.

If you prefer to use another term, please write in here::

What is your ethnic group?

Prefer not to say

If other, please specify here::

What is your religion or belief?

Prefer not to say

Other religion or belief::

What is your sexual orientation?

Prefer not to say

If other, please specify::

What would you like to view and comment on?

Which part of the consultation would you like to read and comment on?

Opportunity sites and areas for housing, employment, Gypsies and Travellers, and renewable energy

Contents - Information on strategy and topics

Which strategy and topic section would you like to view and comment on?

1. Introduction (further context for the consultation, there are no questions on this page)

Contents - Opportunity sites and areas for housing, employment, Gypsies and Travellers, and renewable energy

Which opportunity sites/areas would you like to view and comment on?

Housing opportunity sites

Section 1. Introduction

1.1. Introduction

1.2. How to comment

1.3. Background to the Local Plan

1.4. The purpose of this document

1.5. Climate change and the natural environment

1.6. The Dorset Design Code

Where would you like to go now?

Continue to the next section (2. Vision and Strategic Priorities)

Section 2. Vision and Strategic Priorities

2.1. The Local Plan Vision

The Vision for Dorset

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

Add your comments here::

DCAN welcomes the vision that “Dorset will be a fairer, more prosperous and more sustainable place for current and future generations.” However, the vision could be more ambitious to address the joint threats of the climate and ecological crises. Dorset Climate Action Network has a vision of a zero carbon, wild green, locally fed, community centred and sparkling clean Dorset which is widely shared. We would warmly welcome seeing this delivered by the targets in the Local Plan. We need to address the housing crisis in Dorset – in particular the lack of truly affordable housing and social rental housing -and at the same time protect our environment and quality of life for all.

The Local plan is based on the “Standard Method” for housing needs which gives rise to a target number of houses which is over twice the previous target and nearly three times what has historically been delivered in Dorset. Housing at this excessive scale is “unreasonable and undeliverable” and capable of doing great harm to the countryside, the environment, our carbon footprint and the historic setting of our county – indeed much of what we all love about Dorset.

2.2. Strategic Priorities

Strategic priority: Provide affordable and high-quality homes

Strategic priority: Grow our economy

Strategic priority: Communities for all

Strategic priority: Responding to the climate and nature emergency

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

Add your comments here::

DCAN broadly agrees with the four strategic priorities: Provide affordable and high-quality homes, grow our economy, communities for all and responding to the climate and nature emergencies. Underlying all priorities is the absolute need for environmental sustainability.

Housing. Tackling the housing crisis needs a plan to address the county's housing register (7411 people and growing at 120 per week). This emphasises the shortage of truly affordable and social rental housing which cannot be satisfactorily addressed by commercial property developers. Truly affordable means no more than three times the annual income for a two-person household and rents no more than 35% of average local net household income. All new homes should be net zero in terms of operational carbon by 2027, following recognised standards such as LETI and RIBA 2030 with an ambition for new homes to be net zero in terms of their embodied carbon. Otherwise, Dorset risks locking in decades of high-carbon housing. Retrofitting existing homes should also be identified as a strategic priority.

Economic Growth. The 'business-as-usual' industrial/consumerist model of economic growth of the last 200 years is no longer acceptable. Growth must have sustainability as its core principle, so that if economic activity of whatever sort reduces and degrades the environment and damages the climate then it must be deemed unacceptable and not supported. This principle should apply as much to new technologies as to old technologies such as fossil fuel extraction.

Climate & Nature Emergency. Responding to climate change involves adaptation as well as mitigation by ensuring resilience to risks such as flooding, water usage and overheating. This will need to be set using a strong design code that it is hoped Dorset Council is now in the process of developing. Finally, we need to do more to protect our Natural Capital which means protection and restoration of Dorset's outstanding landscapes, biodiversity, and agricultural land. Our key target is to satisfy the primary objective of the Dorset Local Nature Recovery Strategy to protect and conserve a minimum of 30% of land and sea for biodiversity by 2030. This will be essential to reverse species decline, restore habitats, and ensure a more resilient natural world by protecting key areas for nature. The strategic priorities in the Local Plan need to support this key objective.

Where would you like to go now?

Continue to the next section (3. The strategy for sustainable development)

Section 3. The strategy for sustainable development

3.1. Introduction

3.2. The Strategy for Dorset

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?

Suggest any additional settlements and add further comments here::

The settlement hierarchy is based purely on size and not on location. Many of the settlements in Eastern Dorset are close to Dorset's internationally important Heathlands. Population growth in these settlements would put unacceptable pressure on these sensitive valuable natural habitats. The settlement hierarchy suggests that development should be focussed primarily on Tier 1 settlements, with the smaller amounts allocated to Tier 2 and 3 settlements. However, Opportunity Sites Annexe indicates that a significant number of large development sites are in fact proposed for Tier 3 settlements (e.g. Motcombe and Broadmayne) that tend to be less sustainable and have a smaller capacity to absorb large numbers of new houses. In addition, many of these sites have very poor access to facilities, services, transport infrastructure and employment opportunities. The result is likely to be stranded settlements in unsustainable locations.

3.3. South Eastern Dorset area

Question 4: Do you have any comments on the proposed strategy for the South Eastern area?

Add your comments here::

DCAN strongly opposes the characterisation of the SE area as a commuter and dormitory area for the BCP conurbation. We also think that Blandford would have been better placed in the northern area and Purbeck might have been better characterised as a separate area. In addition to the internationally recognised heathlands, this area contains highly sensitive greenbelt land that provides essential ecological corridors and prevents urban sprawl. DCAN strongly opposes any reduction of the greenbelt area and any reclassification to grey belt land. If the greenbelt land is not of high enough environmental quality it should be improved and not built on.

3.4. Central Dorset area

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

Add your comments here::

DCAN endorses the huge economic and emissions reduction potential of the Clean Energy Supercluster. We think this is an excellent and rare opportunity for Dorset to build its economic potential while addressing its carbon footprint in a truly positive way. We therefore support the offshore windfarm and potential for hydrogen storage (so long as the hydrogen comes from electrolysis). Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS) is more controversial but may have its place subject to the sustainability test. Nuclear energy still has a long way to go to prove that it is economically competitive with renewable energy sources backed up with hydrogen turbines or gas turbines with CCS. DCAN also supports the Innovation Centre at Winfrith/Wool. Servicing this clean energy super cluster will involve further developments in the area however, DCAN suggests these should be achieved by selective developments along routes with strong rail connections rather than through increased road building. This would favour locations like Crossways and Upwey rather than North Dorchester which is stranded on the wrong side of the river meadows.

3.5. Northern Dorset area

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

Add your comments here::

North Dorset has seen high levels of housing built in recent years, resulting in harm to the distinctive landscape and countryside, as well as increasing traffic congestion and worsening infrastructure provision. No further developments should be permitted without addressing these structural issues. Future housing developments could be concentrated along the Exeter-Waterloo rail corridor via Sherborne and Gillingham. One location with potential that has not been recognised in the Local plan is the area around Yeovil Junction station. The area is largely undeveloped but has excellent rail transport links to Yeovil, Exeter, Dorchester, Salisbury and London. The area to the North lies in Somerset but the area to the South is in Dorset. A joined development between the two counties should be considered.

A particularly chronic issue exists in Shaftesbury where poor quality housing development far in excess of earlier targets has been built up to the Wiltshire boundary and in part of the Cranborne Chase National Landscape. This has resulted in a situation where not only the important historic character and natural biodiversity of the town has been damaged but also in which Shaftesbury is the only town in Dorset where the combined A30/A350 trunk road now goes through the geographic centre of the town along Christy's Lane, effectively dividing it into East and West Shaftesbury - resulting in increasing traffic congestion with health and safety as well as worsening social issues. The long-planned north-south bypass linking A350 to A30 to the east of the town is essential to overcome this increasing danger for the resident population and threat to social cohesion. To allow this, no further development should take place on the bypass reserved corridor and the housing target for Shaftesbury reduced from 735 to a maximum of 400.

3.6. Western Dorset area

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

Add your comments here::

Large development sites are proposed for the Western Area situated either in, or adjacent to the National Landscape. The greatest number are proposed for Bridport with approximately 136 ha of development sites surrounding the town, all on green field sites in the DNL. Delivering large scale development as proposed in this extremely sensitive area would irreversibly damage its intrinsic natural beauty and character, undermine its biodiversity value, and have a huge environmental impact, contrary to the principles of the Dorset Local Nature Recovery Strategy. It would also risk putting off tourists and increasing traffic congestion through the town, the coast and along the A35.

Lyme Regis is identified as a "main centre for service provision" but this is wrong. The town has lost so many of its services and is very poorly served by public transport promoting inequality. Furthermore, the lack of suitable and affordable housing for people of working age causes a shortage of workers for businesses and organisations, including teachers, dentists and other professionals; and falling school rolls.

The lack of affordable family housing and rental properties risks turning our towns and villages into a services desert with an increasingly ageing, immobile, socially isolated, unhealthy population. Holiday homes block off a significant proportion of the available housing stock from local residents. Instead, purchases could be restricted to primary residences only. Most of the options in this plan seem to be about building large numbers of new houses on green fields when some of the solution lies within the existing housing stock.

In addition, older people are unable to downsize because of a shortage of one/two bed properties. These could be starter homes or "forever homes" if properly designed to people's changing needs and are fully accessible for mobility challenges from the start. There could also be incentives provided to older people in large houses to downsize.

Affordability is a huge issue in take up of vacant properties and there are vacant properties that aren't selling. We need to provide the right homes at the right price (either to rent or buy). This would mean increasing provision of 1 and 2 bed properties and making it easier for larger properties to be broken down into multi occupancy flats.

There are huge opportunities in West Dorset if our tourism and other, better-paid employment was more environmentally sustainable, public transport was better connected, our community better supported and our services more appropriate for residents and visitors. Bridport is a Sustainable Food Town and there are welcome initiatives with nature-based solutions for flood mitigation and more environmentally sustainable land management. There's an ecosystem of regenerative and organic farming as the land holdings are more fragmented which could showcase best practice. The councils should work together with the landowners, farmers and business.

3.7. Infrastructure delivery

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

Suggest any infrastructure that needs to be delivered in any of the areas:

Current infrastructure is already highly stretched in the county and has not been made any better after years of underinvestment. Roads, public transport, active travel routes, access to doctors, dentists and medical care, schools, sewerage, power and many more public facilities already struggle to cope with today's residents and the thousands of visitors who visit our county every year. It is clear that a model in which new infrastructure is solely provided by commercial housing developers and builders is wholly inadequate. It is also important to note that, where the existing infrastructure is not in

place to support future levels of proposed development that this is established prior to the construction of new homes. Far too often the right level of infrastructure is delivered retrospectively, if at all, leaving residents struggling to access public transport, school places, and healthcare services. A key element in housing development in other countries is that service roads and landscaping, including tree planting, are completed and approved before house building starts. It is understood that this model is not followed in Britain for the unacceptable reason that volume developers do not like it. What suits private housing developers in the UK should not be allowed to dictate what is best practice in many other countries. The model should be infrastructure and landscape first, buildings second and this should become a mandatory planning condition for all development.

Where would you like to go now?

Continue to the next section (4. Housing Delivery Strategy)

Section 4. Housing Delivery Strategy

4.1. Introduction

4.2. Local Housing Need and Housing Delivery

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 that could help to meet housing needs?

Suggest any other measures here::

First, we object that the Local plan sets out to address housing needs. In fact, it sets out to address government allocated housing targets. The two are completely different and should not be confused in this document. Local needs can be addressed fairly readily with realistic and deliverable solutions. The government targets cannot be satisfied without widespread damage to Dorset and is in contravention of several important Dorset policy documents including the Natural Environment, Climate and Ecology Strategy (NECES) and our Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS).

Second, we support Dorset Council's decision to commission, jointly with BCP, an up-to-date assessment of Dorset's housing need. We agree with the government that Local Plans should be deliverable over the plan period, based on proportionate evidence, and consistent with national policy. We believe this new assessment will provide evidence to show that the government's housing targets are inconsistent with Dorset's real housing needs.

We believe there should be a much greater effort to build on brownfield sites before greenfield ones are selected; and especially before greenbelt land is used which should be by exception only. Brownfield sites include reuse of car parks in towns and gentle densification without additional parking spaces for selected locations.

We would like to see legislation that allows planning permission to be rescinded if developments are not built and we would like to see a strengthening of compulsory purchase powers to allow councils to allocate land at agricultural rates for particular purposes such as truly affordable, social rental, shared housing and self-build housing especially if part of Community Land Trusts.

4.3. Housing supply

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?

Disagree

Add other suggestions here::

DCAN sees little merit in introducing a stepped approach towards meeting the county's housing targets because the housing delivery targets are simply unrealistic. The average build rate required by government's Standard Method is 3246 houses per year which is over twice the average build rate in the last 5 years. A stepped approach reduces the burden in the early years but increases them in the latter years. The average build rate is unrealistic so it is even less likely that the housing build rate in the latter years could be achieved.

We understand that these housing targets have been handed down to Dorset and they feel largely unachievable. Housing targets should be based on local needs, not imposed from above. Local communities should have a say in the number, type and style of housing needed to sustain their communities. Neighbourhood Plans can assist with this process and Dorset Council could give more encouragement and support to communities seeking to prepare one.

4.4. Meeting housing needs of specific groups

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

Only around those towns and villages listed in the proposed settlement hierarchy

Where would you like to go now?

Continue to the next section (5. Flexible settlements policy)

Section 5. Flexible settlements policy

5.1. Introduction

5.2. Proposed approach – Flexible settlements policy

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?

Partially disagree

Add any further comments or reasoning:

DCAN is highly supportive of affordable and social rental housing, self build and shared housing especially on the edge of villages where it is needed to support the local community. The rural exception policy helps but in many areas it has not always been sufficient to stimulate enough affordable and social housing. We can see that allowing some commercial developments outside the settlements boundary may help to provide these homes especially if built by small local builders. However, introducing a flexible settlements policy may not be the right solution and risks encouraging unsustainable, speculative development in rural areas. Such developments often damage communities which risk losing their sense of identity, and undermining both Dorset's countryside and its climate commitments. If a flexible Settlement boundary is introduced it must be done with water-tight conditions and safeguards including the council's suggestions that only developments up to 30 houses in any one development would be built, and that communities with up-to-date Neighbourhood Plans which provide for such development would be excluded. However, with a looming failure in the five-year housing supply target, it is unclear whether Dorset Council will be able to have any effective control over speculative development either inside or outside settlement boundaries. Settlement boundaries have for years enabled communities to prevent development sprawl in the countryside, and we would prefer to see these boundaries maintained.

5.3. The scale of development

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?

There should be less homes

Add any further comments or reasoning:

DCAN would prefer minimal development sites outside of settlement boundaries except in exceptional circumstances for affordable and social rental houses and which are supported by a Community Land Trust and built by a local builder.

5.4. Number of sites at each settlement

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

No

Add any further comments or reasoning:

If the policy is introduced there should be a restriction on the number of sites allowed around each settlement and planning consent should not be granted until the previously consented site has been built out. Multiple sites adjacent to a settlement could easily result in disproportionate expansion of the settlement causing unacceptable harm to the existing community.

5.5. Settlements where the flexible settlements policy would apply

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?

Tell us what you think here::

These should be taken on a case-by-case basis.

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

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'?

Add your comments here::

See above

5.7. Green Belt

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

Tell us what you think here::

DCAN agrees with the council that the flexible settlements policy should not be applied to settlements in the Green Belt.

5.8. Approach to countryside development and urban intensification

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?

Add your comments here::

It is essential that any development in the countryside must be sensitive in their scale and purpose to the distinctive character of their surroundings, reflecting the topography, geology and historic patterns of land use and settlement. Policies should support the re-use of agricultural buildings, particularly where it facilitates the growth of the holding's agricultural/horticultural business. The development of community renewable energy projects should also be supported.

The Council does not mention whether it intends to retain the Rural Exceptions policy but DCAN would like to see this policy retained, as it facilitates the delivery of community-led affordable housing,

5.9. Neighbourhood plans and the flexible settlements policy

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?

Tell us what you think here::

DCAN agrees with this if the policy is adopted

5.10. Flexible settlements policy and habitat sites

Where would you like to go now?

Continue to the next section (6. Employment Strategy)

Section 6. Employment Strategy

6.1. Introduction

6.2. Employment Strategy

6.3. Employment allocations

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?

Add your comments here::

DCAN notes that Dorset struggles to attract large businesses to Dorset because of the lack of a good transport infrastructure. DCAN also notes that high streets contain many empty sites that are being backfilled with residential properties. Attracting quality businesses to Dorset is a serious concern. We support the ambition of the Clean Energy Super Cluster but many of these businesses will not require a large number of primary employees and many of these will be specialist skilled workers coming from outside the county. Therefore, we will be dependent for growth on secondary employers. The siting of these on the best transport routes will be critical which means that allocating employment space to all large developments irrespective of their location is risky. We strongly urge that new employers and businesses are signed up before major developments are built otherwise they may be unable to attract people of working age.

The example of Shaftesbury is salutary where a developer [Persimmon] was allowed to build houses on land designated for employment use on the false grounds that no commercial use could be identified.

Any new large-scale housing development should be linked to full-time all year round employment opportunities being increased – or we will just be adding pressure onto our roads and environment as we build dormitory settlements around the edge of towns. The assumption in the Local Plan is that all the employment in Lyme Regis, for example, is linked to tourism but we also have opportunities we can develop here in other areas. For example, educational employment and skills training eg the Boat Building Academy, marine services, the fishing school, geology (the Jurassic Coast, fossils, women in science) and cultural heritage (especially literature and the relationship with the sea). Affordable co-working spaces within the existing settlement would provide more opportunities for remote working and local start-ups/small businesses.

6.4. Employment development away from allocated sites

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 have any comments on this approach?

Add your comments here::

Some land set aside for employment opportunities may be required outside settlement boundaries – for example business parks. These should be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. Evaluation of transport infrastructure needs should be paramount otherwise these will just result in further vehicle traffic on the road network.

6.5. Mixed use development

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 quarter of a hectare of employment space for every 100 homes. How much do you agree or disagree with this approach?

Agree

Please provide any further comments or reasoning here::

The answer to this question depends on the type of business with larger, more industrial business located on the edge of towns while quieter, office-based businesses are better integrated into the community. In general, we agree that employment sites should be mixed with residential developments to ensure balanced communities are created where employment opportunities exist close to where people live.

6.6. Protecting employment sites

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?

Add your views here::

As towns grow and the economic climate changes, so their needs change. Hard and fast rules for the location of business or residential areas are probably unhelpful. More control should be given to town councils to decide what is best for their communities and this should be backed up by professional and strategic master planning.

b) What criteria should we consider when defining 'key' and 'non-key' employment sites?

If you selected 'other', please provide further details here::

All of the above.

Where would you like to go now?

Continue to the next section (7. Town Centre Development)

Section 7. Town centre development

7.1. Town centres

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

Add your thoughts here::

Our market towns all have historic high streets. It is vital that these are maintained and improved. All such towns should be encouraged to have design codes which will provide very strong material considerations in any planning decisions. At the same time, we support the development of brownfield sites in town centres which are particularly suited to social housing as they are close to facilities, services, shops and transport infrastructure. This will involve a gentle densification of residential sites as car parks are gradually removed and relocated to the edge of towns.

We support the ideas in the Local Plan and Economic Development Plans for having strategic and professional masterplans for all Market Towns. These should be locally generated, with support from Dorset Council and not imposed on them from County Hall. When out-of-town planning decisions are taken more consideration should be given to impact on the Town Centre.

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

Other (please provide further details in the box below)

If you selected 'other' please provide further details here::

All of the Above. Balanced town centres require all the above to be available as close as possible to residential area. As stated in Q25, we would like to see the development of unused retail space for residential developments but without encouraging private car usage. This will help re-vitalise town centres and reduce crime levels while supporting public transport and shared car schemes. We are also happy for gentle densification of town centres as car parks are gradually removed and relocated outside town centres.

7.2. Managing town centre development

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?

Neutral

Please provide any further comments or reasoning here:

Town centres can be badly impacted by out-of-town developments. However, people also need to have access to supermarkets, DIY stores and other large retail outlets. Decisions need to be taken locally on a case-by-case basis following professional advice and strategic master planning. What is key is that the transport impacts are properly taken into account to minimise overall vehicle movements.

Question 27: Should the threshold also apply to leisure uses that are net 280 square metres?

Not Answered

7.3. Change of use

7.4. Promoting the vitality and viability of town centres

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 or disagree with the introduction of a meanwhile uses policy?

Agree

Please provide any further comments or reasoning here::

Street markets and use of vacant premises for 'pop up' businesses can stop the area looking neglected and encourage visitors. Such uses should be encouraged. We suggest using the expression as 'pop ups' rather than 'Meanwhile use' which is more commonly understood.

Where would you like to go now?

Continue to the next section (8. Brownfield Land)

Section 8. Brownfield Land

8.1. Introduction

8.2. Brownfield land register

8.3. Brownfield land delivery

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

Add your thoughts here::

DCAN strongly supports an urban brownfield-first approach to meeting housing and employment needs. Prioritising previously developed land is essential to protect Dorset's countryside, AONBs, Green Belt, and high-quality farmland while revitalising underused sites in towns and larger villages. The suggested 2500 homes on brownfield sites appears to be a significant underestimate of the brownfield sites potential in Dorset. For example, there are many Dorset County owned car parks and other sites that are ripe for brownfield development.

Where would you like to go now?

Continue to the next section (9. Green Belt Review)

Section 9. Green Belt review

9.1. Introduction

9.2. Our approach to Green Belt release

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

Disagree

Please provide any further comments or reasoning here::

DCAN strongly disagrees with reducing the amount of greenbelt land or reclassifying it as grey belt land. Changes to the green belt should be in exceptional circumstances only. Where greenbelt land is degraded it should be renewed but built on. We fundamentally disagree that this policy is in the best interests of Dorset.

Retaining the integrity of the Southeast Dorset Green Belt, which surrounds Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole is vital for preventing the continuing sprawl of the conurbation and for ensuring that historic towns and villages retain their setting and special character. Of equal importance is that the greenbelt acts as an ecological corridor around towns and villages that protects and supports wildlife while providing natural capital, farmland, and space for biodiversity recovery. This is in keeping with best urban design planning practice of recent years as exemplified by Natural England's 'Creating Nature Neighbourhoods, Town and Cities' programme (<https://naturalengland.blog.gov.uk/2025/07/18/nature-towns-and-cities-programme-transforming-urban-landscapes-for-people-and-planet/>) and the

'Green Wheel' concept of wildlife corridors ('spokes') into urban centres from surrounding countryside.

In addition, the Southeast Dorset Green Belt is unique in that it includes internationally important heathlands. Increasing the population sizes in the Green Belt would put additional pressure on this sensitive habitat, which mitigation measures (Heathland Infrastructure Projects /SANGs) do not fully remove.

Where would you like to go now?

Continue to the next section (10. Self-build and custom build housing)

Section 10. Self-build and custom-build housing

10.1. Introduction

10.2. Self-build register

10.3. Self-build plot delivery

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?

No impact

Please add any further comments or reasoning here::

DCAN supports self-build for local people as a reason for development as an exception site, and be linked for example, with a Community Land Trust proposal.

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

Add your thoughts here::

All sites could include a fixed allocation of land set aside for self-build and Community Land Trust use, thus enabling local people to build or rent on that development.

Where would you like to go now?

Continue to the next section (11. Neighbourhood Plans)

Section 11. Neighbourhood Plans

11.1. Introduction

11.2. Strategic priorities and strategic policies

11.3. Housing requirement figures for neighbourhood plans

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?

Disagree

Please provide any further comments or reasoning here::

Suggesting that local Neighbourhood Plans should be restricted by pre-agreed targets and conditions is undemocratic and unacceptable. Neighbourhood Plans take a long while to develop and represent the views of the local population. They are so much more than housing plans albeit they do have to fit with the Local Plan's strategic remit. Some of the proposed site allocations completely ignore existing Neighbourhood Plans that undermines them and is bad for democracy. They should not be overruled just to satisfy unreasonable government targets.

11.4. Flexible Settlements Policy

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?

No

Please provide any further comments or reasoning here::

Any development proposed outside the settlement boundaries can be agreed under an exceptions policy.

Where would you like to go now?

Continue to the next section (12. Sites for Gypsies, Travellers, and Travelling Showpeople)

Section 12. Sites for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople

12.1. Introduction

12.2. Need for Traveller pitches and plots

12.3. Strategy for meeting Traveller needs

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 needs for Traveller sites?

Add your comments here:

DCAN agrees with the objectives in the Local plan for Travellers' sites. They should follow the same rules of sustainability and impact on landscape and the environment as any other development sites. That being said, consideration needs to be taken into account of the different cultural sensitivities of this group of people.

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?

Let us know any issues here::

In an ideal world, Traveller pitches could be located alongside homes for the settled community. However, given the cultural differences, it seems unlikely that this will be a success for either community. Travellers, like gypsy communities from whom they are a distinct discrete group, generally do not like living near or mixing with people from a settled community who do not share their culture or way of life. Certainly, it is essential that any proposed sites are located in consultation with both communities.

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

No - it should be lower

Please provide any further comments or reasoning here::

DCAN questions whether it would be a good idea to mix traveller sites with settled communities.

12.4. Traveller opportunity sites for consultation

12.5. Criteria based policy for 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?

Let us know your thoughts here::

DCAN supports the inclusion of a criteria policy that enables proper assessment of Travellers' sites, including their impact on the environment and carbon emissions.

Where would you like to go now?

Continue to the next section (13. Strategic Heathland Recreation Mitigation)

Section 13. Strategic Heathland Recreation Mitigation

13.1. Background

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?

Yes

Please provide any further comments or reasoning here::

Dorset heaths are internationally important habitats that must receive maximum environmental protection. The Local Plan 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. At the same time, we would like to see an expansion of the heathland areas consistent with the aims of the Local Nature Recovery Targets to strengthen the current Heathland areas and prevent further fragmentation. DCAN does not believe that current mitigation strategies (e.g. SANGs) are wholly successful and that further large-scale development of land within 5km of existing heathlands will be detrimental over the long term.

13.2. The strategic need for heathland mitigation

13.3. Shapwick/Kingston Lacy/Stour Valley Park

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?

Neutral

Please provide any further comments or reasoning here::

DCAN does not know enough about Shapwick Village to comment on the proposals. However, we usually support the National Trust to find a reasonable balance between rising visitor numbers and their environmental responsibilities.

Where would you like to go now?

Continue to the next section (14. Wind, solar, and battery storage)

Section 14. Onshore Wind, Solar, and Battery Energy Storage

14.1. Introduction

14.2. Identifying suitable areas

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

Neutral

Please provide any further comments or reasoning here::

DCAN strongly supports the advancement of renewable energy in this country. Locally we support rooftop solar over large solar farms, and we support both onshore and offshore wind. We are strongly in favour of community energy projects over fully commercial projects. We also strongly believe in the local generation of renewable energy for local use to prevent the need for largescale transportation of energy across the country.

We believe that a fair compromise needs to be made between landscape and visual considerations and the benefits of renewable energy. In general, we believe that constraints on renewable energy are too restrictive given the need for immediate action on the climate (and nature) crises. So, we generally support rooftop solar in conservation sites and on listed buildings even where they are clearly visible. We are also more supportive than other organisations of large or even very large wind turbines in areas close to or even in National Landscape areas. We are not asking for wholesale changes to the skyline but areas such as the Camel Estuary in Cornwall have shown that wind turbines and National Landscapes can coexist without unnecessarily detracting from the beauty and tranquillity of the area. So, sites such as Rampisham Down north of Bridport and Slyers Land north of Dorchester should be viable onshore wind sites even if there is a visual impact.

We support the council's drive to identify possible sites for renewable energy. However, many assumptions have gone into producing these maps which could be challenged and so we take the actual maps as an indication not as a definite blocker to locating renewable energy. Instead, it is important that every proposed site is given fair and unbiased consideration at the planning permission stage.

We note that the contractor's renewable energy report has now been released. However, the accompanying landscape sensitivity report has still not been made publicly available.

Where would you like to go now?

Continue to the next section (15. North of Dorchester masterplan)

Section 15. North of Dorchester Masterplan

15.1. Introduction

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

15.3. Matter 1: Eastern edge

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?

Agree

Please provide any further comments or reasoning...:

The greener the edge the more it blends into the existing landscape and makes more space for nature.

15.4. Matter 2: Employment locations

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?

Agree

Please provide any further comments or reasoning...:

Better that new workspaces for offices and small businesses are integrated into the communities. This is not a good site for larger industries or storage/distribution companies because of the lack of rail and poor road connectivity.

15.5. Matter 3: Pigeon House Farm neighbourhood

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?

iii. The use of the area as an undeveloped landscape buffer, for recreation, education and nature interpretation, without any housing development.

Please provide any further comments or reasoning...:

The use of the area as an undeveloped landscape buffer for recreation, education and nature interpretation without any housing development. Any housing development would lead to overdevelopment of this rural area with steep slopes. A generous buffer to the North is required to prevent skyline development and provide a green “wheel” around the site.

15.6. Matter 4: Main east to west route

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

Let us know your priorities here:

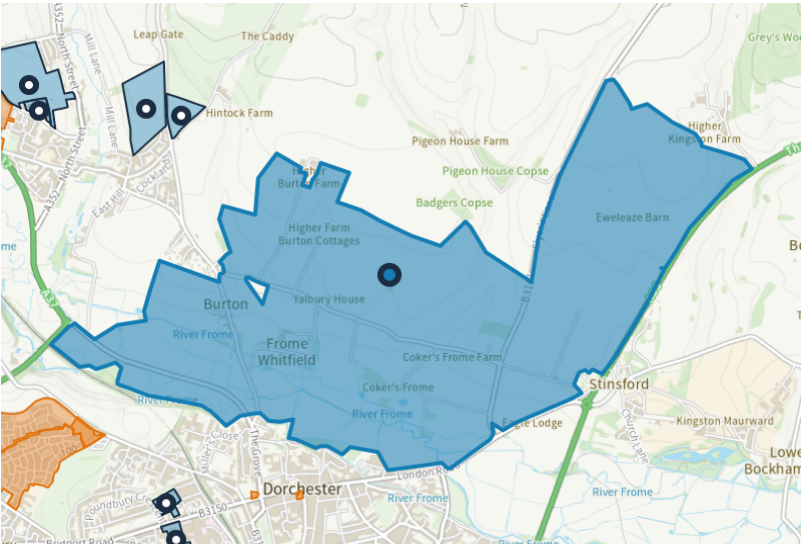
Any East-West route would end up as a rat run attracting through traffic in the centre of the garden community blighting it with heavy traffic and undermining its credentials. Instead, the development should be planned with active travel and public transport at its heart – consistent with the vision in Dorset’s Local Transport Plan

Where would you like to go now?

Continue to view and comment on another section of the consultation

Housing opportunity sites

Select a proposed housing site option to see further details and to give your comments



Select a site you wish to comment on:

Please provide further details on these considerations, and how they might be addressed:

LA/STLB/006: North of Dorchester

Do you have any comments on how the development North of Dorchester could take place?

Add your comments here:

The North Dorchester Development has been proposed for several decades and remains a controversial site. The site is separated from Dorchester by a wide water meadow which acts as a substantial barrier. Indeed, in many ways, the North Dorchester development is really an East Charminster development and should be treated as such. A report in 2018 by Halcrow for West Dorset Council identified several key constraints including the limited capacity road networks, the inadequacy of electrical distribution, limited water supply and sewage treatment and limitations posed by the sensitive built and natural environment. No new public information has been released countering these concerns, and the viability of the site remains a major concern. There are current two different masterplans for the site. One generated by building developers, Grainger, on behalf of some of the landowners and one by Hyas for Dorset Council. These two plans are substantially different with the Hyas plan being more landscape-led. Together they could represent more than 4000 houses (i.e. more than the headline allocation).

All local organisations are against the development including Dorchester Town Council, Stinsford and Charminster Parish Councils, STAND, Hardy Society, Dorchester Civic Society and the Dorchester Transport Action Group. This is because there is very little in this development which will be beneficial for the rest of Dorchester. The arguments centre around providing much needed housing and growth potential for Dorchester. However, there are better ways to achieve this with brownfield developments and smaller greenfield sites and in more sustainable locations. The development appears to be driven by the need to meet excessive government targets rather than satisfying local need.

Perhaps the worst aspect of the development is the travel infrastructure. There are no main roads, train lines or bus services to the site; and existing active travel routes are very poor. To make the site viable, the developers have proposed a car-led development which includes a single-carriageway link road between the A35 and A37. This road would bring heavy traffic through the development blighting the neighbourhood and undermining its status as a "Garden Development". In addition, 4000 new homes would attract a large number of new cars which would quickly overwhelm new infrastructure and impact the surrounding road network which is already full to capacity. Furthermore, the cost of the new link road, along with two major new junctions and a section of road across the water meadows is estimated at over £65m which is likely to seriously impact the ability of the development to remain viable while satisfying other important requirements such as affordable homes, carbon footprint targets & investment in other services. Other aspects have been equally poorly thought-through such as access to water and sewerage, connections to the grid and supply of doctor's surgeries and dentists.

Where would you like to go now?

Continue to the end of the survey to submit your comments