

Public Document Pack



DORSET COUNCIL

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 10 DECEMBER 2020

Present: Cllrs Tony Alford, Jon Andrews, Mike Barron, Richard Biggs, Cherry Brooks, Dave Bolwell, Alex Brenton, Piers Brown, Graham Carr-Jones, Simon Christopher, Kelvin Clayton, Robin Cook, Janet Dover, Jean Dunseith, Matthew Hall, Paul Harrison, Sherry Jespersen, Carole Jones, Stella Jones, Andrew Kerby, Rebecca Knox, Nocturin Lacey-Clarke, Howard Legg, Robin Legg, Jon Orrell, Emma Parker, Andrew Parry, Mary Penfold, Bill Pipe, Byron Quayle, Molly Rennie, Maria Roe, Jane Somper, Clare Sutton, David Taylor, David Tooke, Daryl Turner, Kate Wheller, Sarah Williams, John Worth, Jill Haynes, Mike Dyer, Mike Parkes (Vice-Chairman), Ryan Hope, Rob Hughes, Tony Ferrari, Beryl Ezzard, Andrew Starr, Derek Beer, David Walsh, Cathy Lugg, David Gray, Toni Coombs, Gill Taylor, Barry Goringe, Pete Barrow, Brian Heatley, Ryan Holloway, Pauline Batstone, Tim Cook, Nick Ireland, Andy Canning, Paul Kimber, Laura Miller, David Morgan, Louie O'Leary, Ray Bryan, Shane Bartlett, Val Potheary (Chairman), Belinda Ridout, Mark Roberts, Spencer Flower, David Shortell, Susan Cocking, Gary Suttle, Roland Tarr, Simon Gibson, Bill Trite, Les Fry, Peter Wharf and Rod Adkins

Apologies: Cllrs Julie Robinson

Officers present (for all or part of the meeting):

Susan Dallison (Democratic Services Team Leader), Jonathan Mair (Corporate Director - Legal & Democratic Service Monitoring Officer), Matt Prosser (Chief Executive), John Sellgren (Executive Director, Place), Hayley Caves (Member Development and Support Officer), Kate Critchel (Senior Democratic Services Officer), Lindsey Watson (Senior Democratic Services Officer), Andrew Billaney (Interim Corporate Director for Housing) and Elaine Tibble (Senior Democratic Services Officer)

32. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 15 October were confirmed and agreed as a correct record.

33. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests were made at the meeting.

34. Chairman's Announcements

The Chairman announced the sad death of Honorary Alderman Ray Banham (former Weymouth and Portland Borough Councillor) and Cllr Howard Legg paid tribute to him.

The Chairman also commented on the benefits of remote meetings.

35. Public Participation - Questions and Statements

The Chairman of Council invited officers to read out the questions and statements submitted by members of the public. Responses were provided by the appropriate Portfolio Holder and a copy of these is attached as an appendix to these minutes.

36. Public participation - petitions and deputations

There were no petitions or deputations.

37. Announcements and Reports from the Leader of Council and Cabinet Members

Council received announcements and reports from the Leader of Council and Cllr Laura Miller Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care and Health.

38. Questions from Councillors

The Chairman of Council invited councillors to ask their questions, responses were provided by the appropriate Portfolio Holder and a copy of these are attached as an appendix to these minutes.

39. Harbour Revision Order - Bridport and Lyme Regis

The Chairman of the Harbours Committee introduced the report which sought authority to prepare and submit a combined Harbour Revision Order (HRO) to the Marine Management Organisation (MMO) in order to consolidate and modernise the current local legislation relating to Lyme Regis and Bridport Harbours.

Proposed by Cllr Mark Roberts, seconded by Cllr Rob Hughes

Decision

- 1) That an application be made to the Marine Management Organisation for a joint Harbour Revision Order in respect of Bridport and Lyme Regis Harbours to consolidate and modernise the current applicable legislation;
- 2) That delegated authority was given to the Executive Director of Place in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Highways, Travel and Environment to determine the wording of the Harbour Revision Order based on legal advice and to undertake all procedures for the submission of the Harbour Revision Order to the Marine Management Organisation.

- 3) That a budget of £36,000.00 be allocated for this work to include the legal advice, the application fee and public notices. This may be split over 2 years.

Reason for Decision

To consolidate and modernise the local legislation for Lyme Regis and Bridport Harbours.

40. **Terms of Reference for the Dorset Council Harbours Consultative Groups**

The Chairman of the Harbours Committee presented the report which sought to approve the Terms of Reference for the Dorset Council Harbours Consultative groups.

Proposed by Cllr Mark Roberts, seconded by Cllr Rob Hughes

Decision

That the proposed Terms of Reference for the Dorset Council Harbours Consultative Groups be approved.

Reason for Decision

With the Harbour Committee's new responsibility for all of Dorset Council's Harbours it was timely to consider how the consultative groups would operate in the future, providing consistency across the harbours.

41. **Statement of Gambling Licensing Policy 2021 - 2024**

The Chairman of the Licensing Committee presented the Statement of Gambling Licensing Policy 2021 – 2024

The Council, as Licensing Authority under the Gambling Act 2005, is required to publish a Statement of Gambling Licensing Policy at least every three years.

The purpose of the policy statement was to define how the Council would exercise its responsibilities under the Act. The draft policy had been prepared by officers, considered at an informal meeting of the Licensing Committee and undergone 12 weeks of public consultation.

The policy had been presented to the Place & Resources Overview Committee for comment on 19 October and the Licensing Committee on 22 October.

Proposed by Cllr Emma Parker, seconded by Cllr Les Fry.

Decision

That the Statement of Gambling Licensing Policy 2021-2024 be adopted.

Reason for Decision

To comply with legislative requirements. The policy statement defines how the Council exercises its responsibilities under the Gambling Act 2005.

42. **Statement of Licensing Policy 2021 - 2026**

The Chairman of the Licensing Committee presented the Statement of Licensing Policy 2021 – 2026.

The Council, as Licensing Authority under the Licensing Act 2003, is required to publish a Statement of Licensing Policy at least every five years. The purpose of the policy statement was to define how the Council would exercise its responsibilities under the Act. The draft policy had been prepared by officers, considered at an informal meeting of the Licensing Committee and published, in draft format, for a 12 week period of public consultation.

The policy was presented to Place & Resources Overview Committee for comment on 19 October and Licensing Committee on 22 October.

Proposed by Cllr Emma Parker, seconded by Cllr Jon Andrews

Decision

That the statement of Licensing Policy 2021 – 2026 be adopted

Reason for Decision

To comply with legislative requirements. The policy statement defines how the Council exercises its responsibilities under the Licensing Act 2003.

43. **Dorset Council Housing Allocations Policy 2021 - 2026**

The Portfolio Holder for Housing and Community Safety presented the Dorset Council Housing Allocations Policy 2021 – 2026.

Local authorities are required under Part 6 of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended) to have a housing allocation scheme and to ensure social housing is allocated. In accordance with the provisions in The Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole (Structural Changes) Order 2018, Dorset Council required a new Dorset Council Housing Allocation Policy.

Proposed by Cllr Carr-Jones, seconded by Cllr Gill Taylor.

Following discussion regarding what constituted a minor amendment, the Corporate Director, Legal and Democratic advised this was something that would not result in a material change in the policy.

Decision

That the Housing Allocation Policy be adopted and authority delegated to the Portfolio Holder Housing and Community Safety to make minor amendments to the Policy and any amendments necessary to reflect legislative change.

Reason for Recommendation

To ensure Dorset Council has a legally compliant Housing Allocation Policy that meets the needs of the residents.

44. **Notice of Motion - proposed by Cllr L O'Leary**

Proposed by Cllr L O'Leary Seconded by Cllr B Pipe

Supported by: Cllr Cathy Lugg Cllr John Worth Cllr Susan Cockings Cllr Andrew Kerby Cllr Emma Parker Cllr Bill Trite Cllr Simon Christopher Cllr Mike Parkes

“On Remembrance Day when as a nation we pause to recognise the sacrifice made by those who serve to defend our democratic freedoms and way of life activists from Extinction Rebellion hung a climate change banner in front of the Cenotaph.

That Dorset Council condemns the behaviour and actions of Extinction Rebellion for their actions at the Cenotaph and their total disregard of those who gave the ultimate sacrifice; and for their continued disregard of the law”

In accordance with Procedure Rule 14.3 (a) this Notice of Motion, upon being proposed and seconded, was debated by Full Council.

The following amendment was proposed by Cllr Nick Ireland, seconded by Cllr Robin Legg.

In the first sentence delete the words "from Extinction Rebellion".

In the second sentence, delete all words and replace with "Dorset Council deplores any Remembrance Day event being hijacked for political purposes or used by anyone to cause divisions in society".

Amendment

“On Remembrance Day, when as a nation we pause to recognise the sacrifice made by those who serve to defend our democratic freedoms and way of life, activists hung a climate change banner in front of the Cenotaph.

Dorset Council deplores any Remembrance Day event being hijacked for political purposes or used by anyone to cause divisions in society”.

Proposed by Cllr Noc Lacey-Clarke, seconded by Cllr Jane Somper.

Decision

That in accordance with procedural rule 19.5 a recorded vote be taken for both the proposed amendment and the original motion.

Those who voted in favour:- Cllrs Jon Andrews, Ryan Hope, Nick Ireland, Stella Jones, Robin Legg, David Gray, Richard Biggs, Tim Cook, Ryan Holloway, Mike Barron, Howard Legg, Brian Heatley, David Taylor, Paul Kimber, Roland Tarr, Maria Roe, Sarah Williams, Kelvin Clayton, Matt Hall, Gill Taylor, David Tooke, Andrew Starr, Clare Sutton, David Morgan, Kate Wheller, Alex Brenton, Jon Orrell, Shane Bartlett, Jill Haynes, Molly Rennie, Anthony Alford, Beryl Ezzard, Derek Beer.

Those who voted against:- Cllrs Daryl Turner, David Shortell, Spencer Flower, David Walsh, Rob Hughes, Pauline Batstone, Carole Jones, Ray Bryan, Cathy Lugg, Robin Cook, Mike Parkes, Jean Dunseith, Les Fry, Noc Lacey-Clarke, Louie O'Leary, Rod Adkins, Sherry Jespersen, Mark Roberts, Laura Miller, Tony Ferrari, John Worth, Belinda Ridout, Peter Wharf, Michael Dyer, Andrew Kerby, Byron Quale, William Trite, Cherry Brookes, Susan Cocking, Rebecca Knox, Graham Carr-Jones, Valerie Pothecary, Emma Parker, Simon Christopher, Paul Harrison, Jane Somper, Andrew Parry, Bill Pipe, Piers Brown, Simon Gibson, Mary Penfold.

Those who abstained:- Cllrs Dave Bolwell, Gary Suttle, Toni Coombs, Janet Dover, Barry Gorringe.

The amendment was **LOST**

Members returned to the original motion.

Those who voted in favour:- Cllrs Daryl Turner, Toni Coombs, Spencer Flower, Cathy Lugg, Rod Atkins, Pauline Batstone, Mike Parkes, Michael Dyer, Rob Hughes, Belinda Ridout, David Taylor, Piers Brown, Simon Christopher, Carole Jones, Andrew Parry, Noc Lacey-Clarke, Louie O'Leary, Les Fry, John Worth, Jean Dunseith, Sherry Jespersen, Graham Carr-Jones, David Walsh, Jon Andrews, Tony Ferrari, Susan Cocking, Ray Bryan, Peter Wharf, Mark Roberts, Kate Wheller, Robin Cook, David Gray, Rebecca Knox, Byron Quale, William Trite, Laura Miller, Emma Parker, Anthony Alford, Paul Harrison, David Shortell, David Morgan, Mary Penfold, Bill Pipe, Valerie Pothecary, Andrew Kerby, Jane Somper, Shane Bartlett, Simon Gibson, Barry Gorringe, Cherry Brooks.

Those who voted against:- Cllrs Tim Cook, Robin Legg, Kelvin Clayton, Brian Heatley, Paul Kimber, Clare Sutton, Jon Orrell, Beryl Ezzard.

Those who abstained:- Cllrs Andrew Starr, Ryan Hope, Matt Hall, Maria Roe, Alex Brenton, Ryan Holloway, Gill Taylor, Stella Jones, Sarah Williams, Nick Ireland, Mike Barron, David Tooke, Molly Rennie, Howard Legg, Dave Bolwell, Roland Tarr, Garry Suttle, Richard Biggs, Janet Dover, Derek Beer,

Decision

That Dorset Council condemns the behaviour and actions of Extinction Rebellion for their actions at the Cenotaph and their total disregard of those who gave the ultimate sacrifice and for their continued disregard of the law.

45. Urgent items

There were no urgent items.

46. **Exempt Business**

There was no exempt business.

APPENDICES TO MINUTES

Public questions and answers

Councillor questions and answers

Duration of meeting: 6.30 - 9.07 pm

Chairman

.....

This page is intentionally left blank

**Full Council
10 December 2020
Councillor Questions and Responses**

Question 1

Submitted by Cllr Paul Kimber

The empty shell of the building known as the Hardy Block Castletown, Portland, been an eyesore and a danger to the Portland community without being resolved for years. From the photograph submitted young people climbing on the building is clearly a massive danger to them and the community.

Given the dangers regarding this building what stronger action does the council intend to take in respect of completely clearing the site or the consideration of a compulsory purchase?

Response by Cllr David Walsh

Thank you for your question. I share your frustrations in wanting to see a solution to this long-standing situation.

Prince Andrew House is part of the former naval base which has the benefit of an extant planning permission for 554 residential units, involving a mix of new-build and conversion. The approved plans would see the conversion of the 'Hardy Block' into 157 units. However, this is a difficult and expensive site to develop and viability has proved to be a key stumbling block, in spite of a previous award of money through the Government's Housing Infrastructure Fund. Unfortunately this was still not sufficient to make the scheme viable and so the money could not be drawn down. In the absence of a substantial capital injection, completion of the scheme is therefore likely require a significant change in market conditions.

On the issue of safety, the building itself is structurally sound and not a dangerous structure under the provisions of the Building Act. The Council's Environmental Protection Officers have previously investigated reports of people accessing the site and at the time were satisfied that the company had secured the site as far as reasonably practicable and introduced appropriate monitoring procedures. This will be monitored but it is relevant to note that unauthorised access to private land is a responsibility for the owner and potentially a police matter.

Turning to the question of compulsory purchase, this requires ministerial approval and acquiring authorities should only use such powers where there is a compelling case in the public interest, and must demonstrate that they have taken reasonable steps to acquire all of the land and rights included in the Order by agreement. A number of steps are therefore required. In any event Dorset Council would need to be prepared to shoulder the financial cost (and subsequent risk) in taking such action, including any potential compensation liabilities under the provisions of the Compulsory Purchase Act. I would advise Council that now is not the appropriate time to be taking on such risks and the balance of public interest currently would not lie with embarking upon the acquisition via CPO of this site.

Question 2
Submitted by Cllr Bill Trite

Of all planning applications upon which a decision has been made by Dorset Council since the Council's inception, what percentage were determined under delegated powers without passing through a convened planning committee meeting, and what percentage were determined through the total number of convened meetings of the Council's planning committees?

Response by Cllr David Walsh

98% of planning decisions issued since 1 April 2019 have been determined under delegated powers, and 2% have been determined by the Council's planning committees.

Number of decisions are included in the table below:

Dorset Council			
	Delegated	Committee	Total
Apps	6837	140	6977
%	98	2	

Supplementary question from Cllr Bill Trite

Since, compared with the situation prior to the advent of Dorset Council, these figures show a steep reduction in the number of planning applications being determined directly by the public's elected representatives, can the portfolio holder - who is not the author of this reduction - think of any ways in which this decline represents an improvement in local democracy, or demonstrates the greater involvement of elected Members in the discharge of the Council's functions?

Response by Cllr David Walsh – This was all set out in the Scheme of Delegation to enable urgent decisions to be made. The only way to amend this would be through the proper legal channels.

Question 3
Submitted by Cllr Kelvin Clayton

Last week the PM vowed to cut CO₂ emissions by 68% by 2030 based on 1990 levels. In response, one of the UK's leading climate scientists, Prof. Sir Brian Hoskins, told the BBC that the PM's target "is ambitious", but added that "we need action to back it up, right now"! Bearing in mind the need for urgent action, what will be the process, method and timetable for reviewing responses to the consultation and finalising our CEE Strategy and Action Plan?

Response by Cllr Ray Bryan

Targeted promotion of the consultation opportunity is being undertaken by the Communications Team to ensure the maximum number of responses.

Statistical analysis of the responses is provided by the software system and the results are being monitored throughout the consultation period.

It is intended that the programme following the close of the consultation on the 20th January is as follows:

- The Closing date for the consultation is 20th January 2020.
- Results analysed and discussed together with suggested amendments to the strategy with the Climate & Ecological emergency EAP in February
- A paper setting out the findings of the consultation and a suggested revised strategy will be reported to Place and Resources Scrutiny 25th March
- Report presented to Cabinet on 6th April
- It is intended that the final strategy and action plan are signed off by Full Council 15th April 2021

The Sustainability Team have continued to develop areas for action throughout the consultation period to ensure that following final approval Dorset Council is as best placed as possible to deliver the actions identified in the Strategy and associated Action Plans.

Question 4

Submitted by Cllr Matt Hall

Dorset Council employs a number of agency staff. Please could the Portfolio Holder confirm what financial impact that has on the various budgets compared to an alternative system where Dorset Council only employed Council contracted Staff?

Response by Cllr Peter Wharf

The Council uses agency staff for operational reasons. Many of our services would not be able to properly function and deliver important services to the public without this flexibility. For example when vacancies arise, and before replacements can be recruited, resource levels have to be maintained otherwise service performance would be effected. Some front line services include the use of agency workers in their workforce strategies.

There are also national skills shortages in a number of occupational areas, for example social care, planning, engineering and legal services. Sometimes use is made of agency workers to cover those gaps.

At the moment we have 220 agency workers in place, this constitutes around 5% of the total workforce.

For the reasons I have explained some use of agency workers is unavoidable if we are to deliver good quality services to the public. The impact on budgets is mixed. In service areas where it is known that agency workers will be used then this is built in. In areas where it is less likely then the cost would normally be met, at least in part, from the underspend accruing

from the vacancy being covered. Although the cost of agency workers is often higher than employees, that is not always that case.

Question 5

Submitted by Cllr Matt Hall

Why are not all Dorset Council jobs posted on the Council's website?

Response by Cllr Peter Wharf

It is in the gift of the recruiting manager to decide, or for certain senior posts it is for the Portfolio Holder. We regularly advertise posts internally only.

When vacancies arise, an assessment is carried out to determine the best approach to advertising. Factors that are taken into account include the likelihood of there being internal candidates, the chance to provide opportunities for our own employees career development, the state of the current external job market, the number of vacancies (when there is more than one) and the potential benefit to bring in new people to the organisation.

Full Council - 10 December 2020
Public Participation

Question 1

Submitted by: Dr Anthony Fincham, Hon. Chairman of the Thomas Hardy Society.

I place this question on behalf of Thomas Hardy Society, which is an international literary society with over one thousand members, dedicated to the promotion of the works of Thomas Hardy, and the preservation of the countryside, which features so prominently in Hardy's novels and poems.

Hardy's Casterbridge (Dorchester) is the central focus of his Wessex – described so clearly in much of his poetry and fiction, most particularly in *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, where he describes Dorchester as being 'as compact as a box of dominoes', having 'no suburbs in the ordinary sense. Country and town met in a mathematical line'. Although much has changed in the 140 years since this novel was published, this strict division between town and country persists unaltered along the Roman northern boundaries of the town.

Five years ago, plans to allow a similar large-scale development on Came Down were rejected primarily on grounds of their deleterious impact on a sensitive landscape of literary, ecological and historical importance. The North Dorchester proposal would have a far worse impact on the local environment in all these same categories. It is also nonsensical to build a detached extension to a town, ruining the intervening water meadows and in effect linking Charminster and Stinsford in one hideous conurbation.

The population of Stinsford Parish today stands at 334 which is less than it was in 1840, when Hardy was born there. This proposed development would ruin Hardy's Mellstock – so vividly described in his poetry and early fiction – especially in *Under the Greenwood Tree* and *Desperate Remedies*. The Hardys' Cottage, Stinsford Church and the Kingston Maurward Estate and the countryside of the whole of Stinsford Parish are sites of literary pilgrimage to which people travel from all over the world. The construction of 'North Dorchester' would therefore constitute an act of the most severe literary, historic and environmental vandalism

I understand that you recently replied to a public question that the local plan '...provides for environmental protection and enhancement alongside development.'

My question on behalf of the Thomas Hardy Society is what enhancements will accrue for Dorchester and Hardy's own Parish of Stinsford with the building of a 4,000-house mixed development? How can you make such a statement when the planned development would destroy all that is most valuable about this unique County Town and its environs?

Response by Councillor David Walsh

Firstly, I would like to emphasise that the documents agreed this week by Cabinet are for public consultation. The council has the difficult task of preparing a plan that allocates sufficient land to meet the housing

requirements across Dorset. We have not made any decisions yet about where these should go, but will be consulting everyone on a range of options including the land north of Dorchester.

We do not believe that development would destroy all that is most valuable about Dorchester and its environs: if that were the case it would not even be considered as an option.

Dorchester is the County Town, and as such provides shops, employment and services to the benefit of its residents and those in the surrounding area. Its growth through the Poundbury development has helped it to sustain this role, but without further growth it is at risk of declining, and people who want to live here will struggle to find suitable homes. As one of Dorset's larger and better provided towns, it is one of the most sustainable locations for growth, and development north of the watermeadows would be within walking and cycling distance of many shops and services.

We have undertaken detailed work on the potential heritage impact of development, and have taken account of its conclusions in the proposals outlined in the consultation document.

Benefits for Dorchester and the surrounding area would include: new homes, including affordable housing; employment land providing additional jobs; new schools at all three tiers; healthcare provision; and a new road link between the A35 and A37.

Environmental improvements would include: the creation of wetlands and other biodiversity enhancements; new copse and woodland planting; enhanced access to the watermeadows; and connections to long distance trails. The consultation document also refers to the development aiming to enhance and better reveal the significance of the heritage assets, and to recognise the Thomas Hardy connections and enable their greater appreciation, for example through interpretation within the site's public spaces.

Question 2

Submitted by: Cllr Alistair Chisholm, Independent Councillor Dorchester Town Council

Given the land NE of Dorchester is marked as unsuitable for development in Dorset Council's SHLAA, why is the Council proposing major housing development in this area, and why is the SHLAA not part of the suite of documents being made publicly available given its important role in guiding development recommendations.

Response by Cllr David Walsh

The Dorset Council SHLAA (strategic housing land availability assessment) has taken a cautious approach in declaring whether sites are or are not suitable for development, generally describing sites as unsuitable if they would require changes from current policy, or if there are further issues that need to be addressed to make them suitable. This is why the site north of Dorchester has been assessed as unsuitable so far, and the same applies with many of the other sites put forward as possible development sites in the current draft consultation document on the local plan.

The SHLAA has been updated recently and is all publicly available online, though in the form of an interactive web page rather than a document.

Question 3

Submitted by: Linda Poulson

When WDDC included DOR15 in its proposals for a new local plan prior to local government reorganisation, Dorchester Town Council expressed strong opposition on behalf of the town, & something like **1,400 objections** were received raising legitimate reasons why the site should not go ahead - yet despite this opposition it has reappeared as DOR13 in Dorset Council's latest draft Local Plan.

Cllr Walsh insists that this is a democratic process, that people's voices will be heard – what level of public opposition would persuade him that it is 'undemocratic' to pursue this site? Please will he explain what tips the balance between 'democratic' & 'undemocratic' with regard to DOR13?

Response by Cllr David Walsh

Local plans are required to meet the housing needs of their areas. We do not have the option of saying no to development across the whole area, but we do have choices to make about where in the council area development takes place, and how it takes place, for example what sort of environment is created and what facilities and infrastructure are provided with it.

These decisions need to take account of a wide range of factors including environmental constraints; where there is demand for development; and where development is most likely to be accessible to existing jobs and facilities. Consultation helps us to identify and examine these matters, and the responses to the previous consultations have helped to influence further work on the sites previously considered.

We will be considering all the consultation responses from communities across the whole of the Dorset Council area, but we need to consider them together in coming to a view about where development is best located.

Question 4

Submitted by: Linda Poulson

I know how DOR13 will benefit landowners & developers – they will make huge profits at the expense of the local community.

I know how DOR13 will benefit Dorset Council – it will assist them in delivering over- inflated Gov housing targets instead of challenging them.

I know how DOR13 will benefit the planners – they will take part in an ambitious vanity project which enables them to stamp their mark on a Greenfield site rather than identifying the numerous brown field sites which are already available.

What I don't know is how Dorchester will benefit from such large scale destruction of the environment & pressure on its already struggling infrastructure. The draft plan makes all sorts of unsubstantiated claims but the huge costs of implementing them cast serious doubts on the site's viability. In the real world, how will Dorchester benefit from DOR13?

Response by Cllr David Walsh

Councils need to provide to meet the housing needs of their areas, and there is a standard national methodology for working these out. This must be followed unless exceptional circumstances justify an alternative approach, which also reflects current and future demographic trends and market signals.

Meeting these needs means that people who want to live in Dorset can do so. We know that there is in-migration of retired people, but we also know that we need people of working age to move into the area if we are going to maintain a thriving local economy, and that there are very substantial affordable housing needs, which development can go some way towards meeting. Development can help to sustain existing facilities, and is an opportunity to provide new ones. Growth at Dorchester will also help to support the town centre and existing businesses and services.

We have identified brownfield sites across the area and these are included in our plans, but there are not enough brownfield sites in a rural area like Dorset to meet all the housing needs.

Development viability is indeed a key factor to be considered through the plan, as we have to be able to demonstrate that development can be achieved. We will be carrying out detailed work on development viability during the next stage of plan preparation and this will be tested during the independent examination.

Question 5

Submitted by: Peter Bowyer Chair of Dorset CPRE

Will the portfolio holder for planning confirm that the draft Dorset Local Plan will be based on central government targets which are 47% above the housing levels in existing Local Plans in Dorset?

Response by Councillor David Walsh

The draft Dorset Council Local Plan consultation document includes housing figures based on the current national standard methodology. This results in a requirement of 1,793 dwellings per annum. Current local plans for the area (including the shortly-to-be-adopted Purbeck local plan) set out figures that add up to 1,682 per annum. The current national methodology figures therefore represent a 6.6% increase in the previous housing levels for the Dorset Council area.

National policy states that the Government's standard methodology should be used to calculate housing needs, unless exceptional circumstances justify an alternative approach which also reflects current and future demographic trends and market signals.

The standard methodology is being revised, as proposed through recent government consultations, and so the numbers for our area will change during the course of plan preparation. The consultation draft of the local plan seeks to make provision for the housing required under the current standard methodology whilst also giving some flexibility to respond to changes in this methodology, to respond to the consultation and to respond to the delivery of sites over the plan period.

Question 6

Submitted by: Peter Bowyer Chair of Dorset CPRE

Will the portfolio holder for planning confirm that the government housing target for Dorset is "in excess of sensible forecasts of local housing need". These words in quotations relate to the conclusions of an important independent report for Dorset CPRE which has been made available to every member of the Dorset Council as well as leading officers.

Response by Councillor David Walsh

As set out in the answer to the question above, the housing requirement figures for the Dorset Council area derived from the national standard methodology are not significantly higher than those in current local plans and are not considered to be in excess of sensible forecasts. It is important to be aware that we are required to meet the needs of all sectors of the housing market, not only those derived from current local residents.

The current standard methodology does however result in a very high figure for the adjoining Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole area, which BCP Council is certainly unlikely to be able to meet within its area.

Local plans need to consider the extent to which they can meet the unmet needs of surrounding council areas as well as their own, so this would put additional pressure on the numbers to be provided within the Dorset Council area. However the proposed changes to the standard methodology, published for consultation this summer, would result in a significantly lower figure for the BCP Council area, which is much more likely to be met within that council area.