

## **Cabinet 8 December 2020**

### **Public Questions and Statements**

#### **1. Question from Andy Matthews**

##### **Re Agenda Item 9 - Local Plan Consultation Documents Central Functional Area – Portland**

Section 26 of the document which deals with the Central Functional Area sets out a narrative around the future development for Portland. It is welcomed that a number of proposals support the Neighbourhood Plan but some, as currently described, are at odds with the Local Planning Authorities position which was agreed earlier this year with the Neighbourhood Plan's Examiner. Specific examples are in regard to Key Employment sites and some aspects of the Development boundaries scheduled particularly the exclusion of the Albion Stone employment policy area as well as Southwell Business Park area. Providing certainty and flexibility to these employment areas at a time of change is an important element to the Economic Vision which runs in tandem with the Neighbourhood Plan.

As you are aware the Neighbourhood Plan is currently held because of the COVID pandemic and the earliest the referendum can be held is May 2021. It is intended that the Local Plan consultation will commence during the early part of 2021.

Meanwhile policies in the Neighbourhood Plan can carry material weight in planning decisions.

There is a risk that unless the base data is aligned that this could undermine the basis to any referendum.

Would Cabinet please clarify the position?

#### **2. Question from David Moss**

##### **Re Agenda item 9 - Dorset Council Local Plan, Consultations**

1. In 2008 a financial appraisal of possible development north of Dorchester was undertaken by the Halcrow Group on behalf of WDDC. It found that after a notional development period of fourteen years it would have a negative value of - £174 million. It also concluded that the necessary road works to serve such a development would cost £113 million. The only upto date information on the viability of development North of Dorchester on the Council's website are two paragraphs which refer to the Council's recent experience of the Gillingham Extension highlighting the need to understand the cost implications of the infrastructure requirements on large scale schemes.

In May 2020 a Planning Inspectors report into the North Essex Authorities Shared Strategy (Section 1) Plan found in respect of three proposed 'garden communities', that two of the three proposed 'garden communities' were financially unsound and therefore not deliverable. Therefore, the draft plan failed the key test of whether it was sound or not. What is of particular importance in the Inspector's analysis of the financial viability of the proposals is his criticism of the unrealistic assumptions being made on behalf of both the Councils involved and the

promoters of the 'garden communities'. In particular he specifically refers to unrealistic assumptions regarding build-out rates and the need to account for 'optimism bias' in considering the cost of the infrastructure requirements.

In the absence of an upto date financial appraisal which both takes into account the Halcrow Group conclusion of 2008 and the Inspectors Report of May 2020 is it appropriate to submit to the public for public consultation a major development proposal North of Dorchester when its financial viability and therefore deliverability is at the very least in grave doubt?

2. Given all that is known about the 'Climate Emergency' and the need for sustainability is it appropriate that North of Dorchester can only be built if a new link road between the A35 and A37 is built? The route of such a link road because of topography and cost will of necessity be driven through the middle of what is supposed to be a 'garden community'.

### **3. Question from John Calvert**

#### **Re Item 9 Local Plan, Section 23.3.8 and Section 23.3.9 in Dorchester Town Centre Strategy**

As a Dorchester resident I would like reassurance that any plan involving changes to Trinity Street would not just look at the public car parks as an easy place to put retail enterprises but also look at the public transport issues relating to the lack of room for queues at the various bus stops and at the overall look of Trinity Street.

It needs major strategic changes rather than simply putting shops on the two car parks to the West of Trinity Street.

### **4. Question from Peter Bowyer Chair of Dorset CPRE**

#### **Re item 9 Local Plan**

1. Dorset Local Plan. Can the Council outline how it plans to incorporate the recommendations from the research report commissioned by Dorset CPRE (Campaign to Protect Rural England) on Dorset Housing Evidence Needs into the emerging Dorset Local Plan? This report was sent to every member of Dorset Council and to its key officers. To date Dorset CPRE has received no comments or feedback from members and officials of the Council. This is particularly disappointing when considering the requests made at the September and October 2020 meetings of the Cabinet to have community input and engagement into a shared vision for the Dorset Local Plan. The report is particularly relevant to agenda item 9-Dorset Council Local Plan Consultation. The research findings and the substance of the report do not appear to feature at all in the Consultation planned for January 2021 and the associated information.

In the interests of public engagement and public confidence in the exercise of the planning function in Dorset, it would be helpful to know how Dorset Council intend to make use of this important report in the development of the Dorset Local Plan and what others form of engagement than the January 2021 Consultation the Council will be developing for the Dorset Local Plan.

2. Can the Council please explain why it has not included the SHLAA (Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment ) in the background papers to agenda item 9-Dorset Council Local Plan? The SHLAA is an important document for residents .The provisional sites proposed by developers do not clearly show policy changes as expected. This is somewhat unusual and unexpected.

**5. Question from Sally Cooke  
Re Item 9 Local Plan**

The development envisaged in policy DOR13 of the draft Local Plan (the Garden Community proposal) will, if approved, greatly increase the number of people wanting outdoor recreation in the Dorchester area.

The Garden Community proposal intends to improve public access and nature conservation in the river valley. This habitat, however, is not the most robust to cope with large numbers of extra visitors.

The nearby public Local Nature Reserve at Thorncombe Woods is thought by local residents to be already at full stretch, and unable to cope with a big upsurge in visitor numbers. (This is an opinion which has been voiced during recent consultation on Stinsford's draft Neighbourhood Plan.)

**What ideas does Dorset Council have, in the context of policy DOR13, for creating new robust outdoor amenity space, such as extensive community woodland (larger in scale than the copses referred to in point VIII of policy DOR13), so that all residents close to Dorchester can continue to enjoy the same or better opportunities for countryside recreation as we enjoy now?**

**6. Question from Stinsford Neighbourhood Plan group  
c/o Stinsford Parish Council**

Draft Local Plan Policy DOR13 proposes that "Land to the north of Dorchester will be developed in accordance with a masterplan produced for the site, which will reflect garden community principles."

In paragraph 12 of the government's Garden Communities Prospectus, 2018, we read that *"Proposals should set out how the local community is being, or will be, engaged and involved at an early stage, and strategies for continued community engagement and involvement. We are clear that local communities – both current and future residents – must have a meaningful say in developing the proposal from design to delivery."*

If the development proposed in DOR13 goes ahead, what mechanism will Dorset Council put in place to ensure that this principle of Garden Communities is followed?

## **7. Questions from Roy Phillips MBE**

Question one for Cllr Ray Bryan " At the cabinet meeting on 6th October it was minuted that Cllr Bryan would respond to all statements and questions submitted in relation to proposed major road works in Dinah's Hollow, Melbury Abbas. After 2 months no response has been received by stakeholders, Melbury Abbas & Cann Parish Council or residents. When will this be actioned ?"

Question two for Cllr Flower " Why were the stake holders and residents not given reasonable time between issue of the papers and reports and the closing date for submissions (in some cases only 2 days) to seek opinion on the reports and prepare a detailed submission on Dinah's Hollow proposed works. Why was the substance of the submissions received after the closing date not made available to the cabinet as required by the 1974 Local Government Act. "