



Cabinet

Date: Tuesday, 3 March 2026
Time: 6.30 pm
Venue: Council Chamber, County Hall, Dorchester, DT1 1XJ

Membership: (Quorum 3)

Nick Ireland (Chair), Richard Biggs (Vice-Chair), Jon Andrews, Shane Bartlett, Simon Clifford, Ryan Hope, Steve Robinson, Clare Sutton, Gill Taylor and Ben Wilson

Chief Executive: Catherine Howe, County Hall, Dorchester, Dorset.

For more information about this agenda please contact Democratic Services
Meeting Contact 01305 252234 - kate.critchell@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

Members of the public are welcome to attend this meeting, apart from any items listed in the exempt part of this agenda. If you would like to attend this meeting and have any specific requirements please contact the Democratic & Governance Services Officer named above.

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Agenda

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1. APOLOGIES

To receive any apologies for absence.

2. MINUTES

7 - 26

To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 29 January 2026.

3. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Representatives of town or parish councils and members of the public who live, work, or represent an organisation within the Dorset Council area are welcome to submit either 1 question or 1 statement for each meeting. You are welcome to attend the meeting in person or via MS Teams to read out your question and to receive the response. If you submit a statement for the committee this will be circulated to all members of the committee in advance of the meeting as a supplement

to the agenda and appended to the minutes for the formal record but will not be read out at the meeting. The first 8 questions and the first 8 statements received from members of the public or organisations for each meeting will be accepted on a first come first served basis in accordance with the deadline set out below. Further information read [Public Participation - Dorset Council](#)

All submissions must be emailed in full to Kate.Critchel@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk by 8.30am on Thursday 26 February 2026.

When submitting your question or statement please note that:

- You can submit 1 question or 1 statement.
- a question may include a short pre-ambule to set the context.
- It must be a single question and any sub-divided questions will not be permitted.
- Each question will consist of no more than 450 words, and you will be given up to 3 minutes to present your question.
- when submitting a question please indicate who the question is for (e.g., the name of the committee or Portfolio Holder)
- Include your name, address, and contact details. Only your name will be published but we may need your other details to contact you about your question or statement in advance of the meeting.
- questions and statements received in line with the council's rules for public participation will be published as a supplement to the agenda.
- all questions, statements and responses will be published in full within the minutes of the meeting.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

To disclose any pecuniary, other registrable or non-registrable interest as set out in the adopted Code of Conduct. In making their disclosure councillors are asked to state the agenda item, the nature of the interest and any action they propose to take as part of their declaration.

If required, further advice should be sought from the Monitoring Officer in advance of the meeting.

5. QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS

To receive questions submitted by councillors.

Councillors can submit up to two valid questions at each meeting and sub divided questions count towards this total. Questions and statements received will be published as a supplement to the agenda and all questions, statements and responses will be published in full within the minutes of the meeting.

The submissions must be emailed in full to kate.critchell@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk 8.30am on Thursday 26 February 2026.

[Dorset Council Constitution](#) – Procedure Rule 13

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11.	BRIDPORT (WEST BAY) HARBOUR WALLS STABILISATION & PROPERTY WORKS	199 - 204
	To consider a report of the Cabinet Member for Place Services.	
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18.	BUSINESS GROWTH DORSET – GOVERNMENT GROWTH HUB FUNDING FINANCIAL YEAR 26/27 TO 28/29	473 - 478
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19.	NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY AND GUIDANCE CONSULTATION RESPONSE	479 - 548
	To consider a report of the Cabinet Member for Planning and Emergency Planning.	
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	To consider a report of the Cabinet member for Planning and Emergency Planning.	
21.	URGENT ITEMS	
	To consider any items of business which the Chairman has had prior notification and considers to be urgent pursuant to section 100B (4) b) of the Local Government Act 1972. The reason for the urgency shall be recorded in the minutes.	
22.	EXEMPT BUSINESS	
	Exempt Business	
	To consider passing the following recommendation:	
	Recommendation	
	That in accordance with Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act	

1972 to exclude the public from the meeting for the business specified in item(s) because it is likely that if members of the public were present there would be disclosure to them of exempt information as defined in paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of schedule 12A to the Act and the public interest in withholding the information outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information to the public.

The public and the press will be asked to leave the meeting whilst the item of business is considered. (Any live streaming will end at this juncture).

Reason for taking the item in private

Paragraph 3 - Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

23.	BRIDPORT (WEST BAY) HARBOUR WALLS STABILISATION & PROPERTY WORKS <i>Para 3</i>	559 - 560

Exempt appendix associated with agenda item 11 -“Bridport (West Bay) Harbour Walls Stabilisation & Property Works”.

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CABINET

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 29 JANUARY 2026

Present: Cllrs Nick Ireland (Chair), Richard Biggs (Vice-Chair), Jon Andrews, Shane Bartlett, Simon Clifford, Ryan Hope, Steve Robinson, Clare Sutton, Gill Taylor and Ben Wilson

Also present: Cllr Andrew Parry, Cllr Les Fry and Cllr David Northam

Also present remotely: Cllr Louise Bown, Cllr Belinda Bawden, Cllr Alex Brenton, Cllr Ray Bryan, Cllr Simon Christopher, Cllr Beryl Ezzard, Cllr Barry Goringe, Cllr Jill Haynes, Cllr Rob Hughes, Cllr Jack Jeanes, Cllr Sherry Jespersen, Cllr Carole Jones, Cllr Stella Jones, Cllr Chris Kippax, Cllr Craig Monks, Cllr David Morgan, Cllr Byron Quayle, Cllr Belinda Ridout, Cllr Jane Somper, Cllr Gary Suttle and Cllr Andy Todd

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

Jan Britton (Executive Director - Place), Kate Critchel (Senior Democratic & Governance Services Officer), Lindsey Watson (Senior Democratic and Governance Officer), Jonathan Price (Executive Director of People - Adults and Housing), Lisa Cotton (Corporate Director for Transformation, Customer and Cultural Services), Jonathan Mair (Director of Legal and Democratic and Monitoring Officer), Catherine Howe (Chief Executive), Jack Wiltshire (Corporate Director for Highways and Engineering), Nina Coakley (Head of Transformation and Design) and Mike Garrity (Corporate Director for Planning)

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

Sean Cremer (Corporate Director for Finance and Commercial), Sam Crowe (Director of Public Health), Paul Dempsey (Executive Director of People - Children) and Steven Ford (Corporate Director for Strategy, Performance and Sustainability)

19. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 9 December 2025 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

20. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest to report.

The Director of Legal & Democratic and the Monitoring Officer advised that in respect of Item 19 "Weymouth Neighbourhood Plan", three members of Cabinet, Cllrs Simon Clifford, Ryan Hope and Gill Taylor were members of Weymouth Town Council as well as councillors at Dorset Council.

Weymouth Town Council had met on 20 November 2024 to endorse the submission of the draft Neighbourhood Plan to Dorset Council, independent inspection and a referendum.

The Director of Legal & Democratic and the Monitoring Officer confirmed that these councillors had not predetermined the report before Cabinet and he had advised those members concerned that they were able to take part in the debate and decision.

21. Public Participation

There were two questions/statements from the public. A copy of the full questions and the detailed responses are set out in Appendix 1 to these minutes.

22. Questions from Councillors

There were no formal questions from Councillors.

23. Forward Plan

The draft Cabinet Forward Plan for March was received and noted.

STATEMENT OF THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

The Leader of the Council made a statement explaining how reports 7 to 10 on the agenda demonstrated the way investment, planning, and financial decisions combined to deliver tangible progress against each of Dorset Council's Plan Priorities. The statement is provided at Appendix 2 to these minutes.

24. Climate programme capital workstreams over £500K

The Leader of the Council, Climate, Performance and Safeguarding introduced a report outlining the Capital Programme and the proposed capital investment across a broad range of projects within the Natural Environment, Climate and Ecology Strategy 2023 – 25. The remaining funding allocation for 2025-2027 (£4m) involved expenditure exceeding the £500k threshold, meaning Cabinet approval was required for the projects detailed in the report.

It was proposed by Cllr N Ireland and seconded by Cllr J Andrews

Decision

- (a) That the spend from the corporate climate capital programme for those elements identified as over £500k, as set out in the report to Cabinet or 29 January 2026, be approved.

Specifically:

- (i) £700k for the installation of the next phase of solar PV across the council's estate, and

(ii) £1.3m for replacement of more old, obsolete street lighting with LED street lighting using the PFI contract and in line with the Council's street lighting policy adopted September 2025.

(b) That authority be delegated to the Corporate Director for Strategy, Performance and Sustainability in consultation with the Leader and Cabinet Member for Climate, Performance and Safeguarding, to approve further individual item spend within the remaining climate capital allocation, for the identified projects.

Reason for the Decision

There was £4m remaining in the climate capital programme. Two workstreams allocated within the current climate capital programme had identified the requirement for spend above the £500k cabinet approval threshold, with the total of these amounting to £2m. Delegating approval for the further spend within the remaining allocation would allow the projects outlined in the report to proceed.

25. Active Travel Infrastructure Plan

The Cabinet Member for Place Services set out the referral from the Place and Resources Overview Committee meeting held on 25 September 2025, seeking Cabinet's support to approve the Active Travel Plan.

It was proposed by Cllr J Andrews and seconded by Cllr S Robinson

Decision

That the Active Travel Infrastructure Plan be approved.

Reason for the decision

To enable the Active Travel Infrastructure Plan to be implemented.

26. Transforming Public and Community Transport

The Cabinet Member for Place Services presented a report outlining the strategic direction for transforming public and community transport in Dorset. The report identified current challenges and set out the intention to develop a Full Business Case to deliver a more inclusive, reliable and community-focused transport system from 2027.

Non-executive members expressed support for the proposals and welcomed the future development of the detailed business case. Questions were raised regarding the approach to community engagement, particularly ensuring that local action groups could contribute, and about providing adequate support for smaller parishes where the need for community transport was significant.

In response, the Cabinet Member for Place Services welcomed members' comments and confirmed that consultation would take place following completion of the Full Business Case. This would involve both public and stakeholder engagement.

It was proposed by Cllr J Andrews and seconded by Cllr S Clifford

Decision

- (a) That the strategic direction for transforming public and community transport, as set out in the report of 29 January 2026, be endorsed
- (b) That the development of a Full Business Case exploring the range of options for delivering a modern, integrated and community-focused transport system, including financial, procurement, and consultation plans to enable implementation from April 2027, be approved.

Reason for the decision

To secure Cabinet endorsement for the strategic direction and authorise preparation of a Full Business Case for improving public and community transport, ensuring alignment with the council's community-focused agenda, and enabling timely planning for investment, procurement, and consultation ahead of implementation in 2027.

27. **Budget and Medium-Term Financial Plan Strategy Report (MTFP)**

The Cabinet Member for Finance & Capital Strategy presented the Budget and Medium-Term Financial Plan Strategy report for recommendation to Full Council.

In setting out the report and its recommendations, the Cabinet Member for Finance and Capital Strategy gave a wider overview of the context influencing the Council's financial position. He highlighted that Dorset, as a predominantly rural county with a significantly aging population, continued to face challenges which were not fully reflected in national funding allocations. Also, the Council received comparatively less transport support than neighbouring authorities, and the area's seasonal economy contributed to younger residents leaving the county in search of stable employment.

The Cabinet Member continued that the introduction of a three-year financial settlement was welcomed; however, in real terms Dorset would see a reduction of £6 million over that period. He explained that business rates have fallen by 15%, and this financial backdrop contributed to the need for a 4.99% increase in council tax, which, while disappointing, was presented as a direct consequence of the national approach to funding distribution and its impact on Dorset.

The Cabinet Member acknowledged the contributions of the budget cafés, and the recommendations and comments from the Scrutiny Committees; and these along with the responses were set out in Appendix 9 to the report (circulated as a supplement).

Non-Cabinet members asked several questions around Adult Social Care and Children Services. There was also frustration expressed regarding the government's settlement, and it was hoped that the Council would continue to apply pressure on central government for improved funding.

Members welcomed the introduction of the budget simulator and expressed a hope that it would be utilised again next year.

Before the recommendations were put to the vote, individual Cabinet members were given an opportunity to draw attention to how the budget specifically impacted their portfolio areas, and the steps being taken to manage financial pressures through efficiencies while continuing to support vulnerable residents and essential infrastructure.

Cllr S Clifford proposed the recommendations 1 to 13 of the report and these were seconded by Cllr S Robinson.

Recommendation to Full Council

1. That the revenue budget summarised in Appendix 1 of the report to Cabinet of 29 January 2026, be agreed.
2. That the increase in general Council Tax of 2.9985% and 1.9919% in the Social Care Precept, providing a Band D Council Tax figure for Dorset Council of £2,205.90; an overall increase of 4.9904%, be agreed and that the Council Tax resolution in Appendix 2 be agreed.
3. That the Council Tax base of 163,765.1 and Band D equivalents (188,374 households in total) agreed by the Section 151 Officer earlier in this budget setting process, be noted.
4. That the continuation of the unchanged scheme of Local Council Tax Support, and the revised income tables following the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) uplift of benefits by 3.8%, be noted.
5. That the Capital Strategy set out in Appendix 7, be agreed.
6. That the "standing items" included with the Capital Programme as set out in Appendix 3 to be report, be agreed.
7. That the introduction of three formal gateways for capital projects: (i) Business case approval, (ii) Budget allocation, and (iii) Procurement approval by Cabinet or delegated authority, set out in the capital section of the report to cabinet be agreed.
8. That the Treasury Management Strategy set out in Appendix 8 be agreed.
9. That the assumptions used to develop the Budget Strategy and Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP), as set out throughout the report to Cabinet, be noted.

10. That the recommended balances on earmarked reserves and on general funds, including the minimum level of the general fund, be agreed.
11. That the responses to the recommendations and comments made as part of the budget scrutiny process, as set out in Appendix 9, be agreed.
12. That the recommendations 2.1.1 and 2.2.2 from 3 December 2025 Harbour Advisory Committee meeting regarding fees and charges, budget and asset management plans, as set out at Appendix 6, be agreed.
13. That the fees and charges for 2026/27, as set out in Appendix 10, be agreed.

Reason for the recommendation

In accordance with its statutory duties, the Council was required each year to set a balanced revenue budget, including the determination of the Council Tax Level. A balanced budget ensures that all planned expenditure was met from the councils regular and sustainable income, rather than from one-off or short-term sources of funding.

The council must also approve a Capital Strategy, a capital programme and budget, and a treasury management strategy, all of which were presented within the report.

28. **December 2025 Quarter 3 financial management report 2025/26**

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Capital Strategy introduced the quarter 3 financial management report which provided a comprehensive overview of Dorset Council's financial position as of 31 December 2025. The report also highlighted key challenges, risk and actions for the 2025/2026 fiscal year.

Cabinet noted

- (a) That the Senior Leadership Team's forecast as of December 2025 including progress on the transformational and efficiency savings incorporated into the budget, be noted.
- (b) That the capital programme for 2025/26, be noted.
- (c) That the number and extent of contract exemptions, be noted.

Reason for the report

To ensure the Council could set and deliver a balanced budget, this report provided an update on the forecast financial position for 2025/26 and the significant operational and financial pressures facing the organisation. In a challenging national context for local authorities, effective oversight of activities and budgets was essential to maintain financial sustainability, support delivery of

Council Plan priorities, and ensure the Council continued to provide vital services and wider economic benefits.

29. **School Admission Arrangements 2027-2028**

The Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Education and Skills presented the annual report that asked members to approve the policies that make up Dorset Council's School Admission Arrangements. Members were also asked to consider reductions in Pupil Admission Number (PAN) for William Barnes Primary School and Wyke Regis Junior School.

It was proposed by Cllr C Sutton and seconded by Cllr S Robinson

Decision

- (a) That the following policies that make up Dorset Council's School Admissions Arrangements and Coordinated Scheme for school place allocations for September 2027, be approved and adopted:
 - (i) Co-ordinated Admissions Scheme Timetable 2027-2028
 - (ii) Primary Co-ordinated Scheme 2027-2028
 - (iii) Secondary Co-ordinated Scheme 2027-2028
 - (iv) In Year Co-ordinated Scheme 2027-2028
 - (v) Admissions Arrangements for Community & Voluntary Controlled Schools 2027-2028.
 - (vi) Admissions to Maintained Nursery Units Policy 2027-2028
 - (vii) Sixth Form Admissions Policy 2027-2028
 - (viii) Armed Forces Policy 2027-2028
- (b) In addition, the following reductions in Pupil Admissions Number (PAN), be approved.
 - (i) William Barnes Primary School reduction of their PAN from 30 to 20 with effect from September 2027.
 - (ii) Wyke Regis Junior School reduction of their PAN from 90 to 60 with effect from September 2027.

Reason for the decision

To determine admissions arrangements in accordance with statutory requirements including the Schools Admissions Code September 2021.

To ensure compliance with the latest legislation and any subsequent regulation/statutory guidance.

30. **Independent Reviewing Officer's Annual Report**

In presenting the report, the Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Education and Skills advised that the paper had also been considered and scrutinised by the Corporate Parenting Board on 11 December 2025.

The annual report reviewed and monitored all plans for children's services and the evidence demonstrated that the service continued to develop and supported children to be well cared for.

In response to a question relating to support for the most vulnerable children including SEND and children with speech and language difficulties, the Cabinet Member agreed to have a conversation with the individual member outside of the meeting.

It was proposed by Cllr C Sutton and seconded by Cllr S Robinson.

Decision

That the contents of the annual report be received and noted.

Reason for the decision

To ensure that the QARO service continued to develop and evolve to offer the best possible support and challenge to the Local Authority in meeting the needs of our children in care, and to ensure voices of children and young people in care were heard and acted upon.

31. LADO (Local Authority Safeguarding Officer) Annual Report

The Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Education and Skills presented the annual report, which had also been considered and scrutinised by the Corporate Parenting Board on 11 December 2025.

It was proposed by Cllr C Sutton, seconded by Cllr R Biggs

Decision

That the annual report be received.

Reason for the decision

To provide a clear and comprehensive overview of the LADO service and ensure all stakeholders were fully informed via the LADO Annual Report.

32. Coombe House Annual Performance Report 2025

The Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Education and Skills presented the referral from the Shareholder Committee for the Dorset Centre of Excellence that met on 1 December 2026, to approve the Coombe House annual report.

In response to questions, the Cabinet Member reaffirmed the administration's commitments to Coombe House, noting that an options appraisal was currently underway to explore how different areas of the site could be further developed. It was acknowledged that, while significant progress had already been made with the school, there remained clear opportunities to do more and these were being actively considered as part of the appraisal process.

It was proposed by Cllr C Sutton and seconded by Cllr R Biggs

Decision

That the Coombe House annual report be received and noted.

Reason for the decision

To ensure that Cabinet was fully informed of the activities and work of Coombe House.

33. Printing of Electoral Registration and Election Materials - procurement arrangements

The Leader of the Council, Climate, Performance and Safeguarding outlined the report regarding the need to ensure continued provision of electoral registration and election printing services. The current contract had reached its approved duration and value, and therefore a short extension was required to maintain continuity of service while officers undertook a full review and procurement process.

It was proposed by Cllr N Ireland and seconded by Cllr R Hope

Decision

Cabinet agreed

- (a) To a contract modification, in accordance with the Public Contract Regulations 2015, Regulation 72, to the existing electoral registration and elections printing contract extending the term for a period of 6 months to 31 August 2026. The value of the permitted modification under Regulation 72 is no more than 10% of the initial contract value of £805,000 i.e. £80,500.
- (b) To the commencement of a procurement exercise for a contract for electoral registration and election printing.

Reason for decision

The Council must maintain its ability to meet statutory obligations for delivering elections and electoral registration services, and the current supplier had provisionally agreed to extend the existing contract pending internal approvals. As the estimated value of the new electoral registration and elections printing contract is £1.85 million, exceeding the £500,000 financial threshold for key decisions, Cabinet approval was required to proceed with the procurement.

34. East Devon Local Plan Consultation

The Cabinet Member for Planning and Emergency Planning presented a report on the East Devon local plan consultation. The response to East Devon District Council was set out in detail as an appendix to the report and it ensured that the Council's views were considered in preparing the East Devon Local Plan and

maintain appropriate co-operation during the production of both councils' local plans.

It was proposed by Cllr S Bartlett and seconded by Cllr B Wilson

Decision

That the response to East Devon District Council, as set out in Appendix 1 of the report of 29 January 2026, be agreed.

Reason for decision

To ensure that this Council's views were considered in preparing the East Devon Local Plan and maintain appropriate cooperation during the production of both councils' local plans.

35. New Forest National Park Local Plan consultation response

The Cabinet Member for Planning and Emergency Planning presented a report on the New Forest National Park Local Plan response.

The response to the consultation was set out at Appendix B of the report and Members were asked to endorse the comments that had been agreed by the Cabinet Member for Planning and Emergency Planning.

The Cabinet Member and Corporate Director for Planning confirmed that all approved development in Dorset included sufficient mitigation for impacts on internationally protected habitats. In the case of the New Forest, Dorset had a duty to ensure mitigation was in place; without it, those developments could not be approved. While the New Forest District Council delivered the mitigation, Dorset Council ensured the necessary contributions were passed to them. This process was based on the actual habitat impact not on administrative boundaries. The cost of Dorset Council's administrative process was met by the Community Infrastructure Levy.

It was proposed by Cllr S Bartlett and seconded by Cllr B Wilson

Decision

That the response agreed with the Cabinet Member for Planning and Emergency Planning, be endorsed.

Reason for the decision

Dorset Council must engage constructively with the New Forest National Park Authority in preparing its Local Plan, including responding to cross-boundary matters such as housing need and provision for gypsy, traveller and travelling showpeople. A draft consultation response, agreed with the Cabinet Member for Planning and Emergency Planning and included at Appendix B of the report of 29 January 2026, had been submitted to the Authority. Following Cabinet's

consideration, Dorset Council would confirm that this response was final or amend and resubmit it to replace the original draft.

36. Weymouth Neighbourhood Plan

The Cabinet Member for Planning and Emergency Planning set out the report on the Weymouth Neighbourhood Plan that had been subject to independent examination and referendum. The Neighbourhood Plan would also replace the Sutton Poyntz Neighbourhood Plan.

In proposing the recommendation, the Cabinet Member for Planning and Emergency Planning took the opportunity to thank Weymouth Town Council, the members of the Neighbourhood Plan Group and officers for producing the plan.

Cllr N Ireland seconded the motion.

Cabinet supported the recommendation and congratulated Weymouth Town Councillors and in particular Cllr D Northam for their hard work. Cllr D Northam spoke in support of the recommendation and thanked all those involved.

Decision

- (a) That the Council 'makes' the Weymouth Neighbourhood Plan (as set out in Appendix A of the report of 29 January 2026) part of the statutory development plan for the Weymouth Neighbourhood Area, replacing the made Sutton Poyntz Neighbourhood Plan.
- (b) That the Council offers its congratulations to Weymouth Town Council and members of the Neighbourhood Plan Group for producing a successful neighbourhood plan.

Reason for the decision

To formally 'make' the Weymouth Neighbourhood Plan part of the statutory development plan for the Weymouth Neighbourhood Area, replacing the made Sutton Poyntz Neighbourhood Plan. In addition, to recognise the significant amount of work undertaken by the Town Council and members of the Neighbourhood Plan Group in preparing the plan and to congratulate the Council and the Group on their success.

37. Melbury Abbas and Cann Neighbourhood Development Plan

The Cabinet Member for Planning and Emergency Planning set out the report on the Melbury Abbas and Cann Neighbourhood Plan that had been subject to independent examination and referendum.

In proposing the recommendation, the Cabinet Member for Planning and Emergency Planning took the opportunity to thank Melbury Abbas and Cann Parish Council and members of the Neighbourhood Plan Group for producing a successful plan.

Cllr R Hope seconded the motion.

Cllr J Somper spoke in support of the recommendation and took the opportunity to thank the parish council and volunteers for their hard work in shaping the plan.

Decision

- (a) That the Council 'makes' the Melbury Abbas and Cann Neighbourhood Development Plan (as set out in Appendix A of the report to cabinet 29 January 2026) part of the statutory development plan for the Melbury Abbas and Cann Neighbourhood Area.
- (b) That the Council offers its congratulations to Melbury Abbas and Cann Parish Council and members of the Neighbourhood Plan Group for producing a successful neighbourhood plan.

Reason for the decision

To formally 'make' the Melbury Abbas and Cann Neighbourhood Development Plan part of the statutory development plan for the Melbury Abbas and Cann Neighbourhood Area. In addition, to recognise the significant amount of work undertaken by the Parish Council and members of the Neighbourhood Plan Group in preparing the plan and to congratulate the Council and the Group on their success.

38. **Urgent items**

There were no urgent items considered at the meeting.

39. **Exempt Business**

There was no exempt business scheduled for this meeting.

Appendix 1 - Public Participation

Appendix 2 Statement of the Leader of the Council

Duration of meeting: 6.30 - 8.13 pm

Chairman

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Cabinet 29 January 2026

Public Participation

Questions

1. Question from James Gillet

PREAMBLE

I have reviewed Section 11.1e of the Transforming Public and Community Transport report, which sets an 'hourly' target for core routes. In the Dorchester and Weymouth areas, busy services like the 1, 2, and 10 already run every 12–15 minutes; reducing these would be a major downgrade for this vital public transport link. Furthermore, residents are frustrated by First's aging fleet of buses and the lack of reliable, frequent direct links to major regional hubs like Poole and Yeovil, which restricts local job opportunities. I also support cheaper fares for 16-25s and a unified ticketing system to modernise our network in line with the high-quality Morebus model seen elsewhere in Dorset.

QUESTION

To achieve the modern vision in Section 4.3, will the Council commit to maintaining 10–15 minute high-frequency targets for busy urban routes across both Dorchester and Weymouth and include requirements for newer vehicles, a restored frequent and direct link to Poole and Yeovil for commuters, and a unified ticketing system rather than applying the lower hourly standard to these vital services?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Place Services

Thank you for your question. The Cabinet report does not propose reducing the frequency of any bus routes including the 1, 2 and 10 in Weymouth. We are seeking to find solutions in rural areas, where services are not commercially viable. Our strategic approach aims to build a more reliable and modern network, including working with operators to protect well used frequent routes, introducing newer and more accessible vehicles, strengthening regional links, and developing simpler and more affordable fares. Community input will be central to shaping the detailed proposals through the Full Business Case and consultation later this year. The next stage will examine these improvements in detail to ensure Dorset's network meets local needs, including the concerns you have raised.

2. Question from Karen Tippens

Statement on Use of Council Tax Where Section 106 Funding Exists

The proposed 12% increase in Shaftesbury Town Council's precept is not being driven by unavoidable costs, but by the use of Council Tax to fund projects that already have allocated Section 106 developer contributions and which, under proper governance, should not be impacting residents' council tax at all.

1. First, the Mampitts Hub.

Dorset Council Cabinet agreed in October 2025 that this project would be subject to strict project cost control and that early drawdown of Section 106 funds would be available. Despite this, over £60,000 of Council Tax has already been used to fund Mampitts Hub costs, with only a partial Section 106 reimbursement claimed. There is no evidence of a ringfenced project account, no clear reconciliation between Council Tax and Section 106 expenditure, and no published cost-control framework, despite Cabinet direction.

2. Second, Wincombe Recreational Park.

Dorset Council Cabinet papers confirm that £200,000 of Section 106 funding has been agreed with Shaftesbury Town Council for this project. Despite this, the Town Council has added £164,000 of Council Tax to the precept for Wincombe, without published project plans, delivery dates, or cost breakdowns. This represents Council Tax being used in place of developer contributions, contrary to the purpose of Section 106.

3. Third, the Youth Club.

There is £128,000 of Section 106 funding allocated, yet the Town Council has added £5,000 of Council Tax for this project. Again, Council Tax is being used where ringfenced developer funding already exists.

In addition, the precept includes:

- £19,000 in 'Professional and Legal' Cost Centre for “Dorset Council devolution”, with no definition, scope, or supporting agreement published.
- £25,000 for High Street traffic management under Ear Marked Reserve, despite Dorset Highways previously indicating that surveys could be undertaken at no cost to the Town Council.

Taken together, these decisions show a pattern where Council Tax is being used as a substitute for Section 106 funding, rather than Section 106 being used to reduce pressure on residents' bills.

This matters because Section 106 contributions are intended to be spent as a priority in towns like Shaftesbury, which have experienced rapid housing development. When substantial Section 106 funding is allocated and available, Council Tax precepts should not be rising to fund the same infrastructure.

Question to Dorset Council Cabinet

Given the Cabinet decision of October 2025 requiring strict cost control on the Mampitts Hub, and given the confirmed allocation of Section 106 funding for Wincombe Recreation Park and the Youth Club, what action will Dorset Council now take to ensure that Section 106 funds are properly ringfenced, transparently accounted for, and used to reduce — rather than increase — Council Tax for Shaftesbury residents

Response from the Cabinet Member for Planning and Emergency Planning

Thank you for your question. Dorset Council recognises the importance of good partnership working with town and parish councils and other organisations to deliver positive outcomes for Dorset's communities. Therefore, Section 106 funding can be accessed by town and parish councils and some third-party organisations to deliver infrastructure. A protocol exists to support the review of projects and the eligibility of

organisations. This process helps ensure that the transfer of contributions is transparent and fair to all.

Section 106 funding is a form of developer contribution which is secured through the planning process. In some cases, single contributions are insufficient to fund major transport, education, flood or community infrastructure, and new development will only be expected to pay for its fair and reasonable share. The use of s106 funds does not prevent the combined use of other sources of funding, as long as the s106 funding is spent on the infrastructure/purposes for which it was collected. When combined with other relevant contributions, government grants, regional funding or borrowing, s106 funds allow infrastructure to be delivered at scale that genuinely supports growth.

With regard the setting of local Town Council precepts, this decision lies with the Town Councillors so I can't comment on the basis for their decisions nor how they choose to allocate resources.

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The North Dorset Trailway Network is a registered charity working closely with Dorset Council to establish an uninterrupted off-road route (the Trailway) along the course of the old Somerset & Dorset Railway line, through the centre of Dorset between Stalbridge and Corfe Mullen, eventually to connect with the Castleman Trailway at Broadstone. The section of Trailway between Sturminster Newton and Spetisbury is of course now well established, and we are encouraged by the fact that the recent joint Dorset Council and BCP Council Local Transport Plan consultation included specific reference to completing the Trailway as a strategic objective. The Somerset & Dorset Railway once linked Bath and Poole and its closure in 1966 was one of the most controversial cuts of the Beeching Plan. Its repurposing today as an accessible cross country trailway could potentially be transformative. Most of the station sites may have been redeveloped, but the route of the old railway between the urban areas remains to a very large extent free of obstruction. The cost of repurposing a derelict railway route as a trailway for inclusive community use is significantly less costly than comparable travel schemes.

The Dorset Council Greenspace Service team, and all officers and councillors we meet or speak with are very supportive of our aims and appreciate the tremendous amenity and value to public health and wellbeing that a completed Trailway would provide. Proactive extension strategies are in place, both northwards from Sturminster Newton and southwards from Spetisbury. Completion of the southern extension to Sturminster Marshall would leave a tantalisingly 1.4 mile short gap to the A31, south of which the old railway trackbed is already Dorset Council owned and now used as a permissive path. Completion would also enable a far safer traffic free link between Wimborne and Blandford than the existing NCN 25 through the Stour Valley which utilises country lanes via Cowgrove, White Mill, Shapwick and Tarrant Crawford. This route can often be intimidating due to speeding traffic using the narrow lanes as a 'rat run'.

We welcome the proposed approval of the Active Travel Infrastructure Plan at today's Cabinet meeting. However, we are disappointed that the North Dorset Trailway, and its extensions north and south, have low, or non-existent profiles. With the increase in developments (and residents) in Stalbridge, the impetus to link with Sturminster Newton is overwhelming, yet this is not included. Spetisbury to Sturminster Marshall, where extensive new housing developments are proposed, and the new off-road section from Blandford St Mary to Wards Drove are both included as '**Long**' timescale schemes in the Blandford Forum delivery plan. We would therefore respectfully request that the priority of extending the North Dorset Trailway be increased. Thank you.

(447 words)

Mark Woolley

Secretary, North Dorset Trailway Network

Email: secretary@northdorsettrailway.org.uk

Tel: 07775 976559

Registered charity number 1145442

25th January 2026

Colleagues,

As we move into items **7 through 10**, we are brought right to the heart of our Council Plan and its four strategic priorities: **providing affordable and high-quality housing, growing our economy, supporting communities for all, and responding to the climate and nature crisis**. Tonight's sequence of reports shows how our investment, our planning, and our financial choices knit together to deliver tangible progress against each of those priorities.

Item 7, on *Climate Programme capital workstreams*, demonstrates our continued leadership in responding to the climate and nature emergency. The proposals to invest **£700k in additional solar PV** across our estate and **£1.3m in replacing obsolete streetlights with LEDs** directly accelerate our decarbonisation pathway—cutting emissions, reducing energy costs, and building a resilient, modern public estate. These projects are not just technical upgrades; they are enablers of a more sustainable Dorset, supporting cleaner air, safer streets, and long-term savings that protect frontline services. This is climate leadership in practice. [1](#)

Item 8, the *Active Travel Infrastructure Plan*, strengthens our commitment to **communities for all** and to creating places where people can move safely and confidently. With more than **700km of walking, wheeling and cycling corridors assessed** and a prioritised programme of improvements, the ATIP will open up active, healthy, low-carbon travel for residents of all ages. It supports safe routes to school, improves independence for those without access to a car, and helps reduce congestion and emissions. Crucially, having this plan in place unlocks future Active Travel England funding—ensuring Dorset remains competitive when bidding for national investment. This is infrastructure that supports health, inclusion, and climate action side by side.

Item 9, on *Transforming Public and Community Transport*, speaks directly to our priorities around **growing the economy** and **strengthening communities**. Dorset's dispersed rural geography means we must think differently about mobility. Endorsing this strategic direction allows us to develop a Full Business Case for a modern, integrated system—bringing together public transport, school transport, community transport and demand-responsive services into a coherent network designed with and for our towns and parishes. This is a shift from fragmented provision to a genuine mobility partnership: giving people better access to work, learning, healthcare and community life; tackling rural isolation; helping local businesses; and supporting a greener future through reduced car dependency.

Finally, **Item 10**, our *Budget and Medium-Term Financial Plan*, is the financial framework that makes all this delivery possible. Despite a very challenging national funding picture—and a continued, significant reliance on locally raised Council Tax—the proposed **2026/27 budget of £482.6m** protects essential services, prioritises our Council Plan commitments, and embeds the strategic investments we have just heard about. It includes substantial transformation, £18m in savings and efficiencies, and a responsible approach to risk and reserves. This is how we ensure financial sustainability

while still making progress on housing, the economy, community resilience and climate action.

Taken together, items 7 to 10 show a council that is **clear in its priorities, responsible in its decision-making**, and **ambitious for Dorset's future**. Whether it is reducing our carbon footprint, enabling more sustainable travel, rethinking rural mobility, or safeguarding our financial stability, these papers demonstrate how we are delivering—practically, transparently, and in partnership—for the residents and communities we serve.

The Cabinet Forward Plan - April to July 2026

Explanatory Note:

This Forward Plan contains future items to be considered by the Cabinet and Council. It is published 28 days before the next meeting of the Committee. The plan includes items for the meeting including key decisions. Each item shows if it is 'open' to the public or to be considered in a private part of the meeting.

Definition of Key Decisions

Key decisions are defined in Dorset Council's Constitution as decisions of the Cabinet which are likely to -

- (a) to result in the relevant local authority incurring expenditure which is, or the making of savings which are, significant having regard to the relevant local authority's budget for the service or function to which the decision relates (**Thresholds - £500k**); or
- (b) to be significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more wards or electoral divisions in the area of the relevant local authority."

By determining the meaning of "*significant*" for these purposes the Council will have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State in accordance with section 9Q of the Local Government Act 2000 Act. Officers will consult with lead members to determine significance and sensitivity.

Cabinet Members and Portfolios 2024/25

Nick Ireland	Leader and Cabinet Member for Climate, Performance and Safeguarding
Richard Biggs	Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Property & Assets and Economic Growth
Jon Andrews	Place Services
Shane Bartlett	Planning and Emergency Planning
Simon Clifford	Finance & Capital Strategy
Ryan Hope	Customer, Culture and Community Engagement
Steve Robinson	Adult Social Care
Clare Sutton	Children's Services, Education & Skills
Gill Taylor	Health and Housing.
Ben Wilson	Corporate Development and Transformation

Subject / Decision	Decision Maker	Date the Decision is Due	Other Committee(s) consulted and Date of meeting(s)	Portfolio Holder	Officer Contact

April

Housing Standards Enforcement Policy & Statement of Principles for Determining Financial Penalties Key Decision - Yes Public Access - Open To agree the adoption of a new Housing Standards Enforcement Policy & Statement of Principles for Determining Financial Penalties to account for legislative changes being enacted under the Renters Rights Act 2025.	Decision Maker Cabinet	Decision Date 21 Apr 2026	People and Health Overview Committee	Cabinet Member for Health and Housing	<i>Steven March, Service Manager for Housing Standards</i> <i>steven.march@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk, Iain Sim, Interim Corporate Director for Housing</i> <i>ian.sim@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk</i> <i>Executive Director, People - Adults (Jonathan Price)</i>
Local Authority Housing Fund (LAHF) 4 Key Decision - Yes Public Access - Open In the Spending Review in June, the Government announced a fourth round of the Local Authority Housing Fund (LAHF) 4 committing £950m to deliver a four-year programme nationally (from April 2026). This report will inform Cabinet that DC had been awarded £662,000 of capital grant and £4, 796 of revenue grant from MHLG to acquire 4 properties.	Decision Maker Cabinet	Decision Date 21 Apr 2026		Cabinet Member for Health and Housing	<i>Paul Derrien, Housing Enabling and Delivery Manager</i> <i>paul.derrien@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk, Vikki Jeffrey, Senior Housing Funding and Delivery Officer</i> <i>vikki.jeffrey@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk</i> <i>Executive Director, People - Adults (Jonathan Price)</i>

Subject / Decision	Decision Maker	Date the Decision is Due	Other Committee(s) consulted and Date of meeting(s)	Portfolio Holder	Officer Contact
Two of these properties were to be used as settled housing for refugees from Afghanistan and the other two to be used as temporary accommodation for those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.					
Dorset National Landscape grant funding 2026-2029 Key Decision - Yes Public Access - Open In January 2026 the hosted Partnership team for the Dorset National Landscape should be notified of its grant allocation from Defra for 2026-2027 and indicative allocations for 2027-2029. All support delivery of the Management Plan previously adopted by Cabinet.	Decision Maker Cabinet	Decision Date 21 Apr 2026		Cabinet Member for Planning and Emergency Planning	<i>Mike Garrity, Corporate Director for Planning</i> <i>mike.garrity@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk, Tom Munro, Dorset National Landscape Manager</i> <i>tom.munro@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk</i> <i>Executive Director, Place (Jan Britton)</i>
Transformation Update Key Decision - Yes Public Access - Open Sets out the context, progress to date, and the rationale for targeted investment for transformation. This will ensure Dorset Council remains resilient and fit for the future, full aligned with Council Plan priorities and our medium-term financial plan.	Decision Maker Cabinet	Decision Date 21 Apr 2026		Cabinet Member for Corporate Development and Transformation	<i>Nina Coakley, Head of Transformation and Design</i> <i>nina.coakley@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk, Lisa Cotton, Corporate Director for Transformation, Customer and Cultural Services</i> <i>lisa.cotton@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk</i> <i>Chief Executive</i>

Subject / Decision	Decision Maker	Date the Decision is Due	Other Committee(s) consulted and Date of meeting(s)	Portfolio Holder	Officer Contact
Strategic Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) - prioritisation of CIL funded infrastructure projects Key Decision - Yes Public Access - Open To provide an update on arrangements for spending strategic CIL. The report will address the clarification of current CIL funding commitments and the identification and prioritisation of CIL funded projects to be supported through the Capital Programme process.	Decision Maker Cabinet	Decision Date 21 Apr 2026		Cabinet Member for Planning and Emergency Planning	<i>Andrew Galpin, Infrastructure & Delivery Planning Manager andrew.galpin@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk Executive Director, Place (Jan Britton)</i>
Culture Strategy 2021 - 2026 Key Decision - Yes Public Access - Open Strategy document to shape the future direction of arts, culture and heritage across the Dorset Council area.	Decision Maker Cabinet	Decision Date 21 Apr 2026	Place and Resources Overview Committee 26 Mar 2026	Cabinet Member for Customer, Culture and Community Engagement	<i>Paul Rutter, Service Manager for Leisure, Arts and Cultural Services paul.rutter@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk Executive Director, Place (Jan Britton)</i>
Leisure Facilities Strategy Key Decision - Yes Public Access - Part exempt Strategy report to determine the future of leisure centre provision.	Decision Maker Cabinet	Decision Date 21 Apr 2026	Place and Resources Overview Committee 26 Mar 2026	Cabinet Member for Customer, Culture and Community Engagement	<i>Paul Rutter, Service Manager for Leisure, Arts and Cultural Services paul.rutter@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk Executive Director, Place (Jan Britton)</i>

Subject / Decision	Decision Maker	Date the Decision is Due	Other Committee(s) consulted and Date of meeting(s)	Portfolio Holder	Officer Contact
May					
Financial Provision for the Voluntary Community Sector Key Decision - Yes Public Access - Open The current 5-year financial agreement for the VCS will be coming to an end in October 2026. This paper will propose the new support for	Decision Maker Cabinet	Decision Date 19 May 2026	People and Health Overview Committee	Cabinet Member for Customer, Culture and Community Engagement	<i>Laura Cornette, Business Partner - Communities and Partnerships</i> <i>Laura.cornette@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk, Jennifer Lewis, Head of Strategic Communications and Engagement</i> <i>jennifer.lewis@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk</i> <i>Executive Director, Corporate Development - Section 151 Officer</i>

Private/Exempt Items for Decision

Each item in the plan above marked as 'private' will refer to one of the following paragraphs.

1. Information relating to any individual.
2. Information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual.
3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).
4. Information relating to any consultations or negotiations, or contemplated consultations or negotiations, in connection with any labour relations matter arising between the authority or a Minister of the Crown and employees of, or office holders under, the authority.
5. Information in respect of which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained in legal proceedings.
6. Information which reveals that the shadow council proposes:-
 - (a) to give under any enactment a notice under or by virtue of which requirements are imposed on a person; or
 - (b) to make an order or direction under any enactment.
7. Information relating to any action taken or to be taken in connection with the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime.

Cabinet

3 March 2026

Biodiversity Duty report For Decision

Cabinet Member:

Cllr N Ireland, Leader of the Council, Climate, Performance and Safeguarding

Local Councillor(s): All Councillors

Senior Leadership Team:

J Britton, Executive Director for Place Services

Report author and job title: Mike Garrity, Corporate Director for Planning, Bridget Betts, Environment, Policy & Partnership Manager

Email: mike.garrity@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk, bridget.betts@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

Statutory Authority:

Report status: Public (the exemption paragraph is N/A)

1. Executive summary

- 1.1. This report presents the biodiversity duty report and its obligations to Cabinet for formal approval prior to its publication and submission to Defra.
- 1.2. Dorset Council has a statutory duty under the Environment Act 2021 to conserve and enhance biodiversity. This duty requires the Council to embed biodiversity considerations into its policies, plans, and decision-making processes, and to publish a Biodiversity Report with an end date of no later than 1 January 2026 (published within 12 weeks of this date).
- 1.2 The strengthened duty builds on the original Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 and introduces a requirement for public authorities to take strategic action and report on progress. Dorset Council's approach is being coordinated through the Natural Environment Team, working across departments to identify current activity, address gaps, and future ambitions. This includes aligning with the Dorset Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS), which provides a key mechanism for delivering biodiversity enhancement at scale.

- 1.3. Delivering on this duty has wide-ranging benefits, including improved climate resilience, enhanced ecosystem services, and positive impacts on public health and wellbeing. It also supports economic development, community engagement, and the Council's leadership role in environmental stewardship.
- 1.4. Promoting and enhancing biodiversity also delivers against the council plan priority of responding to the climate and nature crisis and the Local Nature Recovery strategy.
- 1.5. Failure to meet the requirements of the biodiversity duty presents legal, reputational, and environmental risks.
- 1.6. Place and Resources overview committee have recommended to cabinet the Biodiversity Duty report 2023 – 25. Comments and actions from the committee have been imputed into the final Biodiversity Duty report 2023-25.
- 1.7. Dorset Council's Biodiversity Duty report 2023-25 be viewed in appendix 1. It captures our policies, objectives, actions between December 2023 to December 2025, as well as our future actions and aspirations to conserve and enhance biodiversity over the next 5 years.
- 1.8. Regular monitoring and reporting will ensure transparency and accountability, while helping to secure future funding and partnership opportunities.

2. Recommendation(s)

- 2.1. Cabinet is requested to endorse Dorset Council's Biodiversity Duty Report 2023–25, authorising its publication and subsequent submission to Defra.

3. Reason for the recommendation(s)

- 3.1 To ensure that Dorset Council meets its statutory requirement to prepare, approve and publish a Biodiversity Duty Report for the 2023–25 period and submit it to Defra by the required deadline

4. The report

- 4.1 Biodiversity is the variety of life on earth and includes all species of plants and animals and the natural systems that support them. Biodiversity is a core component of sustainable development, underpinning economic development and prosperity, and has an important role to play in developing locally distinctive and sustainable communities.

- 4.2 Conserving biodiversity is essential for addressing climate change and sustaining vital ecosystem services like food production, flood management, pollination, and clean air and water. It also supports species and habitat restoration and protection, while offering broader benefits for tourism, economic growth, health, community development, and social cohesion.
- 4.3 By 2030, the government has committed to halting the decline in species abundance and protecting 30% of UK land. By 2042, it aims to increase species abundance by at least 10% from 2030 levels (surpassing those of 2022), restore or create at least 500,000 hectares of diverse wildlife-rich habitats, reduce the risk of species extinction, and restore 75% of the UK's one million hectares of terrestrial and freshwater protected sites to favourable condition. Dorset Council has built these commitments into its council plan priority of responding to the climate and nature crisis, the Natural Environment, Climate and Ecology strategy and the Local Nature Recovery strategy.
- 4.4 Public authorities have a statutory duty under the Environment Act 2021 to consider and take action to enhance biodiversity, building on the original NERC Act 2006 duty to conserve biodiversity. This strengthened duty requires authorities to set strategic objectives, implement actions, and report progress through Biodiversity Reports, including on Biodiversity Net Gain and Local Nature Recovery Strategies. Authorities must also cooperate with Natural England's species and site strategies, aligning with national policy on nature recovery and environmental improvement.
- 4.5 Public authorities must produce a Biodiversity Report for the first reporting period which ends on 1 January 2026. The report must be published within 12 weeks of this date (by 26 March 2026). The report must cover:
- i. a summary of the action taken to comply with the biodiversity duty
 - ii. plans to comply with the biodiversity duty in the next reporting period
 - iii. actions carried out to meet BNG obligations
 - iv. details of BNG resulting (or expected to result) from biodiversity gain plans the LPA has approved
 - v. plans to meet BNG obligations in the next reporting period
 - vi. any other information considered appropriate
- 4.5 Dorset Council have a key role to play in conserving biodiversity, through their work in: developing and implementing external and internal policies and strategies. For Dorset Council (DC) this could involve:
- i. administering the planning system
 - ii. managing DC land and buildings
 - iii. developing and maintaining infrastructure
 - iv. engaging with business and the public
 - v. conducting research and managing information
 - vi. making decisions about procurement

vii. implementing economic, environmental, and social programmes.

4.7 The timetable and steps for this work is set out in table 1:

Step 1	Consider what can be done by Dorset Council to conserve and enhance biodiversity	By 1 January 2024
Step 2	Agree policies and specific objectives based on the consideration	As soon as possible after 1 January 2024
Step 3	Act to deliver the policies and achieve the objectives and re-consider the actions taken	Within 5 years of the original consideration (by 1 January 2029)
Step 4	Finalise a report of action taken to comply Publish the report	By 1 January 2026 – 26 March 2026 (and then every five years)

Table 1 – timescale and steps relating to the biodiversity duty

4.10 The work is led by the Corporate Director for Planning with the work being coordinated by the Natural Environment Team, working with all relevant teams to ensure that Dorset Council has a robust process where our biodiversity duty is considered across all our services.

4.11 The Biodiversity Duty report 2023-25 can be viewed in appendix 1

5. Alternative options considered

5.1 There are no other alternative options for this as we have a statutory duty to comply with the biodiversity duty.

6. Legal considerations

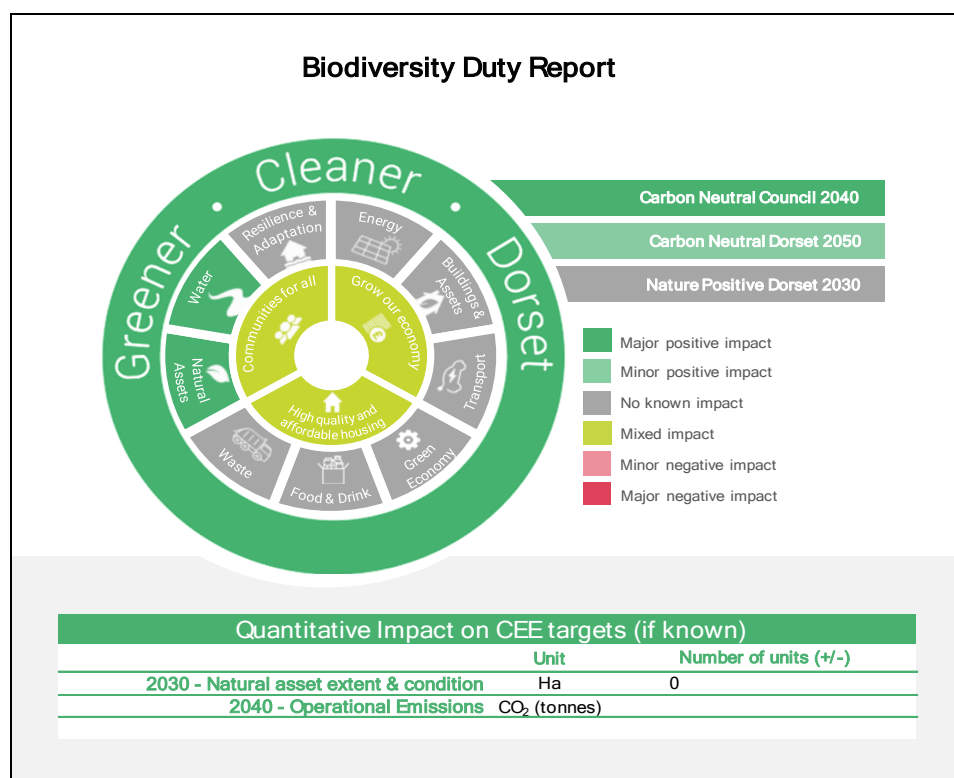
6.1 The legal considerations for Dorset Council in relation to the biodiversity duty include a statutory requirement under the Environment Act 2021 (amending the NERC Act 2006) to not only conserve but also enhance biodiversity through strategic planning and action. This includes setting and implementing biodiversity objectives, finalising a Biodiversity Report by 1 January 2026 (and published within 3 months – by 26 March 2026). It needs to be reviewed every five years thereafter and having regard to Natural England's species conservation strategies and protected site strategies. Failure to comply may result in legal, regulatory, and reputational risks.

7. Financial implications

7.1. Not applicable

8. Natural environment, climate & ecology implications

- 8.1 Carrying out Dorset Council's biodiversity duty has important implications for the natural environment, climate, and ecology and supporting nature recovery. It also directly delivers against one of the four council plan priorities, responding to the climate and nature crisis.



9. Well-being and health implications

- 9.1 There are no specific health and wellbeing implications of this report. However, delivering actions set out in the Dorset Council's biodiversity duty has positive health and well-being and implications by increasing access to nature-rich environments, which are proven to reduce stress, improve mental health, encourage physical activity, and support social cohesion.
- 9.2 Enhancing and recovering biodiversity contributes to cleaner air and water, climate resilience, and more attractive, liveable communities - all of which support long-term public health outcomes.

10. Other implications

- 10.1 There are no other specific implications contained in this report.

11. Risk implications

- 11.1 **HAVING CONSIDERED:** the risks associated with this decision; the level of risk has been identified as:

Current Risk: High

Residual Risk: Low

- 11.2. Due to the known high level of public interest in the nature emergency agenda and the commitment to show the public our commitment to biodiversity, to not do endorse and support this should be considered a high reputational risk to Dorset Council.

12. Equalities

- 12.1 There are no specific equalities implications for this report itself.

12. Appendices

- 12.1 Appendix 1 - Biodiversity Duty Report 2023-25

Appendix 2 – Accessible table showing impacts

ACCESSIBLE TABLE SHOWING IMPACTS	
Natural Environment, Climate & Ecology Strategy Commitments	Impact
Energy	No known impact
Buildings & Assets	No known impact
Transport	No known impact
Green Economy	No known impact
Food & Drink	No known impact
Waste	No known impact
Natural Assets & Ecology	major positive impact
Water	major positive impact
Resilience and Adaptation	No known impact
Corporate Plan Aims	Impact
Grow our economy	neutral
High-quality and affordable housing	neutral
Communities for all	neutral

13. Background papers

- 13.1 Not applicable

14. Report sign-off

- 14.1 This report has been through the internal report clearance process and has been signed off by the Director for Legal and Democratic (Monitoring Officer), the Executive Director for Corporate Development (Section 151 Officer) and the appropriate Portfolio Holder(s)



Dorset Council Biodiversity Report 2023-2025

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Foreword

This report marks an important milestone: Dorset Council's first Biodiversity Report spanning all council services.

Our Council Plan recognises that a thriving natural environment is fundamental to healthy communities. By connecting people with nature, we can ensure that everyone across Dorset has access to species-rich green spaces, resilient landscapes, and abundant wildlife.

In 2024, we declared a Nature Emergency. This was not a symbolic gesture; it was a clear commitment to act. We face profound challenges, but we also have a responsibility, and an opportunity, to protect and restore the natural environment for current and future generations.

This report brings together the effort, expertise, and passion of teams across the council. It highlights the work being done to create new space for nature, enhance and protect existing habitats, communicate the value of biodiversity, and help people connect more deeply with the natural world around them.

I am immensely proud to lead a council that is so committed to this work. Protecting nature is not the responsibility of a single service; it is a shared endeavour, and this report shows how we are rising to that challenge.

Cllr Nick Ireland

Leader of Dorset Council



1. Dorset Council and the Biodiversity Duty

1.1. About the authority

Dorset Council is a unitary authority, created in 2019 to deliver all local government services across the county of Dorset (excluding BCP Council area). It combined the former county and district councils into a single organisation. Dorset Council serves approximately 379,000 people over an area of 2491 km².

The council has 82 elected councillors and operates a Leader and Cabinet governance model, supported by a Chief Executive and senior leadership team. Its headquarters are located at County Hall, Dorchester, DT1 1XJ.

Dorset Council's functions include education, social care, planning, highways, waste services, environmental protection and stewardship of Dorset's natural environment, carried out within the governance framework set out in its [Constitution](#).



Figure 1 Nature-friendly planting outside County Hall (credit: Steve Wallis)

1.2. The Biodiversity Duty

Dorset Council must report on the policies, objectives and actions the council has taken to conserve and enhance biodiversity, to comply with the [Biodiversity Duty](#) strengthened in the Environment Act 2021.

1.2.1. Reporting period

Following the council's Biodiversity Duty First Considerations in December 2023, the reporting period for this first Biodiversity Report is December 2023 to December 2025. After this, the end date of each reporting period must be within 5 years of the previous reporting period.

1.3. Our top biodiversity achievements

Figure 2 outlines some of our top biodiversity achievements in this reporting period, details of which can be found throughout the report.

Nature is a top priority

- Dorset Local Nature Recovery **Strategy** published
- Nature and climate one of the 4 priorities in the Dorset Council **plan**

Lots of people involved

- **28** teams or services across the council reporting actions to conserve or enhance biodiversity
- **299** members of the Nature Recovery Dorset network and growing
- **138k** visitor interactions at our country parks (Apr24-Sep25)

Benefits for wildlife and people

Space for nature a key part of **social care, education** and **housing** projects. For example:

- Edible kitchen gardens in **schools** and inclusion hubs
- Wildlife-friendly gardens in **extra care housing** and **supported living**
- 617 children involved in **tree planting** and **beach cleans**
- Nature-based **day opportunities** for older adults and those with complex needs

Habitat creation and enhancement

(2023- 2025)

- **4769** trees planted
- **6005m** hedgerow planted
- **3180m²** shrubs planted
- **345702m²** wildflower seed planting
- **5060m²** wetland creation
- **160140m²** invasive and non-native species removal
- **25** natural flood management projects
- **40%** reduction in glyphosate use for highways weed management
- **62%** of urban verges managed to enhance their value for nature
- **122** hectares of land management change to deliver nutrient mitigation
- **46** hectares of Suitable Alternative Natural Green Space (SANG)

Investing in nature

(2023-2025)

- **£9.18M** approx. investment in nature through Countryside Stewardship agreements, Defra Capital Grants, National Landscape funding and the Local Nutrient Mitigation Fund.

Figure 2 our top biodiversity achievements

2. Biodiversity in Council-wide objectives

This section shows how biodiversity has been considered within council-wide policies, plans and strategies between December 2023 to December 2025, and future actions that are going to be implemented or an aspiration for implementation in the next five years.

2.1. Dorset Council Plan 2024 - 2029

<i>Policies, objectives and actions</i> <i>(December 2023 –2025)</i>	<i>Future actions</i> <i>(January 2026 – 2031)</i>
- Responding to the climate and nature crisis is one of four priorities in the Dorset Council Plan - The plan has a vision for a more sustainable Dorset, including helping nature to recover - The plan sets a strategic approach to halting nature decline, by working in collaboration to take immediate action to help protect and enhance our land, rivers, and seas for wildlife	- The Plan commits to several actions relevant to the duty, including: - Implement Dorset local nature recovery strategy - Develop a climate adaptation plan for Dorset and the council - Support sustainable farming - Work with water companies on water quality and pollution - Renew the Rights of Way Improvement Plan - Continue to support Dorset Coast Forum and Litter Free Dorset - Embed nature recovery within our contracts - Ensure the climate and nature priority is a major focus of delivery and shapes how we allocate resources and align service delivery

Impacts, evaluation and monitoring

- The plan commits to the following targets:
 - 30% of our land to be in positive management for nature by 2030
 - 80% of our urban verges will be managed to enhance their value for nature by 2030
 - improve 300 miles of the Rights of Way network, making it more accessible to connect people's access to nature by 2030
 - 70% of our county farms land will be managed using sustainable farming practices that balance food production and nature by 2030
 - 79,000 hectares of land across Dorset Council and BCP council areas involved contributes to nature recovery through the Nature Recovery Dorset network by 2030
- Monitoring of progress against these Council Plan targets is reported on a [performance dashboard and in progress reports](#)

Challenges for future delivery

- Covered in the relevant functions below

2.2. Natural Environment, Climate and Ecology Strategy 2023 to 25 Refresh

<i>Policies, objectives and actions</i> <i>(December 2023 –2025)</i>	<i>Future actions</i> <i>(January 2026 – 2031)</i>
• Biodiversity and nature recovery are one of three key pillars to the council’s Natural Environment, Climate and Ecology Strategy 2023 to 25 Refresh • Nature integrates through all 9 of the strategy’s missions, with mission 8 focusing on natural assets and nature-based solutions • Actions taken include: ○ Co-produced Dorset local nature recovery strategy ○ Established the community tree fund ○ Published a new county farms strategy ○ Supported farmers through Farming in Protected Landscapes ○ Developed and expanded highway verge programme	• Nature-based solutions for climate mitigation (protecting, enhancing and expanding natural climate stores) and adaptation (particularly natural flood and overheating measures) • Use nature to deal with residual emissions that the council will have, to ensure that its operations become carbon neutral • Support sustainable farming • Increase focus on nature within the climate and ecology operational group • Refine approach to monitoring nature recovery across the council to increase consistency and clarity, linking this with our new role in county-wide monitoring of the local nature recovery strategy

Impacts, evaluation and monitoring

- Progress on the strategy is reported bi-annually, the most recent [Climate and Nature Autumn/Winter 2025 report](#) had an increased focus on the council’s nature actions (pg. 26-37)

Challenges for future delivery

- Covered in the relevant functions below



Figure 3 Nature-rich highway verge (Credit: Ali Quinney)

2.3. Dorset Local Nature Recovery Strategy 2025

<i>Policies, objectives and actions</i> <i>(December 2023 –2025)</i>	<i>Future actions</i> <i>(January 2026 – 2031)</i>
- Facilitated collaborative process to prepare the strategy as responsible authority - Published Dorset’s local nature recovery strategy (LNRS) in December 2025	- Carry out the four key functions of the LNRS delivery role: - Lead and convene a delivery partnership - Embed LNRS into local decision making (including internally at Dorset Council) - Identify strategic projects and facilitate project development - Monitor and report on delivery of LNRS priorities - Continue working collaboratively with supporting authorities, BCP Council and Natural England - Work with neighbouring authorities to identify regional nature recovery opportunities, including across the Wessex Partnership region

Impacts, evaluation and monitoring

- Key metrics relating to Nature Recovery Dorset communications and engagement activities can be found in the [Dorset local nature recovery strategy consultation and engagement report](#)
- Approximately 41% of Dorset Council land is in the local habitat map that forms part of the strategy, with approx. 729ha in the 'nature areas of national importance' and approx. 1176ha in the 'high opportunity nature areas' (note: figures are approximate due to some council land being recorded as point/line data which is not comparable to the local habitat map data)
- Note: Dorset Council Pollinators Action Plan 2019 to 2024 outlined the council’s commitment to reduce the decline in pollinators and where possible enhance populations. The plan has not been renewed, as it is superseded by Dorset local nature recovery strategy. Actions to support pollinators are still being delivered across relevant functions

Challenges for future delivery

- Funding for the LNRS delivery role from Defra is only being agreed 1 year at a time



Figure 4 Local people and organisations inputting to the local nature recovery strategy at the Local Nature Partnership Annual Forum 2024

2.4. Sustainable Procurement Toolkit

<i>Policies, objectives and actions</i> <i>(December 2023 –2025)</i>	<i>Future actions</i> <i>(January 2026 – 2031)</i>
• A toolkit, policy, training and guidance has been prepared to support better integration of environmental sustainability within Dorset Council’s procurement activity • Based upon reviews of best practice and a survey of DC’s supplier base, this toolkit provides category-specific support on whole lifecycle assessments, supplier questions, tender clauses and KPIs relevant to nature recovery (alongside emissions, adaptation and waste & resources)	• Internal review of the toolkit to work towards adoption in early 2026 • Ongoing work to embed and review the toolkit/policy will become a core element of the Corporate Sustainability Officer role, supported by appropriate upskilling of our green champions network and other internal colleagues

Impacts, evaluation and monitoring

- None to report

Challenges for future delivery

- None to report

2.5. Climate and Nature Decision Wheel

<i>Policies, objectives and actions</i> <i>(December 2023 –2025)</i>	<i>Future actions</i> <i>(January 2026 – 2031)</i>
• Dorset Council has adopted a Decision-Making Wheel, which is a form of climate and nature impact assessment undertaken for any papers going to committees (excluding licensing and planning, transport appeals and staffing committees) • The wheel includes prompts to officers to consider opportunities to increase biodiversity, enhance land management or strengthen habitat connectivity	• To enable biodiversity to be considered and incorporated by more officers and councillors, we are: ○ Reviewing questions to embed nature recovery throughout all sections ○ Make different versions for strategic papers and operational papers ○ Provide an early-stage planning checklist to prompt colleagues of the sorts of questions they’ll need to answer later and provide contacts who can support them

Impacts, evaluation and monitoring

- Between 1st December 2023 and 31st December 2025, 175 proposals completed the climate and nature wheel questionnaire. 47 of the 175 proposals (26.8%) had an impact on land, water or the marine environment. Of those 47 proposals:

- 35 proposals (74.4%) brought land into positive management. Of those, 13 proposals knew the area of land it would bring into positive management and the total was 1521.5 hectares
- 35 proposals (74.4%) aimed to increase biodiversity
- 24 proposals (51.1%) stated that they would reduce habitat fragmentation and provide wildlife corridors
- 21 proposals (44.6%) stated that they would protect the soil from erosion
- 19 proposals stated that chemicals or fertilisers are currently used on the land. Of those, 18 proposals (94.7%) sought to reduce chemical use
- 9 proposals required the use of hazardous substances. All 9 of these proposals (100%) put adequate pollution prevention measures in place
- 23 proposals stated that the land involved was at risk of flooding, of those, 21 proposals (91%) reduced flood risk
- Please note, the findings above are based on the current questions in the wheel. From 2026, the questions are being updated to embed nature recovery throughout all sections of the questionnaire

Challenges for future delivery

- None to report

2.6. National Species Conservation Strategies and Protected Sites Strategies

<i>Policies, objectives and actions</i> <i>(December 2023 –2025)</i>	<i>Future actions</i> <i>(January 2026 – 2031)</i>
● The Natural Environment Team are joint lead with Devon County Council on Natural England’s Pilot Species Conservation Strategy for Hazel Dormice ● The Natural Environment Team are also part of a national group looking at species-specific pilots of Species Conservation Strategies	● Align policies and actions with emerging Protected Sites Strategies and Species Conservation Strategies as these are developed or published ● The Natural Environment Team will continue being part of Species Conservation Strategy pilots and development ● Ongoing conversation with Natural England to restart the preparation of the Jurassic Coast Protected Sites Strategy expected in 2027

Impacts, evaluation and monitoring

- None to report

Challenges for future delivery

- None to report



3. Biodiversity across relevant functions

This section shows how biodiversity has been considered and delivered across relevant functions, between December 2023 to December 2025, as well as future actions that are going to be implemented or an aspiration for implementation in the next five years.

3.1. Land and countryside

3.1.1. Greenspace, protected sites and parks

<i>Policies, objectives and actions</i> <i>(December 2023 –2025)</i>	<i>Future actions</i> <i>(January 2026 – 2031)</i>
- Dorset Council manages greenspaces and countryside sites in order to conserve and enhance (where possible) their biodiversity e.g. protected sites, parks, nature reserves and SANGs - Several countryside stewardship schemes have been delivered to enhance our Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), and other actions are taken with partners to improve site condition - Management plans are being prepared for all protected sites, with the largest sites prioritised to have plans first - Collaborative working between countryside/greenspace team and ecologists in the Natural Environment Team as required - Student placements and school & college group sessions have been delivered, providing young people with opportunities to learn about nature and landscape management - Country Park teams work with local farmers/landowners on grazing management, and some town councils to advise on local nature reserves - Work with the Dorset Environmental Records Centre (DERC) to log sightings of invasive non-native species. Using the Living Record software helps highways teams target problem sites and enables members of the public to also log sightings	- Continue all existing work as stated for 2023-25 In addition: - Move more of our Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) from unfavourable to favourable condition - Finalise management plans for all protected sites - Durlston Country Park to continue working with National Trust, Dorset Wildlife Trust and Natural England to get the National Nature Reserve extended along the Purbeck Coast

Impacts, evaluation and monitoring

- The countryside management section of the [Climate and Nature Autumn/Winter 2025 report](#) (pg 27 – 28) reports key figures on site management, tree planting, wildflower planting and invasive non-native species removal. The points below provide further detail on habitats, species, site condition and community engagement happening across our greenspaces and countryside sites
- Figure 6 shows a map of Dorset Council's countryside sites, around 70% (630ha) of these countryside sites contain priority habitat (habitats of principal importance)
 - Dorset Council's countryside sites map layer is available to view on [Dorset Explorer](#), along with Natural England's priority habitat layer
 - Dorset Council's countryside sites also feature in the land manager or project proposals layer in [Dorsets' nature recovery maps](#)

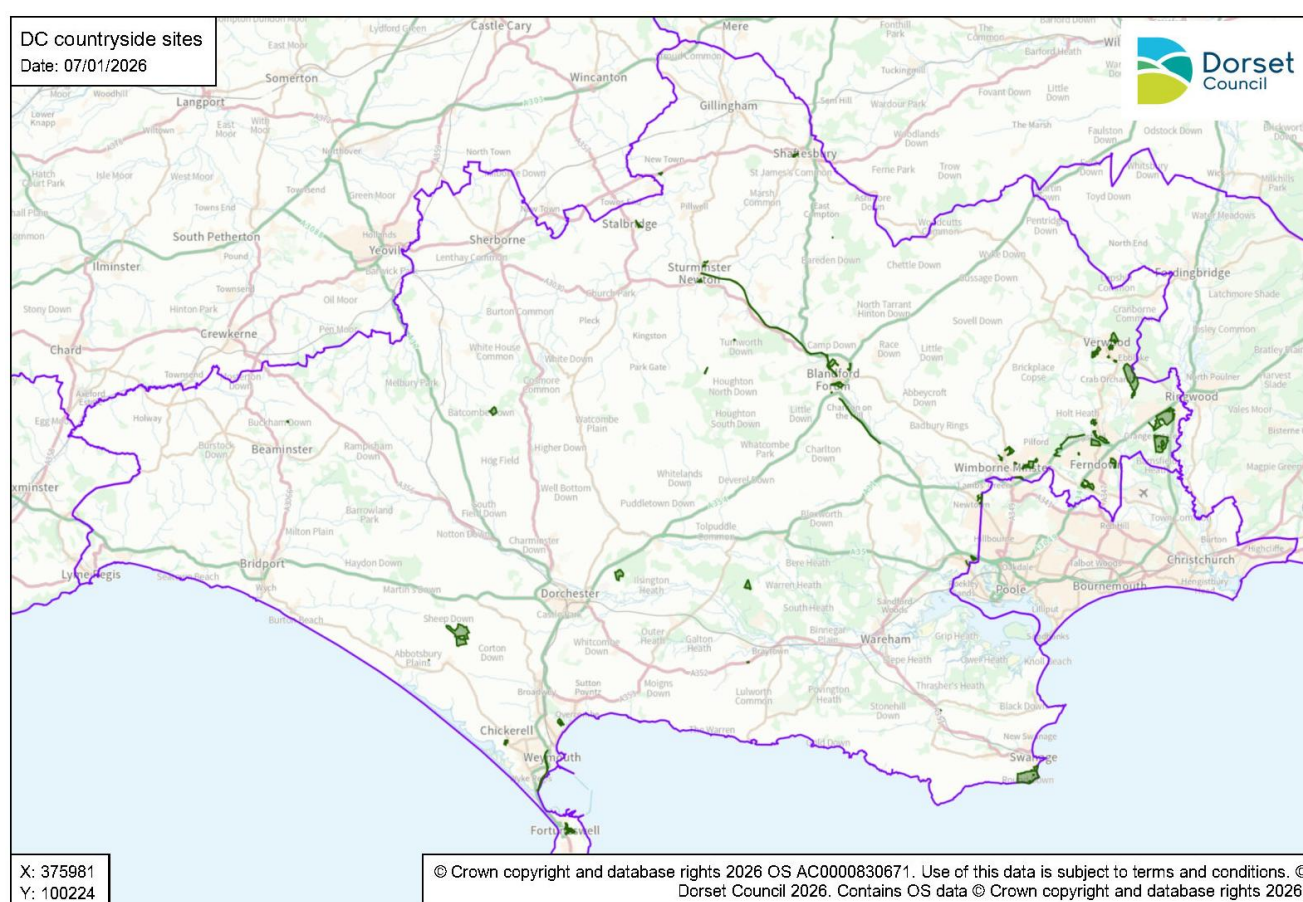


Figure 6 map of Dorset Council countryside sites as shown on Dorset Explorer

- Table 1 summarises the latest condition assessments of Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) managed by Dorset Council (see [Appendix A](#) for further detail)

Latest site condition assessment	Number of sites
Favourable	4
Unfavourable recovering	9
Unfavourable no change	1
Unfavourable declining / Part destroyed / Destroyed	0

Table 1 SSSI condition

- 74% of Dorset Council's total sites have a management plan. The remaining sites would benefit from a small financial investment to contract experts to produce long-term management plans to support sites to reach/maintain favourable status
- Dorset Council manages approximately 233ha of Sites of Nature Conservation Interest (SNCI) (also known as Local Wildlife Sites), covering around 2.5% of Dorset Council land and highway extent (note: figures are approximate due to some council land being recorded as point/line data which is not comparable to the local habitat map)
- Table 2 summarises highlights from wildlife surveys across the country parks, many of which are led or supported by local volunteers

Avon Heath Country park	• Increases in breeding bird territories have been recorded since major restoration work began in 2019 to 2024: ○ Dartford Warbler + 164% ○ Nightjar + 131% ○ Woodlark + 86% ○ Stonechat + 86% ○ Tree Pipit + 33%
Durlston Country park	• Increased invertebrate species count by over 600 species in surveys 2023-25, showcased in an exhibition • Glowworm numbers are currently stable • Four butterfly transects are now in place to record butterflies • Steady increase in Guillemot numbers • Cirl buntings arrived for the first time and bred in 2024 and 2025 • Regular bird ringing records show resident and passing species numbers, these are reported to national statistics
Thorncombe Wood and Hardy's Birthplace	• Silver studded blue butterflies recorded on site every year since 2018, other recent butterfly highlights include silver washed fritillary and purple Hairstreak eggs • Moths recorded on site since 2024 include the scarce lobster moth • 69 species of bird between December 2023-25, 5 of those recorded as breeding on site and 15 are red listed species at high risk of extinction • 3 species of bats recorded in 2025 and 5 species in 2023 (Dorset Bat Group have full data since 2015) • 3 juvenile dormice recorded in 2025 and 2023 • 6 reptile records since 2019 • Positive eDNA results for great crested newt in 2025
Moors Valley Country park	• 1219 butterflies recorded in 2024 (14 species) and 1760 butterflies recorded in 2025 (18 species) – with 2025 highlights including Essex skipper, pale clouded yellow, purple hairstreak and small tortoiseshell • 557 dragonflies recorded in 2023 (22 species) and 347 dragonflies recorded in 2024 (12 species) • 284 birds recorded in 2024 (58 species) • 324 birds recorded in 2023 (64 species) • Consistent bird survey numbers since 2012

Table 2 country park wildlife survey highlights

- Durlston meadows were recognised as high quality and chosen to collect and spread seeds in a local land regeneration programme
- Table 3 summarises environmental engagement across Dorset Council's 4 country parks between 01.04.24 to 30.09.25 (see [Appendix A](#) for further detail on engagement activities)

Volunteer hours	Formal interactions	Overall visitor interactions
25,056	12,734	138,707

Table 3 country park engagement highlights

Challenges for future delivery

- Possibility of change in central government potentially impacting funding availability
- Controlling regrowth of Pine, Bracken and Birch, along with some Rhododendron and Laurel, is very significant amount of work on recently 'restored' heathland SSSIs. For example, over the 280ha of Avon Heath, it is estimated that around 200ha is heathland, which means every 7 to 10 years the scrub regrowth is required to be removed, equating to 20 to 30 ha required every year - a serious challenge with only 3 to 4 estate staff

3.1.2. Roadside verges

Policies, objectives and actions (December 2023 –2025)	Future actions (January 2026 – 2031)
• Dorset Council roadside verge management balances biodiversity with road safety, and this effective method means many verges now have SNCI status for their biodiversity value • Reduced glyphosate use for managing weed growth on the highway network by 40% since 2024 and carried out alternative weed control trials • Love your verge campaign to highlight ecological value of roadside verges – multi-channel campaign featuring 100 road signs across the county	• Increase the number of our roadside verges that are recognised as Sites of Nature Conservation Interest (SNCIs) • Increase nature-friendly verge management across the county (currently 1.2million square meters) • Continue weed control trials and implement results

Impacts, evaluation and monitoring

- The countryside management section of the [Climate and Nature Autumn/Winter 2025 report](#) (pg 27 – 28) reports key figures on urban verge management and glyphosate use
- 62% of our urban verges managed to enhance their value for nature. Monitoring of progress against the target for 80% by 2030 is reported on the Council Plan [performance dashboard and progress reports](#)
- Dorset Council's verge management has been shared as best practice with other local authorities e.g. [Plantlife case study](#) and ASPE (Association for Public Service Excellence) seminar

Challenges for future delivery

- Identifying effective weed control alternatives to glyphosate

3.1.3. Rights of Way

<i>Policies, objectives and actions</i> <i>(December 2023 –2025)</i>	<i>Future actions</i> <i>(January 2026 – 2031)</i>
- Working with partners to maintain the rights of way network, to support access to the countryside - Dorset Council exercises its legal duty processing applications to change a public right of way and decide whether an order should be issued to make the change - Running the Dorset, Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Local Access Forum (DLAF) - Implementing the current Rights of Way Improvement Plan (RoWIP)	- Continue performing these regulatory functions - Review, update and implement the Rights of Way Improvement Plan (RoWIP)

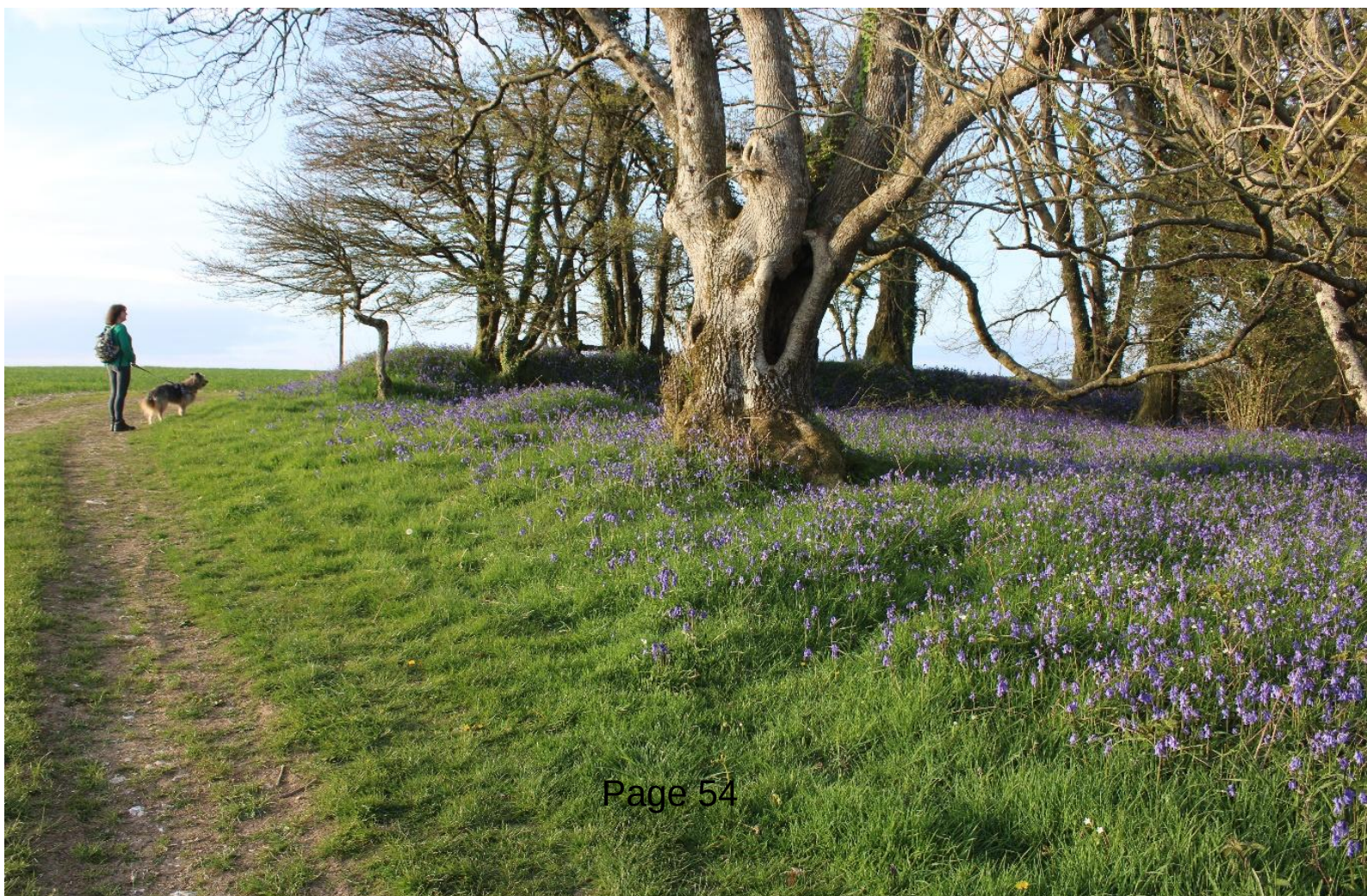
Impacts, evaluation and monitoring

- The countryside management section of the [Climate and Nature Autumn/Winter 2025 report](#) (pg 27 – 28) reports key figures on completed rights of way improvement

Challenges for future delivery

- Resources to implement the actions in the Rights of Way Improvement Plan (RoWIP)

Figure 7 Dog walker using Right of Way (credit: Steve Wallis)



3.1.4. Grounds and landscape

<i>Policies, objectives and actions</i> <i>(December 2023 –2025)</i>	<i>Future actions</i> <i>(January 2026 – 2031)</i>
• Dorset Council grounds team are involved in maintaining many natural outdoor spaces, such as greenspaces near offices, schools, golf course, parks, sports pitches, playgrounds and amenity spaces • The team also deliver landscape design and build services for enhancement of existing outdoor spaces and on new capital projects • The team aim to deliver spaces that meet the needs of people using them, as well as making space for nature e.g. native pollinator-friendly plants, adding ponds and wildlife areas • The grounds team support schools that would like to create a nature area or forest school, to ensure this is delivered in a sympathetic way • New nature-friendly planting at the County Hall front garden, with plants selected to support birds and pollinators, and a bug house installed. • The team also support delivery of habitat and species enhancements as part of projects to enhance heritage assets on our land	• Continue looking to use least environmentally harmful chemicals e.g. fuels, pesticides, herbicides • Explore options for more naturalised gardens around council buildings that would require less maintenance • Explore options for more wildlife-rich areas / less managed areas in Potten Park and other public open spaces • Continue to develop practices in accordance with industry best practice and guidance

Impacts, evaluation and monitoring

- The Landscape design and maintenance section of the [Climate and Nature Autumn/Winter 2025 report](#) (pg 28) reports key figures on work delivered by the landscape and grounds team as part of a range of different projects

Challenges for future delivery

- Funding needed for long-term maintenance of nature areas not just creation
- School budget pressures limiting ability to create more wildlife-friendly areas
- Mainly able to work with local authority schools, less so with academies and other types of school

3.1.5. Trees (arboriculture)

<i>Policies, objectives and actions</i> <i>(December 2023 –2025)</i>	<i>Future actions</i> <i>(January 2026 – 2031)</i>
• The arboriculture team manage and maintain Dorset Council’s stock of over 560,000 trees • The team also respond to emergency tree callouts and carry out checks on trees adjacent to fallen trees • The team use a number of nature-friendly practices where possible, including: ○ Leaving habitat poles instead of simply felling and removing trees ○ Leave old tree pollards to enable regrowth and maintain invertebrate habitat ○ Cut tree branches to a jagged end, to perform similar function as a veteran tree ○ Leave felled trees as deadwood/dead hedging to continue providing resource for invertebrates and other wildlife • The team also carry out tree planting	• Explore possible additional locations needed for tree planting to deliver the 2 for 1 policy • Continue to develop practices in accordance with industry best practice and guidance, including additional biodiversity enhancements as part of tree management

Impacts, evaluation and monitoring

- The trees section of the [Climate and Nature Autumn/Winter 2025 report](#) (pg 28-30) reports key figures on work delivered by the arboriculture team

Challenges for future delivery

- Finding a balance between trees and wildflowers on highway verges, both provide important habitat

Figure 8 Rawlsbury and Nettlecombe (credit: Steve Wallis)



3.2. Property and assets

3.2.1. County Farms

<i>Policies, objectives and actions</i> <i>(December 2023 –2025)</i>	<i>Future actions</i> <i>(January 2026 – 2031)</i>
- Published a Farms Estate Strategy. - The Natural Environment Team works with the council farm estate team to deliver projects to enhance the ecological value of our farms. Projects include Barn Owl Boxes, Great Crested Newt Ponds and baseline biodiversity Surveys - Council Plan sets a target for 70% of Council Farms will be managed using sustainable farming practices that balance food production and nature by 2030 - Pilot study commenced on Clapcott's Farm, Spetisbury to show the potential for delivery of BNG at council farms	- Dorset Council will actively encourage tenants to engage with Environmental Improvement Grant Schemes, for example by: - providing additional adjoining land - sharing knowledge and good practice around sustainable farming practices between tenants - If the pilot study on potential BNG delivery yields positive results, consider investigating other opportunities across the Farms Estate and working with tenants to deliver BNG

Impacts, evaluation and monitoring

- 25% of county farms and farmland only assets are currently delivering sustainable farming as part of a countryside stewardship agreement or sustainable farming incentive. Monitoring against the target for 70% is reported on the Council Plan [performance dashboard and in progress reports](#)

Challenges for future delivery

- None to report

3.2.2. Asset policies, management and review

<i>Policies, objectives and actions</i> <i>(December 2023 –2025)</i>	<i>Future actions</i> <i>(January 2026 – 2031)</i>
- Community asset transfer policy enables consideration of whether an asset could better be managed locally to benefit the community, the decision-making includes environmental impacts - The strategic asset management plan includes a commitment to make changes to buildings that benefit the environment e.g. net zero	- Continue implementing these policies and plans - Continue the strategic asset review, considering options for possible sites to deliver BNG, SANGs etc

Impacts, evaluation and monitoring

- None to report

Challenges for future delivery

- None to report

3.2.3. Capital projects

<i>Policies, objectives and actions</i> <i>(December 2023 –2025)</i>	<i>Future actions</i> <i>(January 2026 – 2031)</i>
• The Capital Projects Design and Delivery Team seek to include biodiversity enhancements as part of new build projects and schemes. For example, wildlife-friendly gardens in new school grounds and care homes with native planting for pollinators and boxes for birds or bats • Input is sought from ecologists in the Natural Environment Team where required • Wildlife enhancements are then maintained by the authority long-term	• Continue delivering wildlife enhancements and BNG as part of capital projects • More fully integrate climate and nature decision wheel into capital project development process

Impacts, evaluation and monitoring

- The project delivery and operations section of the [Climate and Nature Autumn/Winter 2025 report](#) reports key figures on work delivered as part of capital projects, either by the landscape and grounds team (pg 29) or external contractors (30). Some highlights include:
- 33% biodiversity net gain being created on-site in the construction of the new Blandford Waste Management Centre, secured for 30 years by the Landscape and Ecological Management Plan (LEMP)
 - Habitats include native woodland, hedgerows, wildflower grassland, wetland, ponds, understorey shrubs, and trees
 - Habitats have been designed to provide connection across the ecological network and local provenance seeds and plants will be used
 - Further enhancements include hedgerows managed to provide bat corridors, installing bat, bird and dormouse boxes, and creating loggeries from any tree felling
- Transforming an old car park and hardstanding into a wildlife-friendly space for residents at Chestnut House, a new young people's care home and care leavers accommodation. This includes
 - Native hedgerows, shrubs, herbaceous perennials, fruiting plants, herbs, pollinating plants, fruit trees and wildflower seeding
 - Sustainable drainage to return rainwater to the ground instead of into sewers
- Outdoor spaces that support nature while also giving students opportunities for growing, outdoor learning and recreation, in new and existing schools and inclusion hubs, including:
 - Native planting including fruit trees, berry patches, wildflowers, sensory plants, trees

- Raised planters for growing and nurturing plants to encourage wildlife, pollinators and birds
- Edible kitchen gardens to grow herbs, fruit and vegetables
- Forest schools
- Pond creation
- Sensitive lighting to support dark skies
- Wildlife bricks and boxes for birds, bats and insects

Challenges for future delivery

- Budgets available for new capital projects

3.3. Highways and transport

<i>Policies, objectives and actions</i> <i>(December 2023 –2025)</i>	<i>Future actions</i> <i>(January 2026 – 2031)</i>
• The Highways teams work with the natural environment team to identify ways to avoid harm to species and habitats, mitigate for any biodiversity loss and deliver wildlife enhancements as part of delivering highway improvements or new active travel routes • Dorset Council verge management balances biodiversity with road safety, and this effective method means many verges now have SNCI status for their biodiversity value • Ecological advice is provided for individual schemes and wider opportunities to incorporate biodiversity enhancements, such as avoiding soil importation, using low-fertility soils, and integrating built-in features for bats and birds on bridges • Habitat Regulations Assessment and SSSI assent applications are undertaken when required • New street lighting policy to support dark skies for wildlife • Draft Local Transport Plan includes Policy A4 on nature-positive design	• Finalise Local Transport Plan 2026-2041 • Work with developers to deliver good practice when constructing roads for new housing developments. This includes specifying low nutrient verges to support wildflowers, tree crates to help trees grow without damaging nearby structures and street lighting designs that protect bat flightpaths

Impacts, evaluation and monitoring

- None to report

Challenges for future delivery

- None to report

3.4. Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management

<i>Policies, objectives and actions</i> <i>(December 2023 – 2025)</i>	<i>Future actions</i> <i>(January 2026 – 2031)</i>
• Dorset Council Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management (FCERM) team have a role in managing flood risk, coastal risk and wastewater, alongside a number of external partners • All FCERM schemes apply standing advice on best practice for pollution prevention, invasive non-native species and ecological mitigation • Input is sought from DC ecologists as required. For major schemes an ecologist attends steering groups providing advice • External ecological surveys are contracted as required • Advice is sought from Natural England as required e.g. developing mitigation measures to support seagrass restoration • Working with the Marine Maritime Organisation as required • Habitat Regulations Assessment and SSSI assent applications undertaken • Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) is complied with on all relevant projects • Small wastewater assets are maintained and upgraded to reduce water pollution • Delivering the Local Flood Risk Management Strategy includes identifying flood mitigation options for high risk areas • As a Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA), Dorset Council assesses Land Drainage Consent applications to ensure biodiversity interests are considered • The LLFA is a Statutory Planning Consultee for major development to ensure that surface water flood risk is appropriately managed and biodiversity interests are included via the promotion of Sustainable Drainage Systems	• Develop a FCERM BNG protocol, to be agreed by the Natural Environment Team • Explore possible options to install ecological enhancements on wastewater compounds • Exploring additional opportunities and funding from Defra for natural flood management • Continue performing regulatory functions for land drainage consenting and planning consultations

Impacts, evaluation and monitoring

- One FCERM scheme involved delaying essential harbour wall repair and replacement works to give [seahorses time to breed and raise their young](#). Following the works there is a plan to [restore and increase the area of seagrass](#) and monitor this over several years

Challenges for future delivery

- The FCERM team have a preference to continue using internal ecologists and environmental advice, but this depends on the capacity of other teams and the capital pipeline

3.5. Planning

3.5.1 Planning policy

<i>Policies, objectives and actions</i> <i>(December 2023 –2025)</i>	<i>Future actions</i> <i>(January 2026 – 2031)</i>
• Adopted Local Plans, alongside Neighbourhood Plans set the basis for decisions on planning applications. Strategic Priorities and Policies are developed locally to reflect national policy and local objectives • There are four adopted Local Plans across Dorset that were prepared and adopted by the former Local Authorities that make up Dorset Council. In addition, the Waste and Minerals plans were adopted by Dorset County Council. There are numerous Neighbourhood Plans in effect across Dorset that include local, non-strategic policies • The adopted Local Plans all have policies that address biodiversity loss where development takes place however, these are inconsistent and largely out of date given changes in national policy and legislation. Neighbourhood Plans add a further level of detail that creates additional complexity	• Preparation of the new Dorset Council Local Plan provides an opportunity to consider what policies and approaches are needed to protect biodiversity and support nature recovery, reflecting national policy and legislation • Consider the implications of legislative requirements and national policy for the Local Plan • Develop approaches to suggest for inclusion in Neighbourhood Plans to give a degree of consistency • Develop the Dorset Design Code to raise design standards of future development, including how nature is considered in designs to create greenspaces that benefit communities and use Dorset’s natural resources wisely

Impacts, evaluation and monitoring

- The [Authority Monitoring Report \(April 2023 - March 2024\)](#) evaluates the effectiveness of the Local Plan policies across the board, including environment (pg27-33)

Challenges for future delivery

- National Policy is currently very fluid making it very difficult to progress with the Local Plan. This is slowing down production considerably

3.5.2. Development management

<i>Policies, objectives and actions</i> <i>(December 2023 – 2025)</i>	<i>Future actions</i> <i>(January 2026 – 2031)</i>
• Planning applications determined in accordance with current wildlife legislation and policy (local and national) • Natural Environment Team ecologists provide technical advice and operate the Dorset Biodiversity Appraisal Protocol to integrate biodiversity in the planning system. It is designed to: ○ meet Natural England’s Protected Species Standing Advice ○ address the mitigation hierarchy set out in the National Planning Policy Framework ○ audit and review ecological information submitted with planning applications ○ ensure impacts on biodiversity are addressed ○ provide technical guidance to applicants or their ecological consultants • Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) has been embedded within the planning system as this became mandatory in 2024 • The development of a local BNG market has been supported by running a call for sites, registering potential sites for delivery of BNG and nutrient mitigation	• Continue regular reviews and annual updates of the Dorset Biodiversity Appraisal Protocol in line with relevant emerging legislation and policy • Continue to ensure that decisions are taken in line with national planning policies and local policies to conserve and enhance biodiversity • Continue to promote best practice through officer training and agents forums • Continue to ensure that Habitats Regulations requirements are met through planning decisions • Implement BNG monitoring software so that monitoring and reporting can start (expected for 1st April 2026) • Regularly check and review effectiveness of BNG monitoring, and of the software module • Embed the local nature recovery strategy into decision-making as a new tool to inform sustainable development, this will inform BNG strategic significance and possibly be a material consideration

Impacts, evaluation and monitoring

- 961 Certificates of Approval issued to planning applications going through the Dorset Biodiversity Appraisal Protocol (DBAP) between December 2023 – December 2025
- We are currently unable to provide all the required information to report on BNG because we need to complete a planning software update. The BNG monitoring module is being set up and tested, but has not been fully implemented

Challenges for future delivery

- Implementation and roll out of the new BNG monitoring software needs to be fitted into a schedule of competing priorities and dependencies, including other planning system statutory changes. This makes resourcing and time-allocation difficult
- Potential national changes to BNG requirements could require changes to current processes

3.5.3. Conservation

<i>Policies, objectives and actions</i> <i>(December 2023 –2025)</i>	<i>Future actions</i> <i>(January 2026 – 2031)</i>
• Hedgerow Removal Notices must be submitted by landowners, Dorset Council then considers if the hedge is ‘important’ under the regulations and if a retention notice should be issued, to help address widespread loss of hedgerows in the countryside • Dorset Council can serve TPOs to prohibit the damage or destruction of specific trees without consent from the council, to help protect trees that are a of amenity importance and may also be a key element of local biodiversity. TPOs can also be used to protect groups of trees or woodlands	• Continue performing these regulatory functions

Impacts, evaluation and monitoring

- None to report

Challenges for future delivery

- None to report

Figure 9 Fungi (credit: Ali Quinney)



important habitats and species, to comply with legislation • Mitigation includes: ○ Nutrient neutrality ○ Air quality on Dorset Heathlands ○ Recreational disturbance in Poole Harbour and Chesil and Fleet ○ Heathland infrastructure projects • Actions are delivered to avoid or mitigate harm, but wherever possible achieve additional benefits for biodiversity wherever possible e.g Sutable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANGs) have a primary purpose to reduce recreational disturbance on heathlands, but it is encouraged that designs include nature-rich areas of planting • The following strategies and supplementary planning documents guide this mitigation work: ○ Chesil and Fleet interim strategy 2020 ○ Poole Harbour Recreation 2019-2024 ○ Dorset Heathlands Interim Air Quality Strategy 2020 to 2025 ○ The Dorset Heathlands Planning Framework 2020-2025 ○ Nitrogen Reduction Mitigation in Poole Harbour Catchment	○ Prioritise investment in opportunities working with farmers/landowners where commitment to 80 years land use change is possible ○ Explore potential partnership with the Wareham Arc Landscape Recovery Scheme • Air quality on Dorset Heathlands: ○ Continue to collect botanical and air quality data from heathland sites to monitor changes in air quality in relation to traffic pollution levels ○ Develop and deliver air quality mitigation projects to counteract air pollution from vehicles within 200 metres of a road e.g. removing vegetation, stripping away nutrient enriched soil and focussed grazing ○ Develop and deliver school activities • Recreational disturbance in Poole Harbour and Chesil and Fleet: ○ Develop and deliver infrastructure improvement projects e.g. footpath improvements and viewpoint creation ○ Continue to deliver engagement and awareness raising across sites • Heathland infrastructure projects: ○ Maintain ongoing review and ensure effective implementation of the Heathland SPD (2020–2025) and any subsequent guidance or policy updates ○ Collaborate with developers and partners to ensure the successful delivery of agreed projects and proactively identify new opportunities ○ Work in partnership on nature recovery projects ○ Enhance and strengthen the green infrastructure network through targeted improvements

Impacts, evaluation and monitoring

- Nitrogen mitigation delivery has supported:
 - Land to be temporarily fallow which has wildlife benefits
 - Stopping high chemical inputs on the land
 - New nature reserves or increased size of existing nature reserves

- Permanent opportunities for environmental charities to manage new habitats, support species, improve hydrology, improve water quality, encourage access and education for local people
- Monitoring via S106 agreements and through Local Nutrient Mitigation Fund reporting and governance
- The environmental mitigation section of the [Climate and Nature Autumn/Winter 2025 report](#) reports the hectares of land delivering nutrient mitigation and nature recovery, since that report an additional 40 hectares has been added.
- Air quality mitigation:
 - Air quality monitoring at 13 sites situated within 200m of main road on a range of Dorset heathland SAC and SPA sites identified that all 13 sample sites had ammonia levels above 1ug/m3 (the critical level above which lichen and bryophyte populations can be damaged)
 - None exceeded the critical level for nitrogen dioxide however results showed that the roadside traffic emissions are high enough to contribute towards nitrogen deposition at all sites
 - Correlation between air sampling and vegetation surveys has identified 8 medium to high priority sites where critical loads for nitrogen deposition are being exceeded and road traffic pollution is a significant pollution source. 5 of these sites are the focus for the first mitigation projects (Avon Heath, Matcham's View, Canford Heath, Upton Heath and Ferndown Common) where activities such as vegetation removal and soil scraping will take place to make them more resilient to future nitrogen-based air pollution
 - The 2025 air quality monitoring programme has continued with the collection of baseline data at 14 new heathland sites and will contribute to the creation of a road traffic emissions risk rating for Dorset Heathlands
- Impacts of the recreation mitigation delivery can be found in the
 - Poole Harbour Recreation Mitigation [Annual Delivery Report 2023-2024](#) and [Annual Delivery Report 2024-2025](#)
 - Chesil and the fleet Mitigation [Annual Delivery Report 2023-2024](#) and [Annual Delivery Report 2024-2025](#)
- Heathland infrastructure initiatives have supported:
 - Strategic land-use change
 - Enduring nature-positive outcomes through the creation and enhancement of greenspaces, including rewilding opportunities
 - Inclusive public access alongside environmental education
 - 3 SANG sites signed off as practically complete and open to the public in this reporting period
 - Monitoring via planning agreements
 - The environmental mitigation section of the [Climate and Nature Autumn/Winter 2025 report](#) reports the hectares on SANGs with a nature-friendly management plan

Challenges for future delivery

- None to report

3.7. Dorset Heaths Partnership

<i>Policies, objectives and actions</i> <i>(December 2023 – 2025)</i>	<i>Future actions</i> <i>(January 2026 – 2031)</i>
• Dorset Heaths Partnership delivers recreation mitigation allowing DC and BCP Councils to meet Habitat Regulations contributing to the mitigation of harm from new housing and tourism development on the Dorset Heathlands. This is achieved through the delivery of Strategic Access Management and Monitoring (SAMM) across the Dorset Heathlands • This work includes education, wardening, the Dorset Dogs project, and ongoing monitoring, all aimed at raising awareness of heathland habitats and encouraging both local communities and visitors to enjoy, respect and protect the Dorset heathlands	• Continue to deliver engagement and awareness raising across Dorset Heathlands

Impacts, evaluation and monitoring

- [Annual Delivery Reports](#) and [Annual Monitoring Reports](#) track public engagement, wardening activity, visitor use and pressure on the heathlands, as well as habitat and species data. This monitoring provides the evidence base for assessing the effectiveness of mitigation measures and guiding future management of Dorset's heathlands

Challenges for future delivery

- None to report



Figure 10 Dartford Warbler
(credit: Susan Buckland)

3.8. Dorset Coast Forum

<i>Policies, objectives and actions</i> <i>(December 2023 –2025)</i>	<i>Future actions</i> <i>(January 2026 – 2031)</i>
• Dorset Coast Forum work with communities to protect, enhance and promote Dorset’s coast and surrounding seas • Example actions supporting biodiversity 2023-25 include: ○ Studland Bay eco-moorings and seagrass habitat protection project ○ Creation of Peveril Point & Downs local nature reserve in Swanage ○ Exploring emerging opportunities around marine nature recovery	• Development and creation of Marine Local Recovery Strategy • Engaging with communities regarding the creation of saltmarsh at Moors at Arne • Increased focus on ocean and coastal literacy • Connecting young people to the coast through outdoor classroom days • Continued working with communities to protect, enhance and promote our coast and surrounding seas

Impacts, evaluation and monitoring

- A dedicated partnership has been formed to protect and restore seagrass habitats. As part of this work, 87 eco-moorings have been funded and installed, supporting increased seahorse sightings and early signs of seagrass recovery
- Peveril Point & Downs Local Nature Reserve supports over 300 plant species and 100 animal species. New interpretative signage installed

Challenges for future delivery

- Having enough funding in place to cover staff, overhead and other costs
- Risk of Dorset Coast Forum no longer being hosted by Dorset Council
- Having the necessary support from key partners – success cannot be achieved by Dorset Coast Forum alone
- Lack of interest by communities leading to reduction in engagement
- Climate change impacts on marine nature recovery outweighing support provided through strategy



Figure 11 Dorset Coast Forum team at East Beach

3.9. Litter Free Dorset

<i>Policies, objectives and actions</i> <i>(December 2023 –2025)</i>	<i>Future actions</i> <i>(January 2026 – 2031)</i>
• Litter Free Dorset campaign to reduce litter and waste as well as improve water quality across Dorset • Example actions supporting biodiversity 2023-25 include: ○ A ‘nature recovery’ category was added to the Sustainable Business Network award scheme in 2024 to support all types of businesses to take actions supporting nature ○ The reconnecting with nature spaces project delivered three community gardens to reconnect residents with nature: St John’s Garden in Weymouth, the Thyme Out Community Garden in Portland and the Queen Mother Garden in Shaftesbury	• Continue delivering current and new projects relating to litter, waste and water quality, supporting biodiversity through these projects wherever possible

Impacts, evaluation and monitoring

- The Sustainable Business Network now has 214 member businesses across Dorset, each at different stages of their sustainability journey. In 2024, with the introduction of the Nature Recovery category, 55 businesses achieved the SBN Nature Recovery Award in recognition of the actions they have taken to support biodiversity and nature recovery
- The 35th Great Dorset Beach Clean in 2024 was the biggest event yet; over one week, 297 volunteers came together to clean 15 beaches, removing 327kg of rubbish
- Water quality campaigns in Bournemouth and Weymouth have communicated campaign messaging to over 25,000 households, encouraging residents to take simple actions to protect their local rivers and the sea

Challenges for future delivery

- None to report

Figure 12 Sustainable Business Network nature recovery awards and actions



3.10. Communications

<i>Policies, objectives and actions</i> <i>(December 2023 –2025)</i>	<i>Future actions</i> <i>(January 2026 – 2031)</i>
• Dorset Council uses a range of methods to raise awareness of our own actions to conserve and enhance biodiversity, and promote opportunities for others including: • Launch of the Nature Recovery Dorset network to celebrate and encourage local action for nature • Let Grass Grow campaign – encouraging Dorset residents to let their lawns and grow • Green libraries week nature-based activities • Resident newsletters (including Residents' News, Climate & Nature Bulletin, and Enjoying Dorset's countryside) highlighting council activities and encouraging residents to get involved • Video storytelling demonstrating the importance of nature for health and wellbeing • Press releases issued to regional media e.g. heathland restoration project • Webpages on the Climate and Ecological Emergency and Countryside, coast and parks • Species and habitat advice notes and guidance sheets • Tree management guidance and Tree Planting Checklist for the public, businesses and community groups • Green champions employee network to engage staff in climate and nature knowledge sharing and action. • Support embedding action across council services • Town and Parish Council climate and nature network to facilitate working together, sharing and disseminating best practice • Town and Parish Council webinars and newsletters • Established Dorset Citizens' Climate Panel to seek resident views on Dorset's approach to climate resilience	• Continue communications activities to support the delivery of the council plan priority to respond to the climate and nature crisis • Develop specific campaigns to support nature recovery and grow membership of the Nature Recovery Dorset network • Establish regular workshops webinar series and toolkit for Town and Parish Council Climate and Nature Network • Expand internal green champions network and related work programme and resources • Expand on-line staff climate training modules to include resilience and nature • Take forward the Dorset Citizens' Climate Panel recommendations in the development of a county-wide Climate Adaptation Strategy. Build on key themes identified by the panel - nature, land and water – and ensure engagement with a range of internal and external stakeholders

Impacts, evaluation and monitoring

- 299 members of the Nature Recovery Dorset network so far
- Communications and engagement activities have contributed to increased public awareness and participation in biodiversity initiatives, as evidenced by campaign reach, engagement rates, and stakeholder feedback
- Evaluation approach:
 - Campaign-level reviews: each major campaign (e.g., *Love Your Verge*, *Let Grass Grow*) undergoes post-delivery evaluation to assess effectiveness, audience reach, and lessons learned for future improvements
 - Stakeholder feedback: Surveys and feedback sessions with Town & Parish Councils, staff, and residents inform ongoing strategy refinement
- Monitoring metrics:
 - Digital engagement: Social media reach, impressions, engagement rates; website traffic and unique page views; e-newsletter open and click-through rates
 - Media coverage: Volume and sentiment analysis of press coverage
 - Content performance: Video views, average watch duration, and shares
 - Participation indicators: Attendance at events and webinars; number of resources downloaded; sign-ups to Nature Recovery Dorset network
 - Network engagement: Evaluation of Nature Recovery Dorset network and Citizens' Climate Panel recommendations feeding into strategic planning
- Continuous improvement: Insights from monitoring and evaluation are used to adapt messaging, channels, and formats to maximise impact and align with Dorset Council's climate and nature priorities

Challenges for future delivery

- Resource constraints: Limited staff capacity and budget may restrict the ability to scale campaigns or deliver new engagement activities
- Stakeholder engagement: Maintaining momentum and active participation from Town & Parish Councils, residents, and internal networks will require ongoing engagement
- Digital reach limitations: Reliance on online channels may exclude audiences with limited digital access or skills
- Public perception and behaviour change: Achieving sustained behaviour change (e.g., letting grass grow, supporting verge management) can be slow and requires ongoing reinforcement
- External factors: Policy changes, environmental incidents, or negative media coverage could impact messaging and engagement plans
- Monitoring and evaluation capacity: Ensuring robust data collection and analysis for impact measurement may be difficult without dedicated resource

3.11. Children and education

<i>Policies, objectives and actions</i> <i>(December 2023 –2025)</i>	<i>Future actions</i> <i>(January 2026 – 2031)</i>
• Youth nature activities shared via education providers, libraries, and youth voice social media channel (including poster competitions, activity booklets and resource sharing) • Launched Dorset Climate Ambassadors programme in partnership with the MET Office and Department for Education – to support Dorset schools to reduce carbon emissions and boost biodiversity, including taking part in the National Nature Education Park. This includes recruiting more volunteers to help education settings work through the programme • Education Challenge Leads (ECLs) are all trained as Climate Ambassadors. They can provide bespoke support to schools, alongside our Southwest Climate Ambassador team, to achieve the Department for Education’s Climate Action Plan initiative. The next training for Dorset schools is 16th January. • Established internal network of officers working in schools on environmental topics e.g. giving assemblies or delivering lessons, lectures, webinars, competitions or campaigns • Working with UK100 and other South West councils to bid for lottery funding to support youth engagement in climate and nature	• Expand climate ambassadors’ schools and volunteer network • Work with topic specialists to develop lesson packs • Increase engagement with school governors • Host a conference in Q3 for schools and climate ambassadors • Continue internal network of officers working in schools on environmental topics

Impacts, evaluation and monitoring

- 85 Dorset schools and colleges engaged in the climate ambassador programme
- 30 Climate Ambassador volunteers signed up and trained
- 200 students took part in beach clean activities as part of the climate ambassador programme

Challenges for future delivery

- Limitations in capacity of education settings to fit climate and nature education and activities alongside other curriculum and pastoral responsibilities, and limited capacity of Dorset Council officers to support all schools in the county. Therefore, a focus is placed on volunteer

recruitment, internal networking of council officers, and sharing of curriculum matched resources for schools to use

3.12. Housing and adults

<i>Policies, objectives and actions</i> <i>(December 2023 –2025)</i>	<i>Future actions</i> <i>(January 2026 – 2031)</i>
- As part of refurbishing West Farm House, a House in Multiple Occupation (HMO), a qualified ecologist was appointed to survey, report on, and oversee significant roof and external façade works to protect the bat species using the building. The project also incorporated ecologist-approved features in the roof soffits and ridges to support future nesting - The adults’ social care team commissions nature-based day opportunities—such as gardening and land management—for older adults and those with complex needs, helping residents connect with nature, learn new skills, and support biodiversity through nature-friendly land management - The Inclusive Housing Design Guide for Extra Care Housing includes guidance on biodiversity enhancements and nature-connection features, such as bird boxes and pollinator planting. At St Martins House in Gillingham, a wild garden area has been set aside to “allow nature to be nature”	The Supported Living Design Guide (scheduled for publication in 2026) will include requirements for biodiversity enhancements, such as creating wildlife-friendly areas, providing space for raised planters to support growing activities, and designing gardens with year-round greenery, colour and scent

Impacts, evaluation and monitoring

- None to report

Challenges for future delivery

- None to report

Figure 13 Pollinator friendly planting (credit: Steve Wallis)



3.13. Public Health

<i>Policies, objectives and actions</i> <i>(December 2023 –2025)</i>	<i>Future actions</i> <i>(January 2026 – 2031)</i>
• Mapped access to nature to identify communities where people are less likely to live with nature nearby (2 hectares plus within 300 metres walk) • Working with partners to promote nature-based health interventions	• Internal collaboration to ensure measures to increase access to nature are embedded in policy and decision making to support moving more, social connection and wellbeing e.g. design of new housing • Promote Nature Nearby mapping to internal stakeholders to support activity by other Directorates e.g. funding bids, policy development • Continue working with system partners to promote nature-based health interventions that support physical activity/moving more, social connection and wellbeing e.g. other Dorset Council Directorates, NHS partners, Voluntary Community Sector

Impacts, evaluation and monitoring

- Nature nearby mapping was used to inform the local nature recovery strategy map to deliver co-benefits for people as well as biodiversity
- Figure 14 shows one of the map layers created as part of the Nature Nearby mapping. Map layers are available to view on [Dorset Explorer](#), find out more about the data and method in the [Guide to Dorset’s nature recovery maps](#)

Challenges for future delivery

- None to report

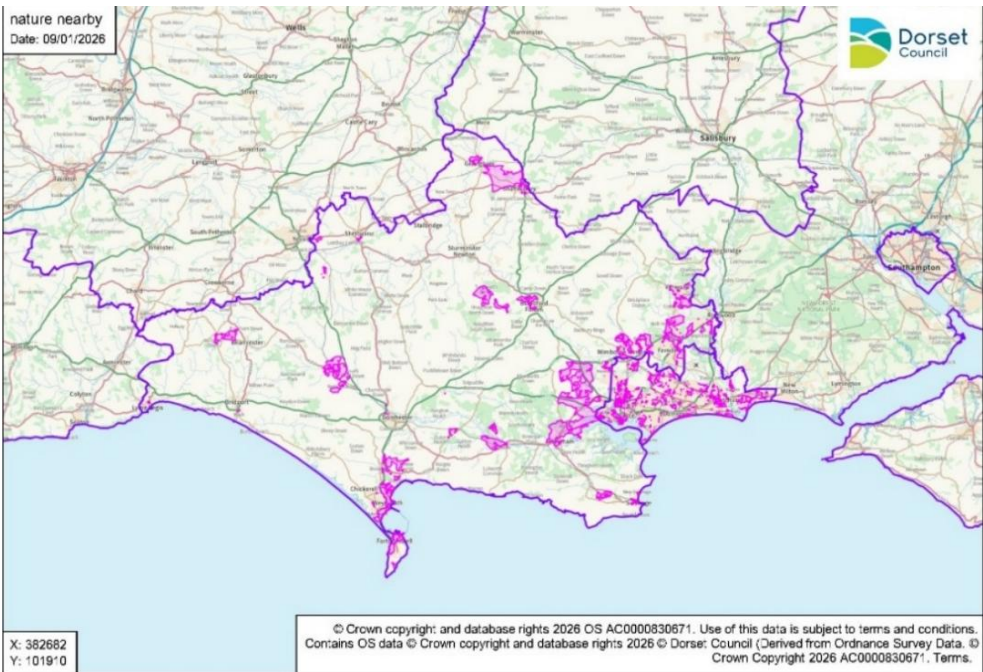


Figure 14 Map showing priority areas for increasing nature nearby - where the modelling estimates that 30% or less of the population in the 'live with nature nearby' (within 300 metres walk of nature-rich space)

3.14. Environmental Protection

<i>Policies, objectives and actions</i> (December 2023 –2025)	<i>Future actions</i> (January 2026 – 2031)
- Protecting human health through the pollution control regulatory functions, with a net positive impact on environmental biodiversity and sustainability - Published the Contaminated Land Strategy that outlines the management/remediation of potentially contaminated land - Permitting process – ensuring certain industrial emissions are regulated - Launched a Better Burn Campaign to reduce the level of particulates emitted from domestic solid fuel burning - Enacting and enforcing a dog related Public Spaces Protection Order to reduce the incidents of dog fouling and contamination on the ground	Continue to carry out statutory obligations, delivering advice, guidance and campaigns

Impacts, evaluation and monitoring

- Continuous monitoring of air quality to ensure specific contaminants do not exceed allowed levels
- Sampling and risk assessing private water supplies to ensure water quality is wholesome and potable

Challenges for future delivery

- None to report

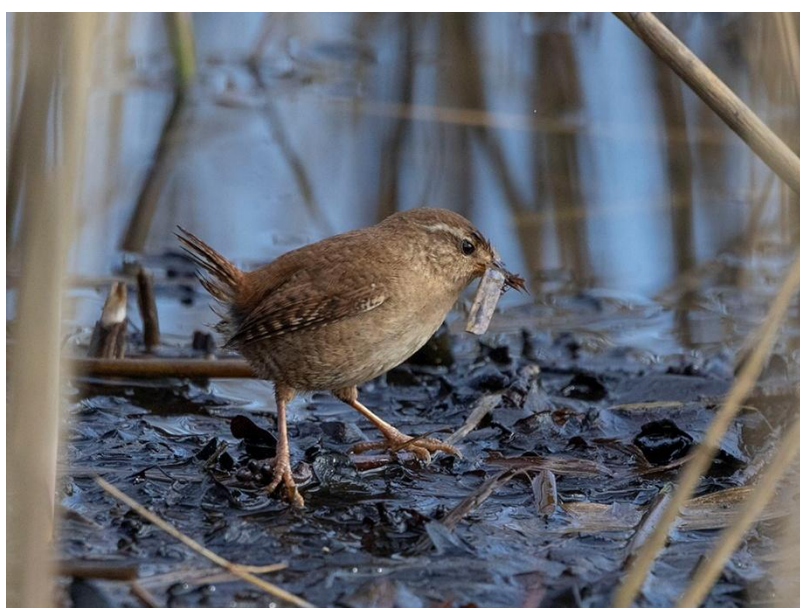


Figure 15 Wren at Lodmoor (credit: Susan Buckland)

3.15. Waste

<i>Policies, objectives and actions</i> <i>(December 2023 –2025)</i>	<i>Future actions</i> <i>(January 2026 – 2031)</i>
• Undertaken a review and adoption of a Dorset Council Waste Strategy 2024 and began implementing the associated action plans • Continued to prioritise waste reduction and recycling, which in turn protects ecosystems from pollution and reduces extraction of natural resources • Treat waste close to source of collection where possible e.g. use of local Mechanical Biological Treatment (MBT) facility for residual waste	• Continue to implement the revised Dorset Council Waste Strategy 2024 and associated action plans • Undertake two major tenders—the Resource, Management and Transport Contract and the Residual Waste Treatment Contract— with a view to working with successful bidders to introduce some measures for biodiversity (e.g., green roofs, onsite habitats, bird boxes, pollinator plants etc) , reducing environmental impacts by minimising ‘waste miles’ and exploring the use of alternative fuels within the transport elements of the contracts • Continue to drive forward infrastructure improvements that will enhance biodiversity where new sites are developed including sustainable planting and wildlife ponds as well as a rainwater harvesting system • Complete the development of the new Blandford waste management centre to include planting and pond creation • Continue to manage historical closed landfill sites and pursue ecological improvements where possible

Impacts, evaluation and monitoring

- Recycling rate 60.5% (2023/24) – highest performing unitary authority in England.
- Residual household waste per household – 363 kg/hh – very low level
- Percentage of municipal waste sent to landfill – 0.5%

Challenges for future delivery

- Insufficient financial and people resources to enable actions to be implemented
- Legislative changes
- Lack of participation in recycling and waste schemes from residents and businesses

3.16. Economic Growth and Regeneration

<i>Policies, objectives and actions</i> (December 2023 –2025)	<i>Future actions</i> (January 2026 – 2031)
- Supporting eco-tourism and nature-based visitor economy initiatives, promoting Dorset’s natural assets sustainably, through Visit Dorset, Dorset’s official destination management organisation Nature and Wildlife in Dorset Visit Dorset - Businesses looking to develop or extend buildings are encouraged to work with Planning and Natural Environment colleagues to meet biodiversity net gain, nutrient neutrality and protected species ambitions	- Continue advising businesses to follow best practice on supporting biodiversity and the natural environment - Continue promoting the Sustainable Business Network and Award to businesses we work with

Impacts, evaluation and monitoring

- None to report

Challenges for future delivery

- None to report



Figure 16 Comma Butterfly at Morton (credit: Susan Buckland)

3.17. Protected Landscapes

3.17.1 Dorset National Landscape

<i>Policies, objectives and actions</i> <i>(December 2023 – 2025)</i>	<i>Future actions</i> <i>(January 2026 – 2031)</i>
• As host to Dorset National Landscape (DNL) partnership, Dorset Council supports the partnership to deliver work that conserves and enhances the natural beauty of the landscape • The DNL team has a key convening role for the landscape, including: ○ Dorset Downs Conservation Forum ○ West Dorset Rivers & Streams catchment ○ Wild Purbeck Forum, including convening partners around the opportunity for a new ‘super’ National Nature Reserve • The DNL team supports access to nature and the landscape through its projects Stepping into Nature, Nature Buddies, FLAVOURS and Nature Calling, and makes investments with a Defra-origin capital fund for Access for All • Dorset National Landscape’s Farming in Protected Landscapes programme (FIPL) supports farm clusters and knowledge exchange programmes facilitating changes towards more regenerative and nature-friendly practice. It has also supported significant areas of survey for biodiversity baselines • An additional capital fund was made available in FY25-26 to further the national 30x30 aims; relevant investments have been made • A new statutory National Landscape management plan for 2026-2031 has been adopted by the Partnership with strong policies for nature	• Funding is secure for Nature Buddies until September 2026 to continue to develop a network of volunteers to support green social prescribing • Other future actions are highly funding dependent; the DNL Partnership has not received notice of its allocation for this Spending Review period. However, ambitions include: ○ Continue supporting uptake and adoption of regenerative farming ○ Continue to coordinate and deliver action on EIP targets apportioned through the Protected Landscapes Targets & Outcomes Framework. ○ Continue to support nature-focussed partnerships ○ Develop a Landscape Connections programme for support by National Lottery Heritage Fund ○ Lead a Landscape Recovery round 3 bid for the Isle of Purbeck

Impacts, evaluation and monitoring

- The hosted partnership section of the [Climate and Nature Autumn/Winter 2025 report](#) (pg 33-34) reports key figures on investment in nature recovery projects by Dorset National Landscape,

as well as tree planting, hedgerow planting, wildflower planting, wetland creation, invasive and non-native species removal and natural flood management

- 959 people from ethnically diverse communities joined in supported countryside visits with the [FLAVOURS](#) project (371 in spring/summer '25)
- 201 people (from target underserved communities in Yeovil) engaged directly with the Cerne Abbas Giant and its environment through the [Nature Calling](#) project
- 40 [Nature Buddy volunteers](#) recruited to help support people's access to nature for green social prescribing
- 417 school children received in-school sessions on trees and climate change and an outdoor tree planting session, as part of The West Dorset Trees schools project (supported by the [Dorset Community Tree Fund](#))

Challenges for future delivery

- Funding is a challenge; National Landscape team core revenue funding is effectively 65% of what it was in 2012, yet the expectations and demand for delivery are at the highest ever
- Culture clashes (food vs nature / nature vs development) within the local and national community have a bearing on the ability to deliver, whether that is through policy or funding priorities, or simply absorbing time that could be directed to delivery

Figure 17 Thrift at Ferrybridge (credit: Ali Quinney)



3.17.2. Cranborne Chase National Landscape

<i>Policies, objectives and actions</i> <i>(December 2023 –2025)</i>	<i>Future actions</i> <i>(January 2026 – 2031)</i>
• As a host to Cranborne Chase National Landscape (CCNL) partnership, Dorset Council supports the partnership to deliver work that conserves and enhances the natural beauty of the landscape • The CCNL team managed the Chase and Chalke partnership between 2020-2025, delivering 20 distinct projects focussed around natural, historic and cultural landscapes • The CCNL team delivered the Management Plan 2019-2024 which directly supported the recovery of biodiversity by guiding the restoration and creation of wildlife-rich habitats and enhancing ecological connectivity and resilience through collaboration with farmers, landowners, and communities at a landscape scale • Cranborne Chase National Landscape (CCNL) Partnership Plan 2025-2030 was published in December 2025 with a stated ambition that the National Landscape will be a place where habitats are restored, expanded, created and connected allowing wildlife to thrive and move freely across the area • CCNL published Tree Planting Guidance in 2025 which aims to enhance biodiversity and support nature recovery by encouraging the planting and management of woodland using the Right Tree Right Place principle • The CCNL team continued to facilitate the National Landscapes International Dark Sky Reserve status – with all host Local Authorities now committed to complying with the designation and reducing light pollution through the planning process • £260k of funding was allocated for projects in Dorset through the Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) Programme between December 23-25	• Deliver the Cranborne Chase National Landscape Partnership Plan 2025-2030 • Deliver the Cranborne Chase National Landscape Nature Recovery Plan 2025-2030 which includes target-driven plans to support ambitions within the Environment Act 2021, the Environmental Improvement Plan (EIP) 2025 and the National Landscapes ‘Colchester Declaration’ • Align delivery with Dorset’s Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) to ensure a coordinated approach to regional priorities • Continue to promote and facilitate a net reduction in light pollution to maintain CCNL status as an International Dark Sky Reserve • Develop a funding application to the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) Landscape Connections scheme which if successful will enable delivery of a series of large-scale and impactful land management actions and activities that will enhance biodiversity • Secure NLHF funding for Wild About Cranborne Chase community engagement project • Deliver the Farming in Protected Landscape Programme March 2026-2029, focussing on enabling projects that delivery positive outcomes for people, nature, climate and place

Impacts, evaluation and monitoring

- The hosted partnership section of the [Climate and Nature Autumn/Winter 2025 report](#) (pg 34) reports key figures on investment in nature recovery projects by Cranborne Chase National Landscape in the Dorset Council area
- Through the Chase and Chalke Landscape Partnership volunteers and landowners were trained in biodiversity monitoring, woodland management and surveying, hedge laying and practical land conservation management activities. The partnership also delivered a Forest School Programme, the introduction of grazing on a National Nature Reserve and pond creation
- The Farming in Protected Landscapes funding has supported: tree planting, woodland management, orchard creation, hedge planting and laying, pond restoration and creation, chalk stream restoration, wetland creation, chalk grassland management and restoration and specialist species surveys

Challenges for future delivery

- Delivery of the CCNL Partnership Plan is largely reliant on maintenance of staffing and the securing of external revenue and capital to ensure delivery
- Delivery of the CCNL Nature Recovery Plan is largely reliant on securing external revenue and capital expenditure to enable impactful delivery
- Delivery could be impacted by a reduction and/or removal of environmental land management funding from central government. This includes funding for the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme and funding for facilitation of farmer clusters. There is also the challenge of competing land use, especially on agricultural land where economic viability is the primary consideration

4. Highlights and next steps

This first biodiversity report demonstrates how nature is already embedded across so many of our council functions, with approximately 28 teams or service areas reporting their policies, objectives and actions to conserve or enhance biodiversity.

Over the next five years we will build upon these existing successes and increase our efforts to deliver more nature recovery. This will be achieved by increasing collaborative working across the organisation, to avoid working in silo and identify opportunities to deliver multiple benefits through joint projects and resource sharing, as well as expanding our partnership working with external partners and Dorset's communities through the implementation of the Dorset local nature recovery strategy.

We will also look to make our evaluation and monitoring more consistent across the organisation to be able to present a clearer picture of our successes and remaining areas of improvement. This will be done for the council, but in alignment with the monitoring framework we are developing according to national guidance for the county-wide monitoring of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy.

5. Appendices

Appendix A: Greenspace, protected sites and parks – further detail on impacts, evaluation and monitoring

Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) condition assessment

- SSSIs at Avon Heath Country Park were last assessed by Natural England in 2017, the condition was ‘unfavourable recovering’ due to the number of mature trees on the heathland
 - Since then, countryside stewardship scheme funding has enabled removal of at least 90% of the trees, so it is now expected to be in favourable condition
 - It is estimated 80-90% of actions are on-track to restore the SSSI to favourable condition
- South Dorset Coast SSSI, of which Durlston Country Park is major part, was last assessed as in ‘favourable’ condition.
- The part of the Moors River System SSSI that runs through Moors Valley Country Park remains in unfavourable condition - no change
 - This is due to a number of factors outside the sites control, including:
 - Agricultural runoff
 - Pollution incidents in the Ebblake Stream
 - Surface runoff from Verwood Town approximately 1 mile upriver
 - Historical changes the water course
 - Invasive non-native species (mink)
 - Past and current management activities that Moors Valley Country Park team have been involved in to improve site condition, include:
 - Creating artificial riffles
 - Mink monitoring programme, working with local landowners
 - Water vole release programme
 - EA fish monitoring surveys, most recently 2024
 - Restoring old ponds and ditches along the watercourse for invertebrates & amphibians
 - Tree management along river banks to provide shade/rest areas

Engagement activities

- Engagement with visitors across Dorset Council’s 4 country parks can be defined in 3 ways:
 - Formal: national and/or official measure and accreditation; national curriculum (visiting school groups), further and higher education, Duke of Edinburgh, scouts etc
 - Informal: self-generated measure; participants engaging through events, trails, birthday parties, volunteers
 - Non-formal: Self-generated measure, short interactions with participant under 5 mins; exhibitions, roaming rangers and meet and greets
- Table 5 summarises environmental engagement across Dorset Council’s 4 country parks

	Volunteer hours	Formal interactions	Overall visitor interactions
Avon Heath Country Park (01.04.24 to 30.09.25)	1020.4	8873	34,828
Durlston Country Park (01.04.24 to 30.09.25)	18,531	1597	37,793
Moors Valley Country Park (01.04.24 to 30.09.25)	1107.5	1545	56,332
Thorncombe Wood (01.04.24 to 30.09.25)	4397	719	9754
(01.01.23 to 30.12.25)	8372	1812	18,440

Table 4 country park engagement figures

- At Avon Heath Country Park, engagement and volunteer activities between 01.04.24 to 30.09.25 included:
 - 1020.4hrs of volunteer time including scrub clearance, wildlife surveys and practical estates work
 - 8,873 formal interactions with visitors aimed at environmental engagement and education
 - 34,828 overall visitor interactions aimed at environmental engagement and education, including all formal, non-formal and informal data
 - Linwood School (SEND School) attending for 1 hour a week for 6 week blocks, with between 3 and 5 students they have assisted with pine clearance.
 - Sheiling School (SEND School) have attended weekly with between 1 and 4 students, usually involving litter picking, sharpening pencils or moving logs for us for an hour once a week, as well as a larger group in March 2025 that undertook some planting
 - Duke of Edinburgh students and volunteers removing planters and willow from the site
 - Regular volunteers have assisted with many projects including clearing 1.25 hectares of an overgrown pond
- At Durlston Country Park, engagement and volunteer activities between 01.04.24 to 30.09.25 included:
 - 18,531 of volunteer time including land management, visitor service tasks and wildlife surveys. Volunteer time spent on specific activities includes:
 - 2,600 hours of wildlife surveys
 - 7800 hours of volunteer time maintaining the Favourable condition of the SSSI by undertaking practical habitat work (scrub cutting, moving, clearing), cattle management (moving cows around the site) and boundary management (dry-stone walling, fencing, hedgelaying)
 - 1,597 formal interactions with visitors aimed at environmental engagement and education
 - 37,793 overall visitor interactions aimed at environmental engagement and education, including all formal, non-formal and informal data. These visitor interactions are comprised of:
 - 80 environmental based guided walks and events (80)
 - 1300 school children on paid sessions

- 1100 Volunteer Ranger engagements with public on patrols providing info about the site and the wildlife
- At Thorncombe Woods, engagement and volunteer activities between 01.01.23 to 30.12.25 included:
 - 8,372 hours of volunteer time including land management, wildlife surveys and practical estates work
 - 715 formal interactions with visitors aimed at environmental engagement and education
 - 7,501 overall visitor interactions aimed at environmental engagement and education, including all formal, non-formal and informal data.
 - Volunteer contributions to wildlife surveys includes:
 - Bird surveys by 1 volunteer (monthly all year)
 - Bat surveys by 5 Dorset bat group volunteers (monthly March-November)
 - Dormice surveys by 3 Dorset Mammal Group volunteers (monthly March-November)
 - Moth surveys by 1 volunteer (monthly all year in 2024)
 - Moth surveys by work placement students (ad hoc in 2025)
 - Reptile surveys by work placements and apprentices (ad hoc)
 - Amphibian surveys by 4 volunteers (March to May)
- At Moors Valley Country park, engagement and volunteer activities between 01.04.24 to 30.09.25 included:
 - 1,107.5 hours of volunteer time including scrub clearance, wildlife surveys and practical estates work
 - 1,545 formal interactions with visitors aimed at environmental engagement and education
 - 56,332 overall visitor interactions aimed at environmental engagement and education, including all formal, non-formal and informal data

Report compiled by the Natural Environment Team on behalf of teams and services at Dorset Council. Report authors: Nikki Taylor, Amy Smith, Josh Morris & Bridget Betts - 15/01/2026

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Cabinet

3 March 2025

Authority to Grant Farm Business Tenancies on County Farms For Decision

Cabinet Member:

Cllr R Biggs, Property & Assets and Economic Growth

Local Councillor(s):

Senior Leadership Team:

J Britton, Executive Director for Place Services

Report author and job title: Jessica Maskrey, Head of Assets & Property and Sam Hoida, Service Manager for Estate Management

Email: jessica.maskrey@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk / sam.hoida@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

Statutory Authority:

Report status: Public (the exemption paragraph is N/A)

Executive summary

1. This report seeks cabinet approval to delegate authority to the Executive Director of Place to approve Farm Business Tenancy (FBT) agreement where the aggregate rental value of the lease over the contractual term exceeds £500,000. This delegation is required to support the timely implementation of the Farms Estate Strategy 2026–2036, which introduces clear tenancy routes to support new entrants and strengthen business growth within Dorset's agricultural sector.

As part of ongoing Strategy delivery, the Council is currently reletting four farms, three of which are Progression Farms. Because Progression Farms have long fixed tenancy terms and typical rents above £25,000 per annum, their aggregate rental values routinely exceed £500,000. Under current arrangements, this triggers the need for individual Cabinet approvals, making the reletting process longer than necessary. Streamlined delegated decision making will therefore support timely re-lettings and ensure alignment with the Strategy's aims.

Delegated authority is therefore sought specifically to enable efficient decision making for the four farms currently being relet, as well as all future re-lettings

where the aggregate rental value exceeds £500,000, while maintaining strong governance and alignment with the Strategy's aims.

2. **Recommendation**

- 2.1 That Cabinet delegate authority to the Executive Director of Place to grant Farm Business Tenancies (FBTs) with an aggregate rental value exceeding £500,000, including those for the four farms currently being relet and any future re-lettings, following consultation with the Cabinet Member for Property & Assets and Economic Growth and the S151 Officer, on terms to be agreed.

3. **Reason for the recommendation**

- 3.1 To enable a responsive and efficient approach to granting Progression Farm FBTs, where contractual terms are typically 20–25 years and market rents mean the aggregate rental value routinely exceeds £500,000. Delegation supports alignment with the Farms Estate Strategy.

4. **The report**

- 4.1 On the 9 October 2025 Cabinet approved the adoption of the Farms Estate Strategy 2026-2036, setting out a sustainable, modernised, and future focused approach to managing the Council's agricultural holdings.
- 4.2 The Strategy introduced two defined tenancy routes: Starter Farms, offering fixed terms of up to 12 years and aimed at new entrants beginning their farming career; and larger Progression Farms, offering 20–25-year terms designed for farmers ready to expand and develop more established agricultural businesses. These routes provide structured opportunities for both new entrants and those progressing their farming careers.
- 4.3 The Council is currently reletting four farms, Cross Farm in Buckland Newton, Rowden Farm in Long Bredy, Twyford Farm in Twyford (all Progression Farms) and Wooth Farm in Wooth (a starter farm), as part of early implementation of the Farms Estate Strategy.
- 4.4 Because Progression Farms are larger, and operate on long fixed terms, with rents often exceeding £25,000 per annum, their aggregate rental values regularly surpass £500,000, triggering the need for individual Cabinet approval under current arrangements.
- 4.5 Re-letting opportunities for agricultural holdings are shaped by the farming calendar, with new Farm Business Tenancies typically commencing only in March and September. Streamlined and timely decision making therefore ensures the Council is able to meet these reletting windows, minimising void

periods and supporting smooth transitions for both the Council and prospective tenants.

- 4.6 Delegated authority will improve operational efficiency, maintain competitiveness in the letting market, and support continuity of food production. Governance safeguards remain in place through required consultation with the Cabinet Member for Property & Assets and the S151 Officer.

5. **Alternative options considered**

5.1 Retain current arrangements

Discounted, as repeated Cabinet decisions for routine, strategy aligned FBTs delay reletting and reduce market responsiveness.

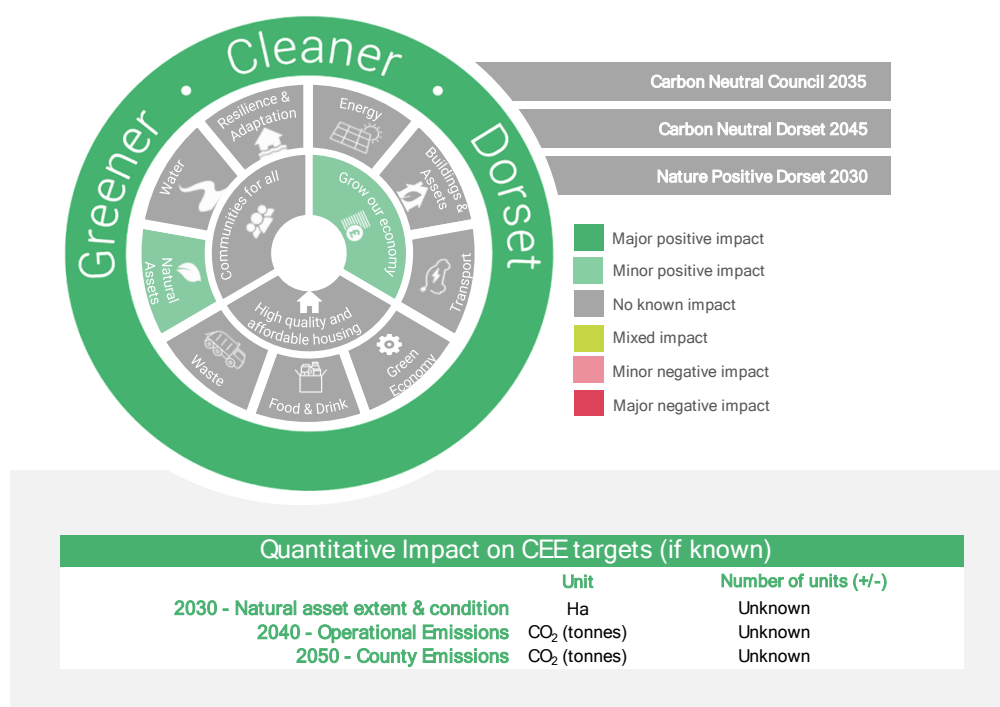
6. **Legal considerations**

- 6.1 The delegation is compliant with the Council's Constitution and statutory obligations under the Agriculture Act 1970.

7. **Financial implications**

- 6.1 FBTs provide stable income to support ongoing investment needs. Delegated approvals will reduce void periods and improve financial resilience.

8. **Natural environment, climate & ecology implications**



Energy	No known impact
Buildings & Assets	No known impact
Transport	No known impact
Green Economy	No known impact
Food & Drink	No known impact
Waste	No known impact
Natural Assets & Ecology	Minor positive impact
Water	No known impact
Resilience and Adaptation	No known impact
Corporate Plan Priorities	Impact
High quality & affordable housing	No known impact
Grow our economy	Minor positive impact
Communities for all	No known impact

- 7.1 Delegation in itself has a mostly neutral impact. However, alongside encouraging new entrants into farming, the Strategy places a strong emphasis on enhancing the natural environment, cutting greenhouse gas emissions, improving climate resilience, and delivering meaningful ecological gains across the Farms Estate. A key ambition of the Strategy is for 70% of council farms to adopt sustainable farming practices by 2030, embedding environmental stewardship across the estate. Timely tenancy decisions ensure capable and committed tenants are in place to deliver these outcomes.

9. **Well-being and health implications**

- 9.1 Productive farms contribute to local food security, rural employment, and wider community well-being.

10. **Other implications**

- 10.1 Delegation supports delivery of the Strategic Asset Management Plan and the Council Plan by strengthening Dorset's rural economy and supporting new entrants into farming.

11. **Risk implications**

- 11.1 HAVING CONSIDERED: the risks associated with this decision; the level of risk has been identified as:

Current Risk: LOW

Residual Risk: LOW

12. **Equalities**

- 12.1 The Farms Estate Strategy promotes transparent and fair access to agricultural opportunities. All tenancy decisions remain subject to the Council's Equalities Policy.

- 13. **Appendices**

- 13.1 N/a

- 14. **Background papers**

- 14.1 N/a

- 15 Report sign-off**

- 15.1 This report has been through the internal report clearance process and has been signed off by the Director for Legal and Democratic (Monitoring Officer), the Executive Director for Corporate Development (Section 151 Officer) and the appropriate Portfolio Holder(s)

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Cabinet

3 March 2026

Entering into South West Flood and Coastal Shared Service For Decision

Cabinet Member:

Cllr J Andrews, Place Services

Local Councillor(s):

Senior Leadership Team:

J Britton, Executive Director for Place Services

Report author and job title: Jack Wiltshire, Corporate Director Highways & Engineering

Email: Jack.wiltshire@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

Statutory Authority:

Report status: Public (the exemption paragraph is N/A)

1. Executive summary

- 1.1 Responding to the climate and nature crisis and responding to the impacts of climate change is a clear priority for Dorset Council as captured in its council plan. Recent extreme weather events have led to impacts such as flooding and coastal erosion, and it is important that Dorset develops a strategic approach to developing greater resilience for Dorset's economy, communities and housing.

These are issues that are areas of concern for Dorset's communities and residents, and the council recently ran a climate resilience citizen's panel that set out a series of concerns and future areas of focus. This work was supported by an advisory panel of key stakeholders including the Environment Agency and Wessex Water, and will feed into the development of an overarching climate adaptation strategy.

January's storm Chandra affected connectivity, with a corresponding impact on businesses and residents. With some areas seeing the highest ever recorded water levels, the county saw property flooding and risks to safety. As part of Dorset's emerging strategic approach to climate resilience, this paper identifies how joining the South West Flood and Coastal partnership can help

to provide a stronger plan and response for flooding and coastal erosion in Dorset that will better support Dorset's communities. Through improvements to infrastructure and supporting Dorset's residents to be empowered and better prepared, the county will become more resilient to climate change.

South West Flood and Coastal (SWFaC) is a shared service operating between BCP Council (host authority) and East Devon District Council ([South West Flood and Coastal](#)). They also provide a consultancy service to Torridge District Council, Exeter City Council, Teignbridge District Council and Dorset Council. It is proposed to improve service level by joining SWFaC, through their existing Shared Service Agreement (SSA), allowing existing Dorset Council staff to fully integrate into their structure and for SWFaC to report to Dorset Council as the Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management (FCERM) service.

It is important to note that this has distinct advantages over simply accessing as a consultancy service. In particular, it gives access to greater resources as demand in Dorset increases and ensures Dorset's needs will be prioritised.

The new approach will strengthen Dorset's ability to bid for external Grant in Aid funding, increase capability, reduce reliance on consultancy support and deliver more projects, enabling communities to be more resilient. This collaborative approach will support a stronger community led focus, with town & parish councils, neighbouring authorities and external agencies working better together.

And it creates a single partnership working from BCP, through Dorset to East Devon, working cooperatively and in the best interests of all residents instead of the current fragmented approach.

2. **Recommendation(s)**

- 2.1 Cabinet supports entering into a Shared Service Agreement for Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management with South West Flood and Coastal (BCP Council & East Devon District Council).
- 2.2 Cabinet delegate authority to the Executive Director of Place in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Place Services to negotiate, authorise and enter into the Shared Service Agreement, following Dorset Council's governance processes for entering into agreements.

3. **Reason for the recommendation(s)**

There are many advantages to joining the partnership. Through this collaborative approach:

- Communities become more resilient to climate change
- Enables access to increased external funding through a larger capital programme
- The local economy is strengthened through improved network resilience
- As part of the council's strategic approach to deliver more climate resilience in line with the council plan priority, closer working is achieved with town & parish councils and the Environment Agency to support and empower local residents to better protect themselves and their properties
- The partnership is more attractive in the recruitment market
- Dorset gains greater resilience for service provision due to staff numbers
- Dorset Council supports the Environment Agency (EA) to meet their 'properties protected' targets
- Capital programmes are smoothed allowing consistent resourcing
- Dorset Council reduces reliance on consultancy support for day-to-day activities

4. **The report**

4.1 Taking a more strategic approach through collaboration with Dorset's town & parish councils, external organisations such as the Environment Agency and neighbouring authorities is key to providing better flooding resilience in Dorset (including the ultimate development of a climate adaptation strategy). The Environment Agency promote collaboration to meet local flooding needs within communities. Helping community engagement, participation and empowerment in response to flooding supports:

- New social practices and processes
- New social relationships working collectively and collaboratively
- Changing routines and beliefs, learning
- Local needs in and within communities

Joining the SWFaC partnership will be a key step in enhancing this collaborative approach, leading to a stronger community focused response to flooding and coastal erosion.

4.2 SWFaC acts with BCP as the host body. SWFaC have a proven track record of securing external funding through the national Grant in Aid programme provided by DEFRA and administered by the Environment Agency. SWFaC is structured to provide specialist experts to manage relevant assets and secure

additional funding. By entering the shared service, consistent management of the BCP, Dorset and East Devon coastline will be provided.

- 4.3 To join the shared service, staff from Dorset Council's existing FCERM team will move into SWFaC with BCP as the host organisation. Dorset Council will then see the collective benefit of having access to a greater pool of knowledge, experience and bidding power. Increasing the size of SWFaC has advantages over the existing arrangement as work demands can be spread across the partnership, reducing peaks and troughs of workload.
- 4.4 It is proposed that current Dorset Council employees would transfer to the host organisation, BCP Council, who manage SWFaC. This will be in line with TUPE legislation ensuring protection of their current pay, terms and conditions.
- 4.5 The SWFaC Shared Service model is focused on staffing and skills. Each Council within the agreement retains control of their objectives and budgets. The governance is such that the service reports to a board of Client Managers (one at each authority) and Councillors (relevant Cabinet Member at each authority).
- 4.6 A wider pool of staff will provide access to a greater breadth of shared knowledge and expand the range of particular specialists across the member authorities. Collaboratively working through the partnership and with other external agencies is likely to yield greater results, the outcomes of which will be the provision of an enhanced level of service for our communities and greater external funding investment in Dorset.

5. **Alternative options considered**

- 5.1 Continue to work as Dorset Council FCERM, supplemented by consultancy support from SWFaC and private sector consultants.
 - 5.1.1 Retaining the current model would simply demonstrate how the Local Lead Flood Authority duty is discharged by Dorset Council. However, Dorset Council can clearly show how the duty is discharged through the governance of the recommended option.
 - 5.1.2 Retaining the current model would be sub optimal as it doesn't benefit from the advantages of working as part of a larger team with a wider pool of knowledge and specialisms. Through the partnership Dorset Council would see greater collaborative working with neighbouring authorities and government agencies. Working within a larger structure is likely to support better training and staff development, whereas the limited size of Dorset

Council's FCERM team restricts these benefits. Moving to the recommended model is likely to involve a short period of disruption for existing Dorset Council employees working in this team, although it's anticipated that the greater benefits of the recommended option will be quickly realised.

6. Legal considerations

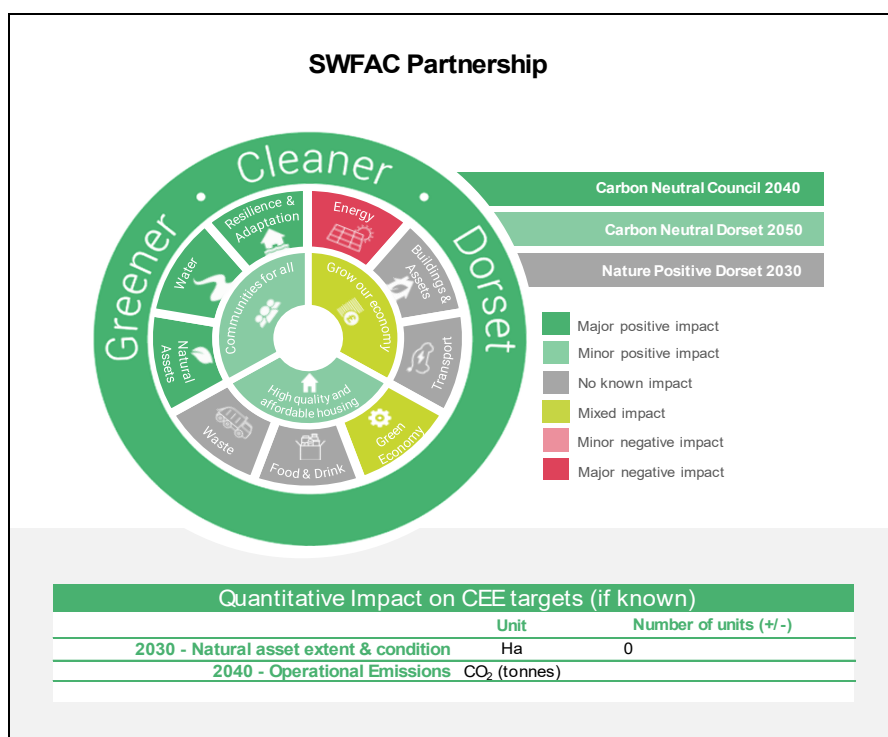
- 6.1 BCP to act as single employer for any growth of the shared service (recruitment).
- 6.2 The method for our employees to join the partnership if a single employer model is used.
- 6.3 As a shared service, Dorset Council would continue to discharge the Local Lead Flood Authority duties, with SWFaC staff undertaking those objectives.
- 6.4 The shared service agreement will include an appropriate exit strategy/clause, as is usual for this type of agreement.

7. Financial implications

- 7.1 Joining SWFaC is likely to increase growth of the capital programme through bids for national grant funding to deliver potential projects.
- 7.2 Each authority maintains control of their FCERM budgets with revenue maintenance and capital project budgets hosted independently.
- 7.3 The Dorset Council investment into the Shared Service will be reflective of the current net cost of running the current service. The budget for the shared service would reflect the people costs and any associated revenue costs such as equipment / IT / training / HR, etc.

8. Natural environment, climate & ecology implications

- 8.1 A positive impact on climate resilience is expected through a programme that improves resilience. The climate wheel demonstrates an anomaly around energy that is incorrect, this is because the climate wheel negatively scores projects relating to assets that do not introduce renewable energy options. As the assets relating to FCERM do not relate to buildings, the energy impact should be regarded as neutral.



9. Well-being and health implications

- 9.1 Improved resilience against property flooding and risks to health arising from flooding and coastal erosion.

10. Other implications

- 10.1 None identified

11. Risk implications

- 11.1 HAVING CONSIDERED: the risks associated with this decision; the level of risk has been identified as:

Current Risk: Medium

Residual Risk: Low

12. Equalities

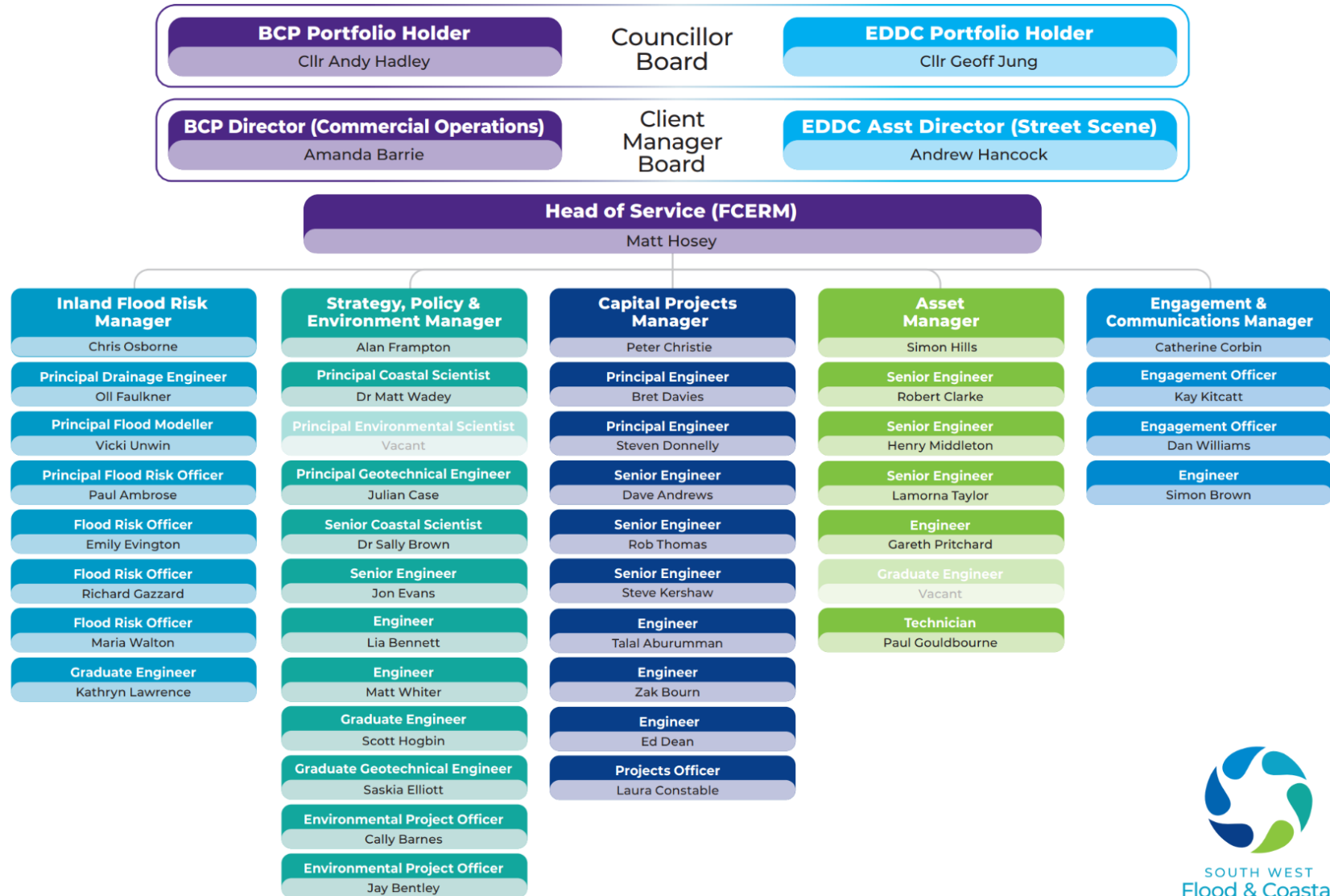
12. See 13. 4

13. Appendices

- 13.1 Existing South West Flood and Coastal Structure Chart

South West & Flood & Coastal Service Structure

14 August 2025



13.2 Joining the shared service follows the successfully established model of the Hampshire and West Sussex coastline <https://coastalpartners.org.uk/>. The existing Head of Service of SWFaC was instrumental in setting up and managing this partnership and SWFaC operates using the same form of agreement.

13.3 Climate wheel outputs

ACCESSIBLE TABLE SHOWING IMPACTS

Natural Environment, Climate & Ecology Strategy Commitments	Impact
Energy	major negative impact
Buildings & Assets	No known impact
Transport	No known impact
Green Economy	mixed impact
Food & Drink	No known impact
Waste	No known impact
Natural Assets & Ecology	major positive impact
Water	major positive impact
Resilience and Adaptation	major positive impact

Corporate Plan Aims	Impact
Grow our economy	neutral
High-quality and affordable housing	minor positive impact
Communities for all	minor positive impact

TABLE OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations	Responses -will this be incorporated into your proposal? How? And if not, why not?
Energy	
Provide advice and/or signpost business to sources of information on how they can become more resource efficient	There are no obvious opportunities within the scope of FCERM to introduce this.
consider opportunities to generate renewable energy on the land	Options to be considered where appropriate
Buildings & Assets	
No recommendations found for this category	

Transport	
No recommendations found for this category	
Green Economy	
No recommendations found for this category	
Food & Drink	
No recommendations found for this category	
Waste	
No recommendations found for this category	
Natural Assets & Ecology	
Use the opportunity to connect existing habitats using wildlife corridors	FCERM Strategies seek to protect habitats or mitigate the impacts of flooding or coastal erosion on them. Watercourses will act as wildlife corridors.
Water	
No recommendations found for this category	
Resilience & Adaptation	
No recommendations found for this category	

13.4 Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA)

Dorset Council Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management (FCERM)

Initial information

Name of the policy, project, strategy, project or service being assessed:

Proposal for Dorset Council Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management (FCERM) to potentially join the South West Flood and Coastal Partnership (SWFaC).

2. Is this a (please delete those not required):

Other (please explain)

This is a proposal which would enable an improved delivery model for flood and coastal erosion risk management across the Dorset Council area. Responding to the climate and nature crisis is a clear priority for Dorset Council with a cross-cutting impact of both flooding and coastal erosion. Greater resilience would be gained by joining the partnership and has positive benefits for our economy, communities and housing.

The proposal to join the South West Flood and Coastal partnership would help to provide a stronger plan and response for flooding and coastal erosion in Dorset. Ultimately, the proposed operating model seeks to better support our communities. Through improvements to infrastructure and supporting our residents to be empowered and better prepared, we will improve our resilience.

Is this (please delete those not required):

Internal (employees only)

External (residents, communities, partners)

Both internal and external

This proposal almost entirely impacts internal employees as it will affect our staff. The proposal is anticipated to bring positive outcomes by switching to the improved delivery model, therefore no negative impacts for any external people have been identified so far.

Please provide a brief overview of its aims and objectives:

Joining the partnership will give Dorset Council access to a greater skills base and allow the BCP, Dorset and East Devon coastline to be managed through one body. Inland flood management will benefit in the same way. The overall objective is to better manage our assets and flood duties, therefore positively benefiting our communities.

Please provide the background to this proposal.

South West Flood & Coastal provides a coordinated shared service between BCP Council and East Devon District Council. The partnership is well established and recognised as a strong delivery model for effective flood and coastal erosion management. If political support is given by BCP and Dorset Council's Cabinets, Dorset Council's FCERM team will join the partnership lead by BCP. The mechanism for this may be transfer under TUPE.

Evidence gathering and engagement

What sources of data, evidence or research has been used for this assessment? (e.g national statistics, employee data):

Employee data has been used for this assessment. This was produced on 3rd February 2026.

What did this tell you?

The raw data gathered has provided insight into the potential impact to Dorset Council (DC) employees should a TUPE transfer to the SWFaC partnership occur. Any TUPE transfer legally protects an employee's rights when a service is

transferred to a new employer, and this includes contractual terms and conditions of employment.

The raw data is attached and indicates a largely neutral impact on existing DC employees; however this would need to be explored further should a TUPE transfer be confirmed and measures agreed.

The current cabinet paper for this proposal anticipates that employees will continue to work flexibly and in a hybrid manner across the partnership with desk availability at all three Councils (BCP, DC and EDDC.) Staff are likely to be able to choose where they work with meetings at either location from time to time

Whilst the detail is not known yet, there is likely to be some consultation about an appropriate centre of duty, with the requirement for travel across the geographical partnership area to be defined and confirmed. As this is clarified it will be necessary to understand the impact on employees, specifically those with caring responsibilities and disabilities.

Employees are currently required to travel as part of their roles and responsibilities; however, this geographical area may become wider depending on their role. It is not anticipated that employees will suddenly start travelling a lot more than the currently do as a lot of work is done online. Senior leaders are committed to ensuring work bias suits an individual's location.

Who have you engaged and consulted with as part of this assessment?

There has been early high-level engagement with both employees impacted by this proposal, as well as engagement with Corporate Directors, Heads of Service and Service Managers.

Trade Union Colleagues have been engaged as part of the early proposals for this potential change. As the Cabinet paper continues to progress through the approval and consideration process, engagement with the trade unions will consider accordingly.

HR Colleagues have been involved in the analysis of the EQiA data related to this proposal.

Is further information needed to help inform decision making?

Further advice and guidance is sought from the Equalities and Diversity Officer in relation to this point.

Is an EQIA required?

Yes

Assessing the impact on different groups of people

For each of the protected characteristics groups below, please explain whether your proposal could have a positive, negative, unclear or no impact. Where an impact has been identified, please explain what it is and if unclear or negative please explain what mitigating actions will be taken.

use the evidence you have gathered to inform your decision making.

consider impacts on residents, service users and employees separately.

if your strategy, policy, project or service contains options you may wish to consider providing an assessment for each option.

see guidance for more information about the different [protected characteristics](#).

Key to impacts

Positive Impact	the proposal eliminates discrimination, advances equality of opportunity and/or fosters good relations with protected groups.
Negative Impact	protected characteristic group(s) could be disadvantaged or discriminated against
Neutral Impact	no change/ no assessed significant impact of protected characteristic groups
Unclear	not enough data/evidence has been collected to make an informed decision.

Impacts on who or what?	Choose impact	How
Age	Neutral Impact	Two-thirds of this grouping are fifty years old or above, however there is no assessed significant impact of protected characteristic groups. Any consultation will provide an opportunity to share further information, which may result in the impact being updated.
Disability	Unclear	The consultation will provide an opportunity to share further

Impacts on who or what?	Choose impact	How
		information, which may result in the impact being updated.
Care Experience	Neutral Impact	There is no assessed significant impact of protected characteristic groups. The consultation will provide an opportunity to share further information, which may result in the impact being updated.
Gender reassignment and Gender Identity	Neutral Impact	There is no assessed significant impact of protected characteristic groups. The consultation will provide an opportunity to share further information, which may result in the impact being updated.
Marriage or civil partnership	Neutral Impact	There is no assessed significant impact of protected characteristic groups. The consultation will provide an opportunity to share further information, which may result in the impact being updated.
Pregnancy and maternity	Unclear	The consultation will provide an opportunity to share further information, which may result in the impact being updated. Policy and legislative additional protections are in place for employees which will be followed during any consultation.
Race and Ethnicity	Neutral Impact	There is no assessed significant impact of protected characteristic groups. The consultation will provide an opportunity to share further information, which may result in the impact being updated.
Religion and belief	Neutral Impact	There is no assessed significant impact of protected characteristic

Impacts on who or what?	Choose impact	How
		groups. The consultation will provide an opportunity to share further information, which may result in the impact being updated.
Sex (consider men and women)	Neutral Impact	There is no assessed significant impact of protected characteristic groups. The consultation will provide an opportunity to share further information, which may result in the impact being updated.
Sexual orientation	Neutral Impact	There is no assessed significant impact of protected characteristic groups. The consultation will provide an opportunity to share further information, which may result in the impact being updated.
People with caring responsibilities	Unclear	The consultation will provide an opportunity to share further information, which may result in the impact being updated.
Rural isolation	Unclear	The consultation will provide an opportunity to share further information, which may result in the impact being updated.
Socio-economic deprivation	Neutral Impact	There is no assessed significant impact of protected characteristic groups. The consultation will provide an opportunity to share further information, which may result in the impact being updated.
Single parents	Unclear	The consultation will provide an opportunity to share further information, which may result in the impact being updated.
Armed forces communities	Neutral Impact	There is no assessed significant impact of protected characteristic groups. The consultation will provide

Impacts on who or what?	Choose impact	How
		an opportunity to share further information, which may result in the impact being updated.

Please provide a summary of the impacts:

Age

All employees will be treated equally, regardless of age; there is no retirement age for the workforce.

Where there are pathways to employment (care leavers between the age of 16 and 25), employees who are in scope, we will need to ensure that we meet our Corporate Parenting responsibilities. If this applies, the Apprenticeship and Work Based Learning Team will have been made aware.

We will provide equality of opportunity for all employees and will ensure that individual differences and the contributions of all employees are recognised and valued throughout any consultation process.

Disability

Reasonable adjustments can be requested to help remove or reduce a barrier faced by employees who have a disability or health condition.

As part of business-as-usual processes, we will continue to support colleagues through their new or existing Reasonable Adjustment Passports and update them to reflect any changes in travel requirements.

Pregnancy and Maternity

If employees are on family leave, they will be engaged with and communicated to in a fair and inclusive way in line with TUPE Legislation. They will be offered support to ensure that they are able to take part equally to all employees.

We do not hold information centrally on employees who may currently be pregnant, however, this information may be known to managers at a local level if the employee has chosen to make their manager aware. We will encourage all employees as part of any consultation process to make us aware of any concerns or issues that may impact on their ability to participate.

Sex (Men and Women)

Change can be daunting as it may impact long-established care arrangements that are difficult to change. Therefore, as part of any consultation, employees will have an

opportunity to express their circumstances for consideration. Efforts will be made to balance the individual's needs with those of the business.

All employees have a statutory right to request flexible working arrangements.

Rural Isolation

The centre of duty for the new service will be is not yet clear, which may cause uncertainty. Employees are currently required to travel as part of their roles and responsibilities; however, this geographical area may become wider depending on their role. It is not anticipated that employees will suddenly start travelling a lot more than the currently do as a lot of work is done online. Senior leaders are committed to ensuring work bias suits an individual's location.

It is anticipated there will continue to be a balance between office working and option of hybrid working based on business need. We will work with employees to understand and work through any issues and apply excess travel provisions to help mitigate any impact.

Social-economic

The social economic local protected characteristic focusses on the place a person lives. It is noted that this proposed transfer may cause stress and anxiety due to uncertainty. During this time, the workforce is supported through engagement with managers and leaders, and a range of resources is available to help employees.

Lone Parents

Although there are no employees who have declared themselves lone parents, we must be mindful that an individual's surrounding support system can vary, regardless of whether they are a lone parent. We must be aware that two thirds of employees have not provided a response to this characteristic and this should continue to be explored through any TUPE consultation period.

People with caring responsibilities

Change can be daunting as it may impact long-established care arrangements that are difficult to change. Therefore, as part of any consultation, employees will have an opportunity to express their circumstances for consideration. Efforts will be made to balance the individual's needs with those of the business.

All employees have a statutory right to request flexible working arrangements.

The service will continue to refer to the Good Practice Guidance for Employees who are Carers to ensure that our change management process reflects the needs of carers. We also need to be mindful that two thirds of employees did not respond.

General Initial Reflections

We will review our assessment as required based on the information known at various points in the proposed transfer process, specifically after Cabinet Review and should any proposed TUPE transfer proceed.

All employees will be treated equally regardless of their protected characteristic(s). However, if someone declares a protected characteristic, reasonable adjustments will be made to enable them to fully participate in the consultation process, if applicable. This will also continue after the outcome, ensuring that reasonable adjustments/ adaptations are implemented to positively support those with protected characteristics.

14. Background papers

14.1 None

Report sign-off

15. This report has been through the internal report clearance process and has been signed off by the Director for Legal and Democratic (Monitoring Officer), the Executive Director for Corporate Development (Section 151 Officer) and the appropriate Portfolio Holder(s)

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Cabinet

3 March 2025

Swanage Beach Coastal Protection Scheme For Decision

Cabinet Member:

Cllr J Andrews, Place Services

Local Councillor(s):

Cllr G Suttle

Cllr C Tomes

Senior Leadership Team:

J Britton, Executive Director for Place Services

Report author and job title: Jack Wiltshire – Corporate Director Highways & Engineering.

Email: jack.wiltshire@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

Statutory Authority:

Report status: Public (the exemption paragraph is N/A)

1. Executive summary

Swanage seafront requires additional protection to provide resilience to flooding and coastal erosion. The primary purpose of this paper is to seek cabinet's approval to bid for £4 million of external funding to replenish beach levels, install a new rock groyne control structure and provide additional protection to the seawall. The recommended approach includes sustaining the effectiveness of the beach and existing groyne structures, which together play a vital role in reducing the risks of coastal flooding and erosion.

Swanage Beach is a key coastal asset that provides flood and erosion protection to the town, supports critical infrastructure and key amenities, and attracts thousands of visitors each year. Protecting the seafront supports economic growth and enhances resilience.

The total project cost is estimated at £4.657m, with a current spend of £460k. This paper seeks additional investment of £190k from Dorset Council in match funding to secure external funding of £4.007m.

The project is in continued alignment with the wider Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council (BCP) Poole Bay Strategy project, which is fundamental to the delivery approach of the scheme. Ongoing collaboration enables shared efficiencies

and cost savings; without this alignment, these benefits would be lost, and the project would no longer be economically viable to deliver. Project delivery is currently estimated in 2028.

2. Recommendation(s)

- 2.1 Approve the Swanage Beach Coastal Protection Scheme outline business case.
- 2.2 Approve budget allocation within the Capital programme as detailed in Table 1.0 section 7.
- 2.3 Authorise the submission of the Outline Business Case to the Environment Agency's National Project Assurance Service.
- 2.4 Authorise the draw-down of all external Flood Defence Grant-In-Aid and Local Levy funding, ongoing throughout the project.
- 2.5 That the decision to procure and award the works and associated professional services be delegated to the Executive Director of Place in consultation with the Section 151 Officer and the Cabinet Member for Place Services.

3. Reason for the recommendation(s)

- 3.1 Scheme delivery is required to provide resilience against coastal erosion and flooding.
- 3.2 National flood funding rules change on 1 April 2026, the outline business case must be submitted before 31 March 2026 to avoid the risk of extensive rework, delays, and additional costs under the new requirements.
- 3.3 The outline business case setting out the £4.987m project requires cabinet approval before it can be considered for external funding.

4. The report

4.1 Strategic priority

- (a) Protection of Swanage seafront is supported by the Dorset Council Plan, *"Our seaside communities are particularly exposed to rising sea levels which can lead to coastal erosion, flooding, and damage to infrastructure."* In preparing for the challenges of climate change, *'we are committed to helping our communities, ecosystems, and economies adapt to the unavoidable impacts of climate change'*.
- (b) This scheme aligns with central government's approach which sets out the long-term ambition to create a nation more resilient to future flood and coastal erosion risk.

4.2 Background

Swanage's existing coastal defences are deteriorating. Beach levels have been steadily falling, leaving over 110 properties, critical public infrastructure and the local economy at increasing risk from coastal flooding and erosion.

Without intervention, the seawall is projected to fail as early as 2029, leading to rapid shoreline retreat and major loss of residential, commercial and amenity assets.

The outline business case presents a preferred option that delivers long-term protection, strategic alignment with regional programmes and excellent value for money.

4.3 The scheme directly supports:

- National FCERM Strategy (2020): climate resilient places and proactive adaptation.
- Shoreline Management Plan (2011): *Hold the Line* policy for Swanage.
- Poole Bay FCERM Strategy (2014): maintain defences for 100 years.
- Local Plans (Swanage 2017; Dorset 2021): safeguard coastline and economy.
- Swanage Town Council Seafront Masterplan (2023)

4.4 Options appraisal and preferred option

A longlist of 11 options was appraised against strategic, economic, environmental, buildability and carbon criteria. Beach recharge with a new control structure has been identified as the preferred option. This was selected because it:

- Restores the established standard of protection
- Provides the best overall value for money
- Is technically deliverable with lower construction and programme risk than more intrusive alternatives.
- Minimises carbon impacts relative to other engineered options.
- Enables significant cost efficiencies by aligning with the BCP recharge programme, including shared mobilisation and materials.

Please see the full outline business case included in appendix A.

5. Alternative options considered

5.1 Eleven options were developed and assessed in accordance with Environment Agency Appraisal Guidance and the HM Treasury Green Book, using technical,

environmental, economic and deliverability criteria. Following Multicriteria Analysis and detailed appraisal, a shortlist of viable options was assessed against flood and erosion risk reduction, value for money, environmental impact, buildability and affordability, regulatory and consenting risk.

6. Legal considerations

6.1 Dorset Council is the Coast protection authority with the responsibility for carrying out works to protect the coast from erosion and flooding. This responsibility is derived from the Coastal Protection Act 1949 and Flood Water Management Act 2010.

6.2 Regulatory licences will be required from the Environment Agency, Natural England and the Marine Management Organisation.

7. Financial implications

7.1 £190,000 of Dorset Council capital expenditure is required in addition to the existing project spend of £460k to meet the full £650k contribution commitment. In addition, £330,000 of external Local Levy funding has been secured to complete the remaining pre-construction work in 2026/27. Subject to approval, external Flood Defence Grant-in-Aid funding would be £4 million.

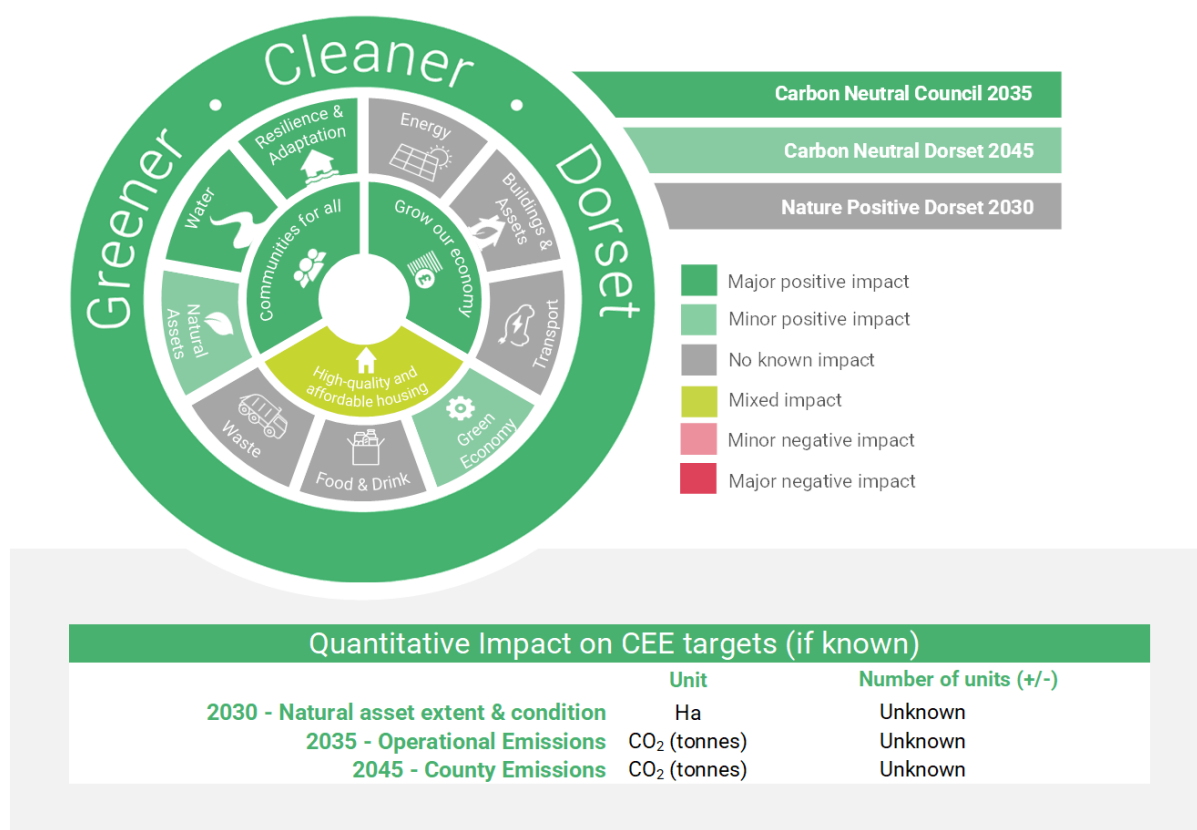
Table 1.0

Funding source	Spend to date	Additional Funding Required	Total
Dorset Council capital	£460k	£190k	£650k
Local Levy (External)		£330k	£330k
Flood Defence Grant-In-Aid (External)		£4,007k	£4,007k
Total			£4,987k

8. Natural environment, climate & ecology implications

8.1 The design retains as much existing beach material as possible to minimise waste, vehicle movements and use of new materials. The project will increase climate resilience.

8.2 Natural England have had input on relevant environment, habitat and marine conservation zone screenings. Dorset Council will continue to consult with relevant regulatory bodies during detailed design and planning. Dorset Council will implement mitigation measures to minimise ecological impacts on marine habitats and species during construction.



9. Well-being and health implications.

9.1 The return of the beach to previous design levels enables safer access onto the beach, improves beach quality and renews the standard of protection previously established to prevent coastal erosion and flooding. This will allow beach users continued well-being benefits associated with exercise and key amenity usage.

10. Other implications

None identified

11. Risk implications

- 11.1 HAVING CONSIDERED: the risks associated with this decision; the level of risk has been identified as:

Current Risk: High

Residual Risk: Low

12. Equalities

- 12.1 No adverse effects have been identified.

13. Appendices

- 13.1 Appendix A – Outline Business Case
- 13.2 Appendix B – Equality impact assessment
- 13.3 Appendix C – List of acronyms used

14. Background papers

- 14.1 None

15. Report sign-off

- 15.1 This report has been through the internal report clearance process and has been signed off by the Director for Legal and Democratic (Monitoring Officer), the Executive Director for Corporate Development (Section 151 Officer) and the appropriate Portfolio Holder(s)

1 Business case template: supported change

Template: LIT 73921

Published: 14/03/2025

Audience: Environment Agency

Swanage Beach Coastal Protection Scheme Outline Business Case



Project type: Supported change

Assurance route: National Project Assurance Service (NPAS)

Project stage: Outline Business Case

Date: 8th January 2026

Version: C01

Financial Scheme of Delegation (FSoD) approvals

Section 1: all projects should complete this section

1.1	Project name (Enter project name exactly as it appears on AIMS PD PoL)	Swanage Beach Coastal Protection Scheme
	SOP Project Code	
	Start date (dd/mm/yyyy)	09/03/2023
	End date (dd/mm/yyyy)	30/10/2028
	For FSoD team use only	
	FSoD reference	
	FSoD date (dd/mm/yyyy)	

1.2	Items approved under Section A	Items approved under Section C6/C7/C11	FSoD Ref	Date (dd/mm/yyyy)	Amount Requested (£k)	Approval amount (£k)	Current Total Approval (£k) (for FSoD team use)
	OBC						
		BCUR 1					
	Add rows as required						
	Total project cost (£k) (Estimated at SOC & OBC, actual at FBC) (£k)						
	Whole Life Cash Cost (£k)						

* SOC / OBC / FBC / single stage business case

1.3	Lead assurer	Post title	Assurance confirmation			Date (dd/mm/yyyy)
			RED ☐	AMBER ☐	GREEN ☐	

1.4	Information to be highlighted to the Approving Officer

1.5	If the business case contains sensitive or commercial information or data that should be restricted (see Government Security Classifications) please tick the box.	☐

1.6	FSoD approver name(s)	Post title	Attach emailed approval (not email address)	Date (dd/mm/yyyy)

1.7

FSoD schedule	Description	Check relevant box
A1	Projects (including FCRM or Navigation revenue)	☐
A2	FCRM or Navigation capital projects	☐
Name and FSoD ref of approved strategy (A2) if applicable		
A4	FCRM capital projects led by LA, IDB and other RMAs	☐
T2	Corporate Property Projects / acquisitions	☐

1.8

For FSoD team use only:

Section 2: only Environment Agency-led projects should complete this section

2.1	SOP Project Code				
	Programme				
	National team name				
	Area name				
	Function				

2.2	Role	Name	Post Title	% time on project
	Project Sponsor			
	Project Executive			
	Project Manager			

2.3	Required level of Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) from programme	N/A	Low	Medium	High
		☐	☐	☐	☐

Section 3: only other RMA-led projects should complete this section

3.1	RMA reference number	SCH3249

3.2	Assurance and endorsement from Risk Management Authority	
	I confirm that this business base meets our guidelines, quality assurance requirements, environmental obligations and Defra investment appraisal conditions. All internal approvals, including member approval, have been completed. I apply to the Environment Agency for capital grant and local levy in the sum of £4,040,000 (Grant Claim Value).	
	Name of RMA Project Executive	Jack Wiltshire
	Date of endorsement (dd/mm/yyyy)	
	Attach emailed endorsement (not email address)	
	Version approved	

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1 Executive Summary

1.1 Introduction

This Outline Business Case (OBC) seeks approval for £4,007k of Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management (FCERM) Grant in Aid (GiA) to deliver the detailed design and capital construction of a flood defence to reduce the risk of coastal flooding and erosion across the Swanage Beach frontage.

1.2 Strategic Case

The Swanage Beach Coastal Protection Scheme is a scheme led by Dorset Council to address the increasing risks of coastal erosion and flooding along the Swanage seafront. The project area spans from the Mowlem Theatre in the south to Shep's Hollow in the north, encompassing key coastal infrastructure such as seawalls, groynes, and the Banjo Pier. The primary objective is to maintain the 0.33% AEP Standard of Protection (SoP) established by the 2005/06 beach recharge scheme, which is now under threat due to asset deterioration and declining beach levels. Without intervention, over 110 properties and vital public amenities are at risk.

The scheme aligns with national and regional strategies, including the National Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Strategy (2020), the Poole and Christchurch Bays Shoreline Management Plan (2011), and the Poole Bay FCERM Strategy (2014). These documents advocate for a “Hold the Line” policy, emphasising the need to maintain existing defences and adapt to climate change. The Swanage Local Plan (2017) and the Dorset Council Local Plan (2021) further reinforce the importance of protecting the town's coastline, which is vital to its tourism-driven economy. The project also seeks to align with the Bournemouth, Christchurch, and Poole (BCP) Council's beach recharge programme to optimize resources and reduce costs.

Historically, Swanage has implemented various coastal defences since the early 20th century, including seawalls, timber groynes, and beach nourishment. However, recent assessments show that many of these structures are nearing the end of their service life. The 2023 asset condition survey by JBA Consulting revealed that without active intervention, the seawall could fail as early as 2029, leading to accelerated erosion and significant damage to the town. The “Do Minimum” scenario highlights the inadequacy of current defences, projecting severe shoreline retreat and infrastructure loss over the next century.

Environmental, heritage, and visual considerations are integral to the scheme. The project area intersects with multiple designated ecological and heritage sites, requiring careful planning and mitigation. Preliminary assessments indicate that, with appropriate measures, the scheme will not significantly impact these sensitive areas. Additionally, the project offers opportunities to enhance the seafront's visual appeal and public access, aligning with the Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Management Plan.

Key risks include funding uncertainties, landowner opposition, and alignment with BCP's next round of beach recharge at Bournemouth. However, the project team has proactively engaged stakeholders and developed a robust OBC to secure approval and funding. The scheme represents a critical investment in Swanage's long-term resilience, environmental protection, and economic sustainability.

1.3 Economic Case

The Swanage Beach coastal protection project aims to mitigate coastal flooding and erosion over a 100-year period. A comprehensive appraisal process was conducted to identify the most suitable intervention, guided by Critical Success Factors (CSFs) derived from project objectives and HM Treasury's Green Book. These CSFs included flood and erosion risk management, cost-effectiveness, carbon management, buildability, affordability, regulatory compliance, and enhancement of beach amenities. A longlist of 11 options was developed and assessed using a Multi-Criteria Analysis (MCA), with four options shortlisted for further evaluation.

The shortlisted options included: (1) Do Nothing, (2) Beach Recharge with a New Control Structure, (3a) Beach Recharge with Rock Armour Underpinning, and (3b) Beach Recharge with Sheet Pile Underpinning. Technical, environmental, and economic appraisals were conducted. Option 3a emerged as the lowest carbon solution with option 2 offering enhanced protection through a terminal groyne. Environmental assessments highlighted varying impacts, with Option 2 offering landscape and amenity benefits, albeit with some ecological concerns.

Economic analysis over a 100-year appraisal period showed all options were viable, with Option 2 achieving the highest benefit-cost ratio (BCR) of 5.35. However, due to funding rules, a 20-year duration of benefits was also considered. Under this shorter horizon, Option 2 had the highest BCR (11.87) and Net Present Social Value (NPSV), making it the preferred option.

Following this, Option 2 was refined through outline design, reducing material quantities and costs. This led to a revised PV whole-life cost of £4,435k from the previous £5,203k and an updated BCR of 13.92 from the previous 11.87, reaffirming its strong value for money. The proposal meets all strategic objectives and demonstrates high economic, environmental, and social returns.

1.4 Commercial Case

Dorset Council (DC) will deliver the Swanage Beach Recharge project using a procurement strategy that ensures compliance with Public Contract Regulations and achieves value for money. The approach combines internal and external resources to meet operational, financial, and social objectives. Key procurement drivers include professional and consulting services, recharge operations, control structure construction, site investigations, and public engagement.

Two procurement routes are considered: open tendering for specific contracts or using approved frameworks. The project will proceed in two phases: Phase I (April 2026–Dec 2027) for planning, design, and permissions, and Phase II (Jan–Apr 2028) for construction and beach recharge.

Commercial arrangements include procuring the designer under the TEPS contract and appointing a principal contractor via open tender. Significant efficiencies will be achieved by aligning with the larger BCP scheme, such as free use of the sinker pipe and shared dredged material. An efficiencies register will track cost-saving measures and innovative ideas throughout the project.

1.5 Financial Case

The total Whole Life Cash Cost for the scheme is estimated at £4,657k. This OBC is seeking £4,007k Cash in funding to cover scheme development costs over the first three years following OBC approval, spanning financial years 2025–26 to 2027–28. This funding will support the scheme through to the construction phase and includes a 60% Optimism Bias with an embedded risk allowance.

1.6 Management Case

The management of the Swanage Beach Coastal Protection Scheme is structured around clear governance, defined responsibilities and coordinated project delivery, with Dorset Council acting as the lead client supported by BCP Council through a public sector cooperation agreement, and specialist consulting engineers appointed for scheme design and technical oversight. A detailed programme sets out key milestones from committee approval and NPAS funding in March 2026 through designer and contractor procurement, statutory consultations, detailed design, and construction between January and February 2028. Stakeholder engagement led by the Dorset Coastal Forum is embedded throughout, supported by Equality Impact Assessment considerations and ongoing communication with affected residents and businesses. The scheme delivers significant long-term benefits, including maintaining the 0.33% AEP Standard of Protection, protecting over 110 properties, enhancing beach amenity, and supporting environmental resilience, with structured change-management processes ensuring collaboration across DC, BCP, the EA, Natural England and other partners. Risk management follows an established FCERM framework, with clear ownership, early identification, mitigation planning and continuous review, informed by lessons from previous coastal schemes. Contract management will be undertaken by DC with TEPS-appointed consultants providing design assurance and BCP Council supporting recharge-related interfaces. Assurance will follow the EA's IAAS process with all stages embedded within the project timeline, while post-project evaluation will focus on the performance of the new rock groyne control structure. Contingency arrangements including a 60% optimism bias, alignment with the BCP recharge programme and committed DC and

Local Levy funding ensure core outputs can still be delivered in the event of cost escalation, delay or partial project failure.

1.7 Recommendation

It is recommended that this OBC for Swanage Beach Coastal Protection Scheme is recommended for the approval of the sum of £4,007k of the flood defence grant in aid funding to progress the project to detailed design of the preferred option and construction.

2 Strategic case

2.1 Introduction

Swanage is a coastal town situated on the southern coast of Dorset. The project site is located within the Poole and Christchurch Bay Shoreline Management Plan (sometimes referred to as the 'Two Bays SMP') and extends along the Swanage seafront, encompassing the beach and foreshore area. The southern boundary of the site is located near the southern end of Shore Road, adjacent to the Mowlem Theatre, while the northern boundary is approximately 60 meters north of the steps at Shep's Hollow, as illustrated in Figure 2-1. The site includes several structures, such as sea walls, access steps, outfalls, slipways, groynes, and a pier.

Dorset Council (DC) is seeking approval of this OBC to develop a scheme aimed at preventing further deterioration of the seawall. The proposed plan focuses on maintaining the functionality of the beach and groyne to mitigate the risk of coastal flooding and erosion. Continued deterioration of the seawall could result in its failure, leading to the loss of principal amenity areas and over 110 residential and non-residential properties to erosion.



Figure 2-1: Location and features plan of Swanage Beach

2.2 Strategic context

2.2.1 National Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Strategy 2020

This strategy sets out the long-term vision for managing flood risk and coastal change in England, by improving the resilience of the nation to the year 2100.

The aim of the strategy is for Risk Management Authorities to work with partner organisations to deliver on three long-term ambitions to manage future risk and investment needs. They are:

- Climate resilient places: working with partners to bolster resilience to flooding and coastal change across the nation, both now and in the face of climate change.
- Today's growth and infrastructure resilient in tomorrow's climate: making the right investment and planning decisions to secure sustainable growth and environmental improvements, as well as infrastructure resilient to flooding and coastal change.
- A nation ready to respond and adapt to flooding and coastal change: ensuring local people understand their risk to flooding and coastal change and know their responsibilities and how to take action.

The project team have used the aims and objectives of the strategy to focus the project objectives and ensured that the team worked in partnership and that adaptation and carbon emissions are considered as part of the appraisal.

2.2.2 The Poole and Christchurch Bays shoreline management plan (SMP) (2011) review sub-cell 5F, section 4, PDZ 4

This SMP acknowledges the critical importance of preserving the town's viability, heritage, and community aspects. It prioritizes flood reduction and protection of the town centre, adhering to the policy of 'Hold the Line for all epochs.' The Poole & Wareham FCERM Strategy, finalized in December 2014, advocates for collaboration with other operating authorities and continued defence and necessary adjustments, particularly in response to rising sea level.

2.2.3 Pool Bay, Poole Harbour & Wareham FCERM Strategy (2014)

The Poole Bay, Poole Harbour, and Wareham FCERM Strategy (Environment Agency, 2014a) reaffirmed the SMP policy for Swanage Bay established in 2011. The strategy concluded that the preferred approach for the area is to maintain the defences along Swanage seafront for the next century. For the cliff section at North Swanage and The Pinnacles, the strategy recommends a "Do Nothing" approach, with a brief transition to Managed Realignment in between. This sustain policy assumes:

- The SoP will remain as established by the 2005/6 coast protection scheme. According to the 2005 Swanage Beach Management Plan (BMP), this scheme

was designed to offer a 0.33% AEP SoP over a 50-year lifespan, incorporating timber groynes, beach recharge, and seawall maintenance

- In the short term, spanning the first 20 years up to around 2033, efforts will focus on beach recycling and the upkeep of the groynes and seawall.
- In the medium term (approximately 2033 to 2063), the short-term measures will persist and be supplemented by a recharge in 2033, with additional recharges occurring every seven years thereafter. Note that the 2005 BMP initially assumed recharges would only be needed every 20 years.
- In the long term (approximately 2063 to 2113), the measures implemented during the medium term will persist. However, the frequency of top-up recharges will increase to every five years, with an anticipated 50% increase in recharge volume each time. Additionally, the northernmost 630 meters of seawall along the Swanage frontage is expected to be replaced after approximately 75 years, around 2088.

The Strategy was written in 2014 and thus is over 10 years old (10 years is the normal frequency for refreshing a FCERM Strategy). The project team contacted the Local Environment Agency (EA) Senior Coastal Advisor on the 15th of January 2025 and confirmed that even though it is technically over the 10-year period now. The Strategy is expected to be refreshed later in 2025 but would not anticipate the strategic direction for intervention at Swanage beach to change much beyond the currently agreed approach. This was also recently reviewed in the SMP refresh process, and no changes were proposed.

2.2.4 The Swanage Local Plan (2017)

The Swanage Local Plan highlights climate change, flood risk, and coastal change management as key challenges facing the town. It recognises Swanage's vulnerability to the effects of climate change, such as rising sea levels, landslips, increased flooding, and beach erosion, all of which could significantly impact the town and its economy. The plan also emphasises the vital role tourism plays in the local economy, particularly the importance of the beach in attracting visitors. A new policy within the plan ensures that existing open spaces in Swanage, including the area covered by this project, will be protected in accordance with current policies. Additionally, the plan outlines other initiatives that will shape the town's future development, including the designation of a Coastal Change Management Area, which this project supports.

2.2.5 The Dorset Council Local Plan 2021

The Dorset local plan is currently being developed, building off the guidance in the 2023 DC level 1 strategic flood risk assessment (SFRA). This scheme is included in the Dorset Local Plan as a future development. The DC Local Development Scheme 2025 outlines the schedule for preparing new development plan documents, with the Dorset Local Plan being the primary document to be produced.

2.2.6 The Beach Management Plan 2020

This BMP covers the central part of the Swanage Bay coast, extending from The Mowlem to the south, northwards to Shep's Hollow which is the same extent for this project. The BMP provides a review and update of the existing BMP first produced by Halcrow in March 2005 as part of the 2005/6 Swanage Beach Recharge Scheme (Halcrow, 2005). The key objective of the BMP which the primary objective of the project has been linked to is to manage the risk of coastal erosion and flooding by ensuring that an adequate beach is maintained in combination with the hard defence/control structures, such that the 0.33% Annual Exceedance Probability (AEP)) SoP of the 2005/6 Swanage Beach Recharge Scheme is retained. The BMP outlines an Action Plan comprising activities categorized under management, monitoring, maintenance, and future studies or research. This plan is designed to guide the ongoing and future management of the BMP area.

2.2.7 Bournemouth Poole and Christchurch Council Scheme

The Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole (BCP) Council is currently preparing for a new phase of its beach recharge programme, scheduled for implementation during the 2027/2028 period. As part of this initiative, the council plans to utilise a newly identified dredging site, for which it holds an independent dredging licence. This site will serve as the primary source of sediment for the Swanage beach nourishment activities

This Outline Business Case (OBC) aims to strategically align with the BCP Council's beach recharge project to maximise efficiency and cost-effectiveness. By coordinating efforts, the project stands to benefit from shared construction resources, optimised use of dredged materials, and streamlined procurement processes. These synergies not only enhance the overall affordability of this OBC but also underscore the critical importance of aligning timelines and logistics with the BCP initiative.

2.2.8 Swanage Town Coastal Protection Scheme

The central section of the Swanage Bay (Swanage Bay is bounded by Peveril Point to the south and Headfast Point to the north) coastline has experienced relatively limited coastal flooding. In contrast, more severe issues have been recorded further south along the Swanage Town frontage, where wave overtopping is a frequent problem. To manage the risk of winter storm flooding, the EA has deployed temporary flood barriers each winter since 2018. Although these barriers help to dissipate wave energy, Storm Ciarán in November 2023 displaced several concrete blocks, highlighting their limitations.

To provide a more robust and long-term solution, the Swanage Town Coastal Protection Scheme is currently in development. This scheme covers the coastal area adjacent to Swanage Town and overlaps by approximately 50 metres with the Swanage Beach Coastal Protection Scheme (this OBC) near the Mowlem Theatre, as shown in Figure 2-2. This overlap reflects a coordinated strategy to tackle flood and erosion risks along the Swanage Bay frontage through two interconnected projects that share a common boundary.



Figure 2-2: Swanage Beach Coastal Protection Scheme and Swanage Town Coastal Protection Scheme Extents Showing Boundary Overlapping Area

2.3 Current Arrangements

2.3.1 Defence History

Over the past two centuries, various coastal defence measures have been implemented along the Swanage Beach frontage to combat flooding and erosion. Key developments include:

2.3.1.1 Early 20th Century Seawall Construction (1904–1920s):

In response to beach sand loss in the late 19th century, a seawall was built along Shore Road between the Mowlem and Ulwell Stream outfall in 1904. This wall was later extended seawards during Shore Road widening in the 1920s. Around the same time, irregular sections of seawall were constructed along the cliff base north of the Ulwell Stream outfall.

2.3.1.2 Groyne Field Installation (1929–1931):

The vertical seawall likely accelerated beach erosion at its base. To counteract this, a groyne field was installed to help retain beach material.

2.3.1.3 1960s Coastal Protection Enhancements:

Purbeck District Council assumed responsibility for the New Swanage section, repairing and rebuilding of the ad hoc private seawall, extending the wall up to The Pines Hotel and supporting this with the construction of timber groynes in 1962 to aid retention of beach levels in this area to Shep's Hollow.

2.3.1.4 Outfall Jetty Construction (1993):

The Outfall Jetty, also known as the “Banjo Pier,” was built at the bay’s southern end as part of the Swanage Flood Alleviation Scheme. It is now maintained by the EA.

2.3.1.5 Beach Recharge Scheme (2005–2006):

This major project included:

- Removal of 19 old timber groynes north of the Banjo Pier and two older groynes between the Mowlem and Banjo Pier.
- Installation of 18 new timber groynes north of the Banjo Pier.
- Placement of approximately 130,000m³ of beach recharge sediment.
- Installation of a flushing system at the Outfall Jetty.
- Repairs to sections of the seawall and access steps.

2.3.1.6 Slope Stabilisation Measures (20th Century–2017):

Private landowners implemented various slope stabilisation efforts along the New Swanage coast (north of Shore Road) to address ongoing stability issues. The most recent was a scheme by the Pines Hotel owners, constructed between 2015 and 2017, following emergency slope stabilisation works in 2013.

2.3.2 Current Defences

The Swanage Beach coastal frontage is made up different coastal assets which comprises of beach, timber groynes, seawall and promenade and the cliff area slope stabilisation. The frontage also has a Pier known as Banjo Pier, several beach access steps, slipways and non-formalised outfalls.

The current defence arrangements are in place to continue to provide the SOP offered by the 2005/2006 scheme.

In 2023, JBA Consulting carried out a visual asset condition assessment of the coastal structures along the Swanage Beach frontage to inform the development of the

project's options appraisal. This assessment followed the EA's T98 Condition Assessment guidelines. The primary aims were to evaluate the remaining service life of the structures and to identify any critical defects requiring attention within the scheme. The inspection concluded that most of the defences were in fair condition, although the estimated residual life varied across the structures. The condition assessment report can be found in Appendix B.

2.3.3 Existing Maintenance Regime

In 2020, DC updated the Beach Management Plan for Swanage Beach. This revision included the implementation of monitoring plans with beach level alerts and actions to manage flood and erosion risks, as the beach serves as the primary coastal defence for the town.

As outlined in Section 5 of the BMP, the current maintenance activities encompass annual visual inspections of all structures along the beach frontage by qualified engineers. Additionally, DC and private asset owners undertake ad hoc maintenance of various structural elements as required, guided by regular monitoring and visual inspections.

2.3.4 Previous Investments

A beach nourishment scheme was undertaken in Swanage Bay in 2005 and 2006 with an estimated cost of £2.2M. This included placing 130,000m³ of material from Poole Harbour channel across 1.3 km of coastline and constructing eighteen timber groynes at this time. The BMP undertaken in 2005 alongside the nourishment project projected that 40,000m³ of material would be required every ca. 20 years. Under this estimation, the first re-nourishment would be due around 2025. The BMP was updated in 2020 based on assessments of beach monitoring and modelling.

2.4 Case for Change

Although, the current defence arrangements were put in place to maintain the SoP provided by the 2005/2006 scheme, the asset deterioration overtime and gradual loss of beach material has meant that the required SoP will continue to reduce without any active intervention.

There have been significant storm events since the supporting strategy highlighted in section 2.2.3 was published in 2014. These storm events have increased the risk of coastal flooding and erosion along the majority of the Swanage Bay, particularly from the Mowlem northwards. This is evident by the declining beach levels, temporary exposures of the seawall toe after storm events and increased overtopping. Some of the consequences of these storm events are shown in Appendix C – Past Flooding and Erosion Events.

2.4.1 Do Minimum Implication

Recent storm events have caused significant erosion damaging the existing seawall and exposing the toe of the defences. This has increased the risk of structural failure. While the beach tends to recover somewhat after storms, it does not return to its original levels, and overall beach levels have continued to decline over time.

The coastal structures along the frontage have undergone multiple reconstructions and modifications, with records dating back to the 1920s and the most recent significant works completed in 2005/2006. As a result, the condition and remaining lifespan of these structures vary considerably across the area.

A condition assessment by JBA Consulting in March 2023 estimated the residual life of the seawall under a low maintenance regime to range from 40 years in the south to 20 years in the north. Although the process showed varying time to reach failure for different structures, the continued beach level decline means that failure of the seawall could occur at any time. Factors such as major storm events, successive storms, and climate change impacts such as sea level rise could all influence these projections.

The loss of the beach would expose the toe of the seawall, making it vulnerable to collapse. If the seawall fails, natural coastal erosion will accelerate, causing the coastline to retreat rapidly. Without the seawall, storm events would likely intensify this process, significantly hastening the rate of retreat and eventually the loss of most of the developed Swanage Town area.

2.4.2 Baseline Erosion Risk

The baseline erosion risk highlights the potential risk of what could happen if there is no active intervention now. An assessment of erosion rates in the project area was conducted to support this business case. Projected erosion and associated damages were estimated for the years 2034, 2044, 2074, and 2124 using modelled erosion contour lines. Figure 2-3 illustrates the predicted coastal retreat over 5, 15, 45, and 95 years following the anticipated failure of the seawall.

It is assumed that the seawall will fail in 2029. Erosion rates were calculated using two different exponents 0.5 and 1.0 to account for variability in erosion progression. For the damage assessment, the exponent of 1.0 was applied to reflect long-term sea level rise, indicating that the rate of coastal retreat is expected to be proportional to the rate of sea level rise. A comprehensive analysis of erosion rates and associated damages, which forms the basis for the economic evaluation, is presented in the Economic Appraisal Report located in Appendix D.

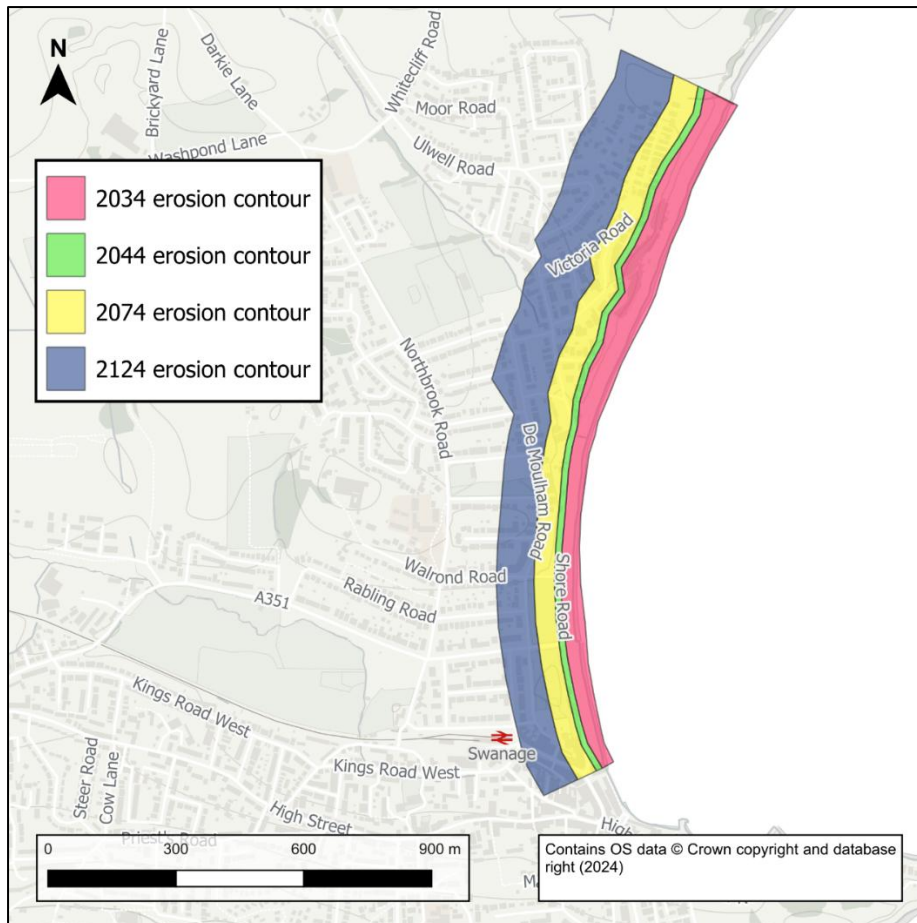


Figure 2-3: Swanage Beach erosion contours

We have clearly demonstrated the necessity of this project as a proactive measure to prevent the adverse impacts associated with the current coastal management practices. Without intervention, these existing arrangements are projected to lead to significant long-term coastal erosion and an undesirable realignment of the shoreline at Swanage, posing risks to the natural environment, local infrastructure and amenities, and community resilience.

2.5 Environmental and Other Considerations

2.5.1 Ecology

The project considers five statutory designated sites within the scheme boundary (see Figure 2-4), these include

- the Solent and Dorset Coast SPA,
- Studland to Portland SAC,
- Isle of Portland to Studland Cliffs SAC,
- Purbeck Coast MCZ and
- Purbeck Ridge (East) SSSI.

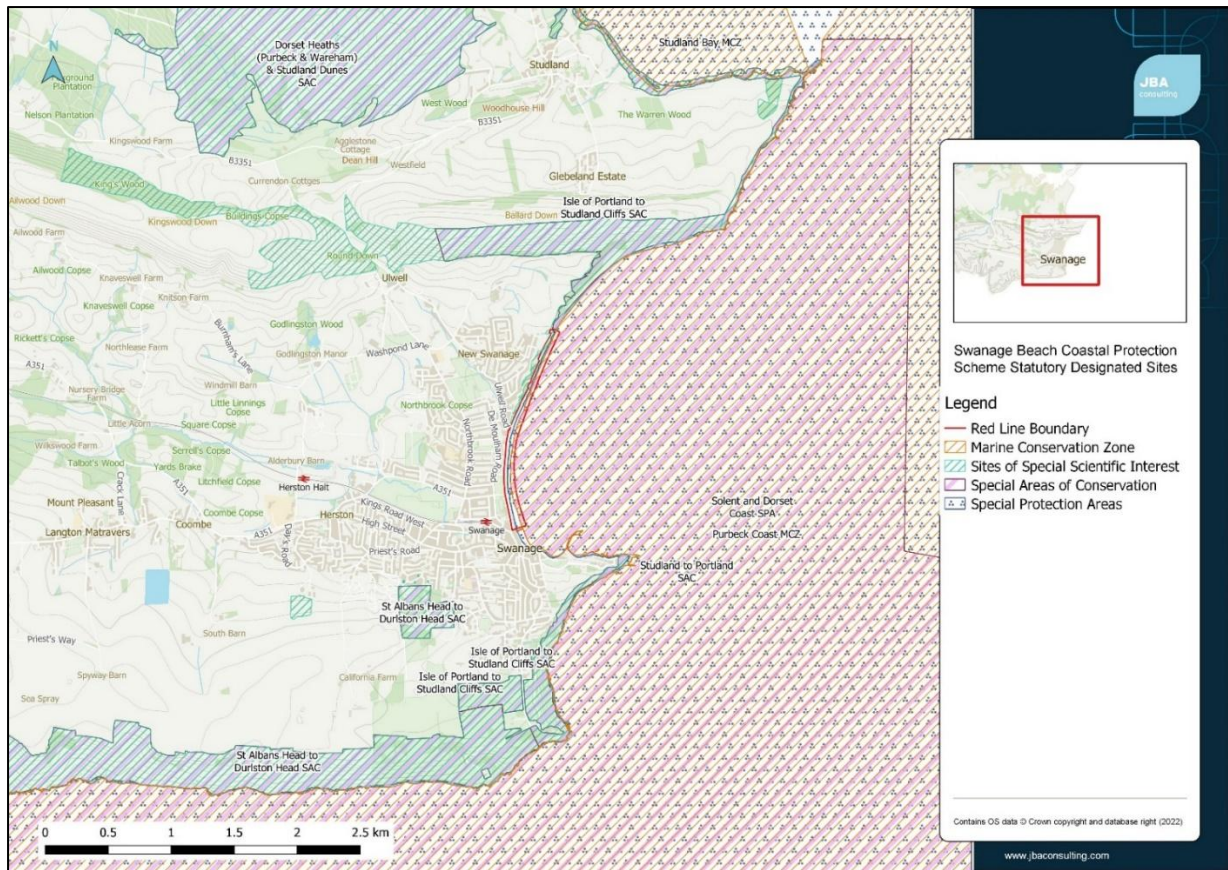


Figure 2-4: Statutory designation within 2km of the scheme (Defra Magic Map)

There are also seven locally designated non-statutory sites within a 2km search area of the scheme boundary. These include the Dorset Wildlife Trust reserve, Peveril Point and the Downs Local Nature Reserve (LNR), a habitat restoration site and four Sites of Importance in Nature Conservation (SINC). These designations are shown in Figure 2-5.

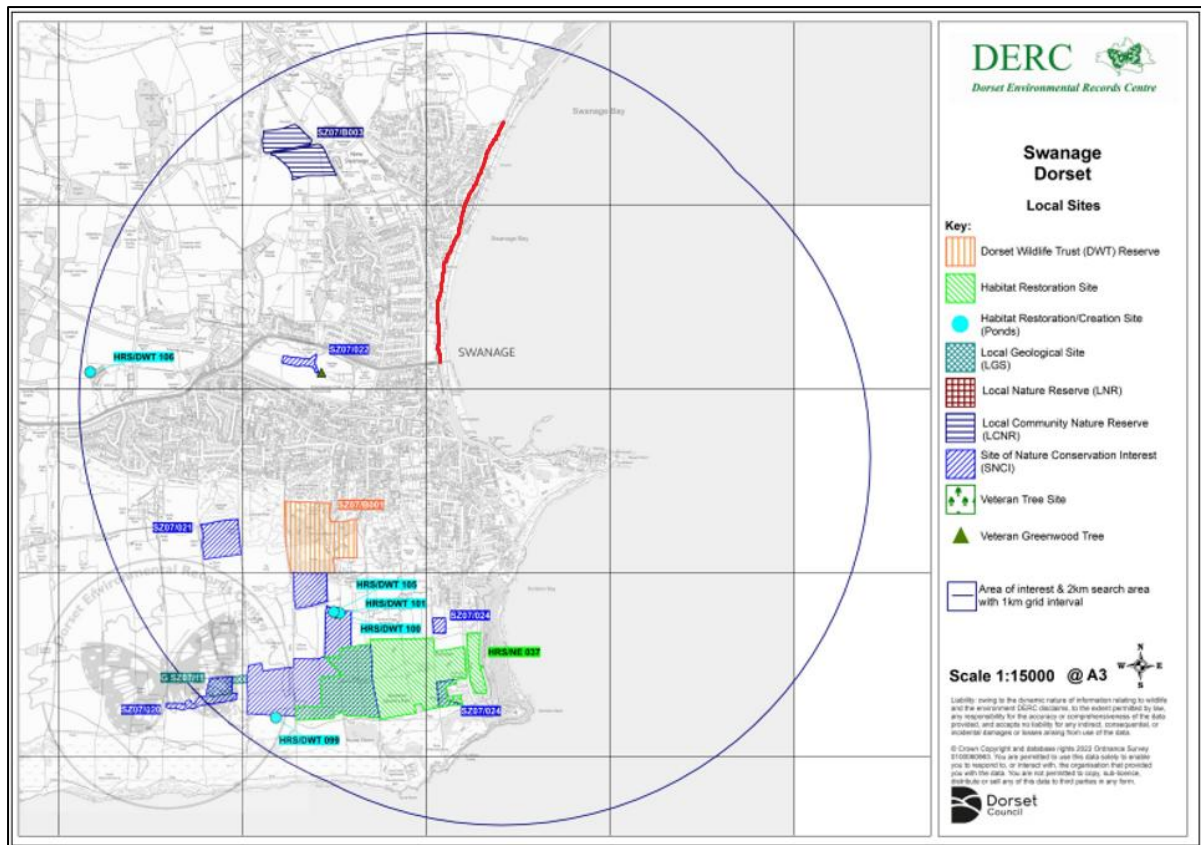


Figure 2-5: Non-statutory designated sites within 2km of the scheme from Dorset Environmental Records Centre (DERC, 2022)

A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) was undertaken by JBA in 2023 (Appendix E1) to determine the presence of, and use of the site by protected and notable species and habitats.

An Inshore Inland Fisheries Report was produced by JBA in 2023 (Appendix E2), in conjunction with the PEA in relation to this project. The nearest catchment associated with the scheme has the potential to support a number of eurytopic and rheophilic coarse fish species, Brown Trout and European Eel. A Marine Biotope and Environmental Management Report was produced by JBA in June 2023 (Appendix E3). High numbers of nesting black seabream were found within the site; black sea bream nests are a protected feature of the Purbeck Coast marine conservation Zone (MCZ).

Due to the site's hardstanding surface, it is considered unlikely to support terrestrial habitats suitable for reptiles or amphibians. No invasive non-native species were identified during the PEA desk study and no species were recorded during the site survey of the scheme boundary.

2.5.2 Heritage and archaeology

The scheme area contains 38 Grade II Listed Buildings, predominantly situated in the southern part within the Swanage Conservation Area. Most of these buildings are

located in Swanage town and are either not visible from the scheme area due to the surrounding terrain and structures or are too far away to affect their setting (Appendix E4). The King Alfred Memorial (1153297) is the only building directly adjacent to the scheme's redline boundary, making it the sole Listed Building considered to potentially be impacted by the works. The designated heritage assets are shown in Figure 2-6.

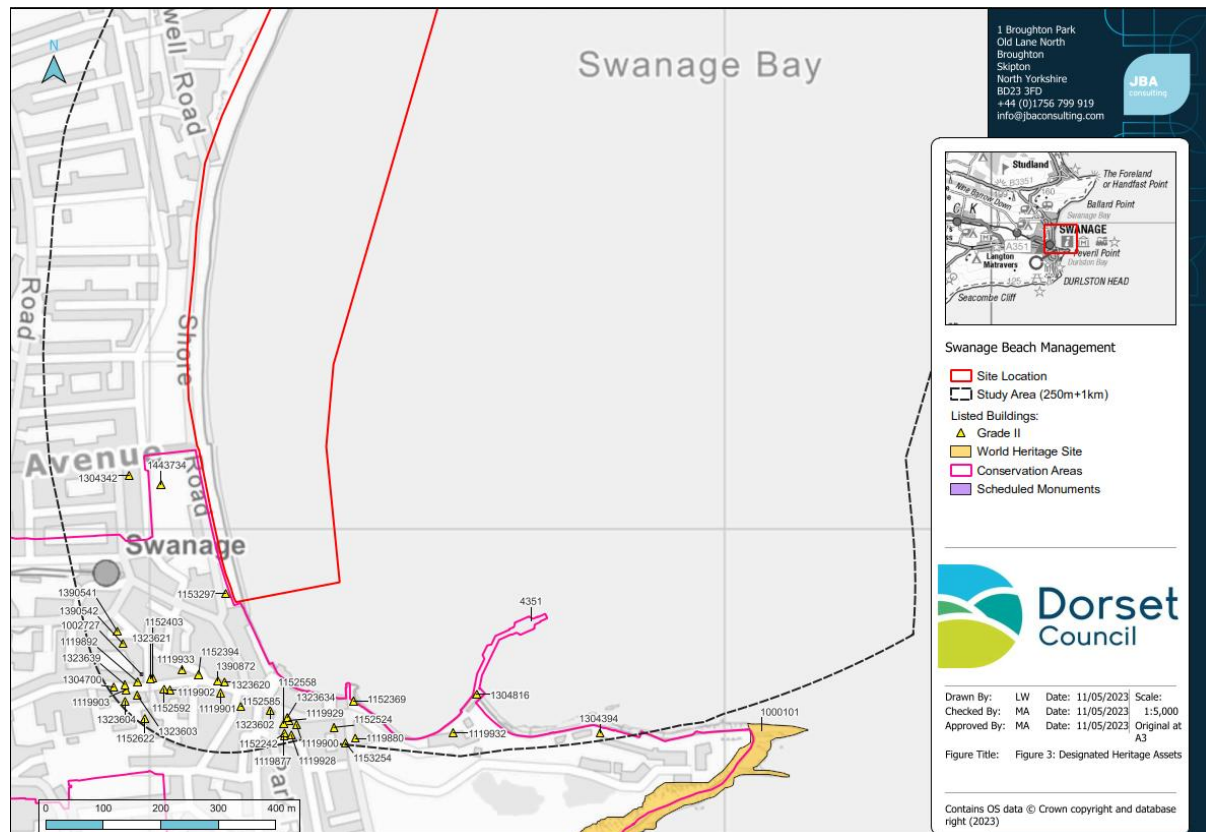


Figure 2-6: Designated heritage assets

The archaeological potential for all periods across the scheme is deemed to be negligible. The very few findspots which are within or in close proximity to the scheme contain no further information on their provenance and are likely to be unstratified stray finds.

Although there are a number of wrecks recorded as being within the study area, their exact locations are currently unknown. Additionally, the historic wooden groynes and Second World War defence related assets within the scheme boundary have either been removed or are currently unlocated. No remains were noted in previous works within the area to complete beach replenishment and given the previous replenishment, any archaeological deposits or remains are likely to have been disturbed or buried beneath imported sand.

The northern portion of the scheme is partially within the Dorset and East Devon Coast World Heritage Sites (WHS) (1000101) and given the significance of the WHS, the

Archaeological Advisor to DC will be consulted to understand if there are any concerns.

2.5.3 Landscape and Visual

A Landscape and Visual Baseline assessment was undertaken by JBA in June 2023 (Appendix E5) to provide an overview of the landscape and visual baseline of Swanage Beach and to consider the potential effects of the scheme during construction and operation on the landscape character, landscape designations, local landscape features, public realm, and visual amenity.

The character of the scheme and surrounding area is dominated by the urban nature of Swanage and its coastal setting. A 'multi-layered' landscape and townscape where public and privately owned space sit at varying levels e.g. beach hut terraces, natural landforms, terraced and sloping greenspaces. This allows for a varied physical and visual experience of the coastline. The buildings within Swanage limit the views to the sea from much of the town. From the Swanage seafront there are panoramic views across Swanage Bay, with spectacular views of a characterful town in a dramatic landscape setting. Tourist amenities and residential properties along the seafront benefit from the attractive sea views. Temporary concrete wave barriers have been trialled in winter months in three locations across the seafront, including Gee White's Café, in the south, by The Square and between Mowlem Centre and Shore Road to the north. These temporary concrete flood defences are visually intrusive and are not a long-term solution to managing coastal flood risk in Swanage.

There is the potential, aligned with the Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan strategies, for the completed scheme to improve the character and physical appearance of the landscape character seafront. This may occur where the proposal removes, repairs, or reconstructs existing structures such as groynes or outfalls within the beach. In turn, this may have the potential to improve pedestrian access in these locations.

2.5.4 Traffic and Transport

Shore Road passes through the scheme boundary. The eastern extents of Walrond Road and Victoria Avenue and small sections of Upwell Road, Station Road and Institute Road fall within the scheme boundary. The South West Coast Path National Trail and Dorset Footpaths (SE3/21, SE3/17 and SE3/13) also pass through the site.

There is potential for the proposals to impact the local road network during construction, due to increased traffic volume, construction vehicles requiring access to the coastal front and the requirement for a site compound. The operation of vehicles for the scheme has the potential to cause disruption to local road networks.

The South West Coast Path will temporarily require limited access to the public during scheme works, and diversions of the footpath would require implementation during this period.

2.5.5 Air Quality, Noise and Waste

Potential air quality and noise sensitive receptors principally comprise residential properties located in the area surrounding the scheme area, as well as users of the local facilities. The scheme area is not located within or in close proximity to an Air Quality Management Area or a Noise Important Area.

2.5.6 Regulatory and Consenting

A Water Framework Directive (WFD) Screening and Scoping Assessment has been carried out (Appendix E6), identifying potential impacts on biological quality, hydromorphological quality, physico-chemical quality and chemical quality, as well as on protected sites. The assessment concluded that the scheme has the potential to be WFD compliant. However, it also highlighted the need for a full impact assessment during the next stage, as part of the detailed design development, to confirm compliance.

Stages 1 and 2 Habitats Regulation Assessments (HRAs) were undertaken for the scheme (Appendix E7). It concluded that certain effects on qualifying features of the Studland and Portland SAC, Isle of Portland SAC and Solent and Dorset Coast SPA could not be screened out without appropriate mitigation/avoidance strategies put in place. Some of the potential adverse effects identified include:

- Invasive Non-native species spread during construction
- Direct habitat loss through sedimentation and smothering
- Physical disturbance to some of the qualifying features.
- Water pollution or changes in water quality and
- Hydrodynamic changes

The stage 2 HRA assessment concluded that the scheme will not have an adverse impact upon the qualifying features of the SAC. The works will not be directly within the SAC and no access routes will pass through the SAC. Therefore, there are no likely significant effects of introducing invasive non-native species (INNS) to the SAC site. No impacts upon the qualifying features, either alone or in combination with any other plans or projects, providing the following mitigation measures are implemented:

- Industry standard pollution prevention measures.
- The works will take place outside of the black seabream nesting season (April and May) The construction programme is not currently known at this stage, but it is anticipated that the works will be programmed carefully to help mitigate any impacts on features of designated sites. It is estimated that the works will be phased over the course of approximately 4 months, with likely construction taking place in Autumn and Winter. The detailed works programme will be subject to confirmation with the contractor in collaboration with stakeholders including DC and Swanage Town Council, this will include the identification of the site compound area.
- Biosecurity measures will be followed as appropriate to prevent introduction of INNS. As industry standard practice these measures are not considered to be

avoidance or reduction measures for a European site in the context of the Conservation of habitats and species regulations (2019, as amended).

At this stage, the project with appropriate mitigation measures will not result in Likely Significant Effects (LSE) on these designated sites, particularly regarding disturbance, water quality, and habitat alteration. However, a full Appropriate Assessment (AA) may be required at the next stage to ensure compliance with the Habitats Regulations.

Due to the importance of the Purbeck Coast MCZ, an MCZ screening was undertaken (Appendix E8). This concluded that the scheme will not have an adverse impact upon the MCZ either alone or in combination with any other plans or projects. Significant impacts are not anticipated; however, the following precautionary measures shall be implemented:

- Impacts on habitats will be minimised by the implementation of best construction practices including industry standard pollution prevention measures, particularly addressing the risks of fuel and concrete spills.
- Sediment Placement and Profiling: Importing and distributing new sediment along the foreshore to restore beach levels and enhance coastal protection.
- Monitoring and Assessment: Conducting bathymetric surveys, grab sampling, and sediment transport analysis to inform the BMP.
- Groyne Maintenance long-term: Evaluating and adjusting groyne structures to optimise sediment retention.
- Environmental Considerations: Implementing mitigation measures to minimise ecological impacts on marine habitats and species. For example, scheme works should be undertaken outside of the Black seabream (*Spondyliosoma cantharus*) nesting season (April and May) to minimise disturbance to Black seabream excavated nests in the seabed.

At this stage, the project with appropriate mitigation measures will not result in Likely LSE on the MCZ; however, a further MCZ assessment will be required at the next stage to ensure compliance.

A request for an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) screening opinion was submitted to DC (Appendix E10), which concluded on the 3rd of June 2025 that a statutory EIA is not required for the scheme. Similarly, a screening opinion has been requested from the Marine Management Organisation (MMO) and currently awaiting MMO's response to the request. The feedback received from MMO will be considered and implemented at the next stage of the project before an MMO licence application is submitted.

2.6 Main Risks

The main risk to the project is inadequate funding from an unsuccessful FCERM GiA bid. This would cause the project to be put on hold until further funding is acquired. The project team have worked to minimise this risk by developing a scheme with a good Partnership Funding (PF) score and a high benefit cost ratio.

Due to construction activities needing to be carried out within private land, there is a risk of private landowners opposing the scheme. Mostly at the Ocean Bay slipway and the north beach. The project team have looked to limit through early engagement with the public and continued engagement for future project stages.

As outlined in the BMP Action Plan, the initial step for future beach recharge projects is to conduct a monitoring and mapping study of the adjacent SAC and its designated features, in consultation with Natural England. This study may take longer than anticipated, potentially impacting the overall project timeline. The monitoring and mapping study is currently underway and scheduled to be completed by year 2026/2027 prior to the beach recharge.

There is also a risk that the scheme will become unaffordable if it is not aligned with the BCP recharge schemes. The project team has continued to mitigate this through liaison with BCP around their planned programme of works to ensure project alignment.

A detailed project risk register can be seen in Appendix F.

2.7 Constraints

The key project constraints are listed in Table 2-1 below

Table 2-1: Project constraints

Theme	Constraint
Programme	Any procurement or construction proposal that will seek to align this project with BCP plans will require significant legal input and allocated time in the whole life programme of this project. If the pre-construction phase of the project is not carried out in a timely manner, it may negate the possibility of doing a joined project with significant cost consequences.
Legal requirements and permissions	The project team will need to engage early with statutory consultees to ensure any consents, licences, permits and any other statutory constraints are considered as part of project development as early as possible.
Funding	The EA's capital programme has been reduced from 6 to 5 years. As a consequence, 26/27 has been scrapped. It is uncertain whether there will be another capital programme and, if so, the form and allocation it would have. This will have an impact on the project as it might not get the funding required in a timely manner to align with the BCP.

2.8 Dependencies

2.8.1 Wider BCP Recharge Activity

Due to BCP dredging licence and the source of the beach material for this project, it was identified that there are lots of efficiencies to be gained in timing the beach recharge activity of this project with the wider BCP recharge activity. An example of this efficiency is the cost of mobilising and demobilising the sinker pipe. As BCP will also be using the sinker pipe, this project would only incur cost for the transfer of the pipes from the BCP scheme to Swanage Bay. Throughout the development of this OBC, the project team have continuously liaised with the BCP coastal team to ensure that these efficiencies can be realised. This liaison will continue until construction is completed.

2.8.2 Swanage Town Scheme

This project is closely linked to the Swanage Town Scheme (see Figure 2-2). The proposed rock groyne and beach recharge by the Mowlem at Shore Road will provide a consistent SoP across Swanage Town. Throughout project development the project teams have worked closely together to provide a joined-up approach to investment in the protection of Swanage.

The Swanage Town Scheme is also dependent on EA's approval of this scheme's (Swanage Beach Coastal Protection Scheme) application for GiA funding and securing the required Partnership Funding.

2.9 Opportunities

The key project opportunities are listed in Table 2-2 below

Table 2-2: Project opportunities

Theme	Constraint
Programme	There is an opportunity to gain some efficiencies such as cost savings on mobilisation and demobilisation by aligning this project timeline with BCP plans for dredging and other recharge activities in the area.
Funding	An opportunity to have a joined project with other authorities within the sediment cell has been proposed to gain more efficiencies.

2.10 Investment Objectives

2.10.1 Objective definition

Based on a review of the strategic factors influencing project development that have been covered in this section, project objectives were prepared by the project team that

included DC, JBA Consulting, Swanage Town Council, and the EA with approval from the project board.

2.10.2 Primary objective

The primary objective for the OBC is linked to the strategy and BMP which was to sustain the standard of service provided by the 2005/2006 scheme which was a 0.33% AEP SoP. The primary objective was therefore set as:

- Manage the risk of coastal erosion and flooding by ensuring that an adequate beach is maintained in combination with the hard defence/control structures, such that the 0.33% AEP SoP of the 2005/6 Swanage Beach Recharge Scheme is retained.

2.10.3 Secondary objectives

In addition to the primary objective, secondary objectives, which have lower weighting to the primary objective have been defined as follows.

- Optimise the frequency, timing, quantity, and source of future beach recharge to provide the best value for money, reduce whole life cost and carbon.
- Protect and enhance the natural environment.
- Support the tourism and economy of the town by providing the opportunity to improve the amenities of the beach.

3 Economic case

3.1 Introduction

The primary objective of this project is to reduce the risk of coastal flooding and erosion across Swanage Bay over a 100-year appraisal period. To ensure the most appropriate option was taken through as the preferred option, a detailed options appraisal was undertaken.

The appraisal approach was initially discussed and agreed with DC and the EA as a sustain Standard of Service (SOS) project as stated in the strategy. This was later changed to a Supported Change project as defined by the FCERM-AG (Environment Agency, 2022) as the project developed and more information became available. The project appraisal approach modification was informed by strategic consultation with the Swanage Town Scheme, which identified the necessity for the installation of a terminal groyne adjacent to the Mowlem. This structural intervention was deemed essential to mitigate coastal flooding and erosion risks by the Mowlem and was therefore integrated into this project overall design.

3.2 Critical success factors

Critical Success Factors (CSF) are the attributes that the proposal must have if it is to achieve successful delivery of its objectives (HM Treasury, 2022). The CSF are the agreed measurement criteria against which the longlisted options were appraised.

The CSF were derived from the project objectives. In addition to the five basic CSF that apply to all proposals (provided in the FCERM Appraisal Technical Guidance), two other CSF have been added, as shown in Table 3-1 below.

1 Business case template: supported change

Template: LIT 73921

Published: 14/03/2025

Audience: Environment Agency

Table 3-1: Swanage Beach coastal protection scheme critical success factors

Project Objectives	Number	Critical Success Factor (CSF)	Green Book Five Basic CSF	Description
Manage the risk of coastal erosion and flooding by ensuring that an adequate beach is maintained in combination with the hard defence/control structures, such that the 0.33% AEP SoP of the 2005/6 Swanage Beach Recharge Scheme is retained.	1	Manage Flood and Erosion Risk	Strategic Fit and Business Need	Potential to offer 0.33% AEP SoP against erosion and flooding such that the 2005/6 Swanage Beach Recharge Scheme is retained.
Optimise the frequency, timing, quantity, and source of future beach recharge to provide the best value for money, reduce whole life cost and carbon.	2a	Cost Effective	Potential Value for Money	Has the potential to be the most cost effective.
	2b	Carbon Management		Low carbon cost and considers methods for managing any associated carbon cost.
	2c	Buildability	Supplier Capacity and Capability	Risks during construction, operation and maintenance could be managed effectively.

Project Objectives	Number	Critical Success Factor (CSF)	Green Book Five Basic CSF	Description
	2d	Affordability	Potential affordability	Is attractive to third-party funders and enables contributions to be sought.
Protect and enhance where possible the natural environment	3	Regulatory Consenting	Potential Achievability	Compliant with regulatory framework (Planning, HRA, WFD, MMO etc.).
Support the tourism and economy of the town by providing the opportunity to improve amenities of the beach	4	Beach Amenities		Does not negatively impact amenities of the beach that will further promote tourism thereby improving the economy of the town.

1 Business case template: supported change

Template: LIT 73921

Published: 14/03/2025

Audience: Environment Agency

3.3 Longlist options

The longlist appraisal was built upon the outputs from different sources. The initial longlist was collaboratively reviewed, added to and re-appraised considering new guidance, information and policy.

The longlist appraisal considered the following information sources:

- Beach Management Plan (Dorset Council, 2020),
- Stakeholder Engagement Information including, EA, DC and Swanage Town Council,
- Expert judgement from relevant specialists from JBA (e.g. Environmental, Engineering, Contractor etc.) and others (e.g., the Early Supplier Engagement (ESE) Contractor),
- FCERM Appraisal Technical Guidance (FCERM-AG) (Environment Agency, 2022), and
- The Green Book (HM Treasury, 2022).

Two generic options are applicable to a supported change project. These are:

- Do Nothing to manage flood or erosion risks, and
- Options to carry out an agreed strategy

Table 3-2 below identifies a range of different options to carry out the agreed strategy. This formed the longlist of options.

Table 3-2: Swanage Beach scheme longlist options

Options	Type	Description
1	No Active Intervention/Do Nothing	No active intervention.
2	Beach Recharge with New Control Structure	This option involves the addition of dredged offshore material to the beach to increase the level of the beach.
3	Beach Recharge and Underpin Vulnerable Sections	This option involves underpinning vulnerable sections of the seawall toe through seawall underpinning works in combination with the beach recharge in Option 2.
4	Upgrade Existing Groynes	This option involves upgrading the existing timber groynes to maintain the retention of

Options	Type	Description
		sediment on the beach at the required levels.
5	New Groynes	This option involves constructing new groynes to maintain the retention of sediment on the beach at the required levels.
6	Beach Recycling	This option involves recycling beach material from areas of deposition to areas of erosion to increase beach levels in those areas.
7	Rock revetment	The option involves placing rock armour protection at the toe of the structures to reduce impact and deterioration of the sea walls.
8	Replacing the Seawall	This option involves constructing new seawall along the frontage to a crest level that will support the required SoP.
9	Offshore Breakwaters	This option involves reducing wave action along the frontage by constructing single or multiple offshore breakwaters.
10	Nature Based Solution	This option involves incorporating nature-based solutions in combination with the existing defences.
11	New Control Structure(s) e.g., groynes	This option involves the addition of new control structure(s) to support retention of beach levels at different sections of the frontage.

A qualitative assessment of each of the longlist options to highlight strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) was undertaken. SWOT was undertaken with the PESTLE framework (Political, Economic, Social, Technical, Legal, and Environment). This is shown in Appendix G.

3.3.1 Multi-Criteria Analysis

A multi-criteria analysis (MCA) was undertaken where the longlist options were screened against the project objectives, and CSFs, and a RAG status (Red - does not meet CSF, Amber - has the potential to meet CSF, Green - meets CSF) was applied. A decision as to whether these options are shortlisted was made based on performance against the CSFs. The MCA was developed and assessed by the Project Team, consisting of DC, EA (Funding and Partnership), and JBA Consulting. The MCA was also reviewed by other stakeholders including Swanage Town Council.

Options that didn't meet all the CSFs (with one or more red) were discounted except the 'Do Nothing' option which was taken forward to serve as the baseline option. The summary of the longlist appraisal is given in Figure 3-1 below.

Options	Critical Success Factors (Red = does not meet CSF, Amber = has the potential to meet CSF subject to more information, green = meets CSF)	
Do Nothing This option assumes there is no intervention involving maintenance going forward. Groynes will deteriorate, beach loss will be rapid, and seawalls will deteriorate over time, eventually failing. Failure of defences will result in a significant increase in erosion risk (cliff erosion). Shortlisted - as economic baseline	1. Manage Erosion Risk 2a. Cost 2b. Carbon 4. Beach Amenities	2c. Buildability 2d. Affordability 3. Regulatory
Beach Recharge and New Control Structure This option involves the addition of dredged offshore material to the beach to increase the level of the beach. It also involves the addition of a new control structure to support the retention of beach levels. Shortlisted	1. Manage Erosion Risk 2a. Cost 2b. Carbon 4. Beach Amenities	2c. Buildability 2d. Affordability 3. Regulatory
Beach Recharge and Underpinning Vulnerable Sections This option involves beach recharge and underpinning vulnerable sections of the seawall toe through seawall underpinning works. Shortlisted	1. Manage Erosion Risk 2a. Cost 2b. Carbon 4. Beach Amenities	2c. Buildability 2d. Affordability 3. Regulatory
Upgrading Existing Groynes This option involves upgrading the existing timber groynes to maintain the retention of sediment on the beach at the required levels. Shortlisted	1. Manage Erosion Risk 2a. Cost 2b. Carbon 4. Beach Amenities	2c. Buildability 2d. Affordability 3. Regulatory
New Groynes This option involves the construction of new groynes to maintain the retention of sediment on the beach at the required levels.	1. Manage Erosion Risk 2a. Cost 2b. Carbon 4. Beach Amenities	2c. Buildability 2d. Affordability 3. Regulatory
Beach Recycling This option involves recycling beach material from areas of deposition to areas of erosion to increase beach levels in those areas.	1. Manage Erosion Risk 2a. Cost 2b. Carbon 4. Beach Amenities	2c. Buildability 2d. Affordability 3. Regulatory
Rock Revetment This option involves placing rock armour protection on the foreshore in front of the existing defences	1. Manage Erosion Risk 2a. Cost 2b. Carbon 4. Beach Amenities	2c. Buildability 2d. Affordability 3. Regulatory
Replacing the Seawall This option involves constructing a new seawall along the frontage to a crest level that will support the required standard of protection.	1. Manage Erosion Risk 2a. Cost 2b. Carbon 4. Beach Amenities	2c. Buildability 2d. Affordability 3. Regulatory
Offshore Breakwaters This option involves reducing wave action along the frontage by constructing single or multiple offshore breakwaters.	1. Manage Erosion Risk 2a. Cost 2b. Carbon 4. Beach Amenities	2c. Buildability 2d. Affordability 3. Regulatory
Nature-Based Solutions This option involves replacing the existing defences with nature-based solutions	1. Manage Erosion Risk 2a. Cost 2b. Carbon 4. Beach Amenities	2c. Buildability 2d. Affordability 3. Regulatory
New Control Structure This option involves the addition of new control structure(s) to support the retention of beach levels at different sections of the frontage. Shortlisted	1. Manage Erosion Risk 2a. Cost 2b. Carbon 4. Beach Amenities	2c. Buildability 2d. Affordability 3. Regulatory

Figure 3-1: Summary of MCA

The shortlisted options are shown in Table 3-3 below.

Table 3-3: Summary of shortlisted options

Option	Type	Description	Reason
1	No Active Intervention/Do Nothing	No active intervention.	Carried forward as the baseline against which to compare other options.
2	Beach Recharge and New Control Structure	This option involves the addition of dredged offshore material to the beach to increase the level of the beach and the construction of a new control structure at the Mowlem Theatre	Potential to maximise benefits based on project objectives. Issues with HRA could be resolved with appropriate mitigation/compensation, and all other objectives delivered successfully.
3	Beach Recharge and Underpinning Vulnerable Sections	This option involves underpinning vulnerable sections of the seawall toe through seawall underpinning works.	Difficulties around existing structures during underpinning can be managed through design. Issues with HRA could be resolved with appropriate mitigation/compensation, and all other objectives delivered successfully.
4	Upgrading Existing Groynes	This option involves upgrading the existing timber groynes to maintain the retention of sediment on the beach at the required levels.	The option is unlikely to be a stand-alone solution due to insufficient beach. In combination with other options, e.g., beach recharge, there is potential to maximise potential benefits of existing infrastructure and offer significant carbon and environmental benefits.
11	New Control Structure(s)	This option involves the addition of new control structure(s) to support the retention of beach levels at different sections of the frontage.	High carbon cost could be negated by reduction/ offsetting and has the potential to achieve project objectives in combination with other measures.

3.4 Technical appraisal of shortlisted options

Upon the agreement of the shortlist, the options were developed into concept designs. Following this, comprehensive technical, environmental, economic, and sustainability appraisals were conducted on the shortlisted options. This section details the technical appraisal of the shortlisted options.

3.4.1 No Active Intervention / Do Nothing

This option serves as the baseline from which options are appraised. This option means that all capital and maintenance expenditure on flood and erosion defence assets and existing flood and erosion management practices would cease. The coastal defence assets would deteriorate rapidly and eventually fail. Failure of the

defences would lead to erosion of the cliffs resulting in property and infrastructure losses. Although this option was taken forward to the shortlist for appraisal purpose, it does not achieve most of the CSF.

3.4.2 Option 2 – Beach recharge with New Control Structure

This option involves the placement of dredged material to the beach to increase the level of the beach and resilience against wall failure and wave overtopping flooding and the construction of a new control structure at the Mowlem Theatre. The sediment will be graded to provide an equivalent to the existing beach material to ensure that Swanage Beach continues to perform under wave and local hydrodynamic conditions.

The current BMP requires a minimum crest level of 1.2mAOD at the sea wall to offer the 0.33% AEP SoP against beach drawdown. However, for the purpose of costing, an overfill crest level of 2.1mAOD with a design slope of 1:20 was used to provide an allowance for long term beach losses prior to the next beach recharge. At this stage of design (concept design), it was assumed that the volume of beach recharge required through this option would be the difference between the overfill design beach and the most recent survey, requiring approximately 66,400 m³ allowing for 15% of losses during construction

Storm induced waves propagate into Swanage Bay from a south easterly direction, causing littoral drift to transport sediment from south to north. During winter periods, beach levels can be drawn down near the Mowlem, leaving it vulnerable to scour. This option involves placing a terminal groyne at the southern end of the scheme area by the Mowlem to reduce longshore losses from the south of the area and provide additional flood protection. The groyne would be constructed from rock armour and aligned and orientated to afford protection to the most southerly section of the beach.

3.4.3 Option 3 - Beach recharge and underpinning vulnerable sections

This option involves underpinning vulnerable sections of the seawall toe in addition to beach recharge. A review of the BMP and historic information of the seawall identified section of the seawalls that have not been previously underpinned and classed as vulnerable sections of the wall that could be undermined.

This option was split into 2 sub-options as detailed below.

- Option 3a: Sheet pile underpinning of vulnerable sections - In addition to beach recharge, this option considers underpinning vulnerable sections of the existing seawall with sheet piles to reduce the risk of undermining of the wall. The area between the sheet piling and existing wall will be filled with a C20/25 mass concrete to form a plug to reduce the risk of the existing wall foundation material from being eroded.
- Option 3a: Rock armour underpinning of vulnerable sections - This involves the use of appropriate rock grading to underpin vulnerable sections of the existing seawall to reduce undermining of the seawall in addition to beach recharge.

3.4.4 Option 4 - Upgrading existing groynes

Option 4 is to carry out remedial works on the existing groynes on the frontage. An asset inspection undertaken in April 2023 identified components of the groynes that could be replaced to ensure the efficiency of the groynes and increase their residual life. This includes works such as plank replacement and sacrificial pile rubbing strips.

Although, this option was shortlisted, further analysis during the concept design, including more detailed seawall failure year analysis, indicated that this option would not manage erosion risks due to seawall failure occurring in 2029 before any major intervention occurs in 2036. As such, this option would not achieve the primary project objective as well as CSF 1, 2a and 4. Option 4 was therefore discounted from further analysis and shortlist options appraisal.

3.4.5 Option 11 - New control structures

Option 11 is to construct a new control structure at the Mowlem Theatre. Storm induced waves propagate into Swanage Bay from a south easterly direction, causing littoral drift to transport sediment from south to north. During winter periods, beach levels can be drawn down near the Mowlem, leaving it vulnerable to scour. This option involves placing a terminal groyne at the southern end of the scheme area by the Mowlem to reduce longshore losses from the south of the area. The groyne would be constructed from rock armour and aligned and orientated to afford protection to the most southerly section of the beach.

3.5 Environmental assessment

An environmental appraisal of the shortlisted options was undertaken by environmental discipline experts (see Appendix E11). The environmental appraisal includes consideration of heritage, ecology, high-level BNG screening, landscape and visual and geomorphology.

The environmental disciplines' review of the shortlist of options indicates a consensus that Option 1 - Do Nothing should not be taken forward. There are, however, varying impacts across disciplines of Options 2, 3a, 3b, and 11, each providing their own merit. The key environmental impact of all Options is summarised in Table 3-4.

1 Business case template: supported change

Template: LIT 73921

Published: 14/03/2025

Audience: Environment Agency

Table 3-4: Environmental appraisal summary for each shortlisted option

Options	Key Negative Effects	Key Positive Effects
Do Nothing	Loss of heritage features and conservation area. Loss of sediment and changing composition will result in changes to the invertebrate community and fish populations exploiting the intertidal area for foraging. Loss of features of interest, properties, and green spaces, plus impact on views and an altered relationship between town and sea.	Loss of sediment and changing composition may benefit Black Sea Bream which nest on sandy substrate.
Option 2 - Beach Recharge and New Control Structure	Possible negative impacts on fish (namely Black Sea Bream) if sediment is delivered from a dredging vessel. Sediment recharge may utilise a dredging vessel which may cause disturbance to benthic habitats and designated sites including nesting Black Sea Bream and Mearl beds (a key MCZ	Recharge (where periodically repeated) will retain and slightly improve landscape character, high quality views from private and public spaces, and access to and along the beach in some locations. The combination of these options will have a larger working footprint and longer construction programme; therefore, it is likely that impacts to the species and

Options	Key Negative Effects	Key Positive Effects
	feature). Further surveying is required. Construction will result in noise, vibration, and visual disturbance. Construction mitigation will be required to prevent impacts of tern species. This option will have a larger working footprint and longer construction programme; therefore, it is likely that impacts to the species and designated features detailed for these options may increase in magnitude due to construction related impacts. Whilst rock is a natural material, this would introduce a new, uncharacteristic feature into the beachscape.	designated features detailed for these options may increase in magnitude due to construction related impacts. Specific construction mitigation will need to be devised with consideration to timings of works which could affect the designated features of the Solent and Dorset Coast SPA.
Option 3 - Beach Recharge and Underpinning	Possible negative impacts on fish (namely Black Sea Bream) if sediment is delivered from a dredging vessel. Sediment recharge may utilise a dredging vessel which may cause disturbance to benthic habitats and designated sites including nesting Black seabream and Mearl beds (a key MCZ feature). Further surveying is required. Construction will result in noise, vibration, and visual disturbance. Construction mitigation will be required to prevent impacts of tern species.	Recharge (where periodically repeated) will retain and slightly improve landscape character, high quality views from private and public spaces, and access to and along the beach in some locations.

Options	Key Negative Effects	Key Positive Effects
Option 11 – New Control Structure	The new control structure may have a permanent negative impact on the settings of the King Alfred Memorial and the Swanage conservation area. It may be visible in long views from the World Heritage Site (WHS) causing a negative impact, but it is likely that the impact would be minimised as the structure should blend in with the existing sea defences when viewed at that distance. Permanent loss of littoral mixed sediment habitat and additional temporary losses. Noise and visual disturbance plus potential impacts on foraging tern species in proximity and sediment mobilisation may impact foraging in open water.	Void spaces within the rock armour control structure can provide refuge and food sources, possible changes in adjacent abiotic conditions may result in greater exploitable habitat. New control structure not considered to be entirely uncharacteristic. It will result in localised change to the landscape character and views but not notably negative and no widespread landscape or visual impacts. Additional benefits from limiting loss of sand at Swanage Beach. Habitat features for marine fauna and flora should be integrated within design.

1 Business case template: supported change

Template: LIT 73921

Published: 14/03/2025

Audience: Environment Agency

3.6 Appraisal of economic, sustainability and carbon

3.6.1 Carbon costs

As part of the options appraisal, a comparison of the whole life carbon (WLC) of the shortlisted options was undertaken. This comparison considers the carbon emissions associated with the construction, operation, and decommissioning phases of each option over the 100-year appraisal period. The Environment Agency ERIC Carbon Modelling Tool was used to assess the carbon footprint to provide a high-level breakdown of the WLC for all the options as shown in Table 3-5.

Table 3-5: A breakdown of carbon assessment for each option

Stage	Option 2	Option 3a	Option 3b	Option 11
Capital carbon (tCO ₂ e)	51,140	50,713	51,069	51,451
Operational carbon (tCO ₂ e)	6,491	6,340	7,012	6,535
Replacement carbon (B4) (tCO ₂ e)	139,059	138,760	139,391	139,928
Refurbishment carbon (B5) (tCO ₂ e)	8,740	8,641	8,887	8,740
Demolition carbon (C) (tCO ₂ e)	8,933	8,844	9,032	8,974
Whole Life carbon (tCO ₂ e)	216,640	215,576	218,468	217,908

The WLC for each option was assessed based on all the interventions from year 0 to year 100. Scheme Option 2 is the lowest carbon solution followed closely by Option 3a. All options have comparable WLC, due to the similarity in future interventions. There is a marginal difference in carbon tonnage between Scheme Option 2 and 3a, however; this is not significant enough to differentiate a preferred option on the basis of whole-life carbon.

3.6.2 Carbon damages and benefits

The carbon damages associated with the Do Nothing option were assessed through the Environment Agency Carbon Impacts Tool. The Carbon Impacts Tool presents the carbon damages avoided (benefits) as a result of the options. This also acknowledges that all the options have the same benefit (due to the same SoP). This

is calculated as the cost of carbon resulting from the erosion loss of residential and non-residential properties, based on the assumption that properties will be demolished prior to being eroded. The cost of the carbon emissions as a result of this demolition is converted into an economic cost using carbon values from the Department of Business, Energy & Industrial Society (UK Government, 2023). The tool uses the count of residential properties, and the total area of non-residential properties lost within 20 years (medium term loss) and between 21 and 100 years (long term loss). The carbon cost of this loss is then discounted to present day to calculate a present value carbon benefit.

A breakdown of the residential and non-residential properties lost in each time period is shown in Table 3-6 and Table 3-7 respectively.

Table 3-6: Residential property carbon cost

Time period	Residential count	Residential carbon avoided (tCO ₂ e)	Residential carbon benefit (£k)
Medium term loss	117	269	55,989
Long term loss	772	1,776	149,975

Table 3-7: Non-residential property carbon cost

Time period	Non-residential area (m ²)	Non-residential carbon avoided (tCO ₂ e)	Non-residential carbon benefit (£k)
Medium term loss	11,474	298	62,070
Long term loss	17,874	465	39,252

From this, the present value of carbon avoided due to erosion loss by delivering the scheme at Swanage beach is calculated. This is shown in Table 3-8.

Table 3-8: Present value carbon cost

Time period	Carbon emissions avoided (tCO ₂ e)	Erosion carbon benefits (£k)
Medium term loss	567	118,059
Long term loss	2,240	189,227
Total	2,808	307,285

The values above present the carbon benefit associated with the project. This would be a carbon benefit that could be claimed by any of the short list options given all the options offer the same SoP. The carbon assessment (the Carbon Modelling Tool, Carbon Calculator and Carbon Impacts Tool) is in Appendix H.

3.6.3 Benefits

A coastal erosion analysis was conducted using predicted erosion contours to determine when properties would be lost under a Do Nothing scenario.

Economic damages and benefit calculations were undertaken in accordance with the FCERM-AG (Environment Agency, 2022), Multi-Coloured Manual (Penning-RowSELL, E. et al., 2013), Multi-Coloured Handbook (Flood Hazards Research Centre, 2024), and Treasury Green Book (HM Treasury, 2022).

The Strategy identifies an expenditure profile for the recommended management options over a 10-year period (2014 to 2024), within the context of a 100-year overall plan. Therefore, the economic assessment was carried out over a 100-year appraisal period and has a base date of January 2026.

The combined quantitative benefit over the 100-year appraisal period is shown in Table 3-9. As all of the proposed options were designed to extend the existing level of protection by 100 years, the benefit provided by each option is the same. This benefit consists of the property benefits, the carbon benefits, and the recreational benefits. Scheme benefits are equal to the 'Do Nothing' damages as the options are designed to protect the area from erosion damage over the entire appraisal period.

Table 3-9: Total combined PV benefit

Property benefit (£k)	Carbon benefit (£k)	Recreational benefit (£k)	Total Benefit (£k)
96,465	307	7,260	104,003

3.6.4 Costs

Whole life costs were estimated in March 2024 based on the concept design drawings developed at shortlist stage. The whole life costs incorporate all costs associated with the scheme over the working life of the structures, including appraisal, construction, future construction, and maintenance costs. The whole life costs for both the shortlisted options and the preferred option are in Appendix D.

A collaborative bottom-up pricing exercise involving DC and JBA was undertaken to develop the pre-construction cost. This comprises detailed design, project management, procurement and engagement, site investigations and surveys, planning, and administration costs.

The capital construction cost was developed through engagement with an ESE Contractor, using latest price estimates from recent similar schemes and market tested rates for key materials.

The capital construction cost covers construction of the works, staff, welfare, offices, site running costs, plant, labour, compounds and access. Others include security, temporary works, insurance, contractor owned risk, overheads, profit, contract administration, design support and landowner compensation costs. The capital costs

of a new seawall and groynes replacement were based on using the EA Long Term Costing Tool which was last published in 2021 (Environment Agency, 2021). A 20% uplift was added to this cost to account for inflation (based on Construction Output Price Indices between 2021 and 2024). The cost estimate of constructing a new seawall was based on 930m defence length, and wall height of 3.8mAOD and constructing a new groyne field comprising 18no groynes that were each 47m in length and 4m in height.

Operation and maintenance costs were calculated using the EA's Long Term Costing Tool (Environment Agency, 2021).

The overall project risk contingency at shortlist stage is based on the project risk percentage and optimism bias. An optimism bias of 30% was applied to the pre-construction, construction, and operation and maintenance costs. 60% optimism bias was applied to future costs. A lower optimism bias was used for construction, operation and maintenance and design costs due to increased confidence in these cost assumptions following consultation on the proposed works with the ESE contractors.

The breakdown of the present value costs over the 100-year appraisal period for each option is provided in Table 3-10.

Table 3-10: Summary of PV options costs over 100-year appraisal period (£k)

Option	Description	Appraisal PV Cost (£k)	Capital PV Cost (£k)	Future PV Cost (£k)	Optimism Bias	Whole-Life PV Cost (£k)
1	Do Nothing	-	-	-	-	-
2	Beach Recharge and New Control Structure	610	3,217	9,037*	6,564	19,429
3a	Beach Recharge with Rock Armour underpinning	988	3,106	10,606	7,591	22,293
3b	Beach Recharge with Sheet pile underpinning	702	5,448	11,088	8,492	25,729
11	New	224	1,355	11,549	7,403	20,530

Option	Description	Appraisal PV Cost (£k)	Capital PV Cost (£k)	Future PV Cost (£k)	Optimism Bias	Whole-Life PV Cost (£k)
	Control Structure					

The appraisal PV cost for the purpose of option's appraisal is made up of all the pre-construction cost (detailed design, Dorset Council costs, procurement and engagement costs, site investigation, management and supervision) except the OBC cost which was subsequently added to the preferred option. The OBC cost was excluded from the options' appraisal cost as it is common to all the options with the same value.

3.6.5 Economic summary

An economic summary of each option, including PF score, the maximum eligible FCERM GiA funding and the funding gap, over a 100-year duration of benefits is provided in Table 3-11.

Table 3-11: Options economic summary (100-year appraisal period and duration of benefits).

	Option 2	Option 3a	Option 3b	Option 11
PV Property benefit (£k)	96,465	96,465	96,465	96,465
PV Recreation benefit (£k)	7,260	7,260	7,260	7,260
PV Carbon benefit (£k)	278	278	278	278
Total benefit (£k)	104,003	104,003	104,003	104,003
Initial PV costs (£k)	3,827	4,094	6,150	1,579
Future PV costs (£k)	9,037	10,608	11,088	11,549
Optimism bias (£k)	6,564	7,591	8,492	7,403
Total costs (£k)	19,429	22,293	25,729	20,530
Net Present Value (£k)	84,574	81,710	78,274	83,473
Benefit/cost ratio	5.35	4.67	4.04	5.07
Max eligible GiA (£k)	12,241	12,241	12,241	12,241
GiA funding gap (£k)	3,844	5,269	7,675	3,626
Public sector contribution (£k)	650	650	650	650
Adjusted PF score (%)	69	60	52	67

Option 2 has the highest benefit cost ratio (5.35) and adjusted PF score (69%); this is due to the option having the lowest Present Value costs over the appraisal period. As mentioned previously, the results of the 100-year appraisal period Partnership Funding calculations are provided for reference only, as the duration of benefits for each option must be capped when future costs reach 20% of upfront costs.

The results of the 100-year appraisal period and duration of benefits Partnership Funding calculation show that while the options are economically viable, securing GiA funding would not be possible as the duration of benefits is greater than the time period where intervention increases future costs to more than 20% of initial capital costs. In order to better understand the funding viability of the options Table 3-12 shows the period in which required intervention increases future costs to be greater than 20% of the initial proposed capital costs. Future costs that exceed 20% of the initial capital costs are highlighted in red.

Table 3-12: Present value Initial costs and 2036 and 2046 intervention costs

	Option 2	Option 3a	Option 3b	Option 11
Initial costs	3,827	4,094	6,150	1,579
2036 costs	204	204	204	2,373
2046 costs	4,337	4,337	4,337	2,170

From Table 3-12, the first intervention (2036) cost for required groyne remediation is less than 20% of capital costs for Option 2, Option 3a and Option 3b. Option 11 requires additional beach recharge interventions at 2036, which increases this intervention cost to greater than 20% of the initial capital cost. Therefore, this option will not secure longer-term funding using GiA due to the 20% cap.

The economic appraisal summary for a 20-year duration of benefit is therefore provided in Table 3-13.

Table 3-13: Options economic summary (20-year duration of benefits)

	Option 2	Option 3a	Option 3b
PV Property benefit (£k)	58,383	58,383	58,383
PV Recreation benefit (£k)	3,269	3,269	3,269
PV Carbon benefit (£k)	94	94	94
Total benefit (£k)	61,746	61,746	61,746
PV Initial costs (£k)	3,827	4,094	6,150
PV Future costs (£k)	144	138	138
Optimism bias (£k)	1,232	1,310	1,929
Total costs (£k)	5,203	5,543	8,223

	Option 2	Option 3a	Option 3b
Net Present Value (£k)	56,543	56,203	53,523
Benefit/cost ratio	11.87	11.14	7.51
GiA funding gap (£k)	629	962	3,602
Public sector contribution (£k)	650	650	650
Remaining funding gap (£k)	0	312	2,952
Adjusted PF score (%)	100	94	63

Table 3-13 shows that over a 20-year duration of benefit, Option 2 is the most economically viable option with a BCR of 11.84 and adjusted Partnership Funding score of 100%

3.7 Preferred option

The decision rule detailed in the FCERM-AG (2022) has been adopted in identifying the preferred option. The outcome of each stage in the decision-making process for a CBA project is shown below.

Stage 1 – check that shortlisted options have average BCR of more than 1.

Table 3-13 shows that all options have benefit cost ratios of more than 1, enabling decision-making to move to Stage 2.

Stage 2 – choose the leading option on reduced AEP or NPSV

All the shortlisted options provided the same SoP established by the 2005/2006 scheme to continue to reduce erosion risk. As such, it is not possible to order the options by reducing AEP. However, the net present social value (NPSV) which is the difference between the present value benefit and the present value cost over the 20-year duration of benefit was assessed for each option.

Table 3-14 : Summary of net present social value

	Option 2	Option 3a	Option 3b
PV benefit (£k)	61,746	61,746	61,746
PV cost (£k)	5,203	5,543	8,223
NPSV (£k)	56,543	56,203	53,523
Rank	1	2	3

As shown in Table 3-14, the leading option based on the NPSV is Option 2 after stage 2.

Stage 3 – consider whether uncertainty affects the leading option

Uncertainty has been factored in through optimism bias allowances. Scheme Options 3a and 3b are deemed to carry the most uncertainty due to the onerous piling and rock armour requirements under the beach material and undetermined ground conditions. Over the 20-year duration of benefits, Option 2 is the leading option based on the NPSV ranking. Section 3.7.1 shows the sensitivity analysis carried out around the uncertainties in pricing for Beach Recharge which affects all three options and defence failure year. Despite these uncertainties, none of the sensitivities tested were sufficient to overturn Option 2 as the leading option.

Stage 4 – identify the national economically preferred option

The leading option at Stage 3 is Option 2. This option remains the nationally economically preferred option as it meets all the project objectives and CSF.

Stage 5 – consider if there is an affordable local choice

Discussions with DC, Swanage Town Council and the EA have suggested that the most desirable option from a local perspective is to undertake Option 2, beach recharge and a new control structure which is also the nationally economically preferred option. As such, Option 2 remains the preferred option at this stage.

Stage 6 – confirm the choice of preferred option

The recommended preferred option is Option 2.

The Appraisal Summary Table (AST) is shown in Appendix I

3.7.1 Sensitivity analysis

Seawall Failure Year

A sensitivity analysis was carried out for the seawall defence failure year. The analysis evaluates the impact of varying the assumed year of sea wall failure on the benefits, costs, and funding eligibility of different coastal defence options. The original economic assessment assumed a defence failure in 2043, but this analysis explores earlier failure scenarios in 2034, 2029, and 2024 to account for the uncertainty in predicting structural deterioration.

The methodology involved updating coastal erosion modelling and benefit calculations for each failure year across 20, 50, and 100-year appraisal periods. While the cost estimates for each option remained unchanged, the benefits comprising property protection, recreational value, and carbon savings were recalculated. The analysis focused particularly on Option 2, which was identified as the preferred solution.

Results show that earlier failure years significantly increase the total benefits and improve the BCR and PF scores. For example, under a 20-year appraisal period:

- A 2043 failure yields a BCR of 4.74 and a PF score of 30%.
- A 2034 failure increases the BCR to 11.40 and PF score to 83%.
- A 2029 failure results in a BCR of 14.71 and PF score of 109%.

- A 2024 failure further boosts the BCR to 18.85 and PF score to 137%.

These results imply that earlier failure assumptions make the scheme more economically attractive and potentially fully fundable through government grants (GiA), eliminating funding gaps in the 2029 and 2024 scenarios.

However, the analysis acknowledges limitations. The assumed failure years are not based on empirical data but on anecdotal evidence and engineering judgment. To mitigate this, a probability-based approach to model failure likelihoods over time was adopted.

Duration of Benefits Period

In addition to the 100-year and 20-year duration of benefits assessed, further test was carried out for a 50-year duration of benefits. All the duration of benefits assessed, i.e., 100 years, 50 years and 20 years did not change the selected preferred option

Beach Recharge Costs

As part of the options costing exercise, a sensitivity analysis was carried out on the construction cost for beach recharge, which is common to the options considered. The sensitivity analysis was necessitated due to the following.

- Uncertainty around cost per cubic metre of beach material due to an opportunity to source beach material more locally to the site. Based on the possible sources of the beach material, the material costs could range from £7.50 per m³ to £33 per m³ of beach material.
- The potential availability of a sinker pipe locally free of charge (with the exception of relocation from the local source).

The summary of the sensitivity analysis of the capital costs (including pre-construction and construction costs) for a 50-year duration of benefits is shown in Table 3-15 below.

Table 3-15: Summary of the sensitivity analysis for Option 2 over a 100-year appraisal period and 50-year duration of benefits

Beach Recharge Cost Options	PV Capital Costs (£k)	Benefit Cost Ratio
Beach Recharge at £33/m ³ (ECI Cost)	2,553	2.59
Beach Recharge at £20/m ³	5,312	2.86
Beach Recharge at £20/m ³ without Sinker Pipe	2,991	4.71
Beach Recharge at £7.50/m ³	3,844	3.97
Beach Recharge at £7.50/m ³ without sinker pipe	1,524	8.72

Further strategic engagement with BCP Council, the ESE contractor, Coastal Partners (organisation representing a group of local authorities on the south coast) and other contractors in the region was undertaken to confirm costs associated with beach recharge. It was identified that an efficiency could be realised by aligning the Swanage Beach Recharge with the Bournemouth Beach Management scheme planned in 2027/2028.

By aligning the schemes, the greater volumes of recharge may make the contract more commercially attractive, increase competition in procurement, driving greater value for money. Another efficiency that could be realised from the aligned project work is that the Swanage beach recharge scheme could be offered the use of the sinker pipe free of charge (due to this cost already being incurred by the Bournemouth Beach Management Scheme). In this scenario the Swanage Beach Recharge scheme would only incur the costs for the transportation of the sinker pipe to Swanage Bay from the local source.

The choice of the preferred option remains consistent across all sensitivity tests, demonstrating that the selection is stable even when assumptions are varied.

3.8 Outline design and refinement

3.8.1 Preferred option design development

Following the selection Option 2 as the preferred option, the concept design used for shortlist pricing was refined and a subsequent pricing undertaken in March 2025 to reflect the design optimisation and provide greater cost certainty.

The outline design incorporated new data and information such as the geotechnical desk study (Appendix J1), climate change and other key design standards and guidance to optimise the design of the preferred option developed at the concept design stage. This design refinement led to the optimisation of the materials proposed which necessitated the need for revised pricing. The outline design drawings are in Appendix J2 and the design philosophy and buildability statement are in Appendix J3.

The geometry of the preferred option is summarised as follows:

- Beach recharge overfill crest level (including allowances for average annual losses and design storm losses at the 0.33% AEP event) - +1.75mAOD
- Control structure design crest height - +1.51mAOD
- Beach recharge slope - 1:20
- Control structure trunk design slope - 1:14
- Control structure seaward, landward and roundhead slopes - 1:3
- Total beach recharge design volume (including a 20% assumption for loss of volume) - c. 24,550m³
- Total control structure primary rock volume - c. 1,460m³ (tonnage is dependent on the confirmed source material density)

3.8.2 Revised Pricing

The revised cost estimate for the both the national and local preferred option has been derived based on the progression of the general design, updated material and labour cost, and a reassessment of project-related risks. A detailed summary of the updated cost for the preferred option is presented in Table 3-16 below

Table 3-16: Summary of PV costs at outline design

Project Stage	Preferred Option PV Cost (£k) (Option 2)
OBC to Detailed Design	861
Construction Stage	1713
Future Costs	197
Optimism Bias	1663
Whole Life Cost	4,435

The revised pricing for the preferred option (Option 2) showed a £769k decrease in PV whole life cost when compared to the price estimate from March 2024 for Option 2 (see Table 3-13). The reasons behind this are summarised below:

- Initial Costs - Due to the design optimisation, the major reduction in the price was due to the reduction in material quantity needed for construction. i.e., beach volume and rock tonnage. The OBC cost was not added to the initial appraisal cost used for the options' appraisal as it was common to all options. The OBC cost was added to the appraisal cost to reflect a more realistic cost for the preferred option. These resulted in a £1,253k reduction in PV initial cost.
- Future Costs – The future costs increased due to added maintenance costs for regular inspection and site walkover over the 20-year benefit period. This resulted in a £53k increase in PV future cost.
- Optimism Bias – A 60% OB was applied to the all the cost due to the increased risk with the new rock groyne construction and the confirmation of the use of limestone to Granite at detailed design stage. Additionally, due to the dynamic environment, the volume of beach material required will be dependent on when construction is undertaken and the condition of the groynes at that time may mean significant works to groyne may be required to limit outflanking of the groynes and in turn lead to beach washout. This resulted in a £431k increase in PV OB cost.

The three points above led to an overall PV cost reduction of £769k.

The cost reduction further makes the preferred option more economically viable with an updated BCR of 13.92 from the previous 11.87. A summary of the economic case is provided in Table 3-17 below. The economic summary and partnership funding calculator are in Appendix K.

Table 3-17: Summary of economic performance at outline design

Preferred Option	Option 2
Option Description	Beach recharge with a new control structure in the form of a rock groyne to continue to provide a 0.33% AEP SoP.
PV whole life costs (£k)	4,435
PV whole life benefits (£k)	61,746
BCR	13.92

DC have committed to £650k additional funding to support the scheme.

3.9 Value for money statement

The proposal demonstrates strong Value for Money (VfM) by delivering significant benefits relative to its cost. The BCR of the proposal is over 4 and according to LIT 73643, Defra's Value for Money Framework (2024), the categorisation is very high. This means that for every pound invested, the proposal realises more than 4 pounds (13.92 to be exact) in benefit.

A wide range of options were considered for this proposal. Option 2 (the preferred option) showed the best value for money when compared to all other options from both the BCR and the NPSV point of view over a 100-year appraisal period and 20-year duration of benefits. There is also an added flood risk benefit associated with the selection of the Option 2. To avoid double counting the flood risk benefit will be claimed by the Swanage Town Coastal Protection Scheme. Hence, its dependence on this OBC. The appraisal process undertaken shows that the proposal will achieve all its strategic objectives.

Key impacts of the proposal include improved recreation and amenity, and medium-term sustainability. All of which have been monetised and included in the BCR calculation.

The VfM has looked at the 3 categories namely BCR, NPSV and Return on Public Sector Cost (RPSC) for the proposal as shown in Table 3-18. It shows that there is no difference between the BCR and RPSC. It reflects the proposal's ability to deliver high-quality outcomes at a reasonable cost, while also considering equity and sustainability.

Table 3-18: Value for Money categories

Categories	
BCR	13.92
NPSV	£57,311k
RPSC	17.21

There is a high-level of confidence that the VfM category will be realised and unlikely to change. Uncertainties and risk costs have been included in the OB and assessed as part of the appraisal and further reinforce the reliability of the VfM assessment, ensuring informed and accountable decision-making.

4 Commercial case

4.1 Procurement strategy

Dorset Council (DC) has significant experience with Public Contract Regulations and the Procurement Regulations. Delivering on procurement will rely on a mixture of internal and external resources. To meet operation, financial, social and administrative policies DC will achieve value for money and efficient corporate procurement of work, goods and services.

Building on the project objective, key drivers for the procurement of the scheme have been identified as follows:

- Professional and consulting service
- Recharge operations
- Control structure construction
- Site investigations and surveys
- Public engagement and communications

Key drivers will be considered both individually and collectively to determine its optimal procurement options. Procurement options will be chosen on its efficiency to deliver on the project and its objectives.

The major element of the project will be delivered as part of a larger Bournemouth Christchurch and Poole Council (BCP) recharge scheme. Swanage beach is therefore part of a collaborative effort and recharge campaign involving BCP, New Forest and DC beaches. Therefore, to achieve project efficiencies BCP will lead on procurement for the recharge operations post outline business case approval, with DC in the client role, it is likely that the BCP preferred professional and consulting service provider and contractor will provide the best value for the Swanage Beach element of this larger scheme. This will be managed under a public sector cooperation agreement between DC and BCP.

This contracting approach involves the commission of a design supplier to undertake design in advance of commissioning the construction supplier.

The Council procurement policy is to commission the services of consulting engineers through approved framework or contract agreements. It is our intent to procure consultant advice through Dorset Councils TEPS contract agreement for the design phase.

Dorset Council can consider two alternative procurement routes, a Contract tendering process for specific contracts or the use of an approved procurement framework.

Design, procurement, and construction supervision will be managed by Dorset Council potentially with the aid of consultants depending upon staff resource at the time of construction.

4.2 Procurement route and timescales

Following approval of the business case, DC will set out to procure the necessary services and construction work. Post OBC the project will be implemented in two sequential phases outlined below:

- Phase I: April 2026 – December 2027 This is the pre-construction, planning, detailed design, ECI, statutory licensing and planning permissions.
- Phase II: January 2028 – April 2028 This phase will include construction and the beach recharge itself

4.3 Efficiencies and commercial issues

4.3.1 Commercial arrangements

The Designer will be procured under the Dorset Councils Highways TEPS Contract. The appointed consultant will assist in procurement of a Principal Contractor via Open Tender.

4.3.2 Efficiencies

Major efficiency by aligning with the larger BCP scheme and using material dredged under their license. Swanage scheme could be offered the use of the sinker pipe free of charge (due to this cost already being incurred by the larger BCP scheme). In this scenario the Swanage Beach Recharge scheme would only incur costs for the transportation of the sinker pipe to Swanage Bay.

Detailed optioneering has been undertaken with project partners to help structure a viable outline design to minimise optimism bias.

An efficiency's register will be kept throughout this project to catalogue and quantify savings from innovative ideas, cost saving measures and decisions.

5 Financial case

5.1 Financial summary

A financial summary of the project is provided in Table 5-1 below.

Table 5-1: Financial Summary of the Preferred Option

Costs (£k)	Whole-life cash cost (£k)	Total value of project (£k) (for approval)
Costs up to OBC		
OBC Costs	450	450
Sub-total	450	450
OBC to Construction		
DC Costs	37	37
Consultant Fees (Detailed Design)	250	250
Procurement and Engagement	4	4
ECC PM and Supervision	6	6
Site Investigation	100	100
Environmental Surveys	50	50
Optimism Bias (60%)	268	268
Sub-total	715	715
Construction		
Construction Costs (Beach Recharge)	998	998
Construction Costs (Rock Groyne)	517	517
ECC PM, Supervisor, ECoW	49	49
DC Costs	13	13
Consultant Fees	108	108
Risk	152	152
Optimism Bias (60%)	1,102	1,102
Inflation (3%)	55	55
Sub-total	2,994	2,994
Future Costs		
Future works	205	
Maintenance	106	
Optimism bias (60%)	187	
Sub-total	498	
Project Total Costs	4,657	4,159

5.2 Funding sources

The Swanage Beach Coastal Protection Scheme will be funded through a combination of FCERM GiA and partnership funding from DC. The scheme is eligible for a maximum of £4,556k of FCERM GiA, and DC has committed to contributing a total of £650k capital funding to the scheme.

Table 5-2: Key financial details

Detail	Total / score
Whole life project cost (£k)	4,657
3 rd part contributions (£k)	650
Raw PF score (%)	103
Adjusted PF score (%)	118

5.3 Mitigating cost variations

The beach volume needed for the beach recharge was estimated based on the existing beach survey information available during the outline design. Due to the dynamism of the beach and the unpredictability of storm events, there could be an increase in beach material loss before construction starts. The project plans to update the beach material using latest beach survey at the next design phase. Ongoing engagement with BCP and the ESE contractor will be adopted, and the OB will be employed to any cost increase. This will be confirmed at the next phase (detailed design) prior to construction.

5.4 Overall affordability

The affordability of the scheme was assessed based on the use of partnership funding calculations to determine the eligibility of the scheme for FCERM GiA funding and identify any funding gaps.

According to the EA (2023), the duration of benefits period typically relates directly to the useful life of the flood or coastal asset being built or upgraded, or the time until the next major capital investment is proposed, whichever is sooner. A major investment is one that is more than 20% of the value of the investment being considered today (in today's prices, without inflation added). For the development of the financial case, a 20-year benefit period was adopted. Sensitivity tests were also carried out for the capped duration of benefits equating to when the 20% future capital cost threshold is exceeded. This was undertaken to accurately assess affordability of the options in the Partnership Funding calculator.

Table 3-13 shows the eligibility for GiA, partnership funding score and funding gap associated with the options considered over the 20-year duration of benefits. It also shows that Option 2 is the most economically viable and affordable option under these conditions.

However, at Stage 5 of the Decision Rule detailed in the FCERM-AG and Partnership Funding guidance, the local choices and preferences may be considered. Option 2 - Beach recharge with new control structure was identified by DC and the EA as the locally preferred option. As such remained the preferred option. This option is economically viable, with a Net Present Value of £57,311k and a benefit cost ratio of 13.92. A maximum of £4,556k of this option's costs over a 20-year appraisal period

are eligible for Grant in Aid funding, with no funding gap. Additionally, £650k of Capital Funding has been made available by DC to contribute towards the cost of the Swanage Beach scheme.

Table 5-3: Project Cost Spend Profile

Annualised and itemised spend profile (cash, £k)	Pre-Yr 0	Yr 0 (this financial year)	Yr 1	Yr 2	Yr 3	Yr 4+	Total
Project development costs (pre-approval)	450						450
Site Investigation costs		100					100
Internal staff costs		47	62				109
External consultant fees		250	108				358
Project implementation costs (construction/services/goods)			1515				1515
Environmental:							
• Surveys and Licences		50					50
Risk (95 th %ile + 60% Optimism Bias)		268	1254				1522
Inflation (3%)			55				55
Initial project costs (total of above rows)	450	715	2994				4159
Future costs:							
• Resource (specify)				5	5	96	106
• Capital (specify)						205	205
• Future risk/60% optimism bias				3	3	181	187
Project whole life costs (total of initial + future cost rows)	450	715	2994	8	8	482	4657
Funding sources:							
• Grant in Aid	450	715	2842				4007
• DC Capital Funding			152	8	8	482	650

6 Management case

6.1 Project management

The Council will use its public sector cooperation agreement with BCP Team to project and contract manage the delivery of the works. Dorset Council will remain the client for the scheme and be responsible for the appointment of a consultant designer of the works.

Dorset Coastal Forum will lead the press and stakeholder communications engagement aspect of the project.

Consulting Engineers will be commissioned to advise the Council and design the scheme.

6.2 Project roles and responsibilities

Project Manager: Adam Steele, Project Engineer – Dorset Council

Project Executive: Matthew Penny, Lead Manager FCERM – Dorset Council

Lead Public/Stakeholder Engagement: Sara Parker, Dorset Coast Forum Co-ordinator– Dorset Coast Forum

Project Advisor: Matthew Hosey, Head of FCERM - BCP Council

Project Advisor: Martin Ayres, Town Clerk – Swanage Town Council

RMA Advisor: David Picksley, Senior Coastal Advisor – Environment Agency

6.3 Project plan

The main schedule of events is listed below, with provisional timescales based on a construction phase during early 2028.

Event	Date DD/MM/YY
Dorset Council committee sign off	March 2026
NPAS decision on FDGiA Funding Approval	March 2026
Tender, Procure & Appoint Designer	May 2026
Undertake public consultations (3 months)	July 2026
Start Detailed Design	Autumn 2026
Obtain licences and consents	April 2027
Final Detailed Design complete.	January 2027
Tender, Procure & Appoint Contractor	Spring 2027

Event	Date DD/MM/YY
Inform public and businesses of contractor's programme and method of working. Undertake further public awareness.	Summer 2027
Construction works commence	January 2028
Work substantially completed by	February 2028

6.3.1 Table: project stage summary

Project stage / gateway	Project stage description	Estimated start date	Estimated end date	Responsible organisation	Likely budget required (£k)
Gateway 0	Strategic assessment	September 2023	January 2026	Dorset Council	£475k
Gateway 1	Business justification	January 2026	March 2026	Dorset Council	
Gateway 2	Delivery strategy	March 2026	March 2026	Dorset Council	
Gateway 3	Investment decision	March 2026	March 2026	Environment Agency	
Gateway 4	Readiness for service	April 2026	January 2027	Dorset Council & BCP	£715k
Gateway 5	Operational review	January 2027	February 2028	Dorset Council & BCP	£3,747k
Gateway 6	Benefits management and project closure	February 2029	January 2030	Dorset Council	£50k

6.4 Communications and stakeholder engagement

Informal consultation for the planning consent has been undertaken.

Further consultation lead by Dorset Coast Forum will be undertaken once the design has reached an appropriate stage. The communications team will advise and recommence consultations at this point. Meetings will be arranged with affected and nearby businesses and further information will be made available after the main contractor has been appointed. Dorset Coast Forum have extensive experience working with stakeholders in Swanage on many marine based projects, there expertise will be

invaluable going forward and ensuring a harmony with the project team and the people of Swanage.

The project team has undertaken an Equality Impact Assessment screening and as part of the procurement stage the tenderers will be expected to demonstrate their compliance with Equality Act 2010.

6.4.1 Table: consulted partners

See Appendix A below for detail.

6.5 Benefits, outcomes and change management

This section sets out the key benefits and outcomes arising from the Swanage Beach Coastal Protection Scheme, along with the governance, responsibilities and people-related change activities required to ensure successful delivery. It draws upon the strategic, economic, commercial and financial assessments undertaken within this OBC.

Benefits and Outcomes

The scheme delivers substantial long-term benefits across economic, environmental and social domains. Over the 100-year appraisal period, the project provides a total Present Value (PV) benefit of £104,003k, comprising £96,465k in property protection, £307k in carbon benefits, and £7,260k in recreational benefits.

The primary benefit is the continued provision of a 0.33% Annual Exceedance Probability (AEP) Standard of Protection, achieved by maintaining an adequate beach profile in combination with existing and new hard defences. This reduces risks to more than 110 residential and non-residential properties along the Swanage frontage.

Environmental benefits also arise from enhanced landscape character, improved beach accessibility, and opportunities to strengthen coastal habitat resilience. With appropriate mitigation, the scheme avoids significant adverse ecological or heritage impacts and can enhance the public realm experience along the seafront

Outcomes and Timescales

Delivery of the preferred option (Option 2 – Beach Recharge with a New Control Structure) provides the following outcomes:

Outcome	Responsibility	Planned Delivery
Completion of detailed design, statutory approvals, and procurement	Dorset Council (DC), supported by appointed Principal Designer and BCP Council	April 2026 – December 2027
Construction of the rock control structure and implementation of beach recharge	Principal Contractor managed by DC	January – April 2028
Sustained 0.33% AEP SoP and improved beach amenity	DC (coastal operations)	From 2028 onwards
Realisation of economic, carbon and recreational benefits	DC and partner authorities	Over 20-year duration of benefits, extending to 100-year appraisal

The preferred option offers the highest BCR (13.92) and Net Present Social Value (£56,543k) across scenarios and is both the national and locally preferred choice.

Approach to People-Side Change

Although the project does not directly restructure staff roles, it introduces new ways of working, increased inter-authority collaboration, and operational process changes. Effective people management is central to delivering the scheme.

Managing Changes to Structures, Roles, and Ways of Working

The scheme requires strengthened coordination among Dorset Council, BCP Council, the Environment Agency, Natural England, and local stakeholders. Key organisational changes include:

- Integrated procurement and delivery model, with BCP Council leading on procurement of dredging and recharge activities to secure efficiencies via their licence and supply chain.
- Revised operational processes during construction, including road access management, temporary footpath diversions, provision of alternative disabled parking and beach access controls.
- Enhanced monitoring and maintenance regime aligned with the updated Beach Management Plan.

These changes will be embedded through project governance, clear role definitions, and structured communication with operational teams and the public.

Ensuring Skills and Capability Readiness

Successful delivery relies on specialist technical and environmental skills. The following capabilities are already mobilised:

- Coastal engineering, environmental appraisal, geotechnical assessment and modelling, provided by JBA Consulting.
- Expertise in dredging and recharge operations, coordinated with BCP Council's beach management programme.
- Design and technical assurance delivered through the Dorset Council TEPS framework.

The project's two-phase implementation allows for progressive capability building and early integration of consultant and contractor expertise.

Business Readiness and Stakeholder Acceptance

The scheme has embedded stakeholder engagement throughout OBC development and will continue this approach during delivery. Requirements include:

- Ongoing engagement with statutory bodies such as Natural England, MMO, and the Environment Agency, including for HRA, WFD, and MCZ assessments.
- Community and landowner engagement, critical given the risks of private landowner opposition and interface with local businesses. Early engagement has been undertaken and will be maintained.
- Public information and access planning, particularly relating to temporary construction impacts.

These activities ensure readiness, minimise disruption, and support community acceptance.

Resource Implications and Governance Responsibilities

Resources required to deliver the change include:

- Project Executive (DC) – strategic oversight.
- Project Manager (DC) – day-to-day delivery management.
- Technical Design Team (TBC via TEPS) – detailed design, modelling and technical assurance.
- BCP Council – procurement leadership for dredging and beach recharge efficiencies.

- Dorset Coast Forum – community engagement and communications support.

The Risk Register and Consultation Log provide assurance that resource and governance responsibilities are fully defined.

Benefits Management

A benefits register will be maintained throughout project delivery to ensure outcomes are monitored, measured, and realised. Benefits tracked will include:

- Property protection
- Carbon reduction and avoided emissions
- Recreational and amenity improvements
- Environmental risk mitigation
- Partnering and efficiency gains (including shared dredge mobilisation, free use of sinker pipe)

Progress will be reviewed at key gateway stages, from detailed design through to post-construction monitoring.

6.5.1 Table: carbon benefit summary

Carbon calculation	Carbon forecast (tCO ₂)	Carbon baseline (tCO ₂)	Carbon reduction target (tCO ₂)	% target from baseline	% forecast from baseline
Capital carbon	51,140				
Operational carbon	6,491				

6.6 Risk management

Risk Management

A robust and structured approach to risk management has been adopted to ensure the successful delivery of the Swanage Beach Coastal Protection Scheme. This approach aligns with established FCERM and wider government project risk-management methodologies. It covers the identification, assessment, ownership, mitigation and continuous monitoring of risks throughout the project lifecycle. A comprehensive Risk Register is provided in Appendix F.

Risk Management Strategy and Framework

The project applies an established risk-management framework, following the standard cycle of Identify → Analyse → Plan → Own → Monitor. This framework ensures consistency, transparency and early intervention when risks threaten project cost, programme, quality or delivery.

Key elements include:

Identification

Risks have been identified through:

- Technical assessments and early design work.
- Environmental and consenting reviews (HRA, WFD, MCZ, MMO screening).
- Lessons learned from previous coastal management schemes.
- Engagement with BCP Council, EA, MMO, Natural England, Swanage Town Council and local stakeholders

Analysis

Each risk has been assessed for likelihood and impact across programme, cost, environmental, legal and delivery dimensions. This includes consideration of strategic risks such as funding uncertainty, alignment with BCP recharge activity, landowner opposition and environmental constraints

Mitigation Planning

Mitigation measures have been developed based on proven techniques, statutory bodies' guidance, and experience from comparable coastal schemes. These include:

- Design optimisation following outline geotechnical and coastal engineering studies
- Scheduled construction outside sensitive ecological periods (e.g., Black seabream nesting).
- Alignment with the BCP Council recharge programme to secure operational efficiencies and reduce delivery risks
- Extensive early and ongoing engagement with private landowners and local businesses.

Ownership

Every risk has a defined owner within the project's governance structure (DC Project Executive, DC Project Manager, BCP Council, JBA Consulting, Dorset Coast Forum). Clear ownership ensures accountability and timely escalation.

Monitoring and Review

Risk assessments will be updated at each gateway and reviewed regularly by the project board, recognising that risks evolve as design progresses, consents are secured and construction approaches.

Lessons Learned from Previous Projects

The scheme incorporates learning from:

- The 2005/06 Swanage Beach Recharge Scheme, particularly on sediment performance, groyne interaction and recharge volumes.
- Swanage Town Coastal Protection Scheme, emphasising the limitations of temporary barriers and the need for integrated planning (Storm Ciarán impacts).
- BCP Council coastal recharge operations, demonstrating the efficiency benefits of multi-authority collaboration, shared infrastructure (e.g., sinker pipe) and coordinated dredge sourcing.

These lessons have been integrated into the preferred option, mitigation planning, procurement strategy and collaborative working arrangements.

Early Risk Potential Assessment

An early high-level risk assessment was undertaken during the development of this OBC. The assessment highlighted critical risks that shaped project formulation, including:

- Funding risk due to the competitive FCERM GiA landscape
- Programme risk associated with alignment to BCP's recharge campaign, which is essential for securing efficiencies.
- Environmental risk, particularly the need for compliance with HRA and MCZ mitigation requirements.

These early insights informed the scope of surveys, timing of engagement and design refinement.

Key Delivery and Operational Risks

The detailed risk register (Appendix F) sets out all project risks; a high-level summary of key categories is provided below.

Funding and Affordability

- Risk: Insufficient grant funding or changes to EA capital programme may delay delivery.

- Mitigation: Strong BCR and PF score; DC capital contribution; continued engagement with EA.

Landowner and Stakeholder Engagement

- Risk: Restricted access to private land (e.g., Ocean Bay slipway, North Beach) affecting construction.
- Mitigation: Early, proactive engagement and clear communication with affected parties.

Environmental and Consenting Risks

- Risk: Potential impacts on SAC, SPA and MCZ features (e.g., Black seabream nests, Mearl beds).
- Mitigation: Seasonal working windows, pollution prevention, habitat-specific controls.

Programme and Dependency Risks

- Risk: Delay to required monitoring and mapping studies for protected features; reliance on BCP programme.
- Mitigation: Maintain alignment with BCP's 2027/28 schedule, integrate Natural England requirements into programme.

Cost Escalation

- Risk: Uncertainty in dredged material cost and recharge volumes.
- Mitigation: Updated beach surveys; 60% optimism bias; efficiencies from shared dredging and equipment.

Technical and Buildability Risks

- Risk: Ground conditions or design uncertainties impacting groyne construction.
- Mitigation: Geotechnical studies, early contractor input, iterative design refinement.

Risk Ownership and Governance

Risk management is embedded within the project governance structure:

- Project Executive (DC): Overall accountability for risk strategy.
- Project Manager (DC): Operational risk management and register maintenance.
- JBA Consulting: Technical, environmental and modelling risks.
- BCP Council: Procurement and dredging-related risk leadership.

- Dorset Coast Forum: Reputation, communications and stakeholder-management risks.

Governance processes ensure risks are reviewed at each stage, escalated promptly where required, and used to inform programme decisions.

Dynamic Risk Assessment

Risk profiles will evolve as the project progresses through design, consenting and procurement. The project team will update the risk register regularly, ensuring the OBC reflects the best possible assessment at the point of submission, in line with FCERM guidance.

6.7 Contract management

Contract management for the Swanage Beach Coastal Protection Scheme will be led by DC, which retains full client responsibility for administering the contract, monitoring performance, managing change, and ensuring that delivery meets programme, cost and quality requirements. Technical oversight and construction supervision will be supported by the consultant appointed through the TEPS framework, who will provide design assurance and quality checks throughout delivery. Coordination with BCP Council will continue where construction interfaces with their wider recharge programme, particularly regarding dredging logistics and use of the shared sinker pipe. DC will also ensure that all environmental and consenting obligations are met, including HRA, WFD and MMO requirements, supported by an Environmental Clerk of Works where needed. Risk, cost and schedule control will be maintained through established governance processes, with the Project Manager responsible for continuous monitoring and escalation to the Project Executive and Project Board, ensuring that the scheme is delivered efficiently, safely and to the required standard

6.8 Assurance

This is a simple change appraisal type project, which will be assured in line with the Environment Agency's [Integrated Assurance and Approval Strategy \(IAAS\)](#), with the Outline Business Case subject to NPAS assurance prior to funding approval. The project schedule incorporates all required assurance stages, including OBC approval in March 2026, designer procurement by May 2026, public consultation and detailed design through 2026–2027, and licensing and statutory approvals completed by April 2027, allowing sufficient time for technical review, environmental assessment, and EA oversight before construction begins in January 2028. Ongoing assurance will be maintained through gateway checks, independent technical review (via TEPS-appointed consultants), design validation, and continued engagement with statutory bodies such as Natural England, MMO and the EA, ensuring compliance with HRA, WFD, MCZ and planning requirements throughout project development. This integrated approach ensures

that all assurance activities are aligned with the project plan and delivered in time to support safe, compliant and efficient progression to construction.

6.9 Post project evaluation

Post project evaluation for the Swanage Beach Coastal Protection Scheme will focus specifically on assessing the performance and effectiveness of the new rock groyne control structure constructed at the Mowlem frontage. The evaluation will review whether the groyne is successfully retaining sediment, reducing longshore losses, and maintaining the required beach profile to sustain the 0.33% AEP Standard of Protection, as defined within the preferred option design. The intention is to construct a non-standard adaptive design that can be changed following suitable review. Monitoring will include inspections of groyne stability, armour stone condition, and structural behaviour under storm events, supported by beach level surveys and coastal process observations referenced in the Beach Management Plan. Any significant deviations such as unexpected scour, settlement, or material displacement, will inform future maintenance requirements and long-term asset management planning. The evaluation will also consider construction impacts, buildability assumptions, and environmental mitigation measures applied during installation, ensuring lessons learned are captured to support future FCERM schemes along Swanage Bay and wider Dorset Council coastal assets.

6.10 Contingency plans

If the project, or any of its components, experiences significant failure, delay, or cost escalation, DC has established contingency measures to safeguard delivery of essential outputs. The scheme includes a 60% optimism bias on construction and future costs to accommodate price variability, environmental uncertainties, and potential scope adjustments. In the event of substantial cost changes, DC will assess whether scope reduction, such as deferring non-critical works or adjusting recharge volumes based on updated beach surveys can maintain the required 0.33% AEP Standard of Protection. Alignment with the BCP Council recharge programme also provides resilience, enabling cost efficiencies through shared mobilisation, equipment access, and dredged material supply. Should funding gaps arise, DC has committed £650k of capital funding to support affordability, with the option to secure additional partnership funding if needed. DC has also secured an additional £330k of Local Levy funding to provide additional financial assurance. Collectively, these measures ensure that the project can continue to deliver its core outputs even under adverse financial or delivery conditions.

7 References

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Appendix A – Confirmation and details of consultation

Names of key consultees (for example, Finance Business Partner, PAD, NEAS, NE, Commercial, Legal etc.)		
Name and job title	Date	Key outcomes from consultation
Natural England	14 th July 2025	NE provided updated feedback on the scheme's HRA, MCZ screening and SSSI Notice to be implemented at the next stage.
Dave Picksley (EA Senior Coastal Advisor, FCRM Wessex)	30 th April 2025	OBC Template Confirmation
Natural England	22 nd May 2025	NE provided feedback on the HRA, MCZ screening and SSSI Notice
Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council (BCP)	29 th January 2025	Understanding of seabed grab samples survey operations and collection methodology from previous experience.
Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council (BCP)	4 th July 2024	Meeting with BCP and Boskalis to discuss Beach Recharge cost with construction methodology, rates and assumptions agreed
Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council (BCP)	3 rd April 2024	Agreed for BCP to undertake the particle size analysis for Swanage Beach
Natural England (NE)	5 th January 2024	A validity period would not apply to baseline surveys as the surveys are the starting points for monitoring
Natural England (NE)	1 st November 2023	NE provided comments on Baseline surveys proposed for Swanage Bay and confirmation that NE is happy for the planned surveys to proceed
Marine Management Organisation (MMO)	6 th October 2023	Exemption request for taking sediment samples from Swanage Beach confirmed
Dave Picksley (EA Senior Coastal Advisor, FCRM Wessex)	9 th June 2023	Review of longlist options and comments provided
Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council (BCP)	1 st June 2023	Meeting with BCP to gain insight into the previous Swanage Beach recharge (i.e., 2005/2006 scheme) and understand BCP dredging plans for 2025 and 2026. Key outcomes include potential sediment source, availability of sediment current assumptions on volumes and when other recharge campaigns are planned for in the bay areas.
Garcia Cuesta, (EA Flood Economist)	18 th May 2023	Consultation with NPAS through Dave Picksley to agree on the Tourism approach for economics. Two options were proposed.

		1. Value of Enjoyment following the Multicoloured manual guidance 2. Travel Cost method based on costs incurred to visits displaced into nearby similar sites
Dave Picksley (EA Senior Coastal Advisor, FCRM Wessex)	20 th April 2023	Appraisal Approach Agreement
Dave Picksley (EA Senior Coastal Advisor, FCRM Wessex)	28 th February 2023	Clarification on the existing strategy
I confirm that the documentation is ready for submission to Assurance/Budget Holder (delete as appropriate). I, as Project Executive, have ensured that relevant parties have been consulted in the development of this project and the production of this update in particular the Project Sponsor and Senior User.		
Name	Jack Wiltshire	
Job Title	Corporate Director for Highways & Engineering, Dorset Council	
Emailed approval		
Date		

Paste the full email from the Project Executive here.

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Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA)

1. Initial information

Name of the policy, project, strategy, project or service being assessed:

Swanage Beach Coastal Protection Scheme

2. Is this a (please delete those not required):
Project

3. Is this (please delete those not required):
Both internal and external

4. Please provide a brief overview of its aims and objectives:

The primary objective is to maintain the standard of protection established by the 2005/06 beach recharge scheme, which is now under threat due to asset deterioration and declining beach levels. Without intervention, over 110 properties and vital public amenities are at risk. Renourishing the beach to established levels mitigates the risk of coastal flooding and erosion.

In addition to the primary objective, secondary objectives, which have lower weighting to the primary objective have been defined as follows.

- Optimise the frequency, timing, quantity, and source of future beach recharge to provide the best value for money, reduce whole life cost and carbon.
- Protect and enhance the natural environment.
- Support the tourism and economy of the town by providing the opportunity to improve the amenities of the beach.

5. Please provide the background to this proposal?

The scheme aligns with national and regional strategies, including the National Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Strategy (2020), the Poole and Christchurch Bays Shoreline Management Plan (2011), and the Poole Bay FCERM Strategy (2014). These documents advocate for a "Hold the Line" policy, emphasising the need to maintain existing defences and adapt to climate change. The Swanage Local Plan (2017) and the Dorset Council Local Plan (2021) further reinforce the importance of protecting the town's coastline, which is vital to its tourism-driven economy. The project also seeks to align with the Bournemouth,

Christchurch, and Poole (BCP) Council's beach recharge programme to optimize resources and reduce costs.

Historically, Swanage has implemented various coastal defences since the early 20th century, including seawalls, timber groynes, and beach nourishment. However, recent assessments show that many of these structures are nearing the end of their service life. The 2023 asset condition survey by JBA Consulting revealed that without active intervention, the seawall could fail as early as 2029, leading to accelerated erosion and significant damage to the town. The "Do Minimum" scenario highlights the inadequacy of current defences, projecting severe shoreline retreat and infrastructure loss over the next century.

Environmental, heritage, and visual considerations are integral to the scheme. The project area intersects with multiple designated ecological and heritage sites, requiring careful planning and mitigation. Preliminary assessments indicate that, with appropriate measures, the scheme will not significantly impact these sensitive areas. Additionally, the project offers opportunities to enhance the seafront's visual appeal and public access, aligning with the Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Management Plan.

Evidence gathering and engagement

6. What sources of data, evidence or research has been used for this assessment?
(e.g national statistics, employee data):

2026 – JBA Consulting produced a Outline Business Case – Compiles all available data, options assessments and financial information to provide analysis, recommendations, benefits, outcomes and future provision on all aspects of the project for an external funding request.

2020 - Beach Management Plan outlines the action plan to maintain the standard of protection to manage coastal erosion risk and flooding.

2023 – JBA consulting asset condition survey outlined the need for intervention.

7. What did this tell you?

The project is necessary to maintain the standard of protection to manage coastal erosion risk and flooding.

8. Who have you engaged and consulted with as part of this assessment?

Consultants, officers, senior management, Cllrs, neighbouring authorities, Environment Agency, Natural England, Marine Management Organisation, Swanage Town Council

9. Is further information needed to help inform decision making?

No

Is an EQIA required?

Not every proposal will need an EqlA. The data and research should inform your decision whether to continue with this EqlA. If you decide that your proposal does not need an EqlA, please answer the following question:

This policy, strategy, project or service does not require a EqlA because (provide details):

The project does not require and EqlA because the aim and objectives are to provide a standard of protection for all. The project is to maintain the standard of protection to manage coastal erosion risk and flooding.

Assessing the impact on different groups of people

For each of the protected characteristics groups below, please explain whether your proposal could have a positive, negative, unclear or no impact. Where an impact has been identified, please explain what it is and if unclear or negative please explain what mitigating actions will be taken.

- use the evidence you have gathered to inform your decision making.
- consider impacts on residents, service users and employees separately.
- if your strategy, policy, project or service contains options you may wish to consider providing an assessment for each option.
- see guidance for more information about the different [protected characteristics](#).

Key to impacts

Positive Impact	• the proposal eliminates discrimination, advances equality of opportunity and/or fosters good relations with protected groups.
Negative Impact	• protected characteristic group(s) could be disadvantaged or discriminated against
Neutral Impact	• no change/ no assessed significant impact of protected characteristic groups
Unclear	• not enough data/evidence has been collected to make an informed decision.

Impacts on who or what?	Choose impact	How
Age		
Disability		

Impacts on who or what?	Choose impact	How
Care Experience		
Gender reassignment and Gender Identity		
Marriage or civil partnership		
Pregnancy and maternity		
Race and Ethnicity		
Religion and belief		
Sex (consider men and women)		
Sexual orientation		
People with caring responsibilities		
Rural isolation		
Socio-economic deprivation		
Single parents		
Armed forces communities		

Please provide a summary of the impacts:

Action Plan
Summarise any actions required as a result of this EqlA.

Issue	Action to be taken	Person(s) responsible	Date to be completed by
Potential impact change with final design	Review EqlA impacts following detailed design. Estimated date January 2027.	Adam Steele	

Sign Off
Officer completing this EqlA: Adam Steele
Officers involved in completing the EqlA: Adam Steele
Date of completion: 30th January 2026
Version Number: 2
EqlA review date: 30th January 2026
Equality Lead Sign Off: James Palferman-Kay

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List of Acronyms

AEP	Annual Exceedance Probability
AOD	Above Ordnance Datum
AONB	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
AQMA	Air Quality Management Area
AST	Appraisal Summary Table
BCP	Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council
BCR	Benefit Cost Ratio
BMP	Beach Management Plan
BNG	Biodiversity Net Gain
CEMP	Construction Environmental Management Plan
CMT	Carbon Modelling Tool
CSF	Critical Success Factor
DC	Dorset Council
DWT	Dorset Wildlife Trust
EA	Environment Agency
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
ESE	Early Supplier Engagement
FBC	Full Business Case
FCERM-AG	Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Appraisal Guidance
FCERM	Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management
FDGiA	Flood Defence Grant in Aid
GiA	Grant in Aid
HRA	Habitats Regulation Assessment
INNS	Invasive Non-Native Species
LNR	Local Nature Reserve
LSE	Likely Significant Effects
MCA	Multi Criteria Analysis
MCZ	Marine Conservation Zone
MMO	Marine Manangement Organisation

NIA	Noise Important Area
NPSV	Net Present Social Value
OBC	Outline Business Case
PDZ	Policy Development Zones
PEA	Preliminary Ecological Appraisal
PESTLE	Political, Economic, Social, Technical, Legal, and Environment
PV	Present Value
PVB	Present Value Benefit
PVC	Present Value Cost
RAG	Red, Amber, Green
RPSC	Return on Public Sector Cost
SAC	Special Area of Conservation
SFRA	Strategic Flood Risk Assessment
SINC	Sites of Importance in Nature Conservation
SMP	Shoreline Management Plan
SOP	Standard of Protection
SPA	Special Protection Area
SSS	Side Scan Sonar
SSSI	Site of Special Scientific Interest
SWOT	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats
TMP	Traffic Management Plan
VfM	Value for Money
WFD	Water Framework Directive
WLC	Whole Life Carbon

Cabinet

3 March 2026

Bridport (West Bay) Harbour Walls Stabilisation & Property Works For Decision

Cabinet Members:

Cllr J Andrews, Place Services

Cllr R Biggs, Property & Assets and Economic Growth

Local Councillor(s): Cllr Bridget Bolwell, Cllr Dave Bolwell, Cllr Sarah Williams

Senior Leadership Team:

J Britton, Executive Director for Place Services

Report author and job title: Jack Wiltshire, Corporate Director Highways & Engineering

Email: jack.wiltshire@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

Report status: Part Exempt Para 3

1. Executive summary

The idyllic harbour at Westbay is a key visitor attraction and central point for the local community. Located on Dorset's famous Jurassic Coast, the area strengthens the local economy with a predominant maritime and visitor focus.

Dorset Council is responsible for maintaining the harbour walls at West Bay. Walls A and B, which form the western and southern sides of the inner harbour, have deteriorated significantly, and Wall B has already failed. This has created safety risks, affected access and contributed to movement in nearby Council buildings.

Project costs are shown in exempt Appendix 1. The spend since 2023 has enabled the first phase of ground stabilisation work to be completed. This paper seeks approval to restore structural strength to Wall B, raise its height to reinstate its flood defence function, and stabilise wall A through ground stabilisation.

The condition of Wall B has also highlighted the declining state of the Harbour Master's office and adjacent public toilets. Following the repairs to the harbour

walls, the paper seeks Cabinet's support to investigate a series of options for the council owned buildings.

Both elements are presented together to support a coordinated approach to investment, with further transformation of the public space aligned to the Strategic Asset Management Plan to shape the final proposals.

2. **Recommendation(s)**

- 2.1 That Cabinet delegate authority to the Executive Director for Place to agree a specification for required works, procurement and award of contracts for harbour wall repairs up to a maximum spend (shown in Appendix 1), following consultation with the Cabinet Member for Place Services and the Section 151 Officer.
- 2.2 That Cabinet recommend investigating a series of options for the council owned buildings that have been affected by the localised ground movement.

3. **Reason for the recommendation(s)**

- 3.1 Delegating authority for the overall harbour wall repair works will ensure that essential stabilisation and repair activity can proceed in a coordinated and efficient manner, maintaining the safety, functionality and resilience of key harbour infrastructure. Consultation with the Cabinet Member for Place Services and the Section 151 Officer will provide appropriate oversight and financial assurance.
- 3.2 The full options for the related buildings cannot be suitably assessed until the works to the walls have been completed. The options for the buildings will need to be investigated, with a subsequent report presented to Cabinet if further substantial works are required.

4. **The report**

4.1 West Bay Harbour Walls

Location and function

Walls A and B form the western and southern sides of the West Bay inner harbour and are critical infrastructure for the Council's commercial harbour activity, local business operations, tourism and flood defence. Located directly behind Wall B are several council owned assets, including trading kiosks, public toilets and the Harbour Master's office.



Failure and temporary stabilisation

Wall A requires urgent maintenance, while Wall B is in extremely poor condition with no remaining design life. Wall B is also too low to provide effective flood defence, increasing the risk of inundation to nearby businesses and properties during storm events. Further deterioration would require closure of the kiosks and the Harbour Master's office until repairs could be completed.

For public safety, barriers have been installed around the failed sections, restricting access for visitors and limiting access to moored vessels. The damaged footway and temporary measures also detract from the setting of the Grade II listed harbour and negatively affect local trade. If permanent works are not delivered before further failure occurs, the wall and adjacent footway may be lost, necessitating full reconstruction, business closures and significantly increased cost and timescales.

Poor condition and main construction elements

The remedial scheme uses innovative methods suitable for weakened structures that cannot withstand traditional construction techniques, while retaining historic features wherever possible. Remaining works include restoring structural strength to Wall B and raising its height to reinstate its flood defence function, along with additional void filling and ground stabilisation behind Wall A. The chosen methods minimise new materials, vehicle movements and noise, supporting a sustainable and neighbour friendly approach.

4.2 Harbour Offices and Toilets

A series of options for the Harbour Master's office and public toilet block will be investigated once the stabilisation works have been completed. These options will consider improvements to the public space aligned with the Strategic Asset Management Plan, ensuring proposals integrate with the wider vision for West Bay.

5 Alternative options considered

5.1 West Bay Harbour Walls

13 options for remediation were considered and weighted for viability (including cost, time to construct, historic impact, environmental impact, noise, and lifespan). The proposed scheme demonstrates the optimal engineering solutions for construction delivery.

6 Legal considerations

6.1 West Bay Harbour Walls

Works will be undertaken in accordance with relevant licensing, environmental and marine regulatory frameworks. No additional legal issues have been identified.

6.2 Harbour Master's Office and Public Toilets

The investigation of alternative options will need to consider planning permission, compliance with building regulations, accessibility standards and marine licensing considerations where applicable. No other legal concerns are identified at this stage.

7. Financial implications

7.1 Financial implications are identified in Appendix 1 (exempt).

8. Natural environment, climate & ecology implications

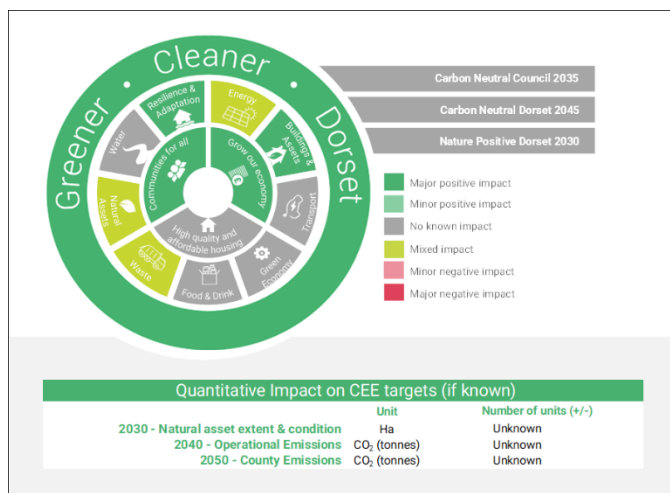
7.1 West Bay Harbour Walls

The design retains as much existing material as possible to minimise waste, vehicle movements and use of new materials. All works are done with Environment Agency and Marine Management Organisation scrutiny.

7.2 Harbour Master's Office and Public Toilets

Investigation of the possible options will consider opportunities to improve energy efficiency, reduce operational carbon and incorporate sustainable design measures.

7.3 Climate Wheel



The proposal will have major positive impacts on the resilience and adaptation of the locality and, thereby, the proximal buildings and assets. This impact is immediate, but should also be considered significant in the context of the growing risks associated with sea level rises.^[1] Strengthened resilience is in turn expected to have major positive economic and community impacts. The energy and waste impacts are noted as mixed due to the unavoidable use of resources during construction, but efforts will be made to mitigate these impacts through the construction and design approaches for the repairs and new assets. The natural assets element is also noted as mixed due to the proximity of Lyme Bay and Torbay SAC and Chesil and the Fleet SAC, but as noted all works will be undertaken with EA and MMO scrutiny.

Footnote 1. Met Office projections of local changes in sea level (relative to a 1981-2000 baseline) are 18cm (2030s), 29cm (2050s) and 48cm (2080s) in its 'central' scenario, and up to 26cm (2030s), 47cm (2050s) and 91cm (2080s) in its 'high impact' scenario. Projections are made relative to emissions levels rather than global temperatures as sea levels will continue to rise long after temperatures stabilise. There may be a greater than 10% chance of rises outside these ranges, and the Met Office is clear that it cannot rule out substantial further rises associated with ice sheet instability not represented in the projections. The full range of Met Office projections is available at: [Sea Level Rise - Projections \(Local Authority\) v1 | The Met Office climate data portal](#). A factsheet on sea level rise and storm surges is available at: [ukcp18-fact-sheet-sea-level-rise-and-storm-surge.pdf](#).

9. Well-being and health implications

9.1 West Bay Harbour Walls

Restoring the walls to a safe and functional condition will significantly improve movement and accessibility around the harbour, reinstating safe access to moored vessels and reducing risks associated with floodwater exposure.

9.2 Harbour Master's Office and Public Toilets

Wellbeing and health implications will need to be considered as part of the investigation of future options.

10. **Other implications**

10.1 N/a

11. **Risk implications**

11.1 HAVING CONSIDERED: the risks associated with this decision; the level of risk has been identified as:

Current Risk: Medium

Residual Risk: Low

12. **Equalities**

12.1 A full Equality Impact Assessment will need to be completed for the series of options considered for the Harbour Master's office and associated buildings.

13. **Appendices**

13.2 See Appendix 1, exempt appendix detailing cost estimates

14. **Background papers**

14.1 N/a

15 **Report sign-off**

15.1 This report has been through the internal report clearance process and has been signed off by the Director for Legal and Democratic (Monitoring Officer), the Executive Director for Corporate Development (Section 151 Officer) and the appropriate Portfolio Holder(s)

Recommendation to Cabinet 03 March 2026

**From People and Health Overview Committee on 2
February 2026**

Dorset Council Housing Allocations Policy 2026 – 2031

For Recommendation to Council

Cabinet Member:

Cllr G Taylor, Health and Housing

Local Councillor(s):

All

Senior Leadership Team:

J Price, Executive Director of People - Adults

Report Author and job title: Sarah How, Service Manager for Housing Register and Lettings

Email: sarah.how@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

Report Status: Public

Recommendation:

1. That the Housing Allocations Policy 2026 – 2031 be recommended to Full Council for approval.
2. To consider recommendations for amendments, for inclusion in the Housing Allocations Policy.

Amendments proposed by the People and Health Overview Committee:

- a) To replace 'any English local authority' with 'any UK local authority' in section 4.14 – moving to Dorset for work or an apprenticeship.
- b) To replace 'a minimum of two years' with 'a minimum of five years' in section 4.12 – association with close family.
- c) To amend section 4.15 to add 'or assets' after 'having £16,000 or more of savings'.

- d) To make an amendment to section 4.15 to provide information on ownership of a property through a company or shares.

The amendment to section 4.15 under recommendation 2d would replace the first bullet point with the following text:

- *applicants who own, or part own, or have any legal or beneficial interest in a residential property in the UK or abroad, whether occupied by them or let to others. This includes applicants who hold such an interest directly or indirectly, including through a company, partnership, trust, or other legal entity, where the applicant has control of, or a material interest in, that entity and it owns residential property, or*

Update on resources to note

Cabinet is asked to note that a one-off allocation of corporate resources has been approved to fund temporary posts for a 12-month period, providing additional capacity to support reassessment of applications while maintaining business as usual.

Appendices

Dorset Council Housing Allocation Policy 2026 – 2031 report to the People and Health Overview Committee, which included the following appendices:

- Appendix 1 – Draft Dorset Council Housing Allocation Policy
- Appendix 2 – Consultation response
- Appendix 3 – Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA)

Background papers

[Agenda and draft minutes of the People & Health Overview Committee held on 2 February 2026](#)

People and Health Overview Committee

2 February 2026

Dorset Council Housing Allocation Policy 2026 - 2031

For Recommendation to Cabinet

Cabinet Member:

Cllr G Taylor, Health and Housing

Local Councillor(s): All

Senior Leadership Team:

J Price, Executive Director of People - Adults

Report author and job title: Sarah How, Service Manager Housing Register and Lettings

Email: sarah.how@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

Statutory Authority: Housing Act 1996, part 6

Report status: Public (the exemption paragraph is N/A)

Executive summary (maximum of 500 words)

1. Dorset Council's Housing Allocation Policy sets out how social and affordable housing is allocated across the Dorset Council area. The current allocation policy (2020-2026) is due for renewal, and a comprehensive review has been undertaken to ensure the policy remains fit for purpose and aligned with legislative requirements, local housing need, and strategic priorities.
- 1.1 Following a detailed review and a 12-week public consultation. The consultation closed on 24 August 2025, and the feedback received has informed the final proposed version of the policy. In addition to the consultation, engagement took place with:
 - Housing Services
 - Elected Members
 - Registered Providers
 - Homelessness Forum members
 - Internal stakeholders (Adults and Children's Services)

- 1.2 The revised policy aims to ensure fair and transparent access to housing, make best use of available social housing stock, and support Dorset Council's wider objectives around homelessness prevention, community sustainability, and effective management of housing demand.

2. Recommendation(s)

That the People and Health Overview Committee:

- a) Endorses the proposed changes set out in the report and the draft policy (Appendix 1)
- b) Notes the outcome of the public consultation on the draft Dorset Council Housing Allocation Policy 2026 – 2031
- c) Recommends to Cabinet that the Housing Allocation Policy 2026 – 2031 be approved and adopted by Full Council

3. Reason for the recommendation(s)

- 3.1 To ensure Dorset Council has a clear, fair, and legally compliant policy governing the allocation of social housing, consistent with the Council's statutory duties under the Housing Act 1996 (as amended) and the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 considering the needs and priorities of Dorset residents.

4. The report

- 4.1 The current Dorset Council Housing Allocation Policy (2020-2026) was adopted following Local Government Reorganisation to create a single, consistent approach to managing housing allocations across the Dorset Council area.

Since its adoption, several factors have prompted the need for review, including:

- Continued pressure for social and affordable rented housing, with increasing numbers on the Housing Register and sustained enquiries from households following an effective early homeless prevention information and advice campaign as well as the continued cost of living crisis.
- The changing needs of Dorset Council residents
- A need to improve clarity, accessibility, and administrative efficiency.

- Updates to Government guidance and case law, decisions and advice relating to the local government and social care ombudsman relating to allocation schemes.
- 4.2 Dorset Council has benefitted from the support and advice of an external expert, Neil Morland, to review and revise the Dorset Council Housing Allocations Policy, the Nomination Agreement with the Registered Providers and the Data Sharing Protocol.
- 4.3 The revised policy (2026 -2031) maintains the core principles of the existing scheme but includes several updates following the review and consultation. Key proposed changes include:
 - Simplification of banding framework – the existing banding structure has been simplified by reducing the number of bands and revised band names. Each band now contains clearer categories making the policy easier to understand, ensuring greater alignment between housing need and priority awarded.
 - Consistent local connection requirements – a standard two-year local connection requirement has been applied across all relevant criteria, including residence, employment, and family connection. This provides a consistent and transparent approach to assessing qualification.
 - Revised savings and earnings thresholds – the policy replaces the previous combined income, savings and capital threshold of £60,000 gross: with separate limits of savings up to £16,000 and earnings up to £60,000 gross.
 - Removal of age-based banding without local connection – this policy no longer proposes allowing applicants aged 55 and over to qualify without a local connection to Dorset Council.
 - Assessment of overcrowding – the policy proposes using the bedroom standard, rather than the local housing allowance standard, when assessing overcrowding. This aligns the policy with a widely recognised and consistent measure of housing need.
 - Qualification requirements for households owed a homelessness duty – the policy proposes that those applicants owed a homeless duty must meet the qualification criteria in the same way as anyone else applying to the housing register.
 - Removal of housing related-debt – the banding has been removed as a qualification or prioritisation consideration within the policy, simplifying assessments and supporting access to the housing register.
 - Additional reasonable preference given to Service personnel in urgent housing need.
 - Recognition of the Armed Forces community – a new banding category has been introduced for members of the Armed Forces community, including spouses and adult children of serving or former personnel.

- Use of quotas – the policy introduces the ability to use quotas to manage allocation across different categories of housing need.
- 4.4 The final policy ensures compliance with statutory requirements and equalities considerations.

6 Alternative options considered

- 5.1 As part of the policy review, consideration was given to replacing the current Choice-Based Lettings (CBL) approach with a point-based system, which remain permissible under the Housing Act 1996. This option was not progressed for several reasons. Point-based systems are generally more complex and less transparent for applicants, who often find it difficult to understand how their points translate into the likelihood of being rehoused. In contrast, CBL provides clearer expectations by enabling applicants to view available properties and their bidding position. Furthermore, implementing a point-based system would require significant redesign of IT systems, allocation workflows, and communication processes. Retaining CBL therefore maximises the use of existing digital infrastructure and avoids unnecessary disruption.
- 5.2 The review also examined whether changes should be made to the qualifying and disqualifying criteria. Following detailed consideration, it was agreed that the existing criteria should be retained to ensure consistency and fairness. However, the draft policy has been amended to provide greater clarity on specific aspects, including definitions of local connection, income thresholds, and circumstances where disqualification applies. These refinements are intended to improve transparency, support consistent decision-making, and enhance confidence in the allocations process.

6 Legal considerations

- 6.1 The policy ensures compliance with the Housing Act 1996, Homelessness Act 2002 (as amended), Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 and relevant statutory guidance on social housing allocations.
- 6.2 Legal services have reviewed the draft policy to confirm its compliance and robustness.

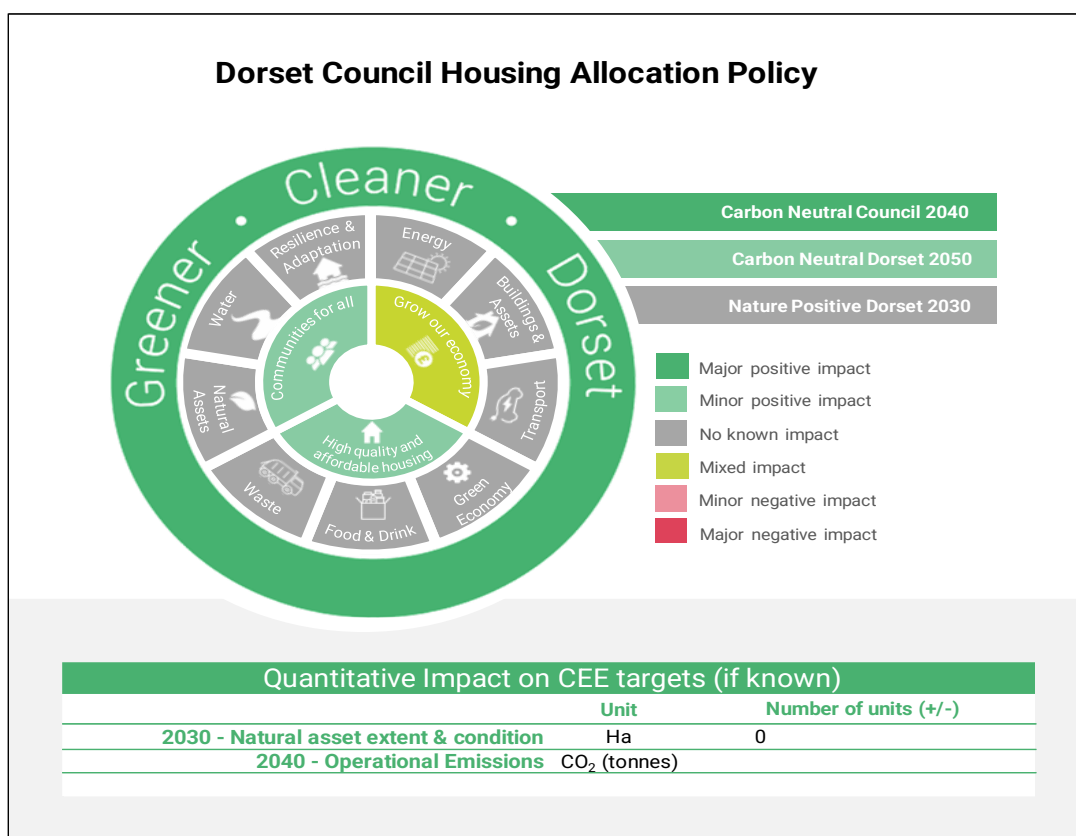
7. Financial implications

- 7.1 The proposal includes the creation of temporary posts for a fixed period of one year. These posts will provide additional capacity within the service to

enable the reassessment of current applications while maintaining business-as-usual operations. Funding for these temporary posts will require an agreed one-off allocation of corporate resources, and a business case has been submitted for consideration as part of the budget-setting process.

There are no direct financial implications associated with changes to the Huume Housing system, as the system allows for most adjustments to be made internally without additional cost. Any minor configuration changes will be managed within existing resources.

8. Natural environment, climate & ecology implications



9. Well-being and health implications

- 9.1 Revising the Housing Allocation Policy is expected to have a direct impact on the well-being and health of residents who rely on the service. A clearer, fairer and more responsive policy can support better housing outcomes, which are closely linked to mental health. Households with medical needs, disabilities, or vulnerabilities may benefit from clearer criteria and banding enabling them to access appropriate accommodation.

10. Other implications

- 10.1 The allocations policy underpins the Council's wider strategic objectives. It supports the prevention of homelessness in line with the Homelessness Strategy and aligns with the Housing Strategy. The policy also reflects the Council's strategic approach to social housing tenure and will complement the forthcoming Tenancy Strategy once approved. In addition, it forms a key component of the Housing Strategy by making best use of new and existing housing stock to meet identified needs.

11. Risk implications

- 11.1 HAVING CONSIDERED: the risks associated with this decision; the level of risk has been identified as:

Current Risk: High

- **Insufficient Resources:** Failure to secure temporary staffing and an implementation period to reassess over 6,000 applications risks delays and service disruption, directly impacting the Council's strategic priority to deliver fair and timely housing allocations.

Mitigation - A business case has been submitted for temporary staffing to provide additional capacity during implementation. This will ensure reassessment of the housing register and delivery of business as usual services. Recruitment will be prioritised and monitored to avoid delays.

- **System Configuration:** Inadequate time for updating the housing software to reflect new processes could lead to operational errors, undermining the strategic priority of maintaining efficient, compliant, and customer-focused services.

Mitigation - Early engagement with the IT provider (Huume) has confirmed that required changes can be implemented internally. A configuration plan is being scheduled alongside staff training to ensure the system reflects the new policy before go-live. Contingency time has been built into the implementation timeline.

- **Policy Expiry and Legal Compliance:** If the revised policy is not adopted before the current one expires, allocations may be legally challenged and deemed invalid, jeopardising the Council's strategic priority to comply with statutory guidance and meet current housing needs in Dorset.

Mitigation - the revised policy is scheduled for adoption before the current policy expires to maintain legal compliance. A clear timeline for approval and implementation has been agreed. Minor amendments will continue to be made as required to reflect legislative changes.

Residual Risk: Low

While mitigation measures significantly reduce the likelihood of major issues, some residual risk remains. Recruitment delays or unexpected workload could still affect implementation timelines, and there is a risk that additional funding for temporary staff may not be approved, limiting capacity to deliver the changes. In addition, technical challenges may arise during system configuration. However, these risks are considered low and will be monitored throughout implementation.

12. Equalities

- 12.1 An equality impact assessment has been completed, and the assessment and action plan are attached at Appendix 3.
- 12.2 A statutory public consultation was conducted between 2 June 2025 and 24 August 2025, receiving 713 responses. Feedback included contributions from individuals with protected characteristics such as age, disability, gender reassignment, sex, and race, as well as respondents from the armed forces community and those living in rural areas.
- 12.3 Analysis of the consultation and engagement feedback informed the policy revisions. The updated policy strengthens support for vulnerable individuals, ensures equitable access, and enables all applicants to fully engage with the scheme. Overall, respondents expressed strong agreement with the proposed changes, particularly those relating to local connection, employment criteria, and the simplification of the banding. Some proposals, such as the timeframe for certain processes, received mixed views; however, most responses remained broadly supportive. These findings confirm that the revised policy reflects public priorities while maintaining fairness and transparency.
- 12.4 The Housing Service also sought advice from the Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Panel (EDI) who broadly supported the proposed changes but highlighted areas requiring clarity and inclusivity. These points have informed clarifications in the policy and will be monitored to ensure fairness and accessibility.

13. Appendices

- 13.1 Appendix 1 - Draft Dorset Council Housing Allocation Policy
- Appendix 2 - Consultation response
- Appendix 3 - Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA)

14. Background papers

- [Housing Act 1996, Part six UK parliament](#)
- [Allocations of accommodation statutory guidance, Ministry of housing, communities and local government](#)
- [Providing social housing for local people \(statutory guidance\)](#)
- [Right to move and social housing allocations \(statutory guidance\)](#)
- [Improving access to social housing for victims of domestic abuse \(statutory guidance\)](#)
- [Improving access to social housing for members of the armed forces \(statutory guidance\)](#)
- [Tenancy Standard, regulator of social housing](#)
- [Housing and Disabled people, a toolkit for local authorities in England: allocations, equality and human rights commission](#)
- [Housing allocations for disabled people, local government ombudsman](#)
- [Domestic abuse and housing decisions, local government ombudsman](#)
- [Medical assessments for housing applications, local government ombudsman](#)

15 Report sign-off

This report has been through the internal report clearance process and has been signed off by the Director for Legal and Democratic (Monitoring Officer), the Corporate Director for Finance and Commercial (Section 151 Officer) and the appropriate Portfolio Holder(s)

Dorset Council Housing Allocation Policy

Rules for allocating social housing
2026 - 2031

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Introduction

Dorset Council, like all local housing authorities, is charged with administering a range of public law housing duties.

One such duty is to have a policy for the allocation of social housing.

In 2021, we adopted our first housing allocation policy. In 2025, a review of the policy was carried out and the findings informed amendments to the policy. This revised policy comes into effect from July 2026.

Our housing allocation policy operates across the whole of the Dorset Council area.

To allocate social housing, we work collaboratively with register providers of social housing that own stock in the Dorset Council area.

The demand for social housing exceeds the number of homes available to let, locally and nationally. For example, on the 31 March 2025, there were:

- 6,783 households on our housing register (including social housing tenants seeking a transfer).
- 22,142 units of social housing in Dorset (owned by 54 registered providers).

During the preceding year, from 1st April 2024 until 31st March 2025:

- 1,198 units were let to households on the housing register.
- the total number of applicants on the housing register was nearly equal to one-third (31%) of the total units of social housing.
- the total number of units available to let was equal to one-twentieth (5%) of the total units of social housing.
- the total number of units let was equal to only one sixth (17%) of the number of people on the housing register.

Typically, a person might have to wait several years before being allocated social housing.

We will allocate social housing transparently, making rational, lawful, and objective decisions in accordance with this policy.

This housing allocation policy outlines the rules for who can join our housing register. It explains who is eligible and how applicants are prioritised for social housing. The policy also describes the level of choice people may have in the housing they are offered, and how we nominate individuals for properties owned by registered providers.

Aims of Dorset Council's housing allocation policy

Our vision for housing, set out in the housing strategy, is to ensure our residents have access to affordable, suitable, secure homes where they can live well as part of sustainable and thriving communities.

We aim for this housing allocation policy to contribute to its vision for housing, by:

- making best use of social housing available to let.
- ensuring those most in need of social housing are prioritised for it.
- allocating social housing to people whose housing needs cannot be met by the commercial housing market.

The aims of our housing allocation policy, helps to meet the key objectives from the following Dorset Council housing strategies:

- housing strategy 2024 to 2029: enable residents to live safe, healthy, independent lives in homes that meet their needs
- homelessness and rough sleeping strategy 2021 to 2026: prevent homelessness and arrange for suitable accommodation to be available for everyone
- tenancy strategy 2025 to 2030: [insert relevant objective(s), this will be added shortly]

1.0. Allocation of social housing

Outlining our policy for allocating social housing

- 1.1. We will allocate social housing following the policy and procedure set out in this document. Decisions about the allocation of social housing shall be taken by officers acting under delegated powers.
- 1.2. 54 private registered providers of social housing collectively hold around:
 - 22,142 units of social housing in the Dorset Council area
 - four-fifths (82%) are held by four private registered providers, three of which previously received transfers of housing accommodation from our predecessor district local housing authorities
 - the remaining one-fifth of units (18%) are collectively owned by 50 private registered providers, five of which are also Almshouse Trusts (collectively owning less than 1% of units)

Find information on private registered provider's social housing stock in the Dorset Council area [insert hyperlink on whole sentence this will be added shortly].

- 1.3. We will allocate social housing, which is low-cost rental accommodation, made available for rent at below the market rate, to people whose housing needs are not met by the commercial housing market.
- 1.4. We will allocate the following types of social housing:
 - general needs housing. This is the most common type of social housing. It can be allocated to any person with a need for social housing
 - supported housing. This type of social housing has special design facilities, or features targeted at specific persons requiring support, for example, housing designed for older people
- 1.5. Dorset Council will allocate social housing to be let at the following rent rates:
 - at a social rent rate - this is the most common type of rent, it is set in accordance with a national formula that takes account of relative local earnings, for properties, relative value and the number of bedrooms it has, or
 - at an affordable rent rate - where the rent to be paid by tenants can be no more than 80% of the market value of the property, or

- at an intermediate rent -often part of a specific named scheme. Rent must not exceed 80% of current market rate, the reduced rent is an opportunity for the tenant to save towards a house purchasing deposit. There may also be a future opportunity to purchase all, or a share of the property currently being rented
- I.6. We will allocate social housing to a person that is eligible and qualifies to join our housing register, by nominating them to be an assured tenant of social housing held by a private registered provider.
 - I.7. We will allocate social housing to tenants seeking a transfer of social housing, in line with the rules of the policy.
 - I.8. Tenants who under-occupy their social housing that seek a transfer to downsize to a smaller home, will be given priority for an allocation of housing and shall be exempt from disqualification rules relating to outstanding rent or service charge arrears that have been incurred because of under-occupation.
 - I.9. We will make objective decisions about the allocation of social housing. Information on what social housing we allocate will be published on the Dorset Home Choice website. We will allocate housing as quickly as possible (in line with the nomination agreement held with private registered providers), advertising homes available to let on any day of the week, for any duration of time, to minimise void periods and reduce waiting times.
 - I.10. We will carry out analysis of our housing register and the nominations we make to the registered providers, and lettings made by them, to make sure the needs of tenants and households on the housing register are met and to inform any future amendments to this policy. We will carry out consultation with tenants and households on the housing register, and anyone else interested in how social housing is allocated by us, to seek their views on changes that might be made to the way social housing is allocated.
 - I.11. When allocating social housing, we will offer households on the housing register, an opportunity to express their preference on types of property they might be allocated and a choice of accommodation. To accomplish this, a choice-based lettings scheme (CBL) is incorporated into this policy. We will ensure the primary purpose of the stock is to meet housing need.
 - I.12. People who are owed a relief duty or main housing duty by Dorset Council will not be given choice, but if they are allocated social housing, we will make sure that any housing offered will be suitable for their needs. We want to make sure tenancies are sustainable and communities are settled, viable and inclusive.

- 1.13. Alongside this, we will support tenants, households on the housing register and prospective applicants to choose the housing option which is best for them. This will include promoting a wide range of options within the Dorset Council area and elsewhere such as, low-cost homeownership, mutual exchange, the private rented sector. Information shall be provided about staying put options, where desirable, viable and feasible, such as aids and adaptations.
- 1.14. We aim to make the best use of available social housing by prioritising applicants with the greatest housing need. Social housing that is intended for households with specific needs (e.g. accessible housing, older persons housing, etc) will be allocated to households that have a need for such housing, such as vulnerable people with housing care and/or support needs that are inextricably linked, to compliment other programmes of care and support commissioned and provided by us.
- 1.15. If planning permission includes specific conditions, like giving priority to people with a local connection to the parish, those conditions will affect how we decide who gets social housing. Our housing allocation rules are designed to make the best use of available homes and meet people's housing needs.
- 1.16. This policy sets out how households can apply to join our housing register, how decisions will be made about applications, and the procedure to be followed when a review of a decision is requested.
- 1.17. We will make sure that language and interpretation assistance is available for people who have difficulty speaking or reading English.

2.0. Other rules outside this Policy

The policies for deciding who is allocated social housing in the Dorset Council area, that are not covered by this policy.

- 2.1. In collaboration with the registered providers, we may use local letting plans to allocate specific homes to people who meet certain criteria. These plans achieve a wide variety of housing policy objectives, for example to deal sensitively with lettings on new housing development sites giving priority to those with a local connection to the parish council area.
- 2.2. A local letting plan is used alongside the main allocation policy. It adds extra rules or considerations for how homes are allocated. This type of plan applies to a specific housing development and must be backed up with information showing why it is required.

- 2.3. We will publish local letting plans as separate documents, which will be revoked or revised as appropriate. If the plan is only meant to be in place for a limited time, it should also include details on how and when it will end.
- 2.4. The availability of housing through local letting plans will fluctuate depending on the specific characteristics of each new housing development and the planning conditions for initial and subsequent lettings.
- 2.5. We will monitor and review local letting plans regularly, as to their effectiveness, to make sure decisions are fair and not discriminatory, and whether they remain appropriate or necessary.
- 2.6. Registered providers that own stock in the Dorset Council area and operate a separate housing register from ours must have rules explaining how they will allocate any social rented homes that are not allocated from nomination arrangements agreed with us. These rules should:
- ensure people seeking to become a social housing tenant are prioritised for an allocation of social housing; and
 - ensure that their existing tenants who wish to transfer from their current home to another social rented home are prioritised for an allocation of social housing

Please refer to each Registered Providers website for copies of their housing lettings policies, which we take into consideration when allocating homes.

- 2.7. The availability of private housing in Dorset is restricted by high house prices, high numbers of second homes and a low wage economy. As a significant proportion of social housing in Dorset is rural, this policy aims to sustain these rural communities by giving local people in housing need, priority for these properties and reducing reliance on new social housing developments (see appendix 6 for list of parishes).
- 2.8. Some rural properties are subject to planning legal agreements, known as section 106 agreements, which restrict residency to applicants meeting specific parish or settlement criteria and these restrictions take precedence over the housing allocations policy standard criteria.
- 2.9. Where rural properties are not subject to planning legal agreements specifying specific parish or settlement criteria Dorset Council will advertise for applicants with a local connection to the parish or settlement which they are located in.

- 2.10. Where no applicant meets the criteria, the area will be expanded to the neighbouring parish or settlement or the wider Dorset Council area until a suitable application is received.
- 2.11. Dorset Council will allocate 75% of these properties in this way to help create mixed, sustainable communities.
- 2.12. Where the property is a specific type (for example is accessible) applicants from the wider Dorset Council area will be considered to ensure we are making best use of any property adaptations.
- 2.13. Community land trusts (CLTs) are independent, non-profit organisations that provide affordable housing and manage land for the benefit of the local community. Because CLTs set their own eligibility criteria and allocation processes based on community led priorities, they operate outside the rules of the allocation policy.

3.0. Eligibility

How we decide if a person is eligible for an allocation of social housing.

- 3.1. We can allocate social housing to people who have a right to live without any restrictions to residence in United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Republic of Ireland, Isle of Man, and the Channel Islands.
- 3.2. We are not allowed to allocate social housing to persons from abroad who are subject to immigration control and those that are not subject to immigration control but for whom regulations stipulate should not be eligible for an allocation of social housing. We will allocate social housing to persons from abroad, only when the law allows. We will seek verification of a person's immigration status from the home office whenever there is any uncertainty about this.
- 3.3. We will not allocate social housing to persons from abroad who are not entitled to Universal Credit or Housing Benefit (regardless of whether they would apply for these benefits).
- 3.4. We will not assess the eligibility of existing social housing tenants who are seeking a transfer, as they are exempt from the usual eligibility rules for housing allocations.
- 3.5. We will provide people with a written decision about whether they are eligible for an allocation of social housing. We will issue decisions to each person via an individual online user account, or by the preferred method specified in their application.

- 3.6. We will make sure that online accounts are kept available for a person to access, for a reasonable period after a decision has been made.
- 3.7. We will make a decision regarding eligibility for an allocation of social housing. This decision will be made when an individual applies to join the housing register. Additionally, it will be made when an individual who has been accepted into the housing register is subsequently considered by us for an allocation of social housing.
- 3.8. When deciding whether a person is eligible for an allocation of social housing, we will assess a person's (and that of their family members):
- nationality
 - economic activity
 - compliance with worker registration schemes
 - immigration status
 - entitlement to public funds
 - where they usually live and where they are living when they make an application of to join the housing register
- 3.9. We will not check if someone is eligible for social housing if they choose to withdraw their application from the housing register.
- 3.10. Our employees responsible for making decisions about eligibility for an allocation of social housing shall be provided with training about housing allocation law and practice.
- 3.11. We will inform persons from abroad who are eligible for an allocation of social housing, that changes to their immigration status could affect their eligibility for an allocation of social housing. This information will be given when they join the housing register.
- 3.12. A person whom we have deemed to be ineligible for an allocation of social housing, may make a fresh application if they consider they should no longer be treated as ineligible. It will be for the person to show that their circumstances have changed.
- 3.13. A full description of persons that are eligible for an allocation of social housing can be found in an Appendix Two of this policy.

4.0. Qualifying persons

How we decide if a person qualifies to join the housing register.

- 4.1. We will only allocate social housing to people who satisfy the qualifying criteria set out below.
- 4.2. We have decided that to qualify for an allocation of social housing, people must be:
 - capable of holding a tenancy, and
 - not guilty of past unacceptable behaviour, and
 - have a local connection to the Dorset Council area, and
 - not have sufficient income or savings to meet their housing needs from the commercial housing market
- 4.3. We have decided to disqualify a person for an allocation of social housing when they are:
 - incapable of holding a tenancy, or
 - guilty of past unacceptable behaviour, or
 - have no local connection to the Dorset Council area, or
 - have sufficient income or savings to meet their housing needs from the commercial housing market
- 4.4. A person applying to join the housing register must satisfy all qualifying criteria. When qualifying criteria includes a person's usual household member, they must also satisfy the applicable qualifying criteria. A person's usual household member is defined as:
 - someone who normally lives with the person making the application to join the housing register, and
 - someone who might be reasonably expected to live with the person making the application to join the housing register
- 4.5. Dependent children
We will consider various factors on a case-by-case basis when determining whether a dependent child resides with the applicant. A child's residence is defined as the address where they are cared for by their parents, guardians or others with parental responsibility (or legal equivalent) and where it has been agreed they live. If this address is not the same as the applicants, the child cannot be included on the application.
- 4.6. A person is not a qualifying person when they are incapable of holding a tenancy agreement, for example due to being:
 - aged under 18 years, or

- looked after children owed a duty of care, or
- aged over 18 years lacking sufficient mental capacity to hold a tenancy agreement

4.7. Exceptions apply to people who are incapable of holding a tenancy agreement, when they are:

- eligible children, relevant children, former relevant children, including former relevant children pursuing further education or training, entitled to care leaving support from Dorset Council, or
- aged over 18 years lacking sufficient mental capacity to hold a tenancy agreement but have a suitable guarantor (for example Dorset Council's adult social care) who can hold a tenancy on their behalf

4.8. A person, including members of their household, will not qualify for social housing if they have been involved in serious unacceptable behaviour in the past. Behaviour that was serious enough that it could have been reasonable to allow us or another Registered Provider to secure a possession order had the applicant been a tenant at the time the behaviour occurred, and the persons behaviour remains unacceptable at the date of application, and/or at the date any allocation of social housing might be made.

4.9. Unacceptable behaviour that makes an applicant unsuitable to be a tenant, includes breaches of tenancy conditions, for example due to:

- having outstanding rent or service charge arrears, or property related recharges connected to a tenancy (see exemption below), or
- causing nuisance or annoyance or allowing a visitor to do so, to others living or visiting the neighbourhood of their home, or to employees or contractors of Dorset Council and/or registered providers that own stock in the Dorset Council area who are carrying out housing management functions, or
- having an unspent conviction for allowing their home to be used for immoral or illegal purposes or an offence in their home or nearby to their home; or
- having an unspent conviction for an offence which occurred during and at the scene of a riot in the UK, or
- violence or threats of violence towards another person that caused them to leave the home they share with the applicant, with the intention of not returning; or
- damaging or deliberately neglecting their home, or
- deliberately making a false statement to be granted a tenancy by Dorset Council (or another landlord), or
- paying money or receiving money as part of a mutual exchange, or

- being guilty of conduct that makes it inappropriate to continue living in their home, due to the home being part of a building used for non-housing purposes (e.g. a property situated in the grounds of a school or a public park)

4.10. Unacceptable behaviour that makes an applicant unsuitable to be a tenant, includes having unspent convictions or having breached an injunction for serious anti-social behaviour, for example due to:

- entry to a dwelling house that has been subject to a closure order, or
- noise nuisance and environmental legislation, or
- violent offences, or
- sexual offences, or
- offensive weapons, or
- offences against property, or
- drug related offences, or
- modern slavery, or
- encouraging or assisting to cause serious antisocial behaviour, or
- conduct causing nuisance to landlord, or
- offences connected with riot

4.11. Exceptions to outstanding rent or service charge arrears or property related recharges, connected to a tenancy with us or a registered provider, apply for people who:

- were not the tenant, when the outstanding arrears and/or recharges were accrued (e.g. the arrears or recharges occurred after a person stopped being a tenant or were accrued by a former member of their household); or
- their outstanding arrears and/or recharges accrued are no longer outstanding (e.g. they have been repaid, or too much time has passed due to being accrued more than 6 years ago and never being acknowledged by the debtor), or
- If you are a social housing tenant asking to transfer, you can be considered if:
 - You have made a payment in the past month, and
 - You are fully up to date with your payments up to the point of nomination, and
 - The payments you've made are equal to the usual rent or service charge for the tenancy where the arrears or charges are owed.

This also includes tenants who:

- Fell into arrears because of the overall benefit cap, and
- Applied for a Discretionary Housing Payment but were refused.

- are a new applicant and have agreed a repayment schedule for the outstanding arrears or recharges:
 - and made at least three consecutive repayments as per the repayment schedule at point of application, or
 - are up to-date with their repayments up to and including nomination, or
- have outstanding arrears or recharges that do not relate to a tenancy (e.g. non-housing debts such as Council Tax arrears), or
- are a social housing tenant under-occupying their current home, by the Local Housing Allowance size criteria, and intend to downsize to a smaller home, and the arrears have occurred due to under-occupation, or
- their arrears or recharges were a result of them being a victim of domestic abuse, or
- are a serving, or former member, of the regular Armed Forces, or their spouse or civil partner is or was, and who have accrued mesne profit charges as a result continuing to live in a home provided to them by the Armed Forces, following a relationship breakdown

4.12. A person (including their usual household members) is a qualifying person when they have local connection to the Dorset Council area due to:

- normally being resident in the Dorset Council area, by their own choice (i.e. not been detained in custody, serving a custodial sentence, or detained under mental health laws), for a minimum of two years, or
- being employed in the Dorset Council area for 2 years or more for a minimum of 16 hours per week, or
- having any association with close family (defined as adult children, parents, siblings, or someone else who can be regarded as a near a relative) resident in the Dorset Council area, by their own choice, for a minimum of two years
- Any location requirements detailed in a s106 Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (applicants will be limited to bidding on properties within that development only)

4.13 Applicants with a local connection only through a Section 106 agreement (and do not meet local connection rules through residency, family, or employment) can only bid on properties within that specific development.

4.14. Exceptions to local connection requirements, apply to people who are:

- members of the UK Armed Forces community who are currently serving or have served in the Regular Armed Forces, or

- bereaved spouses or civil partners of those serving in the Regular Armed Forces, who have recently ceased, or will cease, to be entitled to reside in ministry of defence accommodation, following the death of their spouse, or civil partner, where the death was wholly or partially attributable to the service, or
- serving or former members of the Reserve Armed Forces who are suffering from a serious injury, illness, or disability which is wholly or partially attributable to their service, or
- divorced or separated spouses or civil partners of UK Armed Forces personnel who need to move out of accommodation provided by the Ministry of Defence, or
- adult children of currently serving members of the UK Armed Forces who may no longer be able to remain in the family home, or
- tenants of any English local authority or registered provider that need to move to Dorset for work or an apprenticeship. Factors considered include;
 - travel distance and time
 - availability and affordability of transport in relation to earnings
 - the nature of the work and whether similar opportunities exist closer to home
 - personal circumstances such as medical needs or childcare
 - the length of the work contract
 - whether not moving would result in hardship.
- escaping violence, harm or harassment, (see 9.6) or
- Actively fleeing domestic abuse (within the Domestic Abuse Act 2021) from anywhere in the UK and are homeless as a result, or
- an eligible child, a relevant child or a former relevant child (aged 18-24) who is or was looked after by a local authority in England or Wales, or
- people who are homeless within the meaning of Part 7 of the 1996 Act including those that are considered by Dorset Council to be intentionally homeless or not in priority need. or
- people who are homeless and owed a duty by Dorset Council under section s193(2) or s189(B) or s195(2) or s192(3) or s190(2), or
- Gypsy, Roma or Irish Traveller ethnicity with no local connection to any other local authority district, in the Dorset Council area, or required to be near special medical or support services which are available only in the Dorset Council area, or
- returning to the Dorset Council area where they previously were brought up or lived for a considerable length of time, following a period of imprisonment or hospitalisation, or
- are a social housing tenant under-occupying their current home in the Dorset Council area (by the local housing allowance size criteria) and intend to downsize to a smaller home, or

- are subject to Multi- Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) and a multi-agency risk assessment has been carried out, or
- need to move to Dorset to provide care to a relative, or to receive care from a relative who has lived in Dorset for at least two years. The care must be essential to help the relative remain living independently and avoid residential or specialist accommodation
 - significantly reduce travel time for daily support.
 - daily care should be required for at least one hour per day.

4.15. A person is not a qualifying person when their earnings and/or savings, together with the other main earner in the household, allow them to meet their housing needs from the commercial housing market, due to:

- being the sole or joint owner of the property (including anyone with a mortgage on the whole or part of a home), such as a house, flat, second home or holiday home, which they usually live in or rent out to others, or owning land or a building intended for residential use, either in the UK or abroad, or
- having £16,000 or more of savings (£23,500 for adults who have been assessed by Dorset Council as needing care), or
- earning £60,000 or more of taxable income in the most recent tax year

4.16. Deliberate disposal of Assets (capital, savings or property)

The Council recognises that applicants may dispose of property, capital or savings for a variety of reasons. However, where such assets have been disposed of for nil or significantly reduced value, the Council will investigate whether this constitutes deliberate deprivation of capital. In making this assessment we will consider:

- The applicants' circumstances at the time of disposal
- Whether there was a reasonable alternative to disposal
- Whether the disposal was made to improve the applicant's housing priority

Where deliberate deprivation is established, we will assess the application based on notional capital.

4.17. Exceptions to homeownership, earnings and savings, apply to people who:

- are a person aged 55 years or older, who cannot stay in their own home and need to move into older people's accommodation or other types of older person specific social housing; or
- are a disabled person who requires accessible housing, whose current home is not suitable for adaptation under a disabled facilities grant, or housing renewal assistance (e.g. to purchase a new home, adapt or improve their

home, repair their home, demolish their home and build a replacement) from Dorset Council or through a third-party such as a home improvement agency; or

- have a home that is in such poor condition that living there could endanger the health of the applicant including anyone who normally lives there (or who is expected to live with them), and where there are no reasonable steps that the applicant can take to remove the danger, or they do not have the resources to fix the problem, or
- have a home that they could not sufficiently raise equity of £16k or more to enable them to afford alternative suitable accommodation, or
- have been deserted by the main wage earner following a relationship breakdown and may become homeless because the property is not affordable, or
- have let a house and cannot secure entry to it, because it is not safe to enter due to structural faults or where there are squatters living in the house, or
- it is probable that occupying the home would result in abuse from someone who currently lives there or from someone who previously lived with the applicant in that home or elsewhere, or
- are Armed Forces personnel or their families, in relation to any lump sum compensation received for injury or disability sustained on active service with Regular or Reserve Forces, or
- a young person leaving care, or a former care leaver, who is in receipt of funds paid to them because of compensation relating to the reason why they were a looked after child and/or because of experiences while a looked after child, or
- foster carers, adopters, special guardians, and family or friend carers approved by Dorset Council who have taken on the care of a child because their parents are unable to provide care, or
- are a social housing tenant under-occupying their current home (by the local housing allowance size criteria) in the Dorset Council area and intend to downsize to a smaller home

4.18. We may in exceptional circumstances choose to disapply the qualifying criteria in specific circumstances, for example people who are intimidated witnesses or protected persons who need to move quickly from another local authority area.

4.19. We will notify people if they are not a qualifying person, explaining reasons for the decision. A decision about whether a person is a qualifying person, will be made at the time of initial application, and again when considering making an allocation.

4.20. A person who we previously deemed to be not qualifying to join the housing register, may make a fresh application if they consider they should no longer be

treated as not qualifying. It will be for the person to show that their circumstances have changed.

5.0. Housing Register

Our procedure for maintaining the housing register and the type of information we store on it.

- 5.1. We keep a register of people who are eligible and qualify for an allocation of social housing, known as the housing register.
- 5.2. We keep the housing register in an electronic format on a software system, provided and maintained by a third-party organisation.
- 5.3. People applying to join the housing register will have opened an online individual portal, linked to a software system used by us to administer the allocation of social housing.
- 5.4. A person's online portal will allow them to make an application to join the housing register, request information about the housing register, express preferences about any home that might be allocated to them, etc. We will issue all decisions, including reasons for decisions, via a person's online individual portal.
- 5.5. We manage the housing register for people applying for an allocation of social housing, and for existing social housing tenants seeking to transfer to another home. Applications from new applicants and transfer requests from current tenants are recorded separately so they can be distinguished.
- 5.6. Our housing register contains information, such as:
 - the number of people on the housing register
 - the number of people falling into one or more of the statutory reasonable preference categories set out in law
 - the number of members of the armed forces community given additional preference
 - allocations made
 - adapted and accessible properties and how these are matched to people who have access needs
 - properties advertised as part of or outside of the choice-based lettings, and
 - nominations taken up

- 5.7 We will use information held on the housing register to inform our strategic approach to housing, such as, when assessing the housing needs of people in the Dorset Council area.
- 5.8 We will process and store personal data provided by people applying for an allocation of social housing, in compliance with data protection law. We are prohibited from divulging to members of the public that a person is a social housing applicant.
- 5.9 We will inform people of their right to view the information held about them on the housing register.
- 5.10 People applying to join the housing register must provide appropriate documentary evidence to show they meet the qualifying criteria. Dorset Council will verify this evidence and, where necessary, may contact other individuals or organisations to assist with the verification. All checks will be carried out on a case by case basis in line with UK data protection law.
- 5.11 A detailed list of information that applicants must provide to join the housing register can be found at Appendix Five.

6.0. Operation of the housing register

Our procedure for assessing applications to be put on the housing register, how the housing register may be amended and how people may be removed from the housing register.

- 6.1 We will accept a person on the housing register if they apply to be put on it and they are eligible for an allocation of social housing and are a qualifying person. A person who is not eligible for an allocation of social housing or is not a qualifying person, will not be accepted on the housing register. The date a person applies to the housing register shall be known as the registration date.
- 6.2 Applications to join the housing register will be made via an online form, which will be accompanied by guidance notes that are easy to understand and in plain language. A person can only make one application at any time to join our housing register, multiple applications from the same person to join the housing register are not permitted.
- 6.3 We will notify a person when they have been accepted on the housing register. A person's entry on the housing register will include details of:
- people who normally live with them, for example a member of their family (i.e. those with close blood or marriage relationships and cohabiting

partners), or children (their own, and/or a child they have adopted, fostered or a step-child), who normally lives with the person that is making the application to join the housing register on a permanent or regular basis, at least part of the time

- people who might be reasonably expected to live with them, for example children in the care of children services or staying with relatives but will return to live with their parent(s), if they are allocated social housing. In such circumstances, we will liaise with children services before reaching any decision about the allocation of social housing, or
- foster children, potential adoptive children, or other children whom a person has been approved by us to be involved in their upbringing, or
- children living with one parent who, by arrangement between two separated parents or because of shared residence order made by the family courts, are to begin living with their other parent), or
- children of a person who have earlier fled their home in fear of domestic abuse, or
- a person unable to return from hospital to their normal home, where they were living before going into hospital or
- a person who must live apart of their spouse or civil partner, because they have nowhere that they can live together, or
- a prospective carer, (the person making an application to join the housing register) who wishes to live with and look after another person
- the address of the person who applied to join the housing register
- the date on which the person was put on the register
- the most recent date on which an entry on the register was amended

- 6.4. We will amend a person's entry on the housing register when there is an alteration to our rules for allocating social housing. It is the responsibility for applicants to log into their portal account immediately if there is a change in their personal circumstances such as change of address or housing need and make any changes to their application as appropriate. This will then be assessed and confirmed by us.
- 6.5. We will review the housing register regularly to make sure information held about each person is up to date. We shall operate an annual rolling review, contacting people on the housing register, on the anniversary of their effective date, providing them an opportunity to confirm whether their housing needs have changed and to see if they still wish to remain on the housing register.
- 6.6. We will notify a person when their entry on the housing register is amended, explaining the reasons for any amendment. Any amendment that results in a person being afforded a higher priority, shall be given a new effective date. Any change that results in a person having the same degree of priority or a lower priority, will retain their original effective date.

6.7. We will remove a person from the housing register, in the following circumstances:

- a person who is no longer eligible or qualifies to be allocated social housing, or
- a person requests to be removed from the housing register, or
- a person dies, or
- a person fails to respond to a first request and a follow-up request, to a review of information held about them on the housing register or other correspondence, such as request for information or an allocation of housing, or
- a person has have moved away or no longer needs or wants to be housed by us

6.8. We will notify a person, via their online portal, when they are removed from the housing register, explaining the reasons for the removal.

6.9. We will consider every application received to join the housing register, provided it is made in accordance with the rules of this policy.

6.10. A person applying to join our housing register is required to provide sufficient detail about their personal circumstances, to enable us to assess their housing need, or to identify those cases where further investigation may be needed. We will liaise with other local authorities, other landlords and other agencies (e.g. adult social services, children services, NHS trusts, prisons and probation) to verify a person's circumstances and their housing needs. When carrying out liaison, we will do so in accordance with information sharing protocols. We may liaise with medical and welfare experts when assessing a person's application that suggests they have a medical or welfare need.

7.0. Decisions, reviews and complaints

How we make decisions and how people can ask for a review if they disagree with a decision.

7.1. We will notify a person of their decision and of the reason for it when:

- a person applies to be put on the housing register, explaining if they are eligible or ineligible for an allocation of social housing, or are a qualifying or non-qualifying person, or
- we remove a person from the housing register, explaining why they are now ineligible for an allocation of social housing, and/or not a qualifying person,

- Any decision regarding the facts of an applicant's case that we consider when determining whether to allocate a home.
 - We remove a person from the housing register if they fail to respond to requests for information or other important correspondence, such as a request for details following a review of their application or an offer of housing.
- 7.2. We shall, when notifying a person that they are ineligible for an allocation of social housing, explain whether this is because:
- a person is subject to immigration control within the meaning of asylum and immigration law, or
 - because of other legislation that stipulates specified persons from abroad are ineligible for an allocation of social housing
- 7.3. We will, when notifying a person that they are not a qualifying person, explain whether this is because:
- they or a member of their household has been found guilty of serious unacceptable behaviour that makes them unsuitable to be a tenant. At the time the application is considered, they remain unsuitable because of that behaviour.
 - any other reasons why they are not qualifying person
- 7.4. A person can themselves request to be removed from the housing register. They can do so by notifying us via email or phone. We shall confirm receipt of such a notification and confirm when the request has been acted on. Following which, a person's portal shall be closed.
- 7.5. We shall inform a person of their right to request a review of the following decisions made by Dorset Council:
- they are ineligible for an allocation of social housing.
 - they do not meet the criteria to be considered a qualifying person.
 - the priority awarded and whether this is a fair reflection of their housing needs, medical conditions, other welfare needs, or any other facts regarding their entitlement to a reasonable preference for an allocation of social housing.
 - whether or not a person should receive additional preference due to having urgent housing needs or otherwise.
 - they have been unfairly suspended, or their application has been unreasonably cancelled.

- a person's priority is reduced due to the number of offers refused.
- offence related to information given or withheld by them.
- the type of property which will be allocated to them, or
- any other facts of their case which were considered when deciding whether to allocate social housing to them

7.6 A person must make a request for a review before the end of the period of 21 days beginning with the date on which they are notified of our decision and reasons. We, may, in exceptional circumstances, allow a person a longer period to make a request for a review.

7.7 A person can request a review in writing, via email or letter or verbally via a telephone call or visiting our offices. A person is also entitled to instruct another individual or organisation, that can prove they have authority to act on their behalf and submit a request for review.

7.8. When making a request for a review, a person should set out the reasons for their request. This might be for the following reasons (this list is not intended to be exhaustive and the reasons shown below are provided for illustrative purposes only):

- the reliability of the evidence we relied on to make a decision
- how we interpreted the evidence it has relied on to make a decision
- the compatibility of our decision compared to housing allocation legislation
- whether there are sufficient facts available to us to reach a decision
- whether a person has been given the benefit of the doubt by us when a decision was made

7.9 A person cannot request a review of a decision reached on an earlier review. Upon receipt of a review request, we shall carry out a review of the decision in accordance with the procedure set out in the next chapter of this policy (Section 8).

7.10 We will notify a person when a review decision has been reached by email or post.

Complaints

7.11 We will notify people of the formal complaints process that is in place, including service standards and time frames for handling and responding the complaints, so people know what to expect. People will be informed of their right to make a complaint to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman [insert hyperlink to complaint policy and any hyperlink that might allow people to make a complaint online].

- 7.12 We will monitor complaints, to identify any areas where improvements and/or training are required.
- 7.13 We will invite people to provide feedback on their satisfaction with using our housing allocation policy and service. This might be when they join the housing register or when they are nominated to a private registered provider or at other times.

8.0. Review procedure

Our procedure for carrying out a review of a decision.

- 8.1. We will carry out a review of a decision as per the procedure set out below.
- 8.2. We will appoint an employee of appropriate seniority, who was not involved in the original decision, to carry out the review.
- 8.3. Individuals can provide written representations, which should reach us within the agreed timescale set by the reviewing officer.
- 8.4. At our discretion, we can offer verbal representations, if this happens an applicant can choose to have a representative of their choice attend with them.
- 8.5. If a verbal representation is arranged, we will let you know the date and time in advance. This review can take place over the telephone or at suitable office location. This will be no sooner than five days after the request, unless the individual agrees to a shorter notice.
- 8.6. When carrying out a review, we will consider all information available at the time of the original decision, along with any new or additional details provided before the review decision is made. The review will focus on whether the original decision was consistent with our housing allocation policy and compliant with the law.
- 8.7. When issuing a review decision, we will explain the reasons for the decision and provide information about the individual's right to seek a judicial review.
- 8.8. We will complete the review and notify the individual of the outcome by letter or email within 56 days of receiving the request. This timeframe may be extended if agreed with the person requesting the review.
- 8.9. We will monitor reviews, to identify any areas where improvements and/or training are required.

9.0. Applications and information

Our procedure for social housing applications, how applicants are informed about their rehousing prospects, and how their information on the housing register is managed.

Applications for an allocation of social housing

9.1. We are aware of our public sector equality duty and shall work to ensure that no applicants are discriminated against or treated unfairly. We will provide advice and information, free of charge, to people in the Dorset Council area, about the right to make an application to join the housing register, regardless as to whether a person might wish to make an application. This shall include information about:

- application procedures
- qualification and prioritisation criteria
- how to apply for advertised vacancies
- how people on the housing register are selected for an allocation
- advertising criteria (e.g. priority for bungalows is given to older people or accessible housing for disabled people.), and
- review procedures

9.2. We will provide guidance notes that are easy to understand and in a plain language, to help a person complete their application to join the housing register.

9.3. We will provide any assistance necessary, free of charge, to people in the Dorset Council area who are likely to have difficulty without assistance to make an application to join the housing register.

9.4. We will use information from housing register applications to assess whether applicants are likely to have:

- priority under the rules of this policy
- difficulty in making an application or choosing their accommodation without assistance
- access or support needs

9.5. We will only request information needed to assess whether a person is eligible and qualifies to join the housing register and priority for housing. Appropriate evidence could include:

- valid passport or other identity documents
- birth certificate

- rent arrears repayment plan
- a contract of employment
- wage/salary slips
- bank statements
- tax and benefits information, for example proof that a person is in receipt of welfare benefits
- Proof of current address

After applying, applicants will be required to provide supporting documents. These documents can be uploaded immediately or up to 7 working days after submission of the application.

- 9.6. In cases involving harassment or domestic abuse, we will seek relevant supporting evidence from agencies such as the police, social services, and health when assessing priority for housing allocation.
- 9.7. We will make further enquiries as to what assistance applicants might require. For example, assistance may be provided to people with physical or mental impairments, people who may have difficulty in living independently in the community without care and or support.
- 9.8. We will work together with other relevant agencies and providers, to ensure people can make an application to join the housing register and consider support requirements at different stages of the allocation process. This extends to people who do not have access to or are unable to use a computer or the internet.
- 9.9. We, together with social services, prisons, probation and relevant health bodies and professionals, other housing providers, the voluntary sector, carers and user groups, will identify people who are likely to require intensive support throughout the process, such as assistance to choose accommodation that is appropriate to their needs, and make sure that suitable assistance is available. We will provide the assistance or rely on other organisations and individuals to provide assistance.
- 9.10. We will provide access to translation and interpreting services, for people whose first language is not English. Where there is a significant number of speakers of a particular language, we might publish information in that language.
- 9.11. We will provide information in other accessible formats for people with various communication needs, for example people with learning disabilities, people with literacy issues and people with a visual or hearing impairment.

- 9.12. We will provide information to people who are likely to have difficulty accessing information, for example, via home visits or housing advice surgeries to prisoners, the Gypsy and Traveller community, etc.
- 9.13. We will provide user-friendly information about our housing allocation policy via the Dorset Council website [insert hyperlink to be added shortly], via the telephone and in printed hardcopy form upon request.
- 9.14. We will provide information to a person when they apply to join the housing register, about how their application will be treated. We provide a calculator on the Dorset Council website that people can use to estimate average waiting times to being rehoused. [View the housing wait time calculator](#)
- 9.15. We intend to make available general information about the profile of social housing stock in the Dorset Council area. This might include the type, size and location of the stock, whether it is accessible or could be adapted, whether there is access to a shared or private garden, how old it is, and how frequently it is likely to become available.
- 9.16. We will provide information about appropriate housing options which might be available to people in the Dorset Council area. This information shall be made available when someone applies to join the housing register and more generally via the housing allocation policy website. This might include information about:
- private rented accommodation
 - low-cost homeownership options
 - mobility schemes, which enable people to move out of the Dorset Council area, and
 - home improvement policy or aid and adaptation services which enable people to remain in their existing accommodation for longer
- 9.17. We will provide information to people when they first join the housing register, that a choice-based system is being used to allocate homes, so they know how the system works and to assist them to participate successfully in bidding for homes being advertised as available to let.
- 9.18. We will provide generalised information, via the applicant's portal account and the Dorset Home Choice website, about how many bids have been received for a particular property and the band that the successful bidder was in, to help people on the housing register make decisions about what sort of homes to bid for.
- 9.19. We will provide generalised information, via the Dorset Home Choice website, about the number of direct lettings made.

- 9.20. We will, upon request from a person on the housing register, provide personalised feedback about a particular vacancy they might have been interested in but were unsuccessful when bidding for it. This might include their relative position on the shortlist, or why they were unsuccessful.
- 9.21. We will provide people on the housing register with information about vacancies which are advertised. Vacancies advertised via the Dorset Home Choice website, will be notified to people who cannot use a website and at their request we will bid on a vacancy on behalf of a person.
- 9.22. Our Dorset Home Choice website shall be accessible for people who have visual impairment or learning disabilities. As much as possible, this information shall be provided using symbols and maps. This information shall help people to determine:
- whether they are entitled to bid for a property
 - whether a property meet their needs and any other requirements
 - what their likelihood of success would be if they made a bid for a property

It will also give basic details about a property such as:

- location,
- type (e.g. flat, bungalow, etc)
- size (e.g. number of bedrooms)
- floor, and whether or not it has a lift
- type of heating
- whether it has a garden
- the amount of rent payable
- type and level of adaptations
- condition of the property
- access to services
- information about transport, education and other local public services, and
- what type of applicant is entitled or excluded from bidding for a property, or who will be given a preference for a property

Information about the housing register

- 9.23. If a person requests to view their housing register entry, we will provide them with a free copy.
- 9.24. We will not, without the consent of a person, share any information about them that is included on the housing register. We will share information about a person (with their consent,) on the housing register, for example, to ensure that a person is

properly assisted to participate in bidding for a home that is advertised by the policy and that they are housed properly.

- 9.25. We will share personal information without consent if a lawful basis can be identified, for example a person's safety is at risk. We will determine on a case-by-case basis whether it is appropriate to share information regarding safeguarding concerns, including, but not limited to concerns about domestic abuse, with other agencies (such as private registered providers). Where there is a need to share data without consent, this shall be done in accordance with UK data protection law.
- 9.26. We will make sure employees responsible for making decisions about the allocation of social housing, have appropriate knowledge and training to allow them to identify possible victims of domestic abuse.
- 9.27. We will implement information sharing protocols to ensure clarity on what information will be shared, with whom, and for what purpose. These protocols will cover organisations such as social services, statutory bodies, and voluntary agencies.
- 9.28. When devising information sharing protocols, and when passing on information about individuals on the housing register, we will be mindful of responsibilities under data protection legislation.
- 9.29. We will inform people, both when they apply and when they join the housing register, of their right to make a complaint to the Information Commissioner's Office if they believe their personal data has been shared without consent.
- 9.30. We will obtain from applications, information to monitor the fairness of allocations and compliance with equal opportunity requirements. Information about ethnicity, disability, gender, age, religion, and sexual orientation shall be collected through applications.
- 9.31. We will inform applicants, both when they apply and when they join the housing register, of their right to make a complaint to the Equality and Human Rights Commission if they believe they have been discriminated against in social housing allocation decisions.
- 9.32. We will, once an application is submitted, keep people informed about what happens next. This might include:
 - sending confirmation that the application has been received, when it will be verified and what checks will be made
 - asking for any information that has not been supplied by the person making the application and give 7 working days to provide it (this can be extended at

Dorset Council's discretion) and make them aware of how it may affect their application if they fail to provide it

- advising people that they must inform Dorset Council about any changes in circumstances that could affect their application and level of priority, or

- 9.33. When a decision is made that a person can join the housing register, we will inform them about the level of priority they have been awarded, and that they should notify us immediately about any changes in circumstances which could affect their application and their level of priority
- 9.34. We will aim to verify applications within eight weeks.
- 9.35. People applying to join our housing register shall be asked to sign a declaration that the information they have provided is correct to their knowledge. We will advise people that register providers can raise action in the court for recovery of possession where a tenancy has been given based on information being knowingly withheld or false information knowingly supplied by a person.
- 9.36. We will carry out checks to verify an application when it is received and again at point of nomination.
- 9.37. High risk offenders with an offending history will always require an appropriate risk assessment, which will take MAPPA (Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements) guidance into account where appropriate. They will only be considered for the housing register once a multi-agency risk assessment is carried out to consider what type of accommodation is appropriate.

10.0. Allocations

Our procedures for offering choice to people on the housing register, including making offers, rights to refuse, and how choice applies to homeless applicants and disabled people requiring accessible housing. It also explains when choice may be restricted.

Choice

- 10.1. We will prioritise people on the housing register, and allocate homes, following the procedure set out in this chapter. Decisions about allocations will be made by our employees tasked with administering housing allocation functions.
- 10.2. Most applicants will be entitled to express a choice about the type of social housing that they might be allocated. A minority of applicants, on some occasions or in specified circumstances will not be entitled to choice and instead will be made a direct let of social housing and/or have a bid automatically placed on their behalf.

- 10.3. We will provide people on the housing register with the opportunity of selecting the property they wish to be allocated. People will be able to apply (referred to as 'bidding') for homes which are advertised as vacant on the Dorset Home Choice website. People will be able to bid for up to six homes per day.
- 10.4. We will operate an 'open advertising' approach whereby all people on the housing register, and members of the public, can find out about vacancies which are advertised on the Dorset Home Choice website.
- 10.5. Specialist accommodation may be advertised via the Dorset Home Choice website to give people more choice. Where homes are designated for a specific purpose (such as housing for older people or adapted homes for disabled people), the advert will clearly state that applicants with relevant housing or support needs will be prioritised.
- 10.6. We will work together with other relevant agencies and providers to ensure people can bid for homes. This extends to people who do not have access to or are unable to use a computer or the internet. People that may have difficulty in bidding for homes without assistance, for example people with physical or mental impairments, shall have access to any necessary assistance to make a bid, such as the system automatically placing a bid for them (known as auto bidding).
- 10.7. We reserve the right to reject a bid on grounds of risk: People who pose a risk to themselves, to other individuals, or are at risk from other individuals, for example due to sexual or violent offences, shall be restricted in the homes that they shall be nominated to. The extent of risk posed shall be determined based on the facts and evidence available concerning a person's application. Any decisions made about risk shall give a person the benefit of the doubt where evidence is inconclusive.
- 10.8. We reserve the right to make a direct let to manage the risk posed by some people or for other management reasons. A direct let is when a direct offer is made to a household bypassing the usual bidding process or this policy. Examples of when a direct let might be made, include (the following list is illustrative only and is not intended to be exhaustive):
- people whose home has been compulsory purchased, where Dorset Council must offer a specific property to meet legal requirements.
 - people who are tenants, who need to leave their original home to facilitate an area regeneration scheme, who have not bid for any advertised homes that would be suitable for them to occupy
 - people who are homeless or owed certain homelessness duties (relief duty and main duty) who do not bid for any advertised homes that would be suitable for them to occupy

- people seeking a move under a witness mobility policy
- people managed under multiagency public protection arrangements (MAPPA) who pose a serious risk to the community, such as level 1 or 2 cases involving sexual or violent offenders

10.9. Our housing software system creates a shortlist of applicants who meet the advert criteria and have placed a bid. It lists everyone needing a home of that size, then ranks bidders in descending order of priority.

10.10. Homes are advertised daily. As a rule, homes which have been advertised shall be offered to a person who:

- has the highest priority under the policy, and
- has been on the housing register the longest (by date of completed application submitted to join the housing register), and
- has a local connection to Dorset Council (some homes have a planning stipulation that requires it is allocated to a person with a local connection to the parish or surrounding parish in which the property is located)
- matches the lettings criteria for that home (e.g. the type of home, its size and bedroom needs of the household, its location, accessible adaptations have been made or might be possible, etc), and
- matches any quotas that might be in place

10.11. A person's date of registration to join the housing register shall be based on the date they submitted a completed application, including all relevant supporting documentation, such as proofs of identity.

10.12. We may reject a bid for a home, if the property isn't suitable for the person. This could be because of risks to or from others, or because the home doesn't meet the person's specific needs. A person can see the reasons why they might have been rejected or bypassed for a home via their online individual portal.

10.13. When we do reject a person's bid, they shall be provided with the reasons for this decision and inform them of their right to request a review of the decision.

We shall keep a record of reasons behind decisions to reject bids. This information will help in monitoring the operation of the housing allocation policy and make sure individuals or groups are not systematically disadvantaged. Common reasons for rejecting a person on the housing register might include the person has already refused a very similar property and has said they're not interested in receiving a similar offer.

10.14. We will make sure property advertisements provide people with sufficient information about homes which are available to bid for, so they can make an informed decision about whether to bid for it.

When a home is advertised, the following details will be provided if supplied by the private registered providers:

- provision type, for example general needs, housing for older people
- photo of property or street scene
- rent type and charge, for example social/affordable/intermediate rent, weekly rent and service charges and any other property related charges
- unit size and maximum occupancy for each unit, for example studio, number of bedrooms, non-self-contained or self-contained
- letting criteria priorities (when applicable); such as giving priority to under-occupiers or applicants with accessibility needs
- tenure type, for example flexible tenancy, secure tenancy
- condition of home, for example type of windows/boiler/insulation/walls, whether it has a loft, number of floors, installation of renewable technology and if so, what type, state of repair, modernity of amenities and services, heating system and energy performance certificate, year of build
- location, for example street name and postcode
- accessibility, for example approach routes, ramps, steps, entrance doors, corridors and doors, lifts and stairs, gardens, adaptations already made to individual homes
- local services, for example GP surgery, schools/colleges/universities, Jobcentre Plus, post office, public transport
- typical running costs, for example Council Tax, heating, water

Nominations to a property and refusals

10.15. We will provide people with appropriate advice and assistance to help them to bid effectively.

10.16. The fact that an applicant has made a bid for a home should not be treated as meaning that we have made a final decision to allocate it to them. We will, on occasions, withdraw an allocation or nomination of home, for example, if a person:

- is no longer eligible to be allocated social housing
- no longer qualifies to join the policy
- would be overcrowded or under-occupy a home if it was allocated to them,
- does not require such adaptations, but they have been allocated a home that has adaptations to make the home accessible for a disabled person

- is disabled and requires adaptations to be made to a home that has been allocated, to make accessible for them, but it is not possible for adaptations to be made to the home
- the home is designated as supported housing (e.g. sheltered housing, extra care housing) and the person does not need such housing
- the person would be at risk of domestic abuse, violence, or threat of violence due to the locality of the home that has been allocated to them

10.17. When using discretion to allocate a home outside the rules and procedures of this policy, we will ensure the individual has an exceptional level of need or that their circumstances are so unusual they would not otherwise be adequately prioritised.

We will keep a clear audit trail and record the reasons for any such allocation. All decisions will follow a formal authorisation process and require approval by the Service Manager. Discretion will be used rarely.

10.18. The Registered Provider will allow people a reasonable period to decide about any home they have been nominated to, providing them with an opportunity to view the home before making a decision as to whether they wish to accept or reject the home to which they have been nominated.

They will allow sufficient time for people who require additional assistance and/or support to arrange for an adviser or an advocate (who may be a friend or family member) to accompany them when viewing a home and to take advice in making their decision to accept or reject an offer.

10.19. Before a nomination can be made to the Registered Provider, the applicant will be asked to provide up to date information, including but not limited to:

- evidence that they continue to be eligible for an allocation of social housing, qualify to be on Dorset Council's housing register, and are entitled to reasonable or additional preference for the allocation of social housing, and
- the number and ages of other persons who normally reside with them as a member of their family or who might reasonably be expected to reside with them

This information must be received by Dorset Council within 48 hours of the request being made. Failure to provide the information within in the required timescale will result in the applicant being bypassed for that property and further action may be taken against the applicant for failing to engage (implied refusal).

10.20. Applicants in Bands One, Two and Three may refuse up to three suitable properties. After the third refusal, they will be moved to Band Four for a period of 12 months. All applicants will be reminded of this limit whenever an offer of housing

is made.

- 10.21. Applicants in Band Four may refuse one offer of suitable social housing. If they decline a second offer, they will be suspended from the housing register for 12 months. This policy aims to reduce delays caused by repeated refusals. Applicants will be reminded of this limit whenever an offer is made.

People who are homeless or owed a homelessness duty

- 10.22. We will make an automatic bid to any person who is owed a relief or main homelessness duty.
- 10.23. People who are owed a homelessness duty have the right to refuse a suitable housing allocation. If a person does refuse a suitable offer, within the meaning of the Housing Act 1996 part 7, we will make them aware that the duty of homelessness assistance may come to an end.
- 10.24. People can stay on the housing register if they are still eligible and meet the rules, even if our duty to help them as a homeless applicant has ended. However, they will no longer get the same homeless priority. Instead, their housing needs will be reassessed, and any priority will be based on their current situation. If they are still homeless, they will continue to receive a priority for that reason.

Disabled people

- 10.25. Housing which has been designed or adapted to meet the needs of disabled people, known as accessible housing, will be advertised in the same way as other homes. Accessible housing shall be prioritised for people who have access needs. This will be explained in the advert.

Disabled people can apply for accommodation that does not meet their needs, but this will be assessed by relevant parties to check it is reasonable and practical to adapt the home.

- 10.26. When an accessible property is advertised, the advertisement shall give sufficient information about the level of adaptations and/or accessibility features in the accommodation, so that applicants can make informed decision on whether to bid for the particular property. Information shall be included about external access to the property (e.g. whether there is a ramp up to the property and whether there is accessible parking nearby) and relevant information about the surrounding area (e.g. local shops and public transport that is easily accessible).

10.27. We propose to establish and maintain a database of accessible properties owned by all registered providers with stock in the Dorset Council area. Disabled people shall be able to see the full range of accessible properties, including the number and types of properties, accessibility features, and the level of adaptations of each property and location. Such information shall be provided to assist disabled people to decide whether to bid for a particular home which is advertised.

10.28. We will provide disabled people with additional assistance and support, depending on the nature and degree of their disability.

Restricting choice

10.29. We will set advertising criteria for properties and people who meet the criteria will be given preference for that property. For example, advertising criteria will be used for:

- local lettings plan's, which are used to achieve housing management and other housing policy objectives
- a certain proportion of homes may be let to applicants who are homeless
- to match applicants with access needs to accessible accommodation

10.30. We will not allow every person to express an interest in or be considered for any, and every available home to let. People shall not be permitted to bid for homes, which would result in overcrowding or under occupation. Therefore, couples and single people will not usually be permitted to bid for a home that has more than one bedroom, unless there is an evidential need for a couple to have a two-bedroom home.

10.31. We will make a final decision on whether it is appropriate to nominate a person to any particular property. When doing so the following shall be considered:

- a. provision type (for example a home is housing for older people and person has no need for such housing, or a home is general needs housing, and a person has a need for supported housing or housing for older people)
- b. rent type and charge (for example a person cannot afford the pay the rent and all other property related charges for a home)
- c. unit size (for example a person and their household would under-occupy a home)
- d. letting criteria restrictions (for example a home must be allocated to disabled people with accessibility needs)
- e. location (for example a home would result in a person or members of their household being at risk to or from others)
- f. properties subject to s106 Town and Country Planning Act, local lettings plans, and/or specific social landlord requirements will be prioritised accordingly.

11.0. Prioritisation

Our procedures for prioritising people for an allocation, determining bedroom entitlements and setting quotas.

11.1. When allocating homes, we will give a preference to people in the following order of bands:

- Band One: people with priority housing needs
- Band Two: people with high housing needs
- Band Three: people with medium housing needs
- Band Four: people with low housing needs

11.2. People who might fall into more than one band shall be placed in the band that gives them the greatest priority.

Band One: priority housing need

- Owed a main homelessness duty
- priority medical grounds
- UK armed forces
- fleeing domestic abuse
- priority welfare grounds
- disaster/emergency

Band Two: high housing need

- homelessness relief duty
- under occupying social rented housing
- overcrowded by two or more bedrooms
- foster carer/adopters and care leavers
- insanitary and unsatisfactory housing conditions
- medical grounds
- welfare grounds
- hardship grounds
- giving up accessible housing

Band Three: medium housing need

- homeless household
- homeless prevention duty
- social housing tenants right to move
- UK armed forces community
- Overcrowded by one bedroom

Band Four: low housing need

- social housing tenants seeking a transfer
- need for older person housing
- supported housing: not ready to move

- reduced preference for 12 months
- low housing need

11.3 We will, when making decisions about prioritisation, disregard a persons' household members, if such household members are ineligible for an allocation of social housing.

Bedroom criteria

11.4. When deciding if a person's household is overcrowded, for the purpose of determining the priority they should be afforded, make an assessment against the UK Government's Bedroom Standard, which allows a separate bedroom each for:

- any adult couple
- any remaining adult aged 21 years or over
- two males aged 10 to 20 years
- one male aged 10 to 20 years, and one male aged 9 years or under
- one male aged 10-20 years (if there are no males aged 0-9 years to pair with him)
- two females aged 10 to 20 years
- one female aged 10 to 20 years, and one female aged 9 years or under
- one female aged 10-20 years (if there are no females aged 0-9 years to pair with her)
- two children regardless of sex aged 9 years or under
- any remaining child aged 9 years or under

This criterion does not apply to households accommodated in temporary accommodation by Dorset Council.

11.5. When deciding if a person's household is under-occupied, for the purpose of determining the priority they should be afforded, we will make an assessment against the UK Government's Local Housing Allowance bedroom criteria, which allows a separate bedroom each for:

- any adult couple
- any person aged 16 years or over
- two children of the same sex aged 15 years or under
- two children aged 9 years or under
- any other child
- a member of a couple who cannot share because of a disability or medical condition
- a child who cannot share because of a disability or medical condition

- a foster child (if a person is an approved foster parent)
- a non-resident carer providing overnight care to a person or a member of their household (one room is allowed, regardless of the number of carers who stay overnight)

11.6. We will when allocating a home, use the UK Government's Local Housing Allowance bedroom criteria, to decide the number of bedrooms a person (taking account of who is usually a member of their household) requires. The following types of homes will be allocated to people with the following bedroom need:

Bedsit

- any adult/couple or
- any person aged 16 years or over

One-bedrooms

- any adult/couple or
- any person aged 16 years or over

Two-bedrooms

- any adult/couple with any one of the following:
 - any person aged 16 years or over
 - two children of the same sex aged 15 years or under
 - two children aged 9 years or under
 - any other child

Three bedrooms

- any adult/couple with any two of the following:
 - any person aged 16 years or over
 - two children of the same sex aged 15 years or under
 - two children aged 9 years or under
 - any other child

Four bedrooms

- any adult/couple with any three of the following:
 - any person aged 16 years or over
 - two children of the same sex aged 15 years or under
 - two children aged 9 years or under
 - any other child

Five bedrooms

- any adult/couple or
- any person aged 16 years or over with any four of the following:
 - two children of the same sex aged 15 years or under

- two children aged 9 years or under
- any other child

Six bedrooms

- any adult/couple with any five of the following:
 - any person aged 16 years or over
 - two children of the same sex aged 15 years or under
 - two children aged 9 years or under
 - any other child

Exceptions allowing an extra bedroom when assessing overcrowding and bedroom need

- a member of a couple who cannot share because of a disability or medical condition
- a child who cannot share because of a disability or medical condition
- a foster carer who has fostered a child, are an approved foster carer or about to become an approved foster carer and have written evidence from Children's Services.
- a non-resident carer providing overnight care to a person or a member of their household
- Where the applicant or partner is pregnant, and the Mat b1 certificate has been received, and it is the first child
- Other exceptional circumstances

Quotas

11.7. We may set quotas to ensure fair allocation across different needs, but applicants in bands one, two and three will never be given lower priority than those in band four.

11.8. Quotas will be based on housing need and demand in the Dorset Council area, using data from the housing register. We will consider:

- the size and composition of the housing register, including the housing needs people have, and
- the profile of stock and vacancies which are likely to become available

11.9. If we set quotas, they will be flexible and adjustable to reflect changing circumstances, ensuring significant housing need continues to be met even after a quota is reached.

- 11.10. We shall monitor who is being allocated properties and publish information on performance against quotas that have been set.

12.0. Information about this allocation policy

Our procedure for providing copies of this policy, consulting people on future changes, and using UK guidance on social housing allocation when making decisions about social housing allocations.

- 12.1. We will publish a summary of this housing allocation policy and provide a printed copy free of charge to any person who requests one. The summary will be available to download from the Dorset Council Website in 2026. Copies can also be requested by contacting our Housing Register Team:

Email: dorsetcouncilhomechoice@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

Phone: 01305 221739

- 12.2. We will make available a full copy of this policy for inspection at our office, [insert address]. We will, upon request from a person, provide a copy of the policy, and payment of a reasonable fee, maybe requested, to cover the cost of printing a copy.
- 12.3. We will regularly review and update this policy. We will, before modifying this policy, have regard to all relevant statute and local strategies and policies, including our:
- homelessness strategy
 - housing strategy
 - tenancy strategy
- 12.4. The Portfolio Holder for Housing may approve minor and/or legislative amendments to the housing allocation policy at any time to ensure it remains compliant with legal requirements. without the need for further approval.
- 12.5. We will, before making an alteration to the policy which would be a major change of policy, send a copy of proposed alterations to every registered provider, which own stock in the Dorset Council area and provide them with a reasonable opportunity to comment on the proposals.
- 12.6. When we make a significant change to the policy, which would affect a many people on the housing register, we will notify them and consult widely. Consultation will include stakeholders such as health services, community justice services, voluntary organisations, social housing tenants, people on the housing register and the public. The consultation approach will depend on the scale of the changes and may involve the following:

- a small sounding board group of social housing tenants and people on the housing register,
- a social housing tenant scrutiny panel, or
- public consultation

12.7. We will refer to statutory guidance published by the UK Government when reviewing and amending this housing allocation policy, and when making decisions about housing allocation policy and practice.

13.0. Co-operation with private registered providers

Our procedure for working with registered providers to nominate people from the housing register for a vacancy.

- 13.1. We will work together with register providers that own and manage social housing in the Dorset Council area, to make best use of the available social housing. We will make nominations to registered providers, for them to offer an allocation of social housing to people on our housing register.
- 13.2. We will comply with requirements set out in a nomination agreement with registered providers, when making nominations for social housing to persons from our housing register.
- 13.3. The Nomination agreement will have clear objectives, based on a thorough analysis of need and demand. It will specify the proportion of lettings that private registered providers in the Dorset Council area will make available to us.
- 13.4. The nomination agreement will set out any criteria which has been adopted for accepting or rejecting nominations and how any disputes shall be resolved.
- 13.5. We will monitor and regularly review the nomination agreement, to demonstrate that obligations are being met and to ensure they reflect changing needs and demand.
- 13.6. We will, when making nominations to a registered provider, make sure the details of a nominated person are accurate, comprehensive and up-to-date and provide information about any vulnerability, support needs and arrangements for support, where this information is available.
- 13.7. We will also agree an information sharing protocol with private register providers of social housing who own or manage stock in the Dorset Council area, covering issues such as rent arrears, antisocial behaviour and support needs.

I 4.0.False statements and withholding information

Our procedure for when someone applying for social housing gives false information and/or withholds information.

- I 4.1. We will consider, when a person knowingly or recklessly makes a false statement or knowingly withholds information that would be reasonable to provide on a housing register application, (including during review proceedings), as a reason for disqualification from joining the housing register.
- I 4.2. We will look at the circumstances of each person rather than applying a blanket approach and whether to institute criminal proceedings against a person who has given false information or withheld information.
- I 4.3. We will take appropriate steps to vet employees who make decisions about the allocation of social housing and require some decisions to be validated by a senior member of staff, via a system of random checks, to minimise the risk of employees allocating incorrectly or potentially fraudulently.

I 5.0.Elected members

The role of our elected members in allocating of social housing

- I 5.1. Our elected members shall not be part of a decision-making body at the time an allocation decision is made, when either the accommodation concerned is situated in their electoral ward or the person subject to the decision has their sole or main residence there.
- I 5.2. Elected members shall be permitted to represent their constituents in front of any decision-makers, such as seeking or providing information on behalf of their constituents and be permitted to participate in the decision-makers deliberations prior to a decision.
- I 5.3. Elected members shall not attempt to confer an advantage on any person seeking an allocation of social housing. Elected members shall ensure compliance with our Code of Conduct and shall consider whether they are required to declare an interest before participating in such deliberations. Elected members shall seek to obtain advice from our monitoring officer, should there be any doubt.
- I 5.4. Elected members shall be involved in policy decisions that affect the generality of social housing in their electoral ward.

- 15.5. Elected members shall be responsible for determining allocation policies and monitoring the implementation of this policy, to ensure the operation of the policy is open and accountable and systems are compliant with our policy objectives.

Appendix one – statute

Law

[Housing Act 1996 Part VI Allocation of Housing Accommodation](#)

Statutory guidance

[Allocation of accommodation guidance for local authorities](#)

[Providing social housing for local people](#)

[Right to move and social housing allocations](#)

[Improving access to social housing for victims of domestic abuse](#)

[Improving access to social housing for members of the armed forces](#)

Regulations

[The Allocation of Housing Regulations 1996](#)

[The Allocation of Housing \(Procedure\) Regulations 1997](#)

[The Allocation of Housing \(England\) Regulations 2000](#)

[The Allocation of Housing \(England\) Regulations 2002](#)

[The Allocation of Housing and Homelessness \(Miscellaneous Provisions\) \(England\) Regulations 2006](#)

[The Allocation of Housing \(Qualification Criteria for Armed Forces\) \(England\) Regulations 2012](#)

[The Housing Act 1996 Additional Preference for Armed Forces\) \(England\) Regulations 2012](#)

[The Allocation of Housing \(Qualification Criteria for Right to Move\) \(England\) Regulations 2015](#)

[The Allocation of Housing and Homelessness \(Eligibility\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2020](#)

[The Allocation of Housing and Homelessness \(Eligibility\) \(England\) and Persons subject to Immigration Control \(Housing Authority Accommodation and Homelessness\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2021](#)

[The Allocation of Housing and Homelessness \(Eligibility\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2021](#)

Appendix two – eligibility

The following classes of persons, subject to satisfying a habitual residency test, will be eligible to join this scheme:

- British citizens (constituting the nations of England, Scotland and Wales)
- Commonwealth citizens with a right of abode in the UK immediately before 01 January 1983 who have remained commonwealth citizens throughout (excluding non-British citizens from Pakistan and South Africa, but inclusive of citizens from Gambia and Zimbabwe)
- Irish citizens (constituting the nations of Northern Ireland and Republic of Ireland)
- EEA Nationals (other than those from Ireland) and their family members, who:
 - have acquired limited leave to enter and remain in the UK
 - were frontier working before 31 December 2020, or;
 - are lawfully residing in the UK by 31 December 2020, but still have to apply to, or acquire status under the EU Settlement Scheme before the deadline of 30 June 2021, and are covered by the “Grace Period statutory instrument”
- persons exempt from immigration control (e.g., diplomats and their family members based in the UK and some military personnel).
- persons granted refugee status by the UK Government
- persons granted exceptional or limited leave to enter or remain in the UK with condition that they and any dependents have resource to public funds (e.g: humanitarian or compassionate circumstances)
- persons with current leave to enter or remain in the UK with no condition or limitation, and who are habitually resident in the UK, The Channel Islands, the Isle of Man or the Republic of Ireland (defined as the Common Travel Area) (a person whose maintenance and accommodation is being sponsored must be resident in the Common Travel Area for five years since date of entry or date of sponsorship, unless the sponsor has died)
- persons who have humanitarian protection granted under the Immigration Rules (e.g., a person whose asylum application has failed, but they face real risk of harm if they returned to their state of origin)
- persons who moved to the UK as child seeking asylum and have been given limited leave to remain
- persons who have limited permission to enter or remain in the UK, from November 2018 onwards, due to Calais leave
- persons who have limited permission to enter or remain in the UK as the family member of a relevant persons of Northern Ireland
- persons who have leave to enter or remain in the UK under Appendix Hong Kong British National (Overseas) of the Immigration Rules, and your leave is not subject to a condition requiring you to maintain and accommodate yourself or any person dependent upon you
- persons who are a relevant Afghan citizen, such as one who has worked for the UK government in Afghanistan

- persons who have permission to enter or remain in the UK and left Afghanistan in connection with the collapse of the Afghan government took place on 15 August 2021 and are allowed to claim housing and welfare assistance from the state
- persons who are currently living in the UK and previously was living in Ukraine before 1 January 2022 and left as a result of the Russian invasion which took place on 24 February 2022 and have arrived in the UK under the Ukraine family scheme or the homes for Ukraine scheme and have been granted leave to remain
- persons who have been granted limited leave to remain due to being a victim of human trafficking or slavery
- persons who were living in Sudan before 15 April 2023 and left as a result of conflict that commenced on 15 April 2023 and have been granted leave to remain and are allowed to claim housing and welfare assistance from the state and do not have a person that will sponsor your stay in the UK
- person who are EEA Nationals means nationals of any of the EU member states, and nationals of Iceland, Norway, Liechtenstein and Switzerland.

Even when an Applicant is eligible for an allocation of social rented housing, only those who are habitually resident in the United Kingdom, Ireland, the Isle of Mann or the Channel Islands, will be eligible for an allocation (except persons which exempt from the requirement to be habitually resident, as defined in law or statutory guidance).

Applicants who are subject to immigration control or are an ineligible person from abroad will not be eligible for an allocation of social rented housing

Appendix three – banding

Band One: priority housing need

Owed a main homelessness duty

People who are owed a homelessness duty by Dorset Council under section 193(2). This applies to those that have a priority need, are not intentionally homeless, and must be provided with suitable accommodation.

Priority medical grounds

People (or someone from their household) who have urgent medical needs and require stable accommodation because of their health condition, due to:

- the condition is expected to be terminal, and re-housing is required due to unsuitable accommodation or to provide a basis for the provision of suitable care, or
- a condition is life threatening and existing accommodation is a major contributory factor, or
- a planned discharge from hospital is imminent and there is no accommodation available that is reasonable to occupy, or
- Extensive adaptations are required, and adapting the current home is not possible because it is either technically unfeasible, unsuitable due to a progressive medical condition, or not cost-effective. (This applies where remaining in the current property is clearly impractical and urgent rehousing is essential.)

UK Armed Forces community

People who are members of the UK Armed Forces community, who fall within one or more of the reasonable preference categories and have urgent housing needs:

- former members of the Regular Armed Forces (including those who are close to leaving or have recently left the Regular Armed Forces, or
- serving in the Regular Armed Forces and are suffering from a serious injury, illness (including mental ill health) or disability which is wholly or partially attributable to the person's service, including those who need to move to suitable adapted accommodation, or
- serving or have served in the reserve forces and suffering from a serious injury, illness (including mental ill health) or disability which is wholly or partially attributable to the person's service, or
- bereaved spouses of civil partners of those serving in the Regular Armed Forces where the bereaved spouses of civil partners have recently ceased,

or will cease, to be entitled, to reside in accommodation provided by the Ministry of Defence following the death of their partner whose death was attributable (wholly or partially) to that service.

Domestic abuse

This includes people who need to move because they are fleeing domestic abuse (within the meaning of the domestic abuse act) from anywhere in the UK. It covers those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, or who are living in a refuge or other safe temporary accommodation in the Dorset Council area, having escaped domestic abuse, or

Priority welfare grounds

People who need to be urgently rehoused because of violence or threats of violence likely to be carried out, who are:

- witnesses of crime, or victims of crime, who would be at risk of intimidation amounting to violence or threats of violence if they remained in their current home, or
- escaping serious antisocial behaviour, or
- hate incidents, or
- harassment (for example racial, religious or sectarian, homophobic, transphobic,).

Disaster/emergency

People who have lost their home because of a disaster, such as a fire, flood or other emergency.

Band Two: high housing need

Homeless relief duty

People who are homeless and owed the section 189(B)(2) initial (relief) duty (by Dorset Council).

Under-occupying social housing

People who are tenants of a Private Registered Provider property within the Dorset Council area and are under-occupying their home, as defined by Local Housing Allowance size criteria, and who wish to transfer to a smaller property.

Overcrowded by two or more bedrooms

People occupying overcrowded housing, by two bedrooms (by the Bedroom Standard criteria).

This banding does not apply to households accommodated in temporary accommodation by Dorset Council.

Foster carers, adopters and care leavers

People with a need for accommodation, who are:

- foster carers and adopters, special guardians, and family and friend carers (who have taken on the care of a child because their parents are unable to provide care), who need a larger home in order to accommodate a looked after child, approved by or being assessed by Dorset Council, or
 - is an eligible child
 - age 16/17
 - currently looked after by children's services
 - has been looked after for at least 13 weeks since the age of 14, including time after their 16th birthday
 - has support of a personal advisor, Needs Assessment, Pathway Plan, and continued care until leaving care
- relevant child
- age 16/17
 - currently looked after by Children's Services
 - has been looked after for at least 13 weeks since the age of 14, including time after their 16th birthday
 - has a personal adviser, needs assessment, pathway plan, accommodation and financial support for education, training, and employment
- former relevant children
- age 18 to 24
 - Previously an eligible child or relevant child
 - Personal Adviser, Pathway Plan (reviewed regularly), assistance with accommodation, living costs, and education/training

Insanitary and unsatisfactory housing conditions

People occupying insanitary, or otherwise living in unsatisfactory housing conditions, for example due to:

- entirely lacking bathroom or kitchen or the bathroom or kitchen is in such disrepair as to make it unusable, or
- lacking inside WC, or
- entirely lacking cold or hot water supplies, electricity, gas, or a fixed adequate heating system, or the cold or hot water supplies, electricity, gas or heating is in such disrepair as to make it unusable, or
- property in serious disrepair, due to significant damage or deterioration in a property, where repairs are needed to make it safe, habitable and usable, or

- tenants who need to be rehoused because of them being displaced from rented accommodation in the consequence of Dorset Council making a housing order (prohibition or demolition order), where suitable alternative accommodation on reasonable terms is required and is not otherwise available to the person.

This list is not exhaustive, and the banding shall only be awarded for the duration of the disrepair.

Medical grounds

People who need to move on medical (including any grounds relating to a disability), due to:

- a mental illness or disorder (including Armed Forces veterans with mental ill health, or
- a chronic or progressive medical conditions (e.g. MS, HIV/AIDS); or
- an infirmity due to old age, or
- a need for improved heating (on medical grounds), or
- a need for older peoples housing (on medical grounds) or
- a need for ground floor accommodation (on medical grounds), or
- a need for adapted housing and/or extra care facilities, such as a property with an additional bedroom or bathroom, where the current home could technically be adapted but doing so would involve significant delays, high costs, or complex works. (This applies where adaptation is possible but not ideal, and rehousing would better meet the person's needs), or
- the need to move, following hospitalisation or long-term care, or
- moving on from a drug or alcohol recovery programme.

Welfare grounds (including grounds relating to a disability)

People who need to move on welfare grounds, due to:

- a physical or learning disability or sensory impairment, or
- learning difficulties; or
- the need to give or receive care; or
- the need to recover from the effect of violence or threat of violence, or physical, emotional or sexual abuse (e.g. victims of domestic abuse); or
- people who cannot fully look after themselves because of certain limitations or circumstances making it difficult to manage daily tasks without support, or
- young people at risk (i.e. child(ren) in need, 16–17-year-olds, lone parents under 18); or
- people with behavioural difficulties; or

- being ready to make a planned move from supported housing (commissioned, managed or owned by Dorset Council), where they are provided with care, support or supervision in resettlement accommodation, or a managed property, or a hostel for homeless people, or
- Being vulnerable (e.g. having learning disabilities) and not expected to find their own accommodation, who wish to live independently in the community, with appropriate care and support.

Hardship

People who need to move to a particular locality in the Dorset Council area, where failure to meet that need would cause hardship (to themselves or others), for example due to accessing specialised medical treatment or financial implications.

Giving-up accessible housing

People occupying accessible housing adapted for disabled people, who no longer require such accommodation and wish to move.

Band Three: unmet housing need

Homeless Households

People who are experiencing homelessness (within the meaning of Housing Act 1996 Part 7 Homelessness) in the Dorset Council area, that have either not made an application for homelessness assistance, have withdrawn their application for homelessness assistance, or any homelessness duty of assistance owed has ended, including people:

- with no fixed abode, or
- living with friends, or
- rough sleeping, or
- Intentionally Homeless
- homeless upon departure from prison.

Homelessness prevention duty

People who are threatened with homelessness and owed a homelessness duty by Dorset Council under section 195(2). The council must take reasonable steps to help them keep their current home or find somewhere else to live.

Social tenants right to move for work

People who are a social housing tenant anywhere in England and need to move to the Dorset Council area for work reasons. This includes those who already

work in Dorset or have a genuine job offer (including an apprenticeship) that will last more than 12 months and involves at least 16 hours of work per week.

UK Armed Forces community

People who are members of the UK Armed Forces community, who are:

- divorced or separated spouses or civil partners of Regular Armed Forces service personnel, who need to move out of accommodation provided by the Ministry of Defence, or
- adult children of Regular Armed Forces service personnel, who may no longer be able to remain the family home.

Overcrowded by one bedroom

People occupying homes that are overcrowded by one bedroom based on the Bedroom Standard.

This banding does not apply to households accommodated in temporary accommodation by Dorset Council.

Band Four: other housing needs

Social tenants seeking transfer

People who are secure tenants of a private registered provider in Dorset Council area who are seeking a transfer, and who are not entitled to a reasonable preference for an allocation of social housing (for example they would not be placed in any of the above bands).

Need for older person housing

People aged 55 years or over requiring older persons housing and do not meet the criteria in the bands above.

Supported housing: not ready to move

People not ready to make a planned move from supported housing (commissioned, owned or managed by Dorset Council). This includes those receiving care, support or supervision in resettlement accommodation, or a hostel for homeless people.

Reduced preference for 12 months

People who have had their priority on the housing register reduced for 12-months because they have refused 3 offers of suitable housing that would have been reasonable to accept.

Low housing need

Any other person who is eligible for an allocation of social housing and qualifies to join the housing register.

Appendix four: registered providers that own social housing stock in the Dorset Council area.

Providers include:

- Abri Group Limited
- Anchor Hanover Group?
- Aster Communities
- Bournemouth Churches Housing Association Limited
- East Boro Housing Trust Limited
- Hastoe Housing Association Limited
- LiveWest Homes Limited
- Magna Housing Limited
- Places for People Homes Limited
- Sage Homes RP Limited
- Sanctuary Housing Association
- Sovereign Housing Association Limited
- Stonewater Limited
- The Guinness Partnership Limited
- Willow Tree Housing Partnership Limited

Appendix Five: Information applicants need to provide when making an application to join the housing register

Submission of supporting documents

After submitting your application, you must provide the required supporting documents when requested. If you are unable to provide all the documents at the time of submission, you will have up to 7 working days to supply them. If the documents are not received within this timeframe, your application will be closed. Applicants requiring assistance should contact the housing service via telephone on 01305 221739 or via email dorsetcouncilhomechoice@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk - please quote your application reference number.

Note: During the assessment of your application, we may ask you to provide additional information.

How to Submit Your Documents

You can submit your documents in one of the following ways:

- Online:
Log into your Portal Account and upload the requested documents via the Actions Page.
- By Post:
Send photocopies to:
The Housing Register Team
Dorset Council
County Hall
Colliton Park
Dorchester DT1 1XJ
(Please allow time for delivery and include your application number on each document.)
- In Person:
You can take your documents to a local library or County Hall where staff can assist you with scanning and uploading your documents.

Required Documents to establish eligibility and qualification to join the Dorset Council Housing Register.

I. Nationality and immigration status

Provide applicable documents:

- Passport

- Right to remain papers (e.g. Home Office letters)
- EU Settlement Scheme confirmation
- Biometric residence permit (front and back)
- Share code from the Government website to prove immigration status

2. Identity (Applicants aged 18+)

Provide one of the following:

- Driving Licence
- Passport
- Citizen Card
- EU ID Card
- Bus Pass

3. Proof of Current Address

Provide one of the following (dated within the last 3 months):

- Utility bill (gas, electric, water)
- Council Tax bill
- Letter from DWP
- Letter from an official body (e.g. NHS, Solicitor, Social Services)

4. Proof of Local Connection via

Residency – currently resident and have been for two years prior to the application date

Provide one or more of the following:

- Tenancy Agreement
- Utility Bill
- Car Insurance document
- Mobile phone contract
- Council Tax Bill

(You can access and screenshot your Council Tax summary at Dorset Council Tax Portal)

Family – currently resident and have been for two years prior to the application date

Provide:

- Tenancy Agreement or Utility/Council Tax bills for each year (up to 2 years)
- Most recent Utility bill

- Full birth certificate (to confirm relationship)
- Written confirmation of relationship
(Include marriage certificate if name has changed)

Note: Bank statements and driving licences are not accepted as proof of local connection or residency.

Employment

Provide:

Contract of employment (showing permanent employment over 16 hours/week for 2+ years)

- 3 months of recent wage slips
- Full name and address of workplace

If self-employed, provide:

- 2 years of HMRC tax returns
- Invoices/receipts showing self-employment in Dorset Council area (16+ hours/week)

5. Employment (All Working Applicants)

Provide:

- 3 months of recent payslips
- Contract of employment

6. Residency of Dependent Children (Under 18 or in Full-Time Education)

Provide:

- Full birth certificate
- Child Benefit letter (showing children's names) or
- Recent bank statement showing benefit payments

7. Financial Information (All Applicants)

Provide:

- 3 months of recent bank statements (including savings/Post Office accounts)
- Pension Service award letter (if applicable)
- Details of any children's savings account

- Mortgage statement and estate agent's details (if homeowner)
- Any benefit letters

Supporting evidence dependent on circumstances

1. Parish Connection

Provide:

- Proof of relative's residency in the parish (e.g. Tenancy Agreement, Utility bill)
- Full birth certificate (to confirm relationship)
- If a name has changed by marriage, a copy of the marriage certificate is also required.
Written confirmation of relationship
- Proof of employment in the parish (employment contract and recent wage slips)

Note: Parish connection priority is assessed case-by-case based on property criteria (e.g. Section 106 Agreement or Local Lettings Plan).

2. Armed Forces

Provide:

- Armed Forces ID
- 3 months of recent wage slips
- Proof of discharge date (if applicable)

3. Health and Support Needs

If you or a household member has health-related needs that affect your housing situation, please provide supporting information relating to your circumstances from the following list:

- Medical Evidence:
 - PIP (Personal Independence Payment) award letter
 - Disability Living Allowance award letter
 - Confirmation from a GP or medical professional explaining how a medical condition affects your housing needs
- Critical/Essential Support Needs: If you need to move to receive or provide essential care and support, please provide:
 - A letter from a relevant practitioner (e.g. GP, social worker, care coordinator) stating:
 - The medical diagnosis
 - The type of care/support required or provided

- Why this support cannot be delivered by anyone or any service in your current area
- Support from a Family Member in Dorset: If your move is related to receiving support from a family member living in the Dorset Council area, please provide:
 - Proof that your family member has lived in Dorset for more than 2 years (e.g. utility bill, tenancy agreement)
 - A letter confirming your relationship to them
 - A statement outlining the support they will be providing

4. Overcrowding

Provide:

- Copy of current tenancy agreement showing number of bedrooms in the property or
- Letter from Letting agent or landlord confirming the number of bedrooms in the property
- If living with family, a breakdown of all household members

5. Pregnancy

If any individual included in your Housing Register application is pregnant, please provide:

- Mat BI certificate (usually provided on or around 20 weeks)

Appendix Six – Parish List

A

Abbotsbury Parish, Affpuddle and Turnerspudde Parish, Alderholt Parish, Alton Pancras Parish, Anderson Parish, Arne Parish, Ashmore Parish, Askerswell Parish, Athelhampton and Puddletown Parish

B

Batcombe Parish, Beaminster Town Council, Beer Hackett Parish, Bere Regis Parish, Bettiscombe Parish, Bincombe Parish, Bishop's Caundle Parish, *Blandford Forum Town Council, Blandford St Mary Parish, Bloxworth Parish, Bourton Parish, Bradford Abbas Parish, Bradford Peverell Parish, *Bridport Town Council, Broadmayne Parish, Broadwindsor Parish, Bryanston Parish, Buckland Newton Parish, Burleston and Tolpuddle Parish, Burstock Parish, Burton Bradstock Parish

C

Cann Parish, Castleton Parish, Catherston Leweston Parish, Cattistock Parish, Caundle Marsh Parish, Cerne Abbas Parish, Chalbury Parish, Chaldon Herring Parish, Charlton Marshall Parish, Charminster Parish, Charmouth Parish, Cheselbourne Parish, Chetnole Parish, Chettle Parish, *Chickerell Town Council, Chideock Parish, Chilcombe Parish, Child Okeford Parish, Chilfrome Parish, Church Knowle Parish, Clifton Maybank Parish, *Colehill Parish, Compton Abbas Parish, Compton Valence Parish, Coombe Keynes Parish, Corfe Castle Parish, *Corfe Mullen Town Council, Corscombe Parish, Cranborne Parish, Crichel Parish, Crossways Parish

D

Dewlish Parish, *Dorchester Town Council, Durweston Parish

E

East Chelborough Parish, East Holme Parish, East Lulworth Parish, East Orchard Parish, East Stoke Parish, East Stour Parish, Edmondsham Parish, Evershot Parish

F

Farnham Parish, *Ferndown Town Council, Fifehead Magdalen Parish, Fifehead Neville Parish, Fleet Parish, Folke Parish, Fontmell Magna Parish, Frampton Parish, Frome St Quintin Parish, Frome Vauchurch Parish

G

*Gillingham Town Council, Glanvilles Wootton Parish, Goathill Parish, Godmanstone Parish, Gussage All Saints Parish, Gussage St Michael Parish

H

Halstock Parish, Hammoon Parish, Hanford Parish, Haydon Parish, Hazelbury Bryan Parish, Hermitage Parish, Hilfield Parish, Hilton Parish, Hinton Parish, Hinton St Mary Parish, Holnest Parish, Holt Parish, Holwell Parish, Hooke Parish, Horton Parish

I

Ibberton Parish, Iwerne Courtney (Shroton) Parish, Iwerne Minster Parish, Iwerne Stepleton Parish

K

Kimmeridge Parish, Kington Magna Parish

L

Langton Herring Parish, Langton Long Parish, Langton Matravers Parish, Leigh Parish, Leweston Parish, Lillington Parish, Littlebredy Parish, Litton Cheney Parish, Loders Parish, Long Bredy and Kingston Russell Parish, Longburton Parish, Lydlinch Parish, *Lyme Regis Town Council, Lytchett Matravers Parish, *Lytchett Minster and Upton Town Council

M

Maiden Newton Parish, Manston Parish, Mapperton Parish, Mappowder Parish, Margaret Marsh Parish, Marnhull Parish, Marshwood Parish, Melbury Abbas Parish, Melbury Bubb Parish, Melbury Osmond Parish, Melbury Sampford Parish, Melcombe Horsey Parish, Milborne St Andrew Parish, Milton Abbas Parish, Minterne Magna Parish, Morden Parish, Moreton Parish, Mosterton Parish, Motcombe Parish

N

Nether Cerne Parish, Nether Compton Parish, Netherbury Parish, North Poorton Parish, North Wootton Parish

O

Osborne Parish, Okeford Fitzpaine Parish, Osmington Parish, Over Compton Parish, Owermoigne Parish

P

Pamphill Parish, Piddlehinton Parish, Piddletrenthide Parish, Pilsdon Parish, Pimperne Parish, Portesham Parish, *Portland Town Council, Powerstock Parish, Poxwell Parish, Poyntington Parish, Pulham Parish, Puncknowle Parish, Purse Caundle Parish

R

Rampisham Parish, Ryme Intrinseca Parish

S

Sandford Orcas Parish, Seaborough Parish, *Shaftesbury Town Council, Shapwick Parish, *Sherborne Town Council, Shillingstone Parish, Shipton Gorge Parish, Silton Parish, Sixpenny Handley and Pentridge Parish, South Perrott Parish, Spetisbury Parish, St Leonards and St Ives Parish, Stalbridge Town Council, Stanton St Gabriel Parish, Steeple with Tyneham Parish, Stinsford Parish, Stockwood Parish, Stoke Abbott Parish, Stoke Wake Parish, Stour Provost Parish, Stourpaine Parish, Stourton Caundle Parish, Stratton Parish, Studland Parish, Sturminster Marshall Parish, Sturminster Newton Town Council, Sutton Waldron Parish, *Swanage Town Council, Swyre Parish, Sydling St Nicholas Parish, Symondsburys Parish

T

Tarrant Crawford Parish, Tarrant Gunville Parish, Tarrant Hinton Parish, Tarrant Keyneston Parish, Tarrant Launceston Parish, Tarrant Monkton Parish, Tarrant Rawston Parish, Tarrant Rushton Parish, Thorncombe Parish, Thornford Parish, Tincleton Parish, Todber Parish, Toller Fratrum Parish, Toller Porcorum Parish, Trent Parish, Turnworth Parish

U

Up Cerne Parish

V

*Verwood Town Council

W

Wareham St Martin Parish, *Wareham Town Council, Warmwell Parish, West Chelborough Parish, West Compton Parish, West Knighton Parish, West Lulworth Parish, *West Moors Town Council, West Orchard Parish, West Parley Parish, West Stafford Parish, West Stour Parish, *Weymouth Town Council, Whitchurch Canonorum Parish, Whitcombe Parish, *Wimborne Minster Town Council, Wimborne St Giles Parish, Winfrith Newburgh and East Knighton Parish, Winterborne Came Parish, Winterborne Clenston Parish, Winterborne Herringston Parish, Winterborne Houghton Parish, Winterborne Kingston Parish, Winterborne Monkton Parish, Winterborne St Martin Parish, Winterborne Stickland Parish, Winterborne Whitechurch Parish, Winterborne Zelston Parish, Winterbourne Abbas Parish, Winterbourne Steepleton Parish, Witchampton Parish, Woodlands Parish, Woodsford Parish, Wool Parish, Woolland Parish, Wootton Fitzpaine Parish, Worth Matravers Parish, Wraxall Parish, Wynford Eagle Parish

Y

Yetminster Parish

* Properties in these parishes would not be included within the rural allocation process and would not normally have restrictive letting criteria unless associated with a Community Land Trust (CLT) scheme.

Glossary of terms

This section shows the key definitions used in this Policy.

Allocation	When Dorset Council nominates a person to be an assured tenant of accommodation held by a private registered provider of social housing.
Eligibility	The rules set out in UK immigration law, which Dorset Council must follow to check by the nationality which persons can and cannot be allocated social housing.
Qualification	The criteria Dorset Council has chosen to decide which persons are entitled to join its housing register.
The housing register	The list of people to whom Dorset Council can allocate social housing.
Allocation policy	The procedures (i.e. this document), Dorset Council follows when allocating social housing, which includes including all aspects of the allocations processes and descriptions of persons who will make decisions.
Notifications	Decisions made Dorset Council about a person's application to join the housing register, including the extent of priority they are entitled to, or to remain on the housing register.
Review	A person's right to ask Dorset Council to reconsider a decision made about their housing register application.
Review procedure	The rules Dorset Council shall follow when carry out a review of a decision.
Case	The information held by Dorset Council about a person on the housing register.
Applications	The process people must following when applying to join the housing register.
Choice	The way by which people can express a preference about the type of social housing they might be allocated.

Banding	The way Dorset Council prioritises people when selecting someone on the housing register for an allocation of social housing.
Nominations	Arrangements held between Dorset Council and private registered providers of social housing for selecting a person on the housing register for a social rented home available to-let.
Dorset Council	The area of the local authority district.
Private Registered Provider	Organisations that own social housing and are on the register of social landlords maintained by the Regulator of Social housing and are regulated by it.
False statements	When a person knowingly and recklessly provides false materials when applying for an allocation of social housing, which is a criminal act
Withholding information	When a person knowingly withholds information about the application for allocation of social housing, which is a criminal act.
Local lettings policy	A set rules explaining how the usual rules for allocating social housing will be changed for particular types of homes, or particular locations of homes or particular types of people.
Public portal	Online software system used by Dorset Council, which allows people to apply to join the housing register, view and express a preference for home advertised as available to-let, receive notifications of decisions and more.

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Housing Allocation Consultation

Consultation response analysis report produced by the
Consultation and Engagement Team – Dorset Council

Consultation Response Report

What was the consultation about?	The Council has a public law duty to operate a Housing Allocation Scheme, like all local authorities. This scheme explains how to register for housing, how applications are assessed, and how properties are allocated. Dorset Council is required to periodically review its Housing Allocation Scheme. The current housing allocation scheme was introduced in 2021. The Council intends to amend its Housing Allocation Schemes, so that it continues to meet legal requirements and good practice standards. The proposed policy makes some changes that will affect households on the current housing register. The consultation was to hear the public's views to help shape the new policy.
Over what period did the consultation run?	The consultation ran from 02/06/25 to 24/08/25.
What consultation methods were used?	This consultation was available through an online survey and a paper version of the survey. The consultation was promoted widely through both the local press and social media. The consultation had a separate communications plan and consultation plan prepared beforehand.
How many responses were received overall?	713 overall responses were received
How representative is the response to the wider population?	53.7% of responses were from Housing Register applicants; 22.0% were members of the public; 16.8% were Social Housing tenants; Registered Providers and Parish/Town Councils were 1.0% respectively; 0.4% were from other organisations, 2.4% were Elected Members; 0.1% were voluntary organisations and 2.7% identified themselves as 'other'. There were significantly more female respondents (71.0%) than male (23.1%). 32.2% of the overall response were from people aged 60 and above, 39.0% from those aged between 40 and 59 with 24.8% 39 or below. 37.1% of respondents identified as having a disability.
Where will the results be published?	Results will be published on the council's website www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk and on Dorset Council's consultation platform
How will the results be used?	Results from this survey will be used to inform the next steps of the process.

Who has produced this report?	Consultation and Engagement Team, Dorset Council, September 2025

Background

Local authorities are required under Part 6 of the Housing Act 1996 to have a housing allocations policy and to ensure social housing allocated accordingly. In 2021 we adopted our first allocations policy. A review of that policy has been carried out along with a consultation, and the findings will inform the new policy due in 2026.

The Consultation

The consultation survey was aimed at Dorset Council residents including those on the current housing register. It asked for their thoughts on the proposed changes.

Analysis Method

Responses to closed questions were reviewed and summarised, with the source of each dataset clearly shown in the report's base notes. All consultation questions and their results are included. For open-ended comments, we looked for common themes where enough people responded to make patterns clear. These themes were grouped and reported based on how often each issue was mentioned.

Note: Figures may not always total precisely due to rounding.

Executive Summary

Dorset Council undertook a public consultation from 2 June to 24 August 2025 to gather feedback on proposed changes to its Housing Allocation Policy. The consultation aimed to ensure the policy remains legally compliant, reflects best practice, and continues to meet the needs of residents. A total of **713 responses** were received, with the majority (53.7%) from current Housing Register applicants.

Key Findings

Criteria Changes:

- **Residency Requirement:** 66% supported the requirement for applicants to be residents in Dorset by choice. However, support dropped to 55% for changing the qualifying period to two years, with higher opposition from the general public.

- **Close Family Connection:** 70.3% agreed with recognising close family ties in Dorset. Support for the two-year timeframe was lower (54.1%), again with higher disagreement among the public.
- **Employment-Based Eligibility:** 62.7% supported recognising employment of 16+ hours/week in Dorset. The two-year employment requirement received 57.6% support, with stronger backing from the public than tenants or applicants.

Removal of Criteria:

- **Criteria 4:** 41.2% supported its removal, but 31.6% were neutral, indicating uncertainty.
- **Older People with No Local Connection:** 74.6% supported removal, with strongest support from the public (88.4%).
- **Housing-Related Debt:** 53.6% supported removal, though 25.9% were neutral and 15.6% opposed.
- **Banding System:**
 - **New Band Names:** 49.2% supported the proposed names, with 29.4% neutral and 18.8% opposed.
 - **Banding Criteria:** 54.6% supported the proposed criteria, with Housing Register applicants showing the highest agreement (58.4%).
- **Special Groups:**
 - **Armed Forces Community:** 53% supported the proposed banding, though 28% were neutral.
 - **Care Leavers & Tenancy Capability:** 54.1% supported the proposed requirements, with 32.1% neutral.
- **Other Proposals:**
 - **Savings & Earnings Thresholds:** 63.3% supported the proposed criteria.
 - **Refusal of Nominations:** 74.2% supported allowing up to three refusals; 59.5% agreed with reducing banding for 12 months after three refusals.
 - **Quotas:** 50.4% supported inclusion of quotas, with 33.2% neutral.
 - **Overcrowding Assessment:** 55.9% supported using the bedroom standard over Local Housing Allowance criteria.
 - **Direct Lets for Homeless Households:** 65.4% supported this approach.

Conclusion

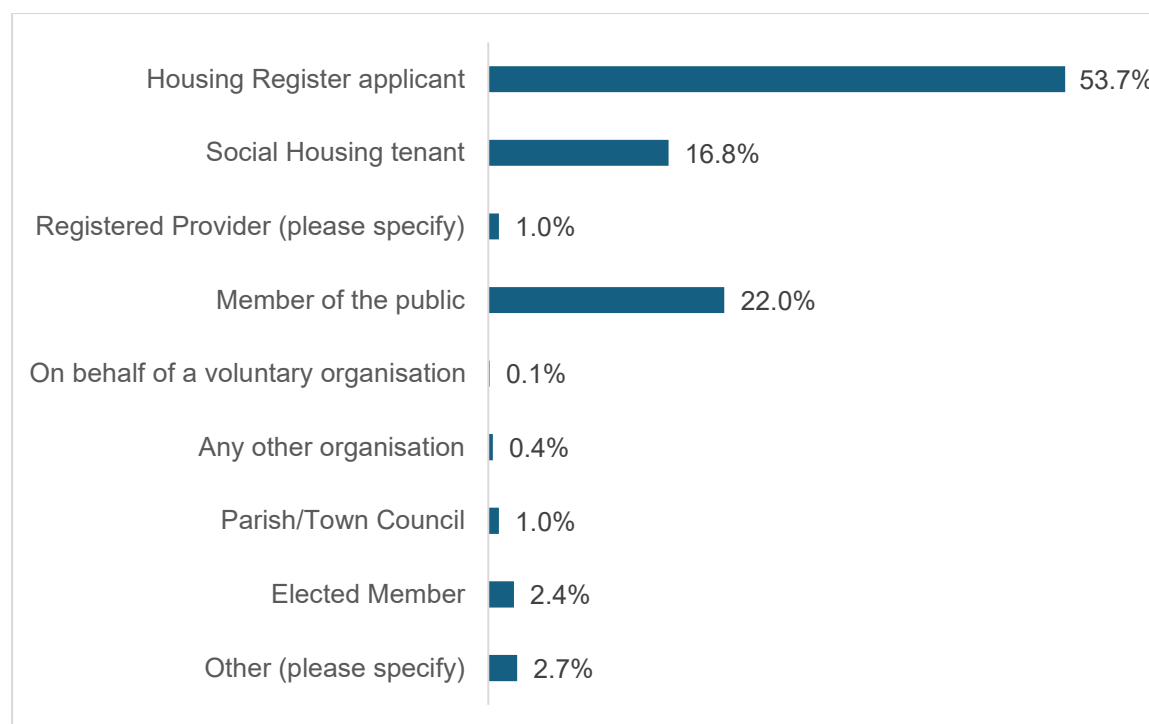
The consultation revealed broad support for many of the proposed changes, particularly around local connection, employment, and simplifying the banding

system. However, some proposals, especially those involving timeframes and removal of certain categories, produced mixed views or uncertainty.

Data Analysis

Q1. I am responding as a:

Base: n-710



Option	Total	Percent
Housing Register applicant	381	53.7%
Social Housing tenant	119	16.8%
Registered Provider (please specify)	7	1.0%
Member of the public	156	22.0%
On behalf of a voluntary organisation	1	0.1%
Any other organisation	3	0.4%
Parish/Town Council	7	1.0%
Elected Member	17	2.4%
Other (please specify)	19	2.7%

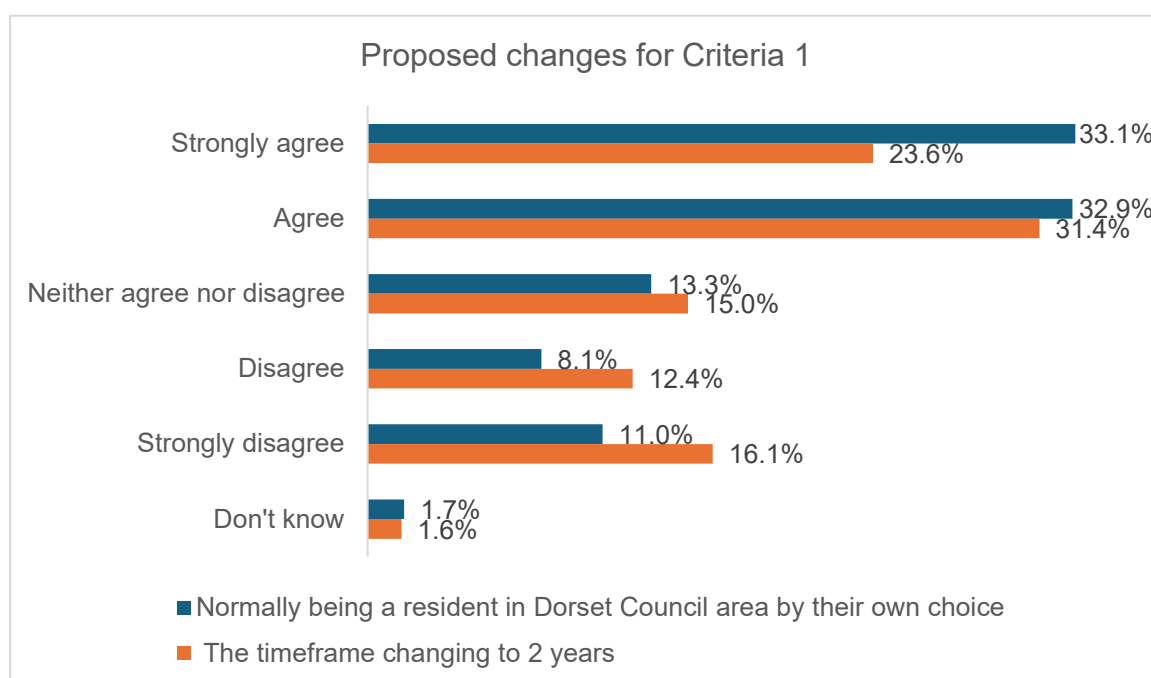
The majority of responses (53.7%) came from Housing Register applicants, indicating a strong interest or concern from individuals actively seeking housing.

Members of the public made up the second-largest group at 22.0%, followed by Social Housing tenants at 16.8%, suggesting broader community engagement beyond those directly involved in housing services. Smaller proportions of responses came from Elected Members (2.4%), Other (2.7%), and Registered Providers and Parish/Town Councils (each at 1.0%). Minimal input was received from voluntary organisations (0.1%) and other organisations (0.4%). Overall, the data suggests that the consultation was most effective in reaching individuals directly affected by housing issues.

Respondent type	Respondent details
Registered Provider	Abri
Registered Provider	Aster Group
Registered Provider	Supported Living
Registered Provider	Aster
Registered Provider	Abri
Registered Provider	Magna Housing
Registered Provider	BCHA
Other	Local person wants housing
Other	Awaiting rehousing from MAGNA
Other	Council house tenant, and currently on bidding site waiting for housing
Other	I'm on the housing register and also work in supported accommodation
Other	Home for Ukraine
Other	Mother of a housing register applicant
Other	I am a tenant but am waiting for a three bed property
Other	Planning consultant
Other	carer for social housing tenant
Other	Housing Register applicant and Social Housing Tenant
Other	Dorset Council
Other	DC employee
Other	Housing Professional
Other	Mother of a tenant
Other	Property landlady
Other	Carer of Social Housing Register Applicant
Other	Householder
Other	Local resident who also works within housing
Other	Professional supporting young people

Q2. How much do you agree or disagree with the proposed changes for Criteria 1?

Base: Normally being a resident in Dorset Council area by their own choice (n -702),
The timeframe changing to 2 years (n-695)



Criteria 1: Normally being a resident in Dorset Council area by their own choice	Total	Percent
Strongly agree	232	33.1%
Agree	231	32.9%
Neither agree nor disagree	93	13.3%
Disagree	57	8.1%
Strongly disagree	77	11.0%
Don't know	12	1.7%

Criteria 1: The timeframe changing to 2 years	Total	Percent
Strongly agree	164	23.6%
Agree	218	31.4%
Neither agree nor disagree	104	15.0%
Disagree	86	12.4%
Strongly disagree	112	16.1%
Don't know	11	1.6%

The results for Criteria 1 indicate stronger support for the proposal that individuals should normally be residents in the Dorset Council area by their own choice, with 66% of respondents either agreeing or strongly agreeing. In contrast, the proposed change to extend the residency timeframe to two years received comparatively less support, with 55% expressing agreement.

Opposition to the two-year timeframe was notably higher, with 28.5% disagreeing or strongly disagreeing, compared to 19.1% for the residency criteria. These findings

indicate that while there is broad support for the principle of voluntary residency, the proposed change to the two-year timeframe appears to be more contentious and may benefit from clearer communication or further justification to enhance public understanding and acceptance.

Looking at different respondent types, females had a sizeable difference for the timeframe changing to 2 years proposal versus males. Respondents identifying as male had lower levels of agreement than both females and the overall data, at 46.2% (73), with higher levels of disagreement at 34.8% (55).

Female respondents however were slightly higher than the overall in terms of agreement, and lower for disagreement. 58.5% (288) expressed agreement, with 25.2% (124) disagreeing or strongly disagreeing.

Looking across the respondent types in the tables below, support for residency by choice has a majority agreement across all groups. However, overall opposition is higher for members of the public by comparison.

The data for the proposed 2-year timeframe shows a sharp divide, especially among the public. This group had a disagreement rate of (42.1%) compared to social housing tenants (26.9%) and housing register applicants (22.8%).

Criteria 1: Normally being a resident in Dorset Council area by their own choice

	Overall agreement	Overall disagreement
Social Housing tenant	67.0%	16.1%
Housing Register applicant	67.1%	15.5%
Member of the public	61.3%	29.7%

Base: Social Housing tenant (n-118); Housing Register applicant (n-374); Member of the public (n-155)

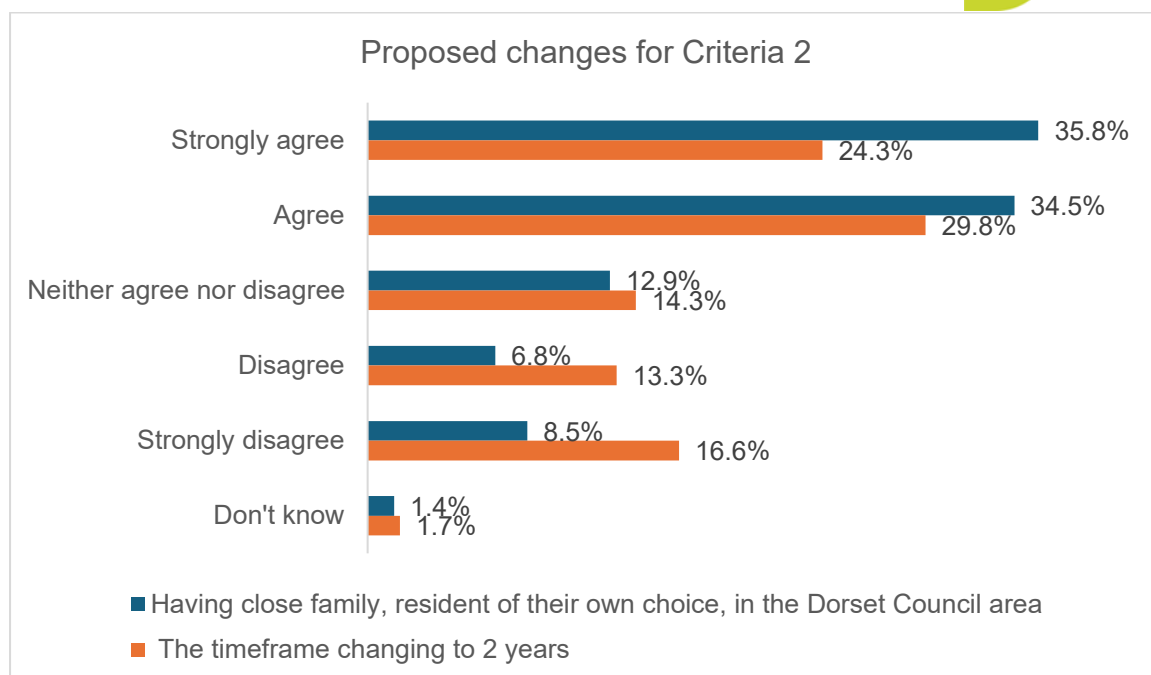
Criteria 1: The timeframe changing to 2 years

	Overall agreement	Overall disagreement
Social Housing tenant	62.2%	26.9%
Housing Register applicant	55.0%	22.8%
Member of the public	48.0%	42.1%

Base: Social Housing tenant (n-119); Housing Register applicant (n-369); Member of the public (n-152)

Q3. How much do you agree or disagree with the proposed changes to Criteria 2?

Base: Having close family, resident of their own choice, in the Dorset Council area (n-704), The timeframe changing to 2 years (n-692)



Criteria 2: Having close family, resident of their own choice, in the Dorset Council area	Total	Percent
Strongly agree	252	35.8%
Agree	243	34.5%
Neither agree nor disagree	91	12.9%
Disagree	48	6.8%
Strongly disagree	60	8.5%
Don't know	10	1.4%

Criteria 2: The timeframe changing to 2 years	Total	Percent
Strongly agree	168	24.3%
Agree	206	29.8%
Neither agree nor disagree	99	14.3%
Disagree	92	13.3%
Strongly disagree	115	16.6%
Don't know	12	1.7%

Results for Criteria 2 indicate stronger support for the proposal that individuals should have close family living in the Dorset Council area by their own choice, with 70.3% of respondents either agreeing or strongly agreeing. In contrast, the proposed change to reduce the residency timeframe to two years received comparatively less support, with 54.1% expressing agreement.

Opposition to the two-year timeframe was notably higher, with 29.9% disagreeing or strongly disagreeing, compared to 15.3% for the close family residency criteria. These findings suggest that while there is broad support for recognising voluntary family connections within the area, the proposed reduction to a two-year timeframe is

more divisive and may require additional explanation or outreach to build broader understanding and support.

For the having close family proposal, there are again similar differences between female and male respondents. As before, female respondents had higher levels of agreement than the both the overall and when compared with males, at 73.4% (365). Conversely, although still showing a clear majority, males had lower levels of agreement at 67.5% (108).

This trend continues for the second proposal too. 57.1% (278) of female respondents expressed agreement for the change to the timeframe, opposed to just under half of males, at 49.4% (48). Males also had higher levels of disagreement compared to the overall data and females in addition to this, with 34.2% (54) either disagreeing or strongly disagreeing. 27.1% (132) of female respondents expressed disagreement.

The data in the tables below demonstrate that Social Housing tenants and Housing Register tenants show the strongest agreement with the close family criteria at 70.9% and 70.1% respectively. In contrast, Members of the public show the highest disagreement with the proposed 2-year timeframe (46.4%), significantly more than Social Housing tenants (28.0%) and Housing Register applicants (22.8%).

These differences suggest that the public is more open to stricter residency requirements, while tenants are more supportive of both criteria.

Criteria 2: Having close family, resident of their own choice, in the Dorset Council area

	Overall agreement	Overall disagreement
Social Housing tenant	70.9%	17.1%
Housing Register applicant	70.1%	12.2%
Member of the public	68.2%	20.1%

Base: Social Housing tenant (n-117); Housing Register applicant (n-378); Member of the public (n-154)

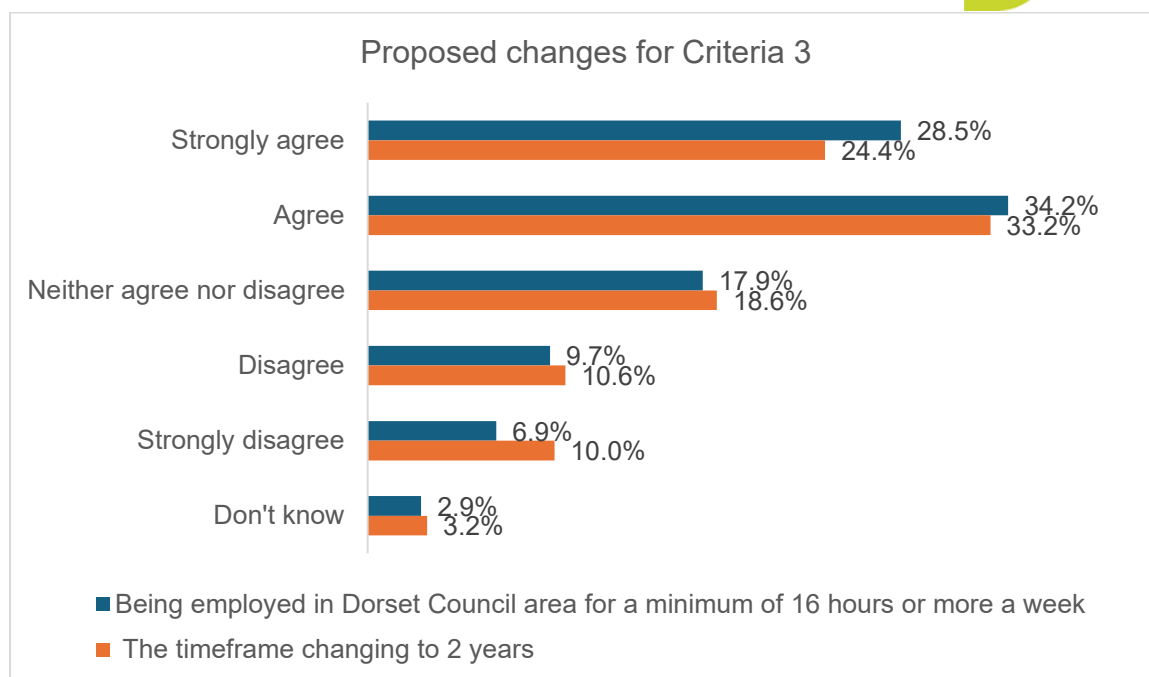
Criteria 2: The timeframe changing to 2 years

	Overall agreement	Overall disagreement
Social Housing tenant	56.8%	28.0%
Housing Register applicant	57.1%	22.8%
Member of the public	44.4%	46.4%

Base: Social Housing tenant (n-118); Housing Register applicant (n-368); Member of the public (n-151)

Q4. How much do you agree or disagree with the proposed changes for Criteria 3?

Base: Being employed in Dorset Council area for a minimum of 16 hours or more a week (n-699), The timeframe changing to 2 years (n-692)



Criteria 3: Being employed in Dorset Council area for a minimum of 16 hours or more a week	Total	Percent
Strongly agree	199	28.5%
Agree	239	34.2%
Neither agree nor disagree	125	17.9%
Disagree	68	9.7%
Strongly disagree	48	6.9%
Don't know	20	2.9%

Criteria 3: The timeframe changing to 2 years	Total	Percent
Strongly agree	169	24.4%
Agree	230	33.2%
Neither agree nor disagree	129	18.6%
Disagree	73	10.6%
Strongly disagree	69	10.0%
Don't know	22	3.2%

The findings for Criteria 3 show stronger support for the proposal that individuals working at least 16 hours per week in the Dorset Council area should be recognised, with 62.7% of respondents expressing agreement or strong agreement. In comparison, the proposal to introduce a two-year employment timeframe received slightly lower backing, with 57.6% in favour.

Levels of disagreement were more pronounced for the two-year timeframe, with 20.6% of respondents disagreeing or strongly disagreeing, compared

to 16.6% for the current employment criteria. These results suggest that while the principle of acknowledging local employment is broadly accepted, the proposed timeframe adjustment has raised more concerns and may require additional context or clearer justification to strengthen public understanding and support.

Respondents that identified as disabled had lower levels of agreement compared to the overall for the being employed in the Dorset Council area proposal, with 55.2% (144) agreeing. A higher percentage also remained neutral, with 22.6% (59) neither agreeing nor disagreeing with the proposal.

Similarly, for the timeframe changing to 2 years, 50% (126) of respondents that identified as disabled agreed, which is lower than the overall levels of agreement. Again, a higher percentage responded neutrally, with 23.4% (59) answering so.

Members of the public show the highest agreement with both the employment criteria (71.1%) and the 2-year timeframe (63.8%). This is noticeably more than Social Housing tenants (59.0% and 55.3%) and Housing Register applicants (60.1% and 54.3%). Disagreement levels are similar across all groups for both aspects, but the public's stronger support for the employment-based criteria stands out as the key difference.

Criteria 3: Being employed in Dorset Council area for a minimum of 16 hours or more a week

	Overall agreement	Overall disagreement
Social Housing tenant	59.0%	18.8%
Housing Register applicant	60.1%	15.2%
Member of the public	71.1%	18.4%

Base: Social Housing tenant (n-117); Housing Register applicant (n-376); Member of the public (n-152)

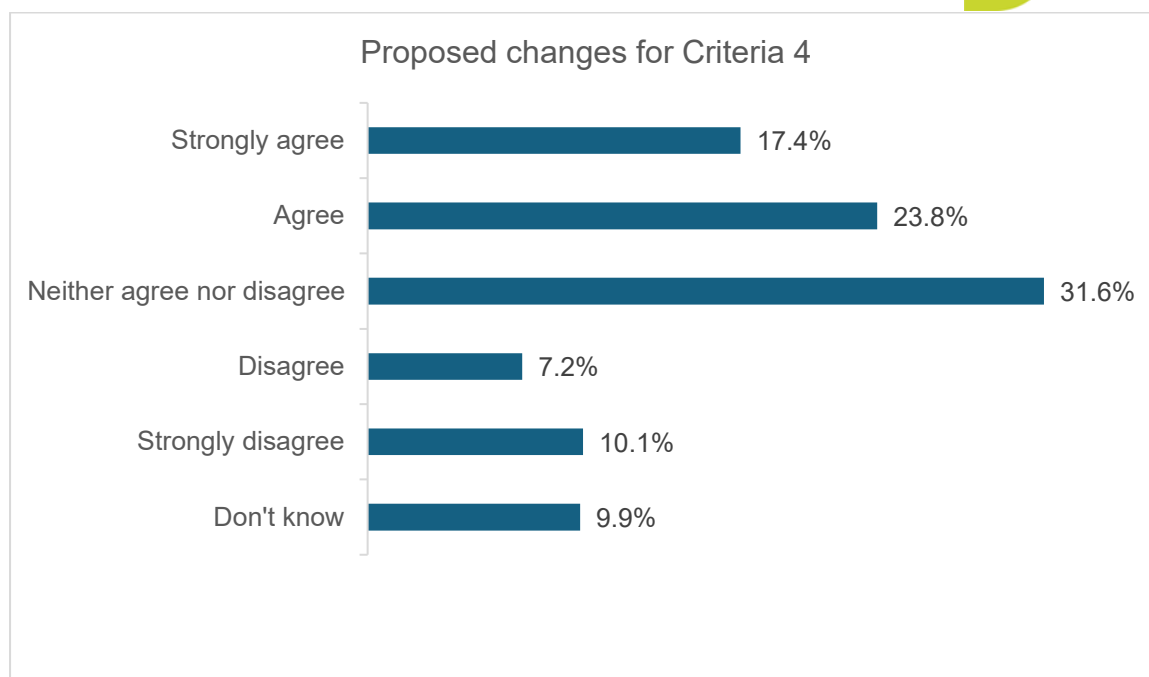
Criteria 3: The timeframe changing to 2 years

	Overall agreement	Overall disagreement
Social Housing tenant	55.3%	21.1%
Housing Register applicant	54.3%	20.5%
Member of the public	63.8%	20.4%

Base: Social Housing tenant (n-114); Housing Register applicant (n-370); Member of the public (n-152)

Q5. How much do you agree or disagree with the proposals for Criteria 4 to be removed?

Base: n-706



Option	Total	Percent
Strongly agree	123	17.4%
Agree	168	23.8%
Neither agree nor disagree	223	31.6%
Disagree	51	7.2%
Strongly disagree	71	10.1%
Don't know	70	9.9%

The responses to the proposal to remove criteria 4 show a relatively mixed picture. A combined total of 41.2% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed with the removal, while 17.3% expressed disagreement. Notably, the largest proportion of respondents (31.6%) neither agreed nor disagreed, and a further 9.9% selected 'Don't know,' indicating a significant level of uncertainty or ambivalence. These results suggest that while there is some support for removing criteria 4, a substantial portion of respondents are either undecided or unsure. This may reflect a lack of clarity around the implications of the change and could benefit from further explanation or engagement.

Housing Register applicants show the highest agreement with the removal (43.7%) and the lowest disagreement (13.4%). In contrast, members of the public have a higher disagreement (22.9%) than both Social Housing tenants (19.3%) and particularly housing register applicants (13.4%), indicating more concern about removing this criterion.

	Overall agreement	Overall disagreement

Social Housing tenant	37.0%	19.3%
Housing Register applicant	43.7%	13.4%
Member of the public	37.9%	22.9%

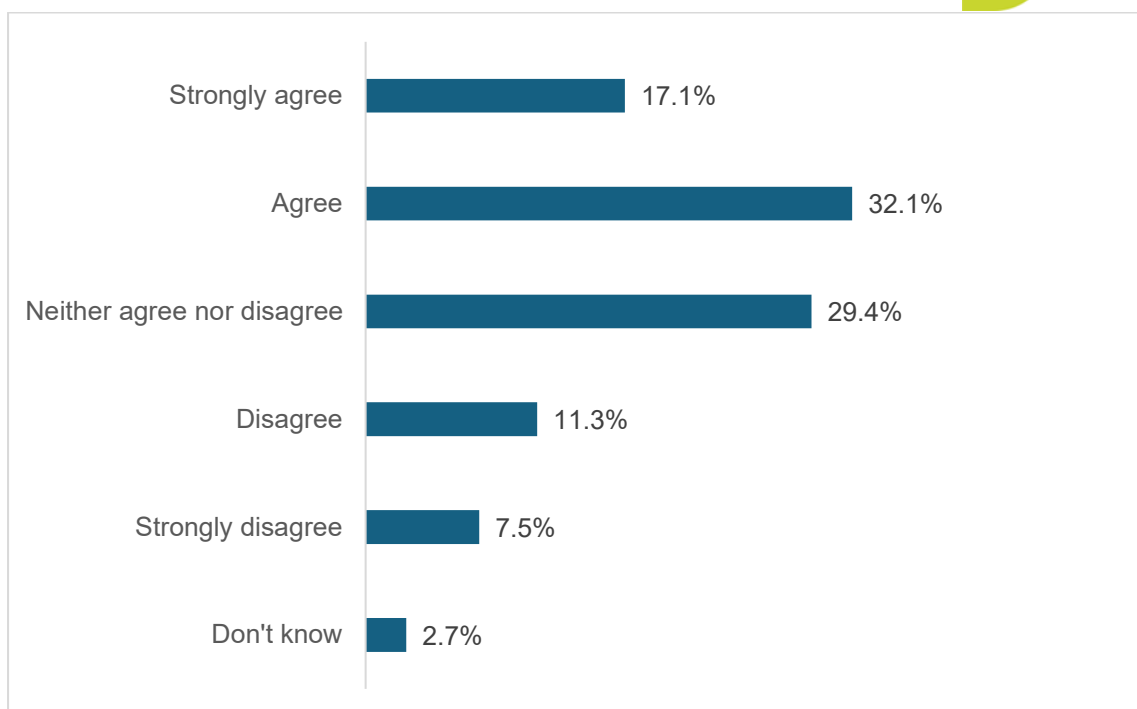
Base: Social Housing tenant (n-119); Housing Register applicant (n-380); Member of the public (n-153)

Q6. If you disagree with any of the criteria proposals, please let us know which ones and why

Comment/theme	Total
Comments against proposals re changes to residency in area	101
Comments against changes to close family connection (5yrs to 2 yrs)	86
Local houses for local people / locals should take priority	69
Personal issues re allocation system / comments about personal situation	67
Comments against changes to increase from 1 to 2 yrs in paid employment	66
Comments relating s106 and location requirements	35
Retired / disability category / Equality, Diversity and Inclusion comments	34
Not enough suitable property / property allocation	29
Uncategorised statement	24
Comments supporting changes to close family connection (5yrs to 2 yrs)	20
General comments about accessibility of survey / wording of policy	11
Comments in support of change to residency in area	9
Comments re community and infrastructure needs	7
No change	5
Comments re cross border allocation	4
Comments supporting changes to increase from 1 to 2 yrs in paid employment	4
Need to give single people higher priority / more property availability	2

Q7. How much do you agree or disagree with the proposed new band names above?

Base: n-708



Option	Total	Percent
Strongly agree	121	17.1%
Agree	227	32.1%
Neither agree nor disagree	208	29.4%
Disagree	80	11.3%
Strongly disagree	53	7.5%
Don't know	19	2.7%

The responses to the proposed new band names show a moderate level of support, with just under half (49.2%) of respondents either agreeing or strongly agreeing with the changes. However, a significant proportion (29.4%) neither agreed nor disagreed, suggesting a degree of ambivalence or uncertainty. Opposition was relatively low, with 18.8% expressing disagreement or strong disagreement, and 2.7% indicating they didn't know.

Members of the public show the lowest agreement (44.1%) and the highest disagreement (22.4%) compared to Social Housing tenants (51.3% agreement, 16.0% disagreement) and Housing Register applicants (51.2% agreement, 17.9% disagreement), indicating greater scepticism among the public toward the proposed naming changes.

	Overall agreement	Overall disagreement
Social Housing tenant	51.3%	16.0%
Housing Register applicant	51.2%	17.9%
Member of the public	44.1%	22.4%

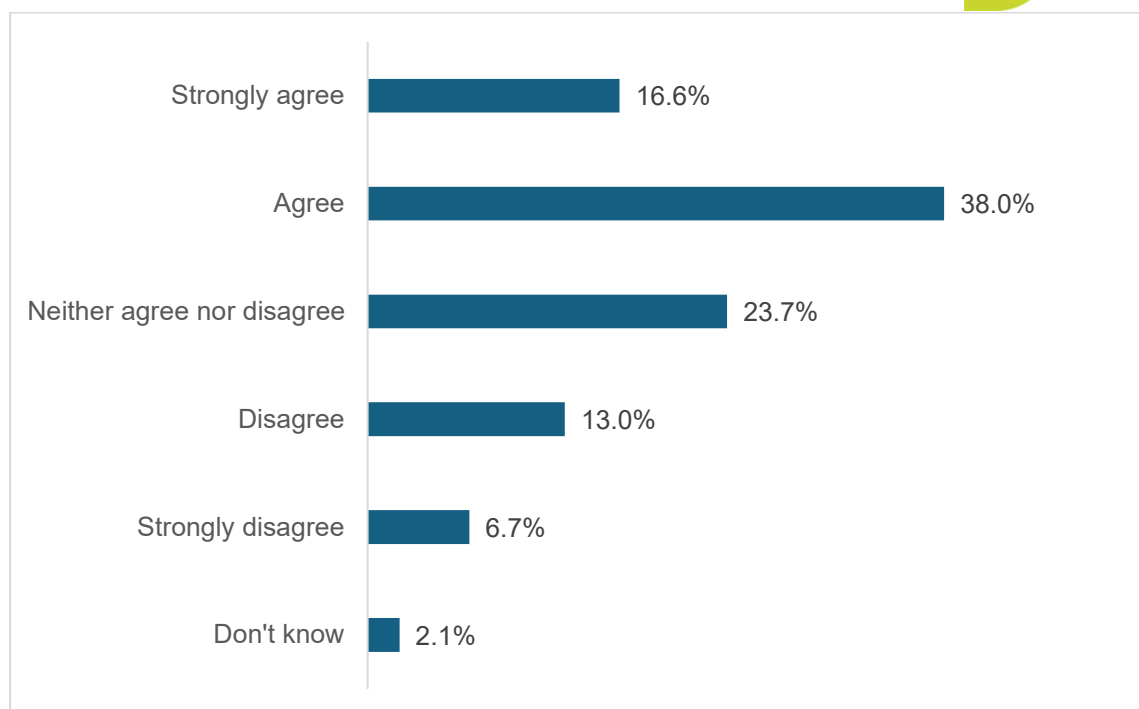
Base: Social Housing tenant (n=119); Housing Register applicant (n=381); Member of the public (n=152)

Q8. If you disagree with specific parts of the banding names, please specify which parts you do not agree with and explain your reasons

Comment/theme	Total
It doesn't matter/makes no difference	75
I don't understand the language used	38
Banding system isn't fair	34
Unmet' or 'other' seems disrespectful	22
I don't agree with the banding I am on	19
Priority level is above urgent need	10
Prioritise longer waits	9
Prioritise local people/UK citizens	8
Depends on the criteria for each band	6
You never get moved	5
I like the new criteria	3
Prioritise those who are employed	3
Need more affordable social housing	3
Observe individual cases	3
Band A should be medical and homelessness	3
Replace priority with 'immediate'	1
Basic human rights is an issue	1
Make it easier to downsize or house swap	1
Armed forces should not take priority	1
We need a sub banding system	1
Current banding easier to understand	1

Q9. How much do you agree or disagree with the banding criteria proposed?

Base: n-706



Option	Total	Percent
Strongly agree	117	16.6%
Agree	268	38.0%
Neither agree nor disagree	167	23.7%
Disagree	92	13.0%
Strongly disagree	47	6.7%
Don't know	15	2.1%

The proposal for the new banding criteria received a fair level of support, with an overall agreement of 54.6%. However, 23.7% neither agreed nor disagreed, and a further 2.1% selected 'Don't know,' suggesting that a notable portion of respondents may not feel strongly about the changes or may lack sufficient information to form an opinion.

Although not the majority view, 19.7% of respondents did express some level of opposition. These findings suggest that although the proposed criteria are broadly supported, a notable proportion of respondents remain uncertain or undecided about the changes.

Comparing against different respondents, there was a slight difference for those identifying as male. 60.9% (98) of males either agreed or strongly agreed, showing a higher level of support for the proposed banding criteria than the overall figures. Responses from females were closely aligned to the overall figures.

Housing Register applicants show the highest agreement (58.4%) and lowest disagreement (17.1%), indicating stronger support for the proposed criteria. In

contrast, Social Housing tenants (47.9% agreement, 25.2% disagreement) and members of the public (47.4% agreement, 24.3% disagreement) are more divided, with notably higher levels of disagreement.

	Overall agreement	Overall disagreement
Social Housing tenant	47.9%	25.2%
Housing Register applicant	58.4%	17.1%
Member of the public	47.4%	24.3%

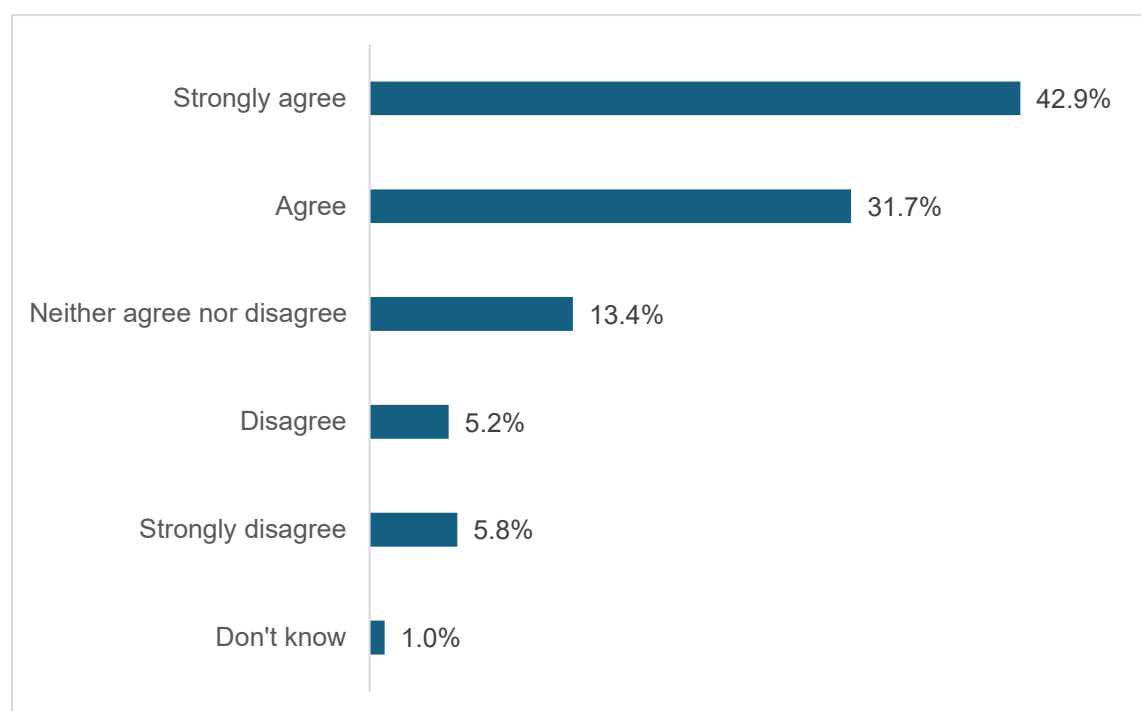
Base: Social Housing tenant (n-119); Housing Register applicant (n-380); Member of the public (n-152)

Q10. If you disagree with the banding criteria proposed, let us know why here:

Comment/theme	Total
Disagree with the grouping/banding	63
Other 'priority group' suggestions	44
Relates to personal circumstances	28
Should prioritise UK/local residents	21
Clarify definition/wording	18
Consider medical needs in banding	15
Free up bigger homes when household numbers have reduced	14
Consider disability in banding	9
Agree with proposals	7
Consider length of time on housing list	7
Need detail on 'how' these are changing	5
Groups missing from categories	5
System could be open to abuse	5
Uncategorised comment	5
It is confusing	5
Changing the banding/wording will not change the outcome	4
System is not fair	4
Recognise the varying age/abilities of pensioners	2
Refers to previous answer	2
Single people overlooked	2
People paying unaffordable private rental should be included	2
It is easier to understand	2
Previous banding was better	1
Overcrowding should be 1 or more bedrooms	1
Age should be a consideration	1
Only band 1 will be housed	1
Protections for tenants	1
Should identify affordable housing ownership	1
Consider timescales around age and room sharing	1

Q11. How much do you agree or disagree with removing the category 'Older people with no Local Connection'?

Base: n-709



Option	Total	Percent
Strongly agree	304	42.9%
Agree	225	31.7%
Neither agree nor disagree	95	13.4%
Disagree	37	5.2%
Strongly disagree	41	5.8%
Don't know	7	1.0%

The proposal to remove the category 'Older people with no Local Connection' received strong support, with an overall agreement of 74.6%. Only 11% expressed disagreement, while 13.4% neither agreed nor disagreed, and 1.0% selected 'Don't know.'

These results suggest a clear majority in favour of the removal, with relatively low levels of disagreement or uncertainty. The strength of support may reflect a shared view that local connection should be a consistent requirement across all applicant groups.

Members of the public show the strongest support for removal of 'older people with no local connection' category (88.4%) and the lowest disagreement (7.7%), followed by Social Housing tenants (79.8% agreement). Housing Register applicants are

slightly less supportive (67.3%) and show slightly higher disagreement (12.7%), marking them as the most cautious group on this proposal.

	Overall agreement	Overall disagreement
Social Housing tenant	79.8%	10.9%
Housing Register applicant	67.3%	12.7%
Member of the public	88.4%	7.7%

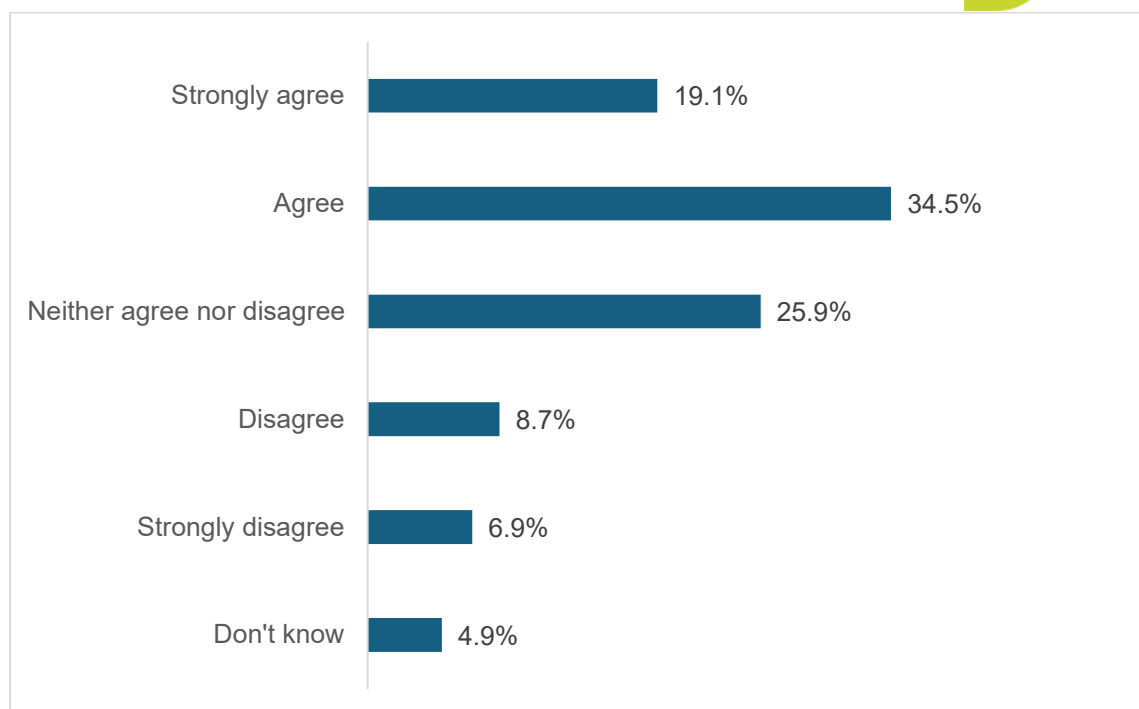
Base: Social Housing tenant (n-119); Housing Register applicant (n-379); Member of the public (n-155)

Q11. Disagree comments - Removing older persons housing no local connection

Comment/theme	Total
Locals should have first priority - "born and bred" / lived here for years	19
Need to move closer to family for support	11
Dorset 'local' but have 'no local connection' - either no family or not worked in DC area	11
Older people need support / are vulnerable / social care is expensive / ageing population	11
Support the removal of the 'Older Persons housing with no local connection'	10
Should be able to live where you want in the UK / able to swap	10
Comments relating to personal situation	10
Too much accommodation for older people, not enough for families	10
Disagree - would be unable to retire to the south coast /near the sea	8
Comment not categorised	7
Unclear about what 'local connection' means	6
Properties reserved for older people should not be on open market	6
Should be able to move within the DC area	4
Need to increase housing stock suitable for single AND older people	4
Concern for homeless older people	3
Properties reserved for older people could be used for general use	3
Difficult for older people to downsize to smaller/suitable property	2
Wording of changes don't help	2
Look at individual on case-by-case basis	1

Q12. How much do you agree or disagree with removing the category of 'housing related debt'?

Base: n-711



Option	Total	Percent
Strongly agree	136	19.1%
Agree	245	34.5%
Neither agree nor disagree	184	25.9%
Disagree	62	8.7%
Strongly disagree	49	6.9%
Don't know	35	4.9%

The proposal to remove the category 'Housing-related debt' received moderate support, with an overall agreement of 53.6%. However, 25.9% neither agreed nor disagreed, and 4.9% selected 'Don't know,' indicating a notable level of uncertainty or ambivalence.

Overall disagreement was relatively limited at 15.6%. These results suggest that while the proposal is generally supported, the significant proportion of neutral and unsure responses may reflect a need for greater clarity around the implications of removing this category.

Housing Register applicants show the highest agreement (55.9%) and the lowest disagreement (12.9%), indicating strong support for removal. In contrast, members of the public show similar agreement to Social Housing tenants (49.0% vs. 50.4%) but have a much higher disagreement (23.9%), suggesting greater concern among the public about removing this category.

	Overall agreement	Overall disagreement
Social Housing tenant	50.4%	14.3%
Housing Register applicant	55.9%	12.9%

Member of the public	49.0%	23.9%

Base: Social Housing tenant (n-119); Housing Register applicant (n-381); Member of the public (n-155)

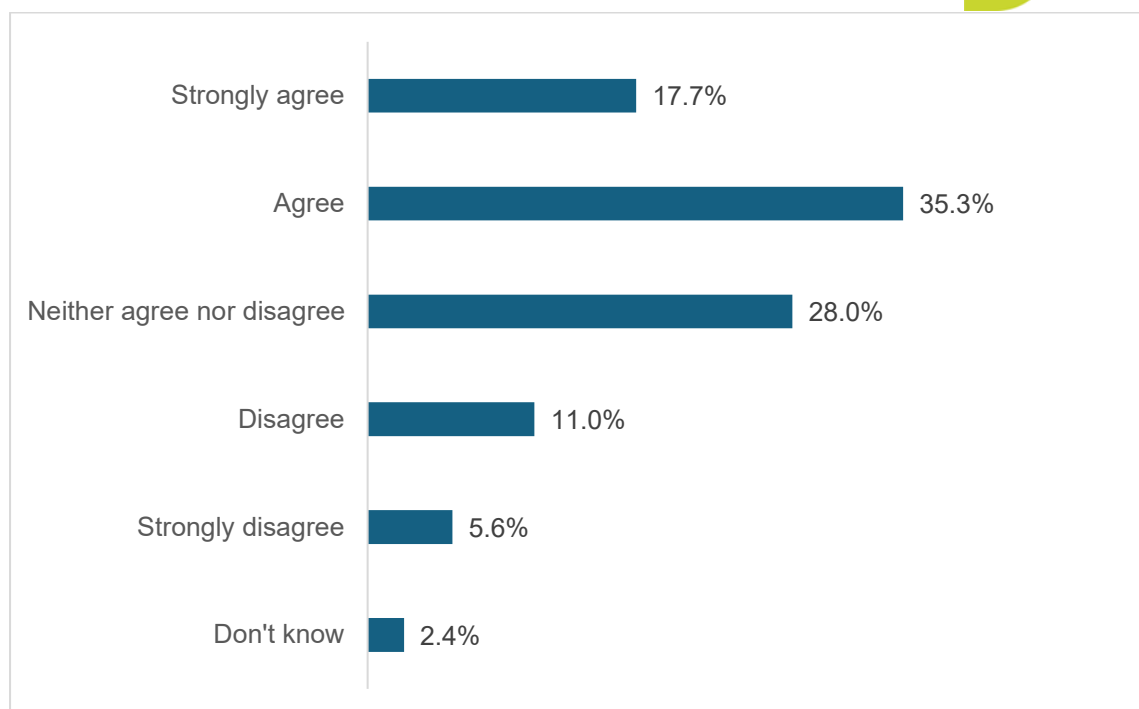
Q13. Removal of housing related debt- disagree comments

Comment/theme	Total
Perceived unfairness	25
Based on individual circumstances - consider the reasons	22
People should learn to budget/ manage debt	16
An 'easy way out' perpetuates the pattern	15
Should be based on people wilfully trying to improve their circumstances	12
Money/rent/debt should be prioritised before re-housing	8
They need help and support	7
Further detail/definition required	6
Non-payment shouldn't be rewarded	5
Personal circumstances comments	4
The state makes it too easy	4
There should be repercussions	3
People should have responsibility for what they owe	3
Don't know enough to comment	2
People without debt should have priority	2
Other	2
Creative ways to pay off the debt	1
Do not disagree - debt creates barriers	1
It will affect our communities negatively	1
No apparent change	1
Financial assessment should be included	1
People who can't pay, won't pay	1
It could make people more vulnerable	1
Moving could help/improve their financial situation	1

Q14. How much do you agree or disagree with the proposed banding criteria?

Armed Forces Community

Base: n-711



Option	Total	Percent
Strongly agree	126	17.7%
Agree	251	35.3%
Neither agree nor disagree	199	28.0%
Disagree	78	11.0%
Strongly disagree	40	5.6%
Don't know	17	2.4%

The proposed banding criteria for the Armed Forces Community received a fair level of support, with over half of respondents (53%) either agreeing or strongly agreeing. However, 28% neither agreed nor disagreed, and 2.4% selected 'Don't know,' indicating a degree of uncertainty or lack of strong opinion among a notable portion of respondents.

A smaller proportion of respondents (16.6%) expressed disagreement with the proposal. These findings suggest that while the criteria are generally viewed positively, the relatively high proportion of neutral responses may point to a need for further clarification or awareness around how the changes would affect this group.

Members of the public show the highest agreement (60.0%), noticeably more supportive than Social Housing tenants (47.9%) and Housing Register applicants (50.7%). Social Housing tenants also show the highest disagreement (22.7%), suggesting more reservations within that group compared to others.

	Overall agreement	Overall disagreement
Social Housing tenant	47.9%	22.7%
Housing Register applicant	50.7%	13.1%

Member of the public	60.0%	18.7%

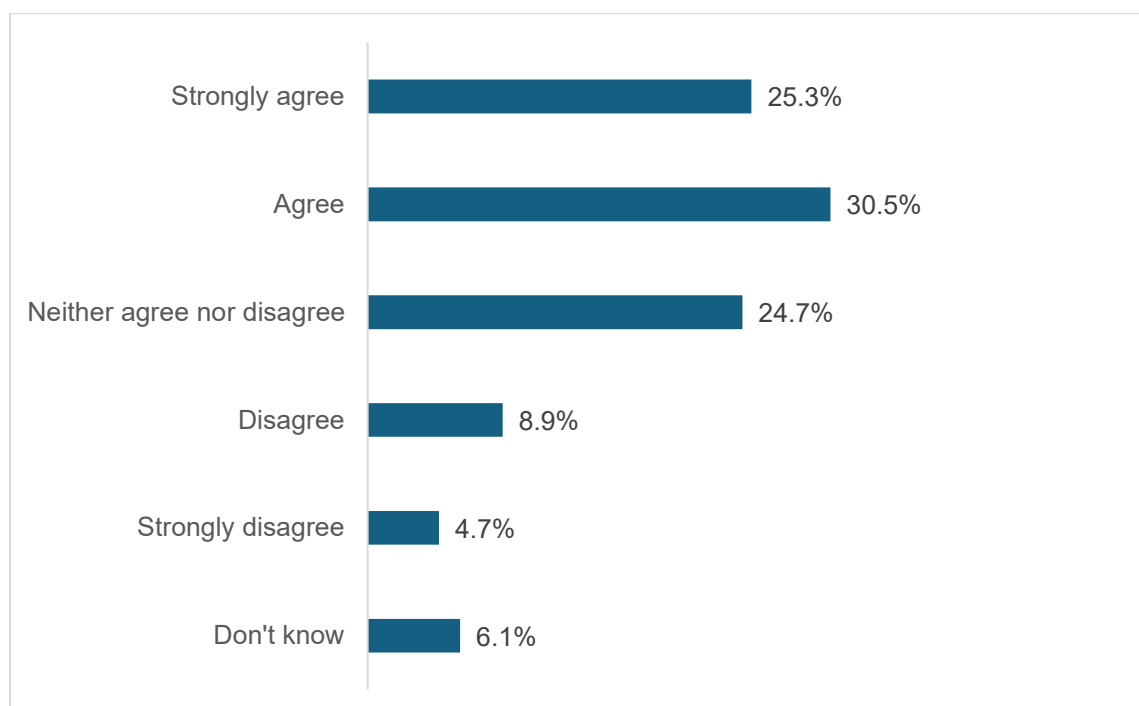
Base: Social Housing tenant (n-119); Housing Register applicant (n-381); Member of the public (n-155)

Q15. Disagree - Armed Forces Community

Comment/theme	Total
Placed on list according to need like everyone else / case by case basis/ Shouldn't have preference	28
Don't agree with adult family members	17
Should be higher band	13
MOD should help more / housing via work / not a council issue	13
Not fair / don't agree	13
Other comments	7
Only band 3 if local connection (family or work)	6
Agree with the current banding (3)	5
Should be lower band (4)	4
Comments relating to personal situation	4
Should be housed in county they originated from pre-armed forces	3
Should be for all 'blue light' personnel / why just armed forces	3
Only UK residents	1

Q16. How much do you agree or disagree with the proposal to apply all qualification criteria to those with an accepted homeless duty?

Base: n-709



Option	Total	Percent
Strongly agree	179	25.3%
Agree	216	30.5%
Neither agree nor disagree	175	24.7%
Disagree	63	8.9%
Strongly disagree	33	4.7%
Don't know	43	6.1%

A majority of respondents (55.8%) expressed support for applying all qualification criteria to individuals with an accepted homeless duty. Just under a quarter (24.7%) neither agreed nor disagreed, and 6.1% selected 'Don't know,' indicating that a significant portion of respondents may be uncertain or undecided about the implications of the change.

A smaller share of respondents (13.6%) expressed disagreement with the proposal. These findings suggest that while the proposal is generally supported, the level of neutrality and uncertainty may point to a need for clearer explanation of how the criteria would be applied in practice.

Social Housing tenants (59.7%) and Housing Register applicants (56.3%) show stronger agreement than members of the public (49.4%), who also show the highest disagreement (19.5%). This suggests the public is more cautious about applying full qualification criteria to those with a homeless duty.

	Overall agreement	Overall disagreement
Social Housing tenant	59.7%	15.1%
Housing Register applicant	56.3%	10.5%
Member of the public	49.4%	19.5%

Base: Social Housing tenant (n-119); Housing Register applicant (n-380); Member of the public (n-154)

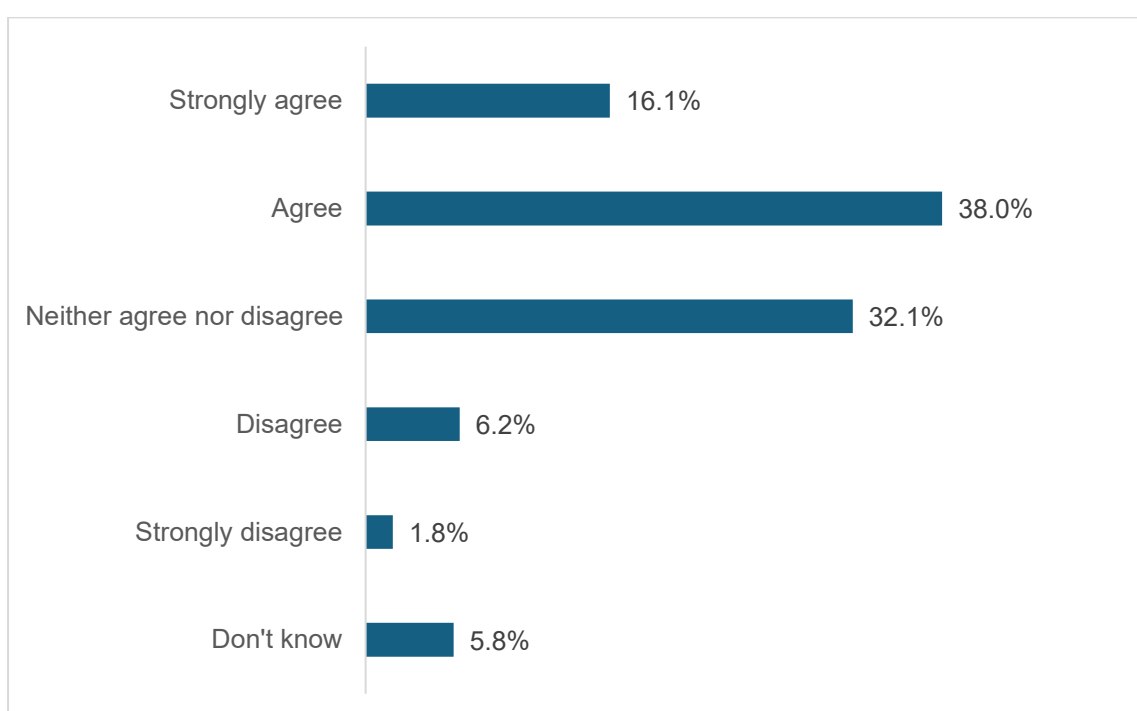
Q17. Disagree - Unacceptable Behaviour

Comment/theme	Total
Rent arrears on case by case / genuine reasons e.g. illness, cost of living / support re anti-social behaviour	33
Don't understand wording / proposal	23
Unacceptable behaviour shouldn't be tolerated / taken more seriously – anti-social behaviour affects neighbours - needs better policing	20
Don't agree with rent arrears - should be separate from noise / abuse	16
Homeless - not their fault, make difficult situation worse	13
Uncategorised comment	12
Rent arrears are unacceptable / pay on time / prioritise	11
Unacceptable behaviour should apply to everyone	9

Anti-social behaviour - respect property or should be moved out of area / not entitled to social housing	9
Should be at bottom of list / banned from social housing / penalty in allocation	9
Personal situation comment	6
Need more supported housing	2
Council has a responsibility for everyone	1

Q18. How much do you agree or disagree with the requirements proposed above for care leavers and for anyone that is incapable of holding a tenancy?

Base: n-708



Option	Total	Percent
Strongly agree	114	16.1%
Agree	269	38.0%
Neither agree nor disagree	227	32.1%
Disagree	44	6.2%
Strongly disagree	13	1.8%
Don't know	41	5.8%

The proposal received a fair level of support, with an overall agreement of 54.1%. Nearly a third of respondents (32.1%) neither agreed nor disagreed, and 5.8% selected 'Don't know,' suggesting that many respondents may be uncertain or lack strong views on the proposed changes.

Although not widespread, 8% of respondents did express disagreement. While the proposal was met with overall support, the significant number of neutral responses may point to a lack of clarity regarding how it would be implemented.

Members of the public show the highest agreement (57.4%) and the lowest disagreement (5.8%), indicating strong support and minimal concern. Housing Register applicants (51.9%) and Social Housing tenants (52.1%) also show support, but with higher disagreement levels (8.2% and 10.9% respectively) highlighting that the public is notably more unified in support compared to the other groups

	Overall agreement	Overall disagreement
Social Housing tenant	52.1%	10.9%
Housing Register applicant	51.9%	8.2%
Member of the public	57.4%	5.8%

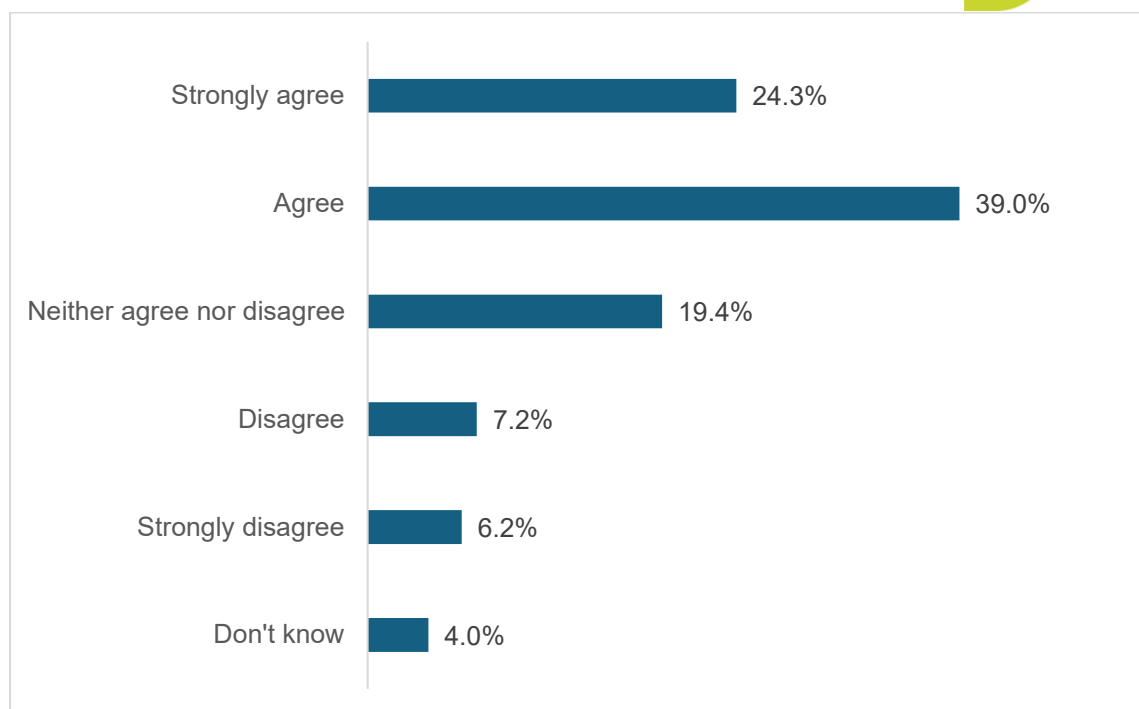
Base: Social Housing tenant (n-119); Housing Register applicant (n-378); Member of the public (n-155)

Q19. Guarantor requirements - disagree comments

Comment/theme	Total
Give people support when they are unable to reach out	10
Care leavers should be priority	9
Not everyone can get a guarantor	9
Young people need more than a guarantor	9
Treat all fairly	4
Not all care leavers can live independently	4
Guarantors are necessary	3
This will create issues	3
Depends on suitability of guarantor	2
Guarantors not necessary	2
Decisions are necessary	1
All rent needs to be guaranteed	1
All cases should be assessed individually	1
Don't take credit score into account	1
Alternative options needed	1
Guarantor in place before joining the register	1

Q20. How much do you agree or disagree with the proposed savings and earning criteria?

Base: n-708



Option	Total	Percent
Strongly agree	172	24.3%
Agree	276	39.0%
Neither agree nor disagree	137	19.4%
Disagree	51	7.2%
Strongly disagree	44	6.2%
Don't know	28	4.0%

The proposal to introduce savings and earning criteria received a good level of support, with 63.3% of respondents either agreeing or strongly agreeing. However, 19.4% neither agreed nor disagreed, and 4.0% selected 'Don't know,' suggesting that some respondents may not have formed a clear opinion on the proposal.

Disagreement was relatively limited, with 13.4% expressing opposition. Although the proposal was positively received, the high proportion of neutral responses may signal that its practical implications are not yet fully understood.

Social Housing tenants show the highest agreement (67.5%), followed by members of the public (63.2%) and Housing Register applicants (61.3%). However, disagreement levels vary more noticeably: members of the public show the highest disagreement (18.1%), compared to Social Housing tenants (15.4%) and Housing Register applicants, who show the lowest disagreement (10.0%). This suggests that while support is generally strong, the public expressed more concern about the criteria than those directly engaged with housing services.

	Overall agreement	Overall disagreement
Social Housing tenant	67.5%	15.4%

Housing Register applicant	61.3%	10.0%
Member of the public	63.2%	18.1%

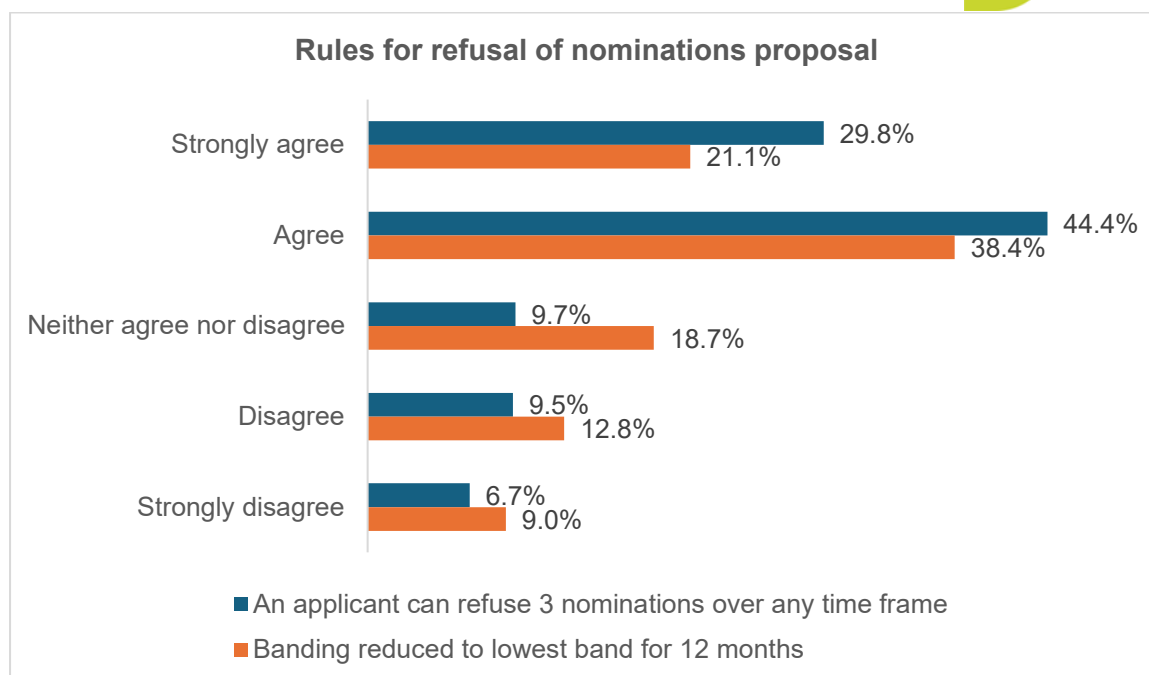
Base: Social Housing tenant (n-117); Housing Register applicant (n-380); Member of the public (n-155)

Q21. Disagree - savings and earning criteria

Comment/theme	Total
£16k is too low given current housing market / cost of living	22
60K salary cap is too high	20
Uncategorised comment	19
60k salary should be able to rent on private market	11
Social housing should be for those in need e.g. disability / on small income	10
Comments related to personal circumstances	10
Savings cap too low - means can't save deposit for own property /mortgage	9
£16k savings is too high	9
Not eligible if own property	7
Should not include pensioners/pensions	6
Income and savings should be checked for current social housing tenants every 5 years	4
Should include assets like cars, motorhomes etc / include deprivation clause	4
Criteria should remain the same	2

Q22. How much do you agree or disagree with the rules for refusal of nominations proposal?

Base: An applicant can refuse 3 nominations over any time frame (n-705), Banding reduced to lowest band for 12 months (n-631)



An applicant can refuse 3 nominations over any time frame	Total	Percent
Strongly agree	210	29.8%
Agree	313	44.4%
Neither agree nor disagree	68	9.7%
Disagree	67	9.5%
Strongly disagree	47	6.7%

Banding reduced to lowest band for 12 months	Total	Percent
Strongly agree	133	21.1%
Agree	242	38.4%
Neither agree nor disagree	118	18.7%
Disagree	81	12.8%
Strongly disagree	57	9.0%

Note: Due to a minor error, this question was slightly different from others in that it did not include a 'Don't know' answer option. While this was not intentional, the question was not set as mandatory, allowing respondents to skip it if they chose. Given this flexibility, the absence of a 'Don't know' option is unlikely to have had a significant impact on the overall results.

The proposal allowing applicants to refuse up to three nominations over any time frame received strong support, with 74.2% of respondents either agreeing or strongly agreeing. In comparison, the proposal to reduce banding to the lowest level for 12 months following three refusals was less popular, with 59.5% expressing agreement.

Neutral responses were notably higher for the banding reduction proposal (18.7%) than for the nomination refusal rule (9.7%), suggesting greater uncertainty or hesitation about the consequences of refusal. Similarly, 21.8% of respondents expressed disagreement with the banding reduction, compared to 16.2% for the refusal rule. Although the option to refuse nominations is well-supported, the idea of reducing banding for doing so seems to be met with greater hesitation.

When looking at the data for respondents who identified as disabled, there was a slight disparity when compared to the overall response for the proposal allowing applicants to refuse up to 3 nominations. 79.3% (207) either agreed or strongly agreed, showing a slightly higher level of support. In turn, the level of disagreement for the proposal was lower too, with 12.6% (33) either disagreeing or strongly disagreeing.

For the first criteria (refusing 3 nominations), Housing Register applicants show the highest agreement (77.4%) and lowest disagreement (11.6%), while members of the public show lower agreement (67.3%) and the highest disagreement (26.1%), indicating more concern about this rule.

For the second criteria (banding reduced to lowest band for 12 months), members of the public show the highest agreement (61.0%), but disagreement remains high across all groups, especially among Social Housing tenants (25.9%) and the public (25.5%) suggesting mixed views on the penalty aspect.

First criteria: An applicant can refuse 3 nominations over any time frame

	Overall agreement	Overall disagreement
Social Housing tenant	75.4%	15.3%
Housing Register applicant	77.4%	11.6%
Member of the public	67.3%	26.1%

Base: Social Housing tenant (n-118); Housing Register applicant (n-380); Member of the public (n-153)

Second criteria: Banding reduced to lowest band for 12 months

	Overall agreement	Overall disagreement
Social Housing tenant	54.6%	25.9%
Housing Register applicant	58.9%	19.9%
Member of the public	61.0%	25.5%

Base: Social Housing tenant (n-108); Housing Register applicant (n-331); Member of the public (n-141)

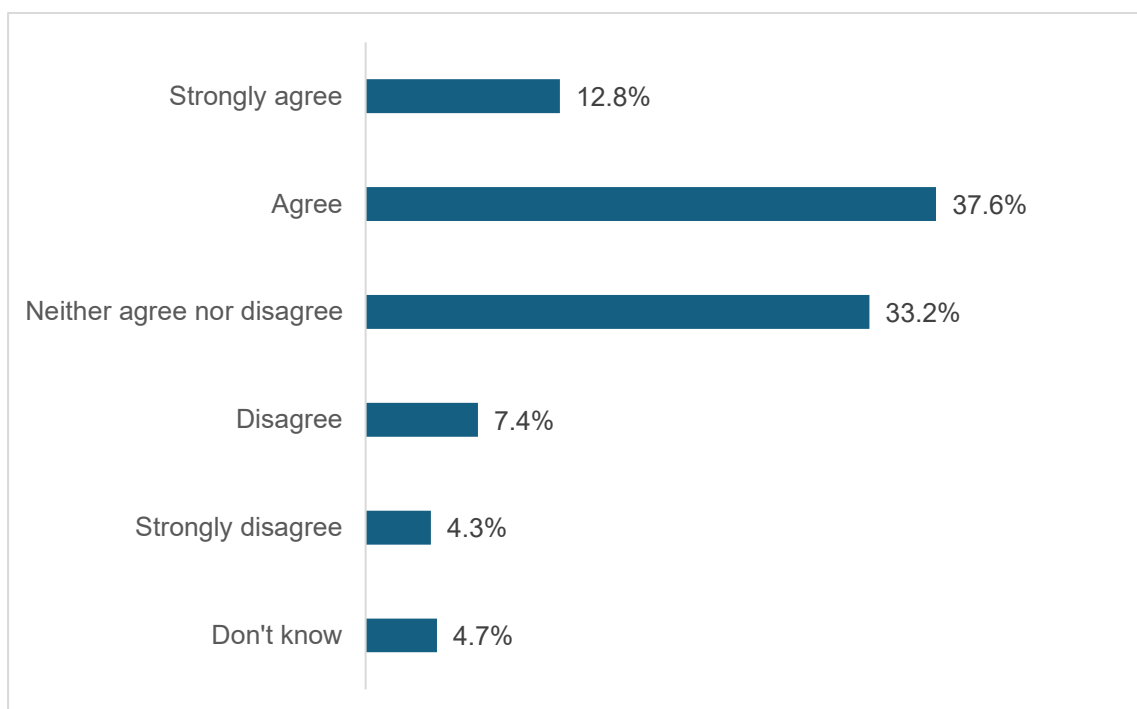
Q23. Disagree - rules for refusal of nominations

Comment/theme	Total

Don't limit refusals	47
People should have one or two chances	45
Limit refusals	31
People shouldn't get to choose if they are in need	27
Penalising refusers is unfair	19
Remove refusers from register	16
More chances for disabilities	13
Provide property images	8
Judge on individual cases	5
Original version better	4
Terms and language are hard to understand	4
12 months is a long time to reduce banding	4
Let people arrange as many viewings as necessary	2
Other	1

Q24. How much do you agree or disagree with the proposed inclusion of quotas?

Base: n-704



Option	Total	Percent
Strongly agree	90	12.8%
Agree	265	37.6%
Neither agree nor disagree	234	33.2%
Disagree	52	7.4%
Strongly disagree	30	4.3%

Don't know

33

4.7%

The data suggests a generally positive reception toward the inclusion of quotas, with over half of respondents expressing support, with 12.8% strongly agreeing and 37.6% agreeing, totalling 50.4% in favour. A third of respondents, 33.2%, remained neutral, highlighting the need for possible further communication or engagement to clarify the proposal and address any concerns or gaps in understanding. Opposition was relatively low, with an overall disagreement of 11.7%. Additionally, 4.7% of respondents selected 'Don't know,' suggesting some uncertainty or lack of information.

Members of the public show the highest level of disagreement (19.5%), indicating more concern or opposition to the proposal. This contrasts with Social Housing tenants (16.9%) and especially Housing Register applicants, who show the lowest disagreement (5.6%), suggesting they are significantly more supportive or less opposed to the inclusion of quotas.

	Overall agreement	Overall disagreement
Social Housing tenant	50.9%	16.9%
Housing Register applicant	52.8%	5.6%
Member of the public	48.7%	19.5%

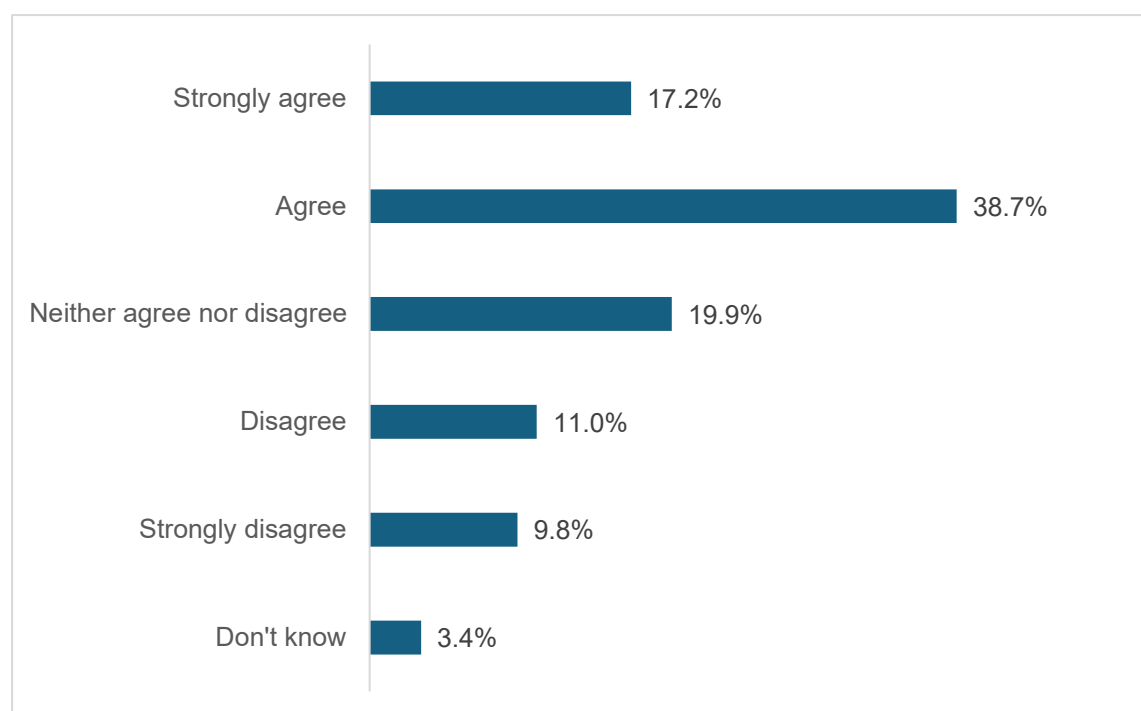
Base: Social Housing tenant (n-118); Housing Register applicant (n-377); Member of the public (n-154)

Q25. Disagree - inclusion of quotas

Comment/theme	Total
Uncategorised comment	33
Comments relating to quotas managed / how allocated etc	32
Should be case by case basis	12
Should be equal / fair for everyone	11
People on the waiting list should be housed first	11
Disagree with Armed forces personnel	7
Need quotas for local people / prioritise local people	7
Agree with Children leaving in care	4
Agree with Armed Forces personnel	3
Don't agree with proposals	3
Need more supported accommodation / accommodation for disabled people	2
Agree with all criteria	1
comment related to personal situation	1

Q26. How much do you agree or disagree with assessing overcrowding using the bedroom standard rather than the Local Housing Allowance criteria?

Base: n-708



Option	Total	Percent
Strongly agree	122	17.2%
Agree	274	38.7%
Neither agree nor disagree	141	19.9%
Disagree	78	11.0%
Strongly disagree	69	9.8%
Don't know	24	3.4%

A majority of respondents support assessing overcrowding using the bedroom standard rather than the Local Housing Allowance criteria, with an overall agreement (55.9%) indicating general support for this approach. Meanwhile, 19.9% neither agreed nor disagreed, suggesting some uncertainty or neutrality. Opposition accounted for 20.8%, with 11.0% disagreeing and 9.8% strongly disagreeing. A small proportion, 3.4%, selected 'Don't know.' This suggests that while the proposal is broadly accepted, there remains a significant minority who are either unconvinced or require further information or reassurance.

Responses from males were slightly different to the overall, showing higher levels of agreement and lower levels of disagreement. 61.7% (100) expressed they either agreed or strongly agreed, while 16.7% (27) disagreed or strongly disagreed. Female respondents were closely aligned to the overall figures.

Members of the public show the highest agreement (63.6%), indicating stronger support for the proposed change. In contrast, Social Housing tenants show the lowest agreement (50.0%) and the highest disagreement (30.5%), suggesting more concern or resistance within that group. Housing Register applicants fall in between, with moderate agreement (54.6%) and lower disagreement (17.3%), showing a more balanced view.

	Overall agreement	Overall disagreement
Social Housing tenant	50.0%	30.5%
Housing Register applicant	54.6%	17.3%
Member of the public	63.6%	20.1%

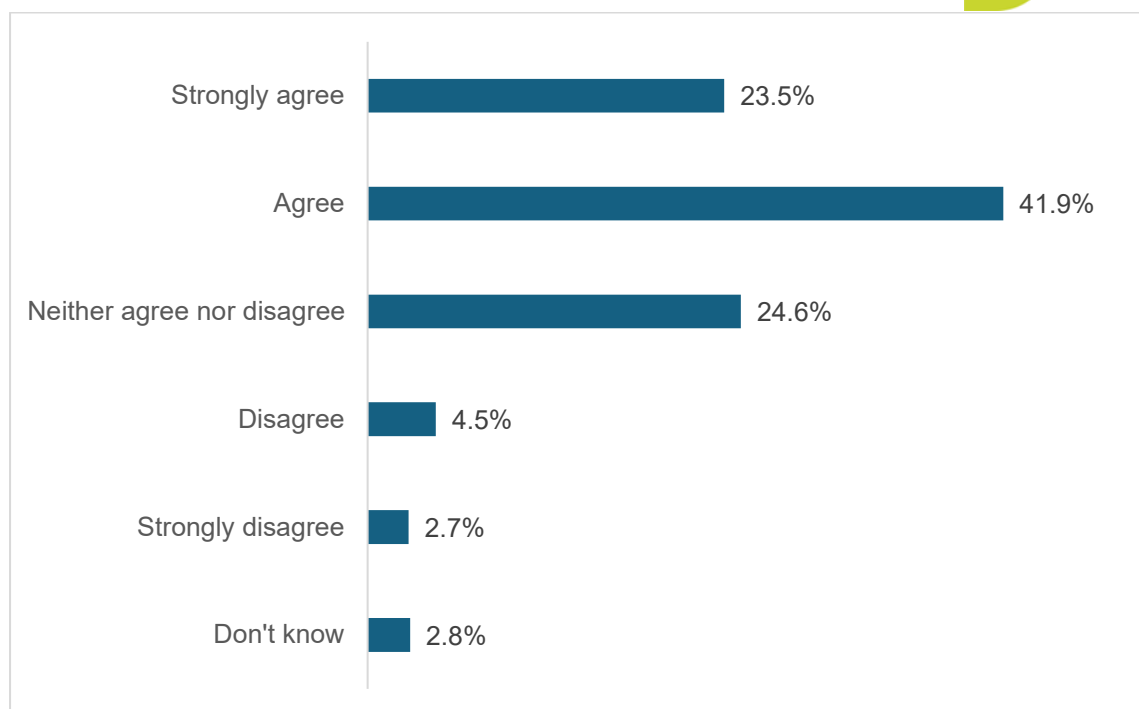
Base: Social Housing tenant (n-118); Housing Register applicant (n-381); Member of the public (n-154)

Q26. Disagree - assessing overcrowding

Comment/theme	Total
Limit needs lowering, 20/21 is too old. 18+ are adults	45
Children need their own privacy	39
It's inappropriate for mixed sex children to share	28
None of these limits are practical	19
My children struggle sharing	11
Puberty is starting earlier	10
Children with health needs need privacy	9
Children should share if they have to	6
People have children to get a bigger house	6
I don't understand the language being used	5
Children are more aware of sexuality	3
Overcrowding shouldn't be an issue	2
Criteria is too vague	1
These limits are practical	1
Overcrowding is common	1
Needs to be more info on overcrowding	1
Rooms not big enough for separate beds	1
Non-blood siblings should not share	1

Q27. How much do you agree or disagree with direct lets for homeless households?

Base: n-707



Option	Total	Percent
Strongly agree	166	23.5%
Agree	296	41.9%
Neither agree nor disagree	174	24.6%
Disagree	32	4.5%
Strongly disagree	19	2.7%
Don't know	20	2.8%

A clear majority of respondents reflects the overall support for the use of direct lets for homeless households, with 23.5% strongly agreeing and 41.9% agreeing, totalling 65.4% in favour. Just under a quarter of respondents remain neutral, (24.6%) indicating a notable level of neutrality or uncertainty. The low overall level of disagreement (7.2%) suggests that this approach is broadly accepted and may be seen as a positive step toward addressing homelessness. Additionally, just 2.8% selected 'Don't know.'

All groups show strong support, with members of the public showing the highest agreement (69.9%). However, the most notable difference is in overall disagreement: Housing Register applicants show the lowest disagreement (3.9%), compared to Social Housing tenants (12.7%) and members of the public (8.5%), indicating that applicants are the most unified in support of this proposal.

	Overall agreement	Overall disagreement
Social Housing tenant	65.3%	12.7%
Housing Register applicant	64.0%	3.9%
Member of the public	69.9%	8.5%

Base: Social Housing tenant (n-118); Housing Register applicant (n-381); Member of the public (n-153)

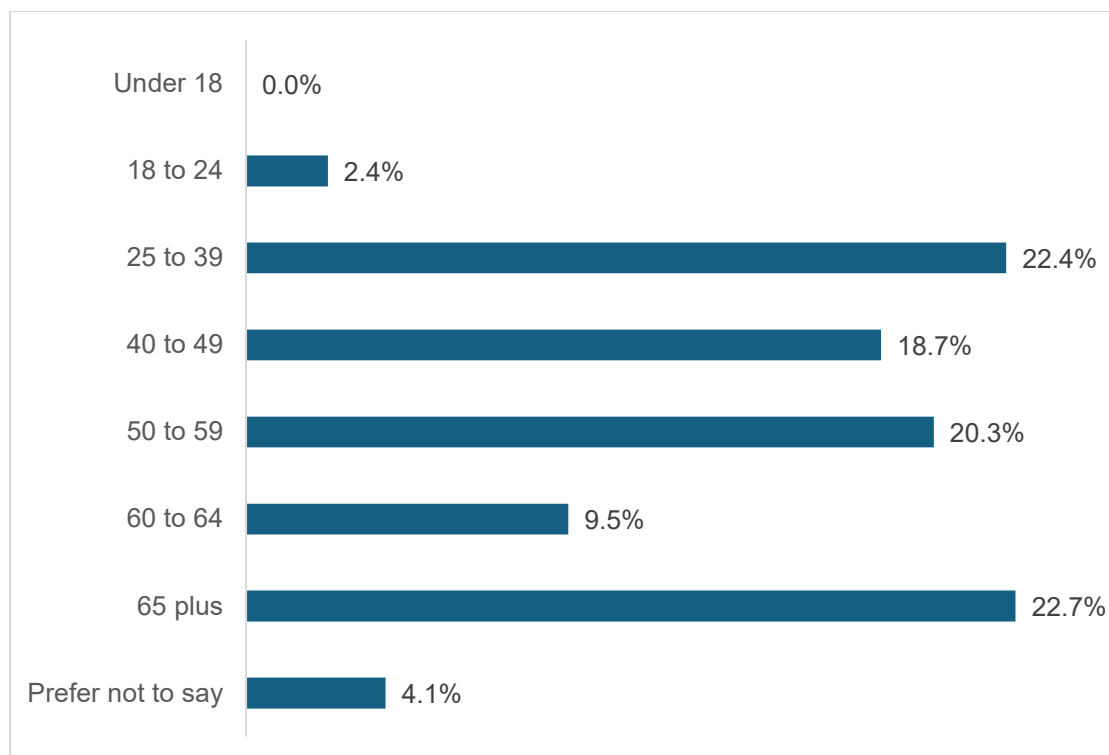
Q28. Disagree - direct lets

Comment/theme	Total
Other uncategorised comment	16
Should be on a case-by-case basis according to need / vulnerability	14
People should have choice	13
Jobs / transport / family support affect where people can live	10
Comments relating to personal situation	9
Should be more than one offer of suitable accommodation	8
Need to prioritise local people	8
Agree with policy	5
The system needs to be fair / equal / transparent	5
Private Lets not stable / secure as landlord can sell / landlords profiteering /private let properties substandard	5
Should explore other options first	3
Don't use expensive hotels / temporary housing is a waste of money	3
Direct Lets need to be within the Dorset area	3
Don't understand policy / wording	2
Private housing much more expensive than social housing	2
Singles and couples without children shouldn't be eligible	1

About You

Q29. Please select your age group.

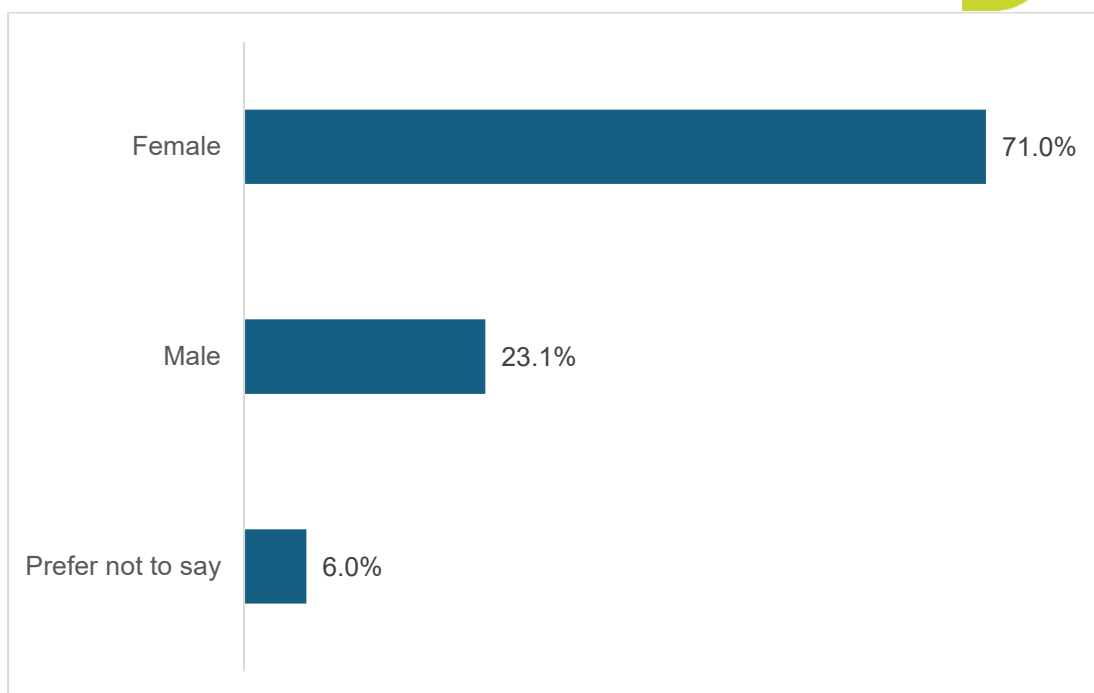
Base: n-706



Option	Total	Percent
Under 18	0	0.0%
18 to 24	17	2.4%
25 to 39	158	22.4%
40 to 49	132	18.7%
50 to 59	143	20.3%
60 to 64	67	9.5%
65 plus	160	22.7%
Prefer not to say	29	4.1%

Q30. What is your sex?

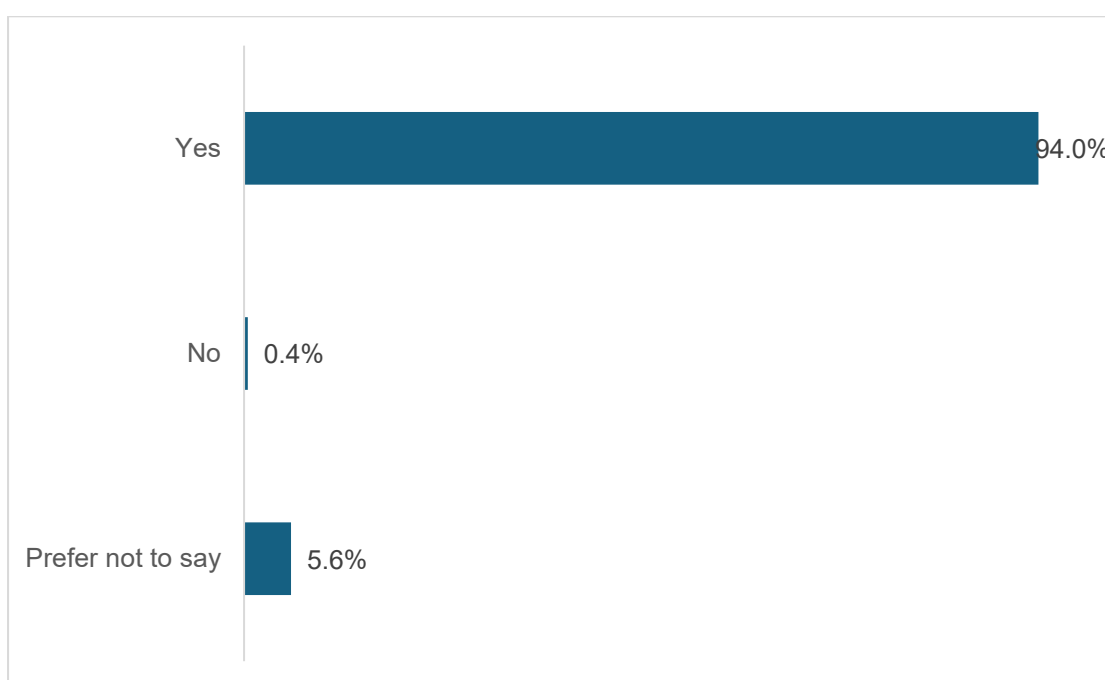
Base: n-706



Option	Total	Percent
Female	501	71.0%
Male	163	23.1%
Prefer not to say	42	6.0%

Q31. Is the gender you identify with the same as your sex registered at birth?

Base: n-703



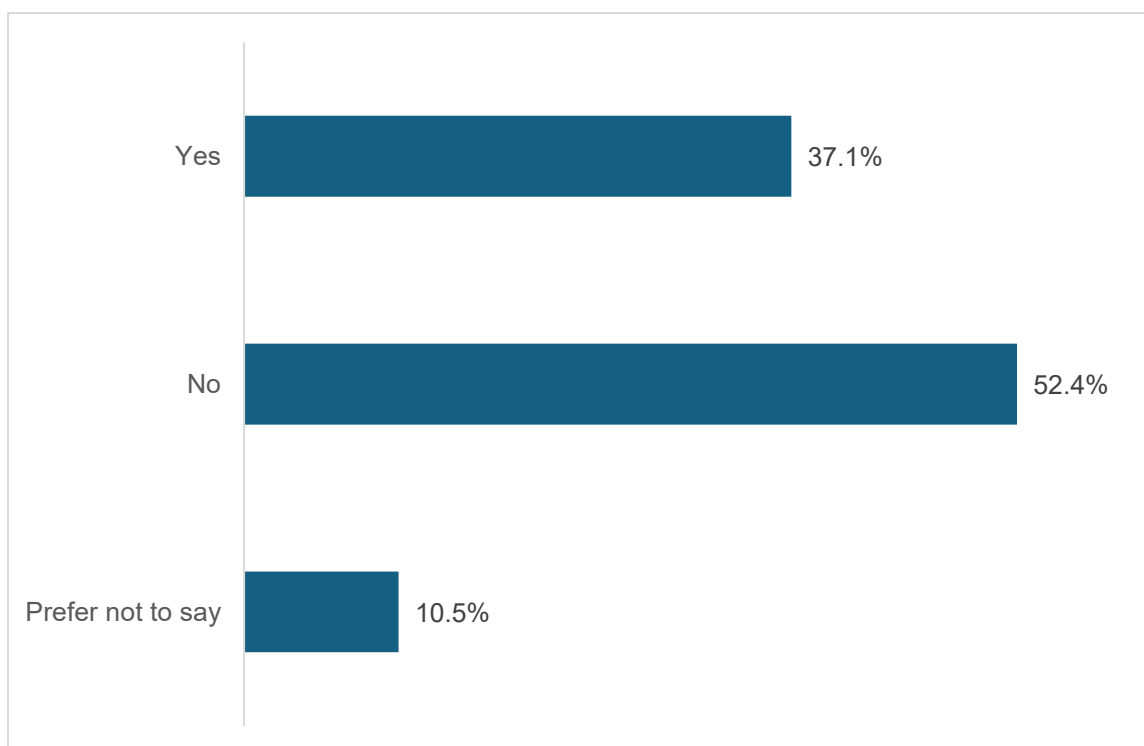
Option	Total	Percent

Yes	661	94.0%
No	3	0.4%
Prefer not to say	39	5.6%

Q32. 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?

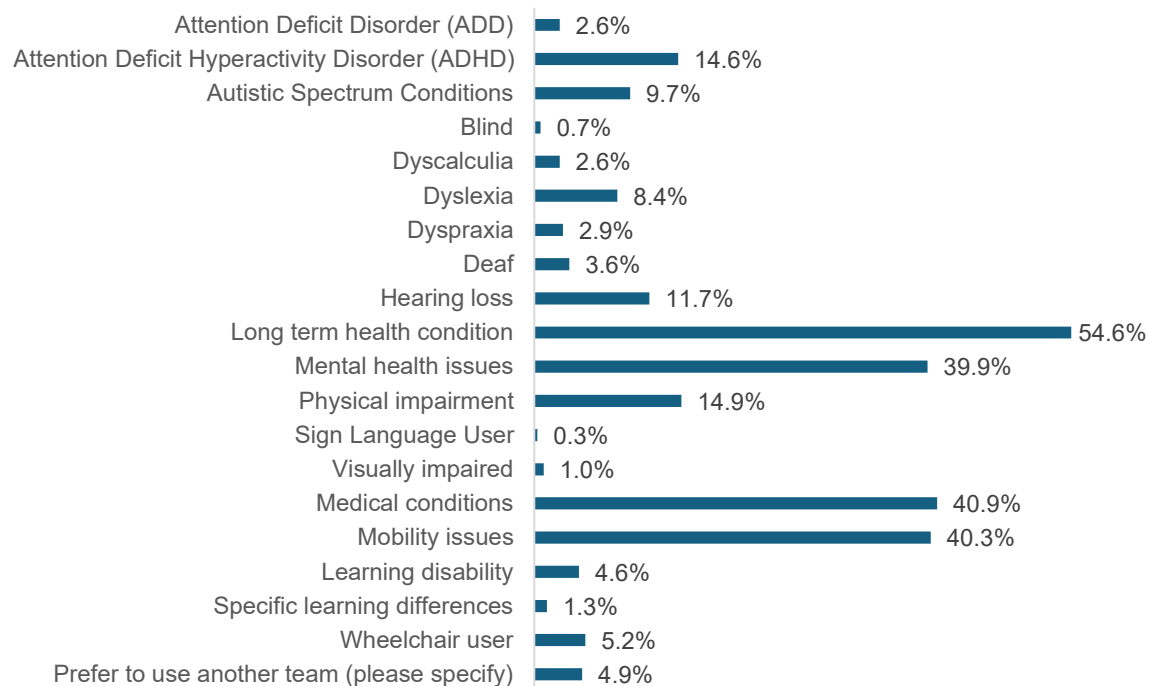
Base: n-706



Option	Total	Percent
Yes	262	37.1%
No	370	52.4%
Prefer not to say	74	10.5%

Q33. If at the previous question you stated you consider yourself to have a disability, please state the type of disability which applies to you.

Base: n-308



Option	Total	Percent
Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD)	8	2.6%
Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)	45	14.6%
Autistic Spectrum Conditions	30	9.7%
Blind	2	0.7%
Dyscalculia	8	2.6%
Dyslexia	26	8.4%
Dyspraxia	9	2.9%
Deaf	11	3.6%
Hearing loss	36	11.7%
Long term health condition	168	54.6%
Mental health issues	123	39.9%
Physical impairment	46	14.9%
Sign Language User	1	0.3%
Visually impaired	3	1.0%
Medical conditions	126	40.9%
Mobility issues	124	40.3%
Learning disability	14	4.6%
Specific learning differences	4	1.3%
Wheelchair user	16	5.2%
Prefer to use another team (please specify)	15	4.9%

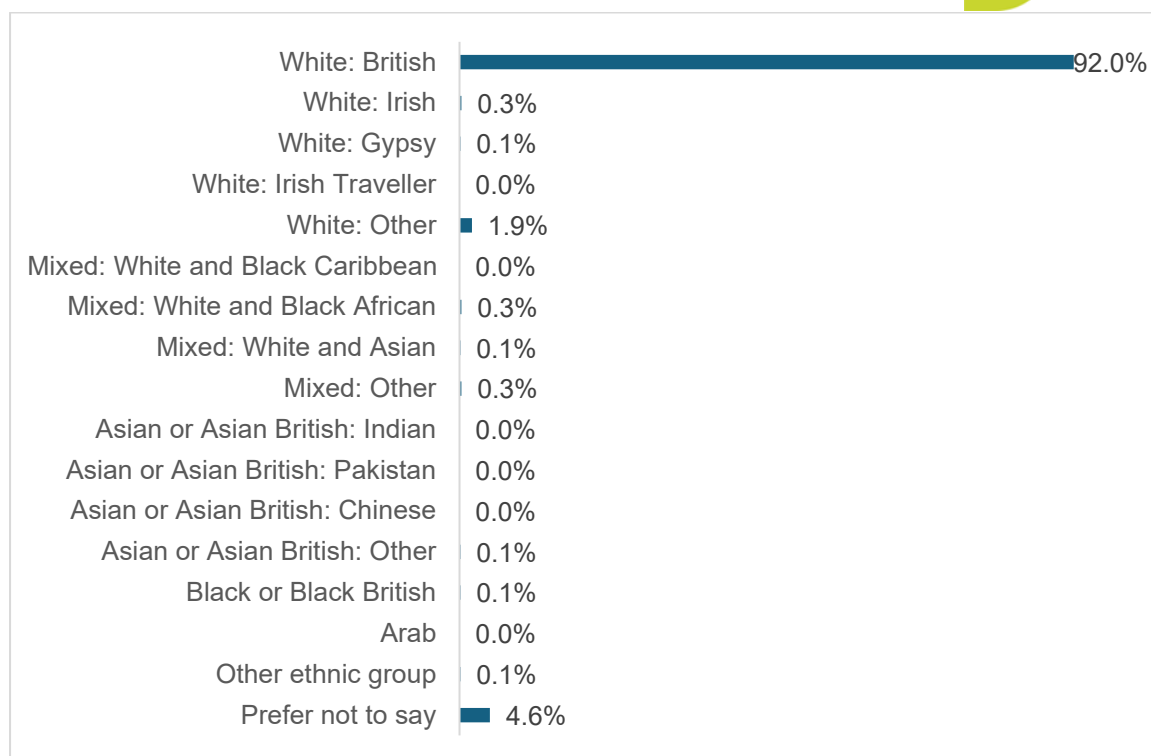
Other - disability type

Lung disease

Polymyalgia fibromyalgia osteoporosis primary biliary sclerosis
Fibromyalgia
Also my daughter [redacted] is 30 with Down's syndrome autism bad eyesight and anxiety x
Bipolar and arthritis
A typo above. I ticked - Prefer to use another 'team' . It should say - another term.
My son is these and I have fubromialja
I have rheumatoid inflammatory arthritis
Fibromyalgia
Arthritic
Crone's disease
Chronic back pain. Anxiety. Insomnia
Addiction issues
Stroke
Anxiety
Spinal cord injury resulting in severe disability
Mobility scooter needed for extended mobility
Depression exacerbated by little opportunity to rent on the private market or get allocated a council place
my son is on the housing list he has severe learning disabilities
COPD & Emphysema
Is it team or term - spelling error above
Ability
Ongoing health issues
PTSD
Paralysed
Fibromylga
PTSD, Depression & anxiety
Many issues not happy to state
Heart Failure
Cancer

Q34. What is your ethnic group?

Base: n-701



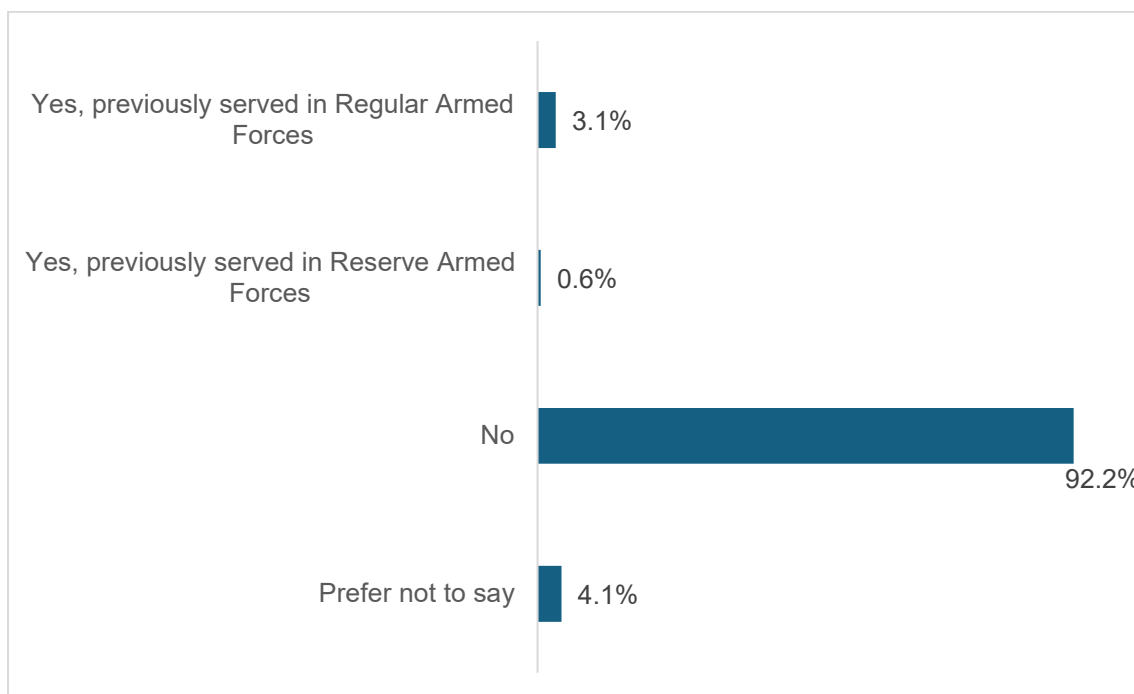
Option	Total	Percent
White: British	645	92.0%
White: Irish	2	0.3%
White: Gypsy	1	0.1%
White: Irish Traveller	0	0.0%
White: Other	13	1.9%
Mixed: White and Black Caribbean	0	0.0%
Mixed: White and Black African	2	0.3%
Mixed: White and Asian	1	0.1%
Mixed: Other	2	0.3%
Asian or Asian British: Indian	0	0.0%
Asian or Asian British: Pakistan	0	0.0%
Asian or Asian British: Chinese	0	0.0%
Asian or Asian British: Other	1	0.1%
Black or Black British	1	0.1%
Arab	0	0.0%
Other ethnic group	1	0.1%
Prefer not to say	32	4.6%

Other - Ethnicity
White British English
Minority (White, English, Born in Dorset, Fully employed and not claiming anything!)
Mixed - white/Fijian

White English

Q35. Have you previously served in the UK Armed Forces?

Base: 702



Option	Total	Percent
Yes, previously served in Regular Armed Forces	22	3.1%
Yes, previously served in Reserve Armed Forces	4	0.6%
No	647	92.2%
Prefer not to say	29	4.1%



Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) Template

Before completing the EQIA please have a look at the [Dorset Council style guide](#) and also use the [accessibility checker](#) to make sure your document is easy for people of all abilities to read.

Some key tips

- avoid tables and charts, if possible please provide raw data
- avoid pictures and maps if possible.
- avoid using bold, italics or colour to highlight or stress a point
- when using numbering or bullet points avoid using capitals at the beginning unless the name of something
- date format is dd month yyyy (1 June 2021)
- use clear and simple language
- where you need to use technical terms, abbreviations or acronyms, explain what they mean the first time you use them
- if using hyperlinks, make sure the link text describes where the link goes rather than 'click here' Please note equality impact assessments are published on the Dorset Council [website](#)

Before completing this form, please refer to the [supporting guidance](#). The aim of an Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) is to consider the equality implications of your policy, strategy, project or service on different groups of people including employees of Dorset Council, residents and users of our services and to consider if there are ways to proactively advance equality.

Where further guidance is needed, please contact the Inclusion Champion or the [Diversity & Inclusion Officer](#).

1. Initial information

Name of the policy, project, strategy, project or service being assessed:

Dorset Council Housing Allocation Policy

2. Is this a (please delete those not required):

Review of policy

3. Is this (please delete those not required):

Both internal and external

4. Please provide a brief overview of its aims and objectives:

- The allocations policy sets out how Dorset Council works with social landlords to manage the housing register and allocate housing fairly and transparently. It explains the choice-based lettings scheme, including registration, assessment, and property allocations processes, to ensure applicants understand how to access social housing.
- The policy provides guidance for housing and lettings officers, outlining clear criteria and procedures to support consistent decision-making. It promotes equality, prevents discrimination, and ensures effective use of housing resources to meet diverse community needs.
- Additionally, the policy supports strategic planning by enabling the collections of accurate data to inform future housing development and optimise the use of available stock to meet local demand and strategic housing goals.

5. Please provide the background to this proposal?

- Under Part 6 of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended), local authorities are required to have a housing allocation scheme to ensure social housing is allocated appropriately. This policy complies with legal obligations, including the duty to give reasonable preference to certain groups such as those who are homeless, living in unsanitary or overcrowded conditions or needing to move for medical or welfare reasons.
- Social housing is essential for providing secure, affordable homes to those unable to access the private market. The Allocation Policy ensures that

available housing is distributed fairly, prioritising those in greatest need, including vulnerable individuals and families.

- The policy also responds to increasing demand and limited supply of social housing, with the need to support vulnerable groups, such as those experiencing homelessness, overcrowding or health-related housing needs. The Dorset Council Housing Allocation Scheme will apply to all Dorset Council residents.

Evidence gathering and engagement

6. What sources of data, evidence or research has been used for this assessment? (e.g national statistics, employee data):

- Housing Act 1996, Part 6
- Statutory guidance for housing allocations
- Tenancy standard, the regulator or social housing
- Housing and disabled people the human rights commission
- Housing Allocations for disabled people, local government ombudsman
- Domestic abuse and housing decision, local government ombudsman
- Medical assessments for housing applications, local government ombudsman
- The Dorset Council Housing Allocations Policy
- The Housing Register
- Local housing data
- Internal consultation

During the 12-week statutory consultation of the Dorset Council Housing Allocation Policy the following responses were received:

- Registered Providers – 1% or 7 responses
- Registered Provider tenants – 16.8% or 119 responses
- housing register applicants – 53.7% or 381 responses
- Elected members – 2.4% or 17 responses
- Parish and town councillors – 1% or 7
- members of the public – 22% or 156 responses

7. What did this tell you?

There are currently 6629 households on the housing register and we receive 400 – 500 new applications each month this tells us there is a high level of demand for social housing in the Dorset Council area. The number of lets made between 2024/25 was 978 with an average wait time of 18 months. This tells us that many applicants eligible to register will not be allocated a home quickly and can wait years

before a suitable home is found. This also tells us many people are living in homes that do not currently meet their need.

Data from the current housing register illustrates the average wait time for properties during 1 April 2024 – 31 March 2025

Bedsits - 31 allocations average wait of 14 months

1 bedroom – 423 allocations average wait of 17 months

2 bedrooms – 407 allocations average wait of 17 months

3 bedrooms – 105 allocations average wait of 25 months

4 bedrooms – 11 allocations average wait of 30 months

5 bedrooms – 1 allocation average wait time of 8 years

7.1 Equalities raised as part of the consultation on Housing allocation policy

A meeting was held with the Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Panel to review and address comments raised during the consultation process, ensuring that principles of fairness and equality were upheld. The following key issues were discussed:

Local connection - the panel generally agreed with the proposed requirement for a two-year local connection. However, they recommended that the employment criterion should allow cumulative evidence rather than requiring two consecutive years. This means applicants who have worked in the area intermittently over a longer period can still demonstrate a local connection, ensuring fairness for those with seasonal or non-standard work patterns.

Banding name changes - the panel supported changing the banding system from alphabetical to numerical, as this provides a clearer and more structured approach. However, concerns were raised about the original band descriptions:

- Band 1 – Urgent housing need
- Band 2 – Priority need
- Band 3 – Unmet housing need
- Band 4 – Other housing need

The panel felt that “priority” and “urgent” were too similar, “unmet” could be perceived as discriminatory, and “other” could be considered dismissive of someone’s housing needs. Following feedback, the proposed bands for the new policy are:

- Band 1 – Urgent need
- Band 2 – High need
- Band 3 – Medium need
- Band 4 – Low need

This revised terminology is clearer, avoids negative connotations, and better reflects levels of housing need in a fair and respectful way.

Income Savings and capital - the panel agreed with the proposed income and savings limits, as they align with Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and Universal Credit (UC) thresholds. However, concerns were raised that older people could be unfairly impacted—particularly those who own their own home but can no longer remain there due to suitability, affordability, or adaptability issues. This risk is mitigated within the policy, which allows applicants who own a property that is unsuitable and cannot be adapted or afforded to join the housing register.

Overcrowding - the panel expressed concerns about the age limits used in the Bedroom Standard for determining overcrowding. Under the Bedroom Standard, same-sex children can share a bedroom until the age of 21, which is less generous than the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) standard, where individuals aged 16 and over are entitled to their own bedroom.

However, while the Bedroom Standard will be used to assess overcrowding for banding purposes, it is not used to assess bedroom need. Applicants will still be able to bid on properties that meet the LHA standard. This means families who are not classed as overcrowded under the Bedroom Standard will be able to bid on larger homes, reducing any disadvantage caused by the stricter criteria.

8. Who have you engaged and consulted with as part of this assessment?

- Members of the Housing Team
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Engagement Panel

9. Is further information needed to help inform decision making?

No

Is an EQIA required?

Yes

Not every proposal will need an EqlA. The data and research should inform your decision whether to continue with this EqlA. If you decide that your proposal does not need an EqlA, please answer the following question:

Assessing the impact on different groups of people

For each of the protected characteristics groups below, please explain whether your proposal could have a positive, negative, unclear or no impact. Where an impact has

been identified, please explain what it is and if unclear or negative please explain what mitigating actions will be taken.

- use the evidence you have gathered to inform your decision making.
- consider impacts on residents, service users and employees separately.
- if your strategy, policy, project or service contains options you may wish to consider providing an assessment for each option.
- see guidance for more information about the different [protected characteristics](#).

Key to impacts

Positive Impact	• the proposal eliminates discrimination, advances equality of opportunity and/or fosters good relations with protected groups.
Negative Impact	• protected characteristic group(s) could be disadvantaged or discriminated against
Neutral Impact	• no change/ no assessed significant impact of protected characteristic groups
Unclear	• not enough data/evidence has been collected to make an informed decision.

Impacts on who or what?	Choose impact	How
Age (55+)	Negative	Current housing allocations policy (2021-26) The current allocations policy includes an exception for people aged 55 or over who do not have a local connection to the Dorset Council area, allowing them to be considered for housing. This exception was originally introduced to help fill properties that were hard to let. However, this is no longer necessary because there is now sufficient demand from eligible applicants with a local connection. Proposed Housing allocations policy (2026-31) Under the proposed policy, anyone who does not have a local connection to the Dorset Council area, regardless of age, will not be able to join the housing register. As of 7 January 2026, we anticipate this impacting 559 households.

Impacts on who or what?	Choose impact	How
Age (16+)	Positive	Current housing allocations policy (2021-26) The current allocations policy requires applicants to have a local connection to the Dorset Council area. This can be shown by living in the area for two years, living in the area for three out of the last five years, or having close family who have lived locally for at least five years. Proposed Housing allocations policy (2026-31) The proposed policy simplifies this requirement. Applicants will need to show two years of continuous residency or a two-year family connection, in line with the national Code of Guidance, which recommends that two years is a reasonable period to establish a local connection.
Age (16+)	Negative	Current housing allocations policy (2021-26) The current policy allows those that are working to apply to the housing register after one year. Proposed housing allocations policy (2026-31) The proposal in the new policy is to increase the local connection timescale to two years. This change may disadvantage individuals who move to Dorset for employment or who have recently started working locally, as they will need to wait longer before being eligible for social housing.
Age (16+)	Positive	Proposed housing allocations policy (2026-31)

Impacts on who or what?	Choose impact	How
		The proposed allocations policy increases the local connection requirement from one year to two years for working applicants ensures consistency and fairness across all applicants, regardless of employment status. It supports community stability by encouraging individuals to establish a stronger connection to the area before accessing social housing. This approach helps manage demand on the housing register, prioritising those with a more established link to Dorset. It also aligns with the national Code of Guidance, which recommends two years as a reasonable period to demonstrate a local connection.
Disability (visible and non-visible)	Neutral	Proposed housing allocations policy (2026-31) The proposed Allocation Policy continues to support applicants with disabilities by ensuring adapted properties are prioritised for those who require them. This helps make best use of available stock and ensures that homes meet the specific needs of applicants. Additionally, applicants who no longer require adapted properties are placed in a high housing need band to facilitate appropriate re-housing, ensuring fairness and efficient use of resources.
Disability (Neurodivergence such as ADHD, Autism etc.)	Positive	Proposed housing allocations policy (2026-31) The proposed simplified banding system provides a clear and structured framework for assessing housing need. For people who are neurodivergent, the impact of housing can be complex and may require additional consideration. We do not rely solely on information provided by the applicant; we also consider

Impacts on who or what?	Choose impact	How
		relevant details from professionals involved in their health or support needs. Our team can offer practical assistance with the application process. This includes completing the form on the applicant's behalf, guiding them through it step by step, or arranging a home visit. We can also meet applicants at selected libraries to provide support in a comfortable and accessible setting.
Care Experience	Neutral	Proposed housing allocations policy (2026-31) The proposed Allocation Policy does not introduce any changes that would negatively or positively impact individuals based on care experience.
Gender reassignment and Gender Identity	Neutral	Proposed housing allocations policy (2026-31) The proposed Allocation Policy does not introduce any changes that would negatively or positively impact individuals based on gender reassignment or gender identity. Access to the housing register and the assessment of housing need remain based on objective criteria such as local connection, housing circumstances, and vulnerability, without regard to gender identity
Marriage or civil partnership	Neutral	Proposed housing allocations policy (2026-31) The proposed Allocation Policy does not introduce any changes that would affect individuals based on their marital or civil partnership status. Eligibility and priority for housing are determined by housing need, local connection, and other objective criteria, regardless of relationship status.
Pregnancy and maternity	Positive	Proposed housing allocations policy (2026-31) Under the proposed Allocation Policy, pregnant women will be eligible for an additional bedroom from the point at which a MATB1 certificate is provided—typically around 12 weeks into

Impacts on who or what?	Choose impact	How
		pregnancy. This is an improvement on the previous policy, which only granted an additional bedroom within 12 weeks of the expected due date. The change ensures earlier recognition of housing need and supports better planning and stability for expectant mothers.
Race and Ethnicity	Neutral	Proposed housing allocations policy (2026-31) The proposed Allocation Policy does not introduce any changes that would affect individuals based on race or ethnicity. All applicants are assessed equally based on housing need, local connection, and other objective criteria.
Religion and belief	Neutral	Proposed housing allocations policy (2026-31) The proposed Allocation Policy does not introduce any changes that would affect individuals based on religion or belief. All applicants are assessed equally based on housing need, local connection, and other objective criteria.
Sex (consider men and women)	Positive/Negative	Current housing allocations policy (2021-26) The current policy uses the local Housing Allowance (LHA) bedroom standard when assessing overcrowding. Under this standard: • Children under 10 share a bedroom regardless of sex. • Children of different sex require their own room from age 10 • Children of the same sex can share a room until they are 16 • Individual 16 or over require their own room Proposed housing allocations policy (2026-31) At the time of drafting this assessment the impact could be positive or negative depending on individual circumstances. The proposed policy replaces the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) standard with

Impacts on who or what?	Choose impact	How
		the Bedroom Standard when assessing overcrowding, this is a nationally recognised measure aligned with statutory guidance. The Bedroom Standard provides a clear and consistent framework for assessing overcrowding based on household composition. Under this standard: • Children under 10 share a bedroom regardless of sex. • Children aged 10–20 can share if they are the same sex. • Individuals aged 21 and over require their own bedroom. This approach ensures fairness and transparency across all applicants and supports better management of housing stock. The policy also retains flexibility by allowing additional bedrooms where there is a welfare or medical need, ensuring that households with specific health or care requirements are not disadvantaged.
Sex (consider men and women)	Negative	Proposed housing allocations policy (2026-31) The Bedroom Standard is less generous than the LHA standard, which previously allowed individuals aged 16 and over to have their own bedroom. As a result, fewer households will be classed as overcrowded under the new measure, which may delay access to larger homes for some families. Larger families may experience longer waiting times for suitable accommodation.
Sexual orientation	Neutral	Proposed housing allocations policy (2026-31) The proposed Allocation Policy does not introduce any changes that would affect individuals based on sexual orientation. All applicants are assessed equally

Impacts on who or what?	Choose impact	How
		based on housing need, local connection, and other objective criteria.
People with caring responsibilities	Neutral	Proposed housing allocations policy (2026-31) The proposed Allocation Policy does not introduce any changes that would affect individuals with caring responsibilities. All applicants are assessed equally based on housing need, local connection, and other objective criteria. If there is a sleeping overnight carer the additional bed need will be assessed accordingly.
Rural isolation	Neutral	Proposed housing allocations policy (2026-31) The proposed Allocation Policy does not introduce any changes that would affect individuals in rural areas. The policy supports applicants in rural areas by offering flexible and accessible application methods. Applications can be completed online from home or at public access points such as libraries. Additionally, support is available over the phone, with staff able to complete back-office applications on behalf of applicants or provide in-person assistance if required or a paper application. This ensures equitable access to the housing register regardless of geographic location.
Socio-economic deprivation	Neutral	Proposed housing allocations policy (2026-31) The proposed changes to the allocations policy are not expected to have a disproportionate impact on individuals or households experiencing socio-economic deprivation. The policy continues to assess housing need based on clear criteria such as homelessness, overcrowding, and medical or welfare needs, which apply equally regardless of income or social status. Access to the housing register remains based on housing need rather than financial circumstances, and support is available for applicants who may require assistance with the application process.

Impacts on who or what?	Choose impact	How
Single parents	Neutral	Proposed housing allocations policy (2026-31) The proposed Allocation Policy does not introduce any changes that would affect single parents. Their housing needs continue to be assessed based on household composition, housing circumstances, and other objective criteria.
Armed forces communities	Positive	Proposed housing allocations policy (2026-31) The proposed Allocation Policy provides additional reasonable preference to members of the UK Armed Forces. In addition, there is a new band for family members of service personnel

Please provide a summary of the impacts:

The revised Allocation Policy introduces several changes aimed at improving fairness, consistency, and alignment with best practice. Positive impacts include additional preference and increased priority for Armed Forces applicants, moving from Band B (high housing need) to Band 1 (priority housing need), and earlier recognition of housing need for pregnant women, who will now qualify for an additional bedroom when they are 12 weeks pregnant and receive their MATB1 certificate rather than 12 weeks before their due date as set in the current allocation policy.

The shift to the Bedroom Standard provides a clear, nationally recognized measure of overcrowding and retains flexibility for welfare or medical needs, ensuring vulnerable applicants are not disadvantaged.

Local connection requirements have been simplified to two years' residency, making qualification easier to demonstrate.

However, some negative impacts are anticipated. The Bedroom Standard is less generous than the LHA standard, meaning fewer households may be classed as overcrowded, potentially delaying access to larger homes. Applicants aged 55 and over without a local connection will no longer be eligible, and the increase in employment-based local connection from 12 months to two years may disadvantage older applicants who are working. These changes reflect a balance between

managing housing stock effectively and prioritising those in greatest need, while maintaining safeguards for applicants with specific health or care requirements.

Action Plan

Summarise any actions required as a result of this EqIA.

Issue	Action to be taken	Person(s) responsible	Date to be completed by
Review of Consultation Feedback	Some of the proposed changes in the policy may still require further amendment during the democratic process.	Service Manager Housing Register and Lettings	April 2026
Staff Training	The Housing Register and Lettings Team, Registered Providers and other Housing Teams to receive specific training on the Dorset Council Housing Allocations Policy and the actions in the EqIA.	Service Manager Housing Register and Lettings. Letting Team Leader, Housing Register Team Leaders	May 2026
Amendments to Existing Applications	The proposed new policy has several changes to the current version. If the new policy is approved this will result in all existing applicants requiring a new band and approximately 2,500 existing applicants having their current banding reassessed. Depending on individual circumstances this will result in a higher or lower priority or being removed from the register altogether. All affected applicants will be contacted and the Huume system will be updated to reflect the changes and the applicants notified.	Service Manager Housing Register and Lettings. Letting Team Leader, Housing Register Team Leaders	On going from April 2026
Reasonable Adjustments to service delivery must be embedded	Reasonable adjustments will continue to be embedded across all processes to ensure accessibility and inclusion. Information will be provided in alternative formats where required, such as large print, audio, or other accessible options. Any changes to application forms, letters, and emails will incorporate accessibility considerations, and support will be offered to applicants who need assistance completing forms or understanding communications. Comms will be sent before the policy is implemented and during implementation to ensure the public, internal and external services are aware of the changes. This will be monitored and staff training given as required.	Service Manager Housing Register and Lettings. Letting Team Leader, Housing Register Team Leaders. Comms Team (Rachael Ballard)	Ongoing

Issue	Action to be taken	Person(s) responsible	Date to be completed by
Being Flexible and Agile	Over the remaining time until this proposed policy and its potential changes are implemented, circumstances may change, and we will need to react to these changes and take appropriate action, including updating this EqIA if appropriate. All changes will require monitoring and reporting on after implementation to ensure there is no discrimination or any one group impacted unfairly.	Service Manager Housing Register and Lettings	Ongoing from November 2025

Sign Off

Officer completing this EqIA: Sarah How and Martin Short

Officers involved in completing the EqIA: Sarah How, Martin Short, Cara Buckley, Neil Morland (consultant)

Date of completion:28/11/2025

Version Number: 4

EqIA review date:20 April 2026

Equality Lead Sign Off:

Next Steps:

- the EqIA will be reviewed by Communications and Engagement and if in agreement, your EqIA will be signed off.
- if not, we will get in touch to chat further about the EqIA, to get a better understanding.
- EqIA authors are responsible to ensuring any actions in the action plan are implemented.

Please send to [Diversity and Inclusion Officer](#)

Recommendation to Cabinet 03 March 2026

**From People and Health Overview Committee on 2
February 2026**

Dorset Council Tenancy Strategy 2026 - 2031

For Decision

Cabinet Member:

Cllr G Taylor, Health and Housing

Local Councillor(s):

All

Senior Leadership Team:

J Price, Executive Director of People - Adults

Report Author and job title: Sharon Attwater, Service Manager for Housing
Strategy and Performance

Email: sharon.attwater@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

Report Status: Public

Recommendation:

1. That the Dorset Council Tenancy Strategy 2026 – 2031 be approved.
2. That the relevant part of section 5.3 of the Tenancy Strategy be amended.

The amended text, proposed by the People and Health Overview Committee, for the relevant part of section 5.3 is as follows:

We welcome an approach where any breaches of tenancy (for example rent arrears, anti-social behaviour and damaging property) are dealt with under the normal possession process, allowing a court to consider the case. We expect registered providers to avoid including tenant rent arrears in decisions on tenancy renewals. We expect registered providers to prioritise other methods to resolve rent arrears.

We also expect registered providers to avoid including complaints due to antisocial behaviour in decisions on tenancy renewals. In exceptional

circumstances, if registered providers do consider non-renewal of tenancy because of antisocial behaviour, we expect that community care needs (e.g. social care needs, domiciliary care needs, health care needs, etc.) are included in any assessment.

Appendices

Dorset Council Tenancy Strategy report to the People and Health Overview Committee, which includes the following appendices:

Appendix 1 – The Dorset Council Tenancy Strategy 2026 - 2031

Appendix 2 – Fixed Term Tenancy Statistical Analysis

Appendix 3 – Equality Impact Assessment

Background papers

[Agenda and draft minutes of the People & Health Overview Committee held on 2 February 2026](#)

People & Health Overview Committee

2 February 2026

Dorset Council Tenancy Strategy 2026 - 2031 For Recommendation to Cabinet

Cabinet Member:

Cllr G Taylor, Health and Housing

Local Councillor(s): All

Senior Leadership Team:

J Price, Executive Director of People - Adults

Report author and job title: Sharon Attwater, Service Manager for Housing Strategy & Performance

Email: sharon.attwater@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

Statutory Authority: The Localism Act 2011

Report status: Public

Executive summary (maximum of 500 words)

1. Dorset Council is required to publish a tenancy strategy in accordance with The Localism Act 2011.
 - 1.1 Registered providers of social housing (RPs) must formulate their own tenancy policies. The purpose of this strategy is to outline and give guidance on the council's preferred approach for RPs to consider when formulating their policies. RP policies must include details on the types of tenancies, the circumstances under which they will be granted, the terms for which they will be granted and conditions under which further tenancies will be granted.
 - 1.2 Dorset Council is a local authority registered provider. It owns and manages housing stock that is low-cost rental accommodation including for rough sleepers but does not have a housing revenue account. This strategy will be considered by Dorset Council when setting relevant policies.
 - 1.3 The council plan approach recognises RPs as strategic and operational partners and their essential role providing social housing, good housing management and tenant support in the Dorset Council area.

- 1.4 The strategy promotes RPs providing the most secure tenancies to social housing tenants. Recognising local challenges for the economy such as outward migration, and recruitment and retention compounded by high house prices, an effective homeless prevention approach is vital together with clear regard for community cohesion. This tenancy strategy reflects these council strategic priorities.
- 1.5 Relevant to this strategy, since 1 April 2012 (as amended), RPs are required under Consumer Tenancy standard to:
- co-operate with local authorities' strategic housing functions and assist local authorities to fulfil their duties to meet identified local housing needs. This includes assistance with local authorities' homelessness duties, and through meeting obligations in nominations agreements.
 - seek to allocate homes that are designated, designed, or adapted to meet specific needs in a way that is compatible with the purpose of the housing.
 - take action to prevent and tackle tenancy fraud.
 - provide tenants required to move with timely advice and assistance about housing options before the tenancy ends.
 - publish clear and accessible policies which outline their approach to tenancy management, including interventions to sustain tenancies and prevent unnecessary evictions and tackling tenancy fraud.
- 1.6 As part of the preparation of this strategy, we considered The Dorset Council Plan Priorities, the Housing Strategy, the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy and the Dorset Council Housing Allocation. This strategy aims to support these council's commitments and the prevention of homelessness.
- 1.7 The council's temporary accommodation is not covered by this strategy because temporary accommodation is not a long-term solution for households and is covered by separate policies.
2. **Recommendation(s)**
- 2.1 That the People & Health Overview Committee recommend the Dorset Council Tenancy Strategy 2026 – 2031 to Cabinet for approval.

3. Reason for the recommendation(s)

- 3.1 This strategy fulfils the council's legal obligations under The Localism Act 2011 by explaining its expectations and outlining the approach we would like RPs to take when creating their own tenancy policies.

4. The report

- 4.1 The councils Homeless & Rough Sleeping Strategy's objectives to minimise and prevent homelessness are reflected in the Tenancy Strategy. It explains expectations on providing secure tenancies and supporting the allocation of social housing to those in the greatest need.
- 4.2 RPs are required to publish tenancy management policies that cover tenancy sustainment and preventing evictions. These activities can help minimise and prevent homelessness. This strategy describes our expectations on these matters including tenant support, relationships, equality, risk, collaboration with partner organisations (including the council), anti-social behaviour, abandonment, harassment and debt.
- 4.3 The strategy supports the Housing Strategy vision that 'our residents have access to affordable, suitable, secure homes where they can live well as part of sustainable and thriving communities'.
- 4.4 The strategy recognises the Renters Right Act and that this strategy will be reviewed to reflect the forthcoming enactment arrangements and requirements.
- 4.5 The strategy encourages RPs to only grant fixed term tenancies (prior to any Renters Right Act enactment changes) in exceptional circumstances and describes our expectations regarding assured short-hold tenancies. Data and insight included in the strategy illustrates that RPs are aligned to our expectations about the length of fixed term tenancies granted and the circumstances they are granted in. Overall, fixed term tenancies are much less likely to be granted now in the Dorset Council area than 5 years ago. The strategy includes a list of useful terminology including fixed term tenancies.
- 4.6 The strategy encourages RPs to offer the longest feasible tenancy possible and grant assured tenancies which are the most secure type of tenancy. This is particularly important for tenants with children. Assured tenancies are also known as lifetime tenancies given for the lifetime of the tenant.
- 4.7 The strategy supports the Dorset Council Housing Allocation Policy by encouraging RPs to offer the most secure form of tenure possible, supporting

the priorities of the allocation policy to make best use of stock and prioritising those in most need for an allocation of social housing.

- 4.8 The data and insight included in the strategy is relevant data on social house lettings provided by RPs in the Dorset Council area on their lettings to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government for the period 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2024. It reflects tenancy terms, tenancy lengths, and fixed term tenancy lengths.
- 4.9 The data illustrates that RPs are aligned with our expectations and most tenancies granted are lifetime tenancies. A small number of RPs have consistently granted fixed term tenancies in small numbers and the council will seek assurance in accordance with this strategy when fixed term tenancies are granted.
- 4.10 Expectations on tenancy renewals are included and suggest a proportionate approach based on tenants' personal circumstances, reasonable adjustments, valid reasons for not renewing a current tenancy, and how RPs can support the tenant to find an alternative home when a tenancy is not renewed.
- 4.11 RPs are required to publish their own tenancy policies. Information must be included about certain decisions, complaints and how they provide advice to tenants to find an alternative home if they decide not to grant another tenancy. This strategy describes our expectations on these matters including being proportionate and having consideration for the needs of the whole household, the neighbourhood and community.
- 4.12 RPs tenancy management policies must also include tackling tenancy fraud, and this strategy lays out how we expect RPs to do this including taking a proactive, transparent and collaborative approach.
- 4.13 This strategy helps encourage sustainable communities. It ensures that social housing is provided in a fair and consistent way across the Dorset Council area, and that social housing tenants are provided with the most secure form of accommodation available.
- 4.14 It aims to encourage RPs with stock in the Dorset Council area, to develop and administer their own user-friendly policies, that adhere to this tenancy strategy and legislative requirements.
- 4.15 As part of the development of this strategy, we held a workshop with RPs who hold stock in the Dorset Council area. The workshop provided RPs with an opportunity to set out what they thought should be the priorities for the Dorset Council Tenancy Strategy. A copy of the draft strategy was sent to all RPs who hold stock in the Dorset Council area for comment. RP consultation feedback is reflected in the strategy.

4.16 The strategy aims to ensure that RPs offer tenancy types in accordance with the preferences Dorset Council set out in its tenancy strategy. These preferences are based on the priorities agreed from discussions with RPs and informed by the priorities of the council's strategies and policies referenced.

4.17 An action plan forms part of the strategy's monitoring and review arrangements.

5. Alternative options considered

5.1 None

6. Legal considerations

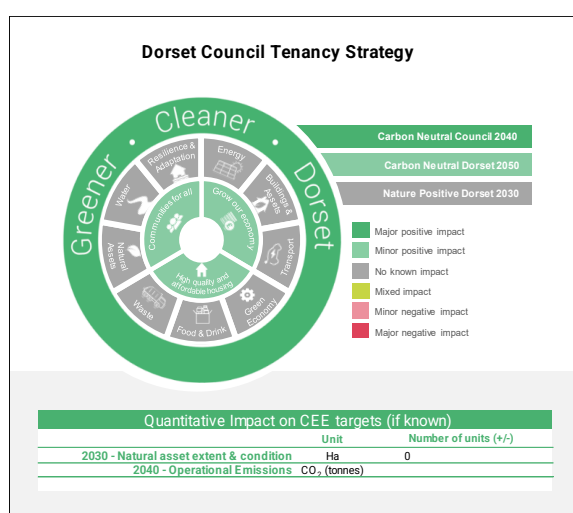
6.1 Section 150 of The Localism Act 2011 requires local authorities in England to prepare and publish a tenancy strategy. This indicates the council's expectations for all registered providers of social housing with accommodation in their area and provides guidance on their preferred approach to tenure and affordability.

7. Financial implications

7.1 None

8. Natural environment, climate & ecology implications

8.1



ACCESSIBLE TABLE SHOWING IMPACTS	
Natural Environment, Climate & Ecology Strategy Commitments	Impact
Energy	No known impact

Buildings & Assets	No known impact
Transport	No known impact
Green Economy	No known impact
Food & Drink	No known impact
Waste	No known impact
Natural Assets & Ecology	No known impact
Water	No known impact
Resilience and Adaptation	No known impact
Corporate Plan Aims	Impact
Grow our economy	minor positive impact
High-quality and affordable housing	minor positive impact
Communities for all	minor positive impact

TABLE OF RECOMMENDATIONS	
Recommendations	Responses -will this be incorporated into your proposal? How? And if not, why not?
Energy	
No recommendations found for this category	
Buildings & Assets	
No recommendations found for this category	
Transport	
No recommendations found for this category	
Green Economy	
No recommendations found for this category	
Food & Drink	
No recommendations found for this category	
Waste	
No recommendations found for this category	
Natural Assets & Ecology	
No recommendations found for this category	
Water	

No recommendations found for this category	
Resilience & Adaptation	
No recommendations found for this category	

9. **Well-being and health implications**

- 9.1 Secure and suitable housing can positively impact people's quality of health by reducing long-term and chronic health conditions and has been associated with better mental health outcomes and improved overall well-being.
- 9.2 Secure and suitable housing can positively impact on people's ability to engage in the work environment. Secure social housing can help increase positive impacts on employment rates and access to secure employment.
- 9.3 Secure and suitable housing can help provide a stable and consistent environment for learning, reduce negative impact on children's academic performance and health.
- 9.4 Community cohesion can be positively impacted by providing secure and suitable housing. It can help to create a sense of community, reduce social inequality, promote inclusivity, and helps build trust in local services.

10. **Other implications**

- 10.1 Other council services such as Children's Services or Adult Social Care may need to provide services or support to tenants of social housing. Secure housing can support the council to deliver the best services possible, and this strategy is clear about what the council would like RPs to consider in relation to families with children and older people.

11. **Risk implications**

- 11.1 **HAVING CONSIDERED:** the risks associated with this decision; the level of risk has been identified as:

Current Risk: Low

Residual Risk: Low

12. **Equalities**

- 12.1 This strategy outlines the council's expectations of RPs when setting their tenancy policies. The council expects all RPs to comply with the Equality Act 2010.

12.2 An equality impact assessment was completed during the development of this tenancy strategy. There were no negative impacts identified and individuals with protected characteristics should be considered within the activity described. Decisions about the type of tenancy to grant will be informed by law and dictated by the type of housing a person will be occupying. Some types of social housing require fixed-term tenancies to be offered due to stipulations within capital funding for developing the accommodation rather than the characteristics of people who may be occupying the accommodation.

12.3 The Equality and Human Rights Commissioner can act against a registered provider of social housing if they act in a discriminatory (directly or indirectly) way when providing services.

13. **Appendices**

13.1 Appendix 1 – The Dorset Council Tenancy Strategy 2026 - 2031

Appendix 2 - Fixed Term Tenancy Statistical Analysis

Appendix 3 – Equality Impact Assessment

14. **Background papers**

Localism Act 2011, Part 7, Chapter 2, Tenancy Strategies (sections 150-153) and Flexible Tenancies (sections 154-155)

Tenancy Standard of the Regulator of Social Housing, April 2024 (section 2.3 Tenure (sub-section 2.3.1-2.3.6))

Human Rights at home 'Guidance for social housing providers. Human Rights Commissioner 2011

Dorset Council Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy

Dorset Council Housing Allocation Policy

Wilson, W (2018) Social Housing: flexible and fixed-term tenancies. Housing of Commons Library. London

Watts, B., Fitzpatrick S. (2018) Fixed term tenancies: revealing divergent views in the purpose of social housing. Heriot-Watt University, Edinburgh

(2013) How to develop your tenancy policy. Chartered Institute of Housing. Coventry

Garvie, D. (2012). Local decisions on tenure reform. Local tenancy strategies and the new role of local housing authorities in leading tenancy policy. Shelter. London

Larner, D. Pipe. (2012) The practical implications of tenure reform. Chartered Institute of Housing. Coventry.

Fitzpatrick, S., Pawson, H (2011). Security of tenure in social housing: an international review. Heriot-Watt University. Edinburgh.

15 Report sign-off

- 15.1 This report has been through the internal report clearance process and has been signed off by the Director for Legal and Democratic (Monitoring Officer), the Executive Director for Corporate Development (Section 151 Officer) and the appropriate Portfolio Holder(s).

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Dorset Council Tenancy Strategy 2026 to 2031

Contents

Introduction	3
1.Purpose and aims of this tenancy strategy	4
2.Preparation of this tenancy strategy	4
3.Social housing tenure background	6
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Introduction

Registered providers of social housing grant over 1000 tenancies each year in the Dorset Council area.

Housing allocation procedures decide who is offered a tenancy, many are nominated by the council to registered providers of social housing, to help meet local housing need. Households we nominate include (but are not limited to) people owed a homelessness duty by us, people requiring accessible housing, and people living in under-occupied or overcrowded housing.

A tenancy sets out the terms under which a person has a right to live in their home, including the length of time they're able to live in their home. The main aspect of a tenancy is the agreement, which is a legal contract that outlines the rights and responsibilities of both a tenant and a landlord and confirms legal rights and responsibilities.

This tenancy strategy has been formulated and published at a time when changes are being made to the tenancy system. The Renters' Rights Act 2025 removes fixed term tenancies. Instead, all tenancies will be periodic, with tenants being able to stay in their home until they decide to end their tenancy by giving two months' notice.

We want to collaborate with registered providers, to support them to achieve regulatory outcomes and expectations concerning tenure. Taking action to sustain a tenancy is important to registered providers and tenants, as both wish to avoid unnecessary evictions.

It is also important to offer advice and assistance about housing options before a tenancy comes to an end helps people to move on in a timely way.

This tenancy strategy includes a range of actions that can be taken to help make tenancies a success.

By publishing this tenancy strategy, we are meeting our legal obligations under the Localism Act 2011 providing clear expectations for the management of social housing tenancies within the local authority area.

Gill Taylor
Portfolio Holder for Housing & Health

1. Purpose and aims of this tenancy strategy

The purpose of this tenancy strategy is to fulfil a legal duty to outline our objectives for social housing tenure. It aims to ensure that the types of tenancies granted meet the needs of social housing tenants in the Dorset Council area.

Registered providers of social housing (registered providers) that own or manage social housing within the Dorset Council area are required to consider the contents of this strategy when formulating their own tenancy policies.

Dorset Council shall consider this tenancy strategy when formulating a tenancy policy for any social housing we might own as a local authority registered provider.

This tenancy strategy relates to lettings of all social rented housing. This includes general needs and supported housing, let at social rent rates or affordable rent rates.

The strategy objectives are –

- to ensure that tenants are provided with the most secure form of accommodation available to encourage sustainable communities.
- to help provide housing to those in greatest need.
- to optimise the use of social housing stock in the Dorset Council area.
- to minimise and prevent homelessness.
- to ensure that housing is provided in a fair and consistent manner across the Dorset Council area.
- to encourage registered providers to develop tenancy policies that adhere to this tenancy strategy and legislative requirements.

2. Preparation of this tenancy strategy

We prepared and published this tenancy strategy to outline the matters registered providers that own social housing in the Dorset Council area, should consider when formulating their own tenancy policies. This includes –

- the types of tenancies that should be granted.
- the circumstances for granting specific types of tenancies.
- the length of term for certain tenancies.
- the circumstances for granting further tenancies upon the end of an existing one.

Our tenancy strategy summarises and explains our expectations of registered provider tenancy policies.

We will consider our tenancy strategy when carrying out our own housing management functions for any social housing we might own and manage.

We will keep our tenancy strategy under review and may modify or replace it.

If we modify our tenancy strategy, we will publish the modifications or the modified strategy.

A copy of our tenancy strategy will be available at our principal office for inspection at all reasonable hours (County Hall, Colliton Park, Dorchester, Dorset, DT1 1XJ). It will be available to members of the public without charge. We will provide copies to anyone who asks for one.

Before adopting this tenancy strategy, we held a workshop with some registered providers that own social housing in the Dorset Council area. We also sent a copy of the draft tenancy strategy to all registered providers that own social housing in the Dorset Council area and gave them a reasonable opportunity to comment on those proposals. Feedback from registered providers was strongly in favour of –

- granting the most secure form of tenure when allocating social rented housing.
- granting fixed term tenancies only when necessary and when the initial fixed term comes to an end, always seeking to grant another fixed term or a secure tenancy.
- working collaboratively to develop deliverable policies concerning tenancy sustainment, preventing evictions, and tackling tenancy fraud.

We also held interviews with officers from across Dorset Council including those responsible for social housing allocations, homelessness and housing advice, private sector housing standards, spatial planning, and adult social care. They all indicated a preference for the most secure form of tenancy to be granted but appreciated there were occasions when a fixed term tenancy might be necessary and even beneficial. They were all equally enthusiastic about the prospect of joint working to deliver improved outcomes around tenancy sustainment, preventing evictions and tackling tenancy fraud.

In the preparation of this tenancy strategy, we have taken into consideration our homelessness and rough sleeping strategy, housing allocation scheme, and housing strategy. The objectives of this tenancy strategy include minimising and preventing homelessness by providing secure tenancies and facilitating the allocation of social housing to those in greatest need.

3. Social housing tenure background

This tenancy strategy is being introduced at the same time as the Renters Rights Act 2025, which amends the law on rented homes, including abolishing fixed-term and 'no fault' evictions, and for other purposes.

3.1. Housing Act 1980 and Housing Act 1988

The Housing Act 1980 introduced long-term security of tenure for most social housing tenants. The Housing Act 1988 introduced the assured tenancy regime for most new tenancies since 15 January 1989. These tenancies, often called 'lifetime tenancies,' offer limited exceptions to eviction if tenants breach the terms of their agreement.

3.2. Localism Act 2011

The Localism Act 2011 allowed local authority registered providers and private registered providers (registered providers of social housing) in England discretion to offer fixed-term tenancies to all new tenants after 1 April 2012 and removed the previous requirement for the 'most secure' form of tenancy, mostly 'lifetime' assured tenancies.

The UK government aimed to give registered providers greater freedom to manage their housing stock, ensure social housing is allocated to those in need, and provide fixed term tenancies for tenants whose circumstances may change.

The Localism Act 2011 also required local authorities, irrespective of whether they own social housing stock, to publish a tenancy strategy setting out the types of tenancies they wish registered providers to grant, including the circumstances for granting them, the length of fixed term tenancies and when further tenancies are given. A tenancy strategy acts as a framework for registered providers when setting their own tenancy policies.

3.3. Use of fixed-term tenancies by registered providers

This section explains how fixed term tenancies have been used by registered providers. Take-up of fixed-term and flexible tenancies has been limited. In 2014/15, only 15% of social housing tenancies were let on a fixed-term basis, as reported in the Equality Impact Assessment on Lifetime Tenancies (May 2016).

There is very little research on social housing tenure. A 2018 study by Heriot Watt University on fixed-term tenancies in social housing revealed varying opinions on their purpose. Analysis of the research report shows –

- three-quarters of registered providers and 42% of local authority registered providers used fixed-term tenancies for new lets. Many

regions including the South of England saw the highest adoption, while the North of England had the lowest.

- reasons for using fixed-term tenancies included efficient stock use, reducing under-occupancy, and targeting 'in need' tenants. A perceived expectation from the UK government also influenced local authority registered providers.
- decisions against fixed-term tenancies stemmed from local political and organisational commitment to 'lifetime' tenancies, along with worries that fixed term tenancies created uncertainty for tenants and communities, plus concerns about the administrative burdens of issuing lots of fixed term tenancies and then having to carry out numerous renewal reviews.
- some registered providers offered fixed-term tenancies as their standard offer, while others targeted specific properties or tenants. It had been hoped that fixed term tenancies would make a beneficial difference to anti-social behaviour, under-occupation, rent arrears, and overcrowding, while also strengthening contractual obligations and efficient use stock. However, many registered providers have not been able to realise these benefits despite using fixed term tenancies.
- registered providers deploying fixed-term tenancies reported rare non-renewals and anticipated this pattern.
- most registered providers were undecided about fixed-term tenancies' effectiveness. Those who commented were split, with some seeing positive impacts on tenant behaviour and stock efficiency. Others saw neither benefit despite the implementation workload.
- many registered providers thought fixed term tenancies negatively affected tenants, reducing their sense of security and belonging in their homes and communities, especially vulnerable ones and families with children.
- there were also concerns about potential work disincentives. One initial ambition for fixed term tenancies was that they would be offered to people until their earnings and savings exceeded an agreed threshold. At which point the fixed term tenancy would come to an end and a person would have to rent or buy a home from the commercial housing market. Registered providers were concerned that tenants might choose to limit their earnings so they remained below a threshold from which a fixed term tenancy would come to an end so they could remain in their social rented housing and be offered another fixed tenancy or a secure tenancy.
- while a third of registered providers considered fixed term tenancies ethically appropriate due to their ability to meet household needs, another third saw them as deeply problematic, hindering the sector's long-term stability and connectedness. The remaining third were

undecided, waiting to see the impacts of fixed term tenancies as more households renew in the coming years.

The research shows at best a limited appetite for the use of fixed term tenancies. Reluctance to use fixed term tenancies is born out in statistics published subsequent of this research, which are explored in the next section of this strategy.

3.4. Renters Rights Act 2025

The Renters Rights Act 2025 will have a minimal impact on social housing initially, as the key reform of abolishing fixed term tenancies is focused on the private rented sector. Social housing tenants will not be directly affected by the changes until the reforms are extended to the social housing sector, which will be a separate process.

The UK government is aiming to do this as soon as possible, but beforehand, it's important that the Regulator of Social Housing refreshes its tenancy standard. This will explain exactly what registered providers need to do under the new tenancy system. Since this involves a statutory consultation, it's expected that the new system for social tenancies will be rolled out later.

Fixed-term tenancies are usually used in the social rented sector when people expect a tenancy to be short-term. So, most social tenants already have secure assured tenancies, which offer more security and don't allow the use of 'no fault evictions.

3.5. Updating the Tenancy Standard of the Regulator of Social Housing

The Tenancy Standard of the Regulator of Social Housing is one of five consumer standards that all registered providers must comply with. It was first published in 2012, updated in 2015 and again in 2024. The Tenancy Standard sets out required outcomes and specific expectations for all registered providers concerning, allocations and lettings, tenancy sustainment and evictions, mutual exchange, social housing tenure.

The UK government's new national plan to end homelessness in England, was published in December 2025 and includes a commitment to update the tenancy standard of the regulator of social housing. The tenancy standard will include clear expectations of registered providers, that they are transparent with tenants about their approach to granting and ending tenancies as well as how they will support tenants to find alternative accommodation before eviction takes place.

Other commitments in the cross-government homelessness and rough sleeping strategy action plan that are relevant to this tenancy strategy, include:

- a review of how effectively registered providers use their properties, updating statutory guidance on social housing allocations.

- a consideration to require registered providers to rehouse statutory homeless households referred by a local authority.
- publication of best practice guidance to reduce tenancy failure.

4. Tenancy statistics

4.1. Social housing stock in the Dorset Council area

Official statistics published by the Regulator of Social Housing show that 50 registered providers owned 24,083 units of social housing stock in the Dorset Council area, on 31 March 2025.

Dorset Council as a local authority registered provider owned 160 (0.7%) units of social housing stock in the local authority area.

Four registered providers each owned more than 1,000 units and collectively owned 19,523 (82%) units –

- Aster Group – 7,360 (31%)
- Magna Housing – 5,936 (25%)
- Sovereign Network Group – 4,965 (21%)
- Stonewater – 1,262 (5%)

The first three registered providers listed above each received a large-scale voluntary transfer of social housing stock from Dorset Council's predecessor district local authorities, explaining why the ownership of social housing stock is concentrated across a small number of registered providers.

45 registered providers owned 4,400 (18%) social housing units.

Three held their total stock in the Dorset Council area, collectively owning 57 social housing units (0.2%).

- Dorchester Almshouses – 19 (0.1%)
- Sturts Community Trust – 35 (0.1%)
- The Maragret Jane Ashley Almshouses Charity 3 (0.0%)

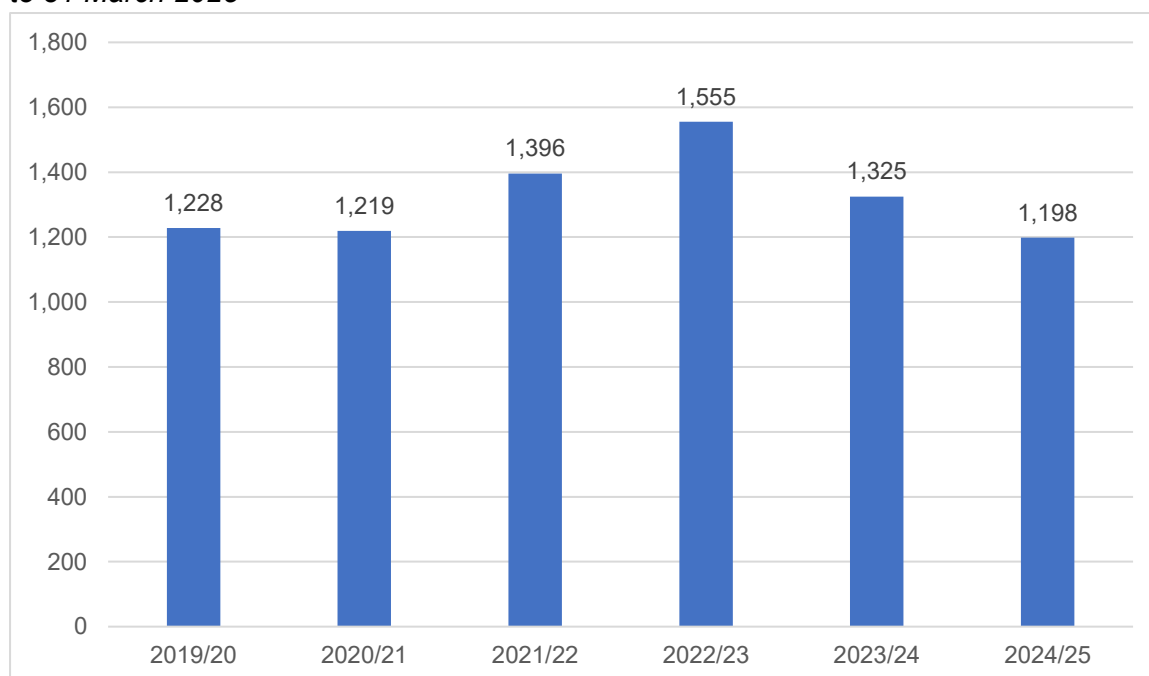
17,409 (72%) units were general needs social rented housing, 4,733 (20%) units were supported housing (including housing for older people) and 1,941 (8%) units were low-cost home ownership (rent to buy housing or shared ownership housing).

4.2. Social housing lettings in the Dorset Council area

For each letting made, a tenancy (or occasionally a licence) is granted.

7,921 lettings have been made by registered providers that own social housing in the Dorset Council area, since the local authority was established over a six-year period 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2025.

Chart 1. Social housing lettings, registered providers in the Dorset Council area, 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2025



1,320 lettings on average have been made per year. After increasing by 22% over three consecutive years to a record high of 1,555 in 2022/23, letting rates have reduced by 23% over the past two years to a record low of 1,198 in 2024/25.

Lettings rates are influenced by the overall amount of social housing stock, which changes depending on the number of units disposed of and new social housing built. Furthermore, eviction and tenancy sustainment rates also determine the amount of existing social housing being available to re-let.

The four registered providers that own the majority of social housing stock in the Dorset Council area, are responsible for the majority of social housing lettings made in the Dorset Council area, with most lettings being made to general needs provision at the social rent rate, which is consistent with the social housing stock and rent rates in the Dorset Council area.

4.3. Social housing tenancy terms granted in the Dorset Council area

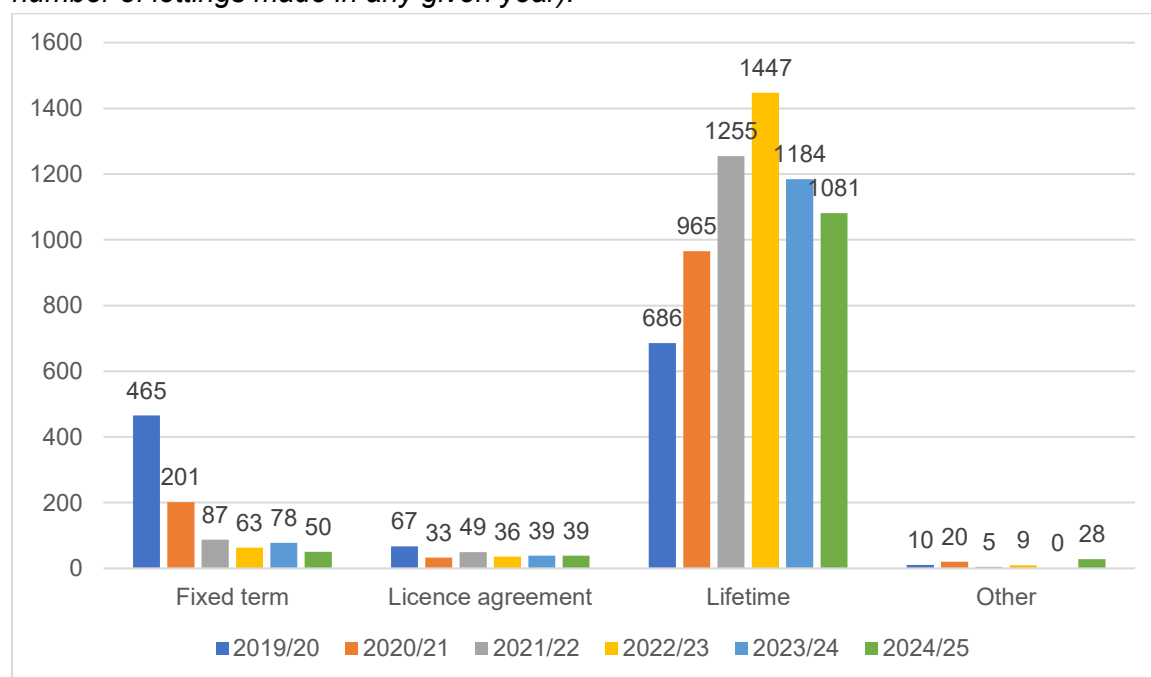
Registered providers that own social housing stock in the Dorset Council area, consistently grant lifetime tenancies more often than any other type of tenancy. The proportion of lifetime tenancies granted has increased over the past six years (1 April 2019 to 31 March 2025), from 55% to an average of 90%. Consistent with this, there has been a reduction in the number of fixed term tenancies granted from 36% down

to 6%, license agreements granted are from 5% down to 2%, and other types of tenancies granted are from 1% down to zero.

The number of license agreements granted over the past three years has remained consistent, although numbers are approximately half of those granted six years ago.

Other types of tenancy terms granted have remained low, with none being granted from April 2023 to March 2024 and then 28 being granted from April 2024 to March 2025, a significant increase and a record high. These were all periodic assured tenancies, 93% (26) were granted primarily by East Boro Housing, with Aster granting the others.

Chart 2. tenancy terms granted by registered providers in the Dorset Council area, 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2025 (note: data is not available on tenancy terms granted for every letting made, so there will be a difference between the statistics in the chart below and the overall number of lettings made in any given year).



The four registered providers owning the largest amount of social housing stock in the Dorset Council area grant the largest number of lifetime tenancies, for general needs provision at the social rent rate, which is consistent with the social housing stock and rent rates in the Dorset Council area.

Seven registered providers have granted license agreements over the past six years.

Just under one third (32%) of license agreements were granted by Bournemouth Churches Housing Association, with just over one-quarter (28%) granted by Magna Housing Group. Magna Housing Group is a large, registered provider which has just over two-thirds (70%) of its social housing stock in the Dorset council area and is

one of four that owns the majority of social housing stock in the Dorset Council area. Bournemouth Churches Housing Association is also a large, registered provider, more than four-fifths of its social housing stock is owned outside the Dorset Council area and the stock it does own in the Dorset Council area represents less than 1% of the total social housing stock in the Dorset Council area.

The two aforementioned registered providers, along with Stonewater (another one of the four registered providers that owns the majority of stock in the Dorset Council area), granted license agreements in each of the past six years.

Three registered providers collectively granted three licenses, one each, during the six-year period.

Seven registered providers have granted other types of occupancy agreements.

One registered provider has granted just over one third (35%) of all other types of occupancy agreements, East Boro Housing (part of the Aster Group, but a separate legal entity, registered separately with the Regulator of Social Housing), which is a small provider that owns the majority of its social housing stock in the Dorset Council area although counts for less than 2% of all social housing stock in the Dorset Council area.

4.5. Fixed term tenancies granted in the Dorset Council area

23 registered providers have granted 944 fixed term tenancies over the past five years.

Four registered providers collectively granted three quarters (73%, 703) of fixed term tenancies:

- East Boro Housing – 111 (12%)
- Magna Housing – 176 (19%)
- Sage Homes – 132 (12%)
- Sovereign Network Group – 284 (30%)

Two of the above registered providers (Magna Housing, and Sovereign Network Group) collectively own nearly half of all social housing stock in the Dorset Council area (25% and 21% respectively), The other two registered providers listed above (East Boro Housing Trust and Sage), collectively own less than 2% of the total social housing stock in the Dorset Council area,

Eight registered providers collectively granted eight fixed term tenancies over the past six years (one each):

- Abri Group
- Advance Housing & Support
- Bespoke Supportive Tenancies
- Golden Lane Housing
- Hastoe
- Hilldale
- Inclusion Housing
- The Guinness Partnership

All the above registered providers are large, registered providers, all operating in multiple local authority areas. They collectively own just under 6% of the total social housing stock in the Dorset Council area, but each holding less than 1% of their total stock in the Dorset Council area.

Only three registered providers have granted fixed term tenancies each year over the past six years:

- Bournemouth Churches Housing Association – 52, an average of 8.6 per year
- Sovereign Network Group – 284, an average of 47.3 per year
- Stonewater – 24, an average of 4 per year

The other two registered providers listed above own just over one-quarter of all social housing stock in the Dorset Council area (Sovereign Network Group, 21%, Stonewater 5%). The other registered provider listed above, Bournemouth Churches Housing Association, is a large, registered provider operating in nine local authority areas and owns 185 units in the Dorset Council area (just under 1% of the total stock) representing 16% of the organisations total stock.

Three registered providers, all recipients of large-scale voluntary transfers of social housing from Dorset Council's predecessor district councils, and holding the largest amount of stock in the area, granted most of their fixed term tenancies between 1 April 2019 to March 2020:

- Aster Group – 72 (97%), compared to 74 for the whole five years.
- Magna Group – 147 (83%), compared to 176 for the whole five years.
- Sovereign Network Group – 196 (69%), compared to 284 for the whole five years.

Further statistical analysis of fixed term tenancy trends can be found in an appendix to this report.

5. Tenancy types, terms and renewal

Typically, registered providers currently grant two types of tenancies:

- lifetime tenancies (assured tenancy by registered providers or secure tenancy by local authority registered providers). Lifetime tenancies give tenants greater security, as it can be lifelong and only ends if the tenant chooses to leave or is evicted for a valid, legal reason. An assured tenancy usually continues indefinitely and does not have a fixed end date unless a tenant gives notice or they are evicted for a legal reason. A notice of eviction must be given and a court order for possession must be obtained before an eviction can take place. A periodic assured tenancy is a type of lifetime tenancy. There is no fixed end date, and the tenancy continues from one rent period to the next. These tenancies have greater security for a tenant compared to a fixed term tenancy, as there needs to be a specific reason and a court order to end the tenancy.
- fixed term tenancies. A tenancy for a set period, with a clear start and end date, during which time, legally binding terms, with the tenant responsible for the rent until the end date unless they can negotiate to end the tenancy early (sometimes there may be a break clause that allows for a fixed term tenancy to end early under specific conditions). When the fixed term expires, the tenancy can either end, be renewed with another fixed term, or transition to a rolling tenancy or a lifetime tenancy.

Additionally, registered providers sometimes grant a residential license to occupy. A license agreement is generally for a short term, on a non-exclusive basis. These agreements must be used in limited circumstances, such as when a person will be temporarily (for a few weeks or months, but not years) occupying a property, or when they don't have sole occupation of their home (due to sharing a bathroom, kitchen, or front door with one or more other household).

The Renters' Rights Act 2025 will eliminate fixed term assured tenancies. Instead, all fixed term tenancies will become periodic assured tenancy, allowing tenants to stay until they give two months' notice. Once a date has been confirmed for fixed term tenancies to be abolished in the social rented sector, and after the Regulator of Social Housing has updated its tenancy standard, we shall update this section of this tenancy strategy.

The Regulator of Social Housing expects registered providers to publish their own tenancy policies, that have regard to the Dorset Council tenancy strategy, and explain –

- the types of tenancies they will grant
- the circumstances when they will grant specific types of tenancies
- the length of term they will use when fixed term tenancies are granted
- The circumstances in which they will renew tenancies

We want to support registered providers with their tenancy policies, as these policies contribute towards the aims of our homelessness and rough sleeping strategy, our housing allocation scheme and our housing strategy. Our expectations about social housing tenure are explained below.

5.1. Lifetime tenancies

Enabling tenants to have the most secure form of tenure appropriate helps create stable and sustainable communities. When registered providers are determining the tenure to offer, we expect them to offer the longest tenancies feasible and grant assured tenancies. This is particularly important for tenants with children.

We expect registered providers to grant assured tenancies to the following groups –

- individuals who were previously tenants under an assured tenancy (for the same or a different property), where someone in the household has been a victim of domestic abuse, and the new tenancy is granted as a result.
- households containing individuals over the age of 55 years.
- households containing one or more person who are vulnerable by reason of age, disability or illness, and households with children.

5.2. Fixed term tenancies

The UK Parliament has approved legislation to abolish fixed term tenancies and replace them with periodic assured tenancies in England. No date has been set for when this will happen for social rented sector. Until then, registered providers are permitted to continue to grant fixed-term tenancies.

We expect registered providers to grant fixed-term tenancies where it aligns appropriately with the intended purpose of the housing, the sustainability of the community, the household's needs, and the efficient utilisation of stock.

An example of when a fixed term tenancy might be best is for social housing provision that is for people who have undergone a specific adverse experience, to allow them an opportunity to recover and to transition towards general needs social rented housing. (An example of this, is the UK government's rough sleeper's accommodation project 2021 to 2024, which required people allocated homes provided through this project be given a fixed term tenancy of two years).

When registered providers offer fixed term tenancies, we expect them to consistently grant fixed terms of at least five years. This should follow any initial probationary period (which typically spans twelve months but can be extended if the tenant breaches the tenancy).

People who have been offered a fixed-term tenancy can ask the registered provider to review the decision regarding the specific term length. We expect the registered provider to maintain the original offer open until the review is completed.

In exceptional circumstances, registered providers may grant fixed-term tenancies for a term less than five years in general-needs housing (subject to any probationary period). In these cases, we expect registered providers to always first assess whether the reason for the shorter term offered can be effectively addressed through a probationary period or an assured short-hold tenancy.

We expect such exceptional circumstances to be extreme in nature and infrequent.

Fixed term tenancies may more commonly be granted for supported accommodation types that are designed for people who are transitioning to independent living.

Any fixed-term tenancies granted in exceptional circumstances must be for a minimum of two years and we do not expect them to be used where –

- the applicant requires substantial adaptations to their home (for instance, works worth more than £3,000 or equivalent to a flat floor shower).
- applicants have vulnerable adults (including older persons) or children residing within their household.

Fixed-term tenancies for a minimum of two years may also be granted where necessary to –

- comply with a legislative directive or UK government requirement
- comply with other recommendation (including funding requirements)
- due to the nature and construction of the premises necessitating the use of short-term tenancy.

We expect affordable rent tenancies to initially be granted as fixed-term tenancies, until registered providers are required to replace these with periodic assured tenancies. Upon the conclusion of the initial tenancy, we expect registered providers to carefully consider all circumstances to determine whether to grant another affordable rent tenancy or an alternative type of tenancy.

We expect registered providers to offer the most secure tenure possible, and consider the following factors –

- the purpose of the accommodation
- the needs of the person and their household, including any reasonable or additional preferences they may be entitled to under our housing allocation scheme
- the sustainability of the community
- the efficient use of their housing stock

5.3. Tenancy Renewal

When a fixed term tenancy comes to an end, we want registered providers to decide what might be the most appropriate tenancy to issue. If there are matters concerning breach of tenancy conditions, these should be dealt with outside of and ideally before any decisions about the most appropriate type of tenancy a tenant should be granted. Actions concerning breach of tenancy conditions should not be delayed until a decision must be made about whether a tenancy is renewed.

We expect all registered providers to ensure that all fixed-term tenancies are renewed at the expiry of their fixed term, to become another fixed term tenancy, or a lifetime tenancy. We expect the tenancy renewal process to allow sufficient time for consideration of all relevant issues and for appeals to be made. We expect registered providers to initiate tenancy reviews at least nine months prior to the end of the fixed term, and ideally twelve months prior to the end of the fixed term.

We expect registered providers to give written notice to the tenant, stating either that they propose to grant another tenancy on the expiry of the fixed term or that they do not propose to grant another tenancy.

From the outset when a registered provider issues a fixed term tenancy, we expect them to assume that they will grant a new tenancy, which will either be a lifetime tenancy or a fixed-term tenancy for a term at least equivalent to the current fixed term.

We expect that when a registered provider is considering whether to renew a fixed term tenancy the needs of the whole household, neighbours and community, will be assessed. If a registered provider decides there is a valid reason not to extend a tenancy for at least the same term, we expect them to provide the tenant a clear and full explanation. We expect that this includes information about available alternative tenancies (including lifetime tenancies). Decisions are expected to adhere to the registered provider's own tenancy policy, be in the interest of good housing management and be proportionate to the tenant's personal circumstances.

Examples of valid reasons for not renewing the tenancy for the current property include:

- the home is under-occupied in accordance with the social sector size criteria.
- there are unused, substantial adaptations.

If a registered provider does not renew a tenancy, we expect them to consider on a case-by-case basis –

- providing or finding an alternative suitably priced and sized home.
- offering financial or other incentives to encourage tenants to relocate.
- working with us or another registered provider that owns or manages dwellings in the Dorset Council area to provide a suitable home.
- supporting the household into affordable or market rent or owner occupation if appropriate to their social and financial circumstances.

We expect registered providers to avoid including tenant rent arrears in decisions on tenancy renewals. We expect registered providers to prioritise other methods to resolve rent arrears.

We also expect registered providers to avoid including complaints due to antisocial behaviour in decisions on tenancy renewals. We welcome an approach where any breaches of tenancy are dealt with under the normal possession process, allowing a court to consider the case. In exceptional circumstances, if registered providers do consider non-renewal of tenancy because of antisocial behaviour, we expect that community care needs (e.g. social care needs, domiciliary care needs, health care needs, etc) are included in any assessment.

We acknowledge that sometimes, tenants with fixed term tenancies do not engage with the registered providers' tenancy review. We expect a registered provider to explore whether the tenant has any vulnerability affecting their ability to engage and to make reasonable adjustments. Where this is complete, we expect a registered provider to consider not renewing a tenancy.

We expect registered providers to maintain their rules on tenancy renewal for at least 2 years after their policies are published. This offers some security to tenants about renewal criteria.

6. Tenancy decisions

The Regulator of Social Housing requires registered providers to publish tenancy policies that explain:

- how tenants can ask for a review of a decision not to renew a fixed-term tenancy.
- how tenants can make a complaint about a fixed term tenancy decision.
- how they will provide advice and assistance to tenants on finding alternative accommodation when they decide not to grant another tenancy.

6.1. Reviews and complaints against tenancy decisions

We expect registered providers to publish their renewal and appeals processes in a form that is clear and accessible. Timescales should be clear and start early enough to ensure homelessness is prevented.

We expect registered providers to include information about statutory reviews in their tenancy policies. We expect tenants to be aware of their right to get independent advice and support in seeking a review of any decision about their tenancy. This includes decisions not to renew fixed-term tenancies.

When sending formal notice of the decision not to grant another tenancy, we expect registered providers to advise tenants to seek independent advice on requesting a review.

Furthermore, we accept that registered providers have the right to review a decision they make not to renew a tenancy or to serve notice seeking possession.

6.2. Finding alternative accommodation

Before registered providers conclude their decision regarding a tenancy review, we expect them to explore potential housing alternatives to prevent homelessness.

We expect registered providers to offer guidance and assistance to all tenants whose tenancies are not being renewed. We expect registered providers to assist tenants in locating suitable alternative accommodation that meet the specific requirements of their household.

We expect assistance to include:

- ensuring they adhere to statutory guidance on suitability.
- discussing with tenant's alternative, affordable housing options.
- understanding and considering the tenant's income and capital resources.
- using the opportunity to connect the household with any additional necessary support, such as employment assistance.

7. Tenancy management

The Regulator of Social Housing requires registered providers to publish tenancy management policies that cover:

- tenancy sustainment
- preventing evictions
- tackling tenancy fraud

We want to support registered providers to successfully deliver the above policies, as they contribute towards the aims of our homelessness and rough sleeping strategy, housing allocation scheme, and housing strategy. Our expectations about these matters are explained below.

7.1. Tenancy sustainment

Tenancy sustainment includes a range of activities designed to reduce the risk of tenants getting into difficulties and to increase their overall well-being. This reduces the number of evictions and abandonments from social housing tenancies.

We expect registered providers to have an effective approach to tenancy sustainment. We want to support registered providers to have tenancy sustainment policies that includes the following types of activities:

- early identification of support needs including sharing information with relevant organisations that might be able to provide appropriate support to the tenant. Examples of support needs include mental health, substance issues, learning disabilities or physical disabilities, (this list is not exhaustive). This would include using sensitive lettings of properties for vulnerable tenants. It would be at the lettings stage after a nomination has been made by the council and accepted by the registered provider. The council will always share relevant information about a person we are nominating to a registered provider for an allocation of social housing, whenever we are permitted to share it.
- early establishment of relationships when welcoming new tenants and helping them settle into accommodation including working with the whole range of council departments, services and commissioners.
- help furnishing and equipping their home, where needed.
- Consider waiving rent in advance for new tenants who do not have the funds to pay it or would have to pay rent on two homes.
- Make sure that all practice, including communication with tenants such as letters, text messages and online information, is equality sensitive. This includes for example, people experiencing domestic abuse, people with learning disabilities, young people, care leavers, and refugees.

- use effective methods to identify risks and intervene early. This includes improving knowledge and understanding of tenants and carrying out home visits.
- working with and creating networks to support tenants to maintain their tenancies, including agencies that can help with debt advice.
- working collaboratively across multiple agencies to address issues and escalate safeguarding concerns, particularly where Dorset Council's services, including housing, adult social care and children's services, are involved.
- tackling anti-social behaviour and abandonment, including working collaboratively with other agencies. In cases of harassment and anti-social behaviour this includes responding to complaints, providing support and making use of transfer where appropriate. In cases of abandonment, spotting and responding to risk of abandonment and having procedures for suspected abandonments.
- building positive tenant and community connections, by engaging and supporting tenants, and connecting into local communities and services.
- supporting arrears and debt and the use of pre-eviction protocols. This includes income maximisation such as helping tenants with the benefits system, and debt advice. It can also include helping to avoid arrears and debt and managing finances such as arrears and rent repayment plans, early identification of difficulties and responses to missed payments, providing support and using enforcement as last resort.

7.2. Preventing evictions

Tenant evictions are a major cause of homelessness, primarily due to unpaid rent. Other factors include nuisance, improper use of housing, financial risks like unemployment, lack of financial skills, and sudden income loss which can lead to unpaid rent and eviction.

Other risks include underusing subsidies and assistance due to knowledge, shame, or past negative experiences. Unstable housing and insufficient social support also increase the risk. Addiction, physical and mental health problems, and ineffective coping styles can contribute. Housing policies, market conditions, and homelessness prevention policies can also affect eviction rates.

Evictions are traumatic for all, especially families. Registered providers face high costs, and evictions strain homelessness services, increasing overall costs.

Over the past 25 years, policy has shifted from housing the homeless to preventing homelessness and the high costs of evictions has been a consideration. Preventing tenant evictions is a vital part of our homelessness strategy.

We expect registered providers to have effective interventions in place to prevent evictions. We want to support registered providers to have eviction prevention policies that include the following types of activities:

- debt advice, both by telephone and in person, with information to help tenants manage their debt. Face-to-face sessions should include income and expenditure assessments and action plans.
- an intensive multi-method intervention approach for tenants at risk of eviction due to antisocial behaviour. (Good practice examples include help lasting from a few months to over 2 years that provides a systemic approach combining individual, couple, family, and group work to prevent evictions, and workers who can focus on a small number of cases at a time, providing intensive support).
- help for tenants to find organisations that can provide them legal assistance, advice, and representation from a paralegal, solicitor, or barrister or other qualified and authorised legal practitioner.
- support in place for hoarders at risk of eviction (good practice examples include using personalised methods, support groups, workshops, educational materials, referrals, home visits, emotional support, and signposting to legal services and individual counselling).
- mediation that is available for tenants at risk of eviction within two months due to personal, financial, or social circumstances.
- providing information about accessing welfare benefits and grants to help tenants resolve issues leading to eviction.
- one-off financial assistance package for self-sufficient tenants at risk of homelessness due to sudden financial crises (for example case by case assistance that may or may not be required to be repaid and might collaborate or compliment measures the local authority makes available).

7.3. Tackling social housing tenancy fraud

Social housing tenancy fraud is the illegal or fraudulent occupation of a registered providers' home. It causes significant social harm, can lead to antisocial behaviour and deprive legitimate tenants of affordable homes. Common examples include providing false information to let or buy a property, applying for multiple properties when a person is already a social housing tenant, receiving payment to give keys to an unentitled occupant, renting out property without permission, or moving into a property without a legal tenancy when the legal tenant is deceased or has moved away.

Social housing fraud deprives vulnerable people of social housing. With the need for social housing exceeding the supply of existing and new social housing, protecting the stock and taxpayers' investments from fraud is vital. Prevention is more cost-effective than ending tenancies or taking legal action against tenants, employees, suppliers, or others.

We expect registered providers to act against tenancy fraud. We want to support registered providers to have tenancy fraud policies that include the following types of activities:

- a clear policy that is shared with staff, tenants and others on subletting, application, succession, key-selling, right-to-buy and right-to-acquire fraud.
- carrying out their own checks on new applicants before a home is let that includes identity, residency status and tenancy history.
- ensuring that all new tenants completing a housing application form and sign relevant declarations, regardless of how they obtain the tenancy.
- getting colour photographs of new tenants and/or their signatures during the lettings process and reviewing them during tenancy audits.
- conducting annual, risk-based or rolling tenancy audits to check that the authorised tenant is living at the property. They should combine this with other planned visits, such as annual gas safety checks or property valuations.
- training frontline staff to spot fake and forged documents and warning signs of fraud throughout the tenancy lifecycle.

8. Monitoring and reporting

We will monitor the impact of this strategy, to ensure that this tenancy strategy achieves the objectives set out at the beginning of this strategy.

At least annually, we will review official statistics reported by registered providers to the UK government, which are published by the regulator of social housing, and include data on the number of and types of tenancies granted in the Dorset Council area. We shall share and discuss these with registered providers.

Additionally, we will review registered providers tenancy policies whenever they are renewed, to ascertain whether they are incorporating the aims of this tenancy strategy. We shall discuss our findings with them.

We have developed an action plan to support the delivery of our priorities set out in this tenancy strategy.

We shall revise and re-publish this tenancy strategy following the enactment of legislation that abolishes fixed term tenancies and replaces them with periodic assured tenancies.

Action Plan

We intend to deliver the actions in this plan collaboratively with registered providers that own social housing stock in the Dorset Council area.

What	When	Why	How
Review official statistics on types of tenancies granted in Dorset Council area and publish findings.	Autumn/Winter, annually.	To ascertain if types of tenancies granted are consistent with registered provider tenancy policies.	Statistical analysis.
Review contents of tenancy policies.	Ongoing, whenever a tenancy policy is reviewed and republished.	To ascertain how aims of Dorset Council's Tenancy Strategy are being incorporated. To ascertain how required outcomes and specific expectation in Tenancy Standard are being fulfilled. To ascertain consistency with Code of Practice.	Interviews, literature review, comparative analysis.
Review approach to how decisions are made to issue fixed-term tenancies, licences, and lifetime tenancies.	2026	To prepare for forthcoming changes to tenure law in social rented sector, arising from the Renters Rights Act 2025.	Interviews, focus groups, literature review, comparative analysis.
Revise Dorset Council's Tenancy Strategy when fixed term tenancies are replaced with period assured tenancies.	2027	To ensure tenancy strategy is consistent with revisions made to tenancy standard following changes to social housing tenure.	Literature review, report writing.
Review approach to tenancy sustainment.	2028	To help fulfil required outcomes and specific expectation in Tenancy Standard.	Focus groups, literature review, comparative analysis.
Review approach to preventing evictions	2029	To help fulfil specific expectations in Tenancy Standard.	Focus groups, literature review,

			comparative analysis.
Review approaches to tackling social housing tenancy fraud.	2030	To help fulfil specific expectations in Tenancy Standard.	Focus groups, literature review, comparative analysis.

9. Terminology

Dorset Council means the local authority.

Dorset Council area means the area of the local authority.

Registered provider of social housing means the landlord of social housing that is on a register of providers of social housing established by the Regulator of Social Housing. There are two types of registered providers –

- local authority registered providers, these are local authorities that own and manage social housing.
- private registered providers, these are commonly known as housing associations and are also often charitable organisations and for-profit organisations.

Social housing means low-cost rental accommodation that is made available for rent below the market rate, for people whose needs cannot be met by the commercial housing market.

General needs social housing means the bulk of social housing. It includes both self-contained units and non-self-contained bedspaces. It is stock that is not designated for specific client groups or delivered under specific investment programmes.

Supported housing means social housing that is made available only in conjunction with the supply of support. It is made available exclusively to households that include a person who has been identified as needing that support. It falls into one or both of the following categories –

- accommodation that has been designed, structurally altered or refurbished to enable residents with support needs to live independently, and
- has been designated as available only to individuals within an identified group with specific support needs.

Social rent means social housing that is provided by a registered provider (which constitute a majority of rented social housing properties) have been set based on a formula set by the UK government, calculated on the relative value of the property, relative local income levels, and the size of the property to ensure that similar rents are charged for similar types of social housing properties.

Affordable rent means social housing that is provided by a registered provider according to an agreement between that registered provider and Homes England. The social housing is permitted by that agreement to be let at an affordable rent, provided by a registered provider according to an agreement with The Secretary of State and is permitted by that agreement to be let at an affordable rent. The rent for affordable rent housing (inclusive of property related service charges) must not exceed 80% of gross market rent of an equivalent property.

Fixed term tenancies are tenancies of a set length, provided by both local authority registered providers (secure flexible) and registered providers of social housing (assured shorthold). For general needs social housing, the minimum length is five years (though may be shorter in exceptional circumstances) and the maximum length is 20 years.

Lifetime tenancies mean tenancies given for the lifetime of the tenant. When provided by registered providers they are known as assured tenancies, when provided by local authority registered providers they are known as secure tenancies.

Licence agreement means an informal tenancy. They have no set length or end date and are mainly used for supported housing.

Dorset Council Tenancy Strategy 2026 - 2031

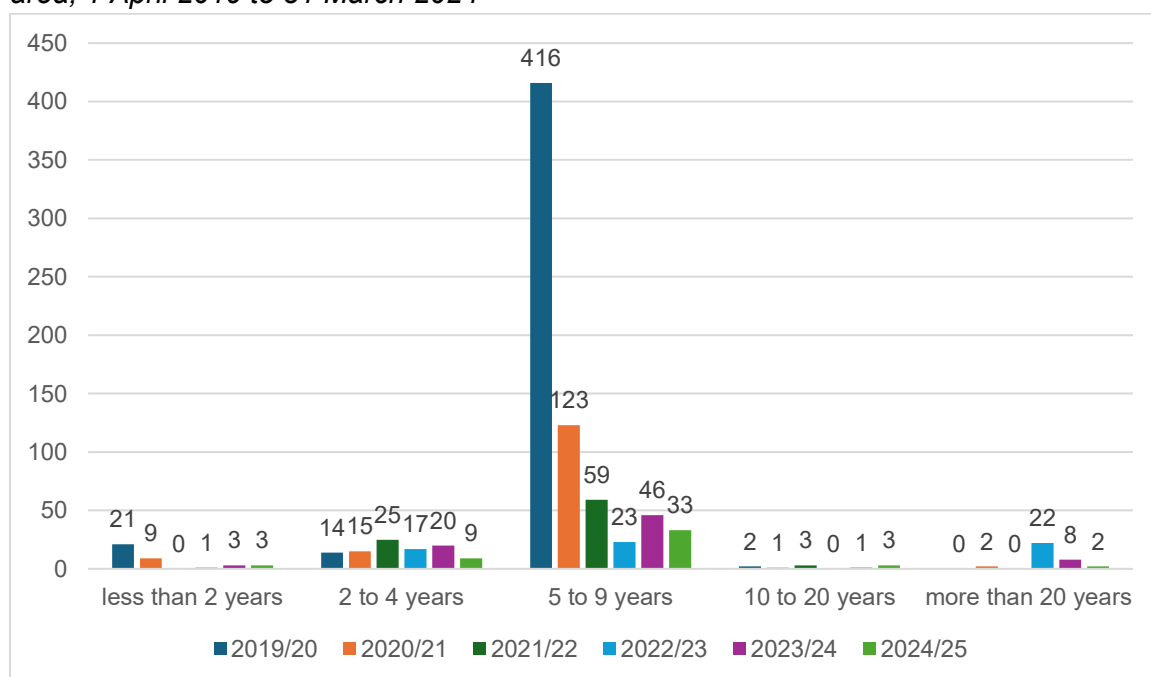
Appendix 2: Fixed-term tenancy statistical analysis.

This appendix provides an in-depth statistical analysis of fixed term tenancy trends in the Dorset Council area from 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2024.

An overview of social housing tenancy statistics can be found in chapter 4 of the strategy.

When fixed term tenancies are granted, the most common length of term is 5 to 9 years, equating to 70% (700) of all fixed term tenancies granted over the past six years. Fixed term tenancies of 10 to 20 years were the least common type of fixed term tenancy granted, equating to just one percent (10) of all fixed term tenancies granted over the past five years.

Chart 3. fixed term tenancy granted by length by registered providers in the Dorset Council area, 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2024



Three registered providers are responsible for granting three-quarters (77%) of fixed term tenancies for a duration of 5 to 9 years.

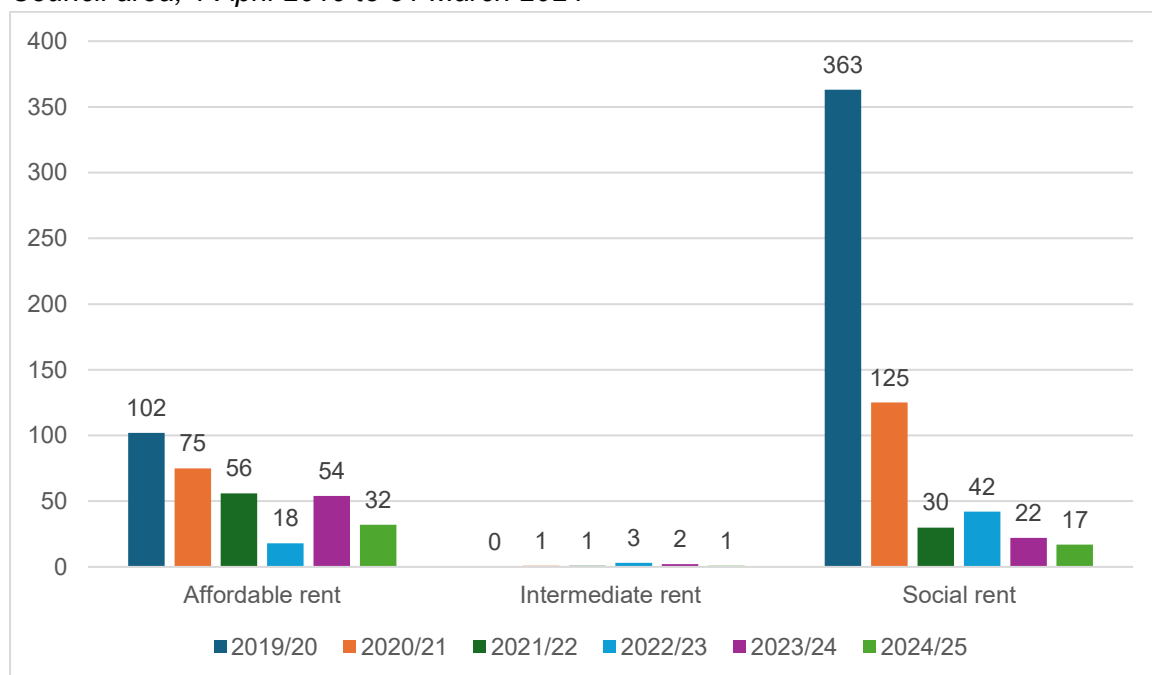
- Magna Group – 140 (20%)
- Sage Homes – 119 (17%)

- Sovereign Network Group – 281 (40%)

Fixed term tenancies have been granted more often to social housing let at the social rent rate, 63% (599) of the total, compared to other rent rates. However, the proportion of fixed terms tenancies let at the at the social rent rate has reduced over the past six years (in relative and real terms), from 78% (363) down to 34% (17). Whereas during the same period fixed term tenancies let at the affordable rent rate has increased from 22% (102) up to 64% (32). This change will be influenced by the increase in the number of new social homes, provided at the affordable rent rate rather than a social rent rate during this period.

These changes are consistent with the changes in rates of fixed term tenancies granted by the three largest registered providers that own stock in the Dorset Council area.

Chart 4. fixed term tenancies granted by rent rate, by registered providers in the Dorset Council area, 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2024



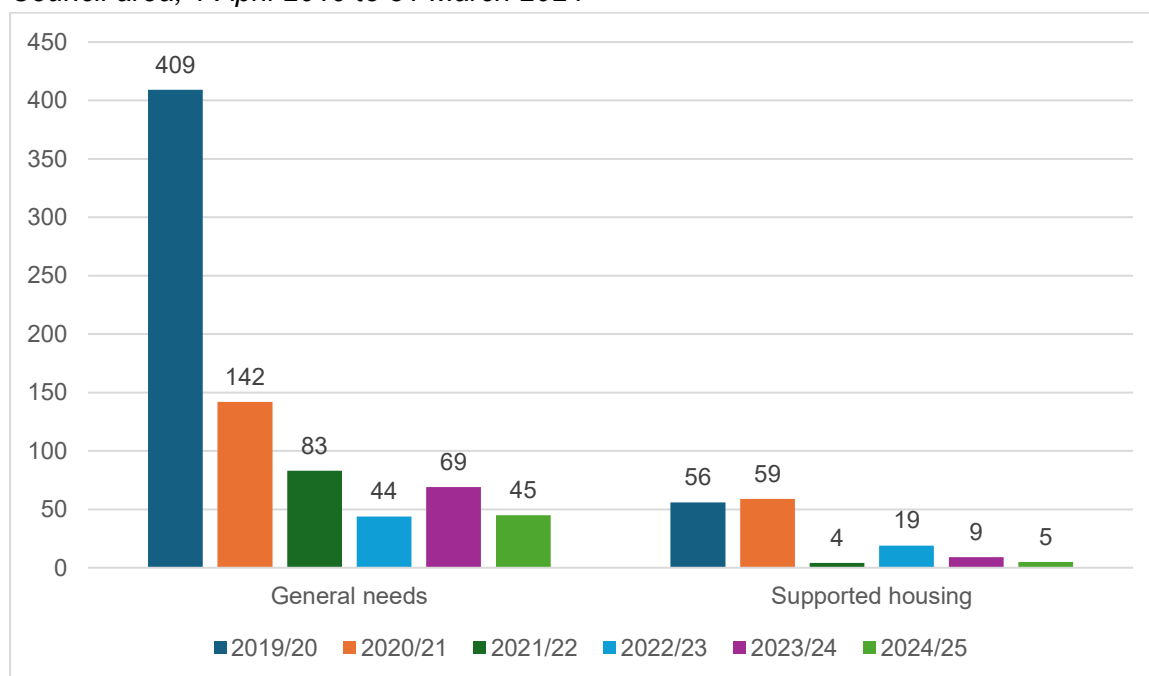
One registered provider, Sage Homes, is responsible for granting 40% of all fixed term tenancies at the affordable rent rate. Sage Homes does not own a large proportion of the social housing stock in the Dorset Council area, and most of their social housing stock is located outside the Dorset Council area.

Five registered providers have granted fixed term tenancies at the intermediate rent rate, granting one or two each.

Fixed term tenancies have been granted to more general needs social housing than supported housing, at average rate of 83% across the five years, and about 10%

higher than the overall rate of general needs social housing stock in the Dorset Council area.

Chart 5. fixed term tenancy granted by provision type, by registered providers in the Dorset Council area, 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2024



10 registered providers have granted supported housing fixed term tenancies.

Six registered providers have a granted only one supported housing fixed term tenancy each.

One registered provider, East Boro Housing, is responsible for granting one third of all supported housing fixed term tenancies. East Boro Housing is a small, registered provider that own stock in two local authority areas, with 8% of its stock in the Dorset Council area, although it represents less than 2% of all social housing stock in the Dorset Council area.

Overall, fixed term tenancies in the Dorset Council are much less likely to be granted now than five years ago. When fixed term tenancies are granted, it is by small number of registered providers, often for a period of 5 to 9 years, at a social rent rate, for general needs housing provision.

The statistics do not provide a reason for why there are less fixed terms tenancies granted now compared to previously, although the reduction in the number granted is part of a long-term prevailing trend.

Given that most social rented housing stock is general needs provision available at the social rent rate, this would explain why fixed term tenancies granted are for this

type of provision at this rent rate, although it's notable that fixed term tenancies granted for general needs provision at the affordable rent rate has increased in relative terms over the past six years.

It's unclear why the period of 5 to 9 years has been the most common duration used when fixed term tenancies are granted, with one registered provider being more prevalent than others, especially as the Regulator of Social Housing recommends fixed terms tenancies be for a period of five years (two years is acceptable when necessary).



Equality Impact Assessment

1. Dorset Tenancy Strategy 2026 - 2031
2. This is a strategy.
3. This is external guidance for Registered Providers of Social Housing (RPs) (commonly known as Housing Associations which are often charitable organisations but also includes for profit registered providers) about Dorset Councils preferences for them to consider when setting their tenancy policies and aims to support tenants in the area. It does not give Dorset Council powers or duties but does describe the work it will do to monitor how RPs have considered the strategy.
4. Its aims and objectives are to meet our legal requirement to publish a tenancy strategy. The Regulator of Social Housing requires RPs to have policies relating to social housing tenure, housing management and tenant support. This strategy outlines and provides them with guidance on what the council wishes them to consider when formulating these policies including:
 - Tenure
 - Tenancy renewals, reviews and decisions
 - Tenant support provided as part of the RP's roles and responsibilities including matters relating to protected characteristics.
 - Written and in person practices and approaches relating to RP's roles and responsibilities on tenancy management and tenancy sustainment.
5. Under the Localism Act 2011 the council is required to have a tenancy strategy in respect of social housing. Dorset Council is a local authority registered provider. It owns and manages low-cost rental housing for example for rough sleepers. It will consider this strategy for any relevant council owned housing. This strategy does not cover temporary accommodation the council owns as a local authority registered provider.

Dorset Council employed an external consultant, Neil Morland & Co Housing Consultants to develop the tenancy strategy and complete the consultation. Relevant council services and the portfolio holder for housing & health were included. The council is required to consult with RPs to develop the strategy. There is no method or mandated timeframe to do this. A workshop was held with RPs during the development of the strategy. The draft strategy has been shared with RPs (see section 8) and they were invited to provide feedback which has been considered. There is no legal requirement to consult tenants.

The Renters Rights Act has recently become law. The Act abolishes fixed term tenancies and replaces them with periodic assured tenancies. An enactment timetable will follow, and The Regulator of Social Housing will amend its guidance for RPs and Dorset Council will update its tenancy strategy accordingly once there are more information and guidance from the UK government.

Public data from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government has been used to review tenure practice from 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2024 and included information about:

- The name and number of RPs who hold stock in the Dorset Council area.
- The amount of stock each RP holds in the Dorset Council area.
- The types and tenures granted in the Dorset Council by these RPs over the last 5 years.
- Rent levels for stock types.
- Comparisons to England and the Southwest regions.

6. Evidence gathering and engagement

[Data from the Regulator of Social Housing](#) for social housing statistics on registered provider social housing stock and rents in England. For this strategy data was sourced on the number of registered providers that own stock in the Dorset Council area and the amount of social housing stock in the Dorset Council area, by registered provider type and overall.

[CORE](#) data published by the UK government on statistics on social housing lettings in England. For this strategy data was sourced on fixed term tenancy lengths, starter/introductory tenancy, tenancy term, tenancy type overall and by registered provider type.

Dorset Council Housing Register. A link is not provided because the register includes personal data.

[Heriot Watt University 2018](#) for this strategy data was sourced on fixed term tenancies.

7. Insight from data and evidence gathering is as follows:

Data from the Regulator of Social Housing:

There are 54 RPs who own stock in the Dorset Council area of circa 24K units of accommodation.

4 RPs own 82% of the stock. 3 of these had large scale voluntary transfers of stock from predecessor district authorities.

73% of stock held is general needs social rented housing, 20% is supported housing including for older people, 7% were low-cost home ownership.

Data from the national data set CORE (Continuous Recording of Lettings in Social Housing):

RPs in the Dorset Council area consistently grant lifetime tenancies more often than any other type of tenancy.

Overall fixed term tenancies are much less likely to be granted now than 5 years ago. When fixed term tenancies are granted, it is by a small number of RPs, often for a period of 10 – 20 years, mostly at a social rent rate and has mostly been for general housing needs provision.

Statistics don't provide a reason for why there are less fixed term tenancies granted now than previously but the reduction in number is reflective of a prevailing trend.

Most stock in general needs housing provision available at the social rent rate and may explain why most fixed term tenancies are granted for this type of provision at this rent rate.

The proportion of lifetime tenancies granted has increased over the past 5 years from 50% to an average of 90%.

There has been a reduction in the number of fixed term tenancies granted over the past 5 years from 36% to 6%.

There has been a reduction in the number of licence agreements granted over the past 5 years from 5% to 2%.

There has been a reduction in the number of other types of tenancies granted over the past 5 years from 1% to zero.

19 RPs have granted 894 fixed term tenancies in the last 5 years, and 4 RPs granted 76%. Only 4 RPs have consistently granted fixed terms tenancies each year over the past 5 years.

When fixed term tenancies are granted the most common term is 5 to 9 years (80%). Fixed term tenancies with terms 10 to 20 years are the least common (just under 1%).

More fixed term tenancies have been granted to social housing let at social rent rate (65%) but this has reduced in real terms from 78% to 28%. For the same period fixed term tenancies let at the affordable rent rate has increased from 22% to 69%.

Fixed term tenancies have been granted to more general needs social housing than supported housing (83%).

Data from the housing register:

6,723 lettings have been made by RPs in this area from 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2024.

19/20 1,228 lettings

20/21	1,219 lettings
21/22	1,396 lettings
22/23	1,555 lettings
23/24	1,325 lettings

Heriot Wyatt University 2018 study on fixed term tenancies in social housing:

At that time, decisions against fixed term tenancies stemmed from commitment to lifetime tenancies and worries that fixed term tenancies created uncertainty for tenants and communities as well as the additional associated administrative burden.

Some landlords targeted the use of fixed term tenancies to specific properties or tenant, but others used it as their standard offer.

Many RPs had not realised anticipated benefits of using fixed term tenancies.

Many RPs using fixed term tenancies reported rare non-renewals and expected this.

The study reported that many respondents were undecided about the effectiveness of fixed term tenancies but thought they negatively affected tenants' sense of community and security especially vulnerable tenants and families with children. They also reported concerns that linking fixed term tenancies to earnings and employment was ineffective.

None of the data provided an assessment of qualitative data. The action plan details work Dorset Council will do to monitor the effectiveness of this strategy and aims to include qualitative findings.

8. As part of this assessment we engaged with:

Registered Providers

Dorset Council officers responsible for:
Social housing allocations
Homelessness and housing advice
Private sector housing standards
Spatial planning
Adult social care
Housing strategy

9. No further information needed to help inform decision making.

10. An EQIA is required.

11. Assessing the impact on different groups of people.

Key to impacts

Positive Impact	the proposal eliminates discrimination, advances equality of opportunity and/or fosters good relations with protected groups.
Negative Impact	protected characteristic group(s) could be disadvantaged or discriminated against
Neutral Impact	no change/ no assessed significant impact of protected characteristic groups
Unclear	not enough data/evidence has been collected to make an informed decision.

We hope this strategy will have a positive impact relating to most protected characteristic. It encourages RPs to ensure their policies and practice include holistic assessments of the whole household (not limited to tenants), communities and care provision for tenancy reviews, renewals or the ending of a tenancy or eviction. Our guidance aims to encourage RPs to ensure support is offered to households about tenancy sustainment, alternative accommodation and seeks to prevent homelessness. We want RPs to grant the most secure form of tenancy possible.

Impacts on who or what?	Choose impact	How
Age	Positive	When a household includes children and/or older people, we want RPs to consider their needs, seek mitigation to barriers and offer good tenant support that takes these characteristics into account.
Disability	Positive	When a household includes people who have additional needs because of a disability, we want RPs to consider their needs, consider vulnerability, seek mitigation to barriers and offer good tenant support that takes these characteristics into account.
Gender reassignment and Gender Identity	Positive	When a household includes a person(s) who are in the process of or has already changed their gender, we want RPs to consider their needs, seek mitigation to barriers and offer good tenant support that takes these characteristics into account.
Marriage or civil partnership	Neutral	A person's marriage or civil partnership status is not a factor

Impacts on who or what?	Choose impact	How
		specifically impacted. All members of a tenant's household should be considered and a good standard of support made available. In the event of a marriage or civil partnership breakdown RPs are required to administer changes to tenancies according to legislation.
Pregnancy and maternity	Positive	When a household includes a person who is pregnant or on maternity, we want RPs to consider their needs, seek mitigation to barriers and offer good tenant support that takes these characteristics into account.
Race and Ethnicity	Positive	When a household includes a person(s) with needs around language or cultural considerations, we want RPs to consider their needs, seek mitigation to barriers and offer good tenant support that takes these characteristics into account.
Religion and belief	Positive	We hope this strategy will have a positive impact relating to religion and belief. When a household includes a person(s) with needs around religion or belief, we want RPs to consider their needs, seek mitigation to barriers and offer good tenant support that takes these characteristics into account.
Sex (consider men and women)	Positive	Rarely, specific properties are set aside because they require single sex. In instances where community cohesion impacts related to a person's sex exist, a property may be or become unsuitable, but we want RPs to take a holistic approach to all aspects covered by this strategy.
Sexual orientation	Positive	In instances where community cohesion and/or anti-social behaviour or harassment exists

Impacts on who or what?	Choose impact	How
		relating to a person's sexual orientation, a property may be or become unsuitable. We hope this strategy encourages RPs to ensure their policies and practice include holistic approach in relation to all aspects covered by this strategy. When a household includes a person(s) has needs related to their sexual orientation, we want RPs to consider these needs in delivering their relevant roles and responsibilities.
People with caring responsibilities	Positive	When a household includes a person(s) with needs relating to their caring responsibilities we want RPs to consider these needs in delivering their roles and responsibilities.
Rural isolation	Positive	Where rural isolation is a consideration, we want RPs to have regard for households with people who have additional needs or who are vulnerable as a result.
Socio-economic deprivation	Positive	We want RPs to recognise how housing insecurity can affect low-income households and to consider whether households living in rural isolation have additional needs during the delivery of their tenancy related roles and responsibilities.
Single parents	Positive	We want RPs to recognise how housing insecurity can impact single parent households, and to consider whether a single parent household has additional needs or who are vulnerable as a result.
Armed forces communities	Positive	A person's previous employment history is normally not a factor that impacts on matters covered by this strategy. We recognise that people who are armed forces veterans may have vulnerabilities because of

Impacts on who or what?	Choose impact	How
		that, and we want RPs to consider these.

Summary of impacts:

There are no negative impacts derived from this strategy. The Equality & Human Rights Commission can act against a registered provider of social housing if they act in a discriminatory way (directly or indirectly) in the way they provide services.

Action Plan

Summary of any actions required because of this equality impact assessment.

Issue	Action to be taken	Person(s) responsible	Date to be completed by
4 RPs have consistently granted fixed term tenancies each year over the last 5 years.	Although the Renters Right Act abolishes fixed term tenancies, until the enactment arrangements are published and the Regulator of Social Housing updates relevant requirements, fixed term tenancies can still be granted. Granting a fixed term tenancy is appropriate if it relates to specific intentions for the unit of accommodation or the tenant. The council wishes to ensure the reasons behind the very small number of fixed term tenancies granted are appropriate and to encourage RPs to issue the most secure form of tenancy possible. The council will monitor the tenure granted and work with RPs issuing fixed term tenancies to provide assurance.	Sharon Attwater	Annually
Ensure the impact of this strategy on vulnerable groups is monitored	Include impact on vulnerable groups in annual monitoring	Sharon Attwater	Annually
RP compliance	Include a periodic review of RP policies to monitor compliance and identify areas for improvement or barriers to mitigate/support.	Sharon Attwater	Periodic on RP policies renewal/development

RP equality and inclusion knowledge and skills to be current	Explore opportunities for the council to check and support the level of skills and knowledge held by RPs on equality and inclusion.	Sharon Attwater	Periodic and in response to changes in legislation.
Renters Right Act	Dorset Council Tenancy Strategy to be amended when enactment timetable is published and when Regulator of Social Housing publishes new requirements for RPs.	Sharon Attwater	TBC

Sign Off: Andrew Billany

Officer completing this EqlA: Sharon Attwater

Officers involved in completing the EqlA: Gary Messenger

Date of completion: 18 December 2025

Version Number: 5

EqlA review date: 06 January 2026

Equality Lead Sign Off: James Palfreyman-Key

Cabinet

3 March 2026

Crisis and Resilience Fund For Decision

Cabinet Member:

Cllr R Hope, Customer, Culture and Community Engagement

Senior Leadership Team:

L Cotton, Corporate Director, Transformation, Customer & Cultural Services

S Cremer, Corporate Director, S151

Report author and job title:

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Email: laura.cornette@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

Statutory Authority: Local Government Act

The Crisis and Resilience Fund National Policy

Report status: Public (the exemption paragraph is N/A)

1. Executive summary

- 1.1 The Government has introduced a new national Crisis and Resilience Fund (CRF) that replaces the Household Support Fund (HSF) and Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) from 1 April 2026. These two former schemes (HSF and DHP) have been amalgamated into the new national Crisis and Resilience Fund (CRF), running from 1 April 2026 to 31 March 2029.
- 1.2 Dorset Council has embedded the principle of supporting our communities at the heart of its priorities. The communities for all priority states that strong communities have a vital role in preventing crises from happening, both personal and at a community level. This approach to community resilience will require partners across our local system to work with and within our communities to develop the approaches that will support resilience at all levels.
- 1.3 It is important that the council maintains the ability to support vulnerable residents who experience financial shocks that affect their resilience.
- 1.4 Dorset Council's settlement for CRF is £4.1m with a minimum of £458,298 ringfenced for the Housing Payment for years 1 and 2.
- 1.5 The difference between the HSF including DHP settlement for 2025/26 (£4,503,064) and the CRF is (£4.1m) is £403,000. This represents an 8.9% reduction in funding compared to the 2025/26 HSF + DHP allocation. However,

the new three-year settlement provides greater stability and allows for improved forward planning.

- 1.6 The timescales set by Government for issuing amended CRF guidance were extremely limited. Given that the updated guidance was only received on 21 January 2026, and with implementation required by 1 April, this paper seeks approval to continue delivering the key crisis and resilience services currently funded through the Household Support Fund, where these services meet the new CRF criteria.
- 1.7 This ensures Dorset Council remains safe, legal and compliant on day one, with no gaps in critical support, while further development work continues.
- 1.8 Due to the compressed timelines, it has not been possible to follow the usual route through Overview Committee. Cabinet Members can be assured that the longer-term development of the CRF will follow full committee processes once further national guidance is received. Measuring impact will form a key part of this next phase.

2. Recommendation(s)

- 2.1 Dorset Council Cabinet approve the day one continuation of critical crisis and resilience projects in line with the CRF criteria project proposals
- 2.2 To note that local authorities must allocate CRF funding to provide financial support towards housing needs, to those who face a shortfall in meeting their housing costs. This will replace the current Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) scheme ending on the 31 March 2026.
- 2.3 To note that once more information relating to the administration of the new fund is available from Government, a further report will be submitted to People and Health Overview Committee for consideration.

3. Reason for the recommendation(s)

- 3.1 To ensure Dorset Council is safe, legal and compliant with the CRF criteria and that there is no loss of critical crisis and resilience support whilst further development work is undertaken within Dorset Council and with our strategic community delivery partners.
- 3.2 CRF Guidance states Authorities are expected to maintain existing levels of spending on Housing Payments, using the FYE March 2026 allocations for DHPs as a guide. The Housing Payment will closely replicate existing DHP guidelines and will adopt a phased transition over the 3-year funding period.
- 3.3 To ensure that members have the opportunity to understand the development of the fund and its impact.

4. Background and Current Picture

This section outlines the national reform and how CRF replaces previous scheme.

- 4.1 The Household Support Fund (HSF) has provided essential support to vulnerable households since 2020, including help with food, utilities, housing costs and other necessities. A breakdown of the HSF budget is provided in Appendix 4.
- 4.2 The national Crisis and Resilience Fund (CRF) was announced in the Spring Budget ([Spending Review 2025](#)). It combines and replaces both the HSF and Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP). Under the provisional settlement, Dorset Council is expected to receive £4.1m per year for three years, until 31 March 2029.
- 4.3 Dorset Council received the provisional CRF grant conditions from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) on 19 December 2025. These were embargoed until 13 January, when an updated version was published. Several further updates have since been issued. The latest version is included in the background papers.
- 4.4 The CRF places a strong emphasis on prevention and resilience, aiming not only to provide crisis support but also to strengthen the longer-term financial resilience of vulnerable residents. Delivery will involve Dorset Council services and the local Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) working together to help people before they reach crisis point. The three key outcomes and four priority pillars of the CRF are summarised in Appendix 1-. Delivery will involve Dorset Council services and the local Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) working together to help people before they reach crisis point. The three key outcomes and four priority pillars of the CRF are summarised in Appendix 1.
- 4.5 Dorset Council's combined allocation for the Household Support Fund (HSF) and Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) in 2025/26 is £4,503,064. Under the new national Crisis and Resilience Fund (CRF), our annual settlement — including the Housing Payment element — will be £4,100,000, representing a reduction of £403,000 (-8.9%). For years 1 and 2, the minimum discretionary housing payment (DHP) element is fixed at £458,298 as set out in the grant conditions. In year 3, local authorities will have the autonomy to determine their own Housing Payment level within the overall £4.1m allocation.
- 4.6 In addition, Dorset Council Cabinet has committed £500,000 from the Cost-of-Living budget for the duration of the administration, which complements national government support. The most recent report is included in the background papers, and a breakdown of the 2025/26 Cost of Living budget is provided in Appendix 4.

5 Current Landscape of National Legislation and Policy Change

This section summarises wider national reforms that may affect need and demand.

- 5.1 The current landscape of national policy and legislation is complex. The introduction of CRF is significant, but there are other pieces of legislation and policy change such as the removal of the 2-child benefit cap, changes to pupil premium, free school meals along with increases to national minimum and living wages. Ensuring that Dorset has a strategic and coherent view on how these various pieces of legislation can combine to enhance resilience, support vulnerable residents and promote opportunity is a key focus area for Dorset Council, and directly aligns with the council's priorities. This will be a key part of the development work required during the coming months as we seek to better understand the CRF and what role it can play in longer-term planning. A summary of national legislation and policy changes are summarised in Appendix 2.
- 5.2 Given the tight timescales between receiving the grant guidance criteria and the April 1 and a degree of uncertainty on elements of national policy it is not practical to have all elements of the 3-year CRF in place for April 1. Whilst some elements directly transfer from the HSF, others require much more detailed review and development to ensure this funding is being utilised most efficiently to target support for our most vulnerable residents. Ensuring that this is done well will be a critical part of our strategic approach.
- 5.3 Due to the changes in welfare benefits system detailed in Appendix 2, many of our low-income residents be in receipt of greater levels of welfare benefits from April 1. Some modelling of welfare benefit income examples have been provided in Appendix 5.

6 Immediate Considerations

This section explains the essential day one decisions required to ensure continuity.

- 6.1 To prevent any break in essential support and ensure day one compliance with CRF, several key projects have been identified for short term continuation. These are detailed in Appendix 3
- 6.2 To ensure continuity of critical housing support currently delivered through the Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) funding stream, Dorset Council must maintain uninterrupted provision for residents facing shortfalls in meeting their housing costs, which would otherwise place their housing security at risk. In transitioning to the CRF, the Council must ensure full compliance with the criteria for Housing Payments, which broadly mirror the existing DHP framework.

- 6.3 One key difference between HSF and CRF is the expectation that local authorities adopt a person centred, needs based approach rather than a standardised model. This will allow more targeted support and help strengthen independent and community-level resilience-based approach rather than a standardised model. This will allow more targeted support and help strengthen
- 6.4 Under the new CRF guidance, Dorset Council will no longer be able to provide free school meal holiday vouchers (FSMHVs). The HSF currently spends around £2.035m per year on these vouchers for eligible families, including pre-school children.
- 6.5 To support families through the transition, Dorset Council has confirmed with DWP that we may continue providing vouchers until the end of the academic year. This will cover May half term and the summer holidays, aligning the change with wider national policy updates on pupil premium and free school meals. The Easter allocation is already funded within the 2025–26 HSF budget. (appendix 2)
- 6.6 Additional mitigating actions include continuing crisis and resilience support as part of the day one CRF offer and developing an auto enrolment scheme for families eligible for pupil premium (with an optout option). Evidence from other councils suggests very few families opt out. The auto enrolment process is set out in Appendix 6. CRF guidance also requires local authorities to ensure low-income families are made aware of the support available to them.-one CRF -enrolment scheme for families eligible for pupil premium (with an optout option-out option). Evidence from other councils suggests very few families opt out. The auto-enrolment process is set out in Appendix 6. CRF guidance also requires local authorities to ensure low-income families are made aware of the support available to them.

7 Resilience Development Work

- 7.1 Within the CRF, local authorities are encouraged to invest in the development of 'Resilience Services' that contribute towards improving the financial resilience of individuals. Financial resilience refers to the ability of individuals to withstand and recover from financial shocks – such as sudden income loss or unexpected expenses. The purpose of building financial resilience is to enable individuals to better manage future financial shocks and reduce the need for crisis support.
- 7.2 Development work currently identified to inform Dorset Council's offer to align to the CRF principles will include:
- 7.2.1 Review and analysis of current processes and routes for accessing crisis support and payments within Dorset Council and the community with wrap-around resilience support.
- 7.2.2 A holistic and preventative approach to food security with wrap-around support.

7.2.3 Financial education and community resilience support.

7.2.4 Strong links to the wider community resilience work of the council, with a more strategic approach to developing personal and community resilience. Insights to support this work are likely to come from the Community Conversations approach being planned for 2026, and the subject of a separate paper to this Cabinet meeting.

8 Legal considerations

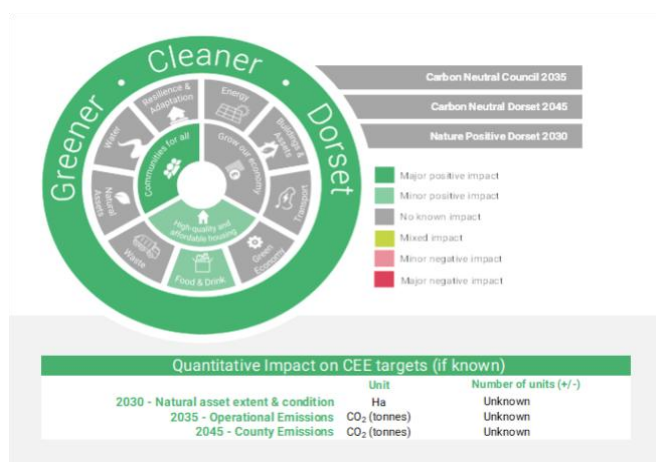
8.1 There are several legislative and national policy changes that interact with the CRF. These are summarised in Appendix 2.

9 Financial implications

9.1 The CRF grant for Dorset Council has been awarded at £4.1m per annum for 3 financial years; 2026/27, 2027/28 and 2028/29.

9.2 For years 1 and 2 the Housing Payment element (previously known as DHP) is set within the grant award at a minimum £458,298. It is for Local Authorities to set the level of their housing payment for year 3.

10 Natural environment, climate & ecology implications



ACCESSIBLE TABLE SHOWING IMPACTS

Natural Environment, Climate & Ecology Strategy Commitments	Impact
Energy	No known impact
Buildings & Assets	No known impact
Transport	No known impact
Green Economy	No known impact
Food & Drink	Minor positive impact
Waste	No known impact
Natural Assets & Ecology	No known impact

Water	No known impact
Resilience and Adaptation	No known impact

Corporate Plan Aims	Impact
Grow our economy	Neutral impact
High-quality and affordable housing	Minor positive impact
Communities for all	Major positive impact

11 Well-being and health implications

The CRF grant will support a broad spectrum of individuals affected by poverty in the Dorset Council area. This includes children, adults, and those of pension age, as well as other priority cohorts impacted by the complex and multi-dimensional effects of poverty - such as care leavers, individuals involved with social care, and those with SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities).

Tackling poverty and mitigating the impacts of low incomes in families is an important aspect of reducing inequalities in health as these disproportionately impact people living on low incomes.

12 Risk implications

HAVING CONSIDERED: the risks associated with this decision; the level of risk has been identified as:

Current Risk: Medium
Residual Risk: Medium

13 Equalities

13.1 An Equality Impact Assessment is in Appendix 7.

14 Appendices

Appendix 1 – Summary of the key requirements of the 4 pillars of the CRF
Appendix 2 – Summary of other interconnected national legislation/policy changes
Appendix 3 – Summary of the CRF Day one request
Appendix 4 – Summary of HSF and CoL projects for 2025/26
Appendix 5 – Benefits Income Examples
Appendix 6 – Auto-enrolment considerations and process
Appendix 7 – CRF Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) DRAFT

15 Background papers

[DWP CRF Grant Conditions and Guidance](#) released from embargo 13th January 2026.

16 Report sign-off

This report has been through the internal report clearance process and has been signed off by the Director for Legal and Democratic (Monitoring Officer), the Corporate Director for Finance and Commercial (Section 151 Officer) and the appropriate Portfolio Holder(s)

Appendix 1 Summary overview of the Crisis and Resilience Fund

From 1 April 2026, the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) will introduce the Crisis and Resilience Fund (CRF). This new fund replaces short-term crisis grants and consolidates housing-related discretionary support.

‘The primary objective of The Fund is to both provide a safety net for those on low incomes who encounter a financial shock and to invest in building local financial resilience to enable individuals and communities to better deal with crises in the long-term, reducing crisis need’. ([DWP](#) 2026)

The ringfenced grant will enable local authorities in England to:

- Provide a safety net for low-income households experiencing financial shocks
- Invest in local financial resilience, helping individuals and communities better withstand crises in the longer term

The fund is built around three main outcomes:

1. **Effective crisis support** – Providing timely, needs based assistance to prevent crises from occurring or escalating. This includes ensuring that people receive the right support at the right time through person-centred and resilience building services.
2. **Improving financial resilience** – Enabling residents to better manage financial shocks and reduce the likelihood of recurring crises—for example, reducing reliance on food parcels and crisis payments.
3. **Strengthening support networks** – Developing a more connected, visible welfare landscape. The CRF emphasises joined-up local support networks as essential to building long-term financial resilience.

The CRF provides a three-year framework (2026–2029) and requires councils to deliver four integrated elements:

1. **Cash-first crisis payments**
2. **Housing payments** (replacing Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP))
3. **Resilience services**
4. **Community coordination**, delivered through by person-centred, needs-led, and trauma-informed practice

There will be a phased transition for Housing Payments, with an expectation that councils maintain DHP-equivalent spend in Years 1 & 2.

Area	Key Points
Crisis Payments Providing support to those in crisis	Required to offer 'crisis payments' to support those on low income who experience a financial shock, such as sudden income loss or unexpected expenses. Features include: • Broad eligibility – which maintains local authority discretion • Person-centred and needs based approach in assessment and award of payments • Cash first approach with vouchers and goods in-kind as alternatives with wrap around support to improve resident resilience • No routine use of Free School Meals (FSM) vouchers - eligibility for benefits does not create automatic entitlement; support will be based on assessed need. • Wraparound support – use crisis support as a gateway for people to access resilience services, where appropriate • Accessible support – range of application methods must be offered, and the support offer should be easy to find and up to date. Crisis Payments are intended to meet occasional or short-term needs and cannot provide an alternative source of regular income. Crisis Payments and Housing Payments should be used as a gateway to wider support.
Housing Element Providing financial support towards housing needs, to those who face a	The housing payment will replicate DHPs to provide financial support to those in receipt of a qualifying benefit to help with rent or moving costs. The integration of housing support will take a phased approach: 1. In years 1 & 2 the current allocation status is maintained. Admin funding also remains at the current level to allow for a smooth transition.

Area	Key Points
shortfall in meeting their housing costs - replicating Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP)	2. In year 3, Local authorities will receive all CRF funding including the housing element and admin funding. Updated data will also be used to determine allocation amounts. This will: • Continue to provide housing support to those most at risk of rent arrears and eviction • Retain the ability of housing support to mitigate welfare reforms (e.g. local housing allowance) • Streamline the delivery of support for residents
Resilience Services Programmes to improve financial resilience	We are required to use a significant part of the funding on services and programmes that increase local financial resilience to enable communities to better deal with crises in the long term. A person-centred, outcomes-based approach will be taken to resilience services to offer strong wraparound support in alignment with the Fund's intent to address root causes, not just crisis symptoms. These services must demonstrate they are meeting the resilience outcomes on: • Increased savings • Reduction in priority debt • Reduced need for emergency food parcels • Reduced experiences of material deprivation • Maximising individuals' income • Increased access to appropriate and quality advice services. Examples include:

Area	Key Points
	Budget maximisation e.g. by funding community supermarkets or advice services Income maximisation e.g. benefits application support, CV building services Income smoothing e.g. access to affordable credit or supporting saving behaviours Financial capability e.g. supporting future planning services and education Resilience Services will be available to all residents, not only those receiving crisis payments or housing-related support. A strong, two-way referral pathway must operate between services and grant support, ensuring a consistent ‘no wrong door’ approach. The fund will prioritise food aid providers that integrate with, or are co-located alongside, Resilience Services. This may include connections with advice services, support with benefit applications, and assistance for utility and other household debts.
Community Funding Investment in activities that connect and enhance the local support landscape	Building strong partnerships and referral pathways is essential to creating a more integrated welfare system—one that supports both immediate crisis responses and longer-term resilience building. This approach directly contributes to the fund’s intended outcomes: • Provision of effective crisis support • Improving individuals and local communities’ financial resilience Effective community support may include: • Strong awareness of local support offers – forming the foundation of a “<i>no wrong door</i>” approach and improving community access to Resilience Services. • Integrated and holistic support – ensuring individuals receive coordinated help that addresses multiple needs.

Area	Key Points
	• Co-location of services – placing different services or professional groups in the same space to deliver more joined-up, accessible support. • Strong partnerships and collaborative working – including co-location and shared approaches that strengthen consistency and referral pathways across organisations.

Appendix 2 – Summary of relevant legislative and national policy changes that link with CRF

Legislation/National Policy	Date Change comes into effect	Key Changes	Potential Impact
Renters' Rights Act	May 2026	- Abolition of s21 “no fault” evictions and introduction of new type of tenancy - Greater rights for tenants to challenge landlords over rent increases. - Safeguards for tenants to receive fair treatment from landlords over a range of issues including having pets and rental discrimination for DWP households or households with children. - New regime of fines for breaches and offences on landlords to ensure compliance with new rules. - New investigation and enforcement duties placed on Private Sector Housing.	Longer notice periods for tenants to find alternative accommodation when faced with eviction, tenancy advice will need increased capacity, more rent tribunal challenges likely, Housing Caseworkers having cases open for longer, increased enforcement on landlords through breaches and offences.
	Sept 2026	The most recent Free school meals guidance is that the eligibility criteria for Free School Meals (FSM) is expected to change from September 2026. At this point	Government expects over 500,000 children will be newly eligible for a Free School Meal from September. We don't yet have reliable predictions on

Legislation/National Policy	Date Change comes into effect	Key Changes	Potential Impact
Free School Meals expansion		these key things are likely to happen: a. All children of families receiving Universal Credit (UC) aged between 4 and 16 will be eligible for FSM. b. Children of families receiving less than £616.67 per month/£7400 per year will still attract Pupil Premium (PP) for their school/s, (FSM PP). Children of families above this threshold will not. c. The transitional protections that were brought in to protect families from fluctuations and delays in UC will cease. d. Parents/carers will be required to re-apply for free school meals on at least an annual basis. This includes families who meet the new criteria, set to take effect from September 2026 • We are awaiting further clarification from DfE re: a. How soon we can start the application process under	the anticipated increased meal eligibility for Dorset, but early modelling suggests that the removal of transitional protections may potentially see approximately a 30% reduction in those eligible for the Pupil Premium element of FSM. National research on the impact of these policy changes estimates that across England there will be 150,000 fewer people in relative poverty after housing costs in FYE 2030 as a result of expanding Free School Meals in England to all children on Universal Credit. This includes 100,000 fewer children in relative poverty after housing costs.

Legislation/National Policy	Date Change comes into effect	Key Changes	Potential Impact
		the proposed Sept 2026 criteria. b. Whether the PP threshold will remain the same.	
Removal of two-child benefit cap	Apr 2026	In November 2025, the UK government announced that from April 2026 it will be removing the two-child limit so that families can receive the child element of Universal Credit for all children regardless of family size. This is a key measure in the Government's agenda to tackle Child Poverty and ensure all children have the Best Start in Life.	Data provided by DWP indicates there are 1540 households in Dorset Council area who currently do not receive child elements for one or more children. From April 2026 their household income will increase by an estimated £3647.00 per year per child.
Benefit uprating	Apr 2026	- DWP benefits that are linked to inflation rise by 3.8% in April 2026, as do inflation linked benefits administered by HMRC. - Universal Credit standard allowances will receive an additional uplift of 2.3%. The basic and new state pensions will be uprated by 4.8% from April 2026.	Uprated welfare benefit rates are positive, but it should be noted that Local Housing Allowance rates remain frozen so no additional support in relation to rental costs will be applied. Many social and private sector rents increase annually in April so this will place additional burdens on some.

Legislation/National Policy	Date Change comes into effect	Key Changes	Potential Impact
The disability element of UC (called LCWRA) will reduce for NEW claimants	April 2026	Reduction of around £47.00 pw.	Affects working age disabled people, likely to push some into relative poverty – increase crisis demand
Increase to the National Minimum Wage (NMW)	April 2026	- Age 21+ £12.71, a 4.1% increase from 2025 - Age 18-20 £10.85. Up by 85p/hour - Age 16-17/Apprentice £8.00. Up by 45p/hour	Increase in NMW means those on the lowest incomes will receive more in their pay. The personal tax and NI allowance remains at £12,570

Appendix 3 – Summary of CRF Day 1 Request

Previous Funding Stream	Title	25/26 allocation (£)	Proposed 2026/27 funding allocation	Purpose of Funding	CRF Delivery Pillar/Comments
National Gov Grant	Housing Payment	£458,298	£458,298	Also supported from CoL to manage demand	Housing Element - compulsory
HSF	Free School Meals Holiday Vouchers (FSMHV)	£1,965,000	£1,000,000	Manage the transition away from automatic FSMHV's from the new academic year. c11,000 vouchers for May half term (£15 per child), and the summer break (£80 per child).	Resilience
NA	CRF Crisis Route	£500,000	£500,000	Potential for increase in demand for crisis payments, mitigating factor for loss of automatic FSMHV. Wrap around resilience support will also be offered	Crisis
HSF	Homelessness Prevention service	£200,000	£202,000	1. Rent arrears/in advance and deposit payments 2. Tenancy sustainment officer (3.2% uplift) 3. media and information campaign 4. Emergency vouchers and energy top ups Also supported from CoL	Crisis Housing payments (not DHP) Resilience
HSF	CA Debt Advisors	£110,000	£113,500	Continuation of 4x specialist debt advisors to support vulnerable residents consolidate/apply to write off debt and energy advice. Contribution of supervision costs. 3.2% uplift. Also supported from CoL	Resilience

Previous Funding Stream	Title	25/26 allocation (£)	Proposed 2026/27 funding allocation	Purpose of Funding	CRF Delivery Pillar/Comments
HSF	CA Discretionary crisis fund	£100,000	£100,000	Distribution to residents being supported by a case worker, e.g. very complex circumstances or those who present for a second time in the year.	Crisis Resilience
HSF	Emergency and Affordable Food	£125,000	£125,000	Targeted grant programme to foodbanks and social supermarkets.	Crisis
HSF	Sustainable Community Food Projects	£70,000	£70,000	Funded food projects take a preventative, upstream approach to tackling food insecurity by building long-term community resilience. Rather than focusing solely on emergency provision, these initiatives aim to equip individuals and groups with practical skills, confidence, and infrastructure to support healthier, more sustainable food practices. Through cooking education, volunteer training, and network development, the projects foster local capacity, reduce reliance on crisis services, and promote social connection—laying the groundwork for more resilient communities in the face of ongoing economic pressures.	Resilience
HSF	Children's services crisis support fund	£120,000	£120,000	Need identified by practitioners and resources distributed directly	Crisis
HSF	Healthy Homes Dorset Ridgewater Energy	£70,000	£70,000	provide up to two white goods per household, including electric cookers, fridge/freezers, air fryers, microwaves and	Crisis Resilience

Previous Funding Stream	Title	25/26 allocation (£)	Proposed 2026/27 funding allocation	Purpose of Funding	CRF Delivery Pillar/Comments
				washing machines. These items are distributed by Ridgewater Energy following an assessment of the individual's home situation and confirmation that they meet the agreed eligibility criteria.	
HSF	Older People benefits advisory	£55,000	£56,760	Improve financial resilience and income maximisation for older/immobile residents with benefit application and checks in home visits. Innovative approaches via GP's text services to encourage take up. 3.2% uplift	Resilience
HSF	Disabled Facilities Grant	£50,000	£100,000	To boost the Government grant to support growing demand	Resilience
HSF	Hospital to Home	£25,000	£25,000	To provide additional resource to the Hospital to Home programme	Resilience
HSF	Children's Services inc care leavers support fund	£125,000	£125,000	Colleagues and partner referrals for direct support to families inc. Care leavers in hardship. £150 vouchers distributed directly for known crisis	Crisis Resilience
HSF	HAF	£10,000	£10,000	Continuation of additional support for the HAF programme due to increased demand in eligible CYP. Also supported from CoL	Resilience

Appendix 4 – Summary of authorised Household Support Fund and the Cost-of-Living Fund 2025-26

Existing Funding Stream	Title	25/26 allocation (£)	How this is calculated	Purpose / use of funding
CoL (HLF)	Homelessness Support	CoL £167,000 HSF £200,000 £367,000	Request from service, proof of impact, sign off with P&H Scrutiny, S151 and Lead Cabinet Member	1. Rent arrears/in advance and deposit payments 2. Tenancy sustainment officer 3. media and information campaign 4. Emergency vouchers and energy top ups
CoL (HSF)	Healthy Homes Dorset Scheme	HSF £70,000*	Proof of impact, sign off with P&H Scrutiny, S151 and Lead Cabinet Member	provide up to two white goods per household, including electric cookers, fridge/freezers, air fryers, microwaves and washing machines. These items are distributed by Ridgewater Energy following an assessment of the individual's home situation and confirmation that they meet the agreed eligibility criteria.
CoL (HSF)	CA Specialist Debt Advisors	£110,000 (HSF) £100,000 (CoL) £210,000	Request from service to address statistically evidenced need, proof of impact, sign off with P&H Scrutiny, S151 and Lead Cabinet Member	Continuation of 4x specialist debt advisors to support vulnerable residents consolidate/apply to write off debt and energy advice. Contribution of supervision costs.

Existing Funding Stream	Title	25/26 allocation (£)	How this is calculated	Purpose / use of funding
CoL	Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP)	£48,000 CoL	Request from service to address statistically evidenced need, proof of impact, sign off with P&H Scrutiny, S151 and Lead Cabinet Member	To boost the Government grant to support growing demand
CoL (HSF)	Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG)	£50,000 (HSF)	Request from service, proof of impact, sign off with P&H Scrutiny, S151 and Lead Cabinet Member	To boost the Government grant to support growing demand
CoL (HSF)	Community Transport Network	£30,000 (HSF) £30,000 (CoL)	Request from service, proof of impact, sign off with P&H Scrutiny, S151 and Lead Cabinet Member	Targeted grant programme to support community transport sustainability as it underpins the wider real community support and prevention agenda
CoL (HSF)	Emergency and Affordable food security	£125,000 (HSF) £120,000 (CoL)	Statistically evidenced need, proof of impact, sign off with P&H Scrutiny, S151 and Lead Cabinet Member	Targeted grant programme to foodbanks and social supermarkets.

Existing Funding Stream	Title	25/26 allocation (£)	How this is calculated	Purpose / use of funding
CoL (HSF)	Sustainable and affordable food security projects	£70,000 (HSF)	Proof of impact, sign off with P&H Scrutiny, S151 and Lead Cabinet Member	Funded food projects take a preventative, upstream approach to tackling food insecurity by building long-term community resilience. Rather than focusing solely on emergency provision, these initiatives aim to equip individuals and groups with practical skills, confidence, and infrastructure to support healthier, more sustainable food practices. Through cooking education, volunteer training, and network development, the projects foster local capacity, reduce reliance on crisis services, and promote social connection—laying the groundwork for more resilient communities in the face of ongoing economic pressures.
CoL (HSF)	Support for older residents' benefits applications	£55,000 (HSF) £5,000 (CoL)	Proof of impact, sign off with P&H Scrutiny, S151 and Lead Cabinet Member	Improve financial resilience and income maximisation for older/immobile residents with benefit application and checks in home visits. Innovative approaches via GP's text services to encourage take up.
CoL	HAF	£30,000 (CoL)	As per HAF national government criteria	Continuation of additional support for the HAF programme due to increased demand in eligible CYP

Existing Funding Stream	Title	25/26 allocation (£)	How this is calculated	Purpose / use of funding
Total CoL programme awarded		CoL £500,000 HSF £710,000*		
HSF	Cost of Living projects*	£710,000		Individual project spend detailed above
HSF	Free School Meal holiday supermarket vouchers scheme	£1,965,000		c11,000 vouchers per half term (£15 per child), Christmas and Easter (£30), and the summer break (£80).
HSF	Vouchers for residents - Practitioner referral scheme	£975,000		Colleagues and partner referrals for residents in hardship. £150 vouchers distributed to 6,500 unique households.
HSF	Citizens Advice discretionary - holistic support grants to residents being supported by a case worker	£200,000		Distribution to residents being supported by a case worker, e.g. very complex circumstances or those who present for a second time in the year.
HSF	Children's Services - direct support to families inc. Care Leavers	£120,000		Need identified by practitioners and resources distributed directly

Existing Funding Stream	Title	25/26 allocation (£)	How this is calculated	Purpose / use of funding
HSF	Adults commissioning	£25,000		To provide additional resource to the Hospital to Home programme
HSF	Lantern project	£20,000.00		Distribution to residents being supported by a case worker, e.g. who cannot access the main referral scheme due to No Fixed Abode
HSF	HAF	£10,000.00		To provide additional additional activity places and food - expanding the reach of the programme
HSF	Administration	£19,766.17		To resource the administration of the HSF
HSF total programme spend 2025/26 (max allocation)		£4,044,766.17		

Appendix 5 Benefits Income examples

For the purpose of these examples, we have excluded any benefits paid in relation to housing costs to cover rent and focussed only on living costs.

Please also note these figures are based on 25/26-year Universal Credit rates.

From April 2026 the Standard Allowance of UC will increase by 6.2%. The child allowance of UC and child benefit is due to increase by 3.8%. The minimum wage is also due to increase from £12.21 to 12.71 per hour.

Example 1

Single parent with 3 children all born after 6/4/17

Current monthly income from Child Benefit/Earnings/Universal Credit = £1873.78

Revised monthly income from Child Benefit/Earnings/Universal Credit = £2166.53

This customer is currently receiving child benefit for all 3 children, but Universal Credit is only paying the child allowance of £292.81 for 2 children. From April 2026 the child allowance will be paid for all 3 children.

Example 2

Couple with 3 children all born after 6/4/17

Current monthly income from Child Benefit/Earnings/Universal Credit = £2387.74

Revised monthly income from Child Benefit/Earnings/Universal Credit = £2680.55

This customer is currently receiving child benefit for all 3 children, but Universal Credit is only paying the child allowance of £292.81 for 2 children. From April 2026 the child allowance will be paid for all 3 children.

Example 3

Couple with 5 children all born after 6/4/17

Current monthly income from Child Benefit/Earnings/Universal Credit = £2471.16

Revised monthly income from Child Benefit/Earnings/Universal Credit = £3349.59

This customer is currently receiving child benefit for all 5 children, but Universal Credit is only paying the child allowance of £292.81 for 2 children. From April 2026 the child allowance will be paid for all 3 children.

Example 4

Single Parent with 1 child born after 6/4/17

Current monthly income from Child Benefit/Earnings/Universal Credit = £1655.83

Revised monthly income from Child Benefit/Earnings/Universal Credit = £1655.83

This customer is currently receiving child benefit for her child and Universal Credit is paying the child allowance of £292.81 for her child. From April 2026 there will be no change for this customer apart from the normal annual increase.

Example 5

Couple with 2 children both born after 6/4/17

Current monthly income from Child Benefit/Earnings/Universal Credit = £2251.35

Revised monthly income from Child Benefit/Earnings/Universal Credit = £2251.35

This customer is currently receiving child benefit for both children and Universal Credit is paying the child allowance of £292.81 for both children. From April 2026 there will be no change for this customer apart from the normal annual increase.

Appendix 6 – Free School Meals Auto Enrolment

N.B This content is based on a Children's Services Report for Senior Leaders. The recommended Option 2 received outline permission to progress on 13 January 2026.

1 Background

The eligibility criteria for Free School Meals (FSM) is expected to change from September 2026 ([Free school meals](#)). At this point these key things are likely to happen:

- 1.All children of families receiving Universal Credit (UC) aged between 4 and 16 will be eligible for FSM.
- 2.Children of families receiving less than £616.67 per month/£7400 per year will still attract Pupil Premium (PP) for their school/s, (FSM PP). Children of families above this threshold will not.
- 3.The transitional protections that were brought in to protect families from fluctuations and delays in UC will cease.
- 4.Parents/carers will be required to re-apply for free school meals on at least an annual basis. This includes families who meet the new criteria, set to take effect from September 2026.

Please note: Universal Infant FSM (UIFSM) for children in Reception and Y1 and 2 remains the same. UIFSM doesn't attract PP.

As a result:

- 1.Our Eligibility Checking Service (ECS) will need to distinguish between two tiers of eligibility so that schools can correctly receive PP.
- 2.Families will need to reapply at least annually to continue receiving FSM and schools to receive PP.
- 3.School meal providers will need advance notice of bulk changes in number of meals each year before the new academic year starts. They prefer to receive this information in May.

Additional considerations:

- 1.Some families may not apply/re-apply perhaps due to difficulties with the application process, stigma, language barriers etc; potentially delaying or preventing their access to FSM and related benefits they, and their schools, are entitled to.
- 2.Awaiting confirmation from government on a range of issues including:
 - a. How soon we can start the application process under the Sept 2026 criteria.
 - b. Whether the PP threshold will remain the same.

3.Ensuring applications are all processed in time for meals to be provided and/or the October census so that schools have correct numbers and can claim correct PP.

4. The Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme, (a DfE funded holiday programme launched in 2020, offering enriching activities and a hot meal for FSM children in the longer school holidays), will continue for another three financial years after this one; until March 2029, but with a reduced budget. HAF codes, enabling children to access free holiday activities, are generated automatically by our ECS system when a successful application for free school meals has been made. From Christmas 2026, eligibility for HAF codes will be restricted to children of families under the FSM PP threshold.

5.We need a process where reapplication in May/June doesn't mean children lose eligibility for meals in the rest of that Academic year (AY). We need to agree that our FSM annual check gives eligibility for the relevant AY in full.

6.The process needs to minimise impact on schools; both the potential loss of PP income and the administrative burden including increased manual applications and enquiries, changes to school information systems, unfamiliar application timetable and criteria, census and reporting. At DC we are currently discussing potential MIS changes required with our schools' main providers. We are investigating via regional and national networks whether there is also a national conversation.

7.Impact on children educated other than at school (EOTAS). HSF will end March 26, or July 26 if permission is granted to extend to end current AY. EOTAS children are entitled to meals in term time but have also been getting holiday vouchers if eligible. We will need to ensure EOTAS families and relevant colleagues understand that vouchers will cover term time only from the 'to be confirmed' date. For P16 EOTAS students we will seek guidance on whether this change and will communicate accordingly.

8.P16: students over 16 currently need to apply for FSM via their schools and colleges. LAs are not allowed to use the DWP system to check for FSM eligibility P16. We will seek guidance on whether this change and will communicate accordingly.

2. Implementing Auto Enrolment

We are looking to further explore implementing an auto enrolment system as a means of checking families' ongoing FSM eligibility in Dorset.

Auto enrolment is a process whereby eligible children are automatically awarded free school meals, without their families having to directly apply.

We are aware that the Government is considering a national roll out of auto enrolment. However, there are no confirmed timescales for this that we are currently aware of. Other Councils have chosen to launch their own programmes so that families in need

and schools get the support/additional funding they are entitled to sooner rather than later.

Approximately 75 Councils nationally are in the process of implementing auto enrolment, or have already successfully rolled this out, ensuring all families eligible are signed up and will have their eligibility checked on an annual basis. This has resulted in thousands of newly identified children being successfully registered.

There are case studies from other LAs available, including information and support available if we take this route. Please see further pages below for this supporting information.

Work undertaken in Dorset Council so far:

Research

- Dorset Council Feasibility Study
- Officers have attended a range of national webinars, explored case studies from other LAs and gathered supporting information from colleagues in Dorset Council, other LAs, UK Government and national organisations.

Approval already sought

- Green paper: Following a Councillors pre-briefing on 6 January 2026, our understanding is that SLT/members are keen for auto enrolment to be prioritised.
- Laura Cornette took a CRF Green paper to SLT on 13 January 2026, including outline permission for auto enrolment as part of the Day 1 CRF request. Laura's further CRF papers are scheduled to go to Cabinet in March for political approval to proceed.

Collaboration

- A working group has been set up with other LAs working on AE implementation.
- A new working group has been set up within Dorset Council to include relevant colleagues from Children's Services, Revenues and Benefits, Data Protection, Data/Research and ICT. Membership of this may change as the project progresses. The group will have SLT sponsorship.

Benefits to schools

Auto-enrolment could generate a significant amount of additional pupil premium funding to be paid to Dorset schools. The recent feasibility study within Dorset Council (see supporting information in supporting statement 1 and at FSM feasibility results.docx) identified a potential total of approximately £547,000 in additional annual funding based on current circumstances:

The feasibility study results suggest approximately 221 pupils in the Dorset Council area are eligible but not currently claiming Free School Meals (FSM). Based on the average pupil premium funding rate, this could represent up to £280,000 in additional funding for Dorset schools.

In addition to this, a more speculative analysis—based on manual address matching and extrapolation from a small sample—indicates that there could be a further 211 eligible pupils not claiming FSM. If accurate, this could equate to an additional £267,000 in pupil premium funding per year which will help fund initiatives that support children.

It is hoped that AE will help Pupil Premium funding reach its full potential and generate more money coming into school so they can better support disadvantaged pupils, improve educational outcomes for children and also enable vulnerable families to access related support they are entitled to.

Other benefits to schools include:

- Reducing the administrative burden on schools.
- Mitigates under-registration of FSMs for children receiving UIFSM
- Helps schools know which students require additional support
- Maximise support for families: All eligible children will be automatically awarded free school meals and those who attract pupil premium will receive the additional support that can come with the award, e.g. HAF codes, subsidised school trips, music lessons etc.

2. Options

2.1 Option 1: Await confirmed guidance (effective September 2026) and look to manage the changes using targeted communications to schools and parents/carers. All parents/carers will be required to submit FSM applications during the summer term, before the start of the 2026/27 school year.

Even with best efforts here, there is a risk that all eligible children will have new applications submitted. This could result in eligible children missing out on free school meals and the additional support the award brings. Additionally, schools may receive less pupil premium funding.

School offices will be impacted by the significant amount of individual FSM approval emails incoming. This may be difficult for them to manage, particularly in schools with a large number of pupils on roll.

There will need to be a significant communications campaign to maximise applications made by parents/carers and raise awareness of other areas the changes may impact i.e. HAF eligibility.

2.2 Option 2 (approved): Start the process of implementing auto-enrolment: Aim to implement this before the start of the 2026/27 school year. The auto enrolment process is to identify and approve all children eligible for free school meals without the need for families to apply themselves.

Initiate the FSM AE working group to bring together key colleagues and explore the processes and tasks required for implementation and the resource required i.e. funding and staffing. Items considered will include but not limited to:

- Planning and implementation using the Fix Our Food Toolkit as guidance.
- Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) and gaining permissions to use the relevant data.
- Consultation and potential pilot with sample schools.
- Working with relevant DC colleagues to identify all children likely to be eligible.
- Develop guidance for schools and for families on the process. Families will be given the opportunity to opt out (informed consent).
- How a final list of children can be run through an Eligibility Checking System (ECS) as a bulk upload, and the outcome communicated to parents/schools accordingly.
- How schools should update their information systems, populating their pupils' FSM entitlement, which will be included when calculating pupil premium funding.
- Frequency of repeating the process e.g. on an annual basis, in time for the start of each school year.

3. Recommendations

3.1 This paper recommends Option 2 to best support families and schools.

3.2 Auto enrolment will ensure we can build on the progress we have made increasing uptake of FSM, maximising funding for schools and helping vulnerable families access support they are entitled to.

4. Supporting information

Benefits of free school meals

Children who are approved for free school meals not only benefit from the free food provided at school, but also access other forms of support:

- **Holiday Activity and Food Programme**

Children from disadvantaged backgrounds who regularly suffer food insecurity can access free holiday clubs, providing healthy food and critical learning opportunities during the school holidays: [Holiday activities and food \(HAF\) programme - Dorset Council](#)

- **Pupil Premium**

The pupil premium grant provides funding to schools which is used to support disadvantaged pupils. It can enable extra resources and staff, as well as create opportunities for disadvantaged children to reach their educational potential. Schools are currently under significant pressure to support children and maximising this funding would ease the strain: [Pupil premium: overview - GOV.UK](#)

There are many barriers which result in parents not applying for free school meals. We are dedicated to supporting families to access the FSM offer and have worked hard to promote the uptake of free school meals with the overall aim of supporting families and generating pupil premium funding for schools. The 2022 campaign resulted in a 26% increase in the number of applications submitted (compared to the same quarter the previous year).

Feasibility study

Despite this, we are aware that there may be many children still not registered for free school meals, who meet the criteria. A recent feasibility study conducted by DC's Strategy, Performance & Sustainability team to establish how many children in the Dorset Council area are thought to be currently missing out on free school meals suggests that there are approximately 221 eligible pupils in the Dorset Council area who are not currently claiming Free School Meals (FSM). Based on the average pupil premium funding rate, this could represent up to £280,000 in additional funding for Dorset schools. Further analysis identified potential groups of more pupils.

Information from other LAs and from national organisations

One case study example is Sheffield City Council, who in 2022 implemented auto-enrolment. In the first year, Sheffield estimated that they were able to register an additional 1189 children for FSM, which also meant that schools received an additional £1,392,600 in pupil premium funding: [Free School Meal Auto Enrolment \(youtube.com\)](#)

There is a range of information and support available. The following toolkit was put together by 'Fix Our Food', a research programme aiming to transform the current food system: [Microsoft Word - CURRENT - FixOurFood FSM Auto-enrolment TOOLKIT](#). They run regular webinars with ongoing advice and support, along with opportunities to share information and successes with other Councils.

Further explore costs and resources required: the following extract is taken from the AE toolkit linked above:

"5.4. Identifying and allocating staffing and financial resources

*5.4.1. Each stage of the process map will require staffing resources. Initial set-up of processes, governance, business case and undertaking a DPIA has been estimated at around **150 staff hours**.*

*5.4.2. Completing datasets, issuing 'right to object' letters, checking and recording FSM claimants will vary, but Sheffield have estimated between **100-150 hours each year** - this will also depend on whether the council or schools undertake actual FSM registrations.*

5.4.3. Additional financial costs are deemed to be low, the main cost being distribution of letters to parents.

5.4.4. You should agree how to treat any respective costs with schools - and confirm whether different types of schools (e.g. academies) should be treated differently."

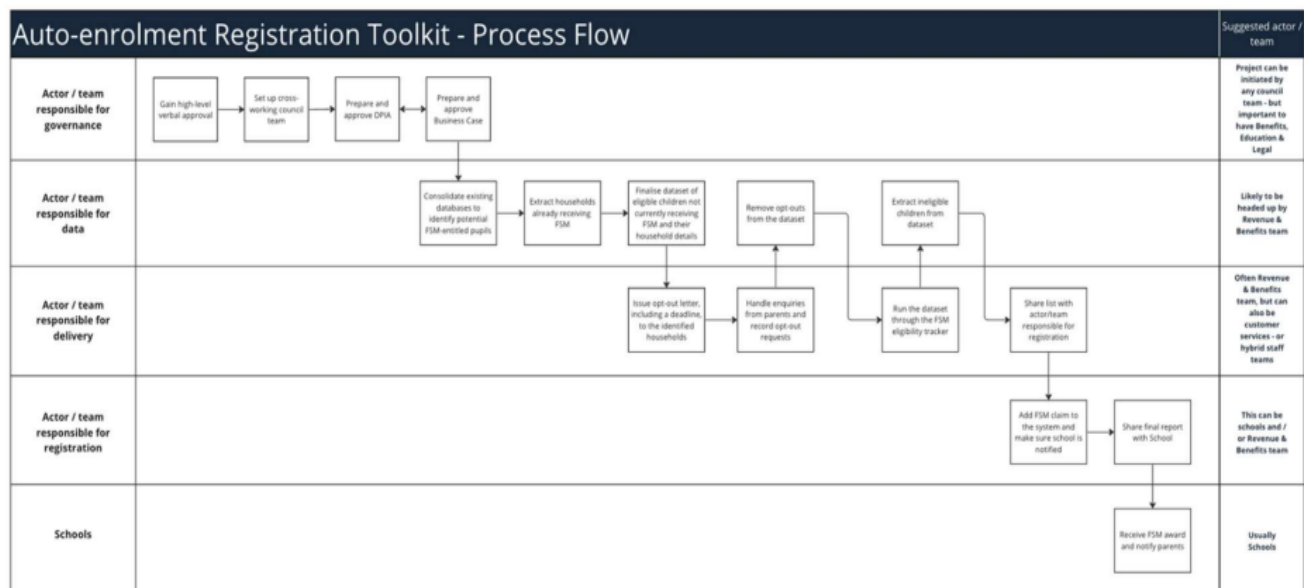
Transitional Protections

It is important to note that a percentage of children currently eligible fall under transitional protections. This means since 2018, a one-off application for each child has been required to establish ongoing eligibility. Protections mean children remain eligible even if their circumstances change/earnings rise above the threshold during this the protection period.

Key facts

- Around 8,300 children are living in low-income families in the Dorset Council area.
- 9,480 children (20.05%) are currently eligible for free school meals in Dorset (October 2024 School Census)
- There are 11 areas (out of a total of 219) in the Dorset Council area within the top 20% most deprived nationally for multiple deprivation.

5. Auto-enrolment Registration toolkit flowchart [please remove as this is referenced above for interested parties to sign up to and the image below will be subject to copyright]



Appendix 7 - CRF Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) DRAFT

1. Initial information

Name of the policy, project, strategy, project or service being assessed:

Community Resilience Fund (CRF) - Programme 2025/26 (and to 2029)

2. Is this a (please delete those not required):

New policy or service

3. Is this (please delete those not required):

Both internal and external (residents, communities, partners)

4. Please provide a brief overview of its aims and objectives:

The CRF aims to provide crisis support for low-income households facing financial shocks and to build financial resilience through services and community coordination. It includes four strands:

- Crisis Payments (cash-first approach for urgent needs)
- Housing Payments (replacing Discretionary Housing Payments)
- Resilience Services (advice, income maximisation, debt support)
- Community Coordination (strengthening local support networks)

5. Please provide the background to this proposal.

The CRF runs from April 2026 to March 2029, replacing Discretionary Housing Payments and complementing Local Welfare Assistance. It is funded by DWP and delivered by local authorities under Section 31 of the Local Government Act 2003.

6. What sources of data, evidence or research has been used for this assessment? (e.g. national statistics, employee data):

Data sources:

- Local deprivation indices and Experian modelling
- UC/HB claimant data (via DWP monthly data share)
- Learning from Household Support Fund evaluations
- Engagement with VCS partners and advice networks

Consultation:

- Internal teams (Housing, Welfare, Financial Inclusion)
- Voluntary and community sector organisations
- Residents via previous HSF feedback

Further info needed:

- Equality monitoring data from CRF applications
- Insights from local advice providers on barriers for protected groups

7. What did this tell you?

Duration: CRF is multi-year (2026–2029) vs HSF short-term.

Scope: CRF combines crisis support with resilience-building; HSF focused on emergency relief.

Approach: CRF introduces trauma-informed practice, cash-first principle and mandatory referral pathways.

Accessibility: CRF guidance requires multiple application routes and formats (Easy Read, Braille, offline).

Housing Support: CRF replaces DHPs with Housing Payments.

8. Who have you engaged and consulted with as part of this assessment?

Internal stakeholders

- Portfolio Holder for Customer, Culture and Community Engagement
- Executive Director Corporate Development / Chair of the Cost of Living working group - Dorset Council
- Head of Revenues & Benefits
- Principal Research Officer, Strategy, Performance and Sustainability
- Service Manager, Housing Advice & Homelessness
- Service Manager, Growth & Economic Regeneration
- Service Manager for Housing Standards
- Public Transport Manager
- Business Manager, Digital and Service Development, Libraries

External stakeholders including VCS and Statutory Sector Partners

- Ridgewater Energy
- Citizens Advice in Dorset
- Friendly Food Club
- The Lantern
- Age UK North, South and West Dorset
- The You Trust
- Age Concern North Dorset
- Island Community Action
- Volunteer Centre Dorset
- Wessex Water

9. Is further information needed to help inform decision making?

Is an EQIA required? **Yes**

Impacts on who or what?	Choose impact	How
Age	Positive impact	Older adults and families with children benefit from targeted support (e.g., pension credit advice, affordable food, warm spaces). Offline routes help digitally excluded older residents.
Disability	Positive impact	CRF guidance requires accessible formats and fast-tracking for terminal illness. Disabled households benefit from crisis support and referrals to specialist services.
Gender reassignment and Gender Identity	Neutral Impact	No barriers identified; CRF is inclusive and person-centred.
Marriage or civil partnership	Neutral Impact	No barriers identified; eligibility is based on need, not marital status.
Pregnancy and maternity	Positive impact	Financial stress during pregnancy and maternity leave is mitigated through crisis support and referrals.
Race and Ethnicity	Neutral impact	We expect the cost-of-living crisis have a disproportionately negative impact on diverse communities.
Religion and belief	Neutral Impact	No barriers identified; CRF works with faith-based organisations delivering food aid.
Sexual orientation	Neutral Impact	No barriers identified; CRF is inclusive.

Impacts on who or what?	Choose impact	How
People with caring responsibilities	Positive impact	Carers benefit from crisis support and referrals to advice services.
Rural isolation	Positive impact	Offline application routes and community coordination reduce barriers for rural residents.
Socio-economic deprivation	Positive impact	CRF directly targets low-income households and aims to reduce material deprivation.
Single parents	Positive impact	CRF mitigates financial stress for single-parent households, who are disproportionately affected by poverty.
Armed forces communities	Positive Impact	CRF includes signposting to specialist support for veterans and service families.

Programme overview

The Community Resilience Fund (CRF) is a three-year programme (April 2026–March 2029) designed to provide both immediate crisis support and longer-term resilience-building for low-income households. It replaces Discretionary Housing Payments and complements Local Welfare Assistance schemes. The CRF is structured around four key strands:

1. Crisis Payments

- Cash-first approach to meet urgent needs such as food, energy, essential household items, and transport costs.
- Available year-round, with multiple application routes (online, phone, face-to-face) to ensure accessibility.

2. Housing Payments

- Financial support for housing costs for those entitled to Housing Benefit or Universal Credit housing element.
- Includes rent in advance, deposits, and shortfalls caused by benefit caps or under-occupancy rules.

3. Resilience Services

- Investment in advice and support services to help households build financial resilience.
- Includes income maximisation (benefit checks), debt advice, budgeting support, and access to affordable credit.

- Delivered through local authority teams and voluntary/community sector partners.

4. Community Coordination

- Strengthening local support networks to create a “no wrong door” approach.
- Activities include mapping services, building referral pathways, co-location of advice services, and outreach to rural and digitally excluded communities.

The CRF adopts a person-centred, needs-based, and trauma-informed approach, ensuring dignity, choice, and flexibility for applicants. It aims to reduce material deprivation, prevent crises from escalating, and foster long-term financial stability.

Overall, CRF is expected to have a positive impact on most protected groups by reducing financial hardship and improving resilience. Risks relate mainly to accessibility and awareness, which can be mitigated through inclusive design and proactive outreach.

Evidence Base

Local Data and Insight

- Dorset Intelligence & Insight Service (DIIS) modelling using Experian data to identify areas of significant need.
- Revenue and Benefits Team data highlighting households in financial hardship.
- Housing Advice and Homelessness Team data on rising housing insecurity.
- Feedback from Dorset Together Cost of Living Working Group (since 2022), which includes internal council teams and external partners.

Previous Programme Learning

- Household Support Fund (HSF) evaluations and monitoring reports, which identified:
 - High demand for emergency food and energy support.
 - Barriers for digitally excluded residents.
 - Increased need for advice services and wraparound support.

National Research

- Citizens Advice national reports on cost-of-living impacts.
- House of Commons Library briefing (Dec 2024) on inflation and low-income households.
- Rapid evidence review (BMC Public Health, Feb 2024) on health impacts of financial hardship.
- LSE Business Review on widening inequality due to rising costs.

Community and Voluntary Sector Insight

- Dorset Community Foundation's *Hidden Dorset Impact Report*.
- Feedback from local VCS organisations (Citizens Advice, Help & Kindness, Age UK, Volunteer Centre Dorset).
- Input from foodbanks, social supermarkets, and grassroots charities.

Protected Groups

- Data from Citizens Advice Dorset showing 66% of clients are disabled or have long-term health conditions.
- Maternity Action survey (2024) highlighting financial stress during pregnancy and maternity leave.
- Joseph Rowntree Foundation research on carers and poverty risk.

Action Plan

Summarise any actions required as a result of this EqIA.

Issue	Action to be taken	Person(s) responsible	Date to be completed by
Digital exclusion	Provide offline application routes (telephone, postal, face-to-face) and outreach through libraries and Family Hubs.	CRF Delivery Lead	April 2026
Language barriers	Translate key materials into community languages and provide interpretation support for applications.	Communications Team	April 2026
Accessibility	Ensure application forms and guidance are available in Easy Read, Braille, large print, and audio formats. Use accessibility checker for all documents.	Inclusion Champion	April 2026
Awareness	Develop inclusive communications plan, including non-digital channels (leaflets, community noticeboards, GP surgeries).	Communications Team	April 2026
Referral pathways	Establish warm referral processes between Crisis Payments, Housing Payments, and Resilience Services. Train staff on trauma-informed practice.	CRF Programme Manager	June 2026
Monitoring equality impacts	Collect and analyse equality monitoring data from CRF applications to identify gaps and adjust delivery.	Business Intelligence Team	Ongoing

Sign Off

Officer completing this EqlA: Fiona Thomas, Communities Team Leader

Officers involved in completing the EqlA: Laura Cornette, Business Partner, Communities and Partnerships

Date of completion: DRAFT 4th February 2026

Version Number: 1

EqlA review date: Ongoing as the CRF programme develops

Equality Lead Sign Off: James Palfreman-Kay

Cabinet

3 March 2026

Working with communities For Decision

Cabinet Member:

Cllr N Ireland, Leader of the Council, Climate, Performance and Safeguarding

Local Councillor(s):

Senior Leadership Team:

S Crowe, Director of Public Health & Prevention

Report author and job title: Sam Crowe, Director of Public Health and Prevention

Email: sam.crowe@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

Statutory Authority:

Report status: Public

1. Executive summary (maximum of 500 words)

- 1.1 Closer working with our communities and partners, including parish and town councils, is essential for Dorset Council to deliver its council plan ambitions under the Communities for All priority. This paper asks cabinet to approve a Statement of Reasonable Expectations that articulates how we can foster closer working with parish and town councils, and a programme of community conversations designed to strengthen how Dorset Council works in neighbourhoods.
- 1.2 Two factors underline why we need to work more closely with communities. First, the Communities for All priority in the council plan, which was a clear response to evidence we have heard from residents and partners that the council has not always been easy to work with. This was coupled to a perception of remoteness and a lack of join up in how we meet community needs effectively and efficiently.
- 1.3 Second, the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill, at committee stage in the House of Lords, sets out a requirement for unitary councils to establish neighbourhood governance. The Bill's intent is to move

decision-making closer to residents, so that decisions are made by people who best understand their local needs.

- 1.4 Officers have been working with People and Resources Overview since November 2025 on the Statement.... and town councils. Therefore a revised version is presented in Appendix A for recommendation to Cabinet.
- 1.5 The rationale and context for the recommendation to adopt the Statement of Reasonable Expectations goes beyond the development of services and assets for double devolution. It recognises the importance of the programme of planned conversations with communities, ward members, parish and town councils, the voluntary and community sector and other partners. These 'Community Conversations' are planned to take place throughout 2026. Externally, this will help shape neighbourhood governance and options for double devolution, as well as better understand community needs. Internally, the conversations will inform how we work differently as a council, aligning more joined up services in localities and developing a one-council prevention approach to better achieve outcomes for residents, in a financially sustainable way.

2. Recommendation(s)

- 2.1 Cabinet is asked to consider and approve the Community Conversations approach outlined in this paper, which supports how we will work with communities to deliver the Council Plan objectives and prepare for the English Devolution and Community Empowerment legislation.
- 2.2 Cabinet is also asked to approve that the revised Statement of Reasonable Expectations between Dorset Council and parish and town councils be signed by the Leader of Dorset Council and adopted.

3. Reason for the recommendation(s)

- 3.1 To enable Dorset Council to strengthen partnership working with town and parish councils, and key community partners including the voluntary and community sector, as we understand how to best meet community needs and improve outcomes for residents in a sustainable and effective way. This will help us deliver the objectives under 'Communities for All' in our council plan, and prepare for policy changes that are emerging from the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill.

4. The report

4.1 Closer working with communities is essential if Dorset Council is to deliver the objectives of the Communities for All ambition under the Council Plan. The three priorities under Communities for All are:

- a) to be more active in local communities;
- b) to become a better partner;
- c) improve connection and collaboration between council directorates;

This report and recommendation supports delivery of all three priorities, with an emphasis on 1 and 2.

4.2 The first year of the Communities for All programme was largely about building relationships, gathering evidence from partners, and understanding opportunities to work differently, with a close connection to the Our Future Council transformation programme.

4.3 Now we are moving to delivery. This includes developing a locality model of working, a single council approach to prevention, and strengthening partnerships with town and parish councils, the voluntary and community sector and health partners to improve outcomes for residents.

4.4 A programme of Community Conversations is planned which will help strengthen how Dorset Council works in neighbourhoods. The conversations will help shape ideas about neighbourhood governance, options for double devolution, as well as provide information on internal changes needed to work more effectively in neighbourhoods. Importantly they will enable local ideas recognising there is no 'one size fits all' approach for communities across Dorset.

4.5 There are local and national drivers behind this need to work more closely with communities. Firstly, we cannot deliver the Communities for All priorities without involving communities in identifying needs and solutions together.

4.6 Secondly, there has been frustration at a lack of progress with double devolution, working with town and parish councils who want to consider providing more local assets and services.

4.7 Finally, Government has signalled through the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill that it will be a requirement for all unitary councils to establish neighbourhood governance. The Bill's intent is to move decision making closer to residents, so that decisions are made by people who best understand their local needs.

4.8 The conversations will be held in clusters of neighbourhoods across the whole of Dorset over the next 12 months. The approach will be participatory and aimed at discovering and producing together opportunities and solutions. Initial

participants will be town and parish councils, ward members, locality employees of Dorset Council, VCS organisations, and health partners, supported and facilitated by a core team from Dorset Council's community partnerships programme.

- 4.9 A test and learn approach is being adopted, recognising that the methods will need to evolve as we learn more about what works best. This includes the detail of which areas are included in clusters, the participants, and the facilitation and hosting of the conversations. The process will start with sharing and exploring information on what the local area is like and will end with follow up sessions to make sense of the findings, and develop draft governance models and double devolution options.
- 4.10 Place and Resources Committee has worked with officers since 24th November 2025, which recommended adoption of the Statement of Reasonable Expectations to Cabinet. This is a partnership agreement between Dorset Council and Dorset Association of Parish and Town Councils, aimed at agreeing ways of working more closely to deliver better outcomes for residents. Committee members did not support the recommendation to Cabinet.
- 4.11 .
- 4.12 Having listened to feedback, the Community Conversations were launched through an all-member webinar on 28th January 2026. Members will be asked to use the content to brief their parish and town councils, and to play a key role in the conversations over the next year.
- 4.13 An Executive Advisory Panel is being proposed in consultation with the Leader to support the development of the community conversations.
- 4.14 On 12th February 2026 Place and Resources Overview Committee recommended the Statement of Reasonable Expectations to Cabinet with two minor adjustments..
- 4.15 **Alternative options considered**
 - a) Aiming to deliver on the Communities for All priorities without extensive and genuine community involvement would risk continued duplication, fragmentation and non-sustainable service delivery. This option is therefore not supported.
 - b) Not adopting the Statement of Reasonable Expectations to support closer working with parish and town councils is also rejected as an option. Refusal to sign up to a clear agreement to support closer working would send a signal to town and parish councils that Dorset Council is not serious about working with them, understanding effective community governance, or how we need to adapt and change to be a better partner.

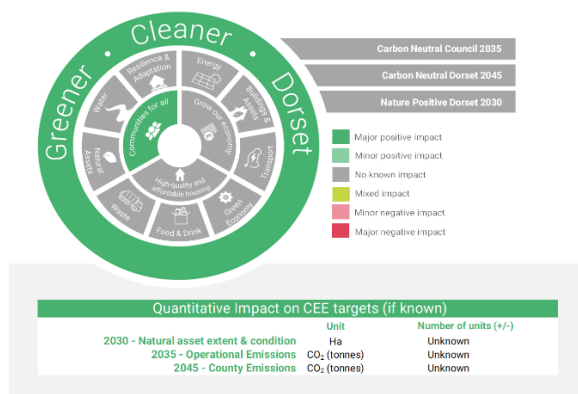
5. Legal considerations

- 5.1 None currently. If the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill passes into law then unitary councils must establish effective neighbourhood governance structures with their communities.

6. Financial implications

- 6.1 Community conversations will be supported via £0.5M funding secured through Cabinet for communities transformation in October 2025.

7. Natural environment, climate & ecology implications



8. Well-being and health implications

- 8.1 A strong body of evidence from government evaluations to academic studies shows councils that empower communities and co-produce solutions have better outcomes and even cost savings, across a number of service areas from public health to housing and planning. These improvements happen across health and wellbeing measures, community resilience, public trust and service effectiveness.
- 8.2 Community Conversations build on strong prevention work delivered to date, through a one-council approach. Insights and information gathered through these conversations will be important in helping to shape place-based working across other programmes, including through the Health and Wellbeing Board's strategy, and the Neighbourhood Health Programme being delivered by the NHS and partners in Dorset.
- 8.3 Findings will also inform our future design as a prevention-focused council, building on the excellent work begun by Childrens Services, and Adults and Housing. Conversations will support how we bring together separate initiatives like Thriving Communities, Day Opportunities and Family hubs towards a more joined up service in neighbourhoods.

9. Other implications

- 9.1 Nil.

10. Risk implications

10.1 HAVING CONSIDERED: the risks associated with this decision; the level of risk has been identified as:

Current Risk: MEDIUM

Residual Risk: LOW

11. Equalities

11.1 None.

12. Appendices

12.1 Proposed Statement of Reasonable Expectation

13. Background papers

13.1 English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill briefing

14. Report sign-off

14.1 This report has been through the internal report clearance process and has been signed off by the Director for Legal and Democratic (Monitoring Officer), the Executive Director for Corporate Development (Section 151 Officer) and the appropriate Portfolio Holder(s).

Appendix A: Statement of Reasonable Expectations

Introduction

This statement sets out the reasonable expectations for partnership working between Parish and Town Councils¹ and Dorset Council.

Dorset Association of Parish and Town Councils (DAPTC) enters into this agreement in its role representing and supporting its member Parish and Town Councils throughout Dorset.

Both parties support a shared commitment to the communities and residents of Dorset. The statement aims to foster better working relationships, enhance democratic representation, and ensure effective service delivery for the benefit of local communities.

1. Mutual Respect and Recognition

- i. Dorset Council recognises Parish and Town Councils as statutory, democratically elected bodies with legislated roles and responsibilities, the power of taxation and a deep understanding of local issues.
- ii. Parish and Town Councils respect Dorset Council's role as the democratically elected Principal Authority in strategic planning and delivery of a range of statutory services across its area.
- iii. Dorset Council also recognises the role played by DAPTC in representing the collective views and interests of **most** Town and Parish Councils.
- iv. Both parties commit to a spirit of cooperation, valuing each other's contributions and responsibilities, with a view to ensuring an effective and appropriate response to the differing needs and priorities of local places and communities.

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2. Communication and Engagement

- i. Dorset Council and Parish and Town Councils will recognise and foster the importance of a constructive and regular working relationship between the Dorset Council Ward Member and the parish meeting, parish council or town council they liaise with. This relationship should be based on openness, mutual respect and timely communication, supporting the effective flow of local knowledge, community priorities and informed decision making.
- ii. Dorset Council will provide best effort provision of timely and relevant updates on policies, projects, and decisions affecting local communities, and will consult

¹ Parish and Town Councils includes precept raising bodies such as Parish Meetings.

with Parish and Town Councils well before making decisions or policy changes that impact their role and operations or the wellbeing of their place and community.

- iii. Parish and Town Councils will share local insights and concerns to inform Dorset Council's decision making by attending regular forums or liaison meetings when established to facilitate open dialogue and exchange of views.
- iv. Clear points of contact will be maintained to ensure smooth communication, by all parties.
- v. Engagement periods will allow sufficient time for meaningful input, and each party undertakes to consider the other's views and insights before making decisions, to seek clarification where necessary, and provide meaningful feedback.

3. Support and Capacity Building

- i. Dorset Council, Parish and Town Councils, and DAPTC will collaborate to identify key areas for guidance and training and determine the most effective methods of delivery. This joint effort will aim to enhance the capabilities of Parish and Town Councils and support the expansion of their role within the local governance framework.
- ii. Resources, toolkits, and best practice examples will be shared between the parties to support effective local governance.
- iii. Parish and Town Councils will proactively seek opportunities to upskill and enhance their role in service delivery in key areas agreed by both parties, community leadership and engagement.
- iv. Parish and Town Councils will develop financial and strategic plans for the short, medium, and longer term to set out their ambitions for the community around them and enhance their role in place management.
- v. Elected members for all parties should be supported and trained to understand the benefits of co-working and partnering toward better outcomes for communities they jointly serve.
- vi. Development of personnel in Parish and Town Councils, particularly those in senior roles like Clerks, will be encouraged to enable them to undertake broader roles and responsibilities effectively.

4. Collaborative Working

- i. Dorset Council, Ward Members and Parish and Town Councils are encouraged to work directly and collaboratively to identify, design and deliver projects that bring mutual benefit to local communities. This includes early engagement on opportunities, transparent sharing of relevant information, and a shared commitment to achieving positive, practical outcomes for residents.
- ii. Dorset Council, Ward Members and Parish and Town Councils will work together to identify, explore, and, where mutually agreed, pursue opportunities for joint

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initiatives and shared services, and including the transfer or devolution of assets and services.

- iii. Partnership working and a problem-solving approach will be adopted to address challenges collectively and improve local service delivery and community outcomes.
- iv. Dorset Council will work constructively with Parish and Town Councils to facilitate changes through Community Governance Reviews where these strengthen democratic representation.
- v. Greater collaboration between neighbouring Parish and Town Councils will be encouraged to ensure best value asset management and service delivery.

5. Transparency and Accountability

- i. Decisions and actions will be made transparently, with clear explanations provided for major policy changes or service alterations.
- ii. All parties will uphold transparency in their own operations, ensuring local communities are informed and engaged.
- iii. Mechanisms for feedback and review will be in place to assess the effectiveness of collaboration and address any issues constructively.
- iv. This statement will be reviewed jointly on a periodic basis.

Conclusion

This statement represents a shared commitment to strengthening democratic representation and delivering better outcomes for Dorset's communities. By fostering mutual trust, engagement, and cooperation, Parish and Town Councils and Dorset Council can work together effectively to serve the needs of residents.

Signed by

Nick Ireland, Leader of Dorset Council

Date:

KD Johnson, Chair DAPTC Board

Date:

Catherine Howe, Chief Executive Dorset Council

Date:

Neil Wedge, Chief Executive DAPTC

Date:

Cabinet

3 March 2026

Towards a New Model of Day Opportunities For Decision

Cabinet Member:

Cllr S Robinson, Adult Social Care

Local Councillor(s):

All

Senior Leadership Team:

J Price, Executive Director of People - Adults

Report author and job title: Sarah Perrett - Commissioning Manager

Email: sarah.perrett@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

Statutory Authority: Care Act 2014

Report status: Public (the exemption paragraph is N/A)

Executive summary

- 1.1 Day opportunities remain a key element of Dorset's adult social care provision, offering structured and purposeful activities to approximately 600 residents requiring support. These services underpin wellbeing, independence, and social inclusion. Recent engagement and research indicate a growing demand for flexibility, diversity, and opportunities for social interaction, particularly among younger cohorts.
- 1.2 Public engagement exercises conducted in 2021 and 2023 identified key priorities for service improvement. The formal consultation undertaken in Spring 2025 reinforced the need for a broader, more personalised offer. Evidence demonstrates that while some individuals do not seek or require building-based provision, there remains a significant need for people who use services to develop skills, confidence, and pathways to independence. Concurrently, a smaller group of individuals with complex needs will continue to require building-based support.
- 1.3 Proposed changes reflect the evolving system-wide approach that the council is taking to better align and integrate locality-based working within our communities. This includes our evolving social policy priorities, including Integrated Neighbourhood Teams, the Council's commitment to whole-population services, and a focus on preventative, community-led support. The Council must ensure that day service transformation optimises resources,

aligns with strategic objectives set out in the Council's Strategic Asset Management Plan and leverages existing community assets, such as Children and Family Hubs and libraries ensuring better use of Council property and assets. This integrated thinking will allow for joined-up thinking and approaches to the delivery of shared-outcomes across our local system, placing communities at the heart of how we design service provision and policies moving forwards.

- 1.4 This paper asks Cabinet to endorse a series of recommendations as set out below.

2. Recommendation(s)

- 2.1 This report asks Cabinet to:

- i) Endorse the review of our commissioning model with Care Dorset and the private sector
- ii) Endorse the introduction of the revised delivery model, as described within the report and appendix 1, supporting development of a range of activities across multiple locations for implementation subject to Cabinet approval

3. Reason for the recommendations

- 3.1 The recommendations aim to create a modern, sustainable model of day opportunities that reflects the changing needs and aspirations of Dorset's residents. They support the Council's ambition to deliver flexible, community-based services that promote independence, wellbeing, and social inclusion, while continuing to provide specialist support for those with complex needs. By endorsing these changes, the Council can make better use of existing community assets, integrate services within local neighbourhoods, and align with wider priorities such as prevention and early help as part of a wider outcomes-based approach that will help drive joined up models of delivery and partnership.
- 3.2 This approach also ensures that resources are used efficiently and commissioning arrangements with Care Dorset and the independent sector are optimised. It will enable the delivery of the Commissioning for a Better Life Strategy 2023–2028, offering a broader, more personalised range of opportunities that reduce reliance on traditional building-based provision. In doing so, the Council will strengthen pathways to independence, help reduce future care needs, and create a service model that is responsive, inclusive, and financially sustainable.

4. The Report Consultation

- 4.1 Extensive engagement in 2021 and 2023 gathered feedback from individuals using day opportunities to identify areas for improvement. This informed the proposal for an expanded offer combining community-based activities with building-based support for those with complex needs. The approach was further validated through formal consultation launched in Spring 2025, ensuring broad participation and representation.
- 4.2 The consultation provided valuable insights into what people want from day opportunities, confirming a strong sense of community attachment and a clear desire for flexible, vibrant, and locally accessible services, particularly among younger people. The following key themes were identified:
- **Flexibility and Variety:** Younger cohorts expressed a preference for non-building-based day opportunities, favouring local activities that promote independence and skill development.
 - **Choice and Change:** Respondents highlighted the importance of greater choice and flexibility, with interest in alternative models of day provision.
 - **Local Provision and Community Support:** There was strong support for community-based services, with many people indicating a willingness to access opportunities closer to home.
 - **Specialist and Respite Services:** Retention of specialist and respite services was considered essential by service users and carers.
 - **Availability:** Weekday mornings were the preferred times for service users, while carers expressed strong support for weekend and evening options.
 - **Understanding of the Hub and Spoke Model:** Over half of respondents recognised the potential benefits of this model, demonstrating openness to a broader range of activities and innovative approaches.
 - **Transport:** Both service users and carers emphasised the need for more flexible transport arrangements.
 - **Communication:** Feedback indicated a requirement for clearer information and improved promotion of available services, as some respondents were unaware of local provision.
- 4.3 Some concerns were raised regarding the proposed changes. These will require careful management and appropriate support during implementation. It is important to emphasise that all individuals with assessed Care Act eligible needs will continue to receive an appropriate form of day service.
- 4.4 The [full published Consultation report can be found here](#).

Service Changes and Developments

- 4.5 The proposal includes implementing a community Hub model across Dorset Council's five localities (North Dorset, Weymouth & Portland, East Dorset, West Dorset and Purbeck) with a range of building and community-based services. The hub model will act as the foundation to support future delivery of more joined up services in Neighbourhoods, working closely with communities. This ambition requires partners to work in a more proactive way, particularly paying attention to early help and prevention and enabling communities to thrive; an ambition that aligns with our Communities for All council plan priority and the required system-wide approach to the delivery of shared outcomes.
- 4.6 A Hub could provide and host a range of activities, and services that may include:
- Specialist community activities/day opportunities for individuals with complex needs
 - Introduction of a community brokerage service supporting individuals access a wider range of bespoke services closer to their homes. Supporting development of the private sector and VCSE options.
 - Act as a neighbourhood base for outreach services delivered by health, the VCSE and other partners.
- 4.7 In addition to the five hubs officers propose to retain and develop two specialist services for people with complex needs in Verwood (East Dorset) and Ridgeway (Weymouth & Portland). The remaining centres will continue to deliver a diverse range of options for community activities/day opportunities for adults across Dorset.
- 4.8 The Council will offer Direct Payments and Individual Service Funds as a first option to encourage and promote flexibility and choice in accessing day opportunities. People will still be able to access a day service via the block contract mechanism if that is their choice.

Building Changes

- 4.9 As part of the transformation of day opportunities, the Council has reviewed the use of all 13 Care Dorset-managed building-based services to ensure they are fit for purpose, aligned with community needs, and maximised as local assets. This review considered consultation feedback, demand trends, and opportunities to integrate services within the wider neighbourhood model. While the initial proposals for each building are set out in the *appendix 1*, the overarching approach seeks to retain and repurpose key sites as community hubs, develop specialist provision where required, and ensure that any changes support flexibility, independence, and better use of Council

resources. Under the agreed Strategic Asset Management Plan, the council will work through the asset review process to refine and ensure all factors influencing future asset usage are fully considered.

Review of Commissioning Mechanisms

- 4.10 The current Care Dorset contract for Day Services is funded via a block contract, comprising of a mix of direct service costs and building costs. Initial work has been undertaken to benchmark the private market, reviewing current volume of market placements, flat session rates, day rates and 1:1 rate. In addition, officers have reviewed Care Dorset financial and operational data as well as analysis of placements, frequency, expenditure, staffing levels and the self-funder market.
- 4.11 Completion of financial and operational analysis will act as a catalyst for future commissioning mechanisms. This will include removing a proportion of day centre costs out of the block contract and supporting Care Dorset to become commercially independent through the development of the self-funder market.

Next steps

- 4.12 Officers are committed to continuing the engagement with stakeholders and will ensure there are robust engagement and feedback structures in place. This will include further face to face sessions with people who use services, carers and families. Officers will support engagement with wider council departments where changes may impact, for example transport and utilisation of other resources including libraries. Further discussions will also be had to ensure that future approaches to locality working are symbiotic with this new model, enhancing the delivery of the outcomes that have been recognised through the extensive consultation that has been undertaken. Members will be kept apprised of progress in implementing recommended changes.
- 4.13 Subject to Cabinet decision, next steps to be prioritised are:
- April – Oct 2026**
- Review contracting mechanism and cost base for Care Dorset and the private market.
 - In line with the Strategic Asset Management Plan asset review process, continue to work with Asset & Property to review lease arrangements, associated costs, building condition, compliance, value, sustainability, and service change implications for each centre.
 - Issue new service specifications and contracts
 - Further embed 'pathways to independence' approach with front line social work staff, users and families and providers, as well as integration with wider approaches to prevention and new approaches to locality working to enhance the delivery of the outcomes identified in this paper.
 - Review Community Brokerage model

- Further market engagement with micro providers and VCSE.

5. Legal considerations

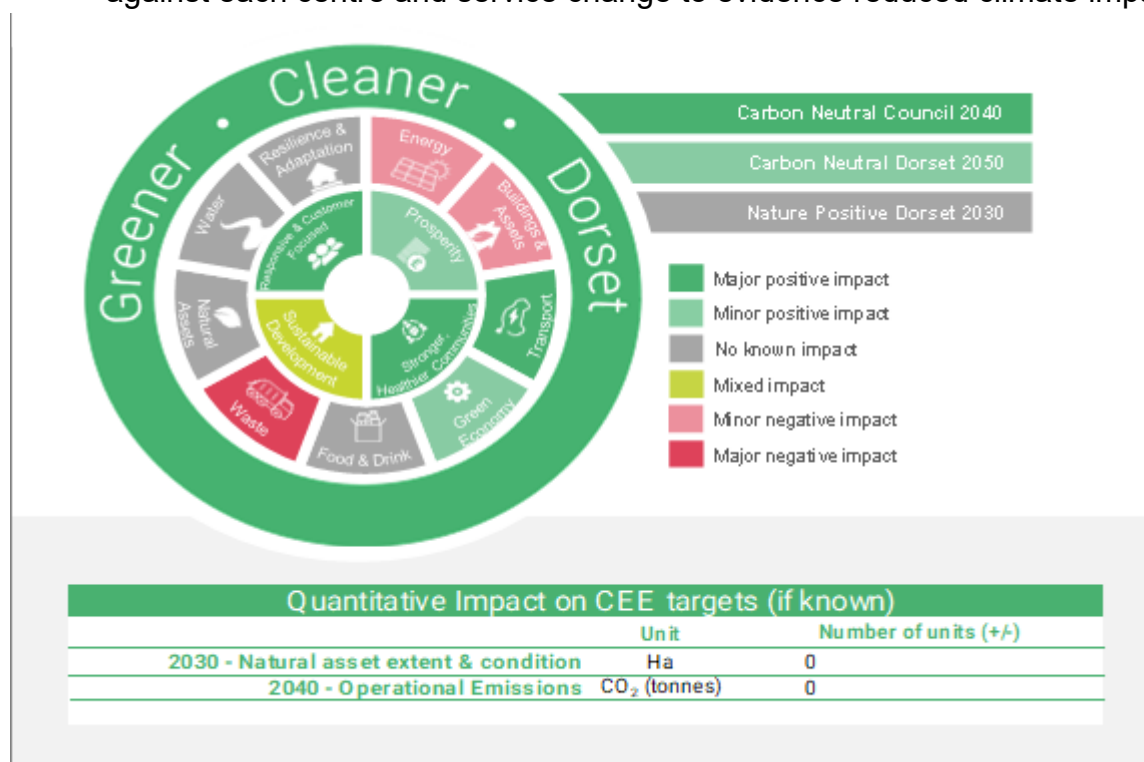
- 5.1 The Council has a duty under the Care Act to meet assessed needs and adopt a strength- based approach to delivering outcomes for eligible individuals. Moreover, the Care Act supports increased choice and control for people through individual budgets. The proposed changes to our day service operating model will enhance available options for individuals and strengthen the mechanism in which services can be purchased.

6. Financial implications

- 6.1 There are no immediate negative financial pressures through adopting a new service model. As change is implemented opportunities will emerge to review contracting mechanisms which will drive efficiencies, alongside any changes to building usage may have financial implications related to changes in building usage. The focus on building skills and independence for people who use services will have a positive financial impact over a medium term as care and support needs will reduce.

7. Natural environment, climate & ecology implications

- 7.1 Reduction in travel and transportation of individuals will result in reduced carbon emissions and carbon footprint. The climate wheel will be utilised against each centre and service change to evidence reduced climate impact.



8. Well-being and health implications

- 8.1 The Adults Directorate Transformation programme continues to drive change that improves how the Council supports individuals, ensuring services are tailored to meet diverse needs. The move towards a new model of day opportunities strengthens this ambition by redesigning provision to deliver personalised, meaningful activities in local settings. This approach will be delivered in partnership with community organisations, voluntary groups, and local businesses, creating a richer and more inclusive offer.
- 8.2 By embedding day opportunities within neighbourhoods, the proposed model enhances the ability of the wider health and care system to improve population health and wellbeing. It supports early intervention and prevention, reduces isolation, and promotes independence, all of which contribute to better long-term outcomes. Through proactive collaboration with partners and local networks, the model will enable communities to thrive and ensure that individuals receive support that is holistic, accessible, and aligned with their aspirations. This forms part of a systems-wide approach to redefine the way that we are working with communities with shared-outcomes at the heart of all we do.

9. Other implications

- 9.1 Changes in building use and enhanced community activities will require a review of transport options including the use of the VCSE, Council Transport and increased use of Direct Payments that will support people have more flexibility on how they access a day opportunity.
- 9.2 Aligning to the approved Strategic Asset Management Plan, which was approved by Cabinet in October 2024, officers will work to ensure there is a comprehensive understanding of existing community provision and opportunities to design services that address existing gaps and reduce service provision.
- 9.3 This paper and the provisions within it align with the broader redefinition of the approach to locality working as articulated in the Communities for All council plan priority, where shared outcomes will be at the heart of how we approach future service delivery.

10. Risk implications

Having considered the risks associated with this decision; the level of risk has been identified as:

Current Risk: LOW

Residual Risk: LOW

The decision is assessed as low risk because it maintains statutory compliance under the Care Act, ensures continuity of support for all

individuals with eligible needs, and introduces changes through a phased, consultative approach.

11. Equalities

- 11.1 An EQIA has been completed for each centre and approved by the Equalities Team. Consideration was given to any potential impact for people who use services now and those who may in the future. The Impact Assessment evidenced the proposed model of day services increased people's choice, would support more bespoke options particularly in rural areas and support people ambitions to develop more independence and skills.

12. Appendices

- 12.1 Appendix 1: Towards a new Model of Day Opportunities – Building proposals

13. Background Papers

- 13.1 [Commissioning for A Better Life for Adults in Dorset 2023 to 2028](#)

14. Report sign-off

- 14.1 This report has been through the internal report clearance process and has been signed off by the Director for Legal and Democratic (Monitoring Officer), the Executive Director for Corporate Development (Section 151 Officer) and the appropriate Portfolio Holder(s)

Towards a new model of day opportunities

Appendix – Building Proposals

03 March 2026

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This appendix provides the detailed proposals for each of the 13 Care Dorset-managed day centres, reflecting the feedback received through public consultation and the Council's ambition to modernise day opportunities across Dorset. While the main report outlines the strategic rationale for change, this appendix sets out how those principles translate into local recommendations for each building. The proposals balance the need to maximise use of Council assets with a commitment to maintaining local presence wherever possible, supporting the wider ambition for Communities for All. The next step would be to work with Asset & Property to complete full asset reviews (as per Strategic Asset Management Plan) to ensure all factors influencing future asset use are fully considered. Unlike some local authorities that have closed a significant proportion of their day centres, Dorset is taking a more measured and community-focused approach, retaining most buildings while redesigning how they operate to better meet current and future needs.

2. Building Proposals

- 2.1 The below describes the context of each centre, the initial proposal and a revised recommendation post consultation.

North Dorset Locality

Blandford
Context: The Blandford Centre is an important community resource for local people. It is currently attended by 15 LD and 6 OP, 4 self-funders. The building is in a good location but is not fully maximised. There is opportunity to harness the centre as a community resource and link the operational activity in the centre to wider community work, such as Integrated Neighbourhoods and Thriving Communities.
Initial Proposal: To close the centre and relocate services to a smaller site in Blandford
Revised Recommendation following Consultation: Keep Blandford open but invest in developing an all-age service by integrating: • Children and Family Services. • Extend community activity for those not assessed as needing building-based care. • Providing expert local knowledge, advice, guidance and support

- Harness new opportunities to work with Health and develop a vibrant community asset

Sherborne

Context:

The day service is operated from an old house that is no longer fit for purpose. Only one floor of the property is used and it is not centrally located to other community resources. 3 people with LD attend, 7 OP and 8 Self funders. Sherbourne Town has significant potential to offer improved services for local people, closer to the centre, harnessing local assets whilst maintaining a more appropriate building base for those that need it.

Initial Proposal:

Maintain the services offered to the current clients but transition from the current building to a community-based model which will include: -

- Commissioning a smaller building closer to the town centre.
- Supporting more people to access community resources and local activities.
- Extend and develop community activity for those not assessed as needing building-based care.

Revised Recommendation following Consultation:

Continue with original proposal.

Shaftesbury

Context:

The day service is currently provided from a large, rented property. It has a small number of attendees. A number of the rooms in the rental agreement are unused and demand from the local population is declining. 0 people with LD attend, 8 OP and 7 Self funders. However, officers do recognise the need for a local service and propose to maintain the service in the current building, utilising different space, whilst developing opportunities to develop outreach for those who want it. Officers will also be reviewing the potential to extend out of all our centres in the North to ensure more rural areas have access to services.

Initial Proposal:

To transition the current service to a community-based model.

Revised Recommendation following Consultation:

To keep the Shaftesbury services offer to current clients.

- Renegotiate the lease to reflect actual building space required
- Support more people to access community resources and local activities.
- Targeted work to develop a community-based offer for younger adults
- Extend community activity for those not assessed as needing building-based care.

Sturminster Newton (Stour Connect)

Context:

This day service is operated from a large building with community café and other onsite community provisions (charity shop & sixth form college). Important community resource for local people. It is currently attended by 32 people with LD, 6 OP and 4 Self funders.

The building is not fully utilised by the wider community and has significant scope to be developed further. This will include a range of options with health, the VCSE and other partners to create a local vibrant resource.

Initial Proposal:

Stour Connect to become a Community Hub for North Dorset

Revised Recommendation following Consultation:

- Continue current services, providing specialist community activities/day opportunities for individuals with complex needs
- Provide specialised equipment and support to local services in towns and villages for outreach services delivered by health, the VCSE and other partners.
- Introduction of a community brokerage service supporting individuals access a wider range of bespoke services closer to their homes.
- Supporting development of the private sector and VCSE options.
- Support more people to access community resources and local activities.
- Extend community activity for those not assessed as needing building-based care.

Weymouth and Portland Locality

Weymouth**Context:**

The day service is operated from a large centrally located building in Weymouth. A well, attended provision for adults with learning Disability and older people with cognitive impairment. 30 people with LD attend, 21 OP and 11 Self funders. The service has the potential to develop further, and more will enable the Council to develop services with health and other stakeholders

Initial Proposal: Weymouth Connect to become the Community Hub for Weymouth and Portland.

- Review the long- term viability of the current building and if appropriate commission a more appropriate space.
- Support more people to access community resources and local activities.
- Extend community activity for those not assessed as needing building-based care.

Revised Recommendation following Consultation:

- Review the long- term viability of the current building and if appropriate commission a more appropriate, local, space.

- Continue current services, providing specialist community activities/day opportunities for individuals with complex needs
- Provide specialised equipment and support to local services in towns and villages for outreach services delivered by health, the VCSE and other partners.
- Introduction of a community brokerage service supporting individuals access a wider range of bespoke services closer to their homes.
- Supporting development of the private sector and VCSE options within towns and villages.
- Support more people to access community resources and local activities.

Ridgeway

Context:

Large day service on the outskirts of Weymouth with ample outdoor space, on a shared site with Children's service provision. 29 people with LD attend, 1 OP and 11 Self funders. Ridgeway is a key local resource, the model of service delivery could be enhanced to support people plan for greater independence

Initial Proposal:

To build on the services provided at the Ridgeway creating a specialist service for the west of the County for adults with Learning Disabilities. Change the service model to focus on building skills and independence.

Revised Recommendation following Consultation:

Continue with original proposal.

East Dorset Locality

Verwood

Context:

The Verwood day service is located in a purpose built two storey building with good access. 27 people with LD attend, 3 OP and 12 Self funders. Verwood is a key service for local people, the service model can be developed to support people build independence and extend out into the community

Initial Proposal:

Develop the service as a Community Hub for East Dorset.

Revised Recommendation following Consultation:

To build on the services provided at the Verwood centre creating a specialist Service for the east of the County for adults with Learning Disabilities. Change the Service model to focus on building skills and independence.

Ferndown

Context:

Ferndown is well located and has the potential to develop as a strong community asset. There are not high numbers of Council funded people attending (10) and 15

Self-funders. Developing Ferndown as a community resource, linking with children's services. VCSE and Health offers potential to create a local resource that build and extends existing services.

Initial Proposal:

To close the service with people attending local community activities or the proposed Verwood Hub.

Revised Recommendation following Consultation:

- Retain the current services offered to the Ferndown community
- Retain the Ferndown building and develop towards becoming a financially viable community asset for local people, complementing (not competing with) existing provision within the town.
- Review the contracting mechanism with Care Dorset
- Establish best use of the space and how the building can be managed locally, with revised contracting arrangements developed.

West Dorset

Dorchester

Context:

Dorchester plus is a centrally located and easily accessible day service. 14 people with LD attend, 19 OP and 17 Self funders. It has potential to integrate with other local services with improved utilisation of the building.

Initial Proposal:

Dorchester Plus to become the West Dorset Community Hub.

Revised Recommendation following Consultation:

- Continue current services, providing specialist community activities/day opportunities for individuals with complex needs
- Provide specialised equipment and support to local towns and villages for outreach services delivered by health, the VCSE and other partners.
- Introduction of a community brokerage service supporting individuals access a wider range of bespoke services closer to their homes.
- Supporting development of the private sector and VCSE options within towns and villages.
- Support more people to access community resources and local activities
- Extend community activity for those not assessed as needing building-based care.

Bridport

Context:

The day service operates from an old Victorian school building which is in poor condition. 22 people with LD attend, 22 OP and 5 Self funders. A service in Bridport is key to ensuring people in the west have good access to services. However,

building based support is not always right for younger people who feedback they seek broader opportunities.
Initial Proposal: To move the current service to a more suitable building and location in Bridport.
Revised Recommendation following Consultation: No immediate change but explore the development of a new centre, located within the Reablement development in Bridport, or seek an alternative local site. Additionally, develop a community outreach model for people who want to build skills and independence

Purbeck Locality

Swanage
Context: The day centre was transferred to the Swanage and Purbeck Development (SPDT) Trust as part of a community asset transfer in 2024. 2 people with LD attend, 1 OP and 0 Self funders. Some people who previously attended have moved to a new provider in the Swanage area. There remains a need for a local service in Swanage and working with the SPDT and other local providers to develop further is key to our proposals
Initial Proposal: Remove from Care Dorset Block contract and work with the SPDT and local community activities providers to deliver a local service.
Revised Recommendation following Consultation: Maintain services to current clients through the development of spot funding and commissioning of VCSE and other agencies. Develop new, flexible services as need arises.

Wareham
Context: Specialist Day service for older people with cognitive impairment. The service is joined to Anglebury Court residential home in Wareham. 1 person with LD attend, 24 OP and 31 Self funders. Wareham is well located and links well to the attached residential home, proposals to retain Wareham but build community outreach form part of our proposals.
Initial Proposal: To close the current service, redirect people to Purbeck Connect as a Community Hub and develop community activities.
Revised Recommendation following Consultation: To retain Wareham Plus as a specialist service for Older People. Review the contracting mechanism with Care Dorset.

Purbeck
Context: The centre is located on an industrial estate a mile from the Wareham centre. Older

people who use Purbeck fed back that they wanted a different type of service and more opportunities.

Initial Proposal:

To keep Purbeck as a local Hub and develop increased community services.

Revised Recommendation following Consultation & recommendation from the Health & Wellbeing Board (11 Feb):

- Purbeck Connect to continue operating as normal, with Care Dorset committed to sustaining and growing the service so current users can keep attending unless they choose an alternative.
- Continue to develop community-based service in Wareham.

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Cabinet

3 March 2026

Procurement arrangements for specified services for Children's Services.

For Decision

Cabinet Member:

Cllr C Sutton, Children's Services, Education & Skills

Local Councillor(s): N/A county wide

Senior Leadership Team:

P Dempsey, Executive Director of People - Children

Report author and job title: Kelly Henry Head of Service Good Care Provision, Safeguarding and Business Support.

Email: Kelly.Henry@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

Statutory Authority:

Report status: Public (the exemption paragraph is N/A)

1. Executive summary

- 1.1 Children's Services are responsible for commissioning a range of services. Some of these services involve procurements with delegations attached to them enabling named officers to make decisions, in conjunction with the Lead Member where appropriate.
- 1.2 Through these procurements the Council has been able to ensure there are sufficient homes for children in care and care experienced young people, sufficient educational provision and sufficient support services for children and families. This has met needs by increasing local capacity where it has been required.
- 1.3 Some of the delegations date back to 2021, market costs have risen materially since delegations were last approved in, driven by regulatory changes and national market pressures.

- 1.4 All Childrens Services contracts delegation and arrangements have been reviewed to ensure they remain up to date and compliant. This review has resulted in the need to ensure arrangements cover the extent of the procured services for Supported Housing for Young People and arrangements for securing of placements at independent non maintained special schools and specialist post 16 placements are clarified, as set out in Appendix 1.

2. **Recommendation(s)**

Supported accommodation.

- 2.1 Cabinet approves the budget and funding allocations to procurements within Appendix 1 and delegates authority to the Executive Director of People – Children’s, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Children’s Services, Education & Skills and the Corporate Director Finance & Commercial / Chief Financial Officer & S151 officer to procure and award contracts, or release agreed funding to third parties delivering services, for any procurement within Cabinet approved Appendix 1 provided the cost is contained within the Children’s Services budget.
- 2.2 Cabinet approves the re-opening of the existing, previously approved procurement framework to support ongoing commissioning activity within Children’s Services, without the requirement of further Cabinet approval of openings.
- 2.3 Note that these frameworks have already been formally established in line with procurement regulations and governance procedures.

Independent non maintained special school and specialist post 16 placements.

- 2.4 Note the arrangements for securing placements at independent non maintained special schools and specialist post 16 providers which is operated in accordance with the Special Educational Needs & Disability (SEND) Scheme of Delegation see paragraph 3.6 below.

3. **Reason for the recommendation(s)**

- 3.1 To draw together several previous delegations against individual Children’s Services budgets to ensure consistency of approach and to ensure appropriate oversight and authority is in place to allow sufficient services to be procured to meet the needs of children and young people.

4. **The report**

Supported Accommodation

- 4.1 In 2021 Cabinet approved Dorset Council's Children's Social Care Placement Sufficiency strategy and associated procurements. Supported accommodation for Children in Care and Care Leavers has been procured but the cost of this has increased above the amount Cabinet approved in 2021. Additional supported accommodation also needs to be procured to meet requirements on Dorset Council to provide accommodation to children who have entered the UK seeking asylum and being unaccompanied by their parents.
- 4.2 Supported Accommodation has become a regulated activity through Ofsted since 2023, and while this is a welcome development, leading to improved standards of provision for children and young people, it has contributed to increased costs to providers, including organisational and registered manager registration costs required by the regulator.
- 4.3 The Competition and Markets Authority concluded in 2022 that the social care market for homes for children was not a functional market, having been monopolised by private equity firms leading to consolidation of smaller providers into larger organisations making outsized profits.
- 4.4 Our response has been to structure the delegated procurement as an open framework, allowing us to develop partnerships with local private providers and voluntary sector organisations, prior to committing to block contracts. Annual reviews of pricing via open book account scrutiny before the Commercial Board has facilitated influence over inflationary pressures and managed costs.

Externally commissioned specialist school and college placements

- 4.5 Local Authorities have a duty under Section 42 of the Children and Families Act to secure education provision as set out in a child or young person's Education Health and Care Plan (EHP). Typically, such needs can be met within mainstream settings (including Resourced Provisions), or a local special school. In some instances, such as a lack of suitable provision, a third-party provider must be commissioned. Such providers are known as independent and non-maintained special schools and specialist post 16 institutions (INMSS and SPIs). Such placements are funded through the High Needs Block (HNB). The cost of such placements can vary significantly depending on the complexity of need, but indicatively, forecasts in Autumn 2025 were for 307 FTE placements at an average cost of £66,300 (a total of £20,354,100 per annum).
- 4.6 In line with good practice nationally, Dorset's approach is:

- to have in place overarching contacts with INMSS/SPI providers (where block contracts are not in place), with contract management and Quality Assurance arrangements; working with regional LAs to establish framework arrangements where possible (this is severely limited due to the nature of the market which is provider led due to national legislation)

- when the need for an INMSS/SPI placement is identified, a search is carried out of INMSS/SPI which can meet need, options are presented to the Multi Agency Resource Panel, and decisions made on the most appropriate provision in line with the child's Education & Health Care Plan, such decision making is governed by the SEND Scheme of Delegation

- an Individual Placement Agreement is then established (a contract for the specific placement)

5 Alternative options considered

- 5.1 The alternative option would involve all procurements above the key threshold decision level to be brought to Cabinet on an individual basis for approval. This could result in an un-coordinated approach and lead to delays in meeting need, incurring additional costs. Children and young people have specific needs and require very timely decision making, for example to ensure a placement is secured before a provider becomes full again or to prevent a gap in provision.

6 Legal considerations

- 6.1 The Children Act 1989 (Section 22G) requires local authorities to take steps that are reasonably practicable to secure sufficient accommodation for children and young people under their care who cannot live at home and whose circumstances indicate that it would be in their best interests to be accommodated within the local authority's area, so that they can see their family and stay at the same school. This is commonly known as the 'sufficiency duty.'
- 6.2 Local Authorities have a duty under Section 42 of the Children and Families Act to secure education provision as set out in a child of young person's ECHP.

7. Financial implications

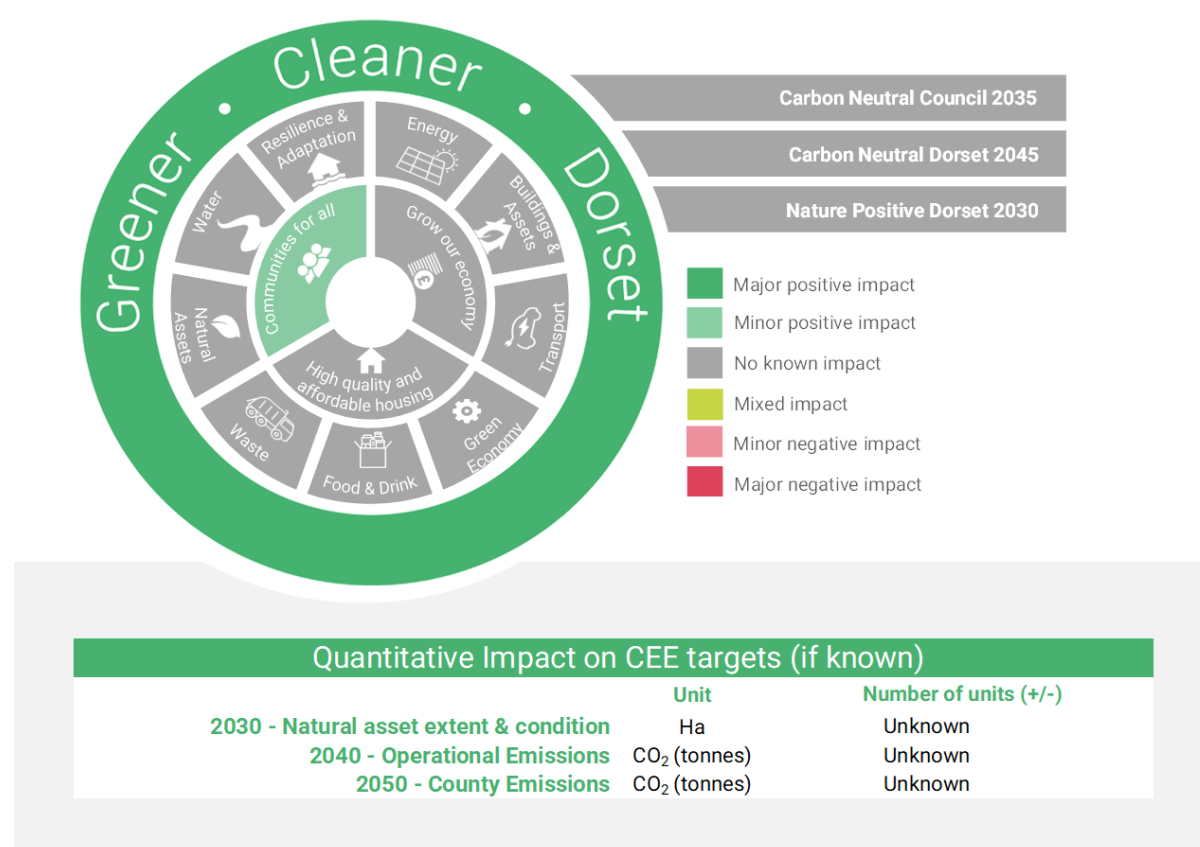
- 7.1 The aim of the Children's Services sufficiency strategies and these procurement arrangements is to contribute to a reduction in spend on children's social care, and to ensure that spending in these areas deliver value for money (including financial sustainability for the High Needs Block) and makes a positive impact on outcomes for children.

7.2 For accommodation, service budgets have identified the funding required for the procurement set out in this report, which are from existing placement spend and reimbursements from central government for accommodating unaccompanied asylum-seeking children.

7.3 Spend against INMSS and SPI placements is funded from the High Needs Block (HNB) of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) which is in significant deficit. This decision requested in this paper does not positively or negatively affect this position.

8. Natural environment, climate & ecology implications

8.1



Energy	No known impact
Buildings & Assets	No known impact
Transport	No known impact
Green Economy	No known impact
Food & Drink	No known impact

Waste	No known impact
Natural Assets & Ecology	No known impact
Water	No known impact
Resilience and Adaptation	No known impact
Corporate Plan Priorities	Impact
High quality & affordable housing	No known impact
Grow our economy	No known impact
Communities for all	Minor positive impact
Climate and nature crisis	No known impact

9. Well-being and health implications

- 9.1 A lack of adequate and sufficient supported accommodation for young people in our care may result in young people being placed in higher-cost provision or in settings that do not appropriately meet their needs. This may also lead to an increased number of children being placed at a significant distance from Dorset at significant cost and adding pressure to services that support them as well as moving them further from their home and connections. In addition, there is a need for a broader range of specialist education provision for children whose needs cannot be met within mainstream settings, both of which could have a negative impact on their wellbeing and health.

10 Other implications

10.1 N/A

11. Risk implications

11.1 **HAVING CONSIDERED: the risks associated with this decision; the level of risk has been identified as:**

Current Risk: High

Residual Risk: Low

- 11.2 There are no direct impacts arising from a decision of Cabinet to grant delegated authority for new providers joining the Supported Housing for Young People framework or noting the arrangements in respect to the purchasing of INMSS and SPIs.

12. **Equalities**

- 12.1 No EQIA has been undertaken as the decision of Cabinet to grant delegated authority for new providers joining the Supported Housing for Young People framework or the internal agreement in respect to the purchasing of INMSS and SPIs does not directly impact our children, young people or communities.

13. **See Appendix 1**

14. **Background papers**

- 14.1 Children's Provision Report (Including Supported Accommodation Procurement) ([Public Pack](#)) [Agenda Document for Dorset Council - Cabinet, 19/01/2021 10:00](#), pp. 119-147.
- 14.2 Strategy: Sufficiency of Homes for Children 2024-27 [Decision - Children Sufficient Places - Dorset Council](#)
- 14.3 Competition and Markets Authority (2022) [Children's social care market study final report - GOV.UK](#)
- 14.4 [Main findings: children's social care in England 2025 - GOV.UK](#)

15. **Report sign-off**

- 15.1 This report has been through the internal report clearance process and has been signed off by the Director for Legal and Democratic (Monitoring Officer), the Executive Director for Corporate Development (Section 151 Officer) and the appropriate Portfolio Holder(s)

Appendix 1 - Procurements

No.	Contract Description	Portfolio / Portfolio Lead	Executive Director	Contract Term (Initial)	Term Extensions Beyond Initial (Recommended)	Estimated Spend Over Initial Contract Term	Spend Extensions Beyond Initial (Recommended)	Potential Market Route	Risk Category	Comments
1	Supported Housing for Young People	Children's / Cllr Clare Sutton	Paul Dempsey	5 years	1 year + 1 year	£13,664,000	£7,200,000	Call off from Framework/DPS	High	Contract start date 1/4/2023. Light touch rules apply. Extensions value reflects increase in provision to meet increased statutory duties from Year 4 (2026-27) onwards.

Name of Committee

3 March 2026

Business Growth Dorset – Government Growth Hub Funding Financial year 26/27 to 28/29 For Decision

Cabinet Member:

Cllr R Biggs, Property & Assets and Economic Growth

Local Councillor(s):

All

Senior Leadership Team:

J Britton, Executive Director for Place Services

Report author and job title:

Jon Bird, Service Manager for Economic Development & Skills
Shelley Collins-Trevett, Business Growth Dorset Manager

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shelley.collins-trevett@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

Statutory Authority: Local Government Act 2000

Report status: Public (the exemption paragraph is N/A)

1. Executive summary

- 1.1 Government has confirmed a three-year Growth Hub funding allocation for Dorset, providing £341,000 per year (total £1.023m) for 2026/27–2028/29. This funding enables Dorset Council, as the accountable body, to deliver the Business Growth Dorset service across both Dorset and Bournemouth, Christchurch & Poole (BCP) areas.
- 1.2 The Growth Hub provides free, impartial advice and access to business support, aligned with national policy through the Department for Business and Trade and the new Business Growth Service. The report seeks approval to accept the grant and deliver the service in accordance with government conditions, supporting both national objectives and local economic priorities.
- 1.3 This service was delivered by Dorset Local Enterprise Partnership until March 2025 and by Dorset Council since April 2025.

2. Recommendation(s)

That Cabinet:

- 2.1 Approves acceptance of the Growth Hub grant for 2026/27 - 2028/29 and its associated grant conditions.
- 2.2 Approves in principle the proposed budget, resourcing and activities.
- 2.3 Delegates authority to the Executive Director, Place, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Property, Assets and Economic Growth, to implement and adjust delivery plans within grant rules.

3. Reason for the recommendation(s)

- 3.1 Accepting the funding advances the Council's "Grow our Economy" strategic priority and supports delivery of the Economic Growth Strategy 2025–2040, supporting entrepreneurship and local business. It contributes towards actions in the Council Plan aiming to narrow the Dorset to UK productivity gap by 5% by 2029 and create 1000 business start-up courses for 16-34 year olds.

4. The report

- 4.1 The Department for Business and Trade announced multi-year Growth Hub allocations on 19 December 2025. Multi-year funding provides stability for long term planning and integrates local delivery with the national Business Growth Service.
- 4.2 Dorset Council is the accountable body for the Business Growth Dorset service, part of a national network of 41 Growth Hubs offering triage, diagnostics, signposting and brokerage to local businesses.
- 4.3 The Growth Hub model has been delivered for pan-Dorset since 2017 with Dorset Council the accountable body since 2019.
- 4.4 This Financial Year Business Growth Dorset have delivered a high-quality information, diagnostic and signposting service in addition to five programmes focusing on Dorset's key priority sectors and high-growth potential businesses with over 400 businesses supported so far:
 - **Scale-Up Smart Tech** – focused on Advanced Engineering & Manufacturing, Defence & Marine SMEs to become more productive through the adoption of technology.
 - **Scale-Up Growth** – equipping senior business leaders in Advanced Engineering & Manufacturing, Defence, Marine and Digital sectors with strategies and insight to drive growth and long-term success.
 - **Scale-Up Finance** – split into two strands this programme supports new and established businesses to understand and access finance for their business.
 - **Build: Not For Profit** – helping Charities, Social Enterprises, B-Corps, Mutuels, Cooperatives and Circular Economy businesses to thrive.
 - **Supporting Our High Streets** – equipping Dorset's independent retail, hospitality and leisure businesses with vital tools and knowledge to grow and innovate.
- 4.5 The three-year funding deal covering Financial Years 26/27, 27/28 and 28/29 brings in £1.023m of funding to benefit Dorset businesses.
- 4.6 Proposed 3-year Growth Hub funding allocation:
 - £771,000 to cover salaries, on-costs and 25% Dorset Council indirect costs for 3.5 Full Time Equivalent fixed-term posts directly linked to the

funding. This includes an allocation for potential redundancy payments in year 3.

- £116,500 to deliver programmes focused on Start-Up, Scale-Up and Sustain targeted on Dorset and Department for Business & Trade key priority areas.
- £105,000 to provide the Business Insight and Intelligence tools required for delivery, reporting and compliance.
- £31,000 operations budget (marketing, website, expenses, events and staff development).

5. Alternative options considered

- 5.1 Dorset Council could choose to reject the grant, and deliver similar services using Council funds, which does not represent best value.
- 5.2 Dorset Council could choose to reject the grant and not offer similar services, which would not best serve the residents and businesses of Dorset.
- 5.3 Dorset Council could choose a different mix of commissioned services and employed staff. The proposed mix best fits the expectations of the grant funder for core services to be delivered in-house, with specialist functions, such as programme delivery, commissioned from third parties. Recent commissioning experience shows there is a functioning and competitive market for these services.

6. Legal considerations

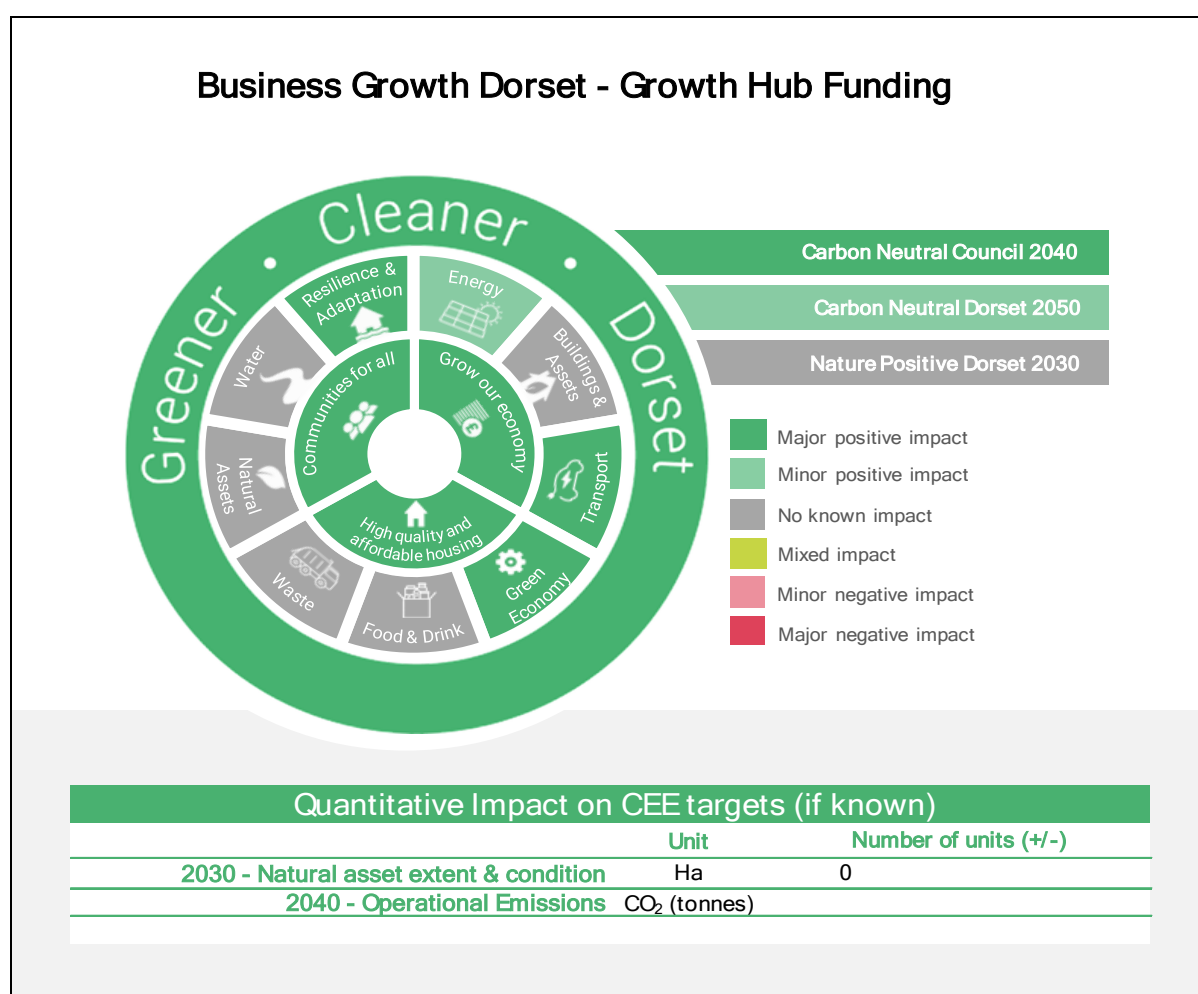
- 6.1 The Growth Hub model has been delivered locally for nine years in line with government requirements. Dorset Council has been the accountable body since 2019, with funding benefitting both Dorset and BCP areas. Business Boards being established across both authorities will link to Growth Hub activity.

7. Financial implications

- 7.1 The allocation is ring fenced specifically for Growth Hub activity. It funds the Business Growth Dorset team, Dorset Council's costs and any procured delivery contracts. Activities and benefits will be delivered pan Dorset, with at least 50% of interventions in the Dorset Council area.
- 7.2 There are no additional costs to the council therefore no additional Council funding is required and some un-funded ambitions of the Council will be part-funded by Growth Hub funding.

8. Natural environment, climate & ecology implications

- 8.1 Business Growth Dorset promotes Net Zero and sustainable business practices. The website has information and resources relating to Net Zero and business conversations include appropriate information to help businesses with their approach.
- 8.2 As a Network Partner of the National Business Growth Service this is a key priority of the Department for Business & Trade and we fully support the UK Government's Willow Review regarding the Sustainability of Small Businesses.
- 8.3 Climate Wheel:



- 8.4 For impact assessment see full paper [Climate Emergency Wheel](#)

9. Well-being and health implications

- 9.1 Supporting business growth contributes to higher quality jobs and improved financial wellbeing - key determinants of health.

10. Other implications

10.1 None identified.

11. Risk implications

11.1 HAVING CONSIDERED: the risks associated with this decision; the level of risk has been identified as:

Current Risk: Low

Residual Risk: Low

12. Equalities

12.1 The EQIA shows mostly positive impacts on businesses, with actions ensuring accessibility for all users.

13. Appendices

13.1 [EqIA](#)

14. Background papers

14.1 Department for Business and Trade funding allocation letter to Council Chief Executives (19 December 2025).

[Growth Hub Funding Allocations letter to CEOs](#)

15. Report sign-off

15.1 This report has been through the internal report clearance process and has been signed off by the Director for Legal and Democratic (Monitoring Officer), the Executive Director for Corporate Development (Section 151 Officer) and the appropriate Portfolio Holder(s)

Cabinet

3 March 2026

National Planning Policy and Guidance consultation responses For Decision

Cabinet Member:

Cllr S Bartlett, Planning and Emergency Planning

Local Councillor(s): All

Senior Leadership Team:

J Britton, Executive Director for Place Services

Report author and job title: Terry Sneller, Strategic Planning Manager

Email: terry.sneller@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

Statutory Authority: Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004

Report status: Public [Choose an item.](#)

1. Executive summary

- 1.1 The government have launched a consultation on changes to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) which will have implications for both the production of the Local Plan and for decision making on planning applications. The proposals are significant, separating out decision-making policies from those for plan-making. This report outlines the main changes and proposes a response to the 225 questions that form the consultation document.
- 1.2 Alongside the consultation on the NPPF, the government are also consulting on some changes to the Design and Placemaking Planning Practice Guidance (PPG). This guidance adds detail to the design related parts of the NPPF giving guidance on their implementation.

2. Recommendation(s)

- 2.1 It is recommended that Cabinet agree the proposed responses to the NPPF and PPG consultations for submission.

3. Reason for the recommendation(s)

- 3.1 Responding to the consultations means that Dorset Council has an influence on the formation of the new NPPF and associated PPG. As one of the largest local planning authorities in England, it is important that a response is made.

4. The report

NPPF Consultation

- 4.1 Over recent years, successive governments have been making changes to the planning system with the intention of making it more streamlined in both decision-taking and plan-making.
- 4.2 Released on 16 December 2025 and running until 10 March 2026, the latest consultation proposes a fundamental restructuring of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The changes separate out the different policies for plan-making and decision-making and update some policy approaches. The approach aims to simplify plan-making and deliver growth more quickly.
- 4.3 The objectives of the changes to the NPPF, stated in the introduction to the consultation are to:
 - Ensure national planning policy is accessible and understandable for everyone who uses it;
 - Establish a comprehensive suite of national policies on general planning matters which will apply across the country, to avoid these matters being repeated or deviated from in locally-produced plans – in so doing helping to speed up their preparation and preventing an unnecessary increase of different standards that can complicate development; and
 - Make the policy which it contains more ‘rules-based’ and certain, and so more capable of supporting timely and consistent planning – especially in those places where development is most desirable, where national policy should provide for a default “yes” to the principle of development.
- 4.4 The proposed changes to the NPPF are part of a suite of wider reforms to the planning system which include the introduction of Spatial Development Strategies (SDS) and a simpler approach to local plans. The SDS will set a strategy for managing development over an area that covers multiple local planning authorities. It is likely that Dorset will fall within the Wessex area, alongside BCP, Somerset and Wiltshire councils. The NPPF consultation policies describe the relationship between the SDS and local plans.
- 4.5 The NPPF consultation sets out a number of decision-making policies. The intent is that these decision-making policies are set at the national level and should not be repeated in local plans however they will only be material considerations in planning decisions rather than statutory.
- 4.6 It is proposed that local plans should not set standards that go beyond those required by other regimes such as Building Regulations other than in areas of water stress or in requiring the nationally described space standards. As such, setting local policy that would require higher energy performance or requiring solar panels on roofs would not be allowed.

- 4.7 The proposed NPPF would require a local plan to identify a strategy for meeting the development needs of the area and identify settlements at which this need could be met. It includes a policy which would support appropriate development within these settlements and when the supply of homes does not keep pace with the need, allowing development adjacent to them. The consultation also proposes that development around well served railway stations should be approved.
- 4.8 The proposed policies do not alter the Standard Method for calculating housing need but do enable the cumulative housing need to be distributed across the area covered by the SDS in a way that diverges from the local planning authorities calculated need. It also requires consideration of the needs of certain economic sectors in both SDS and local plans and proposes to relax some policies on town centre developments.
- 4.9 The new NPPF proposals continue with the requirement for the review of Green Belt boundaries and continue with the concept of grey belt but add further clarity to these elements.
- 4.10 The approach to transport focuses on a vision-led approach to transport planning and the use of connectivity to understand the implications of development in certain locations and the implications for public transport provision.
- 4.11 Other policy areas include restricting hot food takeaways near schools, parameters for green space provision, policies on flood risk and coastal change, policies for minerals plans, a simplified approach to heritage considerations amongst other more minor changes.
- 4.12 The consultation includes 225 questions on various aspects of the changes. Much of the consultation proposals are to be supported although some detailed matters require further clarification. The proposed response to the consultation questions is included in Appendix A to this report.

PPG Consultation

- 4.13 The Draft Design and Placemaking Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) was published on 21 January 2026 as part of the Government's planning reform programme. It consolidates four national design documents—National Design Guide, Design: Process & Tools PPG, National Model Design Code Parts 1 & 2 into one streamlined guidance resource. Its purpose is to make national guidance clearer, more accessible, and easier to apply across planning decisions and policy making.
- 4.14 The draft PPG supports the emerging draft National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2025, setting out national expectations for well-designed, healthier and climate resilient neighbourhoods. The PPG proposes to base design expectations around seven features of well-designed places, replacing the existing ten characteristics. The seven features proposed are Liveability,

Climate, Nature, Movement, Built Form, Public Space. Local context is proposed as a characteristic embedded within the seven features.

- 4.15 The document clarifies a simplified, nationally endorsed structure for coding and seeks to remove ambiguity. It raises expectations around climate change, nature and liveability in terms of internal home quality. The document enhances engagement with the community and using digital tools to encourage this.
- 4.16 The findings of the pathfinder work appear to have informed the PPG document in terms of document structure. The brief created by Dorset Council to prepare a local design code took into consideration the Design Code pathfinder work undertaken by MHCLG. Therefore, it should not largely alter the thrust of the Dorset Design Code. The main change is that there is no longer a requirement to create a county wide code, the code can be specific to the issues for that area. Some of the topics that have arisen in Dorset are at a county wide level and so the intention is that Dorset Council will continue to work towards creating policies at a county wide level as well as area level coding and neighbourhood plan and master plan templates, as per the original brief.
- 4.17 A potential area for further work may come from densification, which is mentioned several times within the PPG consultation document. Density has a direct impact on character of a place and Dorset has a prevailing character that has a lower density than the figures proposed in the NPPF and PPG consultation documents. Paragraph 126 requires that development proposals are based on understanding the local and wider context and the existing pattern of built form should inform the layout grain, form and scale of new buildings. However, paragraph 175 goes on to say where the scale nature or density of new development is very different to the existing place, a new identity may be more appropriate. This later statement and the national policy push for densification may encourage contrasting forms of new development to the local situation where many of Dorset's rural settlements have particularly low density and open settlement pattern. The balance between local context and the increased housing supply was identified within engagement work as a particular issue and the Dorset Design code will go further to clarify standards for context and locally informed placemaking.
- 4.18 Additional guidance in the PPG would be helpful on issues such as tree-lined streets, the relationship between trees and lighting, and examples of development in rural or landscape-sensitive areas which are other issues that have arisen as part of the work on the Dorset Design Code. We intend to feed this back as part of the PPG consultation process.

5. **Alternative options considered**

- 5.1 The proposed responses are to government consultations. By making a response, the issues that Dorset Council face can be used to influence the final versions of the documents. The only alternative would be to not respond which would mean that the concerns of Dorset Council are not considered in forming the final NPPF and PPG.

6. **Legal considerations**

- 6.1 None

7. **Financial implications**

- 7.1 The preparation of the responses has been undertaken using existing resource.

8. **Natural environment, climate & ecology implications**

- 8.1 The proposed NPPF includes policies on the natural environment, ecology and climate. The proposed consolidated PPG focuses on Design and Placemaking. Influencing how these policies will be formed is considered to have a positive impact.

9. **Well-being and health implications**

- 9.1 The proposed NPPF includes policies related to hot food takeaways, active travel and green space which will have positive health implications, and the proposed PPG will influence how places are designed. The responses support these positive outcomes.

10. **Other implications**

- 10.1 None

11. **Risk implications**

- 11.1 HAVING CONSIDERED: the risks associated with this decision; the level of risk has been identified as:

Current Risk: low

Residual Risk: low

12. **Equalities**

- 12.1 The government have undertaken an equalities impact assessment of the proposed changes to the NPPF. There are also some questions exploring the equalities issues associated with some of the proposed changes.

13. **Appendices**

- 13.1 Appendix A: proposed response to the NPPF consultation questions.
13.2 Appendix B: proposed response to the PPG consultation questions

14. **Background papers**

[National Planning Policy Framework: proposed reforms and other changes to the planning system](#)

[National Planning Policy Framework: draft text for consultation](#)

[Design and Placemaking Planning Practice Guidance: consultation document](#)

15. **Report sign-off**

16. This report has been through the internal report clearance process and has been signed off by the Director for Legal and Democratic (Monitoring Officer), the Executive Director for Corporate Development (Section 151 Officer) and the appropriate Portfolio Holder(s)

NPPF Consultation Questions

2025

- 1) **Do you have any views on how statutory National Development Management Policies could be introduced in the most effective manner, should a future decision be made to progress these?**

If statutory decision-making policies are introduced, it will be important to provide clear guidance on the relationship between local plan and neighbourhood plan policies and the new statutory decision-making policies. The guidance would need to cover the situations where the local policy covers issues that are not covered by the new statutory decision-making policies as well as the situation where there is a degree of conflict. Where there is conflict between local and neighbourhood plan policies and new statutory decision-making policies, the corresponding plan should be subject to a review but with limited weight being given to the local policies in the interim.

- 2) **Do you agree with the new format and structure of the draft Framework which comprises separate plan-making policies and national decision-making policies?**

Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.

- a) **Please provide your reasons, particularly if you disagree.**

Strongly agree – The approach is supported however some parts of the plan-making policies are relevant to decision-making and vice versa so would need to be considered in both aspects of the planning system. It is also essential that the ambition of each part of planning is aligned. Some parts of plan-making are written in a stronger way than the corresponding decision-making policies and vice versa.

- 3) **Do you agree with the proposed set of annexes to be incorporated into the draft Framework?** *Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.*

- a) **Please provide your reasons, particularly if you disagree.**

Strongly agree – Elevating important PPG policies to the NPPF is supported as it gives clarity on the relative status of PPG and NPPF text. It also gives clarity that those parts of the PPG which remain are of less importance to decision-making than those imported into the NPPF.

- 4) **Do you agree with incorporating Planning Policy for Traveller Sites within the draft Framework?** *Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.*

- a) **Please provide your reasons, particularly if you disagree.**

Strongly agree – The approach gives clarity to how the NPPF and NPPTS inter-relate and reduces the need for duplication of common policy approaches.

- 5) **Do you agree with the proposed approach to simplifying the terminology in the Framework where weight is intended to be applied?** *Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree*

- a) **Please provide your reasons, particularly if you disagree**

Partly agree – using the same terminology across the NPPF keeps things simple and clear, removing ambiguity.

However, it will be important to make it clear that the weight across different parts of the NPPF should be equal. For example, the change in wording of the presumption in favour of sustainable development (Policy S3, S4 and S5) to refer to ‘substantially outweighed’ implies greater weight should be given over and above the ‘substantial’ weight used elsewhere.

- 6) **Do you agree with the role, purpose and content of spatial development strategies set out in policy PM1?** *Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.*

- a) **Please provide your reasons, particularly if you disagree.**

Partly agree – The approach to the SDS sets framework for local plans, providing a mechanism for cross-boundary working and for setting the strategic framework for plan making. There is also a role for the SDS to plan for and facilitate the strategic elements of climate change mitigation including strategic low-carbon transport infrastructure and green energy production. There is also an omission from the scope of the SDS in relation to strategic minerals and waste issues. Minerals and waste issues are strategic in nature and should therefore be addressed at the strategic scale with more site-specific detail being addressed through local plans.

- 7) **Do you agree that alterations should be made to spatial development strategies at least every 5 years to reflect any changes to housing requirements for the local planning authorities in the strategy area?** *Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.*

- a) **If not, do you think there should be a different approach, for example, that alterations should only be made to spatial development strategies every five years where there are significant changes to housing need in the strategy area?**

Strongly disagree – To set a framework within which local plans can be prepared requires consistency and stability. A frequently changing spatial development strategy does not provide this stability. It is suggested that the SDS should be reviewed every 10 years and local plans reviewed every 5 years with each being updated where necessary.

Updating SDS frequently creates a resources issue which would have implications for both strategic planning and local planning. The approach should be more focused on the Plan – Monitor – Manage approach where information on the effectiveness of the SDS and local plan is collected and used to inform when an update is required.

8) If spatial development strategies are not altered every five years, should related policy on the requirements used in five year housing land supply and housing delivery test policies, set out in Annex D of the draft Framework, be updated to allow housing requirement figures from spatial development strategies to continue to be applied after 5 years, so long as there has not been a significant change in that area's local housing need? Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.

a) Please provide your reasons, particularly if you disagree.

Strongly agree – Once an SDS is adopted, the housing targets for each constituent LPA area should remain fixed until the SDS is amended. The SDS should be a reflection of the strategic issues, priorities and approach to distributing growth. It should also reflect the local environmental constraints and opportunities. To remove this strategy through the application of the 5YHLS or HDT would undermine the long-term effectiveness of the SDS in providing certainty and strategy for infrastructure investment and efficiency of provision of local services.

9) Do you agree with the role, purpose and content of local plans set out in policy PM2? Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.

a) Please provide your reasons, particularly if you disagree.

Partly agree – It would be helpful if further guidance and explanation could be provided on and the reasoning behind the '10 measurable outcomes'.

Many of the requirements for the content of the local plan focus on the allocation of sites to meet housing and other needs however the main delivery route in a local area is not always through site allocations. Often, the majority of housing in an area is delivered through windfall and other speculative developments rather than through site allocations. The Local Plan therefore needs to set the framework for decision-making appropriate for the area for this type of development. This framework needs to be retained in local plans, covering policy areas not covered by national decision-making policies, in addition to the identification of development allocations to deliver against strategic needs.

10) Do you think that local plans should cover a period of at least 15 years from the point of adoption of the plan? Yes/No

a) If not, do you think they should cover a period of at least 10 years, or a different period of time. Please explain why.

A balance needs to be struck between giving certainty over a longer period and the resourcing of the Local Plan production. The SDS could be the vehicle for providing the longer-term direction for development whilst the local plan could be more agile in responding to local issues. To aid in a more agile local plan regime, a shorter timeframe of at least 10 years would be helpful but with the opportunity to consider the longer timeframe on some aspects such as significant, large-scale development sites. To many people, a 15-year period is an abstract concept.

11) Do you agree with the principles set out in policy PM6(1c), including its provisions for preventing duplication of national decision-making policies? *Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.*

a) Please provide your reasons, particularly if you disagree.

Partly agree – Broadly support the principle of not duplicating the content of the national decision-making policies but it depends on the final wording of these policies.

There does however seem to be a discrepancy between the provisions for local plans in PM2: 1.d. and PM6: and those for neighbourhood plans in PM5: 1.b. For local plans, policies are restricted to those that 'support the delivery of specific allocated sites' or to 'address particular local issues in accordance with PM6' with PM6 specifying that these are only allowed where 'there is clear and justified reasons for inclusion'. For neighbourhood plans, the wording of PM5 states that policies can be included 'which address particular local issues' but that these should 'relate to site-specific matters or, where appropriate, may cover wider issues'. Neighbourhood plans therefore require less justification to include more general policies.

12) Do you agree with the approach to initiating plan-making in PM7? *Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.*

a) Please provide your reasons, particularly if you disagree

Partly agree – the approach of setting out the relevant information and putting resources in place seems to be reasonable. The ability to review the timetable easily is also important. A significant time constraint however is the lead in time for decision-making within LPAs which has the potential to slow down the process of producing a local plan.

13) Do you agree with the approach to the preparation of plan evidence set out in policy PM8? *Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.*

a) Please provide your reasons, particularly if you disagree.

Strongly agree – The approach takes a pragmatic view of evidence requirements, and this is reflected in the amended tests of soundness. The statement that evidence prepared at an early stage of plan making should not require reviewing is positive.

Evidence of deliverability of development sites is something that often needs to be prepared to support a site's inclusion in the Local Plan. Emphasis needs to be placed on site promoters preparing this evidence rather than for the LPA to foot the bill. This should however not prejudice the LPA's final decision on the development strategy and the sites to allocate.

14) Do you agree with the approach to identifying land for development in PM9? *Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.*

a) Please provide your reasons, particularly if you disagree.

Partly agree – Local plans need to be formed on an identification of suitable land for development in the plan area. This can initially be undertaken as a desk-based assessment as in some instances, the most appropriate sites are not actively promoted for development. Identification through the local plan process can prompt a landowner to promote their site for development.

Where a site is promoted, the site promoter should be required to produce and submit a basic assessment of their site (ecology, flood risk, heritage, landscape, transport) and to assess the site's capacity having regard to the vision, objectives and spatial strategy of the emerging local plan. These site assessments should be funded by the site owner/promoter and not be funded by the LPA.

15) Do you agree with the policies on maintaining and demonstrating cross-boundary cooperation set out in policy PM10 and policy PM11? *Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.*

a) Please provide your reasons, particularly if you disagree.

Partly agree – Clarity is needed about the level of cooperation that is needed between plan-making authorities. It is accepted that LPAs should be cooperating during the preparation of their local plans but with these being prepared in the context of the SDS, it should be made clear that many of the issues will have been already addressed. Is there a requirement then for LPAs to engage with and prepare a SoCG for neighbourhood plans and SDS?

16) Do you agree that policy PM12 increases certainty at plan-making stage regarding the contributions expected from development proposals? *Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.*

a) Please provide your reasons, particularly if you disagree.

Partly agree – It can be difficult to fully understand the infrastructure requirements and therefore the level of contributions associated with a development option at early stages in the plan-making process. Often, when a site is initially promoted for development, a price has been agreed with the landowner which leaves very little room for manoeuvre to reflect site-based infrastructure and other policy requirements. This level of detail can only be fully understood at the application stage once a full set of site-specific evidence have been produced.

For example, until a transport assessment has been produced, it can be very difficult to understand the requirements for, sometimes expensive transport infrastructure that is needed to make the development acceptable in planning terms.

17) Do you agree that plans should set out the circumstances in which review mechanisms will be used, or should national policy set clearer expectations? *Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.*

a) Please provide your reasons, particularly if you disagree.

Strongly agree – A review mechanism for non-policy compliant development schemes is helpful but national policy and guidance around this must be clear and water-tight so that contributions cannot be avoided / negotiated away. The lack of policy compliant affordable housing provision is often a reason for objection to development.

18) Do you agree with policy PM13 on setting local standards, including the proposal to commence s.43 of the Deregulation Act 2015? *Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.*

a) Please provide your reasons, particularly if you disagree.

Strongly agree – Not only does the proposed approach give clarity to all those involved in the development process about how greater energy efficiency and other standards will be required, but it also removes the pressure on LPAs to gather evidence to support higher standards that are addressed through other regimes such as Building Regulations. The inclusion of higher standards in a local plan can create uncertainty as to the soundness of a local plan.

It is likely that many of the qualitative design and place-making standards can be addressed through the area wide Design Code however there may be a need for some further quantitative detail to be specified for example in relation to open space provision.

19) Do you agree that the tests of soundness set out in policies PM14 and PM15 will allow for a proportionate assessment of spatial development strategies, local plans and minerals and waste plans at examination? *Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.*

a) If not, please explain how this could be improved to ensure a proportionate assessment, making it clear which type of plan you are commenting on?

Partly agree – Across the area of the SDS, it may not be possible to identify sufficient land to meet objectively assessed needs and market conditions may constrain actual delivery. It is important that these circumstances are recognised within the tests of soundness for the SDS. It may not be appropriate for unmet needs to be met outside of the SDS area at a considerable distance from where the need arises. A particular issue may arise around areas with high levels of environmental constraints.

For local plans, reference to policy S1 to give context to the positive soundness test is helpful. The move away from the 'justified' test and to an 'appropriate' test that is based on evidence and considers reasonable alternatives is welcomed. Similarly, the move away from 'deliverable' to 'realistic' is welcomed as this recognises that LPAs do not deliver developments but put in place a framework to meet the needs of the area. The more relaxed approach to testing the soundness of Local Plans is considered to be a proportionate response to the desire to see more local plan adoption whilst continuing to assure the robustness of its strategy.

20) Do you have any specific comments on the content of the plan-making chapter which are not already captured by the other questions in this section?

In order for the challenging 30 month timetable for preparing and adopting Local Plans to be met, the process of their preparation and examination needs to be simplified as does their content. The changes go some way to achieving this, but it will take time to understand their implications and whether the 30 month timetable can be met. It needs to be recognised that the delivery of Local Plans must be a partnership between all stakeholders and not something that LPAs undertake in isolation. Buy-in to the process and positive engagement from developers and other key stakeholders is therefore important.

21) Do you agree with the principles set out in policy DM1? Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.

a) Please provide your reasons, particularly if you disagree.

Partly disagree – The proposed text of Policy DM1.1. that proposals for major development should be informed by early engagement is strongly supported, however, this principle should apply to all development proposals with engagement being proportionate to the nature of the scheme. As currently drafted policy DM1.2. indicates that pre-application engagement would only be encouraged in relatively limited circumstances for non-major proposals. This approach is not supported. Pre-application engagement with neighbours and the local community, and with the local planning authority and statutory consultees, is important on a wide range of schemes, to enable early consideration of issues and to facilitate prompt decision-making. This principle applies equally to schemes which fall within the 'minor' category and the proposed new 'medium' category of development. As currently drafted, Policy DM1.2. will discourage applicants from seeking pre-application advice for non-major development leading to lower-quality applications and delays at the decision-making stage due to matters which could have been resolved prior to the submission of an application.

22) Do you agree with the policy DM2 on information requirements for planning applications? Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.

a) Please provide your reasons, particularly if you disagree.

Partly agree – It is helpful to distinguish between the requirements for major, medium, minor and other types of development to provide clarity for applicants and ensuring that the correct information is provided alongside the application. However, there is unlikely to be much variation in the assessments required for minor, medium and major development as the information requirements to enable decision making are generally driven by the particular site context and the nature of the proposals, rather than the scale of the development proposed. It is however recognised that any such assessments should be proportionate to the development proposal.

In DM2.2. the wording should be amended to reflect the development plan policy intent as good practice and previous advice from the Planning Inspectorate has been to ensure local plan policies are focused on decision-making rather than requiring reports to support an application. The wording should therefore be changed to say 'Local validation lists should only include additional information requirements where such information is required to assess the policy against the development plan policy'. The current wording would only require the additional material to be submitted if the policy wording specifically mentioned an assessment.

Although Annex C is a reasonable starting point, there are some reports, essential for decision-making, missing from the list. For example, there is no mention of an ecological survey of the site. There is also an omission in relation the assessment of carbon emissions from the development, without which the transition to net zero will be difficult to achieve.

23) Do you have any views on whether such a policy could be better implemented through regulations?

The approach in DM2 is the preferred approach as it enables an element of flexibility. If regulations prescribe the information requirements, the ability to amend or adjust them to respond to change in circumstance will be limited and time consuming.

24) Do you agree with the principles set out in DM3? *Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.*

a) Please provide your reasons, particularly if you disagree.

Partly agree – Paragraphs b. – f. of policy DM3 are supported but paragraph a., as currently worded does not recognise the difficulties which can arise when changes are made during the course of a planning application. Changes made during the consideration of a planning application can have resourcing implications and implications for the ability to meet statutory decision-making timescales. Redrafting paragraph a. to refer specifically to pre-application advice and the provision of discretionary services will address this issue, requiring engagement before the statutory decision-making timeframe commences. "Local Planning Authorities should work with applicants in a positive and proactive manner, through the provision of pre-application advice and discretionary services such as Planning Performance Agreements, where necessary seeking solutions to problems arising from initial proposals".

Policy DM3 should also make clear that there is an expectation that applications, once submitted, should be determined as quickly as possible, and within statutory decision-making timeframes.

25) Do you agree that policy DM5 would prevent unnecessary negotiation of developer contributions, whilst also providing sufficient flexibility for development to proceed?

Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.

a) Please provide your reasons, particularly if you disagree.

Partly agree – It is common to need to engage in lengthy discussions with developers around viability on major development sites. This causes long delays with some negotiations taking years to resolve. The key differences of opinion are around land values, abnormal costs, developer profit and gross development value and DM5 introduces limited guidance on these issues that would provide clarity or reduce delays. A national approach to land values and multipliers would be particularly welcomed.

Viability appraisals informing the local plan process tend to take a cautious approach and factor in the risk of changes in economic circumstances. Strengthening the requirement for development viability assessments to refer back to the local plan and fully evidence differences in assumptions is supported. Under current NPPF policy, this approach was unsuccessful at appeal.

Instances where consent is granted for a policy compliant scheme and then a subsequent application is made to vary the affordable housing provision due to viability are common. At the point of consent, the principle of development has been established narrowing the grounds for refusal of the subsequent non-compliant scheme. This ‘gaming’ of the system needs to be considered in the policy.

Strategic, multi-phase sites often achieve sales values in excess of that assumed at the decision-making stage. Attempts to capture this change through a viability review mechanism tend to be unsuccessful due to the complexity involved. The instances where viability review was required and the mechanisms for such a review should be set out in policy or guidance at the national level rather than reliant on local policy. The approach should apply to multi-phase sites, or where there is limited local data on sales values.

26) Do you have any further comments on the likely impact of policy DM5: Development viability?

The policy is very similar to current NPPF requirements and therefore is unlikely to make significant changes to the current situation unless accompanied by changes to the PPG. Changes would need to set further national guidance on assessing viability at the decision-making stage to reduce time spent on negotiation of standard assumptions such as developer profit, professional fees, land multipliers etc..

- 27) Do you have any views on how the process of modifying planning obligations under S106A, where needed once a section 106 agreement has been entered into, could be improved?**

As above, we routinely see applications to reduce planning obligations from policy-compliant levels after a proposal has been consented. This causes delays to the delivery of housing and reduces affordable housing delivery. It also increases workload for local authorities. Often applicants point to small changes in circumstances however the reduction in affordable housing that is sought is often disproportionate.

In such circumstances it seems reasonable to limit the reduction to only that resulting from the change in circumstances which would need to be fully evidenced and costed to enable them to be taken into account. No other circumstances should apply.

- 28) Do you have any views on how the process of modifying planning obligations could be improved in advance of any legislative change, noting the government's commitment to boosting the supply of affordable housing.**

None.

- 29) Do you agree with the approach for planning conditions and obligations set out in policy DM6, especially the use of model conditions and obligations?** *Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.*

Partly agree – however it is important that local planning authorities, and particularly planning enforcement teams, have the opportunity to comment on and inform the national model conditions, and it will also be important to have a feedback mechanism in place, so that local planning authorities can share any proposed changes to the national model conditions once these are in place, for example if issues arise when seeking to enforce the model conditions.

The proposal to publish a standard s106 template is supported in principle but it is noted that the template would need to cover a wide range of matters given the range of circumstances in which s106 agreements are necessary to secure infrastructure and mitigation.

- 30) Do you agree that policy DM7 clarifies the relationship between planning decisions and other regulatory regimes?** *Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.*

- a) Please provide your reasons, particularly if you disagree.**

Strongly agree.

- 31) Do you agree with the new intentional unauthorised development policy in policy DM8?** *Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.*

- a) Please provide your reasons, particularly if you disagree.**

Strongly agree – However, for clarity reference to “evidence that the unauthorised development was intentional” in DM8.1. should be included, to make clear that local planning authorities can take account of this when considering whether enforcement action is expedient, as well as when considering whether to approve retrospective planning applications. It is likely to be difficult to prove that an unauthorised development was intentional.

32) Are there any specific types of harm arising from intentional unauthorised development, and any specific impacts from the proposed policy, which we should consider?

a) If so, are there any particular additions or mitigations which we should consider?

Intentional unauthorised development undermines public confidence in the planning system and leads to costs and resourcing demands for local planning authorities in investigating and seeking to resolve breaches of planning control, particularly when breaches of planning control can take a significant period of time to resolve through retrospective planning applications and appeals. The proposed policy is supported, as, over time, it should act as a deterrent to reduce cases where intentional unauthorised development takes place.

33) Do you agree with the new Article 4 direction policy in policy DM10? *Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.*

a) Please provide your reasons, particularly if you disagree.

Strongly agree – Flexibility is always welcome in relation to permitted development rights restrictions.

34) Do you agree with the proposed approach to setting a spatial strategy in development plans? *Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.*

a) Please provide your reasons, particularly if you disagree.

Partly agree – The identification of settlements across the plan area is essential to forming the spatial strategy in the development plan but this should be focused on identifying those settlements where it is considered appropriate to focus future growth. This point should be specifically mentioned in criteria S2.1.a.. Some settlements in rural areas are not appropriate locations for growth due to their remoteness and lack of facilities and others may not be appropriate due to the potential impact on sites designated under (new) footnote 23.

The Spatial strategy should therefore provide for the broad distribution of growth and for areas where development would not be appropriate.

35) Do you agree with the proposed definition of settlements in the glossary? *Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.*

a) Please provide your reasons, particularly if you disagree.

Strongly disagree – The definition of settlements is too broad and lacks precision meaning that it is open to interpretation to suit the circumstances that support a development proposal. To focus development in the most appropriate locations, the definition must include specific mention of the need to reduce the distance people need to travel to meet their everyday needs and reduce reliance on car travel should. The focus should be on giving genuine options for alternatives to car travel such as walking, cycling and public transport, to meet every day needs and reduce commuting.

36) Do you agree with the revised approach to the presumption in favour of sustainable development? *Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.*

a) Please provide your reasons, particularly if you disagree.

Strongly agree.

37) Do you agree to the proposed approach to development within settlements? *Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.*

a) Please provide your reasons, particularly if you disagree.

Partly agree – The definition of settlements is key and those identified in the development plan under policy S2 only should fall within this category. These should be identified to enable the use of and assist in the efficient provision of public transport to enable sustainable patterns of movement. In the interim, before a new Local Plan is adopted that sets the list of settlements, the approach proposed in S4 and S5 will lead to unsustainable patterns of development.

Development should be within the built-up area of a settlement and should not require the definition of a boundary to the settlement. Clear definitions of where this policy (and policy S5) apply would be possible in local plans. As part of the emerging Local Plan, Dorset Council have been considering a flexible approach to identifying settlements where growth would be focused that does not require a boundary to be drawn around a settlement. This would enable flexibility and facilitate growth to meet needs whilst also focusing on the most sustainable locations that reduce the distance residents travelled to meet everyday needs. It is also likely to support SME developers. We would welcome a discussion about the detail of this approach to ensure that the revised NPPF does not prevent it from giving the desired flexibility.

38) Do you agree to the proposed approach to development outside settlements? *Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.*

a) Please provide your reasons, particularly if you disagree.

Partly agree – Whilst the overall approach is supported, some of the criteria associated with the policy need to be amended or more clearly defined. Whilst criteria a, b, g are generally supported,

- Criterion c does not specify the uses that would be acceptable for the re-use of existing buildings, nor does it quantify the size of the buildings that would be appropriate for certain uses. An example could be for the re-use of a large scale industrial agricultural building in an isolated location for residential uses. The policy would potentially enable this; hence clarity is needed as to whether this is the intended outcome as it would potentially undermine the spatial strategy in the development plan.
- Criterion d the redevelopment of large brownfield sites in rural locations for residential uses have again the potential to undermine the spatial strategy of the local plan.
- Criterion e is ambiguous. Further clarity is needed on what would constitute limited infilling and what would constitute 'groups of houses'. Would the delivery of 20 homes between two houses on a road fit with this policy?
- Criterion f needs to be amended. Rural exception sites are putting people on lower income, who are unable to compete in the housing market in rural locations where the cost of living (many are off mains gas, and many will increase reliance on car ownership) is greater. Council services are more expensive to deliver when there is a dispersed pattern of growth. The local plan, through the identification of sustainable settlements and the management of growth can help to create efficiencies in provision. The focus should be on those settlements that the development plan defines as being 'sustainable' in accordance with the strategy prepared under policy S2.
- Criterion j footnote 29 needs further clarification in relation to sites that have been consented but are not allocated within the development plan. Would the policy approach in S5 apply? The approach that is being developed in Dorset would enable sites of up to 30 homes, associated with a listed settlement to come forward whether there is a five-year housing land supply or not. We would welcome the opportunity to discuss this approach further.

Under point 4 of the policy, the implications for promoting sustainable patterns of movement apply whereas they are not mentioned in relation to the other criteria in the policy. As such, it would appear as though the promotion of sustainable patterns of movement are not considerations, including on housing sites when there is no 5YHLS/HDT as this scenario is captured by criteria j and therefore does not fall under point 4 of the policy

39) Do you have any views on the specific categories of development which the policy would allow to take place outside settlements, and the associated criteria? *Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.*

a) Please provide your reasons.

See above response to Question 39

40) Do you agree with the proposed approach to development around stations, including that it applies only to housing and mixed-use development capable of meeting the density requirements in chapter 12? Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.

a) Please provide your reasons, including any evidence that this policy would lead to adverse impacts on Gypsies and Travellers and other groups with protected characteristics.

Partly agree – The approach is supported but must also deliver improved access and investment in rail services particularly on rural routes. There is also a concern about the conflict between increased development in rural locations and traffic on level crossings which are often close to stations and can cause traffic congestion as well as pedestrian/road safety concerns. Closure of level crossings and the provision of alternative railway crossing infrastructure should be prioritised.

All the stations on the Heart of Wessex line will not meet the criteria for “four trains per hour overall or 2 trains per hour in any one direction” which would define these stations as not “well-connected” and therefore potentially not suitable for development. Even if the service frequency is increased to 1 train per hour in each direction, this will still not meet the “well connected” definition. Similarly, railway stations on the London/Weymouth line and on the London/Exeter line would not fit within the criteria. This is supported as the routes are either highly constrained (due to habitats sites), sensitive in the landscape or very rural.

41) Do you agree that neighbourhood plans should contain allocations to meet their identified housing requirement in order to qualify for this policy? Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree or disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.

a) If not, please provide your reasons

Partly agree – In some locations the housing need for a neighbourhood plan area could be low. For example, a neighbourhood area that is very rural in nature and which only contains small villages with poor connectivity and limited facilities, is likely to have a low housing need. In such scenarios there may be no need to make allocations to meet the need as it could be met by existing planning consents and/or windfall sites.

Furthermore, there may be situations where it would be very difficult or not possible for a neighbourhood plan to make allocations. For example, the proposed NPPF policies only provide limited scope for neighbourhood plans to make changes to Green Belt boundaries. Consequently, neighbourhood plans that are entirely within the Green Belt, would be limited in their ability to make allocations.

It seems unreasonable that, in these circumstances, neighbourhood plans would not benefit from the additional policy protections provided by proposed Policy S6. This is especially the case given that such plans may provide a positive policy framework towards meeting needs in all other respects.

42) Do you agree with the approach to planning for climate change in policy CC1? *Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.*

a) Please provide your reasons, particularly if you disagree.

Partly agree – The comprehensive national policy which sets out the approach to mitigating and adapting to climate change is welcome as it removes the need for detailed policy and evidence to be developed at the local level for an issue that is global in nature. There will be a need to develop an understanding of the local risks associated with climate change and this will need to be built into local policy to respond to the requirements of CC1: 1.b. Omissions from the policy include the strategic approach to renewable and low carbon energy including heat network infrastructure. The wording of 1.d. should also be amended to recognise the importance of green and blue infrastructure and their importance in improving carbon storage and carbon sequestration.

43) Do you agree with the approach to mitigating climate change through planning decisions in policy CC2? *Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.*

a) If not, what additional measures could be taken to ensure climate change mitigation is given appropriate consideration?

Partly agree – The location of development is the single biggest influence that the planning system can have on mitigating climate change as such, it is encouraging to see feature in the first two criteria in policy CC2. The emphasis on locating development in the most sustainable locations, that reduce the reliance on car travel need to be integrated throughout local plans, Spatial Development Strategies and planning decisions. It is critical to the success of this policy that development proposals that do not accord with the emphasis of criteria a and b of CC2 can be refused consent; something that needs to be strengthened in the current proposed wording.

In line with the suggested changes to CC1, where an opportunity for connection to a heat network has been identified, connection should form part of development proposals unless it can be justified that it is not feasible to do so – a similar test for developments to the connection to mains sewerage networks.

44) Do you agree with the approach to climate change adaptation through planning decisions in policy CC3? *Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.*

a) What additional measures could be taken to ensure climate change adaptation is given appropriate consideration?

Partly agree – The policy is supported as it sets out what is expected from development in managing risks associated with climate change. The inclusion of a focus on design approaches which minimise risks from overheating and require the inclusion of suitable tree

planning, green and blue infrastructure is welcomed. Considering these elements from the outset of a development's formation is essential to build climate resilience into new homes. The Design Code will enable clear priorities in relation to this policy to be established which will support the measures required through Building Regulations. Other elements missing from the policy include measures to help minimise drought conditions and effectively manage water and measures to improve community resilience (such as community scale battery storage, and emergency access routes) so that benefits of development can be realised by the existing population.

45) Does the policy on wildfire adaptation clearly explain when such risks should be considered and how these risks should be mitigated? *Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.*

a) Please provide your reasons

Partly agree – In rural areas, the majority of development sites will be adjacent to either agriculture, heathland or woodland and therefore would be caught by criteria e. of policy CC3. Some clear illustrative design guidance and design principles of what measures would meet the requirements of this part of the policy would be helpful to decision-making.

46) How should wildfire adaptation measures be integrated with wider principles for good design, and what additional guidance would be helpful?

See response to Question 45.

47) Do you have any other comments on actions that could be taken through national planning policy to address climate change?

None.

48) Do you agree the requirements for spatial development strategies and local plans in policy H01 and policy H02 are appropriate? *Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.*

a) Please provide your reasons, particularly if you disagree.

Strongly disagree – Reference within these policies to the housing needs assessment being a minimum should be adjusted to set out the circumstances where exceeding the Housing Needs Assessment would be acceptable. This could include where the Spatial Development Strategy sets higher figure for a local plan area, where there are infrastructure investments in an area that would enable a higher figure or where economic growth aspirations would suggest a higher figure. To suggest that local plans should, by default be looking to exceed their housing need assessment figure will put pressure on LPAs to justify the figure their planning for undermining the justification for a standard approach to calculating housing need. This also ignores the criteria in policy S1:a.i. around other policies in the framework restricting the overall supply. Policy H03 should be reworded to say “Local plans should usually identify a sufficient supply and mix of sites to meet the housing requirement figure...”

and then go on to refer to the reasons when departure for the housing requirement may be appropriate.

49) Is further guidance required on assessing the needs of different groups, including older people, disabled people, and those who require social and affordable housing? *Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.*

a) If so, what elements should this guidance cover?

No.

50) Do you agree with the approach to incorporating relevant policies of Planning Policy for Traveller Sites within this chapter? *Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.*

a) Please provide your reasons, particularly if you disagree.

Yes.

51) Is further guidance needed on how authorities should assess the need for traveller sites and set requirement figures? *Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.*

a) If so, what are the key principles this guidance should establish?

No.

52) Do you agree the new Annex D to the draft Framework is sufficiently clear on how local planning authorities should set the appropriate buffer for their local plan 5-year housing land supply? *Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.*

a) Please provide your reasons, particularly if you disagree.

Partly disagree – The approach in Annex D should specifically refer to adopted local plan target or that target set through an emerging or adopted SDS to avoid confusion. Where a local plan is more than 5 years old and needs to be reviewed due to the housing target in the emerging or adopted SDS changing significantly, the standard method should be used as the fall-back.

53) Do you agree the new Annex D to the draft Framework is sufficiently clear on the wider procedural elements of 5-year housing land supply, the Housing Delivery Test and how they relate to decision-making? *Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.*

a) Please provide your reasons, particularly if you disagree.

Partly agree – The approach is clear except in relation to Traveller sites. It is unclear what the implications of not being able to demonstrate a 5YHLS of Traveller sites and what happens when there is not a pitch and plot requirement in the development plan.

- 54) Do you agree the requirements to establish a 5 year supply of deliverable traveller sites and monitor delivery are sufficiently clear?** *Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.*

Yes.

- 55) Do you agree the plan-making requirements, for both local plans and spatial development strategies, in relation to large scale residential and mixed-use development are sufficiently clear?** *Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.*

- a) Please provide your reasons, particularly if you disagree.**

Partly agree – The consideration of the opportunities for large scale developments is something that the development plan should consider however to suggest that opportunities should be identified in the development plan assumes that there are suitable locations for such large-scale development. If large scale developments are appropriate for an area, there should be some expectations in Policy HO4 that the development will bring with it appropriate improvements in infrastructure both at the local (site) level and more strategically. This may require commitment for funding from external sources.

It would be helpful if further clarification could be provided about what levels of self-containment of a large-scale development are considered 'unrealistic'.

The requirement in HO4:2. About setting clear expectations of quality is supported however local planning authorities have limited capacity to produce and fully evaluate large sites and to produce masterplans. Such masterplans can take a significant amount of time to produce and are resource intensive needing to be founded on a full understanding of site characteristics. The full understanding of a site is best funded by a developer who will profit from the eventual development of the scheme. As such, the policy needs to build in a requirement for the promoters of large development sites to work with the local planning authority to agree design and masterplan principles prior to applications being submitted.

- 56) Do you agree our proposed changes to the definition of designated rural areas will better support rural social and affordable housing?** *Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.*

Strongly disagree – The definition of a rural area is unclear and imprecise. How should a local authority assess how many people live within an area to understand the number of persons per hectare – a better measure would be the number of dwellings per hectare which could easily be measured. However, even with a change in definition, it is not possible to clearly define an area to which the assessment would apply both in relation to the 3,000 population and in relation to the number of dwellings per hectare. The preferred approach is for areas to be designated as 'rural' through the development plan applying some clear criteria and policy implications which can then be tested at examination.

- 57) Do you agree with our proposals to ask authorities to set out the proportion of new housing that should be delivered to M4(2) and M4(3) standards?** *Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.*

Strongly agree – Establishing the principle of delivering at enhanced accessibility standards at the national level is supported.

- 58) Do you agree 40% of new housing delivered to M4(2) standards over the plan period is the right minimum proportion?** *Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.*

- a) Please provide your reasons, and would you support an alternative minimum percentage requirement?**

Partly agree – Although setting a minimum proportion is supported, the minimum proportion should be evidence led to reflect local circumstances rather than a national requirement. This would allow for other local policy priorities to be set. The proposed approach in Policy H09 should refer to locally set standards being achieved as a minimum.

- 59) Do you agree the proposals to support the needs of different groups, through requiring authorities to identify sites or set requirements for parts of allocated sites are proportionate?** *Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.*

- a) Please provide your reasons, particularly if you disagree.**

Partly agree – The allocation of sites for mixed uses should be encouraged to aid in meeting the needs of the area but the exact approach to delivering against the needs should be left to the development plan. When such requirements are placed in a local plan, and in negotiations with developers, the requirement must be positively engaged with by developers.

- 60) Do you agree with our proposals to ask authorities to set out requirements for a broader mix of tenures to be provided on sites of 150 homes or more?** *Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.*

- a) Please provide your reasons and indicate if an alternative site size threshold would be preferable?**

Strongly disagree – The needs of specific groups are usually established over a broad area and are a snapshot in time based on available evidence. The position changes and the data that underpins this position is less accurate at smaller geographies. The proposed rigid approach is likely to result in challenge and the delivery of a mix of homes that does not meet the needs of the local area at the point in time that the development takes place. The preferred approach would be for the broad principles to be established in evidence but for flexibility to be provided to respond to the specific local circumstances.

61) Do you agree with proposals for authorities to allocate land to accommodate 10% of the housing requirement on sites of between 1 and 2.5 hectares? *Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.*

a) Please provide your reasons

Strongly disagree – It is accepted that there needs to be a diverse range of site types and sizes to meet the need and something that Dorset Council has been working towards through the emerging local plan however the requirements to deliver 10% of housing requirement on sites of less than 1 ha and a further 10% on sites of less than 2.5 ha is unmanageable. In Dorset, this would be equivalent to identifying 170 sites of less than 1 ha, 90 sites of less than 2.5 ha and writing policies to formally allocate them. The amount of work associated with this is significant and disproportionate to the benefits that would result. It would be more appropriate to allow other policy levers to facilitate the objectives of the policy rather than to stipulate a percentage that needs to be identified and allocated.

The policy being developed by Dorset Council for consideration through the emerging Local Plan would allow for sites of up to one hectare adjacent to the built-up area of larger villages and towns to be considered on their merits rather than allocated through the plan. This gives greater flexibility for SME developers, doesn't radically alter the characteristics of the settlement and reduces the resource drain for local planning authorities. We would welcome a conversation to explain the approach so that it could be considered and enabled through the proposed NPPF policies.

62) Are any changes to policy H07 needed in order to ensure that substantial weight is given to meeting relevant needs?

The Policy should specifically mention the type, size and tenure of housing rather than simply referring to a local housing need assessment. It should also reference the housing need as set out in an adopted local plan or the spatial approach in emerging or adopted SDS to give the strategic context to housing provision.

63) Do you agree that proposals to add military affordable housing to the definition of affordable housing, and allow military housing to be delivered as part of affordable housing requirements, will successfully enable the provision of military homes? *Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.*

a) Please provide your reasons, particularly if you disagree.

Partly agree – The MoD will need to be in a position to inform decisions with evidence of military affordable housing needs in an area relevant to any qualifying development proposal. A lack of up-to-date evidence runs the risk of slowing down the delivery of new homes and risks undermining the LPAs 5-year housing land supply. It is also important that the delivery of military housing does not reduce the amount of general affordable housing that can be delivered in an area. Military housing needs to come with a separate funding stream.

64) Do you agree flexibility relating to the size of market homes provided will better enable developments providing affordable housing? *Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.*

a) Please provide your reasons, particularly if you disagree.

Partly disagree – The delivery of affordable housing to meet local needs has to be a priority and the tenure split and size is an integral part of meeting local need. If a flexible approach to tenure and size is permitted, it runs a risk of not meeting local needs and not creating mixed, tenure blind communities. It also seems to be inconsistent with Policy HO7. If a flexible approach is maintained in the policy, it must be backed up by a viability assessment to ensure that the most appropriate affordable housing levels are being delivered.

65) Would requiring a minimum proportion of social rent, unless otherwise specified in development plans, support the delivery of greater number of social rent homes? *Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.*

a) If so, what would be an appropriate minimum proportion and development size threshold taking into account development viability?

Partly agree – requiring a minimum proportion of social rental homes is supported as this more closely reflects local need. However it would undermine the total number of affordable units that are deliverable in some locations and would result in reduced other forms of affordable housing.

Development viability varies across an area and therefore the number of social housing units that can be delivered in a development also varies. In some areas, there is a depressed housing market meaning that market homes do not give sufficient value to enable the delivery of social housing when considered against ever increasing other development costs (such as habitats mitigation). Setting a target may undermine the delivery of the objectives of the policy and it may be better left to local assessments of viability and local targets.

66) Are changes to planning policy needed to ensure that affordable temporary accommodation, such as stepping stone housing, is appropriately supported, including flexibilities around space standards?

a) If so, what changes would be beneficial?

Having a policy to specifically support the provision of temporary accommodation is not considered necessary to aid in delivery. Delivering a greater proportion of affordable housing overall would be preferable with some of these being used temporarily as needed. An alternative approach would be to negotiate greater flexibilities within section 106 agreements and for encouragement and support from Homes England; it is not a significant planning issue. There is however a need for more supporting housing, but this would not be temporary. The use of the term 'stepping stone housing' creates ambiguity and is not supported.

67) Do you agree that applicants should have discretion to deliver social and affordable housing requirements via cash payments in lieu of on-site delivery on medium sites?

Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.

Partly disagree – Although the principle of off-site contributions in lieu of on-site delivery is supported there is concern that this approach will lead towards a presumption for off-site provision as the easier route to discharging the obligation. It would then lead to larger areas of affordable housing rather than mixed tenure, tenure-blind developments where affordable housing was integrated with market homes. The circumstances where such a payment can be 'justified robustly' should be clarified to fully understand the implications of the approach.

- a) **If so, would it be desirable to limit the circumstances in which cash contributions in lieu of on-site delivery can be provided – for example, should it not be permitted on land released from the Green Belt where the Golden Rules apply? Please explain your answer.**

Placing limits on the situations where payments towards off-site affordable housing provision can be considered acceptable is strongly supported. The provisions of this approach should apply as an exception rather than as a rule and be related to site-specific deliverability issues rather than to sites in the Green Belt or other designated areas.

- b) **If you do not believe applicants should have blanket discretion to discharge social and affordable housing requirements through commuted sums, do you think cash contributions in lieu of on-site delivery should be permitted in certain circumstances – for example where it could be evidenced that onsite delivery would prevent a scheme from being delivered? Please explain your answer**

The aim of the policy is accepted however the provision of off-site affordable housing should be the exception and not the rule. Any off-site contribution must be equivalent in cost to the provision on-site in order to enable provision off-site including allowing for the costs associated with land acquisition and development costs. Allowing more instances of off-site provision would undermine the objective of creating mixed communities. There will also be limited suitable sites on which to deliver the affordable housing as competition for sites with market led schemes will increase costs.

The off-site route should apply in limited circumstances and not to the proposed category of medium development. Where it can be demonstrated that affordable housing delivery on-site would prevent a scheme from coming forward, this would need to be robustly evidenced to enable the provision to be made offsite.

- 68) What risks and benefits would you expect this policy to have? Please explain your answer. The government is particularly interested in views on the potential impact on SME housing delivery, overall housing delivery, land values, build out rates, overall social and affordable housing delivery, and Registered Providers (including SME providers).**

The approach is likely to increase competition for land and therefore increase land price, deterring affordable housing providers from delivering the affordable housing. The sites that are 'left' after market sites have been built are likely to be the more difficult to deliver and therefore more costly to deliver.

69) What guidance or wider changes would be needed to enable Local Planning Authorities to spend commuted sums more effectively and more quickly? Please explain your answer.

The increased competition and therefore cost of delivering suitable sites results in delays to delivery of these schemes. There would be a need for suitable and deliverable sites to be available for affordable housing providers which would delay delivery timetables. A more flexible approach to section 106 agreements would enable better partnership working with affordable housing providers and with SME developers to deliver more affordable homes.

70) Would further guidance be helpful in supporting authorities to calculate the appropriate value of cash contributions in lieu?

a) If so, what elements and principles should this guidance set out? Please explain your answer. For example, guidance could make clear that contributions in lieu should be an amount which is the equivalent value of providing affordable housing on site, based on a comparison of the Gross Development Value of the proposed scheme with the Gross Development Value of the scheme assuming affordable housing was provided onsite.

Establishing the equivalency principle, where the costs associated with on-site delivery are equal or less than the costs of off-site provision, in national policy would help. Dorset have developed an approach which enables this to be applied ([Dorset Council wide Affordable Housing Commuted Sum Calculator - Dorset Council](#)). It is however likely that discussions around site viability will continue.

71) Do you support proposals to enable off site delivery where affordable housing delivery can be optimised to produce better outcomes in terms of quality or quantity? *Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.*

a) Please provide your reasons, particularly if you disagree.

Partly agree – This policy approach is again promoting more off-site delivery, the implications of which are set out in response to Questions 68 and 69.

72) Do you agree the with the criteria set out regarding the locations of specialist housing for older people? *Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.*

a) Please provide your reasons, particularly if you disagree.

Partly agree – The policy approach is supported but the policy should specifically set out the locations where these types of development are not acceptable. There is pressure from developers of this type of development to argue that some more remote locations, away from services are still accessible when in reality they are not hence a negatively worded policy is preferred. The wording should be amended to say “only being located where residents...”

73) Do you agree with the criteria set out regarding the locations of community-based specialist accommodation, including changes to the glossary? *Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.*

a) Please provide your reasons, particularly if you disagree.

Strongly agree.

74) Do you agree with the criteria set out regarding the locations of purpose-built student accommodation and large-scale shared living accommodation, including changes to the glossary? *Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.*

a) Please provide your reasons, particularly if you disagree.

Partly agree – The internal layout of a building is not a strategic, national issue and therefore is not needed in a national policy. This objective would be better addressed through guidance or be a requirement of Building Regulations.

75) Do you agree the proposals provide adequate additional support for rural exception sites? *Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.*

a) Please provide your reasons, including what other changes may be needed to increase their uptake?

Partly disagree – Exception sites should be well related to settlements and accord with the hierarchy of settlements in the Local Plan. Providing subsidised housing for those who are on low wages and therefore cannot afford to pay market rates for housing, should be focused on areas where the cost of living is lowest. Provision in rural areas which are often not connected to mains utilities and often have limited public transport meaning reliance on car travel for everyday needs increases costs for the residents. It is unlikely that a plot value of £10,000 is achievable due mainly to the competition for appropriate development sites as a result of the lack of a five-year housing land supply.

A flexible approach to development at suitable settlements enables the provision of affordable and market homes to meet needs across all tenures with policies set locally. Including detailed criteria in national policy for rural exception sites would inhibit the approach being developed in Dorset as a response to rising costs of delivering rural exception sites (see response to Question 37)

76) Do you agree with proposals to remove First Homes exception sites as a discrete form of exception site? *Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.*

a) Please provide your reasons, particularly if you disagree.

Strongly agree. No such schemes have been delivered in Dorset.

77) Do you agree proposals for a benchmark land value for rural exception sites will help to bring forward more rural affordable homes? *Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.*

a) If so, which approach and value as set out in the narrative for policy H010 of the consultation document is the most beneficial for government to set out?

Partly disagree – The competition for development sites as a result of the lack of a five-year housing land supply undermines the effectiveness of this approach. This hope value is likely to continue even when the five-year housing land supply is restored.

78) Do you agree the proposals to set out requirements for traveller sites at policy H012 adequately capture relevant aspects from Planning Policy for Traveller Sites, whilst ensuring fair treatment for traveller sites in the planning system? *Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.*

Partly agree - Support is particularly given to H012: 3. however the policy should also cross reference Policy H05: 1.c.iv. which encourages the delivery of plots and pitches for travellers as part of the mix on market-led residential development sites.

79) Please provide your reasons, particularly if you disagree.

See response to Question 78.

80) Do you agree the proposals in policy H013 will help to ensure development proposals are built out in a reasonable period? *Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.*

a) Please provide your reasons, particularly if you disagree.

Partly disagree – Restricting the timescale by when a development should commence places the onus on developers to commence schemes quickly. Conversely, removing consent does not enable fast build-out as a scheme that doesn't have consent cannot be built. It is difficult to use planning conditions to incentivise development commencement other than for smaller, more straightforward schemes.

There are a wide range of reasons why development sites are not built out, many of which are outside of the control of the LPA. If a proposal lapses, without being implemented, then there is a cost of obtaining planning permission which most developers would avoid other than in exceptional circumstances. Restricting the length of a permission would result in a

rush to technically start a development in order to keep the permission 'alive', but this does not mean that it will be built out any quicker.

81) Do you agree the requirements to take a flexible approach to the consenting framework for large scale residential and mixed-use development is sufficient to ensure the opportunities of large scale development are supported? *Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.*

a) Please provide your reasons, particularly if you disagree.

Strongly agree – The emphasis in HO13: 4. on the plan-led approach to large scale development is important in ensuring that such schemes are delivered in a way that delivers benefits for the local community. These significant strategic large-scale schemes should be established in the local plan before applications can be decided, to ensure a strategic and coordinated approach to delivery of homes and infrastructure. This cannot happen on a piecemeal basis.

82) Are any more specific approaches or definitions needed to support the delivery of very large (super strategic) sites, including new towns? *Yes, no*

a) Please provide your reasons.

The delivery of large-scale schemes need to respond to the local plan as the impacts are often significant and beyond the boundaries of the site. Infrastructure capacity needs to be thoroughly examined and integrated into the scheme to address these impacts, and this can only be achieved through the strategic approach in a local plan. There should be a clear requirement in national policy for large scale schemes (over a threshold of 500 homes for example) to be masterplanned in conjunction with the LPA. LPAs currently spend significant time and resource in evaluating large scale sites and this can be quickly undermined through pre-emptive planning applications.

83) Do you agree with the proposed changes to the Housing Delivery Test rule book? *Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.*

a) Please provide your reasons, particularly if you disagree.

Strongly agree.

84) Do you agree that more emphasis should be placed on relevant national strategies and the need for flexibility in planning for economic growth, as drafted in policy E1? *Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.*

a) Please provide your reasons, particularly if you disagree.

Partly agree – Allowing flexibility of uses on employment sites within the policy is supported. However, it is important that this flexibility does not undermine the operation of employment sites through conflicting uses. Given the high level of importance given to employment uses, there is a need for employment space to be protected for genuine employment uses including

strong national policies preventing residential uses on employment allocations. This can cause conflict with noise and odour generating employment uses and undermine the effectiveness of the employment site overall. Considerations such as traffic movements should be added to the policy.

The emphasis on unblocking sites through consideration of grid capacity is out of the hands of local authorities. Our experience is that the capacity of the grid is only increased to meet a known demand. With many planning applications on employment sites relating to a specific use, the capacity to enable certain energy intense business uses is not available restricting business growth.

85) Do you agree with the approach to meeting the need for business land and premises in policy E2? *Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.*

a) Please provide your reasons, particularly if you disagree.

Partly agree – see also response to Question 84. Policy E2 should also reference Policy E4 as a specific criterion for rural businesses.

Further clarification of the relevant market signals mentioned in E2:2.a. is needed. Without detail, decisions will need to be taken on a case by case basis, slowing down decisions and creating opportunity for conflicts in interpretation and appeals.

86) Do you agree with the proposed new decision-making policy supporting freight and logistics development in policy E3? *Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.*

a) Please provide your reasons, particularly if you disagree.

Partly agree – The policy is supported but it is recommended that the additional word ‘operational’ is added so that the policy is not interpreted as including staff vehicles ‘Provide sufficient and secure parking for lorries or other operational vehicles to cater for the anticipated use.’. The policy should also mention the need to decarbonise the operational fleet and the inclusion of the necessary space and infrastructure to enable this.

87) Do you agree with the approach to rural business development in policy E4? *Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.*

a) Please provide your reasons, particularly if you disagree.

Broadly agree however the location of rural businesses in areas poorly served by public transport should only be considered in exceptional circumstances rather than viewed as something that is generally acceptable. A strong case should be required to justify such a location having consideration of the criteria in policy CC2. Proposals to meet the needs of rural businesses should focus on using existing buildings as a preference over the construction of new buildings and this preference should be added to E4:2.a..

88) Do you agree with the proposed changes to policy for planning for town centres?
Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.

a) Please provide your reasons, particularly if you disagree.

Partly disagree – Although the policy approach is generally supported, there needs to be care that residential uses do not undermine the role of town centres by diluting the concentration of uses. By specifically mentioning residential as part of the mix of uses that are appropriate in a town centre, there is likely to be a significant impact on town centre vitality. The Local Plan should be used as the tool for managing town centre uses (beyond typical uses) including restricting some uses where it is considered a detriment to the town centre function. Residential on the upper floors of town centre buildings is supported whilst maintaining active ground floor level frontages.

89) Do you agree with the approach to development in town centres in policy TC2?
Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.

a) If not, please explain how you would achieve this aim differently?

Partly disagree – References to residential uses in town centres should be in accordance with the development plan and not specifically mentioned in national policy. The dilution of uses can be a significant issue for town centres in market towns. – see also the response to Q88

90) What impacts, if any, have you observed on the operation of planning policy for town centres since the introduction of Use class E?

There is a conflict between the aims of the NPPF in focusing town centre uses in town centres, and the flexibility of Class E. Since Class E was introduced there is a need to routinely condition Class E development proposals outside of town centres to restrict their use in order to meet the national policy aims of town centre viability and vitality. The flexibility of Class E undermines this policy aim whereas a plan-led approach would enable local circumstances to be reflected.

91) Do you believe the sequential test in policy TC3 should be retained? *Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.*

a) Please provide your reasons, particularly if you disagree.

Partly agree – Given that most town centres do not have large vacant sites, the sequential test is largely redundant. Where vacant large town centre sites do exist, these could be considered brownfield land and prioritised through regeneration policies that specifically relate to the site and its location within the town centre. The sequential test policy for town centres should therefore be amended to promote brownfield town centre regeneration for town centre uses.

For smaller settlements, there is a need to be able to consider co-location of town centre uses to enable the creation of new centres. An amended sequential test policy could promote these benefits.

92) Do you agree with the approach to town centre impact assessments in policy TC4? *Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.*

a) Please provide your reasons, particularly if you disagree.

Partly disagree – Whilst the general approach of the policy is supported, the impact assessment threshold should be set as low as possible to enable full consideration of the impact of a development on a town centre. In smaller centres, a proposal for uses of 1,000m² is considered significant and may have an adverse impact on the existing centre uses. The aim of direct town centre uses towards town centres first particularly towards town centre regeneration opportunities should be specifically mentioned in Part 2.a. of the policy.

93) Do you agree that the updated policies provide clearer and stronger support for the rollout of 5G and gigabit broadband? *Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.*

a) Please provide your reasons, particularly if you disagree.

Strongly Agree – The aim to minimise the proliferation of masts is supported, especially in National Landscapes and other sensitive areas.

94) Do you agree the requirements for minimising visual impact and reusing existing structures are practical for applicants and local planning authorities? *Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.*

a) Please provide your reasons, particularly if you disagree.

Strongly agree.

95) Do you agree the supporting information requirements are proportionate and sufficient without creating unnecessary burdens? *Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.*

a) Please provide your reasons, particularly if you disagree.

Partly agree – The approach to assessing the impact of telecommunications infrastructure is supported but there needs to be clarification of what is ‘close to a school or college’ and the same criteria should also apply to proposals close to children’s nurseries and other places where children gather.

96) Do you agree with the approach to planning for energy and water infrastructure in policy W1? *Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.*

- a) **Please provide your reasons, particularly if you disagree, what alternative approach would you suggest?**

Partly agree – When consultation takes place on plan-making with utilities providers, it is generally one way. Development locations are shared with utilities providers at plan-making so that they can be built into future infrastructure and investment plans. However, infrastructure and investment plans are generally drawn up over a five-year period and therefore do not consider the upgrades required to meet demands over the 15-year plan period. In addition, many developments for industry and business are dependent on factors outside of the control of the planning system making it very difficult to predict the energy demand from future uses. Where there is limited utilities infrastructure capacity, development can be prevented. Utilities providers therefore need to be making longer term plans and factor in headroom to respond to the unknown demands of speculative economic development.

- 97) **Do you agree with the amendments to current Framework policy on planning for renewable and low-carbon energy development and electricity network infrastructure in policy W2?** *Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.*

- a) **Please provide your reasons, particularly if you disagree.**

Strongly agree.

- 98) **Do you agree with the proposed approach to supporting development for renewable and low carbon development and electricity network infrastructure in policy W3?** *Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.*

- a) **Please provide your reasons, particularly if you disagree, and any changes you would make to improve the policy.**

Partly agree – There is a lack of clarity in the last sentence of paragraph 2.. Should proposals for renewable and low carbon energy development and electricity network infrastructure automatically be considered acceptable when considered against policies in the Framework or should an assessment be undertaken that considers the proposal against the policies in the Framework?

Suggest paragraph 2 is updated to read: “Where proposals for this form of development come forward outside areas which have been identified as suitable for them, they should be **acceptable when** assessed against the national decision-making policies in this Framework, taken as a whole.” The addition of battery energy storage, and carbon capture and storage should be added to the scope of the policy.

Under paragraph 1, would it be more appropriate for the weight given to ‘supporting economic development’ to be considered on a case-by-case basis given the direct and indirect support between such projects is likely to be highly variable?

99) Do you agree with the proposed approach to supporting development for water infrastructure in policy W4? *Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.*

a) Please provide your reasons, particularly if you disagree.

Partly agree – The benefits of providing capacity to meet the needs of development should also acknowledge those relating to security of supply relating to climate change.

100) Do you agree with the proposed prohibition on identifying new coal sites in policy M1, and to the removal of coal from the list of minerals of national and local importance? *Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.*

a) Please provide your reasons, particularly if you disagree.

Strongly agree.

101) Do you agree with how policy M1 sets out how the development plan should consider oil and gas? *Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.*

a) Please provide your reasons, particularly if you disagree.

The oil sites in many areas use existing licences and it is expected that there is enough resource in the reservoirs to make it possible to continue extracting beyond 2050, subject to approval. Therefore, not allowing new sites or extensions with new licences is less relevant for these areas. The approach as proposed is supported as it ensures that oil and gas development remains within the licensed areas, and there is no attempt by operators to work outside the licensed blocks.

102) Do you agree with the proposed addition of critical and growth minerals to the glossary definition of ‘minerals of national and local importance’? *Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.*

a) Please provide your reasons, particularly if you disagree.

Partly agree – the identification of minerals of national and local importance is supported but by doing so, the suggestion is that other minerals are of less importance to growth.

103) Do you agree criteria b of policy M2 strikes the right balance between preventing minerals sterilisation and facilitating non minerals development? *Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.*

a) Please provide your reasons, particularly if you disagree.

Partly agree – There are pros and cons to the proposed new approach of requiring prior extraction of minerals. Where an area is safeguarded due to the presence of a minerals resource, prior extraction would be required as part of the safeguarding policy rendering the approach in M2 redundant. A better approach would be to require non-minerals applications

in safeguarding areas to provide a minerals assessment which would provide more information about the viability of prior extraction on the site. The wording 'where practical and environmentally feasible' allows an appropriate response to the then submitted minerals assessment.

104) Do you agree policy M3 appropriately reflects the importance of critical and growth minerals? *Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.*

a) **Please provide your reasons, particularly if you disagree.**

Strongly agree.

105) Do you agree with the exclusion of development involving onshore oil and gas extraction from policy M3? *Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.*

106) Please provide your reasons, particularly if you disagree.

Partly agree – Whilst removing onshore oil and gas extraction from Policy M3 would show commitment to them being considered differently from other minerals, it would create uncertainty for existing onshore licences. Excluding onshore proposals from Policy M3 would create a policy vacuum in the absence of any specific wording. There needs to be stronger commitment and specific policy on how to consider oil and gas extraction within existing licences in the interim years up to 2050 and then beyond net zero.

107) Do you agree policy M4 sufficiently addresses the impacts of mineral development, noting that other national decision-making policies will also apply? *Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.*

Partly agree – Policy M4 provides the absolute minimum to enable decisions to be made on minerals applications.

108) Please provide your reasons, particularly if you disagree.

None

109) Do you agree with approach to coal, oil and gas in policy M5? *Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.*

a) **Please provide your reasons, particularly if you disagree.**

Partly agree – The approach is supported, but as noted for the response to Question 101, many oil sites use existing licences and there is enough resource in reservoirs to consider extension to beyond 2050. Consideration should be given to the downstream impact of emissions.

The storage facilities referred to in M5:4. should include proposals for storage of hydrogen.

110) Are there any other exceptional circumstances in which coal extraction should be permitted? Yes/No

No

111) If yes, please outline the exceptional circumstances in which you think coal extraction should be permitted.

None

112) Do you agree policy M6 strikes the right balance between preventing the sterilisation of minerals reserves and minerals-related activities, and facilitating non-minerals development? *Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.*

a) Please provide your reasons, particularly if you disagree.

Partly agree – The inclusion of Policy M6 which implements the safeguarded areas identified through Policy M2 is welcome however, there could be circumstances where the economic benefits of development outweigh the harm of developing in the safeguarding area.

113) Does policy M6 provide sufficient clarity on the role of Minerals Consultation Areas? *Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.*

a) Please provide your reasons, particularly if you disagree.

Strongly agree subject to the responses to Questions 103 and 122.

114) Do you agree policy L1 provides clear guidance on how Local Plans should be prepared to promote the efficient use of land? *Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.*

115) If not, what further guidance is needed?

Partly disagree – The amount of work necessary to evaluate and allocate sites for development is significant. Suggesting that small and medium sites should be allocated puts a significant resource pressure on local authorities. It would be better to suggest that a good mix of sites should be enabled through allocations and other policy approaches to enable LPAs to respond to local circumstances.

The reuse of car parks should only be supported where there it is no longer a need for the car park. The implications for transport infrastructure more widely (including active travel modes and public transport) needs to be built into the policy to ensure transport impacts for all users are considered.

Clause L1:1.c. can cause problems particularly with mixed use allocations. Sites can be allocated for employment uses through the local plan, but often a landowner will not release the site for development instead seeking consent for residential (higher value) uses. With mixed use developments, the higher value elements (residential) are often built first with the

employment element being retained by the housebuilder. Subsequent applications for residential use (especially when there is a lack of housing land supply) are often difficult to defend at appeal. This undermines the strategy within the local plan. Clause L1:1.c. should therefore be deleted or significantly amended to ensure the intended use of the site is explored proactively by the landowner and that it is robustly demonstrated that the intended use in the local plan is not deliverable even at a lower site value.

116) Do you agree policy L2 provides clear guidance on how development proposals should be assessed to ensure efficient use of land? *Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.*

a) Please provide your reasons, particularly if you disagree.

Strongly disagree – The policy needs to reference back to some of the fundamental principles in the revised NPPF especially including policy CC2 and the requirement for development to be located in areas with a genuine choice of sustainable transport modes. Isolated locations should not be seen as acceptable for all uses just because it has previously been contaminated or are currently being underutilised. The weight given to these priorities needs to be equal to the weight given to the delivery of development. Criterion 1. Should therefore be re-phrased to read "Substantial weight should be given to achieving the following benefits ~~where a development proposal would achieve one or more of the following~~".

Criterion 2 of the policy is very detailed points that may be better suited to the PPG rather than strategic national policy for inclusion in the NPPF.

Criterion 3 focuses on only one part of the principles of good design. There specifically needs to be consideration of the appropriate layout and scale of development proposals in the context of this policy.

117) Do you agree policy L2 identifies appropriate typologies of development to support intensification? *Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.*

a) If not, what typologies should be added or removed and why?

Neither agree nor disagree.

118) Do you agree the high-level design principles provided in policy L2(d) appropriate for national policy? *Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.*

a) Please provide your reasons, particularly if you disagree.

Partly agree – L2:d.i. states that street corners are locations appropriate for taller buildings. Suggest this is updated to read "other than where it may be appropriate to have..." in recognition that not all street corners will be appropriate locations for taller buildings.

In addition, L2:d.ii. should include mention of “outlook” alongside the other considerations in the policy.

119) Do you agree policy L2 (d)(i) achieves its intent to enable appropriate development that may differ from the existing street scene, particularly in cases such as corner plot redevelopment and upwards extensions. *Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.*

a) Please provide your reasons, particularly if you disagree.

See response to Question 118.

120) Do you agree with the proposed safeguards in policy L2 that allow development in residential curtilages? *Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.*

a) Please provide your reasons, particularly if you disagree.

Neither agree nor disagree.

121) Do you agree policy L3 provides clear guidance on achieving appropriate densities for residential and mixed-use schemes? *Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.*

a) If not, please explain how guidance could be clearer?

Partly disagree – Clarity is needed on how BNG, strategic open space and other mitigation requirements should be addressed in relation to this policy. It is likely that there will be arguments made to locate these types of open space away from the development it serves to allow for increased development value.

122) Do you agree with the minimum density requirements set out within policy L3? *Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.*

a) Please provide your reasons, particularly if you disagree.

Partly disagree – The aims of the policy are supported however there are some very rural railway stations with infrequent services and request stops, often in areas of high landscape value (National Landscapes) where development would not be appropriate unless part of a well-planned approach. This is better achieved through the Local Plan rather than through speculative development. Definition of what is meant by ‘reasonable walking distance’ would be helpful to add further clarity to the policy approach.

b) Could these minimum density requirements lead to adverse impacts on Gypsies and Travellers and other groups with protected characteristics? Please provide your reasons, including any evidence

No comment.

123) Do you agree that using dwellings per hectare is an appropriate metric for setting minimum density requirements? Additionally, is our definition of 'net developable area' within the NPPF suitable for this policy? *Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.*

a) Please provide your reasons, particularly if you disagree.

Partly agree – The definition should include incidental and communal open space to reflect that such spaces may be integral to flatted developments or higher density areas.

124) Do you agree with the proposed definition of a 'well-connected' station used to help set higher minimum density standards in targeted growth locations? In particular, are the parameters we're using for the number of Travel to Work Areas and service frequency appropriate for defining a 'well-connected' station? *Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.*

a) Please provide your reasons and preferred alternatives.

Partly agree - The approach will help to enable higher density in certain locations however there needs to be consideration of the heritage impact of development at higher densities as many railway stations are in the historic parts of towns.

125) Are there other types of location (such as urban core, or other types of public transport node) where minimum density standards should be set nationally? *Yes/No*

a) If so, how should these locations be defined in a clear and unambiguous way and what should these density standards be?

Urban core to settlements over a certain size, both planned and existing would help reinforce the objectives of the policy approach. These areas should however be considered strategically and set through the Local Plan.

126) Should we define a specific range of residential densities for land around stations classified as 'well-connected'?

An alternative could be to have a 'pyramid of densities' where density requirements decrease further away from the railway station. This would also need to consider the services and facilities in the settlement identified as being 'well connected'. If a village with a well connected station has no schools or other day-to-day facilities, growth would need to be planned for strategically including the delivery of day-to-day facilities. This is best done through the local plan.

127) If so, what should that range be, and which locations should it apply to?

See response to Question 126.

128) Do you agree policy L4 provides clear high-level guidance on good design for residential extensions? *Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.*

Partly agree – the requirement for external amenity space provision is welcomed. Reference should also be made to the living standards of neighbouring properties. The policy should require residential extensions to achieve high energy and water efficiency standards and should refer to design and materials rather than just scale and form.

129) Please provide your reasons, particularly if you disagree.

See response to Question 128.

130) Do you agree that policy GB1 provides appropriate criteria for establishing new Green Belts? *Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.*

Strongly agree.

131) Please provide your reasons, particularly if you disagree.

No comment.

132) Do you agree policy GB2 gives sufficient detail on the expected roles spatial development strategies and local plans play in assessing Green Belt land? *Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.*

a) Please provide your reasons, particularly if you disagree.

Partly agree – There seems to be little distinction between the strategic Green Belt review that informs spatial development strategies and the more local Green Belt review undertaken to inform local plans. The strategic review is likely to need to be reasonably fine grained and detailed to identify where boundaries should be amended.

133) Do you agree with proposals to better enable development opportunities around suitable stations to be brought forward? *Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.*

a) Please provide your reasons, particularly if you disagree.

Partly agree – Review of Green Belt boundaries should be required through the preparation of local plans not only to enable development at stations but also to enable appropriate patterns of development. Development outside of the Green Belt may result in less sustainable patterns of development and increased reliance on car travel due to the extents of the Green Belt, displacing development out to its outer edge. The exceptional circumstances test should be replaced or amended to enable the LPA to make a decision to release Green Belt in preference to other locations for development.

134) Do you agree the expectations set out in policy GB5 are appropriate and deliverable in Local Plans? *Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.*

135) Please provide your reasons, particularly if you disagree.

Partly agree – The benefits need to be linked to development otherwise the aims of the policy approach are lost. Developments should therefore seek to further the relevant objectives identified in the development plan under policy GB5. There also needs to be clarity in how the benefits listed in GB5 or in the Development Plan are considered in decision making against the purposes of the Green Belt.

136) Do you agree policies GB6 and GB7 set out appropriate tests for considering development on Green Belt land? *Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.*

a) Please provide your reasons, particularly if you disagree.

Partly agree – The proposed Policy GB6 sets an appropriate framework for assessing different types of development proposals in the Green Belt. However, GB7:1.f.vi. should make reference to the buildings being ancillary to the main use of the site.

The change in approach to the redevelopment of previously developed land in GB7:1.e. to remove the phrase ‘limited infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed land’ which is currently at paragraph 154(g) of the 2024 NPPF is welcomed. This has been used to justify Green Belt development which would normally have been resisted under previous policies.

137) Do you agree policy GB7(1h) successfully targets appropriate development types and locations in the Green Belt, including that it applies only to housing and mixed-use development capable of meeting the density requirements in chapter 12? *Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.*

Partly agree – The policy includes a number of criteria for development near to railway stations but it needs to be made clear that all of the criteria apply to a development proposal rather than just one.

It would be helpful to aid decision-making if a definition of what constitutes “a reasonable walking distance” could be included in the Glossary or as a footnote to the policy. The simplest approach would be to refer to the CIHT ‘Guidelines for Providing for Journeys on Foot’ (GPJF, 2015). This suggests that when walking to a railway station 400m is desirable, 800m is acceptable and 1200m would be the maximum acceptable.

138) Please provide your reasons, including any evidence that this policy would lead to adverse impacts on Gypsies and Travellers.

No response.

139) Do you agree that site-specific viability assessment should be permitted on development proposals subject to the Golden Rules in these three circumstances?
Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.

a) Please provide your reasons, particularly if you disagree.

Where a development proposal is on previously developed land or where the development type is wholly different to that tested through a local plan viability appraisal, a site-specific assessment would seem appropriate. For multi-phase schemes (and not just those allocated through a Local Plan), viability assessments may be appropriate for certain phases, but the overall aim should be for the site as a whole to meet the Golden Rules upon completion. Otherwise, this would undermine the objectives of the Golden Rules policy.

140) With regards to previously developed land, are there further changes to policy or guidance that could be made to help ensure site-specific viability assessments are used only for genuinely previously developed land, and not predominantly greenfield sites?

The policy could be amended to make clear that it is only available on previously developed land where there can be shown to be abnormal costs which are specifically related to the site's status as previously developed such as demolition or remediation of contamination. As such, it would also be helpful to give an idea of what percentage of a site must be previously developed and therefore not greenfield as there could be a mix on a development site.

141) Do you agree with setting an affordable housing 'floor' for schemes subject to the Golden Rules accompanied by a viability assessment subject to the terms set out?
Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.

Strongly agree – setting a floor accords with the policy approach of Green Belt development benefiting the local community even as the small scale or in relation to the three scenarios outlined.

142) Please explain your answer, including your view on the appropriate approach to setting a 'floor', and the right level for this?

The approach should reflect local circumstances as these vary significantly across the country and therefore a national 'floor' would not be appropriate in some locations and may actually restrict development coming forward where there are extraordinary costs associated with development (such as habitats mitigation requirements).

143) Do you agree with local planning authorities testing viability at the plan-making stage using a standardised Benchmark Land Values scenario of 10 times Existing Use Value for greenfield, Green Belt land? *Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.*

a) Please explain your answer.

Partly disagree – The proposed level of setting Benchmark land Values needs to be evidenced. If the level is set as a rigid value, it doesn't allow for regional or local variation in levels of planning obligations between and within the Green Belt. There is the possibility that the approach could raise expectations for landowners when significant planning obligations might require those expectations to be tempered.

144) Do you have any other comments on the use of nationally standardised Benchmark Land Values for local planning authorities to test viability at the plan-making stage?

Fixing parameters at the plan-making stage and where appropriate creating a greater degree of standardisation can result in less disagreement at the decision-making stage. The standardisation will however need to reflect the specific characteristics of the Green Belt and the differences with grey belt land.

145) Do you agree that proposed changes to the grey belt definition will improve the operability of the grey belt definition, without undermining the general protections given to other footnote 7 areas? *Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.*

a) Please provide your reasons, particularly if you disagree.

Partly agree – Whilst the inclusion of Footnote 7 assets in the current definition introduces a level of complication, it is helpful in explaining in both decision making and plan making terms where the definition of grey belt does not apply. It is not possible to fully understand the impact of a development proposal on a heritage asset for example, without a development proposal to consider. The NPPF wording around Footnote 7 (now Footnote 23) assets is not fully clear that these should be considered throughout all stages of the plan process. However, Footnote 23 should make this clear along with clarity on the status of Habitats Sites including cSAC, pSPA and pRamsar as this wording has now been moved to the Glossary. Footnote 7 assets will continue to apply at both plan-making and decision-making stages whether a site is within the Green Belt or not.

146) Do you agree that policy DP1 provides sufficient clarity on how development plans should deliver high quality design and placemaking outcomes? *Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.*

a) Please provide your reasons, particularly if you disagree.

Partly disagree – It is unclear what is meant by the plan's vision reflecting the desired design and placemaking outcomes. Further guidance is needed on how this element of the policy can be achieved.

147) Do you agree with the approach to design tools set out in policy DP2? *Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.*

a) Please provide your reasons, particularly if you disagree.

Strongly agree – The strengthening of this requirement is welcomed.

148) Do you agree policy DP3 clearly set out principles for development proposals to respond to their context and create well-designed places? *Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.*

a) **Please provide your reasons, particularly if you disagree.**

Partly agree – The requirements in Policy DP3 are clearer than those in the 2024 NPPF and the PPG consultation provides further detail on these requirements. Some elements of policy DP3, particularly around the design response to Climate Change mitigation could be added as to strengthen the position.

149) Do you agree with the proposed approach to using design review and other design processes in policy DP4? *Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.*

a) **If not, what else would help secure better design and placemaking outcomes?**

Partly agree – These requirements are clearer than the previous NPPF which is welcomed. The emphasis on pre-application engagement and design review are supported but the design review process can be considered expensive and is not always appropriate or viable on smaller schemes. There are concerns that although desirable, DP4:c. is often unachievable in reality and could stall sites from being delivered.

150) Do you agree that policy TR1 will provide an effective basis for taking a vision-led approach and supporting sustainable transport through plan-making? *Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.*

a) **Please provide your reasons, particularly if you disagree.**

Strongly agree – Dorset Council have been developing the Local Transport Plan following a vision-led approach. The LTP and Local Plan are aligned as much as possible so this should help strengthen the vision-led approach in the plan making process.

The Connectivity Tool is already being used to help inform the spatial approach to development distribution to focus development on those locations that are the most connected and to minimise the distance that residents need to travel on a day-to-day basis.

151) Do you agree that policy TR2 strikes an appropriate balance between supporting maximum parking standards where they can deliver planning benefits, and requiring a degree of flexibility and consideration of business requirements in setting those standards? *Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.*

a) **Please provide your reasons, particularly if you disagree.**

Strongly agree – The requirement to set parking standards is supported and the approach of “requiring a degree of flexibility and consideration of business requirements” is important in a largely rural area where more urban parking standards may be less relevant.

152) Do you agree with the changes proposed in policy TR3(1a), including the reference to proposals which could generate a significant amount of movement, and the proposed use of the Connectivity Tool? *Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.*

a) **Please provide your reasons, particularly if you disagree.**

Partly agree – The Connectivity Tool is yet to be explored in detail to fully understand and appreciate its usefulness in the assessment of sites coming forward in the Local Plan.

The approach of focusing development in the locations that are, or can be made sustainable is supported however, it can be difficult to secure elements that make a place more sustainable through the decision-making phase of planning. The approach, and the appropriate locations for growth is therefore something that needs to be considered through the development plan.

153) Do you agree that proposed policy TR4 provides a sufficient basis for the effective integration of transport considerations in creating well-designed places? *Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.*

a) **Please provide your reasons, particularly if you disagree.**

Partly agree – Priority for pedestrian and cycle movements is strongly supported but local design coding work should be prioritised in the application of the policy rather than national design guidance. There needs to be recognition of Green Infrastructure within the policy and adherence to local standards.

154) Do you agree with policy TR5 as a basis for supporting the provision and retention of roadside facilities where there is an identified need? *Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.*

a) **Please provide your reasons, particularly if you disagree.**

Partly agree – The provision of roadside facilities should only be proposed in appropriate locations having regard to the potential impact on Green Belt, protected landscapes and habitat sites. The policy should specify where such facilities may not be appropriate.

155) Do you agree that the amended wording proposed in policy TR6 provides a clearer basis for considering when transport assessments and travel plans will be required, and for considering impacts on the transport network? *Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.*

a) **Please provide your reasons, particularly if you disagree.**

Partly agree – The Vision for the development needs to reflect the overall transport vision for the area as stated in the Local Transport Plan and Local Plan and the measures to achieve the vision must be deliverable. The term “generate significant amounts of movement” is ambiguous and subjective and therefore needs to be robustly defined and subsequently evidenced. There is also no clear definition of what a “severe adverse impact” is, the term is ambiguous and again subjective.

156) Do you agree the proposed text in policy TR7 provide an effective basis for assessing proposals for marine ports, airports and general aviation facilities? *Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.*

a) **Please provide your reasons, particularly if you disagree.**

Partly agree – The policy needs to reference ecological impacts, both terrestrial and marine. There should also be a recognition of the overlapping remits of the Marine Management Organisation and the Local Planning Authority.

157) Do you agree with the additional policy on maintaining and improving rights of way proposed in policy TR8? *Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.*

a) **Please provide your reasons, particularly if you disagree.**

Partly agree – In a rural context the public rights of way network is important for local connectivity, and many opportunities exist to extend, link and improve the network as this policy seeks to support. In rural areas the network is often the only or nearest means of contact with nature and access to greenspace. Network improvement can increase accessibility for all and address barriers to use for groups less able to use the network. Where a development proposal is likely to impact negatively on the rights of way network, either directly through the closure or diversion of an existing route, or indirectly by altering the attractiveness and appeal of a route, there should be a requirement to deliver improvements to the network.

158) Do you agree with the approach to planning for healthy communities in policy HC1, including the expectation that the development plan set local standards for different types of recreational land, drawing upon relevant national standards? *Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.*

a) **Please provide your reasons, particularly if you disagree.**

Partly agree – Clarity on what constitutes community facilities and public service infrastructure is welcome as with the expectation that enhancement of these through the planning system is expected. However, ensuring meaningful information is available at the appropriate time from service providers is often problematic. There needs to be recognition and mention in the policy that developments are required to provide for the demand arising

from the development and not to make good any deficit, improve or enhance existing facilities beyond this demand.

There may be situations where the required community facilities and public service infrastructure would make a development unviable. In these instances, there needs to be clarification about which facilities should be prioritised especially in areas of high affordable housing need. Areas of high affordable housing need are often the areas where there is a need for enhanced community facilities and public service infrastructure provision.

Clear distinction also needs to be made between the facilities that are provided as commercial enterprises and those that are provided for community benefit, often with subsidy. Priority should be given to the latter.

Point 1.e. should also make clear that policies that strengthen town centres can promote good health and prevent ill-health by limiting proliferation of unhealthy uses by giving local authorities the power to prevent change of use or creation of new gambling and alcohol premises in locations where these uses would harm the population for example due to population vulnerability and/or density of existing availability.

159) Do you agree that Local Green Space should be 'close' to the community it serves?

Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.

Please provide your reasons, particularly if you disagree.

Partly agree – Consideration of the availability of green space in an area should be reflected in the policy. In some areas green space may not be 'in close proximity' but may still serve the area and be valued by residents.

160) Do you agree that the proposed policies at HC3 and HC4 will support the provision of community facilities and public service infrastructure serving new development?

Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.

a) Please provide your reasons, particularly if you disagree.

Partly agree – The approach of requiring development to make provision for new community facilities and public service infrastructure and in particular the provisions proposed under HC4.2 is supported. requiring collaboration between infrastructure providers, developers and the local planning authority. As many open space and play facilities are managed and run by parish and town councils, engagement with these bodies should also be built into the policy.

The long-term maintenance of open space and play facilities needs to be added to the policy with the preference for this to be passed to a public body such as the parish or town council rather than to a management company who run on a profit basis as this does not capture public benefits for residents of the area.

161) Do you have any views on whether further clarity is required to improve the application of this policy, including the term ‘fast food outlets’, and the types of uses to which it applies?

Further clarity is required of the types of uses the term ‘fast food outlets’ includes. If the intent is to prevent opening of additional outlets that predominantly sell food high in fat, sugar and salt then guidance is needed to define the types of outlet this should apply to and how local authorities should determine whether or not a particular proposal meets those definitions. Outlets falling under the same use class could sell very different types of food and clarity is needed on how to prevent outlets selling food high in fat, sugar and salt in the locations government is seeking to prevent when a change of use takes place, but the operator of a premises (existing or new) significantly changes the food they serve. This can undermine the policy aims and there is no point specifying ‘fast food outlets’ in addition to the relatively clearly defined ‘hot food takeaway’. Also of relevance is the situation where a fast food outlet sells predominantly unhealthy foods but also sells some more healthy options.

As with other proposed policies, it would be beneficial to more clearly define ‘within reasonable walking distance’.

162) Do you agree with the proposed approach to retaining key community facilities and public service infrastructure in policy HC6? *Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.*

a) Please provide your reasons, particularly if you disagree.

Partly agree – The policy is broadly support however there needs to be clarity as to what is meant by the ‘the last of its type in the area concerned’. A definition of the ‘area concerned’ is needed. It may be that in an area there are two facilities that provide for different types of use and only protecting the last of its type would seem counterproductive. Both facilities should be retained.

163) Do you agree with the approach taken to recreational facilities in policy HC7, including the addition of ‘and/or’ with reference to quantity and quality of replacement provision? *Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.*

a) Please provide your reasons, particularly if you disagree.

Partly agree – The assessment of whether a facility is surplus to requirements should take account of planned future growth as set out in the development plan.

164) Do you agree with the clarification that Local Green Space should not fall into areas regarded as grey belt or where Green Belt policy on previously developed land apply? *Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.*

a) Please provide your reasons, particularly if you disagree.

Strongly agree.

165) Do you agree with policy P1 as a basis for identifying and addressing relevant risks when preparing plans? Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.

a) Please provide your reasons, particularly if you disagree.

Partly disagree – By stating that development plans should identify areas where ground conditions may inhibit development, suggests that where an area has not been identified to meet this requirement, it may not inhibit development. The resources required to undertake a full assessment of the plan area are significant and therefore this requirement should be qualified stating 'using existing data sources' rather than requiring LPAs to commission extensive ground condition surveys.

The policy should ensure that risks to nearby uses must not be increased as a result of development

166) Are any additional tools or guidance needed to enable better decision-making on contaminated land?

None.

167) Do you agree with the criteria set out in proposed policy P3 as a basis for securing acceptable living conditions and managing pollution? Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.

a) Please provide your reasons, particularly if you disagree.

Strongly agree.

168) Do you agree policy P4 makes sufficiently clear how decision-makers should apply the agent of change principle? Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.

a) Please provide your reasons, particularly if you disagree.

Strongly agree – This is an important principle to apply to changes of use on land allocated for employment uses where existing uses can restrict what other uses can take place. It is particularly important for sites where permitted development allows for the change of use of a building to residential use, diluting the effectiveness of the employment site. Restrictions to permitted development are needed in this instance.

169) Do you agree policy P5 provides sufficient basis for addressing possible malicious threats and other hazards when considering development proposals? Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.

Partly disagree – Consideration of up-to-date information about the nature of threats would only be relevant in the short term. Development generally has a longer lifetime and therefore

the information upon which decisions are made will become of less relevance. Some information from police will be sensitive and not suitable for making public, making it very difficult to take into account in decision-making.

Some advice and guidance on how to assess terrorism / security / malicious threats would be helpful. Especially how to reconcile the potential conflicts with the public square and public open space requirements.

170) Do you agree that substantial weight should be given to the benefits of development for defence and public protection purposes? *Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.*

a) Please provide your reasons, particularly if you disagree.

Strongly agree.

171) Do you agree with the proposed changes set out in policy F3 to improve how Coastal Change Management Areas are identified and taken into account in development plans? *Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.*

a) Please provide your reasons, particularly if you disagree.

Strongly disagree – The data collected to inform the level 1 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment for a plan area often repeats data from the Environment Agency and is relatively quickly superseded by updates to the Environment Agency data. As such, it would seem more appropriate for local assessments of flood risk (level 2 Strategic Flood Risk Assessments) to focus on those areas where flood risk is greatest and where development is being considered (e.g. existing urban areas at risk of flooding) and where more detailed modelling can assist in the understanding of flood risk from all sources. This approach would avoid conflict and confusion as to which dataset is to be used to understand risk for decision-making. It would also reduce costs for local authorities.

Strongly agree with policy F2.

Strongly agree with policy F3.

Strongly agree with policy F4.

172) Do you agree with the proposed clarifications to the sequential test set out in policy F5? *Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.*

a) Please provide your reasons, particularly if you disagree.

Partly disagree – The term ‘Anticipated catchment’ needs to be defined maybe by providing examples. For housing developments, this could be the housing market area within which the development is proposed and for employment uses this could be the travel to work area.

Other catchments could be defined depending on the scale and type of development proposed. The proposed wording would be open to interpretation and not bringing any further clarity over the wording in the 2024 NPPF on the search area for the test.

173) Do you agree with the proposed approach to the exception test set out in policy F6?
Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.

a) Please provide your reasons, particularly if you disagree

Partly disagree – The policy (and Annex F) should include reference to areas of high risk of flooding from surface water alongside the risks associated with Flood Zones 2 and 3.

174) Do you agree with the proposed requirement in policy F8 for sustainable drainage systems to be designed in accordance with the National Standards? *Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.*

a) Please provide your reasons, particularly if you disagree.

Strongly Agree - The use of national standards for SUDS is supported so as to provide an agreed and understood approach to surface water management.

175) Do you agree with the proposed new policy to avoid the enclosure of watercourses, and encourage the de-culverting and re-naturalisation of river channels? *Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.*

a) Please provide your reasons, particularly if you disagree.

Strongly agree – The proposed policy has the ability to enable multiple benefits from re-naturalising watercourses and removal of potential blockages to water flows whilst recognising that slowing down of water flow is a key aim. New sections of culverting should be only permitted in exceptional circumstances.

176) Do you agree with the proposed changes to policy for managing development in areas affected by coastal change? *Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.*

a) Please provide your reasons, particularly if you disagree.

Strongly agree.

177) The National Coastal Erosion Risk Map sets out where areas may be vulnerable to coastal change based on different scenarios. Do you have views on how these scenarios should be applied to ensure a proportionate approach in applying this policy?

Policy F9 would need significant amendment if it were to cover the different scenarios and likely to become a very lengthy policy. F9 would seem to be adequate as written without covering different scenarios.

178) Do you agree with the proposed new additions to Table 2: Flood Risk Vulnerability Classifications? *Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.*

a) **Should any other forms of development should be added? Please give your reasoning and clearly identify which proposed or additional uses you are referring to.**

Strongly agree - Reference should also be made to the approach to high surface water flood risk areas. Battery energy storage systems and the pollution control mechanisms associated with them need to be added as these would have an impact on for flood storage capacity and water flows.

179) Do you agree that the proposed approach to planning for the natural environment in policy N1, including the proposed approach to biodiversity net gain, strikes the right balance between consistency, viability, deliverability, and supporting nature recovery? *Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.*

a) **Please provide your reasons, particularly if you disagree.**

Partly disagree – Proposed Policy N1 points to the use of the LNRS in preparing development plans. LNRS documents have been produced with best available mapping, modelling, species data and related documents. It is unclear which of a range of named documents, potentially with conflicting data or recommendations, would override another leading to possible uncertainty and delay when applying policy. The wording in N:1.c. clarifies the relationship between the LNRS and the Local Plan which is welcomed.

However, overall the draft wording is considered to dilute the natural environment priority from the 2024 NPPF policies by trying to ‘support’ rather than ‘protect’ nature, shifting the priority to making development acceptable rather than protecting the environment. For example, the draft wording refers to ‘managing development’ in relation to habitats of high value such as chalk streams rather than protecting them from development. This no longer follows the principles of the mitigation hierarchy where the first approach is to avoid harm followed by minimisation of any harm that is unavoidable and mitigating this residual harm.

Rather than encouraging plans that ‘promote the conservation, restoration and enhancement of priority habitats, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of priority species’, the proposed policy states that ‘opportunities should be identified’, which is a significantly weaker approach.

The proposed wording of N:1.a. removes the direct link between the NPPF and the Habitats Regulations which has been maintained since the first NPPF in 2012. This is considered a significant weakening of policy approach.

180) In what circumstances would it be reasonable to seek more than 10% biodiversity net gain on sites being allocated in the development plan, especially where this could

support meeting biodiversity net gain obligations on other neighbouring sites in a particular area?

A higher threshold should only be targeted where there are real opportunities for increasing biodiversity as a result of development. It would make sense in strategically advantageous locations, possibly directed by the LNRS and other relevant strategies to include provisions for additional BNG or where allocations are near to protected sites to encourage greater buffers to those sites and to create larger areas for wildlife. For larger allocations (urban extensions and new towns) there are greater opportunities through masterplanning to be able to maximise potential for BNG alongside the development.

181) Do you agree policy N2 sets sufficiently clear expectations for how development proposals should consider and enhance the existing natural characteristics of sites proposed for development? *Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.*

a) Please provide your reasons, particularly if you disagree.

Partly disagree – The approach in N:2 is considered a weakening of the position in the 2024 NPPF with a move from ‘protected and enhanced’ to ‘conserve or enhance’, and the management of networks to provide resilience to ‘current and future pressures’ now referring to ‘minimising of the risk of future failure’. N:2.e. neglects to consider the role played by the pre-development green infrastructure on a site. This should be conserved and enhanced in accordance with criteria a. and d. With all green infrastructure and ecological features on a site, provision needs to be made for the lifetime of the development.

182) Do you agree the policy in Policy N4 provides a sufficiently clear basis for considering development proposals affecting protected landscapes and reflecting the statutory duties which apply to them? *Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.*

a) Please provide your reasons, including how policy can be improved to ensure compliance.

Partly agree – The amendment to applying ‘substantial weight’ achieves consistency / parity with other aspects of the Framework, such as Green Belt. The inclusion of reference to the setting of protected landscapes is supported but the removal of the statement that National Parks / Landscape are afforded the highest level of landscape protection is not supported.

The wording of N:4.2. repeats the established policy approach of requiring exceptional circumstances to be demonstrated for major development in the National Landscapes. However, ‘major’ in this context is not the same as the definition of major development elsewhere. There is an opportunity for this disconnect to be addressed by avoiding the use of the phrase ‘major development’ and instead referring to ‘development which could have a significant adverse impact on the designated landscape’.

183) Do you agree policy N6 provides clarity on the treatment of internationally, nationally and locally recognised site within the planning system? *Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.*

a) Please provide your reasons, particularly if you disagree.

Partly disagree – Environmental Delivery Plans as currently proposed will only cover certain types of development and certain types of habitats impact. They are also not the only route to delivering mitigation for development. Developers could provide their own mitigation, the LPA could provide mitigation, a third party could provide mitigation or a combination of approaches could be used. Until there is comprehensive coverage of Environmental Delivery Plans across all habitats sites and impacts, flexibility needs to be built into N6

As mentioned in comments on policy N2, the overarching expectation that sites should be protected in a manner commensurate with their status or quality is missing from the revised policies.

184) Are there any further issues for planning policy that we need to consider as we take forward the implementation of Environmental Delivery Plans?

Environmental Delivery Plans are only mentioned in relation to habitat sites and SSSIs which raises questions about how they will relate, through policy, to protected species and how policy will support / guide how contributions will be spent to recover nature.

185) Do you agree the government should implement the additional regard duties under Section 102 of the Levelling-Up and Regeneration Act? *Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.*

a) Please provide your reasons.

Strongly agree.

186) Do you have any evidence as to the impact of implementing the additional regard duties for development?

In practice, the heritage assets listed are afforded similar weight in planning decisions and therefore the change proposed will not make a material difference.

187) Do you agree with the approach to plan-making for the historic environment, including the specific requirements for World Heritage Sites and Conservation Areas, set out in policies H1 – H3? *Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.*

a) Please provide your reasons, particularly if you disagree.

Partly Agree – Guidance is needed on what constitutes a ‘positive strategy’ across the plan area as opposed to a positive strategy on a site or town basis. The different geographical areas will create significant complexity in establishing the detail of any strategy. The policies

are also not addressing the nuances associated with unknown heritage assets (ie archaeology).

A list of non-designated heritage assets is a positive aspiration but practically is difficult to produce and maintain. There are significant numbers of designated heritage assets in Dorset and the consideration of these in plan-making and decision-taking is a significant resourcing issue. Adding a requirement for another level of heritage assets to this will increase this resourcing issues. An approach of seeking nominations of locally important heritage assets has resulted in a wide variety of nominations, all of which require assessing to ensure they meet the relevant criteria. Often locally important heritage assets are nominated in an attempt to block development.

188) Do you agree with the approach to assessing the effects of development on heritage assets set out in policy H5? Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.

a) Please provide your reasons, particularly if you disagree.

Partly disagree – The clarity provided through the new policy HE5 should enable the assessment of effects on heritage assets to be undertaken more consistently. As currently worded however, the policy identifies the instances where the impact on a heritage asset would either have a positive effect, no effect, result in substantial harm or total loss. This means that any harm to a heritage asset has to be categorised as either ‘substantial’ or ‘total loss’. There will be instances where development may be judged as having harm but not to the level of substantial harm or total loss meaning that there is an omission of a level of harm from the policy.

189) Do you agree with the approach to considering impacts on designated heritage assets in policy HE6, including the change from "great weight" to "substantial weight", and in particular the interactions between this and the statutory duties? Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.

a) Please provide your reasons, particularly if you disagree.

Partly disagree – referring to substantial weight is supported to provide consistency with other policies in the framework, and the policy does provide clarity as to the decision-making process. However, the wording of HE6:1. is not consistent with the wording of HE5. HE6 refers to ‘whether any potential effect amounts to a positive effect, harm, substantial harm, or total loss of its significance’ whereas HE5 refers to a ‘positive effect, substantial harm, or total loss’, omitting reference to harm that is not substantial.

Enabling of energy efficiency and low carbon heating measures should be seen as public benefits as mitigating climate change is a public benefit. The decision maker will need to consider the harm from these measures against the benefit of climate change mitigation. Other public benefits could include the heritage asset being better revealed as well as being brought back into long-term use.

190) Do you agree with the new policies in relation to world heritage, conservation areas and archaeological assets in policies HE8 – HE10? *Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.*

a) Please provide your reasons, particularly if you disagree.

Partly agree – Provision needs to be made for the archiving and display of archaeological assets where they cannot be preserved in-situ. This applies equally to those assets covered by HE11.

191) Do you have any other comments on the revisions to the heritage chapter?

We welcome the more positive approach to the historic environment, and greater clarity regarding non-designated heritage assets and Conservation Areas.

HE4 refers to disbenefits of a proposal being weighed against the benefits however the term disbenefits is not considered helpful in a planning context and should be replaced with the words 'adverse impacts'.

There is a discrepancy in how the terms 'Heritage Assets' and 'Archaeological Assets' are used and the terms need to be clarified. A specific concern is that the potential need for a field evaluation is mentioned under Heritage Assets (HE5.5.), but under Archaeological Assets (HE10.1.) there is only mention of 'appropriate investigation'. Such evaluations are more likely to be needed for below-ground archaeology, and therefore HE10.1. should specifically refer to 'desk-based assessment and, where necessary, field evaluation'.

192) Do you agree with the transitional arrangements approach to decision-making? *Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.*

a) Please provide your reasons, particularly if you disagree.

Partly agree – However, guidance with examples would be helpful, to assist local planning authorities in assessing whether policies in the Framework and the development plan are consistent. For example, if a Local Plan or Neighbourhood Plan policy covers a matter which is not referred to in the national DM policies, then clarity is needed as to whether the Local or Neighbourhood Plan policy would still form the starting point for decision-making.

193) Do you have any further thoughts on the policies outlined in this consultation?

None.

194) Do you agree with the list of Written Ministerial Statements set out in Annex A to the draft Framework whose planning content would be superseded by the policies proposed in this consultation? *Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.*

a) Please provide your reasons, particularly if you disagree.

No comment.

195) Do you consider the planning regime, including reforms being delivered through the Planning and Infrastructure Act, provide sufficient flexibility for energy generation projects co-located with data centres to be consented under either the NSIP or TCPA regime? Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.

a) Please give reasons.

Partly agree – The approach of simplifying and unifying the consenting regime for data centres and co-located energy system is supported however it should also be extended to enable the benefits that arise from co-locating battery storage and the provision of heating schemes that make use of waste heat from data centres.

196) Would raising the Planning Act 2008 energy generation thresholds for renewable projects that are co-located with data centres in England (for the reason outlined above) be beneficial? Yes/No

a) If so, what do you believe would be the appropriate threshold? Please provide your reasons.

Yes – This would enable better national consistency that best minimises the risks of failing to co-locate the requisite energy infrastructure.

197) Do you have any views on how we should define ‘co-located energy infrastructure’? Please provide your reasons.

The co-located energy infrastructure should not necessarily be adjacent to the proposed data centre but within reasonable distance. Some degree of flexibility is needed to enable efficient decision-making, but the definition must also provide appropriate guidelines.

198) Do you think the renewable energy generation thresholds under Section 15 of the Planning Act 2008 for other use types of projects should be increased, or should this be limited to projects co-located with data centres? Yes/No

a) Please provide your reasons.

No – The threshold is set at a level that has been considered as being ‘nationally significant’ in part due to their scale and the complexity of issues that need to be addressed. As such, the threshold should continue to apply or potentially reduced as the colocation of renewables and data centres creates further complexity and scale.

199) What benefits or risks do you foresee from making this change? Please provide your reasons.

None

200) Would you support the use of growth testing for strategic, multi-phase schemes? Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.

The aim for large multi-phase developments should be to deliver a policy compliant development over the lifetime of the scheme. It could be that in early phases, the amount of affordable housing delivered for example could be below policy compliant levels to enable better cash flow as the development commences. Later phases should however seek to make back this shortfall in provision without affecting viability or investability as the risks of a scheme are greatly reduced once delivery is established.

201) Would you support the optional use of growth testing for regeneration schemes?

Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.

Regeneration schemes often involve abnormal costs associated with the development site. If growth testing is incorporated into viability assessments for such schemes, it should be considered on a case-by-case basis.

202) Do you agree greater specificity, including single figures, which local planning authorities could choose to diverge from where there is evidence for doing so, would improve speed and certainty? *Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.*

- a) **Please explain your answer. If you agree, the government welcomes views on the appropriate figure – for example, whether 17.5% would be an appropriate reflection of the industry standard for most market-led development.**

The standardisation of as many inputs to viability appraisal as possible would speed up the assessment of viability where required at the decision-making stage. The majority of viability appraisals are agreed at 17.5% of Gross Development Value and if this were a standard input, negotiations would be quicker. However, profit is only one of many inputs to viability appraisal, and on its own is unlikely to make a significant difference to the speed of decision making – this would need to part of a wider standardised approach to viability.

203) Are there any site types, tenures, or development models to which alternative, lower figures to 15-20% of Gross Development Value might reasonably apply?

- a) **Please explain your answer. The government is particularly interested in views on whether clarifying an appropriate profit of 6% on Gross Development Value for affordable housing tenures would make viability assessments more transparent and speed up decision-making.**

Similarly to the above, the majority of negotiations arrive around the 6% mark for affordable housing. Again, standardising this input could speed up negotiations, although this assumption is less often in contention as the reason for viability appraisal centres on the case for not providing affordable housing.

204) Are there further ways the government can bring greater specificity and certainty over profit expectations across landowners, site promoters and developers such that the

system provides for the level of profit necessary for development to proceed, reducing the need for subjective expectations?

a) Please explain your answer.

For brownfield regeneration sites within urban areas, a profit of 20% is considered appropriate to incentivise these developments to come forward. However, brownfield sites outside of urban areas could remain at 17.5% as such sites often benefit from lower risks.

205) Existing Viability Planning Practice Guidance refers to developer return in terms a percentage of gross development value. In what ways might the continued use of gross development value be usefully standardised?

Gross Development Value (GDV) is already a well-understood metric in the development industry. Issues arise when the inputs which make up GDV (e.g. sales values) are underestimated, when compared to the values that are later achieved by the development. This results in a reduction in policy compliance and reduces affordable housing delivery.

206) Do you agree there circumstances in which metrics other than profit on gross development value would support more or faster housing delivery, or help to maximise compliance with plan policy? *Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.*

a) Please explain your answer.

Partly agree – Viability metrics are often subject to negotiation at the decision-making stage. Standardising as many of these as possible would assist in both faster housing delivery and the associated delivery of affordable housing. Examples with commonly agreed assumptions are:

- Build costs – for larger schemes, BCIS lower quartile, unless there is evidence to support a higher build cost. For smaller schemes, BCIS upper quartile to reflect higher costs on these smaller sites.
- Externalities – 10% of build costs for larger sites, 15% of build costs for smaller sites.
- Contingency – 5% of build costs for most sites
- Professional fees – 8% of build costs
- Disposal / sales fees – 3% of GDV excepting affordable housing

207) Are there types of development on which metrics other than profit on gross development value should be routinely accepted as a measure of return e.g. strategic sites large multi-phased schemes, or build to rent schemes?

a) Please explain your answer.

Our experience is that even for strategic site viability review, including large multi-phased schemes the focus is on profit on gross development value as the measure for profit with the percentage profit being the point of discussion.

It is possible that other metrics could be available however it seems overly complex to introduce these unless there are clear reasons for doing so. Simplifying the process of viability review as far as possible is the most likely way to achieve faster housing delivery.

208) Do you agree that guidance should be updated to reflect the fact a premium may not be required in all circumstances? *Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.*

a) **In what circumstances might a premium, or the usual premium, not be required?**

Neither agree nor disagree.

b) **What impact (if any) would you foresee if this change were made?**

No comment.

209) Do you agree that extant consents should not be assumed to be sufficient proof of alternative use value, unless other provisions relating to set out in plans are met? *Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.*

a) **Please explain your answer.**

Strongly agree – often existing consents would themselves be costly to implement, and there does not seem to be a mechanism to factor this into viability assessment.

210) If extant consents were not to be assumed as sufficient proof of alternative use value, should this be at the discretion of the decision-maker, or should another metric (e.g. period of time since consent granted) be used? *Decision maker discretion / Another metric / Neither*

a) **If another metric, please set out your preferred approach and rationale.**

If the aim is to speed up negotiations, then a clearly definable metric, such as period of time of last consent, would be effective.

211) What further steps should the government take to ensure non-policy compliant schemes are not used to inform the determination of benchmark land values in the viability assessments that underpin plan-making?

There is a need to act against non-policy compliant schemes at the decision-making stage and this can inform plan-making. One of the biggest factors affecting viability and the delivery of affordable housing is assumed land values and premiums. If there could be a move away from the assumption that there is a minimum 10x multiplier as a premium for all greenfield sites that would assist. Despite what policy says, in practice there is no adjustment of land

values or premiums at the decision-making stage to reflect policy requirements. This then informs plan-making and creates a feedback loop of worsening viability.

212) Do you agree that the residual land value of the development proposal should be cross-checked with the residual land values of comparable schemes; to help set the viability assessment in context. *Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.*

a) Please explain your answer.

Neither agree nor disagree – While it is useful to cross back against other schemes, this should focus on checking against schemes which have been at or close to policy compliance. Where such schemes are not available for checking, land values should not be used as justification to reduce developer contributions.

213) Do you agree that a 2.5 hectare threshold is appropriate? *Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.*

a) Please provide your reasons, particularly if you disagree.

Partly Agree – The approach seems to enable schemes that do not necessarily make best use of land and could result in very low-density development in some locations but also uncharacteristically high-density development in others. A preferred approach would involve flexibility with a site threshold set locally to respond to local characteristics. For example, a scheme of 1ha (30 dwellings) on the edge of a village is very different to a scheme for 49 dwellings. Also, having a site threshold of 2.5ha would not necessarily support SME developers as this size of site would attract larger developers in rural locations due to relatively high yields.

214) Do you agree that a unit threshold of between 10 and 49 units is appropriate? *Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.*

a) Please provide your reasons, particularly if you disagree.

Partly agree – See response to Question 213.

215) Do you foresee risks or operability issues anticipated with the proposed definition of medium development? *Yes/No.*

216) If so, please explain your answer and provide views on potential mitigations.

Yes - If medium sites are given more flexibility to provide commuted sums for affordable housing, rather than on-site provision, then there is a risk that developers may seek to split sites into smaller areas, to benefit from this flexibility. To mitigate this risk, national policy should set out that any additional flexibilities which are offered for medium sites will only apply for standalone medium development sites, and not in cases where the development would form part of a larger overall scheme.

There is also concern that off-site delivery of affordable housing would reduce provision overall as sites will become increasingly difficult to find and their value will increase. Increased off-site provision does not assist with integration and the creation of mixed tenure communities.

It is also noted that, currently, Lead Local Flood Authorities are statutory consultees for major applications. The introduction of the new medium category of proposed development could therefore result in the Lead Local Flood Authority not being consulted on schemes of up to 49 homes, resulting in planning officers having less access to expert advice to inform decision-making. The implications of the introduction of the new category in terms of potential reduction in specialist input from statutory consultees need to be considered, and clarity provided to ensure that statutory consultees who are currently consulted on major applications, would continue to be consulted on applications falling within the new proposed medium category of development.

From a plan-making perspective, setting a requirement to allocate a proportion of the housing need on medium sized sites will create a resource blockage and slow down the production of local plans. This is a significant demand on councils. As indicated earlier in this response, a flexible approach should be permitted to enable local circumstances to be reflected in policy rather than the creation of another type of site category.

217) Do you have any views on whether the current small development exemption should be extended to cover a wider range of sites – indicatively to sites of fewer than 50 dwellings, or fewer than 120 bedspaces in purpose-built student accommodation?

a) Please provide your reasons.

No comment.

218) If the exemption were to be extended, do you have any views on whether the development of 120 purpose-built student accommodation bedspaces is an appropriate equivalent to a development of 50 dwellings for the purposes of the levy exemption?

a) Please provide your reasons.

No comment.

219) If the exemption were to be extended, do you have any views on whether the exemption should be based solely on the existing metrics (dwellings/bedspaces) or whether there should also be an area threshold.

No comment.

220) If you do have views on possible changes to the small developments levy exemption, please specify the potential impact of the possible change of the levy exemption on

people with protected characteristics as defined in section 149 of the Equality Act 2010.

No comment.

221) What do you consider to be the potential economic, competitive, and behavioural impacts of possible changes to the levy exemption? Please provide any evidence or examples to support your response.

No comment.

222) Do you agree with the proposal to extend the Permission in Principle application route to medium development? *Strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, strongly disagree.*

a) Please provide your reasons, particularly if you disagree.

Strongly disagree – Currently there is no route for securing habitats site mitigation at the Permission in Principle stage. As such, it is not possible to approve any Permission in Principle applications where there is an impact on a habitats site that needs mitigation. This is particularly relevant for Dorset Council as there are multiple protected habitats sites across our area. Extending the Permission in Principle application route to medium development is not supported as many such sites in Dorset would require habitats mitigation. The additional administration and consideration of the sites and the reduced information requirement associated with Permission in Principle make this more challenging.

223) Do you have views about whether there should be changes to the regulatory procedures for these applications, including whether there should be a requirement for a short planning statement?

Partly agree – If the Permission in Principle route is extended to cover medium development, then there should be a requirement for a short planning statement to set out why the site is suitable in principle for medium development, making reference to the development plan and relevant national decision-making policies.

224) Do you have any views on the impacts of the above proposals for you, or the group or business you represent and on anyone with a relevant protected characteristic?

a) If so, please explain who, which groups, including those with protected characteristics, or which businesses may be impacted and how.

None.

225) Is there anything that could be done to mitigate any impact identified?

No comment.

PPG Consultation

Design and Placemaking

Question 6

Do you agree that the usability and effectiveness of the draft Design and Placemaking PPG has improved?

- The structure of the of the document is well laid out and simpler to use in comparison to the current 4 documents that it is proposes to replace.
- The features of well-designed places have been simplified with less overlapping which is welcomed.
- Local authorities are not required to produce area-wide design codes but may still do so where contextually appropriate. This is welcomed and supports the approach Dorset Council are taking.
- Support best practice of digital mapping of design requirements to improve usability.
- Context is within the 7 characteristics rather than on its own leading to repetition of the phrase context through each individual characteristic. Opportunity to have 8 characteristics rather than have context throughout, however, appreciate that this has the benefit of forcing the user to have an iterative consideration of context.
- Higher densities in areas with better transport links is welcomed as a sustainable growth pattern however consideration of the differences at certain locations should be given thought. For example, heritage areas or wider landscape impacts from increased heights, etc.
- Engagement and tools for design requirements is welcomed.
- The strengthened evidence base for coding environmental performance and internal space quality is welcomed.
- Giving more autonomy for producing codes and ensuring that they are specific to the area to which they are being produced is an improvement.
- The seven 'features' of well-designed places are intended to be read in conjunction with the NPPF Chapter 14 DP3 which outlines 8 No. 'key principles' for well-designed places. These principles are referred to in the NPPF with a letter (a. b. c. etc.) rather than numbers. The 'Key Principles' cross over with the 7 features in the PPG except for the addition of 'Context' in the NPPF, which as a topic is discussed under each of the 7 'Features'. This is confusing and makes it complex for a case officer to refer to these 'Key Principles' or 'Features' in a planning assessment. If the PPG Is indeed intended to be used in conjunction with the NPPF it would be helpful to rationalise how the 'principles' or 'features' are defined by aligning them. For example, referring to them in both documents as 8 Key principles or 7 Features, not both.
- The inclusion of highlighted drawings (Figures) throughout the document is very useful as a visual prompt / summary of the relevant text. It would help strengthen the guidance if there is clear crossover between these diagrams and the model design codes when they come forward.

Question 7

Are there any aspects where clarity, accessibility, or practical application could be improved to better support design and placemaking outcomes?

- Interactive tools – creating and utilising interactive tools is costly and therefore it would be useful if there was a government tool that could facilitate this.
- Digital community engagement is welcomed. However, planning specific engagement tools are extremely costly with ever decreasing budgets. A nationally based digital engagement service may better improve this situation, even if this was a budget friendly cost.
- The requirement for tree lined streets has a significant implication for development and maintenance. A diagram to show the integrated arrangement of street trees with street lighting, utilities, SuDS and building line would be useful
- Density / Effective use of land B1 – further guidance/clarity required in relation to optimising site capacity for development balanced with an acceptable quantum of Green infrastructure and need for healthy placemaking. A more permissive planning system puts greater emphasis on the need to clearly explain where design would be inadequate.
- Further clarification required on increased densification balanced with existing local character and urban grain, particularly in a rural county where major development is often located on edge of settlements/ rural edge where existing density can be low.
- B2 paragraphs 132,133 needs further clarification and distinction.
- I2 paragraph 172 considerations should include existing urban grain/settlement pattern
- I3 paragraph 175 further clarity required on when new identity would/would not be appropriate. Important to understand how this fits with local context? Perhaps 'new identity may be more appropriate in areas with weak or limited positive qualities? Concern paragraph 175 could support insensitive design, out of context with the area in rural locations.
- Further clarification on the acceptable quantum of Green Infrastructure required. A more permissive planning system must clearly explain where design would be inadequate.
- Include examples / images of development with a rural context. Important to demonstrate development considering landscape qualities, views, topography etc. (not shown in Fig 39)

Question 8

Do you agree that the principles set out in the draft Design and Placemaking PPG adequately address the needs and requirements of traveller sites?

- Although not mentioned explicitly, the seven features (liveability, climate, nature, movement, built form, public space, identity) could inform layout and access arrangements, safety, and public realm, green spaces and nature

integration, climate adaptation features, etc. However, this would be interpretative rather than a requirement specifically for travellers sites.

- We have been made aware of a piece of work called the 'The modern nomad – G & T community vision guide 2024/25', that specifically discusses design on travellers sites. It can be found on the following link [GRT-Design-Guide@300dpi-1.pdf](#) . Whilst Dorset Council does not agree with the entirety of the document recommendations, it is considered a good reference point for the specific issues relating to the design of Traveller sites, and has been informally endorsed by the Traveller community in Dorset. It may therefore be a useful tool in starting to unpick some specific design issues for traveller sites. Dorset Council intends to use national guidance, best practice guidance, and consult with the Traveller community in order to prepare a masterplan template or design guidance document for Traveller sites, to be used by developers, Council officers, and decision makers at application stage to inform the design of Traveller sites. As noted above, it would be useful if Government guidance was more explicit in setting out expectations and examples of good design for Traveller sites.

Question 9

What additional considerations or clarifications might be necessary to ensure planning practice guidance supports inclusive and culturally appropriate design and placemaking?

- The Draft PPG does not specifically reference culturally specific accommodation needs, including Traveller sites or large multi-generational households. The need for traveller sites covers all areas of the country but there may be cultural requirements for communities in the UK that are outside of the norm and require understanding. Survey work and ONS data can inform this understanding and should be incorporated in the social/community context that informs the requirements of the physical built form.
- An additional section recognising non-standard housing forms (e.g., caravan-based households, transient sites, community-led housing) could be added and clarification of how Liveability, Built Form, and Public Space principles apply to households whose living forms and space needs differ from conventional bricks-and-mortar housing.
- Further guidance on inclusive engagement methods that reach marginalised groups and how to ensure that the needs of these groups are appropriately catered for as a result of the engagement work. This could include case studies.
- More consideration of on street lighting and the relationship with trees. These issues are creating considerable issues in our Design Code. There is a need for lighting for safety, particularly of women and girls, at night but the need and desire to provide trees causes a conflict. Often with the trees being lost from the scheme. This is also true of public spaces at night.
- The focus on designing for Health & Wellbeing throughout the document is welcome. However, in today's food climate which is dominated by 'big food' and the increasing encroachment of unhealthy choices being the easiest choice consideration should be given to emphasising access to affordable

healthy food options such as community cooperatives, allotments/ growing spaces etc.

Question 10

Do you agree that tools, such as model design codes, could speed up the preparation of local design codes?

- Model design codes would support the preparation of local design codes by helping end users better understand what codes would like and how they could serve a use. Having examples would be a useful way to explain this.

Question 11

What other tools would support this

- Guidance for the production of codes should be linked with Manual for Streets, LTN1/20 and other national guidance and standards.
- It would be helpful if national policy could obligate larger sites to produce their own design code if there isn't one already in place through local policy. This would be particularly helpful in the intermediate times when local plans are not yet adopted but some sites which are expected to become allocated are already coming forward.

Cabinet

3 March 2026

Adoption of Local Heritage List For Decision

Cabinet Member:

Cllr S Bartlett, Planning and Emergency Planning

Local Councillor(s): **all**

Senior Leadership Team:

J Britton, Executive Director for Place Services

Report author and job title: Alison Turnock, Service Manager for Conservation

Email: alison.turnock@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

Statutory Authority:

Report status: Public (the exemption paragraph is N/A)

Executive summary

- 1.1 Dorset (Dorset Council and BCP Council) was successful in jointly securing government funding for a pilot project to create a list of local heritage assets.
- 1.2 A local list includes non-designated heritage assets, which do not meet the threshold for formal designation (such as listed buildings) but nonetheless have local heritage value. Non-designated heritage assets have a degree of heritage significance which merits consideration in planning decisions¹.
- 1.3 A draft list has been compiled following a public consultation exercise (link included in main report and Appendix(s)). The data has been formatted so that all entries contain consistent information. The draft list went out to public consultation for verification earlier in the year.
- 1.4 Plan-making bodies should make information about non-designated heritage assets accessible to the public to provide greater clarity and certainty for developers and decision-makers, and it is therefore helpful to keep an up-to-date local list of such assets². The purpose of this report is to request that the draft list be agreed and published by Dorset Council. It is also recommended that authority be delegated to the Director of Planning, in consultation with the

¹Planning Practice Guidance, para. 039 Reference ID: 18a-039-20190723

² Planning Practice Guidance – para 040 Reference ID: 18a-040-20190723.

Cabinet Member for Planning, to approve further modifications to the list in the interests of maintaining an up-to-date record.

2. **Recommendation(s)**

2.1 That the list of local heritage assets is approved and the list is published on Dorset Council's website;

2.2 That delegated authority is given to the Director of Planning, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Planning, to approve any future modifications to the list.

3. **Reason for the recommendation(s)**

3.1 To approve and publish a list of local heritage assets which can be used to inform future planning decisions.

3. **Background**

- 3.1 Non-designated heritage assets include buildings, monuments, sites, places, areas or landscapes identified by plan-making bodies as having a degree of heritage significance meriting consideration in planning decisions but which do not meet the criteria for designated heritage assets.
- 3.2 Most buildings have little or no heritage significance and thus do not constitute heritage assets. Only a minority have enough heritage significance to merit identification as non-designated heritage assets, and so it is important to maintain an up-to-date public record which is kept under review so that changes can be incorporated as necessary. Publishing a local list ensures transparency about their significance and the fact that their status is a material planning consideration.

Policy Background

- 3.3 Paragraph 216 of the National Planning Policy Framework (December 2024) states: The effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining the application. In weighing applications that directly or indirectly affect non-designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss to, and the significance of, the heritage asset.
- 3.4 The following local plan policies are relevant to non-designated heritage assets:

3.4.1 [Christchurch and East Dorset LP 2014](#)

Objective 2 refers to a local list in reference to maintaining and improving the character of towns and villages.

Policy HE1 (Valuing and conserving our historic environment). Policy refers to non-designated heritage assets and a local list of heritage assets to be created and maintained.

3.4.2 [West Dorset, Weymouth & Portland LP 2015](#)

Section 2.3 (Protecting and enhancing our heritage assets)

Policy ENV4 (Heritage Assets). Policy

includes requirements relating to non-designated heritage assets which are similar to para 216 of the NPPF and requires any harm to be justified.

3.4.3 [North Dorset Local Plan Part 1 2016](#)

Para 4.116 refers to local listings. Para 4.169 states that the Council has developed a local list of non-designated heritage assets and that a series of criteria have been established.

Para 4.127 refers to non-designated heritage assets

Policy 5 (The Historic Environment). Policy includes a section on “Justifying harm to a non-designated heritage asset”

3.4.4 [Swanage Local Plan 2017](#)

Although there is no policy as this is covered by the Purbeck LP, paras 270-271 (page 77) discuss the option of setting up a local list.

3.4.5 [Purbeck Local Plan 2024](#)

Policy E2 (Historic Environment). Policy includes requirements relating to non-designated heritage assets which are similar to para 216 of the NPPF (and other details). Glossary item on “heritage asset” refers to local listing.

3.5 Dorset was successful in obtaining government funding through a joint bid with BCP for a pilot project to develop a local list. Land Use Consultants (LUC) was appointed by Dorset Council on behalf of both Councils to carry out the work.

3.6 The first part of the work was to develop and agree a rigorous and consistent set of criteria, standards and processes for both Dorset Council and BCP Council which could then be used to assess heritage assets. This work included:

a) **Standards for inclusion** on the local list: levels of significance which vary from none through little, moderate and high to outstanding. To meet the threshold for inclusion in the list, the asset needs to be outstanding in one criterion, of high interest in one and moderate in two, or moderate or above in at least four of the criteria.

b) **Types of heritage asset.** These have been divided into four categories: buildings; structures; gardens and designed landscapes; and sites and places. Definitions and examples are detailed at the following link to the Council’s website: [Types of heritage asset - Dorset Council](#)

c) **Types of heritage value:** these were drawn from the National Planning Policy Framework and Historic England’s Conservation principles, policy and guidance. There are six values: archaeological; historic illustrative; historic associative; architectural; aesthetic or artistic; and communal. For each of these values, a definition is provided together with examples of heritage assets which feature the value: [Types of heritage value - Dorset Council](#). Factors that might affect the level of the value are also given.

3.7 Of key importance was ensuring that all the assets had met a consistent set of standards that have been assessed and checked. For this reason it was not

possible to automatically include lists of non-designated heritage assets included in Conservation Area appraisals or Neighbourhood plans. In many cases these include a list of assets but do not have a description or explanation how they meet the required criteria. As they are identified in these documents they can still be considered as material considerations when planning applications are being assessed, but the detailed assessment against the criteria would have to be undertaken by a Conservation officer at that stage in the process.

- 3.8 Public engagement was undertaken in accordance with Dorset Council's [Statement of Community Involvement](#). In recognition of the value of ensuring that local lists are inclusive and representative of the communities that value them, consultation involved engaging with parish councils, heritage groups and members of the public, all of whom were encouraged to submit nominations through an online form. This was developed by LUC and a link was included on the web pages of both Councils to enable members of the public to submit nominations. Some respondents submitted hard copies of nominations which were also considered. Online meetings were held for those interested in learning more about the process.
- 3.9 Work then took place to ensure the data is in a consistent format for the verification process (which took place earlier this year). Having a project involving two local authorities has also produced robust criteria for the whole of Dorset which is of benefit.
- 3.10 Checking the nominated assets has been time consuming to ensure they fulfil the required criteria. Some organisations did not use the online form and submitted lists of assets which did not contain sufficient information to be scored. These organisations were requested to list their top assets, and these were then assessed using online information available by LUC.
- 3.11 A verification process was undertaken earlier this year, when the public were asked to check the list and inform us if they had evidence that there were errors relating to any of the assets. Fifteen responses were received and information submitted has been used to check the assets and refine the final list which is now submitted for adoption.
- 3.12 At this time, people who had submitted assets during the consultation process were contacted and informed if their nominated asset had met the criteria for inclusion on the list. All identified owners of assets were contacted by letter (as we did not have email addresses) to inform them that their asset had been included on the draft list which would be taken to committee in due course.

Next steps

3.13 Members are requested to approve the list for publication ([local-heritage-list-for-verification-2024](#)). Assets can then be uploaded onto the Council's mapping system (QGIS) and this will provide clarity and transparency about their status as material considerations when planning applications are being assessed.

3.14 Once the list has been approved, it will be possible to add to the list in future as additional assets are identified for example through the planning process or as a result of communities undertaking work to identify local assets (for example through the neighbourhood plan making process). In order to streamline this process the Committee is also asked to give delegated authority to the Director of Planning, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Planning, to approve future additions to the list. In order for assets to be added to the list they will need to be submitted via the form on the Council's website to ensure that they meet the required criteria. The assets will also be added to the Council's Historic Environment Record (HER).

3.15 It is proposed to have a three month window during the year, when additional assets can be submitted for consideration to be added to the list.

4. Alternative options considered

4.1 The project has been undertaken in partnership with BCP which has advantages both in establishing a consistent framework across BCP and Dorset Council areas, and this was also essential to secure government funding needed to procure LUC to undertake the work. Alternative options of not working jointly with BCP or attempting to carry out the work in-house without recourse to Government funding would have placed undue pressure on team resources and missed out on the funding opportunity.

4.2 An alternative option of not proceeding with a local list was considered. This was discounted because it would run counter to advice from Government and Historic England, and would result in less certainty about the status of locally important heritage assets in Dorset. As a result it was agreed that appointing a consultancy to undertake the work was the preferred option. This had the advantage of being able to draw on a variety of skills and disciplines for a project which required both conservation and digital skills.

5. Legal considerations

5.1 As set out above, there are local plan policies and national planning policy which requires the impacts of proposed development affecting non-designated heritage assets to be considered during the planning application process. That said, they do not constitute formal designations and there are

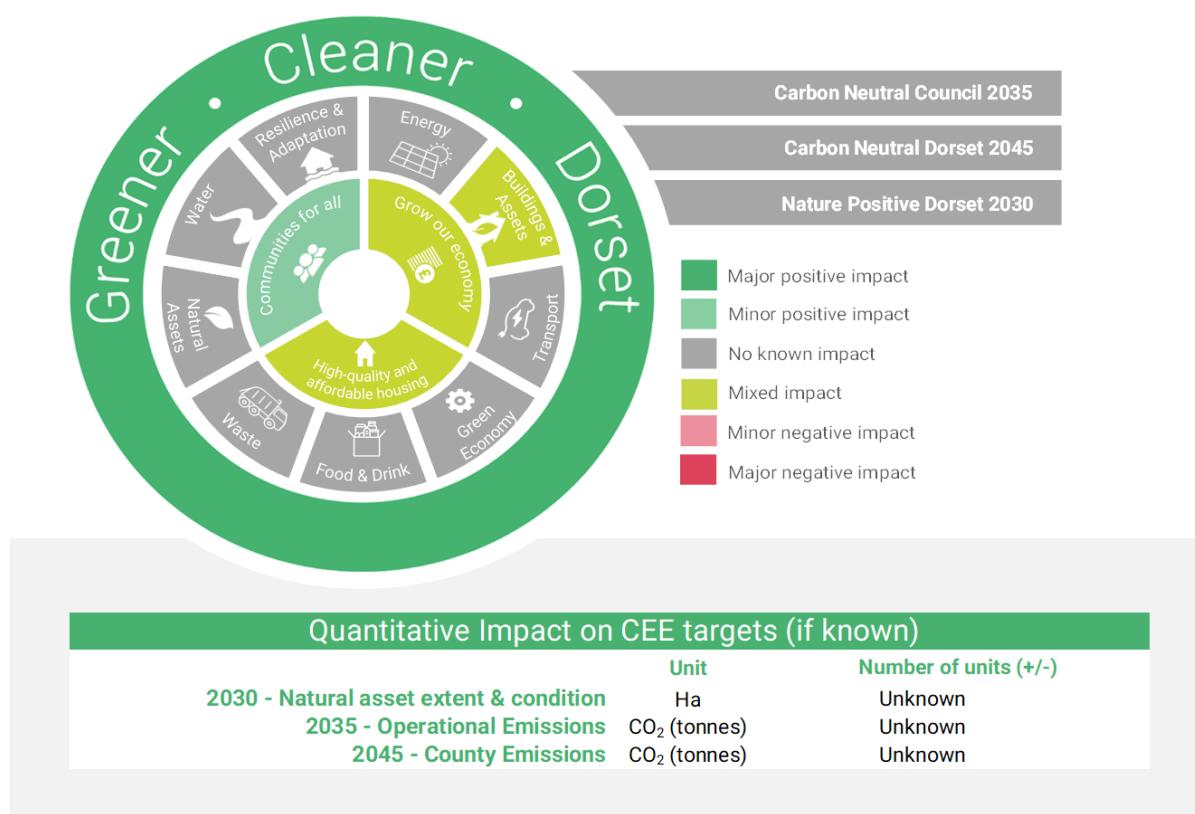
no other legal implications or additional constraints placed on owners of assets as a result of their inclusion in the list.

6. Financial implications

- 6.1.1 The work to develop the list was undertaken jointly with BCP through consultants engaged using government grant funding. There has been some Council input through officer time but no capital funding. Maintenance of the list will be undertaken by members of the conservation team as capacity allows.

7. Natural environment, climate & ecology implications

- 7.1.1 By ensuring that non designated heritage assets are taken into consideration during the planning process this process will raise awareness of locally important heritage assets. Where the assets are buildings and can be incorporated within a proposed development, the embedded carbon within them may reduce the quantity of building materials required.



- 7.1.2 In general the proposal is neutral in terms of the majority of the aspects considered in the wheel. Adopting a list will not result directly in outcomes such as solar panels or retrofitting, and this accounts for the largely neutral outcome. While an adopted list will not result in additional planning constraints, there may be occasions where non designated sites are retained within a proposal and this would have a positive impact in terms of embedded carbon.

8. **Well-being and health implications**

- 8.1 Non designated heritage assets add to the interest and diversity of local communities, thereby having a positive impact on health and wellbeing.

9. **Other implications**

- 9.1 None

10. **Risk implications**

- 10.1 HAVING CONSIDERED: the risks associated with this decision; the level of risk has been identified as:

Current Risk: low to medium

Residual Risk: low

11. **Equalities**

- 11.1 As set out in the Equalities Act 2010, all public bodies, in discharging their functions must have “due regard” to this duty. There are 3 main aims: -

- Removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics
- Taking steps to meet the needs of people with certain protected characteristics where these are different from the needs of other people
- Encouraging people with certain protected characteristics to participate in public life or in other activities where participation is disproportionately low.

Whilst there is no absolute requirement to fully remove any disadvantage the Duty is to have “regard to” and remove or minimise disadvantage and in considering the merits of this planning application the planning authority has taken into consideration the requirements of the Public Sector Equalities Duty. In this case it is not considered that the adoption of a local list will impact on people with protected characteristics.

12. **Appendices**

- 12.1 [local-heritage-list-for-verification-2024](#)

Background papers

- 13.1 [The Dorset Local Heritage List - Dorset Council](#)

14 **Report sign-off**

- 11.1 This report has been through the internal report clearance process and has been signed off by the Director for Planning and on behalf of the Monitoring Officer.

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By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
of the Local Government Act 1972.

Document is Restricted

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