

# Dorset Council – Planning Service Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) January 2020

Dorset Council formed on 1st April 2019, replacing Dorset County Council and the former district and borough councils of East Dorset, North Dorset, Purbeck, West Dorset, and Weymouth & Portland. The new council is a unitary authority. As such it is responsible for all planning matters that the former councils would have dealt with (including minerals and waste).

The Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) sets out how and when Dorset Council will involve the community as part of its planning duties.

The table opposite summarises the planning duties performed by Dorset Council.

Because planning affects the future of Dorset, the Council wants to be sure that everybody is able to be involved in both the preparation of Local Plans and decisions on planning applications.

## We aim to

- Seek the views of residents, statutory bodies, landowners, developers, infrastructure and service providers, community organisations, businesses and visitors **as early as possible** in the process.
- **Engage with and involve people** regardless of their race or ethnicity, faith or belief, age, gender, sexual orientation or disability.
- Provide a range of opportunities and consultation methods that are **inclusive, appropriate, cost effective and timely**.
- Produce consultation documents and materials that are **clear and avoid unnecessary jargon**.
- Make documents available upon request, **in alternative formats**, such as large print and audio and other languages, where possible.
- Keep people and groups **informed of progress** and let them know of future consultation events.

What we do	Explanation
Producing Local Plans	Local Plans specify the types of development that may or may not be permitted in different areas.
Producing Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD)	SPDs can provide additional detail, particularly on specific issues such as design.
Monitoring	This measures the success of current Local Plan policies and helps inform the content of future Local Plans.
Neighbourhood planning support	Support given to communities undertaking neighbourhood planning.
Working with neighbouring planning authorities	Managing cross boundary issues under the duty to cooperate.
Processing and deciding planning applications	Most development requires planning permission. Planning applications should be processed efficiently and fairly.
Providing pre-application advice	Enables planning issues to be discussed before planning applications are submitted.
Planning enforcement	Where development does not have planning permission we can decide to take action.

# Planning policy

The Council's planning policies are set out in Local Plans (also known as development plan documents). 'Adopted' local plans and 'made' neighbourhood plans form the development plan. Legally these are the starting point in determining planning applications (see page 5).

In addition, when more detail is required the Council can choose to produce and publish a supplementary planning document (SPD).

Public and stakeholder engagement is an important part of the plan making process as it allows knowledge and expertise to be gathered from a wide range of perspectives.

## Who will we consult

The Council is required to consult with a range of consultees as set out in The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012, as amended.

This includes specific and general consultation bodies, and duty to cooperate bodies. Specific consultation bodies include:

- Environment Agency
- Historic England
- Natural England
- Homes England
- NHS Dorset Clinical Commissioning Group
- Public Health Dorset
- Highways England
- Network Rail
- Marine Management Organisation
- town and parish councils in Dorset
- neighbouring county, local and parish councils
- Dorset Police and Crime Commissioner
- gas, electricity, water and telecoms providers.

The duty to cooperate also requires us to cooperate with the:

- Civil Aviation Authority
- Office of Rail Regulation
- Dorset Local Nature Partnership
- Dorset Local Enterprise Partnership.

General consultation bodies include:

- Voluntary bodies whose activities benefit the area;
- Bodies representing racial, ethnic or national groups in the area;
- Bodies representing disabled persons in the area;
- Bodies representing businesses in the area.

The Council will consult with groups that fall into one of the above categories to ensure that it captures the views of a broad range of local groups that represent different interests in the area. If you belong to a group that can be described by one of the categories listed above and you would like your group to be involved in local plan production, please let us know.

As well as the above the Council believes that all residents and businesses operating in the area should have the opportunity to be involved in the plan making process. The Council operates a local plan mailing list which anyone can ask to be included on. Please see page 6 for contact details for the Council's Planning Policy Team.

## When we will consult

On the next page is a brief overview of the plan making process highlighting the key production stages.

## Local Plan production process

Stage	Activity
Initial evidence gathering	Consider the scope of the plan and begin evidence gathering. We may consult particular stakeholders on certain evidence base documents.
Plan preparation (can include Issues and Options and Preferred Options stages)	Engage with local communities, businesses and other interested parties.  Public consultations will usually last six weeks. <sup>1</sup>
Publication	Draft plan published and representations invited on it for a minimum of six weeks <sup>2</sup> .
Submission	Plan submitted for examination.
Examination in public	Independent inspector assesses the Local Plan to determine whether it is 'sound' and meets other legal requirements.  Public hearings are held. Everyone who made representations at the publication stage will be notified six weeks beforehand.  The Inspector's Report is published.
Adoption	Plan adopted (depending on outcome of inspector's report).

<sup>1</sup> Additional days will be added to the consultation period to compensate for any public bank holidays that coincide. In exceptional circumstances public consultation on a SPD may last for only four weeks.

## How we will consult

There are a number of methods that we can use to inform, consult and involve others such as:

- Publicising consultations through press releases, our website, public notices in the local press, posters, leaflets, and social media (e.g. Twitter and Facebook).
- Emailing or writing to appropriate organisations, community groups and individuals directly.
- Making consultation documents available:
  - at appropriate council reception areas<sup>2</sup>
  - on the Dorset Council website
  - at local libraries or other public locations, as deemed appropriate.
- Hosting public events such as exhibitions and displays where everyone is welcome to attend and ask questions. The Council will aim to hold these events towards the beginning of a consultation period.

## How to make your involvement effective

The following is a guide to making sure that your involvement is effective:

- Write clearly and submit your comments within the published timescale.
- Give your name and contact details<sup>3</sup>
- Be courteous and respectful of other people's views. We reserve the right not to accept comments that could be considered offensive.

Be aware that local plans and decisions need to be legal and consistent with government policy.

## What happens to your comments?

All comments received in response to a consultation will be considered. A consultation report summarising comments and a response to the issues raised will be made available on the Local Plan web pages.

<sup>2</sup> The Council will publicise at what council reception areas consultation documents are available to view.

<sup>3</sup> The Council's Planning Policy Privacy Notice is available to view on the Council's website. It can currently be accessed via the following link:

<https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/your-council/about-your-council/data-protection/service-privacy-notices/planning-policy.aspx>

# Neighbourhood planning

Dorset Council is responsible for facilitating neighbourhood planning in the Dorset area. Neighbourhood planning gives local communities direct power to develop a shared vision for their neighbourhood and shape the development and growth of their local area.

With a neighbourhood plan (NP) a community can create planning policies that will be used in determining planning applications.

Alternatively, a neighbourhood development order (NDO) can be used to grant planning permission for specific types of development.

The qualifying body that can produce a NP or NDO is the parish or town council in areas that have one. In areas without a parish or town council, a neighbourhood forum needs to be formed to act as the qualifying body.

## Neighbourhood planning support

Dorset Council will offer support, advice and assistance to groups undertaking neighbourhood planning activities. The support offered will be tailored to the needs of the group, but may include attendance at meetings, providing information and advice by email and over the phone, and directing the group to external sources for advice and assistance. In addition, Dorset Council will organise and fund the independent examination and subsequent referendum.

## When to consult

The various stages of neighbourhood plan production are outlined below. This also shows whose responsibility it is to consult at the different stages.

Stage	
Area designation	Before neighbourhood planning work can formally start, the area must be designated a 'neighbourhood area'. Details of how to do this are set out on the Council's website.
Plan production	Groups should aim to be inclusive and open when preparing a plan. They

	should inform the community of the proposals and allow people to make their views known.
Pre-submission consultation	When the qualifying body consider the plan ready they should publicise it and invite representations for at least six weeks. They should then consider the responses, prepare a consultation statement, and if necessary, amend the plan.
Plan submission	The qualifying body submits the plan to Dorset Council. We check that it meets legal requirements then publicise it and invite representations on it for at least six weeks.
Examination	We send the plan to an independent examiner. He/she undertakes an examination and decides whether the plan can go to referendum.
Referendum	Dorset Council organises a referendum on the plan.
'Making' the plan	If the plan receives community support at referendum, Dorset Council will formally 'make' the plan.

# Planning Applications

Most development requires planning permission before it can go ahead. This can be obtained through submission of a planning application. It is at the planning application stage where specific, detailed decisions are made about the use of land or building works.

## When and who will we consult

All stages of the planning application process from registration onwards can be followed on the Council's website.

Stage	Consultation
Pre-application	Anyone seeking planning permission is encouraged to talk to those likely to be affected by the proposal and consider their views before submitting an application. For small scale schemes this may be as simple as talking over plans with a neighbour. The Council can provide pre-application advice, as detailed on our website. <sup>4</sup> The Council will aim to provide timely pre-application advice.
Application	The Council is responsible for notifying relevant parties when an application has been submitted. <sup>5</sup> The following summarises methods we may use to consult: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Publishing details of planning applications online. You can view details of planning applications on the Council's website</li><li>• Emails / letters to statutory organisations and interest groups</li><li>• Emails / letters to parish and town councils</li></ul>



<sup>4</sup> Charges apply for this service.

<sup>5</sup> The requirements for consulting on planning applications are set out in the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015: [www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2015/595/made](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2015/595/made)

- Site notices
- Newspaper advertisements (where required by law)<sup>6</sup>

All consultation material will clearly state the deadline for responses.

Making a decision

Many decisions are made by council officers using delegated powers. Other decisions are decided by planning committees. Details of committee meetings, including the agenda, the meeting date and time, will be published on Dorset Council's website in advance of the meeting. Members of the public may speak at planning committee meetings. Find out more on our website<sup>7</sup>.

After a decision

We will publish all decisions on planning applications on our website. Reasons for the decision and relevant planning issues are included in the application report which will also be on the website.

## Appeals

Only applicants have the right of appeal against a decision. We will inform anyone who was notified, or commented on, about the original application of the appeal process. The Planning Inspectorate will decide the best way to handle the appeal process.

<sup>6</sup> Some types of applications have additional prescribed requirements in law regarding publicity. Examples include planning applications requiring Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), and proposals that are defined as 'major development (including minerals and waste applications), which must be advertised in a local newspaper.

<sup>7</sup> Anyone who wishes to speak at a planning committee meeting has to register beforehand, at least two clear working days before the meeting. Current guidance for speaking at a planning committee meeting is available via: <https://moderngov.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/ecSDDisplay.aspx?NAME=Guidance%20to%20Speaking%20at%20Planning%20Committee&ID=455&RPID=158889>

## Enforcement

Where a possible breach of planning control is brought to our attention, we will maintain the confidentiality of people providing such information. Where a breach has occurred, we will consider the appropriate action to take, if any. We will keep people who have made an allegation, as well as those who are potentially responsible for a breach, informed throughout the investigation.

## Contacts

### Planning application and enforcement enquiries:

The planning office in Dorchester (covers the former North Dorset, West Dorset, and Weymouth & Portland Council areas): 01305 838336

[planningteamd@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk](mailto:planningteamd@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk)

The planning office for the former East Dorset District Council area: 01202 795031

[planningteamc@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk](mailto:planningteamc@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk)

The planning office in Wareham (covers the former Purbeck District Council area): 01929 556561

[planningteame@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk](mailto:planningteame@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk)

The planning office for minerals and waste development: 01305 224289

[planningteama@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk](mailto:planningteama@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk)

### Planning Policy enquiries:

[planningpolicy@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk](mailto:planningpolicy@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk)

01305 838336

## Web links for further information

*Dorset Council – planning web pages*  
[www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/planning](http://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/planning)

*National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)*

This sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these should be applied. It is an important document for both plan making and decision making.

[www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2)

*Planning practice guidance*

Produced by the Government, this provides further detail and guidance on a wide range of planning matters.

[www.gov.uk/government/collections/planning-practice-guidance](http://www.gov.uk/government/collections/planning-practice-guidance)

*Planning Portal*

This website provides a guide to members of the public and professionals on the planning system, and in particular the process of gaining planning permission. It offers a service to submit planning applications.

[www.planningportal.gov.uk](http://www.planningportal.gov.uk)

*Planning Aid England*

Provides planning advice and support to help individuals and communities engage with the planning system and get involved in planning their local area.

[www.rtpi.org.uk/planning-aid/](http://www.rtpi.org.uk/planning-aid/)

*Neighbourhood Planning Support*

This website provides information to communities on how to develop a neighbourhood plan or neighbourhood development order. It explains what support is available. The website is run by Locality, a not-for-profit organisation.

<https://neighbourhoodplanning.org/>