

Cabinet of 22 June 2021

Public Questions

1. Question from Linda Poulsen

Preamble – DO13

Historic England's consultation response letter (15/03/2021) to draft Local Plan, specifically DOR 13 & the implications of LUC's HIA:

"Historic England has reserved its position ... we consider that further work is needed in response to the Heritage Impact Assessment's conclusions ... [the work to] include *an options appraisal for the routing of the link road ... taking into account the HIA's recommendations on the position of the southernmost boundary and the layout, height and design of development including the use of strategic landscaping, sightlines and key verified views.*" (My italics)

Question:

When will Historic England's "strongly recommended" Heritage Topic Paper, particularly the options appraisal for the routing of the link road, be available to the public?

Response from the Portfolio Holder for Planning

Further work is currently being carried out by the site promoters and we expect it to be in the public domain by the time of the 'publication' stage of plan preparation.

2. Question from Linda Poulsen

Preamble – DOR13

In 2018 Wessex Water confirmed that a significant part of DOR 13 lies within a groundwater source protection zone:

"This development represents a risk to Eagle Lodge Source both from a water quality and a recharge perspective."

The Environment Agency also expressed concerns & jointly with Wessex Water advised Dorset Council that:

"A hydrological risk assessment should be undertaken which must demonstrate that the proposal (including construction phase) poses either no risk to groundwater and the aquifer(s) feeding the water source or that any risk can be successfully mitigated."

In addition to concerns about Dorchester's water supply, Dorset Council also required further information about sewerage & flooding.

Question:

When will the Hydrological Risk Assessment, Strategic Flood Risk Assessment & documentation regarding sewerage be available to the public?

Response from the Portfolio Holder for Planning

A Strategic Flood Risk Assessment for the whole plan area is being commissioned, and further hydrological work is being undertaken by the site promoters of the North of Dorchester site. We expect these all to be in the public domain by the time of the publication stage of plan preparation.

3. Questions from Mike Allen

I would like to ask the Cabinet to express their view of the importance and future of Dorset's Green Belt, and whether it aligns with Government policy.

The recent White Paper, "Planning for the Future" (p28) states the Government's view. Let me summarise:

- *The existing policy for protecting the Green Belt should remain (para 2.26).*
- *The (standard method) methodology does not **yet** adjust for land constraints, including Green Belt (para 2.29), but we're considering how to do this.*
- *The requirement for housing arising from the standard method should have regard to practical limitations such as the Green Belt (para 2.25).*

Clearly the Government do not intend the standard method to be a justification for releasing green spaces from the Green Belt for development. Instead they regard the Green Belt to be a constraint on development and a limitation on local housing target numbers.

Giving evidence to Parliament's Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee, which reported recently, the Minister said that: "...we can achieve our building ambitions **without encroaching** on important green spaces that we know communities, yours and mine, feel very strongly about." (Q156)

The policy in Dorset recently appears to be opposite to this. The Council's draft Local Plan sees the standard method's housing target, and consequential development, as a limitation on the future of the Green Belt. The Council apparently has taken the view (so far) that the future extent of the green spaces in the Green Belt are to be constrained by the standard method, not the other way round.

Is the Cabinet fully aware of their marked divergence from Government policy on this?

Response from the Portfolio Holder for Planning

The local plan has followed national policy as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework. This allows green belt boundaries to be changed in exceptional circumstances through the preparation or review of a local plan.

4. Questions from Gerald Duke

According to a recent Position Paper on the Local Plan submitted to the March 25th committee of the Place and Resource Scrutiny Committee, "Members will be asked to approve the 'publication' version of the plan in the autumn."

Question:

Which Council body, bodies or committees will be asked to approve the 'publication' version of the plan or will all members have an opportunity to determine it?

Response from the Portfolio Holder for Planning

A revised local development scheme (work programme) will be brought to Cabinet in July, proposing that the publication stage will now be in spring 2022 rather than autumn 2021. The publication plan will be brought to Cabinet and full Council for approval.