

Public Questions for Cabinet 8 November 2021

1. Question from Linda Poulsen

Preamble:

During the draft Local Plan consultation a member of the public submitted a question asking if all house building included in the Local Plan would meet PassivHaus standards. The Council's response at that time indicated that good design would be encouraged but no specific sustainable design standards had been set; rather the Council would be suggesting the use of recognised assessments such as the Building Research Establishment's Environmental Assessment Method.

Question:

The Draft Local Plan proposes the construction of 39,000 houses across Dorset, many on green field sites such as 433 hectares of productive farmland north of Dorchester. With COP 26 well underway and with the Council's declared climate emergency, will the Council commit to moving from 'encouragement' and 'suggestions' to a definitive set of standards for net zero house building that are fit for purpose in a climate emergency?

Response of the Portfolio Holder for Planning

Cabinet and full Council will be making decisions about the changes to be made to the content of the plan, and approving the amended document for publication, at meetings due to take place in spring 2022.

Until then we will not be making any decisions about the local plan. It is important that these decisions are made together, as different policies have impacts on each other. Higher environmental standards, while clearly desirable, are likely to have an impact on development viability and this is being assessed within the viability assessment that will accompany the plan.

Dorset Council is lobbying for stronger national policy on this issue, in fact I have just written to the Rt Hon Michael Gove, who was appointed Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities on this very matter.

2. Question from Mike Allen

A DLUHC spokesperson was quoted in "Planning" in their article about Ashfield District Council's pause in their Local Planning process, saying:

"Councils are ultimately responsible for setting housing targets, but our National Planning Policy Framework is clear that most new building is inappropriate in the green belt".

This accords with the recent Adam Smith Institute paper "Build Me Up, Level Up". In seeking a politically less-toxic way of increasing house building, the authors note that no group in the British population wants building in Green Belt, with only 20% of people in support. So:

- the Prime Minister doesn't want building in the Green Belt,
- the Ministry doesn't want building in the Green Belt,
- the British population doesn't want building in the Green Belt.

Evidenced by the draft Local Plan responses published recently*:

- the people of East Dorset don't want building in the Green Belt,
- the Local MPs don't want building in the Green Belt,
- and a notable local political association doesn't want building in the Green Belt.

That leaves only Dorset Council and a few building developers in favour.

My question is:

Has the Cabinet considered that their policy of building more housing than needed by demography in the East Dorset Green Belt is "electorally toxic" (as the Adam Smith Institute puts it)? Local people are beginning to say they will vote differently if this continues. Why is the Dorset Council Cabinet so reluctant to reconsider this?

(*A huge and welcome effort by the team, and searchable as requested – thank you)

Response of the Portfolio Holder for Planning

National policy makes provision for amendments to green belt boundaries through local plans. Prior to concluding that amendments to the green belt are justified, Councils are required to examine all reasonable alternatives to meeting housing need including making use of brownfield and underutilised land and increasing density on development sites. This assessment needs to be undertaken in the context of the need to promote sustainable patterns of development including furthering the objective of reducing the distance people need to travel to fulfil their everyday needs.

Question from Peter Bowyer (CPRE)

3. Question

Concerning the Dorset Council Draft Local Plan could the portfolio holder confirm that he agrees with the examiner's recent determination concerning Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) within the authority's borders for the next 17 years:

Exceptional Circumstances for major development will include a requirement to adhere to sustainable development principles and therefore the size and extent of the housing allocation challenge will mean it is inevitable that some areas in the AONB will be affected.

Response of the Portfolio Holder for Planning

In his report on the examination of the West Dorset, Weymouth & Portland Local Plan, the Inspector concluded that the council faces the difficult problem of balancing the need for homes and jobs with the need to protect designated landscapes. Given there is a continued need to provide homes and jobs in sustainable locations, it is likely that some areas will be affected by development. The Council aims to minimise the impact of development and direct development towards the least sensitive areas.

4. Question from Rupert Hardy

Question for the Portfolio Holder for Planning

The Dorset Council Draft Local Plan (DLP) identifies the Dorset Local Enterprise Strategy (LEP) as the source of potential employment generation possibilities. The Dorset LEP Economic Growth Strategy identifies the following job opportunities:

- To open space at the Aviation Park, Bournemouth Airport, with the potential to generate up to 16,000 jobs
- To complete the regeneration at the Port of Poole with the potential to accommodate up to 5,000 jobs.

Please could the portfolio holder confirm that these are indeed the same 21,000 jobs as those identified on page 17 of the DLP which states, "Around 21,000 new jobs are to be created across the area over the lifetime of this Plan."

Response of the Portfolio Holder for Planning

Economic forecasts prepared in 2017 were used to give a projected level of jobs growth for the local plan consultation document. These projections relate to the Dorset Council area and indicate around 21,000 jobs may be created across the area. Since these projections were produced, there have been some significant changes in the national and international economy which will have implications for Dorset and these implications are being explored with a revised set of economic projections.

The job opportunities in the Dorset LEP Growth Strategy mentioned are not within the Dorset Council area and therefore do not form part of the projected jobs growth in the proposed Dorset Council Local Plan.

5. Question from John Gatrell

The Phase 2 Parking Transformation Report states in Appendix 2 Response 1 that Wimborne Town Council "... was minded to support the proposals within the draft Strategy and agreed that it did not appear to affect Wimborne Minster residents unduly." This implies that the Town Council supported the 325% increase in the Residents' Car Parking Permits from £80 to £260, when in fact the figures were not known at the time of the Council's response to the consultation. On the basis that this statement is misleading, will the public record now be amended to reflect the context in which the Town Council's comments were made, and that a section of Wimborne Minster residents were unduly affected.?

6. Question from Nicky Dear

I am writing to object to the substantial price increase in regard to residents' parking permits by Dorset Council in the Proposed Car Parking Strategy at <https://modern.gov.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/documents/s26254/Phase%20%20Parking%20Charges%20Transformation%20Project.pdf>

The proposed increase is from the current £80 pa to £260 pa is extortionate (325%), exceeds the rate of inflation, is not in line with household income (which in real terms has declined over the last 2 years and has been largely flat for a number of years preceding). With increasing pressure on household finances in the coming months, e.g., higher energy and food bills (together with a rumoured increase in mortgage rates), **the proposed parking increase is not financially sustainable for many Wimborne residents.**

From the strategy I can see that residents would fall under the 'Live, Work and Play' permit. It would seem to me that this not only prejudices and/or discriminates those that do not work (e.g. retirees), but also those who live on the border of neighbouring authorities (e.g. BCP Council, Hampshire Council and Ringwood Council). Many of us who live in East Dorset, work in neighbouring authorities and have family in neighbouring authorities and would not get the benefit of the 'work' or 'play' element of the permit. What impact statement has been carried out to mitigate these concerns?

To increase the charge is unfair to local residents who have no option but to use these car parks where there is no parking on their property. It is also unfair that existing resident permit holders were not consulted directly.

When we moved to Wimborne in 2000 our residents' permit cost £15pa per. A year on year increase would have added a few pounds over the years. **An inflation calculator estimates that £15 in 2000 is equal to £25.90 today, yet the Council wants to charge £260 per permit?**

It appears that the Council consulted with stakeholders (e.g. Town Councils (but not existing permit holders)) on the proposed strategy. Wimborne Town Council (WTC) considered the proposal in their 09/07/21 meeting. Their response was that the

proposed strategy would not affect Wimborne Residents unduly, and was included here (see page 36)

<https://moderngov.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/documents/s26254/Phase%20%20Parking%20Charges%20Transformation%20Project.pdf>.

However, WTC had not received any information on the proposed increase in the price of residents permits when it made that response. I have reviewed the minutes of the meeting held by WTC on 9 July 2021 (<https://www.wimborne.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/2021-090721-Minutes.pdf>). It would appear that the Parking Strategy reviewed by WTC **did not contain any information in regard to the increase in residents' parking permits**. In effect the WTC could not recommend or approve something that they did not know. WTC did not consider the impact to residents at their further meeting on 03.09.2021 either, therefore, I do not consider that proper consultation has taken place.

7. Question from Helen Sadler

As a Wimborne resident I am very concerned to read the proposals for the change in tariffs and permits. I currently live in a house with no off street parking. Once again, my family and I are at the mercy of people making decisions that directly affect us with little or no consultation.

As I understand it, the residents permit will become a live, work and play permit. £25 a month or £260 per year. Currently, the first household residents permit costs £80. This directly affects Wimborne residents. I am utterly appalled that residents who purchase permits have not been directly consulted via email or letter to advise them of the proposals and give them chance to object properly.

This decision has a huge impact on us financially and will also have a direct impact on the potential sale of property. I can no longer park in a short stay car park, closest to my house. I have to cross a very busy road often with 4 children because a car park committee met and changed the residents permits to long stay car parks only. I had an exchange of emails with Dorset CC who passed all to Wimborne residents who then passed it back to Dorset.

There seems to be no database for exactly who this affects at County/Carpark Dept level. I have to write to the car parks department to state that I don't have any parking and they issue me with a permit, based on my honesty. When I have enquired about how many households are affected, no one seems to know. Does the council know how many houses require a permit because they cannot park their cars anywhere but a car park? I can assure you they do not all need the same car park and it would be hugely beneficial to residents to be able to park in the closest car park to their homes. I have even offered to create the database.

It is very different living in a town, spending money on a house and all it entails to working in said town. £25 a month to park all day everyday for work doesn't seem too unfair but I work in Lytchett everyday so my car is parked mainly when the shops are shut. Obviously weekends are different, but I do feel this has not been thought

through. Surely there needs to be a working permit and a residents permit? The needs of people who require these are wholly different.

I sincerely hope this matter will be examined much more closely before another decision is made that does quite clearly negatively affect those who require residents permits in Wimborne.

8. Question from Janet Boniface

My husband and I are residents in Leigh Road, Wimborne, BH21 1AB. As we don't have Off Street or On Street Parking , we currently both have Residents Parking Permits at an annual cost of £80 for our first car, and £120 for our second car. We understand that the total cost of our two parking permits is being raised to £520. This is, I feel, a huge and unfair increase and one that we would struggle to afford.

In addition, despite being permit holders, we find it virtually impossible to find a parking space in our nearest car parks (Leigh Road and Poole Road), on our return if we go out during the day. We often need to, understandably go out during the day for work, shopping, medical appointments etc. We then have the choice of waiting for up to an hour to find a parking space, or parking in excess of 10 minutes' walk from home. This is very difficult when carrying heavy shopping, especially as we both suffer from long term health issues.

Possibly, there may be a further option of Leigh Road Car Park becoming Resident Permit Holders, Disabled Parking and Short-Term Parking only?

I sincerely hope that these issues will be considered.

9. Statement from Mel Ogden

I live in Leigh Road in Wimborne in a 300 year old house and have done for 25 years. Due to having no off road parking or driveway, both my husband and I have no choice but to have Resident Parking Permit and park in the long stay car park opposite our home. We have two disabled children and work out of the area so cars in our household are essential.

I am absolutely horrified that resident parking permits are being given a 150% increase whereas the business permits are only seeing a £12 increase. This means that my household will now have to pay £520 for two permits because we have no off road parking/driveway, as opposed to the £200 we were paying.

It's claimed that us residents were consulted which is a complete lie. Certainly no residents in our area were consulted, the first I knew of it was on Facebook and the Bournemouth Echo.

I think it's absolutely disgraceful in the current financial circumstances that many people face including ourselves that a 150% increase is considered acceptable and justified!! As a resident who has lived here all my life, it's appalling that we the

residents are not given a fairer more manageable increase but actually appear to be punished for having no driveway and being expected to pick up the tab for everyone.

Over the years we have accepted rises year after year which with our ever rising council tax has made it difficult to manage and afford, but this 150% rise in one go is beyond extortionate. It's pure criminal.

It's made me feel that I'm not welcome in my own town and home anymore and that I should sell up and leave, not that I would be able to sell. My property has now been devalued as no one will want to buy a house without parking and pay completely over the top I fees to use the car park opposite.

Please reconsider this decision and put in place a fairer, more reasonable deal for Wimborne Residents that have no choice but to use a permit for public car parks for their home.

10. Statement from Jane Arnold

Wimborne Resident Parking Permit – Statement for Committee

Although I am a resident permit holder (as I live in the centre of Wimborne with no alternative parking at my property) I was only informed by a neighbour yesterday regarding the proposed permit changes. **Why were existing resident permit holders not properly consulted by letter?**

Looking online Cllr Ray Bryan stated "we have found a great offer to benefit everybody, while making sure that residents and workers are not left out of pocket". Work permits are currently £248 per annum and under the new permit scheme would see a small manageable increase of £12 per annum (4.8% increase), however **residents, with no alternative parking, would see an increase of £180 per annum (a 225% increase). How is this not leaving residents severely out of pocket?**

Why have resident parking permits been lumped together with those that work and play? Resident parking permits are a necessity, we do not have the luxury of choosing not to get one. This proposed new permit scheme is penalising residents and hitting them the hardest financially. I do not need or want a permit that allows me to park in any car park in Dorset but I will be paying a premium for this nonetheless. I just need one that allows me to park near my home. Residents use the car parks at their quietest time while workers clog them up all day, why should we have to pay the same?

How are families supposed to afford this? A two-car family will now be paying £520 per annum (an increase of £320 per year). Even if monthly payments are an option this would be a huge sum of money every month and with additional administration charges added on top.

It has been advised that the charges are a levelling process and that some areas have been paying more but surely this highlights the need for permit costs to also be different over the 3 levels. Is it right that in our area the permit will increase by

225%? Is it right that an area like Wimborne pays the same as those that live in Weymouth that can walk to the beach!

I implore you to continue offering a separate, more cost effective, permit for residents who rely on these to continue living in their homes, to have the option of solely having a resident permit without the extra frills.

The proposed permit scheme and the increase imposed to Wimborne residents is unjust and unfathomable.

11. Statement from Mike Dodd

We have moved into 13 Leigh road recently and bought 3 permits to be able to park near our house. At the moment we often have to wait up to an hour in a queue just to park near our home as there is no off road parking available. The car parks are designated long stay and are very cheap for anyone to use. Putting permits up to the amount seems unfair especially as it is difficult to find a space in our only options near our residence. This seems morally wrong to do this when it is tough to park already at certain times of the day. Hopefully the council will see sense and not put the prices up.

Response of the Portfolio Holder for Highways, Travel and Environment to questions and statements 5 to 11.

Currently, our resident's car park permits range in price from £95 to £430, and the terms and conditions vary greatly. This is inconsistent, unfair for residents and needed addressing.

The new Live, Work and Play permit allows the holder to park in more car parks in Wimborne than the current residents permit. It can also be used in most of the long stay and short stay car parks, enabling holders to use Dorset Council car parks for work, medical appointments, shopping and other activities. In the long run this may be cheaper than paying on an hourly rate.

In January, invitations were sent out through Town and Parish Councils inviting the public to join parking project working groups. The groups included residents, Business Improvement Districts, Chambers of Commerce, surgeries, businesses, disability action groups and others. Details about the proposed charging strategy were shared and discussed during the working groups. The final proposed charges were sent to statutory consultees and communicated through the local press; the opportunity was given to residents to email comments directly to the project team.

The cost of the permits was not known when the original proposed charging strategy was released for consultation. The permit prices were included in the final proposed charging strategy that was distributed to all statutory consultees. Wimborne Town Council did not respond to the final strategy but did send an email with queries regarding the permits at a later date.

It should also be noted that Dorset Council has no legal responsibility for providing parking for residents who do not have parking at their property, however as we are

Dorset residents we also understand the difficulties the lack of parking can cause and so have tried to find a solution that works for everyone.

12. Question from Helen Sumblar

I note from the website news item dated 29/10/21 that Dorset Council has submitted its bid for the Government's Bus Back Better fund to revitalise the nation's bus services. Could I ask how much of this £3 billion fund Dorset Council has bid for, in order to pay for the comprehensive and ambitious Dorset Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP)?

My understanding is that services in accordance with the BSIP, and the associated Enhanced Partnerships with operators, have to be implemented by April 2022. Should Dorset Council not be successful in its bid for money from the Bus Back Better fund, in whole or in part, what process will be followed to decide which policies and / or deliverables in the BSIP will be implemented, and which will be removed; specifically will there be any further stakeholder or public engagement in this decision making?

Response of the Portfolio Holder for Highways, Travel and Environment

I refer you to paragraph 1.17 of the Bus Service Improvement Plan which states that delivering the objectives across the life of the BSIP will require initial investment between 2022 and 2025 of £92 million with further funding required beyond 2025 for some aspects of the BSIP, though with funding from the Department for Transport programmed to progressively decline.

In paragraph 12.2 it states that the BSIP is designed to be living document and will be altered and republished as is necessary. As part of this refresh process we will continue to engage the public and stakeholders through the formalisation of a bus forum which will include local bus operators, community and business voices, bus passengers, and the voluntary and health sectors. The forum will have a key role in the prioritisation of the policies and deliverables and decision making on money allocated from the Bus Back Better fund.