

**Full Council  
14 July 2022**

**Questions and Statements submitted for the Public Participation Period**

**Question 1 – submitted by Richard Lonsdale**

Recently a telegraph pole in the parish I live in was knocked down resulting in a loss of phone line & internet for a number of residents and businesses. My understanding is that, whilst Openreach only needed a day to install a new pole and re-connect the lines, it required however a road closure which took several days to approve. As a result phone & internet lines were out for a week.

In 2022 surely a communication line (especially in a rural area) would be deemed an essential service & warrant an emergency road closure without the need to wait for Dorset Council's permission (rather than merely inform them)?

**Question 2 – submitted by Jane Ashdown**

A number of local media outlets (West Dorset Magazine <https://westdorsetmag.co.uk/editions/edition-9/> Dorchester Nub) recently reported that Dorset Council has received £135,000 from the Government's Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC). According to MP Chris Loder, these funds are to support Dorset Council in reworking their Local Plan. In particular Mr. Loder claims that this reworking will allow the Council to shelve the 4,000 houses proposed for the north of Dorchester (DOR13). Given how unpopular this latter proposal is and given the water quality, traffic, environmental, heritage and cultural degradation this development would bring such news is to be welcomed. As is the prospect of rethinking the overall Plan.

However, in a May press release the Government's DLUHC web site (May 21<sup>st</sup>, 2022 – see link below) lists North Dorchester (DOR 13) as a Garden Village project in receipt of £135,000 to promote its development for housing.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/garden-communities-set-to-flourish-across-england#:~:text=Today's%20investment%20brings%20total%20funding,North%2C%20Midlands%20and%20South%20West.>

This is puzzling - two different announcements about the proposed housing development north of Dorchester and the same amount of funding in each case. The people of Dorset and particularly Dorchester could be forgiven for being confused. And amidst these possibly conflicting announcements Dorset Council has not issued any statement or press release about receiving government funding which might clarify the situation. Indeed since Councillor Flower's press release back in January reflecting his concerns about the Local Plan there has been radio silence in terms of changes to the Local Plan as a result of the consultation well over a year ago and silence on a timetable for moving forward.

As taxpayers we should be the first to know about changes to the Plan. Can Councillor Flower clarify how this £135,000 will be used? Can he also clarify the status of the north of Dorchester (DOR 13) proposal for 4,000 houses in light of this funding?

### **Question 3 – submitted by Giles Watts**

At a recent planning meeting for Town and Parish Councils on 29<sup>th</sup> May, Dorset Council published a timetable for Dorset's Local plan which shows submission of the new plan between October 2022 and March 2023. This is contrary to Spencer Flower's suggestion that he is negotiating a 2-year extension with the government along with mitigation against failing the 5-year housing supply and the housing delivery. In public, the council have been silent on the schedule for the Local Plan and what changes they plan to make. Furthermore, they have not published any analysis of the initial public consultation that took place over a year ago. Can the council please confirm the schedule for the Local Plan going forward and clarify what further opportunities there will be for consultation with the general public when a revised plan is published.

### **Question 4 – submitted by Sandra Reeve**

#### **Energy Efficiency.**

I welcome the recent changes to building regulations, which came into force on 15<sup>th</sup> June, that require new homes in England to produce significantly less CO<sub>2</sub>. I also welcome the phasing out of gas boilers by 2025 which will support the change towards heat pumps. These changes pave the way for the Future Homes and Buildings Standard in 2025 which will mean that all future homes will be net zero ready and will not need retrofitting. However, it is within Dorset Council's power to act faster. It is wrong that new houses are being built now that will require retrofitting in a few years' time. It is also wrong that houses are not being built with rooftop solar as standard in this time of very high energy prices and rising cost of living. Will Dorset Council use its powers to make sure new developments conform to the highest possible standards of insulation and have rooftop solar as standard for clean, renewable energy generation?

### **Question 5 – submitted by Alistair Chisholm**

#### **Nutrient Neutrality.**

In June, Dorset Council generated a report on the "Five Year housing land supply" and its impact on the Purbeck Local Plan. The conclusion was that, due to the new guidance issued by Natural England about nutrient neutrality for nitrogen and phosphorous, no new developments in the Poole Harbour watershed which are not yet started can be included in the five-year housing supply. As a result, the Council is unable to identify a deliverable housing supply for the 2021-2026 plan period. Presumably this advice will also impact any similar developments in Local Plan such as DOR13. Please can the council provide more information on the implications for both the Purbeck and the Dorset local plans ?

### **Question 6 – submitted by Tracee Cossey**

The County Hall site in Dorchester is barely used. The library has moved, the County Court has closed and many of the remaining buildings have few permanent staff with many people choosing to work from home. This is a large site with considerable potential for brownfield development that would have a much lower carbon footprint than any greenfield development in the area. Would the council consider a full redevelopment of the site by adding it to the official Brownfield register with the purpose of providing affordable and social housing for the people of Dorset?