

Questions from the Public to Cabinet for the meeting on 6 September 2022

1. Question from Richard Thomas on behalf of the Dorset Deserves Better campaign

On 26 July, Dorset Council (DC) announced that the Council would pilot a new national approach to local planning with a 2-year delay to its own Local Plan timetable, for adoption in 2026. This announcement was promptly contradicted by the Department for Levelling Up Housing & Communities (DLUHC) who confirmed that a request for planning rule changes had been requested by DC but that no such changes had been agreed.

Will Cllr Walsh please comment on when he expects to have a decision on the proposed rule changes for the Dorset Local Plan and confirm that the Council will continue to press the case for a change in the rules with the new Government?

2. Question from Richard Thomas on behalf of the Dorset Deserves Better campaign

Given the likelihood that developers are continuing and will continue to take advantage of the current situation for 'speculative development', what is his department doing or will do in the event DLUHC does not grant DC sufficient dispensation against housing land supply restrictions or an extension of the plan timetable?

3. Question from Ian Wolff

The Portfolio Holder for Planning has proposed that the existing dates for adopting a new Local Plan be extended out until 2026 as per the table below¹.

Stage	Existing Milestones in adopted LDS	Proposed Milestones
Further evidence and review	-	Through to Q2 2024
Cabinet	-	Q2 2024
Council	-	Q3 2024
Publication (pre-submission consultation)	Q2 2022	Q4 2024
Submission to Secretary of State	Q4 2022	Q2 2025
Examination	Q2 2023	Q3 2025
Adoption	Q4 2023	Q2 2026

¹ From - Appendix 3, Dorset Council Plan Priorities Update Local Plan 26 July 2022.

This appears to be based on the Department of Levelling Up Housing and Communities (DLUHC) agreeing "for Dorset to be a pilot for a new national approach to local plans". What does the Portfolio Holder propose to do if the DLUHC does not agree with Dorset being a pilot scheme?

4. Question from Ian Wolff

As per the table below¹, only the old West Dorset & Weymouth and Portland 2015 Local Plan meets the five-year housing supply out to 2026. What does the Portfolio Holder for Planning propose to do to maintain West Dorset & Weymouth and Portland to meet the required level and bring the rest of Dorset up to the required housing delivery out to 2026, while the new Local Plan is being developed?

Area of Dorset (based on predecessor Councils' boundaries)	Housing Delivery Test Result (2021 Measurement)
East Dorset ²	94%
North Dorset	69%
Purbeck	76%
West Dorset, Weymouth and Portland ³	114%

¹ From - Appendix A - Dorset Council Housing Delivery Test Action Plan – FINAL – March 2022

² The HDT result for East Dorset has been measured jointly with Christchurch on the basis that there is currently a joint plan for the Christchurch and East Dorset area.

³ The HDT results for West Dorset and Weymouth and Portland have been measured jointly on the basis that there is currently a joint plan for the West Dorset, Weymouth and Portland area.

5. Question from David Berry

Reference 1 : Printed Minutes of the Cabinet Meeting 27th July 2021

Reference 2 : Public Document Pack Cabinet Meeting 6th September 2022

Appendix 3 Dorset Council Plan Priorities Update: Local Plan

Background Information to Question 1

At reference 1 I asked two questions with the following responses:

"Question(s) from David Berry

Question 1

With the proposed nominal 6 month delay in adopting the Dorset Local Plan from Quarter 2 2023 (published in September 2020) to Quarter 4 2023 (proposed in July 2021) there is a serious risk that the Dorset Council will miss the Government December 2023 deadline for it being adopted. What are the results of the risk analysis and mitigation measures to produce the Local Plan to meet this deadline, including but not limited to, the effects of your proposed reduction of the submission and examination duration from 15 months to 12 months, the new National Planning Policy Framework issued on the 20th July 21 and the proposed Government Planning reforms?

Response from the Portfolio Holder for Planning

The delay in the local plan programme is due mainly to the large number of responses received to the first consultation, but it is essential that all of these are properly considered before moving forward to the next stage. We had originally aimed to adopt the plan early in 2023, so this delay should not risk the December 2023 deadline. We do not yet know when the national planning reforms will come into effect but it is likely that there will be transitional arrangements allowing plans that are in progress to continue.

Question 2

Can you please provide to the public a more detailed breakdown of the indicative dates for each stage of the local plan development including how the public will be engaged for comments on the pre submission draft version of the Local Plan now scheduled for publication in May 2022.

Response from the Portfolio Holder for Planning

The stages of local plan preparation are set out in the Local Development Scheme. The publication draft plan will be brought to Cabinet and full Council for approval before it is published in May 2022, and a more precise date will be given at that time. At the publication stage, there will be an eight-week period during which people will be invited to comment on the plan and whether they consider it to be sound. All the responses received will be submitted to the inspector who will examine the plan."

At reference 2 there is a table with a proposed delay in the Local Plan adoption from Quarter 4 2023 to Quarter 2 2026, a delay of 2 years and 6 months. The same table included Publication (pre-submission consultation) (footnote 2) moving from Quarter 2 2022 to Quarter 4 2024. The footnote stated that "Milestones based upon no further round of pre-submission consultation. If we have to consult on significant changes, there is potential for the timetable to be extended."

Question

In the next issue of the Local Development Scheme Update a period should be included in the revised dates to have public consultation for pre-submission significant changes. In fact it is confusing that in July 2021 it was stated by the Portfolio Holder that the publication stage will be for public **comment** (i.e. not consultation) but in July 2022 the publication was a pre-submission **consultation** document. Please can the Portfolio Holder clarify the Council's view on the proposed significant changes to the Local Plan and the current plans (including timescales) for all future public consultation stages of the revised Local Plan including under what Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations they will be?

6. Question from David Berry

Going forward what constructive ongoing interaction can local residents groups and organisations who have registered concerns and comments on the Draft Local Plan have direct with Dorset Council Officials during the

period of gathering further evidence and review until Quarter 2 of 2024, including access to completed studies and reports?

7. Question from Mike Allen

At the last Cabinet Cllr Walsh's statement on future housing developments in Dorset referred to "the longer-term growth needs of Dorset". He also said that "Dorset is planning ambitious growth".

Estimates of housing needs are based currently on 2014 figures. Back then the UK population was expected to grow rapidly for the foreseeable future. But falling fertility and rising numbers of deaths mean that much less growth is expected now according to the ONS and OBR. Indeed, the OBR has recently put forward a scenario in which the UK population would stabilise in the 2030s.

So, assuming these phrases are based on the Council's own research, what are the "longer term growth needs" in Dorset referred to in the Cabinet statement of 26th July and what is the Council's current justification for "planning ambitious growth"? Thank you.

Response from the Portfolio Holder for Planning to questions 1-7 from members of the public

I propose to answer questions 1 to 7 in a single response, as all of these questions are about the local plan and raise similar issues.

Cabinet will be considering a report on a revised local plan timetable, at our next meeting in October. This will include a full revised 'Local Development Scheme' or local plan programme, setting out the dates for all the milestones along the way to adoption and the opportunities for involvement.

We have not yet had any response from Government to our requests about the local plan, but have had to delay the programme in any event because of the time needed for additional evidence work, particularly relating to nutrients in Poole Harbour, following the recent letter from the Government's Chief Planner.

If we are not granted the dispensations we have asked for from Government, we will continue to work on the plan, on the new timetable. We are of course anticipating changes in the national planning system, as set out in the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill and will make changes to our plan in the light of those. They are expected to include changes to the current 'duty to cooperate' and to the methodology for working out housing requirements.

In the meantime, in areas where we have not met the requirements for the five-year housing land supply and/or housing delivery test, we will need to take this into account when considering planning applications. Any new pieces of evidence prepared for the local plan will be published online as soon as they are available.

8. Question from Colin Tracy on behalf of Dorset Climate Action Network (to be read out by Giles Watts)

Most people have been shocked by the drought this summer with the highest temperatures ever recorded leading to wildfires, water shortages and destruction of much wildlife. Nearly everyone agrees that we need to act now to reduce the impact of climate change and protect our environment. Dorset Council has made strong efforts to address its own carbon emissions (which we applaud) but has done little to address the other 99% of emissions in Dorset.

Will Dorset work with other like-minded local organisations and the general public to tackle this urgent issue and put resources towards reducing emissions in the wider county and providing mitigations against the effects of climate change?

Response from the Portfolio Holder for Highways, Travel and Environment

Dorset Council has committed to working and engaging with a range of partners and stakeholders to deliver the ambitions set out in the Climate and ecological emergency strategy, work is continuing to strengthen engagement and partnership working in this area.

9. Question from Giles Watts

We are in the midst of a very damaging cost of living crisis which is being fuelled by very high energy prices.

Will the council support some simple ideas that will help to reduce costs such as helping people to put solar panels on their roofs, retrofitting insulation and supporting community energy projects which often generate electricity at rates much lower than the national capped rate?

Response from the Portfolio Holder for Highways, Travel and Environment

The Council is working closely with a range of partners to support residents through the cost-of-living crisis. Current advice and support is available from the Dorset for you webpages.

Support includes additional investment in the Healthy Homes Dorset Programme, which can offer free impartial energy advice and for eligible residents' free loft and wall insulation. Free heating improvements may also be available.

Further opportunities for accelerating energy efficiency schemes and community energy continue to be explored.

10. Question from Giles Watts

Do you also think that Dorset would benefit from its own Energy Strategy that would provide a route-map of how Dorset will supply its future energy needs while also supporting local businesses and complying with its ambitions for reducing carbon emissions?

Response from the Portfolio Holder for Highways, Travel and Environment

This is identified as one of the actions within the Dorset Council Climate and Ecological emergency strategy and work continues to explore how best this could be achieved.

11. Question from Jennifer Morisetti

Will the council demand that all new buildings (residential and commercial) have rooftop PV solar installations as standard and how will the council facilitate installation of rooftop PV solar on existing buildings, at speed and for the general public?

Response from the Portfolio Holder for Planning

Dorset Council through a number of its climate and ecological projects is directly delivering and facilitating the take up of PV and energy efficiency measures both across its own estate, community buildings, businesses and on residential properties. However, while the council is delivering these programmes that will result in over 10MW of additional renewable generation, working within national planning policy frameworks Dorset Council cannot universally insist on the installation of PV on residential and commercial buildings. The council continues to work in partnership with government to look at how greater flexibilities can be integrated into the local plan moving forward to help us accelerate the delivery of our climate and ecological strategy ambitions.

Cllr R Bryan and I will be knocking on doors of ministers to get energy efficiencies added to future planning legislation.