

## Public Questions for Cabinet 9 July 2024

### 1. From Giles Watts, Dorset Deserves Better Campaign

It is now three years since the previous council published their draft Local Plan for Dorset. The Plan was deeply disappointing and came in for much criticism. Indeed, the former Leader of the council stated that “many residents share my view that the [draft Local Plan](#) chases housing numbers rather than prioritises local needs.”

The Dorset Deserves Better campaign was set up to persuade Dorset Council to rethink the Local Plan. For three years, Dorset Council has given no indication how it will respond to public concerns and modify the plan. Instead, we have had 3 years of delay and uncertainty.

Three priorities have emerged:

1. First, the excessive housing numbers proposed would have a damaging impact on Dorset’s exceptional natural environment and cultural heritage, green spaces and Green Belt. Excessive numbers are driven by the Standard Method with its 40% “affordability uplift”. In fact, Dorset already has enough planning permissions for 13,000 new houses (10 years’ supply at current rates).

2. Secondly, Dorset’s real housing crisis is a lack of truly affordable homes for local people, especially for social rent. The existing approach to providing affordable housing, through percentages of commercial (usually greenfield) developments, has failed to address the problem. A new approach and plan are needed.

3. Thirdly, there is little connection between planning policy and the climate and ecological emergencies declared by Dorset Council. Developments are planned on the edge of towns with little or no public transport and insufficient infrastructure. Houses are built to lower levels of insulation than will be required in future; solar panels are not installed; houses are still built with gas central heating. All this will need expensive retrofitting in a few years’ time.

**So, my question is: are you willing and minded to withdraw the existing, inadequate draft Local Plan which is a source of anguish and concern to so many residents? Instead, will you commit to produce a fresh, new Dorset Local Plan and to involve local people throughout this process?**

### 2. From Gerald Rigler Chairman of Purbeck & Poole Group of Dorset CPRE

#### Preamble

There are substantial concerns about the proposed Purbeck Local Plan since:-

It was based on the former government's "Standard Method for assessing housing need", an approach which **artificially inflated housing targets by 40%** on the spurious grounds that building excessive housing numbers would improve affordability. There is no evidence for this.

The plan for such high and excessive numbers in Purbeck (recognized for its exceptional biodiversity) involves **great damage to the countryside and communities**, including loss of Green Belt and other green spaces much valued by local people. At the same time, the plan **fails to make adequate provision for truly affordable homes for local people**.

The plan, with its excessively high and damaging housing targets was overwhelmingly rejected by 96% of local people at public consultation. The views of communities were disregarded by the then Dorset Council in taking forward the Purbeck Local Plan for Planning Inspector examination.

To adopt the Purbeck Local Plan, as proposed, would prejudice the review of the Dorset-wide Local Plan which the Leader has initiated.

### **Question**

Will Dorset Council please decline to adopt the proposed Purbeck Local Plan which, if adopted, would damage Purbeck and also prejudice the review of the Dorset-wide Local Plan that has been initiated?

### **3. From Anne Kaile, Clerk to Melbury Abbas & Cann Parish Council**

Dinah's Hollow

Why are you proposing to spend £8M when modern effective alternative schemes can be done for less than £3M?

### **4. From Roy Phillips on behalf of Olive, Freddie, Arthur and all the other children and future generations of Melbury Abbas and Dorset**

Dinah's Hollow

Given the unacceptable level of destruction of the ecology, the unacceptable level of destruction on the village and the landscape, the accepted low risk to road users, and the poor cost / benefit ratio can we ask that this scheme be again shelved until such time as a more acceptable cost effective ecological scheme is available.

### **5. From Lavinia Phillips**

Why are Dorset Council proceeding with these very expensive proposals for Dinah's Hollow, where there have been NO road accidents or injuries to road users, when promised necessary works to other local roads where there have been fatalities and serious accidents (I.E. at the Gore Clump turning) have not been addressed?

## **6. From Bernard Ede BA(Hons).pgDipLD.FLI Retired Chartered Landscape Architect & Fellow of the Landscape Institute (Written submission)**

The use of Glyphosate to kill all ground vegetation, removal of all organic material, grinding-out tree-stumps & filling hollows with sand will cause extensive habitat destruction & create an inert mineral surface of this significant ecological corridor & historic feature distinctive of the area.

The Ecological Report & Impact, Mitigation & Compensation Measures are not available on DC's portal.

Surface erosion caused by intense rainfall during construction could induce slope instability by removal of foliage & organic matter which naturally retards infiltration.

Removal of organic matter will remove a future growing-medium.

Tree stumps & their roots anchor & buttress steep slopes & their retention can form a protective coppice layer.

Drilling & installing metal pins could induce localised instability of the substrate.

Regeneration of the seed-bank, coppice regrowth & new planting are proposed.

Has the efficacy of these proposals been independently reviewed by specialist Bio-engineering & Ecological Consultants including substantiating the increase in cost from £4.3million to £8million?

## **7. From Mike Cummings**

There will undoubtedly be a significant negative impact for the ancient woodland species and habitats present if this scheme goes ahead but this has not been adequately assessed or addressed. The two mitigation measures briefly mentioned do not mitigate or compensate the impacts to the habitats present. Once the majority of the trees are cleared from the bank, the ground vegetation sprayed off with glyphosate and then ground matting installed beneath the mesh, the woodland vegetation present will be totally destroyed. This is a significant negative ecological impact and must be addressed prior to approval.

The up to date Ecological Impact Assessment for this project has not yet been written or submitted. The 2014/15 version was invalid as no surveys had been undertaken. Since then presence of Protected species (Dormice, Bats and Badgers) has been confirmed on site. Phase 2 surveys for bats have not yet been completed in line with current guidelines (BCT: Bat survey Guidelines 2023). No mitigation plan has been proposed by a Suitably Qualified Ecologist and no compensation for the very specific habitats lost have been offered. I therefore disagree that the council have been able to "carefully consider" the full ecological impact of this project.

This lack of adequate information goes against the DCC Climate and Ecology strategy 2023. The destruction of these tree lines and the ground vegetation will block connectivity for Dormice and Annex 2 bat species which are present on site (according to a brief mention in the arboricultural report submitted) this could have a major negative impact to the populations at a local level where they are already struggling. This may mean that Natural England are unable to grant licenses for the project. Under the NPPF and the Habitat Regulations

these issues must be fully assessed and a mitigation and compensation strategy approved prior to any determination of the feasibility of this heavy handed project.

Its clearly stated in the report that the is no “evidence of major failure” and whilst the “do nothing” approach is clearly not enough the drastic denuding of the banks of nearly all the trees and vegetation is far in excess of what’s needed to secure these ancient banks and it coming at great cost to the tax payer.

How can you back up the claim in your infographic (5.4) which states that this scheme will deliver a “major positive impact” to “Natural assets”. This appears to be a totally inaccurate and un substantiated claim in the absence of full Ecological Impact assessment and full mitigation and compensation plans.

## **8. From Richard Thomas (Written submission)**

Sustainable Shaftesbury

My apologies for being unable to present this question in person or remotely as I am chairing a meeting of Shaftesbury Town Council's Sustainable Shaftesbury Advisory Committee at precisely the time of your meeting, but I would appreciate a written response at your earliest convenience.

My question is:

Given your public statement following election that you want Dorset Council to work much more closely with town and parish councils, how do you intend to do this and when, and in particular, given that your climate and ecological policy team are now in possession of the Sustainable Shaftesbury Strategy & Action Plan adopted by Shaftesbury Town Council in February 2024, how far are you prepared to take account of ideas and actions suggested by town and parish councils to meet the climate and nature emergency in Dorset and to help them with local project advice, support and funding?