

Cabinet

25 February 2025

Local Development Scheme Update

For Decision

Cabinet Member and Portfolio:

Cllr S Bartlett, Planning and Emergency Planning

Local Councillor(s): All

Executive Director:

J Britton, Executive Director for Place Services

Report Author: Terry Sneller
Job Title: Strategic Planning Manager
Tel: 01305 838224
Email: terry.sneller@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

Report Status: Public (the exemption paragraph is N/A)

Brief Summary:

An update of the Local Development Scheme to establish the timetable for the production of the Dorset Council Local Plan, the Dorset Council Minerals Plan, the Dorset Council Waste Plan, various neighbourhood plans and other planning policy documents. This update is required in response to the request from the Deputy Prime Minister for all local planning authorities to update their Local Development Scheme by 6 March 2025¹.

Preparing an updated Local Development Scheme accords with Dorset Council's vision of *Working together to create a fairer, more prosperous and more sustainable Dorset for current and future generations*, by clearly setting out the timetable for the production of various planning documents. The Local Development Scheme includes anticipated timings for consultation when local

¹ In light of the changes to the NPPF, the Deputy Prime Minister has asked that all local planning authorities produce an updated Local Development Scheme (LDS) within 12 weeks of the publication of the NPPF, i.e. by no later than 6 March 2025. [Chief Planner's newsletter December 2024](#)

people and developers will be able to have input into the Local Plan. Producing the development plan documents that feature within the Local Development Scheme helps to meet the Council's priorities.

Recommendation:

That Cabinet:

- i. makes the decision to continue with the current plan-making system but to review this at the point the new plan-making system is in place.
- ii. agrees the revised Local Development Scheme and key programme milestones for development plan preparation contained within it, and to bring it into effect on 5 March 2025.
- iii. agrees to the Local Development Scheme being published on the Dorset Council website.
- iv. agrees to a copy of the Local Development Scheme being submitted to the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government by 6 March 2025 to comply with the request from the Deputy Prime Minister.
- v. make the decision to continue to produce a Local Plan separate from the Minerals plan and Waste plan but to undertake a review of this approach once the new plan-making system is introduced.

Reason for Recommendation:

To respond to the request from the Deputy Prime Minister for all Local Planning Authorities to update their Local Development Scheme within 12 weeks of the publication of the revised National Planning Policy Framework. The revised Local Development Scheme needs to be agreed with a copy being sent to the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government by 6 March 2025.

1. Report

- 1.1 Dorset Council is required to prepare and maintain a Local Development Scheme (LDS) that specifies the development plan documents it intends to prepare for the Dorset area. By doing so, the Council will give clarity to local communities and other interested parties on progress in producing these important planning documents.
- 1.2 Development Plan Documents that are included within the LDS are the Dorset Council Local Plan, the Minerals Plan and the Waste Plan.

- 1.3 The other planning documents that are being produced within the area should also be set out in the LDS to give further clarity to local communities. These other documents include Neighbourhood Plans, the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) documents and Design Guides. The up-to-date LDS should be made publicly available on the Council's website.

2. The Dorset Council Local Plan

- 2.1 In June 2019, Dorset Council made the decision to start work on producing a single Dorset Council Local Plan to replace all the current adopted Local Plans. The most recent LDS for this plan production was agreed in March 2023 but is now in need of a refresh in the light of changes to national planning policy.
- 2.2 Work on the Local Plan has progressed with consultation on a full draft Local Plan in January 2021. A range of evidence studies have been produced to support the Local Plan's production. However, work to progress the Local Plan beyond this 2021 consultation has been affected by a number of factors.
- 2.3 In March 2022, Natural England updated their advice for development proposals that have the potential to affect water quality in internationally protected habitats sites requiring development proposals to demonstrate that they can achieve nutrient neutrality. This advice applied to five catchments that affect Dorset and cover a large part of the Dorset Council area.
- 2.4 It also became clear after the 2021 consultation that there was a need to undertake further work in response to flood risk in Weymouth and to identify further options for meeting the needs of gypsies and travellers.
- 2.5 In December 2024, a revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published. This included a new, binding approach to calculating housing requirements for local planning authorities which has resulted in a significantly higher housing target for Dorset of 3,219 new homes per annum. This target is approximately 80% above the previous target and around double the rates of past delivery.
- 2.6 In addition to the NPPF, there have been various reforms to the planning system either introduced or pending including extensive changes to plan-making and a forthcoming consultation on a set of National Development

Management Policies. The Government has confirmed its intent to continue with reform to the plan-making system.

- 2.7 Transitional arrangements have been put in place for those local plans being produced under the current plan-making system but with the emphasis being for all local planning authorities to have an up-to-date local plan in place. For Dorset, these transitional arrangements set a target of submitting the local plan for examination by December 2026.
- 2.8 Meeting the December 2026 deadline will be ambitious given the amount of work that is needed and the uncertainty arising from changes to the national plan-making system. There will be a need to undertake consultation later this year which will focus on site options for meeting the housing target. The results of the consultation would then be analysed and put together to form a draft Local Plan which would be subject to a further round of consultation in August 2026. It is likely that the examination and adoption of the plan would then take place in 2027.
- 2.9 The alternative to progressing the Local Plan under the current plan-making system would be to transition onto the new plan-making system. The Government has indicated that the new plan-making system will be introduced in Summer/Autumn 2025 but at this point in time, there is uncertainty around this timetable.
- 2.10 There is also uncertainty around the process for preparing a local plan under the new system and how long this may take. Previously, the Government had made preparations for a streamlined 30-month plan-making timetable preceded with a 4-month scoping period. If the 30-month timetable is retained when the new plan-making system is introduced, it could potentially be possible to adopt a new style Local Plan by mid-2028 if work commenced immediately when the new system is introduced in Summer/Autumn 2025.
- 2.11 Having an up-to-date local plan is crucial to ensure Dorset is able to set out a clear vision and strategy for sustainable development, taking into consideration the national drive for housing delivery, economic growth and securing comprehensive coverage of development plan policies across the country. Therefore, progressing the local plan to adoption via the quickest route is recommended. As such, proceeding under the current plan-making arrangement and aiming to meet the December 2026 deadline is proposed.

- 2.12 There are risks associated with this approach which may require a re-evaluation of the timetable. These include:
- a) Not managing to undertake all of the work necessary to meet the December 2026 deadline. This could be as a result of changes to national planning policy, or a significant number of issues being raised through the consultation process.
 - b) The changes to the plan-making system being introduced early and with a significantly streamlines approach which makes the new approach more attractive. This could be as a result of new transitional arrangements or the introduction of the new National Development Management Policies.
- 2.13 The LDS will need to be regularly reviewed and, where necessary updated as further detail of the new plan-making system becomes apparent.

3. The Dorset Council Minerals Plan and Waste Plan

- 3.1 The Minerals Strategy 2014 and Minerals Sites Plan 2019, and the Waste Plan 2019 require review as they were adopted more than five years ago. The review will enable the plans to be updated to reflect any changes that have taken place since their adoption and enable new sites to be considered to meet the need for minerals development and waste facilities.
- 3.2 With changes being made to the plan-making system, the review of the Minerals Local Plan and Waste Local Plan will need to follow the new process, with the earliest start date being Autumn 2025.
- 3.3 Consultation by the previous Government on changes to the plan-making system suggested three possible routes² for the production of minerals and waste plans, these were:
- a. as a single document – a minerals and waste plan
 - b. separately – a minerals plan and a waste plan
 - c. where possible through local government structure, incorporated as part of a local plan.

² Paragraph 207 [Levelling-up and Regeneration Bill: consultation on implementation of plan-making reforms](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/levelling-up-and-regeneration-bill-consultation-on-implementation-of-plan-making-reforms) - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

- 3.4 This creates options for the production of the Dorset Minerals and Waste Plans. One option would be to incorporate minerals or waste policies and proposals into the emerging Dorset Council Local Plan.
- 3.5 However, currently the Minerals Strategy 2014 and Minerals Sites Plan 2019, and the Waste Plan 2019 cover the whole of Dorset and therefore there is a single unified approach to decision making across the area. Having been adopted relatively recently, they also make sufficient provision to meet needs for the short to medium term. This is not the case for the Local Plan where there are four legacy local plans each with different strategies and policies, giving a fragmented approach to decision making across Dorset. In addition, housing provision in the adopted Local Plans falls short of the new housing targets for Dorset.
- 3.6 Work on producing the Minerals and Waste Plan is at a very early stage. There will be a need to identify the waste and minerals issues for Dorset, gather evidence to support proposal and to undertake consultation. This additional work and consultation would risk the Dorset Council Local Plan not meeting the December 2026 deadline. It would also put immediate additional resource requirements on the Local Plan budget.
- 3.7 At this point, it is recommended that the Dorset Council Local Plan is progressed separately from the Minerals and Waste Plan to enable it to progress quickly towards adoption. However, when the new plan-making system is introduced, this approach could be reviewed to consider whether to incorporate both plans into a single plan covering all of the issues.

4. The Dorset Council Design Guide

- 4.1 The area covered by Dorset Council varies significantly in character. As such a design code that covers the whole of the area would be a significant undertaking and would struggle to effectively address all of the design related issues in sufficient detail whilst being produced in a timely fashion. It is also recognised that local communities may want to play a role in producing a design code.
- 4.2 For these reasons, a design guide covering general design issues found across the whole of the Dorset Council area will be produced. This will provide a framework for more localised area specific and topic specific design codes to be prepared where necessary. It also enables the production of design codes as part of the Neighbourhood Planning process where the appetite exists locally.

- 4.3 It is anticipated that the design guide for the Dorset Council area will take approximately one year to prepare. There will then be a period of engagement before the Guide is adopted in mid to late 2026.

5. Neighbourhood Plans

- 5.1 There are a number of neighbourhood plans being prepared across Dorset and since the last LDS was prepared a number of these plans have been made part of the development plan. The list of made and proposed neighbourhood plans has been updated within the revised LDS.

6. Community Infrastructure Levy

- 6.1 The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) is charged in all of the former district and borough council areas except North Dorset.
- 6.2 In the future, there is uncertainty about how infrastructure delivery will be supported through development contributions. The government have indicated that a review of CIL will be undertaken but the detail of this is unknown at this stage.

7. Financial Implications

- 7.1 This is an amendment to the timetable for the production of the Dorset Council Local Plan. The local plan and other planning documents are being produced from existing budgets, including reserves that have been safeguarded for this purpose. However, the costs associated with the collection of evidence to support the local plan have increased in part due to the changes to the planning system. As such, there will be a need for additional resources to take all the necessary documents to the point where they can be adopted.
- 7.2 The revised timetable for the local plan will have implications for the implementation of a revised Community Infrastructure Levy charge across Dorset as will the timetable for its replacement with the Infrastructure Levy.

8. Natural Environment, Climate & Ecology Implications

- 8.1 No climate decision-wheel has been included for this report as the LDS will set the timetable for future planning policy documents that the Council intends to produce. Each of these planning policy documents will need to be supported by a climate decision-wheel.
- 8.2 One of the roles of the Dorset Council Local Plan is to manage where development takes place and the form that this development takes. The

Dorset Council Local Plan and other planning documents will provide an opportunity to ensure developments respond to the climate and ecological emergencies. In the interim period, before the Local Plan is adopted, development will be considered against the adopted local plan policies having regard to the Council's Climate Change Interim Position Statements³.

9. Well-being and Health Implications

- 9.1 The updated Local Development Scheme will not have Well-being and Health implications.

10. Other Implications

- 10.1 By updating the Local Development Scheme setting out the timetable for the production of the various Development Plan Documents, including the Dorset Council Local Plan, gives certainty to local communities and businesses on the Council's intentions on the development plan.

11. Risk Assessment

- 11.1 The Government have indicated that they intend to have in place the regulations, policy and guidance by autumn 2025 to enable the preparation of the first new-style local plans and minerals and waste plans. However, as there is uncertainty around this timetable, efforts will be made to produce the Dorset Council Local Plan under the current plan-making system with a target date of submission by December 2026. Should the new plan-making system be implemented as intended, consideration will be given to whether the Local Plan will proceed as planned or transition onto the new plan-making system.
- 11.2 **HAVING CONSIDERED:** the risks associated with this decision; the level of risk has been identified as:

Current Risk: medium

Residual Risk: medium

12. Equalities Impact Assessment

- 12.1 An Equalities Impact Assessment has been prepared for the Dorset Council Local Plan. As this revised LDS amends the timetable for the production of the local plan, along with other updates, it is not considered

³ [Planning for climate change - Dorset Council](#)

to have an impact on any groups protected under the Equalities Act. During the process of preparing the various Plans detailed in the LDS, the Equalities Impact Assessments will be refreshed and updated.

<https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/your-council/equality-and-diversity/equality-impact-assessments/place/dorset-council-local-plan-draft-options-eqia/dorset-council-local-plan-draft-options-eqia.aspx>

13. Appendices

Appendix 1: Updated Local Development Scheme

14. Background Papers

[Chief Planner's newsletter December 2024](#)

15. Report Sign Off

11.1 This report has been through the internal report clearance process and has been signed off by the Director for Legal and Democratic (Monitoring Officer), the Executive Director for Corporate Development (Section 151 Officer) and the appropriate Portfolio Holder(s).