

FULL COUNCIL

MOTION ON NOTICE

Date of Council Meeting: - 22 October 2026

Title of Motion: - Viability as a material planning consideration

Proposer: - Cllr S Flower

Seconder: - Cllr B Quayle

Supported by: - Cllrs A Parry, T Coombs, S Gibson, V Potheary, C Monks, J Haynes, C Lugg, M Goringe, G Suttle, C Tomes, J Robinson, R Bryan, S Jespersen, C Jones, S Murcer and A Skeats

Motion Narrative and Action Required

Dorset Council has ambitions for the delivery of Affordable Housing for local people for rent or shared equity. However, this desired outcome is considerably constrained whilst viability remains as a material planning consideration.

The Dorset Plan 2024-2029 sets out Dorset Council's vision to create a fairer, more prosperous, and sustainable Dorset for current and future generations includes the provision of affordable and high-quality housing – addressing the chronic shortage of affordable homes for local people, improving housing standards, and supporting vulnerable residents. Targets include delivering 500 new affordable homes, increasing annually; reducing temporary accommodation, eliminating family use of bed and breakfast by 2028 and importantly getting local people off the housing waiting list.

Dorset Local Plan which is scheduled for adoption in 2029 has housing targets for the Dorset Council area of 3,246 homes per annum, totalling in the order of 50,000 new homes during the lifetime of the plan. Site allocations for affordable housing @ circa 30% would provide 15,000 dwellings, which will be at huge risk whilst viability remains a material planning consideration in its current form.

Viability, as set out in national planning policy, is a significant barrier to Dorset Council's ability to secure affordable homes as part of open market housing developments. Social housing is vital in helping local people remain in the area, work locally and raise a family.

Too often developers gain planning permission for a scheme, including an allocation of affordable housing, only to revert to the planning authority months later with a spread sheet to support a claim that the scheme is no longer viable. This situation is

both unfair and unsustainable, circumventing the policy of providing social housing for rent or shared equity and in doing so undermining the status of our emerging local plan.

There is no doubt that the ongoing requirement of considering scheme viability as a material planning consideration, is and will continue to have, a huge negative impact on the council's ability to facilitate the building of affordable housing for rent or shared equity through local plan policy. Without radical reform of national policy, developers will continue to circumvent Local Plan Policy, to the detriment of local people.

Therefore, I propose the following motion:

THAT the administration will commit to lobbying Government for changes to the viability provisions set out in national policy so that this council is able to comply with its own policies as set out the Dorset Plan and the emerging Dorset Local Plan.

THAT the Leader of Council will write to the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government setting out these concerns, seeking changes to national guidance on the matter of viability. Furthermore, in doing so he will seek cross-party support from other Group Leaders to be co-signatories to the letter.

This approach should enable Strategic Planning Authorities to support the Central Government policy to provide social housing for rent or shared equity for local people.