

Report to the parish council 30/8/2025

Cllr Jill Haynes Chalk Valleys Ward

Dear Clerks, councillors and members of the public please find below my report for August 2025. I have concentrated this report on the new Local Plan Consultation which is a complex document, and it is vital that as many people as possible get involved and make comments. The best way to do this is online and the details of how to do this are at the bottom of this report.

The consultation on the first draft of this Local Plan opened on 18th August 25 and will run until 13th October 25. The principal purpose of this first informal consultation is to identify offers of land brought forward by developers and landowners. This land is not purely for housing but also includes employment land, land for potential solar and wind farms and sites for Gypsy and Travellers and is looking at a vision for 2043.

Planning Authorities must include all offers of land in the consultation. If the council does not do this then it can be open to legal challenge from a landowner or developer whose land has been subject to an internal "sifting" process and therefore not included in proposed land allocations in the consultation process.

This is an informal consultation which gives communities, parish councils, other interested organisations and local members the opportunity to challenge land being offered for development. Approximately 50% of the proposed sites are likely to fall away as they are found unsuitable for a variety of reasons.

Central Government has imposed an 80% increase in the statutory housing targets which the council must provide land allocation. The council must now provide 3264 new houses per year for the life of the plan; this is for the Dorset council area and does not include Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council area of Dorset.

From October this year Dorset Council will no longer have a 5 year housing land supply. Without this 5 year supply there is a presumption of permission for most developments. Even if the council refuse developments they are likely to win on appeal without the 5 year land supply.

There are currently 10,000 planning permissions for housing granted but not being developed. In addition, there are further sites in either the old District Council Local Plans or designated development areas in Neighbourhood Plans which account for 12,00 more houses. This still leaves the council needing to find land for a further 25,000 houses. As far as I am aware the Secretary of State has not been challenged on the proposed numbers for Dorset by either the Leader of the Council or the Cabinet member. We should not just give in but fight this massive rise in housing numbers without any needs assessment; but there does not appear to be an appetite for this in the current leadership.

The new plan must be ready to go to the Secretary of State by December 2026 and the Draft Plan will be will need to be published by the middle of next year for further public comment. The final draft will also include a series of new planning policies.

Some of the changes to policy are out for consultation at the moment and in particular I would like to draw attention to the removal of development boundaries/envelopes in our towns and our larger villages. In the Chalk Valleys Ward this applies only to Cerne Abbas but also will affect our local towns of Dorchester, Sherborne and Blandford. I find that I cannot agree to the removal of this protection

just to enable further development. We must have some form of control on where additional development happens in bigger settlements.

Central Government has withdrawn all funding for Neighbourhood Plans and as they are expensive to create or renew it is likely that they will become obsolete and not influence planning decisions as they become out of date. This is a terrible move and takes away any local say in development by the local community. We can no longer rely on Neighbourhood Plans to provide local protection. The only way going forward for local people to have a say in future development is for a strong voice in these Dorset Local Plan Consultations.

There are a number of anomalies in the draft document! For example, at 5.2 in the document there is the proposal to remove the boundaries and call these “flexible settlements”. However, just a few pages on there is a proposed policy of allowing up to 30 houses at a time outside the development boundary as long as the development abuts the existing boundary!! These 30 house developments would not be permitted in the green belt (which is only in the east of the county anyway). The new policy states these small developments would help local developers but to my knowledge there are no small developers who could manage as many as 30 houses. They either do 1 or 2 houses or they are like Frys and Wyatts and do about 150 at a time. The new policy also proposes that a second 30 house development in the same settlement cannot be granted unless the first one is started. I feel that this should say completed not started, we all know developers put in the drive entrance – that counts as started – and then they sit on the asset; hence the 10,000 granted permissions which are not built.

At no point is there mention of appropriate infrastructure to go with new developments. This can have a very detrimental effect, particularly in rural areas. No access to GP surgeries, insufficient places in schools and limited public transport. This also does not address the cost to the council itself in bussing children to school and providing social care to adults in rural areas.

Finally, despite the Government requirement to provide the land allocation for all this additional housing I can't ever see it working as we struggle to get the existing allocation of 1793. How will we get developers geared up to build all these extra houses in a time of a slow economy and just two years to build and complete these houses? What I believe will happen is that we will agree a plan and set out in 2027 but do not complete the target number. What happens then is that the number we do not get built is added to the 3246 required in 2028 total plus a buffer which the Government sets making a substantially larger total number requiring to be built that year – a target which is also missed and so the numbers game continues. Meanwhile as we haven't met our targets then most development will be granted on appeal whether, we like it or not!!

I am most disappointed that the current administration has not gone with the two new settlements that were being proposed after the last local plan consultation in 2023. If they had there would have been the possibility to masterplan the new developments to ensure appropriate infrastructure, and we would not be getting these pepper pot developments with no additional facilities. There would also have been a reason to challenge the timing of the building as this would have been spread throughout the period of the plan in a similar way to the Poundbury development.

Public information sessions are being held nearby on both the Local Plan and the Local Transport Plan. Please get involved and ensure that the voice of our rural communities is heard.

Blandford	9th September at Royal British Legion Club	2pm – 7pm
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Dorchester	11th September at the Corn Exchange	2pm – 7pm
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Sherborne	7th October at the Digby Hall	2pm – 7pm
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View the documents and complete the response questionnaire at:

dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/dorset-is-changing

There are a lot of questions but you don't have to answer all of them just those that are relevant to you and your community,

Kind regards

Jill

