



Dorset Council Local Plan Options Consultation August 2025



Dorset is changing – help us shape it.

Dorset Council is preparing a new Local Plan to guide development. The consultation explores how much development we should provide and identifies opportunity sites for new homes, employment land and traveller sites. It also identifies areas of opportunity for wind and solar power.

The Local Plan options consultation is available to view at www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/dorset-is-changing. You can comment on the Local Plan by completing all or part of this survey online or by using this form. You can also view the site options on a map online and make your comments. Alternatively comment on the site options using the site response form. You can view a paper copy of the Local Plan Options Consultation at your local Dorset library or at County Hall, Dorchester.

If you need help with the survey, please contact the Planning Policy team at planningpolicyconsult@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk or 01305 838334.

You are able to give your views between 18 August 2025 and 13 October 2025.

**The consultation will begin on
18 August 2025 and end on 13 October 2025**

How can I make a comment?

To give your views, please:

- Make sure you give your name and either postal or email address along with your postcode so that your response can be considered appropriately.
- Use the official form.
- Make your comments within the consultation period to ensure they are considered.
- If you are part of a group that shares a common view, please include a list of the contact details of each person (including names, addresses, emails, telephone numbers and signatures) along with a completed form providing details of the named lead representative.
- Continue on separate sheets if necessary.

Please note:

- Representations cannot be treated as confidential. By completing a representation, you agree to your name (but not your address) and comments being made available for public viewing.
- The council do not accept any responsibility for the contents of the comments submitted. We reserve the right to remove any comments containing defamatory, abusive or malicious allegations.

You can respond:

Online

View the consultation and submit your response online via the following link:

www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/dorset-is-changing

The benefits of providing your response this way are as follows:

- less impact on the environment as we do not need to use paper or postage
- you will be emailed a copy of your response as confirmation once submitted
- you will be able to start your response, save it, and return to it at a later date - a confirmation email will send you a link to where you left off
- using the online survey greatly assists our analysis of the responses, enabling more efficient and effective consideration of the issues raised

E-mail

We can also accept responses emailed to us, preferably using this form.

planningpolicyconsult@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

Written responses

There are paper copies of the response form available upon request for those without internet or computer access.

Please telephone **01305 838334** to request a copy.

Responses returned by post should reference the **Dorset Council Local Plan Consultation 2025** and be sent to the **Spatial Planning Team, Dorset Council, County Hall, Colliton Park, Dorchester, Dorset DT1 1XJ**.

Part A

Please complete one part A form

	Individual	Agent (if applicable)
Name*	Councillor Richard King	Click or tap here to enter text.
Organisation	Netherbury Parish Council	Click or tap here to enter text.
Address line 1*	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
Address line 2	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
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Postcode*		Click or tap here to enter text.
Email address*	clerk@netherburyparishcouncil.gov.uk	Click or tap here to enter text.

Client's details if applicable:

Name*	Click or tap here to enter text.
Organisation	Click or tap here to enter text.
Address line 1*	Click or tap here to enter text.
Address line 2	Click or tap here to enter text.
Address line 3	Click or tap here to enter text.
Town	Click or tap here to enter text.
Postcode*	Click or tap here to enter text.
Email address*	Click or tap here to enter text.

*essential fields

Group representations

If your representation is on behalf of a group, ensure the lead representative completes the contact details box above. Also, please state here how many people support the representation:

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Part B

Consultation questions

Section 2: Vision and Strategic Priorities

2.1. The Local Plan Vision

Question 1: Do you have any comments on the proposed vision for Dorset?

From the point of view of rural West Dorset, the proposed vision for Dorset includes many welcome aims, particularly the emphasis on preserving the area's natural beauty, biodiversity, and heritage. Rural West Dorset is defined by its rich landscapes, small historic towns, and close-knit communities – all of which are key to both its character and its long-term sustainability. We are pleased to see recognition that towns and larger villages will act as hubs for their surrounding rural areas. This approach is vital in supporting rural communities with access to services, jobs, and public transport – but it must be backed by real investment to ensure rural areas are not left behind. While the vision supports rural service hubs, many smaller villages already struggle with reduced public transport, healthcare access, and affordable housing. It's essential that the vision translates into practical support for rural infrastructure, not just growth in the main centres. The vision should emphasise infrastructure delivery in advance of development, not after. High-quality, affordable homes that are suitable for local families and younger generations are urgently needed in rural West Dorset. New development should genuinely meet local needs, not just market demand. It must include a firm commitment to aligning the Local Plan with the Local Transport Plan (LTP4), so that housing growth is supported by the necessary transport and connectivity improvements. We support the commitment to protect and enhance the natural environment. However, in rural areas, development must be carefully managed to avoid damaging sensitive landscapes and habitats. Development should not override good sustainable agriculture practice which, in most cases, has created this environment which should be protected. Strong, enforceable environmental protections will be crucial. There is a welcome focus on jobs and prosperity, but more detail is needed on how rural economies – especially agriculture, tourism, and small businesses – will be supported. Digital connectivity and local skills training will be key.

2.2. Strategic priorities

Question 2: Do you have any comments on the proposed strategic priorities for the Local Plan?

The strategic priorities outlined in the Local Plan are broadly positive and reflect many of the key issues that matter to residents in rural West Dorset. However, to ensure these priorities work in practice for smaller, more remote communities, we offer the following comments:

PROVIDE AFFORDABLE AND HIGH-QUALITY HOMES - We welcome the plan to involve community land trusts, parish councils, and local housing partners. However, delivery must ensure that housing is genuinely affordable based on local incomes, well-designed to reflect local character, built in small, sustainable numbers in rural villages, avoiding overdevelopment and supported by local infrastructure – including schools, GP services, and public transport. Without this, new homes risk adding to pressures on already stretched rural services.

GROW OUR ECONOMY - Rural areas have often been overlooked in economic development strategies. While we support the focus on sustainable economic growth, rural West Dorset needs tailored support that recognises its strengths and challenges. We call for support for small businesses, agriculture, tourism, and craft industries, improved digital connectivity, especially in rural areas with poor broadband and mobile signal, more flexible workspaces and home-working support and transport infrastructure that links rural areas to employment hubs without increasing car dependency. The Plan should ensure that economic growth benefits all parts of Dorset, not just the more connected urban centres.

COMMUNITIES FOR ALL - We strongly support the ambition to build strong, healthy communities, but rural communities face specific risks, the loss of services (e.g. local shops, GPs, libraries, and post offices, limited access to youth services and support for ageing populations, infrequent or non-existent public transport. To build resilient rural communities, the Plan must encourage young people, multi-use community facilities that meet local needs, secure green spaces and recreation areas in every development and ensure development is matched with service provision, not just housing numbers. Community involvement in decision-making must be meaningful and early in the process.

RESPONDING TO THE CLIMATE AND NATURE EMERGENCY - Rural West Dorset's landscape and biodiversity are among its greatest assets. We welcome the Local Plan's commitment to reducing emissions, supporting nature recovery, and building climate resilience. However, development in rural areas must avoid harm to sensitive landscapes and habitats. Environmental priorities (Dorset National Landscape, biodiversity) need to be stronger and clearly enforceable, including more detail on implementation and monitoring, to include protection of agricultural land, where appropriate. Renewable energy should be supported, but appropriately located to avoid landscape and wildlife harm. Green infrastructure must be integrated into all developments, especially in areas with high ecological value. Sustainable transport and active travel routes should be accessible to rural residents, not just those in larger towns. We urge Dorset Council to adopt a rural-proofing approach across all strategic priorities, ensuring inclusive, balanced, and genuinely sustainable development for the whole county.

Section 3: The strategy for sustainable development

3.2. The Strategy for Dorset

Question 3: The proposed settlement hierarchy lists the towns and villages that will be the focus for new homes. Are there other settlements where we should plan for new homes? Do you have any comments on whether a settlement is in the right Tier or not?

We welcome the recognition in the draft Local Plan that the Western Area of Dorset is distinct, characterised by its deeply rural nature, environmental sensitivity, and limited connectivity. It is vital that these characteristics are fully taken into account when deciding where, and how much, development should take place. The use of a settlement hierarchy is a sensible approach to focus growth in the most sustainable locations. However, we would urge Dorset Council to apply this strategy flexibly and proportionately in rural West Dorset. Some of the current Tier placements may need re-evaluation based on local knowledge and changing circumstances. Some small settlements in rural West Dorset, while not major service centres, may still be suitable for small-scale, community-led development to support local needs especially affordable homes for younger families or downsizing options for older residents. These types of villages may not justify higher-tier status, but the Plan should allow for exception sites, infill development, or support via community land trusts, even if they are not listed as growth locations. We suggest a review of Tier placement for some settlements, especially where the availability of local services has changed (e.g. closure of shops, pubs, or schools), where there are public transport limitations that reduce sustainability and where there is strong community demand for housing that isn't being met under current tiering. Beaminster is rightly identified as a key settlement, but its infrastructure is under strain and future growth should be carefully phased and matched with improvements to healthcare, education, and transport. Lyme Regis faces major constraints from topography, roads, and National Landscape designation. It may not be suitable for significant new allocations, despite being in a higher tier. Settlements like Bridport are already under pressure. While some growth is appropriate, excessive housing allocations here could worsen including traffic congestion, GP and school access issues, strain on sewage and drainage systems and loss of local character and green gaps. A more dispersed approach to growth, allowing for modest, well-designed development in multiple rural settlements, may better preserve the character and sustainability of West Dorset. In summary, we support the idea of a settlement hierarchy, but urge Dorset Council to apply it flexibly in rural West Dorset, allow for modest growth in smaller settlements where appropriate, review Tier placements based on current realities and community needs and avoid concentrating development in a few towns already facing infrastructure and environmental pressure. This approach would help to maintain the vitality of rural West Dorset's communities while still respecting the area's landscape, heritage, and ecological importance.

3.3. South Eastern Dorset area

Question 4: Do you have any comments on the proposed strategy for the south eastern area?

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3.4. Central Dorset area

Question 5: Do you have any comments on the proposed strategy for the central area?

Click or tap here to enter text.

3.5. Northern Dorset area

Question 6: Do you have any comments on the proposed strategy for the northern area?

Click or tap here to enter text.

3.6. Western Dorset area

Question 7: Do you have any comments on the proposed strategy for the western area?

We welcome the recognition in the draft Local Plan that the Western Area of Dorset is distinct, characterised by its deeply rural nature, environmental sensitivity, and limited connectivity. It is imperative that these characteristics are fully taken into account when deciding where, and how much, development should take place. It is also vital that green energy sites are clearly identified and that residents have the chance to comment once these are published. Beaminster is rightly identified as a key settlement, but its infrastructure is under strain and future growth should be carefully phased and matched with improvements to healthcare, education, and transport. Lyme Regis faces major constraints from topography, roads, and National Landscape designation. It may not be suitable for significant new allocations, despite being in a higher tier. Settlements like Bridport are already under pressure. While some growth is appropriate, excessive housing allocations here could worsen including traffic congestion, GP and school access issues, strain on sewage and drainage systems and loss of local character and green gaps. A more dispersed approach to growth, allowing for modest, well-designed development in multiple rural settlements, may better preserve the character and sustainability of West Dorset. Netherbury Parish Council and our local community would like to know where the funds for essential investment will come from, how it will be financed, and whether there is a firm commitment to deliver it.

3.7. Infrastructure Delivery

Question 8: Is there any important infrastructure that needs to be delivered alongside new homes in the Western/Central/South Eastern/Northern area?

We welcome the recognition that infrastructure is a key component of sustainable development. In rural West Dorset, however, the existing infrastructure is often already fragile or insufficient, and without targeted investment, even modest levels of new development could put unsustainable pressure on essential services. We therefore strongly support Dorset Council's intention to plan for and secure infrastructure in advance of, or alongside, development, not as an afterthought. Public transport is extremely limited in many rural areas, leaving residents heavily reliant on private cars. We urge the Council to improve bus routes and frequency, especially to/from market towns like Bridport, Beaminster, and Lyme Regis, explore community transport schemes for isolated villages and provide safe walking and cycling links between villages and service centres. Without real alternatives to car travel, claims of "sustainable development" in rural locations are undermined. Access to GPs, pharmacies, dentists, and community health services is already difficult in some rural areas, with long waiting times and closures of smaller practices. New housing must be supported by expanded or new healthcare facilities, including mobile health services and contributions from development ring-fenced for local health infrastructure. Local primary schools are central to rural communities but many face falling rolls or limited capacity. Secondary schools often require long travel distances, especially for villages not served by school transport. Growth should be matched with investment in school places, particularly at primary level and safe and reliable school transport options. Rural areas often struggle with ageing drainage systems, limited mains water supply, and electricity grid capacity. In some areas, surface water flooding and sewage overflows are becoming more frequent. Before development is approved, site-specific infrastructure assessments must ensure adequate sewage and stormwater capacity, upgrades to electricity and broadband infrastructure and access to renewable energy opportunities, where appropriate. Poor broadband and mobile coverage continue to disadvantage rural residents and businesses. This must be prioritised as critical infrastructure, especially for enabling home working and digital access to services. The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and Section 106 agreements must be transparent, fairly allocated across both urban and rural areas and used to fund infrastructure where the impact of development is felt, not just where it is most visible. For rural West Dorset, infrastructure planning is not just about enabling growth - it is essential to preserving the viability, sustainability, and resilience of our communities. Without real improvements in transport, healthcare, utilities, and digital connectivity, new development risks placing further strain on already stretched services and weakening the fabric of rural life. We urge Dorset Council to embed rural infrastructure priorities into the Local Plan and ensure that development is always matched by the delivery of the services and facilities rural communities need to thrive. Netherbury Parish Council and our local community would like to know where the funds for essential investment will come from, how it will be financed, and whether there is a firm commitment to deliver it.

Section 4: Housing Delivery Strategy

4.2. Local Housing Need and Housing Delivery

Question 9: The Local Plan sets out a strategy to meet the area's housing needs through

We understand the challenges Dorset Council faces in meeting housing targets, particularly in the short term, and we welcome the acknowledgment that a flexible, multi-faceted approach is needed. We believe that there are additional measures that could help deliver the right homes in the right places, especially in rural areas like West Dorset.

SUPPORT MORE COMMUNITY-LED HOUSING - community land trusts (CLTs) and other locally driven schemes can deliver truly affordable homes tailored to local need. Dorset has an active network of CLTs, these should be proactively supported with funding, planning support, and land release, especially on small rural exception sites. Such housing often has strong local backing and helps retain younger generations and key workers in villages.

UNLOCK SMALL-SCALE RURAL SITES WITH LOCAL BENEFIT -the focus on large allocations is understandable, but many small windfall sites and infill opportunities exist in rural West Dorset. A positive and flexible planning framework that supports modest development (e.g. 2–10 homes) in appropriate rural locations can cumulatively deliver significant numbers without overwhelming infrastructure. Policy should also enable barn conversions and rural exception housing where they meet strict local need and design quality.

MAKE BETTER USE OF EMPTY HOMES AND UNDERUSED BUILDINGS - bringing empty homes back into use is a low-impact, sustainable way to increase housing stock. Dorset Council should continue to incentivise and support renovation of long-term vacant properties, especially in market towns and smaller villages. Similarly, policies should promote conversion of redundant commercial and agricultural buildings, with careful design to maintain rural character.

PRIORITISE AFFORDABLE AND SOCIAL HOUSING DELIVERY - much of Dorset's housing need is not just about numbers, but about affordability. The Council should explore higher affordable housing quotas on new sites, partnering with registered providers to deliver rented homes, not just discounted market sale, ring-fencing funds from the Community Infrastructure Levy or Section 106 agreements for affordable housing in rural communities.

ENABLE FASTER DELIVERY OF PERMITTED SITES - many sites with planning permission in Dorset remain undelivered or delayed. The Council could work more closely with developers and landowners to bring forward sites more quickly, use phased release or delivery targets on larger sites and consider planning performance agreements to streamline delivery where appropriate.

PRIORITISE A BROWNFIELD-FIRST APPROACH - we strongly believe that the Local Plan should include a clear and enforceable commitment to prioritising brownfield development before considering greenfield or sensitive rural sites. Reusing previously developed land helps protect Dorset's valuable countryside, AONBs, and biodiversity, especially in rural West Dorset where much of the landscape is nationally or internationally designated. Brownfield development is often closer to existing infrastructure, reducing the need for expensive new provision and minimising car dependency. Local Plans must maximise urban and town centre regeneration opportunities before allocating new greenfield sites, especially those with weak sustainability credentials. We urge Dorset Council to identify and publish a comprehensive brownfield land register, provide greater policy weight and incentives for brownfield regeneration schemes, ensure planning policies resist greenfield allocations where suitable brownfield alternatives exist and consider higher density targets in town centres and urban edge locations to make best use of brownfield land. Small-scale, affordable, and community-backed development can deliver meaningful homes that help villages thrive without compromising character, infrastructure, or environmental sustainability. The Plan should allow rural areas to contribute proportionately, not disproportionately, to housing supply and to prioritise the quality, affordability, and location of homes as much as the quantity.

allocating sites for new homes, the flexible settlements policy, new settlements and the efficient use of land. Are there any other measures could help to meet housing needs?

4.3. Housing supply

Question 10: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the Plan including a lower housing target for the first few years and a higher figure towards the end of the plan period to meet housing needs?

a. Agree ☒

b. Disagree ☐

c. I have another suggestion ☐

A stepped housing target is acceptable only if it is used as an opportunity to get the foundations right - by investing in infrastructure, supporting rural services, and delivering genuinely affordable homes early on. It must not be used as a reason to accelerate unsustainable development in rural areas that lack capacity. Support for a Stepped Target but with conditions:

AVOID OVERBURDENING RURAL AREAS EARLY IN THE PLAN PERIOD

A lower initial target must not result in disproportionate pressure on rural settlements and small towns like Bridport, Beaminster, or villages in the surrounding area. There's a risk that if larger urban sites are delayed, developers will seek quicker wins in less sustainable rural areas. This must be firmly resisted.

FRONT-LOAD AFFORDABLE AND COMMUNITY HOUSING

Even with a lower overall target at the start, the Plan should prioritise early delivery of affordable housing (especially in high-need rural areas, community-led housing schemes, homes for key workers and younger residents. These can often be delivered faster than large market-led schemes and address Dorset's most urgent needs.

USE THE STEPPED PERIOD TO INVEST IN INFRASTRUCTURE

A lower early target provides a critical window to improve infrastructure (transport, utilities, healthcare, broadband) – particularly in rural areas – so they are not overwhelmed as housing numbers increase later in the plan period.

CLARITY AND TRANSPARENCY NEEDED

The Plan must clearly state what the stepped figures are, when and how the increase will take place and how delivery will be monitored and managed. Without this, there's a risk that under-delivery in the early years could be used as justification for inappropriate development later on.

4.4. Meeting housing needs of specific groups

Question 11: Where should a policy allowing sites for only affordable homes apply?

a. All of Dorset ☒

b. Only around those towns and villages listed in the proposed settlement hierarchy ☐

c. Only in the Green Belt ☐

Affordable housing policies should apply across the whole county to ensure local communities everywhere have access to homes that meet their needs.

Section 5: Flexible Settlements Policy

5.2. Proposed approach – Flexible settlements policy

Question 12: We have suggested that the Local Plan will not include clear boundaries to define the edges of towns and villages. Instead, the flexible settlements policy would allow new homes to be built around certain towns and villages. How much do you agree or disagree with this approach?

- a. Agree ☒
- b. Partially agree ☐
- c. Neutral ☐
- d. Partially disagree ☐
- e. Disagree ☐

Please provide any further comments or reasoning...

A flexible settlements policy can be a pragmatic approach in rural areas like West Dorset, where rigid boundaries may not reflect the reality of local geography, topography, or community needs. It allows for small-scale, well-designed development to take place in appropriate locations close to existing settlements, helping to meet housing needs without being unnecessarily constrained by strict boundary lines. This approach also gives parish councils, developers, and communities more scope to work together to identify suitable sites, particularly for affordable housing or community-led projects. It can encourage incremental growth that supports local services and infrastructure rather than concentrating development in a few larger settlements. However, it is essential that this flexibility is well-regulated and guided by clear criteria, including protection of the natural environment, landscape character, and local heritage. Safeguards must ensure that growth is proportionate, sustainable, and sensitive to the needs of existing communities, avoiding ribbon development or overextension of villages. Overall, this approach balances the need for housing delivery with the preservation of the rural character and identity of West Dorset's settlements.

5.3. The scale of development

Question 13: We propose that the flexible settlements policy will include a limit of 30 homes per site. To what extent do you agree or disagree with this threshold?

- a. The limit of 30 homes is about right ☒
- b. There should be less homes ☐
- c. More homes per site should be allowed ☐

Please explain your reasoning

The limit of 30 homes is about right. This threshold is sensible, but any development must be considered in relation to the scale of the proposed site and the size of the village. For smaller settlements, 30 homes may represent too large an increase, so flexibility and careful assessment are needed to ensure growth remains appropriate and sustainable for rural West Dorset.

5.4. Number of sites at each settlement

Question 14: At a town/village, should one flexible settlement policy site be started, before another one is permitted?

a. Yes ☒

b. No ☐

Please provide any further comments

Allowing several developments to proceed at the same time makes it far more difficult to monitor cumulative impacts or ensure that promised infrastructure improvements are delivered in a timely manner. Phasing development by allowing one site to come forward at a time enables proper evaluation of real-world effects on the community and environment before additional growth is permitted. This approach supports more sustainable, manageable, and locally appropriate development.

5.5. Settlements where the flexible settlements policy would apply

Question 15: We have suggested that the flexible settlements policy will only apply to the areas around certain towns and villages, these are those ranked as 'Tier 1, Tier 2 or Tier 3' in our settlement hierarchy. What do you think about the locations where we have suggested that the flexible settlements policy should apply?

We believe the flexible settlements policy should be applied more widely – not just to Tier 1, 2, and 3 settlements, but to all towns and villages. Many smaller rural communities in West Dorset have clear local housing needs, particularly for affordable and downsizing homes, yet are currently excluded under the proposed hierarchy. A broader application of the policy would allow these villages to accommodate small-scale, well-designed development that supports local sustainability and helps keep rural communities vibrant.

5.6. Continuous built-up areas and edge of continuous built-up areas

Question 16: We have suggested that the flexible settlement policy should only be applied around the 'continuous built-up areas' (i.e. 'densely populated areas with high concentrations of buildings, infrastructure and paved roads') of certain towns and villages. Do you have any comments on our definition of this 'continuous built-up area'?

The definition of a 'continuous built-up area' is too vague. It should be more clearly distinguished from the rural fringe. A clearer definition would help prevent uncontrolled creep into surrounding rural areas, for example Beaminster into Netherbury and provide greater clarity and consistency when applying the flexible settlements policy in both urban and rural contexts.

5.7. Green Belt

Question 17: We have suggested that the flexible settlements policy should not be applied in the Green Belt. What are your thoughts on this?

We support the proposal that the flexible settlements policy should not be applied in the Green Belt. This approach helps protect the openness, character, and environmental value of these areas, and ensures that development is directed towards locations more suitable for growth. Maintaining the integrity of the Green Belt is essential to prevent urban sprawl and preserve the distinct identity of rural West Dorset.

5.8. Approach to countryside development and urban intensification

Question 18: Away from the towns and villages listed in the settlement hierarchy, there may be types of development that we could support. Do you have any comments on this approach and on the types of development that could be supported in the countryside?

We support the types of development outlined in the plan for areas outside the settlements listed in the hierarchy. In addition, we support limited, well-designed development in the countryside where it meets local needs. This could include self-build projects, small affordable homes, infill, or other development where the environmental impact is low.

5.9. Neighbourhood plans and the flexible settlements policy

Question 19: We have suggested that the flexible settlements policy should not be applied in places with a recently made neighbourhood plan which includes allocations for new homes. What are your thoughts on this?

We agree with this approach. Excluding areas with a recently made neighbourhood plan that already includes allocations for new homes helps to avoid undermining local planning decisions and respects the work and priorities established by those communities.

Section 6: Employment Strategy

6.3. Employment allocations

Question 20: The Local Plan will retain and protect existing key employment sites, identify new employment sites at locations close to more sustainable settlements, allow for expansion of existing employment sites and allow for new employment sites in suitable locations. Do you have any comments on this approach?

We support this approach in principle, provided that employment growth is focused in sustainable locations, well served by transport links. It is also vital that the locations of any green energy-related employment sites are clearly identified so that residents and stakeholders have the opportunity to comment.

6.4. Employment development away from allocated sites

Question 21: The Local Plan will enable employment land to be developed outside identified sites at certain towns and villages, subject to certain considerations. Do you agree with this approach?

We agree with this approach in general, provided that any development outside identified sites carefully respects environmental protections and landscape assets.

6.5. Mixed use development

Question 22: We have suggested that larger scale housing sites should be required to provide land for employment uses. Proposals for 300 homes or more would be mixed residential and employment developments, with a ratio of 0.25ha of employment space for every 100 homes. How much do you agree or disagree with this approach?

- a. Agree ☒
- b. Partially agree ☐
- c. Neutral ☐
- d. Partially disagree ☐
- e. Disagree ☐

Please provide any further comments or reasoning...

We agree that mixed-use development makes sense; however, the proposed ratio should be flexible to reflect local market demand.

6.6. Protecting employment sites

Question 23: We have suggested that the Local Plan should include policies to protect the most important existing 'key' employment sites.

a) Do you have any views on the strategy we have suggested for protecting employment sites?

No.

b) What criteria should we consider when defining 'key' and 'non-key' employment sites?

a. Site size ☒

b. Location ☒

c. Employment use type ☒

d. Accessibility ☒

e. Contribution to meeting economic objectives/needs ☒

f. Market attractiveness ☒

g. Opportunities for growth/expansion ☒

h. The site's status in previous local plans ☐

i. Other ☐

Section 7: Town centre development

7.1. Town centres

Question 24: How do you think we should plan to support town centres in the future?

We should support town centres by encouraging development within them rather than out-of-town, prioritising the reuse of brownfield sites, and creating attractive, accessible spaces that draw people in for shopping, work, and leisure.

Question 25: What types of use do you think will be most important for the future of our town centres?

- a. Shops ☒
- b. Cafes/restaurants ☒
- c. Leisure (e.g. cinemas) ☒
- d. Offices ☒
- e. Cultural (e.g. museums) ☒
- f. Community (e.g. libraries) ☒
- g. Hotels ☒
- h. Other ☐

Click or tap here to enter text.

7.2. Managing town centre development

Question 26: We are suggesting that retail impact assessments should be undertaken for retail development proposals outside the town centres defined in the Plan, that are over the size of a small food store (280 square metres net). How much do you agree or disagree with the introduction of a threshold of 280 square metres for retail impact assessments?

- a. Agree ☒
- b. Partially agree ☐
- c. Neutral ☐
- d. Partially disagree ☐
- e. Disagree ☐

Please provide any further comments or reasoning

Click or tap here to enter text.

Question 27: Should the threshold also apply to leisure uses that are net 280 square metres?

a. Yes ☒

b. No ☐

Question 28: We are considering whether the Local Plan should include a policy which supports interim or temporary uses pending a permanent use for a vacant town centre building - we have called these 'meanwhile uses'. To what extent do you agree with the introduction of a meanwhile uses policy?

a. Agree ☒

b. Partially agree ☐

c. Neutral ☐

d. Partially disagree ☐

e. Disagree ☐

Please provide any further comments or reasoning

We support a 'meanwhile uses' policy as it can bring vacant town centre buildings back into use, support local businesses, and maintain vibrancy while a permanent use is being considered.

Section 8: Brownfield Land

8.3. Brownfield land delivery

Question 29: How else can we encourage development on brownfield land, whilst also planning positively to meet our needs for homes and employment land?

Financial incentives from central government should be explored to encourage the redevelopment of brownfield land. Greater emphasis should be placed on identifying and prioritising brownfield sites during future “Call for Sites” exercises, rather than focusing primarily on greenfield development.

Section 9: Green Belt Review

9.2. Our approach to Green Belt release

Question 30: To what extent do you agree with taking land out of the Green Belt to help meet our development needs?

- a. Agree ☒
- b. Partially agree ☐
- c. Neutral ☐
- d. Partially disagree ☐
- e. Disagree ☐

Please provide any further comments or reasoning...

Only if it has been designated as grey belt.

Section 10: Self-build and custom-build housing

10.3. Self-build plot delivery

Question 31: We have suggested that the Local Plan should include a flexible settlements policy which would allow new homes around certain towns and villages. What impact, if any, do you think the proposed flexible settlements policy might have on opportunities for self-build homes?

- a. High impact ☐
- b. Some impact ☒
- c. No impact ☐

Please provide further comments or reasoning.

The flexible settlements policy should explicitly support self-build opportunities, allowing individuals and communities to build homes affordably. This approach would help meet local housing needs, provide more choice, and encourage small-scale, community-led development within the policy framework.

To increase the supply of self-build plots, eligibility criteria should be made clearer, ensuring that plots are targeted at those genuinely seeking to build their own homes. Additionally, the Local Plan could identify suitable sites, provide guidance on plot sizes, and encourage community-led or affordable self-build schemes.

Question 32: Is there anything else we should do to increase the supply of self-build plots?

Section 11: Neighbourhood Plans

11.3. Housing requirement figures for neighbourhood plans

Question 33: We have suggested that housing requirements for neighbourhood plan areas should be finalised at the next stage of preparing the Local Plan. This is likely to involve consideration of sites with planning permission, local plan allocations and unplanned development. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed approach?

- a. Agree ☐
- b. Partially agree ☐
- c. Neutral ☒
- d. Partially disagree ☐
- e. Disagree ☐

Please provide any further comments or reasoning...

Click or tap here to enter text.

11.4. Flexible Settlements Policy

Question 34: Should the housing requirement figures for neighbourhood plan areas outside the Green Belt, include an allowance for sites that could come forward through the flexible settlements policy?

a. Yes ☐

b. No ☒

Please provide any further comments or reasoning.

Click or tap here to enter text.

Section 12: Sites for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople

12.3. Strategy for meeting Traveller needs

Question 35: We have suggested that our Local Plan objectives for Travellers should be:

- to reduce the numbers of unauthorised sites,
- to provide opportunities for sites to expand,
- to encourage new Traveller sites in sustainable locations, and
- to provide opportunities for Travellers to deliver their own sites.

Do you have any comments on the objectives for meeting the need for Traveller sites?

We agree with the proposed objectives for Traveller sites, provided that the same criteria applied to the flexible settlements policy for self-build homes are used. Sites should be in appropriate locations, have good transport links, and allow easy access to Tier 1, 2, and 3 settlements to ensure that new Traveller sites are sustainable.

Question 36: To help ensure that enough pitches are provided to meet Dorset's needs, Traveller

People living in settled communities may have a different way of life to Travellers which could create tensions.

pitches could be delivered alongside homes for the settled community on large scale residential development. Are there any issues which you think we need to consider in locating Traveller pitches alongside new built homes for the settled community?

Question 37: We are suggesting that 5 Traveller pitches should be provided for every 500 homes on large development sites. Is this threshold correct?

- a. Yes ☒
- b. No-it should be higher ☐
- c. No-it should be lower ☐

Please provide any further comments or reasoning.

We suggest that this approach should also apply to transient communities, not just Travellers, ensuring they have access to suitable, sustainable, and well-connected sites in appropriate locations.

12.5. Criteria based policy for Traveller sites

Question 38: To encourage Travellers to deliver their own sites, we are suggesting that the Local Plan should include a criteria policy which takes account of the site's location, access, neighbouring development, environmental impact and management of the site. Do you think we need to add or change any of the suggested criteria?

Clear criteria to ensure that sites are suitable - sustainable, well-connected and in appropriate locations.

Section 13: Strategic Heathland Recreation Mitigation

13.1. Background

Question 39: We have identified opportunity sites which could deliver more homes to help meet Dorset's housing needs. Do we need to change the approach to mitigating impacts on protected Dorset Heaths habitat sites as part of planning to meet increased housing needs?

a. Yes ☐

b. No ☐

Please provide further comments or reasoning.

No sites locally.

13.3. Shapwick, Kingston Lacy and the Stour Valley Park

Question 40: To what extent do you agree or disagree with development at Shapwick to enable the delivery of public benefits from investment in the Kingston Lacy Estate?

a. Agree ☐

b. Partially agree ☐

c. Neutral ☒

d. Partially disagree ☐

e. Disagree ☐

Please provide any further comments or reasoning

Click or tap here to enter text.

Section 14: Onshore Wind, Solar, and Battery Energy Storage

14.2. Identifying suitable areas

Question 41: We have outlined some areas which could be appropriate for wind turbines, ground mounted solar panels and battery energy storage. To what extent do you agree or disagree with identifying broad areas of opportunity for wind, solar and battery energy storage?

- a. Agree ☐
- b. Partially agree ☒
- c. Neutral ☐
- d. Partially disagree ☐
- e. Disagree ☐

Please provide any further comments or reasoning

We agree in principle with identifying broad areas of opportunity for wind, solar, and battery energy storage. However, the current mapping lacks sufficient detail to understand the proposed locations. More clarity and consultation are needed once sites are more clearly defined so that communities have the opportunity to comment. This work appears to be in its early stages and should be developed further before decisions are made.

Section 15: North of Dorchester Masterplan

15.3. Matter 1: Eastern edge

Question 42: Since Roman times, the centre of Dorchester has had a prominent position in the landscape. One of the threats to this identity is at the eastern edge of the potential development area (near the A35). Would you support keeping this eastern area more green and open, even if that means fewer homes, facilities and jobs?

- a. Agree ☐
- b. Partially agree ☐
- c. Disagree ☐
- d. Partially disagree ☐
- e. Neutral ☒

Please provide any further comments or reasoning...

Click or tap here to enter text.

15.4. Matter 2: Employment locations

Question 43. Supporting jobs, homes and services all in one place is an essential part of the health of a town. Do you see new workspaces that are integrated into walkable neighbourhoods and local centres as an attractive part of Dorchester in the future?

- a. Agree ☐
- b. Partially agree ☒
- c. Disagree ☐
- d. Partially disagree ☐
- e. Neutral ☐

Please provide any further comments or reasoning...

Supporting jobs, homes, and services together makes sense, provided new workspaces are well served by sustainable transport options and make use of brownfield sites where possible. This approach would encourage accessibility, reduce commuting, and make Dorchester a more vibrant and sustainable town for the future.

15.5. Matter 3: Pigeon House Farm neighbourhood

Question 44: We believe that the valley at Pigeon House Farm can play an important role in encouraging access to nature and celebrating local landscape – What type of development, if any, do you think could help support this in a sustainable way?

- i. A smaller scale of development ☐
- ii. A larger scale of development ☐
- iii. The use of the area as an undeveloped landscape buffer, for recreation, education and nature interpretation, without any housing development. ☒
- iv. A mixture of the above ☐

Please provide any further comments or reasoning...

This approach would best protect the valley's character while providing opportunities for people to enjoy and learn from the natural environment in a sustainable way.

15.6. Matter 4: Main east to west route

Question 45: What are your priorities for a new east–west route?

Our priority for a new east–west route would be to widen the A35 running west from Dorchester and ensure that new development is properly connected to this route. This would help manage traffic flow, reduce congestion through villages, and provide safe, direct access for new housing and employment areas.