



THE SHERBORNE and DISTRICT SOCIETY CPRE

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Planning Policy
Dorset District Council
South Walks House
South Walks Road
Dorchester

Dear Madam/Sir

The attached report represents the views of the Sherborne and District Society CPRE, to the consultation on the first Draft of the Dorset Local Plan. It is purely related to the issues in the DT9 area but should be read in conjunction with the more general report titled '*Dorset Council Local Plan Consultation, January – March 2021. Response from Dorset CPRE Monday, 8th March 2021*' of which we were a party to its preparation and which we fully support and is also attached.

We look forward to seeing the revisions to the plan and continue to work with the Council to achieve a Plan which is really beneficial to Dorset and will not ruin its unique characteristics as this one threatens to do.

Yours faithfully

Sir Christopher Coville – Acting Chairman
Peter Neal - President.

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The Sherborne and District Society CPRE has a membership of ca 200.**

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The Campaign to Protect Rural England exists to promote the beauty, tranquillity and diversity of rural England by encouraging the sustainable use of land and other natural resources in town and country.

**Dorset Local Plan Consultation, January – March 2021, The Sherborne and District Society
CPRE Response.**

Please Note: Proposed alterations to wording shown in blue.

Comments related to individual sections shown in italics.

Comments related to general issues shown in standard type face.

SECTION 2

2.3.13 – 2.3.14 and appendix 2 in volume 2.

DT9 Villages.

We have concerns that there is a danger of some villages becoming unsustainable and run the risk of dying or being havens just for retirees) due to the tiering policy. We would advocate some housing provision be allocated, with the communities' agreement, either by way of a neighbourhood plans or a simpler method of gaining agreement. This we have suggested in both the current West Dorset and Weymouth/Portland Local Plan and the revision out to consultation in 2017/18. It appears no notice has been taken.

All villages that have a School should have a small allocation of housing, and all other villages closely examined to see how their viability might be maintained. The tiering principle is too simplistic. So whilst we support village development it should be clear on what is the appropriate scale, so that such developments don't swamp the villages. We suggest, as we have done before, that development take place with two caps in the plan period – the first the size of each development is fixed at 2.5% of the households in the village and the second on the cumulative amount in the plan period of 5% gain on households. The exception being where a neighbourhood plan has indicated different options or where no neighbourhood plan is in place, the overall consent of the community is obtained.

We note the allocation of housing within the neighbourhood planning section but are concerned about its accuracy. With villages named who haven't yet had a plan adopted and seemingly a very large allocation of housing for Yetminster that would create an increase in population approaching 40% which is too great and would ruin the nature of the village and its community.

**Section 28 and FIGURE 28.3/4 HOUSING AND EMPLOYMENT LAND ALLOCATIONS IN THE
NORTHERN DORSET FUNCTIONAL AREAS**

Housing Numbers for Sherborne

Like many others we believe the housing numbers are too high overall and not the real housing need for Dorset, at least 10%, if the housing targets are used, but up to 40% if housing site allocation is considered. This naturally affects the allocation to Sherborne as seen as a Tier 2 location. The total new site provision for the Town is set at 1230 dwellings, with no evidence provided for this number other than it seems to be based on what land might be available for development. Taking the population of Sherborne, that should be actually based on residents living permanently in the Town and not including the Boarders at the Public Schools, it is in the high 8000's not the high 9000's. Using this population figure in relation to the predicted uplift in population in the overall draft plan then the total housing number for Sherborne shouldn't be more than 700.

Even if one considers the 1230 as a base line figure, we would argue that since the West Dorset and Weymouth/Portland Local plan was adopted the Town has seen the housing numbers exceed that planned number, with build out and current construction producing nearly 300 extra dwellings (Barton Farm, Bovis Bradford Road, Harbour Court, Kings Road, Cold Harbour Business, Park Sherborne Hotel site). Given this extra provision we believe that the allocation on the greenfield sites should be no more than 900 plus the 50 on the one brownfield site at the old gas works (the development of which we support). In this event the housing provision of the town from the 2015 adopted local plan would have increase by ca 30% and the population by ca 35%. Unless there is associated infrastructure, which is substantial, such a figure would run the risk of being unsustainable. The original allocation moves the figures up to over 40% increases which would alter even more significantly the nature of the Town as outlined in the vision section.

We would also add that we don't think such level of development is possible whilst meeting the Dorset Councils own ambitions with regard to Climate Change. The proposed allocation of employment land (see separate comments) is unlikely to significantly change the number on the population commuting out of the town to find employment or the housing to attract those who commute in. The current pattern of people using their cars to get to work will continue and add to carbon emissions rather than start to reduce them.

EMPLOYMENT LAND.

Overall there is limited justification for the allocation of employment land, the structure and availability of employment has changed radically in the last 20 years, (accelerated by the pandemic of the past year or so) with the advent of the internet and wholesale computerisation of commerce. Proper economic analysis is needed to substantiate a need when, for example, lowly priced industrial units on estates in Yeovil lie empty and business parks in Sherborne have empty units too. Indeed one large unit has recently been converted into flats. Employment land in Sherborne might be used for a major employer to relocate and consolidate operations on one site (e.g. Bradfords). Therefore sites vacated in such a way should be treated flexibly as brownfield sites on which housing or small starter units might be developed.

We believe therefore that the amount of employment land being allocated is too high and almost certainly in the wrong location as proposed for the Lenthay Road area.

31.4. TOWN CENTRE STRATEGY

Clearly this strategy is out of date and needs to be completely rewritten. We have suggested alterations as follows.

31.4.1. Sherborne has an accessible town centre with adequate bus, rail and road links. The town centre has a [reasonable, but diminishing](#), provision of retail services, with [worrying](#) levels of retail vacancies and recent bank closures. The town [has](#) benefitted in the past from a high concentration of independent non-food retailers, which make up the majority of town centre trading, adding to the diversity, vitality and viability of the centre as a whole. [This diversity must be encouraged, not least to address the increasing closures of retail outlets.](#)

~~There is however a below average provision of leisure uses (including cafes and restaurants) within the town centre. There are approx. 20 cafés, pubs or restaurants in Sherborne so no perceived shortage.~~

31.4.2. The town has a good convenience provision with larger shops including Waitrose and Sainsbury's, supported by other smaller grocers, delicatessens and bakers. There are also several markets which provide additional diversity including the Sherborne ~~Vintage~~ Thursday and Saturday Markets and Sherborne Farmers' Market which are held at regular intervals each month.

31.4.3. The centre of Sherborne is classified as a 'Town Centre' within the retail hierarchy. Sherborne's primary shopping area is located in the centre of the town and is concentrated mainly along Cheap Street with a small amount extending into Half Moon Street, Long Street, Newland and The Green. The primary shopping frontages include all of Cheap Street with the secondary frontages including South Street, Half Moon Street, Longstreet, Digby Road and The Green, although Sainsbury lies out with these locations. *Is there any need to have primary and secondary shopping area in such a small town?*

~~31.4.4. The retail capacity assessment identified a need for 1,245 m² net of new comparison goods floorspace in the town by 2036. There was however limited need identified for additional convenience floorspace with a requirement for only 55 m² net by 2036. This is out of date and takes no notice of the current situation regarding the retail trade both pre and post COVID-19. No mention needs to be made of the need for additional floor space.~~

31.4.5. Overall the historic nature of the town centre provides a good, well maintained environmental quality. However, there is a lack of public open space and seating within the centre which if improved could attract more people to the area.

31.4.6. The historic character of the town is a significant asset; however it does also restrict large scale development opportunities. Within the town centre there are a number of opportunities for enhancement through the redevelopment of redundant or underutilised sites. ~~The redevelopment of the former tennis courts as a new arts centre with access off the Old Market Place (to the rear of Cheap Street) is one example which currently benefits from planning consent.~~ *With the changing nature of retailing patterns, and thus the High Street offer, careful and well-planned changes to reassign use of redundant shops within Cheap Street and property elsewhere may need to be considered to keep the Town Centre viable. This should be incorporated into a master plan for the Town Centre, initially in general terms, but in due course refined to meet planning process requirements.*

~~31.4.7. Although large scale opportunities for town centre development are limited, the car park areas to the rear of Cheap Street are the most suitable location for the future expansion of the town centre. The provision of public car parking close to the town centre is also important to its continuing success, and therefore any development will need to take this into account. Opportunities for reconfiguring car parking in Sherborne to allow for the town centre to expand will be supported.~~ *Whilst large scale Town Centre development is limited, the Old Market Car park are behind Cheap Street would benefit from mixed use development, which could incorporate housing, leisure, arts facilities, green open space, tree planting and parking.*

31.4.8. Due to the significance of the heritage assets within the town centre any proposals for development will need to be sensitively designed to minimise impact. Where possible, development proposals should look to enhance the public appreciation of heritage assets within the centre.
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31.4.9. Any development should be well-integrated with the existing primary shopping area with adequate connections to Cheap Street.

SHER1: ~~Future town centre expansion~~—A vision for future town centre development

~~Land at Newland Car Park North and Newland Car Park South, as shown on the policies map, is the most suitable site for future expansion of the town centre area.~~

- (i) The Old Market Carpark behind Cheap Street would benefit from mixed-use development which could include housing, leisure, arts facilities, green open space, tree planting and parking. This area would incorporate the land behind the Paddock Garden and possibly adjacent properties to the car park. It would be expected that a master plan be created to ensure a holistic approach to such development. Where the mixed-use development might focus on the options for the creation of a cultural and arts focus, to supplement the planned development of Sherborne House. This could stimulate a wider cultural interest in the Historic Abbey Town creating an arts and artisan economy to attract inward investment and grow economic stability and tourism.
- (ii) Any development proposals for the site should offer improved linkages to the existing primary shopping frontage and will need to retain the existing level of public car parking.
- (iii) Development of the site should result on an overall enhancement of the historic core of Sherborne.
- (iv) Once developed, the area ~~will~~ could form part of the primary shopping area of the town. Increased accessibility into the town centre including additional footpaths and access points, will be supported to promote walking and cycling into the town centre.
- (v) Careful and well-planned changes to reassign use of redundant shops within Cheap Street and property elsewhere may need to be considered to keep the Town Centre viable. This should be incorporated into a master plan for the Town Centre, initially in general terms, but in due course refined to meet planning process requirements.
- (vi) Opportunities to reconfigure other car parking within the town centre without detracting from the historic nature of the town will be supported to allow for the continued success of the town centre.

31.5 Main Development Opportunities

Land at Sherborne Hotel

This is completely out of date as the design etc has already received planning permission and much of the build with the exception of the Hotel has already be completed and needs to be deleted but then indicate.

The re-building of an hotel on the old Sherborne Hotel site (Platinum Skies) is considered to be important locally in sustaining tourism and accommodating visitors to the local schools and businesses. This is crucial to the town vision of becoming a key inland visitor destination; accordingly, the condition of building an hotel, which was applied when granting planning permission for the site, will have to be enforced.

~~31.5. Main development opportunities Land at Sherborne Hotel 31.5.1. This site was previously allocated in the 2006 and 2015 Local Plans for employment uses including the retention of a hotel on the site. The hotel is considered to be important locally in sustaining tourism and accommodating visitors to the local schools and businesses. This is relevant to the town vision of becoming a key inland visitor destination. The site was granted planning permission in November 2017 for a 24 bed hotel and 119 unit Extra Care facility.~~

~~31.5.2. The development of the site will require improvements to the existing vehicular access with Horsecastles Lane to improve highway safety. In addition pedestrian and cycle paths links from the site to the A30 Yeovil Road and the existing network of cycle and foot paths will be required. 31.5.3. The site is visually prominent in the street scene and therefore any development will need to be designed to a high standard to reflect the gateway status of this location.~~

Former gasworks site, Gas House Hill

31.54 -31.57

We support the development of this site which makes use of a brownfield land and should improve the aspect of the town near to the station.

DEVELOPMENTS WEST OF SHERBORNE 31.5.8 TO 31.5.27 AND SHER 4 TO SHER 6

Locations

As we have very few brownfield sites for development and although some empty buildings, such as the Old Magistrates Court, and probably some town centre shops might become available to provide more dwellings, it remains the situation that any further housing in Sherborne is going to require the use of greenfield, farmland. This is a great pity when we should be supporting farming so that the country becomes more self-sufficient in food production. However, we are where we are, and have an advantage in that the preferred sites are in the control of a single landowner (Sherborne Castle Estates). Whilst we do not fully accept the sustainability arguments for all of the sites. (e.g. The extension of Barton Farm to the west and north has significant landscape issues which are downplayed within the analysis.), we acknowledge that the sites might be the best options. It is a pity that the developments are all to the West of the Town and that for good reason, those to the East are less acceptable.

The key though isn't the sites themselves but the acknowledgment that they must not be viewed as separate entities which would lead to three housing estates being tacked into the edge of the town to its detriment. The three sites must be considered together and a master plan developed to incorporate them. They must also have a good selection of affordable houses for local people and the use of a Community Land Trust and possible land allocation for self-build to be strongly considered.

We, therefore, in principle support the Sherborne Castle Estates Ideas in master planning, with a need to ensure that any development creates a sense of place, (including substantial green space allocation and tree planting) which the town and the residents living in it can be proud. This won't be easy as mentioned earlier the extension of Barton Farm has considerable landscape issues to overcome and extensive work will be needed to satisfy that issue. All the sites then will have farmland impinging on them and real consideration needs to be given to how this 'urban to rural' interface is managed. In addition very clear indication will be needed to cover the infrastructure issues, transport (e.g. there is no town bus service covering the west end which was lost with the 57-bus route stopping), provision of schooling and medical facilities all of which are stretched now before any further increase in population. The plan is light on such detail.

As the town and its rural environs are within the hydrological catchment of the Somerset Levels Ramsar site, in addition all the new developments will need to be phosphate neutral and so the plan should include the policy of how this will be done as, for example, Wiltshire and Hampshire have done in their local plans.