Dorset Council Local Plan Scoping Consultation September 2026

Dorset Council is preparing a local plan to guide development. Once adopted, it will be used to help decide planning applications across the Dorset Council area.

This scoping consultation is an initial stage for preparing the local plan under the new planning system. The purpose of the consultation is to consider what the local plan should include and how organisations and people would like to be involved.

The consultation will run from
21 September to 26 October 2026

Please note, this consultation is not seeking views on possible sites for development, any specific policies, or presenting any information on possible sites for development at this stage. There will be further opportunities to submit sites for consideration and to share your views on site options through the local plan at a later stage.

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

How can I make a comment?

You can comment on the local plan by completing all or part of this survey online or by using this form. The questions in this form should be read in the context of the supporting text (heading numbers in Part B refer to Chapter numbers). You can view the scoping consultation on our website, or alternatively a paper copy of the local plan scoping consultation can be viewed at your local Dorset library or at County Hall, Dorchester.

Online

Please respond online wherever possible. View the consultation and submit your response online:

www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/dorset-council-local-plan-consultation

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 Scoping Consultation 2026** and be sent to the **Spatial Planning Team, Dorset Council, County Hall, Colliton Park, Dorchester, Dorset DT1 1XJ**.

Please note:

- You must include your name and either postal or email address along with your postcode so that your response can be considered appropriately. We cannot accept anonymous responses
- The council does 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
- 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

Data protection

Please note, any data collected will be retained and processed in accordance with Dorset Council's privacy policy.

Submissions may be made public. By responding to the consultation, you are accepting that your response and the information within it will be in the public domain, and that it may be disclosed if requested under the Freedom of Information Act/Environmental Information Regulations. Any published information will exclude contact information but will identify individuals by name. Please avoid including personal or sensitive information within your responses to the questions.

It is necessary for us to collect some personal information, such as your name, email address and postcode. These details are required to ensure authenticity and so that, if you wish, we can contact you about the local plan in the future. If you would like to be kept informed about the local plan, please ensure you opt in to sign up to our mailing list.

Your information will be retained by the council in line with its information retention schedule.

Part A – Your details

	Individual	**Agent (if applicable)**
Name*	Dorchester Town Council	Click or tap here to enter text.
Organisation	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
Address line 1*	19 North Square	Click or tap here to enter text.
Address line 2	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
Address line 3	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
Town	Dorchester	Click or tap here to enter text.
Postcode*	DT1 1JF	Click or tap here to enter text.
Email address*	G.Wakely@dorchester-tc.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

Do you want to be contacted about the local plan in the future? If you would like to be notified of future local plan consultations and stages, please tick.

☒ I give consent for my details to be added to the digital mailing list for the local plan and supplementary work. Please ensure you have provided an email address in the field above.

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:

Please state how many people here
20

Part B – Consultation questions

2. The overall scope of the local plan

Question 1: What period do you think the plan should cover?

a. 10 years ☒

b. 15 years ☐

c. Longer than 15 years ☐

d. Other ☐

e. Not sure ☐

Please explain your answer
Because of the speed of change – things can be very different in 10 years, government policy and so forth, 10 years is long enough to provide continuity of personnel through the changes.

3. Spatial vision and objectives

Question 2: Are there any other priorities that should be considered when developing the vision? If so, please specify.

a. Yes ☒

b. No ☐

c. Not sure ☐

Please explain your answer
Heritage should also be a priority in its own right– we are custodians of historical sites.

Question 3: Which of the key priorities do you think should be a focus for the local plan? (select as many as you wish).

a. Housing ☒

b. Economy ☒

c. Environment ☒

d. Movement ☒

e. Health & Wellbeing ☒

f. Design & Character ☒

g. Tourism ☒

Please explain your answer, including any specific issues within the priorities you think are particularly important:
Provision for Education needs to be recognised as a priority. Under the 'Economy' priority there should be flexibility for the type of provision to meet the community and the local economy's needs.

Question 4: Do you think it the draft vision reflects what Dorset should be like at the end of the local plan period?

a. Yes ☐

b. No ☒

c. Not sure ☐

If no, please explain what you think Dorset should be like:
'Economic investment will provide increased opportunity for higher quality and highly paid jobs and increased productivity across the area. The main centres for economic activity of the Dorchester to Weymouth corridor and those in southeast Dorset will be enhanced with improved prosperity for residents.'We would like Dorchester and Weymouth to keep their own distinct identities, ensuring that the individual heritage is maintained.

Question 5: What measurable outcomes should the council use to assess how well the local plan is performing?

Please list suggested measure outcomes:
Reduction of people in temporary housing and on housing waiting lists, employment, crime and health figures. A satisfaction survey to ascertain how is 'wellbeing' is perceived in the area.

4. Developing a strategy for growth

Question 6: What factors do you think should be considered when developing the settlement hierarchy for future development?

Please list suggested factors:
We query the inclusion of Dorchester in 'Large built-up areas'. Dorchester is a distinctive market town. The Market makes up a large part of the town's identity. Dorchester's position in the hierarchy should reflect its role as the county town and a centre for employment, healthcare, education and services alongside the constraints of its infrastructure capacity and the limits of the environmental surroundings. Future growth should respect the town's adopted vision, historic character and countryside setting, maintaining clear separation from neighbouring settlements, and avoiding ribbon development.

Question 7: What links to services and facilities are most important when looking at the sustainability of potential future development locations? (select all that apply)

a. Access to public transport ☒

b. Access to safe walking/cycle routes ☒

c. Distance from towns or places with facilities that serve a wider area ☒

d. Other ☒

Please explain your answer
Connectivity and accessibility is also important within the county and particularly rural communities. Access to the rest of the country needs improvement, to achieve this there needs to be more focus on rail. The provision of public transport that is sized to meet the demands (e.g smaller buses for rural roads).

5. Key planning issues for Dorset

Question 8: Are there any locally specific climate change issues that are not addressed by national policy and should be considered in the Local Plan?

a. Yes ☒

b. No ☐

c. Not sure ☐

Please explain your answer
National policy should be supplemented by evidence addressing Dorchester's particular climate risks and opportunities.The plan should assess flood risk in the Frome valley, surface-water runoff and drainage capacity, including the cumulative effects of development and future rainfall patterns. It should also consider water availability during drought and overheating in homes and public spaces.Dorchester's water meadows, trees and green spaces should be valued for their contribution to flood resilience, cooling and biodiversity. Development should protect these functions and provide connected green spaces, shade and sustainable drainage with funded long-term maintenance.The plan should support energy-efficient buildings and low-carbon travel, including sensitive improvements to historic buildings. Dorchester's climate response should reflect its adopted town vision, with clear targets and monitoring.

Question 9: Are there locally specific housing issues that are not addressed by national policy and should be considered in the Local Plan?

a. Yes ☒

b. No ☐

c. Not sure ☐

Please explain your answer
Demographic imbalances across the age ranges. Housing sites need to meet the demands of the residents, for example development should provide step-free access and sufficient circulation space to accommodate wheelchairs and pushchairs. Housing should be planned with a long-term perspective, ensuring it can accommodate residents' needs at different stages of life.

Question 10: Are there locally specific economic issues that are not addressed by national policy and should be considered in the Local Plan?

a. Yes ☒

b. No ☐

c. Not sure ☐

Please explain your answer
There is a lack of Higher Education provision and skilled jobs in the area which results in young people moving away. There are a lack of opportunities for young people to live and work within the area, particularly due to the limited availability of skilled employment.

Question 11: Are there locally specific town centre issues that are not addressed by national policy and should be considered in the Local Plan?

a. Yes ☒

b. No ☐

c. Not sure ☐

Please explain your answer
The need to encourage tourism and encourage footfall. Pressure needs to be applied to the owners of the buildings in town centres to ensure occupancy, improve accessibility and that the buildings, for example the increasing number of empty banks; are maintained - there is a need to look at alternative uses for these premises to create a vibrant town centre. Space above shops provides an ideal opportunity to provide accommodation. Dorchester also has a need for more hotel accommodation.

Question 12: Are there locally specific water and energy issues that are not addressed by national policy and should be considered in the Local Plan?

a. Yes ☒

b. No ☐

c. Not sure ☐

Please explain your answer
It is vital that energy, infrastructure and water supply and treatment plants are futureproof to meet the needs of current demand and future development, whilst being mindful of changing climatic conditions. We will need to compensate for the fact that natural water sources are not as reliable. There should be a requirement for up-to-date evidence of the town's current and growing demand, available water and energy supplies, and infrastructure capacity. Necessary improvements should be identified and delivered alongside development.

Question 13: Are there locally specific issues to do with making effective use of land that are not addressed by national policy and should be considered in the Local Plan?

a. Yes ☒

b. No ☐

c. Not sure ☐

Please explain your answer
More consideration needs to be given to ensure that we have valuable, high quality agricultural land that must be preserved for the longer term. Dorchester has many local food producers that help meet the needs to maintain a sustainable community, reducing food miles and encouraging local employment. There should be support for sustainable development through effective use of existing buildings and suitable previously developed land, while protecting valuable agricultural land.

Question 14: Are there locally specific Green Belt issues that are not addressed by national policy and should be considered in the Local Plan?

a. Yes ☒

b. No ☐

c. Not sure ☐

Please explain your answer
The policies for greenbelt seem adequate but the areas of national landscape also are very important, but do mean there is increased pressure on those areas which are not designated as such. Any proposed development needs

to remain respectful and sensitive to historic and SSSI sites. We are particularly concerned by the irreversible encroachment of urban sprawl.

Question 15: Are there locally specific design issues that are not addressed by national policy and should be considered in the Local Plan?

a. Yes ☒

b. No ☐

c. Not sure ☒

Please explain your answer
Maintaining locally important characteristics is essential to preserving the distinctiveness of individual towns and villages. New homes should be accessible and adaptable to residents' changing needs, while remaining sympathetic to Dorchester's established character. Their scale, layout, materials and architectural detailing should respect surrounding buildings and the historic townscape.

Question 16: Are there locally specific transport issues that are not addressed by national policy and should be considered in the Local Plan?

a. Yes ☒

b. No ☐

c. Not sure ☐

Please explain your answer
There needs to be a vast improvement in transport issues for the whole area of the plan and equality in the provision of public transport for all areas. Areas that are underserviced, particularly our surrounding rural areas, need to be brought up to the standards of areas with good public transport provision. Constant consideration needs to be given to the pedestrian and cycle ways. Dorchester needs a connected internal transport network, with reliable public transport and safe, continuous walking and cycling routes. These should provide practical alternatives to individual car journeys and help reduce congestion. Good rail and other public transport connections to neighbouring towns and the wider region are also essential.

Question 17: Are there locally specific health and wellbeing issues that are not addressed by national policy and should be considered in the Local Plan?

a. Yes ☒

b. No ☐

c. Not sure ☐

Please explain your answer
It is vitally important that natural open spaces are preserved and accessible. There needs be be adequate provision of a variety of outdoor sports facilities that are free to use and encourage participation from all age groups and levels of fitness, with a variety of equipment to encourage and enable whole families to exercise together. Travel to dentists, doctors and hospitals can be problematic, especially for those with additional needs. Alongside Dorchester's role as the location of the main hospital, the plan should protect and improve access to green spaces and outdoor activities that support physical and mental wellbeing. Opportunities for walking, exercise, recreation and contact with nature should be accessible to people of all ages and abilities.

Question 18: Are there locally specific pollution, public protection and security issues that are not addressed by national policy and should be considered in the Local Plan?

a. Yes ☒

b. No ☐

c. Not sure ☐

Please explain your answer
The siting of Dorchester's Household Recycling Centre must be reviewed in the light of growing pressure and increased demand and its proximity to residential properties.

Question 19: Are there locally specific flood risk and coastal issues that are not addressed by national policy and should be considered in the Local Plan?

a. Yes ☒

b. No ☐

c. Not sure ☐

Please explain your answer
There are specific areas that need addressing. The impact on existing flood plains around waterways must be robustly examined and mitigated, especially where new developments are proposed. The floods in early 2026 showed that the current provisions are insufficient for today's and future climate challenges – For example the wards of East and West Dorchester.

Question 20: Are there locally specific natural environment issues that are not addressed by national policy and should be considered in the Local Plan?

a. Yes ☒

b. No ☐

c. Not sure ☐

Please explain your answer
It is important to recognise that even if a special title hasn't been assigned to a green space, it doesn't mean that it is less important to the local community, therefore consideration should be given to the value that the local community attribute to local greenspace.

Question 21: Are there locally specific historic environment issues that are not addressed by national policy and should be considered in the Local Plan?

a. Yes ☒

b. No ☐

c. Not sure ☐

Please explain your answer
We have a large number of historically important buildings and sites within our Town boundary and the policies must be robust enough to protect and maintain them, making them available and relevant for the community and visitors to enjoy.

Question 22: Should the local plan identify land for local waste facilities, including household recycling centres and depots?

a. Yes ☒

b. No ☐

c. Not sure ☐

Please explain your answer

The current household recycling centre in Dorchester is completely unfit for purpose. It's location, accessibility and size renders it inadequate to meet the current and future needs of the residents of Dorchester and surrounding areas.

Question 23: Are there any other topic areas that the Dorset Council Local Plan should cover?

a. Yes ☒

b. No ☐

c. Not sure ☐

Please explain your answer
Designing policies that will satisfy local people, who are keen to maintain Dorset's natural character, national government policies and developers who are keen to profit from their own ideas will be a very difficult task. The council must be robust in its defence of Dorset.

6. Evidence base for the plan

Question 24: Do you think any additional evidence should be gathered to inform the preparation of the local plan?

a. Yes ☐

b. No ☐

c. Not sure ☒

Please explain your answer
It is a constantly changing and complex world. Significant and meaningful consultation and review needs to be undertaken with local stakeholders in good time to allow informed responses and optimal progress. It is important that the reports and evidence are supplied in a timely manner so that it can be considered by stakeholders before giving their response. Up to date evidence is needed on existing infrastructure capacity and the additional demand arising from proposed growth, particularly drinking water supply, sewerage, wastewater treatment and surface water drainage. This should establish whether systems can accommodate further development, identify necessary upgrades and demonstrate when and how these would be delivered.

Question 25: Is there any existing evidence that you think should be updated?

a. Yes ☒

b. No ☐

c. Not sure ☐

Please explain your answer
Flood risk and drainage evidence should be updated to reflect the 2026 flooding events, current climate projections and the cumulative effects of development. This should inform the assessment of the Frome Valley, surface water runoff and drainage capacity.

7. Proposed engagement approach

Question 26: How would you prefer to receive information about the local plan? (Rank in order of preference)

1. Social media
2. Written updates/newsletters
3. Dorset Council magazine
4. Information displayed in public libraries
5. Dorset Council website
6. Through Town and Parish Councils
7. Through community groups / organisations
8. Other methods, please specify

Please specify
5, 6, 3, 2, 1, 4, 7 8 – We would encourage Dorset Council to undertake face to face public engagement exercises.

Question 27: How would you prefer to take part in the local plan process? (Rank in order of preference)

a. Online consultations
b. Interactive online maps
c. Public events
d. Written submissions
e. Other methods: please specify

Please specify
C, D, A, B

Question 28: How could the council best engage with under-represented groups in the local plan process? For example, people with different protected characteristics such as age, disability, race, religion or belief, sex, or gender reassignment. (Select all that apply).

a. Through networks and organisations representing those groups
b. Ensuring accessibility of written materials
c. Providing in person events
d. Providing digital opportunities to get involved
e. Other: please specify

Please specify
A, B, C, D, E- Ensure accessible in other languages.

Question 29: Is there anything else the council should consider when developing its approach to engagement for the new Local Plan?

Please suggest anything else
The response forms should be suitable for groups and organisations to submit collective responses. There is concern that the online consultation platform does not allow responses to be saved and returned to at a later date, making it difficult to develop and refine submissions over time. In addition, the downloadable Word document is formatted and restricted in a way that makes editing difficult and does not readily support responses written in paragraph form.

Part C – Consultation demographic questions

This section is optional. We use it to collect diversity information. This helps to ensure any changes do not unfairly impact specific sectors of the community. It also helps to make sure our consultation response comes from a representative sample of residents.

Age question

Please select your age group.

☐ Under 18
☐ 18 to 24
☐ 25 to 39
☐ 40 to 49
☐ 50 to 59
☐ 60 to 64
☐ 65+
☒ Prefer not to say

Sex question

What is your sex?

☐ Female
☐ Male
☒ Prefer not to say

Gender question

Is the gender you identify with the same as your sex registered at birth?

☐ Yes
☐ No
☒ Prefer not to say

Disability question

The Equality Act 2010 describes a person as disabled if they have a longstanding physical or mental condition that has lasted or is likely to last 12 months; and this condition has a substantial adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. People with some conditions (cancer, multiple sclerosis and HIV/AIDS for example) are considered to be disabled from the point that they are diagnosed.

Do you consider yourself to be disabled as set out in the Equality Act 2010?

☐ Yes

☐ No
☒ Prefer not to say

If, at the previous question, you stated you consider yourself to have a disability. Please state the type of disability which applies to you.

☐ Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD)
☐ Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)
☐ Autistic Spectrum Conditions
☐ Blind
☐ Dyscalculia
☐ Dyslexia
☐ Dyspraxia
☐ Deaf
☐ Hearing loss
☐ Long term health condition
☐ Mental health issues
☐ Physical impairment
☐ Sign Language User
☐ Visually impaired
☐ Medical conditions
☐ Mobility issues
☐ Learning disability
☐ Specific learning differences
☐ Wheelchair user
☒ Prefer not to say

If you prefer to use another term, please tell us here:
Click or tap here to enter text.

Ethnicity

What is your ethnic group?

☐ White: British
☐ White: Irish
☐ White: Gypsy
☐ White: Irish Traveller
☐ White: Other
☐ Mixed: White and Black Caribbean
☐ Mixed: White and Black African
☐ Mixed: White and Asian
☐ Mixed: Other
☐ Asian or Asian British: Indian
☐ Asian or Asian British: Pakistan

☐ Asian or Asian British: Chinese
☐ Asian or Asian British: Other
☐ Black or Black British:
☐ Arab
☐ Other ethnic group
☒ Prefer not to say

If other, please specify
Click or tap here to enter text.

Religion

What is your religion or belief?

☐ Buddhist
☐ Christian (including Church of England, Catholic, Protestant and all other Christian denominations)
☐ Hindu
☐ Jewish
☐ Muslim
☐ Sikh
☐ No religion
☐ Any other religion or belief (please specify if you wish)
☒ Prefer not to say

If other, please specify
Click or tap here to enter text.

Sexual Orientation

What is your sexual orientation?

☐ Heterosexual or Straight
☐ Gay or lesbian
☐ Asexual
☐ Bisexual
☐ Other
☒ Prefer not to say

If other, please specify
Click or tap here to enter text.

Armed forces

Have you previously served in the UK Armed Forces?

☐ Yes, previously served in Regular Armed Forces
☐ Yes, previously served in Reserve Armed Forces
☐ No
☒ Prefer not to say

Maternity/Pregnancy

Are you currently pregnant or have you been pregnant in the last year?

☐ Yes
☐ No
☒ Prefer not to say

Caregiving

Do you look after, or give any help or support to, anyone because they have long-term physical or mental health conditions or illnesses, or problems related to old age?

☐ Yes
☐ No
☒ Prefer not to say