

Dorchester Town Council
Meeting of the Dorchester Town Council's
Planning and Environment Committee

30 March 2020

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic the Planning and Environment Committee followed Government advice and did not meet together. It was recognised, however, that there was a need to continue to conduct the business of the Planning and Environment Committee and that alternative arrangements needed to be improvised to allow Members to engage in the business of the Planning and Environment Committee. The following procedure has been observed for this meeting.

- A full Agenda was dispatched to all Members of Council by e-mail on 25 March 2020 and placed on the Council's website
- Members were invited to submit questions and comments regarding items on the Agenda by 0900 on Monday 30 March 2020
- These Minutes were circulated to all Members of the Planning and Environment Committee by e-mail at 17:00 on Monday 30 March 2020 with a request for e-mailed approval. The following Members submitted their approval by 2400 on Tuesday 31 March 2020.

For: Councillors: Councillors R. Biggs (the Mayor ex-officio), A. Canning, J. Hewitt, S. Hosford, G. Jones, S. Jones, F. Kent-Ledger, R. Potter (Chairman), M. Rennie and R. Ricardo

Against: None

- These Minutes will be submitted for ratification at the next available full meeting of the Town Council
- Should Government advice subsequently create a requirement for an alternative process to be undertaken the Council and Town Clerk will seek to comply with that requirement

84. Declarations of Interest

Councillor Fry stated that as a member of Dorset Council's Area Planning Committee, he would keep an open mind on the planning applications and consider all information available at each stage of the decision process. He would take part in the debate but not vote on planning applications at this meeting.

Councillor G. Jones stated that as a Dorset County Economic Development Officer, he would keep an open mind on agenda item 5, planning application WD/D/19/002470 and consider all information available at each stage of the

decision process. He would take part in the debate but not vote on this planning application.

85. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 2 March 2020 will be signed by the chairman as soon as circumstances permit

86. Request for Parking Restrictions

The Committee considered the request from the Dorset Council to support a single line timed restriction, weekdays only, joining up the two bus bays along Coburg Road. The Committee agreed to support the request although concerns were raised about the displacement of parking to neighbouring streets during the times of the restrictions.

Resolved

That the Clerk to the Committee notify the Dorset Council that the Planning and Environment Committee supports the request from the Dorset Council for a single line timed restriction, weekdays only, joining up the two bus bays along Coburg Road.

87. Dorset Local Plan Development

Members considered the consider the draft response from Dorchester Town Council to the Dorset Council's preliminary questions regarding the development of a new Local Plan and agreed on various points to submit to the Dorset Council.

Resolved

That the Town Council submits comments, included as Appendix 2 to these Minutes, to the Dorset Council regarding various policies and plans in the Dorset Council's Local Plan preliminary questions.

88. WD/D/19/002470 37 - 38 High West Street, Dorchester, DT1 1UP

The Committee noted Historic England's additional response and the Conservation Officer's response to the above planning application and considered if a revised comment to the planning application was required.

The Committee agreed that the comments previously submitted to the Dorset Council after consideration of the application at the Planning and Environment Committee meeting held on 2 December 2019 should remain unchanged.

89. Planning Applications for Comment

The Committee considered the planning applications referred to the Council for comment by Dorset Council.

Resolved

That Dorset Council be notified of the comments agreed on the various planning applications as set out in Appendix 1 to these minutes.

90. **Minute Update Report**

Minute 83 (02 March 2020) Network Rail

The Chairman of the Committee informed the Committee that he was aware that Network Rail had completed Tree Works similar to those carried out in Dorchester in other areas of the Country and the previous comments of the Committee should be directed to the local MP as well as Network Rail.

Resolved

That the Clerk to the Committee write to Network Rail and the local MP and inform them that the Planning and Environment Committee had been made aware of works to the railway embankment adjacent to Monmouth Road.

The Committee felt that the loss of the trees was detrimental to the Town's Climate Emergency Plans and were also disappointed that a quantity of litter along the embankment, which had been revealed by the felling, was not removed.

91 **Planning Issues to Note**

Resolved

That the Planning Issues to Note report be noted.

Chairman

Appendix 1
Dorchester Town Council
Planning and Environment Committee – 30 March 2020

North Ward (Councillor A. Canning)

1. **[WD/D/20/000416 THE CORN EXCHANGE, HIGH EAST STREET, DORCHESTER, DT1 1HF](#)**

Installation of replacement lift.

As Dorchester Town Council is the applicant, no comment was made on this application.

2. **[WD/D/20/000378 20-22 HIGH WEST STREET, DORCHESTER, DT1 1UW](#)**

Proposed rear single storey extension and conversion of plant room into customer area.

No objection.

3. **[WD/D/20/000379 20-22 HIGH WEST STREET, DORCHESTER, DT1 1UW Listed Building Consent](#)**

Proposed rear single storey extension and conversion of plant room into customer area.

No objection.

4. **[WD/D/20/000512 5 NORTH SQUARE, DORCHESTER, DT1 1HY](#)**

Internal and External alterations to accommodate A1 / A2 use at Ground floor & 2No one bedroom flats.

No objection.

5. **[WD/D/20/000513 5 NORTH SQUARE, DORCHESTER, DT1 1HY Listed Building Consent](#)**

Internal and External alterations to accommodate A1 / A2 use at Ground floor & 2No one bedroom flats.

No objection.

6. **[WD/D/20/000344 43 HIGH EAST STREET, DORCHESTER, DT1 1HN Listed Building Consent](#)**

Replacement of single glaze window to double glaze.

No objection.

West Ward (Councillors L. Fry, J. Hewitt and R. Ricardo)

7. **[WD/D/20/000346 3A EDWARD ROAD, DORCHESTER, DT1 2HJ](#)**

First floor rear extension including alterations to rear elevation.

No objection.

South Ward (Councillors G. Jones, R. Potter and M. Rennie)

8. [WD/D/20/000262 8 COPPER STREET, DORCHESTER, DT1 1GH](#)

Change of use from A1 (retail/nano brewery) to mix use of A1 (retail/nano brewery) and A4 (drinking establishment).

No objection subject to the imposition of conditions as proposed by Environmental Health.

9. [WD/D/20/000246 1 EGDON ROAD, DORCHESTER, DT1 2EA](#)

Erection of two storey extension to form annex accommodation. Modify existing vehicular access and create additional parking.

Objection.

The Committee considered that the design and appearance of the development (both the dwelling and the provision of parking spaces) is not reflective of others in the locality and it would be detrimental to and out of keeping with the character of the area and the street scene.

The Committee in particular felt that the split roof line would have an adverse affect on the street scene and considered the proposal to be over development of the site. The proposal would be contrary to Policies ENV10 and ENV12 of the adopted Local Plan and Section 7 of the NPPF.

10. [WD/D/20/000629 30 SOUTH COURT AVENUE, DORCHESTER, DT1 2BX](#)

Demolition of detached garage, back extension and conservatory & Erection of attached garage, single storey side extension, single storey rear extension and raised decking.

No objection.

Appendix 2
Dorchester Town Council
Planning & Environment Committee – 30 March 2020
Dorset Local Plan Development

1. As part of its development of a new Local Plan the Dorset Council recently ran two workshops; one with Parish Councils, the other with Towns and larger Parishes. Members have received a copy of the presentation provided to the Towns workshop, which was attended by the Committee Chair and Town Clerk.
2. The workshop discussed a series of questions in short time, with the offer that Councils could submit more detailed responses by a March-end deadline.
3. The Clerk and Chair have prepared the attached draft response to the questions, also taking advice from Feria Urbanism, who assisted the Council with responses to the West Dorset Local Plan exercises.
4. The document is fairly comprehensive, but if Members identify additional relevant material the Clerk will consider how to incorporate it into a final version to be signed off by the Chair.
5. This exercise does not cover specific sites. The timescale for that part of the plan making process is still understood to be Autumn 2020.
6. It is **RECOMMENDED** that the Town Clerk, in consultation with the Committee Chair, send a final response to the exercise based on the attached document, supplemented by additional relevant contributions raised by Members.

Adrian Stuart
Town Clerk

DORSET LOCAL PLAN: PRELIMINARY QUESTIONS

1. Settlement Hierarchy

The preferred approach to selecting villages for inclusion in the settlement hierarchy is to include all settlements of around 500 population or more and to give consideration to the number of facilities and journey time to nearby town. Do you agree with this approach?

We see no reason for excluding any towns or villages from the settlement hierarchy. It is quite conceivable that some of the 30+ villages that you are looking to exclude may have developable land within their parish boundary.

Development would sustain, indeed enhance, those settlements and may lead to the introduction of new facilities. We are aware of a number of smaller settlements who are not objecting to housing development in their area, where the current absence of a development boundary is frustrating development.

2. Focus for Growth

The main towns (Tier 1 and 2 of the settlement hierarchy) play an important role in providing for their rural hinterland. These settlements will be the focus for growth thereby helping to reduce car based travel. Do you agree with this approach?

We do not accept that the tier 1 and 2 towns should be the focus for growth, simply due to a presumption that residents in surrounding villages will automatically visit their local town on a regular basis.

The journey patterns of village residents, and indeed those in towns, are far more sophisticated than the assumption implies, with journeys based around work, schooling, shopping and leisure based on need and preference rather than the shortest distance. We would be interested to see the evidence that this clustering around the towns would reduce car journeys.

Growth of the main towns on the scale envisaged will inevitably be at some distance from the town centre or local facilities, with many residents of new developments opting to use cars for their journeys, which again may not be related to the town in which they have been able to set up home.

Nor does the focus take account of ever changing work patterns and technological opportunities, including the ability to work at home, the rural economy, the move away from public transport to shared autonomous transport, or potential new ways of delivering education or healthcare.

Restricting growth in smaller settlements limits the potential for existing or new forms of public or shared transport to develop, leaving the elderly in particular, who make up the largest and growing single component, with no choice but to carry on using the car. Dorset Council has declared a climate emergency and one aspect of this should be the encouragement of the use of Public Transport.

There is a fundamental mismatch between the hierarchy definitions and the way they have been imposed on settlements. Clearly villages which play a role as suburbs to market towns could reasonably be expected to play a greater role in the expansion of those towns, while villages such as Wool and Crossways, already served by the train, are also ignored. Individual villages along a stretch of road could be grouped together, for example in the Blackmore Vale, to have the same capacity as a small town. There are a host of villages, some distance from towns, that clearly survive without a clear connection to a market town and where development, even though at first sight potentially disproportionate, would enhance those settlements.

3. Facilities

The assessment of facilities is based on having at least 3 important facilities. Which facilities do you think should be taken into account? (7 examples given)

The current availability of facilities should not be a factor in determining suitability for growth. New technology has already facilitated changes to how services are enjoyed and this will continue to evolve.

The Local Plan is a 20 year strategy and should take account of rapid change due to the response to the climate emergency and to technological innovation. The adaptation of community meeting places to provide opportunities to receive services such as education or healthcare diagnosis; over time green electric and autonomous vehicles will assist home shopping; play spaces are often provided as part of a development, enhancing play opportunities for existing residents of smaller settlements, although traditionally opportunities for play in rural areas are less dependent on formal play spaces.

Technology is likely to allow new ways of delivering services that have long been surrendered to the towns, as witnessed by the use of current technologies to support a return to home working and home delivery, neither of which were included in the Local Plans 10 and 20 years ago. Many villages are, as a result, at their most economically active for years and it would be disastrous to reverse this trend.

Which facilities are considered most important will inevitably vary by location. An excellent shop or leisure opportunity 30 minutes away would in many instances trump a poor offer nearby. Employment space offering craft-based work would not suit a graduate physicist. And why three important facilities, why not two or four?

4. Acceptable Journey Times

Acceptable journey times to nearby towns is considered to be up to 30 minutes by public transport or up to 15 minutes by car. Do you agree with this approach?

Our view is that there is little point in a planning authority seeking to impose what they see as acceptable travel times onto developments. Acceptability will be determined by those who choose to live in, or indeed are forced into, a location. The push/pull factors about where people choose to live, and work are invariable nothing to do with journey times. Only long commutes such as trains to London on regular basis, where cost, unreliability and long hours away from home push people to seek work closer to home. Car-based commutes on a

smaller town/village basis are not notably affected by what is considered acceptable/unacceptable; quality of village life and the geographical availability of work (e.g. public sector hubs, retail etc) are relatively fixed.

Taken to a logical conclusion, because there can be no control over the housing market, workers will be obliged to journey as far or further from their new edge of town property to a distant town for work as they would had the property been built in a village. A simple analysis of postcodes for current main employers is likely to demonstrate how many are already willing to journey far more than the times suggested.

The proposal ignores the fundamental shift in the use of transport, with both technology enabling residents to undertake more tasks from home, while autonomous, green electric vehicles ultimately have the potential to replace old-fashioned and uneconomic public transport options. Given the life of the plan it should take account of this progressive shift.

Finally, journey times are also extremely variable, as anyone accessing Dorchester will know! The constraints and pinch points due to rivers, bypasses etc. will also need to be taken into account.

5. Concerns

Are there any concerns from a town council's perspective?

The proposals as phrased too readily accept the continued push towards the overdevelopment of towns, with a consequential decline of villages. Embracing new ideas around technology and transport could provide innovative solutions that reverse this trend. The new Local Plan, based on a much larger county area, represents a perfect moment to reboot the system and not just carry on with business as usual and old-fashioned thinking.

Issues such as the Climate Emergency, Brexit and even the COVID-19 outbreak are starting to stress test old ways of working and push us very quickly into new forms of travel, work and interaction. There is a case for waiting to learn the lesson from this and develop an innovative Local Plan, responsive to this emerging brave new world.

As recent experience nationally has demonstrated, towns are no longer always built in the right place. While their growth historically may have been logical, whether they are still in the right place given current behaviours, employment trends and movement choices is questionable. Or rather, are our current behaviours, employment trends, movement choices the correct ones for the historic towns and villages we are living and working in?

The national trend towards focusing development on towns has created many problems associated with highways routes being placed under pressure, while there are too many examples of a failure to understand the implications of flood plain development, based on a model of intensification or expansion that relies upon the use of out-dated 20th Century tech such as regular use of the private motor car, commuting rather than home-working and so on. We need to find another, better way to support both towns and villages?

A fixed approach to focus development on already overburdened infrastructure takes no account of the potential of many smaller settlements to absorb and take advantage of development.

6. Town's Current Role

What do you consider is the current role of your town?

Dorchester is first and foremost a public service centre. As such its hospital, schools and local government services all act as a magnet for workers and service users, often journeying far longer distances than any arbitrary parameters set within the Local Plan.

It is also very attractive to visitors, especially with its developing Heritage Tourism quarter, and how these visitors access the town and park in it will need to be taken into account.

The town also plays the role of a traditional market town, providing retail and professional services for its own residents, those of nearby Weymouth and the villages, and workers from far and wide.

Dorchester already has an imbalance of residents across the age range, with a greater than usual proportion of retired people and a distinct dearth of younger active workers in the range 20-40. The town is at risk of becoming a retirement home, with too much of its recent development focused on the needs of those who can afford to live in the town the most, the wealthy elderly. Future development within the town needs to resist and deliberately reverse this steady shift.

7. Priorities

What issues are your priorities? (6 suggestions)

The town has a growing number of important priorities and it is not easy to identify which of them is the biggest and why

They include

- finding a proper balance between the competing needs of residents, workers and visitors to arrive at, move about and park their vehicles;
- the delivery of housing at a price that is affordable to the young workers who will provide the town's services in the long term;
- making a constructive and positive contribution to resolving the climate emergency; and
- recognising and adapting to the fact that our retail infrastructure no longer provides for the logistics requirements of larger retailers.

Not least among our priorities is to ensure that the future development of the town is consistent with its own needs. It should not simply become the primary location for inappropriate housing as a result of unsubstantiated government targets; it should not pay the bulk of the price for adherence to an incorrect and already out of date mantra that "development should be focused in the vicinity of Dorchester"; it should not serve to satisfy

the long held ambitions of local landowners or be regarded as the natural outcome of the lack of a genuine, defensible process for a robust search across the whole of the Dorset Council area.

Councillor Robin Potter
Chair, Planning &
Environment Committee

Adrian Stuart
Town Clerk
Dorchester Town Council