



CORFE MULLEN TOWN COUNCIL

RESPONSE TO DRAFT DORSET LOCAL PLAN CONSULTATION

Corfe Mullen Town Council has considered the content of the Draft Dorset Local Plan and should like to respond by way of the following statement:

Corfe Mullen Town Council recognises that the housing allocation figures are a central Government driven issue imposed upon Dorset Council to identify sites in Dorset which are considered by them as suitable for potential development over the next 15 years from 2023 to 2038.

The Plan indicates that Dorset Council has accepted without question the large increase in housing targets that the Department of Housing, Communities and Local Government have stated they expect Dorset to increase by over the years to 2038. This has been based upon an estimate of 21,000 full time jobs being created within Dorset during this time. However, there is no substantial research to support this statement, with no evidence as to where these jobs will come from. The way in which people now work has changed, particularly in the current pandemic climate and, given this is likely to continue to some degree, much stronger justification for the allocation of housing numbers is required in light of this change. The employment references within section 7.21 of the plan provides no clarification or justification in respect of the generalisations made around the employment decisions.

Importantly there has been little or no compliance with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), in that local housing need assessments should be based on the Central Standard Method, unless exceptional circumstances justify an alternative approach. Corfe Mullen is surrounded by Green Belt land, internationally recognised heathland and an important SSSI which has been indicated in the plan within the area for building, making the proposed allocation wholly inappropriate and at odds with the NPPF. Section 136 of the NPPF states there is a clear requirement to demonstrate exceptional circumstances for Green Belt development and the plan goes entirely against this current guidance, providing absolutely no evidence of the exceptional circumstances for Green Belt development.

The Plan fails to demonstrate any co-operation with neighbouring authorities in respect of the available brown field sites which could accommodate further housing before development of any Green Belt. All the areas identified by the Plan within the Corfe Mullen Parish are situated on Green Belt land and the Plan claims there are no alternatives. However, there is no evidence within the Plan that alternatives have been sought and considered, as it is required to do by statute. Corfe Mullen sits on the boundary with BCP Council which has many brown field sites able to accommodate the suggested housing need before any infringement to the Green Belt. The legal requirement to have an informed discussion with neighbouring authorities should have taken place and been evidenced as per the Duty to Co-operate in the Localism Act 2011 and paragraph 182 of the NPPF, but this legal requirement has not been met within the Plan.

In addition to the issues with the allocation, there is a lack of any detail on the type and affordability of housing proposed to correlate with the housing needs. Corfe Mullen has a lack of affordable housing for local people and any housing development needs to be affordable for the community with a Community Land Trust established.

There are significant anomalies within the Plan in relation to the retail provision, pedestrian and cycling paths for easy access, vehicular access, flooding and ecological issues. Above all else the suggested infrastructure changes within the Plan go against the climate and ecological emergency already declared by Dorset Council, by encouraging travel in an area lacking public transport to neighbouring towns.

There is a complete absence of infrastructure analysis within the Plan with no evidence that it has been carried out on roads, drains, doctors, hospitals and schools, and whether those

already in situ are able to cope with an increased population in south east Dorset. Traffic congestion is already an issue within the Parish, with no national or local strategy to improve public transport.

The Plan suggests an expansion of the existing retail and local facilities on the land between Newtown Lane and the petrol station at Windgreen, with the suggestion of a retail centre. Corfe Mullen has no central retail area; it is a linear village, and the Plan fails to understand the dynamics of the village. Providing a space for retail does not necessarily mean that private retailers would be prepared to fill them, especially given the area concerned slopes away to the bottom of a hill, making pedestrian access difficult for the elderly and disabled, and is situated next to a cemetery and a school. Both of which require an element of privacy. Indeed, the small convenience shop and post office at Badbury View Road/Blandford Road, opposite Pardy's Hill, closed because of lack of custom.

The areas identified for extensive development at Pardy's Hill, Sleight Lane and Haywards Lane are all set off a small country road with access via a dangerous and limited visibility junction at the top of a very steep hill. There would need to be major highways redevelopment to accommodate the increased traffic levels and to make the junction safe. Pardy's Hill in particular is a very steep road leading to a limited sight junction with Blandford Road and would be the main route in and out of the proposed sites. Neither this, nor Waterloo Road, were designed for the proposed volume of traffic, and the resulting significant redesign of the road layout and junctions would result in the unnecessary loss of further green belt and significant cost for the County.

The Plan states at paragraph 5.6 that "the development at the bottom of Pardy's Hill/Sleight Lane should provide easy pedestrian and cycling access to current facilities". As already stated, the area is at the bottom of a very steep hill with small narrow lanes and lies a significant distance from any main part of the village. There would be no easy access for pedestrians or cyclists to access the facilities in the village without use of a vehicle, which is in absolute contradiction to the Plan's strategic claim that it is to reduce the need to travel and car use.

The Plan contradicts itself by stating that there is a need to avoid building in areas likely to flood. The Haywards Lane site is within an area which suffers from severe flooding. Corfe Mullen allotments which are located on the same stretch of the valley have continually suffered from flooding, as have the houses on occasion. This will only worsen if housing is sited further in the valley. The whole valley is a collection point for the surrounding hills and development will merely aggravate the situation with the need to ensure high specification land drainage systems were in place as part of the building and major highways works.

There is an increasing need to protect the biodiversity of Waterloo Valley which is a wildlife environment with precious species present. As the road would need to be widened to provide safe access to developments it would be impossible to keep the character and protect the wildlife, which would result in loss of hedgerows, trees and shrubs. This would in turn increase flooding of the area as the land would be turned over to tarmac and concrete and the wildlife diversity would disappear.

The wording at CORM 2 is incorrect. The housing being built in two of the three fields is under construction and the allotments are now situated on Broadmoor Road.

CORM 3 provides green space, which although appropriate, would not be of any benefit as allotments because the village already has an allotment provision. The land falls away steeply in this area and accessibility to any green space would be extremely difficult for disability groups or the elderly.

In summary, Corfe Mullen Town Council recognises the need to develop affordable homes within Corfe Mullen, but those homes must be affordable to residents and located in areas which will not damage the environment or decimate the Green Belt and are appropriately sited

within the village. Dorset Council has failed to communicate with local Towns and Parishes to identify suitable areas for development and has produced a draft Plan which relies on very little factual evidence, breaches the NPPF in numerous ways and has not followed statutory requirements to co-operate with its neighbouring Local Authorities.

Where a Local Plan does identify development within a parish, the Town Council concerned should be part of the early discussions before a plan is drafted and consulted upon, in order that it may help identify areas which would be better utilised for meeting any housing need. As can be demonstrated by the photographs supporting this response, the areas identified by officers are wholly inappropriate for all the reasons already mentioned, and it would save both time, public money and irreversible damage to wildlife if local involvement was introduced in at the very beginning of any planning process.

Corfe Mullen Town Council strongly objects to the proposed Local Plan and requests Dorset Council to reconsider its proposals for allocation and sites within the Parish of Corfe Mullen. Corfe Mullen Town Council would also like Dorset Council to consider the option of developing one town in a suitable area in the County of Dorset, with housing and amenities which would meet the housing requirement specified within the plan. This would lessen the damage done across the county by confining it to one area which would be suitable for development, rather than reducing the Green Belt and decimating wildlife on a large cross-county scale.

Signed On behalf of Corfe Mullen Town Council on 1 March 2021.



Nicola Gray
Town Clerk and RFO



