**Lytchett Matravers Parish Council**

**Notes of a Meeting with Dorset Council Planning**

# Introduction

Councillors Alf Bush and Ralph Watts met with Anna Lee (formerly the Planning Policy Manager at Purbeck District Council, now a Planning Policy Manager in the Dorset Council) at Westport House on 16th May 2019. The meeting followed on from a conversation on 2nd May with Bridget Downing about the Housing Mix policy in the Purbeck Local Plan. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the Purbeck Local Plan (including policy H9 – Housing Mix), the Lytchett Matravers Neighbourhood Plan, and negotiations on Developers Contributions, etc, that the Dorset Council may have with Developers in relation to the sites in Lytchett Matravers allocated for development in the Purbeck Local Plan.

# Notes of the Meeting

Anna Lee pointed out that in these discussions she could not give clear commitments on future policy because of the changes underway in the Dorset Council. The Dorset Council intends that a new management structure will be complete by mid July. Once the new structure has been implemented, there will be a need to co-ordinate planning policy across the whole of the Dorset Council area, involving the development of a new approach.

The meeting began with a discussion about policy H9 set out in the Purbeck Local Plan. The possibility of including a Housing Mix policy in the Local Plan was discussed in meetings between the Parish Council and Purbeck District Council during the winter of 2017/18. At these meetings members of the Parish Council asked whether it would be possible to ensure that small local builders could be given part of the works of any developments arising from the Local Plan, and also whether the Plan could require any housing to include provision for the elderly. Both of these are incorporated in policy H9. We asked Anna about the extent to which these policy requirements might be negotiated away by Developers during the discussions which take place about any sites allocated in the Local Plan, recognising that the process includes a step in which Developers submit a Viability Assessment for each allocated site (in which they are likely to claim that various of the policy requirements would make it unviable to develop the site). This led to a discussion about recent sites including Policeman’s Lane in Upton, the Huntick Road site in LM and the Wessex Water site in LM where the initial planning applications submitted by the developers did not comply with the requirement for Affordable Homes, and Purbeck District Council had to negotiate to improve the position, achieving 38% of the homes on the Huntick Road site to be affordable against a policy requirement of 40%.

Anna said that there had been a number of recent changes to the NPPF. One of these was to require a Viability Assessment to be done at the Plan Making Stage. This moves the emphasis from a Viability Assessment carried out by the Developers when they submit a planning application to an assessment carried out by the Planning Authority. Anna agreed that the level of Affordable Homes to be provided on the Huntick Road site provided a useful benchmark for the level of Affordable Homes that was viable for developments in the village. She added that the Purbeck Local Plan is one of the first to go through Examination under the new framework.

On the question of the Negotiations with Developers on matters such as Developer Contributions, Affordable Home requirements, Housing Mix, etc, we noted that the historical pattern had been that the Parish Council had not had any involvement with the negotiations. This seemed incongruous given our role, recognising that Lytchett Matravers had an adopted Neighbourhood Plan, and that the outcome of the negotiations would have a significant impact on our community. Anna confirmed that these negotiations were the responsibility of Alan Davies (Development Manager), and that she would discuss the possibility of the Parish Council being involved with him.

We discussed the request made by Turley for a meeting with the Parish Council, and the Parish Council’s concerns about this taking place during the Examination of the Local Plan. Anna understood our concern, and suggested that we might consider asking for the meeting with Turley to be delayed until after the Public Hearings. Although the Inspector may ask for submissions to be made to him/her after the public hearings, these would normally relate to submissions from the Council. In Anna’s experience it would be very unusual for an Inspector to ask for submissions from Developers.

We noted that the comments submitted by various Developers on the Pre-Submission version of the Purbeck Local Plan including various comments challenging the Housing Mix Policy on the basis of its impact on viability, and the likelihood that Developers would make similar submissions to the Inspector as part of the Examination process. Anna acknowledged that that was likely. We also noted that during the Homes for Purbeck consultation early in 2018, Wyatt Homes had made a submission that the Green Belt boundary around Lytchett Matravers should be moved further out than Purbeck District Council was proposing to allow more homes to be built at the Blaney’s Corner site, and whether Wyatt might also make such a submission to the Inspector. Anna acknowledged that that was possible. She suggested that the Parish Council could attend those sessions of the public hearings relating to the Green Belt to see what submissions were made (eg by Turley/Wyatt Homes).  We asked whether the Dorset Council had any influence on any amendments to the Local Plan arising from the Examination Process. Anna said that Inspectors often recommended adoption of a Local Plan subject to various amendments being made. At that point the Dorset Council has an option not to adopt the Local Plan, but that was very unlikely. It was more likely that the Council would make the amendments recommended by the Inspector, so that the Local Plan could be adopted. The Council did not have an option to appeal or modify the Inspector’s recommendations.

During the discussions between the Parish Council and Purbeck District Council during the winter of 2017/18 we discussed the phasing of any developments in Lytchett Matravers, with a preference for any allocated sites to be developed over a period of time rather than all at once. Anna said that she understood that Wyatt’s intention was that if the Local Plan was adopted with the 3 sites currently allocated, then they would bring forward planning applications for all 3 early in the plan period. The Dorset Council is having discussions with Developers on phasing, because as part of the Examination process, they are required to make a submission to the Inspector to demonstrate that the Council has a sufficient land supply to deliver the homes required in the first 5 years of the Local Plan. Anna said she would check the indications they have on phasing with Steve Boyt. She added that as things stand, no other area of Dorset has secured a 5 year land supply.

We raised the possibility of revising the Lytchett Matravers Neighbourhood Plan. Options that might be considered included a request to the Planning Authority for a housing target for the village, and introducing a requirement for improved parking provision for any new homes. On the latter we described the survey carried out by the Parish Council in 2018 which clearly showed that some new developments in the village did not have adequate parking provision, whereas others did. The Parish Council wanted to make sure that any future developments had parking provision that worked. For example, if on-street parking was the approach, then the roads had to be wide enough for vehicles to pass, including emergency vehicles. We referred to the development at Policeman’s Lane in Upton as an example of parking provision that worked. One aspect of this was the extent that such amendments to the Neighbourhood Plan might be considered to be “minor amendments” such that a new Neighbourhood Plan could be adopted without the need for a referendum. Anna said that she believed both of the changes we had described would not constitute minor amendments, and would require a referendum. We added that we were concerned that we would want any new Neighbourhood Plan to come into effect so that it applied to any developments in the village under the adopted Purbeck Local Plan, so that there was now only a limited time available, particularly if Wyatt Homes were planning to bring forward applications early in the Local Plan period. Anna commented that it was now possible to streamline the Neighbourhood Plan process, such that it was feasible to complete within a year.

We asked which body would judge whether any amendments to a Neighbourhood Plan might be considered “minor”, such that a referendum was not required. Anna said she would check

On the question of a housing target for the village, Anna said that she would expect this to be developed as part of a collaborative process between the Parish Council and the Dorset Council. She added that it was not yet clear how the Council would go about determining a housing number for the village, but referred to the recent work carried out with the Bere Regis Neighbourhood Planning Group and the Wareham Neighbourhood Planning Group, during which specific numbers for new homes in those communities had been developed. She added that under the new NPPF, there was a framework for the Planning Authority to designate a Neighbourhood Area, which would be the method used.

On the question of parking provision, Anna said that the Council has a policy on parking, and a Council Transport Officer would need to be involved to determine what evidence was required to justify a specific parking provision policy for inclusion in the Neighbourhood Plan.

Councillor Bush asked whether it was possible for the Parish Council to develop requirements for new developments outside of the Neighbourhood Plan, which could then be applied to planning applications which were subsequently submitted. Anna Lee replied that the Local Plan and the Neighbourhood Plan were the mechanisms available in the NPPF for this purpose, and that policies or requirements outside these would not have the same weight.

There followed a discussion about the Green Belt, and the Parish Council’s view that the allocated sites in the Purbeck Local Plan were not located in the right place in terms of the Green Belt objectives. If the Green Belt boundary around the village was to be moved, the Parish Council would have preferred the approach recommended by Steve Tapscott some years ago. This had indicated that applying the Green Belt objectives would lead to sites to the west of the village being considered. At the time the Lytchett Matravers Neighbourhood Plan was prepared, the NPPF did not allow the Parish Council to identify sites in the Green Belt for development. Anna said that the arrangements had changed since then. Under the new arrangements, the Local Plan could include a policy for the Green Belt boundary around a settlement to be moved in a particular direction, which would provide a basis for a subsequent Neighbourhood Plan for that settlement to set out the specific sites in that part of the Green Belt, and how many homes would be developed. Unfortunately the time pressure on Purbeck District Council to complete the Local Plan had been such that they were not able to consider this, but the opportunity existed for the Dorset Council Local Plan to include such policies. Anna said that the Dorset Council Local Plan was due to be complete by 2024, but that the Shadow Dorset Council had resolved to complete the process by 2023.

In view of the limited time available if the Parish Council was to undertake a revision to the Neighbourhood Plan, we proposed a follow up meeting to discuss the various issues outstanding from the above, which should involve both Anna and Alan Davies, during the second half of June. Anna acknowledged this, and said she would consult with Alan Davies on possible dates.

# Follow Up Actions for Lytchett Matravers Parish Council

The following actions arise from the meeting with Anna Lee:

1. Councillor Bush to check with Andrew Collins (Case Officer for the Huntick Road site) on provision of a section of cyclepath as part of the Huntick Road works, and its likely effect on CIL/Developers Contribution due.
2. Subject to outcome of 1, Councillor Bush to prepare a letter to Turley/Wyatt Homes on the proposal for a section of the cyclepath to be built as part of their developments of the Huntick Road site.
3. Councillor Bush to prepare a letter to Turley/Wyatt Homes proposing a deferral of the meeting they have asked for until after the Local Plan Public Hearings.
4. Parish Council to consider attendance at the Local Plan Public Hearings, with a schedule of those to attend.
5. Parish Council to confirm its intent to prepare a revision to the Neighbourhood Plan. A paper presented to the Parish Council in November 2018, set out a series of proposed changes to be made, which are reproduced in Appendix 1. It seems likely that these amendments would require a referendum. If the Parish Council confirms this intent, a Working Group needs to be established to start work at the earliest opportunity. This Working Group would need to establish a collaborative work method with the Dorset Council to develop amendments which are not contrary to the Purbeck Local Plan (and would therefore remain intact). The Working Group would need to identify early in their work those areas where supporting evidence was needed, for example on parking provision. This evidence might take the form of a report of a transport study commissioned by the Parish Council (with guidance from the Dorset Council), including an assessment of which approaches work and which don’t. There may also be a need for a study to develop a housing target for Lytchett Matravers based on existing infrastructure, and supporting evidence for a policy on housing density (again with guidance from the Dorset Council). In order for any revisions to the Neighbourhood Plan to be successful, each revision will need to be supported by a robust set of evidence.

# Recommendations

The Parish Council is asked to approve the recommendations set out in sections 3.

Councillor Alf Bush

Councillor Ralph Watts

# Appendix 1 : Proposed Revisions to the Lytchett Matravers Neighbourhood Plan

The following revisions to the Lytchett Matravers Neighbourhood Plan were proposed by HLF Planning and approved by the Parish Council at a meeting in 2018:

* Establish the localised housing need for the village as a starting point for reviewing the Neighbourhood Plan, requesting an indicative figure from the Local Planning Authority.
* Include a policy designating existing open spaces in Lytchett Matravers as Local Green Space. The open spaces to be included would primarily be those identified in a paper presented to the Parish Council in November 2018.
* The creation of smaller open spaces, such as playgrounds, could be promoted through development briefs (site specific policies enabling development subject to specific criteria).
* Consider two policies for provision of SANG, firstly that for developments of 50 dwellings or more a SANG is provided within 400m of the development, and secondly for major residential sites a SANG is provided on-site (publicly accessible open space)

In addition to the revisions proposed by HLF Planning, the LMPC also intends to consider other policies for inclusion in a revision to the LMNP. These include a policy requiring specified levels of car parking space for new developments, taking into account the special circumstances associated with the village, and also the development of a maximum limit that might apply to the Small Sites Policy proposed in the Purbeck Local Plan for sites within the village.