



Lytchett Matravers Parish Council

DORSET LOCAL PLAN – SUMMARY OF CONSULTATION RESPONSE

Dated: 14th March 2021

This paper summarises the full and more detailed responses that the Lytchett Matravers Parish Council submitted to the formal Dorset Council Local Plan Consultation website and pro forma.

WHY ARE THE PROPOSALS OF THE PURBECK LOCAL PLAN (PLP) 2018-34 BEING SET ASIDE?

The PLP states:- *“Following local government reorganisation on 1st April 2019, the area covered by this plan now forms part of Dorset Council. The Purbeck Local Plan 2018 when adopted by Dorset Council, will apply to the area formerly covered by Purbeck District Council”.*

Is Dorset Council genuinely concerned about Consultation, or is it setting aside years of public engagement spent in the preparation of the PLP, determined only to comply with Central Government Targets, regardless of their communities’ concerns and the effect on our environment?

TIMING OF THE CONSULTATION

This Consultation is being undertaken with unnecessary haste and is likely to be proven premature given fundamental changes in national demographics. Further, the timing of this Consultation is unreasonable given the ongoing Covid restrictions and therefore cannot be expected to lead to a credible consensus. As such, it is a flawed and undemocratic process.

QUESTIONABLE ASSUMPTIONS

The draft Dorset Local Plan (DLP) is based on 2 x highly questionable assumptions, namely:

1. Target Numbers

The last quarterly report of the ONS on migration was March 2020. Because of C-19 they have been unable to publish reliable figures for the past year. But with the impending rise in unemployment in the UK, a significant number of EU workers are predicted to return home.

The impact of Brexit is similarly unknown, but the ONS (Office of National Statistics) statistics show the UK economy shrank by 2.9% in January and is now 9% below its level of 1 year ago in March 2020. How short or long term the C-19/Brexit impact will be, is unknown, and that is the key point. How can Dorset Council, or any other council, have any level of confidence in the current government numbers for housing in the light of what are likely to be such fundamental changes? Key contributing factors need to be considered:

- Because of Brexit, the costs of business is predicted to increase. This will vary by sector, but due to the present mix of C-19 and Brexit factors it is currently impossible to gauge the true outcome.
- Employment is falling drastically due to C-19. We do not know if or when this will reverse or by how much.
- Many businesses are closing down for good, and again we don’t yet know the full impact of this.
- Office blocks and business premises will be left empty as a result, but as yet we do not know how many.
- Planning rules allow reuse of such premises for housing - so that alone will significantly reduce demand for new housing land.

How can we realistically plan until 2038 with this uncertainty?

2. Green Belt

As part of the Government's response to the 2020 White Paper consultation on planning changes they stated:-

"...we heard suggestions in the consultation that in some places the numbers produced by the standard method pose a risk to protected landscapes and Green Belt. We should be clear that meeting housing need is never a reason to cause unacceptable harm to such places".

We agree with that sentiment. However, we fail to understand why Dorset Council are so willing to ignore the reasons for, and the responsibilities inherent in, Green Belt legislation. The Dorset Green Belt was designated in 1980, only just in time to preserve a very narrow 2-mile wide zone of open countryside between the conurbation and Lytchett Matravers. Despite this, since 1980, the protective zone has been sliced away on numerous occasions with the village doubling from c800 to the present c1600 dwellings.

This erosion of the Green Belt cannot be allowed to continue. More details regarding this and the continuing threat that it presents are set out in the Parish Council's point by point response on the Consultation website/pro-forma.

Notwithstanding these questionable assumptions, the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), all current Government initiatives, and Dorset's own declaration of a Climate Emergency, all stress that the over-riding priority must be sustainable development.

Dorset Council's consultative draft local plan fails to recognise this in the most fundamental ways

The principal objective in creating a sustainable built environment community must be to ensure convenient, non-polluting access between homes, workplaces, schools and community facilities (including shops, leisure, recreation, and entertainment). A sustainable model for development is created through a balanced mix of all of these, each accessible by walking, cycling, regular public transport and with minimal reliance on private motor vehicles.

Lytchett Matravers has very limited workplace provision. It is far below that required by c 4000 inhabitants, a large proportion of whom are of working age. Consequently, the village is being developed as a dormitory settlement, primarily for the conurbation, but without access to good public transport. As a result, Lytchett Matravers is being pushed towards an entirely unsustainable model of how development should take place.

The Parish Council has been working hard in developing strategies to mitigate this and make the village more sustainable, much of which was enshrined in our Neighbourhood Plan, adopted in 2017. It is unfortunate that Dorset Council Planners in their very recent decision to replace a village retail site with housing, are failing to support the Parish Council in that project. Dorset Council Planners must use the emerging Local Plan to respond to the Climate Emergency and support their Communities in their endeavours to create a more sustainable future.

The Consultative Draft fails to do this because it considers only housing numbers. That is a facile approach seeking only to appease a hasty and highly questionable central Government diktat.

Lytchett Matravers cannot accept any additional housing development without a corresponding provision of supporting facilities - in particular, workplaces.

If the required housing numbers are mandatory, Dorset Council must direct new residential development towards centres of employment and/or the principal of sustainable transport corridors through the County – namely the Weymouth, Dorchester, Moreton, Wool, Wareham, Holton Heath, Poole – London railway line and the Exeter, Yeovil, Sherborne, Gillingham, Salisbury – London railway line.

CONCLUSION

Lytchett Matravers Parish Council, having listened to parishioners' concerns, including during an open Zoom meeting called specifically for this purpose, are strongly opposed to the proposals as they affect our village.

LMPC 14TH March 2021