



WAREHAM NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

Regulation 16 Consultation **Friday 18 December 2020 until Friday 12 February 2021**

Response Form

The proposed Wareham Neighbourhood Plan has been submitted to Dorset Council for examination. The neighbourhood plan and supporting documentation can be viewed on Dorset Council's website: <https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/wareham-neighbourhood-plan>

Please return completed forms to:

Email: planningpolicy@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

Post: Planning Policy, South Walks House, South Walks Road, Dorchester, DT1 1UZ

Deadline: End of Friday 12 February 2021. Representations received after this date will not be accepted.

Part A – Personal Details

This part of the form must be completed by all people making representations as **anonymous comments cannot be accepted**. By submitting this response form you consent to your information being disclosed to third parties for this purpose, personal details will not be visible on our website, although they will be shown on paper copies that will be sent to the independent examiner and available for inspection. Your information will be retained by the Council in line with its retention schedule and privacy policy (www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/privacypolicy). Your data will be destroyed when the plan becomes redundant.

	Personal Details *	Agent's Details *
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**If an agent is appointed, please complete only the Title, Name and Organisation boxes to the personal details but complete the full contact details of the agent. All correspondence will be sent to the agent.*

Part B – Representation

1. To which document does the comment relate? Please tick one box only.

X	Submission Plan
	Consultation Statement
	Basic Conditions Statement
	Other – please specify:-

2. To which part of the document does the comment relate? Please identify the text that you are commenting on, where appropriate.

	<i>Location of Text</i>
Whole document	Windfall Allowance, Provision of SANG
Section	Plan Monitoring and Review
Policy	H5, H6, H7, H8, GS2 AND GS3

Page	
Appendix	

3. Do you wish to? *Please tick one box only.*

	Support
X	Object
	Make an observation

4. Please use the box below to give reasons for your support or objection, or to make your observation.

Please refer to representations dated February 2021 and supporting information.

Continue on a separate sheet if necessary

5. Please give details of any suggested modifications in the box below.

Please refer to representations dated February 2021 and supporting information.

Continue on a separate sheet if necessary

6. Do you wish to be notified of Dorset Council's decision to make or refuse to make the neighbourhood plan? Please tick one box only.

X	Yes
	No

Signature: ██████████ Date: 12.01.2021
If submitting the form electronically, no signature is required.

WAREHAM NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT PLAN REVISED DRAFT 2019 – 2034
SUBMISSION (REGULATION 16) CONSULTATION

RESPONSE ON BEHALF OF WELBECK LAND

FEBRUARY 2021



WELBECK LAND

Carter Jonas

CONTENTS PAGE	Page No
1.0 INTRODUCTION	1
2.0 SUGGESTED SITE ALLOCATIONS H5, H6, H7 AND H8	3
3.0 SUGGESTED POLICIES GS2 AND GS3	5
4.0 WINDFALL ALLOWANCE	6
5.0 PLAN MONITORING AND REVIEW	6
6.0 PROVISION OF A SANG AT WAREHAM	8
7.0 CONCLUSION	10

Annex A: Vail Williams report: Westminster Road Industrial Estate

Annex B: Proposed north Wareham SANG Vision

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This statement is submitted by Welbeck Land (“Welbeck”) in relation to the Submission (Regulation 16) consultation of the Wareham Neighbourhood Plan 2019 - 2034 (“the new plan”). Carter Jonas LLP is instructed by Welbeck.
- 1.2 The Wareham Neighbourhood Plan was originally submitted to Purbeck District Council (now Dorset Council) in October 2018. The plan was withdrawn due to issues raised at the examination (“the revised plan”).
- 1.3 In preparation of the new plan, a second pre-submission consultation (Regulation 14) took place from 28th February 2020 until 14th April 2020 (which was extended due to the Covid-19 pandemic). Welbeck provided evidence through the consultation process as to why the pre-submission consultation plan was fundamentally flawed.
- 1.4 Nevertheless, Wareham Town Council considered the comments raised through the pre-submission and, on 1st December 2020 Wareham Town Council met and agreed to submit the new plan for examination.
- 1.5 Welbeck is promoting the potential for the development of land at North Wareham and Sandford for residential and associated development acting on behalf of Charborough Estate. The two parcels, as evidenced by discussions with senior officials at Natural England, are capable of coming forward independently of each other with suitable ecological mitigation, or combined.
- 1.6 Welbeck welcomes the opportunity to comment on the new plan but remains concerned about the timing of its production. Since the formation of the Dorset Unitary Authority the emerging Purbeck Local Plan has continued through the examination process. The draft Purbeck Local Plan (2018 – 2034) with tracked Proposed Main Modifications was published on 3rd December 2020 in advance of the consultation.
- 1.7 Dorset Council is in the process of preparing a new Dorset Local Plan and is currently consulting on the Options strategy for the plan. The Local Development Scheme anticipates adoption in 2023.
- 1.8 Our advice in the Regulation 14 pre-submission consultation on the new plan was that the Regulation 16 consultation (this consultation) does not take place until there is some certainty about the future of the Purbeck Local Plan. Whilst the Inspector believes that the plan may be found sound there is still uncertainty about its future. No report has been issued by the Inspector confirming they find the Purbeck Local Plan (2018 – 2034) sound, nor has it been adopted.
- 1.9 We will find ourselves in the same complicated and unsatisfactory situation that we did for the previous Wareham Neighbourhood Plan submission and examination with misaligned plans and uncertainty about which strategic document the Neighbourhood Plan must conform. The adopted strategic plan for Wareham is The Purbeck Local Plan 1, the emerging Purbeck Local Plan is yet to be adopted and the emerging Dorset Local Plan is at its very early stages of preparation. Therefore, the Neighbourhood Plan

- should be delayed until there is sufficient certainty regarding an up-to-date strategic plan.
- 1.10 Welbeck is not persuaded that there has been enough investigation regarding the suitability, viability and deliverability of ensuring that at least 300 dwellings in Wareham can be delivered. Welbeck remains unconvinced by the proposed housing allocation of active employment sites and other sites that would be unviable and likely undeliverable. Furthermore, there is an over reliance on 'windfall' development in a tightly constrained settlement.
- 1.11 Welbeck acknowledges that the Purbeck Local Plan Inspector has suggested that there are no exceptional circumstances to remove land from the Green Belt at Wareham. In the Post Hearing Note (March 2020) the Inspector clarifies that the emerging allocations in this neighbourhood plan can deliver sufficient housing for Wareham without the need to remove land from the Green Belt. However, Welbeck maintain that the allocations referred to are undeliverable and therefore should not be relied upon.
- 1.12 Furthermore, this could change through to the Inspector's final report, but of potentially more significant importance is the expected emergence of the (whole of) Dorset Local Plan in the coming months. Welbeck respectfully suggests that the Wareham Town Council ought to more explicitly acknowledge in their Neighbourhood Plan that the Dorset Plan – and the likely increase in housing needs and helping to meet the needs of neighbouring planning authorities – will have a material impact on Wareham.
- 1.13 This consultation is held under regulation 16 of the Neighbourhood planning regulations and therefore must comply with the basic conditions. Hereunder, Welbeck comments on suggested site allocations H5, H6, H7 and H8. Also, policies GS2 and GS3, and Plan Monitoring and Review. Welbeck also submits comments relating to the delivery of SANG at Bog Lane.

2.0 SUGGESTED SITE ALLOCATIONS H5, H6, H7 AND H8

2.1 Welbeck has very significant concerns about the appropriateness of the proposed allocations, and their deliverability in the revised Plan. Welbeck has the following concerns and observations about the included sites:

Policy H5: Westminster Road (30 homes) and Policy H6: Johns Road Industrial Estates (15 homes)

- 2.2 These are protected employment sites in the extant Local Plan (The Purbeck Local Plan Part 1 2006 – 2017) and moreover, their exemption from such a designation might be proposed but it has not yet been accepted through the Local Plan examination or been adopted.
- 2.3 During the examination of the emerging Purbeck Local Plan 2018 – 2034, the Inspector released a Post Hearing Note (March 2020). The proposed revisions to the plan included modifying policy EE1 to reference Westminster Road Industrial Estate and Johns Road Industrial Estate in Wareham as non-strategic employment sites (but with reduced site areas 2.5ha and 0.5ha respectively). Whilst there is a dispensation in the non-strategic allocation, on the southern end of the industrial estate, to allow for the Neighbourhood Plan allocation, the specifics of the allocation are not considered by the Purbeck Local Plan inspector to establish whether they are suitable, achievable and deliverable. The designation of the industrial estate as a non-strategic industrial estate cements the role which it plays in delivering local economic prosperity and therefore the Neighbourhood Plan should seek to protect this rather than compromise its existing and future use with an adjacent residential housing allocation which will threaten the viability of the industrial estate through noise, pollution, and traffic issues.
- 2.4 Furthermore, as provided in relation to the Neighbourhood Plan regulation 14 consultation Welbeck submitted strong evidence confirming that both Westminster Road Industrial Estate and Johns Road Industrial Estate is not suitable for residential development. This evidence, a report produced by Vail Williams, can be read at **Annex A**.
- 2.5 The clear viability and subsequent deliverability implications of reducing the proposed redevelopment of Westminster Road Industrial Estate from 90 dwellings to 30 dwellings has not been considered by the Town Council, or through Neighbourhood Plan.
- 2.6 The Vail Williams report includes recent purchase prices of the industrial units which are considerably in excess of any likely land value achievable with residential development and that both the 90 dwelling and 30 dwelling options are demonstrably not viable even when applying the Neighbourhood Plan's own consultant's (Aecom) methodology.
- 2.7 In any event, part development of an industrial estate is not good planning and place making. It is unlikely that appropriate buffering will be achievable between industrial uses and new residential development. This will threaten both the amenity of future

residents and the proper and viable future of employment on the industrial estate. There is a risk of piece meal and uncoordinated development of the industrial estates which would be ineffective and inefficient. This would be the case for both H5 and H6.

- 2.8 This is further evidenced by the recent 12 house outline application (reference 6/2020/0163) which is under consideration by Dorset Council. 50% of the proposed housing numbers for this allocation is being provided on just 25% of the land area. This results in gross over-development of the site, creates a poor design which is vehicle led and dominated by car parking. This demonstrates that higher densities are required to make the site financially viable against the use of the land as industrial units. Therefore, the site cannot be considered viable.
- 2.9 Whilst this is not the platform to voice objections to an individual planning application, it should be noted that environmental health has not been consulted. If consulted they are likely to raise issues relating to noise, pollution and harm to human health which would further demonstrate lack of suitability for residential development. The application is premature of the plan and therefore inappropriate.

**Policy H7: Wareham Town Northern Gateway (Gasworks and Autopoint Sites)
(20 homes)**

- 2.10 Welbeck is concerned that the Town Council is seeking to allocate another site which provides employment, for residential use. There is no provision in the proposed policy to seek recourse for the loss of employment or the loss of the service which a mechanic provides to the town. The auto garage is operating as a going concern and as such, this raises concerns – like for policies H5 and H6 – that this proposed allocation is undeliverable.
- 2.11 Turning to the Gasworks, this site has been vacant for well over 10 years. In that time approval for residential development has been granted and subsequently lapsed. As such, the principle of residential development of the site has been long established but development has not occurred due, most likely, to issues of viability. Given that there is no evidence to suggest otherwise the site should be considered at best as a potential windfall.

Policy H8: Former Hospital and Health Centre Site

- 2.12 Policy H8 is entirely reliant on policy GS2 (Proposed Health Care and Housing Hub (former Middle School site)) being deliverable and coming forward. Proposed policy H8 is confusing and reliant on several circumstances converging to provide for the site's development. Welbeck is not convinced that a policy which opens with a statement: "*Provided that the GP surgery is relocated...*" is either positive or can demonstrate that development is deliverable. Welbeck suggests that this policy is reviewed so that either it is supported by robust evidence that the site is available and viable for development or it is treated as a windfall site. Such evidence should be available from Dorset Council

and should amount to more than aspiration/intention but firm funding commitments with appropriate timescales for delivery.

- 2.13 The Neighbourhood Plan indicates that development of the 'health and housing hub' (GS2) will need to be undertaken in phases, as funding becomes available. With policy H8 so heavily reliant on the delivery of the 'health and housing hub' before it can be delivered itself, it further demonstrates the lack of deliverability for Policy H8.
- 2.14 Before the development can begin (or an application be submitted) a masterplan must be approved by the authority in consultation with the town council, which is likely to be a lengthy process. In the interests of good planning a masterplan should form part of the Neighbourhood Plan process, in order to demonstrate the sites suitability for the proposed allocation.
- 2.15 Furthermore, the proposals for the site appear to suggest a capacity of 40 dwellings. This would equate to about 49 dwellings per hectare. This seems to be an excessively high density, especially given the proximity of heritage assets and their setting, and when the Neighbourhood Plan evidence suggests a capacity of 19 new homes. Welbeck again, has concerns that this does not represent good planning, respect of heritage assets or good place making.

3.0 SUGGESTED POLICIES GS2 AND GS3

- 3.1 It is not clear why policies GS2 and GS3 are drafted in the local green space and community facilities section. Given that the Town Council is seeking to rely on the two sites to deliver a third of the overall housing need at Wareham, it would be more appropriate for them to be part of the housing chapter.

Policy GS2: Proposed Health Care and Housing Hub (former Middle School Sites) and Policy GS3 – Proposed Affordable Housing and Extra Care Housing, Bonnets Lane

- 3.2 Welbeck has serious concerns about the Town Council's most recent and revised proposals for the Middle School sites. There is no convincing evidence that these sites are deliverable and viable. There is, again the strong likelihood that redevelopment costs will adversely affect the provision of affordable housing and other mitigation, and there is also no publicly available confirmation that the protected status of the school playing field has been (or can be) extinguished. Even if these matters can be overcome, they will inevitably result in delays to housing delivery. There is also anecdotal evidence that there is local opposition to this idea.
- 3.3 Policy GS2 states that the site '*may include extra care housing, key worker housing, a care home facility and affordable housing*'. The policy therefore does not explicitly require residential development in this location.

- 3.4 Policy GS3 confirms scheme for affordable housing and extra care housing will be supported. However, it is unclear whether market housing will be permitted on the site. It is unlikely that both affordable housing and extra care housing will come forward without market housing and therefore this policy requires clarification.
- 3.5 It is completely unclear how many new homes will be delivered on each of GS2 and GS3. We are only told in 'Table 1' that the two sites could potentially deliver 100 new homes. However, previous publicly available consultations options suggested around 90 new homes on GS2. This would give an indicative density of 53 dwellings per hectare. This seems to be an excessively high density, especially given the proximity of heritage assets and their setting, and when the Neighbourhood Plan evidence suggests a capacity of 41 new homes. Welbeck once again, has concerns that this does not represent good planning and place making.
- 3.6 Welbeck is also not convinced that the types of homes that are suggested – and already have temporary permission – on the Middle School site will meet identified needs. The recently consented scheme provides accommodation for vulnerable adults and is not the market houses necessary to meet the overall target of Purbeck or Wareham. These specialist types of homes are counted 'on top of' the overall housing target. This is with reference to the proposed care home at Moreton Station, which was described at the Purbeck Local Plan Examination as in addition to the 490 homes proposed there.

4.0 WINDFALL ALLOWANCE

- 4.1 Welbeck's position remains that a windfall allowance of 100 dwellings is too high. This view is especially in light of many of the proposed Neighbourhood Plan sites being those that would usually be considered as windfall e.g. H7 and H8.
- 4.2 Welbeck is also concerned that the Town Council's decision to scrap the provision of a SANG north of the railway line will artificially cap development in this general location at 45 dwellings. The implication of this is that the full 100 dwelling windfall allowance will need to be accommodated south of the railway line to ensure cumulative development does not impact Wareham Forest without mitigation. This would bring the windfall in direct conflict with conservation and flood avoidance priorities.
- 4.3 It is unlikely that there will be sufficient suitable sites in Wareham to accommodate 100 windfall dwellings in the plan period. Further positive allocations should be made.

5.0 PLAN MONITORING AND REVIEW

- 5.1 Welbeck is pleased to note that the Town Council has included a chapter in the revised plan which identifies the need to monitor and review policies, as necessary. It is reasonable to suggest that the plan will need reviewing in five-year cycles and to cite "*...possible changes in national or local policies...*" but this commitment should be

- strengthened. Welbeck has highlighted some significant challenges with the sites proposed to be allocated, and even if they do prove to be deliverable it is likely that they will take some time to come to fruition. If the sites do not deliver in a timely fashion (after all – as highlighted in relation to H7 – the time horizon for the plan is 15 years and planning consents can be secured and lapse in that time) then the Town Council will need to consider alternative sites to ensure conformity with the Local Plan.
- 5.2 Whilst Welbeck maintain that the Neighbourhood Plan is premature and should be delayed until the Purbeck Plan is adopted, it could further be considered that it would be wise to wait until the strategy for the Dorset plan area is agreed. Should the Neighbourhood Plan progress through examination there should be a clear commitment, in the Neighbourhood Plan, to ensuring that it must be reviewed as soon as the Dorset Local Plan is adopted to ensure that it meets the base conditions of conforming with its strategic plan.
- 5.3 Welbeck acknowledges that, at present, there is no mechanism to allocate its land interests in the Green Belt through the Neighbourhood Plan and although in relation to the Local Plan Inspector's view that there are no very special circumstances at Wareham to justify release of land from the Green Belt, the Town Council should also acknowledge that the emerging Dorset Plan will be a material change in circumstance that will affect the Neighbourhood Plan. This could include the need to meet neighbouring authorities (BCP) unmet housing need.
- 5.4 There is a proposed modification in the Purbeck Local Plan (MM28) which is to include a commitment to reviewing the Plan in the event of increased housing needs being identified. The Post Hearing Note (2020) sets out further need to review MM28 to indicate that the new Dorset Local Plan will serve as the vehicle for an early review in relation to ensuring that any housing need above the capped level is provided for as soon as possible. Welbeck agrees with, and supports, the introduction of this important modification and suggests that the Town Council follows this lead and includes a similar specific reference in its monitoring chapter. The proposed timetable for the Dorset Plan puts its adoption in 2023 and before any five-year review of the Wareham Neighbourhood Plan.
- 5.5 Housing needs and requirements are likely to increase in Purbeck, and Wareham specifically, in the foreseeable future, especially as it is a logical and sustainable location to help meet some of the expected unmet housing needs of Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole. This too, the Local Plan Inspector has commented upon when she noted in her post hearing note at paragraph 19 that:
- “...there is a general acceptance that there is likely to be some unmet need in neighbouring authorities particularly the new adjoining unitary authority of Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole, New Forest District and the New Forest National Park...”*
- 5.5 Wareham is on a direct and sustainable rail connection to the areas of unmet needs and the political designation of Green Belt can and should be reviewed. Whilst in

relation to the emerging Purbeck Local Plan, the Inspector concluded that there are no very special circumstances to release land from the Green Belt in Wareham, this may well change when reviewing Dorset plan area as a whole (potential increased housing need and neighbouring authority unmet need).

- 5.6 Welbeck disagrees with the Purbeck Local Plan Inspector's conclusion (above) and maintain that evidence exists which demonstrates that review of the Green Belt at Wareham is reasonable, and the unmet needs will provide the exceptional circumstances to change the Green Belt boundaries. This is a situation that the Town Council should embrace and identify opportunities for positive development that, especially in the case of the land promoted by Welbeck, will bring with it the genuine benefits of new homes and appropriate ecological mitigation that would be a major benefit to both existing and new residents.

6.0 PROVISION OF A SANG AT WAREHAM

- 6.1 Welbeck has significant concerns about the appropriateness of the choice of Bog Lane as a SANG location to mitigate development in Wareham. Bog Lane is a site of limited accessibility. It is a location that can only practically be reached by car and it is counter intuitive to suggest that it will reduce pressure on sensitive ecological heathland and woodland; nor would it promote sustainable behaviours and attitudes. Bog Lane is also a walk of some 30 minutes from the "middle school" proposed development site, and around 45 minutes from north of Wareham railway station. Moreover, the site is separated from Wareham by the A351 bypass road. Dorset Council has published a Green Belt Mitigation Strategy document as part of the Local Plan Examination [ID: SD93], which includes a usage survey of the existing SANG at Bog Lane. This information demonstrates that the site is not heavily used and the majority of those people who do visit the site do so by car. The survey was carried out over four days and only recorded 30 people on the site in the whole period. 75% of those people surveyed arrived by car. What the survey does not capture is the people who, having little option but to travel by car, then decide to travel to the attractive sensitive destinations that a SANG is meant to protect. To be effective a SANG needs to be within easy walking distance of residents which Bog Lane is not.
- 6.2 Furthermore, the Bog Lane SANG is in the wrong location to mitigate development in the area of Wareham that Natural England reports as being particularly sensitive i.e., development land in Wareham located north of the railway. Indeed, the latest information suggests that no more than 50 homes can be built north of the railway without mitigation. The Neighbourhood Plan now proposes an allocation of 45 new homes north of the railway on the two industrial estates. This leaves no headroom for further growth; in this regard, the Town Council strategy which relies on infill and windfall development, cannot effectively be mitigated.
- 6.3 A strategy that includes a SANG – or HIP – at north Wareham is necessary to intercept people travelling towards the Wareham Forest or proposing to use the heath – especially those arriving on foot. It would also complement the Bog Lane SANG. Such

a strategy has been agreed with the necessary parties and is deliverable as I have set out above. It is therefore very disappointing to see this approach abandoned at this very late stage in the process.

6.4 Welbeck is in the process of producing a master plan and vision for the proposed SANG at North Wareham and this can be seen at **Annex B** to this report. Welbeck initially had a proposal for a smaller SANG to which Natural England previously confirmed that there was SANG capacity for around 180 dwellings in Wareham. Through further discussion with Charborough Estate and careful planning Welbeck is now able to present a proposal which will see the creation of over 19ha of natural green space. The SANG can be delivered as part of a phased approach commensurate to the delivery of housing. The principles of SANG are to provide areas of natural green space for informal recreation as mitigation for new development which may put pressure on nationally or internationally designated ecological sites, such as Special Protection Areas (SPAs). The SANG will provide a series of walking routes within a natural setting near to new developments to reduce visitor pressure on existing habitats. The proposed SANG will provide a high quality, heathland fringe landscape, with undulating walking routes and opportunities to experience nature at first hand.

6.5 The proposals have the potential to include:

- A 3.76 km circular walking route. This will be surfaced with hoggin to ensure a low impact, decent walking surface is achieved;
- Informal, mown paths will also be created, providing alternative routes around the SANG;
- Visitor parking for 20 cars, including two disabled spaces;
- Two pedestrian crossing points on Bere Road to enable a larger circular walk to be achieved;
- Management and enhancement of areas of wet grassland;
- New native tree and scrub planting. The proposed trees will include a mix of deciduous and evergreen species, reflecting the localised landscape context;
- New planting will be introduced along key boundaries to create a degree of separation between the SANG and neighbouring uses;
- Management of existing areas of acidic grassland and creation of new areas through the spreading of topsoil won from the proposed development areas to the east;
- 25 m planted buffer to Wareham Forest, which includes new fencing to deter public access between the SANG and Northport Heath;

- Creation of several viewpoints along the walking route which will afford panoramic views of Wareham Forest, the Seven Barrows and the Purbeck Hills, as well as providing elevated views over Wareham;
- Provision of interpretation boards around the SANG which will provide information on the landscape setting, the history of the area and the ecology associated with the site and its context;
- Protection of the tumuli which form part of the Seven Barrows SAM by new fencing and the introduction of interpretation boards providing information about the features and their history;
- A secure area will be created for dogs to be off lead. Livestock fencing will be introduced along vegetated boundaries to ensure that it is not visually obvious, but ensures dogs are contained within the defined area;
- Existing internal fences will be removed to open up the grassland, reducing the perception of an agricultural landscape;
- Informal paths will be cut through the areas of dense scrub to create fire breaks, as well as alternative routes to the circular path.

7.0 CONCLUSION

- 7.1 Welbeck acknowledges that the Purbeck Local Plan Inspector, in her post hearing note, has indicated that there are not the exceptional circumstances (at this time) to change the Green Belt at Wareham. However, this is not yet a final report. Welbeck respectfully suggests that the Town Council remains circumspect about the submission of its plan for examination until at least the final report of the Inspector is published.
- 7.2 More importantly, however, Welbeck remains unconvinced about the deliverability of many of the sites included in the revised Neighbourhood Plan and also its over reliance on windfall development. It is likely that the Town Council will need to review its allocations in the face of the uncertainty about their completion, potentially after the plan has been 'Made.' Welbeck suggests that in committing to the review of the Neighbourhood Plan the Town Council should specifically acknowledge that the Dorset Plan could affect its own proposals. Welbeck would welcome a working relationship with the Town Council, to build on previous work, which looks at the potential to deliver some homes north of the town at the appropriate time alongside a comprehensive SANG.