



Dorset Council

Statement of Community Involvement 2025

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1.0 What we do

- 1.1 Produce Local Plans: Local Plans specify the types of development that may or may not be permitted in different areas.
- 1.2 Produce Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD): SPDs can provide additional detail, particularly on specific policies, such as design.
- 1.3 Monitoring: This measures the success of current Local Plan policies and helps inform the content of future Local Plans.
- 1.4 Support Neighbourhood Planning: Support is given to communities undertaking neighbourhood planning.
- 1.5 Work with neighbouring planning authorities: Managing cross boundary issues under the duty to cooperate.
- 1.6 Process and determine planning applications: Most development requires planning permission. Planning applications should be processed efficiently and fairly.
- 1.7 Provide preapplication advice: Enables planning issues to be discussed before planning applications are submitted.
- 1.8 Planning enforcement: Where development does not have planning permission we can decide to take action.

2.0 The Statement of Community Involvement

- 2.1 The Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) sets out how and when Dorset Council will involve the community as part of its planning duties. The list below summarises the planning duties performed by Dorset Council.
- 2.2 Because planning affects the future of Dorset, the Council wants to be sure that everybody is able to be involved in both the preparation of Local Plans, including the Minerals and Waste plans and Neighbourhood Plans and decisions on planning applications.
- 2.3 We aim to
 - (a) Seek the views of residents, statutory bodies, landowners, developers, infrastructure and service providers, community organisations, businesses and visitors as early as possible in the process.
 - (b) Engage with and involve people regardless of their race or ethnicity, faith or belief, age, gender, sexual orientation or disability.

- (c) Provide a range of opportunities and consultation methods that are inclusive, appropriate, cost effective and timely.
- (d) Produce consultation documents and materials that are clear and avoid unnecessary jargon.
- (e) Make documents available upon request, in alternative formats, such as large print and audio and other languages, where possible.
- (f) Keep people and groups informed of progress and let them know of future consultation events.

3.0 Planning Policy

- 3.1 The Council's planning policies are set out in Local Plans (also known as development plan documents). 'Adopted' local plans, including the Minerals Strategy and Waste Plan and 'made' neighbourhood plans form the development plan. Legally these are the starting point in determining planning applications.
- 3.2 In addition, when more detail is required the Council can choose to produce and publish a supplementary planning document (SPD). However, government has indicated that they are likely to remove reliance on SPDs and they may be phased out.
- 3.3 Public and stakeholder engagement is an important part of the plan making process as it allows knowledge and expertise to be gathered from a wide range of perspectives.

Who will we consult

- 3.4 The Council is required to consult with a range of consultees as set out in The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012, as amended. This includes specific and general consultation bodies, and duty to cooperate bodies.

3.5 Specific consultation bodies include:

- Environment Agency
- Historic England
- Natural England
- Homes England
- NHS Dorset Clinical Commissioning Group
- Public Health Dorset
- Highways England
- Network Rail
- Marine Management Organisation
- town and parish councils in Dorset
- neighbouring county, local and parish councils
- Dorset Police and Crime Commissioner

- gas, electricity, water and telecoms providers.

3.6 General consultation bodies include:

- Voluntary bodies whose activities benefit the area
- Bodies representing racial, ethnic or national groups in the area
- Bodies representing disabled persons in the area
- Bodies representing businesses in the area

3.7 The duty to cooperate also requires us to cooperate with:

- the Civil Aviation Authority
- the Office of Rail Regulation
- the Dorset Local Nature Partnership

3.8 The Council will consult with groups that fall into one of the above categories to ensure that it captures the views of a broad range of local groups that represent different interests in the area. If you belong to a group that can be described by one of the categories listed above and you would like your group to be involved in local plan production, please let us know.

3.9 As well as the above the Council believes that all residents and businesses operating in the area should have the opportunity to be involved in the plan making process. The Council operates a local plan database which anyone can ask to be included on. People on the database will receive notification of consultations directly. Please see below for contact details for the Council's Planning Policy Team.

When we will consult

3.10 A brief overview of the plan making process highlighting the key production stages is summarised below.

Local Plan production process

Initial evidence gathering: Consider the scope of the plan and begin evidence gathering. We may consult particular stakeholders on certain evidence base documents.

Plan preparation (can include Issues and Options and Preferred Options stages): Engage with local communities, businesses and other interested parties. Public consultations will usually last six weeks¹.

¹ Additional days will be added to the consultation period to compensate for any public bank holidays that coincide

Publication: Draft plan published and representations (comments) invited on it for a minimum of six weeks.

Submission: Plan submitted for examination.

Examination in public: Independent inspector assesses the Local Plan to determine whether it is 'sound' and meets other legal requirements. Public hearings are held. Everyone who made representations at the publication stage will be notified six weeks beforehand. The Inspector's Report is published.

Adoption: Plan adopted (depending on outcome of inspector's report).

How we will consult

3.11 There are a number of methods that we can use to inform, consult and involve others such as:

- Publicising consultations through press releases, our website, public notices in the local press, posters, and social media (e.g. X and Facebook).
- Emailing or writing to appropriate organisations, community groups and individuals directly.
- Making consultation documents available:
 - on the Dorset Council website and/or
 - at local libraries or other public locations, as deemed appropriate, where possible and safe.
- Hosting public events, such as roadshows/exhibitions or webinars, where everyone is welcome to attend and ask questions.

How to make your involvement effective

3.12 The following is a guide to making sure that your involvement is effective:

- Write clearly and submit your comments within the published timescale.
- Give your name and contact details²
- Be courteous and respectful of other people's views. We reserve the right not to accept comments that could be considered offensive.

Be aware that local plans and decisions need to be legal and consistent with government policy.

What happens to your comments?

3.13 All comments received in response to a consultation will be considered. A consultation report summarising comments will be made available on the Local Plan web pages.

² The [Council's Planning Policy Privacy Notice](#) is available to view on the Council's website.

4.0 Neighbourhood planning

- 4.1 Dorset Council is responsible for facilitating neighbourhood planning in the Dorset area. Neighbourhood planning gives local communities direct power to develop a shared vision for their neighbourhood and shape the development and growth of their local area.
- 4.2 With a neighbourhood plan (NP) a community can create planning policies that will be used in determining planning applications. Alternatively, a neighbourhood development order (NDO) can be used to grant planning permission for specific types of development.
- 4.3 The qualifying body that can produce a NP or NDO is the parish or town council in areas that have one. In areas without a parish or town council, a neighbourhood forum needs to be formed to act as the qualifying body.

Neighbourhood planning support

- 4.4 Dorset Council will offer support, advice and assistance to groups undertaking neighbourhood planning activities. The support offered will be tailored to the needs of the group, but may include attendance at meetings, providing information and advice by email and over the phone, and directing the group to external sources for advice and assistance. In addition, Dorset Council will organise and fund the independent examination of the plan and subsequent referendum.

When to consult

- 4.5 The various stages of neighbourhood plan production are outlined below. This also shows whose responsibility it is to consult at the different stages.

Area designation

Before neighbourhood planning work can formally start, the area must be designated a 'neighbourhood area'. Details of how to do this are set out on the Council's website.

Plan production

Groups should aim to be inclusive and open when preparing a plan. They should inform the community of the proposals and allow people to make their views known.

Pre-submission consultation

When the qualifying body consider the plan-ready they should publicise it and invite representations for at least six weeks. They should then consider the responses, prepare a consultation statement, and if necessary, amend the plan.

Plan submission

The qualifying body submits the plan to Dorset Council. We check that it meets legal requirements then publicise it and invite representations on it for at least six weeks.

Examination

We send the plan to an independent examiner. They undertake an examination and decide whether the plan can go to referendum.

Referendum

Dorset Council organises a referendum on the plan.

'Making' the plan

If the plan receives community support at referendum, Dorset Council will formally 'make' the plan.

5.0 Planning Applications

- 5.1 Most development requires planning permission before it can go ahead. This can be obtained through submission of a planning application. It is at the planning application stage where specific, detailed decisions are made about the use of land or building works.

When and who will we consult

- 5.2 All stages of the planning application process from registration onwards can be followed on the Council's website.

Pre-application advice

- 5.3 Anyone seeking planning permission is encouraged to talk to those likely to be affected by the proposal and consider their views before submitting an application. For small scale schemes this may be as simple as talking over plans with a neighbour. The Council can provide pre-application advice, as detailed on our website³. The Council will aim to provide timely pre-application advice.

Applications

- 5.4 The Council is responsible for notifying relevant parties when an application has been submitted⁴. The following summarises methods we may use to consult:
- Publishing details of planning applications online. You can view details of planning applications on the Council's website
 - Emails / letters to statutory organisations and interest groups
 - Emails / letters to parish and town councils

³ Charges apply for this service.

⁴ The requirements for consulting on planning applications are set out in the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015: www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2015/595/made

- Site notices⁵
- Newspaper advertisements (where required by law)⁶

All consultation material will clearly state the deadline for responses.

Making a decision

- 5.5 Many decisions are made by council officers using delegated powers. Other decisions are decided by planning committees. Details of committee meetings, including the agenda, the meeting date and time, will be published on Dorset Council's website in advance of the meeting. Members of the public may request to speak at planning committee meetings. Find out more on our website.

After a decision

- 5.6 We will publish all decisions on planning applications on our website. Reasons for the decision and relevant planning issues are included in the application report which will also be on the website.

Appeals

- 5.7 Only applicants have the right of appeal against a decision. We will inform anyone who was notified about, or commented on, the original application of the appeal process.
- The Planning Inspectorate will decide the best way to handle the appeal process.

6.0 Enforcement

- 6.1 A breach of planning control occurs when a person starts work on a building, or undertakes a new use, without obtaining the necessary planning or related permission. Our [Local Enforcement Plan](#) sets out our priorities for investigations concerning planning enforcement, explains what we will investigate, our policies and procedures when investigating and remedying breaches, and outlines our general powers.

⁵ In some circumstances the Council may ask applicants and agents to erect site notices

⁶ Some types of applications have additional prescribed requirements in law regarding publicity. Examples include planning applications requiring Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), and proposals that are defined as 'major' development (including minerals and waste applications), which must be advertised in a local newspaper

7.0 Contacts and useful links

Contacts

Planning application and enforcement enquiries:

- The planning office for the Eastern area: 01305 838336; planningeast@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk
- The planning office for the Northern area: 01305 838336; planningnorth@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk
- The planning office for the Southern and Western area: 01305 838336; planningwest@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk
- Planning enforcement: 01305 838336; planningenforcement@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

Minerals and waste enquiries:

- The planning office for minerals and waste: 01305 224289; planningminerals@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

Planning policy enquiries:

- 01305 838334; planningpolicy@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

Web links for further information

Dorset Council – planning web pages

[Planning, building control and land - Dorset Council](#)

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

This sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these should be applied. It is an important document for both plan making and decision making.

[National Planning Policy Framework - GOV.UK](#)

Planning practice guidance

Produced by the Government, this provides further detail and guidance on a wide range of planning matters.

[Planning practice guidance - GOV.UK](#)

Planning Portal

This website provides a guide to members of the public and professionals on the planning system, and in particular the process of gaining planning permission. It offers a service to submit planning applications.

[Planning Portal](#)

Planning Aid England

Provides planning advice and support to help individuals and communities engage with the planning system and get involved in planning their local area.

[RTPI | Planning Advice](#)

Neighbourhood Planning Support

This website provides information to communities on how to develop a neighbourhood plan or neighbourhood development order. It explains what support is available. The website is run by Locality, a not-for-profit organisation.

[Home - Locality Neighbourhood Planning](#)