

# Dorset Council Statement of Community Involvement (SCI)

## DRAFT May 2019

Dorset Council formed on 1 April 2019, replacing Dorset County Council and the former district and borough councils of East Dorset, North Dorset, Purbeck, West Dorset and Weymouth & Portland. The new council is a unitary authority. As such it is responsible for all planning matters that the former councils would have dealt with (including minerals and waste).

The Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) sets out how and when Dorset Council will carry out consultation and engagement as part of its planning duties.

The table opposite summarises the planning duties performed by Dorset Council.

Dorset Council wants to be sure that everybody is able to be involved in both the preparation of Local Plans and decisions on planning applications.

### We aim to

- seek the views of statutory bodies, landowners, developers, infrastructure and service providers, community organisations, businesses, visitors and residents **as early as possible** in the process
- engage with and **involve people** regardless of their race or ethnicity, faith or belief, age, gender, sexual orientation or disability
- provide a range of opportunities and consultation methods that are **inclusive, appropriate, cost effective and timely**
- produce consultation documents and materials that are **clear and avoid unnecessary jargon**
- make documents available upon request, **in alternative formats**, such as large print and audio, where possible
- keep people and groups **informed of progress** and let them know of future consultation events

Duty	Explanation
Producing Local Plans	Local Plans can specify the types of development that may or may not be permitted in different areas.
Producing other documents such as Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD)	SPDs can provide additional detail, particularly on specific issues such as design.
Monitoring and evidence base work	This measures the success of current Local Plan policies and helps inform the content of future Local Plans.
Enabling neighbourhood planning	Support to communities undertaking neighbourhood planning.
Working with neighbouring planning authorities	This ensures cross boundary issues are successfully managed.
Making decisions on planning applications	Planning applications are determined against local and neighbourhood policies and decisions must take account of national policy and comments made on applications.
Providing pre-application advice	To enable planning issues to be discussed before planning applications are submitted.
Planning enforcement	Where development does not have planning permission we may take action.

# Planning policy

The council's planning policies are set out in Local Plans. The council uses these and neighbourhood plans in determining planning applications. Neighbourhood plans need to be in general conformity with certain 'strategic' planning policies.

Sometimes more detail is required. The council can choose to publish this in a supplementary planning document (SPD).

Public and other 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 we will consult

The council is required to consult with a range of consultees as set out in planning legislation<sup>1</sup>.

This includes specific and general consultation bodies. Specific consultation bodies include the Environment Agency, Historic England, Natural England, the Clinical Commissioning Group, Highways England, Network Rail, the Marine Management Organisation, parish councils, neighbouring local and parish councils, and gas, electricity, water and telecoms providers.

General consultation bodies aim to capture a broad range of local groups that represent different interests in the area. They 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

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.

As well as specific and general consultation bodies, the legislation allows for any other residents or businesses in the area to be consulted. All residents and businesses operating in the area should have the opportunity to be involved in the plan making process.

## When we will consult

On the next page is a brief overview of the plan making process highlighting when we are likely to consult.

***You can see what plans or SPDs are underway and their timetables for production in the Local Development Scheme on our website***

<sup>1</sup> The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 [www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2012/767/contents/made](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2012/767/contents/made)

## Local Plan production process

Stage	Activity
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	Engage with local communities, businesses and other interested parties.  Public consultations will usually last four to six weeks.
Publication	Draft plan published and representations invited on it for a minimum of six weeks (or a minimum of four weeks for SPDs).
Submission	Plan submitted for examination.
Examination of the submitted plan	Independent inspector assesses plan to determine whether it is 'sound' and meets other legal requirements.  Inspector may invite those who made representations to speak at a public hearing.
Adoption	Plan adopted (depending on outcome of inspector's report).

## How we will consult

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, leaflets, and social media (e.g. Twitter and Facebook)
- emailing appropriate organisations
- making consultation documents available:
  - at the appropriate council reception area<sup>2</sup>
  - in the case of minerals or waste applications, at County Hall in Dorchester and also in the nearest appropriate council reception area<sup>2</sup>
  - on our website
  - at local libraries or other public locations, as deemed appropriate
  - in printed format
- hosting public events such as exhibitions and displays where everyone is welcome to attend and ask questions

## How to make your involvement effective

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 details<sup>3</sup>
- 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

**The best way to be kept informed of local plan production is to ask to be on our local plan mailing list.**

<sup>2</sup> Dorset Council has a number of office locations with reception areas and consultation documents will be placed in the most appropriate office serving the local community. For example, for applications in the Purbeck area consultation documents will be located in Westport House, Wareham. The minerals and waste planning service is currently hosted at County Hall in Dorchester, so all minerals and waste consultation documents can be viewed here but will also be available to view in the relevant 'local' Council reception area. Details of locations can be found on the [relevant page of Dorset Council's website](#).

<sup>3</sup> The Planning policy privacy notice explains who the planning policy team are and what we do, what personal information is being collected, why we need it, what we do with your information and how it is shared, how long we keep your details and how to contact us.

## What happens to your comments

All comments received in response to a consultation will be considered. We will not acknowledge submitted comments. A consultation report summarising the issues raised will be made available on the Local Plan web pages.

## Neighbourhood planning

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.

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.

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

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 and subsequent referendum.

### When to consult

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

Stage	Activity
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. He/she undertakes an examination and decides 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.

# Planning Applications

It is at the planning application stage where specific, detailed decisions are made about the use of land and building or engineering works.

## When and who we will consult

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

Stage	Consultation
Pre-application	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 discretionary pre-application advice <sup>4</sup> , as detailed on our website.
Application	The council is responsible for notifying relevant parties when an application has been submitted. <sup>5</sup> The following summarises methods we may use to consult: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• publishing details of planning applications online. You can view details of planning applications on the council's website</li><li>• emails / letters to statutory organisations and interest groups</li><li>• emails / letters to parish and town councils</li><li>• site notices</li><li>• newspaper advertisements (where required by law<sup>6</sup>)</li><li>• all consultation material will clearly state the deadline for responses</li></ul>
Making a decision	Many decisions are made by council officers using delegated powers. Other applications 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 speak at planning committee meetings. Find out more on our website.
After a decision	We will publish all decisions on planning applications on our website. Reasons for the decision and relevant planning issues will be included in the application report which will also be on the website.

<sup>4</sup> Charges apply

<sup>5</sup>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/ukxi/2015/595/made](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2015/595/made)

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

## Appeals

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.

## Enforcement

Where a possible breach of planning control is brought to our attention, we will maintain the confidentiality of people providing such information. Where a breach has occurred, we will consider the appropriate action to take. We will keep people who have made an allegation, as well as those who are potentially responsible for a breach, informed throughout the investigation.

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## Contacts and further information

[Dorset Council website](http://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk)

[www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk](http://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk)

### Dorset Council contacts

Planning Policy enquiries:

East Dorset area

**planningpolicyteamc@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk**

North Dorset area

**01258 484201**

**planningpolicyteamd@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk**

Purbeck area

**01929 556561**

**planningpolicyteame@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk**

West Dorset, Weymouth & Portland area

**01305 251010**

**planningpolicyteamb@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk**

Minerals and Waste

**01305 228585**

**mwdf@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk**

Planning application and enforcement enquiries:

East Dorset area

**01202 795031**

**planningteamc@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk**

North Dorset area

**01305 838336**

**planningteamd@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk**

Purbeck area

**01929 556561**

**planningteame@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk**

West Dorset, Weymouth & Portland area

**01305 251010**

**planningteamf@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk**

Minerals and Waste

**01305 224289**

**planningteama@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk**

## Web links for further information:

### [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.

**[www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2)**

### [Planning practice guidance](#)

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

**[www.gov.uk/government/collections/planning-practice-guidance](http://www.gov.uk/government/collections/planning-practice-guidance)**

### [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.

**[www.planningportal.gov.uk](http://www.planningportal.gov.uk)**

### [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.

**[www.rtpi.org.uk/planning-aid/](http://www.rtpi.org.uk/planning-aid/)**

### [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.

**<https://neighbourhoodplanning.org/>**