



Draft BCP Local Plan

Draft Statement of Common Ground between Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council and Dorset Council

Version: 20 March 2024

1. List of Parties involved:

- Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council (BCP Council)
- Dorset Council (Dorset Council)

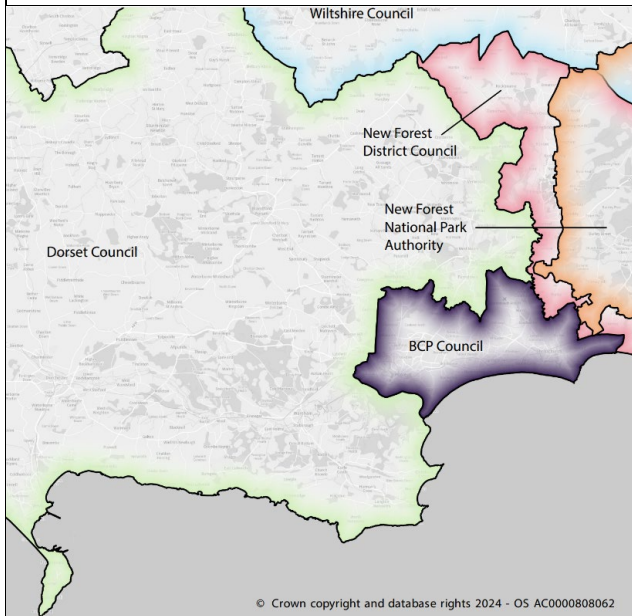
2. Signatories:

This draft statement of common ground was completed to support the Draft BCP Local Plan on 20 March 2024 between planning policy officers involved in duty to cooperate discussions. The statement provides a record of our officer discussions and how far we got in resolving cross boundary issues. The information is an officer view and has not been through a formal sign off procedure by the local authorities. Dorset Council will reach its own view on the content of the Draft Local Plan and may submit representations. Meetings will continue on an ongoing basis and this statement of common ground will be updated accordingly.

Officers involved:

- BCP Council - Caroline Peach, Head of Strategic Planning and Steve Dring, Planning Policy Manager
- Dorset Council - Hilary Jordan, Service Manager for Spatial Planning and Terry Sneller, Strategic Planning Manager

3. Strategic Geography



BCP Council is on the south coast of England with sea to the south, and Dorset Council to the north and west.

BCP Council and Dorset Council are unitary authorities newly formed in 2019 from 9 local authorities.

The BCP Council and Dorset Council areas are closely linked, forming the county of Dorset and sharing a housing market, functional economic market area and multiple habitat sites including Poole Harbour, the Dorset Heathlands and the River Avon (also shared with parts of Hampshire and Wiltshire).

4. Strategic Matters

Housing

Council	Standard method figure (2023-2033) (homes per year)	Local Plan target (homes per year)	Local Plan Status	Plan period
BCP Council	2,806	1,600	Publication Version March 2024	2024-2039
Dorset Council	1,793	1,793	Consultation draft Published January 2021	2021-2038 ¹
Total	4,599	3,393		

BCP Council and Dorset Council jointly commissioned the [BCP and Dorset Local Housing Needs Assessment \(November 2021\)](#) , [Review of Housing Need - Examining demographics and testing the Standard Method in BCP and Dorset \(December 2021\)](#) and [Impact of Housing Need Sensitivity Report \(November 2021\)](#). The report concludes that the BCP Council area and the Dorset Council area form housing market areas in their own right, but that the two authorities need to liaise closely on housing numbers due to the complexity of housing market areas. The work suggests a locally derived housing need of 1,580 homes per year in the BCP area and 1,958 in the Dorset Council area.

BCP Council - When assessed through the government's standard method for calculating housing need, 2,806 new homes are needed each year in the BCP area, which significantly exceeds historic delivery rates that average 1,117 homes a year over the last fifteen years. The BCP area has a number of constraints to development with significant areas covered by environmental designations or being at risk from flooding. The coast to the south and Green Belt to the north, also limit the amount of land suitable for development. The BCP Council Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment has looked comprehensively across various sources of land to examine where new homes could be built, considering if land is suitable and available and whether or not development is achievable, and if constraints could be overcome. While some significant regeneration opportunities exist there is a shortfall of land which is suitable and available for development. Given the numerous constraints and land availability challenges, the total number of homes which can realistically be built is 1,600 homes a year.

The Draft BCP Local Plan (March 2024) takes a constraints-based approach that seeks to deliver 1,600 homes a year on a stepped approach of 1,200 homes per year for 2024/25-2028/29 and 1,800 homes per year for 2029/30-2038/39.

As examined within the Housing Needs Sensitivity report (2021) delivery of 1,600 homes a year more accurately reflects our local housing needs when examining demographic trends relating to in-migration in more detail over a longer time frame. The in-migration figures which underpin the standard method calculation in the years preceding 2014 represent a time of particularly high in-migration to our area from the expansion of the European Union and did not accurately consider how the town's student population affects in-migration. Through inputting more robust migration data into the calculation the housing needs across the BCP area were calculated to be closer to 1,600 homes a year.

Government planning guidance is clear that the standard method should be the starting point for calculating housing need but other approaches can be used in exceptional circumstances. As it is not clear whether or not the issues surrounding in-migration figures would be accepted as exceptional circumstances

¹ The consultation draft covered the period to 2038 however future iterations of the Dorset Council Local Plan will cover at least a 15-year period from the point of adoption.

BCP Council has included this information to demonstrate that there are issues with the standard methodology calculation for the BCP area. Planning for 1,600 homes a year is therefore not only realistic given our constraints but could better reflect local housing need.

Dorset Council: The Local Housing Need calculated using the government's standard method gives a need for 1,793 new homes per year for the Dorset Council area using the 2014 household projections and the 2024 median workplace-based affordability ratios and including the cap as set out in National Planning Practice Guidance. This figure is above historic housing targets which were around 1,500 new homes per annum as established through the adopted local plans for the legacy councils that now form part of the Dorset Council area.

The Housing Needs Sensitivity report (2021) jointly commissioned with BCP Council suggests that, based on a locally derived estimate of household growth, the need for new homes is higher than that calculated using the government's standard method. This suggests that the locally derived housing needs figure potentially over-estimates the need for new homes in the Dorset Council area.

Unmet housing need:

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (December 2023) para 67 states '*local planning authorities to establish a housing requirement figure for their whole area, which shows the extent to which their identified housing need (and any needs that cannot be met within neighbouring areas) can be met over the plan period*'.

The BCP Council Local Plan housing target of 1,600 homes per year is short of the standard method target of 2,806 homes a year by 1,206 homes per year. BCP Council has not made a formal request to Dorset Council to meet any of the unmet housing need (nor to BCP's other neighbours New Forest District Council and New Forest National Park Authority). This is because BCP Council's locally derived figure for objectively assessed housing need does not merit such a request. .

Dorset Council (and New Forest DC and New Forest NPA) as of the date of this Statement of Common Ground have not currently made any official requests for housing need to be met within the BCP Council area. This position may change when these local planning authorities progress their local plans.

Employment

BCP Council and Dorset Council jointly commissioned the Dorset and BCP Employment Land Study. Whilst the report was published in March 2024, the employment need data was generated in 2021 covering the period to 2039. The Study concludes that the BCP area and Dorset area combine to form a functional economic market area (FEMA), although there will be sub-FEMAs within it. The main sub-FEMA for the BCP Council area is within the Southeastern part of Dorset Council. The study concludes that the New Forest whilst related does not form part of the FEMA as it is likely to be mainly served by Southampton. The study indicates a need of 66.4 to 97.4 hectares for the BCP area by 2039, and for the Dorset area 111.8 to 261.7 ha, with a preferred range of 111.8 ha of 162.8 ha. The Draft BCP Local Plan allocates a supply of 72 hectares of employment land.

As BCP Council can meet its minimum employment requirement there is no need for Dorset Council to meet any unmet need.

Green Infrastructure

The Stour Valley River Corridor straddles the northern boundary of the BCP Council and south eastern boundary of the Dorset Council areas. The vision is to create a connected public space for walking, cycling and ecology as shown in orange on the figure below. BCP Council's Green Net Strategic Plan identifies cross boundary linkages for enhancement.



Habitat Sites

Dorset Heathlands recreational disturbance - BCP Council and Dorset Council have been successfully operating a joint [mitigation strategy](#) since 2007. The mitigation strategy restricts development within 400 metres of the Dorset Heathlands and requires mitigation measures between 400m and 5km. Development is required to pay towards Strategic Access, Management and Monitoring (SAMMs). The SAMMs fund wardening, monitoring and education by the Dorset Heaths Partnership including Dorset Dogs and BCP wardens. The Dorset Heaths Partnership is hosted by Dorset Council and is overseen by a joint governance steering group. The strategy raises awareness about the protected species on the heathlands and impact upon them from disturbance, fire etc.

The strategy also requires the delivery of heathland infrastructure projects, which include Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANGs) – delivered by officers in BCP Council and Dorset Council. An independent review by Footprint Ecology in 2022 shows the mitigation strategy and approach is effective. The joint mitigation strategy will need updating in 2025 and the work has commenced.

Dorset heathlands air quality - BCP Council and Dorset Council introduced an interim [Air Quality Mitigation Strategy](#) in 2021. The strategy will address the adverse effect of airborne nitrogen from increases in traffic upon the Dorset Heathlands habitat sites by contributing to the achievement of the conservation objectives for air quality and in doing so, facilitate the delivery of planned development. The Councils jointly appointed a project officer (hosted by Dorset Council), have an implementation plan in place, set aside CIL for the project purpose and commenced bringing forward mitigation projects overseen by the joint Steering Group for the project. The joint mitigation strategy will need updating in 2025 and we have commenced work on the review.

Poole Harbour nutrients – BCP Council and Dorset Council have been successfully operating a joint catchment wide [mitigation strategy](#) for nitrogen since 2017. The Councils have jointly appointed project officers to deliver mitigation. The addition of phosphorus as an issue for housing and tourism development to mitigate in March 2022 is expected to be resolved in the government announcement in 1 April 2024 of which waste water treatment works will be required to incorporate nutrient mitigation measures. If the announcement is positive Natural England advise that development will not be required to provide further phosphorus mitigation before or after the upgrades to the waste water treatment works are implemented (required by April 2030). We have agreed to change the mitigation approach operated since 2017 where the Councils use CIL to deliver mitigation, to follow the new Natural England approach of setting up a nutrient credit scheme for the catchment. Each developer will be required to secure mitigation credits prior to validation of a planning application, using the Poole Harbour nutrient calculator to assess the mitigation requirement for their development. This new approach will be developed during 2024. In 2023 Dorset Council secured a grant of £4.63M from the government's Local Nutrient Mitigation Fund to deliver mitigation projects across the Poole Harbour catchment for development in both BCP Council and Dorset Council areas.

Poole Harbour recreational disturbance – BCP Council and Dorset Council have been successfully operating a joint [mitigation strategy](#) since 2019. The strategy requires housing and tourism development within the Poole Harbour Recreation Zone to pay towards SAMM and Poole Harbour Infrastructure Projects (PHIPs). The SAMMs fund wardening, education, monitoring and other project work with the aim of raising awareness about the protected birds in Poole harbour and impact upon them from disturbance. The Birds and Recreation Initiative (BARI) leads on mitigation work, with the help of Dorset Dogs in raising awareness. The officers are hosted by Dorset Council and work across the whole Recreation Zone. The PHIPs delivered through the strategy serve to manage access to avoid disturbance of birds in the harbour. The joint mitigation strategy will need updating in 2024.

River Avon nutrients - BCP Council are working with Dorset Council (and Wiltshire Council, New Forest DC and the New Forest NPA) to mitigate phosphorus generated from housing and tourism development. The local authorities are currently waiting for a government announcement by 1 April 2024 of which waste water treatment works will be required to incorporate phosphorus mitigation measures, in particular Christchurch Waste Water Treatment Works (WWTW). If as expected Wessex Water is required to provide upgrades to the Christchurch WWTW the burden on developers to provide phosphorus mitigation will be significantly reduced from 2030 onwards. The affected councils will introduce a catchment wide mitigation approach by setting up a nutrient credit scheme. Each developer will be required to secure mitigation credits prior to validation of a planning application using the nutrient calculator. This new approach will be developed during 2024. In 2023 Wiltshire Council on behalf of the catchment partners secured a grant of £9.8M from the government's Local Nutrient Mitigation Fund to deliver mitigation projects in the River Avon catchment.

New Forest Recreational disturbance - BCP Council, Dorset Council, New Forest DC and New Forest NPA are working on a recreation mitigation strategy with Eastleigh Borough Council, Fareham Borough Council, Forestry England, Natural England, Southampton City Council, Test Valley Borough Council (TVBC) and Wiltshire Council. The Strategy will address the recreational impacts of planned new development within 13.8km of the New Forest's designated sites (SAC, SPA and Ramsar), based on the evidence published by Footprint Ecology between 2020 and 2023. The mitigation strategy will focus on Strategic Access Management & Monitoring measures (SAMM) within the New Forest's internationally designated sites, complementing the measures delivered within local planning authority areas (such as new and enhanced greenspace provision and Dorset heathland infrastructure projects). The mitigation strategy will be worked up in 2024 by the steering group of affected local planning authorities, Natural England and Forestry England.

Dorset Local Nature Recovery Strategy

Dorset Council is the responsible authority, working with BCP Council as the supporting authority to work with people, landowners and farmers across Dorset to show the most valuable existing places for nature, explore and identify opportunities to create or improve nature and agree Dorset's priorities for nature recovery. This strategy will be developed in 2024/25 and will provide bigger, better, and more joined up approach to improve outcomes for nature and people.

Landscape

The Dorset National Landscape (Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty) lies to the south of the BCP area and the Cranborne Chase National Landscape (AONB) to the north of the BCP area (both within the Dorset Council area). Some forms of development within the BCP area will need to carefully consider the impact upon these landscapes. National policy recognises that the scale and extent of development within nationally protected landscape areas should be limited, while development within their setting should be sensitively located and designed to avoid or minimise adverse impacts on the designated areas (paragraph 182, NPPF, 2023). The Levelling Up & Regeneration Act 2023 also introduced a legal duty on 'relevant bodies' to seek to further the statutory purposes of AONBs in making decisions that could affect them. This duty is relevant to the plan-making of local planning authorities within and adjacent to protected landscapes.

Coastal Management

BCP Council and Dorset Council are party to the [Shoreline Management Plan](#) and working together to manage coastal change from Durlston Head to Hurst Spit.

Transport

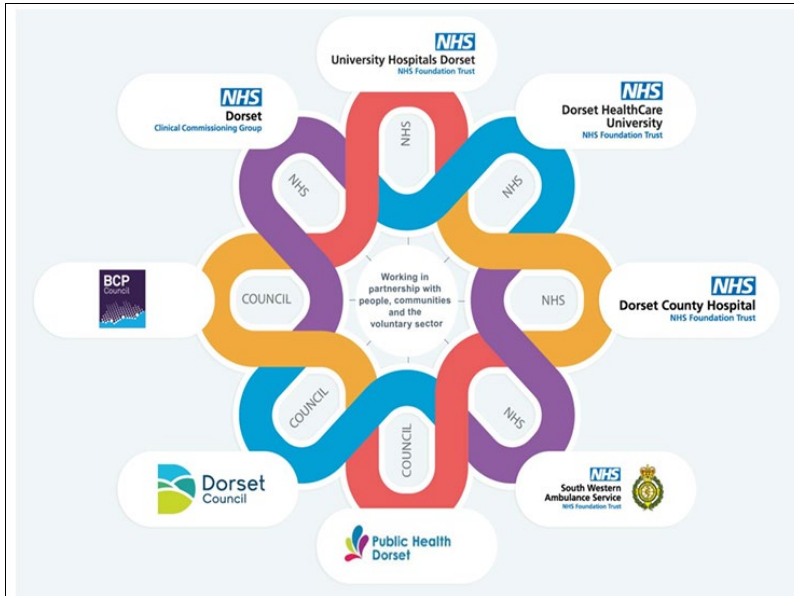
BCP Council and Dorset Council work closely on transport strategy and implementation. Work is underway on Local Transport Plan 4, jointly prepared by the two transport authorities. Joint working will be crucial in implementing the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans, Bus Service Improvement Plans, Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Plans, strategic cycle routes and for the enhancement of rail corridors.

Education

There is some overlap in education pyramids between the BCP Council and Dorset Council area and cross boundary working is essential to plan for growth and infrastructure needs.

Health

[Our Dorset](#) is a partnership of the NHS, Public Health Dorset, BCP Council and Dorset Council working together to deliver Integrated Care Systems.



In 2020 BCP Council and Dorset Council worked with health care bodies (Dorset Clinical Commissioning Group, Public Health Dorset, Dorset County Hospital NHS Foundation Trust, University Hospitals Dorset NHS Foundation Trust, Dorset HealthCare University NHS Foundation Trust and NHS England and Improvement) to understand what development contributions towards health care infrastructure would be needed to mitigate the pressure of population growth. CIL can be used to meet the requisite health care needs.

Minerals and Waste

Prior to the reorganisation of councils in Dorset, Dorset County Council, Poole Borough Council and Bournemouth Borough Council had prepared joint mineral and waste plans, the most recent of which were adopted by BCP and Dorset Councils in 2019. The latest adopted versions of the Minerals and Waste Local Plans are:

- The Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole Minerals Strategy 2014
- The Bournemouth, Christchurch, Poole and Dorset Mineral Sites Plan 2019, and
- The Bournemouth, Christchurch, Poole and Dorset Waste Plan 2019

A review of these Plans for the Dorset Council area is about to commence. BCP Council are considering their approach to minerals and waste plans.

It is expected that sand and gravel from Hurn Court Farm Quarry in the BCP area (adjacent to Bournemouth Airport) is supplied to Dorset Council, but the amount is not known. It is also likely that aggregate minerals, including crushed rock from Swanworth Quarry in Purbeck, is supplied to the BCP area from the Dorset Council area. Waste also moves between Dorset Council and BCP Council - it is understood that most if not all residual black bag (household) waste from Dorset Council is processed to some extent in the BCP area. Such flows of minerals and waste across local authority administrative boundaries are normal, and there are no unresolved cross-boundary issues with BCP Council regarding movement of minerals and waste.

5. Governance Arrangements

There are formal joint working arrangements through the BCP & DC Joint Strategic Planning & Transport Advisory Committee. Councillors from the two councils can discuss any cross-boundary issues through this committee.

The authorities remain committed to working positively together, sharing information and best practice, where appropriate, throughout the final stages of their plan preparation and beyond. This co-operation and collaboration takes place at senior member, chief executive, and senior officer as well as at technical officer level, where appropriate.

In terms of governance, the authorities agree:

- that in response to any new evidence / changes in circumstances, informal discussions will occur between the local authorities on the cross-boundary issues referred to in this SoCG in the form of officer level meetings with escalation of matters to Councillor level where necessary;
- that this SoCG will be reviewed when required including adding additional issues that may be identified through the process of forming the local plan;
- to continue to work collaboratively on plan preparation and evidence, whilst acknowledging each others' timetables and timescales; and
- to respect each other's right to develop their own plans that fit the specific circumstances of the local authority's communities.

6. Timetable for review and ongoing cooperation

BCP Council and Dorset Council planning policy officers will continue to meet monthly to discuss cross boundary issues. The table below sets out the timetable for local plan preparation as at March 2024.

Council	Currently adopted local plans (adoption date)	Progress on local plan review	Target date Publication	Target date Submission
BCP Council	2012 Bournemouth Core Strategy, 2014 Christchurch and East Dorset Core Strategy 2018 Poole Local Plan	Commenced in October 2019, Issues and Options in January 2022 and now at Publication stage	March 2024	June 2024
Dorset Council	Christchurch and East Dorset Local Plan Part 1 - Core Strategy (April 2014) ² North Dorset Local Plan Part 1 (January 2016) Purbeck Local Plan Part 1 (November 2012) ³ West Dorset, Weymouth & Portland Local Plan (October 2015)	All the legacy Dorset councils had commenced reviews of their local plans prior to Dorset Council being formed in April 2019. These reviews had reached various stages with the Purbeck Local Plan review reaching submission stage. With the exception of the Purbeck Local Plan, a decision was made to cease the production of the local plan reviews and to focus on the production of the Dorset Council Local Plan. A consultation took place in January 2021 on a draft Local Plan and work to produce the Plan is continuing.		October 2026

² Joint Local Plan produced by Christchurch Borough and East Dorset District councils. This Local Plan now covers part of the BCP Council area and part of the Dorset Council area.

³ At the time of writing the review of the Purbeck Local Plan Part 1 is due to be replaced by the emerging Purbeck Local Plan which is at the final stages of examination.