

## West Dorset, Weymouth & Portland Local Plan EiP

### Position statement made by Smiths Gore on behalf of the Salisbury Diocese Board of Finance.

#### Matter 4: Housing Policy HOUS 1-7

##### 4.1 Are the targets for affordable housing appropriate and is there adequate recognition of viability issues?

- The Council's objectives to encourage housing development to reflect local needs as far as possible and result in balanced communities is supported, as this will be essential to the continued vitality and sustainability of those communities throughout the plan period.
- Although the Salisbury Diocese is generally supportive of this objective and approach and the key outcomes it is important to note that the approach to affordable housing, as outlined in paragraph 47 of the Framework and supported by paragraphs 54 and 55, is far more positive about the necessity to meet the full needs for market and affordable housing over a Plan period. The Salisbury Diocese is concerned that at present this is not the case, given the admission that the affordable housing needs will not be met over the plan period.
- As such, it is suggested that the wording in the housing strategic approach be altered to be more consistent with the approach outlined in the Framework, the objective be altered with the aim being to meet the full affordable housing need of the area and the Policies identified later in the plan be readdressed, in this context. Specifically, this will require a more positive approach in respect of Housing Policy 2 (HOUS 2.) and Achieving a Sustainable Pattern of Development Policy 2 (SUS 2.), which will be outlined below.
- Furthermore Policy HOUS 2. does not allow enough flexibility to ensure that sites which provide clear benefits to rural communities, through the provision of affordable housing in line with the needs of that community or group (cluster) of communities, will be bought forward in a timely manner. The Framework makes it very clear that plan makers should take a far more flexible approach to the viability of schemes for exceptions sites where this will provide significant additional affordable housing to meet local needs. The viability of development is key to its delivery, hence the additional flexibility identified in this regard within the Framework.
- The Framework, at paragraph 55, also recognises that settlements should not be seen as isolated and it should be recognised that there is a relationship between neighbouring settlements, their occupants and the sustainability of their services. Policy HOUS 2. doesn't reflect this consideration either and would therefore also be inconsistent with the Framework in this regard.

##### 4.3 Is there sufficient detail to show how the Councils will assess potential affordable housing exception sites?

- Policy HOUS 2. is considered to be unsound as it does not represent the most appropriate strategy, is inconsistent with the requirements of the Framework and will be ineffective because it is not flexible enough to ensure a supply of affordable

rural housing suitable to provide for the needs of West Dorset, Weymouth and Portland.

- Although a brief description of why flexibility has not been included within the Policy this statement simply makes the Policy unsound as it is not consistent with the Framework. This Policy must ensure that it allows for facilitating open market dwellings to be allowed on exceptions housing developments which provide significant affordable housing to meet local needs where the delivery of affordable housing would otherwise not be achieved. It is suggested that a sentence be added to the Policy to reflect this requirement, as outlined in paragraph 54 of the Framework.
- The Policy also fails to recognise that by allowing affordable housing in locations where land is available, in suitable locations between settlements or in settlements with a low number of facilities, this could help to support and sustain facilities in these settlements through the plan period. It is suggested that the wording at criteria i) of this policy be altered to address the existing inconsistency with the Framework and the NPPG.