



Town Council Engagement Consultation Summary

DORSET LOCAL PLAN SETTLEMENT HIERARCHY

MARCH 2020

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1. The Proposed Approach

1.1 The Council put forward an approach whereby villages meeting the following criteria would be included in the settlement hierarchy:

- 500+ population
- 3 or more facilities from the list: school, shop, meeting place e.g. village hall, employment space, children's play area or recreation ground, doctor's surgery
- With 30 minutes by public transport or 15 minutes by car of nearby towns

1.2 Town Councils have been asked the following questions regarding the proposed approach:

1. *The preferred approach to selecting villages for inclusion in the settlement hierarchy is to include all settlements of around 500 population or more and to give consideration to the number of facilities and journey time to nearby towns. Do you agree with this approach?*
2. *The main towns (Tier 1 and Tier 2 of the settlement hierarchy) play an important role in providing for their rural hinterland. These settlements will be the focus for growth thereby helping to reduce car based travel. Do you agree with this approach?*
3. *The assessment of facilities is based on having at least three important facilities. Which facilities do you think should be taken into account? E.g. Children's playground, shop, school, doctors, employment space, meeting place.*
4. *Acceptable journey time to nearby towns is considered to be up to 30 minutes by public transport or up to 15 minutes by car. Do you agree with this approach?*
5. *Are there any concerns from a town council's perspective?*
6. *What do you consider is the current role of your town?*
7. *What issues are your priorities? Eg. Climate change, town centre redevelopment, affordable housing, ageing population, economic prosperity, community led housing.*

1.3 11 Town Councils submitted responses to the questions. Table 1.1 shows a list of the responders.

Table 1.1: List of responders.

Corfe Mullen
Blandford Forum
Beaminster
Bridport
Dorchester
Sherborne
Stalbridge
Wareham
West Moors
Wimborne Minster
Weymouth

1.4 The following sections show a summary and analysis of the responses received with regard to each question, with a concluding statement after each question.

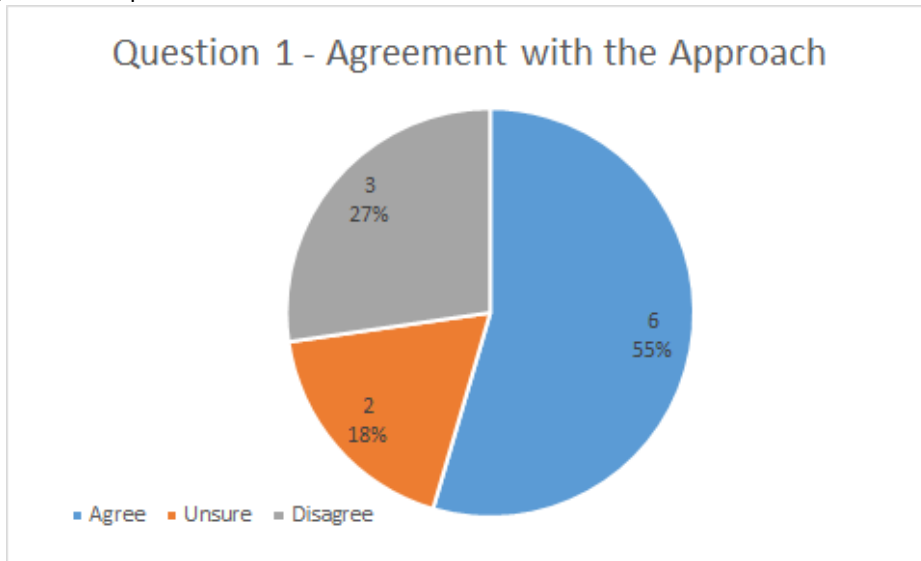
2. Responses to Question 1

2.1 *The preferred approach to selecting villages for inclusion in the settlement hierarchy is to look at including all settlements of about 500 population and over and then to consider the level of provision of facilities and journey time to nearby towns. Do you agree with this approach?*

Q1 Analysis

2.2 Figure 2.1 shows that the majority of responders agreed with the proposed approach. Those who didn't agree were Dorchester, Stalbridge, and Weymouth Town Councils, whilst Wimborne and Bridport Town Council neither agreed nor disagreed.

Figure 2.1: Responses to Question 1



2.6 Figure 2.2 presents the comments into 'general categories'; providing a count of common issues. Table 2.1 shows more detailed comments as summarised by Figure 2.2. Concerns regarding climate change and the environment were raised the most, along with the view that smaller settlements should be included in the approach.

Figure 2.2: Count of comments in relation to question 1; in general categories (excluding more general comments)

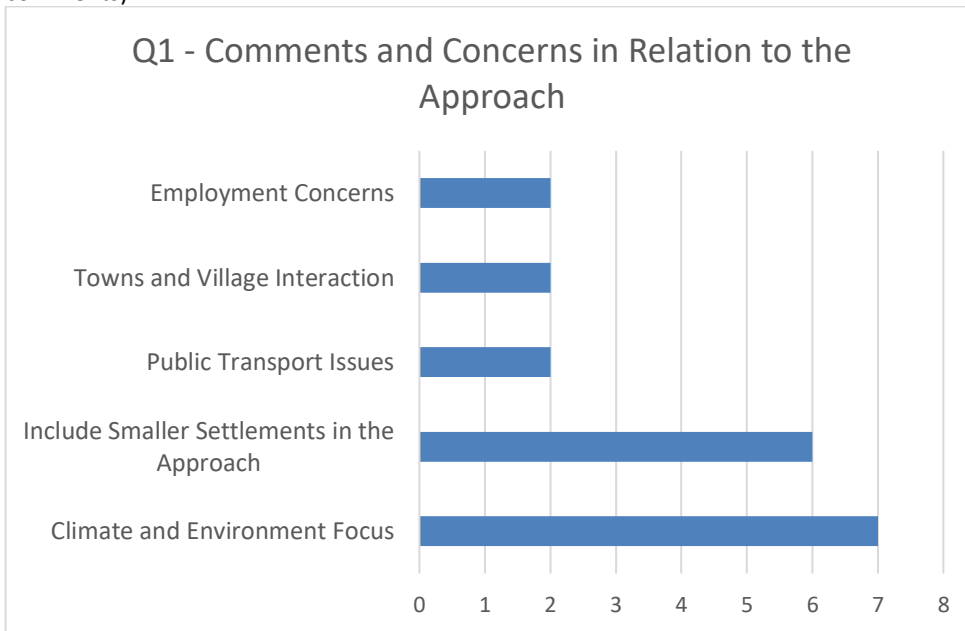


Table 2.1: List of comments on the proposed approach categorised into broad themes.

Category	Specific Comment/Concern
General	Each situation needs to be considered on an individual basis
	Supportive of sustainable development
	This would allow development to be evenly spread without swamping small villages and hamlets
	Towns below top two tiers need to be further sub-divided based on population size
	Need frameworks that promote attractive, high quality places to live, work and visit
	Limited medical facilities
	Development of a new settlement required
	More nuanced approach needed
	Select villages that are on main roads with access to public transport
	Select villages that are sufficiently far from towns and have facilities
Climate and environmental focus	Environmental protection important
	Need more joined up planning processes for ecosystem services
	Greenbelt protection
	Environment Bill must be considered
	Climate change must be considered
	Trees and green infrastructure
	Design opportunities for climate change
Consideration of villages	Should not exclude any villages from development
	The villages to be excluded may have attractive developable land
	Development would enhance these settlements and lead to introduction of facilities
	Tier 3 areas facilities should be improved to address climate emergency and sustainability in rural areas
	Focus on towns will remove tourism from villages that rely on it
	Relaxing development for villages could increase pressure on towns as local service centres
Public Transport	Frequency of public transport
	Inadequate public transport
	Sustainable transport options
Town and village	Need to understand the interaction between towns and hinterlands

	Connection between towns and villages needs strengthening to increase food security and renewable energy provision
Employment	Limited employment opportunities
	Encourage local employment as well as addressing journey times

Q1 Conclusions

2.7 The Town Councils responded with a range of considerations; the main messages being an emphasis on climate change and the environment, and that discounting smaller villages may be restrictive of their aspirations or need to grow.

2.8 Environmental sustainability is a main driver for the approach, and issues around climate change are key to this. As explained in the presentation, the approach suggested to development in rural areas would not prevent communities from an appropriate level of growth to meet their local needs. Opportunities to meet local aspirations would include the production of a neighbourhood plan, the formation of a community land trust or an exception site for 100% affordable housing.

2.9 The answers also highlighted a desire to see the improvement of public transport frequency alongside this approach and increase local employment opportunities.

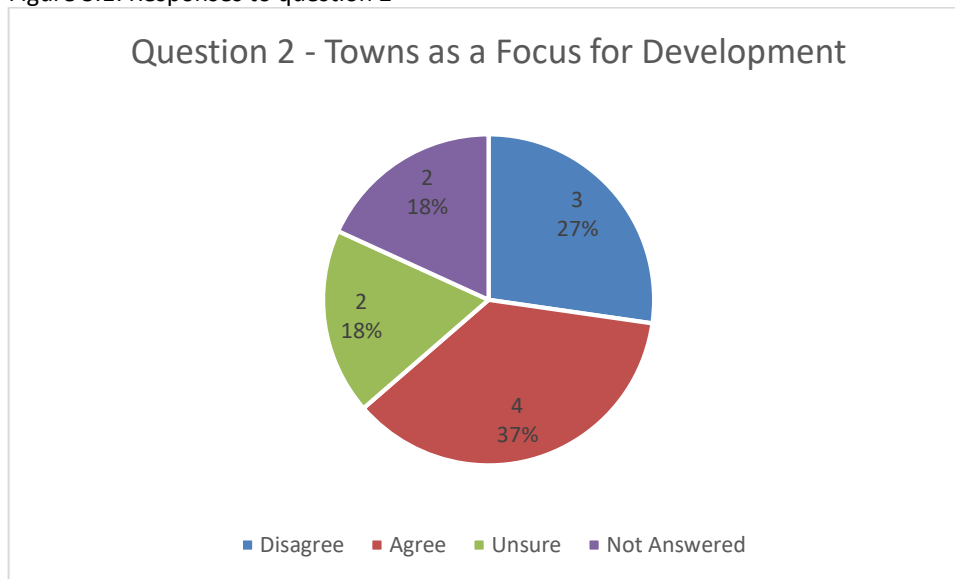
3. Responses to Question 2

3.1 *The main towns (Tier 1 and Tier 2 of the settlement hierarchy) play an important role in providing for their rural hinterland. These settlements will be the focus for growth thereby helping to reduce car based travel. Do you agree with this approach?*

Q2 Analysis

3.2 Figure 3.1 shows a greater ratio of Town Councils agreeing with the approach, however the majority of responders either disagreed, were unsure, or didn't answer. Those that disagreed were Corfe Mullen, Dorchester, and Weymouth.

Figure 3.1: Responses to question 2



3.3 Of those that disagreed or were unsure, there was much focus around the increased requirement for sustainable public transport options to and from towns, with investment in reasonably priced bus services, as detailed in Table 3.1.

3.4 Further comments related to the simplicity of the hierarchy which would not reflect the complexities of the journeys people decide to make, and how a more nuanced approach is required to selecting villages to reflect this, rather than just looking at their distance to towns and presence of facilities.

Table 3.1: Summary of comments in relation to Question 2.

Comments	Count
Need for investment in reasonably priced bus services and public transport	3
Need for a more nuanced approach to selecting villages for development than presence of facilities and distance to towns	1
Journey patterns are more complex than just visiting local towns	1
Restricting growth in smaller settlements limits the potential for existing or new forms of public or shared transport to develop	1
Larger settlements need sufficient infrastructure and facilities to support development	1
Not suitable for Wareham due to the housing allocation issues highlighted within the Wareham Neighbourhood Plan and Purbeck Local Plan	1
There is a need for more affordable housing and local employment alongside this approach	1

Q2 Conclusions

3.5 There was a mixed response to this answer, and the main consideration that came forward was that if this was to be the selected approach, improved public transport and public transport frequency would be vital.

3.6 It is acknowledged that the quality and frequency of public transport is a key concern for much of rural Dorset. It could be possible to factor public transport frequency and quality into the approach however this may prove complex and could be overly restrictive.

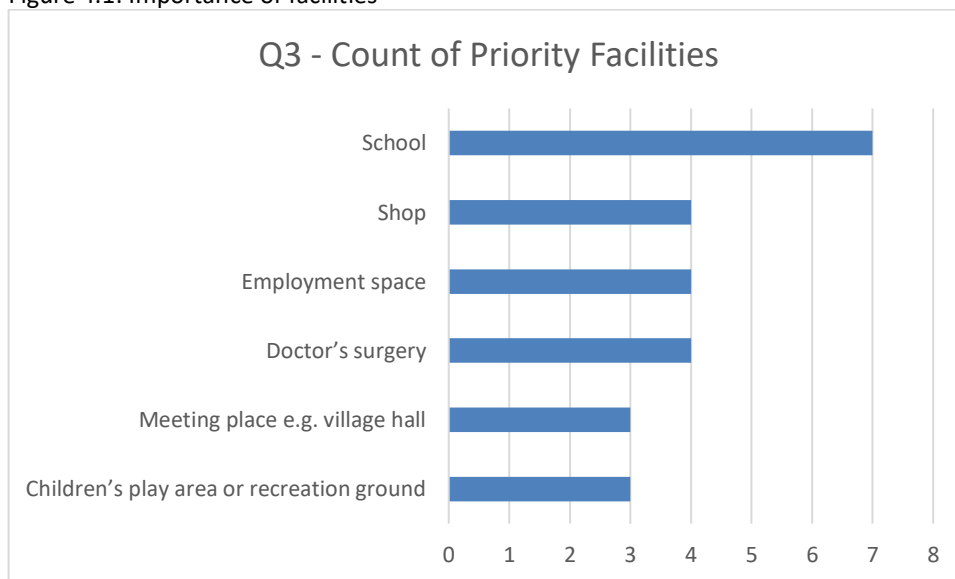
4. Responses to Question 3

4.1 *The assessment of facilities is based on having at least three important facilities. Which facilities do you think should be taken into account? E.g. Children’s playground, shop, school, doctors, employment space, meeting place.*

Q3 Analysis

4.2 Of the responses to question 3, the existence of a school in settlements featured most frequently in the comments. Below this consideration, the remaining facilities suggested were considered to be of largely equal importance.

Figure 4.1: Importance of facilities



4.3 In response to question 3, Town Councils also suggested other important local facilities that may be taken into account in the formation of the settlement hierarchy, as well as providing comments on the suggested approach. These are detailed in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1: Additional suggested facilities and comments on the approach to considering the facilities

	Additional Facilities and Comments
Additional Facilities Suggested	Schools for all ages
	Local hubs for services
	Dental Practices
	Adequate low-cost public transport
	Access to green space
	Community Centres
	Libraries
	Youth facilities
	Health facilities
	Broadband access
	Policing
Comments on Approach to Facilities	Concentrate development where there are most facilities
	Emphasis on local employment facilities is important
	Question of whether the stated services/facilities indicate self-sufficiency in any meaningful way
	The LP should take account of future change due to climate change and technology
	Three important facilities is too little
	Importance of facilities will vary by location
	A more radical response is required
	Why three facilities and not two or four?
	Cataloguing what facilities exist will not change the pattern of failure in delivering the Local Plans' objectives
	The current availability of facilities should not be a factor in determining suitability for growth
	Considerations of home-working
	Adaptation of existing meeting places to perform as health and education facilities
	Need to provide more facilities in rural settlements to reduce need to travel

Q3 Conclusions

4.4 Of the suggested facilities, Town Council's considered local schools to be the most important by far, followed by a local shop, employment, and doctor's surgery. This could feed into the approach if a hierarchy of facilities was to be developed. Many other suggestions of facilities were made however there was no strong consensus on them.

4.5 A number of comments received queried the justification for basing the approach on the arbitrary number of three facilities, and whether the existence of these services indicate self-sufficiency in any meaningful way. Further justification could be provided in the policy to explain this decision.

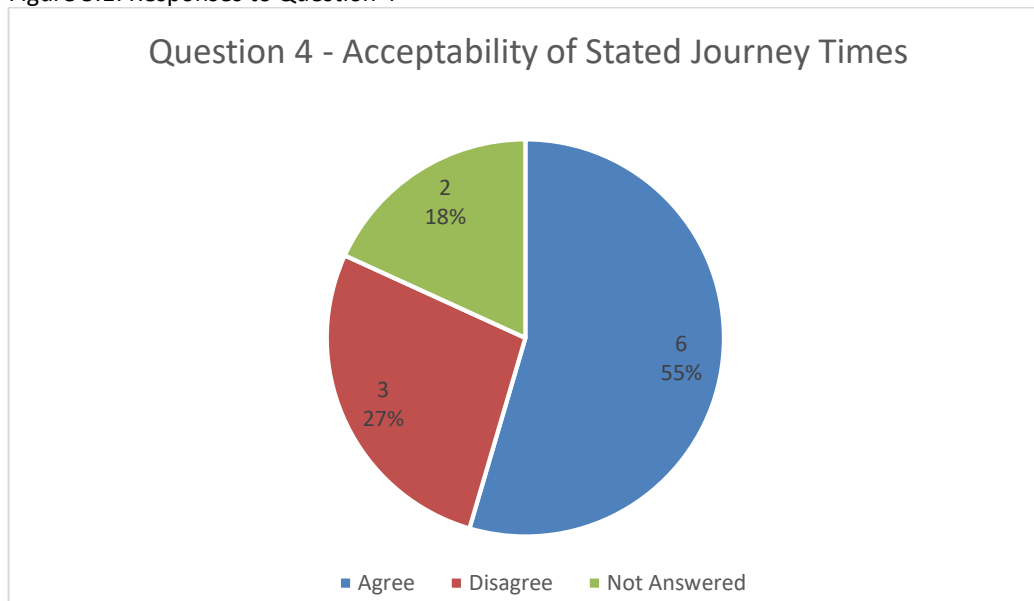
5. Responses to Question 4

5.1 *Acceptable journey time to nearby towns is considered to be up to 30 minutes by public transport or up to 15 minutes by car. Do you agree with this approach?*

Q4 Analysis

5.2 Figure 5.1 gives a summary of the responses received to question 4. There was majority agreement with the stated journey times. The Town Councils that disagreed were Bridport, Dorchester, and Weymouth.

Figure 5.1: Responses to Question 4



5.3 Responders were asked for their comments on the proposed approach in relation to public transport and car journey times. Table 5.1 lists a count of the types of comments received. The most common comment was that improvements to public transport and its frequency would be required if we were to rely on this approach. Inclusion of real time information at bus stops was also mentioned, as well as tackling congestion, and the requirement for local employment to reduce travel in the first place.

Table 5.1: Count of comments on journey times

Comments on approach	Count
Improvements in public transport/more frequent public transport	4
Acceptability of journey length based around personal views	1
Real time information required at all bus stops	1
This method won't restrict people travelling further	1
Congestion is an issue	1
Local employment is important to reduce car journeys	1

Q4 Conclusions

5.4 The majority of town councils agreed with the approach but considered that improvements to public transport quality and the frequency would be vital to go forward with this approach.

5.5 It is acknowledged that the quality and frequency of public transport is a key concern for much of rural Dorset. A more refined approach to public transport availability will be used to assess settlements with the availability of public transport at the morning peak being used.

6. Responses to Question 5

6.1 *Are there any concerns from a town council's perspective?*

Q5 Analysis

6.2 A summary of the specific concerns raised by each responding Town Council is shown in table 6.1. Table 6.2 counts the concerns raised across all of the responses, with a lack of public transport being the most highlighted. Other infrastructure concerns, affordable housing and environmental concerns were also prevalent in responses.

Table 6.1: Summary of specific Town Council concerns

Town Council	Summary of Concerns
Corfe Mullen	New development not sustainable; lack of public transport; environmental considerations
Blandford Forum	Lack of public transport
Beaminster	Lack of public transport; lack of employment
Bridport	Town centre under pressure from development; lack of public transport
Dorchester	Must consider new ways of working and travel; decline of villages

Sherborne	Infrastructure concerns; affordable housing; Town Council to have control over development
Stalbridge	Not answered
Wareham	Dorset LP must take account of Wareham NP and Purbeck LP
West Moors	Decline of town centre; infrastructure concerns; growth altering character of town
Wimborne Minster	Not answered
Weymouth	Lack of public transport; lack of affordable housing; need for Community Land Trusts; housing numbers will not be met without a new town or larger urban extensions; protect countryside and open space; Weymouth has fulfilled its housing quota already; Protect villages; Protect and Improve the harbour

Table 6.2: Count of concerns across all responses to Q5

Concerns	Count
Lack of public transport	5
Infrastructure concerns	2
Lack of affordable housing	2
Environmental considerations	2
Decline of town centres	1
Decline of villages	1
Dorset Local Plan must take account of neighbourhood plans	1
Growth is altering character of towns	1
Housing numbers will not be met without a new town or larger urban extensions	1
Lack of employment	1
Must consider new ways of working and travel	1
Need for Community Land Trusts	1
New development not sustainable	1
Town centres under pressure from development	1
Town Council to have control over development	1
Protect towns' assets and features	1
Protect villages	1

Q5 Conclusions

6.3 Once again, the main concerns across all of the responses relate to insufficient public transport. The Dorset Local Plan as a whole will be setting out how Dorset will deliver on infrastructure, will make provision for affordable housing, and environmental and climate change considerations will be applied throughout.

7. Responses to Question 6

7.1 *What do you consider is the current role of your town?*

Q6 Analysis

7.2 Table 6.1 displays a summary of each Town's response to question 6, and Table 6.2 shows a count of categorised subjects derived from all of the Town Councils' roles. Table 6.2 then translates this into frequency of comment mentioned, which shows how tourism and history were the most commonly mentioned factors, followed by strong natural environmental assets and a strong community feel.

Table 6.1: Town Councils' roles as summarised from responses to Q6

Settlement	Role
Corfe Mullen	A contained population that has no rural dependencies
Blandford Forum	The principal North Dorset Service settlement, and a dormitory settlement for the Poole and Bournemouth Conurbation
Beaminster	To be self-sufficient, acting as a hub for the surrounding villages. To safeguard the whole community and to provide an attractive space to work and play
Bridport	(Not answered)
Dorchester	A local employment hub and place for schools, healthcare and local government services, and an attractive place to visit. A historic market town, but with a high percentage of elderly population which needs to be reversed
Sherborne	To provide a safe environment for its residents with appropriate housing and relevant supporting infrastructure to include green and recreational space to provide a high quality of life. To provide schooling for all ages, as well as a support system for the elderly and vulnerable groups. To assist in attracting employment to the town.
Stalbridge	(Not answered)
Wareham	A charming historic Saxon walled town with a thriving retail centre and strong and united community, located in a unique natural setting as the gateway to the Isle of Purbeck.
West Moors	A dormitory town, with a positive spirited Community. A safe haven for families, supporting a high proportion of elderly and retired people. A thriving town with a public bus service that has deteriorated over the years, causing a high car reliance to get to other towns.

Wimborne Minster	A tourist destination and historic, safe town, with strong natural environment assets.
Weymouth	A tourist destination with a high proportion of income from that source. A historic town with higher population density than most of Dorset. Provision of low-cost housing and employment, with strong natural environment assets.

Table 6.2: Count of categories from Town Councils' roles

Role of town	Count
Tourism	4
Historic town	4
Strong natural environment assets	2
Strong community	2
Service hub	2
Employment provider	2
Provision of housing	2
Contained population	1

Q6 Conclusions

7.3 Responses to Question 6 showed that tourism and heritage, along with the natural environment, and a strong community feel were considered key roles of Dorset's towns.

8. Responses to Question 7

8.1 *What issues are your priorities? Eg. Climate change, town centre redevelopment, affordable housing, ageing population, economic prosperity, community led housing.*

Q7 Analysis

8.2 Table 8.1 summarises the responses specific to each Town Council. Figure 8.1 shows a count of issues and priorities across all of the responses. A real mix of issues and priorities is apparent, however issues around climate change the environment, as well as public and alternative transport modes, received the most attention.

8.3 The Town Councils were also asked to detail any specific vision documents that may be relevant to the development of Dorset Local Plan. These, and a summary of the main points of each vision detailed in responses, are shown in table 8.2.

Table 8.1: Summary of issues and priorities specific to each Town Council

Town Council	Key Issues Mentioned	Summary of Priorities/Concerns
Corfe Mullen	Climate and ecological emergency; Affordable housing need; Ageing population; Community led housing; Local aspirations	Reduce air pollution; retain public transport; Protection of sensitive environment; protection of greenbelt
Blandford Forum	Climate and ecological emergency; Affordable housing need; Economic prosperity; Town Centre regeneration; Local aspirations	Not answered
Beaminster	Climate and ecological emergency; Economic prosperity; Effective public transport; Community led housing; Affordable housing need; Ageing population	Pay more attention to effects of climate change; Economic prosperity; Employment opportunities; Areas of deprivation in the town; Effective public transport; Community led housing; Affordable housing; Housing for ageing population; Controlled growth
Bridport	Climate and ecological emergency; Affordable housing need; Economic prosperity;	Publicise anticipated carbon emissions from development; Communities to engage in the planning process; Protect and enhance the environment; To protect designated areas; Genuinely affordable housing and right mix of tenures; Support socially balanced communities; Achieve appropriate and energy efficient design of housing developments; Housing to be accessible to public services; Protect existing community facilities; Expand local economy; Ensure robust and diverse local economy; Encourage tourism and its economic benefits; Enable sustainable and environmentally friendly means of transport; Improve pedestrian accessibility; Maintain thriving town centre; Safeguard and revitalise public transport hub; Protect and enhance car parking capacity; Achieve less private vehicle dependency
Dorchester	Affordable housing need; Climate and ecological emergency;	Balance needs of residents, workers, and visitors; Affordable housing; Contribution to addressing climate emergency; Recognise and adapt to needs of retail sector; Development to be in line with the town's specific needs; Resist inappropriate development

Sherborne	Climate and ecological emergency;	Work together with towns, parishes, and Dorset Council for the benefit of Dorset as a whole; Tackle climate and ecological emergencies; improved public transport; Achieve a stronger voice in housing plans earlier in the process; Align needs of the environment with national planning policy
Stalbridge	Not answered	Not answered
Wareham	Not answered	Not answered
West Moors	Not answered	Not answered
Wimborne Minster	Not answered	Not answered
Weymouth	Affordable housing need; Climate and ecological emergency; Economic prosperity;	Collaboration with other groups and stakeholders; Enforcement of affordable housing provision in policy; Greater investment in social homes; Climate and ecological emergency; Economic prosperity; Prosper from New Green economy; Green public transport; Protect local town centre assets; Develop employment sites; Development of an enterprise zone; Social and affordable housing at Brewers Quay; Create retirement homes; Natural country park; Benefit peoples' health; Protect natural space and provide habitats; Improve walking and cycling network; Develop an active travel plan; Re-invigorate park and ride; Achieve carbon neutrality

Figure 8.1: Count of categorised issues and priorities from all responses

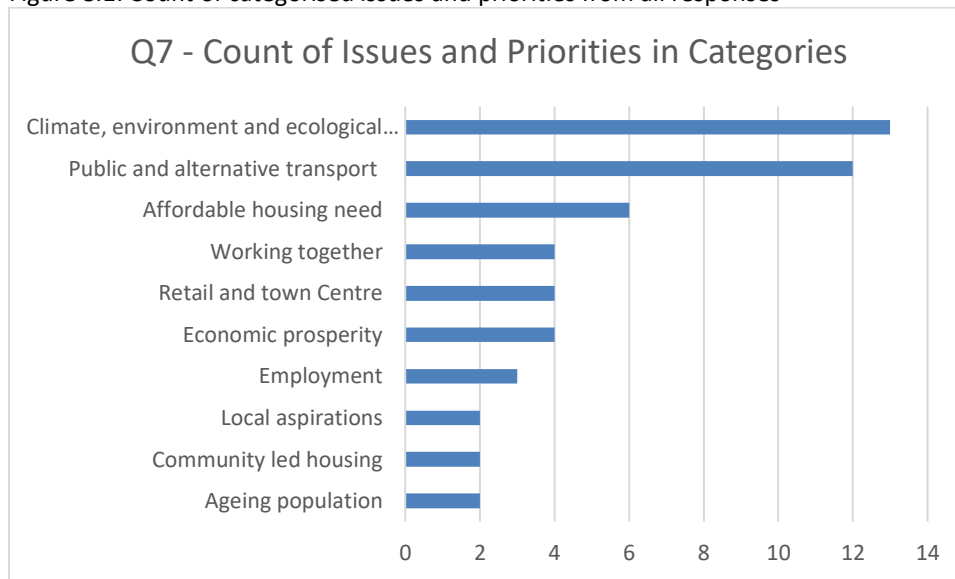


Table 8.2: Vision documents by each Town Council

Town Council	Vision Documents	Vision Summary
Corfe Mullen	Parish Plan, now considering both a Neighbourhood Plan and Community Land Trust to address local need.	Improved public transport; better connectivity; retain its character; no net-in migration
Blandford Forum	Blandford Plus Neighbourhood plan section 5	Improving local facilities; improving town centre; retain status as principal settlement of the North Dorset area; increasing local employment; enhance heritage; reduce congestion
Beaminster	None provided	Provision of facilities to support town centre and wider area; employment provision; sustainable housing development; improved infrastructure; improved public transport
Bridport	Bridport Neighbourhood Plan	Increasing public transport; improving connectivity; local employment; housing provision; retain its character; sustainable environment
Dorchester	None provided	None provided
Sherborne	None provided	Affordable housing provision; improving town centre; sustainable housing; retain its character; safeguard town from overdevelopment; infrastructure improvements

Stalbridge	None provided	Strong community; retain its character; improving Town Centre; town to be a destination point; supporting/showcasing local businesses
Wareham	Wareham Neighbourhood Plan	Protect town centre; economic prosperity; climate change; affordable housing; ageing population; housing allocations
West Moors	None provided	Maintain character; green spaces; local businesses; improved doctor's surgery; climate change; encourage people working from home; improve town centre; provision of a library; ageing population
Wimborne Minster	None provided	Maintain character; natural environment; biodiversity; tree preservation; maintain rights of way
Weymouth	Draft strategy v8	Community where people are proud to live, work and play