

Topic Paper on Housing Delivery and Housing Land Supply

**Land west of Church Hill and land off Butts
Close and Schoolhouse Lane, Marnhull**

Appeal Reference APP/D1265/W/24/3353912

28 February 2025

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1. Introduction and Purpose

Introduction

- 1.1 This Topic Paper has been jointly prepared by Mr. P. Crocker (the Appellant) and Dorset Council (the Council) concerning the appeal on land west of Church Hill and land off Butts Close and Schoolhouse Lane, Marnhull, Dorset.

Purpose

- 1.2 The purpose of this Topic Paper is to confirm the agreed position of both parties regarding housing delivery and housing land supply. It includes the current supply position as set out in Dorset's Annual Position Statement (APS) (October 2024) and considers the potential position on 1st November 2025, when the APS is due to expire.

Structure

- 1.3 This Topic Paper is structured as follows:
- **Section 2** – Provides a brief overview of the planning policy context relevant to the assessment of the five-year housing land supply.
 - **Section 3** – Outlines housing delivery to date in the former North Dorset local authority area (which includes Marnhull) and across Dorset as a whole.
 - **Section 4** – Confirms the five-year housing land supply position as stated in the Council's October 2024 APS and sets out the five-year housing land supply position as of 1st November, based on the current APS assessment of deliverable supply.
 - **Section 5** – Confirms the additional deliverable supply required to meet the minimum threshold for demonstrating a five-year housing land supply.

2. Planning Policy Context

The Development Plan

- 2.1 The village of Marnhull is located within the former North Dorset District Council area, but which became part of the Dorset Council unitary authority on 1st April 2019.
- 2.2 For the former North Dorset area, the North Dorset Local Plan Part 1 was adopted in January 2016. The Local Plan has a start date of 2011 and covers the 20-year period to 2031.
- 2.3 The spatial strategy for housing development is set out in the Local Plan in Policies 2, 6 and 20. Policy 2 highlights that the four main towns will function as the main service centres in the District and will be the main focus for growth, both for the vast majority of housing and other development. It goes on to identify Stalbridge and eighteen larger villages (of which Marnhull is one) as the focus for growth to meet the local needs outside of the four main towns. Outside the defined boundaries of the four main towns, Stalbridge and the larger villages, the remainder of the District will be subject to countryside policies where development will be strictly controlled unless it is required to enable essential rural needs to be met. Policy 20 sets as overarching policy for development that might be permitted in the countryside, and Figure 8.5 provides a summary of types of development that might be acceptable.
- 2.4 Local Plan Policy 6 (Housing Distribution) states that the Council will make provision for the delivery of at least 5,700 new homes (equating to 285 dwellings per annum) between 2011 and 2031. In the countryside (including Stalbridge and the villages) the level of housing and affordable housing provision will be the cumulative number of new homes delivered to contribute towards meeting identified local and essential rural needs. Policy 6 states that at least 825 dwellings will be provided in the countryside (including Stalbridge and the villages) during the period 2011–2031.
- 2.5 Policy 1 of the North Dorset Local Plan Part 1 also expressly incorporates the NPPF presumption in favour of sustainable development into the Development Plan.
- 2.6 The North Dorset Local Plan is more than five years old. In addition, the formation of Dorset as a unitary authority came into effect on 1st April 2019, and so the 1st April 2024 was the fifth anniversary of its formation. For the purposes of calculating five-year supply, Dorset Council, therefore, uses a Local Housing Need (LHN) figure derived from the government’s standard methodology calculation, and do so on a Dorset wide basis.

Other Material Considerations

National Planning Policy Framework (December 2024)

- 2.7 The National Planning Policy Framework was recently updated in December 2024, with changes affecting the calculation of five-year housing land supply. Relevant sections are summarised below.

- 2.8 **Paragraph 11** sets out the presumption in favour of sustainable development. It states that development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan should be approved without delay. Where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies are out-of-date, permission should be granted unless the NPPF provides a strong reason for refusal, or any adverse impacts would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits.
- 2.9 **Footnote 8** (associated with paragraph 11) provides two circumstances where policies would be out of date. These are where a 5-year supply of deliverable housing sites cannot be demonstrated, or where the Housing Delivery Test (HDT) result is below 75%. It is agreed that the Council's APS demonstrates a 5.02 year housing land supply and the Council is now entitled to rely on the supply as shown until 31 October 2025, and the latest HDT result for Dorset is 106%.
- 2.10 **Section 5, Delivering a sufficient supply of homes, is of relevance. Paragraph 61** advises that to support objectives of significantly boosting the supply of homes, it is important that a sufficient amount and variety of land can come forward where it is needed. The paragraph also advises that the overall aim should be to meet an area's identified housing need, including with an appropriate mix of housing types for the local community.
- 2.11 **Paragraph 73** confirms that small and medium sized sites can make an important contribution to meeting the housing requirement of an area.
- 2.12 **Paragraph 78** confirms that Planning Authorities should maintain and update annually a 5-year supply of deliverable sites sufficient to provide a minimum of five years' worth of housing against their housing requirement set out in adopted strategic policies, or against their local housing need where the strategic policies are more than five years old. A buffer of 5% buffer or 20% should be applied to the calculation, with the appropriate buffer determined based on an authority's performance against the Housing Delivery Test (HDT). It should be noted that the APS was produced under the terms of the previous NPPF (December 2023), which did not require a 5% buffer to be added to the supply.
- 2.13 **Footnote 39** associated with paragraph 78 states that the local housing need should be applied unless the strategic policies which are more than five years old have been reviewed and found not to require updating. The local housing need should be calculated using the standard method set out in national planning practice guidance.
- 2.14 **Paragraph 232** indicates that existing policies of an adopted development plan should not be considered out-of-date simply because they were adopted prior to publication of the 2024 Framework. Due weight should be given to them, according to their degree of consistency with the Framework. Policies should not be regarded as out-of-date where specific criteria have been met, namely the demonstration of a five year housing land supply; compliance with the HDT as explained therein; and that the plan has been adopted within the last five years.
- 2.15 **Paragraph 233** confirms that, where a local planning authority has confirmed its housing land supply position for a year through a published Annual Position Statement that has been examined by the Planning Inspectorate against the previous version of this

Framework, this position will stand until the APS expires. However, aside from this reference to current Annual Position Statements at paragraph 233, the provisions for future Annual Position Statements to be agreed has now been removed from the 2024 NPPF.

The Emerging Dorset Local Plan

- 2.16 A review of the North Dorset Local Plan had been commenced, with an Issues and Options document consulted on between November 2017 and January 2018. This looked at options to plan for a LHN figure of 366 dwellings per annum (dpa) in North Dorset.
- 2.17 With the formation of Dorset Council in 2019, it was decided to produce a single Dorset Council Local Plan instead. The Dorset Council Local Plan options consultation was consulted on between January and March 2021. This looked at options to plan for a LHN figure of 1,793 dpa.
- 2.18 The latest Local Development Scheme (published February 2025 – **Core Document 7.1**) sets out an updated timetable for its production, including an intended site options consultation in August 2025, an intended publication consultation in August 2026, and an intended submission plan in December 2026.

The Marnhull Neighbourhood Plan

- 2.19 A Marnhull Neighbourhood Plan is in the early stages of production. A Regulation 14 (pre-submission) consultation is being carried out between 10 February and 31 March 2025.

3. Housing Delivery to Date

- 3.1 Marnhull is located within the former North Dorset District Council area. The North Dorset Local Plan Part 1 was adopted in January 2016, with a plan period starting in 2011. Delivery since 2011 has, therefore, been considered against the housing requirement in Local Plan Policy 6, which required the delivery of at least 5,700 new homes (equating to 285 per annum) between 2011 and 2031. The Council calculated its housing land supply against this Local Plan housing requirement until 2021.
- 3.2 Since the North Dorset Local Plan became 5 years old in 2021, the Council calculated its five year housing land supply against a local housing needs figure calculated using the standard method. From 2024 (the fifth anniversary of Dorset Council), the Council transitioned to monitoring housing supply and delivery across the whole of the Dorset Council area instead of using the former district council areas.
- 3.3 Against the Local Plan housing requirement in the plan period to 2021 and against LHN from 2021, the parties confirm the following delivery of homes in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1: Delivery to Date in the Former North Dorset Area Against the North Dorset Local Plan and Against Local Housing Need

	Year	North Dorset LP Requirement / LHN	Delivery in the Former North Dorset Area	Shortfall/Surplus
Local Plan	2011/12	285	375	+90
	2012/13	285	144	-141
	2013/14	285	227	-58
	2014/15	285	178	-107
	2015/16	285	220	-65
	2016/17	285	142	-143
	2017/18	285	159	-126
	2018/19	285	223	-62
	2019/20	285 ¹	96	-189
	2020/21	285 ²	198	-87
Local Housing Need	2021/22	332	298	-34
	2022/23	377	511	+134
	2023/24	373	524	+151

¹ 2019/20 and 2020/21 were affected by Covid restrictions / lockdowns. The government recognised that this would have an impact on housing delivery and reduced the requirement for 2019/20 by 1 month (1/12) and for 2020/21 by 4 months (4/12). If these discounts were applied then the LP requirement for 2019/20 would be 261, and 2020/21 would be 190.

² Ibid

3.4 In addition, since Dorset became a unitary authority in 2019, the following Dorset wide delivery figures are agreed in Table 3.2, below:

Table 3.2: Dorset wide delivery

Year	Net dwelling completions
2019/20	1,440
2020/21	1,379
2021/22	1,946
2022/23	1,772
2023/24	1,483

3.5 The most recent HDT is for 2023 and was published on 12 December 2024. It measures housing delivery for the years 2020/21, 2021/22 and 2022/23, with the result being 106% for Dorset.

4. Dorset's Annual Position Statement on Five Year Housing Land Supply

The Council's Five Year Housing Land Supply Until 31st October 2024

- 4.1 Dorset Council prepared a draft Annual Position Statement (APS) dated 31 July 2024, and submitted to the Planning Inspectorate seeking to confirm its five year housing land supply.
- 4.2 The APS Inspector's report was received on 26 September 2024 (**Core Document 5.1**) and confirmed that the Council's draft APS dated 31 July 2024 can demonstrate a five year supply of deliverable housing sites, subject to the removal of 537 dwellings.
- 4.3 With the removal of those 537 dwellings, paragraph 2 of the APS Inspector's Report confirms that Dorset is able to demonstrate a deliverable supply of **8,999 dwellings** against a requirement of **8,965 dwellings**. This is a housing land supply of **5.02 years** (a **surplus of 34 dwellings** against a minimum five year housing land supply requirement).
- 4.4 Paragraph 3 of the APS Inspector's report confirms that the Council is now entitled to rely on the supply as shown in the draft APS and subject to the above revisions until 31 October 2025.
- 4.5 Dorset Council subsequently published an adopted Annual Position Statement (APS) on 5 Year Housing Land Supply, dated October 2024 (**Core Document 5.2**). This confirms, at Figure 8.8 on page 29 that the Council's supply is, as set out above, **5.02 years**.
- 4.6 Paragraph 233 of the December 2024 NPPF confirms that, where a local planning authority has confirmed its housing land supply position for a year through a published Annual Position Statement that has been examined by the Planning Inspectorate against the previous version of this Framework, this position will stand until the Annual Position Statement expires, so 31 October 2025. This means that the component requirement to demonstrate a 5 year housing land supply for the purposes of footnote 8 and paragraph 232 has been met.

The Council's Five Year Housing Land Supply on 1st November 2025

- 4.7 When the APS expires on 1 November 2025, then the following assumptions on five year housing land supply can be made:
- i. The Council would need to use the latest LHN figure calculated using the standard method. The most up-to-date LHN figure for Dorset is **3,219 homes per annum**. That is an increase of 1,426 homes per annum compared to the LHN of 1,793 used in the October 2024 APS.
 - ii. The December 2024 NPPF reintroduced the need to apply a 5% buffer for choice and competition in the market and retained a 20% buffer for authorities where there has been a significant under-delivery of housing (where the HDT result is below 75%). For Dorset, the latest HDT score is 106% and so **a 5% buffer is appropriate**.

- 4.8 Taking the above changes together, the Council’s five year housing land supply position (using the examined supply within the APS of 8,999 homes, and retaining a base date of 1st April 2024) would be as set out in Table 4.1 (under the NPPF 2024 column), below. For ease of reference, the two parties also provide the calculation in Dorset’s October 2024 APS, which uses the December 2023 NPPF, to show where the differences in the calculations occur.

Table 4.1: Dorset Council’s Five Year Housing Land Supply – Current and Assumed Future

Step		APS (2023 NPPF)	2024 NPPF
A	Housing Requirement (LHN)	1,793 homes per annum	3,219 homes per annum
B	Requirement over 5 Year (Ax5)	8,965	16,095 homes
C	Requirement with a 5% Buffer (Bx1.05)	n/a	16,900 homes
D	Dorset’s APS Supply	8,999	8,999 homes
E	Supply	5.02 years	2.67 years
F	Shortfall	+34 homes	-7,901 homes

- 4.9 As set out in Table 4.1, it is agreed that on 1st November this year, the Council’s housing land supply is likely to drop significantly when measured against the new minimum requirement to around 2.67 years.

5. The Increase in Deliverable Housing Land Supply Required to Meet the Minimum Five-Year Housing Land Supply Requirement

- 5.1 Going forward, the Council will need to update its housing land supply with a 1st April 2025 base date, covering the five year period 2025/26 to 2029/30.
- 5.2 It is agreed that this will require a comprehensive review of all deliverable supply across the authority taking into account the homes that have been completed in the 2024/25 monitoring year, sites on which planning permission may have lapsed, and additional sites and permissions that may have come forward. It is agreed that sites that might be included in the Council's 2025 to 2030 five year housing land supply will need to meet the definition of deliverable in the NPPF.
- 5.3 Until such time as the LHN is updated, it is agreed that the Council's housing land supply will need to be calculated against an LHN of **3,219 homes per annum** and a total five year housing requirement of **16,900 homes over a five year period**.
- 5.4 Based on the Council's current APS deliverable supply figure of 8,999 homes, it is agreed that an approximate **88% increase in housing land supply** in the next five year period (2025-2030) (sites capable of delivering in the region of a **further 7,901 homes**) is likely to be required in order to meet the minimum 5 year requirement.
- 5.5 It is agreed that this level of supply will not be met without a significant increase in the number of permissions granted, including on windfall sites, beyond existing local plan and neighbourhood plan allocations.