



Dorset Council Local Plan Options Consultation

Background paper - Housing, employment and traveller
site selection

August 2025

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1. Introduction

- 1.1.1. Councils are responsible for preparing local plans, to set out the vision and framework for development and land use in a particular area. Local plans identify specifically what development is needed and where it should go. They also identify the areas that need to be protected or enhanced.
- 1.1.2. Dorset Council was formed in April 2019, and since this date we have been working on preparing a new 'Dorset Council Local Plan' for the council area. We consulted on a draft Local Plan early in 2021. The draft Local Plan set out strategies for meeting the area's development needs.
- 1.1.3. Since the 2021 consultation, we have adopted a Dorset Council Plan (2024 to 2029), which sets out a new vision and strategic priorities for Dorset's future. Government has also made changes to national planning policy and guidance. The new local strategic priorities, alongside changes to national policy and guidance, have implications for the way development needs are assessed and met locally. As consequence both priorities and development needs in Dorset have significantly changed since the last 2021 Local Plan consultation.
- 1.1.4. As part of preparing the Dorset Council Local Plan, we have to fully explore the reasonable alternatives for meeting the needs of Dorset.
- 1.1.5. This background paper explains how we have selected a shortlist of site opportunities which could potentially meet Dorset's development needs for homes and employment land. In the first sections of the background paper, we have explained the broad policy aims, context and where necessary we have also referenced national policy and guidance.
- 1.1.6. The final sections explain how we have selected those site opportunities that are presented in the consultation. The individual criterion for selecting sites are presented in Appendices.
- 1.1.7. Site selection will be refined during the next stages of the plan making process, taking into account consultation feedback, additional evidence and the strategic priorities in the Dorset Council Plan.

2. Sustainable growth in Dorset

2.1. The Dorset Council Plan (2024 to 2029)

2.1.1. The Dorset Council Local Plan is being prepared in the context of the Dorset Council Plan (2024 to 2029). This Plan sets out a series of strategic priorities for Dorset including:

- provide affordable and high-quality homes
- grow Dorset's economy
- communities for all
- responding to the climate and nature emergency

2.2. Proposed 'Local Plan Vision' for Dorset

2.2.1. We have prepared a proposed Local Plan Vision that reflects the Dorset Council Plan's strategic priorities. Full details of the Local Plan Vision are set out in the consultation document.

2.2.2. The Local Plan Vision reaffirms the Dorset Council Plan vision of a fairer, more prosperous and sustainable place for current and future generations. It also recognises the importance and quality of Dorset's environment, including its: landscapes, biodiversity, coastline, rich cultural and built heritage and picturesque towns and villages.

2.2.3. Alongside economic growth, it seeks to enhance Dorset's environment with high quality, well designed and accessible developments that will bring homes, jobs and supporting infrastructure.

2.2.4. The Local Plan Vision goes on to specifically reference:

- the main centres for economic activity – these comprise the Dorchester to Weymouth corridor and south-east Dorset
- the existing market and coastal towns that are spread across Dorset which are closely linked to surrounding villages and act as 'hubs' for the surrounding more rural areas, providing services and facilities needed by local communities
- rural areas – in particular their character, heritage and natural attributes (including hedgerows, trees, landscape and biodiversity), and longer term aims for protection and enhancement guided by the Local Nature Recovery Strategy

Meeting strategic priorities

2.2.5. The consultation document also explains how the Local Plan will help to meet the vision across Dorset through:

- providing affordable and high-quality housing – supporting delivery of new homes, including accessible and affordable housing, that is focused in the most sustainable towns and villages where existing services and facilities allow every-day needs to be met locally without travelling long distances
- growing our economy - enabling sustainable economic development in the right locations and by:
 - providing homes for those who work in that area
 - focusing employment space and new homes in the most sustainable towns and villages so that they act as hubs and reduce the need to travel
 - supporting delivery of infrastructure alongside new development
 - supporting delivery of renewable forms of energy based on the principle of the most appropriate type of technology in the best location
- providing communities for all – by:
 - encouraging new homes and employment space in the most sustainable towns and villages where there is already access to services and facilities
 - delivering services, facilities and infrastructure alongside new development
 - providing places which help social connections to be built and maintained (e.g. high quality public and public green spaces)
- responding to the climate and nature emergency – enabling a diverse and healthy natural environment by:
 - minimising the distances needed to travel, and encouraging active and sustainable means of travel
 - avoiding and mitigating impacts on the natural environment and supporting nature recovery at a local level, guided by the Local Nature Recovery Strategy
 - avoiding development in areas at risk from flooding, and where risks cannot be avoided ensuring that any new development will be safe over its lifetime without increasing risks elsewhere
 - encouraging development that generates renewable forms of energy based on the principle of the most appropriate type of technology in the best location

Key policies and strategies for specific areas in Dorset

- 2.2.6. Alongside the broader strategies, the consultation document also sets out more specific aspirations for areas in Dorset where there are opportunities or specific issues.

Weymouth to Dorchester corridor

- 2.2.7. The Weymouth to Dorchester corridor will be key in energising Dorset's economy. The southern part of this area encompasses Chickerell and Portland.
- 2.2.8. We are working on preparing and delivering ambitious strategies that will help to create vibrant and thriving communities in this part of Dorset. As part of this we are developing a positive vision that where people will love where they live, continue to enjoy beautiful surroundings and have a choice of well-paid careers.
- 2.2.9. This part of Dorset is already well connected by rail, road and sea, and significant investment (estimated at potentially £28 billion across all projects) in key areas has the potential to provide future jobs in renewable energy¹, defence technology, maritime tourism and health or social care.
- 2.2.10. The strategies and Local Plan policies will help to deliver high quality affordable homes and employment space in this part of Dorset, whilst also conserving and enhancing the area's rich history and heritage.
- 2.2.11. Investment of the Levelling Up Funds will help regenerate Weymouth's Town Centre in accordance with a refreshed masterplan that is supported by complementary policies in the Local Plan.
- 2.2.12. The investments, and growth, in this part of Dorset will have a 'ripple effect' that brings prosperity across a wider area.

Dorset's towns

- 2.2.13. The role of Dorset's towns is changing; in part this is because of changing shopping habits. Vacancy rates for traditional retail uses in town centres are increasing and there is also a greater variety of uses evident in areas where retail has historically dominated including community and cultural land uses.

¹ The Dorset Clean Energy Super Cluster is one of the featured investment opportunities that Dorset Council took to the UK's Real Estate Investment and Infrastructure Forum in 2025. The green energy super cluster is focused on contributing to government objectives of economic growth and clean renewable energy.

- 2.2.14. Our understanding of towns and the way that they function has been guided by a series of town centre surveys across the whole of Dorset which were carried out in 2024.
- 2.2.15. As part of responding to the future role of towns we may need to consider defining smaller town centre areas, to reflect demand, and recognise that diversification to other types of complementary uses.
- 2.2.16. With the support of local communities, our Local Plan strategies and policies can help to support thriving town centres for future generations that continue to be a focus for services, facilities, jobs as well as hubs for cultural and community activities.
- 2.2.17. Our approach to town centres will be developed alongside the general strategy to meeting the area's needs for homes and employment space.

Rural Dorset

- 2.2.18. Dorset is a largely rural area. Its rural community is focused around established villages spread across the plan area. The services and facilities in these existing villages are important to maintaining the vitality and viability of the people living in them and the wider surrounding areas which often rely upon them.
- 2.2.19. We have outlined a new Flexible Settlements Policy in the consultation document and background paper. The proposed policy will help support delivery of new homes, but will also help to support services, facilities and infrastructure that it important for maintaining the vitality and viability of rural communities.
- 2.2.20. The policy will include criteria which act as safeguards for conserving the special character of natural and built environments of our rural areas.

New Settlements

- 2.2.21. In the short and medium term over the Local Plan Period (2027/28 to 2042/43) the strategies and approaches in the Local Plan focus on supporting growth in areas within and around existing towns and villages, alongside the Flexible Settlements Policy.
- 2.2.22. We are also considering 'larger scale expansions' to existing settlements and 'new settlements', but these are unlikely to deliver homes in the short to medium term but, are more likely to take at least 10 years to deliver.
- 2.2.23. It will take time to gather the evidence and fully examine the opportunities for 'larger scale expansions' and 'new settlements' in Dorset. For this reason, the

consultation does not focus on these opportunities. These opportunities will be explored as part of future work.

3. Context

3.1. Evidence presented in 2021 Local Plan consultation

- 3.1.1. The site opportunities consultation includes a series of sites which might be suitable for delivering new homes, and land which might be suitable for employment uses in Dorset Council area.
- 3.1.2. To guide the selection of site opportunities for this consultation, and as part of preparing our development strategies for the local plan, we have gathered local evidence about how housing and economic markets operate in Dorset and considered the role of existing towns and villages across Dorset.
- 3.1.3. This evidence helps to understand the needs for different types of development across Dorset, and can help shape a development strategy. A development strategy which responds to local economic market areas can help to contribute toward building strong and competitive local economies by allocating employment land where it is required. A development strategy which responds to local housing market areas can help to contribute toward building strong and healthy communities by allocating land for homes where needed and where residents can access services and facilities.
- 3.1.4. We presented evidence on Dorset's functional economic and housing market areas, and our settlement hierarchy, in 2021. Both background papers are presented on our [webpages](#).
- 3.1.5. The next sections provide a brief overview of our evidence for functional economic and housing market areas, and the role of existing settlements across Dorset. Further details on both topics are presented in accompanying background papers.

3.2. Functional areas

- 3.2.1. Functional Economic Market Areas (FEMA) are distinct spatial areas where economic activity is concentrated, and where people tend to live, work and access services and facilities. There is no standard approach to defining a functional economic market area since patterns of activity vary from place to place². Some of the factors that can be considered include travel to work areas,

² Planning Practice Guidance, [Plan-making](#), Paragraph: 019 Reference ID: 61-019-20190315

service markets for consumers, catchment areas for facilities and the flow of goods, services and information within the local economy. FEMA can overlap administrative areas so assessments of need may be carried out on a cross-boundary basis with neighbouring authorities.

- 3.2.2. As with functional economic market areas, there is no standard approach to defining Housing Market Areas (HMA). They are generally understood to comprise geographical areas that are defined by household demand and preferences for housing. There are often close links between FEMA and HMA, as the places where people chose to live and work can be closely interrelated.
- 3.2.3. After reviewing evidence gathered by the predecessor district councils (for a more detailed discussion please refer to the '[Functional Areas Background Paper](#), 2021'), we were able to draw some general conclusions about FEMA and HMA in Dorset.
- 3.2.4. There are two broad housing market areas (HMA) in Dorset. These are: the Bournemouth and Poole HMA, which is centred around the conurbation, but which extends into the eastern part of Dorset and the Western part of the New Forest; and the Dorchester and Weymouth HMA which covers much of western Dorset.
- 3.2.5. Within these two broad areas the evidence also indicates that there are two sub-areas in the north and west. The northern part of Dorset is influenced by the Yeovil and Salisbury HMA, but the extent of this influence varies (the work on FEMA shows a wider economic influence centred around the corridor for the A303 trunk road). In western Dorset the latest evidence indicates that there is a distinct housing market area centred around Bridport, Lyme Regis and Beaminster.
- 3.2.6. Whilst it is difficult to draw very precise boundaries (as the individual markets overlap and interact with one another around their edges), we think that the existing evidence gathered for the predecessor councils can be used to identify four broad functional economic and housing market areas in Dorset. These are:
 - South Eastern Dorset, which forms part of a wider functional area centred on the Bournemouth/Christchurch/Poole conurbation;
 - Central Dorset, centred on the towns of Dorchester and Weymouth;
 - Northern Dorset, which forms part of the wider A303 Corridor extending into Somerset and Wiltshire; and
 - Western Dorset, centred on the town of Bridport/Lyme Regis/Beaminster.
- 3.2.7. Figure 4.2 shows the broad extents of each of the functional housing and economic market areas.

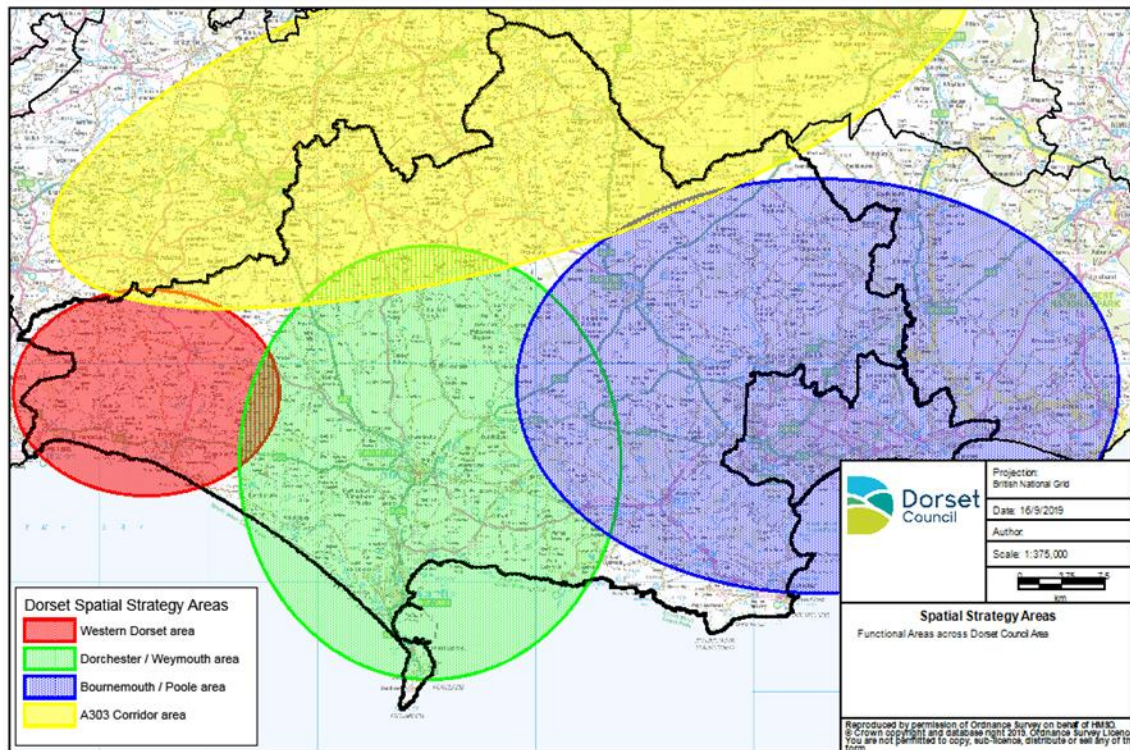


Figure 4.2: Representation of the four housing and economic markets in and beyond the Dorset Council area

- 3.2.8. Following publication of our background paper in 2021, some further work on the definition of the FEMA concluded that Dorset was part of a single FEMA with neighbouring Bournemouth Christchurch and Poole³. It also identified a need to look at distinct sub-FEMA areas. It tested the validity of the four functional areas which we presented in the 2021 background paper and concluded that they were the most appropriate sub-areas within the larger FEMA. For these reasons we think it is appropriate to continue to use the sub-areas within the wider FEMA based on the areas presented in Figure 4.2.
- 3.2.9. We have used the evidence on these sub-areas to help shape the emerging development strategies for each functional area. The process of selecting individual site opportunities within each of these areas also takes account of the role and function of settlements. The emerging settlement hierarchy is discussed in the next section of this paper.

³ Dorset Council and Bournemouth, Christchurch & Poole Council Employment Land Study 2024 [Employment Land Study \(Dorset Council and Bournemouth, Christchurch & Poole Council\) - Dorset Council](#)

3.3. Settlement hierarchy

- 3.3.1. Within the context of the functional areas, the role of existing settlements has been a key consideration when selecting site opportunities.
- 3.3.2. We presented a '[Settlement Hierarchy Background Paper](#)' in 2021 for the last Local Plan consultation. The Department of Transport have recently produced a Connectivity Tool which establishes the relative connectivity of a place to everyday services. The settlement hierarchy will be updated to reflect this new information with the assessment being included in an updated Settlement Hierarchy Background Paper.
- 3.3.3. We think that existing settlements have a key role when planning the distribution of current and future growth for the following reasons:
 - Services, facilities and infrastructure – services, facilities and key infrastructure tends to be concentrated in the larger towns and villages, and locating development in or around these settlements provides the opportunity for consolidation and further investment.
 - Efficient use of resources – focusing growth around existing settlements encourages focused and efficient use of resources and public services.
 - Accessibility and reducing travel – existing transport infrastructure often means that the towns and villages are in the most readily accessible locations. Focusing development in and around these settlements can help to reduce the need for travel, help to encourage sustainable modes of travel and make travel as efficient as possible.
 - Vitality and viability of existing communities – planning growth around existing towns and villages can help to sustain the viability of communities with new homes, employment and access to new or renewed service and facilities.
- 3.3.4. Focusing growth within and around existing settlements where services facilities, and infrastructure are concentrated, is consistent with overarching objectives around achieving sustainable development through supporting local economies, building strong, vibrant and healthy communities, encouraging effective use of land and prudent use of resources and mitigating against climate change.
- 3.3.5. We have prepared a 'settlement hierarchy' which ranks settlements according to their size, accessibility, the range of different services and facilities that they offer and the settlement's role or function. We worked with local communities (Parish and Town Councils across Dorset) when preparing the 'Settlement

Hierarchy Background Paper' in 2021 and also took account of the hierarchies prepared by the predecessor councils for the existing local plans.

3.3.6. The resulting hierarchy includes three tiers:

- Tier 1 - Large built-up areas: comprising in eastern Dorset, the main built-up area of the Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole conurbation within the inner boundary of the South East Dorset Green Belt; and in western Dorset, the county town of Dorchester and the coastal resort of Weymouth, which is the largest urban area in rural Dorset;
- Tier 2 – Towns and other main settlements: comprising market and coastal towns across Dorset and 'other main settlements' mostly in eastern Dorset and excluded from the Green Belt, close to the main built-up area of Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole;
- Tier 3 – Villages with 'Local Plan Development Boundaries' or villages excluded from (inset within) the Green Belt. These are typically larger villages which have a population of around 500 and at least some facilities enabling some day-to-day needs to be met locally; and

3.3.7. A list of the settlements falling within each tier of the hierarchy is presented in the consultation document. Most of the settlements in Tiers 1, 2 and 3 have 'settlement boundaries' 'defined development boundaries' or 'village infill envelopes' (hereafter referred to as settlement boundaries) defined through existing adopted local plans.

4. Selecting site opportunities for consultation

4.1. Planning considerations applied to all site opportunity assessments

Significant planning considerations

- 4.1.1. National planning policy, and existing local planning policies, include policies relating to specific environmental land use considerations which can significantly restrict or limit the opportunity to deliver development. We have called these 'significant planning considerations', and where these relate to a site opportunity and are likely to frustrate delivery of either homes or employment uses, we have discounted that site from consideration.
- 4.1.2. Our selections have been based upon the latest planning policy and guidance, and published information on these considerations (including data presented by Natural England and the Environment Agency) and any local evidence which was available at the time the assessments were undertaken. (Where new policy, guidance or evidence is published following the assessments we may need to review selection at subsequent stages of the plan making process).
- 4.1.3. These 'significant planning considerations' relate to environmental land use issues including flood risk, coastal change and European and internationally protected habitat sites (also including Sites of Special Scientific Interest).

Flood risk

- 4.1.4. The thrust of national planning policy is to avoid flood risk whilst preparing development strategies for local plans through the application of the sequential test. We have evidence which shows 'flood extents' for different sources of flood risk, but the evidence does not define risks in the same way and in some instances more detailed site-specific assessment may be needed to accurately understand the nature of the risks.
- 4.1.5. For this reason, we have initially relied upon the 'moderate' (Flood Risk Zone 2) and 'high' (Flood Risk Zone 3) Flood Risk Zones which present fluvial and coastal flood risks when screening potential site opportunities for flood risk.
- 4.1.6. We have only discounted site opportunities from further consideration where the extent of the Flood Risk Zone would inhibit delivery of development. Some sites may be subject to moderate and/or high risks and still be presented in the site opportunities where we think there is a possibility of applying a sequential

approach to the site's redevelopment in accordance with paragraph 175⁴ of the NPPF, December 2024.

- 4.1.7. Where a site could also be affected by other sources of flood risk (e.g. surface water flood risk or groundwater flood risk) we have noted this and outlined the steps that need to be followed to explore and properly understand the nature of any risks to inform preparation of the local plan. In these circumstances, and subject to exploration of this issue, there is a possibility that a site opportunity may need to be discounted from consideration at a later stage in the plan making process.

Coastal change

- 4.1.8. Coastal erosion is defined in the Flood and Water Management Act 2010 as 'the erosion of the coast of any part of England or Wales.' (Section 1 (4)). 'Coastal change' is a wider term that is used in national planning policy which is defined as '...an area identified in plans as likely to be affected by physical changes to the coast. Such changes include erosion, coastal landslip, permanent inundation or accretion.'⁵
- 4.1.9. The thrust of national planning policy is to reduce the risks from coastal change by avoiding inappropriate development in vulnerable areas. National policy also states that Coastal Change Management Areas (CCMA) should be defined to identify land subject to coastal change and to clarify the types of development that will be appropriate in these areas.
- 4.1.10. We have not defined CCMA for all of Dorset's coastline however the [Purbeck Local Plan](#) 2018-2035 does define CCMA for the section of coastline that was within the former Purbeck District.
- 4.1.11. We have used the areas shown as CCMA in the Purbeck Local Plan, the evidence of 'indicative erosion' presented in Shoreline Management Plans (SMP) and National Coastal Erosion Risk Mapping to define those areas where coastal change is likely to inhibit the delivery of development.

⁴ 'The sequential test should be used in areas known to be at risk now or in the future from any form of flooding, except in situations where a site-specific flood risk assessment demonstrates that no built development within the site boundary, including access or escape routes, land raising or other potentially vulnerable elements, would be located on an area that would be at risk of flooding from any source, now and in the future (having regard to potential changes in flood risk).'

⁵ Planning Practice Guidance, [Flood risk and coastal change](#), Paragraph: 071 Reference ID: 7-071-20220825

- 4.1.12. Where the evidence indicates that a site is likely to be subject to coastal change during the development's lifetime, we have generally discounted the site from consideration. Following Planning Practice Guidance⁶, we have also discounted all site opportunities being considered for homes where they overlap with an area that is likely to be subject to coastal change.

Habitat sites

- 4.1.13. The law relating to European and internationally protected habitat sites⁷ is set out in the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017. Before we grant consent for plans (including the local plan) or projects (including decisions on individual planning applications) which are likely to have significant effects on a habitat site we must complete an appropriate assessment. Consent should only be given following the appropriate assessment for plans or projects that will not adversely affect the integrity of the habitat site.
- 4.1.14. The nature of the process set out in the regulations around avoiding adverse impacts, means that we think it is unlikely that development could be delivered on a site where a significant proportion of the same site is also designated as a habitat site and this would inhibit the delivery of development i.e. the development would adversely affect the integrity of the habitat site.
- 4.1.15. Local evidence gathered for the Dorset Heathlands⁸ Special Protection Area (SPA) and Dorset Heaths Special Area of Conservation (SAC) also indicates that residential development within an area close to the site's boundary (400 metres) is likely to adversely affect the integrity of these sites. The local evidence suggests that residential development in this area should also be restricted because of the limited opportunities to effectively mitigate adverse effects.
- 4.1.16. We think it is unlikely that residential development could be delivered on a site where a significant proportion of the same site is also defined as part of 400 metre area around a Dorset Heaths SAC, or Dorset Heathlands SPA habitat site,

⁶ 'Permanent new residential development (including through change of use) will not be appropriate within a Coastal Change Management Area.', Planning Practice Guidance, [Flood Risk and Coastal Change](#), Paragraph: 073 Reference ID: 7-073-20220825

⁷ Any site which would be included within the definition at regulation 8 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 for the purpose of those regulations, including candidate Special Areas of Conservation, Sites of Community Importance, Special Areas of Conservation, Special Protection Areas and any relevant Marine Sites.

⁸ [The Dorset Heathlands Planning Framework, 2020 -2025](#), Supplementary Planning Document, April 2020

as this would inhibit the delivery of development. For this reason, sites that are affected in this way have been discounted from consideration.

- 4.1.17. Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) are notified and protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. There are restrictions as to what can be done on SSSI land, and each SSSI will have a list of operations that require consent from Natural England. National planning policy advises that planning permission should not be given for development on land within, or adjacent to, an SSSI that is likely to have an adverse effect on it, either individually or cumulatively.
- 4.1.18. We have assumed that new homes and employment uses on SSSI are likely to have adverse effects. We think it is unlikely that residential development and employment uses could be delivered on a site where a significant proportion of the same site is also defined as SSSI as this would be likely to inhibit the delivery of development. For this reason, sites that are affected in this way have been discounted from consideration. See Appendix 1 'Generic' for 'Site Opportunities Selection Criterion A'.

Other planning considerations

Applying criterion relating to other planning considerations

- 4.1.19. In addition to considering 'significant planning considerations' when reaching a decision on whether a site was suitable for selection, we have also taken account of a broader range of 'other planning considerations'. Each of these planning considerations is broadly described in more detail in the following section of the report, and the criterion relating to these considerations are presented in Appendix 1. The list presented in this report is not necessarily exhaustive as depending on the site's characteristics and context, other considerations may also be relevant when assessing suitability.
- 4.1.20. Many of the site opportunities we have assessed as part of the selection process were affected by one or more 'other planning considerations'. In these circumstances as part of the assessment, we have needed to determine the significance of the issue, alone or in combination, in restricting or limiting development and the opportunities for the impacts to be mitigated.
- 4.1.21. The assessment process has involved the application of professional discretion based on available information, a consideration of in combination impacts, the opportunities to mitigate impacts and any other relevant factors.

- 4.1.22. Rather than apply a rigid approach to scoring individual sites, we have arrived at balanced judgments about whether a site was suitable for selection as an opportunity. The weight given to each of the matter's rests on the specific circumstances of each site and the specific nature of the planning issues. In some instances, we have discounted sites from consideration where we judged that there would be in-combination impacts from a number of planning issues.
- 4.1.23. In order that all reasonable alternatives to meet Dorset's development needs were examined, where we considered that more information was needed, or that suitable mitigation could be achieved, sites have been shortlisted for this consultation and ongoing consideration through the next stages of the plan making process.
- 4.1.24. As with significant planning considerations, our selections have been based upon the best available published evidence, policy and guidance at the time the assessments were made.

Other areas around habitat sites

- 4.1.25. We have not discounted site opportunities around habitat sites where development is likely to have significant effects, but where there are opportunities to mitigate adverse impacts on the site's integrity. For example depending on the circumstances it may be possible to include infrastructure projects to mitigate nutrient pollution, infrastructure projects to mitigate recreational impacts, infrastructure projects to mitigate air pollution or measures to manage recreational activity linked with the development.
- 4.1.26. We have identified areas around a number of habitat sites in Dorset where certain types of development are likely to have significant effects and where mitigation will need to be provided alongside their development. These significant effects relate to the following issues:
- Recreational impacts - Dorset Heathlands (specifically areas outside the 400 metre area up to 5 kilometres), Poole Harbour, Chesil and the Fleet and New Forest
 - Water quality impacts – Nutrient sensitive catchments
 - Air quality impacts – Dorset Heathlands
- 4.1.27. There is a broad understanding between us and developers of these potential impacts, and effective approaches to mitigation. In some instances, we take responsibility for delivery of strategic mitigation to avoid adverse effects from the development, and in others, developers have the responsibility for delivering mitigation with our guidance and support. We may need to review and update

the strategic approaches to mitigation as the plan progresses and we gain a clearer understanding on the requirement for development.

Green Belt

- 4.1.28. We have not discounted site opportunities that are also defined as part of the Green Belt. Green Belt boundaries can be changed as part of the Local Plan making process where there are exceptional circumstances, and the changes have been fully evidenced and justified.
- 4.1.29. In accordance with national policy, we will be exploring the opportunities for changes to boundaries as part of a review of the Green Belt through the next stages in the plan making process. Where relevant we have acknowledged when a site opportunity forms part of the Green Belt and explained that this issue will need to be explored further through the processes set out in national policy.

Designated landscapes (including National Landscapes and Heritage Coast)

- 4.1.30. We recognise our responsibilities under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 in respect of National Landscapes (Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty), alongside national planning policies. In most cases we have not discounted site opportunities within National Landscapes, or where development on a site could affect the setting of National Landscapes. Despite this the issue is likely to require further consideration through the next stages of the plan making processes.
- 4.1.31. Similarly in most instances we have not discounted site opportunities within, or close to, the Heritage Coast but we recognise that the issue is likely to require further consideration through the next stages of the plan making processes.
- 4.1.32. Where relevant we have acknowledged when a site opportunity forms part of the National Landscape or Heritage Coast, or when development on site could affect the setting of landscapes and explained that this issue will need to be explored further.

Irreplaceable habitats

- 4.1.33. We acknowledge national planning policy relating to irreplaceable habitats (including ancient woodland). We have recognised in our assessments that where the whole of a site opportunity is also defined as an irreplaceable habitat it may be challenging to find 'wholly exceptional reasons' that clearly outweigh the loss of the habitat. In these instances for the most part we have discounted the site opportunity from consideration.

4.1.34. In those instances where development of a site opportunity could lead to the deterioration of an irreplaceable habitat we have acknowledged this issue and explained that it will need to be explored further in the next stages of the plan making process to fully assess impacts.

Heritage assets

4.1.35. We acknowledge that development on some site opportunities may have direct, and indirect impacts, on both designated and non-designated heritage assets. Our screening assessment of individual sites takes specific account of:

- Conservation Areas
- Listed Buildings
- Scheduled Monuments
- Historic Parks and Gardens
- Registered Battlefields
- World Heritage Sites

4.1.36. When screening sites we have also recognised the potential for non-designated heritage assets within and around sites.

4.1.37. In most instances and subject to the asset in question, we have not discounted site opportunities within or close to designated heritage assets, or where there is potential for non-designated heritage assets within a site. Despite this we note that issues relating to the impacts of development on assets may require further consideration through the next stages of the plan making processes.

4.1.38. In some instances, for example where a site is designated as a highly significant heritage asset, we have discounted site opportunities on the basis of this issue.

Transport, access and movement

4.1.39. We have considered whether it would be possible to achieve suitable access into a site opportunity, with or without works to the site or over adjoining land. Where we have found that it would not be possible to form a suitable access we have discounted site options from consideration.

4.1.40. We also recognise that development of different scales has impacts on the existing road network, and that location of development and relationship with existing transport infrastructure have impacts on the opportunity to encourage sustainable and active travel. Where appropriate we have made recommendations around the need for further consideration of these issues through 'transport assessments', 'transport statements' or 'travel plans', but have not discounted on the grounds of these issues alone.

Infrastructure

4.1.41. We have not discounted site opportunities because of inadequate provision of infrastructure alone. In those instances where we consider that investments in infrastructure may be needed to support delivery of the development, we have noted this and outlined the types of infrastructure that may be required. We acknowledge that issues around provision of infrastructure will need to be explored further in the next stages of the plan making process through the infrastructure delivery plan and when considering whether there are any site-specific requirements.

Amenity

4.1.42. In this context we have taken amenity to include planning considerations like potential overshadowing, overlooking/loss of privacy, noise and smells. Amenity considerations will vary according to the nature of development and the specific characteristics of the site and its setting. Amenity considerations do not include the protection of purely private interests such as value of neighbouring properties or loss of private rights to light. In most instances we have not discounted sites from consideration because of impacts on amenity, but we acknowledge that potential impacts may need to be more thoroughly explored as work on a site opportunity develops through the subsequent stages in the plan making process. In some instances, we may suggest that further assessments may need to be undertaken (for example noise impact assessments where a site is positioned close to a noise source) to guide subsequent selection processes.

4.1.43. Where we have judged that the nature of development being considered on a site opportunity would be fundamentally incompatible with an existing nearby use, we have discounted the site from further consideration.

Other relevant land use planning issues

4.1.44. We have also considered other planning matters that could affect the delivery of development on a site when assessing site opportunities. These include, but are not necessarily limited to:

- Existing land use – we have considered and taken account of any existing land uses where we think that they could impact on delivery of development
- Local matters – these can include any locally specific issues including specific issues relating to a particular site which we consider to be relevant to the delivery of development

- Tree Preservation Orders – we have noted when existing trees growing on a site are protected by a preservation order, and suggested that where appropriate they should be retained and protected during any development
- Contamination – we have noted where a site may be affected by contamination and indicated further steps to investigate this matter, as well as remediation
- Planning history – we have noted any relevant planning history. Where an earlier planning decision highlights a planning issue that might be equally applicable to development being considered through site opportunities we may discount a site from further consideration.

4.1.45. See Appendix 1 'Generic' for 'Site Opportunities Selection Criterion B'.

4.2. General distribution of growth

4.2.1. At this stage in the plan making process, we have sought to fully explore all reasonable opportunities for meeting locally assessed needs for development in Dorset. Our search has focused on the areas around existing towns and villages where services and facilities are concentrated and also taken account of planning considerations relating to broad areas and specific sites. Our approach to site selection will be refined and finalised during the next stages of the plan making process taking account of the strategic priorities in the Dorset Council Plan and giving an emphasis of providing high quality and affordable homes. This is translated into the Local Plan priority of meeting Dorset's housing needs.

Homes for the settled community

- 4.2.2. We have used the settlement hierarchy, and established settlement boundaries to focus the search for site opportunities.
- 4.2.3. The settlements at Tier 1, Tier 2 and Tier 3 of our settlement hierarchy have been the focus for development opportunities. In broad terms sites within around 1 kilometre of these existing settlements have been considered and therefore site opportunities that are more than 1 kilometre away have been discounted. (See Appendix 2 for 'Site Opportunities Selection Criterion 1' for the settled community). An element of flexibility has also been used in instances where part of a site that is more than 1 kilometre away from a settlement has been retained if other parts of the site are within the rough 1 kilometre area.

Homes for the Traveller community

- 4.2.4. We think that the underlying principles relating to the selection of site opportunities for homes for the settled community are equally applicable when

screening and reviewing Traveller site opportunities that do not relate to existing established sites (including those sites with and without planning permission).

- 4.2.5. We have therefore applied them when assessing Traveller site opportunities that relate to new sites.
- 4.2.6. There are also existing Traveller sites spread across the Dorset Council area. Some of these sites have planning permission, and some do not. Many of these existing sites are in rural areas outside the 1 kilometre search area around Tier 1, Tier 2 and Tier 3 settlements in our settlement hierarchy.
- 4.2.7. The 2022 GTAA provides a breakdown of need according to a baseline of existing sites and yards. In many instances the GTAA shows that there is a relatively modest need connected with existing sites and yards that arises from the natural growth of existing Traveller families. Other need arises from those sites without planning permission. National planning policy relating to Travellers states that as part of the plan making process we should aim to reduce the numbers of unauthorised developments and to increase the numbers of Traveller sites in appropriate locations with planning permission⁹.
- 4.2.8. We have adopted a more flexible approach when selecting site opportunities connected to existing Traveller sites for their expansion, intensification or authorisation (for those sites which do not have planning permission). This approach takes account of national policy relating to Travellers, and the specific needs of existing Traveller families. For these reasons we have not ruled out Traveller site opportunities that relate to the expansion or intensification or authorisation of an existing Traveller site with or without planning permission that are location away from a Tier 1, Tier 2 or Tier 3 settlement. See Appendix 3 for 'Site and Yard Opportunities Selection Criterion 1' for the Traveller community.

Employment land

- 4.2.9. The larger settlements have a key role to play in the delivery of new employment opportunities because of their accessibility to labour, support services and infrastructure.
- 4.2.10. When selecting site opportunities for employment development, the role of existing settlements has been a key consideration. As with the identification of

⁹ [Planning policy for traveller sites](#), December 2024, Paragraph 4 f) and h

opportunities for homes, we have used the settlement hierarchy and existing 'settlement boundaries' to develop selection criteria.

- 4.2.11. While we have sought to focus new development close to the more sustainable settlements, there are existing employment sites across the Dorset Council area in more rural locations. These sites may be located outside the 1-kilometre search area identified around Tier 1, Tier 2 and Tier 3 settlements but they bring about economic activity and provide job opportunities.
- 4.2.12. To allow for the growth of these existing rural sites and businesses we have taken a more flexible approach in selecting site opportunities that are well connected to existing employment premises. Development opportunities in more rural locations that could make provision for the expansion of an established employment site have not been ruled out. See Appendix 4 for 'Site Opportunities Selection Criterion 1' for employment.

5. Selecting site opportunities for new homes

5.1. Selecting sites for the settled community

Site size and yield threshold

- 5.1.1. We have decided to apply a site size and yield threshold when selecting site opportunities for this consultation. The next sections of this paper summarise some of the evidence, and broader policy issues, that we have considered when setting this threshold.

Evidence relating to size, and development yields in Dorset

- 5.1.2. In Dorset we find that many smaller windfall sites (under 10 new homes) are given planning permission because the proposals are consistent with the current settlement boundary-based policy approach in most adopted local plans. We also receive and determine a reasonable number of planning applications for larger sites (of more than 30 homes), including applications based on those local and neighbourhood plan allocations. However, there is a gap in the supply of sites that deliver between 10 and 30 homes. Therefore, we don't see as many sites being developed which deliver smaller scale housing developments in this range.
- 5.1.3. Smaller sites of up to 30 homes are often built by small and medium sized builders, often local to Dorset rather than the larger national firms who tend to build large sites, something that is acknowledged in national policy¹⁰. In accordance with national policy we want to encourage smaller, local builders by enabling these sites to come forward more easily. In addition, smaller sites lead to a more organic approach to the growth of settlements and are often more sympathetic to the character of the settlement at which they're located.
- 5.1.4. There are differences between the impacts of smaller and larger scale residential developments. Typically, larger scale developments are likely to need more significant supporting infrastructure to be delivered alongside new homes – and due to their scale, are more likely to be able to deliver that new infrastructure. Making policy allocations for larger scale residential developments through the Local Plan allows these issues to be thoroughly

¹⁰ National Planning Policy Framework, December 2024, paragraph 73

considered, and where necessary for specific policy requirements to be included.

National planning policy relating to 'small sites'

- 5.1.5. Small and medium sized sites can make an important contribution to meeting the housing needs of an area, are essential for Small and Medium Enterprise (SME) housebuilders to deliver new homes and are often built out relatively quickly. National policy requires Local Planning Authorities to consider measures to states that to promote the development of a good mix of site sizes including the identification of sites and the use of policies to encourage their development.

Flexible Settlements Policy

- 5.1.6. To help support SME builders, ensure a resilient supply of homes and meet the requirements in national planning policy we are proposing to remove the adopted settlement/development boundaries around all Dorset's settlements and to introduce a Flexible Settlements Policy that will apply around the larger and more sustainable towns and villages (those in Tier 1, Tier 2 and Tier 3 of our settlement hierarchy).
- 5.1.7. We have suggested that the Flexible Settlements Policy could enable the development of up to 30 new homes around the edge of the 'continuous built area' of certain settlements. All the usual planning matters such as those relating to protected habitats and species, flood risk, access, landscape and heritage impacts, etc. would still need to be considered.
- 5.1.8. We have suggested that the Flexible Settlements Policy should not be applied to towns and villages within the Green Belt. This is because national policy indicates that the fundamental aim of the Green Belt is to prevent urban sprawl. There is still an opportunity for development in the Green Belt where applicants can show that there are 'very special circumstances' or where they can demonstrate they meet the national policy tests including those that relate to grey belt¹¹.

Site size and yield threshold for opportunity sites

- 5.1.9. We have taken account of the size and types of planning application that we typically receive, national planning policy, our proposals relating to the Flexible

¹¹ National Planning Policy Framework, December 2024, paragraph 155

Settlements Policy and national planning policy relating to Green Belt when setting the site size and yield threshold holds for opportunity sites.

- 5.1.10. To dovetail with the Flexible Settlements Policy we have applied a site size threshold of one hectare or more, or which can deliver 30 homes or more. We anticipate that sites under this threshold will continue to be delivered within urban areas or through the proposed Flexible Settlements Policy. Whilst we are suggesting that the Flexible Settlement Policy will not be applied in the Green Belt, we have applied the same threshold when selecting site opportunities because national policy still allows for development where there are 'very special circumstances' or the exceptions have been satisfied. See Appendix 2 for 'Site Opportunities Selection Criterion 2' for the settled community.

Site opportunities

- 5.1.11. The next sections of this paper set out how we have identified potential site opportunities for the current Local Plan consultation.

Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA)

- 5.1.12. The first potential sites considered were those presented to us as part of the SHLAA. National planning policy states that: 'Strategic policy-making authorities should have a clear understanding of the land available in their area through the preparation of a strategic housing land availability assessment.
- 5.1.13. Planning Practice Guidance also explains that: 'An assessment of land availability identifies a future supply of land which is suitable, available and achievable for housing and economic development uses over the plan period. The assessment is an important source of evidence to inform plan-making and decision-taking, and the identification of a 5-year supply of housing land.'¹²
- 5.1.14. We opened a 'call for sites' in October 2019 to allow people to submit details of sites that may have potential for development over the next 15 years and beyond. We completed and published an initial round of SHLAA assessments (the assessments were undertaken to determine the suitability of sites) and published these in 2020. We published an update in 2021 after assessing more sites. We opened a further call for sites in 2023 and have now also published assessments relating to all the sites which had been submitted to us by July

¹² Planning Practice Guidance, [Housing and economic land availability assessment](#), Paragraph: 001 Reference ID: 3-001-20190722

2023, in the October 2024 update. Assessments for sites submitted after July 2023 will be published in 2025.

- 5.1.15. All of the SHLAA sites that were submitted before 20 December 2024 have been considered as part of the site opportunities selection process undertaken for this consultation.

Officer identified sites

- 5.1.16. When preparing local plans planning practice guidance states¹³ that councils should proactively identify a wide range of sites and broad locations for development. As part of this process it goes on to state that the search should not be restricted to the sites that have been submitted through a land availability assessment (or Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA)). Planning practice guidance encourages councils to undertake an active search for sites that might assist in meeting an area's need for development. For this reason alongside SHLAA sites which have been submitted to us, we have also identified other sites which we considered might be suitable for the development of new homes.
- 5.1.17. These land parcels were typically identified where well related to either a Tier 1, Tier 2 or Tier 3 settlement and in those instances where we considered that they could form a suitable extension to the existing settlement. At this stage in the process we don't have clarification on their availability, but we are anticipating that their inclusion in the consultation will lead to further discussions, engagement and clarification on key issues which can feed into the next stages of preparing the local plan. We are expecting that where a site is not available for development that the landowner will notify us through the consultation so that we can take this into consideration.

Other

- 5.1.18. We have also sought to identify other potentially suitable site opportunities by considering other sources of information. These other sources include the land availability assessment conducted in the preparation of neighbourhood plans, the Brownfield Land Registers and recent planning applications.
- 5.1.19. Neighbourhood Planning groups often conduct their own independent 'call for sites'. They typically use different assessment criteria when considering

¹³ Planning practice guidance, [Housing and economic land availability](#), Paragraph: 010 Reference ID: 3-010-20190722

suitability, but these parallel processes often allow different site opportunities to be identified and considered that could add to the mix of opportunities.

5.1.20. In Dorset, the Brownfield Land Register is linked to the SHLAA and therefore site identification largely overlaps with this process.

5.1.21. Another source of potential sites is those planning applications that have been refused or withdrawn from consideration. When considering sites where planning permission has been refused, we have carefully considered the refusal reasons to determine whether they might be equally relevant to the development being considered and to explore the opportunities to overcome any issues that they raise.

Exclusions

5.1.22. When completing our assessments of site opportunities we have also discounted certain sites from further consideration. The next section explains why we have discounted certain sites, and the reason behind these decisions.

Sites with planning permission

5.1.23. In order to avoid duplication when reviewing different sources of housing land supply, sites with planning permission have been discounted from consideration as part of the process of selecting site opportunities. We have separately recorded those sites with planning permission and taken account of the homes that they will deliver when preparing details of the housing land supply. To draw attention to these sites, and the supply of homes from this source, we have identified major planning applications on the maps presented in the consultation material.

Allocated sites from adopted Local Plans

5.1.24. We expect that undeveloped sites, that are also subject to a policy allocation in an adopted local plan, will be developed in the period leading up to the adoption of the Dorset Council Local Plan. Where this is not the case, we are likely to carry forward the site as policy allocations in the new plan.

5.1.25. Based on these assumptions and to focus resources we have discounted site opportunities that overlap with allocated sites that are defined in existing adopted local or neighbourhood plans. We consider that these sites will deliver homes and have referenced them in our assessment of housing land supply. For the purposes of the Sustainability Appraisal these sites are considered reasonable alternatives and have been assessed.

- 5.1.26. There is some overlap between several site opportunities that relate to sites in emerging neighbourhood plans that have not yet been made. It is possible that some of these sites which currently meet our criteria for selection might be discounted from consideration at a later date when we have more certainty around their delivery through the neighbourhood plan process. However, it may be that sites discounted through the neighbourhood plan process are needed to contribute to meeting the strategic needs of Dorset. See Appendix 2 for 'Site Opportunities Selection Criterion 3' for the settled community.

5.2. Selecting sites for the Traveller community

Site size and yield threshold

- 5.2.1. The next section of this paper sets out the criteria which have been applied when selecting Traveller site opportunities for this consultation.

Approach

- 5.2.2. There is no specific direction on pitch limits for Travellers to guide the site size and yield threshold for the local plan. '[Designing Gypsy and Traveller Sites Good Practice Guide](#)' (2008) reflects this, but provides a recommendation at paragraph 4.7 that:

'... experience of site managers and residents alike suggest that a maximum of 15 pitches is conducive to providing a comfortable environment which is easy to manage. However, smaller sites of 3-4 pitches can also be successful, particularly where designed for one extended family.'

- 5.2.3. We want to encourage high quality residential development across Dorset for both settled and Traveller communities. We recognise that the effective management of Traveller sites is an important consideration, and that larger Traveller sites may be more challenging to effectively manage.
- 5.2.4. Taking account of Dorset's need for pitches and plots, alongside the good practice guidance, for the most part we have applied a 10-pitch cap on the estimated yields from sites opportunities. There are instances where a larger land area for the site opportunity has been identified that could in theory deliver more pitches or plots, but the estimated yield has been limited to the 10-pitch cap. Exceptionally we have also considered larger Traveller site opportunities, with projected yields that exceed 10 pitches where they relate to the authorisation of an existing site. Taking account of the overall need for pitches

and plots, and the specific needs related to individual sites¹⁴, we have not imposed any minimum size limit on Traveller site opportunities presented in the consultation.

- 5.2.5. We have assessed yields from Traveller site opportunities by defining a net developable area (i.e. the area where new homes could be delivered) for each site. This was determined after considering any significant planning issues as outlined earlier in this paper, that could limit or restrict development. We have assumed that pitches for Gypsies and Travellers would need to accommodate: i) space for a static caravan, ii) space for a touring caravan, iii) car parking for at least two cars, iv) amenity space, and v) a day room. We used the indicative dimensions presented in Designing Gypsy and Traveller Sites Good Practice Guide¹⁵ to estimate the area of land needed to deliver these key features and arrived at an area of between 0.0390 ha and 0.0575 ha. For the purposes of the consultation we have assumed that a pitch for Gypsies and Travellers could be delivered on 0.05 ha.
- 5.2.6. We recognise that the accommodation requirements of Travelling Showpeople differ from those of Gypsies and Travellers. We have not found any specific guidance to direct our approach for Travelling Showpeople. Instead we have applied a pragmatic approach of using yields from existing Travelling Showpeople sites to estimate potential from site opportunities.

Traveller land availability assessment - Site opportunities

- 5.2.7. We have presented our Traveller land availability assessment online. It includes those sites submitted for consideration through 'call for sites', all existing Traveller sites¹⁵ with planning permission, known Traveller sites which are being used without planning permission and sites which we have identified as potentially suitable for Travellers.
- 5.2.8. The Traveller sites presented in the land availability assessment are a mixture of occupied and unoccupied land with and without planning permission. The ownership of the land also varies and includes council owned land.

¹⁴ The 2022 GTAA shows a generally 'modest' need for small numbers of pitches and plots arising from the growth of existing Traveller families, and accommodation of those families in appropriate accommodation.

¹⁵ The 2022 GTAA includes a site and yard list of all existing sites which was used when compiling the Traveller land availability assessment.

- 5.2.9. Each of the Traveller sites presented in the land availability assessment has a site reference which we have also used in the Local Plan site opportunities consultation.
- 5.2.10. The exclusions relating to land with planning permission, and existing sites, which were applied when selecting site opportunities for the settled community, have not been applied to Traveller site opportunity selection. This is because there are fewer planning permissions relating to Traveller sites, and because we wanted to fully explore the opportunities to provide pitches and plots around and within existing Traveller sites.

6. Selecting site opportunities for new employment land

6.1. Selecting sites for employment land

- 6.1.1. We have undertaken an assessment of land availability for economic development uses. The Dorset Council Employment Land Review (ELR) and the Dorset Employment Land Study (ELS) are presented online and have been used in the selection of opportunities for new employment land.
- 6.1.2. Taking the existing assessments as a starting point, a further process was used in the identification of opportunities for new employment land for the current consultation. In addition to the planning concerns applied to all development opportunities (set out in section 5 of this background paper), the following considerations and criteria were used to select sites.

Site size

- 6.1.3. Sites of a range of different sizes are important in the delivery of economic development and accordingly the Dorset Council ELR has assessed sites of 0.25ha and above.
- 6.1.4. However, the purpose of the site selection exercise described in this background paper is to identify new employment opportunities that might be suitable for allocation in the Dorset Council Local Plan. While small sites make an important contribution to the employment land supply, we have sought to identify strategic opportunities to meet anticipated needs. In doing so we have applied a minimum site size threshold.
- 6.1.5. There are no mandated sizes prescribed nationally for employment site allocation. For consistency with the housing site selection process a size threshold of 1 hectare was chosen. Sites of 1 hectare are also generally considered by the planning system to be 'major development' when it comes to non-residential uses¹⁶.
- 6.1.6. Larger sites can accommodate a range of uses, supporting the clustering of business which can enhance productivity and collaboration. They are more cost-effective to service with infrastructure and are more likely to attract

¹⁶ Other than for the specific purposes of paragraphs 190 and 191 of the National Planning Policy Framework

investment. Small sites may still be viable but are likely to be more suited to local or niche uses.

- 6.1.7. Under our proposed policy approach, employment development on smaller sites could continue to be delivered at the Tier1, Tier2 and Tier3 settlements detailed in our settlement hierarchy. We are also suggesting that employment development away from these locations be enabled where the need is justified, and normal planning considerations have been adequately addressed.
- 6.1.8. The approach of limiting the identification of employment opportunity land to the larger (1ha) sites, alongside the use of generic policies to support the delivery of other appropriate development will ensure a flexible and ready supply of employment sites. See Appendix 4 for 'Site Opportunities Selection Criterion 2' for the employment land.

Site opportunities

- 6.1.9. At this stage of plan preparation, as further work is needed on the projection figures, we have not limited the proposed site opportunities to align with assessments of need. Instead, we have presented a range of all realistic potential opportunity sites so that when demand figures are finalised at the next stage of plan production, provision can be made in the most appropriate locations.
- 6.1.10. Employment sites have been identified from a number of sources:

Call for sites

- 6.1.11. We have carried out a 'call for sites' which allowed people to submit locations they consider have potential for development over the period of the new Local Plan and beyond.
- 6.1.12. Sites submitted by July 2023 have been assessed and published in the ELR. Assessments for sites submitted after July 2023 will be published in a future update. However, sites submitted before the 20 December 2024 have still been considered as part of this consultation.

Officer identified sites

- 6.1.13. Planning Practice Guidance highlights that it is important that plan-makers do not simply rely on sites they have been informed about. In addition to the sites submitted to the "call for sites", officers have identified potential development opportunities from other sources. The availability of these sites may currently be unknown but their identification could initiate future discussions and engagement.

Existing employment sites

- 6.1.14. The ELR identifies and assesses a number of existing employment sites. While some of these sites may have capacity to deliver additional employment uses through infilling, vacant plots or intensification such development opportunities can be limited. Existing employment sites have generally been discounted from the employment site selection process unless the development opportunity they present is significant either in terms of size or potential to contribute to meeting identified strategic priorities.
- 6.1.15. Existing employment sites will continue to make an important contribution to meeting the economic needs of the area. Our suggested approach to retain, protect and support employment uses on such sites is presented through the consultation.

Exclusions

Allocated sites from Local Plans

- 6.1.16. The adopted local plans in the Dorset Council area contain a number of employment allocations, some of which are not yet developed. As existing allocations, we expect that most of these sites will contribute to future supply, and they will be reallocated in the new Local Plan.
- 6.1.17. The focus of this consultation is on the identification of new development opportunities, so the adopted Local Plan allocations have been discounted from the process.
- 6.1.18. Going forward, should barriers to the development of existing employment allocations be identified we will work to understand and overcome them. Where this is not possible and there is no reasonable prospect of a site being developed for employment, we may decide to 'release' them for consideration as opportunities for other uses or revoke the allocation in its entirety

Sites identified as opportunity for residential development

- 6.1.19. In order to avoid duplication, development options investigated as potential residential opportunities were not considered for employment use through the site selection process.
- 6.1.20. We are suggesting through this consultation that larger housing sites could provide some employment land in addition to new homes. If appropriate, opportunities for employment provision as part of 'mixed use' development may be proposed at the next stage of the plan making process. See Appendix 4 for 'Site Opportunities Selection Criterion 3' for the employment land.

Appendix 1 – Generic selection criteria applied when considering all site opportunities

Generic

Site Opportunities Selection Criterion A –

Significant planning considerations:

- Discounted from further assessment - Where a significant proportion of a site's area is affected by moderate and/or high risks from fluvial or coastal flood risks (as presented in Flood Risk Zones 2 and 3), or where this issues is likely to frustrate delivery (e.g. not likely to be possible to form a safe or suitable access to the site)
- Discounted from further assessment - Where a significant proportion of the site's area is likely to be affected by coastal change as identified in Shoreline Management Plan (SMP) (SMP 15 and 16) Purbeck Local Plan CCMA or National Coastal Erosion Risk Mapping 2 (NCERM2), or where this issues is likely to frustrate delivery (e.g. not likely to be possible to form a safe or suitable access to the site)
- Discounted from further assessment – Where:
 - a significant proportion of the site's area is also defined as a habitat site, or
 - a significant proportion of the site's area also forms part of an area where development is likely adversely affect a habitat sites integrity and mitigation is unlikely to be effective (e.g. residential opportunities in the 400 metre area around heathland SAC or SPA sites); or
 - a significant proportion of the site's area is also defined as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)

Generic

Site Opportunities Selection Criterion B –

Other planning considerations:

- Included for further assessment -
 - a) Site opportunities that could lead to development in ‘areas’ around habitat sites
 - b) Site opportunities that could lead to development in the Green Belt
 - c) Site opportunities that could lead to development in or around designated landscapes (National Landscape and Heritage Coast)
 - d) Site opportunities where development could lead to the deterioration of irreplaceable habitats
 - e) Site opportunities that could lead to development near, or containing, heritage assets where further assessment is needed to assess the nature of harm
 - f) Site opportunities where development could give rise to transport, access and movement issues
 - g) Site opportunities where development could give rise to infrastructure issues
 - h) Site opportunities where development could give rise to amenity issues
 - i) Site opportunities affected by other planning considerations (including existing land use, ‘local matters’, Tree Preservation Orders, contaminated land and planning history)
- Discounted from further assessment:
 - j) Site opportunities where development is likely to lead to the loss of irreplaceable habitats
 - k) Site opportunities where development is likely to result in total loss or substantial harm to the most important heritage assets or their setting
 - l) Site opportunities where development would be fundamentally incompatible with an existing neighbouring use
 - m) Site opportunities where considerations, either alone or in combination, are likely to significantly frustrate delivery

Appendix 2 – Selection criteria for homes for the settled community

Homes for the Settled Community

Site Opportunities Selection Criterion 1:

Relationship with Tier 1, Tier 2 or Tier 3 settlements -

- Included for further assessment: Site opportunities within 1 kilometre of a Tier 1, Tier 2 or Tier 3 settlement boundary
- Discounted from further assessment: Site opportunities outside 1 kilometre of a Tier 1, Tier 2 or Tier 3 settlement boundary

Homes for the Settled Community

Site Opportunities Selection Criterion 3:

Allocations made through an existing adopted local plan -

- Discounted from further assessment: sites with planning permission for development with homes, area or sites which have already been allocated for delivery of homes in an existing development plan document

Homes for the Settled Community

Site Opportunities Selection Criterion 2:

Size thresholds -

- Included for further assessment: sites of one hectare or more, or which sites capable of delivering 30 homes or more
- Discounted from further assessment: sites of less than one hectare, or those which will deliver fewer than 30 homes

Appendix 3 – Selection criteria for homes for the Traveller community

Homes for the Traveller Community

Site and Yard Opportunities Selection Criterion 1:

New sites and yards -

- Included for further assessment: Site opportunities within 1 kilometre of a Tier 1, Tier 2 or Tier 3 settlement boundary
- Discounted from further assessment: Site opportunities outside 1 kilometre of a Tier 1, Tier 2 or Tier 3 settlement boundary

Existing sites and yards -

- Included for further assessment: site opportunities that relate to the expansion or intensification or authorisation of an existing Traveller site or Travelling Showpeople yard with or without planning permission

Appendix 4 – Selection criteria for employment land

Employment

Site Opportunities Selection Criterion 1:

New sites -

- Included for further assessment: Site opportunities within 1 kilometre of a Tier 1, Tier 2 or Tier 3 settlement boundary
- Discounted from further assessment: Site opportunities outside 1 kilometre of a Tier 1, Tier 2 or Tier 3 settlement boundary

Existing sites expansion -

- Included for further assessment: site opportunities outside 1 kilometre of a Tier 1, Tier 2 or Tier 3 settlement boundary that are well related to existing employment sites

Employment

Site Opportunities Selection Criterion 3:

Discounted from further assessment -

- Allocations made through an existing adopted local plan: sites which have already been allocated for employment uses in an existing local plan document
- Sites identified as opportunity for residential development: sites investigated as potential residential opportunities were not considered for employment use

Employment

Site Opportunities Selection Criterion 2:

Size thresholds -

- Included for further assessment: sites of one hectare or more
- Discounted from further assessment: sites of less than one hectare