



Swanage Town Council - Consultation responses - Local Plan Options 2025, and draft Local Transport Plan 2026-2041

From Nicola Clark [redacted]
 Date Tue 2025-11-25 13:59
 To Planning Policy Consult <planningpolicyconsult@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk>
 Cc Martin Ayres [redacted] Terry Sneller [redacted] Hilary Jordan [redacted] Sara Hardy [redacted]

2 attachments (246 KB)

Swanage Town Council-Response-Dorset Council Local Plan Options Consultation 2025.pdf; Swanage Town Council-Response-Draft Local Transport Plan 2026-41 Consultation.pdf;

Some people who received this message don't often get email from [redacted] [Learn why this is important](#)

Caution - Attachments:
 Do not open attachments in this email unless you are sure the email is genuine (please see the [intranet](#) for more guidance).

Caution - External links:
 Do not click on links in this email unless you are sure the email is genuine (please see the [intranet](#) for more guidance).

Dear Planning Policy Team

Thank you for granting the Town Council an extension to respond to the above consultations. Following the Council's Extraordinary Meeting yesterday evening to consider its draft responses, the final approved documents are attached for your attention.

Kind regards.

Niki Clark
Planning and Community Engagement Manager
Swanage Town Council



Website: www.swanage.gov.uk
 Tourism Website: <https://www.visit-dorset.com/swanage/>
 Facebook Page

This e-mail and any files transmitted with it are confidential and intended solely for the use of the individual or entity to whom they are addressed. If you have received this e-mail in error please notify the originator of the message. Any views expressed in this message are those of the individual sender, except where the sender specifies and with authority, states them to be the views of Swanage Town Council.



Tel: [REDACTED] Website: www.swanage.gov.uk



IN COLLABORATION WITH SLCC, NALC, OVW, COUNTY ASSOCIATIONS



Dorset Council Local Plan Options Consultation 2025

Swanage Town Council supports the preparation of a Dorset Local Plan but emphasises that it must be realistic and deliverable.

The government’s target for Dorset of 3,246 dwellings per annum (over 50,000 homes during the 17-year Local Plan period) is unrealistic and undeliverable. Historic data shows Dorset’s housing delivery averages around 1,300 homes per year, reflecting what the market can sustainably build and sell. Even with an increase in affordable housing, delivery would remain well below government targets.

A Plan based on unachievable housing numbers risks failing the Housing Delivery Test, leading to developer-led planning and the loss of local control.

The Plan must be appropriate to Dorset communities’ housing needs, whilst also respecting our environment and heritage.

The Plan should therefore be based on local evidence, focusing on sustainable, achievable growth, and prioritising community-led social and affordable housing to meet genuine local need.

The Town Council is concerned that no engagement was undertaken with local Parish and Town Councils to help inform or shape the proposals for the draft Plan.

2.2 Strategic Priorities

2.2.1 Provide affordable and high-quality homes

The Plan sets no target for how many new homes will be affordable. Clear, area-specific targets should be established, and some development sites could be dedicated entirely to community-led affordable housing.

Rigorous affordable housing targets are essential and are key to attracting and retaining young families, thereby helping to protect the viability of local schools.

2.2.5 Responding to the climate and nature emergency

It is unclear how the proposed Plan can ‘halt nature’s decline’ in Swanage while allocating sizeable greenfield sites for development within an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty/National Landscape. This policy appears contradictory.

3.2 Strategy for Dorset

3.2.2. The Town Council strongly disagrees with the statement that the influence of Bournemouth and Poole is weaker in areas such as Blandford and Swanage. Many residents rely on Bournemouth and Poole for employment opportunities, major hospitals, and larger shopping centres. After age 16, young people depend on Bournemouth, Poole, and Weymouth for further and higher education, apprenticeships, and jobs that are not available locally in Purbeck.

3.3.4 Traffic congestion on the A351 is already a major issue, particularly in the summer months. With no commuter rail services, public transport links between Swanage/Purbeck and the rest of Dorset are limited. The Sandbanks Ferry is often unreliable and unaffordable for many residents, including our young people, which also creates recruitment difficulties for local employers.

The Town Council is particularly concerned about the Sandbanks Ferry Toll Application which has recently been approved, and which will significantly increase tolls. This is likely to adversely impact the local community and economy, and the environment, as it is anticipated to increase traffic on the A351/A35 due to more people opting to drive round, rather than use the ferry. The A351 is already one of the busiest roads in Dorset.

Given these challenges, Swanage needs more local services and employment opportunities due to poor public transport connectivity. The Plan should clarify whether it aims to improve public transport or to expand local employment opportunities within Purbeck.

3.7 Infrastructure Delivery

The Town Council is concerned about whether future housing development can be supported by adequate public services.

GP surgeries and health services in Swanage are already overstretched, and no new provision is proposed. NHS dentistry, including emergency services, is in crisis nationally, and Swanage urgently requires improved or additional dental services. The town also needs enhanced Dorset Police services and coverage.

The local medical practice estimates that an additional 1,000 patients could require extra GP sessions, but recruitment of GPs and key staff is constrained by the lack of affordable housing in Purbeck. Wessex Water has confirmed that the existing sewage treatment plant is operating at capacity and would require improvements, with upgrades not planned until 2030.

There are further concerns about sewage discharge into Swanage Bay during heavy rainfall, which risks harming water quality and could negatively affect the town's Blue Flag and Seaside Award, especially if housing numbers increase as proposed.

4.2 Local Housing Need and Delivery

4.2.2 Local Housing Needs Assessment

The recent Housing Needs Assessment commissioned by the Swanage Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group shows that Swanage does not need additional market-led housing but urgently requires community-led, genuinely affordable and social housing for local residents.

The Plan should include an affordable and social housing allocation policy prioritising local people. The Local Needs Housing Assessment (HNA) is due to be refreshed before the Plan's submission. What methodology will the new HNA use, and how will it affect allocations for social and affordable housing in Swanage? Local housing should be driven by local need.

4.4 Meeting Housing Needs of Specific Groups

4.4.4 Viability Assessments – 'We will be seeking to secure the maximum viable number of affordable homes on market-led housing sites where 10 or more homes are proposed. The minimum number of new affordable homes per site will be informed by an assessment of development viability'.

The Town Council has serious concerns regarding the use of Viability Assessments to determine affordable housing provision. Previous developments in Swanage have seen affordable homes reduced or removed due to 'viability,' demonstrating that this method is unlikely to deliver sufficient affordable housing in the town. If the 300+ new homes planned for Swanage are predominantly market-led, the town will remain in the same position regarding the shortage of truly affordable and social housing, as seen with the outline application for the former Harrow House site and the approved application for the former St Mary's RC Primary School site. Market-led housing in Swanage is priced beyond the reach of local residents.

Dorset Council needs stronger policies to ensure developers deliver on commitments to community-led housing, including truly affordable and social homes, particularly alongside commercial developments. Where necessary, enforcement measures should be applied to guarantee delivery.

5. Flexible Settlements Policy

5.2 Swanage Town Council strongly opposes Dorset Council’s proposal to remove settlement boundaries under a so-called ‘flexible settlements policy.’ The suggested safeguards, limiting developments to 30 houses and excluding communities with up-to-date Neighbourhood Plans which provide for development, are insufficient. Settlement boundaries have long protected communities from sprawl, and their removal would make Swanage more vulnerable to speculative development.

Swanage lies entirely within the National Landscape and contains Special Sites of Scientific Interest. Flexible boundaries would put sensitive habitats at risk, harm the town’s natural appeal, and could negatively impact tourism and the local economy. This approach is not appropriate for Swanage and could effectively ‘open the floodgates’ to developers.

The Council wishes to see these boundaries continue in Swanage.

If Dorset Council were to fail the Housing Delivery Test and lose local control under the government’s ‘presumption in favour of sustainable development,’ removing settlement boundaries could lead to developer-led growth. This would allow developers to select sites across Dorset without regard for impacts on local communities, the environment, or heritage.

5.8. Approach to countryside development and urban intensification

5.8.2 ‘There may however be exceptional circumstances where development in the countryside could be supported.’

Swanage urgently needs community-led, affordable and social housing, and consideration should be given to allowing affordable-housing-only sites within these flexible boundaries.

6. Employment Strategy

6.5 Mixed use development

Mixed-use proposals should not be determined solely by the size of the development. Smaller developments may also need to be mixed depending on local requirements, particularly in rural towns and larger villages. In Swanage, Commercial Road provides an example, and the former Town Council Depot, and the Kings Court Business Centre, in Kings Road West could also be developed as mixed-use sites.

Office space is sadly lacking in Swanage – more, affordable spaces are needed for small businesses and could also be provided through this type of development.

6.6. Protecting employment sites

The Town Council wishes to retain and protect all existing employment sites in Swanage to safeguard current and future local jobs. It strongly opposes any policy allowing change of use to non-employment purposes.

7. Town centre development

7.2 Managing town centre development

The Town Council agrees with this approach. Swanage ‘High Street’/town centre has a thriving local retail sector, and careful management will be needed to protect and support these businesses.

However, concerns have been raised that the existing offering in the town centre by the larger food stores is inadequate and expensive for local people (there are pockets of deprivation in the town). The impact of not providing an adequate shopping experience in the town is that a sizeable number of local residents regularly drive out of town to shop, therefore driving the local economy down, and adding to the traffic and environmental issues affecting the already congested A351. This would be exacerbated by the residents of the proposed new homes in the planned settlement extension.

Appendix A: Opportunity sites for housing – Pages 405 to 417

Swanage

Swanage Town Council wishes to express its disappointment and concern regarding the lack of engagement with local Town and Parish Councils prior to the launch of this consultation. Local knowledge and early dialogue would have helped shape the plan more effectively and would likely have prevented the inclusion of several inappropriate potential development sites, some of which have since been withdrawn from the consultation by Dorset Council (DC).

In Swanage, the Town Council is particularly concerned that an area of designated Village Green land (LA/SWAN/005) has been included as a potential opportunity site. In addition, Swanage Farm (land north of Washpond Lane and west of Darkie Lane, LA/SWAN/018) has now been removed from consideration by DC following representation from the landowner, who had not been consulted prior to its inclusion.

As DC is aware, community engagement on the proposals for the Swanage Neighbourhood Plan was being undertaken at the same time as DC's Local Plan Options (LPO) and Local Transport Plan (LTP) consultations. DC was unable to share details of the Swanage development site options prior to the launch of the LPO consultation.

Consequently, the Swanage Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group agreed not to consult on the potential development sites it had identified at that stage, to avoid public confusion. The Steering Group considers it essential to first review feedback from the LPO consultation before determining next steps and formulating its own approach to site selection.

Given this process, the following comments on specific sites are in the format of outline remarks only because the Town Council is intending to make site allocations for Swanage through the Neighbourhood Plan. Therefore, at this stage it cannot pre-judge the allocations process that will be followed by the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group.

LA/SWAN/002 & 007 - Land north and west of Prospect Allotments

It is noted that this site was previously included, and subsequently withdrawn, from the 2021 Local Plan consultation. Clarification is requested on what has changed and the reasons for its reinstatement in the current consultation.

This is a greenfield site in open countryside, outside of the settlement boundary, situated within the National Landscape and close to a Special Site of Scientific Interest, National Trust land, and the Purbeck Heaths National Nature Reserve. Public rights of way also cross the site.

Reference is made to Paragraph 190 of the National Planning Policy Framework regarding major development in sensitive designated landscapes. The policy states that permission should be refused for major development within National Parks, the Broads, and other national landscapes unless exceptional circumstances exist and the proposal is demonstrably in the public interest. The threshold for demonstrating 'exceptional circumstances' is intentionally high, requiring significantly compelling justification due to the high level of protection afforded to these landscapes.

Further concerns are held that land adjacent to this proposed site is the subject of a 'live' planning application for a new Suitable Area of Natural Greenspace (SANG) in relation to the proposed development at Harrow House: [Planning application: P/FUL/2024/03005](#)

LA/SWAN/005 - Land north of High Street

The Town Council strongly objects to the housing development proposed on land north of High Street. This land forms part of the Herston Village Green, which was formally registered by Dorset County Council in July 2017. As a registered Village Green, it protects the rights of the local community to use the land for lawful pastimes and recreational activities.

Advice received from the Open Spaces Society confirms that Village Greens are protected from encroachment and development under Section 12 of the Inclosure Act 1857 and Section 29 of the Commons Act 1876. The only development permitted on a Village Green is that which enhances its use for sports and pastimes. On this basis, the Society advised that DC would be ill-advised to accept the landowner's proposal for housing on this site, and that doing so could call into question the soundness of the Local Plan.

LA/SWAN/015 – Land to the west of Cauldron Barn Park

The Town Council has concerns regarding the housing development proposed on land to the west of Cauldron Barn Park. This is a greenfield site in open countryside, outside of the settlement boundary, situated within the National Landscape and close to a Special Site of Scientific Interest, National Trust land, and the Purbeck Heaths National Nature Reserve.

Reference is made to Paragraph 190 of the National Planning Policy Framework regarding major development in sensitive designated landscapes. The policy states that permission should be refused for major development within National Parks, the Broads, and other national landscapes unless exceptional circumstances exist and the proposal is demonstrably in the public interest. The threshold for demonstrating 'exceptional circumstances' is intentionally high, requiring significantly compelling justification due to the high level of protection afforded to these landscapes.

Further concerns are held regarding the lack of access to this land, and whether the landowner has been consulted.

LA/SWAN/016 - Purbeck View School

The Town Council recognises the development potential of this site for up to 50 residential dwellings. Any allocation or future application should be supported by a robust assessment of key planning considerations, including:

- Design and layout – high-quality design, appropriate density, respecting local character

- Access and highways – safe and suitable access for all users, transport assessment addressing traffic impacts
- Genuinely affordable housing – prioritising local need (community-led)
- Environmental and amenity impacts
- Infrastructure capacity

LA/SWAN/017 - Harrow House

There is currently an outline planning application with DC for up to 93 dwellings on this site, and the Town Council is aware that a revised application for up to 83 dwellings has recently been submitted, although this has not yet been considered. However, the LPO consultation states that the site has potential for 50 new dwellings. Clarification is requested on how this reduced figure has been calculated, and on what basis it differs from the capacities proposed in the live planning application.

The Council's detailed comments on this site and the associated planning application can be found on the planning portal: [Planning application: P/OUT/2024/03253](#)

The Council has raised a number of fundamental objections to the proposed development, particularly the lack, or complete absence, of genuinely affordable housing, and has therefore strongly recommended refusal of the application in its formal representation.

LA/SWAN/018 – Swanage Farm – land north of Washpond Lane and west of Darkie Lane

Withdrawn from consultation by DC. (It was noted that this land is actually east of Darkie Lane – the land to the west forms part of a SANG)

Potential/additional sites for consideration/inclusion by Dorset Council

Land at Washpond Lane/Ulwell Road

Swanage Community Land Trust is in the process of acquiring this site from DC and intends to submit a planning application for a social housing scheme providing approximately 8-10 homes for local people.

Former Swanage Town Council Depot, and adjoining Kings Court Business Centre, Kings Road West (DC owned sites)

These sites present an opportunity for a mixed development incorporating community-led housing alongside commercial units. This aligns with Swanage Local Plan Policy KCD: Kings Court Depot Site.

As noted in section 6.5 above, there is a notable shortage of office and workspace provision for small businesses in Swanage.

Redevelopment of this site could help meet that need by delivering flexible commercial space as part of a well-designed mixed-use scheme.

Swanage Town Council
24th November 2025
