

Weymouth's Future; Affordable Homes Site Options

Summary

This paper is developed as part of the preparation for a Weymouth Neighbourhood Plan.

Principal concerns in Weymouth are the need for good local employment and affordable homes. Analysis shows that the Dorset Local Plan will not meet Weymouth's specific affordable homes needs with a shortfall of, best case, 646 homes and, worst case, 2230 homes. The Weymouth Neighbourhood Plan is exploring ways to address this shortfall. The Site Assessment has been independently revisited and from this a number of sites have been identified which should help increase the number of Affordable Homes planned. This includes sites outside the Defined Developed Boundary which would not normally be considered but given the high Housing Need in Weymouth these sites can be considered as Exception sites with a higher proportion (up to 100%) of Affordable Homes, this has the potential to reduce the best-case shortfall to 215 homes.

In September/October 2022 the public will be invited to comment on Options for developing sites in Weymouth to meet these needs. These will be refined, and probably reduced in number as a result of landowner decisions and viability and will form part of the formal consultation to approve the Weymouth Neighbourhood Plan in first quarter 2024.

This paper is to be approved by the Weymouth Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group on 15th Aug 2022, endorsed by the Weymouth Town Council Planning Committee on 16th Aug 2022, and Full Council on 7th Sept 2022.

It is with some reluctance that we are considering Exception Sites as the only way that the Neighbourhood Plan can address the Affordable Homes need.

Parallel discussions have been requested with Dorset Council on addressing this shortfall in Affordable Homes in Weymouth.



Background

Weymouth Neighbourhood Plan (WNP) group was set up by Weymouth Town Council to develop the Neighbourhood Plan. A Steering Group SG has been formed comprising residents and councillors and subsidiary groups have been established to progress themes within the WNP.

The Homes Theme Group, comprising SG members, a representative from Dorset Council, Community Land Trust, Homeless Charities, Housing Associations and Housing Developers, councillors and residents.

The process for allocation is in accordance with the process set out in the NPPF and the guidance provided by Locality for Neighbourhood Plan Groups.

This paper is produced by the Homes TG. The process and progress has been reported to the SG and this paper will be presented for endorsement by the SG on 15th Aug. It will then be presented to the Planning & Licensing Committee on 17th Aug and Full Council on 7th Sept for endorsement.

The SG produced 14 Aims for the WNP of particular relevance are those for the Homes Theme:

Aim 4. Provide a broad mix of homes, which align with housing need and give priority to the needs of current and future residents and all parts of the community, with emphasis on social and affordable homes that reflect the character and appearance of the area.

Aim 5. Support and encourage the reuse of brownfield sites as well as community-led, self-build and innovative development schemes and tenancies as ways of achieving sustainable developments that are affordable for local residents.

The Need

From the initial survey the Weymouth Neighbourhood Plan has identified a desire for more local jobs and more affordable homes.

As a result, the Steering Group commissioned a Housing Needs Analysis (HNA) for the Weymouth Area – this report shows a chronic need for affordable homes in Weymouth with a number between 1,775 and 2,649 required over the period 2021 to 2038. This need is driven by the high prices and rents and the low incomes for many people in Weymouth.

	Affordable Home Tenures					
Households on	For Sale	Affordable Rent	Social Rent			
Average Income £39,929	Unaffordable	Affordable	Affordable			
2 Lower Quartile Incomes £29,490	Unaffordable	Affordable	Affordable			
1 Lower Quartile Income £14,745	Unaffordable	Unaffordable	Unaffordable			

Further the HNA identified the tenure and size of homes needed for Weymouth as follows:

- Tenure for Affordable Homes (AH) 29% Ownership (ie for Sale) and 71% Rented. There are many types of AH Ownership schemes including First Homes, Discounted Market Sale, Shared Ownership, and two types of AH for rent; Social Rent or Affordable Rent.
- The greatest future demand is for 3-bed and 2 bed, 48% and 35% respectively, with 1-bed at 7%, 4-bed at 9% and 5 or more beds at 0.5%

Dorset Council Plan 2020-2024

The need for Affordable Homes is recognised in the Dorset Council Plan which lists as one of its 6 priorities 'Suitable Housing: we will work with registered providers, community land trusts and local housing partners to deliver affordable, suitable and decent housing.'



The Plan then provides a list of what it will do to provide suitable housing for its residents:

- Maximise the use of council assets to develop affordable and sustainable housing, including the creation of more social rented housing
- Bring long-term empty properties back into use
- Support people to access the right accommodation
- Promote energy efficiency and green initiatives within the housing sector
- Implement a new single Dorset Council housing register
- Adopt a new Dorset Council Local Plan by 2024

On page 9 the Plan states: 'Greatest demand for social rented housing is in West Dorset Weymouth and Portland area.'

Dorset Local Plan

The new draft Dorset Local Plan identifies an allocation of 3,225 homes to be built in Weymouth over the period 2021-2038. The Local Plan requires that 35%¹ of these should be Affordable Homes on sites of 10 units or more, or 5 on rural sites such as in designated Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB's) - this would only deliver 1,129. This shortfall led the Steering Group to issue a Call for Sites that might be suitable for local businesses and affordable homes. At the same time, we are asking residents to identify the Local Greenspaces they value – this process is ongoing. Sadly, looking back at Annual Monitoring Reports, only 13% of new homes have been Affordable Homes so the shortfall in Affordable Homes is increasing – if this figure is maintained this would result in only 419 Affordable Homes.

Dorset Council and its predecessor Weymouth & Portland Borough Council conducted Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessments and more recently Dorset Council issued a Call for Sites. This resulted in one additional Strategic Allocations area within Weymouth being proposed in the Local Plan. Ie Land South of Wey Valley for 150 Homes.

Delivery of Affordable Homes² is falling off; The WDWP Council has delivered on average just 91 net affordable dwellings per annum since 2012/13 and is losing on average 4 dwellings per annum through Right to Buy. Pressure on the housing register is increasing with 6,271 households on the register across Dorset at 1st April 2021 with no improvements in the waiting times to be housed between 2020 and 2021 and in consequence 219 households were living in temporary accommodation.

On 26th July Dorset Council published a statement on the new Local Plan stating that it would not now come into place until 2026 and would be done as a pilot of the 'new national approach'. The statement went on to say:

- However, we recognise that access to affordable housing is currently a challenge for some Dorset residents. More affordable housing needs to be built, but we need the right development in the right places, at the right quality which respects our unique and important natural environment.
- Working with Homes England there will be more focus on new or significantly expanded settlements
 to help deliver the longer-term growth needs of Dorset, with the necessary infrastructure (transport,
 utilities, health and education services)

_

¹¹ 35% is the minimum set for areas outside the Town Centre 25% is suggested for the Town Centre

² Affordable Housing statement, Tetlow King Planning, Nov 2021

WEYNOUTH NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

Site Assessment

Locality identify a standard process for site assessment, which is in progress see Figure 1 and progress below.

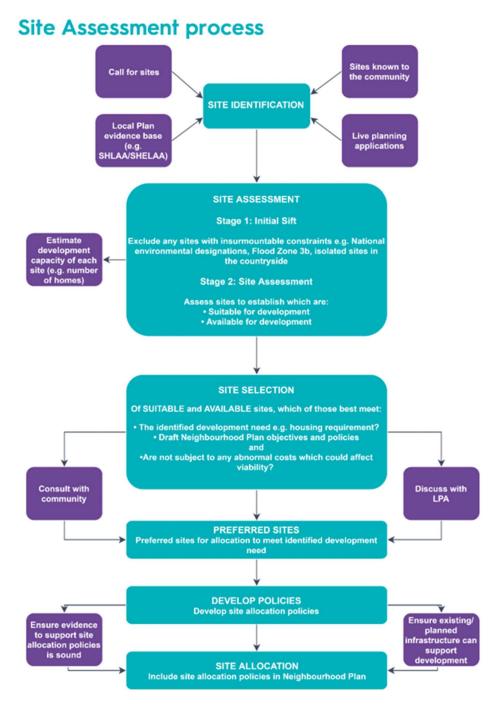


Figure 1 Locality: Site Assessment Process

Site Identification

The WNP group issued a Call for Sites which raised 14 site suggestions. The SHLAA identifies 54 sites within Weymouth not allocated within the existing West Dorset Weymouth & Portland Local Plan (2015).

Site Assessment

These sites, together with the previously identified 54 SHLAA (Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment) sites have been independently assessed by AECOM to evaluate their Suitability, and Availability.

Sites were assessed for both suitability for housing and for employment land. This Site Assessment report has been reviewed, by the Homes Group and the final draft was delivered at the end of June 2022. Of the 61 sites assessed, 31 sites were deemed unsuitable, shown in red on map. 3 sites were deemed suitable, shown in green, and 27 were assessed as suitable subject to mitigation of constraints such as access, ground instability, closeness to SSSI, or because they may not be economically or practicably deliverable, shown in amber. Note the hatched areas shown on the map show where part of the site area is proposed for Local Nature Reserve or Public Open Space.

Sites which are already allocated in the existing WDW&P Local Plan have not been re-assessed. These sites are from Chapter 24 and Appendix 3 of the new Draft Dorset Local Plan, as follows:

Policy: Location	Number of homes	With consent	Other
WEY2: Weymouth Town Centre incl WEY3-8	400+	228	TC Master Plan
WEY3: Town Centre Core & Commercial road			Mixed Use
WEY4: Station & Swannery Car Park etc			Transport Hub, Main public Car park, pedestrian routes
WEY5: Custom House Quay & Brewery Waterfront			Improve pedestrian environment, Brewers Quay Dev't incl Museum, wet weather attraction, tourist cafes/shops etc
WEY6: Esplanade			Unique Heritage, Guesthouses/Hotels
WEY7: Ferry Peninsular			Pavilion Theatre – leisure/tourist related incl Housing
WEY8: Westway Road and North Quay			Mixed use may incl, residential, hotel, commercial and small-scale retail
WEY10: Bincleaves Cove	220	220	
WEY11: Littlemoor urban extension	600	500	Key Employment Site, housing and community infrastructure.
WEY12: Land off Louviers Road	100	100	Residential
WEY13: Land at Wey Valley	350	350	Residential
WEY14: Land south of Wey Valley	150		Proposed Allocation Residential
WEY15: Land west of Southill	400		Proposed Allocation Residential 325 & Care Home 75
WEY16: Land at Markham & Little Francis	500	500	Residential & Public Open Space, some employment

Site Selection

The Neighbourhood Plan Homes group agreed a set of criteria for identifying those sites with a potential to deliver the most affordable homes – Appendix 1.

Using these criteria, a short list of sites was produced reducing the number of sites to 20.

Criteria 1: 31 sites were rejected as being assessed independently by AECOM as not suitable.

Criteria 2: 12 sites were included as being inside the development boundary and offering more than 10 homes providing a potential 437 homes of which 35% should be affordable.

Criteria 3: 5 sites were included as being outside the development boundary, offering more than 10 homes providing a potential for 531 homes, which as Exception Sites should deliver a higher proportion (up to 100%) of Affordable

Homes

Criteria 5: relates to use of land for Employment and is reported elsewhere.

Criteria 6: sites which are currently are in use as as Car Parks, Community Spaces, Leisure/Recreation areas. 1 site was included as a prime Town Centre site subject to the owner agreeing the site is available and an alternative site being available providing 21 homes. 5 sites in the SHLAA are listed as Car Parks with a total housing potential of 145 homes — however these are not practical to bring forward unless alternative car parking is provided (perhaps as Multistorey or by dealing with the peak summer demand by re-establishing

Note the Swannery Car Park site was Assessed by AECOM as Unsuitable for development and is not one of these 8 sites.

an operational Park & Ride scheme), or by maintaining parking at ground level and building homes above.

Criteria 7: sites are already in use as Offices or Retail and the owner wishes to change the use to Residential. Subject to some retention of employment use the 4 sites offer the potential for 174 homes of which 35% should be affordable homes.

7 sites were rejected outright; 6 of these for being too small (less than 10 homes) and one considered under Criteria 6 but rejected as no suitable alternative.

It has been pointed out that although the sites in the draft Local Plan and the SHLAA have been used to support the Housing Requirement of 3,225 units not all these sites have been confirmed as 'Available' by the landowner.

The details of the 20 shortlisted sites are contained in Appendix 2. The Site Assessment and Options Paper produced by AECOM is in Final Draft. Both these are Confidential until this paper is endorsed finally by the Weymouth Town Council in September 2022.

Preferred Sites

This stage will commence following endorsement of the Shortlist of Sites, and will involve verifying site availability for the identified use with landowners, consulting with the local community, through public engagement on-line, town centre and community centres and discussing the sites with the Local Planning Authority, Dorset Council (who are also the landowner in many instances). This is expected to reduce the number of sites.

In addition, a Strategic Environment Assessment and Habitat Regulation Assessment are being conducted by AECOM which may reduce the number of sites.

The draft preferred sites will be subject to further discussion with landowners on use and development options and independent viability assessment.

The list of Preferred Sites will also take the above into account, plus consideration within the WNP Group of other Policies and proposed land uses such as proposed designation of Local Greenspaces. The Preferred List will again be subject to review and endorsement.

Develop Policies

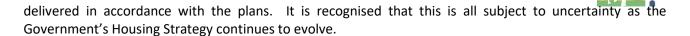
Developing Site Allocation policies for the Preferred Sites has yet to commence, this will though be presented in the Draft Neighbourhood Plan for formal Consultation in January 2023.

Site Allocation

Following reviewing the formal consultation, the finalised Site Allocation Policies will be included in the Final Draft of the NP which will be subject to Public Referendum in early 2024.

Will this be enough?

Weymouth's Housing Needs have not been met by existing Local Plan Policies. The situation has worsened since the WDW&P Local Plan was produced in 2015. The new draft Dorset Local Plan will not deliver these needs. More needs to be done in the Local Plan, and Dorset Council, to ensure Affordable Homes are



Assessment of Shortfall between HNA and Draft LP

	Optimis	tic	Pessi	mistic	
Local Plan Homes Req 3,225	1129	35%	419	13%	
Weymouth HNA	1775	Method 1	2649	Meth	od 2
Shortfall	646		2230		
Exception Site Contribution @70%	531	5 sites @100%	70	2	sites
Revised Shortfall	115		2160		

This year, 2022, the Housing Monitoring Report for 2020-21 reported that WDW&P Local Plan was now meeting the 5 year Housing Supply. This means that market-led development is again subject to Local Plan policies and will normally be within the Defined Development Boundary. Exception Sites, outside the Defined Development Boundary, can be declared in a Neighbourhood Plan, where it is clear that the Housing Needs are not being *met*, *and will be for Affordable Homes*.

Discussions are ongoing with Dorset Council with respect to what else can be done to meet Weymouth's Need for Affordable Homes – this will include developing land assets owned by Dorset Council for Affordable Homes with the support of Homes England grants and grants for Brownfield sites.

Should this still leave a shortfall, Weymouth Town Council will need to consider whether it should be acquiring land and commissioning development of Affordable Homes.

WEYMOUTH NEIGHBOUR HOOD PLAN

Appendix 1 Supporting Information

Steering Group Draft Homes Aims

Aim 4. Provide a broad mix of homes, which align with housing need and give priority to the needs of current and future residents and all parts of the community, with emphasis on social and affordable homes that reflect the character and appearance of the area.

Aim 5. Support and encourage the reuse of brownfield sites as well as community-led, self-build and innovative development schemes and tenancies as ways of achieving sustainable developments that are affordable for local residents.

Homes Theme Group Objectives

These 12 draft Objectives are still being worked up with supporting evidence and will be further updated and then translated into Planning Policies within the Neighbourhood Plan.

- The mix of dwelling sizes, types and affordability should reflect the Housing Needs Analysis –
 different figures will apply to different area types (Urban, Suburban, Semi-Rural) Ref HOUS1 pick
 up % from HNA report
- 2. Encourage imaginative thinking to create a diverse range and variety of homes (co-housing, car-free developments, live-work units and self-build) if possible, allocate sites for such schemes Ref HOUS6
- 3. Prioritise development on brownfield sites rather than greenfield. (track Government Grants/Loans for Brownfield Sites)
- 4. Ensure market-led development in Weymouth delivers at least 35% affordable homes with right mix of Sale, Affordable Rent and Social Rent [is this realistic ie viable?] HOUS2
- 5. Provide an additional 1,078 affordable homes, over the plan period, from Exception Sites, or Councilled development on council land, through Community Development Orders or Community Land Trusts HOUS2
- 6. Community Land Trusts and Housing Associations to prioritise Affordable Housing for Local People and Public Sector Workers [Essential Workers?]
- 7. Allocate Exceptions sites primarily for Affordable Homes HOUS3 limited number of sites from CfS process.
- 8. Planning Controls (Article 4 Directions) to restrict numbers of HMOs in areas where already too dominant and to restrict p21 table 36 AND to prevent conversion of affordable family homes to HMOs applicable to areas like Park District.
- 9. Reduce the effect on affordable housing supply by the increase in numbers of Second Homes, Holiday Lets, Air BnB
 - Principle Residency Policy?
 - Encourage Private Rented Sector?
 - DC asked for suggestions
- 10. In certain areas allow Increased Housing Density by allowing upward extensions and replacement of house with mid-rise flats
- 11. Clarify need for dementia and nursing care and emergency homes HOUS5
- 12. Make homes more energy efficient. New Build at least EPC B, Conversions at least EPC C note Housing Associations obliged to be at C by 2030. Should we push for higher standards such as **Passiv Haus**



Homes Theme Group Site Shortlisting Selection Criteria

The housing needs analysis shows a clear need for significant numbers (1,775 min to 2,649) of Affordable Homes in Weymouth.

The amount of land for B2 employment has diminished as sites have been developed with retail and housing. Weymouth has clear need for more and better employment opportunities.

Better to allocate a small number of larger sites than many small sites to avoid infilling valuable open spaces.

- The assessment by AECOM has determined the availability, deliverability and sustainability. As a result a number of sites have been assessed as Unsuitable noting that some sites have been assessed as unsuitable for allocation by the Weymouth Neighbourhood Plan because they are already allocated in the Local Plan. Criteria 1: Do not consider sites assessed as Unsuitable in the Site Assessment and Options Report.
- Sites inside the development boundary for more than 10 homes should under the Local Plan Policy HOUS2 provide 35% Affordable Homes. **Criteria 2: Consider Sites inside the development boundary with potential for more than 20 homes.**
- Sites which are outside the development boundary can be brought forward as Exception Sites where there is a clear need for Affordable Homes and can be up to 100% Affordable Homes. Criteria 3: Consider Sites Outside the Development Boundary with potential for more than 10 homes.
- Smaller sites outside the development boundary should be considered where they provide homes
 otherwise not available to the local community. Criteria 4: Consider Sites Outside the Development
 Boundary with potential for less than 10 homes where they are supporting very local housing
 needs.
- To reduce commuting and carbon output employment sites should be near to urban areas. **Criteria**5: Consider Sites near to urban areas which are suitable for B2 employment.
- A number of sites are already in use either as Car Parks, Community Spaces, Leisure/Recreation areas.
 Criteria 6: In-use sites will not be considered unless there is, or can be, adequate or alternative provision nearby.
- A number of sites are already in use as Offices or Retail and the owner wishes to change the use to
 Residential. Criteria 7: Sites providing employment will not be considered for residential unless
 Affordable Housing Provision of 35% is enabled and some employment use is retained.



Appendix 2 Shortlisted Sites

The following table shows how criteria were used to shortlist specific sites.

	1 reduces 61 candidate sites to long list of 30 sites.	Cultural -		N-A		DC 2 22-
Site Ref		Criteria	Homes max	Notes		DC 3,225
WEYM/001	Brewers Quay	2 Inside DB more than 10	35	Brewers Quay new owner. In LP.	WEY5	
WEYM/044	Newberry Gardens Car Park	2 Inside DB more than 10	18	Note under development as part of Brewers Quay	WEY5	
WEYM/045	Newton's Rd Car Park	2 Inside DB more than 10	18	Note under development as part of Brewers Quay	WEY5	
WEYM/027	Land Adjoining Southill Shopping Centre	2 Inside DB more than 10	15		LW	15
WNP05 WEYM/032	Jubilee Sidings Extenssion	2 Inside DB more than 10	80	part of WEYM/032	WEY2	
WNP13 WEYM/029	Westwey Road (South) incl Westwey House	2 Inside DB more than 10	90	WNP13 Westwey House part of WEYM/029	WEY8	
WEYM/047	Tides Centre	2 Inside DB more than 10	3	Although small could be part of WEYM/029	WEY2	
WEYM/033	Lakeside Superbowl, St Nicholas St	2 Inside DB more than 10	30		WEY2	
WEYM/041	Council Offices, North Quay	2 Inside DB more than 10	72		WEY2	
WEYM/043	The Ferrybridge Inn	2 Inside DB more than 10	29	Note Under development		
WEYM/048	Pavilion and Ferry Terminal	2 Inside DB more than 10	30		WEY7	
WNP01	Beverley Road, Littlemoor	2 Inside DB more than 10	17			
		2 Inside DB more than 10 Total	437			
WEYM/050	Land South of Wessex Roundabout	3 Outside DB more than 10	50			
WNP02 WEYM/013	Wyke Oliver Farm South (Budmouth Avenue, Preston)	3 Outside DB more than 10	56	Part for LNR.		
WNP06	Lodmoor Old Tip	3 Outside DB more than 10	140			
WNP12	Redlands Farm	3 Outside DB more than 10	150	In Draft LP as WEY14 but WNP includes 5 other fields as Open Space	WEY14	150
WNP14 WEYM/012	Wyke Oliver Farm (North)	3 Outside DB more than 10	135	- part for LNR		
		3 Outside DB more than 10 Total	531			
None		4 Outside DB less than 10		None assessed suitable under Criteria 1		
		4 Outside DB less than 10 Total	0			
WEYM/030	Bus Depot, King St	6 In-use sites but alternatives	60	Could move bus depot to P&R	WEY2	
WEYM/031	Harbourside Car Park, Commercial Rd	6 In-use sites but alternatives	25	1 or more Car Parks could be used if P&R in use - note Swannery CP Not Suitable site	WEY2	
WEYM/034	Land at Commerical Rd, Car Park	6 In-use sites but alternatives	28	1 or more Car Parks could be used if P&R in use - note Swannery CP Not Suitable site	WEY2	
WEYM/035	Land at Governers Lane, Car Park	6 In-use sites but alternatives	18	1 or more Car Parks could be used if P&R in use - note Swannery CP Not Suitable site	WEY2	
WEYM/037	The Loop Car Park, Commercial Rd	6 In-use sites but alternatives	24	1 or more Car Parks could be used if P&R in use - note Swannery CP Not Suitable site	WEY2	
WEYM/040	Land at Park St, Car Park	6 In-use sites but alternatives	50	1 or more Car Parks could be used if P&R in use - note Swannery CP Not Suitable site	WEY2	
		6 In-use sites but alternatives Total	205			
WEYM/006	Westhaven Hospital	7 In-use sites but could be 35% AH	50		LW	50
WEYM/036	Post Office Sorting Office	7 In-use sites but could be 35% AH	64		WEY2	
WEYM/042	Former Oyster Farm, Ferryman's Way	7 In-use sites but could be 35% AH	30		LW	30
WNP08	New Bond St Shopping Centre	7 In-use sites but could be 35% AH In-use sites but could be 35% AH To	30 174	WEYM/005	WEY2	
WEYM/025	Dorset Vehicle Rentals, Dorchester Rd	Not taken forward	6	Too small		
WEYM/028	Land at Nothe	Not taken forward	8	Too small	WEY2	
WEYM/038	Weymouth Bowling Club	Not taken forward	32	Weymouth Bowling Club - No Alternative?	WEY2	
WEYM/046	Land at Elm Close	Not taken forward	2	Too small		
WEYM/049	Land at rear of Marsh Rd	Not taken forward		Too small		
WEYM/051	Land at Chickerell Rd	Not taken forward		Too small		
WEYM/052	Land at Westhaven	Not taken forward		Too small		
		Not taken forward Total	59			
		Grand Total	1406			
		Shortlist Total	1347			
		Shortlist Total less car parks	1202			

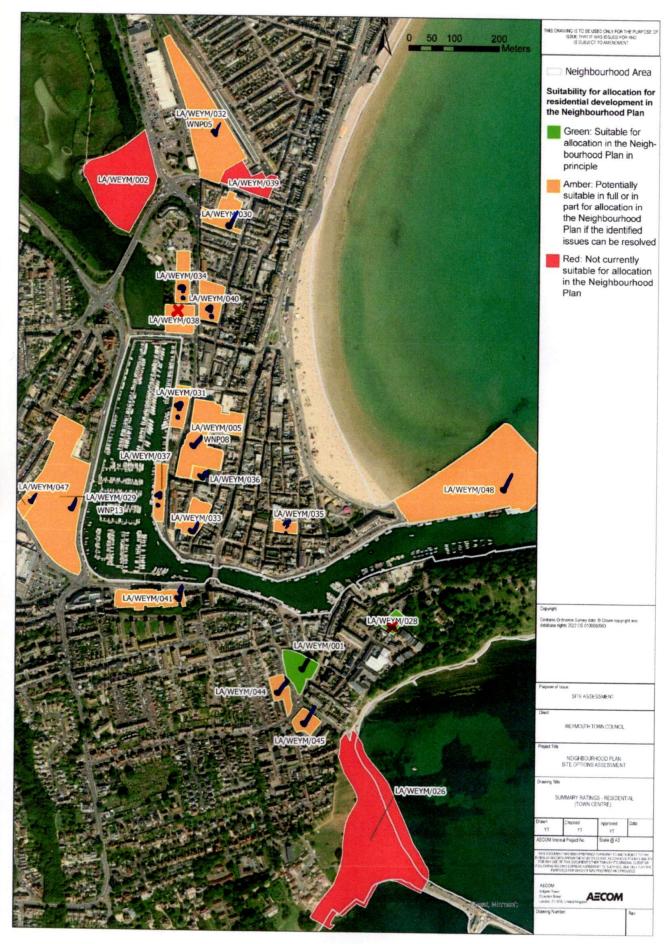
The following table shows the calculation made by Dorset Council in determining the Neighbourhood Plan requirement for 3,225 homes and references the sites which contribute to this.

Sites in LP used	l to calaculate Weymouth Housing Requirement to s	upport LP				
	Weymouth Town Centre includes	LA/WEYM/028, 030, 031, 033, 034,	4, 035, 036, 037, 038, 040, 041, 047, 048,		WEY2	400
LA/WEYM/026	Former QinetiQ Site, Bincelaves				LW	195
	Sites with Planning Permission at April 2020		1460			
	Site Allocations without Planning Permission (both current and proposed)	WEY14 and WEY2 Redlands & Town Centre	550			
	Large Site Windfall Allowance (based on sites identified in the SHLAA)	4 sites labelled LW LA/WEYM/006 026, 027, 042	290			
	Small Site Windfall Allowance (based on past completion rates)	Calculation based on last 5 years	925			
	Total		3225			

On the following pages these sites are shown on a map of Weymouth; Green indicate sites which were assessed as Suitable, Red – Unsuitable and Amber – Potentially Suitable.

The blue tick indicates sites shortlisted while the red cross indicates sites Suitable or Potentially Suitable sites not shortlisted. There are a number of Town Centre Car Parks which could be developed if alternative parking provision is made – this might be Mount Pleasant Park & Ride or multistorey car parks – this may release one or two sites and the potential for this is shown with a ? mark.







The following shows the sites outside the Town Centre.

