

From: Cllr. Louie O'Leary
Sent: 10 April 2025 12:53
To: NeighbourhoodPlanning
Subject: Weymouth neighbourhood plan comments Cllr Louie O'Leary

I am writing as one of the Dorset council councillors for Littlemoor & Preston (2019-) and a Weymouth town councillor for Littlemoor (2024-).

I am also a lifelong Littlemoor resident. The Wyke Oliver site sits within the Preston part of the ward as does the Sutton Poyntz neighbourhood plan area contained within the plan. The Beverley road site sits within the Littlemoor part of my ward.

I am writing to object to the plan overall for the reasons below

Overall scope of the plan

It is my opinion the area covered by this plan is too large. The plan will cover an area of 53,000 people while the areas nearest covered by neighbourhood plans Portland is 12,000, Chickerell around 8,000 and Sutton Poyntz (who have a plan coming under this overall plan) is around 1000. Weymouth is not a neighbourhood. It is a town made up of a number of small communities and the plan even admits to this fact. It is impossible in my opinion to have a neighbourhood plan for a dozen different neighbourhoods who are vastly different from one another. A plan covering Westham a highly dense urban housing estate in the middle of the conurbation won't be able to cover Upwey and Broadway a mix of suburban housing stretching up to a rural to semi-rural village with farm land. The other issue with forming a plan encompassing this number of people is the ability to communicate and consult with them. This is clearly an issue as shown by the tiny percentage of the population who have taken part in the drop ins and the previous consultations.

Poor engagement

I feel the level of engagement by the steering group has been poor and the plan therefore lack legitimacy. The first stage of engagement were a series of walk arounds of various communities (or neighbourhoods once again confirming my belief that the area plan isn't a neighbourhood but a collection). I attended the Littlemoor walk around and apart from the then town councillor who was involved in the steering group I was the only Littlemoor resident to take part. I expressed my opposition to development on the land behind Beverley road as did the other Littlemoor resident/town councillor. However this was added to the plan which in my opinion shows the walk around was merely a tick box. It is my understanding from the late Cllr Tony Ferrari who attended the Preston walk around and Cllr Dickenson who attended other walk arounds that low turnout was the norm. Myself and other Preston councillors attended a number of the drop ins held around Weymouth and once again turnout was extremely low. Areas like the town centre and Wyke Regis didn't even have a walk around. While I have had disagreements with the plan on several aspects I have sought to support the engagement as best I could. Myself and Cllr Dickenson helped organised a number of open street meetings as part of the green space allocations with Colin Marsh of the steering group. These had a better attendance than some of the formal drop ins. I offered to support the drop ins by putting up posters locally advertising them. I was given less than two weeks' notice and by the time I was given the posters and one drop in had past and the most relevant one to my area was just three days away. I recently met (25th April 2025) with residents in another part of Weymouth affected by an aspect of the plan who have only become aware of it in the previous 6 months.

Borders

If the area covering the plan is not regarded as being too large then it is certainly out of date. Since the plan area was outlined the town council boundary most affected (Weymouth) has been increased to its North due to a community governance review taking place in 2023. The land North of Littlemoor road is a new housing estate under

construction including 500 dwellings as well as ample employment land. To not take these into consideration would be pointless given the impact they will have on housing needs and supply. If Weymouth is to have a neighbourhood plan then it should be updated to include the new boundary of the town and take into consideration the new housing as part of the housing needs assessment.

Political interference and steering group make up

Since the early stages of the plan political interference has been a concern to many of us. Conservative town councillor for Preston (2019-2024) applied to join the initial steering group but was turned down/removed. Cllr Northam was questioned about this and stated at the Weymouth town council meeting of 26th February 2025 as to why he wasn't on the steering group insinuated it was due to Mr Colin Marsh being more representative of the community of Sutton Poyntz. This is despite Mr Bergman being an elected member for Sutton Poyntz (as part of the Preston ward) and a resident of Sutton Poyntz. Since its start no Conservative councillor has served on the steering group (Cllr Peter Dickenson served on the homes sub group) but it has been chaired at various times by Labour Councillor (Cllr Lucy Hamilton) and now by Cllr David Northam a Liberal Democrat councillor and in my opinion the plans driving force. Other members of the steering group include Ms Penny Quilter (former steering group chair) and Mr Robert Cheesman who according to a 8th December 2020 Dorset echo article are "local extinction rebellion campaigners". Mr Cheesman also made comments critiquing "conservative councillors in Preston" and "wealthy and vocal residents in Preston". A former Conservative councillor (until 2016) Mr Michael Bevan is also a member but in the May 2024 election stood in Preston (Mr Bevan doesn't live in Preston) as a Liberal Democrat for Weymouth town council. Given his position on the steering group and the fact Preston has viewed the plan with great hostility in general I find this a pro-vocative move and un-helpful in terms of portraying the steering group as a neutral group. In May 2024 the town council offered positions on the steering group to all political parties on the town council. The Conservative group refused to take up a seat because

- We view the chairmanship of the steering group by a councillor as making the SG political
- We think the steering group should be free from Councillors so it seen as being a bottom up approach as opposed to top down
- We do not want to be associated with what we view as the groups previous failings
- It blurs the line between residents steering group and a town council entity

It is my view that this political interference has led to a politically biased plan. In earlier plan the two most major new sites Wyke oliver close, land behind Budmouth and Brackendown avenue, and land of Beverley road are situated in the only Conservative held Dorset council ward in Weymouth out of 7 wards. Due to the makeup of the steering group and the politics of the wards affected it hard to see how politics hasn't played a part in the plans allocation from the outside.

Wyke oliver site

I object to the site behind Wyke Oliver being included in the plan for the following reasons

-Access: This would add roughly another 200 cars to this part of Preston. This section of Preston is serviced by only two access/exit points on Wyke oliver road onto Preston road and one further down on Melstock close exiting to Preston road. Preston road is a busy access road to Weymouth from the east and is especially busy during the summer months. The two junctions are not able to be improved by any measures such as roundabouts etc due to their size. To add an extra 200 cars onto these two junctions would be far too much for them to handle. An extra 200 cars would also turn Wyke oliver and Wyke oliver close from a pleasant quiet cul-de-sac into a busy residential road.

-Flooding: This site is situated on the slope of the south side of the Bincombe valley. Flooding has been an issue for years. Melstock futher down, Oakbury drive and Wyke oliver have experienced flooding due to a mixture of springs (Preston where Wyke Oliver close is situated) was historically known as Seven Springs. I attach to my submission a detailed analyses of the area by a late resident who was a geologist.

Beverley road site

I have known this site my entire life. It is a small, closed in area of open green space at the bottom of a steep incline with no obvious suitable access routes.

Access: This site is closed in the West by Kestrel view whose houses back onto the site rolling up the side of the hill. The North is closed in by Fieldfare close which is on land built up higher than the site proposed. To the east high rise flats of Beverley road close it off. The only possible access route is through shared ownership carpark from Kestrel view that would be very tight and then lead all through the Kestrel view and Turnstone close estate onto the busy and already increasingly congested A353 where turning out from exits on Turnstone close and Louviers road is increasingly difficult.

Flooding: This site is notorious for flooding. It sits at the bottom of a run off from the rolling fields above. On rainy days the site basin fills up greatly to the back of properties on Fieldfare. A culvert runs through this site into a storm drain on the site. This area has been very difficult to manage over the years due to mixed ownership. I worked alongside both Dorset and Weymouth town council to try improve it but this was limited to do its natural layout. 19 houses have recently been given approval further down Beverley road. This development is on higher ground than this site and has the housing allocated to be built at the front of the site due to the back sloping down to level similar to the one in this plan and that being used as a run off for the new houses.

Overlooking: As stated this site is blocked in by houses on three of its four sides. Houses on Kestrel and tall high level flats on Beverley road will look into the site directly causing a loss of privacy to those new properties.

Overdevelopment: This site is within Littlemoor. Littlemoor in the last years has had 100 homes built of Louviers road to its South and another 90 granted permission. On top of this 500 homes being built just to its north and 19 being built on Beverley road itself. Its my opinion that Littlemoor is taking on more than its fair share of new housing and that local amenities and services will be negatively impacted

Positives

I would like to thank the members in the public who put time and effort in to developing a plan and I believe a plan is needed. But the plan currently formulated isn't the right one. There are positive aspects of this plan such as the open green spaces allocated which have had some of the highest levels of public engagement. Some of the other policies around green gaps, flooding and nature are also positive but are contradictory to some of the site allocations.

Final

I have great concerns about this plan and I'm concerned that its lack of public support so far puts it in danger of being defeated at referendum and leaving Weymouth without a plan at all. I believe what we need are new plans drawn up by a broad group of residents for separate areas of Weymouth without the interference of political groups of figures with a wider more though out level of consultation and engagement.

Cllr Louie O'Leary
Dorset Councillor Littlemoor & Preston ward

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