

Response ID [REDACTED]

Submitted to Weymouth Neighbourhood Plan 2021 to 2038
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Part 1: personal details

1 Are you responding on behalf of yourself or for someone else?

I'm responding on behalf of someone else

2 What is your name?

Name:
Anna Beech

3 What is your email address?

Email:
[REDACTED]

4 What is your job title and organisation?

Organisation:
Public Health Dorset Council

Job title:
Health Programme Advisor

5 What is your address?

Address:
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Postcode:
[REDACTED]

6 What is your phone number?

Phone number:
[REDACTED]

Part 1A: your client's details

7 Please provide details of the person or organisation you are representing

Name of person or organisation:
Public Health Dorset Council

Address of person / organisation:

Public Health Dorset
County Hall
Colliton Park
Dorchester
DT1 1XJ

Part 2: your representation

8 Please write your comments / representation in the box below

Comments:

Comments provided on the attached document.

9 Would you like to attach a file in relation to your response?

File upload:

Weymouth Neighbourhood Plan response April 2025.docx was uploaded

10 Do you wish to be notified of Dorset Council's decision to 'make' or refuse to 'make' the neighbourhood plan at the Regulation 19 stage?

Yes

Weymouth Draft Neighbourhood Plan

Comments from: Dorset Council, Public Health and Prevention team

The links between health and the built and natural environment are well established, and Dorset Council Public Health team welcome this opportunity to comment on the implications of the proposed Neighbourhood Plan for public health.

In doing so we have drawn on a number of resources, in particular the UK Health Security Agency's 'Spatial planning for Health – an evidence resource for planning and designing healthier places', Public Health England's 'Improving Access to Greenspace' and DEFRA's 'Evidence Statement on the Links Between Natural Environments and Human Health', the links to which are provided here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/729727/spatial_planning_for_health.pdf

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5f202e0de90e071a5a924316/Improving_access_to_greenspace_2020_review.pdf

<https://beyondgreenspace.net/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/evidence-statement-on-the-links-between-natural-environments-and-human-health1.pdf>

The Dorset Council Public Health Team welcome the incorporation of several important aspects related to public health in the draft plan and the strong community focus of the plan production.

Areas where the representation of public health could be strengthened to maximise the positive impact of the plan on local population health are highlighted below more generally, and then more specifically in relation to policies in the draft plan.

General comments

- **More explicit focus on mental health as part of overall health and wellbeing:**

The World Health Organisation (WHO) defines health as "a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity".

While the plan acknowledges the importance of and impact policies may have on health and wellbeing, it could more explicitly reference mental health as part of overall health and wellbeing.

- **Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED)**

Although the plan mentions the importance of safety and accessibility of developments and in public spaces, e.g. through natural surveillance and safe footpaths, it could more explicitly incorporate CPTED principles in its design policies and guidance to ensure that new developments and public spaces are designed to reduce opportunities for crime and increase feelings of safety and security, which are important for mental wellbeing.

- **Climate change and direct health impacts**

While it's clear the plan responds to the Climate and Ecological Emergency and has a variety of environmental targets, it could more directly link requirements in policies to the need to mitigate the impact of climate change to support both planetary and human health – for example, the requirement for renewable energy on new developments to reduce carbon emissions and also minimising living costs for residents and the provision of adequate shelter in the public realm to protect human health during heatwaves whilst continuing to enable the physical and mental health benefits from spending time outdoors.

This was noted in policies such as:

Policy W15 – 2

Policy W16

- **Addressing health inequalities**

Whilst the draft plan clearly aims for inclusive communities and notes the stresses experienced in areas of deprivation, the plan could benefit from a more explicit consideration of health inequalities and how its policies, particularly around improving access to greenspace, housing and active travel infrastructure, can contribute to reducing them.

- **Wording around wider neighbourhood plan targets**

Several policies mention a need for proposed developments to be in 'alignment with the environmental objectives and targets of the Neighbourhood Plan'. A query we have is whether this wording refers only to the environmental objectives and targets, or whether this means an alignment with environmental objectives in addition to the wider targets of the neighbourhood plan. Additionally, this sentence doesn't seem to be complete for Policy W22 – 2ix.

Policy specific comments

- **Landscape and Greenspace**

Dorset Council Public Health team welcomes the recognition in the plan of the importance of access to greenspace to health.

Strong evidence exists for the contribution of green and blue space to reducing health inequalities (PHE, 2020), with particularly strong links are found in relation to mental health and wellbeing, development and maintenance of a healthy immune system and reduction of inflammatory based diseases and in relation to variation between social and demographic groups (DEFRA, 2017).

The World Health Organisation recommend a target for all to be within 300m of a greenspace. Given a high percentage of residents in the neighbourhood plan area do not own a car, enabling access to blue and green infrastructure within a walkable distance is even more important.

The identified high mental health need in the Weymouth Neighbourhood Plan area, and the growing body of evidence to support the positive impact that green and blue infrastructure can have on both physical and mental health, we recommend strengthening the wording around this in point 8.5 where it says 'Open greenspace is very important to the sense of health and wellbeing experienced by the people of the area'.

DEFRA (2017) suggest that greenspace should be designed for a variety of user interests and capabilities to enable equity of access. As such, we would recommend making point 8.7 more inclusive:

8.7 ' These spaces provide natural beauty in the town and also support leisure and physical activities for all ages' - perhaps simply saying ' for all'.

Points 8.20, 8.59, 8.66, 8.71 and 8.79 could also be strengthened to reflect the strong evidence surrounding access to blue and green spaces and improved mental and physical health outcomes and its potential to reduce health inequalities.

- **Housing**

Policy W16

1ii – We would suggest including EV charging for equipment to maximise sustainability and widen terminology to include all forms of electric transport (e.g. scooters).

2 – We would suggest widening 'walking and cycling' to explicitly say 'all forms of active travel', as this can also encompass various forms of transportation that involve physical activity such as wheeling (using a wheelchair or mobility scooter) or scootering.

For both policy W16 and policy W29 (1 iv) the Town Council may wish to consider a requirement that residential developments meet minimum space standards (for example through the Nationally Described Space Standards [Technical housing standards – nationally described space standard - GOV.UK](#)) as part of this policy to ensure residents have adequate space to live healthy and happy lives, including space for storage.

Additionally, space to dry clothing (with sufficient ventilation when indoors) is of extreme importance given the well documented impact that poor indoor air quality can have on respiratory and cardiovascular health.

Policy W17

Although also mentioned in Policy W18 – 3iii – we would suggest it may also be beneficial to outline the importance of tenure blindness here given that most large developments are likely to include a proportion of affordable housing.

Policy W23a

This policy doesn't seem to include the same environmental objectives as other similar policies – as seen in, for example, Policy W25 – 3ii, though it would seem to be of equal importance for this development.

Policy W25 – 6v

We would suggest the wording be strengthened to emphasise the importance of maximising accessibility for all in respect of any future development designed for public access, in light of the positive impact access to blue and green infrastructure can have on mental and physical health highlighted earlier in this response.

Policy W32

9.168 – We would recommend emphasising the importance of maintaining accessibility for those with mobility issues.

Policy W34 – 2v

We would recommend this also includes a requirement for EV charging points for all appliances.

- **Jobs and the economy**

Levels of childhood and adult overweight and obesity are rising nationally and in some areas locally.

Access to healthy, accessible, local and affordable food is essential to mental and physical health and wellbeing as it directly impacts energy levels, nutrient intake, and disease prevention (World Health Organisation [Healthy diet](#)). It protects against chronic noncommunicable diseases such as heart disease, diabetes and cancer. Eating a variety of foods and consuming less salt, sugars and saturated and industrially-produced trans-fats, are essential for healthy diet.

Public Health welcomes the strong support in the plan supports for allotments and community gardening, which is positive. However, in light of the renewed spotlight on the impact of food environments on obesity and health that can be seen in the updated paragraph 97 of the NPPF in December 2024, Public Health wonders whether the plan has scope to go further in respect of **policies W39 and W40** to support and enable a healthy food environment within the town centre and wider plan area.

This could contribute to ensuring that a wide variety of food options are available to residents and visitors, including healthy choices that are accessible, affordable, and convenient, supporting physical and mental health and reducing health inequalities.

Consideration to supporting the development of the local food economy and promotion of local food producers, businesses, and markets may also be beneficial.

Policy W42

Public health would like to emphasise the importance of robust, open communication with the local community in relation to such developments, and a need to ensure thorough engagement throughout the planning process to mitigate mental health impact from the earliest opportunity.

• Communities & neighbourhoods

Policy W48

11.25 – We would suggest noting that poorly managed parking can result in congestion, hinder active travel, reduce accessibility on local pavements and increase conflict between visitors and local residents.

Policy W54 – 3iii

We would suggest wording around the importance of accessibility to enable the positive physical and mental health impacts could be strengthened.

11.58 – We would suggest adding that the widening of participation and access is as important means to reduce health inequalities in the population.

Policy W55

There appears to be potential here to provide more detail in terms of requirements to mitigate climate change impacts – for example, provision of adequate shading and shelter, or the contribution that green infrastructure to aid cooling and mitigate against air pollution mitigation, enabling people to spend more time in the outdoors to the benefit of their mental and physical health.

Wording could also be strengthened around the importance of maximising inclusion in the public realm, time in which enables good physical and mental health and aids in

reducing health inequalities. This could be, for example, through use of guidelines such as Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) to increase perception of safety, or safeguarding / enabling provision of toilets, benches, and cafes. PHE cite a lack of facilities as a key barrier to time spent outside for older groups and those living with disability.

11.64 – we would suggest the wording ‘pedestrian routes’ is amended to reflect the potential to maximise active travel of all kinds along these routes, where this is intended.

Policy W56

Growing food, particularly through community gardening and allotments, provides significant mental health benefits, supported by a growing body of evidence, including improvements in self-esteem, mood, and reductions in anxiety, depression, and stress. Additionally, access to fresh, nutritious food grown locally can combat food insecurity and its associated mental health challenges.

As such, we strongly support this policy and suggest the positive mental and physical health impacts could be strengthened in point 11.69.