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## North Dorset Local Plan Part 1

### Pre-submission Consultation 29 November 2013 to 24 January 2014

Regulation 19 of Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012)

## Response Form

For each representation you wish to make a separate response form will need to be completed.

This is a formal consultation on the legal compliance and soundness of the Local Plan before it is submitted to the Secretary of State for examination by an Inspector. For advice on how to respond to the consultation and fill in this form please see the 'Guidance Notes for Making Representations' that can be found on the Council's website at [www.dorsetforyou.com/planning/north-dorset/planning-policy](http://www.dorsetforyou.com/planning/north-dorset/planning-policy)

Please return completed forms to:

Email: [planningpolicy@north-dorset.gov.uk](mailto:planningpolicy@north-dorset.gov.uk)

Post: Planning Policy, North Dorset District Council, Nordon, Salisbury Road, Blandford Forum, Dorset DT11 7LL

Alternatively you can submit your comments online at: [www.surveymonkey.com/s/NorthDorsetLocalPlan](http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/NorthDorsetLocalPlan)

**Deadline: 5pm on 24 January 2014. Representations received after this time may not be accepted.**

### Part A – Personal details

This part of the form must be completed by all people making representations as **anonymous comments cannot be accepted**. Representations cannot be treated in confidence as Regulation 22 of the Town and County Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 requires copies of all representations to be made publically available. By submitting this response form on the pre-submission North Dorset Local Plan Part 1 you consent to your information being disclosed to third parties for this purpose, but signatures, private telephone numbers and e-mail addresses or private addresses will not be visible on our web site, although they will be shown on paper copies that will be sent to the Inspector and available for inspection.

\*If an agent is appointed, please complete only the Title, Name and Organisation boxes to the personal details but complete the full contact details of the agent. All correspondence will be sent to the agent.

Personal Details (if applicable)*	Agent's Details (if applicable)*
Title	Mr
First Name	David
Last Name	Seaton
Job Title( <i>where relevant</i> )	Managing Director
Organisation ( <i>where relevant</i> )	Sherborne School and Cancer Research UK
Address	PCL Planning Ltd First Floor, 3 Silverdown Office Park, Fairoak Close, Clyst Honiton, Exeter. Devon.
Postcode	EX5 2UX
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## Part B – Representation

The North Dorset Local Plan 2011 to 2026 Part 1 and its supporting documents have been published in order for representations to be made prior to submission to the Secretary of State for examination. The purpose of the examination is to consider whether the Local Plan complies with the **legal requirements** and is **'sound'**.

If you are seeking to make a representation on the **way** in which documents have been prepared it is likely that your comments or objections will relate to a matter of **legal compliance**.

If you are seeking to make representations on the **content** of the documents it is likely that your comments or objections relate to the **soundness** of the plans and whether it is justified, effective or consistent with national policy.

Further information on the matter of legal compliance and the issue of soundness can be found in the 'Guidance Notes for Making Representations'.

If you need help completing the response form please see a member of the Planning Policy Team at one of the consultation exhibitions or call 01258 484201.

### 1. Please select which document you are commenting on:

- North Dorset Local Plan 2011 to 2026 Part 1 (please complete Questions 2 to 9)
- Final Sustainability Appraisal Report (please complete Questions 2 and 10)
- Habitats Regulations Assessment (please complete Questions 2 and 10)

### 2. Please state the part of that document you are commenting on:

Paragraph number:	Policy/site: Draft Policies 2, 6, 17 and 21	Policies map:
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### 3. Do you consider the Local Plan to be legally compliant and prepared in accordance with the Duty to Cooperate, legal and procedural requirements?

- Yes  No

### 4. Do you consider the Local Plan to be 'sound'?

- Yes  No

### 5. If you consider the Local Plan to be unsound please specify your reason(s) by ticking the box(es) that apply below

- It has not been positively prepared
- It is not justified
- It is not effective
- It is not consistent with national policy

6. Please give specific details of why you consider the Local Plan has not been prepared in accordance with the Duty to Co-operate, legal or procedural requirement or why you consider the plan to be **unsound**. Alternatively, if you wish to support any aspects of the plan please also use this box to set out your comments.

Please see attached letter, dated 24<sup>th</sup> January 2014, Reference DS/PCL/1245b.

*Continue on a separate sheet if necessary*

7. What change(s) do you consider are necessary to ensure that the Local Plan is legally compliant and sound? It would be helpful if you are able to put forward your suggested revised wording of any policy or text. Please be as precise as possible.

Please see attached letter, dated 24<sup>th</sup> January 2014, Reference DS/PCL/1245b.

*Continue on a separate sheet if necessary*

8. If your representation is seeking a change, do you consider it necessary to participate in the oral part of the examination?

No, I do not wish to participate in the oral examination

Yes, I would like to participate in the oral examination

**9. If you wish to participate in the oral part of the examination please outline why you consider that to be necessary.** Please note that the Inspector determines who is heard at the examination.

PCL Planning Ltd seek to participate in the oral part of the examination to fully present and discuss the content of the written representations submitted.

**10. Please outline your comments on the Final Sustainability Appraisal Report or Habitats Regulations Assessment.** Comments are not confined to 'soundness' issues, but respondents can express their opinions on the above documents and use it as a reference point on the 'soundness' of the Local Plan.

**11. Do you wish to be notified of any of the following?** Please tick all that apply. We will contact you using the details you have given above.

- That the Local Plan Part 1 has been submitted for independent examination
- The publication of the recommendations of any person appointed to carry out an independent examination of the Local Plan Part 1
- The adoption of the Local Plan Part 1.

Signature: David Seaton (submitted electronically)

Date: 24.01.2014

*If submitting the form electronically, no signature is required.*

**Our Ref** DS/PCL/1245b  
**Date** 24<sup>th</sup> January 2014



Planning Policy (North Dorset),  
North Dorset District Council,  
Nordon,  
Salisbury Road,  
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DT11 7LL

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Dear Sirs,

**DRAFT NORTH DORSET LOCAL PLAN – 2011 TO 2026 PART 1 -  
PRE-SUBMISSION PUBLIC CONSULTATION**

I write with regard to the above public consultation on the draft North Dorset Local Plan and I thank you for the opportunity to comment. We act on behalf of Sherborne School and Cancer Research UK and seek to make Representations on the draft North Dorset Local Plan.

As you will be aware, PCL Planning Ltd previously made representations on the Public Consultation on Key Issues for the Revision of the Draft New Plan for North Dorset which ran from October 2012 to December 2012 (our reference DS/PCL/1245b; letter dated 20<sup>th</sup> December 2012). Within this letter we raised substantial concerns regarding the overall planned provision for housing over the proposed plan period (2011 to 2016).

We remain concerned that these substantial concerns have not been properly addressed and we, therefore, make these updated representations.

**Levels of housing provision within the District**

We are concerned that the draft North Dorset Local Plan does not provide for a sufficient supply of new homes within the District.

Policy 6 Housing Distribution seeks to ensure at least 4,200 net additional homes will be provided in North Dorset between 2011 and 2026 at an average annual rate of about 280 dwellings per annum.

The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) is clear in its advice that Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) should deliver a wide choice of high

quality homes and "boost significantly the supply of housing" (paragraph 47). To do this, the Framework states that LPAs should:

*"use their evidence base to ensure that their Local Plan meets the full, objectively assessed needs for market and affordable housing in the housing market area, as far as is consistent with the policies set out in this Framework, including identifying key sites which are critical to the delivery of the housing strategy over the plan period"* (paragraph 47).

Further, paragraph 182 of the Framework identifies that to be found sound plans will need to be:

- **Positively prepared** and based on a strategy which seeks to meet objectively assessed development and infrastructure requirements including unmet requirements in neighboring authorities where it is reasonable to do so and is consistent with achieving sustainable development
- **Justified** i.e. that the plan is the most appropriate strategy when considered against reasonable alternatives based on proportionate evidence
- **Effective** i.e. that the plan should be deliverable over its period and based on effective joint working
- **Consistent with national policy** including the policies contained in the Framework

Having regard to the above guidance within the Framework, it is appropriate to have regard to the evidence base to the draft Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) when assessing housing requirement since this represents the most up to date, robust and tested evidence base available. The draft RSS made provision for 7,000 net additional dwellings in North Dorset over the period 2006 – 2026, at an average annual rate of 350 dwellings per annum. Therefore, in accordance with the emerging RSS, over the plan period 2011 – 2026, 5,250 new dwellings should be provided on a district wide basis.

LPAs in the Dorset sub region commissioned a Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) in 2008. That SHMA identified the total net annual

housing need in North Dorset to be 399 dwellings per annum (paragraph 8.27 of the North Dorset HNDS, SHMA 2008). 399 dwellings per annum would equate to 5,985 dwellings over the plan period which is broadly consistent with the emerging RSS.

However, the SHMA has since been 'updated', culminating in an updated SHMA dated January 2012 (SHMA 2012). In short the Council are now proceeding on the basis of a reduced housing requirement. The North Dorset SHMA Summary Report (2012) states at paragraph 5.10 that:

***"Trend-based data suggests household growth of around 273 per annum for the period from 2011 to 2031 and so a housing delivery figure (on the basis of this figure) might be around 280 per annum (to take account of a small vacancy rate)".***

It is surprising that the Council have been able to demonstrate that the overall need for housing has fallen since the examination of the emerging RSS and the preparation of the Council's own SHMA (2008).

However, paragraph 1.4 of the SHMA Update states that:

*"A key part of the process was to update household survey data used in the original SHMA report. There have been a number of changes recorded both locally and nationally which will impact on local housing requirements. These include a large increase in the size of the private rented sector, a decrease in the propensity for households to move and decreases in property prices. These have all been factored in to the updating of survey data and the outputs derived from the information base with key sources of information used including ONS/CLG population/household projections, data from the English Housing Survey and Council records".*

It is contended that there are a number of reasons why it is inappropriate to rely on the trend-based population projections of the recent past and therefore inappropriate to rely on the updated SHMA to provide the evidence base for future housing growth in the District.

It has long been recognised that the planning context at both the national and local level during the preceding decade up to 2011 has constrained the supply

of deliverable housing land and contributed towards the lowest levels of post-war housing delivery.

This has been compounded by the economic market circumstances arising out of the recession with the house building industry one of the first to experience its impacts. The consequences of these economic circumstances was to further suppress housing delivery as the industry was affected by a combination of market collapse and a severe squeeze in funding by lending institutions.

In light of the above, it is considered inappropriate to base future planning on the SHMA Update which was informed by changes arising from a severe economic downturn across the country. It is likely that the suppression of housing delivery has acted as a brake on the formation of new households. As paragraph 1.4 of the SHMA Update observes a large increase in the private rented sector. It is likely that this is a direct result of the economic downturn forcing those who might otherwise seek to purchase a home and set up a new household, to defer doing so in favour of living in the District. This will impact upon the statistics relating to household formation and headship rates since sharers who are unable, or unwilling, to afford to set up their own households, both reduce the rates of household formation and increase the higher occupancy levels of shared accommodation.

Paragraph 1.4 of the SHMA Update also observes a decrease in the propensity for households to move and notes a decrease in property prices. Updating data on these issues is clearly highly likely to be skewed negatively in a period of economic downturn.

The advice set out in paragraph 158 of the Framework is of particular relevance in relation to contextual considerations:

*"Each local planning authority should ensure that the Local Plan is based on adequate, up-to-date and relevant evidence about the economic, social and environmental characteristics and prospects for the area. Local Planning authorities should ensure that their assessment of and strategies for housing, employment and other uses are integrated, and that they **take full account of relevant market and economic signals**" (own bold).*



There would appear to be a distinct lack of regard for this evidential requirement in the Council's approach to the assessment of housing requirements. The Framework is clear in its aim that LPAs should boost significantly the supply of housing. This should be done by taking a broader view of the evidence base, not updating the evidence during an economic down turn but viewing housing building as securing positive economic advantages and investment in an area.

In our view, the plan should be prepared to meet the higher figure (of 5,250 as supported by the draft RSS and the SHMA) over the plan period.

This is further compounded by the evidence within the SHMA Update which states that to meet existing affordable housing needs alone, the Council would need to secure 387 units of affordable housing per annum if all needs are to be met (in the five year period from 2011 to 2016).

Further, the matter of general housing provision over the period 2006 to 2013 (which formed part of the plan period for the draft RSS) also needs to be considered. The emerging RSS advised a provision of 2,450 new homes over this period however, the Council's AMR 2013 demonstrates that 1653 new net additional dwellings have been provided. There has therefore been a shortfall to date of some 797 dwellings which should be planned for, to be provided in the next five years.

### **Distribution of new housing provision**

Draft Policy 2: Core Spatial Strategy seeks to focus the majority of housing growth and other development at the main towns in the District, Blandford (Forum and St Mary), Gillingham, Shaftesbury and Sturminster Newton. The Council has been consistent in seeking to ensure that at least a third of new housing provision is at Gillingham (which is the largest town in North Dorset). PCL Planning agrees in general with the Council's approach to directing the majority of housing growth at the main settlements as the most sustainable approach for the District.

### **Housing Provision at Gillingham**

Having regard to the above, in our opinion, at least 2,300 new homes should be provided at Gillingham over the period 2006 to 2026, of which 204 new

dwellings have been provided over the period 2006 - 2011, leaving a balance of 2,096 new dwellings to be provided over the plan period at Gillingham. Therefore the Local Plan needs to allocate sufficient land for these dwellings.

The Council has acknowledged the low levels of growth at Gillingham to date, in its Key Issues Consultation Document (October 2012) which stated that:

*"Since 2006, Gillingham has experienced relatively low levels of growth with only 180 homes being built in the five year period to 2011 and 10 homes being built in 2011/12. The main sites that have been developed are the residual part of the Ham Farm site (about 30 homes), the former Oake Woods site at Station Road (about 40 homes), the Addison Close/New Road site (20 homes) and the former Royal Hotel site (25 homes in the 2006 to 2011 period with 10 homes being built in 2011/12).*

*The allocation adjacent to Lodden Lakes in the adopted Local Plan remains undeveloped and this will now form part of the larger southern development proposed in the draft policy" (paragraphs 11.11 and 11.12).*

The acknowledged low levels of growth since 2006 should be considered as a significant problem by the Council. Draft Policies 17 and 21 relate to future development at Gillingham. The Council largely seek to rely on the delivery a Strategic Site Allocation to the south of the existing settlement, in order to address the significant housing growth required at Gillingham. The Council considers this site allocation will accommodate 1,800 homes in total, delivered over phases, with 1,240 homes delivered by 2026.

PCL Planning are firmly of the opinion that the delivery of housing on this strategic site allocation is not likely to come forward in a timely manner and it is inappropriate to rely so heavily on the delivery of a strategic site allocation which cannot be realistically delivered within the plan period. As noted above, the strategic site allocation comprises an historic site allocation adjacent to Lodden Lakes which was already formally identified within the adopted Local Plan and still remains undeveloped, an indicator in itself of complexities in the delivery of housing on the site. Further, the supporting text for Draft Policy 21 relating to the Gillingham Strategic Site Allocation, states that a Master Plan Framework is expected to be produced:

*"to provide a comprehensive basis for informed decision-making on subsequent planning applications for development within the SSA"* (paragraph 9.19).

Paragraph 9.21 then states:

*"the Council will not support the submission of planning applications for development within the SSA until a Master Plan Framework has been produced by the developers, published for public consultation, and agreed by the Council"*.

The Council wish to see the production of a Master Plan Framework to comprehensively guide development within the allocation and will not support ad hoc applications in the absence of such a Framework. The Council, therefore, expect developers to collaboratively produce such a document, publicly consult on the Masterplan Framework and secure agreement from the Council in advance of any planning application, let alone the grant of planning permission or on-site works to deliver the housing units. Given that agreement between all parties will not necessarily be automatic and timely, this casts severe doubts over the projected time frames for housing delivery on this strategic site which is proposed to achieve the majority of the settlement's housing allocation.

Furthermore, as previously expressed in my letter dated 20<sup>th</sup> December 2012, there are numerous problems with the likely delivery of this large site which, in summary, are:

- The site is severed from the town centre by the rail line therefore access from the site, to the town, is restricted and difficult to improve.
- There are likely to be ransoms in place at the proposed points of access into the site. Even if not, then existing residents are likely to strongly oppose further development being served from these points of access.
- Access to residential development via an industrial estate is unlikely to work in practice. If it were to be considered it would significantly reduce the value (and therefore be likely to have a detrimental effect on the deliverability of the site).

- Large parts of the site are located within the flood plain and are not developable.

Therefore, in our opinion, it is plain that this site is unlikely to be able to deliver the level of new homes that are required to be accommodated at Gillingham over the plan period in a timely manner, particularly having regard to the existing backlog and the Framework's aim to "boost significantly the supply of housing" (paragraph 47).

The Council, therefore, need to allocate additional smaller, deliverable sites if housing needs are going to be met.

### **An Additional Proposed Allocation at Gillingham**

Land South of Chantry Fields (shown edged red on the attached plan) is available for development.

The suitability of the site for residential development has already been considered (by the Inspector examining the saved North Dorset District-Wide Local Plan to 2011). It was concluded at paragraph 15.1.46 of the Inspector's Report that:

*"I recommend that the Plan be modified by allocating that part of this objection site which lies outside the sewage treatment works protection area (Policy 1.16) and outside the area liable to flood (Policy 1.13) for housing."*

Despite the Council eschewing this recommendation it does not change the characteristics of the site nor its suitability for residential use. We therefore recommend that the Council amend their plan and allocate the land edged in red on the attached plan for residential use.

The site is suitable for residential development, the land is available and, given that the site lies within the ownership of just two parties who are cooperating with each other, development will be achievable within the time frame of the plan period. Unlike the Strategic Site Allocation within the draft Plan, the land South of Chantry Fields has the potential to deliver a significant number of dwellings within a five year period, contributing to the Council's housing land

supply, particularly the much needed housing requirement at Gillingham, the principal settlement.

Please do not hesitate to contact me should you require any further information regarding the above site. I look forward to the opportunity to participate in any future consultation periods and the future Examination in Public of the local plan.

Yours sincerely,



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