Cabinet

28 July 2026

Dorset Council Local Plan For Decision

Cabinet Member:
Cllr S Bartlett, Planning and Planning Enforcement

Local Councillor(s): All

Senior Leadership Team:
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Statutory Authority: Planning and Compulsory Purchase act 2004

Report status: Public (the exemption paragraph is N/A)

1. Executive summary

1.1 The national planning context for preparing the Local Plan is undergoing rapid and fundamental change, with significant implications for Dorset's current plan-making approach. The Government is reforming both the planning system and national policy, creating significant risk to continuing under the existing ("legacy") system.

1.2 A new plan-making framework is being introduced, requiring Local Plans to be prepared within an ambitious 30-month timeframe set by Government. This system includes structured "Gateway" stages to track and secure progress and introduces Spatial Development Strategies (SDS) to address strategic issues across local authority boundaries. Compared with the legacy system, this approach is more streamlined, proportionate, and reduces the risk of late-stage failure.

1.3 The Government's 2024 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) significantly increased Dorset's housing requirement, almost doubling the calculated Local Housing Need, and imposed a December 2026 submission deadline for legacy plans. Recent consultation on potential sites to meet the development needs generated over 9,000 responses, raising issues that need resolution. Further assessments of landscape impact within the National Landscapes are needed alongside further consideration of heritage impact.

1.4 As a result, it is no longer possible to produce a sound Local Plan under the legacy system by the Government-imposed deadline of December 2026. This position is reflected nationally, with many other local planning authorities transitioning to the new system. Additional risk arises from the pending 2026 NPPF, as any legacy plan would need to align with both the 2024 and 2026 Frameworks, with policies that are not compliant with the 2026 NPPF becoming redundant immediately upon adoption.

1.5 The new system offers key advantages: clearer focus on local priorities and sites, earlier weight for emerging plans in decision-making, and the introduction of Spatial Development Strategies at the regional level which will address much of the strategic matters covered by the duty to cooperate. Alignment with Wessex regional partners, who are already progressing under the new system, is critical to ensure coordinated planning, influence over strategic decisions, and optimal outcomes for Dorset.

1.6 Arrangements for moving ahead under the new plan-making system are set out in the report including delegation to the Corporate Director for Planning in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Planning for various parts of the plan-making process. The process begins with a formal Notice of Intent to Commence Plan making and a minimum four-month scoping phase. Cabinet and Full Council approval will be required for the two key consultation stages and for adoption.

1.7 Effective project management and resourcing will be essential to meeting the challenging timetable. To support delivery, it is requested that additional funding of up to £1 million is made available to secure external consultancy support.

2. Recommendations

2.1 It is recommended that:

a) A decision is made to progress the Dorset Council Local Plan via the new plan-making system;
b) The governance arrangements outlined in the report are agreed delegating the detailed arrangements to Cabinet Member for Planning in consultation with the Corporate Director for Planning;
c) The indicative timetable for the production of the local plan in Appendix 1 is agreed with the detail delegated to the Cabinet member for Planning and the Corporate Director for Planning to review and vary this timetable and update and publish when necessary;
d) The content and publication of the formal Notice of Intent to Commence Plan Making included in Appendix 2 is agreed;
e) The outline of the focused Scoping Consultation and Consultation Strategy in Appendix 3 is noted with the detail to be agreed with the Cabinet Member for Planning;
f) The spend of up to £1,000,000, initially funded from Local Plan Reserves, to bring in additional support to the project as and when needed is agreed;

3. Reason for the recommendations

3.1 To put the necessary arrangements in place to enable the Dorset Council Local Plan to be prepared as quickly and efficiently as possible under the new plan-making system.

4. The Dorset Council Local Plan

4.1 The national planning context within which the Local Plan is prepared, is undergoing fundamental and rapid change. The Government is both reforming the plan-making system itself and significantly revising national policy. These changes have direct and substantial implications for how and indeed whether it is appropriate to continue progressing our Local Plan under the existing, or "legacy" plan-making system.

4.2 The Government is introducing a new plan-making system, with an expectation that local plans will be prepared within a 30-month timeframe. It also introduces Spatial Development Strategies (SDS) that are produced at a more strategic level, across local authority boundaries. The new local planmaking system incorporates a series of formal Gateways, enabling local planning authorities to "bank" progress at key stages and reduce the risk of failure late in the process. This represents a more structured, streamlined approach compared to the current system.

4.3 At the same time, the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) published by the Government in 2024 had a significant effect on the evidence base requirements and plan strategy. The NPPF almost doubled Dorset's calculated Local Housing Need and imposed a strict deadline of December 2026 for submission under the legacy system. In response, the Council ran a round of consultation in mid-2025 on housing opportunity sites to meet this significantly increased requirement.

4.4 That consultation generated over 9,000 representations and raised new and complex issues that must be properly addressed for the local plan to be found sound. These include the strengthened legal duty in relation to National Landscapes, which came into force on 23 October 2023 and places greater emphasis on their protection and enhancement. Addressing these matters requires further evidence gathering, analysis and policy development including the testing of potential transport impacts. The testing of transport impacts should be iterative, but the government's deadline only allows sufficient time for the testing of a single development scenario.

4.5 Advice from the Planning Inspectorate has identified additional areas where further work is needed to address specific national policy requirements. This includes the need to agree a position statement with statutory bodies on specific issues such as the implications for the strategic road network. In addition, several of the evidence studies resulting from the consideration of additional sites need to be undertaken sequentially.

4.6 Taken together, this further work means it is no longer realistic or deliverable to prepare a sound plan under the legacy system within the Government's prescribed deadline. Many other local planning authorities, including our Wessex partners in BCP, Wiltshire and Somerset Councils are in the same position, moving to continue their plan preparation under the new system.

4.7 A new version of the NPPF is expected in 2026. Any local plan prepared under the legacy system would need to demonstrate conformity not only with the 2024 NPPF but also with this emerging 2026 version (when published). Policies that fail to align with the updated framework would risk becoming immediately out of date upon adoption, undermining the value of the plan and the significant resources invested in its preparation.

4.8 By contrast, the regulations for the new plan-making system, laid on 25 March 2026 introduce a more proportionate and streamlined process, with a clearer focus on meeting needs and other local issues and a reduced risk of plans failing at examination. They enable the emerging strategy to carry greater weight earlier in the plan preparation process, strengthening our ability to manage development in the interim until the final local plan is adopted.

4.9 Importantly, the new system also reshapes how strategic, cross-boundary issues are addressed. The current "Duty to Cooperate," which has been a frequent cause of plan failure, will largely be replaced by Spatial Development Strategies (SDS). This means that the local plan only needs to consider local cross-boundary matters with wider strategic issues such as housing distribution and major infrastructure, being addressed at the broader geographic scale through the SDS.

4.10 All Wessex partners are progressing under the new plan-making system. Alignment with our Wessex partners on the new plan-making system is therefore critical. This will enable coordinated plan preparation and consideration of strategically significant growth and infrastructure provision across the wider area. Choosing not to align would significantly diminish our ability to influence these discussions and secure the best outcomes for Dorset.

5. Arrangements for moving ahead on the new plan-making system

5.1 The preparation of the Local Plan under the new plan-making system will follow a series of statutory stages, beginning with early scoping and progressing through consultation, gateway assessments, submission, examination and adoption. The Government require Local Planning Authorities to prepare a local plan over a 30-month period after the conclusion of at least a four-month scoping period. There is a need to follow the regulatory requirements of the new plan-making system; however, much of the work that has been undertaken to date can be used to inform the local plan as it passes through each stage.

5.2 Stage 1 – Scoping: The process will commence with publication of a 'Notice of Intent to Commence Plan making', which provides formal notification of the Council's intention to prepare a Local Plan. A Local Plan timetable must be published at this stage, setting out key milestones and consultation periods to meet the 30-month requirement. The timetable must be reviewed and updated as necessary and updated following each key stage in the process.

5.3 The 30-month timetable represents a significant challenge for all involved. Many factors are outside of Dorset Council's control such as further changes to National Planning Policy or capacity of the Planning Inspectorate to provide timely input at

each Gateway stage and at examination. The new plan-making process is also untried and untested and therefore it is unclear whether it is possible to prepare a local plan within 30-months. It is anticipated that the timetable will require regular updating to reflect this challenge and will be subject to change.

5.4 A draft Notice of Intent to Start Plan-making is included in Appendix 2 of this report, and an indicative Local Plan Timetable is included in Appendix 1. It is proposed that responsibility for agreeing and publishing the timetable along with any future updates, is delegated to the Cabinet Member for Planning in consultation with the Corporate Director for Planning.

5.5 The scoping stage must run for a period of at least four months from the point of publishing the Notice of Intent to Commence Plan-making. During this period a scoping consultation must be run. This consultation is focused on the specific and general consultees and will seek views on the scope and content of the local plan. Although the target audience is the specific and general consultees, it will be open to all interested parties to input.

5.6 It is anticipated that the local plan will include a vision for the future of the area supported by no more than ten measurable outcomes to monitor the delivery of the vision, aims and objectives for the local plan area and a spatial strategy for managing growth. It will also include the level of growth that is expected to take place over the period of the local plan with site allocations and policies to achieve this growth and an approach to deliver the necessary infrastructure to support the growth. Supporting infrastructure may include, but is not limited to, playing pitches and other sports facilities, schools, local waste management facilities, active travel infrastructure, health facilities, community buildings, and other social and community infrastructure.

5.7 In addition to the content and scope of the local plan, the scoping consultation will ask about how to engage with the specific and general consultation groups during the plan preparation. This will help inform the consultation and engagement strategy for the local plan.

5.8 A summary of consultation responses will be prepared and published to inform the later stages of plan-making.

5.9 Stage 2 – Gateway 1: Following the scoping stage, the Council must publish a Gateway 1 self-assessment statement confirming readiness to proceed with plan preparation. This assessment will consider governance and project management arrangements, the updated local plan timetable, the details of the approach to consultation and engagement, the anticipated content of the plan and the arrangements for undertaking environmental assessments of the plan as it progresses. The publication of the Gateway 1 self-assessment statement is the formal start of the 30-month timeline for the production of the local plan.

5.10 Stage 3 – Local Plan Content and Evidence Consultation: Once the Gateway 1 statement has been published, a consultation on the local plan content and evidence is required. This consultation is open to everyone who may have an interest in the local plan to comment on and must run for at least six weeks. The consultation must

include as a minimum, a draft vision for the area, measurable outcomes, any aims and objectives of the local plan, the amount and type of development and any local policies needed. It is likely that this content will include more detail than the minimum required including proposed sites for meeting the development needs of the area.

5.11 This is a key stage in shaping the Local Plan. A report will be brought to Cabinet for approval of the consultation material prior to publication.

5.12 Stage 4 – Gateway 2: After completion of the Content and Evidence Consultation and the publication of the responses received, the Council must seek observations and advice on the work undertaken from an appointed person, most likely a Planning Inspector. This stage provides an early independent review of the progress towards the creation of a sound plan. The advice received will be published and used to inform preparation of the draft plan.

5.13 Stage 5 – Consultation on the proposed Local Plan: The proposed draft local plan will be subject to consultation for a minimum period of 8 weeks. The draft local plan will include a vision, outcomes and strategy for the area, a full set of proposed policies and sites to meet the development needs of the area

to achieve the vision, a policies map showing the spatial extents of policies and allocations, and the necessary evidence and supporting material.

5.14 This stage represents an important opportunity for all those with an interest in the local plan to comment on the detailed content of the proposals. This draft Local Plan will be presented to Cabinet and Full Council for approval prior commencement of consultation. It would also be intended to seek delegated authority to the Cabinet Member for Planning in consultation with the Corporate Director for Planning to submit the local plan for Gateway 3 assessment and then examination subject to there being no significant issues raised through the consultation that materially change the content of the local plan.

5.15 Stage 6 - Gateway 3: Prior to submission for examination, the Council must pass through Gateway 3, where the appointed person (likely to be a Planning Inspector) assesses whether the prescribed requirements have been met. The prescribed requirements include an assessment of the content of the proposed draft local plan, whether the correct process has been followed in the preparation of the local plan, whether the submission documents have been prepared and meet the requirements, and that the necessary arrangements are in place to enable the examination of the local plan.

5.16 The results of this assessment will be published. Where the appointed person concludes that the requirements are not met, the Council will need to undertake further work to address the issues raise and repeat Gateway 3.

5.17 Stage 7 – Submission, Examination and Adoption: Following a successful Gateway 3 assessment, the Local Plan will be submitted for independent examination. The examination will test whether the local plan is sound. If necessary, the examination may be paused to allow further work to be undertaken. If the Local Plan is found sound at examination, it will be brought to Full Council for formal adoption.

5.18 To ensure effective delivery of the Local Plan within the required timeframe, it will be important for appropriate governance arrangements to be put in place alongside the necessary resources.

5.19 Detailed governance arrangements will be prepared and agreed with the Cabinet Member for Planning.

5.20 It is proposed that authority is delegated to the Corporate Director for Planning in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Planning to update and publish the local plan timetable, to submit information for each of the Gateway Assessments, and to publish the statutory notices and other relevant documentation such as the outcomes of consultation.

5.21 It is proposed that the content of the proposed scoping consultation will be delegated to the Corporate Director for Planning in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Planning. The Stage 3 – Local Plan Content and

Evidence Consultation material will be brought to Cabinet for approval prior to commencing consultation.

5.22 The Stage 5 – Consultation on the proposed Local Plan will be brought to Cabinet and then Full Council for agreement prior to the start of the consultation. Delegated authority will also be sought at the same time to submit the relevant material for Gateway 3 assessment and if successful at Gateway 3, to submit for Examination subject to the consultation and Gateway 3 assessment not raising any issues that materially affect the content of the local plan.

5.23 Once the local plan is found sound at examination, it will be brought to Full Council for formal adoption.

5.24 Additional resources will be required specifically to assist with processing consultation responses, to assist with some evidence gathering and to support the writing of the Local Plan. An external consultancy has been engaged to provide support under existing delegated arrangements. However, it is anticipated that the overall cost of this support will exceed current approved limits. At the point of drafting this report, spend against the agreed budget as part of this contract are zero but ‘tasks’ are due to start shortly with a value of up to £225,000. Cabinet is therefore requested to approve additional expenditure of up to £1,000,000 to support delivery of the Local Plan as part of this contract.

6. Alternative options considered

6.1 A thorough examination of the option of continuing to prepare the local plan under the legacy system has been undertaken. However, due to the significant increase in calculated Local Housing Need, the issues raise through the consultation, the need to gather further evidence to be able to demonstrate a deliverable local plan, and the need to address some policy issues highlighted by the Planning Inspectorate, it is not possible to meet the Government’s hard deadline of December 2026. As such, the only option is to proceed with preparing a local plan under the new plan-making system and to put arrangements in place to proceed at pace.

7. Legal considerations

7.1 The arrangements for plan-making under the new plan-making system are set out in the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2026. The process outlined in the report summarises the key stages of plan-making set out in these regulations. It is for Dorset Council to consider which approach to take to preparing the local plan but getting complete coverage of local plans across the whole country as quickly as possible is a government priority.

8. Financial implications

8.1 In order to proceed rapidly with the production of the local plan, additional resources are needed. Additional resource is already in place with the ability to spend up to £500,000 however it is possible that this value may be exceeded through the 30-month timetable. For this reason, and to avoid future delay, it is requested that this limit is raised to £1,000,000. This will be in addition to the existing local plan budget and resourcing.

9. Natural environment, climate & ecology implications

9.1 Producing a local plan has far reaching implications. It provides a framework to guide decisions on planning applications directing development to locations that are the least sensitive and that reduce reliance on car-based travel. It helps to balance growth with the conservation of biodiversity and landscape impact, mitigating any impact.

9.2 The local plan will play a role in both mitigation and adaptation of climate change. Directing development to locations where there are alternatives to car travel not only reduces greenhouse gas emissions but also reduces congestion on the roads. It will steer development to locations with lowest risk of flooding and coastal change and build green infrastructure into developments to help with urban cooling.

10. Well-being and health implications

10.1 Having a decent and secure home is key to good health and well-being and the local plan will provide a framework for the delivery of housing of all types and employment opportunities to meet needs. Active lifestyles will be enabled through well designed places and the local plan, alongside the emerging Dorset Design Code will set the policy framework for requiring good design.

11. Other implications

11.1 Due to the wide-ranging nature of the local plan, its production will contribute towards many Council objectives.

11.2 The timetable to adopt the local plan under the new plan-making system would result in a short delay of around six months over that anticipated under the legacy system. However, as the likelihood of preparing a sound plan under the legacy system is minimal, it is considered more appropriate to move on to the new system.

12. Risk implications

12.1 The risks associated with trying to meet the Government's deadline of submitting a local plan under the legacy system are considered so significant that it is not possible to proceed on this basis.

12.2 However, the new system is untried, and it is uncertain how long each stage will take. Multiple local planning authorities are moving onto the new planmaking system meaning that there may be resource constraints at statutory consultees and at the Planning Inspectorate which may impact the timetable. By putting in place governance arrangements, delegated authority for parts of the plan-making process and securing additional external resources, the risks are reduced.

12.3 HAVING CONSIDERED: the risks associated with this decision; the level of risk has been identified as:

Current Risk: High

Residual Risk: Medium

13. Equalities

13.1 This report focuses on the timetable and process for producing a local plan rather than the content of the local plan itself. As such, an Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) is not considered necessary. An EqIA will be produced for the local plan during its production so that the implications of the proposed policy framework can be fully considered

14. Appendices

Appendix 1: Indicative Local Plan Timetable

Appendix 2: Notice of Intention to Commence Plan-making

Appendix 3: Scoping Consultation Outline and Local Plan Engagement Strategy Preparation

15. Background papers

Timetable for the production of the Dorset Council Local Plan under the legacy system: The Local Development Scheme for Dorset Council March 2025 - Dorset Council

Report sign-off

This report has been through the internal report clearance process and has been signed off by the Director for Assurance and Governance (Monitoring Officer), the Director for Resources (Section 151 Officer) and the appropriate Cabinet Member(s)

Dorset Council Local Plan

Indicative Local Plan Timetable

1. Introduction

The Dorset Council Local Plan timetable will come into effect on 31 July 2026, at the point it is published on the Local Plan website. It will replace the Local Plan timetable shown in the Local Development Scheme (March 2025). All other timetables and schedules in the Local Development Scheme (March 2025) are valid until reviewed.

Once adopted, the Dorset Council Local Plan will cover the whole of the Dorset Council area. It will include policies and allocations to guide the development of land in Dorset except for strategic waste infrastructure and minerals developments. Minerals developments and strategic waste facilities will be addressed through separate Minerals and Waste plans.

2. The Timetable

Dorset Council is required to review this timetable on a monthly basis and update it as and when necessary and when each stage in the plan-making process is reached. The Local Plan timetable will therefore change over time. This indicative timetable sets out the intended dates for key early stages in the plan-making process for the local plan along with broad timetables for the latter stages.

Stage	Date
Publication of Local Plan Timetable	31-Jul-2026
Publish notice of Intention to Commence Local Plan Preparation	31-Jul-2026
Publish notice of Scoping Consultation – start of consultation (including consultation with the statutory consultation bodies on the Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report)	21-Sep-2026
Date by which Scoping Consultation comments must be received – close of consultation	25-Oct-2026
Gateway 1: Self-assessment	30-Nov-2026
Publish summary of Scoping Consultation	Mar/Apr-2027
Publish notice of Local Plan Content and Evidence Consultation – start of consultation	Mar/Apr-2027
Date by which Local Plan Content and Evidence Consultation comments must be received – close of consultation	Apr/Jun-2027
Gateway 2: Seek observations and advice from Planning Inspectorate	Jul/Sep-2027

Publish notice of Proposed Local Plan Consultation – start of consultation	Jan/Mar-2028
Date by which Proposed Local Plan Consultation comments must be received	Mar/May-2028
Gateway 3: Seek advice from Planning Inspectorate on whether prescribed requirements have been met	May/Aug-2028
Submit Local Plan for Examination	Jul/Oct-2028
Adopt Local Plan	Feb/Aug-2029

Published: 31 July 2026

Notice of Intention to Commence Plan-making

On 31 July 2026, Dorset Council gives Notice of its Intention to Commence the production of the Dorset Council Local Plan.

This notice is a required stage in the new plan making system and marks the formal start of the Dorset Council Local Plan process. Publication of this notice is required by Regulation 19 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2026.

Title of the plan: Dorset Council Local Plan

The Dorset Council Local Plan will not cover any strategic Minerals or Waste matters. All strategic Minerals and Waste matters will be covered in a separate Dorset Council Minerals and Waste Plan(s) however the Dorset Council Local Plan will identify and allocate sites for one or more local waste facilities such as household recycling centres where there is an urgent need for such a facility. Local Plan timetable

The Local Plan Timetable sets out the key milestones for preparing the plan. It can be accessed at the following locations:

- https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/planning-buildings-land/planningpolicy/dorset-council-local-plan
- County Hall, Colliton Park, Dorchester, DT1 1XJ

The Local Plan timetable will be reviewed monthly and updated when necessary, including at key stages throughout the plan-making process. We expect to pass through Gateway 1 on 30 November 2026.

What geographic area will the Local Plan cover

The Dorset Council Local Plan will cover the administrative area of Dorset Council (ONS E06000059). This area is shown on the map below. The GIS boundary of the area can be downloaded here

Published: 31 July 2026


Amesbury
Glastonbury
Bridgwater
Bruton
East Gomeldon
North Petherton
Mere
Salisbury
Mill Cross
Somerton
Wincanton
Tuckingmill
Lower Knapp
Wyke
Taunton
Wiltown
The Marsh
Critchell's Green
Northover
North Town
New Town
Shaftesbury
Towns End
East Compton
Wick
Stalbridge
Yeovil
Pound
Ilminster
Newton
Fordingbridge
Kingston
Crewkerne
Verwood
Chard
Blandford Forum
Holway
Ringwood
Beaminster
Honiton
Ferndown
Axminster
Ensbury Park
Burton
New Milton
Colyton
Bridport
Lyme Regis
Dorchester
Bournemouth
Seaton
East Burton
Wareham
Sandbanks
Broadwey
Weymouth
Swanage
Fortuneswell
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Dorset Council Local Plan

Scoping Consultation Outline and Local Plan Engagement Strategy Preparation

1. Introduction

As part of the new plan-making system councils are expected to spend time preparing before formally starting work on their new local plan. This is to ensure that councils are ready to start the 30-month plan making process and is part of the broader aims for new local plans to be prepared faster and for the process of engaging on local plans to be more accessible.

There are several preparatory tasks that need to be undertaken, including scoping the anticipated content of the new local plan and the preparation of an engagement strategy. The scoping stage must run for a minimum of 4 months during which a scoping consultation must be undertaken. The scoping consultation takes place in advance of Gateway 1 of the plan making process when the 30-month plan making process formally begins.

2. The Scoping Consultation

2.1. Purpose of the scoping consultation

Councils retain discretion of the precise content of the consultation provided the matters are relevant to the preparation of the local plan. The new local plan making regulations do however stipulate that the purpose of the scoping consultation is primarily to inform:

a) the content of the local plan;
b) how councils should engage with interested parties as part of the plan making process.

2.2. Content of the scoping consultation

The consultation is scheduled at the start of the new plan making process. It will not include the detail of development or policy proposals, but the outcomes from the scoping consultation should allow the council to:

- start to define the main areas or locally specific subject matters which will be addressed in the new local plan;
- form a draft a vision and to begin to define measurable outcomes which can be used to determine progress towards fulfilling the vision;
- identify and scope the evidence which needs to be gathered to guide the plan's preparation;

- understand need for different types of development in the Dorset Council area;
- set out spatial options and strategies to meet needs and local plan content.

2.3. Issues that will not be covered in the scoping consultation

At this early stage in the plan making process we will not be:

- presenting any details of sites which could be developed to meet the area's needs – the consultation will not seek views on detailed site allocations or present preferred development sites as site-specific matters will be considered at later stages of plan preparation;
- seeking views on sites for development;
- setting out spatial development strategies to meet Dorset's development needs;
- setting out detailed planning policies.

2.4. Issues that will be covered in the scoping consultation

As part of the consultation, we will be seeking views on:

- how we should engage as part of the plan making process.
- the broad topics which should be addressed in the new local plan – as part of this we will outline the scope of National Decision Making Policies in the emerging National Planning Policy Framework and the areas which are likely to fall within the remit of local plan policies.

  For example emerging National Decision Making Policy 'PM13: Setting standards' defines a restrictive approach for local plan policies on quantitative standards, and clarifies that plan policies should not cover matters which are already addressed by Building Regulations other than in relation to accessibility standards or water efficiency. This means that the new local plan is not likely to include locally specific quantitative standards relating to environmental performance of buildings.
- the locally specific issues which need to be addressed in the local plan, such as those relating to approaches to the mitigation of habitats sites impacts.
- the scope of evidence needed to support statutory environmental assessment (including Strategic Environmental Assessment and Habitats Regulation Assessment)

The formal notice of scoping consultation will identify the matters on which representations are invited and the date by which representations must be received. It will be made available in accordance with the statutory publication requirements, including publication on the council's website and availability for inspection.

2.5. Next steps

Following the consultation, the council will publish a summary of the scoping consultation (including the bodies invited), the main issues raised and how the council has had regard to

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the representations at that stage. The outcomes of the scoping consultation will inform the preparation of the local plan.

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3. Engagement Strategy

3.1. Introduction

The new planning system requires the preparation of a strategy for engaging the community and other key stakeholders in the preparation of the local plan. This appendix sets out key community engagement principles, the stages of consultation that will be undertaken, who will be consulted and methods that may be used. This will be developed into a full draft engagement strategy with input from the consultation and engagement team.

We will then seek input on the engagement strategy through the scoping consultation and invite people to help shape this strategy. The final engagement strategy will define target audiences and set out clear objectives for consultation.

3.2. Community Engagement Principles

Good quality engagement is essential to provide a strong foundation for the local plan. It is important to engage with a diverse range of groups and people, including bodies with roles such as environmental, housing and transport, parish councils, businesses, voluntary groups and members of the public.

Key principles of good engagement include:

- Starting engagement early
- Being proactive
- Helping people to understand the plan making process and how their feedback will be used
- Using mixed methods of engagement to gather a broad range of insights and ensure consultations are accessible for all

Equalities Act

Under the Equalities Act, the Council must pay “due regard" to the need to the following considerations when preparing the local plan:

1. Eliminate unlawful discrimination.
2. Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic[1] and those who do not.
3. Foster good relations between different groups.

These considerations will be of particular importance at public consultation stages.

[1] Protected characteristics include age, disability, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, pregnancy and maternity, and gender reassignment

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Digital first

The Government strongly advocates a 'digital first' approach to engagement and presentation of documents. Local planning authorities should prioritise digital formats and comply with defined data standards.

3.3. Stages of local plan consultation

There are three stages of consultation under the new planning system, as set out below.

Scoping Consultation (Regulation 20)

When?

This consultation stage takes place after the council publishes a notice of intention to commence local plan preparation, and before 'Gateway 1'.

Purpose

The purpose of this consultation is to invite early engagement around what the local plan should contain and how the local planning authority should engage with people and organisations when preparing the local plan.

Length of consultation

Minimum of 21 days.

Who should be invited to take part?

- Specific consultation bodies that the council considers may have an interest in the preparation of the local plan
- General consultation bodies the council think appropriate
- Other residents or people can also respond

Post consultation

A summary of the outcomes of the scoping consultation will be prepared. The community engagement strategy will be reviewed and finalised. The scoping consultation will inform the content of the proposed local plan.

Consultation on proposed local plan content and evidence (Regulation 23)

When?

This consultation stage takes place after 'gateway 1'.

Purpose

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The purpose of this consultation is to share the proposed content of the local plan and evidence that has been prepared to support the local plan. This would include:

- a proposed vision and measurable outcomes
- any proposed aims and objectives
- proposed spatial strategy
- summary of evidence we intend to gather and details of any evidence we already have

This is also an opportunity to engage on site options.

Length of consultation

Minimum of 6 weeks.

Who should be invited to take part?

- Specific consultation bodies that the council considers may have an interest in the preparation of the local plan
- General consultation bodies the council think appropriate
- Residents or people carrying out business in the area the council considers appropriate
- Anyone who requested to be notified of this consultation

Post consultation

A summary of the outcomes of the consultation will be prepared. This will inform the content of the proposed local plan.

Consultation on the proposed local plan (Regulation 27)

When?

This consultation stage takes place 'Gateway 2'.

Purpose

The purpose of this consultation is to publish the final proposed local plan. A map of proposed local plan policies and any evidence reports are also published, as well as any other supporting documents that will be submitted to the Planning Inspectorate.

Length of consultation

A minimum of 8 weeks.

Who should be invited to take part?

- Specific consultation bodies that the council considers may have an interest in the preparation of the local plan
- General consultation bodies the council think appropriate
- Residents or people carrying out business in the area the council considers appropriate
- Anyone who requested to be notified of this consultation

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Post consultation

A summary of the outcomes of the consultation will be published. The council will make any updates necessary to the local plan and supporting evidence and will then move on to 'gateway 3', before submitting the local plan to the Planning Inspectorate for examination.

3.4. Engagement methods

A mix of methods can be used to enable engagement at each stage of consultation. The engagement will follow that outlined in the community engagement strategy, will be published following the scoping stage.

For each stage this will include:

- Publishing the consultation and questionnaire on a digital platform
- Inviting consultees to respond as set out under 'Who should be invited to take part'
- Publishing a notice on our website and at county hall

Other methods of engagement may include the following, which can be selected as appropriate depending on the consultation stage and content:

- Use of map based platforms
- Press releases
- Social media
- Digital storytelling
- Displaying information in libraries
- Public exhibitions or drop in events
- Engagement with Dorset Youth Council and other specific under-represented groups

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