

Report to the parish council 5/9/24

Cllr Jill Haynes Chalk Valleys Ward

Dear Clerks, Councillors and members of the public,

After my report on Housing matters last month this time I am providing an update on some of the proposed central Government changes to planning. The proposals are out to consultation at the moment but will have a considerable impact on Dorset if they are implemented.

On 30 July, the Government made a Written Ministerial Statement and announced a consultation on a series of changes to the planning system, including a draft revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). Responses are invited by 24 September. (So a very short time frame!)

The proposed changes aim to increase house building across the country. There is a new standard methodology for calculating housing targets, which would result in them being significantly higher. Targets would be mandatory rather than advisory, and where they cannot be met due to constraints, then the potential for neighbouring councils to meet them should be examined. There would be greater flexibility around potential development within the Green Belt, where necessary to meet housing requirements. New legislation would be introduced to require a level of strategic planning across the country, and in the meantime the existing 'duty to cooperate' is proposed to be strengthened. All councils are urged to bring up to date local plans in place as soon as possible. Changes to the process of preparing local plans, as previously proposed, are still due to take effect, but the timing of their introduction will be later, and councils are advised not to wait for that change before progressing their plans. These changes will have very significant implications for the preparation of the Dorset Council Local Plan, which will need to be based on the new higher housing targets. The consultation also includes suggestions for increasing planning application fees, so that the fees would cover a greater proportion of the costs of considering applications.

The most significant implication for this Council is the change to the standard methodology for calculating housing targets. **The standard methodology housing target for Dorset Council, under the proposed new methodology, will increase from 1,793 homes a year to 3,230, which is well beyond the scope of the options we consulted on in the 2021 local plan consultation.** To put the Dorset figures into further context, there are currently 10,128 homes with planning permission and not yet built, and a further 5,376 allocated in plans: a total supply of 19,186. **Planning for new homes does not guarantee their provision, and it is not certain that the market would be able to deliver the level of increase proposed.** The consultation documents say that environmental constraints **may** prevent the targets being achievable in some

areas, and this is likely to be the case in Dorset, with its two National Landscapes and variety of highly protected habitats sites. This will however require strong arguments, a full review of green belt opportunities, and examination of whether any unmet need could be met in neighbouring areas.

There are over 100 questions to be answered in the consultation document and the Dorset Council response will be debated at the Cabinet meeting on 10th September.

I totally agree that there is a real problem with house prices both for purchase and for rent and that there are insufficient numbers of affordable houses in Dorset. However, the proposals do not seem to address or understand what happens in a rural, picturesque region like Dorset. Most new houses do not go to local people but to those moving in from outside. We already have passed planning for over 10,000 homes but they developers are not bringing these forward in the current economic climate. Perhaps we can do more for locals as they have in some of the National parks where all development has a local only clause on the planning? We all know that developers agree to the affordable aspect of an application and often then say they cannot afford to build them and so all the houses become market price. Putting smaller developments into our villages without further infrastructure like schools, Dr's and bus services will not work. We need to strategically plan bigger settlements which cover all these things and that cannot be done quickly.

The proposals will just open the door for development where developers will make the most money and there will be nothing the council will be able to do as we cannot get to the numbers required for the five-year housing supply to stop them. It is verry worrying and quite frankly depressing.

Planning Enforcement

Much of my mail box is complaints about planning issues and so I though I would give a bit more information on this area. The first point to note is that it is done at the discretion of the council, and therefore not as the word implies we do not force people to do something. The idea is to ensure that matters are safe and the default is to ask for a planning application to regularise a position.

The Town and Country Planning Act 1990 ("Act") provides the main legislative framework for dealing with breaches of planning control. The Act provides the Council with the necessary powers to deal with breaches of planning control whilst the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG), provide government guidance on how the Council should deal with breaches of planning control.

The NPPF (National Planning Policy Framework) states:

Effective enforcement is important to maintain public confidence in the

planning system. Enforcement action is **discretionary**, and local planning authorities should act proportionately in responding to suspected breaches of planning control.

I think that the priority criteria chart is helpful in showing the council’s priorities in enforcement matters. A rough idea on caseload is some 40-60 matters are reported each month and a similar number are resolved or signed off although there may be some months for this to happen on an individual case.

Priority	Examples of Alleged Breach Of Planning Control
<p>1 Site visit within 1-2 working days of receipt.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unauthorised development/activity which is causing immediate and irreversible harm in the locality. • Unauthorised works to trees subject of a Tree Preservation Order or to trees in a conservation area. • Unauthorised works to a Listed Building. • Development which is likely to give rise to a serious risk of harm to public health, public safety or seriously compromise highway safety (including a Breach of Condition). • Development that may adversely affect or destroy a site of nature conservation value.
<p>2 Site visit within 10 working days from receipt.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stationing a new residential caravan in the countryside (including gypsy sites and travelling show people sites). • Works not in accordance with a planning permission. • Householder development. • Commencement of development (following the grant of planning permission) without discharging ‘pre-commencement’ conditions – except for issues such as landscaping or means of enclosure, which are unlikely to require immediate action.
<p>3 Site visit within 15 working days from receipt.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All other breaches of conditions. • Changes of use not covered by Priority 1 or 2. • Earthworks and changes to land levels. • Display of advertisements. • Agricultural developments. • Equestrian related developments. • Gates, walls, fences. • Satellite dishes. • Untidy land. <p><u>(Note: adverts and fence issues may be increased in priority if highway safety issues are identified).</u></p>