

Sherborne Town Council (STC) want to ensure critical factors of quality homes, infrastructure, natural environment, clean energy, health, education, utilities, recreational amenities, transport and employment are at the forefront of the Dorset Local Plan for Sherborne, ensuring that adequate provision is embedded within the plans for new housing development sites in and around the town.

STC appreciate that there is only one major landowner involved: Sherborne Castle Estates along with some other smaller proposals with varying ownership. This centralisation can facilitate focused collaboration among stakeholders to ensure the local community's best interests are prioritised. STC strongly feels that the landowner must control the design of future housing in our town to prevent the introduction of standard, uninspired house types. This would include locally distinctive design principles to ensure new development reflects the town's character and market town status and contributes positively to the build environment. The demand for quality homes cannot be overstated; sustainability and renewable energy technologies should be intrinsic to each property's design and construction, reflecting our shared commitment to a greener future.

The proposed introduction of over 1,800 new homes raises strong concerns, particularly regarding the feasibility of achieving this target within the current specified timescales.

A mixture of housing types and tenures, with a particular emphasis on meeting identified local need is crucial. This should include provision for affordable housing, first time buyers, downsizing opportunities for younger and older people and accommodation for families and key workers.

The current allocation of commercial sites has raised concerns regarding their location. STC urge Dorset Council thorough re-evaluation to identify more appropriate alternative sites for commercial use in line with new development in conjunction with the major landowner.

Initiating long-term leases should also be considered by the landowner to prevent commercial land from reverting to residential use, thereby maintaining the vitality of local economies.

The inclusion of wooden signage for commercial shop fronts should be integrated into any design codes to enhance aesthetic appeal and promote a sense of place and identity for Sherborne.

Infrastructure will play a pivotal role in accommodating these developments, and the phasing of projects is of utmost importance to avoid overwhelming current services and facilities. Adequate sustainable drainage and sewerage systems will need to be thoughtfully designed and integrated into any new development sites to avert potential environmental and public health issues and measures to reduce carbon emissions.

It is essential to consider the long-term accommodation of healthcare and educational facilities. Strategic planning should identify suitable locations to address future demands adequately. The potential for expanding primary and secondary school provision, must be explored thoroughly to enhance existing healthcare provision and educational opportunities for our growing population. The provision for safer routes to schools and designated drop-off and collection areas is critical for traffic management around educational settings.

Facilities should be conveniently located and accessible from primary routes to optimise transport links for residents and visitors alike. For example, a new hospital would need to be located in proximity to the A30 for ease with general transportation links.

The importance of developing new roads, layouts, and enhancing connectivity cannot be overstated. STC support the introduction of a single carriageway that serves as a gateway into town from the existing A30 dual carriageway between Sherborne and Yeovil.

Consideration on improving Marston Road is also vital in alleviating existing traffic congestion as the road approaches the town centre.

The potential to modify Kitt Hill should also be explored, especially the potential widening of the road at this location on the A30 which would significantly help with congestion through the top of town with the road serving traffic from neighbouring parishes and neighbouring towns of Yeovil and Wincanton.

There is an obvious need for the creation of new footpaths and cycleways that establish a connection to the town and the surrounding countryside, promoting sustainable travel options. Any new connectivity must be seamlessly integrated with the existing town centre to create a cohesive community layout.

The potential for 20 mph zones particularly in new developments should also be considered wherever feasible, as these measures will contribute to increased safety for pedestrians and cyclists. The transport links within our community are of vital importance, and their enhancement should be prioritised in the Dorset Local Plan and the Transport Plan for Sherborne.

Green space is an invaluable component of community wellbeing, and it is vital to create additional areas while preserving the character of existing streetscapes in the town. Effective landscaping must be prioritised to both maintain and introduce new green spaces and corridors, community gardens, along with provisions for new tree planting, provision for wildflowers, pollinators and hedging to enrich our natural environment. Local green space should be designated for recreational, ecological or heritage experience. These designations will help protect important open spaces from inappropriate development and support wider environmental objectives. Additional provision for children's play, older young people's activities, outdoor sports or fitness equipment, additional burial ground and general community space should also be catered for within new community provision.

Our town's growth must occur in a manner that thoughtfully considers the needs of its residents, future generations, characteristics and the environment.

STC in conjunction with Yeohead and Castleton Parish Council will be developing a Neighbourhood Plan for the combined parishes, and this will help shape and influence future housing development in and around the town.

Thank you for considering these points as part of this consultation process.