

infrastructure in different ways, but the starting position is in the creation of policies that can anticipate where investment is likely to be necessary.

- 3.7.2. Growth through a local plan places direct and indirect pressure on existing facilities. Development should contribute towards the provision of infrastructure but in a way which is appropriate. National planning policy expects policies within local plans to set out the financial contributions expected from development; such policies should not undermine the delivery of the plan.
- 3.7.3. We encourage respondents to indicate where there are infrastructure needs, both for specific sites and wider areas. This will allow us to plan for the needs of development and to secure infrastructure provision through the most appropriate methods.
- 3.7.4. We currently use a combination of planning obligations and the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) to secure infrastructure when development takes place. Understanding future needs will enable us to progress a revised Community Infrastructure Levy charging schedule alongside the preparation of the Local Plan.

Question 8: Is there any important infrastructure that needs to be delivered alongside new homes in the Western/Central/South Eastern/Northern area?

4. Housing Delivery Strategy

- 4.1.1. National policy emphasises that the Government's aim is to boost the supply of new homes. We are required to plan to meet need for all types of homes and ensure that there is a sufficient amount and variety of land available to meet these needs. In addition to this, we want to meet local needs in well-designed sustainable communities.

4.2. Local Housing Need and Housing Delivery

- 4.2.1. National policy requires us to plan to meet the need for new homes in Dorset using a local housing needs assessment as a key part of the evidence. Planning for new homes should be based on a local housing need figure calculated using the Standard Method set out in national planning practice guidance.

- 4.2.2. A joint Dorset Council and BCP Council Local Housing Needs Assessment was produced in 2021⁶ but in December 2024, a change to the Standard Method was introduced. This change means we will need to refresh the housing needs assessment before the Local Plan is submitted for examination.
- 4.2.3. Using the new Standard Method, we need to plan for 3,246 homes a year, which equates to 55,182 homes in total between April 2026 and March 2043. This figure is just over an 80% increase compared to what we were previously planning for. It also requires the development industry to effectively double past delivery rates⁷. We therefore need to identify a significant amount and variety of land to meet this new target, whilst also ensuring that the necessary supporting infrastructure is delivered and that valuable environmental and heritage assets are protected.
- 4.2.4. Achieving the target will require a step change in approach from both us and the development sector. Our approach will involve a series of actions.

Site allocations

- 4.2.5. The settlement hierarchy identifies the towns and villages that will be the focus of new development and is set out in Section 3 of this report. We consulted on the hierarchy for Dorset in January 2021, as well as a number of sites mostly at the Tier 1 and Tier 2 settlements. In this consultation we have looked again at opportunities to identify sites to allocate for development at Tier 1 and Tier 2 settlements and expanded the search to the Tier 3 settlements.
- 4.2.6. We have identified over 240 opportunity sites across the Dorset Council area at these settlements that together could deliver around 33,000 new homes.
- 4.2.7. The opportunity sites being considered as potential new housing sites are included in Appendix A – Opportunity sites for housing, which accompanies this document. They can also be viewed in the relevant section of the online consultation. The site location, size and other relevant planning information is set out. The list of option sites, and their boundaries, may be revised in light of consultation feedback or on the basis of additional evidence.
- 4.2.8. These sites will take time to deliver, in part due to the need for sites to gain planning permission. In addition, not all the new homes would be delivered over the plan period.

⁶ Available from <https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/w/dorset-council-local-plan-evidence-and-background-papers>

⁷ Average annual net additional new homes built between 2021 and 2024 was 1,662

- 4.2.9. We also intend to work with landowners and local communities to deliver larger allocations for new communities which together could deliver a total of around 12,000 new homes. These include the new communities proposed to the north of Dorchester (see Section 15), the area to the north of Crossways, and at Bere Farm to the south of Lytchett Matravers.

Flexible settlements policy

- 4.2.10. We are proposing a new policy framework for the delivery of homes on small to medium sized sites at the more sustainable settlements (those in Tier 1, Tier 2 and Tier 3). This approach could enable incremental, organic growth of these settlements without having a significant impact on their character. It would also support smaller, local builders, enabling a new stream of housing supply. Details of this proposed flexible settlements policy are included in Section 5.

Development of new settlements

- 4.2.11. Over the longer term, we will be working to identify possible future locations for significant new settlements in Dorset. These will be longer term projects that will put in place a strategic approach to meet housing and other development needs.

Other policy measures

- 4.2.12. Making best use of land and ensuring good design are fundamental to the delivery of homes that people want to live in whilst minimising their environmental impact and giving us the best chance of meeting the housing target. We are therefore interested in suggestions for other approaches that could help us meet housing targets that could be included in policies. Potential options include:
- optimising levels of development on sites in the most sustainable locations by setting housing density requirements through planning policies. This approach would need to ensure that development still responds to the character of the area, making sure appropriate levels of green infrastructure are provided but also making best use of the developable land.
 - ensuring that developments are built out in a timely manner after the granting of planning permission, by including implementation timescales through planning conditions.

Question 9: The Local Plan sets out a strategy to meet the area's housing needs through allocating sites for new homes, the flexible settlements policy, new settlements and the efficient use of land. Are there any other measures could help to meet housing needs?

4.3. Housing supply

- 4.3.1. It is estimated that new site allocations, including the significant larger sites being considered as new allocations for the local plan, could deliver a total of around 45,000 homes. However the opportunity sites being considered through this consultation may not all be allocated and additionally, some of these are likely to be delivered beyond the end of the plan period. There is also likely to be an increased supply from the flexible settlements policy but as this will be a new approach to managing development, it is unclear what the delivery rate will be over the plan period. Similarly, new settlements will deliver few if any new homes within the period to 2043.
- 4.3.2. It is likely that in the short term, the delivery rate will not be at the target established through the Standard Method. It may be that a stepped housing requirement could be proposed in the Local Plan.

Figure 4.1: Housing supply and expected delivery

Housing Supply category	Supply estimate	Delivery period
Existing permissions (includes full and outline consent)	10,000	Short to medium term
Adopted Local Plan allocations	4,000	Medium term
Adopted Neighbourhood Plan allocations	1,500	Short to medium term
New site allocations	45,000	Medium to long term
Flexible settlements policy	Unknown	Throughout plan period
Development of new settlements	Unknown	Longer term
Identified large sites	2,500	Throughout plan period
Minor windfall (sites of less than 10 dwellings)	7,000	Throughout plan period
Total	70,000	

Question 10: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the Plan including a lower housing target for the first few years and a higher figure towards the end of the plan period to meet housing needs?

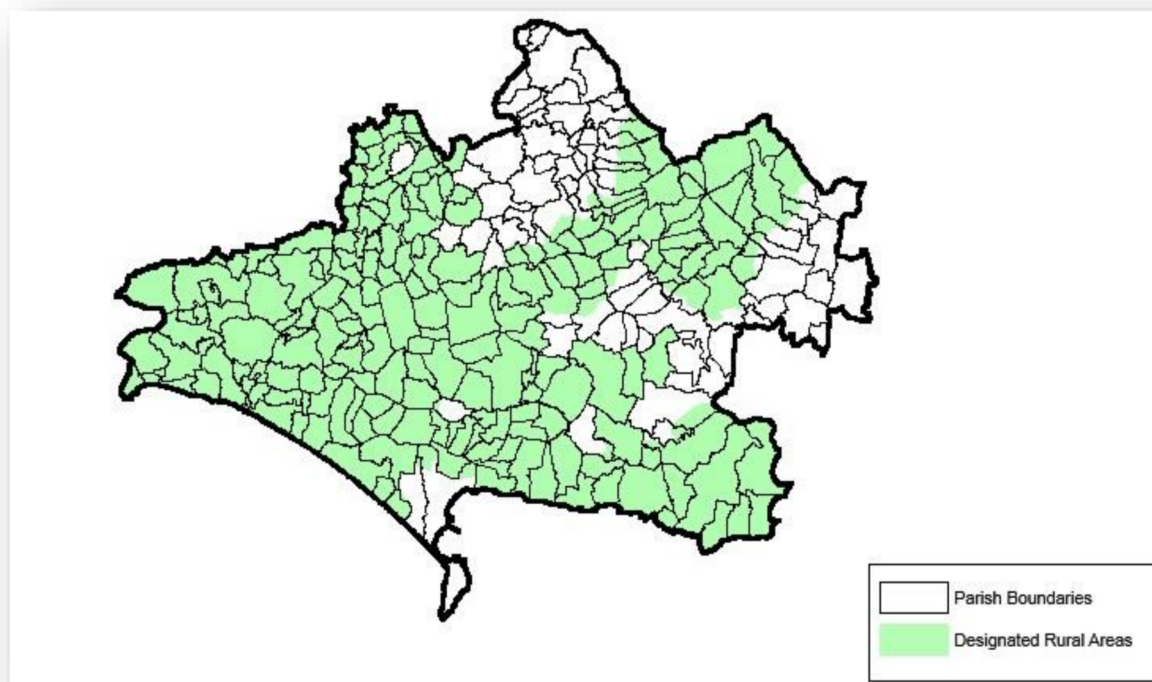
- a. Agree
- b. Disagree
- c. I have another suggestion

4.4. Meeting housing needs of specific groups

- 4.4.1. Although we can calculate the overall housing need for the plan period using the Standard Method, we need to update the local housing needs assessment to understand what this means for the needs of current and future residents in Dorset so that we can plan for the correct size, type and tenure of new homes.
- 4.4.2. National policy identifies some specific groups whose needs should be considered. These are: those who require affordable housing; families with children; looked after children; older people; students; people with disabilities; service families; travellers; people who rent their homes; and people wishing to commission or build their own homes. The need for self-build housing is covered in Section 10 and the needs of Gypsies and Travellers is covered in Section 12.
- 4.4.3. The consultation we undertook in January 2021 outlined an approach to meeting the needs of these groups. We will need to refresh the evidence that informed the approach in response to the new housing targets. This will include consideration of the need for accessible homes, the need for care and nursing homes and the need for affordable housing.
- 4.4.4. We recognise that the need for affordable housing is significant across Dorset. We will therefore be seeking to secure the maximum viable number of affordable homes on market led housing sites where 10 or more homes are proposed. The minimum number of new affordable homes per site that we will require through policy will be informed by an assessment of development viability. We will also be exploring the option to require affordable housing on

sites of between 5 and 9 homes in 'designated rural areas'⁸ in line with national policy as shown in Figure 4.2.

Figure 4.2: Designated Rural Areas in Dorset



- 4.4.5. Where providing affordable housing is not possible or appropriate on a development site, we will look at collecting financial contributions from developers to provide affordable housing off-site.
- 4.4.6. Market led housing developments may not always deliver affordable housing in the locations where it's most needed. We will therefore explore the use of an exceptions site policy to enable schemes for wholly affordable housing to be permitted on sites not allocated in the Local Plan, where there may be a particular need. This could apply across the whole of Dorset, be focused on specific 'more sustainable' settlements, or restricted to Green Belt locations only where the flexible settlements policy (in Section 5) would not apply.

⁸ Designated rural areas include areas within the two National Landscapes as well as areas designated by the Secretary of State as 'rural' under Section 157 of the Housing Act 1985.

Question 11: Where should a policy allowing sites for only affordable homes apply?

- a. All of Dorset
- b. Only around those towns and villages listed in the proposed settlement hierarchy
- c. Only in the Green Belt

5. Flexible Settlements Policy

5.1. Introduction

- 5.1.1. The strategies for managing development in adopted local plans tend to focus on supporting delivery of homes through site allocations and encouraging 'windfall development'⁹ within settlements. The plans draw boundaries around the built-up areas of each settlement, with windfall development normally acceptable within the boundaries. The local plans then include policies to restrict development outside these settlement boundaries¹⁰.
- 5.1.2. We feel this approach could mean that we will not be able provide the number of homes needed given the significant increase in housing targets (see Section 4). In order to significantly boost the supply of new homes, we are proposing a new approach which gives more flexibility for development to take place adjacent to sustainable settlements, without the need for defined settlement boundaries.
- 5.1.3. The 'presumption in favour of sustainable development'¹¹ in national policy means that, in planning decisions, less weight is given to restrictive policies such as settlement boundaries when the supply of housing sites is insufficient. Even with the options for site allocations that we are considering through this consultation, there is a real risk that not enough homes will be delivered, especially in the first few years. Any site allocations will take time to be permitted and built. If not enough homes are being delivered, 'the presumption

⁹ Windfall sites are sites not specifically identified in the local plan (National Planning Policy Framework, December 2024, Glossary)

¹⁰ Note that the various local plans use slightly different names for the same approach. North Dorset and Purbeck use the term 'settlement boundary', West Dorset, Weymouth & Portland use 'defined development boundary' or 'DDB', and Christchurch and East Dorset use 'village envelope' or 'village infill policy envelope'.

¹¹ National Planning Policy Framework, December 2024, paragraph 11