**Question 1**: Do you have any comments on the proposed vision for Dorset?

The vision as set out in LPO is a good one; the challenge, however, will be in the delivery.

Environmental quality is not automatically achieved by building more properties: new buildings will change villages and hamlets. Furthermore, this will decrease the space and countryside between.

House building design is from the bottom up, and is not intrinsically “good”, as claimed. Builders and developers are businesses with a remit to minimise cost and maximise revenue. Often this “economical” approach to housebuilding sees one estate mirroring another with little variation in appearance or style, and this is detrimental to creating a pleasing aesthetic.

A statement regarding the goal of reducing the carbon footprint are empty words without an indication of how this will be achieved: all construction generates carbon emissions.

Towns act as hubs, providing services for hinterlands, but many villages classified as larger do not provide services; they also rely on towns. Consequently, increasing the size of villages simply increases road traffic and forces the occupants to travel for work and daily activities. This leads to increased carbon emissions.

There is no evidence that the character of the landscape will be respected when much will have to be destroyed to create new developments.

**Question 2:** Do you have any comments on the proposed strategic priorities for the

Local Plan?

Provide affordable and high-quality homes

The County Council states they will work with very many organisations to deliver high quality homes, but there has been no contact with our local parish council or community land trust to discuss our housing needs. One is forced to conclude that the plan is entirely focussed on numbers, not “needs”.

The Fontmell Magna Neighbourhood Plan First Review Version was ‘made’ by Dorset Council on the 25th of February 2025, but the plan has been ignored in the choice of housing sites in Fontmell Magna, which illustrates that local opinion is not valued and disregarded.

The previous Local Plan (North Dorset Local Plan January 2016 -Policy 6) policy on housing delivery within Dorset villages was that provision should be sufficient for local needs. This aim has now been abandoned in favour of meeting an arbitrary proportion of the housing target for Dorset.

Grow our economy

Currently, with the exception of a family run shop and pub, there are no employers in Fontmell Magna; new residents will have to seek work elsewhere.

The Fontmell Magna community has a number of active social organisations, but local services are limited to the village hall, the very small village shop and post office, the church, the public house and the primary school.

The former surgery in the village has been closed and is now a private dwelling. Access to medical facilities and larger shops is handicapped by inadequate public transport, and is almost always done by private car.

High street banks shutting with the announcement of Lloyd’s closing in Gillingham and Blandford being the most recent announcements.

Responding to the climate and nature emergency.

Because of the lack of employment, shops and medical services, residents of the proposed 105 houses for Fontmell Magna will usually have to travel by car to satisfy these needs. Currently, the village is not a safe environment for pedestrians with narrow roads and a lack of pavements, and increased traffic will increase the danger for all local inhabitants.

The extra land area that will be covered with tarmac and buildings will increase pressure on local biodiversity.

The runoff from rainwater must be dealt with in a sustainable way so that it does not overwhelm local drainage systems or impact ecologically important brooks and streams.

The local Sewage Treatment Works (STW) is known to be operating at near capacity. Without major investment within STW the plant will not be able to cope.

**Question 3:** The proposed settlement hierarchy lists the towns and villages that will be the focus for new homes. Are there other settlements where we should plan for new homes? Do you have any comments on whether a settlement is in the right Tier or not?

The Tiers need to take into account not only ‘*a reasonable level of facilities* but also infrastructure such as roads, power and other utilities (water and water treatment).

The A350 corridor south of Shaftesbury is not ideal for large vehicles, and there is little or no opportunity to modify it. Increases in housing in the area will ultimately increase traffic flows in both directions along the road, and lead to an increase in traffic on the many narrow roads that allow alternative routes out of the village, especially in westward and eastward directions; these roads do not have pavements.

**Question 4:** Do you have any comments on the proposed strategy for the south eastern area?

3.3.5 If it is anticipated that further development of Blandford will be associated with the economic and social benefits available in BCP, then much needs to be done to improve the current problems on the A350 through the villages between Blandford and the A31 roundabout near Bailie House.

Similarly, for the A31 at Merley roundabout and the traffic flow at Canford Bottom.

**Question 5**: Do you have any comments on the proposed strategy for the central area?

The economic hub of the Central Dorset area should provide employment opportunities for the wider Northern and Western areas of Dorset, which will need to rely on good transport links via roads and buses, as well as reliable fast broadband connections.

The Clean Energy Cluster (3.4.6) should focus on generating renewable energy to serve the whole county and encourage the development of Small Modular Reactors as a base supply.

 We are not aware of any evidence that CO2 capture and storage would be viable in Dorset.

**Question 6**: Do you have any comments on the proposed strategy for the northern area?

Much of this section is agreed statement of fact 3.5.1 – 3.5.4 and we support the focus on the market towns.

Item 3.5.5 is misleading in suggesting that the Trailway offers opportunities for enhanced active travel. In theory it may be possible to reach Templecombe from Sturminster, but at present there are no bridges on two rivers (Stour & Lydden) and the A30, there is still track in some areas, and in many others the line has been subsumed into fields.

Question 7:Do you have any comments on the proposed strategy for the western area?

We do not have enough knowledge of the area to be able to comment.

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

Roads – Dorset’s road system has not had adequate infrastructure improvements over the years. There are no motorways in the county, and major roads that are dual carriageway in parts are principally in the south of the county, along the coastal corridor. All north south routes are primarily single carriageway in each direction linking to towns, few of which have bypasses, which are also usually single carriageway roads. Two examples would be Blandford and Dorchester. Both towns have bypasses, but already suffer from regular jams and tailbacks, particularly at peak times and during the busy holiday season. This would be exacerbated when adding in the additional journeys and traffic that will be created by further housebuilding. To increase capacity significant amounts of money would be required to make improvements across the county. Innovative thinking will be required so that the county does not become a mess of roads and houses, with thought given to bridges and tunnels and creative ways of reducing traffic bottlenecks.

Rail transport – North Dorset now only has the London South Western route towards London and Exeter. Previous cost cutting policies of singling have the left the route with capacity restrictions, usually resulting in an hourly service. There is no direct north south route through the county. Unfortunately, the route linking Bournemouth through to the towns of Blandford and Sturminster Newton was lost in 1966.

Buses – With the roads already congested with private cars and lorries and mostly being single carriageway, buses are not an attractive option for long-distance commuting. Particularly so given many are narrow or single-track country roads, with their bends, hills and dips.

**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?

4.2.7 Appendix A p207 Land South of West Street and West of Old Crown Road.

The proposed development of 105 homes is more than three times the size of Spring Meadows, which is the most recent significant development in Fontmell Magna.

The reality of Spring Meadows is that it is largely, but not wholly, populated by retired couples, owning two cars and living in 3 or 4 bedroom homes. The detached houses on the development are owned by over 60’s who have mostly downsized from elsewhere.

There is a significant mismatch between the good intentions of planners in wanting to provide more homes for local people to stay, work and live in the village and the outcome. The village is one of the more expensive in terms of property values in the wider area.

Spring Meadows has few, if any, primary age children attending the village school, which is adjacent to the site, or secondary school age children attending schools in Shaftesbury or Blandford.

What defines a “small, local builder” and will these builders be able to compete on land prices?

Inflated land prices result in inflated house prices and the result for local people is self-evident. Couples and young families are priced out of the area, in favour of finding much cheaper accommodation in Shaftesbury or Blandford.

Unless DC adopt a more interventionist approach to granting planning consent by requiring more 1or 2 bedroom homes, then it is difficult to see how the current situation in Fontmell Magna will change.

**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

b. Disagree

There is an acute shortage of “affordable” homes in the county, ie. homes that are affordable for younger families on modest incomes.

If rural communities are to thrive, they need younger age groups in the local population, otherwise villages in particular will become moribund.

Priority should be given to the development of 1,2 and 3 bed houses and flats, as early in the plan period as possible. However, more thought must be given to creating pleasant and attractive homes, avoiding the habit of building soulless concrete boxes, that would blight the landscape, be unrewarding to live in or own, and be at odds with the character and heritage of the area. There are some great examples of over 55 developments dotted across the county within each of the towns, and some of the design principles demonstrated including building styles and great landscaping should be mirrored for the benefit of young people and small families.

**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

Affordable homes should be considered at every proposed development. If a development passes planning permission, then it must include an affordable proportion. Reducing the requirement for consideration from 10 to 5 in specific areas only without any detailed reasoning would appear to be satisfying the business interests of developers, not meeting community needs.

The current method of delivering affordable housing may limit the opportunities at some proposed developments. The process of associations bidding to developers may not always work. The process is central government driven, not county level.

**Question 12:** We have suggested that the Local Plan will not include clear boundaries to define the edges of towns and villages. Instead, the flexible settlements policy would allow new homes to be built around certain towns and villages. How much do you agree or disagree with this approach?

a. Agree

b. Partially agree

c. Neutral

d. Partially disagree

e. Disagree

Please provide any further comments or reasoning…

e. Disagree

The new flexible settlements policy as applied to Fontmell Magna proposes 2 development sites. One, which had a planning application refused recently and the other which was rejected by the Neighbourhood Plan.

The proposed 105 houses on these sites would completely alter the character of the village, with a possible increase of 50% in the number of dwellings in the village.

The pedestrian access to the village along West Street would require a 20mph speed limit, and probably speed bumps on the road, and a provision for signage stating that it is a shared carriageway.

Although settlement boundaries are not always upheld in planning decisions, they remain an important safeguard for villages against speculative development. There is some validity in the idea that larger villages may need to accommodate modest growth, perhaps through carefully planned edge-of-village developments of around 30 homes. However, this does not require the wholesale removal of settlement boundaries. With a robust planning policy in place, such growth could be managed without undermining the boundaries themselves.

Settlement boundaries are the strongest defence against speculative or ribbon development, which risks eroding the character of villages and encroaching on open countryside. While the proposal suggests that settlement boundaries could continue to be defined within neighbourhood plans (which Fontmell Magna has just refreshed), the withdrawal of funding for these plans makes it increasingly difficult for communities to produce them, and even harder to keep them updated every few years. In practice, this means very few villages will be able to maintain up-to-date neighbourhood plans.'

The allocation of houses across the DC area seems to be based on where sites were proposed for the SHLAA and not shared out in anyway proportionate to the existing settlement sizes.

**Question 13:** We propose that the flexible settlements policy will include a limit of 30 homes per site. To what extent do you agree or disagree with this threshold?

a. The limit of 30 homes is about right

b. There should be less homes

c. More homes per site should be allowed

Please explain your reasoning

Agree with the threshold, but each decision to build should carefully assess actual need and impact.

To preserve the outstanding features of the county, the number of homes built in Tier 3 sites should take into account local needs and what contribution to housing has recently been provided.

Just because land is available it does not mean it should be developed. If the development damages the soul of a village and does not harmonize with the existing housing and the surrounding landscape.

Building homes away from areas of employment is likely to cause the infrastructure in neighbouring towns and villages to be overwhelmed and add to any traffic issues on the local roads.

**Question 14**: At a town/village, should one flexible settlement policy site be started, before another one is permitted?

a. Yes

b. No

Please provide any further comments

1. Yes:but only as part of a master plan for the whole site.

There would be a need to ensure individual developments within the full site are of sufficient size to require affordable homes to be included in each development.

**Question 15:** We have suggested that the flexible settlements policy will only apply to the areas around certain towns and villages, these are those ranked as ‘Tier 1, Tier 2 or Tier 3’ in our settlement hierarchy. What do you think about the locations where we have suggested that the flexible settlements policy should apply?

This seems reasonable except in the case of Tier 3; and always provided the allocated sites are adjacent to existing developments.

Tier 3 will have clear settlement boundaries especially those with a Neighbourhood Plan. This is essential to stop creeping development potentially leading to villages coalescing into one.

Sites that are Grade 1 agricultural land should not be built on.

**Question 16**: We have suggested that the flexible settlement policy should only be applied around the ‘continuous built-up areas’ (i.e. ‘densely populated areas with high concentrations of buildings, infrastructure and paved roads’) of certain towns and villages. Do you have any comments on our definition of this ‘continuous built-up area’?

This seems to be a contradiction of statements. It is stated that first, you propose to remove the adopted settlement boundary. It is then stated that second, you propose to accept a clear edge to settlement boundary.

The statement then further states that consideration will be given to developments within or adjacent to a boundary. Surely “within” is a given therefore you are proposing to extend the boundary by considering those developments “adjacent”.

Considering Fontmell Magna, the Neighbourhood Plan defines a clear settlement boundary at the edge of the continuous built-up area. This plan has been agreed with residents and Dorset Council and also makes provision for future development.

**Question 17:** We have suggested that the flexible settlements policy should not be applied in the Green Belt. What are your thoughts on this?

The Green Belt areas are mainly around Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole.

Development in these areas should be open to consultation with BCP.

**Question 18**: Away from the towns and villages listed in the settlement hierarchy, there may be types of development that we could support. Do you have any comments on this approach and on the types of development that could be supported in the countryside?

A policy of controlled, incremental and considered development in Tier 3 locations should be favoured over isolated homes as this would improve and enhance community spirit if done well.

Existing policy with regard to building on agricultural land and sites of AONB/NCA etc already control building in these areas.

**Question 19:** We have suggested that the flexible settlements policy should not be applied in places with a recently made neighbourhood plan which includes allocations for new homes. What are your thoughts on this?

Agree. The flexible settlements policy should not be applied in places with a recently made neighbourhood plan that includes allocations for new homes.

**Question 20:** The Local Plan will retain and protect existing key employment sites, identify new employment sites at locations close to more sustainable settlements, allow forexpansion ofexisting employment sites and allow for new employment sites in suitable locations. Do you have any comments on this approach?

Employment sites should be allocated close to large centres of population, to minimise the amount of commuting and consequent pollution.

Careful consideration should be given to the future electricity and water supply to employment zones, particularly new data centres to power the increasing use of AI.

Wherever possible solar panels should be installed on buildings used for employment.

**Question 21:** The Local Plan will enable employment land to be developed outside identified sites at certain towns and villages, subject to certain considerations. Do you agree with this approach?

Whilst planning for employment is to be fully supported, this should not become ad-hoc.

Part of the statement is Tier 1-3 locations will be foci for growth. Part of the statement is development away from Tier 1-3. This appears to be supporting any development anywhere provided it can be shown to have an employment link to Tier 1-3 settlements.

We believe this is a dangerous move. Any requests for consideration outside current defined development areas should be considered very carefully. We do not agree with this approach.

**Question 22**: We have suggested that larger scale housing sites should be required to provide land for employment uses. Proposals for 300 homes or more would be mixed residential and employment developments, with a ratio of 0.25ha of employment space for every 100 homes. How much do you agree or disagree with this approach?

a. Agree

b. Partially agree

c. Neutral

d. Partially disagree

e. Disagree

Please provide any further comments or reasoning…

The proposed housing in Fontmell Magna would not include provision for employment sites as it is less than 300 homes; consequently, all new residents would have to travel out of the village to find employment, which goes against the stated aim of creating sustainable communities.

**Question 23:** We have suggested that the Local Plan should include policies to protect the most important existing ‘key’ employment sites.

a) Do you have any views on the strategy we have suggested for protecting employment sites?

b) What criteria should we consider when defining ‘key’ and ‘non-key’ employment sites?

a. Site size

b. Location

c. Employment use type

d. Accessibility

e. Contribution to meeting economic objectives/needs

f. Market attractiveness

g. Opportunities for growth/expansion

h. The site’s status in previous local plans

i Other

1. Agree, the strategy seems to cover the requirement.

a-i. All of the above depending on the requirement.

**Question 24**: How do you think we should plan to support town centres in the future?

By lowering business rates particularly for start-up businesses and encouraging multi-business occupancy of the larger sites.

Consider change of use for certain premises so that people are encouraged to live in town centres, which would provide convenient accommodation close to jobs, and stop towns becoming ‘ghosts’ during the evening.

**Question 25**: What types of use do you think will be most important for the future of our town centres?

a. Shops

b. Cafes/restaurants

c. Leisure (e.g. cinemas)

d. Offices

e. Cultural (e.g. museums)

f. Community (e.g. libraries)

g. Hotels

h. Other...

All the above are important for town centres, to encourage shopping footfall, tourism, etc. but there must be adequate provision for car parking.

The list should also include provision for medical centres and banking hubs.

**Question 26**: We are suggesting that retail impact assessments should be undertaken for retail development proposals outside the town centres defined in the Plan, that are over the size of a small food store (280 square metres net). How much do you agree or disagree with the introduction of a threshold of 280 square metres for retail impact assessments?

a. Agree

b. Partially agree

c. Neutral

d. Partially disagree

e. Disagree

Please provide any further comments or reasoning

c. Neutral

**Question 27**: Should the threshold also apply to leisure uses that are net 280 square metres? Yes/No

No – Depending on where they are sited leisure sites could have a big impact on countryside areas.

**Question 28**: We are considering whether the Local Plan should include a policy which supports interim or temporary uses pending a permanent use for a vacant town centre building - we have called these ‘meanwhile uses’. To what extent do you agree with the introduction of a meanwhile uses policy?

a. Agree

b. Partially agree

c. Neutral

d. Partially disagree

e. Disagree

Please provide any further comments or reasoning

b. Partially agree

This is very difficult problem to resolve.

With so much competition in the retail sector and the internet, shopping habits are changing. It is difficult to envisage the High Street ever being full of shops again. The High Street has also been deserted by banks and building societies.

Perhaps a policy of uplevelling of the former high street with quality conversions only permitting establishments that would not conflict with the introduction of dwellings in former town centres.

Mixing dwellings with late-night fast-food outlets and brightly lit facades could, for example, be an issue.

**Question 29:** How else can we encourage development on brownfield land, whilst also planning positively to meet our needs for homes and employment land?

From the figures quoted in this para., Q29 is difficult is answer.

If the Dorset register of brownfield sites indicates these are only sufficient for 2,500 homes, then it would seem to require a redefinition of what constitutes a “brownfield” site to increase that number.

Look to town centres again?

**Question 30**: To what extent do you agree with taking land out of the Green Belt to help meet our development needs?

a. Agree

b. Partially agree

c. Neutral

d. Partially disagree

e. Disagree

Please provide any further comments or reasoning…

b. Partially agree

As a last resort, development on Green Belt land may be necessary, but only on sites that can be classified reasonably as “grey belt”. Green belt land that is Grade 1 agricultural land should be specifically excluded, as this land may/will be needed for food production in the future.

**Question 31:** We have suggested that the Local Plan should include a flexible settlements policy which would allow new homes around certain towns and villages. What impact, if any, do you think the proposed flexible settlements policy might have on opportunities for self-build homes?

a. High impact

b. Some impact

c. No impact

Please provide further comments or reasoning.

Under question 16 we have made clear that we object to “flexible” settlement policy. This should apply to all developments including self-build.

**Question 32**: Is there anything else we should do to increase the supply of self-build plots?

Developments over 30 units in size could be required to provide a small percentage of self-build sites.

**Question 33:** We have suggested that housing requirements for neighbourhood plan areas should be finalised at the next stage of preparing the Local Plan. This is likely to involve consideration of sites with planning permission, local plan allocations and unplanned development. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed approach?

a. Agree

b. Partially agree

c. Neutral

d. Partially disagree

e. Disagree

Please provide any further comments or reasoning…

This question is seeking to delay the decision of changing Neighbourhood Plans to match the LPO aspirations to the next stage.

If a Neighbourhood Plan has been produced and accepted, it should not be re-written unless there is some compelling reason of error or omission to do so.

The number of homes stated as required – 3246 per annum is staggeringly large. By the end of 2030, this amounts to 13,704 – where is the evidence that this is required in the county.?

**Question 34:** Should the housing requirement figures for neighbourhood plan areas outside the Green Belt, include an allowance for sites that could come forward through the flexible settlements policy?

a. Yes

b. No

Please provide any further comments or reasoning.

1. No.

If neighbourhood development plans have been completed and submitted to DC then possible future development sites will already have been given consideration.

If that is not the case, then the neighbourhood planning body should be given the opportunity to respond before something is imposed upon them.

**Question 35**: We have suggested that our Local Plan objectives for Travellers should be:

* to reduce the numbers of unauthorised sites,
* to provide opportunities for sites to expand,
* to encourage new Traveller sites in sustainable locations, and
* to provide opportunities for Travellers to deliver their own sites.

Do you have any comments on the objectives for meeting the need for Traveller sites?

These objectives seem reasonable.

Sites should be provided near Tier 1 and Tier 2 settlements only where there is sufficient provision for healthcare and education particularly for children.

**Question 36**: To help ensure that enough pitches are provided to meet Dorset’s needs, Traveller pitches could be delivered alongside homes for the settled community on large scale residential development. Are there any issues which you think we need to consider in locating Traveller pitches alongside new built homes for the settled community?

Provision of Travellers pitches is difficult but must be addressed. Alongside proposed large developments would appear equitable.

Impact and access would need careful consideration at the planning stage. Furthermore, location both at time of planning and for future needs consideration.

**Question 37**: We are suggesting that 5 Traveller pitches should be provided for every 500 homes on large development sites. Is this threshold correct?

a. Yes

b. No-it should be higher

c. No-it should be lower

Please provide any further comments or reasoning.

a. Yes

If it is lower it could break up family kinship groups.

**Question 38**: To encourage Travellers to deliver their own sites, we are suggesting that the Local Plan should include a criteria policy which takes account of the site’s location, access, neighbouring development, environmental impact and management of the site. Do you think we need to add or change any of the suggested criteria?

No.

**Question 39**: We have identified opportunity sites which could deliver more homes to help meet Dorset’s housing needs. Do we need to change the approach to mitigating impacts on protected Dorset Heaths habitat sites as part of planning to meet increased housing needs?

a. Yes

b. No

Please provide further comments or reasoning.

1. No.

It is important to continue with the existing mitigation approach to preserve the remaining heathland as long as possible.

DC must be aware of the problems that BCP experience with heathland fires regularly occurring in close proximity to large areas of housing.

Once the heath is gone, it cannot be recovered and it does store carbon which is an important consideration.

**Question 40**: To what extent do you agree or disagree with development at Shapwick to enable the delivery of public benefits from investment in the Kingston Lacy Estate?

a. Agree

b. Partially agree

c. Neutral

d. Partially disagree

e. Disagree

Please provide any further comments or reasoning

c. Neutral

**Question 41:** We have outlined some areas which could be appropriate for wind turbines, ground mounted solar panels and battery energy storage. To what extent do you agree or disagree with identifying broad areas of opportunity for wind, solar and battery energy storage?

a. Agree

b. Partially agree

c. Neutral

d. Partially disagree

e. Disagree

Please provide any further comments or reasoning

We generally agree with the areas proposed as an opportunity for renewable energy sites.

Clearly 14.2.4 is important to ensure that any development is appropriate. Any proposal must pass stringent testing to ensure that local environment is not harmed.

**Question 42**: Since Roman times, the centre of Dorchester has had a prominent position in the landscape. One of the threats to this identity is at the eastern edge of the potential development area (near the A35). Would you support keeping this eastern area more green and open, even if that means fewer homes, facilities and jobs?

a. Agree

b. Partially agree

c. Disagree

d. Partially disagree

e. Neutral

Please provide any further comments or reasoning…

b. Partially Agree

This area should retain its present character.

Any development should respect this.

**Question 43**. Supporting jobs, homes and services all in one place is an essential part of the health of a town. Do you see new workspaces that are integrated into walkable neighbourhoods and local centres as an attractive part of Dorchester in the future?

a. Agree

b. Partially agree

c. Disagree

d. Partially disagree

e. Neutral

Please provide any further comments or reasoning…

e. Neutral

**Question 44:** We believe that the valley at Pigeon House Farm can play an important role in encouraging access to nature and celebrating local landscape — \_What type of development, if any, do you think could help support this in a sustainable way?

i. A smaller scale of development

ii. A larger scale of development

iii. The use of the area as an undeveloped landscape buffer, for recreation, education and nature interpretation, without any housing development.

iv. A mixture of the above

Please provide any further comments or reasoning…

Unable to comment on this question.

**Question 45**: What are your priorities for a new east–west route?

There should be adequate provision for pedestrians and cyclists.