Appendix I - Response to Dorset Council Local Plan: Scoping Consultation

Minute ref: 26/11-11.i
Submitted by clerk 25 October 2026

Submissions to the consultation may be made public. In order to submit a response, you must consent to your response being published by ticking the box below. Published information will exclude contact details but will identify individuals by name.

I give consent for my response to be published:
Yes

What is your name?

Your name::
Clare Smith

What is your email address?

Your email address::
clerk@tollerporcorumparish.org

What is your postcode?

Your postcode::
DT2 0DE

What type of responder are you? (Please select the most applicable responder type)

Parish or Town Council

What are your client's details (if applicable)?

Your clients details::
n/a

What is your organisation (if applicable)?

Your organisation:
Toller Porcorum Parish Council

Do you want to be contacted about the local plan in the future? If you would like to be notified of future local plan consultations and stages, please tick.

I give consent for my details to be added to the mailing list for the local plan and supplementary work.:
Yes

2. The overall scope of the local plan

2.1. Introduction

2.2. What the local plan must do

Question 1: What period do you think the plan should cover?

b. 15 years

Please explain your answer:

A 15-year period provides sufficient certainty for infrastructure and development planning while recognising that economic, demographic and environmental circumstances can change considerably over longer periods.
For rural communities such as Toller Porcorum, it is particularly important that the plan remains capable of responding to changing local housing needs, availability of services and public transport provision rather than relying on assumptions made many years previously.

3. Spatial vision and objectives

3.1. Introduction

3.2. Priorities for the vision

Question 2: Are there any other priorities that should be considered when developing the vision? If so, please specify.

a. Yes

Please explain your answer:

The Parish Council suggests adding rural sustainability and resilience as an explicit priority.
Dorset is a predominantly rural county and the circumstances of small rural settlements can be very different from those of towns and larger villages. The Local Plan should recognise the importance of maintaining viable rural communities, supporting appropriate local employment, retaining community facilities, addressing rural isolation and providing opportunities for people of different ages and incomes to remain within their communities.
Digital connectivity should also be recognised as essential infrastructure in rural areas.

Question 3: Which of the key priorities do you think should be a focus for the local plan? (select as many as you wish).

a. Housing, b. Economy, c. Environment, d. Movement, e. Health & Wellbeing, f. Design & Character, g. Tourism

Please explain your answer, including any specific issues within the priorities you think are particularly important:

These priorities are closely interconnected in rural communities. Housing growth should be proportionate to the size, character, infrastructure and environmental capacity of settlements and should help meet identified local needs.
Particular importance should be given to affordable housing, homes suitable for younger households and older residents, maintaining rural employment and services, realistic access to transport and essential services, and protecting the distinctive character and landscape setting of Dorset's villages.
The Local Plan should recognise that rural sustainability cannot be assessed solely by reference to the number of facilities within a settlement.

3.3. A vision for the local plan

Question 4: Do you think it the draft vision reflects what Dorset should be like at the end of the local plan period?

c. Not sure

If no, please explain what you think Dorset should be like:

The Parish Council (TPPC) broadly supports the aspirations of the vision but considers that the approach to rural communities requires clarification.
The statement that "Growth in rural communities will be to address local need and where essential services are accessible" could result in smaller rural communities being effectively prevented from accommodating appropriate development because they have limited services.
There is a potential circular problem: communities without services receive little development because they lack services, while the lack of development contributes to declining population and makes services progressively less viable.
The vision should therefore support proportionate development in rural communities where it meets an identified need, supports community sustainability and is appropriate to the character, infrastructure and environmental capacity of the settlement.

3.4. Measurable outcomes

Question 5: What measurable outcomes should the council use to assess how well the local plan is performing?

Please list measurable outcomes to assess local plan performance :

Suggested measures include:
• Affordable homes delivered, including in rural areas;
• Housing mix and tenure;
• Proportion of development within reasonable access of essential services;
• Retention or improvement of community facilities;
• Delivery of infrastructure alongside development;
• Accessibility by public transport, walking and cycling;
• Biodiversity and habitat improvements;
• Employment space and rural employment opportunities;
• Housing delivery within smaller rural communities; and
• Changes in the demographic balance of communities.
Importantly, monitoring should distinguish between urban, larger-village and small-rural-settlement outcomes. Dorset-wide averages could conceal significant differences between rural and urban communities.

4. Developing a strategy for growth

4.1. Local context

4.2. National planning policy

4.3. New local plan

Question 6: What factors do you think should be considered when developing the settlement hierarchy for future development?

Describe what factors you think should be considered when developing the future settlement hierarchy:

The settlement hierarchy should consider population, services and facilities, employment opportunities, public transport, digital connectivity, infrastructure capacity, environmental constraints and the relationship between settlements.
However, the Parish Council considers that a simple population threshold or checklist of facilities would be too crude an approach for Dorset's smaller rural settlements.
Accessibility should be assessed on the basis of real-world accessibility. The existence of a bus service, for example, should not automatically make a location sustainable unless its frequency, destinations, operating days and ability to provide practical return journeys are considered.
Equally, smaller villages should not automatically be regarded as unsustainable simply because residents necessarily rely more heavily upon private transport.
The hierarchy should recognise the role that proportionate development can play in maintaining viable rural communities and meeting locally identified housing needs.
There is a particularly important background point here. The 2026 document says larger villages have previously been identified using a broad population threshold of over 500, whereas small villages and hamlets have fewer services. It also says villages well connected to larger towns may be considered more sustainable. Toller Porcorum therefore has a genuine interest in how Dorset Council develops this methodology. Historically, it has been treated as one of the settlements of 200+ population without a defined development boundary.

Question 7: What links to services and facilities are most important when looking at the sustainability of potential future development locations? (select all that apply)

a. Access to public transport, b. Access to safe walking/cycle routes, c. Distance from towns or places with facilities that serve a wider area, d. Other

Please explain your answer :

For Other: Digital connectivity and access to healthcare, education, employment and essential shopping should also be considered.
The assessment should consider the quality and practicality of the connection rather than simply its existence. For public transport this should include frequency, operating days, journey time, destinations and the availability of return journeys.
Safe walking and cycling routes should be assessed realistically. A destination being geographically close does not necessarily make it accessible on foot or bicycle where routes involve narrow rural roads without footways or other safe infrastructure.

5. Key planning issues for Dorset

5.2. Meeting the challenge of climate change

Question 8: Are there any locally specific climate change issues that are not addressed by national policy and should be considered in the Local Plan?

a. Yes

Please explain your answer:

Rural communities face particular challenges in reducing transport emissions because alternatives to private cars are often limited or unavailable.
The Local Plan should recognise this reality while supporting improved public transport, active travel where genuinely practical, EV infrastructure, energy-efficient development, renewable energy and improved digital connectivity that can reduce the need to travel.
Climate policies should also recognise the importance of rural landscapes, soils, woodland, hedgerows and habitats in climate adaptation and carbon storage.

5.3. Delivering a sufficient supply of homes

Question 9: Are there locally specific housing issues that are not addressed by national policy and should be considered in the Local Plan?

a. Yes

Please explain your answer:

Small rural communities need a range of housing that enables younger people, working households and older residents to remain within their communities.
The Local Plan should consider affordable housing, smaller homes, opportunities for older residents to downsize, rural exception sites and community-led housing.
Housing need should not be considered solely at a Dorset-wide level. Evidence should identify needs within rural areas and recognise that very small numbers of additional homes can make a meaningful contribution in a small community.
Policies should allow appropriately scaled development to meet identified rural needs without opening the way to disproportionate development which would fundamentally change the character of small settlements.
Dorset Council's consultation itself says almost half of its overall housing need is for affordable housing and identifies particular requirements for families, smaller households, accessible homes and older people's accommodation.

5.4. Building a strong, effective economy

Question 10: Are there locally specific economic issues that are not addressed by national policy and should be considered in the Local Plan?

a. Yes

Please explain your answer:

The Local Plan should recognise the importance of small businesses, home working, agriculture, rural enterprises and appropriate diversification to the rural economy.
Policies should support appropriate reuse of existing rural buildings and proportionate expansion of established businesses where environmental and highway impacts can be satisfactorily addressed.
Reliable high-speed digital connectivity should be treated as essential economic infrastructure.

5.5. Ensuring the vitality of town centres

Question 11: Are there locally specific town centre issues that are not addressed by national policy and should be considered in the Local Plan?

c. Not sure

Please explain your answer:

The Parish Council notes that residents of small rural settlements, like Toller Porcorum, depend upon nearby towns for services and therefore the continuing vitality and accessibility of Dorset's market towns is important.

5.6. Securing clean energy and water

Question 12: Are there locally specific water and energy issues that are not addressed by national policy and should be considered in the Local Plan?

a. Yes

Please explain your answer:

The capacity of water supply, sewerage, drainage and electricity infrastructure should be established before significant development is allocated, rather than relying upon problems being addressed after development occurs.
In rural locations particular consideration should be given to infrastructure constraints, surface-water drainage and the cumulative impact of relatively small developments.
Renewable-energy infrastructure should be appropriately located and designed with regard to landscape character, residential amenity, biodiversity and the cumulative effect of installations.

5.7. Making effective use of land

Question 13: Are there locally specific issues to do with making effective use of land that are not addressed by national policy and should be considered in the Local Plan?

a. Yes

Please explain your answer:

Density expectations appropriate to urban locations should not automatically be applied to small rural villages.
Efficient use of land is important, but development density should also respond to existing settlement character, landscape setting, drainage, parking requirements, biodiversity and green infrastructure.
The redevelopment and reuse of existing buildings and previously developed land should be encouraged where appropriate.

5.8. Protecting Green Belt land

Question 14: Are there locally specific Green Belt issues that are not addressed by national policy and should be considered in the Local Plan?

c. Not sure

Please explain your answer:

5.9. Achieving well-designed places

Question 15: Are there locally specific design issues that are not addressed by national policy and should be considered in the Local Plan?

a. Yes

Please explain your answer:

Dorset's villages have distinctive settlement patterns, building forms, materials and relationships with the surrounding countryside.
New development in small rural settlements should respond to that local context rather than applying standardised suburban layouts and densities.
Particular attention should be given to settlement edges, landscape setting, building scale and massing, locally characteristic materials, boundary treatments, lighting and important views.
The Dorset Design Code should recognise the significant differences between urban, suburban and rural environments.

5.10. Promoting sustainable transport

Question 16: Are there locally specific transport issues that are not addressed by national policy and should be considered in the Local Plan?

a. Yes

Please explain your answer:

Car dependency in small rural settlements is substantially a consequence of geography and limited public transport provision.
The Local Plan should distinguish between the theoretical availability of sustainable transport and services which residents can realistically use.
Assessments of public transport accessibility should consider frequency, operating days and hours, destinations, journey times and practical return journeys.
Walking and cycling assessments should similarly consider whether routes are actually safe and usable, particularly where journeys involve narrow rural roads without footways.
The Local Plan should seek improvements to rural transport and active-travel connections but should not assume that private-car dependency can simply be designed out of development in rural Dorset.
The consultation itself recognises that many Dorset residents rely on cars because of limited public transport, particularly in rural areas.

5.11. Promoting healthy communities

Question 17: Are there locally specific health and wellbeing issues that are not addressed by national policy and should be considered in the Local Plan?

a. Yes

Please explain your answer:

Rural isolation and access to healthcare and other services should be specifically considered.
Planning should support the retention of village halls, recreation facilities, open spaces and other community facilities that provide opportunities for social interaction.
Housing appropriate for older residents should also be considered, particularly where it enables people to remain within their existing community.

5.12. Pollution, public protection and security

Question 18: Are there locally specific pollution, public protection and security issues that are not addressed by national policy and should be considered in the Local Plan?

a. Yes

Please explain your answer:

For rural areas, particular consideration should be given to light pollution and dark skies, noise and the potential effect of development upon tranquillity.
Development should avoid unnecessary external lighting and protect the intrinsically dark character of rural areas where appropriate.

5.13. Managing flood risk and coastal change

Question 19: Are there locally specific flood risk and coastal issues that are not addressed by national policy and should be considered in the Local Plan?

a. Yes

Please explain your answer:

The Local Plan should consider all sources of flooding, including surface water and groundwater, and should use up-to-date local evidence.
Development should not increase downstream flood risk and should incorporate effective sustainable drainage. The cumulative effect of multiple small developments should be considered rather than assessing each proposal entirely in isolation.
I would check the parish's actual flood history before submitting this answer and add any known Toller-specific locations.

5.14. Conserving and enhancing the natural environment

Question 20: Are there locally specific natural environment issues that are not addressed by national policy and should be considered in the Local Plan?

a. Yes

Please explain your answer:

The Local Plan should recognise the importance of the landscape setting of rural settlements as well as formally designated landscapes and habitats. Hedgerows, mature trees, watercourses, species-rich grassland, wildlife corridors and the relationship between settlements and surrounding countryside should be considered when assessing development.
Landscape and ecological assessment should consider cumulative effects and should inform the scale and location of development rather than simply being used to mitigate impacts after sites have been selected.

5.15. Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

Question 21: Are there locally specific historic environment issues that are not addressed by national policy and should be considered in the Local Plan?

a. Yes

Please explain your answer:

The historic character of rural villages derives not only from listed buildings but also from settlement form, historic field patterns, lanes, views, archaeological remains and the relationship between buildings and landscape.
The Local Plan should therefore consider designated and non-designated heritage assets and their settings when determining the appropriate scale and location of development.
There is documented medieval-settlement archaeology at Higher Kingcombe in Toller Porcorum parish, illustrating why archaeological evidence can matter even outside the core village.

5.16. Local waste facilities

Question 22: Should the local plan identify land for local waste facilities, including household recycling centres and depots?

a. Yes

Please explain your answer:

The Local Plan should ensure sufficient land is available for household recycling centres and operational waste infrastructure, located so that residents across rural Dorset have reasonable access.
Any new facilities should be appropriately located with regard to highways, neighbouring amenity, landscape and environmental impacts.

5.17. Other topics for the local plan to cover

Question 23: Are there any other topic areas that the Dorset Council Local Plan should cover?

a. Yes

Please explain your answer:

The Parish Council considers that rural resilience should be addressed explicitly.
The Local Plan should consider the cumulative relationship between housing, demographics, community facilities, rural employment, digital connectivity, transport and access to services.
Small settlements should neither be expected to accommodate disproportionate growth nor effectively prevented from evolving because they fall below an arbitrary population or service threshold.

6. Evidence base for the plan

6.1. Context

6.2. Evidence that remains valid

6.3. Evidence requiring an update

6.4. Superseded evidence

6.5. Additional evidence

Question 24: Do you think any additional evidence should be gathered to inform the preparation of the local plan?

a. Yes

Please explain your answer:

TPPC considers that further evidence should be gathered on the sustainability and accessibility of rural settlements.
This should assess actual public transport provision — including frequency, operating days, destinations and return journeys — rather than simply the existence of a service.

Evidence should also cover access to healthcare, education, employment and essential shopping; safe walking and cycling connections; digital connectivity; local housing needs; demographic structure; infrastructure capacity; and the availability and vulnerability of community facilities.
Parish and town councils should be invited to verify factual information relating to their settlements before it is used to determine the settlement hierarchy.

Question 25: Is there any existing evidence that you think should be updated?

a. Yes

Please explain your answer:

Particular priority should be given to updating the Settlement Hierarchy Background Paper.
Dorset Council already says this evidence requires updating. The revised assessment should use current information about services, public transport and infrastructure and should distinguish between theoretical connectivity and practical accessibility.
Parish councils should be given an opportunity to verify settlement-level information.

7. Proposed engagement approach

7.1. Engagement strategy

Question 26: How would you prefer to receive information about the local plan? (Rank in order of preference)

Question 26 - receiving information - rank - 1. Social media:
5

Question 26 - receiving information - rank - 2. Written updates/newsletters:
2

Question 26 - receiving information - rank - 3. Dorset Council magazine:
6

Question 26 - receiving information - rank - 4. Information displayed in public libraries:
7

Question 26 - receiving information - rank - 5. Dorset Council website:
3

Question 26 - receiving information - rank - 6. Through Town and Parish Councils:
1

Question 26 - receiving information - rank - 7. Through community groups / organisations:
4

Question 26 - receiving information - rank - 8. Other methods: please specify:
8

Please specify any other methods:

Direct email notification to Parish Clerks at each key stage of plan preparation.

Question 27: How would you prefer to take part in the local plan process? (rank in order of preference)

Question 27 - taking part - rank - a. Online consultations:
2

Question 27 - taking part - rank - b. Interactive online maps:
3

Question 27 - taking part - rank - c. Public events:
4

Question 27 - taking part - rank - d. Written submissions:
1

Question 27 - taking part - rank - e. Other methods: please specify:
5

Please specify any other methods:

Direct engagement with affected Town and Parish Councils, particularly when settlement-specific evidence, proposed allocations or significant changes to the settlement hierarchy are being considered.

Question 28: How could the council best engage with under-represented groups in the local plan process? For example, people with different protected characteristics such as age, disability, race, religion or belief, sex, or gender reassignment. (Select all that apply).

a. Through networks and organisations representing those groups, b. Ensuring accessibility of written materials, c. Providing in person events, d. Providing digital opportunities to get involved, e. Other: please specify

Please specify any other methods:

Town and Parish Councils and established local community organisations can also assist Dorset Council in reaching residents who may not routinely engage with formal planning consultations.
A combination of digital and non-digital engagement is particularly important in rural communities and for residents who may have limited digital access or confidence.

Question 29: Is there anything else the council should consider when developing its approach to engagement for the new Local Plan?

Please let us know anything else:

Dorset Council should recognise the particular role of Town and Parish Councils as democratically elected bodies with detailed local knowledge.
Parish Councils should be directly notified where emerging evidence, changes to the settlement hierarchy, proposed site allocations or policies could materially affect their communities.
Where Dorset Council relies upon settlement-level data — for example relating to services, facilities, transport or infrastructure — the relevant Parish Council should have an opportunity to verify the factual information before conclusions are drawn from it.
Consultation material should clearly explain what has changed since the previous stage and how earlier consultation responses have influenced the emerging plan. This would make it easier for communities to concentrate on new or unresolved issues rather than repeatedly responding to the same matters.

Demographic questions

Please select your age group.

Prefer not to say

What is your sex?

Prefer not to say

Is the gender you identify with the same as your sex registered at birth?

Prefer not to say

The Equality Act 2010 describes a person as disabled if they have a longstanding physical or mental condition that has lasted or is likely to last 12 months; and this condition has a substantial adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. People with some conditions (cancer, multiple sclerosis and HIV/AIDS for example) are considered to be disabled from the point that they are diagnosed. Do you consider yourself to be disabled as set out in the Equality Act 2010?

Prefer not to say

At the previous question you stated you consider yourself to have a disability. Please state the type of disability which applies to you.

Prefer not to say

If you prefer to use another term, please tell us here: :

What is your ethnic group?

Prefer not to say

If other, please specify here: :

What is your religion or belief?

Prefer not to say

If any other religion or belief, please specify here (if you wish):

What is your sexual orientation?

Prefer not to say

If other, please specify here :

Have you previously served in the UK Armed Forces?

Prefer not to say

Are you currently pregnant or have you been pregnant in the last year?

Prefer not to say

Do you look after, or give any help or support to, anyone because they have long-term physical or mental health conditions or illnesses, or problems related to old age?

Prefer not to say