

Summary of Changes to the Weymouth Neighbourhood Plan Policies (post Reg 14 consultation)

Overview

1. The Reg 14 received 312 responses from 289 individuals and 23 groups and Statutory Authorities. 147 responses were in overall favour of the Neighbourhood Plan while 141 were against.
2. The responses have been analysed and considered by the Steering Group. In most cases consensus was reached, by the Steering Group, on how to respond. In some instances, particularly regarding the site allocation policies consensus was not reached but a majority decision was agreed on the way forward. Most of the critical responses and objections to the Plan related to site allocations. Where these responses highlighted recognised planning considerations, these have been evaluated and, where necessary, the policies changed to address these concerns.
3. Significant discussion took place regarding the pros and cons of allocating specific sites outside the defined development boundary for business and residential use, as opposed to creating a criteria-based policy which opened up development outside the defined development boundary and protected areas without detailing specific sites. Again, consensus was not reached but the majority view was to continue with site allocations, modifying, if necessary, the Defined Development Boundary, and to retain the Exception Site Policy for sites outside the new Defined Development Boundary which only allows development for exceptional purposes such as 100% Affordable Housing where there is a need that cannot be met otherwise. Additionally, this was conditional on the site allocations including transfer of significant tracts of land to Public Open Spaces or Nature Reserves and a renewed emphasis in the WNP to supported Affordable Housing Development on brownfield sites within the Town Centre.
4. Some feedback by both residents and departments in Dorset Council raised issues which cannot be addressed until a full planning application has been raised, by a developer, and submitted for review by Dorset Council as the Local Planning Authority. Where this requires specific reports to be submitted by the applicant these have been highlighted when appropriate to specific allocated sites.
5. A significant concern raised by residents, and the Environment Agency has been the Flood Risk both from climate change increasing wave surge, sea levels, rain and storm incidence. The 2nd Level Weymouth Strategic Flood Risk Assessment report indicates the extent of this and records the impact on sites within the Town Centre Masterplan area. Work is underway by Dorset Council to produce the Outline Business Case for the Esplanade and Weymouth Harbour Sea Defences. The government's response to this report will provide confidence in investment in Weymouth Town Centre.
6. Another major concern has been the increased strain on an already stressed infrastructure particularly with Weymouth's surface water run-off and combined storm/sewage drains. The Neighbourhood Plan cannot directly address these concerns as they are strategic policy issues, but can highlight the need for investment in upgrading the system.
7. Where concerns are not addressable through planning policy conditions, they may be addressable as Aspirations and are captured in Section 13 of the Plan.
8. The Steering Group affirmed the Aims and Objectives in the Neighbourhood Plan with only minor modifications and some re-organisation. A balance has been sought which allocates sites where least harm is predicted whilst also ensuring the protection of large areas which are currently un-protected and ensuring alignment with the Aims and Objectives.
9. As a result, changes have been made by the Steering Group to a number of Policies; some of these are significant changes to Policies (including deletion), whilst others are modified to incorporate advice / suggestions from responders. In addition, repetition has been removed, in some cases by combining policies, and the intent of some of the policies has been clarified.

10. The benefit of these policies being applied is that, in addition to the allocations in the extant Local Plan:
- 31.9ha of land transferred for either Public Open Space or added to Lorton Valley Nature Park (LVNP)
 - 15.3ha of land allocated for Leisure use, mostly outdoor
 - 3.0ha of land provided for employment use on 2 sites
 - Nearly 60ha of land is designated Local Green Space, protecting areas of importance to local communities for future generations
 - Green gaps and wildlife corridors preserved between Littlemoor and Preston
 - Green gaps and wildlife corridors preserved between Radipole, Nottingham and Redlands
 - Constraining future development on Town Centre Car Parks
 - 425 new homes are enabled with 50% (212) affordable on 3 mixed site developments, 16.9ha of land
 - Brownfield Land in the Town Centre is prioritised for Leisure, Employment and Affordable Housing in an amended Town Centre Plan
 - New affordable homes are prioritised for local residents, particularly young families and key workers
 - New development in the Town Centre is constrained as principal residencies, rather than 2nd homes and holiday lets
 - Conversion of premises to Homes in Multiple Occupation (HMO) is restricted in areas within Weymouth which already have a high incidence.
 - Allocating 3.82ha land as Transport Interchange Hub to relieve peak period (summer) stress on the town centre
11. The reduction in sites for affordable homes will require a greater focus on brownfield site development in the town centre. Given the scarcity of sites for development across Weymouth such brownfield sites should only be developed if they can either deliver employment (not retail) or affordable homes for rent.

SUMMARY AND RATIONALE FOR KEY CHANGES TO POLICY

The following summary covers key policy changes. The policies are addressed under the relevant pre-submission document headings starting with the topics which attracted most concern and potential for change.

Landscape and Green Spaces

WNP02: Areas of Nature Conservation - Enhanced maps received from DERC. To confirm map alignment of Water meadows with that of WNP26. Changes to title to read 'Conservation of the Natural Environment' and some terminology for consistency and to provide clarity ref DC, DWT and Ramblers feedback.

WNP04: Wildlife Areas- Amended to reflect higher Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) requirement targeted at sites adjacent to wildlife corridors as per DC feedback and clarify potential contradiction by requiring all development proposals within wildlife corridors (as per map) to comply with the Dorset Biodiversity Appraisal Protocol (DBAP).

WNP11: Local Green Space - Two further sites were proposed for addition to the schedule, one of which (Chapelhay Growing Area) was assessed as meeting the NPPF criteria and added to the Schedule of sites proposed as Local Green Space. Objections by Dorset Council to three sites for Highways reasons are subject to on-going discussion with the current recommendation that they remain on the list

WNP12: Incidental Open Spaces - Following feedback from Dorset Council requesting a detailed map of the open spaces within each individual site boundary, a review was conducted with the involvement of ward councillors and draft maps have been produced which are currently under review.

WNP15: Panoramic Vistas and Views – additional views submitted by the Civic Society that meet the necessary criteria of being from a publicly accessible location within the Neighbourhood Area and taking in views primarily within that Neighbourhood Area have been added under this policy. All relate to coastal views – Nothe across Newtons Cove to Bincleaves, Bincleaves to Newtons Cove / Nothe, Beach / Esplanade to Nothe, East from Bowleaze Coveaway.

Development & Homes

As part of the response to the Regulation 14 consultation the Local Planning Authority updated the Housing Requirement for the Neighbourhood Plan area, from 3,225 to 3,118, to reflect the number of homes already delivered in the plan period 2021-2038. In the same period the demand for Social Housing, with a Local Connection to Weymouth, as evidenced by the Housing Register has increased from 376 to 513.

WNP16: Defined Development Boundaries – updated to include WNP13 Countryside and to reflect the built, in-built developments and land allocated outside the DDB, as defined in the 2015 Local Plan and the allocations proposed in the draft Weymouth Neighbourhood Plan.

WNP20: Major Housing Sites – removed duplication with other policies and added additional conditions for safe vehicular and pedestrian access, included reference to DC's standard for community facilities, need for linkages to facilities, off-street parking and EV, safe footpaths and cycleways, safe pedestrian light avoiding light pollution. Added list of assessments to support application, where appropriate; landscape and visual assessment, flood risk assessment, drainage proposal, transport impact assessment and transport plan, noise assessment and archaeological assessment. Added condition for drainage impact assessment and for consideration of heritage impact.

WNP22: Affordable Homes – 35% AH on brownfield sites and 50% on greenfield sites. Emphasised need for social rented. Affordable Homes can include both Social Rented and Affordable Rented – the Viability Testing is based upon Affordable Rented. In practice the difference in rent costs can fall on the council's housing benefit. Incorporated Wyke Regis Society suggestion of adding a condition for financial contribution to Affordable Homes on sites between 2 and 9 dwellings, as in the Purbeck Local Plan.

WNP23: Residential Site Allocations – updated to reflect changes to the residential site allocations and to include the non-residential site allocations -see table 1 below. This summary shows that we are allocating sites for housing, employment, transport and leisure use and additionally transferring more than twice as much land to public open spaces or Lorton Valley Nature Park.

WNP24: Land at Budmouth Avenue – removed as an allocation due to the negative impacts of the development identified in the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and reflected in the comments made by a significant number of residents in the area. This removes the potential for 230 homes on a mixed development with 50% affordable homes, and the transfer of 8.5ha land to Lorton Valley Nature Park and the creation of allotment and car parking access to LVNP but removes the likely adverse effects as identified in the SEA, namely, Biodiversity and Geodiversity, Community Wellbeing, Landscape, Transportation and which are considered as difficult to mitigate on this site.

WNP25: Land at Wyke Oliver Farm – updated to ensure concerns raised are addressed in any future development. Note that there is just one likely adverse effect identified in the SEA, namely, Landscape, which it is considered can be effectively mitigated. It is considered that this is outweighed by the benefit of bringing 250 family homes (50% affordable) to Preston with ready access to local schools and amenities with the transfer of 23ha of land to LVNP ensuring the green gap and wildlife corridor between Littlemoor and Preston are protected.

Concerns were raised that given their close proximity, allocating both WNP24 and 25 placed a high demand on infrastructure and amenities in the Preston area. Removing WNP 24 removes half this demand. Note that WNP25 is nearer to services and amenities, has considerably fewer ‘likely adverse effects’ identified in the SEA and involves the future protection of a much larger area of green space.

WNP26: Land at Redlands Farm – updated to ensure concerns raised are addressed in any future development planning applications. It is considered that the likely adverse effects as identified in the SEA, namely, Biodiversity and Geodiversity, Climate Change, Landscape, Transportation can be satisfactorily mitigated. This site is already identified in the Draft Local Plan but with only 35% Affordable Homes thus allocation was considered necessary to gain 50% Affordable Homes – this is supported by the extended Viability Testing. This site has the benefit of bringing 150 homes (50% affordable) to Redlands with ready access to local schools and amenities and the transfer of 8.8ha of land to public access ensuring the green gap and wildlife corridor between Nottingham, Radipole and Redlands is protected – this also supports the Water meadows in Policy WNP02.

WNP27: Land at Beverley Road – updated to ensure concerns raised are addressed in any future development planning applications. Viability Testing shows potential for 50% AH so long as Section 106 demands are reduced as this development has the benefit of bringing 25 homes (50% affordable) to Littlemoor with ready access to local schools and amenities and the transfer of 0.5ha of land to Local Green Space ensuring public open spaces within Littlemoor are protected.

WNP28: Land at St Nicholas Street – removed as an allocation. Because the site is in Flood Zone 3 we cannot allocate without demonstrating sequential and exception tests which are beyond our scope. However, the preferred use of the land is for affordable housing with a fallback being for indoor leisure and this has been added to WNP45 Weymouth Town Centre. The Viability Testing suggests that the site with suitable funding could provide 60 dwellings in a 4-storey development.

WNP29A: Lodmoor Old Tip Mid-Section – modified to replace housing development with leisure use to comply with Local Plan Policy WEY8 which sets such use for the wider Lodmoor Gateway Area. This additionally addresses concerns regarding land instability, contamination and proximity of the site to the Lodmoor SSSI and SNCI.

WNP29B: Lodmoor Old Tip North Section – modified to reduce the size of the development area, to exclude land within WEY8 and the previous liquid waste storage area. The smaller area is allocated for light

industrial use – retention of part of this site for employment use addresses the concerns about the lack of employment land and support to local businesses. This additionally, addresses concerns regarding land instability, contamination and proximity of the site to the Lodmoor SSSI and SNCI.

WNP29C: Lodmoor Old Tip South Section – modified to replace housing development with leisure use to comply with Local Plan Policy WEY8 which sets such use for the wider Lodmoor Gateway Area. This additionally addresses concerns regarding land instability, contamination and proximity of the site to the Lodmoor SSSI and SNCI.

WNP33: Homes in Multiple Occupation – Retained. Intent is to limit further HMOs in areas which already have a high concentration.

WNP34: Exception Site Development – On DC advice clarified difference between Rural Exception Site and First Homes exception site.

WNP35: Principal Residency – Comment from DC on the lack of persuasive evidence prompted further work resulting in an updated Housing Needs Analysis. This shows sufficient evidence in the Town Centre regarding level of Empty Homes denying homes for local people. Recommendation that the policy is modified to be Town Centre specific.

Jobs & Local Economy

WNP41: Mixed Use Scheme at Jubilee sidings – retained. Potential for wider site development of land owned by Network Rail. Concerns about flood risk and access addressed by proximity of Alexandra Bridge.

WNP42: Town Centre Car Parks – modified to emphasise no development on these sites unless adequate alternate provision is made. This addresses concerns about town centre car parking spaces being lost to residential development and the potential impact on local business.

WNP45: Weymouth Town Centre Masterplan – modified to include additional condition regarding the inclusion of Affordable Homes where possible and incorporating the former proposed allocation at St Nicholas Street.

WNP47: Sustainable Tourism Development – strengthened to support development which extends the tourist season.

Communities

WNP54: Mount Pleasant Old Tip – retained as Transport inter-change hub but modified to restrict development outside the Park and Ride. Modified to ensure that either the running track is retained or alternate provision is made nearby and that development outside the Park & Ride respects the wildlife recovery area.

All Changes are summarised in the Compendium of Policy Changes.