

North Dorset District Council Local Plan 2011 to 2026 Part 1 Examination

Closing Statement by the District Council

This is the final day of the hearing sessions into the North Dorset Local Plan Part 1 and I would like to thank Christine Self, the Programme Officer, and yourself, Mr Hogger, for running all the sessions with thoroughness, patience and good humour.

When it first emerged the programme for the hearing sessions looked quite challenging, but and I am sure all the participants here would join me in thanking you for adhering so closely to the programme, whilst also allowing everyone to have their say.

Over the last two weeks you have heard the Council's case that we have prepared a sound, well evidenced plan based on extensive community consultation and engagement. A level of housing growth is being proposed well above the current demographic projections as the Council is fully aware of the need to boost supply and plan for growth.

We recognise that the plan period is a matter of concern to you, as is the approach to meeting needs in the rural parts of the District. In response we have undertaken to do further work on these issues and we hope to be in a position soon to offer a way forward, so that the Plan can be put in place speedily to deliver the growth proposed within it.

We are also aware that new CLG household projections have been published during the course of the examination, but the implications for future needs, both in North Dorset and across the wider 'Eastern Dorset' Housing Market Area, still need to be assessed.

Our housing trajectory establishes that putting the Plan in place now will give a significant boost to supply over the next five years and enable the proposals for the Strategic Site Allocation at Gillingham to be taken forward, which will provide the bedrock for future delivery from 2020 onwards. We fully recognize that the new CLG household projections may give us new challenges in the future, but we consider the adoption of the Local Plan Part 1 as soon as possible to be the best way of establishing a strong foundation for whatever the future may hold.

The Local Plan Part 1 was submitted with a set of Proposed Changes in response to many of the issues raised through consultation at the pre-submission stage. During the course of the examination, a further set of changes has been drawn up to reflect points of clarification from yourself and

suggestions from participants. In particular, we have suggested significant rewording of Policy 8 – Affordable Housing to reflect the recent Government announcement regarding affordable housing site size thresholds and the findings of the recently completed Whole Plan Viability Assessment. All these proposed changes (and the evidence that sits behind them) have been added to the website.

A number of issues have come up during the examination and you have asked the Council to look again at the wording of certain policies and supporting text. That work is progressing with a view to further changes being proposed, which will also be made available for comment in advance of any more formal consultation on 'main modifications'.

Finally we hope you have enjoyed your time in this part of Dorset and if there is anything we can do to support you in your report writing endeavours we would be pleased to assist. We would also like to wish Christine Self well in her retirement, as we understand that this is her final assignment as a Local Plan Examination Programme Officer.

Trevor Warrick: Planning Policy Manager - Thursday 19 March 2015