

Purbeck Local Plan

Submission January 2019

Environment background paper



Thriving communities in balance
with the natural environment

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Introduction

1. The Council has prepared this background paper to briefly summarise and signpost the findings and information contained in the evidence studies, reports and other papers used to develop its housing strategy and the environmental planning policies in the Purbeck Local Plan. Further detail on each of the topic areas has been presented under the following headings taken from the Purbeck Local Plan:
 - Conserve the outstanding character and distinctiveness of Purbeck's coastline, countryside, cultural heritage and settlements.
 - Improve resilience to climate change and mitigate against flood risk.
 - Conserve and enhance Purbeck's natural habitat, biodiversity and geodiversity.
 - Ensure high quality, sustainable design fit for all.
2. Where a document has informed the preparation of the Purbeck Local Plan, but is not included as a part of the core evidence submitted for examination, this evidence paper includes an internet link to the relevant document.

Conserve the outstanding character and distinctiveness of Purbeck's coastline, countryside, cultural heritage and settlements

Environmental and infrastructure capacity study (EICS)

4. Purbeck has a distinctive and rich natural and historic environment – its distinctive character arises from the complex interaction between different environmental 'assets'. The EICS identifies the key environmental 'assets' (including those in the natural environment and historic environment) and the parts of the District which are affected by these 'assets'. The EICS concludes that most of the District's environment is highly sensitive to the changes connected with new development. The opportunities for development in these areas will necessarily be more limited in order to conserve the quality of Purbeck's environment.
5. The EICS also shows the parts of the District which have comparatively fewer environmental constraints, where it might be possible to deliver new homes subject to appropriate mitigation. The EICS also considers whether it might be possible to deliver the infrastructure needed to support new homes at four different scales of growth (50 homes, 250 homes, 500 homes and 1000 homes).
6. The parts of the District with fewest environmental constraints include:
 - Moreton and Affpuddle.
 - Turners Puddle and North West Bere Regis.
 - Bloxworth and North East Bere Regis.
 - Lane End and South East Bere Regis.
 - West Morden and East Morden.
 - Lytchett Matravers and Lytchett Minster.
 - Wool and East / West Burton.
 - Bovington Camp and Binnegar.
 - Piddle Valley and Trigon Hill.
 - Wareham and East Holton.
 - Fossil Farms.
7. In these areas the EICS concludes that there are no fundamental issues with infrastructure which would prevent development coming forward, but that significant issues may need to be addressed. The findings from the EICS have guided the Council's approach to selecting suitable sites for new homes in its strategy for addressing housing need.

Landscape

8. Large parts of the District's landscape are designated as part of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The Council has considered whether there are exceptional circumstances for new homes when assessing the suitability of a number of sites in its Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA). The findings from this evidence paper have guided the Council's site selection process and its strategy for addressing housing need.
9. The following sensitivity studies and character assessments, together with national planning policy, planning practice guidance and Policy E1 in the Purbeck Local Plan, will be used in decision making to help conserve Purbeck's distinctive character:
 - Conserving Character. Landscape Character Assessment and Management Guidance for the Dorset AONB (2008); and
 - A Framework for the Future, AONB Management Plan 2014-2019 (2014).

Historic environment

10. Purbeck's historic environment includes a diverse range of designated (listed buildings, scheduled monuments, conservation areas and registered parks and gardens) non-designated heritage assets. The Council has prepared appraisals for each of its conservation areas and taken account of the effects of development on the significance of heritage assets when selecting sites for its strategy to meet housing needs.
11. The Council has identified: assets and considered the effects of development when considering the suitability of sites, the opportunities for avoiding / mitigating adverse impacts from development on possible sites and opportunities to enhance an assets significance through development, when assessing the suitability of possible housing sites through the SHLAA. These assessments have been used help form the Council's strategy for addressing housing needs.

Improve resilience to climate change and mitigate against flood risk

12. Taking account of evidence from the Environment Agency the Council has modelled rising sea levels in its Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA), to ensure that these risks are taken into consideration when assessing flood risk as part of its approach to adapting to climate change. The Council's SFRA also identifies flood risks from the following sources: main rivers, the sea, surface water, groundwater and sewer flooding, so that these can be taken into consideration when assessing flood risk. The Council has also prepared a level 2 SFRA for Swanage (2016). The findings from these SFRAs have guided the Council's site selection process and its strategy for addressing housing need, and will be taken into consideration in decision making.
13. The Council's approach to responding to coastal change is informed by evidence from the South Devon and Dorset (2011) and the Poole and Christchurch Bays (2011) Shoreline Management Plans. The Council's coastal change management areas (CCMAs) evidence paper explains how the Council has identified land which will be affected by coastal change and its approach to developing a planning policy which

ensures that coastal change is taken into consideration when managing proposals for new and existing development on this land.

14. The Council's approach to improving resilience to climate change and mitigating against flood risk have been guided by responses from key consultees (including Lead Local Flood Authority and the Environment) and relevant national planning and guidance. The Council has prepared policies E3: Renewable energy and E6 : Sustainable drainage systems for the Purbeck Local Plan to help deliver development which mitigates the impacts of climate change and reduces flood risk.

Conserve and enhance Purbeck's natural habitat, biodiversity and geodiversity

Protected Habitats

15. Purbeck District includes some of the most special and heavily protected environments in the country. It has a wealth of biodiversity and geodiversity of international, European and national importance.
16. In Purbeck, Sites of Scientific Special Interest (SSSI), the Dorset Heaths Special Protection Area (SPA), Dorset Heaths Special Area of Conservation (SAC), Dorset Heathlands Ramsar site, Poole Harbour Ramsar site, and Poole Harbour SPA are key sites afforded statutory protection through national and European law.
17. Policies and proposals in the Purbeck Local Plan have been assessed through Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) to determine their potential significant effects upon internationally designated sites and an Appropriate Assessment carried out to determine if mitigation proposals are sufficient. Habitats Regulations Assessments are iterative in nature and reviewed at each stage of a plan's development.
18. The approach to heathland mitigation is set out in the Dorset Heathland Planning Framework 2015-2020 Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). Exploring Heathland Mitigation in Purbeck (AECOM 2016) reviewed the approach and concluded the approach should be continued.
19. There are two key matters that need to be addressed at Poole Harbour that policy E9 highlights. The issues and solutions of over enrichment of the water is addressed in the Nitrogen Reduction in Poole Harbour SPD. The Council is also working with the Borough of Poole on the development of a Recreation in Poole Harbour SPD to address the impact of potential increased recreational pressures.

Local biodiversity and geodiversity

20. In addition to the protection afforded in the NPPF, the local plan (policy E10) identifies how it will protect important local biodiversity and geodiversity features, including the requirement for a biodiversity appraisal where there are protected sites or important species and habitat features, as set out in the Dorset Biodiversity Protocol, within the site or close to it. The Council has taken account of the Dorset Biodiversity Strategy (2003) and the Dorset Local Geodiversity Action Plan (2005).
21. Also, within the vicinity of areas that support nationally and European protected bird species, the applicant will need to demonstrate that there is no significant adverse effect on the species or their habitats.

Ensure high quality, sustainable design fit for all

Design

22. The Council's Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (2014) provides an overview of the design principles and 'good' practice that the Council expects applicants should take into account when preparing their planning applications. The Council will also have regard to these principle and 'good' practice when assessing the suitability of design in decision making and considering the potential suitability of a site in site selection as part of the process of preparing its strategy for meeting housing need.
23. Townscape character appraisals were produced in 2012 for the following towns and larger villages in the District:
- Bere Regis;
 - Bovington;
 - Corfe Castle;
 - Lytchett Matravers;
 - Swanage;
 - Upton;
 - Wareham North;
 - Wareham; and
 - Wool.
24. These appraisals provide contextual evaluation of the character of these settlements to be used when assessing proposals against the requirements of planning policy and to which regard has been given when conducting the site selection as part of the process of preparing the strategy set out in the Purbeck Local Plan for meeting housing need.