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*Agenda for special meeting at 7:00pm on Wednesday 8th October 2025 at:
Upwey and Broadwey Memorial Hall, Victoria Avenue, Weymouth DT3 5NG*

- 1. Present & Apologies**
 - 2. Declaration of Interests and Requests for Dispensations** re items on the Agenda.
 - 3. Reference to standing orders**
 - 4. Planning Matters**
 - 4.1. Dorset local plan options consultation**
 - 5. Matters of Interest, Information or other business**
 - 6. Date and location of next Meeting – 19th November 2025 at Upwey and Broadwey Memorial Hall**
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Local plan options consultation

WFPC talking points

October 2025

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Introduction

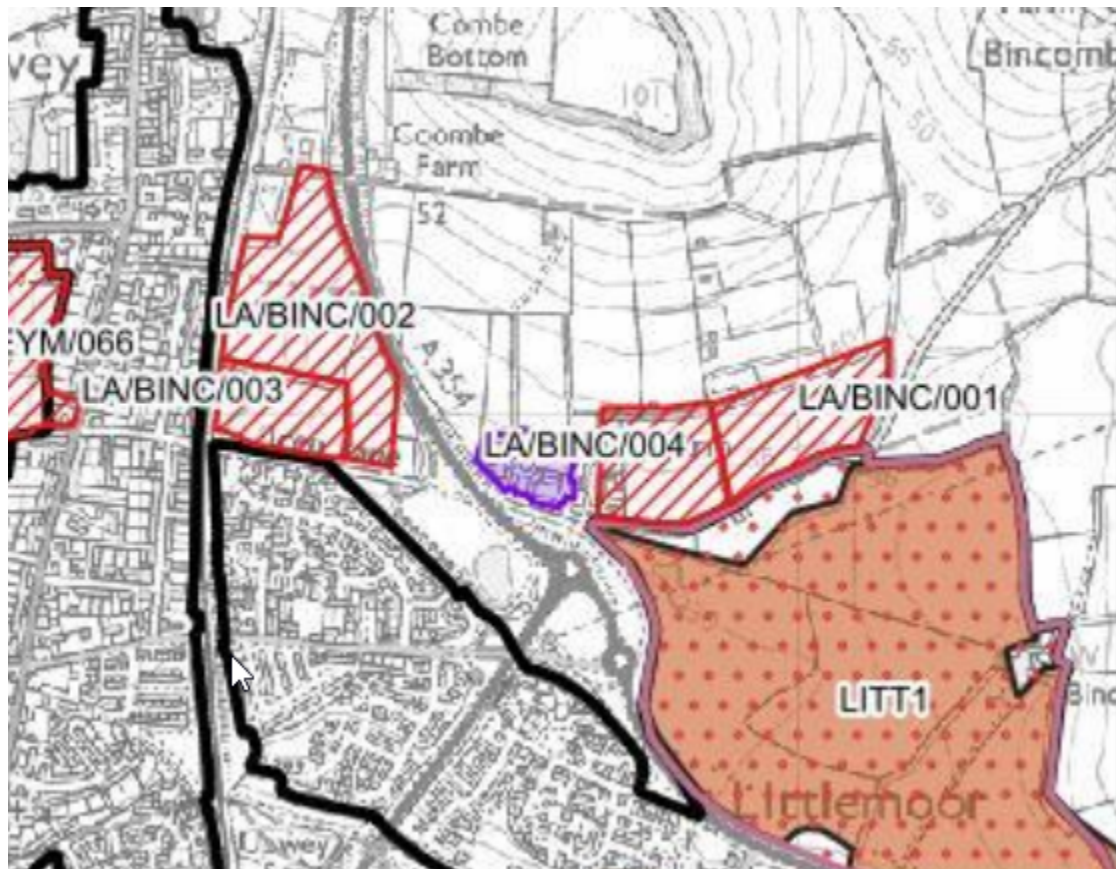
This paper sets out a number of items that are potentially of interest to this council in the ongoing local plan options consultation, along with a draft response to the consultation that the council may wish to consider submitting.

The options paper and associated documents can all be seen and examined in full on the Dorset Council website at

<https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/w/dorset-council-local-plan-options-consultation-2025>

LA/BINC/001, 002, 003, 004

These areas of land for potential residential development to the north of Weymouth (and north of Icen Lane) - two within Weymouth (LA/BINC/002 and 003 on the map below) and two within Bincombe (004 and 001) - have been submitted by landowners or other interested parties (usually property developers). Dorset Council will have to evaluate these areas of land (and many others submitted across the county) to assess their suitability. ([pages 448-459 of appendix A](#))



Draft response

This council believes it is essential that the character of our rural areas is preserved and that Dorset's area of outstanding natural beauty is protected. We are, therefore, unable to support the listing of these areas of land as opportunity sites for housing in a draft local plan and the associated incursion into the Dorset area of outstanding natural beauty.

Protected national landscapes such as AONBs are important assets to Dorset. The AONB and the Jurassic Coast are defined as two of Dorset's distinctive characteristics in the document, which has as one of its central aims "*an underlying commitment running throughout the final Local Plan, to conserve and enhance the natural environment.*" Additionally, article 189 of the National Planning Policy Framework states that "*great weight should be given to conserving and*

enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and National Landscapes, which have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues.”

We cannot support the allocation of this land for development, in effect endorsing a piecemeal chipping away of the boundaries of the AONB to facilitate a northward expansion of the urban area. One of the factors in favour of the current development taking place to the north of Littlemoor Road was the creation of a better interface between the urban area and the AONB, which further northward development would make a mockery of. The parish of Bincombe forms part of a vital green lung between Weymouth and Dorchester, and it is imperative that this important gap is not eroded over time, either north of the existing built-up area or to the east of the railway line, regardless of the concept of a “Portland - Weymouth - Dorchester corridor”.

Such development and the creation of such a corridor would do nothing whatsoever to enhance the character of the AONB and a great deal to damage it.

Section 3.4 - Central Dorset area

The document makes reference to a “Portland - Weymouth - Dorchester” corridor. Paragraph 3.4.4 states *“Within the bounds of the important environmental assets, there are significant opportunities for further growth along the Portland – Weymouth - Dorchester corridor to support and enhance the continued value of the central Dorset area to the wider Dorset economy.”* ([section 3.4 on pages 21-22 of the main document](#))

Draft response

This council notes and supports the need for Dorset to have a strong, versatile and adaptive economy. We feel strongly however that development must not be at the expense of the important open gap between Weymouth and Dorchester, especially in piecemeal form around the edge of each settlement. A draft local plan must do better at explaining how it would prevent the “corridor” from being an enabler for continual, fragmented development, especially in the absence of defined development boundaries as also proposed by this document.

Section 5 - flexible settlements policy

The document proposes the removal of “defined development boundaries” from a future local plan and its replacement with a “flexible settlements policy”. ([section 5 on pages 31-39 of the main consultation document](#))

Draft response

The establishment of a flexible settlements policy represents a fundamental departure from the established system of defined development boundaries that have provided certainty for both communities and developers for decades. A flexible policy would require Dorset Council to establish a strong evidence base of local character, landscape sensitivity and mapping of local services and facilities to inform decisions, and such decisions would be reliant on officer interpretation of policy wording and site-by-site assessments. This would have obvious impacts on the consistency of decision making and risks tying up officer time in the justification and defence of decisions.

A flexible settlements policy risks diminishing the involvement of the community in strategic planning decisions. The existing boundaries around this council’s area were determined through a local plan process that involved extensive community consultation. The proposed change risks disempowering communities from having a say in this manner, delegating approval to officers on a case-by-case basis.

It is this council’s concern that a flexible settlements policy would accelerate piecemeal development both at the urban edge and in more rural areas, gradually transforming the character of an area with many subsequent decisions in favour of development and not allowing adequate scoping and planning of local infrastructure and services to support an increased population. Where poor decisions are made, or a flexible settlements policy is poorly implemented, this could well represent an inappropriate weakening in the protection that ought to be afforded to the AONB, and the gradual urbanisation of rural areas without appropriate safeguards.

It is our view that a flexible settlements policy risks undermining good strategic plan setting, risks the creation of infrastructure deficit, and risks the gradual erosion of the rural character that makes Dorset’s settlements so distinctive.

Section 6.6 - protection of employment sites

While section 6.6 discusses controls to “to retain and protect existing employment uses in suitable locations” it does not particularly mention provisions for rural employment sites, or equestrian employment uses. While this section discusses restricting the types of uses for key employment sites (6.6.10) it does go on to state *“some other uses may be appropriate on ‘key’ sites so long as they are directly compatible with and complementary to the employment function and they enhance job provision, the effective operation and appeal of the site. Uses that do not provide direct and ongoing employment opportunities, such as residential development or retail development, would not be permitted.”* The current local plan has a policy (ECON11) that explicitly protects equestrian employment sites. ([section 6.6 on pages 44-46 of the main consultation document](#))

Draft response

We note and support the intention to retain and protect existing employment sites in suitable locations. We note the proposal that this may be limited in scope (section 6.6.10) but further note section 6.6.11 which states *“some other uses may be appropriate on ‘key’ sites so long as they are directly compatible with and complementary to the employment function and they enhance job provision, the effective operation and appeal of the site. Uses that do not provide direct and ongoing employment opportunities, such as residential development or retail development, would not be permitted.”*

Policy ECON11 in the current adopted local plan for West Dorset, Weymouth and Portland has a sub clause that explicitly protects equestrian employment sites, however it has long been this council's view that it would be straightforward for a motivated applicant to sidestep this. We are of the view that a similar policy in any new plan should go to great lengths to protect rural employment sites, particularly where equestrian employment is concerned, and that the policy should consider the appropriateness of a new use in its setting and landscape and be worded to favour the protection of existing employment.