

Stinsford Parish Council are unanimously opposed to the proposed development North of Dorchester as stated in DOR15. The following areas outline the basis of our objection, our concerns about the proposal, the lack of detail in many areas, and our questions around the methodology of the process

1. **Case for housing numbers:** The government's targets for Dorset are based on over-optimistic growth estimates at the local and national level. Even with the Inspector's report of the 2015 inquiry into the extant Local Plan, it is not at all axiomatic that the extra numbers should be at Dorchester. We believe that West Dorset District Council (WDDC) should re-calculate the housing requirements for West Dorset and produce a more up to date assessment of housing need. Why Dorchester needs to grow so dramatically needs more justification. As a Parish Council, we doubt whether Dorchester or Stinsford need this amount of extra housing.

2. **Housing purchase and affordability:** Why are only 35% of houses to be affordable? Why not a greater proportion such as 80%? Housing need at a local and national level is for more affordable/social housing and therefore this proposal should be more ambitious in this area.

The current government model for projected housing numbers assumes that if prices are above a certain ratio, when compared to average incomes, then building extra houses over and above the normal projected figures will help meet demand and bring down prices. This model has various problems in that developers do not seem to recognise the need for smaller and more affordable homes. What they build will bring more inward migration thus worsening the problem. Much of the house purchasing will be done by outsiders coming in; the house prices are not solely determined by the local market. As we have seen at Poundbury, and other developments in Dorchester, building more homes has not reduced house prices.

3. **Freestanding community or urban extension?** The whole concept of this development is blighted by indecision about whether this is to be a free-standing community or an urban extension of Dorchester. As an extension, it must have easy, quick, non-vehicular access to the middle of Dorchester. Clearly, it does not have this. The shape of the proposed development stretching down the A35, dragging Dorchester a long way North and East contorts the town and will make in-town journeys much longer. As a free-standing settlement, it should have identity and social cohesion. It will need community structures and meeting places which have not been planned in. As proposed, it will be a soulless mass housing estate with little or no connectivity to Dorchester.

4. **Detail and master planning:** The vision of an 'urban extension' is a low aspiration and the Local Plan itself is very vague on detail and delivery. For instance; the Overarching Vision for North Dorchester as given in 11.5.2 of the Local Plan is simply not delivered with the detail that follows. We have little confidence that the vision will be delivered and no statements of guarantee that it can be enforced. We have a principal council that is being reorganised imminently with WDDC disappearing. There needs to be more explanation of how a successor authority will deliver and secure the necessary commitments from developers.

5. **The environmental case:** Weak statements such as, "Efforts to reduce carbon emissions from the new dwellings and other buildings to a level below that required through building

regulations will be encouraged”, appear not to be aligned with national policy. The government has already said new build housing in the 2020’s should be fossil-fuel free. What real mechanisms are being planned to make this a zero carbon development, both in its construction and then over the next fifty years when it is lived in?

The River Frome is a protected chalk stream (with an SSSI designation downstream from Dorchester) and is a unique habitat globally and worthy of a high level of protection. Disposing of sewage effluent into it is a costly business and existing facilities will require upgrading. Given that the land around Eagle Lodge is the catchment area for Dorchester’s water supply, the outfall will have to be routed further downstream. There needs to be more detail and explanation as to how this development will protect the environment around Dorchester and the downstream habitat of the River Frome.

6. **Transport, roads rail and connectivity:** The A35 is Dorchester’s key link from the north and east and is already at or near to capacity, often becoming gridlocked at current traffic levels. The extra 5,000 + vehicles created by the development would gridlock the town and cause traffic queues that would severely reduce the flow on the bypass.

Dorchester has very low levels of commuter cycling. To see cycling as a realistic option would not only require the creation of a fully integrated cycle network within the proposal, but also improved connections to Dorchester and within Dorchester. It would also require the creation and promotion of a cycling culture at a local level. The current proposals do not consider increased cycling use adequately.

The new link road between the A35 and A37 must be more than a feeder road for the A35, as it is already fully congested for much of the summer, and the Stinsford Hill, Stadium and Monkey Jump roundabouts are already overloaded. The traffic will increase with 3,500 new homes and a simple feeder road will not solve the problem. The proposed link road includes an abrupt bend and terminates at an incongruous point on the outskirts of Dorchester. A comprehensive traffic masterplan for Dorchester and surrounding roads is needed before any increase in housing numbers is proposed.

Rail links are currently not suitable for the increase in passenger numbers this development would bring, where are the plans to upgrade rail links and train capacity to and from Dorchester?

7. **Health, education, amenities and services:** In this area statements are contradictory in places: e.g. “11.5.2 The development will enhance the town’s role as an economic hub for Dorset, building on its excellent education opportunities.” Having three completely new schools, as proposed, will not be building on existing excellence. The current proposal to build a four-form entry high school in a town with a twenty-form entry upper school is an ill-thought out solution to increasing school places.

The current proposals include schools, GP surgeries and a shop or two. Where are the proposals for other facilities; a library, arts centre, sports hall, social centre, gardens, restaurants, cafés, cinema, pubs and so forth? The sense of place will be one of being in the wrong location and having to go

elsewhere for all social and cultural events. There is an element that none of these social assets can be included for fear they will detract from Dorchester's existing assets. The consequence could well be a soulless, empty, hollow environment North of Dorchester.

8. **Heritage:** Dorchester and Stinsford have received significant heritage funding for the Museum, Shire Hall and Hardy's birthplace. These developments take place in and gain meaning from a beautiful but fragile rural context. The cultural heritage of the area is embedded in the landscape. The proposed development would threaten this heritage by significantly upsetting the balance of landscape and settlement. It would also threaten the developing tourism economy of the town as it is largely based on landscape and heritage. These are significant heritage concerns with the nature of the site and proximity to where Hardy lived and wrote, as referenced in the inspector's report from 1998 turning down an application to build a fishing lake/gravel extraction quarry north of Dorchester. The DOR15 proposal appears not to consider the 1998 inspector's comments.

9. **Employment:** There is a recognised disparity between work journeys into and out of the town. This is a function of Dorchester's skewed demographic as its elderly population has created a 'service-consuming' economy, thus sucking in workers and consequently traffic. The development of more houses in a free-market environment will further skew this demographic (see paragraph 2).

The proposal allocates significant land to create job opportunities. Dorchester has at present virtually full employment and new employment land will create more inward traffic as at Poundbury. The Local Plan has a flawed view of Dorchester as an employment 'hotspot' but Dorchester's two largest employers face difficult and retrenching futures. Local government budgets have been cut by 30% and face further rounds of austerity. The Health Service has a future of reorganisation and cost reduction. The case for the extra numbers of houses is published in the inspector's report of 2015 and indicates West Dorset needs more employed people to counter the number of retired people already here and continually migrating in. As stated before in paragraph 1, the 2015 numbers require reassessment in the light of changing employment levels, work patterns and demographics.

10. **Other options for development:** There is no recognition in DOR15 of other development models, such as a Garden Village. The Local Plan and current WDDC processes cannot deal with the problem of loss of money from the area concerned once it has been designated for building purposes. The financial uplift for the landowners is enormous and with this model, once WDDC announces where the development will be, land prices will increase enormously and any chance of getting sufficient funding from the development for all the necessary infrastructure disappears. There is a very strong argument to suggest that following this developer-led proposal is not the best recourse for Stinsford or Dorchester and that a different process is needed, one more akin to a Garden Village, where a trust takes control of development. The siting is a poor compromise between building an urban "extension" which will lack community and social facilities, and a new town or "Garden Village" which would bring social, environmental and aesthetic cohesion to the whole development.