

Report to: **Strategic Planning Committee**



Date of Meeting 30 September 2025

Document classification: Part A Public Document

Exemption applied: None

Review date for release N/A

Response to Dorset Local Plan Options Consultation

Report summary:

This report outlines the key issues arising from the Dorset Council Local Plan Options Consultation 2025 that are of relevance to East Devon District Council. It seeks agreement on a formal response to be submitted to Dorset Council, focusing on cross-boundary matters including housing growth at Lyme Regis, landscape and infrastructure impacts, and shared environmental designations such as the Jurassic Coast World Heritage Site and National Landscapes.

Is the proposed decision in accordance with:

Budget Yes ☒ No ☐

Policy Framework Yes ☒ No ☐

Recommendation:

- (1) That Strategic Planning Committee agrees the proposed response to the Dorset Council Local Plan Options Consultation 2025 as set out in paragraph 3.2 this report and authorises the Planning Policy team to submit it to Dorset Council.
- (2) That Strategic Planning Committee give delegated authority to the Assistant Director- Planning Strategy and Development Management in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Place, Infrastructure and Strategic Planning to agree a Statement of Common Ground with Dorset Council covering the issues set out in this report.

Reason for recommendation:

To ensure East Devon District Council provides a timely and constructive response to Dorset Council's consultation, reflecting key cross-boundary planning issues and protecting the interests of East Devon's communities, environment, and infrastructure.

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Portfolio(s) (check which apply):

- ☐ Assets and Economy
- ☐ Communications and Democracy
- ☒ Council, Corporate and External Engagement
- ☐ Culture, Leisure, Sport and Tourism
- ☐ Environment - Nature and Climate
- ☐ Environment - Operational
- ☐ Finance
- ☒ Place, Infrastructure and Strategic Planning

☐ Sustainable Homes and Communities

Equalities impact Low Impact

Climate change Low Impact

Risk: Low Risk; Failure to respond could result in missed opportunities to influence development near the East Devon border, with potential negative impacts on infrastructure, landscape, and communities.

Links to background information [Dorset Council Local Plan Options Consultation 2025 - Dorset Council](#)

Link to [Council Plan](#):

Priorities (check which apply)

- ☒ A supported and engaged community
 - ☐ Carbon neutrality and ecological recovery
 - ☐ Resilient economy that supports local business
 - ☐ Financially secure and improving quality of services
-

Report in full

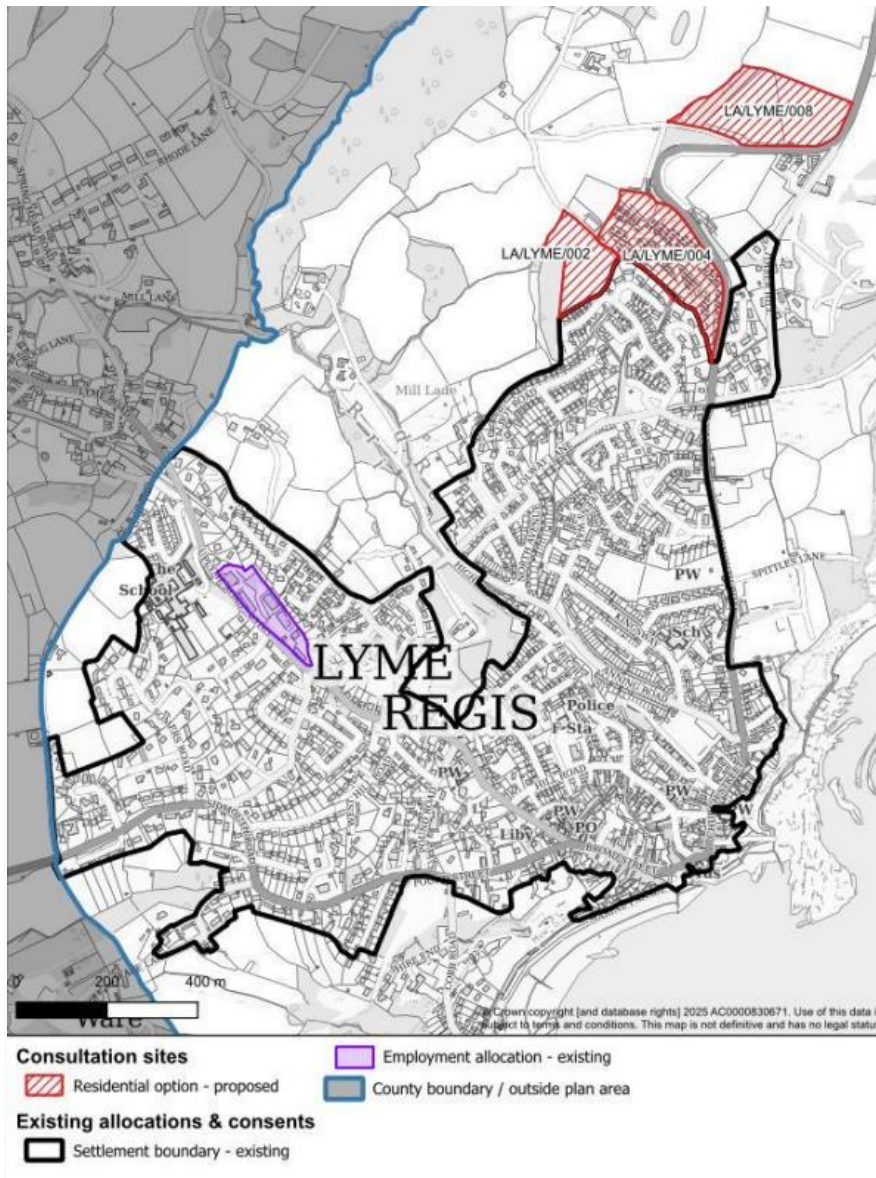
1. Introduction

- 1.1 Dorset Council is preparing a new Local Plan to guide development across its area to 2043. The current consultation sets out a vision, strategic priorities, and a range of policy options. It also identifies a significant number of ‘opportunity sites’ for housing, employment, renewable energy, and Traveller provision. These are not formal allocations at this stage but are being consulted on to inform the next version of the Local Plan.
- 1.2 Given the proximity of Dorset Council’s administrative boundaries to East Devon, and the shared environmental, infrastructure and housing market considerations—particularly around Lyme Regis and the A35 corridor—it is important that East Devon responds to ensure cross-boundary issues are fully considered.
- 1.3 Dorset Council have also provided a first draft of a statement of common ground that seeks to establish some context to the relationship with East Devon on planning matters and basic principles around collaborative working and sharing of information as work on their plan progresses. Delegated authority is sought to sign a statement of common ground with Dorset covering these issues.

2. Key Issues for East Devon

- 2.1 **Growth at Lyme Regis and Impact on Uplyme:** Lyme Regis is identified as a Tier 2 settlement and a focus for growth. Three opportunity sites in Lyme Regis have been identified (Figure 1).
 - LA/LYME/002 – Around 48 homes
 - LA/LYME/004 – Around 72 homes

- LA/LYME/008 – Around 108 homes



2.2 Elevated sites may affect the East Devon National Landscape and the setting of the Dorset and East Devon Coast World Heritage Site.

2.3 **Housing Numbers and Infrastructure:** Dorset Council is planning for 3,246 homes per year, totalling 55,182 homes over the plan period (2026–2043), representing an increase of over 80% compared to previous targets. The strategy includes new site allocations, a flexible settlements policy, and potential new settlements.

The consultation identifies:

- **Over 240 opportunity sites** across the Dorset Council area, which together could deliver **around 33,000 new homes**.
- A further **12,000 homes** could be delivered through larger strategic sites, including new communities north of Dorchester, north of Crossways, and Bere Farm near Lytchett Matravers.
- The total estimated housing supply from all sources is **approximately 70,000 homes**, although not all opportunity sites will be allocated and some may deliver beyond 2043.

- 2.4 It also acknowledges the scale of the challenge and the need for a “step change” in delivery, including a possible stepped trajectory.
- 2.5 **National Landscapes and the Jurassic Coast:** The consultation includes commitments to protect the Dorset and East Devon National Landscapes and the Jurassic Coast World Heritage Site.
- 2.6 **Flexible Settlements Policy:** A new policy is proposed to allow housing development of up to 30 dwellings adjacent to Tier 1–3 settlements, without relying on defined settlement boundaries. This could potentially lead to cumulative impacts in settlements near the East Devon border, such as Lyme Regis. The policy excludes the Green Belt on the Poole/Bournemouth fringes and neighbourhood plan areas with recently adopted housing allocations.
- 2.7 **Strategic Heathland Recreation Mitigation:** Dorset Council proposes to continue its strategy to mitigate recreational pressure on protected heathland sites through Heathland Infrastructure Projects (HIPs) and Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG). This has parallels with the approach that East Devon are taking with respect to management of European protected sites. Visitor catchments may cross administrative boundaries, requiring coordination with East Devon on shared ecological assets.

3. Proposed response

- 3.1 The full proposed response is included below. It addresses the following consultation questions, which are of relevance to East Devon.
- Q3: Settlement Hierarchy
 - Q8: Infrastructure Delivery
 - Q12: Flexible Settlements Policy

Q3: The proposed settlement hierarchy lists the towns and villages that will be the focus for new homes. Are there other settlements where we should plan for new homes? Do you have any comments on whether a settlement is in the right Tier or not?

- 3.2 Response: East Devon District Council supports the principle of directing growth to the most sustainable settlements, as set out in the proposed hierarchy. The inclusion of Lyme Regis as a Tier 2 settlement is noted, and it is recognised that this designation reflects its role as a service centre and its desirability to accommodate a certain amount of growth. Given Lyme Regis's proximity to Uplyme and the East Devon National Landscape, Dorset Council is encouraged to ensure that any future development is carefully designed to respect the sensitive landscape setting and the shared Dorset and East Devon Coast World Heritage Site. More generally, given the environmental sensitivities and infrastructure limitations within East Devon, it is anticipated that Dorset Council will seek to accommodate its identified housing need within its own administrative boundary.

Q8: Is there any important infrastructure that needs to be delivered alongside new homes in the Western/Central/South Eastern/Northern area?

3.3 Response: East Devon District Council welcomes Dorset Council's commitment to planning for infrastructure alongside growth. The scale of development proposed—up to 70,000 homes over the plan period—will require significant investment in transport, utilities, education, and healthcare. In areas close to the East Devon border, such as Lyme Regis and Crossways, there may be shared infrastructure pressures and service catchments. East Devon supports a collaborative approach to infrastructure planning and delivery, including early engagement with neighbouring authorities and service providers to ensure that cross-boundary needs are identified and addressed.

Q12: We have suggested that the Local Plan will not include clear boundaries to define the edges of towns and villages. Instead, the flexible settlements policy would allow new homes to be built around certain towns and villages. How much do you agree or disagree with this approach?

a. Agree b. Partially agree c. Neutral d. Partially disagree e. Disagree

3.4 Response: c. Partially disagree- The proposed Flexible Settlements Policy offers a pragmatic approach to enabling small-scale growth in sustainable locations. East Devon District Council recognises the potential benefits of this policy in supporting local housing delivery and providing opportunities for smaller builders. Dorset Council is encouraged to consider how the policy will be implemented and monitored, and to engage with neighbouring authorities where development may have wider implications. Consideration should also be given to whether National Landscapes should also be excluded from this Policy given the legal duty on the council to seek to further the purposes of the national landscape.

Financial implications:

There are no direct financial implications identified within the report. (AB/17/09/2025)

Legal implications:

There are no direct legal implications identified within the report (002533/17 September 2025/DH).