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# **BARTON FARM:** *have your say...*

## **Barton Farm Development Brief August - September 2007 consultation on the draft guidelines: Feedback Report**

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1. The purpose of this report**

- 1.1.1. Sherborne Area Partnership and West Dorset District Council carried out a 6 week consultation on the draft Barton Farm Development Brief during August - September 2007. This was done to test the soundness of the planning guidelines, and help point towards where changes should be made. This report sets out the main issues raised and what changes were made to the final planning guidance in response.

### **1.2. Previous consultation**

- 1.2.1. In February 2007 the first stage of consultation was held to find out people's hopes and fears for the development of the site. Two 'drop-in' events were organised, one at the West End Hall, Littlefields, and a second in the Wingfield Room of the Digby Hall (by the library in Hound Street). An additional session was also held at the Gryphon School to hear young people's views. At the same time, organisations that provide community services (service providers) and other specialist organisations were consulted about future needs, possible constraints and opportunities. Over 300 people attended the events, and over 650 comments were recorded. For further information please refer to the feedback report for this consultation stage.
- 1.2.2. A workshop event was run on 19 March 2007 for representative groups and technical experts. It was held to develop a range of practical options to address the key issues established from the February consultation and evidence gathering.
- 1.2.3. In April 2007 the community was asked which options they preferred, and whether they had any better ideas. Two 'drop-in' events were organised (at the same premises used previously), together with a session at the Gryphon School. Relevant organisations were again consulted. Just under 200 people attended the consultation events. For further information please refer to the feedback report for this consultation stage.

### **1.3. How we consulted on the draft planning guidelines <sup>1</sup>**

- 1.3.1. The draft planning guidelines and sustainability appraisal were considered at the council's Policy Development Committee on 12 June, and approved for consultation by the Executive Committee on 28 June 2007. The 6 week consultation started on 3 August and ended on Friday 14 September 2007.
- 1.3.2. Information sessions, with staff on hand to answer questions, were held on Wednesday 8 August from 2.30pm to 6.30pm at the West End Hall, Littlefields, and Thursday 6 September 2007 from 11am to 7pm in the Digby Hall (by the Library in Hound Street). As before, a market day was chosen for the Digby Hall event in the town centre to take advantage of the higher number of people visiting the town, with the hours extended beyond normal shopping times to catch those returning from work. In addition the information events were combined with those scheduled for the Core Strategy Issues and Options consultation, and the Sherborne Conservation Area Appraisal consultation, to

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<sup>1</sup> The consultation undertaken meets the requirements set out in the council's statement of community involvement (adopted January 2007), which explains how and when this council will involve people in preparing planning policy. It also complies with the procedures set out in the Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2004.

help those wishing to comment on all planning issues in Sherborne. Display boards were used to explain why the consultation was being held, and what was contained in the draft development brief and sustainability appraisal. Copies of the feedback reports from the previous consultation events were made available, together with the adopted local plan. Comment forms were provided for people to indicate their support or objection to the guidelines. Copies of both the development brief and sustainability appraisal were made available for people to view or take away.

1.3.3. Awareness of the two information events was raised through:

- Two press releases
- Posters displayed on information boards in Sherborne and the surrounding parishes, including local shops and clubs, the library, town council offices and the tourist information centre
- A letter / email to those people who had attended previous events and asked to be kept informed of progress
- A letter / email to all Sherborne Area Partnership members, local town and parish councillors, district councillors and local county councillors, and a wide range of organisations
- Information contained on [www.dorsetforyou.com/bartonfarm](http://www.dorsetforyou.com/bartonfarm).



**Have your say**  
on plans for Sherborne's  
historic and future buildings

- Ideas to protect the special character of the town
- Draft planning guidelines for development at Barton Farm

**Wednesday 8 August**  
at Westend Hall, Littlefields from 2.30 - 6.30pm

**Thursday 6 September**  
at the Main Room, Digby Hall, Hound Street from 8.30am - 7pm

Can't make it? More details are on  
[www.dorsetforyou.com/bartonfarm](http://www.dorsetforyou.com/bartonfarm) and  
[www.dorsetforyou.com/conservationplans/west](http://www.dorsetforyou.com/conservationplans/west)  
or call the district council on 01305 251010

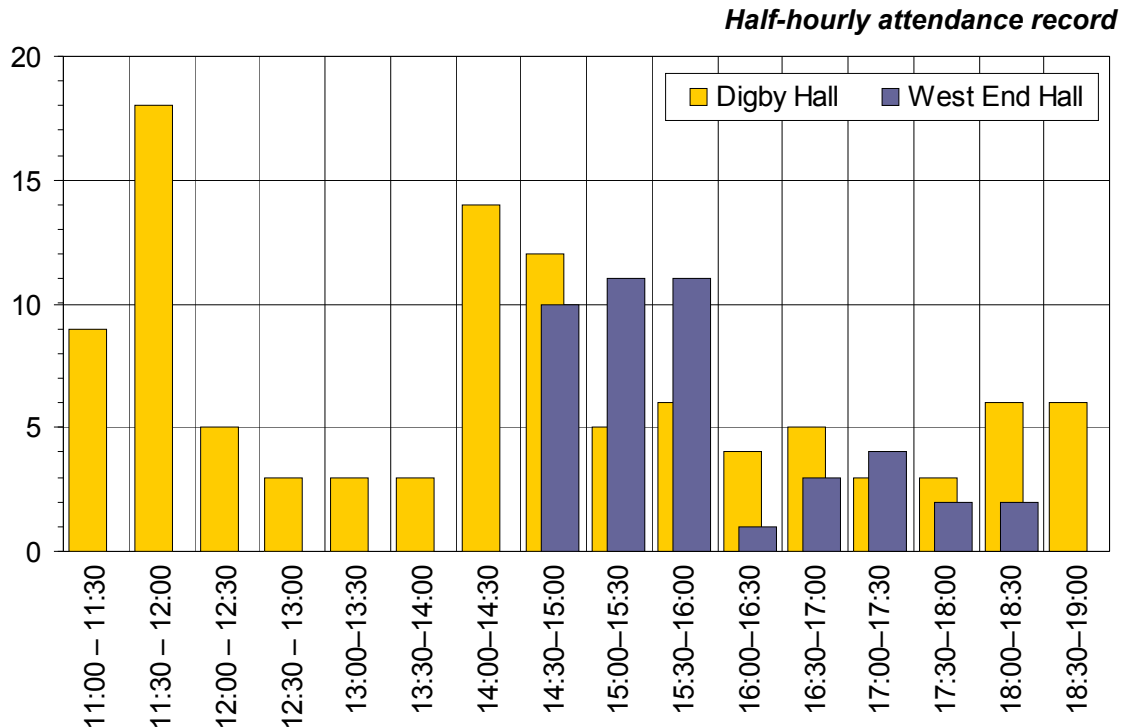
Working for West Dorset

1.3.4. An online questionnaire was also made available throughout the consultation period, together with copies of all the relevant documents. Copies were sent to Sherborne Library, the mobile library service in the area, and the parish councils adjoining the town with a request that they be made available for public viewing. Copies were also available for people to take away from the council offices in Newlands, Sherborne and in Dorchester.

## 2. WHO RESPONDED

### 2.1. Attendance at the information events

2.1.1. In total, 149 people were recorded attending the information events. 44 people attended the first (3½ hour) drop-in event in the West End Hall at the beginning of August, 105 people came to the longer (8 hour) drop-in session in the Digby Hall towards the end of the 6 week consultation. Hourly attendance at the two public events ranged from 4 to 27 persons.



### 2.2. Who made comments

2.2.1. Over 250 comments were recorded, reflecting the views of 33 local people or businesses and the following organisations:

- ASOD (Against Sherborne's Over Development) – representing residents from the areas adjoining the Barton Farm site
- Dorset Archaeological Committee
- Dorset County Council
- Dorset Police
- Environment Agency
- Highways Agency
- Persimmon Homes South West Ltd
- Sherborne Town Council

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- Sherborne Transport Action Group
  - The Sherborne and District Society
  - The Theatres Trust.

2.2.2. A late response was also received from the South West Regional Assembly (the Regional Planning Body) drawing attention to a number of emerging policy in the draft regional spatial strategy that should be taken into account in preparing the final guidelines.

### **2.3. Monitoring**

2.3.1. 46 people indicated on their comment forms how they had heard about the consultation. 11 had found out about the consultation through more than one source. The majority (31) had received a letter or email from the district council. 11 had read about it in the local newspapers, others mentioned that they had seen the posters (6), found out about it by word of mouth (6) through a meeting of the district council or visit to the council officers (5), through the Sherborne Area Partnership (5), and a variety of other means. One person commented that “publicity has been good”.

2.3.2. To help check whether that the responses reflected the views of the wider community (being from people of all ages, gender, ethnicity and disability) we asked people to voluntarily complete an equalities monitoring form which was attached to the back of the response forms. In total, 32 people provided relevant information. The sample size is relatively small from which to draw any strong conclusions, and was only completed by about one in five of those attending the information events.

2.3.3. Of the 32 residents that responded, three quarters live in the roads immediately adjoining the development site (Yeovil Road, Marston Road, Sheeplands Lane and Barton Gardens). One person commenting lived just outside West Dorset across the Somerset border, and the others all lived elsewhere in Sherborne.

2.3.4. In terms of age, all the respondents who completed the monitoring form were over 35 years of age, and nearly two-thirds (65%) were over 65 years old. In terms of gender, a slightly higher proportion of the respondents were male (59%). In terms of ethnicity, 93% described themselves as “White – British”, with the remainder either White – Irish or White – Other (North European). And in terms of long-term illness, disability or infirmity, 1 person described themselves as having a long-standing illness (having both a physical and hearing impairment).

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### 3. ANALYSIS OF COMMENTS MADE

#### 3.1. General comments

3.1.1. The following sections look at the main issues raised in relation to each chapter in turn. A more detailed breakdown of the comments made can be viewed as part of the relevant committee papers.

3.1.2. General support for the majority of the guidelines contained in the draft was given by the County Council, Oliver Letwin MP and two local residents.

**Response:** *support welcomed.*

**Changes made:** *n/a.*

3.1.3. It was suggested that the area to be covered by the development brief should be extended to include all the buildings that form part of the Barton Farm complex together with the garden area to the east (south of Higher Ground) which is in the control of the developer.

**Response:** *A more comprehensive approach, encompassing those areas adjoining the allocated site where there may be potential or pressure for development, would be useful. It should however be made clear that this does not override the need to apply the relevant policies in the adopted plan to individual sites.*

**Changes made:** *yes.*

3.1.4. The developer (Persimmon Homes South West Ltd) raised a number of concerns about the prescriptive nature of the development brief, in particular the maps indicating the possible site layout. In contrast, a local resident felt that the guidelines as worded were too vague (where the word 'should' was used as opposed to 'will').

**Response:** *The Inspector recommended the preparation of a detailed masterplan as part of the development brief. Therefore where a definite approach is required the brief should be prescriptive. However, where there may be alternative and equally acceptable solutions, or where other factors may curtail the best solution from one angle (to achieve a better overall solution) a more flexible approach is needed.*

**Changes made:** *yes.*

#### 3.2. Chapter 2 – the site, its limitations and opportunities

3.2.1. Comments centred on the need to understand and devise ways to reduce risk of contamination from the land before a decision on a planning application can be made.

**Response:** *It would be useful to provide further clarification of the likely risks and measures required to address contamination in the development brief.*

**Changes made:** *yes.*

3.2.2. The Environment Agency raised the need for a surface water masterplan to be submitted in addition to a flood risk assessment when a planning application is made.

**Response:** *It would be useful to provide further clarification on the information that will be required as part of any planning application in relation to surface water run-off and flood risk assessment.*

**Changes made:** *yes.*

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### 3.3. Chapter 3 – traffic and movement

- 3.3.1. Concerns were raised as to whether the traffic assessment carried out for the site would be sufficiently independent, and whether there would be enough thought given to the impact on the wider road network (potentially as far north as the A303), other modes of transport and possible solutions, rather than focusing on the road junctions immediately adjoining the site.

**Response:** *The scope of the Transport Assessment will be agreed by qualified transportation planning experts employed by the local highway authority. Other modes, including walking and cycling, are an inherent part of the assessment. It will not be limited to the junctions immediately surrounding the site, but will look as widely as the affects will spread out. This can be clarified by the inclusion of a diagram and amendments to the text. The results of the assessment, including the survey work, will then be subject to rigorous scrutiny by these qualified transportation planning experts. This means that any findings and proposed solutions will only be accepted if the council's experts are satisfied that the assessment is full, accurate and thoroughly tested.*

**Changes made:** *yes.*

- 3.3.2. The preferred option of a single point of access was supported by some, in particular because of its benefits to the eastern part of Sheeplands Lane. However, given the uncertainty over whether it would provide a workable and acceptable solution a number of respondents suggested alternatives to be considered. There was also concern that under this option the Barton Garden's service road may be used as a short-cut to avoid the traffic signals for those travelling to and from the direction of the town centre, and that this option would cause further problems for traffic going into the centre. The fall-back option referred to in para 3.2.2 was criticised by some for exacerbating the traffic problems along the Marston Road, and potentially encouraging lorries and other large vehicles to access via this route. The provision of a workable link road between the A30 and Marston Road, which would potentially reduce traffic at the Kitt Hill junction and along the lower part of Marston Road, either within the site, along Sheeplands Lane, or cutting further north to join the B3148 north of existing properties, was put forward by both local residents, the developer and organisations such as the Sherborne Transport Action Group (although the Highways Agency agreed that it may result in further pressure for greenfield development in this area).

**Response:***Based on the traffic assessments at the time of the local plan inquiry, the adopted policy highlights the need for a major improvement at the junction where Sheeplands Lane joins the A30 Yeovil Road. This took into account the limited visibility for vehicles exiting from Sheeplands Lane on to the Marston Road, which makes this junction unsuitable for a significant increase in traffic. The potential for a link road is therefore not something that can be considered in the context of this development, but is a matter for future consideration through the review of the local development framework, either in its own right or as part of Sherborne's future growth.*

*Further traffic modelling and consultation with the local community has broadened understanding of the local traffic issues. The preferred approach proposed in the revised brief is for vehicles to access the site from a new traffic signal controlled junction with the A30, just west of the existing junction with Horsecastles Lane. The junction with Horsecastles Lane and Sheeplands Lane can then be modified from a four-way to a three-way traffic signal controlled junction, with the existing northern arm (from Sheeplands Lane) closed, as traffic to and from the site will use the new junction to the west, which should both improve capacity and safety. Measures will also be taken to deter traffic from attempting to short-cut along Barton Gardens. The existing connection from Marston Road via Sheeplands Lane would be closed, for example, by placing bollards across the lane where it narrows down to a single carriageway just west of Sheeplands Estate, and the section of Sheeplands Lane between this point and the access point to the site would*

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remain single track (used by cyclists and pedestrians only). This closure will require separate regulatory consent. Provision should also be made for emergency vehicles and public transport to access the site from both sides of the development, and this could be achieved, for example, by making the bollards removable. The developer will be required to monitor the effects of the road closure on the wider road network (including the capacity of junctions along the A30 and pedestrian and cycle safety), and may be required to re-open this section of road to provide a one-way (westbound) link if the wider benefits significantly outweigh the benefits of the road closure. If the road was re-opened, measures would also need to be taken to ensure it was not used by heavy goods and large commercial vehicles (which should only use the A30 / Horsecastles Lane access), and a pavement on the south side of Sheeplands Lane would also need to be constructed.

**Changes made:** yes.

- 3.3.3. A number of existing properties along the Yeovil Road backing onto the site have no safe on-street stopping or parking, and their current means of rear access (other than through the properties) appears to be by informal agreement with the tenant farmer. Although it is not appropriate for this document to address their legal rights, they suggested it may be possible to ensure that the development makes provision for access to these properties in a more appropriate and safe manner.

**Response:** *The provision of an alternative access for these properties is not a concern that either the county council or the emergency service providers have raised to date, and therefore it is not reasonable to require alternative access to be provided. However, it is a matter that the developers should be encouraged to consider, and will be a material planning consideration at the detailed planning application stage.*

**Changes made:** yes.

### 3.4. Chapter 4 – land uses

- 3.4.1. The developer calculates that the land use areas referred to in this chapter are an underestimate of what could be accommodated, both due to the amount of unallocated space in the guidelines and the potential to include the whole complex farm buildings and adjoining private garden.

**Response:** *The estimates of land required, as set out in the draft development brief, are based on the local plan allocation and subsequent research. Although the council would support a higher figure to make more efficient use of land, and accepts that the boundary as amended gives a greater site area, it is important that this does not compromise other objectives of the development or site constraints. A minimum level, based on the current figures, is therefore a more appropriate guideline.*

**Changes made:** yes.

- 3.4.2. Mixed views were received as to what percentage of affordable homes should be rented, what provision be made for specific need groups such as the elderly and those with learning disabilities, and what should be provided in other forms such a shared equity.

**Response:** *Relevant data (relating to the Sherborne area) will be available from the Housing Need and Demand Survey, the results of which are expected to be available by the end of December 2007. As such, reference to the previous research will be removed to avoid unnecessary confusion.*

**Changes made:** yes.

- 3.4.3. Concern was raised that larger employment units (over 300m<sup>2</sup> or 3,250 sq ft) would be too big for the site.

**Response:** *The majority of demand from businesses is for units of up to 150m<sup>2</sup> (1,600 sq*

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ft), and market demand is likely to influence the type and size of units provided. However, if there is no allowance for larger units then the more successful businesses may grow and leave the area, which would be damaging to the local economy. As such a blanket size restriction for the entire site is not considered appropriate. The guidelines relating to the design including scale, intensity and built form (chapter 6) should be revised to provide clearer guidance. Where a need for large units (in excess of 300m<sup>2</sup>) is established, these should be designed to both appear and have the potential to function as a number of smaller, joined units. The maximum height of any buildings close to the boundary with Barton Gardens will be guided by the height of these homes.

**Changes made:** yes.

- 3.4.4. The need to further consider provision for working from home was highlighted as a county priority.

**Response:** It is estimated that more than 10% of workforce work as self-employed from home. The provision of a space and services which allows the occupants to set up a home office in a quiet room is also credited in the code for sustainable homes. It would be reasonable to expect all homes that may be occupied by people seeking employment to meet this requirement.

**Changes made:** yes.

- 3.4.5. The developer questioned to what extent the need for community facilities had been proven, and that a more flexible approach should be taken.

**Response:** Issues of need and viability are material considerations that would be taken into account at the time of a planning application. The community facilities outlined in the development brief are based on the results of consultation and studies undertaken. The onus should therefore be on the developer to demonstrate that there is no need for such facilities, or that their provision would make the development unviable, as part of any planning application.

**Changes made:** no.

- 3.4.6. The developer considered that the projected building rates were overly conservative, and that the housing could be completed within a three-year construction period.

**Response:** The exact speed of development is not intended to be strictly prescribed, but should be in line with the adopted local plan, which states that the development will start in 2010 and take place over phases 2 and 3 of the plan period.

**Changes made:** yes.

- 3.4.7. The developer was concerned that the phasing proposals may cause problems because finance needed to deliver some of the less economic aspects (such as the employment and community uses) would be raised through the housing which was being phased last.

**Response:** In considering the allocation the Inspector recommended that employment uses should be brought forward in the earlier tranches of development, and later phases of house building could be brought forward as and when indicated by the monitoring of housing land supply. The provisions contained within the development brief do not preclude allowing some housing at an early stage to help offset the relevant costs.

**Changes made:** no.

### **3.5. Chapter 5 – public spaces**

- 3.5.1. Comments by local residents suggested that more detail on what screening or other means of protecting privacy would be welcomed, alongside the strategic planting shown in the indicative layout. However the developer thought the draft plan was already too prescriptive.

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**Response:** *Appropriate screening will be required for properties adjoining the site. Further clarification on the type and location of screening / planting would be of use.*

**Changes made:** *yes.*

- 3.5.2. Locating the allotments on the edge adjoining Sheeplands Lane was questioned by some. Alternatives put forward included locating them closer to the farm buildings, adjacent to existing hedgerows, or adjacent to the B1 and B2 uses where they would act as a buffer.

**Response:** *A more flexible approach would be appropriate, as they could usefully be put alongside the main employment area or the back of Barton Gardens (where they would act as a buffer), or alongside an existing hedgerow (where they would provide help enable this feature to be retained).*

**Changes made:** *yes.*

### **3.6. Chapter 6 – design principles**

- 3.6.1. Dorset Police raised the need to be clearer how crime prevention would be taken into account when considering which aspects of Sherborne's character should be reflected in the new development.

**Response:** *The need to take into account safety and security is an important consideration, and examples of how this can be achieved should be included in the development brief.*

**Changes made:** *yes.*

- 3.6.2. The development brief was criticised for failing to take into account the need to protect the setting of all the listed buildings along the Yeovil Road. It was argued that the high intensity areas would adversely affect these properties, as they were close to the boundary and at a lower level.

**Response:** *The intensity of development along the boundaries should reflect the scale and intensity of the existing development, and protect the setting of the listed buildings, and amendments to the text and diagrams are needed to ensure this.*

**Changes made:** *yes.*

- 3.6.3. The guidance for the appropriate density of the main employment area was considered to be unclear, and it was suggested that a flexible approach was needed as potential end users were currently unknown.

**Response:** *The guidance on the appropriate intensity and scale of development should be made clearer for the employment areas.*

**Changes made:** *yes.*

- 3.6.4. A number of respondents questioned the guidelines referring to the scale of development. Some considered that these were too generous and that the height of buildings should be restricted to 2 storeys and perhaps single storey next to existing bungalows. Concerns were also raised about subsequent extensions under permitted development rights. The developer felt that there should be some flexibility for larger scale buildings where topography and visual impact allows.

**Response:** *The guidance on the appropriate scale of development should be made clearer for the mixed use / housing areas. The need to protect the amenity of these homes should be taken into account in determining the scale of development. The removal of permitted development rights for all new properties is not justifiable. Conditions however can be applied at the detailed planning application stage where there are concerns that further changes may result in an unacceptable loss of privacy, and this can be clarified in the text.*

**Changes made:** *yes.*

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### 3.7. Chapter 7 – sustainable and energy efficient development

- 3.7.1. The Environment Agency commented that the council should be more ambitious in its response and require some buildings to achieve level six of the code for sustainable homes. The developer considered that code level five was not feasible or financially viable and beyond what is required by central government.

**Response:** *Further research has been unable to find any examples of where the equivalent of code level five has been achieved on a comparable site. The council has recently received a planning application to erect 229 residential units and 3,720m<sup>2</sup> of offices and retail floor space at Poundbury, which aims to meet code level four. Further discussions with local developers suggests that it is technically feasible and economically viable to achieve code level three with designs in keeping with the traditional character of historic places, and that code level four can be achieved at reasonable cost with proven technology if factors such as orientation and roof designs are not restricted. As such, a four star rating should be achieved for all new housing at Barton Farm, where code level four cannot be achieved because it would significantly compromise other policies contained in the development brief, the developer will be required to achieve code level three.*

**Changes made:** *yes.*

### 3.8. Other comments

- 3.8.1. Some comments were also made that do not directly relate to the development brief. This included comments on whether the development should take place, impact on property values and taxes, and legal rights of access. It should be noted that the council can only make its decision on planning grounds. Matters that cannot be taken into account include reduction in property values, loss of views, private rights of way, ownership matters and disturbance during construction. These are issues that should be pursued separately, either as a private legal matter or through other legislation.
- 3.8.2. Two people were concerned that the planning guidelines may not be followed in determining planning applications for the site. When adopted as Supplementary Planning Document (SPD), the planning guidelines will be a material consideration, and the weight given to them will also be considerable. The guidelines should be followed unless:
- superseded by more up-to-date planning policy contained in national or regional documents or the local development framework (which should take precedence)
  - other material considerations indicate otherwise (and the weight accorded to these will be a matter of judgement).

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## **4. WHAT HAPPENS NEXT**

### **4.1. Publicity and distribution of this report**

- 4.1.1. To let people know about this report, the council intends to issue a press release highlighting some of the key findings, circulate the report to all members of the Sherborne Area Partnership steering group, and make it available in the council offices and on the council's website [www.dorsetforyou.com/bartonfarm](http://www.dorsetforyou.com/bartonfarm).

### **4.2. The planning application process**

- 4.2.1. The decision when to submit a planning application for this site is made by the developer, and is not controlled by the council. The developer has indicated that a planning application is likely to be submitted shortly after the planning guidelines are adopted.
- 4.2.2. When the application is received it will be registered and added to the list of applications kept in the council offices and at Sherborne library, updated on the website and circulated to a range of organisations<sup>2</sup>. Sherborne Town Council, together with other relevant organisations such as the Environment Agency and English Heritage will be told, as will local residents living next to the site. A site notice will be displayed and an advert put in the Blackmore Vale. Information about the application can be seen at the council offices in Sherborne (please give prior notice). Information will also be available at [www.dorsetforyou.com](http://www.dorsetforyou.com) along with records of any comments received.
- 4.2.3. The council allows 21 days for the public to comment on planning applications. The decision on whether to grant permission and what, if any, conditions should be attached will either be made under delegated powers<sup>3</sup> or by the Development Control Committee at a venue in Sherborne. If decided by committee, the meeting will be open to the public and the applicant or their agent, the town council, local councillors and anyone who has submitted comments on the application can speak.<sup>4</sup> The weight given to each comment (whether submitted in writing or made at the committee) will reflect its relevance to the development, and only material planning considerations can be taken into account.
- 4.2.4. The final planning decision (including reasons given for refusal and approval), together with any officer report, will be made available at the council offices in Dorchester and Sherborne. The town council and all those who have made comments on the planning application will be sent a letter about what decision was made.

### **4.3. Monitoring**

- 4.3.1. As part of the Sustainability Appraisal process, the effects of the development of Barton Farm (such as on pollution levels and local wildlife) will be monitored. This should mean that if the development has unforeseen negative effects, these are identified at an early stage and remedial measures can be taken. The results of monitoring, where known, will be reported every December in the council's Annual Monitoring Report.

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<sup>2</sup> Registration checks that it is accompanied by sufficient information and the appropriate fee, and will be delayed if this is not the case. Information will be circulated within 5 working days.

<sup>3</sup> Delegated powers may be used provided the local councillor has not requested that the application be referred to committee for decision, there have been no objections to the plans by either the town council or any statutory consultee, and the proposed development is not contrary to development plan policies.

<sup>4</sup> In order to ensure the meeting is held in a timely manner, the time allowed for speaking is limited to a maximum of three minutes per person.