**Key points from Weymouth Town Council’s TAG group**

**Issues about the paper as a whole**

As well as the issue that this paper was a patchwork of plans from the past there is no recognition of the new circumstances that are developing as a result of the impact of the pandemic. Taking the six old plans does not lead to a coherent new plan and so the concept of a “**South Ridgeway connurbation”** is not mentioned. It makes a lot more sense to look at the conurbation south of the Ridgeway as a whole.

Before we can make any real progress on options we need to get accurate figures to work with. There is considerable double and triple counting.

We believe that there are general statements on strategy but these are not clearly followed when applied to the different policies.

We are disappointed in the lack of recognition of the AONB and SSSI areas in and around Weymouth.

Even the over counted figures would not allow us to get anywhere near the balance needed between housing, business and environmental developments.

We are concerned that figures are based on a Government algorithm and bear little reflection to local need.

There is no reflection of the new conditions prevalent today; a Covid-19 pandemic which should have a major impact on working habits, business needs and needs for residents and a Climate and Ecological Emergency. This paper sets the policies for the next 15 years and assumes that everything in the late 2030’s will be similar to today. This needs to change.

**Questions for public and council**

1. Are these the right general points we should be making?
2. Are there any other points you would like made on behalf of Weymouth residents as a whole?

**Housing**

WTC have commissioned a Housing Needs Assessment as part of its development of a Neighbourhood Plan. This report, produced by AECOM, says that Weymouth has an Affordable Housing need for a minimum of 1,775 units and a potential need of 2,649. Further they state that policy HOUS2 will not deliver this quantity – at 35% Affordable Housing the plan would deliver as a maximum 1,129 units (35% of 3225). Even with 35% affordable housing everywhere we would not meet our housing demand in this area for private and social rented accommodation. This is especially relevant because of the large number of sites already with planning permission. This challenges the total number of houses needed in the area and reinforces the need for us to develop a plan for the “South Ridgeway Conurbation”. Looking at the area as a whole also means that overdevelopment on the green corridor between Chickerell and Weymouth can be managed more effectively, such as excluding Wey 14.

Action needs to happen to deliver our needs and some suggestions are:

* Work with Social Housing providers to improve provision on their land already developed or invest in new projects such as work in the town centre.
* Relook at all land now owned by DC and identify how any of the Brown Field sites, such as part of Lodmoor, could be developed using relevant grants and also DC should consider building houses itself.
* Look for possible exception sites eligible for grants where large numbers of affordable houses might be possible
* Develop a “principle residence” policy to reduce the second home market and also those bought to let. (This might apply to the whole of Dorset)
* Identify where CLTs could be providers.
* Identify what planning restrictions might be eased to allow more flats and apartments to be established in the town centre.
* Ensure that all mixed developments have clear safeguards to prevent the building of the profitable retirement homes and then argue that the affordable houses are not viable.
* Work with DC to avoid all double and triple counting and to identify areas in the town centre suitable/not suitable for future housing

**Questions for public and council**

1. Are we right in stressing the need for the area south of the Ridgeway to have a joined up plan for housing development and quality open spaces?
2. What balance in housing development would you like to see?
3. Are there any other points you would like made on behalf of Weymouth residents as a whole to help us satisfy the housing needs of Weymouth residents?

**Business Growth**

The DC plan fails to deliver its Economic Strategy with its proposals for business growth. Weymouth is the biggest conurbation yet only has 13 hectares of possible business land and even this is under threat of turning it into new retail units despite the development needs of the town centre, devastated by the pandemic and the new way of shopping. The environmental policy says developments should be close to people to avoid unnecessary travel yet there is no allocation of business growth to match the housing growth, especially in Greater Weymouth. Weymouth residents believe that this is the greatest priority for the plan to deliver. There is some concern that overdevelopment of the Dorchester area for housing may impact on the commuting needs for residents and hence detract from the environmental policies being suggested.

Some of our suggestions to tackle this are:

* Present land identified for development could have a different balance between housing and business.
* An enterprise zone should be established in “the South Ridgeway Conurbation”.
* All new retail development, other than groceries, should be limited to Weymouth Town Centre
* Can exception sites be identified for Business development?
* A campaign should be established to bring higher paid jobs responding to the green environmental revolution, to Weymouth, which might be linked to affordable housing for young working families.
* Brownfield Sites such as Jubilee Sidings and the Park & Ride and the surrounding land should be added to the options for developments.
* Dorset need to draw up a quick report on how they this employment practices will change as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.
* DC should carry out its promise to base some of its services around the county and not to base them all in Dorchester.
* Weymouth needs to be a priority area for the development of the best possible IT connections and get this highly publicised in the employment market to encourage home working and new start-ups.

**Questions for public and council**

1. Are we right in stressing the need for business development and better paid jobs should be a priority?
2. Are there any areas you could identify for business development?
3. Are the ideas we have suggested above the right ones for driving any plan forward?

**Environmental Vision**

The balance between business growth and housing development needs to closely reflect this vision. Housing developments must be required to conform to standards required to conform to standards required for the Climate and Ecological Emergency. These cover a range of activities. An emphasis needs to be made for improving public transport to support both local travel and the train route to London via Yeovil and Salisbury. We also need a clear strategy for the spread of electric car charging points which should be shared as quickly as possible. There is mention of ensuring that housing quality meets new environmental standards, but it is not clear how these should be enforced without giving developers excuses not to provide sufficient affordable units.

**Questions for public and council**

1. Are we right in stressing the need to tackle the Climate and Ecological Emergency should be a driving force for our future planning?
2. Are there any ideas you have for improving our general transport provision across the county?
3. What other priorities should we be striving for in Weymouth to help us over the next 17 years?
4. Should we be insisting that all housing and business developments have to follow rigid environmental guidelines but the this should be nationwide to ensure areas are not competing with each other?