



## Weymouth Local Connection Policy

### Background

Neighbourhood Plans can set a specific Local Connection Policy (LCP) where there is a demonstrable shortage of affordable homes and there is support from the local community.

Strong feedback from Weymouth residents in the initial engagements highlighted the lack of affordable homes, especially social housing, for local people, particularly young people and young families on low incomes, and also the difficulty of recruiting key employment workers to the area with the high cost of housing. The idea of setting a Local Connection Policy was discussed in the Homes Theme Group (a subgroup of the Weymouth Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group) and the need and the basic concepts were agreed.

Reference to a Weymouth LCP was made in the Pre-Submission Draft of the Weymouth Neighbourhood Plan in Policy WNP22 Affordable Housing. The policy overall was supported in the Reg 14 Consultation with some comments highlighting the need and benefit of such a policy. Dorset Council comment recognised that discussions were ongoing with the Housing Team.

A draft plan was circulated to Dorset Council Housing Team and concerns were raised about implementing the plan. A meeting has taken place and the Weymouth LCP has been updated to align with the Dorset Council Housing Allocations Policy, where possible, whilst still emphasising the need for a Weymouth Specific Local Connection Policy. Given that there is mobility with the adjacent parishes (particularly Portland and Chickerell) the definition of local is Weymouth and adjacent parishes. Further the definitions have been aligned and updated to include the Dorset Criteria. It was recognised by Dorset Council that there is a desire to establish a Weymouth focussed Local Connections Policy, as part of the Neighbourhood Plan process but concern was raised as to the difficulty of administering such a scheme. It was highlighted that the current Local Connections Policy 2021 to 2026 will start its review and update process next year to be in place for 2027 to 2032.

The Weymouth Housing Needs Analysis estimated the need for affordable housing area and highlights that the extant local plan will not deliver this number leaving a significant shortfall. Additionally, the Housing Enabling Team have highlighted that applications to the Housing Register have significantly increased in 2024. One way to address this need is to tighten up the Local Connections policy to give priority to those with a strong Weymouth Local Connection rather than, merely, a Dorset Council Area Connection.

Further, the 2021 Census has shown that the demographic in Weymouth is distorted by young people leaving the area to find employment and homes they can afford and by older people moving into the area for retirement.

This policy sits alongside other policies in the Weymouth Neighbourhood Plan encouraging homes for local people – i.e. supporting Homes In Multiple Occupation, setting a Principal Residency criteria for new homes in the Town Centre allocating sites in Weymouth not allocated in the extant Local Plan, and setting a higher proportion of affordable homes on market-led sites.

### Weymouth Local Connections

Strong feedback was provided to the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group on the need for local homes for local people particularly younger people and families. Additionally, there was support for key workers needing homes who may not have a local connection policy and often have problems finding suitable affordable accommodation.

The local connection policy shall apply to new affordable homes which are purchased or rented in Weymouth as follows;

- a) To Buy - purchased under First Homes agreements, Shared Ownership of other forms of discounted to purchase, and
- b) To Rent – from a Community Land Trust, Housing Association or other Registered Provider whether at Social Rent or Affordable Rent.



This Local Connection Policy shall sit alongside the Dorset Council Housing Allocations policy. The basic eligibility conditions are unchanged. Section 13.1, (of the 2021-2026 Policy) set the Local Connection Criteria. The criteria below seek to establish a priority to people with a Weymouth Connection either on the basis of having lived in the area or having employment in the area. These supplement and repeat those in the Dorset Local Connection policy but set a priority for those with a Weymouth Connection because of the chronic shortage of affordable homes (particularly for rent) in Weymouth and the likelihood of this continuing, if not getting worse, as the current Local Plan fails to deliver the number of homes required. This shortage is contributing to the numbers of young people leaving the area to find affordable homes and better employment opportunities.

It is recognised that Section 10 (of the Dorset Housing Allocations 2021-2026 Policy) will need to change to require those wishing to register for homes in Weymouth to provide additional evidence for the Weymouth specific criteria. If they are unable to do so then they can still register by providing the Dorset Local Connection evidence.

Other Sections remain unchanged including the Exception and Exclusion criteria.

This policy should be trialled following the Weymouth Neighbourhood Plan being made in 2025 and be formally incorporated as part of update to the Dorset Council Housing Allocation Policy 2027 -2032.

### Weymouth Local Connection Criteria

The following is intended as a cascade list to be used to prioritise applications for Affordable Homes in Weymouth.

Applicants are deemed to have a local connection if they meet one of the following criteria, when housing is released, priority will be given to those meeting the higher criteria in this list.

- i. Is under 30 and has been living in Weymouth, or adjacent parishes, for more than 12 years.
- ii. Has been living in Weymouth, or adjacent parishes, for more than 12 years.
- iii. Is in paid employment (or has a current offer of employment) in a Key Worker role in Weymouth, or adjacent parishes.
- iv. Has been living in Weymouth, or adjacent parishes, for 2 years or 3 out of 5 years.
- v. Is in paid employment in Weymouth, or adjacent parishes.
- vi. Is to provide care for a relative who has lived in Weymouth for more than 3 years and is still living in Weymouth.
- vii. Has been living in the Dorset Council area for 2 years or 3 out of 5 years.
- viii. Is in paid employment

The definition of key worker should be taken from the Government Definition EIM21735. This covers housing for key workers.

Key workers, as defined in EIM21735, are -

- nurses and other NHS staff,
- teachers in schools and in further education or sixth form colleges,
- police officers and some civilian staff in police forces,
- prison service and probation service staff,
- social workers, education psychologists, planners and occupational therapists employed by local authorities, and
- whole time junior fire officers and retained fire fighters in some fire and rescue services.



Definition: Living in Weymouth - refers to living within the parished area of Weymouth Town Council or adjacent parishes.

The Weymouth Local Connection Policy for rented homes shall be administered as part of the Dorset Council Housing Allocations Policy.

The Weymouth Local Connection Policy for new homes to buy, shall be administered by the developer and will be a condition of the Planning Application Approval. The Weymouth Local Connection Policy is a condition within the Policy W18 Affordable Housing of the Weymouth Neighbourhood Plan Submission Draft, Nov 2024.