



COLEHILL PARISH COUNCIL

RESPONSE TO DORSET COUNCIL LOCAL PLAN ISSUED FOR CONSULTATION JANUARY 2021

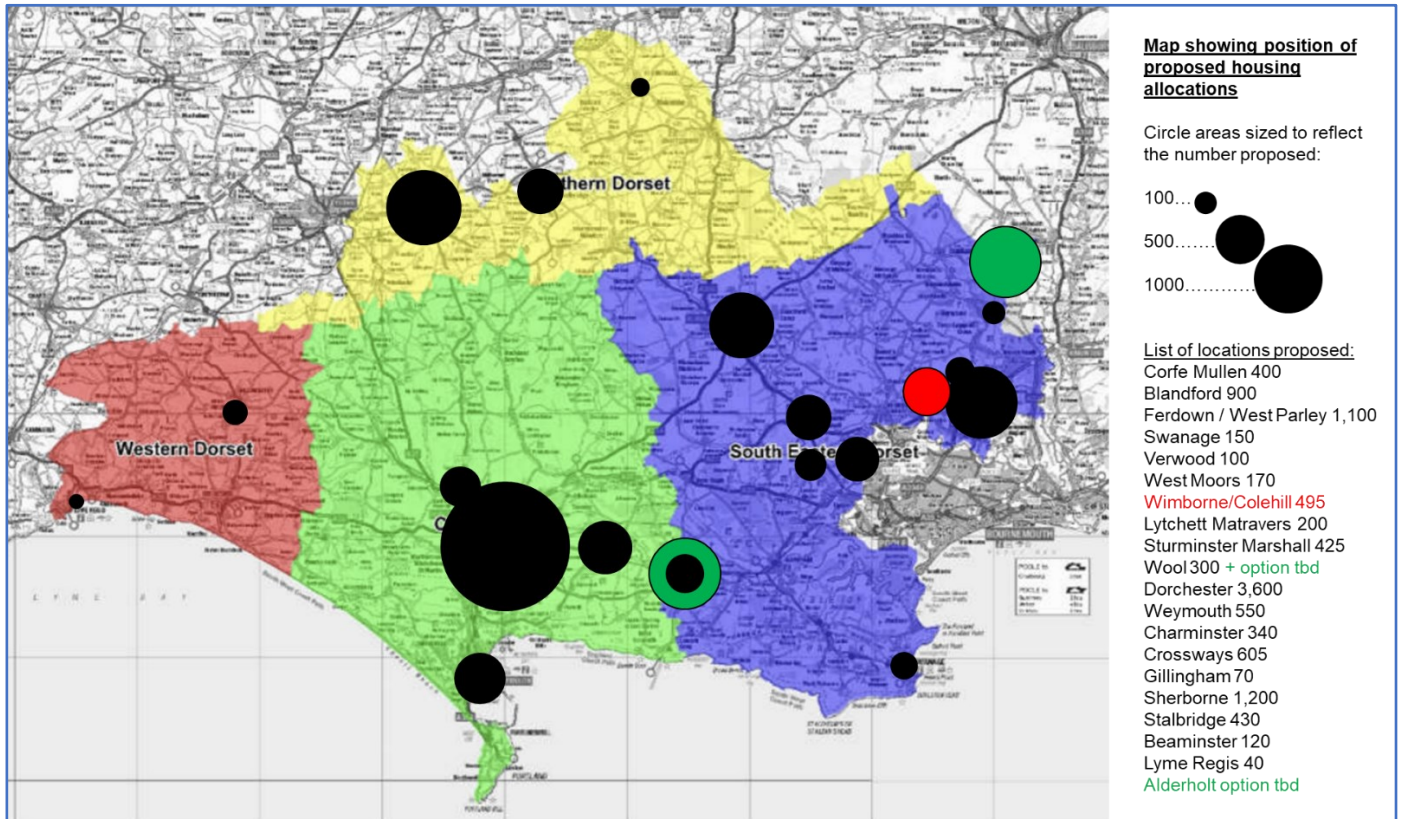
Colehill Parish Council object to the Local Plan for the seven reasons detailed below:

1. The scale of the housing allocation for Colehill is excessive

- The Local Plan includes new housing allocations for 11,195 houses across Dorset in the next 17 years (sect 2.7).
- The population of Colehill Parish is 7,190, based on the 2016 parish level population estimates on Dorset Insights, which is 1.9% of the Dorset County population 378,510.
- Based on 1.9% of the total housing allocation, a **'fair' housing allocation is 213 houses**.
- The actual number proposed is 495, more than double the 'fair' figure.
- Colehill is also likely to see c. 186 houses constructed on Small & Minor sites (sect 2.7.17), based on 1.9% of 9,808. In total this means **681 houses**, a **22% increase** on our current housing stock of 3,087.
- In addition two sites with existing consents at Cranborne & Leigh Road have 786 houses still to be developed. These sites are on land that was in Colehill Parish until being transferred to Wimborne in 2015 when these developments commenced. Including these sites gives a total of **1,467 houses**, a **47.5% increase** on the housing in the area, and more than six times the 'fair' figure.
- **Such a large increase is grossly excessive** for a parish the size of Colehill to absorb, particularly as we have limited infrastructure and a crowded road network.

2. The housing allocation is focused too heavily on East Dorset

- The map on page 2 (figure 1) shows the approximate position of each of the new housing allocations proposed, in total 11,195 houses:
 - Each circle has been sized to reflect the number of houses proposed at that site.
 - With the exception of Dorchester, the majority of proposed allocations are in South East Dorset, an area that is already significantly more developed than the rest of Dorset.
 - West Dorset in particular has been allocated very little housing.
 - Much of the proposed housing in East Dorset lies close to the boundary with the BCP conurbation, suggesting that areas such as Wimborne and Colehill are at risk of being absorbed into BCP in the future.
- The proposed plan fails to recognise the significant shift seen over the last year to home working. It's been widely reported that many people would like to continue working from home beyond the end of the pandemic, and there's currently a heavy focus on increasing internet connectivity to rural communities to support this. Over the next 17 years it seems likely that more people will want to live in more rural areas of Dorset, rather than close to the BCP border.
- **The proposed housing allocations should be spread more equitably across Dorset.**



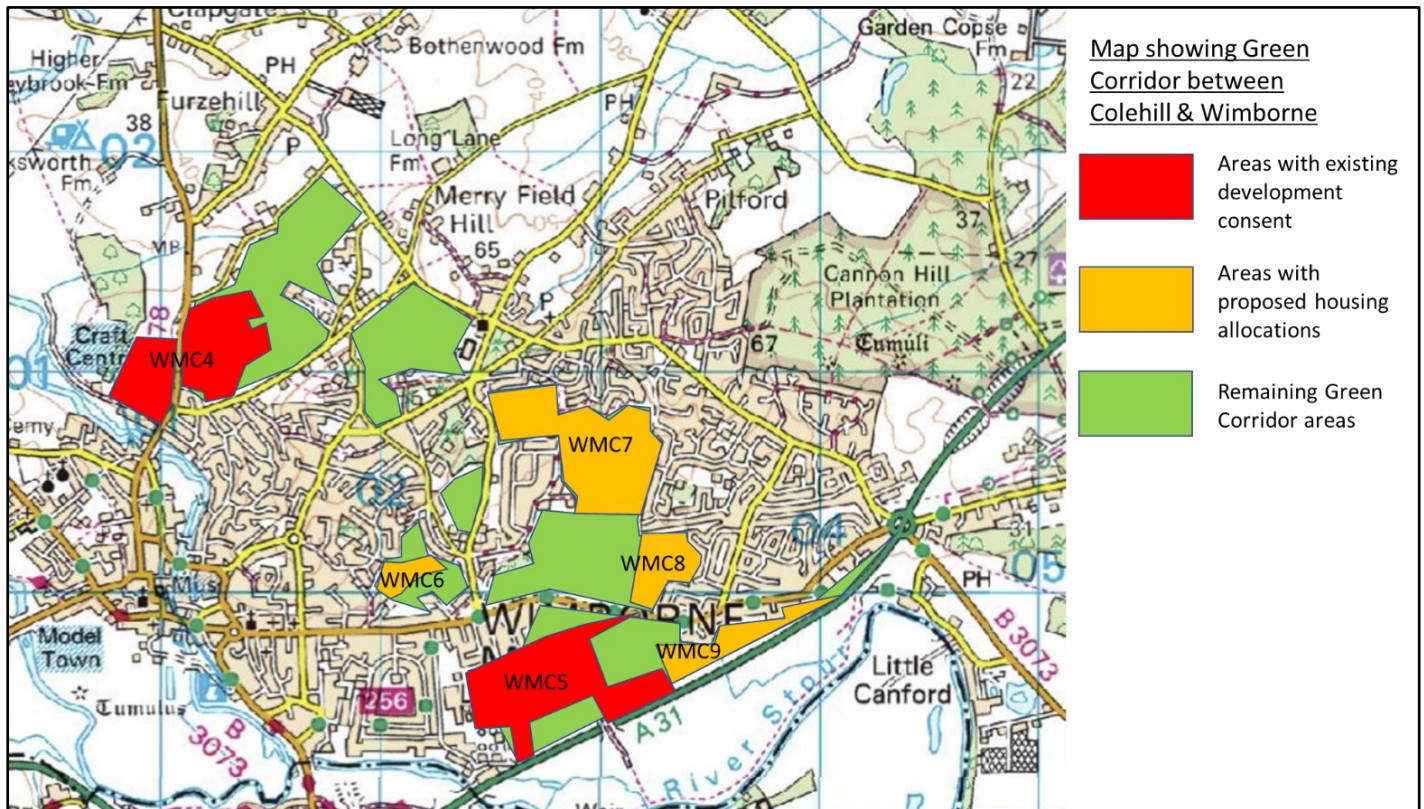
(figure 1)

3. Brownfield sites must be prioritised over Green Belt

- All four of the proposed housing allocations for Colehill are on Green Belt land.
- The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) paras 136 & 137 say Green Belt boundaries can only be altered “where exceptional circumstances are fully evidenced and justified”. Before concluding that exceptional circumstances exist the Local Authority must demonstrate their strategy “makes as much use as possible of suitable brownfield sites and underutilised land”.
- However the Local Plan (sect 7.2.8) simply states that the necessary exceptional circumstances exist, and says that there is limited supply of brownfield sites and sites suitable for intensification. No evidence is provided to substantiate this, as required by the NPPF.
- Section 17 on Wimborne Minster and Colehill includes no consideration of the potential development on local brownfield sites, or sites suitable for intensification. There are however a number of potential brownfield sites identified in the 2019 SHLAA, e.g. the Flight Refuelling Site, East Dorset Council Offices in Furzehill and Wimborne Market.
- **Before allocating housing for Green Belt, the Local Plan must, as required by the NPPF, attempt to identify suitable brownfield sites and other underutilised sites.**

4. **The Green Corridor between Colehill & Wimborne will be significantly impacted**

- We agree with the vision (sect 17.2.1) that Colehill & Wimborne should continue to maintain their own identities as two settlements, and that we should “safeguard the open space and separation between Wimborne Minster and Colehill for the long term” (sect 17.3.3).
- However all four of the proposed housing allocations for Colehill lie in the Green Corridor separating Colehill and Wimborne Minster, as do two of the areas with existing consent.
- The map below (figure 2) illustrates that the areas proposed for housing cover approximately half of the Green Corridor between Colehill and Wimborne Minster.
- This Green Corridor provides an essential link for wildlife to move across the area.
- Developing so much of the Green Corridor is highly likely to have a detrimental impact on the ecology and biodiversity in the area, contradicting several aspects of the Local Plan:
 - Policy ENV1 says green corridors should be strengthened.
 - Section 2 says “ecological net gain” is a strategic priority.
 - Section 3.4.10 says new developments must deliver a 10% biodiversity gain.
- The fields around ByTheWay Field have previously been identified as areas with particularly high biodiversity, as they have only ever been used for pony paddocks and hay cropping, never subject to intensive farming. The more fragmented they become, the greater the risk they will become depleted through isolation and encroachment of non-native garden species.
- **Any development in the Green Corridor between Colehill and Wimborne Minster should be relatively small in scale, retaining significant green spaces and designed to increase biodiversity.**



(figure 2)

5. Insufficient provision is made for Affordable Housing in Colehill

- The Local Plan (sect 1.3.11) states that there's a high level of affordable housing need across Dorset because the average house price in Dorset is £285,000 compared to £248,000 for England.
- House prices in Colehill are actually significantly higher than much of Dorset. According to Rightmove the [average house price in Colehill](#) last year was £395,470.
- Colehill has a very high need for more affordable housing, particularly shared ownership schemes, to enable local people to get on the housing ladder.
- One of the inhibiting factors is our positioning within 5km of protected heathland, which requires developers to provide appropriate mitigation. This makes provision of affordable housing less viable.
- Section 4.3.7 recognises that some areas require higher than normal level of affordable housing, and receive 35-45% on qualifying sites. However Colehill has been allocated to the standard level of 30-40% on qualifying sites.
- Section 4.3.5 states that affordable housing will only be sought on sites providing 10 or more houses, unless the area has been formally designated as a 'rural area', in which case affordable housing will be provided on sites with 5 or more houses.
- Colehill is not currently designated as a rural, despite having no town centre or local centre, and therefore currently receives little affordable housing, as we have few development sites with 10 or more houses.
- It's not clear why Colehill has not been designated as rural, the Government document titled [Defining Rural Areas](#), states areas are defined as rural "if they fall outside of settlements with more than 10,000 resident population. On this basis **Colehill with a population of 7,100 should be designated as rural.**

6. Colehill's positioning with Wimborne Minster appears confused

- Section 2.3.12 classifies the combined area of Wimborne Minster and Colehill as a town, and fails to recognise that the two parishes form two distinct settlements with their own development needs (as specified in the vision in 17.2.1).
- Colehill is not a town, we have very little infrastructure, no local centre, no doctors, no dentists, no hospital, no secondary school, no police station. Colehill residents currently have to travel to local towns for all these facilities. No additional infrastructure has been proposed for Colehill, to cater for the additional population proposed.
- The Local Plan places most of the housing for both areas within Colehill:
 - All 4 sites proposed for housing allocations lie within Colehill.
 - 2 of the 3 sites with existing consents are on land that was in Colehill until 2015 and transferred to Wimborne Minster when these developments started.
- Appendix 2 states that Wimborne Minster's housing allocation for their Neighbourhood Plan is 1,616, yet they have no new housing allocations shown in the Local Plan.
- When Wimborne Minster obtained agreement to commence work on a Neighbourhood Plan they rejected from consideration the idea of including Colehill within their designated area, as they regarded the needs of the two areas as being too different.
- **The Local Plan must also treat Colehill as a separate settlement, and provide separate housing allocations for Colehill and Wimborne Minster.**

7. It's essential that all new sites provide Footpath and Cycle Links

- Colehill currently has no designated cycle links with our two neighbouring towns of Wimborne Minster or Ferndown. There are very limited footpaths and no cycle links to the SANG at ByTheWay Field, the main greenspace between Colehill & Wimborne Minster.
- Work has just commenced on building a new cycle route along Wimborne Road West / Leigh Road, but this doesn't connect with the main population centre in Colehill and doesn't connect with Wimborne town centre.
- We proposed a number of options to improve cycling links to the Cycling Officer for Dorset Council in Feb 2020, seeking to establish cycle routes connecting with the main population areas of Colehill. None of our ideas have yet been progressed.
- It is essential that any proposed developments provide additional safe footpaths and cycle links. This requirement should be seen as a necessity, rather than optional, and therefore written into the policy statement as 'will' rather than 'should'.
- If the 4 proposed housing allocations are progressed then:
 - Policy WMC6 (land at Leigh Farm) must require that the new foot/cycle path along the disused rail line connects to ByTheWay Field, and the new cycle path on Leigh Road.
 - Policy WMC7 (land East of Northleigh Lane) must require new foot/cycle links to be established to connect with the main population areas of Colehill to the North and East.
 - Policy WMC8 (land North of Wimborne Road West) must require new foot/cycle paths to link with ByTheWay Field and the residential areas to the East.
 - Policy WMC9 (land South of Wimborne Road West) specifies that foot/cycle links are required to Wimborne Road West and a foot link to ByTheWay Field. This needs to include a cycle link, and the means to safely cross the road to reach the SANG.
- **All proposed housing allocations must include appropriate safe foot/cycle links.**

Additional Points of Accuracy

- Section 17.1.1 says the combined population of Colehill & Wimborne Minster is 8,700. It's actually significantly higher, about 15,000. The 2016 parish level population estimates give 7,190 for Colehill and 7,410 for Wimborne Minster, but this will have increased with recent developments.
- Section 17.5.2 refers to a new allotment provision specifically for Colehill, but it's not clear where this will be. If it's referring to the new allotments recently created at Parmiter Drive, then this is in Wimborne Minster, not Colehill.
- WMC8 & section 17.5.15 refer to land North of Wimborne Road, it should say Wimborne Road West.

In summary these are our Desired Outcomes:

- The Local Plan should specify a 'fair' housing allocation for Colehill, c. 213 houses.
- Suitable Brownfield sites should be allocated ahead of Green Belt.
- Sites should be allocated around the parish, not all in the Green Corridor.
- Development should ideally be less than 50 houses, and incorporate appropriate greenspaces to increase biodiversity, and appropriate foot/cycle links.
- Each development should incorporate at least 40% affordable housing.