



## **Dorchester Civic Society**

**An Independent Voice**

**Registered Charity No. 268636**

**[www.dorchestercivicsociety.org.uk](http://www.dorchestercivicsociety.org.uk)**

### **Principles of Appraising Planning Applications**

As part of its commitment to promoting high standards of architecture, urban design and planning, a small panel of Society Committee members monitors Dorchester's planning applications submitted to the District Council, aiming to encourage the protection of the town's rich architectural and historic heritage. Applications relating to sites within Dorchester Conservation Area, and proposals in the vicinity of buildings listed as being of architectural or historic importance, are scrutinised especially carefully, given their potential impact on the town's special historic character.

As a result, when considered necessary the Society makes representations to the District Council prior to the application being determined, sometimes opposing a grant of permission and occasionally suggesting restrictions on any permission or improvements to the proposals, including where relevant the need for archaeological investigation. In the recent past this process has resulted in objections being submitted in respect of a number of development proposals affecting the conservation area or listed buildings, including in Glyde Path Road, Albert Road and North Square. The Society's aim of improving the appearance of the town's streets and avoiding interference with the safe flow of traffic has also resulted in opposition to a number of proposals for additional advertising material in locations such as South Street, Top O' Town and Fordington.

Away from Dorchester's historic core the Society aims to maintain and, where possible, improve the appearance and function of the town by ensuring that new development respects existing character and blends in with its surroundings. The Society particularly recognises the importance of this approach when dealing with large and/or visually prominent sites, encouraging a combination of good design and innovation that, in some cases, is necessary to achieve a new life for disused sites. Recent proposals for a large "gateway" site in London Road have prompted an adverse response from the Society in an effort to achieve a scheme that would not only respect the form and scale of existing development in the area but that would also reinforce the attractive tree-lined approach to the town. The Society wants to encourage innovative solutions in such situations, but also tries to ensure that the town continues to be a pleasant and rewarding place in which to live and to visit.

The District Council is currently reviewing its Local Plan, which will set out principles for the town's development for the foreseeable future. This review may generate planning applications for extensive new housing developments on the fringes of Dorchester, and possibly significant new proposals for retail and associated development in and close to the

town's central shopping area. The established arrangements for scrutinising planning applications will ensure that any future major proposals are carefully assessed, allowing the Society to continue its role in protecting the rich historic and architectural heritage of Dorchester.