

Matters and issues 1 – overall strategy

2. Is the CS supported by a robust Infrastructure Delivery Plan which;

- Identifies the essential infrastructure that is required to deliver the strategy?

It is strange that the tone of paragraph 2.37 describing school facilities in East Dorset District disregards the reality that Upper School availability in Wimborne (paragraph 8.13), and Corfe Mullen (paragraph 9.10) are close to capacity and that Verwood (paragraph 11.12) is the largest town in Dorset without Upper School provision.

With proposed new development in the district the majority of which is centred in Wimborne, Colehill and West Parley it is blatantly obvious that the two upper schools in these localities, Queen Elizabeth 2 and Ferndown will become grossly overloaded. As a consequence this will increase class sizes, which in turn deprives young people the standard of education that governments demand we provide for them in their formative years.

From recent publications in the press (see Appendix 1) it appears to be Dorset County Council Policy to overload the Upper Schools in Wimborne and Ferndown by providing housing in their immediate catchment areas. This it reasons will create critical mass in Verwood to provide an upper school on land there, we are told, which has already been allocated for this purpose.

Conversely, I argue, by putting greater housing development into Verwood it will create the critical mass needed to facilitate the creation of a new upper school in that locality and avoid the need to swamp class sizes in existing schools!

If the development strategy is not changed we will perpetuate the ridiculous situation which currently exists namely; bussing older school children into Wimborne and Ferndown from Verwood (paragraph 11.26) and when the new upper school is established in Verwood we will be bussing older school children in the opposite direction. I think this strategy has not been thought through. I am sure it will not be well received by council tax rate payers.

This strategy is unsound, is not positively prepared, is not effective or consistent with National Policy.

The scale of development identified in Wimborne, Colehill and West Parley is not supported by upper school provision and therefore fails to comply with NPPF paragraphs 37, 72 and 156. The policy for stalling the building of an upper school at Verwood should be seriously examined along with an urgent review of alternative development site locations.

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business community unity

EXCLUSIVE Interview with Councillors

Spencer Flower and Toni Coombs

by LAURENCE JONES



Relevant comment commences here

Cllr Spencer Flower is the new leader of **Dorset County Council**. For the last five years, he has been the leader of East District Dorset Council and will stand down in September due to his new role. His other council hats are: district councillor for Holt ward, county councillor for Verwood and Three Legged Cross division, and parish council councillor for Knowlton Parish Council. I met up with him and **Cllr Toni Coombs**, who is a district councillor for Verwood Dewlands ward, county councillor for Verwood and Three Legged Cross division, and town council councillor for Verwood Town Council. Both were elected in 1999 and I grilled them on a few issues, at EDDC's headquarters in Furzehill.

LJ - You tell us more about the proposals for the Purple Haze ground extraction and the extension of the landfill site?

Toni - "The site is right on the edge of Hampshire, within 450 metres of housing in Verwood and very close to the northern border of Moors Valley country park. There are a lot of people who live nearby and drift out of the park into the street and use the forest paths where the site is - so locally it has been very contentious. The proposals that Hampshire County Council put forward have been contested by many local people and a huge campaign had been mounted. The results have been posted and very sadly the inspector has decided that the proposals for Purple Haze will remain in the new Hampshire Minerals Plan and that any constraints that we want to put around the sensitivity of the site would have to be done through the planning processes as we move forward.

Spencer - "I have been pretty heavily involved in this particular issue, I've spoken at the examination in public twice. I spoke at the Hampshire County Council meeting when they made the decision to submit their plans and I also had a meeting here with Natural England, who have a big responsibility of looking after the ecology of our country. What I got from them was some very interesting information - because whilst we're obviously very disappointed that

the inspector's chosen to leave this particular site in the plan - there is no evidence, and these things are all evidence based - there isn't sufficient evidence today to prove that he's wrong. It's quite clear that the inspector wasn't even against the washing of the material before it was taken off site! It's poor material and there's no natural water on the site available, so they'll have to bring that to the site, so it's going to start getting into Ebblake bog and it'll ruin it - it'll destroy it. I'm comforted with my discussion with Natural England that there are lots of big hurdles yet to jump and that we shouldn't lose hope. There still is a way to stop it.

LJ - Is it a case of Hampshire County Council trying to dump a problem on Dorset County Council's doorstep?

Spencer - "If you look at the geography and you look at the lines on the map, the line that we've got drawn is within 400 metres of Verwood, the other side of it is Hampshire. You couldn't have wanted to find a site in Hampshire that was furthest away from any population in Hampshire. I'll leave you to draw your own conclusions from that.

LJ - Toni, in your opinion, is it about time that Verwood had its own upper school to save bussing children to QE and Ferndown?

Toni - "It will happen, the core strategy that's going through at

the moment has a large amount of development for both the West Parley area and the Colehill/Wimborne area. That extra development will put pressure on Ferndown and QE upper schools, which will then put pressure on those children who access the schools from further away, for example, Verwood, Cranborne, Alderholt and so on. It's that new development that is coming forward over the next twenty years that will finally give us the critical mass to provide the secondary provision. The land is already allocated and bought by the County Council for many, many years. As soon as we know we have the right numbers, we'll be able to start planning what that provision will look like.

LJ - In light of the tragic accident on the back roads with a school bus and a mini, where the driver was killed, what are your views on the safety of bussing children around country roads?

Toni - "Bussing children to school is a reflection of the sort of terrain that we live in. If you live in a rural area, you have to have transport to get children to school. The whole issue about school transport is that there is a large number of children who get transported to school every day. There are very rarely accidents, but as we found out, when they do happen they can be very tragic and certainly my thoughts and the thoughts of everyone who was

involved on the day do go out to the driver of the car who died. The issue since has been - should we be having seatbelts? If you have a coach doing the journey, coaches by law must have seatbelts and they have to be marked by pictograms on the windows and by law you are supposed to wear those seatbelts.

LJ - But it can be quite hard at times to persuade children - especially from upper schools to wear them - maybe you believe there needs to be a campaign to raise awareness?

Toni - There definitely needs to be and that's part of the investigation that the County Council will be doing into what happened and what lessons can be learned from the incident. Because there are not the number of coaches and specialist school buses available as part of the procurement, the County Council will speak to normal bus companies and we will use commercial buses for part of our school routes - those buses do not have seatbelts fitted and that is something that we will be looking at - but I would be concerned with the difficulties of trying to insist on having seatbelts fitted on vehicles that are not intended for that purpose. That's part of the difficulty and challenge that you have in trying to provide a level of service right across a very large rural area.

This is just an extract of the interview, other issues tackled include the new rubbish collection scheme, the demolition of the Allendale Centre and the review of parking in town centres. Check out the rest at www.youtube.com/mags4dorset, or scan this code with your smartphone -

