

**MATTER 11: Western Localities of West Dorset
Beaminster (BEAM 1-3)**

Statement of Beaminster Town Council (ID 639)

Represented by Michael Dower

11.1 Is it clear what exceptional circumstances exist for the Council to promote development in the AONB at Beaminster.

1. Beaminster Town Council accepts that limited development for both housing and employment are needed on greenfield sites within the AONB which surrounds Beaminster, in order to sustain the vitality of the town's services, and to maintain a balance in the population structure and as between population and employment. The Town Council accepts the proposed extension to the Defined Development Boundary, to embrace an increased area of land at Broadwindsor Road. It is ready also to accept development for employment of land at Lane End Farm, and an extension of the existing affordable housing scheme at Flaxfield Rise, which it understands will shortly be the subject of planning application by Spectrum Housing Group. It believes that these three greenfield developments, plus the potential offered by sites within the Defined Development Boundary, will suffice to meet the town's needs for new housing and employment during the period to 2028.

2. The Town Council is opposed in principle to development of other greenfield sites outside the development boundary. It believes that Beaminster – as a freestanding small town, wholly surrounded by the AONB, with poor transport links and constrained infrastructure – should grow gradually. During the last 15 years, its housing stock has grown by an average of 11 per year. The Council believes that that is a suitable pace, rather than the 15 per year that might be implied by its pro-rata share (based on present population) of the target figure now proposed by the District Council, or the 19 per year that would be implied by the use before 2028 of the capacity of all the sites identified in the Sustainable Housing Land Availability Assessment. Moreover, many of the sites identified in the SHLAA are challengeable on planning grounds. If all the sites (among those identified) that proved to truly developable were actually used by 2028, that would (in the Council's view) severely damage the town's capacity for further gradual growth beyond that date without consequent damaging impact on the AONB, which forms a precious setting for the town and is a national asset which should be protected.

3. For all those reasons, the Town Council does not accept that there are exceptional circumstances that justify the District Council promoting development in the AONB at Beaminster, beyond the land at Broadwindsor Road, the proposed employment land at Lane End Farm, and the exceptions site for affordable housing at Flaxfield Rise. If the District Council calls in aid its strategic assessment of housing need, the Town Council makes clear that it does not accept the reasoning behind the proposal for a target of 775 new housing units a year across the housing market area. We believe that the estimate of growth in the national economy during the whole period to 2028, based on its growth in the boom period between 2001 and 2007, on which this high target is based, is grossly optimistic. We also believe that the assessments of impact contained in the Sustainability Appraisal are weighted too heavily upon the highest target figure as having the only beneficial impact on

Beaminster TC Matter 11

housing and economy, and no higher impact than the lower target figures upon the AONB and other factors. We believe that the case for the high target, and therefore for the rapid use of development land throughout the housing market area, has not been proved.

11.2 Are the reasons for objecting to BEAM 1 (Land North of Broadwindsor Road) valid ?

4. As stated above, the Town Council accepts the need for some greenfield development for both housing and employment in order to sustain the vitality and balance of the town. It believes that the land north of Broadwindsor Road is the only site of significant size, with acceptable access, capable of meeting a significant part of the need. The Council is ready to see that land developed, subject to the following conditions :

- a. That the land for employment is located at the east of the site, in order to link to the adjoining industries : the Council is ready to see this element take the form of a set of starter units for new enterprises, or perhaps of live-and-work units, if a developer comes forward with a convincing scheme.
- b. That the housing development includes a full 35% quota of affordable housing, for which there is substantial need and which could do much to sustain the social balance of the town.
- c. That the developers are required to provide or to fund effective pedestrian links, and possibly a cycleway, between the development and the town.
- d. That the development includes generous landscaping, including a small public open space, and effective peripheral screen planting, in order to sit down well within the AONB.
- e. That there is fully adequate provision for disposal of surface and foul water from the development, bearing in mind the distance to the main sewers and pumping station and the serious issues of capacity of the town's drainage system following storms.

11.3 Are there wider consequences for the soundness of the Plan given the Council's intention to delete BEAM2 (Land off Hollymoor Lane).

5. The Town Council, and a large number of Beaminster residents, strongly opposed the earlier proposals for development at Hollymoor Lane. We strongly support the Council's intention to delete this site. Our primary ground for objection to development on this site relates to the generation of further traffic on East Street, which is a narrow street, with discontinuous pavement and tight frontage development, and which already suffers from severe problems of vehicle movement and parking. The planning officers' assessment of this site, contained in the SHLAA, makes plain that its notional developability depends upon overcoming these highway constraints. Plans by the County Engineer for radical traffic management in East Street, which have been displayed at public consultations, have attracted strong opposition from residents of East Street and tributary roads, and in the Town Council's view should not proceed. The Council sees no acceptable solution which would justify development of the site off Hollymoor Lane.

6. We do not believe that the removal of this site, with an estimated capacity of 30 housing units, would affect the soundness of the Plan, in terms of its ability to meet the needs of Beaminster for additional housing

Beaminster TC Matter 11

11.4 Is the choice of BEAM3 (Land at Lane End Farm) a suitable location for employment use given the largely greenfield nature of the site and its separation from the settlement ?

7. If the lands on the east side of Tunnel Road were wholly green fields, the Town Council would oppose their development as an unjustified incursion on the AONB. But Tunnel Road already serves a veterinary surgery, a small garden centre, a garden design business, a waste transfer station, the farm and its farm shop. Development of further employment land, subject to suitable planning conditions, is therefore acceptable to the Town Council. The separation from the main settlement can be seen as an asset for such development, but should preclude any use of that area for housing, such as is implied in the SHLAA (housing site BEAM8).

8. The site can gain access directly to an A road. But the Town Council is acutely aware of the dangers on that stretch of road, caused by vehicles accelerating as they drive north out of the 30mph area or south downhill from the Tunnel. Our acceptance of further development on that stretch of road, using green fields alongside the existing development, is therefore conditional on the following provisions :

- a. That the existing enterprises and the new development, taken together, have the smallest possible number of adequate high-visibility junctions onto Tunnel Road.
- b. That the 30mph speed limit area be extended northwards to beyond the northernmost of these junctions, with advance warning signs at 300, 200 and 100 metres before the limit starts, in order to enhance the safety at the entrance to all enterprises, including the drive serving Mountjoy and Beaminster Secondary Schools.
- c. That a roadside footpath be constructed down the east side of the whole length of Tunnel Road, from the northernmost junction to the entrance to Monmouth Gardens.
- d. That the development includes effective peripheral screen planting, in order to minimise adverse impacts upon the views of Beaminster from the north and northeast of the site.
- e. That there is fully adequate provision for disposal of surface and foul water from the development, bearing in mind the distance to the main sewers and pumping station and the serious issues of capacity of the town's drainage and flood-control systems following storms.

BTC evidence to Exam in Public 121114