

West Dorset, Weymouth and Portland Local Plan Examination

Hearing Statement

for

Matter 11: Western Localities of West Dorset



Prepared by West Dorset District Council and

Weymouth & Portland Borough Council

November 2014

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BEAMINSTER

Agenda Item 11.1: Is it clear what exceptional circumstances exist for the Council to promote development in the AONB at Beaminster?

- 1.1 The Submission Plan's strategy for distribution of development is influenced by:
- the needs, size, and roles of the area's settlements, taking into account any current imbalances of housing or jobs;
 - the benefits of concentrating most development in locations where homes, jobs and facilities will be easily accessible to each other and there is a choice of transport modes;
 - the availability of land, and whether it has been previously developed (brownfield); and
 - the environmental constraints of the plan area.
- 1.2 In following the site selection process, as set out in the Site Selection background paper (CD/SSBP), it was clear that in major development within the AONB was inevitable, as the designation washes over three of the larger settlements in the plan area.
- 1.3 Beaminster is one of the larger settlements in the plan area, and based upon its size, housing needs, accessibility to jobs, transport links and land availability, the council considers that it should be a focus for moderate future growth.
- 1.4 In the agreed Statement of Common Ground (SOCG/4), Natural England has confirmed that they are satisfied that the proposed West Dorset, Weymouth & Portland Local Plan housing and employment allocations have the potential to be acceptable and meet the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). This is based on the potential of the allocations to include appropriate measures designed to moderate the adverse effects of development on the landscape of the Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). On this basis they have no outstanding objections in principle to the proposed housing and employment sites.

Agenda Item 11.2: Are the reasons for objecting to BEAM1 (Land North of Broadwindsor Road) valid?

- 2.1 A number of representations raised concerns over the fact that the allocation is situated in the AONB; the impact of the development upon the landscape setting and character of the town; the capacity of the town to take further development - in terms of infrastructure (flooding, drainage, sewerage, highways) and community facilities (schools, shops, medical services, etc); and the protection of wildlife habitats.

Development in the AONB

- 2.2 The principle of development in the AONB is addressed by the response to the above question. Natural England has confirmed their opinion that they have no outstanding objections to the proposed housing and employment sites (SOCG/4).

Landscape Impact

- 2.3 The councils recognise that development at BEAM 1 will be visible from the local landscape. The policy requires structural woodland planting, the retention of existing vegetation where possible, and a suitable buffer to the wooded river channel to the east of the site in order to protect the linear wildlife habitat on the eastern edge of the site. As stated above, Natural England has confirmed their opinion that they have no outstanding objections to the proposed housing and employment sites (SOCG /4). The councils also consider that the previous allocation for employment uses in the 2006 Local Plan (CD/POL2), albeit over a smaller area of the site, establishes the principle of development in this location.

Infrastructure

- 2.4 There are no objections to developing this site from the Environment Agency, Wessex Water or the County Council, as both Local Highways and Education Authority. The Submission Plan policy states a requirement for the provision of a footpath link to the primary school and a footway along the frontage of the site to connect to the existing footway to the east of the development.

Agenda Item 11.3: Are there wider consequences for the soundness of the Plan given the Councils' intention to delete BEAM2 (Land off Hollymoor Lane)?

- 3.1 No, there is sufficient supply from the remaining allocated sites in the plan and therefore there are no consequences for the soundness of the plan.

- 3.2 In the Pre-Submission Local Plan (CD/SP1), the allocation of land to the north and south of Hollymoor Lane was expected to deliver up to 70 new homes. However, the Alternative Strategy Consultation in January 2013 put forward the options of retaining the allocation, reducing the allocation in area to deliver 40 units or deleting the allocation altogether. The majority of respondents supported the deletion option. The implications for meeting the housing needs of the plan area are that the land supply has only been reduced by a modest 70 dwellings.

Agenda Item 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?

- 4.1 Yes, there are existing commercial uses on and to the immediate north of the site. These buildings demonstrate that employment uses can be sensitively designed to be appropriate in a rural AONB setting. Any future planning application would have to satisfy the requirements of Submission Plan Policy ENV1 through the standard development management process.
- 4.2 Regarding the separation from the settlement, the site is within walking distance of the town centre, being just over 1km (approximately 10 – 15 minutes walk) from the convenience store in the Square. This is an equivalent distance from the town centre as the Beaminster School (secondary) and the existing employment units on the Broadwindsor Road Industrial Estate. The Submission Plan policy wording requires the delivery of a footway link to the south, which would also improve the pedestrian access to the existing units.

BRIDPORT

Agenda Item 11.5: Has adequate consideration been given to infrastructure requirements to service the development at Vearse Farm (BRID1) and how its impact on the AONB can be mitigated?

- 5.1 Yes. The following infrastructure is required in connection with the Vearse Farm development as outlined in 5.33 & schedule 2C of the Infrastructure Delivery Plan (CD/CIL18). The councils has given adequate consideration to the need for additional infrastructure, its impacts on the AONB and any necessary mitigation. The individual items of infrastructure are discussed in more detail below:

Highway improvements (including Trunk Road and access)

- 5.2 Improvements are required to the existing highway network. These include an existing junction point on the A35 Trunk Road (the Miles Cross Symondsburly junction) and changes to the existing traffic calming measures in West Allington. The Highway Authority has confirmed that the detail of the works can be addressed at application stage (SOCG/5). As any works would be within or immediately adjacent to highway land, and will not involve any significant new highway structures, the impacts on the AONB are not considered to be significant, and could be adequately mitigated through the normal highway improvements procedures.

Education – provision of land for replacement 2Form Entry (FE) primary school (on-site).

- 5.3 The education authority has expressed a preference for new on-site school provision to serve the wider catchment, including that of St Mary's (Skilling) and Symondsburly. In terms of landscape impacts, the new school would form a coherent part of the Vearse Farm development area and would be subject to the comprehensive landscape mitigation of the whole site. The development management process and masterplan formulation would ensure it is appropriate to its setting.
- 5.4 In terms of Secondary provision, the education authority would continue to secure Secondary contributions to ensure that Sir John Colfox can expand as primary numbers start to enter the secondary phase.

Improvement to waste management provision (off-site).

- 5.5 Work is already underway on the Broomhills Waste Management Site. It is expected that the facility will be operational by September 2015.

Open space and footway/cycleways

- 5.6 Open space provision throughout and surrounding the development site area will secure effective design mitigation by preventing the spread of built form into important open and elevated areas of the site. Open space will also provide locally needed informal green space, which along with new and improved footway and cycle links, will facilitate a greater appreciation of the AONB landscape, in line with objectives set out in the Dorset AONB Management Plan (2014) (CD/ENV16), in particular policy E2a: Support measures to improve connectivity and functionality of the rights of way network.

Provision of community facilities.

- 5.7 Any new community facilities on site would form a coherent part of the Vearse Farm development area, and would be subject to the comprehensive landscape mitigation of the whole site. The development management process and masterplan formulation would ensure they are appropriate to their setting and the adjacent settlement area (which also forms part of the AONB).

Electricity – Overground 11kV lines

- 5.8 Local small substations will be included as part of the design layout. No significant electrical infrastructure is envisaged.

Employment

- 5.9 The allocation is for a mixed use development to include approximately 4 ha of employment provision. Any new employment premises on site would form a coherent part of the Vearse Farm development area, and would be subject to the comprehensive landscape mitigation of the whole site. The development management process and masterplan formulation would ensure they are appropriate to their setting and the adjacent settlement area (which also forms part of the AONB).

Agenda Item 11.6: Are there any valid reasons why the potential of the existing primary school off Skilling Hill Road (BRID2) cannot be exploited?"

- 6.1 The education authority Dorset County Council (DCC) anticipates that a minimum increase of one Form Entry (1FE) will be required, based on the proposed housing at Vearse Farm. It is also anticipated that additional capacity will be required in the long term given national trends. DCC is looking to secure the capacity to increase Primary provision by 1 FE as a minimum and will look for flexible opportunities to secure that additional provision.
- 6.2 DCC has also confirmed that the current St. Mary's site, along with the Children's Centre and Nursery, could not be expanded to accommodate the additional 1FE required. The site itself could not accommodate a 2FE school of 420 places due to a lack of space on site. This would also preclude any further expansion if required to address the national trends. Ground conditions on the site are difficult with the playing fields affected by flooding as there are significant drainage problems. DCC is

therefore looking to secure land on the Vearse Farm development sufficient for a 2 FE school and possible future expansion.

- 6.2 Policy BRID 2 was included to clarify that housing would be considered acceptable on the site given the tests set out in Submission Plan Policy COM 3 – The Retention of Local Community Buildings and Structures. At this stage Dorset County Council has no set plans for the existing school site but have confirmed that the site or part of the site is an 'exploitable' asset in terms of alternative uses were it to come forward for development.

Agenda Item 11.7: Changes proposed to policies BRID3 and BRID5 would require maintenance of a wildlife corridor. Would this adequately address wildlife concerns?

- 7.1 Yes. The policy wording and the supporting text were amended to reflect the comments from Natural England (NE) and the Dorset Wildlife Trust (DWT) with regard to the need to retain a wildlife corridor. No specific width was specified in the policy text. The DWT stated that a minimum distance of 30 metres from the river should be kept clear of development, however, NE have confirmed that any proposals to expand and improve this corridor would be beneficial. There is a distance of 10 metres between the River Asker and the eastern site boundary, and in the light of NE's comments, this will adequately address wildlife concerns.
- 7.2 With regard to Policy BRID 5, NE has pointed out that the wildlife corridor should include St Michael's Island. The council is happy to amend the text accordingly and additional wording to Policy BRID3 and paragraph 13.3.1 has been agreed with NE.

Agenda Item 11.8: Is the suggested location for future town centre expansion appropriate (BRID4)?

- 8.1 The retail and leisure development needs of the town centres and their capacity to accommodate new development has been independently assessed through the Joint Town Centre Retail and Leisure Study (and update) produced by CBRE (CD/ECON3 & CD/ECON4). To ensure that potential future needs are met in full and are not compromised by limited site availability, where necessary the Submission Plan has identified sites to accommodate future growth in and around the town centres, including Bridport, based on the recommendations of the CBRE report. Policy BRID4 only identifies the land as the councils preferred location for

town centre expansion *when* this need arises. If the need does not arise there would be no need to expand the town centre.

- 8.2 As set out in the CBRE report, the method of site selection followed a sequential approach. It also took account of a retail capacity exercise, qualitative knowledge of the market and information about known occupier requirements. Two main opportunities for town centre expansion were identified: Rope Walks and the Bus Station and Depot. Though it could be possible to consider each of these sites in isolation, potentially far more benefit can be derived by taking a more holistic approach. Accordingly these sites are identified at Policy BRID4 as the councils' preferred location for future town centre expansion. Further information can be found in CD/ECON3. The identified site is therefore the most appropriate location based on clear evidence and a robust methodology.

LYME REGIS

Agenda Item 11.9: Various constraints/site limitations have been identified which could have implications for the successful development of LYME1 (Land at Woodberry Down). Is there evidence to support these views?

- 9.1 Representations received in response to the pre-submission stage consultation expressed concern that due to access, drainage and ground stability issues, the cost of providing homes on this site will preclude affordable housing.
- 9.2 The Submission Plan policy acknowledges that access, drainage and ground stability issues will have to be addressed as part of any development on the site. These factors were considered as part of the determination of a planning application, submitted in 2013 for housing development on Phase 1. The application related to the current allocation in the 2006 Local Plan (CD/POL2), which forms the eastern portion of the larger allocation in the submission draft. Planning permission was granted in January 2014 and the development is under construction.
- 9.3 With specific regard to the concerns expressed by respondents, the site has delivered 35% affordable housing, in line with current adopted local plan policy.
- 9.4 The developers, Bloor Homes, have confirmed the following in a letter to the councils dated 29 October 2014:

“As you are aware the company has secured detailed consent for 46 homes on the land at Woodberry which is allocated in the adopted Local Plan. The scheme is currently being built out and includes a policy compliant level of affordable housing

(35%) and financial contributions in accordance with the Council's adopted development tariff. These contributions have been negotiated with a full understanding of the site constraints. In bringing forward this land, we have been mindful of the potential of the 'Phase 2' land and have provided a road access capable of accommodating development arising from Phase 2 which includes off site improvements in Colway Lane. Furthermore we have ensured that all services and utilities have been oversized to accommodate future potential development.

With specific regard to the Phase 2 land the company has undertaken a full suite of technical work including geotechnical assessment and a ground instability study and at this moment in time, assuming current market trading conditions, see no reason why the scheme cannot support a policy compliant level of affordable housing and contributions in accordance with the development tariff."

- 9.5 In light of the above, the councils remain of the opinion that there is no evidence to suggest that the successful development of LYME 1 cannot be achieved.

Agenda Item 11.10: What reliance, if any, can be placed on the ability of the council to promote development through Policy LYME2 in the absence of any formal agreement between the two authorities?

- 10.1 The council is committed to ensuring a joint approach to development at Lyme Regis and Uplyme, and a Joint Duty to Cooperate Statement on Cross Boundary Issues at Uplyme/Lyme Regis is being developed. This statement is subject to member discussion at East Devon Council prior to the Examination.
- 10.2 This statement highlights the continuing commitment to joint working between the authorities and will ensure that the objectives set out in Policy LYME 2 will be achieved and, in particular, that the authorities will explore and develop options to support the long-term growth of Lyme Regis and Uplyme.
- 10.3 Wording changes to Policy LYME2 are also proposed to confirm both authorities' commitment to joint working to explore and develop options to support the long term needs of both settlements. The revised wording will set out as an attachment to the Duty to Cooperate Statement.

Agenda Item 11.11: Is there a case for identifying reserve sites in Lyme Regis to meet future development needs should the principles behind LYME2 fail to materialise?

- 11.1 Sufficient land has been identified to meet the needs of Lyme Regis over the Submission Plan period up to 2028; moreover permitted/committed/allocated sites are now delivering with 65 new homes built since 2009.
- 11.2 Looking to the future, the councils are confident, as stated in the response to agenda Item 11.10 above, that the joint approach with East Devon Council is a robust and pragmatic approach and through joint working, the councils will be able to deliver against LYME2.
- 11.3 Both the communities in Lyme Regis and Uplyme are making progress with neighbourhood planning initiatives and these will provide the most appropriate opportunity for the community to explore the longer term development aspirations for both settlements. Identifying a reserve site now could therefore potentially prejudice community consultation work and discussions which the respective neighbourhood planning bodies would wish to steer.
- 11.4 For both these reasons it would therefore not be prudent to identify reserve sites now.