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Mr Paul Crysell, Inspector
c/o Mrs Christine Self



Spatial & Community Policy Manager Hilary Jordan

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Our Ref:

Date: 7 August 2013

Dear Mr Crysell,

Inspector's Initial Questions to Councils, 19 July 2013: Sustainability Appraisal Issues

Further to my letter of 24 July, I am writing to respond to the additional points about the Sustainability Appraisal, raised in the Pegasus Group letter of 18 July. Oliver Rendle who carried out the Sustainability Appraisal has now had the chance to look at these points.

As stated in my previous letter, in terms of consistency of scoring, the SA was an iterative process alongside the local plan, and took account of changes in the wording of policies that was taking place through the local plan preparation. The way that a site was scored during the original assessment of potential sites may well have changed as a result of amendments that had been made to the policy following consultation (such as the addition of mitigation proposals).

The assessment of the sustainability effects of the policy and site options were made using the same methodology to ensure that a like for like comparison between the options could be made. The 'Methodology' section of Chapter 7 of the Sustainability Appraisal explains that in coming to a judgement about the sustainability effects of a policy or site option, the sustainability framework was used in conjunction with the environmental characteristics of the plan area presented in Chapter 3 of the Sustainability Appraisal, other evidence such as the evidence base for the Local Plan, and the professional opinions of specialists. In some cases reasonable assumptions were made, which are clearly stated in Appendix C of the Sustainability Appraisal.

Using the example given in the letter, the potential capacity of a site to accommodate development or a land use mix was determined at the alternatives stage using the information available at the time of assessment, such as the SHLAA, and expert advice from council officers to enable the likely usage of the site to be determined and the sustainability effects of the development to be predicted.

The Strategy for Alternative Land Allocations in West Dorset (January 2013) removed or reduced in size a number of allocations in the Local Plan, resulting in the housing supply from the allocations falling below the required level of housing growth (presented in policy SUS 1) towards the end of the plan period, between 2026 and 2031.

Chapter 10 of the Sustainability Appraisal (as updated June 2013) considered the effects of the potential shortfall in housing supply resulting from this strategy. The 'Selection of Preferred Options' section of Chapter 10 states that the potential shortfall in housing land supply would be addressed by undertaking further work on future development options, depending on the results of the ongoing housing land supply monitoring which may show that a greater amount of development has come forward than had been anticipated, for example from neighbourhood plans. This section proposes that any additional development proposals for this period will be brought forward through a review of the Local Plan or a separate Development Plan Document. This document is likely to be subject to a Sustainability Appraisal in its own right.

The Sustainability Appraisal also considered the effects of policies that propose future sites for development, such as policy DOR 11 of the 2012 pre-submission draft, which proposed that the Council would explore options for development in the areas surrounding Dorchester, in order to meet the remaining housing land supply for the final part of the plan period. (This has now been replaced by the new section (ii) of Policy SUS 1, and refers to the whole district rather than only Dorchester).

Please let us know if you would like further clarification on these or any other matters.

Yours sincerely,

Hilary Jordan
Spatial & Community Policy Manager