

CHRISTCHURCH AND EAST DORSET CORE STRATEGY EXAMINATION DRAFT STATEMENT OF COMMON GROUND

POLICY CN1 – CHRISTCHURCH URBAN EXTENSION

1 GENERAL

- 1.1 This Statement of Common Ground (SOCG) has been produced by Christchurch Borough Council to assist the Inspector at the Christchurch and East Dorset Core Strategy Examination.
- 1.2 The SOCG is intended to set out factual information and background which has led to the introduction of an allocation of approximately 950 dwellings on land at Roeshot Hill, Christchurch (the Christchurch Urban Extension).
- 1.3 The Council has circulated this SOCG to the following parties for comments, and where agreed, these are incorporated. Where parties have indicated any disagreement, this is set out in the Appendix.
 - Meyrick Estate Management Limited
 - Taylor Wimpey
 - Natural England
 - Dorset County Council (Transport Planning)
 - New Forest District Council
 - New Forest National Park Authority
 - Sainsbury's Supermarkets Limited
 - Roeshot Hill Allotment Association

2 THE REGIONAL SPATIAL STRATEGY

- 2.1 Proposals for an urban extension at north Christchurch arose during the development of the South West Regional Spatial Strategy.
- 2.2 Prior to production of the draft RSS, the strategic planning authorities in Dorset (Dorset County Council, Bournemouth Borough Council and Borough of Poole), submitted "First Detailed Proposals" to the Regional Assembly. This submission included proposals for housing in the South East Dorset Sub-Region of which Christchurch and East Dorset form part.
- 2.3 A sieving process was undertaken to produce a list of possible locations for new housing within the Green Belt. Of these, two sites were merged to form "Area of Search M" in the draft Regional Spatial Strategy, submitted for Examination by the Secretary of State.
- 2.4 The Area of Search did not have defined boundaries, but broadly comprised land at Roeshot Hill immediately to the north of Christchurch, and adjacent to the A35 road, together with land to the east of Burton village, and north of the

main Waterloo-Weymouth railway line. The RSS suggested that 600 dwellings could be accommodated within Area of Search M.

- 2.5 The draft RSS was published in June 2006, and the Examination was held between April and July 2007. The Secretary of State published a set of Proposed Modifications to the RSS in July 2008. The Area of Search M for Christchurch remained in the document unchanged.

3 TAKING FORWARD THE REGIONAL SPATIAL STRATEGY INTO THE CORE STRATEGY

- 3.1 Throughout the RSS process, the position of Christchurch Borough Council was as follows:

- That is considered the total housing targets proposed for Christchurch in the RSS were unrealistically high given the constraints and character of the Borough.
- That, however, the part of the Area of Search M at Roeshot Hill did represent a sustainable location for new housing on greenfield land where well planned development could be secured, and there could be delivery of significant affordable housing.
- That the remaining parts of Area of Search M north of the railway and east of Burton village would not be suitable for new housing due to the impact on the openness of the Green Belt and on the character of Burton village itself.

- 3.2 Following the 2010 General Election, the new Coalition Government announced its intention to revoke Regional Spatial Strategies, and the South West RSS was therefore not progressed to adoption.

- 3.3 Nonetheless, Christchurch Borough Council continued to progress its Core Strategy on the basis that the urban extension should still form a sustainable element of the new locally based housing requirement for the Borough.

- 3.4 The urban extension has been developed through the Core Strategy as follows:

- Issues & Options consultation (March 2008), sought views on which parts of the urban extension area of search should be used for housing, and what the important planning criteria to consider in developing policy were. The consultation revealed significant support for restricting new housing to land south of the railway line at Roeshot Hill, although there was significant opposition to relocating the allotments.
- Options for Consideration consultation (October 2010), 4 different options were put forward to deliver the urban extension on land south of the railway line:

- Option 1 – deliver development of 950-1250 dwellings south of the railway, with power lines undergrounded, and SANG and allotments located north of the railway.
- Option 2 – deliver development of 650-850 dwellings south of the railway, retain the power lines, but locate SANG and allotments north of the railway.
- Option 3 – deliver 500-650 dwellings south of the railway, with power lines and allotments retained, but SANG located north of the railway.
- Option 4 – deliver 500-650 dwellings south of the railway, with power lines and allotments retained, and SANG also located south of the railway.
- The Options consultation revealed support for maximising potential for development south of the railway line, and for placing the power lines underground. Natural England objected to Option 4 because they did not consider that a suitable SANG could be achieved on land south of the railway line.
- In 2009 the Council commissioned Broadway Malyan Limited to undertake master planning work for the urban extension in order to provide a more robust assessment of the impact of constraints, and on the capacity of the site for housing. Stage 1 of this work informed the 4 options put out to consultation in 2010.

4 CHRISTCHURCH URBAN EXTENSION ADVISORY GROUP.

- 4.1 As part of the development of Core Strategy policy for the Christchurch Urban Extension, the Council took the decision in 2007 to form an Advisory Group of key stakeholders who would inform evidence gathering and policy development for the site.
- 4.2 The group comprised members of the following organisations:
- Meyrick Estate Management Ltd
 - Taylor Wimpey
 - Burton Parish Council
 - Highcliffe Residents Assn
 - Natural England
 - Environment Agency
 - Dorset County Council
 - Highways Agency
 - Roeshot Hill Allotments Assn
 - Sembcorp Bournemouth Water
 - Wessex Water
 - RATP Yellow Buses
 - Sainsbury's PLC
 - National Grid PLC
 - Local ward councillors.

4.3 The role of the group was as follows:

- To determine what sources of evidence about the site were available from various stakeholders.
- To discuss the particular aspirations which key stakeholders had for the development.
- To review draft documents prior to publication for consultation.
- To review and comment on the master planning work.

4.4 Meetings of the Advisory Group were held, and information was also e-mailed to the group for comment at various stages of the Core Strategy development.

5 URBAN EXTENSION MASTER PLANNING AND ITS STATUS

5.1 As referred to above, the Council commissioned Broadway Malyan Limited in 2009 to undertake a master planning study to support the development of a Core Strategy policy and allocation for the Christchurch Urban Extension at Roeshot Hill.

5.2 The study comprised three main elements:

- A “Stage 1” context report, which would form the basis of various development options, to be consulted on at Options for Consideration stage in October 2010. This report was published in April 2010.
- A “Stage 2” detailed master plan report taking forward a preferred option and creating a framework master plan to support an allocation and policy at Pre-Submission consultation stage. This report was published in December 2011.
- An associated viability report by Whiteleaf Consulting which tested the viability of the preferred option (and other options), to provide a broad indication that the proposed Core Strategy policy would be deliverable.

5.3 The master planning work has not been subject to specific public consultation, although the work has been scrutinised by the Urban Extension Advisory Group, and Broadway Malyan met with a number of key stakeholders, and the major landowner, during the course of the study.

5.4 The master planning study does not therefore have the status of policy or SPD, but rather is a key piece of evidence which informs the main elements of Policy CN1 of the Core Strategy.

6 THE PRE-SUBMISSION CORE STRATEGY ALLOCATION, AND PROPOSED CHANGES.

6.1 The Pre-Submission Core Strategy took forward Option UE 1 from the Core Strategy Options consultation document of October 2010. This was to maximise development potential south of the railway line, to place existing power lines underground, and to relocate the allotments north of the railway

line, and provide a SANG north of the railway line. The housing capacity for this option had been estimated at 950-1250 dwellings.

- 6.2 Detailed “Stage 2” master planning work was commissioned to translate this option into a workable policy allocation in the Pre-Submission Core Strategy. The master planning work concluded that a lower capacity range would be appropriate for the site having regard to density and design considerations, and proposed a range of between 765 and 933 dwellings, taking a mid-point figure of 849 for the purposes of the detailed framework master plan.
- 6.3 Based on this work, the Pre-Submission Core Strategy policy (CN1) was based on a figure of about 850 dwellings.
- 6.4 Following the Pre-Submission consultation, a further allocated housing site at Marsh Lane, Christchurch, was removed from the Core Strategy, primarily due to failure to agree a workable SANG with Natural England. This site had been allocated for 90 dwellings.
- 6.5 To make up for the loss of the Marsh Lane site, the allocation at the urban extension was increased from 850 to 950 dwellings at Pre-Submission Proposed Changes consultation stage. The master planning consultants, Broadway Malyan confirmed that this small increase (17 dwellings) above their Stage 2 masterplan tested capacity, would not impact upon the validity of their masterplanning study.

7 STRATEGY FOR REPLACEMENT ALLOTMENTS

- 7.1 Roeshot Hill allotments is one of 5 allotment sites in Christchurch Borough, and by far the largest site with 231 plots.
- 7.2 The site is Statutory and therefore enjoys the protection of the Allotments Acts.
- 7.3 The various options for development of the Christchurch Urban Extension have included those to redevelop the existing allotment site, and relocate the allotments north of the railway line or elsewhere, and options to retain the allotments.
- 7.4 Whilst the Core Strategy policy CN1 proposes the relocation of the allotments, it should be noted that the implications of retaining the allotments was also tested in the Stage 2 master planning study.
- 7.5 The Council has explored alternative options for replacement allotments and all of the options under consideration are within the land ownership of Meyrick Estates. Meyrick Estates is also the landowner for the majority of the urban extension site and has a common interest in securing replacement allotments.
- 7.6 An initial option of replacement allotments north of the railway line was consulted on at the ‘Options for Consideration’ stage of the Core Strategy. At

the Pre Submission stage this was refined to a location north of the railway line, to the east of Salisbury Road. Due to the consideration of additional options for the location of replacement allotments the Schedule of Proposed Changes to the Core Strategy removed reference to a specific site.

7.7 The Council and Meyrick Estates are actively exploring a number of suitable sites according to the requirements contained in the recently adopted Christchurch Allotment Strategy (<https://www.dorsetforyou.com/allotments/christchurch>).

7.8 Five potential sites have been under consideration and the site or sites that best meet the requirements of our tenants and the Council's adopted allotment policies are being shortlisted for detailed analysis and further development. The Council is looking to provide sites to replace any plots which are lost through development of the Urban Extension. It also wants to develop additional (new) plots to bolster the number of plots to meet current undersupply.

8 STRATEGY FOR SUITABLE ALTERNATIVE NATURAL GREENSPACE

8.1 Details relating to progress on a strategy for the provision of Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace are contained in a separate Statement of Common Ground prepared jointly by Meyrick Estate Management Limited and Natural England.

9 TRANSPORT ASSESSMENT OF THE URBAN EXTENSION

9.1 The primary transport assessments which relate to development of the Christchurch Urban Extension are:

- The South East Dorset Multi-Modal Transport Study 2011
- The A35 Route Management Study 2011.

9.2 The Multi-Modal Study tested the impact of development across South East Dorset, including any proposed new greenfield development.

9.3 The A35 Study provided a more detailed assessment through localised transport modelling examining the impact of development on the A35 from Fountains Roundabout to the borough boundary on Lyndhurst Road.

9.4 Both of these studies were based on a housing figure of 900 units for the urban extension, and concluded that the transport impacts of the development were acceptable. Dorset County Council (as transport authority) considers that 950 dwellings can be delivered on the urban extension without unacceptable impact.

10 SAINSBURYS STORE LAND OPTIONS

10.1 The existing Sainsbury's supermarket at Somerford adjoins the site but does not form part of the Core Strategy allocation.

- 10.2 During the preparation of the Core Strategy information was received regarding land options held by Sainsbury's on the allocation site.
- 10.3 Sainsbury's have an option covering 2.4 hectares of land immediately to the north of their existing supermarket. This option has been referred to in the Stage 2 Master Plan report (December 2011). On the indicative framework master plan, the Sainsbury's option land broadly encompasses an area set out as open space and playing pitches.
- 10.4 Sainsbury's have advised the Council that they may have medium to long term aspirations to utilise this option and further extend their Somerford store. Should such a proposal come forward, this could be incorporated into the design of the local centre and public space within the development, subject to other planning considerations.

Statement prepared by Christchurch Borough Council
Dated: 3rd September 2013

APPENDIX A – MATTERS AND ISSUES NOT AGREED.

A – COMMENTS OF NEW FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

New Forest District Council has reviewed the statement and consider that it is a fair reflection of the facts and chronology of events. The Council does not however feel it appropriate to formally sign its agreement to the SOCG, and restate its concerns relating to the delivery of the mitigation measures for the urban extension within New Forest District.

Response: The Council notes this position.

B – COMMENTS OF THE NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

The Authority has no comments to make on Sections 7 and 10 of the SOCG as these issues are not directly relevant to the work or remit of the NFNPA.

Response: The Council notes this position.

Comments on Section 8 have been set out in the NPA response to the SOCG on the Urban Extension SANG. The Authority considers it unusual for the landowner of a proposed major housing site to prepare a Statement of Common Ground for the Examination rather than the planning authority.

Response: The Council notes the National Park Authority position, however Statements of Common Ground are encouraged from and between all parties at Examination, and are not restricted to those produced by the planning authority.

C – COMMENTS OF THE ROESHOT HILL ALLOTMENT ASSOCIATION

3.4 The Association does not agree paragraph 3.4. There was indeed significant support for retaining the allotment site. There was minimal public support for building 850 or even 950-1250 homes south of the railway line. The concluding paragraphs in item 3 are misleading in that they do not say there was little support for maximising potential for development south of the railway line. The people of Christchurch opted for UE4 and UE3 by a wide margin.

Response: This is a matter for the hearings.

4.4 The Association were invited to one meeting of the Christchurch Urban Extension Advisory Group, at no time did we receive e-mails from the group as stated in 4.4

Response: This Council consider this inaccurate. The Allotment Association are recorded in minutes of at least 3 meetings of the Advisory Group, and were included in e-mail circulations as set out.

Section 6 – The Association agree that these stages happened, but do not understand how they happened given the results of consultation.

Response: The merits of the allocation and master planning are a matter for the hearings.

7.4 The Association has no details on this and are unaware of the extent to which this was tested.

Response: This information is contained in the Stage 2 Master Planning Report.

7.5 We are officially unaware of alternative options for replacement allotments, set out in paragraph 7.5. There have been discussions at our request with Council officers on possible outcomes, in 2012 and 2013 but not with members of the Christchurch Urban Extension Advisory Group.

Response: It is unclear what “officially unaware” means, however the Association has been aware of discussions on alternative allotment sites. These meetings took place outside the Advisory Group.

7.6 We are puzzled by item 7.6 and encouraged by 7.7 and 7.8 even though we have not been consulted in any way.

Response: These comments are noted.

9.4 We accept that 9.1, 9.2, 9.3 happened but we note that the conclusions in 9.4 are delivered by an authority based as far away from this development as is possible to be within the County of Dorset. There is already major difficulty in leaving the allotment site onto the A35.

Response: This is a matter for the hearings.

The Draft SOCG seeks to imply there is widespread consensus for building an ever increasing number of homes on Roeshot Hill and that there has been full consultation amongst all interested parties, including Roeshot Hill Allotment Association. We do not agree.

Response: This is a matter for the hearings.