

Christchurch Borough and East Dorset District Councils Core Strategy/Local Plan
Examination in Public.

Wimborne Minster Town Council and Colehill Parish Council – A Statement of Common Ground.

The Wimborne Minster Town and Colehill Parish Councils have agreed the following Statement of Common Ground concerning the East Dorset and Christchurch Core Strategy, in particular Chapter 8 titled “Wimborne/Colehill Housing and Town Centre”, and other relevant documents submitted for consideration at the Examination in Public.

Both Councils welcome planned development over the next 15 years, and especially the increased emphasis on the provision of social housing which has been lacking in recent years.

However, both Councils consider the scale of residential development proposed for Wimborne/Colehill within the 15 year planning period (2447 new dwellings including both urban and non urban) is not only grossly disproportionate within the District as a whole (46%) but is also grossly excessive for the two Settlements (a 39% increase in households, 46% increase in the combined populations, plus an additional 3650 or more private vehicles).

Neither Council believes that the sustainability of the proposed developments has been proven: key studies to this effect (transport and traffic, site-specific flood risk assessments, groundwater source analyses) are yet to be carried out.

Nor do the two Councils believe that the infrastructure requirements have been thought through sufficiently, particularly the provision of school places, medical facilities, and sewerage capacity.

We remain most concerned about the impact of increased traffic on an already congested road system. The extant (2010) Wimborne Transport Model Study reveals no less than a 45% increase in “general traffic around the town”, considerably greater increases in the volume of traffic on certain key roads (Leigh, Cranborne, Middlehill, and others), and the majority of the 21 key road junctions studied becoming “near, at, or over capacity” or “of concern” (i.e. above 85% RFC). We are aware that much of this data is already out of date.

We are very concerned about the lack of employment in Wimborne/Colehill for the increased population, particularly given the reduction in employment opportunities in the immediate area as a result of the proposed change of use of the Stone Lane Industrial Estate and Long Close Farm buildings from commercial to residential, and also from the proposed move of staff of the East Dorset District Council from Furzehill to the partnership offices in Christchurch.

Both Councils appreciate the need for some greenfield development in order to meet the District’s overall new housing requirement; however, neither Council welcomes the considerable release of Greenbelt land demanded in the Wimborne/Colehill area without compensating additions to the Greenbelt boundaries, as proposed elsewhere in the District.

Both Councils believe the Cranborne Road “New Neighbourhood” proposal (WMC5) is unsound as currently conceived:

- It will destroy forever the rural landscape to the north of Wimborne, assessed as of great scenic value, and as a consequence change the setting of this historic town irrevocably.
- It will increase the flood risk to Wimborne.
- It will increase the risk of polluting the all important groundwater source in that area (a Zone 1 Groundwater Source Protected Zone).
- It will exacerbate existing surface water drainage problems.
- It is on the wrong side of town to access the expanded employment centres at Ferndown, Sturminster Marshall, and the Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Industrial Estates.
- It will exacerbate existing traffic problems in the area.
- It will increase the environmental/ habitat risks to the River Allen.
- It will increase danger to non-vehicular traffic, particularly given the proposal to move the existing Wimborne First School from Old School Lane to this development site.

In addition to the recorded opposition of both Councils to this development proposal during the Statutory Consultation, we have noted the overwhelming opposition from the residents of both Wimborne and Colehill and from the majority of other civic organisations.

We would draw the Inspector’s attention to the fact that in 2009 the Leader of the East Dorset District Council wrote to the Secretary of State, Department of Communities and Local Government, stating that the Council did not wish to develop to the north of Wimborne on grounds of rural landscape/Green Belt, traffic and flooding, and infrastructure. This concerned a proposal to build 400 new dwellings on the eastern side of the Cranborne Road only. Yet now the same Council is proposing to build 600 new dwellings, a new school, plus community facilities and retail outlets, on both sides of the road, not in order to satisfy any local need but to meet the District’s overall requirement for new housing. Both Councils believe this reversal of the District’s officially stated position to be entirely unjustified.

Concerning the proposed housing and Sports Village to the south of Leigh Road (WMC6), the Councils do not oppose these in principle, but both Councils have important reservations and concerns regarding the proposal in its present form. Dealing with the housing development first:

- It will raise the question of whether adequate surveys have been carried out in relation to the ecology, the environment generally and flood risk given the relatively low-lying nature of the land.
- It will generate approximately 520 cars from the housing estate, emerging onto the Leigh Road and adding to the pressures on an already inadequate road infrastructure, referred to in relation to WMC5.
- It will probably increase the workforce of the area by about 650. As has already be highlighted these will mostly have to commute to work owing to the absence of sufficient employment in the area.

- It will create the need for up to 600 additional school places. Many children will need to travel across Wimborne and Colehill at peak times, often being transported criss-cross in the area generally because of the location of schools.

Whilst the argument for the development of the Sports Village on the site appears to be sound:

- It will add to the difficulties in constructing the housing development, and both Councils take the view that concentrating the area's sports facilities on this site with the proposed 350 homes is excessive.

Both Councils would draw to the Inspectors attention the plight of residents already living in this area. The argument that both Councils would put forward in relation to whatever format is decided for WMC6 requires the following provisos:

- That any access to the new homes and the Sports Village must **NOT** be through existing roads at Parmiter and Brookside Manor because they are utterly inadequate and would unreasonably change the nature of the area. This includes construction traffic, but not emergency services.
- That access roads to the new housing should be separate from roads to the Sports Village, because of the sheer volume for each at peak times, and that new roads should be constructed.
- That such roads should be accessed from Leigh Road at a point nearer to Canford Bottom.
- That the housing development should **NOT** incorporate multi-occupancy buildings which would be totally out of character with the area.
- That there should be a significant buffer zone of green space between existing properties and any new development to allow the existing housing stock of Parmiter and Brookside Manor to maintain its present nature.

Finally both Councils would highlight to the Inspector the wholly disproportionate increase in development that Wimborne and Colehill are being asked to bear when taken as a proportion of the housing needs for East Dorset. It seems incongruous to ask this area to take so much of the burden and forever alter the character and nature of both settlements.

Signed by:

On behalf of Wimborne Town Council.

On behalf of Colehill Parish Council.

Chairman

Chairman

Date: