

Wessex Water

Statement in Respect of Matters and Issues

2 Green Belt (KS2)

Christchurch and East Dorset Core Strategy
Examination in Public

August 2013

Representors Name: Wessex Water

Representors Ref: 524080

Examination Matter No: 2

Our ref: JC/1222

Contents

	Page
1.0 Introduction	1
2.0 Matters and Issues 2 – Green Belt	2

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This Statement has been prepared on behalf of Wessex Water. It relates to the matters and issues listed in the first version of the Hearing Programme for the Christchurch and East Dorset Core Strategy Examination.
- 1.2 The next section of the Statement addresses the questions listed for Matters and Issues session 2 – Green Belt (Policy KS2) to be heard on Tuesday 17 September 2013
- 1.3 Wessex Water is the regional water and sewage treatment business which serves most of the South West of England including Dorset, Somerset, Bristol, most of Wiltshire and parts of Gloucestershire and Hampshire. It has a long term commitment to providing stability and certainty in terms of service supply throughout the region. Wessex Water is committed to giving all customers excellent standards of service that take into account the need to protect health, improve the environment and give customers good value for money. The company is recognized by the water industry regulator, Ofwat, as one of the most efficient water and sewerage companies in England and Wales.
- 1.4 The company provides sewerage services to the whole of the East Dorset District, Christchurch Borough and most adjoining Districts in Dorset including the Bournemouth and Poole conurbation. It has significant property holdings in the region which include the main depot at Little Canford which lies close to the B3073 near to its junction with the A31(T) just east of Wimborne.
- 1.5 The depot is an extensive mixed use brownfield site between the River Stour to the west and the B3073 to the east. It is currently in use but the company's preference is to vacate and relocate to purpose built premises elsewhere in the sub-region. For this reason there is need for future clarity on the site. Further information in relation to operational requirements, the characteristics of the depot and related issues are contained in other Hearing Statements on behalf of Wessex Water and in particular the Statement for Matter 8 – Economic Development / Employment for the session which is to take place on Tuesday 24 September 2013.
- 1.6 Wessex Water has participated in the CS preparation process since Options stage and representations in respect of the emerging CS were submitted in January 2011 (at Options stage), November 2011 (at Preferred Options stage) and in December 2012 (in response to the Proposed Changes to the Resubmission Document). The matters covered in the statement which follows should be read in conjunction with these earlier representations and in particular the representations submitted in December 2012.

2.0 Matters and Issues 2 – Green Belt (KS2) : Key Question Responses

Q1 Is the proposal to make limited changes to the Green Belt justified?

- 2.1 The Core Strategy proposal to make changes to the Green Belt is justified. There is clearly a balance to be struck. There is a need to continue to apply Green Belt policy to prevent unrestricted sprawl and coalescence as settlements across the Districts. At the same time there is an important need to meet requirements for new development and in particular to boost the supply of housing for the reasons that will have been discussed at Matters and Issues Session 1.
- 2.2 The evidence presented already by various parties including the Council's own evidence and acknowledgement of their predicament leads us to conclude that the conflict between Core Strategy Objectives 1 (to manage and safeguard the natural environment of Christchurch and East Dorset) and Objectives 4 and 5 (to enable the mixed economy to grow whilst also delivering a sustainable range of housing to provide for local needs) has not been resolved. The balance is tipped too much towards maintaining the status quo particularly when one considers the conservative wording in the Core Strategy Vision (*"the Green Belt policy will be kept in place..."*) and in Objective 1 (*"the Green Belt will be retained and protected..."*).
- 2.3 The objective of securing sustainable development does not necessarily run counter to the objectives of Green Belt policy and we are now at a time when there is a need to make changes to Green Belt (which the NPPF allows for) to address unmet needs and help secure economic recovery and a step change in housing land supply. Hence changes to Green Belt boundaries within this area or identification of opportunities for development within the Green Belt should be more extensive.

Q2 Have the Green Belt boundaries been assessed to consider their capability to endure beyond the Plan period, as advised in NPPF para 83?

- 2.4 As outlined above there is a need to respond to the current economic position and inadequate housing land supply, to government policy and to consider future needs and requirements beyond the Plan period. We are not aware of evidence to demonstrate that the Green Belt boundaries have been assessed to consider their capability to endure beyond the Plan period.

Q3 Does the Core Strategy set out a precise timescale and clear process for Green Belt boundary changes?

- 2.4 No Comment

Q4 Are the Green Belt boundaries for every development proposal clearly defined on proposal maps?

- 2.5 The Green Belt boundaries for all new development proposals included within the Core Strategy are not clearly defined on the proposals maps. Wessex Water is concerned more with sites in Green Belt and their identification than it is with the limited number of new edge of Settlement Green Belt changes. With the removal of guidance on Major Developed Sites in Green Belt the NPPF leaves it for Councils to

set their own approach to redevelopment of previously developed land in Green Belt, providing that such provisions are properly justified and evidence based.

- 2.6 The key guidance is in para 89 of the NPPF which indicates clearly that new buildings in Green Belt can be appropriate in the form of (last bullet point) :

“Limited infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed sites (brownfield land), whether redundant or in continuing use (excluding temporary buildings), which would not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt and the purpose of including land within it than the existing development”

- 2.7 The Council’s approach is somewhat inconsistent with the proposals for the Furzehill Offices site (Policy RA2 – redevelopment of the site for residential, offices, residential institutions, non-residential distribution, hotel and / or community uses) going ahead without any change to the Green Belt designation whilst the similarly sized Coppins Nursery site for about 30 new homes is to be enabled by a Green Belt boundary change with the exclusion of the land identified for new housing.

- 2.8 A more consistent approach needs to be developed and this needs to provide for an appropriate mixed use redevelopment of the Little Canford site which for the reasons set out in other Statements on behalf of Wessex Water is considered to be suitable for new development at this time.