

Examination of West Dorset, Weymouth and Portland Local Plan

Statement on Matter 11: Western Localities of West Dorset

Introduction

This statement has been prepared by RPS on behalf of Taylor Wimpey UK Ltd in response to the Inspector's questions on Matter 11: Western Localities of West Dorset.

The Statement specifically deals with the following:

- Question 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?

In respect of the other issues raised by the Inspector, Taylor Wimpey is content to rely on previous written submissions on the Further Proposed Changes to the Plan and on oral submissions at the Examination.

Inspector's Question 11.5

1. Within the Joint Local Plan Pre-Submission Draft (Draft JLP) (modified in June 2013), paragraph 13.2.2 states that Vearse Farm could deliver 760 new homes and approximately 4ha employment land. Accordingly, the Strategic Housing Land Availability Study (SHLAA) Update (July 2014) has included 760 homes to be delivered over the plan period at Vearse Farm, with 260 completions contributing towards the current 5 year housing supply calculation.
2. Taylor Wimpey raises significant concerns as to whether the large scale of development proposed is realistic or deliverable given the significant environmental constraints across the site and the unavoidable requirement for extensive new infrastructure. These factors, and the high numbers of objectors, are set out in our response to the Further Proposed Changes (September 2014)
3. Taylor Wimpey also has concerns regarding the feasibility of delivering the proposed number of houses within the plan and 5 year periods as relied upon by the Local Planning Authorities. We consider that the delivery assumptions and expectations in respect of this site are overly optimistic and without firm foundation. The basis for our position is set out below.
4. Paragraph 13.2.2 of the draft Plan states that between 50 and 80 homes will be completed per year on the Vearse Farm allocation. This is subsequently contradicted by the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment SHLAA update of 2014

(CD/SUS9) which identifies a figure of 60 housing completions in 2016/17 and 100 housing completions in each subsequent year (up to 2023/24). The confusion is further magnified by reference to Appendix 5 of the latest Five Year Land Supply Statement (February 2014) which suggests that only 30 dwellings will be deliverable from the site in the 5 year period (2013 – 2018).

5. This total lack of consistency in the Plan's Evidence Base demonstrates the total uncertainty that exists in respect of delivery from the Vearse Farm allocation. It also suggests, alarmingly, that the Council has little understanding of the issues facing the site, including in terms of infrastructure, and therefore as to its eventual deliverability.
6. Taylor Wimpey recognises that large strategic sites, by their very nature, often have longer lead in periods including, for example, in terms of the need for up-front infrastructure provision. However, it is also clear that the Plan is heavily reliant on the delivery of the Strategic Allocation to meet the (claimed) objectively assessed need for new homes both within the Plan Area as a whole and within West Dorset. The consequences of the site failing to deliver are therefore potentially severe. In such circumstances, Taylor Wimpey would have expected to see evidence of a greater synergy between the Planning Authorities and the promoters of the site including, for example, a joint statement on its delivery trajectory including the timing of infrastructure delivery. This does not appear to be the case.
7. In addition, discussions with West Dorset District Council (WDDC) have confirmed that the site is not yet subject to a planning application. Any such application, along with supporting documents and studies, is likely to take considerable time to prepare and be determined by the Local Planning Authority. Therefore the SHLAA Update's projection of 60 housing completions in 2016/17 seems inaccurate and unachievable.
8. The site is also known to be subject to a range of significant constraints including landscape, ecological and flooding. To date, and as confirmed by WDDC, there has been no Screening or Scoping undertaken by the promoters of the site in respect of the Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations. Given the complexity of the environmental constraints present within the site, it is thought that a number of environmental studies will be required in the form of an environmental statement/impact assessment. It is likely to take considerable time to prepare such a document in support of a planning application for the site and therefore raises further concerns that the site will not deliver as anticipated and relied upon by the Plan.
9. Significant local opposition to the proposed development at Vearse Farm is growing, with 1,250 signatures from local residents in opposition to the development registered on the opposition web site "ADVERSE", as of October 25th 2014. Opposition to the Vearse Farm is also receiving significant local media attention, along with increasing activity across Twitter and Facebook. Furthermore, opponents to the proposed

development have voiced their concern over the lack of public engagement by its promoters/developers.

- 10.** Having reviewed the suitability and deliverability of the Vearse Farm housing allocation, as set out within the Draft JLP and SHLAA Update, Taylor Wimpey strongly believes that the site is unlikely to deliver new homes in a manner which is consistent with the aspirations of the Plan. It is therefore considered that additional sites should be identified at Bridport to ensure that there is a positive and robust approach to meeting objectively assessed need.