



Purbeck Core Strategy Development Plan Document

Examination into the soundness of the plan

Statement on behalf of Purbeck District Council

Hearing date: Wednesday 9 May 2012 – 2pm

Matter 6: Employment (Policies ELS and E)

Issues

- 6.1 Does the Core Strategy provide sound guidance for economic growth in the District relative to its needs? Is policy ELS sufficiently detailed and clear? NPPF (paragraph 21) advises that a clear economic vision and strategy for the area should be set out which positively and proactively encourages sustainable economic growth. Where is that strategy?
- 6.2 What opportunities for additional employment provision have been assessed at Bere Regis, Wareham and Swanage? Why is the allocation of up to 1.2ha at Prospect Business Park not identified on Inset Map 11? Why have no other specific employment allocations been proposed? Why is the Dorset Green Technology Park not referred to in policy ELS?
- 6.3 Is there sufficient clarity regarding the infrastructure required to enable economic growth?
- 6.4 Policy ELS refers to existing employment sites being carried forward on the Proposals Map. Where are these sites and what policy would apply to them?

Introduction

1. This statement considers all the issues within Matter 6: Employment (Policies ELS and E).

Statements of common ground

2. A statement of common ground (SCG) has been agreed between Purbeck District Council and the Highways Agency in respect of employment at Bere Regis.

Why the Council considers the Core Strategy sound

3. Each issue raised by the Inspector is considered in turn below:

6.1 Does the Core Strategy provide sound guidance for economic growth in the District relative to its needs? Is policy ELS sufficiently detailed and clear? NPPF (paragraph 21) advises that a clear economic vision and strategy for the area should be set out which positively and proactively encourages sustainable growth. Where is that strategy?

4. The Core Strategy includes a range of policies to enable sustainable economic growth over the plan period. These include: providing a plentiful supply of employment land to meet both local and some wider needs, making improvements to town and village centres, offering increased opportunities for rural diversification and making improvements to business infrastructure.
5. Para 21 of the NPPF sets out specific requirements for Local Plans. The Core Strategy fulfills most of these requirements, specifically it supports the needs of existing business sectors and any expansion of these sectors can be accommodated due to the flexibility offered by the choice of available sites. It also identifies priority areas for economic regeneration at Dorset Green Technology Park, Holton Heath Industrial Estate, Upton town centre and Swanage town centre.. However, officers acknowledge that the economic strategy is not expressed sufficiently clearly in the Core Strategy. Therefore, in order to address the need to conform with paragraph 21 of the NPPF, officers request that the Inspector considers the changes put forward to the spatial area policies, as set out at the end of this statement.
6. The Council is working with neighbouring authorities and business groups on economic development issues. It has contributed to and endorsed the sub regional economic development strategy 'Raising the Game' (2005)¹ produced by the Bournemouth Dorset and Poole Economic Partnership. This strategy was supplemented by an Economic Strategy Action Plan 2008, prepared by the Multi Area Agreement Board, which aimed to improve the quality of the business environment.
7. The South West Regional Development Agency, Dorset County Council, six districts and two unitary authorities in the sub-region jointly commissioned GVA Grimley Ltd to review and update the 2003 Workspace Strategy. This review aimed to "allow a coordinated employment land policy approach across the Bournemouth, Dorset and

¹ CD96a: Raising the Game 2005-2016

Poole area as well as providing local planning authorities with a robust evidence base for their LDF processes”² The strategy identified the extent of land to be allocated by district area and any requirements necessary to bring this forward.

8. The Purbeck Employment Land Review (Parts 1 and 2)³ has involved a detailed survey of all land and business premises and included meetings with landowners of the key employment sites. This confirmed land owner support and commitment to progress the employment development of these employment sites⁴.

Needs

9. Forecast demand in Purbeck, as set out in the Workspace Strategy (2008), is for 11.5ha. To meet local and wider needs, the Council is rolling forward an existing supply of 35ha of mainly previously developed land for future employment development. These sites offer flexibility in terms of a plentiful land supply across a range of locations, which offers good market choice. The majority of sites are serviced and actively marketed by willing landowners. This should help to attract a range of new employment developments over the plan period and help to improve the sustainability of local communities.
10. Existing employment sites are detailed in Table 2 of the Core Strategy (6.5.2.1) and these will be rolled forward and safeguarded on the Proposals Map upon adoption of the Core Strategy. These safeguarded sites have been reviewed as required by paragraph 22 of the NPPF, and much of the previously developed employment allocations, in particular at Holton Heath and Dorset Green, are not suited to re-use for other uses, such as residential development. Each site will be subject to further review through the final stage of the Employment Land Review (summer 2012) and sites allocated by other plans; principally the Site Allocations Plan and Swanage Area Action Plan.

Detail and Clarity of Policy ELS

11. The Pre-Submission Core Strategy⁵ included much greater detail about specific employment sites. However, in response to representations⁶ Policy ELS and the five spatial area policies were rewritten for the Proposed Changes⁷, removing specific site references. The Council also considered this change appropriate as Employment Land Review (ELR) Part 3 has not yet been undertaken. ELR Part 3 will review the specific employment sites and could include recommendations for sites to be added, or amended and in some cases, such as the undeveloped allocation at Corfe Castle and the Dorset Green Technology Park, the deletion of all or part of the site. The recommendations will be taken forward and will inform subsequent plans, where sites will be formally allocated. Due to the plentiful supply of sites, compared to projected needs, this approach provides sufficient flexibility to ensure economic growth is not unduly constrained.

² CD96: SWRDA Dorset Workspace Strategy 2008, paragraph 1.13.

³ CD94: Purbeck Employment Land Review Part 1 and CD 95: Purbeck Employment Land Review Part 2.

⁴ CD16: Core Strategy Preferred Options 2009 ('Planning Purbeck's Future'), Table 2 (6.5.2.1).

⁵ SD1: Core Strategy Pre-Submission 2010

⁶ SD8: Summary of Representations to the Pre-Submission

⁷ SD13: Core Strategy Proposed Changes to the Pre-Submission 2011

Vision and Strategy

12. The Core Strategy includes a vision and strategy for each of the five spatial areas with the aim of providing both employment and housing growth to meet local needs in each spatial area. This strategy will improve the self sufficiency of towns and key service villages that act as the hubs to surrounding settlements. In rural areas, the Core Strategy supports small scale employment opportunities to improve the self sufficiency of smaller settlements. Holton Heath and Dorset Green do not fit within the settlement hierarchy set out in Policy LD: Location of Development, as these sites occupy a location away from residential areas. Nonetheless, these sites provide employment to meet Purbeck needs and opportunities for inward investment. New transport infrastructure will be provided alongside development to improve accessibility and reduce the need to travel by car to find work. The specific strategies for each spatial area are set out below.
13. In North West Purbeck, a new employment site will be brought forward in order to provide sustainable development alongside the new housing development at Bere Regis.
14. In South West Purbeck, Dorset Green Technology Park provides the focus for employment development. The rural location of the site is better suited to meeting local needs than wider needs. However, due to the significant extent of the site and the ambitions of the developer, the site could provide for wider needs, if businesses will be attracted to re-locate to this rural area. Any significant growth would need to provide new public transport infrastructure including better linkage with Wool railway station to ensure there isn't a large increase in traffic travelling through Wool and increasing congestion at the railway crossing when the barriers are down. Further detail about Dorset Green is included in section 6.2 below.
15. In Central Purbeck, industrial sites at Holton Heath have capacity to accommodate further growth to serve both Purbeck and some wider needs. This location is convenient for commuting from both Wareham and Poole; as it is located on the Weymouth to Waterloo railway. Furthermore, the Purbeck Transportation Strategy⁸ plans for new and improved public transport links within Central Purbeck and beyond, focusing on the A351 corridor, to improve accessibility to Holton Heath by alternatives forms of transport to the car.
16. In North East Purbeck, a new employment site will be brought forward in order to provide sustainable development alongside the new housing development at Lytchett Matravers.
17. In South East Purbeck, employment will be focused at Swanage, where the strategy is to provide opportunities for the expansion of existing businesses. This location is less likely to attract inward investment on account of the size and isolated character of the town and the seasonal transport congestion along the A351 (particularly through the narrow streets of Corfe Castle). There is only a relatively small supply of skilled labour of working age and this is compounded by a small hinterland due to the coastal location. Some micro industries and niche businesses have successfully developed in Swanage and it is important that opportunities are provided to enable these to grow and remain in the town. There is some out-commuting to higher paid

⁸ CD160:Purbeck Transportation Strategy

jobs elsewhere and the traditional local low wage economy of the town reflects significant local employment in tourism and retail activities.

18. Across the district, there is a need to improve home based working opportunities through improved broadband provision. The Local Economic Partnership is working to implement this provision. Encouraging home working can bring a variety of benefits, including higher paid jobs and helping to reduce the environmental impact of traffic.

6.2 What opportunities for additional employment provision have been assessed at Bere Regis, Wareham and Swanage? Why is the allocation of up to 1.2ha at Prospect Business Park not identified on Inset Map 11? Why have no other specific employment allocations been proposed? Why is the Dorset Green Technology Park not referred to in policy ELS?

Additional Provision

19. The Council has considered a variety of options for additional employment provision at Bere Regis, Wareham and Swanage. At Bere Regis, the Council has considered the de-allocation of an undeveloped Local Plan allocation in favour of a new site. However, options for a new site are limited because of access constraints. The Highways Agency has advised that no new access points can be added to the adjacent A35 route or associated roundabout junctions. As a result, any vehicular access would need to use existing routes through residential areas in order to access potential alternative employment locations. In contrast, the safeguarded employment allocation is served by direct access from the A35/A31 road junction and the landowner has expressed some interest in bringing this site forward alongside the Core Strategy housing allocation. This would provide adequate land to meet local needs over the plan period. It would also help to improve the self sufficiency of Bere Regis satisfying the concerns raised by the Highways Agency concerning out-commuting.
20. The setting of Wareham is heavily constrained by environmental designations, flood zones and Green Belt. However, some potential employment sites were submitted as mixed use schemes with housing through the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA). These sites were all situated on greenfield land within the Green Belt. The promoted housing elements were rejected following Council assessment and public consultation. The employment elements of the promoted land were not then made available by the landowners. Instead, the redevelopment of previously developed land outside of the Green Belt at nearby Holton Heath, which is also rail served, provides a more sustainable and less intrusive option. This site is within easy commuting from Wareham and additional development here would consolidate and enhance the existing employment centre. This will be further supported by improved sustainable transport from Wareham by rail, bus and cycle links.
21. Swanage is served by an undeveloped Local Plan employment allocation of 1.2ha at Prospect Business Park. This site, which has been provided through public sector investment, is serviced, actively marketed and will provide for future local needs. Sales have been agreed on three plots, which amount to 45% of the Park. If built out quickly, local needs will be re-assessed and addressed through review of the Core Strategy. An additional site search could, if necessary, be conducted as part of the

Swanage Area Action Plan, although landscape constraints will make finding a site difficult and landowners have not promoted alternative sites.

Inset Map 11

22. Inset map 11 depicts only those policies identified for amendment or deletion from the Purbeck District Local Plan Final Edition⁹ proposals map. Prospect Business Park will be carried forward to the Core Strategy Proposals Map and safeguarded for employment use. Part of the site (1.0ha) now supports a household recycling centre and a further 0.8ha falls within an area of identified flood risk. The boundary of the remaining 1.2ha will be redrawn and allocated through the Swanage Area Action Plan.

Other Employment Allocations

23. The Core Strategy has identified a new employment allocation as part of the settlement extension at Huntick Road, Lytchett Matravers. No other specific allocations are required in the district, as there is significant spare capacity at other employment sites which is able to satisfy District needs. However, the Council has also left some land adjacent to the Holton Heath industrial area outside of the Green Belt in order to enable future expansion of this site. If required, this could be allocated through a subsequent plan during the plan period.

Dorset Green Technology Park

24. The Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) did not identify Dorset Green Technology Park as a strategic sub-regional site and no other Dorset Authority is dependent upon this site coming forward as a sub-regional employment centre.
25. The future of Dorset Green is currently unclear. The landowner has suggested that large scale employment growth may not be viable unless accompanied by significant housing development (around 700 dwellings). However, this would be contrary to the housing strategy of the plan and there are major constraints which would need to be overcome. The Council's statement concerning Matter 15 covers this matter in greater detail. The Council would like to safeguard this site for future employment use. This would help meet local needs and offer opportunities for inward investment. The Council is keen to work with the developer to make this possible and has offered on several occasions to assist in funding, on a joint venture basis, the erection of new or the conversion of existing buildings to provide small or managed workspace focused on small local knowledge based businesses. This offer remains open and it is highly likely that additional partnership funding could also be made available from the Dorset Economic Partnership using the "Growing Places" funding which is available for kick starting entrepreneurship schemes of this nature.

6.3 Is there sufficient clarity regarding the infrastructure required to enable economic growth?

26. The choice of locations for future employment sites has had regard to existing infrastructure and any identified future provision. The existing employment sites are all serviced and readily available. The infrastructure requirements for development of the key employment sites were addressed through the 2008 Workspace Strategy.

⁹ CD136: Purbeck District Local Plan Final Edition 2004

The viability issues at the Dorset Green Technology Park were not identified at the time and this may influence the deliverability of the 20ha of available land referred to in that Strategy Para 6.18- 6.19.

27. The Purbeck Transportation Strategy (PTS) will make improvements to public transport and sustainable links between the major population and employment centres. There is a focus on the A351 corridor, where a programme of ongoing improvements includes new combined footpath and cycle-way that will be completed in 2012. The PTS will be implemented by contributions taken from interim transport policy¹⁰ prior to replacement of this by the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). Contributions from development will provide 90% towards the Purbeck Transportation Strategy (PTS), with the Local Transport Plan providing 10%.
28. The Local Economic Partnership aims to improve broadband facilities. It remains unclear how the LEP will fund the improvements, although this has been identified as a priority.

6.4 Policy ELS refers to existing employment sites being carried forward on the Proposals Map. Where are these sites and what policy would apply to them?

29. As discussed above in paragraphs 9 and 22, existing employment sites are detailed in Table 2 of the Core Strategy (6.5.2.1). These sites will be carried forward and safeguarded on the Proposals Map upon adoption of the Core Strategy. Planning applications on these sites will be determined against Policy E: Employment. The Employment Land Review (Part 3) will include detailed review of each site and, if required, the boundaries will be amended in subsequent plans, such as the Swanage Area Action Plan and Site Allocations DPD.

Suggested changes for the Inspector to consider

30. Update as per changes 28-30 of the Minor Changes Schedule¹¹. The inclusion of additional employment land at Bere Regis has been emphasized in changes 34 and 35 the Minor Changes Schedule. In addition:
- Add to Policy NW: *“A new employment site at Bere Regis will provide for local job opportunities linked to housing growth. The existing allocation at North Street will be safeguarded on the Proposals Map and reviewed through a subsequent plan(s)”*.
 - Add to Policy SW: *“New employment development will be focused at Dorset Green Technology Park to provide both local and wider job opportunities, supported by improved public transport links with Wool. The existing allocation will be safeguarded on the Proposals Map and reviewed through a subsequent plan(s)”*.
 - Add to Policy CEN: *“New employment development will be focused at Holton Heath to provide both local and wider job opportunities, supported by improved public transport links with Wareham. Existing employment sites at Westminster Road, Sandford Lane, Johns Road, Holton Heath, Admiralty Park and Romany Works will be safeguarded on the Proposals Map and reviewed through a subsequent plan(s)”*.

¹⁰ CD156: Development Contributions Towards Transport Infrastructure in Purbeck (2009)

¹¹ SD26: Minor Changes Schedule

- Add to Policy NE: *“A new employment site at Huntick Road, Lytchett Matravers will provide for local job opportunities linked to housing growth. Existing employment sites at Factory Road (Upton), Wareham Road (Lytchett Matravers) and the Axian Centre will be safeguarded on the Proposals Map and reviewed through a subsequent plan(s)”*.
- Add to Policy SE: *“New employment development to meet local needs will be focused at Prospect Business Park, Swanage. Existing employment sites at Prospect Business Park, Victoria Avenue (Swanage) and the Milk Depot (Corfe Castle) will be safeguarded on the Proposals Map and reviewed through a subsequent plan(s)”*.