



Unclassified

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Date: 1st May 2012.
Ask for: Gill Smith
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Dear Mrs Neale,

Purbeck Core Strategy – Consultation on the implications of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and Planning Policy for Travellers (PPfT) on Purbeck Core Strategy.

I refer to the Information Note from the Inspector dated 3rd April 2012 asking for representations relating to matters in the NPPF and PPfT. I wish to submit the following comments:

1. NPPF - Duty to Co-operate.

County Council officers have worked with Purbeck District Council in developing policies and evidence for a range of policy documents, including the Core Strategy. It is considered that the NPPF does not raise any additional matters of policy which alter the position of Dorset County Council as stated in its previous representations. However, it is the case that plans now need to demonstrate that they have complied with the duty to co-operate. It is in relation to this duty that the following comments are made.

The “Duty to Co-operate” was introduced in the Localism Act 2011. Paragraphs 178 – 181 of the NPPF explain how the Government expects it to operate. Para 181 specifies that local planning authorities will be expected to demonstrate evidence of having effectively co-operated to plan for issues with cross boundary impacts when their Local Plans are submitted for examination. It cites the options of plans/policies prepared by a joint committee, a memorandum of understanding or as part of a jointly prepared strategy which is presented as evidence of an agreed position. Co-operation should be a continuous process of engagement from initial thinking through to implementation.

The local authorities in Dorset – including the unitary councils of Poole and Bournemouth have enjoyed a long history of joint working and co-operation. The preparation of the Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole Structure Plan¹, Minerals and Waste plans² as well as the production of evidence to inform the Regional Strategy (RS) were projects undertaken with the full co-operation of all the authorities in Dorset. Currently the authorities are working on a Joint Heathlands Development Plan Document (DPD) covering the authorities in South East Dorset as well as a Joint Dorset Wide Gypsy and Traveller Site Allocations DPD.

¹ Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole Structure Plan adopted July 2000.

² Minerals and Waste Local Plan 1999; Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole Waste Local Plan 2006.

Since the government's announced intention to revoke the RS the individual authorities have continued to co-operate by jointly working on or procuring evidence such as the Local Economic Assessment 2011, Strategic Housing Market Assessment update 2012, Strategic Housing Land Availability studies and the Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole Workspace Study 2012.

Notwithstanding the good and continuing record of joint working, I would raise a concern that emerging plans within the Dorset LEP area do not yet benefit from an agreed framework or memorandum of understanding for considering matters of a strategic nature, including those relating to infrastructure which Dorset County Council has a role in providing.

Whilst the County Council is supportive in principle of the approach taken in Purbeck's Core Strategy, I consider that compliance with the duty to co-operate will extend to delivery of plans in the area and their subsequent review in future. For this reason I would advocate the importance of local authorities in the Dorset LEP area working together in developing a framework for agreeing matters of a strategic nature. I understand that Purbeck is agreeable in principle to this and so I would suggest that assurances to this effect are sought during the appropriate hearing session.

2 Planning Policy for Travellers

Dorset County Council is, by convention, the lead authority on gypsy and traveller matters in the administrative county. It currently manages three public sites (42 pitches) for gypsies and travellers. Together with Bournemouth and Poole unitary authorities, the County Council and all six Dorset District authorities are producing a joint Development Plan Document which will identify sites to meet the needs (as identified in the joint Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment 2006) for gypsy, traveller and travelling show peoples' accommodation.

The Purbeck Core Strategy includes a criteria based policy (Policy GT) to guide decisions on unallocated sites for gypsies and travellers that come forward during the plan period.

It is considered that there are some significant differences between the wording of Policy GT in the Core Strategy and the Government's policy in PPfT. For instance, the spirit and tone of the criteria under para 11 of Policy B are generally more proactive than those set out in Purbeck's Policy GT. They refer to matters such the need for policies to promote peaceful and integrated co-existence between the site and the local community; to promote access to appropriate health facilities and ensure children can attend school on a regular basis.

Policy C (in PPfT) refers to the need to ensure that the scale of sites in rural or semi-rural areas does not dominate the locality. Policy D suggests that, if there is a lack of affordable land to meet local traveller needs, local planning authorities may consider including a rural exception site policy for traveller sites. Neither of these matters is addressed in Purbeck's policy.

In the light of the difference in tone and approach to site development that the PPfT provides, Purbeck District Council may wish to consider either re-wording Policy GT to align better with the governments' new policy or including text to refer to the PPfT as the source of policy advice.

I hope these comments are helpful and please do not hesitate to contact me should you require any further assistance in this matter.

Please note that this is an officer response

Yours faithfully,

Gill Smith
Senior Planning Officer