

The Purbeck Core Strategy Development Plan Document Examination March 2012

Matter 2 – General Location of Development (Policy LD)

Introduction/Background

The Government makes it clear in the NPPF that it attaches great importance to Green Belts, stating that “the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence”. Only in cases of “exceptional need” is it considered appropriate to modify green belt boundaries.

The role of the Green Belt is to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas; prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another; assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment, preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land (NPPF page19). Under the duty to co-operate Purbeck’s Green Belt land serves a strategic importance in the sub region serving to prevent the sprawl of the conurbation of Bournemouth/Poole/Christchurch and assist in regeneration within the conurbation in addition to its more local functions of preserving the special character of Purbeck’s historic towns.

It should be recognised in considering the proposed moving of Wareham’s Green Belt that Wareham is only 15 minutes’ drive from the conurbation and 10 minutes by train. As such Wareham will never be able to compete with the provision of shopping, employment and services in the conurbation. It is also most likely that any new development in Purbeck will increase pressure on the A351 and increase commuting.

PDC has undertaken 2 reviews of the Green Belt in Purbeck in recent years, in June 2006 and May 2010. The review in 2006 concluded that the *“Green Belt within Purbeck compliments the urban areas providing countryside between the main settlements in the North of the District, and forming the historic setting of 3 Conservation Area Villages and one Conservation Area Town. The general extent of this Green Belt has been assessed as being ‘fit for purpose’.”* The review identified a few *“minor amendments to the detailed boundaries”* ie not altering the general extent of the Green Belt.

However the review carried out in 2010 came to a different conclusion, proposing that 23.77 ha of Green Belt land to the west of Wareham be released from designation and that areas of land at Holton Heath, Sandford and Lytchett Minster be added so as to create a net gain in green belt land. However allocating green belt elsewhere does not negate the arguments for retention of land currently designated Green Belt.

The Government makes it clear in the NPPF that it attaches great importance to Green Belts, stating that *“the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence”*. Only in cases of “exceptional need” is it considered appropriate to modify green belt boundaries. The need for land for development is not sufficient reason for releasing land from green belt designation. The 2011 Green Belt Review devotes less than a page in purporting to explain the exceptional need for deleting the Green Belt in Worgret Road – in fact it does nothing of the sort, rather it merely explains that the site lies within the by-pass (which has been the case since the 2001/2 District wide Local Plan concluded that it should be designated Green Belt).

Moreover consideration was given to development of Green Belt land at Worgret Road, Wareham at the previous Local plan Inquiry in 2002 when the Inspector concluded that

“there are no exceptional circumstances that presently necessitate an alteration of the Green Belt boundary” (Appendix 3).

What particular part of the Core Strategy is unsound?

The release of Green Belt land to the west of Wareham.

Which criteria set out in paragraph 182 of the NPPF does it fail?

Not justified.

Not consistent with national policy.

Why does it fail?

The 2011 Green Belt Review **[CD127]** does not explain the ‘exceptional circumstances’ for deleting the Green Belt on this side of Wareham, which the Inspector at the previous Local Plan Inquiry considered was acceptable and which the Council itself in its previous 2006 Green Belt Review also considered to be correctly drawn. It is unclear why land in other areas, including re-assessing the potential for development at Sandford & Holton Heath, as well as Wool & Crossways has not been considered for strategic settlement allocations.

How can the Core Strategy be made sound?

Maintain the boundary of the Green Belt to the west of Wareham including covering the Purbeck School playing fields, the Wareham Middle School playing fields, and the Scott Estate land adjacent to the western roundabout.

What is the precise change/wording we are seeking?

Delete the wording relating to the strategic settlement extension in Wareham in Policy LD, and delete Policy CEN and the Draft Development Brief for the Worgret Road site.

Appendices:

Appendix 1: Local Planning Inspector’s summary letter attached to Purbeck District Local Plan – Inspector’s Report 2002 (para 11)

Appendix 2: 2006 Green Belt Review

Appendix 3 – Extract from Purbeck District Local Plan Inspector’s Report 2002 – Housing Omission site at Worgret Road page 250 para 6.336