

# **West Dorset, Weymouth and Portland Local Plan Examination**

## **Hearing Statement for Matter 8: Weymouth**



Prepared by West Dorset District Council and  
Weymouth & Portland Borough Council

**November 2014**

## Matter 8: Weymouth

### Agenda Item 8.1: Are the objectives for improving the range of housing comprehensive and appropriate to the needs of the Borough?

- 1.1 Weymouth is the largest urban area in Dorset (outside of Bournemouth & Poole). It has a significant commercial and employment centre and existing homes, jobs and facilities are easily accessible to each other and there is a choice of transport modes making it an appropriate place for growth.
- 1.2 The most recent assessment of local housing needs, utilising 2011 census information can be found in part 2 of West Dorset, Weymouth & Portland Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA), July 2014 (CD/SUS10). Paragraph 2.39 identifies terraced housing and flats as the most commonly found household type in Weymouth & Portland. Three bedroom homes followed by two bedroom dwellings are the most commonly found property size.
- 1.3 In terms of future housing requirements, Section 4 of the SHMA indicates that new owner-occupied accommodation should principally be two, three and four bedroom homes and new private rented housing should be one and two bedroom properties. This up to date evidence demonstrates a wide ranging need for different sized houses and flats across different tenures in Weymouth and the wider Borough.
- 1.4 Paragraph 50 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) requires local planning authorities to plan for the needs of different groups in the community such as, but not limited to families with children, older people and people with disabilities. The policy approach taken in the Submission Plan provides a range of sites that can meet these wide ranging needs.
- 1.5 The age profile of the population is heavily focussed towards older age groups with an estimated 12.3% of the population of the Housing Market Area being aged 75 and over (compared with 8% nationally) and 20.8% aged between 60 and 74 (compared with 14.6% nationally)<sup>1</sup>. 21% of people have their day to day activities limited to some degree by long term health problems or disabilities; the national average is 16%<sup>2</sup>. In contrast there is a relatively lower proportion of people of a working age. This evidence demonstrates that the older population are a particularly important

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<sup>1</sup> Dorchester/Weymouth Housing Market Area – 2011 Strategic Market Assessment Update Jan 2012.

<sup>2</sup> Nomis official labour market statistics. Census 2011 Detailed characteristics.

age group to cater for when planning for growth and that consideration should be given to the type of housing that will attract people of working age to the town.

- 1.6 The tight administrative boundary, and the fact that the borough is a peninsula, bounded largely by the sea as well as environmental constraints means that options for development sites for new housing is limited. This has been reflected in previous development plans for Weymouth (CD/POL1) where emphasis was placed on re-using previously developed sites.
- 1.7 However, it is important that both greenfield and previously developed sites are identified to meet local needs and enable economic growth as they have the ability to cater for different needs, particularly delivering a mixture of housing types and sizes to meet the needs of people of all ages. Two large greenfield strategic sites within Weymouth are proposed in the Submission Plan along with two major mixed use allocations on the periphery of Weymouth in Littlemoor and Chickerell. A further two sites carried forward from the previous development plan (Submission Plan Policies WEY11 and WEY13). A total of 870 units are planned for greenfield sites in the administrative boundary of Weymouth, part 8.2 of this matter statement demonstrates that the sites proposed for allocation in Weymouth are realistic and deliverable.
- 1.8 New housing allocations at Markham & Little Francis, Submission Plan Policy WEY10 and Land in the Wey Valley, Submission Plan Policy WEY12, provide opportunities for family housing close to the Granby Industrial Estate a key employment site and Littlemoor Urban Extension respectively. These sites are well located close to local services such as secondary schools and are easily accessible from the highway network. The greenfield allocations are of a suitable size where benefits in terms of community infrastructure and a significant level of affordable housing would be achieved. This is particularly important as Weymouth is an attractive area for people to retire, and the ageing population places demands on health, housing and support services.
- 1.9 The provision of additional family housing in Weymouth would help support additional employment and regeneration in the town allowing people to live and work in the same area.
- 1.10 Weymouth Town Centre has been a longstanding area of regeneration. Previous development plans have identified the town centre as a focus for mainly residential development, particularly on brownfield sites around the inner and outer harbour.

- 1.11 The Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) Update (CD/SUS9) has identified further sites with development potential in the town centre. This evidence suggests at least 600 new homes could be delivered in Weymouth Town Centre during the plan period. The Weymouth Town Centre Strategy (Submission Plan Policy WEY1) will provide a mechanism for their delivery. Development in the town centre would be attractive for older people to live in given the close proximity of services and facilities which are often required to meet increasing demands from that age group. An example is the current redevelopment of the former Fire Station Site at North Quay by McCarthy & Stone. Development in the town centre would also provide opportunities to accommodate younger people of a working age who may not have access to personal transport. The strategy has the potential to deliver a more balanced community, address matters of deprivation, and make the town centre a more convenient location for people to live.
- 1.12 The nature of available land in the town centre and the requirement for mixed uses would suggest that one and two bedroom properties of higher density are likely to be delivered on these previously developed sites, meeting the needs of the private rented sector as identified in the SHMA update 2014. Some development sites in the town could also provide for larger properties such as townhouses where families could establish themselves and contribute towards a more balanced community.
- 1.13 This approach demonstrates that the range of housing provided through the Submission Plan is comprehensive and appropriate to the needs of the Borough.

## **WEYMOUTH - OTHER LOCALITIES (WEY 8-16)**

### **Agenda Item 8.2: Are proposals for the town centre, other retail, commercial, recreational and residential sites realistic and deliverable?**

- 2.1 Yes, the proposals for areas in and around Weymouth are realistic and deliverable as the supporting evidence demonstrates. There are no identified constraints that cannot be mitigated and the level of development proposed is commensurate with that coming forward from discussions on numerous sites currently at pre-application stage.
- 2.2 The councils' are proactive in developing partnerships to progress and manage recreational and community projects and current work on the Weymouth Town Centre Masterplan provides momentum to deliver regeneration of the town centre. Policy WEY1 of the Submission Plan is an overarching policy, setting out the overall aims for the regeneration of Weymouth Town Centre to support its viability and vitality. It sets a vision and policy base for the development of the Weymouth

Town Centre Strategy area. Submission Plan Policies WEY 2 – 16 go on to identify sites with development potential that will deliver the housing, employment, retail and leisure objectives in accordance with the plan's overall vision, spatial objectives and development strategy. Work has progressed on preparing the Weymouth Town Centre Masterplan which will include more detailed guidance on five key sites. The boundaries for the key sites are proposed to be included on the Local Plan proposals map to supplement Figure 7.1 in the Submission Plan. In addition, the masterplan will include Lodmoor as a key site and therefore it is proposed to add this key site to the list of key sites shown in Policy WEY1. These changes are included in the Schedule of Suggested Changes (CD/SSC).

- 2.3 The masterplan will form a Supplementary Planning Document and a programme for its preparation is set out in the Local Development Scheme (CD/CON1). The masterplan will provide detail on the appropriate mix of uses for each key site. Viability testing and a funding strategy will be developed together with a phasing plan and infrastructure delivery plan. The Council, as a major landowner in the town centre, is undertaking discussions with other landowners in order to promote development proposals. Extensive public consultation is currently being undertaken to help form development options for the key sites.
- 2.4 The recently updated SHLAA (CD/SUS9), provides a robust evidence base for the Submission Plan. It shows that the provision of housing is realistic and deliverable on a number of sites within the masterplan area. These include Weymouth Railway Station (Policy WEY 3); the Pavilion and Ferry Terminal (Policy WEY 6); Weymouth First Bus Depot (Policy WEY 3); sites on Commercial Road (Policies WEY 2 and 3), Westwey Road (Policy WEY 7), the Weymouth & Portland Borough Council Offices (Policy WEY 7) and Brewers Quay (Policy WEY 4).
- 2.5 Paragraph 10.12 of the Joint Town Centre Retail and Leisure Study 2008 (CD/ECON3), confirms Weymouth as an appropriate location for a focus on retail and associated development. Policy areas WEY2, WEY 3, WEY 6 and WEY 7 located in the heart of the town centre are identified for retail uses, with the scale and specific location to be explored through the Weymouth Town Centre masterplanning process.
- 2.6 Policy WEY4 (Custom House Quay and Brewery Waterfront). An application for a mixed use scheme for a museum, indoor tourist and outdoor cultural activity space, restaurants, retail and residential development at the Brewers Quay sites was withdrawn in November 2010. However, revisions to the scheme have been discussed and the submission of a new planning application is expected shortly. A public consultation on the revised proposals was held on 15th August 2014. This evidence demonstrates that this development proposal is realistic and deliverable.

- 2.7 Policy WEY5 (Esplanade South) supports achieving a balance between un-neighbourly entertainment and related uses and residential and tourist accommodation and outdoor events. This will be achieved during the Submission Plan period by enforcing licences and managing proposed changes to land use through planning applications.
- 2.8 Policy WEY 6 (Ferry Peninsula) relates to a council owned site that requires significant investment to maintain its current operations. There has been recent interest in redeveloping the site. A mixed use scheme was proposed in 2008 and extensive public consultation was undertaken by the council and a development partner. A comprehensive redevelopment of this important site will be progressed as part of the masterplan process. The work being undertaken on the masterplan will identify a more detailed land use mix and will be subject to viability testing to ensure its deliverability.
- 2.9 Policy WEY7 (Westwey Road and North Quay) covers the outer harbour areas of Weymouth Harbour. The policy is considered to be realistic and deliverable because there is evidence that development sites in this area are being brought forward. For example, the former Weymouth Fire Station site at North Quay is being redeveloped to provide 43 retirement dwellings. On the adjoining site, Weymouth & Portland Borough Council is in the process of preparing a planning application for a mixed use development of the council offices. A further planning application has been submitted for residential development (25 dwellings) at the former Southern Electric Board Depot site on Westwey Road.
- 2.10 Policy WEY 8 (Lodmoor Country Park) is a policy area covering a successful existing leisure facility comprising a variety of independent attractions such as; Sealife Centre, café, pub, events area, green gym, and pitch & put. It is owned by Weymouth & Portland Borough Council and managed by the independent concessions and The Friends of Lodmoor Country Park. The policy allows for the continuation, expansion and improvement of existing and future recreational and tourism uses in line the strategy for the Weymouth Town Centre Masterplan.
- 2.11 Policy WEY 9 (Bincleaves Cove). This policy area had planning consent (06/00915/OUTE) for mixed uses; including a hotel, retail, drinking establishments, hot food takeaway, business use, non residential institution, & 110 apartments. The planning consent lapsed in 2011. There have been significant ongoing pre-application discussions in relations to a proposed Care Village on the site for in the region of 200 extra-care apartments, associated amenities such as; restaurant, spa, museum, bars, library, retail & offices. A public consultation event was held by the developers in 2013. It is expected that a development will be delivered in accordance with the proposed policy.

- 2.12 Policy WEY 10 (Markham & Little Francis) has planning consent for a total of 180 residential units, convenience store, commercial development and associated landscaping, access and drainage works. Construction of the first phase of this development has now commenced. An outline application for the development of approximately 500 residential dwellings in 3 further phases is currently being considered by Weymouth & Portland Borough Council. This demonstrates that the level of development promoted by the Local Plan is realistic and deliverable on this site.
- 2.13 It is acknowledged that the current application does not specifically deliver public open space to the same extent as defined in the Local Plan. The Ecological Survey submitted with the application identified areas required for biodiversity mitigation, and proposes that fields not developed within the developers ownership will be subject to management. Concerns have been expressed by Natural England and Dorset Wildlife trust in relation to wildlife corridors and the SNCI indicating that the extent and management of green infrastructure over the site it is a matter of ongoing discussion.
- 2.14 The Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment also recognises that management plans for the site may need to come forward through detailed planning negotiations, and it is the councils' intention to secure public access to open space through this negotiating process.
- 2.15 Policy WEY 11 (Land off Louviers Road) has outline planning consent for approximately 100 residential units. Pre-application discussions have been held with the developer and a reserved matters application is expected in January 2015.
- 2.16 Policy WEY 12 (Land at Wey Valley). There have been on going pre-application discussions to bring this site forward for development in accordance with the Local Plan policy. A number of technical studies (AD/WPBC16 – AD/WPBC23) have been prepared by the developer to demonstrate that there are no constraints that cannot be mitigated and the site is deliverable.
- 2.17 Two planning applications are currently being considered at The Old Rectory Lorton Lane (Policy WEY 13) for a total of 39 residential units. The Old Rectory is a listed building set within the conservation area. English Heritage have raised no objection to the proposal and believe it has potential to enhance the conservation area. Therefore the proposal meets the aspirations of the policy in relation to heritage assets and is considered to be realistic and deliverable.
- 2.18 Policy WEY14 (Bowlaze Cove) covers an area containing tourist and leisure related uses. These uses make an important contribution to the tourist economy of Weymouth. The site is within a sensitive coastal location of landscape, nature

conservation and geological importance. In addition it is in an area of coastal change that is at risk from coastal erosion and flooding. The policy recognises the need for the continuation of the leisure uses and the need to adapt to climate change. It recognises that only time limited development is permissible in accordance with the guidance in Managing Coastal Change: Coastal Risk Planning Guidance for West Dorset, Weymouth & Portland. Halcrow Group Ltd March 2013 (CD/ENV8).

- 2.19 Policy WEY15 (Tumbledown Farm). Weymouth & Portland Borough Council (WPBC) has agreed to a Ground Work Trust taking on a long term lease of Tumbledown Farm to develop the site into a community food growing and environmental education centre. The Trust will work in partnership with WPBC, Weymouth Transition Town Group, the RSPB, and Natural England. This partnership was agreed on the basis of a business case submitted by Ground Work Trust demonstrating that the proposal is deliverable.
- 2.20 Policy WEY 16 (Lorton Valley Nature Park) covers an established Nature Park developed in partnership with Natural England and under the joint stewardship of Dorset Wildlife Trust, the RSPB, and Weymouth & Portland Borough Council. It is a delivered project which is developing further since its creation and is used by Natural England as a model of good practice in the management of green infrastructure for benefit of community.
- 2.21 This matter statement shows that there has been significant progress on the development of sites in Weymouth proposed in the Submission Plan. This evidence combined with the councils ongoing development of the masterplan in Weymouth Town Centre helps demonstrate that the proposals are both realistic and deliverable within the Plan period.