

Position Statement



Matter 1
Representor 2574
The Charborough Estate

PURBECK LDF
CORE STRATEGY DPD
EiP

MATTER 1 : THE OVERALL APPROACH

Position Statement
On behalf of:
The Charborough Estate

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AJP/CHA/1233

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1 Overview

1.1

This brief Position Statement seeks to address the first part of Issue 1.2 “In general terms is the overall spatial strategy based on a sound assessment of the socio-economic and environmental characteristics of the area?”

1.2

The Inspector will be fully aware that much of Purbeck District is characterized by large tracts of heathland SPA, landscape of AONB quality, and historic Conservation Areas, which, in cases such as Corfe Castle, are national icons.

1.3

This high quality environment attracts commuters from the Bournemouth – Poole conurbation and weekenders from London, pushing house prices way above the national average. Yet local incomes are below the national average. Obviously there is a potential conflict between the particularly special environment and the particularly pressing needs of the local community.

1.4

There are other issues of local strategic significance. One is that Wareham is the most sustainable location in Purbeck by virtue of its relationship to present and future public transport and its local facilities, but it is not the largest town in the District.

1.5

North East Purbeck is designated Green Belt, which the community appears to be keen to conserve; this affects development at Upton and Wareham. The community appears also be keen to conserve the AONB which affects development at the largest town, Swanage, and also at Wareham;

1.6

The major employment land areas at Holton Heath and Winfrith Heath (Dorset Green Technology Park) are not well related to the main residential settlements (although Holton Heath is within reach of Sandford, which is in turn well related to Wareham).

1.7

Many of the villages, particularly those without defined development boundaries in the current Local Plan, are in danger of dying as communities and need new life and improved sustainability.

2 The Appropriate Overall Strategy

2.1

In broad terms there appear to be potentially 4 strategic approaches:

- 1) **No Change** - which appears to be the approach favoured by those who appear to wish to see an absolute minimum of Greenfield development, if any;
- 2) **Minimum Change** - which is a reasonable summary of the Core Strategy as it stands – favoured by the Council to help meet local needs for jobs and homes, with the amount of new development in existing town and villages proportionate to the existing size of each settlement;
- 3) **Moderate Change** - The minimum change approach but with a modest allowance for any extra development needed to meet community needs – especially a range of affordable housing - now and in the future, with more focus on the central hub of the District (favoured by the Charborough Estate); and
- 4) **Radical Change** – favoured, for example, by those who support the “North West Sector” proposals for a New Town near Lytchet Minster, or major housing at Wool to compliment Dorset Green Technology Park.

2.2

We are not aware of any sound evidence that the “No Change” approach could meet the needs of the local community.

2.3

In the opinion of the Charborough Estate the “minimum change” approach which the Council has adopted is an understandable starting point. It reflects the needs and the aspirations of the community, is compatible with both the ecological and landscape characteristics of the District, would require only modest changes to the Green Belt, and would help create a sustainable but basic pattern of development. It could help bring new life to villages and countryside.

2.4

However, The Charborough Estate is concerned that as currently set out, it would not in fact meet the aims and objectives of the community. Thus, technically speaking, parts of it are not “sound”. In Section 3 of this Position Statement we therefore summarise why the Charborough Estate believes it needs some adjustments, in an approach which we call “Moderate Change”

2.5

The Charborough Estate does not support the “Radical Approach” because by and large the community does not support such an approach. Nor does The Estate consider any such approach to be justified or the best available option in all the circumstances of Purbeck District.

2.6

The “North West Sector” proposals for a new town near Lytchet Minster originate from the RSS process. The primary purpose would be to accommodate housing and employment need arising from the Bournemouth – Poole conurbation. It would form a major incursion into the countryside and in particular the Green Belt. Functionally it would not appear to relate well to existing towns and key service villages in Purbeck District.

2.7

On reading paras 1.4 – 1.7 above of this Position Statement, it might seem logical to divert major housing development to a location close to Dorset Green Technology Park (DGTP). However, again it does not appear to be supported by the community and it would also form a major incursion into the countryside. The pattern of development in Purbeck would be distorted away from sustainability because DGTP and its locality are not the hub of the District in the way that Wareham (and Sandford) is, nor does the locality already enjoy the wide range of facilities which are offered by Swanage and Wareham (and which the residents of Upton can readily access in Poole).

2.8

The Charborough Estate therefore concludes that the best available option for development in Purbeck is the “Moderate Change” approach.

3 The “Moderate Change” Approach

3.1

The Charborough Estate is concerned that the Core Strategy as currently set out will not achieve the aims and aspirations of the community in respect of:

- 1) Affordable (and lower medium cost market) housing
- 2) Job creation
- 3) Keeping rural communities alive
- 4) Conserving the special ecology and landscape of Purbeck
- 5) Development needs at Wareham and Sandford, both current and future.

3.2

The Charborough Estate is also concerned that there needs to be more focus in Wareham and Sandford in order to promote sustainable patterns of development.

3.3

In these respects, although forming a starting point for an appropriate strategy for Purbeck, the Core Strategy is unsound, and needs some modest changes to make it sound.

3.4

More housing is needed, in order to increase the supply of Affordable Housing and also the supply of lower/medium cost market housing. That will require provision for more Greenfield allocations to be brought forward now and in the future.

3.5

Wareham and Sandford should be the focus of such additional provision being in the central hub of the District and thus the most sustainable sub-area.

3.6

Furthermore, future development at Sandford may be able to contribute towards reducing the impact and problems of the A351, and will help to make Holton Heath a more sustainable location for employment by providing housing closer to it.

3.7

More Greenfield land should also be allocated for employment, in order to help attract more and better jobs to the District. Again this should be in Central Purbeck in order to help create sustainable patterns of development.

3.8

Therefore, modest areas of “white land” should therefore be retained at Sandford, and created at North Wareham. Some or all of it may well need to be allocated in this strategy.

3.9

The Charborough Estate is very encouraged by the fact that the Council wants to keep small villages and rural areas alive. However, the Estate is concerned that the wording of the Policy LD fails to adequately reflect the aims and objectives of the Council in this respect. This also applies to Policies CO and TA (which are not now set out in the NPPF). The Core Strategy therefore needs some moderate changes to policies LD, CO and TA to make it sound and to reflect the aspirations of the community, particularly the rural community.

3.10

The Charborough Estate is keen to conserve the ecology, character and appearance of the countryside and rural settlements. Such objectives are fundamental to the management policy of the Estate.

3.11

The Charborough Estate has large scale opportunities for Strategic SANGS on the North West side of Wareham (in conjunction with new mixed development) which would be very well related to both new and existing housing. There is also a significant strategic recreational opportunity at Morden Park, which would restore attractive landscape, restore an SSSI and could also act as SANGS. Landscape and ecology are of fundamental strategic significance in Purbeck District, so these opportunities need to be identified in the Core Strategy.

3.12

Adopting the "Moderate Change" approach would largely follow the intentions of the strategy already devised by the Council in consultation with the community. The modest adjustments suggested above would meet the aspirations of the community where at present it would fail to do so, ensure that it accords with National Policy and be both effective and deliverable. The Charborough Estate therefore commends this approach to the Inspector.