

# Purbeck District Council: Core Strategy Examination in Public Submission on behalf of ZBV (Winfrith) Ltd

Reference: 4953

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## **MATTER 1: BASIS FOR THE OVERALL APPROACH OF THE DPD**

1.1 ZBV (Winfrith) limited is an existing, significant landowner and investor in Purbeck District, with an extensive history in supporting the future for Dorset Green Technology Park, Wool (DGTP). ZBV (Winfrith) Ltd has made a number of representations to Purbeck District Council with regard to the objectives and policies contained in the LDF Core Strategy, Submission Draft.

### **1.1: Does the DPD have regard to national and sub-regional policy and if there are any divergences how are these justified? What are the implications of the forthcoming revocation of Regional Spatial Strategies? Are there satisfactory linkages with the Purbeck Community Plan and other local strategies? Has the duty to co-operate been fulfilled?**

1.2 In response to this Matter, ZBV are particularly interested in commenting on the national and sub-regional policy divergences, the implication of the revocation of the RSS and on the Duty to Co-operate.

#### National Policy Divergence

1.3 National policy has been subject to significant revision within the last year with Royal Assent of the Localism Act (November 2011) and the publication of a draft and now finalised version of the National Planning Policy Framework (March 2012). Nevertheless, ZBV are of the opinion that the Government's intentions for the planning system to deliver sustainable development and growth have remained constant throughout this period.

1.4 ZBV are of the view that the new NPPF condenses but reinforces the former body of PPS and PPG guidance at a number of points, including paragraph 9 where pursuing sustainable development involved *inter alia*: make it easier for

jobs to be created; improve the conditions in which people live, work and travel; and widen the choice of high quality homes. Paragraph 14 then sets out the presumption in favour of sustainable development, which for plan-making includes positively seeking opportunities to meet the development needs of the area. Local Plans are required to meet objectively assessed needs with sufficient flexibility to adapt to rapid change.

- 1.5 Paragraph 156 of the NPPF follows the same themes of guidance for plan-making that were contained in the previous PPS12 (Local Spatial Planning); while paragraph 157 identifies what Local Plans should do. ZBV consider that the Core Strategy fails to justify effectively why it is divergent from this national policy.
- 1.6 For example, the Core Strategy does not plan to meet the objectively assessed housing needs of the area as the RSS Proposed Changes (July 2008) established (at least 5,150 dwellings), or that identified by the Government (as the Core Strategy itself establishes in paragraph 6.1.2 (4,000 dwellings), nor ZBV's own independent calculation of future dwelling requirements based on current household forecasts. It does not resolve the needs identified in the Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2008 or 2011 (despite using this evidence within the Core Strategy vision, spatial objectives and policy HS); nor provide an updated, current assessment of employment land requirements beyond the Bournemouth Dorset Poole Workspace Strategy (2008) leaving this to a later, unknown date.
- 1.7 Furthermore, it is ZBV's view that the Core Strategy does not set out a clear delivery strategy for housing and economic growth within the District during the plan period. The Core Strategy does describe a future vision and spatial objectives but does not then plan positively for the development and infrastructure required.
- 1.8 It is on the basis of this reinforcement and continuity of Government planning guidance, coupled with ZBV's significant concerns over the Council's approach to its housing evidence base, targets and delivery strategy (set out

in response to Matters 4 and 5) that ZBV consider the Core Strategy to be divergent from national policy and unsound.

South West RSS and Future Revocation

- 1.9 The South West RSS remains extant. Although not finally adopted it reflects the most up to date policy position published by the Government in July 2008 after Public Examination and taking into consideration the Panel Report findings. It therefore has material weight as part of the Development Plan for Purbeck District. The Core Strategy was prepared during a period prior to the proposed revocation of the RSS and on this basis, it should have been prepared in accordance with that Plan as the former PPS12 required.
- 1.10 ZBV note that successive appeal decisions by PINS and the Secretary of State (including *inter alia*: Quarrendon Fields and Newton Lees both in Aylesbury Vale; and Wainhomes in St Austell Cornwall) have supported the continued role of the RSS as a formal part of the Development Plan until such time as the Secretary of State may direct its revocation.
- 1.11 As it stands, therefore, ZBV consider that the Core Strategy is divergent to regional policy because it does not positively plan for the level of housing required by the RSS (policy HMA7) and did not consider alternative spatial options for the accommodation of this level of housing growth when it became apparent that the RSS proposal for major development at Lytchett Minster could not be delivered. An issue that the Government Office for the South West identified in its letter to the District Council (December 2009).
- 1.12 If the South West RSS is eventually revoked, the evidence base of that Plan remains, in many cases the most up-to-date analysis of development and growth requirements across the Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole sub-region. Both the 2008 and 2011 SHMAs consider the housing market position across Bournemouth Dorset and Poole, including Purbeck; while the Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole Workspace Strategy set out the sub-regional economic matters that the Core Strategy should encompass. The existing evidence does not evaporate simply because the RSS is revoked. ZBV suggest that this

is an important consideration given the lack of a meaningful, consistent cross-boundary co-operation on strategic priorities required in the duty to co-operate as set out in the Localism Act and in the NPPF (paragraph 178).

- 1.13 With, or without the revocation of the RSS, the Core Strategy would still need to be in accordance with national policy in the NPPF which as ZBV note above, it fails to do.

#### Duty to Co-operate

- 1.14 While the Duty has only come into force formally with the Localism Act and latterly the NPPF, the evidence of co-operative working and analysis during the plan preparation period as described by the Council in its response to the Inspector suggests that co-operation this has been undertaken on a rather patchy and inconsistent basis. The evidence of co-operation appears poorly recorded given the scale and nature of the environmental, Green Belt, economic, social, transport and housing issues concerned.
- 1.15 The NPPF establishes in paragraph 181 that “co-operation should be a continuous process of engagement from initial thinking through to implementation, resulting in a final position where plans are in place to provide the land and infrastructure necessary to support current and projected future levels of development”.
- 1.16 It is not evident to ZBV from the Core Strategy, or the Council's published response to the Inspector how and by what mechanism(s) this Duty will be fulfilled through in a managed and sustained manner to meet the requirements of paragraphs 178 and 181.

**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 and are the impacts of the proposals properly addressed?**

1.17 With respect to the overall spatial strategy and the resultant settlement hierarchy of locations for development in the Core Strategy, it is ZBV's view that not all the socio-economic and environmental characteristics of Purbeck have been considered fully because:

- There was limited analysis and examination given to available brownfield sites (such as Dorset Green Technology Park) and their sequential consideration over above Green Belt sites or settlement extensions (such as Lytchett Matravers and Upton), or other ecologically sensitive locations or settlements within the AONB or the heavily developed coastal areas of Purbeck.
- Sustainable planning should seek to locate housing close to employment, services, facilities and public transport. The Dorset Green proposals provide employment and residential uses within the same location, within walking and cycling distance, and would thereby negate the need to travel by car by providing internalisation of trips as well as reducing journey lengths for new residents and residents in the surrounding settlements (which in turn would further reducing the cost of living and enhance quality of life). It is unclear why the spatial strategy has not given more weight and consideration to this opportunity.
- There was limited consideration of the benefits of clustering settlements as a viable spatial strategy. Clustering enables rural communities and settlements to remain distinct (separated by strategic gaps or Green Belt), but able to share infrastructure such as transportation and community facilities / services.

1.18 For example, while Wool is identified as a Key Service Village, growth at this location is discounted entirely. However, Dorset Green Technology Park is within close proximity to Wool and could provide a valuable opportunity for

mixed use growth, both employment and housing, and the provision of supporting amenity and services for Wool.

- 1.19 Indeed, this was an approach considered earlier within the preparation of the Core Strategy (The Preferred Options Public Consultation, September 2009) by grouping Bovington, Wool and DGTP and indicating an Area Action Plan would be prepared for this growth area. The Council's own evidence in the Implications of Additional Growth Scenarios for European Protected Sites, 2010 suggested that 1,000 new homes could be accommodated around Wool (with the introduction of suitable mitigation measures to protect nearby protected heathlands). Further work was required by the Council in respect of this option but was not undertaken at the time and did not allow the spatial strategy to be fully informed.
- 1.20 As such, ZBV consider that a wholly sound assessment of the socio-economic and environmental characteristics has not been undertaken in respect of the creation of the overall spatial strategy.

**1.3: Is the DPD based on a sound process of sustainability appraisal and testing of reasonable alternatives, and does it represent the most appropriate strategy in the circumstances? Has the site selection process been objective and based on appropriate criteria? Is there too much reliance on the preparation of 'subsequent plans' and should such references be more specific? Are such plans identified in the Local Development Scheme?**

- 1.21 ZBV consider that the plan-making and preparation of the Core Strategy has consistency failed to identify, test and evaluate reasonable alternatives that reflect the current role and future opportunity presented by the Dorset Green Technology Park as a large brownfield site. The 'Route Map attached as Appendix 1.1 sets out in greater detail how DGTP has been approached in the preparation of the Core Strategy; an issue that ZBV give further detail to in Matters 4, 11 and 15). Key failures are:
- To identify and assess strategic alternatives to meet identified future growth when it became apparent that the South West RSS proposal for major development at Lytchett Minster could not be delivered;

- To properly and fully consider DGTP as a major brownfield site in the District;
- To identify options which make sufficient provision for new housing and affordable housing with suitable flexibility and contingency. Through the SHLAA and Character Area Potential analysis, the Core Strategy does not demonstrate with clear justification why alternative opportunities or sites have been disregarded;
- To examine the option of housing growth and supporting mitigation measures around Wool and to recognise the sustainability benefits of delivering a mixed use allocation at DGTP (including SANGs proposals) and the surrounding area and therefore is benefits over other sites;
- To set out a positive, proactive approach for the growth of the existing employment provision at Dorset Green Technology Park as part of a mixed use development.

**1.4: In broad terms is the quantum of development proposed for housing, employment and retail properly justified? Is it deliverable over the timescales proposed?**

- 1.22 ZBV are concerned that the Core Strategy's approach to housing and employment development are not properly justified or deliverable.

Housing

- 1.23 ZBV's other submissions to the EIP examine in greater detail the failure of the Core Strategy policies HS and AH to secure the necessary levels of future housing (and affordable housing) provision contrary to national guidance in the NPPF (paragraphs 14, 47 and 156 in particular) and with respect to locally derived evidence in the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (2008 and 2011) which is considered to be a robust, up-to-date evidence base of future household growth, housing demand and affordable housing needs.

- 1.24 This issue is particularly significant given that the housing target proposed in the Core Strategy is insufficient to meet the housing needs of the District (see ZBV's response to Matters 4 and 5). There is an acute and growing level of affordable housing need across the District according to the SHMA (2008) and 2011 update and as Map 5 of the Core Strategy identifies. Future housing market demand will not be adequately met by the level of development proposed as ZBV show in response to Matter 4.
- 1.25 The Core Strategy's housing land supply policy (policy HS) and the proposed housing trajectory fail to make sufficient provision for new development in a realistic manner with suitable flexibility and contingencies. The proposed Settlement Extensions and nebulous Character Area Potential assessments lack sufficient evidence of their achievability within the five year and longer term period.
- 1.26 The overall approach to housing and economic development has therefore ignored or discounted the opportunities presented by available previously developed land. For example, while the Council's own assessment (Implications of Additional Growth Scenarios for European Protected Sites, September 2010) cautiously suggests that 1,000 new homes could be accommodated around Wool, this opportunity and the attendant evidential analysis has not, in ZBV's view, been comprehensively investigated. Rather the Council has dismissed the option for further growth around Wool and at Dorset Green Technology park as a major previously developed site and currently the District's largest employment location, principally on the basis that the South West RSS omitted reference to Dorset Green Technology Park (formerly Winfrith Technology Centre) and its potential to accommodate 'strategic' economic growth for Dorset.
- 1.27 The flaws in this approach, coupled with those in the SHLAA and Character Area Potential analysis results in a position whereby the Core Strategy cannot demonstrate with clear justification why alternative opportunities have been disregarded and the subsequent housing policy and trajectory heavily reliant on settlement extensions in Green Belt locations and at unidentified locations around the higher order district centres. ZBV conclude that the Core Strategy

policies do not meet housing needs and do not plan positively for future growth making the best use of available brownfield land.

### Employment

- 1.28 ZBV's submission to the EIP with respect to Matter 6 considers the level of provision and spatial distribution of employment land in greater detail. It sets out ZBV's concerns that the Plan fails to make an adequate allocation of employment floorspace related to future population growth and housing requirements.
- 1.29 The Core Strategy further compounds this by failing to recognise the opportunities afforded by sites such as Dorset Green Technology Park to be developed as strategic mixed use locations; an issue that the former Government Office for the South West clearly identified in its letter to Purbeck District Council on the Preferred Options Core Strategy (23<sup>rd</sup> December 2009) when it identified that "Purbeck has two existing commercially functioning 'strategic employment locations' (i.e. Winfrith Technology Centre/Dorset Green Technology Park and Holton Heath/Admiralty Park) and that these sites should be seen as 'fix points' around which housing distribution "needs to be explored".
- 1.30 This has an important and potentially adverse effect on the economic growth prospects for the District. ZBV consider that the housing level proposed in the Core Strategy will fail to support economic and employment growth as it fails to deliver the appropriate quantum, mix and choice of housing necessary to improve sustainability in terms of greater self-containment and reductions to out-commuting for work purposes.
- 1.31 ZBV Consider that the Core Strategy provides no clear guidance on where new employment land or economic growth is to be accommodated over the plan period. All reference to potential sites to accommodate new growth have been deleted from Policies ELS and E and the Council is instead proposing to undertake a further Employment Land Review Stage 3 (at a later date) to assess options to accommodate growth and allocate sites within a

"subsequent plan(s)". In ZBV's opinion, this is a significant omission from the Core Strategy (and its supporting evidence base) and not only demonstrably fails to meet many of the economic development requirements of the NPPF at paragraphs 16, 17 (third bullet), 20, 21 (1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> bullets) and 37, but also creates uncertainty in terms of the Plan's effectiveness and justification for the distribution of growth proposed.

- 1.32 By way of example, as ZBV set out in greater detail in response to Matter 6, the Core Strategy provides no clear policy on the delivery of economic growth for existing sites or strategic opportunities such as at the Dorset Green Technology Park site. Considerable evidence has been provided to the Council in support of the regeneration of the DGTP site and the opportunity to secure a more sustainable pattern of development during the Core Strategy's preparation period. The failure to properly consider and positively formulate a policy approach towards the DGTP site is considered to be a significant and unjustified omission from the Core Strategy.

**1.5: What are the main risks to delivery; does the Council have an appropriate fall-back position; and is there sufficient flexibility to accommodate any unforeseen circumstances? What are the triggers for a review of the document?**

- 1.33 The NPPF requires Local Plans to be capable of delivery and this includes building in a level of contingency and flexibility. This situation has not changed from that set out in the former PPS12.
- 1.34 ZBV has set out in detail its concerns within its submissions to other Matters, including 4, 5, 6 and 15 with respect to:
- The overall failure to meeting housing needs in the District (both market and affordable);
  - Lack of realism in the housing trajectory and the failure to include any form of contingency in terms of the number of dwellings proposed or the supply of sites;

- The lack of positive, proactive support and strategy for economic growth, including making the best use of existing employment sites, such as Dorset Green Technology Park and allowing such locations to form the basis for future mixed use development;
- The need to ensure sufficient flexibility to accommodate rapid change.

1.35 ZBV consider that the main risks arising from this are a failure to:

- Achieve the District's Vision for Purbeck and Spatial Objectives by not planning sufficiently positively for future growth that meets the economic and housing needs of the District;
- The failure to develop a locational approach to development that fully supports the principles of sustainability in the NPPF;
- Make the best use of existing previously developed land and sites, particularly those where there are evident opportunities to provide a larger scale of development that contributes significantly to the District's infrastructure and affordable housing needs;
- Adequately protect the Green Belt and environmentally sensitive areas by directing and accommodating future growth elsewhere in the District as realistic, alternative sites are available.

1.36 There is no obvious fall back position, rather the Core Strategy appears, in ZBV's view, to adopt a 'wait and see' approach where positive planning ceases beyond the immediate short term period.

1.37 ZBV therefore conclude that the overall approach to the Core Strategy is unsound, as it is not:

- **Positively prepared**, the Plan fails to meet objectively assessed requirements which it is reasonable to expect the Core Strategy to do given the weight the NPPF applies to supporting sustainable development; and the significant weight the Core Strategy itself places on meeting needs in its vision, spatial objectives and underlying evidence base;

- **Consistent with national policy** in the NPPF, or with extant regional policy, setting aside the intention to revoke the RSS in due course;
- **Effective** in demonstrating how the Vision for Purbeck and Spatial Objectives will be met and delivered consistently and with suitable flexibilities and contingencies;
- **Justified** in failing to plan for the most appropriate housing strategy based on the available, objective evidence of future housing requirements derived from demographic forecasts, the extant RSS and the SHMA.

1.38 ZBV believe the Core Strategy requires a clear statement of the level of housing and economic growth to be delivered that meets the evidence of such needs; and critically how this will be implemented with suitable flexibility and contingencies built in to respond to market, demographic and socio-economic change. The Plan should look to include alternative opportunities to meet evident housing and economic needs and make best use of available, previously developed sites as part of this (including those such as Dorset Green Technology Park) as anchors for growth. This should ensure that there is a clear, positive alignment between national policy, the Vision for Purbeck, the Spatial Objectives and the evidential basis of the Plan in terms of meeting housing and economic needs.