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# WEST DORSET, WEYMOUTH & PORTLAND LOCAL PLAN:

## COUNCILS' SUPPLEMENTARY RESPONSE ON SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL ISSUES, FOLLOWING EXPLORATORY MEETING

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The Inspector asked the following questions about the Sustainability Appraisal of the Local Plan:

1. Have the potential impacts upon European Wildlife Designations been properly assessed?
2. Has the Sustainability Appraisal thoroughly examined all reasonable alternatives and given adequate reasons why they were rejected?
3. Will the final Sustainability Appraisal summarise how all the decisions have been made and show how the current position has been reached?

Those attending the meeting raised the following issues:

4. Four options were identified for the Crossways allocation (CRS1) at the pre-submission stages. The option for CRS1 in the Submission Draft of the Local Plan was not one of these options, and therefore no reasonable assessment of the options was undertaken.
5. The Sustainability Appraisal is a good document but does not appear to have been taken into account whilst developing the plan.

In response to the Inspector's points:

### **1. European Wildlife Designations**

A Habitats Regulations Assessment was completed for the West Dorset, Weymouth and Portland Local Plan ("Local Plan") in accordance with European Directive 92/43/EEC on the Conservation of Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora and the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010, and with the assistance of Natural England. The Habitats Regulations Assessment

influenced the development of the Local Plan, recommending a series of amendments at various stages of the plan which were subsequently made. The final Habitats Regulation Assessment for the submission draft of the Local Plan concluded that the Local Plan would not cause a significant adverse effect upon European Wildlife Designations.

## 2. Consideration of Alternatives

The legislative requirement to consider alternatives whilst undertaking Sustainability Appraisal originates from Article 5.1 of European Directive 2001/42/EC on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment (“SEA Directive”) which states that an Environmental Report shall “be prepared in which the likely significant effects on the environment of implementing the plan or programme, and reasonable alternatives taking into account the objectives and geographical scope of the plan or programme, are identified, described and evaluated”. Article 5.1 states that the Environmental Report shall achieve this by providing the information given in Annex 1 of the SEA Directive, paragraph (h) of which requires the Environmental Report to include “an outline of the reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with, and a description of how the assessment was undertaken including any difficulties (such as technical deficiencies and lack of know-how) encountered in compiling the required information”.

Table 1.1 shows how the Environmental Report for the Local Plan fully meets the statutory requirements.

*Figure 1.1: A table showing how the Environmental Report for the Local Plan meets the statutory requirements of the SEA Directive*

<b>SEA Directive requirement</b>	<b>Where this requirement is met in the Environmental Report</b>
<u>Article 5.1:</u> “likely significant effects on the environment of implementing the plan or programme, and reasonable alternatives taking into account the objectives and geographical scope of the plan or programme, are identified, described and evaluated.”	Section titled “Findings of the Sustainability Appraisal and Selection of Preferred Options” in Chapter 7 on page 37 (and Appendix C).  Section titled "Findings of the Sustainability Appraisal of Options" in Chapter 10 on page 73 (and Appendix E).
<u>Annex 1 paragraph (h):</u> “an outline of the reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with..	Sections titled “Identification of Alternatives” in Chapter 7 on page 36, and Chapter 10 on page 70.  Section titled “Findings of the Sustainability Appraisal and Selection of Preferred Options” in Chapter 7 on page 37 and “Selection of Preferred Options” in Chapter 10 on page 76.
...and a description of how the	Section titled “Methodology” in Chapter 7

assessment was undertaken	on page 36 and Chapter 10 on page 73.
...including any difficulties (such as technical deficiencies and lack of know-how) encountered in compiling the required information.”	“Difficulties in Undertaking the Assessment” in Chapter 7 on page 37 and in Chapter 10 on page 73.

Alternatives were considered at two stages during the development of the Local Plan; the options stage (Chapter 7 and Appendix C) and whilst considering the alternative land allocations in West Dorset (Chapter 10 and Appendix E). At both stages, the Environmental Report provides an account of how the plan developed by explaining how the alternatives were selected for assessment, the impacts associated with each alternative, and the reasons for choosing the preferred option.

### 3. Summary of Decisions

In addition to the Environmental Report providing an account of how the Local Plan developed, the Councils will provide an Adoption Statement in accordance with Article 9.1b of the SEA Directive upon adoption of the Local Plan. Article 9.1b requires the Council to produce “a statement summarising how the environmental considerations have been integrated into the plan or programme...and the reasons for choosing the plan or programme as adopted, in the light of the other reasonable alternatives dealt with”. The Adoption Statement will therefore more fully explain how the plan developed in response to the findings of the Sustainability Appraisal and the reasons for selecting the preferred options.

In response to the points made by those attending the meeting:

### 4. Options at Crossways

The sustainability appraisal identified, described and evaluated the potential impacts of 4 options for development at Crossways during the development of the Local Plan (including a very broad strategic option considered at the early stages), prior to the final allocation being presented in the submission draft of the Local Plan in June 2013. These four were:

- Strategic option looking at general concept of development at Crossways, and including development in five main areas as set out below;
- Option proposed in 2012 draft plan, of up to 1,500 dwellings on land to north, south and west;
- First of two options subject to consultation in 2013, comprising land to north and south;
- Second of two options subject to consultation in 2013, comprising land to north and north-west.

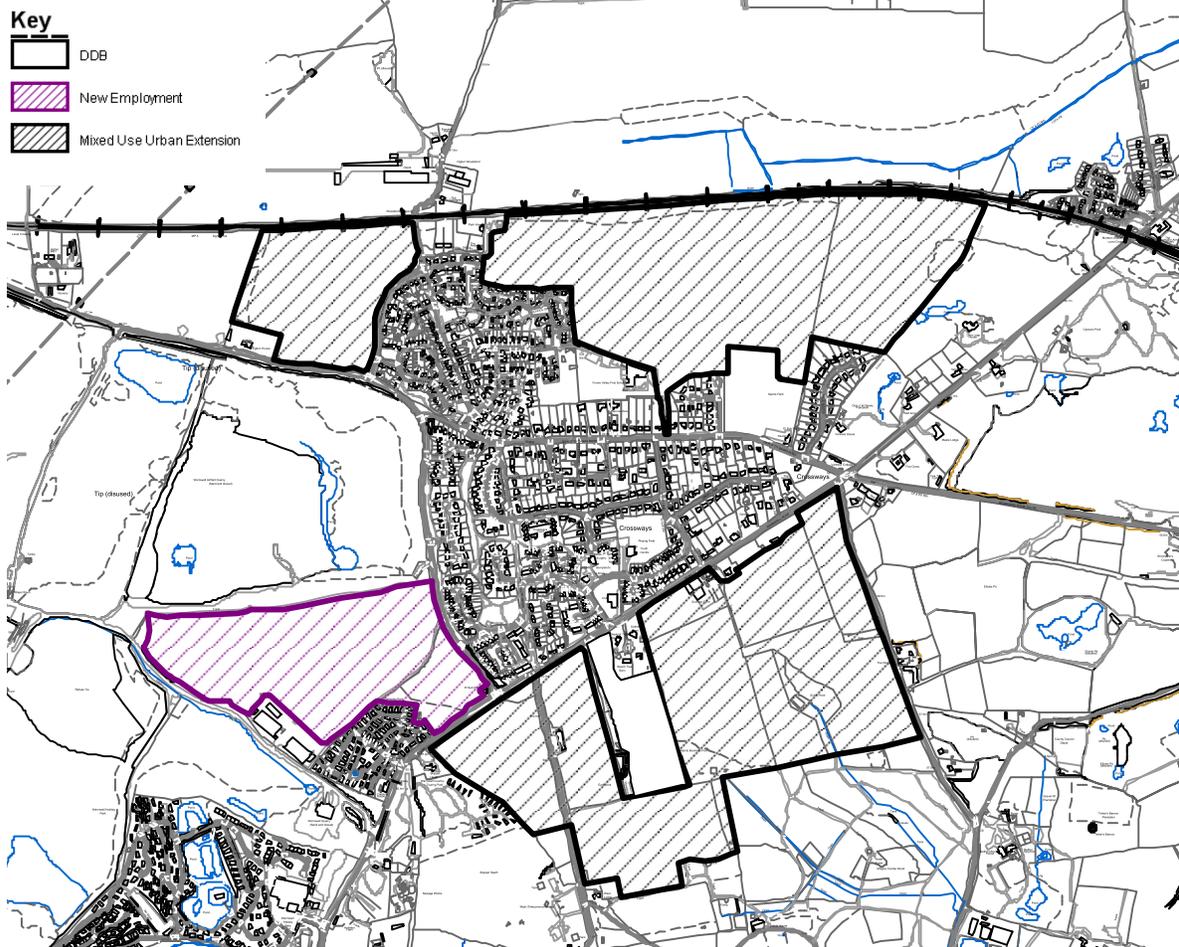
Development at Crossways was considered as an option at a very early stage in the development of the Local Plan. As explained in the Environmental Report, at this stage the options were largely strategic and considered the general concept of development at Crossways rather than a more detailed approach. Figure 4.1 shows the areas for development at Crossways that were considered at this stage.

*Figure 4.1: The areas at Crossways considered for allocation at the options stage of the Local Plan*



The Crossways option was selected as an allocation in the draft Local Plan stage published in June 2012. The Crossways allocation included at least 7.2ha of employment land and between 1,200 and 1,500 new homes at this stage. The area allocated for development at this stage is shown in Figure 4.2.

Figure 4,2: The area of the Crossways allocation in the draft Local Plan (June 2012)

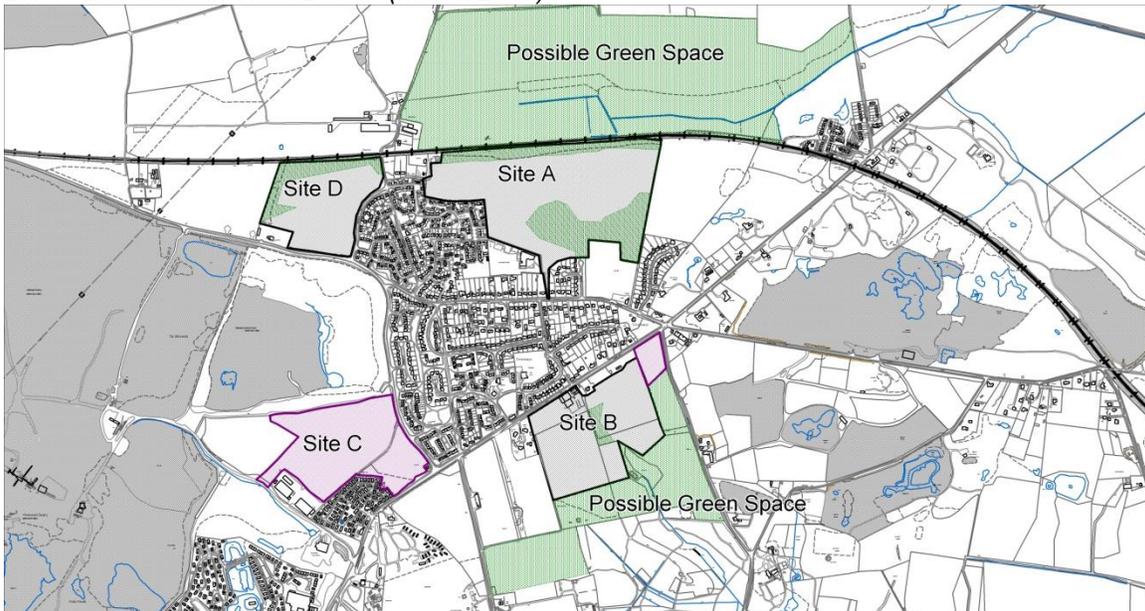


A further two options for development at Crossways were appraised whilst considering alternative land allocations in West Dorset in March 2013. Figure 4.3 shows the areas of development at Crossways that were considered at this stage. The two options for development were:

- development of site A and B to provide 700 new homes and site C to provide approximately 10ha of land for employment use; and
- development of site A and D to provide 700 new homes and site C to provide approximately 10ha of land for employment use.

At this stage, we compared the impacts associated with the Crossways allocation from the draft Local Plan (June 2012) and the two options for development at Crossways considered during the alternative land allocations in West Dorset in March 2013, as shown in the table presented in Figure 10.5 on page 75 of the Environmental Report.

Figure 4.3: The area of the options considered for development at Crossways in the Alternative Land Allocations in West Dorset (March 2013)



The CRS 1 allocation in the submission draft of the Local Plan published in June 2013 intends to provide approximately 500 new homes and approximately 3.5ha of land for employment use, as shown by the hatched area in Figure 4.4.

Figure 4.4: The area of the options considered for development at Crossways in the Alternative Land Allocations in West Dorset (March 2013)



The final CRS 1 allocation presented in the submission draft of the Local Plan (Figure 4.4) is not considered to be materially different to the areas previously considered, since it comprises a minor modification to area B at Crossways which was assessed as part of a larger area in the sustainability appraisal of alternative land allocations in West Dorset in March 2013 (Figure 4.3). Justification for reducing the size of the Crossways allocation is presented in Page 76 of the Environmental Report which states that there was a high level of public opposition to the proposed allocation at Crossways and therefore it was reduced in size.

The sustainability appraisal considered the reasonable alternatives to development at Crossways throughout the development of the plan. Therefore, the decision to allocate the areas for development at Crossways was informed by the appraisal of impacts provided by the Sustainability Appraisal (Figure 4.5).

Figure 4.5: A table showing the sustainability appraisal of the Crossways (CRS1) allocation throughout the development of the Local Plan

Sustainability objective	Stage in the development of the Local Plan				
	Options stage	Draft Local Plan (June 2012)	Alternative Sites in West Dorset (March 2013)		Submission draft Local Plan (June 2013)
			Option 1	Option 2	
Historic & cultural features	0	+	0	0	+
Landscape, townscape & seascape	0	+	+	+	+
Climate change mitigation	-	+	+	+	+
Climate change vulnerability	-	+	+	+	++
Soil & water quality	-	0	0	0	0
Biodiversity, geodiversity, & habitats	--	0	0	0	+
Quality of life	-	++	++	++	++
Economy	0	++	++	++	+
Housing	++	++	+	+	+

## **5. Use of SA in developing the Plan**

The findings of the sustainability appraisal influenced the development of the Local Plan, assisting each of the decision making stages. The sustainability appraisal informed these decisions, not only at Council officer level but also at elected member level. Evidence of the elected members taking the sustainability appraisal into account is provided by the committee reports, such as paragraph 121 of the Policy Scrutiny Committee report from May 2013 which can be viewed online at the following link:

<http://www.dorsetforyou.com/media.jsp?mediaid=184601&filetype=pdf>.

The Adoption Statement (discussed in point 3 of this statement) will provide a detailed account of how the findings of the Sustainability Appraisal were taken into account throughout the development of the Local Plan.

3 February 2014