



**Purbeck Core Strategy Development Plan Document**

**Examination into the soundness of the plan**

**Statement on behalf of Purbeck District Council**

**Hearing date: Wednesday 16 May 2012 – 2pm**

**Matter 16: South East Purbeck (Policy SE)**

**Issues**

- 16.1 Is the policy for growth and change in this area appropriate and justified, including in relation to national guidance and local needs, and in terms of economic, social and environmental impact?**
- 16.2 The allocation of 200 dwellings at Swanage is considered by the Council to be not of strategic importance. Is this an appropriate approach and is it reasonable to rely on a 'subsequent plan' for the residential allocation?**
- 16.3 Has the relationship between housing and employment provision in Swanage been properly explored?**

## Introduction

1. This statement considers all the issues within Matter 16: South East Purbeck (Policy SE).

## Statements of common ground

2. A statement of common ground (SCG) between the Council and Natural England refers to harm to the AONB and is relevant to this Matter.

## Why the Council considers the Core Strategy sound

3. Each issue raised by the Inspector is considered in turn below:

<b>16.1 Is the policy for growth and change in this area appropriate and justified, including in relation to national guidance and local needs, and in terms of economic, social and environmental impact?</b>
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## National Guidance

4. Policy SE: South East Purbeck was written to be consistent with national guidance in Planning Policy Statement (PPS) 1: Delivering Sustainable Development which has now been deleted. The PPS required development plans to contribute towards the delivery of sustainable development through the achievement of social, economic and environmental objectives. The policy for growth and change in the South East Policy Spatial Area reflects this approach by focusing development in the most sustainable settlements, thereby reducing the need to travel by car and the subsequent impact on climate change. The policy also sets out an integrated approach to achieving sustainable development by addressing a range of social (housing, health, education, community facility provision), economic (employment and retail provision) and environmental objectives (habitats and wildlife, green infrastructure and transport).
5. The NPPF which supersedes PPS1 sets a presumption in favour of sustainable development. Policy SE: South East provides a clear local policy to ensure the delivery of sustainable development within the South East Policy Spatial Area of the district (as set out above) whilst fully taking into account local circumstances and the area's relationship with the rest of the district.

## Local Needs

6. Swanage is identified in Policy LD: General Location of Development and Policy SE: South East Purbeck as a Coastal Town (Regional Spatial Strategy Development Policy B Settlement) which together with Wareham is the level of settlement which should be the focus for housing development. This approach reflects the recommendations of the settlement strategy which directs development towards the most sustainable settlements within the district that have the widest range of facilities and services. Swanage is the district's largest settlement and is also the most self-contained due to its good level of facility and service provision and geographical isolation at the end of the A351. There is a high need for affordable housing provision within Swanage due to a high market demand forcing house prices upwards. In particular, there is a need for family sized homes due to the high

level of flats recently completed on infill and redevelopment sites. Without such family housing, Swanage is likely to experience a loss of services and facilities due to its ageing population and reduced viability of provision. Despite the town's location at the end of the A351, and poor accessibility to the rest of the District and the conurbation, the reconnection of Swanage to the mainline railway at Wareham will provide a significant public transport improvement.

7. Elsewhere in the South East Policy Spatial Area, Policy LD: General Location of Development identifies Corfe Castle as a 'Key Service Village'. This level of village has the highest level of population and facilities, including important facilities such as a school and doctors' surgery, and acts as a hub to surrounding settlements thereby reducing the need to travel. Key Service Villages are therefore considered suitable by the Council for some limited growth due to their sustainable location and role as a hub to surrounding settlements. Limited growth would also help to sustain vital rural services and facilities for example the local school and doctors' surgery, reducing the need to travel within the wider rural area, and supporting remaining shops. However, no sites were promoted through the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) at Corfe Castle and the level of development proposed is small in scale and does not include any identified housing allocation.
8. Langton Matravers is identified as a 'Local Service Village' which needs some small scale growth to sustain vital rural services. The villages of Church Knowle, Harmans Cross, Kimmeridge, Kingston, Studland and Worth Matravers are identified in Policy LD as 'other villages with a settlement boundary' within which some small scale development would be considered appropriate.
9. Background Paper 4<sup>1</sup> sets out 9 development options for growth across the district. Officers assessed each option in detail and all were considered to be reasonable taking into account the [previously] emerging RSS, the settlement strategy<sup>2</sup>, existing housing completions and commitments (planning permissions), retail and employment provision, and the large number of constraints within the district. Of the 9 options assessed in detail, the Council considered the following 3 were the most appropriate for consultation<sup>3</sup>: (i) distributing development around Swanage, Upton, Wareham and the Key Service Villages of Bere Regis, Lytchett Matravers and Wool; (ii) concentrating growth on the edge of Wareham and (iii) focusing growth at Swanage.
10. Consultation results<sup>4</sup> indicated clear support (67% of responses from an 8% overall response rate) for the distribution of development around the district's towns of Swanage, Upton and Wareham and the Key Service Villages of Bere Regis, Lytchett Matravers and Wool. This approach, together with Policy LD will ensure that affordable housing is delivered in each spatial area addressing one of the district's biggest issues.
11. One of the key aims in allocating land at Swanage is to ensure continued support for the existing level of service and facility provision and to also support new provision of retail floor space, regeneration of key areas within the town, employment growth and business expansion within the town, the potential provision of an integrated

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<sup>1</sup> CD30 Volume 4: Development Options

<sup>2</sup> CD36: Volume 10: Settlement Strategy

<sup>3</sup> CD16 Core Strategy Preferred Options 2009 ('Planning Purbeck's Future')

<sup>4</sup> CD17c: Responses to development options and supermarket responses

health care facility, an extra care facility, and/or new education and community facilities. The Council has already explored and consulted upon options to deliver the 200 dwellings proposed in Swanage, including two preferred allocations of 100 dwellings each<sup>5</sup> (further detail is provided in paragraph 16.2 below).

12. No sites were promoted through the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment at Corfe Castle. However, through the Core Strategy Preferred Options consultation in 2009<sup>6</sup>, Corfe Castle Parish Council asked for some affordable housing provision to help sustain the local community. Officers approached local landowners about potential sites. Landowners made it clear that they would only make available as part of a mixed open market and affordable housing scheme. A further consultation in 2010<sup>7</sup> considered more detailed options for sites in the towns and villages, including the principle of 30 dwellings at Corfe Castle. The consultation results for Corfe Castle were split and the Parish Council objected, as it did not want any open market housing. Following the Parish Council objection, the Council decided to delete the allocation at Corfe Castle.
13. Dorset County Council is working on a review of school places in Purbeck, due to falling school rolls. The Council has worked alongside DCC to ensure that growth in the South East Policy Spatial Area continues to support future school rolls and maintain the presence of a viable school in the areas villages.

### **Economic, Social and Environmental Impact**

14. The Sustainability Appraisal (SA)<sup>8</sup> notes significant positive effects from the proposed policy for growth and change in this area through helping children to access learning, training, skills and cultural events. In particular, subject to the provision of secondary education at the proposed 'free school' in Swanage, there are also likely to be reduced trips on the road network to access provision in Wareham. Other positive effects include the provision of 100 new affordable homes, although this will still fall short of the longer term housing need across the district. The opportunity for the proposed settlement extension(s) to provide and/or support new or improved recreation, community facility and services, in particular healthcare provision is also a benefit. New housing growth will support the long term viability of businesses in Swanage, local schools and existing employment providers and new employment provision at Prospect Business Park. Improved public transport provision, including re-connection of the railway will allow access to employment opportunities at Holton Heath and Poole having a positive effect in terms of reducing poverty. There will also be increased opportunity to access wider facility, service and tourist provision within the district and conurbation whilst reducing the need to travel by car.
15. Negative impacts identified by the SA include concerns over the effects upon nearby protected habitats, although this can be mitigated through the provision of SANGS which also provides the opportunity to improve the health of local people. Short term negative impacts on health could be experienced during construction, and subject to the final location of new development, there could be negative impacts upon the setting of Swanage within the AONB, townscape, cultural and historic assets.

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<sup>5</sup> CD24: Where shall we build in South East Purbeck 2012 – 2026?

<sup>6</sup> CD16: Core Strategy Preferred Options 2009 ('Planning Purbeck's Future')

<sup>7</sup> CD21-CD 26: Where shall we build in Purbeck 2012 – 2026

<sup>8</sup> SD15: Sustainability Appraisal for Proposed Changes to Core Strategy Pre-Submission 2011

**16.2 The allocation of 200 dwellings at Swanage is considered by the Council to be not of strategic importance. Is this an appropriate approach and is it reasonable to rely on a 'subsequent plan' for the residential allocation?**

16. The Council considers that the allocation of 200 dwellings at Swanage is strategically important and has consulted upon site options through the preparation of the Core Strategy. However, due to uncertainties surrounding the deliverability of education and health care provision (further detail provided below), site allocation will take place through a subsequent plan. In addition, whilst the housing allocation in Swanage is for a relatively high level of dwellings and will be located within the AONB, it does not require a review or amendment of a national strategic allocation such as green Belt to allow deliverability. A number of other site allocations considered as having strategic importance have been identified and included in the Core Strategy, including sites at Wareham, Upton and Lytchett Matravers where the de-allocation of land within the South East Dorset Green Belt is required.
17. Despite leaving the detail of site options to be considered through the AAP, the Council has already explored and consulted upon several options for development in Swanage based upon sites submitted through the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment. This has included two preferred allocations of 100 dwellings each<sup>9</sup> which received support from 85% and 62% of respondents, although a petition of objection with over 3,000 signatories was also received in relation to the site with the lower level of support.
18. When preparing the pre-submission document<sup>10</sup> a great deal of uncertainty remained surrounding the aspirations of a local campaign group (Education Swanage) to provide a 'free school'. The former Swanage Grammar School was one potential site location although further discussions were required with the landowner. Uncertainties remained over future health care arrangements and aspirations to create an integrated health care facility within the town due to publication of the government's white paper and their decision to abandon Primary Care Trusts. The Council therefore agreed to defer allocation of the housing allocation at Swanage to a subsequent plan (Area Action Plan) to allow future decisions relating to free school provision and the health care model to be agreed.
19. Instead, the delivery of development at Swanage will be set out through a focused AAP. This subsequent plan is considered an appropriate means of re-exploring all site options available to deliver both the housing allocation and the other requirements of Policy SE. There are many site options available, within and between land ownerships, to ensure that the housing allocation and Suitable Alternative Natural Green Space (SANGS) is deliverable in Swanage. Options include sites identified in the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) and sites more recently submitted to the Council for consideration through the next SHLAA review. In addition, supported by Core Strategy Policy SE, planning permission has recently been granted by the Council for up to 52 dwellings (50% affordable) which will support the provision of a free school in Swanage. The permission adds certainty to the delivery of up to a quarter of the town's housing requirement.

<sup>9</sup> CD24: Where shall we build in South East Purbeck 2012 – 2026?

<sup>10</sup> SD1: Core Strategy Pre-Submission 2010

20. The Swanage AAP will be prepared jointly with Swanage Town Council and the local community ensuring a 'bottom up' approach to future change and development in the town. Although the work will commence as an AAP, the plan will remain sufficiently flexible to be taken forward by the Town Council as a neighbourhood plan at a future date.

**16.3 Has the relationship between housing and employment provision in Swanage been properly explored?**

21. Swanage is served by an undeveloped Local Plan employment allocation of 1.2ha at Prospect Business Park. This site, which has been provided through public sector investment, is serviced, actively marketed and will provide for future local needs. Sales have been agreed on three plots which amount to 45% of the Park. The Prospect Business Park is intended to mainly provide for locally generated needs. If built out quickly, local needs will be re-assessed and addressed through review of the Core Strategy. There will also be an opportunity to consider further mixed use development when additional sites for housing growth, service facilities and other requirements are addressed through the Swanage Area Action Plan. Landscape constraints are likely to make this difficult and landowners have not promoted any alternative sites.
22. The relative isolation of Swanage makes it less likely to attract significant inward investment. The coastal location reduces the service hinterland and there is also a limited supply of skilled labour of working age. There is some out-commuting to higher paid jobs elsewhere and the local low wage economy reflects a traditional dependence upon tourism and retail related employment. Some micro industries and niche businesses have successfully developed in Swanage and it is important that opportunities are provided to enable these to grow and remain in the town.
23. The strategy is to provide land for existing businesses to expand locally and to increase further diversification of the employment base through improvements to broadband connection in order to encourage more office development and opportunities for working from home. This would also help to reduce out-commuting from the town.

**Suggested changes for the Inspector to consider**

24. Update with minor changes as per numbers 64-70 of the Minor Changes Schedule<sup>11</sup>.

25. In addition add to Policy SE:

*“New employment development to meet local needs will be focused at Prospect Business Park, Swanage. Existing employment sites at Prospect Business Park, Victoria Avenue (Swanage) and the Milk Depot (Corfe Castle) will be safeguarded on the Proposals Map and reviewed through a subsequent plan(s).”*

26. As set out in the SCG with Natural England, the Council proposes to add the following text to Policy SE:

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<sup>11</sup> SD26: Minor Changes Schedule

‘The settlement extension(s) should look for opportunities to enhance the visual appearance of the transition between the urban area and open countryside to the benefit of the AONB.’