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Examination of Purbeck Core Strategy Development Plan

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I have been notified that I may participate in the examination on 16th May.

Unfortunately, I have not been able to refer to the Reference Documents or the Minor Changes Schedule, as no written copy was available in Swanage library, but only an electronic form which the staff there were unable to get their computers to access. I may therefore inadvertently mention below matters that have already been rectified.

My concerns relate solely to matters affecting Swanage.

Green Spaces Matters 2.3, 11.1, 19.1, 20.1

It is self-evident that the charm and delight of Swanage, for both visitors and those who live here, is in its geographical setting rather than the architectural standard (with few exceptions) of its buildings. Visitors tend to feel that Swanage is in a time-warp, escaping many of the traumas of big-city life to which more and more are now condemned. Residents see the town more as a model of how the world ought to be and how we should all live (if there were not so many of us).

Swanage is economically dependent to an overwhelming extent on holiday-makers and tourists. Industry is hard to attract to the end of the "longest cul-de-sac in the country". The language school, providing a need for lodgings, and the Autistic Centre, a significant employer, both also depend on the town's small scale and beautiful setting. It is therefore essential to ensure that these assets are preserved, as an absolute priority.

Swanage may seem to be surrounded in green, much of it open to the public; but the number of visitors, which may during Regatta Week amount to perhaps ten times the local population, and the added spur provided by the Jurassic Coast, is already tending to damage parts, for instance the coastal Country Park, through over-use. At Herston, the most inland part of the town with a none-to-strong sense of community, people are dependent on Herston Fields to provide for out-door community activities. This land should never have lost its AONB status, and any strategy that does not include renewing this must be considered unsound. Altogether, it is absolutely vital to the life of Swanage that it does not grow significantly in scale and that every scrap of green space around is preserved if at all possible.

Additional Housing Matters 1.2, 1.3

There is no doubt a need for more affordable houses in Swanage, where property values are so high. The difficulty in providing them appears to lie more in an inadequate national system than in local policy. The total number of houses allocated to Swanage seems to have no factual basis and has perhaps been arrived at so as to yield the required number of affordable houses. In view of the extreme damage that

excessive growth would do to the town, surely the total number of houses should be on a more realistic basis, and if this does not provide enough affordable homes, then an alternative means of subsidising the extra required must be found. To provide additional housing without additional source of employment can only increase commuting, and further overloading the A35, thus in conflict with other parts of the strategy.

To prevent the town expanding unduly, as many new houses as possible be on infill sites, in compact forms on small plots. This is surely particularly appropriate for affordable homes. The developers' current reformulation of 1930's suburban and post-war new town layouts is therefore to be eschewed. Of course, if future growth in local employment or other factors demand an increase in the town's footprint, then the above policy would make that far less damaging; the land which under present proposals is to be developed would still be available.

Transport. Matter 3.2.

There is currently a strong trend nationally to reduce car use. The economic pressure behind this can only increase year by year, and climate-change is another factor likely to escalate; another strong reason to limit the spread of a town is the high proportion of old people, with a limited range of mobility.

Swanage Education state in their printed information on the new Swanage school for 11-16-year olds that "they will encourage sustainable travel for their students, including initiatives to encourage cycling". On health grounds, as well as for the above reasons, a greater proportion of journeys within the town by bicycle would benefit young and (relatively) old alike, particularly as Purbeck weather is about the most favourable in the country. Surely no strategic plan that does not take this into account and contains no reference to possible changes in road layout and sign-posting, and provision, wherever possible, of designated cycle-ways, can be considered sound. Cycle-ways are only mentioned in the Local Transport Plan in connection with rural areas and the A35. What is wanted is a network of safe cycle-routes within the town, so that the advantages of cycling are not offset by an increased accident rate.