

# **West Dorset, Weymouth and Portland Local Plan Examination**

**Hearing Statement**

**for**

**Matter 9: Peripheral Weymouth Localities**

**Littlemoor & Chickerell**



Prepared by West Dorset District Council and

Weymouth & Portland Borough Council

**November 2014**

## **Matter 9: Peripheral Weymouth Localities**

### **Agenda Item 9.1: Does LITT1 offer the best opportunity for accommodating future development needs and has the need to develop in the AONB being fully justified in accordance with the NPPF?**

- 1.1 Yes. Littlemoor Urban Extension offers the opportunity to enhance an area of the Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) that currently does not display the special qualities of the designation. Natural England consider that there is scope for a sensitively planned and scaled development to improve the interface between the existing built development at Littlemoor and the wider protected landscape of the AONB.
- 1.2 Development would allow the creation of a better balance between housing and jobs in Littlemoor, which currently does not benefit from a good range or quantity of employment opportunities. The level of unemployment in Littlemoor is higher than any other area in the borough; 6.4% compared with 4.2% and Littlemoor East Ward is within the top 10% of areas of deprivation in the country. Employment opportunities in this location would provide much needed jobs in Littlemoor and help reduce out-commuting from the borough as a whole.
- 1.3 Existing community facilities in the area include a health centre, library, shops, church and community hall, which make the location sustainable, and which could be enhanced with new development and investment.
- 1.4 A higher proportion of the housing stock is social rented compared with the borough as a whole and so further development of open market housing at Littlemoor would help to create more balanced community.
- 1.5 There has been a large amount of investment in the road infrastructure and cycle and footpath network, which has the capacity to serve the proposed level of development without further investment. The site's proximity to the strategic road network would allow access, particularly to the employment uses, without increasing pressure on the wider Weymouth road network.
- 1.6 The proposed level of employment provision and housing on this site is important to the economy of the area. The scale of development proposed together with the economic benefit it would offer provides the opportunity to seek investment from external funding sources. The councils are submitting a bid to the Dorset LEP for government funding to progress the scheme to ensure economic benefits can be brought forward in a timely manner.

- 1.7 Alternative locations for urban extension in and around Weymouth have been considered, at Chickerell, Littlemoor and Southill (see CD/WPCLBP Weymouth, Portland, Chickerell and Littlemoor background paper and CD/SSBP Site selection background paper). The councils have allocated land at Littlemoor and Chickerell, and not at Southill. Smaller sites were also examined but they could not deliver the level of development or the balance between employment and housing that Littlemoor can provide.
- 1.8 Southill was not progressed as a major allocation for housing because it included areas of land that were considered to result in landscape harm that could not be mitigated. It would also be difficult to provide positive links with the adjoining community, it included land that acted as a wildlife corridor and would require the re-location of recreational facilities.
- 1.9 The Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) process has identified some development potential on sites around Southill that the councils consider would not result in significant landscape impacts and are in a sustainable location. These areas are not strategic in scale, however would provide some additional opportunities for new housing that is required in addition to, rather than instead of Littlemoor.
- 1.10 The councils consider that there are exceptional circumstances to justify allocation of development within the AONB, and that it would be in the public interest. It is consistent with NPPF in that:
- The proposal would meet the national and local need for housing and employment and offer considerable benefits to the local economy. In addition, it would provide a better balance of housing and jobs in line with the strategic approach of achieving a sustainable pattern of development.
  - There are no opportunities to meet the needs elsewhere outside the designation or in another way that provides the significant benefits that LITT 1 has to offer to Weymouth and the wider plan area as a whole.
  - The proposal would provide positive landscape enhancement of the AONB and improved recreational opportunities for existing and future residents.

This is confirmed by Natural England in the Statement of Common Ground (ref SOCG/4) which states that they *“are satisfied that the proposed West Dorset, Weymouth & Portland Local Plan housing and employment allocations have the potential to be acceptable and meet the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework, with appropriate measures designed to moderate the adverse effects of development on the landscape of the Dorset AONB. On this basis [Natural England] have no outstanding objections to the proposed housing and employment sites”*.

**Agenda Item 9.2: Similarly, is redevelopment of LITT2 a sound proposal given its prominent siting in the landscape and its location in the AONB?**

- 2.1 Yes. The site is currently developed with a variety of employment-related uses, and the proposed allocation boundary does not include land beyond this existing footprint. The existing site is of poor visual quality within the AONB. Submission Plan Policy LITT 2 requires an agreed landscape and design strategy to ensure future development creates a positive visual enhancement of the AONB, relates positively to the proposed Littlemoor urban extension and creates a positive image when viewed from the main highway network. The Policy recognises that the current development is prominent in the landscape and detracts from its quality and therefore seeks to ensure that the positive benefits to the AONB achieved through LITT1 will be similarly gained through LITT2.

**Agenda Item 9.3: How serious are the constraints identified by various parties to development at Chickerell?**

- 3.1 The issues raised in relation to development at Chickerell relate to; ecological connectivity and protected species, flooding and drainage, education provision, impacts on the local infrastructure, landscape impact, erosion of the gap between Chickerell and Weymouth, impact on the SRN, and retail provision.
- 3.2 Technical studies submitted by the two developers of the site to support the allocation in the Submission Plan (AD/WPCL3 - WPCL11) have not highlighted that any of these issues pose significant constraints that cannot be mitigated. The masterplanning process, which will include public engagement, will provide detail on; appropriate landscape mitigation, sustainable drainage, maintenance of appropriate wildlife corridors, provision of community facilities and the transport network to link the development to the wider area. There are on going discussion with Dorset County Council regarding school provision and community infrastructure will be sought in accordance with Submission Plan Policy COM 1 and secured through a Section 106 Agreement. Therefore the constraints identified by various parties are capable of mitigation and would not hinder the delivery of this allocation.

**Agenda Item 9.4: How will a masterplan for the area be developed and taken forward?**

- 4.1 The masterplan for the allocation will be taken forward by the developers of the two parcels of land (land to the north Bank and Ridge Farm and land to the East) in conjunction with the local community and West Dorset District Council (WDDC). The two areas are separated by School Hill, and the developers are collaborating to ensure consistency within the masterplanning process. WDDC will provide the overview of the process to ensure the successful delivery of the whole allocation.
- 4.2 The requirement for a BREEAM for Communities or similar assessment will provide a consistent approach for the development of the masterplan. The sites are capable of being developed independently of each other and infrastructure delivery and phasing can be addressed through appropriate planning conditions and Section 106 Agreements for each area.