



Purbeck Core Strategy Development Plan Document

Examination into the soundness of the plan

Statement on behalf of Purbeck District Council

Hearing date: Thursday 10 May 2012 – 10am

Matter 8: Community Facilities (Policy CF)

Issues

8.1 Does policy CF appropriately reflect local needs and opportunities?

Introduction

1. This statement considers all the issues within Matter 8: Community Facilities (Policy CF).

Statements of common ground

2. The Council has agreed a statement of common ground with Hall and Woodhouse in relation to the revised policy wording in change number 88 of the Minor Changes Schedule. This is subject to one further minor change, which the Council has agreed to (see paragraph 11 of this statement).

Why the Council considers the Core Strategy sound

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

8.1 Does policy CF appropriately reflect local needs and opportunities?
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4. Facilities and services are vital, particularly for many of the rural parts of the District, and accessibility is a key issue. Some facilities have been unable to remain open in Purbeck due to changing demographics, trends and economic conditions. Paragraph 70 of the NPPF is clear that policies should plan positively for new community facilities and safeguard existing ones.
5. The Council received an objection from Hall and Woodhouse to the Proposed Changes version of the Core Strategy that the policy was unclear, required simplification and was too restrictive. The Council recognised that some aspects of the policy warranted revision. These have been included as change number 88 of the Minor Changes Schedule. This change splits the policy into three sections that address needs and opportunities for community facilities and services: allowing new facilities; allowing replacement facilities; and safeguarding existing facilities.

New facilities

6. The policy allows for new facilities to address identified local needs, subject to accessibility and environmental impacts. It is flexible to allow new facilities and services outside settlement boundaries in particular circumstances.

Replacement facilities

7. The policy allows for existing community facilities to be used for an alternative facility. This ensures that existing sites are able to continue as community uses instead of losing them unnecessarily. The policy is flexible in allowing existing uses to relocate.

Safeguarding existing facilities and services

8. This aspect of the policy ensures that there must be genuine circumstances to require a change of use to a non-community use. This is achieved through realistic and sufficient marketing over a period of 9 months and means that sites will not go out of community use unnecessarily.

9. The Council requests that this section of the policy is changed as detailed in paragraph 11 below.

Suggested changes for the Inspector to consider

10. The policy has undergone a significant rewrite in order to make the policy clearer and less restrictive. This is shown in change 88 of the Minor Changes Schedule¹. This change will be consulted on as a modification to the Core Strategy after the hearings have been completed.
11. The Council has agreed a Statement of Common Ground with Hall and Woodhouse, who request a minor wording change to the 'Safeguarding Existing Facilities and Services' section of the policy in change 88 of the Minor Changes Schedule. The original wording in change 88 requires that development that would result in the loss of existing community facilities/services will only be permitted if there is no need for any community use. Hall and Woodhouse suggest that this is too restrictive and could lead to sites becoming derelict. The Council agrees and requests the following wording to replace the 'Safeguarding Existing Facilities and Services' section:

'Development (including change of use) that would result in the loss of existing community facilities/services will only be permitted if:

- it can be demonstrated that there is no longer a need for the community facility/service through a sufficient and realistic marketing of the current use over a period of at least 9 months to show that the current use is unviable.'*

¹ SD26: Minor Changes Schedule