

**West Dorset, Weymouth & Portland
Local Plan Examination Statement
- Matter 12 Northern Localities of
West Dorset - Policy 25**

Examination ID Ref: 261 Sherborne Castle
Estates

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1. Matter 12 – Northern Localities of West Dorset – Policy 25

12.1 – The Council intends to delete extensions to the 2006 Local Plan allocation at Barton Farm. What are the implications for meeting the housing needs of the town as well as those of the District as a whole?

- 1.1 This Statement has been prepared by Turley on behalf of Sherborne Castle Estates (SCE), who control the land proposed for allocation under the original Policy SHER1 of the Pre-submission Local Plan (dated June 2012).
- 1.2 As a headline point, SCE contends that the Councils' reasons for deleting the extensions to the 2006 Local Plan allocation at Barton Farm have never been adequately justified in planning terms and no reasonable evidence exists to support the decision to delete the extended site area.
- 1.3 This housing need situation is further exacerbated at both the local and District level in the context of a significantly higher housing requirement (which we contend should be higher still) of at least 775 homes per annum. The Councils also appear to acknowledge that sites such as the extended Barton Farm would need to be reinstated in order to meet the full housing needs to 2031.
- 1.4 As highlighted further in our Matter 1 Statement, the Sustainability Appraisal process undertaken is also flawed and did not consider all reasonable alternatives. It has at no point sought to adequately assess the implications of deleting the extended Barton Farm site in respect of meeting housing needs for the town and District as a whole. The resultant SA following the decision to delete the site only focused on the sustainability merits of the 2006 Local Plan allocation area, which were already well established.
- 1.5 We also refer the Inspector to our earlier representations to the Regulation 19 consultation stages. These confirm that the extended Barton Farm site remains suitable for development over the plan period and that the Councils' purported reasons for its deletion are resolvable and not sufficient to prevent allocation, particularly in the context of the increased housing requirement. In short, our earlier representations demonstrate that the site can be developed without leading to significant harmful impacts on landscape, heritage and highways.
- 1.6 The development of the site would lead to significant community benefits such as community facilities, potential provision for a new link road, market and affordable housing as well as new employment floorspace to meet local and District needs.
- 1.7 We also note from the Councils' most recent SHLAA (2014 update) that the extended site is still included as a developable site. Paragraph 47 of the NPPF requires local planning authorities to identify a supply of specific, developable sites or broad locations for growth, for years 6-10 and where possible for years 11-15. Footnote 12 of the NPPF defines a developable site as one which is in a suitable location for housing development and there should be a reasonable prospect that the site is available and

could be viably developed at the point envisaged. The site's inclusion within the SHLAA as a developable site suggests that the Council consider it capable of forming a component of housing land supply over the 6-15 year periods stated in the NPPF.

- 1.8 Our evidence highlights that the site's reinstatement will perform an important role in meeting needs at the local and District level over a 15 year plan period.

Sherborne and the Submitted Local Plan Context

- 1.9 Chapter 16 of the submitted Local plan subject of this examination sets out the proposed planning framework for Sherborne.

- 1.10 The opening paragraph 16.1.1 identifies that Sherborne has strong links with Yeovil to the west as well as good connections to Dorchester to the south, Wincanton to the north and Sturminster Newton and Shaftesbury. It is noted that none of the settlements listed in paragraph 16.1.1 are within the Weymouth and Portland administrative area.

- 1.11 Paragraph 16.1.2 then sets out the spatial vision for Sherborne in the period to 2031. Bullet point 5 of the vision states that Sherborne by 2031 will have a better balance of housing and jobs.

- 1.12 It is therefore a fundamental part of the Local Plan to ensure that there is a better balance of housing and jobs in Sherborne by 2031, which is required in order to meet housing needs and address the issues with affordability in the town.

Implications on housing needs

- 1.13 The Council's original intention of including the extended SHER 1 Barton Farm allocation was to provide sufficient homes and jobs in the town to help meet local and district needs as well as realise the stated vision of achieving a better balance of housing and jobs.

- 1.14 The Council's updated evidence on housing need produced by Peter Brett Associates confirms that needs are higher than originally considered by the Councils, particularly when the decision was taken to delete the extended site area. The vast majority of need across the plan area is confirmed in the Peter Brett Associates study as being generated in West Dorset.

- 1.15 Despite the stated vision (which has remained consistent throughout in terms of seeking to achieve a better balance of housing and employment in Sherborne) and increase in housing need, there is now virtually no new housing allocations planned for Sherborne over the plan period following the deletion of the extended SHER 1 Barton Farm site.

- 1.16 The proposed plan simply seeks to rely upon the 2006 Local Plan Barton Farm site and the former gasworks site (30 dwellings) to provide housing for the town. Although the Barton Farm now benefits from planning permission and development shortly to commence it is understood that there are significant issues with the former gasworks site in respect of contamination that continue to affect deliverability.

- 1.17 We note that the former gasworks site, and whether it can be delivered, is a specific item for discussion under the Inspector's Hearing Question 12.4. This indicates, as set out in our original Regulation 19 Representations, that there are questions marks over the deliverability of the Former Gasworks site, which could result in the contribution it can make to meeting housing needs in Sherborne significantly reduced following the examination hearing sessions.
- 1.18 If this occurs, the only strategic allocation to meet needs in Sherborne will be the 2006 Local Plan Barton Farm site. It is worth highlighting that the original Barton Farm allocation area was required to meet requirements identified (and established under a different evidence base) for the 2006 Local Plan. Given the under delivery in West Dorset against the 2006 Local Plan requirements, reliance upon the original allocation area will only serve to help address some of the historic unmet needs in the Sherborne and wider West Dorset area. Therefore, we do not consider it justified for the 2006 Local Plan site area to be relied upon (as the Councils seek to do) as being a key contributor to meeting the town's and District's future needs, which are now established as being significantly higher than originally considered when the extended site area was deleted.
- 1.19 Further and notwithstanding the issues with the deliverability of the Former Gasworks site, both of the proposed allocations are expected to deliver the identified housing numbers mainly within the first five years of the plan period meaning that the Local Plan as drafted provides no further spatial direction on how housing needs in Sherborne will be met over the remaining plan period (which we contend should be to 2031 in line with both the Councils' evidence and the specific vision for Sherborne). Of course, the extended SHER 1 Barton Farm allocation was intended to provide for the longer term strategy for meeting needs beyond five years and across the plan period, which is now missing from the proposed Local Plan and strategy for Sherborne.
- 1.20 Given that Sherborne is one of the most sustainable settlements within West Dorset (as identified in the earlier chapters of the Local Plan) it has not been justified in accordance with the NPPF why it is appropriate for the strategic level plan to make no new provisions to meet housing needs in the town over the full plan period.
- 1.21 Instead of reinstating the extended SHER1 – Barton Farm area, the Councils' approach to meeting the increased housing requirement (that is predominantly being generated in West Dorset) appears to be to rely upon surplus supply in Weymouth & Portland. As previously identified in paragraph 1.6 of this statement Weymouth & Portland has no real strategic relationship with Sherborne. Therefore supply in Weymouth & Portland cannot reasonably be concluded to have any meaningful contribution to meeting the housing needs that will occur in Sherborne over the period to 2031.
- 1.22 In addition, no reasonable evidence has been presented by the Councils to demonstrate that any of the related settlements nearby that do have links with Sherborne are planning to accommodate additional growth specifically to cater for meeting the needs in Sherborne that will continue to arise over the plan period once the existing proposed allocations are delivered. This supports our view that the implications of deleting the extended SHER1 Barton Farm site in terms of meeting both the towns and wider West Dorset District housing needs have simply not been addressed.

- 1.23 The failure to allocate sufficient land in the plan in our view will have significant negative implications on Sherborne being able to meet its housing needs and address the chronic affordable housing shortages that exist in the town. Whilst it is recognised that the 2006 Local Plan Barton Farm allocation extent (now benefitting from planning permission) will help meet some of the historic unmet need, there will still be a significant shortfall in meeting affordable housing needs in Sherborne over the plan period.
- 1.24 We also note that this residual need will not be met in any significant way by the identified SHLAA sites that are generally small in capacity and some falling below the proposed affordable housing thresholds. The original Sherborne allocation for 800 homes was therefore brought forward by the Council specifically to help meet the affordable housing needs in Sherborne.
- 1.25 The Councils' continued resistance to reinstatement of the extended allocation at Barton Farm (including seeking to unjustifiably restrict the plan period) is therefore now clearly untenable.

Overall Conclusions

- 1.26 The extended SHER 1 Barton Farm site was originally proposed for allocation in the Pre-submission Local Plan in June 2012 based on sound evidence on the need for more housing in Sherborne in order to assist with meeting the town's specific needs (particularly to address the affordability issue) as well as being a significant contributor to the wider District needs.
- 1.27 We have demonstrated in this statement as well as our earlier Regulation 19 representations that:
- The decision to delete the extended site has not been adequately justified and was the result of local pressure rather than of any unresolvable and objective planning grounds. We consider the Councils decision to delete the extended allocation was therefore unsound at the time having originally proposed and supported the full allocation to help meet the town and wider District's needs.
 - The reinstatement of the full extended SHER1 Barton Farm site is necessary to help meet the housing requirements for the plan area as a whole and more specifically at Sherborne including the need for affordable housing;
 - The site will have a significant contribution to help achieving the vision for Sherborne as set out in the submitted plan, which we contend is reliant on the delivery of the site for its achievement;
 - The Council's site selection process has shown to be unsound. The Council originally selected and endorsed the site following a comprehensive sustainability appraisal that showed it was appropriate against the reasonable alternatives. The subsequent Sustainability Appraisals have at no point assessed the implications on Sherborne and the wider District housing needs of the deletion of the extended site area;

- The deletion of the extended site area is inconsistent with the latest housing evidence on objectively assessed need that confirms a significant increase in the housing requirement is required, yet no new allocations are proposed;
- The Councils acknowledge that the reinstatement of sites such as the extended SHER 1 Barton Farm will be required in order to meet objectively assessed needs to 2031. The Councils proposal to restrict the plan period to 2028 (and therefore provide a planning framework for only 13 years contrary to the NPPF) is simply an arbitrary mechanism to avoid having to consider reinstating the extended SHER 1 Barton Farm.

1.28 In summary, we consider that the full extent of land originally proposed for allocation in SHER1 should be reinstated along with the original policy wording. Without the reinstatement of the original SHER1 allocation the Local Plan cannot be found sound as it will fail the positively prepared, justified and effective tests of soundness.

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