



MATTERS AND ISSUES 5

**Individual site allocations in East Dorset
VTSW5 North Eastern Verwood**

REPRESENTATION 524090

Hearing Statement

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1 **Individual site allocations in East Dorset**

- 1.1 The following statement responds to the Inspector’s questions relating to VTSW5. I have made submissions on issues 1 and 2 in relation to the settlement hierarchy, spatial strategy and Green Belt which are related to this particular proposal. The various representations already made interlink with each other and the sites mentioned under this section / issue however the Inspector’s questions are quite specific in relation to other allocations and thus I do not intend to add any further to those allocations.
- 1.2 In relation to VTSW5 however the issue is whether or not the 50 dwellings proposed in an earlier version of the plan be reinstated. If additional housing is justified for Verwood is the VTSW5 site the most appropriate location.
- 1.3 The VTSW5 land only appears to have been included to make up some of the numbers when land to the south of the settlement was removed from the plan. Previously the amount of housing being directed in total to Verwood was substantially more. The Council have simply removed the allocation to the south based on the inability to provide SANGS without any published analysis as to how this would then affect housing supply for Verwood which is identified as one of the key settlements. Indeed the Council are silent on why certain amounts of housing are directed to certain locations. They are equally silent on the consequences of removing substantial allocations.
- 1.4 The Council, it would appear, put forward their initial allocations based on an objectively assessed needs exercise in terms of housing numbers. To then withdraw large sites without explaining the consequences in relation to how this will affect housing needs and distribution of housing is not considered acceptable. Either the initial proposal was not properly considered or the

amended proposal is not properly considered. The Council need to be clear on which is which.

- 1.5 It is clear from the various background papers that 300 previously approved dwellings in Verwood can no longer be developed due to heathland constraints. The current allocation of only 230 at Eastworth Farm in total over the next 15 years therefore seems to be delivering less housing than has previously been planned for Verwood. The housing allocations for Verwood should be significantly increased as part of the overall strategy. The Key Strategy should set out how, and importantly why, certain levels of housing are to be provided in certain areas of the district. If it is as a consequence of the least constrained land which is available for development being promoted then this needs to be stated so that an assessment can be made to the validity of that approach but also as to whether the sites being promoted are the least constrained available and deliverable sites. The failure to discuss the distribution in terms of amounts relative to the various settlements and on a district wide basis against stated objectives is a significant failing of the Key Strategy.
- 1.6 As discusses throughout this representation there would appear to be a disproportionately low level of housing allocated and expected for Verwood relative to the other settlements. There is no justification for this.
- 1.7 The VTSW5 site is located at the far end of the urban area furthest removed from the town centre and any other facilities. The policy discusses the creation of a new neighbourhood but yet there would be no facilities on site or close by. The land is therefore not considered to be the best option for delivery of much needed housing. Instead it is considered that the land to the north of Edmondsham Road, which is a short distance from the town centre, scores much higher. The latter site is within easy walking distance of the town

centre which will allow residents to easily meet their day to day needs but also to ensure that the development is located so as to enable the growth of the town centre which is a stated objective of the plan. There is already a large allocation within this area and a simple enlargement of the this allocation will result in a much more sustainable form of development which better meets the aims and objectives of all other elements of the Spatial Strategy, that is directing development to sustainable locations and to help support existing centres. Additional land at Eastworth Farm is available for development and SANGS can be provided within the same land ownership.

- 1.8 This representation concludes that the plan is not sound because it is not positively prepared with lower numbers of housing being facilitated in Verwood than is required, lower than previous plans despite that settlement being identified as a location for growth.
- 1.9 The plan is not justified because there is no assessment of housing numbers relative to location and against the aims and objectives. There is no consideration of reasonable alternatives, it has been a simple case of sites either allocated or not without consideration of other locations, either within the settlement or in other settlements such as Colehill and, if not other settlements or sites, there is no discussion or evidence as to why, i.e. no justification.
- 1.10 The plan can be made sound by recognising that housing figures for Verwood need to be increased and by facilitating that increase at Eastworth Farm.