

## **Strategic Allocations – East Dorset**

### Question 7 - WMC5 Cranborne Road.

Background. WMC5 is the largest of the planned New Neighbourhood developments throughout the whole District. Locally, it will account for nearly half of the non urban new dwellings in Wimborne/Colehill. It is the most contentious of all the proposed developments and has generated very considerable adverse comment.

WMC5 is unsound because it is not justified and contravenes national policy.

#### Justification.

WMC5 is unjustified because alternative sites exist within the Wimborne/Colehill area of search which were discounted in the East Dorset Housing Options Masterplan exercise predominantly because they were too remote from Wimborne Town Centre (ED62, p241). These alternative sites suffer minimal coalescence and no hydrological issues and lie closer to the employment sites at Ferndown and Bournemouth Airport Industrial estates which are to be expanded. Good transport links exist to the A31(T) and other proposed Prime Transport Corridors.

The opportunity to consider these alternative sites during the decision making process, as required by the Statement of Community Involvement (SD 25, figures 7 and 8), was withdrawn at the Council's discretion shortly after the Statutory Consultation, and without public consultation.

#### National Policy.

WMC5 contravenes the NPPF in three ways:

- Green Belt. A). The Urban Extension will destroy the setting of this historic town to the north contrary to NPPF para 80; the rural landscape, assessed as of great scenic value will become a housing estate however designed or disguised. B). No analysis has been undertaken of the value of the development weighed against the long term harm caused by its inappropriateness and other harm, as required by NPPF paras 87 to 89. (NB. I have dealt with this issue more fully under Matter 2 Green Belt).
- Flood Risk. The western part of the WMC5 site (Long Close Farm, which is slated to be redeveloped into higher density housing as an integral part of the New Neighbourhood, and linked to WMC4 (Stone Lane) by a bridge across the River Allen) lies on the very periphery of Flood Zone 3b, the functional floodplain, which was fully flooded for many weeks in both 2012 and earlier this year. Given the predicted impact of climate change and possible 10% increase in peak river flows, further flooding can reasonably be expected within the planning period. NPPF paras 99 to 103 require developments to be sited in areas at least risk of flooding, following a Sequential Test and if required an Exception Test, and where necessary a site specific flood risk assessment. There is no evidence in the public domain that these tests have been carried out. (NB. I have dealt with this issue more fully under Matter 3 Flood Risks).
- Groundwater. Water supply and demand is an important consideration in the light of climate change (NPPF paras 94, 99). The western site of WMC 5 and half of the eastern site lie within a Groundwater Source Protection Inner Zone 1 and the rest of the eastern site in a SPZ outer Zone 2. This important environmental issue has been overlooked in both stage1 (Refined

Areas of Search) and 2 (Site Specific Constraints) of the East Dorset Housing Options Masterplanning exercise (ED 62, pp 241, 243).

WMC5 contravenes the Localism Act:

- It is target driven; its only “justification” is numbers of houses required by the District.
- It is not required to meet any local need in Wimborne or Colehill.
- It is being imposed by a superior Government authority against the overwhelming opposition of the local people, their elected Town and Parish representatives, and other civic institutions, as revealed in the responses to the various consultation exercises: a majority of 6 to 1 against in Options for Consideration (despite the Council’s attempt to show a broad equivalence between those for and against - Core Strategy Background Paper 06, chapter 2, para 2.89 refers), and 95% against in the Statutory Consultation (SD10 p275).

Other factors militating against WMC5:

- It will exacerbate existing surface water drainage problems in the area.
- It will increase the environmental/habitat risks to the River Allen.
- It will lead to excessive increases in the volume of traffic in the area (+270% along Burts hill in the PM peak, for example).
- It will increase the danger to non-vehicular traffic, particularly given the proposed relocation of the existing Wimborne First School from Old School Lane to this development site.
- The Cranborne Road is not a PrimeTransport Corridor (SD28, KS9), nor are there any plans for road improvements in the planning period.
- It is on the wrong side of town for access to the employment sites to the south, east and west, thus further increasing traffic congestion around the town.
- The additional 1500 residents in the area will swamp the Walford Mill Surgery, already overloaded.

In June 2009 the Leader of the East Dorset Council wrote to the Secretary Of State at the Department of Communities and Local Government stating that the Council did not wish to develop to the north of Wimborne on grounds of rural landscape/green belt, traffic and flooding. This concerned a proposal to build 400 new dwellings on the eastern side of the Cranborne Road only. The current proposal is 50% larger plus a new school, retail and community facilities thus exacerbating the very issues which led the Council to vote against its smaller predecessor. It is difficult for the layman to understand what has changed in the interim to justify this larger development, particularly given the 4% reduction in the annual estimate of future new housing need for the East Dorset District since then (ED29, Figure 6.12, page 75).

In sum, neither the scale nor the location of this housing allocation is justified by robust evidence and there are no measures I can think of to render this development sound.