

West Dorset, Weymouth & Portland Local Plan Examination

Statement submitted by Savills on behalf of Hallam Land Management Ltd on Matter 11:
Western Localities of West Dorset

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Savills Planning
Wessex House
Priors Walk
Wimborne
Dorset
BH21 1PB



Hearing 11: Western Localities of West Dorset

Introduction

1. This statement is submitted on behalf of Hallam Land Management (HLM). Hallam Land Management has interests in land at Vearse Farm, Bridport, and on the edge of Lyme Regis, within the administrative area of East Devon.
2. HLM is the strategic land arm of the Henry Boot Group. HLM has a proven track record in delivery of successful and sustainable residential and mixed use schemes including; Cranbrook New Settlement at Exeter which has delivered 800 residential occupations (a Primary School, community building, 1.5km bypass (at the end of the Exeter Airport runway) all in 30 months, and is currently seeing the delivery of a Secondary School and second Primary School, for opening September 2015. HLM also delivered the Morrison's Distribution Centre and associated residential scheme at Bridgwater, and more modest residential schemes at Chudleigh and Launceston (100 dwellings each) and Melksham 700 dwellings.

Bridport

Issue 11.5 Has adequate consideration been given to infrastructure requirements to service the development at Vearse Farm (BRID1) and how its impact on the AONB can be mitigated?

Background to Policy BRID1

3. Policy BRID1 has been developed following an extensive process of consultation and dialogue over several years between West Dorset District Council, Bridport Town Council, Dorset County Council (DCC), representatives of the local community, the developer, infrastructure and service providers, relevant government agencies including the Highways Agency (HA), Environment Agency, and Natural England.
4. This process commenced with issues and options consultation in 2007, followed by a series of technical reports and evidence base studies. Savills responded to the Council's Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) consultation in 2010, with supporting information to demonstrate how development at Vearse Farm could come forward in sustainable manner, addressing a range of issues including transport and accessibility, landscape, flood risk and drainage.

5. Prior to the preparation of the draft Local Plan, the Council organised a series of consultation events, and working group meetings held between September and November 2011, a range of issues were considered including growth needs, infrastructure provision, and options for development, including the option of development at Vearse Farm. Representatives of Hallam Land Management and Savills attended several of these events and found the process to be open and transparent, going well beyond the level of engagement that is usual in early stages of Local Plan preparation and representing a genuine attempt to front-load the consultation process.
6. Savills have responded on behalf of Hallam Land Management at each stage of formal consultation on the Local Plan, and ongoing dialogue has been maintained with the relevant agencies, service providers and advisory bodies to ensure that the relevant issues including landscape and infrastructure provision have been carefully considered and can be fully addressed and appropriately mitigated at the planning application stage.
7. In addition to the work undertaken by the Council to inform the Local Plan and accompanying Infrastructure Delivery Plan, Hallam Land Management have also commissioned a series of technical studies and investigations into infrastructure and service provision. This work is summarised below and in the accompanying appendices and is ongoing in preparation for the submission of a planning application and supporting documents.

Infrastructure requirements to service development at Vearse Farm

8. The West Dorset, Weymouth & Portland Infrastructure Delivery Plan confirms that the infrastructure necessary to support the Vearse Farm development will be secured through a section 106 agreement. The IPD includes the following indicative list of the infrastructure required for the Vearse Farm development:
 - Highway improvements (including Trunk Road and access)
 - Education – provision of land for replacement 2FE school (on-site).
 - Improvement to waste management provision (off-site).
 - Landscape mitigation.
 - Improvements to Bridport Library (off-site).
 - Improvement to Bridport Museum/Arts Centre (off-site).
 - Provision of community facilities, e.g. Bridport Skate Park.
 - Water – Potential off-site reinforcement works required for water supply.

- Electricity – Overground 11kV lines likely to require multiple substation installation, deviation works and possible reinforcement.

9. The following infrastructure requirements have been identified by HLM and their project team in consultation with service providers:

Transport

10. Brookbanks Consulting has undertaken a review of the transportation networks across Bridport, including a detailed review of the operation of the road network in accordance with a methodology agreed with DCC and the HA. A technical note setting out the findings of the transport assessment is set out at **appendix 1**.

11. The report concludes that there are no transport infrastructure barriers to scheme delivery and that a sustainable development can be delivered, with the following elements:

- Public transport strategy that delivers improvements to the existing services
- A site masterplan that connects into the existing walking and cycling infrastructure
- Improvements to the walking and cycling infrastructure as discussed with DCC
- Capacity improvements to the West Allington junction
- Intervention at the Miles Cross junction to respond to road safety issues.

Flood Risk & Drainage:

12. An assessment of flood risk and drainage issues has been undertaken by Brookbanks Consulting and is summarised in the technical note on infrastructure in **appendix 2**.

13. In terms of fluvial and tidal flood risk, the majority of the site lies within Flood Zone 1 and hence has a low probability of flooding. The River Simene flows through part of the site, new buildings are not proposed in the areas at risk of flooding from the river.

14. The assessment shows a low probability of flooding from overland flow, ground water and sewer flooding.

15. Drainage to the River Simene within the site coupled with detention storage appears to be the most appropriate mechanism to discharge storm water drainage from any

development at this location. A number of potential options are available for attenuation and disposal of stormwater from the site utilising SuDS to control peak discharges to no greater than the baseline rate. Storm drainage is therefore not considered a constraint to development at this location and indeed, the proposals could ultimately deliver a benefit in flood risk terms to the wider area by reducing the run-off from the site

16. Further discussions with Wessex Water are needed to confirm the capacity of the foul drainage network in the immediate vicinity of the site and determine what upgrading works are required to accommodate the foul flows from the development proposals. The developer will work in conjunction with Wessex Water to ensure that any upgrading that may be required is delivered in a timely fashion.

Ground Conditions

17. As set out in the technical note at **appendix 2**, initial assessments have any significant constraints to development.

Services and Utilities

18. A review of existing services in the area has been undertaken and is summarised in the technical note on infrastructure at **appendix 2**. This has demonstrated that the proposed development can be supplied with normal network service supplies without prohibitive reinforcements to the existing networks.

Education

19. Existing primary school provision in the vicinity of the Vearse Farm site includes St. Mary's CE VC Primary School, located approximately 1km to the south east of the site on the edge of Skilling, and Symondsbury CE VA Primary School, located approximately 1.5km to the north west of the site in Symondsbury. Both schools serve pupils aged 4-11. St Mary's School has one class in each year group with capacity for 210 pupils and 174 pupils currently on the school roll. Symondsbury School has capacity for 112 pupils and currently has 110 pupils on the school roll. The secondary school for the area is Sir John Colfox School and is located on the northern outskirts of the town.
20. A series of meetings have taken place with WDDC, HLM, and DCC's schools organisation team to discuss school provision for the Vearse Farm development. DCC have identified that a requirement for additional primary school provision is likely to arise

during the course of the proposed development. A site of this scale would usually generate the need for a single form of entry at primary school stage to serve around 210 pupils. In order to provide flexibility to accommodate DCC's future education strategy for the area, provision will be made within the site to accommodate a 2 form entry primary school, as explained above HLM is well versed in the delivery of Primary Schools.

Healthcare

21. The Bridport Medical Centre adjoins the site. This is purpose built GP surgery opened in 2007 and offers a range of health care and health promotion services including pharmacy, GPs, and minor surgery.

Community facilities

22. Community facilities in the vicinity of the site include Bridport Leisure Centre (swimming pool, sports hall, squash courts, gym), St Mary's playing fields (football pitches), Bridport Cricket Club and Bridport Rugby, all of which are located on the edge of Skilling approximately 1km to the south east of the site. Plottingham Playing Fields is located close to the eastern edge of the site and includes skate park, tennis courts, and children's play area.
23. The site has the scope to deliver on-site open space and play areas as well as contributions to wider off-site improvements to community facilities in line with the IDP.

Landscape considerations and mitigation strategy

Landscape and Visual Appraisal

24. Proposals for the development of Vearse Farm have been informed from the earliest stages by careful consideration of landscape, recognising and taking account of the AONB designation. A landscape and visual appraisal of the site and its context was undertaken by Savills in 2010, this has since been updated to provide a comprehensive Landscape and Visual Appraisal which is included at **appendix 3**. This includes recommendations for mitigation measures that could be incorporated to avoid, reduce or offset the potentially adverse effects, which are summarised below.
25. The site benefits from a network of trees and hedgerows along field boundaries. It is proposed to retain and where appropriate, enhance as much of the existing network of hedgerows and trees on the site as possible. When coupled with additional new planting

both within the development and surrounding it, this vegetation could provide a high level of visual containment and an attractive landscape setting to proposed development, enabling integration into its urban/rural fringe setting. This would assist in mitigating any potential adverse effects on views from areas of land surrounding the site, including any views from the Open Access/publicly accessible land, public rights of way and permissive paths in the surrounding countryside. It would also contribute to protecting the amenity of existing residential properties surrounding the site and which would have potential views towards development within it.

26. In views towards the site from the wider landscapes surrounding it, the development would appear as an integrated extension to the existing settlement. Bridport forms a significant element in panoramic views from the areas of high ground surrounding the town, and development would in most views, be seen against or as part of this context of town set within a bowl of enclosing hills. Mitigation planting associated with the proposed scheme, particularly on the western flank, also has the potential to improve the appearance of the settlement fringes by providing additional planting to the west, as well as supplementing the biodiversity value of the area.
27. The built areas of the proposed development would not extend across the whole of the allocation site or study area. For example, a large area of open space would be retained within the defined floodplain of the River Simene, and would be complemented by a network of open spaces, green routes and play areas, that also integrate the public footpath network and additional planting. In keeping with the character of existing built areas within Bridport that rise up the slopes of the valley sides, the higher and mostly steeply sloping land in the southern part of the study area would be maintained in its current form of open fields divided by dense hedgerows. Further land would remain undeveloped to the west, near the A35 Bridport bypass.
28. While the primary purpose of the AONB designation is to conserve and enhance natural beauty, the Dorset AONB Management Plan 2014-2019 acknowledges the need for additional housing and associated infrastructure to accommodate a growing population and growth in low-occupancy households. The policies of the Plan support adaptation and mitigation in response to this and other challenges. The proposed scheme would contain development within a relatively low lying part of the AONB, in close proximity to one of the few large settlements in the area. The proposed approach to development entails retention and the protection of existing features of landscape and ecological value, sensitive design of the built areas and siting development well below skylines, as

well as creating opportunities for additional landscape/ecological planting, recreational spaces and routes. In keeping with objectives and policies, the development could make a positive contribution to this part the Dorset AONB, sustaining both local communities and the landscape itself.

Local character and design approach

29. An important part of scheme delivery will be to ensure a sensitive and appropriate approach to design and character of the development, with careful consideration of density, visual appearance, height and massing of proposed buildings, particularly along the western edges of the development area. A response to these issues is included in **Appendix 4** from BHB Architects giving a flavour of the character that the development will seek to achieve and the principles which will inform the scheme design.

Conclusions on infrastructure and landscape

30. The work undertaken to inform Policy BRID1 demonstrates that the site is extremely well located with jobs, healthcare, education, open space, shops and facilities all available within walking and cycling distance. Good linkages to the built up area will ensure that the proposed development will be well connected to services and amenities in Bridport and the surrounding area by sustainable modes of transport.
31. In summary, with appropriate masterplanning that adopts a sensitive approach to design, responding to the constraints and opportunities of the area, and integrated with a robust scheme of mitigation, it is considered that the site can be developed in a manner that respects the AONB designation.

Lyme Regis

11.10 What reliance, if any, can be placed on the ability of the Council to promote development through policy LYME2 in the absence of any formal agreement between the two authorities?

32. Lyme Regis lies on the border of West Dorset and East Devon. The town falls within the administrative area of West Dorset District Council, and the adjoining parish of Uplyme falls within the administrative area of East Devon District Council. Due to physical and environmental constraints, the opportunities for Lyme Regis to expand beyond within West Dorset's administrative area are limited and cooperation is required to deliver a

policy framework that allows for consideration to be given to sites adjoining the town that lie within the administrative area of East Devon.

33. Housing needs in the Lyme Regis area are particularly acute, and straddle the administrative boundaries. There are currently around 2,637 applicants in housing need on the East Devon Council Housing Register, whilst in West Dorset there are around 2,645 applicants on the Housing register, of which 190 have expressed a preference for Lyme Regis.
34. In Lyme Regis between 2006/07 and 2011/12 affordable housing delivery averaged just 3 dwellings per annum against an objectively assessed need for 15 per annum, resulting in an accumulated backlog of some 70 affordable dwellings against a target provision of 90 over the same period.
35. The issue of the future growth of Lyme Regis is a strategic, cross boundary matter that requires constructive and active engagement between the two local planning authorities to provide a sound planning policy framework that addresses and responds to these needs.
36. Such an approach has been advocated by Savills in our previous representations on the emerging East Devon Local Plan, including statements of evidence and attendance at the Examination. The Inspector's letter following the Examination has confirmed that the East Devon Local Plan is not sound for various reasons including a failure to consider housing needs at Lyme Regis. We continue to advocate a strategic policy in the East Devon Local Plan that recognises that meeting the future growth needs of Lyme Regis is a cross-boundary matter requiring co-operation between the two authorities. Such an approach would bring the following benefits:
 - Facilitate joint working to address the potential for Lyme Regis to grow in a sustainable manner to meet objectively assessed growth needs;
 - Provide scope to help address unmet housing needs arising from within West Dorset and East Devon;
 - Allow potential for additional housing provision in East Devon to meet wider NPPF objectives of boosting the supply of housing and improving affordability.
37. In the absence of a formal agreement between the two authorities Policy LYME2 represents a pragmatic approach on the part of West Dorset District Council. However, we consider that the policy would benefit from further strengthening as follows:

The district council will work with East Devon District Council, Lyme Regis Town Council and Uplyme Parish Council to ~~explore and develop options to~~ identify and ensure that new sites are brought forward to meet the long-term growth needs of Lyme Regis and Uplyme.

11.11 Is there a case for identifying reserve sites in Lyme Regis to meet future development needs should the principles behind LYME2 fail to materialise?

38. Policy LYME2 has been introduced because of the limited availability of suitable sites for development within or adjoining Lyme Regis within the administrative boundaries of West Dorset. The identification of reserve sites within West Dorset's administrative area would not be an appropriate response as it would fail to reflect the Duty to Cooperate or the presumption in favour of sustainable development.

39. In the context of the recognised shortfall of suitable sites within West Dorset's administrative area to meet the growth needs of Lyme Regis, in particular the pressing local housing needs, it is important that the emerging East Devon Local Plan also makes allowance for the identification of potentially suitable sites on the edge of Lyme Regis.