

NORTH DORSET LOCAL PLAN EXAMINATION

CONSULTEE ID – 3085

FURTHER STATEMENT

ON BEHALF OF SHAFTESBURY LVA LLP AND LAND VALUE
ALLIANCES

ISSUES 9 (SHAFTESBURY)

February 2015



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FURTHER STATEMENT

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Question 9.1

Is there any evidence that the proposed residential development sites in Shaftesbury, including the development of land to the east of the town; to the south-east of Wincombe Business Park; and to the west of the A350 are not available, sustainable or deliverable? If such evidence exists what alternatives are available and have they been satisfactorily considered by the Council?

We support the Council's view that Shaftesbury is an important location for future growth in the District, which the Plan recognises this to an extent in seeking to deliver a significant proportion of growth at the town (27%) over the plan period. However, the proposed residential development sites are not considered to represent the most sustainable locations for growth at Shaftesbury. In our view the site selection process undertaken by the Council to identify the sites is flawed and does not accord with guidance set out in the Framework and Planning Practice Guidance.

Para 8.98 of LP1 states that development at Shaftesbury is 'limited by environmental (mainly landscape and biodiversity) constraints and the limited number of potentially developable sites where the town could expand'. In particular, land to the north of the town is situated within the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB.

Para 115 of the Framework is clear that great weight should be given to conserving the landscape and scenic beauty of AONBs, which have the highest status of protection. It is therefore surprising that the Council are looking to allocate a site – Land to the west of the A350, which is largely within the AONB, when there are other available and suitable sites which are not within this designation. It is not made clear in LP1, or in the evidence base (including the Market Town Site Selection Background Paper – MTC001), the approach that has been taken by the Council in proposing to allocate this site in the AONB, in preference to other potentially suitable land that is not within such as sensitive landscape area.

One site that does not lie in the AONB, nor forms part of any locally designated area of landscape importance, is Land to the south of Salisbury Road (A30) and East of Higher Blandford Road (B3081), Shaftesbury (see Location Plan at Appendix 1). The site is available, sustainable and deliverable and is capable of accommodating circa 120 residential units.

The site lies to the south of a residential development which was originally granted outline planning permission by the Secretary of State in 2007 (ref. APP/N1215/1191202 and APP/N1215/1191206). The site is situated to the west of Land south of the A30 which is allocated for employment uses and to the east in part by an agricultural machinery business. The site is, therefore, effectively enclosed on three sides by existing development, with further development proposed to the east.

The topography of the site is relatively flat and any proposed development would be viewed within the context of the existing and proposed surrounding development at Shaftesbury. On the basis that the proposed development would be suitably designed to respect and reflect the character of the area, it is considered that the introduction of development within this site would not appear visually intrusive or prominent and would not have an adverse impact upon the character of the area or the wider locality.

The Inspector's attention is drawn to the previous Inspector's consideration of the former Local Plan in 2000, in relation to the proposed allocation of land to the north. The Inspector recommended that the allocation should be extended to include further land to the south of the A30 (Appendix 2). In making this recommendation, the Inspector made no reference to any landscape constraints nor did he exclude the site. He stated (para. 37.1.87) *"I recommend that Policy SB12 be reviewed by considering whether Site E/37/4 should be extended to the west and south in order to provide sufficient land to be reserved exclusively for the relocation of the livestock market should the need arise"*.

It is plain that this site has not been appropriately considered by the Council in their selection of sites. The Council used the 2010 SHLAA as the basis to identify sites for potential development. The above referenced site was not originally put forward in the Council's 2010 SHLAA but representations advocating its inclusion were made in October 2013. The site complies with the criteria of the SHLAA and is suitable, available and development is achievable.

The Landscape Impact Assessment (ECC020) undertaken to inform LP1, focused only on sites included in the SHLAA and did not constitute a full assessment of the potential of other land around the edge of settlements. In Shaftesbury a total of ten sites were assessed, seven were considered to be sensitive from a landscape and visual point of view for any mitigation to be effective. Three sites - those now proposed to be allocated in the Plan - were acknowledged as having sensitivity issues, but

through careful mitigation could be appropriate for development without having a negative impact on the landscape setting of the town.

The only reason the above mentioned site was not considered as part of the Council's Landscape Impact Assessment was that it was not included as part of the SHLAA at the time the landscape impact assessment was carried out. This is a significant shortcoming and does not constitute a robust nor sound basis in which to plan positively for future development at the town.

A Preliminary Landscape Review has been prepared for the site (Appendix 3), which has considered the site's relationship with the wider landscape. The document considers that the site is not significant in landscape and visual terms and is less sensitive than other sites at Shaftesbury. Like the conclusion of the Inspector reviewing the allocation of employment land adjacent to the site, the document considers it is not possible to view the site from many locations. No important views, particularly towards the AONB, have been identified and from the AONB the site is seen within the context of the existing town. When the adjoining land is developed, the built up setting to the site will be even more pronounced than currently exists.

It is our contention that evidence exists to demonstrate that residential development sites proposed do not represent the most sustainable options for growth and that alternative sites have not been satisfactorily considered by the Council. An alternative site, which is not within the AONB, has been demonstrated to be available, sustainable and deliverable and would not appear visually intrusive and would not have an adverse impact on the character of the area or wider locality.

Question 9.3

Can the proposed development be satisfactorily assimilated into the town without significant detriment to the character of the environment and the living conditions of nearby residents?

As set out in relation to Q 9.1 above, it is not considered that an appropriate, detailed, landscape assessment has been undertaken in order to fully consider the alternative development options and their associated impact, on the character of the environment, in particular the AONB.