

**Matter 8 Evidence / 656661
Site Developments (Ferndown) Ltd.**

**CHRISTCHURCH & EAST DORSET CORE STRATEGY
EXAMINATION IN PUBLIC**

MATTERS & ISSUES 8

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT / EMPLOYMENT

AUGUST 2013

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 This statement comprises a response to the issues identified by the Inspector for the Examination in Public (EIP) into the soundness of the Christchurch & East Dorset Core Strategy (CS). This submission is on behalf of Site Developments (Ferndown) Ltd. The company own land to the east of the Ferndown Industrial Estate, and have historically promoted the land for commercial development.

2.0 MATTER & ISSUE 8/1

2.1 IS THE EMPLOYMENT LAND HIERARCHY SOUNDLY BASED ON ROBUST EVIDENCE?

2.2 Policy PC 1 sets out the employment land hierarchy. The sites listed in the policy are divided into different categories, with strategic and higher quality sites being identified in advance of more conventional B1, B2 and B8 sites. Other sites are identified for upgrading. These are all essentially existing sites; in the main already developed.

2.3 The new employment land allocations appear mostly unrelated to the settlement hierarchy. Whilst the allocations in Christchurch clearly relate to the urban area and to Bournemouth International Airport, the East Dorset allocations are more random. Blunts Farm is adjacent to the main settlement of Ferndown. However, Bailie Gate is at Sturminster Marshall; a rural service centre ranked fourth in the list of six settlement types. The site at Woolsbridge is not situated within any identified settlement.

2.4 The Bailie Gate and Woolsbridge sites are adjacent to existing industrial estates. However, in being unrelated to the main settlements, district centres and the suburban centres, their allocation in the CS is not considered sustainable. The CS Sustainability Report (SD 6) notes that both sites are well related to the main road network. However, neither site is closely related to the main urban areas. Indeed, the Woolsbridge site is 1.5 kilometres away from the nearest settlement of Three Legged Cross.

- 2.5 Vehicle movements will therefore increase as a consequence of employees travelling to and from work. Whilst non car borne modes of transport can be encouraged, the use of the private car is likely to be the predominant means of getting to both of these sites. They are not considered to be in sustainable locations.
- 2.6 The evidence supporting the CS has been too limited in its evaluation of alternatives. Work on assessing employment needs, and hence land supply, commenced with the preparation of a Stage 1 Christchurch & East Dorset Employment Land Review (2007). The intention of this document was to take stock of the existing situation, including an initial assessment of the suitability of currently allocated sites. However, a Stage 2 assessment - to assess the demand for land and premises - was never undertaken. Similarly, a Stage 3 report - a detailed review of site supply and quality - has not been prepared.
- 2.7 The CS has a more limited evidence base. For East Dorset, this is in the form of the East Dorset Employment Land Key Issue Paper, October 2010 (CD 4.11). This only reviews eight sites, including land to the east of the Ferndown Industrial Estate, to the south west of land owned by Site Developments (Ferndown) Ltd. It is submitted that the search for additional employment sites should be far more comprehensive, in particular around the edges of the main settlements identified in the hierarchy contained in Policy KS 1.

3.0 MATTER & ISSUE 8/2

3.1 ARE THE FOLLOWING SITES CORRECTLY DESIGNATED: LAND EAST OF THE FERNDOWN INDUSTRIAL ESTATE.

3.2 The Ferndown Industrial Estate is now mostly developed, excepting one particular element of the site that was allocated for development in under Policies FWP 2 and FWP 3 of the East Dorset Local Plan (OD 5). This site, referred to in Paragraph 2.7 above, now benefits from planning permission;

and is likely to come forward for development in the course of the next five years.

3.3 The remaining land to the east of the Ferndown Industrial Estate comprises part open / part wooded land that separates the estate from the residential areas at north Ferndown. The width of this 'gap' is variable, but is generally in the order of 150 metres to 200 metres. It is the subject of the following policies of OD 5:

- FWP 11 - use of 15 HA of land as public open space.
- FWP 14 - Provision of a cycleway and footpath between Leeson Drive and the northern end of Cobham Road.

3.4 It is also identified as falling within the Green Belt (GB).

3.5 The original purpose for keeping this land open was to safeguard it for the development of the Poole Harbour to A31 link road. Historically, this comprised a Department of Transport trunk road improvement scheme. However, it was removed from the trunk road programme in July 1998. Whilst it was still referred to in Transportation Policy W of the Bournemouth, Dorset & Poole Structure Plan (OD 1), the supporting text referred to the need to amend the policy at a future date to reflect the deletion of the scheme from the road construction programme.

3.6 The proposed link road continues to be omitted from any adopted planning policies. CS Policy KS 9 makes no reference to it; and it is not contained within the Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole Local Transport Plan 3 (ED 49). However, a part of the link road was constructed when the A31 Ferndown By-Pass was built in the 1980's.

3.7 This comprises approximately 500 metres of road leading from the junction with the A31 at Ameysford, to the south - west where a roundabout forms the junction to Cobham Road. Before this was constructed, access to the Ferndown Industrial Estate was solely from Wimborne Road West, to the south.

- 3.8 The roundabout junction with Cobham Road was configured in such a way so as to allow for the future Poole Harbour Link Road to continue in a southerly direction, between the Ferndown Industrial Estate and the residential areas; eventually to link to the Mannings Heath Relief Road at Poole. However, this roundabout will not now be needed for this historic piece of infrastructure. It therefore has no function as an item of infrastructure. The road link from Cobham Road to the A31 does not need it.
- 3.9 Nevertheless, this roundabout does have the potential to act as a point of access to the land proposed for commercial development in this statement. A vehicular access can easily be formed on the southern side, to produce a three armed junction with sufficient capacity to accommodate the additional commercial traffic that will be generated from the development. It is rare that such an item of infrastructure is readily available to allow for a commercial development to proceed.
- 3.10 There are three key issues to be addressed in considering the potential development of this land; the extent to which it is still needed as open space; its GB function; and the need to maintain a 'buffer' between any commercial development and the residential properties to the east.
- 3.11 In respect of the need for open space, the CS now introduces a new approach, when compared to the policies in OD 5, in that substantial areas of open space are to be provided as Sustainable Alternative Natural Green Spaces (SANGS) in association with the proposed urban extensions. Passive recreation is to be directed to these areas, which will be delivered alongside the residential developments.
- 3.12 The need for open space therefore has to be balanced against the need for new employment development land - as identified in Section 2 of this statement. It is submitted that the employment needs take precedence. The land to the east of the Ferndown industrial estate has the advantage of being situated at one of the main settlements identified in Policy KS 1, as well as having a direct access to the strategic road network. Its development would constitute proactive planning - as required by Paragraph 20 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).
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- 3.13 In respect of the GB function, it is submitted that the land between the commercial and residential areas of Ferndown does not serve any of the five purposes as set out in Paragraph 80 of the NPPF. Whilst it forms a current local 'gap' function, this is to some extent by default. A road was historically proposed to be constructed through the site. This would have had the effect of conjoining the commercial and residential elements of this part of Ferndown.
- 3.14 The second bullet point to Paragraph 80 of the NPPF does refer to the prevention of towns merging into one another. However, that is not the case here. The area as a whole comprises the north west extent of Ferndown. The commercial and residential areas are both parts of the same settlement - Ferndown. Indeed, the allocation of the Blunts Farm site, to the west of the industrial estate, is more threatening to the merging of Ferndown with Wimborne - and hence more compromising to the second of the five purposes of the GB.
- 3.15 In terms of the relationship to the residential dwellings to the east, the width of the land is sufficient to allow for development to occur and to incorporate a suitable wooded 'buffer' to the houses at Bracken Road and Leeson Drive. Strategic landscaping of, say 20 metres in extent, would be sufficient to act as a visual and audible barrier. In addition, the layout of commercial development could occur with B1 commercial units being sited closest to the residential properties, with B1 by definition, being acceptable in residential areas.
- 3.16 It is therefore considered that there are positive reasons to allocate additional land for commercial development to the east of the Ferndown Industrial Estate. It is needed to underpin the employment strategy; it is in a sustainable location; and has the necessary infrastructure available to allow it to be developed in the early years of the CS period.