

Christchurch and East Dorset Core Strategy

Hearing Statement - Objection to Option KS1

I object to the soundness of the planned Strategy with reference to Option KS1 as it falls short of meeting the Government's objectives in matters shown in this statement. I live in Wimborne and so my concerns centre mainly on this area although obviously it is necessary to look at the wider picture. I believe Option KS1 is linked with KS2 and so have submitted a separate statement for KS2 but it is difficult to separate both objections because one cannot happen without a minor change to the other.

The definition of Hamlets in the Settlement Hierarchy does not provide sufficient flexibility to allow for minor infill development in locations that would not be harmful to the Green Belt.

Too much emphasis is given to large scale development using Green Belt land without any regard to minor development that could take place in other equally accessible places.

Introduction

One of the Key Options of the Core Strategy is to release Green Belt land to satisfy housing needs while maintaining the character of local communities. Appropriate locations are being chosen for sustainable new housing areas in what is considered the most accessible places.

I agree that the requirement for more housing justifies the opening of the Green Belt to a small manageable degree but believe proposals submitted in the Christchurch and East Dorset Core Strategy appears to favour only high density development and this in itself can damage the integrity of the area.

My objection to the Strategy is that it does not allow scope for infill development in hamlets in the Green Belt in cases where the location is also sustainable and accessible and where no harm would be caused to the fundamental aims of the Green Belt.

The reason for my objection is that the new plan does not provide the means to build two infill dwellings towards the frontage of my family's two acre parcel of land in Dogdean. Dogdean is within walking distance to Wimborne and is a good example of a site that is capable of sustainable development in an accessible place. Infilling here would be modest in scale.

Proposals to open up the Green Belt constitute a significant material change to circumstances and are the first such change since 1984. At that time land in Dogdean was changed from designated white land to 'washed over' Green Belt.

In considering my objection to the Core Strategy, it was logical to take into account the wider implications and conclude that if infill were to be allowed for one site, this would potentially open other similar requests within the Green Belt which may or may not be detrimental.

It is therefore reasonable that any change to the wording of Option KS1 would have to show that limited sustainable development would be allowed only in a minority of cases where certain tight restrictions complied. With careful wording, minor infill development in accessible settlements could be allowed. This would help counter the inflexibility that a rigid policy dictates with regard to hamlets.

The Government's Objective

Among the Government's objectives is that local planning should:

- Meet the housing requirements of the whole community
- Provide wider housing opportunity and choice and a better mix in the size, type and location of housing than is currently available
- Provide sufficient land and make more efficient use of it
- Ensure the planning system can accommodate new homes in the right place at the right time

Option KS1 falls short of meeting these Government objectives for the following reasons:

- **Meet the housing requirements of the whole community**

The Strategy excludes the need for homes on larger plots in the area by not allowing for controlled infill in hamlets close to adjoining current boundaries giving no opportunity for those families who crave a bit of space but still wish to live in a community near amenities without the need to travel any distance.

- **Provide wider housing opportunity and choice and a better mix in the size, type and location of housing than is currently available**

The proposal of allowing the Green Belt to be opened to such major developments creates a danger of changing the fabric of the area. Wimborne has always had a good mix of dwellings in and around the town. Overly prescriptive and discriminatory proposals could change its unique character in the face of the larger conurbations of Poole and Bournemouth. Minor infill in washed over settlements, with the application of strict controls, can balance the danger of the overdevelopment that is proposed. It can also provide the opportunity and choice to build more substantial homes on larger plots.

- **Provide sufficient land and make more efficient use of it**

Infilling in gaps of otherwise built-up frontages should be permissible in hamlets that already have existing services and are close to facilities. Explicitly, these infill sites would only be permitted where it is determined it would not harm their separate physical identity and would not contribute to urban sprawl by encroaching onto open land.

- **Ensure the planning system can accommodate new homes in the right place at the right time**

In the previous Inquiry into the current East Dorset Local Plan I submitted a similar objection asking that infill should be allowed along the line of existing houses in Dogdean. In making his decision, the Inspector could not support my objection at that time because there were no material changes in circumstances of any weight since 1984 that would lead him to do so. However he did state:

“I accept that it may be possible to develop one or two plots with houses of good quality design that would fit in with their surroundings”.

Ours was the only objection among hundreds where he made this type of comment and it related to Dogdean. On a visit to the Planning Inspectorate in Bristol, I was told by a senior official; “it doesn’t matter why he said it, it has been said and cannot be unsaid”.

Now is the *right time* to support this further objection because it is the first time since 1984 that material changes to the Green Belt are being considered to accommodate new homes.

When considering the *right place* to accommodate new homes, the Council should not only bear in mind the attributes for large scale development when considering using Green Belt land adjoining existing towns and villages but also make provision for small infill development in settlements close to existing towns where it is shown they are sustainable locations and not detrimental to the Green Belt. Each case should be considered on its own merit.

The Settlement Hierarchy – (Hamlets) (KS1)

The Councils’ Preferred Option KS1

The Settlement Hierarchy states the Function of Hamlets as being; “Settlements where development would not be allowed unless it was functionally required to be in the rural area”.

Objection to the Settlement Hierarchy (KS1)

Under the proposals of the Core Strategy, it appears that there is no possibility for any future development in a hamlet ‘unless the development is functionally required’. In the majority of rural settlements it is reasonable to apply this rule. However in a minority of cases, sustainable infill development could be deemed possible outside defined envelopes where it was accessible, would not impact on the Green Belt or change the characteristics of the area. No regard has been made for this circumstance.

The inflexibility of the Settlement Hierarchy with regard to the Function of Hamlets discriminates against the minority who wish to have an alternative to high density living. Not taking into account the possibility of minor infill development in existing hamlets, at a time when there are proposals to open up the Green Belt for major development, is short-sighted.

Where settlements are close to main towns providing major focus for local needs but have no defined village boundaries, there is not sufficient flexibility within the Strategy to allow for

minor development. Allowing for limited infill in ‘washed over’ Green Belt settlements enables wider housing opportunities than the current proposal of just using sites where large scale development can take place. It gives the prospect to plan individual housing of high quality design using new technology, satisfying those who have the means and the vision to develop them.

Suggested wording to Option KS1

I ask that the wording of the Settlement Hierarchy with regard to the Function of Hamlets be expanded to allow for infill development in the Green Belt in cases where it would not harm its integrity. Suggested wording:

Hamlets - Settlements where development would not be allowed unless it was functionally required to be in the rural area or exceptionally where minor infill meets the strict aims of the Green Belt.

Background Information on the Hamlet of Dogdean

Dogdean is a good example of a settlement that is sustainable and accessible. It is a hamlet consisting of 16 homes on its northern side and 1 house on the southern side along a 0.4 mile stretch of roadway off the Cranborne Road, between Wimborne and Furzehill. The other end of Dogdean joins Smugglers Lane. The land referred to is after the dogleg in the lane following a line of homes down the length of Dogdean from the Cranborne Road and sited before the last two properties at the end of the lane. The current houses are mixed in design and the gardens are of varying sizes, some large, some small.

The parcel of land was purchased in 1982 as ‘white land’ and until 2003 was used as a smallholding. Since 2003 it has been used for family recreational use only, the smallholding being unsustainable. Most of the buildings to support the smallholding have been removed but there still exists a large concrete sectional building used as storage. The site is immediately next to ‘The White Cottage’ and backs onto several properties in Furzehill that are within a village envelope.

Dogdean is only about a 10 minute walk to Wimborne Middle School, Budgens supermarket and garage and to a doctors’ surgery. It’s less than two minutes by car. Dumpton, the private prep school, is nearer to walk to as is the shop and public house in Furzehill.

The generally open gap between Furzehill and Dogdean would not be compromised if any infill was restricted to the frontage of the plots. The amount of infill could be strictly controlled and would be screened behind existing hedging and trees. It would not represent piecemeal development but would complete the line of existing properties and optimise the use of services already available to residents.

Existing services include the road network, telecommunications, electricity, water supplies and a sewerage scheme.

The open countryside to the south side of the lane is a corridor of farmland that extends to the outer limits of Wimborne/Colehill, and would not be compromised. In fact an argument

could be made that allowing limited infill on the northern side of the lane now could effectively protect the lane from larger unwanted development in the future.

It should also be said that the countryside to the south/west side of the lane will actually be diminished if the Core Strategy plans for Area 1 of the Site by Site – Issues for Consideration (8.69 of the Core Strategy Options) is accepted. Area 1 finishes just short of Dogdean. It links with a corresponding line of land on the other side of the Cranborne Road coming out of Wimborne. It is a large area of land that is currently Green Belt which could potentially include a huge development site of new homes and other community infrastructure (e.g. school, local centre as well as proposed open space).

- *See map of Dogdean as attached in Appendix A showing its close proximity to Furzehill and Wimborne.*

Conclusion

As said, my particular concern with the Plan is that it does not allow for infill in the hamlet of Dogdean. I recognise that by allowing infill here it could potentially open other areas that would harm the Green Belt. This in itself should not deter the Planners from looking to alternative sites to support aspirations of the minority where feasible. I believe alternative wording of KS1 could be made to provide for viable sites in Dogdean and possibly other similar sustainable locations.

In the past, the Authority has recognised the locational attributes of Dogdean in particular and designated it as ‘white land’. At the time, it was considered that the land was genuinely capable of development in the future.

Even though there are a substantial number of dwellings along the lane and services are shared with Furzehill it is not included in the Furzehill village envelope. The Hierarchy as it stands therefore again blocks any potential for infill in Dogdean despite its locational attributes.

There is a history of planning applications for approval to build individual houses on infill sites along the lane over the past decades. Infill here would have little impact on the openness of land if development was approved close to the road frontage as with the majority of existing properties.

The last Inquiry Inspector thought minor development was possible in Dogdean had there been any material changes of any weight to enable him to agree to my objection. There was not then but now, for the first time since 1984 there is about to be a change in circumstances if the Green Belt is opened up.

I ask that the Inspector take this opportunity to allow for minor infill development in the Green Belt to also be applied by changing the wording on Options KS1 as regards to Hamlets.