

Matters and Issues 5

Strategic allocations – East Dorset - Individual site allocations in East Dorset

7. WMC5 Cranborne Road New Neighbourhood

- Is the location and scale of this housing allocation justified by robust evidence?

The scale of new housing proposed at WMC5 (see page 102 of the CS) is grossly excessive and disproportionate to that proposed in the rest of East Dorset District. It unfairly represents 24% of the East Dorset District Total and it will be 170% larger than any other proposed development in the district. All of this on a site that has not been properly assessed for; biodiversity (ref Policy ME1 – page 161 of the CS); flood risk (ref Policy ME6 – page 171 of the CS); and its effects on rare and endangered species (see paragraph 8.5 – page 87 of the CS); let alone on its effect on transport routes through Wimborne and Colehill (noting that Policy KS9 – page 43 of the CS, fails to include any provision for transport improvement in areas to the North of Wimborne.) This development will also put undue pressure on local medical and education resources. It will destroy the iconic view of the Minster when approaching Wimborne from the North and the increased use of private transport will saturate car parking spaces in the Town, causing loss of revenue for local traders.

In addition Objective 3 (page 23 of the CS) indicates that development will be located in areas at the least risk of flooding. Development at WMC5 does not fit comfortably with this statement, when considering the paragraph on drainage at Policy WMC5 (page 103 of the CS)

In the introductory paragraph concerning Wimborne and Colehill, (paragraph 8.1 page 87) Colehill is referred to as a suburb of Wimborne. This is not the case; Colehill is a neighbouring village settlement separated by Green Belt from Wimborne which the Core Strategy identifies is important to protect in order to prevent coalescence of settlements (paragraph 8.8 Page 87 of the CS.) In support of this Policy KS2 states that one of the purposes of the Green Belt is to protect the separate and physical identities of individual settlements by maintaining wedges and corridors of open land between them. The proposed development at WMC5 in the Parish of Colehill sits right on the border of Wimborne Minster at Walford Close, Burts Hill and Long Close Farm cottages. I contend that this contravenes paragraph 80 of the NPPF.

The Council have clearly not thought through its reasoning for including WMC5 in the Core Strategy especially with regard to an influx of upwards of 1,500 people to this location alone and when compounded by another 5,000 people anticipated from developments within the Wimborne and Colehill Parishes which are planned within the Core Strategy period.

WMC5 should never have progressed this far into proposals for development. As far back as 2009 the leader of the council was urging the then Secretary of State to dismiss the proposal from the South West's Regional Spatial Strategy as being unsustainable in terms of flood risk and transport infrastructure. Absolutely nothing has been put forward in the Core Strategy to change the view that this proposed development continues to be unsustainable and in the wrong place. (see my response on Matter 1/1)

One can foresee, if this development is allowed to proceed, the grid-locking of roads through Wimborne Minster from cars, vans and lorries trying to make their way to factories, offices, schools or retail outlets, either locally, or to locations in Ferndown, Christchurch, Bournemouth and Poole.

This will be a nightmare scenario for existing residents in the locality and a significant release of undesirable CO₂ emissions to the atmosphere.

As a consequence I believe the proposal to build houses at WMC5 is unsound, is not positively prepared, is not justified, and is not effective or consistent with National Policy. In fact it fails to comply with 6 of the 12 Core Planning Principles of paragraph 17 of the NPPF and should therefore be removed from the Core Strategy. As I have stated elsewhere in responses to these hearings there is undisputable evidence that housing development in the location of WMC5 is unsustainable and clearly in the wrong place.

So what could be done with the land to create a more beneficial use of it for the community, or indeed the district as a whole?

It is a great pity that none of the proposals put forward at the options stage of this process, which have largely been ignored by the Council, were not considered evidential in these hearings, since there were some perfectly sound and convincing arguments to take the Core Strategy forward on a more evolutionary rather than a contentious course. One idea I promoted was to use the land to the east of the Cranborne Road as a Solar Farm. It is a good location to generate upwards of 7 Megawatts of renewable energy, which would go some way to offsetting the effects of climate change and increasing CO₂ emissions caused by all of the additional homes proposed in the district, (its inclusion would support Policy ME8 – page 169 of the CS.) Its elevation and the position of arrays, which would be South facing, make it an ideal location for capturing the sun's rays and converting them to electricity via photovoltaic panels. In my view there is also no reason why the land to the West of the Cranborne Road cannot continue to be cultivated and remain a food source in perpetuity, or if absolutely necessary it could become a SANG offsetting other developments in the area.

Both proposals avoid increasing the risk of flooding, contaminating the ground water protection zone, and upsetting biodiversity whilst conserving and protecting endangered species dependent upon the River Allen.

What then of the loss of 600 homes from the Core Strategy?

Well surely they can be built in other areas of the district, such as supporting the need to achieve a critical mass in Verwood in driving forward the obvious need for an Upper School in this area? (reference my response on Matter 1/2)

If this cannot be achieved, I am confident more houses can be located elsewhere in the Parish of Colehill, since I am aware there are alternative sites identified in the SHLAA, which can be developed to accommodate a total of 600 homes. These would be imminently more sustainable than those proposed at WMC5 and should therefore be factored into the Plan.