

**West Dorset, Weymouth & Portland Local Plan: Independent Examination
Matter 11 Western Localities of West Dorset Bridport (BRID 1-6)**

**Additional Representation from Bridport Town Council
Bob Gillis, Town Clerk, ID: 641**

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?

1. Introduction

1.1 Bridport Town Council has commented on this allocation at all stages in the consultation process including highlighting the importance of necessary infrastructure provision before the site is developed. In addition to the comments made previously, it would wish to raise the following issues.

2. Consultation

- 2.1 During the consultation process, the Town Council has highlighted the need for the local community to have a say in how the site is delivered, which would include the infrastructure required. The Town Council feels that this should happen through the emerging Neighbourhood Plan, which it is working on with local parish councils.
- 2.2 In October 2013, the Town Council held a special Council meeting to approve its response on the proposed modifications to the draft Local Plan at that time. This meeting was attended by around 100 members of the public, nearly all of whom were attending to show their concern and opposition to this site allocation.
- 2.3 Members felt that the very high level of attendance from the public, and the comments at the meeting, showed that people had some real anxieties about this development. It was felt that in other areas of West Dorset there had been an opportunity for people to object to site specific allocations, such as at Sherborne and Dorchester. However, members felt that there had not been such an opportunity in the Bridport area, for specific and dedicated consultation on the Vearse Farm allocation.
- 2.4 The Town Council also raised its concern regarding the general consultation process on the Local Plan. It was stated that, in some cases, councillors had not been able to participate as they would have liked in the early stages of the process. Generally, members felt that it appeared that local people had not been made aware of the size and implications of such a large site allocation. For these reasons, and in view of the size and strength of the representations at the Council meeting, it was agreed that the Town Council should ask if there could be further dedicated consultation on the site allocation at Vearse Farm.

- 2.5 At that stage in the Local Plan process we were informed that such a request could not be considered. It is therefore now asked that further consultation be held on the allocation of this site.

3. Community Involvement

- 3.1 The Vearse Farm site is in Symondsburry parish but it is on the boundary of the Bridport town area and it will have implications for the Town Council's area. The Town Council is working with Symondsburry, Allington, Bothenhampton and Walditch and Bradpole parish councils on the Bridport Area Neighbourhood Plan.
- 3.2 The draft Local Plan proposes that the Vearse Farm site "should be developed in accordance with a masterplan prepared in conjunction with Symondsburry Parish Council, Dorset County Council, Bridport Town Council, Dorset County Council and the local community, and agreed by West Dorset District Council."
- 3.3 The Town Council feels strongly that there needs to be reference in this section, and throughout the Bridport part of the Plan, to the Bridport Area Neighbourhood Plan. It is considered that issues relating to this site – phasing, level of affordable housing, infrastructure, community provision etc – can best be discussed and resolved, with the involvement of the local community, through the emerging Neighbourhood Plan. As stated above, there has been a growing level of public concern about the size and impact of this allocation and there is a need for additional consultation and opportunities for public involvement. The best way to achieve this is through the emerging Neighbourhood Plan.

4. Infrastructure

- 4.1 The Town Council does not feel that adequate consideration has been given to the infrastructure requirements of the Vearse Farm site. There are a number of issues that need to be considered further, as set out below.
- 4.2 The traffic implications for the A35 and surrounding roads - in terms of the A35, the traffic is getting worse generally from the east and west, often with long tailbacks, particularly in the summer but also at weekends throughout the year. The increase in traffic from the new waste transfer station will also have to be considered. Town centre traffic at busy times is at capacity. This would be further exacerbated by this development. Local councils are already participating in a working group, chaired by Oliver Letwin MP, looking at highways issues on the A35. The issues raised by that group needed to be fully considered.
- 4.3 The current and proposed road infrastructure is inadequate for this level of development. The public transport provision in this area is also currently

poor with bus services being reduced and there is no local rail provision. This will result in greater reliance on cars and potential severe congestion.

- 4.4 The community should be fully consulted on what community infrastructure should be provided including any discussion of educational provision. Once again, it is considered that this is best undertaken at a local level, through the Neighbourhood Plan. The nearest school at St Mary's has a local catchment area, many of whom can walk to the school, but this would be difficult for any new facility on the Vearse Farm site. If the school was moved, then this would only increase the traffic in the area.
- 4.5 Other infrastructure requirements to be considered include provision for affordable housing, sustainable employment facilities including local food production, skills training etc. The number of new residents would increase the pressure on existing medical facilities, which are at capacity now. Other facilities in Bridport such as the leisure centre, arts and open spaces may also not be adequate for such a large development.
- 4.6 The Town Council has highlighted the issue of flooding at this site and the need to address this issue, prior to any development being considered. This was a particular concern for local people bearing in mind flooding in town centre areas in July 2012 and relates both to surface water and foul drainage from the site.
- 4.7 The Town Council would wish to see confirmation on the housing numbers expected to be delivered through this site allocation and evidence that it was meeting an identified need in the area. The community has not been consulted as regards the specific needs of this area and bearing in mind the concerns on the consultation process, these should be articulated through the Neighbourhood Plan process.

5. Impact on the AONB

- 5.1 The allocation of such a large site in such a sensitive area will have an impact on the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The views in and out of the AONB are very important in the Bridport area. The design of the buildings and infrastructure should, as far as possible, be in keeping with the AONB. Wildlife corridors and complementary employment provision such as onsite "farm" food production should be considered.

6. Conclusion

- 6.1 Overall, the Town Council would wish to emphasise its view that there has been insufficient consultation on the allocation of this site within the draft Local Plan. It feels that the level of the concerns from local people has risen in the past two years and there is a need to ensure that they have a real say in this site allocation in terms of its design, size, phasing, infrastructure etc. This should happen through the Neighbourhood Plan. The work on that Plan has started and within 18 months it is expected that a draft Plan will be ready for inspection and hopefully then go to a referendum.

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11.6 Are there any valid reasons why the potential of the existing St Mary's primary school (BRID2) cannot be exploited?

- 1.1 The Town Council has stated that it feels that this site should remain as a school and that it would have any concerns about any proposed development in the area of the school that could conflict with the recreational uses in this area. The site should be retained, as designated in the current Local Plan, as part of the River Brit Sport and Leisure Action Area with the adjoining football pitches, nearby leisure centre and open spaces.
- 1.2 In general though, the Town Council felt that if the Vearse Farm development went ahead in some form, St Mary's school would be able to accommodate the additional numbers. It was a more accessible and sustainable option than re-locating the facility to Vearse Farm, which would then be inaccessible to a very high percentage of pupils from West Bay, Bothenhampton & Walditch and Bridport South(see response for BRID1).

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11.7 Changes proposed to policies BRID3 (Land to the East of Bredy Veterinary Centre, off Jessop Avenue) and BRID5 (St. Michael's Trading Estate) would require maintenance of a wildlife corridor. Would this adequately address wildlife concerns?

- 1.1 BRID3 (Land to the East of Bredy Veterinary Centre, off Jessop Avenue)** - the Town Council had objected to the inclusion of this site during the consultation and was keen that it was maintained as a green corridor to town. If there was to be housing on the site then the numbers should be reduced from the 40 in the draft Plan (half that number was proposed) to allow maintenance of the green wildlife corridor, which could also be part of the local cycle network.
- 1.2 BRID5 (St. Michael's Trading Estate)** - the Town Council had commented in the consultation that this important site should not be a mixed use site. The draft Plan recognised that the historic buildings on this site provided employment opportunities for local businesses and the Town Council wished to see the site designated for employment use only. The provision of housing in previous failed plans has always been located close to the river. It would be difficult to reconcile those conflicting requirements with the need to maintain the wildlife corridor along the side of the river.

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11.8 Is the suggested location for future town centre expansion appropriate (BRID4)?

- 1.1 The Town Council did not support the development on car parks as proposed. There was currently pressure on car parking in the town and it would not wish to see the loss of car parking places in the town centre. The coach station car park is a long stay car park with facilities for coaches, caravans and lorries and having such facilities close to the town centre is important to the economy of Bridport. The Town Council also still wished to see the coach park designated as a transport hub for the area.
- 1.2 The St Michaels Trading Estate would appear to be a natural solution for such town centre expansion/regeneration, based on identified local needs through the Neighbourhood Plan. Hence the importance for that site to remain, and be designated in the Local Plan, as an employment site.