

NORTH DORSET LOCAL PLAN 2011 – 2026 PART 1 EXAMINATION

HEARING STATEMENT

ISSUE 10

Sturminster Newton

March 2015

Question 10.1: Is there any evidence that the proposed residential development sites in Sturminster Newton, including to the north of the former livestock market; to the north of Northfields; and to the east of the former creamery site; are not available, sustainable or deliverable? If such evidence exists what alternatives are available and have they been satisfactorily considered by the Council?

- 1.1 The Council is not aware of any evidence that the proposed residential development sites in Sturminster Newton are not available, sustainable or deliverable.

Residential Development Sites

- 1.2 The development of land to the north of the former livestock market is an existing allocation (Policy SN4) in the 2003 Local Plan and therefore is considered to be available, sustainable and deliverable. This status has more recently been confirmed as part of the SHLAA (2/54/0459). The land to the north of the former livestock market has previously been promoted by Symonds & Sampson on behalf of Fidei Holdings Ltd (Representation 16/4238) but is now in the control of David Wilson Homes. The developer approached the District and Town Council for initial pre-application discussions in 2014 and is now undertaking supporting ecology and habitats background work.
- 1.3 The development of land to the North of Northfields is considered available, sustainable and deliverable as it has been assessed as part of the SHLAA (2/54/0410). The land to the North of Northfields is owned by Fidei Holdings Ltd and is represented by Symonds & Sampson (Representation 16/4238). The developer is currently engaged in discussion with Dorset County Council over the possible relocation of the local primary school onto part of this site.
- 1.4 The development of land to the east of the former Creamery is considered available, sustainable and deliverable as it has been assessed as part of the SHLAA (2/54/0459). The site is in the control of Taylor Wimpey, a major national house builder who confirm in their representation (Representation 769/4183-4197) that the site is *“available and deliverable now”*. The site promoter confirms that *“the site is in a single ownership, is relatively flat and well contained in the wider landscape”*. An informal meeting was held with the developer and agent in early 2012, but there has been no further pre-application discussion.

Sustainability Appraisal

- 1.5 Sites for growth at Sturminster Newton have been carefully selected to minimise the impact on the local landscape. In addition the community’s Town Design Statement (TDS) (MTC018), which was adopted by the District Council as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) in July 2008, and the informal design briefs for the Station Road area (MTC012) and North Dorset Business Park

(MTC011) help to ensure that development reflects local character. The regeneration of land to the north of the town centre will also help to improve the appearance of the town, all contributing to protecting and enhancing the local townscape and landscape.

- 1.6 The development of the Trailway, connecting towns and villages along its route will help to encourage sustainable travel in the local area, including through the proposed connection with North Dorset Business Park. In addition, the recognition of flooding and biodiversity issues within the policy will help with recognition of the importance of the local environment, contributing to the positive SA results.

Alternative Residential Sites

- 1.7 No alternative residential sites at Sturminster Newton are being promoted through representations on LP1, although alternatives have been examined by the Council through the preparation of the plan.
- 1.8 Sturminster Newton's strategic location as a crossing point on a bend of the River Stour and the town's historic growth up to the edge of the river flood plain mean that options for growth to the west and south of the settlement are extremely limited. The bulk of the settlement is also located on a prominent land spur (reflecting the bend in the river) ensuring that strategic development to the west, south and east if not in the flood plain is liable to have landscape impact. This leads to the conclusion that strategic growth should be directed to the north of the town and away from these constraints.
- 1.9 Different character areas are identified in the TDS with the town's historic core comprising: the historic town centre; edge of historic town centre; and southern fringe character areas. The historic core is suitable for infilling only and not strategic levels of growth. The TDS also identifies the high quality transition between the historic core and adjoining open countryside, much of which is also part of the flood plain of the River Stour.
- 1.10 These constraints have resulted in the historic expansion of the town to the north of the former railway line. The TDS identifies a 'central regeneration area' which includes land and buildings associated with the former railway, former livestock market and former creamery. Much of this area has been regenerated already but the land north of the former livestock market (which was historically used for grazing by animals to be sold at the market) remains as a greenfield site which can be developed for housing within the existing urban area. Land to the east of the former Creamery comprises a narrow strip of land adjoining the 'central regeneration area' between the existing urban development at Elm Close and the route of the former railway (now forming part of the North Dorset Trailway).
- 1.11 Land east of Rixon, beyond the Manston Road would be prominent in the landscape and land to the west of the Bath Road lies within the floodplain of the River Stour. This leaves land to the north of the town (i.e. north of Northfields) as

the preferred location for the further expansion of the town. The capacity of 90 dwellings assumed in LP1 is based on the assessment of the capacity of SHLAA site 2/54/0410. Some additional land may also be required to enable a new primary school to be accommodated in this location, which could potentially include SHLAA site 2/54/0412 or other land in the vicinity all of which is in the ownership of Fidei Holdings Ltd. The approach of identifying broad locations for growth on inset diagrams in LP1 has allowed some flexibility to respond to the recently identified need for a replacement primary school for the town.

- 1.12 Proposed development in or adjoining the village of Newton to the south of the River Stour has been discounted on the basis of poor access to local services and facilities which are located in the town centre but which are not easily accessible for pedestrians due to severance issues caused by the main road (A357).
- 1.13 For further information on the site selection process and sustainability issues please refer to the Market Town Site Selection Background Paper (MTC001) and the Sustainability Assessment (SUD003).

Question 10.2: Is there any evidence that the proposed economic development sites in Sturminster Newton, including at the North Dorset Business Park, are not available, sustainable or deliverable? If such evidence exists what alternatives are available to the Council?

- 1.14 There is no evidence that the proposed economic development sites in Sturminster Newton, including at the North Dorset Business Park are not available, sustainable or deliverable.
- 1.15 The key strategic site covering 6.3 hectares of land on the western edge of Newton is allocated (Policy SN6) in the 2003 Local Plan. This combined with the re-use and regeneration of other employment sites in Sturminster, is more than sufficient to meet local economic development needs in the period up to 2026.
- 1.16 North Dorset Business Park has been an allocated employment site for a number of years, but has remained largely undeveloped. SturQuest (the local community partnership) produced a design and development brief in 2012 (MTC011), which included proposals such as a 'food-based' cluster on the frontage of this site. The planning permission (2/2012/1614/PLNG), which has since been granted includes a masterplan for the site and in 2013 key pieces of infrastructure were installed on site. Any proposals that come forward on North Dorset Business Park should have regard to both the design and development brief and the masterplan for the site.
- 1.17 The Business Park is a joint venture between landowners Dorset County Council, the Homes and Communities Agency and the District Council. The project to install the infrastructure, which is complete, was awarded an £800,000 loan by Dorset Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) through the Government's Growing Places Fund. Serviced plots are now being actively marketed by Goadsby.

- 1.18 The Council will continue to support and will seek to retain existing industrial estates, such as Butts Pond Industrial Estate, to provide job opportunities for local people and space for local businesses.
- 1.19 No alternative sites have been promoted through representations to the plan. The Local Plan Part 2 will take forward the allocation of the land at North Dorset Business Park as a strategic employment site. Additional sites could also be allocated through the neighbourhood planning process.

Question 10.3: 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?

- 1.20 The proposed development can be satisfactorily assimilated into the town without significant detriment to the character of the environment and the living conditions of nearby residents.

Town Design Statement (TDS)

- 1.21 The Sturminster Newton TDS (MTC018) was prepared by the Matrix Partnership under the management of SturQuest, the town's local community partnership. It was adopted by the Council as SPD on 25 July 2008.
- 1.22 The overall aim of the TDS is to achieve a coherent approach to future design and planning to enhance the townscape and to encourage further regeneration of the town and surrounding area as a local centre for employment, retail and service activities.
- 1.23 The TDS contains a contextual analysis, map based analysis, elevation and section studies, identification of character areas, and culminates with design guidelines. The design guidelines seek to ensure that both the essential characteristics of the old town are conserved and that any future development in the newer part of the town uses the opportunity to create a much higher quality of urban environment. It also seeks to encourage substantially higher quality new development around the edges of the town, particularly where sensitive edges have been identified.
- 1.24 The TDS was produced prior to, but was used in, the site selection process as discussed in the answer to Q10.1. The TDS, in particular the identification of character areas and sensitive edges, provides information on the local context, which can be used together with Policy 24: Design to encourage designs of the sites identified for growth that will improve the character and quality of the area.

Question 10.4: Are all the infrastructure requirements listed in policy 19 justified and deliverable?

- 1.25 All the infrastructure requirements listed in policy 19 are justified and deliverable. To support growth in Sturminster Newton the grey, social and green infrastructure proposed has been developed with the 12 core planning principles set out in

Paragraph 17 of NPPF in mind. The issue of ‘reasonable alternatives’ has been explored through the Infrastructure Background Paper 2013 (INF002).

- 1.26 The Council have planned positively for the development and infrastructure in Sturminster Newton to meet the objectives, principles and policies of the NPPF. The Infrastructure Delivery Plan (SUD020) sets out what infrastructure is needed to enable the development proposed to be delivered, how much it will cost and who will deliver it.
- 1.27 Appendix A (of SUD020) sets out the various categories of infrastructure and their significance in respect of the Plan and Appendix B contains a schedule of infrastructure currently programmed/needed to support new development.
- 1.28 The Infrastructure Delivery Plan will be regularly reviewed and updated because development and funding arrangements are likely to change over time and so infrastructure requirements and costs will need to be realigned.

Question 10.5: Is the reference to ‘the existing built-up area’ in criterion (a) appropriate? Why is the reference not to the settlement boundary?

- 1.29 Policy 19: Sturminster Newton, criterion (a) refers to ‘the existing built-up area’ instead of the ‘settlement boundary’ because the purpose of this part of the policy is to set out the Council’s ‘sustainable development strategy’ for the town. The settlement boundary of the town includes areas of green space, which are not built-up (such as school playing fields) where most forms of development would be inappropriate.
- 1.30 Criteria (a) to (d) establish the overarching strategic framework for the subsequent criteria which relate to specific development types under the relevant sub-headings of the policy. Criterion (e) indicates that housing needs will be met through ‘infilling development and redevelopment within the settlement boundary’ in order to make clear that infilling development and redevelopment will not be permitted outside the settlement boundary. However, this criterion also needs to be read in the context of criterion (a) which makes it clear that such infilling should be within ‘the existing built-up area’ to avoid areas of green space where most forms of development would be inappropriate.