

Written Statement by Savills on behalf of the Wool Partnership

Respondent No.: 746

Matter 4/7 - Bournemouth and Poole HMA Sub-regional Strategy

Summary

The Bournemouth and Poole Housing Market Area Sub-regional Strategy should be revised to cover the whole of the Housing Market Area, not just the South East Dorset Conurbation.

The current strategy is overly reliant on windfall sites from within the urban area of the Bournemouth and Poole conurbation. Concerns are raised that the strategy will not deliver an appropriate mix of new housing and that it has overestimated the potential of the built up areas to accommodate additional housing development.

A higher proportion of housing provision needs to be allocated to Purbeck District in order to contribute to meeting its housing needs in qualitative and quantitative terms, fund transport infrastructure requirements, and balance the potential for jobs growth with new housing.

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This written statement is submitted on behalf of the Wool Partnership. The Partnership controls significant areas of land in Purbeck around Wool and Winfrith Technology Centre, and has been involved for many years in the provision of local housing and community services in the area.
 - 1.2 The Wool Partnership's landholding is being promoted as a strategic location for mixed-use development via the Purbeck District Local Development Framework, one of the options within which was to focus growth at Wool / Winfrith.
 - 1.3 The statement relates primarily to the housing distribution for the Bournemouth and Poole Housing Market Area (HMA), in particular for Purbeck District. The statement supports the case for higher levels of growth in the Bournemouth and Poole HMA, including higher levels of growth to meet the needs of Purbeck District in particular.
- ## 2.0 Sub-issue (a) Is the draft RSS sufficiently clear about the spatial outcomes it is seeking in Bournemouth and Poole in terms of their present and future regional and sub-regional roles and their relationship with the other parts of the HMA?
- 2.1 Section 4.3 of the draft RSS focuses primarily on the South East Dorset Conurbation, and the towns within its immediate hinterland. However, it is apparent from Table 4.1 that the Bournemouth and Poole HMA also includes Purbeck, East Dorset, and North Dorset Districts. The Sub-regional strategy for the Bournemouth and Poole HMA fails to recognise that these areas have their own housing and employment needs that cannot be adequately met by

- development within or adjoining the conurbation or the other settlements within the immediate hinterland.
- 2.2 Whilst meeting the needs of the conurbation is a key challenge, of equal importance is the sustainable and balanced growth of the other towns in the HMA. Other settlements in the HMA have the potential to accommodate development in a sustainable manner, and can make a significant contribution to housing supply.
- 2.3 There is a strong case for an increase in the level of housing provision for Purbeck District based upon the potential of Wool / Winfrith Technology Centre to accommodate growth in a sustainable manner in a location that has few environmental constraints, good transport links, and is adjacent to a sub-regionally important employment centre.
- 2.4 A long term vision for the development of a sustainable community at Wool has been prepared by The Wool Partnership (*Wool – Vision for a Sustainable Community*), which has been added to the EiP library. This vision has sought to address the wide range of issues and challenges facing the area such as farm diversification, tourism, landscape management, renewable energy generation, housing, biodiversity, and transport infrastructure.
- 3.0 Sub-issue (b) Has the scale of additional greenfield development been adequately justified against the likely level of housing requirements and in particular the urban renewal opportunities in the main urban areas?**
- 3.1 The approach taken to assessing the capacity of urban areas to accommodating additional development by the Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) in the Dorset area lacks transparency and gives rise to the concern that a number of unrealistic and unsupported assumptions have led to an overestimate of the future levels of housing development that can be accommodated in built up areas.
- 3.2 The approach employs a mix of site surveys, desktop studies, and formulas. It has been used for Urban Housing Potential Studies (UHPS) across Dorset and it is understood that South East Dorset LPAs propose to use it as the basis for Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessments (SHLAAs). One of the drawbacks of the methodology is that specific sites are not identified - this does not give the opportunity for the development industry to comment on site viability or the accuracy of the assessments made by planning officers. This was a key issue at the West Dorset Local Plan Inquiry, with the result that the inspector placed reduced weight on the findings of the study and increased the level of greenfield housing allocations accordingly.
- 3.3 The assumptions in the UHPS are based on currently adopted planning policies and do not take into account the effects of changes to policy that are being considered through emerging Local Development Frameworks. For example, the Urban Potential Study for Purbeck predicts that the rate of housing coming forward from intensification in Swanage will double in the plan period, whilst at the same time a new policy is proposed in the Core Strategy to limit intensification in Swanage. Lower thresholds and higher proportions of affordable housing along with increasing requirements for developer contributions will also have adverse effects on the viability of many brownfield sites.

- 3.4 The strategy put forward for the Bournemouth and Poole HMA in the draft RSS is reliant on a pattern of development that delivers predominantly 1 and 2 bed flats on windfall sites. This will not provide the balanced mix of housing including new homes for families that is required at paragraphs 20 to 24 of PPS3.
- 3.5 A strategy that focuses primarily on providing small flats on windfall sites fails to meet the space aspirations and expectations of many people, especially families, and could have negative long term social and economic consequences that have not been fully considered. The implications include:
- A widening of the affordability gap for family homes, and a rise in real house prices if the total quantity of new homes is below demand.
 - Younger people will be especially hard hit by building fewer family homes as evidence suggests older households will continue to occupy the existing stock of family homes into older age.
 - Growing shortages of larger homes, and rising relative prices, could make communities less sustainable by failing to provide for middle-income households, including many key workers, leaving more polarised communities of either higher or lower income households.
- 3.6 In relation to Purbeck's needs, there is a significant need for affordable housing of about 349 dwellings per annum (latest affordable housing needs survey from Purbeck District Council), considerably in excess of the housing requirement in the draft replacement Structure Plan of 90 dwellings per annum. PPS3 states that LDFs should look forward 15 years in seeking to allocate land for housing and only take account of identified windfall sites – this all places an emphasis on the role of sustainable greenfield sites in delivering the much needed housing in the area. Given the backlog in housing provision alongside the significant increase in housing need (reflecting increasing household formation and economic activity such as at the Winfrith Technology Centre), it is clear that there is a need for significant new housing land within the District to meet longer term needs up to 2026. Such land must be able to deliver the significant requirement for affordable housing, which could not be provided on smaller urban infill sites as currently planned.
- 3.7 Housing is a key issue in rural areas as well as urban areas. The Bournemouth and Poole HMA Sub-regional strategy needs to give greater recognition to the potential of settlements outside the South East Dorset conurbation to provide a mix of new housing development by increasing the housing provision for districts such as Purbeck.
- 4.0 Sub-issue (d) Have environmental limits arising from matters such as flood risk and the protection of environmental assets been adequately taken into account and in particular do the proposals reflect the need to avoid any impact on the integrity of the important nature conservation areas around the conurbation?**
- 4.1 The potential for urban extensions to the conurbation is apparent, even taking account of the profile of constraints affecting the SED area. However, additional urban extensions around the conurbation does not obviate the

need for sustainable urban growth in Purbeck District to meet its needs and balance housing and employment growth in sustainable locations. settlements outside the SED conurbation, including within Purbeck District, have the potential to accommodate growth in a sustainable manner without adverse impacts on designated areas. In particular, the northern part of the Purbeck District focused on the 'larger settlement' of Wool / Winfrith Technology Centre, is unconstrained by significant environmental designations and could accommodate much needed housing and economic development. This should be recognised by an increase in the level of housing proposed for Purbeck District.

5.0 Sub-issue (e) Have infrastructure considerations been adequately taken into account?

5.1 The delivery of the Purbeck Transport Strategy is vital to the future economic performance of Purbeck District and the quality of life of its residents. Based on the anticipated level of grant funding from the Government, about two thirds of the total cost of the highways improvements will need to be met by contributions from developers. However, the amount and rate of growth planned for the district will not be sufficient to deliver the level of contributions needed to cover the anticipated private sector funding of these important infrastructure improvements.

5.2 The current level of contribution per new dwelling is high, and any further increases are likely to be resisted by the house building industry, particularly given the likely costs associated with the proposed planning obligation framework, and the additional costs of incorporating renewable energy and sustainable drainage systems within new development.

5.3 Whilst housing policy should not be driven by infrastructure needs alone, these needs are considerable and combined with other demographic and housing need factors do indicate that a higher rate of growth is justified. An increase in the housing requirement for Purbeck to at least 200 dwellings per annum could raise sufficient funding to cover the shortfall.

6.0 Sub-issue (f) Do the proposals adequately reflect the need to reduce the need to travel, support the use of public transport and minimise congestion?

6.1 Winfrith Technology Centre (WTC) situated adjoining the settlement of Wool on the London – Weymouth railway corridor is a strategic employment site of sub-regional importance, but this is accompanied by high levels of in-commuting. WTC is capable of supporting an additional 2,400 jobs (currently around 1,600 people are employed at WTC), and is one of the few sites in the area that is capable of attracting knowledge-based industry including high-tech research and development opportunities.

6.2 Current and future travel patterns can be improved through an increase in housing at Wool as part of a comprehensive regeneration strategy to create opportunities for people to live in Wool and work at WTC. This can be achieved within the context of an increase in the overall level of housing provision for Purbeck.

7.0 Conclusion

7.1 The Bournemouth and Poole HMA sub-regional strategy should give greater recognition to the needs of districts and settlements outside the South East Dorset conurbation. The potential for the conurbation to accommodate additional housing is recognised, but this does not obviate the need for the outer areas of the HMA to address their needs in sustainable locations. Increased housing provision for Purbeck will contribute towards meeting the District's housing needs and has the potential to facilitate the Purbeck Transport Strategy, improve travel patterns and deliver the range of benefits set out in the *Wool – Vision for a sustainable community* document.

7.2 The Panel are therefore asked to consider increasing the housing requirement for Purbeck District to at least 200 dwelling per annum (Table 4.1) and consider acknowledging the potential around Wool / Winfrith in the RSS. Given the nature of Purbeck District and the absence of major constraints to development in the northern part of the District, we suggest that the Panel consider amending Development Policy C as follows:

Amend Development Policy C by changing the first and third bullet points to read:

“- Supports economic activity in the area

- Can be accommodated in terms of traffic and transport requirements and supports the provision of more sustainable modes of transport”

And the last paragraph, fourth line to read:

“...assessment of housing needs within the local authority's area verified by...”

7.3 Amendments to other policies are contained in our original representations dated 30th August 2006. These include amendments to Policies TO1 (Sustainable Tourism) and paragraph 4.3.8 (South East Dorset Spatial Strategy).