

Christchurch and East Dorset Core Strategy Options:

A response from the Wimborne Civic Society.

1 Consultation and discussion about the Christchurch and East Dorset Core Strategy will take two years. The new Plan will be designed to manage growth and development from 2012 to 2027. It therefore seems imperative that any conclusions drawn from the consultation process must take account of or attempt to counter the significant demographic and social trends forecast for the area involved over the next 20 years.

2 In this context we would like emphasis to be given to the following points, made under the heading ‘**Challenges and Opportunities for the Future**’ in Chapter 2 of the Core Strategy Options for Consideration:-

- (a) care should be taken to ensure that the intensification of residential development within the urban areas does not adversely impact on the established and valued local character and amenity of these areas;
- (b) the imbalance of the age groups of the population towards the older age groups will have implications for the types of housing required and provision of services;
- (c) the impact of a declining working age population on the economy of the area needs tackling;
- (d) the need to address the significant shortfall in affordable homes;
- (e) meeting needs for a sufficient amount and range of employment land and premises;
- (f) the current employment structure is predominantly within traditional industries. It is important that other growth industries are attracted to the area to complement these businesses;
- (g) ensuring the provision of a sufficient level of community facilities and services to support current and future population;
- (h) improvements will need to be made to the A31(T) and roads in and around Ferndown to enable the delivery of a growing economy and appropriate housing.

3 The **principal conclusions** to be drawn from the above points seem to be:-

- (a) attention needs to be concentrated on keeping and ideally increasing the number of **younger people** in the area, through providing additional employment opportunities, affordable or low-cost housing to purchase and an increase in rented accommodation. We would therefore support all attempts (PC4 to PC6) to locate more employment land options. Indeed we would prefer **Option WMC3** (please note that all numbers are taken from the main document, not from the leaflets, where the numbering is different) (**Stone Lane**) to

be developed as a revamped industrial site rather than used as a basis for a limited number of new homes. Our views on housing strategy were sent to EDDC on 12th. October 2009;

(b) as far as **older people** are concerned we would like to see more sheltered accommodation with warden assistance, as in the case of Tapper Court, so that residents can retain their homes and not be forced prematurely into residential or care homes. The effects of a disproportionately high number of the population in homes, with the absence of footfall on the streets and in the shops, are damaging to towns as appears to be happening in Ferndown. Good quality care for older people in their own homes should also be a priority;

(c) we see no likelihood of the drop in the percentage of the residents enjoying car-ownership. Upgrading some of the main arteries is essential. In fact we consider that any significant development should only go ahead if it is carried out in conjunction with corresponding improvements to **roads and other infrastructure**. As a first step, consideration should be given to making the A31 a dual carriageway from Canford Bottom to the Merley Roundabout, and ideally doing the same from Ameysford with a flyover at Canford Bottom. The strategy could be planned in conjunction with the minerals extraction suggested for the land between the A31 and Canford School, which proposal we supported in our response to the Bournemouth, Dorset & Poole Minerals Site Allocations Discussion Paper in December 2008. After extraction, the dual carriageway and proposed country park could be explored. Further we would like to see a new link road between the A31 and Poole, as agreed by us in our submission on the SE Dorset Transport Study in July 2010.

(d) if money were no object we feel that a new town might be the best solution to housing needs in East Dorset, but realistically we will have to settle for Key Strategy 1 (4.35, the settlement hierarchy). One of the cardinal benefits of living in East Dorset is ready access to beautiful and largely unspoilt landscape. We would therefore not like to see significant erosion of the Green Belt and AONB areas, although we would support some of the limited changes as proposed in KS2 (4.41). In judging the various **development options** we are focusing on the Society's area of benefit, principally Wimborne Minster and Colehill. It seems to us that the best strategy would be to start at the areas nearer to Wimborne Town Centre and, only after these options have been exhausted, should consideration be given to developing green sites on the town fringes. Further these latter developments should not be activated unless there is a demonstrable need for housing and a sustainable educational, medical, employment and transport infrastructure for the areas concerned.

(e) with the above considerations in mind the most promising option to us is **Option WMC5 (Leigh Road)**. Though the land is low-lying, it is level; the proposal would allow Wimborne Rugby Club and Wimborne Town Football Club to move to better facilities, provide additional allotments and a valuable green infrastructure, including the country park. Presumably an exit/entrance underpass to the A31 would be pro-

vided to ease traffic pressure on Leigh Road. Both the rugby and football clubs suffer from severe parking and traffic problems, inconveniencing local residents, at busy times;

(f) the Leigh Road Option would facilitate the implementation, at least in part, of **Option WMC1 (Cuthbury)**, and of **Option WMC2 (Leigh Park)**. Regarding the former, we would not wish to lose in its entirety the attractive vista when approaching Wimborne from Eye Bridge and also from the A31 towards Julian's Bridge; we would therefore give support only to the development of part of the proposed area, namely the space available if the Football Club was moved from Cuthbury, and the part of the site nearest to Julian's Road. This would of course require the replacement of the blocks of flats immediately south of the allotments and using the space between them and Julian's Road for development, but it would leave most of the present allotment area undisturbed. We support the provision of additional allotments, to help to meet the current shortfall, on the site south of Leigh Road.

The football ground, if vacated, might be a possible extension site for the valued Wimborne Hospital. We do not, however, think there is any value in the limited development at St Margaret's Close. We would oppose moving the site in Julian's Road to the urban area, as proposed in Preferred Option KS4; very little building land would be provided, the approach to Wimborne from the west would not be improved and access would be difficult;

(g) we would support the proposals for **Leigh Park** once the rugby club has moved. However, this housing development will only work if the road/transport/parking infrastructure is satisfactorily solved and this project should be considered jointly with the application for 180 units at the riverside site at Cobham plc, Brook Road, about which we made submissions on 26th. December 2008 and 20th. October 2009. We consider it essential, however, that some of this land at Leigh Park should be used to develop further facilities for the local residents, such as playgrounds, following the success of the new community centre;

(h) we feel that the **Stone Lane Industrial Estate (WMC3)** has more to offer the town of Wimborne Minster as a business site than as a housing area. Some of the units are currently empty and there appear to be buildings with asbestos components on the estate. The area needs a current overhaul to encourage traders to take the units and create employment opportunities. The entrance to the estate is difficult at present and needs to be widened;

(i) the option for which we have the least enthusiasm is **Option WMC4 (the Cranborne road)**. This involves moving into Green Belt land and would bring with it considerable logistical problems not least the consequences of building over land which is hydrologically sensitive; in the event of urgent need for yet more housing in the Wimborne area, we would find the development of the area west of the Cranborne road marginally more acceptable than building to the east of it;

(j) on Wimborne Town Centre we hope the proposed **Square Enhancement Scheme** goes ahead (see our letter of 16th. January 2009 to the Chief Executive of EDDC). Regarding **Options WMC9 & 10 (the Allendale Area)**, we would regard these as entirely unnecessary and a waste of resources. The Allendale Centre could be refurbished at much lower cost, there is a premium on car parking spaces, the advent of Riverside Park at Waitrose has reduced the need for a public garden and, with only 12% of residents without a car, the case for moving EDDC from Furzehill is not conclusive. Further, the existing Wimborne Market is flourishing and provides a commercial aspect to the Leigh Park area. Leigh Park has benefited from its new community centre and the more varied activities taking place in that section of Wimborne the better. The case made that the arrival of the car park at Waitrose has reduced demand for parking at the Allenvie Car Park is not convincing. The fall in demand at the short-stay part of Allenvie may well have been caused by the rise in the charges, which has encouraged drivers to park on Allenvie Road almost as far as Burts Hill. There should be a review of parking policy, with the provision of more long-stay spaces and a time limit on parking in Allenvie Road similar to that operating in East Borough.

4 Finally we were pleased to see a reference, in the Summary of Key Issues (2.91), to the **high quality historic built environment** which we would naturally like to see preserved. Consequently we strongly support Preferred Option HE 1, **Protection of Buildings of Local Historic and Architectural Interest**, and HE 16, **Rural Design Policies**.

John Worth,
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