

**BATH AND NORTH EAST SOMERSET - CORE STRATEGY EXAMINATION****HEARING – 8 APRIL 2014****STRATEGIC ALLOCATION, WHITCHURCH****INSPECTOR'S AGENDA**

The overall issue for this hearing is as follows: is the strategic allocation at Whitchurch justified in principle and are the detailed requirements of the allocation policy appropriate and effective?

The Hearing covers CSA44, CSA45 (Policy RA5 Whitchurch) and CSAs 46 and 47 (Diagrams), any remaining relevant issues from the consultation in March 2013 in SPCs 145 and 146 and any alternative or additional sites at Whitchurch.

Given the volume of material already submitted in relation to sites at Whitchurch and the helpful Statements of Common Ground (SCG) (those received by me by 27 February) no further statements are requested and no further written evidence/documents will be accepted other than set out in my Guidance Notes.

At the hearing, on each subject below, the Council should briefly explain the reasons for the acceptability of the allocation, followed by those who are opposed to the principle of allocation in relation to that issue (and any Council response), then those who seek any detailed change (and any Council response).

**1. Overall Approach at Whitchurch**

1.1 Is the identification of Whitchurch for more housing development than is proposed at other (non Green Belt) villages, justified in principle? (To be discussed in so far as not already covered in the discussion of the spatial strategy/distribution on Day 1.)

1.2 Proposed change CSA44 indicates that the scope to identify safeguarded land will be considered as part of the Core Strategy Review, given the close relationship of the village to Bristol. Having regard to NPPF paragraph 85 and the Council's acceptance that the 200 dwellings proposed here is a residual figure and not the environmental capacity at Whitchurch, if a site-specific allocation of 200 dwellings at Whitchurch in the Core Strategy is not immediately required to ensure a 5 year supply of housing, should an allocation requiring site-specific changes to the Green Belt boundary be deferred until there is more certainty about the scale of development/possible changes to the Green Belt in this area that might be required in the longer term?

**2. Green Belt**

2.1 What would be the effect of the allocation on the purposes served by the Green Belt in this location? The Council should explain its justification for removal from the Green Belt carefully in the context of the *Green Belt Review Stage 1* (CD9/E2 pp27-29) and *Stage 2* (CD9/E9 pp45-54) Reports.

2.2 If an allocation is justified in principle, is the proposed Green Belt boundary shown on the Concept Diagram and Policies Map (CD10/CS1, Annexes 1 and 2) appropriate for the scale of development envisaged?

- Is the proposed indented southern boundary justified compared with the alternative following Queen Charlton Road sought by Barratt Homes Bristol (see SCG BNES/53K)?

- An area to the north east of the allocation is to be removed from the Green Belt, but is not included in the allocation, nor subject to any other policy. Is this removal justified? Does it have potential for additional housing development? Should it be subject to any particular policy guidance?

### **3. Housing numbers and density**

3.1 Is the proposed density justified in this location? Should it be specified in the policy or left to Master-planning work?

3.3 The allocation is for *around 200 dwellings*. Is this intended as a cap or might a future decision maker perceive it as such? Should flexibility to accommodate more or fewer dwellings within the location be acknowledged, if all the requirements of the policy can be met and any harm avoided? If so, how might this be expressed (either here or as a general statement applying to all the allocations)?

### **4. Heritage Assets, Landscape and Ecology**

4.1 Would there be any harm to heritage assets, landscape or the ecology of the area to be allocated? If so, what is the degree/significance of the harm? In particular, would there be any harm to the setting of:

- the listed building at Staunton Manor Farm;
- the Queen Charlton Conservation Area;
- the Maes Knoll Ancient Monument?

### **5. Other Place-making Principles**

5.1 Is the area of retained vegetation shown on the Concept Diagram justified? Would it hinder the creation of an appropriate layout for the housing development?

5.2 Are the proposed primary vehicle access points justified? Should there be vehicular access from Queen Charlton Road?

5.3 Are the education requirements justified and deliverable (see CD10/E21 and CD12/10)? Why does provision for early years need to be on site?

*As with the other strategic allocations, concerns regarding the affordable housing requirement and sustainable construction/renewable energy will be considered at the later joint hearings on those specific matters.*

### **Additional or Alternative Green Belt sites at Whitchurch**

*The focus of the Examination is now whether the changes the Council has proposed, including the strategic housing allocations, would make the Core Strategy sound. Hence this overall hearing focuses on the soundness of the proposed allocation at Whitchurch. Any criticisms of the justification for the allocation should be made in the discussion above. However, to avoid those discussions being made more complex or prolonged with material that really relates to other sites, this part of the hearing provides a brief opportunity for those who want to be heard on other sites. I do not intend these sessions to repeat matters covered in the previous hearings concerning any alternative sites in January 2012.*

*I would remind all parties that I could not recommend in my report any such alternative site unless it had been the subject of appropriate public consultation and it would be inevitable that a further hearing would also be required if any alternative were proposed to be included in the Core Strategy. Hence it is inappropriate and unnecessary to examine in this session possible alternatives in the same degree of detail as the allocation currently proposed by the Council. Such detailed scrutiny would take place if any alternative needed to be pursued further.*

*The identified potential participants need to confirm with the Programme Officer whether they wish to participate.*

*For each possible alternative location the Council should briefly explain how the merits of any such alternative have been assessed in the overall plan process (or why not assessed) and the reasons they are considered inappropriate or less suitable than the chosen site. The promoter of the alternative should then summarise the reasons why the plan is considered unsound in the absence of the change sought. The promoter should make clear whether the site is being suggested as a replacement for the allocation now proposed by the Council or as an addition. The Council can make a final comment in each case if necessary.*

**Potential Participants/Sites**

1. Land North of Orchard Park, Staunton Lane, Whitchurch; Robert Hitchens Ltd (Rep 170 and BNES/53/Y)
2. Lands Improvement (Rep 4639 Turley Associates) and Bovis Homes (Rep 251 Barton Willmore) should confirm with the Programme Officer whether they are pursuing their sites at this hearing.

**Simon Emerson  
Inspector  
18 March 2014**