

NORTH SOMERSET CORE STRATEGY EXAMINATION OF REMITTED POLICIES

HEARING STATEMENT:

MATTER 3 Policies

PERSIMMON HOMES SEVERN VALLEY

MAY 2016

Contents

Policy CS28: Weston-super-Mare

b. Policy CS30: Weston Villages

c. Policy CS31: Clevedon, Nailsea and Portishead

d. Policy CS32: Service Villages

e. Policy CS33: Infill Villages, Smaller Settlements and Countryside

Matter 3 Policies

Question 3

In those settlements and locations where the consequential changes significantly increased the housing requirement, can it be demonstrated that the capacity exists to deliver the increased number of homes to enable the Core Strategy Housing Requirement, including those of the consequential changes, to be met in the following locations, in terms of overall numbers and housing mix?

Question 4

Is the plan with the consequential changes, flexible and resilient enough to ensure that the housing requirement is met? Are there modifications that need to be made to make it more flexible and resilient? In particular should there be more flexible wording in respect of:

- A. Policy CS32;
- B. Policy CS33;
- C. Any other location.

Question 4: General Comment on Capacity

1. We consider the responses to the two questions are interrelated because the inflexibility of the wording of a number of policies impact on the potential capacity and ability to deliver the housing requirement.
 - 1.1 We also have the following general comments on capacity which reflect comments elsewhere in our statements.
 1. The supply is dependent on delivery on almost 100% of the identified numbers and is unlikely to meet the overall requirement without further allocations.
 2. Demonstration that the required sites can be delivered is dependent on the Site Allocations Plan which is not envisaged to be adopted until April 2017.
 3. Given the lack of a sustainability appraisal for the revised policies, it is not clear whether the most sustainable locations (both settlements and sites) have been identified.
 4. The HELA indicates there is sufficient additional capacity.
 - 1.2 Therefore we consider that the flexibility of policies CS28, CS30, CS31, CS32 and CS33 should be increased as set out below.

Policy CS28: Weston-super-Mare

3. Capacity

2. In respect of capacity we can confirm that there is sufficient capacity to deliver a minimum of 2,500 homes on the land we control at Weston Airfield.

4. Flexibility

- 2.1 In considering flexibility the issue is whether increasing the housing figure to 10,914 means 10,500 employment opportunities are still '*balanced*'. The Inspector's conclusions on the examination of Policy CS13 (CC/04) implies that they are in his paragraph 47 conclusion (*'In my opinion an improvement of about 6% in this self-containment'* rate which would derive from a housing requirement of circa 21,000 would still be worthwhile and would be compatible with the overall strategy of '*self-containment in the adopted parts of the Core Strategy*'). This suggests that whilst it might still be worthwhile to pursue self-containment, the housing and employment figures may not still be balanced. Therefore we consider this should be recognised by simplifying the policy wording and deleting '*balanced with*' and replacing it with '*and*'. In addition in accordance with our comments on CS14, '*around 10,914*' should be replaced by '*a minimum of 10,914*' including all these amendments the first paragraph of the policy would read:
- 2.2 '*Weston-super-Mare will be the primary focus for development within North Somerset. The town will accommodate a minimum of 10,914 additional new dwellings and approximately 10,500 employment opportunities from 2011-2026 as part of an employment-led strategy to deliver improved self-containment and reduced out-commuting during the plan period*'.
- 2.3 Additional comments on the employment-led approach are included in response to Policy CS30 below and to the Inspector's question 6 in relation to Policy CS20.

b. Policy CS30: Weston Villages

3. Capacity

3. In relation to capacity we confirm that there is sufficient capacity at Weston Airfield to deliver a minimum of 2,500 new homes and the employment land identified in the Masterplan for Winterstoke Village.

4. Flexibility

- 3.1 In our comments on the consultation on the consequential changes we suggested changes to the wording of Policy CS30 and its supporting paragraph, based on inconsistencies with Policy CS20. We have looked at this issue further and suggest additional changes should be considered because of further inconsistencies with other guidance.

- 3.2 Bullet points 1 and 3 taken together say development '*must satisfy*' (ie it is a requirement) and provide 1.5 jobs per dwelling over the plan period and at least 37.7 hectares of B class employment land. However, subsequent guidance (Weston Villages SPD), the Joint Position Statement on the delivery and monitoring of employment-led growth at Weston Villages (ED25) and Employment-led delivery at Weston-super-Mare (CC/22) and the practical implementation of the policy, demonstrate that the re-examination of the policy provides an appropriate opportunity to adjust the policy wording to take account of the following:

- Paragraph 3.3 of ED25 which specifically removes references to B-class jobs from the requirements for Weston Villages;
- Paragraph 5.8 of CC/22 which confirms all forms of employment generating land use can potentially count;
- Paragraph 5.8 of CC/22 which refers to a '*priority*' to B-class use, not barrier to other employment classes;
- Paragraph 5.2 of CC/22 which measures numbers of jobs by amount of floor space delivered not on actual numbers of jobs provided by end users.

- 3.3 Therefore we consider the wording of Policy CS30 should now be consistent with this later guidance. This is further emphasized by a number of other flexibilities which the guidance introduces, including:

- Paragraph 5.9 of CC/22 enables an exception to ensure the right employment is provided and that the number of jobs should not be the only factor;
- Paragraph 5.10 of CC/22 enables a reduced jobs/homes ratio to prevent appropriate low density uses being rejected.

Therefore it is clear from the above and previous comments that amendments to Policy CS30 are now required as follows:

- (i) To ensure consistency between CS20 and CS30 as set out in our submitted comments on the remitted policies we consider as a minimum the first bullet point should be amended to read '*Development should be employment-led and should provide for 1.5 jobs per dwelling over the plan period*'.

However, the further considerations above suggest the following additional amendments:

- (ii) Replace '*with the provision of 1.5 jobs per dwelling*' with either:

- (a) '*a target provision of 1.5 jobs per dwelling*' or
- (b) '*the provision of 1.5 jobs per dwelling based on floor space provided*'.

(iii) In bullet point 3 delete '*B-class*'. Putting all these together, overall we suggest that bullet point 1 should be reworded to:

- '*Development should be employment-led and should target provision of 1.5 jobs per dwelling over the plan period based on floor space provided.*'
- Bullet point 3 should be reworded to '*Provide at least 37.7 hectares of employment land . . .*'

This will require consequential changes to paragraph 4.48 to 4.53.

- 3.4 Finally in accordance with our comments on CS14 '*Provide about 6,500 new homes*' in bullet point 2 should be replaced with '*Provide a minimum of 6,500 new homes*'.
- 3.5 These changes will ensure that there is sufficient flexibility to provide for the delivery of sufficient employment land to enable the delivery of the requisite number of houses at Weston Villages in accordance with the employment-led strategy and contribute towards the aim of achieving greater self-containment.

c. Policy CS31: Clevedon, Nailsea and Portishead

Capacity and Flexibility

4. Similar issues apply in principle to Policy CS31 as apply in respect to Policy CS30, in that the balance between homes and jobs will change due to the substantial increase in the number of houses (+1,925 or 63%) but no increase in numbers of jobs. Indeed the impact is even clearer in this policy, where unlike CS30 the policy provides figures for indicative numbers of jobs rather than areas of land.
- 4.1 In submitting our comments on the consultation draft, we suggested that the deliverable capacity of the three towns should be further reviewed and clarified. The publication of the consultation draft of the Site Allocations Plan (CC/10) provides further information. As part of the Sustainability Appraisal an assessment was carried out of all the potential residential Site Allocations (CS/14). The following table sets out an assessment of the totals for each of the three towns and shows the total sites assessed, the resultant numbers that are within the settlement boundaries and the total numbers proposed as allocations in the Site Allocations Plan.

Table 1 Site Allocations Plan Assessment Criteria for Residential Allocations

Town	Numbers Inside Settlement Boundary	Total Numbers Identified	Allocations
Clevedon	86	346	127
Nailsea	173	2,932	967
Portishead	373	373	258
Total	632	3,651	1,352

- 4.2 It is clear from this simple analysis that even the limited numbers the Council recognise now need to be brought forward in the three towns cannot be accommodated strictly in accordance with terms of the policy '*within*'the settlement boundaries. There is also a deficiency in the policy wording in Policy CS14. This also says new development will take place in Clevedon, Nailsea and Portishead on 'existing Site Allocations' as well as new development in settlement boundaries. Effectively this does allow additional development outside the settlement boundaries of the three towns. However what is emerging in the Site Allocations Plan is new site allocations in addition to existing allocations. Again this suggests that the policy wording in the Core Strategy should be adjusted to reflect current circumstances.
- 4.3 There is a further inconsistency in the policy wording when it is compared with CS32. At a town level in the settlement hierarchy, the policy in paragraph three supports small scale residential development and mixed use schemes which cannot be accommodated within existing settlement boundaries, subject to the provisos that they are supported by the local community and brought forward as an allocation in the Site Allocations Plan. It has never been clear why this degree of flexibility has been accorded to Service Villages but not the Towns. A similar wording deleting '*small scale*' to provide the difference in approach between Towns and Service Villages could be used in CS31. However in our view this is not entirely necessary that the issue can be dealt with more simply by referring to development '*at*' rather than '*in*' towns.
- 4.4 Therefore to ensure consistency between Policies CS14 and CS31 we suggest the following amendments:

CS14 – ‘*Outside Weston, most additional development will take place **at** the towns of Clevedon, Nailsea and Portishead on Site Allocations or through new development within their settlement boundaries*’.

Policy CS31 should be reworded ‘*Proposals for development **at** Clevedon, Nailsea and Portishead will be supported . . .*’

- 4.5 The second sentence should then be amended from ‘*within the main towns . . .*’ to ‘*at the main towns . . .*’. Finally to ensure consistency with CS14 the heading to the numbers should be amended from houses (2006-26) to ‘*a minimum no. of houses 2006-26*’.
- 4.6 In terms of potential capacity the above table shows that the proposed allocations amount to only 37% of the total number assessed. The other sites would then appropriate be assessed in terms of the new policy wording which would increase the potential capacity in the three towns. In addition other sites not assessed which have been promoted would also be reconsidered in the light of the revised policy wording. This will provide greater certainty that sufficient housing and employment can be provided at Clevedon, Nailsea and Portishead.

d. Policy CS32: Service Villages

5. From our view the original wording of Policy CS32 was appropriate at the time the Council proposed to adopt the original Core Strategy, but it now needs to be reconsidered in the light of changed circumstances. The original wording supports small scale development appropriate to the size and character of the village and small scale residential or mixed use schemes which cannot be accommodated within existing settlement boundaries as specific allocations. The emphasis in both cases is on small scale. However, the Council recognises in their 14th March 2016 response to the Inspector (CC/02), at paragraph 24, that a higher than might otherwise have been anticipated proportion of new housing will need to be delivered at Service Villages.
- 5.1 When we look at what is now proposed in the Site Allocations Plan (CC/10) it is clear that the small scale restriction has been selectively breached. Comparing existing dwellings derived from the 2011 census with the Site Allocation proposals, a total of 219 new dwellings are proposed at Churchill where there are 889 existing dwellings, an increase of 25%. At Yatton 696 new dwellings are proposed in addition to 3,116 existing dwellings, an increase of 22%. Increases of nearly a quarter in these two villages cannot be considered small scale.
- 5.2 Neither can some of the individual Site Allocations be considered small scale in a village context (170 at North End, Yatton, 200 at Arnolds Way, Yatton in addition to 150 granted planning permission and under construction. Equally 141 at Pudding Pie Lane East at Churchill adds 15% to the number of dwellings in the village. Clearly the policy needs to be adjusted to take account of this. It would be inappropriate and disingenuous to allow this level of development now in breach of policy and then attempt to re-impose the more restrictive approach of the original policy wording.
- 5.3 The Council's response to the Inspector's letter (CC/02) in arguing that the existing Service Village designations remain fit for purpose confirms that the sustainability settlements has been reappraised. This exercise is more detailed than previously and includes an assessment of the sustainability of settlements and sites considered for allocation. We accept this provides part of the sustainability analysis of the Site Allocations Plan and not the Core Strategy but nevertheless it provides an important body of information which provides appropriate evidence that can be taken into account in reconsidering the wording of Policy CS32.
- 5.4 On a general point, we note that there is no policy commitment to sustainable development in any of the Core Strategy policies, although Objective 1 does seek to deliver sustainable housing development. This approach largely stems from the fact that the Core Strategy was adopted in April 2012, only a month after the formal adoption of the NPPF, with its emphasis on the presumption in favour of sustainable development.
- 5.5 So, the criteria in Policy CS32 do not refer to sustainable development, but relate to scale, size and character and role in relation to a number of elements. We accept all these issues contribute to achieving sustainable development and these are now encompassed in a specific sustainability appraisal for the villages. We note that the Council has always resisted including any sort of classification of Service Villages in Core Strategy policy but nevertheless the Sustainability Appraisal the Council has now carried out effectively establishes a hierarchy of villages based on new evidence.
- 5.6 The document '*Assessing the sustainability and settlement hierarchy of rural settlements in North Somerset*' (CC/15) itself demonstrates the important role of the SA. The instruction says it will '*provide a framework to help support decision-making on future Site Allocations*' and will '*assess the current relative sustainability of*

villages' and it provides '*an overall framework for assessing the broad location of the future development*'.

5.7 Therefore we suggest the following amendments to Policy CS32:

1. Delete small scale in the first paragraph so that it reads '*proposals for development appropriate to the size and character of the village . . .*'
2. In paragraph 3 delete small scale so that it reads '*where residential or mixed use schemes which demonstrate clear local benefits . . .*'
3. Amend supporting paragraph 4.86 to refer to the evidence base provided by the Sustainability Appraisal for the Site Allocations Plan.

e. Policy CS33: Infill Villages, Smaller Settlements and Countryside

6. The consultation document says this is the least sustainable tier of the settlement hierarchy where new development is tightly controlled. However, we note that the percentage increase in the numbers (128% from 522 to 1,189) is the second largest percentage increase for any level in the hierarchy.
- 6.1 Secondly, it is also clear that the precise wording of the policy is not being applied. The wording is very restrictive and in particular within settlement boundaries, residential development should be infill development (defined as one or two dwellings) or small scale residential redevelopment where the proposal is community-led and with clear community and environmental benefits. In the case of Bleadon, planning permission was granted for 42 units at Bleadon quarry for a land owner-led application. Whilst there was substantial public consultation and the Parish Council supported the principle of development, it had a number of objections to the details including the need to improve community facilities and provision of medical facilities so this was not a community-led and entirely community supported scheme.
- 6.2 This was clearly an appropriate site and the Council might suggest the policy has been applied flexibly. However, what has happened is that an element of the policy has been ignored in considering the proposal at the discretion of the Council and that it is far different from the appropriate interpretation of a flexible policy wording.
- 6.3 Another aspect of the policy is restrictive and lacks flexibility by limiting small scale residential proposals within settlement boundaries to redevelopment, rather than development. Whilst this might only apply to a small number of sites, it is illogical where opportunities exist for developing a site within a settlement boundary as the Bleadon example shows.
- 6.4 We therefore suggest in the third paragraph of the policy, deleting '*where the proposal is community-led with . . .*' and adding '*which delivers*' and substituting '*development*' for '*redevelopment*' so that it reads:

'Within the settlement boundaries of the following villages infill development (one or two dwellings) or small scale residential development which delivers clear community and environmental benefits will be permitted'. The next sentence adequately deals with redevelopment proposals.