

## REPORT 7 South Somerset's scale of growth workshop discussion paper 29 March 2011 – Consideration of the scale of growth for Chard

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### Introduction

This paper examines the potential scale of growth that might be delivered through the Draft Core Strategy at Chard in the light of issues raised by respondents. 5 representations in support of the scale of housing growth at Chard have been received and 3 representations in support of the level of employment growth. Key issues arising from objections are set out and considered below.

### Issues:

#### Housing

- Major urban extension proposed at Chard is excessive relative to the status of Chard in the District's spatial strategy.
- The strategic allocation has been carried forward when it has consistently proven impossible to deliver. Although it has recently been reappraised the allocation is still inherently unreliable as it remain in multiple ownerships and will be even more so given the increase in the size of the allocation.
- The Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS)<sup>1</sup> intended 68% of development to be in Strategically Significant Towns and Cities. Core Strategy should increase provision at Yeovil to approx 9,600 dwellings with the redistribution of numbers from Chard (support the district wide RSS target of 19,700).
- Written justification suggests that there is a market limit to the level of provision within Chard and that this limit is 1,700 dwellings. Given that the level of housing commitment in Chard is in excess of this figure and the Chard Regeneration Framework is at a very advanced stage with funding commitment for key infrastructure already secured in it is considered unnecessary to place restriction to growth at Chard.
- Chard is receiving too much growth in relation to Yeovil - reduce Chard by 800 and give the housing to Yeovil (to 9,000) redress an imbalance and favour Yeovil as the primary growth point in the District.
- Policy only makes provision for 328 new allocations in Chard. This should be increased to achieve the Core Strategy's strategic objectives. Para 52 of PPS3<sup>2</sup> refers to the need to have a flexible land supply. The identification of additional sites would help to absorb any shortfall in delivery from Yeovil urban extension.
- Additional housing provision should be increased to 500 dwellings (328 + 172).
- More growth should be directed towards Chard rather than Yeovil, would have the advantage of justifying improved road links from the A303, provide justification for the reopening of Chard railway station and help regenerate shopping.
- The strategy for Chard should be based on Option 2, not 3, forming a ceiling for development (1366 approx) - reasons 1) Chard consistently failed to deliver growth, Consortium no longer exists, 2) Chard Vision does not rely on high levels of peripheral growth, but on an economic strategy, 3) case and logic for proposed level of growth is not explained, SA does not clarify, 4) Option 3 delivers little additional benefit to Option 2, 5) Option 3 extends outside plan period.

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<sup>1</sup> The Draft Regional Spatial Strategy for the South West Incorporating the Secretary of State's Proposed Changes – For Public Consultation July 2008

<sup>2</sup> Planning Policy Statement 3: Housing, June 2010

- Option 3 will not deliver the proposed scale of growth or be viable enough to deliver accompanying infrastructure.
- Concern regarding impact on infrastructure – capacity of schools, medical facilities etc

**Response:**

**Housing**

The Draft Core Strategy defines Chard as a Market Town. It identifies that 1863 dwellings were committed<sup>3</sup> in the settlement (as at Autumn 2009) with 328 additional dwellings to be built giving a total housing provision of 2191 dwellings, 1,700 of the strategic allocation of 2,716 are to be built by 2026. The Annual Monitoring Report 2009-2010 shows that as at April 2010, 1854 dwellings are now committed.

The 2010 Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) confirms that there is sufficient suitable, available and viable land to accommodate the proposed additional 328 dwellings<sup>4</sup>. The Peripheral Landscape Study for Chard (2008) supports this proposed level of growth by identifying that there is scope within the landscape Chard to accommodate within the region of 1600 new homes (this is in addition to the Key Site allocation).

The proposals for Chard differ from other places in the District because of the work that has been undertaken by LDA Design as part of the Chard Regeneration Framework. The Chard Regeneration Plan (2009) sets out 4 options for the growth of Chard ranging from 'Town Centre Regeneration (410 dwellings) to 'Growth to Natural Limits' (3284 dwellings), Option 3 'Eastern Growth Area Full Build Out' is identified in the Draft Core Strategy as the preferred option (2716 dwellings). An accompanying Implementation Plan (October 2010) sets out how growth might be delivered through a phased approach that consequently delivers the Chard Key Site allocation (and additional growth) without the prohibitive costs associated with providing the eastern distributor road. It is accepted that further work is required to assess the viability and deliverability of the scheme. An internal Delivery Team has been set up headed by the Economic Development Manger to focus on delivery of the ACI Boden site and Phase II of the Regeneration Plan.

Draft policy SS4 identifies 1863 commitments for Chard, this includes 1372 dwellings allocated without planning permission (includes the 1,350 dwellings within the Key Site which are now part of the strategic allocation) as noted it was considered that the market could deliver in the region of 1700 dwellings over the plan period. The following is a breakdown of how the housing figures were calculated:

**Figures for Chard housing calculation Option 3:**

Completions (06/09 - net) = 247  
 Under construction = 38  
 Existing Commitments (not started) (Autumn 2009) = 206  
 Allocated without planning permission = 1372  
**Total = 1863**

$247+38+206 = 491$

$491+1700 = 2191$

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<sup>3</sup> Includes completions 06/10, under construction, commitments not started, and allocated without permission.

<sup>4</sup> Indicates capacity for 2396 dwellings (1810 within Chard Key Site)

2191 – 1863 = 328 residual requirement

1700 (from growth area in the plan period) + 1016 (post 2026) = 2716 (total housing in Chard Regeneration Plan Option 3).<sup>5</sup>

Whilst provision has been made for only 328 additional dwellings the figures above show that Chard has a high number of existing commitments, the scale of growth set out in the Draft Core Strategy is considered to be an achievable target as demonstrated by the Implementation Plan (October 2010). To increase this figure by 172 dwellings is not considered necessary; if the market in Chard becomes particularly buoyant over the plan period the growth directed beyond the plan period could be delivered earlier through a flexible plan monitor and manage approach as advocated in PPS3.

The Chard Regeneration Plan and the accompanying Implementation Plan have already considered infrastructure provision particularly highways, utilities and energy infrastructure. Draft Policy CV2 indicates the requirement for primary school provision, neighbourhood centres and sport and open space provision. The Infrastructure Delivery Plan will reaffirm what infrastructure improvements are required by the proposed level of growth. The proposed regeneration in the town centre will help to bring about an improved shopping experience for those living in and visiting Chard.

Regarding the re-opening of Chard junction the Draft Core Strategy explains that in the absence of a viability study indicating that there is a business case for the re-opening of Chard junction there is not sufficient evidence to protect the land. The County Council, as the Highway Authority could carry out such a study or developers could undertake it. Given that there is no need for more growth than is already proposed and it has already been recognised that the deliverability of what is proposed needs more work, it would not be prudent to allocate yet more growth in Chard with the objective of re-opening Chard Junction.

It has been suggested that no growth restriction should be placed on Chard, however it is appropriate that within the Core Strategy an indication of the scale of growth expected to be accommodated in Yeovil, Market Towns and Rural Centres is given; draft Policy SS4 is clear that the numbers given are 'indicative' and provision will be made for 'at least' that number of dwellings. Given that there has been concern expressed that the number of dwellings indicated might not be deliverable and given that there are a number of issues that still need work to be overcome, including viability and impact on the highway network, it is considered that a higher figure would not be deliverable and therefore be found unsound.

Re-distribution of growth from Chard to Yeovil would need to be discussed as part of the overall strategy for the District, however it is considered that, as the second largest settlement in the District the level of growth directed to Chard is proportionate and will help to achieve the vision for Chard. To reduce the level of growth by 800 dwellings over the plan period would reduce the total growth for Chard from 2191 dwellings to 1391 dwellings this would have a detrimental impact on deliverability of the strategic allocation and the regeneration and infrastructure improvements it would bring with it, particularly given Chard's status as a Market Town with strategic shopping, cultural, education, health, leisure and financial facilities, an existing concentration of businesses and being a place with sustainable transport modes<sup>6</sup>. The same arguments apply to the suggestion that Option 2 should be taken forward instead (1366 dwellings). The Sustainability Appraisal shows that Option 3 delivers more significantly positive effects than Option 2.

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<sup>5</sup> Figures would be updated for the Publication Plan.

<sup>6</sup> South Somerset Settlement Role and Function Study Final Report April 2009, Baker Associates

The level of growth proposed at Chard is not considered to be disproportionate to the rest of the District given Chards status as the second largest settlement in the District. Whilst Option 3 extends beyond the plan period as long as the issues of deliverability and viability can be successfully addressed the scale of growth associated with that Option will bring about the maximum benefits for the town in terms of infrastructure improvements, housing and regeneration opportunities.

**Recommendation:**

No change in approach. Amend the total housing provision for Chard to 2,431 (2,430 rounded) dwellings within the plan period to reflect the incremental change arising from the extension of the plan period to 2028.

**Employment**

No representations were received in objection to the scale of employment growth proposed at Chard.

**Response:**

It is noted that there are no issues raised in relation to the scale of employment growth at Chard.

**Recommendation:**

No change.