

**REPORT 8 South Somerset's scale of growth workshop discussion paper
6 April 2011 – Consideration of the scale of growth for Crewkerne**

Introduction

This paper examines the potential scale of growth that might be delivered through the Draft Core Strategy at Crewkerne in the light of issues raised by respondents. There are nine responses in support of the scale of growth proposed at Crewkerne. Issues arising from the fourteen objections are set out and considered below.

Issues:

Housing

- The level of growth for Crewkerne is too low, should have more growth reflecting its role in the District. Crewkerne could take more growth.
- Crewkerne should deliver 200 extra houses.
- Support the eastern expansion of Crewkerne but suggest that dwelling numbers at Crewkerne should be increased by a further 300-400. This would help meet the shortfall identified against the current evidence base. And would contribute to the costs of highway improvements. There would also need to be a commensurate increase in employment land provision.
- Concerned that the housing growth for Chard and Crewkerne relies largely on saved allocations. This is unnecessarily inflexible and would fail the justified, effective and consistent with national policy tests of soundness. Consider that it would be more appropriate to identify an additional larger housing requirement over and above commitments for these towns to allow for a more responsive and flexible housing supply.

- Object - as policy stands 70% of new homes will be in Yeovil and Chard, just over 12% in Crewkerne & Wincanton, just over 10% in Ilminster, Somerton, Martock and the rest meaning less than 10% in the remaining small towns and villages. Almost 25% of growth is proposed at Keyford - this would involve building a medium sized town with 3,700 houses for up to 8,000 people.
- Prefer greater growth at Crewkerne ahead of Wincanton.

- Object to the level of growth attributed to Crewkerne, it will put too much strain on services and increase traffic.
- Object to the housing development, it will generate traffic as there are no jobs in the town and people will need to travel elsewhere - this will lead to highways issues and road infrastructure is poor. Need to improve road infrastructure.
- Is there sufficient capacity in existing schools (particularly Ilminster primary, Chard Holyrood and Crewkerne, Wedlam)?
- Roads are inadequate even for current levels of traffic. Any further development will need significantly improved road access.

Employment

No objections to the proposed scale of employment land, one response in support.

Response:

Housing

The responses fall into three categories:

1. objecting to the level of growth, suggesting additional houses are required, and not on saved allocations,
2. objecting to overall level of growth, suggest redistributing growth from Yeovil and Wincanton to Crewkerne; and
3. objecting to growth on infrastructure grounds.

The Draft Core Strategy defines Crewkerne as a Market Town. It identifies that 928 dwellings were committed¹ in the settlement (as at Autumn 2009) with 100 additional dwellings to be built giving a total housing provision of 1028 dwellings.

The latest housing supply position in Crewkerne is set out in the recent Annual Monitoring Report (2009-2010) and shows a total of 939 dwellings are either built, under construction, have planning permission or are allocated.

The 2010 Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) suggests there is the potential to deliver sites accommodating some 1115 dwellings, confirming that there is sufficient suitable, available and viable land to accommodate the proposed additional 100 dwellings cited in the Core Strategy. The Peripheral Landscape Study for Crewkerne (2008) supports this proposed level of growth by identifying that there is scope within the landscape around Crewkerne to accommodate this level of growth.

The Settlement Role and Function Study² provides evidence of the need for the scale of growth identified in the draft Core Strategy. Population projections identify that over the plan period there will be a reduction in household size, from 2.36 persons per household to 2.12 persons. Based on the 2001 Census population for Crewkerne (7500 population), if there were no additional dwellings built in the town, there was no migration and household reduction occurred as projected (i.e. reduced from 2.36 to 2.12) Crewkerne's population would decline by 750 people to 2026. This could negatively impact on the provision of shops and community facilities. On this basis around 354 houses would be required to maintain Crewkerne's current population alone.

The South Somerset Local Plan allocated the CLR site as a key site, which as part of the regeneration of the town would deliver a package of land uses to achieve a balanced development for Crewkerne, including a link road between the A30 and A356. This is viewed as strategically significant and is carried forward in draft Policy HG1 of the Core Strategy.

Some respondents have used the argument that the overall District-wide level of growth is too low, and if this is increased, additional growth should go to Crewkerne, no decision has been made with regard the overall level of growth, and if this is amended, then the scale of growth in all the Market Towns and Rural Centres may need to be examined in light of the settlement hierarchy.

There is concern that a large proportion of Crewkerne's commitments come from saved Local Plan allocations, suggesting that these will never be realised, however, the Maiden Beech site was awarded planning permission in August 2010 and a material start has been made on site, which will deliver 114 dwellings and there is evidence that the CLR site is moving forward, with a solution to the dormouse issue, consequently this will deliver 525 dwellings. The concern that the dwellings will not deliver is unfounded, and therefore there is no need for additional dwellings on this basis.

It has been suggested by respondents wishing to see less development in Yeovil, that additional development should be accommodated across the District, including in Crewkerne,

¹ Includes completions 06/10, under construction, commitments not started, and allocated without permission.

² South Somerset Settlement Role and Function Study Final Report April 2009, Baker Associates

but there is no evidence of further need is submitted, therefore no case is made to change the Core Strategy position, which is a result of evidence from the Settlement Role and Function Study.

Respondents suggest that there should be no additional homes until jobs are available. The Core Strategy has sought to balance the requisite amount of employment land to economically active persons who will be generated from the additional homes, this sufficiently balances the amount of jobs to homes, delivering the land is more difficult and is considered below.

The Infrastructure Delivery Plan will assess what infrastructure improvements would be required by the proposed level of growth. Despite concerns regarding highways and education Somerset County Council, as the Highway and Education Authority has not objected the proposal. Additionally, highways impact and education contributions will be considered as part of any planning application that might be received in the future.

The scale of growth recommended in the draft Core Strategy reflects the town's economic growth potential and the trajectory shows this growth is possible.

Recommendation:

No change in approach.

Employment

No objections to the proposed scale of employment land, one response in support.

Recommendation:

No change.