

**REPORT 13 Scale of growth workshop discussion paper April 2011 Review of
Langport/Huish Episcopi's scale of growth**

Introduction

The draft Core Strategy incorporating preferred options¹ states that 300 dwellings should be built in Langport/Huish Episcopi over the plan period 2006-26, and 1.5 hectares of 'B' use class employment land. The housing provision included an existing commitment of 182, leaving 118 dwellings to be found; although the latest figures show that only 66 dwellings need to be found in order to achieve 300 dwellings as explained below.

Summary of issues

There were relatively few comments on the scale of growth at Langport/Huish Episcopi, with a total of just 9 on the Langport/Huish Episcopi core strategy section, including 5 objections and 1 support. The key issues regarding housing and employment scale of growth at Langport/Huish Episcopi are highlighted below.

Housing:

- 2,700 dwellings should be distributed around the Rural Centres as a proportion to existing population to ensure balanced growth, appropriate to the existing scale of each settlement; therefore 404 dwellings should be built at Langport/Huish Episcopi.
- Flooding near the centre does not affect other edge of centre sites, and there is a recognised desire for more local industry and employment opportunities and local community facilities that can only be met if classed a Market Town.
- Support the level of housing proposed to ensure the town centre continues to provide local facilities.

Employment:

- Maybe it would make sense to put the future job needs of Langport/Huish Episcopi and Somerton together and look to develop a 2.5 ha site which might allow a high specification scheme leading to high quality jobs.
- Don't include any warehousing as part of employment proposals as this would aggravate an already chaotic traffic situation.

Response to issues

The latest housing supply position in Langport/Huish Episcopi is set out in the recent Annual Monitoring Report (2009-10), and shows a total of 234 houses either built, under construction, committed or allocated from 2006-10. This is a relatively large increase on the figure of 182 dwellings set out in the core strategy preferred options report.

Evidence from the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA)² suggests there is potential to increase housing numbers at Langport/Huish Episcopi, with sites accommodating some 499 dwellings identified as being suitable, available, and viable. For information, over the 20 year period of the South Somerset Local Plan (1991 – 2011), it was envisaged that 205 new dwellings would be built in Langport/Huish Episcopi, which the Local Plan Inspector considered was reasonable to sustain and enhance the town's role and function.

The support for housing to ensure the town centre to continues to provide local facilities is an important issue, with the Settlement Role and Function study

¹ Policy SS4, SS5.

² Published in March 2010.

identifying that reducing household size would lead to 300 drop in population levels in Langport/Huish Episcopi if no additional housing was provided.

Regarding the comment advocating around 400 dwellings at Langport/Huish Episcopi, the evidence in the SHLAA suggests that there is scope to increase the housing provision at Langport/Huish Episcopi up to around 500 dwellings. Additional development would raise infrastructure capacity issues, which can only be commented on in greater detail upon receipt of the Infrastructure Delivery Plan. Given Langport/Huish Episcopi's relative size and character compared to the other Market Towns, it is considered there is a limit to the scale of development acceptable. The level of new development should be sufficient to maintain the town's function, sustaining and enhancing its role, at a level that is commensurate with its size, accessibility, character and physical identity.

The Employment Land Review identifies that Langport/Huish Episcopi has an employment land supply of 0.69 ha based upon completions, commitments, and land under construction from 2006-10. Within the ELR, the consultants 'BNP Paribas Real Estate' consider that Langport/Huish Episcopi is similar to Somerton, with an active local business community and a range of employment premises. Langport/Huish Episcopi is on the "cusp" in terms of its size, as demonstrated by the presence of a Tesco foodstore on the outskirts of the town centre. There is limited substantial commercial demand for new employment land, but the intermediate size of the area and its strategic significance within the north west of the district means that a small allocation in the region of 0.25 ha would meet local need. Therefore, the ELR recommends there is a gross need for 2.02 ha employment land (1.77 ha from additional population generated by 300 dwellings, and 0.25 ha as a rolling supply).

Regarding the suggestion to put the future job needs of Langport/Huish Episcopi and Somerton together and look to develop a 2.5 ha site that might allow a high specification scheme leading to high quality jobs; although the two settlements are closely related geographically, it is not considered there is sufficient evidence to justify rolling the two together.

The Strategic Flood Risk Assessment highlights that flood risk is a key issue at Langport/Huish Episcopi – the town centre has a high risk of flooding, and much of the area surrounding the settlement is in the flood plain where development is precluded. However, there are sites on higher land in Huish Episcopi parish that could be developed outside areas of high flood risk, potentially delivering a higher scale of development than currently proposed.

The impact on the Somerset Levels and Moors is a key issue to consider if further development is to be identified at Langport/Huish Episcopi, given its proximity to these internationally protected sites. Habitats Regulations Assessment will be required with the intention of ensuring there is not a significant adverse effect.

Langport/Huish Episcopi's peripheral landscape study identifies 11.5 ha as suitable for development in landscape terms around the edge of the settlement – this equates to around 270 houses with 6 ha of residential and 5.5 ha employment land, and a maximum of 490 houses if no employment land was to be provided. The following recommendation is subject to the findings of the Infrastructure Delivery Plan.

Recommendation

- Increase scale of housing at Langport/Huish Episcopi to around 400 dwellings, an addition of 100 dwellings given identified housing potential and its upgraded status as a Market Town, but lower than some Market Towns to

reflect the smaller scale of the settlement. Given that 234 dwellings have already been 'identified', this means 166 'new' dwellings should be delivered.

- Increase 'B' use employment land provision to 2 ha to reflect increase in dwellings.