

South Somerset's Chard allocation and Market Town growth locations workshop discussion paper 5 July 2011 – Chard Strategic Growth Area Allocation

The purpose of this paper is to address the key issues raised in response to the strategic allocation for growth at Chard in the Draft Core Strategy (incorporating Preferred Options). Policy CV1 Chard Growth Area received 7 representations in support, 17 objections and 6 observations. Policy CV2 Chard Phasing received 2 representations in support, 16 objections and 6 observations and Policy CV3 Chard Obligations received 1 representation in support, 2 objections and 5 observations. Key issues arising from objections to these policies and the supporting text are summarised and addressed below.

Issues:

Policies CV1 Chard Growth Area and CV2 Chard Phasing

Phasing, viability and deliverability

- 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.
- Requires infrastructure and investment on a scale, which is unlikely to be forthcoming.
- Strongly object as Option 3 (essentially the old Local Plan Key Site allocation) will not deliver the housing and employment required in the plan period nor will it deliver the infrastructure including an eastern bypass that is required to accommodate the scale of growth proposed. The proposals are not viable and there is no credible evidence base to support these proposals. Seems the council will be relying on a level of public sector investment from the HCA, however given recent cuts it is highly unlikely that public sector money will be available. Therefore highly unlikely that the whole of Option 3 will be developed which can only exacerbate traffic problems in the centre and delay balanced growth.
- Object to rigid phasing of implementation plan as phase 3 could provide highway improvements.
- Unlikely that grant aid to fund the Millfield Link will be forthcoming, therefore there is a need to adopt more realistic objectives with a lesser amount of development and infrastructure costs e.g.. Option 2 (or some modification of it). This is considered to be more deliverable than Option 3.
- Whilst including detailed phasing Chard Implementation Plan does not include information on viability. It is noted that public sector funding will be needed to assist delivery however the Coalition Gov is cutting public sector spending therefore have concerns as to whether the wider proposals for Chard are achievable. Notwithstanding this Cavanna Homes (South West) Ltd and Chard Town FC are jointly promoting the redevelopment of the football club as well as the new community and football facility. Proposal is available, achievable and deliverable but cannot provide additional funding over and above what is required to deliver the site. Certainty is needed as soon as possible so that the development can proceed.
- Phasing of development can be achieved whether housing delivery is linked to a masterplan or not.
- PINS Frontloading project visiting Inspector (Nov 2009) - noted that a masterplan was being prepared and that detailed policies would be included to guide planning applications in accordance with the masterplan - this has not happened as the Council have failed to provide a viable plan for Chard.

- Concerns are: 1. Lack of economic feasibility studies, public funding and reaction of landowners. 2. Alleviation of traffic at the junction of the A30 and A358. 3. Cost, co-ordination and implementation of the many phases.
- Need to bear in mind the difficulties associated with delivering the eastern link road in relation to the local plan allocation - delivery should be on a phased basis to assist viability.
- Whilst planned central regeneration is applauded other proposals are ludicrous, costly and ill conceived. Chard has many social and economic problems that need to be solved before any hope that regeneration will be successful.
- Phase 1 of the Regeneration Framework includes a triangular extension of land in open countryside whilst more readily available land closer to the town centre has been omitted. 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 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.
- Phasing of development can be achieved whether housing delivery is linked to a masterplan or not.

Highways

- Concern that expansion of Chard will lead to increased traffic flow on the A358 through Donyatt where the volume of traffic is already a hazard to pedestrians and the properties along the roadside.
- Object to the proposed road at Touches Lane, it will have a detrimental effect on Chard Reservoir and Nature Reserve - will damage an area that is an asset to local people. A beauty spot will be replaced by noise and pollution. Nature Reserve should be protected. Concern regarding the impact on wildlife. Loss of informal recreation. Road will become a rat run littered with dead animals.
- Creation of any new highway infrastructure or improvements of existing routes would need to be solely funded through developers or other third parties (SCC).
- Concerned that any building in the Forton Road area will increase the volume of traffic to a "main road" situation and increase the danger at the Axminster Road junction.
- Concerned about the use of Henderson Drive as a through route to Millfield from the east i.e. Axminster Road/Forton Road side of town and the use for all construction traffic for the development around Lordleaze. Henderson Road would be difficult to widen without threatening residential areas.
- Support new transport proposals in respect of new roads and links but think proposed cycle lanes need to be looked at in more detail as these are not always well used e.g. in Exeter. As long as roads are surfaced in a non-noisy material it is all a good idea. Traffic lights along Furnham Road need to prioritise more effectively.
- Any growth of Chard should include improvement of the A358.
- Paragraphs 6.56 & 6.57 -This level of reference to a specific traffic signal software tool seems too detailed for a core strategy. A more generic description would be more appropriate such as allowing development within the highway capacity that can reasonable be achieved without major improvements.
- South Somerset Local Plan made it clear that the Chard Key site should not be delivered in a piecemeal fashion and significant development should not come forward without any guarantee that the whole Distributor Road will be delivered. The work undertaken by LDA now appears to suggest that the percentage of through traffic was higher in 1994 than now and conclude that the level of through traffic is insufficient to justify a road in the form of a 'bypass' - this is at odds with the adopted Local Plan.
- Paragraph 6.28 identifies a range of local issues including traffic problems. It suggests an alternative route between A358 Furnham Road and A 358 Tatworth

Road is required and refers to the Chard Regeneration Plan however this does not offer a viable and suitable solution and there is no requirement for the route to be delivered in its entirety. The question remains how the eastern relief road will be funded in its entirety and is the proposal viable? The failure of the Council to address this matter is an illustration of the unsoundness of the Plan and the lack of evidence to support the strategy.

- It is nonsense to suggest that the requirement for the Distributor Road has gone away. National statistics show that car usage has grown year on year. However now suggested that an internal distributor road utilising existing street would be more deliverable in terms of cost and will be able to accommodate through traffic.
- Given the comments in the Strategic Transport Appraisal Report that the phasing scenario presented in the Implementation Plan is not the only one that would work it is considered that the phrase re phrases being "delivered in the order set out in the Chard Implementation Plan" is unnecessary. However, the clarification that deviation from the implementation plan is subject to the delivery of the total growth not being compromised is welcomed.
- Concerned that Touches Lane and Oaklands Drive should not evolve into a pseudo ring road by stealth. Accepted that Oaklands Drive will provide local access to new housing and that a new road south of Oaklands Drive/A30 junction will provide a new access route for commercial traffic serving the Millfields Industrial Area entering Chard via the A30 Windwhistle Ridge route, but remains a risk that Touches Lane will provide an unplanned link to this new road. Touches Lane currently has a rural character, in keeping with the Nature Reserve it adjoins. No new link road should be built to the A358 north of Chaffcombe Road. Important that Touches Lane/Oaklands Drive does not become a rat run for boy racers.
- East Street urgently needs improvement for safety reasons. Would benefit by converting it to one-way (east bound) with a new road south of East Street connecting into the A358/Silver Street, south of the Central Motors traffic lights for west bound traffic. Traffic lights would need to be relocated.
- Glaringly obvious lack of transport infrastructure. No railway or motorway connection.
- Money would be better spent on replacing the traffic lights where Furnham Road meets High Street in Chard with a roundabout.
- Fails to show the link road from Furnham Road to Oaklands Ave and therefore hides the impact on the Avishayes area. Will result in heavy traffic through residential areas.

Environment

- Fear of development at Crowshute/Snowdon Park recreational area, leaving no accessible green area.
- Concern that east of Chard is to be developed, blocking views of Windwhistle Hill.
- Stage 2 of the Habitats Regulations Assessment assessed the impact on the Somerset Levels and Moors as 'Low'. RSPB do not agree with this and believe parts experience high levels of disturbance. Believe that the assessment of visitor use and behaviour is superficial. Particular concerns are 'in combination' recreational pressures on SL&M from draft settlement policies.
- SSDC are responsible for the 'Favourable Conservation Status' of European Protected Species (EPS) under Reg 9 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species regulations 2010 (the Habitats Regulations), which requires local authorities to have regards for the provisions of the Habitats Directive. Any development will need to demonstrate how populations of EPS are maintained including habitat to support them. Mitigation should be detailed at this stage of plan development.
- Building beyond St Mary's Close is badly thought out. The close is very narrow and the fields above prone to flooding.

- Good farming land should not be used for housing and employment development.
- Oppose the redevelopment of the current Chard Football Club ground. 1. It should be retained as a football ground for the Chard teams that play in the Perry Street league. 2. Should be retained a part of a 'green lung' (Green Heart). 3. 400 plus dwellings on this land will completely snarl up the town centre, there is not sufficient egress from the site.
- Chard has a green core consisting of the Rugby Club, Cricket Club and Football Club - cannot understand the plan to relocate the Football Club to the Business Park and build housing on the vacated site. Same applies to Rugby Club - especially as Holyrood School has large expanse of land not currently in daily use. Proposals that diminish this green core should be rejected.

Retail

- Would like to see a variety of quality individual shops, which would draw people from the surrounding areas. There are sufficient supermarkets.
- Plans that Chard will become a major shopping centre will never be fulfilled in the near future. Too close to Taunton, Yeovil and Exeter - have seen similar plans in Crowborough, East Sussex fail. Chard will remain a local shopping centre for daily needs.

Employment

- Efforts should be put into retaining existing local businesses such as Oscar Meyer and Henry Vacums. Assets such as the countryside and food and drink should be encouraged not the building of houses and industrial estates.
- Whilst the plan will deliver local transport infrastructure large employers are only likely to be attracted if road links to M5 and A303 are improved - which goes beyond this plan but is vital therefore further expansion of the town is pointless. Existing uncompleted development should be finished before considering more development. Large numbers of homes without employment will only cause a dormitory village.
- New employers will not come to the town. Currently many empty plots on business parks. Traffic will increase as will pollution and development of Option 4 would particularly increase the problems.

Other

- Policy CV1 proposes a rigid allocation of housing that is not a flexible approach to the supply of land for housing in the context of PPS3. Policy is therefore not flexible or deliverable and is considered unsound.
- CV1 - 5th bullet should recognise that this includes walking and cycling infrastructure/improvements in addition to roads.
- Lordleaze Hotel - keen to see any improvement to the access to the hotel and any increase in employment and population in the area. 3 star hotel with 25 rooms so any increase in trade is to be encouraged. Fully support any improvement.
- Concern re: potential impact on Holly Terrace having looked at plans exhibited on 11/09/10.
- 3207 dwellings is more than outlined in the previously submitted Infrastructure Questionnaire (2,191). Primary Care Trust consider that further medical facilities will be needed to support the full 3207 dwellings and this additional provision will be needed at the out.
- Delete the requirement for housing beyond the plan period and redirect it to Yeovil.
- Plans for the neighbourhood centres are ill conceived. The Avishayes shops serving the Henderson Park area already struggle any shops in the Oaklands Drive, Lordleaze site will not be viable. Chard is not big enough to support facilities of this size.

- Concerned about the lack of awareness Chard residents have about what is planned. Seems that the only people who have been consulted are those who stand to profit.

Response:

Draft Core Strategy (incorporating Preferred Options), October 2010

The Draft Core Strategy considered four options for the future growth of Chard based on the Chard Regeneration Plan¹. Option 3 Eastern Growth Area (Full Build Out) was chosen as the preferred option. Policy CV1 therefore allocates land at Chard for a strategic allocation to be delivered within the plan period and beyond including approximately 3207 dwellings, approximately 19 hectares of employment land, 2 new primary schools, 4 neighbourhood centres, highway infrastructure and improvements and sport and open space provision. Policy CV2 identifies that 2191² of those dwellings, 13 hectares of employment land, 1 new primary school, 2 neighbourhood centres and sports and open space provision will be delivered within the plan period with the remainder coming forward later. To ensure that infrastructure is delivered to support growth, development phases are expected to be delivered in the order set out in the Chard Implementation Plan³ any deviation those phases should be justified and it should be demonstrated that the proposal will not compromise delivery of the total growth.

Phasing, Deliverability and Viability

The Implementation Plan tests the proposals for Chard against a broad development appraisal and identifies where proposals lack economic viability and require public support to come forward. This work will be used as the basis for further viability testing using the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) toolkit, which includes measures for modelling more deliverable strategies. Somerset County Council, the HCA and Chard Town Council, the South West Development Agency and most recently the RTPI have endorsed a phased approach to delivery. The master planning approach taken for Chard leads to joined up, phased development regulated by guiding principles informed by local stakeholders who have set the objectives for the town's future. 'Phases' completed to maximise revenue with no consideration given to facilitating further required growth and infrastructure is not truly phased.

As part of the overall governance of the Chard Regeneration Scheme and to ensure overall viability SSDC is currently seeking specific advice and expertise to assist in facilitating the delivery of the strategic allocation with a particular focus on ensuring that Phase 2 (Millfield Link) can be secured. A Delivery Team headed by the Economic Development Manger has been set up and a market brief to invite 'expressions of interest' from appropriate developers has been prepared together with a request for Specialist Economic Regeneration Advice on the following:

- The suitability and viability of the forthcoming expressions of interest in developing the town centre site in response to the initial marketing brief
- Assessment criteria to evaluate bids
- Technical and valuation issues arising from the proposals
- The final appointment of a developer

¹ Chard Regeneration Plan October 2009, LDA Design

² This figure includes housing commitments of 1863 dwellings – including the 1350 dwellings allocated as part of the Chard Key Site (KS/CHAR/1) hence an additional housing provision of only 328 dwellings

³ Chard Regeneration Framework Implementation Plan, October 2010.

In order to achieve this Thomas Lister the appointed consultants have been asked to provide:

- Clear evidence that Phase 2 of the Chard Implementation Plan can be delivered at an early stage. This will require clear evidence of developer intent and evidence of a viable development scheme. Particular focus is to be placed on
- securing the Millfield Link (See Pg.10 of the Chard Regeneration Framework Implementation Plan; Section 3.4.4. "Phase 2b: Access to Millfields")
- Evidence of land ownership, early discussions with relevant parties to understand their intentions or aspirations, and developer control over the land in question.
- Clear evidence that the relevant developers/landowners are willing to enter into a planning obligation that will ensure that the wider Eastern Development Area can be delivered
- Advice in relation to the mechanisms that can be incorporated within a 106 agreement that ensures that no individual phase prejudices the delivery of the wider Eastern Development Area
- Provide support, when required, to council officers in negotiating with landowners/developers
- Review and re-affirmation of the existing Chard Regeneration Framework viability assessment presenting evidence of long term viability of the Eastern Development Area (strategic allocation in the draft Core Strategy)

Thomas Lister will be meeting respective developer interests, with a view to assisting the council in reaching a clear understanding of their expectations. The challenge is to reconcile competing interests and achieve an 'in-principle' acceptance of the importance of delivering a phased development programme that makes provision for the essential infrastructure - in particular the satisfactory easement of the highways issues identified in the Chard Regeneration Framework Transport Report. The outcome of their work will be a 3 pronged report including an assessment of viability, evidence of engagement with landowners/developers and a statement of intent from them to take the project forward and identification of how any gaps in funding will be filled this will be prepared by the end of the year to inform the final decisions of the Council on the Chard allocation and provide more certainty on its deliverability.

The level of development proposed does correlate with overall scheme viability. The costly transport infrastructure in the early phases of development almost justifies the level of growth given the reduced capacity of the convent signals junction (A30/A358), especially when extant planning permissions are taken into account.

Whilst LDA Design believe that the whole of Option 3 could be delivered within the plan period, the overall settlement strategy for the District envisages a reduced level of growth (approx 1700 dwellings) being delivered over that period. Should ongoing monitoring demonstrate that insufficient housing is coming forward to ensure a 5 year housing supply across the District and market forces are favourable then it may be that the later phases of the scheme may be able to come forward within the plan period although this would be dependent on the necessary highway infrastructure being in place.

Thomas Lister will identify any funding gaps and potential problems this work needs to be co-ordinated with the Infrastructure Delivery Plan.

The result of the Chard Regeneration Scheme implementation will be sustainable community development which provides for the economic, environmental and social requirements of the town.

Highways

Both the Chard Regeneration Plan⁴ and Implementation Plan show how the roads within the strategic allocation could be set out and delivered in a phased approach that would minimise the impact on traffic flows within the rest of the town. The key driver of the phasing is the need to incrementally increase the capacity of the highways infrastructure to accommodate increased traffic as the town grows, in particular to relieve the Convent Signals (Furnham Road/Fore Street/East Street). The phasing scheme suggested by LDA seeks to bring forward development in a number of phases in which the need for major upfront investment is minimised and, where possible, positive cash flow is maintained. The proposal no longer includes the distributor road shown as part of the saved Chard Key Site allocation (KS/CHAR/1) as this has proved to be an impediment to the delivery of the overall scheme particularly due to issues of viability. As explained above an additional viability assessment Phase 2 is to be undertaken and once complete the Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) will provide valuable information. Draft Core Strategy Policy CV2 allows for deviation from the order set out in the Implementation Plan as long as it is justified and will not compromise the delivery of the total allocation. It is accepted that the new roads and supporting infrastructure including cycle and pedestrian infrastructure would have to be funded by developers or other third parties rather than the Highway Authority (Somerset County Council).

Whilst it is accepted there are concerns regarding the impact of the proposal on Chard Reservoir and Nature Reserve plans for a new road at Touches Lane are not new and formed part of the adopted Key Site allocation which has been through a statutory process including consideration at Public Local Inquiry.

Matters of detail such as the final road layout will be assessed and considered as part of the planning application process, there will also be the opportunity to make comments on what is being proposed; the layout presented by LDA in the Regeneration Plan may not be exactly the same as the final submitted scheme. The requirement for improvements to the A358 in locations such as Donyatt is something that will have been considered by the Highway Authority however nothing is planned in their LTP and they have not objected to the growth proposals for Chard. Improvements to East Street are planned as part of the Chard Regeneration Plan.

Somerset County Council has suggested that the reference to specific traffic control software within the Core Strategy is too detailed and a more generic phrase should be used. It is agreed that this might make the plan simpler therefore it is considered that the direct reference to MOVA could be removed without compromising the Core Strategy. Regarding access onto the main transport network, it is accepted that Chard does not have direct access to the motorway or a railway station, however access can be gained to the M5 via the A358 to Taunton and there are connections to the mainline railway network at Axminster approximately 7 miles away.

It is noted that the Highways Agency considers that Option 3 (eastern growth area) presents the most sustainable option, on the basis that there will not be un-due traffic congestion generated.

Environment

Concern regarding the loss of views of Windwhistle Hill is noted, however development on the eastern side of Chard has been planned for well over 10 years (Chard Key Site allocation), added to this the impact on views will very much depend on the design, layout and massing of the final proposal. Potential development of land at Crowshute/Snowdon

⁴ Chard Regeneration Plan October 2009, LDA Design

Park is identified as part of growth Option 4, however growth Option 3 has been chosen as the preferred option and this does not include development in that area nor does it include development in the vicinity of St Mary's Close.

In accordance with PPS7⁵ it is accepted that where possible the best quality agricultural land should be protected from development and some areas of the strategic allocation are within Grade 2 agricultural land, however this land has already been allocated as part of the Key Site, therefore the principle of development has been accepted in this location through a statutory process.

The relocation of Chard Town Football Club is included as part of preferred Option 3 the football club have been seeking an alternative site on which to build a new ground for a number of years as the existing ground does not meet the requirements of the football league. It is understood that all the football teams that currently use the existing ground will have access to the new facilities. Whilst the Regeneration Plan indicates that the vacated football site will be developed for housing the vast majority of the green core (Green Heart) is shown as being retained.

The Draft Core Strategy⁶ refers to the fact that the European Protected Species Assessment (EPS) (2009) identifies the presence of dormice and potential significant impacts on the local bat population in some areas identified as coming forward as part of Option 3. Whilst Somerset County Council (SCC) and Natural England have commented that mitigation should be identified at this stage, the position has since been clarified⁷ and it has been suggested by SCC that some text should be added to say that the presence of EPS will need to be taken into account and compensatory off site habitat creation may be required. SCC will be looking at all allocated sites later this year as part of a DEFRA pilot study to assess the need for mitigation - this might include compensatory off site habitat. It is therefore considered that paragraph 6.53 should be amended as suggested.

The objection from the RSPB regarding Stage 2 of the Habitats Regulations Assessment is the subject of a separate paper⁸ and will be addressed through the Appropriate Assessment.

Retail

The Retail Study update⁹ shows that there are already a number of independent comparison retailers in Chard, however currently there is a higher than national average vacancy rate (12%). The Core Strategy can only provide the policies to facilitate the provision, delivery and retention of retail premises the market will dictate the type of retailer that wishes to operate from Chard. It is accepted that consumers may travel further afield for some types of shopping but Chard does provide a good range of retail opportunities for day to day needs and has the 2nd highest level of floor area in the District after Yeovil. The Retail Study also shows that Chard performs better than Honiton and Glastonbury on the VenueScore¹⁰ rankings and identifies that on the basis of a constant market there is future comparison floorspace capacity in the town of 400 sq m net by 2014, rising to 1,950 sq m net by 2016

⁵ Planning Policy Statement 7: Sustainable Development in Rural Areas, 2004

⁶ Paragraph 6.53

⁷ Ecology Officer, Somerset County Council on 12.05.11

⁸ Housing, Employment and miscellaneous key issues workshop April 2011 ~ Response to RSPB criticism of the Habitats Regulations Assessment

⁹ South Somerset Retail Study Update 2009, July 2010.

¹⁰ VENUESCORE™ is an annual survey compiled by Javelin Group, which ranks the UK's top 2,000 retail venues including town centres, stand-alone malls, retail warehouse parks and factory outlet centres.

Employment

The Draft Core Strategy makes provision for approximately 13 hectares of employment land at Chard. Efforts are being made and will continue to be put into retaining existing local businesses and building on the existing manufacturing and food-processing base. The Chard Regeneration Plan recognises the importance of building upon this base, the regeneration of the Town Centre is likely to create jobs in retail, offices and leisure. Core Strategy development management policies will support this. New employers are likely to be drawn to the town if there is a willing and able local workforce, although the market is currently slow conditions would be expected to improve over the plan period.

Other Issues

As has been explained earlier in this paper further work is being undertaken to confirm the deliverability and viability of the strategic allocation at Chard. The approach to the delivery of housing set out in the Draft Core Strategy is considered to be flexible and in accordance with Planning Policy Statement 3 (PPS)¹¹. South Somerset District Council currently has a 5 year supply of housing land. The Chard Regeneration Plan sets out to achieve the long term social, economic and environmental objectives for Chard.

It has been suggested that the 5th bullet point of Policy CV1 should recognise the inclusion of walking and cycling infrastructure/improvements in addition to roads. However, it is considered that the wording in Policy CV1 is adequate as highway infrastructure does include pavements and cycle provision; additionally paragraph 6.52 of the Draft Core Strategy refers to improved legibility, this includes access via walking and cycling, however there may be some benefit in making this clearer.

The figure of 2,191 dwellings quoted in the infrastructure questionnaire relates to the number of dwellings proposed to be built in Chard over the plan period, the figure of 3,207, includes the additional growth beyond the end of the plan period. The levels of growth across the District will be monitored and reviewed as the plan progresses this will include how much growth is directed towards Yeovil and Chard.

It is anticipated that the proposed neighbourhood centres would include local facilities such as a pub, newsagent and or community facility such as a GP surgery, it is not considered that the local provision will be at the expense of the Town Centre shopping experience where there is capacity to grow as identified in the Retail Study update. What is to be provided will be predominantly dictated by the prevailing market.

Concern regarding the degree of consultation with local people on the contents of the Chard Regeneration Plan is noted, however Area Development staff have worked closely with local community groups and other local stakeholders, including the Town Council over a number of years as the plan has emerged. A public event held at Chard Guildhall on Saturday 11 September 2010, included presentations about the Regeneration Plan by LDA consultants, the accompanying display material showed detailed plans of what is proposed. The event was widely publicised. Consultation events have also been held as part of the Core Strategy process including the delivery of a summary leaflet to all households in the District. The Chard Regeneration Plan is available to view on South Somerset District Council's web site as is the Draft Core Strategy and accompanying evidence base documents.

¹¹ Planning Policy Statement 3: Housing, June 2010

Conclusion

It is accepted that further work needs to be undertaken to ensure that the strategic allocation at Chard is deliverable and viable and as has been explained in this paper this issue is currently being addressed. It is anticipated that the work will be completed in time to report to December 2011 District Executive – the project timetable is attached at the end of this paper for information. Until such time as any findings indicate that the growth proposals are not deliverable it is considered that the strategic allocation for Chard should remain part of the Core Strategy with the caveat that the allocation may need reconsideration in the light of the findings. In the meantime it is recommended that a number of minor amendments to increase clarity are made as detailed below.

Recommendations:

- Retain Option 3 presented in the Draft Core Strategy strategic allocation pending the outcome of the work being undertaken by the Delivery Team and the completion of the Infrastructure Delivery Plan.
- Delete specific reference to MOVA signal control in paragraph 6.56.
- Amend paragraph 6.53 to say that the presence of EPS will need to be taken into account and compensatory off site habitat creation may be required.
- Amend paragraph 6.52 to include a reference to walking and cycling infrastructure.

Policy CV3 Chard Obligations

Summary of key issues arising:

- Proposals on the eastern margins of the town will have to bear significant infrastructure costs, these costs together with the proposed social and physical infrastructure is likely to limit the ability of landowners to fund all the elements of the scheme, including affordable housing. The lessons from 15 years of trying to implement Chard should be fully taken into account.
- Unclear if the policy is seeking contributions from strategic allocations alone or all development in Chard. Development of Snowdon Farm has the potential to fund and deliver early improvements to the Convent Junction and the Millfield Link subject to meeting the test in Circular 05/2005.
- Needs to be a direct link between contributions and development.
- Any transport-related obligations will need to be solely funded through developers or other third parties.
- Policy is not strong enough and does not secure all the benefits on a comprehensive basis. Council has capitulated to the Key Site landowners on current planning policy in an attempt to generate any form of development no matter how uncoordinated or piecemeal notwithstanding the inability for the same landowners to deliver development over the last 15yrs. If the development was not viable at the height of the residential market it is unlikely to be deliverable now notwithstanding the Council have done a complete volte face on the original requirements of the Adopted Local Plan that required a comprehensive approach, associated facilities and open space and a distributor road all planned as part of a comprehensive brief.

Response:

Planning Obligations for development in Chard will be required where appropriate, other areas of funding for infrastructure may be identified through the work being undertaken on

behalf of the Delivery Team additionally CIL contributions will be required once any future charging schedule is in place. It is important to show that Phase 2 can be funded.

As more details have emerged regarding the likely approach to the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), it has become clear that the tariff approach based on the Chard Implementation Plan and set out in draft Policy CV3 will not be acceptable as although a small proportion of CIL funds will be directed locally; CIL priorities will be set at a District level and ring fencing for specific schemes will not be accepted. It is therefore considered that Policy SS7 Planning Obligations can be applied and Policy CV3 is no longer necessary or appropriate.

Recommendation:

- Delete draft Policy CV3 and supporting text in paragraphs 6.58-6.60.

