

**South Somerset's Chard Allocation and Market Town growth locations
Workshop Discussion paper, 5th July 2011 - Direction of growth for Langport /
Huish Episcopi**

The draft Core Strategy incorporating preferred options identified that Langport/Huish Episcopi should be a 'Rural Centre' and accommodate 300 dwellings, of which around 120 are in addition to existing completions, under construction, committed and allocated. However, it is now being proposed that Langport/Huish Episcopi should be a 'Market Town', and a subsequent increase in housing provision to 400 dwellings which, following updated figures on completions etc., leaves around 160 dwellings to be found. Emerging work on employment requirement suggests that 3 ha of 'B' use class employment should be provided at Langport/Huish Episcopi. Therefore, to be consistent with the other Market Towns, it is now necessary to consider potential broad locations for the future growth of the town.

Issues

There were no specific comments on broad locations for strategic development at Langport/Huish Episcopi as these were not proposed in the preferred options consultation, although the following comment put forward a specific site:

- Propose a 5 acre site which is ideal for affordable housing for local people on the edge of the town adjoining a 1960's development within easy walking distance of Westover Trading Estate and the shops and facilities in town, outside the flood plain, not prime agricultural land, and good road access.

Response

Subsequent investigation has ascertained that the above site was included in the SHLAA (site ref. N/CURI/0005), which identified that it has a potential maximum yield of 30 dwellings. This is not of a 'strategic' scale necessary for Langport/Huish Episcopi, which requires around 160 dwellings. The wider area in the vicinity of this site has been considered as a strategic growth option, but discounted for the following reasons:

- lack of evidence of further land availability for development in this area;
- low landscape capacity;
- high historic value with the presence of a Grade II* listed building.

Potential growth location options for Langport/Huish Episcopi

Much of the area surrounding Langport/Huish Episcopi has a high flood risk which limits the potential for development; there are also landscape constraints, and areas of historic value. After consideration of environmental constraints and availability of sites through analysis of the SHLAA, the following options are suggested as broad locations for the 'strategic' growth of Langport/Huish Episcopi (see map):

- Option 1 – north and east of Old Kelways.
- Option 2 – south of Old Kelways, area adjacent the railway line/cricket pitch and south of St Mary's Church (a combination of three areas).

Sustainability Appraisal has been carried out on these two options (see separate document for details) – the key SA findings are set out below:

Option 1 – north and east of Old Kelways:

This option offers good accessibility to services and facilities being approximately 1km from the town centre, and slightly closer to the major supermarket, schools, health and leisure facilities. There are likely to be social benefits of new housing provision and subsequent boost to the economy, and evidence that the housing can be delivered in this location. This location is around 1km from potential job

opportunities in the town centre, but over a mile to the Westover Trading Estate and the abattoir. There would be a negative effect upon the landscape if the northern section near Wearne is developed, indicated as moderate-low capacity in the Peripheral Landscape Study. Other environmental effects include potential negative archaeological impact and the loss of Best and Most Versatile agricultural land.

Option 2 – south of Old Kelways, area adjacent the railway line/cricket pitch and south of St Mary’s Church (a combination of three areas):

All locations within this option offer good accessibility to services and facilities, being within 800m of the town centre, major supermarket, schools, health and leisure facilities. There would be a significant positive benefit of additional homes to meet the needs of the town, and there is evidence of housing deliverability in the SHLAA within these locations. New development is likely to benefit the economy through job creation, and additional residents should help promote the town centre’s vitality and viability and the local economy – these locations are within 0.8 -1km of potential job opportunities in the town centre, but further (around 1 mile) to the Westover Trading Estate, although the abattoir is closer, being adjacent to the southern section. The locations in this option are well related to the townscape of the existing settlement. Much of these areas have a high landscape capacity to accommodate built development but negative effect is loss of Best and Most Versatile agricultural land (Grade 2). Potential negative impact upon the historic environment as the southern part of the area is adjacent to a Grade I listed church and Conservation Area, and within an Area of High Archaeological Potential. The southern part of the option is also adjacent to areas of high fluvial flood risk, and flood incidents have occurred in the past in this area.

Conclusion

The three broad locations that form Option 2 are better related to the existing settlement than Option 1, and would have less impact on the landscape/townscape of the town. Option 2 also has better access to key services, being slightly closer to the town centre and in close proximity to schools and leisure facilities. However, development of the southern part of Option 2 could lead to more negative environmental effects, particularly upon the historic environment as adjacent to a Grade I listed church, a Conservation Area, and within an Area of High Archaeological Potential. Option 1 is a single location, which could offer potential ‘economies of scale’ benefits associated with a large, single development e.g. provision of community facilities on-site; although when Community Infrastructure Levy is introduced this will become less of an advantage as infrastructure provision will largely be part of a single funding pot.

Overall, both options perform similarly in the Sustainability Appraisal; and there is evidence that land is available for development in both.

Recommendation

- Incorporate Options 1 and 2 of the Draft Core Strategy into a single broad direction of growth for Langport/Huish Episcopi, encompassing appropriate locations to the north, east and south east of the town, with specific proposals within these options to come forward through the development management process.
- Include a ‘Direction of Growth’ policy in the Core Strategy, which indicates that in Langport/Huish Episcopi, the direction of strategic growth will encompass locations to the north, east and south east of the town as shown on the following map.

Proposed Revised Preferred Direction Of Growth
Inset Map 7 - Langport / Huish Episcopi

