

LDF PMB and MAG Combined Group

Core Strategy Workshop 9 – November 23rd 2011 Chard Growth Options - Contingency Plan

Report by Jo Wilkins – Policy Planner

Introduction

The Chard Delivery Group are exploring the delivery of Phases 1 and 2 of the Chard Regeneration Plan with the help of consultants Thomas Lister. This paper seeks to establish a contingency plan for the future growth of Chard should that work conclude that the Millfield Link road is currently undeliverable and with it phase 2 of the Chard Strategic allocation and most of the rest of the allocation.

Capacity of the Furnham Road/Fore Street/East Street “Convent Signals” Junction

The Chard Transport Assessment undertaken by PBA showed that the Convent Signals junction was at or very near to capacity - it was identified that the installation of a MOVA traffic signal control software could increase capacity at that junction by 8%-15%. Funding has since been secured for that software.

Recent investigations have confirmed that there is no further capacity in that junction. Both Richard Sweet and John Gallimore at Somerset County Council have confirmed that the junction is at capacity. This view appears to have been further confirmed by the Transport Assessment submitted in support of planning application no 11/04212/FUL for 63 dwellings at Snowdon Farm, Chard which at paragraph 7.19 states:

“The signal controlled junction of A358/A30 operates with negative levels of practical reserve capacity both at AM and PM peaks under existing conditions” Table 7.7 assumes that the MOVA system is in place, paragraph 7.21 states:

“The 2018 base (*think this should read 2010*) and 2018 with development scenarios assume that the MOVA system is in place...”

Paragraph 7.22 states:

The change in practical reserve capacity levels, degrees of saturation and queue lengths between peak hour 2018 (*think this should read 2010*) base and 2018 with the proposed development traffic is considered to be negligible. The addition of development traffic therefore leads to no material change to the operation of the junction.”

Although in paragraph 7.23 it is concluded that:

“peak hour operation of the junction in 2018 with MOVA and the proposed development flows better than would be the case in the 2013 base year with no MOVA and no development.”
Therefore the introduction of MOVA creates additional capacity.

Currently there are 146 dwellings either under construction or not started in Chard. This confirms the need for the Millfield link to serve further development.

Alternative Growth Options – Contingency Plan

Funding, land acquisition and engagement issues remain to be resolved, Thomas Lister are addressing these and will report their findings to PMB in December 2011. Should the Millfield link prove to be undeliverable via developer contribution and other funding sources it is considered that the remaining alternative options are:

- A. Deletion of the Core Strategy Strategic allocation and key site allocation with no more development in Chard.
- B. Deletion of the Core Strategy Strategic allocation and key site allocation with no more development in Chard with the allocation in the Core Strategy of a strategic link road (the Millfield Link) to act as a Town Centre relief road to be bought forward by Somerset County Council and presented in their programme of works. The relief road can be contributed to by CIL contributions from SSDC if considered appropriate and as an identified primary road improvement one would expect moneys forthcoming from the County Council.

Option A would be due to major traffic failure at the heart of Chard's road network and the inability to establish a development related mechanism to remedy it and means that Chard is likely to stagnate. The Vision for it's future growth cannot be achieved in the foreseeable future and an appeal led approach is likely to ensue until such time as an appeal is dismissed on highway grounds. Option B requires co-operation from the County Highway Authority and prospective political buy in from South Somerset District Council regarding the prioritisation of CIL funds (CIL funding is unlikely to be forthcoming until 2014). The achievement of the relief road will enable us to consider Chard for growth in a future Core Strategy. It would not be possible to link the road to concurrent development as this would end up re-defining the strategy dismissed in the context of considering this Contingency Plan.

It is noted that the emerging plans for the ACI Boden site are likely to include a proposal for a supermarket; as part of the planning application process any application will require a transport assessment. It will therefore be interesting to see what the outcome of such an assessment is and whether an as yet unidentified solution to the transport issues emerges however, in terms of timing it is unlikely that any planning application stage will be forthcoming for at least 18 months.

The options for the redistribution of the growth at Chard within the Core Strategy should the link road prove undeliverable are set out in Appendix A.

The contingency options presented above effectively mark an end to the Vision and aspiration for Chard unless and until a County road scheme is implemented and emphasise the importance of securing the delivery of the current proposals in the Core Strategy.

Recommendation

That the Chard Delivery Group continues to work towards the delivery of Phases 1& 2 of the Chard Regeneration Plan as a primary objective. If it becomes clear that a solution to the highway issues cannot be delivered then alternative Growth Option B (above) is pursued.

Implications for the Core Strategy

Both of the alternative growth options for Chard have implications for the overall housing provision for the District. Currently the District housing requirement to 2028 is 17,200 dwellings although a 5% excess has been included taking that figure up to 18,106 dwellings. The removal of the Chard housing provision beyond that already built or committed would require the redistribution of 1910 dwellings to other settlements

Suggested options for accommodating this remaining growth are:

1. Do nothing

This option would mean the level of growth identified to meet the needs of the District to 2028 would not be met. The levels of growth identified for the Market Towns and Rural Centres across the District have been selected in consultation with local communities in order to help achieve the visions for those settlements. Given that the Draft Core Strategy accepted an over provision of 5% an under provision of just over 12% from the actual housing requirement may be considered acceptable although this approach is likely be less acceptable at examination than an over provision given the national policy for growth.

2. Accommodate the additional growth in Yeovil

If the remaining dwellings were to be accommodated in Yeovil this would shift the existing balance of development from 50% in Yeovil and 50% in the rest of the district. Given that Chard is a Market Town it would seem more appropriate to accommodate the growth in the remaining Market Towns and Rural Centres rather than directing more growth towards Yeovil, thus maintaining the balance between the Strategically Significant Town and the Market Towns and Rural Centres.

3. Accommodate the additional growth in Market Towns and Rural Centres

Given the comments under option 2 above it is considered that this is the most appropriate option for re-distributing the growth lost from Chard, although not all the Market Towns and Rural Centres will be appropriate locations for more housing growth e.g. Wincanton.

Recommendation

Should the work being undertaken by the Chard Delivery Group demonstrate that the Millfield Link road is currently undeliverable that the remainder of Chard's growth should be directed towards unconstrained Market Towns and Rural Centres.

NB in relation to the Review of Housing Growth Projections Paper putting forward a revised housing requirement of 15,950 dwellings the deletion of 1910 dwellings from Chard effectively brings the identified supply in the market towns and rural centres and settlements back in line with the requirement (on the basis of a 50/50 reduction of supply between Yeovil and the rest of the District)