

## Response to East Coker Parish Council letter to PMB Jan 2012

Thank you for your letter in the email of January 20<sup>th</sup> outlining your concerns with documents in the Core Strategy evidence base, specifically in relation to the location of an urban extension at Yeovil.

Following discussion at the Local Development Framework Project Management Board on Friday 27 January, I have set out a response to each of the bulleted sub-headings in your letter below.

### Eco sustainability

Whilst the planning system cannot ensure that the urban extension will provide jobs for all the extension occupants it can and should enable this by providing sufficient employment land.

### The southern escarpment:

That the southern escarpment is relatively steep is not in dispute, but it should be noted that much of Yeovil is surrounded by hills; to the north development would need to drop over the northern escarpment, to the east development would need to climb Babylon Hill, while to the west the land is perhaps the least constrained direction in terms of topography but has other constraints (e.g. Brympton D'Evercy Historic Park and Garden and the proposed Yeovil Airfield Safeguarding Zone). For movement within the urban extension (to school, local shops and local employment etc) the site is relatively flat.

### Bus routes:

It is acknowledged that bus routes (Service 4, 212 and 68) to the south of the town are less frequent and in some cases less well used than other areas around the town. However, development of such a scale proposed in the urban extension would be expected to provide bus links to the existing town and make such routes more economic and attractive to Operators.

### Grade 1 agricultural land:

It is agreed that best and most versatile agricultural land is an important resource. National policy (Planning Policy Statement 7) states that the presence of best and most versatile agricultural land (defined as land in grades 1, 2 and 3a of the Agricultural Land Classification) should be taken into account alongside other sustainability considerations. Land of poorer quality should be used, except where this would be inconsistent with other sustainability considerations.

A Sustainability Appraisal of the various options for locating the urban extension has been carried out to highlight the various 'sustainability considerations' and weigh them all in the balance including grade 1 agricultural land. The Local Plan Inspector in his report on the Local Plan received in 2003 advocated development on part of the emerging option for development despite its grade 1 status after taking all factors into consideration.

### Misnomas:

It is agreed that the topography of the area to the north west of Yeovil is similar to that of the Keyford area. Regarding eco design and passive solar gain, it is true that the Foundry House development has been built to high sustainable construction standards near the base of a steep north facing slope, however the potential for passive solar gain when buildings are actually *located* on north facing slopes is more limited than flat sites or southern facing slopes.

Heritage:

The reference to “more important heritage sites in the north west than in the southern option is not recognised and further clarification of where this reference has been made is sought. Important historic assets surround much of Yeovil, and the area to the south does include a Scheduled Ancient Monument, conservation areas, and listed buildings, but important historic assets surround much of Yeovil. A Historic Environmental Assessment of Yeovil’s periphery has been carried out to ensure that these issues are properly assessed and considered in identifying a location for the proposed Yeovil urban extension. .

Infrastructure:

The ‘Highway Infrastructure Requirements for Yeovil urban extensions’ report considered the site accesses and the highways infrastructure requirements to get to the nearest appropriate road for the volume of traffic predicted, for the various options for locating the proposed urban extension. Therefore, your point that not enough infrastructure is provided to allow traffic to flow from an urban extension to the south is noted, but not borne out by the findings of this study. However, further, more detailed work on highways infrastructure will be carried out when a location for the proposed Yeovil urban extension is finalised.

Flooding:

National policy clearly directs development away from areas of flood risk, and it is not proposed to locate built development in such areas around Yeovil. Sustainable Drainage Systems (SUDS) will be required in the urban extension to mitigate flood risk.

Health and well being:

The benefits of the sandy lanes in enjoying the countryside are noted. Public access via footpath is common to all options considered as potential locations for the urban extension.

The next stages of the Core Strategy involve the consideration of responses to the main issues that were raised during consultation on the ‘draft Core Strategy (incorporating preferred options)’ by Area Committees and District Executive in February/March. Following this, Full Council should consider the ‘proposed submission’ version of the Core Strategy in April, with a view to publishing this document for public consultation in May (2012). After this final round of public consultation, the ‘examination’ process by an independent inspector will begin.

I hope this response is helpful in allaying some of your concerns.

Yours sincerely...