

**LDF Project Management Board
Workshop 19: Friday 26 October 2012**

**Potential amendments to Yeovil Urban Area and Urban Extension Housing
Provision**

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Introduction

Consultation on the Proposed Submission Local Plan generated hundreds of comments in relation to Yeovil and the sustainable urban extension. Following initial consideration three key issues have been raised with sufficient merit to potentially be considered as amendments to the Local Plan.

It should be noted that English Heritage have raised concerns regarding the impact of the urban extension on the Roman Villa (a Scheduled Ancient Monument). A meeting has been arranged with English Heritage to discuss this – the outcome will be reported orally at the PMB meeting.

Recommendations

That PMB note the issues that have arisen from consultation on the Proposed Submission Local Plan in relation to Yeovil; and agree the following changes should be made to the plan when it is submitted:

1. Amend Policy YV1 to state 7,815 dwellings should be built at Yeovil, of which 5,415 should be located in the urban framework, and up to 2,500 dwellings at a sustainable urban extension. Subsequent changes to Policies SS5 and YV2 will be required to reflect this, and Policy SS3 should include an employment land provision of 11 ha in the urban extension to align with the increased housing requirement in the plan period.
2. Remove two fields at Gregg's Riding School from the East Coker and North Coker buffer zone.
3. Add the land to the south of Yeovil Court Hotel to the urban extension.
4. Remove reference to a housing density of 45 dph in the urban extension, as this should be left to the forthcoming master plan to determine.

Report

The Yeovil Sustainable Urban Extension raised the most comments in consultation on the Proposed Submission Local Plan. The majority of these objected to the proposal, citing similar issues to those previously raised, namely:

- Traffic impact
- Insufficient infrastructure capacity e.g. Hospital, schools.
- Loss of grade 1 agricultural land
- Impact on surrounding villages (East Coker, Barwick, Stoford)
- Impact on historic environment
- Loss of habitat/wildlife
- Flooding
- Pollution (noise, air, light)
- Lack of need for the proposed scale of development

- Development should be on several smaller sites ('multi-site') rather a single large one.

The comments did not raise any substantive points that had not been previously considered in progressing the Local Plan to its current stage. For example, the infrastructure concerns are not substantiated by evidence in the Infrastructure Plan, and will be mitigated through measures such as the provision of new schools, improvements to the road network, and sustainable transport provision. National policy on agricultural land remains the same, and alternative locations have been considered but ruled out for valid planning reasons. It is considered that the impact on surrounding villages and the historic environment can be adequately mitigated through the provision of the buffer zone and the forthcoming master plan. The proposed location avoids areas of high flood risk, and any residual flooding and pollution impacts would be adequately mitigated. The scale of development is necessary to support Yeovil's primary role in the District; and a single site is preferred rather than several smaller sites in order to create a 'sustainable' community that can support a range of community facilities and sustainable travel options.

In addition to these general points, there were several representations on the specific boundaries of the urban extension location. These are highlighted below, along with initial consideration:

- Tellis Cross has potential for further development and should be removed from the buffer zone.
 - Disagree – the policy allows for house extensions in accordance with permitted development rights, but allowing development beyond this would compromise the intention of the policy to buffer East and North Coker from the urban extension and to leave the area as open space.
- Open space associated with the urban extension can be provided to the east of Pavyotts Farm (site D on the accompanying map).
 - Disagree as sufficient land is already identified in the urban extension, and the land has a high flood risk.
- Yeovil Showground and Rugby Club should be included in the urban extension (site E on the accompanying map).
 - Disagree due to adverse landscape impact, and negative impact on Barwick Historic Park and Garden (as indicated in the Peripheral Landscape Study and Historic Environment Assessment).
- Land at the Aldon estate should be included in the urban extension as open space (site F on the accompanying map).
 - Disagree as sufficient land is already identified in the urban extension; the master plan will address whether this area can be included as existing open space.
- A site submitted by Abbey Manor Group at Primrose Lane, north east of Yeovil, should be developed for around 800 dwellings (site G on the accompanying map).
 - Disagree as highlighted above, a single site is preferred in order to create a 'sustainable' community. Therefore, the principle of this smaller site is not considered acceptable.

- The location of the urban extension should be to the west, towards Brympton D'Evercy, as suggested by East Coker Parish Council (site A on the accompanying map).
 - Disagree due to adverse landscape impact and negative impact on the historic environment, for example Brympton D'Evercy Historic Park and Garden and Brympton House (Grade I listed).
- The proposed density of 45 dph is not consistent with Garden City principles.
 - Agree that reference to housing density is best left for the forthcoming master plan to determine, which will be submitted as a 'minor change' to the plan.

Potential amendment 1 – Amend Yeovil housing provision

Policy YV1 of the Proposed Submission Local Plan states that 7,815 dwellings should be delivered at Yeovil, of which 6,250 dwellings should be located in the urban framework, and 1,565 dwellings built in an sustainable urban extension up to the year 2028 (with 935 beyond the plan period). The supporting text to YV1 explains that the change in national policy to allow windfalls to be considered in the 5 year housing land supply, meaning that 5,815 dwellings could be delivered in Yeovil's urban framework. A revised calculation in an appendix to the NPPF Full Council report (23 April 2012) indicates that there is a Yeovil urban capacity of 5,303 dwellings.

The latest review of the housing capacity of the Yeovil urban area (including figures for the monitoring year 2011-12) indicates that 5,415 dwellings can be delivered in the urban framework from 2006-28. This would leave a residual figure of 2,400 dwellings in the urban extension to achieve the overall housing requirement of 7,815 at Yeovil.

Consultation comments received from Charles Bishop Ltd (who have interests in most of the land in the urban extension) state that given the uncertainty of the urban capacity and reliance on windfalls, there should be more flexibility for the delivery of development in the urban extension, and the relevant policies should be reworded to state "up to 2,500 dwellings to be built in the plan period". This indicates that the entire provision for the urban extension could be delivered in the plan period. In addition, evidence¹ suggests that around 250 dwellings per annum could be delivered in a single urban extension – as the proposed start date in the housing trajectory is the year 2016, this would enable 2,500 dwellings to be delivered in the urban extension within the plan period.

Given this evidence it is proposed that Policy YV1 is reworded to state that 5,415 dwellings should be located in the urban framework and 2,500 dwellings within a sustainable urban extension. 2,400 dwellings of the sustainable urban extension should be built up to the year 2028 as a minimum with any remaining amount to be built after the Plan period. The policy footnote to Policy SS5 will need adjusting to reflect this policy rewording and the second bullet of policy YV2 will need similar amendment. Policy SS3 should be amended to increase the amount of employment land in the urban extension to 11 ha to align with the delivery of up to 2,500 dwellings in the plan period.

Potential amendment 2 – Add land at Gregg's Riding School to the location of the urban extension

¹ Housing requirement for South Somerset and Yeovil, 2011, Baker Associates for SSDC.

Land at Gregg's Riding School was not included in the urban extension as the landowner originally indicated that it was not available for development, and in order to retain the viable existing land use of the riding school. Subsequently, letters and emails were submitted from the owner outlining that the riding school would be relocating and therefore the land should be included in the urban extension. A Local Plan representation formally confirmed this, and requested that two fields should be taken out of the buffer zone, and one should remain to protect Naish Priory and the hamlet of Nash (site C on the accompanying map).

Given that the two fields proposed are already adjacent to the urban area on two sides, and there is evidence that they are now available for development; their inclusion in the urban extension is considered generally acceptable, with the forthcoming master plan process to indicate the nature of development that would be appropriate. The loss of the fields proposed would not impact on the role and nature of the buffer zone.

Potential amendment 3 – Add land to south of Yeovil Court Hotel to the urban extension

PMB workshop 4 (5th July 2011) agreed that land around Nash Farm and close to North Coker should not be included in the urban extension. During the Local Plan consultation, comments and supporting studies were submitted on behalf of the landowners for a site east of Holywell and to the south of Yeovil Court Hotel, proposing that the site be included as part of the urban extension (site B on the accompanying map). The site size is around 10 ha, and the proposed density is 20-25 dph. The representation is summarised below:

“This land is proposed for around 194-240 dwellings as it is accessible, will not have a significant highways impact, is not constrained by any statutory land designations, and would not have a detrimental impact upon any recognised historical, geological, or archaeological feature in the site or surrounding area. Any ecological impacts would require mitigation or compensation. It is deliverable immediately. This site could complement existing location for the Yeovil SUE or replace sites which are overly constrained. This site features highly in the site selection process but was not included in the indicative master plan.”

This site is considered generally acceptable for inclusion in the Local Plan as part of the urban extension. It is adjacent to the urban area and has a moderate-high landscape capacity to accommodate built development. Although the Historic Environment Assessment grades the broad area as “low capacity”, the reasons for this grading are no longer applicable on the site in question as the historic field patterns referred to in suggesting a low capacity grading have largely been lost due to 20th century agricultural practices. The commitment from the land owner is evidence that the site is realistically deliverable. It is a matter for the master plan to consider whether the site is subsequently developed for housing, or whether a range of uses would be more appropriate.

Potential amendment 4 – remove reference to housing density of the urban extension

Several comments were submitted suggesting that the reference in the supporting text of the plan (para 5.33) to the urban extension being developed at 45 dph is too high to be consistent with the proposal for Garden City principles which advocate around 30 dph. This is considered a valid comment, and reference to housing density at the urban extension should therefore be removed from the Local Plan. The size of the location identified for the sustainable urban extension would allow a

range of housing densities in delivering 2,500 dwellings, which will be determined in the forthcoming master plan process.