

South Somerset District Council: Local Plan 2006 – 2028

Independent Examination, May 2013

South Somerset District Council Hearing Statement

Issue 5

Yeovil Town – including Summerhouse Village and Yeovil Airfield

April 2013

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Question 5.1

Is the vision for growth and change in this area appropriate and justified, including in relation to national guidance and local needs, and in terms of economic, social and environmental impact

1.1 The PSSSLP serves to deliver for Yeovil the

- Homes and jobs needed in the area
- Provision of retail, leisure and other commercial development
- Provision of relevant infrastructure

In accord with para 156 of the NPPF and it addresses para 157's exhortation for Yeovil to

“plan positively for the development and infrastructure required in the area to meet the objectives principles and policies of this framework”

It serves to deliver on the vision identified for Yeovil in the vision for the District set out in chapter 3 of the PSSSLP [CD3] and derived principally from the sustainable community strategy.

1.2 The status of Yeovil as a Strategically Significant Town was determined by the Regional Spatial Strategy for the South West [Sec of State's proposed changes CD 6a and b – page 39 in 6b] and was taken on board by the emerging South Somerset Local Plan. Yeovil along with the other strategically significant settlements was chosen because it is a focal point for economic activity, cultural facilities and a wide range of services fundamental to resident's quality of life and where the requirements of individuals to travel can be catered for by better and more reliable public transport provision. They are also key places in the region with potential to achieve further significant development sustainably. In concentrating development in strategically significant towns and cities it is possible to achieve critical mass and achieve economies of scale making best use of existing and planned infrastructure and maximising the effect of developer contributions to the cost of critical infrastructure

1.3 The overall scale of housing growth for Yeovil is explained and justified in the Housing Topic Paper [CD14] which presents the chronology of decisions on Yeovil's level of housing growth and its split between the existing urban framework and a greenfield urban extension in summary form in pages 7 – 12 and in more detail thereafter. The Topic Paper explains on page 31 that the level of provision at Yeovil was the subject of sustainability appraisal to review its appropriate share of overall housing growth. Alternative approaches for the distribution of growth at Yeovil

compared to elsewhere in the District were considered, but a 50:50 approach splitting housing growth between Yeovil and the rest of the District was seen as the most sustainable as this has the most economic benefits (including the retention of around a 50% jobs share for Yeovil reflecting its past performance), enables the best potential to access services and facilities, and helps to meet housing need where it is greatest [CD16a, para 5.5.2 – 5.5.7].

- 1.4 The employment growth for Yeovil, its distribution between urban framework and urban extension and the requirement for employment land within and about the town are explained and justified in the Employment Topic Paper [CD11]. The 50% share of employment growth (subsequently modified to 49% to reflect past performance) emerged from the Housing Requirement for South Somerset and Yeovil report [CD 30] which undertook analysis and scenario work to project future economic growth in employment terms for Yeovil and the District. The provision of employment land within the town reflected a review of the quantitative supply and an assessment on qualitative grounds that a further 5 ha is required to provide choice and range of sites. The requirement for the urban extension is also explained and discussed more specifically in the Council's Statement on Issue 6.
- 1.5 The determination of the level of growth to take place in the urban framework against that in the Urban extension is charted again in the Housing Topic paper [CD 14] and in particular it was addressed by the PMB in workshops 4 and by Area South in Committee meeting on 7th March 2011 and Workshop 13 prior to publication of the PSSSLP. Workshop 19 served to review the likely provision for the urban framework of Yeovil in the light of the changed position in relation to windfall development occasioned by the NPPF and updated monitoring information. This work was finalised in workshop 23 and confirmed in the light of the Housing Trajectory endorsed at that meeting. In essence the provision within Yeovil was that which was either committed or likely to come forward by windfall provision with the remainder to be met by the urban extension up to the end of the plan period (1,565 dw) with the rest of the extension to be developed post plan. The Housing Trajectory affirmed that this provision split was realistic and reflecting market forces. The final provision for the urban extension and the urban framework is shown in the list of all Modification Modification number 74 [CD3b].
- 1.6 The aspiration for garden city standards at Yeovil as set out in the Policy YV2 emerged from the eco Town initiative undertaken by the Council for the urban extension and then informed by the publication of the NPPF that ended the eco town Planning Guidance and replaced it with Garden city aspirations. This is explained further in the Council's Statement on Issue 6.
- 1.7 The sustainable travel initiative emerged again from the Council's initiative on an eco town for Yeovil and reflects NPPF policy aspirations as set out in paras 29 – 41 of the framework
- 1.8 The retail aspiration for Yeovil to grow set out in Policy EP 10 is fully explained in the supporting text para 8.84 and is evidenced in the retail capacity study, and more

recently in its update and 2nd update [CDs 52.53 and 51]. This policy is strongly in accord with NPPF policies seeking to ensure the vitality of town centres.

- 1.9 Yeovil Summerhouse Village was initially identified out of the Yeovil Urban Development Framework [CD107] and was carried forward by a master planning exercise initiated as part of the Eco Town initiative. This culminated in completion of a draft masterplan in August 2011 [CD100]. This was considered by the Council's Area South Committee in January 2012 and they resolved to accept it as a draft and to undertake further work to complete the masterplan. The Area South resolution is set out in appendix 1. Para 5.57 of the PSSSLP [CD3] set out the reasons why early delivery of the strategic location is not anticipated along with a further reason put forward in the List of all modifications [CD3b] Modification M97 derived from consideration of the Somerset County Council car parking report (and its subsequent update.). The Housing Trajectory as presented in the List of all Modifications [CD3b] shows the later start of the Yeovil Summerhouse Village in modification M76. The Yeovil Summerhouse Village was considered as part of the urban framework housing provision for Yeovil in the sequence of workshop and Area Committee reports set out in para 1.5 above.
- 1.10 The promotion of Yeovil Summerhouse Village emerged out of the Eco Town initiative of the government and Supplementary Planning Policy Statement "Planning Policy Statement: eco towns- a supplementary to PPS1 [CD]. It is supported in the NPPF that has superseded the supplementary PPS by para 17 bullet re transition to a low carbon future and bullet encouraging the effective use of land by re using land that has been previously developed and that encouraging the fullest possible use of public transport and walking and cycling. Furthermore it serves to provide residential development needed in town centres (para 23). The proposal also serves to widen opportunities for home ownership and create sustainable inclusive and mixed communities (para 50).
- 1.11 The Yeovil Summerhouse Village has been justified in economic, social and environmental terms in the sustainability appraisal undertaken and set out in CD16a and presented in detail in the appendix 7 pp 29 -32 [CD 16c?]

Question 5.2

Is the boundary of the flight safety zone fully justified and is policy YV5 sufficiently clear? How will the Council assess whether or not a proposal would cause a hazard to the operation of the airfield?

- 2.1 The Council introduced the Yeovil Airfield flight safety zone in response to concerns raised by AgustaWestland (AW) in public consultation on the draft Core Strategy (incorporating preferred options) [CD1]. AW objected to development in the minimum

safety zones required for the safe operation of the airfield, explaining that any developments that interfere with these zones would lead to a strong likelihood that the AW airfield would lose its aerodrome licence. This would seriously hinder any future new development aircraft programmes, and would rule out work to modify or repair existing aircraft as it requires the aerodrome licence [CD9b, Appendix 8, pages 104 and 119].

- 2.2 Following this objection to the draft plan, the Council sought further clarification and justification for the flight safety zone from AW. This resulted in a letter from AW detailing the importance of introducing a safeguarding area and why it is necessary, accompanied by a map delineating the safeguarding zone (Appendix 5.2A and 5.2B). The letter explains that development in this zone would severely impact the safe test flying activities of both current and any future aircraft, putting new programmes at risk and having a negative impact upon a new business strategy. The outline of the safety zones are based upon simulation work using a model approved by the Civil Aviation Authority.
- 2.3 As the inclusion of the flight safety zone is of such high importance to the economy of Yeovil and the wider area, this constraint was given high priority in considering the location of the Sustainable Urban Extension [CD115, PMB workshop 3], and 'reasonable alternatives' were not considered on this issue [CD16a, para 6.3.5].
- 2.4 The Council consider that policy YV5 is sufficiently clear. The intention of this policy is to ensure that no hazard is caused to the operational needs of the airfield, with the target being no built development in the flight safety zone, as explained further in the supporting text and its delivery [CD3, para 5.61-62]. The delineation of the flight safety zone on inset map 15 shows the area to which the policy will apply [CD3].
- 2.5 In assessing whether or not proposals would cause a hazard to the operation of the airfield, the Council will apply policy YV5, supported by the explanatory text [CD3, paras 5.61-62 and YV5]. AgustaWestland is identified as a delivery body for the policy, and they will be consulted on applications for development in the flight safety zone in order to make an assessment as to the hazardous nature of the proposal. In addition, the 'avoidance of development that will cause a hazard to the Yeovil Airfield Safety Zone' is a monitoring indicator for policy YV5, with the target being 'no built development in the Yeovil Airfield Flight Safety Zone'. The letter from AW (Appendix 5.2A and 5.2B) explains that "hazards may include factors such as permanent or proposed high obstructions which may interfere with navigation aids or the safe approach and departure of aircraft from the airfield" and that AW requires the safety zones "to be clear of any developments or buildings as far as possible".

Summerhouse Village Masterplan (Agenda Item 9)

The Spatial Policy Manager presented the report informing members of the Draft Summerhouse Village Masterplan as attached under separate Appendix and the future actions required to finalise the Masterplan.

He explained the recommendations as set out in the agenda report including the importance of the Car Parking Analysis and further work required. He did however feel the need to actively take forward these proposals but appreciated that the Core Strategy was the main priority at this stage.

The Policy Planner then explained the proposals for the area identified around the Stars Lane car park and the outline and vision for this part of the town.

In response to members' questions, the Spatial Policy Manager agreed that:

- additional provision would be required for parking and that these extra facilities would need to be identified
- appreciated any proposals would be subject to further specific detailed reports before members endorsed any proposed actions
- would need to engage with Yeovil Town Council when undertaking feasibility work regarding the ski slope site

Following a short discussion by members, it was agreed and put forward that the following amendments be made to the recommendations as set out in the Agenda report:

- Recommendation 1) be amended to read 'Note the Draft Summerhouse Village Masterplan as presented at 4th January 2012'.
- Recommendation 2)(c) be amended to read 'Undertaking further feasibility work on the ski slope site in consultation with Yeovil Town Council, including the market for different kinds of hotel or leisure attraction, the costs and viability of different access options and a flood risk assessment on proposals affecting the Dodham Brook

This was subsequently seconded and on being put to the vote the motion was carried by 10 votes in favour and 3 against.

The Chairman then moved the substantive motion and on being put to the vote the motion was carried unanimously.

RESOLVED:

That Members:-

1) Note the Draft Summerhouse Village Masterplan as presented at 4th January 2012

2) Note the proposed future actions:

(a) Setting up a development group to take the ideas forward that includes relevant officers and councillors, and that can negotiate with potential partners, secure relevant grants and establish a delivery plan.

(b) Identifying, acquiring and financing the development of replacement long stay car parking to serve the town centre and implementing a new car parking management strategy in the town. (Work to be undertaken post Core Strategy 2012/13)

(c) Undertaking further feasibility work on the ski slope site in consultation with Yeovil Town Council, including the market for different kinds of hotel or leisure attraction, the costs and viability of different access options and a flood risk assessment on proposals affecting the Dodham Brook.

(d) The provision of an energy centre as part of a local CHP scheme.

(e) Consulting on the draft masterplan, and character guidance.

(f) Establishing the Quality Transport Partnership, and undertaking the transport assessment and travel plan process for the site.

The proposed future actions (a-f) will be subject to a future report that will set out in detail the full set of issues and potential solutions before seeking Member endorsement for pursuing these actions.

3) Note that the Urban Village development will be delayed to later in the Core Strategy Plan period and that the Core Strategy and Flood Risk Position Statement will be amended to reflect changes

(Voting: unanimous)