

Inspector's Report on South Somerset Local Plan Deposit Draft

Purpose of Report

To advise the District Executive of the Regeneration & Land Use Manager's responses to the Inspector's report on the Local Plan following the Local Public Inquiry into objections made to the Deposit Draft Local Plan (1998) and of the consideration of those responses by the four Area Committees. The Group Manager's responses are set out in his report (of several parts) considered by special meetings of the Area Committees held on 16th & 17th December 2003 and 6th January 2004. Members of District Executive are asked to bring their copy of that report to this meeting for consideration.

Recommendation

That the District Executive;

1. accept the recommendations of the Regeneration & Land Use Group Manager in the report submitted to the Area Committees on 16th & 17th December 2003 and 6th January 2004;
2. consider the proposed amendments to those responses resolved by the Area Committees as set out in the attached schedule;
3. subject to ratification by the Council, authorise the Regeneration & Land Use Group Manager to proceed to produce the formal Modifications Report to be placed on public deposit.
4. That the decision to include an allocation of land for housing development land at Yeo Paull Ltd., south of Steppes Crescent, Martock, be delegated to the Group Manager to be exercised if planning permission for the site has not been granted prior to the publication of the formal Modifications Report.

Report

The District Council approved the South Somerset Local Plan Draft Deposit on 12th February 1998 for "formal deposit" for public consultation. It was placed on public deposit for the period 26th June 1998 until 7th August 1998. Some 3,900 representations were duly made, of which nearly 3,100 were objections.

In the light of objections made, the Council published 386 **Proposed Changes** to the Plan, with a six-week period for consultation from 17th May 2001 to 27 June 2001. These generated a further 744 objections and 416 supporting representations.

Subsequently, the council put forward **Further Proposed Changes**, of which three relating to Chard, Crewkerne and Misterton were advertised.

A Public Inquiry into objections to the Draft South Somerset Local Plan was held between 9th April 2002 and 7th February 2003. During the course of the inquiry a further set of 56 **Inquiry Agreed Changes** were put forward, none of which were advertised, but all were endorsed by full Council.

The Inspector's report, extending to 555 pages, was dated 9th June 2003 and the 3726 outstanding objections existing at the start of the Inquiry are the subject of that report. The Inspector has had regard to both the Further Proposed Changes and the Agreed Changes in preparing his report. The weight he has been able to give to them reflects

the extent of public consultation on them. The Council is required to consider the report and to decide what action to take on each of the recommendations. The Council is not obliged to accept the Inspector's recommendations.

The Inspector's Report has been carefully considered by the Planning Policy Unit in conjunction with consultations with the Highway and Education Authorities and the Environment Agency.

A report relating to the Regeneration & Land Use Group Manager's responses has been considered by each of the Area Committees (together with accompanying errata sheets submitted to each AREA Committee). All members of the Council have received a copy of that report. For ease of reference the document was split into four sections and colour coded.

Report 1 referred to those items where the Inspector is recommending no change. The Group Manager agrees with those recommendations.

Report 2 contained those items where the Inspector is recommending that the Local Plan be modified in accordance with the Council's Agreed Changes. The Group Manager agrees with those recommendations.

Report 3 contained those items where the Inspector is recommending that the Local Plan be further modified. The Group Manager agrees with these recommendations in full or is recommending non-substantive alterations to them, and is seeking Council endorsement.

Section 4 contained those items where the Inspector is recommending that the Local Plan should be modified and where the Group Manager does not agree wholly or in part with those recommendations.

In addition there were attached the following reports:

- **Proposed Modifications to Proposals and Inset Maps.** Where "Greenfield" allocations have been removed, Development Areas have generally been amended to reflect the development limit boundaries in the relevant extant development plan, e.g. Chard & Ilminster Local Plan etc. Where this is not the case, it is clearly shown on the Proposals Map.
- **Yeovil Employment Land Study (2003).** This study was promised prior to the Inquiry as a consequence of the council accepting that there was insufficient employment land in the Yeovil area. The conclusions of this report inform and influence the Group Manager's recommendations on employment matters.
- **Chard Key Site: Compulsory Purchase.**

The minutes of the Area Committees relating to the consideration of the report are attached. Members are advised that the papers before them do not include the minutes of the special Area South meeting due to inadequate time between that meeting and the publication of papers for this meeting.

A schedule is also attached setting out the Area Committees' recommended changes to the Group Manager's responses, the Group Manager's comments and the consequential changes to Proposed Modifications required by the Area Committee changes.

It is considered relevant to draw members attention to achieve consistency in the application of strategic policy to avoid undermining the integrity of the Local Plan as a whole.

In particular, attention is drawn to potentially conflicting recommendations of the Area Committees;

- the recommendations of Area East to reinstate the allocation of land at Templecombe and Area West's acceptance of the deletion of the allocation at Misterton. Neither settlement is a rural centre and in terms of strategic policy should not be considered as suitable settlements for further significant growth, and;
- the recommendation of Area North to allocate employment land at Lopen Head whilst Area East has agreed to the deletion of employment land allocation at Marsh Lane, Henstridge. Both sites are proposed employment sites in open countryside and are relatively remote from their potential workforce thereby susceptible to sustainability arguments. Both sites run counter to the overall approach of locating rural employment in market towns and rural centres or within the existing built fabric (especially farm buildings) of the rural area.

Should members accept the original recommendations of the Group Manager, these apparent inconsistencies would be resolved.

Pages 38-39 of Report 3 omit reference to objections to the following designated No Development Areas (Policy EH12) where the Inspector concluded that no change be made to the Local Plan and the sites should remain as No Development Areas:-

- Riverside Walk, Bruton,
- Land to the south of St Nicholas' Church, Combe St Nicholas,
- Touches Lane, Chard; and
- Brickyard Lane, Crewkerne.

Report 3 also fails to acknowledge that the Inspector concluded that land at Fore Street, West Camel is not designated as a No Development Area.

The reason for these omissions was that the report addressed the Inspector's formal recommendations with regard Policy EH12, rather than also addressing his conclusions. This error is noted on the errata sheet, which has been before the area committees.

Members' attention is also drawn to the Group Manager's recommendation in respect of the land at Yeo Paull Ltd., south of Steppes Crescent, Martock (Chapter 13A page 181 of report 3). Should planning permission not be forthcoming before the formal Modification Report, then that report will need to include an allocation for this site, together with details of the council's requirements for an acceptable scheme.

Following the consideration of this report by the District Executive and full Council, a **Proposed Modifications** document will be published and placed on public deposit for a minimum period of 6 weeks. At the same time, the Council is also required to prepare a statement of decisions on each recommendation and to give full reasons for not accepting any recommendations by the Inspector. All representations received as a result of that deposit will be considered and if necessary a further Public Inquiry held into outstanding objections relating to new substantive issues. Following any further inquiry, another Inspector's Report will be considered and a further Proposed Modifications report will be published. The next step would then be the publication of a **Notice of Intention to Adopt the Plan**, which would be on deposit for a minimum period of 28 days, following which the Local Plan could be formally adopted. Following the formal

resolution to adopt the Local Plan there would be a statutory period of 6 weeks within which a formal legal challenge to the plan could be made.

Financial Implications

None

Background Papers: *South Somerset Local Plan Deposit Draft*
South Somerset Local Plan Proposed Changes to the Deposit Plan
South Somerset Local Plan Deposit Draft Council Agreed Changes (15th November 2001)
Local Plan Inquiry Inspector's Report.
Area North (17/12/2003), South (06/01/2004), East (16/12/2003) and West (17/12/2003) Committee minutes.

CHAPTER 14A - SETTLEMENTS AND SITES IN AREA SOUTH

The Inspector brings together in this chapter objections relating to sites advanced by objectors for inclusion as housing sites under policy HG2, as employment sites under policy ME2 and those objections relating to the status of settlements under policies ST2 and ST3.

LAND AT KEYFORD, WEST OF DORCHESTER ROAD, YEOVIL.

Inspector Recommendation

I recommend that the local plan be modified by the addition of the following policy:

PROPOSAL KS/KEYF/1

Land at Keyford is allocated for Key Site development to provide the following:

- Approximately 15 hectares for employment for Class B1 development, requiring a high quality environment;
- Approximately 9.6 hectares of residential land providing about 335 dwellings including a target of 35% affordable housing;
- Associated public open space and structural landscaping of about 7 hectares;
- Provision of a new access to Keyford roundabout;
- Contributions towards footway/cycleway improvements to the town centre and to improved public transport (Council to add more specific requirements in both respects);
- Provision of land for a local centre including shops and a hall;
- Provision of a site for education facilities.

Policies HG2 and ME2 will need to be amended accordingly.

Group Manager Response

It is considered that the Inspector's recommendation should not be accepted.

The Inspector's conclusions on this site are detailed below in full:

7.12.1 The objection site adjoins the southern edge of the town and extends to about 35 hectares. The objectors promote a mixed development of housing and employment, suggesting a range of potential mixes, with employment land varying between 6 and 15 hectares and housing between 9.5 hectares (about 335 dwellings) and 17 hectares (600 dwellings).

Strategic matters

7.12.2 Consideration of this major site needs to take on board my conclusions in respect of firstly, the plan's settlement strategy and housing land supply and secondly, the need for more employment land in the Yeovil area. I do not intend to rehearse those arguments and conclusions here, except to summarise my approach. On the first, I have concluded that the council's review of its settlement strategy, post PPG3, has not gone far enough. A greater concentration of development is needed in the district's main town, Yeovil. The plan should, therefore, look to providing more housing land in and around the town. Any opportunities should be carefully examined with a view to adding to the town's allocations. Secondly, I have supported the council's position that additional employment land is need in the town, including a minimum of 12 hectares in the form of a high quality site.

- 7.12.3 *Taken with national guidance on the desirability of mixed use developments, the advantages, in strategic terms at least, of identifying another Key Site for the town gather some force. As to, in broad terms, where this should be, the council's Yeovil Peripheral Land Study offers a helpful overview. That Study provides a comparative analysis of the landscape around the town. Yeovil has largely developed on an east west axis, within the topographical constraints of the northern and southern escarpments. The Study recognised that and identified areas that could complement that urban form, without breaching those physical landform features. In effect, the surrounding area was graded by sector, with certain areas considered to be unsuited for development, whilst others were felt to be acceptable. The objection site lies within a sector that falls somewhere between the two.*
- 7.12.4 *This process helped to lead to the plan allocating land to the east (Lyde Road), to the west (Lufton) and to the north, within the rising dip slope (Thorne Lane). The less constrained sites have now been developed or identified for development. In these general terms the sector within which the objection site lies falls into the next, "least worst", category. I see no reason to disagree with this broad brush assessment.*
- 7.12.5 *This location satisfies the principal requirements of a strategic employment site. It is well related to the main employment areas. It offers the opportunity to add to the cluster of High Tec businesses in the area. It has the potential to be a high profile site at the entrance to the town, accessed directly off the primary road network. It is large enough to create its own, high quality environment. Although south of the town, access to the A303 is not so difficult as to represent a significant drawback to its location, nor is this an issue that is so compelling for B1 uses.*

Landscape

- 7.12.6 *Turning to the specifics of this site, it is located on the south sloping dip slope outside of the natural containment of the east-west scarp. Despite this southerly extension beyond the east-west escarpment, I do not consider that this represents a fundamental objection. In my view this escarpment is relatively less sensitive than that to the north of the town. It has already been breached by the adjoining area of housing. The site adjoins the A37, a major route into the town, where the character is very much that of a gateway, an entrance into the main built-up area. The modern roundabout, the rugby club lights and other features signal that one is entering the town. The objection site itself is for the most part well screened from this road. Further, although parts of the site are fairly prominent in the wider landscape and are visible from wider views from the west, the south and the east, these views are not especially sensitive, important ones. The fact of visibility does not equate with them not being suitable for development.*
- 7.12.7 *The site would be seen in the context of development already spilling over the shoulder of land. Although new development would be clearly visible from some directions the division between developed land north of the shoulder of land and fields to the south is a blurred one. The proposals would tilt the balance towards a greater presence of built development. However, neither the quality of the site itself or that of the wider landscape is such as to render that unacceptable. It should not have a harmful impact upon the setting of the historic landscape associated with Barwick Park; Stoford, North Coker and East Coker Conservation Areas, nor the listed building, Keyford House.*
- 7.12.8 *Although it would extend development out and away from the existing built-up edge, in my opinion extending development southwards in this form offers a relatively soft option, without causing unacceptable harm to the setting of the town. I do not believe that the development of this land would lead to actual or perceived coalescence between the main built-up area of Yeovil and the nearby villages. Sufficient physical and visual separation would remain. The site is contained within well defined limits, by existing highways. In landscape terms it falls into two principal elements as described in the council's Keyford Landscape Assessment 2000: small scale, well-vegetated plateau head fields on the urban fringe, with more open, larger fields to the south. Provided that a)*

development respected that broad division, limiting potentially more obtrusive larger-scale employment buildings mainly to the lower, less visually prominent parts of the site, b) that the built form respected the small scale nature of the northern part and c) the hedgerows and trees are retained and supplemented, then I consider development could be assimilated into the landscape without causing unacceptable harm. Similarly, I consider that the archaeological interest on the site can be assimilated within the overall development without its integrity being compromised.

Sustainability

- 7.12.9 *I was presented with a great deal of detailed evidence on the accessibility of this and the other Key Sites to various facilities in the town. On a general point, on a district-wide perspective, a location on the edge of Yeovil is likely to be substantially more sustainable than locations away from the town. As an urban extension it respects the advice in paragraph 66 of PPG3. The comparative evidence suggests to me that the site offers a sustainable location for peripheral development. In comparative terms it holds up very well compared with the plan's three Key Sites. It is substantially better than the Lufton site, which is located significantly further from the town centre. It also scores well in comparison with the Thorne Lane and Lyde Road sites. The route into and out of town from Keyford is not a level one. Walkers and cyclists would be faced with fairly significant gradients which may put off less robust residents from making their journeys by foot or cycle. Nevertheless, the site still remains a sustainable location. I do not approach this objection on the basis of whether it should replace one of the plan's Key Sites. Rather, because of the need to further concentrate development in the town, additional suitable sites should be considered. If there has to be peripheral greenfield development around the town, then this is an acceptable and sustainable location.*
- 7.12.10 *Currently bus provision in the area is not good. The objectors suggest that the development would act as a catalyst for a circular service, incorporating the town centre and Yeovil Junction railway station. I agree with the view that it is important that a 15 minute service is provided serving this site. It needs to be assured for more than just a nominal period. Although there is little hard evidence on this, I would expect that it should be possible to instigate a decent bus service to service this part of Yeovil. The provision of a bus route on the lines suggested by the objectors would improve bus services within this part of the town, at the same time serving adjoining residential areas. As I have indicated with other major sites I consider this is such an important issue to which the policy should make a clear references. It should make an explicit reference to the public transport requirements that must be provided in order to increase opportunities to travel by means other than the car. There are no insurmountable problems with the capacity of the local highway network to accommodate the likely increase in traffic as a result of the development.*

Agricultural land

- 7.12.11 *A major, and significant objection remains: that the site is classified as being Grade 1 agricultural land. National and local policies no longer prescribe an absolute ban on developing such land. Yeovil is located within an area of high quality agricultural land, with much of it being grades 1 and 2. It is inevitable that if Yeovil is to expand it will require the loss of such land. Other land, to the west side of the town may offer a lower, but still high, quality locations for development. However, that land appears to suffer from other significant restraints in relation to the landscape of Brympton D'Evercy.*
- 7.12.12 *It seems to me that in drawing together the advantages and disadvantages of development of this site, the former are much weightier than the latter. On balance, I find that there are compelling advantages in increasing the amount of employment and residential land in the town by allocating this site. In conclusion, I come firmly to the view that there is a need to identify an additional Key Site to both provide a high quality employment site and add to the concentration of new housing on the town.*

Prematurity

- 7.12.13 *Perhaps the most weighty objection by the council is that an allocation at this time would be wrong; that a comparative assessment of candidate sites (for the high quality employment land) should be undertaken before any additional allocations are made. I have commented on this issue in the section on employment land in chapter 9 of my report, in respect of policy ME2. There I have supported the addition of a further 15 hectares of land for a strategic, high quality development. Keyford is the only possible site before me as an objection site. The only other realistic site specifically mentioned by the council is the site at Bunford. Unfortunately, I do not have any objection before me in respect of that site.*
- 7.12.14 *Although the council professes the need for a wide-ranging assessment of all options in respect of identifying a high quality employment site, it seems to me that the options are extremely restricted. It was accepted by the council at the inquiry that the site would need to adjoin the built-up area of the town. It should not be sited away from the town. Bunford has been considered by the council and rejected, in part at least for site specific reasons. The site I have before me now is one where I find no compelling objection. It is an acceptable site for a large, Key Site, development. I am content to recommend its allocation because I do not find that would be objectionable. Secondly, I consider that the price to pay if one adopts the council's approach is too high for what seems likely to be a spurious, unrewarding, exercise.*
- 7.12.15 *This plan has taken 8 years to come to inquiry. Already over half the plan period has passed. There is a time that matters can and should no longer be deferred. It is important that no further time is lost. Whilst I accept that my recommendation is likely to result in the need for a Modifications Inquiry, a firm recommendation should enable some preparatory work on this site to be undertaken. The alternative, of delaying a choice of sites until after an assessment exercise, followed by a Modifications Inquiry, opens up the prospect of even greater indecision and delay. On the council's estimate the deferment of a decision pending a comparative assessment of sites would add several months to the process. I am inclined to a less optimistic scenario. I detect no sense of urgency on the council's part that would necessarily drive them forward on this matter. The need is now, if these sites are to make a contribution during the remaining years of the plan period. In these circumstances I conclude that it would be right to make a firm recommendation.*

Overall conclusions

- 7.12.16 *Accordingly, I shall recommend that a further Key Site be identified at Keyford for a mix of employment and residential development. Bearing in mind that one of the principal driving forces for this is the identification of a high quality employment site of 15 hectares, I do not support the options advanced by the objectors that fail to achieve this. For the same reason the employment allocation should be restricted to B1 uses. A mixed development should be achievable. Infrastructure costs should be relatively low, with improvements to the primary road network having already taken place. I shall recommend that 15 hectares be allocated for employment, with about 9.6 hectares of housing, providing for about 335 dwellings. I support the other matters raised in the objectors' suggested policy, which the council may need to review with the objector, with the one proviso that the policy includes a firming up on improvements to public transport.*

The key issue in not accepting the Inspector's recommendation is that land at Keyford is not considered to be the best site to meet Yeovil's additional employment land needs and neither is it considered necessary for housing reasons. A further Key Site development is not therefore supported. The Inspector considers land at Keyford to be suitable for employment use for a number of reasons and whilst it is not disputed that it has potential for development this does not make it the best site, which, it is contended, should be the basis for making such an important decision. The Inspector's conclusions are considered below under the following headings: Employment development, housing development, strategic issues, and site-specific matters.

Employment development:

In his concluding comments (paragraph 7.12.16) the Inspector identifies this as a key issue "...one of the principal driving forces for this (allocation) is the identification of a high quality employment site of 15 hectares...". As a matter of principal, this is not disputed. However, his conclusions are arrived at on the basis of land at Keyford and in the absence of a comparative study of alternative sites. This the Inspector acknowledges in paragraph 7.12.13, "...Keyford is the only possible site before me as an objection site. The only other realistic site specifically mentioned by the council is the site at Bunford. Unfortunately, I do not have any objection before me in respect of that site." In contrast, the conclusions of the Council's Yeovil Employment Land Study (2003) were arrived at following a detailed comparative study of sites across and around the town. In terms of locating the strategic business park and residual general employment land, the study concluded that land off Bunford Lane is the best site. The Inspector's conclusions and recommendations should therefore be considered in the context of this study in order to ensure that the best and most appropriate site for employment use is allocated.

In his paragraph 7.12.5, the Inspector considers that land at Keyford satisfies the principal requirements of a strategic employment site and, indeed, that may be the case to a large degree. But this is not to say that such requirements are exclusive to land at Keyford or that this site satisfies them to the best degree. The Yeovil Employment Land Study shows clearly that land off Bunford Lane not only satisfies the principal requirements of a strategic employment site but is more suitable in certain respects; the Highway Authority consider this site to be more suitable than at Keyford, and, in my role as Group Manager including the Economic Development Unit, it is my firm opinion that land at Bunford is the most marketable site for Yeovil by virtue of its prominent location on the western edge of the town and its better accessibility into Yeovil town centre and out to the national road network.

The Inspector refers to, and is critical of, the Council's position on the need for the Yeovil Employment Land Study in paragraphs 7.12.13 to 7.12.15. He has commented on this matter in response to Policy ME2 above and further comments that the options are extremely restricted, that land at Bunford has been considered and rejected by the Council, that the Keyford site has no compelling objection and that the price to pay for adopting the Council's approach is, "...too high for what seems likely to be a spurious, unrewarding, exercise." The Inspector expands on this latter point in his paragraph 7.12.15 commenting "...I detect no sense of urgency on the council's part that would necessarily drive them forward on this matter. The need is now, if these sites are to make a contribution during the remaining years of the plan period. In these circumstances I conclude that it would be right to make a firm recommendation."

It is not accepted that the Yeovil Employment Land Study has been a spurious and unrewarding exercise. As is mentioned in response to Policy ME2 above, timing of the preparation of the Local Plan has not been entirely within the control of the District Council and in arriving at the present position the Council is committed to making the best choice in relation to the identification of additional employment land for Yeovil. Neither is it accepted that the allocation of land at Keyford would be any speedier than the allocation of the preferred site off Bunford Lane. It is accepted that the latter would, as a new matter, be likely to result in a Modifications Inquiry. However, this is no different from the position adopted by the Inspector in relation to land at Keyford where he accepts that his recommendation is likely to result in the need also for such an inquiry. Similarly, the Inspector's view that a firm recommendation should enable some preparatory work to be undertaken on the Keyford site equally applies to land of Bunford. Furthermore, some of this work will have already been undertaken through the Yeovil Employment Land Study.

The Inspector bases his criticism in part on the view that the options are extremely limited and refers to only two sites, land at Keyford, and land at Bunford. However, his views are made only in the context of the strategic business site does not acknowledge the consequences of also identifying additional general employment land. The Inspector recommends that 10 hectares of such land be identified but had no such sites before him. A study was essential therefore to consider the options and alternatives and to identify the preferred site(s). Any such proposals would be new matters and, in the case of a greenfield allocation, would be likely to result in a Modifications Inquiry.

In paragraph 7.12.14, the Inspector comments that land at Bunford has been considered by the council and rejected, in part at least for site specific reasons. The Inspector's interpretation of this matter is not supported. Full Council on 21 April 2001 concluded this matter and whilst the Bunford Lane proposal had generated much debate which included site-specific issues, the Council's resolution was based on strategic reasons, namely, that "...the resolution of Council dated 14th December 2000 that an additional employment allocation

be made in the Yeovil area be rescinded because the existing amount and choice of employment sites for the town are sufficient for its needs."

Housing development:

In arriving at his conclusion that this site should be allocated, the Inspector is influenced by his conclusions elsewhere in his report that more housing development should be provided for Yeovil. He refers the strategic background and summarises his conclusions elsewhere. On housing he concludes that the Council's review has not gone far enough and that a greater concentration of development is needed. The plan should, *"...look to providing more housing land in and around the town. Any opportunities should be carefully examined with a view to adding to the town's allocations"* (paragraph 7.12.2).

In support of this general conclusion the Inspector makes recommendations to increase the number of dwellings on the Lufton and Thorne Lane Key Sites in addition to recommending this site. The overall effect of these recommendations is to increase the amount of allocated housing for Yeovil by about 810 dwellings and in his introductory comments to the Yeovil Key Sites (paragraphs 1.1 to 1.10 of Chapter 14) he recognises the concerns about market delivery. He acknowledges *"...there has to be limit on how much greater a rate of development in the town the housing market can achieve.."* (paragraph 1.8) and, in paragraph 1.9, that his recommendation to add a fourth key site to the town represents a considerable increase in the number of dwellings in the town. He continues by commenting, *"...it would not be unreasonable to assume that a small element of the three larger sites would not come to completion by the end of the plan period but, rather, would slip over beyond that. Accordingly, I propose to reduce the likely contribution to the plan's housing provision to 2011 of the 3 larger Key Sites by 100 dwelling each.."*

The net effect of the Inspector's recommendations is to increase the expected level of housing in Yeovil by about 35 dwellings. Namely, adding about 335 dwellings at Keyford but reducing by 300 the dwellings expected to be built on the other three Key Sites. The Inspector supports the principle of these sites and even recommends the enlargement of the Lufton and Thorne Lane sites. In such circumstances, and given the conclusions on the employment development above, it is not considered that there is an overriding case for the development of a further significant greenfield site for housing. It is acknowledged that the Inspector is not placing a ceiling on the delivery of the other three Keys Site and that it is not a constraint should market conditions support completions by 2011 (paragraph 1.9, Chapter 14). Should this be the case, there is still a further 250 dwellings on the Thorne Lane Key Site which are expected to be delivered beyond the plan period and this site should therefore be built out before the need for further greenfield development. In the longer term, monitoring will show the extent to which further housing should be planned for in Yeovil and decisions on further greenfield sites made in the context of the forthcoming Local Development Framework for the District.

Sustainability

In paragraphs 7.12.9 and 7.12.10 the Inspector comments on sustainability matters in the context of a further mixed use Key Site and finds the Keyford site to be an acceptable and sustainable location. In the general sense, the Inspector's conclusions on this aspect are not disputed but as with the requirements of a strategic employment development (above) these are not exclusive to the Keyford site and neither do they constitute an overriding case for further greenfield development. As he says in paragraph 7.12.10, the Inspector approached this objection site on the basis of an additional Key Site rather than a replacement of one of the Plan's such sites. However, the need for a further Key Site is not accepted; there is a more suitable location for employment land and there is no overriding need to provide for further housing over and above that in the existing three Key Sites.

Site-specific matters:

The Inspector refers to site specific matters in several places in his conclusions. It is not intended to address these in great detail, as the principle of allocating the Keyford site is not accepted.

In paragraphs 7.12.3 and 7.12.4, the Inspector refers to the Yeovil Peripheral Land Study which he considers offers a helpful overview as to where a new development should be. He finds that the land at Keyford lies within the *"east worst"* category, namely a sector that fell between areas considered unsuited for development and those areas felt to be acceptable. This general conclusion is not disputed, however, it adds little to the arguments. The Yeovil Peripheral Land Study was prepared in the late 1980's in support of the

Yeovil Area Local Plan and does not reflect latest policy approaches to urban expansion. In particular, the study has limited depth of landscape analysis and is not up to date with current methodologies.

The Inspector then addresses landscape issues in more detail in paragraphs 7.12.6 to 7.12.8, concluding in paragraph 7.12.8 that, *"...in my opinion extending development southwards in this form offers a relatively soft option, without causing unacceptable harm to the setting of the town."* He continues by referring to the Council's Keyford Landscape Assessment (2000) and *"...Provided that a) development respected that broad division, limiting potentially more obtrusive larger-scale employment buildings mainly to the lower, less visually prominent parts of the site, b) that the built form respected the small scale nature of the northern part and c) the hedgerows and trees are retained and supplemented, then I consider development could be assimilated into the landscape without causing unacceptable harm."* The Council's Landscape Architect has reviewed the 2000 Assessment in the context of the Yeovil Employment Land Study and in the knowledge of the Inspector's recommendation on the Keyford site, and concludes

"Within the Keyford area, there is no land available for employment or business park development that could be sympathetically integrated with Yeovil's urban form, as the site stands. However, should a key site proposal come forward for this area, which would provide both a context and framework for development, then a site could be accommodated within a larger proposal, providing suitable mitigation measures are an integral part of that proposal."

It is not disputed therefore that this site could accommodate major development, subject to appropriate safeguards. However, more specifically, the 2000 Assessment identified only a relatively small area on the southern edge of the site where employment development would be acceptable in terms of scale and visual impact. This area of land is broadly equivalent to the 6 hectares of employment land indicated in the objector's option A. The Inspector's recommendation is, however, that about 15 hectares of employment land be allocated, equivalent to the objector's option C, some of which would be on land of high visual profile resulting in an unacceptable level of visual impact. The Inspector's conclusion on this matter are not therefore supported.

Additionally, the landscape assessment of alternative sites carried out in response to the Yeovil Employment Land Study concludes that land off Bunford Lane is the preferred location.

The issue of agricultural land is addressed in paragraphs 7.12.11 and 7.12.12 wherein the Inspector acknowledges that the sites classification as Grade 1 agricultural land is a major and significant objection but national and local policies no longer prescribe and absolute ban on developing such land. The Inspector's comment that if Yeovil is to expand it is inevitable that it will require the loss of such land is accepted but in doing so the objective should still be to use poorer quality land in preference except where other sustainability considerations outweigh the agricultural land value. It is contended that there are no such other sustainability considerations which justify the development of this land. The Inspector refers to other land to the west side of the town which *"...may offer a lower, but still high, quality locations for development. However, that land appears to suffer from other significant restraints in relation to the landscape of Brympton D'Evercy."* These views are not supported. The Yeovil Employment Land Study concludes that land off Bunford Lane is the preferred location and represents the most marketable site for Yeovil and that the relationship to the landscape of Brympton D'Evercy is not an absolute constraint.

The Education Authority advise that this proposal creates substantial difficulties. The nearest schools geographically in Yeovil are Huish Primary and Holy Trinity VA Primary but these are already at their maximum site size and capacity. The East Coker Primary School would be about a mile away and although a comparatively large village school it is on a restricted site and is not considered feasible to significantly further increase its size. The nearest school to the south is probably Barwick but which is not practical to extend because of site constraints. The option to replace Barwick school on the Keyford site referred to as an alternative but this would still be a small school (4 classes) and would involve children crossing the busy A37. A 7-class school would be more viable from the education point of view but would require about another 450 homes to be allocated. Further discussions and consultations would be needed on any such proposals. The Education Authority comment briefly on secondary education noting that the Barwick and East Coker Schools are within the catchment area for Westfield Secondary School which is a popular school but on a split site with temporary buildings. Further consideration will need to be given to its potential for expansion, bearing in mind that it is already the closest site to the Thorne Lane allocation. Alternatively, secondary school pupil catchment areas in Yeovil might be considered. Presently, the Education Authority is minded to object to an allocation at Keyford as recommended by the Inspector, however, if the land is to be allocated it may be

preferable to consider it as a larger housing site for, say, 1,000 dwellings, which would require an ideal size 7-class primary school but the employment allocation might then be commensurately reduced.

Group Manager Recommendation

That no modification be made to the Local Plan.

South Somerset District Council

Minutes of a Special meeting of the **Council** held on **Thursday 22nd January 2004** in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Brympton Way, Yeovil.

(7.30 pm – 11.05 pm)

115. Inspector's Report on South Somerset Local Plan Deposit Draft

The Chairman drew members' attention to the copies of additional letters received that had been circulated around the chamber. The letters circulated were:

- 309 signed pro formas in the following terms:

I/We strongly urge the District Council to accept the recommendations of the Planning Inquiry Inspector and of the Council's Group Manager and delete from the Local Plan Deposit Draft the CLR Key Site (KS/CREW/1) and reinstate in its place the Longstrings Key Site (KS/CREW/2)

- 22 letters in objection to the CLR Key Site, Crewkerne.
- 5 letters in support of the CLR Site, Crewkerne.
- 3 letters in objection to the allocation of Bunford Lane. This included a letter from Montacute Parish Council.

The Chairman said that he would take the recommendations in the order set out. If any member wished to oppose any particular site then amendments could be proposed.

Recommendation (1)

The Regeneration and Land Use Group Manager explained that recommendation (1) referred to all those recommendations in the reports submitted to the area committees where the committees agreed with his recommendations. This included agreement to allocate the Bunford Lane site as employment land. If the Council did agree to allocate this site, there would be a further public Inquiry, and the public would be able to raise further objections at that stage. All the modifications agreed at this stage would also be subject to a further period of consultation.

The following members of the public addressed the Council in objection to the allocation of Bunford Lane:

Mr R. Aitken of West Coker Parish Council, Mr R. Savill-Dore of Odcombe Parish Council, Mr. R. Meecham of Brympton Parish Council, Ms L. Glaisher, Mr M. Young, Mr J. Hall of the Campaign for the Protection of Rural England, and Mr R. Alderman of Montacute Parish Council. The comments made by the speakers included:

- the site would destroy the villages in the area.
- it would increase traffic in the area.
- the site had been rejected by the previous Council and nothing had changed.

- there was no need identified for further employment sites as the current unemployment rate in Yeovil was very low.
- it was only 3 years until the new planning reform agenda process was to be introduced. Therefore, why not wait until the new system was introduced.
- it would be better to allocate a site near the A303.
- had the views of English Heritage been taken into account?
- there had not been full consultation on the allocation of this site.

The Group Manager confirmed that English Heritage had been consulted. There would be increased traffic but the Highway Authority supported the site, and traffic impact could be successfully mitigated. Since the Council had last considered this site in 2000 things had changed, including agreement by the Council in 2002, immediately prior to the Local Plan Inquiry, that more employment sites were required. The identification of the proposed Bunford Lane site had followed an extensive employment survey. Parish councils had also been consulted on all the employment site options.

Councillor Jayne Jones, one of the ward members, spoke against the allocation of the site and stressed that other brownfield sites should be developed before greenfield sites, such as this one, were looked at.

Councillor Alan Cornelius, the other ward member, spoke against allocating an additional 10 hectares above the original 15 proposed at this site. He re-iterated the objections of the public speakers, and he also highlighted the loss of a potential archaeological site identified in Somerset County Council research.

Councillor Cornelius, seconded by Councillor Jayne Jones, moved an amendment as follows:

That allocation of the 10 hectares of land shown on proposal map SO9, as an addition to that indicated on Plan 3 of the Employment Land Study, be deferred for consideration until the introduction of the Local Development Frameworks in 2007.

The amendment was put to the vote and declared to be lost. There were 11 votes in favour, 36 votes against, and 3 abstentions.

Councillor Martin Wale, seconded by Councillor Derek Yeomans, moved the following amendment:

Delete the proposed allocation site of 25 hectares from Bunford Lane and reallocate the site to Cartgate Link (Martock).

The amendment was put to the vote and was declared to be lost. There were 19 votes in favour, 27 against, and 2 abstentions.

Following debate on the allocation of Bunford Lane, the Leader of the Council said that there was a need for employment land for the many more houses to be built on

the new key sites around Yeovil. The Council needed to make prior provision for these new houses.

The Group Manager confirmed that the new houses to be built in the area would add an additional 4,500 people who would need jobs. All the brownfield sites had been looked at and these could not meet the predicted future demand. Also in terms of the Cartgate site this had been looked at, but the Government Office had told the Council that the site was not appropriate, and that it would therefore be likely to lodge objections. He said that the archaeological importance of the Bunford Lane site could be looked at as part of the consultation process.

Recommendation (1) in the report was then moved by the Leader of the Council and seconded by Councillor Tony Fife. It was put to the vote and declared to be carried by 29 votes in favour, 18 against and 2 abstentions.

It was therefore:

RESOLVED: that the recommendations of the Regeneration and Land Use Manager in the report submitted to the area committees on 16th, 17th December and 6th January, 2004 be accepted with the exception of those relating to sites, policies and proposals set out in the Review of Area Committee Changes as in Appendix 1 to the report, and it be noted that this includes acceptance of the Bunford Lane allocation of employment land in Area South

Recommendation (2)

KS/WINC/1: Land At New Barns Farm

The Leader of the Council proposed that the reasons set out in the report needed to be clarified in line with the wishes of Area East Committee to make clear that it was the southern access that was needed. This was accepted by the Council. The revised wording would therefore read: "... the additional reasons given that the southern access was also necessary, as it would create improved traffic distribution and highways conditions in the area. This would be needed with the increased traffic caused by the new development."

ME/LOPE/1: Land At Lopen Head Nurseries, Lopen

Mr N. Potts from Lopen Parish Council spoke against the allocation of this site due to its impact on the village.

One of the ward councillors Paull Robathan said that there was a need for local employment sites in the area but it was hoped something could be done to ameliorate the traffic flows in Lopen. His views were supported by the other ward member, Councillor Keith Ronaldson.

KS/CREW/1: Land Between Yeovil Road And Station Road And Station Road, Crewkerne and KS/CREW/2 Land Between Broadshard And Yeovil Road, Crewkerne

Councillor Angie Singleton had declared a personal and prejudicial interest, and left the room during the discussion of this site and the voting on the recommendation.

The following members of the Public addressed the Council in objection to the the CLR key site:

Mr Mcall, and Mr Andrew from the Crewkerne Town Council; Mr Stokes, Mrs Hennessey of the Residents Action Group, Mr Pakes of the Crewkerne Civic Society, Mr Fleetwood of the Wadham Park Residents Association; Brigader Mullins, and Mr Durnford.

The main points made by speakers against the CLR site were:

- The Longstrings site would be less damaging from an environmental view point, and should be supported if the Cropmead Link Road could be provided. This would do more to alleviate traffic problems in the town.
- It was felt that most people in Crewkerne did not support the CLR site.
- The CLR site would not help alleviate the road problems in Crewkerene, particularly the East /West traffic flows. No traffic study had been undertaken. The Cropmead link road could be provided to assist traffic flows to the Longstrings development.
- It was likely that the decision would be legally challenged if the Council went against the officer's and Inspector's recommendation.
- Crewkerne Town Council supported the Longstrings site with a link road to the industrial estate.
- There would be increased HGV traffic in local roads.

Mr Molnar, Mr Churchouse, Mr Grant, Mr Palmer, and Mr Singleton spoke in support of the CLR key site. The main points made in support were:

- Businesses supported CLR and increased trade was important for the town.
- A link road would be provided. No supporting study had been provided for the Cropmead link.
- The site would provide much needed housing. However, there would also be footpaths and cycle links. The developers would work with the community to minimise environmental impact.

Mrs Wall spoke specifically against the Cropmead link road proposed as part of the Longstrings key site

The Group Manager confirmed that the Cropmead link had not been subject to a feasibility study.

In response to the suggestion that the decision would be subject to legal challenge members were assured that they could take the recommended decision as long as they were acting reasonably bearing in mind the information they had received. The Group Manager said that the recommended decision could reasonably be taken on the information presented although before the Plan was adopted it would be important to receive and consider revisited data on the traffic impact of the site. This information would be available prior to adoption.

In discussion of the site members emphasised that they had a lot of information on this issue. They had also listened to all the arguments at both Area West Committee and District Executive. However, it was difficult decision, as the Inspector had said, but Area West Committee had a solid majority in favour of CLR.

Councillor Geoff Clarke, one of the ward members, said that he saw no reason to change his support for the CLR site, which he considered was the best site for Crewkerne and would deliver a road to link the A30 to the A356. It was only the CLR site that would help to alleviate the traffic problems in the town.

There were no comments on any other sites set out in recommendation (2).

Recommendation (2) in the report was then moved by the Leader of the Council and seconded by Councillor Tony Fife. It was put to the vote and declared to be carried by 45 votes in favour, and 2 abstentions.

It was therefore:

- RESOLVED:** (2) that the Area Committee changes set out in the Review of Area Committee Changes (Appendix 1) and listed below be endorsed with the amendments as set out (where relevant)
- KS/WINC/1: Land At New Barns Farm with the additional reasons given that the southern access was also necessary, as it would create improved traffic distribution and highways conditions in the area. This would be needed with the increased traffic caused by the new development.
 - MU/ABTE/2: Land East Of Slades Hill, Templecombe by reason of the type and nature of the settlement and that the allocation be subject to the phasing policy.
 - Land West Of Station Yard, Templecombe
 - PROPOSAL HG/SOPE/1: Land At Hayes End, South Petherton subject a reduced geographical size of the site and the phasing policy outlined in the Appendix.
 - PROPOSAL HG/SOPE/2: Land At Lightgate Lane, South Petherton, subject to deletion of reference to preferred access and clarification that the two accesses be retained with no vehicular connection between them other than for emergency vehicles.
 - ME/LOPE/1: Land At Lopen Head Nurseries, Lopen subject to the deletion of B8 of the use of classes order.
 - KS/CHAR/1: Land East Of Chard Between Furnham Road And Tatworth Road, Chard
 - KS/CREW/1: Land Between Yeovil Road And Station Road And Station Road, Crewkerne and KS/CREW/2 Land Between Broadshard And Yeovil Road, Crewkerne

Recommendation (3)

Remalard Court, Castle Cary

The ward councillors, Emma Bourne and Peter Davies raised concerns about the inclusion of this site.

The Leader of Council explained that, whilst he supported the Area East Committee view on this site at the District Executive, it was noted that if the site was not allocated then it was likely that an applicant would appeal to the Secretary of State. The Council could exercise more control if the site was in the Plan. The Area East Chairman endorsed these comments and said that the best way to contain the site to 2007 and beyond was to include it in the Plan.

The Group Manager confirmed that the site could only be developed after other brownfield sites as it would be subject to the phasing policy. It would be for the Council to decide if the site should come forward. The concerns raised about the access to the site could be looked at as part of a future design brief.

There were no comments on any other sites in this recommendation.

The Group Manager suggested revised wording to the recommendation as shown in bold below:

that the Area Committee changes **put forward for the policies and proposals listed below** be not endorsed:

and to add at the end of the recommendation: **and the revised wording set out in the Review of Area Committee Changes (Appendix 1) for HG4 and the Remalard Court site be endorsed.**

The Council accepted the revised wording and recommendation (3) was put to the vote and declared to be carried. It was therefore

RESOLVED: that the Area Committee changes put forward for the policies and proposals listed below be not endorsed:

- POLICY TP8: Parking Provision In Residential Areas
- POLICY HG4: Replacement Dwellings In The Countryside
- KS/HENS/1: Land South Of Henstridge Airfield subject to discussions taking place with Dorset councils to achieve agreement on traffic improvements.
- Remalard Court, Castle Cary subject to the phasing policy.

and the revised wording set out in the Review of Area Committee Changes (Appendix 1) for HG4 and the Remalard Court site be endorsed.

Recommendation (4)

CR/HENS/4: Land At Junction Of Furge Lane And Furge Grove, Henstridge

Mr N. Forrest spoke in support of the allocation of the site.

The Planning Policy Manager reported that the Inspector had confirmed that this site should remain outside the development limits in Henstridge, but had also recommended that the site be within the developments limits, which meant that there were conflicting recommendations. It was not felt that the development limits should be re-drawn.

Members generally agreed that this was generally in line with the wishes of the Area East Committee.

It was moved by Councillor Emma Bourne and seconded by Councillor Tim Carroll that the site be deleted from the Plan. This was put to the vote and declared to be carried. It was therefore

RESOLVED: That the following site be deleted from the Plan:

CR/HENS/4: Land At Junction Of Furge Lane And Furge Grove,
Henstridge

For the reason that to include the land would be contrary to policy and the site area should remain outside the development limits.

Recommendation (5)

Councillor Sylvia Seal had declared a personal and prejudicial interest, and left the room during the discussion and voting on this recommendation.

Mr R. Meecham of Brympton Parish Council spoke in support of the inclusion of a primary school in the Lufton key site. He also welcomed the traffic assessment but asked if the developers would make a contribution to traffic alleviation measures.

The Group Manager said that the Council could ask the developers of the Lufton site to make a contribution towards traffic measures.

Councillor Tony Fife proposed that there should be a correction of fact to the wording under KS/YWEI/1 Land East Of Lyde Road Key Site to delete "... in particular the Preston Road roundabout and ASDA entrance.." and replace with "...in particular the junction of Lyde Road and Mudford Road.." This was accepted by the Council.

It was also agreed by Council that for each of the three sites the words "careful assessment of traffic flows.." should be changed to "thorough and comprehensive assessment of traffic flows...".

Recommendation (5) was put to the vote and declared to be carried. It was therefore:

RESOLVED that the amendments to the Regeneration and Land Use Group Manager's recommendations as proposed by Area South Committee be approved in relation to

KS/BRYM/1 – Lufton Key Site subject to the following amended wording:

that the Group Manager's recommendations in Chapter 3. pages 183 – 192 be supported subject to an amendment that any transport study should include thorough and comprehensive assessment of traffic flows and impact on the local highway network and in particular the Preston Road roundabout and ASDA entrance; and the allocation of 1.4 hectares for a primary school.

KS/YEWI/1 Land East Of Lyde Road Key Site subject to the following amended wording:

that the Group Manager's recommendation be supported subject to an amendment that any transport study should include thorough and comprehensive assessment of traffic flow and impact on the local highway network and in particular the junction of Lyde Road and Mudford Road; and the allocation of 1.6 hectares for a primary school.

KS/YEWI/2 Land North Of Thorne Lane Key Site subject to the following amended wording:

that the Group Manager's recommendation be supported subject to an amendment that any transport study should include thorough and comprehensive assessment of traffic flow and impact on the local highway network and in particular the Preston Road roundabout and ASDA entrance.

Recommendations (6) and (7) were approved as in the agenda. Council agreed to amend recommendation (8) to take out the wording "That the full Council be asked to approve the recommendations set out in 1-7 above.." as these recommendations had already been approved. Subject to that change, recommendation (8) was approved.

In full the Council had therefore:

- RESOLVED:**
- (1) that the recommendations of the Regeneration and Land Use Manager in the report submitted to the area committees on 16th, 17th December and 6th January, 2004 be accepted with the exception of those relating to sites, policies and proposals set out in the Review of Area Committee Changes as in Appendix 1 to the report, and it be noted that this includes acceptance of the Bunford Lane allocation of employment land in Area South
 - (2) that the Area Committee changes set out in the Review of Area Committee Changes (Appendix 1) and listed below be endorsed with the amendments as set out (where relevant)
 - KS/WINC/1: Land At New Barns Farm with the additional

reasons given that the southern access was also necessary, as it would create improved traffic distribution and highways conditions in the area. This would be needed with the increased traffic caused by the new development.

- MU/ABTE/2: Land East Of Slades Hill, Templecombe by reason of the type and nature of the settlement and that the allocation be subject to the phasing policy.
- Land West Of Station Yard, Templecombe
- PROPOSAL HG/SOPE/1: Land At Hayes End, South Petherton subject a reduced geographical size of the site and the phasing policy outlined in the Appendix.
- PROPOSAL HG/SOPE/2: Land At Lightgate Lane, South Petherton, subject to deletion of reference to preferred access and clarification that the two accesses be retained with no vehicular connection between them other than for emergency vehicles.
- ME/LOPE/1: Land At Lopen Head Nurseries, Lopen subject to the deletion of B8 of the use of classes order.
- KS/CHAR/1: Land East Of Chard Between Furnham Road And Tatworth Road, Chard
- KS/CREW/1: Land Between Yeovil Road And Station Road And Station Road, Crewkerne and KS/CREW/2 Land Between Broadshard And Yeovil Road, Crewkerne

(3) that the Area Committee changes put forward for the policies and proposals listed below be not endorsed:

- POLICY TP8: Parking Provision In Residential Areas
- POLICY HG4: Replacement Dwellings In The Countryside
- KS/HENS/1: Land South Of Henstridge Airfield subject to discussions taking place with Dorset councils to achieve agreement on traffic improvements.
- Remalard Court, Castle Cary subject to the phasing policy.

and the revised wording set out in the Review of Area Committee Changes (Appendix 1) for HG4 and the Remalard Court site be endorsed.

(4) That the following site be deleted from the Plan:

CR/HENS/4: Land At Junction Of Furge Lane And Furge Grove, Henstridge

For the reason that to include the land would be contrary to policy and the site area should remain outside the development limits as previously recommended.

- (5) that the amendments to the Regeneration and Land Use Group Manager's recommendations as proposed by Area South Committee be approved in relation to

KS/BRYM/1 – Lufton Key Site subject to the following amended wording:

that the Group Manager's recommendations in Chapter 3. pages 183 – 192 be supported subject to an amendment that any transport study should include thorough and comprehensive assessment of traffic flows and impact on the local highway network and in particular the Preston Road roundabout and ASDA entrance; and the allocation of 1.4 hectares for a primary school.

KS/YWEI/1 Land East Of Lyde Road Key Site subject to the following amended wording:

that the Group Manager's recommendation be supported subject to an amendment that any transport study should include thorough and comprehensive assessment of traffic flow and impact on the local highway network and in particular the junction of Lyde Road and Mudford Road; and the allocation of 1.6 hectares for a primary school.

KS/YEWI/2 Land North Of Thorne Lane Key Site subject to the following amended wording:

that the Group Manager's recommendation be supported subject to an amendment that any transport study should include thorough and comprehensive assessment of traffic flow and impact on the local highway network and in particular the Preston Road roundabout and ASDA entrance.

- (6) that the site Land east of Temple View, High Street, Templecombe be allocated for housing development subject to the phasing policy.
- (7) that the decision to include an allocation of land for housing development land at Yeo Paull Ltd., south of Steppes Crescent, Martock be delegated to the Group Manager to be exercised if planning permission for the site has not been granted prior to the publication of the formal Modifications Report.
- (8) that the Regeneration and Land Use Group Manager be authorised to proceed to produce the formal Modifications Report to be placed on public deposit.

.....
Chairman