

**South Somerset District Council: Local Plan 2006 – 2028**

**Resumed Independent Examination**

**South Somerset District Council Hearing Statement**

**Issue 6: Delivering New Housing Growth  
(PMM5)**

**May 2014**

## **Issue 6: Delivering New Housing Growth (PMM5)**

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**Question 6.1: Is the Council's permissive approach to the consideration of housing proposals in Yeovil (via the SUEs), the 'directions of growth' at Market Towns and the Rural Centres justified, effective and appropriate in the circumstances?**

**Background**

- 6.1.1 The Inspector's Preliminary Findings letter of 3 July 2013 (paragraphs 61-62)<sup>1</sup> raised a significant issue of concern in relation to the approach for housing delivery within the Market Towns and Rural Centres prior to the adoption of the Proposed Site allocations Development Plan Document (DPD). It notes that the Council agreed to insert a new paragraph which sought to clarify the Council's approach towards development in the 'directions of growth' prior to the Site Allocations DPD being adopted [CD 3c, M217] and that he considers this amendment to be a Main Modification.
- 6.1.2 It is considered that the key concern is that the delivery of appropriate development for each Market Town and Rural Centre is not adversely affected by substantial additional provision at one or several of these settlements brought forward by market forces before the Site Allocations Development Plan Document is adopted. Whilst the Inspector refers to Market Towns only it is felt that this issue is also relevant to Rural Centres.
- 6.1.3 As a result of the consultation responses to the Main Modifications further amendments were made to PMM5 [PMB Workshop 31, 24 February 2014]<sup>2</sup>. Submitted PMM5 introduces additional text which sets out a 'permissive approach' to considering planning applications for housing development within Directions of Growth at Yeovil (via the SUEs) and Market Towns; and for housing proposals adjacent to Rural Centres [CD 159].

**Is the permissive approach justified, effective and appropriate in the circumstances?**

- 6.1.4 It is considered that PMM5 [CD 159] is justified because it adds clarity and certainty to the emerging Local Plan in accordance with paragraphs 17, 154 and 157 of the NPPF. By providing an interim approach to development proposals within the Directions of Growth at Yeovil (via the SUEs), Market Towns and adjacent to Rural Centres prior to the adoption of the Site Allocations DPD it is effective and appropriate in the circumstances.
- 6.1.5 Paragraph 157 of the NPPF advises that local plans should allocate sites and provide detail on the form, scale and quantum of development. It is the Council's intention to produce a Site Allocations DPD as a matter of urgency and to provide the resources to fast track the production of this document in line with the timescales emanating from the conclusion of the Examination process. The Local Development Scheme 2013 – 2016 [CD 27] identifies that the document will be adopted in 2015.
- 6.1.6 The Sustainability Appraisal Addendum Report (March 2014) [CD 161 d. iii.] concludes that PMM5 does not significantly affect the findings of the Local Plan SA Report (June 2012). This is because PMM5 [CD 159] does not change the substance

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<sup>1</sup> The submitted Main Modifications document incorrectly refers to paragraphs 56-59 [CD 159, paragraph 5.1].

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.southsomerset.gov.uk/media/643229/south\\_somerset\\_local\\_plan\\_analysis\\_of\\_consultation\\_responses\\_to\\_proposed\\_main\\_modifications\\_project\\_management\\_board\\_24\\_february\\_2014.pdf](http://www.southsomerset.gov.uk/media/643229/south_somerset_local_plan_analysis_of_consultation_responses_to_proposed_main_modifications_project_management_board_24_february_2014.pdf)

of the policy, but is intended to clarify the delivery of housing land ahead of allocating sites. The need to consider an appropriate scale of growth, the NPPF and other Local Plan policies, means that appropriate policy measures remain in place to ensure the impacts of new housing development are fully considered and addressed, particularly regarding the overall scale of growth. The modification could potentially deliver more housing land in the short term, but significant positive effects are already predicted for these objectives.

- 6.1.7 PMM5 [CD159] is considered to be effective, appropriate and positive as it provides decision makers with the certainty and flexibility to bring forward development proposals within the Directions of Growth at Yeovil (via the SUEs), Market Towns and adjacent to Rural Centres. This would be subject to consideration against the NPPF, emerging Local Plan Policy SD1, the scale of growth and settlement hierarchy for South Somerset and other Local Plan Development Management Policies. It provides a pragmatic approach to positively enable housing development to come forward in the intervening period before such time as the Site Allocations DPD is adopted.
- 6.1.8 Additionally, this permissive approach taken by the Council was accepted by the Inspector as detailed in his letter 25 November 2013 [CD 169].

## **Question 6.2: Is the Council's approach to residential development proposals in Crewkerne sufficiently clear and justified?**

### **Background**

- 6.2.1 Policy SS5: Delivering New Housing Growth identifies a requirement for 961 dwellings in Crewkerne over the plan period. The majority of this growth is taken up by the Crewkerne Key Site (see Policy HG1).
- 6.2.2 This leaves a residual requirement of 45 dwellings additional dwellings [CD 3a]. Paragraph 6.64 of the Proposed Submission Local Plan 2006-2028 [CD 3a] explains that unlike the other Market Towns, Crewkerne does not have a Direction of Growth as the location for future growth has been determined by the planning permission for the CLR development which is re-confirmed under Policy HG1 as a "Strategic Housing Site"<sup>3</sup> [CD 3a]. PMM5 [CD 159] includes a footnote explaining and reinforcing this point and clarifying that Crewkerne does not have a Direction for Growth by virtue of it having an identified Key Site.
- 6.2.3 The approach to development in Crewkerne is explained in further detail in South Somerset District Council's response to the Inspector's Examination Issue 8: Crewkerne (April 2013) and provides the justification for focusing on the Key Site to meet the objectively assessed housing need for the town.

### **Is the Council's approach to housing proposals clear and justified?**

- 6.2.4 The Council considers that the policy framework set out in the emerging Local Plan with regards to Crewkerne is appropriate, clear, justified and positive. The utilisation of the Crewkerne Key Site [CD 3a] as the significant source of growth and development in the settlement provides a series of local infrastructure improvements which will be to the benefit of the wider Crewkerne area, whilst forming an important element of the overall regeneration of the town. Furthermore, it provides greater

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<sup>3</sup> The site is also saved as a strategic employment site - Policy EP1: Strategic Employment Sites [CD 3a].

security both in terms of delivery of development and infrastructure improvements. Outline planning permission has already been granted for the whole site and reserved matters have been approved for 203 of the total 525 dwellings<sup>4</sup>.

- 6.2.5 Historic trends (2006 - 2013) show an average of 26.29<sup>5</sup> completions as windfall per annum; it is therefore reasonable to expect the residual housing requirement of 45 dwellings to be taken up as windfall development through the Development Management process where planning applications will be considered on their merits against the policies in the Local Plan and the NPPF. The Authorities Monitoring Report indicates that there is some capacity for growth within the existing Development Area of Crewkerne<sup>6</sup>.

## Conclusion

- 6.2.6 For the reasons set out above it is considered that the approach to residential proposals in Crewkerne as set out in emerging Local Plan Policy SS5 and Policy HG1 is clear and justified. It is not appropriate to include Crewkerne within the scope of the proposed Main Modification as it has a Strategic Housing Site rather than a Direction of Growth and the residual housing requirement can be delivered through the Development Management process.

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<sup>4</sup> Authorities Monitoring Report April 2012 – March 2013  
[http://www.southsomerset.gov.uk/media/641538/housing\\_monitoring\\_report\\_2012 -  
2013\\_site\\_analysis\\_docx.pdf](http://www.southsomerset.gov.uk/media/641538/housing_monitoring_report_2012_-_2013_site_analysis_docx.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> Authorities Monitoring Report April 2012 – March 2013  
[http://www.southsomerset.gov.uk/media/641538/housing\\_monitoring\\_report\\_2012 -  
2013\\_site\\_analysis\\_docx.pdf](http://www.southsomerset.gov.uk/media/641538/housing_monitoring_report_2012_-_2013_site_analysis_docx.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> Authorities Monitoring Report April 2012 – March 2013  
[http://www.southsomerset.gov.uk/media/641538/housing\\_monitoring\\_report\\_2012 -  
2013\\_site\\_analysis\\_docx.pdf](http://www.southsomerset.gov.uk/media/641538/housing_monitoring_report_2012_-_2013_site_analysis_docx.pdf)