

# **SOUTH SOMERSET DISTRICT COUNCIL LOCAL PLAN 2006-2028**

## **ISSUE 1**

### **DUTY TO CO-OPERATE, PUBLIC CONSULTATION AND THE COUNCIL'S OVERALL STRATEGY (INCLUDING PMM1)**

**ON BEHALF OF CHARLES BISHOP LIMITED (ID NUMBER 4103425)**

#### *Questions*

**1.1 *Has the Duty to Co-operate been complied with regarding the formulation of the Main Modifications?***

Charles Bishop Limited have no comment to make on this matter.

**1.2 *Have the Main Modifications been subject to appropriate public consultation in line with the Council's Statement of Community involvement? (see also question 2.1 below)***

The Main Modifications were subject to a six week period of consultation which ended on Friday 10 January 2014.

Some may wish to level criticism at the Council for scheduling the consultation period over the Christmas and New Year period, but we do not believe the timing of the consultation has been prejudicial to the process.

Both the Mudford site, and the Keyford site in the Parish of East Coker, have attracted such media interest, that the local papers in Yeovil had numerous articles and letters during the consultation period related to the Local Plan and particularly to the proposed two Yeovil Sustainable Urban Extensions.

**1.3 *In broad terms are the Main Modifications based on a sound process of sustainability appraisal and testing of alternatives?***

We believe that they are.

In our representations to the Council in January this year, we felt they had failed to properly test the smaller 800 unit Keyford site, which performs much more strongly in almost every respect than the previous 2500 proposal.

While we consider that the case for Keyford is still somewhat understated, we nevertheless believe that the further work the Council has carried out this year has reinforced the sustainability appraisal and the testing of alternatives, to the point where the Plan is now sound.

**1.4 *Is there clear evidence demonstrating how and why the preferred strategy (as encapsulated in the Main Modifications) was selected? Does it represent the most appropriate strategy in the circumstances?***

We believe that the weight of evidence the Council has collected in respect of the Keyford scheme demonstrates conclusively how and why this part of the strategy is preferred.

We also consider that the selected strategy in respect of the Keyford scheme represents the most appropriate strategy in the circumstances. This site will be the only main development offering houses for sale in the southern half of the town, in strong contrast to the north of the town where four Key Sites – Brimsmore, Lufton, Lyde and Mudford will all be competing for house purchasers who prefer that specific location.

Given that Keyford is closest to Augusta Westland, the town's largest employer, and to the Lynx and proposed new Bunford trading estates, and closest to the railway station, the south of Yeovil will be an obvious choice of location for many house purchasers.

This factor, combined with easy main road access onto the A37, and a warm south-facing slope environment within the development, will readily make this location a very viable and deliverable proposal.

**1.5 *In the year since the first hearing sessions commenced, have there been any significant changes to the evidence base or to the legislative framework, particularly in terms of housing and employment needs, which should be reflected in the Local Plan? Is there a five year supply of housing sites (with appropriate buffer) and is the housing trajectory sound?***

Since the first hearing sessions, the National Planning Practice Guidance has been produced, in draft form, in August 2013.

On the second point, our understanding is that South Somerset District Council do not currently have a five year supply of housing sites.

Looking on a broader basis, with an ever rising population, demand for housing is continuing to rise, but the housing industry is failing to meet the delivery targets required of it, notwithstanding stronger performance in the six months since the first hearing sessions.

For this reason, as stated below in our response to 1.6, we believe it would have been prudent for the Council to have proposed the full 2500 dwellings as before, including the provision of 935 dwellings after the end of the Plan period.

**1.6 *Is the Council's removal of the reference to the provision of 935 dwellings after the end of the Plan period (Policies YV1 and YV2) appropriate?***

Our understanding is that the Council are acting strictly correctly in removing the reference to the provision of the 935 dwellings after the end of the Plan period, and as such, the removal does not make the Plan unsound.

However, the question is whether the removal of the 935 dwellings is appropriate, and in this respect, we are disappointed with the Council's actions.

We believe the Council would have been better to have planned for the full 2500 dwellings, as they did previously, as this would allow some 'headroom' and flexibility, and would provide a greater guarantee of the 1565 dwellings being delivered in the Plan period.