

SOUTH SOMERSET DISTRICT COUNCIL: LOCAL PLAN 2006-2028

ISSUE NO 3:

SOUTH YEOVIL SUSTAINABLE URBAN EXTENSION (PMM2)

ON BEHALF OF CHARLES BISHOP LIMITED

AND

NOEL PROPERTY LLP

Pegasus Group

Pegasus House | Querns Business Centre | Whitworth Road | Cirencester | Gloucestershire | GL7 1RT
T 01285 641717 | F 01285 642348 | W www.pegasuspg.co.uk

Birmingham | Bracknell | Bristol | Cambridge | Cirencester | East Midlands | Leeds | Manchester

Planning | Environmental | Retail | Urban Design | Renewables | Landscape Design | Graphic Design | Consultation | Sustainability

CONTENTS:

	Page No:
3. ISSUE 3	1
3.1 Is the vision for growth and change in this area justified and based on an appropriate sustainability appraisal?	1
3.2 Have the implications of development in the South Yeovil Sustainable Urban Extension been appropriately addressed with regard to:	2
3.3 What will be the status of the buffer zone?	8
3.4 Is the Urban Extension viable and deliverable?	9

APPENDICES:

APPENDIX 1: DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK UPDATE MAY 2014

APPENDIX 2: AGRICULTURAL LAND CLASSIFICATION REPORT MAY 2014

APPENDIX 3: CONCEPT MASTERPLAN UPDATE MAY 2014

3. ISSUE 3

3.1 Is the vision for growth and change in this area justified and based on an appropriate sustainability appraisal?

- 3.1.1 The vision for change and growth in this area is justified. We have continued to support the identification of the sustainable urban extension to the south of Yeovil at Keyford.
- 3.1.2 In our representations to the Proposed Main Modifications we commented on the SA. Our objections were concerned with the lack of adequate justification for this multi-site approach to the delivery of Yeovil's housing requirement and the flaws in the supporting documentation (see reps to PMM 2). The changes the Council have made since the consultation have sought to ensure that the SA is appropriate (see Hearing Statement to Issue 1).

3.2 Have the implications of development in the South Yeovil Sustainable Urban Extension been appropriately addressed with regard to:

- **Landscape and topography**
- **Biodiversity and geodiversity**
- **Historic assets**
- **Flood risk**
- **Highway safety**
- **Sustainable travel**
- **Agricultural land value**
- **The provision of infrastructure, services and facilities (including employment, waste water, education and health)**
- **Pollution**

3.2.1 The Council has undertaken an independent detailed review of its Sustainability Appraisal (November 2013) accompanying the Proposed Modifications to the Local Plan. Its conclusions are that the reduced Keyford scheme does not generate any adverse environmental consequences and that it represents a sustainable location for development. In coming to this conclusion the Council has relied upon:-

- (i) a detailed re-appraisal of the Landscape Character;
- (ii) an assessment of heritage assets;
- (iii) an assessment of agricultural land quality;
- (iv) a re-appraisal of ecological and archaeological constraints.

3.2.2 These studies update a series of earlier studies carried out over the last 15 years which examine the opportunities for peripheral development.

3.2.3 It should also be noted that the general location of the development as shown on the Council's Map 1 PMM2 – Amended Directions of Growth for Yeovil Sustainable Urban Extensions now proposed for development at Keyford is almost identical to the area previously recommended for release as a Key Site for development in the period to 2011 by the last Local Plan Inspector.

- 3.2.4 Although SSDC chose not to accept the Inspector's recommendations at that time, it is important to remember that the Inspector concluded in his Report in 2003 that there were no unacceptable objections to the release of the site on the grounds of landscape, coalescence, heritage, agricultural, archaeological, or sustainability. These conclusions continue to hold true today and provide appropriate reasons for the site now being identified for development.
- 3.2.5 In addition to the Council's evidence we have undertaken further studies in association with the preparation of a planning application for the sustainable urban extension for Yeovil at Keyford. These studies have informed the consultation on the planning application and are nearing completion as the planning application is soon to be submitted to the District Council.
- 3.2.6 To accompany representations submitted in January 2014 in response to the consultation on the Proposed Main Modifications we prepared a Development Framework Statement. This document has since been updated as the evidence base to support the planning application is completed. An update is therefore attached at Appendix 1 this sets out the work completed to date and a further update can be provided by the examination. The following paragraphs provide a summary with regard to the headings set out above in question 3.2 above.

Landscape and Biodiversity

- 3.2.7 A Landscape and Visual Assessment has been prepared. The landscape of the site is characteristic farmland comprising open, urban fringe arable field and with some grassland on the upper levels. The land falls away gently from a high point on the northern edge of the site and abuts existing residential development on the south side of Yeovil.
- 3.2.8 Within the site there are a number of existing landscape features, including a green lane, two small blocks of woodland and a number of trees. Hedgerows form the perimeter to the large arable blocks of land, and border both edges of the green lane within the site, and the lanes to the south of the site.
- 3.2.9 All these features will be retained to form integral elements within the proposed development, as they will help the proposal to fit comfortably into the existing landscape and townscape.
- 3.2.10 Existing vegetation, buildings and topography will limit potential views of the proposed employment and residential development from the majority of the surrounding roads, although there would inevitably be views of the development from the higher ground to the south. From sections along public roads, bridleways and footpaths where there is little or no intervening vegetation or

buildings, there would be views of the proposed scheme; however, substantial areas of new structural planting, and the design of the western side of the site as a series of large terraces will screen, to a significant degree, much of the development proposed.

3.2.11 The landscape strategy for the proposed development will therefore be designed to ensure that the appearance of the scheme would be acceptable through the creation of an attractive landscaped urban environment which mitigates longer distance views of the development from the south.

Biodiversity and geodiversity

3.2.12 An Ecological Assessment has been completed.

3.2.13 The site itself is not subject to any statutory nature conservation designation. Large areas of the site are dominated by arable fields of negligible nature conservation value. However, in terms of flora the presence of Corn Marigold within some of the fields is of County interest.

3.2.14 Protected faunal species recorded within the site include badgers and farmland birds, with some potential for roosting bats within the mature trees. Mitigation measures will be put forward that will safeguard these species both during and post-development. In some cases, e.g. bats and birds, enhancements have been put forward that will positively benefit these groups.

3.2.15 The habitats of relatively greater ecological interest within the context of the site are the hedgerows, many of which are likely to be important using the criteria from the Hedgerow Regulations, and the woodland copses. There will be partial losses of hedgerows for the purpose of access road provision. However, in general, the large majority of these features will be retained and enhanced through subsequent management to maximize nature conservation interest.

3.2.16 It is considered that the proposals would not have any adverse impact upon any of these statutory or non-statutory designated sites of nature conservation interest.

3.2.17 The development proposals appear to be in conformity with national and local policy, and, as such, it appears that there are no ecological reasons why the site could not be developed.

Historic assets

3.2.18 A complete geophysical survey of the site has already been completed by archaeological specialists. This did not reveal any archaeological remains of high

significance within the site or within its immediate surroundings, such that they would preclude the development of the site.

3.2.19 There will be no physical impacts on the two Grade II Listed Buildings in close proximity to the site, namely Keyford House and its former stables and cottage. The individual and group significances of these structures will not be materially affected. There are three other Listed Buildings further away from this site; these are Key Farm House and adjoining listed barn together with Pavyotts Mill, all of which lie over 400m to the south of the site. None of these will be directly affected by the proposed development; nor will their significances be adversely affected.

3.2.20 There will be no physical impact on the Grade II* Registered Park, Barwick Park, the boundary of which lies some 400m to the east of the proposed development.

Flood risk

3.2.21 The site is located on the south eastern slope of a ridge of high ground. Topographically, the site is located on the dip slope of an escarpment that trends broadly northeast/southwest. The surface elevation of the site, which falls from approximately 85mOD in the north to 65mOD in the south indicates that there is no likelihood of flooding on the site itself.

3.2.22 The site has been subject to a strategic Flood Risk Assessment as part of the Plan preparation. This demonstrates that none of the developed part of the site will be situated in either Flood Zones 2 or 3.

3.2.23 It is intended to drain surface water from the site by means of a system of pipes, ditches and swales directly to a balancing lagoon which links to the existing Coker Stream watercourse.

3.2.24 The drainage scheme adopted at the site will be designed to maximise current best practice for urban drainage (i.e. utilising SUDS) which will ensure that there will be no adverse effects from surface water runoff downstream at Barwick.

Highway Safety

- 3.2.25 A Transport Assessment is being completed. The objective for Keyford is to ensure that a sustainable development is planned and designed to be accessible to all modes of transport, minimizing emissions and natural resource use, with good linkages to public transport, and providing improved links for pedestrians and cyclists both locally and strategically.
- 3.2.26 The site can take vehicle access directly from the A37 in two locations. Junctions will be provided to appropriate highway design standards and have capacity to accommodate the predicted traffic flows.
- 3.2.27 Equally, the site will have good pedestrian and cycle connections to the surrounding roads, and crossings appropriate to the circumstances will be provided where required to promote safe and easy access on foot and by bicycle. The site has been designed with the local centre at its core, including a Primary School. Radial routes, both footways adjacent to roads and separate footpaths will lead to this core, and provide for safe journeys on foot. The local centre will be designed to accommodate sufficient parking and drop-off/pick-up space for the school and other facilities to be provided there to ensure a safe environment around the school.

Sustainable travel

- 3.2.28 The site sits adjacent to the existing southern residential area of Yeovil and around 1 mile from Yeovil town centre. Through bus services and footway/cycleway routes, it will be well connected to the town centre (and other connecting buses) and to the employment and retail areas on Lysander Road.
- 3.2.29 The layout of the site, based on radial routes with the local centre, including a primary school, at its heart is designed to encourage travel on foot and by bicycle. Links to the surrounding residential areas will also mean that the centre is accessible to existing residents also.

Agricultural land value

- 3.2.30 All sites in close proximity to the edge of Yeovil are shown on the old Ministry of Agriculture Food & Fisheries (MAFF) 1 inch Agricultural Land Quality Maps as falling within the "Best & Most Versatile" designation. In common with much of the other peripheral Yeovil land, the Keyford land is shown as Grade 1 quality based on semi detailed surveys. The MAFF Land Quality Maps only provide general guidance on land quality and prior to any development occurring DEFRA

recommend more detailed surveys be undertaken to determine precise soil quality.

3.2.31 The site has been investigated by Reading Agricultural Consultants (RAC) to determine its precise agricultural land quality. While these further tests by RAC confirmed that the Keyford soil was still “Best and Most Versatile”, the soil was classified as Grade 2 quality by RAC primarily because of problems associated with droughtiness, and the tendency of the soil to dry out and lead to loss of crops during extended periods of dry weather.

3.2.32 The National Planning Policy Framework advises that, where possible development should avoid “Best & Most Versatile” soils; this covers Grades 1, 2 and 3A.

3.2.33 When the original Local Plan was submitted DEFRA had no objection to the larger scale YSUE development proposal for the south of Yeovil, which included the Keyford area. Further assessment has been undertaken by Robert Askew, Director of Askew Land & Soil Limited and concluded that the findings of the RAC Study are correct but that localised steeper areas of the western part of the site are definitively grade 3b due to gradient (see Appendix 2 for the full report).

The provision of infrastructure, services and facilities (including employment, waste water, education and health)

3.2.34 The site will include the provision of 2.5 hectares of employment land, a neighbourhood centre and a health centre, a care home and associated dwellings and a new primary school.

3.2.35 The existing provision and future capacity of relevant infrastructure services for the proposed development has been assessed. Consultees include Transco, Scottish and Southern Power Distribution, Wessex Water, the Environment Agency, British Telecom, and Cable and Wireless. All these service providers confirmed that, with the exception of an overhead power cable along Pavyotts Lane, there are no major services within the proposed development site that will need to be relocated.

Pollution

3.2.36 Consideration has been given to the potential for pollution effects to arise from the proposals and this is set out in the Development Framework document.

3.3 What will be the status of the buffer zone?

3.3.1 In view of the Proposed Main Modification PMM2, and the reduction in scale of the proposed sustainable urban extension to Yeovil at Keyford, the policy basis for retaining the buffer zone in the Proposed Submitted Plan has not been fully explained. There is no need to prevent the coalescence of Yeovil and East Coker as the scale of the urban extension has reduced and the landscape strategy for the site proposes additional structural planting which will screen to a significant degree, much of the development proposed.

3.3.2 The buffer zone was originally proposed when there was single urban extension to Yeovil. The zone was proposed to be dedicated as strategic landscape area and green open space (para 5.50 of the Proposed Submission Local Plan June 2012). Now that the scale of the proposed urban extension has reduced and there are two sustainable urban extensions, the need for a buffer zone should be questioned.

3.3.3 NPPG Paragraph: 007 Reference ID: 37-007-20140306 How does Local Green Space designation relate to development? Clearly states that:

“Designating any Local Green Space will need to be consistent with local planning for sustainable development in the area. In particular, plans must identify sufficient land in suitable locations to meet identified development needs and the Local Green Space designation should not be used in a way that undermines this aim of plan making.”

3.3.4 The NPPG Paragraph: 015 Reference ID: 37-015-20140306 How big can a Local Green Space be? also states that:

“...is clear that Local Green Space designation should only be used where the green area concerned is not an extensive tract of land. Consequently blanket designation of open countryside adjacent to settlements will not be appropriate. In particular, designation should not be proposed as a ‘back door’ way to try to achieve what would amount to a new area of Green Belt by another name.”

3.3.5 The use of countryside policies will address any issues outside the settlement boundary. Rural settlements are considered as part of the countryside to which national countryside protection policies apply.

3.4 Is the Urban Extension viable and deliverable?

3.4.1 The urban extension is viable and deliverable. A planning application is imminent. Public consultation has taken place as the planning proposals were being prepared. A public exhibition was held over two days on 3rd April 2pm – 7.30pm and Friday 4th April 10.30am – 4pm, both were at The Red House Public House, adjacent to the site. A large number of leaflets (approx. 3,000) were delivered to all households and businesses in the vicinity of the site and the events were advertised in the local press.

3.4.2 Several pre-application meetings have taken place with officers at South Somerset District Council and a schedule of these is set out in the Development Framework Document.

3.4.3 Meetings have been held with the Parish Councils of East Coker on 8th May 2014 and Barwick and Stoford on 22nd May 2014.

3.4.4 Following the public consultations and meetings the concept masterplan has been revised whilst still retaining its consistency with the proposals in the Local Plan. The principal changes to the Masterplan were as follows

- Playing fields and primary school moved to the northern part of the development
- Local centre moved to a more central location and radial grid adjusted so that roads and footpaths still lead to the centre
- Vehicular access from Lower East Coker Road deleted and a bus gate added to Placket Lane
- Extra care/care home use added adjacent to Hospice to provide quiet environment
- Extra attention to western boundary design with the introduction of single storey to match the existing urban edge of Yeovil

3.4.5 Attached is a copy of the concept masterplan reflecting the changes made as a result of the consultation with the community, (See Appendix 3)

3.4.6 The evidence base to support the planning application has been prepared and is entirely consistent with the District Councils' validation checklist for planning application.

3.4.7 A Planning Performance Agreement has also been prepared.

- 3.4.8 It is anticipated that the planning application will be submitted to the District Council in June. Allowing time for determination by the Council; it is envisaged that the first dwellings will be completed on the Keyford site in 2017 and will therefore assist the Council in meeting its five year housing land supply. The trajectory indicates that the development will contribute 50 dwellings per year in 2017, rising to 100 dwellings per year thereafter. Allowing for 35% affordable housing, only 65-70 of these dwellings would be for open market sale. This figure would be comfortably achievable from two sales outlets on site, each selling 35-40 dwellings per annum.
- 3.4.9 In marketing terms, Keyford would be the only site on the south of Yeovil (in contrast to the four key sites on the north – Brimsmore, Lufton, Lyde and Mudford). Keyford is the closest to Augusta Westland, the towns largest employer and closest to the Lynx and new Bunford employment areas. These points, together with the warm south facing slope environment the site offers, should make sales easier at Keyford than on other sites in the town.
- 3.4.10 The road junctions required to provide access to the site from the A37 Dorchester Road are already in place, and this will greatly assist the deliverability and viability of the urban extension. In addition it should be noted that a legal agreement already exists with the Highways Authority for the provision of a fifth arm from the Keyford roundabout which would provide the southern access into the Keyford site.
- 3.4.11 With regard to the provision of land for swales, balancing ponds and other surface water attenuation measures, sufficient land is already within the ownership of the Keyford landowners' consortium, and water discharge rights to Coker Stream already exist.
- 3.4.12 With regard to the provision of services, there is sufficient capacity in the local networks to allow a modest early start on the residential development on site, while larger scale gas, water and electric services are being brought to the site.
- 3.4.13 The combination of the above factors will allow an early start of residential development on site, and this, linked to the fact that Keyford would be the only major development on the south side of Yeovil, would enhance what will clearly be a very deliverable site.
- 3.4.14 Once underway the Keyford site is expected to take about 9 years to complete. A phasing programme will ensure that the infrastructure the scheme is providing is delivered in a structured manner.