

Verwood County Division Report –January 2019
Cllrs. Toni Coombs and Spencer Flower

Highway Issues – East Dorset Local Plan Review – With the degree of local concern, regarding potential additional housing in Alderholt, we have recently sought a briefing from County Highways, who are statutory consultees.

Currently the Local Plan Review has been paused to allow East Dorset District Council to carry out some Master Planning work, which will cover the whole of the east Dorset area, not just the proposed housing in Alderholt.

The County Council is also undertaking a Multi Modal Study, which is vital to the review. This will be particularly important where possible new housing development may take place in a number of settlements in East Dorset. Data relating to the traffic impact is vital to appreciate the potential impact on an existing road network and what mitigation measures and investment would be required for development.

Following an expression of concern we are assured by District Planning officers, that at this time, the only ‘conflict’ is the concern expressed by the County Highways regarding traffic issues, which will be covered by the Multi Modal Study.

It would be appropriate for discussions to take place with concerned residents once the outcome of the study is available, supported by the early thoughts regarding the key piece of work involving Master Planning, which was approved by the East Dorset Cabinet late last year. We are well aware of the issues which concern Alderholt residents following the representation made to the East Dorset Cabinet by members of the public and subsequent emails received from concerned residents.

The likely timescale for further public consultation regarding ‘preferred options’ is scheduled for the early Autumn of this year, which of course will be carried out by the new Dorset Council.

Examination of the Mineral Site Plan - The main point to make is that as the Examination is ongoing, the Mineral Plan Authority [MPA] no longer has control over the process, the timetable or what does or doesn’t get included in the Plan. These matters are in the hands of the Inspector. The MPA considered including the AS08 and AS27 sites at Horton Heath, and rejected them. The Plan submitted to the Planning Inspectorate did not include either of these sites. It is the Inspector who has asked the MPA to specifically consider including them, following the arguments made by the agents of the owner of AS08 and AS27 at the Hearings.

The MPA is firmly of the opinion that AS08 is unsuitable, and has resisted its inclusion. The position is not as clear cut for AS27 – which is constrained, but would be a valuable source of sand and is therefore more difficult to resist, so the MPA are looking further at this site. Because this site wasn’t included in the final Pre-Submission Consultation for the whole plan, it is undergoing its own focussed consultation now.

This is not a planning application – it is for the possible allocation of AS27 in the Mineral Sites Plan as a future sand extraction site. The MPA would strongly advise all interested parties to comment through the current consultation. If anyone wishes to appear before the Inspector, provided there is a Hearing session, it is important to OBJECT now and to request to appear at the Hearing.

However, it must be stressed again that the control of the process is in the hands of the Inspector.

Regarding the issues raised:

- High volume of heavy goods traffic in a rural area where the roads are narrow with concealed entrances and accesses.
- Noise pollution
- Air pollution
- Heavy goods traffic crossing foot paths and bridleways – conflict with users
- Areas of scientific interest affected
- Water table contaminated for local farmers, farms running on water sourced from wells
- Area proposed for planning is within green belt

These are valid points, and the MPA has considered these (please note – mineral extraction is allowed in green belt designated land). However, for AS27 from the assessment to date no constraints have been identified that are so significant as to rule this site out, whereas for AS08 the biodiversity constraints are such that the site is considered unacceptable.

The County Council still awaiting further comments from various consultees, including Historic England on heritage constraints. There may yet be arguments put forward that might rule this site out. The level of information required for a proposed allocation in a Plan is not as detailed as it would be for a planning application. All that is really required at this stage is that the Inspector has a degree of confidence that the site can reasonably be allocated, and can be developed and restored. Should it get to a planning application stage, much more detailed information would be required.

Regarding the recent permission for the Redman's Hill site, immediately to the east of AS27 – this is a much smaller site (c. 100,000 tonnes, as opposed to up to 3.5 million tonnes for AS27) which was formerly used for sewage disposal, it is not a strategic site, but would provide a small amount of sand which is in relatively short supply in Dorset. It will be worked relatively quickly and restored. It is adjacent to a solar farm, and it is possible to create an access route that limits impacts on users of Rights of Way in the area. The MPA considered that this was an appropriate use for this site.

The Somerley HRC – Discussions continue with Hampshire County Council and representatives from Dorset Waste Partnership [DWP] seeking a way forward for Dorset residents living in the eastern part of the Dorset Council area for them to have continued access to the Somerley HRC..

As Local Councillors we have been involved in lobbying for a pragmatic solution in support of Verwood, Alderholt, Cranborne, Three Legged Cross, West Moors and St Leonards and St Ives. News of further progress can be expected during February.

SGF/TBC January 2019