

FORDINGBRIDGE TOWN COUNCIL
Minutes of an Extraordinary meeting of the Planning Committee held
At 7.15pm on Wednesday 29th August 2018 in the Town Hall
(Minutes subject to approval at the next meeting of the Committee)

Present: Cllr Hale (Vice Chairman)
Cllrs Lewendon, Adams, Moulard, White, Anstey, Perkins, Earth & Connolly

In Attendance: Mrs H Richards. Town Clerk

1. To receive Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Cllrs Fulford & Wilson

2. To receive Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest given.

3. To agree a response to the East Dorset District Council Local Plan Review Options Consultation

A draft response had been prepared by the Clerk and distributed to Members prior to the meeting. This draft had been formulated following attendance at the Local Plan exhibition in Alderholt (and discussion with the Chair of Alderholt PC) comments received from Members, together with responses forwarded by Sandleheath and Godshill Parish Councils.

Cllr Lewendon proposed and it was seconded by Cllr Earth and therefore **RESOLVED:** to submit a response to the EDDC Local Plan Review Options Consultation as the prepared draft. Attached as Appendix A.

All in favour.

The meeting closed at 7.20pm

RESPONSE TO THE EDDC LOCAL PLAN REVIEW OPTIONS CONSULTATION 2018

Background:

Christchurch Borough Council and East Dorset District Council are progressing work on a review of the Local Plan, to produce documents to help shape the nature of future growth and development in our local area. As a result of Local Government Re-organisation, a decision was taken in February 2018 to produce separate local plans for Christchurch and for East Dorset.

The current Options consultation draft policy 5.28 proposes a minimum of 1000 new homes to be provided in the village of Alderholt which is classed as a "Rural Settlement", and which neighbours Fordingbridge. Development is *likely* to be subject to criteria which include:

- Contributions toward and physical provision of transport infrastructure in line with Policy 3.12 (see below)
- Contributions to, or provision of additional retail, health and community facilities
- Contributions to education provision

In forming this proposal, it is acknowledged that the main area for shops in the village is the local convenience store with more substantial shopping facilities available at Fordingbridge and Verwood, but the nearest larger centres are located at Ringwood, Salisbury and Ferndown. With regard to education, within the village there is only one public sector school, St James First School. There are no Upper or Middle Schools, with the nearest schools located at Cranborne, Verwood and Wimborne.

Objection to Policy 5.28

Having considered the impact of the proposed development both on the local & wider infrastructure and also on existing residents and communities, Fordingbridge Town Council consider that the allocation for a minimum of 1,000 new dwellings in the village of Alderholt is at least unacceptable and unsustainable, if not unsound, for the following reasons:

- **Character** – the village is currently classed as a Rural Settlement and as such is located in the centre of a mainly agricultural environment. The settlement still maintains its village character with provision for "essential requirements" supplied by the central convenience store, sport and recreation provision at the recreation ground, leisure activities, (walking, cycling and horse-riding) and has managed to retain the public house social facility. The proposed development will double the population and built environment, potentially turning the village into a dormitory settlement in a similar fashion to that of neighbouring Verwood.

- **Transport & Accessibility** – the location of Alderholt makes it inaccessible without travel through narrow country lanes (designed for horses and carts) and onward it will be necessary to pass through the already problematic town centre of Fordingbridge. All of the roads into and out of the village, namely the B3078 from Cranborne/Verwood and onward into Fordingbridge, Harbridge Drove south to Ringwood via B3081 and Sandleheath Road to the north are all unsuitable for a significant increase in the volume of traffic either from the construction traffic, resulting residential population or delivery lorries to existing and new retail/commercial enterprises. Furthermore, without significant provision of new schools within the settlement, development of this scale will result in a high increase in school transport provision - more buses on narrow country lanes.

Lorries and large delivery vans already create a danger to both other drivers, pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders on the existing road network, either through necessity to make deliveries in Alderholt or Sandleheath but also by using this as a cut-through to the A338 or to avoid the A31 to Southampton.

Unless a direct link to the A338 by way of provision of a bypass (in itself not acceptable) any potential improvements to the immediate transport network, particularly into Fordingbridge a historic town with many listed buildings and narrow streets, will do nothing to improve or prevent an increase in the issues faced in the Town Centre. Furthermore an increase in traffic travelling onwards to Southampton via Godshill, the open forest and onto Cadnam will significantly impact on both the character, environment and inhabitants (animals and human) of this protected, tranquil place.

With regard to public transport, it is difficult to see how Alderholt could be linked to the mainstream public transport network giving access to Ringwood, Bournemouth and Salisbury. The Public Community Bus service (no. 97) is already under threat with requests for funding and even if continued, cannot be considered to provide an adequate alternative to car use.

Draft Policy 3.12 of the plan states that *“Development should be in accessible locations that are well linked to existing communities by walking, cycling and public transport routes. Development must be designed to: provide safe, permeable layouts which provide access for all modes of transport, prioritising direct, attractive routes for walking, cycling and public transport; provide safe access onto the existing transport network; allow safe movement of development related trips on the immediate network; and minimise the number of new accesses on the A338.”*

For the reasons given above, the requirements of Policy 3.12 cannot be met in the allocation draft policy 5.28 making it unsound.

Paragraph 5.4.2.11 States that *“Transport modelling work is currently being produced which will examine the impact of new development in this area*

will be completed this year, with respect isn't this shutting the stable door after the horse has bolted? Does this Transport Modelling support the Duty to Co-operate, is the impact of the EDDC Local Plan proposals being considered together with the impact of neighbouring New Forest DC Local Plan proposals and is a strategic solution being sought by all relevant District and County Councils? While it is appreciated that some improvements are planned on the A31 around Ringwood, this will not alleviate the problems for those travelling across the forest on the A31 and onward to the M27 – the solution - dual carriage across the A31 forest route, at what cost to the environment and this would only create further problems to the west at Wimborne. The impact will be that more commuters will use the B3078 across the more sensitive part of the forest (see comment above).

- **Community Facilities and Services**

Draft Policy 3.14 proposes new facilities should be concentrated in settlements including Alderholt. While this will be necessary should development of such a large scale go ahead, there will still potentially be a reliance on the provision of services from neighbouring larger settlements, particularly Fordingbridge given its close proximity. As with most of the country, local services are already inadequate and with the combined impact of the proposed new development in Fordingbridge (800 dwellings) services will not cope. In any case, being located in another county and healthcare area, it may be prohibitive to allow access for Alderholt residents resulting in reliance to travel further afield to larger urban areas for some services .

Retail services are limited, either within Alderholt or Fordingbridge and while some will make use of independent providers, residents will, through necessity, need to travel to larger settlements to do their weekly shop (or would there be a constant convoy of supermarket delivery lorries clogging up the local road network?)

As with transport policy it is considered that allocation policy 5.28 is unsound as it cannot provide adequate and sustainable access to community facilities and services as required by draft Policy 3.14

- **Employment**

There is no specific proposal to provide new employment opportunities within Alderholt and while there may be the potential for some provision, this has to be regarded as limited. Given the difficulties explained above regarding public transport, the majority of working residents will rely on travelling to work by car. This reliance can only exacerbate the traffic problems. While opportunities for employment may be present in Fordingbridge, there are no plans to provide sufficient parking spaces within the town centre to cope with an increase in demand, particularly for long-stay spaces for either residents or workers.

- **Education**

As detailed in transport comments, any increase in demand for education should be met within the settlement to reduce the impact on the transport network – however this is potentially unrealistic and unviable. The current Upper School (QE Wimborne) provision is located at a considerable distance from Alderholt (approx. 15 miles). Furthermore the most local school, Burgate in Fordingbridge which takes pupils from outside of catchment may have to review this position to manage the increase in demand following the proposed new development in Fordingbridge.

Fordingbridge Town Council therefore consider that draft Policy 5.28 for the allocation of the large scale development of the village of Alderholt is unsound due to its location and accessibility; unsustainable with regards to provision of services and inappropriate as it would completely change the character and nature of this rural community.

It is appreciated that Local Authorities are under great pressure from Central Government to meet the demand for new housing; however this should not be at the detriment of the existing residents, potential new residents or the local community or environment. It is suggested that while alternative urban areas have already been heavily developed (Ferndown, Verwood and currently Wimborne) other options within the plan area should be considered further. Again it is appreciated that environmental constraints exist for example protected heathland, however areas around Ferndown, West Moors and even Three Legged Cross should be considered as more suitable for large scale development given their proximity to transport networks, schools, employment, community & retail facilities and given their existing urban nature.