

LOCAL PLAN REVIEW 2018

Recently there has been considerable concern expressed by local residents in relation to items disclosed in the local press with regard to possible development of sites in and around Colehill and the rest of this part of East Dorset. This concern is understandable given that we already anticipate significant new housing for the area, particularly in the three main areas of Burts Hill/Cranborne Road, Leigh Road and Cuthbury.

It is understandable that residents have expressed concern at the possibility that there may be even more sites being exploited in the area and that they should feel that Wimborne, Colehill and the local area are being asked to bear yet more development. Thus it seems that this area is being asked to bear a disproportionate amount of development compared with other parts of the District.

Needless to say rumours abound and if taken all together it seems that we are about to be swamped with massive amounts of housing and the serious risk of local areas losing their identities and becoming dormitory areas for Poole and Bournemouth.

The purpose of this document therefore is to act in three ways:

1. To allay fears for residents
2. To Explain what is actually happening
3. To explain the process and the likely timetable.

In the years between 2004 and 2014 research and planning took place by the East Dorset District Council to establish what amount of housing was needed for a 15 year period, what potential sites existed within the District, which of the sites were viable and what conditions were needed to make development environmentally and socially acceptable.

The process involved several consultations (both professional and public) leading to the publication of a Core Strategy 'Issues and Options' discussion paper in 2008. Again this was opened to public consultation and the publication of a Core Strategy which itself, before it could be accepted was made the subject of an Examination in Public lasting 5 days.

During that public examination, which was attended by Colehill Parish Councillors throughout and during which they made a number of presentations to the Government Inspector, arguments were put forward in respect of each of the proposed sites. It is a fact that some of the arguments presented by the Colehill Parish Council were successful, others were not but eventually a final Core Strategy Document was produced with the approval of the Government Inspector and which became the strategy document upon which the decisions were finally made that have led to the development of the sites mentioned above.

That is the position we are at now. What developments can proceed are defined in the Core Strategy. **No other major developments have been approved or will be approved under that plan.**

Since the Core Strategy was published in 2014, as is often the case, Central Government has had a rethink and has effectively moved the goalposts. This means that Councils across the

Country are now obliged to rethink their strategies. This is known as the 'Local Plan Review 2018/19' and for all intents and purposes it amounts to a rerun of the long review that started in 2004 **but it does not mean that any of the approved plans in the Core Strategy are cancelled or in any way altered.**

Once the District Planning team have carried out a review it will publish another 'Issues and Options' paper which will be open to scrutiny by all and will be subject to public consultation. It is thought unlikely that this will be ready for publication until early in 2018. It will again look at all aspects especially including housing need in the area, environmental issues and all the issues relating to infrastructure (Roads, Power, Services, Schools etc.).

It is because of this 'rerun' of the strategy that planners and owners of available land have been tempted to 'float the idea of further developments in this area'. Some at the Dudsbury Golf Course, Broomhill and Parley immediately come to mind. **It does not mean that all or any of them will be likely to get approval.**

In any event, following the 'Issues and Options' consultations, which will take some time, the District Council will once again have to submit proposals for a new strategy and this will, as on the previous occasion, be subject to a full Examination in Public before a Government Inspector.

Any new strategy regarding development **MUST** be based upon the genuine need of the District and will not be allowed to be led by pure financial speculation. So it could decide that no more development should go ahead.

There is one sting in the tail as far as the new Central Government decision is concerned and that is that the reviews do require 'cross border co-operation'. This means in effect that one adjacent area, unable to find space for needed development, could ask its neighbour to 'take up some of the slack'. This is seen as being a difficult manoeuvre which could lead to some disagreements between authorities. However, and without going into detail, there are some effective safety nets for this immediate area.

The next question then is how long will this all take. There has already been some time slippage and the negotiations regarding local 'Unitary Authorities' is also slowing things down. The 'Issues and Options' document is unlikely be ready before early 2018 and then it is likely that the process will lead to the Examination in Public at some time in 2019. The period between resolving the 'Issues and Options' and reaching a point where the new Local Plan in draft form will be ready will be a period of quite intense negotiation and consultation. Also during this time there will be several 'public consultations' when local residents views will be canvassed for inclusion in the process. **No new site developments will be approved before that and even then it may not lead to approval for any further sites in the area unless the finally approved plan requires it.**

This leads to the question of what the Town and Parish councils are doing and can do in relation to the development of the new strategy. As far as Colehill is concerned it has a

Local Planning Group who will monitor the development of the plan and can make direct approaches to the District Planners for advice and clarification. It will be represented throughout the consultation stages and will make presentation on behalf of residents at the Examination in Public.

In addition the Parish Council works closely with the East Dorset Environment Partnership which has the access to advice from influential bodies such as Natural England, Dorset Wildlife Trust, The Campaign for the Protection of Rural England, The Forestry Commission and other interested parties.

In the meantime the Parish Council and East Dorset Environmental Partnership will oppose **any new major site** proposals until after the entire review process has been completed. This seems to be the adopted stance of East Dorset District Council now.

As was the case with the Core Strategy back in 2013 it will be the Parish Councils intention to keep residents informed, especially on the web site and to call public meetings when appropriate. When parts of the review come up for public consultation the residents of Colehill will be advised and asked to make their thoughts known.

We would ask that residents keep an eye on the Parish Noticeboards, the notices at the Library and in the Stour and Avon magazine so that the opportunity for expressing a view is not missed.