

NOTES OF MEETING BETWEEN EDDC AND ACTION FOR ALDERHOLT REPRESENTATIVES

14th NOVEMBER 2018

Present - EDDC: Dave Barnes, Jane Lynch, Simon Trueick; A4A: Chris Walker, Janet Walker, Hywel Morris, Colin English, Stephen Godsall.

Aims and objectives of A4A SG and CW explained that Alderholt Parish Council has resolved to make representations objecting to the Local Plan option for the village. Action for Alderholt has been formed to support the Parish Council in this process. It aims to provide a single voice for the people of Alderholt and has collected a petition of over 1000 signatures.

The group is in favour of development which is sustainable given the local infrastructure - it is not a "NIMBY" group. However the group believes that 1000 homes is excessive growth, a view shared by local MP Simon Hoare. There is also a strong scepticism about claims by local politicians that a larger scale development could lead to extra schools, doctor's surgery, road improvements and buses.

A4A would like to work with EDDC to see if the proposals can be clarified and improved between now and the end of March.

Timetable for Local Plan review and Dorset Unitary Council DB confirmed that EDDC would not be able to complete preparation of a draft local plan. The process is delayed because Dorset CC will not complete their "multi-modal transport study" until next Autumn and the resulting strategy until end of 2019, and no local plan can be completed until after this.

Discussions between Council members leading up to forming the new Dorset UA in April 2019 have agreed that the local plan review process should continue. However, some factions would prefer to see a Dorset wide review. The concern in East Dorset is that this could lead to a "policy vacuum" increasing from 2019 to 2024, when a new Dorset wide plan is required.

JL explained that policies and options included in the consultation document will be a material consideration in any forthcoming planning applications, helping to mitigate against "Gladman" type appeals. SG commented that this is no comfort to people in Alderholt because piecemeal development could arise in many locations around the village as a result of the document.

On 1/4/19 both JL and ST will be transferring to Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole. It is not yet known who will lead the Dorset UA planners.

Update on local plan options consultation ST explained that 750 responses had been lodged, which included over 3500 different points. It was proving a challenge with limited staff to input this data to the online portal. ST said this would be completed shortly but apologised for the resulting delay in providing a full response to A4A's FOI request.

ST updated on discussions with service providers, which were continuing. It is now clear that any

likely expansion of Alderholt would not lead to new doctor's surgery or upper school being provided. It is still doubtful whether a new upper school could be achieved for Verwood. However it was likely that an expansion of 1500+ homes in Alderholt would enable a new first school to be funded; government had just increased developer contributions for education from £5880 to £9000 per dwelling to include provision for nursery education and special educational needs. Such expansion could also assist with services such as shops and recreation facilities.

JW asked about bus services and explained problems of funding current service, which runs just three times per week. ST said discussions with bus operators had confirmed that there is no prospect of new regular services for an expanded Alderholt within the current funding context. Indeed there is concern that proposed government changes to fuel duty could make some existing services unviable. SG explained that this is a key part of A4A's concerns about transport and sustainability and asked officers to confirm that there was no realistic prospect of a public transport solution to Alderholt's expanding needs, particularly for commuting. This was acknowledged and ST commented that it would not be acceptable for new development in Alderholt to be just a very large dormitory settlement.

HM asked whether the revised ONS projections for housing need were likely to change the level of housing proposed in the local plan. DB explained that government was still reviewing the data but the most likely outcome is confirmation of existing targets.

Questions about the Alderholt proposal

CW asked whether officers still believed that sites in Alderholt could accommodate up to 2500 houses. JL and ST responded that it was premature to talk about likely numbers before transport assessment had been done; this may well show that there was a limit on the amount of expansion that could be considered for the village. However officers feel that more than 1000 homes could be beneficial to get road improvements and facilities. Sites identified would be large enough to fit up to 2500 houses.

JW asked where SANG could be provided for this scale of development. ST said that this had not yet been considered. DB emphasised that the process so far had been an initial consultation and none of the "options" should be considered as proposals yet. A great deal more work was required before they could be narrowed down and it may transpire that some of the options were not practical.

CW asked why no proposals for local employment had been included in Alderholt. ST responded that it may be possible to include employment on some sites although he doubts any large scale employment in the village would be viable.

CE asked if an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) would be done for the Alderholt proposals given their scale. JL explained that EIA would not be required for sites allocated within the local plan because environmental issues would be examined as part of the plan preparation process. SG questioned whether the current "Sustainability Assessment"(SA) was suitable for

this purpose as it took a very broad brush approach; for instance, any development "close to bus stops" was considered acceptable in transport terms. ST acknowledged that the SA so far was a very rough sift involving a "box ticking" approach and much more detailed work was required before any options were included in a "preferred options" consultation.

HM asked what mix of affordable and social housing would be proposed for Alderholt and how this could be controlled. JL stated that the aspiration for 50% affordable housing was policy on green field sites like those in the village. Usually the mix would required would be 70% homes for rental and 30% other forms of "affordable" housing, Developers often argued that this level would prevent viability and levels of affordable housing often "take the hit" for road costs. ST added that significant "Section 106" contributions were likely to be required for transport in Alderholt. Due to the nature of the village he felt that the proportion of shared ownership, "starter homes" and "low entry market housing" would be significantly higher.

CW asked what type of transport improvements might be considered around Alderholt and whether these would be delivered before development generated extra traffic. Officers agreed that the proposed development would inevitably generate extra traffic and improvements would be needed, but this would depend upon the pace of development and could only be funded gradually as developer contributions come in. As an example, ST thought that the scale of development proposed would require pinch points such as Pressey's Corner to be improved. SG commented that because commuting patterns around Alderholt went to all points of the compass it would be impractical to address the many pinch points.

JW commented that many of the roads which need improvement are outside Dorset and JL confirmed that developer contributions could be used to fund necessary improvements in Hampshire or Wiltshire although no discussions had so far been held with these transport authorities. She explained that the NPPF includes a presumption in favour of development and proposals would only be refused on transport grounds if impacts were judged to be "severe". SG mentioned that the presumption was only in favour of "sustainable" development; JL agreed but said "sustainability" is very hard to pin down and recent case-law has further confused the definition.

HM asked to what extent Councils could control the pace and phasing of development. JL responded that the plan could include robust requirements for phasing where this is justified. She would not expect large scale developments in Alderholt and it is more likely that the sites would be developed in small parcels over the life of the plan. The pace of development was up to the private sector and could not be controlled. However she believes this would still be better for the village than unplanned developments such as the Gladman scheme.

HM queried why greenfield sites around Alderholt had been described as "low quality agricultural land" when they are primarily Grade 3, classified as "fair to good". ST acknowledged that the majority of land in East Dorset is grade 3 or 4, and it is incorrect to describe most of the village sites as low quality.

Consideration of other sites for development

CE asked how sites to be included in the options consultation had been chosen. JL explained that the "Call for sites" had invited landowners and developers to submit proposals throughout the EDDC area. This has not been restricted by the "areas of search" mentioned in the consultation document. Some sites put forward were clearly unsuitable because they were in flood plains, close to heathland or in sensitive parts of the green belt.

SG asked why no sites around Wimborne or Colehill had been included as options for consultation. JL explained that there were already extensive developments in this area awaiting construction and concerns about cumulative impact. DB added that many sites in this area were completely unsuitable. However, more green belt sites may need to be considered if sites elsewhere are found to be impractical.

CE asked whether "constraints mapping" for the district was available. DB said this is fully available online and he will arrange for a link to be sent.

Process from here on

Officers are pressing DCC to make an initial assessment of transport capacity around Alderholt so that they can commission "masterplanning" consultants by end of March. They accept that Alderholt proposal is the most challenging in the plan consultation and expect to spend a large proportion of the £100k masterplanning budget on it.

The further work proposed would respond primarily to concerns about transport. Arguments about strain on things like schools and health services are made wherever planners propose development. Apparently ST has attended a meeting of 350 residents in Verwood recently who are objecting to a site in the green belt and arguing that Alderholt would be a better location.

SG asked whether officers agree that the provisions of NPPF paragraph 72 apply to the Alderholt expansion. Officers agreed this is the case. ST commented that the provision in this paragraph for planners to work "with the support of their communities" was an aspiration rather than a requirement; it is almost unknown for any community to support large scale development. However, DB confirmed that officers would wish to work as closely as possible with local people during the next stage of "masterplanning".

Next steps

- It was agreed that a further meeting of A4A and EDDC officers will be arranged as soon as there is news about transport assessments and/or masterplanning
- DB will arrange for links to "constraints mapping" to be sent to A4A
- All agreed that there are a lot of issues arising from the meeting and will consider what further clarification is required.

