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DORSET COUNCIL - NORTHERN AREA PLANNING COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 16 FEBRUARY 2021

Present: Cllrs Sherry Jespersen (Chairman), Mary Penfold (Vice-Chairman), Jon Andrews, Tim Cook, Les Fry, Matthew Hall, Brian Heatley, Carole Jones, Emma Parker, Val Potheary, Belinda Ridout and David Taylor

In Attendance: Cllr Graham Carr-Jones and Cllr David Walsh

Officers present (for all or part of the meeting):

Robert Lennis (Area Lead (Major Projects) Eastern), Hannah Smith (Planning Area Manager), Lara Altree (Senior Lawyer - Regulatory), Steve Savage (Transport Development Manager), Gill Whitney (Technical Support Officer) and George Dare (Democratic Services Officer Apprentice)

30. Apologies

No apologies for absence were received at the meeting.

31. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

32. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 15 December 2020 were confirmed and would be signed at a later date.

33. Public Participation

Representations by the public to the Committee on individual planning applications are detailed below. There were no questions, petitions or deputations received on other items on this occasion.

34. Planning Applications

Members considered written reports submitted on planning applications as set out below.

35. 2/2020/0406/OUT, Land south of Lower Road, Stalbridge, Dorset

The Committee considered an application to erect up to 114 dwellings and up to 2,000 square metres of employment space. (Outline application to determine access).

The Chairman introduced the item by explaining that the application has been referred to the Planning Inspectorate on the grounds on non-determination. She asked that members consider the application the same as any other application, however the final decision would be made at a public enquiry.

The Area Lead Planning Officer delivered a presentation to the Committee. Various plans were shown including an aerial view, access plans, and a concept masterplan. He highlighted the officer views on the site being a valued landscape.

The Transport Development Manager presented the access points to the site. There would be two highways access points and two pedestrian access points. He explained to the Committee that the Highway Authority would not support the eastern pedestrian access point because it was not considered safe. The application was supported by a transport assessment. The Highway Authority had no objections to the application.

The key planning matters were highlighted:

- Principle of development, lack of five-year housing land supply, and the Planning Balance
- Landscape impact

Members were advised that there was an amendment to condition 8.

A number of written representations were received and are attached as an annexure to these minutes.

Local Member for Stalbridge

Cllr Graham Carr-Jones

As a representative of the local community, he urged members to refuse the application. He stated although the Council cannot demonstrate a five-year housing land supply, the proposal contradicts several parts of the North Dorset Local Plan. He felt that Stalbridge has inadequate facilities and infrastructure, such as the lack of a medical facility. He also drew attention to the fact that there would be a 27% growth of the town if this application was approved and if the other two proposed sites are built.

Cllr Carr-Jones' full statement has been attached as an annexure to these minutes.

Members' Questions and Comments

The Committee asked questions and made comments on the application. The issues raised included: pedestrian safety on Lower Road; the residual cumulative impact of the development; the lack of a housing land supply; the high-density housing proposed compared to other areas of the town; the

commercial area of the development; and the lack of infrastructure and facilities in Stalbridge.

In response to the members, the Area Lead Planning Officer confirmed that: there are no historical trails near to the site; the planned commercial area would be for light industrial use or for workshops; Stalbridge could be allocated further growth in the new Dorset Local Plan.

In response to the members, the Transport Development Manager confirmed that the transport assessment has been checked and it identified no traffic issues; there would be a construction traffic management plan.

It was proposed by Cllr Ridout and seconded by Cllr Andrews that, for the purposes of appeal, the application be refused.

The meeting was adjourned at 11.39am for officers to formulate formal reasons for refusal as this proposal was against the recommendation.

Upon reconvening at 12.04pm a roll call was taken by the Chairman to ensure that all members were present.

The Area Lead Planning Officer presented the reasons for refusal and members voted on the proposal.

The vote was carried.

Decision

That, for the purposes of appeal, the application be refused.

Reasons for Decision

1. The proposal by reason of its location on the edge of a settlement would lack sufficient services and facilities to support the level of growth proposed, would lead to an unsustainable form of development in which people would be reliant on the private car to access a sufficient range of services, facilities, and employment. In view of there being no overriding need for this proposal within the countryside and particularly Stalbridge Parish, the proposal would be contrary to policy 2, 6 and 20 and Objectives 2 and 4 of the Local Plan and the NPPF, which seek to meet local housing needs in rural areas, and the requirement to locate development to facilitate access to high quality public transport, with layouts that maximise the catchment area for bus or other public transport services, and appropriate facilities that encourage public transport use. The identified environmental harm is considered to significantly and demonstrably outweigh the social and economic benefits of providing the level of proposed housing and employment in this location.

2. The level of housing proposed on the edge of settlement location would result in a level of development which would be out of keeping with the prevailing character of existing and planned development which surrounds the site and which would fail to successfully integrate due to the extent of built form proposed and existing. The proposal would be contrary to policies 2, 6,

7, 20 and 24 and objectives 2 and 4 of the North Dorset Local Plan Part 1 and NPPF.

36. Urgent items

There were no urgent items.

37. Exempt Business

There was no exempt business.

Duration of meeting: 10.00 am - 12.17 pm

Chairman

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Northern Area Planning Committee 16 February 2021 Decisions List

APPLICATION NUMBER: 2/2020/0406/OUT

APPLICATION SITE: Land south of Lower Road, Stalbridge, Dorset

PROPOSAL: Develop land by the erection of up to 114 No. dwellings and up to 2,000 square metres of employment space (for Business use (Class B1), with up to 1 No. Retail (Class A1) unit). Form vehicular and pedestrian access, form public open space and carry out associated works. (Outline application to determine access).

DECISION: That, for the purposes of the appeal, the application be refused.

Reasons for Refusal

1. The proposal by reason of its location on the edge of a settlement would lack sufficient services and facilities to support the level of growth proposed, would lead to an unsustainable form of development in which people would be reliant on the private car to access a sufficient range of services, facilities, and employment. In view of there being no overriding need for this proposal within the countryside and particularly Stalbridge Parish, the proposal would be contrary to policy 2, 6 and 20 and Objectives 2 and 4 of the Local Plan and the NPPF, which seek to meet local housing needs in rural areas, and the requirement to locate development to facilitate access to high quality public transport, with layouts that maximise the catchment area for bus or other public transport services, and appropriate facilities that encourage public transport use. The identified environmental harm is considered to significantly and demonstrably outweigh the social and economic benefits of providing the level of proposed housing and employment in this location.

2. The level of housing proposed on the edge of settlement location would result in a level of development which would be out of keeping with the prevailing character of existing and planned development which surrounds the site and which would fail to successfully integrate due to the extent of built form proposed and existing. The proposal would be contrary to policies 2, 6, 7, 20 and 24 and objectives 2 and 4 of North Dorset Local Plan Part 1 and NPPF.

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**Northern Area Planning Committee
Written Submissions
Tuesday, 16 February 2021**

Item 5a – 2/2020/0406/OUT, Land south of Lower Road, Stalbridge, Dorset

Mrs June Harman – AGAINST the Application

I am objecting to this proposal on land to the South of The Paddocks, Lower Road Stalbridge.

There are already a number of housing sites already under construction, with other applications in the pipeline.

Stalbridge is an extremely infrastructure poor, small town? We have a failing High Street, those shops no longer in used are either empty or have been changed back to residential dwellings. We have had no local G.P. for over two years, residents having to travel to nearby Milborne Port, Sturminster Newton or Sherborne surgeries. If you are not a car owner, getting there is a logistical nightmare, with a fundamental lack of public transport running at times to get you to appointments. Our one primary school is sadly lacking in capacity to accommodate a large influx of children, which will be happening as the new houses being built, have families with children moving in.

Work locally is minimal, therefore people will need to commute further afield, meaning increased traffic flow on the already, at times congested narrow roads in Stalbridge.

The current house building sites, the one off Lower Road, private housing starting prices at £325k hardly affordable for local Stalbridge residents trying to get on the housing ladder. The social housing site off Thornhill Road, although welcome, will not, as many people believe necessarily benefit locals, as these will be put out for bids for anyone from anywhere be able to access.

As regards the commercial and retail units, not a desirable place for them to be built, and once again traffic flow would increase, and noise and disruption to a new housing development would not be favourable.

Stalbridge already has huge lorries coming through, making dangerous turns on to the High Street from Station Road, a few near misses have occurred as the pavements are so narrow, pedestrians have to, at times hug the walls of buildings to escape being knocked into the road.

I would like the developers to maybe spend some time here, not just a flying visit, to see what it is like on a daily basis. Perhaps when Covid is over, and before a final decision is made, they could do just that. It's not all about money, (or maybe it is for them?!) They build and walk away; we have to live here.

Thank you

Jane Westbrook – AGAINST the Application

On behalf of Dorset CPRE (Campaign for the Protection of Rural England) we object to this application as follows:

1. The A357 runs through Stalbridge and is the main route from Wincanton/A303 and on southwards. Traffic is constant with HGVs and agricultural vehicles. Due to the historic nature of the town, the roads are narrow. The crossing in the town centre is restricted in size and visibility. Approaching from Barrow Hill to A357 (Ring Street) the lane is narrow, with buildings on either side, no pavements and poor view of approaching traffic. Approaching from the A357 (Ring Street) the road is wide enough for one vehicle only - traffic queues by Dike's supermarket. Grove Lane cuts into Ring Street, with no visibility of oncoming traffic from the crossing.

Highways opinion is that "the network will continue to operate efficiently". We suggest it will become a significant road safety hazard. Highways state "there are no highway safety issues" when, in commenting for the draft Local Plan, they mention - "**road safety concerns**".

2. The applicant proposes a B1 employment site – this allows industrial processes, which would be entirely unsuitable at the heart of a residential area.

3. The applicant states the report of the Senior Landscape Officer, who does not support this application, may be "influenced by local opinion". The opinion **reflects** local opinion, which should be respected and not treated with derision. Further, it is an accepted fact that mitigation seldom fully repairs harm done to landscape.

4. DC housing enablement team have reported “housing need in the area would need to be demonstrated” and that, although there is a high level of housing need in Dorset generally, it is likely that the housing need in Stalbridge will be met by the recent and current development in the area. The applicant seeks to undermine the knowledge and experience of the DC housing team, which is disingenuous.

5. We are surprised that Highways have no concerns. If the access point to Lower Road is made safe, there is still considerable impact from **795 trips DAILY**. With no useful public transport, no doctor’s surgery, no secondary school and few retail/employment options it is unlikely that residents will choose to walk or cycle to access these facilities. Templecombe Station is 4 miles away and the A357 is busy and unsuitable for cycling. Stalbridge is “not well connected to neighbouring towns” as stated by the applicants.

6. DC has a climate emergency strategy which states that housing should **ONLY** be built where there is access to public transport, employment, schools, training and all amenities.

Stalbridge Town Council – AGAINST the Application

Stalbridge Town Council consider that Agenda item 5a is being brought to the committee at the wrong time. The Dorset Local Plan is currently in the consultation process and the application in question subject to an appeal. They do not consider this to be best practice and will be considering seeking a judicial review of this process.

The proposed greenfield site, outside the established settlement boundary, forms part of the historic landscape setting of the Town within the Blackmore Vale. Members agree with the Landscape Architects position of non-support due to the cumulative adverse effect on the character of a valued landscape.

The additional vehicle and pedestrian movements from the site via difficult junctions onto the A357 will create additional hazards in terms of highways safety and ‘block’ new road connections to the south of Stalbridge to the A357.

This application combined with two recently granted major developments represents a 27% growth for the Town. This figure more than doubles the 10%

growth of the whole District over the last ten years and the planned comparable rate of growth for the period (mostly in the four main towns). This rate of growth for Stalbridge at the edge of the county is not sustainable and members agree with the inspectors view of the local plan in 2015, that large scale development sites in Stalbridge would harm the character and uniqueness of the Town.

The level of growth to date in Stalbridge already contributes to meeting the five-year land supply target, which Dorset Council is dependent on granted permissions being built out by developers. This application is not supported by a demonstrated local need, a view which is supported in The Officers report. It is therefore considered to be unsustainable and not in accordance with the adopted local plan's spatial strategy, given the towns location on the northern edge of Dorset with restricted links to larger towns via public transport and a limited local infrastructure in terms of commerce and employment.

In conclusion STC ask Committee Members to consider the Dorset Local Plans commitment to Build the Right Houses in the Right Places give due consideration to the value of the rural setting of the Town of which they are proud and respectfully ask that they do not to support the recommendation in principal.

Grassroots, on behalf of the Applicant

We welcome the Officer's recommendation and hope that Members can support it, so we can work towards avoiding the Public Inquiry scheduled for the end of April.

The proposals represent the use of land to "round off" Stalbridge and provide much needed housing and employment land.

As the Council's Housing Enabling Officer notes, there are currently 1,100 households on the Dorset Home Choice register, with the SHMA indicating the need for 367 additional affordable housing units over a five-year period to meet that need.

This application proposes the delivery of 114 houses, 46 of which would be affordable. This will provide a significant boost to the Council's supply and

assist in addressing the backlog that currently exists.

Since the application was submitted, the Council's Cabinet has ratified the Dorset-wide Local Plan Options Consultation, which is now out for public consultation. The consultation document recognises that Stalbridge acts as a District Centre and places it as a Tier 2 town (on the same footing as the current "four main towns") and notes that housing need across Dorset will rise to 1,793 net additional dwellings a year (30,481 over a 17-year period). It identifies a number of sites to meet this emerging housing requirement in a sustainable way.

The application site is included as a "Preferred Site" for residential development with capacity to deliver c.150 new homes. In suggesting the site for allocation, both the principle of development and the impact on landscape was taken into account, with specific guidance on landscape matters provided within the policy wording.

While we appreciate the Dorset-wide Local Plan is at an early stage of preparation, it does indicate the direction of travel and highlights that the Council's own Officers consider the site represents an appropriate location to accommodate development needs in a sustainable manner, without leading to adverse impacts on the landscape, or the town's infrastructure. The Council's Highways Officer and Flood Risk Management Engineer have also confirmed they have no objection to the proposals.

The scheme will deliver a number of benefits, the most significant of which are:

- Increase the choice and supply of market and affordable housing, helping to reduce serious shortfall in supply in a sustainable location, thus allowing the Council to resist unsustainable development elsewhere;
- Provides a mix of uses, including employment land which will provide flexible workspaces and local jobs in the town; and
- Replaces ecologically sterile arable fields with a more biodiverse network of habitats.

We trust that Members will agree with your Planning Officer's recommendation that the public benefits associated with the delivery of much

needed open market and affordable housing, alongside job creation, weighs in favour of granting permission, and that no adverse effects that would represent reasonable reasons to refuse the application exist.

We therefore commend the application for approval to provide a much-needed boost to housing supply in the area, to provide people with the homes and jobs they needed to bounce back from the current recession.

Northern Area Planning Committee

16 February 2020

Item 5a – 2/2020/0406/OUT, Land south of Lower Road, Stalbridge, Dorset

Statement from Cllr Graham Carr-Jones

Ward member for Stalbridge and Marnhull

Chairman, Members of Committee.

Members the in-principal decision you are being asked to take is NOT one for a planning committee!

A large Strategic site like this is one that the Community in Stalbridge should be making through their representation and feedback into the current Local Plan Consultation, our Town Council are currently working on their response to the local plan, the residents are feeding back their comments. This large-scale development is more important to the community and they would urge you to refuse this application if they could be here today.

I would like to draw attention to the report which clearly sets out: Stalbridge has recently taken on a housing growth in excess of the current adopted Development Plan policies.

The report states a reason this case is coming before Committee is the Council is unable to demonstrate a five-year housing land supply.

Please let me remind Members who may not be familiar with it, that the adopted North Dorset Local Plan still carries weight, and this application is completely Contrary to

Policy 2 – Core Spatial Strategy

Policy 6 – Housing Distribution

Policy 20 – The Countryside And furthermore, contradicts the *Saved Policies North Dorset District Local Plan 2003- Policy 1.7 – Settlement Boundaries*

Chairman, should members require it I have **Policy 2** Extract **3.39 & 3.50** **Policy 6** Extract **5.6 and 7.27** and **Policy 20** to hand should you wish me to refer directly to them.

Policy 2 **3.39** Outside the four main towns, where access and proximity to services is more limited, development will be more strictly controlled with an emphasis on meeting local and essential rural needs.

3.50 Outside the defined boundaries of the four main towns, in the remainder of the District (including Stalbridge and all the District's villages), development will be more strictly controlled with an emphasis on meeting local and essential rural needs.

Policy 6 **5.6** *In terms of location, national policy advises that local planning authorities should actively manage growth to make the fullest possible use of public transport, walking and cycling, and focus significant development in location, which are or can be made sustainable. It also states that in order to promote sustainable development in rural areas, housing should be located where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities.*

7.27 All the foregoing elements support Policy 2 – Core Spatial Strategy, which seeks to concentrate development at the District's four main towns with a focus on meeting local needs elsewhere. **and**

Policy 20 Stalbridge **and the eighteen larger villages will form the focus for growth outside of the four main towns. Development in the countryside outside defined settlement boundaries will only be permitted if: a it**

is of a type appropriate in the countryside, as set out in the relevant policies of the Local Plan, summarised in Figure 8.5; or b for any other type of development, it can be demonstrated that there is an 'overriding need' for it to be located in the countryside.

The only reason this application is before you today is because Dorset Council are being bullied into it by the reprehensible actions of "Land Value Alliances"

Their duplicitous, guileful appeal to the Inspector, for a non-determination has our officers running ragged, and being spooked into bringing this forward in a rush to the detriment of Stalbridge & the community.

Members I could sight you 2 other applications in Marnhull that have been in the planning system for over two years!

So, let's not be bullied.

The riding rough shod over communities is the next hurdle.

As a Council we talk about **Sustainable development** so let me address that point:

Dorset's smallest market town, a town in name only, a town that has only 2 or 3 viable shops on the High Street, no Medical provision, and a small County Primary School with limited capacity. A town where employment opportunities are extremely limited and the work from home option severely hampered by inadequate poor broadband provision.

Leisure activities, further education and professional entertainment will always mean a car journey.

These may not be material planning considerations, but these are the things that make communities sustainable.

Both myself and The Town Council feel that the current rate of growth is not sustainable and will permanently alter the rural character of Stalbridge. Something that when the "ND Local Plan" went to inspection in March 2015 the inspector David Hogger said large scale development sites would harm the character and uniqueness of the Town.

The recently approved, adjacent sites (2/2019/0161/REM off Lower Road and 2/20019/1710/REM Thornhill Road) for 180 houses in total have already started construction with residents already living at the Lower Road development. This represents an 18% growth rate. If this application is approved **these three sites alone** will increase the size of Stalbridge by 27%. This does not take into account the extant planning applications for a further 30 or so houses dotted around the village.

To put this into context the adopted North Dorset Local Plan notes that the District as a whole has expanded by about 10% over the last ten years and planned a similar rate of growth for the plan period (with most of this growth in the four main towns).

It is worth noting, **The Dorset Council Landscape Architect - is not able to support the application due to cumulative impacts.** This greenfield site is outside the established Settlement boundary, borders footpath N51/39 and forms part of the historic landscape setting of Stalbridge. members the loss of this setting and the impact on the footpath would be a sad loss of amenity for local residents

Moving onto the Cumulative Impact of large-scale development

I am concerned that this application, with the two already started, that gain access via Lower Road which is a quiet road with a difficult junction onto the A357.

As a local member with 32 years of experience of the road, the extra motor traffic and pedestrians from 294 new houses will pose a significant safety hazard.

The proposed business area is not appropriate on this site because it will be surrounded by residential developments on all sides, notwithstanding the empty shops and business units that Stalbridge has.

Where an earth does this outfit do their research? Their suite in Harrow?

This speculative land banking exercise will not help our five-year land supply, (an achievement which is reliant on permissions being built out by developers).

Members as the Portfolio Holder for Housing I cannot Support this application in the ward.

It is fair to say Dorset Council is in desperate need for social housing, this comes back to the Council mantra of: **the Right Houses in the Right Places.**

Due to the existing number of extant permissions **this application does not address a demonstrated local need** and, given Stalbridge's isolated location within rural North Dorset, the limited public transport links and local infrastructure, it seeks to create a level of growth that is considered to be unsustainable and contrary to the adopted local plan's spatial strategy. 7.27

Members our own Officers report clearly states: Stalbridge does not have a local need of affordable housing
To give you context The Lower Road site will provide 48 units of affordable Housing.

The Thornhill site is a 100% affordable scheme of 60 Housing units provided by Sovereign.

Current numbers on the Housing Register for Stalbridge are:

34 households with their 1st Choice being Stalbridge

17 Households with their 2nd Choice being Stalbridge

And 22 households with their 3rd choice being Stalbridge

Only 2 Households have named Stalbridge their 1st 2nd & 3rd Choices

I also understand Bovis Homes are currently looking at selling a further tranche of houses to another provider of shared ownership property because sales are slack.

I firmly believe that the current level of growth more than demonstrate Stalbridge's contribution to achieving the overall supply target for Dorset's' Northern area.

We do not wish to see Stalbridge turned into a vast ghastly housing estate, where there is little neighbour interaction and the heart and the community spirit of the town is stolen for profit.

The applicant has not provided a 'climate implications' statement with the application, something our Local Plan Process holds in the highest regard!

Our officer report highlights: ***Stalbridge taken housing growth in excess of the current adopted Development Plan and that planning policies and decisions should be responsive to local circumstances and support housing developments that reflect local needs.*** Which I think you'll agree, this does not!

In conclusion, I and the Town Council implore you to refuse this application on grounds:

That the development proposed is so substantial, and its cumulative effect would be so significant, that to grant permission would undermine the plan-making process

Members of Committee refusing this application would make these speculators do the **right thing and bring any future proposal through the proper process of the emerging Dorset Plan**, which will establish whether it meets the council's requirement **to Build the Right Houses in the Right Places**, so I ask you to give careful thought to the preservation of the rural amenity of the smallest town in Dorset and how the Cumulative Impact of large-scale developments will decimate the character and uniqueness of our Town forever.

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