

Huish Episcopi Parish Council

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Spatial Policy Team, South Somerset District Council
The Council Offices
Brympton Way
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4 January 2018

Dear Sirs

re: **REVIEW OF THE SOUTH SOMERSET LOCAL PLAN (2006 – 2028)
ISSUES AND OPTIONS CONSULTATION**

Current position:

Huish Episcopi Parish Council welcomes the opportunity to respond to the above consultation. It also totally concurs with the National Planning Policy Framework's (NPPF) three dimensions for achieving sustainable development listed under paragraph 7, namely - an economic role, a social role, an environmental role - and, within paragraph 8, that all of these roles should not be undertaken in isolation, because they are mutually dependent.

Because Langport is almost surrounded by Huish Episcopi, the town has nowhere to expand thus all development has had, will have, to take place in this village. The Council notes and agrees that 297 dwellings out of the current plan of 374 have been completed equating to 79% of the current plan by the end of 2017. A further 179 have been identified (see Appendix 1 at the end of this letter) which are expected to be completed by 2020, meaning a staggering 127% of the current planned requirement with still eight years to go. This fact alone fully justifies, in the Council's view, putting the brakes on any further large developments of six houses or more, over and above those already identified above, in Huish Episcopi.

The rest of "with accessible local services that reflect the community's needs and support its health, social and cultural well-being" element of the NPPF for "a social role" is in the Council's opinion starting to look to be very questionable. Since the 2006-2028 plan started the community has:

- lost the last bank,
- lost the dedicated Post Office,
- lost three Pubs, and
- seen a huge increase in traffic congestion through Langport.

Further issues concerning the Council are:

- whether a sewerage system designed and built in the 1950s is able to cope with yet more properties,
- the total lack of local employment opportunities, a failure of the current Plan,
- control of future flash flood water,
- overload in the Langport Surgery,
- local dental NHS treatment not available to new patients,
- Huish Episcopi Primary School in danger of being oversubscribed, and
- Huish Episcopi Academy in danger of being oversubscribed.

To cover the last four concerns, the Council has written to each one requesting that they share with the Council, and direct with the Policy Team, what the positive and negative aspects to date of the 297 new dwellings already built have had on the community and also their further thoughts on the impact of the additional 179 plus homes yet to be built.

Unfortunately the only real element of achievement within the NPPF's framework to date is building many dwellings, most of which are likely to accommodate families with children. Nothing has been done about supporting and creating employment - quite the reverse in fact, because a condition of developing Old Kelways was that an area of industrial/business units would be built. The developer chose to only advertise these halfheartedly over a long period of time and then claim that there was no interest. They should have been built, then advertised. The Parish Council remains convinced that, had this been the case, the community would now have a number of small thriving businesses operating on this site. Unfortunately, against the Council's recommendation, SSDC Planning Department allowed a further 12 houses to be built instead.

In June 2016 Huish Episcopi Parish Council carried out a Residents' Survey which provided some very interesting feedback, the most important being:

Against the question about the 2006-2028 local housing requirements:

- 43% thought that there were already far too many granted
- 31% said should resist future developments of 6 or more houses
- 21 % said insist on affordable (cheaper) houses for local youngsters
- 5% supported more housing being built

Against the question of growing employment in Langport/Huish Episcopi:

- 58% said more should be done to create local jobs
- 17% said no more needed – plenty of jobs within commuting distance
- 14% said don't know
- 11% said no more needed – most people living here are retired

Against the question where do you normally do your household shop?

- 51% said in TESCO Langport
- 29% said in Langport town centre
- 10% said in Somerton
- 5% said near to the place they work
- 5% said online delivery service

Against the question – Is it about time that Huish Episcopi had a decent sized Community Hall?

- 56% said Yes
- 24% said No
- 20% said Don't know

Against the question would you use a local train service from Huish Episcopi or Somerton?

- 70% said Yes

- 17% said Don't know
- 13% said No

Based on this information Huish Episcopi Parish Council pledged £5,000 towards a feasibility study into a station being built.

LOCAL MARKET TOWNS – LANGPORT & HUISH EPISCOPI – SPATIAL PORTRAIT
Huish Episcopi Parish Council's responses are as follows:

Question 7.24

Huish Episcopi Parish Council has never agreed to the proposed “direction of growth” for this village. In the response in August 2012 to the “Proposed Submission South Somerset Local Plan 2006-2028” the Council wrote:

“Any development of the land lying behind Old Kelways and Newtown Park east would require very sympathetic design, retaining a green agricultural zone between any dwellings and the hamlet of Wearne. This is not favoured by the Parish Council at this time because of the visual impact and necessity to maintain the separate identity of Wearne and the availability of more suitable sites.”

This became part of the plan under – Policy LMT2: Langport/Huish Episcopi Direction of Growth – “all development must avoid coalescence with the settlement of Wearne.”

This was further endorsed by the Planning Inspectorate, who approved the plan in 2015, in his report on South Somerset's Local Plan 2006-2028 with regard to the direction of growth at Langport/Huish Episcopi:

“The policy makes it clear that any development to the north must avoid coalescence with Wearne and there is no reason to doubt the Council's commitment to this objective.”

It should also be noted that the houses going down Wearne Lane are actually part of Wearne.

Answer:

Huish Episcopi Parish Council therefore fully supports that the “direction of growth”, subject to a planning application which was finally refused on Appeal, should definitely be removed from 2014 – 2034 revised plan.

Question 7.25

7.18(a) LANG 1:

Huish Episcopi Parish Council has the documents that clearly state that the land south of Wearne down to the Langport to Somerton Road was known as Lower Wearne Fields. So in fact Old Kelways was built on Wearne land, which explains why most of the new residents on this site found it strange that they could not vote for the Langport Huish Ward's District Councillor because they are part of the Turn Hill Ward.

For the purpose of future clarity, whilst also taking cognisance of all above, Huish Episcopi Parish Council suggests that the wall north of Old Kelways is accepted as the natural break between Huish Episcopi and Wearne.

LANG 1 is currently well used good grade agriculture land which should only be built on as a last resort, nevertheless it was identified by SSDC at an early stage of the current Plan as being suitable for industrial development. As currently suggested, based on LANG 2's size, this piece of land is capable of having over two hundred homes built on it. The Council believes this to be far too large a development. It is also shown as almost touching the bottom part of Wearne thus infringing the “no coalescence with Wearne” commitment. Accepting that the proposal above regarding the wall be

agreed, Huish Episcopi Parish Council suggests striking an almost straight line starting at the point on the west side of this field in line with the corner of Old Kelways wall and joining it to the corner of the next piece of land adjacent to the road. The result would be a much more acceptable sized site while also maintaining well balanced, reasonable sized fields separating Wearne along its whole southern length.

Answer:

Huish Episcopi Parish Council would support a revised LANG 1 being included in the revised Plan, with the proviso that its Councillors are actively involved in being part of the agreement with exactly what will be built there.

7.18(b) LANG 2:

Answer:

Huish Episcopi Parish Council fully supports the development of LANG 2 and has already responded to its issues of concern including a suggested maximum of 80 dwellings.

7.18(c) Other options:

Answer:

There are not many left.

Please now refer to **Figure 7.34: Langport & Huish Episcopi** and Appendix 1 at the end of this letter:

Land by the railway line on A372 Field Road

Huish Episcopi Parish Council requests its removal of this from the Plan. As this is adjacent to the cricket ground and the school playing fields opposite, Huish Episcopi Parish Council has for many years wished to acquire this piece of land for community recreational purposes, including the possibility of building a long overdue Community Centre. It is ideally placed to serve both Langport and Huish Episcopi being mainly accessible by foot. Unfortunately it is currently marked as development land, initially for 16 houses but it is understood that SSDC Planning Area North has advised the owners that 21 houses could be acceptable.

Further to this, to inform those that are unaware, the opportunity for Huish Episcopi and Langport to acquire this area of land as a gift in exchange for fair mitigation against the Lloyd Family Trust's S106 LANG 2 obligation has been missed because the SSDC S106 team deemed it to only be worth nominally £20,000 to £25,000 and then refused to negotiate.

This was despite a statement by the then SSDC Area North Chair at a meeting held in Compton Dundon 27th March 2014 that all parties (SSDC Planning, S106 team and HEPC) should meet to discuss and resolve this issue. This meeting never took place. The Council requests that this land be removed from the current Plan and be identified in the revised Plan as land only suitable for agriculture or future recreation purposes.

Land south of the Hanging Chapel - limited to 24

Again this has been identified on the plan as a possible site to develop and shown as extended lines north on the "Direction of Growth to the south-east". Referring to the discussion between two Parish Councillors and SSDC's Planning representative, Mr Steven Baimbridge, at the consultation meeting held at Bow Wharf on 30 November 2017, Mr Baimbridge suggested that any development of this piece of land would affect the spatial aspect around the Church and as such should be avoided. This will be addressed in the answer to question 7.26.

Ducks Hill field 15 - low density, so far 4 agreed on Appeal

The Parish Council would support some further sympathetic infill developments to the southeast of Huish Episcopi along the A372 but requests that, within this new Plan, reference be made to avoid any hard joining up of Huish Episcopi to Pibsbury.

2006 - 19 Brookland Road

The planning permission granted for 8 dwellings in 2006 for the above address has still not been activated. In fact the derelict building on this site, which has remained empty for over 25 years, has not even been started to be cleared and remains a potential danger and an eyesore. Huish Episcopi Parish Council has had numerous complaints from the residents over the years and would like to see this site bought back into use. SSDC Area North's action would be appreciated.

Employment

Question 7.26

Direction of Growth to the south-east of the settlement – Tanyard Lane

Answer:

Albeit that there are a few areas within this identified site that could be improved by clearing for development for a house or small business, Huish Episcopi Parish Council fully supports the total removal of the “Direction of Growth to the south-east of the settlement”.

Westover Trading Estate

Huish Episcopi Parish Council fully supports the further development of Westover Trading Estate. It also understands that there is currently an Appeal which could include some extra houses, if approved.

Question 7.27

Without doubt the need for a Community Centre for the use of all the residents in Huish Episcopi and Langport is long overdue. The most ideal spot has been identified above. There is no other centrally situated suitable land in either Langport or Huish Episcopi. If this site were to prove to be totally unobtainable then the only other possible alternative would be on LANG 1. This however would need to be carefully planned to blend with some suitable business/industrial units and extra housing.

Answer:

The new revised plan should include the need for a Community Centre to support both Langport and Huish Episcopi.

Yours faithfully

**S NICHOLAS (Mrs)
Chairman of the Parish Council**

Email copies to:

Cllr C Aparicio Paul

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