

The Welborne Plan

Welborne Plan Main Modifications, January 2015

Comments of Winchester City Council (WP041)

MM2 – Policy WEL2

The City Council argued in its submissions and at the examination hearing that it is important to establish the principle that Welborne looks to the south for its key transport links, via the A32 and M27, and that Welborne is designed to prioritise these movements rather than those northwards. Any north-bound traffic will impact on important conservation interests, either in Wickham Conservation Area or the South Downs National Park.

The Council therefore welcomes the changes proposed in MM2 that confirm that Welborne will form a functional part of Fareham and the wider South Hampshire area and that access will be principally to/from the south. The Main Modifications do not include the City Council's suggested revisions relating to the design of the development and traffic management measures, which the City Council considers are necessary to achieve the aims set out. The Council comments further on this in relation to policy WEL23 but maintains its objection to WEL2 which it considers should be amended in order to be **positively prepared** and **effective**, as suggested below:

The City Council maintains its objection to policy WEL2 and considers that MM2 should be amended with the addition of the text in italics below:

6th Bullet, 4th sub-bullet: "Access will be principally to / from the south via the A32 and junction 10 of the M27, *with the development designed, phased and managed to achieve this;*

MM3 – WEL5

The City Council participated in the examination session on Issue 3, where it amplified its particular concerns about the 'buffer' at the northern edge of Welborne. The City Council generally welcomes the other buffers proposed and the acknowledgement in CD38 that *'new housing abutting each of the settlement buffers will be built at a lower density, and appropriately landscaped'* (CD38 page 2). It also welcomes the approach planned for the Knowle buffer (CD38 page 4).

However, the City Council maintains its view that the extent of the proposed northern buffer is inadequate and not supported by the evidence (i.e **not justified**). For the avoidance of doubt, the City Council accepts that the landform and proposed buffer will screen views from the north, and that Blakes Copse and the proposed planting as far south as Knowle roundabout will (in time) break up views from the east. The Council's main concern, as elaborated at the examination hearing, is with views from the south. While these are not from within the City Council's area, it is very important that development in the northern part of Welborne does not become a skyline feature or appear to extend 'over the hill', and that a continuous wooded backdrop is provided and maintained along the ridge to the north of Welborne.

The cross-sections provided at Appendix 2 of CD38 are useful and confirm the points made in the City Council's evidence. For example, Section 4 demonstrates the City Council's point that the 50m contour extends well into the Welborne area and that the ridgeline is not confined to the northern edge of the Welborne site. Indeed, it shows how the ridgeline starts to rise more significantly above the Haytesbury Farm green corridor (between the 40m and 45m contour) and how difficult it would be to break up or screen the impact of development in this area on longer views from the south. This is especially so in view of the fact that the sections show mature landscaping in the northern buffer and Haytesbury Farm green corridor, whereas none exists at present.

The City Council considers that there is landscape justification for excluding built development on land to the north of the Haytesbury Farm green corridor. It is acknowledged that this could reduce the developable area by perhaps 10 hectares, equating to up to 250 dwellings at the densities likely in this area. Nevertheless, the City Council maintains its view that this could be more than offset by a very modest increase in the overall density assumed for Welborne (from 30 dwellings per hectare on average to 31-32 dwellings per hectare) and that this would be entirely consistent with the aim of creating a sustainable new community.

While the reference in MM3 to the need for site sections is welcomed, the list of circumstances in which a buffer may be increased beyond 50 metres would not apply to the northern edge of Welborne as there is no existing development immediately adjoining. The change may be relevant to other gaps which separate

existing developed areas very close to Welborne, but will not address the broader landscape concerns that the City Council has about the northern edge.

The City Council objects to the Main Modification to policy WEL5 and the lack of a MM to the Strategic Framework Diagram and Policies Map to exclude development north of the Haytesbury Farm green corridor.

An alternative, but **less effective**, solution would be for development to be limited to below the 50m contour, with substantial blocks of planting above this level and within the proposed development area. The linear planting shown in CD38 Section 4 along the Haytesbury Farm green corridor and northern edge of the site would not be sufficient to prevent the housing in between being highly exposed and appearing as a skyline feature (taking account of levels, building heights and the time needed for landscaping to mature).

The City Council does not think it would be appropriate simply to propose belts of planting running along the contours to break up the (very widely spaced) areas of housing shown on CD38 Section 4. Instead, the design and location of blocks of planting should be planned in conjunction with the layout of built development. The changes proposed in MM3 will not achieve this and therefore, if the City Council's preferred change to exclude land north of the Haytesbury Farm green corridor (above) is not accepted, it would seek at least its previously suggested amendment to policy WEL5:

Amend WEL5 text under the 'Wickham' heading to read: "Land within the Welborne Plan boundary comprising Blakes Copse, the rear of properties on Hoads Hill and the northernmost edge of the Welborne site (**above the 50 metre contour line**) is allocated as a minimum settlement buffer."

The City Council also sought corresponding changes to policy WEL33 and the extent to which these are achieved is covered below in comments on MM16.

MM9 – WEL16

The City Council welcomes the changes to policy WEL16 proposed in MM9 and to the changes to the Strategic Framework Diagram proposed in Minor Modification AM66. It would withdraw its objections on this matter if these modifications are accepted.

MM11 – WEL23

As noted above, the Council welcomes the changes to WEL2 proposed in MM2, but maintains its concern that the changes do not refer adequately to the design of the development and traffic management measures. The Council suggests a further modification to policy WEL23 to achieve a **positively prepared** and **effective** Plan.

The references in MM11 to achieving a south-facing development through the masterplan layout are welcome insofar as they go, but policy WEL23 should include sufficient detail to secure this through the design and phasing of development, and through traffic management measures. Without a requirement to design, phase and manage the development appropriately there is no way of ensuring the 'southward-facing' aspiration is achieved or of monitoring whether it has been.

The travel habits of Welborne residents will be established by the nature of the development and the way traffic is managed, not by reading the aims set out in the Welborne Plan. It is acknowledged that the details are matters for the Transport Assessment and planning application stage and that provision will be made for traffic movements to the north. However, the change proposed by the City Council is not detailed or prescriptive and it is only by securing the appropriate design, phasing and management of the development that the aim of encouraging southwards movement can be **effective**.

The City Council maintains its objection to policy WEL23 and considers that MM11 should be amended with the addition of the text in italics below:

iii. Achieves a development which is southwards-facing in transport terms, *with the development designed, phased and managed so as to reinforce this, through the masterplan layout and delivery of access via the A32 and an improved junction 10 of the M27;*

MM13 – Para 7.27 (1)

The City Council objected to the references in paragraph 7.27 (1) to junction signals being a likely requirement for the A32/A334, as that may be misleading. It also considered that references to other junctions on the A32 and A334 should be included, particularly the A32/Southwick Road junction and the A334/Titchfield Lane junction. These are also likely to require improvements or traffic management measures, which would be consistent with the Transport Strategy's reference to "the potential to implement traffic management measures through Wickham to discourage through traffic." It may also be possible to coordinate these with other transport improvements that may be needed as a result of the development allocations proposed in Winchester's draft Local Plan Part 2.

The re-wording of paragraph 7.27 (1) proposed in MM13 is generally welcomed as it removes references to traffic signals and refers to managing demand. The City Council suggests that the changes in italics below would be **justified** and make the Plan **effective**, as MM13 focusses only on Wickham 'town centre' (Wickham is a village rather than a town) and does not refer to traffic improvements or management elsewhere on the local road network.

The City Council objects to MM13, which should be amended as follows:

~~...It is likely that junction signals will be required.~~ Whilst some works may be required at this junction to discourage additional traffic movements travelling north through Wickham, it may be more appropriate to manage this additional demand through traffic management measures in *Wickham and elsewhere on the A32 and A334*, and appropriate measures will need to be identified and locally agreed.

MM14 – WEL25

The addition proposed in MM14, to refer to access being from the south, is welcomed and would overcome this element of the City Council's objection. The City Council also sought the addition of "Knowle" to the list of settlements in the final bullet point of criterion (iv), as off-site improvements or funding may be needed for measures here. This is not included in MM14 so the Council maintains this part of its objection (**justified**).

The City Council objects to MM14 on the basis that WEL25 (iv) should refer to "Knowle" in the final bullet point.

MM16 – WEL33

As noted in relation to MM3 and WEL5 above, the City Council is concerned about the 'buffer' on the northern edge of Welborne and the importance of avoiding a skyline feature in views across the site from the south. The changes to WEL33 proposed in MM16 are welcome in referring to the importance of landscaping schemes taking account of the impact of development in long distance views from the south. The consequential Minor Modification to paragraph 8.43 (AM54) is also welcomed in reinforcing the importance of view across the site from the south.

The City Council supports MM16 and AM54, whilst emphasising that these do not overcome its objections to MM3 and WEL5.

MM21 – Para 10.6 – 10.23

The City Council participated in the examination session on Issue 11, where document CD36 was circulated. It welcomed the production of a phasing plan but maintained its objections to the proposed phasing. Without wishing to repeat these in detail, the objections related to the lack of logic/**justification** for inclusion of land in the northern part of Welborne within Phase 1, and the need to plan and phase development so as to be **effective** in achieving a 'southwards-facing' development.

It is noted that the phasing plan in CD36 was produced by the promoters of Welborne. While it may be in the promoters interests for early phases of development to be to the north of Knowle Road, this is not necessary to achieve the proposed development rates, or desirable in terms of achieving the aims of Welborne. The main employment areas, District Centre, access routes, public transport provision, and external destinations will be to the south of the development. Access into the southern area is proposed within Phase 1a and this is capable of serving a first Phase which radiates from the south-eastern part of the site.

Given the City Council's aim of achieving a 'southwards-facing' development, which Fareham Borough Council now accepts through its Main Modifications to WEL2 and WEL23, it is important that early phases of development do not take place in 'detached' locations to the north of Welborne. As well as being relatively isolated from the range of employment, facilities, public transport and access that will be to the south of Welborne, development to the north is more likely to lead to travel patterns which are predominately car-based and directed northwards, and to these patterns becoming engrained and difficult to change even when the remainder of Welborne is developed.

The City Council agrees that a variety of housing locations and character types are needed to achieve the sales necessary to generate the proposed housing trajectory. However, it considers that it is entirely possible to achieve these by focussing Phase 1 to the south of Welborne, especially when account is taken of the sheer scale of the land available in this area. It is also relevant to note that not all of these dwellings will be market housing.

The promoters argue that providing housing to the north of Welborne within an early phase of development will make best use of the existing Knowle Road and the proposed Local Centre. However, this argument is not credible as Phase 1b is proposed to be only on the northern side of Knowle Road and the Local Centre, so would fail to make best use of them. The promoters seemed to indicate at the examination hearings that they would need to provide the main north-south spine road at an early stage, to link Phases 1a and 1b, which would be a much greater cost to them than any savings associated with being able to use the existing Knowle Road.

Accordingly, the City Council considers that, while the additional detail proposed in MM21 is welcomed, the actual phasing proposed is not logical, **justified**, or conducive to a sustainable and southwards-facing development. The phasing plan is also not included in the Welborne Plan as either a Main or Minor Modification (impacting on its **effectiveness**). The respective landowners' desire to achieve development income at an early stage should not be the main driver of the phasing and there is scope for these matters to be resolved through the equalisation arrangements which are no doubt in place between the main landowners.

The City Council welcomes the intention expressed at the examination hearings to complete the upgrading of M27 junction 10 at the earliest opportunity, and by the end of Phase 2 at the latest. However, this would still mean that 1,500 dwellings could be built before an all-moves Junction 10 is operational. This reinforces the City Council's concerns about developing in the northern part of Welborne at an early stage. To do so would be more likely to result in unsustainable travel patterns being established, unnecessarily increasing traffic pressure on Wickham and other settlements to the north.

With regard to the modified text proposed in MM21, this does not appear to be consistent with the phasing plan and trajectory presented to the examination in document CD36. CD36 suggests about 1500 dwellings within Phase 1 (presumably Phases 1a and 1b), whereas MM21 suggests 500 dwellings within Phase 1 and a further 1000 within Phase 2 (paragraphs 10.6b and 10.6f). At first sight, it appears that Phase 1b in CD36 has been named Phase 2 in MM21, but this cannot be the case as both documents refer to a total of 5 Phases. While the need for flexibility is acknowledged, this discrepancy appears to be a recipe for confusion, not flexibility.

The City Council objects to the failure to include a phasing plan for Welborne and to the detail of MM21, which provides for development north of Knowle Road within the first phase of development.

MM22 – WEL41

The City Council objected to the phasing of Welborne, as noted in relation to MM21 above, and to the degree of flexibility implied by the 'deferral of contributions policy'. While the City Council maintains its objections regarding the phasing of Welborne, the change to WEL41 proposed in MM22 is welcome in deleting reference to the deferral of contributions policy.

The City Council supports MM22, whilst emphasising that this does not overcome its objections to MM21 (phasing).

OMISSIONS

The City Council is disappointed to note that no changes are proposed in relation to policies WEL28, WEL30 and WEL32, although it acknowledges that the Inspector's Preliminary Findings letter did not suggest changes to these policies. For the avoidance of doubt, the City Council maintains its objections to these policies, for the reasons originally submitted and amplified at the examination hearings (not **justified** or **effective**).

City Council objects to the lack of Main or Minor Modifications to policies WEL28, WEL30 and WEL32.