

The Welborne Plan

Statement on Issues and Questions

Issue 5: District Centre, Local Centre and Community Hub (WEL10 to WEL13)

September 2014

CD-12

5.1 *Has the Council satisfactorily demonstrated that the provision of the proposed community services and facilities is viable?*

- 5.1.1 Policy WEL13 requires the provision of a single multi-functional community building within the District Centre. The size, specification and phasing of the building are to be agreed at the planning application stage. However, the supporting text to WEL13 states that the building should provide a total of approximately 1,800 m² of floorspace and the aim should be to complete the building by the end of Main Phase 2.
- 5.1.2 The indicative size of the building referred to in paragraph 5.66 derives from the Welborne Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP), undertaken for the Council in two stages by AECOM between 2012 and 2014 (EV27 and EV29). Stage 1 of the IDP sets out a range of standards for the provision of community facility floorspace (EV29, Table 5.14). These were used to begin the process of determining the level of provision required for the anticipated population at Welborne (Table 5.15). Four of the five applicable standards were based on national standards, recommended by the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA) and by Arts Council England. The fifth standard within Table 5.14, for 'community halls' derives from the work undertaken for the Council by KKP to determine the level of outdoor and indoor sports provision required at Welborne (EV19, Table 3 and also DF102 of the evidence document library for LP2).
- 5.1.3 When these standards are applied to the assumed population peak at Welborne, following the delivery of 6,000 homes (see Table 3.3 of EV29), the level of provision of community building facilities equates to a floorspace of approximately 2,300 m², not including any requirements for a police service hub.
- 5.1.4 Stage 2 of the IDP was developed in parallel with the Submission Welborne Plan. This involved work to refine the community building space requirements, including stakeholder engagement with Hampshire Constabulary, Hampshire County Council and the Borough Council's Leisure Services. One outcome of this engagement was a consensus that in order to promote the efficient delivery of community services at Welborne and to reduce costs to the development, a single multi-function community building at the District Centre would be the preferred route to achieve the required facilities. By being designed to allow for the flexible use of space, this building could meet Welborne's requirements with significantly less floorspace than was indicated by the relevant standards referred to above. This is because the standards are generally based on discrete provision of each type of community facility in a separate building.
- 5.1.5 The outcomes of the Stage 2 IDP work on community buildings are presented in paragraph 5.13 and also in section 2 of the IDP project list (EV29). These set out the need for a building or 'hub' of approximately 1,800 m², comprising:
- Combined community meeting and flexible arts/culture space (1,000 m²)
 - Library space (227 m²)

- Indoor sports hall (approximately 400m²)
- A safer neighbourhoods team police hub (minimum of 168 m²)

5.1.6 Whilst the multi-functional community building is considered to be sufficient to meet the needs of Welborne, the Council has been careful to ensure that opportunities are provided for the delivery of additional facilities by third parties, such as faith groups, community associations and other 'third-sector' organisations. These opportunities are expressed in Policy WEL13, both through the requirement to assess the potential to share Welborne's school facilities with the wider community and also through the need for detailed masterplans drawn up by the applicants to include spaces for churches (and/or other places of worship) to come forward during the development. The applicants will also be encouraged to engage with third parties regarding their emerging proposals for places of worship or other community facilities to maximise opportunities for shared use.

5.1.7 With the focus at Stage 2 of the IDP on how community facilities at Welborne could be delivered in a cost effective way, as described above, it has been possible to reduce the total estimated costs of indoor community facilities provision from £6.1 million at Stage 1 of the IDP (Table 9.2 of EV27) to £3.4 million at Stage 2, which equates to £567 per dwelling. The Council is confident that this is a level of cost that the development will be able to bear.

5.1.9 Although the Council is confident that the community facilities, covered by Policy WEL13 of LP3, will be viable, it is not possible to demonstrate this conclusively. The Council is also confident that the facilities being required are appropriate for the level for development proposed and that the form of provision being required is the most cost-effective of the alternatives considered. It is also considered that the timely provision of suitable community infrastructure contributes to the creation of a sense of place, driving the overall attractiveness of the development as a place to live. This in turn has the potential to drive-up residential values in the area and therefore has a beneficial impact on viability over the medium to long term.

5.1.10 In terms of the on-going operational viability of the new community facilities, no decisions have been taken at this stage about which organisation(s) will be responsible. However, based on practice elsewhere within the Borough, the Council is likely to be ultimately responsible for the operational viability of the community facilities at Welborne, at least in the early stages whilst the development is being built out. At a later stage, once Welborne is further progressed and community governance structures have been firmly established, a decision can be taken about whether any organisation(s) other than the Council would be better positioned to operate the community facilities on a long-term basis for the benefit of Welborne's residents.

5.2 ***Has the Council achieved an appropriate balance between retail provision, self-containment and ensuring that no material harm would be caused to nearby existing retail areas?***

- 5.2.1 The Council considers that the level of retail provision anticipated by Policies WEL10, WEL11 and WEL12 does achieve the balance between supporting self-containment and avoiding material harm to existing retail centres. The retail proposals within LP3 have a clear evidence base and have also been informed by stakeholder engagement and public consultation as the plan has been developed.
- 5.2.2 The retail evidence (EV08) was prepared for the Council by GVA who were given a brief to recommend retail floorspace requirements to support self-containment at Welborne and to avoid competition with Fareham Town Centre and with Wickham. In undertaking the work, GVA considered the projected growth in population and available expenditure that would result from the development of Welborne. GVA also considered the existing patterns of retail expenditure in the area, including northern parts of Fareham town, Wickham and Knowle. Finally, for convenience retail, the likely requirements of a food store operator were considered, in terms of the minimum size of supermarket that would be considered commercially attractive.
- 5.2.3 For convenience retail, GVA advised that, in order to support self-containment, the new District Centre would need to include a new 'anchor' food store at an early stage in the development of Welborne. The evidence indicated that for a new supermarket to serve as an effective anchor, it would need to have a net convenience goods floorspace of between 1,900m² and 2,500m². The analysis undertaken on the growth in convenience goods expenditure over the period of Welborne's development indicated that a new supermarket at the lower end of this range could be comfortably supported. The GVA evidence indicated that a food store larger than the lower end of the range could begin to impact on the existing trading patterns and potentially undermine self-containment by attracting additional visits to Welborne's District Centre from outside of the new development.
- 5.2.4 In relation to the timing of the new food store's development, whilst the growth in population and available expenditure would take until 2036 to support the recommended size of food store, GVA's analysis demonstrated that existing out-of-centre supermarkets in the area were significantly over-trading. This provided an opportunity to support the early development of the new 'anchor' food store at Welborne without significantly harming other existing nearby centres.
- 5.2.5 Based on GVA's advice, the Draft Welborne Plan (EV33, Draft Policy WEL10) included a requirement limiting the food store at the District Centre to 1,900m² net convenience goods floorspace. However, a number of consultation responses considered that the size of supermarket was too low and that the draft policy was unduly prescriptive. Therefore, in order to take this into account and to ensure that the policy covering convenience retail operated in a flexible way, the requirement was expressed as a range. Again, this was based on GVA's evidence on the size of supermarket that

could be supported and which would be considered commercially attractive to operators. At the time GVA's advice was prepared, it was not possible to undertake a retail impact assessment as there were no proposals available on the level or timing of retail development at Welborne. Therefore, it was considered appropriate for Policy WEL10 of LP3 to include the requirement to undertake such an assessment at the planning application stage.

- 5.2.6 In relation to comparison retail, the evidence demonstrated that growth in expenditure by Welborne residents would support a good selection of comparison services and retailers. However, in order to ensure that the Welborne District Centre would not be competing with Fareham Town Centre, GVA recommended that policies for comparison retail at Welborne limit the extent of provision to that necessary to provide opportunities for a range of goods and services (as set out in paragraph 5.44 of LP3). This range is focussed on meeting the more common and 'everyday' needs of Welborne's residents and workers and is commensurate with the role of a District Centre within the hierarchy of centres (see Policy CS3 of the adopted Core Strategy). GVA indicated that accommodating each of the listed comparison goods and service retailers would amount to a total net requirement for 3,600m² floorspace. This has been expressed as a requirement for 'A range of comparison shops and services, amounting to approximately 3,600 square metres of (net) floorspace' in Policy WEL10 in order to provide some flexibility.
- 5.2.7 Policies WEL11 (The Local Centre) and WEL12 (Community Hub) do not include any specific retail floorspace guidance or targets. Rather, the emphasis with these smaller centres is on providing only a more limited range of retail that will be clearly focussed on meeting everyday (or 'top-up') convenience needs of Welborne's residents, thereby supporting self-containment.
- 5.2.8 In the case of the Local Centre, the retail provision is expected to conform to the role of 'Local Centre' with the hierarchy of centres (Policy CS3 or the Core Strategy). This would not exclude some comparison goods or service provision, as long as any such provision is consistent with the centre's role and that it can be demonstrated through impact assessment that the provision will not lead to harm being done to the District Centre or to Wickham. In addition, and to take into account the aspirations of the principal landowners, policy WEL11 also allows for a limited number of larger-scale services where certain conditions can be met. This includes demonstrating through impact assessment that harm to the District Centre and to Wickham can be avoided.
- 5.3 *Policy WEL11 refers to 'robust impact assessments'. Is it sufficiently clear what is required in these assessments, when they are required and how the Council will assess their content?***
- 5.3.1 Impact assessments are a tool commonly used to support planning applications for retail, office and leisure development. The NPPF requires

the use of impact assessment for proposals of this nature, which fall outside of town centres, where they are not in accordance with the Local Plan (NPPF, paragraph 26). In the case of Welborne, the proposals in LP3 (Policies WEL10 and WEL11) cover the creation of two new centres where none existed previously. This process will inevitably involve changes in local shopping patterns as the new centres are developed. Therefore, the Council considers that impact assessments are an appropriate requirement for retail and leisure proposals within the two newly emerging centres at Welborne.

- 5.3.2 The intention in requiring impact assessments is to understand how the proposals within the District and Local Centres at Welborne will affect existing trading and leisure patterns and whether, and to what extent these effects will harm the vitality and viability of existing established nearby centres. In addition, the Council expects the impact assessments to demonstrate that the proposals concerned are consistent with the role of each of Welborne's centres and with their respective places within the hierarchy of centres, established by Policy CS3 of the adopted Core Strategy.
- 5.3.3 For the District Centre, paragraph 5.46 of LP3 sets out that retail impact assessments will be required to accompany planning applications for retail uses, and 5.48 covers the potential harm caused by leisure proposals. At which point such an impact assessment will be required, is also set out within paragraph 5.46. These assessments will need to demonstrate that the proposals are consistent with relevant policies within the Local Plan. This would include Policy CS3 of the Core Strategy and Policy WEL10 of LP3. The content of the impact assessment, or its purpose, is therefore clearly set out within LP3.
- 5.3.4 The Council considered that it was appropriate not to prescribe a methodology for the impact assessments, when these are required, in order to allow for flexibility in approach. For example, the approach to assessing the impact of a retail development could be quite different to that taken in case of a leisure development. Therefore, it was decided not to try to set out how the content of the impact assessments will be evaluated as this may reduce the intended flexibility for the principal landowners to decide the appropriate methodology.
- 5.3.5 For the Local Centre, paragraph 5.51 seeks 'robust impact assessments' for proposals such as the examples listed in the paragraph (garden centre, cycle hire or outdoor pursuits), thereby confirming when such an assessment will be required. This paragraph also sets out that impact assessments will need to demonstrate that the Local Centre overall will serve to complement the function of the District Centre, and will not adversely compete with it, or with Wickham's centre. In Policy WEL11 robust impact assessments are required to demonstrate that the range of services proposed at the Local Centre will serve to complement the function of the District Centre and will not adversely compete with it or with Wickham's centre (Policy WEL11, 4th paragraph). When an assessment is

needed and what it is required to demonstrate, are therefore clearly set out within LP3.

5.3.6 Having considered the wording covering the requirement for impact assessments of proposals at the District and Local Centres, the Council considers that the current drafting is not clear or consistent and therefore **minor modifications** are proposed to address this as follows:

5.3.7 **Policy WEL10 - The District Centre** (6th paragraph):

The scale and type of retail and leisure development at the District Centre shall be appropriate to the centre's function and position within Fareham's retail hierarchy of centres. All retail and leisure development proposals will require an impact assessment to demonstrate that they can comply with policies within the Local Plan and that they do not adversely impact in Fareham Town Centre or Wickham.

5.3.8 Paragraph 5.51 (3rd and 4th sentences):

~~Where being proposed, these sorts of services~~ All planning applications for retail and leisure services within the Local Centre will be required to demonstrate, through robust impact assessments that they will not give rise to significant adverse impacts on Fareham Town Centre or Wickham's centre. Impact assessments will also need to demonstrate that retail and leisure proposals the Local Centre will be consistent with the role of the Local Centre and its place within Fareham's hierarchy of centres overall will serve to complement the function of the District Centre and will not adversely compete with it the District Centre or with Wickham's centre.

5.3.9 **Policy WEL11 - The Local Centre** (4th paragraph):

~~Robust impact assessments shall be undertaken to accompany planning applications for all retail and leisure proposals to demonstrate that they will not give rise to significant adverse impacts on Fareham's Town Centre or Wickham's centre and range of services proposed at the Local Centre will be consistent with the role of the Local Centre and its place within Fareham's hierarchy of centres serve to complement the function of Welborne's District Centre and will not adversely complete with it or with Wickham's centre.~~

5.4 *Is it sufficiently clear, in land use terms, what differentiates the community hub from the local centre?*

5.4.1 Policy WEL11 of LP3 sets out the main expected land uses at the Local Centre, with further detail being provided within paragraphs 5.50-5.51. These uses comprise of a limited range of retail, employment and community uses, consistent with the function of a 'local centre' within Fareham's hierarchy of centres, as well as a limited number of larger-scale services, where these meet the three criteria set out in the 3rd paragraph of Policy WEL11. These additional larger-scale services will need to reflect and complement the Woodlands Character Area, within which the Local

Centre is to be located.

- 5.4.2 For the Community Hub, the anticipated land uses are set out in Policy WEL12 and in paragraph 5.56 of LP3. The uses will comprise a limited range of small-scale convenience retail, which will be aimed at meeting at least some of the everyday needs of residents in the western parts of Welborne, where the Community Hub will be located. The Community Hub is not intended to undertake a role within Fareham's hierarchy of centres and its function as a 'centre' should be understood within the Welborne context only.
- 5.4.3 The Community Hub will however have an important role in supporting the primary school and potentially Welborne's secondary school, if it is located at the western edge of Welborne. In land use terms, supporting the secondary school could involve the Community Hub providing a location for a church, or other community use buildings with connections to the schools, such as a youth centre. Nevertheless, these uses are not prescribed by LP3, but are encouraged by Policy WEL13 in particular.
- 5.4.4 Unlike the Local Centre, the Community Hub is not expected to include any specific employment development. In addition, given the focus of the Community Hub, set out in the first paragraph of WEL12, it will not be appropriate for the Community Hub to include any of the larger-scale services, referred to in paragraph 5.5, in relation to the Local Centre.