

# **The Welborne Plan**

## Statement on Issues and Questions

### **Issue 8: Green Infrastructure, Biodiversity and Landscape (WEL29 – WEL35)**

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September 2014

**CD-15**

**8.1 *What is the evidential basis for the 108 ha of green infrastructure referred to in paragraph 8.6? Are the standards set out in policy WEL29 justified?***

8.1.1 The open space standards in policy WEL 29 are derived from the standards set out in policy CS21 in the adopted Core Strategy. The policy requires:

- a) 1.5 ha of parks and amenity space per 1,000 population;
- b) 0.34 ha of allotments per 1,000 population
- c) 1.2 ha of outdoor sports provision per 1,000 population; and
- d) 3 ha per 1,000 population of semi-natural green space to include local nature reserves accessible natural green space. (In the Core Strategy this is split between accessible natural green space at 2 ha per 1,000 population (paragraph 6.46) and Local Nature Reserves at 1 ha per 1,000 population).

8.1.2 Because in Welborne the distinction between natural green space and local nature reserves will be blurred as the expectation is that all the natural open space will contribute towards enhancing bio-diversity the two standards were combined into a requirement to provide 3 ha of semi natural greenspace.

8.1.3 Therefore when the above standards are applied to Welborne, 6,000 dwellings would generate a population of around 15,000 which equates to an open space requirement of around 90.6 ha, but this figure might be reduced if a more effective way of encouraging local food production reduces the need for allotments from 5.1 ha to 2.1 ha. This would reduce the overall open space requirement to the total of 87.6 ha as implied in paragraph 8.7. The Welborne Plan also sees these standards as the minimum required to deliver the vision for Welborne, and to ensure that there is an adequate supply of multi-functional open space accessible to all residents.

8.1.4 The reference to 108 ha in paragraph 8.6 refers to the fact that the Strategic Framework Diagram, illustrates the broad disposition of the various land uses, and the total quantum of green infrastructure shown on the Diagram is around 108 ha. This includes additional land required for settlement buffers, and open space mostly along the main transport routes which might be used for SUDs but would otherwise fulfil only a limited role as usable open space. While the Welborne Plan expects the green infrastructure standards to be met, there is no requirement in the Plan to provide 108 ha of Green Infrastructure.

**8.2 *Is the Council's methodology and reasoning in relation to the SANGs provision sound? How will the SANGs be delivered and over what timescale? What is the basis for the figure of 84ha required for SANGs (representing only 70% of the SANGs standard)? The sites referred to in LP3 would result in up to 70.5ha of SANGS. Paragraph 8.21 explains that the shortfall will be met through a financial contribution towards***

***mitigating impacts along the coast. What are the mechanisms for the identification and delivery of such mitigation measures?***

- 8.2.1 The Council's Appropriate Assessment Report on the Publication Draft Welborne Plan (HRA04) identified a number of potential threats to the Solent Special Protection Area (SPA) from the development of Welborne, which would require a strategy to either avoid or mitigate all potential risks. This is consistent with the findings of the Solent Disturbance and Mitigation Project (LD11), which identified that the main threats to the Solent Special Protection Area (SPA) are from recreational activities and their impacts on feeding birds, with dog walking being a particular threat.
- 8.2.2 There is not a standard methodology or universally accepted approach to mitigating the potential impacts on internationally important sites. However, after discussions with Natural England, it was agreed that the most appropriate approach which could be applied to Welborne would be the Suitable Alternative Natural Green Space (SANGS) standards which are applied to the Thames Basin and Dorset Heathlands SPAs respectively. The SANGS standard is to provide 8 ha of suitable alternative natural greenspace per 1000 population.
- 8.2.3 While these two heathland habitats are quite different to the Solent SPA, the principle of providing a significant quantum of natural green space to deflect pressures from more sensitive areas is sound, and is applicable to Welborne. However, because there will still be recreational trips to the coast, regardless of the quantity and quality of the local SANGS, it was also considered expedient that a financial contribution to be made to provide mitigation measures along the coast itself.
- 8.2.4 The full SANGS standard, if applied to Welborne with a projected population of around 15,000 would be a requirement for around 121 ha of suitable alternative natural greenspace. But in developing policy WEL 30, agreement was reached with Natural England that a balanced approach would be more appropriate, wherein around 70% of this standard should be met on or adjoining the site, with a pro-rata contribution based on the current level of contribution required for sites within 5.6 kilometres of the Solent SPA. The justification for this split is that the on-site natural green space needs to be of a sufficient quantum to generate the feeling of being in the natural environment, without any urban/suburban physical or perceptual intrusions. It also has to be of a sufficient size to absorb the likely visitors without seriously undermining the sense of tranquillity.
- 8.2.5 For Welborne to provide around 70% of the SANGS standard it would require around 84 ha of natural green space, but the final total of SANGS required will depend on the quality of the spaces provided and the other components of the mitigation strategy, which would need to be identified in the HRA to support the outline planning application(s).
- 8.2.6 The Strategic Framework Diagram identifies around 70.5 ha of potential SANGS, (which includes only part of the Knowle Triangle) but this would

increase to just over 83 ha if all the 22.78 ha of land at the Knowle Triangle is used for SANGS as opposed to part of the site being used for SANGS, and part for school playing fields. Significant areas of potential SANGS at Dash Wood and Fareham Common are in the ownership of the principal landowners. This means that a substantial area of SANGS could be brought forward during the early phases of the development.

- 8.2.7 The SDMP also indicates that the frequency of trips to the coast, diminishes with increasing distance from the coast. Additionally, while the SANGS at Welborne will be there primarily to mitigate the impacts of the new development, it will also provide an attractive amenity for the wider area, and will help to deflect some of the existing pressures on the coast. Therefore the full Solent Disturbance and Mitigation Strategy contribution would not be justified, however a contribution set at the level of 30% of the current rate, (which is £172 per dwelling) would provide around £309,600 for wardening, signing and other measures to influence behaviour and mitigate risks along the coast. The full package of measures will need to be agreed with Natural England, and form part of the Welborne mitigation proposals. A Solent Disturbance and Mitigation Strategy officer has now been appointed and an interim SPA wide mitigation strategy agreed, which will be key in identifying and delivering effective measures to mitigate the potential impacts of Welborne.
- 8.2.8 The potential risks to the Solent SPA will arise from the first occupations; therefore mitigation measures including the provision of SANGS will be necessary from the first residential phase of the development.
- 8.2.9 It should be stressed that the approach set out in WEL 30 is a balanced response to the statutory requirement for Welborne to mitigate or avoid all risks to the Solent SPA. Policy WEL 30 sets out a strategy which has been developed and agreed by Natural England, and which is capable of avoiding or mitigating all potential risks to the Solent SPA. But the policy is also quite clear that at the outline planning application stage a full HRA will be required, and as the competent authority, the Council will be obliged to undertake an Appropriate Assessment of the potential risks to the Solent SPA. The policy therefore allows for an alternative strategy to be agreed with the Council and Natural England depending on the final outcomes of the comprehensive masterplanning process and the applicants own detailed assessment work.
- 8.3 *Is there any substantive evidence that the development should contribute to the protection of the New Forest SPA from increased recreational disturbance?***
- 8.3.1 The Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) and Appropriate Assessment report for Welborne identified a potential risk to the New Forest SPA. As the 'crow flies' Welborne is within the sphere of potential influence on the New Forest SPA, but it must be borne in mind that as the 'crow flies' Welborne is separated from the National Park by the Solent, so this is not a very

accurate predictor of risk.

8.3.2 By road, however, it is over 20 kilometres from the nearest point of access to the New Forest, but nonetheless Welborne could potentially come within the sphere of potential influence on the SPA

8.3.3 It is for the above reasons that in paragraph 5.3.42 of the Welborne Plan HRA the possibility is raised of a financial contribution towards the New Forest Recreation Management Strategy being required, should the studies currently being undertaken by the New Forest National Park Authority clearly demonstrate the need for one.

8.3.4 An assessment of any likely risks to the New Forest SPA would need to take into account the effectiveness of the proposed mitigation measures put into place at Welborne, which are bound to reduce pressures on the New Forest SPA. If the proposed mitigation measures effectively reduce the risks to the Solent SPA which is nearer, then they must also reduce risks to the New Forest SPA. The HRA therefore concludes (paragraph 6.7.13) that the Welborne Plan will not result in any adverse impacts on the New Forest SPA, but nonetheless the applicants will need to verify this in their own assessment work which will be required to support their outline planning application, and if, in the light of any new compelling evidence, a risk emerges, then a financial contribution might be justified.

**8.4 *Has the Council given consideration to the role that land north and south of Funtley Road, Funtley, could play in mitigating the impact of the proposed development in terms of biodiversity? If so, what conclusions were drawn?***

8.4.1 The Sustainability Appraisal for Welborne concluded that whilst there could be short-term effects on locally important habitats and populations of protected species, in the long-term the Plan presents a considerable opportunity for biodiversity gain. Therefore the applicants will need to put in place measures to protect the habitat of certain protected species, and to enhance biodiversity (as required in policy WEL31), but this can be accommodated within the proposed green infrastructure required to support the new community. No further land would be required to off-set this potential impact.

8.4.2 As stated above, it is believed that it is possible to meet the SANGS requirement for Welborne either on or adjoining the site. However if additional land were to be required, then the land north and south of Funtley Road (see Appendix 8A to this statement) would not be considered suitable. It is some distance from the potential built up area of Welborne, and is separated by a railway line and Funtley Road. Pedestrian access to this site from Welborne is restricted and would either be via a very narrow bridge over the railway or via a circuitous route via the former railway line accessed from Knowle.

8.4.3 The land north and south of Funtley Road would therefore not provide an attractive accessible alternative recreational facility for either the new community or existing residents of north Fareham and Funtley. If any additional land were to be required west of the railway line then the land adjoining Knowle in the ownership of the Land Trust (see Appendix 8A) would be preferred as this land is currently available as a green asset.

**8.5 *Does policy WEL31 provide sufficient protection for important habitats and species? The policy refers to both an ecological assessment and a biodiversity assessment – are they the same thing?***

8.5.1 The majority of the land at Welborne has been intensively farmed for many years, which has significantly reduced its ecological value. There is very little tree cover in the main body of the site, and the hedgerows have been aggressively maintained and have little ecological value. The only areas which have been identified as having any significant ecological importance are around the edges of the site. These areas are not really suitable for development and the Strategic Framework Diagram reflects this.

8.5.2 The protected species present on the site, are also present around the edges, where the land has not been so intensively farmed or in the peripheral woodland. These will still need protecting and policy WEL 31 requires a full ecological assessment to identify, and address any potential impacts on designated sites, priority habitats, and protected species within or immediately adjacent to the site boundary. It is only at the planning application stage with the benefit of a comprehensive masterplan that an effective strategy can be developed to protect and enhance the biodiversity on the site.

8.5.3 To ensure that the necessary mitigation measures remains effective, policies WEL 31 and WEL 35 requires that both an ecological mitigation/enhancement strategy and a long-term management strategy should be submitted with the comprehensive masterplan for the site and accompanying planning application(s). It is also a requirement in the policy that such an ecological strategy should set out how it will be up-dated to ensure that the mitigation and enhancement measures remain effective. Subsequent phases of Welborne would need to include an updated ecological impact assessment for the relevant part of the site, taking account of any changes in ecological characteristics in that part of the site, and either update (if necessary) or reflect the long-term management strategy.

8.5.4 There is reference in the policy to both an ecological assessment and a biodiversity assessment, whereas in fact they are the same thing and the policy wording should be changed accordingly to avoid any confusion as to what is required.

8.5.5 Policy WEL 31 should therefore be amended by deleting ‘ priority habitats and ~~priority~~ and protected species in the first paragraph; and replace the

term 'biodiversity assessment' in the second paragraph with 'ecological assessment'.

**8.6 *How will green connections to outside Fareham Borough be achieved? Is this element of policy WEL32 deliverable?***

8.6.1 Policy WEL28 in the Transport Chapter of the Welborne Plan sets out the framework for ensuring that Welborne has a network of strategic and local pedestrian and cycle routes. These will help to encourage sustainable modes of transport as well as add value to the new community through positive place making and maximising the opportunities for providing links to nearby communities and the surrounding countryside. This policy should be read in conjunction with Policy WEL 32, which identifies a number of potential links in the supporting text.

8.6.2 Policy WEL 32 requires development proposals to include enhanced green connections leading from the site. Paragraph 8.38 identifies a number of corridors which offer the potential to create these links to adjacent areas. All these links in one form or another exist at the present time, and are mostly in public ownership or control, which will help in bringing forward any proposals. The Land Trust has recently had the potential green link along Mayles Lane transferred to their ownership and they will be looking to help provide an enhanced cycle and pedestrian link from the adjoining area to the South Downs National Park. The only link where third party land would definitely be required would be to complete the Meon Valley Trail

8.6.3 Not to have any green links from Welborne to adjoining areas would be directly contrary to the vision of ensuring that Welborne is connected to Fareham, surrounding settlements, and destinations. But it is recognised that it might be more difficult to complete some links than others which is why the policy is not prescriptive as to which of the links should be created. It is also why paragraph 8.38 only sets a requirement that the potential to create these links should be fully explored. Furthermore, paragraph 8.39 then goes on to confirm that the principal landowners are not solely responsible for bringing forward these links, and will need to work with all the other relevant agencies, including Hampshire County Council as the Highway Authority, to deliver the network of green links.

**8.7 *Policy WEL33 includes reference to 'a new garden community'. This is not referred to in the vision or the objectives and the glossary only includes Garden City. Is it sufficiently clear what the Council envisages when it refers to a garden community?***

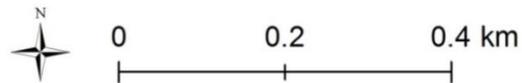
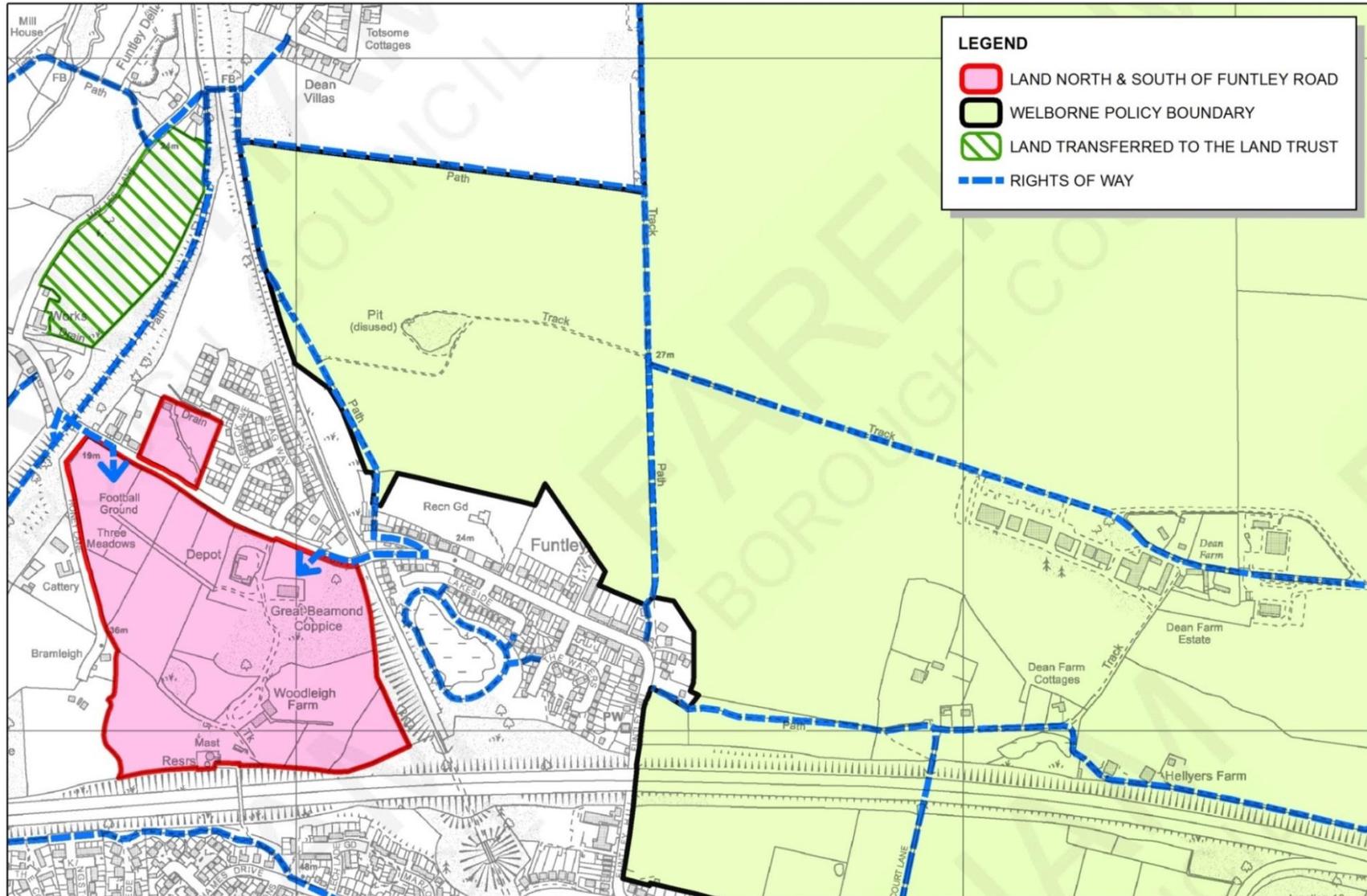
8.7.1 The Vision for Welborne is that it should be developed as a 21<sup>st</sup> century garden community (paragraph 2.2). This is summarised as being a distinct new community whose spirit, character and form are inspired by its landscape setting. This landscape led approach to developing Welborne is reiterated in paragraph 4.13. Demonstrating how the development

proposals have responded to the unique setting of Welborne, and how this might contribute towards creating a new garden community is a requirement of policy WEL6.

- 8.7.2 The aspiration of creating a unique garden community is further developed in paragraph 8.3, which seeks to ensure that every household is within at least 200 m of the primary open space network in a way which most modern housing developments do not manage to achieve.
- 8.7.3 Policy WEL 33 further develops the landscape led theme by ensuring that Welborne has a unique garden community character, by requiring that future proposals exploit the existing landscape and build upon it with a structural landscaping scheme.
- 8.7.4 The glossary will need to be amended by replacing the term 'garden city' with 'garden community', and by highlighting those parts of the original Garden City prospectus which apply to Welborne, i.e. high quality imaginative designs, homes with gardens, mixed tenures, local job opportunities, and most importantly generous open spaces linked to the wider countryside.

**APPENDIX 8A**

**Land North and South of Funtley Road and Land Transferred to the Land Trust**



**FAREHAM**  
BOROUGH COUNCIL

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