

Standing Conference and Fareham Borough Council visit to Poundbury on 22 October 2012

A note by David Walton on Key points from the visit with additional material from Henry Cleary

- Compared with other new communities, Poundbury is small. When the final phases are complete circa 2025, it will have generated 2,500 houses (ie: 1/3 of the SDA – Option 1) and taken almost 35 years to build from the point of first conception. At the time of our visit (2012) it was only 50% complete.
- What makes Poundbury exceptional is the single minded approach to overall design and the leadership on quality standards provided by the Prince of Wales and the Duchy of Cornwall. Development will have been achieved over 4 distinct Phases, with planning permission having been separately granted for each Phase, based on an over-arching and rigorously enforced Masterplan, supported by design codes, using local building materials(or sympathetic substitutes). A key aim was to encourage historic craft design in new building. A different architect was used for each Phase in order to generate distinctive, but complementary styles/themes – which range from Rural Village (Phase I) to distinctly more Urban (subsequent Phases).
- As a concept Poundbury is something of a paradox. Being joined onto Dorchester, it is in one sense an urban extension but the Prince of Wales and his masterplanner, Leon Krier, wanted to give it a strong and “historic” town centre (rather than suburban) feel and so designed it to have a clearly separate identity with its own shopping, employment areas, community facilities and “strong, bold edges” to the development. The design is very successful at giving people a sense of place, of using bold or landmark buildings to help people know where they are and can get to. It is based on streets (not cul de sacs) to encourage movement on foot and so reduce car use. “Green” infrastructure is mainly around the edges of the development to keep the development more walkable.
- Being an “urban extension” to Dorchester (as opposed to a stand-alone Development), Poundbury has benefited from having fewer infrastructure requirements than is the case for the Fareham SDA. Accordingly, it is considered as being economically viable by the developers, despite its (relatively) small size.
- Of the 400 acres available, 250 have been allocated to development (Housing & Commercial) and 150 acres to Greenspace/landscaping.
- 35% of the Housing has been allocated as “Affordable/Social Housing”, which is sprinkled largely at random across the whole Development. This “pepper-potting” appears to work particularly well, helps with Community integration and it is not possible to identify which houses are allocated to affordable/market rate housing.

- Poundbury has achieved remarkably high levels of employment within the site; due both to the prestige/publicity that the Prince of Wales's patronage has generated, the ready availability of space and the expansion of local business, some possibly benefiting from strong incentives from the Duchy. The downside however, is that of the 1,200 jobs created, some 1,000 are filled by workers who currently commute to Poundbury although over time it is hoped to rebalance this.
- One of the major benefits of high employment is to make the new shops and eating places viable – they would not be viable if simply reliant on a suburban, residential locality.
- The particular character of Poundbury has attracted a significant number of older and retired people and as such, it has a different demographic to other new settlements with fewer young families and children. It regularly achieves very high satisfaction ratings from those who live there but the detailed controls on buildings and changes are not for everyone.
- To help support the strict design codes and avoid “unsightly” items, cable TV/Broadband was provided into every house from the outset and is funded by an annual service charge of £130pa; TV Aerials/Satellite dishes are NOT allowed. In similar vein, Solar panels (Hot Water & Photovoltaic) are only allowed on roofs at the rear of properties and require permission on a case by case basis.
- Again to support the strong design codes, traffic and highway signs are minimal and lamps attached to properties rather than free standing. Traffic calming is achieved through the positioning of buildings and the layout of the street rather than additional humps etc
- Buildings have been designed from the outset to be highly energy efficient and an Aerobic Digester (AD) system provides significant levels of Gas into the National Grid. A small number of ECO homes have been built and these demonstrate the highest possible level of energy efficiency (BREEAM etc)
- Similarly on transport the “walkability” of the overall plan was intended to reduce car use although this has proved more of a challenge.
- Other particular points that arose during the Fareham tour of the development included:
 - Car parking was always a difficult issue to manage. Poundbury had made a success of overlooked, visible parking in garages or courtyards to the rear of housing, but given high demand was now also providing “cart sheds” for those looking for larger garage space. One lesson learned was that business parking was often poorly used – better to mix residential and business use (peak pressure was at different times);

- Parking and other unadopted estate features (eg gravel roadways which County Council would not take on) were managed through a series of resident run management organisations (MANCOs) costing c £110 per house per annum. The design approach for Poundbury led to covenants on owners (re alterations etc) but the experience was that citizen/peer pressure was much more effective than formal enforcement;
- Getting the sequence of development right was critical. The first phase of Poundbury (250 homes) was more low density – about 34 to the hectare – but it had been a challenge to get the café, shop and pub (which were key parts of the “offer”) open. Now there were over 10 places to eat and phase 2 was more ambitious and around 50 dwellings to the hectare;
- Rendering used as a building surface finish could discolour after a few years and a repaint might not be affordable to all owners. However the Duchy had a relaxed view of this, seeing the benefit of visual variety in a new set of buildings;
- A Duchy led development at Newquay was now in detailed planning, learning lessons from Poundbury.

Annex – Purpose and timetable for Visit to Poundbury on 22 October

The purpose of the visit is to benefit from Poundbury’s experience of dealing with the wide range of issues that need to be considered in creating a successful new community. The visit will enable the Standing Conference to see and hear about what is being achieved in terms of quality of place, housing, shops and community facilities as well as some of the problems that have had to be overcome.

0900 Leave Civic Offices by coach

1030 Arrive Poundbury

1030 - 1130 Coffee followed by presentation by Simon Conibear, Poundbury Estate Director, Duchy of Cornwall

1130 - 1230 Guided walk around the site

1230- 1330 Bread and cheese etc lunch in Poet Laureate pub Poundbury, with local produce, fruit, tea, coffee.

1330 (approx) Leave Poundbury

1500 (approx) Arrive Civic Offices

(ii) List of Poundbury visit Attendees

Chair	Henry Cleary
Fareham Borough Council	Cllr Sean Woodward Cllr. Keith Evans Cllr Brian Bayford Cllr Susan Bayford Cllr David Swanbrow Cllr Nick Walker Richard Jolley Selina Crocombe Nigel Green Rose Fletcher
Hampshire County Council	Stephen Jenkins
Radian Housing Landowner Landowner representative Fareham Society Wallington Residents Wickham residents Christians Together, Fareham Buckland Estates Fareham Town Centre Management	Andrea Smith Mark Thistlethwayte David Pepper Brenda Clapperton MBE David Walton Michael Carter Madeleine Brand, Rev Tapani Simojoki David Griffiths, Fiona Gray Clive Wright