

CHAPTER 8

COMMUNITY

HOUSING

Inspector's note

In sections 8.1 to 8.9 of this chapter I deal with exclusively housing matters, both in general policy terms and also in relation to the more substantial sites. The subject of housing is intimately related to the hierarchy of settlements in the Settlement Strategy in Chapter 3 of the draft deposit Plan. The total housing target of 2,100 dwellings for the Plan area is consonant with the Structure Plan Review apportionment to West Somerset District as a whole and is agreed between the District Council and the Exmoor National Park Authority. A Residential Urban Capacity Study commissioned by the Council was published in July 2001. Identification of the housing requirement and its components was the principal subject of the housing round table session which was held in the inquiry.

An element of duplication arises in the case of objections to Chapter 3 that refer to settlement development limits but clearly are essentially concerned with housing provision. Furthermore, various objections which also effectively concerned housing omission sites were made to settlement development limits with reference to the inset maps. While I consider here the major sites, either as residential land allocations or housing omission sites, I refer later in this Report to smaller omission sites in particular localities with regard to the respective settlement Inset Maps in Chapter 10 of the Plan.

In general I have followed the skeleton report devised by the Programme Officer, examining objections sequentially according to their order in relation to the Plan. In that pattern I consider firstly the objections concerning housing in general, the housing requirement, and the windfall allowance in paragraphs 8.1.1 to 8.1.33 of the Plan in sections 8.1 to 8.9 of this Report. I deal with sites allocated in the draft deposit Plan in section 8.10A; with omission sites within the various settlement development limits in Section 8.10B; and omission sites outside settlement development limits in Section 8.10C.

The residential development of Land East of Williton was proposed as a change (Site 10) in the October 2000) Proposed Changes but was withdrawn in the subsequent October 2001 Proposed Changes. Its inclusion excited the greatest volume of objection of all matters in the Plan. I treat it in terms of its status at the opening of the inquiry in the realisation that most of the very large number of objections relate to its earlier inclusion as Site 10 in the superseded 2000 version of PC191.

I lastly deal in sections 8.16 - 8.36 of this Report with the general issues concerning housing outside defined settlements and such empirical general matters as affordable housing, exceptions to meet local needs, conversions to residential use, the avoidance of odour or noise nuisance near protected residential accommodation, and gypsy accommodation in paragraphs 8.1.49 to 8.1.70 and Policies H/2 to H/8 of the draft deposit Plan.

I find considerable repetition in objections which, though objecting to housing policies and notably Table 4 also maintain the substance of such objections in ones referring to paragraphs

of the supporting text. In general I have attempted to restrict my appraisal and conclusions to a single reference with an appropriate cross-reference where appropriate.

8.1. LOCAL PLAN OBJECTIVES & CHANGE NO 182

Objection

737 Environment Agency-South West Region

Objection conditionally withdrawn

141 Council for the Protection of Rural England

Supporter of PC182

2462 Council for the Protection of Rural England

Inspector's note

Objection 141 is conditionally withdrawn in response to PC182, which I support. The change expresses the priority aim of redeveloping under-used sites and properties within settlement development limits as an additional Local Plan Objective.

Issue

Whether the protection of the environment from harmful effects should be an objective of the Plan.

Inspector's reasoning and conclusions

The Local Plan objectives for housing are essentially concerned with the supply and distribution of dwellings. However, proposals for housing development should be assessed against all of the relevant provisions of the Plan and the housing objectives may not be an invariably overriding consideration. In my view part of the objector's concern about pollution is appropriately acknowledged in the Local Plan Objectives for the water environment in Chapter 4.4 of the Plan.

8.1.1. RECOMMENDATION

I recommend that the Plan be modified by PC182.

8.2. PARA 8.1.2

Objection

975 Somerset County Council

Issue

Whether the last sentence of para 8.1.2 might read better as a continuation of the second sentence.

Inspector's reasoning and conclusions

As the last sentence does not refer to a census figure I consider it would be an inappropriate extension of the second sentence. I note that it is intended to update the figures when the full 2001 census results become available.

8.2.1. RECOMMENDATION

I recommend that no modification be made in response to this objection.

8.3. PARA 8.1.16 & CHANGE NO 183

Objection

653 House Builders Federation

Objection to PC 183

2261 House Builders Federation

Issues

- (i) The adequacy of the global District housing provision in the light of the EiP Panel Report on the Somerset Structure Plan Review.
- (ii) The reliability of the windfall component of the future supply of housing.

Inspector's reasoning and conclusions

Issue (i)

I deal more fully with the housing provision below in relation to Table 4. However, I observe that

Objection 653 was made when the Somerset and Exmoor National Park Joint Structure Plan Review

was still in its emergent phase. That Plan was adopted in April 2000. Policy 33 of the Structure Plan apportions about 2,400 dwellings to West Somerset District up to 2011, including about 250 dwellings to the part of Exmoor National Park that is within the District. PC183, which I support, aligns the deposit Local Plan figure with the adopted Structure Plan and, allowing for existing commitments, identifies a need for 2,100 dwellings in the Local Plan area. I deal further with this matter in Section 8.5 of this report below.

Issue (ii)

I deal with the question of the allowance to be made for windfall sites below in section 8.6 of this report.

8.3.1. RECOMMENDATION

I recommend that the Plan be modified by PC183.

8.4. PARA. 8.1.17 AND CHANGE NO 184

Objection

335 Rank Group Holidays Division

Objection to PC184

2262 House Builders Federation

Issues

- (i) Whether the text should refer explicitly to the extant planning permission for 250 dwellings at the former Lido site at Warren Road, Minehead.
- (ii) Whether a more rigorous assessment is needed of the windfall contribution.

Inspector's reasoning and conclusions

Issue (i)

Paragraphs 8.1.21 and 8.1.22 refer to this site under the Windfall Allowance section of the Plan. Its status has changed from a potential site to a site under construction with its expected completion date in autumn 2003. In the circumstances I discern no need for any change in the Plan text.

Issue (ii)

I deal with the question of the allowance to be made for windfall sites below in section 8.6 of this report.

8.4.1. RECOMMENDATION

I recommend that the Plan be modified by PC184.

8.5. PARA. 8.1.18 (TABLE 4) & CHANGE NO 185

THE HOUSING REQUIREMENT

Objections to the draft deposit Plan

205 Prowting Homes South-West Limited
362 Dr Wyndham
367 Mr D Gliddon

Objections to PC 185

2263 House Builders Federation
2333 Mr B H Biggs
2372 South West RSL Planning Consortium
2537 Redland Housing Association
2540 Crown Estates Commissioners
2591 Somerset Wildlife Trust

Issues

- (i) Whether the housing provision in Table 4 should take account of the requirement of 2,600 dwellings in the Panel Report on the EiP of the Somerset Structure Plan Review.

- (ii) The appropriate dwelling requirement for the District Local Plan area with reference to the division in requirements between West Somerset and Exmoor National Park;
- (iii) Whether the shortfall of 80 units in Table 4 should be remedied by the allocation of further land for residential development;
- (iv) The discrepancy between the requirement figure of 292 in Table 4 and the allocation figure of 320 in PC191 and whether account should be taken of the potential capacity of sites at Dunster Marsh, the Williton Workhouse, the former Minehead Lido, Windsor Hotel, and Rank plc to provide a more up to date assessment.
- (v) The accuracy of the non take-up allowance.
- (vi) The allowance to be made for the contribution of windfalls to the supply of dwelling sites.
- (vii) The accuracy of Rows D and E in Table 4 and whether it would be preferable to label Row E as 'Remainder to be made up from windfalls and allocated housing sites', 2391 2372
- (viii) Whether the Proposals Map should be consistent with Table 4 by identifying all sites with dwellings under construction, those with planning permission where construction has not yet started, and those otherwise committed.

Inspector's reasoning and conclusions

Issue (i)

In approaching the question of the dwelling requirement I am mindful that some objections were made when the Local Plan was in its first deposit state and the Somerset and Exmoor National Park Joint Structure Plan Review was still in an emergent phase. However, numerical arguments starting from the EiP Report recommendation on the draft Joint Structure Plan Review have been overtaken by the adoption of that Plan in April 2000. The adopted Joint Structure Plan Review incorporated a modification of the county provision resulting in a requirement of 2,400 dwellings for West Somerset, a reduction of 200 units compared with the 300 referred to by the objectors.

The changes in PC184 and PC185 therefore align the housing provision for the Local Plan area up to 2011 with Policy 33 of the adopted Joint Structure Plan Review and the deposit Exmoor National Park Plan, assigning 2,100 of the 2,400 dwellings to West Somerset District outside Exmoor National Park. In the West Somerset Local Plan area that leaves a dwelling requirement of 206 on allocated sites and 459 from windfalls while allowing for completions to 31 March 2001, unimplemented planning permissions at 1 April 2001, and an allowance for failure to implement permissions. Bearing in mind that the Structure Plan Review is reasonably up to date and that the Plan is required to be in conformity with it I regard the Plan area housing figures as the appropriate target, subject to the adjustment to be made for the allocation at Dunster Marsh agreed by the LPA in the inquiry.

Issue (ii)

The House Builders Federation and Redland Housing Association contend that excessive weight is given to commitments within Exmoor National Park and that the West Somerset Local Plan area itself should maintain a requirement of 2,150 units. However, the PC184 figure of 2,100 dwellings is stated to be based on the close monitoring of housing development by the 2 authorities in accordance with

**West Somerset District Local Plan
Report on Objections**

paragraph 34 of PPG3 and paragraphs 3.53 and 3.54 of the Joint Structure Plan Review. At 1 April 2001 91% of the strategic housing provision in the National Park was developed with 10 years of the Structure Plan period still to run. However, with more restrictive policies coming into play I agree that rate of development is unlikely to be maintained. The National Park authority expects about 30 open market dwellings to be completed in the April 2001- April 2003 period. Added to the committed 53 dwellings and allowing a 10% non take-up allowance would slightly exceed the 300 figure. Against that background of provision in the National Park I conclude that the apportionment between the Plan area and the National Park is reasonable.

Issue (iii)

Objectors claim that the shortfall of about 80 dwellings should be remedied immediately by allocating sites for 2,400 dwellings as a minimum in a variety of locations, rather than deferring such allocations to an uncertain future date. The shortfall is acknowledged by the LPA, though this is only 3% of the strategic requirement. Its response is to seek sites where the 80 residual units could be provided from 2006, bearing in mind that the Plan meets the PPG3 requirement to allocate sufficient sites to accommodate at least the ongoing 5 year need and to monitor and review site allocations on a 5 yearly basis. Given the limitations to the expansion of Minehead and restricted opportunity at Watchet the LPA's preference is for development at Williton. It expects that by that time construction on previously developed sites and that of Williton Workhouse would be likely to have commenced and questions of improvements in the strategic road network and potential town centre redevelopment would be resolved. That procedure would also allow for the monitoring of the effect on the provision of new dwellings of the take-up of sites identified in the Residential Urban Capacity Study.

I accept that the 3 Policy H/1 sites identified at Minehead, Williton and Stogursey together with 10 of the larger potential RUCS sites, each of at least 10 units, dispersed between Minehead, Watchet, Brushford, and Carhampton would provide a good geographical spread of sites without any immediate need to allocate a further 80 units. In my view the LPA's overall housing strategy as numerically categorised in PC185 does not presage a paucity of provision in the period to 2006 and its review at that date can allow the opportunity to align provision up to 2011 with the adopted Joint Structure Plan Review.

Issue (iv)

The original PCs 185 and 191 (October 2000) included a surplus provision of 28 dwellings, the sites at Williton Workhouse and the former Minehead Lido having been counted against B(ii) of Table 4 as having planning permission for housing. However, the assessment of potential housing sites within settlements and outstanding allocations was updated following 2001 Residential Urban Capacity Study, undertaken in response to the DTLR's Tapping the Potential. In my view PC185's correction of the components of Table 4 is appropriate.

Issue (v)

It is claimed that the application of the 10% non-take up allowance (Table 4, Row D) to both dwellings under construction and outstanding planning permissions constitutes double counting. Bearing in mind the LPA's view that the conversion rate of permissions to implementation is low objectors hold that it would be more realistic to employ a rate of 15% of the commitment figure, together with a 10% allowance on allocated sites.

I find no reason to doubt that the LPA's 10% allowance is a reasonable reflection of 20 years experience in rural West Somerset, where failure to implement small-scale permission for one or two dwellings is common. While the double counting allegation is correct I accept it is not particularly significant in the situation where only about 10% to 15% of extant planning permissions are in the course of implementation at any time. As for raising the allowance, the LPA's 10% rate for the

residual requirement implies a further 55 units towards allocated sites. However, those are already taken into account in Row D of Table 4 (PC185). In view of these factors I do not discern any justification for amending the allowance for the non-take-up of planning permissions.

Issue (vi)

I deal separately with the question of the windfall allowance in section 8.6 of this Report below

Issue (vii)

I support the factual correction by PC185 of the errors in Rows D and E of Table 4. However, it appears to me that as the suggested labelling amendment of Row E could lead to confusion no change in that respect should be made in Table 4. However, the Table now requires amendment to take account of the proposal accepted by the LPA in the inquiry regarding the acceptable degree of development at Dunster Marsh which I deal with below in section 8.10A of this Report.

Issue (viii)

Objection 2537 is effectively an objection to the Proposals Map. I agree it should be brought into broad conformity with Table 4 as changed by PC185 by identifying all major (exceeding 0.4 ha) sites with dwellings under construction, those with planning permission where construction has not yet started, and those otherwise committed.

8.5.1. RECOMMENDATIONS

I recommend that the Plan be modified by:

- (i) PC185, subject to the adjustment of dwelling numbers to include the degree of restored housing provision at Dunster Marsh;**
- (ii) The depiction on the Proposals Map of all sites exceeding 0.4ha included in Table 4 where there are dwellings under construction, with planning permission where construction has not yet started, or are otherwise committed.**

8.6. PARA 8.1.19 & CHANGE NO 186 THE WINDFALL ALLOWANCE

Objection

654 House Builders Federation

Conditionally withdrawn objection

841 Government Office for the South West

Objection to PC186

2264 House Builders Federation

Inspector's note

Objection 841 is conditionally withdrawn in response to PC186 which refers to the exclusion of greenfield windfalls.

Issue

The amount and rate of the windfall contribution to the supply of dwellings.

Inspector's reasoning and conclusions

The windfall allowance in the October 2000 version of PC185 was raised in the October 2001 version from 275 dwellings to 459 dwellings, following the findings of the Residential Urban Capacity Study in 2001.

The Plan foresees a reduction in the supply of windfall sites from the 68% of new dwellings in the District achieved in 1991-1995 and allows a rate of 25 a year in Table 4. There is no fundamental dispute in principle between the LPA and the HBF regarding paragraph 8.1.23, namely that windfalls will decline from their former high level. The HBF argues that a reduction in windfalls during the Plan period will result from up-to date plan coverage, a reduction in the number of small sites coming forward, and restrictive planning policies. They consider the Plan's 25 windfall dwellings a year will reduce to 15 a year by 2007-2011 and that compared with the Plan's estimate there is a resultant requirement for additional allocated sites for about 270 dwellings.

In terms of the scale of housing provision from windfalls in the Plan area I regard the discrepancy between the two figures as significantly large. I agree that in the long run it is logical to assume that the provenance of sites is not inexhaustible and that the rate of their development will slow as they become more difficult to locate. The issue is the rate of decline. That it is not continuous is clearly demonstrated by the LPA's evidence of a rise in the rate of windfall developments in the period of 11 months immediately preceding the inquiry, equivalent pro-rata to 89 dwellings a year. On the other hand no analysis of that figure was presented; the anomaly could result from a single large windfall site becoming available. In general, the cautious approach of the RUCS to the range of likely windfall opportunities in their subdivisions of Minehead, Watchet, Williton, and the villages leads me to conclude that the overall figure of 459 dwellings in the later change of Table 4 is appropriate.

Objectors consider that uncertainty would have been reduced and the plan/monitor/manage approach would be facilitated if some of the windfall sites, notably 14 RUCS sites of over 0.5 ha, were allocated in the Plan. The LPA's view is that most of the windfall sites are too small to allocate. In general I am inclined to agree with the approach of formally allocating only major sites rather than adding the possibly pepper pot distribution of relatively small sites which the objectors' preference would lead to.

In specifically excluding greenfield windfalls from the contribution in Table 4 PC186 recognises the deep significance of this in a predominantly rural district. I consider it acknowledges the guidance in PPG13 regarding the efficient use of urban land and the avoidance of the incremental expansion of small towns and villages to provide commuter housing accommodation for urban centres.

8.6.1. RECOMMENDATION

I recommend that the Plan be modified by PC186.

8.7. PARA 8.1.28 & CHANGE NO 187

Conditionally withdrawn objection

842 Government Office for the South West

Supporter of PC187

2373 South West RSL Planning Consortium

Inspector's note

Objection 842 is conditionally withdrawn in response to PC187 which provides satisfactory guidance on the type and scale of residential development appropriate to thriving rural communities while ensuring that urban housing requirements are not met in rural areas.

8.7.1. RECOMMENDATION

I recommend that the Plan be modified by PC187.

8.8. PARA. 8.1.31 & CHANGE NO 188

Re LAND EAST OF WILLITON

Objections to PC188

2334 Mr B H Biggs

2358 Mr R W and Mrs M A Miles

2592 Somerset Wildlife Trust

Supporter of PC188

2598 Mr G Bosley

Issues

- (i) The significance of 'established higher order settlement centre'.
- (ii) The feasibility of the allocation of housing land at Williton.

Inspector's reasoning and conclusions

Issue (i)

Notwithstanding that it is based on Structure Plan Review Policy STR3 and is a technical expression, 'established higher order settlement centre' is a nevertheless overly circumlocutious term. Williton is one of the 3 principal centres in the District and I consider it more helpful to users of the Plan to refer here to the settlement in those terms.

Issue (ii)

The reference to land East of Williton in an earlier change to paragraph 8.1.31 is superseded by PC188. Whereas the earlier change proposed a notably more substantial residential development PC188 envisages the provision of about 80 dwellings on a smaller undefined site from 2006. In my view that goes far to meet the objections to the previous allocation of a much larger tract of land, most notably on the ground of the risk of flooding. I am satisfied that PC188, combined with the plan/monitor/manage approach, sets out a realistic scenario for the scale of possible future residential development east of Williton. I consider more detailed aspects of this site in Section 8.10C.11 of this Report below.

8.8.1. RECOMMENDATION

I recommend that the Plan be modified by PC188, subject to the deletion of 'an

established higher order settlement centre' and its replacement by 'one of the 3 principal centres in the District'.

8.9. PARA. 8.1.32 & CHANGE NO 189

Objection to PC189

2335 Mr B H Biggs

Issue

Whether housing allocations in the deposit draft Plan at Seaward Way, Minehead, and Dunster Marsh, whose withdrawal is unexplained in PC191, should be maintained in preference to development at Williton.

Inspector's reasoning and conclusions

The deposit draft Plan housing allocations at Seaward Way, Minehead, and sites 6, 7, 8, and 9 at Dunster Marsh were withdrawn by the LPA in 2000 (LPA Report ED 16/00) in response to objections to the Dunster Marsh sites and the prospect of an alternative large-scale release of land at Williton which, however, was later withdrawn in a later change.

In the inquiry the LPA agreed a further change to accept in principle the development of 40 dwellings at Site 7, Higher Marsh Farm, subject to a number of requirements relating to associated community benefits. In that connection I note that the site is nearer various employment and commercial establishments in Minehead than much of the built up area of the town itself. In summary I consider that the Marsh Farm proposal goes most of the way to meeting this objection and also those to Policy DM/1 in Chapter 10 of the draft deposit Plan.

The Residential Urban Capacity Study shows that Minehead will provide about 247 units (54%) of the 459 total in Table 4, whereas Williton will provide only 20 units (4%), excluding the 80 units to be identified from 2006. In those circumstances I do not consider it appropriate to claim that Williton will gain a disproportionate share of the Plan area's residential development compared with the scale of likely development in Minehead. However, by way of clarification of that point I accept the LPA's proposal to add to PC189 a reference to the RUCS in relation to future residential development in Minehead.

8.9.1. RECOMMENDATION

I recommend that PC189 be amended by the addition of the following:

This level of provision will be easily met elsewhere in the town on a range of potential sites identified in the Council's Residential Urban Capacity Study.

**8.10A ALLOCATED HOUSING SITES
POLICY H/1 AND CHANGES NOS 191 & 194**

8.10. THE NUMBER AND DISTRIBUTION OF PROPOSED ALLOCATED HOUSING SITES: PC191

Objections

219 Greenslade Taylor Hunt

625 Somerset Wildlife Trust

655 House Builders Federation

Supporter

1084 Crown Estates Commissioners

Inspector's note

PC191 amends the table of sites in Policy H/1 by deleting sites 6, 7, 8, and 9 at Dunster Marsh and by revising the numbers of dwellings at sites 1 and 2 at Seaward Way, Minehead. In the inquiry the LPA conceded the reinstatement of site 7 at Dunster Marsh as a further proposed change which I deal with in section 8.10A.3 below regarding allocated sites. I deal in section 8.10.C with the larger omission sites which are in Brushford, Minehead, Stogursey, and Williton. I consider any smaller omission sites and those in other settlements in relation to the inset maps in Chapter 10 of the Plan.

Issue

Whether the number and distribution of sites allocated for residential development is appropriate

Inspector's reasoning and conclusions

It is represented that the allocation of a few relatively large sites in a very small number of settlements limits the opportunity for development by small local firms of builders and the self-build market. A wider spread of development opportunity, providing housing for local people, would, it is claimed, sustain and strengthen local economies.

As to the amount of development, it is claimed by the nature conservation interest that in view of the modest windfall estimates and the fact that they exceed the Structure Plan requirement the provision on allocated sites is excessive. On the other hand, the development industry advocates a higher level of allocated provision to counterbalance what it believes is a contracting provenance from windfall sites.

The concentration of sites is to my mind a proper reflection of the Settlement Policy in Chapter 3 of the Plan which is based in the hierarchy of settlements recognised in the Structure Plan review. Nevertheless, I note that the number of units to be provided on allocated sites shown in Table 4 is reduced by the proposed alterations from 295 in the deposit Draft Plan to 126 in the October 2001 PCs. That correctly reflects the emphasis in the revision of PPG3 on previously developed sites revealed by urban capacity studies. It implies a higher level of unidentified potential and windfall sites than was assumed in the deposit Draft Plan. In that connection I support the identification of 21 potential sites in 9 villages to provide about 100 dwellings (Appendix 3 (i) of General Paper 1); in my view that respects the dispersed rural settlement pattern of the Plan area. In all these circumstances I find no justification to amend PC191.

8.10.1. RECOMMENDATION

I recommend that no modification of PC191 be made in response to these objections.

8.10A.1. SITE 3: REAR OF NORTH STREET, WILLITON

Objections

- 187 Somerset Property Services
- 354 Gliddons
- 357 Gliddons

Issues

- (i) Whether alternative land west of Bridge Street where community benefits could be provided should be developed rather than land at the rear of North Street, Williton (Policy H/1 Site 3), in view of the multiple ownership of the allocated site and its dependence for access on land in another ownership.
- (ii) Whether the allocation of Site 3 for residential development and the reference in paragraph 10.21.5 should be amended or deleted in favour of the redevelopment of Gliddons premises at Bank Street for a mixture of retail and residential uses.

Inspector's note

These objections were made expressly to the Williton Inset Map but I have considered it more appropriate to deal with them here in relation to Site 3.
Inspector's reasoning and conclusions

Issue (i)

Site 3 is largely a previously developed site which rounds off the otherwise developed area between Williton Hospital to its north and the Priest Street area to its south. Although its fragmented ownership is likely to result in development over an extended period, as paragraphs 8.1.36 and 10.21.5 of the Plan note, it has the substantial advantage of easy access to the centre of Williton and the potential community benefit of affordable housing matching that of the site west of Bridge Street. I consider its allocation should be sustained.

Issue (ii)

Gliddons 0.6 ha site is immediately south east of Site 3 and is identified as a potential housing site in the Residential Urban Capacity Study. I consider the LPA is justified in regarding it as a long-term resource which is not included in table 4 of the Plan. However, I also bear in mind that it is a significant employment site.

In reality the objection refers indifferently to a mixed or wholly retail development. Any mixed use development would fall to be assessed in the light of the lack of any proposal in the Plan for the alternative use of the Gliddons site and the appropriate shopping and transport policies. In the circumstances I consider it reasonable at the present time to sustain the allocation of Site 3 for residential development without identifying adjoining additional land.

8.10A.1.1. RECOMMENDATION

I recommend that no modification be made in response to these objections.

8.10A.2. SITE 5: ST. AUDRIES CLOSE EAST, STOGURSEY

Objections

770 Environment Agency-South West Region

846 Government Office for the South West

Issues

- (i) Drainage considerations attending the development of the site.
- (ii) The relation of the proposed housing allocation at Stogursey to the strategic objectives of the Plan.

Inspector's reasoning and conclusions

Issue (i)

The Environment Agency points out that the area may be affected by the flood plain which will need to be investigated with a river corridor maintained alongside the Stogursey Brook and other mitigation/enhancement measures taken as necessary. I agree with the LPA that this is a matter of development control rather than of Local Plan policy. I also concur with the insertion of a reference in the explanatory text regarding the requirement to maintain a buffer zone alongside the brook to protect the ecological and wildlife interests defined by the LPA's consultants.

Issue (ii)

In strategic terms Stogursey has about 340 dwellings and is the second largest settlement after Minehead and the rural centres of Watchet and Williton. It provides local services for its own catchment area and accounts for 6% of the total of new dwelling allocations in the Plan area, which equivocates to about 13% growth in the number of dwellings in the village. It is the closest village of any size to Hinkley Point Power Station, which is only 3 miles distant and is one of the largest local employers. The site at St Audries Close East provides a new opportunity for employees to live relatively close to work in a community which already has a primary school, post office, general store, and regular public transport service to the larger towns. In the context of these facilities I consider it appropriate to regard Housing Site 5 as of strategic significance without modification of the Plan.

8.10A.2.1. RECOMMENDATIONS

I recommend that the Plan be modified by:

- (i) PC191; and
- (ii) **The addition to paragraph 8.1.39 of the following:
In addition, development proposals will be expected to conform with Policy W/8 in relation to Protection of River Corridors for Stogursey Brook.**

8.10A.3. SITES 6, 7, 8 & 9 AT DUNSTER MARSH.

Objections

145	Council for the Protection of Rural England
188	Somerset Property Services
220	Greenslade Taylor Hunt
289	Mr and Mrs D Doyle
321	Mr S Clements
322	Mrs O Pitt
324	Ms M Lacey
326	Mrs V McDade
328	Mr G Pitt
330	Mrs D Scott
430	J Morrison
432	Mr and Mrs N Welsh
437	Mrs J Walcot
456	Mr C Hammond-Smith
467	Mr B Gurnett
470	Mr P Cross
476	Mrs S Morgan
485	Mr A Brown
527	Mr A Vicary
564	Blue Anchor Conservation Society
631	Somerset Wildlife Trust
635	Mr and Mrs Achurch
640	G Richmond
645	Mr D Shellard
675	Mr and Mrs A Harris
843	Government Office for the South West
1010	Mr D Gliddon
1076	Carhampton Parish Council

Conditionally withdrawn objection

845	Government Office for the South West
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Supporter

1083	Crown Estate Commissioners
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Inspector's note

The numerous objections regarding Dunster Marsh share much in common and cover a wide range of subjects. However, they are largely overtaken by the modification conceded in the inquiry by the LPA, including the deletion of Sites 8 and 9 from the deposit draft Plan by PC191 and the acceptance of revised proposals submitted by an objector for Sites 6 and 7. In view of the submissions made at the inquiry I deal here with the Crown Estates Commission's objection 2547 tabled by the LPA as an objection to PC265 (Map 6) which proposes altering the settlement development limit consistently with PC191.

Issue

The suitability of the alteration of the village development limit and allocation of Site 6 (Marsh Lane) at Dunster Marsh for outdoor recreational facilities including 5 affordable dwellings on land fronting Marsh Lane and Site 7 (Higher Marsh Farm) for about 40 dwellings together with a public house or local shop and several 'live/work' units.

Inspector's reasoning and conclusions

In advance of the inquiry the objection was modified to comprise the development cited in the issue above. The revised proposal has the general support of the LPA.

I consider that the poor condition of many of the buildings, the fact that they are in only very limited use for storage, and they have no long-term function in the objectors' pattern of husbandry on their neighbouring land in the locality indicate that Higher Marsh Farm is redundant. I consequently conclude that, as it is a previously developed site, the revised proposed use of the agricultural property at Site 7 (Higher Marsh Farm) accords with paragraph 31 of PPG3 and Structure Plan Policy STR1. The degree of mixed use proposed accords with the principles enunciated in PPG1 and RPG10. It would afford community benefits currently lacking at Dunster Marsh; their precise nature could await definition in a Village Design Statement

The relevant part of Site 7 was identified in the LPA's Residential Urban Capacity Study of June 2001 and incorporated into the allowance for windfall provision in PC185. I agree with the LPA that it is appropriate to regard the proposed limited amount of housing fronting Marsh Lane as an affordable rural exception site under Policy H/5 as proposed to be changed by PC207.

The reduction to about 45 from the 70 dwellings originally proposed would reduce the pressure on the capacity of local facilities. In particular, Dunster First School has the capacity to accommodate any resultant demand as well as that originating from the Exmoor National Park area of Dunster village and the potential for 36 dwellings at Carhampton identified in the Urban Capacity Study.

As for the effect on the appearance of the landscape I consider the substantial reduction in the proposed built up area south of Marsh Lane and its use for outdoor recreation would provide welcome protection of the openness of the site and longer views to and from Exmoor National Park. Since the status of the recreation site would be protected under Policy R/3 I find no overriding reason to include that land within the village development limit: to do so would be inconsistent with the treatment of similar land in other village inset maps.

The sites are undeniably less readily accessible to facilities in Minehead than the allocated land within the town. On the other hand that is outweighed in a useful measure by the prospect of mixed development at Dunster Marsh. At the same time I do not consider that the scale of residential development at Dunster Marsh now proposed threatens the possible allocation of land for housing at Williton when the Plan becomes due for review. I find that on balance these are persuasive reasons to modify the Plan as proposed by the LPA.

8.10A.3.1. RECOMMENDATIONS

I recommend that

- (i) Higher Marsh Farm (Site 7) be included within the development boundary of Dunster Marsh (Inset Map 6) and be allocated in Policy H/1 as a site for up to 40 dwellings;
- (ii) Land south of Marsh Lane (Site 6) be identified as a proposed recreation ground under Policy R/3 on Inset Map 6 outside the development boundary line and incorporate an affordable (rural exception) housing site for 5 dwellings on land fronting Marsh Lane; and
- (iii) The following explanatory text be inserted after paragraph 8.1.39:

8.1.40 Dunster Marsh. The Local Planning Authority will permit residential development on Site 7 at Dunster Marsh, subject to the following requirements:

Site 7 comprises previously developed land and is allocated for up to 40 dwellings including live/work units as a proportion of the open market housing, such proportion to be agreed with the Local Planning Authority and secured by a planning obligation. There will also be affordable housing provided in accordance with Policy H/4. The Council will also seek the conversion of the existing farmhouse or traditional buildings associated with it into a public house/village shop or the provision of some other such appropriate community facility as a community hall. In addition, contributions for new recreation facilities will be sought in association with the housing scheme, including the provision of a local recreation field and a picnic area.

8.1.41. Site 6 comprises land south of Marsh Lane. A row of 5 affordable houses will be permitted fronting Marsh Lane in accordance with Rural Exceptions Policy H/5. In addition, contributions for new recreation facilities will be sought in association with the housing scheme, including the provision of a local recreation field and a picnic area.

**8.10B HOUSING OMISSION SITES
WITHIN SETTLEMENT DEVELOPMENT LIMITS**

8.10B.1. PICKPURSE LANE, STOGUMBER

Objections

423 J Morrison

424 J Morrison

Issue

Whether the allocation on Settlement Map 15 of the site at the junction of Pickpurse Lane/Wood Lane Station Road known as Wallfield and Butts Close, Stogumber, is consistent with paragraphs 8.1.14 and 8.1.15 in view of the focus in the latter on development in major towns especially Taunton and Bridgwater.

Inspector's note

Although it lies within the settlement development boundary of Stogumber this is not a site formally allocated under Policy H/1. However, the identification of small-scale residential development sites identified within the village development boundary by the Residential Urban Capacity Study falls within the scope of the advice in PPG3 and does not breach the principles of strategic development. In Structure Plan Review terms Minehead is the only town in the Plan area and is to accommodate 57% of the new housing provision for the area in the period to 2011. I concur with the LPA's proposal to alter the third sentence of paragraph 8.1.15 to secure consistency with the Structure Plan Review.

8.10B.1.1 RECOMMENDATION

I recommend that the third sentence of paragraph 8.1.15 be modified to read as follows:

This review has resulted in a figure of 44,800 dwellings being required for the Plan period.

8.10B.2. LAND AT TOWNSEND FARM, CARHAMPTON

Objections

2545 Crown Estates Commissioners

2538 Redland Housing Association

Issue

Whether land at Townsend Farm, Carhampton, should be identified on the Proposals Map as a site committed for housing.

Inspector's reasoning and conclusion

Though claimed by the objectors to be subject to an extant planning permission that is stated by the LPA to have lapsed. It is nevertheless recognised as a potential windfall site for residential development in the RUCS and has been accounted for in Line F of Table 4 (PC185). In the present circumstances I consider it should remain unidentified on Settlement Inset Map 4.

8.10B.2.1. RECOMMENDATION

I recommend that land at Townsend Farm, Carhampton, be not shown as a residential land allocation on the Inset Map 4.

8.10B.3. LAND NORTH OF TOWNSEND FARM, CARHAMPTON

Objector

2542 Crown Estates Commissioners

Issue

Whether land opposite Townsend Farm, Carhampton, should be allocated for residential development.

Inspector's reasoning and conclusions

This approximately 0.9 ha site is within the development limits of the village and consist of former garage buildings housing an antiques business together with open land. It is shown as white land on the Carhampton Inset Map and is not subject to any designation protective of its open space element. It is within the Central West Somerset Character Area and an Area of High Archaeological Potential that covers most of the village. It was allocated for residential development in the early consultation stages of the Plan but was subsequently withdrawn in 1996 in preference to other sites at Minehead and Dunster Marsh.

Carhampton has a good range of local facilities, and has adequately frequent access by public transport and by cycleway to the higher order service centres of Minehead and Williton. The LPA does not challenge the site's ultimate potential for residential development. It is identified in the RUCS as a possible windfall site for 15 dwellings in the period to 2011 and is incorporated as such in the revision of Table 4 of the Plan by PC185. However, I agree with the LPA that at the present time the development of the site would be premature before the provision of the A39 Carhampton Relief Road in view of the need to restrict access to the existing A39 road through the Village. To my mind that consideration justifies the deferment of development to the post-2006 phase of the Plan when the capital road infrastructure commitments in the Second Somerset Local Transport Plan will have been confirmed. In those circumstances I do not consider the site's formal allocation currently supportable.

8.10B.3.1. RECOMMENDATION

I recommend that no modification be made in response to this objection.

8.10B.4. BIRCHAM ROAD, ALCOMBE.

Objection

274 Mr M Collins

Inspector's note

The land which is the subject of this objection has now been developed for residential use. It does not therefore fall to me to make any recommendation.

8.10B.5. NORTH STREET, WILLITON

Objection

354 Gliddons

Inspector's note

This objection raises matters equally germane to the objections related to land adjoining Site 3 (Rear of North Street, Williton) that I consider in Section 8.11A.1 above.

Issue

Whether the housing allocation of land at the rear of North Street, Williton (Site 3) should be amended or deleted to reflect the redevelopment potential for retail uses for a wider site area or mix of uses to includes Gliddons premises at Bank Street.

Inspector's reasoning and conclusions

The objector suggests that land to the south of Site 3 either be redeveloped for retail use or alternatively that its southern half be developed for retailing with the northern part allocated for housing in conjunction with Site 3. For the reasons I explain in Section 8.11A.1 I do not consider it appropriate at the present time to allocate add further land to site 3.

8.10B.5.1. RECOMMENDATION

I recommend that no modification be made in response to this objection

**8.10C. OMISSION HOUSING SITES
OUTSIDE SETTLEMENT DEVELOPMENT LIMITS**

8.10C.1. CARNARVON ARMS HOTEL, BRUSHFORD.

Objection

667 Mrs T Jones

Issue

Whether land south of the Carnarvon Arms Hotel, Brushford, should be allocated for elderly persons housing with consequent extension of the settlement development boundary of the village.

Inspector's note

I deal with the question of the settlement development boundary in relation to the Brushford Inset Map in Chapter 10.

Inspector's reasoning and conclusions

Carnarvon Arms is a former hotel with planning permission for conversion to 17 dwellings. The objector suggests that in the context of the village's dormitory function for Dulverton this site of about 1 ha, the former station complex, is considered potentially suitable for small-scale development for persons aged over 55 years and would be linked to the existing and proposed facilities of the Hotel.

Within the curtilage of the hotel there is an extensive open area to the east and south of the building which merges with the adjoining open countryside whose physique bears a strong sense of continuation with the landscape of the fringe of the Exmoor National Park. Only a small part nearest the hotel falls within the settlement development boundary. The land south of the hotel, shown on the deposit draft Proposals Map as within a former Special Landscape Area, now falls within the southern flanks of the Exmoor Character Area (Upper Exe Valley Sub-Area) and is subject to Policy LC/3 (as changed by PC28). The track bed of the former Taunton - Barnstaple railway line runs through the site and is part of a County Linear Archaeological Site subject to Policy AH/2.

I agree with the LPA that encroachment here on the open landscape by residential development would be contrary to Policies SP/5 (as changed by PC13) and Policy LC/3 (as changed by PC28) for the protection of the countryside. I consider the potential site capacity of 25-35 dwellings would be overly substantial for Brushford. At the same time I note that the RUCS identifies two potential sites in the village, one of which is the subject of the extant planning permission at the hotel which I note above. Neither site involves greenfield land take or land outside the settlement development boundary. Only a small former railway goods depôt to the south of the hotel and the railway track bed itself constitute formerly developed land. Development of the area south of the hotel would infringe the strategic planning principles of Policies VIS10 and SS20 of RPG10. In all these circumstances I discern no justification for allocating the objection site for residential development.

So far as concerns the former railway premises I note that the goods depôt stands proud of the overall site and could not be incorporated within the settlement development limit without the addition of intervening land. Notwithstanding an extant planning permission for leisure or recreational use of the depôt I agree with the LPA that that would be unacceptable in terms of the potential for development it could open up relative to the status of the village under the (new) Policy SP/3 (PC9) and in disregard of the principles of Policy LC/3 as amended by PC 28.

8.10C.1.1. RECOMMENDATION

I recommend that no change be made in the settlement limit of Brushford and that land south of the Carnarvon Arms be not allocated for residential development on Inset Map 3.

8.10C.2. ELLERSDOWN LANE, BRUSHFORD.

Objection

207 Mr R Summers

Issue

Whether land north of Ellersdown Lane, Brushford, should be allocated for residential development.

Inspector's reasoning and conclusions

In the inquiry the objector amended the representation to a proposal to allocate the land fronting Ellersdown Lane for about 20 dwellings, leaving the balance of the northward rising land forming the remainder of the site as open space. I consider the proposal unacceptable for 2 reasons. Firstly, it would be an incursion into open countryside, contrary to paragraph 3.21 of PPG3 in being neither a small group of dwellings nor filling a small gap. The continuous hedgerow marking a particularly finite boundary between the built-up part of the village and the open countryside would be seriously interrupted by access splays and the sense of the immediacy of open land next to the Lane would be lost.

Ellersdown Lane is of single vehicle width only. Although it could be widened within the objector's land that would require a 5.5m carriageway together with footways and would not overcome the objection on visual amenity grounds of the loss of rurality. Moreover, the objector does not control the lane beyond his own frontage and its restricted width connects with the B3222 Dulverton - Bampton road where visibility for turning traffic at the junction is severely limited. The possibility of creating a one-way inward system, even if a degree of improvement in the junction geometry were possible, from the B3222 is problematic with the consequences for the main road traffic flow remaining unexamined. In the circumstances I consider any increase in traffic on the lane would be unacceptable

The objector points out that there are clearly limited opportunities for further development in nearby settlements such as Dulverton and Skilgate. Nevertheless, I reject the objector's notion that the Plan's allocations of housing land are overly weighted towards development in the north of the West Somerset District; that is a consequence of the distribution of population. I note that 14 of the 16 committed dwellings at Brushford are at the Carnarvon Arms. Although the objector speculates that will not provide affordable housing, that fact nevertheless does not in my view justify the development of the Ellersdown Lane land.

8.10C.2.1. RECOMMENDATIONS

I recommend that no change be made in the settlement limit of Brushford and that land to the north of Ellersdown Lane be not allocated for residential development on Inset Map 3.

8.10C. GENERAL NOTE ON MINEHEAD

With regard to housing development in Minehead I accept the LPA's assessment that there is land for 247 dwellings on non-allocated sites and that there are existing commitments for 397 dwellings. In all, those account for 56% of the District's global need to 2011. The Urban Capacity Study carried out for the LPA in 2001 identifies a potential windfall sites capacity of 450 to 480 dwellings within the urban area. Somerset County Council's 1999 Environmental Constraints Project using the methodology of Policy STR2 in the Joint Structure Plan Review 1999 defines a Blue Anchor Bay Character Area. The built up area of the town and the allocated greenfield land are contained within its boundary.

8.10C.3. LAND SOUTH OF WOODCOMBE, MINEHEAD

Objection

2058 The Hon R T Lytton

Issue

Whether land south of Woodcombe, Minehead, should be allocated for residential development and the settlement development limit adjusted accordingly.

Inspector's reasoning and conclusions

This omission site of about 3.3 ha consists of 3 open fields on the west side of Porlock Road. Its 150/165 dwelling capacity, based on the density advocated in paragraph 58 of PPG3, well exceeds the shortfall of dwelling provision in the District as a whole for the entire Plan period.. In view of the 7 to 9 year sufficiency of housing land I conclude that even if it were environmentally acceptable it is not needed to meet the housing demand until after the review of the Plan.

On the question of the effect of the development of the site on visual amenity I note that it is a substantial part of the buffer of open land around Minehead defined in the 1999 landscape character assessment as the Blue Anchor Bay - Minehead - Exmoor Fringe area. Its roadside hedgerows are a marked feature of the rural character of the western approach to Minehead. Their continuity, together with glimpses of the open land forming the site, would be lost were development to take place. Such development of the site would be damaging to the clear distinction between the rural and urban environments which is characteristic of both sides of the main road on this gateway to Minehead. In that connection I support the landscape character assessment in respect of the site and reject the claim that the settlement development boundary is arbitrarily drawn in this locality. I consequently find no justification to recommend changing the settlement development limit to allocate this omission site for residential development.

8.10C.3.1. RECOMMENDATION

I recommend that no modification be made in response to this objection.

8.10C.4. LAND SOUTH OF THE CEMETERY, PORLOCK ROAD, PERITON, MINEHEAD

Objection

348 Miss Thorne

Issue

Whether the settlement development limit of Minehead should be amended to include land south of the cemetery, Porlock Road, to allow for residential development

Inspector's reasoning and conclusions

This tract of pasture land is outside the settlement development limit and adjoins the cemetery extension to its south and recent residential development at Cuckoo Meadow to its east. Given that there is no dispute that satisfactory vehicular access to Porlock Road could be provided the objector considers that the LPA's proposed removal of the Special Landscape designation eliminates the principal constraint on the development of the site. However, it is part of the buffer of open land around Minehead defined in the 1999 Landscape Character Assessment as the Blue Anchor Bay - Minehead - Exmoor Fringe area. That status is supported by the visual link with the open land on the west side of Porlock Road, to which I refer above, resulting in the well-defined open green character of the entrance to Minehead from the west contrasting with the relatively sharp edge of the built-up area.

Although the site immediately adjoins the Cuckoo Meadow development the latter predates Policy 5 and paragraph 4.28 of the current Structure Plan, the updating of PPG13 with regard to the curbing of car use, and the guidance in PPG3 on the priority use of brownfield land. In this case, and notwithstanding the potential ease of road access, I consider the peripheral location of the site relative to Minehead town centre would discourage, contrary to the Plan's transport objectives, the general use of public transport, as would the distance of about 600m from the nearest primary school.

I deal at the head of this section of the report with the question of meeting the demand for residential development in Minehead. In view of the 7 to 9 year sufficiency of housing land I conclude that this site is not needed to meet the housing demand until after the review of the Plan. I therefore find no overriding justification to recommend the allocation of this site and consequent alteration of the settlement development limit.

8.10C.4.1. RECOMMENDATION

I recommend that no modification be made in response to this objection.

8.10C.5. LAND AT MINEHEAD RUGBY CLUB

Objection

202 Prowting Homes South-West Limited

Issue

Whether land at Minehead Rugby Club should be allocated for residential development and incorporated in the settlement development limit of Minehead.

Inspector's reasoning and conclusions

This greenfield site of about 1.4 ha consists of the south western part only of the land originally referred to in representation 202. It adjoins recent housing development to its west and is estimated to be capable of accommodating about 42 dwellings. It is not part of any policy area on the deposit draft Inset Map and was identified in Somerset County Council's 1999 Environmental Constraints Project using the methodology of Policy STR2 in the 1999 SP Review as falling within the Minehead Exmoor Fringe Sub-area of the Blue Anchor Bay Character Area. Hence the site would be subject to the proposed revised Policy LC/3 (PC28). In visual terms the development of the site would appear as a suburban extension of housing into the open space between Alcombe and the Exmoor National Park. Although the land is of Grade 2 agricultural quality in the DEFRA classification and protected by Policy A/2 it is not currently part of an agricultural holding. However, I do not consider that its present non-agricultural use outweighs its open status as part of the character area. I also bear in mind that the objection does not propose any mixed use units that in terms of Policy STR4 of the Structure Plan and PPG3 might be acceptable in locations where purely residential development would not be permissible. In that respect it is less suitable for development than the amended proposal for Dunster marsh.

In accordance with the guidance in PPG3 a requisite 5 year supply of land for residential development in the District exists. The existing 247 windfall dwellings and 397 commitments in the Minehead area account for 56% of the global District total to 2011. This is in the context of an existing 7 to 9 year supply of sites in the District. While the allocation of the objection site would increase that proportion by only 2% I consider that could undesirably temper the momentum of the development of brownfield sites in Minehead and fetter the LPA in its consideration of residential development in the District as a whole when the Plan is reviewed in 2006. In such circumstances I conclude that there is no justifiable current overriding need for the immediate allocation of such greenfield land as the objection site outside the settlement development limit.

8.10C.5.1. RECOMMENDATION

I recommend that no modification be made in response to this objection.

8.10C.6. MAPLES, ELLICOMBE, MINEHEAD.

Objection

465 Mr B Gurnett

Issue

Whether land at Maples, Ellicombe, Minehead, should be allocated for residential development in the light of the objective of RPG10 that the bulk of new housing should be concentrated in and around main urban areas to obviate the need for large scale development at Dunster Marsh.

Inspector's note

This approximately 2.4 ha site is the southern part of the larger deposit objection site at Minehead Rugby Club which I deal with immediately above.

Inspector's reasoning and conclusions

The site is within the Blue Anchor Bay Character Area (Minehead Exmoor Fringe Sub Area) which is subject to Policy LC/3 as changed by PC28. It is part of an open backdrop to Minehead and

foreground buffer between the town and the Exmoor National Park with a characteristic landscape pattern of fields, hedges, trees, and woodland. Its south eastern corner, nearest the National Park boundary is overgrown and of wildlife interest. The existing limit of development in this part of the town is clear cut whereas the development of the site would result in suburban extension into the open countryside about the town, contrary to the thrust of the Plan to direct further housing development to the existing urban area. Furthermore, the site is recognised as Grade II agricultural land, the development of which is contrary to Policy A/2 as changed by PC127, and Policies 7 and SS20 of the Structure Plan Review and RPG 10.

So far as the objection refers to Dunster Marsh, sites 6, 8, and 9 in the deposit Plan are withdrawn in subsequent changes and development at Higher Marsh Farm with a limited amount of affordable housing on site 6 as conceded by the LPA in the inquiry and recommended by me as a modification of Policy DM/1 in Chapter 10 of the deposit draft Plan. That amended proposal would use previously developed land as an element of a mixed use providing community facilities for the village. In a wider context the Plan recognises the importance of certain villages as service centres and balances rural development against the marked predominance of Minehead so far as it concerns housing provision. .

In the light of these considerations I consider the site at the Maples should not be allocated for residential development nor included within the settlement development boundary of Minehead.

8.10C.6.1. RECOMMENDATION

I recommend that no modification of the Plan be made in respect of this objection.

8.10C.7. LAND SOUTH OF HIGH STREET, STOGURSEY

Objections

- 278 The Diocese of Bath and Wells
- 279 The Diocese of Bath and Wells
- 280 The Diocese of Bath and Wells

Inspector's note

I deal here with objections 278, 278, and 280. Though objections 278 and 280 were registered as objections to Settlement Map 16 and Policy SY/2 respectively they are identical with objection 279.

Issue

Whether land south of High Street, Stogursey, should be allocated for part residential development with comprehensive amenity space and amendment of the settlement development limits.

Inspector's reasoning and conclusions

The objection site, a 3 ha tract of open pasture land, was identified as a potential housing site at the consultation stage of the Plan. The scheme also included open space in the form of a proposed playing field for Stogursey primary school at the rear of the school, together with a open public amenity area fronting Tower Hill/High Street. The two latter elements, but not the housing, are retained in the draft deposit Plan; the objections advocate the restoration of the allocation of land for housing.

The location of the site in the Quantock Vale Character Area (Eastern Lowlands Sub-Area) is subject to Policy LC/3 (PC28) and its northern and eastern boundaries abut the Stogursey Conservation Area. Development here would encroach on the village's attractive open countryside surroundings, contrary

to Policies SP/5 (PC13) and LC/3 (PC28) that seek to protect the countryside for its own sake in accordance with the national guidance in PPG7. Save for the gap of open land south of High Street/Tower Hill that is proposed on Settlement Map 16 as public open space this part of Stogursey has a notably clear cut edge.

Stogursey is defined as a (new) Policy SP/3 (PC9) village where Policy H/1 Site 5 is allocated commensurate with the expected rate of growth. That site will provide 45 dwellings with a more comprehensive range of community benefits than the objection site. In addition a small number of sites with unimplemented planning permission has been identified in the Residential Urban Capacity Study.. Against that background of provision I do not consider the allocation of further land for housing appropriate. .

The LPA considers that if future growth of the village were sought in the post-2011 period the objection site could be a prime candidate for development consistent with (new) Policy SP/3 (PC9). In the absence of knowledge of what other sites might be in contention and in competition with the objection site at any future date it is not appropriate for me to comment on that, save to note that the current landscape and conservation constraints would impose limitations on the design and layout of any development of the objection site and that the necessary access to High Street would intrude on the proposed public open space.

8.10C.7.1. RECOMMENDATION

I recommend that no modification be made in response to these objections.

8.10C.8.1. LAND AT THE QUARRY, WEST QUANTOXHEAD

Objection

340 Mr D Gliddon

Inspector's note

Although this omission objection site is about 2 ha in extent its developable area is claimed to be suitable for 12 dwellings or alternatively, having regard to the mineral working status of the site, for 2 dwellings on the road frontage. I therefore deal with this objection together with objections 339, 341, and 342 in relation to the Inset Map in section 10.20 of the Plan and Chapter 10 of this Report.

8.10C.9. BRIDGE STREET, WILLITON.

Objections

186 Somerset Property Services

370 Trustees of The Wyndham Estate

Issue

Whether this site, the playing field of a redundant first school, could be combined with the contiguous Wyndham Estate land as a housing site in preference to Site 3 (Land behind North Street, Williton)

Inspector's reasoning and conclusion

In support of this omission site Somerset County Council points out that the allocated site (3) is in multiple occupation with access in other ownership and might be difficult to bring forward. The proceeds of its disposal would benefit the public. As well as being easier to develop, the Wyndham

Trustees consider this site ideally located near the village centre with the possibility of adequate site access. Its development would recognise Williton as the Plan area's second priority location for development after Minehead.

This 1.2 ha site adjoins but is outside the development limits of the town. It is not subject to any specific protective designation but lies in the Central West Somerset Character Area and the Area of High Archaeological Potential which includes most of Williton. The site was identified for residential development site at the consultative stage of the Plan but was not pursued in the deposit draft.

At this western edge of the built-up area of Williton there is a markedly sharp break between the town and its surrounding countryside notwithstanding the relative proximity here of open land to the centre of the town. The site is also part of the open setting of the parish church. Development here would contravene Policies SP/5 as changed by PC13 and LC/3 as changed by PC28 to the detriment of the particularly clear cut and visually pleasing distinction between town and country which still prevails on this side of Williton. Unlike the existing settlement boundary, it would provide a less defensible westward boundary against the encroachment of further development.

I note that the potential resources of housing land in Williton comprise not only the allocated Site 3 but also those identified in the RUCS and unimplemented planning permissions. In the light of this I am not persuaded that, based on the past rate of growth, there is need for a further formal allocation of land for the period to 2006. Notwithstanding its location no part of the site has been previously developed. That contrasts with Site 3, largely previously developed land, which would round off the developed areas to its north and south and has access to central facilities equal to those of the omission site. The Plan comments in paragraphs 8.1.36 and 10.21.5 on the likelihood of the development of Site 3 later in the plan period. In those circumstances it appears to me that its fragmented occupation is of lesser significance than claimed by the objectors. For all these reasons I consider the site should not be included inside the development boundary of Williton nor allocated for residential development. . .

8.10C.9.1. RECOMMENDATION

I recommend that no modification be made in response to these objections.

8.10C.10. LAND NORTH OF MAMSEY HOUSE, WILLITON

Objector

- 2025 Mr W Vaughan
- 2049 Mr & Mrs P Bramidge
- 2184 J R Carter
- 2191 Mrs A Vaughan
- 2210 Mr R Coleman
- 2234 Mr K Cordingley
- 2242 Mrs E Peeks
- 2492 Ms K E Molyneux
- 2494 Mr M J Gibbins
- 2508 W P Cleere
- 2514 Mr R L Tucker

Issue

Whether land North of Mamsey House should be allocated for residential development in preference to Land East of Williton.

Inspector's reasoning and conclusions

This tract of agricultural land, to the north east of and adjoining the development limits of Williton, is identified within the Special Landscape Area on the Williton Inset Map but that designation is now superseded by the Central West Somerset Character Area (Carhampton to Quantock Coastal Hills Sub-Area) which is subject to Policy LC/3 as changed by PC28. It was not the subject of objection at the deposit stage of the Plan and the objections are inappropriately made in proposing a new site in response to the proposed changes. Consequently it has not been assessed by the LPA, who suggest it be examined when post-2006 development at Williton is considered. In the circumstances I find no case for its inclusion in the development boundary of Williton nor for its allocation for residential development.

8.10C.10.1. RECOMMENDATION

I recommend that no modification be made in response to these objections.

8.10C.11. LAND EAST OF WILLITON CHANGES NOS 191, 194, AND 261

Objections to the October 2000 version of PC191

2000	Mr M Williams
2002	Una G Uzunhasan
2004	Mr J E Holden
2006	Mrs P Holden
2010	Mr A C Machin
2012	Mrs B Machin
2013	Mrs D Scott
2014	Mr and Mrs A Harris
2016	Mr A Jarrett
2020	Mr A Guest
2021	Mr and Mrs Richards
2023	Mr J E Noble
2025	Mr W Vaughan
2027	Mrs J Beaver
2029	Mr G H Beaver
2037	J R Langridge
2041	Mr D Richards
2042	Mrs M B Milnes
2044	Rachael David
2045	D M Groves
2047	G J H Fry
2049	Mr and Mrs P Bramidge
2051	Sampford Brett Parish Council
2052	Mrs M Gadd
2054	Mr and Mrs J Griffiths

West Somerset District Local Plan Report on Objections

2056	S M Godfrey
2058	Mr R G Godfrey
2060	Williton Parish Council
2061	Mr J Hesford
2069	Mrs A Rigby
2071	Ms J Killick
2074	Mrs I Whitfield
2076	Mrs M Fountain
2078	Mr J Hitchcock
2080	Mr R Hitchcock
2091	Williton Village Hall Steering Committee
2094	Mrs R Lawrence-Mills
2172/3	Mr H Cooper
2175/6	Mrs A Cooper
2178	Mr J W Carslake
2180	Mrs J J Carslake
2182	Mrs K Rawson
2184	J R Carter
2191	Mrs A Vaughan
2193	Mrs I Pirie
2194	Mr B Gurnett
2195	J V Hayes
2197	Kim Noble
2199	Anne Russell
2200	Mr F Morgan
2202	Mr G Knott
2204	Mrs P Knott
2205	Mr D Chidgey
2206	Mrs P M Chidgey
2208	J Boyd
2210	Mr R Coleman
2211	Cheltenham Builders Ltd
2214	Mr A Woollam
2216	Melanie J Woollam
2218	C Duck
2220	Mrs J Y Duck
2222	Mrs V M Stevens
2224	W H Harris
2226	Mr M and Mrs P G Scarlett
2227	Mr R D Murray
2230	W M Moore
2232	Williton Action Group
2234	Ken Cordingley
2236	Joan I Cordingley
2238	Mrs S E Cleere
2244	Mr and Mrs G Fishlock
2246	Sidney Junes
2265	House Builders Federation
2279	Mr R McKee

West Somerset District Local Plan Report on Objections

2276	B L Thomas
2281	Miss June Gregory
2297	Somerset County Council Environment and Property Dept
2300	Mr and Mrs David Chuter
2301	A P Dove
2303	J Holroyd
2308	C R Durham
2313	John Allison
2314	Frances Allison
2316	Cilla Webb
2318	Chris Webb
2320	Mr B Gliddon
2322	Mrs M Gliddon
2323	Mrs J E Mundy
2325	A Saunders
2327	D Saunders
2335	Mr B H and Mrs S C Biggs
2337	Mr B H and Mrs S C Biggs
2340	D F Clark
2343	Grace Jean Housden
2344/5	F G Stanford
2346	L W Woodward
2348	Rita G Leitch
2349	Mr and <Mrs T H Mallett
2352	Mr M Howe
2354	Mrs E Howe
2359/60	Mr R W and Mrs M A Miles
2362	Mrs Melanie Johnston
2363	A R Hayes
2365	Mrs V A Hayes
2368	Vera J Lang
2370	Mr A J Mundy
2374	South West RSL Planning Consortium
2408	Environment Agency South West Region
2463	C P R E
2478	Mr R G Eglinton
2479	B K Mandzies
2481	P H Rawson
2483	K J Williams
2484	Trustees of the Wyndham Estate
2486	Nicholas Holden
2488	Miss Nicola Egglestone
2490	Miss D Williams
2492	Mds Kate E Molyneux
2494	Mr M J Gibbins
2496	Mrs A Bishop
2498	K Bishop
2508	W P R Cleere
2510	Roy Tandy

West Somerset District Local Plan Report on Objections

2512	Jayne Tandy
2516	J Weedon
2518	George Lewis
2519	Ann Lewis
2521	V J Broomfield
2523	Richard David
2524	Mr M J Nicholas
2526	Mrs J Nicholas
2528	Nora Stephens
2530	Mrs G Day
2532	Alan Preece
2541	Crown Estates Commissioners
2542	Crown Estates Commissioners
2543	Crown Estates Commissioners
2551	D Gliddon
2555	Turner Holden
2596	Mr R Hutchings
2599	Mr G Bosley
2611	Mrs L E Barnes
2705	Mr J R Langley

Omission site proposers:

Of additional housing on the land east of Williton

359	Dr Wyndham
364	Mr D Gliddon
373	Trustees of The Wyndham Estate
2285	Somerset County Council
2289	Somerset County Council
2308	Mr C R Durham
2600	Mr G Bosley

Of additional housing on the land east of Williton and on adjacent land

451	Chanin and Thomas
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Supporters of the 200 dwelling proposal (October 200)

2008	A M and J M Sylvester
2289	Somerset County Property Services

Supporter of the requirement for play space

2501	Sport England
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Inspector's note

In terms of the number of representations made, the question of housing development on land east of Williton was the most controversial subject in the draft deposit Plan before the final revisions in PC191, PC194, and PC261. This 16.5 ha site comprising land east of Williton was not identified in the draft deposit Plan although it had been defined as a potential mixed development site with housing as the primary use in a consultation document in 1992. However, it was promoted in objections 359, 364, 373, and 451 on account of the high level of services in the centre of the town and the absence of constraints to the development of the site. It was identified as an additional site (Policy H/1 Site 10) for 200 dwellings in the revision of the Plan in PC191 published in October 2000. In the subsequent revised proposed changes dated October 2001, on which this report is based, PC191 is altered, omitting the land east of Williton, and a revision of PC194 deletes the extensive explanatory text regarding the now superseded proposal allocating land for 200 dwellings. PC188, to which I refer above, signals a search for land for about 80 dwellings at Williton from 2006.

Inspector's reasoning and conclusion

In terms of paragraph 67 of PPG3 the site could be recognised as an 'urban extension' area in relation to the existing built-up area and the opportunity for a mixed-use scheme. The land is not subject to any statutory or non-statutory nature conservation designations. Williton is identified as a Rural Centre in PC5 providing modern services for a rural hinterland including the Brendon Fringe and North Quantocks. It is favourably located on the A39/A358 road network. While Policy STR4 of the Structure Plan recognises Minehead as the only town in the District in strategic terms, growth there is tightly constrained by its landscape setting and educational facilities. However, Williton is important in the next tier of settlement in the District and 156 dwellings are allocated to it.

A connector road between the A358 and A39 would ease traffic flows to existing residential areas and the existing Williton Industrial Estate. It could relieve traffic pressure on the centre of the town; diverting work, shopping, and leisure trips to adjoining areas from the North Street/High Street junction. There would also be relatively convenient access to the West Somerset Railway station though current services are an exclusively leisure activity. The area could be served by the diversion of bus routes which I consider of reasonable frequency for a rural area. A good public footpath system already serves the site.

In terms of the considerations above I conclude that as a site for the more modest development which the LPA envisages from 2006 the Land East of Williton is not without planning merit as a development area notwithstanding its recent planning history. However, the RUCS shows a disbalance in potential sites between Williton (20), Watchet (70) and the villages (122), with the Williton figure concealing about 100 dwellings for which unimplemented planning permission exists. Nevertheless, beyond the allocation of land to the rear of North Street (Site 3) there remains a shortfall in the Plan area as a whole. Consequently, PC188 supports the identification of sites for about 80 further units in the review of the Plan for the period from 2006.

PPG25 draws attention to the avoidance of flood risk which in this case restricts the developable area of the site. The greenfield nature of the site generally militates against its allocation in terms of the up to date advice in PPG3 in addition to the policies of the Structure Plan (STR1) and RPG10 (VIS2). That constraint gains further weight from the RUCS reduction of the residual dwelling allocation total under Policy H/1 from 300 to 206 units. The area is currently in agricultural use and though claimed by objectors as a significant public amenity that is restricted to the footpath system over this privately owned site.

With regard to road usage and safety the residential capacity of the site is likely to exceed job opportunities in Williton, leading to commuting which in view of the frequency of bus services would be likely to be car-borne, contrary to the national and local transport policies. Furthermore, both the

A39 and A358 roads have significant accident histories, suffering from substandard alignments, few passing opportunities, and a mixture of high-speed and slow traffic.

The connector road could have a serious impact on the landscape that would need to be mitigated by careful landscaping design to accord with Policy T/3 as changed by PCs 164 and 165 and Policy LC/3 as changed by PC28. Such matters would have to be subject to a detailed planning brief. In more general terms the development of the site would have a disruptive impact on the character of the landscape of the locality, affecting many local views together with those from more distant locations to the north and east.

As for the site's location in relation to the existing settlement the walking distances from the centre of the site to such key facilities as food shops or the primary school exceed the 600m advised in Annex A of RPG10. While land north of Mamsey House is put forward in some objections as an alternative site that is not the subject of a duly made objection. It nevertheless is open to the LPA to consider it in the review of the period from 2006. In the mean time I consider that the fact that the site is greenfield land and its development would have a detrimental impact on the character of the landscape weighs against its allocation and the concomitant extension of the settlement development boundary at the present time. As almost all of the numerous objections refer to the former 200 dwelling proposal rather than the updated proposal withdrawing the site I consider that in so far as they refer to that greater volume of development they are met.

8.10C.11.1. RECOMMENDATION

I recommend that the Plan be modified by PC191, PC194, and PC261.

8.11. CHANGE NO 192

Objection

2296 Somerset County Council

Issue

Whether there should be inserted 'The construction of one further road junction only will be permitted direct on to Seaward Way, which, dependent upon the scale of the development proposed, may require the provision of a ghost island for traffic turning right off Seaward Way'.

Inspector's reasoning and conclusion

I concur with the LPA's agreement that additional text to clarify the future arrangements for vehicular access to Site 2 is required. However, I consider that is suitably provided in PC192, which I support.

8.11.1. RECOMMENDATION

I recommend that the Plan be modified by PC192.

8.12. PARA 8.1.36 AND CHANGE NO 193

Objection

454 Chanin and Thomas

Issue

Whether the proposed number of new houses for Williton is totally inadequate, bearing in mind that the town has existing shopping and commercial facilities to absorb expansion and would take a lot of pressure off Minehead into the 21st century.

Inspector's reasoning and conclusion

PC188, to which I refer above, embraces a more significant level of development at Williton than was envisaged in the deposit draft Plan with additional land for about 80 units to be identified for development from 2006. As the amendment of paragraph 8.1.36 by PC193 refers only to site 4 I discern no justification for further modification of that text.

8.12.1. RECOMMENDATION

I recommend that the Plan be modified by PC193

8.13. PARA. 8.1.37 & CHANGE NO 195

Objection

847 Government Office for the South West

Issues

- (i) The conditions under which an element of affordable housing may be sought on the site
- (ii) The requirement to contribute to the provision of public facilities.

Inspector's reasoning and conclusion

Issue (i)

Paragraph 38 of PPG3 states that while the LPA may seek the provision of affordable housing it cannot require it. That is appropriately acknowledged in PC195.

Issue (ii)

The provision of public benefits should be directly related to the proposed development, fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind and necessary for the development to proceed. In that context GOSW questions the justification for the developer of a site of 30 dwellings to contribute to a burial ground, public car parking and toilets. Nor, in the view of GOSW, should the LPA seek to require applicants for planning permission to enter into agreements with third parties, in this case the parish council. Land should be allocated for such facilities independently of the housing proposals.

Although the LPA states that the proposals for community facilities are agreed between the District Council, the parish council, and the landowner, any obligation to provide such facilities in association

with the housing development should not, provided that in other respects the facilities conform with the criteria above, involve the parish council as a party. In my view the amendment of the paragraph by PC195 meets the objections.

8.13.1. RECOMMENDATION

I recommend that the Plan be modified by PC195.

8.14. PARA 8.1.42

Objection

738 Environment Agency-South West Region

Issue

The identification of on-site and off-site works to be sought of the developer.

Inspector's reasoning and conclusions

This objection was made in relation to Site 8 at Dunster Marsh. As the site is withdrawn by PC196 it does not fall to me to make any recommendation.

8.15. PARA 8.1.46 AND CHANGE NO 196

Objections

146 Council for the Protection of Rural England

636 Mr and Mrs Achurch

848 Government Office for the South West

Inspector's note

PC196, which I support, is a consequence of substantial changes in the deposit Plan regarding Dunster Marsh. I consider it satisfies the objections to these 2 paragraphs by deleting paragraphs 8.1.40-48.

8.15.1. RECOMMENDATION

I recommend the Plan be modified by PC196.

8.16. PARA. 8.1.49 & CHANGE NO 197

Objection

976 Somerset County Council

Inspector's note

This objection is conditionally withdrawn in response to PC197 which appropriately clarifies the definition of activities permissible outside towns, rural centres, and villages.

8.16.1. RECOMMENDATION

I recommend that the Plan be modified by PC197.

8.17. POLICY H/2

Objection

302 Community Council for Somerset

Issue

Whether Policy H/2 should include a reference to supplementary planning guidance as a result of a village design statement exercise

Inspector's reasoning and conclusion

I consider criterion (ii) of Policy H/2 satisfactorily incorporates design considerations in the context of the Building Design policies and that no further elaboration in the form of reference to supplementary planning guidance or village design statements is required.

8.17.1. RECOMMENDATION

I recommend that no modification be made in response to this objection.

8.18. PARA. 8.1.52 & CHANGE NO 198

Objection

147 Council for the Protection of Rural England

Supporter of PC198

2465 Council for the Protection of Rural England

Inspector's note

PC198, which I support, meets the objection by following national guidance on the imposition of a trial period to demonstrate the viability of an agricultural holding.

8.18.1. RECOMMENDATION

I recommend the Plan be modified by PC198.

8.19. PARA. 8.1.54 & CHANGE NO 199

Objection

149 Council for the Protection of Rural England

Supporter

978 Somerset County Council

Supporter of PC199

2466 Council for the Protection of Rural England

Inspector's note

PC199, which I support, meets the objection by usefully updating and clarifying the criteria for assessing the justification for permitting agricultural workers' housing.

8.19.1. RECOMMENDATION

I recommend that the Plan be modified by PC199.

8.20. POLICY H/3 & CHANGE NO 200

Objection

979 Somerset County Council

Inspector's note

This objection is conditionally withdrawn in response to PC200 which clarifies that the criteria of the policy apply to all agricultural or forestry dwellings that are subject to occupancy conditions.

8.20.1. RECOMMENDATION

I recommend that the Plan be modified by PC200.

8.21. CHANGE NO 201

Objection

2375 South West RSL Planning Consortium

Issue

Whether the Plan should include a more local definition of affordable housing related to local circumstances and characteristics and linked to the findings of the 1999 Housing Needs Study.

Inspector's reasoning and conclusions

PC201 inserts an additional explanatory paragraph which fills a gap in the Plan by helpfully defining affordable housing in terms of the strategic Policy 35 of the Structure Plan Review, regional guidance in Policy HO3 of RPG10, and national guidance in the revised PPG3, PPG11, PPG12 and Circular 6/98. In PC202 the LPA signifies its intention to take account of its 1999 Housing Needs Study in the revision of paragraphs 8.1.56-61 of the Plan. I refer to that below.

8.21.1. RECOMMENDATION

I recommend that the Plan be modified by PC201.

8.22. PARA 8.1.56 & CHANGES NOS 202 AND 203

Objections

183 Somerset Property Services

849 Government Office for the South West

Objection to PC22

2376 South West RSL Planning Consortium

Issues

- (i) The definition of a full range of types of affordable housing.
- (ii) The need for affordable housing.
- (iii) The updating of the 1999 Housing Needs Study.

Inspector's reasoning and conclusions

Issue (i)

PC201, that I recommend above, adds a new paragraph defining in detail the types of affordable housing in terms conforming with the national guidance in PPG3, PPG10, and Circular 6/98. I consider its necessary insertion fills an otherwise serious gap in the Plan.

Issues (ii) and (iii)

The LPA acknowledges the need to review paragraphs 8.1.56-61 of the Plan to take account of the detailed information in the 1999 Housing Needs Study and its Housing Strategy (2002-5). I concur

with the inclusion of the detailed information in the supporting text. However, as PC202 is only an admission of the need for modification and not a proposed textual change I shall merely recommend that the LPA address the matter. Summary details from the Housing Needs Study are proposed to replace 1993-based survey information. In addition to PCs 202 and 203 I support the inclusion of this detailed text on housing need and the target for the provision of affordable housing.

8.22.1. RECOMMENDATIONS

I recommend that the Plan be modified:

- (i) By PC202; and**
- (ii) By the insertion of the following paragraphs after paragraph 8.1.56:**

The Council's Housing Strategy (2002-5) contains various data and key findings which provide an overview of the housing problems experienced in West Somerset, which include:

- 1,210 households on the Council's Housing Register/Waiting List at April 2002**
- 618 (51%) of applicants live in Minehead/Alcombe, Watchet, or Williton at April 2002.**
- There were 217 homelessness applications in 2001-2, of which the Council accepted 102.**
- The average household income in West Somerset in 2000 was £18,600, with 50% of household incomes below £15,000.**
- The average house price in West Somerset in 2002 was £131,195.**
- The average weekly rent of a private 2 bedroom house in West Somerset in July 2002 was £100.**

Affordable Housing Target

The 1999 Housing Needs Survey identified a total affordable housing need of 1,394 units up to 2004. This was to be met through several sources which include: 750 re-lets of existing housing association rented accommodation units and 150 units of new housing association accommodation (114 units built and projected full provision by 2004/5).

The survey also estimated 210 new subsidised affordable homes are required during the period 2000-6 and a further requirement for 100 units of low-cost market housing over the same period. By the end of 2001/2 this total of 310 units remained to be developed. In pro-rata terms an allowance of some 60 units of this total will be provided in Exmoor National Park, leaving a requirement in the Plan area of 250 units up to 2006. The projected target for the final phase of the Local Plan (post 2006) will be assessed during 2005/6 when an overall review of housing provision will take place.

To reach the defined target the Plan requires about 20% of dwellings on site allocations under Policy H/1 and windfall allocations under Policy H/4 to be affordable. For the latter, the percentage allowance will be assessed at the time a planning application is submitted on the basis of criteria (i) to (iv) of the Policy.

(iii) By PC203; and

(iv) By the following amendment of paragraph 8.1.60:

About 450 dwellings are expected to be permitted on Urban Capacity Potential/Windfall sites during the Plan period. A large number of these will be on small sites or involve the conversion of one dwelling into 2 or 3 units. Occasionally a windfall site may arise through, for example, redevelopment resulting in a larger number of dwellings. In accordance with paragraph 10 of Circular 6/98 and RPG10, where a need can be identified an element of affordable housing will be negotiated on sites of 15 or more dwellings or 0.5 ha or more in Minehead or 5 or more dwellings or 0.2 ha in the Rural Centres of Watchet and Williton. For villages, a zero trigger threshold applies so that where a need for affordable housing exists, some provision will be secured even on the smallest site, often on a one-for-one basis. These thresholds reflect the relatively limited housing opportunities in the rural settlements in the context of the pressing need for affordable accommodation in local communities.

8.23. POLICY H/4, PARAS 8.1.59 & 8.1.60, CHANGES NOS 204 AND 205 AND POLICY OMISSION - AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Objection

206 Prowting Homes South-West Limited

Conditionally withdrawn objections

150 Council for the Protection of Rural England

980 Somerset County Council

Objection to PC203

2266 House Builders Federation

Inspector's note

Objections 150 and 980 are conditionally withdrawn in response to PC203. Which updates the reference to national policy and clarifies the thresholds for an affordable dwelling requirement.

Issues

- (i) The updating and revision of the definition of affordable housing.
- (ii) The need to refer to low cost market housing; the LPA's housing needs assessment; and the justification for the threshold requirements of affordable housing.

Inspector's reasoning and conclusions

Issue (i)

PC203 appropriately updates the reference to national policy. I note that PC201 revises paragraph 8.1.56 to include reference to low cost market housing.

Issue (ii)

I concur with the LPA's justification for applying a range of thresholds in seeking affordable housing in terms of the proposed replacement H/4 Policy which is explained in a proposed replacement paragraph 8.1.60.

8.23.1. RECOMMENDATIONS

I recommend that the Plan be modified

(i) by PC203; and

(ii) by the replacement of paragraph 8.1.60 by the following text:

About 450 dwellings are expected to be built on Urban Capacity Potential/Windfall sites within the Plan period. A large number of these will be on small sites or involve the conversion of one dwelling into 2 or 3 units. Occasionally a windfall site may arise through, for example, redevelopment which will result in a larger number of dwellings. Where a need can be identified in accordance with paragraph 10 of Circular 6/98 and RPG10, an element of affordable housing the Local Planning Authority to negotiate the provision of a proportion of affordable dwellings on sites of 15 or more dwellings or 0.5 ha or more in Minehead or 5 or more dwellings or 0.2 ha in the rural centres of Watchet and Williton. For villages, a zero trigger threshold applies so that where a need for affordable housing exists, some provision will be sought even on the smallest site, often on a one-for-one basis. These thresholds reflect the relatively limited opportunities in the rural settlements in the context of the pressing need for affordable accommodation in local communities.

8.24. POLICY H/4 & CHANGES NOS 204 & 205

Objections

204 Prowting Homes South-West Limited

656 House Builders Federation

Supporter

400 Country Landowners Association

Conditionally withdrawn objection

637 Mr and Mrs Achurch

Objections to PCs 204 and 205

2267 House Builders Federation

2377 South West RSL Planning Consortium

2544 Crown Estates Commissioners

2556 Turner Holden

Supporters of PCs 204 and 205

2467 Council for the Protection of Rural England

2601 Mr G Bosley

Issues

- (i) Whether the intention to seek affordable housing should be the subject of a policy.
- (ii) Whether Policy H/4 should be modified in accordance with national policy in Circular 6/98 and the revision of PPG3 and in particular whether it should include reference to low cost market housing.
- (iii) The justification for reduced thresholds.
- (iv) Whether the threshold limit for Minehead should be reduced to 15 dwellings or 0.5 ha and there should be no threshold limit for other identified settlements. Conversely, whether the 25 dwelling threshold should apply to all settlements.
- (v) The flexible application of the proposed Policy in relation to the need for affordable housing and in particular the contributions sought in relation to other facilities.

Inspector's reasoning and conclusion

Issue (i)

The need for a policy regarding the provision of affordable housing is accepted by the LPA and is the subject of PC202 (above) and PC205. with which I concur.

Issue (ii)

Reference to 'low cost market housing' is incorporated as part of the general compass of affordable housing in PC201. I consider that explanatory citation appropriately meets the objections without further reference in the policy. .

Issues (iii)

Bearing in mind the nature of the settlement pattern of the Plan area, the thresholds proposed are consistent with the advice in paragraph 10 of Circular 6/98 and Policy HO3 in RPG10. The constraints which characterise the area are summarised in PC202 and are based on the Council's Housing Strategy. I agree that they justify a compelling case for the revised thresholds in PC205.

The Council's Residential Urban Capacity Study shows that potential or windfall sites in defined rural settlements in the Plan area will generally be small scale of about 5 or 6 dwellings or about 0.3 ha in area. Even in Minehead only a small number of sites subject to

Policy H/4 are likely to come forward. In this context I consider there is justification for reducing the thresholds further below the PC205 figures in line with the text proposed by the LPA.

Issue (iv)

Notwithstanding my above reference to Minehead, the town is of a different order of magnitude to all other settlements in the Plan area. The application of the 25 dwelling yardstick would mean that few if any development proposals would come forward in settlements where the LPA wishes to encourage the provision of affordable housing. I incline to agree with the LPA that its proposed tiered approach based on a town/rural centre/village settlement hierarchy is appropriate to the character of the range of localities in the Plan area.

Issue (v)

I consider that criteria (i) to (iv) of the proposed replacement Policy H/4 provide for an adequate degree of flexibility in the approach to affordable housing provision.

8.24.1. RECOMMENDATION

I recommend that the Plan be modified by PC204 and PC205, further modified as follows:

POLICY H/4

Based on the level of identified housing need of the area, affordable housing will be sought on development sites as follows:

**In Minehead on any development of 15* or more dwellings or 0.5 ha or more;
In Watchet and Williton, on any development of 5* or more dwellings or any residential site of 0.2 ha or more;**

In Brushford, Carhampton, Crowcombe, Dunster Marsh, Kilve, Stogumber, Stogursey, and Washford on any residential development site.

The following requirements will be taken into account in assessing proposals:

- (a) Site suitability in terms of proximity to local services and facilities and access to public transport;**
- (b) Particular costs associated with the development of the site;**
- (c) The need to realise other planning objectives that should be given priority in the development of the area;**
- (d) The number and type of outstanding planning permissions within the area.
(* Developers are not precluded from providing affordable housing on sites below this site threshold.)**

8.25. PARA. 8.1.60

Conditionally withdrawn objection

850 Government Office for the South West

Inspector's note

Objection 850 is conditionally withdrawn in response to PC204 and PC205 which state the affordable housing thresholds as policy. As I refer to and recommend the changes above I make no further recommendation here.

8.26. PARA. 8.1.61 & CHANGE NO 206

Conditionally withdrawn objection

852 Government Office for the South West

Supporter of PC206

2378 South West RSL Planning Consortium

Inspector's note

Objection 852 is conditionally withdrawn in response to the explanation by PC206 of the provision for affordable housing in rural settlements.

8.26.1. RECOMMENDATION

I recommend that the Plan be modified by PC206.

8.27. POLICY H/5 & CHANGE NO 207

Objection

301 Community Council for Somerset

Conditionally withdrawn objection

851 Government Office for the South West

Supporters

401 Country Landowners Association

1029 Old Cleeve Parish Council

Supporter of PC207

2379 South West RSL Planning Consortium

Inspector's note

Objection 851 is conditionally withdrawn in response to PC207, which appropriately deletes reference to management.

Issues

Whether the term 'affordable' should reflect a link between local incomes and housing costs rather than a general index or measure of cost, clarifying the term 'low cost' in criterion (i).

Inspector's reasoning and conclusions

I consider the deletion of 'low cost' by PC207, which I support, removes uncertainty about the interpretation of the Policy. I note that a definition of low cost market housing is included in PC201, though this form of provision is not recognised in terms of the Rural Exceptions Policy.

8.27.1. RECOMMENDATION

I recommend that the Plan be modified by PC207.

8.28. PARA. 8.1.63 & CHANGE NO 208

Conditionally withdrawn objection

981 Somerset County Council

Supporter

152 Council for the Protection of Rural England

Objection to PC208

2268 House Builders Federation

Inspector's note

Objection 981 is conditionally withdrawn in response to the clarification of the third sentence of paragraph 8.1.63 to refer to residential development.

Issue

Whether PC208 should provide a more flexible interpretation of the contribution that housing can make to the rural economy

Inspector's reasoning and conclusion

I consider that Paragraph 8.1.63 as amended by PC208 appropriately reflects the very limited effect that small-scale conversion schemes for 1 or 2 dwellings are usually likely to have on the economy of any locality.

8.28.1. RECOMMENDATION

I recommend that the Plan be modified by PC208.

8.29. POLICY H/6 & CHANGE NO 209

Objections

- 221 Greenslade Taylor Hunt
- 234 British Telecommunications plc
- 368 Turner Holden
- 626 Somerset Wildlife Trust

Supporters

- 502 Rural Development Commission
- 1030 Old Cleeve Parish Council

Supporter of PC209

- 2593 Somerset Wildlife Trust

Issues

- (i) Whether criterion (i) is appropriate in the context of the employment situation in the Plan area and in the light of the possible comparative impact of industrial or commercial uses on the one hand and residential use on the other.
- (ii) Whether a further criterion relating to the highway implications of business use should be added to the Policy.
- (iii) Whether the Policy should refer to the safeguarding of such protected species as bats or owls in the event of the conversion of a building to residential use.

Inspector's reasoning and conclusions

Issue (i)

The requirement of criterion (i) that every reasonable attempt should have been made to secure the business use of a building is held by objectors to be overly onerous on the grounds that it is not justified by the employment needs of the area and the loss of redundant industrial or commercial buildings is not likely to have an adverse effect on the local economy. Further, opportunities occur when the design, character, or location of a building mean its conversion to residential use is not detrimental to its fabric or may be the only realistic or economic use.

I consider the criterion accords with paragraph 3.15 of PPG7. In view of the limited nature of opportunity in the rural parts of the Plan area I accept that the assumption that its employment needs are not of significance is not well founded. In that context I note that the criterion supports the Local Plan Objective in section 6.2 of the plan regarding suitable development of buildings in countryside locations, an aim consonant with the Council's Rural Economic Development Programme. In the circumstances I discern no need to change the criterion.

Issue (ii)

As criterion (iii) of the Policy requires the accessibility to a building converted to residential use to be satisfactory I discern no necessity for further reference to traffic generation.

Issue (iii)

I concur with the LPA's acknowledgment that a reference to wildlife conservation is needed. However, it is appropriately provided by PC209.

8.29.1. RECOMMENDATION

I recommend that the Plan be modified by PC209

8.30. POLICY H/7

Objection

982 Somerset County Council

Issue

Whether the Policy should be reworded to reduce its negative emphasis.

Inspector's reasoning and conclusions

As a general principle policies should not be negatively expressed. I shall recommend an alternative wording.

8.30.1. RECOMMENDATION

I recommend that Policy H/7 be reworded as follows:

New protected buildings will be permitted provided that they are at an acceptable distance from existing livestock units, slurry lagoons, or tanks which could cause unavoidable odour or noise nuisance.

8.31. PARAS. 8.1.67 – 8.1.70 & CHANGE NO. 210

Conditionally withdrawn objection

983 Somerset County Council

Inspector's Note

Objection 983 is conditionally withdrawn in response to PC210 which recognises the need of gypsy sites for access to local services.

8.31.1. RECOMMENDATION

I recommend that the Plan be modified by PC210.

8.32. POLICY H/8 & CHANGE NO 211

Objections

222 Greenslade Taylor Hunt

1106 Somerset Association of Local Councils

Conditionally withdrawn objections

739 Environment Agency-South West Region

856 Government Office for the South West

Supporter of PC211

2409 Environment Agency-South West Region

Inspector's note

Objections 739 and 856 are conditionally withdrawn in response to PC211.

Issues

- (i) Whether, in the light of the policies relating to the rural area outside the development limits of settlements, gypsy sites should be allocated on the Proposals Map to avoid pressure for development in inappropriate sporadic locations.
- (ii) Whether the Policy should include a criterion requiring the active management of gypsy sites.

Inspector's reasoning and conclusions

Issue (i)

Circular 1/94 states that development plans may contain criteria-based policies for gypsy sites without necessarily identifying specific locations. I recognise that the nature of such sites militates against their location within settlement development boundaries. Nevertheless, Structure Plan 36 requires sites to be within reasonable distance of a settlement providing local services and facilities.

Issue (ii)

Notwithstanding the desirability of such control, the question of the management of gypsy sites falls outside the purview of the planning régime.

8.32.1. RECOMMENDATION

I recommend that the Plan be modified by PC211.

8.33. POLICY OMISSION

PHASING OF HOUSING DEVELOPMENT

Objection

627 Somerset Wildlife Trust

Issue

Whether the Plan should include a phasing policy to control the release of housing land.

Inspector's reasoning and conclusions

Phasing is endorsed in national policy in paragraphs 33 and 34 of PPG3. However, in prescribing the criteria for a review of the Plan in 2005/6 PC188 takes into account the contribution of potential and windfall sites identified in the Residential Urban Capacity Study prior to identifying an additional site at Williton for development in the 2006-2011 period. I consider that an inbuilt safeguard against overprovision. At the same time the settlement policies of Chapter 3 of the Plan militate strongly against the inappropriate future

development of greenfield sites. In the circumstances I do not find the objector's concern justified.

8.33.1. RECOMMENDATION

I recommend that no modification be made in response to this objection.

8.34. POLICY OMISSION

UNALLOCATED SITES

Objection

853 Government Office for the South West

Issue

Whether the Plan should include a policy on the residential development of unallocated sites to provide a positive and consistent basis for planning decisions.

Inspector's reasoning and conclusions

GOSW rightly stresses the important contribution of unallocated sites in meeting the Plan's housing requirement. However, I am satisfied that the policy changes in PCs 8 and 9 in Chapter 3 of the Plan express the appropriate criteria for the granting of planning permission for residential development on unallocated sites in the Plan area without the need for a further policy.

8.34.1. RECOMMENDATION

I recommend that no modification be made in response to this objection.

8.35. POLICY OMISSION

CONVERSION OF NON-RESIDENTIAL BUILDINGS

Objection

854 Government Office for the South West

Issue

Whether the Plan should include a policy for the conversion of non-residential buildings in settlements

Inspector's reasoning and conclusions

I have no doubt that the conversion of non-residential buildings in settlements can make a worthwhile contribution, assessed by the LPA as about 132 dwellings, towards meeting the Plan's housing requirement. Nevertheless, I am satisfied that the policy changes in PCs 8 and 9 in Chapter 3 of the Plan express the appropriate criteria for the assessment of such developments in settlements in the Plan area and in accordance with the national and regional advice in PPG3 and RPG10 respectively without the need for a further policy.

8.35.1. RECOMMENDATION

I recommend that no modification be made in response to this objection.

8.36. POLICY OMISSION

SUB-DIVISION OF HOUSING

Objection

855 Government Office for the South West

Issue

Whether the Plan should include a policy on the sub-division of dwellings

Inspector's reasoning and conclusions

The LPA expects about 102 new dwellings to emerge from the subdivision of existing residential units during the Plan's life. However, I am satisfied that the policy changes in PCs 8 and 9 in Chapter 3 of the Plan express the appropriate criteria for the assessment of such developments in the Plan area and in accordance with the national and regional advice in PPG3 and RPG10 respectively without the need for a further policy.

8.36.1. RECOMMENDATION

I recommend that no modification be made in response to this objection.
