

Ashurst and Colbury Parish Council's response to the proposed changes to the draft Local Plan; specifically SP33, Land at Knellers Lane.

We are particularly concerned about the creeping suburbanisation of our village, and the loss of its rural character; the diminution of the green buffer zone between Ashurst and West Totton; the impact on infrastructure, particularly traffic, public transport and pedestrian and cycle access, and the risk of flooding in this area.

### **Suburbanisation**

Ashurst is described as “(a) more dispersed village, with community facilities and residential development in a more linear pattern”. However there is a definite centre to the village;, centred around a small parade of shops, encompassing the area from the Co-Op to Ashurst station. The allocated site is in an area of low density development and fields (there are currently 16 houses in Knellers Lane, which is just under half a mile long) on the very periphery of the village, about a mile from the Co-Op and 1.5 miles from the station. The proposed allocation site in Knellers Lane suggests it could accommodate a development of 50 to 70 dwellings; such a development is completely inappropriate in this location. DP27 (Residential character of the Defined Villages) states “Development densities should reflect the strong built heritage of the Defined Villages, their locally distinctive character and location”. The draft Local Plan's Vision for 2043 is that *the inherent characteristics and local distinctiveness of the individual villages have been retained and enhanced...* This level of development is not in accord with either this vision or DP27.

### **Loss of green buffer zone between Ashurst and West Totton**

The A326 road widening scheme proposes widening the single carriage A326, which is adjacent to the fields bordering Knellers Lane, by adding a new dual carriageway and embankments between the existing A326 and Knellers Lane, and enlarging the roundabout between those two roads. This will be built on the fields which form part of the current green buffer between the village and West Totton, and will result in some tree loss on the corners of the roundabout. Planning application 15/00179 ( 11 dwellings and Park and Stride scheme, in approximately the same location as the proposed allocation site) was refused permission, in part because “The site lies outside the village boundary in the open countryside between Ashurst and West Totton characterised by a regular pattern of small and medium sized fields with traditional hedgerow boundaries. The proposed development would significantly encroach into this area resulting in the harmful and unnecessary loss of the open space and the landscape qualities which would bring the built-up edge of Ashurst much nearer to the conurbation of West Totton, thereby narrowing the strategically important green gap between the two settlements.” This reasoning has not changed, and the proposed provision to make “Provision of a landscaped buffer adjacent to Knellers Lane, to create a new village edge and to define the extent of the built up area to avoid

coalescence with land outside the National Park;” would not mitigate against the reduction of this “strategically important green gap”, particularly if the A326 widening scheme goes ahead.

DP25 states “Built development and changes of use which would individually or cumulatively erode the Park’s local character, or result in a gradual suburbanising effect within the National Park will not be permitted”. This allocation will undoubtedly result in a suburbanising effect on this New Forest village.

### **Infrastructure – traffic, public transport, pedestrian access**

The bus service is infrequent and will not suit the needs of most people who work. The train station is 1.5 miles from the proposed site, with no nearby bus stop. Residents will therefore be reliant on using cars to access services.

For example, the no. 6 Bluestar bus service between Southampton and Lymington is the only public bus service which serves Ashurst. The buses don’t run through the village at times of increased traffic congestion, due to the difficulty in navigating these roads; no buses run to Southampton between 07:08 and 09:21, nor for two hours mid afternoon. The buses run every 1 to 2 hours, and the last bus is at 19:28, leaving Southampton at 18:55. The buses to and from Lymington begin at 09:58, the last bus to Ashurst leaves Lymington at 17:25. These times will not suit most people who commute.

Foxhills and Knellers Lane are already extremely busy, with effectively one way traffic due to car parking along both roads, for several hours around school drop off and pick up times. There are episodes of gridlock, despite an unofficial one way system. The junction between Foxhills and Knellers Lane is very close to the proposed allocation site; major road reconfiguration would be needed to ensure safe traffic flow, particularly as residents would be very likely to use cars for transport in view of the infrequent and inconvenient bus service, and train station 1.5 miles away.

The proposed site is close to Foxhills School, and Knellers Lane is used for vehicle, cycle and pedestrian access to both Foxhills School and Hounsdown School in Totton, both from the village and West Totton. SP33 does not mention the need for safe access to the School as specified in SP38 and SP39, which seems an anomaly. Safe access is needed for all users of Knellers Lane, not just for access to the site, as any development will result in significantly increased car use in that area.

SP33 states *Traffic assessment to include enhancements to Knellers Lane to ensure safe access to the site, for both vehicles and pedestrians and cyclists.* However SP38 (Bartley) and SP39 (Landford) both state that there should be *Provision of suitable vehicular access onto (the site) and creation of pedestrian and cycle links and safe crossing points to the nearby primary school.*

## **Flooding**

Much of this part of the village is characterised as having a high or medium yearly chance of flooding. The current development site at Whartons Lane is regarded as having a small area at high risk of flooding; the current development has resulted in significantly increased flooding of neighbouring houses, so a larger development in an area more extensively impacted by high or medium risk of flooding is likely to result in major problems in the area.

## **Disproportionate impact on Ashurst**

Of the 7 proposed defined villages, Ashurst is the joint second smallest, with a population probably equal to Bartley and Cadnam, and with 500 more residents than Landford. Yet it is being proposed that we are to provide about 110 dwellings plus about 30 C2 (the planning application already received is for a 70 bed Care Home). This is far higher than that expected of any of the other villages, which have significantly larger populations. The other villages are expected to provide (apart from Brockenhurst which will provide none) between 30 to 55 dwellings, plus C2 housing in Lyndhurst and Sway. The three allocated sites in Ashurst would increase our population by about 20%, and the density of the new developments will lead to a suburbanising effect on one of the smaller defined Villages. Whilst we understand that there has not been much windfall development in Ashurst over the past few years, the proposed level of development in Ashurst is far higher than the level of windfall development, estimated as 20 dwellings per annum, expected across the National Park.