Ringwood Town Council

Response to consultation
Local Plan Part 2: Sites and Development Management
Main Modifications

Policy DM1

Although the Council welcomes the greater protection this revised policy gives to heritage assets, Members envisage working in partnership with the District Council (as outlined in paragraph d of the policy) to ensure there is no detrimental impact on the vitality and viability of the town centre as a result of this increased protection.

Policy DM2b / RING3

The Council is greatly concerned about the effect new policy DM2b will have on the RING3 site.

The Draft Mitigation Strategy explains that the use of new areas of public open space to provide SANGS has been given priority over aspirations to address shortfalls of public open space provision.

The District Council has acknowledged that Ringwood is significantly under provided in terms of formal open space and should have priority for recreation facilities as it is the least well served town in the district for its size. The RING3 site had been identified to provide new and improved facilities for cricket and bowls close to the town centre. The effect of policy DM2b on this site means this will no longer be possible.

The Council strongly disagrees with the inference that the protection of the New Forest is more important than the provision of facilities for residents. The proposed new requirement for SANGS takes priority over the provision of much needed formal open space, when the RING3 development site is within a few hundred yards of the boundary of the New Forest, which provides approximately 150 square miles of public recreation land for the enjoyment of local people. It is stated that the SANGS will be provided for walking with or without a dog, but in reality residents will undoubtedly use the Forest in preference to this “man-made” space.

The Council is also particularly concerned about the future maintenance of the proposed open space on the RING3 site. Land provided for SANGS should be available for public recreational use in perpetuity and will normally be transferred to the ownership of a public authority. Under current arrangements, it is expected that the District Council will look to the Town Council to take over the maintenance of on-site open space. Although contributions will be sought from the developer for future maintenance, these contributions have proved to be insufficient in the past to meet the cost beyond the first few years. As this would have a significant impact on the Council’s budget and work schedules, and would burden local taxpayers with additional costs for facilities that are already on the doorstep of the site, the Council is not willing to take on the responsibility for maintenance of the proposed on-site open space. The Council would want to be satisfied that the developer has put in place robust arrangements that will continue in perpetuity for the maintenance of this area, and that any failure to maintain will bring a liability back to the developer rather than the Council Tax payers.

The lack of supply of housing in the town is increasing prices in line with well-known economic principles relating to demand exceeding supply. The Town Council does not
accept that the developer of the RING3 site should be entitled to benefit from the higher prices they will achieve from the sale of properties without making some compensatory provision to address the shortfall in formal open space provision.

Neither existing planning policies, nor the proposed modifications, take account of the enhanced financial benefits that the developer will receive as a result of the pent up demand for housing accommodation in the town, which in turn will lead to higher prices for the developers’ properties.

The proposed introduction of policy DM2b will mean that the recreation facilities planned for RING3, which is reasonably close to the main centres of population, will have to move to the edge of town and be more remote from residents. That will also mean that access will be by car and the development will be carried out in the Green Belt.

In all of the circumstances, the Council requests that the application of proposed policy DM2b on the RING3 site be reviewed in order to bring about much needed formal open space as originally intended.

**Infrastructure Delivery Plan**

The Council has commented previously on this document in its responses to the Community Infrastructure Levy Draft Charging Schedule (letter dated 21st February 2012 and representation form dated 2nd May 2012).

The Council continues to be concerned that the IDP identifies some projects for Ringwood of which we have no knowledge and no local consultation has taken place. For example, the scheme to “improve connections through the cemetery to enable pedestrians to go through the site” would not be supported. In addition, the IDP still fails to include all of the projects identified in the Ringwood Town Plan, which was the result of extensive public consultation.

There is a very strong feeling locally that provision needs to be made for the previously proposed relief road, both to relieve existing congestion and to mitigate against the increased traffic that will result from the development of both the RING3 and the former Wellworthy sites. **The Council therefore requests that the relief road be included in the IDP for the benefit of all residents and road users.**

13th November 2013