

Report subject	Wessex Fields Site Development Strategy
Meeting date	18 March 2020
Status	Public Report
Executive summary	<p>This report is brought before Cabinet in order to determine the next steps in deciding the use of the land at Wessex Fields. It follows a period of public consultation and a public engagement day held on 7 January 2020 where attendees had the opportunity to suggest uses for the land fitting all the essential criteria of Financially Viable, Environmentally Sustainable and Socially Responsible.</p> <p>The scope of the consultation was specific to the theme of use for the land and not to the existing road scheme. Although this was inevitably discussed at the event the objective was limited to generation of ideas for the land use, not to gauge support for road.</p> <p>This report summarises the public feedback and proposes a course of action that reflects this whilst securing and safeguarding the future use of the site. The feedback preferred development which accommodates health, care, research and education themes as well as seeking to include key worker or affordable housing and realise the vision of the Living Lab.</p> <p>Any future development should incorporate plenty of open access green space to promote wellbeing and wildlife habitats, as well as improved controlled access to the hospital and improved transport links in forms fitting the essential criteria.</p> <p>The challenge of an increasingly ageing society which requires longer term care, additional support and a desire to remain active for as long as possible is clearly evident in Dorset, where the population comprises 28% of over 65s, 10% more than the national average. This challenge is identified in the Government's Industrial Strategy. The "Our Dorset" long term plan also supports this.</p>
Recommendations	<p>It is RECOMMENDED that:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. From the outcome of the consultation, the Cabinet are recommended to progress the three key themes broadly supported by the public: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health, Care, Research and education; • Affordable or Keyworker Housing; • Realising the vision of the Living Lab. 2. Cabinet delegates authority to the Director for Development in consultation with his senior officers to commission soft market testing to develop viable delivery options relating to the preferred use themes. Once completed, this will be reviewed by Cabinet with an estimate of a report in Autumn 2020.

Reason for recommendations	<p>Adopting the recommendation will demonstrate the Cabinet has listened to the public and will ensure the development of the land delivers an environmentally sound and leading-edge solution, carried out in a manner fitting the essential criteria the Council has identified for the project. The recommendation is a good fit with the following corporate priorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Sustainable Environment b. Dynamic Places c. Connected Communities d. Fulfilled Lives
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Portfolio Holder(s):	<p>Cllr Vikki Slade, Leader</p> <p>Cllr Mark Howell, Portfolio Holder for Regeneration and Culture</p>
Corporate Director	Bill Cotton, Corporate Director of Regeneration and Economy
Report Authors	Rachel Doe, Project Manager – Wessex Fields
Wards	Not applicable
Classification	For Decision

Background

- Following the decision made by Cabinet to pause the development of the A338 link road through the Wessex Fields employment site, a period of consultation was opened in order to gauge public opinion regarding how the land should or should not be used. The Local Plan review (currently in consultation) would enable the allocation of the land to be changed from employment use if required in order to accommodate a different use in the future, so the timing for this consultation was important.

The consultation

- The consultation format was agreed with Cabinet in early October 2019. The event was to be of a series of workshop style sessions with 30 minutes of presentation time at the beginning to set out the essential criteria any new ideas should meet (to be financially viable, environmentally sustainable and socially responsible) and present the masterplan work that has been done to date. Ideas could be generated and expressed in a number of ways. Feedback forms allowed detailed ideas for the site to be drawn and a post-it wall enabled quick “sound bite” style views to be expressed. The first of the three sessions of the day was filmed and after the event the video was available online to view, with the option to submit ideas and views electronically.

The Royal Bournemouth and Christchurch Hospital (RBCH) were consulted in accordance with the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) held between RBCH and the Council. The aims of the MOU include reducing congestion, encouraging sustainable transport, enhancing the public amenity of the wider site, and supporting the sustainable expansion of RBCH and the wider health and care provision to the population.

The event was originally scheduled for 19 November 2019 but was delayed due to the timing of the Parliamentary Election and impact of the pre-election purdah period. It was felt important to reschedule as quickly as possible in order to retain the engagement which had been started by publishing the first date. The next available

date to hold the event close to Wessex Fields was 7 January 2020. The consultation was held open for submission of ideas until the end of January 2020.

Event promotion and engagement

3. Utilising a variety of channels, communications activity helped to raise awareness for the Wessex Fields public engagement event and encouraged local residents, community groups and businesses to register their attendance on the 7 January 2020. Communications activities, engagement and reach are detailed in Appendix 1.

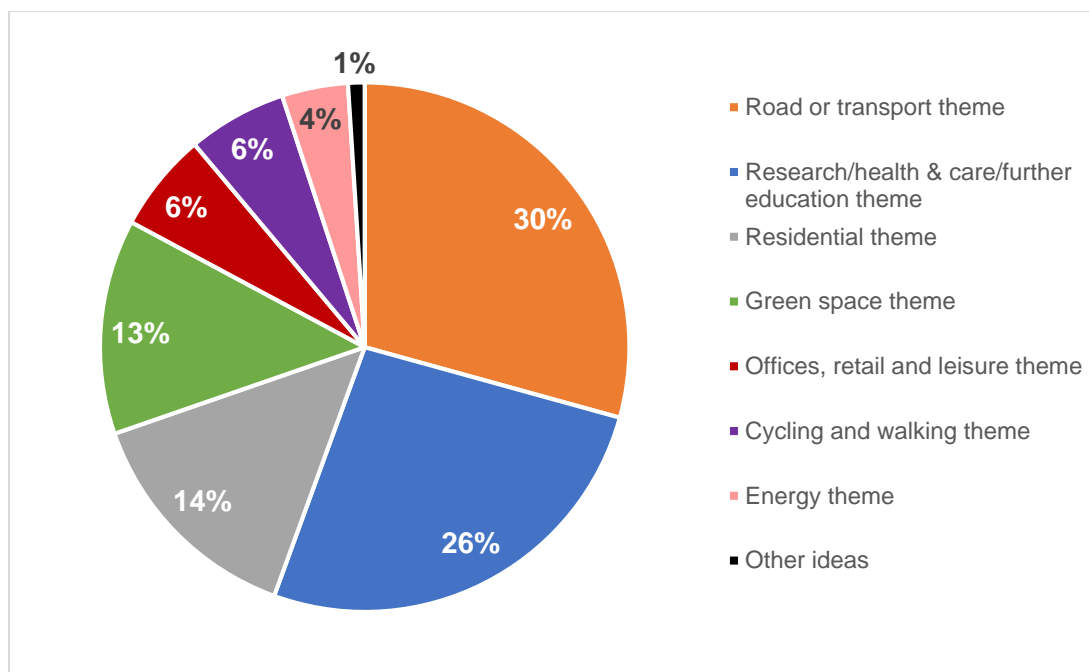
Feedback analysis

4. The feedback came in three formats:
 - a. Feedback forms from the day
 - b. Post-it notes from the day
 - c. Submissions made after the event by email

There were 108 total attendees at the event, over three sessions. These people completed 37 feedback forms and 240 post-it notes. There were also 28 submissions made subsequently before the consultation closed at the end of January. These delivered a number of positive themes - ideas of ways the land should be used, and negative or vetoed themes - ways the land should not be used. Specific topics within these themes have been broken down further. The full breakdown of the analysis can be found in Appendix 2. The feedback submissions are available as a background paper which includes feedback forms as well as the emails and submissions gathered after the event.

The summary is as follows:

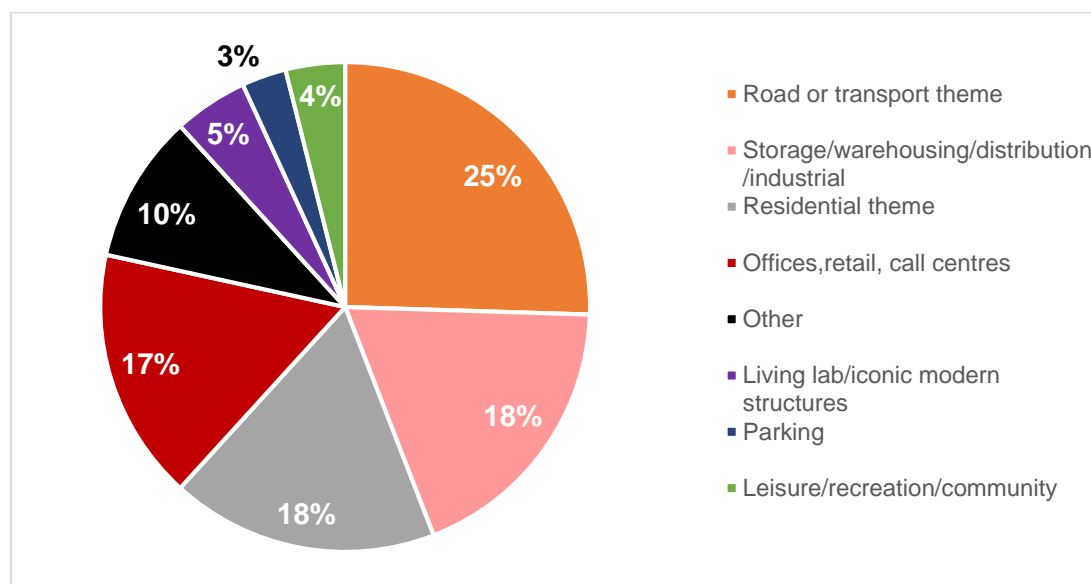
Positive, supported idea themes:



The top three topics within the positive themes were:

- i. Health, care, research & education uses – 15%
- ii. Keyworker or affordable housing – 13%
- iii. The “Living Lab” from the masterplan – 11%

Negative, unsupported idea themes:



The top three topics within the negative themes were:

1. Access to Deansleigh Road or Riverside Avenue – 12%
2. General/private housing – 11%
3. Retail – 8%

The most prevalent topics are discussed in more detail here:

Health, Care and Research: The ideas presented to promote health, care, research and education plus a move towards better caring for the increasing elderly population proved very positive. There were a similar number of people supportive of a large, iconic modern building as there were against, but the activities proposed to take place within the Living Lab were largely supported. The existing Retired Nurses National Home (RNNH) was mentioned in the feedback specifically with ideas to expand, re-site or renew the facilities they provide. This fits with the RNNH's own masterplan and could be followed up with them directly. There was support for a solution which enhances a sense of community, potentially a care home and self-contained apartments with 24 hour on-site care promoting better outcomes for the elderly. There was no feedback which was directly unsupportive of the health, care and research theme, although there was feedback unsupportive of any development at all.

Residential: It was broadly felt that key worker or affordable housing would be a useful element to include, although the increased vehicles were cited as a downside by some. The ability for key workers to walk to work at the hospital could form part of a solution to this concern. Private housing schemes received no support.

Roads and transport: The link road through to Deansleigh Road and the flyover across to the northbound A338 featured strongly in both the supported and not supported suggestions. It should be noted that more representations were made in favour of the road scheme (in some format) than against it. Cabinet, having reviewed the original scheme, decided that a connecting road to Deansleigh Road would not be progressed and remains unfunded.

The Royal Bournemouth and Christchurch Hospital will require a road connection to be built between the A338 slip road and roundabout to their site for hospital and bus use only.

A number of suggestions were made to include a public transport hub (rapid transport was mentioned by some) or a "park and ride" location. One suggestion was that if the flyover was not built then a loop to bypass Cooper Dean roundabout should be created. This would allow traffic to pull off the southbound Cooper Dean slip road on the right, go directly under the existing overpass (but not around the roundabout), and up the northbound slip road onto the A338.

Cycle and walking routes were a topic raised by a significant percentage, including improving the route across the A338 and beyond for cyclists, which will be an essential element of encouraging cycling in the area. Permeability within the broader Wessex Fields campus is currently very poor and this should be addressed in order to encourage walking and cycling.

Retail and offices: There were mixed feelings regarding the use of the land for these purposes. Some support was shown for local shops and café's but generally large-scale retail was not supported and office space was not widely supported as it was felt there was enough in the town centre.

Green space: This covers a variety of ideas including returning the field to crop production, wild habitat, community gardening/allotments, tree planting and nature reserves. It was felt important that if the site undergoes development it must be sympathetic in design and accommodate publicly accessible green open space with planting specifically to encourage bees and other wildlife.

Summary

5. The majority feedback supported health, care and research uses within the development, but ensuring congestion is not made worse and the environmental impact is mitigated by plenty of green spaces and provision of renewable energy.

The following uses were not supported and are therefore not proposed;

- General / private housing
- Large scale retail
- Warehousing / storage

Next steps

6. The recommendation is for Cabinet to proactively support the prevalent themes gathered during the consultation and pursue a development which accommodates a health, care, research and education theme. After consideration of the feedback against the essential criteria, officers consider this to be the correct route to follow. The development should seek to include key worker or affordable housing and the vision of the Living Lab. The development should incorporate plenty of open access green space to promote wellbeing and wildlife habitats, as well as improved controlled access to the hospital and improved transport links in forms fitting the essential criteria. In line with the feedback from the consultation and within the essential criteria, the next step is for Cabinet to agree the development of a programme to take forward this approach.

Cabinet is requested to authorise officers to undertake soft market testing ahead of developing viable delivery options to bring forward the site. This work should align to the recommended use and take into account the existing memorandum of understanding with the Royal Bournemouth and Christchurch Hospital, including the commitment to work together to help ease access issues at the hospital site. Options could include, for example, a joint venture with a preferred partner, sale of individual plots of land, an in-house delivery model or other delivery mechanisms. Further work is required with officers and stakeholders to create a realistic and achievable options appraisal which enables this delivery. This would be brought forward for approval within a timescale to be agreed with Cabinet, anticipated to be summer 2020.

A travel plan for Wessex Fields (with scope to be determined) will be developed as part of the subsequent steps to these immediate actions and a recommendation to carry this out will be included in the same Cabinet report as the results of the soft market testing.

7. The recommendation is a good fit with the following corporate priorities:
 - a. **Sustainable Environment – leading our communities towards a cleaner sustainable future that preserves our outstanding environment for generations to come.** By taking action to control the development on Wessex Fields the Council can ensure the most sustainable building methods

are used and a carbon neutral scheme is brought forward, with attention paid to providing accessible green spaces for communities and habitats for wildlife.

- b. **Dynamic Places – supporting an innovative, successful economy in a great place to live, learn, work and visit.** With innovation and education at the heart of a vision for Wessex Fields the Council can create a development which supports learning and research, creating opportunities for people to flourish.
- c. **Connected Communities – empowering our communities so everyone feels safe, engaged and included.** The provision of a well-designed environment for community accessible spaces and facilities, in a location on the border between Bournemouth and Christchurch.
- d. **Fulfilled Lives – helping people lead active, healthy and independent lives, adding years to life and life to years.** The location adjacent to the Hospital and to open green spaces provides an ideal place to tackle the challenge of an aging society in Dorset, delivering benefits for years to come.

Options Appraisal

8.

Option 1: Recommended

Accept the recommendation to take the next steps for action. Taking this option will demonstrate the Cabinet have listened to the public and will ensure the development of the land delivers an environmentally sound and leading-edge solution, carried out in a manner fitting the essential criteria identified for the project. The disadvantage to this option is that it commits the Council to particular outcome.

Option 2:

Reject the recommendation to take the next steps for action. This may undermine the public engagement undertaken as it dismisses the majority feedback which fits the essential criteria and loses the opportunities the site represents to the conurbation. It does defer the decision regarding the use of the land so could enable a future change of strategy if desired.

Option 3:

Re-adopt the original road infrastructure plans for the land in accordance with the feedback from the consultation which supported this use. This goes against Cabinet's previously stated position, which dismissed the use of the land for a flyover or link road through to Deansleigh Road. This would also not fit the essential criteria which have underpinned the consultation process.

Summary of financial implications

- 9. The support of external property agents will be required to undertake soft market testing with an appropriate level of marketing and exposure. This would be a fixed fee activity and is anticipated to fall into the £10-30k procurement category and will be funded from existing resources. As referred to in the Cabinet report dated 9/11/16, approval was granted for the use of borrowing to acquire approx 12 hectares of land (5.9 hectares employment land and 6.3 hectares greenbelt land) at this site. Pending the proposed soft market testing, any forthcoming options which reflect the preferred land use and the financial offer(s) will need to be considered against the scheduled capital sum repayment obligations.

Summary of legal implications

- 10. The Council has the relevant powers to proceed as recommended, and the consultation undertaken so far in respect of the future options supports the need for sound and robust decision making which considers all options and takes account of public and stakeholder views. There are no specific legal implications arising from the recommended actions contained in this Report.

Summary of human resources implications

11. There is no impact on human resources at this time beyond Business as Usual.

Summary of sustainability impact

12. By proactively utilising the land Cabinet can ensure the essential criteria are upheld for future development, putting sustainability at the forefront. This is vital, in line with the climate emergency and also as the option to do nothing with the land was removed from the table before the consultation because it did not fit the essential criteria of Financially Viable. Deciding on a course of action at this point enables Council control of how the development is delivered over the coming years.

Summary of public health implications

13. Through the adoption of a health, care, research and education themed development the benefits to the local community, the BCP Council area and to the wider Dorset region could be huge. With an aging population in Dorset it is vital to consider how the elderly are treated, to allow them as much time as possible to be healthy in their own homes and make provision for how they can be cared for in the future. Choosing to continue exploring health research will bring benefits to the public health network and to the local economy.

Summary of equality implications

14. The consultation regarding the use of the land was undertaken across a number of channels, including a physical event, online and by post. At the event attendees could feedback in the form of a fully written feedback form, a drawn plan or simple post-it notes, with officers in attendance to assist as well. The event format was developed in conjunction with the BCP Council Insight Manager. This multi-channel approach ensured good accessibility for all, in accordance with Council policy. Any future development would comply with all equality and diversity requirements, and indeed would aim to be an exemplar given its specific focus.

Summary of risk assessment

15. Should the recommended option not be taken forward there is a reputational risk to the Council, as the result of the consultation would be undermined. By adopting a do nothing approach there is the risk that in the future the Council could be forced into making a decision on the use of the land at a time of financial pressure. This could undermine the essential criteria of being environmentally sustainable and socially beneficial. Acting now to do something with the land mitigates that risk by moving towards delivery and having control of the development type.

Background papers

Feedback submissions from the day and made subsequently are available to read – stored in Sharepoint. The name of the author and an indication of any attachments to emails is in the “Notes” column. **To view attachments the file must be downloaded rather than previewed.**

<https://bcpcouncil.sharepoint.com/:f:/s/EconomicDevelopment/ErFifZb4K7pFooGCyqaIFBYBLBu-Wnt-X2J7RPI7r6T8NA?e=s8XWux>

Appendices

Appendix 1 - Event promotion and engagement stats

Web

Wessex Fields web content updated with relevant information and link to event registrations.
www.bcpccouncil.gov.uk/wessexfields

This web content received:

- 1159 page views in November
- 857 page views in December
- 1506 page views in January

Media Relations

A media release inviting the public to help shape future plans and attend the engagement day was issued on the 17 October 2019 on the BCP Council website and social media channels. It was then sent to local media, including online, print, and radio.

Following the General Election announcement and the decision to postpone the event due to the pre-election period an update was issued to local media, resulting in further coverage for the new January date. Local business and stakeholder publications were also targeted. Pre-registered attendees were contacted directly advising them of the date change and the need to re-register.

Social Media

Weekly social media posts (17 in total) promoted registrations for the event on LinkedIn, Twitter and Facebook through November and December 2019. These reached an audience of 216,000 through our channels with 216 clicks through to the Wessex Fields event page.

Post event activity included the promotion of the consultation through January, (six posts in total) this includes a shortened video snapshot from the day issued on 13 January, encouraging people to submit their ideas. These posts have reached an audience of over 109,000 with 202 click throughs to the Wessex Fields page.

A full video of the public engagement event and presentations, including subtitles, was also uploaded to YouTube on the 8 January. This has been viewed 544 times to date.

E-newsletters

Regular features promoting registrations for the event and consultation were included in the BCP Business News e-newsletters (6111 subscribers) and Roads & Travel e-newsletters (4448 subscribers).

Business News:

- Issued on 31 October 2019 with 132 clicks through to registration.
- Issued on 9 December 2019 with 21 clicks through to registration.

Roads & Travel:

- Issued on 11 December 2019 with 69 clicks to the event page.
- Issued on 17 January 2019 with 50 clicks to the webpage with the ongoing consultation and 60 clicks to the event to the presentations video on YouTube.

Town Hall screens

Both internal staff facing and external visitor facing event promotion displayed on Bournemouth Town Hall screens.

Appendix 2 – Feedback analysis

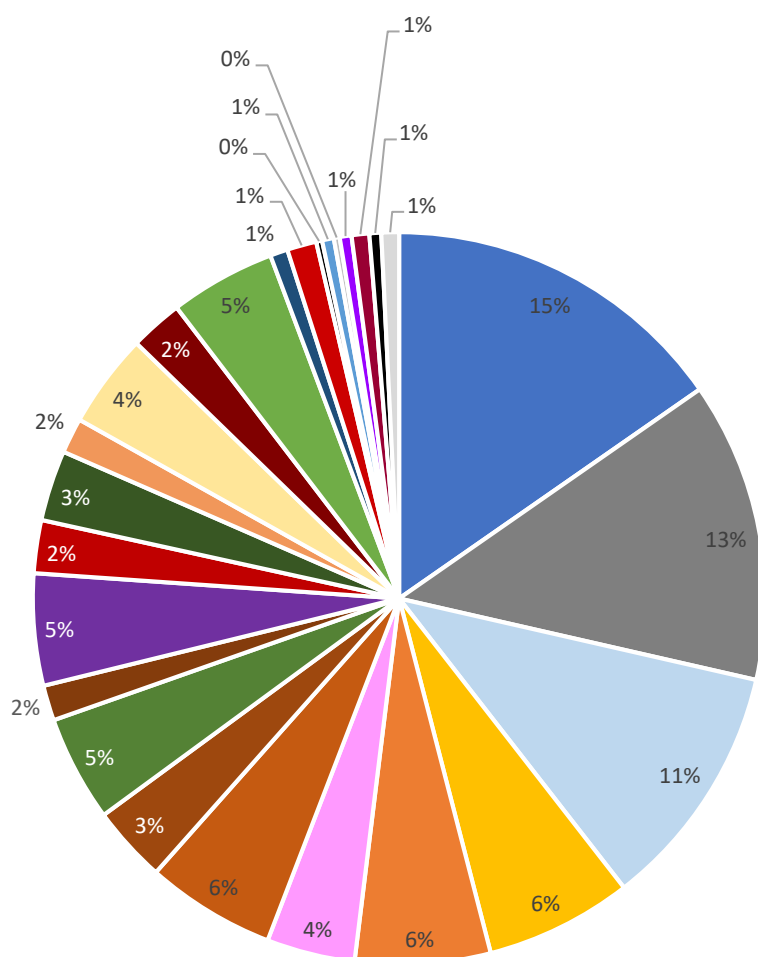
Positive supported ideas

Key:

Blues - research/health & care/further education theme
Greys - residential theme
Orange/yellows/browns - road or transport theme
Pink - energy theme
Greens - green space theme
Purples - cycling and walking theme
Reds - offices, retail and leisure theme
Black - other ideas

Categories - working clockwise

- Health, care, research and education
- Affordable/keyworker housing
- Living Lab
- Road through/around to Deansleigh/Riverside Ave
- Hospital controlled access road
- Solar/green/renewable energy
- Transport hub (inc rapid transport)
- Park and ride
- Trees/ nature reserve/natural habitats
- Widen Riverside Ave
- Cycle connections and footpaths
- Offices inc for startups
- Farmland/crop production/allotments
- Hospital parking/car parking
- Flyover
- Health & leisure (inc outdoor)
- Include green habitat in development
- School
- AFCB stadium
- Distribution centre
- Agricultural research
- Agricultural tied homes
- Large scale bike storage and bike retail
- Local shops/retail/cafes
- Symbolic construction/gateway icon
- Holiday /respite homes for carers



Black - other

- Encroachment into green belt

