

# Bodmin Town Council



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Strategic Policy Team  
Cornwall Council  
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Date: 2 March 2012

Our Ref: PO/SMF/CS/2012

Your Ref:

Dear Sir,

## **Planning Future Cornwall – Preferred Approach for a Core Strategy**

The Council welcomes the opportunity to respond to the consultation documents in connection with Cornwall Council's preferred option for a Core Strategy and the Bodmin Community Network Area discussion paper.

This matter was considered by my Council's Planning Committee when it met recently and I would like to take this opportunity on behalf of the Town Council to thank Paul Webber, Senior Planning Officer, for attending that meeting and for providing an overview of the Core Strategy document and the planning context which Members found very helpful. I have been instructed by Council to make the following representation:

This response is made from the viewpoint that Bodmin Town Council is one of the most proactive town councils in Cornwall, providing a range of high quality services for the people of the town. Many of the services provided by the Council are also enjoyed by people living in the surrounding villages and the thousands of tourists who visit the town each year. The Council achieved Quality Status in November 2004 and was reaccredited in February 2009.

**Bodmin Town Council would be pleased to support the additional housing and employment growth at the levels detailed in the Bodmin Masterplan, however such support is wholly conditional on Cornwall Council recognising the strategic importance of Bodmin and reflecting that in its preferred options and strategic priorities in the Core Strategy and associated forward planning policies and documents.**

**Bodmin has a thriving employment base and could reasonably accommodate around 10% of the proposed housing allocation for the County, but that would only be supported if there is (a) significant redressing of the current West Cornwall centric bias of the Core Strategy by giving Bodmin the same priority to the level of towns in the 'golden triangle' (Camborne / Pool / Redruth and Falmouth, Penryn and Truro) and (b) investment by Cornwall Council in the necessary infrastructure.**

Bodmin Town Council was disappointed to read the opening statement from Councillor Mark Kaczmarek, Portfolio holder for Planning & Housing, which stated that the Core Strategy consultation document was Cornwall Council's preferred approach to development, as the document appears to marginalise Bodmin and the Eastern part of the County in favour of the Camborne / Pool / Redruth and Falmouth / Truro / Penryn 'golden triangle' that always seems to be far higher up the strategic ladder at Cornwall Council. The Cornwall Strategy Key Diagram (page 27), which whilst marked not to scale, only seems to reinforce this West-centric emphasis which would seem to reflect the overall tone of the document by constricting and shrinking the North and East parts of the County and minimising its strategic role in what should be a county-wide document.

The minor reference to Bodmin in the final bullet point on page 5 of the Core Strategy does not reflect the strategic importance of a town which has a thriving job base and could reasonably accommodate around 10% of the County's proposed housing allocation with the correct level of infrastructure.

### **Levels of Growth**

Bodmin Town Council is supportive of the Medium level of growth – 2,400 dwellings per year, with a 20 year total of 48,000 dwellings. This level was thought to be both attainable and sustainable, and is considered to be a natural progression from the 2,250 average homes per annum built in Cornwall over the last 20 years.

Bodmin Town Council favours a Semi-Dispersed Distribution settlement pattern with around two thirds (67%) of the houses being in the key towns and the remainder in the smaller towns and villages. This is considered to be a more balanced and sustainable approach as it reflects the positive impact of high speed broadband to the smaller towns and villages where it will enable small business parks and trading areas (clean industry) to thrive. This would enable sustainable live-work type development and also protects local services in the villages such as schools, community shops / post offices and pubs etc., which would atrophy if there was not at least some growth.

Balanced against this was the need to protect the 'green and pleasant' nature of the countryside in Cornwall by not overdeveloping rural areas. The model proposed recognises the essential role and development of the key towns, which will continue to be the major centres for employment and, in the interests of sustainability, should also provide the appropriate level of housing to enable people to walk or cycle to work, and thereby reduce carbon emissions from vehicles.

Bodmin Town Council does not support an Economy Led Distribution which seems to over favour the areas referred to above as the golden triangle (Truro, Camborne-Pool-

Redruth and Falmouth-Penryn), to the detriment and marginalisation of the North and East of Cornwall. This would simply perpetuate the problems previously stated by the Regional Spatial Strategy and, if carried to the extreme, cram everything into the 'golden triangle' and lead to the area between St Austell / Newquay and the Tamar becoming a forgotten rural hinterland.

**Transport Infrastructure** - the success, or otherwise, of any of the settlement patterns described is reliant on investment in infrastructure, including:

- the need for decent transport hubs, with effective public transport links from settlements to mainline rail stations;
- the need to support transport links including public transport to outlying villages obtaining services from the key market towns. It is short sighted to cut public transport, if the Development Framework is based on people accessing services in the key Market Towns;
- a northern link road in Bodmin, between the A30 and A389 (Dunmere Road) which will open up the opportunity for 2,500 extra houses and employment land to north of Bodmin. The Town Council recognises that this could be delivered in the form of a service road in the first instance and extended at a later date through phased delivery in line with development and any Community Infrastructure Levy / Section 106 contributions via the planning system; and
- it is imperative that the A30 between Temple and Higher Carblake is dualled, in order to fully open up economic development opportunities in Bodmin and points West (i.e. majority of County);
- Improved traffic management and public interchange including links with Bodmin Parkway railway station; and
- Addressing the balance between car users, pedestrians and cyclists, particularly in the Dennison road corridor and improving the link of the Camel Trail into the town centre so that the town can benefit from the economic benefits that trail users bring to the local economy and enjoyed at a comparable rate to that of towns like Wadebridge and Padstow.

### **Bodmin Town Centre**

The Town Council feels there is merit in opening-up a dialogue around the pedestrianisation or partial pedestrianisation of Fore Street, the town's main and historic retail street. The town centre at the current time does not offer local residents or visitors to the town with the freedom and relaxed shopping experience enjoyed in other towns such as Wadebridge, as the through traffic and on-street parking arrangement leads to a desire to conduct any trip quickly and without the economic benefits (spend per visitor) associated with towns where people can take a more leisurely tour of the many shops, bars and cafes that are on offer. Any potential pedestrianisation could be trialled on an initial seasonal basis to measure the success or otherwise of such a scheme. Any scheme could operate from 11.00 a.m. to 5.00 p.m. which would seem to give scope for vehicular delivery of goods in the morning.

However, the Town Council recognises that closing Fore Street for any length of time would have knock-on-effects to the Dennison Road corridor and there would need to be some works to improve the flow of traffic along this route, particularly at the entrance and exit points. This would enable the accommodation of increased vehicular traffic that would have otherwise used Fore Street (particularly traffic heading from a east / west direction). The mini roundabout at Church Square would also need addressing as it is recognised that this does not perform well in its current form.

### **Bodmin Leat**

If Bodmin is to expand there needs to be significant assessment of the leat and careful development to ensure that there is sufficient hydraulic capacity to cope with additional growth. The Environment Agency have identified areas of the town where there is anticipated degradation of the leat culvert and any future plans need to recognise that improved infrastructure is not only about the road network and vehicle capacity / movements around the town, but also ensuring that the urban drainage system can effectively handle additional growth and increased surface water run-off.

### **Allotment Provision**

Bodmin Town Council supports the provision of Allotments but would recommend that the wording in Key Principle F on page 12 of the Core Strategy is strengthened so that not only are allotments provided but future policy also aims to protect existing allotments from development. Bodmin Town Council fully supports the recognition of the existing allotments at the top of Castle Hill and would endorse their continuing allocation as allotments on the future Northern Growth plan on page 154/155 in the draft Bodmin Masterplan.

The Town Council would also prefer additional and future allotment allocation to be delivered via a dispersed approach to better achieve a sustainable community, but that any provision not be sited on land South of the Beacon in order to protect the ongoing biodiversity corridor to this Local Nature Reserve and four times Green Flag Award Winning site.

### **Bodmin Masterplan**

Bodmin Town Council is extremely pleased to have the Bodmin Masterplan and to see that it is now undergoing public consultation, as it recognises that this document could be utilised to form a Neighbourhood Plan strengthening the town from a long-term planning and development perspective.

Bodmin is well placed to accommodate future growth but is reticent to be allocated with additional housing without the jobs and infrastructure to support and trigger house building. Bodmin should be identified within the Core Strategy as a significant employment hub given its strategic location. Within the Bodmin Community Network Area Discussion Paper (page 35) it is noted that Cornwall Council would be pursuing the Beacon Technology Park site as a 'priority project' as a possible location for Cornwall Councils new offices, which would go some way toward increasing employment opportunities with higher quality jobs.

However, given the bias towards continuing support to the regeneration of two former industrial heartlands, central to resolving deprivation and strengthening the economy (Preferred Approach for a Core Strategy – page 5) – i.e. the 'golden triangle' and the St. Austell and China Clay country area, we anticipate that the Beacon Technology Park site as a project priority has now conveniently slipped off the radar for Bodmin.

However, there seems to be a disconnect between the Masterplan and the Core Strategy. The Core Strategy fails to recognise Bodmin's strategic importance in the Mid to East of the County and its role as one of, if not the key town, for economic growth at the conflux of the A30 and A38. Bodmin is not recognised with the same strategic importance as towns in the Western part of the County, but if Cornwall Council was to start to look at Bodmin with the same emphasis and favour that has led to large investment in places like Camborne / Pool and Redruth, the fortunes of Bodmin could turn from a forgotten town performing pretty well without support from the Principal Council to a thriving employment hub that could generate housing demand of up to 5,000 new homes.

At the very least, Bodmin Town Council would expect to see Bodmin given the same level of credence in the Core Strategy as Camborne / Pool / Redruth etc given its strategic importance in the Mid to the East of the County. Bodmin Town Council would urge Cornwall Council to ensure that the Masterplan is cross referenced in the narrative of the Core Strategy to make certain that this document does not become another paper gathering dust on a shelf at County Hall that conveniently ticks a box to demonstrate that some assessment and scoping work was carried out for Bodmin, but after consultation warranted no further intervention from Cornwall Council given the stated preferred approach by Councillor Mark Kaczmarek to development and strategic priorities in the West.

Bodmin Town Council would support a 5,000 house allocation but only on condition that Bodmin is given the same weight, treatment and investment / use of Cornwall Council resources to drive-up the economic prosperity of the town to the same level as areas such as Camborne / Pool & Redruth. Bodmin Town Council would also expect to receive some sort of statement of intent and commitment from Cornwall Council by committing jobs to Bodmin with the relocation of any of its offices to the town. Bodmin is continually talked about as an important, strategic hub but the town continues to be marginalised at every opportunity as it would appear to be beyond the horizon of Officers and Members deployed and cocooned in County Hall looking at the prosperity of Bodmin and other towns in the North and East of the County from a plan / desk based approach. The key driver behind any sustainable housing allocation needs to be grounded in and based on job creation and employment growth and not on a high risk principle of 'build it and they will come.'

Bodmin Town Council would respond to the specific questions contained in the Core Strategy consultation paper as follows:

*Question 1 – Will this strategy achieve the vision? What would be better and why?*

It is imperative that the vision is re-worked to better reflect the strategic priorities of the whole of Cornwall and not simply the west-centric priorities outlined in the current document.

*Questions 2 – Does the policy intent contained in boxes A-J in section 2 achieve the objectives of the plan?*

If the primary objective is sustainability, the strategic direction and the policies must better reflect the role of Bodmin, one of very few towns in Cornwall where there are more jobs than houses, so redressing this balance by investment in housing with the appropriate infrastructure would significantly improve sustainability.

*Question 3 – which level of growth would you prefer to see in Bodmin?*

Bodmin Town Council would prefer to see a growth model which triggers higher quality jobs and infrastructure improvements, in all its forms, that can lead to economic prosperity for local business and residents of the town. The Town Council would be prepared to support the higher level of growth, with the associated benefits that the increase in critical mass could generate, but this would need to be supported with a significant change of emphasis in terms of strategic priorities by Cornwall Council plus the necessary investment in infrastructure.

*Question 4 – Which level of growth would you prefer to see in Saltash?*

Bodmin Town Council would not want to comment in any detail on a growth model for Saltash, as it is not best placed to make such comments. However, we would support the East of the County being given the same recognition and strategic importance as areas in the 'golden triangle'.

*Question 5 – Do you think we have the right balance with the spread of development across Cornwall?*

Definitely Not. This Core Strategy is far too West Cornwall centric and fails to recognise the strategic importance of the East of the County in general and Bodmin with its excellent road transport links via the A30 and A38 and vibrant employment base, in particular.

Bodmin is well placed strategically, being only one hour from Exeter, two hours from Bristol and with conditions on road haulage and freight only being tightened rather than relaxed, Bodmin would seem to offer a pivotal operating base for all businesses including road haulage.

*Question 6 - What are the top 3 objectives for your community network area?*

These responses are not ranked in any order of priority or preference:

- putting in the necessary infrastructure - both road (northern link road) and green infrastructure. This will maintain a healthy environment and support and protect the special nature of the Beacon LNR and the further extension of the Camel

Trail into the Town Centre, together with links with the Lanhydrock Cycle Hub. There is also a need for community infrastructure to support additional housing;

- dualling the A30 between Temple and Higher Carblake; and
- supporting a mixed employment and retail growth that drives up the economic base of the town, improves the retail offer in the centre of town and provides higher paid jobs – this must include Cornwall Council support with location of a major hub or countywide service in the town.

*Question 7 – Does this provide the framework to develop your own plans?*

This document would provide a very good framework for the West of the County, which seems to be the stated preferred approach for Cornwall Council, who seem to view the East of the County as merely a rural conduit / thoroughfare that has to be endured to be able to get from their offices in Truro to the Devon border.

### **BO7 Questions relating to Bodmin Community Network Area Aims and Objectives**

**Question BO1** – *Do you agree with the objectives for the Bodmin Community Network Areas? If not, please indicate which you disagree with.*

Bodmin Town Council broadly agree with the objectives set out for the Bodmin Community Network Area, at the higher level of housing provision, subject to Cornwall Council increasing the strategic priority for Bodmin (as detailed above) and inputting the necessary infrastructure.

**Question BO2** – *What are your top three objectives for the Bodmin Community Network Area?*

These responses are not ranked in any order of priority or preference:

- putting in the necessary infrastructure - both road (northern link road) and green infrastructure. This will maintain a healthy environment and support and protect the special nature of the Beacon LNR and the further extension of the Camel Trail into the Town Centre, together with links with the Lanhydrock Cycle Hub. There is also a need for community infrastructure to support additional housing;
- dualling the A30 between Temple and Higher Carblake; and
- supporting a mixed employment and retail growth that drives up the economic base of the town, improves the retail offer in the centre of town and provides higher paid jobs – this must include Cornwall Council support with location of a major hub or countywide service in the town.

**Question BO3** – *Are there any other aims / objectives that you think the Bodmin Community Network Area should aspire to?*

- Improving provision of 'affordable' housing – recognising that this might need to be socially rented accommodation as well as assisting first time buyers to get on the housing ladder;
- The housing mix needs to be such that it also provides for higher spec houses to attract managers and executives to the town in the interests of sustainability as

this demographic has traditionally commuted into Bodmin from the surrounding villages.

- Continuing improvement to and linkages with green infrastructure – building on the Green Flag award winning Local Nature Reserve at the Beacon, St. Guron's Way and the Camel Trail.

**Question BO4** – *Which level of growth would you prefer to see in Bodmin – 1,000 new homes (without the distributor road) or 5,000 new homes (with the distributor road)?*

Bodmin Town Council would prefer to see the large level of growth, provided that it is linked with sustainable job creation and with the provisos stated above – namely that Cornwall Council increases the strategic priority for Bodmin (as detailed above) and commits to providing the necessary infrastructure.

**Question BO5** – *Do you agree with the target for 250 new homes in the remainder of the Community Network Area over a 20 year period? If you disagree with the targets proposed, please indicate your alternative.*

This target would seem not unreasonable but Bodmin Town Council considers it is important to balance the vitality and ongoing sustainability of the surrounding villages with enough [affordable] housing to ensure the continuing viability of schools and shops etc, whilst at the same time preserving the 'green and pleasant land' that is a key driver of the County's economic / tourism prosperity.

**Question BO6** – *Do you agree with the retail boundaries and primary retail frontages shown on map 1? If you disagree, please describe your alternative.*

Bodmin Town Council broadly agrees with these boundaries but it is important to balance the demand of modern retailing with the constraints of the Conservation – maintaining Bodmin's rich heritage whilst meeting the needs of an improved retail offer and supporting local business. The Masterplan should seek to build on the proposals outlined in the previous Town Centre Framework Plan.

Consideration should also be given to developing ideas set out in the Portas Report including opening up a dialogue about the pedestrianisation or partial / summer-seasonal pedestrianisation of Fore Street, the town's main and historic retail street.

**Question BO7** – *Do you agree with the vision as set out in the Masterplan?*

The Town Council supports this in principle but would wish to see further information developed along the lines of the previous Town Centre Framework document.

**Question BO8** – *Do you agree with the need to address transport and air quality issues within Bodmin? If you agree with the need to address these issues do you support the proposed solutions, including the northern link road, as set out in the Masterplan?*

The Town Council recognises that a northern link road could open up the opportunity for 2,500 extra houses and employment land to north of Bodmin. The Town Council considers that this could be delivered in the form of a service road in the first instance

and extended at a later date through phased delivery in line with development and any Community Infrastructure Levy / Section 106 contributions via the planning system.

The Town Council considers that the Dennison Road corridor is an important conduit through the town that needs addressing to improve the flow of traffic along this route, particularly at the entrance and exit points, to be able to accommodate any increase in vehicular traffic. The mini roundabout at Church Square would also need addressing as it is recognised that this does not perform well in its current form and would only add to increasing congestion and air quality issues along Dennison Road if ignored. Any further consideration of air quality management areas should be based on firm medical evidence and biological monitoring and not simply on ad hoc environmental sampling.

**Question BO9** – *Do you have any comments on the eastern, western and northern proposed areas of growth?*

Bodmin Town Council would urge that any development, eastern, western and northern, is sustainable – ensuring that there is sufficient housing provision, employment / work space, leisure and education facilities and that these areas act as small hubs (communities) which link in with the core hub (community) of Bodmin town centre.

The links with 'out of town retail parks' and the town centre need to be carefully managed at the planning / development control stage to ensure that any out of town development is not at the detriment of a vibrant town centre economy.

**Question BO10** – *Do you have any comments about the housing and mixed use sites proposed for the Bodmin area?*

Bodmin Town Council would support the principles of sustainable development balancing housing with sufficient community and green infrastructure.

The Council would support mixed live-work development where appropriate linking housing with light employment (office type) that will not conflict with the amenity value of the community. This could be particularly important to maximise the introduction and the benefits of high speed broadband in the County.

The housing mix needs to reflect affordable / social provision with higher end housing for managers and executives.

**Question BO11** – *Are there any other sites which you feel would be more appropriate for housing related development? If so, please state the location, together with reasons for it being more appropriate than the currently identified sites.*

The Town Council broadly agree with the areas identified for housing provision, but would not support any development to the south of the Beacon which is an important biodiversity corridor and green wedge to the Beacon Local Nature Reserve and must be preserved for future generations.

**Question BO12a** – Please identify the name (or location) of the open space that you visit most often on foot from home.

This question is not applicable to a body corporate.

**Question BO12b** – Please provide your post code (this will enable us to calculate typical walking distances).

Not applicable.

**Question BO12c** – From the following list please tick the two main aspects that appeal to you about this space:

Not applicable.

**Question BO13** – Feel free to set out any other comments regarding the proposals for the Bodmin Community Network Area.

The Bodmin Community Network Area could well assist Cornwall Council in delivering around 10% of the housing allocation for the County. However, the Town Council is of the view that this would only be reasonable if Cornwall Council concomitantly raises the strategic profile of Bodmin to the level of towns in the 'golden triangle' (Camborne / Pool / Redruth, Falmouth / Penryn and Truro).

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P. O'Callaghan', with a stylized flourish at the end.

P O'Callaghan  
**Town Clerk**