

WINTERBORNE FARRINGDON PARISH COUNCIL

Chairman – R J Harrison
PO Box 15 Weymouth Dorset DT4 8DS
Tel: 01305 814040 Fax: 01305 814040

26th July 2012

Local Plan Consultation
West Dorset District Council
Stratton House
58-60 High West Street
DORCHESTER DT1 1UZ

Dear Sir/Madam

A NEW LOCAL PLAN FOR WEST DORSET, WEYMOUTH AND PORTLAND

I write with reference to the consultation regarding the above document. Please consider this letter as the corporate response of Winterborne Farringdon Parish Council. We are objecting to and commenting on the following policies:

POLICY LITT1

Winterborne Farringdon Parish Council is appreciative of the need for new homes in and around Weymouth & Portland as the town continues to grow. We are, however, unable to support the proposed policy LITT1 and its incursion into the Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

The Parishes of Winterborne Farringdon exist wholly within the limits of the AONB and we are very supportive of this designation. As such, we cannot support any attempt at a piecemeal chipping away of its boundaries to facilitate this northward expansion of the urban area. Consultation with the AONB Partnership has also highlighted their concerns about this policy, which we share.

Our stance would appear to be in agreement both with existing policy in the form of policy SA1 in the current local plan (which states "development which would harm the natural beauty of the AONB will not be permitted.") and with the similarly-worded proposed policy ENV1. We also note point iii) of ENV1 which states "development should be located and designed so that it does not detract from and, where reasonable, enhances the landscape character". These policies effectively contradict each other; such development as is suggested in LITT1 does nothing whatsoever to enhance the character of the AONB and a great deal to damage it.

This development would also do a great deal of harm to the rural character of Bincombe and Icen Lane, an area which has already seen great change over recent years. The proposed policy would see the urban area expanded to take in previously rural dwellings and a productive working dairy, now the last in the area where at one time seven existed. The implications to this business, and the loss of hard-to-replace fields, must be considered very carefully indeed.

We would also call into question the suitability of this area for development when alternative space within the Borough appears to have received little consideration. We additionally note the recent decision by the London Organising Committee of the Olympic Games to cease use of their Littlemoor Road Park and Ride site, which lies within the policy area, due to flooding and would query the infrastructure required to support development in this area.

We urge you to consider this proposal and its risk to the rural areas on the Borough's northern boundary extremely carefully.

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POLICY LITT2

West Dorset District Council is well aware of Winterborne Farringdon Parish Council's long-standing objections to the current industrial usage of Icen Farm. This is a site that has only recently become compliant with planning law, having for years operated in contradiction of planning law at all hours of the day and night, to the distress and disturbance of those living nearby. Policies LITT1 and LITT2 will leave the residents of the previously rural Icen Lane with an industrial estate on one side and a suburban residential development on the other.

We appreciate the need to resolve the existing issues at the site, and commend effective steps to deal with un-neighbourly employment uses, but cannot support the effective message of this policy which almost encourages the illegal use of land for industrial purposes with the promise of future tacit approval from the Planning Authority.

Allowing the expansion of industrial usage on this site again does nothing whatsoever to enhance the AONB and would again appear to be in contravention with both established and proposed policy.

POLICY ECON10

We object to item iii) of policy ECON10. Inclusion of this item in policy invites a prejudgment on the re-utilisation of equestrian buildings. A significant risk exists of rural communities having to play host to large, inappropriate residential or commercial development with associated overuse of local services and infrastructure where ordinarily none would ever have been allowed.

The hamlet of Whitcombe, part of Winterborne Farringdon, contains fewer than twenty inhabitants and has no infrastructure to speak of. With a large equestrian facility on its doorstep, this policy provides no protection whatsoever to a settlement such as Whitcombe which could ultimately be engulfed by residential or business development.

This was a very real possibility ten years ago when the business at Whitcombe failed and a succession of unsuitable applications to change the site's use were submitted. A petition of residents in nearby Broadmayne at the time found over four hundred persons against such development. The site has since been returned to equestrian use with additional development taking place, however this would considerably worsen Whitcombe and Broadmayne's situation should equestrian activity again cease.

It is our worry that adoption of this policy would provide a green light for developers or landowners to claim an equestrian site they own is inappropriate or unviable and thus seek to redevelop it. The demonstration of inappropriate or unviable use in recent equestrian development would surely call into question how well current adopted policy is being implemented.

We are also of the opinion that item iii) has the potential to undermine the criteria of Policies ENV1 and SUS4 by confusing the issue as to what would and would not be permitted.

Consultation with West Dorset officers suggests a realisation that this policy is not well worded. We would urge that this is urgently reconsidered.

POLICY DOR10

We object to the proposal to use land as set out in policy DOR10 for a park and ride site and trunk road service area. This is situated at a busy junction between two major roads which already suffer from congestion at peak times. It is hard to see how any access could be created to this site which would not significantly further impact the traffic flow on the A354, causing a re-emergence of rat-running along side roads that has up until now been largely discouraged by the improved access to Weymouth along the A354.

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The addition of a trunk road service area for A35 traffic is also highly undesirable - again the location of the site lends itself to the possibility of bringing A35 traffic onto the A354 to access the site. This would again adversely impact the free flowing of both the A35 and A354 as well as the Stadium Roundabout.

The land itself is known to flood and we are concerned that the area set aside for winter flooding has been underestimated. No consideration either seems to have been given to the residents of the Maiden Castle Farm cottages who could find that the service area becomes a noisy next door neighbour. Again, consultation with the AONB Partnership has highlighted a further concern that the site's impact when viewed from Maiden Castle seems to have been forgotten about - this is a hugely important monument, one of the largest hill forts in Western Europe and it is surely incongruous for such a site to have a development such as this within its sightlines.

We additionally object to the outward expansion of Dorchester towards the small farming village of Winterborne Monkton - it should not become a suburb of Dorchester by way of piecemeal development. We refer you to the Inspector's report into the precursor of the Adopted Local Plan which stated "I agree with the objector that development of this site would create a most undesirable precedent ignoring established policies to confine Dorchester to land within the bypass ... I agree that a park and ride site especially if coupled with a primary route service station would create unwanted noise, pollution, visual intrusion and light pollution in a countryside location...". She continues "I consider that the harm to the countryside and landscape from development of this site would outweigh the benefits to the transport system and town centre...". (Policy EA24, page 293m, paras 13.27.5 and 13.27.6)

We consider the need for a park and ride site unproven, with the current facility at the football stadium combined with the bus service to Dorchester serving the Weymouth park and ride seemingly providing adequate capacity. We also suggest that consideration should be given to locating the service area away from Dorchester in a less sensitive location.

Yours Faithfully

R J HARRISON
Chairman