

[REDACTED]
E MAIL ADDRESS: [REDACTED]

BOURTON NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN
Objection to Submission Draft (Nov. 2016)

1. Introduction

- i. I have been commissioned by Mr. and Mrs. Hix, who are owners of the site identified in the Submission Plan known as “land adjoining Sandways Farm”. I have been asked to study and comment upon the work undertaken in the preparation of the Submission Draft, with particular reference to the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment and to assess it’s appropriateness and competency.

2. Background

- i. I am a qualified and Chartered Member of the Institute of Landscape Architects with over 40 years experience. As a partner of Peter Swann & Associates, and later its principal, I have carried out numerous Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, many of which have been in the North Dorset District.

3. Landscape and Visual Impact Methodology

- i. Since their inception I have used the ‘Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment’ (GLVIA) published jointly by the Institute of Environmental Management and the Landscape Institute. The current edition (3rd Edition) was published in 2013. The GLVIA emphasises: *“the aspects that are essential to successful landscape and visual impact assessment:- proportionality to ensure relevant weight is given to the most important elements; transparency of professional judgement; to allow others to see how judgements have been reached and what reasoning has been applied by the assessor and communication and presentation, so that those reading the LVIA can understand it.”*
- ii. The GLVIA lists a range of factors that should be evaluated, i.e. sensitivity and magnitude of impact and its significance.

4. The short listed sites included in the Bourton Neighbourhood Plan for the New Village Hall.

- i. The three shortlisted sites, see Figure 6, are as follows :-
 - a. Site 9 - Voscombe Farm
 - b. Site 10 - Chaffeymoor Farm (Jubilee Field)
 - c. Site 12 - Land adjoining Sandways Farm.

- ii. These three sites have been assessed in the Submission Draft (Nov. 2016) and as a result two alternative sites, i.e. Jubilee Field and Sandways Farm, have been identified as possible locations for the Village Hall.
- iii. I have studied the assessment criteria and have been asked to give my professional judgement on its suitability and whether it is fit for purpose. This will be addressed later (see Section 7 below)

5. Site Investigation

- i. I have carried out projects in and around Bourton and have passed through the village on countless occasions. I have recently visited Bourton, mid March 2017, in order to concentrate on the possible impact of the alternative sites. On my initial pass through the village westwards on the main road, and my return eastwards, having an expectation from the Submission Document that the Jubilee Site would be '*noticeably visual*', I was surprised to find it as prominent as it was. This was particularly evident when travelling east and also from the West Bourton Road to the south. In contrast, once I had located the 'Sandways Farm' site, amongst the existing streetscape it was evident that, there were no public views from the road passing through the village, with the exception of a 'sought-after' view through the farm gate.

6. The Submission Draft (Site Appraisal and Selection)

- i. My brief does not necessitate the preparation of an alternative LVIA to that produced in the above document. I list below what I consider to be relevant to my task to assess the competence of the 'Village Hall and Amenity Space' document, particularly the 'Site Appraisal and Selection' document dated 'Final April 2016'. These are as follows:-
 - a. The document was not produced by a qualified Landscape Architect and, in my opinion, is an amateur attempt at LVI Assessment and not fit for purpose.
 - b. Table 1 lists all the 14 sites considered for the provision of a new Village Hall. The Jubilee Field site (10) is described as '*a clear plot of land with sufficient space to include all the elements. The slopes are fairly modest and the road access is reasonable*'. The Sandways Farm site (12) is described as '*Centrally located on modest slopes and opposite the existing Hall. Housing can be sited in a discrete area*'.
 - c. Paragraph 3, in particularly 3.3 and 35, describes each of the two sites and includes a photograph across both. It is evident from these photographs that whilst the Sandways Farm site is semi-enclosed by landform and vegetation (see Fig. 5), the Jubilee site is open to local views from the south and also from the higher ground at West Bourton, approximately 1km distant. Due to its elevation and aspect the peripheral hedgerows do not provide screening, even in summer (see Fig. 3).

- d. Table 2. There is no reference to any baseline methodology, and the difference in spread of points for each alternative seems very large. I find this Table and its scoring criteria extremely confusing. For example the reference to *'Mature trees and hedgerows affected'* attributes a weighting of '0', i.e. poor to the Sandways site and a weighting of '10' i.e. 'fair' for Jubilee Field. Do these scores reflect the quality of the trees/hedgerows or the potential impact on them? The Jubilee Field appears to be devoid of vegetation, apart from the roadside boundary, whilst at Sandways Farm what vegetation there is provides an important screening element and, from the proposals plan, it appears that these will be retained.
- e. Site Selection. Para 4.1 states *'the final two sites are considered broadly comparable'*. However it acknowledges that the Jubilee Field is *'less central and has greater visual impact'* which surely should be reflected in Table 2 as a weighting of '0' and not '6'.
- f. I have studied the document in detail and have concluded that the conclusions reached do not reflect the evidence and, had the Assessment Criteria been clearer, a different conclusion could be determined.

7. The Submission Document (Landscape Visual Impact Assessment)

- i. This document, again not compiled by a qualified landscape professional, seeks to assess the likely impact of the potential sites. It does not, however, assess, or in my opinion adequately take account of, potential impact on 'Landscape Character' which is a fundamental element in the process of Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment. In the GVLIA (2013 edition) the difference between 'landscape' and 'visual' effects are defined as *'an assessment of effects of change and development on the landscape as a resource'* (landscape), and *'an assessment of the effects of change and development on the views available to people and their visual amenity'* (visual). Having defined the local landscape character, the impact is assessed by evaluating the landscape's sensitivity and the magnitude of the impact of the development. In my opinion this has not been carried out, i.e. supported by para 3.1.2 sentence 5 *'although other impacts besides visual impacts have not been formally considered here'*
- ii. Para 4.2 Jubilee Field. It states *'the field rises up it will be visually prominent from several locations within and around the village prominent from the Main Road'*. I have studied Table 2 and, based on the above comments, am surprised that from not one of the receptors a *'considerable impact'* been identified. In mitigation it is stated the site *'suffers'* from being a large open field that offers more open views (? In or out) than the more wooded landscape of most of Bourton and its surroundings and relies on new screen planting.

- iii. Para 4.3 (Sandways Farm) states that some of the housing will be set back to allow for views out over the valley. Reference to the photograph (Fig. 5) in 'Site Appraisal and Selection' these views are more restricted by existing hedgerows. Photograph 8 seeks to identify the 'amenity land', however the arrow is pointing to an area of field which doesn't seem to correspond to that in Fig. 5. Table 3 includes three receptors at Sandways Farm with 'Noticeable Impact' compared with the seven for the Jubilee Site. In the summary it states that the Jubilee Site will have potentially the most visual impact, relying for mitigation on new tree planting. I take issue with the first sentence in the Summary. I believe the development of the Jubilee Site will have unacceptable visual impact.

8, Other Documents

- i. Consultation Statement (Nov. 2016). In Section 7.9 it details responses received from NPG consultees. With reference to Policy 5 (New Village Hall) a response was made from the Cranborne Chase AONB stating '*Visual Impact Analysis not done by professional Landscape Architect*', this concern was also raised by D. Watkins and Diccon Carpendale (Brimble Lea and Partners). Andrew Sturt said the assessment '*does not concur with previous policy advice from NDDC Officers*'. It is understood this rejected the Jubilee Field site on grounds of unacceptable visual impact.
- ii. Bourton Village Design Statement (Adopted Version Sept. 2011).
In Section 3 of the above, titled 'Landscape Setting', it is stated that "*with the contrasting topography of steep slopes and flat vale the parish enjoys varied and far reaching views which are particularly treasured by the local community. These views give the village its rural character (see Map 7).*" Map 7 identifies, amongst other things, 'Important Views'. Although not specifically identified on the map both Jubilee Field and Sandways Farm can be identified. The arrows on the map identify these important views which can be divided into (a) those along the Main Road through the village. A number of photographs in the VDS (11 and 18) demonstrate the visual prominence of the Jubilee Field site, (b) those from the north and (c) those on West Bourton Road to the south (see photographs). This map and supporting photographs clearly demonstrate that Sandways Farm is hidden from view by existing vegetation from Long Lane to the north, at the edge of the AONB and from any other public viewpoints in and on the periphery of the village. The only viewpoint identified is a 'sought-after' view from the site entrance gate. In comparison the views of and towards the Jubilee Field site are shown in an arc from the north east, north, west and south, a total of six on the plan. As mentioned above this site has an open aspect whilst Sandways Farm is set within an enclosed perimeter of vegetation and landform.
- iii. North Dorset Local Plan (1st Revision).
The settlement boundary for Bourton, shown on the map on slide 5 of the above document, shows that both Sandways Farm and Jubilee Field sites lie outside but adjacent to it. The potential development of Sandways Farm could be viewed as village infilling between the existing properties on either side along this southern edge of the main road. This could be assimilated successfully within the village

character. On the other hand, development at Jubilee Field is a westward extension of the Village Settlement Boundary onto an open area which gives the village its attractive setting when approaching from that direction. The VDS recommends consideration for designation of Chaffeymoor as a Conservation Area recognising that it possesses a character and appearance which it is desirable to preserve or enhance.

- iv. Brimble Lea and Partners Pre-submission consultation response form.
The photographs included in this document on pages 1 and 2 clearly identify that the Jubilee site is open to views from all but the east, as described above, and that the visual impact on the eight receptors is assessed as noticeable. The Sandways Farm site, by contrast, is well contained within the surrounding landscape on a south facing slope with very few public viewpoints. Mr. Carpendale also makes the point that in terms of access and impact on mature trees, Sandways Farm has been unfairly weighted in the scoring table.

9. Summary and Conclusion

- i. Having studied the documentation listed above, and visited Bourton, I have, in my professional opinion, concluded the following :-
 - a. That the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment has not been professionally carried out and that it lacks sufficient consideration of the setting of the village, its relationship to surrounding topography and its closeness to the AONB. The effect of the potential impact of development at Jubilee Farm on the setting of St. George's Church has barely been mentioned.
 - b. Similarly the potential westward extension of the Village Settlement Boundary devalues this area at Chaffeymoor which is an attractive setting at the entrance to the village. The Sandways Farm site does not pose any of the foregoing and has the advantage of a central location for the proposed Village Hall.
 - c. I believe the case put forward in the consultation documents regarding potential visual impact is flawed. It will be seen from the submitted photographs, maps and from site inspection, it can be clearly seen that Jubilee Field is open to both extensive views from the areas surrounding the western section of Bourton and also views from the south. In contrast views of the Sandways Farm site are confined to one at the site entrance gate and those from adjacent properties.
 - d. Due to its central local within the village the Sandways Farm is also very close to the existing established Village Hall. I conclude that development at Sandways Farm can be seen as village infilling whilst that at Jubilee Field is an extension into the open green space that borders the village at the west. This is clearly demonstrated in Photograph 11 of the Bourton Village Design Statement, the Sandways Farm site is hidden amongst the vegetation behind the right hand telegraph pole.

- e. Chaffeymoor is described in the Bourton Village Design Statement (8.5) as being '*a small hamlet which survives in its original form*'. The VDS recommends that consideration be given to designating this area (and West Bourton) as a Conservation Area in recognition of the special architectural and historic interest that the areas possess and the desirability of preserving or enhancing their character and appearance. Development at Jubilee Field will blur this setting (see also 9.1.1 on page 44).

- ii. I therefore conclude that of the two alternative sites identified Sandways Farm is the only one that provides a replacement location for the Village Hall which can be assimilated into the fabric of Bourton Village with little or no impact on its character or visual containment. The proposed site at Jubilee Field will have a significantly harmful visual impact upon the landscape character and appearance of this part of the village. I would concur with earlier NDDC Officer advice that the site is not suitable for allocation and in my professional opinion had the Landscape Appraisal been undertaken by a properly qualified Landscape Architect the site would have been rejected.

Dated 21st March 2017