

Sarah Horniman ID: 2519

Matter: Bridport

1. The whole of Bridport and the countryside that overlooks and surrounds it lies within the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB.) In writing this submission I have referred to the Dorset AONB Management Plan 2014-2019.

Issue: 11.5 Has adequate consideration been given to infrastructure requirements to service the development at Vearse Farm (BRID1) and how its impact on the AONB can be mitigated?

AONB

2. If Vearse Farm was not adjacent to Bridport but instead stood separately within the open countryside its development would not even be being considered. And yet the development of Vearse Farm is in danger of placing further open Area Of Natural Beauty (AONB) countryside to the north of West Road at future risk of development. What measures will be put in place to prevent further future deterioration of the AONB due to the development of Vearse Farm?
3. It's development will put an increased number of vehicles on the small network of lanes in the surrounding AONB leading to a wide area of deterioration in terms of tranquillity, beauty and cultural heritage. This is a very rural hinterland. How are farmers and horse riders to move their animals along the roads safely?
4. Vearse Farm will be visible from a higher level, for example from the iconic symbol for Bridport, Colmers Hill and the popular walking sites of Allington Hill and Eype Down which sits above the World Heritage status coast. The southern area of the site is 50metres above sea level and overlooks the whole site which slopes down to only 10 metres above sea level on its northern edge.





View of Vearse Farm from Colmers Hill

5. There will need not only to be trees and open areas at the edges of the development to blend it in with the surrounding landscape; there will also need to be open green spaces and tree plantings within the site to break up the built up areas.
6. Otters hunt for fish along the ditch located across the northern end of the Vearse Farm site. Voles live in its banks and feed from them. There needs to be a minimum of 10 metres, preferably 12, on each side of this ditch kept free of development as the habitat of these species are legally protected.
7. An orchard stands by the farm buildings. Orchards are traditional to the area and this should be retained. It would also be helpful to have a community farm on the site for visual, cultural and educational reasons. This would help integrate the site with its heritage and its agricultural hinterland.
8. The buildings which will be hardest to mitigate for will be the employment buildings as these will be the largest. They will need to be made out of relatively cheap materials so that businesses can afford to rent them. They are therefore unlikely to be made out of traditional materials such as stone.. There needs to be enough space for forest size trees.
9. Wouldn't the Local Plan mitigate for the AONB more sufficiently if the amount of employment and comparison retail buildings were increased at St Michael's Trading Estate and the houses and apartments currently proposed for that site were located at Vearse Farm? This would mean a lower number of employment buildings at Vearse Farm. Houses would be easier to mitigate for on Vearse Farm than employment buildings.
10. The AONB should be protected from major development which should only be allowed in exceptional circumstance such as local need. It is said that the amount of housing currently matches the employment opportunities in Bridport. In contrast Dorchester is a town that attracts commuters. Some Bridport residents commute even further afield.
11. In developing this Local Plan WDDC have given greater weight to public objections to developments outside of the AONB which have been reduced than to protecting the AONB. Yet the AONB is supposed to have the greatest level of protection under the NPPF.

Infrastructure

12. Bridport doesn't have a railway. There have been recent significant cuts in bus services. The A35 gets congested around Bridport. The local road system consists of single lane country roads. Even the other main roads leading from Bridport to other towns are single lane in places apart from the main road that leads through Beaminster to Somerset. This A3066 spoils the tranquillity of the very rural area it passes through, including the town of Beaminster all of which sit within the AONB. Such poor road and travel infrastructure is not sufficient for the amount of development?
13. Nor is Vearse Farm, being in the AONB, well placed to provide local cheap renewable energy such as a solar farm, biodigester or wind turbines. These would be very unlikely to be

permitted in the AONB. Yet I think that this type of supply would be needed to attract businesses of even a fraction of the quantity proposed for Bridport and make them sustainable. Can wires be put underground to protect the AONB?

14. Bridport floods. And its drains are old. West Bay, which is only a couple of miles down river, also floods as does its river flood plain. West Bay particularly floods at high tides, especially neap tides, when there has been heavy rain. The boats in the harbour sometimes float above the quayside. The river system in Bridport including the Symene flows out into the sea at West Bay. So much development at Vearse Farm will increase run off and reduce rainwater retention. This will increase the danger of flooding both in Bridport and at West Bay. West Bay harbour already silts up. This will get worse with rising sea levels. The Environment Agency map shows a high risk of flooding from Bridport to West Bay. Sufficient space needs to be allowed on the site for mitigating features such as water retaining tanks, ponds and reed beds. The area has a tradition of hemp ponds and reed beds. How have designs for Vearse Farm mitigated for flooding and have these designs been sufficiently tested to make sure they will work?
15. How will sufficient waste management and waste water be provided?
16. A very positive feature of Bridport is the strength of its community. It is important that there is sufficient infrastructure to support this. The provision of front gardens would help people in the area know each other. It is good that there will be provision for community buildings but has enough space been set aside for this?
17. In my opinion the amount of space at Bridport Hospital is not sufficient to meet the needs of its existing population let alone an increased population. The psychiatric ward at Bridport Hospital closed in April 2013. The ward is about to be eradicated to make space for a Hub, including social services. There is a lot of concern about the level of provision of mental health services in West Dorset. Details can be viewed on the Dorsetforyou website on the Health Scrutiny Committee pages. An external evaluation study of the acute mental health services in West Dorset is due to report back in May 2015. This is meant to inform future provision. The Care Quality Commission's January 2014 report into the Acute Mental Health Services in West Dorset expresses concern about the lack of provision, including psychiatric beds. However if the evaluation study indicates that the psychiatric ward needs to be reinstated there no longer appears to be any place for it . The Local Plan will mean that there will be further demands on this community hospital. There is little space around the hospital for expansion. An excellent co-housing project which has taken ten years to come to fruition, which has massive local support, is being located adjacent to the hospital. With all the effort put into this project and the brilliance of its design it needs to be allowed to go ahead.
18. The Local Plan sensibly states that the infrastructure and mitigation should be put into Vearse Farm first. The developers in earlier submissions to the Consultation state that the number of houses to be built needs to be capped in order to enable them to plan for the infrastructure and mitigation.

19. The number of houses needs to be capped below 700 and the number of employment buildings reduced so that this development does not constitute a major development within the AONB and so there is enough space within the site to mitigate for the AONB. This capping will also help mitigate for the effects of this development on the wider AONB.

Issue 11.6

Are there any valid reasons why the potential of the existing primary school off Skilling Hill Road (BRID2) cannot be exploited?

1. I need to declare an interest as I am now a Governor of a neighbouring school. I am writing this as a resident of Bridport and not as a school Governor.
2. I have always understood that the playing fields at this site flood. I hope to check this with the Environment Agency.
3. In addition I have understood that the school was built as a two form entry. However it was open plan. To help the children concentrate internal walls were then built. This reduced the available space. At this point in time I am unclear about the current capacity of the school.
4. I understand that St Mary's School and its site are owned by the Diocese of Salisbury. As a church school the proximity of the school to the church is important. The children can easily walk between the two.
5. If St Mary's School is converted to housing, the children from Skilling and that area of Bridport will be making trips to Vearse Farm to go to school. If no school is developed at Vearse Farm those children will be making trips to St Mary's and also possibly to Symondsby Primary school. The Primary School in Skilling Hill (St Mary's) has the advantage that it is close to Bridport's principal church and that it would help to integrate the Vearse Farm children and their parents with the town. If St Mary's School needs to be extended, the extension could, if necessary be built on stilts. The school and adjacent Children's Centre are only 20 years old.
6. The playing fields should be retained for sport and leisure as it is in the town's sport and leisure zone.
7. I hope to hear from the Diocese on this 11.6 Issue prior to the Public Hearing.

Issue 11.7**Changes proposed to policies BRID3 and BRID5 would require maintenance of a wildlife corridor. Would this adequately address wildlife concerns?**

1. The plan for BRID 3 shows development going right down to the river at Jessops Avenue. At Brid 5 the boundary is too close to the river too.
2. This is a summary of a conversation that I had with Emily Newton of Dorset Wildlife Trust.
3. There are records for Water Vole and Otter on the Rivers; Brit, Simene and Mangerton/Asker. Ideally these rivers would be buffered from development with at least a 10metre margin. Otter and Water Vole have different habitat requirements in terms of vegetation cover as Otter likes scrubby edges to rivers where as the Water Vole like a grassy bank, to have both habitats on either side of the river would be ideal.
4. Some of the development, in particular the Jessop Avenue one is in an area I would like to see maintained as a Green Infrastructure corridor, as it will provide benefit for wildlife, flood management and recreation. River corridors make good Green Infrastructure corridors and are used by a variety of wildlife including Bats, Otter and Water Vole. River water quality affects the overall biodiversity of a river and additional run off from hard surfaces could influence species diversity in he rivers if not mitigated properly as part of the development.



Otter family in West Bay by Phil Cook

Issue 11.8

Is the suggested location for future town centre expansion appropriate (BRID4)?

1. The sites set out in Brid 4 would be disastrous as an area for future town centre expansion.
2. I have been told that the Brid 4 sites are mainly owned by West Dorset District Council.
3. The population of Bridport has an unusually high number of elderly people. The town serves a large and very rural hinterland. Shoppers also travel in from other towns. The rural hinterland is poorly served by buses and there have recently been significant cuts in the bus services. Many people cannot travel in by bus because there isn't one. For others the buses are not at times that allow them to shop or to attend evening events. Bridport has a twice weekly 100 stall market which is a great attraction. Tourism is a key part of the Bridport economy including for its hinterland. All these people need somewhere to park. Bridport competes against other towns. Shoppers are more likely to go to towns where it is convenient to park. Park and ride schemes tend to be inconvenient and expensive. With the proposal for at least 800 more houses and commensurate employment sites it seems perverse to reduce the amount of parking. St Michael's Trading Estate alone will lose about 100 informal car parking spaces. One of the attractions of Bridport is its independent shops. How will they survive if people cannot park? Bridport does not have enough parking as it is. It needs more car parking, not less. This town is marketed as a Gateway to the Jurassic coast. Any development on any car park will have a serious impact on the economy of Bridport. This year during the Season, the town was consistently clogged with traffic, nose to tail, most trying to find a car parking space. On Saturday, if you do not arrive before 9 o'clock, there are NO spaces, which does not cater for the late rising tourist. Rope Walks car park provides the most central parking in town.
4. Also perverse is the plan to build on the coach station which serves as a bus station too. Just because the buses have been significantly cut at present does not mean that there will not be expansion of bus services in the future. The coach and bus station needs to be close to the centre of town so that people can walk to it. The coach station car park needs to be retained so that private drivers and taxis can drop off passengers and luggage and pick them up on arrival, however delayed.
5. A planning application in 2008, by WDDC, to develop the coach station triggered a traffic survey by Mr and Mrs Harding. This survey was submitted as part of Bridport Town Councils' response. Since then, the Hardings have continued to note every new coach company using the coach park. The number of coach companies using the site per year has now increased from 100 to 262 (September 2014). Since 2009 the number of coaches, campervans and caravans have doubled, and are present year round. These vehicles are too large to access any other town car park. There is no other car park in town where people with zimmer frames can access a cafe and toilet easily within five minutes. There are seven ladies' toilets at the coach station. There was on file a 2008 letter from the Federation of Passenger Transport, which stated that if coaches could not park in town there would be a reduction of visitors and 100% of the drivers asked said that in this event they would visit a more

welcoming town. This car park also has a 24 hour toilet facility and so provides a safe place for overnight lorries. In addition there are two daily National Express coaches. The estimated spend in 2008 was about £50,000 for refreshments alone by the coach passengers. Today with increased visits and increased prices, for refreshments alone the figure may be doubled to £100,000. Many of the coaches stop for a couple of hours to allow their passengers to shop in town so the actual financial benefit to the town is considerably more. The survey is available should the Inspector wish for a copy.

6. St Michael's Trading Estate is the ideal site for future town centre expansion. It has the potential for further comparison retail sites, employment building sites and there is parking space.



7. The St Michael's Trading Estate site already provides some employment and comparison retail buildings. The Dorset AONB Management Plan states "...the Dorset AONB retains a strong sense of continuity with the past, supporting a **rich and built heritage.**""Examples of our industrial heritage include.....the thousand year old rope industry around Bridport, which have shaped the landscape, local architecture and town design."

"The local townscapes of the flax and hemp industry are of great historic significance. It is hoped that they can be well treated as cornerstones of Bridport's heritage, and utilised as building blocks for the regeneration of its historic industrial areas."

Sir Neil Cossons OBE, Chairman, English Heritage



“The survival of so much of Bridport’s industrial townscape into the 21st century is both rare and extremely fortunate.” (English Heritage)

8. St Michael’s Trading Estate with its vintage market which includes furniture and artists’ open studios and many flourishing businesses helps attract visitors to Bridport. The artists play an important part in educating the public about the AONB. Many of these small businesses need to be near the town centre for footfall. St Michael’s Trading Estate is the only trading estate in the town’s centre.
9. Why doesn’t WDDC transfer the housing proposed for St Michael’s to Vearse Farm and concentrate on the further sensitive development of St Michael’s as a way of increasing development in the Town Centre.? Once housing is placed on St Michael’s the flexibility of this space is gone for ever because of the nature of home ownership.

Artist's Impression: St Michael's Trading Estate showing ideas for new buildings

Suggested new multiple-occupancy business unit, located close to exit for delivery vehicle access.

Idea for carbon-neutral multiple-occupancy offices and workshops.

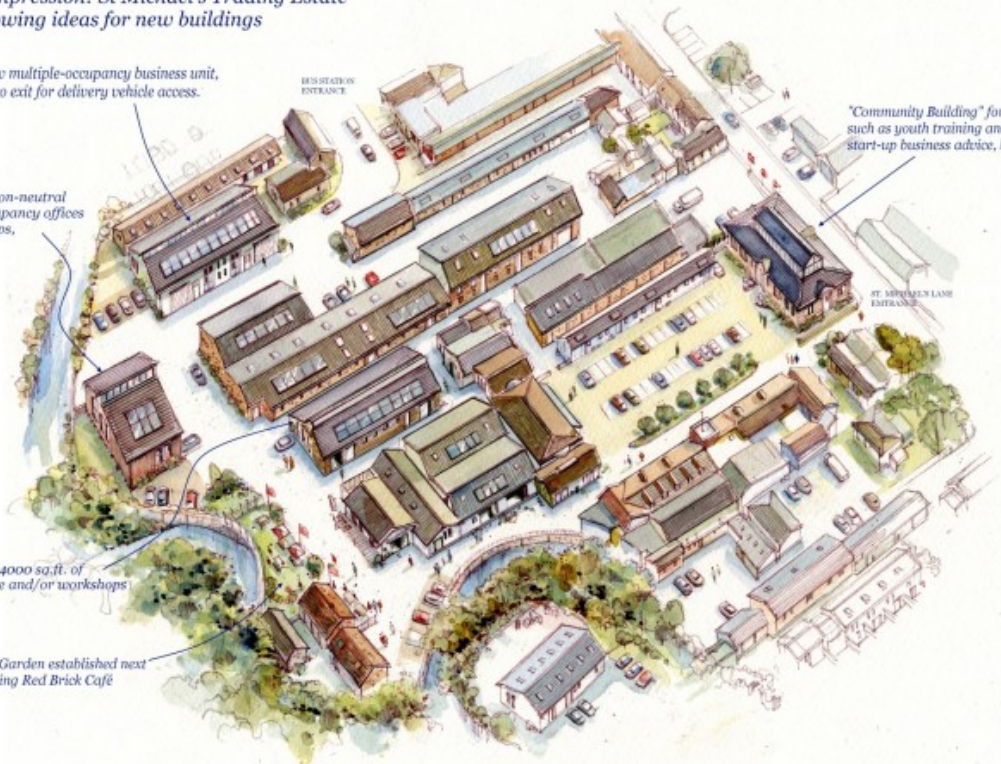
Proposed 4000 sq.ft. of warehouse and/or workshops

Community Garden established next door to existing Red Brick Café

ST MICHAEL'S ENTRANCE

"Community Building" for shared uses such as youth training and opportunities, start-up business advice, heritage centre...

ST MICHAEL'S LANE ENTRANCE





I do still want to speak at the Public Hearing.