

Matter; 11. Bridport.

Para 11.5 Vearse Farm

1. The considerable scale of this proposed development at Vearse Farm which slopes towards the river Symene before it enters Bridport town in an area of high flood risk, would require a robust study of the increase of run-off rainwater expected to be caused by roof structures, stone and tarmacked areas.

I believe that this development should not be considered until it is proven beyond doubt that the risk of flooding to residential areas further downstream of the river Symene will not be significantly increased. This should also take account of the currently projected future increase in severe weather and resultant flash flooding threats. It may be that any amount of sustainable urban drainage, storage chambers, or flood defence undertakings could fail to prevent an environmental man-made catastrophe. Many houses suffered from flood damage in 2013 within this area.

I therefore submit that consideration to infrastructure requirements are inadequate and unsound according to national policy, and evidence to support that damage to the ANOB and neighbouring settlements will not be significant is wholly insufficient. I would recommend that if a reduction in the quantity of dwellings and business units, and a far greater proportion of open or green space is retained, this could help to prevent many detrimental impacts to the vicinity.

Para 11.6 St Mary's Primary School

I believe there are several valid reasons why this established primary school should not be exploited.

1. It is already submitted that this is an 'exception' to normal policy.
2. No evidence has been submitted to support the assertion that 'it is hard to find ways to extend primary school provision at this site'. St Mary's is adjacent to a very large playing field area and also has reasonably generous grounds itself. A survey of other potential alternative sites for an additional school appears to be absent and therefore I believe this assertion is unsupported and unsound.
3. The suitability of the location of the existing school is undeniable. Not only does it serve the adjacent Skilling housing estate, but also all of South Bridport, Bothenhampton, and West Bay areas. It is ideally located for sporting activities at the Leisure Centre, situated opposite the school and to other nearby facilities.
4. The proposed alternative site at Vearse Farm would be likely to create a very significant increase in traffic congestion and general car use which is contrary to sustainable development policies to help reduce unnecessary car journeys. The provision of a bus route is unlikely to counter this effect as every parent has the right to accompany their very young children to the school gates. For the majority of residents, journeys would become significantly problematic.
5. St Mary's school is well established, is highly successful and presents no apparent problems. I

believe that if the District Council intends to exploit this very cherished asset and essential facility for the community, full consultation and an increase of public awareness must precede. To my personal experience, I believe that well over 90% of Bridport residents remain unaware of these potential plans.

6. The need to find sites for housing, however pressed, cannot be allowed to over-ride the basic needs of the community, especially for the purposes of education of young children whose provision is already located in the most optimum location possible. This is contrary to the NPPF Core Planning Principle 11; *'to improve health, social and cultural well being for all'*.

I therefore submit that any attempt to exploit St Mary's primary school as a site for housing development would be wholly unjustified and is not consistent with national policy.

Para; 11.8 Brid4 Town expansion

1. The two 'identified sites' for town-centre expansion are not only totally inappropriate but would be highly likely to cause considerable adverse effects to the character of the Conservation Area, to the existing local economy, to the existing provision of public car-parking, access to local facilities and the required provision of open space in the townscape.

2. The Council has failed to consider or produce alternative locations from using it's own land (currently providing essential public parking space to Bridport town centre) which would be likely to bring in significant revenue, rather than accept professional advice, or to acknowledge local aspirations, or to consider locations which would be both more suitable and more effective.

3. Bridport town centre businesses rely heavily on the existing barely sufficient access by car, especially for many who need to transport goods. The loss of key public parking spaces in the town centre would be likely to force many established businesses to close due to this proposed identified site for town expansion. This has been demonstrated in Dorchester where the new Council Offices have replaced central parking provision and several local firms have disappeared. These proposals are therefore contrary to the NPPF where the vitality of town centres should be protected.

4. In the section 'Main Development Opportunities', the Council has stated that there is very little in the way of opportunities to achieve these aims. However I believe that the council has not taken sufficient action to approach private landowners who could help provide appropriate development opportunities.

In particular, adjacent to these 'identified' public car-parks lies St Michael's Trading Estate of over 5 acres.

In 2009 WDDC commissioned a survey of 'Potential Employment Sites' which studied eleven trading estates in Bridport. However St Michael's is not only the largest provider of employment, but is also the only within the town centre, and has significant land area which remains unused.

The District Council survey concluded;

“The site offers regeneration opportunities for Bridport town centre. It is therefore recommended that this site is retained for employment use.”

Since that time the site has become established as a visitor attraction and has grown to support up to 92 small businesses.

The survey by Goadsby Ltd also recommended that efforts are made to approach the landowner with regard to these matters. However despite these findings, this significant opportunity for town

centre expansion has been omitted as a potential site in the local plan.

I refer to Matter 3, agenda 3.1 where here exists an alternative development option which would deliver a more effective and sustainable development strategy, namely at St Michaels Trading Estate. It should be recognised by the council that there exist businesses which depend heavily on footfall and likewise their central location is ideal for providing easy access for local residents and for visitors.

NPPF 24, Vitality of Town Centres, states LPA's should give '*preference to sites that are well connected to the town centre*'.

5. Local community aspirations should be recognised in the local plan.

The WDDC Planning Department is aware of a forthcoming development proposal for St Michaels in which additional retail outlets could be provided, new employment opportunities for up to sixty full time equivalent workers, and enhancement of the Conservation Area would help generate increased economic activity to the area, especially through tourism and trade.

This is being proposed by a social enterprise of over 500 members and shareholders which has the ability to attract grant-funding and other investment to the area.

With record levels of responses to the landowners application (a proportion of such being in opposition at 98.7%), a unanimous vote by Bridport Town Council to oppose it, and eight reasons given in the Development Officers Report to refuse it on planning policies, it cannot follow that the council has in any way responded to local aspirations, let alone recognised planning policies.

The two identified sites for town centre expansion may well be convenient for the Council itself but do in no way take into account far better and more sustainable alternatives which are based on local expertise and aspirations which build on existing strengths. The idea of filling public car-parks with retail units lacks any intelligent thought and shows no understanding of either contemporary town planning, nor of local needs and concerns whatsoever.

6. Matter/agenda 11.8 Bridport cannot be separated from matter 5- Economy, especially on the first 4 out of the 5 points of agenda.

From the current draft local plan it appears that the council intends to provide over 4 hectares of employment space on the periphery of the town having allowed the most central trading estate to be effectively replaced by housing. There exists ten other trading estates situated in the outskirts of Bridport and therefore to allow the loss of opportunity to provide over 250 jobs in the town centre in an existing site for retail and trade is contrary to the NPPF Vitality of town centres policy (24); 'Only if sites are not available in town centres, should out of town sites be considered.'

Additionally I perceive that the existing 200+ workers, their friends, councillors, and families do not understand why St Michael's is the only trading estate which has until now not been offered any form of employment protection by the council. It has been left to local residents to carry out a survey to determine how many Full Time Equivalent employees work on this site.

In order to achieve a balance between new housing and providing new employment opportunities (Agenda 3.3), I believe that the council should consider that the proposed displacement of employment at St Michaels is highly inappropriate. It should be noted that 65% of demolished work space would not be replaced and the 35% proposed for replacement includes only office use, for which there is no known demand. This would obviously be highly detrimental to the local economy.

7. NPPF Strategy; Conserving and enhancing the historic environment (126) states LPA's should;

'recognise that heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource and conserve them in a manner appropriate to their significance- including those at risk through neglect, decay, and other threats.'

The area in question is within a Conservation Area which includes listed buildings and heritage assets that have been neglected. Currently the landowner claims he is unable to fund further maintenance and wishes to demolish several heritage assets to make way for a high rise housing development.

NPPF 131 states; LPA's should; *'consider putting Heritage Assets to viable uses consistent with their conservation.'*

This is the opposite of the council's proposed actions, but exactly what the social enterprise 'Enterprise St Michaels' is proposing, while offering to help create additional employment, community facilities, and improve the attraction to visitors.

As NPPF 133 suggests; grant-funding is highly achievable to help conservation and would be appropriate for this Industrial and Provident Society.

8. The vast majority of Bridport residents believe that St Michael's is the only remaining, and the most ideally suited site in which town centre expansion can be developed.

Many architect's designs and illustrations exist, 2 of which I am here submitting as examples*. And yet despite bringing many benefits to the wider community, no mention of this opportunity exists as a positive alternative for mixed-use development in the South West Quadrant of Bridport.

NPPF 21 states; LPA's should;

'plan positively for the location, promotion and expansion of networks of knowledge driven, creative or high technology industries.'

Enterprise St Michaels has developed a programme for renewable energy generation, over 2,000 sq metres of new employment space, a community hall to include a local food producers outlets, youth sports and training facilities, improvements to infrastructure, provision for visitors, and restoration to buildings of local importance.

At present, even without sufficient maintenance, the estate is listed as the number one attraction for visitors to the Bridport area in Resort magazine. This brings many benefits to the town and should be allowed to develop as opposed to being a unique feature which is lost due to planning errors.

I believe that the council is obligated to consider *'the wider social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits that the historic environment can bring.'* (NPPF 126)

9. A development at the site at Rope Walks car-park BRID4 would be in violation of the West Dorset Local Development Framework.

Views of important local landmarks would be obscured and the requirement for sufficient open space within the Conservation Area threatened.

In conjunction with the three storey flats proposed next to St Michael's Lane, views to the prominent landmark of the Bridport Industries Building and to the cupola of the Town Hall, and to the surrounding countryside would be lost.

The Conservation Area Appraisal (5.7.2) states;

'The Bridport Industries Building forms an important frontage on the south side of the former cattle market- especially when viewed from the Rope Walks.'

10. As a director of the registered Industrial and Provident Society, Enterprise St Michaels, as a tenant, and as a local resident, I would wish to express great concern that the current Draft Local Plan completely fails to recognise both local aspirations and alternative development possibilities

which are more effective, more appropriate to the locality, and more sustainable.

It is regrettable that until this day, I believe that the views of Bridport Town Council, the Chamber of Trade and Commerce, English Heritage, Planning consultants recommendations and the knowledge and views of local residents have not been taken into consideration.

Reference to Agenda 2.1

While on paper there may be evidence of sufficient public involvement and consultation of stakeholders, I find it hard to accept that the response received has been properly processed and therefore reflected in the Local Plan.

I was one of over two dozen Bridport residents who attended a consultation held 7 miles from our town in 2012. We were put into groups who then were asked to deliver specific proposals. In my group we proposed the creation of an Enterprise Zone in Bridport and formulated it on paper. That was it.

None of us, to my knowledge have been contacted since, no follow up was forthcoming and I can find no trace of these stakeholder inputs, which was our only opportunity for involvement.

Summary

Like many others I would like to assist the District Council in the formulation of an effective Local Plan.

In order to resolve some of the fore-mentioned problems of Agendas 11.5, 6 and 8, I would suggest three solutions;

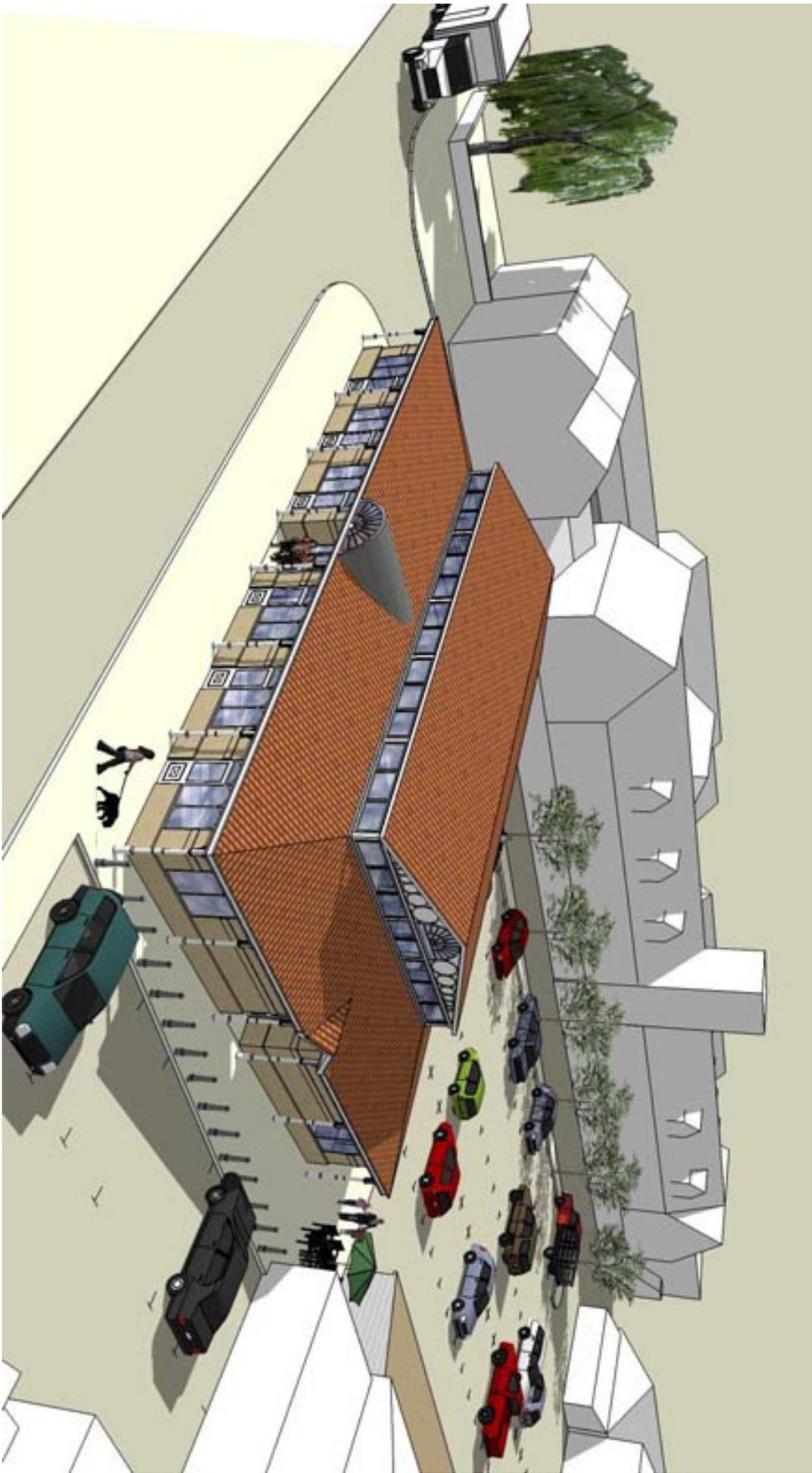
1. The scale of development at Vearse Farm is significantly reduced, and thereby its adverse impact.
2. The existing primary school off Skilling Hill Road is retained and additional provision is achieved by a not so large primary school at Vearse Farm.
3. Town centre expansion should be allocated only in part of Tannery Road car-park ,and at St Michael's Trading Estate.
Rope Walks car park must be removed from the proposed identified sites.

The coach and Bus terminal must be protected. Over 200 bus companies use this facility.

St Michaels Trading Estate should be recognised as offering great potential for expansion of the town centre and the local economy. If WDDC's own report states that ***'it offers regeneration opportunities for Bridport town centre'***, then this should be recognised in the Local Plan as a viable alternative development.

* 3 sample visualisations for proposed commercial development at St Michael's Trading Estate are attached.

These proposals by Enterprise St Michaels have the support of Bridport Town Council, the Constituent MP Rt Hon Oliver Letwin, and the WDDC Planning Case Officer.



St Michael's Trading Estate: ideas for new buildings

New workspace for up to 4 small businesses

New workspace for up to 7 small businesses

New workspace for up to 4 small businesses to 4 small businesses

Community garden next to Café

Stover Building restored and housing "Trick Factory" BMX and Skate park

New multi-purpose Community Hall

Solar panels on main south-facing roofs yielding 300MWh per annum

