

West Dorset, Weymouth & Portland Local Plan:

FURTHER STATEMENT BY MELVYN J WARNER

Given below are reasons why I think that the original decision to delete land at Hollymoor Beaminster from the local plan should stand and the site's omission does not affect the soundness of the plan or have significant wider consequences.

1. Summerfield Homes are at present trying to gain planning permission to build on this site; in their public consultation they acknowledged the fact that traffic in East Street is a real problem by proposing, they also recognise that flooding is an issue and give an outline of how they would overcome it. If, for the moment, these problems are put to one side and the development is examined to see if it would make a real contribution to the housing stock of Beaminster now or in the future, I believe it would not.
2. The developers in their presentation were keen to point out it would have affordable homes and that there was 'easy' access to the local schools, one assumes this would be for first time buyers or couples who wish for a larger property to house a growing family. I was informed by the developers that the houses would range in price from just under £200,000 (presumably the 2 bed roomed semi-detached homes) to £350,000. To put these amounts in some sort of context I would like to give two examples which concern my God-Daughter and her brother who is my God-Son. My God-Daughter and her husband have two very young children and have just moved back into Beaminster from Worcester. They were looking for a four bedroom house with the aim of one of the bedrooms to become an office as the husband works from home. Despite earning more than £30,000 they could only afford to buy a 3 bed roomed ex council house/housing association property, it cost just over £180,000. My God-Son and his wife both work in and around Beaminster and have jobs which are hourly paid and just above the minimum wage. It was hoped that they could buy an 'affordable' home (at the time £150,000 was the sort of figure that was being asked) in the new development in Fleet Street, this would only be possible with financial help from my God-Son's parents. In the end none of the homes were suitable for them and their young son. then they have had another child and so finding a suitable house is more restricted. Given these two examples of young local people in work, how can the developers claim they will provide affordable housing?
3. When the local plan was originally made at a public meeting in Dorchester, the Council official giving a presentation describing the factors that were taken into consideration when devising the plan, stated that the main increase in the area was a result of people coming to retire in West Dorset, Weymouth and Portland. The most common type of property that is sought by would be retirees are bungalows. However not all bungalows are attractive to would be buyers, one only has to look at local Estate Agents displays to discover which properties are readily snapped up, plus their adverts giving the sort of properties that are being sought by potential buyers, the prices of these properties are usually above £350000. A close neighbour has had to reduce the price of her semi

detached 2 bed roomed property (valued around £200000) so that she could find a buyer. Despite getting a smaller amount for her home, she has been able to buy a new bigger house in Crewkerne, where there are more amenities, and have a reasonable sum to help her in her retirement. This begs the question -"Given that the age at which people can now claim their state pension and the low annuity rates, will the area see the same rate of people trying to retire in the area be as great as past history would suggest?" Summerfields' proposed development is for building houses only.

4. Therefore I argue that their proposed development would not provide homes that are affordable to the local people who would like to buy their own home nor to those seeking to retire in to retire in the area. Thus there is the prospect of houses being built and not occupied. This may seem far fetched but figures from Dorset County Council
5. 's Data Book, show that between 2001 and 2010 the population of Beaminster rose from 2920 to 3010 an increase of 80 (3.1% to 2s.f.) and the number of houses in the same period rose from 1527 to 1654 a rise of 127 (8.3% to 2s.f.). Thus house building has increased at more than double the rate in the increase in population. Maybe this explains why there are so many empty properties in the town. During this period the population did not rise year on year, in 2005 and 2008 the population was smaller than the year before, therefore history shows that populations do not always increase. Figures from the 2010 census shown on Dorset County Councils web site show that in West Dorset alone, there is an estimated 48759 dwellings in the area and 44400 households with residents, which seems to indicate that there are around 4300 dwellings unoccupied plus there are over 2,700 second homes in the area. Since these figures were published more houses have been built in Beaminster and West Dorset in general.
6. There seems to no concrete proposals to show that the Beaminster area will generate businesses that will increase the prosperity of local young families or attract such families that could afford the proposed houses at Hollymoor. I would argue that the site is unnecessary for the present planning period and the next as the proposed development does not meet the present or any latent demand.
7. Having taken out the issues of flooding and access to the Hollymoor site, I would like to show how they would impact on the development and the surrounding area. The site is part of a flood plain area and parts of it are classified as zone 1, the most at risk of flooding or zone 3 the least vulnerable to flooding. As you know the risk of flooding is calculated by how likely the area is to be inundated by the sea or a river breaking its banks, run off flooding is not taking into account. The Hollymoor site and some of the surrounding area is subject to run off flooding, thus calculating green field run off rates will not be as accurate as people living down stream, who already suffer flooding would like. If the developers are willing to take this into consideration, then the cost of their flood prevention methods would be greater and thus reflected in the prices of the houses. There are other sites in the area where development can take place such as brown field sites where flooding is not an issue.

8. As said earlier the developers agree that access is an issue and in their plans for the development they say that a footpath will be provided where it is missing and that there would be an obvious shared area for pedestrians and motor vehicles. If a path was put in then the road would be so narrowed that the milk tankers, grain lorries tractors etc. would in every event have to mount the pavement to progress. The shared area wherever that would go, is based on a similar scheme in South Perrot, which it seems has failed to impress the residents there. In South Perrot there are private homes a church and a public house, thus the pedestrian traffic is completely different than that which exists in East Street. Given that the developers boldly claim in their plans that the amenities are in easy walking distance (they say it takes 13 minutes), the obvious conclusion is that foot traffic will also increase as well as motorised traffic and the problem will be even greater.
9. The developers paid for a traffic survey in East Street during February of year, the figures they obtained led them to believe East Street could accommodate a small increase in traffic. However their survey is flawed, the sensor was placed halfway along the street and so was unable to record traffic that entered and left from either end. At the time of the survey the Tunnel Road was closed and traffic was diverted down North Street and access to Hollymoor and part of East Street could be obtained by going along Woodswater Lane. During the survey week the ford in the lane was generally passable and several residents used this rather hazardous route and so would not have been recorded.
10. Access to the local allotments is along East Street, during February there is very little activity at the allotments, similarly farm traffic would also have been less given the time of year, thus if the survey had been conducted even one or two months later more traffic movement would have been recorded. Therefore their figures are inaccurate and they are now out of date; since the survey several properties have changed hands and the number of vehicles used by the new occupiers has increased in all but one of the cases I know of and that one the number of vehicles has remained at two, in fairness there may be a dwelling where the number of vehicles has reduced of which I am not aware.
11. A number of houses actually suffer from physical damage by passing traffic hitting them, the number of occurrences of this happening will only increase if the site is developed and the plans put forward by the developers would not stop damage of this sort given the site of the properties involved. There are several side 'roads' and access to East Street requires a person standing in the road to indicate when it is safe otherwise they are basically 'blind' manoeuvres. There are homes which open straight on to East Street, some where there is no pavement and others where the path is on the other side of the road. I, as I suspect other local residents did) met the developers surveyors when they were in East Street working and they could not see how East Street could be changed to make it safer. An increase in traffic may well result in more damage to the gas and water mains and drains, some of which are extremely old, that exist in East Street.
12. The development plan says that hedgerows, natural habitats and amenities would be protected as much as possible. However the

development would result in the public footpath becoming, for the majority of its length, a path through a housing estate and not a route through a field which is enjoyed by many from around Beaminster.

13. I was told by the developers that they plan to build and sell as they go along and that the whole process will take a year. Thus do they have the financial means to put in place flood prevention methods and improvement to access before the building of houses starts ? With the possible increase of interest rates within the next year and the levels of income of people in the area the development may take several years and also may result in the developers not leaving the roads, street lighting etc to a standard that the local authority can accept responsibility.
14. To summarise why the Hollymoor site should not be included in the local plan my points are:
 - 1) It does not provide housing suitable for local demand.
 - 2) Access to any development along East Street cannot be improved to a standard that is acceptable.
 - 3) Development of the site may well cause more flooding down stream.
 - 4) The demand for homes that are needed locally can be met at more suitable sites.
 - 5) The development would see the loss of a local amenity.
 - 6) The possible damage to people, property and drains and gas mains in East Street.