

West Dorset, Weymouth and Portland Local Plan Examination

Curtis Fields, Chickerell Road, Weymouth, Dorset

Evidence of Michael Kelly, 13 Viscount Road, Weymouth, Dorset, DT4 9EP

Ref 204

November 2014

General comment;

1.0 The proposals for extensive development of the former Markham and Little Francis Farm as proposed will result in seriously harmful impacts upon the western part of Weymouth. Also because of the high dependence on the B3156 Lanehouse Rocks Road to access the Isle of Portland the extent of development envisaged by the landowner will impact severely upon the accessibility and prosperity of Wyke Regis and Portland by reason of additional traffic delays.

Traffic considerations;

2.0 The B3156 Portland Road / Lanehouse Rocks Road corridor already carries traffic levels that detrimentally impact upon the amenities of homes in the area and high traffic levels similarly adversely affect Chickerell Road and the western end of Radipole Lane and the one-way routes of Lynch Road and Benville Road at certain times of the day.

2.1 Extension of the development beyond Cockles Lane into the higher ground in the south west area of the former Markham and Little Francis Farm is likely to create the need for a vehicular access from the steep section of B3156 Lanehouse Rocks Road. Such an access would be likely to represent a serious hazard to road users given the steepness of the gradient of the main road and the proximity of the brow of Wyke Hill to the south. There is no safe provision for pedestrians walking southwards on the east side of the B3156 Lanehouse Rocks Road towards All Saint's Church though the proposed development would greatly add to the number of pedestrians seeking routes towards the local facilities in Wyke Regis.

Scale of development;

3.0 Whilst there is a need for additional housing in the Weymouth area the amount and extent of development envisaged is excessive and disproportionate to the rate of development in most other parts of the Local Plan area.

Environmental impact;

4.0 The area of high ground of the south western part of the land, to the south of Cockles Lane, should be excluded from the area to be developed. This currently open area has high landscape value and provides linkage between the identified Site of Nature Conservation Interest to the east and the fields to the west side of Lanehouse Rocks Road which separate the neighbourhoods of Wyke Regis and Lanehouse and is included within the designated Heritage Coast. This linkage is valuable in landscape and ecological terms.

4.1 Development of houses on this high ground would have an additional visual impact as the likely height of the buildings themselves should be taken into account. An indication of this is given when the 1970s built housing immediately north of Cockles Lane to the west side of Lanehouse Rocks Road is considered where the overall height of the houses obscures views of part of the fields on the rising ground behind.

4.2 Photographs in the Design and Access Statement which accompanies the current planning application do not give sufficient indication of the visual amenity of this high ground as their views are dominated by highway signage. However views are readily available from the Fiveways area that are not obstructed in this way (please see the 2 attached photographs which were taken in early November 2014).

The current planning application;

5.0 My wife and I have submitted representations on the current outline planning application for residential development of most of the remaining open land at "Curtis Fields" (Weymouth and Portland Borough Council reference WP/14/00777/OUT). Our representations are as follows;

5.1 The application form says that the application does not affect a public right of way. The public footpath, Cockles Lane, crosses the site and although we understand that the intention is to retain it as a feature and a route, the footpath must be affected by the application.

5.2 The form says there is no contamination on site. This will be generally true but the existing barn on the high ground of the south west of the site, above Cockles Lane, has damaged asbestos sheeting.

5.3 We do not believe that an application of such a scale where adjoining roads have difficulties of high traffic loading, proximity of busy junctions or, in the case of Lanehouse Rocks Road, a steep gradient with a hill brow a short distance to the south, that the subject of vehicular access should be treated as a reserved matter.

5.4 The application refers to the area in the south west of the application site, to the south of Cockles Lane, as having been used for car parking related to Channel Ferry services. That use was abandoned in the late 1970s / early 1980s. Although a lighting column remains the site has for many years been used for the keeping of horses. It should not be implied that it is a brownfield site.

5.5 Whilst we did not oppose the first phases of the development, recognising the local housing need that exists, and there are aspects of the proposals which we support including the aim of a pedestrian friendly layout, provision of cycle routes, and a recognition of the benefit of accessible buildings and environment designed to Lifetime Homes criteria, there are significant concerns as follows;

Visual impact.

5.6 The proposed development reaches onto high land and will seriously erode the open link between the high part of the site above Cockles Lane and the Heritage Coast fields to the west side of Lanehouse Rocks Road. This land is identified in the adopted Local Plan as being of great landscape value. The photograph in the Design and Access Statement which purports to

represent the view from Radipole Lane is not a fair representation of the attractive aspect from Fiveways junction towards Wyke Hill.

Traffic.

5.7 We believe that any vehicular access from the site to the busy B3156 Lanehouse Rocks Road would represent a serious hazard to road users. This road is now carrying more traffic than the A354 Buxton Road but it is steep (additionally hazardous in frosty weather being on the north side of Wyke Hill) and has busy junctions to the north at Freemantle Road and at the nearby Petrol Filling Station and Supermarket. Many schoolchildren walk along Lanehouse Rocks Road to and from Budmouth, All Saints, Wyke and other schools. The section of Lanehouse Rocks Road to the north of Cockles Lane does not have a footpath. Some pedestrians cross Lanehouse Rocks Road to follow both sections of Cockles Lane to the east and west of the B3156 and although not great in number their safety must be taken into account.

Nature conservation.

5.8 Without a larger area of land being set aside as open space on the higher ground the impact on the Site of Nature Conservation Interest will be considerable. Greater intensity of use is likely to degrade its ecological value adding to the harm done across the wider site in terms of habitat loss.

Schools.

5.9 We would also ask for further consideration of the suggestion that the issues related to schooling would be addressed by setting land aside for the possible expansion of St Augustine's School. As a Catholic School it would not be likely to meet the needs of the majority of local families and pressure arising from the additional population would be more likely to fall on Conifers and Wyke Primary Schools, and Budmouth and All Saints Secondary Schools.

5.10 To summarise we suggest that the proposals are not sufficiently considered, that they represent overdevelopment and raise serious concerns for highway safety. Because of the proposed development in the south west area above Cockles Lane the development will severely detract from the landscape character of the area. We call upon the applicants to withdraw the application and submit revised and reduced proposals after holding a consultation event with local residents.

Summary

6.0 Reference is made to concerns about the current planning application as it relates to the consideration of the extent of development which is appropriate within the effective period of the Local Plan under examination.

6.1 It is submitted that the extent of development at Curtis Fields requires reduction and that, in particular, no development should extend into the land in the south western area to the south of Cockles Lane but that land should, together with the adjacent Site of Nature Conservation Interest be safeguarded from future development and secured for permanent use as a public open space under an appropriate legal agreement.

