

From: Ian Gardner [REDACTED]
Sent: 02 March 2023 15:34
To: NeighbourhoodPlanning
Subject: Chesil Bank NP

Spatial Planning,
Dorset Council,
County Hall,
Colliton Park,
Dorchester,
DT1 1XJ
2 March 2023

Dear Neighbourhood Planning

Chesil Bank Neighbourhood Plan

I provided comments on this Neighbourhood Plan to Chesil Bank PC on 21 Oct 2021 which you may have seen. I now wish to comment on the proposed allocation in Fleet of Land adjoining Stone Cottage, Fleet described as 'one affordable dwelling'.

Neighbourhood Plans are required to conform with National Planning Policy and Local Plan Policy. The current policies are detailed in the 2015 West Dorset, W&P Local Plan. There was also a WD and W&P Local Plan Review Preferred Options Consultation document of August 2018 which did not seem to be proposing relaxations of the policies relating to the Heritage Coast, AONB etc.

The Fleet is the largest example of a lagoon habitat in England and together with Chesil Bank is subject to three international designations (RAMSAR, SAC and SPA). Much of the area received Heritage Coast designation in 1983, and the South West Coast Path following the inner edge of the tidal lagoon is a major recreation destination. The land between the coast and the B3157 Coast Road is particularly environmentally sensitive. ENV1 of the 2015 LP seeks to protect the Heritage Coast and AONB from development. The proposed ENV1 detailed in the 2018 document seems to suggest tighter controls e.g., 'developments in the AONB will be refused unless it can be demonstrated it is in the national interest'.

ENV2 of the 2015 LP (and ENV3 of the 2018 review) affords protection of the Fleet RAMSAR site (International protection status) and its hinterland from development. Para 2.2.12 of the 2015 LP refers to The Fleet and its protection as a wildlife site needing to be given great weight in planning decisions. The Chesil Bank and Fleet Nature Reserve 2020 Report refer to the area being under increased threat from disturbance advising of a risk some areas will become completely devoid of wildlife. More homes, of course, may increase disturbance and more resident cats and dogs. Compromises or mitigation may be suggested but mitigation is unlikely to actually reverse the decline in the habitat or its wildlife. P 2.2.7 of the NP refers to the fact that a large number of residents (of Chickerell) walk through the village and use the coastal

footpath. That path is popular with local dog walkers which brings problems as wildlife is disturbed along the shores of the Fleet and in adjoining open fields. Although a RAMSAR site many walkers/dogs leave the footpath and enter The Fleet disturbing wildlife.

91% of local residents who responded to Chickerell's NP questionnaire agreed that new buildings and structures on the Heritage Coast should be discouraged. Numerous responses commented that the area to the Fleet should be protected not just for the internationally renowned status of its landscape and wildlife but because of its tranquillity and recreational benefits. No development on the Coastal side of the B3157 next to Fleet was wanted. The Chickerell NP approach was supported by the Government Inspector who examined their NP.

Fleet does not have a defined DDB. SUS2 of the 2015 LP states 'outside defined development boundaries development will be strictly controlled having particular regard to the need to protect the countryside and environmental constraints'. There are some exceptions which may permit development and these are listed under SUS2 of the 2015 LP Policy. However, the exceptions do not allow new open market housing. For many decades the Local Planning Authority has not approved any new residential development in Fleet. (Extensions to existing buildings and replacements on a one for one basis have been permitted in line with LP policies.) Sites for new residential properties in Fleet would conflict with Local Plan Policy ENV1.

(Note. an Inspector has turned down an Appeal against WDDC's refusal of a house on the borders of Fleet Parish citing the importance of the area. He argued residential development would cause undue harm to the appearance of the surrounding rural landscape and have an unacceptable adverse effect on the character of the Heritage Coast.) If sites were allocated in Fleet, developers would argue that if it is OK to build one house without damaging the environment why not more? Note the size of the proposed allocation.

Fleet has little if any infrastructure and residents have to go to or through Chickerell to access shops and its schools. Adjacent Chickerell has grown, and is planned to grow significantly with some one of the new homes being affordable which arguably would be able to meet Fleet housing needs.

Natural England objected to new development proposed in Fleet and even to one property in Chickerell on the border of Fleet at the top of Fleet Road. A subsequent Appeal in respect of that latter PA was rejected.

Fleet sites do not meet the LPA's sustainability criteria. There is no safe route to school (taxis have had to provide school transport). Camp site and other tourist traffic is a problem for walkers. Installation of a paved footway would have an adverse effect on the valued rural nature of the Village in the Heritage Coast.

Concerns have been expressed that the proposed Stone Cottage site seems large given the 'preferably be limited to 3 Bedrooms'. Might an owner seek to build more once the principle of some development was accepted? Would it be mandated that a Housing Association should be involved to ensure that 'affordability' would be in perpetuity? However, the main issue is that any new development in Fleet would be contrary to

policy, the advice of Natural England and to the detriment of the Heritage Coast and its wildlife.

Yours sincerely

Ian Gardner

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[West Dorset Planning Cttee 1991-2019 (Portfolio Holder for Planning 2015-19), Dorset County Council Planning 2009-2017, Chair Chickerell Town Council Neighbourhood Plan Group]