

Symondsburry Parish Planning Committee

Appeal Statement 22 October 2025

Planning Inspectorate appeal reference - APP/D1265/W/25/3372602; Address of appeal site - Land to rear of 156-172 South Street, Bridport DT6 3NP

Proposal: Redevelopment for erection of retirement living accommodation comprising 48 apartments, 25 cottages, communal facilities, access, car parking and landscaping to create an integrated retirement community. Location: Land to Rear of 156-172 South Street Bridport. DT6 3NP

Symondsburry Parish Council are against the appeal proposals.

Introduction: This is the appeal statement from Symondsburry Parish Council with reference to the proposal for a comprehensive retirement village development creating a retirement community on a single site. The position of the site is to the South of the town centre and positioned just off South Street. The existing site itself is still currently a commercial use providing building and quarry materials and the northern part of the site may have been the periphery of an historic town gas production site. The site, by its nature and use, is unattractive. As such the type and quality of any proposal can be acknowledged as beneficial rather than achieving the most appropriate solution.

Consideration: Notwithstanding the benefits of regenerating this site from a low base condition, the Symondsburry Parish Planning Committee objected to the proposals (the full scope of the consideration are on public record and should be in the information papers submitted to the inspectorate) at the planning committee meeting where the submission was rejected. The summary of the key areas of concern and consideration for this site are as below, which have been exacerbated by the worsening housing needs requirements of Bridport for affordable and social rent properties.

The recent preparation of the Dorset Local Plan consultation and the updating of the Bridport Area Neighbourhood Plan (BANP) has highlighted a disturbing trend in the age demographics of the area and lack of appropriate accommodation. It is clear there has been a substantial decrease in the younger population whilst the older population has increased substantially (see figure 1 on page 5 of the Bridport Area Neighbourhood Plan). It is felt that the key to providing Bridport and its immediate area lies with providing a true balance of opportunities for all residents in the areas of residential, employment, social infrastructure and retail offer. The key issues for consideration as to why this development should not receive consent under the appeal procedure are as below.

- 1) **Housing need:** Symondsburry Parish Council suggests that the primary use of the site for a restricted residential retirement village is flawed and goes against the urgent needs of Bridport, being affordable and social rented 2/3 bedroom accommodation. The accommodation on this site should be an opportunity for the younger age demographic residents of the area. As such, the variety of size, form, tenure, and type of homes required is not provided by this proposal and does not create a balanced and mixed community. It is understood there are surplus retirement homes in the immediate area with one new build development having unsold vacant units for some time.

It is clear the proposals do not provide for any Affordable Housing stating that following national financial calculations the site is not viable to allow the provision of affordable homes. However, in this case the site is virtually clear and as seen by the adjacent development at Dr. Roberts Close a viable development can be delivered. The calculation relies on the existing use land value, the benchmark land value, and the gross development value. The appellant is not providing any element of the affordable and social rented homes which are desperately required in Bridport and surrounding area, as identified in the BANP and Local Plan.

Signed Clerk to the Parish..... Date:

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- 2) **Existing Services Infrastructure:** The existing community services such as medical centre, dentists, pharmacists and welfare/care are already struggling with the current population, which is seen to be of an aging demographic. The large development at Vearse Farm will add to this issue however a purpose built retirement proposal will add considerable pressure on the already local overworked system.

- 3) **Flooding:** In consideration of data from the Environment Agency, the majority of the site is within an area designated Flood Zone 3 (greater than 1% annual risk of flooding), with the remaining area mainly to the north of the site is designated Flood Zone 2 (thus being a flood plain). It is clear from recent recorded information that the site and surrounding areas /streets do flood on a regular basis especially when combined with high tidal levels. It is felt the proposals do not recognise sufficiently the flood risks of the site especially with the specific design for an aging population. In addition, the proposals indicate covering a substantial area with impervious material which does not promote an acceptable drainage solution especially as the applicant is suggesting pumping the water into the river system during storm sequences, which puts further pressure on the existing systems. It must be remembered that further upstream the consented Vearse Farm development, currently under development, will also be discharging storm water into the river system.

- 4) **Highways and Parking:** The parking provision should be provided in recognition of the Bournemouth, Poole and Dorset Parking Standards and not that of the “Churchill Developments” demographic information. It is suggested that the current level of parking is too low especially the visitor parking, notwithstanding the position of the site on the fringe of the town. South Street is a busy route leading into the town and already suffers from roadside parking issues. With reference to alternative means, the pedestrian routes, their size and condition do not appear to be appropriate in terms of being safe and accessible especially for this form of development.
In addition, the vehicular movement within the site appears to be compromised with narrow highway widths and the safety of road users being compromised due to the limited width and poor sight lines. This, together with the lack of visitor parking compromises further the junction of the development with South Street taking into consideration visibility splays and junction radii to demonstrate safe vehicular access and egress. This is concerning when considering the current peak time vehicle use, market days, roadside parking together with the adjacent development opportunities on land opposite.

Summary:

In summary it is suggested that the primary use of the site for a restricted age residential retirement village is flawed and goes against the urgent needs of Bridport being affordable 2/3 bedroom accommodation. In terms of viability the calculations provided by the appellant suggest that there should be no affordable housing on the site which in turn creates a higher density development proposal which is unacceptable and suggests overdevelopment. This is borne out by the design of the units together with the poor vehicular and pedestrian design with lack of unit and visitor parking. These calculations appear to be based on national statistics rather than local need and as such do not prove the case.

It is understood there are surplus retirement homes in the area with one new build development having numerous vacant units for sale. This vacancy statistic needs to be read with the current age demographic spread in the Bridport area, which shows a dominance of people in the age group of 60-79. In addition, the variety of size, form, tenure, and type of homes is not provided by this proposal and importantly does not create a balanced and mixed community as described in Bridport

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Area Neighbourhood Plan policy H4. The aging demographic will put further pressure on all aspects of the services infrastructure especially medical and social.

It is felt the proposals do not recognise sufficiently the flood risks of the site especially with the specific design for an aging population.

The vehicular movement within the site appears to be compromised with narrow highway widths and pedestrian footpaths which, together with the lack of visitor parking compromises further the junction of the development with South Street taking into consideration visibility splays and junction radii to demonstrate safe vehicular access and egress. The amount of parking provided by the proposal is unacceptable especially when considering visitor numbers and the lack of parking immediately outside of the site.

Conclusion:

Symondsburry Parish Council confirm that the proposals for a Retirement Village are inappropriate for this specific site and for Bridport generally, for the reasons given in detail consideration of the original planning submission and as further summarised above together with following further consultation work on the Dorset Local Plan and also the updating of the BANP. As such Symondsburry Parish Council urge the Inspector to consider the deficiencies of the application and appeal statement for this particular site, with its attendant issues, in understanding the needs of the area in dismissing the appeal.

Signed Clerk to the Parish..... Date: