



22nd January 2014

Trevor Warrick
Planning Policy Manager
North Dorset District Council
Nordon
Salisbury Road
Blandford Forum
Dorset

Dear Mr Warrick

NORTH DORSET LOCAL PLAN

I write to express my grave concern that the Deer Park/Crown Meadows remained the preferred option in the North Dorset Local Plan, for the building of up to 250 houses. I believe it should now be discounted altogether in favour of the alternative; namely the Blandford St Mary land I understand still being offered by the Abbott family to the south east corner of the roundabout by Tesco Supermarket.

The Abbott's land has ready access onto the A350 Blandford Forum bypass. It is a fact of life that a large proportion of the people who buy the new homes will be in employment away from the Town, and also that each dwelling is likely to be occupied by people owning at least two cars. The existing one-way system in Blandford, which has now reached or surpassed pre-bypass levels will become even more unmanageable than it is currently with an additional four hundred cars with no alternative to get access, and exit to and from the Deer Park/Crown Meadows. Claims that people living on the new development will walk to the town centre, are sadly but realistically utterly implausible. Human behaviour is such that they will also not choose, when leaving the Deer Park, to drive along Milldown Road to gain access to the northern bypass if they are travelling south or (as will often be the case) simply wanting to go to one of the Town's supermarkets. With this in mind, the alternative site avoids the need for cars to be driven around the one way system, and also compare favourably with car miles covered, when the need to travel around the one-way system is taken into account.

The need to protect Blandford Forum from further motorised traffic is essential from an environmental and historic point of view. The Town is unique for its Georgian architecture and design, and already suffers, and has suffered from, pollution and the movement of heavy vehicles.

From an ecological point of view, the Blandford St Mary site has been well used agriculturally over many years, and is regularly ploughed. The Deer Park is essentially grassland meadow, and no doubt is host to species of flora and fauna that has long been destroyed on the other sites. It is to be treasured; not to be destroyed.

Issues of flooding have been particularly to the fore in recent months. Whilst I acknowledge the proposed siting for the building on the Deer Park is significantly above (I understand) the 200 year flood plain, the increase 'record' flooding levels that have been characteristic in recent years, should sound warning bells. Additionally, the SuDS issues involved in the Deer Park site, where the geology is of a thin soil level overlying impervious chalk, also must raise huge concerns. The Blandford St Mary site has, I understand, an alluvial topsoil over gravel, and is much more able to discharge surface water to the aquifers.

I believe from a visual impact point of view, there would be an acceptable impact from the surrounding approaches as far as the Blandford St Mary site is concerned. The site is largely in a fold in the valley. Any building on the Deer Park/Crown Meadows site, in contrast, will be significantly visible from the approach from Blandford St Mary and from Bryanston Woods. It would seriously damage the very unique setting of the Town, and this would be a grave loss to the Nation.

I appreciate North Dorset must make difficult decisions, and as far as Blandford is concerned it is a case of opting for the least worst. Development on the Deer Park/Crown Meadows is not the least worst by far, in my view, and also in the passionate view of some 6000 residents of Blandford Forum; several of whom I represent as an elected member of North Dorset District Council.

I should be grateful if these points could be brought to the attention of the Planning Inspectors and Secretary of State when they are deliberating upon the proposals contained in the North Dorset Local Plan.

Kind regards.

Yours sincerely

Joseph Hickish
NDDC Member
Blandford Forum Old Town Ward