

## **Statement of Mr David Brenchley**

**(Spokesperson for 90 local Residents of West Moors)**

### **In Examination of the Christchurch and East Dorset Core Strategy 2013**

Dated: 26<sup>th</sup> August 2013

Ref: Policy Reference VTSW8 (Formally KS4)

Policy VTSW8 relates to the reclassification of Blackfield Farm area of West Moors and recommends the change of existing classification from White Field to Urban for the northern part of the site, and from White Field to Green Belt for the southern part.

During the course of the Core Strategy development by EDDC myself and a number of West Moors residents made their opinions known to the local parish council and the local councillors of EDDC. Our specific objection is that this site should not be reclassified as Urban. The site should remain free from development. The area lies within 400m of a SSSI (Holt & West Moors Heath). We submit that VTSW8 is an unsound policy.

Among the original objections was one by the local doctor at the West Moors Group Practice. This stated clearly that the medical facilities within West Moors are unable to cope with another development for elderly care within the village. A statement which is strongly supported within the village. Strangely this objection, which was on the relevant portal before full publication, has been deleted from the final list of objections. We question why that is, and suggest that this statement is a significantly damning objection, which if ignored would put the health and possibly lives of West Moors residents at significant risk.

The only possible use of the West Moors site, as we understand it, is for a class C2 care facility. This would bring yet more elderly residents into West Moors which according to EDDC's guess, based on data 8 year old information, stated that the percentage of people over the age of 65 in the village was 34.7% some 9.3% higher than the District average of 25.45. This is in comparison with the national average of 16.42% *information from the Office for National Statics – 2011 Census* . The justification for the change in status for Blackfield Farm was the need for elderly care in the area.

We challenge the premise that East Dorset requires more elderly care on the following basis:

### **No Proven Requirement for Development**

1. When requested under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 to state the number of elderly care facilities within the EDDC area of responsibility they were unable to do so. Neither were they able to state how many care beds were available within the area. Clearly if stating that a new care facility is needed these numbers would be a prerequisite for that justification.
2. Castle Oak care made a statement in support of the reclassification of the Blackfield Site, stating that there is a need for 447 care beds within a 20 minute drive. This they claim is the industry standard methodology of calculating demand. We argue that due to the location of West Moors village, this standard has no bearing and is not relevant because, if based on a radius of a 20 minute drive in any direction then only 1/3 of the circle lies within Dorset. Of that 1/3 a significant proportion is covered by the sea, thereby limiting the profile even further. What is left is in the main sparsely populated countryside. In fact only, the conurbations of Bournemouth and Poole fall within the relevant area. This is so significantly

different from the industry standard as to make that standard meaningless in this instance.

3. On 11<sup>th</sup> August 2011 EDDC planning gave permission for the Dormy Hotel site in Ferndown (4 miles from VTSW8) to be redeveloped into, amongst other things, a 64-bed nursing home and a 38-bed dementia care unit and 12 sheltered flats (Annex A). To date, no work has begun on this site, which suggests that there is not the demand for this type of facility.
4. The care village at St Leonards (VTSW7) is only 2 miles from VTSW8. EDDC has given outline planning permission, granted in 2007, for approximately 128 care village residential units for the over 55's has amounted to nothing. This we suggest is yet further proof that care facilities are just not required in this area.
5. Currently for sale on Right Move, less than 1 mile from VTSW8, there is a property with lapsed outline planning permission for conversion to an 8 bed care facility (Annex B). This property has been on sale for a considerable time and again no one has snapped it up to convert it into a care facility. Again this shows that no demand exists for this type of building within the village of West Moors.
6. The village of West Moors already has a proliferation of care facilities within its boundary. These range from converted houses to purpose built care homes and assisted living flats. The village cannot sustain a further care facility.
7. The CEO of Dorset County council Debbie Ward, previously Director of Adult and Community Services, stated "that the aim of DCC was to keep elderly people in

their own homes for as long as possible". One of the reasons given for this policy was that it is cheaper than placing them in a care facility. In fact the services of the future would include "Support to promote independence and help people stay in their own homes" as stated on the "Dorset for You" website under "How we would like services to look in the future" (Annex C).

## **Protection for the SSSI**

The second and possibly more important reason for claiming that policy VTSW8 is unsound is that of the protected status of the SSSI which border the area to the north and east.

The field and Castleman Trailway known as Blackfield Farm form an ideal addition to the SSSI itself. Indeed the reasoning behind the ban on development within 400m of a SSSI is to provide protection for the endangered species and habitat that is protected by the designation of SSSI status. VTSW8 proposes to allow the 100m zone that remains between the existing domestic dwellings and the SSSI to be reclassified as Urban. It will also allow development of the site right up to the very edge of the SSSI.

Currently this 100m strip of land provides a perfect addition to the protected land and with the exception of the once yearly cultivation of the land by the existing land owner, in a deliberate act to prevent the regeneration of heathland; the area is untouched by humans and free from domestic animals such as cats and dogs. It is this lack of human presence which has led to the land being utilised by Foxes, Badgers, Rabbits, Deer and Birds. This includes woodpeckers and birds of prey. In fact the area provides the perfect habitat for the uninterrupted cycle of wildlife that frequents it.

Additionally this 100m strip of land is home to a number of heathland plants each year and given a couple of years or more to mature this area would also be a natural heathland.

This year as is common each year a number of butterflies have been seen in the field. A number of lizards have been seen in this area and were photographed this summer. On the day the field was ploughed four lizards entered the house closest to the field (Pictures enclosed at Annex D).

We notice that Mr N Squirrell of Natural England (Dorset and Somerset Team) also believes the policy to be unsound *ID:612430* response to the CS pre-submissions. We also note; that to the best of our knowledge, no survey of any kind has been conducted to establish the value of this land as a conservation area.

Mrs N Brunt *ID:359461* (Dorset Wildlife Trust) response to the CS pre-submissions goes further than Natural England and states “Ecological survey information for this site is not available therefore it is not possible to fully assess the potential environmental impacts of development on this site. NPPF (165) states that planning policies and decisions should be based on up-to-date information about the natural environment. If priority habitat or species are present on this site it could be inappropriate to develop it and instead include at least part in the Green Belt”.

The idea that this site could offer a site of heathland restoration appears to be supported by Mrs Hilary Chittenden *ID:360302* (Environment TAG (East Dorset)).

Even without that survey EDDC has changed the designation of the southern part of the area to Green Belt in order to protect the Castleman Trailway. Are we to believe that the protection of the SSSI is less important than the path?

The problem with making just the lower half of Blackfield Farm Green Belt is that the path running through this strip of land is only a permissive path. There has already been outline

agreement between the EDDC and the owner/developer to reroute the Trailway around the outside of the site, skirting the SSSI so the path emerges at Pine Walk, some 350m-400m further away from the village centre. An additional consideration is that the path once rerouted, will provide only a narrow 15m strip adjacent to the SSSI. This is in direct contrast to the open nature of the existing path. Therefore even by making this area Green Belt the Castleman Trailway is not protected! We submit that the only way to protect the Trailway is to protect the whole site by making it Green Belt.

## **Conclusion**

We conclude that Policy VTSW8 is unsound, unjustified and inconsistent with national policy. This tiny pocket of land is the only remaining buffer zone between the internationally protected SSSI and the village of West Moors.

There is no evidence to support the inclusion of Blackfield Farm in the urban area. EDDC are unable to substantiate the claim that another care facility is needed in West Moors Village, which is the only possible use of the area. Whereas we have proved that three sites within the immediate vicinity of the village where developers have either outline or full planning permission for in excess of 2 years have not been started. All three alternative sites are directly accessible from main roads and do not involve convoluted journeys through congested residential areas.

The principle of protection for SSSI sites is well established and Blackfield Farm provides the diverse habitat which allows the adjoining SSSI to remain undisturbed and therefore protected from human or domestic animal interference. By moving the whole site into the Green Belt, the SSSI and Castleman Trailway will be protected for future generations. The continuance of the Trailway in its current guise will permit the continued use by local people, commuters and tourists.

## **Suggested Alternatives to Policy VTSW8**

1. The first option we propose is to reclassify the whole of Blackfield Farm (VTSW8) as Green Belt to protect the SSSI and Castleman Trailway. This is by far the preferred option of the local population of West Moors. This option has a positive affect on the local population and natural environment surrounding the site.
2. Reclassify the southern part of Blackfield Farm as Green Belt and keep the Northern part as White Field and free from development. This will still protect the Trailway as the landowner is unlikely to move the Trailway without the corresponding development of the site. The SSSI will remain protected by the 100m buffer zone and there will be time for a full biodiversity survey to be carried out, which will provide an evidential background for future decisions.
3. Reject policy VTSW8 completely allowing the status quo to remain. No development will be permitted, the trailway and SSSI will remain extant and any future demand for a care facility can be assessed in an evidential manner. This option undoubtedly provides the greatest flexibility and provides all interested parties with time to assess the area in detail, which it clearly needs. The site can then be reconsidered in the next Core Strategy.

**Signed**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. Brenchley', with a stylized flourish at the end.

**David Brenchley**



## DAILY ECHO

# Dormy re-development may not include hotel

5:00pm Thursday 11th August 2011

By Harriet Marsh

THE Dormy Hotel redevelopment in Ferndown has been given the go-ahead – but it may not include a hotel.

Planning chiefs unanimously gave De Vere Hotels the green light for a four storey 74-bed hotel, family homes, care home and sheltered flats in New Road on Tuesday.

But even during the hearing at **East Dorset District Council**, officers couldn't reassure residents that the hotel – and not just the 64-bed nursing home, a 38-bed dementia care unit and 12 sheltered flats – would be built.

Ferndown Town Councillor Basil Barnett addressed the planning committee.

His council unanimously opposed the 'cramped' and 'overdeveloped' plans for New Road.

Cllr Barnett said: "My plea was that we don't think this is the best deal we can get for Ferndown, and could the directors be told to go back to the planning department to get us a better one.

"Residents are saying – hang on, we've already got two care homes within spitting distance of this site.

"We're drowning in them. Everybody would like the hotel, restaurant and spa but they could make no commitment about the hotel."

Since the Dormy shut seven years ago, a number of attempts have been made to restore the site to its former glory.

This is the first to secure planning permission.

Conditions include that the entire 8.5 acre plot must be cleared before any building starts; contractors' and developers' vehicles must be parked on site during building work and certain windows overlooking existing homes must be glazed.

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**West Moors Road, Ferndown, Dorset**

**Offers in the region of  
£1,150,000**



**7 Bedroom Cottage - detached**

- Approximately 3 1/2 Acres of Road Side Adjoining L
- 7 Bedrooms and 4 Reception Detached Residence
- Indoor Swimming Pool
- Gymnasium/ Function Room
- The Lodge Is The Second largest Structure On The S
- Detached Garage
- Stables
- Numerous Other Outbuildings

Two separate plots are being sold together; exclusively set in approximately three and a half acres of road side adjoining land, this small holding of mixed use has many potential options to prospective purchasers. The first of multiple buildings is currently presented as a large seven bedroom, four reception detached residence (in need of some updating) with attached indoor swimming pool complex and adjoining gymnasium/ function room. There is major scope for this to be easily converted into a large property with completely separate annexed area if desired. This building has also had planning permission agreed(enclosed) for a conversion to an eight bedroom care home, this has just lapsed, however enquiries with the local planning authority suggest a favourable outcome if re submitted once more. The Lodge is the second largest structure on the site and has been used for many years as accommodation in conjunction with the main family house. Built of brick and of a pitch roofed construction this property that is believed to be approximately 2500 sq ft was originally used many years ago for commercial use. Further structures include a detached double garage, stables and numerous other outbuildings. The land is accessed by one large entrance leading to separately fenced paddocks with the two largest structures being at opposite ends of the plot. Whilst the combined properties have been valued far in excess of the current asking price, it is our clients desire to sell with one clean break and as such at this stage are not inclined to wait for any subject to planning offers that may be desired. This really is a must see to appreciate the many potential options for home and income and much more.(Floor plans included are for conversion to nursing home and are very close to the current layout)

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## **We help people in their homes**

I would like to clarify a few points raised in a letter about changes to home care services ('Council turning down an income', Dorset Echo, January 13). The overall aim of the new re-ablement homecare service is to offer people who are having difficulty maintaining independence at home a period of intensive support to regain confidence and skills.

We want to give people more freedom and control and maximise their quality of life.

The philosophy behind the scheme is that people want to be independent and that means being able to do things for themselves rather than having to rely on other people to do things for them.

In our first year of working in this way, more than 60 per cent of people who used the new re-ablement service required no long term care, and have really valued the way they have been supported to regain their independence. This makes a big difference to the demand for long-term home care and reduces costs. Evidence shows that a short spell of re-ablement service can prevent admission to hospital and transfer to long-term care as well as reducing the level of on-going home care support required. The changes in the county council's homecare service was necessary in order to provide the new re-ablement scheme.

We recognise that some people would prefer to remain with carers they have built up relationships with over a number of years, and that some will be disappointed in having to transfer their care arrangements to the independent sector.

However, all independent agencies involved are rigorously screen-ed and comply with the same high quality care standards as services provided by the council.

We continue to fund home care in the independent sector for eligible people with long term needs.

It is clear from a range of sources, most recently the Audit Commission's "Improving Value for Money in Adult Social Care" (June 2011), that a well-run re-ablement service is capable of generating direct cost efficiencies and that many other local authorities have already begun implementing similar schemes.

**Debbie Ward, Director of Adult and Community Services Dorset County Council**

Pasted from <[http://www.bournemouthcho.co.uk/archive/2012/01/20/9482918.We\\_help\\_people\\_in\\_their\\_homes/](http://www.bournemouthcho.co.uk/archive/2012/01/20/9482918.We_help_people_in_their_homes/)>



**Blackfield Farm Northern Area & Wildlife Present**

**Annex D - 1**