

22nd January 2014

Dear Sir

Consultation on the Draft North Dorset Local Plan 2011-2026 Part 1
Blandford Forum – Alternative Housing Allocations

I write in relation to the above and to the call by the Bryanston Park Preservation Group (BPPG) that any allocation for housing should be at Blandford St Mary rather than land at the back of Whitecliff Mill Street, which is described by the BPPG as Crown Meadows. While the details of allocations are not considered in this Part 1 Plan, I wish to address the comments made by the BPPG. In that respect my comments do not fit within the format of the consultation form and therefore are included in this letter.

The Blandford St Mary Site

In simple planning policy terms and in accordance with good design practice, the site at Blandford St Mary performs exceptionally poorly.

First it is wholly isolated by major routes, the A354 and the A350, from the rest of the community, but will be of such a size that it will not be able to support any of its own community facilities. Therefore, for access to schools, shops, etc, the residents of this site will have to cross the highway network to access such facilities. In such a situation, particularly in relation to access to schools, it will be most likely that residents will use their cars to access such facilities, adding to congestion in the Town, increasing pollution and conflicting with sustainability objectives. The suggestion of a footbridge link, in itself an incongruous landscape feature, would actually increase that sense of physical isolation.

Secondly, the extent and the development of the site at Blandford St Mary, as indicated on the plan distributed by the BPPG, shows no consideration to the landscape form, the extent to which the development would be a major new intrusion into that landscape and the implication for future planning. The site is just defined by existing hedgerows. The plan shown by the Preservation Group shows some new tree planting and landscaping by way of mitigation, but somewhat ingenuously it shows fully mature trees, with a spread of some 20 metres, where no such trees exist. It will take at least 50 years for any new planting to reach that size.

Thirdly, it is suggested by the BPPG that there is some sense of isolation of Lower Blandford St Mary and that the development of the Blandford St Mary site would overcome this. There is no evidence to suggest that the community of Lower Blandford St Mary feels isolated, or would welcome this development. I understand that the community of Lower Blandford St

Mary enjoy their separation and sense of difference. In any event, as the two locations will remain divided by the A350 that supposed sense of isolation would remain.

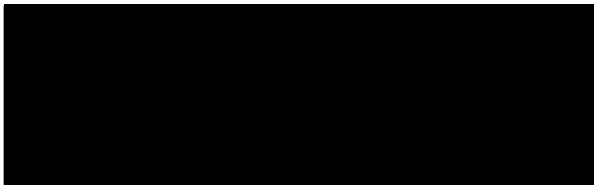
All this proposal will do is to fill in one of the remaining gaps between the communities downstream from Blandford to Spetisbury, leading to suburbanisation of that rural landscape.

The 'Crown Meadows' Site

On the other hand, development of the 'Crown Meadows' site would enable residents to have direct, short and easy walking access to community facilities (schools, shops, surgery, etc) and accords with sustainability objectives.

Contrary to statements by the BPPG, there will be insignificant landscape impacts in developing 'Crown Meadows, because the landscape elements and valued views towards the River and Bryanston Woods will remain. I accept that some residents will lose those views, but that is not a material planning consideration. Further, I understand that the developers will provide public access to the actual Crown Meadows themselves providing an opportunity for all the residents of Blandford to enjoy both that access and the views for the first time.

Yours faithfully



John Cowley