

WP/19/01016/FUL St Nicholas Church Buxton Road

I'm Brian Heatley, one of the local Ward Dorset Councillors.

First of all can I say thank you for taking this in Committee. It's a difficult and important case, and I know that a lot of residents from the ward I represent wanted to make their case directly to the Committee itself. I really appreciate this decision.

There is an inevitable conflict here between two very desirable objectives

- Providing much needed affordable housing
- Protecting the nature of the surrounding area.

I've looked carefully at the application, and the comments and representations made on it. In the end I have to come down to the judgement that the prospect of creating 18 new affordable dwellings is an opportunity that is too good to miss.

I say that in spite of rather disagreeing with the statement in the report that 'the siting, design and materials of the proposed building- with its contemporary approach- would enhance the character of the conservation area.' While it's true that the existing church building adds little to the area, I'm sure a different and more sensitive development could enhance the conservation area.

Indeed I feel that local residents have made many excellent points against this development, and I know that Committee members will consider them carefully when weighing this difficult balance.

But the need for affordable housing, particularly in smaller units, is especially acute in Weymouth, and this will make a real contribution; 18 units would be an important contribution to the estimated 104 such units needed in Weymouth each year.

In the end the needs of people desperately in need of this type of housing outweigh the important desire of local residents to protect the conservation area and only build in a way that thoroughly respects the look of the area as it is now.

We simply don't get opportunities like this very often, and so I support this application.

Thank you