

# **Western & Southern Area Planning Committee - 8 July 2021**

## **Written Submissions**

**WD/D/19/002903 - Osmington Mills Holidays, Osmington Mills, Weymouth, DT3 6HB**

### **1 Jill Dunning – Chairman of the Osmington Mills Protection Group**

As chairman of the Osmington Mills Protection Group, I represent numerous locals and people with an interest in the area. Everyone I have spoken to is against this proposal. The reasons include:

Osmington Mills is in an AONB and should not be judged in the same context as lodges on the extremities of towns or secluded from public view.

The hedgerow on the southern border of the eastern side of the park has been reduced and bases elevated to enable Waterside to provide lodges with sea views. This is to the detriment of local residents and holidaymakers as the lodges are well-lit, have huge windows and are visible from the coast path, Mills Road and beyond. Unlike Osmington Mills, there is year-round “street” lighting in the park. The lodges are even more visible in the winter months with fewer leaves on trees.

The visibility of the lodges seems to go against sections of the Dorset Management Plan 2014-19 including:

Objective L1: Conserve and enhance the AONB and the character/quality of its distinctive landscapes and associated features: L1a: Conserve and enhance landscape character and quality and promote the use of landscape and seascape character assessment to shape decisions affecting the AONB; L1c: Conserve and enhance the special qualities of the AONB such as tranquility and remoteness, wildness and dark skies

Objective L2: Conserve and enhance the AONB by removing, avoiding and reducing intrusive and degrading features.

Objective PH1: Support sustainable development that conserves and enhances the special qualities of the AONB: PH1g: Conserve and enhance the AONB’s undeveloped rural character, panoramic views, tranquility, remoteness and wildness

Objective PH2: Impacts of development and land use damaging to the AONB's special qualities are avoided and reduced: PH2a: Protect the AONB from inappropriate development and land use; PH2b: Protect the quality of uninterrupted panoramic views into, within and out of the AONB

Residents on Upton Fort Road, to the rear of the site, have lodges looking directly into their homes. The old caravans were situated lower and had less fenestration. Residents would like at least two months free from intrusion.

The park does little to increase year-round tourism. An internet search for holiday accommodation finds just 10 lodges for rental.

The vast majority are only used by owners and friends/family. A feature in The Times in 2015 reported that just 10% rent out their lodges. Pandemic-year demand should not be used as precedent.

If no season of use is imposed it will make it difficult for the Council to refuse a Certificate of Lawfulness for it to become residential. Osmington Mills does not have the infrastructure to sustain more homes and its development has never been included in any Local Plan.

## **Richard Burgess (Agent)**

1. The Waterside Group are **the** leading locally based holiday park operator. That is their business. They run 5\* holiday parks and do not permit permanent residential use. Having dealt with them for over 30 years now I can vouch for that fact. You will see also that the case officer has confirmed that their contractual documents with their tenants/occupies makes that very clear.
2. Their main motivation in making this application is to permit their guests to use the chalets during February half term –the dates of which vary from year to year and between counties.
3. This does not imply a high intensity of use during the winter–as might occur during the summer holidays. People to want to come to Dorset for quiet enjoyment, walking etc during the winter months.
4. We have already pointed out to the case officer that the single unit allowed on Appeal on the site does not have any seasonal occupation limitations. In addition there are numerous examples throughout Dorset of holiday park sites who enjoy a year round permission. We have pointed out examples extending from Stoborough in the east, at their own Bowleaze Cove site, at Silverlake and at Burton Bradstock.
5. We are aware that there are concerns about a precedent relative to the Ringstead caravan site which the Committee recently considered. There is however all the difference in the world between the two sites. Ringstead is approached via a private road and then a potholed unmade lane; is very prominent and unscreened and is in a location where, out of season there are no facilities whatsoever. Osmington Mills is well laid out with tarmac roads and parking spaces, underground services, is well screened, heavily landscaped and composed of high quality cedar clad units, all renewed in recent years with on site facilities and a pub and shop/cafe nearby.
6. The number of units on site has of course been greatly reduced since it was taken over by the Waterside Group. Your officers report accurately records this.
7. We consider the planning officers report is fair and accurate (other than that it implies we require permission for an additional unit on the former Ranch House site –we do not consider this is the case). It is part of the original permitted caravan site.

8. We have no objection to the conditions and ecological contribution suggested and would respectfully request you support the officers recommendation

## **WP/19/00778/FUL - Land East of Mercery Road, Weymouth**

### **Craig Oakes, President - Weymouth & Portland Chamber of Commerce**

The Executive Board of the Weymouth and Portland Chamber of Commerce wishes to advise that, further to the recent revision to plans for the above-referenced application, we continue to support the overall development. We feel the proposed change to the retail unit makes no real difference to the original Planning Application.

As a representative body of around 100 businesses in Weymouth & Portland we know business is eager to see progress and development to boost the economy of the town. We believe this scheme will bring numerous benefits to Weymouth including:

- Draw shoppers into Weymouth who in turn will venture into the town and surrounding areas in order to make a day out of it. There is a great opportunity to rethink what Weymouth can really offer as a visitor attraction in and out of season. We have a great town and harbour that could draw in large investment in turn visitors.
- Deliver year-round jobs (which is increasingly important in the current climate)
- Deliver the second (main) part of a c. 50m investment
- Make a long-vacant site productive
- Give the entrance to town greater vitality
- Provide a draw for visitors, which could be capitalised on to signpost people to the high street/beach areas of town to help generate a general uplift. We understand the developers should be willing to provide signage.

Regarding the question of use, the Board previously discussed and commented on the matter, stating that we feel there appears to be no prospect of the site attracting predominantly B Class occupiers, despite the historic allocation, as evidenced by it being vacant for over 10 years. The Granby industrial estate, although outside the Weymouth boundary, has ample space for more industrial style use if it is required.

We hope you will approve this minor revision to a welcome proposed development.

## **Applicant**

Thank you for the opportunity to address you regarding our proposed Weymouth Gateway development.

LondonMetric has owned this vacant site since 2017. In our first-phase development, last year we delivered the Aldi foodstore and are working closely with Medisave to help facilitate their expansion. Combined, these represent some 60 permanent jobs.

Today you are presented with a minor variation of the final-phase scheme that was approved at committee on 9th March 2021, and which will generate another 280-plus permanent, year-round jobs. There is just one principal change to the consented scheme: a re-ordering of the main retail terrace units. There are negligible changes to the total floorspace, and none to the site boundary, car parking numbers or any other key components of the scheme already approved by the planning committee.

You may recall that we have agreements in place with Dunelm, Costa Coffee, B&M and McDonalds to operate at the site. We are progressing conversations with prospective operators regarding options for the final unit. As all the units are currently linked in a single terrace, any changes required to secure a final occupier would impact the rest of the site, delaying the opening of all stores until 2023 at the earliest.

The proposed minor change simply relocates the vacant unit to the opposite end of the terrace. This would allow us to continue negotiations with potential tenants whilst progressing development of the pre-let units this summer, which in turn would enable all committed occupiers to start trading next year.

Importantly, you may be aware of the current labour and materials shortages in the construction industry. We have proactively progressed discussions and orders with a South coast-based contractor and suppliers, which gives us the confidence we can fulfil this stated delivery timetable.

We are very keen to deliver on our promise to provide new local employment opportunities. As well as 280 year-round jobs, the scheme will generate some 50 construction jobs and 50 spin-off jobs, a £4.76 million-per-year boost to the GVA, and circa £6 million in business rates over a 10-year period.

There's no doubt locals back this scheme: 88% of 500-plus respondents to our online exhibition voted in favour, as did Weymouth & Portland Chamber of Commerce, the South Dorset Business Advisory Panel, and Weymouth BID Board with whom we're discussing ways to promote Weymouth Town Centre from our site.

We hope you conclude, as your planning officers have, that the change proposed is minor, beneficial and sensible, and you approve this planning application so that we may proceed in haste.