

Western & Southern Area Planning Committee
30 September 2021

Written Submissions

WP/18/00662/FUL – Land off of Verne Common Road and Ventnor Road, Portland

1 Stuart Morris

I strongly object to this application.

This is virgin open hillside, which has never been developed other than allotments. By any definition this is greenfield.

This steep hillside is an important part of the unique landscape, and is very prominent from several standpoints, especially New Ground, Portland Heights, Chesil etc.

This land has been considered sacrosanct even from days of the former Portland Urban District Council, and previous suggestions that it could be built on have been firmly rejected.

The fact that it is in private ownership with no public path on it is irrelevant to the Planning process.

Destroying this grassland will make a mockery of the council's policy of allowing verges to remain uncut desire to encourage wild flowers. This is a bigger natural area than much of Portland's verges. Destroying this grassland will mean an irreplaceable loss, and no monetary compensation or 'Biodiversity Plan' can replace it.

It is highly misleading to suggest that a 'Biodiversity Mitigation Plan' can in any way compensate for the loss of this land. Portland island has no more land to offer.

In addition to the wild nature of the flora, the soil there is obviously a habitat of numerous invertebrates, so important to the food chain and ecology of the area.

The entire Verne Common hillside has produced copious archaeological evidence. In particular, many Roman stone sarcophagi and other artefacts were found in the construction of the adjoining housing estate in the 1950s. Being closer to the historic heart of Fortuneswell, this site may contain even more important remains, from multiple periods. Nothing should be done before comprehensive archaeological investigations have been carried out, much more than the 2016 evaluation (8.20).

The comments of Historic England show a scant superficial understanding of this area. There is much potential on this site on its own merits, not merely linked to the nearby Conservation Area or the Verne Citadel.

Successive Local and Development Plans have consistently put this land outside the development boundaries, for very good reasons: It should be preserved.

Underhill has a surfeit of houses that were built as 'affordable', including the densely-packed 19th century terraces and the entire Verne Common estate. A high proportion of current house sales on Portland are to people moving from away, so much of this development would not serve any local housing need.

The Representations in Section 9.0 are well-considered and valid. To dismiss them by approving this development would show a blatant disregard for the interests and values of Portlanders.

2 Tracy Matthews-Belcher

I made an objection to this development when the planning was first submitted and my objections still stand. However, I would add the following in line with the local council's neighbourhood plan. This is a green site and should be valued as such, any housing planned for this site will mainly consist of housing aimed at 2nd home buyers and not local people. This is not in line with council neighbourhood plan and indeed only adds to the housing shortage for local needy people. Five rentable properties does not reflect what this area needs at all. The access to this site is via Verne Common Road, which for those councillors that are unfamiliar with Portland, is the only access to the very busy Verne prison. The road is busy with Staff, deliveries and visitors to the prison. These are often large HGV vehicles that have to negotiate parked cars all the way up the road, mounting pavements, or speedy staff members on their mobiles after a busy shift. To add to this by adding 50 plus vehicles to the properties (given all properties have at least 2-3 parking spaces) is absolute madness, not to mention the construction traffic. Majority of the properties coming up the road are ex local authority housing managed by Aster that have no or little off-road parking and therefore the road is difficult to access easily for emergency vehicles. I have witnessed ambulances trying to find spaces to get to vulnerable people in their homes around HGVs etc, this does not need to be made worse. Also, I am not sure that a committee made up of non-Portland councillors can really make a decision about a development that they will never be affected by. The fact the builder involved has connections with the town council should not be a reason to pass the book to people who aren't involved in the community. This builder has also submitted plans for a PUMP HOUSE to service another of his developments and this should be taken into account too. I feel that this planning permission will go the same way as those that have been passed before for this site, it seems to just serve to make more money on once a lovely field where kestrels hunt , so that it can be sold for more money to a different buyer each time. This should not be something Dorset Council should be supporting.

3 Geoffrey Lucas

I am writing to complain about the over development of Portland with regards of housing. Portland is a very overcrowded Island with not enough facilities for the people who live there already. More houses, more congestion on that one single road leading to Portland. I understand there is plans to build on the old Southwell school and Portland Manor School. They need more Chemists, Doctors, and other community services. I am aware people have to have somewhere to live, but not on a small Island that is overcrowded already. I travel to Portland regularly and that Portland road is getting more of a problem which will get worse if you continue to over populate it.

4 Andrew Matthews

My name is Andrew Matthews and I have been involved with the development of the Portland Neighbourhood Plan since its inception.

I am writing on a matter of concern in regard to the officer's report in regard to this application in particular the section on the assessment of the Portland Neighbourhood Plan section b and the conclusion that.

The Portland Neighbourhood Plan therefore contains no housing allocations and instead relies on strategic allocations and windfall development from the adopted West Dorset, Weymouth & Portland Local Plan (2015) and emerging Dorset Council Local Plan later in the Plan period to meet identified housing need.

The assessment quoted in this section was underpinned by a Growth and Strategy Report. This concluded that development on Portland should be focused on maximising the brownfield supply in Underhill and supporting the viability of Easton Centre in Tophill. The report included a supply of sites and additional site assessments by AECOM.

At the Weymouth and Portland and West Dorset Local Plan Review further sites were put forward and were noted by the Neighbourhood Plan Group.

In October 2019 Dorset Council started to undertake their own SHLAAR review and indicated that this was a fresh review and that any previous submissions would have to be re-submitted. Upon enquiry of officers as to whether we needed to re-establish the sites we had included it was agreed that this **was not required** as the report formed part of the evidence base for the Plan.

The total yield for the sites in the report was 1,229 we have been monitoring the position around this and our current estimate is 1,294 units could be available **we are also aware of additional sites which would support the spatial strategy adopted.**

The Local Plan Review included 1050 units being required on Portland. A reason for undertaking a Neighbourhood Plan was to provide a stable basis for housing on Portland to develop. The Chief Planning Officer recently noted that only 2% of Neighbourhood Plans had originated from areas suffering multiple deprivation. In order to continue to support our plan and efforts of volunteers to deliver on this we therefore ask that the Local Planning Authority **correct their assumptions at section b.**

With regard to WP/18/00662/FUL a review and consultation on Development Boundaries was undertaken and the conclusions of this consultation was ***'The sensitivity of this site is clearly set out in the planning application by leaving this outside the development boundary this reaffirms the need for this to be developed appropriately'***.

5 Steve Hoskins - Agent

Good morning Committee Members.

The main part of this site was approved for development with 8 houses in 2016. The proposal now before you includes adjacent land owned by Aster. This layout, prepared in close consultation with Aster, provides a more efficient and comprehensive land use – one that offers greater community benefit.

The Officer's report sets out the Development Plan and NPPF policies that apply to this application – these remain the same as those when the Committee resolved to approve this scheme last year.

In relation to the recently adopted Portland Neighbourhood Plan I make the following observations:

Historic England has reconfirmed that the proposals will not adversely affect the adjoining Conservation Area or harm any Heritage Assets.

Most of the site is privately owned and not accessible to the public. The former play area use of the smaller Aster owned section was discontinued years ago.

The site is surrounded by existing housing. This scheme is effectively 'infilling' with new homes of a high design standard. Significant landscaping improvements will be carried out to improve the present, underutilised and neglected, appearance of the overall site. The development density of the proposed new homes is demonstrably lower than that of existing and recently approved nearby housing.

Natural England has reconfirmed that the proposals will not result in adverse effects on the site's integrity – a Biodiversity Mitigation and Enhancement Plan has been agreed for measures that will protect and enhance the ecological value of the site.

The proposals align entirely with National Planning Policy Framework aims. They meet economic and social objectives by providing a range of high quality new homes that will meet needs and bring additional household spending into the community, to help support

existing and new businesses. Environmental benefits come from the landscaping improvements and agreed BMEP measures.

Members will be aware of the Council's 5 Year Housing Land Supply deficit, exacerbated locally by issues that have held back redevelopment of the former Hardy Naval Accommodation blocks. This is a deliverable opportunity for new homes – one that will show real investment confidence in the locality.

In summary, this is a carefully considered and sustainable new homes proposal with clear community benefits. There are no demonstrable adverse impacts that outweigh National, Local and Neighbourhood Plan objectives. 5 on site, family size, Affordable Homes will be provided in addition to financial contributions for other policy requirements.

Members are therefore respectfully requested to accept the Officers recommendation to re-approve subject to concluding the S106 Agreement.

WP/21/00021/FUL – Land West of Branscombe Road, Portland

Phil Watts – Agent

Chairman and Members of this Committee, I write to respectfully ask for your endorsement of your Officer's recommendation to enable the appropriate officer to APPROVE this application.

Whilst it is noted that objections have been received from the Town Council and a private individual who does not live in this part of the Island, key to your consideration must be the fact that not only does this site already benefit from an extant planning permission for residential development granted as recently as 2018, but that this permission has already been implemented by virtue of the associated groundworks undertaken on site. It follows, that despite calls for the site to be retained as 'incidental open space', the site is already in private ownership where public access is naturally restricted; and there can be no turning back the clock as far the site's very recent planning history is concerned. It is a matter of fact that the principle of developing this area of former open space is well established.

In terms of what is now proposed, despite their objection, Portland Town Council's own adopted Neighbourhood Plan actively seeks to promote a housing mix which is exactly what this proposal will achieve in providing four much-needed smaller properties, most suited to young couples starting out on the housing ladder. All are of a design which is truly reflective of the character and appearance of the wider Rip Croft and Reap Lane estate, with each of the proposed units benefitting from their own off-road car parking and private amenity space.

Portland Town Council suggest that the site is too small to support four dwellings. However, the proposed development will truly make the most efficient use of the site and, as your Officer quite rightly recognises in his report, the width of each plot is broadly comparable to those properties which already exist in Branscombe Close; wider in fact than many properties in the vicinity. Each property will also exceed the National Minimum Space Standard in their size, with the size of each plot being reflective of the range of development in the vicinity.

As also outlined, the proposed dwellings are of a style and design which reflect the majority of properties in the immediate locality, being of two storeys in height and terraced in their nature; they will also be sited in such a manner as to reflect the established pattern of houses and orientated in such a way as to allow the development to be 'read' as a continuation of existing properties on the estate. Their relative spaciousness will also be enhanced by their open frontages facing onto the public highway.

On the basis that the development will make a small but valuable contribution towards the identified housing shortage, as well as making a positive contribution to the established pattern of development within this part of Southwell and the wider Rip Croft and Reap Lane Estate, I respectfully reiterate my request for your endorsement of your Officer's recommendation in respect of this much needed and appropriate development.

WP/21/00196/FUL Land Adjacent to Former Gatehouse West Way, Southwell Business Park, Portland

Andrew Matthews

Please could I lodge the further comment below which explains why the Town Council made reference to the Minerals Consultation Area in their reply and also the designation of the Employment Zone.

As part of the development of our Neighbourhood Plan we reviewed the development boundaries and employment site classifications. It was agreed that we would move the development boundary at the Southwell Business Park to the East to include the Car Park we also extended the employment zone area in a similar manner. The intention was to allow potentially eastward movement of the Business Park if it needed to expand but also to allow for coastal erosion on the western boundaries.

The car park area is also subject to the Minerals Policy with mining now the approved method of extraction. The car park provides a potentially sustainable corridor route to access the substantive reserves in the southern part of the Island, we are aware of constraints issues with the access proposals South East of Southwell.

The provision of employment spaces are seen as less likely to sterilise stone extraction whereas the construction of housing would do so in the context of the above.

The designation of this site for development was part of a process by the then Weymouth and Portland Council which avoided referring the proposal to Portland Town Council for ratification or comment.

I have lodged four maps with the Case Officer to illustrate these details.

Phoebe Milner - Agent

I wish to outline the main considerations why we feel planning should be GRANTED today in line with the Officer's recommendation.

Firstly, I would like to clarify that the principle of residential development on the site has already been accepted following the approved permission in principle which agreed; location, land use and amount of development. Therefore, the residential use of the land has already been established and remains extant.

The Portland Town Council concerns refer to the site as a registered employment site, however the employment allocation at Southwell Business Park does not include this site and since the principle of residential development has already been established, the technical details could not be refused on this basis.

Therefore, I will now outline the relevant matters which should be considered in this application.

In terms of highways, the initial concerns related to extending the proposed footpath to connect with the existing footpath outside the nursery. These concerns have been overcome by an agreement with the LPA which will be secured by a Grampian condition and therefore resolves the Highway Officer's concerns.

In terms of parking, the proposal provides 2 tandem spaces per dwelling and 4 visitor spaces as such the movement of 8 households is not considered significant, therefore the parking arrangements are acceptable.

Furthermore, the applicant will mitigate the biodiversity and infrastructure effects via a CIL contribution, consequently there will be no adverse effects on the integrity of protected habitats nor public infrastructure.

In terms of design, the proposed development creates three pairs of semi-detached houses and two detached bungalows, totalling 8 dwellings. Each property will have a private rear garden as well as shared landscaping space at the front. Therefore it is considered an acceptable balance of built form, amenity space and landscaping enhancements are proposed.

The proposal is compatible with the character of the area as many nearby properties reflect similar materials and scale. Sweethill Road commonly uses stone and slate roofs for their bungalows, while Barlands Close primarily have two storey properties. The proposed development uses a mix of render and stone with slate roofs to reflect the character of the area, while using a variety of one and two storey dwellings to respond to the locality.

In terms of privacy, the surrounding properties' amenity space are protected by 1.8m fences, while the bungalows are specifically located on site to remove potential overlooking to no.50 Sweethill Road. Therefore, the scheme safeguards neighbouring amenity.

Overall, the applicant strongly considers the application will enhance the character and appearance of the area whilst safeguarding neighbouring amenity. I hope you agree with your planning officer and ask that you move to vote to approve this proposal accordingly.