

MINUTES of the meeting of the PLANNING COMMITTEE held at Mountfield, Bridport on Monday 24 July 2023 at 7.00pm.

PRESENT Cllr Dave Bolwell (in the chair)

Cllrs:	Ian Bark	Julian Jones
	Sarah Carney	Anne Rickard
	Kelvin Clayton	Dave Rickard

ALSO PRESENT: Will Austin (Town Clerk), Adam Fitzgerald (Dorset Council), Nigel Coelho (Dorset Council), and 18 members of the public.

PUBLIC FORUM

Adam Fitzgerald (Dorset Council, Building Better Lives team) and Nigel Coelho (Dorset Council Highways), introduced proposals for changes to the highway in the vicinity of the junction of South Street, Morrisons, West Bay Road, and Skilling Hill Road. These were originally proposed to improve pedestrian access to and from the proposed 'care village' development. The development had been delayed, with no timescales for delivery, but the works were set to proceed, possibly in October 2023, to be delivered by Dorset Council Highways as contractor.

- Councillors, members of the public, and representatives of Bridport Business Chamber engaged in discussion with the Dorset Council officers, highlighting:
- The likelihood that the care village development would proceed. Adam Fitzgerald advised that it was not possible to provide a time frame as national and international issues were causing difficulties, but that the project planning was moving forward.
- The need for a crossing in the area to alleviate problems with the absence of pavement on parts of the west side of South Street.
- The challenges to the town centre and its economy associated with October delivery of the scheme.
- Concerns about congestion arising from the narrowing of the carriageway to a single lane, which would be further exacerbated when construction of the care village commences.
- A suggestion that the junction improvements should be deferred until planning approval is given for the care village.
- The need for a 7 to 10 day road closure to allow the junction works to be delivered.
- The extent of feasibility and impact work carried out in support of the proposals. Nigel Coelho advised that he would share the detail of this with the Town Council.
- A concern that the addition of a 'give way' junction at the point of road narrowing, would lead to traffic heading south racing to get to the traffic lights beyond.

Maggie Lindley, a local resident, addressed the meeting regarding proposals to pedestrianise Barrack Street, produced some five years previously. She expressed concern that no progress had been made to the proposals, which she considered positive for traders, the local economy, and the appearance of the area. The Town Clerk reported that the project had been supported by the Town Council, but that Dorset Council had not taken it forward due to a lack of funding.

Cllr Sarah Carney arrived at this point (7.24pm)

Local residents J Guy, P Brown, and V Driscoll, and one other member of the public addressed the meeting to express concerns about footpath closures and diversions, associated with the Foundry Lea development. The points raised were that:

- J Guy:
 - The action to close paths and not divert them immediately could be repeated every six months for many years.
 - The public rights of way had been overlooked during the planning application process.
 - Residents felt they had been misled.
 - The Town Council should involve itself directly.
- P Brown:
 - The developers had permission to close paths outside the development site, covering a huge area with no diversions, whereas it had been assumed there would be immediate diversions. The actions were considered excessive.
- V Driscoll:
 - There would be no access from Magdalen Lane or to the footpath to the allotments and Medical Centre. Various paths were not closed but would nevertheless be inaccessible. The timescale was of concern.
- Unnamed contributor:
 - Why was a £1,000 fine to be levied? Nigel Coelho advised that this would be as a deterrent, mainly to ensure health and safety of the public.

The Chairman thanked members of the public for their contributions.

18. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Cllr Geoff Ackerman.

19. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

20. **MINUTES**

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 26 June 2023 were confirmed as a true and correct record and signed by the Chairman.

21. **HIGHWAYS & TRANSPORTATION MATTERS**

Members considered proposals outlined by Dorset Council officers during the Public Forum, in respect of highway alterations in South Street, between Fisherman's Arms and the Morrisons junction, ENCL: 3825, and associated road closure, ENCL: 3826.

A discussion considered:

- That pavement improvements needed as this is a difficult stretch of road to walk along, but there were concerns that this was not the right solution.
- Alternatives that could be offered: To put the footpath on the outside of the South Street bridge, separate the path alongside the bridge, or further consideration of improving the path through Asker Meadows. Adam Fitzgerald advised that he would look at the option of a separate bridge.

- Was there a traffic flow study? Nigel Coelho said there would have been and he would forward details.
- Disappointment that the proposal was not part of a more comprehensive solution addressing the Access and Movement Study and 20mph zone, but acceptance that if this was genuinely all that was on offer the Council might have to accept it.
- Confusion as to whether the central refuge at Morrisons junction was to be moved, or removed altogether.
- Concern that the narrowing would cause traffic to back up, and a need to avoid the same difficulties faced by motorists/cyclists/pedestrians at the narrowing of West Allington by the Medical Centre.
- Concern that earlier discussions would have helped with community input, and would have ensured that the Access and Movement Study was taken into account. NC said these works could be a catalyst for other Access and Movement Study aspirations.
- A need to see a revised rationale for these works given the delays to the care village, and the two years that had elapsed since it was last discussed.
- The deadline for feedback from the Town Council. The Dorset Council officers suggested August but advised this would be confirmed after the meeting.
- Any changes needed to make a meaningful contribution to the 20mph 'gateway' to the town centre.
- The works were commissioned for the care village but as this was not to be delivered yet, the proposals needed to show how they met the needs of the existing community.
- Concern that there was no indication of how these changes would work for cyclists.
- Changes were needed to allow for mobility scooters, particularly those heading south from Normandy Way.
- Closure signage needed to make clear that all businesses remained open.

RESOLVED: that a response to the proposals be drafted and submitted under delegation, taking account of the discussion and further informal consultation with members.

Members considered a consultation on permanent diversion of footpaths, associated with the Foundry Lea development. The Town Clerk advised that the deadline for comments had been extended, and that the footpath closures had already been confirmed. He further advised that there was no formal provision for temporary diversions during the development, but that the developers had indicated a willingness to consider suggestions.

A discussion considered:

- Concerns that, given the scale of the development, there was insufficient engagement by Dorset Council, and they had agreed the footpath closures without any consultation.
- A previous offer by Cllr Sarah Carney to meet with the developers to consider alternatives.
- A concern that the Public Rights of Way team may not have been consulted.
- Whether a flexible approach to temporary diversions might be confusing.
- A desire for more proactive community engagement by the Public Rights of Way team for future changes.
- A concern that Dorset Council undertook only the minimum statutory consultation and their aspiration should be for more than this.
- Lessons from other developments elsewhere, such as Milton Keynes.

- A recognition that some of the existing paths would become part of a paved route through the finished development, and that some paths would be unaffected.
- A desire for a meeting of the Foundry Lea Working Group to consider the issue further, and a pre-meeting involving local stakeholders only.
- The suddenness with which the closures and proposed diversions were notified. Greater engagement would have shown the community more respect.
- A need to consider both temporary and permanent diversions.
- Symondsburry Parish Council would be preparing a response, and Cllr Paul Hartmann would share this with the Town Council.

RESOLVED: that

- i. Cllrs Ian Bark and Sarah Carney draft a proposed diversion arrangement for further consideration.
- ii. A stakeholder meeting be held in the first half of August.
- iii. A foundry Lea Working Group meeting be held before the end of August.
- iv. The Town Council should write to Dorset Council expressing concern that there was no consultation on the footpath closures, and insisting on engagement before any further changes be finalised.

The meeting paused at this point (8.42pm) for a comfort break and resumed at 8.48pm

22. ST MICHAEL'S TRADING ESTATE

The Town Clerk reported on the recent granting of outline planning permission for the redevelopment of St Michael's Trading Estate. There had been further informal discussions with the site owner, and a suggestion that a working group be established to consider matters of mutual interest.

RESOLVED: That a council working group be agreed in principle, with membership to be determined after further consideration by members.

23. PLANNING APPLICATIONS

RESOLVED: that the recommendations set out in column 4 of the attached [Schedule A](#) be forwarded to Dorset Council.

24. PLANNING DECISIONS

The Town Clerk reported for information, the planning decisions received relating to applications previously considered by the Committee, ENCL: 3824.

RESOLVED: that the planning decisions be noted.

25. COMMUNICATIONS AND ONGOING ISSUES

The Town Clerk reported that Dorset Council had launched a consultation on housing strategy.

The meeting closed at **9.34pm**.

The next meeting of the Committee will be held on 4 September 2023