

KEITH MASON



Mobile: [REDACTED]

Planning Policy
Dorset Council
South Walks House
Dorchester
Dorset
DT1 1UZ

6th August 2020

By email

Dear Sir / Madam,

Objection to the inclusion of LGS4 “Catmead Green Space” in the Puddletown Neighbourhood Plan

I am writing to express my objection in the strongest possible terms to the proposed designation of LGS4 “Catmead Green Space” in the Puddletown Neighbourhood Plan. My objection is relates to every instance of LGS4 in the draft Plan and all the supporting documentation that has been submitted for examination.

I apologise for its length, but this is entirely due to the intransigence of The Steering Group (SG) in the preparation of the draft Plan and supporting documentation in relation to the proposed designation of LGS4 as well as it’s inconsistency of reasoning, misrepresentation of information and economy with the facts,

The reasons for my objections are as follows:

1. The majority of the land in the proposed designated LGS4 is to the north of Nos 8-10 Catmead. It is a, open, lawned garden, owned and maintained at considerable expense by the Catmead Management Company Ltd (CMCL) for the exclusive use of the residents of Catmead. As a private community garden, it is or should be, outside the scope of LGS designation.
2. This is simply one of several attempts by the Parish Council to appropriate the CMCL owned land for its own purposes. Previously attempts have included its proposed use as a village dog walking “park”, having effectively banned dog walking from the recreation ground!
3. At a meeting on 23/10/2019 attended by [REDACTED] and myself [REDACTED] representing the CMCL as Directors and [REDACTED], Chair of the Parish Council, and [REDACTED] both supposedly representing the Puddletown Local Plan Steering Group, after considerable discussion we were assured that, in view of our objections, LGS4 would be removed from the Plan. The SG subsequently reneged on this assurance without any further discussion.
4. The LGS4 site was already previously considered and discounted as a possible LLLI at the Public Enquiry into the West Dorset, Weymouth & Portland Local Plan. However, the Inspector’s view was that, whilst he recognised the site’s visual context in relation to

Puddletown, he did not feel its designation was justified. As a consequence, it has not been considered worthy of inclusion in any of the adopted Local Plans since. However, in relation only to the grassed area to the north of the 3 metre hedge, which overlooks the River Piddle, we have recognised that there is a benefit to the village that we can accommodate which is why we have allowed the Parish Council to locate a memorial seat on it. It is not difficult to predict, though, what the CMCL's member views will be on this remaining in its current position should the proposed LGS4 be designated against the residents' wishes.

5. If the Parish Council is truly concerned about maintaining the appearance of the village why does it choose not to properly maintain the grass spaces in its control and ownership. They are all in a shabby and poor condition and grass only gets cut when residents complain about the lack of maintenance. This is in stark contrast to the pride that the CMCL and the Catmead residents take in its lawned community garden which is probably villagers hold it in high regard. Designation of LGS4 will see the CMCL adopt the same poor attitude to maintenance as the local authority which will result in a distinct deterioration in its current appeal.
6. The Summary of Considerations on P12 of the Consultation Report states "Whilst it is clear from the planning history that these areas were intended to be public land, whose openness and views through would enhance the character of this part of the Conservation Area..." This is a blatant misrepresentation. If it had been intended, then it would have been a specific requirement of the planning permission or conditioned as part of the s106 relating to the footpaths across the area. It wasn't made a requirement or a condition.
7. The LGS maps on P9 of the draft Plan and the Policies Map do not actually indicate that the publicly-owned grass verge along the east side of the Blandford Road is part of LGS4, or indeed part of any LGS. This could of course just be a drafting/labelling error. But, on the other hand, it might not, in which case it is only reasonable to assume it is intentional. If the publicly-owned land has been removed from the proposed LGS designation, as it appears to have been, then the rationale for including the CMCL land no longer stands and the proposed LGS4 should be cancelled in its entirety.
8. The LGS Assessment Spreadsheet is misrepresentative and factually incorrect in relation to LGS4:
 - a. The landscape importance is stated as "high", but this is only because, unlike the publicly-owned land which is badly maintained by the local authority, the residents of Catmead through the CMCL pay to maintain it as such. This will not continue if LGS4 is designated.
 - b. As privately-owned land, it actually has no recreational importance to the village at all, even though this is stated as being of "medium" value.
9. The LGS Policy is based on blatant double standards. It deliberately omits important publicly-owned green spaces at the entrances to the village in the east and west (such as the green space to the south the of the Dorchester Road in front of the C of E First School, to the south of the Athelhampton Road along the hedge row to the Chapel Ground site and the area of land by the traffic lights which hosts the village sign) in order to facilitate future 'development flexibility' whilst deliberately encumbering the private land within the proposed LGS4. This bias is highly undemocratic.
10. The delineation of the public and privately owned land is undefined in the Plan and presents significant potential for future legal disputes over its ongoing maintenance.
11. The CMCL land in LGS is a floodplain for the River Piddle along the Backwater which has proved its value over the past 15 years, preventing significant flooding in the Catmead and Home Farm developments, and is currently managed as such. Designation as an LGS will restrict our ability to quickly and easily undertake any remedial work needed in this respect.
12. The descriptions as to the reasons why LGS4 is important as outlined in the draft Plan and the Assessment Spreadsheet are contradictory and different. They are both false and inaccurate:

- a. The only reason that the majority of LGS4 provides a landscaped setting is that it is regularly maintained at the expense of the Catmead Management Company which is funded entirely by the residents of Catmead. This will not continue.
 - b. The labelled parts of LGS4 are not a setback for the houses fronting the Blandford Road.
 - c. The description of the Blandford Road as being busy, beggar's belief.
 - d. It doesn't present an attractive entrance to the village as it is completely hidden by a 3 metre high hedge and is only seen fleetingly by passing vehicles. Hardly anyone enters the village on foot!!
 - e. The Parish Council commissioned the construction of a purpose-built wooden bus stop to provide a pleasant place to wait for a bus on the Blandford Road. Waiting in this bus stop blocks any view of the Catmead lawned garden. Only the badly maintained public space can be seen. In any event, in the 15 years I have lived in the village, I have not seen more than a handful of people ever use the bus stop. And, in any case, how long will the current bus route continue in operation?
 - f. It is not an informal place to play. The privately-owned space is for the exclusive use of the residents of Catmead. In any event, any suggestion of play next to a "busy" road, is almost certainly a future accident in the making!
 - g. The footpaths through LGS4 do not connect through the area as the proposed connecting footpath through Home Farm has never been formally adopted and the Dorset Highways Department have previously stated that they have no intention of doing so.
13. Other important green spaces, notably the land on the corner of the Blandford Road and the High Street on which the village sign has been erected, and the land between the Dorchester Road and the First school, have been deliberately left out of any LGS designation so as to better facilitate potential future public development projects. On this basis, the designation of privately-owned spaces appears to be highly discriminatory.
14. The proposed designation of LGS4 is a contravention of my human rights under Schedule 1, Article 8 of The Human Rights Act 1998 which refers to the right to respect for private and family life. Further, sub-section 2 states that there shall be no interference by a public authority, which the Plan clearly breaches.

Thank you very much for your patience.

Kind regards,
Yours sincerely,

Keith Mason