

West Street Car Park area query for a planning application

I the Clerk have made contact with both Dorset Council and the Community Land Trust and many different emails have been circulated. Below is my understanding of what has happened in the past as to why the West Street Car Park is not under consideration for the CLT housing.

The West Street Car park was held by Purbeck DC until 2019 and since then by Dorset Council for the purposes of car parking and it is understood there has not been any PDC or DC Committee or officer indication that this site is no longer required for car parking purposes.

It is believed that the car park is within the village settlement boundary and is not an "exception site".

The Parish Council had a housing working group in about 2015 and made its own enquiries about potential sites. The group looked at five sites including Station Road coal yard but not the West Street car park as it was assumed that it was needed for carparking purposes. Pre-application studies were commissioned from Purbeck DC in 2016 on these sites with a clear steer from PDC officers that we consider exception sites. Station Coal yard was not an exception site. The full Council considered the findings informally in a confidential session and noted the five sites. The West Street car park was not raised as a potential residential site then.

The Parish Council facilitated the establishment of the Corfe Castle Community Land Trust which then took forward the search for sites within the clear National Planning Framework steer that affordable housing would be considered for exception sites which would by definition be less expensive in land acquisition costs than market sites. The four sites the CCCLT evaluated were those deemed exception sites in the pre application search, and these were the only sites available for discussion as potential sites by a local landowner. No other landowner e.g. the National Trust or DC has ever offered land for development for social housing.

The suggestion of using the West Street car park site for housing arose from a CCPC working group on parking and traffic study presented to the Council in January 2020. The study recommended the partial closure of the West Street carpark. Several businesses objected to the recommendation and the minutes record "none of the suggestions have been endorsed or approved by the Council or the group itself".

It was decided to consult stakeholders including businesses, the National Trust and Dorset Council starting with Dorset Council as it is the highway authority. The report was sent to DC officers and Cllr Brooks. Cllr Clarke recalls that Cllr Brooks did query the suggestion of closing the West street car park as the village needed car parking spaces.

Cllr Clarke understands that DC officers did discuss the report and the view was conveyed back to Cllr Brooks that the option of using Station Rd coal yard as a replacement car park was regarded by DC a non-starter as the A351 is part of the strategic network and the installation of 4-way traffic lights at the Bankes Arms corner would be too disruptive to traffic flows. However, no formal response has yet been put in writing.

During the pandemic DC reviewed charges at all Dorset council car parking sites and the Corfe Castle West street car park was deemed part of the strategic tourist provision.

As the suggestion of using the West Street car park as a housing site was made repeatedly by objectors, Cllr Clarke confirmed with Cllr Brooks before the public meeting that it was still the DC view that the West Street car park was part of its strategic car parking portfolio and there was no DC intention to cease to use it without an alternative. Cllr Brooks confirmed this and therefore Cllr Clarke was able to state at the meeting that there were no grounds for thinking that the West Street car park could be considered as a potential social housing site in the foreseeable future.