

Response to Poundbury Development Brief

by tenant farmer of Maiden Castle Farm

As Farmers of the land involved in 7.10 and 7.11 we find the permissive footpaths proposed totally unworkable. The use of our internal farm tracks for pedestrians and dogs is unacceptable. People and dogs do not mix well with machinery, cattle and sheep. HSE and Public Liability Insurance would be an issue. Access to Maiden Castle Road is already available via a footway link from Coburg Road. We accept the need for safe access to the south of the development, but it has to be managed, with people and dogs kept separate by fenced footpaths and not using the existing farm tracks which are used daily to ensure efficient running of the farm. Please see map attached for suggested alternative fenced footpaths. Reference access from the North West sector, working together this would be solved reasonably easily using the existing underpass. The underpass is currently used for cattle handling and loading purposes. If adequate funds for alternative facilities were provided by another party, pedestrians and dogs (not cycles) could then use the underpass. Adequate signing would be needed and extra gates erected to prevent people using the farm tracks.

4b 7.11 Poundbury Hill Fort. Access to this needs to be more clearly identified. We have less problems here than in other areas, although dog fouling is a problem. One or two extra stiles/gates could be added to link to existing footpaths. If Maiden Castle Farm is to continue as a working farm and not "invaded" by people and dogs, a sensible solution needs to be, and can be found. If a system of fenced footpaths is provided for people and dogs where it does not affect the day to day management of the farm. Existing farm tracks must be maintained for farm use only. Increased access to the south will necessitate people and dogs keeping to existing footpaths and new permissive footpaths, whilst enjoying the countryside, but enabling us as farmers to continue to farm the land.

Enhancing recreational and nature conservation value will involve conflict with the farming practices. At present the water meadows alongside the River Frome are grazed with cattle for 'summer grazing' only - as has been practised for many centuries. No fertilizer is applied. It is inevitable is the more people that 'use' these areas the greater the effect on conservation. This was well demonstrated when footpaths were closed in 2001 during foot and mouth.

Maiden Castle Farm has always been open chalk downland. It was part of an ancient strip field system used by the people of historical Dorchester during the Middle Ages. Hedgerows have never been a feature of this area. If planting is carried out there is the question as to who would be responsible for future maintenance. With regard to new rights of way across the land - see comments in Principle 7. One or two new managed and enclosed footpaths around the edges of one or two fields could be acceptable

Maiden Castle Farm has worked with English Heritage to maintain tumuli and restore the Roman aqueduct. The farm is involved in Countryside Stewardship and Entry Level Schemes. Conservation is very much part of the farm policy. Arable land has been restored to natural Dorset chalk grassland, and fallow areas provided to encourage lapwings, planted areas with seed mixtures to encourage small birds, left stubbles

untouched over winter, and left other pastures to organic production. The farm under this management has seen an increase in numbers of hares, grey partridge, wild pheasants, skylarks and buntings.

Officer's Response

The comments are welcomed. The concern regarding the use of the south west underpass is noted. However, unauthorized public access to this area is already occurring. As the population of the Poundbury development increases, it is inevitable that the level of trespass and the damage caused will increase. Unless this is acknowledged and proper management of this recreation demand is put in place, even more significant damage than that as outlined by the respondent will occur. A proactive response would be more beneficial to the farming enterprise than simply attempting to prevent access and repairing the damage when such attempts prove unsuccessful. It is agreed that Also the tenant farmer will require financial incentives to adapt to the changed circumstances and incorporate and implement different working practices which will allow the mitigation to be provided and biodiversity improved – and ultimately enable the development to go ahead. This will need to mitigate any reduction in income plus additional expenditure incurred by implementing the offsite environmental improvements and habitat creation. The costs of additional infrastructure such as signs, stiles, gates and fencing should also be covered together with the cost of professional advice to the farmer. These issues need to be covered in detail as part of the Green Space Strategy and Landscape Management Agreement. Further discussions between the developer, the LPA and the other interested parties such as Natural England, the Dorset Wildlife Trust, Environment Agency, DEFRA etc and the tenant farmer and/or his representative (NFU) need to take place.