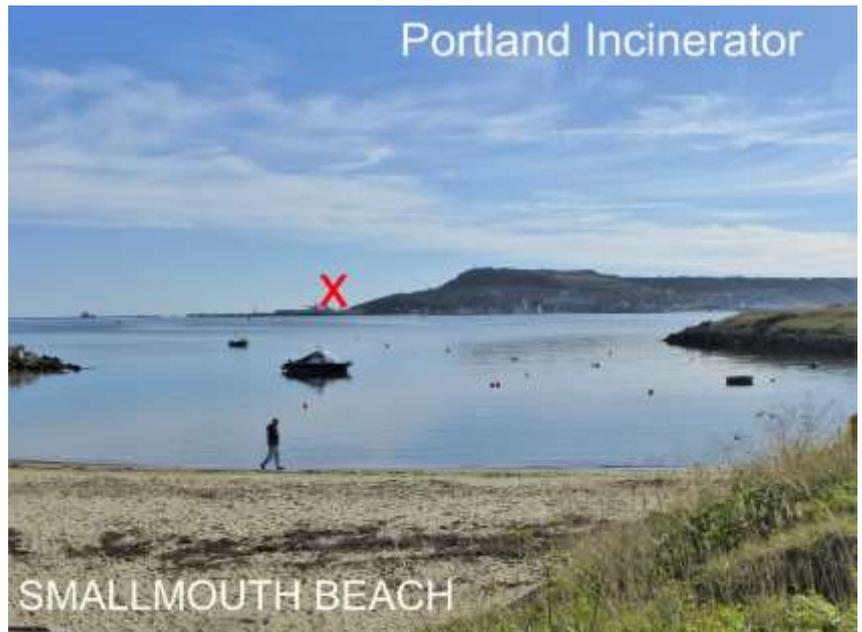


**WEYMOUTH CIVIC SOCIETY
PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE NEWS
September - October 2021**



PORTLAND – PROPOSED INCINERATOR

Having already objected strongly to Dorset Council on the planning application for the proposed incinerator last November, we have now responded to a separate consultation on it by the Environment Agency, conveying our deep concerns. In this there was a requirement to address only a limited range of issues, which excluded the damaging effects of up to 80 heavy vehicles a day on the already difficult and congested routes through Weymouth.



Instead we commented on the expected air pollution and odours created at and around the plant, which could seriously affect the populations of both Portland and Weymouth as well as the local natural environment, with important ecological sites close by. We also stressed the immense visual harm which this massive building in such a prominent position would inflict on the unique landscape, with major impacts on the Portland coastline and the wider setting of the Heritage Coast.

CUSTOM HOUSE QUAY – RAILINGS



The announcement by Dorset Council that they plan to leave the temporary railings alongside the harbour in place for an indefinite period has caused widespread dismay. In our response to the Council's main consultation on Custom House Quay we had expressed our concern that they would "*consult ... at a later date to establish how a more permanent structure can be installed*", and instead urged that action should not be delayed.

Our misgivings have turned out to be all too valid, with the Council seemingly prepared to leave these barriers in place indefinitely. Our view is that they seriously disfigure the harbourside, and it is hoped that the results of the public consultation will cause the Council to re-think this unwelcome proposal.

WEYMOUTH RAILWAY STATION FORECOURT

We are very disappointed that the plans for the station area are going ahead, following their approval by the Council. We have strong reservations about this complete revamp of the forecourt area, the huge costs incurred, and the disruption created during the works, for a scheme which in our view will make only very marginal improvements at best, would destroy all the trees and planting which have been cared for by local people, and could jeopardise any future funding for a better scheme.



PLANNING APPLICATIONS

Land adjacent to 481 Chickerell Road – Seven Houses (P/OUT/2021/03226)

We have written objecting to a line of seven houses proposed on a field in Chickerell, on the west side of Chickerell Road. This open land forms a break in the long ribbon of development alongside the road. It lies within the Heritage Coast land and is designated as of local landscape importance, and also provides a wildlife corridor connecting sites of nature conservation interest.

Former General Post Office, 67 St Thomas Street, Weymouth -

Window Repairs and other work.

(P/LBC/2021/02649)

We have written to welcome proposals for maintaining and repairing the stonework, roof and windows of this important historic building, which includes replacing the windows where necessary. Sympathetic restoration such as is proposed in the plans should help to ensure its continued existence in good condition in the years to come.

Eweleaze Farm, Osmington – Camping

(P/FUL/2021/01654)

The popularity of ‘Staycations’ as a result of Covid restrictions has seen the temporary extension, from 28 to 56 days, of a Government concession allowing land used for agriculture for the rest of the year to become short-term camping sites without the need for planning permission.



There is now an application for full planning permission for this new 56 day period at Eweleaze Farm for the next two years, with the Supporting Statement suggesting continuance into the future, to which we have strongly objected. This site, covering several coastal fields (36 hectares), adjacent to Weymouth's town boundary, has been of long-standing concern to our Society and many local people. The intrusive clutter of tents, vehicles and related facilities, serving thousands of campers each year, in this prominent

position next to the Coast Path, is visible from a wide area. It detracts from the enjoyment of this very lovely open coastal landscape for everyone else, as well as being potentially harmful to the agricultural land if this were to become a more permanent situation.

ADVERTISEMENTS AND OTHER SIGNS

There seems to be an increasing trend for larger and more conspicuous signs, which tend to deface the areas and buildings on which they are placed and degrade the local environment.



Signs for McDonald's, Mercy Road (P/ADV/2021/02538 and 02539)

We have written to the Council about several signs proposed in connection with the new McDonald's being built on land opposite Aldi and near the New Look offices. We are concerned at a set of several very large signs proposed for the McDonald's site, to which the Town Council also objected, considering them to be overbearing for the area. We also objected to a totem sign which was proposed to be 12 metres high, described as situated at the Dorchester Road/Mercery Road junction where there is already a clutter of signs; however, since then it has been confirmed as being on the McDonald's own site, and is now approved at a reduced height of 7 metres.

Fascia Signs for Goadsby, 2-4 Coburg Place. (P/ADV/2021/01709)

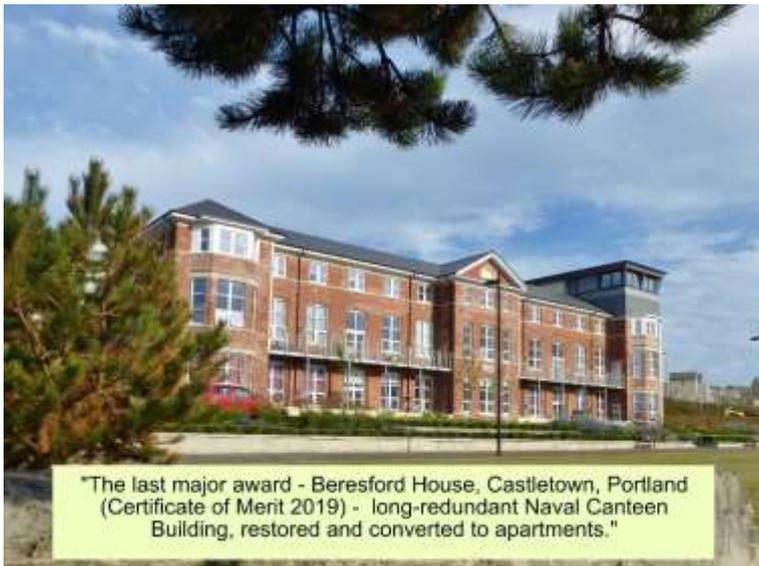
While temporary fascia signs have been in place around these buildings located close to the King's Statue, there are now proposals for permanent fascia boards. We have been delighted to see the great improvements made to the exterior of this fine group of historic buildings, having for many years been depressed at their shabby appearance in such an important location.



It therefore seems a great pity that some of the very prominent red fascia boards are proposed to be much wider than historically has been the case, and quite contrary to the what was indicated in approved plans for the buildings. The Conservation Consultant for Dorset Council has also written about these plans, saying he cannot support the proposals, in a range of aspects, recommending a completely fresh approach.

BRICKBATS AND BOUQUETS - DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS AND THE ANNUAL AWARDS

In the nature of many Civic Societies, much of the Committee's work is in scanning all proposed developments in our area and making our views known. This may be in the form of major public consultations, such as the recent Custom House Quay proposals, or in the regular bread-and-butter of planning applications. While we view many hundreds of these each year, there are only relatively few which we have concerns about. These are the ones upon which we make our comments to the Council. In this pro-active way we hope that any problematic developments can be improved or prevented while they are still in the planning process, before become reality.



Sometimes a scheme is proposed which we think looks particularly promising, and worth writing in support of it at the application stage. However, the main 'bouquets' come in the form of the Annual Awards. This time, owing to the Covid situation, there are two years of projects to be considered. Among those selected, there are a number of very commendable cases of refurbishment and re-use of significant properties of historic interest, which help to ensure their continued survival into the future. We are now in the process of decision taking and preparation for the final Annual Awards Evening at the

end of November, when the results will be announced.

THE PLANNING BILL

There have been hints of a major rethink of the government's whole controversial strategy in relation to housing and other development, set out last year in the Planning White Paper. We wrote a very full response to it, objecting to many of the proposals, which would shake up the planning system to its roots and which we felt would do serious damage to the ability to control unsuitable development. The nation-wide furore which ensued appeared to result in a likely modification of the most controversial elements, as this White Paper proceeded towards a Planning Bill. However, now that Michael Gove has been appointed Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, it has been suggested that there could even be a serious watering down, and in parts possibly a complete rejection, of this unloved document.

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To view the latest WCS Planning Newsletter on-line go to
www.weymouthcivicsociety.org/planninga.html