



SECTION 78 OF THE TOWN AND COUNTY PLANNING ACT 1990 (AS AMENDED)

KNOLL HOUSE HOTEL, FERRY ROAD, STUDLAND, DORSET BH19 3AH

PLANNING INSPECTORATE REFERENCE: APP/D1265/W/24/3348224

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MANAGEMENT OF DOMESTIC DOGS PROOF OF EVIDENCE

DOCUMENT: ISSUE VERSION

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ON BEHALF OF APPELLANT KINGFISHER RESORTS LTD

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Scope of evidence

1. My proof of evidence below contains:
 - a) My professional background
 - b) General principles of behaviour by walkers with dogs
 - c) Assessment of current management of resident staff, guests and visitors with dogs
 - d) Assessment of likelihood of any significant adverse effects from domestic dogs on nearby European sites arising from the development as proposed
 - e) Additional opportunities for the proposed development to minimise any pre-existing adverse effects on nearby designated sites
 - f) Overall conclusion
 - g) References

Professional background

2. My name is Stephen Jenkinson. I have worked full-time as an outdoor access management professional in the public, private and third sectors for 34 years. I am a Fellow of the Institute of Public Rights of Way and Access Management, and have an MSc in Countryside Management from Manchester Metropolitan University.
3. For the last 20 years I have worked full-time across the UK and internationally as a self-employed specialist in understanding and influencing the behaviour of walkers with dogs in the outdoors. For this my access management experience is complemented by my Post-Graduate Diploma in Companion Animal Behaviour Counselling from the University of Southampton, which in essence is the applied behavioural psychology of people and their pets. I am a full member of the International Society for Anthrozoology, Society for Companion Animal Studies and Universities Federation for Animal Welfare.
4. The ethos of my work is to minimise any adverse impacts on wildlife, livestock and people arising from dog walking in town, coast and country, while also supporting the human and canine health benefits of dog ownership. In that role I work for a variety of clients in the public (eg central and local government), private (landowners and developers) and third sectors (eg wildlife charities and the Kennel Club).
5. My clients embrace a wide variety of interests and priorities, ranging from primarily seeking to protect wildlife, through to wanting to optimise public access for walkers with dogs. My advice focusses on pragmatic management approaches built on the best available evidence, to manage access to the outdoors to support the legitimacy of all land uses (such as nature conservation, farming and the wider rural economy, and public access). This is because poor management of walkers with dogs creates needless conflict which benefits no-one.
6. I am professionally very familiar with the challenges and opportunities of managing visitors with, and without, dogs across SPA and SAC designated heathland in southern England. In 2013 I wrote *Planning for dog ownership in new developments: access and greenspace design guidance for planners and developers* for East

Hampshire District Council and Hampshire County Council. This was the first such guidance of its kind and compiled as part of my work on the planning and management of mitigation greenspace for Whitehill and Bordon Ecotown.

7. I have particular knowledge of public access to heathland in East Dorset. Since 2008 (most recently in May 2023) I have been repeatedly contracted by the Urban Heaths Partnership (UHP) / Dorset Council's 'Dorset Dogs' mitigation project to provide advisory and support services. These have included: site assessment; best practice management advice; staff training workshops (including three events at Upton Country Park abutting Poole Harbour) and public-facing engagement events.
8. I am also familiar with the Studland area. Over a number of years and for a variety of clients, I have been engaged in relation to the management of visitors with dogs to the nearby coast and heaths, as well as the management of recreational boating in Studland Bay (the latter in my role as a member of the Planning and Sustainability Committee of the Royal Yachting Association).
9. I have a particular expertise in the management of walkers with dogs along and abutting England's coast. Consequently, I was engaged by Natural England (NE) on a rolling contract between 2017 and 2023 to advise its officers on good planning, design and management of walkers with dogs on the then emerging King Charles III England Coast Path (ECP).
10. The ECP is now almost complete I am no longer under contract to NE. I am not aware of any conflict of interest with any past or current clients. In particular, I am not currently under contract to deliver services to Dorset Council nor any other heathland mitigation project in Dorset.
11. I provide this evidence on behalf of the appellant, Kingfisher Resorts Limited. I confirm that this evidence sets out my professional and honest assessment and I believe it to be true.

General principles of behaviour by walkers with dogs

12. Key to understanding my assessment of the current application are the principles of why walkers with dogs do what they do, and thus how to best influence them in order to minimise any adverse impacts on other people, wildlife and farm animals.
13. While problems arising from owning and exercising dogs are often cited in relation to nature conservation, it is vital to balance such legitimate concerns with the benefits of dog ownership and walking. This is because understanding both aspects helps to develop the best management interventions.
14. The English Nature-commissioned (Taylor et al, 2005) review of dogs, access and nature conservation identified and summarised a wide range of physical, mental and social benefits associated with dog ownership. A subsequent critical review of the available literature (Cutt *et al*, 2007) and a range of subsequent papers (eg Westgarth et al, 2014 and 2020) concluded that dog ownership produces considerable health benefits and provides social support that encourages dog owners to walk.

15. More recently, a 2018 study based on the data underpinning Natural England's 'Monitor of engagement with the natural environment' by the European Centre for Environment & Human Health at the University of Exeter Medical School, indicated that: "We found a positive relationship between neighbourhood greenspace and the odds of achieving *recommended levels of physical activity... this relationship was found for dog owners, but not for non-dog owners. To conclude, our findings support the contention that local planners and greenspace managers can help promote public health by being sensitive to the needs of dog owners as key users of local greenspace, and by supporting dog walking as a key contributor to population level physical activity.*" (White et al, 2018).
16. From the latter sources, the range of benefits associated with dog ownership for the owners themselves and wider society includes:
- daily, year-round, motivation to go walking in the outdoors.
 - making people, particularly women, feel safer in the countryside.
 - making men feel less self-conscious or less of a perceived threat to others when out for a walk alone.
 - dog owners make fewer visits to the doctor and recover more quickly from illness.
 - reducing suicide rates and improving mental health.
 - facilitating social contact, thus reducing risk of social isolation.
 - favourable changes in blood pressure and immune levels.
 - pain relief from generating feelings of well-being.
 - developing a sense of community amongst dog owners.
 - enhancing empathy, learning and responsibility in children.
17. While these benefits will vary in relevance and extent at a local level, the sustained levels of dog ownership (which increased from 9 million / 23% of all homes (2019) to 12 million / 31% of all homes (2023) during Covid), illustrate that pet dog ownership offers very tangible and enduring benefits to a large segment of the population (UK Pet Food - accessed 10 October 2023 www.ukpetfood.org).
18. Dog owners have a uniquely different set of motivations and priorities compared to other types of access user (such as walkers without dogs), and until relatively recently these had not been studied in a structured, scientific way. Thus, two complementary studies (Edwards and Knight, 2006; and Sport Industry Research Centre, 2008) were commissioned by partners including the adjacent Hampshire County Council to provide quantitative and qualitative data from on-site interviews, focus groups and anonymous online questionnaires.
19. The greatest priority for walkers with dogs was found to be the health and enjoyment of the dog itself. This is not surprising as owning a dog is usually a very definite lifestyle choice, from which a strong bond develops between owner and pet. The

latter also explains an owner's often passionate defence of their dog and strong reactions to any criticism of it, including how and where it is exercised.

20. From an access management perspective, often the most relevant influences upon dog walkers as to why they do what they do, especially in relation to wildlife disturbance and lead use, is evidenced in the following survey findings:

**Most important single influence on walk selection for dog owners:
top 10 factors ordered by percentage of owner selection.**

1. 41% Dogs can be off-lead
2. 10.7% Away from traffic
3. 10.5% Close to home
4. 8.7% Personal safety
5. 4.7% Peace and quiet
6. 4.1% Unlikely to meet other dog walkers
7. 3.6% Mixing with other dogs
8. 2.9% Away from livestock
9. 2.5% Poo disposal facilities
10. 2.2% Circular route

(From Sport Industry Research Centre (SIRC), 2008)

21. These priorities have been reflected in many subsequent surveys to support mitigation interventions. It should be noted in the above that while studies have shown landscape type is of some influence on where dog walkers go and what they do, it has not overridden the primary desire by dog walkers for off-lead exercise, close to home and away from traffic / other dangers.
22. Of particular relevance to dog walking along the coast in southern England is the 2016 face to face and online research commissioned by the Solent Recreation Mitigation Partnership (Clark, 2016) which found that 90% of dog walkers wanted to exercise their pets off-lead during a walk, and that 84% were seeking places where "My dog can run around without causing trouble".
23. The overall messages from these research findings can be very challenging to land and access managers. For example, to a non-dog owner or bird watcher, asking someone to "put their dog on a lead" may seem like a modest and reasonable request. However, for most dog owners, this is asking them not to do the single most important thing they want to do during a walk, which they perceive as having a very positive and important role in their daily lives. This principle is at the heart of needing to offer opportunities for off-lead exercise in a managed, proactive way as a key part of effective mitigation interventions that aim to reduce dogs running about off-lead across SPA and SAC designated areas during the ground-nesting bird season.
24. That said, a proportionate amount of seasonal or permanent on-lead zones can also be seen as positive provision, because a minority of dog walkers (around 17% SIRC, 2008) prefer to keep their pets on leads all or most of the time (for reasons such as behavioural issues, physical injury, or poor recall) and so prefer areas where they know other dogs are unlikely to run up to their pets uninvited.

25. Thus, the key issue for effective management is making sure all dog walkers have well-informed, accessible and proportionate choices, in terms of where to go and what to do, including on and off-lead exercise options.

Assessment of current management of resident staff, guests and visitors with dogs

26. Apart from my pre-existing knowledge of access management at Studland, I most recently visited the appeal site, surrounding land and beach from dawn to dusk on 7th November 2024. The times were chosen to include the most popular times for dog walking by local people. I visited, as usual, with my own dog in the guise of a dog walker, so as to avoid looking 'official' (as this can influence people's observed behaviour) and because this readily facilitates informal, open discussions with other visitors, especially those with dogs, about where they go, what they do, and why. No personal details were recorded as part of those informal discussions. As the Sandbanks ferry was not operating that day, and the appellant's hotel was closed, the dog walkers spoken to, when asked, lived locally and frequently walked dogs in the area.
27. During the middle of the day I spent 3 hours looking around the Knoll House Hotel itself, including abutting land and linking access routes, including statutory rights of access (public rights of way and Access Land) and routes recorded as used by people on foot who shared their walks on the publicly-accessible Strava Heatmaps (www.strava.com).
28. In relation to the fouling of land by dogs due to walkers not picking up their pets' faeces (usually by using a small, single-use bags) and removing them from site and / or placing them in a suitable bin, I noted several dedicated bins for dog waste within the application red line area, along with wall-mounted poo bag dispensers; the bags supplied were overprinted with generic "scoop the poop" messages and marked as "100% degradable". There were also some general litter bins suitable for bagged dog waste on Ferry Road in front of the hotel.
29. Neither at the hotel nor more widely, for example on the abutting National Trust (NT) land, did I see any information about the need to pick up everywhere (which is usually what is wanted) nor why leaving dog faeces behind can cause a problem for sensitive habitats (due to nutrient enrichment). Often people can think that the key reason for not picking up is to prevent people from treading in dog faeces, and thus flicking it into adjacent vegetation or only picking up where faeces are left on paths is sufficient. Nor did I see any information to communicate the good practice messages to the effect that "any general litter bin will do for bagged dog poo" as included in the Countryside Code. This is an important message as many people are unsure about whether bagged dog waste can go in general litter bins. Where dedicated dog waste bins are provided there can be a well-meaning but incorrect assumption that these are the only suitable bin for dog waste. Being aware that general litter bins can be so used makes people more likely to pick up, or not leave bagged dog waste behind, because it reduces the distance / time a walker needs to carry filled dog waste bags.
30. Similarly, neither at the hotel nor on the adjacent access routes / NT land did I see any information that would specifically help visitors with dogs know the best places to go year-round, or when there are seasonal sensitivities, to walk with their dog especially as most will be seeking some off-lead exercise. I noted that the hotel does provide photocopies of "Nine Walks from Knoll House" but these do not have any

information specifically for walkers with dogs, nor information about any wildlife or livestock sensitivities where certain behaviours are requested (such as dogs kept on paths or on leads).

31. A key and effective premise of Dorset Council's Urban Heaths Partnership (UHP) / Dorset Dogs (DD) mitigation project is that the enduring demand for off-lead exercise by most walkers with dogs needs to be managed by giving dog owners positive, well-informed choices about where to go and what to do. Hence the significant amount of developer funded mitigation elsewhere in East Dorset, for example through the provision of Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG). Simply relying on the outdated approach of banning or restricting off-lead exercise to provide mitigation is now widely recognised as ineffective. Rather than suppress the activity, it tends to displace it in an unmanaged way, and at times to areas that are more sensitive for wildlife and / or have been traditionally less disturbed.
32. Given the good practice elsewhere in Dorset to avoid the unplanned displacement of off-lead exercise it is, in my professional opinion, counterproductive that Dorset Council's Public Spaces Protection Orders (PSPOs) allow dog walkers to be fined for exercising their dogs off-lead in many areas in and around Studland but do not accommodate or promote any alternative off-lead areas in less sensitive areas for wildlife so that likely displacement is managed.
33. Furthermore, it is notable that Dorset Council approved such PSPO restrictions (predominantly across NT land) despite officers from its own Urban Heaths Partnership / Dorset Dogs mitigation project advising that "*...a dog-friendly all year round off-lead beach should be available at Studland somewhere to take pressure off nearby heathland and downland with vulnerable rare wildlife and grazing animals...*" when responding to the 2020 PSPO consultation. Moreover, no such good practice provision or any promotion of off-lead routes or areas was noted by the NT as landowner during my site visit.
34. Anecdotal discussions with local dog walkers during my visit confirmed my view of the limited effectiveness of the current approach to the management of visitors with dogs, due to it being fragmented, contradictory, and lacking clarity. Some dog walkers to whom I spoke were well-aware of PSPO restrictions and the times and places to exercise dogs off-lead (sometimes in SPA and SAC designated areas) when they would not encounter challenge from NT wardens.
35. It was noted from the hotel's website that efforts were already being voluntarily made to provide guests with information about wildlife-friendly dog walking. A link is provided to the Dorset Council run Dorset Dogs (DD) website although this needs updating (<https://www.knollhouse.co.uk/facilities/dog-friendly>).
36. I also noted that while there are currently no restrictions on the number of guest or resident staff dogs at the hotel, the current owners in 2021 voluntarily chose to not allow staff to have dogs with them. I understand that in the past, and for many years before, up to 10 resident staff dogs were present on site.
37. All told, in my professional opinion there is a great deal of latent opportunity to better influence where hotel guests, and the general public, with dogs go in and around the application site. This is because the existing arrangements do not apply the good practice devised and implemented elsewhere in East Dorset by the developer

funded, and Dorset Council hosted, Urban Heaths Partnership / Dorset Dogs mitigation project.

Assessment of likelihood of any significant adverse effects from guests with dogs on nearby European sites arising from the development as proposed

38. Given the current low baseline of good practice management in terms of guests with dogs at the application site, and on abutting NT land, in my professional opinion there are many substantial opportunities to reduce the likelihood of any significant adverse effects on nearby SPA / SAC sites. Moreover, I believe that these opportunities can reduce any impacts that are already occurring due to the existing hotel, giving a net benefit for protected species and habitats from the appellant's proposal.
39. I believe the above due to: i) actions that the appellant has already voluntarily taken during its ownership, ii) measures that can be readily defined in undertakings associated with any approval, iii) the reality that many of the mitigation-related actions can also be good for the appellant's business, thus fostering an inherent interest in effective and enduring compliance.
40. I am also mindful that the existing operation of the hotel is not currently delivering the best management in terms of minimising any adverse impacts from guests with dogs.
41. The reduction in the overall number of persons residing at the hotel in the revised proposal will represent a likely significant reduction in impact compared to the current hotel operation. This is especially so given the proposed removal of (66) on-site staff accommodation. This is because people living on site with dogs will inherently and incrementally explore more routes and establish year-around dog walking behaviours that may not respect seasonal wildlife sensitivities. Conversely, temporary residents (ie hotel guests) are more likely to be influenced by information supplied about good places for 'happy, healthy, hassle-free' dog walks and that information can also be utilised to benefit nearby wildlife and habitats.
42. Another measure that I believe will ensure no net significant adverse effect in relation to guests with dogs, is the proposed s106 obligation to operate an auditable 'Dog Occupancy Controls' scheme to limit the overall number of guest dogs at any one time. The proposed overall cap on dogs approach is especially relevant, and more likely to be effective, as it avoids the difficulties elsewhere where only certain units are designated for visitors with dogs. This latter approach can prove inflexible from an operational perspective and there is also a greater risk of any notional maximum being exceeded, depending on the size and occupancy of each guest unit.
43. Whilst I expect the 'Dog Occupancy Controls' proposed in the draft s106 obligation dated 25 October 2024 will be effective, I consider this could be enhanced. To ensure agreed limits are not exceeded, and to promote wanted behaviours by guests, each Dog Permit could be linked with each dog's unique microchip number. This is now a viable mitigation option as all UK resident dogs have to be microchipped by law and dogs visiting from abroad also need to be microchipped.

44. This scanning of microchips has two practical benefits. Firstly, it means that guests cannot try and circumvent the permit system by bringing numbers of similar looking dogs. Secondly, any dogs found roaming around the site or more widely can be readily linked to a specific guest who can then be given, as appropriate, a warning or other sanction. This is a much more streamlined approach to ensuring compliance, compared to needing to contact one of the many statutory dog microchip databases to find details of the dog's keeper.
45. In relation to the 'Dog Occupancy Controls' I would also suggest that the total number of permits could be subject to seasonal adjustment to reflect seasonal sensitivities, e.g. for ground nesting birds in spring and early summer. Apart from this reflecting Natural England's Least Restrictive Approach to limiting aspects of public access (namely that restrictions should not be imposed year-round if the behaviour they seek to restrict is not a problem all year round), it could also be used to promote behaviour change by guests with dogs, such that they inherently become accustomed to planning their visits at the less sensitive times. This would also reflect an evidence-based and proportionate approach to imposing restrictive undertakings for the proposed development.
46. Overall, I believe that either of the proposed planning obligations (namely the reduced human occupancy figures and the limits on guests' dogs) will individually be sufficient to ensure no significant adverse effect arising from the proposals, given the current lack of constraints in that regard on the existing hotel. Thus, in combination, I feel these measures give even greater reassurance about the effectiveness of the mitigation proposals, and moreover the likelihood of these measures to reduce any impacts arising from the current hotel's operation, quite apart from not causing an increase from the proposed new development.

Additional beneficial measures the proposed development could implement to enhance the management of nearby designated sites

47. Whilst I believe the undertakings as proposed are more than sufficient to avoid any significant adverse effect, during the course of my assessment other opportunities for beneficial measures became apparent that the applicant may wish to consider:
- The free provision and promotion of compostable dog waste bags with responsible practice(s) branded thereon.
 - General litter bins (such as those on Ferry Road adjacent to the hotel) should also be marked as suitable for bagged dog waste.
 - Dog activity trail obstacles (such as tunnels, jumps and log walks) could be provided in a defined area or alongside a promoted walking route as already proposed.
 - A discretely located enclosed area for guests' dogs.
 - Hard copy leaflets for guests describing at least six different walks (one for each day of a full week stay) with their dogs in the area, specially selected to use less sensitive areas for any off-lead exercise.

Overall conclusion

48. In my opinion the appellant's proposal as a whole, when including the reductions in staff accommodation and the Dog Permit System, will not lead to significant adverse effects on nearby protected species and habitats. I believe that it will reduce the likelihood of any such adverse effects given how the current hotel can and does operate. The proposed measures can further reduce the likelihood of adverse impacts and improve dog owners' awareness of how to exercise their pets in the area, and more widely, in wildlife-friendly ways, by giving them enhanced practical information.

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