



Councillor Peter Wharf

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Dr Martin Ayres
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Date: 18 September 2021
Ref: PW/JA/JS
Officer: Cllr Peter Wharf
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Dear Dr Ayres

Dorset Council recently received correspondence regarding the naming of 'Darkie Lane' in Ulwell, Swanage.

A family holidaying in Swanage have written to express their concern to find their accommodation on a street using a name that they found offensive and which they felt could very easily cause offence to others given our national history.

The historic context for the name is purportedly innocent, relating to the lane being 'dark' and 'shaded' - though this does not avoid the potential for causing offence, particularly for visitors to the area who will likely be unaware of this context.

Dorset Council's Street Naming and Numbering Policy is clear that when naming new developments/streets it will not be acceptable to use a name that "*could cause offence or be considered discriminatory particularly in regard to age, disability, race and ethnicity, faith and belief, sexual orientation, gender and sex*" (Paragraph 5.2).

Whilst the policy does not account for the circumstances of this specific case, the underlying principles regarding the naming of streets are that they be inclusive given the diversity of our communities and visitor populations.

Dorset Council would like to hear your views before deciding on a course of action. We think the options are:

1. Do nothing – leaving 'Darkie Lane' as the official name.
2. Change the name to 'Dark Lane' to preserve the historic context, whilst minimising the potential for offence.
3. Other - have you an alternative suggestion.

I'd be grateful if you could let me know your views by the end of September.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Peter Wharf".

Peter Wharf
Cabinet Member – Corporate Development & Change
Deputy Leader