

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

13 Nov 2023

1. I am providing this report in response to item 3.2 as included in the Winchester City Council Statement of Case document.
2. I am a veterinary surgeon who has experience of small animal practice and zoo practice and have conducted animal accommodation inspections locally on behalf of Basingstoke & Deane, Winchester (Marwell, Sparsholt and various private keepers), Test Valley (Finkley Down and private keepers) plus many others as far away as Scotland, Yorkshire and Cornwall. Inspections have been carried out on accommodation for all species from insect housing, public aquaria, zoo species including specialist elephant housing. I have inspected under pet animals legislation. I am also an adviser from time to time for Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust.
3. I have not been in clinical practice with cats and dogs for some years as my practice has evolved into a consultancy/ inspection based practice. Increasingly over the last 20 years in particular my work has been less clinical 'hands on' and more inspections on-site and consultancy related.
4. I was an RCVS Specialist in Zoo & Wildlife Medicine for 30 years, and have many years of clinical experience and many years of experience inspecting housing and environments of a huge range of animals and birds.
5. I was a council member of the Companion Animal Welfare Council (CAWC) and nominated by Lord Soulsby and Prof. Sir Colin Spedding to represent them on the DEFRA England Implementation Group, specifically working with the various companion animal groups to set up what are now the Sector

groups/councils. I chaired the Companion Animal Sector Council for several years.

6. I worked with the DEFRA companion animal welfare team for many years, advising particularly on animals in entertainment, animals in zoos. I worked on various of the statutory guidance documents under the Animal Activities Licensing (AAL process).
7. I have worked with and advised NGOs on various aspects of animal welfare, these include RSPCA, SPANA, SSPCA as far apart as Southampton and Myanmar.
8. I currently still carry out inspections of sites with animals (of literally almost all genera), including
  - a. Zoo inspections for local authorities, where I am nominated by DEFRA/APHA as a Secretary of States Inspector under the Zoo Licensing Act, or sometimes acting directly for local authorities.
  - b. I was one of only four Circus inspectors nationally selected and trained by DEFRA.
  - c. Animal licensing inspections (AAL, dog breeding and DWA) operating on behalf of local authorities, mainly of falconry establishments under Animals in entertainment legislation
  - d. Independent Animal welfare inspections of animal breeders on behalf of a large national pet shop chain
  - e. Inspections of welfare at harvest and slaughter of fish in aquaculture for retailers
  - f. Veterinary Health plan related inspections of aquaculture sites for the various major trout producers in UK.
9. I declare what may be viewed by the Council as a conflict of interest, although this does not impact on facts. Mr. Alastair Scott is my son. I do not view this as

a conflict since due to his upbringing he shares my unwavering commitment to animal welfare.

10. I have been asked to comment on the provision of the cat run on the rooftop terrace at 2 Calpe Yard.

11. I have personal experience as for several years we had house cats and built a cat run at our house in the New Forest.

12. There are a range of reasons why providing cat runs are preferred to simply allowing free access to the outside.

- a. The first is simple safety, cats have no understanding of roads and a great many are killed or injured on roads. Again, I have personal experience of this, when we ceased showing and breeding and moved to Winchester one of our 2 cats at the time was hit by a vehicle.
- b. In a city centre with restaurants etc there is a greater likelihood of cats coming into contact with pesticides either directly or indirectly.
- c. The second is keeping show cats in particular free from disease. Feral cats can transmit ringworm infections and often fight territorially – this affects the appearance and success in shows.
- d. Cat breeders provide their cats with cat runs to avoid ‘random’ mating.
- e. Ex-house cats are well known to enter houses other than their own, become shut in cupboards, garages, cellars etc.
- f. A very powerful argument is also advanced that domestic and feral cats are the major cause of loss of songbirds in Europe. Conservationists support the provision of cat runs to restrict the cats in regards of this behaviour.
- g. Finally, cats will be provided with cat runs by those offering boarding services

13. Mr.Scotts cat 'Sydney' is a house cat, and has never been outside except in the cat run because Mr.Scott lives in central Winchester and has done so for a few years. Central Winchester has feral cats and it also has traffic in abundance. It is common to see cats reported as lost or killed. For evidence locally I suggest speaking to RSPCA Inspectors or examining the files of the local Nextdoor app. This is very distressing for any person who is used to the great positive influence of pets on general mental wellbeing.
14. Sydney is relatively unusual in that she uses the human toilet, but since she is a house cat not dependent on litter trays she is able to accompany Mr.& Mrs. Scott to hotels (with the hotels prior permission).
15. Mr.Scott employed a professional to create a cat run on his terrace, it is simply a frame sitting on the terrace – it is not attached, ie not permanent. It is covered with a specially sourced strong fine plastic mesh which from ground level is virtually invisible. The mesh is strong enough to withstand cats claws and hold its weight.
16. Mr.Scott is well aware of the [Animal Welfare \(Licensing of Activities Involving Animals\) \(England\) Regulations 2018](#). Guidance for catteries. This is not applicable as the facility is only for his own cat but informed his thoughts on design of the 'catio' and feline needs.
17. 'Sydney' thoroughly enjoys the cat run providing as it does excellent animal welfare by enriching her life while keeping the local bird life safer.
18. The DEFRA Code of Practice on the Welfare of Cats 2017 produced by the Canine & Feline Sector Group makes general points about cat keeping. This was set up when I was Chair of the Companion Animal Sector Council of which it was a part.
  - a. All cats, including those that live predominantly outdoors, need a safe and clean environment and protection from hazards.

- b. They often feel safest when high up. If unable to hide and avoid threats, your cat may suffer anxiety and chronic distress, which can lead to illness.
  - c. If your cat does not go outside, make sure it has plenty of activities to do and enough space to exercise, climb and play indoors.
19. The International Association of Animal Behaviour Consultants (the IAABC) website has a useful paper based in the USA but the same issues apply here titled 'Outdoor cats: science and welfare'.
- a. It points to recent research into outdoor access (as proposed by Winchester Council in this case) was a risk factor in the spread of 19 different pathogens, some of which transmit to humans and wildlife as well as to other cats, revealed that cats with outdoor access were 2.77 times more likely to be infected than indoor-only cats.
  - b. The paper gives shocking statistics on numbers of cats killed on the roads. One study indicates that males are somewhat disproportionately killed (63%).
  - c. They also highlight the vast numbers of small birds and mammals killed by cats.
  - d. The paper states 'Catios keep cats safe from vehicle accidents, predators, disease, and parasites. They also keep small wildlife safe from cats.'
20. There is good evidence that the relationship between cat and owners is stronger in cats kept indoors than free ranging cats, not perhaps surprising.
21. RSPCA (UK) provide a guide for 'Meeting the needs of indoor cats' the various behavioural advice that they give is aided very much by the catio/cat run.

22. RSPCA (Australia) on their website answer the question 'Is it okay to keep my cat at home all of the time?' with a clear Yes, and they even give advice on how to do it; including the provision of access to safe outdoor space.
23. Cats Protection is a good resource and provides a few useful guides: (<https://www.cats.org.uk/help-and-advice/home-and-environment/indoor-cats#balcony>). They provide a statement on how to cat-proof a balcony for your cat, warning of high-rise syndrome where cats fall off. They suggest wire mesh or netting or installing a sturdy screen.
24. One balanced statement is "Ideally all cats would be allowed access to outdoors to express their natural behaviour and in the UK, the majority of people let their cats go outside. However, in built-up areas, there can be a large number of cats, each with a dwindling territory size and many people are choosing to keep their cats inside to minimise fighting. In addition, it is recommended that some cats are kept indoors for their own benefit.
25. Mr.Scott and Sydney live in the city centre, with serious levels of traffic.
26. During lockdown, once the public realised that pets could transmit COVID-19 and in the case of cats could actually suffer from it, many were kept indoors to avoid them bringing disease home – there are no COVID vaccinations for cats.
27. Cats present a special risk here, because free-ranging cats allowed to go out often habitually set up feed 'rounds' getting love and food at multiple households where they can pick up and carry disease between them. While this is not a massive risk, it is an avoidable risk to a caring owner. Publicised evidence of this has made some people regard free roaming cats as a threat, making them a potential welfare hazard to the cat. Eg. the individual prosecuted for putting a cat in a wheelie bin.

28. The council states:

- a. 'It is not understood why the cat cannot live inside the home; the appellant has not expanded on this point. There are other options available that do not amount to unauthorised and unacceptable development, such as keeping the cat inside (the property is split over 4 floors and is likely to have plenty of exercise space).'

29. I hope that the above reasons and clear guidance and support from International cat welfare organisations etc, demonstrate the concept of why indoor cats should be provided with outdoor space. The space and enrichment factors of the netted terrace are very important to providing good welfare for the cat whilst living in the city. A catio/protected outdoor area is safer for various reasons explained above, providing the safe outside space is enrichment for the cat and increases the overall welfare of the cat, as well as protecting local wildlife and preventing the spread of disease in a highly populated area. Taking this "safe" outdoor space away would be unnecessarily cruel. This is not simply about providing space, it is about enhancing the living space of the home with a safe. 'outside' which constantly varies.

30. In summary, the provision of the catio/cat run is good welfare for Sydney, it enriches her life and keeps her safe and secure, and stops her being a threat to other cats and wildlife. The beneficial effects of pet keeping are stronger for Mr.& Mrs Scott, as their mental health benefits from contact with Sydney. The benefits of keeping pets are well established.

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