

D.Hogger, esq.,
Planning Policy,
North Dorset District Council,
Nordon, Salisbury Road,
Blandford Forum,
Dorset, DT11 7LL



6May 2015

Name of Presentor: Mr P.Maddock
Respondent I.D.: 1185
Representation: 4021
Hearing Session: Issue 8A Gillingham Town.
Question Addressed: 8.1
Document Reference: MHD005

Dear Mr Hogger,

North Dorset Local Plan.
Additional Mid-Hearing Written Material.

Historically this Green Belt Site to the south and south-west of Bay has been rigorously protected from development by NDDC through applying various designations such as , “IOWA”, “Buffer Zone”, “Green Zone”, etc., Subsequently Dorset C.C. and NDDC commissioned the “Atkins Report” and the “Burden” Report. You will be aware of these Reports but I would like to emphasise:

(a) that Atkins clearly states that the north-east of the Town scores very low when the test of Sustainability is applied and considered development to meet housing demand would be preferable elsewhere. The SSA has of course provided that alternative.

and (b) the Burden Report is critical of any further development to the Barnaby Mead Estate by its final reduction and isolation of the riverside grassland and would prejudice the separateness, rural character and scale of Bay Hamlet; designated as an Area of Local Character and of which additional development would further erode the calm and tranquillity of the area. Burden recommends allocating this site as a publicly accessible park which makes it highly eligible to be included in the enhanced green infrastructure network focused primarily on the river corridors as promulgated in pre-submission Document Policy 17 (8.56). This site is the sole remaining candidate for inclusion in such a network in this area as its development would close the Shreen Water river corridor from North of Bay Bridge to the Town High Street.

Both of these Reports point to an unacceptable effect on the Environment particularly in the final closure of the Shreen Water river corridor, However the absorption of the Hamlet of Bay into the Town and the concomitant loss of its identity and of the Area of Local Character would clearly impact on the heritage of Gillingham.

These constraints severely curtail any claim that this site complies with all the aspects of Sustainability or the Sequential Approach and it is difficult to reconcile with the undated letter from the Site Owners representative (Mr Tony Brimble) addressed to Ms Self in which it is stated "...the Local Plan Inspector who opined that the site occupies a highly sustainable location for residential development and in a subsequent Section 78 Appeal the Inspector found the site to be highly sustainable, *perhaps the most sustainable site within North Dorset...*". (My italics). This is remarkable and denies further comment.

The site referred to by the Council was not identified in the 2003 Local Plan but Policy 2.6 allows infill/windfall development but of course at that time District Council was doing its utmost to protect the site from any development as it was considered as NOT Sustainable for various reasons and it was in the Town's interest and benefit for it to be retained as a "Green Space". However Council now appears at para 3.5 to have u-turned on its long standing policy and now includes the site as an "Infill/windfall development" and now able to "...accommodate approximately 50 dwellings categorising it as a site *for MAJOR development...*". It is my contention that a MAJOR development on this site must have a greater and much more serious impact on the Environment and all its aspects whilst at para 4.1 Council states that it is the ONLY major previously unallocated site in the District that is vacant and available for development, etc...". Council should have deduced that this is, of course, due to the success of Council's own rigorous steps over many years to actively protect the "Green Zone" site from development. I would ask whether the statements made in NDDC letter dated 17 December 2014 under Reference PRE/2014/0420/PREAPP addressed to Brimble Lee & Partners (Owner's Agent) are justifiable. You will have a copy of this letter wherein the NDDC Area Planning Team Leader (North) states "... As you are aware from our discussion, I would agree with your assessment that there are no significant restraints to the site...". This is a very broad statement indeed especially as para 14 of the National Planning Policy Framework provides specific and particular advice on the presumption in favour of sustainable development *except where any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, etc.* The letter then confirms three sections of the Policy Framework to which it gives priority Framework and presumably considers to be most relevant being (a) Promoting sustainable transport (b) Delivering a wide choice of high quality homes and (c) Promoting healthy communities. The MOST IMPORTANT quoted part regarding "Adverse impacts" and referred to above is ignored yet it is indeed the most significant in the case of this site. Perhaps because of its *uniqueness*

and the reasons for such the site must deserve primary consideration of the various impacts which would cripple the Environment within it and the surrounding area, Surely it is not the intention to provide protection from development to an area of Green Belt in order for it subsequently to become “Unique” and, in consequence, much more attractive for its ultimate destruction irrespective of any deleterious consequences. Having only applied the minimal possible three tests for sustainability and then ignoring the vital Environmental and other remaining tests then Council is also avoiding compliance with those other parts of the New Plan to 2036 which recommend restraint where necessary to ensure that the general quality of life is maintained and improved. Public Leisure Areas provided for the benefit of the community as a whole, etc.

By confining a full and proper consideration of the site’s Sustainability attention has NOT been applied to Environmental impact, the closing of the Shreen Water River Corridor (an act to be avoided anywhere as stated specifically elsewhere in the New Plan), potential Flooding which created considerable concern at Stage 2 of Barnaby Mead’s development, Effects on Flora and Fauna, Pollution from Garden Run-off and Light pollution, the effect on an area designated as an “Area of Local Character”, the disasterous swallowing of the Hamlet of Bay with the proposed development totally joining it with the Town. The Hamlet is bound with Gillingham’s History and thusly a strong part of the Town’s Heritage. It is all of these concerns which in combination must provide the basics for a test of Sustainability yet have not been considered or answered by Council. It is noted that at para 8.70 it is stated that “... Development (of Land at Bay) will need to respect the *character* of Bay...”. This would be impossible to achieve in so far as the Hamlet would no longer be identifiable; its heritage lost and the Shreen Water Corridor totally closed up.

The National Planning Policy Framework emphasises that definitions of Sustainability are highly controversial (paras 4 and 10) however it demands an important requirement which is to “...seek to achieve all the aspects of Sustainable development and not to assume that one aspect can be traded off against another...”. It could be conjectured that Council appears guilty of “trading Off” judging from the selected sections of the framework that they consider the most relevant to support development as included in Council’s letter dated 17th December to Brimble Lee and Partners already referred to above (Page 2).

The preamble to the New Plan to 2026 Part 1 Pre-submission Document, Policy 17 (Page 206) provides a Sustainable Policy Strategy. Clearly the overall number of dwellings to be allocated to the development of a SSA to the south of the Town is fluid and if it is deemed necessary for the overall projected Housing demand then the 50 dwellings envisaged at the Bay site can be absorbed into the Strategic Site Allocation and therefore avoid development of the Bay Green Belt There is therefore no need or demand to encroach on the Green Belt and would be consistent with the New Plan.

The New Plan contains proposals for the provision of Green Infrastructure (paras 8.92 and 8.93) and emphasises the major contribution the corridors of the three Rivers (Stour, Lodden and Shreen Water) now make to the *character of the Town*. Proposals for an integrated network of informal Green Spaces enclosed around the Town with Rights of Way are being advanced.

The unnecessary Building development of this Bay Green Belt Site would constitute the permanent loss of Long Term Benefit to Gillingham and its Community. As a Green Zone Park Publicly Accessible for sporting activities, play space, formal and informal general leisure activities plus access to the Shreen Water providing a northerly back-drop it recommends itself as part of the network of green infrastructure to be progressed around Gillingham as proposed (Page 208, Pre-submission Document). Access by Public Footpath already exists from the High Street/Town Centre and there are few, if any, remaining green belt sites that meet these provisions.

Gillingham's Housing development requirements to 2026 (or 2031) can primarily be met by the adequacy of the SSA sited to the south of the Town. Certainly no imperative targets now exist which demand a **Major** development of 50 dwellings to the North East of Gillingham especially on Green Belt the use of which is specifically discouraged elsewhere in the New Plan.

I find the Council's responses inadequate and ill-considered avoiding as they do any references to the many and unnecessary repercussions to Bay's environment and the Shreen Water should this site be developed. There is no attempt to make a fair assessment in applying fully the tenets and guidance of the Sustainability tests but only a tacit acceptance that all sites are automatically Sustainable unless proved otherwise. This of course is not true but a lack of balance has been displayed which is unsympathetic to the present and long term interests of the people of Gillingham. Council has much past material in its Records dealing with their efforts to protect this site certainly sufficient to have devoted more attention to its lack of Sustainability and potentially its preferred use as a Leisure Park for the enjoyment of the Public many of whom take advantage of it already.

My thanks to you for providing me with this opportunity to elaborate on this contentious matter and Council's responses.

Yours sincerely,

Peter Maddock