



Historic England

Sara Loch
Chairman of Blandford +
Blandford Forum Town Council
Town Clerk's Office
Church Lane
Blandford Forum
Dorset DT11 7AD

Our ref: 2317
Your ref: B+Draftplan2015

Telephone
Email

3rd November
2015

Dear Ms Loch

Neighbourhood Plan for Blandford +

Thank you for consulting Historic England about your Neighbourhood Plan.

The area covered by your Neighbourhood Plan covers the Blandford, Blandford St Mary and Bryanstone Conservation Area and includes a large number of important designated heritage assets including [Listed Buildings; Scheduled Monuments etc]. In line with national planning policy, it will be important that the strategy for this area safeguards those elements which contribute to the significance of these assets so that they can be enjoyed by future generations of the area.

We have the following detailed comments to make regarding your plan:-

1. We are pleased to note that a key objective of the Plan is to retain its distinctive historic character. We have had a number of meetings over past months to explore with the town's community how it can define and exploit its distinctive and historic character to add value to social, economic and environmental objectives for the town. This has involved giving presentations and highlighting specific themes and activities which the town might wish to consider. We are pleased that the decision has now been taken for a community group to work on behalf of the town with North Dorset District Council in the completion of a Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan and we have agreed to participate in the undertaking of the task.

The outcome of the exercise should identify those issues in need of attention so that the conservation area can be preserved and enhanced in accordance with statutory policy. These may well advocate, for example and inter alia, enhanced policy and



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management provisions, as well as the identification of particular sites or issues where physical enhancement is recommended. While it may not be possible to speculate as to the outcomes of the task in drafting policies for the emerging neighbourhood plan, it is probably desirable to refer to this exercise and possibly provide a policy “hook” to trail and highlight its importance – especially if it is felt in due course that the Management Plan should have Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) status.

2. Thought might also be given to the delivery of enhancement ambitions for the town, particularly through the use of Community Infrastructure Levy provisions as they apply to neighbourhood plan communities. Having a schedule of prioritised projects is always useful, and if it is not possible to draft that within the Plan then reference to the preparation of a schedule – perhaps in connection with the recommendations of the conservation area management plan – could be a helpful alternative.
3. A significant thrust of the Plan is the identification of sites for development, as a growth strategy which runs counter to that for the area which is identified in the emerging Local Plan. It is not for us to engage in any debate about reconciling these differing approaches but it is important that we highlight in the context of the neighbourhood plan that any new sites identified will need to demonstrate with evidence that they have identified and understood the significance of relevant heritage assets and ensured that they are protected and enhanced in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). As North Dorset District Council will be able to advise on the basis of their Local Plan preparation experience, this needs to be a robust and informed exercise, and will in advocating growth beyond the existing urban fringe need to take account of not just the significance of individual heritage assets but of the strategic setting of the town and the setting and views into and out of the conservation area.

We are aware from separate correspondence that a Strategic Environmental Assessment of the neighbourhood plan is being prepared and this will no doubt need to embrace a site options evaluation exercise to a methodology consistent with that which has previously been used for the Local Plan.

We would recommend that you liaise with the planning team and historic buildings conservation officer at North Dorset District Council together with the archaeology team at Dorset County Council who look after the Historic Environment Record and give advice on archaeological matters. They should be able to provide details of the designated heritage assets in the area together with locally-important buildings, archaeological remains and landscapes. Some Historic Environment Records may also be available on-line via the Heritage Gateway (www.heritagegateway.org.uk).

Historic England has produced a number of documents which your community might find helpful in helping to identify what it is about your area which makes it distinctive and how you might go about ensuring that the character of the area is retained. These can be found at:-



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[<http://www.historicengland.org.uk/advice/planning/plan-making/improve-your-neighbourhood/>]

I look forward to our continuing involvement in the preparation of this Plan. If you have any queries about this response or would like to discuss anything further, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

David Stuart
Historic Places Adviser



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