



Historic England

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

Our ref: 2474
Your ref: B+Pre-SubPlan2016

Telephone [REDACTED]
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30th March 2016

Dear Ms Loch

Blandford + Pre-Submission Plan consultation

Thank you for consulting Historic England about your Neighbourhood Plan.

In our letter dated 3rd November 2015 sent in response to your consultation on a previous draft of the Plan we highlighted the issues which we thought might benefit from further attention.

While many of these rest within the discretion of your community in terms of their accommodation the allocation of sites in particular has the potential for impact on heritage assets and it is this aspect of the Plan we have therefore focussed on.

As we have previously stated, the matter of resolving land allocations within the adopted Local Plan and the emerging neighbourhood plan is a matter for your community and North Dorset District Council as the local planning authority. Our concern is to ensure that the allocation of any additional land which the Plan may wish to consider is suitably informed by an understanding of the significance of relevant heritage assets to ensure their protection and enhancement. This demonstration of evidence will allow assessment of the extent to which such proposals are in conformity with the statutory provisions for the historic environment within the National Planning Policy Framework and related policies within the Local Plan.

While provisions within individual allocation policies and those elsewhere in the Plan may refer to the need for successful development to safeguard heritage assets the identification of quantum outputs for sites needs to be accompanied by evidence to demonstrate that these can be delivered without causing harm. In this way hostage to fortune commitments,



unwitting though they may be, can be avoided. In addition, evidence needs to show that the change of use of a site or its form of development in principle will not, through that allocation, be harmful to its heritage significance or the settings, individual and collective, of off-site assets through such a change in character.

On this basis it is policies 1, 2, 3, 5, 6 and 7 which attract our attention.

Having gone through the Plan and the extensive and otherwise impressive schedule of supporting information unfortunately we can find no evidence to show how relevant heritage assets have been identified and their significance assessed. Using policy 1 as an example, this need is not covered by the Savills Framework Masterplan. Reference is made in the Landscape and Visual Appraisal to designated heritage assets in the area around the site along with the Historic Landscape Characterisation. Assertions are made as to the lack of impact on identified assets on the basis of proximity or visibility but this is not supported by evidence on the historic settings of these assets.

The Draft Sustainability Appraisal Report generates similar issues. It is not clear how relevant heritage considerations have been assessed (ie the methodology used) to inform the conclusions against heritage objectives and policies within Tables B, C & D.

This is an evidence gap which needs to be filled. However, it is not necessarily an onerous task though, as our previous letter intimated, it is a specialist one. And it should not be assumed that the outcome need be negative; such evidence may usefully verify more conclusively the absence of harm and the conclusions already asserted. Good practice guidance on assessing setting via the link below is available on our website (and could have been accessed via the weblink provided in our previous letter)

(<https://content.historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/gpa3-setting-of-heritage-assets/gpa3.pdf>).

Similarly, the Draft Sustainability Appraisal Report. It is not clear how relevant heritage considerations have been assessed (ie the methodology used) to inform the conclusions against heritage objectives and policies within Tables B, C & D.

If it would be helpful we would be happy to meet and discuss with you the work we have recommended. If so, and given our previous advice, we would suggest that this involves relevant officers from North Dorset District Council.

Yours sincerely

[Redacted signature]

David Stuart
Historic Places Adviser