

Issue 1
Duty to Co-operate, Legal Requirements
& the Council's Broad Strategy
Written Representations

NORTH DORSET LOCAL PLAN PART 1
EXAMINATION IN PUBLIC

ISSUE 1.4: STRATEGIC SITE SELECTION PROCESS

ISSUE 1.11: NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANS

FEBRUARY 2015

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 This statement comprises a response to the issues identified by the Inspector for the Examination in Public (EIP) into the soundness of the North Dorset District Local Plan Part 1 (LP1). The response is submitted on behalf of Charles Church Developments Ltd. The company has a legal interest in land identified for residential development within Policy 16 (b) of LP1, west of Blandford St. Mary, between Dorchester Hill and Fairmile Road. The site is identified edged red on the plan included as **Appendix 1** to these representations.

1.2 In respect of Issue 1, we wish to comment only on the matters raised in the Inspector's Questions 1.4 and 1.11.

2.0 1.4: THE STRATEGIC SITE SELECTION PROCESS

2.1 The identified issue relates to the process of sustainability appraisal, the testing of alternatives; and evidence for selecting the preferred strategy. We consider that the Local Plan is sound in respect of the selection of strategic sites.

2.2 The Sustainable Development Strategy Background Paper (SDS001) clearly identifies the issues arising from the evidence base, including the housing numbers, defining the key strategic settlements, and assessing future population needs in relation to the range and proximity of services in the district. SDS001 also identifies the issues arising from stakeholder and community consultations as undertaken in 2007, 2010, 2011, and 2012.

2.3 The Spatial Strategy for North Dorset Topic Paper (SDS002) also summarised the issues from the evidence base in terms of population, facilities and accessibility. In defining the key strategic settlements, Blandford was identified as being the main service centre in the south of the district, with a good range of shops, employment opportunities and community facilities. Strategic development at the town and its immediate hinterland is clearly appropriate - and sustainable.

2.4 The Background Paper Meeting Housing Needs (MHN001) also assesses the evidence based studies. These include the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) and its update; the Affordable Housing and Economic Viability Study; the Strategic

Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA); Housing Affordability; and Housing Densities. All have informed the overall provision and location of future housing.

- 2.5 The Housing Topic Paper (MHN002) produced conclusions from the studies that were also identified in MHN001 from assessments against National, Regional and Local Planning Policy - as well as stakeholder and community consultations.
- 2.6 From all of these studies, and the evidence that informed them, it is clear that the Council's Broad Strategy is appropriate. It is based on evidence, collected over a long period of time, it is objective and sustainable, particularly with regard to the key settlement of Blandford.

3.0 1.11: NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING

3.1 This issue deals with the relationship between the Local Plan and any future Neighbourhood Plans; and whether the strategic policies act as a sufficient guide. We consider that greater reference should be made in the Local Plan to the strategic policies, and the need for Neighbourhood Plans to conform to them.

3.2 Our representations on the Pre-Submission Local Plan referred to the fact that Paragraph 8.13 of the Local Plan identifies the possibility that the Blandford based Town and Parish Councils may produce a Neighbourhood Plan. Whilst the Local Plan Sustainability Appraisal, at Paragraph E.14, makes it clear that any Neighbourhood Plan will deal with non-strategic local choices, the LP1 itself is silent on the matter.

3.3 We therefore suggested, as far as is relevant to Blandford, that a new sentence is added at the end of Paragraph 8.13, to read:

“This could deal with non-strategic matters to supplement the policies contained in this Local Plan.”

3.4 We maintain our position on this particular issue. However, it is only relevant to our representations in respect of Blandford. The appointed Inspector may consider that a more over-arching paragraph - or even a specific policy - is appropriate in dealing with the relationship of the strategic policies to neighbourhood planning across the district as a whole.

4.0 CONCLUSION

- 4.1 Paragraph 8.13 is unsound. It is not positive, justified or effective. It is considered that it lacks clarity, in particular potentially leading to the preparation of a Neighbourhood Plan that does not fully reflect the strategic objectives or policy requirements of LP1.
- 4.2 We are seeking the change as set out in our representations on the Pre-Submission Local Plan, and as reproduced in Paragraph 3.3 of this Written Representation. The Inspector may consider extending this to refer to the relationship of Neighbourhood Plans to the strategic policies of the district as a whole.

APPENDIX 1

Plan of Land Between Dorchester Hill and Fairmile Road Blandford St. Mary

