



NORTH DORSET LOCAL PLAN Part 1 – 2011 TO 2026

REPRESENTATIONS ON BEHALF OF THE DAVIS COATS FAMILIES (ID NO 3079)

HEARING SESSION – Wednesday 18th March – 10.00

Issue 7: Blandford (policy 16)

Introduction

1. This statement is submitted on behalf of the Davis Coats families in relation to land to the north east of Blandford. The identification of this area for development is supported. The site suitable, available and deliverable. It is in the control of the Davis Coats families and supporting documents have previously been provided to Council as part of the emerging local plan process.

Response to Questions

7.1 Is there any evidence that the proposed residential development sites at Blandford Forum, including the development of land to the south-east and west of Blandford St Mary, is not available, sustainable or deliverable? If such evidence exists what alternatives are available and have they been satisfactorily considered by the Council?

2. In selecting the site to the south east of Blandford St Mary, as a replacement site to the Crown Meadows site, as part of the Focused Changes exercise in 2014, the Council still acknowledge that that site has significant problems relating to its severance from the town by the intervening by-pass and issues related to long-desired provision of the Spetisbury/Charlton Marshall Bypass, raising issues of sustainability and deliverability. Indeed there appears to be outstanding objections to the site, not least from the highway authority.
3. In terms of alternatives, land to the north east of the town does not appear to have had fair consideration. In the Initial Sustainability Appraisal in 2010 it was discounted:

Development to the south west is considered to be the better of the two expansion options due to its lesser impact on the landscape and proximity to the town centre and schools. Extension of the town to the north east would potentially result in increased risk of flooding to the town centre and would breach the barrier of the town's bypass.

4. Additionally in an Addendum to the Initial Sustainability Assessment it:

discounted the site south of the A350/A354 roundabout due to the landscape impact and the difficulty in achieving satisfactory pedestrian and cycle routes across the bypass. On this basis, the land to the west of Blandford Forum along with the sites to the west of Blandford St Mary was still considered the most sustainable option.

5. At that time therefore, the Council was considering a site in the north east comprising 800 dwellings compared to the 550 submitted to the Council on a Masterplan accompanying a consultation response on the The New Plan for North Dorset in 2010. A supporting Landscape and Visual Appraisal and Transport & Access Appraisal were also submitted at this time also. (See enclosures). At that time, however, the Council favoured sites to the west and south west because of lesser impact on the landscape and proximity to the town.
6. When the Council prepared its Focused Changes document in 2014, it also prepared a Supplement to the Pre-Submission Sustainability Report. In the Background section to that document it describes how favoured options were chosen. It also confirms that land to the north east of Blandford for 800 dwellings:

was discounted at an early stage due to landscape impact and the potential for it to increase flooding along the Pimperne Brook. In addition it was considered to be the least accessible to local facilities.

7. No comparative assessment including the north east site was undertaken. The Non-Technical Summary of the Supplement to the Pre-Submission Sustainability Report summarises the options considered as follows:

Previous Sustainability Appraisal work concluded that the site to the north east of the town was not suitable for development due to landscape impact, flooding and access issues. These findings are still considered valid and hence the site to the north east of the town has not been reconsidered as an option for development at this stage.

Three options were considered taking on board the new information about the site at west Blandford Forum and the site south of the A350/A354 roundabout. These options were:

- *Option 1: Continue to promote the site at west Blandford Forum alongside the sites to the west of Blandford St Mary despite the substantial harm to heritage assets that would result;*
- *Option 2: Remove the site at west Blandford Forum but continue with the development of site west of Blandford St Mary. No additional sites included to meet the shortfall in housing numbers in Blandford that would result;*
- *Option 3: Remove the site at west Blandford Forum substituting it with the site south of the A350/A354 roundabout alongside the development of the site west of Blandford St Mary, maintaining overall housing numbers at a reasonable level to meet need.*

The results of the appraisal concluded that Option 3 was the most sustainable option as it not only enabled the housing needs of the town to be met, but it also substantially reduced the impact on heritage assets as a result of development. There was however some issues raised in the appraisal of the sites that need to be adequately addressed either through the policy or through development proposals.

8. Firstly, this Focus Change exercise was too focussed; it should have included an Option 4 comprising the land to the north east.
9. Secondly, it seemed to be biased towards quickly finding a replacement site to the Crown Meadows site which would not have heritage issues.
10. Thirdly, to justify the choice of the site to the south west results of a survey were used which asked for preferences between it and the Crown Meadows. With

opposition to the latter so strong it was obvious a skewed result would follow backing the Council's narrow choice.

11. Finally, it seems strange that a site that was discounted in the initial Sustainability Appraisal suddenly became a favoured site, despite there still appearing to be significant objections to overcome.
12. Savills made representations to the Focused Changes consultation. (ID 752). This:
 - suggested more options should be considered;
 - described the merits of the land to the north east and the fact it had Town Council support;
 - made the point that the land to the south west of Blandford St Mary had not been fully assessed against all the options
 - flagged the possibility of including more than one replacement site to the Crown meadows site
13. To address the shortcomings, it suggested a better option appraisal was required which included the land to the north east.
14. In summary therefore, the Council dismissed consideration of land to the north east early on in the process without good reason.
15. When the need came to replace the Crown Meadows site, despite reconsidering land to the south west of Blandford Mary, after discussions with the developer, the Council relied on its original assessments of land to the north east to make choices, notwithstanding our clients had submitted additional information in relation to transport & access, landscape and a masterplan for 550 dwellings, a number considerably less than the Council had originally assessed.

7.2 Can development at Blandford St Mary be satisfactorily assimilated into the existing settlement and the wider setting, including the AONB?

16. Blandford St Mary is a village and the amount of development proposed around it could significantly alter its character. The housing proposed on our clients land is north east of the bypass and not in the AONB and an LVA has been submitted to show how it can be assimilated into its surroundings, with generous planting and open space. Our clients land immediately to the north of the bypass has the Sunrise Business Park adjacent to the west, allotments to the east, and the bypass to the south with an existing pedestrian footbridge to the town and has good hedge planting to the north. It could easily be assimilated into the town.

7.3 Is there any evidence that the proposed economic development sites in Blandford Forum are not available, sustainable or deliverable? If such evidence exists what alternatives are available to the Council?

17. The Council has granted planning permission on the large Hospital Metalcraft site off Shaftesbury Road for a superstore since this exercise began, and the Brewery site has been a longstanding allocation, which has been slow to come forward. Existing business parks, such as Sunrise, need room to expand.

7.4 Can it be demonstrated that the proposed development in Blandford Forum and Blandford St Mary would not have a significant adverse effect on highway

safety or on the ability of other infrastructure to satisfactorily accommodate the growth?

18. It would appear that there are existing highway objections in respect of the land to the south west and the line of the Charlton Marshal, Spetisbury bypass is threatened. Creating linkages back to the town is difficult and development in this direction does not appear to bring with it the much needed infrastructure the town requires. Land to the north east is better capable of delivering this.

7.5 Are all the infrastructure requirements listed in policy 16 justified and deliverable?

19. The County Council, the District Council Town Council and parish councils will help determine the town's infrastructure needs as it expands. Land to the north east of the town has the ability to meet many of the town's needs. It already has a primary school and local centre shown as part of its masterplan proposals and other facilities can be considered.

7.6 Should Figure 8.1 show the safeguarded route for the Spetisbury and Charlton Marshall by-pass?

20. Improvements to the Trailway are a desired outcome for the Council. As the Spetisbury and Charlton Marshall bypass is a similarly desired project, yes it should be shown. It is noted land to south west affects the line and a satisfactory solution has not been forthcoming.

7.7 Figure 8.1 identifies land at Black Lane (No 7) for housing growth but this is not referred to in policy 16. Why not?

21. No comments.

7.8 Is the Council's delivery strategy, as summarised in paragraph 8.12, justified bearing in mind the presumption in favour of sustainable development?

22. Timing of delivery is rather vague in this paragraph particularly as we are already well into the plan period.

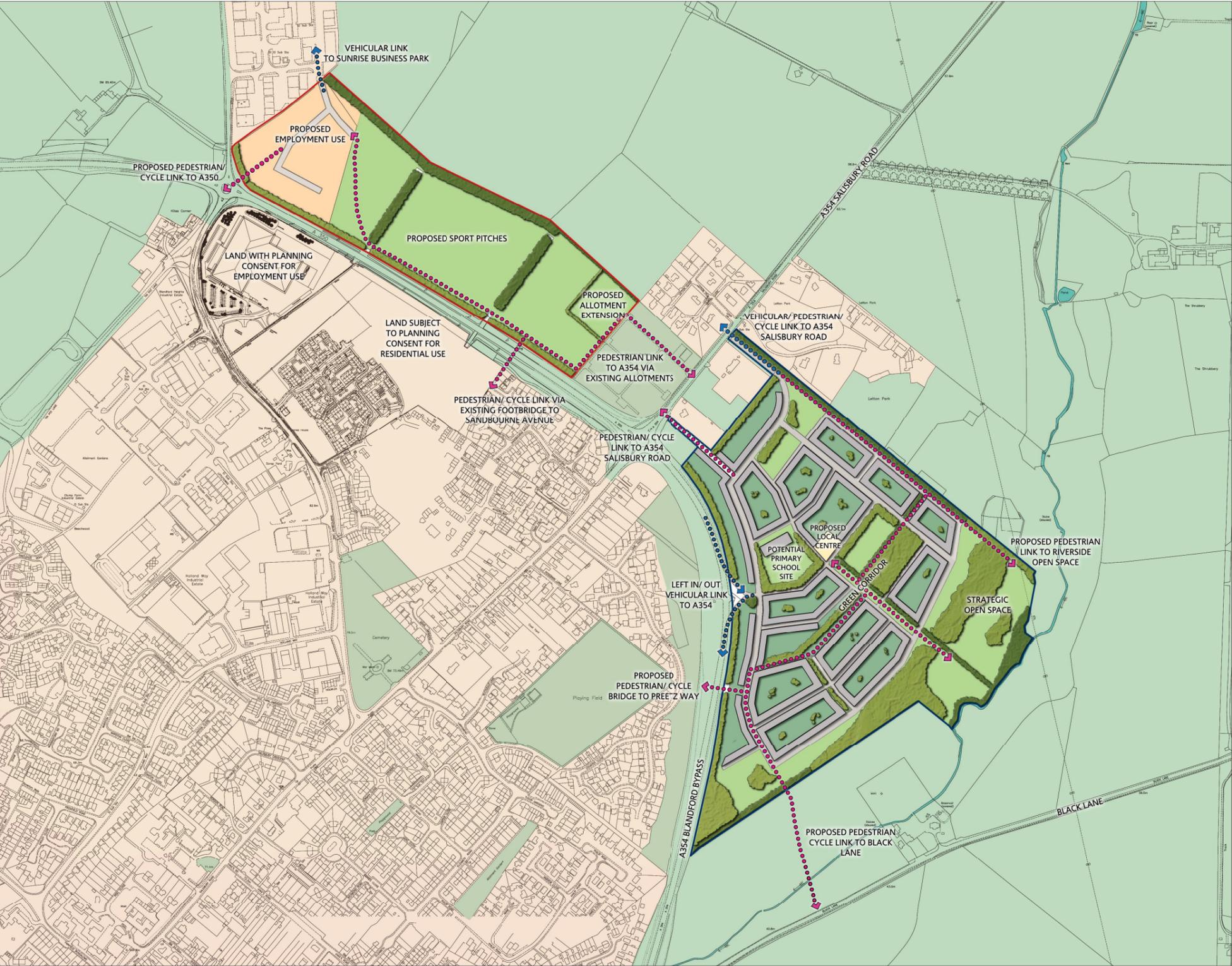
How Plan can be made sound

23. In paragraphs b, h, u and the final paragraph of Policy 16 insert reference to land to the north east of Blandford.
24. In paragraph k insert reference to an extension to Sunrise Business Park

Enclosures

- Indicative Masterplan – Savills 2009
- Conclusions of Landscape and Visual Appraisal Report – Savills 2009
- Conclusions of Transport and Access Appraisal – PFA 2010

Figure 4: Indicative Master Plan



-  Proposed vehicular link
 -  Proposed pedestrian and cycle links
 -  Proposed local centre
 -  Proposed development blocks
 -  Proposed trees
 -  Existing trees
 -  Proposed employment use
 -  Proposed public open space
 -  Proposed private open space
 -  Existing waterways
 -  Existing open space
 -  Existing built environment/land with planning consent for development
 -  Existing agricultural land use
-
-  Site A: Davis Land
 -  Site B: Davis-Coats Land

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date August 2009
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7 Conclusion

Land to the north of Blandford (Site A)

- 7.1 The majority of the site is proposed for sports pitches and allotment use, set within a series of fields that already benefit from mature hedgerows and young shelterbelts. These features will be retained. The appraisal indicates that the proposals for Site A will not have a significantly adverse effect on either the landscape features or visual amenity of the area.
- 7.2 At its northern end of the site, the proposed employment uses will be the only structures that will be visible from beyond the site, although the effects will be limited. The allotments and sports pitches will only be visible from the existing allotments and from the footbridge over the A350 Blandford Bypass. The existing shelter belts and hedgerows will visually integrate the proposed employment buildings with the countryside to the north and adjacent Sunrise Business Park to the west.
- 7.3 Visual receptors in this area are extremely few, with views limited to a public footpath 0.8km away. Whilst there will also be glimpsed views of the employment buildings from the A350 Blandford Bypass and existing Sunrise Business Park, these will be seen in the context of existing industrial buildings and the urban character of the bypass, including proposals for an additional business unit to the south of the Blandford Bypass which has been granted planning consent. The visual receptors from these areas are considered to be 'low sensitivity' as they are not living within view of the site or visiting it for recreational purposes. This further reduces the significance of any adverse visual effects.
- 7.4 Whilst Site A is within the boundary of the Cranbourne Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, it is considered that the proposed scheme can be accommodated in accordance with Policy 1.32 of the Local Plan, in particular that the "siting and scale of the development will be sympathetic with the landscape of the AONB and the particular locality." Given that the hedgerow structure will be retained, there will be little difference in the overall views towards the site.

Land to the northeast of Blandford (Site B)

- 7.5 The land to the northeast of Blandford, Site B, is proposed for housing and an associated local centre and community facilities set within a significant amount of public open space with additional forest scale tree planting (see Indicative Masterplan, and Figure 2). The site is currently in arable use and benefits from strong belts of trees on its southern and eastern sides. Recent tree planting along its boundary with the A354 to the west also provides a further degree of screening. To the north a small number of existing dwellings are set within large, well-treed plots which screen the site when viewed from the A354 Salisbury Road. All of this vegetation would be retained. The site also has a number of clipped native hedgerow boundaries through its centre and these would be incorporated within the green infrastructure of the site.

- 7.6 A small stream, forming a tributary of the River Stour, runs along the south-western boundary of the site. The character of this would be enhanced, with management as riverside meadows.
- 7.7 Visually, the site is generally well contained from the north, west and east, with glimpsed views from short stretches of Black Lane, the A354 Blandford Bypass and the B3082 Wimborne Road. There may also be views from up to four footpaths to the south and west of the site, however the presence of mature hedgerows generally provides much screening, especially during the summer months. Visual receptors on all of these roads are judged to be 'low sensitivity' given that they are passing at relatively high speeds and are not specifically in the vicinity for its visual amenity. Hedge banks and trees further screen views towards the site from the roads. Within views from Black Lane and the Wimborne Road the existing town and suburbs of Blandford Forum are visible however providing a semi-urban setting to the site.
- 7.8 There are limited properties with views of Site B that would be adversely affected, and the only 'high sensitivity' visual receptors are likely to be users of a public footpath that runs to the north of Black Lane, and potential users of a limited number of footpaths to the south and west of the site.

6. CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1. This Sustainability Appraisal has been prepared by PFA Consulting on behalf of The Davis Family to consider the existing and proposed sustainable transport network for the proposed development site on land Northeast of Blandford Forum.
- 6.2. The development site is split into two areas, either side of the A354 Salisbury Road. The land to the west of the A354 Salisbury Road, southwest of Sunrise Business Park totals approximately 13 hectares while the land to the east totals approximately 25 hectares.
- 6.3. This report considers how the Site A can be developed to provide employment development of circa 2.5 hectares and the community sports facility and the Site B be developed for circa 400-800 dwellings with a local centre and potential primary school.
- 6.4. A suitable Access Strategy has been designed for the site with access to the western site through Sunrise Business Park and access to the eastern site from the A354 Salisbury Road and the A354 Bypass.
- 6.5. Suitable pedestrian and cyclist links can be provided to ensure that the proposed development connects into the existing surrounding networks. Also, as part of the development, it is proposed to provide a package of pedestrian and cyclist improvements.
- 6.6. Whilst there are currently few services that operate within the immediate vicinity of site; there are frequent routes that serve the north-east of Blandford and journey to a range of destinations. There is significant scope to provide extensions to existing routes and new bus routes to serve the proposed urban extension providing new bus stops in the vicinity of and within the proposed development so that access to them is within 300-400m.
- 6.7. The 2001 Census data shows that a high proportion of existing residents living in close proximity to the site travel to work by sustainable modes of travel, predominantly walking.
- 6.8. Overall, it is considered that the site on land to the north-east of Blandford Forum could provide a sustainable location for mixed-use development. A suitable access strategy can be provided to serve the development and in conjunction with the development proposals, the potential exists to deliver a package of measures that would improve sustainable transport modes within Blandford Forum.