



Planning Policy Team (North Dorset)
South Walks House
South Walks Road
Dorchester
Dorset
DT1 1UZ

By email only to: planningpolicy@north-dorset.gov.uk

Dear Sir/Madam,

This letter provides Gladman Developments Ltd (Gladman) representations in response to the submission version of the Pimperne Neighbourhood Plan (PNP) under Regulation 16 of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012. Gladman requests to be added to the Council's consultation database and to be kept informed on the progress of the emerging neighbourhood plan. This letter seeks to highlight the issues with the plan as currently presented and its relationship with national and local planning policy.

Legal Requirements

Before a neighbourhood plan can proceed to referendum it must be tested against a set of basic conditions set out in paragraph 8(2) of Schedule 4b of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended). The basic conditions that the PNP must meet are as follows:

(a) Having regard to national policies and advice contained in guidance issued by the Secretary of State, it is appropriate to make the order.

(d) The making of the order contributes to the achievement of sustainable development.

(e) The making of the order is in general conformity with the strategic policies contained in the development plan for the area of the authority (or any part of that area).

(f) The making of the order does not breach, and is otherwise compatible with, EU obligations.



National Planning Policy Framework and Planning Practice Guidance

The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. In doing so it sets out the requirements for the preparation of neighbourhood plans to be in conformity with the strategic priorities for the wider area and the role in which they play in delivering sustainable development to meet development needs.

At the heart of the Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development, which should be seen as a golden thread through both plan-making and decision-taking. For plan-making this means that plan makers should positively seek opportunities to meet the development needs of their area and Local Plans should meet objectively assessed needs, with sufficient flexibility to adapt to rapid change. This requirement is applicable to neighbourhood plans.

The recent Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) updates make clear that neighbourhood plans should conform to national policy requirements and take account the latest and most up-to-date evidence of housing needs in order to assist the Council in delivering sustainable development, a neighbourhood plan basic condition.

The application of the presumption in favour of sustainable development will have implications for how communities engage with neighbourhood planning. Paragraph 16 of the Framework makes clear that Qualifying Bodies preparing neighbourhood plans should develop plans that support strategic development needs set out in Local Plans, including policies for housing development and plan positively to support local development.

Paragraph 17 further makes clear that neighbourhood plans should set out a clear and positive vision for the future of the area and policies contained in those plans should provide a practical framework within which decisions on planning applications can be made with a high degree of predictability and efficiency. Neighbourhood plans should seek to proactively drive and support sustainable economic development to deliver the homes, jobs and thriving local places that the country needs, whilst responding positively to the wider opportunities for growth.

Paragraph 184 of the Framework makes clear that local planning authorities will need to clearly set out their strategic policies to ensure that an up-to-date Local Plan is in place as quickly as possible. The Neighbourhood Plan should ensure that it is aligned with the strategic needs and priorities of the wider area and plan positively to support the delivery of sustainable growth opportunities.

Planning Practice Guidance

It is clear from the requirements of the Framework that neighbourhood plans should be prepared in conformity with the strategic requirements for the wider area as confirmed in an adopted development plan. The requirements of the Framework have now been supplemented by the publication of Planning Practice Guidance (PPG).

On 11th February 2016, the Secretary of State (SoS) published a series of updates to the neighbourhood planning chapter of the PPG. In summary, these update a number of component parts of the evidence base that are required to support an emerging neighbourhood plan.

On 19th May 2016, the Secretary of State published a further set of updates to the neighbourhood planning PPG. These updates provide further clarity on what measures a qualifying body should take to review the contents of a neighbourhood plan where the evidence base for the plan policy becomes less robust. As such it is considered that where a qualifying body intends to undertake a review of the neighbourhood plan, it should include a policy relating to this intention which includes a detailed explanation outlining the qualifying bodies anticipated timescales in this regard.

Further, the PPG makes clear that neighbourhood plans should not contain policies restricting housing development in settlements or preventing other settlements from being expanded. It is with that in mind that Gladman has reservations regarding the PNP's ability to meet basic condition (a) and (d) and this will be discussed in greater detail throughout this response.

Relationship to Local Plan

To meet the requirements of the Framework and the Neighbourhood Plan Basic Conditions, Neighbourhood Plans should be prepared to conform to the strategic policy requirements set out in the adopted Development Plan.

The current adopted plan that covers the Pimperne Neighbourhood Plan area and the Development Plan which the PNP will be tested against is the North Dorset Local Plan Part 1, adopted in January 2016, covering the period 2011 to 2031.

Policy 6 of the Local Plan sets out the strategic approach to housing provision in North Dorset District and states that the Council will seek to maintain a flexible supply of housing, making provision for at least 5,700 new homes over the plan period.

The Council is in the early stages of producing a Local Plan Review which will replace both the Local Plan adopted in 2003 and the Local Plan Part 1 once in place. An initial Issues and Options consultation on the emerging Local Plan concluded on 22nd January 2018, with a further Preferred Options consultation currently scheduled for 2019.

In light of the Council's emerging Local Plan proposals and the likely need to deliver a higher level of homes to meet North Dorset's full objectively assessed needs, Gladman recommend that sufficient flexibility should be written into the PNP's policies to respond to changing local circumstances, and to address the district's strategic development needs. The PNP should acknowledge the aspirations of the Council's emerging Local Plan, including its preferences for the future direction of growth within the settlement.

Policy LGS: Local Green Spaces

Policy LGS identifies 5 tracts of land proposed for Local Green Space designation.

The designation of land as Local Green Space (LGS) is a significant policy designation and effectively means that once designated, they provide protection that is comparable to that for Green Belt land. As such, the Parish Council's should ensure that the proposed designations are capable of meeting the requirements of national policy if they consider it necessary to seek LGS designation.

The Framework is explicit in stating at paragraph 77 that 'Local Green Space designation will not be appropriate for most green areas or open space'. With this in mind, it is imperative that the plan makers can clearly demonstrate that the requirements for LGS designation are met. The designation of LGS should only be used:

- Where the green space is in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves;
- Where the green area is demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance, for example because of its beauty, historic significance, recreational value (including as a playing field), tranquillity or richness of its wildlife; and
- Where the green area concerned is local in character and is not an extensive tract of land.

Gladman have been unable to identify any evidence to support the designations set out within the NP. We suggest that that the Parish Council take the time to revisit the policy and provide robust and justified evidence to support the inclusion of the proposed designations.

Policy LDC: Locally Distinct Character

Policy LDC sets out a list of design principles that development in the NPA is expected to adhere to.

Whilst Gladman recognise the importance of high quality design, planning policies should not be overly prescriptive and need flexibility in order for schemes to respond to sites specifics and the character of the local area. Whilst, Gladman note that the NP seeks to define different design criteria for developments in each of the 8 defined areas, there will not be a 'one size fits all' solution in relation to design and sites should be considered on a site by site basis with consideration given to various design principles.

Gladman therefore suggest that more flexibility is provided in the policy wording to ensure that a high quality and inclusive design is not compromised by aesthetic requirements alone. We consider that to do so could act to impact on the viability of proposed residential developments. We suggest that regard should be had to paragraph 60 of the NPPF which states that: *"Planning policies and decisions should not attempt to impose architectural styles or particular tastes and they should not stifle innovation, originality or initiative through unsubstantiated requirements to conform to certain development forms or styles"*.

Policy MHN: Meeting Housing Needs

Policy MHN states that provision is made for between 40 to 45 dwellings over the 2016 and 2031 plan period. The policy goes on to state that development of these dwellings should be on land within or adjacent to the settlement boundary.

Gladman have been unable to identify sufficient evidence, including the details set out in the Housing Needs Assessment, to support a cap on development in this manner. Gladman suggest that wording of Policy MHN and its supporting text should explicitly state that the figures of 40 to 45 dwellings are not intended as a cap on development, and, should it become evident that further growth is needed, the plan is supportive of sustainable development opportunities in addition to the identified allocated and reserve sites.

Conclusions

Gladman recognises the role of neighbourhood plans as a tool for local people to shape the development of their local community. However, it is clear from national guidance that these must be consistent with national planning policy and the strategic requirements for the wider authority area. Through this consultation response, Gladman has sought to clarify the relation of the PNP as currently proposed with the requirements of national planning policy and the wider strategic policies for the wider area.

Gladman is concerned that the plan in its current form does not comply with basic conditions (a) and (d). The plan does not conform with national policy and guidance and in its current form does not contribute to the achievement of sustainable development.

Gladman hopes you have found these representations helpful and constructive. If you have any questions do not hesitate to contact me or one of the Gladman team.

Yours Faithfully,



Megan Pashley



Gladman Developments Ltd.