

Questions to Dorset Council (DC) and Blandford Forum Town Council (the Qualifying Body (QB))

Questions for both DC and the QB (2)

1. Cranborne Chase AONB¹ Partnership raise a number of issues in its submission, including in relation to light pollution (paragraph 21); lack of engagement (paragraph 33); and lack of compliance with national guidance (paragraph 23). Can both DC and the QB provide a brief joint response addressing the concerns raised by the AONB Partnership?

DC response:

DC endorses the response provided by the QB.

Furthermore, with regards to the comment made by the Cranborne Chase AONB Partnership, in paragraph 33 of its response, that the reviewed NP should not simply be 'waved through' by DC, DC would like to make the point that it will fully consider the findings of your independent report including any possible recommended modifications to the submission version of the plan. The Council will then reach a view regarding whether the modified plan meets the legal requirements and basic conditions tests set out in legislation. Subject to the modified plan not requiring a referendum, members of DC's Cabinet would then make the final decision regarding whether the plan should be formally made (adopted).

Turning to paragraph 23 of the Cranborne Chase AONB Partnership's response, the point that the reviewed NP should make it clear that any major development proposals in the AONB would need to be considered in the light of paragraph 177 of the NPPF is noted. However, there is no requirement or expectation in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) or the Government's Planning Practice Guidance that a neighbourhood plan should repeat national policy. In fact, most guidance produced in respect of producing a NP, including locality guidance², suggests NPs should not repeat national policy or adopted local plan policies. The relevant basic condition test relating to national planning policy and guidance, as set out in Paragraph 8(2) of Schedule 4B to the Town and County Planning Act 1990 (as amended), is that the modified plan has regard to national policies and advice contained in guidance issued by the Secretary of State.

Further to the above, it should be noted that the thrust of national policy regarding major development in AONBs has not changed since the current 'made' version of the Blandford + Neighbourhood plan was subject to examination. The examiner of the current 'made' plan did not suggest a recommended modification to the plan in respect of referencing the relevant paragraph (paragraph 172) of the 2018 version of the NPPF (the version of the NPPF against which the current 'made' plan was examined) regarding major development proposals in the AONB.

2. Wates Development suggest that the Review of the Plan should be delayed until there is greater clarity regarding national policy and the emerging Dorset Council Local Plan (under

¹ Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

² Neighbourhood Plans Roadmap (Locality, 2018) - https://neighbourhoodplanning.org/wp-content/uploads/NP_Roadmap_online_full.pdf

section 4: Conclusion). Can both DC and the QB provide a brief joint response addressing this issue?

DC response:

DC endorses the response provided by the QB.

Furthermore, it should be noted that the timetable for changes to national planning policy is currently unclear so it could be some time before any changes are made. Also, there is no guarantee that the proposed change referred to (increasing the protection period provided by paragraph 14 of the NPPF from 2 years to 5 years) will be implemented.

With regards to the emerging Dorset Council Local Plan (DCLP), the timetable for its production has slipped and the current Local Development Scheme (LDS) sets out that the plan examination will not start until towards the end of 2025 with adoption of the plan hopefully taking place in 2026. Consequently, it will be years until there is greater clarity regarding the emerging DCLP and significant weight can be given to its content.

Any future changes to existing national or local planning policy that have implications for the modified plan, including the policies within it, can be considered as part of a future review of the neighbourhood plan.