Dorset National Landscape

23 June 2026

Dear Sir or Madam,

RE: Bridport Area Neighbourhood Plan Review (Regulation 15 Submission Draft)

Dorset National Landscape Team welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Regulation 15 submission draft of the Bridport Area Neighbourhood Plan (BANP). We recognise the considerable work undertaken by Bridport Town Council, Symondsbury Parish Council and the Steering Group in preparing the review.

Dorset National Landscape Team is broadly supportive of the revised BANP. In particular, we welcome:

- The updating of terminology from Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty to Dorset National Landscape and alignment with NPPF (2024);
- The clear recognition that great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty;
- The inclusion of updated supporting text referencing national policy and relevant evidence;
- The integration of biodiversity net gain, climate change and green infrastructure considerations.

Overall, the Plan demonstrates a clear intention to balance growth with the protection of the distinctive character of the Bridport area.

The Plan area lies entirely within the Dorset National Landscape. As such, development proposals will be considered through a process that affords great weight to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty. This includes ensuring that the scale and extent of development is limited and that proposals are sensitively located and designed. The BANP generally reflects these principles and aligns with the duty under Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act “to seek to further the purpose” of National Landscapes. However, there may be further opportunities to strengthen the practical application of this duty within the Plan’s policy framework.

Dorset National Landscape Team particularly supports the following elements of the Plan:

- Strong landscape policies requiring development to conserve and enhance the National Landscape;
- The use of Green Gaps and anti-coalescence policies to maintain settlement separation and protect rural character;

- The designation of Local Green Spaces, providing protection for key landscape assets;
- The requirement for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment where development may affect landscape character and visual amenity;
- The emphasis on design quality, local distinctiveness and responding to landform and topography.

Collectively, these policies should provide a sufficiently strong framework for safeguarding landscape character, if applied robustly.

Aspects of the Plan that may require some refinement include:

- The Plan does not explicitly reference the 'major development' test as set out in national policy (NPPF 190). It may be beneficial to include a statement confirming that proposals constituting 'major development' will be assessed against this test, reinforcing the high level of protection within the designated landscape. Notably, the test creates a presumption against 'major' applications and requires consideration of the 'moderation' of effects on the environment.
- The Plan draws upon the AECOM Site Options Assessment, which identifies a number of sites as potentially suitable for development. Whilst this provides a useful evidence base, there are assumptions of housing capacity based on notionally acceptable building densities. These may prove unachievable in practice with sensitive sites, such as those at the countryside edge. Consequently, there is a risk that sites identified as 'potentially suitable' may produce unacceptable landscape and visual impacts, particularly if developed densely. It is important that the Plan recognises this issue.
- The absence of specific site allocations means that development may come forward on a case-by-case basis. While this provides flexibility, it also creates a risk of incremental edge-of-settlement growth that could collectively erode landscape character over time. Greater reference to this issue and to cumulative impacts may be beneficial.

In conclusion, Dorset National Landscape Team broadly supports the overall direction of the Bridport Area Neighbourhood Plan Review. The Plan demonstrates a commitment to protecting landscape character and includes a comprehensive suite of policies that, if effectively applied, should safeguard the designated landscape.

Yours sincerely,

Richard Brown CMLI
Landscape Planning Officer, Dorset National Landscape