**DORSET COUNCIL CONSULTATION: BRIDPORT AREA NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN 2020-2036 FIRST REVIEW**

**Response submitted by the Bridport Local Area Partnership (Management Team)**
**To the Planning Policy Team, Dorset Council, County Hall, Colliton Park, Dorchester**

This response is submitted by the Management Team of the Bridport Local Area Partnership (BLAP). That cross-sector, area-based partnership enables networking and encourages joint working. It has more than 80 member organisations and groups from the statutory, voluntary, community and private sectors. This includes Town and Parish Councils.

It is worth noting that the Bridport Area Neighbourhood Plan falls within our partnership's geographic area and that the partnership operates its own Housing Needs working group for members with a relevant specialism or interest.

We welcome the fact that Bridport Town and Symondsbury Parish Councils – working with many local volunteers – have come together to produce a Neighbourhood Plan and that they have taken this opportunity to bring it up to date with a 'light touch' review. This should ensure that the Plan continues to carry significant weight. The Plan helpfully offers more detailed and location-specific guidance than is possible in the current West Dorset, Weymouth and Portland Development Plan or the forthcoming Dorset Development Plan. It also gives residents a valuable say in the area's future, based around their stated priorities.

We particularly welcome the suite of policies in the housing section of the revised Neighbourhood Plan (policies H1 to H8). Our support includes wording changes proposed to policies H1, H2, H5 and H5. They broadly reflect the views expressed within our own working group, that there is a need to: address the shortage of low-cost accommodation (for young people in particular); improve the supply of development sites for affordable and social housing; and assist people taking up employment in the area with somewhere to live.

We recognise that well-located 'affordable housing exception sites' can be a good way to help address local housing needs and we therefore flag our support for policy H3 in the revised Neighbourhood Plan. Such sites should always be within or on the edge of existing settlements.

We understand that there is deemed to be too little evidence currently about the scale or impact of second homes to support a policy which would seek to restrict their development. We hope this topic remains closely monitored to see whether such a policy can be justified and included in the next iteration of the Neighbourhood Plan.

We also wish to express support for (retained, but unaltered) policies seeking to enhance the town centre in Bridport (policies COB1 to COB4). The town is fortunate to (largely) retain a vibrant high street, with many independent stores and hospitality businesses, bolstered by its well-known street market. It is important to have policies in place designed to support its special character. We note positively, too, policy AM6 which seeks to steer redevelopment of the town's (rather run-down) bus station area, to create a proper transport hub, integrated with its surroundings and delivering some new affordable or social housing. We support the wording changes proposed to policy AM6.

Finally, we are pleased to see the retention of Neighbourhood Plan policies which aim to protect green corridors (L1), local green spaces (L3) and green gaps (L4) in the locality, all of which deliver health and wellbeing benefits for residents and form an integral part of the town's distinctive character and setting. To that end, we support proposed wording changes to policies L1, L2 and L3.

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