

Bradford Abbas & Clifton Maybank Neighbourhood Plan

Dorset Council Comments

Introduction

Thank you for submitting the Bradford Abbas & Clifton Maybank Neighbourhood Plan to Dorset Council (April 2026).

This response to the consultation on the submitted plan considers the extent to which the Plan complies with National Policy and Guidance (primarily the National Planning Policy Framework 2024) and includes an assessment of housing delivery (a new basic condition). The neighbourhood plan should also contribute to sustainable development and be compatible with EU obligations (under retained EU law) including the SEA Directive of 2001/42/EC. There are also new requirements to take account of the Local Nature Recover Strategy and for Plans to contribute towards Climate Change mitigation and adaptation.

The comments provided are based upon the requirements to meet the ‘basic condition’ tests relating to the production of the neighbourhood plan.

This response contains specific advice from specialist teams and officers within Dorset Council such as the Natural Environment Team (NET), Conservation Officer & Nature Recovery Officer. The Transport Team confirmed they had no further comments to make.

All comments are from the Planning Policy Team unless attributed to a specific team or officer lead.

Neighbourhood Area

Dorset Council supports section 1.2 and Map 1 which discusses and depicts the Neighbourhood Plan area, a requirement for submission.

Plan Period

The Plan period 2024-2039 is clearly displayed on the front cover. A requirement for submission.

[Relationship with the new National Planning Policy Framework \(August 2026\)](#)

On the 17 August 2026 the Government published a new National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

Paragraph 6 of Annex A of the new NPPF states that neighbourhood plans submitted to the local planning authority on or before the date of publication of the revised Framework should continue to be prepared in accordance with the December 2024 version of the NPPF. Neighbourhood plans submitted after that date must be prepared in accordance with the new NPPF.

The Bradford Abbas & Clifton Maybank Neighbourhood Plan was submitted on 26 May 2026 and before the publication of the new NPPF. As this is the case, we think your Plan can be examined in accordance with the December 2024 version of the NPPF.

[Development Plan Context](#)

The adopted development plan for the neighbourhood area comprises the West Dorset, Weymouth & Portland Local Plan (2015) together with any made neighbourhood plans and minerals and waste planning policies where relevant. While neighbourhood plans are no longer required to demonstrate general conformity with the strategic policies of the development plan as a Basic Condition, the adopted Local Plan remains an important part of the statutory planning framework and provides relevant context when considering the policies and proposals contained within the Plan.

[Dorset Council Local Plan](#)

On 28 July 2026, Dorset Council's Cabinet resolved to prepare a new Dorset Council Local Plan under the Government's revised plan-making system, reflecting significant national changes to planning policy, housing requirements and plan preparation procedures. Existing evidence and consultation responses will continue to inform the emerging Local Plan. The new plan-making system is intended to enable Local Plans to be prepared within approximately 30 months and, whilst the timetable remains subject to further work and consultation, adoption of the Dorset Council Local Plan is not currently anticipated before 2029.

Before this decision, Dorset Council ran an Options Consultation in 2021 and again in 2025 focused on site opportunities.

[Housing Delivery \(a New Basic Condition\)](#)

Sections 98 and 99 of the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023 amend the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and came into effect on 25 March

2026. Consequently, there is a new Basic Condition requirement: *“the making of the draft plan would not result in the development plan for the area of the authority proposing that less housing is provided by means of development taking place in that area than if the draft plan were not to be made.”*

This new Condition replaces the former Basic Condition that the draft plan be in general conformity with the strategic policies contained in the development plan for the area. For neighbourhood planning practitioners, this appears to be a shift from asking whether a neighbourhood plan is simply in general conformity with strategic policies, towards a more explicit test that the plan is not housing-suppressive and does not undermine planned housing delivery.

Having reviewed each of the Plan's policies, our assessment concludes that the Bradford Abbas & Clifton Maybank Neighbourhood Plan does not contain any policies that would unduly restrict or suppress housing delivery.

Local Nature Recovery Strategies

The following comments have been received from the Nature Recovery Officer.

Since preparation of this Neighbourhood Plan began, a new requirement for neighbourhood plans to take account of Local Nature Recovery Strategies was introduced in March 2026 (See paragraph 2B of [Section 38B](#) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended)) that you may not have been aware of. It is therefore recommended that the Bradford Abbas and Clifton Maybank Neighbourhood Plan makes reference to the [Dorset Local Nature Recovery Strategy](#), which should complement and support some of the policies and green spaces included in the neighbourhood plan.

Below are some suggestions to help strengthen the link between your Neighbourhood Plan and the Dorset Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) in the supporting text around your policies:

2.1 Introduction:

Suggested additional paragraph 2.1.5: *Protection and enhancement of local habitats and wildlife corridors supports delivery of the [Dorset local nature recovery strategy](#), which has 13 nature recovery priorities and a local habitat map, together these can be used to [inform development proposals](#), site design and nature recovery projects.*

2.3 Access to the countryside:

2.3.2 – suggested additional text in italics: This network provides multiple benefits in terms of health (physical and mental well-being), bringing people in touch with

nature and tranquillity, *thus supporting delivery of Dorset LNRS priority 11 – nature connection*. They can also function as wildlife corridors, *supporting delivery of Dorset LNRS priorities 7 – urban and 12 – species abundance and diversity*.

2.4 Dark Skies

2.4.1 additional text: *Retaining low levels of light pollution supports delivery of Dorset LNRS priority 7 – urban*.

2.7 Local Green Spaces:

Table 2 – suggest additional text for the following green spaces

- *School playing fields is part covered by the High Opportunity Nature Areas and Potential Activities layers in Dorset LNRS. The potential activities mapped in this area include woodland, wetland and river and ecosystem service opportunities.*
- *Gollops ground is covered by the High Opportunity Nature Areas and Potential Activities layers in Dorset LNRS. The potential activities mapped in this area include woodland, wetland and river and ecosystem service opportunities.*
- *Field opposite pub is part covered by the High Opportunity Nature Areas and Potential Activities layers in Dorset LNRS. The potential activities mapped in this area include woodland and ecosystem service opportunities.*
- *Sports club field is part covered by the High Opportunity Nature Areas and Potential Activities layers in Dorset LNRS. The potential activities mapped in this area include woodland, grassland and ecosystem service opportunities.*
- *Clifton Wood is included in the nature area of national importance layer in Dorset LNRS.*
- *Where public access is possible, these local green spaces also support delivery of Dorset LNRS priority 11 – nature connection.*

2.8 Local wildlife site and habitat enhancement opportunities:

2.8.1 suggested additional text in italics: With careful consideration and planning, it should be possible to create a more robust network of habitats that allow such species to thrive, *and thus support delivery of Dorset LNRS priorities 12 – species abundance and diversity and 13 – priority species*.

The idea to create a more robust network of habitats is great and the inclusion of project P2 is exciting. But the neighbourhood plan could also benefit from including a specific policy, rather than just supporting text, to support the idea of a more

robust habitat network being implemented through development proposals and planning decisions.

3.4 Future water management challenges

This comment does not represent expert flood risk advice but a suggestion to draw links between some of the flood measures suggested that can also support nature recovery:

Efforts to reduce flood risk such as increasing permeable surfaces, reducing surface run-off from agricultural land, or habitat restoration to slow the flow of water can support delivery of Dorset LNRS priorities 4 – rivers, lakes and wetlands, 8 – farming, and 10 – nature-based solutions

Climate Change

On 25 March 2026, a new requirement came into effect through regulations implementing section 98 of the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023. This requires neighbourhood plans, where relevant and appropriate, to help ensure that development and land use in the neighbourhood area support both climate change mitigation and adaptation.

The Plan addresses climate change through its dedicated Climate Change, Renewable Energy and Flood Risk chapter (Section 3) and Policy 7 (Flooding Considerations), which seek to ensure that development does not increase flood risk and incorporates appropriate drainage and water management measures. The Plan further supports climate change adaptation through flood management projects and sustainable land management initiatives, and supports mitigation through community renewable energy projects, energy-efficient building design, solar energy integration, sustainable drainage systems, biodiversity enhancement and support for innovative eco-friendly development. In addition, Policy 12 (Design Guidance) promotes sustainable and energy-efficient design principles, including building orientation to maximise solar gain, solar panel integration, rainwater harvesting, sustainable drainage measures and biodiversity enhancements.

Collectively, these measures contribute to both climate change adaptation and mitigation

Environment and Heritage

Section 2.8 Local wildlife site and habitat enhancement opportunities

As set out in comments above, the Council's NET note that section 2.8 sets out ways to create a more robust network of habitats, but this isn't carried through to any policies.

Policy 5 – Protecting Our Historic Environment

Section 2.6 Heritage Features

The Conservation Officer has commented. We are pleased to see some clarifications made to chapter 2.6 - *Heritage Features* , and additional and qualifying text incorporated into Policy 5 - *Protecting Our Historic Environment* which now articulates clearly which features contribute to the area's distinctive historic character and interest.

Appendix 2 History and Heritage

The Conservation Officer also notes the list of potential non-designated Heritage Assets identified on p70. They would encourage the NP group to assess these potential non-designated heritage assets for inclusion on the [Dorset Local Heritage List](#). For example, they note that Manor Farm (ST58051470), identified for potential conversion, may potentially qualify as a non-designated heritage asset.

Policy 6 – Important Local Green Spaces

Policy 6, Table 2 ("Review of Green Spaces - Proposed") and the supporting Proposals Map 4 identify six areas proposed for designation as Local Green Spaces. These sites are located in and around Bradford Abbas and comprise a range of recreational, community, heritage, wildlife and landscape assets valued by local residents.

NPPF, paragraph 107 explains that Local Green Spaces should only be used where the green space is:

- a) in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves;
- b) 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
- c) local in character and is not an extensive tract of land.

LGS2 Recreation Ground, LGS5 Sports Club Field and LGS6 St Mary's Churchyard

LGS2 (Recreation Ground), LGS5 (Sports Club Field) and LGS6 (St Mary's Churchyard) have been assessed against the requirements of paragraphs 106-108 of the NPPF. The three sites comprise a valued recreation ground, community sports field and historic churchyard, each providing important recreational, social and heritage benefits. The evidence demonstrates that they are all demonstrably special to the local community, closely related to the community they serve and not extensive tracts of land. No concerns are raised with their proposed designation.

LGS1: Gollops Ground

Gollops Ground lies immediately adjacent to the southern edge of Bradford Abbas village and is therefore in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves. The evidence in the Neighbourhood Plan indicates that the site is valued by local residents for informal recreation, its relationship with the River Yeo, wildlife interest and views towards St Mary's Church. The Plan identifies the site as an important component of village character and includes it within locally important view V6.

The landowner objects to the designation on the basis that the site comprises agricultural land and is not demonstrably special to the local community. It is also noted that the site's principal function remains agricultural and that many of the qualities identified in support of designation relate to its visual contribution to the wider landscape setting of the village. Conversely, the NPPF does not preclude agricultural land from designation as Local Green Space, nor does it require public access where other attributes of local significance can be demonstrated. In this case, the supporting evidence relies on the site's contribution to the setting of the village, its relationship with the river corridor and public footpath network, views towards the church tower, and its perceived importance to local character.

The key consideration is therefore whether the evidence demonstrates that the site is demonstrably special to the local community, rather than simply valued open countryside.

LGS3: Rose and Crown Pub Garden

The Rose and Crown Pub Garden lies at the heart of the village and forms part of an important cluster of community facilities including the public house, church, school and village hall. The evidence identifies recreational, social and heritage value, with the garden contributing to the setting of the Grade I listed Church of St Mary, views across the paddock and countryside and the operation of a valued community facility. Consultation responses indicate strong local support and

suggest the site is demonstrably special to the local community. The site is well related to the settlement, local in character and not an extensive tract of land.

However, the site also forms part of an active public house business and functions as an ancillary area supporting its operation and viability. Objections submitted on behalf of Admiral Taverns Ltd contend that the qualities relied upon to justify designation already benefit from protection through Conservation Area status, listed building legislation and existing planning policies. It is also argued that Local Green Space designation could reduce flexibility for future alterations, extensions or operational changes that may be required to support the long-term viability of the public house.

The key issue is therefore whether the evidence of the site's special value to the community justifies the additional protection afforded by Local Green Space designation, noting that paragraph 106 of the NPPF (2024) requires such designations to be consistent with sustainable development and to complement investment in homes, jobs and essential services. As the garden forms part of an established public house business, regard should be had to whether the designation could have implications for the future operation or investment needs of that facility.

LGS4: School Playing Fields and Field Opposite the Pub

This designation combines two physically related areas that together form an important open green corridor linking the centre of the village to the River Yeo. The field opposite the pub is identified as an important green gap within the Bradford Abbas Conservation Area and forms the foreground to locally important View V2. The Plan highlights the site's contribution to local character, heritage significance and village distinctiveness, including references to previous planning decisions recognising the importance of its undeveloped nature. The school playing fields also provide recreational value through their use by St Mary's Primary School. Collectively, the two areas contribute to the rural character of the village and there is evidence of community support for their protection.

However, objections have been raised by the landowner in relation to the designation of the field opposite the pub. Whilst private ownership does not prevent Local Green Space designation, concerns have been expressed regarding the appropriateness of applying the designation to land that is privately owned and the potential implications for future use of the site. It may also be argued that some of the qualities relied upon to support designation, including the site's contribution to

the Conservation Area, local views and heritage setting, already benefit from protection through existing national and local planning policies.

The key issue is therefore whether the site's recreational, heritage and landscape value, together with its contribution to community identity and village character, provides sufficient evidence that it is demonstrably special to the local community and warrants the additional protection afforded by Local Green Space designation.

Housing

[Policy 9 – Meeting Local Housing Need](#)

Housing requirement

As paragraph 5.1.2, bullet point 2 correctly notes, a proposed Neighbourhood Plan housing requirement methodology was set out in the supporting text of policy DEV9 and Appendix 2 of the emerging Dorset Council Local Plan (2021) and more recently in section 11 of the Dorset Council Option Consultation (2025).

In summary, the proposed housing requirement would be the sum of completions since the beginning of the Plan period, extant planning permissions, adopted housing allocations, capacity on major sites (of 10 or more dwellings) within development boundaries as evidenced in the SHLAA and a windfall allowance on minor sites (of less than 10 dwellings). Using this methodology there was a modest housing requirement calculated of around 2 dwellings over the next 15 years, reflecting past delivery rates.

There are no additional opportunity sites emerging from the Dorset Council Local Plan Options Consultation (2025), and the windfall element remains broadly correct. We therefore agree that the low windfall allowance can be met through future infill and conversion applications.

The scope of a neighbourhood plan is up to a neighbourhood planning body. There is no requirement for neighbourhood plans to allocate sites or identify any additional land to meet the overall Local Plan housing need figure. However, in instances where neighbourhood plans don't allocate sites it is unlikely that the plan areas would benefit from the additional policy protection provided by Policy S6 of the new NPPF.

We would also stress that at this stage the Neighbourhood Housing Requirement is a indicative figure and would not become finalised until the Dorset Council Local Plan is adopted.

Business Service and the Economy

Policy 10 – Local Employment Opportunities

Extension of existing homes

Policy 10, Paragraph 2 supports “The extension of existing homes and provision of outbuildings to support expanded home working” subject to three criteria. The second criterion expects “the outbuilding or extension will remain available for business use ancillary to the primary use as a dwelling”.

This criterion appears to be unreasonable, particularly the part relating to the extension of existing homes, as it would restrict homeowners from using part of their property for its primary use. Enforcement would also be difficult.

To address concerns regarding flexibility and enforceability, it is recommended that criterion 2 be amended to focus on ensuring that any business use remains subordinate to the residential use of the property, rather than requiring the space to be retained for business purposes indefinitely. The criterion could be reworded to read “any business use must remain ancillary and incidental to the occupation of the dwellinghouse.”

Section 6.1 What is meant by local businesses, service and facilities?

We welcome the inclusion of a definition of ‘local businesses, services and facilities’ in Section 6.2 of the Plan, which responds to an issue raised during the earlier Regulation 14 consultation.

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)

The Regulation 14 version of the Plan was accompanied by a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Screening Report dated February 2025.

The Screening Report concludes “The consideration of likely significant environmental effects has shown that there are unlikely to be significant adverse environmental effects resulting from the Bradford Abbas and Clifton Maybank Neighbourhood Plan.” And continues “In light of this, at this stage of the Neighbourhood Plan’s progress, it is concluded (subject to consultation) that the SEA Directive does not require a Strategic Environmental Assessment for the Neighbourhood Plan.”

The three statutory consultees were consulted in March 2025, and their responses form a separate appendix to the Screening Report.

The Environment Agency and Historic England both noted an absence of site allocations and constraints and were of the view that a full SEA was not required.

Natural England advised, based on the material supplied with the consultation, that “significant effects on statutorily designated nature conservation sites or landscape are unlikely; and significant effects on Habitats sites, either alone or in combination are unlikely.”

They however warned that they do not hold information on the location of significant populations of protected species or routinely maintain locally specific data on all environmental assets. They therefore recommend advice is sought from your ecological, landscape and soils advisors, local record centre, recording society or wildlife body on the local soils, best and most versatile agricultural land, landscape, geodiversity and biodiversity receptors that may be affected by the plan before determining whether a SEA is necessary.

The Council’s Senior Environmental Assessment Officer has been consulted, and they were not aware of any local information which would draw a different judgement to the SEA Screening conclusion.

Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA)

No draft Habitat Regulation Assessment (HRA) or Screening Assessment accompanies the submission version of the Neighbourhood Plan however sufficient information was provided for Dorset Council, as the competent authority, to draw a conclusion which was recorded in a HRA dated June 2026.

The HRA screening exercise considered the potential threats, pressures and activities which may affect the European sites within 20km of the Bradford Abbas and Clifton Maybank Neighbourhood Area.

The HRA screening identified a likely significant effect as a result of water quality impacts upon the Somerset Levels & Moors Ramsar Site, as a result of the plan.

The Appropriate Assessment concluded that adverse effects upon the integrity of the Somerset Levels & Moors Ramsar Site from water quality can be avoided by the inclusion of the wording in paragraph 2.9.1 of the plan and inserting wording at the end of Policy 9 (Meeting Local Housing Need) in the plan stating that *‘Housing development will only be supported if it can achieve phosphate neutrality in respect of the Somerset Levels & Moor Ramsar Site’*. Additional text will also need to be added to the supporting text to the policy to provide context and reasoning for the requirement in the policy.

Provided that this mitigation is provided, then it can be concluded that the Bradford Abbas & Clifton Maybank Neighbourhood Plan will not result in an adverse effect upon the integrity of a European Site.

On the 1 May 2026 we consulted Natural England as the appropriate nature conservation body. Natural England responded on 29 July 2026 with **no objection**.

“The proposed neighbourhood plan area of Bradford Abbas & Clifton Maybank lies within the hydrological catchment of the Somerset Levels & Moors Ramsar. Listed Wetlands of International Importance under the Ramsar Convention (Ramsar) are protected as a matter of Government policy (National Planning Policy Framework paragraph 194).

It is proposed in the Appropriate Assessment that wording should be inserted at the end of Policy 9 (Meeting Local Housing Need) in the plan stating that ‘Housing development will only be supported if it can achieve phosphate neutrality in respect of the Somerset Levels & Moors Ramsar Site’ and Natural England concur.

Additional text will also need to be added to the supporting text to the policy to provide context and reasoning for the requirement in the policy.

The wording included in paragraph 2.9.1 of the plan, and the additional wording proposed above, will ensure that nutrient neutrality is achieved across the plan area and an adverse effect upon the integrity of the Somerset Levels & Moors Ramsar Site is prevented.

Natural England concur with the Appropriate Assessment for Bradford Abbas & Clifton Maybank plan. The authority should be mindful of the need to secure any mitigation/avoidance measures which have been identified as being required to avoid harm to the habitat’s sites. Suitable legally binding agreements may be required which will need to consider mitigation which must be in place prior to commencement/occupation of any development or where ongoing impacts are long term in perpetuity.”