



Intelligent Plans
and examinations

Report on the Bridport Area Neighbourhood Plan First Review (2020 – 2036)

**An Examination undertaken for Dorset Council with the support of the
Joint Councils of Bridport Town Council and Symondsbury Parish Council
on the Neighbourhood Plan First Review published in March 2026.**

Independent Examiner: Andrew Mead BSc (Hons) MRTPI MIQ

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Main Findings - Executive Summary

I made an initial determination on 11 August 2026 that the modifications contained in the Bridport Area Neighbourhood Plan First Review 2020 - 2036 (the Plan Review/the Plan) are not so significant or substantial as to change the nature of the made Neighbourhood Plan which the Plan Review would replace.

From my examination of the Plan Review and its supporting documentation, including the representations made, I have concluded that subject to the Examiner Modifications (**EMs**) set out in this report, the Plan Review meets the Basic Conditions.

I have also concluded that:

- The Plan Review has been prepared and submitted for examination by a qualifying body – Bridport Town Council (BTC);
- The Plan Review has been prepared for an area properly designated – the parishes of Bridport and Symondsburry as shown on Map 1 on pages 8 and 9 of the Plan Review;
- The Plan Review specifies the period to which it is to take effect – 2020-2036; and
- The policies relate to the development and use of land for a designated neighbourhood area.

Therefore, I recommend that Dorset Council (DC) should make the Plan Review with the **EMs** specified in this report (there will be no statutory requirement for a referendum).

1. Introduction and Context

Bridport Area Neighbourhood Plan First Review 2020–2036

- 1.1 Bridport is a thriving historic market town surrounded by extremely attractive countryside which includes the outstanding Jurassic Coast. Symondsburry is a rural parish immediately to the west of Bridport. About 15,000 people live within the Plan Area.¹ The A35 passes through Bridport. Lyme Regis lies about 16km to the west with Dorchester located about 23 km to the east. The Plan Area is within the Dorset National Landscape and is the subject of the Bridport Area Neighbourhood Plan which was “made” (approved and adopted) in May 2020 by Dorset Council (DC).
- 1.2 In the following years, the main source of Government planning policy, the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) has been updated. The Plan has been reviewed to ensure that it remains up to date and reflects the needs and aspirations of parish residents.

¹ Page 11 of the Plan.

The Independent Examiner

- 1.3 As the Plan Review has now reached the examination stage, I have been appointed as the examiner of the Bridport Area Neighbourhood Plan First Review (2020 – 2036) by DC with the agreement of the BTC.
- 1.4 I am a chartered town planner and former government Planning Inspector. I am an independent examiner, with experience of examining many neighbourhood plans and do not have an interest in any of the land that may be affected by the Review Plan.

Submitted Documents

- 1.5 I have considered all policy, guidance and other reference documents relevant to the examination, including those submitted which comprise:
- The Bridport Area Neighbourhood Plan First Review (2020-2036);
 - the summary of proposals and reasons for the modifications as set out in the Plan²;
 - the Bridport Area Neighbourhood Plan Review Modifications Statement V2 (undated);
 - the Modifications Statement from DC on the nature of the proposed modifications (July 2026);
 - Map 1 on pages 8 and 9 of the Plan Area, which identifies the area to which the proposed Neighbourhood Plan Review relates;
 - a copy of the extant Bridport Area Neighbourhood Plan 2020-2036, as made (May 2020);
 - the Consultation Statement 2025;
 - the Basic Conditions Statement V2 (April 2026);
 - the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Screening Report (Revised February 2026);
 - the Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) (May 2026);
 - the Bridport Area Housing Needs Assessment: AECOM (March 2025);
 - the Bridport Area Housing Needs Assessment Supplement: Housing Group (January 2026);
 - the Bridport Area Site Options Assessment: AECOM (August 2025);
 - the Bridport Area Evidence Base and Policy Development (February 2019);
 - the Bridport Workspace and Business Needs Assessment: Stir to Action (March 2025);
 - the Bridport Area Neighbourhood Plan Evidence: Bridport Town Council;
 - all the representations which have been made in accordance with the Regulation 16 consultation; and
 - the responses from BTC received on 24 August 2026 and from DC received on 26 August 2026 in answer to my questions of clarification in my letter of 11 August 2026 and the further

² See paragraphs 2.5 – 2.10 below.

response dated 30 September 2026 from BTC to my letter of 28 September 2026.³

Planning Policy Context

- 1.6 The Development Plan for this part of Dorset Council, not including documents relating to excluded minerals and waste development, includes the West Dorset, Weymouth & Portland Local Plan (WDWPLP)(2011 – 2031) adopted in 2015 which was extant when the current Bridport Area Neighbourhood Plan was made. The WDWPLP is being replaced by the Dorset Council Local Plan (DCLP). DC have agreed that the DCLP will now be prepared in accordance with The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2026. The next step will be a scoping consultation, which involves asking people what the new Local Plan should cover and how they would like to be involved. The scoping consultation is currently taking place until 26 October 2026. Gateway 1 (self-assessment) is expected on 30 November 2026. Adoption is not expected until 2029.
- 1.7 Planning policy for England is set out principally in the NPPF and is accompanied by the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) which offers guidance on how this policy should be implemented. This Plan has been prepared in the context of the version of the NPPF published in December 2024. A revised NPPF was published on 17 August 2026. However, the revised version does not apply for the purposes of this examination.⁴ Unless otherwise stated, all references in the report are to the December 2024 NPPF and the accompanying PPG.

2. Procedural Considerations

Initial Determination

- 2.1 As the proposal has been submitted as a modification of the made Neighbourhood Plan, I undertook an initial determination under Paragraph 10(1) of Schedule A2 to the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended) ("the 2004 Act"). This concerned whether the modifications contained in the Review Plan are so significant or substantial as to change the nature of the Neighbourhood Plan which the Plan Review would replace.
- 2.2 If there is no change to the nature of the made Plan, the modification proposal can be examined under the streamlined process set out in Schedule A2 of the 2004 Act (no referendum). Otherwise, the examination would proceed under Schedule 4B of the Town and Country Planning Act

³ View all the listed document at: <https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/w/bridport-area-neighbourhood-plan>

⁴ See the transitional arrangements provided by Annex A, Paragraph 6 of the August 2026 NPPF: [National Planning Policy Framework - GOV.UK](#)

1990 (as amended), whereby an examination and referendum would be required.

- 2.3 BTC and DC are required to publish statements setting out their reasoned views on this matter. For BTC, the provision is contained in Regulation 15(1)(f) of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended) ("the 2012 Regulations"). For DC, the provision is at Regulation 17(e)(ii).
- 2.4 The reasons for the review were publicised in the Modifications Statement at the Regulation 14 stage in the Plan Review (See Appendix 2 of the Consultation Statement) and in the Modifications Statement V2 at the Regulation 16 stage.⁵ This information indicates that the modifications made require examination but not a referendum.
- 2.5 To inform the determination, I considered all the relevant submitted documents and representations. In particular:
- the Consultation Statement which demonstrates that, through the Bridport Area Neighbourhood Plan Modifications Statement, BTC alerted respondents to the nature of the changes being made to the Plan through the review⁶; and
 - the written statement on this matter provided by DC to comply with Regulation 17(e)(ii).
- 2.6 BTC state in the Modifications Statement that the changes do not modify the Plan period. The changes respond to the Bridport Area Housing Needs Assessment (2025) and use new information to update, clarify and support the existing policies around affordable housing. AECOMs Site Options Assessment 2025 has been added to the made Plan Evidence Base and used to update the supporting text for housing policies. In terms of housing, the change to the housing mix is relatively limited and should not impact on viability. A Workspace and Business Needs Assessment has been undertaken and used to support the economy and employment policies. Greater emphasis has been placed on transition to a net zero future with amendments to the supporting text in the climate change chapters and updating of climate policies. The Landscape chapter has been updated with supporting text and policy amendments to reflect the requirements of Biodiversity Net Gain legislation.
- 2.7 A new, larger Local Green Space has been proposed as a replacement for the Peter Foote Play Area which has been identified as suitable for a small community led social rent housing development. Carbon reduction and standards for Design for Living were existing elements already contained within the made Plan and updating and adding more detail is helpful in clarifying how these issues should be considered. A number of changes to the made Plan are simply reflecting factual updates and changes to the

⁵ Regulation 14(a)(v).

⁶ I consider BTC has sought to substantially comply with the requirements of Regulations 14(a)(v) and 15(1)(f).

supporting evidence that those policies were based on. They do not alter the general thrust of policies of the made Plan. Accordingly, BTC consider that the proposed modifications are material but are not so significant or substantial as to change the nature of the Plan.

- 2.8 DC have compared the policies in the made Plan with those of the submitted Plan Review and have considered the contents of each policy, along with the Modifications Statement prepared and submitted by BTC. DC has also considered government guidance, in particular, the PPG on 'updating a neighbourhood plan'. PPG Reference ID: 41-106-20190509 summarises the three types of modification that can be made to a neighbourhood plan.
- 2.9 DC note that the Plan period remains the same, and that the Plan does not identify any new development allocations. Since the Neighbourhood Plan was made in May 2020, the most significant changes influencing this review have been updates to national planning policy; local governance arrangements; and the supporting evidence base. The original Neighbourhood Plan was prepared under the NPPF 2019, while this review has been prepared in the context of the revised NPPF 2024. The updated framework places a stronger emphasis on housing delivery, including housing targets and land supply requirements, and has required a few references within the supporting text to be updated accordingly. National policy approaches remain largely the same except for the introduction of Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) and Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS). Supporting text to Policy L1 now reference LNRS and Policy L2 has been updated to reference the latest BNG requirements.
- 2.10 DC received a revised Neighbourhood Area application from Bridport Town Council in February 2025 following parish boundary and governance changes arising from the 2023 Community Governance Review. The revised Neighbourhood Area was approved in March 2025. As the changes were internal to the original Neighbourhood Plan Area, they had no direct implications for the Neighbourhood Plan Review beyond minor updates to provide contextual accuracy. The Plan Review benefits from an updated evidence base, including a Housing Needs Assessment (March 2025); Housing Needs Assessment Supplement (January 2026); Site Options Assessment (August 2025); and a Workspace and Business Needs Assessment (March 2025). These studies have informed updates to Housing Policies H1, H3, H4 and H5 and Employment Policies EE1 and EE2.
- 2.11 The remaining material changes to policy are largely drawn from experience gained using the Plan, community consultation and minor rephrasing to better bring text in line with National Planning Guidance. For example, there is a greater emphasis on Climate Change, and several policy changes respond to earlier DC comments. In addition, Policy L3 has been updated to replace the Peter Foote Play Area Local Green Space designation with the larger Riverside Corridor designation, reflecting a

broader area of green infrastructure and recreational land. Five additional community facilities have been added in support of Policy CF1.

- 2.12 There have been a lot of changes made to the supporting text, including new definitions for Live/Work units and non-key employment uses, but these are considered minor in nature and largely provide factual updates and other improvements. Against this, there have been no changes to 28 policies and a further four changes to Policies H7, COB2, D10 and L1 with regards to the naming of National Landscapes, which are considered non-material changes. In conclusion, while there have been several material changes to policy text, DC's view is that none of the proposed modifications are so significant or substantial as to change the nature of the Plan.
- 2.13 Having assessed all the written documents submitted, including the representations and relevant statements, I am content that the modifications proposed in the draft Plan Review are material but do not change the nature of the made Plan. I set out my determination in my procedural letter of 11 August 2026 to DC and BTC. Therefore, the examination can proceed under the terms of Schedule A2 to the 2004 Act which I set out below and, as a consequence, should I recommend that the draft Plan Review be made (with or without Examiner Modifications), a referendum stage will not be a necessary part of the statutory process.
- 2.14 I note that the vision for the Neighbourhood Area in the Plan Review has been derived from that for Bridport in the made Plan and that a separate vision for Symondsburry is stated (page 24). The subsequent 18 objectives (pages 26 and 27) are the same as in the made Plan, other than the updated reference to National Landscape in Objective 4.

The Scope of the Examination

- 2.15 As the independent examiner, I am required to produce this report and recommend either:
- (a) that the local planning authority should make the draft plan; or
 - (b) that the local planning authority should make the draft plan with the modifications specified in this report; or
 - (c) that the local planning authority should not make the draft plan.
- 2.16 The scope of the examination is set out in Paragraph 11(1) of Schedule A2 to the 2004 Act. The examiner must consider:
- Whether the plan meets the Basic Conditions.
 - Whether the plan complies with provisions under s.38A and s.38B of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended) ('the 2004 Act'). These are principally:

- it has been prepared and submitted for examination by a qualifying body, for an area that has been properly designated by the local planning authority;
 - it sets out policies in relation to the development and use of land and does not go beyond the scope of what may be included in a draft plan⁷;
 - it specifies the period during which it has effect;
 - it is the only neighbourhood plan for the area and does not relate to land outside the designated neighbourhood area;
 - it does not include provisions and policies for 'excluded development';
 - so far as the qualifying body considers appropriate, and having regard to the subject matter of the plan, it is designed to secure that the development and use of land in the neighbourhood area contribute to the mitigation of, and adaptation to, climate change⁸; and
 - so far as the qualifying body considers appropriate, and having regard to the subject matter of the plan, it takes account of any local nature recovery strategy, under section 104 of the Environment Act 2021, that relates to all or part of the neighbourhood area.⁹
- Whether the referendum boundary should be extended beyond the designated area, should the plan proceed to referendum.
 - Such matters as prescribed in the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended)('the 2012 Regulations').

2.17 I have considered only matters that fall within Paragraph 11(1) of Schedule A2 to the 2004 Act, with one exception. That is the requirement that the draft Plan is compatible with the Human Rights Convention.

The Basic Conditions

2.18 The 'Basic Conditions' are set out in Paragraph 11(2) of Schedule A2 to the 2004 Act. In order to meet the Basic Conditions, the draft Plan must:

⁷ See s.38B(A1) and s.38B(2C)(a) of the 2004 Act.

⁸ This additional requirement was commenced on 25 March 2026 by virtue of *The Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023 (Commencement No. 11 and Saving and Transitional Provisions) Regulations 2026*, which brought into force section 98 of the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023.

⁹ See footnote above.

- Have regard to national policies and advice contained in guidance issued by the Secretary of State;
- Contribute to the achievement of sustainable development;
- 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;¹⁰
- Be compatible with, and not breach, assimilated obligations¹¹; and
- Meet prescribed conditions and comply with prescribed matters.

2.19 Regulation 32 of the 2012 Regulations prescribes a further Basic Condition for a neighbourhood plan. This requires that the making of the Neighbourhood Plan does not breach the requirements of Chapter 8 of Part 6 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017.¹²

Site Visit

2.20 I made an unaccompanied site visit to the Neighbourhood Plan Area on 1 September 2026 to familiarise myself with the Plan Area and visit relevant sites and locations referenced in the Plan Review and evidential documents.

Written Representations with or without Public Hearing

2.21 This examination has been dealt with by written representations. At the Regulation 16 stage, no representors suggested that a hearing would be necessary. Sufficient written evidence has been provided which I have supplemented by my site visit. In all respects, the representations clearly articulate their submissions to the Plan Review. There are no exceptional reasons to justify convening a public hearing.¹³

¹⁰ This Basic Condition applies from 25 March 2026 by virtue of *The Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023 (Commencement No. 11 and Saving and Transitional Provisions) Regulations 2026*, which brought into force section 99 of the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023. This replaces the former Basic Condition which required a neighbourhood plan to be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the development plan for the area.

¹¹ See: The Retained EU Law (Revocation and Reform) Act 2023 (Consequential Amendment) Regulations 2023, which replaced the previous reference to 'EU' obligations.

¹² This revised Basic Condition came into force on 28 December 2018 through the Conservation of Habitats and Species and Planning (Various Amendments) (England and Wales) Regulations 2018.

¹³ See Paragraph 12(2)(a) of Schedule A2.

Examiner Modifications

- 2.22 Where necessary, I have specified Examiner Modifications (**EMs**) in this report in order that it meets the Basic Conditions and other legal requirements. For ease of reference, I have included this modification separately in an Appendix.

3. Compliance Matters and Human Rights

Qualifying Body and Neighbourhood Plan Area

- 3.1 The Bridport Area Neighbourhood Plan First Review (2020 – 2036) has been prepared and submitted for examination by BTC, which is a qualifying body for an area that was designated by the former West Dorset District Council (WDDC) in May 2014. WDDC was replaced by DC on 1 April 2019 which carries over the statutory designation. Following the adoption of the Bridport Area Neighbourhood Plan 2020-2036 in May 2020, DC instigated a review of local community governance. As a result of the review, the civil parishes of Allington, Bothenhampton & Walditch and Bradpole were subsumed into either Bridport Town or Symondsbury Parish.¹⁴ The revised Neighbourhood Plan Area was approved by DC in March 2025. The boundary of the Review Plan Area remains the same as that of the made Plan, other than the inclusion of a very small area of land at Dottery along the northern boundary.
- 3.2 It is the only Neighbourhood Plan for the area and does not relate to land outside the designated Neighbourhood Plan Area.

Plan Period

- 3.3 The Plan Review clearly specifies the period to which it is to take effect, which is from 2020 to 2036 and is unaltered from the existing made Plan.

Neighbourhood Plan Preparation and Consultation

- 3.4 Details of the Plan Review preparation, events, activities and consultation are set out in the comprehensive BTC Consultation Statement (CS), as submitted to DC.
- 3.5 Regulation 14 consultation took place between 18 October 2025 and 30 December 2025. The CS (page 3) lists the numerous ways in which people were consulted and the consultation events held (page 5). 117 consultation responses were received. The main issues and concerns raised by residents and statutory consultees are summarised on pages 6 – 22, with agreed actions by the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group noted

¹⁴ See Map 1 on pages 8 and 9 of the Plan.

on pages 23 and 24. The consultation response from DC and actions to be taken are summarised separately on pages 24 – 31.

- 3.6 After the submission of the Plan Review to DC on 28 April 2026, the Regulation 16 stage was held between 1 June 2026 and 13 July 2026. Twelve representations were received, including one from DC.
- 3.7 I confirm that the legal requirements have been met by the consultation process. In addition, there has been regard to the advice in the PPG on plan preparation and engagement.

Development and Use of Land

- 3.8 The Plan Review sets out policies in relation to the development and use of land in accordance with Section 38A of the 2004 Act and does not exceed the appropriate scope of a neighbourhood plan.¹⁵

Excluded Development

- 3.9 The Plan Review does not include provisions and policies for “excluded development”.¹⁶

Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS)

- 3.10 The Dorset LNRS 2025 was adopted during the preparation of the Plan Review and it was not possible to take account of the LNRS in the preparation of the Regulation 14 version of the Plan. Both DC and BTC agree that the Plan Review should more clearly reflect the LNRS. To that end, having canvassed a possible amendment to Policy L1, DC suggested an alternative which I shall use to modify Policy L5 and which I shall deal with in the relevant section below.¹⁷ I shall also make appropriate amendments to the supporting text as suggested by DC. Subject to those inclusions, I consider that BTC has discharged the legal requirements as thoroughly as it could reasonably do so. **(EM1)**

Climate Change

- 3.11 DC consider that the Plan Review contains a range of policies that are consistent with the NPPF objective of supporting the transition to a low-carbon future and helping communities adapt to the impacts of climate change. While the Climate Change chapter is principally focused on carbon reduction and mitigation, Policy D9 and the landscape and biodiversity policies provide additional support for climate change adaptation through measures relating to water management, sustainable drainage, green infrastructure, habitat enhancement and resilient building design. I am also satisfied that the Plan Review, as described in the Basic Conditions

¹⁵ See s.38B(A1) and s.38B(2C)(a) of the 2004 Act.

¹⁶ The meaning of ‘excluded development’ is set out in s.61K of the 1990 Act.

¹⁷ See paragraph 4.26 and **EM8**.

Statement (page 4), is designed to secure the development and use of land in the Neighbourhood Plan Area and that it contributes to the mitigation of, and adaptation to, climate change.

Human Rights

- 3.12 I have to consider whether the Plan Review has regard to and is compatible with the fundamental rights and freedoms guaranteed under the European Convention on Human Rights. BTC has confirmed that the Plan Review complies with the requirements of the Human Rights Act 1998.¹⁸ I consider that all reasonable attempts were made to ensure that all residents of the Neighbourhood Plan Area, including those living outside it with local interests, and all relevant stakeholders, were given the opportunity to contribute to and comment upon the Plan Review. I have considered this matter independently and I am satisfied that the policies will not have a discriminatory impact on any particular group of individuals.

4. Assessment of the Basic Conditions

Assimilated Obligations

- 4.1 The Bridport Area Neighbourhood Plan Review was the subject of Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA). The SEA screening exercise concluded that the Plan is unlikely to result in significant environmental impacts largely due to the Plan not looking to allocate additional land for housing, the Plan being supported by an extensive evidence base and the environmental protection provided by the existing policies in the WDWPLP. The report states that Historic England (HE), the Environment Agency (EA) and Natural England (NE) agreed with the reasons why SEA is not required.
- 4.2 The HRA Screening exercise considered the potential threats, pressures and activities which may affect sites within 20km of the Plan Area and identified a likely significant effect on the Chesil and the Fleet Special Area of Conservation (SAC) from recreational pressure. The Appropriate Assessment (AA) concluded that policy wording was required, perhaps a change to Policy L2 to highlight the need for a contribution towards the Interim Strategy for Mitigating the Effects of Recreational Pressure on the Chesil Beach and the Fleet SAC, Special Area of Protection (SPA) and Ramsar. Providing that mitigation is provided, it can be concluded that the Plan does not result in an adverse effect on the integrity of a European site. NE concurred with that assessment¹⁹, also confirmed in their subsequent Regulation 16 representation.²⁰ DC and BTC agreed an

¹⁸ Letter from BTC dated 30 September 2026.

¹⁹ Letter from Natural England dated 3 June 2026.

²⁰ Letter from Natural England dated 10 June 2026.

additional requirement to Policy L2 which I shall make as a modification to the Plan, the details of which are in the Appendix. **(EM2a)**

- 4.3 Having read the SEA Screening Report and the HRA, I support the above. The statutory consultees raised no objections to the Plan Review. From my independent assessment of this matter and having read the Plan Review, the supporting information and the summaries of the representations, I have no reason to disagree. Therefore, I am satisfied that the Bridport Area Neighbourhood Plan Review is compatible with the assimilated obligations that are relevant to this Plan.

Main Issues

- 4.4 Having considered whether the Plan Review complies with various procedural and legal requirements, it is now necessary to deal with whether it complies with the remaining Basic Conditions, particularly the regard it pays to national policy and guidance and the contribution it makes to the achievement of sustainable development. I test the Plan Review against the Basic Conditions by considering specific issues of compliance of all the Plan's policies.
- 4.5 As part of that assessment, I consider whether the policies are sufficiently clear and unambiguous, having regard to advice in the PPG. A neighbourhood plan policy should be drafted with sufficient clarity that a decision maker can apply it consistently and with confidence when determining planning applications. It should be concise, precise and supported by appropriate evidence.²¹
- 4.6 Accordingly, having regard to the Bridport Area Neighbourhood Plan Review, the consultation responses, other evidence and the site visit, I consider that the main issues in this examination are whether the draft Plan's policies: (i) have regard to national policy and guidance; (ii) do not result in the development plan for the area proposing less housing development than would have been the case if the plan were not to be made; and (iii) would contribute to the achievement of sustainable development.

Policy Modifications

- 4.7 There are 48 land use based policies in the draft Plan Review, 28 of which have no change to them compared to the made Plan. The remaining 20 policies are proposed to be changed, although some changes are non-material. I shall consider firstly the modified policies in the sequence in which they are written in the Plan and then deal with the unmodified policies.

²¹ PPG Reference ID: 41-041-20140306.

Climate Change

Policy CC1 Publicising Carbon Footprint

- 4.8 Focussed changes have been made to Policy CC1 which now refers to the whole life carbon footprint. The policy continues to have regard to national guidance²² and meets the Basic Conditions.

Policy CC2 Energy and Carbon Emissions

- 4.9 Focussed changes have been made to Policy CC2 which now encourages development proposals to exceed the Future Homes Standard expected in 2027/28. The policy continues to have regard to national guidance²³ and meets the Basic Conditions.

Access and Movement

Policy AM6 Transport Hub Proposal

- 4.10 Policy AM6 describes criteria which would apply to any proposals for the redevelopment of Bridport Bus Station. In comparison with the made Plan, criterion a) has been amended to include a specific reference to safeguarding walking and cycling links through the bus station; criterion b) sets out a preference for affordable housing to be provided at social rent levels and criterion c) clarifies the components of successful design in the surrounding area. At the suggestion of DC and with the agreement of BTC, I shall add "*wheeling*" to criterion a). **(EM3)** The policy would then have regard to national guidance²⁴ and would meet the Basic Conditions.

Economy and Employment

Policy EE1 Protection of exiting employment sites

- 4.11 Policy EE1 seeks to protect existing employment sites. The policy text has been updated to reflect the latest changes to the Use Classes Order. Despite the representation of DC, I agree with BTC that the wider Class E category provides necessary flexibility to support local employment and business opportunities. The policy already includes a safeguard that proposals must not have a significant adverse impact on surrounding land uses. Therefore, I consider that the policy has regard to national guidance²⁵ and meets the Basic Conditions.

²² NPPF: paragraphs 161, 164 and 165.

²³ NPPF: paragraph 167.

²⁴ NPPF: paragraphs 109 and 111.

²⁵ NPPF: paragraph 86.

Policy EE2 Provision for New & Small Businesses

- 4.12 Policy EE2 supports development proposals for new and small businesses to which “co-working hubs and live-work spaces” have been included as criterion 2.b). After representations from DC and the response from BTC, I shall make modifications to the policy which would refer to compliance with other policies in the Development Plan. **(EM4)** The policy would then have regard to national guidance²⁶ and would meet the Basic Conditions.

Housing

Definition of Affordable Housing

- 4.13 The introductory page to the Housing section includes a panel within which there is the “UK Government definition of Affordable Housing” followed by a brief description of the key types of affordable housing. DC suggested that this should be replaced by a direct reference to the NPPF Annex 2 definition of affordable housing. I agree that the DC suggestion would reduce potential ambiguity and ensure consistency with national guidance and shall make the modification. **(EM5)** The policy would then have regard to national guidance²⁷ and would meet the Basic Conditions.

Policy H1 General Affordable Housing Policy

- 4.14 Policy H1 is a general affordable housing policy. A focussed change has been made to the policy which now refers to the latest Housing Needs Assessment (HNA) which is defined on page 4 of the Plan. The policy continues to have regard to national guidance²⁸ and meets the Basic Conditions.

Policy H2 Placement of Affordable Housing

- 4.15 Policy H2 considers the location of affordable housing in mixed development of open-market and affordable homes. A new exception has been added to the policy to excuse schemes that provide affordable housing ahead of open-market housing. The policy continues to have regard to national guidance²⁹ and meets the Basic Conditions.

Policy H3 Affordable Housing Exception Sites

- 4.16 Policy H3 deals with affordable housing exception sites. A focussed change has been made to the policy which now refers to the latest HNA which is defined on page 4 of the Plan. BTC agree with the DC suggestion which I support of amending criterion 2. of policy H3 to read: *"If the development is phased, then the approved proportion of open market to affordable*

²⁶ NPPF: paragraph 86 and 87

²⁷ NPPF: paragraph 64.

²⁸ NPPF: paragraph 61.

²⁹ NPPF: paragraph 71.

housing, preferably at social rent, will apply for each phase.” (EM6) The policy would then have regard to national guidance³⁰ and would meet the Basic Conditions.

Policy H4 Housing Mix & Balanced Community

4.17 Policy H4 considers housing mix. Focussed changes have been made to the policy which now refers to the latest HNA which is now defined on page 4 of the Plan. In addition, in the draft Plan Review a new criterion 2. adds a preference for smaller, lower-cost homes suitable for first time buyers. However, following the comments from DC that, because there is no definition of “smaller lower cost homes” the phrase would be ambiguous, BTC agreed that an amendment to: *“To help shape a balanced future community, development of 1 or 2 bedroomed homes, suited to first time buyers, will be strongly preferred”* would be acceptable. (EM7) The policy would then have regard to national guidance³¹ and would meet the Basic Conditions.

Policy H5 Sheltered or Retirement Home or Extra Care Home Developments

4.18 Focussed changes have been made to the policy title and the scope of the policy to include ‘Sheltered or Retirement Home or Extra Care Developments’. Criteria 1.a) and b) are defined as “Location” requirements and criterion 2. is labelled as “Need”. Criterion 2. is now “subject” to proven local need rather than having to “demonstrate” it. The policy continues to have regard to national guidance³² and meets the Basic Conditions.

Policy H6 Housing Development Requirements

4.19 The policy describes requirements for housing development and which includes three criteria 1, 2 and 3, the first of which is subdivided into three further items a), b) and c). A focussed change expands the list of exceptions in criterion 2. to excuse schemes which provide affordable housing ahead of open-market housing. The policy continues to have regard to national guidance³³ and meets the Basic Conditions.

Policy H7 Self and Custom-Built Homes

4.20 Policy H7 supports the provision of self and custom-built homes and includes a focussed change in which the order of the title and text is reversed. The policy continues to have regard to national guidance³⁴ and meets the Basic Conditions.

³⁰ NPPF: paragraph 76.

³¹ NPPF: paragraph 61.

³² NPPF: paragraphs 61 and 63.

³³ NPPF: paragraph 135.

³⁴ NPPF: paragraph 63.

Community Facilities

Policy CF1 Protection of Existing Community Infrastructure

- 4.21 Policy CF1 seeks to protect community buildings, infrastructure and ancillary facilities. Criterion 2. has been amended to clarify that alternative community uses should be explored in full prior to any change of use application being submitted. Five additional community facilities have been added to the supporting text on page 57 of the Plan. The policy continues to have regard to national guidance³⁵ and meets the Basic Conditions.

Landscape

Policy L1 Green Corridors, Footpaths, Surrounding Hills & Skylines

- 4.22 Policy L1 seeks to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the Dorset National Landscape. Criteria 1. and 2. of the policy now seek to "*conserve and enhance*" rather than "preserve and enhance". References to Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) in the policy and supporting text have been renamed National Landscapes. The whole of the Plan Area is within the Dorset National Landscape and I have no objections to the title of the policy. The definition of Green Corridors in the supporting text on page 69 of the Plan now includes a specific reference to Dorset's Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS). The policy has regard to national guidance³⁶ and would meet the Basic Conditions.

Policy L2 Biodiversity

- 4.23 Policy L2 considers biodiversity. Criterion 1. of the policy has been updated to reflect mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) requirements and the BNG metric tool. A new criterion 3. encourages new or enhanced habitats, such as swift bricks or bat boxes in developments over 5 metres or to provide safe hedgehog routes between habitats. The criterion also encourages green roofs, green walls, street trees and sustainable drainage systems. Comments from DC indicates a reference to biodiversity is omitted from criterion 2. Additionally, I agree the reference to 5 metres in criterion 3. is ambiguous and should be specified as height, although it could hardly refer to depth or width. I shall make the modifications. I also note the comment from DC that Map 7 (page 70) has no key. However, the Legend adjacent to Map 8 may well be intended to apply to each of the three Maps on pages 70 and 71, in which case there may be omissions which should be corrected. The policy would then have regard to national guidance³⁷ and would meet the Basic Conditions.
- (EM2b)**

³⁵ NPPF: paragraph 98.

³⁶ NPPF: paragraph 187.

³⁷ NPPF: paragraph 192.

Policy L3 Local Green Spaces

4.24 Policy L3 designates twenty-one Local Green Spaces in the Plan Area. LGS designation 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.³⁸

LGS should also be capable of enduring beyond the end of the Plan period.³⁹

4.25 In criterion 2. of the policy, wording has been amended to clarify that development within a designated Local Green Space "*will be determined in accordance with national policy for Green Belts*" rather than "only being permitted in very special circumstances". In addition, Area N – Peter Foote Play Area has been replaced with a new, larger area called Riverside Corridor which I agree meets the criteria for designation. The policy continues to have regard to national guidance⁴⁰ and meets the Basic Conditions.

Policy L5 Enhancement of the Environment

4.26 Policy L5 aims to enhance the environment within new housing development and make provision for green infrastructure. DC suggested strengthening the policy and introducing a reference to the LNRS with which I agree and will make the appropriate modification. **(EM8)** The policy would then have regard to national guidance⁴¹ and would meet the Basic Conditions.

Centre of Bridport

Policy COB2 Ropewalks Car Park & Bus Station Car Park

4.27 Policy COB2 supports the redevelopment of the car park sites for a mixture of town centre uses subject to various criteria. A focussed change has altered the cross reference in criterion 3. to Policy AM4 rather than Policy AM5. Representations sought prior consultation of the public by applicants should any proposals for redevelopment be made. This cannot be made a requirement, but Policy D2 of the Plan encourages community consultation appropriate to the scale of the project. Standard development management procedures will enable the public to make comments after a planning application has been received. Related comments were also made about Project 4 in the Neighbourhood Plan Projects and Actions.

³⁸ NPPF: paragraph 107.

³⁹ NPPF: paragraph 106.

⁴⁰ NPPF: paragraphs 106 – 108.

⁴¹ NPPF: paragraphs 187 and 192.

However, this project, together with the others listed, does not form part of the examination.⁴² The policy continues to have regard to national guidance⁴³ and meets the Basic Conditions.

Design for Living

Policy D9 Environmental Performance

- 4.28 Policy D9 encourages applicants to design buildings to last and to minimise energy consumption and carbon emissions. Criterion g) within the policy has been updated to refer to: "*Building Regulations Part M4(2) category 2*" rather than "*Lifetime Homes Standard*". The policy continues to have regard to national guidance⁴⁴ and meet the Basic Conditions.

Policy D10 Mitigation of Light Pollution

- 4.29 Policy D10 seeks to minimise light pollution. Criterion a) within the policy has been amended to repeat: "*In any new development, light pollution will be minimised by ...*". The policy continues to have regard to national guidance⁴⁵ and meets the Basic Conditions.

Unchanged Policies

- 4.30 28 other policies in the made Plan remain unchanged. Each policy has regard to national guidance, would contribute to the achievement of sustainable development and would meet the Basic Conditions. The following table sets out the details of how the 28 unchanged policies have regard to national guidance to enable the Basic Conditions to be met.

Table 1.

Policy	Subject	National guidance (NPPF paragraph number)
CC3	Energy Generation to Offset Predicted Carbon Emissions	162
CC4	Neighbourhood Renewable Energy Schemes	162
AM1	Promotion of Active Travel Modes	109
AM2	Managing Vehicular Traffic	109

⁴² See paragraph 4.31.

⁴³ NPPF: paragraph 111.

⁴⁴ NPPF: paragraph 165.

⁴⁵ NPPF: paragraph 198 c).

AM3	Footpath and Cyclepath Network	109, 111
AM4	Car Parking Strategy	109, 113
AM5	Connections to Sustainable Transport	109, 110
EE3	Sustainable Tourism	88
H8	Community-Led Housing	73, 74
CF2	New Community Services & Facilities	96, 98
CF3	Allotments	98
HT1	Non-Designated Heritage Assets	216
HT2	Public Realm	132, 135
HT3	Shop Front Design	135
L4	Green Gaps	125, 187
COB1	Development in the Centre of Bridport	90
COB3	Small Business Support	87
COB4	St Michael's Support for the Creative Industries	87
D1	Harmonizing with the Site	135
D2	Programme of consultation	40
D3	Internal Transport Links	135
D4	Mix of Uses	135
D5	Efficient Use of Land	125
D6	Definition of streets and spaces	135
D7	Creation of secure areas	135
D8	Contributing to the local character	135

D11	Building for Life	135
D12	HAPPI (Housing our Ageing Population)	135

Town and Parish Council Actions

- 4.31 The Plan (pages 94 – 98) contains a list of sixteen actions to be carried out and where the named Lead Partner is frequently, but not exclusively, Bridport Town Council and/or Symondsburry Parish Council. The subjects include Climate Smart Activities, Energy Conservation Initiatives, Town Hall Junction Improvement Plan and Community Bus Schemes. These are items which the community is seeking but cannot be delivered through planning policies, which are not considered as part of the examination and which will not form part of the statutory Development Plan. Nevertheless, they represent aspirations or actions which would benefit the community and demonstrate one of the valuable associated attributes of the neighbourhood planning process.⁴⁶

Alterations to the Text

- 4.32 A consequence of the modifications would be that amendments might have to be made to the explanation within the Plan in order to make it logical. Other amendments might also include minor contextual updates correcting minor inaccuracies or typographical errors, cross referencing and any renumbering of paragraphs and policies. None of these alterations would affect the ability of the Plan to meet the Basic Conditions and could be undertaken as minor, non-material changes.⁴⁷

All Other Matters

- 4.33 In this examination, I have focussed on differences in the policies between the made Neighbourhood Plan and the Plan Review. Nevertheless, I have considered afresh the whole of the draft Plan. I have reviewed each policy in terms of its consistency with national policy and guidance. Other than the issues that are discussed above, I am satisfied that there are no other matters which affect the Basic Conditions. Each policy in the Plan Review has regard to national guidance, would not result in the development plan for the area proposing less housing development, would contribute to sustainable development and would meet the Basic Conditions.

⁴⁶ PPG Reference ID: 41-004-20190509.

⁴⁷ PPG Reference ID: 41-106-20190509.

5. Conclusions

Summary

- 5.1 The Bridport Area Neighbourhood Plan Review (2020 –2036) has been duly prepared in compliance with the procedural requirements. My examination has assessed whether the Plan Review meets the Basic Conditions and other legal requirements. I have had regard for all the responses made following consultation on the Plan Review and the evidence documents submitted with it.
- 5.2 I have set out eight Examiner Modifications to ensure the Plan Review meets the Basic Conditions and other legal requirements.

Examiner Recommendation

- 5.3 I recommend that DC should make the Neighbourhood Plan Review with the modifications specified in the Appendix to this report.

Overview

- 5.4 Inevitably, considerable time and effort has been devoted to the development and production of this comprehensive and extremely well-illustrated Plan Review and I congratulate those who have been involved. The documentation which was submitted from both Councils at the various stages of the examination was very helpful, especially the Modifications Statements and the constructive comments made in response to my questions. The Plan Review should continue to prove to be a useful tool for future planning and sustainable change within and around Bridport over the coming years.

Andy Mead

Examiner

Appendix: Examiner Modifications

Examiner Modification number (EM)	Policy/other reference	Modification
EM1	Page 71	Add a sentence prior to Policy L2: <i>"Policy L2 supports the delivery of Dorset LNRS Priorities 6 – Urban and 12 – Species Abundance and Diversity."</i>
	Page 75	Add a sentence prior to Policy L5: <i>"Policy L5 supports the delivery of Dorset LNRS Priority 6 – Urban."</i>
	Page 87	Add a sentence prior to Policy D5: <i>"Policy D5 supports the delivery of Dorset LNRS Priority 6 – Urban."</i>
	Page 91	Add a sentence prior to Policy D9: <i>"Policy D9 e) and f) support the delivery of Dorset LNRS Priority 6 – Urban."</i>
	Page 92	Add a sentence prior to Policy D10: <i>"Policy D10 supports the delivery of Dorset LNRS Priority 6 – Urban."</i>
	Page 72	Add a sentence prior to Policy L3: <i>"The following Local Green Spaces are identified within Dorset LNRS mapping: Local Green Spaces E and I are covered by the High Opportunity Nature Areas and Potential Activities layers. Local Green Spaces B, J and T are covered by the Nature Areas of National Importance."</i>

EM2a	Policy L2	Add: "4. The developers of net new residential dwellings within the Neighbourhood Area will make a financial contribution to delivery of the Chesil & Fleet Interim Recreation Mitigation Strategy, in line with Dorset Council guidance."
EM2b		Amend criterion 2. to: "... harm to their character, setting, accessibility, appearance, quality, amenity value or biodiversity should be avoided." Amend criterion 3. to: "... swift bricks and bat boxes in developments over 5 metres in height ...". Clarify the Key or Legend for Maps 7, 8 and 9.
EM3	Policy AM6	Amend criterion a) to: "... safeguarding walking, wheeling and cycling links ...".
EM4	Policy EE2	Amend criterion 1 by the addition of: "... provided they are appropriate to their location and accord with relevant policies in the Development Plan." Amend criterion 2 by the addition of a new sentence: "Provided that the scale and nature of the proposal are appropriate to their setting and accord with relevant Development Plan policies."
EM5	Page 48 Definition of Affordable Housing	Replace the UK Government definition of Affordable Housing with the definition as it appears in NPPF (2024) Annex 2 Glossary.
EM6	Policy H3	Amend criterion 2. to: "If the development is phased, then the approved proportion of open market to affordable housing, preferably at social rent, will apply for each phase."

EM7	Policy H4	Amend criterion 2. to: <i>"To help shape a balanced future community, development of 1 or 2 bedroomed homes, suited to first time buyers, will be strongly preferred."</i>
EM8	Policy L5	Amend criterion 2. to: <i>"Development proposals should support delivery of nature recovery priorities identified within the Dorset Local Nature Recovery Strategy, particularly through protecting and, where appropriate, enhancing green infrastructure."</i>