



## Response to Examiner Questions

### Melbury Abbas and Cann Neighbourhood Development Plan

**From:** Melbury Abbas and Cann Parish Council

**To:** Andrew Mead BSc (Hons) MRTPI MIQ, Independent Examiner

**Date:** 15<sup>th</sup> July 2025

**Re:** Examination Ref: 01/AM/MA&CNP

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Dear Mr Mead,

Thank you for your letter dated 2 July 2025 and the accompanying questions regarding the Melbury Abbas and Cann Neighbourhood Development Plan. We are pleased to provide the following responses to your questions.

#### Question 1 - Date of Submission

**Response:** We can confirm that the Plan was submitted under Regulation 15 on 12 March 2025. Therefore, all references in this examination will read across to the December 2023 version of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

#### Question 2 - Policy 1a

**Response (for DC but our response also noted here):** We acknowledge that the rural-urban buffer zone policy is quite expansive and raises some concerns. However, we note that the area identified slopes down from Shaftesbury and represents valued landscape (as referenced in NPPF terminology) that should be afforded protection. A 2019 landscape study excluded this area from development, and SHLAA sites have not been identified from this area other than the Persimmon development, which is largely outside the buffer area (except Higher Blandford Road for 6 dwellings). We believe there are similarities with other neighbourhood plans that have identified green gaps.

### Question 3 - Policy 1b

**Response from MA&CPC:** Our proposals were based on the allocation of 45 dwellings, incorporating existing consents plus windfall allowance. This figure includes the 35 dwellings from the Persimmon development plus 10 from other sources. Since the Regulation 14 consultation in 2022, circumstances have changed with the Persimmon development progressing. The AECOM report specified a range of affordable housing provision, and the government is encouraging housing needs assessment. Our evidence base suggests there is a local need for housing to justify the policies in the plan. We have landowners who are willing to provide a higher threshold of affordability. We wish to maintain the affordable housing numbers as currently stated, as market housing is not affordable for local people. A 50%+ affordable housing provision would better meet local need, and we have evidence that landowners are supportive of this approach.

### Question 4a - Policy 1d

**Response from MA&CPC:** We accept the proposed wording: "Affordable housing should be offered first to eligible people."

### Question 4b - Policy 1d

**Response from MA&CPC:** Yes, the "vistas of local importance" are derived from Policy 2c.

### Question 5 - Policy 1e

**Response from MA&CPC:** The site at St Anne's Close, Guys Marsh is acceptable for affordable housing provision and would not make sense for homes to be sold on the open market given the specific local housing need identified. We have undertaken preliminary viability figures and consulted with a builder regarding deliverability. The site is suitable for this specific use as identified in the Plan and it is for prison workers and therefore not suitable for open market development.

### Question 6 - Policy 1g

**Response from MA&CPC:**

- **6a:** The policy requires 40% affordable housing (4 dwellings) from the 10 total dwellings allocated, so paragraph 97 should be amended to state that at least 4 homes should be affordable.
- **6b:** The village hall provision would be developed separately on a designated area provided for by the developer. These funds would need to be secured separately (c. £700k-£1m) through developer contributions from local development (and possibly grant funding where available).
- **6c:** The village hall would not need to be built at the same time as the Southbank Farm development; rather, land would be set aside for this purpose with delivery phased appropriately.

#### **Question 7 - Policy 2b.iii)**

**Response from MA&CPC:** While no specific tree planting areas have been designated yet, the Parish Council will work with local groups, including Dorset Wildlife Trust, to identify suitable locations.

#### **Question 8 - Policy 2c.iii)**

**Response from MA&CPC:** We accept the proposed wording: "Proposed development should respect the views and vistas identified in Figures 25-46."

#### **Question 9 - Figures 25-46**

**Response from MA&CPC:** We concur that some of the viewpoints start outside the neighbourhood plan area, but acknowledge that the neighbourhood plan can only influence planning decisions within its plan area.

#### **Question 10 - Local Green Spaces (LGS)**

**Response from MA&CPC:** This was a typographical error. The Plan correctly identifies three Local Green Spaces as listed on pages 73-76.

#### **Question 11 - Policy 4d**

**Response from MA&CPC:** We agree that criteria i) and ii) should be linked by "or" rather than "and". The Parish Council remains keen to retain the current village hall site for affordable housing to support local housing needs. This could be complemented with a change of criterion iii) to "IN ALL cases" and remove the current criterion iii).

#### **Question 12 - Policy 4f**

**Response from MA&CPC:**

- **12a:** We acknowledge the wording regarding "positive net benefit in energy efficiency" is unclear, we meant "demonstrate carbon neutrality".
- **12b-d:** If the examiner considers the policy too restrictive and recommends removal, we would accept this recommendation. However, we were seeking to ensure that both agricultural uses and landscape sensitivities are considered in the context of the plan's priorities. If the policy could encourage microgrid connections (similar to Bridport's co-housing model), this could help developers consider ways to support neighbourhood-level grid self-sufficiency, achieving a positive outcome.

#### **Question 13 - Policy 4i**

**Response from MA&CPC:** There is an existing footpath through Boyne Hollow. We did consult Wessex Water during our designation consultation and DC has consulted them in Reg 16. The previous note in Table 6 can be removed as it's from a previous version, and Wessex Water's comments have been considered in the policy formulation.

### **Additional Information**

**Maps:** Vector diagrams will be provided to Dorset Council for clarity when the schematics have been clarified.

We trust this response addresses your questions comprehensively. We remain available for any further clarification you may require.

Yours sincerely,

**William Kenealy**

Chair, Melbury Abbas and Cann Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group

**On behalf of Melbury Abbas and Cann Parish Council**