

Marnhull Neighbourhood Plan: summary of representations that were submitted to the examiner

2 February 2026

Introduction

The regulation 16 consultation of the Marnhull Neighbourhood Plan was held between 8 August and 19 September 2025 (6 weeks). Eighty-one responses were received during this time. These were made available to the independent examiner.

It is a legal requirement that a summary of these representations is made available during the neighbourhood plan referendum period. Microsoft Copilot (an AI tool) has been used to provide a neutral summary of the responses received during the consultation. The summaries have been checked by human and where it was felt necessary, some of the points edited in order to improve clarity. Copies of the full responses can be found at www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/marnhull-neighbourhood-plan

The representations have been sorted into the following categories:

- Individuals / residents
- Agents / consultants / developers
- Government bodies / agencies
- Dorset Council

Individuals / residents

There were 74 responses from individuals, most of whom were residents of Marnhull. The vast majority were in support of the plan. The following is summary of the main points:

1. Strong overall support for the Neighbourhood Plan

A large majority of respondents express full support for the Plan, describing it as:

- Thorough, well-researched, evidence-based
- Reflective of local views
- Balanced between heritage protection and accommodating some growth
- A crucial tool to manage future development properly

Many explicitly state that the Plan *meets the basic conditions* and should be adopted.

2. Concerns about scale of housing growth

While some residents accept that development is necessary, many are concerned that:

- Marnhull has already taken more than its fair share of growth
- Over **330–500+ homes** are already permitted or under construction
- Any additional large allocations would be **unsustainable**
- The village risks doubling in size within a short period

Common issues raised:

- Lack of employment opportunities in the village
- Risk of Marnhull becoming a “dormitory village”
- Potential decline in quality of life

3. Infrastructure capacity concerns

Many representations highlight that existing infrastructure is already under strain:

Transport & Highways

- Narrow rural lanes cannot safely accommodate more traffic
- Safety issues for pedestrians and cyclists
- Requests for 20 mph zones in areas without pavements
- General congestion concerns, especially with new developments (e.g. Tess Square)

Sewage and drainage

- Wessex Water network at or near capacity
- Regular storm overflows from Marnhull Common STW
- Flooding already occurs in parts of the village

Public services

- Limited bus services
- Pressure on schools, healthcare, parking and community facilities
- Village Hall and recreation facilities nearing capacity

4. Protection of village character, heritage and landscape

Many residents emphasise:

- The importance of preserving Marnhull's historic character
- Support for the new and extended Conservation Areas
- Protecting key views, landscape settings, dark skies and tranquillity
- Maintaining the linear village form and avoiding suburban "estate-style" development
- Ensuring future buildings use appropriate materials (local stone/brick) and high-quality design

5. Support for settlement boundaries

A recurring theme is that:

- Settlement boundaries must be protected
- Preventing coalescence with neighbouring hamlets is important
- New large sites outside the boundary should be resisted

However, a handful of representations **object specifically to the exclusion of the Church Hill paddock**, arguing it is suitable for small-scale infill. This site is covered in more detail by the representation from Evans & Traves, which is summarised later in this document.

6. Housing need and affordability

Some residents acknowledge the need for:

- Smaller, affordable homes
- Housing for younger families and older people downsizing

Others criticise existing developments for providing only expensive 4–5 bed homes rather than genuinely affordable housing.

7. Traffic survey and transport policy

Many support the Village Traffic Survey and Policy 12, though some call for:

- Stronger commitments
- 20 mph limits
- Extra safety measures on specific roads (e.g. Church Hill)

8. Green spaces and environment

There is strong support for:

- Protecting green gaps and Local Green Spaces

- Retaining rural character
- Enhancing wildlife and biodiversity
- Avoiding development on farmland where possible
- Keeping dark skies and low-level lighting

9. Community identity and cohesion

Several residents emphasise:

- The importance of maintaining Marnhull's community spirit
- Concerns that very large developments could overwhelm the social fabric
- Support for incremental, smaller-scale, sympathetic growth

10. Miscellaneous points

- Some sports clubs request more space (e.g., cricket second pitch, dedicated tennis court)
- A few residents propose detailed amendments to specific policies
- Some raise concerns about national planning policy and Dorset Council's responsibilities

Overall Summary

The overwhelming majority of representations **support the Neighbourhood Plan**. Supporters value its:

- Evidence base
- Balanced approach
- Protection of rural character
- Sensible housing strategy
- Infrastructure and transport considerations

Where objections arise, they are mainly:

- Concerns about infrastructure capacity
- Opposition to further large-scale housing beyond that already permitted
- A small number of site-specific objections (notably Church Hill paddock)

The consistent message is that residents want **sustainable, modest, well-designed growth** that protects Marnhull's countryside character and does not overwhelm local services.

Agents / Consultants / Developers

Three companies representing landowners or developers responded to the consultation. They were CG Fry, Evans & Traves, and Chapman Lily Planning.

CG Fry

- **Broadly supportive** of the draft plan's ambition for **high-quality design** and say it **largely meets the Basic Conditions**, but they seek **modifications** to ensure the plan is *aspirational yet deliverable/viable* and better supports Marnhull's long-term sustainability.
- They highlight their **active interest in Marnhull** through delivery at **Burton Street (Durbeyfield Park)** and involvement with **Salisbury Street**.
- They ask for tighter, evidence-based wording in narrative sections (avoid vague phrases like "many of us feel..." unless supported), and caveat statements to reflect survey response levels.
- They consider the introduction too negative about new housing and request clearer acknowledgment of **housing need** and the potential benefits of well-designed development for village sustainability and infrastructure.
- They welcome the Salisbury Street allocation but suggest considering **additional allocations** (including SEA alternatives) to strengthen the plan's resilience and ensure it remains genuinely "plan led."
- They request **greater flexibility** in detailed design requirements (e.g., remove strict 1m boundary height cap; treat "30° due south" solar orientation as guidance not a requirement; recognise constraints on street trees; explicitly support courtyard parking).
- They object to **over-prescriptive settlement form/density rules** (e.g., limited depth/100m linearity and " ≤ 20 dph"), arguing they are crude measures and may conflict with efficient land use and evolving village character; suggest character areas could help.
- They recommend changing "preserve" to "respect" for key views to allow for acceptable, well-designed change.

- They seek removal of the “≤40% detached” cap and want size/age-friendly expectations **caveated for viability/site circumstances** (as a starting point for negotiation rather than fixed quotas).
- They argue that expectations for **commercial/workspace** at Salisbury Street/eastward expansion should be **removed**, as they were not part of the consented outline/reserved matters schemes; also note parts of the development are effectively fixed by existing approvals and S106.
- For flooding policy, they suggest removing repetition of higher-level policy, adding “where feasible” caveats, and deleting the proposed occupation restriction tied to **Wessex Water upgrades** (seen as unjustified and dependent on third-party timescales).
- They question why SEA alternatives did not clearly test allocating **all** alternative sites; suggest including the **Basic Conditions** text in supporting material; note minor drafting corrections.

Evans & Traves

- Evans & Traves submit an **objection** on behalf of the landowner of “**Paddock Land East of Church Hill**” (approx. **0.57ha**) to the draft NP’s **re-drawn settlement boundary**, which **excludes** the site.
- **Modification sought: revert the Settlement Boundary (Map 3, p.40)** so that the **Paddock East of Church Hill is included** within the boundary.
- The site is described as **within the village, surrounded by housing**, with an access opportunity from **Church Hill (adopted highway)**.
- They state it could deliver **around 10–12 homes** (houses and/or bungalows)
- They argue the draft NP does **not identify key constraints** affecting the site (not in a conservation area; no listed building setting issue; no non-designated heritage asset; not high flood risk; not a proposed green space; not in important view sightlines).
- They say there is **no sound evidence base** for removing the site from the settlement boundary, which would prevent it coming forward as a **windfall site** (linked to NP Policy 7(a)).
- They argue this approach fails the **Basic Conditions** by not properly having regard to **national policy/guidance**, particularly that neighbourhood plans should not undermine strategic housing delivery objectives.

- The representation challenges the NP’s housing number approach (Policy 7 / Appendix 12), describing it as **misguided**.
- They cite the **Dorset Local Plan Options Consultation (Aug–Oct 2025)** as indicating Marnhull may be expected to deliver **around 697 homes**, implying the NP’s approach may underprovide and risk undermining emerging strategic direction.
- They review the NP’s list of permissions (cited total **~335 dwellings**) and suggest it is skewed, so a **10–12 dwelling** site would improve the “mix” and could be delivered relatively quickly.
- They characterise the proposed settlement boundary as **contrived/illogical**, given the site is surrounded by housing and not otherwise protected/designated.

Chapman Lily Planning

- The submission is by **Chapman Lily Planning Ltd** on behalf of **Paul Crocker, MB Croker, P&D Crocker and Smokey Dorset Dreams Ltd** (local landowners/farming business) with an interest in development delivery in Marnhull.
- It is a **strong objection** arguing the Reg 16 package (Neighbourhood Plan, SEA, “Basic Conditions Test” and Conservation Area Appraisal (CAA)) is **procedurally and substantively flawed**, and is drafted in a way intended to **frustrate implementation of recent appeal decisions** (especially **Tess Square & Butts Close**, and also referencing Salisbury Street/Crown Road).
- They say the Reg 16 submission (including the **CAA**) has been **significantly changed** from the Reg 14 version **without further public/statutory re-consultation** (including an alleged absence of re-consultation with Historic England / conservation specialists after substantial revisions).

They argue the plan fails Basic Conditions **(a), (c), (d) and (e)** as follows:

(a) Regard to national policy

- They say the NP does not properly respond to the strengthened national objective to **boost housing supply**, and does not grapple with Dorset’s revised housing need used in Dorset Council’s Local Plan Options work (they cite **~3,246 homes/year** and an **81% increase** compared to the 2021 consultation).
- They describe the NP approach as effectively trying to **prevent further development** by relying mainly on **extant permissions** and keeping an indicative local figure (**~17**

dwelling/year) without identifying further allocations or seeking an updated/bespoke figure from Dorset Council.

Local Green Space / green gaps (and “green belt by another name”)

- They argue the proposed Local Green Spaces/green gaps are being used to **block development** without adequate evidence they meet national tests, and may not be capable of enduring given the emerging Local Plan context and likely greater housing requirement for Marnhull.

(c) Conservation areas / CAA

- A major focus is the **CAA**: they claim substantial new or extended conservation areas were introduced late (including areas affecting/overlapping **Tess Square** and **Butts Close**) without consultation, allegedly to **frustrate** extant permissions.
- They question whether the CAA was prepared by a suitably qualified **heritage professional**, and say evidence of Historic England / Council advice underpinning boundary changes is not transparently documented.

(d) Sustainable development

- They argue the NP does not promote sustainable development because it: (i) fails to recognise Marnhull’s role as a larger, sustainable village; (ii) does not reflect Inspector findings on the sustainability benefits of the appeal scheme(s); and (iii) includes restrictive policies/designations that could undermine deliverability of consented schemes.

(e) General conformity with strategic policies

- They argue relevant strategic policies are out of date given housing need evidence and appeal findings, and that the NP fails to align with emerging Dorset Local Plan evidence or seek an up-to-date indicative requirement, reducing the plan’s longevity and conformity.

SEA criticisms

- They argue the **SEA is flawed/out of date**, including not properly reflecting that **Tess Square and Butts Close were allowed on appeal**, and that multiple appraisal conclusions should have been updated in light of Inspector testing.

Key policy objections (headline)

- **Settlement pattern / linearity / density:** object to continued emphasis on “linear” development (risking ribbon/sprawl) and argue village character includes consolidated modern areas; cite appeal commentary that Marnhull is large/spreading and not purely linear.
- **Policy 7 (housing):** said to remain essentially unchanged from Reg 14 and not to respond to Dorset-wide housing/affordable housing pressures highlighted at appeal; they also challenge local-connection style prioritisation for affordable housing.
- **Policies 8/9 (site requirements):** argue mapped green gaps/meadow/open space requirements are overly prescriptive, **not viability tested**, and could prevent reserved matters schemes meeting consented numbers (Salisbury Street and Butts Close particularly).
- **Policies 10–11 (business/retail):** argue the NP should acknowledge the **Tess Square** permission for central retail/commercial and avoid applying “town centre” type sequential/impact expectations in a village context.

Bottom line / what they want

- They ask the Examiner to treat the Reg 16 submission as **non-compliant** with Basic Conditions and flawed procedurally (especially around **CAA changes, SEA robustness, housing requirement context and green space designations**) and to require substantial amendment (or removal of unconsulted CAA elements) so the NP does not undermine extant permissions and better aligns with current housing need evidence.

Government bodies / agencies

Responses were received from:

- National Highways
- Natural England
- Historic England
- Environment Agency

None of them had specific comments to make on the neighbourhood plan at this stage.

Dorset Council

The following is a summary of the key points made by Dorset Council in its response.

1. General Position

- The Council supports the plan's intentions but must consider how its policies will be implemented, especially given emerging Local Plan work and recent planning approvals in Marnhull.
- Notes that the emerging Dorset Council Local Plan (now at Options stage) carries limited weight but signals significant future housing pressure in Marnhull.

2. Local Green Spaces (LGS)

- The Council questions whether several proposed LGS sites meet national criteria.
- Main concerns:
 - Some sites are **large intensively farmed fields**, not demonstrably special.
 - Some rely on features (views, setting of listed buildings, public footpaths) that are **already protected** through other means.
 - Designation risks becoming "**green belt by another name**".
- Sites specifically challenged: **LGS05, LGS07, LGS08, LGS10**.

3. Green Gaps

- Green Gaps are considered **insufficiently evidenced**, appear very large, and sometimes overlap with:
 - Existing planning permissions
 - Local Plan option sites
- Council warns they could unintentionally function like Green Belt, conflicting with national policy and future plan-making.

4. Housing Provision and Settlement Boundary

- Policy 7's position on resisting unallocated greenfield development is seen as giving an **unrealistic expectation**, given:
 - The likelihood of Dorset losing its 5-year housing land supply.
 - The impact of the new NPPF and updated standard method (higher housing numbers).
- Settlement boundary revisions are broadly acceptable, though Council notes the emerging Local Plan may remove settlement boundaries entirely.

5. Site-Specific Policies (Eastward and Southward Expansions)

- **Eastward expansion (Policy 8)**
 - Western part (Crown Road) aligns well with existing reserved matters consent.
 - Eastern part (Salisbury Street): Green Gap could constrain the delivery of the permitted housing numbers and the best layout for SuDS.
- **Southward expansion (Policy 9)**
 - Differences exist between the NP indicative layout and outline permission; some elements may need further refinement at reserved matters.

6. Other Policies

- Policies on **heritage, design, tranquillity, dark skies, biodiversity, business, community facilities, transport and flood risk** are generally supported.
- Minor wording and clarity improvements are suggested (e.g., avoiding forward slashes, correcting grammar, renumbering bullet points).
- Recommends that flood policy avoids repeating national policy unnecessarily.

7. Habitat Regulations Assessment

- Council concludes that the NP **is unlikely to have significant effects** on nearby European sites, so an Appropriate Assessment is **not required**.