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North Dorset Local Plan – 2011 to 2026 Part 1

Pre-submission Focused Changes Consultation

1 August to 12 September 2014

Regulation 19 of Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012

Response Form

For each representation you wish to make a separate response form will need to be completed.

This is a formal consultation on the legal compliance and soundness of the Local Plan as amended by focused changes, before it is submitted to the Secretary of State for examination by an Inspector. For advice on how to respond to the consultation and fill in this form please see the 'Guidance Notes for Making Representations' that can be found on the Council's website at

www.dorsetforyou.com/focusedchangesconsultation/north

Please return completed forms to:

Email: planningpolicy@north-dorset.gov.uk

Post: Planning Policy, North Dorset District Council, Nordon, Salisbury Road, Blandford Forum, Dorset DT11 7LL

Alternatively you can submit your comments online at:

www.surveymonkey.com/s/NorthDorsetLocalPlanFocusedChangesConsultation

Deadline: 11:59 p m on 12 September 2014. Representations received after this time may not be accepted.

Part A – Personal details

This part of the form must be completed by all people making representations as **anonymous comments cannot be accepted**. Representations cannot be treated in confidence as Regulation 22 of the Town and County Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 requires copies of all representations to be made publically available. By submitting this response form you consent to your information being disclosed to third parties for this purpose, but signatures, private telephone numbers and e-mail addresses or private addresses will not be visible on our web site, although they will be shown on paper copies that will be sent to the Inspector and available for inspection.

*If an agent is appointed, please complete only the Title, Name and Organisation boxes to the personal details but complete the full contact details of the agent. All correspondence will be sent to the agent.

Personal Details (if applicable)*		Agent's Details (if applicable)*
Title		Mr
First Name		Jonathan
Last Name		Kamm
Job Title(<i>where relevant</i>)		
Organisation (<i>where relevant</i>)	Clemdell Limited	Jonathan Kamm Consultancy
Address		
Postcode		
Tel. No.		
Email Address		

Part B – Representation

The Focused Changes to the North Dorset Local Plan 2011 to 2026 Part 1 and its supporting documents have been published in order for representations to be made prior to submission to the Secretary of State for examination. The purpose of the examination is to consider whether the Local Plan as amended by focused changes, complies with the **legal requirements** and is **'sound'**.

If you are seeking to make a representation on the **way** in which the focused changes have been prepared it is likely that your comments or objections will relate to a matter of **legal compliance**.

If you are seeking to make representations on the **content** of the focused changes it is likely that your comments or objections relate to the **soundness** of the plan and whether it is justified, effective or consistent with national policy.

Further information on the matter of legal compliance and the issue of soundness can be found in the 'Guidance Notes for Making Representations'.

If you need help completing the response form please see a member of the Planning Policy Team at the consultation exhibition in Blandford Forum on 14 August 2014 or call 01258 484201.

1. Please select which document you are commenting on:

- North Dorset Local Plan 2011 to 2026 Part 1: Pre- Submission Focused Changes (please complete Questions 2 to 9)
- Supplement to the Sustainability Appraisal Report (please complete Questions 2 and 10)

2. Please state to which pre-submission focused change you are commenting on:

Change Reference: MAJ/16/1	Section reference: Page 193 and 195, Policy 16: BLANDFORD
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3. Do you consider the Local Plan as amended by focused changes, to be legally compliant and prepared in accordance with the Duty to Cooperate, legal and procedural requirements?

- Yes No

4. Do you consider the Local Plan as amended by focused changes, to be 'sound'?

- Yes No

5. If you consider the Local Plan as amended by focused changes, to be unsound please specify your reason(s) by ticking the box(es) that apply below

- It has not been positively prepared
- It is not justified
- It is not effective
- It is not consistent with national policy

6. Please give specific details of why you consider the Local Plan as amended by focused changes, has not been prepared in accordance with the Duty to Co-operate, legal or procedural requirement or why you consider the plan to be unsound. Alternatively, if you wish to support any aspects of the plan please also use this box to set out your comments.

Please see the Statement attached
Please note that the contents are substantively the same as the Objections to MAJ/16/2 and CON16/4

Continue on a separate sheet if necessary

7. What change(s) do you consider are necessary to ensure that the Local Plan is legally compliant and sound? It would be helpful if you are able to put forward your suggested revised wording of any policy or text. Please be as precise as possible.

Please see the attached Change
Please note that the contents are substantively the same as the Objections to MAJ/16/2

Continue on a separate sheet if necessary

8. If your representation is seeking a change to the Local Plan as amended by the focused changes, do you consider it necessary to participate in the oral part of the examination?

- No, I do not wish to participate in the oral examination
- Yes, I would like to participate in the oral examination

9. If you wish to participate in the oral part of the examination please outline why you consider that to be necessary. Please note that the Inspector determines who is heard at the examination.

Clemdell Ltd is a local company that has various properties in the area of Blandford Forum particularly the Town Centre. It is concerned that the Focused Changes and the Sustainability Appraisal positively reject national planning guidance.

Clemdell's participation in the Hearing could, therefore, assist the Inspector in determining the outcome of the Examination.

10. Please outline your comments on the Supplement to the Sustainability Appraisal or Addendum to the Habitats Regulations Assessment. Comments are not confined to 'soundness' issues, but respondents can express their opinions on the above documents and use it as a reference point on the 'soundness' of the Local Plan.

The comments on the Supplement to the Sustainability Appraisal are a reference point for Clemdell's objections and are attached hereto.

11. Do you wish to be notified of any of the following? *Please tick all that apply. We will contact you using the details you have given above.*

- That the Local Plan Part 1, as amended by the Focused Changes, has been submitted for independent examination
- The publication of the recommendations of any person appointed to carry out an independent examination of the Local Plan Part 1
- The adoption of the Local Plan Part 1.

Signature: J Kamm

Date: 11 September 2014

If submitting the form electronically, no signature is required.

**OBJECTION TO
FOCUSSED CHANGE MAJ/16/1
ON BEHALF OF CLEMDLL LIMITED**

1.0 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The NPPF (for example at paragraphs 7 & 8) identifies the function and content of a sustainability appraisal: *“There are three dimensions to sustainable development: economic, social and environmental..... These roles should not be undertaken in isolation, because they are mutually dependent.”*
- 1.2 As part of what *“constitute(s) the Government’s view of what sustainable development in England means in practice for the planning system”* paragraph 6 points LPA’s, inter alia, to paragraph 23 which includes that the Local Plan *“recognise town centres as the heart of their communities and pursue policies to support their viability and vitality;....recognise that residential development can play an important role in ensuring the vitality of centres and set out policies to encourage residential development on appropriate sites; and where town centres are in decline, local planning authorities should plan positively for their future to encourage economic activity.”*
- 1.3 The Draft North Dorset Local Plan – Part 1 (“the Local Plan”) states that recent Blandford development *“has not always been in places that are accessible to key locations, such as the town centre.”* (paragraph 8.8). In the Local Plan the Sustainable Development Strategy (“SDS”) for the town defines the key spatial aspects at paragraph 8.11 as *“focusing housing in accessible locations, particularly locations close to the Town Centre”* and *“within environmental constraints”* including within the town’s by-pass. The Council’s Vision includes at paragraph 5.18 *“the need to deliver thriving self-contained market town”*
- 1.4 Contrary to national policy and the unaltered parts of the Local Plan, the Focussed Changes promote a site that reinforces development on sites inaccessible to the town centre, increase the inaccessibility to the town centre, and is described as “severed” from Blandford in the Supplement to the Environmental Report (“the Supplement”) (paragraph 3.20). In short the Focussed Changes reject a Sustainable Development Strategy and defeat the LPA’s Vision for a self-contained town.
- 1.5 The Council have taken the opportunity to change the SDS (by Con16/1) to effectively remove the sequential test for all future development in Blandford with profound and foreseeable consequences for the long term future of the town that will thwart the sustainable development objectives for Blandford Forum.
- 1.6 The deletion of the site at Crown Meadows, that meets the range of the key aspects, has been determined upon just one consideration as is set out in the Agenda Report to Cabinet 10 July 2014 (“the Agenda Report”) paragraph 31 *“Consequently, the*

proposal to delete the Crown Meadows site from the Local Plan Part 1 is based on heritage issues and not on other issues.”

- 1.7 What is put forward as a focussed change is, in its detail and effect, no such thing. A focussed change would have re-ordered the priority of potential housing sites (as a simple consequence of the SDS) to go forward to Part 2 of the Local Plan – Site Selection to which the comprehensive sustainability and sequential tests should be applied.
- 1.8 The Council, having supported in 2012-2013 the location of Town Centre uses to out of town centre sites, now proposes to relocate residential development from the edge of Blandford Forum Town Centre to an out of town site.
- 2.0 **MAJ/16/1**
- 2.1 The Focussed Changes purport to focus on the change in a specific site allocation (see for example its paragraph 1.7). That is not the case.
- 2.2 In the documentation supporting the Focussed Changes there is no assessment of the impact on the Town Centre of re-focusing development away from Blandford Forum Town Centre and in particular on the potential harm that shifting new urban development from a site close to the Town Centre to a site beyond Tesco which the Local Plan recognises (at paragraph 8.32) as being already “*an out-of-town site*” and the latest Supplement to the Environmental Report states is indeed severed from Blandford with a road that “*creates a barrier for pedestrians and cyclists to obtain safe access to the facilities (schools, shops etc) within the town.*” (paragraph 3.20)
- 2.3 This is in contrast to the detailed evidence base that led the Local Plan to state (at paragraph 8.8) “*Recent research suggests that there is potential for further growth in more accessible locations, which will help to support the settlement’s service centre function and increase selfcontainment.*” – albeit recognising that such a balance was “*challenging*”. The Local Plan includes as a Vision, at paragraph 5.18, “*the need to deliver thriving self-contained market town*”
- 2.4 The Local Plan (at paragraph 8.8) recognised the need to reverse the trend of Blandford development away from the town centre, thus the SDS states a key spatial aspect to be “*focusing housing in accessible locations, particularly locations close to the town centre*” and “*Town centres are the sequentially preferred location for ‘main town centre uses’*” (paragraph 6.47) Government advice includes, for example, NPPF paragraph 23 for the preparation of Local Plans that “*recognise that residential development can play an important role in ensuring the vitality of centres and set out policies to encourage residential development on appropriate sites*”
- 2.5 Preserving and enhancing the heritage assets that constitute Blandford Forum’s Town Centre requires investment. That comes, inter alia, from the key spatial concepts that are in the NPPF but are rebuffed by the Focussed Changes.

2.6 The Local Plan already contains a suite of policies that positively undermine the vitality and viability of Blandford Town Centre, which are the subject of Clemdell's extant objections to the Local Plan. The Council is turning on its head the proper sequential development which plans from the Town Centre outwards. All substantive housing allocations are now located in and beyond Blandford St Mary away from Blandford Forum and linked to the out-of-town retail area at Tesco, effectively creating a new and separate settlement. It is notable that the Local Plan Market Towns Site Selection Background Paper (paragraph 5.100) identifies that opposition to Crown Meadows and support for St Mary's Hill is based, inter alia, on this severed site generating no extra traffic through Blandford Town Centre (ie no additional footfall).

3.0 ONE DIMENSIONAL PLANNING

3.1 The NPPF (for example at paragraphs 7 & 8) identifies the function and content of a sustainability appraisal: "*There are three dimensions to sustainable development: economic, social and environmental..... These roles should not be undertaken in isolation, because they are mutually dependent.*"

3.2 The Local Plan recognises its purpose is to apply *'the presumption in favour of sustainable development'* at the "*heart*" of the NPPF "*Local plans must be based on and reflect 'the presumption' and include clear policies setting out how the presumption should be applied locally*" (paragraph 1.2). This and similar paragraphs, not altered by the Focussed Changes, are the context for considering the inconsistency of the Focussed Changes.

3.3 In deleting the Crown Meadows proposals in its entirety solely because of the Heritage Report, the proposed Focused Changes fail to apply the strategy for sustainable development for the area. This is contrary to the Local Plan's overall strategy and further is contrary to Government Guidance. Local Plans must aim to achieve each of the dimensions of sustainable development, namely economic, social and environmental. This is repeated by English Heritage in its draft Note 3: The Setting of Heritage Assets (Step 3) which has not been considered by the Council.

3.4 In determining the deletion the Council consider neither the dimensions of the NPPF nor the context of the English Heritage advice note. The Agenda Report is clear at paragraph 19 that a judgement must be made stating: "*However, whilst these judgements establish that the 'strong presumption' against harm to conservation areas and listed buildings needs to be clearly recognised in decision-making, they do not necessarily preclude permitting development that would cause harm to designated heritage assets, nor do they mean that the same weight has to be given irrespective of the degree of harm that occurs.*"

3.5 The Agenda Report recognises (at paragraph 20) that a balance should be struck. Comprehensive judgements are entirely omitted when producing the Focussed Changes stated to be based upon consideration of a single issue only.

- 3.6 The Council is open about redefining the environmental test. The economic test is turned upon its head by equating the sustainability of “other facilities” to that of the Town Centre (see eg CON/16/1) and not considering the effect of directing investment out of the Town Centre by MAJ/16/1 and MAJ/16/2.
- 3.7 The social test is also reversed. The current local plan (paragraph 2.5.2 and policy BL7) has concern, and a policy, recognising the Crown Meadows importance as open space. By considering Crown Meadows only as a “*single issue*” housing site the evidentially sustainable open space allocation for the Crown Meadows is also deleted.
- 3.8 With the new proposal the Local Plan restricts development to out-of-town as the preferred choice for all future development without any evidence base other than its flawed approach to the heritage issues. Such an approach is completely contrary to Government policy.

4.0 UNNECESSARY SITE SPECIFIC DETAIL

- 4.1 Part 1 of the North Dorset Local Plan is not a site-allocation development plan document but rather one aimed at establishing principles. The Local Plan Part 1 need only to set the approximate number of units and the broad areas where they might be accommodated. At paragraph 1.7 the function assigned by the Council to each part of the Local Plan is explained: “*Part 1 of the Local Plan (this document) sets out the strategic planning policies for North Dorset. Part 2 (a subsequent document) will allocate specific sites for housing and employment growth in the main towns and will include a review of other land allocations and settlement boundaries. Work will commence on Part 2 of the Local Plan following the adoption of Part 1.*”
- 4.2 It is thus stated in terms that the specific impacts of planning applications for all the potential sites have yet to be comprehensively assessed in the context of Government policy and an adopted Local Plan. The Supplement is quite specific (at paragraph 1.7) about why the Council now supports St Mary’s Hill “*further information has been submitted for the site to the south of the A350/A354 roundabout. This has been submitted as part of the pre-application process associated with a pending planning application. Analysis of this information has concluded that the impact of the site will be less than previously thought*”. As the Council has clearly stated its own work on site allocation has not commenced - but it has accepted the pre-emptive work on behalf of the owners of St Mary’s Hill but rejected its own Scoping Opinion.
- 4.3 As set out in Clemdell’s Objection to the Supplement that information was submitted as part of a request for a Scoping Opinion (2/2014/0079/PLNG) and the consultee’s responses include the opposite to and contrary information to that reported in the Supplement. Indeed the LPA’s own Scoping Opinion (produced in advance of the Focussed Changes) states of St Mary’s Hill that “*The development has the potential to cause a significant landscape and visual impact*”

- 4.4 As noted, the Agenda Report is clear at paragraph 31: *“Consequently, the proposal to delete the Crown Meadows site from the Local Plan Part 1 is based on heritage issues and not on other issues.”*
- 4.5 The Heritage Report on Crown Meadows states in terms that it deals with that site as a whole and not with any area that might be promoted for development. It assesses the impact as a whole and so there is no clear understanding as to whether any of its constituent parts might be acceptable in any event or whether mitigation can resolve or achieve the balance that must be struck. Upon its own terms it is otiose to prioritising development areas in Part 1 of the Local Plan.
- 4.6 Deleting the whole of Crown Meadows and moving development out to a more remote countryside location without any consideration of the detailed options in the same area or the impact on other material policy considerations (such as the viability of the Town Centre) is inconsistent with good planning practice and with the advice of central Government that requires plans to place sustainable development at the heart of the list of planning policy objectives.
- 4.7 Further it pre-empts the Council’s approach to the Local Plan as a two-stage process where Part 2 of the Local Plan is the proper forum for the consideration of site allocations in a comprehensive and even-handed manner. The Focussed Changes leave no room for the application of sustainability principles at that stage.

5.0 CONCLUSION

- 5.1 The Agenda Report is clear - the Focussed Changes are said to be the result of considering only heritage assets (paragraph 31) and the balance (paragraph 20) against the principles of sustainability has not been attempted.
- 5.2 The residential site selection process in the Focussed Changes MAJ/16/1 and MAJ/16/2 is the mis-application of a procedure already in place. The Major Changes are a pre-emption of that procedure of the Local Plan - Part 2. It is prior to the Council commencing its own work on site selection (all as stated at paragraph 1.7 of the Local Plan). At best the Council has carried out only that work that it believes will support its pre-determined conclusion. Promoters of sites had a legitimate expectation that they could rely on the Local Plan – Part 1 statement that site selection was the Part 2 process.
- 5.3 Sequentially the Council has to justify and secure approval of CON/16/1 before it can run MAJ/16/1 and MAJ/16/2 as “sustainable” in the Council’s own fanciful inversion of the NPPF. CON/16/1, the key change in the Focussed Changes, was not even referenced in the Agenda Report. Councillors were misdirected to a discrete mis-application of the site-selection process. There has been no Sustainability Appraisal for the effect on the vitality and viability of the Town Centre of equating it with “other facilities” nor of relocating residential development out-of-town.
- 5.4 It is perverse that the sole reason given for deleting Crown Meadows – “heritage issues” ie affecting the setting of a minute number of such assets – will result in

adverse effects to the heritage assets of the town by diverting investment away from the Town Centre towards "other facilities" clearly out-of-town and severed from Blandford Forum.

- 5.4 The Council does not have the locus to discard the test of sustainability as it purports to do in MAJ/16/1 and MAJ/16/2. It gives "other facilities" the same weight as the Town Centre in CON/16/1. Self-containment remains the Local Plan's aim for Blandford thus the Focussed Changes - by prioritising a site severed from Blandford Forum - are at best bizarre. The Council is obliged to justify its rejection of a site close to the Town Centre by evidencing that the relocation will benefit the vitality of Blandford Town Centre as required by national policy (such as NPPF paragraph 23).
- 5.5 The NPPF (for example at paragraphs 7 & 8) is clear about how sustainability should be assessed "*There are three dimensions to sustainable development: economic, social and environmental..... These roles should not be undertaken in isolation, because they are mutually dependent.*" The Focussed Changes upon its own content (for example paragraph 1.7) and upon the Agenda Report have been proposed in isolation.
- 5.6 The Focussed Changes reject the heart of the NPPF and reject the principle of sustainable development. The Focussed Changes are, inter alia, perverse and unsound for the reasons set out above.

**SUGGESTED REVISED WORDING OF
FOCUSSED CHANGE MAJ/16/1
ON BEHALF OF
CLEMDELL LIMITED**

Section Reference: Pages 193 and 194, Policy 16: BLANDFORD (Policy Text)

Proposed Change(s): To be read in conjunction with MAJ/16/2.

Extract from Page 193

Sustainable Development Strategy

Blandford will maintain its role as the main service centre in the south of the district through:

- a development, redevelopment **and regeneration** within the existing built-up area **especially Blandford Forum Town Centre**; and
- b extensions, primarily of housing **to the west of Blandford Forum, or to the south-east** and to the west of Blandford St Mary; and
- c employment uses on land within the bypass on the northern edge of the town and the mixed use regeneration of the Brewery site close to the town centre.

Extract from Page 193

Meeting Housing Needs

..... In addition to infilling and redevelopment within the settlement boundary, Blandford's housing needs will be met through:

- g mixed use regeneration of the Brewery site; and
- h **the development of land to the west of Blandford Forum; or**
- i. the development of land to the south east of Blandford St Mary; and
- j. the development of land to the west of Blandford St Mary.

Extract from Page 195

Infrastructure

..... New or improved facilities will include:

- s the identification of a safeguarded route for the Spetisbury and Charlton Marshall Bypass ~~as part of the development of the land south east of Blandford St Mary and~~
- s(i) **securing the provision of a safe route across the Blandford bypass from the south of the A350/A354 roundabout and linking this to routes leading to the Mortain Bridge and Blandford Forum Town Centre and**
- w **informal open space at Crown Meadows to the west of Blandford Forum; and**
- x new sports pitches and associated facilities on land within the built up area of Blandford.

[NOTE: (1) Alterations to the Focussed Changes are in red.
(2) The alteration is the same as proposed to MAJ/16/2
(3) The paragraph numbering of Policy 16 will need reordering.
This affects CON/16/8 & CON/16/9]

**OBJECTION TO
THE SUPPLEMENT TO THE SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL
ON BEHALF OF CLEMDLELL LIMITED**

1.0 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The NPPF (for example at paragraphs 7 & 8) identifies the function and content of a sustainability appraisal: *“There are three dimensions to sustainable development: economic, social and environmental..... These roles should not be undertaken in isolation, because they are mutually dependent.”*
- 1.2 As part of what *“constitute(s) the Government’s view of what sustainable development in England means in practice for the planning system”* paragraph 6 points LPA’s, inter alia, to paragraph 23 which includes that the Local Plan *“recognise town centres as the heart of their communities and pursue policies to support their viability and vitality;....recognise that residential development can play an important role in ensuring the vitality of centres and set out policies to encourage residential development on appropriate sites; and where town centres are in decline, local planning authorities should plan positively for their future to encourage economic activity.”*
- 1.3 The Supplement to the Sustainability Appraisal (“the Supplement”) is the fourth iteration of the Sustainability Appraisal during the Local Plan process. Together with two Scoping Reports this is a process commenced in 2007. In this period there has been ample opportunity to align and update the Appraisal with government policy and events that have a strategic impact upon Blandford. That opportunity has not been taken.
- 1.4 The Local Plan recognises its purpose is to apply *“the presumption in favour of sustainable development at the “heart” of the NPPF “Local plans must be based on and reflect ‘the presumption’ and include clear policies setting out how the presumption should be applied locally”* (paragraph 1.2) The Supplement states the following at paragraph 3.1: *“This Sustainability Appraisal has been undertaken in an iterative way looking at options for meeting the housing requirements at each of the four main towns in the district.”* That is it references a wider area than Blandford but is stated, in terms, to consider just one of the sub-items, “housing”, that affects sustainability. In fact its main effect is to justify a policy reversal by way of the “Focussed Changes”. That effect is not mentioned in the Appraisal and it is the effect of CON16/1 which upturns the basis of sustainability by giving undefined “other facilities” the same status as the Town Centre for growth, contrary to the NPPF.
- 1.5 The Appraisal should be read not just with the Focussed Changes but, inter alia, with the Agenda Report to Cabinet 10 July 2014 (“the Agenda Report”) paragraph 31 *“Consequently, the proposal to delete the Crown Meadows site from the Local Plan Part 1 is based on heritage issues and not on other issues.”* (sic)

1.6 In reviewing the LPA's preferred option in the Supplement the two sites considered have been viewed as if hypothetical planning applications had been made. Thus the Supplement takes an entirely "focussed" view of the options without regard to the overall strategic effect on sustainability of its recommendations and in complete rejection of the NPPF and the principles stated in the Local Plan (eg at paragraph 1.2). In contrast the Focussed Changes makes changes which have foreseeable but unconsidered prejudicial effects upon Blandford and the broad policy area.

2.0 THE LAND TO THE WEST OF BLANDFORD (CROWN MEADOWS)

2.1 The Supplement confirms that "*The detail of the site was discussed with Natural England and appropriate biodiversity mitigation measures were suggested.*" (paragraph 3.7) The Agenda Report (paragraph 1) confirms that English Heritage was also consulted throughout the Local Plan process which included Topic and Background Papers on the Historic Environment.

2.2 Nevertheless the LPA saw fit to commission further work on the effect upon the setting of specific heritage assets - not from the potential development area - but of Crown Meadows as a whole. Specified heritage assets are taken out of context – that is reasonable given the remit of the Heritage Assessment. Heritage assets are of particular importance to Blandford Forum. But it is one sub-heading of the three dimensions of sustainability that have to be balanced. The Council has failed to consider or attach any weight to the investment needed to curate and enhance the heritage assets as a whole; that investment would flow from the applying sustainability criteria rejected by the Supplement.

2.3 What is also clear is that Councillors were not informed of the general prejudice to Blandford Forum that followed upon the deletion of Crown Meadows because of the "*single issue*" of housing, Firstly that the Town Centre would lose investment and CON16/1 would downgrade the Town Centre to equivalence with sundry facilities. The overall effect upon the conservation and enhancement of Blandford Forum's important heritage assets has not been considered. In short the "economic" dimension of sustainability has been discarded.

2.4 Similarly the "social" dimension has been ignored. The current local plan (paragraph 2.5.2 and policy BL7) has concern, and a policy, recognising the Crown Meadows importance as open space. Because, on its own terms, the Supplement considers only housing there is no consideration of the sustainability of the proposed deletion of the majority of Crown Meadows as open space. Such evidence as the Council has put forward that this allocation is sustainable and contributes to Blandford Forum's self-containment and social welfare therefore stands and that allocation should remain in the Local Plan.

3.0 LAND SOUTH OF THE A350/A354 ROUNDABOUT (ST. MARY'S HILL)

- 3.1 In contrast to the review of Crown Meadows the Supplement states at paragraph 3.12, in terms, that the analysis of St. Mary's Hill relies upon "*information (that) has been submitted as part of the pre-application work prior to a planning application being submitted.*" That information was submitted as part of a request for a Scoping Opinion (2/2014/0079/PLNG).
- 3.2 The Supplement states (as an example only) at paragraph 3.22 that this information "*indicates that the development can be adequately incorporated into the landscape. There are areas where the impact on the landscape will exist however the impact is not considered to be as significant as previously thought.*"
- 3.3 The Supplement should be contrasted with the LPA Scoping Opinion, dated 5 March 2014, "*Landscape Impact Assessment (Incl. AONB)* *The development has the potential to cause a significant landscape and visual impact due to the scale of the development proposed, topography of the land and proximity to the AONB's*" which is detailed in the consultee's response.
- 3.4 The Supplement brushes over the sustainability issues breached by the proposed allocation. These issues include of "severance" at paragraph 3.20 and the impact to the setting of the town, at paragraph 4.7. Nor is there any assessment against the Local Plan objective at paragraph 8.8 for Blandford to "*increase selfcontainment*".
- 3.5 The Recommendations almost read as a series of planning conditions to a planning permission rather than a strategic overview of the sustainability of its conclusions. The narrowness of the LPA's re-definition of sustainability is re-enforced in paragraph 4.2 recommending St Mary's Hill as "*the most sustainable approach to meeting the housing needs of Blandford*".
- 3.6 It should also be noted that Recommendation 3 which asserts that the Dorset Trailway "*runs through Blandford town centre.*" In fact it does no such thing, nor is it proposed to do so. It directs users away from the Town Centre. If the Supplement was iterative, applying the three dimensions of sustainability and concerned with, inter alia, self-containment it would reference and reinforce the proposals to strengthen the links between Blandford St Mary and the Town Centre across the Mortain Bridge.
- 3.7 The Council is committed to the Trailway improvements and confirms, in Appendix B of the Infrastructure Delivery Plan that it is a Dorset County Council commitment to fund and deliver and is "*required (to meet the needs and aspirations of the community)*". As with the By-Pass and links from Blandford St Mary to the Town Centre, these are not directly related to the development of a site and cannot be material to the sustainability appraisal contrasting this site to Crown Meadows.
- 3.8 This site is described variously as Land South of the A350/A354 Roundabout, St. Mary's Hill, or Land South-East of Blandford St Mary.

4.0 PRE-EMPTING THE LOCAL PLAN - PART 2 SITE SELECTION

- 4.1 The Council has determined to progress the Local Plan in two parts. What this means in practice is that the LPA is unable, at this time, to make any useful assessment of the sustainability of the alternative sites it lists in the Local Plan – Part 1.
- 4.2 However for St Mary's Hill site the LPA has been able to formulate a Scoping Opinion, further to 2/2014/0079/PLNG, which rebuts the Supplement. The Application Plan identifies the site as 4.061 ha gross, from which land will be reserved for the By-Pass. On the net area the Focussed Changes (CON/16/3) propose about 300 dwellings. The Heritage Assessment uses a different plan.
- 4.3 It is trite that the assessment of the sustainability of a site will be completely different depending on the precise location and size of that site.
- 4.4 The Supplement confirms (at paragraph 6.3) that the iterative assessment process will continue alongside the Local Plan – Part 2. That process will either apply the three dimensions of sustainability:
- (a) To a range of housing sites – then the current exercise will need to be repeated but applying all not just one sub-section of the dimensions, or
 - (b) To an arbitrarily pre-determined housing site – then any future work is otiose and the principle of sustainability should be deleted from the Local Plan pages in toto.

5.0 CONCLUSION

- 5.1 The Focussed Changes (at paragraph 1.22) sets out four tests of a Local Plan's soundness. The Supplement forms part of that Local Plan process and signally fails to comply with those tests. In particular it is inconsistent with national policy – "*the plan should enable the delivery of sustainable development in accordance with the policies in the National Planning Policy Framework.*" The Supplement directly rejects consideration of the three mutually dependent elements of sustainability.
- 5.2 The Supplement fails to appraise the sustainability of its Recommendations in the round. The recommendations flow from an assessment of a narrow review of housing needs based upon a very very narrow view of selective heritage issues. Consistent with the Sustainability Appraisals throughout there is no pretence at a genuine attempt to weigh and balance the "*economic, social and environmental*" roles that are "*mutually dependent*" (per the NPPF).
- 5.3 There has been no Sustainability Appraisal applying the sustainability dimensions to the effect, inter alia, on the vitality and viability of the Town Centre of equating it with "other facilities" or upon it of relocating residential development out-of-town
- 5.4 Upon its own terms the Supplement is flawed ab initio as a sustainability appraisal. Paragraph 3.1 confirms that it considers only housing allocations and that the LPA has made its decision based only upon the setting of heritage assets (paragraph 4.3).

As is stated in the Agenda Report *“the proposal to delete the Crown Meadows site from the Local Plan Part 1 is based on heritage issues and not on other issues.”*

- 5.5 The conclusions pre-empt the Local Plan – Part 2 Site Selection not least for the sustainable location of housing. The Supplement at paragraph 6.3 states that *“Further Sustainability Appraisal work will be undertaken as and when necessary to support the adoption of the Local Plan”*. Until sites are properly defined in Part 2 of the Local Plan no one can make any credible judgement as to the sustainability of housing sites.
- 5.6 The LPA have confirmed by email dated 1 September 2014 that its further work will not include revision and updating of the Joint Retail Assessment by Nathaniel Litchfield. That Assessment is based upon 2007 information thus not taking account of the LPA approvals of Asda and Tesco which its own reports, commissioned from MWA between 2011 and 2012, demonstrate will have a profoundly negative effect upon Blandford Town Centre.
- 5.7 The MWA reports thus stand as the LPA’s appraisals of the sustainability of the Town Centre recording the severe prejudice of decisions not reviewed in the iterations of the Sustainability Appraisals. Assessing the sustainability impact upon Blandford Town Centre of removing the housing allocation from Blandford Forum is necessary and is a piece of work the LPA must do in accordance with paragraph 6.3 of the Supplement.
- 5.8 The form of the Sustainability Appraisals do not comply with the NPPF. As is made clear from the documents referred to in the Agenda Report (paragraph 11) the LPA’s Heritage Reports do not take account of current English Heritage guidance. Even if it were possible to disregard these matters, the Agenda Report (at paragraph 19) accepts that the case law on planning applications which form the basic assumption of the Supplement *“do not necessarily preclude permitting development that would cause harm to designated heritage assets, nor do they mean that the same weight has to be given irrespective of the degree of harm that occurs.”*
- 5.9 Prima facie the commitment to further Sustainability Appraisal work is misleading. For example there is no consideration in the Council’s documentation of how the Council will meet the housing allocation for Blandford if one of its preferred sites is found to be objectively unsustainable through the Local Plan – Part 2 process. That is clear evidence that the Council has pre-empted the outcome of the Part 2 process and that it is critical that the Supplement is recast in the context of the NPPF.
- 5.10 It is not simply the NPPF and statutory guidance that has been disregarded by the Sustainability Appraisals. There is an absence of objective judgement and balance. There is a conflict between statements in the Supplement and the LPA’s own underlying documents.
- 5.11 Crucially the Sustainability Appraisals, as iterated over a seven year period, have failed to positively consider the viability of Blandford Forum Town Centre. There is no consideration of the effect of factual and proposed changes on the Town Centre in

that seven years that could lead to the slipping-in of the key change in the Focussed Changes, CON16/1, that introduces the proposal to rank unidentified “other facilities” as equivalent to the Town Centre in considering sustainability.

- 5.12 The Sustainability Appraisals are thus fundamentally flawed and should be reviewed with regard to NPPF (and indeed English Heritage) guidance. These decisions are recognised in the Local Plan as “difficult” but that is the LPA’s obligation.