

**BLANDFORD ST MARY HOMES Ltd**

**RESPONDENT ID No. 1596**

**ISSUE NO. 7**

**NORTH DORSET LOCAL PLAN**

**EXAMINATION IN PUBLIC**

**ISSUE 7**

**STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF BLANDFORD ST MARY  
HOMES**

**BY**

**M. D. BROWN, FRICS, MRTPI**

This paper is prepared by Malcolm Brown on behalf of Blandford St Mary Homes in response to Questions posed by Inspector D. Hogger.

## **Q 7.1 LAND SE and W of BLANDFORD ST MARY -Available Sustainable and Deliverable**

### Availability

7.1.1 The respondent has been promoting residential development of this site for many years. It is owned freehold and not subject to any land charges. The current agricultural activity can be terminated at any time. (MDB1 drawings)

### Sustainability

7.1.2 The *North Dorset District-Wide Local Plan* (2003) recommends situating housing developments within 1 mile(1.6km) of a town centre. The proposed residential development is situated approximately 0.6 miles (1km) away from Blandford Forum town centre.

7.1.3 The NPPF identifies three dimensions to sustainable development. Development of the allocated site for residential purposes is sustainable in terms of those three dimensions for the following reasons.

7.1.4 Economic Role- It will contribute to providing the land that is necessary now to boost significantly the supply of housing. The necessary infrastructure will be provided as part of the development. The proposal will create jobs and growth in the construction industry satisfying Part 1 of "Delivering Sustainable Development" The construction industry puts money into the local economy by purchasing materials and employing local subcontractors and tradesmen. The occupants of the houses will bring money into the local economy where they will purchase goods and services enhancing the viability the town centre in accordance with Part 2 of the NPPF. It will also generate New Homes Bonus and Council tax.

7.1.5 Social Role – The proposal will help to significantly boost the supply of housing including affordable housing. The respondents have demonstrated their ability to provide a wide choice of high quality homes (Parts 6 and 7 NPPF) in a balanced community at Bryanston Hills (Part 8 NPPF). The development will create employment in construction and maintenance. It will contribute to community activity and retention of facilities.

7.1.6 Environmental Role – The site is within (level) walking and cycling distance to the town centre, employment and Tesco superstore at Stour Park. The shortest route to the town centre is traffic free across Langton Meadows. The *North Dorset Local Accessibility Study* (2010) highlights the importance of a housing development having access to a supermarket.

7.1.7 The development will facilitate improvement to the Trailway (footpath and cycleway) connecting residents of Charlton Marshall and Spetisbury to the town by a level route. The trailway is a long held aspiration of the planning authority to

provide a long distance traffic free walking and cycling route. This will promote sustainable transport (Parts 4 NPPF) , 5 (transp.) 7(good design).

7.1.8 Blandford is within the SE Dorset HMA and development will to some extent relieve pressure on the SE Dorset Green Belt(Part 9 NPPF) 11,

#### 7.1.9 Flood Risk to Development (MDB 2)

The River Stour, the nearest major watercourse, is situated approximately 600m to the north of the site. Although the River is categorized as a significant flood risk by the Environment Agency, the associated flood zone falls outside the development site. The lowest part of the site is also approximately 8m above the 0.1% (1 in 1000yr) flood level for the river. Therefore, the risk of flooding to the site from outside sources is insignificant.

#### 7.1.10 Flood Risk from the Development

All stormwater run-off will be contained and managed at source, thereby simulating the existing condition. All private infiltration facilities have been designed to contain run-off from a 1 in 30yr storm event plus 20% climate change allowance. During a 1 in 100yr storm event (plus 30% climate change allowance) additional surcharge run-off will be contained within the drainage network for each property and within the topography of each plot.

7.1.11 The adoptable infiltration facilities will be designed to contain run-off from a 1 in 50year storm event plus 30% climate change without surcharging. The topography local to the infiltration facility will be designed to provide additional storage in order to contain surcharge run-off during a 1 in 100yr event surcharge (plus 30% climate change allowance). Therefore, the risk of flooding to neighbouring property from the site will be insignificant.2 –

7.1.12 This proposal satisfies Part 10 of the NPPF.(MDB 2)

7.1.13 A biodiversity assessment has established that the site is not of high ecological significance.(MDB 3) The site is not within an AONB. The Landscape Visual Impact Assessment (MDB 4) identifies some harm which can be mitigated by good design and biodiversity enhancement. (See below). An arboricultural Impact Assessment (MDB 5) has shown that the illustrative layout would enhance the most significant group of trees on the site. On balance the impact on the natural environment is considered to be beneficial.(Part11 NPPF)

### Delivery

7.1.14 BSMH built most of Byanstone Hills. That development was designed by the same architectural and planning team. It won national design and planning awards for the developers and the local authority. If not built out by BSMH the site will be sold, subject to a development brief, to housebuilders. Interest is already being received from national and regional housebuilders even though the site is not in the market.

## **Q 7.2 ASSIMILATION INTO THE SETTLEMENT AND WIDER SETTING**

7.2.1 A Landscape Visual Impact Assessment (MDB 4) concludes:-

7.2.2 Due to restrictions on site availability, any new housing within Blandford Forum/Blandford St Mary is likely to require the development of a greenfield site and would therefore result in significant landscape and visual effects.

7.2.3 The St Mary's Hill site, situated on the urban edge of Blandford St Mary, provides an opportunity to create much needed housing in a sustainable and desirable location whilst realising localised and relatively small scale adverse landscape and visual effects.

7.2.4 The findings of this report correspond with those of the St Mary's Hill Heritage Statement, which found any potential impacts on the setting of heritage assets to be Slight.

7.2.5 The site provides the opportunity to extend the existing urban area in a logical way by utilising urban edge landscape that is of relatively low scenic beauty when compared to the AONB landscapes surrounding it.

7.2.6 The development would provide a network of new attractive public open spaces that would act as focal points, not only to the site, but to the wider Blandford St Mary townscape. These would provide important gateway and townscape structure functions, in addition to providing spaces for play and community interactivity, as well as helping to realise ecological and sustainability benefits.

(Appendix MDB 4)

7.2.7 The Trailway will be integrated into the design of the development crossing the A354 at grade by way of a Toucan crossing, assimilating the development functionally both with the town and the settlements in the countryside beyond.

### **HERITAGE ASSESSMENT**

7.2.8 An assessment has been carried out by North Dorset District Council (MDB 6)

7.2.9 The methodology undertaken to assess the impact of the proposed development has drawn on guidance for understanding and assessing heritage significance provided by English Heritage in Conservation Principles

7.2.10 The Conclusions include:-

No designated heritage assets will experience a major significance of effect by the proposed development and so none will experience substantial harm.

7.2.11 Grade I and 2 Grade II\* listed buildings will experience a limited degree of visual interruption within their wider setting although given the nature of the topography, distance (especially in relation to the Grade I listed building) and landscaping, this is relatively minor and less than substantial. Seven Grade II listed buildings will experience no or negligible impact.

7.2.12 Three of the four non-designated assets will not be affected by the proposal. The fourth, Ward's Drove Bridge will lose part of its rural setting and harm will be caused although given the nature of the asset and its context this would not amount to substantial harm.

7.2.13 The overall impact of the proposed development on the significance of heritage assets will be limited and not sufficient to warrant resistance in heritage terms. (See Appendix MDB 6)

## **Q 7.4 - TRANSPORT ASSESSMENT and INFRASTRUCTURE REQUIREMENTS**

7.4.1 Parsons Brinckerhoff was appointed to undertake a Transport Assessment in order to examine the impact of the St Mary's Hill development on the local highway infrastructure in Blandford St Mary. The requirements and scope of the Transport Assessment were agreed with Dorset County Council. (MDB7)

7.4.2 The Transport Assessment considers the impact of a proposed development of 350 dwellings on a 27 acre site adjacent to the A354 and A350 and its impact on the highway network in conjunction with the additional impact generated by other committed developments in the area.

7.4.3 The Transport Assessment concluded that with the exception of the Stour Park/Bournemouth Road roundabout, the existing highway infrastructure can accommodate the combined forecast traffic flows generated through general growth, committed development and the proposed development at St Mary's Hill.

7.4.4 The Transport Assessment also considered the current facilities for cyclists and pedestrians and the potential need for improvements to ensure adequate connectivity between the development and the Blandford conurbation. The Trailway has been a strategic objective for many years. Until now there has been no mechanism to deliver a safe crossing of the A354.

### Findings

7.4.5 Although the Stour Park/Bournemouth Road roundabout exceeds capacity in the 2025 forecast PM peak scenario (with and without the proposed development), the contributory traffic from the proposed development is only one vehicle every 10 minutes on the one approach arm that operates over capacity at the junction. The capacity issue predicted is due to background growth and committed development impact. The proposed St Marys Hill development impact on the junction is insignificant in comparison. Therefore, no improvements to the existing highway infrastructure are considered necessary apart from the new access junctions associated with the development.

7.4.6 Personal Injury Collision data was obtained for both the A350/A354 and Bournemouth Road/Stour Park roundabouts for a five year period between September 2008 and August 2013. A total of 7 personal injury collisions accidents were observed, none of which were pedestrian related. An analysis of the collision activity at both junctions in comparison to national averages concluded that there was no significant road safety issues with the roundabouts, with the number of collisions recorded being significantly less than the national average.

7.4.7 The impact on the A31 trunk road network (at its junctions with the A354 and A350), from the proposed development will be insignificant due to dispersion of traffic between the site and the trunk road. The A31 between Wimborne and Bere Regis is 9 kilometres from Blandford St Mary.

7.4.8 The pedestrian route from the site to Blandford Forum crosses the A354. The development is suitably located so that Blandford Forum Town Centre and the local amenities are both within convenient walking distance.

7.4.9 Dorset County Council had expressed concern that the existing pedestrian crossing over the A354 is not adequate for pedestrians to cross due to the strategic nature of the A354. During the site visit in November 2013 it was observed that the crossing point operated safely and efficiently, with cars slowing down before the roundabout with good visibility on approach to the junction. These observations, coupled with the collision data which showed no collisions involving pedestrians over a five-year period and a less than average number of collisions at the junction, suggests the crossing currently provides safe passage over the A354 towards the town centre.

7.4.10 A further investigation of existing pedestrian and cyclist's movements at the junction identified a total of 2 pedestrian movements in the 08:00-09:00 peak and 6 (3 pedestrian and 3 cyclists movements) in the 17:00-18:00 peak hours crossing the arm. The proposed development will generate a total of 67 AM peak and 59 PM peak hour pedestrian trips from the site. Assuming all pedestrian trips used the existing dropped kerb crossing on the A354 this equates to approximately 1 additional trip every minute in each peak hour.

7.4.11 The *National Planning Policy Framework* published in March 2012 by the Department of Communities and Local Government states that any improvements to the transport network should be cost effective against the impacts of the development. Developments should only be refused on transport grounds where this is not the case, where the residual impacts of the development are too severe. It is therefore considered that any mitigation proposals that are not proportionate to the impact of this residential proposal are not justified.

#### Mitigation Proposals

7.4.12 It is appreciated that the increased pedestrian movements from the site will increase the demand of the existing dropped kerb crossing on the A354 approach to the junction. Dorset County Council has been consulted with regard to the current Transport Assessment findings and has agreed that a Toucan crossing at ground level will provide a safe crossing which will be more attractive to users than either a bridge or a subway both of which have environmental and user issues. (MDB 8). Safety at the crossing will be reinforced by an extension of the 40mph speed limit from A354/A350 roundabout to a point approximately 450m north of the crossing. Further traffic management measures will be provided to complement the revised speed restriction and to discourage overtaking on the approach to the crossing.

7.4.13 Minor improvements (traffic signing and street lighting) will be provided to pedestrian routes from the development to the town centre

encouraging walking and cycling as an alternative to other transport modes as well as shared use footway/cycling facilities in various locations. In addition a bus lay-by will be introduced on the A350 (northbound) enabling public transport users to have a safer boarding and alighting area as well as allowing other traffic to move more freely on the main road.

7.4.14 A separate Travel Plan document has also been produced which sets out the various forms of non-car travel accessible to and from the site and how this development proposal, and supporting soft mitigation measures, enhance this. The Travel Plan will identify the appointment of a Travel Plan Coordinator who will monitor the performance of the site, ensuring measures are successfully implemented and targets are achieved.

#### Conclusion

7.4.15 It is concluded that the proposed development and recommended improvements satisfy all the planning policy requirements and therefore show no reason, on transport and highway grounds, why development at St Marys Hill should not receive planning consent.

#### **Other infrastructure**

7.4.16 The respondents are negotiating with service suppliers for water, gas, and electricity, all of which are available on the site. (see MDB 1e)

### **Q 7.5 INFRASTRUCTURE REQUIREMENTS**

7.5.1 The respondents accept that the “grey infrastructure requirements are justified and will be provided as part of the development of the land south of the A354, specifically enhancement of the Trailway and the provision of improved bus stops.

7.5.2 The position with social infrastructure is less clear

7.5.3 The refurbishment of the Corn Exchange (s) appears more of a revenue cost rather than a capital cost that is necessary to enable development. It is understood that no new neighbourhood halls to serve new development in the south of the town are required. The respondents previously made land available at Bryanston Hills but this was not taken up.

7.5.4 The upgrading of leisure facilities is supported (t).

7.5.5 The respondents built the primary school at Bryanston Hills and it has since been extended. It is understood this school may be accepting pupils from outside the immediate catchment area and the extension of the Archbishop Wake and Milldown primary schools might release capacity at Bryanston Hills.(u)

7.5.6 If new medical facilities are required these can be accommodated within the development south of the A354.(v)

## **Q 7.6 SPETISBURY/CHARLTON MARSHALL BY PASS**

7.6.1 The respondents have made provision to accommodate the by pass. The junction with the A354 will be constructed by the respondents to provide a second access to the development site in such a way as to accommodate the bypass if and when required. The design has been approved in principle by Dorset County Council Highways Department and the land will be provided to DCC when required. ( See MDB8)

7.6.2 It is a widely held belief that an improved route is required between south east Dorset and Bristol.

## **Q 7.8 DELIVERY STRATEGY**

7.8.1 The strategy set out in paragraph 8.12 is not satisfactory. It will not “boost significantly the supply of housing” in accordance with the NPPF. Site 7 has already been built out. There are few sites of any size likely to be delivered without the delivery of the green field allocation. The site at Blandford St Mary can be made available immediately and subject to receiving full planning permission could commence within a year. New dwellings including affordable dwellings complete with grey infrastructure can be delivered in years 3-5 contributing to the 5 year housing land supply.

## **APPENDICES**

APPENDIX MDB 1--DRAWINGS a-e

APPENDIX MDB 2--FLOOD RISK ASSESSMENT- DRAINAGE STRATEGY

APPENDIX MDB 3--ENVIRONMENTAL (ECOLOGY) SURVEY

APPENDIX MDB 5--TREE REPORT AND ARBORICULTURAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

APPENDIX MDB 6--HERITAGE ASSESSMENT

APPENDIX MDB 7--TRANSPORT IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND TRANSPORT PLAN

APPENDIX MDB 8--CORRESPONDENCE WITH TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY