



23 May 2018

Dear

Blandford + Neighbourhood Plan: Site Options

You may know that the Blandford + Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group (representing Blandford Forum Town Council, Blandford St. Mary Parish Council and Bryanston Parish Council) has agreed with North Dorset District Council (NDDC) that a new Neighbourhood Plan will be prepared for the designated Area.

The Plan will be responsible for all site allocations and other area-specific policies to supplement the Local Plan Review, which will provide the strategic policy framework for the Plan. This is very much the approach encouraged by the new NPPF.

The Steering Group and NDDC have agreed a strategic land use and quantum specification for the site allocations and a timetable for the preparation and examination of the Neighbourhood Plan. The specification requires the Plan to allocate land for:

- at least 400 homes over and above commitments and Local Plan allocations
- a 2FE primary school
- at least 2Ha of B1-B8 employment land (area to be confirmed)

Both are keen to see the growth of the town continue to be plan-led and to contribute positively to objectively assessed housing need. In which case, the Plan will come forward more quickly than the Local Plan Review, but will be informed by its reasoning and evidence, along with that of the adopted Local Plan.

You will be aware that NDDC published an Issues & Options document for consultation in November 2017, together with its Sustainability Appraisal (SA). Both documents can be viewed at <https://www.dorsetforyou.gov.uk/article/423247>. It also issued a new 'Call for Sites' to update the evidence on land availability. NDDC has shared with the Steering Group a summary outcome of the comments on the consultation and of the Call for Sites. We understand that you have an interest in land that lies within a qualifying 'Area of Search' (see Sustainability Appraisal Fig. 6.4 p.32) from which we may make site allocations in due course, hence you are receiving this letter.

NDDC has advised that the Neighbourhood Plan should adhere to the SA, which concluded that Areas A, B, E, F and J are those that may be the location of site allocations, having excluded the other Areas for one reason or another. We have agreed that the Neighbourhood Plan will select its site allocations by applying four tests:

- Sustainability effects, using its own SA (to be undertaken by [AECOM](#));
- Deliverability, comprising an analysis of availability, achievability and viability;
- AONB suitability, in respect of the obligations of the [CROW Act 2000](#); and
- Community opinion, comprising a series of informal and statutory consultation activities, commencing in July 2018

We have agreed that the means by which a preferred option for site allocations will be reached is by applying these tests to a number of spatial options. Each option will deliver the full specification on one or more sites, based on an understanding of available land (using the Call for Sites data) and our initial assessment of its capacity to accommodate one or more parts of the specification. All are considered plausible in principle and we do not consider there are any other options.

The seven options are as follows (see attached Spatial Options plan that shows the Areas):

1. Area A + Area B (the full specification)
2. Area F1 + Area F2 (the full specification)
3. Area E (300 homes and primary school only)
4. Area A (300 homes and primary school only)
5. Area B (300 homes and primary school only)
6. Area F1 (300 homes and primary school only)
7. Area F2 (300 homes and primary school only)

For all these options, we estimate that their housing quantum will be supplemented by at least 100 new homes on sites within the existing built up area of Blandford (Forum and St. Mary). In that way, all exceed the given housing target. Further site assessment work will be undertaken of the sites put forward in the Call for Sites within the built-up area boundary and immediately adjoining it, in the case of smaller parts of the Areas of Search H and J. Neither are suitable or necessary for contributing towards the preferred spatial option, but may have other sustainability attributes.

In relation to options 3 – 7, we have assumed that the employment land will either be allocated in Area J or be delivered through a criteria-based policy. Area J adjoins the town's main employment areas off Shaftesbury Lane with access to the strategic road network. If it is ultimately considered unavailable or unsuitable for this purpose, and options 1 and 2 are not preferred, then the Plan may, as a last resort, include an encouraging criteria-based policy.

It is important that we validate each of these options prior to testing them. We therefore invite you to confirm that land you control in the relevant options can and will be made available in the plan period for the mix of uses indicated in a way that can accommodate any necessary landscape, design or access mitigation measures in principle terms. You should also indicate if there is a need for any equalisation arrangement and if such an agreement is already in place. If you consider that an option within which you have a land interest should not be taken forward, then you should make that clear with your reasoning.

We do not need any promotional material at this stage and we do not need your analysis of yours or any other option. You will be given the opportunity in July to make promotional material available to the general public and we will write to you separately on this matter. We will also forward this material to AECOM to inform the Draft SA and it will be used by us to inform our

deliverability and AONB tests, on which we will engage with NDDC and the AONB teams respectively. We are aiming to agree our preferred spatial option, and our other draft policies, in September for the Pre-Submission Plan consultation in the autumn.

I would be grateful for your response by 5pm on Monday, 4 June 2018 at the latest, as we have Steering Group and NDDC meetings scheduled two days later. If you have any queries, please email me in the first instance and I will endeavour to provide a speedy response.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours Faithfully

Sally Gardner

Facilitator for Blandford+ / Project Co-ordinator Blandford Forum Town Council