

Blandford + Neighbourhood Plan 2

Note of meeting with AONB's

23 October 2018 at 10:00am in the BFTC Community Room

Notes of the Meeting

1. Welcome and Introductions

Cllr Roger Carter – Blandford + Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group and BFTC

Cllr John Stayt – B+NPSG, Blandford St Mary Parish Council

Ed Gerry, Planning Policy Team Leader – Dorset Councils Partnership, (NDDC)

Richard Burden, Principal Landscape and Planning Officer – (CCWWD AONB)

Richard Brown, Dorset AONB Landscape Planning Officer – (Dorset AONB)

Jon Dowty, Planning Project Manager – O'Neill Homer (OH)

Leani Haim, Principal Planner – O'Neill Homer

2. The respective roles of the Blandford + Neighbourhood Plan 2 and the North Dorset Local Plan Review

- OH and NDDC provided an outline and background of the project to date and thanked the AONB Partnerships for engaging in the Neighbourhood Plan process.
- The Preliminary development options report issued for the informal consultation held in July 2018, explained this background and highlighted that the environmental constraints are key to considering the spatial options.
- The NP was also conscious of the current planning circumstances in Blandford and the loss of the 5 Year Housing Land Supply in the district.
- A report by Urban Vision Enterprise CIC (dated September 2018) had been circulated prior to the meeting in response to the submissions by AONB's to the informal consultation in July 2018.
- NDDC clarified the relationship between the Local Plan Review (LPR) and B+NP. It had been agreed that the B+NP would progress the options set out in the Local Plan Issues and Options Document as applied to the neighbourhood area.
- NDDC confirmed that given its position in the settlement hierarchy (Blandford defined as a main service centre in the southern part of the district with substantial rural hinterland) there is an expectation for additional growth of the town through the LPR process. NDDC also confirmed they are content that the B+NP2 are able to allocate sites through a land use specification that has been agreed with the Steering Group.

- Dorset AONB sought clarification on the deletion of Spatial Option E (the land to the south of Blandford outside either any AONB).
- OH confirmed that after initial consideration, the land was excluded as a spatial option as the area north of Wards Drove was already committed land in the adopted Local plan and the remainder was not available; had insufficient capacity to accommodate the land use speculation; and, would lead to the coalescence of Blandford St Mary and Charlton Marshall.
- CCWWD AONB suggested that the growth strategy for Blandford needs to look further afield, specifically at concentrating growth on land beyond the Spatial Option E with a view to delivering highways infrastructure (specifically the Charlton Marshall/Spetisbury bypass). OH confirmed that while this remained a long term ambition of the Dorset Authorities and the Dorset LEP, it was a matter beyond the scope of the neighbourhood plan.
- Dorset AONB, while accepting no growth was not an option for Blandford, they sought clarification from NDDC on how the quantum of growth had been derived and they felt this should be demonstrated as part of the B+NP evidence base.

Action: NDDC

3. Exceptional circumstances and the public interest test

- It was explained that the B+NP SG were applying four tests in selecting their preferred options:
 1. Sustainability Appraisal to be undertaken by consultants AECOM
 2. Deliverability
 3. AONB suitability
 4. Community opinion
- Both AONBs were provided with an opportunity to suggest whether there was any additional evidence the AONBs considered necessary to be included in the evidence base.
- A discussion took place on examples of where the exceptional circumstances tests had been applied.
- Dorset AONB recommended, in addition to the evidence required in the context of future growth, that the B+NP supporting evidence should demonstrate the specific enabling role of development in the AONB and how this benefits the social and economic objectives of the town, with specific knowledge of what is being delivered in any allocations to demonstrate how the planning balance has been applied.

Action: B+NP/OH/AECOM

4. Mitigation principles and how the AONBs can assist

- The SG enquired whether there was anything else that the AONBs wished to see included in the evidence base of the B+NP2.
- CCWWD AONB confirmed they had seen no feedback from the informal consultation in July. It was confirmed that the consultation report had been available on the B+NP website since August. (An email notifying CCWWD AONB and other stakeholders that results were available was sent on 22nd August).
- CCWWD AONB also sought clarification that the B+SG were coming to a measured decision and the evidence supporting the plan would need to demonstrate that the three Councils (BFTC, BStMPC, BPC) have had regard to the AONB purposes and their duties under Section 85 of the CRow Act.
- CCWWD AONB also suggested that the SG should consider a combined approach with Charlton Marshall to deliver the highway infrastructure previously mentioned. OH confirmed that this option was not available to the B+SG.
- The AONB's requested updated evidence of housing need (Note: the government will be issuing their revised method in December) and confirmed their expectation that any proposals affecting the AONB will be required to be of high-quality design that sustains the character of the town.

5. AOB

- NDDC confirmed the latest position on the 5YHLS is that only 3.42 years can be demonstrated. A further update will be published around January 2019, but it is not anticipated that this figure will change much. In addition to this, there is currently reservations about the LPR Preferred Options consultation as elections are to take place on 2 May 2019 for the new Council and the purdah period starts 15 March 2019.
- A recent report was noted by the Shadow Authorities where it was decided that work will continue on each respective area's LPRs. The feeling taken from the meeting was that this was a holding position and that once the new Council was formed that they would most likely decide to start forming a joint Local Plan, as this needs to be in place by March 2024. Therefore, Blandford could be in a position with no Local Plan for the next five years.

Action: NDDC will inform the B+SG whether this will affect the B+NP2 current project plan.