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By email

18th March 2020

To: Philip Reese

Milton Abbas Neighbourhood Development Plan 2019-2031 Submission Plan.

Thank you for consulting the Dorset AONB Team in connection with the Submission Plan for Milton Abbas. I have reviewed the Plan and am familiar with the area. Previous AONB advice was provided in July 2019 by Richard Brown (Landscape Planning Officer) who is currently on a career break.

Overall – we welcome the production and submission of this Plan which, on the whole, appears to be well written and considered. The Plan makes positive connections with the Dorset AONB with a number of the policies being complimentary to the conservation and enhancement of the designated area, such as:

➤ **POLICY MA4. THE PATTERN OF DEVELOPMENT AND STREET SCAPE**

To ensure that any new development respects the rural character and historic distinctiveness of Milton Abbas within an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

➤ **POLICY MA5. BUILDING DESIGN**

➤ **POLICY MA6. IMPORTANT VIEWS**

Local Important Views (listed in Table 2) have been identified as valued by the local community and should be respected. Development that would significantly intrude and impact on their enjoyment, by virtue of scale, massing, design or location, will be resisted.

➤ **POLICY MA7: LOCAL GREEN SPACES**

Local Green Spaces (listed in Table 3) have been identified as important to the local community. Other than in very special circumstances, no development may take place which would harm the enjoyment of these spaces or would undermine their importance

➤ **POLICY MA8: DARK SKIES**

Development should be designed to conserve and enhance the intrinsic quality of the dark night skies.

In line with the previous consultation advice provided by the AONB Team the following policies within the AONB Management Plan are highlighted along with Guidelines contained within the AONB's Landscape Character Assessment:

AONB Management Plan Policy C1.a states: *“Support development that conserves and enhances the AONB, ensuring sensitive siting and design respects local character. Development that does not conserve and enhance the AONB will only be supported if it is necessary and in the public interest. Major development decisions need to include detailed consideration of relevant exceptional circumstances.”*

Policy C2.c states that: *“Local and Neighbourhood Plans must be supported by a robust landscape evidence base.”*

Policy C2.d states that: *“The key test of a proposal against the statutory purpose of the AONB will be its ability to demonstrate that the proposed change would conserve and enhance landscape and scenic beauty.”*

Policy C2.f states that: *“Proposals that are harmful to the character and appearance of the area will not be permitted unless there are benefits that clearly outweigh the significant protection afforded to the conservation and enhancement of the AONB. Where impacts cannot be mitigated, planning gain and*

compensatory measures will be considered.”

Policy C4.h states that: *“Avoid large scale and/or high-density housing and employment development at settlement edges when such development weakens the character and appearance of the countryside.”*

The LCA Planning Guidelines for the type of landscape in which the village is based state we should:

- *Conserve the pattern of tight knit villages and views of key landmarks.*
- *Ensure new housing development is complimentary to settlement scale, form and density and secure appropriate mitigation measures. Promote the use of previously developed land before greenfield sites, where this is well connected to settlement form. Require appropriate materials and architectural detailing, recognising the variable viability issues affecting market and affordable homes. Reduce the impact of associated features, including lighting, parking and access.*

With regards the previous comments submitted in July 2019 and associated ‘concerns’ over Sites 5 and 10 – we are satisfied that Site 10 (Land at Windmill Clump) has been withdrawn from the Plan.

With regards Site 5 (Land at Langham Farm) informal advice was provided in October 2019 with regards accommodating a small number of dwellings within this area. Concern was raised about the constraints of the Site – given its sensitive village ‘edge’ location and its relationship with existing dwellings.

The Plan, in para. 6.74 states that *“views into and out of the Site are screened by the hedgerow/trees located along the boundaries”*. This is not entirely accurate – as there are clear views across the Site from the bridleway that runs to the immediate west.

Figure 6 within the Plan illustrates a new landscape edge treatment to the north of the Site – but it is unclear as to what is proposed for the existing hedge that divides the Site from the Community Gardens area? This hedge, as existing, is an important local boundary feature and should be retained and protected. This would entail providing a ‘buffer’ between the hedge and any new development – creating a rather ‘linear’ and disconnected site.

Taking the above into account there remain concerns over the suitability of this Site in relation to the following AONB Management Plan policies:

C1a “Support development that conserves and enhances the AONB, ensuring sensitive siting and design respects local character. Development that does not conserve and enhance the AONB will only be supported if it is necessary and in the public interest”

C2f “Proposals that are harmful to the character and appearance of the area will not be permitted unless there are benefits that clearly outweigh the significant protection afforded to the conservation and enhancement of the AONB. Where impacts cannot be mitigated, planning gain and compensatory measures will be considered”.

The AONB Landscape Character Assessment planning guidance for this landscape states;

“Ensure new housing is complimentary in scale, form and density and secure appropriate mitigation measures”. The linear development of 6 dwellings along this ‘edge’ would appear to go against the thrust of this guidance.

We are, therefore, unable to see how the small number of houses could be comfortably accommodated at this settlement edge – given the constraints of the existing hedgerows/levels/ and poor relationship with the existing built development.

With regards Site 6 it is acknowledged that the number of dwellings that could be accommodated within this area has been adjusted from 12 to 15. We are happy to support the proposals for this area.

I hope that you find these comments helpful.

Kind regards



Sarah Barber CMLI,
Dorset AONB Landscape Planning Officer