

**From:** Hamish Murray  
**Sent:** 04 April 2016 10:00  
**To:** AdminBlandfordForum-TC  
**Subject:** Blandford+ Pre-Submission Plan

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the above Plan. With the limited time available there has not been an opportunity to provide detailed comments but there are a few broad points which might be useful to highlight:

Generally, DWT welcomes the recognition that economic and social objectives need to be balanced with the environment, and that the area's special natural and historic character will be retained and enhanced.

The Blandford+ area supports a particularly wide range of important wildlife and it would be useful to have some specific reference to this in the plan – this could include:

- The local stretch of the River Stour corridor - perhaps the best place in Britain for seeing Otters and other important riverine species such as Kingfisher and a number of scarce dragonflies.
- Areas of semi-natural chalk grassland which still support good populations of wildflowers and butterflies
- A number of significant woodland areas and mature trees supporting a varied range of woodland birds and other associated wildlife

DWT welcomes the development of a network of green infrastructure and improving connectivity between sites. Specific reference should be made to existing wildlife sites, particularly those with an appropriate designation such as Local Nature Reserve (LNR) or Site of Conservation Interest (SNCI) - these should be enhanced or expanded where possible. New opportunities for Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANGS) and other wildlife sites should be highlighted.

Sustainability and wildlife conservation should be integral part of all development in the area – not confined to 'green spaces', for instance opportunities to enhance biodiversity within housing areas and along road verges should be maximised. Gardens and urban green spaces have huge potential for wildlife conservation and often support more species than the surrounding countryside.

Where there is loss of wildlife habitat through development, appropriate mitigation measures should be in place. Caution should be taken when developing so called 'brownfield' sites – some of these can be surprisingly valuable for wildlife. An ecological assessment is required for all development sites.

The design principles (Policy 11) should have reference to optimising the potential for biodiversity and minimising the environmental impact of development.

There appears to be no reference in the plan of a proposed Environmental / Countryside Centre at the Milldown (linked to the Trailway) which is in the early stages of development by a partnership led by DCC and DWT. There is mention of a Visitor Centre in Policy 5 which is welcomed but there needs to be a rationalisation of this policy as it is very unlikely that the development of two Visitor Centres would be viable in Blandford.

A Visitor Centre, covering both the area's natural and cultural heritage, would be a key element in the development of Community Infrastructure and Local Tourism in the area. Its inclusion in the plan would put a 'marker' down and demonstrate wide community support to potential funders. It would also provide a sound basis and strategic context for the centre.

Please get back to me if you require any further information, I would be happy to discuss appropriate aspects of the plan in person if that was helpful

Regards

Hamish

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