



Mr E Gerry  
Planning Policy Team leader  
North Dorset District Council  
Nordon  
Salisbury Road  
Blandford Forum  
Dorset DT11 7LL

Our ref: [REDACTED]

Your ref: [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] [REDACTED]

11<sup>th</sup> October 2016

Dear Mr Gerry

**BLANDFORD + NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN REGULATION 16 CONSULTATION**

Thank you for your consultation on the submission version of the Blandford + Neighbourhood Plan.

Our apologies for this late response. We appreciate that discretion will rest with the Examiner as to whether our comments will be accepted at this stage of the proceedings but as they are few and relate to observations made previously we hope that they can be accommodated.

Previous interest in the preparation of the Plan has focussed on the site allocations and the need for evidence to demonstrate that these will not cause harm to designated heritage assets. Previous correspondence on the matter is attached for information.

We are aware of the need for proportionality in the nature of that evidence although it also needs to be sufficiently robust and credible given that the Plan if made will form part of the suite of development plan documents for the area. Assessment of the settings of heritage assets is an exercise that requires specialist skill and experience, and we have found that communities find it a challenging task if undertaking successfully such assessment themselves.

For this reason we referred the community to the approach adopted for the Shillingstone neighbourhood plan, also within your authority's area, which though requiring the involvement of a specialist heritage consultant did nonetheless represent a robust yet proportionate methodology likely to be equally suitable for the Blandford + scenario.

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We see that the community has now produced a Heritage Statement in support of the Plan which appears to follow broadly the recommended approach. This is stated as having been produced by the Plan’s Heritage Group though doesn’t refer to the involvement of a heritage specialist. Consequently it is not clear whether and how the assessment process has applied best practice, in the form of Conservation principles for example, whether the Group fully appreciated that relevant settings may relate to heritage assets outside the spatial scope of the Plan area, or how it determined that none of the allocation sites have any archaeological interest.

But, as previously indicated, the heritage agenda in terms of the off-site assets whose settings need to be understood is not extensive and we consider that there is sufficient evidence to inform the outcomes suggested for the policy sites which have been investigated. Based on this information and in conjunction with the protection of heritage assets provided by national and local policies we have no objection to their allocation in principle.

What is not clear is why Policy 1 – Land North & East of Blandford Forum is not included in the Heritage Statement. Regrettably, until this site has gone through a similar exercise our view is that there remains a gap in the necessary evidence base to demonstrate the Plan’s conformity with national and local policy for the protection and enhancement of the historic environment.

Yours sincerely

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