Blandford + NP Monitoring Group Meeting
Monday 30th June 2025 at 10.00am
On Teams
MEETING NOTES

1. Welcome and introductions

Cllr Carol Tompsett Chair)
Cllr Terry Clarkson
Cllr Ian Mackay
Sue Cowling
Becci Brady
Cllr Sheila Chapman
Nicci Brown
Roger Carter
Cllr Alan Cross

Ed Gerry- Community Planning Manager, Dorset Council

2. Apologies

Mark Aldis
Cllr John Dallison
Cllr Frank Stocks
Linda Scott-Giles
Cllr Margaret Putt
Cllr Catherine Moxham

Chair welcomed everyone, especially new B+NPMG member, Sue Cowling, and Ed Gerry from Dorset Council.

3. Ed Gerry- Community Planning Manager, Dorset Council

The Chair outlined the Group's wish to start the next B+NP review, due by October 2028, including a new vision for the B+ area. However, the recent withdrawal of funding support, by the government, needed to undertake this work, has now put the future of neighbourhood plans into doubt. In addition, the new Dorset Council Local Plan will be out for consultation, over the summer, and the Monitoring Group wishes to work closely with DC and the LP. Until then, the path forward is unclear.

Questions were put to Ed Gerry:

Carol: Can you tell us what our housing allocation will be in the Blandford+ Area?

Ed: The Local Plan consultation will start on August 18th lasting 8 weeks. Dorset Council says there has been an 80% increase in the government's housing needs for Dorset to 3200+ pa, so many difficult decisions will have to be made in terms of land-use. The Local Plan event on July 14th (B+NP members

attending) will not go into detail about specific site allocation but should provide context in terms of the housing needs.

Carol: When do new homes count towards the 5-year housing land supply?
Ed: When FULL planning permission has been granted.

Alan: You used the term ‘housing needs figure’, but what about ‘land availability’. The land available in Blandford is almost nil, so which is it?
Ed: When DC looked at possible sites, we considered which sites are being promoted as available for development. It is important to make a distinction between the housing need figure directed by the government and the requirement figure from DC. The land availability figure will be a key factor in deciding if the government’s need figure can be met by land availability in Dorset (landowners willing to sell).

Roger: B+NP would like to be involved in strategic site selection for the new Local Plan and to liaise with other local parishes in the site allocation process, as we are one community. Possibly an organisation could be formed to facilitate this.
Ed: This next round of consultations on the Local Plan will consider sites in Blandford and the surrounding area. We need to wait and see what is in that document. If there is an opportunity for local town and parishes to be involved in terms of strategic matters, it may be possible, but we will have to wait and see what comes out from the consultation.

Roger: Will the new Local Plan be based on the settlement hierarchy (more development going to larger towns and villages), seen in the current North Dorset Local Plan, or will it be more of a case of forming a new town to soak up the extra houses required?
Ed: It looks like as if a similar hierarchy will be part of the new LP.

Alan: Is the idea still on the table for Dorset to take up some of the housing needs of the BCP area, and other neighbouring authorities?
Ed: We will need to work closely with BCP and neighbouring authorities. In terms of DC being required to meet some of their housing allocation is unlikely as Dorset Council will find it difficult enough to meet their own housing need figure.

Carol: It is clear it’s going to be difficult to find sufficient sites in Dorset that do not have some constraint on them, so what will Dorset Council’s stance be on building in our National Landscapes and Conservation areas?
Ed: DC will look at each site and consider all constraints. National landscapes and Natural England will have an input. Greenbelt policies have been relaxed but there still need to be a discussion as to how much should be allocated for development. Cllr Bartlett is keen to emphasise that we must go through the exercise considering all opportunities and constraints. If DC cannot meet the

government's housing need figure, it will have to argue the case and put it as strongly as possible to the Inspector. Hopefully the Inspector will agree. The new Local Plan will test this.

Ian: Our Neighbourhood Plan has an influence on Dorset Council's planning decisions. If there is an issue in meeting the new housing number, does that mean the new DC Local Plan will take precedence over the Neighbourhood Plan?
Ed: Whichever plan has most recently been adopted, will take precedence over any other plan, but the NP will still form part of the development plan. So, if the Local Plan is successful and adopted, then the strategic policies in the Local Plan will take precedence over any NP. However, the coming National Development Management Policy (NDMP) from the government could take precedence over everything and will probably be introduced later this year. Currently the status of Neighbourhood Plans remains in place, but the loss of support funding may affect this. There may be the possibility of using some CIL money as an option for funding some neighbourhood plans further down the line (not North Dorset at present, as we still have S106), but that would be a town or parish council decision.

Carol: Does Dorset Council have a group looking at the bigger picture in terms of infrastructure? We need to know if we can provide the infrastructure needed for more new homes and if there is spare capacity in the system for the future.
Ed: The Local Plan will have to be supported by evidence to prove the necessary infrastructure is deliverable. The Infrastructure Delivery Plan, led by Andy Galpin, will be a big part of that.

Carol: Are the Crown Meadows a Non-designated Heritage Asset?
Ed: I cannot remember what the decision was, but I understand there are protective mechanisms in place.

Roger emphasised we are willing to work closely with Dorset Council to protect our wonderful rural area.
Ed explained that the Dorset Local Plan area will still be split into functional areas but couldn't comment as to whether the upcoming consultation will include any changes to the areas mooted in 2021, including the B+ area being placed in the eastern functional area to which we object.
Ed made a point that as part of the Local Plan consultation there will be an in-person exhibition regarding this in Blandford, and he will inform us of the date.

4. Matters Arising

a. <u>Discuss forthcoming meeting with Nick Ireland on 28th July at County Hall</u>
It was decided that the meeting on 28th July should be moved to a mid-September/October date, when the picture is clearer as regards the Local Plan and the fate of neighbourhood plans.

Carol will email Nick Ireland to postpone the meeting
Becci will send out a Doodle Poll to see the groups availability to meet Cllr Ireland in late September/early October.

b. Discuss invitations for Christmas get together on November 27th with neighbouring parishes

To be discussed at next meeting.

Carol will circulate a draft invitation and list of invitees for electronic approval by the B+NPMG.

c. S106 allocations

Carol suggested we speak with Andy Galpin to see if all S106 allocations have been claimed for the Blandford + area.

Carol will email Andy Galpin and ask this question

d. River Stour Meadows and NDHA listing (covered above)

e. Planning enforcements

Becci has tried on multiple occasions to contact DC Enforcement to check on the current status but has yet to receive any response.
Roger Carter suggested that we speak to our local councillors and ask them to chase up Enforcement.

Becci will email the Dorset Councillors on this matter

The Blandford shop fronts will be an agenda item at Blandford Forum Town Council's next Town & General Purposes meeting on Monday 14th July at 7pm. Nicci Brown will attend.

f. Call for sites for next review

To be discussed at a future meeting due to recent changes.

5. Update from working group - incorporation of the Infrastructure List and the Monitoring Sheet

Carol and Becci met with Tobias Carleton-Prangnell from Dorset Council to discuss moving forward with incorporating both B+NP and DC NDHA lists into one. Tobias explained that work had been done with our NDHA lists for Blandford Forum and Bryanston. His department has designed a template spreadsheet that he would like B+NP to input, using the DC criteria. Blandford St Mary's list can go straight into this spreadsheet once we have the information.

Groups for each area will be formed to work together on this.

6. Update on proposed B+NP communique (with Wyatts)

Nothing to add.

7. Update on Wyatt Homes and The Blandford Group Practice (CET)

Wyatts have told us that the Blandford Group Practice do not have the funding to move to the proposed site.

8. Update on Working Group - Blandford St Marys NDHA List

The working group will meet next Monday 7th July.

9. Withdrawal of government grants and the impact on Neighbourhood Plans

Discussed earlier in the meeting with Ed Gerry

10. Discuss the outcome of the Wards Drove Appeal Hearing

The decision to overturn the decision was upheld at an appeal hearing in April. The group summarised what they took from the appeal hearing. A point was made that the B+ Design Code was referred to, showing its significance and the rerouting of the Trailway through the site was welcomed

11. To update the Monitoring Sheet – with Mark Aldis

As Mark Aldis wasn't present. Ian has agreed to work with Mark to update the monitoring sheet with the Ward's Drove outcome.

Ian to help Mark to update the Monitoring Sheet with Wards Drove

12. Any other business

Cllr Terry Clarkson explained they are still waiting to hear back from DC regarding the Market Place Enhancement Plan and pedestrianisation.

13. Date of next meeting

Carol suggested that due to recent changes we postpone some of the items on this agenda and set up another meeting in September 2025 prior to the meeting that we will set with Cllr Nick Ireland.

Becci to circulate a second Doodle Poll when the date with Cllr Ireland has been established