

Part B – Representation

Please tick if you wish to be updated on the progress of this document

1. Which proposed Main Modification are you commenting on? (please insert the MM reference number from column 1 in the consultation document):

Please use a separate form for each proposed modification you are commenting on.

MM3, MM5, MM18 & MM24

2. Do you support this Main Modification? (i.e. do you think it is sound and/or legally compliant)

Yes

No

3. If no, in summary, why do you not support the proposed modification?

- It has not been positively prepared
- It is not justified
- It is not effective
- It is not consistent with national policy
- It does not comply with the law

4. What would you like to happen?

- Delete the proposed modification
- Amend the proposed modification – you should suggest amended wording below
- Add a new policy or paragraph - you should suggest new wording below

(Please give further details or suggested wording in box for Question 6)

5. If there is an additional Examination Hearing session, would you like to verbally express your views to the Inspector?

Yes

No

6. Your Comments.

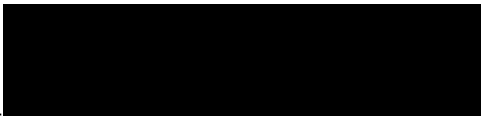
Please provide more details as to

- Why you do/do not feel that the proposed modification meets the soundness criteria set out in Question 3.
- What changes to the proposed modification wording/new wording you are suggesting.
- What additional policies or wording you are suggesting.

To assist the Inspector please try to be as concise as possible. For longer responses a brief summary would also be helpful for the Inspector.

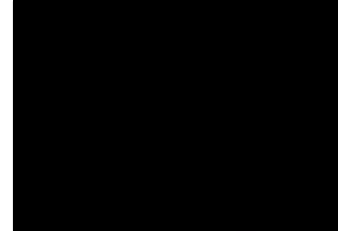
Please see the enclosed Supporting Letter.

Continue on a separate sheet if necessary

Signature: 

Date: 04/09/2015

If submitting the form electronically, no signature is required.



The Head of Planning Services
North Dorset District Council
Norden
Salisbury Road
Blandford Forum
Dorset DT11 7LN

4th September 2015

Our ref: AB/2831

Dear Sir

Re: North Dorset Local Plan Part 1 – Main Modifications Consultation

The following letter has been prepared on behalf of our client Okeford View Ltd. in response to the main modifications to the North Dorset Local Plan Part 1 which have been suggested by the Council subsequent to the publication of the examining Inspector's preliminary findings.

The comments within the ensuing paragraphs are made in response to the Council's main modifications as indicated.

MM3

Across the now proposed 20 year plan period, a provision for 825 new dwellings in the countryside including those within Stalbridge and the 18 other larger villages is still not sufficient to ensure the sustainable growth and support of these settlements and the longevity of their established local services and facilities.

The policy approach actively restricts the ability of communities to seek to provide, by way of positively prepared Neighbourhood Plans, for development which would support the vitality of their community and enable growth which the local people both want and need to support already established, and the provisions of new, local services and facilities.

It is quite apparent from the wording of the policy that *a minimum of 825 dwellings shall be provided*, however it is almost inevitable that, so long as the Council are keeping pace with their required rate of housing delivery and maintaining a demonstrable 5 year housing land supply, they will seek to resist development which is thereby considered superfluous to need despite being sustainable and in

accordance with the intentions of the development plan and which should therefore be approved.

The base figure suggested of 825 dwellings across the 20 year plan period is not substantial enough to ensure that adequate provision for additional housing can be made outside of the District's main settlements. The figure equates to approximately 2 dwellings per annum were it to be equitably distributed amongst each of the 19 settlements (Stalbridge and the 18 larger villages) and indeed taking in to account distribution across the entirety of the remainder of the countryside taken as a single location. As a starting point 825 dwellings is not sufficient and should be increased to enable adequate sustainable growth in order to maintain the vitality of rural areas and support the rural economy in line with National Policy.

MM5

The proposed distribution of development does not make adequate provision to enable sustainable growth in the Countryside area and maintain the vitality of existing settlements.

The Council's proposed housing supply figures do not take account of the latest available information in order to correctly inform their Housing Needs Survey and provide an objective assessment of the future housing requirements of the district. Recent figures such as those released by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) in relation to population growth, make clear that there has been a significant increase in the resident population of the country as a whole over and above that which was originally projected. This will inevitably have a resulting impact upon the level of housing need and indeed the resultant figures of the emerging needs assessment of the East Dorset Housing Market Area (HMA) which has yet to be published.

The housing numbers which the Council have proposed within the Local Plan Part 1 will inevitably need to be revisited as part of the early review of the Local Plan Part 1 which has been suggested by the examining Inspector; whether such a review is appropriate or the Council's housing figures should be revisited prior to the adoption of the Local Plan is a matter for the Inspector to determine and will revolve around whether he considers that the Council's policies are sufficiently sound at this point in time.

MM18

The supporting text to Policy 20 at Paragraph 8.190 suggests that land which is outside of a defined settlement boundary may be allocated for development by way of being adopted as a preferred site for development within a Neighbourhood Plan in order to enable communities to take forward proposals for development which will meet local needs and ensure sustainable growth to maintain the vitality of the settlement and support local services and facilities.

Whilst the intention of the Council to allow communities to propose development outside of settlement boundaries by way of inclusion within a Neighbourhood Plan is made clear within the supporting text to Policy 20, this is not reflected within the policy itself.

The wording of Policy 20 should be amended to provide a third criterion against which development outside of a settlement boundary will be considered acceptable, supplemental to the two already proposed. The suggested wording of which is as follows:

Development in the Countryside outside defined settlement boundaries will only be permitted if:

- a) (as existing)
- b)(as existing)
- c) *The development is proposed within an adopted Neighbourhood Plan, irrespective of its location outside of a defined settlement boundary*

The proposed amendment is consistent with the intentions of National Policy where development within the countryside should be supported where it will support the vitality of rural communities and help support local services and facilities and the growth of the rural economy.

Without such an amendment the supporting text and the policy itself are inconsistent and development which is proposed by way of a Neighbourhood Plan, yet outside of a settlement boundary, will be virtually undeliverable given that it will not accord with 'adopted' Local policy. On this basis, Policy 20 does not pass the test of soundness and undermines the function of Neighbourhood Plans and the ability of communities to influence the planning and development of the area within which they live and work.

MM24

The Government have made clear their intentions and support for the redevelopment of under-used or unviable industrial or commercial land which has not currently been identified for housing development, for the purposes of providing Starter Homes.

Starter Homes are to be delivered by way of exceptions sites on land which has been in commercial or industrial use, and which has not currently been identified for residential development. Suitable sites are likely to be under-used or no longer viable for commercial or industrial purposes, but with remediation and infrastructure costs that are not too great so as to render Starter Homes financially unviable.

The Government have not provided all of the details relevant to the identification of suitable sites, but there is no indication that this will exclude sites which are outside of a defined settlement boundary. Indeed taking in to account the fact that such exceptions sites should be those which have not previously been identified for housing, it is likely that the focus of the policy will be directly on sites which lie outside of settlement boundaries and as such have not been brought forwards for development by way of other established planning policy.

It is clear that Policy 30 and the related supporting text do not make provision for such development and are not therefore consistent with National Planning Policy in

this regard. The Council should make clear that the redevelopment of existing employment sites in the countryside where under-used or unviable for the purposes of housing development will be supported in line with the national Starter Home exceptions policy set out within the Ministerial Statement of 2nd March 2015.

Without such an amendment Policy 30 of the Local Plan Part 1 is to no degree consistent with the intentions of National Policy and cannot be considered sound, justified or positively prepared.

The Inspector is requested to take the above comments in to account and propose additional Examination Hearing sessions in order to deal with the above issues where the Local Plan Part 1 is not consistent with National Policy has not been positively prepared and is not justified.

Should the Inspector require our presence at an Examination Hearing Session in order to discuss the above issues, we will gladly attend on behalf of our Client.

Yours sincerely

A large black rectangular redaction box covering the signature of Adam Bennett.

Adam Bennett BA (Hons)
Town Planning Consultant