

Milton Abbas Neighbourhood Plan 2019 to 2031

Regulation 16 Consultation

– Dorset Council Response

13 March 2020

Dorset Council (DC) welcomes receipt of the submission version of the Milton Abbas Neighbourhood Plan. The Council is aware of the supporting documents that have been prepared and the consultation events held within the local community (as outlined on pages 8-10 of the submitted plan). In this context we seek to provide constructive comments on the finalisation of the Plan.

Vision and Objectives:

Milton Abbas is one of Dorset's most recognisable villages, with some notable history (as outlined on page 6 of the submitted plan). The long street of near identical estate workers' cottages is an iconic scene of rural Dorset. In spatial terms, the parish includes an extensive range of historic and environmental constraints, including being in the Dorset AONB, a conservation area (designated in 1970), a large number of listed buildings / structures (including Grade I), a registered park and garden (Grade II*), and various scheduled monuments. The parish also falls in the Poole Harbour catchment area meaning any new development must not lead to a net increase of nitrates running into Poole Harbour. It is also noted that the village is extremely rural in feel, being off the beaten track and located over two miles from the nearest main road (A354). None of this is to say that new development is not appropriate; the village has a number of services including a doctors' surgery and a pub, and these community facilities are part of the reason Milton Abbas is identified as one of North Dorset's 18 'larger villages'. However, it is clearly necessary to ensure that new development is done sensitively, and meets the needs of the community. With this in mind, Dorset Council recognises the ambitions of the community to produce a plan that aims to meet local housing need but at the same time ensuring it is in keeping with the rest of the village. The Vision on page 11 states: "Our vision is to meet the local housing needs of Milton Abbas in a positive way that is appreciative of our unique landscape, heritage, distinctive rural features and residents." This, and the 5 objectives listed below it, appear to be entirely apt given the context.

Figure 2 and Policy MA1

It is noted that Figure 2 shows a proposed revised settlement boundary. However, in order for this to carry full weight, reference should be made to it in policy text. We suggest that Policy MA1 is amended so that after "settlement boundary" (on the 4th line) it states: "(as amended by Figure 2)".

We would also suggest that a larger scale map is used to show the revised settlement boundary and allocated sites, overlaid on an OS Mastermap.

Policy MA2

This policy requires a residential density lower than what is typically used by Dorset Council for estimating site capacity. In recent SHLAA work we are using an estimated density of 20-30dph for Dorset villages. It is recognised that the policy is a result of detailed work that has considered existing densities in the village, and that the producers of the plan are assumed to be aware of the implications (more land is required). Despite this, Dorset Council feels such a policy is overly prescriptive as there may be valid reasons for building at higher densities on certain sites, so long as the development is generally in keeping with its surroundings. The criteria set out in Policy MA4 (particularly “The design should have regard to the local prevailing scale, massing and spacing”) seems more than adequate to prevent incongruous design and overdevelopment.

Policy MA3

We appreciate that on-street parking is an issue for many Dorset villages, and this has led many neighbourhood plans to propose policies on parking. We note that on many occasions, the examiner has recommended that such policies should be struck out where they deviate from the County standard (e.g. Milborne St Andrew and Motcombe). However, it is noted that Policy MA3 closely resembles Policy HB22 of the Hazelbury Bryan NP, which has been examined and made.

Policy MA4

This policy sets out a number of criteria for ensuring that new development is in keeping with the existing layout and urban grain of the village. As such it is supported and as noted above, this approach is preferred to the more quantitative approach set out in Policy MA2.

Policy MA5

This policy establishes a reasonable compromise between prescription and flexibility. For example, “The choice of materials should help a new development to fit harmoniously with its surroundings but does not have to exactly match...” and “New homes in Milton Abbas should not generally exceed two storeys...” As such, it is supported.

Policy MA6

This policy establishes a number of important views valued by the local community. As noted above, the village is recognised for its large number of historic/heritage assets, and for its views as part of the wider AONB. Such a policy therefore is entirely appropriate and is supported.

Policy MA7

This identifies a small number (9) of Local Green Space in the village which are identified for being important to the local community. As it is understood that the respective landowners have been identified and consulted, these are supported.

Policy MA8

As the village is situated in the Dorset AONB, and as noted above, lies off the beaten track, a dark skies policy seems appropriate. The policy also appears to have strong

local support (para 6.64 refers to 84% local support for such an approach). It seems appropriate to allow external lighting in certain exceptions (e.g. health and safety). However, the word “absolutely” on the third line possibly makes this part of policy difficult for a planning application to reasonably demonstrate. Suggest amend the beginning of the third sentence to: “External lighting schemes should be avoided unless required for health and safety or security reasons...”

Policy MA9

This policy seeks to go beyond the affordable housing requirements of the local plan. As such, there will be concerns among some regarding the viability of any additional requirements. In addition, although Dorset Council is largely supportive of Community Land Trusts, it does not seem appropriate to prescribe them in a planning policy and the planning system does not usually consider ownership a material consideration.

Policies MA10, 11, and 12

These policies allocate land over three sites for housing to meet local need. They are a result of a call for sites process and a documented site selection/scoring process (summarised in Appendix A). They also consider design and access issues for each site and state how these matters should be addressed in the policy text (plus illustrative diagrams). As such, these policies are supported as an appropriate method to meeting the housing needs of the parish.