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**FONTMELL MAGNA NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN**  
**Objection to Submission Draft (16<sup>th</sup> March 2018)**

**1. Introduction**

- i. I have been commissioned to study and comment upon the work undertaken in the preparation of the Submission for Examination in the above, with particular reference to the potential landscape and visual impact and to assess it's appropriateness and competency to the two sites at Middle Farm.

**2. Background**

- i. I am a qualified and Chartered Member of the Institute of Landscape Architects with over 45 year's experience. As a partner of Peter Swann & Associates, later its principal, and now practising under my own name, I have carried out numerous Landscape and Visual Impact Assessments, many of which have been in the North Dorset District.

**3. Landscape and Visual Impact Methodology**

- i. Since their inception I have used the 'Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment' (GLVIA) published jointly by the Institute of Environmental Management and the Landscape Institute. The current edition (3rd Edition) was published in 2013. The GLVIA emphasises: *"the aspects that are essential to successful landscape and visual impact assessment:- proportionality to ensure relevant weight is given to the most important elements; transparency of professional judgement; to allow others to see how judgements have been reached and what reasoning has been applied by the assessor and communication and presentation, so that those reading the LVIA can understand it."*
- ii. The GLVIA lists a range of factors that should be evaluated, i.e. sensitivity and magnitude of impact and its significance.

**4. The 'Middle Farm' sites included in the Fontmell Magna Neighbourhood**

- i. There are two adjacent sites which are being promoted for possible development, both located east of the A350 (Lurmer Street) at the northern end of the village
- ii. Site 10.2 (Middle Farm Barn) identified in the Neighbourhood Plan comprises a small area of land directly to the north east and behind Middle Farm. The farmyard site is the subject of a current Planning Application which will include additional peripheral planting around the boundaries of the external area. Site 10.3 (Middle Farm Paddock), is an area of open land to the north west as far as the southern boundary

with Willow Cottage and the roadside boundary to the west. The existing western boundary of the field, which it is proposed will be retained and supplemented with additional planting, is illustrated in the photographs on Drawing No. 1078/PL1 which accompanies this report.

- iii. Access to both sites will be via the existing track which leads north from the Collyer's Rise housing site. The Highways Authority, having been consulted pre-application, have raised no objections to either site on safety grounds.
- iv. Both sites lie within the Fontmell Magna Conservation Area and lie approximately 120m outside and to the west of the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB. (see plan and photographs on Drawing No. 1078/PL1).

## **5. Site Investigation**

- i. I have carried out projects in the Fontmell Magna area and have passed through the village on countless occasions. I have recently visited the site, the village and the surrounding area, in order to assess the possible impact of both sites. On my initial pass through the village southwards on the A350, and my return northwards, it was evident that due to the extensive roadside hedgerow, there were no public views from the road into the northern area, with the exception of a 'sought-after' view through a farm gate.
- ii. I have recently walked the footpaths on the high ground to the east including the public access areas, i.e. National Trust land and the Fontmell Downs Nature Reserve, in order to study and assess potential impact of development when viewed from within the AONB. As a result I have produced the following :-
  - a. Drawing No. 1078/PL2. This includes photographs taken from two viewpoints on Fontmell Down, a distance of 1 ½ km (Viewpoint C) and 1km (Viewpoint D) to the north east. Also included on this drawing is a zoom lens view from Viewpoint D. Both sites are identified and they sit within a matrix of scattered dwellings on either side and beyond, set within a well-established vegetated framework.
  - b. Drawing No. 1078/PL3. This includes photographs from three further public viewpoints. Viewpoints E and F (approximately 1½ km distant) are taken from the Fontmell Down Nature Reserve south of Fontmell Down and Viewpoints A and B. Viewpoint G, some 1km south east of the village is taken from a point on footpath No. N63/9. Zoom lens views are also illustrated from these points, both of which clearly demonstrate that the two sites are fully screened by the extensive hedgerow trees and vegetation on the eastern edge of the village.

## **6. The Submission for Examination Draft**

- i. I list below extracts from the Submission document what I consider to be relevant to my task to assess the competence of the comments and statements relevant to the Middle Farm sites. These are as follows :-

a. *Site 10.2 Middle Farm Dutch Barn (Pages 38 – 40)*

*VISIBILITY AND VIEWS*

*General prominence and visibility from main public views*      *Footpath N63/9 crosses the field close to the eastern edge of the site, from which nearby views would be gained.  
Potentially highly visible in views from AONB, notably Fore Top, Melbury Beacon and Elbury Hill*

*SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL*

*Landscape*      *Highly visible in views from some key vantage points Within the AONB as foreground to village. Sites east of the A350 are considered likely to be the most problematic from an AONB perspective. Hedgerows and mature trees would need to be respected in design and layout.*

b. *Site 10.3 Middle Farm Paddock (Pages 40 – 41)*

*EXISTING SITE FEATURES*

*Landscape features/ Interest*      *Outside but close (approx. 120m) to AONB boundary intermittent hedgerow boundaries with mature trees. Relatively small field size providing intimacy of character. Within a current gap within built up frontage along Main road, that links to Middle Farm and Church.*

*VISIBILITY AND VIEWS*      *Adjoining and in elevated position to A350 Lurmer St.  
General prominence      Potentially visibility from footpath N63/9 which crosses the adjoining field to the east.  
And visibility from main public views      Visible in views from AONB, notably Fore Top, Melbury Beacon and Elbury Hill.*

*SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL*

*Landscape*      *Visible views from some key vantage points within AONB as foreground to village. Sites east of the A350 are considered likely to be the most problematic from an AONB perspective.*

**7. Other Relevant Observations**

- i. I note that the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB Partnership, a professional body and statutory consultee, have commented on the Neighbourhood

Plan. They state that while the area is sensitive, the sites considered could be made acceptable through the use of appropriate design and suitable landscaping.

- ii. I have studied the Responses made by Brimble Lea and Partners, particularly with reference to Policy FM4, which I consider, as do they, that this Policy runs counter to the aims of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) policies which contains a presumption in favour of development.

## **8. Summary and Conclusion**

- i. Having studied the documentation listed above (Paragraph 6), and visited Fontmell Magna and the surrounding area, I have, in my professional opinion, concluded the following :-
  - a. I believe the case put forward in the consultation documents regarding potential visual impact is flawed. It will be seen from the submitted photographs, maps and from my site inspection, that the site is **not** highly visible but a seen as a small element in a much wider and expansive area of attractive down land, sitting well within the village landscape.
  - b. The two sites lie outside the AONB and, from my studies of existing public views, mainly from public access locations on the high ground to the north east, I conclude that development will have no adverse impact of the AONB provided that design, siting and use of traditional built form, coupled with a sensitive and sustainable landscape concept is contained within each planning submission to assess it potential.
  - c. I therefore conclude that the two sites identified at Middle Farm can be assimilated into the fabric of Fontmell Magna with little or no impact on its character or visual containment and no harm to its setting. I would therefore concur with the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB response and suggest that Policy FM4 should be drafted to include scope for appropriate development on the eastern side of the village.

Dated 5<sup>th</sup> June 2018