



**North Dorset Local Plan Examination
Comments on Council's Mid-Hearing Written Material on behalf of the Davis
Coats families**

1.0 Background comments

1.1 These comments on behalf of the Davis Coats families should be read in conjunction with the written comments that were submitted in respect of the Blandford Hearing session of the Examination held on 18 March 2015. Verbal representations were also made at the session itself.

1.2 The comments are obviously made with the background of the families' continued promotion of land to the north east of Blandford. As further background, it should be borne in mind that with the increasing importance of localism and neighbourhood planning, decisions on this emerging Local Plan need to recognise the important relationship between it and the emerging neighbourhood plan, which covers the Blandford Town Council area, together with the Blandford St Mary and Bryanston Parish Council areas. It is a very significant material consideration that the group preparing the Neighbourhood Plan, Blandford +, as recognised in para 8.13 of the Local Plan, both at the Examination Hearing Session and in representations on the Council's Mid-Hearing written material, support a mixed-use urban extension to the north east of Blandford, because it has the ability to provide, not only dwellings needed in the current plan period to 2031, but also possibly beyond, because expanding the town in this direction is relatively unconstrained. Additionally, expansion in the north east allows the provision of a critical mass of housing that potentially also supports the provision on much-needed infrastructure, such as a primary school and doctors' surgery, as part of a local centre.

1.3 The Davis Coats masterplan for the area, previously appended to the Hearing session representations, also allows an easterly extension to the Sunrise Business Park, playing fields and an extension to the existing allotments. A regular criticism at public consultations on housing proposals is that they make no provision for additional infrastructure. Those criticisms have been made in North Dorset and the Council is slowly realising these issues need addressing. The Davis Coats proposals address this issue whereas other proposed sites around Blandford do not.

1.4 It was interesting at the Hearing Session in March, that the Council's witness acknowledged that development of land to the north east of the by pass would come one day and also confirmed that the Council was talking to an industrialist, with site-specific needs, about the Davis land east of the Sunrise Business Park for a new purpose built factory. The Council's witness was of the opinion that the Council might be prepared to allow this proposal exceptionally. It is also interesting to note the Council has amended its wording of Policy 30, as suggested, to allow small extensions to existing industrial estates in the countryside, which could also help facilitate this development. Discussions about this specific proposal continue.

1.5 Additionally, it is also noteworthy that Policy 8.45 of the emerging Local Plan recognises the need for additional primary school provision. None of the current housing sites the Council favours makes on-site provision for this need, which must be regarded as a significant weakness. With regard to Dorset County Council's stated need in the Local Plan for a further two forms of entry (2FE) for primary education in Blandford, it is also highly significant that Dorset County Council has recently contacted Savills to discuss education provision on the land currently being promoted via the North East masterplan.

1.6 Before getting on to detailed comments on the Council's submission, the Council's witness at the Hearing session stated that there were highways, flooding and landscape issues mitigating against development to the north east. Appended to this Statement is a Technical Note on flooding, produced since the hearing session which refutes the claim of flooding problems. Its conclusions are repeated below:

- 1 *The site is not at risk of flooding from the Pimperne Brook*
- 2 *Solutions exist in the form of infiltration drainage or on-site attenuation which would control peak discharge rates to the Pimperne Brook to below those that currently exist and therefore provide a positive contribution to the mitigation of existing flood risk in Blandford.*
- 3 *Development of a formal surface water drainage strategy would be needed to support an outline planning application in due course.*

1.7 A summary of the conclusions of a Transport and Access Appraisal and a Landscape and Visual Appraisal were provide with our Hearing Statement and are also at odds with the Council witness's statement.

1.8 The Davis Coats families are currently having further highway studies carried to update the previous work. The Initial Access Strategy behind this work is also appended to this Statement.

2.0 Issue 1: MHD006 Broad Strategy

Extending the Plan period

2.1 The Davis Coats families support this extension and its additional requirement for housing numbers, albeit questions whether it provides sufficient a boost to housing supply that the current national under-supply demands.

Housing Provision to 2031

2.2 The expansion of provision in housing numbers at the St Mary's Hill site is viewed with further incredulity. The Davis Coats families have already expressed their dismay at the way the Council moved from its original position in the draft Plan of supporting land to the west of Blandford and nothing outside the bypass to one of supporting 300 dwellings to the South East, outside the bypass and additional to the development to the west of Blandford St Mary. This was undertaken at the Focused Change stage and Davis Coats complained that its land to the north east should have been assessed in this exercise. The Council however refused, relying on outdated assessments undertaken early in the Local Plan Process assessing larger dwelling numbers.

2.3 It seems because of ecology issues on the sites to the west of Blandford the delivery of those sites is being pushed back to the end of the housing trajectory, with an increase in size of the St Mary's Hill site, only suggested at the hearing session.

2.4 Davis Coats once again find this situation wholly unacceptable. Once again their site is not being properly assessed and compared in this process and the Council continue to rely on out-dated assessment material.

2.5 By pushing the sites to the west of Blandford St Mary back in terms of delivery, increasing the numbers at St Mary's Hill from 300 to 450 and continuing to rely on existing permissions and allocations, such as the Brewery, where delivery has been very slow, the Council appears to be putting too many of its eggs in one basket. In so doing, it risks continued slow delivery, particularly from St Mary's Hill and the Brewery. Identification of the land to the north east of the bypass instead of or in addition to other sites would put the Council in a much better position to deliver its required housing in a more timely fashion. It potentially would also allow Neighbourhood Plan some flexibility in future in terms of its desire for a housing site that meets the town's infrastructure needs and potentially has the ability to deliver more houses either in the plan period or beyond.

2.6 Changes such as those proposed by the Council via this mid –hearing process are not minor they are major. They should be justified on the basis of a up to date sustainability assessment, taking in the Davis Coats land, they should be subject to further public scrutiny and once the sustainability work has been undertaken a further hearing session regarding housing provision at Blandford is warranted.

The Need for an Early Review of the Local Plan Part 1 (LP1)

2.7 Paras 5.1 and 5.2 argue for LP1 to be put in place as soon as possible to enable broad locations for growth to be brought forward. Bearing in mind the way the Council has chopped and changed its broad locations for growth through the Draft Plan, the Focused Changes exercise and now through this mid-hearing process and the lack of objective appraisal of all options, can the public have confidence in what the Council is currently proposing; indeed has the public's views on these sites been properly gathered let alone taken into account?

2.8 Before there is consideration of an early review of LP, it should first be considered whether it is actually sound. As currently put together, Davis Coats would maintain it is not. Further sustainability work is required to justify and compare options, as well as further scrutiny being needed of the locations of growth.

2.9 Paragraph 5.2 talks of LP1 identifying 'broad' locations for growth. In identifying three specific greenfield sites, all in the vicinity of Blandford St Mary, one has to question whether this is an appropriate way for LP1 to proceed. Would a better position be to identify the required number of dwellings and associated infrastructure for Blandford, consider the various options with an up to date Sustainability Assessment and identify more broad locations, leaving it for the emerging Neighbourhood Plan to confirm the sites that should come forward, the numbers of dwellings they should deliver in accord with required provision together with the required infrastructure provision for each site, be it on the ground or financial contribution. By all means have an early review of the plan when it is framed more reasonably, only then updated background information can be taken on board in order for review and update.

The Relationship Between the Local Plan Part 1 and Part 2

2.10 Paras 6.1 and 6.2 highlight that LP1 is about 'strategic' priorities and policies. Once again the specific identification of sites in LP1 is questioned. In an era of localism and neighbourhood planning, more flexibility should be built into the plan to allow the emerging Neighbourhood Plan to have a say in how housing numbers should be spread around the sites, the rate of delivery and the infrastructure required from each site.

2.11 In para 6.3 under the heading 'The Role of LP2' which should read 'and Neighbourhood Plans' it quotes from the Local Plan as follows:

'the two part approach will see a strategic policy framework put in place in advance of specific sites being allocated (with the exception of the Strategic Site Allocation at Gillingham) and more detailed policies being reviewed. This approach ensures sufficient provision is made to meet objectively assessed needs, through the identification of broad locations for development in Part 1, whilst also providing some flexibility in Part 2. It also provides choice to local communities in the four main towns to decide whether they want to lead on defining sites and reviewing detailed policies through their neighbourhood plans, or whether the Council should lead on these matters in taking forward Part 2'

2.12 This is a laudable statement and accords with current government thinking. However, are the Council actually doing what is stated?:

- Is the specific identification of the three greenfield sites in Blandford strategic broad direction?
- Can confidence be had in the Council's current selection of sites, numbers proposed and rate of delivery which have chopped and changed through the process?
- In deciding its sites has the Council thoroughly appraised all of the options?
- Has there been sufficient public scrutiny of the Council's current choices?

Davis Coats would maintain the answers to all of the above questions is NO.

2.13 When it is also asked;

- Has the local community in Blandford decided they want to lead on defining sites and reviewing detailed policies, or should the Council lead on these matters in taking forward Part 2? The answer to this is Yes to the first part of the question and No to the second.

Bringing Forward 'Broad Locations' Through Planning Applications

2.14 The Council has chosen not to 'allocate' sites in Blandford because of the additional work that would entail and slowing the adoption of the plan. It has chosen to take another way forward giving more weight to the broad locations for growth, in Blandford's case via Policy 16. This would facilitate planning applications on the sites so identified.

2.15 Davis Coats understands the need for LP1 to show a deliverable 5 year housing land supply. The way the Council is approaching this must be questioned however. The way the Council has chosen the favoured sites has been unfair in the assessment methods used, has not sufficiently assessed other sites, has been ad hoc when it comes delivery times, and has not been transparent in the way it has allocated numbers to various sites. In taking this

approach, it has also not provided sufficient flexibility for the Neighbourhood Plan to have a say in the distribution of housing growth, numbers provided, rate of delivery and infrastructure provision. LP1 is in effect acting as judge and jury on sites included in the broad locations for growth in Blandford, leaving little role for the Neighbourhood Plan.

3.0 Issue 4: Housing MHD008

Changes to Housing Trajectory

3.1 Para 4.4 moves delivery from the two sites at Dorchester Hill and Lower Bryanston Farm back towards the end of the plan period from 2027/2028 in the former case and 2029/30 in the latter case.

3.2 As a result, para 4.7 increases the capacity of St Mary's Hill from 300 dwellings to 450 dwellings with development spanning from 2016/2017 to 2025/26. Delivery from next year seems very optimistic. More worryingly the Council is relying on a significant element of its housing delivery on this one site, which must be considered dangerous, leaving the Council open to speculative planning applications.

3.3 Additionally, these latest changes, following on from the Focussed Changes do feel like 'planning on the hoof'. Surely the Council would be in a much safer and stronger position if it brought another site into its broad locations for growth, which would help spread housing delivery amongst sites and developers making it less prone to delay on its major site and open to speculative applications.

3.4 There is ongoing planning work on the land to the North East and with cooperation from the Council various elements of the proposals could be delivered relatively quickly.

4.0 Issue 7: AONB and Blandford

4.1 In reassuring the Inspector that due consideration was given to impact on the AONB, this document refers to the Council's Sustainability Appraisal which Davis Coats has taken issue with before in not properly assessing current proposals on the land to North East of the bypass. Reference is once again made to it in this document and a Landscape Impact Assessment associated with it is appended at the back.

4.2 From this it would appear there are landscape issues with all the sites that need to be weighed in the balance. In respect of the conclusions of the Council's LIAs on Davis Coats land, these seem excessively harsh and do not properly take account of hedge and tree retention, and tree planting and buffer open spaces. A more objective LVIA in respect of the Davis Coats masterplan has been undertaken and its less critical conclusions were sent to the Inspector with the Davis Coats hearing statement.

4.3 It should be emphasised that the housing, school and local centre proposed as part of the masterplan are not in the AONB.

5.0 Issue 7: Blandford MHD012

Ecological Issues

5.1 It would appear that two of the Councils favoured sites to the west of Blandford St Mary, in its broad location for growth, have significant ecological issues to overcome. Para 5.4 is rather telling. Natural England is of the view that the site at Dorchester Hill should only be allocated once detailed ecological appraisals have been submitted and adequate mitigation measures have been proposed. It is only after they have been submitted and agreed that an informed decision can be made. Para 5.4 indicates the Dorchester Hill site is not supported by such information.

5.2 The Council's response has been to shunt both sites to the end of the plan period. In so doing however there is still no guarantee that these issues will be overcome.

5.3 This is a further reason why the Coats Davis land should be seen as an alternative to the one or more of the Council's favoured sites or as an addition to them with numbers redistributed.

6.0 Schedule Changes MHD018

Policy 16

Change Ref:

8/16/7 The wording additional greenfield sites *beyond the bypass* is supported

8/16/9 The Neighbourhood Plan being able to deal with *greenfield sites beyond the bypass* is supported. It is noted the wording of para 8.13 refers to non-strategic matters. Anything outside the bypass is likely to be strategic, so the words non-strategic should be deleted.

8/16/9 The local centre proposed as part of the Davis Coats masterplan could easily provide a local doctors surgery.

7.0 Conclusion

On behalf of the Davis Coats families, the Inspector is respectfully asked to take note of these comments and take the appropriate steps.

TECHNICAL NOTE



Job Name: Blandford - Land NE

Job No: 34289

Note No: TN001

Date: 17 April 2015

Prepared By: Paul Swindale

Subject: Flooding Advice

Item	Subject
1.	Introduction
1.1.	Peter Brett Associates LLP (PBA) have prepared this technical note on the instruction of Savills who, acting on behalf of the landowners, are promoting land for development to the north-east of Blandford Forum in Dorset. The purpose of the note is to provide an initial assessment of and comment on the flood risk and surface water drainage issues associated with the proposed development.
1.2.	PBA have been involved in the assessment and management of flood risk in Blandford for many years and have a good understanding of the issues affecting the town. Nonetheless, it should be noted that no specific site visit has been undertaken as part of this assessment and information requests have not been issued. The comments below are therefore based on known and publicly available information and current assumptions regarding the form of the development. This advice does not constitute a formal Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) report that will ultimately be required to support an outline planning application for development.
2.	Development Proposals
2.1.	An initial master-plan for the development is included at Appendix A . It is indicative only at this stage and is likely to evolve prior to submission of a planning application. Nonetheless it forms the basis on which this Technical Note has been prepared.
2.2.	The proposed development is located on land outside of, but immediately adjacent to the Blandford bypass (A354) to the north-east of the town, and is understood to include for approximately 550 houses together with an allocation of employment land, sports pitches and strategic open space. All of the residential development is shown to be located to the east of the Salisbury Road.
2.3.	The topography of the land is such that the whole of the proposed development area falls in a generally south easterly direction; the land to the west of the Salisbury Road at relatively shallow gradients and the land to the east at more significant gradients. All of the development land falls within the catchment of the Pimperne Brook which discharges into the River Stour at Langton Meadows in Blandford.
3.	Flood Risk and Existing Flood Defences
3.1.	In considering flood risk at the proposed development site it is pertinent to consider the influence of the Pimperne Brook to flood risk further downstream in Blandford and how those risks have been managed.
3.2.	Blandford lies on the left bank of the river Stour and benefits from the presence of a flood alleviation scheme which is inspected and maintained by the Environment Agency. The scheme was generated following the significant flooding that occurred in the town during both May and December of 1979 and was constructed in two stages.

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3.3.	The first stage comprised the construction of a flood embankment in Crown Meadows upstream of the town. This was constructed to a 100 year standard of defence. The second stage, the Blandford Town flood alleviation scheme, was the major element of the overall scheme and comprised the construction of a combination of flood walls and flood banks from Blandford Bridge (the downstream limit of the Stage 1 work) to naturally rising ground in Langton Meadows downstream of the town. The Stage 2 work was constructed to a 200 year standard of defence which was estimated at that time to be a 419 cubic metres per second (cumec) flow in the river Stour. The project was completed in 1993.
3.4.	In addition to the physical floodwall and flood bank defences, the Stage 2 work also included the provision of a large pumping station in the Langton Meadows car park. This provides the facility to pump water from other sources (the town surface water drainage system, groundwater flows and flows in the Pimperne Brook) into the Stour during a 200 year flood when high water levels in the Stour would compromise their normal gravity discharge.
3.5.	The Pimperne Brook is designated as “Main River” by the Environment Agency and drains a chalk catchment of approximately 17 square kilometres. It is essentially spring fed such that it only flows under conditions of high soil moisture storage – generally winter conditions. The pumping station is located immediately adjacent to the Pimperne Brook just upstream of its confluence with the river Stour but behind the Stour flood defences. It was designed to pump a 5 year flood flow in the Pimperne Brook which, at that time, was estimated to be 0.77 cumecs. The pumping station is provided with mains electrical supply and a dedicated back-up generator to ensure it remains operational even in the event of mains failure.
3.6.	Since completion of the flood alleviation scheme in 1993, the Environment Agency has undertaken further assessment of flood risk in Blandford to inform both the indicative flood plain mapping and the identification of Areas Benefiting from Defences (ABD). As part of that work, the hydrology of both the river Stour and the Pimperne Brook was re-assessed to take into account the additional flooding events and flow data that had become available during the intervening years. This assessment concluded that the updated 100 year and 200 year peak flows in the Pimperne Brook are estimated to be 0.7 and 0.8 cumecs respectively.
3.7.	In the vicinity of the proposed development site the Pimperne Brook flows in a roughly north-east to south-west direction in a well-defined river valley to the east of the development area before passing beneath the bypass in a culvert. From the bypass, the watercourse is largely culverted and runs on an alignment parallel with Wimborne Road until it emerges once again as open watercourse a short distance from its confluence with the river Stour.
3.8.	The predicted 100 year peak flow immediately upstream of the bypass will be slightly less than the 0.7 cumecs value estimated for the brook at its confluence with the river Stour. These are modest flows and this, in combination with the well-defined and incised nature of the watercourse channel dictates that any flooding will be contained within a narrow corridor adjacent to the watercourse itself. The approximate level of the channel just upstream of the bypass is in the order of 40m AOD and the approximate minimum ground level at the edge of the building line fronting the watercourse as indicated on the concept master-plan is in the order of 50m AOD, some 10 metres higher.
3.9.	A review of the Environment Agency mapping (extract at Appendix B) confirms that the flood envelope is contained within a narrow corridor of the valley and that the location of the proposed development falls within Flood Zone 1 – <i>Low Probability</i>

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	being defined as land assessed as having a less than 1 in 1,000 annual probability of river or sea flooding. All forms of development are compatible with Flood Zone 1 and, by ensuring that the proposed buildings are all located in Flood Zone 1 the Sequential Test is met. It is clear that the development proposals as set out in the initial master-plan layout would not be at risk of flooding from the Pimperne Brook.
4.	Surface Water Drainage Management
4.1.	In addition to ensuring that the development is not at direct risk of flooding, in this case from the Pimperne Brook, it is also a key requirement for proposed development to ensure that off-site flood risk is not increased as a result of development. The potential increase is associated with additional run-off generated by the introduction of roofs and hard paved surfaces as part of development and the discharge of this water to watercourses or sewers where, prior to development, some of the water may have infiltrated into the ground of the undeveloped site.
4.2.	The specific consideration at this site is the flow capacity of the Pimperne Brook between the bypass and Langton Meadows car park where that capacity is constrained by the culverted nature of the watercourse. The Environment Agency flood mapping (extract at Appendix B) shows an area of Flood Zone 3 - <i>High Probability</i> associated with the Pimperne Brook immediately upstream of the bypass culvert. While this is still contained within the natural valley of the watercourse and does not impact the proposed development directly, it is indicative that under peak flow conditions the culverted section may be at capacity and that flood water is backing-up as a result. It will therefore be important that the development proposals include a surface water management strategy that ensures that the downstream flood risk is not exacerbated.
4.3.	No surface water management strategy has been developed for the site at this concept stage. However, in determining a solution for the disposal of surface water, priority should be given to the following hierarchy of solutions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ the use of infiltration systems; before ▪ discharging to water courses; before ▪ discharging to sewers.
4.4.	It was noted previously that the site is located essentially in a chalk catchment, and as a consequence it is reasonable to assume, that there will be a level of natural infiltration of rainwater into the ground in its greenfield state. However, the extent to which this will occur is influenced by a number of factors including the nature of the chalk (weathered, near surface chalk can have much lower permeability characteristics than un-weathered chalk) and the topography of the site (surface water will tend to run-off steeply sloping sites rather than infiltrate into the ground). In this context, the land to the east of the Salisbury Road (where the residential elements are proposed), is clearly steeply sloping towards the Pimperne Brook and much of the rainwater falling on this land can be expected to run-off directly to the watercourse.
4.5.	As noted above, in the hierarchy of surface water drainage solutions, infiltration drainage should be considered first. The potential for this would need to be investigated through intrusive site investigation to assess actual permeability rates and to provide information on groundwater levels. This information would provide an evidence base to support the overall surface water management strategy and would also be used for subsequent detailed drainage design.
4.6.	If it can be demonstrated that infiltration drainage alone can be used to manage surface water drainage for the whole of the proposed development area, the peak

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	flows in the Pimperne Brook will be reduced as direct surface water run-off to the brook from the steeply sloping land within the development area would be precluded.
4.7.	If infiltration drainage is not able to provide a complete solution, then direct discharge to the brook will be required, either as a stand-alone solution or in combination with infiltration drainage. The use of attenuation storage within the development would allow the peak discharge rates from the development to the stream to be controlled to rates below those that are currently discharged from the site area.
4.8.	The attenuation ponds would also provide facility to store and discharge at a controlled rate any additional volume of water generated by the development in accordance with accepted practice if this additional volume could not be infiltrated.
4.9.	What is clear is that, while the development concepts are at an early stage, there are options for the development of a surface water drainage strategy using infiltration drainage or attenuation (or a combination of the two) which would control the peak surface water discharge rates from the developed site to below those that currently exist. In this way the development can contribute to the mitigation of existing flood risk further downstream.
5.	Conclusions
5.1.	The site is not at risk of flooding from the Pimperne Brook.
5.2.	Solutions exist in the form of infiltration drainage or on-site attenuation which would control peak discharge rates to the Pimperne Brook to below those that currently exist and therefore provide a positive contribution to the mitigation of existing flood risk in Blandford.
5.3.	Development of a formal surface water drainage strategy would be needed to support an outline planning application in due course.

Appendix A: Initial Master-plan

Appendix B: Extract from Environment Agency Mapping

DOCUMENT ISSUE RECORD

Technical Note No	Rev	Date	Prepared	Reviewed / Approved
34289/4001f/TN001	A	17.04.15		

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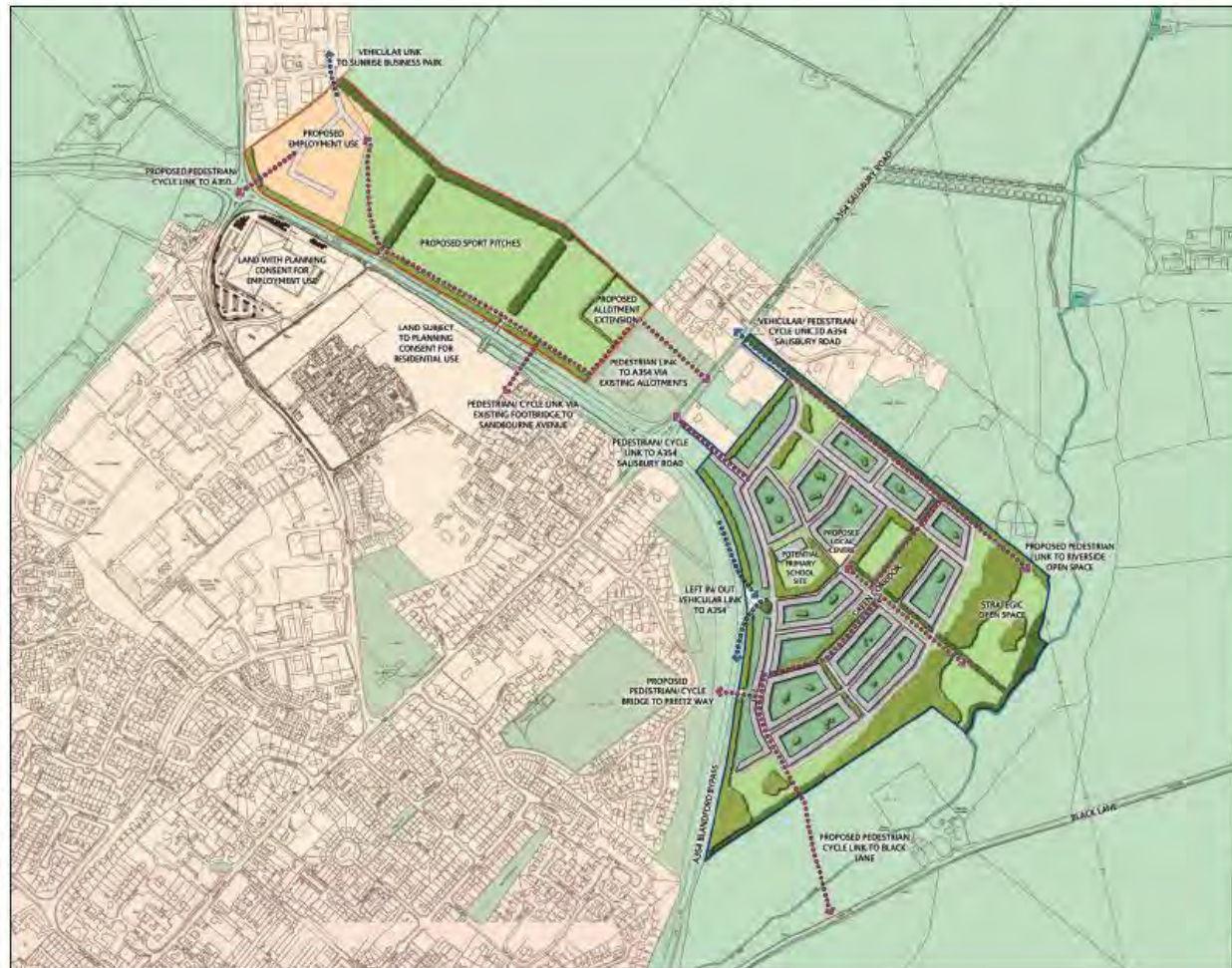
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TECHNICAL NOTE

Appendix A: Initial Master-plan

West Pimperne Farm - Concept Master Plan

Figure 4: Indicative Master Plan



- Proposed vehicular link
 - Proposed pedestrian and cycle links
 - Proposed local centre
 - Proposed development blocks
 - Proposed trees
 - Existing trees
 - Proposed employment use
 - Proposed public open space
 - Proposed private open space
 - Existing waterways
 - Existing open space
 - Existing built environment/land with planning consent for development
 - Existing agricultural land use
- Site A: Davis Land
 Site B: Davis-Coats Land

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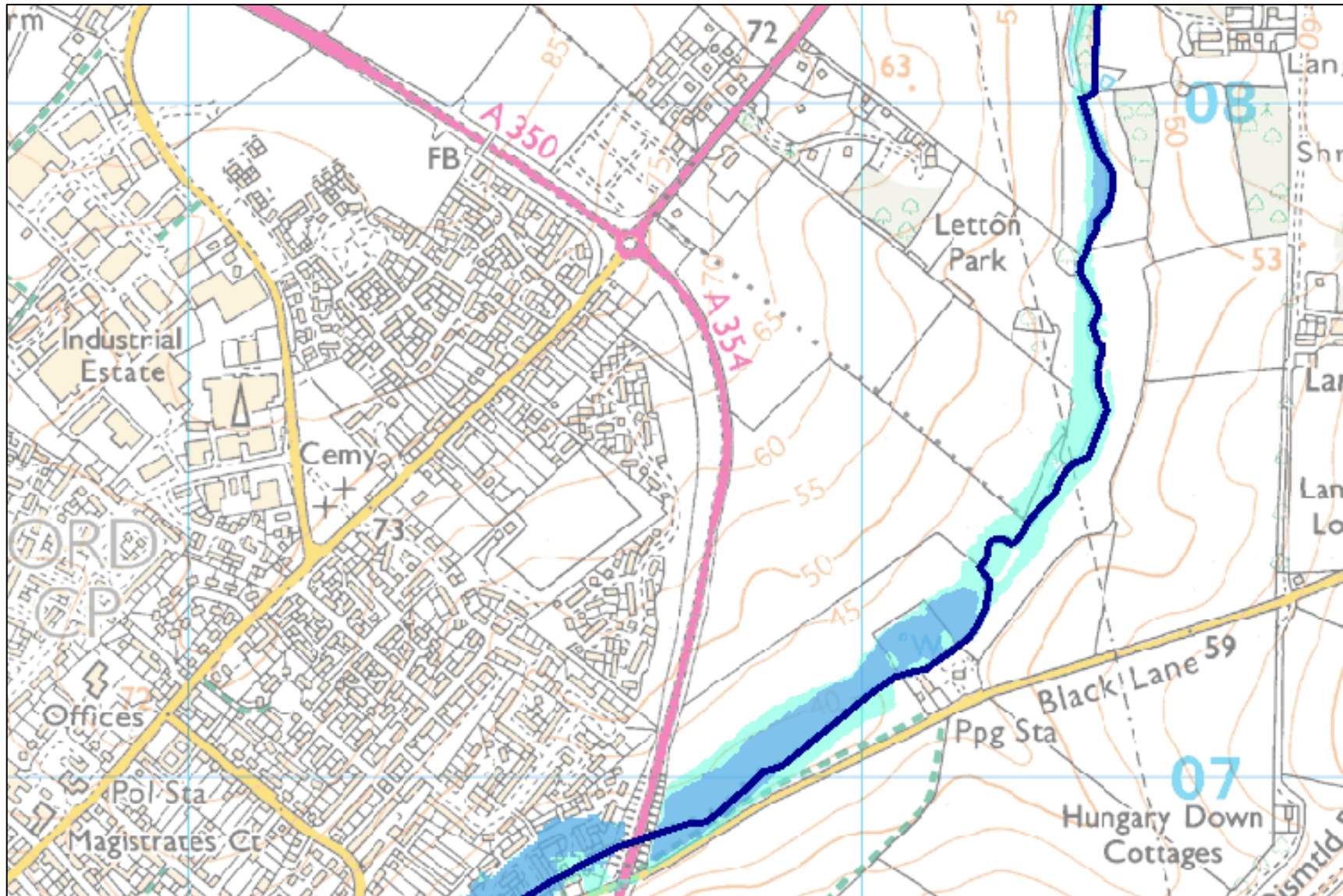
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drawing no.	WIDV6528/LA004
revision	-

planning and regeneration

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TECHNICAL NOTE

Appendix B: Extract from Environment Agency Mapping



Blandford Forum, Dorset

X: 389,728; Y: 107,482 at scale 1:10,000



LAND NORTHEAST OF BLANDFORD

INITIAL ACCESS STRATEGY

- 1.1. The land to the northeast of Blandford is to be promoted for residential use. PFA Consulting has been instructed to devise an access strategy for the site.
- 1.2. The overarching access strategy for the site is to provide linkages to the existing network for all modes of transport in order to integrate the site as part of the existing built form of Blandford.
- 1.3. The access strategy includes proposals to provide two vehicular access points for the proposed residential development.
- 1.4. The first access is proposed from the A354 Salisbury Road, which is a primary route, and would most likely take the form of a signal-controlled junction. The junction operation would need to take account of the A350 / A354 / Salisbury Road roundabout and be designed to ensure that it does not result in queueing back onto the Bypass.
- 1.5. The second access is proposed from the A354 Bypass, with a new 'Left in –Left Out' junction arrangement designed in accordance with standards set out in DMRB.
- 1.6. The access strategy includes additional pedestrian/cycle links to provide permeability of movement for these modes; including, links to the A354 Salisbury Road, Black Lane and Preetz Way, via a new bridge over the A354 Bypass.
- 1.7. As part of the masterplanning and design process, a comprehensive internal pedestrian and cycle network would be identified for the site. Links would be provided along the highway access routes as well as by way of additional dedicated pedestrian/cycle access routes along desire lines. The design of the internal road layout would allow existing bus routes to be extended and / or new bus routes to be accommodated to serve the new development.