

BLANDFORD+ NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

Modification Proposal Statement

Prepared in accordance with Regulation 15(1)(f) of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended) in respect of the Modification Proposal to the made Blandford+ Neighbourhood Plan.

MARCH 2023

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1. Introduction

1.1 As a 'Qualifying Body', Blandford Forum Town Council, Blandford St Mary Parish Council and Bryanston Parish Council ("the Councils"), and local residents working together under the title Blandford+ ("the Steering Group") proposes to modify the made Blandford+ Neighbourhood Plan ("the Made Plan") of June 2021. This Statement has been prepared to support the proposed modified Neighbourhood Plan ("the Modified Plan") following the 'Pre-submission consultation which ended in February 2023. It is being submitted for examination alongside the Modified Plan, a Basic Conditions Statement and a Consultation Statement for examination, in accordance with the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended).

1.2 Both the Councils, and the Local Planning Authority, Dorset Council, consider that the proposals represent material modifications to the Made Plan, but they are not considered so significant or substantial as to change the nature of the Made Plan. It is therefore more in the nature of a material update, which can be made without a referendum in accordance with the Neighbourhood Planning (General) and Development Management Procedure (Amendment) Regulations 2017/1243. Regulation 15 of the amended 2012 Regulations requires:

"in relation to a modification proposal, a statement setting out whether or not the qualifying body considers that the modifications contained in the modification proposal are so significant or substantial as to change the nature of the neighbourhood development plan which the modification proposal would modify, giving reasons for why the qualifying body is of this opinion".

1.3 This Statement serves this purpose and notes the following additional requirements in the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG):

- the qualifying body must (at the pre-submission publicity and consultation stage and when the modified plan is submitted to the local planning authority) state whether they believe that the modifications are so significant or substantial as to change the nature of the plan and give reasons
- the local planning authority must (when sending the modified plan to the independent examiner) state whether they believe that the modifications are so significant or substantial as to change the nature of the plan and give reasons. The local planning authority must also submit a copy of the original plan to the independent examiner
- the qualifying body must decide whether to proceed with the examination after the examiner has decided whether the modifications proposed change the nature of the plan

1.4 In accordance with the requirements of the PPG as stated above, this document is therefore setting out the background reason to this modification, sets out what the modification is and will set out the reasons as to why the Councils believe that this modification of the plan is not so significant or substantial as to change the nature of the plan.

2. Background

2.1 On 22 June 2021 Dorset Council resolved to 'make the Neighbourhood plan, following a referendum which took place on 6 May 2021. The Made Plan covers the period 2011 – 2033 and covers the administrative area for the three Councils.

2.2 The Made Plan contains 15 planning policies (B1 – B15). They cover a wide range of site or area specific proposals, including a mixed use site allocation, as well as development management policies covering the whole of the Plan area.

2.3 The Councils have been active in monitoring the implementation of the policies by Dorset Council in its determinations of planning applications. For the most part it considers that the policies have been correctly and successfully applied in approving and refusing applications that confirm or conflict with the policies respectively. However, it considers that some policies warrant modification to aid their more effective implementation and there are some additional policies that it wishes to include.

2.4 The Councils have also been mindful of the changing housing land supply and delivery positions in the Dorset Councils area and of how this may lead to significant unplanned development proposals being granted planning permission if the weight of the relevant development plan is weakened.

2.5 As a result, it has examined how a first modification of the Made Plan may engage §14 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) – essentially to maintain the full weight of its policies for another two years – and how it may use the new modification route created by the 2017 Regulations for this purpose.

3. The Proposed Modifications

3.1 The purpose of the Statement is to explain the reasons why the Parish Council considers the proposed modifications to the Made Plan do not 'change the nature' of the Plan. It should be read alongside the separate Modified Plan document.

3.2 In judging the 'change the nature of the plan' test, the following factors are considered to be the most important:

- the modifications include no new site or area specific policies that contradict policies in the Made Plan
- the proposed new policies either refine policies in the Made Plan to aid their implementation or address issues that have emerged in national planning policy and are consistent with that policy
- the modified policies refine wording in the light of experience to aid their understanding and implementation but do not significantly alter the policy intent

3.3 The following table provides a summary of the modifications – comprising the modified and new policies but not those that have been deleted or remain unaltered in any material way – and explains why the Parish Council considers they do not change the nature of the plan.

Policy No.	Policy Title	Summary of Modifications	The Change of Nature of the Plan Test	Y/N
B5	Community Facilities	The policy reflects the changes to the Use Class Order, the now consented Blandford St Mary Community Hall is identified as a community facility, and Bryanston Club's title has been corrected.	The Blandford St Mary Community Hall is now consented as provided for by Made Plan Policy B6, which will now be deleted. Its addition, and other minor changes does not materially alter the community infrastructure principles of the Made Plan.	N
B6	Health Provision	The policy has been updated to reflect the outcome of the merger of the GP Practices in the neighbourhood area. The Blandford Clinic forms part of the clinical space provisions in the neighbourhood area which the policy now makes clear can also be included in any future improvement or expansion plans.	The strategy to meet the shortages of GP provision in the neighbourhood area continues to focus on the improvement and expansion of existing clinical space and remains consistent with the social infrastructure principles of the Made Plan.	N
B10	Blandford + Design Code	This policy enables the Modified Plan to better reflect the new approach to design management that the Government wishes the planning system to adopt. The new Design Code is cross referenced in the policy as the amalgamation of the design guidance content of the Made Plan policies and other design guidance documents.	The greater detail provided by the new code refines and does not in any way contradict the design principles of the Made Plan.	N
B11	Local Heritage Assets	This new policy helps draw to the attention of applicants, buildings and structures that have some local heritage value, rather than leave that information in evidence documents.	Although the policy is new and property-specific it is consistent with the heritage principles of the Made Plan.	N

Table A: Summary of the 'Change of Nature of the Plan' Test

- 3.4 The Modified Plan also sets out the housing supply provisions in respect of completions, commitments and allocations. The recalculation shows that the housing supply figure continues to be in excess of what would have been a reasonable contribution to the Local Planning Authority's objectively assessed housing need.
- 3.5 The analysis set out in Table A indicates that no modified or new policy has the potential to change the nature of the Made Plan in terms of key spatial or design principles. The modifications are in conformity with the spirit and stated intentions of the original principles of the plan and this is not so substantial nor so significant to warrant consideration as a change to the nature of the plan.
- 3.6 As a result, the Councils consider that the modifications are material, but the proposed modifications do not change the nature of the plan. This has been agreed with Dorset Council.

4. Strategic Environmental Assessment

- 4.1 O'Neill Homer prepared a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Screening Report, in relation to the modifications, on behalf of the Councils, to establish whether an SEA will be required under the Environmental Assessment of Plans & Programmes Regulations 2004 (as amended). In September 2022 the statutory bodies, the Environment Agency, Historic England and Natural England, were consulted and confirmed their agreement that the modifications are unlikely to result in any significant environmental effects. Dorset Council has prepared an informal opinion which states that an SEA of the Modification Proposal is not required.

5. Conclusion

- 5.1 In summary the Modified Plan proposes the modification or deletion of five policies in the Made Plan and the addition of one new policy. The proposed modifications will ensure the Modified Plan retains the primacy of an up to date, plan-led development management framework for decision making in the neighbourhood area. However, although material and beneficial, those modifications follow not just the spirit of the Made Plan but also maintain and does not change the nature of its spatial or design principles.