

Dear Sir/Madam

Thank you for your consultation on the Pimperne Neighbourhood Plan Options Draft and the accompanying SEA Options Stage Report.

We are pleased to note the extent to which the community is keen to protect and enhance its historic environment and how is used an understanding of the distinctive character of the area to inform emergent policies.

Our focus is on the intention to allocate sites for development and in previous advice on the preparation of the SEA we drew attention to the need to understand the significance of relevant designated heritage assets in order to be able to demonstrate, where appropriate, that site allocations would not cause them harm.

The basis for the evaluation of the various sites identified as potential housing (and employment) sites is summarised in Table 9 of the SEA report. This is clear where it does identify heritage assets in need of consideration but does not reveal the methodology which has been used to determine those sites where no implications exist. What does “not likely to impact on settings of nearby assets” actually mean, for example, and while there may be “no heritage assets within or nearby” what is meant by “nearby” and on what basis can it safely be concluded from this that no harm will occur?

We are conscious that the evidence to substantiate conclusions in the preparation of the Plan should be proportionate and given that much work has clearly been undertaken do not envisage that addressing these gaps should be an onerous task. It may be information already gathered which only needs to be expressed in further detail. Equally, we note that there was to be liaison with the conservation team at North Dorset District Council in the site evaluation process and its confirmation of a “clean bill of health” for the proposed sites will provide sufficient reassurance as to their suitability from a heritage perspective.

At the same time it is important that we highlight the undesirability of inadvertently carrying forward within the Plan any hostage to fortune site allocations which subsequently reveal significant heritage issues when specific development proposals are being prepared. In this respect it should be remembered that as well as satisfying SEA requirements the Plan needs to demonstrate conformity with heritage protection and enhancement policies in the Local Plan and National Planning Policy Framework.

Kind regards

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