



Intelligent Plans
and examinations

Report on the Stinsford Neighbourhood Plan 2021 - 2038

**An Examination undertaken for Dorset Council with the support of
Stinsford Parish Council on the September 2021 submission version of
the Plan.**

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Date of Report: 2 February 2022

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Main Findings - Executive Summary

From my examination of the Stinsford Neighbourhood Plan (SNP/the Plan) and its supporting documentation including the representations made, I have concluded that subject to the policy modifications set out in this report, the Plan meets the Basic Conditions.

I have also concluded that:

- The Plan has been prepared and submitted for examination by a qualifying body – Stinsford Parish Council;
- The Plan has been prepared for an area properly designated – the Parish of Stinsford, as shown on Figure 1 (page 2) of the Plan;
- The Plan specifies the period during which it is to take effect – 2021 to 2038; and
- The policies relate to the development and use of land for a designated neighbourhood area.

I recommend that the Plan, once modified, proceeds to referendum on the basis that it has met all the relevant legal requirements.

I have considered whether the referendum area should extend beyond the designated area to which the Plan relates and have concluded that it should not.

1. Introduction and Background

Stinsford Neighbourhood Plan 2021–2038

- 1.1 The rural Parish of Stinsford, which had a population of about 321 in 2017¹, contains the village of Stinsford, the land-based educational establishment of Kingston Maurward College and several small hamlets. The Parish adjoins the north-eastern edge of Dorchester and extends from the built-up area of the town and the water meadows of the River Frome up south east facing slopes to the high open ground at Waterston Ridge to the north.
- 1.2 The initial process to prepare a neighbourhood plan for Stinsford began in September 2017 when the Plan area was designated by the then West Dorset District Council (WDDC). A public meeting was held in March 2018 and a Steering Group formed. Various open events and consultation meetings were held and evidence was gathered. The Stinsford Neighbourhood Plan was submitted to Dorset Council (DC) in September 2021, representing over four years' work for those involved.

¹ 2017 mid-year estimates: Office for National Statistics. (Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Report; Dorset Council February 2021, updated July 2021)
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The Independent Examiner

- 1.3 As the Plan has now reached the examination stage, I have been appointed as the examiner of the SNP by DC, with the agreement of SPC.
- 1.4 I am a chartered town planner and former government Planning Inspector and have experience of examining neighbourhood plans. I am an independent examiner, and do not have an interest in any of the land that may be affected by the Plan.

The Scope of the Examination

- 1.5 As the independent examiner, I am required to produce this report and recommend either:
- (a) that the neighbourhood plan is submitted to a referendum without changes; or
 - (b) that modifications are made and that the modified neighbourhood plan is submitted to a referendum; or
 - (c) that the neighbourhood plan does not proceed to a referendum on the basis that it does not meet the necessary legal requirements.
- 1.6 The scope of the examination is set out in Paragraph 8(1) of Schedule 4B to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) ('the 1990 Act'). The examiner must consider:
- Whether the plan meets the Basic Conditions.
 - Whether the plan complies with provisions under s.38A and s.38B of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended) ('the 2004 Act'). These are:
 - it has been prepared and submitted for examination by a qualifying body, for an area that has been properly designated by the local planning authority;
 - it sets out policies in relation to the development and use of land;
 - it specifies the period during which it has effect;
 - it does not include provisions and policies for 'excluded development'; and
 - it is the only neighbourhood plan for the area and does not relate to land outside the designated neighbourhood area.
 - Whether the referendum boundary should be extended beyond the designated area, should the plan proceed to referendum.

- Such matters as prescribed in the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended) ('the 2012 Regulations').
- 1.7 I have considered only matters that fall within Paragraph 8(1) of Schedule 4B to the 1990 Act, with one exception. That is the requirement that the Plan is compatible with the Human Rights Convention.

The Basic Conditions

- 1.8 The 'Basic Conditions' are set out in Paragraph 8(2) of Schedule 4B to the 1990 Act. In order to meet the Basic Conditions, the neighbourhood plan must:
- have regard to national policies and advice contained in guidance issued by the Secretary of State;
 - contribute to the achievement of sustainable development;
 - be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the development plan for the area;
 - be compatible with and not breach European Union (EU) obligations (under retained EU law)²; and
 - meet prescribed conditions and comply with prescribed matters.
- 1.9 Regulation 32 of the 2012 Regulations prescribes a further Basic Condition for a neighbourhood plan. This requires that the making of the Plan does not breach the requirement of Chapter 8 Part 6 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 ('the 2017 Regulations').³

2. Approach to the Examination

Planning Policy Context

- 2.1 The Development Plan for this part of Dorset Council, not including documents relating to excluded minerals and waste development, is the West Dorset, Weymouth and Portland Local Plan (WDWPLP) adopted in 2015. The Local Plan was produced jointly by the former WDDC and Weymouth and Portland Borough Council (WPBC). There are no settlements within the Plan area with defined development boundaries which means that, under WDWPLP Policy SUS2 iii), development will be strictly controlled and be restricted to categories which will help to support

² The existing body of environmental regulation is retained in UK law.

³ This revised Basic Condition came into force on 28 December 2018 through the Conservation of Habitats and Species and Planning (Various Amendments) (England and Wales) Regulations 2018.

the rural economy or help in the long term management of the countryside.⁴

- 2.2 The WDWPLP is being replaced by the Dorset Council Local Plan (DCLP), consultation on the first draft of which closed in March 2021. One of the proposals indicated in the DCLP is for the expansion of Dorchester to the north (DOR13) which would comprise mixed use development including 3,500 dwellings.⁵ The majority of the DOR13 allocation covers Stinsford Parish.
- 2.3 The planning policy for England is set out principally in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) offers guidance on how this policy should be implemented. A revised NPPF was published in July 2021 and all references in this report are to the July 2021 NPPF and its accompanying PPG.

Submitted Documents

- 2.4 I have considered all policy, guidance and other reference documents I consider relevant to the examination, as well as those submitted which include:
- the draft Stinsford Neighbourhood Plan 2021–2038, dated September 2021;
 - Figure 1 on page 2 of the Plan which identifies the area to which the proposed Neighbourhood Development Plan relates;
 - the Consultation Statement, dated August 2021;
 - the Basic Conditions Statement, dated September 2021;
 - the Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Report, February 2021 (updated July 2021);
 - the supplementary supporting evidence base documents⁶;
 - all the representations that have been made in accordance with the Regulation 16 consultation; and
 - the request for additional clarification sought in my letter of 14 December 2021 and the combined response of 8 January 2022 from SPC and DC.⁷

Site Visit

- 2.5 I made unaccompanied site inspections to the SNP area on 10 and 16 December 2021 to familiarise myself with it and visit relevant locations referenced in the Plan and evidential documents. My visits included walking from Waterston Ridge to Three Cornered Coppice, descending via

⁴ See WDWPLP page 13: Achieving a Sustainable Pattern of Development.

⁵ Dorset Council Local Plan Options Consultations Document Volume 2 Central Dorset (January 2021) Fig 22.3 page 143 & Land to the North of Dorchester (proposed allocation) pages 159 – 169.

⁶ View at: [Stinsford Neighbourhood Plan - Dorset Council](#)

⁷ View all the all the relevant Plan documentation, including the core submission documents and correspondence at: [Stinsford Neighbourhood Plan - Dorset Council](#)

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public rights of way to the northern edge of Dorchester, walking along the River Frome valley using sections of the River Frome Way and the Hardy Way. I also visited Stinsford village, Kingston Maurward, Lower Bockhampton and Higher Bockhampton, where I parked in the Thorncombe Wood Local Nature Reserve car park and walked through Thorncombe Wood to see the Valued View alongside Rushy Pond and then to Hardy's Cottage.

- 2.6 Therefore, I saw all the Valued Views indicated on Figure 4 of the submitted Plan, including those from the Kingston layby on the A35, and also observed the Important Gaps shown on Figure 2.

Written Representations with or without Public Hearing

- 2.7 This examination has been dealt with by written representations. I considered hearing sessions to be unnecessary as the consultation responses clearly articulated the objections to the Plan and presented arguments for and against the Plan's suitability to proceed to a referendum. No requests for a hearing session were received.

Modifications

- 2.8 Where necessary, I have recommended modifications to the Plan (**PMs**) in this report in order that it meets the Basic Conditions and other legal requirements. For ease of reference, I have listed these modifications separately in the Appendix to this report.

3. Procedural Compliance and Human Rights

Qualifying Body and Neighbourhood Plan Area

- 3.1 The Stinsford Neighbourhood Plan has been prepared and submitted for examination by SPC, which is a qualifying body. The SNP extends over all the Stinsford Parish. This constitutes the area of the Plan designated by WDDC in September 2017, replaced by Dorset Council on 1 April 2019 which carries over the statutory designation.

Plan Period

- 3.2 The Plan specifies the Plan period as 2021 to 2038.

Neighbourhood Plan Preparation and Consultation

- 3.3 The thorough Consultation Statement (CS) indicates the stages of the preparation of the Plan and all the consultation events and activities which took place during the period from the first public meeting in March 2018, when a Steering Group was formed, to 2021. A neighbourhood plan section was created on the Parish website, together with a Facebook page.

News items were also emailed to a list of about 120 people who asked to be kept informed. The Steering Group met each month and members of the public from the Parish could attend. News about the Plan was also published in The Pilot, a local magazine.

- 3.4 A second public meeting was held in July 2018 and in September 2018 stalls were organised and staffed at the Dorset County Show and the Stinsford Michaelmas Fair. Two questionnaires were circulated simultaneously, one about the Plan, the other about the draft option in the Dorset Local Plan for development north of Dorchester. The results of both questionnaires were discussed at Steering Group meetings later in 2018.
- 3.5 Conclusions from the consultations and surveys resulted in the Steering Group drafting a vision for the Plan and aims and objectives which were used to gather further evidence. A business survey was carried out in May and June 2019. 20 responses were received from 52 letters which were sent out. In addition, a further residents survey of all 126 households in the Parish was carried out in September 2019 with a response rate of 56%.
- 3.6 The evidence gathered was used to draft some of the Plan, but the surveys revealed a number of issues on which further feedback was sought, in particular whether the Plan should actively look to allocate sites for housing development, as well as checking whether anything critical had been missed. Consultation on options in the Plan took place in November 2020 and included an article in The Pilot, a leaflet distribution to every household and publication on the web. Zoom meetings were held which were hosted by a member of the Steering Group. The main findings are summarized on pages 9 – 11 of the CS.
- 3.7 The Pre-Submission Plan was published for consultation under Regulation 14 of the 2012 Regulations on 15 March 2021 for a period of six weeks until 27 April 2021. Pages 13 – 28 of the CS summarise the numerous responses from statutory consultees, members of the public and other stakeholders together with the response from the SNP Group on behalf of SPC and any proposed changes to the Plan.
- 3.8 The Plan was finally submitted to DC on 15 September 2021. Consultation in accordance with Regulation 16 was carried out from 13 October 2021 until 24 November 2021. 20 representations were received. I am satisfied that a transparent, fair and inclusive consultation process has been followed for the SNP, that has had regard to advice in the PPG on plan preparation and is procedurally compliant in accordance with the legal requirements.

Development and Use of Land

- 3.9 The Plan sets out policies in relation to the development and use of land in accordance with s.38A of the 2004 Act.

Excluded Development

3.10 The Plan does not include provisions and policies for 'excluded development'.

Human Rights

3.11 The Basic Conditions Statement (BCS) advises that no issues have been raised in relation to the possible contravention of Human Rights in the preceding consultations and, given the conclusions on the Plan's general conformity with the strategic policies of the Local Plan and regard to national planning policy, it is reasonable to conclude that the making of the Plan should not breach human rights. I am aware from the CS that considerable emphasis was placed throughout the consultation process to ensure that no sections of the community were isolated or excluded. I have considered this matter independently and I have found no reason to disagree with the statement in the BCS and I am satisfied that the policies will not have a discriminatory impact on any particular group of individuals.

4. Compliance with the Basic Conditions

EU Obligations

4.1 The Plan was subject to a screening assessment to determine whether a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) or Appropriate Assessment (AA) under the Habitats Regulations would be required.⁸ The draft screening opinion was subject to consultation alongside the pre-submission version of the Plan in order to seek affirmation from the statutory consultees on the conclusion that the full SEA and Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) AA process was not necessary to support the production of the Plan. The statutory consultees Natural England (NE)⁹, Historic England (HE)¹⁰, and the Environment Agency (EA)¹¹ who were consulted on the contents of the SEA report agreed with the findings that the scope of the Plan is such that the sensitive environmental assets are unlikely to be significantly affected because the Plan does not allocate any additional development. On this basis, the need for a fuller assessment was ruled out.

⁸ Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Report: February 2021, updated July 2021.

⁹ Email from Natural England on page 17 of the Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Report, dated 19 April 2021.

¹⁰ Email from Historic England on page 17 of the Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Report, dated 21 April 2021.

¹¹ Email from the Environment Agency on page 16 of the Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Report, dated 27 April 2021.

- 4.2 I have read the SEA Assessment Screening Report and the other information provided, and having considered the matter independently, I also agree with those conclusions. Therefore, I am satisfied that the SNP is compatible with EU obligations.

Main Issues

- 4.3 Having considered whether the Plan complies with various procedural and legal requirements, it is now necessary to deal with whether it complies with the remaining Basic Conditions, particularly the regard it pays to national policy and guidance, the contribution it makes to the achievement of sustainable development and whether it is in general conformity with strategic development plan policies. I test the Plan against the Basic Conditions by considering specific issues of compliance of all the Plan's policies.
- 4.4 As part of that assessment, I consider whether the policies are sufficiently clear and unambiguous, having regard to advice in the PPG. A neighbourhood plan policy should be drafted with sufficient clarity that a decision maker can apply it consistently and with confidence when determining planning applications. It should be concise, precise and supported by appropriate evidence.¹²
- 4.5 Accordingly, having regard to the Stinsford Neighbourhood Plan, the consultation responses, other evidence¹³ and the site visits, I consider that the main issues in this examination are whether the SNP policies (i) have regard to national policy and guidance, (ii) are in general conformity with the adopted strategic planning policies and (iii) would contribute to the achievement of sustainable development? I shall assess these issues by considering the policies within the themes in the sequence in which they appear in the Plan.

Vision and Objectives

- 4.6 The shared vision for the SNP is described on page 5 of the Plan as the protection and development of the Parish. The subsequent aim *is to safeguard and enhance the Parish's outstanding environment and heritage, whilst encouraging appropriate development and acknowledging the pressures associated with climate change*. Eight objectives are derived from the aim, which then form a prelude to the sixteen policies grouped into themes which serve as chapter headings: The Natural Environment; The Cultural and Historic Environment; Housing, Employment and Community Facilities; Sustainable Development and Climate Change; and Safe and Accessible Travel.

¹² PPG Reference ID: 41-041-20140306.

¹³ The other evidence includes the responses from SPC and DC dated 8 January 2022 to the questions in my letter of 14 December 2021.

The Natural Environment (Policies SNP1, SNP2, SNP3, SNP4, SNP5 & SNP6)

- 4.7 Policy SNP1 seeks to protect and strengthen local wildlife and habitats. The policy has regard to national guidance¹⁴ and generally conforms with Policy ENV2 of the WDWPLP. Policy SNP2 requires development to respect local character and, where possible, enhance it. Subject to a modification to add a reference to the need for new streets to be tree lined where appropriate, the policy would have regard to national guidance¹⁵ and generally conform with Policy ENV10 of the WDWPLP. **(PM1)** Both policies would then meet the Basic Conditions.
- 4.8 Policy SNP3 aims to safeguard the setting of the small settlements along the river valley. The policy states that care should be taken to avoid reducing the undeveloped nature of the gaps between the settlements, particularly the Important Open Gaps (IOG) defined in Table 3 and shown diagrammatically on Figure 2. At my request, SPC submitted an amended Figure 2 which has deleted the two small sections of IOG which extended beyond the Plan area near Frome Whitfield. The amended Figure 2 also now shows the boundary of the River Valley Landscape as delineated for the Valley Pasture Landscape Character Area in the Dorset Landscape Character Assessment.
- 4.9 In addition, the second sentence of the policy should be amended to focus more on the characteristics of the landscape and to remove the reference to the Land of Local Landscape Importance (LLLI) and its buffer zone. Therefore, I shall recommend a modification to the Plan by the substitution of the amended Figure 2 and the change to the policy as suggested by DC in their Regulation 16 representation. **(PM2)** Policy SNP3 and accompanying Figure 2 would then have regard to national guidance¹⁶, generally conform with Policy ENV1 of the WDWPLP and meets the Basic Conditions.
- 4.10 Policy SNP4 states that development should be designed to retain the dark skies has regard to national guidance¹⁷, generally conforms with Policy ENV16 of the WDWPLP and meets the Basic Conditions.
- 4.11 Policy SNP5 seeks to protect Important Local Views which are described in Table 4 of the Plan and identified on Figure 4 as Valued Views. DC objected to the policy on three grounds: the evidence was insufficiently robust to justify it; the policy applied to all public footpaths not just the views which it is sought to protect; and the number of views is excessive.
- 4.12 In responding to my question seeking clarification about anomalies between Table 4 and Figure 4 and viewpoints being located outside the Plan area, SPC submitted a Map showing Rationalised Views. The Map excludes the "other views noted by residents" noted on Figure 4 which, in

¹⁴ NPPF: paragraphs 174 & 179.

¹⁵ NPPF: paragraphs 131 & 174.

¹⁶ NPPF: paragraph 174.

¹⁷ NPPF: paragraph 185 c).

my opinion, were not justified for inclusion as views to be protected by Policy SNP5. The Map also shows a reduced number of views, albeit now merely entitled Local Views. SPC submitted a revised Table 4 which has been expanded to offer more explanation of the description of the views from the viewpoints and notable landmarks.

- 4.13 I consider that the additional information about the views, which includes literary references to features in Thomas Hardy novels and poems, is sufficient evidence to justify the inclusion of the viewpoints, particularly those along the valley meadows of the River Frome which act as a significant landscape setting for Dorchester. Although views (6A, 6B and 6C) from Waterston Ridge are far reaching and panoramic, I accept that, in this location, they are characteristic of the dramatic landscape of the chalk ridge north of Dorchester and I agree that, exceptionally in this case, they are worthy of the degree of protection afforded by Policy SNP5.
- 4.14 Representations suggested that the protection of the important local views would be incompatible with the possible allocation of land for development north of Dorchester as indicated in the emerging Dorset Local Plan. However, the second sentence of Policy SNP5 states that a significant adverse effect should be avoided unless there would be "*a clear and overriding public benefit*". I consider that such a benefit would be the strategic expansion of Dorchester upon adoption of the Local Plan, should development be in a northerly direction into the Plan area. Indeed, the issue is accurately addressed in the first sentence of paragraph 3.26 the Plan.
- 4.15 The implication in Policy SNP5 that views from all rights of way and permissive paths should be safeguarded is too general. Therefore, I shall recommend modifying the Plan by the deletion of the first sentence of the policy, a small adjustment to the second sentence to refer to Table 4 and the substitution of Table 4 and Figure 4 by those submitted by SPC in clarification. **(PM3)** Policy SNP5 would then have regard to national guidance¹⁸, generally conform with Policy ENV10 of the WDWPLP and meet the Basic Conditions.
- 4.16 Policy SNP6 encourages recreational access to the countryside and has regard to national guidance¹⁹, generally conforms with Policy COM7 of the WDWPLP and meets the Basic Conditions.

The Cultural and Historic Environment (Policies SNP7 & SNP8)

- 4.17 Policy SNP7 seeks to protect Stinsford's Historic Environment, both designated and non-designated assets. The policy has regard to national guidance²⁰ and generally conforms with Policy ENV4 of the WDWPLP. Policy SNP8 aims to manage new facilities for tourists and visitors who

¹⁸ NPPF: paragraph 174.

¹⁹ NPPF: paragraphs 98 & 100.

²⁰ NPPF: paragraph 189 & 203.

visit the area because of the links to Thomas Hardy and for other reasons. The policy has regard to national guidance²¹ and generally conforms with Policy ECON5 of the WDWPLP. Both policies meet the Basic Conditions.

Housing, Employment and Community Facilities (Policies SNP9, SNP10 & SNP11)

- 4.18 Policy SNP9 supports the provision of affordable housing in the Parish. The policy has regard to national guidance²², generally conforms with Policy HOUS1 of the WDWPLP and meets the Basic Conditions.
- 4.19 Local employment opportunities are supported in Policy SNP10. Criterion iii) of the policy requires that any "*additional buildings should achieve high standards of environmental performance (significantly above that required by the Building Regulations)*". The phrase in parentheses is without justification and I shall recommend its deletion. **(PM4)** Subject to that modification, the policy would have regard to national guidance²³, generally conform with Policy ECON1 of the WDWPLP and meets the Basic Conditions.
- 4.20 Policy SNP11 seeks to protect and enhance community facilities in the Parish and has regard to national guidance²⁴, generally conforms with Policy COM2 of the WDWPLP and meets the Basic Conditions.

Sustainable Development and Climate Change (Policies SNP12 & SNP13)

- 4.21 Policy SNP12 considers many aspects of building design. The joint response to my question regarding the publication of the National Model Design Code indicates that reference to the National Design Guide and the National Model Design Code could be added to the policy and I shall recommend accordingly. **(PM5)** With this addition, the policy would have regard to national guidance²⁵, and generally conform with Policies ENV10, ENV11, ENV12 and ENV13 of the WDWPLP. Policy SNP13 seeks to protect groundwater, has regard to national guidance²⁶ and generally conforms with Policy ENV9 of the WDWPLP. Both policies meet the Basic Conditions.

Safe and Accessible Travel (Policies SNP14, SNP15 & SNP16)

- 4.22 Policy SNP14 supports traffic management proposals which help to achieve five specified objectives. The policy would have regard to national guidance and generally conforms with Policy COM9 of the WDWPLP.²⁷ Where transport assessments are required, Policy SNP15 indicates certain

²¹ NPPF: paragraph 85.

²² NPPF: paragraph 78 & 79.

²³ NPPF: paragraph 85.

²⁴ NPPF: paragraph 84 d).

²⁵ NPPF: paragraphs 127, 128, 152, 154, 156 & 169.

²⁶ NPPF: paragraph 174.

²⁷ NPPF: paragraph 104.

details to be included. The policy has regard to national guidance²⁸ and generally conforms with Policy COM7 of the WDWPLP. Policy SNP16 is aimed at improving cycling infrastructure and has regard to national guidance and also generally conforms with Policy COM7 of the WDWPLP.²⁹ All three policies in this section meet the Basic Conditions.

Overview

- 4.23 Accordingly, on the evidence before me, with the recommended modifications, I consider that the policies within the SNP are in general conformity with the strategic policies of the WDWPLP, have regard to national guidance, would contribute to the achievement of sustainable development and so would meet the Basic Conditions.
- 4.24 The Plan lists 7 Projects to deal with the implementation of the Plan and other actions. These comprise woodland planting and survey; noise reduction measures on the A35; investigating new and improved recreational routes and accessible green spaces; developing the Kingston Maurward Masterplan; a public transport project; traffic management measures; and a cycle route improvements project.
- 4.25 The projects do not fall within the tests of whether the Basic Conditions are met and I do not consider them further. However, the wide breadth of the projects is additional evidence of the thoroughness with which the Plan has been prepared and the benefits that the neighbourhood planning process brings to the community.
- 4.26 A consequence of the acceptance of the recommended modifications would be that amendments would have to be made to the explanation within the Plan in order to make it logical and suitable for the referendum. These might also include incorporating factual updates, correcting minor inaccuracies, revising any references to the NPPF (2021) with updated paragraph numbers, or text improvements suggested helpfully by DC. The amendments could also include the additional non-designated heritage asset near Eweleaze Barn suggested in representations³⁰ and any clarification of the development of the Kingston Maurward Masterplan (Project P4). None of these alterations would affect the ability of the Plan to meet the Basic Conditions and could be undertaken as minor, non-material changes.³¹

²⁸ NPPF: paragraph 104.

²⁹ NPPF: paragraph 106.

³⁰ Regulation 16 representation by Linda Poulsen; response by SPC on 8 January 2022.

³¹ PPG Reference ID: 41-106-20190509.

5. Conclusions

Summary

- 5.1 The Stinsford Neighbourhood Plan has been duly prepared in compliance with the procedural requirements. My examination has investigated whether the Plan meets the Basic Conditions and other legal requirements for neighbourhood plans. I have had regard to all the responses made following consultation on the SNP, and the evidence documents submitted with it.
- 5.2 I have made recommendations to modify a small number of policies to ensure the Plan meets the Basic Conditions and other legal requirements. I recommend that the Plan, once modified, proceeds to referendum.

The Referendum and its Area

- 5.3 I have considered whether or not the referendum area should be extended beyond the designated area to which the Plan relates. The SNP as modified has no policy or proposal which I consider significant enough to have an impact beyond the designated Neighbourhood Plan boundary, requiring the referendum to extend to areas beyond the Plan boundary. I recommend that the boundary for the purposes of any future referendum on the Plan should be the boundary of the designated Neighbourhood Plan Area.

Concluding Comments

- 5.4 The Parish Council, the Steering Group and other voluntary contributors are to be commended for their efforts in producing a comprehensive Plan. It is a professionally presented and well-illustrated document. The Plan is logical, well-structured and very informative. I enjoyed examining it, visiting the area and especially gaining an even greater appreciation of the context of Thomas Hardy literature. The associated statements, particularly the Basic Conditions Statement, were extremely useful, as were the constructive comments of DC in the Regulation 16 consultation.
- 5.5 The high quality of the Plan is demonstrated by the very small number of recommended modifications (necessary to meet the Basic Conditions) which are to only five of the sixteen policies. With those modifications, the SNP will make a positive contribution to the Development Plan for the area and, notwithstanding the challenges faced by the possible northern expansion of Dorchester, should enable the unique and diverse character and appearance of Stinsford Parish to be maintained.

Andrew Mead

Examiner

Appendix: Modifications

Proposed modification no. (PM)	Page no./ other reference	Modification
PM1	Policy SNP2	Add a final bullet point: “ - new roads should be tree lined, unless there are compelling reasons to the contrary.”
PM2	Policy SNP3	Delete the second sentence and replace with: “The characteristics of the river valley pasture landscape (including those characteristics identified in Table 2), which provide the setting for Dorchester and the Stinsford river valley settlements, should be respected.” Replace Figure 2 of the Plan with the new Figure 2 submitted by SPC on 8 January 2022.
PM3	Policy SNP5	Delete the first sentence. Amend the second sentence to: “... (as shown on Figure 4 and described in Table 4) ...” . Replace Figure 4 and Table 4 with those submitted by SPC on 8 January 2022. Retitle the submitted Figure 4 as “Important Local Views” . In the submitted Figure 4, replace the term “Local Views” in the key with “Important Local Views” .
PM4	Policy SNP10	Criterion iii). Delete: “(significantly above that required by Building Regulations).”
PM5	Policy SNP12	Add to the end of the policy: “Regard should also be had to the National Design Guide and the National Model Design Code.”