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# B&NES Placemaking Plan Examination: Hearing Statement Matter 4: Environmental Quality

By Barton Willmore  
On behalf of Taylor Wimpey

Representor no. 234 - Land at Chilcompton Road, Midsomer Norton

August 2016



**B&NES Placemaking Plan Examination:  
Hearing Statement Matter 4: Environmental Quality**

**By Barton Willmore  
On behalf of Taylor Wimpey  
Representor no. 234**

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**1.0 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 This Examination Statement has been prepared by Barton Willmore on behalf of Taylor Wimpey in respect of land at Chilcompton Road, Midsomer Norton. A site plan is included in Appendix 1.

## 2.0 LANDSCAPE SETTING

### Policy NE2A: Landscape Setting

- 2.1 Previous government guidance in the form of PPS7 created a step-change in landscape policy-making, moving away from local landscape designations to carefully drafted, criteria-based policies. This was advised by Government as providing sufficient protection without the need for rigid local designations that may unduly restrict acceptable, sustainable development.
- 2.2 This philosophy continues to be the Government's preferred approach which has been carried forward into the NPPF:

**"Local planning authorities should set criteria based policies against which proposals for any development on or affecting protected wildlife or geodiversity sites or landscape areas will be judged (para 113)."**

- 2.3 Placemaking Plan Policy NE2 provides a criteria-based policy consistent with guidance in the NPPF which aims to conserve and enhance landscape character and which is sufficient to assess applications for development in respect of their impact on the landscape. However, policy NE2A introduces local landscape designations around a number of settlements in B&NES, including Midsomer Norton, which conflicts with national planning policy guidance in the NPPF. These local 'landscape setting' designations are shown on the draft Placemaking Plan Proposals Map. Policy NE2A provides special protection to the landscape setting around large and small settlements and states:

**"Any development should seek to conserve and enhance the landscape setting of settlements and their landscape character, views and features. Development that would result in harm to the landscape setting of settlements will not be permitted."**

- 2.4 As currently written, potentially any change around these settlements could be construed as 'harm' and hence development will not be permitted. This affords the same protection as nationally designated landscapes which again, goes against the thrust of the NPPF which requires levels of protection for nationally and locally important sites to be commensurate with their importance. This means giving great weight to conserving National Parks and AONBs, with less weight towards locally important landscapes.

- 2.5 An overly protective approach to developing land as is proposed in the policy NE2A could stifle much-needed sustainable development, and should not be encouraged through unjustified local landscape designations. On this basis, policy NE2A should be deleted.

**Policy CP7 and Diagram 5: Green Infrastructure**

- 2.6 We object to the proposed designation of the Green Infrastructure policy for land at Midsomer Norton.
- 2.7 The annotation on the proposals map shows a wide GI corridor running through the centre of Midsomer Norton. While we do not object to the principle of the proposed policy, the extent of the corridor should be reduced and it should be made clear that the extent of the corridor is indicative only and should not be taken literally. The aim should be for green infrastructure to be incorporated within new developments, not to prevent the development of sustainable new communities. Without this change, the policy would be unsound as it would not be justified.

### **3.0 CONCLUSION**

#### **Policy NE2A**

- 3.1 We object to the proposed Landscape Setting policy NE2A because it is not justified and is inconsistent with national policy.
- 3.2 The Landscape Setting designation covers land to the south of Midsomer Norton. While future proposals for this site can take account of, and where possible conserve and enhance the landscape character of Midsomer Norton, it should not be used as a policy to restrict development where it is required to meet the long term housing needs of the West of England. This policy is therefore unsound as it is not justified nor consistent with national policy.
- 3.3 Landscape Character policy NE2 is sufficient to assess applications for development in respect of their impact on the landscape and policy NE2A should be deleted.

#### **Policy CP7 and Diagram 5: Green Infrastructure**

- 3.4 We object to the proposed designation of the Green Infrastructure policy for land at Midsomer Norton, which as currently worded is not justified and is, therefore, unsound.

**APPENDIX 1**  
**Site Location Plan**