

Examination of West Berkshire Local Plan 2022-2039

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IN14: Action Points from week one hearing sessions

Introduction

Further to the discussions at the week one hearing sessions, the following actions are required by the Council. I consider these to be necessary at this stage of the examination to inform my consideration of whether the Plan is sound and/or how it could be made sound by main modifications. I may decide in due course that other or different main modifications are required, including to the parts of the Plan that I refer to below.

Responses should be submitted to the Programme Officer by **midday on Friday 17 May 2024** unless otherwise specified.

Sustainability Appraisal

AP1. Council to set out the requirements in the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (“SEA Regulations”) relating to consultation bodies and public consultees being invited to express their opinion on the relevant documents (ie the sustainability appraisal report); explain whether / how this was complied with when the report was published alongside the Plan for consultation in January 2023; and what specific actions will be required when consulting on further versions of the sustainability appraisal report before the end of the examination in order to ensure legal compliance. The Council may wish to liaise with Simon Pike in preparing its response to this action point.

AP2. Council to carry out further sustainability appraisal of each of the allocations included in the Plan that are retained from previously adopted plans using the same methodology as that used to assess the new residential site allocation options and prepare a report setting out the findings in a comparable form to that in Appendix 8b of the sustainability appraisal report [CD3j November 2022].

The responses to AP1 and AP2 should be provided by **midday on Monday 20 May 2024**.

Strategic Road Network

AP3. Council to submit the additional transport assessment evidence referred to in the Statement of Common Ground with National Highways published on 3 May 2024 [EXAM25] along with any further update about the conclusions of National Highways following their review of that work.

Housing requirement

AP4. Council to provide written evidence that Reading Borough Council does not currently have any up to date quantified assessment of unmet need and therefore does not expect the Plan to make any provision towards meeting such need. Alternatively, amend the main modification to policy SP12 (in EXAM23) to include a minimum housing requirement figure of 528 homes per year (515 local housing need plus 13 per year to address Reading's unmet need of 230 per year referred to in paragraph 6.5 of the Plan).

Office and industrial / warehouse floorspace requirements

AP5. Council to amend the main modification to policy SP20 (in EXAM23) to include reference in the first sentence to the minimum floorspace requirements for office and industrial / warehouse uses for a plan period of 2023 to 2041.

Eastern Urban Area

AP6. Council to prepare a main modification to policy SP1 to refer to the Eastern Urban Area as a focus for additional housing in the Eastern Area (or similar, having regard to the approach in SP1 to other urban areas).

North Wessex Downs AONB

AP7. Council to prepare a main modification to policy SP2 to clarify how proposals affecting the setting of the AONB will be assessed, consistent with national policy and guidance (in particular NPPF 176 and PPG ID:8-042-20190721). This should include reference to development being sensitively located and designed to avoid or minimise adverse impacts on the AONB; identifying views from and to the AONB; and identifying where the landscape character of land within and adjoining the AONB is complementary.

Neighbourhood plans

AP8. Council to prepare a main modification to policy SP3 to clarify:

- a) That neighbourhood plans cannot allocate strategic sites.
- b) That neighbourhood plans can allocate non-strategic sites both within and adjoining the settlement boundaries of urban areas, rural service centres and service villages¹.

¹ The proposed main modification (in EXAM23) to the reasoned justification could be amended to state that "Whilst neighbourhood plans can allocate non-strategic sites within defined settlement boundaries, these would not count towards meeting the target figures in policy SP12 because to do

AP9. Council to amend the proposed modification to SP12 (in EXAM23) to clarify or delete the reference to sites allocated in neighbourhood plans being additional to the allocations in the Plan.

Settlement boundaries

AP10. Council to prepare a change to the Policies Map to amend the settlement boundary at Morphetts Lane, Chieveley.

AP11. Council to clarify, with reference to the relevant criteria used in the settlement boundary review, why the Designated Employment Area east of Thatcham and the retail park north of M4j12 Calcot are not included within any settlement boundary.

AWE Aldermaston and AWE Burghfield Common

AP12. Council, in liaison with AWE and ONR, to prepare a main modification to policy SP4 and the reasoned justification to clarify:

- a) What is meant by “non residential population” in the first paragraph in the Table relating to the DEPZ.
- b) That the fourth paragraph in the Table relating to the OCZ includes “new development” as well as “re-use or re-classification of an existing development”.
- c) That the extent of the DEPZs shown on the maps in Appendix 3 of the Plan and the Policies Map could change before the Plan is updated or superseded and policy SP4 will be applied to the latest version of the DEPZ.
- d) The reference to “consideration will be given as to how the proposed development would impact on the AWE Off-Site Emergency Plan and supporting documents”.

Denison Barracks and RAF Welford

The Council’s response to PQ47 said it was not necessary to modify the Plan to include a specific policy relating to the operational sites at Denison Barracks and RAF Welford because policies SP1, SP2, DM1 and DM35 would apply.

However, Defence Infrastructure Organisation’s written statement for matter 2 [WS3/10] suggests that this would not be effective or consistent with NPPF as those policies would allow development close to the operational sites in certain circumstances without any consideration of the potential impact on operations. Furthermore, the sites are in the countryside and those policies are not directly relevant to defence-related development which may be needed at those sites (whereas DM33 specifically supports development that sustains the functions of the AWEs). They suggest an additional policy in the Plan (along with additional reasoned justification):

- a) Development within Denison Barracks and RAF Welford will be supported where it directly sustains the functioning of these defence establishments.

so would not be consistent with the assumptions made in the LPR about the District’s overall housing land supply” (or similar).

b) Non-defence related development in the areas around a defence site will not be supported where it would adversely affect defence related operation or capability.

AP13. Council to prepare a main modification to the Plan to include a policy relating to Denison Barracks and RAF Welford (along with appropriate reasoned justification), having regard to the suggestion from the Defence Infrastructure Organisation.

Site selection

AP14. Council to clarify whether the information currently available to the examination, including the HELAA, sustainability appraisal and any evidence submitted with regulation 19 representations that the Council considers relevant, adequate and proportionate, indicates that there are any sites (including, if appropriate, smaller parts of areas assessed in the HELAA) suitable and available for residential development that are not allocated in the Plan. If there are any such sites they should be listed and identified on a map, and an explanation provided for why each was not allocated in the Plan (for example because the Council decided they were not needed or because more recent evidence has become available that changes the assessment made when the Plan was prepared).

The response to AP13 should be provided by **midday on Friday 31 May 2024.**

William Fieldhouse

14 May 2024