

Examination of West Berkshire Local Plan 2022-2039

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IN18: Action Points from week two hearing sessions

Introduction

Further to the week two 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 Wednesday 19 June 2024** unless otherwise specified.

North East Thatcham strategic allocation

References below to the Council amending the proposed main modification to policy SP17 and reasoned justification relate to the wording set out in Appendix A to the Council's written statement for matter 4 [WS4/1]. A full track changes version of SP17 and reasoned justification, superseding that in WS4/1, should be produced as part of the response to this note.

AP15. Council to amend the first paragraph in policy SP17 to:

- Delete reference to "residential-led".
- Include reference to the Council agreeing a masterplan. Consideration should be given to whether the timing of this agreement should be specified, for example in relation to the submission, or determination, of any planning applications for development on the site. Consideration should also be given to whether the Council intends to adopt the agreed masterplan as a Supplementary Planning Document.

AP16. Council to amend the proposed modification to SP17 under the sub-heading "Homes" so that the second sentence reads "These dwellings will comprise an appropriate mix of housing types, tenures and sizes having regard to policy SP18" (or similar).

AP17. Council to amend the proposed modification to SP17 under the sub-heading “Sustainability” to take account of any subsequent action points relating to policies SP5 and DM4.

AP18. Council to consider whether the proposed modification to SP17 under the sub-heading “Flooding and Water Environment” needs to be amended to:

- Refer to waste water as well as water supply in the second bullet point.
- Include an additional clause requiring the existing flood defences and attenuation ponds on the site to be retained, protected and enhanced to ensure that flood risk downstream will not be increased as a result of the development.

AP19. Council to amend the proposed modification to SP17 under the sub-heading “Heritage” to clarify the requirement relating to development on the North East Thatcham strategic site supporting an appropriate use of the listed buildings in the area, and to refer to development avoiding or minimising harm to their significance.

AP20. Council to amend the proposed main modification to SP17 under the sub-heading “Community” as follows:

- First sentence to read “A range of community facilities will be provided on the site including ...” (or similar).
- To clarify the requirement of the developer in terms of “early years provision”.
- To clarify the requirement for a health care facility, having regard to the wording suggested in the written statement from the ICB [WS4/3] (amended to clarify that the developer’s contribution would be proportionate to the additional needs associated with future residents on the site rather than to meet the full build cost).
- Delete the final two bullet points relating to “outdoor formal and informal sports pitches” and “open space and play areas” (and, if necessary, amend the proposed modification under the sub-heading “Green Infrastructure” relating to “provision of open space within the developable area” to clarify the types of public open space that would be required in accordance with policy DM40).

AP21. Council to amend the proposed modification to SP17 under the sub-heading “Green Infrastructure” to:

- Refer to “in accordance with policy SP10” in the first paragraph.
- Clarify that the “green infrastructure buffer” would comprise an extensive area of multi-functional green infrastructure covering the higher land across the northern part of the allocation to create a strong defensible permanent boundary between the built development and adjoining countryside; protect ancient woodland and other areas of ecological value and provide new opportunities for biodiversity; and provide opportunities for informal recreation (or similar)¹.

See also AP20 above regarding the wording of the requirement relating to the provision of public open space.

AP22. Council to amend the “proposed new site plan”² to:

¹ Consideration could be given to the approach to green infrastructure provision on Sandleford Park set out in the final part of SP16.

² The Policies Map will also need to be changed accordingly.

- Delete the developable area³.
- Amend the notation of the “Green Infrastructure Buffer” so that it is more diagrammatic with a less precise boundary and broadly covers the higher parts of the site and other areas adjoining ancient woodland⁴.
- Amend the Legend to refer to “Indicative Green Infrastructure between built development and adjoining countryside” (or similar).
- Include the settlement boundary to the north of the A4 and Floral Way as currently defined in the adopted Core Strategy.
- Include the Colthrop Industrial Estate Designated Employment Area within the Thatcham settlement boundary⁵.

AP23. Council to prepare a main modification to the reasoned justification of SP17 to explain:

- The purpose of the “site plan”, including showing the allocation’s relationship with the town and surrounding rural areas.
- That the access points and green infrastructure are indicative, and that the layout and landscaping of the development across the whole allocation will be determined following the completion of the further work and masterplanning process required by policy SP17.
- That the Thatcham settlement boundary in the vicinity of the site remains as defined in the Core Strategy and will be revised through a future update to the Plan to reflect the extent of the built up area once that is known subsequent to the masterplanning and planning application processes required by policy SP17.
- That consideration will also be given in a future review of the Plan to designating a strategic gap between Thatcham and Upper Bucklebury having regard to policy DM2 once the revised Thatcham settlement boundary has been defined.

AP24. Council to delete paragraph 6.54 and insert the following (or similar):

“The Thatcham Strategic Growth Study was carried out in 2019 to 2020 to understand how to plan for growth in Thatcham over the plan period. The West Berkshire Strategic Vision 2050 was prepared in 2022 to guide sustainable growth over the long term in the context of paragraph 22 of the updated NPPF published in 2021. Whilst the development proposed in policy SP17 is expected to be completed within the plan period, and some details in both of those documents are now out of date, they still include relevant information that forms part of the justification for the LPR’s spatial strategy and the strategic allocations in Newbury and Thatcham”.

AP25. Council to prepare a statement of common ground with the North East Thatcham Partnership and any relevant infrastructure providers to inform my consideration of whether there is a reasonable prospect of an operationally and economically viable secondary school being provided on the site at an appropriate time in relation to the development of (a) 1,500 homes and (b) 2,500 homes. This should include approximate figures for the following:

- Size of the school (forms of entry, square metres of floorspace and total hectares of land including playing fields etc).

³ Consequential amendments will be required to the wording of various parts of the version of SP17 in WS4/1 Appendix A which refer to “developable area”.

⁴ Having regard to landscape evidence in LAN7e.

⁵ Council response to AP11 [EXAM26].

- Proportion of the school's capacity that would be required to meet the needs of future residents on the site.
- Overall cost.
- Proportion / amount of overall cost to be met by the developer.
- Proportion / amount of overall cost to be met by others along with potential sources of funding.

The statement should identify areas of agreement and disagreement between the relevant parties.

AP26. Council to prepare a statement of common ground with the North East Thatcham Partnership setting out a realistic timetable for the future development of the site having regard to the evidence in "Start to Finish" [EXAM27]. This should assume all of the development proposed in SP17⁶ is provided and include dates⁷ / timescales for the following:

- Marketing and disposal of land to housebuilders.
- Completion of various strategies and other work required by policy SP17.
- Preparation of a masterplan in collaboration with the community and other stakeholders.
- Council agreement to a masterplan⁸.
- Council agreement to phasing arrangements.
- Submission of planning application(s).
- Approval of planning application(s).
- Completion of section 106 / other legal agreements.
- Discharge of pre-commencement conditions.
- Approval of reserved matters.
- "Opening up works" (on and off-site).
- First housing completions.
- Housing completions in subsequent years (having regard to the requirement for this to be phased and coordinated with the timely delivery of the infrastructure required by SP17).

The statement should identify areas of agreement and disagreement between the relevant parties.

Sandleford Park strategic allocation

AP27. Council, in liaison with Bloor Homes and Donnington New Homes, to prepare a main modification to policy SP16 and associated reasoned justification to ensure it is clear and accurately reflects relevant up to date information including that in planning permissions and applications relating to the site. In particular, consideration should be given to the following aspects:

- Mineral Resource Assessment.
- Flood Risk Assessment.

⁶ For the avoidance of doubt, approximately 1,500 homes.

⁷ Expressed in general terms, for example 2024/5 Q4, rather than specific dates.

⁸ This should cover three options as referred to in AP15:

- Council adopts the masterplan as SPD prior to submission of a planning application.
- Council agrees the masterplan as informal guidance prior to the submission of a planning application.
- Council agrees the masterplan during the planning application process.

- Housing mix (see AP16 above regarding reference to policy SP18 in policy SP17).
- On-site renewable energy and carbon neutrality (bearing in mind the detailed requirements of policies SP5 and DM4 and any subsequent action points relating to those two policies).
- Access to the A339.
- Further infrastructure improvements in accordance with the IDP.
- Extension to Park House School.
- Retail facilities, a local centre and business employment.
- The housing trajectory for the site (in EXAM22)
- Amend the proposed main modification to paragraph 6.41 [WS4/1 Appendix A) to refer to the West Berkshire Strategic Vision 2050 having regard to AP23 above.
- The red line allocation boundary and settlement boundary to be shown on the site map in the Plan and the Policies Map.

Non-strategic housing allocations

AP28. Council to amend as necessary the main modifications in EXAM23 to reflect the comprehensive housing land supply information available relating to 31 March 2023⁹, rather than subsequent information referred to in the Council's matter 6 written statement [WS6/1]. For example, RSA3 should be retained as an allocation rather than deleted because, whilst development may have been at an advanced stage in February 2024, it had not started on 31 March 2023.

The response to AP28 should be submitted by **midday on Friday 31 May**.

Council response to AP14: sites reassessed in terms of suitability and availability for residential development

AP29. Council to publish for each relevant site (including smaller parts of areas assessed in the HELAA) its reassessment of suitability and availability used to inform its response to AP14 (including the reasons why sites were not considered suitable and available with reference, where relevant, to evidence submitted with regulation 19 representations).

The response to AP29 should be submitted by **midday on Friday 31 May**.

William Fieldhouse

28 May 2024

⁹ Housing Trajectory 2023/24 to 2040/41 in EXAM22 Appendix B.