

Examination of West Berkshire Local Plan 2022-2039

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IN10: Hearing Sessions Guidance and Programme (Updated 23rd April 2024)

Introduction

As previously advised, the examination hearing sessions will commence at **09.30 on Wednesday 8 May 2024**. They will be held at **Shaw House, Church Road, Newbury RG14 2DR** and the **Council Chamber, West Berkshire Council Offices, Market Street, Newbury RG14 5LD** and are currently expected to be held over 11 days in May and June 2024:

- Days 1 and 2: Wednesday 8 and Thursday 9 May 2024 (Shaw House)
- Days 3 to 5: Tuesday 21 to Thursday 23 May 2024 (Council Chamber)
- Days 6 to 8: Tuesday 4 to Thursday 6 June 2024 (Shaw House)
- Days 9 to 11: Tuesday 11 to Thursday 13 June 2024 (Shaw House)

Wednesday 26 and Thursday 27 June, and Tuesday 2 and Wednesday 3 July, are booked as reserve days.

This note sets out the programme for the hearing sessions (**Annex A**), a list of participants for each session (**Annex B**), and guidance for participating and observing.

Hearing sessions programme

The matters to be discussed at each session are set out in **Annex A**. Please note that the programme remains essentially the same as that published in February¹, with the exception of matter 2 which will be considered (along with matter 1) on day 1, rather than on day 2 (which will consider just matter 3). If any further changes to the programme are necessary, this will be announced on the examination website.

¹ IN7, published 20 February 2024.

An agenda will be published a few days before each session confirming the issues, including any supplementary questions (see below), to be discussed and participants.

Observing the hearing sessions

All the hearing sessions are public events. They will be available to view live via links which will be posted on the examination website.

There will be a limited number of seats in the hearing room at the venue for those that wish to observe in person. If you wish to do so, please contact the Programme Office at least one day before the relevant session. A livestream feed will also be available in a separate room at the venue.

Participating at hearing sessions

A list of participants for each session is included at **Annex B**. This is based on the requests made to the Programme Officer by Friday 8 March 2024², the relevance of the representation to the issues to be discussed, and the need to achieve fairness in the exercise of the right to be heard and avoid repetitive contributions to the discussions. If anyone has any queries about the list of participants these should be taken up with the Programme Officer as soon as possible. If anyone listed as a participant for a session does not wish to attend please also let the Programme Officer know.

Guidance on taking part in local plan examinations is available in the following document which all participants are encouraged to read, particularly if they have not attended such an event previously:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/taking-part-in-local-plan-examinations>

Participants invited to each session should **arrive at the venue between 08.30 and 09.00** in order to allow a prompt start at 09.30.

Each participant at every session will normally have one seat at the table (with the exception of the Council who will have up to three). A limited amount of “hot seating” will be allowed within a session if a participant considers it essential that a different person acts for them in relation to a particular issue. However, this must be kept to a minimum to avoid disruption to proceedings. If you intend to hot seat, please advise the Programme Officers before the session starts.

In some cases, I have listed a consultant / agent as the participant, rather than the representors they are acting for (as specified in the regulation 20 representation and/or written statement submitted). In those cases, the consultant / agent should clarify before or at the start of each session the representor(s) they are participating on behalf of for the issues to be discussed.

Conduct of the hearing sessions

² In response to IN7 published 20 February 2024.

The hearing sessions are an important part of the examination and will help me determine if the Plan is legally compliant and sound and, if not, how it could be modified to ensure that it is. The hearings will focus on particular parts of the Plan and relevant evidence that I need to ask questions about. Not all parts of the Plan will necessarily be discussed at the hearings as for some I will have all of the information that I need in writing.

I will start each session with some opening comments about procedural matters, and ask all participants to introduce themselves and, if relevant, clarify who they are representing.

After introductions, and having dealt with any procedural matters, I will go through each of the agenda items in turn throughout the course of the session. I will focus on the key things that I need to understand better, based on my reading of the Plan, evidence, representations and written statements. I will normally start with some questions to the Council, and then allow other participants to contribute after we have heard the responses to those.

As I will have read all of the written statements before the relevant session, participants should not read out or summarise what they have submitted. When you wish to speak, upturn your name plate and I will invite you to do so at an appropriate time. When asked to speak, you should turn on your microphone and say who you are. Contributions should be short (normally no more than around two minutes in duration) and directly related to my specific questions, or respond to points made by other participants. There is no need to repeat or say you agree with points made by others.

I will give the Council the chance to sum up their position at the end of each item on the agenda before moving on to the next.

Local plan examination hearing sessions are formal events, with appropriate conduct. I will treat all participants with fairness and respect and expect others to do likewise. Participants may only speak when invited to do so, and must not interrupt others.

Adjournments

Morning sessions will start promptly at 9.30am, and will normally finish around 1pm for lunch. On days when there are separate afternoon sessions, they will start at 2pm promptly. We will normally have adjournments for about 20 minutes around 11am and 3pm. We will aim to finish by 5pm, but we may carry on later if necessary.

Documents

Free wifi will be available at the venue to provide access to the examination library online. Paper copies of documents will not be available at the venue, and therefore all participants should ensure that they bring what they need to allow them to access any documents they think they may need to refer to. If any participant feels they need help with accessing documents on the examination website they should contact the Programme Officer.

The deadlines for submission of written statements have passed and no further written material should be submitted unless specifically requested by me. Participants should not expect to introduce new documents during the hearing sessions.

Proposed main modifications

Since submitting the Plan for examination, the Council has proposed some main modifications to it. This is normal practice in examinations, and is intended to help me decide how best to modify the Plan if necessary to ensure that it is sound. The modifications that were proposed by the Council in response to my Preliminary Questions were referred to in my matters, issues and questions and could therefore be commented on in representors' written statements. The Council has subsequently proposed further main modifications in its written statements.

A comprehensive schedule of all of the Council's proposed main modifications will be published in advance of the first hearing session.

Each of the proposed main modifications will be discussed at a relevant hearing session(s). I will consider whether the Council's proposed main modifications (and those suggested by representors) are necessary and would make the Plan sound. I can only recommend them if that is the case, and there may be other recommendations that I identify as being necessary during or after hearing sessions. I cannot recommend changes to the Plan to "improve" it unless I think the relevant part is not sound as submitted. And I can only make recommendations about the actual content of the Plan, not related matters.

Any potential main modifications that I intend to recommend be made to the Plan will be subject to public consultation (similar to that carried out under regulation 19) before I formally include them in my final report. Such consultation will normally be carried out after the completion of the programmed hearing sessions.

Action points

If I identify during hearing sessions that main modifications are required, or that further work needs to be carried out by the Council and/or others, I will usually make that clear during the session. The Council should keep a note of all such matters. I will probably issue an Action Point Note at the end of each week of hearings to confirm what I have asked for.

It is also possible that there are some matters that I need longer to think about, and I may set out interim thoughts in a separate note at a later date.

Queries

Any queries about this note should be taken up with the Programme Officer.

William Fieldhouse

5 April 2024

Hearing Sessions Programme

Day one: Wednesday 8 May 2024

M1. Legal and procedural requirements and other general matters

- 1.1 The duty to cooperate
- 1.2 Public consultation
- 1.3 Equalities
- 1.4 Sustainability appraisal
- 1.5 Habitat regulations assessment
- 1.6 Climate change
- 1.7 Flood risk
- 1.8 Strategic policies and neighbourhood plans (Appendix 6)
- 1.9 Superseded policies in the existing statutory development plan (Appendix 7)
- 1.10 References to supplementary planning documents and other guidance
- 1.11 Definitions (Appendix 9)
- 1.12 Viability
- 1.13 Strategic and local road network (evidence)

M2. Amount of development needed in the District

- 2.1 Plan period
- 2.2 Housing requirement (policy SP12)
- 2.3 Office floorspace requirement (paragraph 7.40)
- 2.4 Industrial and warehouse floorspace requirements (paragraphs 7.8 and 7.13)

Day two: Thursday 9 May 2024

M3. Spatial strategy

- 3.1 The spatial strategy and settlement hierarchy (policies SP1, SP3 and App 2)
- 3.2 AWE Aldermaston and AWE Burghfield (policies SP4 and DM33 and App 3)
- 3.3 North Wessex Downs AONB (policy SP2)
- 3.4 Housing requirements for neighbourhood areas (SP12, SP13, SP14 and SP15)
- 3.5 Settlement boundaries (policies SP1 and SP2)
- 3.6 Separation of settlements around Newbury and Thatcham (policy DM2)
- 3.7 Key Diagram
- 3.8 Site selection methodology

Days three and four: Tuesday 21 and Wednesday 22 May 2024

M4. North East Thatcham strategic site (policy SP17)

- 4.1 Reasonable alternatives and West Berkshire Strategic Vision
- 4.2 Infrastructure
- 4.3 Transport infrastructure
- 4.4 Education infrastructure
- 4.5 Health care infrastructure
- 4.6 Community infrastructure
- 4.7 Landscape and green infrastructure
- 4.8 Flood risk and surface water
- 4.9 Air and noise pollution
- 4.10 Affordable homes and housing mix
- 4.11 Self build plots
- 4.12 Biodiversity
- 4.13 Historic environment
- 4.14 Masterplanning and Thatcham Strategic Growth Study
- 4.15 Viability and delivery
- 4.16 Policies map
- 4.17 North East Thatcham map

Day five: Thursday 23 May 2024

M5. Sandleford Park strategic site (policy SP16)

- 5.1 West Berkshire Strategic Vision
- 5.2 Transport
- 5.3 Comprehensive development and infrastructure provision
- 5.4 Viability and delivery
- 5.5 Settlement boundary

M6. Non strategic housing allocations

- 6.1 Newbury and Thatcham (policies RSA1 to RSA5)

Day six: Tuesday 4 June 2024

M6. Non strategic housing allocations ctd

6.2 Eastern Area (policies RSA6 to RSA13)

6.3 North Wessex Downs AONB (policies RSA14 to RSA23)

Days seven and eight: Wednesday 5 and Thursday 6 June 2024

M7. Housing supply (numbers)

7.1 Allocations in existing plans retained and included in the Plan

7.2 Stratfield Mortimer Neighbourhood Plan

7.3 Allocations in existing plans at advanced stage of construction

7.4 Unallocated sites with planning permission

7.5 New allocations in the Plan

7.6 Sites to be allocated in neighbourhood plans

7.7 Windfall allowance

7.8 Five year housing land requirement and supply

7.9 Overall housing supply for the plan period

M8. Requirements of housing developers

8.1 Affordable housing (policy SP19)

8.2 Density of housing development (policy SP1)

8.3 Housing type and mix (policy SP18)

8.4 Internal space standards (policy DM30)

8.5 Design quality (policy SP7)

8.6 Sustainable homes (policies SP5 and DM4)

8.7 Water quality, water resources and waste water (policy DM7)

8.8 Green infrastructure and public open space (policies SP10 and DM40)

8.9 Biodiversity and geodiversity (policy SP11)

8.10 Trees, woodlands and hedgerows (policy DM15)

8.11 Residential amenity and gardens (policy DM31)

8.12 Landscape character assessments (policy SP8)

8.13 Statements of heritage significance (policy SP9)

8.14 Health impact assessments (policy DM3)

8.15 Car parking and cycle storage (policy DM44 and Appendix 5)

8.16 Transport impacts and infrastructure (policies SP23, DM42 and DM45)

8.17 Digital infrastructure (policy DM41)

8.18 Infrastructure requirements and delivery (policy SP24)

Day nine: Tuesday 11 June 2024

M9. Other housing development management policies

- 9.1 First homes exception sites (policy DM16)
- 9.2 Rural exception sites (policy DM17)
- 9.3 Specialised housing (policy DM19)
- 9.4 Mobile home parks (policy DM21)
- 9.5 Residential use above non-residential units (policy DM22)
- 9.6 Residential development in the countryside (policies DM23 to DM27)
- 9.7 Residential extensions and annexes (policies DM28 and DM29)

M10. Gypsy, traveller and travelling showpeople accommodation

- 10.1 Need for additional gypsy and traveller accommodation (Table 7)
- 10.2 Sites for additional gypsy and traveller accommodation (DM20 and RSA24)
- 10.3 Need for additional travelling showpeople accommodation (Table 8)
- 10.4 Sites for additional travelling showpeople accommodation (policy RSA25)

Day ten: Wednesday 12 June 2024

M11 Economic development

- 11.1 Strategic approach to employment land (policy SP20)
- 11.2 Designated employment areas (policies SP21 and DM32 and Appendix 4)
- 11.3 Sites allocated for economic development (policies SP21 and ESA1 to ESA6)
- 11.4 Office development (policies SP20, SP22 and DM32)
- 11.5 Town centres and retail parks (policies SP22 and DM34)
- 11.6 Economic development in the countryside (policies DM35, DM36 and DM38)
- 11.7 Equestrian development and horseracing industry (policy DM37)
- 11.8 Theale rail-road transfer site (policy DM43)

M12. Other development management policies

- 12.1 Non-residential development and carbon emissions (policies SP5 and DM4)
- 12.2 Non-residential development and transport (policies SP23, DM42 and DM44)
- 12.3 Pollution and air quality (policies DM5 and DM8)
- 12.4 Flood risk (policy SP6)
- 12.5 Water quality and resources (policies DM6 and DM7)
- 12.6 Historic environment (policies SP9 and DM9 to DM14)
- 12.7 Community facilities (policy DM39)

M13. Other soundness issues

Next steps in the examination

**Wednesday 26 and Thursday 27 June, and Tuesday 2 and Wednesday 3 July
2024**

Reserve days in case any issues need to be returned to, or additional issues need to be discussed.

End of Annex A

Participants at Hearing Sessions

Day one: Wednesday 8 May 2024

M1. Legal and procedural requirements and other general matters

- Bucklebury Parish Council (Andrew Black Consulting)
- Croudace Homes (Nexus Planning)
- Donnington New Homes (Turley Associates)
- Home Builders Federation
- North East Thatcham Partnership (Lichfields)
- Pike, Simon
- Pincents Lane (Town)
- Pro Vision (for clients)
- Thatcham Town Council
- Walker Logistics (Pegasus Group)

M2. Amount of development needed in the District

- Bloor Homes (White Peak Planning)
- Bucklebury Parish Council (Andrew Black Consulting)
- Colthrop Village Consortium (Walsingham Planning)
- Copas Farms Ltd (Stantec)
- Croudace Homes (Nexus Planning)
- Darcliffe Homes
- Gladman
- Hallam Land Management (LRM)
- Home Builders Federation
- North East Thatcham Partnership (Lichfields)
- Opus Works (for clients)
- Pike, Simon
- Pincents Lane (Town)
- Pro Vision (for clients)
- Turley Associates (for clients)
- Walker Logistics (Pegasus Group)

Day two: Thursday 9 May 2024

M3. Spatial strategy

- Aldermaston Parish Council
- AWE (Quod)
- AWE Aldermaston and AWE Burghfield Residents Group
- Blackburn, Marie
- Bradfield College (Lucy White Planning)
- Bucklebury Parish Council (Andrew Black Consulting)
- Charlesgate Homes
- Colthrop Village Consortium (Walsingham Planning)
- Croudace Homes (Nexus Planning)
- Darcliffe Homes
- Donnington New Homes (Turley Associates)
- Gladman
- Hallam Land Management (LRM)
- Halthor Property (Bell Cornwell)
- Hamilton Steve (RPS)
- North East Thatcham Partnership (Lichfields)
- Office for Nuclear Regulation
- Opus Works (for clients)
- Pangbourne Beaver Properties (Nexus Planning)
- Pike, Simon
- Pincents Lane (Town)
- Pro Vision (for clients)
- Thatcham Town Council
- Walker Logistics (Pegasus Group)
- Yattendon Estate (Stantec)

Days three and four: Tuesday 21 and Wednesday 22 May 2024

M4. North East Thatcham strategic site (policy SP17)

- Bucklebury Parish Council (Andrew Black Consulting)
- Colthrop Village Consortium (Walsingham Planning)
- Croudace Homes (Nexus)
- NHS / Integrated Care Board
- North East Thatcham Partnership (Lichfields)
- Pike, Simon
- Pincents Lane (Town)
- Pro Vision (for clients)
- Read, Councillor Chris
- Thatcham Town Council

Day five: Thursday 23 May 2024

M5. Sandleford Park strategic site (policy SP16)

- Bloor Homes (White Peak Planning)
- Donnington New Homes (Turley)
- Pro Vision (for clients)
- Pincents Lane (Town)

M6. Non strategic housing allocations (RSA1 to RSA5 Newbury and Thatcham)

- Central Corporation Projects (Bell Cornwell)
- Chieveley Parish Council
- Donnington New Homes (Turley Associates)
- JPP Land (Woolf Bond)
- Pincents Lane (Town)
- Pro Vision (for clients)
- Sovereign Housing Association (Boyer)
- Thames Water

Day six: Tuesday 4 June 2024

M6. Non strategic housing allocations ctd
(RSA6 to RSA13 Eastern Area and RSA14 to RSA23 North Wessex Downs AONB)

- AWE Aldermaston and AWE Burghfield Residents Group
- Baker and White (Wey Planning)
- Central Corporation Projects (Bell Cornwell)
- Chieveley Parish Council
- Donnington New Homes (Turley Associates)
- JPP Land (Woolf Bond)
- Pincents Lane (Town)
- Pro Vision (for clients)
- Sovereign Housing Association (Boyer)
- Thames Water

Days seven: Wednesday 5 June 2024

M7. Housing supply (numbers)

- Bloor Homes (White Peak Planning)
- Hallam Land Management (LRM)
- Home Builders Federation
- JPP Land (Woolf Bond)
- Nexus Planning (for clients)
- North East Thatcham Partnership (Lichfields)
- Opus Works (for clients)
- Pincents Lane (Town)
- Pro Vision (for clients)
- Thames Water
- Thatcham Town Council

Day eight: Thursday 6 June 2024

M8. Requirements of housing developers

- Bloor Homes (White Peak Planning)
- Donnington New Homes (Turley Associates)
- Home Builders Federation
- McCarthy Stone (The Planning Bureau)
- Thatcham Town Council

Day nine: Tuesday 11 June 2024

M9. Other housing development management policies

- NHS / Integrated Care Board
- Bradfield College (Lucy White Planning)

M10. Gypsy, traveller and travelling showpeople accommodation

- Aldermaston Parish Council

Day ten: Wednesday 12 June 2024

M11 Economic development

- Bradfield College (Lucy White Planning)
- Copas Farms Ltd (Stantec)
- Dijksman Planning
- Lambourn Trainers Association (Rapleys)
- Lochailort Newbury Ltd
- Panattoni (Turley Associates)
- Pangbourne College (Turley Associates)
- Pro Vision (for clients)
- Thatcham Town Council
- Walker Logistics (Pegasus Group)
- Yattendon Estate (Stantec)

M12. Other development management policies

- Pincents Lane (Town)
- Yattendon Estate (Stantec)

End of Annex B