

1 Introduction

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What is the Housing Site Allocations Development Plan Document

1.1 The Housing Site Allocations Development Plan Document (DPD) is the second DPD within West Berkshire's Local Plan.

1.2 It has been prepared following the adoption of the West Berkshire Core Strategy in July 2012 which set out the overall planning framework for the site specific proposals and policies to be contained in other documents.

1.3 The Core Strategy allocates strategic development sites in Newbury (Newbury Racecourse and Sandford Park). It also sets out strategic policies. The role of the Housing Site Allocations DPD is now to implement the framework set by the Core Strategy by allocating non-strategic housing sites across the District in accordance with the spatial strategy of the Core Strategy. This means that the sites to be allocated are in the areas that the Core Strategy sets out as suitable for some level of future growth and that the proposals will conform to the policy details set out in the Core Strategy.

1.4 Sites for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople are also proposed for allocation and the Housing Site Allocations DPD will also include updated residential parking standards and a policy which updates part of adopted policy Core Strategy policy (CS3) on Sandford Park.

Approach to Housing Numbers

1.5 The Core Strategy sets out a housing requirement for the District of 'at least' 10,500 dwellings from 2006 to 2026. The Core Strategy was prepared at a time when the housing number for the District was allocated via the regional tier of Government which has now been abolished.

1.6 The Council is now required by national policy set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) to meet the 'objectively assessed needs' of the area. Work is underway in partnership with other local authorities to establish how much housing West Berkshire will need in the future through the production of a Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA).

1.7 The first part of the future housing requirement is being met through the preparation of the Housing Site Allocations DPD which will allocate the remainder of the 'at least' 10,500 housing figure from the Core Strategy, with some additional flexibility around these numbers. Once the DPD has been adopted, the remainder of the future housing requirement will be met through the preparation of a new Local Plan which will allocate additional development and look longer term to 2036, as well as dealing with other policy issues.

Consultation

1.8 Consultation so far on the Housing Site Allocations DPD has included two newsletters and workshops with Parish and Town Councils as part of the process of shortlisting and selecting sites to be included within the DPD.

1.9 Between 30 April and 11 June 2014 we held a consultation about the scope and content of the DPD. This is a regulatory consultation and we notified specified bodies and persons of the proposed subject of the DPD and asked them to make representations. We received over 40 responses and have carefully considered and responded to the points made. This information is set out in the Statement of Consultation that accompanies the DPD.

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1.10 This is a preferred options consultation, setting out shortlisted housing allocations, proposed sites for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople as well as a policy on residential parking standards and an updated policy to guide the future development of Sandleford Park. This is an optional period of consultation, but in the Council's view an important one as it gives you an opportunity to comment at an early stage of the planning process and for us to be able to take your views into account before final decisions are made.

1.11 We would now like your comments on the soundness of the proposals within the draft Plan. This is a 7 week period of consultation which is taking place between 25 July and 12 September 2014. Copies of the documents will be available at the libraries in the District and at the Council Offices.

1.12 Following the consultation, a submission draft Housing Site Allocations DPD will be produced, taking into account the outcome of the consultation. This will then be submitted to the Secretary of State following a further period of consultation.

Duty to Cooperate

1.13 Section 110 of the Localism Act places a legal duty on local planning authorities and other prescribed bodies to cooperate with each other when preparing development plan documents in order to address strategic planning issues relevant to their areas.

1.14 Work is ongoing on satisfying the Duty including sending a paper out to those with whom West Berkshire needs to cooperate which sets out how West Berkshire Council will deal with strategic planning issues as part of the preparation of the DPD. The paper sought comments on the approach as part of the ongoing process of cooperation.

1.15 Additionally one to one discussions have taken place with some of the relevant organisations as part of the process of site selection.

1.16 A Statement of Consultation has been prepared and forms a background paper to the DPD.

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Spatial Strategy - where are the houses proposed to go and why?

2.1 This DPD Preferred Options document contains shortlisted sites for future housing development. These are set out in four spatial areas, to deliver the framework of the adopted West Berkshire Core Strategy. The spatial strategy builds on the existing settlement pattern of West Berkshire, with a particular focus on Newbury as the District's main urban centre.

2.2 The four spatial areas reflect the distinct characteristics of the different parts of West Berkshire, and use the District's settlement hierarchy of Urban Areas, Rural Service Centres and Service Villages as the focus for development within these areas. The four spatial areas are:

- Newbury and Thatcham, including the Service Village of Cold Ash.
- The Eastern Area, which includes the Eastern Urban Area (Tilehurst, Calcot and Purley-on-Thames) and the Rural Service Centre of Theale.
- The North Wessex Downs AONB which includes the Rural Service Centres of Hungerford, Lambourn and Pangbourne and the Service Villages of Compton, Hermitage, Chieveley, Kintbury, Great Shefford and Bradfield Southend.
- The East Kennet Valley, including the Rural Service Centres of Burghfield Common and Mortimer and the Service Villages of Woolhampton and Aldermaston.

2.3 The settlement hierarchy of the Core Strategy sets out that whilst the urban areas will be the focus of development in West Berkshire, there will also be development in Rural Service Centres which provide the role of a focal point for the surrounding villages and rural areas in terms of the provision of services and facilities. Service Villages will accommodate more limited development, appropriate to the character and function of the village, in order to meet local needs.

2.4 The Core Strategy sets out a vision for each of the four spatial areas, showing how each area is expected to change and evolve to 2026. This is followed by a set of bullet points which show how the vision will be implemented, what the level of growth will be and how this level of growth for each area will be delivered.

2.5 Proposed housing allocations have been made in conformity with the Core Strategy. Information about these allocations is set out in summary form in Sections 3 - 6. All of the detailed background information is set out in the Background Paper and in the SA/SEA Environmental Report.

How have the potential housing sites been selected?

2.6 We held a 'call for sites' in the spring of 2013 which led to an update of the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) being published in December 2013. The role of the SHLAA is to identify a range of sites that may have potential for housing development over the coming years. The SHLAA provides a basket of sites from which choices are made through the preparation of the DPD.

2.7 The DPD has to be based on evidence, and so all of the sites have been assessed against the same planning criteria to assess the suitability of each of the sites for development. These criteria are set out in the background paper which accompanies the Housing Site Allocations DPD. The site selection criteria have their basis in national and local policy, focusing on the three elements of sustainability (environmental, social and economic).

2.8 Workshops were held with the Parish and Town Councils during the spring of 2014 in order to discuss the SHLAA sites and to get their views on them at an early stage of the process. Technical consultees were also asked for their comments on the sites during the site selection process to gain their early views. Further information on this is also set out in the background paper.

2.9 Sustainability Appraisal/Strategic Environmental Assessment (SA/SEA) is a key part of the site selection process. This focuses on the significant sustainability effects of the DPD and considers alternatives that take into account the social, environmental and economic objectives. The SA/SEA objectives have been used to assess the sustainability of the sites and the outcomes of this process have been set out in the SA/SEA Environmental Report.

Settlement Boundary Reviews

2.10 Settlement boundaries identify the main built up area of a settlement within which development is likely to be considered acceptable in principle, subject to other policy considerations. While allowing for development, settlement boundaries protect the character of a settlement and prevent unrestricted growth into the countryside. They create a level of certainty about whether or not the principle of development is likely to be acceptable which is helpful for Development Control Officers, Council Members, applicants and members of the public.

2.11 It is proposed that the settlement boundaries around the settlements within the settlement hierarchy will be re-drawn to include the proposed site allocations. Additional sites which are too small to be housing allocations (typically those which are below 5 dwellings) may also be included within revised settlement boundaries.

2.12 Criteria for reviewing the settlement boundaries have been prepared and are set out in Section 8. These form part of the preferred options consultation. The settlement boundaries themselves have not been re-drawn at this stage but will be as part of the submission version of the DPD.

Sites for Gypsies and Travellers and Travelling Showpeople

2.13 There is a requirement for West Berkshire Council, as the Local Planning Authority, to identify sites to meet the needs of Gypsies and Travellers and Travelling Showpeople. National policy sets out a requirement to set pitch and plot targets which address the likely permanent and transit accommodation needs in the area, working in partnership with neighbouring authorities.

2.14 Any pitch provision must be based on evidence and so a Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment (GTAA) is being conducted. This is being carried out by an independent consultant, using a shared methodology with other Berkshire authorities. The preliminary findings from the GTAA have informed the number and location of pitches required.

2.15 A 'call for sites' exercise was held between 28 April and 27 May 2014 in which interested parties could suggest sites they considered suitable for Gypsies and Travellers and Travelling Showpeople. A total of five sites were submitted, including requests from owners of some existing authorised sites to extend their sites and/or increase the number of pitches. In addition to these submitted sites four other sites have been considered for allocation; one existing unauthorised site, a site which was promoted through the SHLAA for Gypsies and Travellers (EUA035), a site where planning permission had lapsed and a Council owned site which has been considered as two separate sites. The potential suitability of each site has been assessed to see which would be suitable to take forward as preferred site allocations. This information is set out in the SA/SEA Environmental Report.

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Policies to Guide Development in the Countryside

2.16 Given the importance of the landscape within West Berkshire, both inside and outside the AONB, and the pressures for development, it is important to provide clear, up to date planning policy guidance to ensure a sound starting point for development management decisions.

2.17 A review has therefore been undertaken of all the 'saved' policies from the previous Local Plan (West Berkshire District Local Plan 1991-2006) which relate to the management of housing in the countryside and which remain in force as part of the development plan.

2.18 The proposed new policies reflect national policy and respond to local issues in West Berkshire. The policies do not form part of this consultation. Instead there will be a separate consultation on them for 6 weeks from September.

Parking Standards for Residential Development

2.19 Levels of parking provision and the way in which they are designed are important factors in creating good quality environments where people want to live. Standards for car parking have now been developed which seek to ensure the delivery of good quality developments in West Berkshire. These standards take into account national policy set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and take into account factors such as the accessibility of the development, the size, type, mix and use of the development, local car ownership levels, existing levels of parking provision and the overall need to reduce the use of high-emission vehicles.

2.20 The draft parking standards for residential development set out within Section 9 of the DPD and is accompanied by a background paper accompanying the DPD.

Updated Policy to guide development at Sandleford Park

2.21 Since the adoption of the Core Strategy in July 2012, new evidence has become available on two specific elements of the Core Strategy policy on Sandleford Park (CS3). These relate to highways access (where evidence shows benefits to the Highways network of additional all vehicle accesses onto Warren Road and to the A339) and to education provision where updated child yield figures show an increased primary requirement to accommodate pupil numbers arising from the site.

2.22 The policy has therefore been updated to ensure that it reflects the most up to date evidence on highways and access. The policy has also been updated to include reference to the need for masterplans for the site to be prepared as part of any planning application.

2.23 All other aspects of the policy remain unchanged. The revised policy is included within Section 9 of the DPD.

2.24 The policy is supported by background technical evidence which is set out as a background paper accompanying the DPD.