



# INFORMATION SHEET

## Planning and Sustainability

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## Position Statement re Greenfield Reserve Sites and Abbey Barn South

**Officer contact: Ian Manktelow, HW 421579, [ian\\_manktelow@wycombe.gov.uk](mailto:ian_manktelow@wycombe.gov.uk)**

### Introduction

At the Daws Hill Reference Group on 20<sup>th</sup> February an issue was raised about the Council's specific position in relation to the release of greenfield reserve sites and the Abbey Barn South site in particular, in the light of statements made in Council publications in 2011. This note seeks to clarify this issue.

### Summary of Position

- The reserve sites (including Abbey Barn South) are reserved in the Wycombe Core Strategy (adopted 2008) to meet future development need.
- No timescales are given in the Core Strategy for their release, although the strategy anticipates some or all of them being needed by 2026.
- The Council's Position Statement on Housing and Land for Business (July 2011) indicated that there is not a case for release of these reserve sites, in terms of meeting housing requirements, at present but that their future should be reviewed in the forthcoming review of the Core Strategy 2013-16 when overall housing targets will also be reviewed.
- Since the adoption of the Core Strategy Abbey Barn South has been considered as a potential special case for early release in advance of when the housing requirements suggest, given the prospect of development on the adjoining RAF Daws Hill site, but only if significant additional benefits from its early release can be demonstrated.
- The Position Statement concluded that, based on the available evidence at that time, the case had not been made for its early release and unless very significant benefits can be demonstrated the Council's preferred approach is to see the development of just the RAF Daws Hill at this point in time.

### Detail

#### Background including adopted Statutory Policy Position

The following sites are included in Policy CS8 of the Wycombe Core Strategy (adopted May 2008) as reserve sites:

- Abbey Barn North
- Abbey Barn South
- Gomm Valley
- Slate Meadow (Bourne End)
- Terriers Farm<sup>1</sup>

These are sites reserved for future development when needed. No timescales are set out in the policy for when the sites should be developed and no priority order for their release is set out. The policy indicates that the Site Allocations document will determine the extent of any development needs that may be required to be met at these locations. However the supporting text to the policy indicates that development needs up to 2026 are likely to generate a requirement to draw on some or all of these areas by that date.

The Delivery and Site Allocations (DSA) document was to be the document that determined the need (or otherwise) for the release of these reserve sites and indicate the broad timing of any release. Earlier consultations on the DSA in 2009 and 2010 considered this issue and also explored whether there was a case for an earlier release of Abbey Barn South as part of a more comprehensive development with RAF Daws Hill. However the Council is not now addressing the issue of the release of reserve sites in the DSA document, the scope of which has been reduced. Instead the issue will be considered in a review of the Core Strategy, work on which is due to commence at the end of this year and finalised in 2016. This Core Strategy review will also set a new overall housing target for the District.

As a result a Position Statement was issued in July 2011 and this was followed up in September 2011 with information in a newsletter/broadsheet issued as part of a consultation on the “reduced” DSA document.

### **Newsletter (Sept 2011)**

Page 3 of this newsletter/broadsheet included 3 articles about the following housing issues:

1. Setting our own housing target in the future
2. Protecting Green Belt/AONB including comment on the greenfield reserve sites.
3. RAF Daws Hill and Abbey Barn South.

There was then a signpost to the Position Statement on Housing and Land for Business (July 2011) for more details.

The second article indicated we don't need to build on any greenfield land in the foreseeable future and stated that we are not bringing forward development on any of the 5 reserve sites listed above. However it stated that *“we can't say there never will be development on these sites because they are still reserved to meet our future*

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<sup>1</sup> Terriers Farm is also allocated in the Local Plan as a housing site but an appeal decision in 2008 indicated that it did not need to be released at that time due to the availability of previously developed sites which should receive priority over greenfield sites.

*development needs.”*

The article on Daws Hill/Abbey Barn South explained that after looking carefully at whether there is a special case for allowing development on Abbey Barn South we have decided that the case has not been made and that the development of RAF Daws Hill should proceed on its own.

## **Position Statement on Housing and Land for Business (July 2011)**

This sets out the detailed position.

### Reserve Sites

Paragraphs 2.14 – 2.15 of the Position Statement set out the position at July 2011 in relation to the reserve greenfield sites. It explains that there is broadly a sufficient supply of previously developed (“brownfield”) sites to meet housing requirements up to 2021 without the need to release any greenfield reserve sites. It states that given the Council’s intention to review its housing targets and housing provision through the Core Strategy Review, the Council’s position is that there is no case for the early release of the reserve greenfield sites and that the position in relation to the release of these sites should be reviewed through the Core Strategy Review. However it then refers on to the next section of the statement in relation to the Abbey Barn South site.

The Council keeps its overall housing land supply position under review on a regular basis so the Position Statement is setting out the position at a point in time.

### Abbey Barn South

The statement makes it clear that the Council has been assessing and consulting on the merits of an early release of the Abbey Barn South site to form a comprehensive development with RAF Daws Hill. This would be in advance of when it is needed to meet housing requirements, and would need to be justified on the basis of there being very significant added value/benefits from releasing the site early.

The Position Statement concluded that from the work undertaken to date there is not the overriding case to release the Abbey Barn South site now. It noted that whilst there were some benefits associated with the comprehensive development of both sites there remain significant concerns about the transportation impacts of the larger development and its ability to demonstrate the wider additional benefits. It stated that *“Unless such very significant benefits can be clearly demonstrated, the Council’s preferred approach is to see the development of just the RAF Daws Hill site at this point in time”* whilst ensuring that RAF Daws Hill is designed and delivered in such a way as to ensure development of Abbey Barn South can be fully integrated with it in the future.

Policy PS8 of the Position Statement sets out a series of principles for the development of the RAF Daws Hill site.