
Wycombe District Local Plan Public Examination

Response to Inspector's Matters and Questions
On behalf of University of Reading (UoR)
(Respondent ID:1014)

**Matter 2:
The Plan's Strategy**

June 2018

**Wycombe District Local Plan
Public Examination**

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Matter 2:**

The Plan's Strategy

**Barton Willmore LLP on behalf of the University of Reading
(Respondent ID:1014)**

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0.0 INTRODUCTION

0.1 Barton Willmore LLP is instructed by the University of Reading (UoR) to submit this written Hearing Statement in response to the Inspector's Matters, Issues and Questions Stage 1. These representations expand upon the representations submitted on behalf of University of Reading at the earlier stages of the Wycombe District Local Plan preparation. The UoR has land interests at the Henley Business School ('Greenlands') which lies within an existing Major Developed Area in the AONB.

0.2 This statement does not respond to all matters and questions as set out in stage 1 as some are directed solely to the Wycombe District Council (WDC) and others are not related to the representations submitted previously.

Greenlands

0.4 The site became the home of a new Administrative Staff College in 1946, first welcoming students in 1948. The College was renamed Henley Management College in 1991 and following the 2008 merger with the University of Reading became Henley Business School. Today, the world-ranked Henley MBA, The Henley DBA and our executive education programmes are delivered at Greenlands. The Greenlands is set within the countryside on the outskirts of Henley-on-Thames, adjacent to the River Thames, with the main building 'Greenlands' a Grade II* listed building.

0.5 The Campus also accommodates business facilities (eleven conference rooms and 40 meeting and syndicate rooms are housed within the main Greenlands building and the adjacent River House building) including meeting rooms and conference facilities boasting air conditioning, natural daylight and excellent acoustics, as well as state-of-the-art AV and presentation technology. In addition to this, there are 100 en-suite rooms, some of which have disabled facilities and parking for 200 vehicles. Greenlands, whilst in a countryside setting, is within an hour of Heathrow Airport, and easily accessible to M4, M25 and the M40 as well as rail links and the public transport network.

RESPONSE TO INSPECTOR'S QUESTIONS - MATTER 2

1.0 Is the Vision sufficiently aspirational and locally specific to form the basis for planning in Wycombe over the Plan period?

1.1 No comment.

2.0 Are the Plan's objectives appropriate, positively prepared and justified and are they capable of delivering the vision for Wycombe District set out in the Plan?

2.1 No comment.

3.0 Is the Plan's Spatial Strategy (Policy CP2) consistent with the requirement of the NPPF to promote sustainable development?

3.1 No comment.

4.0 Does the Plan reflect the strategies and proposals of infrastructure providers?

4.1 No comment.

5.0 Has the Plan's Spatial Strategy been positively prepared, is it justified, and will it be an effective mechanism for delivering growth over the Plan period?

a) Does the Plan's Spatial Strategy represent an effective approach to delivering sustainable development (Policy CP1) over the Plan period?

5.1 Policy CP2 sets out the Spatial Strategy for the District and in broad terms appears compliant with the aims and objectives of national planning policy in terms of the emphasis placed on protecting and enhancing the AONB and the Green Belt. We have no substantive comment to make in terms of the spatial direction of housing and economic growth other than as relevant to the detail of Policies CM12 and DM44, set out in our Statement for Matter 5.

- 5.2 In terms of whether the Spatial Strategy '*represents an effective approach to delivering sustainable development (Policy CP1)*' we have some concern that the Spatial Strategy makes no reference to existing Major Developed Sites within the AONB, such as Henley Business School. Policy CP2 (1) of the new Local Plan is worded in a prohibitive fashion, stating that conserving the landscape and scenic beauty of the AONB will be achieved, in part, by '*not allocating sites that constitute "major development" in the AONB*'. The rationale for not allocating *new* major sites within the AONB is understood; however, we suggest that is a clear role for existing Major Developed Sites within the AONB/countryside to effectively contribute towards the attainment of sustainability objectives set out in CP1 and consider that this should be recognised within the Spatial Strategy.
- 5.3 We consider that this approach would be better aligned with the first of the Plan's strategic objectives – '*Cherish the Chilterns*' – which seeks to ensure that the Chilterns are cherished '*...by conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the landscape of the Chiltern Hills.*' The explanatory text at paragraph 3.7 of the Plan goes on to state that '*The appropriate management and conservation of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty in a holistic and integrated way is...very important*' which further reinforces the need to properly address existing major developed sites within the AONB and to provide clarity as to how development proposals within these areas will be treated.
- 5.4 Considering the above it is considered that further justification should be made in relation to existing Major Developed Sites in the AONB as per Saved Policy C12 in the adopted plan. Policy DM44 (Development in the Countryside outside of the Green Belt) of the new Local Plan acknowledges that some development in the countryside can make a positive contribution to the locality and that any development would have to accord with other Local Plan policies. While the UoR supports Policy DM44 in part (as explained in our representations of November 2017), we consider that, mindful of the potential need for complementary and related uses on the Greenlands site, the policy could be amended to include additional text as follows:

(c) ***Additional buildings for employment and related uses where these are required to support an existing rural enterprise or business located in the countryside, which are proportionate to the existing.***

- 5.5 Moreover, the following supporting text should be added to paragraph 6.220 to reflect rural businesses, some of which are Major Developed Sites within the countryside in the Saved Local Plan which will be replaced by the adoption of the draft Plan, to continue the objective of supporting their contribution to the economy within the context of the countryside:

*6.220 This policy provides a development management framework for development in the countryside beyond the Green Belt. Although not subject to the same restrictions as the Green Belt, these are areas where new development is generally not sustainable, but where some new development can contribute positively to the vitality and sustainability of rural communities and businesses. **The former Local Plan major developed business sites within the countryside include The University of Reading Henley Business School at Greenlands, the Water Research Centre, Medmenham, HTS Management Centre, Lane End and SAS Institute. Medmenham and these sites will be managed appropriately so that any new development can have a positive impact on the local economy without any further significant impact on the countryside. Any new development should not incur a greater impact on the visual amenity or the overall character of the area than the existing development. This will ensure that the existing character is maintained whilst positively managing development appropriately in the countryside.** Whilst some additional development can help to sustain rural communities and local services, in exceptional circumstances it may be concluded that the amount of development proposed exceeds the capacity of local services.*

- 5.6 We suggest that amending the policy in this way will deliver the requisite clarity in relation to existing major developed sites within the AONB and will ensure that the overarching objective of effectively managing the AONB in a holistic way is achieved.
- 5.7 Notwithstanding the above it is considered that the addition of a specific reference within Policy DM44 to Major Developed Sites in the AONB, that echoes the direction of Saved Policy C12 would be wholly appropriate, would provide even greater clarity for these areas and would assist in ensuring that the specific needs of these sites are managed effectively and positively through the planning process, alongside other relevant development management policies and national guidance. We suggest that the following text could be inserted as follows:

Within that portion of the countryside outside of the Green Belt, and subject to other relevant policies, permission will only be granted for:

- (a) Extensions and new buildings within the existing major developed sites within the AONB as identified on the Proposals Map, providing the proposal has no greater impact on the visual amenity or the character of the surrounding area, respects the existing character and is proportionate in scale.*

5.8 The suggested text not only aligns with the Council's approach of not allocating new major sites within the AONB but provides a distinct framework within which planning decisions on existing Major Developed Sites can be made. We suggest that incorporating such a reference would be appropriate, justified and representative of positive planning, providing scope for the delivery of complementary uses on these sites without undermining the general restrictions on the wider AONB.

1. What are the key components of the Plan's Spatial Strategy and how do they interact?

5.9 No comment.

2. Does the Plan's Spatial Strategy effectively link transportation, employment and housing growth?

5.10 No comment.

6.0 Has the Settlement Strategy (Policy CP3) been positively prepared, justified and will it be effective in delivering sustainable growth?

a) Does How has the settlement hierarchy been defined and what level of growth is proposed for each tier?

6.1 No comment.

7.0 How many Neighbourhood Plans are there in the Wycombe, where are they and what is their status?

7.1 No comment.

8.0 Is the Spatial Strategy sufficiently flexible and can it respond effectively to changing circumstances?

8.1 No comment.