

Examination Statement by the Chiltern Society

This statement addresses Inspector's questions 2 and 4c of Matter 8, and also the potential interlinking between these two Policies.

Q2 Is Policy PR8 (Provision and Safeguarding of Transport Infrastructure) justified and will it provide an effective mechanism for securing new and improved transport infrastructure?

The section of the proposed link road referred to at 2 d iii) of this Policy is partly within the AONB.

This would only be a sound proposal if no workable alternative exists and / or it could be done in a way that conserves and enhances the AONB.

Others have suggested alternative routes, for example making use of a re-opened Poppy Road, but we do not have access to the necessary information to judge the feasibility of such an option. But, clearly, a route that avoided encroachment into the AONB, whilst still providing the necessary capacity to facilitate delivery of the wider development area, would be best.

At the very least, any such route must incorporate measures to eliminate visual intrusion into the AONB by appropriate screening and minimal use of lighting, alongside measures to improve habitat within and adjacent to the road corridor. Adverse impacts on the nearby Pyrtle Spring / Culverton Mill area must also be avoided, and opportunities taken to improve further the nature conservation value of this feature. The wording of 2 d iii) requires strengthening to make these requirements clearer.

Q4. Are the following allocations soundly based and is there evidence that the development of the sites is viable and deliverable?

c) Policy PR11 Land to the rear of Poppy Road

We have no soundness-based objections to the removal of this site from the Green Belt.

Theoretically, it might also be acceptable on other grounds if its design and layout conserves and enhances the AONB; and if it provides the means of safeguarding **and enhancing** the biodiversity and water quality of the Pyrtle Spring / Culverton Mill area.

However, insufficient evidence that the latter can be done has so far been presented, so it is premature and unsound to allocate PR11 until and unless such evidence is forthcoming.

Care must also be taken that the appropriate degree of separation is given to decisions on the route of the proposed link road, and the acceptability or otherwise of the Poppy Road site; otherwise the risk exists that the opportunity for delivery of the Poppy Road site that the link road provides, and the scope for using developer contributions from the Poppy Road site to pay towards the relief road, provides the temptation for erroneous self-reinforcing decision-making, and two unsound outcomes.