

Examination Statement by the Chiltern Society

This statement addresses Inspector's questions 1 f, h, j and k of Matter 9.

Q1. Are the following allocations soundly based and is there evidence that the development of the sites is viable and deliverable?

f) Great and Little Kimble-cum-Marsh Parish

Part of the parish is within the Green Belt / AONB (boundary coincident in this area), and a further significant portion is within the setting of the AONB. 5.5.46 correctly rules out removal of land from the Green Belt, and the Plan as a whole rules out major development within the AONB. Policy DM44 and Principles for Rural Areas limits the potential for development in this very rural parish. There are also relevant national policy provisions relating to Green Belt, AONB, and setting of AONB.

Thus, on the evidence provided, it is not at all certain that 160 homes can be delivered within the above locally-specific, and overarching national, policy objectives. Either development will not be in compliance with these objectives, or delivery will fall short of the target.

There is a particular risk involved with delegating allocation of sites to a Neighbourhood Plan without clearer direction about respecting national policies on Green Belt and AONB.

Point 1 of Policy therefore needs amending by removing the reference to 160 dwellings as an absolute requirement, perhaps by changing to "up to 160" or "...if compatible with other requirements of this Policy and Plan."

It should also be made clearer that Points 2, 3 and 4 of the Policy, which address most of the aforementioned concerns, applies to both delivery scenarios (Neighbourhood Plan or no Neighbourhood Plan), rather than just the no Neighbourhood Plan scenario. Or if this is seen as too prescriptive for a Neighbourhood Plan process, at least include a requirement "that full adherence to local and national policies on Green Belt and AONB will need to be respected during the Neighbourhood Plan site selection process", or similar.

h) Land South of Mill Road, Stokenchurch

We believe this allocation is unsound, for the following reasons:

In our view this constitutes major development in the AONB, which Policy CP2 correctly deems not appropriate, because as set out at 4.12 "in our local circumstances any allocation that would result in major development in the AONB would strongly conflict with the NPPF." The AONB Assessment supporting information fails to explain why this is deemed not to be major, especially since one of the criteria for

major development in the assessment methodology is whether “it can sensibly be described as major”, which surely 100 dwellings in open AONB countryside on the edge of a settlement must be. Implying that this quantum of development is acceptable in the AONB will also invite speculative applications on the edge of Lane End and Stokenchurch.

To remedy this unsoundness, the allocation should be deleted, or its extent significantly reduced, confining development to the western edge.

Additionally, consideration should also be given to splitting the overall [reduced] allocation into 2 or 3 discrete parcels, and require them to be phased over the full Plan Period. Doing this would also have the benefit of potentially supporting smaller housebuilders.

j) Land rear of Stokenchurch Business Park, Ibstone Road, Stokenchurch

The Policy wording is currently not consistent with the requirements of national AONB Policy as set out in the NPPF and CROW Act, which requires development to conserve and enhance the AONB, not just “limit its impact”.

Furthermore, the Policy wording and / or accompanying text should more explicitly highlight current key attributes of the site which significantly contribute to its character, and thus will require particular attention during the design and LVIA process; and make it clear that this more detailed analysis may ultimately limit the developable extent of the site.

These key attributes relate mainly to the public right of way that runs through the site, the mature trees alongside it and the character and atmosphere this produces for users, and the views from it into the site, including when approaching from the open countryside. These attributes are so significant, and thus irreplaceable / unmitigatable in relation to the AONB test, that the portion of the site to the north of the track may need to be deleted from the finalised development proposals.

If the Policy is taken forward, suggested amended wording of Policy RUR10 to make it sound might be as follows (with additional / alternative wording in *italics*).

1. Land to the rear of the Stokenchurch Business Park, as shown on the Policies Map, is allocated for a mix of B1, B2 and B8. *The hatched area to the north of the right of way [map to be amended to indicate this] is not allocated until and unless a full assessment and detailed scheme design demonstrates that development on this portion can be achieved whilst conserving and enhancing the AONB, with particular regard to the attributes highlighted in the accompanying text.*

2. Development proposals are required to:

- a) Include an allowance for additional parking to meet the needs of the expanded business park;
- b)* Adopt a landscape-led positive approach to design and layout *which will conserve and enhance* the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. This will include producing a *landscape and visual* impact assessment; and

c) Contribute to enhanced public transport provision in the village and to serve the site.

[*It would be better to put this point first in the list, so as to reflect its importance and overarching nature.]

The accompanying text should be expanded to highlight the notable features of the site, as set out above.

However, it would probably be procedurally better to delete this Allocation completely for the time being, carry out further site assessment work (and further commercial viability work), and, if appropriate, bring it back at the next Plan review.

k) Heavens Above, 16 High Heavens, Marlow Bottom

The acknowledged constraints of this site (provision of a 15m buffer to the ancient woodland, and the avoidance of disturbance impacts on the other woodland) mean that the indicative capacity of 20 dwellings seems very unlikely to be deliverable in a policy-compliant way, and the text and tables should be amended accordingly.