

**Matter 9h) – Is the allocation of Land South of Mill Road, Stokenchurch soundly-based, and is there evidence that the development of the site is viable and deliverable?**

We believe that the allocation of Land South of Mill Road, Stokenchurch, through Policy RUR8, is soundly based, viable and deliverable.

Soundness

To be considered 'sound' a plan must be positively prepared, justified, effective, and consistent with national policy, as laid out in paragraph 182 of the NPPF (2012). We believe that the allocation of this site meets all four criteria, for the following reasons.

Positively Prepared

We believe that this allocation is positively prepared, as it contributes 100 dwellings towards meeting the objectively assessed need of Wycombe District in a sustainable manner. Wycombe District Council has accepted that it is unable to meet its objectively assessed need and has signed a memorandum of understanding with Aylesbury Vale Council, whereby Aylesbury Vale will accommodate 2,275 extra homes in its Local Plan. Given that Wycombe District Council is unable to meet its objectively assessed need, it is essential that it maximises housing delivery from appropriate, sustainably located sites, such as Land South of Mill Road, Stokenchurch.

Justified

We believe that the allocation of the site is justified, as it is the most appropriate allocation, which has been made based on proportionate evidence, and taking into account reasonable alternatives.

**Pegasus Group**

Columbia | Station Road | Bracknell | Berkshire | RG12 1LP

**T** 01344 207777 | **W** [www.pegasuspg.co.uk](http://www.pegasuspg.co.uk)

Birmingham | Bracknell | Bristol | Cambridge | Cirencester | East Midlands | Leeds | Liverpool | London | Manchester

**PLANNING** | **DESIGN** | **ENVIRONMENT** | **ECONOMICS**

A number of representations, such as those from Chilterns Conservation Board, Chadwick Chiltern Society, Turley, and West Waddy ADP suggest that the site is unsuitable, and therefore not justified, due to its location within an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). However, the local plan evidence base demonstrates that this is not the case. The Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Site Assessment Report, published September 2017, found that the Landscape Character Sensitivity was 'Low', the Overall Landscape Sensitivity was 'Low', and the Landscape Value was 'Medium/High', due to its location within an AONB. The site was found to have a 'MEDIUM/HIGH' capacity for development meaning that the site is suitable for development, subject to the development having regard to the existing settlement form and the character and sensitivity of adjacent landscape character areas. The evidence base demonstrated that the site does not make a significant contribution to the AONB, and so its allocation for housing is justified.

#### Effective

We believe that the allocation of the site is effective, as the homes will be delivered within the plan period. During the pre-submission consultation, an agent acting on behalf of a part landowner of the site submitted representations. These stated that the site is available, suitable and deliverable for residential development. Our client represents the landowner of the proposed main access, which runs between the existing access road and 1 Wormsley Crescent. They are also supportive of development on the site, and have promoted it through this local plan process as such. The landowners therefore believe that housing development is deliverable on the site, and they will work to ensure that the housing is delivered within the plan period, if the site is allocated in the adopted plan. Deliverability is discussed further below.

Representations submitted by Thames Water and Scottish Southern Electricity Networks to the pre-submission consultation suggest that the electricity and water network capacity may need to be upgraded/reinforced to support the allocated development. This does not affect the deliverability of the site, as these issues can be resolved through the payment of agreed developer contributions.

#### Consistent with National Planning Policy

We believe that the allocation of the site is consistent with national planning policy because paragraph 14 of the NPPF (2012) outlines the presumption in favour of sustainable development, which runs throughout the whole document. The

representations made by Turley to the pre-submission consultation stated that the site has poor accessibility and is not sustainable, and that Stokenchurch is lacking higher order facilities. However, we believe that this site allocation is sustainable for two main reasons. The site provides excellent access to facilities, with the centre of Stokenchurch being approximately 1km from the site. Figure 1 and Table A of the Transport Statement that was submitted with our pre-submission consultation representations, show that the majority of facilities in the village are within a 1km walk from the centre of the site, including a convenience store, pharmacy, bank, library and medical centre. There is also a local employment site (allocated for expansion under Policy RUR10) a 300m walk from the centre of the site. Although the centre of Stokenchurch is across the M40, the site is close to an existing footbridge that could be used by pedestrians and cyclists.

Secondly, the site has good public transport links, with bus service number 40 operating between Thame, Chinnor, Stokenchurch and High Wycombe every thirty minutes, and service number 275 operating between Oxford and High Wycombe twice a day during the morning and evening peak periods. National Express service 737 also runs into High Wycombe from Stokenchurch three times per day in each direction. School services number 28 and 643 travel from Stokenchurch into High Wycombe, providing access to a number of schools. Table A and Figure 1 of the Transport Statement that was submitted with our Regulation 19 representations show that the nearest school bus stops are a 370m walk from the centre of the site, and the nearest public bus stops at the Kings Hotel are a 740m walk from the centre of the site.

The location of the main site access on the lane between the existing access road and 1 Wormsley Crescent is consistent with national planning policy, because it would provide "*safe and suitable access to the site*" in line with paragraph 32 of the NPPF (2012).

### Viability

A proportion of the site consists of brownfield land, which is currently occupied by an agricultural storage yard. However, the majority of the site is undeveloped greenfield land, which is less costly to develop than brownfield land. The indicative capacity of the 4.93ha site is 100 dwellings, which produces a reasonable density of 23.25dph, which is consistent with the edge of settlement location.

The council's May 2017 Viability Assessment found that Stokenchurch is a viable location for new housing development. Whilst this was a broad study, and did not review this site specifically, it still provides a good indication that the site will be viable.

### Deliverability

Footnote 11 of the NPPF (2012) states that to be considered deliverable, sites should be available now, offer a suitable location for development now, and be achievable with a realistic prospect that housing will be delivered on the site within five years and in particular, that development of the site is viable.

It is considered that this allocated site is deliverable. As previously stated, during the pre-submission consultation, an agent acting on behalf of a part landowner of the site submitted representations. These stated that the site is available, suitable and deliverable for residential development. Our client represents the landowner of the proposed main access, which runs between the existing access road and 1 Wormsley Crescent. They are also supportive of development on the site, and have promoted it through this local plan process as such. All owners of the site want the site to be developed and will work diligently to ensure that it is. This demonstrates that the site is available now.

The site has been determined to offer a suitable location for development now through the local plan process. Stokenchurch is a Tier 3 settlement and is therefore able to accommodate new housing development. The main constraint on the site is its location within the AONB. However, the AONB Site Assessment Report found that the site has a MEDIUM/HIGH capacity for development, which means that it is able to accommodate development. This is because the land is visually enclosed, and is surrounded on three sides by development, including by some that protrudes out into the centre of the site. The proposed allocation of 100 dwellings is also identified as 'non-major' development within the AONB, which increases its acceptability. As previously stated, the site is located sustainably, and is therefore in compliance with paragraph 14 of the NPPF (2012). This demonstrates that the site offers a suitable location for development now.

Whilst the 2017 HELAA states that the site is deliverable within 6 to 10 years, we believe that there is a realistic prospect that housing will be delivered on the site within five years. A November 2016 study by Nathaniel Litchfield and Partners entitled Start to Finish, found that on sites of between 0-99 dwellings, the time from validation of the first planning application to delivery of housing on site was less than three years. For sites of 100 to 499 dwellings, the time was 4 years. There are no site specific factors that would affect delivery rates, and the site comprises majority greenfield land, which is generally built out more quickly than brownfield land. This information suggests that all of the houses will be delivered on the site within 5 years.

It has been demonstrated above that the allocation is viable. The criteria set out in Footnote 11 of the NPPF have therefore been met.

Conclusion

As demonstrated above, the allocation is sound, viable and deliverable. The allocation should therefore remain in the Local Plan in its current form.