

Tel: [REDACTED]

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Our Ref: DfE/SPD/Wycombe2019

17/07/19

Dear Sir/Madam,

**Re: Princes Risborough Expansion SPD**

**Consultation under Regulation 12 of Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012**

**Submission of the Department for Education**

1. The Department for Education (DfE) welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the development of planning policy at the local level.
2. Under the provisions of the Education Act 2011 and the Academies Act 2010, all new state schools are now academies/free schools and DfE is the delivery body for many of these, rather than local education authorities. However, local education authorities still retain the statutory responsibility to ensure sufficient school places, including those at sixth form, and have a key role in securing contributions from development to new education infrastructure. In this context, we aim to work closely with local authority education departments and planning authorities to meet the demand for new school places and new schools. We have published guidance on education provision in garden communities and securing developer contributions for education, at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/delivering-schools-to-support-housing-growth>. You will also be aware of the corresponding additions to Planning Practice Guidance on planning obligations and viability.
3. We would like to offer the following comments in response to the proposals outlined in the above consultation document.

**Primary school provision in Princes Risborough Expansion Area (PREA)**

4. DfE notes that two 2FE primary schools are proposed on this urban extension, to the north and south of the site, with the first school expected to open in 2024/25. We welcome the consideration given to the positioning and timing of these schools, maximising the use of pedestrian routes to school, access to open space and the local centre, and the need to create a walkable community in the vicinity of each school.
5. In particular, DfE supports the confirmation on page 157 that the development's education needs will be met in full onsite, promoting sustainable healthy travel patterns. When education needs from very large developments are assessed and there are plans to utilise capacity in existing schools, instead of, or in addition to a new onsite school, we recommend that you only consider the capacity of primary schools within the statutory walking distance. This ensures large developments are environmentally sustainable and promotes active and

healthy lifestyles. The DfE guidance on securing developer contributions provides further advice on delivering schools in strategic developments and new settlements.

### **Developer contributions**

6. DfE welcomes the SPD's assertion that both land and funding for the provision of schools will be required, and that costs will be based on the DfE scorecards – this accords with our guidance and Planning Practice Guidance. We support the measured and flexible approach being applied to the delivery of the first primary school, allowing short-term use of existing primary schools while the development gets underway; this assists development viability and ensures the new school is delivered at the most suitable time.
7. We note that the urban extension will generate a need for a 2FE secondary school expansion, and that the Council proposes to fund this through the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). It is important to consider the size of any CIL funding gap and whether there will be sufficient CIL funds available for education to cover the cost of these secondary school places. As decisions on infrastructure funding priorities will rest with the new Buckinghamshire Council, it appears unlikely that CIL funds can be allocated to education with any certainty. If CIL will be insufficient or unavailable in practice, it would be preferable to seek developer contributions through a planning obligation, to mitigate the direct impacts of the development. Costs should be incorporated in the viability assessment to ensure that any barriers to delivery are identified early, to inform the Council's planning and prioritisation of infrastructure delivery.
8. In light of the infrastructure burden on this development and the relatively early requirement for the first primary school, the Council and developers may be interested in emerging DfE proposals for forward funding schools as part of large residential developments. DfE aims to be able to clarify forward funding options for schools in the near future. We would be happy to meet to discuss this opportunity further if/when relevant.

### **Conclusion**

9. Finally, I hope the above comments are helpful in shaping the Princes Risborough Expansion SPD, with specific regard to the provision of land and funding for schools. Please advise DfE of any proposed changes to the emerging policies and/or evidence base arising from these comments.
10. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any queries regarding this response. DfE looks forward to working with Wycombe District Council and its successor to aid in the preparation of sound policies for education.

Yours faithfully,



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Forward Planning Manager

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