

Agenda Item IMD3

INDIVIDUAL EXECUTIVE MEMBER DECISION

REFERENCE IMD: IEMD 2024/03

TITLE	Wokingham Borough Council response to Basingstoke and Deane Draft Local Plan Update consultation
DECISION TO BE MADE BY	Executive Member for Planning and Local Plan - Lindsay Ferris
DATE, MEETING ROOM and TIME	4 March 2024 LGF3 - 3PM - 4 March 2024
WARD	None Specific;
DIRECTOR / KEY OFFICER	Director, Place and Growth - Giorgio Framaliccio

PURPOSE OF REPORT (Inc Strategic Outcomes)

To consider Wokingham Borough Council's response to Basingstoke and Deane Local Plan Update 2021-2040 Draft Regulation 18 Consultation (January 2024), to ensure any negative impacts upon Wokingham Borough are minimised and that any benefits are maximised.

RECOMMENDATION

The Executive Member for Planning and Local Plan agrees that Wokingham Borough Council submits the comments contained in this report as this council's response to the Basingstoke and Deane Local Plan Update 2021-2040 Draft Regulation 18 Consultation (January 2024):

- 1) Supports the proposal to meeting Local Housing Need in full;
- 2) Requests further engagement on transport and highways infrastructure necessary to support proposed growth;
- 3) Request further engagement on the potential new train station at Chineham;
- 4) Supports in principle the proposal to meet the needs of Gypsy and Traveller communities, noting the range of approaches for how this might be achieved;
- 5) Requests further engagement on the needs of the Gypsy and Traveller community and actions to meet needs;
- 6) Supports the proposal to meet employment needs in full; and
- 7) Supports the ambition and approach to achieving net zero carbon development.

SUMMARY OF REPORT

Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council (BDBC) is progressing a review of its adopted planning policies, called the Local Plan Update (LPU).

As part of this process, BDBC has published the 'Basingstoke and Deane Local Plan Update 2021-2040 Draft Regulation 18 Consultation (January 2024)' (hereafter the Plan). The Plan takes the form of a full draft local plan document. The Plan sets out the long-term vision up to 2040 and includes proposed development management policies

and proposed site allocations for various uses. The consultation runs until 4 March 2024.

The Plan proposed to focus the majority of housing and employment growth in and around the town of Basingstoke and a new garden village at Popham Airfield. In addition, a range of other sites are proposed, again largely close to the town of Basingstoke. Overall, the spatial strategy approach does not seek to allocate a significant scale of development in proximity to Wokingham Borough.

Regarding housing, the Plan provides a supply of dwellings which is sufficient to meet the Local Housing Need as calculated using the government's standard method. Development is not proposed within the vicinity of AWE sites.

In terms of highways and transport infrastructure, development proposed in the Plan will have an impact on the A33 corridor, however this is not expected to exceed flows experienced pre the covid pandemic. The Plan proposes to safeguard land for a new train station which may assist in reducing car use on the A33 corridor. Ongoing engagement and co-operation will be required in relation to the infrastructure necessary to support growth.

As regards Gypsy and Traveller provision, the need for accommodation is still being established, however the Plan proposes a range of measures to provide pitches, including delivery as part of strategic scale development.

Turning to employment, the Plan includes allocations to meet its identified needs for industrial and logistics floorspace. Identified needs for office floorspace are proposed to be met through regeneration and better use of existing office stock.

Finally, the Plan proposes ambitious requirements for delivering net zero development. This is reflective of industry best practice in setting absolute targets for energy use and space heating demand and is broadly consistent with WBC corporate policy and the emerging WBC Local Plan Update. A recent government Written Ministerial Statement may have implications for this approach.

Overall, it is recommended that WBC supports the Plan, noting that there are no identified unmet need that would have cross boundary implications. Ongoing engagement regarding highways and transport impacts and mitigations will be required, as well as further engagement on provision for Gypsy and Traveller communities.

Background

Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council (BDBC) is progressing a review of its adopted planning policies, called the Local Plan Update (LPU). Currently the process is at an early stage.

As part of this process, BDBC has published the 'Basingstoke and Deane Local Plan Update 2021-2040 Draft Regulation 18 Consultation (January 2024)' (hereafter the Plan). The Plan takes the form of a full draft local plan document. The Plan sets out the long-term vision up to 2040 and includes proposed development management policies and proposed site allocations for various uses. The consultation runs until 4 March 2024.

Publication of the Plan follows on from an earlier Issues and Options consultation undertaken between September and November 2020.

The Plan consultation is supported by a number of documents, including a draft Infrastructure Delivery Plan, Integrated Impact Assessment (incorporating Sustainability Appraisal and Strategic Environmental Assessment), Habitats Regulation Assessment, Net Zero Policy Technical Evidence, Interim Transport Assessment, Site Selection Report.

Business Case (including Analysis of Issues)

This report focusses on strategic planning matters that may have cross boundary implications between Basingstoke and Deane Borough and Wokingham Borough. The key strategic issues are considered to be: the spatial strategy (the scale and distribution of development); development in the vicinity of the Atomic Weapons Establishment (AWE), housing need and supply; highways and transport; Gypsy and Traveller need and supply; and employment land need and supply.

Spatial Strategy

The main components of the spatial strategy for the Plan are summarised at objective c), which states the following:

“...The strategy will take account of relevant constraints, prioritising brownfield development and growth around Basingstoke town and promoting a sustainable pattern of dynamic and healthy places in a way that maintains the local distinctiveness of settlements and their communities and sustains their vitality.”

Policies within the Plan direct the majority of housing and employment growth to within and around the town of Basingstoke as the largest most sustainable settlement. The exception to this is the proposal to create garden village at Popham Airfield which is situated on the A303 in the south of Basingstoke and Deane Borough, away from Wokingham Borough.

Proportionate growth is proposed at some smaller rural settlements. This growth is to be delivered through the setting of minimum housing requirement figures for neighbourhood development plans to deliver.

Overall, the proposed spatial strategy approach does not seek to allocate significant levels of development in proximity to Wokingham Borough. It is recommended that WBC supports the spatial strategy as an appropriate way of meeting the development needs of Basingstoke and Deane Borough and encourages BDBC to work with Hampshire County Council and other service providers to ensure that the provision of infrastructure is delivered in a timely manner so not to place unacceptable burden on existing communities.

Development in the vicinity of AWE

The two licensed nuclear facilities operated by AWE are situated in proximity to Basingstoke and Deane Borough. The Plan does not propose development within the surrounding Detailed Emergency Planning Zone, the zone in which an off-site emergency plan must be maintained in the case of an incident.

This approach is consistent with advice from emergency planners and the Office of Nuclear Regulation.

Housing need and supply

At the time of preparing the Plan, the Local Housing Need (LHN) for BDBC was calculated using the standard method as 850 dwellings per annum (dpa) from 1 April 2023. For the first year of the plan period (2021/22) the standard method figure was slightly higher at 880 dpa. This equates to a minimum housing need of 16,180 additional homes in the period 2021/22 – 2039/40.

Policy SPS1: ‘Scale and Distribution of Development’ states that:

“Within the plan period from 2021 to 2040, the council will make provision for at least 16,180 new homes and associated infrastructure, phased in a stepped trajectory as follows:

- *880 in 2021/2 to meet the standard method figure*
- *At least 850 homes for the four years up to adoption to meet the standard method figure (2022-2026)*
- *At least 660 homes a year for the first five years post adoption (2026-2031)*
- *At least 955 homes a year for the remainder of the Plan (2031 – 2040).”*

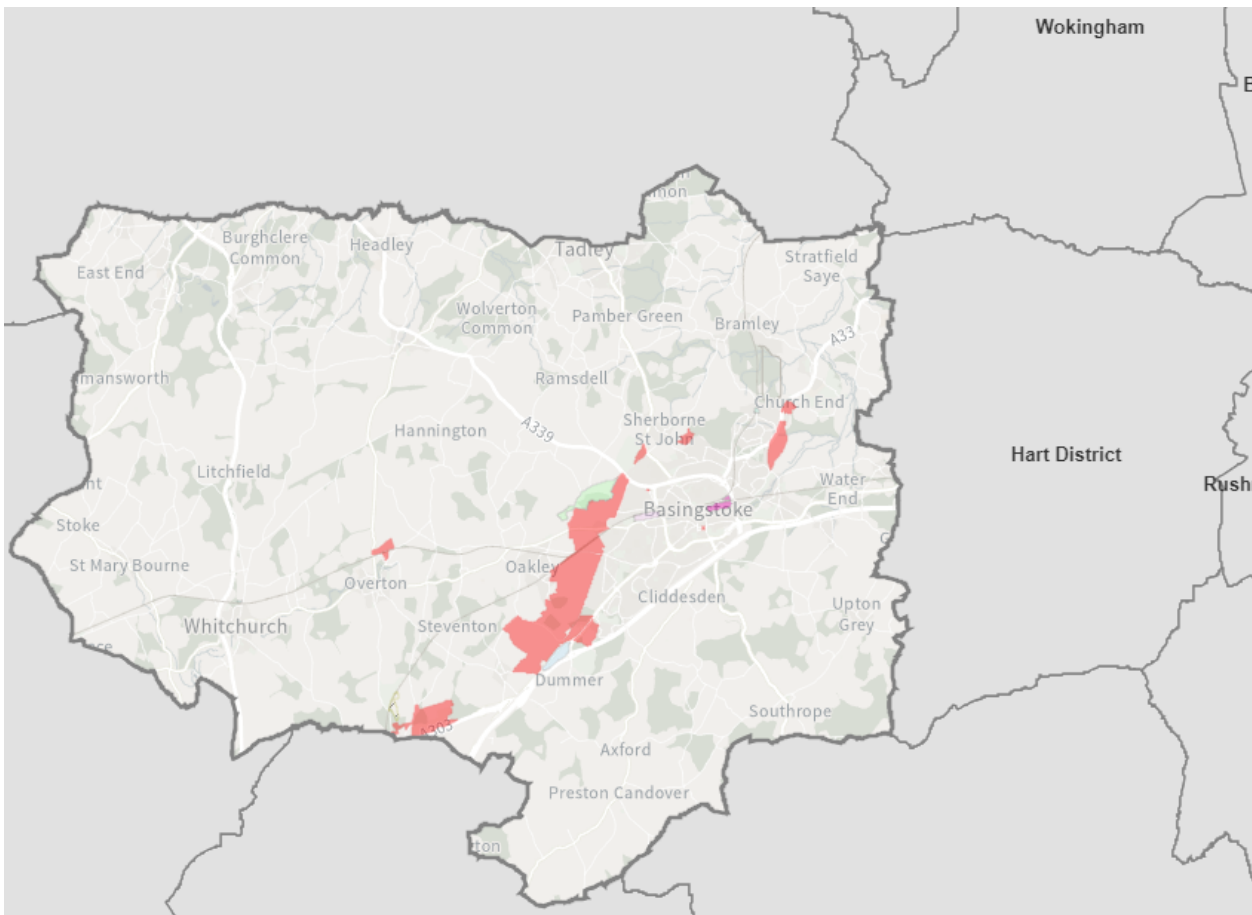
The housing requirement over the final 14 years of the plan period is proposed to be stepped, to reflect the fact that a large number of dwellings will be delivered as part of strategic scale allocations. The national Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) sets out situations where a stepped requirement may be appropriate for plan making, which includes where strategic sites will have phased delivery.

Existing housing completions (in 2021/22 and 2022/23), outstanding planning permissions, allocations in the existing development plan, and anticipated windfall developments account for 11,530 dwellings. Additional land to supply a further 4,650 dwellings is therefore required to meet the LHN figure over the plan period.

Allocations for housing led development are set out in Policies SPS5, with further detail in Policies SPS5.1 – SPS5.15. These policies identify new allocations capable of delivering 4,939 additional homes within the plan period, with an additional approximately 6,700 homes to be delivered beyond the plan period. This includes large allocations at:

- Southern Manydown (approx. 2,400 homes in the plan period and 7,500 in total)
- Popham Garden Village (Approx 1,400 dwellings in the plan period and 3,000 in total)
- East of Basingstoke (approx 900 dwellings, 450 additional to current allocation)
- Sherfield Hill Farm (approx. 300 dwellings)
- Land west of Marnel Park (approx. 200 dwellings)
- Weybrook Park Golf Course (approx. 220 dwellings)
- Overton Mill (approx. 340 dwellings)

Residential allocations are shown in red on the below figure, mixed use commercial / residential in pink, and green showing a proposed country park.



In summary, the Plan proposals meet housing need in full, as informed by the standard calculation set out in national policy and guidance. There would be no cross boundary implications arising from unmet housing need. It is recommended that WBC acknowledges and supports the proposal of the Plan to meet need in full over the plan period.

Highways and Transport

The consultation is supported by an Interim Transport Assessment (ITA) as well as a Draft Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP). The ITA considers the cumulative impact of all existing and proposed development on the transport networks and consequently identifies areas where mitigation is required. The IDP lists required infrastructure as a result of the proposed development within the Plan. Numerous junctions and road improvements are proposed alongside sustainable transport measures. Additionally, a range of policies – including INF1: ‘Infrastructure, INF2: ‘Transport’ – requires new development to provide infrastructure to address needs arising from the development, including promotion of sustainable modes of travel.

Whilst there are no proposed developments in proximity to Wokingham Borough (as discussed above) the level of growth proposed in the Plan will generate impacts for existing highways and sustainable transport. There are two principal transport connections between Basingstoke and Deane Borough and Wokingham Borough and onwards to Reading Borough, the A33 and the Basingstoke – Reading Branch Line. Both have physical/environmental constraints that affect capacity, and both will be affected by proposed developments in the Plan as well as through development within Wokingham Borough.

Regarding the A33, as a consequence of the covid pandemic, daily traffic flows have been markedly lower in recent years than in the past. Based on the scale of proposed development in the Plan and the emerging WBC local plan, the net impact on the A33 corridor is likely to be broadly equitable, with the potential increase in traffic flows unlikely to exceed daily figures experienced in the past. It is recognised that transport modelling and infrastructure delivery plans are an ongoing and iterative process, and therefore it is recommended that WBC requests further engagement on transport and highways infrastructure necessary to support proposed growth as the plan making process progresses.

With regard to the Basingstoke – Reading Branch Line, Policy SPS12: ‘Chineham Railway Station’ proposes to safeguard 1.8ha of land to the north-west of Chineham for a new railway station and associated car parking. This reflects the aspiration of reducing car use within the local area and in the wider A33 corridor. Its delivery is subject to further engagement with Hampshire County Council, Network Rail and the train operator. WBC notes the aspirations that exist to electrify the Basingstoke – Reading railway line but it also understands the potential for this new station at Chineham is predicated on changes to rail services to existing stations on the line. It is recommended that WBC supports in principle the proposals for Chineham Station, but requests further information in order to understand the implications for other stations on the route. This includes Mortimer station within West Berkshire District, where West Berkshire District Council has aspirations to improve accessibility.

As regards sustainable transport infrastructure more generally, there is a need to co-ordinate plans across boundaries and opportunities for enhanced (E-)cycle links could be mutually advantageous. It is recognised that any improvement schemes will be set by neighbouring authorities therefore it is recommended that WBC welcomes the opportunity to explore joint opportunities to ensure the delivery of any necessary targeted infrastructure.

Gypsy and Traveller provision

BDBC has commissioned an updated Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA) to identify future needs. At the time of publication, the Plan does not identify a need figure against which provision will be made.

The Plan Policy HSG9: Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Show People proposes to meet need (to be defined through the emerging study) through a combination of measures:

- as part of Greenfield housing allocations (quantum as yet undefined pending the updated evidence) or via allocations identifying off site provision where certain criteria are met
- through applications that accord with specific policy criteria.
- through safeguarding of existing sites from change of use to non Gypsy and Traveller use.
- prescribed provision through any windfall housing developments above 500 dwellings that may come forward.

In the absence an up-to-date assessment, it is not possible to confirm if the proposed approach is capable of meeting needs in full. Notwithstanding, the range of actions identified would assist. It is therefore recommended that WBC supports proposed range of policy approaches to meet the need. It is further recommended that WBC sets out its expectation that BDBC explore all options to meet the identified needs in full and that future engagement would be welcomed.

Provision for employment

BDBC's employment evidence¹ identifies a need for an additional 40,000 sqm of office floorspace (20,000 sqm over the first 10 years of the plan period), 24,000sqm industrial floorspace, and 99,000sqm logistics floorspace over the plan period.

The Plan proposes to allocate land to meet its industrial and logistics need at Oakdown Farm (Policy SPS10) and at Southern Manydown (Policy SPS5.4), both of which are located on the M3 corridor. The Plan at paragraph 6.203 states that the needs for industrial and logistics will be met through these allocations.

The approach to meeting office floorspace need is to make better use of existing, under-utilised floorspace through improvement, rationalisation and regeneration of existing stock. Given the current uncertainty in the office market, the Plan focusses on the position over the first ten years of the Plan period and considers it appropriate for longer term trends and needs to be addressed through a future review of the Plan.

With the Plan seeking to meet employment needs there would be no cross boundary implications arising from unmet need. It is recommended that WBC supports the proposed approach to meeting identified employment needs.

¹ [Basingstoke and Deane Economic Needs Assessment \(2023\)](#)

Approach to climate change

Whilst not considered to have cross-boundary implications, the Plan's approach to climate change is noteworthy.

Climate change is at the heart of the Plan, as evidenced by the very first policy: Policy CLC1: A Carbon Neutral, Climate Adapted Borough, which summarises the way the Plan will enable new development to respond to the impacts of climate change and cross references to applicable policies elsewhere in the Plan.

Policy ENV11: Energy Standards requires development to follow the energy hierarchy and sets out the requirements for net zero homes, the approach to reducing embodied carbon, and the approach to improvements to existing buildings. As regards net zero homes, the Policy proposes absolute space heating demand and Energy Use Intensity targets. These metrics, and the targets proposed in the Plan, are reflective of industry best practice and are consistent with the approach taken in recently adopted plans such as Central Lincolnshire, Cornwall, and Bath and North East Somerset. This approach is the preferred industry approach because it sets the best practice standard for both residential and non-residential buildings and requires that energy demand is reduced through an appropriately sequenced design approach which prioritises fabric efficiency in the first instance.

However, the government published Written Ministerial Statement (WMS) in December 2023 which attempts to preclude local planning authorities from following this approach. Instead, government expects local plans not propose local energy standards, and where a local authority believes there is justification, to specify percentage uplifts of a dwelling's Target Emissions Rate (TER) which does not accord with the application of the energy hierarchy. It is generally considered that the TER approach would lead to less energy efficient and sustainable buildings.

With WBC having declared a climate emergency and work on the emerging Wokingham Borough Local Plan Update also supporting net zero carbon development, it is recommended that WBC express strong support for the ambitious approach of Policy ENV11.

Conclusion

In summary, it is recommended that WBC supports the identified key areas of the Plan, with proposed policies seeking to meet identified needs and as a result be unlikely to lead to significant cross boundary implications.

Ongoing engagement regarding highways and transport impacts and mitigations will be required, as well as further engagement on provision for Gypsy and Traveller communities.

In addition, it is recommended that WBC supports the climate change ambitions within the Plan, with them according to the corporate position of WBC and emerging planning policy.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

The Council faces unprecedented financial pressures as a result of; the longer term impact of the COVID-19 crisis, Brexit, the war in Ukraine and the general economic climate of rising prices and the increasing cost of debt. It is therefore imperative that Council resources are optimised and are focused on the vulnerable and on its highest priorities.

	How much will it Cost/ (Save)	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Current Financial Year (Year 1)	Nil	Yes	n/a
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	Nil	n/a	n/a
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	Nil	n/a	n/a

Other financial information relevant to the Recommendation/Decision

No financial implications arise as a result of submitting representations to this consultation.

Cross-Council Implications (how does this decision impact on other Council services, including property and priorities?)

None anticipated.

Public Sector Equality Duty

No impact or disproportionate impact has been identified as a result of submitting representations to this consultation.

SUMMARY OF CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Director – Resources and Assets	No comments received
Monitoring Officer	No specific comments
Leader of the Council	No comments received

Reasons for considering the report in Part 2

Not applicable

List of Background Papers

[Basingstoke and Deane Local Plan Update](#)

Further information published by Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council relating to the consultation – see: <https://www.basingstoke.gov.uk/LPU-have-your-say>

Contact James McCabe	Service Place
Telephone No Tel: 0118 908 8333	Email james.mccabe@wokingham.gov.uk

This page is intentionally left blank