

1 Background

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1.1 The Housing Site Allocations Development Plan Document (DPD) is the second DPD within West Berkshire's Local Plan.

1.2 It has been prepared following the adoption of the West Berkshire Core Strategy in July 2012 which sets out the overall planning framework for the site specific proposals and policies to be contained in other documents.

1.3 The Core Strategy allocates strategic development sites in Newbury (Newbury Racecourse and Sandford Park). It also sets out strategic policies. The role of the Housing Site Allocations DPD is now to implement the framework set by the Core Strategy by allocating non-strategic housing sites across the District in accordance with the spatial strategy of the Core Strategy. This means that the sites to be allocated are in the areas that the Core Strategy sets out, based on evidence, as suitable for some level of future growth and that the proposals will conform to the policy details set out in the Core Strategy.

1.4 Sites for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople are also proposed for allocation and the Housing Site Allocations DPD also includes updated residential parking standards and a set of policies to guide housing in the countryside.

1.1 Approach to housing numbers

1.5 The Core Strategy sets out a housing requirement for the District of 'at least' 10,500 net additional dwellings from 2006 to 2026 which is an annual requirement of 525 dwellings per annum. The Core Strategy was prepared at a time when the housing number for the District was allocated via the regional tier of Government which has now been abolished.

1.6 The Council is now required by national policy set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) to meet the 'objectively assessed housing needs' of the area. Work has been undertaken in partnership with the other local authorities in Berkshire and the Thames Valley Berkshire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP⁽¹⁾) to establish how much housing West Berkshire will need in the future through the production of a Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA). This has given an objectively assessed need figure of 665 dwellings per annum. This does not translate directly into a housing requirement for the District due to the need to take into account factors such as environmental constraints and the Duty to Cooperate.

1.7 The first phase of the future housing requirement is being met through the preparation of the Housing Site Allocations DPD which will allocate the remainder of the 'at least' 10,500 housing figure from the Core Strategy, with additional flexibility around these numbers.

1.8 Once the DPD has been adopted, the second phase of the future housing requirement will be met through the preparation of a new Local Plan which will allocate additional development and look longer term to 2036, as well as dealing with other policy issues. 1000 homes are already committed post 2026 as part of the long term Sandford Park allocation.

1.9 The approach to the housing numbers is set out in more detail in a background paper that accompanies the DPD.

¹ Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) are voluntary partnerships between local authorities and businesses set up in 2011 by the Government (Department for Business, Innovation and Skills) to help determine local economic priorities and lead economic growth and job creation within the local area. They replaced the Regional Development Agencies.

1.2 Consultation

1.10 Early consultation on the Housing Site Allocations DPD included two newsletters and workshops with Parish and Town Councils as part of the process of shortlisting and selecting sites to be included within the DPD. These workshops took place in January and February 2014.

1.11 Between 30 April and 11 June 2014 we held a consultation about the scope and content of the DPD. This is a regulatory consultation and we notified specified bodies and persons of the proposed subject of the DPD and asked them to make representations. We received over 40 responses and have carefully considered and responded to the points made. This information is set out in the Statement of Consultation that accompanies the DPD.

1.12 Between 25 July and 12 September 2014, we held phase 1 of the preferred options consultation, setting out shortlisted housing allocations, proposed sites for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople as well as a policy on residential parking standards and an updated policy to guide the future development of Sandleford Park. This was an optional period of consultation, but in the Council's view an important one as it provides an opportunity to comment at an early stage of the planning process and enables us to take your views into account before final decisions are made.

1.13 Between 19 September and 31 October 2014, we held phase 2 of the preferred options consultation, which was on the draft policies to guide housing in the countryside.

1.14 We received over 8,500 comments during these consultations. The comments received provided very useful information to help inform the decision making process. A Statement of Consultation has been produced which summarises the key points made during the consultation and also responds to these. The Statement of Consultation accompanies this DPD.

1.15 We have now produced the proposed submission draft of the Housing Site Allocations DPD. This is the plan that the Council wants to submit for Examination. It is therefore the plan that we feel is the most appropriate plan for West Berkshire, taking into account all of the technical evidence and the outcomes of the public consultation. We would like your comments on the soundness and legal compliance of the proposals within the draft Plan. This is a statutory period of consultation and is taking place between 9 November and 21 December 2015.

1.16 The proposed submission documents include the following:

- The Housing Site Allocations Development Plan Document (DPD)
- The Sustainability Appraisal/Strategic Environmental Assessment (SA/SEA)
- Consultation Statement
- The Proposed Submission Policies Map
- The Duty to Cooperate Statement
- The Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA).

1.17 There are also a number of supporting and evidenced based documents which have informed the preparation of the DPD. These include a Landscape Assessment, a Transport Assessment and a Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment. These are all available on the Council's website.

1.18 You can comment via our consultation portal at <http://consult.westberks.gov.uk/portal> and register using the 'login/register' section. Alternatively please fill in the on-line consultation form which is available at <http://www.westberks.gov.uk/hsaproposedsubmission> and return it to us by email at planningpolicy@westberks.gov.uk. Hard copies of the Proposed Submission DPD and consultation form are also available to view at the Council Offices, Market Street and all libraries across the District.

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We are seeking your comments on the tests of soundness and legal compliance of the Proposed Submission DPD as this will be tested at the Examination. Your comments should therefore address whether the plan is:

- Positively prepared
- Justified
- Effective
- Consistent with national policy.

1.19 All comments made at the preferred options stage have been taken into account in the production of the Proposed Submission DPD and will be submitted to the Inspector. Publication of the Proposed Submission document is a regulatory stage and any additional representations should relate specifically to the legal compliance and soundness of the document. [Guidance notes](#) for completing the form are available online.

1.20 Following the consultation, all the responses will be submitted to the Secretary of State who will appoint an independent Planning Inspector to examine the plan.

1.3 Duty to Cooperate

1.21 Section 110 of the Localism Act places a legal duty on local planning authorities and other prescribed bodies to cooperate with each other when preparing development plan documents in order to address strategic planning issues relevant to their areas.

1.22 Work on satisfying the Duty takes place on an ongoing basis. Early work focused on identifying the key strategic issues that would need to be considered as part of the preparation and delivery of the DPD in conjunction with other local authorities and prescribed bodies. The Council's approach to strategic planning has subsequently been prioritised and is being undertaken on this basis. The Duty to Cooperate Statement which accompanies the Proposed Submission DPD sets out in detail how the Council is cooperating on strategic cross-boundary issues in order to create and deliver a positively prepared plan.

1.4 Spatial Strategy - where are the houses proposed to go and why?

1.23 This DPD contains sites for future housing development. These are set out in four spatial areas, to deliver the framework of the adopted West Berkshire Core Strategy. The spatial strategy builds on the existing settlement pattern of West Berkshire, with a particular focus on Newbury as the District's main urban centre. The spatial strategy is based on evidence and this was examined as part of the Core Strategy.

1.24 The four spatial areas reflect the distinct characteristics of the different parts of West Berkshire, and use the District's settlement hierarchy of Urban Areas, Rural Service Centres and Service Villages as the focus for development within these areas. The four spatial areas are:

- Newbury and Thatcham, including the Service Village of Cold Ash.
- The Eastern Area, which includes the Eastern Urban Area (Tilehurst, Calcot and Purley on Thames) and the Rural Service Centre of Theale.
- The East Kennet Valley, including the Rural Service Centres of Burghfield Common and Mortimer and the Service Villages of Aldermaston and Woolhampton.
- The North Ewssex Downs AONB which includes the Rural Service Centres of Hungerford, Lambourn and Pangbourne and the Service Villages of Bradfield Southend, Chieveley, Compton, Great Shefford, Hermitage and Kintbury.

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1.25 The settlement hierarchy of the Core Strategy sets out that whilst the urban areas will be the focus of development in West Berkshire, there will also be development in Rural Service Centres which provide the role of a focal point for the surrounding villages and rural areas in terms of the provision of services and facilities. Service Villages will accommodate more limited development, appropriate to the character and function of the village, in order to meet local needs.

1.26 The Core Strategy sets out a vision for each of the four spatial areas, showing how each area is expected to change and evolve to 2026. This is followed by a set of bullet points which show how the vision will be implemented, what the level of growth will be and how this level of growth for each area will be delivered.

1.27 It is now the case that the spatial strategy will be reviewed before 2026, as part of the preparation of the new Local Plan for the District and due to the need to accommodate a higher level of housing in West Berkshire that covers a longer time period.

1.28 Housing allocations have been made in general conformity with the Core Strategy. Information about these allocations, including a policy to guide the development of each site, is set out in Section 2, divided by spatial area. All of the detailed background information on how the sites have been selected is set out in the Sustainability Appraisal/Strategic Environmental Assessment that forms part of the proposed submission documents.

1.5 How have the housing sites been selected?

1.29 We held a 'call for sites' in the spring of 2013 which led to an update of the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) being published in December 2013. The role of the SHLAA is to identify a range of sites that may have potential for housing development over the coming years. The SHLAA provides a basket of sites from which choices are made through the preparation of the DPD.

1.30 The DPD has to be based on evidence, and so all of the sites have been assessed against the same planning criteria to assess the suitability of each of the sites for development. These criteria are set out in the background paper which accompanies the Housing Site Allocations DPD. The site selection criteria have their basis in national and local policy, focusing on the three elements of sustainability (environmental, social and economic) in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

1.31 Workshops were held with the Parish and Town Councils during the spring of 2014 in order to discuss the SHLAA sites and to get their views at an early stage of the process. Technical consultees were also asked for their comments on the sites during the site selection process. Further information on this is also set out in the background paper.

1.32 Sustainability Appraisal/Strategic Environmental Assessment (SA/SEA) is a key part of the site selection process. This focuses on the significant sustainability effects of the DPD and considers reasonable alternatives that take into account the social, environmental and economic objectives. The SA/SEA objectives have been used to assess the sustainability of the sites and the outcomes of this process have been set out in the SA/SEA Environmental Report.

1.33 This resulted in preferred options for housing development which were consulted on during July-September 2014. In some cases the sites were presented as a range of options, from which choices needed to be made following the consultation and further technical work.

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1.34 After the consultations, the comments were all assessed and the technical issues raised in them followed up. Further technical work has also been undertaken (such as a Transport Assessment and further Landscape Assessment work) to establish whether or not sites are deliverable and are the most appropriate reasonable alternatives. This has led to a number of them being confirmed as allocations and some of them not being taken forward. The SA/SEA work has been updated to take into account any updated evidence and the consultation outcomes.

1.6 Settlement boundary reviews

1.35 Settlement boundaries identify the main built up area of a settlement within which development is likely to be considered acceptable in principle, subject to other policy considerations. While allowing for development, settlement boundaries protect the character of a settlement and prevent unrestricted growth into the countryside. They create a level of certainty about whether or not the principle of development is likely to be acceptable which is helpful for Development Management Officers, Council Members, applicants and members of the public.

1.36 Criteria for reviewing the settlement boundaries formed part of the preferred options consultation and have been updated as a result of the consultation. The settlement boundaries around the settlements within the settlement hierarchy have been re-drawn to include the developable areas of the proposed site allocations. In some instances the allocated sites are larger due to requirements for landscape buffers. These buffers generally remain outside settlement boundaries. Additional sites where the current identified development potential is too small to be allocated (typically those which are below 5 dwellings) have also been included within revised settlement boundaries where this is in accordance with the criteria.

1.37 As part of this work there have been no changes made to the settlement boundaries of Aldermaston and Great Shefford, and the settlement boundary of Mortimer will be reviewed through the forthcoming Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP). The settlement boundary review criteria and maps can be found in Appendix 6.

1.7 Sites for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople

1.38 There is a requirement for West Berkshire Council, as the Local Planning Authority, to identify sites to meet the needs of Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople. National policy sets out a need to set pitch and plot targets which address the likely permanent and transit accommodation needs in the area, working in partnership with neighbouring authorities.

1.39 Any pitch provision must be based on evidence and so a Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA) has been carried out. This was carried out by an independent consultant, using a shared methodology with other Berkshire authorities. The GTAA has informed the number and location of pitches/plots required.

1.40 A 'call for sites' exercise was held between 28 April and 27 May 2014 in which interested parties could suggest sites they considered suitable for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople. A total of five sites were submitted, including requests from owners of some existing authorised sites to extend their sites and/or increase the number of pitches. In addition to these submitted sites four other sites were considered; one existing unauthorised site, a site which was promoted through the SHLAA for Gypsies and Travellers (EUA035), a site where planning permission had lapsed and a Council owned site. The potential suitability of each site was assessed to see which would be suitable to take forward as preferred sites.

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1.41 During the consultation, further information was received which has implications for which of the preferred options can be confirmed as allocations at this time. This has led to the approach to site provision being revised. The DPD now allocates a site at Paices Hill for 8 permanent pitches and a site for Travelling Showpeople at Longcopse farm in Enborne for 24 plots. Further allocations will need to be made in a future Local Plan for the District.

1.42 Further work is underway to see if the Clappers Farm site that was included as a preferred option has potential to accommodate the needs for Gypsies and Travellers in the longer term. It has therefore been allocated as an area of search

1.43 This information is set out in Section 3 of the DPD.

1.8 Policies to guide housing development in the countryside

1.44 Given the importance of the landscape within West Berkshire, both inside and outside the AONB, and the pressures for development, it is important to provide clear, up to date planning policy guidance to ensure a sound starting point for development management decisions.

1.45 A review has therefore been undertaken of all the 'saved' policies from the previous Local Plan (West Berkshire District Local Plan 1991-2006) which relate to the management of housing in the countryside and which remain in force as part of the development plan.

1.46 The proposed new policies reflect national policy and respond to local issues in West Berkshire. All of the policies relate to new housing in the countryside as well as the potential to extend existing housing and to convert or redevelop existing buildings to housing.

1.47 A 6 week period of consultation was held between 19 September and 31 October 2014 on preferred option policies. 165 comments were received during the consultation, and these are summarised in the Statement of Consultation, together with the Council's response. Following the consultation some changes have been made to the draft policies to take into account the comments received.

1.48 This information is set out in Section 4 of the DPD.

1.9 Parking standards for new residential development

1.49 Levels of parking provision and the way in which they are designed are important factors in creating good quality environments where people want to live. Standards for car parking have now been developed which seek to ensure the delivery of good quality developments in West Berkshire. These standards take into account national policy set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and take into account factors such as the accessibility of the development, the size, type, mix and use of the development, local car ownership levels, existing levels of parking provision and the overall need to reduce the use of high-emission vehicles.

1.50 Some changes to the preferred options policy on parking standards have been made following the consultation and further technical analysis. The parking standards for residential development are included within Section 5 of the DPD and are accompanied by a background paper (Background Topic Paper for Residential Parking Policy) which is available separately.