



**Independent Examination of the  
Compton Neighbourhood Plan**

**Statement by West Berkshire District  
Council in response to the  
Independent Examiner's request for  
points of clarification (sent 9 August  
2021, examination ref: 02/AM/CP)**

23 August 2021

## Contents

<b>1. Introduction</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>2. Response to each question raised by the examiner</b>	
Examiners Question 1	3
WBDC Response	3
Examiners Question 2	4
WBDC Response	4
Examiners Question 3	4
WBDC Response	4
Examiners Question 4	4
WBDC Response	4
Examiners Question 5	4-5
WBDC Response	5-7

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1. This statement is West Berkshire District Council's (WBDC's) response to the Examiner's request for clarification in relation to two points. First, in regards to the wording in Policy C1 iii and then the Council's view on whether there needs to be any modifications to policies in the Compton Neighbourhood Plan (NP) in light of the publication of the revised NPPF.

## 2. Response to each question raised by the examiner

### Policy C1

#### Examiners Question – Question 1

Policy C1 iii. states “conserves and enhances heritage assets and their settings”. Given that the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) advises that “the NPPF sets out a clear framework for both plan-making and decision-making in respect of applications for planning permission and listed building consent to ensure that heritage assets are conserved, and where appropriate enhanced, ...”<sup>1</sup>, should Policy C1 be rephrased to “conserves and, **where appropriate**, enhances heritage assets and their settings”?

#### WBDC response

- 2.1. Our existing Local Plan (Core Strategy Development Plan Document (DPD), Housing Site Allocations (HSA) DPD, and the Saved Policies of the West Berkshire District Local Plan 1991-2006<sup>2</sup>) contains a policy on the historic environment, namely, Core Strategy policy CS19 Historic Environment and Landscape Character<sup>3</sup>. However, policy CS19 does not include the phrase ‘*where appropriate*’.

Policy SP9 of the emerging draft West Berkshire Local Plan Review to 2037 (LPR)<sup>4</sup> does includes this phrasing, and it states that:

*“Development proposals will conserve and, **where appropriate** [our emphasis], enhance those aspects of the historic environment which are recognised as being of archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic interest, or of landscape or townscape significance....”*

- 2.2. Considering that the LPR will be adopted after the adoption of the Compton NP (based on the assumption that the Compton NP progresses to referendum and receives a majority ‘yes’ vote), WBDC agrees that the phrase ‘where appropriate’ should be included particularly given that one of the Basic Conditions is for the policies in a neighbourhood plan to have regard to national planning policy and guidance.

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<sup>1</sup> PPG Reference ID: 18a-002-20190723.

<sup>2</sup> West Berkshire Local Plan: <https://info.westberks.gov.uk/localplan>

<sup>3</sup> Core Strategy policy CS19: <https://info.westberks.gov.uk/corestrategy>

<sup>4</sup> West Berkshire Local Plan Review to 2037:

<https://info.westberks.gov.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=49828&p=0>

## **Policy C3**

### **Examiners Question – Question 2**

Policy C3 i seeks to achieve at least 19% improvement on the carbon emissions target set by Building Regulations (Part L). Please could reference be made to the origin of 19% and, if it is not part of government advice, how is it justified?

### **WBDC response**

2.3. WBDC have not been asked to comment on this question.

## **Policy C7**

### **Examiners Question – Question 3**

Policy C7 refers to the development density at the Pirbright Institute Allocation and the location of single storey homes designed to M4(2) Category 2: Accessible and adaptable dwellings from the Building Regulations 2010 (as amended) Access to and Use of Buildings. It seems to me that the details of accessibility in the Building Regulations do not relate to any need or desirability to have access to services and facilities which might be located in the centre of the village or those which might be built within the redevelopment of the Allocation. Does CPC have any comments?

### **WBDC response**

2.4. WBDC have been asked not to comment on this question.

## **Policy C11 and C13**

### **Examiners Question – Question 4**

Policy C11 states a preference for the re-use of existing buildings for an enterprise hub and that any proposals for new employment buildings should demonstrate why this is essential. The Pickled Pig building is highlighted as appropriate in paragraph 13.11 of the reasoned justification. Similarly, Policy C13 seeks to retain, renovate and enhance the Pickled Pig complex for community uses. What is the justification for the retention of the Pickled Pig complex as opposed to the comprehensive redevelopment of the Pirbright Institute Allocation?

### **WBDC response**

2.5. WBDC have not been asked to comment on this question.

## **National Planning Policy Framework July 2021**

### **Examiners Question – Question 5**

A revised version of the National Planning Policy Framework was published by the government on 20 July 2021, alongside a final version of the National Model Design

Code. I would be grateful if you could please advise me whether you consider any modifications in relation to the non-strategic matters covered by the draft CNP are necessary as a result of the publications and, if so, what these are?

### WBDC response

- 2.6. In light of the publication of the updated version of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), WBDC consider that several modifications may be needed to policies C8 (Design), CS17 (Biodiversity), C11 (HSA DPD Policy HSA23 Allocation Pirbright Business Hub), Policy C18 (Sustainable Drainage) and Policy C1 (Development Strategy for the Parish). In addition it is considered that the vision could be amended. This is to ensure that the Basic Condition, '*must have appropriate regard for national policies and advice contained in guidance issued by the Secretary of State*' is met.

#### *Design quality:*

- 2.7. The revised NPPF now includes measures to improve design quality. Paragraph 8b sets out that the overarching social objective of the planning system is to include the fostering of "*well-designed, beautiful and safe places*". Paragraph 133 introduces a new test that development should be well-designed, and if it is not, then it should be refused "*especially where it fails to reflect local design policies and government guidance on design, taking account any local design guidance and supplementary planning documents such as design guides and codes.*"
- 2.8. Paragraph 128 of the NPPF introduces the National Design Guide and National Model Design Code.
- 2.9. Paragraph 133 goes on to require that significant weight should be given to "*development which reflects local design policies and government guidance on design, taking into account any local design guidance and supplementary planning documents such as design guides and codes*". Significant weight should also be given to "*outstanding or innovative designs which promote high levels of sustainability, or help raise the standard of design more generally in an area.*"
- 2.10. As such, Policy C8 (Design) of the Compton NP could be modified to include reference to the word 'beautiful' and make reference to the National Model Design Code. In addition, the supporting text to Policy C8 at paragraphs 12.1 and 12.2 could be updated to refer to the National Model Design Code.

#### *Trees*

- 2.11. Paragraph 131 of the NPPF states that planning authorities "*should work with local highways officers and tree officers to ensure that the right trees are planted in the right places*".

- 2.12. The existing Local Plan, in particular Core Strategy Policy CS17 (Biodiversity) seeks the conservation of biodiversity and geodiversity assets across West Berkshire, however it does not make explicit reference to the planting of trees in the right places.
- 2.13. WBDC are currently preparing a LPR which is likely to be adopted after the Compton NP is (assuming that the NP progresses to referendum and receives a majority 'yes' vote). A new policy could be added to the neighbourhood plan to meet the requirements of paragraph 131. Any new policy could also place an emphasis that any new trees should be native to the area.

#### *Vision*

- 2.14. Paragraph 22 of the NPPF adds that "*When larger scale developments such as new settlements or significant extensions to existing villages and towns form part of the strategy area, policies should be set within a vision that looks further ahead (at least 30 years), to take into account the likely timescale for delivery.*"
- 2.15. Chapter 6 of the Compton NP sets out a vision which looks through to 2037. Paragraph 6.1 cross refers to Policy HSA23 of the Housing Site Allocations DPD which allocates the former Pirbright Site in Compton for up to 140 dwellings.
- 2.16. Compton is identified as a Service Village within the settlement hierarchy, as set out within Policy ADPP1 (Spatial Strategy) of the Core Strategy. Service Villages sit in the lower level of the hierarchy, and in this context the allocation of the former Pirbright Site is a large extension to the village. With this in mind, the vision could be updated to consider a 30 year period.

#### *Flood risk*

- 2.17. Paragraph 160 of the revised NPPF now requires plans to manage any residual flood risk by using opportunities provided by new development and "*improvements in green and other infrastructure to reduce the causes and impacts of flooding (making as much use as possible of natural flood management techniques as part of an integrated approach to flood risk management)*".

Our existing Local Plan policy on flood risk (Policy CS16 of the Core Strategy DPD) does not mention managing residual flood risk. We have a flood risk policy in the emerging draft of the LPR (Policy SP6) and this will need to be re-worded to take account of managing residual flood risk. The LPR is likely to be adopted after the Compton NP is (assuming that the NP progresses to referendum and receives a majority 'yes' vote)

- 2.18. Policy C18 (Sustainable Drainage) could therefore be modified to cover residual flood risk rather than just sustainable drainage, particularly as parts of Compton Parish are prone to flooding.

*Isolated homes in the countryside*

- 2.19. Paragraph 80 of the revised NPPF refers to isolated new homes in the countryside:

*“Planning policies should avoid the development of isolated homes in the countryside unless one or more of the following circumstances apply:*

- a) there is an essential need for a rural worker, including those taking majority control of a farm business, to live permanently at or near their place of work in the countryside;*
- b) the development would represent the optimal viable use of a heritage asset or would be appropriate enabling development to secure the future of heritage assets;*
- c) the development would re-use redundant or disused buildings and enhance its immediate setting;*
- d) the development would involve the subdivision of an existing residential building; or*
- e) the design is of exceptional quality, in that it:
  - is truly outstanding reflecting the highest standards in architecture, and would help to raise standards of design more generally in rural areas; and*
  - would significantly enhance its immediate setting, and be sensitive to the defining characteristics of the local area”.**

- 2.20. Policy C1 of the Compton NP sets out a development strategy for the Parish, that is, development should take place within the settlement boundary as defined by the West Berkshire Core Strategy DPD. In respect of development outside of the settlement boundary (ie. ‘open countryside’), Policy C1 cross-refers to policies C1 to C8 of the HSA DPD. These policies are non-strategic and have regard to residential development outside of settlement boundaries.
- 2.21. Policies C1 to C8 of the HSA DPD do not make explicit reference to ‘isolated homes in the countryside’, therefore Policy C1 of the Compton NP could be updated to include such a reference.