

Joint Henley & Harpsden Neighbourhood Development Plan Review

Examiner's Clarification Note

This Note sets out my initial comments on the submitted Plan. It also sets out areas where it would be helpful to have some further clarification. For the avoidance of any doubt, matters of clarification are entirely normal at this early stage of the examination process.

Initial Comments

The Plan provides a clear and concise vision for the neighbourhood area. The relationship between the objectives of the Plan and its policies is very clear. This provides a robust structure for the Plan. The combination of submission documents usefully highlights the elements of the Plan which are either new or modified. This is best practice. It provides a focus for the examination.

The Plan is underpinned by a comprehensive evidence base (in the Baseline Report). It is clear that the Assessment of Sites and the Henley Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan directly inform some of the policies in the Plan.

The presentation of the Plan is very good. The difference between the policies and the supporting text is clear. The Plan makes good use of various high-quality maps and photographs.

Points for Clarification

I have read the submitted documents and the representations made to the Plan. I have also visited the neighbourhood area. I am now in a position to raise issues for clarification with the Town Council.

The comments made on the points in this Note will be used to assist in the preparation of the examination report and in recommending any modifications that may be necessary to the Plan to ensure that it meets the basic conditions. I will restrict my questions to the new/revised policies. However, in a limited number of cases, I raise some specific clarification issues on other parts of the Plan.

I set out specific policy clarification points below in the order in which they appear in the submitted Plan:

General

For my information what is the current status of the Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan?

Policy ENV3

What is the status of the Town Council's Tree Strategy?

Policy ENV4

I have followed the audit trail provided in paragraph 5.30. However please can the Town Council provide information on the size of the proposed local green spaces 5/19/22/24/33?

The maps in the Plan were sufficiently detailed to allow me to find the various local green spaces (LGSs). Nevertheless, they will not be suitable for development management

purposes within the Plan period. I will be recommending that more detailed maps are included in any 'made' Plan similar in scale to those included in the Local Green Space Methodology.

In relation to proposed LGS 19 (Gillotts Wood) I saw that the proposed green space was part of a more extensive wooded area. I also saw that the Gillott School boundary fence ran through the wider area. For my clarity, please can the Town Council advise whether the proposed LGS is wholly within the Gillotts School site?

Policies SD1 a/b

These policies address important issues. However, they read a mission statements or ambition rather than as land use policies.

Please can the Town Council explain its thinking for the policies?

Policy SD3

This is an excellent policy. It is based on research and evidence. It is a first-class local response to Section 12 of NPPF 2021

Policy H1

The proposed policy reads more as a process than as a policy.

Please can the Town Council expand on its approach to the policy in general and how it adds value to the site-specific policies in particular?

Policies E2/E3

Both policies are affected by the changes made to the Use Classes Order in 2021. I will be recommending modifications to take account of this matter.

Policy E4

I recognise that the policy is unchanged. However, it remains an important policy. Several opportunities for this type of development have already been taken. Others which may come forward in the future will contribute to sustainable development. The policy reinforces the importance of making the best use of land and buildings in the town.

Policy T2

This is a good policy. During the visit I saw the extent to which the existing network provided good accessibility especially in the built-up area.

Policy T4

The policy takes a good approach.

Could the specific approach in Part B become quickly outdated as technology moves on?

Policy T6

To what extent do parts A-C of the policy add any distinctive value to the approach already taken in national and local policies?

Is part D of the policy expecting a developer to undertake an assessment of the capacity of the residual car parking in the town to accommodate the town's overall parking needs? If so, would this approach be practicable?

Policy DS1

The table in the policy helpfully explains how sites in the 'made' Plan (A1, C, E, F, J and X) are carried forward into the review of the Plan.

General question

Plainly the six sites have not been developed so far. I have looked at the updated details in the AECOM site assessment reports.

What assurances do the Town Council have that the sites are available and deliverable within the Plan period? A response which relies on information from landowners/developers/ third parties (in whole or in part) would be acceptable.

Site M1

The proposed site M1 will supply a significant amount of the additional proposed new housing in the neighbourhood area. It has also raised a series of representations from the development industry on the site-selection process. The Topic Paper makes three important statements about the site as follows:

- *It is considered that the public benefit provided through this scheme would outweigh harm to the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).*
- *The landscape sensitivity is influenced by the new housing being built on the existing allocation Site M: Highlands Farm.*
- *(The site) is in conformity with South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2011 (saved policies) Policy H4 as the site (once the wider site construction is complete) is within the built-up area.*

Please can the Town Council expand on its approach to these matters?

Is the third point still relevant now that the South Oxfordshire Local Plan has been adopted?

Various components of the Plan comment about the relationship between the development of Site M (to the immediate south) and its former uses. They also relate to the rationale behind the allocation of Site M in the made Plan. Please can the Town Council provide information about the nature of the former employment and agricultural uses that existed on Site M at that time?

Site C

I acknowledge proposed housing site at Gillotts School in the Plan remains unchanged from the 'made' Plan. Nevertheless, I can see in the second addendum to the AECOM Site Assessments that there is a degree of commentary both on the proposed access arrangements to the site, and on the environmental implications of those arrangements.

Has any further assessment work been undertaken on the access issue since that report was produced in August 2021?

Representations

Does the Town Council wish to comment on any of the representations made to the Plan?

In particular, does it wish to comment on the representations made by:

- Chilterns Conservation Board (9);
- Thames Developments Group Limited (11)
- Gillotts School (12)
- Blockwork (13)
- South Oxfordshire District Council (14)
- B&M Care (19)
- Taylor Wimpey (21)
- Westbourne homes & Debrecq (Crossways) (22)
- Borlase Family (23)
- Crest Nicholson Chiltern (24)
- Bloor Homes (25)
- Oxfordshire County Council (27)
- Knole Homes (28)
- South Oxfordshire District Council Property (29)

[The numbers in brackets are the reference numbers in the District Council's schedule of representations].

The District Council proposes a series of refinements to several policies. Does the Town Council have any comments on the suggested refinements?

Protocol for responses

I would be grateful for responses and the information requested by 3 May 2022. Please let me know if this timetable may be challenging to achieve. It is intended to maintain the momentum of the examination.

In the event that certain responses are available before others, I would be happy to receive the information on a piecemeal basis. Irrespective of how the information is assembled, please could it come to me directly from the District Council. In addition, please can all responses make direct reference to the policy or the matter concerned.

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Independent Examiner

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30 March 2022