

Beckley and Stowood Neighbourhood Development Plan

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 presentation of the Plan is good. The difference between the policies and the supporting text is clear. The Plan makes good use of various maps which are produced to a high quality.

The Parish Council has grappled with the implications of the development of the strategic site at land north of Bayswater Brook as allocated in the South Oxfordshire Local Plan. The approach taken has resulted in a series of representations to the proposed mitigation policies. This issue will be the principal focus of the examination.

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 able to raise issues for clarification with the Parish 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 set out specific policy clarification points below in the order in which they appear in the submitted Plan. For convenience I have followed the structure of the Plan and referred to the initial policies as General Policies

General Policies

I can see the comment in Policy DS2 about its application. Otherwise, has the Plan been designed and submitted so that the other general policies would apply within the strategic site?

Policy VB1

I saw the challenges which the format of built development in the parish presents in terms of defining a settlement boundary. I have drawn the Parish Council's attention to a specific representation on this matter later in this note.

Policy VB2

Does the policy add any parish-level value to national and local policies on the Green Belt?

In the round could this policy be incorporated into Policy VB1 which would then establish a spatial strategy for the neighbourhood area?

Policy H1

Does the policy add any parish-level value to national and local policies on heritage assets?

Policy DS1

Viewpoint 6 affects the area of the strategic allocation at Bayswater Brook and the approach taken in the policy does not take account of the the strategic allocation in the adopted Local Plan.

Please can the Parish Council elaborate on its approach to this matter and the extent to which the incorporation of viewpoint 6 in the policy would be in general conformity with Policy STRAT 13 of the Local Plan?

Policy DG1

In general terms this is a good policy which seeks to produce a positive local response to Section 12 of the NPPF. However, is the policy considered to be the design guide, or is to be read in conjunction with the information contained in the supporting documents?

Mitigation Policies

I understand the reasoning behind the mitigation policies. National policy is clear that neighbourhood plans can be prepared to add value to the strategic approach taken in a local plan. Nevertheless, should this part of the Plan make it clear that the policies have been designed to supplement Policy STRAT13 of the adopted Local Plan and to follow the approach in paragraph 13 of the NPPF?

On a related matter, is it appropriate for a neighbourhood plan to comment in the first paragraph of Section 6 of the Plan that ‘six of the seven strategic sites in the SODC Local Plan 2035 were within the Oxford Green Belt, three of which are around Oxford. Their inclusion is not in compliance with the strengthening of Government regulations for protecting the Green Belt’ given that the Local Plan has been examined and is now adopted?

To what extent has the Parish Council assessed the added value which the various mitigation policies would bring to the approach already taken in Policy STRAT13 of the Local Plan and the supporting text at paragraphs 3.106 to 3.117? In several cases the policies read as statements of fact and/or the application of normal planning processes rather than as land use policies. It would be helpful if the Parish Council commented on a policy-by-policy basis.

The remainder of this section raises specific issues on some of the mitigation policies.

Policy GB1

Has the Parish Council sought to assess the extent to which emerging proposals for the strategic site would promote their own landscaping proposals?

Is there a risk that the application of the policy would result in an artificial and unnatural boundary to the strategic site?

Has the policy been tested for its potential impact on commercial viability of the strategic site?

Policy CUL3

I am minded to recommend the deletion of Part B of the policy. As submitted it is anticipating a scenario which may not arise. Should it do so, it could then be addressed in any review of a ‘made’ Plan.

Does the Parish Council have any comments on this proposition?

Representations

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

I would find it helpful if the Parish Council commented on the representations submitted by:

- Mr and Mrs Smith (Representation 7);
- Dorchester Road Management Group and Christ's Church Oxford (Representation 9);
and
- South Oxfordshire District Council (Representation 11).

Protocol for responses

I would be grateful for responses and the information requested by 28 April 2022. Please let me know if this timetable may be challenging to achieve. It is intended to maintain the momentum of the examination.

If 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.

Andrew Ashcroft

Independent Examiner

Beckley and Stowood Neighbourhood Development Plan.

29 March 2023