

Whitchurch 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 wider package has been prepared and presented in a very professional and effective manner. The Plan is distinctive to the parish and provides a clear and compelling vision for the neighbourhood area. The policies are very distinctive to the neighbourhood area and the wider Plan is undermined by the Design Guidelines and Codes Report (Appendix A).

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

In the round, the Plan balances opportunities for sensitive, well-designed development with strong environmental and community aspirations. The connections between the vision, the objectives and the policies are very clear.

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:

Policy W2

In general terms, the policy takes a positive approach to the delivery of new homes in the parish.

The first criterion addresses several overlapping issues. Could the part on house sizes be modified so that it is more neutrally related to the findings of the Housing Needs Assessment and with a separate section offering support to schemes which included smaller homes (with 1/2/3 bedrooms)?

Is the sixth criterion needed given that it simply refers to Local Plan policies?

In the tenth criterion is there any need to comment in greater detail beyond the need for sustainable drainage techniques to be incorporated into proposals to manage surface water run-off? In this context, the details submitted with development proposals could then be assessed as part of the development management process, taking account of the way they address on site and any off-site issues.

Policy W3

The proposed allocation of a reserve site is also a positive approach to future potential issues arising from the housing land supply in the County and/or any future requirements which may arise in the parish once the emerging Buckinghamshire Local Plan has been adopted.

Nevertheless, Part B of the policy reads in a slightly confusing way. The intended approach is better expressed in paragraph 5.10.

Please can the Parish Council clarify its position in general terms and relate that position to Buckinghamshire Council's comments on the policy.

Policy W4

The Design Guidance and Codes is an excellent document and helpfully underpins this policy.

For my clarification, is the Guidance and Codes intended to operate in conjunction with Buckinghamshire Council's Design Supplementary Planning Document.

Policies W6/W7

Is the identification of the specific facilities in the parish the added value beyond the details in Policies D7 and I3 in the Local Plan?

Policy W8

In general terms this is an excellent policy which is underpinned by the Local Green Spaces Report.

I have invited the Parish Council to respond to a representation to the designation of one of the proposed Local Green Spaces later in this note.

Policy W10

This policy takes a positive approach to green infrastructure.

However, as Buckinghamshire Council comments, has the Parish Council properly assessed the various elements of green infrastructure so that they can be shown either on a separate map or on the Policies Map? Otherwise, Buckinghamshire Council will not be able to implement the intentions of the policy in a clear and transparent way.

Representations

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

It would be helpful if the Parish Council commented on the representations from Gade Homes insofar as they affect the development of the proposed allocated housing site at Kempson House West (Policy W2) and the proposed designation of a local green space at Kempson House/Old House (LGS iii in Policy W8)

I would find it helpful if the Parish Council commented on the Buckinghamshire Council Planning Policy team/Highways team/Heritage team's suggested changes to certain policies.

Protocol for responses

I would be grateful for responses to the questions raised by 21 November 2023. 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 Buckinghamshire Council. In addition, please can all responses make direct reference to the policy or the matter concerned.

Andrew Ashcroft

Independent Examiner

Whitchurch Neighbourhood Development Plan.

27 October 2023