

APPENDIX 3

Summary of Issues in relation to the Reserve Sites from the Local Plan Options Consultation (Feb-Apr 2014)

Introduction

This appendix summarises the responses received in relation to the reserve sites as part of the Local Plan Options Consultation earlier this year. The consultation was split into several sections. The 'reserve sites' as a group were one of the eight strategic housing options (the other five included using brownfield land, and expanding Princes Risborough, amongst others). Each of the sites also had its own section in the plan.

In addition to the consultation responses made by people with an interest in the planning of the District – often living near the sites – market research was also undertaken during the consultation period, this was based on a representative sample of people taken from across the District. These findings are also summarised below.

This appendix sets out the comments on the Market Research first, then the comments on the strategic option of the reserve sites, then finally the comments on each of the sites.

Market Research Feedback

The market research included a questionnaire survey of a representative sample of people across the District. Of the 8 strategic options, the development of the Reserve Sites was the second to last in terms of support (with the Green Belt Review least favoured).

By contrast, when it came to questions about support or opposition to individual Reserve Sites there was generally more support for development of individual sites than there was opposition. The higher levels of support relative to opposition is likely to be because the research was a district-wide survey, so most people questioned would not be living near a Reserve Site.

However there was a significant proportion (approx. 25%) of people who did not express an opinion about the individual Reserve Sites, perhaps because they did not know the sites or have enough information about them. The proposals with the highest level of support were 'Abbey Barn South' (50%) and 'Abbey Barn North' (50%). Respondents from High Wycombe were more likely to support developing the reserve sites.¹

¹ Note that some figures quoted in this appendix in relation to the market research findings may not total 100% due to rounding

Response to Strategic Option 3: Reserve Sites

Releasing the reserve sites for development was one of 8 strategic options set out in the Consultation Document published in February 2014 for how we might address the level of housing need in the District up to the year 2031.

Main concerns

109 responses were received specifically on this option and others commented on a related question in the consultation report. Most expressed objection to the release of the reserve sites. Concerns focused around the following issues

- Environmental impact
- Location and planning status of the sites
- Suggestions of alternative strategies and places to build
- Concerns about infrastructure

There was also a modest degree of support for the option, with comments made including that it was appropriate to allocate the sites, that there is no alternative, that they are needed to meet development requirements and that they are deliverable sites. There were various comments suggesting that the sites represented logical locations for development.

Responses for Individual Sites

Introduction

The Consultation Document also included more detail about each of the reserve sites including indicative diagrams showing potential development areas and areas that could be protected from development. This section summarises the written responses in relation to each site from the comments received, and through the market research.

Overview of the comments on the sites themselves

Nearly 1,200 responses were received in relation to the reserve sites, predominantly objections raised mainly by people living locally to the sites. The greatest levels of response related to Gomm Valley and Ashwells, and Slate Meadow.

Key issues raised across the sites included:

- The traffic and transport impacts of development, and inadequacy of existing transport infrastructure;
- Impacts on other infrastructure provision such as schools and health facilities, and inadequacy of existing infrastructure;
- Loss of community identity – loss of separation between communities if development happens;
- Environmental impacts of development – including landscape impact, impact on ecology, flooding concerns (especially Slate Meadow);
- Some questioned the existing “reserved” status of the sites.

Abbey Barn North

Total Written Responses: 62

Most of the responses were objections to development of the site with some degree of support for the development of the site.

Main concerns from objections

- Traffic impacts of development: Concerns over the worsening traffic congestion as the current roads are overstretched. Particular concerns about Daws Hill Lane, Kingsmead Road/Abbey Barn Lane and the impact on London Road and roads in Flackwell Heath.
- Infrastructure concerns: Concerns that current infrastructure such as schools and health care would not be able to cope with the influx of new residents to the area.
- Environmental impact: Concerns about the negative impact of development on issues such as landscape, biodiversity and flood risk.

Support

- Support for the creation of a nature reserve on the site
- Vehicular access: views supporting the provision of two access points to the site with the best point being seen as Kingsmead Road.

Market Research Feedback

50% supported and 18% did not support developing this site; 24% had no opinion and 9% were neutral.

Abbey Barn South

Total Written Responses: 68

Most of the responses were objections to development at the site, with a small number of representations in support of the site.

Main concerns from objections

- Traffic impacts of development. Many people stated that the local roads such as Daws Hill Lane, Heath End Road and Marlow Hill are currently unable to handle rush hour traffic at the moment as they are used as rat runs between strategic routes in the area.
- Many representations expressed concerns about the impact of development on the character of Flackwell Heath. Strong concerns were expressed that it would effectively transform Flackwell Heath into a suburb of High Wycombe by eroding the gap between the two settlements and that, as a result, Flackwell Heath would lose its village and community feel, the features which the respondents felt made it such a pleasant place to live.
- Insufficient infrastructure: local services and facilities would be unable to cope with the influx of people which the development would bring. Concerns were expressed about particular services in the area, including GP surgeries, schools and water/sewerage provision.

Support

Those supporting development at the site alluded to its size, potential benefits to the local area and good transport links.

Market Research Feedback

50% supported and 19% did not support developing this site, 24% had no opinion and 8% were neutral.

Gomm Valley and Ashwells

Total Written Responses: 786 in total (570 on Gomm Valley & Ashwells and 216 on Ashwells)²

The vast majority of responses were objections to development of this site with only a very small number in support. A large volume of concerns were also voiced at two public meetings (Cock Lane and Tylers Green – arranged by local community groups with WDC officers and local members in attendance) where Gomm Valley and Ashwells was the focus.

Main concerns:

- There was a large volume of concern about traffic impacts of development, with respondents expressing strong concerns that congestion on the local roads would result. Many people expressed concerns over the safety of roads such as Cock Lane and Hammersley Lane, and expressed strong fears that they would not be able to cope with the extra volume of traffic which would result from development of Gomm Valley & Ashwells. Respondents also alluded to fears over the impact on the wider road network, especially London Road.
- Large volume of comments on infrastructure concerns, with the impact on local schools being a particularly prominent concern, followed by doctor's surgeries and other services/amenities. Infrastructure was seen as being inadequate at the current time, and that development here would exacerbate this situation.
- A large degree of concern over the impact of development here on the character of the area. A particular concern that development would end Penn and Tylers Green's identity as a separate village and that they would be subsumed into Wycombe, causing urban sprawl.
- Strong concerns over landscape impact, with respondents highlighting that this is the last dry valley in Wycombe and that the Council's priority should be to protect what is a cherished landscape.
- Other concerns about the impact of development on the wildlife in the site, and about the potential loss of an important green lung for the area.

Support

These comments were generally supporting detailed aspects or options within the consultation document rather than commenting on the overall suitability of the site. These included support for retaining open space and opening it up for public use, for allotments, and for keeping development on Ashwells separate from High Wycombe.

Market Research Feedback

² The consultation document set out options for the whole site (Gomm Valley and Ashwells) but separately included the Ashwells part of the site where other issues related to Penn and Tylers Green were found in the consultation document.

41% supported and 23% did not support developing this site, 24% had no opinion and 12% were neutral.

Terriers Farm

Total Written Responses: 73

Most responses were objections to development of the site with a small number in support.

Main concerns from objections

- There was significant amount of concern at what was perceived to be overdevelopment in the area around the Terriers Farm site. In particular, there was a significant degree of concern about the impact of development at the former Wellesbourne Campus, particularly on the grounds of lack of parking, traffic impact leading to unsafe roads and what was seen as the over-dense nature of the development.
- There was major concern that development on the site would represent urban sprawl, and would lead to the loss of separation between High Wycombe and Hazlemere and the loss of an important and valued green gap between these two settlements.
- A significant number of respondents were concerned about the traffic impacts of development at Terriers Farm, and the congestion which would result from development on roads where congestions levels are already high.
- Many respondents expressed strong concerns over infrastructure. Concerns included that there was not enough infrastructure generally, that there had been no improvements in infrastructure since the Wellesbourne development and that the current infrastructure in the area could not cope and that extra investment was needed in infrastructure. There were particular concerns about local schools being full and overstretched.
- Several respondents questioned the need for a Park and Ride facility in this location – questioning its usefulness, viability and effectiveness in reducing journey times for traffic coming from the north into the town centre.

Support

Comments in support included that the land had been reserved for many years and was outside the Green Belt and Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and some respondents put the opinion forward that the site was not of any scenic value and that it is in an area which has reasonable transport links, schools and retail.

Market Research Feedback

40% supported and 24% did not support developing this site, 23% had no opinion and 13% were neutral.

Slate Meadow

Total Written Responses: 230

The vast majority of responses were objections to development of this site with only very few in support. A large volume of concerns were also voiced at an exhibition and two meetings (arranged by WDC) in Bourne End where Slate Meadow was the focus.

Main concerns:

- Concerns over building on the flood plain and increasing flood risk were an overwhelming concern. Many were concerned by the impact of flooding on existing roads and properties in the area and feared this situation would be exacerbated by developing Slate Meadow. There were also concerns over impact on ground water levels, sewage and drainage.
- Many feared that development of Slate Meadow would result in the coalescence of Bourne End and Wooburn, and the loss of their respective identities. The loss of the natural break and valuable green space between the two settlements was also a major concern.
- There were many concerns over additional traffic congestion
- Concern that the current roads and pavements are overstretched;
- Increased risk for children during school drop-off and pick-up times due to the increased traffic volume which would result on Stratford Drive
- Extra traffic on the already overloaded Cores End Road during peak times, as well as adjacent streets such as Orchard Drive, Frank Lunnon Close, Jubilee Walk, Willows Road and Stratford Drive.
- Fear that increased bus and vehicular access through the site would exacerbate congestion in the area and cause more accidents.
- Infrastructure concerns, and in particular concerns over the lack of capacity of local primary schools to cater for additional population – also concerns over impact on local health services
- Concerns about building on an area designated as village green which should be protected for local people to enjoy as a recreational resource.

Support

These comments were generally supporting or providing detailed suggestions about the development of the site rather than commenting on the overall suitability of the site. These included some support for a 'park and walk' facility for the nearby primary school, and suggestions about how open space should be provided on the site.

Market Research Feedback

35% supported and 30% did not support developing this site, 23% had no opinion and 12% were neutral.