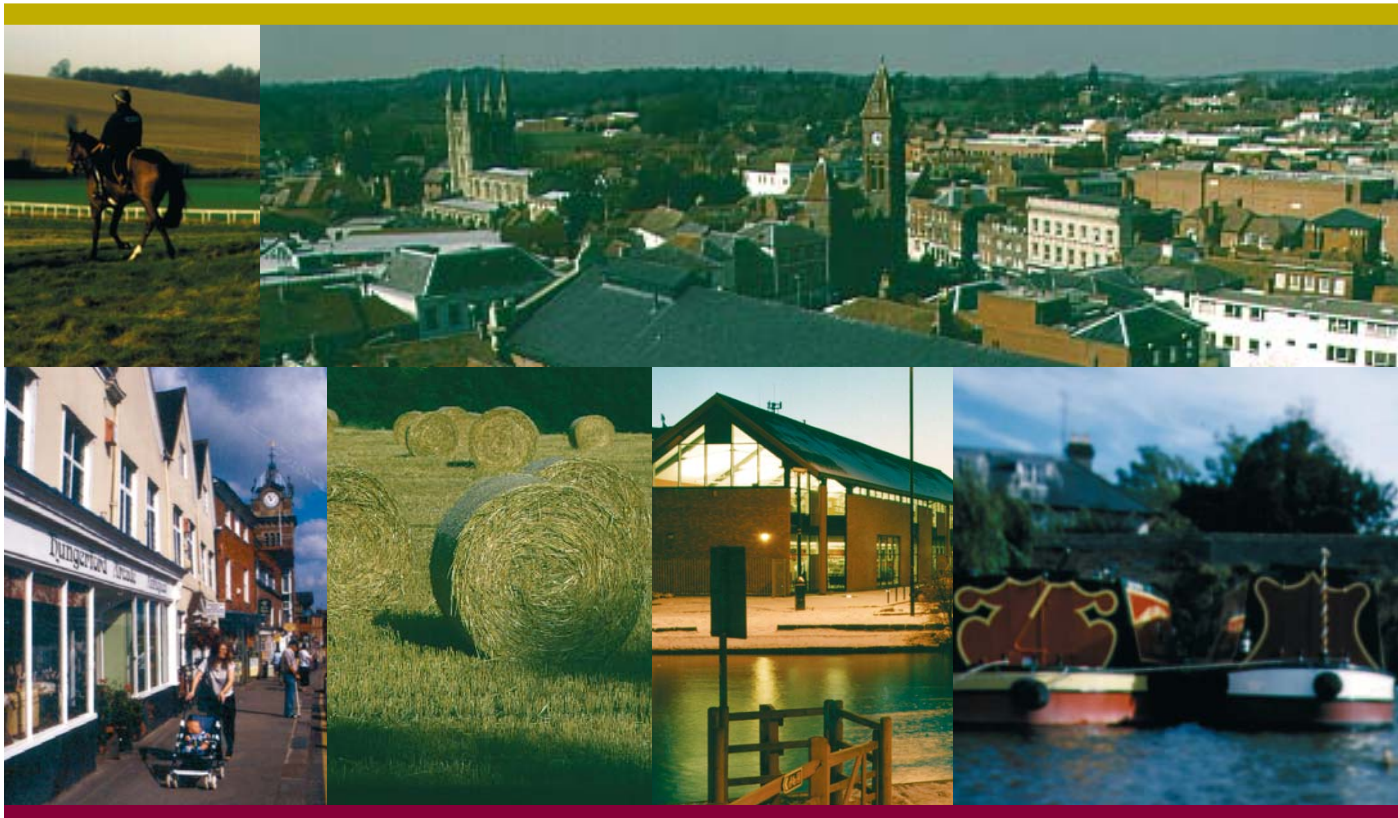


# West Berkshire District Local Plan 1991-2006 Saved Policies

September 2007

## Written Statement



West Berkshire  
COUNCIL

## CONTENTS

Preface		v
<hr/>		
<b>Chapter 1</b>	<b>Introduction and overall strategy</b>	<b>1</b>
<hr/>		
OVS.1	The Overall Strategy	6
OVS.2	Core Policy	7
OVS.3	Planning and Community Benefits	7
OVS.3A	<i>Provision of infrastructure/Utilities (Not Saved)</i>	8
OVS.4	<i>Environmental Impact Assessment (Not Saved)</i>	8
OVS.5	Environmental Nuisance and Pollution Control	8
OVS.6	Noise Pollution	10
OVS.7/OVS.8	Hazardous Substances	10
OVS.9	Renewable Energy	11
OVS.10	Energy Efficiency	12
OVS.11	Planning to Reduce the Opportunity for Crime	12
<hr/>		
<b>Chapter 2</b>	<b>Environment</b>	<b>14</b>
<hr/>		
	<u><i>Introduction and Background</i></u>	15
	<u><i>Section A: Landscape</i></u>	18
ENV.1	The Wider Countryside	20
ENV.2	<i>The Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (Not Saved)</i>	21
ENV.3	<i>Areas of Special Landscape Importance (Not Saved)</i>	22
ENV.4	Gaps between Settlements	22
ENV.5	<i>Setting of Settlements (Not Saved)</i>	22
ENV.6	<i>The Enhancement of Degraded Landscapes/ Reducing Intrusive Development (Not Saved)</i>	23
ENV.7	<i>Central Berkshire Forest (Not Saved)</i>	23
	<u><i>Section B: Nature Conservation</i></u>	24
ENV.8	Active Nature Conservation Measures	27
ENV.9	The Impact of Development Proposals affecting Nature Conservation Sites	28
ENV.9A	<i>Protected Wildlife Species (Not Saved)</i>	28
	<u><i>Section C: Water Environment</i></u>	29
ENV.10	<i>River Flood Plain Areas (Not Saved)</i>	31
ENV.11	<i>Surface Water Runoff (Not Saved)</i>	31
ENV.11A	<i>Waste Water Management (Not Saved)</i>	31
ENV.11B	<i>Surface Water Disposal (Not Saved)</i>	31
ENV.12	<i>Ground Water and Surface Water Protection (Not Saved)</i>	31
ENV.13	<i>Water Resources (Not Saved)</i>	32
ENV.14	River Corridors and Nature Conservation	32
	<u><i>Section D: Agriculture</i></u>	33
ENV.15	<i>Protection of the Best and most Versatile Agricultural Land (Not Saved)</i>	35
ENV.16	Farm Diversification	36
ENV.17	Agricultural Development	36
	<u><i>Section E: Development in the Countryside</i></u>	37

ENV.18	Control of Development in the Countryside	41
ENV.19	The Re use and Adaptation of Rural Buildings	41
ENV.20	The Redevelopment of Existing Buildings in the Countryside	42
ENV.21	<i>Infilling and Ribbon Development in existing areas of Dispersed Settlements (Not Saved)</i>	43
ENV.22	The Extension of Residential Curtilages in the Countryside	43
ENV.23	Replacement Dwellings in the Countryside	44
ENV.24	Extensions to Dwellings in the Countryside	45
ENV.25A	<i>Redundant Defence and Government Establishments (Not Saved)</i>	45
ENV.25	<i>Defence and Government Establishments in the Countryside (Not Saved)</i>	45
ENV.26	<i>The Former Greenham Airbase (Greenham and Crookham Commons) (Not Saved)</i>	45
ENV.27	Development on Existing Institutional and Educational sites in the Countryside	46
ENV.28	<i>Telecommunications Development (Not Saved)</i>	46
ENV.29	Development involving Accommodation for Horses	47
	<b><u>Section F: The Urban Environment</u></b>	48
ENV.30	<i>Protecting and Improving the Urban Environment (Not Saved)</i>	50
ENV.31	The Protection and Enhancement of Important Open Space Areas within Defined Settlements	51
	<b><u>Section G: Conservation and the Historic Environment</u></b>	53
ENV.32	<i>Alterations and Extensions to Listed Buildings (Not Saved)</i>	56
ENV.33	Development in Conservation Areas	57
ENV.34	<i>Burgage Plots in Hungerford (Not Saved)</i>	58
ENV.35	<i>Historic Parks and Gardens (Not Saved)</i>	58
ENV.36	<i>The Newbury Battlefield Sites (Not Saved)</i>	58
ENV.37	<i>Development on Scheduled Ancient Monuments and Sites of Archaeological Significance (Not Saved)</i>	59
ENV.38	The Management of Scheduled Ancient Monuments and Areas of Archaeological Significance	59
ENV.39	<i>The Provision of Archaeological Evaluation (Not Saved)</i>	59
ENV.40	<i>The Level of Archaeological Investigation (Not Saved)</i>	59
<b>Chapter 3</b>	<b>Housing</b>	<b>60</b>
HSG.1	The Identification of Settlements for Planning Purposes	64
HSG.2	<i>Exceptions to Normal Restrictions on New Housing in the Countryside (Not Saved)</i>	65
HSG.3	The Relaxation of Agricultural Occupancy Conditions	65
HSG.4	<i>Development within Urban Areas and on Brownfield Sites (Not Saved)</i>	66
HSG.5	Allocation of new Housing Sites	66
HSG.7	<i>Planning Benefits relating to New Housing Developments (Not Saved)</i>	67
HSG.8	Housing to meet the needs of Disabled People	68
HSG.9	Affordable Housing for Local Needs	68
HSG.10	<i>Affordable Housing for Local Needs (Not Saved)</i>	68
HSG.11	Affordable Housing for Local Needs	68
HSG.13	Residential Use of Space above Shops and Offices	70
HSG.14	Retention of Mobile Home Parks	70
HSG.15	<i>Temporary Residential Accommodation (Not Saved)</i>	70
HSG.16	<i>Purley Park River Estate (Not Saved)</i>	71
HSG.17	Gypsy Transit Sites	71
HSG.17A	Permanent Gypsy Sites	71

<b>Chapter 4</b>	<b>Economy</b>	<b>72</b>
<hr/>		
ECON.1	Retention of Existing Employment Sites	75
ECON.2A	Employment Schemes on Non Protected Sites	76
ECON.2	<i>Alternative uses for Existing Committed Employment Sites (Not Saved)</i>	77
ECON.3	<i>Retention of 'Bad Neighbour' Uses (Not Saved)</i>	77
ECON.4	<i>Enhancement of Employment Areas and their Surroundings (Not Saved)</i>	77
ECON.5	Town centre Commercial Areas	77
ECON.6	Future of the former Greenham Common Airbase	78
ECON.7	Safeguarding Rail-based Industry at Theale	79
ECON.8 & 9	Racehorse Industry	79
<b>Chapter 5</b>	<b>Shopping</b>	<b>81</b>
<hr/>		
SHOP.1	Non-retail uses in Primary Shopping Frontages	83
SHOP.1A	<i>Mixed Uses in Town Centres (Not Saved)</i>	84
SHOP.2	Parkway and the Wharf, Newbury	84
SHOP.3	Retail Areas and Retail Warehousing	84
SHOP.4	<i>Car Boot Sales and Sunday Markets (Not Saved)</i>	85
SHOP.5	The Encouragement of Local and Village Shops	85
<b>Chapter 6</b>	<b>Transportation</b>	<b>86</b>
<hr/>		
TRANS.1A	Road Schemes	87
TRANS.1	Meeting the Transport Needs of New Development	89
TRANS.2	<i>Enhancement of Transportation Facilities and Network (Not Saved)</i>	90
TRANS.3	A34/M4 Junction 13 - Chieveley	90
TRANS.4	<i>Cycling (Not Saved)</i>	91
TRANS.5	<i>Pedestrians (Not Saved)</i>	91
<b>Chapter 7</b>	<b>Recreation and Leisure</b>	<b>92</b>
<hr/>		
RL.1	Public Open Space Provision in Residential Development Schemes	95
RL.2	Provision of Public Open Space (methods)	97
RL.3	The Selection of Public Open Space and Recreation Sites	97
RL.3A	<i>Protection of Existing Public and Private Open Space and Recreation Facilities (Not Saved)</i>	98
RL.4	Safeguarding Existing Allotment Land	98
RL.4A	<i>Informal Recreation and Access in the Countryside (Not Saved)</i>	98
RL.5	Policy on the Kennet and Avon Canal	99
RL.5A	The River Thames	100
RL.6	<i>Thatcham Moors (Not Saved)</i>	100
RL.7	<i>The Lower Kennet Water Park (Not Saved)</i>	100
<b>Chapter 8</b>	<b>Implementation, Resources and Monitoring</b>	<b>101</b>
<hr/>		
<b>Appendices</b>		
<hr/>		
1.	Supplementary Planning Guidance Notes (SPGs)	105
2.	Purley Park River Estate	106
3.	Licensed Mobile Home Sites	107

4.	SSSIs	108
5.	Vehicle Parking Standards	110
6.	Conservation Areas	112
7.	Landscape Character Areas	113
8.	Agricultural Land Classification	114
9.	Stages of Plan Preparation	115
10.	Local Plan Housing Sites Development Statements	116
	▪ <i>Fisherman's Lane, Aldermaston</i>	117
	▪ <i>South Aldermaston</i>	121
	▪ <i>Upper Bucklebury</i>	124
	▪ <i>Chieveley (two sites)</i>	127
	▪ <i>Newbury Racecourse, Greenham</i>	130
	▪ <i>Pinchington Lane/ Deadman's Lane, Newbury</i>	134
	▪ <i>Cementation Site, Hermitage</i>	138
	▪ <i>Bath Road, Eddington</i>	142
	▪ <i>Salisbury Road, Hungerford</i>	145
	▪ <i>Mortimer Hill, Mortimer</i>	148
	▪ <i>Enborne Road, Newbury</i>	151
	▪ <i>Manor Park, Newbury</i>	155
	▪ <i>Park House School, Newbury</i>	159
	▪ <i>Basingstoke Road/Mill Lane, Aldermaston Wharf</i>	163
	▪ <i>Long Lane, Purley</i>	168
	▪ <i>Stockcross</i>	172
	▪ <i>Land Adjacent to Benham's Farm, Burghfield Common</i>	175
	▪ <i>North West Thatcham</i>	179
11.	Deemed Hazardous Substances Sites	183
12.	Settlement Boundary Definition Criteria	184
13.	Schedule of Policies Not Saved	185
	Glossary	194

## **PREFACE:**

In accordance with the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, all existing Local Plan policies were 'saved' until 27 September 2007, unless expressly replaced by 'new' policies. After this date the policies would expire and no longer have weight in planning decisions, unless they had been extended by the Secretary of State. Therefore, in March 2007 the Government required all Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) to submit a schedule of policies to be saved beyond the expiry date until such time that a Core Strategy or relevant Development Plan Document was adopted to replace them through the Local Development Framework. This was to avoid a policy vacuum.

The Government set out a protocol for saving policies, which stated that LPAs were required to demonstrate that the policies they wished to be saved:

- reflected the principles of local development frameworks;
- were consistent with current national policy;
- and/or that it was not feasible or desirable to replace them by 27 September 2007.

The protocol also set out a series of tests, which were taken from PPS12 paragraph 5.14, and stated that policies to be saved should comply with the tests and criteria.

On 25 September 2007 the Council received the Secretary of State's response to this request for the extension of saved policies. As a result of this process, the West Berkshire District Local Plan 1991-2006, has been edited to reflect the recent changes in policy. Those policies that have not been saved have now expired and have been deleted from the text (further comments on unsaved policies are set out in Appendix 13 of this document). The principles and strategy of the plan have not changed so those elements of the adopted Local Plan text have been retained.

The purpose of this document is to remove policies which no longer exist and not to provide new policies or explanatory text. Since the adoption of the Local Plan in 2002, new national, regional and local policy has emerged, replacing earlier policy and guidance. Therefore, some references in the text have now become out of date and either no longer apply or should refer to more recent planning guidance/policies. It is not possible for the Council to update this text without undertaking statutory processes, so those outdated references have been retained in the text.

The policies set out in this document provide the basis for planning decisions within West Berkshire until replaced by the Local Development Documents.

## **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND OVERALL STRATEGY**

### **Policies**

**OVS.1** *Overall Strategy*

**OVS.2** *Core Policy*

**OVS.3** *Planning and Community Benefits*

**OVS.3A** *Provision of infrastructure/Utilities – NOT SAVED*

**OVS.4** *Environmental Impact Assessment – NOT SAVED*

**OVS.5** *Environmental Nuisance/Pollution Control*

**OVS.6** *Noise Pollution*

**OVS.7/OVS.8** *Hazardous Substances*

**OVS.9** *Renewable Energy*

**OVS.10** *Energy Efficiency*

**OVS.11** *Planning to Reduce the Opportunity for Crime*

# **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND OVERALL STRATEGY**

## **1.1 INTRODUCTION**

1.1.1 The Local Plan sets out the Council's proposals for the development and use of land within its area for the plan period up to 2006. Whilst proposals for development are expected to be mainly completed within the plan period the policies will operate up to and beyond this period if still relevant.

## **1.2 GENERAL APPROACH**

1.2.1 The Local Plan is part of the statutory Development Plan, the other parts being the Berkshire Structure Plan and the Berkshire Minerals and Waste Local Plans. The Local Plan must conform generally with the Structure Plan and has been written to complement its approach to development and land use issues.

1.2.2 An Environmental Appraisal has been prepared which examines the environmental implications of the local plan policies.

1.2.3 The Local Plan policies have focused on the interpretation of Structure Plan policies and the Government's Planning Policy and Guidance Notes (PPGs) and in formulating policies which have a positive impact on the control of development. The general objectives of each chapter of the Local Plan are expressed as key aims.

1.2.4 It must be stressed that the Local Plan does not stand alone as a guide for the future development of West Berkshire. It must be read alongside the Structure Plan and PPGs.

## **1.3 STATUS OF THE LOCAL PLAN**

1.3.1 The Local Plan has been prepared to be in general conformity with the Berkshire Structure Plan 1991-2006 adopted on the 4th November 1995. It was adopted on 14 June 2002 and replaced the Newbury District Local Plan which was adopted in 1993.

1.3.2 It has been prepared following extensive consultation and debate on a wide range of local planning issues. The consultation statement gave details of these matters including the work of Community Working Parties set up to help prepare development statements for each of the selected housing allocation sites.

1.3.3 West Berkshire Council is responsible for waste and minerals matters; the Replacement Minerals Local Plan, and the Deposit Draft Waste Local Plan provide policy guidance in these issues, and indicate 'Preferred Areas' for minerals extraction and waste management facilities. In some circumstances, policies in this Local Plan might conflict with the above; these general policies will be a material consideration in determining planning applications and the more recently adopted provisions should prevail.

## **1.4 STAGES OF PREPARATION – PLAN PERIOD**

1.4.1 The key stages in the preparation of the West Berkshire District Local Plan are summarised in the table at Appendix 9. The Plan period is 1991 to 2006.



## 1.5 STRUCTURE PLAN POLICIES

1.5.1 The Berkshire Structure Plan 1991-2006 seeks an appropriate balance between the need to protect and improve the environment and the needs of its population and economy. Key sections of the Structure Plan consider the pressures for further growth and change and the limits to further growth.

1.5.2 The overall strategy of the Structure Plan is to ensure that development is 'sustainable' in terms of the capacity of Berkshire to accommodate further growth and change. This means protecting and, where possible, enhancing the overall quality of Berkshire's environment, and within this framework seeking to meet its social and economic needs and aspirations.

1.5.3 The Structure Plan policies on the overall strategy and limiting the impacts of development are summarised below:

**OS1** The overall strategy of the Plan is to seek sustainable development and improvement to the quality of life in Berkshire.

**LD1** Account is to be taken of the extent to which development is sustainable in its location and form, helps to conserve natural resources and minimise the risk of pollution.

**LD2** The provision of appropriate recycling facilities for major development, particularly development frequently attracting a significant number of people.

**LD3** Development proposals will only be permitted where they do not give rise to unacceptable impact on the environment.

**LD4** To ensure that the environmental impact of any transport scheme is kept to the practical minimum by comprehensive planning.

**LD5** In considering proposals for development, the requirement of all users of transport will be taken into account, including the needs of the mobility handicapped. Development will not be permitted where it is likely to give rise to serious problems of access, parking, road safety or traffic generation. Major development should normally be located in areas well served by public transport.

**LD6** The Local Planning Authority will require to be satisfied that infrastructure, services and amenities made necessary by the development are provided or will be provided at the appropriate time so as to ensure the proper planning of the area. It may also require an acceptable balance of uses in a mixed development.

**LD7** Proposals for development will only be permitted where existing water resources are adequate or where they can be provided without adversely affecting existing water resources, water quality, amenity or nature conservation.

**LD8** Opportunities will be sought for securing environmental improvements and other benefits.

**EN1** To ensure that the character and quality of the environment in the towns, villages and other built up areas will be protected and enhanced.

**EN2** Development should not give rise to unacceptable levels of noise, smell, dust, fumes, light or noxious emissions affecting areas beyond the site boundary, or to unacceptable levels of air or water pollution. Uses sensitive to disturbance should not be located in areas already subject to unacceptable levels of these environmental nuisances.

- EN3** To reduce the risk of flooding.
- EN4** To protect the special architectural or historic interest of listed buildings and buildings in conservation areas.
- EN5** To protect and enhance the character and appearance of 'Areas of Special Character' including Conservation Areas.
- N6** To conserve the archaeological heritage.
- EN7** To protect the character and setting of Historic Parks and Gardens.
- EN8** To protect, enhance and where appropriate make accessible to the public, wildlife habitats or geological sites having special interest or value to the community. Reference is also made in this policy to the different categories of nature conservation designation and species protection.
- EN9** To conserve the nature conservation value of sites affected by development and to provide for replacement habitats or features where damage is unavoidable.
- EN10** To conserve and enhance the character and setting of rivers, the canal and other water courses.

## 1.6 BACKGROUND STUDIES AND STRATEGIES

**1.6.1** The Local Plan has been prepared alongside a number of studies, reports and strategies which provide information at both a Berkshire and West Berkshire level regarding environmental and social conditions. These provided a core body of knowledge, and are listed below:

**Newbury District Council Environmental Strategy 1993-1995** Issues considered: Development; Transportation; Energy; Air & water quality; Recycling.

**Newbury District Council State of the Environment Report 1994** Issues covered: Air; Radiation; Transport; Waste & recycling; Water; Wildlife.

**Berkshire County Council: The Berkshire Environment - A first State of the Environment Report**, January 1995. Issues covered: Land use changes; Energy use; Air quality & radiation; Noise; Water; Soil; Flora & fauna; Landscape and townscape.

**Berkshire County Council: Local Agenda 21 in Berkshire - The County Council's Environmental Strategy (Background Report)**, January 1996. Concerned with managing & improving the Authority's own environmental performance, integrating sustainable development aims into local policies & activities, awareness raising and education & consulting & involving the general public.

**Berkshire County Council Quality of Life in Berkshire. Consultation Draft, May 1995.** To provide an overview of social & economic conditions in the County, & to form a basis for monitoring the effects of planning policies.

**Berkshire County Council. The Berkshire Renewable Energy Strategy, October 1995.** Renewable energy guide & the future role of the County Council in providing advice & monitoring renewal energy schemes.

**Newbury District Council Ambient Air Quality Monitoring Study, December 1994.** 'Snap shot' study along the A34 corridor. Berkshire County Council Planning Guidelines for Environmental Noise, March 1995. All major types of

environmental noise are covered generally reflecting their degree of significance in Berkshire. The guidelines contain advice on design to avoid or mitigate noise problems.

**Newbury District Council Waste Recycling Plan, July 1992.** Waste inventory & collection systems. Plan for the development of waste recycling in Newbury District.

**Berkshire County Council Waste Management Plan and Waste Local Plan (Deposit version December 1994).** Waste Strategy plus subject local plan dealing with the site specific issues.

**Berkshire County Council Replacement Minerals Local Plan, adopted November 1995.** Minerals subject Local Plan (preferred extraction sites, restoration & after use).

**Berkshire County Council, Districts, the Community Council for Berkshire and Reading University - Berkshire Rural Community Strategy, October 1994.** Rural economy & social issues but set against concerns for maintaining the environmental quality & diversity of the countryside.

**Berkshire County Council, Replacement Minerals Local Plan for Berkshire Environmental Appraisal.** This addresses five main issues: The scope of the plan; Forecasts & assumptions underlying the plan; Policy impact analysis; Policy compatibility; Objectives of sustainable development for minerals planning.

**Waste Local Plan for Berkshire Environmental Appraisal, April 1995.** This follows the same basic environmental appraisal format as the Minerals Local Plan.

**Berkshire Structure Plan Environmental Appraisal, March 1995.** This deals with the need for environmental appraisal, characterising the environment, scoping the plan, policy impact analysis & monitoring.

**National Rivers Authority - River Kennet Catchment Management Plan, April 1994.** River Catchment issues and action plan. Overview of the catchment status & condition.

**National Rivers Authority Thames 21 - A planning perspective and a sustainable strategy for the Thames Region, September 1995.** Sustainability strategy regarding the water environment set against key planning & development issues.

**1.6.2** The above list is not exhaustive; some of the strategies have been superseded or revised and new ones developed since the plan was first drafted. Other strategies are referred to in the various topic sections of the Environment Chapter.

## **1.7 KEY AIMS OF THE LOCAL PLAN**

**1.7.1** The Local Plan has the following key aims:

- (i) in the context of Government planning advice contained in the PPGs and of the new Structure Plan, to formulate policies appropriate to the nature and character of West Berkshire;
- (ii) to conserve the natural and built environments of West Berkshire;
- (iii) to identify the location of the development required to meet the provisions of the Structure Plan;
- (iv) to support the principles of sustainable development and to effectively translate them into robust planning proposals and policies at a local level;
- (v) to provide a framework within which environmental improvements and conservation of both the natural and built environments may be pursued;
- (vi) to conserve resources and minimise the impacts of development;
- (vii) to ensure the adequate provision of infrastructure, services and amenities made necessary by the development and to seek related opportunities for securing environmental enhancements;

- (viii) to give appropriate weight to environmental, economic and social issues in developing the planning strategy of the Local Plan;
- (ix) to establish a basis for the preparation of development briefs and other more detailed planning guidance which the Council may prepare for particular sites or areas;
- (x) to bring planning issues before the public and to provide a degree of certainty for developers and the public as to where future development is likely to occur within the West Berkshire in the plan period;
- (xi) to set out in general policies appropriate criteria for judging the acceptability or otherwise of particular categories and types of development.

## 1.8 POLICY STRUCTURE

1.8.1 The policies in this chapter are grouped into four basic sections as set out below:

- The overall strategy for development
- A core development control policy and planning/community benefits
- Environmental nuisance and pollution control
- Renewable energy and energy efficient layouts

Taken together the policies contained in this chapter set out the general approach to development decisions. The Environment Chapter, by way of contrast, deals with related local topics of landscape, nature conservation, the water environment, agriculture, development in the countryside, the urban environment and conservation and the historic environment.

## 1.9 THE OVERALL STRATEGY

1.9.1 The main settlements of West Berkshire with some 75% its population are concentrated in the Kennet Valley at strategic points along the A4 and on the western side of Reading.

1.9.2 Section 2.3 of this Plan sets out the basis by which the Council will seek to limit the impact of development. This, together with the sustainable approach to development, now enshrined in PPG advice, and at the core of the Structure Plan, suggests that new development should be concentrated close to these existing centres of population and with ready access to services and facilities including public transport routes.

1.9.3 In the particular context of West Berkshire it is also necessary to provide for some development in the rural area to sustain balanced rural communities. The overall strategy therefore allows for a limited, but locally significant, proportion of development to take place in the rural area. Such development will be sensitively related to the existing settlement pattern of the District and have regard to policies for the protection of the countryside set out in PPG3, PPG7 and the Structure Plan.

**POLICY OVS.1** The Council will follow the existing settlement pattern and hierarchy found within the district area in seeking sustainable locations for development which minimise the need to travel and with appropriate access to public transport services and other community facilities. In this context the Council would prefer to see the redevelopment of brownfield sites (land previously developed) than the use of 'greenfield' (undeveloped) land.

1.9.4 The reference in the above policy to 'appropriate access to public transport' means either areas serviced by or capable of being served by public transport provision.

## 1.10 CORE POLICY AND PLANNING BENEFITS

### CORE POLICY

**1.10.1** The Council expects new development to improve the quality of the environment. Policy OVS.2 will be applied to all development, irrespective of the proposed use. This policy is described as a 'core' policy because it is central to the purpose of this Local Plan. Identification as a core policy avoids repetition in the different chapters of the Plan. This core policy relates back in part to NDLP policies B.ENV.1 and B.ENV.2 which sought a high standard of design and landscape treatment from new development. Landscape treatment should be an integral part of the design process and including screening, earth works and other hard landscape provision where appropriate i.e. beyond just planting measures.

**POLICY OVS.2** The Council will require, where appropriate, all development proposals which accord with other policies of this Plan, to:

- (a) show a high standard of design including landscape treatment which respects the character and appearance of the area; and
- (b) retain and protect important landscape and nature conservation features and provide for further landscape treatment where relevant to the nature of the safeguarding local amenity; and
- (c) retain important open space areas of recreational and /or amenity value within or on the edge of settlements; and
- (d) preserve or enhance the character and setting of listed buildings and conservation areas; and
- (e) preserve the site and setting of Scheduled Ancient Monuments or sites of especial local archaeological significance; and
- (f) use materials of a quality appropriate to the nature of the development, the site and its surroundings; and
- (g) comply with highway standards in respect of access, parking, pedestrian movement including where appropriate links to adjoining land; and
- (h) safeguard public rights of way and the amenities of adjoining land uses and occupiers, including where relevant the provision of alternative rights of way of equal or enhanced quality; and
- (i) provide buildings and spaces with suitable access arrangements and facilities for use by people with disabilities.

### PLANNING AND COMMUNITY BENEFITS

**1.10.2** Policy LD8 of the Structure Plan seeks to secure benefits to the wider community from development. This policy states: 'In considering proposals for development, opportunities will be sought for securing environmental improvements and other benefits both on site and in the surrounding area'. The other relevant Structure Plan policy is LD6 which requires the provision of infrastructure, services and amenities made necessary by the development. New development cannot be obliged to contribute to 'planning gain' in the same way as it does to those requirements which conform to policy LD6.

**1.10.2a** Government advice on planning obligations is contained in Circular 1/97. Planning obligations should only be sought where they are necessary to the grant of planning permission, relevant to planning and directly related to the proposed development. A further test is whether the extent of what is required is fair and reasonably related in scale and kind to the proposed development.

**1.10.2b** It is Council policy to encourage the provision, where appropriate, of public art works as part of schemes of development. In this respect particular regard will be paid to the contribution made by such works to the appearance of the scheme and the amenities of the area. Projects will be considered on a site by site basis and the 'Percentage for Art scheme' operated on a voluntary basis.

**POLICY OVS.3** The Council will require to be satisfied that the infrastructure, services and amenities made necessary by the development are provided or will be provided at the appropriate time so as to ensure the proper planning of the area. In addition, when considering proposals for development, opportunities will also be sought for securing environmental improvements and community benefits. Such provision will relate to those works necessary to the grant of planning permission, and which are relevant, reasonable and directly related and fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the proposed development, and may for example include:

- (a) affordable housing; and/or
- (b) landscaping, including major structural landscaping on sensitive or exposed sites; and/or
- (c) improved access for pedestrians, cyclist and people with disabilities; and/or
- (d) public transport facilities and services, public car parking, provision for services vehicles or other highway improvements; and/or
- (e) green travel plans where major developments are proposed; and/or,
- (f) the implementation of measures enabling the use of sustainable transport modes, such as walking, cycling and public transport; and/or,
- (g) space and facilities for recreation, community and medical facilities; and/or
- (h) provision of re-cycling facilities; and/or
- (i) the repair of listed buildings and the preservation/enhancement of Conservation Areas and sites of archaeological interest; and/or
- (j) the management of land and water areas for nature conservation purposes; and/or
- (k) public art in appropriate places.

**1.10.3a** Due to local circumstances it may be necessary in some cases to view individual applications collectively when assessing off [or on] site infrastructure requirements and other planning obligations (such as affordable housing). The provision made in respect of each particular development will be limited to what is fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the cumulative impact arising from the relevant scheme before the Council.

**1.10.3b** Further guidance will be given on these issues in supplementary planning guidance. Reference should also be made to the Local Transport Plan.

## **1.10.4 PROVISION OF INFRASTRUCTURE/UTILITIES**

**POLICY OVS.3A** – Not Saved; Refer to Appendix 13.

## **1.11 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT (EIA)**

**POLICY OVS.4** – Not Saved; Refer to Appendix 13.

## **1.12 ENVIRONMENTAL NUISANCE AND POLLUTION CONTROL**

**1.12.1** One of the key objectives of Structure Plan Policy OS1 in seeking sustainable development is to minimise pollution. This approach is embodied in the Structure Plan chapter on limiting the impact of development. Structure Plan policy LD1 and paragraph 4.5(iv) refers to minimising the harm to human health and to the environment from noise, vibration, effluent, fumes and other pollution including gas rising from land fill sites. The Council needs to be satisfied that proposals for development will not have significant adverse environmental impacts. Structure Plan policy LD3 states: development proposals will only be permitted where they do not give rise to an unacceptable impact on the environment, including serious harm to the character or appearance of an area, or the amenities of neighbouring land uses.

1.12.2 Structure Plan policy EN2 seeks protection from environmental nuisance. Development should not give rise to unacceptable levels of noise, smell, dust, fumes, light or noxious emissions affecting areas beyond the site boundary, or to unacceptable levels of air or water pollution. In addition, uses sensitive to disturbance such as new houses, schools or hospitals should not be located in areas already subject to unacceptable levels of environmental nuisance. In areas affected by high noise levels, developments should be designed to minimise the nuisance which may be caused to future occupiers.

1.12.3 The Structure Plan indicates that unacceptable levels of environmental nuisance will be defined through the local plan process and by building upon studies such as the former County Council's State of the Environment Report.

1.12.4 PPG23 Planning and Pollution Control issued in July 1994, provides advice on the relationship between planning and pollution control legislation. In this respect the planning system is defined as having two distinct roles:

- (i) to determine the location of development which may give rise to pollution, and
- (ii) controlling development in close proximity to pollution sources. The control of pollution itself is not a function of the planning system. This is the responsibility of the various pollution control agencies under the 1990 Environmental Pollution Act.

1.12.5 PPG24 Planning and Noise issued in September 1994 gives guidance on the use of planning powers to minimise the adverse impact of noise. Noise can have a significant effect on the environment and quality of life enjoyed by individuals and communities. The planning system should ensure that, wherever practicable, noise sensitive developments are separated from major sources of noise. Housing, hospitals and schools should generally be regarded as noise sensitive development but others may be included depending on local circumstances and priorities. Special consideration is required where noisy development is proposed in or near Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) or which would affect the quiet enjoyment of AONBs.

1.12.6 The Berkshire First State of the Environment Report of January 1995 contains base line county wide information on various aspects of pollution including noise. The former Newbury District's State of the Environment Report of 1994 deals with a similar range of issues at a District level including water quality, the environmental effects of transport and air pollution levels.

1.12.7 The potential risk of pollution or the possibility that nuisance might be caused as a result of development will be important concerns to the Council when assessing the environmental suitability of proposals. In particular, the Council will seek to ensure that appropriate measures are taken in developments to minimise environmental impacts.

1.12.8 In terms of the Local Plan it is considered appropriate to introduce local plan policies that deal with the Council's concerns regarding:

- unacceptable levels of environmental nuisance
- noise sensitive developments
- hazardous substances.

1.12.9 A policy to define unacceptable levels of environmental nuisance can only be considered in general terms. It is impossible to define unacceptable levels of nuisance in all circumstances, given different types of development, locations and land use and their relative sensitivity.

**POLICY OVS.5** The Council will only permit development proposals where they do not give rise to an unacceptable pollution of the environment. In order to minimise the adverse impact on the environment or loss of amenity proposals should have regard to:

- (a) the need to ensure the adequate storage and disposal of waste materials; and
- (b) the installation of equipment to minimise the harmful effects of emissions; and
- (c) the hours, days or seasons of operations; and
- (d) locating potential nuisance or pollution activities onto the least sensitive parts of the site or where the impacts can be best contained by physical or other appropriate measures.

1.12.10 The Council will consult closely with the various pollution control agencies and environmental health services when considering proposals for potentially polluting developments, and other development near to a source of pollution.

## NOISE POLLUTION

1.12.11 Noise can be a major 'nuisance'. Certain types of development are particularly sensitive to noise, for example housing, schools and hospitals. The background levels of noise in residential areas and the countryside are often low. The introduction of noisy activities into such areas can therefore be especially disruptive. The Council will pay particular attention to any likely increase in 'ambient' noise levels when considering planning applications. PPG24 gives advice on how the planning system can be used to reduce the impact of noise on people. It also introduces the concept of 'noise exposure categories' to assist in the appraisal of noise sensitive developments near to existing noise sources.

**Policy OVS.6** The Council will require appropriate measures to be taken in the location, design, layout and operation of development proposals in order to minimise any adverse impact as a result of noise generated. Special consideration is required where noisy development is proposed in or near Sites of Special Scientific Interest or which would harm the quiet enjoyment of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Proposals for noise sensitive developments should have regard to the following:

- (a) existing sources of noise e.g. from roads, railways and other forms of transport, industrial and commercial developments, sporting, recreation and leisure facilities; and
- (b) the need for appropriate sound insulation measures; and
- (c) the noise exposure levels outlined in Annex 1 of PPG24. In the context of this policy noise sensitive uses are housing, schools and hospitals.

## HAZARDOUS SUBSTANCES

1.12.12 Local planning authorities have been able to exercise a degree of control over the presence of hazardous substances through the development control system, where such substances have been directly associated with a proposed development. There are situations, however, in which hazardous substances may be introduced into a site, or used differently within it, without there being any associated development requiring planning permission. Circular 11/92(4) fills the gap by enabling specific control to be exercised over the presence of hazardous substances whether or not associated development is involved. The Health and Safety Executive will need to be consulted on every application for 'hazardous substances consent'.

1.12.13 Annex B (paragraph B7) of Circular 11/92 states that local planning authorities should formulate, as appropriate, policies and proposals for the development and use of land at or near to hazardous installations and for the siting of future hazardous developments.

**Policy OVS.7** The Council will not permit development which on advice from the Health and Safety Executive would cause unacceptable risk or harm to personal safety due to the presence of hazardous substances on the site or other land in the vicinity.



**Policy OVS.8 Hazardous Substances Consent will not be granted where on advice from the Health and Safety Executive the risk arising to persons in the vicinity from the presence of a hazardous substances would be unacceptable.**

1.12.14 The Council has accepted as valid a number of applications for deemed consent under the Hazardous Substance Regulations, these are listed in Appendix 11.

## 1.13 RENEWABLE ENERGY AND ENERGY EFFICIENCY

### RENEWABLE ENERGY

1.13.1 Renewable energy is the term used to cover those continuous energy flows that occur naturally and repeatedly in the environment - from the sun, the wind and oceans, and from plants and the flow of water. It also refers to energy available in waste (Department of Trade and Industry definition).

1.13.2 Government policy is to stimulate the development of new renewable energy sources, where ever they have the prospect of being economically attractive and environmentally acceptable, in order to contribute to:

- diverse, secure and sustainable energy sources;
- a reduction in the emission of pollutants;
- the encouragement of competitive renewable industries.

1.13.3 In February 1993, the Government published PPG22 on Renewable Energy. This guidance note provides advice to local planning authorities on including renewable energy policies in their plans and sets out the Government's commitment towards encouraging renewable energy supplies. It is acknowledged that the development of renewable energy schemes will also have some local environmental effects. However, the guidance goes on to state that in determining the suitability of sites it will always be important that a particular proposal should cause minimum harm to the countryside.

1.13.4 The former County Council prepared The Berkshire Renewable Energy Strategy (October 1995) which was presented in two parts:

- (i) a renewable energy guide and
- (ii) encouragement of renewable energy schemes.

The purpose of the Strategy was to provide a positive framework for appropriate renewable energy projects within the County.

1.13.5 The Council has accepted and endorsed the general approach to renewable energy projects as set out in the Strategy, which seeks to reconcile global environmental issues with local environmental concerns. Policy RE1 of the Structure Plan indicates that development proposals which attempt to harness renewable energy sources will generally be given favourable consideration provided there is no overriding adverse environmental impact.

1.13.6 It is also stated in the Strategy that proposals which help to conserve energy by means of layout, design, orientation and landscaping of buildings will generally be encouraged, subject to detailed policies contained in local plans. This approach is set out in policy LD1 of the Structure Plan where renewable energy and energy conservation are confirmed as one of the cornerstones of sustainable development.

1.13.7 The Strategy also confirms the need to monitor the development and operation of renewable energy schemes; to provide information and assist local authorities to identify suitable locations for such provision. The viability of renewable energy schemes is supported by NFFO (Non Fossil Fuel Obligation) which is in the form of a grant subsidy on a project basis. In the longer term there is always the possibility that such renewable energy

schemes may not remain viable. In these circumstances the Council will normally impose conditions and seek agreement that should the renewable energy scheme cease operations then related buildings and structures should be removed and the site restored.

**Policy OVS.9** The Council will permit proposals for renewable energy schemes in accordance with Policy OVS.2 and where the following criteria, if appropriate, are satisfied:

- (a) the scheme does not seriously harm or impact upon the special landscape qualities of West Berkshire or intrude into open countryside; and
- (b) is not detrimental to designated areas or sites of nature conservation interest; and
- (c) there are appropriate safeguards to ensure no environmental nuisance or pollution from the scheme; and
- (d) will not give rise to serious problems of access, road safety or traffic congestion damaging to the nature of rural areas; and
- (e) will not harm the use or enjoyment of public footpaths and other rights of way; and
- (f) there is no material loss of amenity for local residents or other occupiers in the locality.

**1.13.9** The Council will, where appropriate, consult experts in the relevant renewable energy fields. A register will be maintained of such schemes within West Berkshire. The Council will undertake appropriate consultation on proposals for renewable energy schemes capable of generating electricity for the national grid.

## ENERGY EFFICIENCY

**1.13.10** PPG12 identifies the conservation of energy as a key issue for development plans. In seeking to achieve the aims of sustainable development expressed in Structure Plan Policy LD1, development will be sought which helps to conserve energy by means of layout, design, orientation and the landscaping of buildings. In this respect the Council will take a positive view of development proposals which provide for a high standard of energy efficiency. The minimum standard for insulating buildings is set out in the Building Regulations, though the Council would seek to encourage and negotiate improved standards of energy efficiency where this is possible.

**Policy OVS.10** The Council will seek provision to be made in proposals for new development for appropriate design principles which facilitate energy efficiency, these include:

- (a) the appropriate siting, form, orientation and layout of buildings in order to maximise the benefits of positive solar (or natural) heating, lighting and ventilation; and
- (b) the use of soft landscaping including tree planting, to increase summer shading and reduce heat loss in winter; and
- (c) the use where appropriate of energy efficient technology for heating, power and lighting.

**1.13.11** Implementation will be through the process of development control. A householders guide to energy conservation was prepared and widely circulated in West Berkshire.

## 1.14 PLANNING TO REDUCE THE OPPORTUNITY FOR CRIME

**1.14.1** The design of the built environment should aim to reduce the opportunity for crime. A reduction in the fear of crime is an important priority of the Council. The Council also has an obligation to promote crime prevention through the control of the built environment. Crime prevention is a material consideration which can be taken into account when planning applications are considered. Sound security principles should accompany any new development, and it is also important that the design of a solution to one problem does not create another problem elsewhere.

**1.14.2** The Police Architectural Liaison Manual and the Council's Supplementary Planning Guidance on this topic provide useful advice on layout and design. The principles for creating safe environments are:

- (a) surveillance, the capacity of physical design to enable residents to view the public space;
- (b) image, the capacity of design to improve building image and avoid stigma;
- (c) territoriality, the capacity of the physical environment to create a feeling of neighbourhood and encourage residents to exercise surveillance over the area of defensible space;
- (d) environment, the influence of a neighbourhood's geographical juxtaposition with safe or unsafe areas.

**POLICY OVS.11** All development schemes within West Berkshire should be designed so as to reduce the potential for criminal activity and anti-social behaviour. In this regard, all new development should:

- (a) ensure that development is to a high standard of design, thus reconciling the visual quality of development with the need for crime prevention; and
- (b) be designed to maximise natural surveillance of public spaces from buildings, pedestrians and motorists; and
- (c) be designed to include a limited number of access points, provide secure boundaries around private and public spaces, and provide adequate lighting at meeting places and pedestrian walkways; and
- (d) be designed to encourage social contact and to support the principles of neighbourhood watch.

## **CHAPTER TWO: THE ENVIRONMENT**

### **Introduction and Background**

## **CHAPTER TWO: THE ENVIRONMENT**

### **2.1 INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND**

2.1.1 A number of topic areas have been generally linked under the 'umbrella' heading of the Environment. A brief synopsis of these topic headings is given below:

(A) Landscape Section: conserving and enhancing the Wider Countryside, the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, along with gaps between settlements;

(B) Nature Conservation Section: conservation management and development criteria;

(C) Water Environment Section: conservation of waterways and river corridors.

(D) Agriculture Section: farm diversification and agricultural development.

(E) Development in the Countryside: development categories; the reuse and adaptation of rural buildings; the redevelopment of existing buildings in the countryside; residential curtilage extensions; replacement dwellings and extensions; institutional and school sites and accommodation for horses.

(F) Urban Environment Section: protection and enhancement of important open space areas within defined settlements.

(G) Conservation and the Historic Environment Section: development in conservation areas and the management of Scheduled Ancient Monuments and areas of archaeological significance.

2.1.2 The key aims which underlie the Environment Chapter and set the tone of the Local Plan Review are outlined and briefly discussed as follows:

- (i) Sustainable development;
- (ii) Limiting the impacts of development;
- (iii) Conserving non-renewable resources and promoting energy efficiency; and
- (iv) Reducing emissions/pollution

These aims are not mutually exclusive but are linked together in the process of decision making which takes environmental issues comprehensively and consistently into account. These aims are supported by the need for environmental appraisal and assessment.

### **2.2 SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

2.2.1 Structure Plan policy OS1 seeks sustainable levels, locations and forms of new development. Within the overall context of respecting environmental and other constraints, priority will be given to local economic and social needs.

### **2.3 LIMITING THE IMPACT OF DEVELOPMENT**

2.3.1 Structure Plan policy LD1 is concerned with limiting the impact of development. The County Council stated that the Local Plan should explain how it will seek to implement this policy and develop the principles of sustainable development.

**2.3.2** In seeking to achieve the aims expressed in policy LD1 development will be sought which accords with the following principles of making the best use of urban land and protecting the open countryside; helping to conserve energy and water; supporting the use of renewable energy; minimising pollution; minimising waste generation; reducing the need for travel and increasing opportunities for less energy intensive forms of transport and avoiding irreversible damage to landscape, natural habitat or features of aesthetic, historic or scientific interest. Development proposals must seek to minimise environmental impacts. The Local Plan policies which have a direct relationship to the aims of Structure Plan policy LD1 are set out below:

Objective	Local Plan policies
<p><b>1. The best use of urban land, especially where vacant or derelict, and protecting the open countryside.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Preference for 'brownfield' development sites.</li> <li>•Defined settlements.</li> <li>•Limited forms of acceptable development in the countryside.</li> <li>•Use of space above shops and offices.</li> </ul>
<p><b>2. Energy and water conservation.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Energy efficient layouts.</li> <li>• Safeguarding water resources.</li> </ul>
<p><b>3. Supporting the use of renewable materials.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Using materials that conserve energy and are themselves energy efficient in their manufacture.</li> <li>•Provision of recycling facilities.</li> </ul>
<p><b>4. Minimising pollution.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Hazardous substances.</li> <li>•Environmental nuisance.</li> <li>•Noise sensitive development.</li> <li>•Renewable energy.</li> </ul>
<p><b>5. Minimising waste generation.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Waste Local Plan and Management.</li> <li>•Provision of recycling facilities.</li> </ul>
<p><b>6. Minimising the need to travel and increasing opportunities to offer less energy intensive forms of transport.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sustainable locations for development.</li> <li>• Enhancement of transportation facilities and network.</li> <li>• Enhancement of town and village centres.</li> <li>• Provision for cyclists.</li> </ul>
<p><b>7. Avoiding irreversible damage to the landscape, natural habitats or features of aesthetic, historic or scientific interest.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.</li> <li>• Gaps/setting of settlements.</li> <li>• Landscape enhancement.</li> <li>• Nature conservation protection and management.</li> <li>• Newbury Battlefields.</li> <li>• Protection of the built environment.</li> <li>• Safeguarding historic settings.</li> <li>• Buildings of townscape value.</li> <li>• Important open spaces within settlements.</li> <li>• Archaeology/schedule ancient monuments.</li> </ul>

**2.3.3** In general and having regard to the nature and character of West Berkshire, the Local Plan has a robust policy structure in relation to Structure Plan policy LD1 and the key objectives of sustainable development.

## **2.4 RESOURCES AND ENERGY CONSERVATION**

**2.4.1** Both Structure Plan policy OS1 and LD1 refer to the need to conserve natural resources including land, water and fossil fuels. In this context the Local Plan Review has policies regarding energy efficient layouts and using renewable energy sources. In the latter regard, the County Council prepared a Renewable Energy Strategy (October 1995) and Structure Plan policy RE1 indicates that renewable energy schemes will generally be given favourable consideration provided there are no overriding adverse environmental impacts. The Local Plan Review, in support of the Structure Plan position, has a policy setting out appropriate criteria for determining acceptable renewable energy schemes.

## **2.5 REDUCING EMISSIONS/POLLUTION**

**2.5.1** In this respect the two key factors are (i) minimising harm to human health from pollution including emissions (ii) locating land uses so as to minimise the need to travel, particularly by private cars, and increasing the opportunities for public transport. Car emissions are the largest single source of environmental pollution in West Berkshire. In considering development options the Council will give particular priority to reducing the need to travel and for the selected locations to be capable of being served by public transport. With regard to pollution emissions the Council will seek to minimise the effects by appropriate development control measures.

## **2.6 CONCLUSION**

**2.6.1** The central objective in a major development decision is to minimise the impacts of these different factors in order to secure a scheme which is generally sustainable and which gives due weight to maintaining or enhancing the local environment when considered against other social and economic needs.

## **CHAPTER TWO: THE ENVIRONMENT**

### **Section A: Landscape**

**ENV.1** *The Wider Countryside*

**ENV.2** *The Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty - **NOT SAVED***

**ENV.3** *Areas of Special Landscape Importance – **NOT SAVED***

**ENV.4** *Gaps between Settlements*

**ENV.5** *Setting of Settlements – **NOT SAVED***

**ENV.6** *The Enhancement of Degraded Landscapes/ Reducing Intrusive Development – **NOT SAVED***

**ENV.7** *Central Berkshire Forest – **NOT SAVED***



## **SECTION A: THE LANDSCAPE**

### **2.7 INTRODUCTION**

2.7.1 The landscape of West Berkshire is predominantly rural in character and the 1993 District-wide Landscape Assessment has confirmed its quality, complexity and great diversity. Physical and human influences are important in the development of landscapes and their perception. Nearly 74% of the West Berkshire area lies within the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

2.7.2 It is important that development does not contribute to detrimental change in the landscape. There are opportunities within the development process and the allocation of sites to conserve and enhance landscape character. The overall aim is to maintain or enrich the characteristic features which give each landscape its identity.

2.7.3 The guiding principle is that development should benefit the rural economy and maintain or enhance the environment. New development should be sensitively related to existing settlement patterns, and to historic, wildlife and landscape resources of the area.

2.7.4 All Local Plans are required to include policies in respect of the conservation of the natural beauty and amenity of land (PPG7). Policies and development decisions affecting the AONB should favour conservation of the natural beauty of the landscape. Landscape conservation linked to a 'sense of place' and a 'quality environment' is receiving increasing public attention and support. Solitude and tranquillity in rural areas can be especially important to the enjoyment of the special landscape qualities of the area. The introduction of noisy activities into quiet areas of the countryside can be intrusive and damaging to their 'special sense of place'. In this situation it is also appropriate to cross refer to paragraph 1.12.11 and policy OVS. 6 of the Local Plan.

2.7.5 The Rural White Paper is concerned with conserving the character of the countryside. In this context it is important to ensure that the distinctive character of rural landscapes and buildings is maintained. Environmental quality across the countryside should also be enhanced. Specific mention is made of the 'Countryside Character Programme' and the 'Natural Areas Initiative'. These are linked programmes of the Countryside Commission (now the Countryside Agency) and English Nature which will, for the first time, provide a comprehensive and consistent analysis of the character of the English countryside. This will help to guide all future efforts to conserve and enhance the countryside. At a local level, policies should seek to define and maintain the value which people place on the character of rural areas.

### **2.8 STRUCTURE PLAN POLICIES**

2.8.1 The Structure Plan has a series of policies concerned with the protection and enhancement of landscapes, these are briefly set out below:

**C5:** that development should not visually intrude into the adjoining countryside or prejudice the maintenance of the rural character of adjacent land.

**C6:** to conserve and protect the setting and separate identity of settlements. The boundaries of 'green edges and gaps' to be defined in Local Plans.

**C7:** development will only be permitted which will conserve or enhance the natural beauty of the AONB area.

**C8:** Areas of Special Landscape Importance (ASLIs). These will be delineated and designated through the Local Plans.

C9: the protection and enhancement of landscape and features important to its character and history.

C12: the Structure Plan's proposed 'Berkshire Forest' which will extend into the eastern part of West Berkshire i.e. on to the plateau area west of Mortimer. This will take the form of a loose scattering of woodland planting areas with public access and is the subject of a 'millennium fund bid'.

## 2.9 BACKGROUND STUDIES AND STRATEGIES

2.9.1 In October 1993 the results of a District-wide Landscape Assessment were published (technical and summary reports). This study provides a baseline of information and an overview of the landscape character and qualities of West Berkshire, which is predominantly rural in nature.

2.9.2 The former County Council also prepared the Berkshire Landscape Strategy (May 1995) the key purpose of which is to provide a framework for development and implementing landscape conservation and enhancement measures. Caring for the landscape is seen as an important element of a sustainable approach to future development.

2.9.3 The National Rivers Authority (NRA) in its River Kennet Catchment Management Plan for April 1994, identifies the particular value and sensitivity of the river waterway landscapes within the catchment area. It also highlights the need to monitor landscape change in order to aid overall management. In the accompanying 'action plan' a high priority is attached to the need for a strategic landscape assessment of the River Kennet and its catchment.

2.9.4 These background studies and strategies have increased information, understanding and consensus regarding the landscape diversity and qualities found within West Berkshire District. The landscape policies which follow have been aided in their preparation by this work.

## 2.10 KEY LANDSCAPE AIMS

2.10.1 The key landscape aims of the Local Plan Review are as follows:

- (i) to sustain, conserve and enhance the landscape diversity, character and quality of West Berkshire's countryside;
- (ii) to protect and enhance the natural beauty and special landscape qualities of the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, a substantial part of which lies within the West Berkshire area;
- (iii) to protect important landscape, nature conservation and heritage features from damage due to the adverse effects of development and to encourage their proper management where appropriate;
- (iv) to provide for development and change that would benefit the rural economy while protecting and enhancing the landscape and overall environment of the area.

## 2.11 THE WIDER COUNTRYSIDE

2.11.1 From the Rural White Paper (1995) the Government's priority is to enhance the wider countryside, conserve its natural assets and maintain its diversity of character. In this regard the distinctive elements of local character will become of increasing importance.

2.11.2 Character is in many respects a more meaningful concept than quality. It avoids devaluing areas not designated. An area's character is also more familiar to, and undoubtedly valued by, its inhabitants and users.

2.11.3 The Local Plan policies highlight the importance of maintaining the diversity of character across the countryside as a whole. The 1993 District-wide Landscape Assessment identifies twenty-one different landscape character areas (see Appendix 7). It is important that the character and diversity of these different areas is maintained and enhanced.

**POLICY ENV.1** The Council in considering proposals for development will seek to conserve and enhance the special features and diversity of the different 'landscape character areas' found within West Berkshire.

## 2.12 THE AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY (AONB)

**POLICY ENV.2 – Not Saved; Refer to Appendix 13.**

2.12.1 The North Wessex Downs AONB covers nearly 74% of West Berkshire's area and extends into the adjoining Counties of Hampshire, Wiltshire and Oxfordshire. The area is of national landscape importance, designated to conserve the natural beauty of the area, including flora, fauna, geological and landscape features. The AONB was designated in 1971 and the Countryside Commission (now the Countryside Agency) has no current plans to review the boundaries. The Council will balance the needs of rural communities and the rural economy against the major issue of conserving and enhancing the local character and distinctiveness of the AONB landscape.

2.12.2 The primary purpose of AONB designation is to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the area. In this context, particular regard needs to be paid to promoting sustainable forms of social and economic development that in themselves conserve and enhance the environment. Planning control policies need to promote the conservation of those features that contribute to the special character of the AONB. Major development should generally be regarded as inconsistent with the aims of AONB designation. A revision to PPG7 (June 2000) advises that such proposals will need to demonstrate that they are in the public interest before being allowed to proceed. Small scale development, where essential to meet local community needs and provided for in development plans, is normally acceptable in AONB areas. Such development should be within or immediately adjacent to, existing towns and villages, and should be in sympathy with the architecture and landscape character of the area. In the implementation of this policy the Council will have regard to the continuing locational and operational needs of agriculture.

2.12.3 The North Wessex Downs AONB within West Berkshire has a complex and diverse character. The district landscape appraisal has identified the different landscape character areas. The landscape character areas within the AONB are described in greater detail in the District-wide Landscape Assessment.

- Chalk Upland
- Chalk Dipslopes and Lowland and Chalk with Tertiary or Gravel Deposits
- Western Wooded Chalkland
- Lambourn Valley
- Pang Valley
- Kennet Valley
- Thames Valley
- Wooded Lowland Farming
- Gravel Plateau Woodlands with Pastures and Heaths
- Plateau-edge Transitional Matrix
- London Clay with Gravel Ridges
- Small scale Wooded Valley Farmland
- Large scale Valley Farmland
- Parkland

## 2.13 AREAS OF SPECIAL LANDSCAPE IMPORTANCE (ASLIs)

POLICY ENV.3 – Not Saved; Refer to Appendix 13.

## 2.14 GAPS BETWEEN SETTLEMENTS AND LAND IMPORTANT TO THE SETTING OF SETTLEMENTS

2.14.1 The Structure Plan is concerned to ensure that development should not intrude into the countryside and to conserve and protect the setting and separate identity of settlements and communities.

2.14.2 The definition of settlement boundaries under policy C2 of the Structure Plan and policy HSG.1 of the Local Plan, generally provides for sufficient protection of the character and setting of settlements and of the countryside outside of settlements where development is to be strictly controlled. Policy C6 of the Structure Plan states that the setting and separate identity of settlements and communities will be conserved and protected. Important open areas in this regard are identified in the Local Plan under the following policies. In implementing this policy the Council will have regard to the locational and operational needs of agriculture, while ensuring minimum harm to the visual character and open nature of the gap or setting area.

### GAPS BETWEEN SETTLEMENTS

POLICY ENV.4 The Council will not permit development which would detract from the open, or rural character of areas of land identified on the Proposals Maps essential to the maintenance of a clear physical and visual separation between distinct settlements. The locations to which this policy will be applied are:

- (a) land between Purley and Pangbourne;
- (b) land between Tidmarsh and Pangbourne;
- (c) land between Theale and Tilehurst/Calcot;
- (d) land between Thatcham and Cold Ash/Upper Bucklebury;
- (e) land between Newbury and Thatcham;
- (f) land between Newbury and Cold Ash;
- (g) land between Newbury and Donnington;
- (h) land between Newbury and Enborne Row/Wash Water;
- (i) land between Newbury and Greenham.

### 2.14.3 SETTING OF SETTLEMENTS

POLICY ENV.5 – Not Saved; Refer to Appendix 13.

## **2.15 THE ENHANCEMENT OF DEGRADED LANDSCAPES OR REDUCING INTRUSIVE DEVELOPMENT**

POLICY ENV.6 – Not Saved; Refer to Appendix 13.

## **2.16 CENTRAL BERKSHIRE FOREST**

POLICY ENV.7 – Not Saved; Refer to Appendix 13.

## **CHAPTER TWO: THE ENVIRONMENT**

### **Section B: Nature Conservation**

**ENV.8** *Active Nature Conservation Measures*

**ENV.9** *The Impact of Development Proposals affecting Nature Conservation Sites*

**ENV.9A** *Protected Wildlife Species – **NOT SAVED***

## **SECTION B: NATURE CONSERVATION**

### **2.17 INTRODUCTION**

**2.17.1** The conservation of wildlife for the present and for future generations is an integral component of the concept of sustainability. Attractive environments, where attention is given to nature conservation, are essential to social and economic well being. The key to the conservation of wildlife is the protection of the habitat on which it depends.

**2.17.2** The Government looks to local authorities to keep themselves informed on the state of the natural environment locally, and to take account of nature conservation interests whenever relevant to local decisions.

**2.17.3** PPG 9 (Nature Conservation - October 1994) gives guidance on how policies for the conservation of the natural heritage are to be reflected in land use planning. It embodies the Government's commitment to sustainable development and conserving the diversity of wildlife.

**2.17.4** This PPG also deals with the role of English Nature and the designation of sites important for nature conservation purposes. Sites of local nature conservation importance are designated by local authorities. In the case of Berkshire these are 'Wildlife Heritage Sites'. Local designations are only applied to sites of substantive nature conservation value with care taken to avoid unnecessary constraints on development. West Berkshire District currently has the following broad range of nature conservation designations within its area:

*51 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) totalling over 1150 hectares including SSSI status for the river channels of the Kennet and Lambourn (Appendix 4).*

*503 Wildlife Heritage Sites covering some 6473 hectares with the following broad habit types: ancient woodland, plantation woodlands, unimproved grassland, chalk grassland, wetland, heathland and bird sites.*

*2 Local Nature Reserves at Thatcham Reed Beds and Hose Hill Lake Burghfield. Local Nature Reserves will be considered for other sites where appropriate in consultation with landowners, nature conservation and amenity bodies.*

*13 Non Statutory Nature Reserve sites operated by BBOWT.*

*RIGs (Regionally Important Geological/Geomorphological sites) which are still to be designated by English Nature (a few of the SSSI sites have been identified for their geological value). They will form a network of sites representing the diversity of geological and landform features which may be suitable for general interest, teaching and research purposes.*

*SACs (Special Areas of Conservation) this designation relates to the EU Habitat Directive 92/43 and the proposed Natura 2000 network of protected sites. The River Lambourn, together with certain areas in the floodplain of the Rivers Kennet and Lambourn, together with Boxford Water Meadow and part of Thatcham Reed Beds have proposed SAC status.*

**2.17.5** In terms of PPG 9, Local Plans need to identify relevant nature conservation interests, ensure protection and enhancement of these interests, offer reasonable certainty about the weight that will be given to nature conservation interests in reaching planning decisions, take account of locally prepared nature conservation strategies and indicate the general criteria to be applied to development affecting nature conservation sites.

**2.17.6** Local authorities need to take account of nature conservation considerations in assessing sites for development. The key importance of SACs and SSSIs, designated or proposed, means that development proposals in or likely to affect these special areas must be subject to special scrutiny and consultation with English Nature. Appendix A of PPG 9 lists the various categories of nature conservation designation and their relative importance.

**2.17.7** The Rural White Paper expresses the Government's commitment to conserving and managing the natural assets of the countryside and avoiding irreversible damage wherever possible. There is also a need to reverse the decline in wildlife and to sustain the wealth of flora and fauna across the countryside. In this context there is increasing public awareness and involvement in conserving biodiversity. The *Biodiversity UK Steering Group Report (1995)* attaches particular importance to the preparation and implementation of 'local biodiversity' action plans. The Berkshire Nature Conservation Forum will be promoting and developing this particular initiative and others when carrying forward the Berkshire Nature Conservation Strategy and subsequent framework for Biodiversity Action in Berkshire (1999).

## **2.18 STRUCTURE PLAN POLICIES**

**2.18.1** The Structure Plan has two policies concerned with the protection and enhancement of nature conservation sites, summarised as:

**EN8:** wildlife habitats or geological sites having special interest, or of special value to the community, will be protected, enhanced and where appropriate made accessible to the public. (This policy distinguishes between two levels of importance regarding nature conservation designations i.e. 'those where development will not be permitted' and 'those where development will not normally be permitted'. In the first category are for example SSSIs and in the second 'Wildlife Heritage Sites').

**EN9:** where development could affect a site of nature conservation value, this policy requires appropriate measures to conserve, as far as possible, the site's biological or geological interest and to provide for replacement habitats or features where damage is unavoidable.

**2.18.2** The likely impact of development upon nature conservation interests of the site or others close by should be evaluated by the Council in advance of the development decision being taken. As well as protecting wildlife sites from development, positive steps may be required to conserve and enhance their habitat and ecological value.

## **2.19 BACKGROUND STUDIES AND STRATEGIES**

**2.19.1** The Nature Conservation Strategy for Berkshire (*Action for Wildlife: A Nature Conservation Strategy for Berkshire 1994 - 1999*) is supported by the Council. This provided an agreed framework for co-operation between local authorities and other bodies to achieve nature conservation objectives.

**2.19.2** The Strategy was in essence an operational document which was drawn up to assist those working to protect and enhance the wildlife and natural features of the County. The Strategy has been developed into 'A Framework For Biodiversity Action In Berkshire' (1999).

**2.19.3** The Council fully supports the key theme of countryside management in selected areas. In this regard it will continue to support the Pang Valley Countryside Project and The Kennet Valley Countryside Project. Where possible the Council will also seek to identify and promote other suitable areas for countryside management. Areas will be selected having regard to the following criteria:

- (i) the number, spread and diversity of nature conservation and habitat interests in the selected area;



- (ii) the nature and scale of development/land use change in the area and their likely impact on local nature conservation interests;
- (iii) the unity of the landscape and the natural boundary of the area;
- (iv) the opportunities and benefits which may be gained from the active promotion and pursuit of countryside management principles in the area; and
- (v) the degree of local support and consensus for applying countryside management principles in the chosen area.

## 2.20 KEY NATURE CONSERVATION AIMS

2.20.1 The key aims in nature conservation are as follows:

- (i) to identify relevant nature conservation interests through surveys and appropriate research;
- (ii) to ensure that the protection and enhancement of nature conservation sites is properly provided for in development and land use policies;
- (iii) in considering new development to take the opportunity to improve existing nature conservation sites and/or to seek the creation of new habitat areas;
- (iv) to support and encourage the appropriate management of nature conservation sites in order to protect and enhance their ecological importance and biodiversity;
- (v) to encourage the provision of suitable educational and interpretative facilities for nature conservation purposes;
- (vi) to develop a positive programme of countryside management;

## 2.21 ACTIVE NATURE CONSERVATION MEASURES

2.21.1 This policy arises from the Nature Conservation Strategy for Berkshire and aims to encourage and support active/positive nature conservation measures in connection with new development.

2.21.2 The intention is to secure the protection, enhancement and management of land and water areas having established nature conservation interest or the potential to be so valued. In certain areas like the Lower Kennet Water Park and Thatcham Moors a balance has to be maintained between nature conservation and recreation access and provision.

2.21.3 PPG 9 accepts the use of planning obligations to secure the appropriate management of nature conservation sites, especially following mineral extraction. Long term management is therefore a key issue in securing the future of nature conservation sites and interests. The term 'water areas' used in this policy is a general term referring to 'water bodies and waterways' including where appropriate river corridors and the Kennet and Avon Canal. The Council's support would take a variety of forms from direct financial support to indirect support, e.g. assistance to specialist bodies, or with the use of planning obligations.

**POLICY ENV.8** The Council will encourage and support the management of land and water areas for nature conservation purposes and the creation of nature reserves in connection with new development and land uses. In seeking such provision the Council will have regard to:

- (a) the existing nature conservation value of the site and its present condition; and
- (b) whether the site (or any part thereof) has a specific nature conservation designation; and
- (c) the opportunity and potential to manage the site following development or other land use changes in ways which protect and enhance the habitat and wildlife value of the area in a sustainable manner; and
- (d) expert nature conservation advice from English Nature or other specialist sources.

## 2.22 THE IMPACT OF DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS ON NATURE CONSERVATION SITES

2.22.1 Structure Plan policy EN8 makes provision for protection and enhancement of wildlife habitats and ecological sites of special interest or value. PPG 9 states that Local Plans need to indicate the general criteria to be applied to development affecting nature conservation sites.

2.22.2 The term 'nature conservation sites' refers to the broad range of different nature conservation site designations as set out in Structure Plan policy EN8 and Appendix A of PPG 9.

2.22.3 The presence of a protected species (PPG 9 paragraph 47) is a material factor when considering a development proposal, which if carried out, would be likely to result in harm to the species or its habitat.

2.22.4 Nature conservation sites (statutory and non-statutory) together with other countryside features which provide wildlife corridors (links or stepping stones from one habitat to another) including across West Berkshire's boundaries, all help to form a network necessary to ensure the maintenance of the current range and diversity of flora, fauna, geological and land form features and the survival of important species.

**POLICY ENV.9** The Council in considering development proposals which could affect nature conservation sites or interests will have regard to:

- (a) expert nature conservation advice from English Nature, or other specialist sources; and
- (b) the ecological value and objectives for which the site was classified or designated; and
- (c) the integrity of the site in terms of its nature conservation or ecological relationships; and
- (d) the likely impacts of cumulative uses or developments on the nature conservation interest and value of the site; and
- (e) the need to sustain the ecological diversity of the site; and
- (f) the presence of protected species and appropriate habitat areas/wildlife corridors including those which abut the West Berkshire boundary; and
- (g) proposed measures to safeguard and enhance existing nature conservation and habitat areas including wildlife corridors; and
- (h) the opportunity to create new habitat areas to help improve the conservation status of locally vulnerable species.

### 2.22.5 PROTECTED WILDLIFE SPECIES

POLICY ENV.9A – Not Saved; Refer to Appendix 13.

## **CHAPTER TWO: THE ENVIRONMENT**

### **Section C: Water Environment**

**ENV.10** *River Flood Plain Areas – NOT SAVED*

**ENV.11** *Surface Water Runoff – NOT SAVED*

**ENV.11A** *Waste Water Management – NOT SAVED*

**ENV.11B** *Surface Water Disposal – NOT SAVED*

**ENV.12** *Ground Water and Surface Water Protection – NOT SAVED*

**ENV.13** *Water Resources – NOT SAVED*

**ENV.14** *River Corridors and Nature Conservation*

## **SECTION C: WATER ENVIRONMENT**

### **2.23 INTRODUCTION**

**2.23.1** PPG12 recognises that the provision of increasing services (particularly water and sewage) can have significant implications for local environments. Particular attention is to be paid to the protection of ground water resources which are susceptible to a wide range of threats arising from land use policies. Changes in land use may also affect the availability of ground water resources by restricting, re-charging or diverting flows. The Environment Agency, formerly the National Rivers Authority, is preparing a series of maps to identify those areas of particular concern. They are to be taken into account in drawing up development plans.

### **2.24 STRUCTURE PLAN POLICIES**

**2.24.1** The Structure Plan (paragraph 2.15) identifies the availability of water resources and recent low flows in many rivers as being of considerable concern in much of the County, particularly in the area to the west of Reading. The Environment Agency has expressed the view that levels of development will need to be restrained within current sustainable water resource limitations until such time as new water resource schemes are provided and appropriate infrastructure can be guaranteed.

**2.24.2** The Structure Plan policies relating to the water environment are summarised as:

**LD6:** requires local planning authorities to be satisfied that infrastructure, services and amenities made necessary by the development are provided or will be provided at the appropriate time so as to ensure the proper planning of the area.

**LD7:** is concerned to ensure that proposals for development will only be permitted where water supplies are adequate or can be provided without adversely affecting existing water resources, water quality, amenity or nature conservation.

**EN3:** carries a general objection to development in flood plain areas or where additional surface water run off would materially increase the flood risk.

**EN10:** seeks to protect and enhance the character and setting of rivers, canals and streams and lists the key factors in this regard.

### **2.25 BACKGROUND STUDIES AND STRATEGIES**

**2.25.1** The Council supports the management objectives and related action plans arising from *the River Kennet Catchment Management Plan - Final Report (April 1994)*. This plan takes a holistic approach to river catchment issues. It covers a substantial part of West Berkshire and stretches over to Wiltshire in the west and into Reading on the east. The emphasis is on dealing with environmental problems and to conserve and enhance the water environment. The Council will have due regard to this Management Plan when considering development proposals.

**2.25.2** The Environment Agency has also published (September 1995) their planning perspective and sustainability strategy for the Thames Region. In May 1995 the NRA and Sports Council published "Space to Live, Space to Play" - A recreation strategy for the River Thames. The main aim of this strategy is to optimise the use of the River Thames for recreation while minimising the effect on the natural environment. Further guidance and the Council's policies on recreation and leisure can be found in Chapter 7 of this plan.

**2.25.3** The Council is actively involved in a number of working groups and initiatives which have a direct bearing on the water environment including: the Cleaner Kennet Campaign (jointly with Reading Borough and other amenity/user groups), Kennet Valley and the Pang Valley Countryside Projects. Protection and conservation of water quality and resources; and river and wetland environments are important and remain high on the Council's list of priorities. The Council is particularly concerned regarding water abstraction in areas where 'bournes or streams' have irregular flows and where water abstraction in the winter could seriously reduce summer flow levels. It is the responsibility of the Environment Agency to ensure that flows are protected, when considering the issuing of new abstraction licences. It is the duty of British Waterways to maintain a navigable depth in the Kennet and Avon Canal.

## **2.26 KEY WATER CONSERVATION AIMS**

**2.26.1** The key aims for water conservation are as follows:

- (i) to consider the adequacy of water resources before development is permitted and where resources need to be augmented that this can be done without significant adverse environmental effects;
- (ii) to seek to maintain water quality and that water resources are not depleted to the extent that they have an unacceptable impact on river flow, water quality, water based recreation, amenity and nature conservation;
- (iii) to ensure that development is generally not located in areas liable to flooding;
- (iv) to conserve and where possible enhance the environmental qualities of rivers, canals, water courses and water dependent habitats within West Berkshire;
- (v) to promote, where possible, the efficient use of water.

## **2.27 WATER CONSERVATION POLICIES**

### **2.52.1 RIVER FLOOD PLAIN AREAS**

POLICY ENV.10 – Not Saved; Refer to Appendix 13.

## **2.28 SURFACE WATER RUN OFF & WASTE WATER MANAGEMENT**

### **2.28.1 SURFACE WATER RUN OFF**

POLICY ENV.11 – Not Saved; Refer to Appendix 13.

### **2.28.2 WASTE WATER MANAGEMENT**

POLICY ENV.11A – Not Saved; Refer to Appendix 13.

### **2.28.3 SURFACE WATER DISPOSAL**

POLICY ENV.11B – Not Saved; Refer to Appendix 13.

## **2.29 GROUND WATER AND SURFACE WATER PROTECTION**

POLICY ENV.12 – Not Saved; Refer to Appendix 13.

## 2.30 WATER RESOURCES

POLICY ENV.13 – Not Saved; Refer to Appendix 13.

## 2.31 RIVER CORRIDORS AND NATURE CONSERVATION

2.31.1 Policy EN9 of the Structure Plan sets out the framework for the protection and enhancement of rivers and water courses. River corridors make a significant contribution to the character of West Berkshire and its landscape quality. In many instances river corridors are key sources of open space and also help to form links or 'green chains' important to the survival of wildlife.

**POLICY ENV.14** The Council, in consultation and co-operation with the Environment Agency and British Waterways, will seek to protect and enhance all waterway corridors within West Berkshire as important open land by:

- (a) seeking the conservation of existing amenity features and wherever possible the restoration of natural elements within the corridors and associated margins; and
- (b) seeking the provision of appropriate public access; and
- (c) seeking protection and improved access for operational and maintenance purposes, including maintenance strips where practical; and
- (d) resisting development which would have an adverse impact on nature conservation, fisheries, landscape, public access or water related recreation.

2.31.2 Another topic policy in the Local Plan which will have a direct bearing on these matters including those on nature conservation is policy RL5 - the Kennet and Avon Canal.

2.31.3 River and waterways corridors are also used for recreation purposes and it may be appropriate to locate within these corridors land-based ancillary facilities to support this use. In this regard cross reference should be made to Local Plan policy ENV.9 and Structure Plan policies R1 and R3.

## **CHAPTER TWO: THE ENVIRONMENT**

### **Section D: Agriculture**

**ENV.15** *Protection of the Best and most Versatile Agricultural Land - NOT SAVED*

**ENV.16** *Farm Diversification*

**ENV.17** *Agricultural Development*

## **SECTION D: AGRICULTURE**

### **2.32 INTRODUCTION**

**2.32.1** West Berkshire's countryside relies largely (though not exclusively) on farming for its management and maintenance of character. The relationship between planning and farming can sometimes be difficult given the increasing public pressure to safeguard and enhance the visual and environmental qualities of the countryside.

**2.32.2** Agriculture is a major land use in West Berkshire covering some 51,000 hectares or 73% of West Berkshire's area. It is therefore a major influence on both the landscape and local rural economy. There are some 470 farm holdings in West Berkshire, a decrease of 8% compared with 10 years ago. The wider dependency on agriculture and related services is over 5,000 persons or 7% of the economically active population of West Berkshire.

**2.32.3** The challenge facing the Council is to facilitate the broadening of the rural economy while conserving the landscape, environment and natural diversity of the countryside. Without a sound economic and social base, many environmental objectives for the countryside will not be realised. The rural economy must be allowed to flourish in sustainable ways if the quality of the environment is to be secured

**2.32.4** Government policy towards the countryside and agriculture is contained in revised PPG7, The Countryside and Rural Economy (1997). This sets out general policies for the countryside, the rural economy, agriculture and agricultural land. The guiding principle in the wider countryside is that development should benefit the rural economy and maintain or enhance the environment. In this regard new development in rural areas should be sensitively related to existing settlement patterns and the historic, wildlife and landscape resources of the area. The Council accepts the need for diversification where this supports farming as the principal activity on the holding.

**2.32.5** The Rural England White Paper (1995) states that farming is closely bound up with the management of the rural environment. It identifies as a priority the encouragement of environmentally beneficial and sustainable farming. There is also support for farmers looking to diversify into activities other than agriculture in order to supplement their incomes. The Government has published a Good Practice Guide on Rural Diversification in ways which respect the environment. In the Guide specific reference is made to diversification on farms and having 'farm business plans'. An important aspect is integration of policies for rural diversification with environmental protection and enhancement.

### **2.33 STRUCTURE PLAN POLICIES**

**2.33.1** The provisions of the Structure Plan in the general context of development in the countryside are summarised as:

**C2** accepts the need for agriculture, forestry or other developments for which a rural location is essential and the reuse, adaptation or redevelopment of existing buildings, particularly to assist the diversification of the rural economy and to maintain or enhance the rural environment. Such development also needs to be satisfactory in scale, form, impact, character and siting to its location in the countryside and acceptable in terms of other policies in the Structure Plan.

**C10** to protect the best and most versatile land from development which would irreversibly prevent its future use for agriculture.

**C11** which accepts the principle of agricultural diversification and especially where this could enhance the character of and/or public access to the countryside.



## 2.34 BACKGROUND STUDIES AND STRATEGIES

2.34.1 The Council is involved in a number of countryside projects and strategies which affect agricultural and rural interests. These include:

- (i) The Pang Valley Countryside Project;
- (ii) The Berkshire Heathlands Project;
- (iii) The Kennet Valley Countryside Project;
- (iv) The County wide Landscape Strategy and Action Plan;
- (v) The County wide Nature Conservation Strategy / 'A Framework For Biodiversity Action In Berkshire';
- (vi) The Rural Community Strategy.

2.34.2 The last of these strategies has specific chapters on agriculture and agricultural employment. These set out a series of issues and recommendations regarding action to sustain the rural economy and agriculture while at the same time seeking to make them more responsive to the growing environmental agenda. The key proposals include: having a simple 'one stop shop' to make available appropriate advice on economic and environmental matters; giving increasing emphasis to farming's role in nature and landscape conservation and developing forward looking policies for the reuse of farm land and buildings no longer required for traditional agriculture. The Council was actively involved in preparing the Rural Community Strategy and supports its aims and objectives.

## 2.35 KEY AGRICULTURAL POLICY AIMS

2.35.1 The key aims affecting agriculture from the Local Plan perspective are:

- (i) to accept diversification to support the rural economy and help maintain the viability of farming, where this would not prejudice other countryside planning objectives;
- (ii) to ensure that the allocation of development land in the Local Plan does not unduly prejudice the satisfactory farming of the remaining land holding;
- (iii) to support and encourage the growth of 'countryside management' in rural areas so as to provide both environmental and public benefits. This approach is based on developing a partnership between local authorities, farmers and landowners and other interested parties/voluntary groups.

## 2.36 AGRICULTURAL POLICIES

2.36.1 It is important to have Local Plan policies which are responsive to changes in agriculture and the rural economy, while at the same time seeking to conserve the environmental quality, diversity and character of the countryside.

2.36.2 In the light of advice received from MAFF (now DEFRA) and the former County Council, the Council considers that specific Local Plan policies are needed to:

- (i) support agricultural diversification subject to appropriate environmental safeguards; and
- (ii) set out the general criteria against which agricultural development will be judged.

## 2.37 PROTECTING THE 'BEST AND MOST VERSATILE' LAND AND THE FRAGMENTATION OF VIABLE FARM UNITS

POLICY ENV.15 – Not Saved; Refer to Appendix 13.

## 2.38 FARM DIVERSIFICATION

2.38.1 Changing trends in the agricultural industry have led increasingly to farmers looking into different ways of supplementing their farm incomes through some form of diversification, including farm shops. The objective of diversification is to allow the primary agricultural unit to be retained whilst being supported by other forms of income. In addition to planning and environmental factors the Council will consider economic benefit of the proposed farm diversification scheme as a material consideration.

**POLICY ENV.16** Development which forms part of a 'farm diversification' scheme will be permitted provided:

- (a) it benefits the economy of the rural area of which it is a part; and
- (b) the buildings are appropriate in scale, form, impact, character and siting to their rural location. Wherever possible new or replacement buildings should be located within or adjoining an existing group of buildings; and
- (c) the proposed scheme maintains or enhances the landscape character of the site and its rural surroundings; and
- (d) it does not generate traffic of a type or amount inappropriate for the rural roads affected by the proposal or require improvements to these roads which could be detrimental to their character; and
- (e) it would not cause unacceptable levels of disturbance, nuisance or environmental harm to nearby properties or other adjacent land uses by noise, smell, dust, pollution or operations at unreasonable hours; and
- (f) it would not cause demonstrable harm to existing nature conservation sites and or important habitat areas.

## 2.39 AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

2.39.1 Structure Plan policy C2 accepts the principle of agricultural, forestry and other development for which a rural location is required (i.e. outside of built up areas and settlement boundaries). Annex B of PPG7 sets out the range of permitted development rights for agricultural buildings and operations. In general local planning authorities should adopt a positive approach towards agricultural development proposals which are designed, or are necessary, to achieve compliance with new environmental, hygiene or animal welfare legislation.

2.39.2 Annex D to PPG7 (paragraph D3) advises that a condition withdrawing permitted development rights for new farm buildings may be attached to a permission for the change of use of existing farm buildings. This should, however, only be appropriate where a proliferation of farm buildings could have a seriously detrimental effect on the landscape. Such a condition should be used with great care, and must fairly and reasonably relate to the proposed development.

**POLICY ENV.17** Development reasonably required for agriculture or forestry will be permitted provided:

- (a) it is appropriate in scale, form, impact, character and siting to nearby buildings and the rural landscape; and
- (b) if appropriate there is adequate provision for the disposal of toxic or otherwise unpleasant effluent/waste; and
- (c) it does not generate traffic of a type or amount inappropriate for rural roads, or require improvements which could detrimentally affect the character of such roads or the area generally; and
- (d) it would not cause significant harm to the amenities of occupiers of nearby properties; and
- (e) it would not cause significant harm to existing nature conservation or habitat interests.

## **CHAPTER TWO: THE ENVIRONMENT**

### **Section E: Development in the Countryside**

**ENV.18** *Control of Development in the Countryside*

**ENV.19** *The Re use and Adaptation of Rural Buildings*

**ENV.20** *The Redevelopment of Existing Buildings in the Countryside*

**ENV.21** *Infilling and Ribbon Development in Existing Areas of Dispersed Settlements – **NOT SAVED***

**ENV.22** *The Extension of Residential Curtilages in the Countryside*

**ENV.23** *Replacement Dwellings in the Countryside*

**ENV.24** *Extensions to Dwellings in the Countryside*

**ENV25.A** *Redundant Defence and Government Establishments – **NOT SAVED***

**ENV.25** *Defence and Government Establishments in the Countryside – **NOT SAVED***

**ENV.26** *The Former Greenham Airbase (Greenham and Crookham Commons - **NOT SAVED***

**ENV.27** *Development on Existing Institutional and Educational sites in the Countryside*

**ENV.28** *Telecommunications Development – **NOT SAVED***

**ENV.29** *Development involving Accommodation for Horses*

## **SECTION E: DEVELOPMENT IN THE COUNTRYSIDE**

### **2.41 INTRODUCTION**

**2.41.1** The protection of the countryside is a fundamental concern and development should be limited to that which is both necessary and sensitive to its location. It is important that the countryside which gives West Berkshire its rural character is preserved as an asset in its own right and for its important amenity value.

**2.41.2** Whilst conservation and enhancement of the rural environment is important the Council also wishes to sustain rural communities. The major issues facing rural communities include: limited employment opportunities; the lack of affordable housing; poor public transport and a decline in rural services.

**2.41.3** Small market towns and villages are an integral part of the rural environment. The way such settlements fit into the landscape and rural character of the area are important features to be maintained. Meeting local needs and maintaining the 'quality of life' in such settlements are also important considerations. Overall the Local Plan needs to achieve and maintain an appropriate balance between conservation and development within the different rural parts of West Berkshire.

**2.41.4** The countryside is also a working environment with agricultural activities and a range of other employment concerns. PPG 7, The Countryside – Environmental Quality and Economic and Social Development, notes the importance of integrating economic and social activity in local communities with protection of the countryside. In this way the rural economy can continue to prosper and expand and make its contribution to the quality of the environment. The guiding principle is that development in the countryside should both benefit rural economic activity and maintain or enhance the environment. Local planning authorities need to bear in mind the vital role of small scale enterprises in promoting a healthy rural economy.

**2.41.5** New development in rural areas needs to be sensitively related to existing settlement patterns and to the historic, wildlife and landscape resources of the area. Building in open countryside away from existing settlements or from areas allocated for development, should be strictly controlled.

**2.41.6** It is the Government's policy that the countryside should be safeguarded for the sake of its beauty, the diversity of its landscape and historic character, its natural resources, ecological, agricultural, recreational and archaeological value and that non renewable and natural resources should be afforded protection. It is for local authorities to determine the more specific policies that reflect the different types of countryside found in their area.

**2.41.7** New housing will continue to be required in rural areas to sustain the health of the rural economy and the viability of village communities. Generally, this should be modest development without damage to the character of the village or to the countryside. The expansion of villages and towns must avoid creating ribbon development or fragmented patterns of settlement.

**2.41.8** The purpose of the Local Plan is to use Structure Plan policies and PPG advice to prepare a planning strategy for controlling development in the countryside, which is both appropriate to the nature and character of the West Berkshire area and the planning issues it is facing. It also needs to provide a vision of the countryside that is both realistic and robust in its objectives.

**2.41.9** PPG7 (1997), released following the Rural White Paper (1995), refers to the importance of re-using rural buildings for commercial and industrial uses. PPG7 emphasises the importance of economic diversification and the need to accommodate change while continuing to conserve the countryside. Rural areas can accommodate many forms of development if they are sensitively designed and located. Reference is also made to the relationship between PPG7 and PPG13. PPG13 states that in rural areas the main focus of development should be on those existing centres where employment, housing and other facilities can be provided close together. This promotes

sustainable development by strengthening villages and market towns, protecting the open countryside and reducing the need to travel. The reuse of rural buildings, which can encourage rural enterprise and jobs, should not lead to a further dispersal of activity on such a scale as to prejudice town and village vitality.

**2.41.10** A substantial number of visits are made to the countryside for recreational activities. Whilst the majority do not impinge upon the planning system, the use of the countryside in this context should be duly acknowledged. The countryside has an important role in meeting existing and future recreational needs. PPG17 advises on providing for the recreational and sporting needs of residents and visitors while respecting the rural environment. In the most rural areas the aim should be to balance conservation and recreational activities often using appropriate management measures. The Structure Plan (Chapter 12) includes policies R2 (informal recreation in and access to the countryside) and R3 (organised leisure in the countryside). The Local Plan (Chapter 7) is concerned with recreation and leisure development in both an urban and rural context and sets out key recreational aims in Section 7.4.

## **2.42 STRUCTURE PLAN POLICIES**

**2.42.1** The Structure Plan has two key policies concerned with development in the countryside, and which are briefly set out below:

**C1:** that the nature and scale of development in rural areas should seek to encourage and sustain balanced rural communities. In this context development will normally be within rural settlements defined in Local Plans and be appropriate to the scale and character of a settlement.

The term 'balanced rural communities' means communities which are diverse both in terms of their social composition and the range of activities within them (villages which contain services and appropriate employment opportunities for local people, as well as housing). The Structure Plan also identifies: a need to assist the rural economy; for more affordable local residential accommodation and to address the continuing decline of rural services.

**C2:** development outside built up areas and settlement boundaries defined in Local Plans will be strictly controlled and permitted only:

- (i) where it is required for agriculture and forestry; or
- (ii) for the re use, adaptation or redevelopment of existing buildings, particularly to assist the diversification of the rural economy and to maintain or enhance the rural environment; or
- (iii) other development for which a rural location is essential. Such development also needs to be appropriate in scale, form, impact, character and siting to its location in the countryside and be acceptable in terms of other policies in the Structure Plan.

**2.42.2** Even where development may be acceptable in principle in the countryside, the acceptability of a particular proposal will depend on its suitability for the site, on the impact of the activity and on the adequacy of any measures to integrate the proposal into the surroundings. The Structure Plan also states that more detailed criteria relating to the control of development in the countryside will be included in Local Plans.

## **2.43 BACKGROUND STUDIES AND STRATEGIES**

**2.43.1** In November 1994 The Community Council for Berkshire published the Berkshire Rural Community Strategy on behalf of the Steering Group which included the former Newbury District Council. The central aim of the Strategy is to offer a coherent set of realistic objectives and to suggest possible means by which they may be achieved. The Strategy looks beyond land use planning and examines in a comprehensive manner the issues affecting rural communities.

**2.43.2** The vision of the Strategy is of a multi purpose countryside which addresses the requirements of those who live in, work in and visit rural areas, and which is sustainable both in terms of the use of resources and the maintenance of balanced local communities. What is also clearly emphasised is that the scale and nature of any development must be appropriate to the objectives of conserving and enhancing the environmental qualities of the countryside. West Berkshire has by far the largest number of rural communities in Berkshire (both with and without defined settlement boundaries). These are listed in the Strategy and total seventy villages.

**2.43.3** The overall objective which lies behind the Strategy is one of fostering more diverse and sustainable rural communities and countryside. In many respects seeking balanced rural communities is compatible with wider environmental objectives for the countryside. Particular care is needed in reconciling social and economic needs with countryside conservation objectives. A further feature is that policies and proposals for rural areas must pay proper regard to encouraging forms of community development which offer scope for reducing both the need and desire to travel. It is important to recognise that many linkages exist between social, economic and environmental issues and opportunities.

**2.43.4** The quality of design in the countryside is an issue which is receiving increasing attention. The Strategy recognises that the siting and design of new buildings and conversions in rural areas has often been insensitive. However, well designed and well situated buildings can enhance their surroundings, and thereby make the prospect of additional development more acceptable. Furthermore, the design and orientation of buildings can play an important role in the use of energy. The Countryside Commission (CCP 418) (now the Countryside Agency) has similarly recognised the importance of design in the countryside and in this context has promoted a number of design experiments (CCP 473). The aim is to promote good rural design based on local distinctiveness and the harmony between buildings, settlements and wider landscape. The preparation of 'Village Design Statements' is seen as a way of strengthening links between Local Plans and development control decisions. The initiative for a village design statement should be found in the village itself and developed with a high degree of community involvement. The role of the Parish Council would be critical but the statement could equally well be generated by a local amenity group. The Council would normally expect to offer help, advice and expertise where this is requested but essentially the process should be community led. The Design Statement should be primarily written and produced within the community but with the support of the Local Planning Authority; as the community's expression of how they feel new development can be accommodated in their village.

**2.43.5** The Countryside Commission prepared a consultation paper on *Quality of Countryside, Quality of Life* (CCP 470) which set out its prospectus for the countryside of the next century. This dealt with five main themes:

- Quality and diversity of the countryside
- Multi-purpose agriculture
- Sustainable development
- People and countryside
- Involvement and voluntary action.

**2.43.6** The central purpose of the Rural White Paper (1995) was to carry out a comprehensive review of rural policy and to set out the Government's vision for a future living and working environment. It was followed up with a series of consultation and discussion documents including the release of PPG7 (1997). It is about a changing countryside subject to competing interests and conflicting concerns. The body of the White Paper is in four sections: *Government and people, Working in the countryside, Living in the countryside and A green and pleasant land (the countryside as a national asset)*. The role for the planning system is that it should make adequate provision for development to sustain the rural economy while at the same time conserving the rural environment.

## 2.44 KEY COUNTRYSIDE AIMS

2.44.1 The key countryside development aims of the Local Plan are:

- (i) to support the continuing diversification of the countryside especially where this can contribute to enhancing the rural environment;
- (ii) that new development should be sensitively related to existing settlements and to the historic, wildlife and landscape resources of the area;
- (iii) to promote good quality rural design based on maintaining local distinctiveness;
- (iv) to support the Berkshire Rural Community Strategy as a valuable means of co-ordinating the policies and priorities of different organisations which operate within the rural area;
- (v) to encourage and sustain balanced rural communities as well as maintaining the character and setting of settlements;
- (vi) to support rural economic diversification and rural employment schemes where the need can be shown to exist and in locations where (by careful design, siting or screening) the character of the surrounding countryside is not compromised. Also where appropriate to retain existing rural employment sites.

## 2.45 CONTROL OF DEVELOPMENT IN THE COUNTRYSIDE

2.45.1 To set the overall context for planning control policies in the countryside it is important to reaffirm the approach set out in Structure Plan policies C1 and C2 (see earlier Section 2.42.1) to limit the spread and impact of development in the countryside.

**POLICY ENV.18** The nature and scale of development in rural areas should seek to encourage and sustain balanced rural communities. Development outside of settlements, allocated sites and other defined areas (Local Plan policies HSG.1, HSG.5, ECON.1, ECON.6, ECON.7, ECON.9, TRANS.3, and ENV.27 refer) will be permitted only where:-

- (a) it will benefit the rural economy in accordance with Structure Plan policy C2 and Local Plan policies ENV.16, ENV.19 and ENV.20; or
- (b) it will provide beneficial use of a brownfield site in accordance with Structure Plan policy BU3 and Local Plan policies OVS.1, and OVS.2; or
- (c) it is within the permissible categories of housing development in the countryside; and provided it will maintain or enhance the environment and is appropriate in scale, form, impact, character and siting to its location in the countryside.

## 2.46 THE REUSE AND ADAPTATION OF RURAL BUILDINGS

2.46.1 The focus of rural policy is on expanding the diversity of the rural economy while preserving and enhancing the environment of the countryside. The Structure Plan accepts in principle the reuse and adaptation of existing buildings provided the proposed uses are appropriate in scale, form, impact, character and siting to their location in the countryside and the existing buildings are capable of conversion without major or complete reconstruction.

2.46.2 The Council in making its judgement on specific proposals will take into account the likelihood of any positive benefits that may arise to protect and enhance the rural landscape and nature conservation interests. Buildings which are so derelict that they could be brought back into use only by complete or substantial reconstruction do not fall within the scope of this policy.

2.46.3 Having regard to the need to sustain and diversify the rural economy, it is appropriate that the Council should give particular priority to local employment conversions and uses. The Council will define the acceptable

limits of non-agricultural activities permitted by this policy and resist further expansion (by way of additional buildings or site area) into the countryside.

**2.46.4** The Rural White Paper reaffirms the importance of economic diversification and the need to accommodate change while continuing to conserve the countryside. A possibility under consideration by the Government is the introduction of a 'rural business class' which would be subject to limits on traffic generation. By helping to reduce the risk of uncontrolled expansion local authorities should have more confidence in allowing business diversification in the rural area. PPG7 proposes greater discrimination in favour of the reuse of rural buildings for business rather than residential purposes.

**POLICY ENV.19** Proposals for the re use or adaptation of existing buildings in the countryside will be permitted provided:

- (a) the form, bulk and general design of the existing buildings are in keeping with their surroundings; and
- (b) the existing buildings are suitable for the proposed new use(s) without needing extensive alterations, rebuilding and/or enlargement; and
- (c) the conversion would not have a detrimental effect on the fabric, character and setting of historic buildings; and
- (d) the conversion respects local building styles and materials; and
- (e) the proposed curtilage of the new development is not visually intrusive or harmful to the amenities of the surrounding countryside; and
- (f) the proposed new use(s) would not generate traffic of a type or amount harmful to local rural roads, or require improvements which would detrimentally affect the character of such roads or the area generally; and
- (g) the proposed new use(s) would not result in material harm to the environmental qualities of the surrounding rural area; and
- (h) the use of the building by protected species is surveyed and mitigation measures are approved by the Council using expert advice.

In applying the criteria of this policy the Council will favour, where appropriate, the reuse and adaptation of rural buildings for business purposes.

**2.46.7** Assessment of the highway implications will be made on the basis of the proposal and what would be considered necessary in terms of improvements by the Highway Authority. The reference to 'rural roads' is a generic term and the Council would be concerned as to the effects of the proposed development on rural tracks, footpaths and bridleways. Relevant considerations would include past and existing levels of traffic generated from the site; the level, type and frequency of traffic likely to be generated by the proposed development; and traffic levels accepted under any existing planning permission attached to the land.

## **2.47 THE REDEVELOPMENT OF EXISTING BUILDINGS IN THE COUNTRYSIDE**

**2.47.1** Structure Plan policy C2(ii) supports in principle the redevelopment of existing buildings in the countryside to assist the diversification of the rural economy and to maintain or enhance the rural environment. In this situation a Local Plan policy is necessary to set down the appropriate development control criteria against which such a proposal needs to be judged. Policy H5(ii) of the Structure Plan also states that part of the provision for housing development will be by the redevelopment of existing buildings.

**2.47.1A** Policy ENV.16 accepts the possibility of some new or replacement buildings in support of farm diversification. What is appropriate will depend on the nature of the farm diversification scheme and that the new buildings are appropriate in scale, form, impact, character and siting to their rural location.



**POLICY ENV.20** Proposals for the redevelopment of existing buildings in the countryside will be permitted where the proposal is in a sustainable location and particularly where it will assist the diversification of the rural economy and secure environmental improvements. Proposals must meet the following criteria:

- (a) the redevelopment proposal has no greater impact (in terms of the size and bulk of the buildings or site coverage) than the existing development; and
- (b) is appropriate in design, form, character and siting to its rural location and would not be visually intrusive or harmful to the amenities of the site or surrounding countryside; and
- (c) the redevelopment respects local building styles and materials; and
- (d) it does not involve the redevelopment or loss of listed buildings (or parts thereof) or harm the setting of such buildings; and
- (e) the extent of the proposed curtilage of the redevelopment site is neither visually intrusive or harmful to the amenities of the surrounding countryside; and
- (f) the use of the building(s) following redevelopment would not generate traffic of a type or amount harmful to local rural roads, or require improvements that would detrimentally affect the character and nature of such roads and the area generally; and
- (g) the proposed use(s) would not result in material harm to the environmental qualities of the site and to the surrounding countryside;
- (h) that, where appropriate, the buildings to be redeveloped should be surveyed for protected species and, if found, protection/mitigation measures are approved by the Council using expert advice. The approved measures to be fully implemented before the buildings are demolished.

A sustainable location is generally defined as one which:

- (a) will minimise the need for travel and be accessible by alternative means of transport other than the private car;
- (b) is well related to the existing settlement pattern;
- (c) will not cause material harm to the natural resources and character of the area;
- (d) will contribute towards a balanced local community in terms of the provision of homes, jobs and services.

**2.47.2** Redevelopment would not be acceptable in cases where the existing buildings are in an advanced state of dereliction and vacant, as the introduction of a new use in new buildings would be intrusive in a rural area. Reuse and adaptation of existing rural buildings should normally take priority over redevelopment unless it can be demonstrated that redevelopment would be a better option given the extent of environmental improvement that would occur. Local Plan policy ENV.23 deals with replacement dwellings in the countryside.

**2.47.3** A sustainable development is one which accords with Structure Plan policies OS1, LD1 and C1 and Local Plan policy OVS.1 in support of the existing settlement pattern and hierarchy found within West Berkshire. Structure Plan paragraph 5.9 states that development (including redevelopment) in open countryside away from existing settlements or from areas allocated for development in Local Plans will be strictly controlled.

## **2.48 INFILLING AND RIBBON DEVELOPMENT IN EXISTING AREAS OF DISPERSED SETTLEMENTS**

**POLICY ENV.21 – Not Saved; Refer to Appendix 13.**

## 2.49 THE EXTENSION OF RESIDENTIAL CURTILAGES IN THE COUNTRYSIDE

2.49.1 A persistent problem in the rural area is the taking of agricultural land into residential curtilages. The Council has consistently refused such applications as an unacceptable encroachment and intrusion of domestic and often suburban features into rural areas with adverse effects on the special landscape qualities of the area. The Council will, in considering each application on its merits, take into account the individual and cumulative impact of such development and whether it is justified in accordance with the criteria set out in policy ENV.22. The Council will normally expect to apply a planning condition that once converted to garden space the land in question should be restricted to garden use only. Public footpaths or other rights of way likely to be affected by a proposed garden extension should be maintained or reasonably diverted to at least the same standard.

**POLICY ENV.22** The enclosure of agricultural land, woodland or park land into residential curtilages will only be permitted:

(a) to provide parking spaces or garaging clear of the highway or access to meet the adopted standards of the Highway Authority; or

(b) to provide for private amenity space to the minimum standards adopted by the Council for new residential development; or

(c) where the proposed new garden boundary might be realigned against existing garden boundaries so that the enlarged garden would be similar in size to others typically prevailing in the immediate vicinity;

subject in all cases to any such garden extension not resulting in significant adverse landscape impact or harm to the amenity of neighbouring properties, public footpaths, highway safety or to sites of historic, archaeological or ecological importance. Where permitted any new residential boundary will be required to be in a form and in materials sympathetic to the locality. In sensitive locations such as the AONB or Areas of Special Landscape Importance (ASLIs) permitted development rights may be restricted to minimise impact on the special nature of these areas.

## 2.50 REPLACEMENT DWELLINGS IN THE COUNTRYSIDE

2.50.1 There is concern that large scale modern replacement dwellings with standardised design features are having a detrimental effect on the character of the rural area and will reduce the variety of accommodation. The Countryside Commission (now Countryside Agency) in a report 'Design in the Countryside' (CCP 418) identified the need for design solutions to build on local diversity and distinctiveness, to respond to landscape characteristics and to the settlement form and sense of place.

**POLICY ENV.23** The replacement of existing dwellings in the countryside which are or have been recently occupied will be permitted provided the following criteria are met:

(a) the existing dwelling is long established and is not the result of a temporary or series of temporary permissions;

(b) the proposed dwelling is not disproportionate in size to the dwelling being replaced;

(c) the proposed design of the new dwelling is of a high standard and appropriate to the rural character of the area;

(d) the development where appropriate, incorporates or complements other existing buildings or features in the locality;

(e) the development is appropriate and sympathetic in scale, design, materials, layout and siting to the character and setting of adjoining buildings and spaces;

(f) the development includes an acceptable landscape scheme to retain and improve the rural nature of the locality.

2.50.3 In criterion (b) of policy ENV.23 the Council is concerned to protect the nature and character of the rural environment and to avoid dwellings which are disproportionate e.g. excessive in size and massing and thereby

physically and visually intrusive. This should not be interpreted as a general acceptance of large scale development where the site is well screened, as the wider concern is also to maintain the essential rural nature and qualities of the area. It is neither possible nor practical to determine these situations in advance because proposals and sites can vary greatly. What is possible, however, is to list the likely key determinants in this regard:

- (i) the overall size, scale and massing of the replacement dwelling compared to the original; and
- (ii) the site characteristics and visual prominence of the existing and proposed replacement dwellings. Visual prominence/ intrusion may be reduced or increased by design factors; and
- (iii) the impact on and relationship to adjoining buildings and uses in rural areas; and
- (iv) whether on balance the proposed development maintains/enhances or detracts from the inherent character and nature of the site and the surrounding rural environment (this is a judgement which can only be made on the merits or otherwise of each case).

## 2.51 EXTENSIONS TO DWELLINGS IN THE COUNTRYSIDE

2.51.1 This policy is concerned with extensions to existing houses in the countryside and ancillary buildings within the site curtilage. It allows for this development in appropriate cases subject to a number of provisions. In particular, the policy seeks to prevent the over development of such sites and a material increase in visual intrusion into the countryside.

**POLICY ENV.24** Extensions to existing dwellings in the countryside and the construction of ancillary buildings within the curtilage of such dwellings will be permitted provided the following criteria are met:

- (a) the dwelling is of permanent construction with a reasonable expectation of life;
- (b) the extension or additional building is in keeping with the design of the existing dwelling and uses complementary materials;
- (c) the impact of the proposed development when taken with the existing building or buildings would not be materially greater or more harmful than that of the existing building(s) on the rural character of the area;
- (d) the proposed development would not result in an extended dwelling disproportionate in size to the original.

## 2.52 DEFENCE AND GOVERNMENT ESTABLISHMENTS IN THE COUNTRYSIDE

### 2.52.1 REDUNDANT DEFENCE AND GOVERNMENT ESTABLISHMENTS

POLICY ENV.25A – Not Saved; Refer to Appendix 13.

### 2.52.2 DEFENCE AND GOVERNMENT ESTABLISHMENTS IN THE COUNTRYSIDE

POLICY ENV.25 – Not Saved; Refer to Appendix 13.

## 2.53 THE FORMER GREENHAM AIRBASE (GREENHAM AND CROOKHAM COMMONS)

POLICY ENV.26 – Not Saved; Refer to Appendix 13.

## 2.54 DEVELOPMENT ON EXISTING INSTITUTIONAL AND EDUCATIONAL SITES IN THE COUNTRYSIDE

2.54.1 In the rural area of West Berkshire there are a number of existing educational and institutional establishments including boarding schools. These establishments are found in a number of locations, i.e. wholly within the rural area or partly within and partly outside a defined settlement. An example of the first case is Pangbourne College and of the second case Bradfield College.

2.54.2 Policy ENV.27 makes provision, within appropriate limits and having regard to the nature and character of such sites and their wider setting, for development required by such uses to continue at a reasonable level and scale of operation. Policy C2(iii) of the Structure Plan refers to "other development for which a rural location is essential". Where a school or similar establishment exists within the rural area it is considered appropriate to treat further development on this basis.

**POLICY ENV.27** Proposals for educational and related development on existing school or institutional sites located in the countryside will be permitted only where:

(a) it is demonstrated to the satisfaction of the Council that such development is necessary to meet the reasonable needs and operational requirements of existing educational and institutional establishments; and

(b) there are no existing buildings or accommodation within the site or in proximity that might reasonably be used; and

(c) it is reasonable in proportion to the size and nature of the existing establishment; and

(d) it is well designed and constructed of appropriate materials, is located close to or within an existing group of buildings and is not inappropriate or intrusive in its setting; and

(e) it is not harmful to or would result in any significant loss of open space areas, landscape or habitat features found within the site or impact unduly on the amenities of adjoining residential or other properties; and

(f) it makes provision for landscape enhancement within or adjoining the site where this would help to screen and integrate the new development into its rural surroundings; and

(g) it would not generate traffic of a type or amount prejudicial to highway safety or the amenity of the area.

In general terms the scale and balance of development (existing and proposed) should be in keeping with the existing nature and character of the site and not harm its rural location and setting.

2.54.3 In a situation where there is normally a restriction on development outside of defined settlements except for certain limited cases, it is appropriate for the school or similar establishment to justify its need for extra facilities or accommodation as part of a planning application submission.

2.54.4 The Council will normally require applicants for such development to enter into a legal agreement to ensure that it remains ancillary to the main use of the site and to ensure that staff or student accommodation is not sold off separately to be followed by applications for further housing or residential accommodation.

## 2.55 TELECOMMUNICATIONS DEVELOPMENT

POLICY ENV.28 – Not Saved; Refer to Appendix 13.

## 2.56 DEVELOPMENT INVOLVING ACCOMMODATION FOR HORSES

2.56.1 The Council recognises that the local horse riding activities contribute to a diversified rural economy and that equestrian activities are seen as part of the rural character of the area. However given the growing pressure for field shelters and small scale stabling provision within the rural parts of West Berkshire it is considered appropriate to have a Local Plan policy dealing specifically with such development. Race horse training establishments remain to be dealt with under policies ECON.8 and ECON.9.

2.56.2 Annex F of PPG 7 is aimed at ensuring that equestrian activities do not have an adverse effect on the countryside and that horses are well housed and cared for. The Council has prepared and issued supplementary planning guidance on the keeping of horses for leisure purposes and the erection of 'field shelters and stables'.

**POLICY ENV.29** The Council will permit the erection of stabling and field shelters for horses, including the use of associated land for horse grazing, where:

- (a) the proposed buildings have been designed to blend in with the rural surroundings; and
- (b) the scale and location of such buildings and their use would not cause a material loss of amenity for the occupants of adjoining properties or other users of the countryside; and
- (c) there is sufficient space provided for the ancillary storage of food stuffs, bedding, tack and related equipment on a scale appropriate to the number of horses being accommodated; and
- (d) there is sufficient land being provided with the field shelter and / or stable to accommodate the number of horses; and
- (e) the access to and from the public highway is in a location and form which would prevent any hazard to riders and other users of the highway.

Notwithstanding the above factors such buildings will be unacceptable if they appear to urbanise an attractive rural area or spoil a key view or vista.

2.56.3 In the context of criterion (a) of policy ENV.29 it is suggested that stabling and field shelters should be arranged in a compact plan form. A loose straggle of buildings poorly sited and visually intrusive is not acceptable. Brightly coloured materials or materials out of place in a rural environment will not be permitted. Furthermore regarding criterion (d) the British Horse Society suggest a minimum of 0.6 hectares (1.5 acres) of pasture per horse is required. If such buildings are no longer required for the accommodation of horses then it is expected that they will be removed so as to avoid unnecessary clutter in the countryside.

## **CHAPTER TWO: THE ENVIRONMENT**

### **Section F: The Urban Environment**

**ENV.30** *Protecting and Improving the Urban Environment – NOT SAVED*

**ENV.31** *The Protection and Enhancement of Important Open Space Areas within Defined Settlements*

## **SECTION F: THE URBAN ENVIRONMENT**

### **2.56 INTRODUCTION**

**2.56.1** There is a close relationship and potential conflicts between transport, land use policies and environmental concerns. The quality of the environment is a focus of growing concern. In this context planning policies can make a contribution towards reducing environmental damage. The main objective is the provision of necessary development in a manner which minimises environmental harm. There also has to be an appropriate balance between environmental and other priorities.

**2.56.2** PPG12 (Development Plans) refers to the need for a physically safe environment and re-vitalising older urban areas. Policies and proposals should aim to protect and improve the physical environment and to control pollution. In the context of PPG13 (Transport) transport decisions need to be compatible with environmental goals and minimising environmental impacts. PPG23 (Planning and Pollution Control) is concerned with the loss of amenity which pollution can cause. The relationship between development decisions and the environmental sensitivity of the area can be important.

**2.56.3** The growth in traffic has resulted in congestion and a serious deterioration in environmental conditions in many parts of West Berkshire. This is pronounced at peak periods in the main urban areas, on the approach roads to town centres and on the A4, M4 and A34. The Structure Plan sets out the general principles for safeguarding the quality of life in urban areas, where the majority of the County's population live.

### **2.57 STRUCTURE PLAN POLICIES**

**2.57.1** There are a number of policies in the Structure Plan which relate to the issue of environmental quality in built up areas. These policies include:

**LD1** minimising the risk of pollution.

**LD3** only permitting development where it does not give rise to an unacceptable impact on the environment.

**LD4** seeking to minimise the environmental impact of transport schemes by comprehensive planning.

**LD8** seeking environmental improvements from development.

**EN1** protecting and improving the character and environmental quality of built up areas.

**EN2** protection from environmental nuisance.

**T7** traffic management linked to road safety and environmental improvements.

### **2.58 BACKGROUND STUDIES AND STRATEGIES**

**2.58.1** Both the former County Council and Newbury District Council prepared State of the Environment Reports. They presented a broad overview of the issues using a range of environmental factors.

**2.58.2** The former County Council also published two further important environmental documents which have a particular bearing on the urban environment. These are briefly summarised below:

**(i) Quality of Life in Berkshire January 1996.** This study provides an overview of social and economic conditions in the county. It contains a section on 'environmental quality' including urban uses and the built environment. It is acknowledged that the quality of the built environment can contribute significantly to the sense of well being of the resident population. This is presented mainly in terms of the historic environment and sense of place.

**(ii) Local Agenda 21 in Berkshire.** The County Council's Environmental Strategy (Background Report). One of the key issues is the need to identify linkages between economic, social and environmental deprivation. The condition of urban areas is important with both the County Council and Districts committed to environmental improvement programmes.

**2.58.3** The former County Council carried out a particular study of the extent to which land uses along main road frontages in Berkshire are likely to be suffering from the environmental effects of road traffic. The study is based largely on the tolerance of different land uses to noise. The A34, before construction of the bypass, was identified as experiencing excessive flows in environmental terms and high levels of pollution in Newbury Town.

**2.58.4** The European Urban Charter (1993) considers four main areas: improvement of the physical urban environment, rehabilitation of the existing housing stock, creation of social and cultural opportunities in towns and community development/public participation. This is concerned with the 'qualitative' aspects of urban development and 'quality of life' considerations. The urban environment must be conducive to good health which is to be achieved through a comprehensive urban environment policy. With growing interest and awareness it is not sufficient merely to prevent further deterioration of the environment but to seek positive improvements.

## **2.59 KEY URBAN ENVIRONMENTAL AIMS**

**2.59.1** The key environmental aims in respect of the urban or built up parts of West Berkshire from the Local Plan perspective are:

- (i) to protect and enhance those features of quality and interest found within the urban environment;
- (ii) to apply the principles of sustainable development in reconciling economic development and environmental protection;
- (iii) to ensure that mobility and accessibility are organised in ways which are conducive to maintaining a quality urban environment;
- (iv) to safeguard town and village centres as important elements of cultural and historic heritage;
- (v) to seek the further provision and management of open spaces within towns and villages as an integral part of maintaining environmental quality and diversity;
- (vi) to protect, enhance and manage areas of wildlife value within urban environments and promote community involvement in such areas;
- (vii) to seek balanced and mixed patterns of development which help to maintain the vitality and character of settlements
- (viii) to ensure the adequate provision of infrastructure in towns and villages, to sustain communities and to accommodate growth and change.

## **2.60 PROTECTING AND IMPROVING THE URBAN ENVIRONMENT**

**POLICY ENV.30 – Not Saved; Refer to Appendix 13.**



## 2.61 THE PROTECTION AND ENHANCEMENT OF IMPORTANT OPEN SPACE AREAS WITHIN DEFINED SETTLEMENTS

2.61.1 Structure Plan policy EN1 refers to the protection and where necessary the enhancement of open land important to the character of settlements. Some important open space areas have been formally identified on the Local Plan inset maps. Further areas may be added as part of the development control process, including open space areas resulting from new development. Development which does not harm, or enhances, the special character of such areas may be acceptable.

2.61.2 When considering whether an open space area within a defined settlement has a special historic, ecological or visual/amenity importance or affords views of the surrounding countryside, attention will be paid to matters including:

- (a) the landscape value and wildlife value and nature of the site, including the need to conserve established features such as areas of woodland, hedgerows or areas of water; and
- (b) the wider importance of the site, such as physical or visual links to or contrast with surrounding features, relationships to major landscape/topographical features which may extend outside the settlement, and ecological significance; and
- (c) the visual amenity value of the site including open spaces important to the amenity of residents; and
- (d) the historical importance of an open space, for example, when the site forms part of the setting of a listed building or is part of a Conservation Area.

2.61.3 In cases where the open space area includes ancient woodland or historic landscape parks/gardens these should be conserved. The broad application of the notation allows for the fact that different parts of the designated area may vary in quality and landscape value. Open spaces can include structures complementary to, or which do not detract from, their essential character, role and importance. Gardens, river side and canal side areas can be considered as important open spaces within defined settlements.

**POLICY ENV.31** The Council will not permit development within settlements that would result in significant harm to or the loss of important open space areas which have a special historic, wildlife, visual or amenity importance or afford views of, or from, the surrounding countryside.

## 2.62. HOSPITAL AND NEW COLLEGE CAMPUS FOR NEWBURY

2.62.1 The Council supports the West Berkshire Priority Care Trust in replacing outdated patient care facilities and investing in new hospital services. Provision of the new community hospital is shown on inset map 1 and is located in the open gap area between Newbury and Thatcham. The proposal was granted planning permission *00/01112/REM* (outline permission granted under 145254) on 19 March 2002 and is closely tied to four other proposals set out below:

- (i) *(i) 145255 (01/00627/RELAX) Land at Newbury Hospital, Andover Road*  
- *outline for residential redevelopment.*
- (ii) *145256 (01/00626/RELAX) Land at Sandford Hospital, Newtown Road*  
- *outline for residential redevelopment.*
- (iii) *145257 (01/00980/RELAX) and 145258 (01/00982/RELAX) Land to the east and west of Wash Water, Enborne*  
- *outline permission for residential development comprising 31 dwellings approved on land east of Enborne Row, Wash Water (01/01328/OUT).*

**2.62.2** These residential schemes will help to fund the provision of the new hospital. The location of the new hospital in the open gap between Newbury and Thatcham which is protected by Local Plan policy ENV.4(e) was only accepted by the Council because of its 'exceptional community justification'. If for any reason the new hospital does not go ahead then the related housing redevelopment and the allocation at Wash Water/Enborne Row will not proceed.

**2.62.3** The new college campus on the corner of Monks Lane and the A34 - application 146286 (January 1996) is currently under construction and is shown on inset map 1.

**2.62.4** In summary these two major community schemes are based on exceptional community needs overriding other protective landscape, settings and gap policies. Whilst the Council accepts the exceptional justification in these cases they should not be used as precedent for further unrelated development in the countryside or for alternative development on these sites should the schemes not proceed.

**2.62.5** A further major community scheme approved as having exceptional justification is the Newbury Rugby Union Football Club development to the south of Monks Lane.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **THE ENVIRONMENT**

#### **Section G: Conservation and the Historic Environment**

**ENV.32** *Alterations and Extensions to Listed Buildings – NOT SAVED*

**ENV.33** *Development in Conservation Areas*

**ENV.34** *Burgage Plots in Hungerford – NOT SAVED*

**ENV.35** *Historic Parks and Gardens – NOT SAVED*

**ENV.36** *The Newbury Battlefield Sites – NOT SAVED*

**ENV.37** *Development on Scheduled Ancient Monuments and Sites of Archaeological Significance – NOT SAVED*

**ENV.38** *The Management of Scheduled Ancient Monuments and Areas of Archaeological Significance*

**ENV.39** *The Provision of Archaeological Evaluation – NOT SAVED*

**ENV.40** *The Level of Archaeological Investigation – NOT SAVED*

## **SECTION G: CONSERVATION AND THE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT**

### **2.63 INTRODUCTION**

**2.63.1** It is central to the Government's policies for 'environmental stewardship' that there should be effective protection for all aspects of the historic environment. PPG 15 sets out the Government's detailed advice regarding planning and conservation, listed building controls and conservation areas. Historic features enhance the local scene and sustain the sense of local distinctiveness, so important to the character and appearance of towns, villages and the countryside. The historic environment is also of great importance for leisure and recreation.

**2.63.2** The basic statistics of listed buildings and conservation in West Berkshire are set out below:

**(i) Listed Building Entries, May 2002**

Grade I	42
Grade II*	108
Grade II	1725
Total	1875

**(ii) Conservation Areas**

There are 52 Conservation Areas in West Berkshire covering some 600 hectares in total. These Conservation Areas are shown on the Proposals Map of the Local Plan and listed in Appendix 6.

**(iii) Historic Battlefields**

The Newbury I and II Civil War battlefield sites - only the Newbury I battlefield site is included in the English Heritage Battlefield Register published in June 1995.

**(iv) Historic Parks and Gardens**

There are 12 parks and gardens on the English Heritage register.

In overall terms West Berkshire has over 40% of the County total of listed buildings and the highest number of Grades I and II\* buildings.

**2.63.3** The planning objective in this context is to reconcile the need for development and growth with preserving the natural and historic environment. Some elements of the historic environment are so important that they are irreplaceable and should be preserved as they are for future generations. Many buildings, sites and areas have a capacity to adapt to the needs of a modern society, whilst avoiding loss of historic fabric and character.

**2.63.4** The Government urges local authorities to maintain and strengthen their commitment to stewardship of the historic environment, and to reflect this in their policies and the allocation of resources.

**2.63.5** The design of new buildings intended to stand alongside historic buildings or within Conservation Areas need very careful consideration. In general it is better that old buildings are not set apart, but are woven into the fabric of the living and working environment. Proposals for changes of use should be considered sympathetically where this would enable an historic building or area to be given a new lease of life.

## 2.64 STRUCTURE PLAN POLICIES

2.64.1 The Structure Plan has a series of policies concerned with conserving and enhancing the historic environment, these are summarised below:

**EN4** Listed buildings and buildings in conservation areas. Proposals affecting such buildings should conserve their historic fabric and character, preserve or enhance their setting, provide appropriate uses and ensure adequate standards of maintenance and repair.

**EN5** Areas of Special Character, particularly designated Conservation Areas, to be protected from change damaging to their character and appearance with encouragement for the enhancement of such areas.

**EN6** Scheduled Ancient Monuments (SAM's) and the most important non-scheduled remains, together with their settings, to be protected and managed to ensure that they are not damaged and destroyed. Where preservation is not possible appropriate arrangements need to be made for excavation and recording to take place prior to development.

**EN7** Historic Parks and Gardens of special interest and their settings to be protected from development which would erode or otherwise damage their character.

2.65.2 In the context of new uses for listed buildings the Structure Plan (paragraph 6.11) states that any new use should be wholly compatible with maintaining the special character of the building; involve minimum alteration to that character (internally or externally) and not be materially damaging to the setting of the building.

## 2.65 BACKGROUND INFORMATION AND STRATEGIES

2.65.1 English Heritage maintains the list of buildings and other structures of special architectural and historic interest including the historic parks and gardens found within West Berkshire.

2.65.2 There is currently no 'county-wide' historic conservation strategy on a similar basis to that dealing with nature conservation and landscape. The *First Berkshire State of the Environment Report (1995)* has a section on landscape and townscapes (Chapter 10). This has been followed by the *Berkshire Quality of Life Report* in response to Local Agenda 21, which has a section on 'environmental quality' including the built-environment, listed buildings and conservation areas.

2.65.3 There are a few local conservation studies including the Georgian Group report on Newbury of July 1990. The objective of this report was to address the loss of historic character in Newbury Town. The two primary threats to this character identified in the report were the erosion of architectural detail and unsympathetic and unimaginative new development. These threats still remain to reduce local diversity and a unique 'sense of place'.

2.65.4 The Royal Commission on Historic Monuments for England has undertaken a study of historic farm buildings, of which south-west Berkshire was one of the specific study areas.

2.65.5 The County Sites and Monuments record holds over 16,000 records relating to the cultural heritage of the county. The records range from individual finds to detailed records of large excavations. In addition, there is an annual review of archaeological activity in Berkshire.

## 2.66 KEY CONSERVATION AIMS

2.66.1 The key conservation aims in terms of preserving and enhancing the historic environment and special qualities of West Berkshire are as follows:

- (i) to maintain and strengthen the commitment to 'stewardship' of the historic environment in order to sustain environmental quality and to reflect this in policies, decisions and the allocation of resources;
- (ii) to have special regard to the preservation of listed buildings;
- (iii) to encourage the use of traditional building materials and techniques and to conserve the historic building forms typical of West Berkshire;
- (iv) to preserve and enhance the Conservation Areas in West Berkshire. Any new development in Conservation Areas needs to be appropriate and sympathetic to the special character of the area. It must also address the quality of the townscape as well as the protection of individual buildings and preserving a sense of place;
- (v) to ensure the archaeological heritage is preserved and properly managed.

## 2.67 THE REUSE OF BUILDINGS

2.67.1 There are many reasons why buildings are no longer used for the purposes for which they were built. Inevitably, although not exclusively, these buildings are older buildings which have become an integral part of the built environment. The continued existence of these buildings is important to the preservation of the richness of our surroundings and the conservation of the character of the built environment.

2.67.2 Not all buildings are capable of adaptation for a new use. The best use for a building is usually that for which it was built. Awareness is required of the limitations that a building may impose if its original form and design are to be preserved. At all stages, the benefits of retaining the original building must be carefully assessed against other likely effects of the proposed use.

2.67.3 West Berkshire is predominantly a rural district and the pressures for change have resulted in a significant number of agricultural buildings seeking a suitable reuse. Policy ENV.19 of the Local Plan deals specifically with the reuse and adaptation of rural buildings. The Council may apply its policies and standards flexibly where this would benefit and maintain the special character and setting of these buildings.

## 2.68 THE PRESERVATION AND RESTORATION OF BUILDINGS OF TOWNSCAPE VALUE

2.68.1 The physical quality and character of settlements is mainly derived from groups of buildings and their relationship one to another, which creates a 'sense of place'. It is this grouping or overall pattern which can be defined as 'townscape value'. In some cases individual buildings may fall into disrepair and rather than contributing to the overall character they can in this state materially harm the amenity of the area. Harm may also be caused by successive alterations which may result in a loss of architectural character and local environmental quality.

2.68.2 Local planning authorities have statutory powers which can be used to prevent a loss of the character of listed buildings and conservation areas. The Council can also use 'grant aid' to help in the repair of listed buildings.

## 2.69 ALTERATIONS AND EXTENSIONS TO LISTED BUILDINGS

POLICY ENV.32 – Not Saved; Refer to Appendix 13.

## 2.70 DEVELOPMENT IN CONSERVATION AREAS

2.70.1 Designated conservation areas require care when considering proposals for new development. Encouragement will be given to proposals which make a positive contribution to the enhancement of the character and appearance of such areas.

2.70.2 The special nature of the built environment in settlements, towns and villages is derived from the character of the individual buildings and their relationship one to another. These are relationships which have evolved, in some cases through tradition or in the case of farmsteads from agricultural practice. It is important to preserve these settlement patterns and groups of buildings. In appropriate cases the Council will expect applications for new development in conservation areas to be accompanied by sufficient information to enable a full and proper consideration of their effect to be assessed.

**POLICY ENV.33 The Council will not permit development which would harm or prejudice the special character or appearance of a Conservation Area.**

2.70.3 Proposals will be treated on their merits and in this respect the viable use of buildings will be treated alongside environmental factors as important material considerations.

## 2.71 CONSERVATION AREA DESIGNATION AND REVIEW

2.71.1 The Council is committed to the preservation and enhancement of conservation areas within West Berkshire. PPG 15 (Part 1 -Section 4) gives guidance on the assessment and designation of conservation areas. It is the quality and historic interest of areas rather than that of individual buildings which are the prime considerations in identifying conservation areas.

2.71.2 Conservation areas must be seen to justify their status and not be devalued by the designation of areas lacking special interest. Authorities should seek to establish consistent local standards for their designation and periodically review existing conservation areas and their boundaries against those standards. PPG15 (paragraph 2.9) notes that the process of review should be pursued separately from the Local Plan process itself.

### **Factors to be considered in the designation and review of conservation areas:**

- (i) The townscape qualities of the area.
- (ii) Historic street patterns and layouts.
- (iii) The qualities of open spaces and the relationship between buildings.
- (iv) Particular features of historic or community interest.
- (v) The land use mix, special qualities and 'sense of place'.
- (vi) The number and distribution of listed buildings within the area including their group value.
- (vii) The opportunities for area and building enhancement within the area.
- (viii) The degree of support/consensus for designating the new or revised conservation area.

2.71.3 The assessment should record both the positive and negative features of the area. It should also note those unlisted buildings which make a positive contribution to the special interest of the area.

2.71.4 The Council will keep the conservation areas under regular review to establish the effectiveness of controls and positive implementation.

## 2.72 BURGAGE PLOTS IN HUNGERFORD

POLICY ENV.34 – Not Saved; Refer to Appendix 13.

## 2.73 HISTORIC PARKS AND GARDENS

POLICY ENV.35 – Not Saved; Refer to Appendix 13.

## 2.74 THE NEWBURY BATTLEFIELD SITES

POLICY ENV.36 – Not Saved; Refer to Appendix 13.

## 2.75 ARCHAEOLOGY

2.75.1 Archaeological remains are a finite and non-renewable resource. Government advice is that appropriate management is essential to ensure that they survive in good condition. In particular, care must be taken to ensure that they are not needlessly or thoughtlessly destroyed. The Department of the Environment's PPG16 *Archaeology and Planning* has reinforced the importance of the role of planning in reconciling development and archaeology to ensure that the archaeological heritage is preserved and properly managed.

2.75.2 Protecting Berkshire's archaeological heritage is an important objective. It is widely recognised that the preservation, management and promotion of the most important archaeological sites, buildings and remains, and their settings, is essential. Provision will be made for the appropriate investigation and recording of archaeological sites which are not judged to be worthy of permanent preservation before their destruction.

2.75.3 The Plan area contains a wealth of archaeological remains and evidence reflecting man's occupation and use of the area over the last 10,000 years - 89 sites or structures are identified as Scheduled Ancient Monuments and enjoy specific legislative protection under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979. It is likely that this number will increase through the Plan period as further sites are designated as part of the Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission's 'Monuments Protection Programme'. Any works on or affecting these Scheduled Ancient Monuments must have the prior consent of the Secretary of State. This scheduled Monument Consent is required in addition to any requirements of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

2.75.4 Other sites of archaeological significance require safeguarding through Local Plan policies. Information on the County Sites and Monuments Record will be used as the basis for assessing the likely archaeological implications of any development proposal. Archaeological sites which are discovered by field evaluation also require protection, even though not identified on the County Sites and Monument Record.

2.75.5 The Berkshire Sites and Monuments Record has been used to identify several broad areas where it is most likely that development will have archaeological implications.

(a) The Saxon and Medieval Centres of the historic towns. These are Lambourn, Hungerford, Kintbury, Newbury, Thatcham and Aldermaston.

(b) River Valleys have often been a focus of activity. Alluvium deposits both hide and protect archaeological remains. The Thames Valley, the Kennet and Dun Valleys, and the Lambourn Valley are all identified as being of archaeological significance. The Kennet Valley between Brimpton and Newbury, and Kintbury and Hungerford is particularly noted for rare mesolithic deposits.



(c) The Berkshire Downs have produced evidence of considerable past activity. This is especially the case for the area around Lambourn and also across the Downs to Fawley and on to Farnborough. Also significant are large areas north of Beedon, around East and West Ilsley and east to the north of Aldworth to Streatley and to the south of the Kennet both east and west of Walbury Hill.

2.75.6 A significant amount of known archaeological deposits exist outside these areas and individual developments may still encounter an archaeological constraint. These will be considered on a site by site basis and account taken of the nature of the archaeological remains and the nature of the development proposed.

## **2.76 DEVELOPMENT ON SCHEDULED ANCIENT MONUMENTS AND SITES OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE**

POLICY ENV.37 – Not Saved; Refer to Appendix 13.

## **2.77 THE MANAGEMENT OF SCHEDULED ANCIENT MONUMENTS AND AREAS OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE**

2.77.1 The most significant archaeological sites should remain intact and, where necessary, given additional attention through positive management schemes which may include appropriate educational, interpretation or recreational facilities. The Council will normally refuse development affecting these sites unless it is demonstrated that the proposed development makes adequate provision for the protection, preservation and enhancement of the site and its setting.

<p><b>POLICY ENV.38</b> Programmes of Site Management will be sought in appropriate cases for sites scheduled as Ancient Monuments and for sites of especial local archaeological significance.</p>
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## **2.78 THE PROVISION OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION**

POLICY ENV.39 – Not Saved; Refer to Appendix 13.

## **2.79 THE LEVEL OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION**

POLICY ENV.40 – Not Saved; Refer to Appendix 13.

## **CHAPTER THREE: HOUSING**

### Policies

- HSG.1 *The Identification of Settlements for Planning Purposes*
- HSG.2 *Exceptions to Normal Restrictions on New Housing in the Countryside – NOT SAVED*
- HSG.3 *The Relaxation of Agricultural Occupancy Conditions*
- HSG.4 *Development within Urban Areas and on Brownfield Sites – NOT SAVED*
- HSG.5 *Allocation of New Housing Sites*
- HSG.7 *Planning Benefits relating to New Housing Developments – NOT SAVED*
- HSG.8 *Housing to meet the needs of Disabled People*
- HSG.9 *Affordable Housing for Local Needs*
- HSG.10 *Affordable Housing for Local Needs – NOT SAVED*
- HSG.11 *Affordable Housing for Local Needs*
- HSG.13 *Residential Use of Space Above Shops and Offices*
- HSG.14 *Retention of Mobile Home Parks*
- HSG.15 *Temporary Residential Accommodation – NOT SAVED*
- HSG.16 *Purley Park River Estate – NOT SAVED*
- HSG.17 *Gypsy Transit Sites*
- HSG.17A *Permanent Gypsy Sites*

## CHAPTER THREE: HOUSING

### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

3.1.1 The Berkshire Structure Plan makes provision for about 9,000 dwellings to be built in West Berkshire in the period 1991-2006. This provision is split into three phases; 2,700 dwellings between 1991-1996, 3,250 dwellings between 1996-2001 and 3,050 dwellings between 2001-2006, although these figures are not precise limits or targets. The Local Plan sets out policies allocating sufficient land to allow this requirement to be met.

3.1.2 Although clear allocations for housing provision have been set this is not the only housing issue that this plan must tackle. Issues of quality, variety, and meeting local needs must also be dealt with.

3.1.3 Between April 1991 and March 2001 5,170 dwellings had already been completed. By the end of March 2001 a further 2,671 dwellings were expected to be built within the plan period, without any specific Local Plan allocation.

3.1.4 The provision of housing cannot be entirely met in the already developed areas of West Berkshire's towns and villages. It is necessary therefore for this plan to make specific allocations of land for housing. In identifying sites for housing the Local Plan has sought to balance the issues set out in PPG7 and PPG13. More general advice upon the development of housing is contained within PPG3.

3.1.5 In line with this PPG advice, as it relates to West Berkshire District, particular regard has been had to the following when selecting suitable sites for development:

- Achieving sustainable development, through seeking locations that minimise pollution levels, consumption of energy, land and other non-renewable resources. Key elements of this approach are reducing the need to travel and redeveloping brownfield/previously developed land.
- Protecting open countryside.
- Seeking to sustain balanced communities in rural areas.
- Achieving full and effective use of land within existing urban areas, while ensuring the retention of open space.
- Seeking the implementation of existing commitments for housing development.
- Achieving attractive residential locations and creating good design.
- Does not have a detrimental influence upon the wildlife/nature conservation resources of the area.

3.1.6 The sites allocated below not only meet the Structure Plan requirement but also provide a robust spread of housing types and locations, appropriate to the nature and character of West Berkshire District.

3.1.7 Since the conclusion of the Local Plan Inquiry the government has published revised guidance on housing PPG3 (March 2000). It was not considered necessary to re-write this chapter following the publication of PPG3, as many of the themes were already present in the original text. However, it is considered important to emphasise that the contents of PPG3 will be a very important material consideration when dealing with planning applications. In particular the following issues will be considered:

- density, car parking, and the efficient use of land (paras 57 to 62);
- 'urban' design and sustainable residential developments (para 63);
- dwelling mix, and creating mixed communities (paras 9 to 11).

## 3.2 STRUCTURE PLAN POLICIES

3.2.1 The Structure Plan has a number of policies concerned with detailed aspects of the provision of housing. It is the intention of this document to expand upon these policies, not merely repeat their content. However, for reference, relevant policies from the Structure Plan are set out below:

**H1-H3** *set out the overall numbers, and phasing, of housing required.*

**H4** *new housing should be in locations that are close to employment areas.*

**H5** *new housing will be achieved by infilling within existing settlements, the redevelopment of existing buildings; the change of use of non-residential buildings and the sub-division of existing dwellings.*

**H6** *loss of particular residential properties will only be acceptable if replaced elsewhere.*

**H7** *an appropriate proportion of housing shall be affordable housing to meet local needs.*

**H8** *affordable housing to meet local needs can be approved in rural areas as an exception to normal planning restrictions.*

**H9** *encourages the provision of a range of densities, dwelling types and sizes; with particular emphasis on identified local or special needs.*

**H10** *housing will be encouraged within or on the fringe of town centres.*

**H11** *identifies criteria for the selection of gypsy transit sites.*

## 3.3 BACKGROUND STUDIES AND STRATEGIES

3.3.1 The Council invited suggestions of sites that were available for development within West Berkshire during the plan period, with all comments and proposals being considered by the Council's Local Plan Review Panel. A draft Housing Distribution Strategy was published at two stages for public consultation in 1994 and in 1995. Further sites were put forward by objectors at the Local Plan Inquiry, following which the Inspector recommended the inclusion of some additional sites.

3.3.2 Each year the Council prepares a survey of planning commitments and completions for the previous year in conjunction with the Berkshire Unitary Authorities' Joint Strategic Planning Unit.

3.3.3 The Rural White Paper (2000) identifies the part housing has to play in maintaining a living countryside. The importance of encouraging a wide range of housing options is highlighted, with specific emphasis being placed upon the provision of affordable housing.

3.3.4 The Council has for many years sought to provide a corporate approach to housing related issues through the preparation of a corporate housing strategy. The strategy contains an assessment of housing need and priorities for dealing with that need.

### 3.4 KEY HOUSING AIMS

3.4.1 The housing chapter of the Local Plan has four key aims;

- (i) *to make an adequate allocation of housing sites to accommodate 9000 dwellings of a variety of types in a variety of locations,*
- (ii) *to locate housing having due regard to the principles of sustainable development,*
- (iii) *to secure the maximum level of affordable dwellings to meet the needs of the local population,*
- (iv) *to ensure the creation of 'quality' housing schemes which maintain and enhance the character and appearance of the area in which they are to be located.*

3.4.2 This plan makes provision for about 9,000 dwellings to be constructed across West Berkshire between 1991 and 2006. This allocation is made in the following way:

Completions April 1991 to March 2001	5,170
Outstanding commitments at March 2001 <i>(Allowing for an element of non-completion on small sites with planning permission)</i>	1,226
Thatcham MOD Depot	550
Local Plan Housing Sites	1,379
Unidentified Small Sites <i>(Allowing for non-completions)</i>	695
Urban/Brownfield Sites	200
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>9,220</b>

In this table outstanding commitments include all hard commitments (sites with planning permission) and soft commitments (sites resolved to be approved subject to the completion of a section 106 planning obligation) on sites over 1ha. It excludes Local Plan housing sites which are identified separately in this table and set out in detail in policy HSG.5.

Small unidentified sites are defined as sites of less than one hectare which have not previously been allocated through the local plan process. Soft commitments of less than 1ha are also included in the allowance for small unidentified sites.

3.4.3 A cautious approach has been adopted towards the forecast contribution from small unidentified sites and a suitable level of non completions has been allowed for within both the unidentified small sites figure and the existing small site commitments. In addition, based upon past experience, a further 40 dwellings per annum are expected to be built on urban/brownfield sites. Taken together, these seek to reflect recent government guidance in PPG3 and maximise the contribution of 'previously developed' land.

3.4.4 It is not sufficient to simply identify enough land for housing. The creation of quality housing design and layout is essential. To this end development statements have been prepared for the Local Plan housing sites specifically identified in this plan. In many instances these development statements have been prepared in conjunction with the local communities involved. The development statements, which are attached in Appendix 10 of this plan, attempt to ensure that new development respects and enhances the existing village or neighbourhood. They set out the required elements for development of the respective sites. Also illustrated is a preferred form of development.

**3.4.5** The achievement of a quality development will be central to the consideration of all planning applications. Principles of design, environment and community benefit, to which all developments should have regard, are set out in Policies OVS.2.

**3.4.7** This plan aims to help achieve the aims of the Council's corporate housing strategy which has a primary purpose of 'ensuring that the accommodation needs of the population within the district are met, with priority given to those who are unable to meet their own housing need'.

**3.4.8** One particular area where this plan can assist in meeting housing need is by enabling land to come forward for affordable housing. Policies HSG.9 and 11 will make land available for the provision of affordable housing and encourage partnerships between the Council, Housing Associations and private housing developers.

**3.4.9** The Council will encourage the use of energy efficient designs, layouts, materials and new technologies with particular emphasis upon the generation and conservation of electricity and heat. Furthermore it will encourage designs that will conserve domestic and rain water. These designs should be compatible with the aim of preserving and enhancing the character of West Berkshire's built and rural areas.

**3.4.10** The Council wishes to ensure that new development has an attractive visual environment, including space around buildings. A balance is required between the efficient and effective use of land available for development, and the private amenity and privacy of occupiers and their neighbours. The Council will continue to encourage the provision of adequate private amenity space through Supplementary Planning Guidance. At the same time, developments will be expected to comply with the advice given in PPG3 relating to density.

## **3.5 SMALL SCALE DEVELOPMENT WITHIN SETTLEMENTS AND THE COUNTRYSIDE**

### **THE IDENTIFICATION OF SETTLEMENTS FOR PLANNING PURPOSES**

**3.5.1** The countryside of West Berkshire contains many groups of dwellings, from small groups of 2 or 3 dwellings high on the downlands to the major towns such as Newbury and Thatcham. It is not appropriate to allow new development in the smaller of these groups of dwellings for two clear reasons. Firstly, development ideally should be located close to existing services and facilities that are normally only found in settlements of some size, and secondly small scatters of housing are a characteristic of the Berkshire countryside that should not be destroyed by continuous infill development.

**3.5.2** Dwellings will continue to be built on small unidentified sites. In accordance with Structure Plan policies C1 and H5 these sites will be mostly within the identified settlement boundaries of existing settlements identified in this Plan. The identified settlements are those areas of long established close knit development, large enough to contain a basic range of facilities.

**3.5.3** In preparing this Plan, the Council has reviewed the settlement boundaries set out in the NDLP (1993). In addition this plan includes four further settlements for which a close knit settlement can be identified in accordance with the criteria set out in Appendix 12. The criteria listed in Appendix 12 comprise a balanced and consistent test as to whether existing buildings (and land) should or should not be contained within identified settlement boundaries. The criteria define the principles upon which these boundaries are drawn up; they provide for a thorough and rigorous examination of all West Berkshire's settlements, in order that the surrounding rural areas are not unduly compromised by potentially harmful development.

**3.5.4** In accordance with policy H5 of the Structure Plan, small scale development on unidentified sites will be acceptable in the form of redevelopment and change of use, or infilling within the identified boundaries of the settlements set out in policy HSG.1. Outside settlement boundaries, development will only be acceptable in exceptional circumstances. Special regard should be had to policies of countryside protection and enhancement when considering new housing development outside settlements.

**POLICY HSG.1** New housing development will normally be permitted within the identified boundaries of the following settlements:

Aldermaston	Curridge	Pangbourne
Aldermaston Wharf	Donnington	Peasemore
Ashmore Green	Eastbury	Purley
Beenham	East Garston	Stockcross
Boxford	East Ilsley	Streatley
Bradfield	Enborne Row	Tadley/Pamber Heath
Bradfield Southend	Great Shefford	Thatcham
Brightwalton	Greenham	Theale
Brightwalton Green	Hampstead Norreys	Tidmarsh
Brimpton	Hermitage	Tilehurst
Burghfield	Hungerford	Upper Basildon
Burghfield Common	Kintbury	Upper Bucklebury
Burghfield Bridge	Lambourn	West Ilsley
Calcot	Leckhampstead	Wickham
Chieveley	Lower Basildon	Woolhampton
Cold Ash	Mortimer	Yattendon
Compton	Newbury	

provided such development, either on undeveloped land or following the demolition of existing development, accords with other relevant policies of the development plan, and has regard to the following criteria:

- (i) the existing residential nature of the area surrounding the site;
- (ii) the need to protect special landscape, open space or amenity features which give character not only to the site but also the surrounding area;
- (iii) the scale of development and its likely impact on the general amenity of the area, for example, where there is already severe on street parking, and local access difficulties;
- (iv) provision for improving where appropriate the visual amenity and nature of the area by removing eyesores, derelict buildings and environmental problem uses;
- (v) the cumulative effects of infill development and redevelopment to ensure that it does not materially damage the special character and amenity of an established residential area or settlement

### 3.5.5 EXCEPTIONS TO NORMAL RESTRICTIONS ON NEW HOUSING IN THE COUNTRYSIDE

**POLICY HSG.2** – Not Saved; Refer to Appendix 13.

### THE RELAXATION OF AGRICULTURAL OCCUPANCY CONDITIONS

**3.5.6** There are many agricultural workers dwellings throughout West Berkshire's rural areas. Such properties are available at low cost and thereby perform a valuable function within the rural economy. Many of these dwellings are subject to planning conditions restricting occupation to those in agricultural employment. In order to ensure this stock of housing is not lost the Council will generally resist the relaxation of agricultural occupancy restrictions. There may be situations when there is demonstrated to be no further requirement for the dwelling to house an agricultural worker in the locality. In such cases the Council will firstly consider whether there are other local housing needs that could be accommodated in the dwelling. Examples of local housing needs are set out in paragraph 3.11.2.

**POLICY HSG.3** The Council will refuse applications to relax agricultural occupancy conditions unless it can be demonstrated by the applicant that:

- a) there is no longer a continuing need for accommodation for persons employed or last employed in agriculture in the locality; and
- b) the property has been marketed without success at a value, and in a manner, which reflects the occupancy restriction; and
- c) the property could not meet any other existing local housing need.

### **3.6 DEVELOPMENT WITHIN URBAN AREAS AND ON BROWNFIELD SITES**

**POLICY HSG.4** – Not Saved; Refer to Appendix 13.

### **3.7 THATCHAM MOD STORAGE DEPOT**

**3.7.1** The Council in association with the landowner, the Ministry of Defence, drew up a planning brief for the Thatcham MOD Depot in 1999 and 2000. The brief was approved by the Environment Committee on 6 July 2000.

**3.7.2** Two identical outline planning applications, numbers 156710 and 156711, (January 2000) were submitted for residential development (with improved access and transport links, associated open space and landscaping) at the MOD Storage Depot, Station Road, Thatcham for the development of approximately 550 dwellings. These applications were considered at the Thatcham Area Planning Sub-Committee (July 2000) where they were resolved to be approved subject to a S.106 planning obligation. On 30 October 2001 this site was granted outline planning consent.

### **3.8 ALLOCATION OF NEW HOUSING SITES**

**3.8.1** It is a fundamental aim of the planning process to seek sustainable locations for housing. However, this does not mean that all the new housing should be located in or on the edge of West Berkshire's towns.

**3.8.2** West Berkshire contains many villages with a broad range of facilities that can cater for many of the day to day requirements of their residents. It is an important aim of sustainability and the Government's strategy for rural areas to ensure that the range of services offered in such villages is maintained by allowing natural growth. In the smaller villages this will be done through unidentified small sites coming forward in accordance with Policy HSG.1 and through the development of affordable housing schemes for local needs (Policy HSG.11). However some of the larger settlements with a wider range of services are able to accommodate larger allocations of housing.

**3.8.3** A number of settlements have been identified with potential for such allocations in the plan period. Development statements have been prepared for these sites in consultation with locally based 'community working parties' or the relevant parish or town council.

**3.8.4** Development statements setting out the required elements, and illustrating the preferred forms of development for these sites are attached at Appendix 10. These may be reviewed with further consultation, as appropriate, to take account of local circumstances at the time a development proposal is made. Locations of allocated sites are shown on the inset maps noted. It is expected that the layout will be in the form shown on the development statements. Open areas within the development will be treated as important open space once development is complete, and be subject to policy ENV.31.



**POLICY HSG.5** The Council will grant planning permission for housing development on sites indicated on the Proposals Map in the following settlements, subject to provision of the required elements set out in the relevant development statement:

Location	Parish	No. of dwellings	Inset Map
Fisherman's Lane, Aldermaston	Aldermaston	30	2
South Aldermaston	Aldermaston	46	2
Upper Bucklebury	Bucklebury	40	1
Chieveley (two sites)	Chieveley	50	13
Newbury Racecourse, Greenham	Greenham	180	1
Pinchington Lane, Deadman's Lane, Newbury	Greenham	150	1
Cementation Site, Hermitage	Hermitage	165	20
Bath Road, Eddington	Hungerford	36	5
Salisbury Road, Hungerford	Hungerford	58	5
Mortimer Hill, Mortimer	Mortimer	120	30
Enborne Road, Newbury	Newbury	55	1
Manor Park, Newbury	Cold Ash	80	1
Park House School, Newbury	Greenham/ Newbury	70	1
Basingstoke Road / Mill Lane, Aldermaston Wharf	Padworth	60	2
Long Lane, Purley	Purley	95	3
Stockcross	Speen	9	1
Land adjacent to Benham's Farm. Burghfield Common	Sulhamstead	80	3
North West Thatcham	Cold Ash	55	1
<b>Total</b>		<b>1,379 dwellings</b>	

In addition development on the above sites must be in accordance with all other relevant policies of this plan.

3.8.5 The number of dwellings indicated in the table above reflect the advice in PPG3 that housing densities of less than 30 dwellings per hectare (net) should be avoided in order to make the most efficient use of land. The precise number of dwellings to be accommodated on each site will be determined, taking account of all other factors, when considering specific planning applications.

### 3.9 PLANNING BENEFITS RELATING TO NEW HOUSING DEVELOPMENT

POLICY HSG.7 – Not Saved; Refer to Appendix 13.

### 3.10 HOUSING TO MEET THE NEEDS OF DISABLED PEOPLE

3.10.1 In order to widen the choice of housing to all members of the community a significant proportion of new housing is to be constructed to a standard which could be easily converted for occupation by people with disabilities. While these properties will not always be occupied by those with disabilities, if constructed to a certain standard they can be easily adapted to a particular occupant's needs, if so required. Appropriate features to be incorporated in such new housing will include:

- a) a level or suitably ramped approach and flush threshold at the main entrance;
- b) internal planning for wheelchair manoeuvre into and within all principal rooms;
- c) downstairs bedroom and bathrooms or the ability to install a through floor lift;
- d) a bathroom and toilet large enough to permit lateral transfer from wheelchair to wc/bath;
- e) kitchen layout designed for easy access by wheelchair users.

The primary means for setting out these considerations should be the building regulations.

**POLICY HSG.8** The Council will seek, on suitable sites of more than 10 dwellings and where there is a local need, a proportion of those dwellings to be designed to be capable of alteration without further structural amendments to be accessible to people with disabilities and will refuse permission for proposals resulting in the loss of such dwellings.

3.10.2 PPG3 advises that where there is evidence of local need, provision could be made for housing accessible to the disabled on suitable sites. Such provision would normally be located close to shops and public transport and be in an area of level ground.

### 3.11 AFFORDABLE HOUSING FOR LOCAL NEEDS

3.11.1 The Council's Housing Strategy seeks to quantify the level of housing need in West Berkshire and identifies many ways in which this housing need can be met. The active waiting list and housing needs surveys indicate an additional annual housing need in excess of 1000 homes. While much of this need can be met from existing stock, shortfalls of between 146 and 444 dwellings per annum were anticipated during the three years 1995/6 - 1997/8. The planning system has the potential to provide for some of this shortfall. Therefore in accordance with its housing strategy the Council will seek to maximise the proportion of affordable housing for local needs on new developments. The Council will regularly monitor and review the needs for, and the achievement of, affordable homes.

3.11.2 The local needs that the Council are particularly keen to target include; homeless families, homeless vulnerable singles, those leaving care, those with other special needs and other persons on the housing waiting lists. Affordable housing encompasses both low-cost market housing and subsidised housing. Affordable housing will normally be provided through a registered social landlord (in a range of types and tenures including shared ownership). There could be situations where there would not be a registered social landlord, in that situation the Council will require that the affordable housing is accessible for the targeted groups listed above, and that the quality of the affordable housing is not compromised.

3.11.3 It is essential that the housing units provided are affordable. As a guide the Housing Strategy suggests that net rents and/or mortgage payments should not normally exceed 30% of a tenants disposable income. The achievement of such rent/mortgage levels is ultimately the responsibility of the housing association that manages the housing units. The Council will assist in ensuring the availability of land for housing associations by the following approach:

- a) On sites not allocated through the local plan, consideration will be given to the level of housing need in the area and the suitability of the site to accommodate affordable housing. Circular 6/98 provides guidance on factors to be taken into account when considering the provision of affordable housing including site size,

suitability and the economics of provision. This would apply to schemes involving special needs housing, including sheltered housing for the elderly, but special consideration would be given to the particular circumstances and proposals in each scheme. This guidance is reflected in Policy HSG.9. In most areas of West Berkshire, studies show that need is greater than can be provided through the planning system. Therefore as a starting point applicants for residential development should consider the provision of at least 30%. Due to the level of need in West Berkshire and the scarcity of suitable sites, financial contributions towards affordable housing will only be considered in lieu of on-site provision in exceptional circumstances.

b) On sites specifically identified in this plan for housing an assessment has been made of the housing need in conjunction with the Council's Housing Manager, the Rural Housing Trust and through consultation with the communities involved. The levels of required affordable housing are therefore set out in the development statements accompanying those housing allocations. The need for affordable housing will be reassessed at the time of the planning application.

c) On all new housing sites the land necessary to provide the agreed proportion of affordable housing shall be made available to a housing association at a cost reflecting administration, servicing of the site and the value of the land prior to achieving planning permission. Alternatively the dwellings could be built, to the housing association's specifications, by the developer.

d) This plan makes provision in Policy HSG.11 for rural exceptions sites in accordance with Structure Plan policy H8. All housing on these sites will be affordable. The Council will not consider cross-subsidy on these sites. On rural exception sites the Council will need to be satisfied that the land is being offered at an appropriate price. Such a price should reflect current agricultural land values, administration costs and occasionally compensation for any adverse impact upon remaining land holdings.

e) It is essential that all affordable dwellings achieved through the planning process remain affordable. Different situations will call for different solutions. However the Council will normally expect such matters to be covered by a suitable legal agreement or planning condition and administered by a housing association that has been registered with the Housing Corporation or other Registered Social Landlord.

**POLICY HSG.9** The Council will seek the provision of a range of type and tenure of affordable housing units on sites not allocated through the local plan process. This applies to housing developments of 15 or more dwellings or 0.5 hectare or more. An assessment of the proportion of land or dwellings to be made available for affordable housing will be based upon;

a) the level of local need;

b) the suitability of the site to accommodate affordable housing; and

c) the level of other infrastructure requirements to be funded by the development. In exceptional circumstances the Council will consider a financial contribution towards affordable housing provision in lieu of on-site provision.

The Council will regularly monitor and review the needs for, and the achievement of, affordable homes.

**POLICY HSG.10 – Not Saved; Refer to Appendix 13.**

**3.11.4** Policy HSG.11 represents a major departure from the general aim of retaining housing development within settlements or on brownfield sites. This departure is justified because it enables housing associations to take further action to provide for the considerable levels of housing need that exist throughout West Berkshire.

**3.11.5** The principle of rural exceptions is widely established in PPG3 and Structure Plan Policy H8 and applies across West Berkshire with the exception of Newbury, Thatcham and the western edge of Reading. In the rural areas schemes should be small scale, not normally exceeding 12 dwellings.

**POLICY HSG.11** The Council, where justified as an exception to other policies of this Plan, will grant permission for small scale affordable housing schemes to meet identified local needs on sites adjacent to existing rural settlements provided;

- a) the need has been established by way of a recent local survey of housing need; and
- b) a scheme is prepared and agreed to reserve and control the occupancy of the dwelling for local needs; and
- c) the development does not adversely affect any landscape features that are important to the rural character of the area; and
- d) the development accords with Policy OVS.2;
- e) provision should be made for such schemes to be managed and occupied so that they remain affordable in perpetuity.

### 3.12 RESIDENTIAL USE OF SPACE ABOVE SHOPS AND OFFICES

3.12.1 The Council is committed, through its corporate housing strategy, to improve the range of housing opportunities in town centres. It supports the principles of widening the range of housing as set out in Structure Plan policy H9 and H10. One area where planning can assist with this aim is through adopting a positive approach to the reuse of space over shops. In such circumstances it may also be appropriate to relax normal planning standards for residential garden areas and parking spaces.

**POLICY HSG.13** The Council will permit proposals for the residential use of and refuse proposals resulting in the loss of self contained access to, the upper floors of appropriate premises in town centres. In appropriate cases the normal requirement for car parking provision will be reduced or waived. Requirement for private amenity space may also be reduced or waived.

3.12.2 Proposals resulting in the loss of such units will be supported, in terms of Structure Plan policy H6, only where appropriate provision is made for replacement units.

### 3.13 RETENTION OF MOBILE HOME PARKS

3.13.1 PPG 3 notes that residential mobile homes may have a part to play in providing low cost accommodation for small households. The Council acknowledges the contribution that such properties play in producing a varied housing stock. In 1994 there were some 790 mobile homes on registered parks in West Berkshire. These mobile home parks will normally be protected from redevelopment. A list of these is noted in Appendix 3.

**POLICY HSG.14** The Council will normally resist the redevelopment and loss of existing mobile home parks except where the site is to be redeveloped with affordable housing for an identified local need.

### 3.14 TEMPORARY RESIDENTIAL ACCOMMODATION

POLICY HSG.15 – Not Saved; Refer to Appendix 13.

### 3.15 PURLEY PARK RIVER ESTATE

POLICY HSG.16 – Not Saved; Refer to Appendix 13.

### 3.16 GYPSY TRANSIT SITES

3.16.1 The Structure Plan considers that a sufficient number of sites are currently provided within the county to meet the needs of gypsies residing permanently in Berkshire. Six permanent sites are provided county-wide of which one is within West Berkshire. In addition to this site which is located at Burghfield, there is also a private site at Paices Hill, Aldermaston.

3.16.2 The Structure Plan identifies the need to make adequate provision for the gypsy transit sites. Policy H11 of the Structure Plan suggests such criteria as proximity to primary road network, distance from residential and business properties and the level of self containment should be included in the site selection process.

3.16.3 This plan does not select specific sites. In order to allow the Council to respond positively to proposals for transit sites, should a particular need be identified during the plan period, policy HSG.17 sets out the criteria that will be used to consider the acceptability of such sites.

**POLICY HSG.17** The Council will normally approve proposals for gypsy transit sites where a particular need has been demonstrated provided;

- a) the site has easy and safe access to the primary road network; and
- b) the site is located so as not to cause disturbance to neighbouring land-uses; and
- c) the site has strong existing natural boundaries that with reasonable enhancement would contain the site both visually and physically; and
- d) the site is accessible to local services such as schools and hospitals; and
- e) the transit site would not adversely effect a recognised ecological site such as a SSSI or WHS; and
- f) no site will lie within the North Wessex Downs AONB, unless there is an exceptional need for such a location; and
- g) on-site, there is opportunity for an element of mixed use, such that some 'business' operations linked with the gypsies can be undertaken.

#### PERMANENT GYPSY SITES

3.16.4 In accordance with government guidance (Circular 1/94) the policy below sets out the criteria that will be used to consider proposals for permanent gypsy sites.

**POLICY HSG.17A** The Council will normally approve proposals for permanent gypsy sites, where a particular need has been demonstrated provided;

- a) the site has safe and easy access to the primary road network; and
- b) the site is located so as not to cause disturbance to neighbouring land uses; and
- c) the site has strong existing natural boundaries that are capable of landscape enhancement; and
- d) the site is accessible to local services, including schools, shops and hospitals; and
- e) the site would not adversely affect a recognised ecological site; and
- f) the site does not lie within the North Wessex Downs AONB unless an exceptional need has been demonstrated for such a location; and
- g) on site , there is an opportunity for an element of mixed use, so that some business operations linked with gypsies can be undertaken , subject to no detriment to local residential amenity.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: THE ECONOMY**

### **Policies**

**ECON.1** *Retention of Existing Employment Sites*

**ECON.2A** *Employment Schemes on Non Protected Sites*

**ECON.2** *Alternative uses for Existing Committed Employment Sites – **NOT SAVED***

**ECON.3** *Retention of 'Bad neighbour' Uses – **NOT SAVED***

**ECON.4** *Enhancement of Employment Areas and their Surroundings – **NOT SAVED***

**ECON.5** *Town Centre Commercial Areas*

**ECON.6** *Future of the former Greenham Common Airbase*

**ECON.7** *Safeguarding Rail-based Industry at Theale*

**ECON.8 & 9** *Racehorse Industry*

## **CHAPTER FOUR: ECONOMY**

### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

4.1.1 Retaining existing jobs and creating new employment opportunities are principal priorities of the Local Plan, in so far as these objectives can be met by the plan-making process. A healthy economy is reflected in the environment and vitality of the District and contributes to the quality of life of those who live and work here. The Council is particularly concerned that there should be a wide range of employment opportunities to meet the needs and aspirations of the local workforce.

4.1.2 However, there can be less attractive consequences of an active economy. Traffic congestion, pollution, unattractive development, pressure for future housing, loss of open spaces, noise and disturbance are all problems that can arise in varying degrees. Whilst jobs are important, so is the need for positive and effective planning control.

4.1.3 Besides making decisions in its role as a planning authority, the Council impacts on the economy of the area in a number of other ways:

- it is a major employer;
- it is a major purchaser of goods and services
- it is an owner of property;
- it has important links with statutory undertakers regarding infrastructure and servicing provision;
- it provides information on development opportunities, workforce characteristics and services;
- it has the power to prepare an economic development strategy.

4.1.4 The Rural White Paper (2000) contains measures to enhance the role of market towns and widen the economy in rural areas. Measures to aid rural diversification in order to strengthen the agricultural economy are included. In order to achieve the latter objective, the re-use and redevelopment of rural buildings for employment, will be encouraged. This emphasis is picked up via policy ENV.19 in this Plan, (reuse and adaptation of rural buildings) and policy ENV.20 (redevelopment of rural buildings).

4.1.5 The principal sources of national policy guidance are in PPG4: Industrial and Commercial Development and Small Firms, and PPG7: The Countryside and the Rural Economy. Other PPGs are of some relevance, particularly PPG13: Transport. These guidance notes stress the importance of ensuring sufficient land and buildings are available for generating employment, in a variety of sizes and sites to meet differing needs and in sustainable locations.

4.1.6 The Regional Guidance for the South East RPG9 (2001) contains a vision of encouraging economic success throughout the region, ensuring a high quality of environment and more sustainable patterns of development.

### **4.2 STRUCTURE PLAN POLICIES**

4.2.1 The Structure Plan notes that the County has in recent years experienced high rates of industrial and commercial development. There is now a substantial amount of unbuilt floorspace that has planning permission, or has been accepted in principle; there is also a significant quantity of vacant floorspace on the property market. If recent completion rates and take-up rates continue, then the present stock of commitments and empty premises will last well into the new century.

**4.2.2** The Structure Plan sets out a careful approach towards new employment-generating development; no strategic allocations are made. However, the Structure Plan policies do allow some flexibility, with scope for employment development where it would not unduly add to transport problems or pressures for new housing development. This is to allow opportunities for businesses to expand, premises to be modernised or redeveloped and jobs lost in declining industries to be replaced. That approach assists urban regeneration and the re-use of development land in line with Government guidance and allows more flexibility in providing jobs for the local workforce.

**4.2.3** The Structure Plan policies are summarised below: BU1 permits new business, industrial and distribution development, subject to a number of criteria primarily related to meeting the needs of existing firms and employment needs of the local population, whilst not adding to pressures for new housing or transport problems. Other factors to be taken into account include the amount of land available for employment uses and the rate of completions and occupation of premises. BU2 states that, within the provisions of BU1, favourable consideration will be given to the expansion of existing businesses, providing small units and the provision of industrial and distribution units. BU3 actively promotes the alternative use of committed and built employment areas across the District, in circumstances defined in local plans, subject to there being no unacceptable adverse impact upon the availability of industrial and warehousing land and premises. Permission for the renewal of employment generating schemes will likewise, not be automatically granted.

### **4.3 BACKGROUND STUDIES AND STRATEGIES**

**4.3.1** The Council has in recent years published an Economic Development Strategy in consultation with the business community and with other organisations active in the field of economic development. The Council works closely with the Thames Valley Economic Partnership, the Berkshire and Southern Buckinghamshire Enterprise Agency, Action in West Berkshire, the West Berkshire Training Consortium, the local Education Business Partnership and the Thames and Chiltern Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

**4.3.2** The Council commissioned the University of Reading to undertake a District wide Economic Survey in May 1995, to look at the following issues and trends:

- a) The local economy - structure and performance.
- b) The state of West Berkshire in the 1990's; issues to be included were communications, the rural economy, impact of the peace dividend and the effects of development at Greenham Common.

The second part of the Study considered the future economic prospects for Newbury, incorporating a detailed analysis of the economy and presented options for the District in the 21st century.

**4.3.3** The final results of this study were made available in the spring of 1996. The initial findings of the report have informed the preparation of this chapter. They are as follows: i) The District has been a successful growth area in the 1980s, as part of rural, accessible lowland England, in the south-east's western arc. ii) The movement of skilled people into the area has led in particular to greater numbers seeking to live in the rural areas. iii) This significant in-migration has been assisted by a second-wave of 'counter-urbanisation', which has caused greater numbers to live in the rural areas. iv) This in turn has created higher numbers of jobs and businesses in the countryside. v) Regional policy constraints in the mid 1990's should lead to a renewed focus on urban renewal and diversion of economic growth to the Eastern Thames Corridor. vi) This may mean relatively slow economic growth in the District, but rural employment should be sustained, due to the area's local accessibility and the inherent quality of the environment.

**4.3.4** The implications of the District Economic Study, the Rural England White Paper and the update of PPG7 will be monitored.



## 4.4 KEY AIMS - ECONOMY

4.4.1 On employment issues, the Council will continue to work with organisations in Business and Industry and other organisations that impact on employment in West Berkshire, to:

- (i) maintain and enhance the economic health of West Berkshire, especially the rural economy and through rural economic diversification;
- (ii) encourage the provision of new employment - generating development, providing it does not give rise to any additional transport problems in West Berkshire, nor adds unduly to housing pressures and meets the environmental objectives of this Plan;
- (iii) resist the loss of existing employment floorspace where it is not being replaced or where the intention is to replace B2 and B8 floorspace with B1 offices, (which are over-provided for) unless other specific policies prevail.
- (iv) encourage improvements to industrial sites where the existing use has adverse environmental effects, or encourage the re-location of businesses that have adverse environmental effects in urban areas;
- (v) improve the accessibility of residents to employment opportunities via tele-working sites and home-based working, through the provision of a range of sites, the encouragement of training schemes and provision of support such as childcare.

## 4.5 RETENTION OF EXISTING EMPLOYMENT SITES

4.5.1 In accordance with the key aims it is the Council's policy to both extend diversity in the local economic base and address the needs of the rural economy. In so doing it is essential that employment areas in West Berkshire are retained for such uses. However, a flexible approach is required in these areas to enable renewal of premises to meet changing market needs. The question of small businesses also needs to be considered, given the fact that many of West Berkshire's employment areas support small companies.

4.5.2 Constraint remains on new employment development in the countryside, subject (inter alia) to policies ENV.19 and ENV.20 in the Plan. Employment schemes outside those sites listed in policy ECON.1, but inside settlements, are to be encouraged, in appropriate circumstances, in accordance with the key aims outlined above.

4.5.2A A number of MOD sites are located in West Berkshire's rural areas, which are extremely important to the local economy. The sites concerned are AWE Burghfield and Aldermaston, and RAF Welford, and the army establishment at Hermitage.

4.5.3 Policy ECON.1 seeks to retain key employment sites significant to the availability of business, industrial and warehousing land and premises. These areas are defined on the Proposals Map. The employment sites to which the policy applies are as follows:

- 1) Newbury town: Hambridge Road and Lane, London Road Estates, Newbury Business Park, Turnpike and Castle Estates.
- 2) Hungerford: Station Yard, Smitham Bridge Road, and Charnham Park.
- 3) Lambourn: Membury Estate and Lowesdon Works.
- 4) Thatcham: Green Lane and Colthrop.
- 5) Aldermaston: Calleva Park and Paices Hill (Youngs).
- 5) Beenham Industrial Area.
- 6) Theale: Arlington Business Park, Station Road and adjacent estates. Sheffield Bottom.
- 7) Red Shute Hill, Hermitage.
- 8) Horseshoe Park, Pangbourne.

The three criteria used to select these sites were;

- (a) accessibility to the local workforce;
- (b) protection of the nature and characteristics of premises in the light of jobs provided;
- (c) sites significant to the rural economy in accordance with the key aims.

The total number of 'estates' noted above is 21. This correlates to the great majority of employment areas in West Berkshire. Policy ECON.1 does allow for the expansion of existing businesses, but only within the defined employment sites noted on the Inset Maps.

**POLICY ECON.1** The Council will permit proposals for the development and redevelopment of existing employment sites as identified on the Proposals and inset maps, only to appropriate alternative employment generating uses where:

- (a) the proposed buildings and structures are of a scale and character appropriate to the nature of the site and sympathetic to the surrounding environment; and
- (b) landscape proposals are included where necessary as an integral part of the redevelopment scheme to help blend the development into the wider environment; and
- (c) the proposals make provision for employment opportunities important to the local economy; and
- (d) there is no material intensification of use leading to increased traffic activity or other forms of environmental intrusion; and
- (e) there are no transport/highway objections and adequate provision has been made for access and parking;
- (f) the development does not give rise to pressures for housing development additional to the provision made in this Plan.

4.5.4 The Council is prepared however, to acknowledge the special nature of Marley's operations and the particular value of this employment base and treat 'reasonable' proposals for its own operational needs and expansion (both within and adjacent to the defined area) sympathetically. Any such proposal submitted on this basis would be judged on its merits especially in respect of the AONB setting and the need to conserve its natural beauty and the overall employment position at the time when presented to the Council in the form of a planning application.

#### EMPLOYMENT SCHEMES ON NON-PROTECTED SITES

4.5.5 There are a range of other employment sites in West Berkshire which are not protected by Policy ECON.1. However to accord with policy BU1 of the Structure Plan, a policy in the Local Plan should address situations where planning applications arise on these sites for employment schemes. The policy is as follows.

**POLICY ECON.2A** Proposals to redevelop, re use or extend other existing employment generating sites will be permitted provided that:

- (a) the proposed buildings and structures are of a scale and character appropriate to the nature of the site and sympathetic to the surrounding environment; and
- (b) landscape proposals are included where necessary as an integral part of the scheme to help blend the development into the wider environment; and
- (c) the proposals make provision for employment opportunities important to the local economy; and
- (d) there is no material intensification of use leading to increased traffic activity or other forms of environmental intrusion; and
- (e) there are no transport/highway objections and adequate provision has been made for access and parking; and
- (f) the development does not give rise to pressures for housing development additional to the provision made in this plan.

## 4.6 ALTERNATIVE USES FOR EXISTING COMMITTED EMPLOYMENT SITES

POLICY ECON.2 – Not Saved; Refer to Appendix 13.

## 4.7 RETENTION OF 'BAD-NEIGHBOUR' USES

POLICY ECON.3 - Not Saved; Refer to Appendix 13.

## 4.8 ENHANCEMENT OF EMPLOYMENT AREAS AND THEIR SURROUNDINGS

POLICY ECON.4 – Not Saved; Refer to Appendix 13.

## 4.9 TOWN CENTRE COMMERCIAL AREAS

4.9.1 Newbury is identified as a major town centre in the revised Berkshire Structure Plan. However, it is not only the focus for shopping development in West Berkshire but also for employment provision. Given the range of factors which impinge upon Newbury, namely issues of conservation, shopping, employment, access and recreation, it is considered appropriate to define a commercial core area for the town centre. Within this core area, major new office schemes (defined as having a gross floorspace of 500m<sup>2</sup> or more) may be favourably considered, subject to the criteria set out in policy ECON.5. Outside, such development will be resisted except where in accordance with Structure Plan policies BU1 and BU2 and policy ECON.1 of this Plan. This will assist in protecting those areas outside the commercial core from unacceptable impact of large office schemes.

4.9.2 Similarly, there are four other settlements in West Berkshire, which, in the Council's view, require the identification of a commercial core area; namely, Hungerford, Thatcham, Theale and Pangbourne. Whilst these four towns have smaller commercial core areas than Newbury, there is still a need for identification; since these are where the primary commercial uses are concentrated which are immediately available to the public. For this reason the core areas exclude the major employment areas associated with the towns concerned. However, there is likely to be continuing pressure for new business development in the centres noted, over the Plan period and it is considered correct to direct these pressures to the core areas concerned, for reasons of sustainability. Therefore policy ECON.5 will apply to these centres.

4.9.3 It should be recognised that the Council will examine closely the traffic generation arising from new employment schemes within the Newbury town area in order to minimise the impact of such traffic on its historic fabric, general environment and commercial attractiveness.

**POLICY ECON.5** The Council will permit proposals for business development within the 'commercial areas' of Newbury, Thatcham, Hungerford, Pangbourne and Theale (as defined in inset maps 4, 33, 5, 31 and 34) provided:

- (a) it does not give rise to transport, parking or infrastructure problems; and
- (b) it does not harm the physical or visual character of the area, the amenities of adjoining land uses especially residential uses or the relationship between existing development and the surrounding or adjoining landscape/open space areas; and
- (c) it does not unduly prejudice the prime shopping frontages (Policy SHOP.1); and
- (d) it makes provision for a reasonable variety and scale of business development appropriate to the nature and character of the centre concerned; and
- (e) the development does not give rise to pressures for housing development additional to the provision made in this Plan. Proposals for business development will also be expected to provide planning benefits appropriate to the scale and nature of the scheme as set out in policy OVS.3.

## 4.10 FUTURE OF THE FORMER GREENHAM COMMON AIRBASE

4.10.1 Following extensive public consultation and discussion with the landowner and others having an interest in the land, a Planning Brief for the future of the former Greenham Common Airbase was adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) by the Council's Development Services Committee on 7th June 1994.

4.10.2 The former Airbase was declared surplus to defence requirements in February 1993 and comprises some 900 acres. In summary, the Brief proposes that most of the land should be restored to heathland grazing, much of which is designated SSSI. However, the former 'technical area Areas E and D3' on the south side of the base is to be used primarily for employment-generating purposes, with some sporting and recreational use. Major office developments will not be acceptable as these are already over-provided for.

4.10.3 Within the former technical area a range of new business, industrial and distribution development, sports and leisure facilities, an enterprise centre and day nursery have been developed. Provision of a site for 3 ha. is also made for a range of waste management purposes, in accordance with the Berkshire Waste Local Plan (1998). However, it is considered appropriate to continue to protect the area concerned, in order to retain employment opportunities in West Berkshire.

The Environment Agency is concerned that comprehensive drainage proposals should form part of any new development on the former airbase because of the potential risks from contaminated land on surface water runoff and water quality. New development will not be permitted unless comprehensive drainage is provided to serve the new development and mitigate potential risks.

4.10.4 The Greenham Common Trust, a local body with the Council as a member, was set up in 1994 to manage the Common "for the benefit of present and future generations." A profit making Management Company has since been set up as part of this Trust, to oversee the development and management of the employment scheme on the Areas E and D3.

**POLICY ECON.6** Within the area defined on inset map (1) on the former Greenham Common Airbase and in accordance with the provisions of the adopted planning brief, proposals for industrial, distribution and storage space will be permitted, provided:

- (a) such uses do not impinge upon the agreed space to be made available for sporting and waste processing facilities; and
- b) there is no demonstrable harm to the amenities and features of the surrounding area, especially the nearby SSSI; and
- (c) where relevant, practicable, and necessary, appropriate developer contributions will be sought to improve the infrastructure of the area (sports facilities, highways and transportation infrastructure as identified in Policy TRANS.2 and services) and the restoration of the nearby open areas of the Airbase, for nature conservation and public access purposes; and
- (d) that apart from the enterprise centre proposed by the Council, B1(a) office content will be restricted to no more than 15% of the overall floorspace permitted on the site in addition to that which is ancillary to other business use. Small scale starter industrial units will be encouraged, subject to the above criteria with the exception of (c); and
- (e) provision is made for comprehensive drainage as part of the new development to mitigate potential risks posed by contaminated land.

## 4.11 SAFEGUARDING RAIL-BASED INDUSTRY AT THEALE

4.11.1 The rail site at Wigmore Lane, Theale, is defined to include that area served by the rail link, i.e. the cement works, the coated stone treatment and distribution plant and the oil depot. These uses were permitted by the Secretary of State for the purpose of transferring goods from rail to road. It is this special use which needs to be protected due to the shortage of appropriate sites for such facilities across West Berkshire. The builders yard, house and paddock to the south of Wigmore Lane has now been included within this policy so as to provide a further opportunity for rail-served development. Any development of this site should be subject to satisfactory road access, this access should be contained within the existing rail site and not from outside.

4.11.2 Part of the site has been identified under the Berkshire Waste Local Plan as a preferred area for road to rail transfer operations, plus major recycling facilities which could include difficult and metal wastes. It is considered that these uses conform to the road to rail transfer designation, given the opportunity to transport such wastes, by rail from the site. Care must also be taken to ensure that mitigation measures are employed to limit impacts such as noise, dust and smell from waste transfer activities.

4.11.3 Policy T8 in the Structure Plan encourages road to rail transfer sites, subject to environmental and transport considerations. Any extension to the area designated under policy ECON.7 would therefore be subject to the following factors: (a) a demonstrated need for expansion of the rail-based industries; (b) the scale and intensity of the proposed development and its wider environmental impact; (c) its impact upon the existing residential properties which are in proximity, in particular, in terms of noise, traffic and visual intrusion; (d) the scale and nature of environmental and landscape improvements; (e) the provision of satisfactory access.

**POLICY ECON.7 The rail site at Theale should be reserved solely for those industries which require and need a permanent and proven rail link coupled with access to the primary road network.**

## 4.12 POLICIES ON THE RACEHORSE INDUSTRY

4.12.1 The Council recognise the particular importance of the racehorse industry to the local economy and the character of those parts of West Berkshire where this activity is established. The main centres for training are at Lambourn, East Garston and Eastbury and to a lesser extent at Compton, West and East Ilsley with a generally wider dispersal of establishments specialising in horse breeding.

4.12.2 The Council is concerned to ensure that adequate provision is made for the racehorse industry without causing harm to landscape quality, road safety, the character of settlements or amenities of local residents and to protect the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and any Conservation Areas affected by such activities.

4.12.3 In recent years a number of issues have emerged concerning the impact of the development and operation of the racehorse industry on rural settlements and the countryside. These issues include:

- (a) In established centres, the cumulative effect of development relating to the racehorse industry has been seen to threaten the form and character of settlements and their landscape setting and impose an unacceptable burden on local infrastructure;
- (b) An increasing tendency for owners of training establishments to consider redevelopment of their existing sites and relocation at or beyond the edge of settlements. This has the effect of subjecting the settlement to increased pressure for alternative development and of changing their character by the removal of a traditional feature. Relocation can, however, allow existing training establishments to expand and bring further employment, provide space for hostel accommodation, modern stables and facilities, and may remove problems of horse/vehicle/pedestrian conflict from the settlements;

- (c) The need to review the assessment of proposals for the location of racehorse industry establishments in open countryside. Racehorse training and breeding are rural activities but do not necessarily require isolated positions in open countryside;
- (d) The sub-division of existing yards.

**4.12.4** It is not the intention of the policy to seek to retain racehorse training and breeding establishments in their existing use if they are no longer suitable for the purpose. However, planning applications for re-use or development will be refused, if, arising from the scheme, material harm is demonstrated to the character and amenities of the settlement in which it is located, or the landscape and rural quality of the surrounding countryside or availability of local employment opportunities.

**4.12.5** In the context of policy ECON.8, the suitability of the location of existing establishments will be considered and evaluated against the following factors:

- a) the existing range of facilities on the site and their adequacy for the purpose of training and/or breeding horses;
- (b) the availability of and access to suitable gallops and training areas;
- (c) the impact on local roads including the safety of horses and riders and traffic using the highway;
- (d) the availability of sources of labour and the accommodation of personnel on site or in the locality.

**4.12.6** In summary the central objective of policy ECON.8 is to protect suitably located racehorse establishments with an appropriate range of facilities from redevelopment and reuse pressures. If left unchecked in planning terms these pressures could lead to demands for more training establishments in the open countryside with a potential loss of amenity and landscape character. Policy ECON.9 sets down the criteria against which proposals for new yards will be judged.

**4.12.7** Policy ECON.9 is based on policy RHI.2 from the 1993 Plan except that criterion (b) has been amended to refer to the issue of new racehorse establishments and extensions 'being well related to settlements'. ECON.9 deals with the provision of new yards, either within or well related to settlements.

**POLICY ECON.8** The Council will refuse proposals for change of use or redevelopment of existing and suitably located racehorse training and breeding establishments.

**POLICY ECON.9** The Council will permit proposals for the development of racehorse training and breeding establishments and facilities including new yards where such development, in the opinion of the Council:

- a) would not result in material damage to the rural character of the area, areas of special landscape quality, nature conservation, or archaeological importance; and
- b) when taken by itself or together with other race horse establishments is well related to settlements, including the built up area of Upper Lambourn, would not significantly harm the character or amenities of such settlements, road safety or the amenities of local residents; and
- (c) would maintain and enhance the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty or designated Conservation Area affected by the proposal; and
- d) make adequate provision for:
  - (i) the accommodation of personnel where there is a proven need for such accommodation, and
  - (ii) satisfactory and safe provision for access to the gallops and training facilities and for vehicular and pedestrian access to the site; and
- (e) would safeguard the existing network of public rights of way.

In the context of criterion (b) of ECON.9, the term "well related" means locations where the siting of new yards are both immediately accessible to the range of facilities available in identified settlements, and will be visually read in conjunction with the built up areas of these settlements. In normal cases "well related" will therefore mean adjacent to existing settlement boundaries.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: SHOPPING**

### **Policies**

**SHOP.1** *Non-retail uses in Primary Shopping Frontages*

**SHOP 1A** *Mixed Uses in Town Centres – NOT SAVED*

**SHOP.2** *Parkway and the Wharf, Newbury*

**SHOP.3** *Retail Areas and Retail Warehousing*

**SHOP.4** *Car Boot Sales and Sunday Markets – NOT SAVED*

**SHOP.5** *The Encouragement of Local and Village Shops*

## CHAPTER FIVE: SHOPPING

### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

5.1.1 West Berkshire has maintained a variety and quality of shopping facilities in a range of locations, principally in town centres. Provision for future shopping needs is required to help meet the needs and aspirations of the population whilst improving the environment of existing centres and maintaining their viability and vitality. Shopping is also a major source of local employment so contributing to the vitality of the local economy.

5.1.2 Government policy guidance on shopping issues is primarily contained in PPG6: *Town Centres and Retail Developments*, though PPG13 (*Transport*) is also of special relevance. PPG6, published in June 1996, emphasised:

- the plan-led approach; sites for retail development are to be allocated;
- the sequential approach to selecting development sites for all types of shopping (See paragraph 5.1.3 for explanation);
- support for local or neighbourhood centres.

*On town centres:*

- promotion of mixed use development;
- emphasis on a coherent town centre parking strategy, for assisting vitality;
- promotion of town centre management, and good urban design.

*On assessment of retail proposals:*

- clarify the three key tests for assessment i.e. impact on viability and vitality of town centre, accessibility by a choice of means of transport and impact on overall travel and car use.

Commercial competition between retailers however remains outside the range of matters to be considered when making a planning decision.

5.1.3 Regional Planning Guidance for the South-east (RPG9) supports the thrust of PPG6, in supporting town centres and retailing. The sequential test in PPG6 states that wherever possible new retail schemes should be located in either town or district centres. If such sites are limited, then edge of town centre sites can be considered, which have good access to public transport. If this is still not possible, then alternative sites within the urban area may be acceptable, provided a number of criteria can be fulfilled.

### 5.2 STRUCTURE PLAN POLICIES

5.2.1 The Berkshire Structure Plan provides a framework whereby:

**S1** identifies the hierarchy of shopping centres; Newbury is a major town centre, whilst Hungerford, Thatcham and Pangbourne are small town/district centres.

**S2** encourages proposals which will assist the vitality and viability of retail centres.

**S3** considers the impact of new shopping schemes.

**S4** applies the sequential test to shopping schemes of over 500m<sup>2</sup> floorspace.

5.2.2 The local centres in West Berkshire are Lambourn, Mortimer, Theale, and Tilehurst. In addition there are a number of villages with shops which are locally very important and in the towns of Newbury, Thatcham and Tilehurst there are a number of shopping 'parades'. There are also two concentrations of retail warehouses in West Berkshire; one at Pincents Lane, Theale, and the other on the London Road, Newbury. There are two further retail parks in Newbury town, at Pinchington Lane and Greenham Road.



5.2.3 Given the guidance on retailing from the Government and the policies in the Structure Plan, it is considered that detailed policies in the Local Plan are only needed on the following issues;

- Protection of primary retail frontages in the town and district centres.
- A policy promoting a retail scheme at Parkway and the Wharf, Newbury town.
- A policy regarding retail warehousing .
- The encouragement of local and village shops.

## 5.3 BACKGROUND STUDIES AND STRATEGIES

5.3.1 The Council commissioned a retail study of Newbury, Thatcham and Hungerford in the summer of 1995, the aim of which was to assess the capacity of the three catchment areas to support new shopping floorspace up to the year 2006. The principal conclusions of the report were as follows:

- There is sufficient expenditure growth in Newbury to support the Parkway scheme;
- Limited scope exists for new shopping floorspace in both Thatcham and Hungerford;
- Some demand exists for new retail warehousing space in the Newbury catchment.

## 5.4 KEY AIMS - SHOPPING

- 5.4.1 On shopping issues the Council will continue to work with the retail industry and other organisations to;
- (i) maintain and where possible enhance the vitality and viability of shopping provision in West Berkshire by promoting new shopping development, assisting the refurbishment of centres and applying policies that protect the character of centres;
  - (ii) improve accessibility to shopping centres for all members of the community - one recent example is the introduction of the shopmobility scheme in Newbury town centre;
  - (iii) improve security for both retailers and shoppers; a good example is the introduction of a CCTV scheme in Newbury town centre;
  - (iv) support the existing open markets at Newbury, Thatcham, Hungerford and Lambourn;
  - (v) support existing village shops;
  - (vi) seek new local shopping facilities in major residential development.

## 5.5 NON RETAIL USES IN PRIMARY SHOPPING FRONTAGES

5.5.1 The advice in PPG 6 includes a statement (in Annex B) that Plans may distinguish between primary and secondary frontages in town centres and that changes of use from retail to non retail in primary frontages may be restricted, so as to maintain the attractiveness of that town centre. A primary frontage is where normal (class A1) shop uses predominate, whereas a secondary frontage is where uses such as banks, building societies and cafes/restaurants become more prevalent. The Council considers that such a policy should be applied not only to the town centres of Newbury, Thatcham, Pangbourne and Hungerford, but also to the village centre of Theale.

5.5.2 The primary frontages referred to in the policy are identified on the Proposals map (Insets 4, 5, 31, 33 and 34). For the purposes of PPG 6, all other shopping frontages within the defined commercial core areas, shown on the town centre inset maps, are considered to be secondary frontages.

**POLICY SHOP.1** The Council will refuse planning applications for the change of use from class A1 retail uses, to other purposes, within the primary shopping frontages of Newbury, Hungerford, Thatcham, Theale and Pangbourne, where it would result in a concentration of non-retail uses, which would be harmful to the vitality of the shopping centre.

## 5.6 MIXED USES IN TOWN CENTRES

POLICY SHOP.1A – Not Saved; Refer to Appendix 13.

## 5.7 PARKWAY AND THE WHARF, NEWBURY

5.7.1 In September 1988, the Council approved a policy statement and development brief for Parkway and the Wharf areas of Newbury town centre. Planning application 138011 was considered in December 1990. The applicants were invited to enter into legal agreements. These agreements have not been completed. However, it remains the Council's intention to progress a retail scheme in Parkway, in order to enhance the attractiveness of the town centre, provide new housing and create additional shopping facilities to meet increasing demand as recognised in the Council's Retail Study.

**POLICY SHOP.2** The Council will promote additional Town Centre shopping development, together with leisure and community facilities, housing development and car parking on land adjoining Park Way and The Wharf, Newbury as shown on inset map 4. The development shall be in accordance with the following criteria in that:

- (a) it consolidates and improves the retail provision of the town centre with an increased variety of shop units and uses; and
- (b) it is of a scale, form, design and character compatible with the character and amenities of the town centre, including the Kennet and Avon Canal and will bring about significant improvements and townscape enhancement; and
- (c) it protects and enhances pedestrian rights of way and improves the quality of the environment for pedestrians, particularly for the elderly, disabled or those with children and cyclists; and
- (d) it rationalises access and circulation for vehicles, servicing arrangements and limiting on-street parking; and
- (e) it provides for off-street car parking in accordance with policy TRANS.1; and
- (f) it provides for the implementation of a phased scheme, minimising the impact of redevelopment on the Town Centre; and
- (g) it provides for the retention, enhancement and/or replacement of community facilities affected by the proposed development; and
- (h) it provides for an archaeological assessment of the site.

## 5.8 RETAIL AREAS AND RETAIL WAREHOUSING

5.8.1 In view of the conclusions of the Retail Study referred to earlier, the Council will seek to retain provision for existing retail warehousing. There are two areas in West Berkshire where retail warehousing predominates, namely along the London Road between Newbury and Thatcham, and in the Pincents Lane Commercial Area to the north east of Theale. In both these defined areas, there are also a limited number of leisure uses, such as a public house and nightclub.

**POLICY SHOP.3** Within the retail and leisure areas shown on inset maps (1 & 3) the Council will normally refuse planning applications for the redevelopment/change of use of buildings to non-leisure/retail uses. Further, the Council will permit non-food, bulky goods retail warehousing only where:

- (a) there is no detrimental impact upon the amenity of existing uses of adjacent land, by reason of noise, smell, and visual impact;
- (b) the application site can be easily accessed from the main road network, with adequate parking facilities and no detriment to local highway safety;

(c) they, either by themselves, or cumulatively with such proposals have no significant detrimental impact on the vitality and viability of Newbury town centre or other nearby shopping centres;  
(d) the scheme concerned satisfies the sequential test relating to retail proposals, as noted in paragraph 1.11 of PPG6 and Policy S4 of the Structure Plan.

## 5.9 CAR BOOT SALES AND SUNDAY MARKETS

POLICY SHOP.4 – Not Saved; Refer to Appendix 13.

## 5.10 THE ENCOURAGEMENT OF LOCAL AND VILLAGE SHOPS

5.10.1 The Council is proposing a number of housing sites across West Berkshire. As a consequence, demand in these areas for local shops will increase, together with the importance of retaining existing local shops.

5.10.2 It should be noted that West Berkshire has a considerable scatter of settlements in the rural area, some quite large, such as Mortimer and Burghfield to the east, and Kintbury and Lambourn to the west. The importance of the shops in these villages is significant to the local community, albeit the numbers may be small and the range limited. The vitality of the rural economy is, in part, dependent upon village shops and therefore every encouragement should be given to their retention. It is not possible, however, for the Council to prevent the closure of these shops. Farm shops are also valuable to the local economy and the local consumer, but their potential impact on the vitality of nearby village shops must be taken into consideration in any development proposed.

**SHOP.5 The Council will encourage proposals for the provision and retention of local shops within both new and existing residential areas and in village settlements. It will also encourage the provision and retention of farm shops, provided that they do not adversely affect the vitality of nearby village shops.**

## **CHAPTER SIX: TRANSPORTATION**

### Policies

TRANS 1A *Road Schemes*

TRANS.1 *Meeting the Transport Needs of New Development*

TRANS.2 *Enhancement of Transportation Facilities and Network – NOT SAVED*

TRANS.3 *A34/M4 Junction 13 – Chieveley*

TRANS.4 *Cycling – NOT SAVED*

TRANS.5 *Pedestrians – NOT SAVED*

## **CHAPTER SIX: TRANSPORTATION**

### **6.1 INTRODUCTION**

6.1.1 To a degree, transportation issues require a different approach to those described in other chapters of this Local Plan, for the following reasons:

- traffic congestion is of great concern to all the residents of West Berkshire, and indeed travellers through West Berkshire, because of its economic and environmental consequences;
- transportation is the essential connection between other land uses described in this Plan, and the location and nature of other land uses affects the amount and method of travel.

6.1.2 The policies in this chapter reflect the advice contained in PPG13: Transport, with the overall objectives of reducing the need to travel, encouraging use of the means of transport other than the car, especially public transport, walking and cycling and discouraging reliance on the car where there are effective alternatives.

6.1.3 The Council is committed to achieving an appropriate balance between directing new development to the most sustainable locations and to sustain balanced rural communities. This is consistent with the strategies of the Structure Plan and Policy OVS.1 of this Plan. The Council will not support proposals for major development in unsustainable locations and will expect all proposed development to demonstrate how it will minimise the need for parking, maximise the opportunity to use alternative modes of travel and provide appropriate access to public transport facilities and other community facilities.

### **6.2 POLICY BACKGROUND**

6.2.1 West Berkshire Council welcomes the integrated approach to transport set out in the Berkshire Structure Plan. The plan proposes a balance between all modes of transport and recognises that, particularly in urban areas, it is not practical, environmentally acceptable or economically feasible to cater for unrestrained private car use. The integrated approach was incorporated in the draft Newbury Access Package and was carried forward into the West Berkshire Local Transport Plan 2001/2 to 2005/6 and is reflected in this policy guidance.

6.2.2 In summary, the Structure Plan proposes:

- T1: An integrated approach to transportation.
- T2 & T3: Provision for pedestrians and cyclists - encouragement of walking and cycling by improvements to accessibility, security, safety and environment.
- T4: Encouraging the increased use of public transport, including making provision in new development and encouragement of new services and/or facilities.
- T5: Maintenance and improvement of standards for transport by private car; in urban areas, especially at peak times, car usage will be restrained.
- T6: Control of parking, including particular measures in town centres, integrating car parking provision with other transportation policies.
- T7: Traffic management measures and road safety.
- T8: Encouragement of transfer of freight from road transport to other modes.
- T9 - T14: National, county and minor road proposals and implementation programme.

#### **ROAD SCHEMES**

6.2.3 Policies T12 and T13 were included in the Structure Plan on the advice given in PPG12. These policies list the DTLR'S proposed motorway and trunk road schemes and schemes included in the former County

Council's Transport Programme. The schemes in West Berkshire are set out in the table below, together with their status as at October 2000.

Scheme	Status
A34 Newbury By-Pass, A34/A4 Junction 13, Additional Grade Separation	Opened November 1998 Highways Agency, public inquiry started in September 2000
A4 Thatcham, Hambridge Road/Lower Way, A4 Newbury/Thatcham Corridor Integrated Transport Measures	Opened March 1999 Included in Local Transport Plan
Thatcham Northern Distributor Road Park Way Bridge	Opened March 1999 Reconstruction scheme agreed by council July 2000, opened July 2001
B3421 Kings Road	Included in the Local Transport Plan as "B3421 Kings Road Improvement Link". Involves the construction of a new section of road linking the Sainsbury's Roundabout to Kings Road. Earlier proposal for a new link across the railway to Queens Road not being proceeded with.
Thatcham Southern Crossing	Subject to a further study outlined in the Local Transport Plan.
West Reading A4 Corridor, Including Park And Ride, Bus Priority Measures And Area Studies	Phases 1 and 2 of improvements to the A4 east of M4 Junction12 completed. Further phases are under review

**POLICY TRANS.1A** The Council will protect from development land shown on the Proposals Map required for the following schemes:

- A4 Newbury Thatcham Corridor Integrated Transport Measures
- B3421 Kings Road/ Improvement Link
- A4 West Of Reading Integrated Transport Measures
- Thatcham Southern Crossing.

**6.2.4** West Berkshire Council is supportive of the principle of Park and Ride to serve both Newbury and the West Reading A4 corridor and is committed to working jointly with adjacent authorities to provide appropriate facilities. A joint study with Reading Borough Council has been commissioned to investigate and to prepare proposals for possible park and ride facilities in the area together with a further study to propose a park and ride strategy for Newbury.

## **6.3 WEST BERKSHIRE LOCAL TRANSPORT PLAN**

**6.3.1** The Council's Local Transport Plan 2001/2 - 2005/6 sets out the broad transport policy framework for West Berkshire, together with a five year capital bid for implementing a range of strategies included in the plan. The plan recognises and addresses the individual transport needs of the different areas within West Berkshire as well as identifying issues of common concern such as road safety.

**6.3.2** The Council is working with Reading Borough Council and Wokingham District Council in developing and implementing the Reading Urban Area Package. Proposals in the package relating to West Berkshire,

including improvements to the A4 east of M4 Junction 12, are contained in the financial bid in Reading Borough's Local Transport Plan.

**6.3.3** For the Newbury and Thatcham area, the Local Transport Plan builds on the policy framework established in the draft Newbury Access Package, which in turn drew on the statement known as "Head and Heart" published by the former Newbury District Council in 1996. The access package outlined key proposals which aimed to improve accessibility, quality of life and reduce accidents in Newbury and Thatcham. These proposals were based on the establishment of pedestrian priority areas and the identification of key safe and attractive pedestrian routes into the town centres of Newbury and Thatcham, and between residential areas and schools.

## **6.4 KEY AIMS OF TRANSPORTATION POLICY**

**6.4.1** In line with the overall strategy of this plan and in particular Policy OVS.1, the Council will direct development to the most sustainable locations and will reject poorly devised schemes which do not include adequate measures to reduce the need to travel and encourage alternative modes. In accordance with the objectives and strategies in the Local Transport Plan, the Council will work with other organisations to:

- (i) maintain and enhance the economic health of West Berkshire through improvements to accessibility, especially by public transport;
- (ii) have particular regard to the transport needs of people with mobility handicaps, and other disadvantaged vulnerable sectors of the population;
- (iii) reduce environmental damage from traffic arising from noise, pollution, vibration and visual intrusion and habitat loss;
- (iv) reduce energy consumption, especially by private transport;
- (v) ensure that future development contributes to and enhances the transportation network and facilities, including the safety of users of the network;
- (vi) support appropriate community transport initiatives and appropriate priority use of the public highway by public transport;
- (vii) encourage use of rail and waterways for freight haulage;
- (viii) improve accessibility, effectiveness and attractiveness of public transport;
- (ix) support initiatives for extension and enhancement of pedestrian and cycle routes, including recreational routes in both urban and countryside areas;
- (x) support initiatives to encourage by appropriate means walking to work;
- (xi) ensure that new development facilitates the opportunity, where practicable, to give priority to access by public transport, walking and cycling.

## **6.5 MEETING THE TRANSPORT NEEDS OF NEW DEVELOPMENT**

**6.5.1** Policy TRANS.1 sets out a parking supply and management approach that promotes sustainable transport choices and is consistent with PPG13 and the strategies in the Local Transport Plan. A broad framework of parking standards based on those contained within national and regional guidance will be applied as set out in Appendix 5. In addition, a more detailed set of standards which expand on the basic framework contained within Appendix 5 will be published by the Council as Supplementary Planning Guidance. These standards will be reviewed from time to time in the context of emerging national policy and the Council's Local Transport Plan. The standards are expressed as maximum standards in accordance with national guidance and will be applied with flexibility, to take account of the ability of the site to be accessed by alternative transport modes. A reduction in the standard will be required in some circumstances, for example, where the site is readily accessible by alternative means of travel to the private motor vehicle and/or has a good existing public

transport service. The standards reflect the range of accessibility and rural nature of much of West Berkshire. The Council will seek to locate local facilities in local and rural service centres. In some cases, where public transport improvements are being introduced but are not yet in place, the Council may negotiate a phased reduction in parking provision for new development through the adoption of an appropriate travel plan.

**POLICY TRANS.1** The transportation needs of new development should be met through the provision of a range of facilities associated with different transport modes including public transport, walking, cycling and parking provision. The level of parking provision will depend on the availability of alternative modes, having regard to the maximum standards adopted by West Berkshire Council. Standards below the maximum level may be applied in more accessible locations.

**6.5.2** The move to maximum standards has removed the ability to take contributions in lieu of reduced on-site parking provision. However, contributions from developers will continue to be sought to ensure that any infrastructure relevant to the development is provided. All applications for development with significant transport implications will be required to be submitted with a full transport assessment which must illustrate accessibility to the site by all modes and the likely modal split of journeys to and from the site, together with details of proposed measures to improve access by public transport, walking and cycling. Where appropriate, the Council will expect applications to be accompanied by a travel plan which should detail the proposed strategy to manage parking demand on the site and provide appropriate provision for alternative modes of travel. Such plans may include phased proposals for reduced parking provision, for example, where improvements to public transport are proposed, or through other strategies that encourage the use of alternative modes of travel.

## **6.6 CAR PARKING STRATEGY AND PRICING POLICY**

**6.6.1** Parking, both on and off-street, will be strictly controlled in town centres and other accessible locations to make the best use of land. The presumption in town centres should be that such parking is allocated to, or favours in its pricing policy, short stay visits rather than long stay. This will encourage more people to walk and cycle and the greater use of public transport and help to protect and enhance the visual qualities of these historic areas. In Newbury town centre, the Local Transport Plan's car parking strategy is to transfer long stay parking primarily for commuters to the fringes of the town centre, to revise car parking charges/permissible length of stay in public car parks to favour short-term rather than long term parking and to remove on-street parking in the town centre as part of the pedestrianisation scheme.

**6.6.2** Within the Town Centre Commercial Area (TCCA), the Council will seek to ensure that all new parking provision for commercial or retail development is made available for public use as shared provision at appropriate times. The design and security of such parking areas should reflect this requirement.

## **6.7 ENHANCEMENT OF TRANSPORTATION FACILITIES AND NETWORK**

**POLICY TRANS.2** - Not Saved; Refer to Appendix 13.

## **6.8 THE A34/M4 JUNCTION 13 - CHIEVELEY**

**6.8.1** The strategic location of the A34/M4 interchange (Junction 13) has resulted in continuing pressure for further development. The Council has supported the provision of appropriate facilities at this location to meet the needs of highway users.



**6.8.2** The government is responsible for both the M4 and the A34 including the A34 Newbury By Pass and proposals for further highway capacity at Junction 13.

**6.8.3** The Junction lies in a sensitive area of open downland landscape within the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. To the north-west lies the village of Chieveley and there is concern that further development at Junction 13 could have a harmful effect on the character and setting of the village and the amenities of local residents. To the north east, the Newbury and District Agricultural Showground has a limited impact on the landscape because of its undeveloped nature.

**6.8.4** The M4/A34 Junction 13 is of regional significance and therefore some development for highway users has been justified. The development that has been allowed should not be regarded as a precedent for further development, given the situation of the Junction in the North Wessex Downs AONB, where the general policy is one of restraining development, to protect the landscape quality of the area. Development has been concentrated on a limited area of land to the south of the M4 and its embankment and contained with landscape features of mounding and planting. Provision for other services has been and will continue to be located in Newbury.

**POLICY TRANS.3** Further development at M4/A34 Junction 13 will only be acceptable if it complies with all the following criteria:

- (a) it is essential for the provision of services to meet the needs of highway users; and
- (b) is located within the development boundary indicated on inset map 27; and
- (c) makes provision for major landscape treatment as part of a co-ordinated scheme for the area; and
- (d) is of a scale and design appropriate to its location within the AONB; and
- (e) maintains or enhances provision for lorry parking & overnight facilities; and
- (f) makes provision, as appropriate, for access, car parking and road safety to the satisfaction of the Council in consultation with the Highway Authority; and
- (g) safeguards the public rights of way across the designated area and their safe use by pedestrians.

**6.8.5** Provision is made at this location for lorry parking and overnight facilities. This provision significantly reduces pressure for such facilities in sensitive town centre and residential areas.

## **6.9 CYCLING**

**POLICY TRANS.4** – Not Saved; Refer to Appendix 13.

## **6.10 PEDESTRIANS**

**POLICY TRANS.5** – Not Saved; Refer to Appendix 13.

## **CHAPTER SEVEN: RECREATION AND LEISURE**

### Policies

- RL.1 *Public Open Space Provision in Residential Development Schemes*
- RL.2 *Provision of Public Open Space (methods)*
- RL.3 *The Selection of Public Open Space and Recreation Sites*
- RL.3A *Protection of existing Public and Private Open Space and Recreation Facilities – NOT SAVED*
- RL.4 *Safeguarding existing Allotment Land*
- RL.4A *Informal Recreation and Access in the Countryside – NOT SAVED*
- RL.5 *Policy on the Kennet and Avon Canal*
- RL.5A *The River Thames*
- RL.6 *Thatcham Moors – NOT SAVED*
- RL.7 *The Lower Kennet Water Park – NOT SAVED*

## **CHAPTER SEVEN: RECREATION AND LEISURE**

### **7.1 INTRODUCTION**

7.1.1 Sport and recreation are activities with major land use implications. The planning system has a role in assessing opportunities and the need for sport and recreation provision and safeguarding open space with recreational value. It is the policy of Government to promote the development of sport and recreation in the widest sense. Recreation and leisure provision should be available for everyone, including young children, the elderly and those with disabilities for whom access to facilities is especially important.

7.1.2 It is part of the planning authority's responsibilities to take full account in its development control decisions of the community's need for recreational space, to have regard to current levels of provision and deficiencies and to resist pressures for the development of open space which conflicts with the wider public interest. Local Planning Authorities need to take into account the value of open space not only as an amenity but also as a contribution to the conservation of the natural and built heritage of the area. Policies for open space have to be set in a framework which takes full account of the community's need for development and conservation of all kinds. Authorities should therefore balance very carefully the competing claims of different land uses and the community's long term requirement for recreation facilities.

7.1.3 The principal issues covered in this chapter of the local plan include:

- (i) the standard and provision of public open space in association with residential development;
- (ii) the general criteria for the selection of public open space sites;
- (iii) the protection of existing public open space and recreational facilities;
- (iv) safeguarding allotment land from development;
- (v) noisy sports in the countryside;
- (vi) provision for appropriate boating and related recreational facilities along the Kennet and Avon Canal without causing serious harm to environmental and landscape qualities of the Canal.

7.1.4 In terms of PPG12 it is appropriate to consider local options for conserving and improving the landscape and encouraging opportunities for recreation. The Countryside Commission has stressed the need for stronger links between peoples' enjoyment of the countryside and its conservation.

7.1.5 The provision of public open space in urban areas and access to the countryside is important to the quality of life of residents. There is a close relationship between policies in this chapter and those in the Environment Chapter. The countryside linkages between recreation, leisure and the rural economy can also be of particular importance. As a consequence the countryside can be safeguarded for its recreational value.

7.1.6 Government advice on recreation issues is contained in a number of PPGs, in particular the following:  
**PPG7** The Countryside – Environmental Quality and Economic and Social Development (February 1997)  
**PPG17** Sport and Recreation (September 1991)  
**PPG21** Tourism (November 1992).

One of the principal aims of PPG7 is to conserve and improve the landscape and encourage opportunities for recreation. PPG17 identifies sport and recreation as being activities with major land use implications together with increasing use of the countryside. These activities need to be both appropriate and in harmony with the countryside. Relevant considerations in this regard should include:

- (i) the ability of the land and landscape to sustain the activity in the longer term;
- (ii) to contain and mitigate the environmental impacts of such activities;
- (iii) to provide sufficient enabling infrastructure and amenity/environmental safeguards.

In PPG21 the Government's policy is that tourism should flourish in response to the market while respecting the environment which attracts visitors but also which has a far wider and enduring value. Tourism is not a major land-use issue in the rural parts of West Berkshire. The Council generally supports the provision of tourist accommodation as part of 'farm diversification' schemes and in line with Structure Plan policy R7.

**7.1.7** Sport England advises on all aspects of planning for sport and recreation. The Countryside Commission can advise on planning for recreation in the countryside and provide technical advice on conservation and recreational planning policies. Where conflicts are likely between nature conservation and sport and recreation, it would be helpful to obtain advice from English Nature. The former Sports Council's policy position on sport in the countryside is set out in its publication:- Countryside Policy for Sport and Recreation: A Countryside for Sport 1991.

**7.1.8** The Rural White Paper (October 1995) identifies recreation as an increasing demand on the countryside. Such demands have to be reconciled and positive management can help to prevent conflicts. The Government's priorities in this respect are: to promote countryside recreation, to pursue policies which enable people to enjoy the countryside close to where they live and to ensure that countryside recreation takes place in ways which cause no lasting damage to the environment and respects other rural interests. The Government published a revision to PPG17 in July 2002.

**7.1.9** The Southern Council for Sport and Recreation produced a Regional Strategy for Sports and Recreation: Sporting futures (Sept 94) which emphasises the need for effective partnerships to facilitate the development of 'Sport for All'. This strategy is supported by West Berkshire Council which is keen to progress partnership developments to further such objectives.

**7.1.10** Recreation must not be seen in isolation; sport and tourism are important too. In order to achieve a proper integration of these activities, their environmental impacts and contributions to the economy and well being of rural communities need to be assessed. The Countryside Commission is to develop collaborative programmes with the Rural Development Commission, Sport England and English Tourist Board to meet this objective. To improve rural accessibility the Government commends the Countryside Commission Parish Paths Partnership Initiative and wishes to identify further ways of encouraging direct management at a local level.

## **7.2 STRUCTURE PLAN POLICIES**

**7.2.1** The Berkshire Structure Plan 1991-2006 encourages the provision of a wide and balanced range of leisure opportunities insofar as this is compatible with the maintenance of the character and quality of the County's environment. The series of Structure Plan policies on recreation and tourism are summarised below:

**R1** encourages general leisure provision subject to any necessary controls over form and location to ensure that it does not damage and where possible enhances the environment, character and attractions of the area;

**R2** supports measures which safeguard and improve informal recreation in the countryside including the protection of and enhancement of public rights of way;

**R3** supports proposals for organised recreation in the countryside provided there is a need and it does not result in unacceptable disturbance, adverse change to the landscape or rural character and harmful environmental impacts;

**R4** protects existing sports grounds and public open spaces;

**R5** seeks public open space and recreational provision on a scale which reflects the needs arising from the development and in a form which complements the existing provision;

**R6** states that development with the loss of built leisure facilities will be acceptable only if there is a comparable replacement in the locality as part of the scheme; and

**R7** accepts the provision of tourism accommodation within settlement boundaries and well served by public transport, with the exception of;

- (i) the re use and minor extension of appropriate existing buildings in the countryside and
- (ii) small scale camping and caravan sites appropriate to rural enterprises or countryside recreational facilities.

## 7.3 BACKGROUND STUDIES AND STRATEGIES

7.3.1 The Council has an adopted Recreational Strategy (February 1993). It seeks to identify opportunities which the Council may wish to pursue over the next ten years, having regard to partnership projects as well as direct schemes, in order to maximise community benefits. It is not an exhaustive list of recreational opportunities and projects but an attempt to demonstrate ways in which the Council may progress its recreational provision in the future. The overall aim is to secure a range of recreational and leisure opportunities for all sections of the community including those with disabilities and the elderly. The Strategy is presented as essentially a management tool based on the Council's existing recreational service areas. These are:

- (i) sports development;
- (ii) policies for the improvement and provision of facilities (based on existing recreational centres);
- (iii) play and recreation services;
- (iv) parks and countryside services;
- (v) the arts;
- (vi) museum services;
- (vii) funding and grant schemes.

7.3.2 The Local Plan is primarily concerned with securing public open space and recreation provision from new development and in setting appropriate standards for that provision having regard to the present nature, scale and distribution of these facilities within West Berkshire. This raises issues not only of quantity but also of the range and quality of such facilities. Other important factors include accessibility and the range of local needs. There is also a close affinity between recreation, sport, leisure and community provision.

## 7.4 KEY RECREATION AIMS

7.4.1 The key recreation aims for the Local Plan are as follows:

- (i) to ensure the appropriate level and distribution of public open space and recreational facilities to meet local needs;
- (ii) to improve available opportunities for recreation provision in West Berkshire and to make them accessible to as wide a section of the community as possible;
- (iii) to seek improved access to the countryside in a manner which conserves its landscape and wildlife value, is sustainable in the long term, and which minimises the conflict between users, landowners and local residents;
- (iv) to continue to support the restoration of the Kennet and Avon Canal and measures to enhance its recreational value, providing such measures do not demonstrably harm the environmental character and ecology of the canal;
- (v) to identify and maintain an appropriate balance between recreation and nature conservation in areas important for both activities.

## 7.5 PUBLIC OPEN SPACE PROVISION IN RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEMES

7.5.1 Public open space is land available to satisfy the recreation and leisure needs of the community. It can fulfil a number of functions including:

- (i) areas for formal sporting activity;
- (ii) areas for informal recreation and leisure purposes;
- (iii) play areas; and
- (iv) amenity land.

There are no statutory national standards with respect to how much public open space should be provided. Each location will vary and PPG17 states that it is for local planning authorities to justify the amount and location of new provision. In coming forward with a local standard the PPG advises that it may be helpful to consider the National Playing Field Association (NPFA) recommended standard.

7.5.2 The NPFA recommends a minimum standard for outdoor playing space of 2.43 hectares (6 acres) per 1,000 population but PPG17 also states that in addition open space is important in amenity terms and to the overall quality of the built environment.

7.5.3 Proposals for new housing will be acceptable only where they include appropriate public open space and recreational provision. Informal open space should normally be within the site and accessible safely by foot. This may not be possible for formal sports provision, in which case alternative arrangements such as contributions elsewhere may be appropriate. New rights of way should be provided to afford safe access to and between new and existing open spaces.

7.5.4 The former Newbury District Local Plan (1993) policy REC 1 had a public open space standard of between 3 and 4.3 hectares per 1,000 population in new residential development. The then Local Plan Inspector concluded that there was sufficient flexibility in the wording of this policy as well as the range itself to allow for local variation and generally that the policy was not unreasonable. He also considered the Council had sought to achieve a standard suitable for present day needs within new housing areas rather than trying to remedy overall deficiencies by requiring developers to provide for existing residents.

7.5.5 The standard of 4.3 hectares per 1,000 population has generally been adopted by the other Councils in Berkshire. The exceptions are Reading and Slough where to achieve such a standard would be unrealistic given their built up and urban natures. The adjoining local planning authorities outside Berkshire appear to be applying a public open space standard of 2.8 hectares per 1,000 population. It is against this background that a standard of between 3 and 4.3 hectares per 1,000 population remains reasonable and justified in the context of West Berkshire.

In respect of sheltered and other special needs housing, however, there may be greater flexibility applied in the application of this standard. The second part of Policy RL.1 explains the context.

7.5.6 The threshold of 10 or more dwellings was selected following a comprehensive audit of all open space and outdoor sports provision in West Berkshire, which concluded that, though there was a shortfall of over 50 hectares of such space across the district, no open space was required for developments of less than 10 dwellings.

**POLICY RL.1** The Council will require, in new residential development of ten or more dwellings, the provision of between 3 and 4.3 hectares of public open space per thousand population in such form, scale and distribution as may be considered appropriate depending on local circumstances, together with associated facilities/equipment. The Council will seek the transfer of public open space to local authority ownership control in a condition appropriate for such use together with any appropriate sum for ongoing maintenance.

In the case of sheltered and special needs housing the provision of public open space will be negotiated on the particular type of accommodation and facilities, size of site, the balance of private/public open space needs, local circumstances and the provision and enhancement of nearby accessible and appropriate open spaces.

## PROVISION OF PUBLIC OPEN SPACE (METHODS)

7.5.7 This public open space can be provided for in a number of ways as set out in policy RL.2. In applying the appropriate public open space standard the Council will not normally accept areas of less than 0.2 hectares (0.5 acres) in size, unless adjoining an existing area where the total together would exceed the minimum viable size. The average occupancy rate per dwelling for the West Berkshire is 2.6 persons (1998).

7.5.8 Public open space should be genuinely available in perpetuity to the public at large. The Council will normally seek the transfer of public open space areas into local authority ownership/control in a condition appropriate for such use, and together with a reasonable sum for their ongoing maintenance as set out in Circular 1/97.

**POLICY RL.2** The provision of public open space may be satisfied in the following ways:  
(a) by allocating space on the development site itself;  
(b) by making space permanently available through formal agreement on other land in the applicant's control which is readily accessible from the development site and appropriate for public open space/recreational use;  
(c) in certain circumstances by making payment (subject to formal agreements) to meet the necessary public open space or other recreation requirements within a reasonable distance of the development site. The Council will accept such a payment only if it is able to provide new public open space or other appropriate recreation facilities easily accessible to the development site within a reasonable period of time;  
(d) by a combination of (a), (b) and (c).

## 7.6 THE SELECTION OF PUBLIC OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION SITES

7.6.1 Policies RL.1 and RL.2 of the Local Plan set out the public open space standard and the process of that provision. The purpose of this policy is to set out the criteria which the Council will use, in discussions with developers, to select appropriate public open space and recreation sites and the nature of that provision. These are judgmental criteria and are not mutually exclusive.

7.6.2 In most cases a balance needs to be set between recreation and amenity. The areas of land allocated/identified for public open space use need to be interesting and with sufficient diversity and quality to fulfil a variety of recreational roles, both formal and informal. Such areas also need to be readily accessible from the surrounding development and clearly defined with good access for maintenance and management purposes. In general a scatter of small areas has less recreational potential than one or two larger areas. Recreation/public open space areas need to be designed for both informal and formal activities - with a balance between them that is appropriate to local needs and circumstances. Recreation/public open space provision needs to be an integral part of any development brief prepared for major housing development (it should not be treated as an after use for the residual land but as a key element determining in part the overall quality of the scheme).

**POLICY RL.3** The Council when considering the public open space requirement in connection with a residential development proposal (Local Plan policy RL.1 refers) will seek a 'quality' provision, the acceptability of which will be judged against the following criteria:

- (a) the nature, diversity and attractiveness/condition of the land being offered; and
- (b) its suitability for an appropriate range of recreational activities both formal and informal; and
- (c) the provision is compatible with wildlife conservation and sites of ecological or archaeological importance; and
- (d) the location of different recreational facilities within the public open space area(s) can be accommodated without undue disturbance or harm to the amenity of adjoining residents and landowners.
- (e) the proposed public open space area(s) is easily accessible from adjoining development areas by foot, cycle and public transport where appropriate; and
- (f) the public open space provision is not unduly fragmented into a number of small areas which thereby limits its recreational value and potential. Ideally public open space provision should be grouped into larger 'park areas' where both formal and informal recreation activities can be properly integrated and managed.

**7.6.3** The above criteria are not presented as absolute requirements but need to be taken together in assessing the suitability of a particular land area or site for public open space/recreational use. It is normal practice to seek advice from the Council's Culture and Youth and/or Countryside and Environment Services on the nature and suitability of public open space/recreation provision within major development schemes.

## **7.7 PROTECTION OF EXISTING PUBLIC AND PRIVATE OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION FACILITIES**

**POLICY RL.3A** – Not Saved; Refer to Appendix 13.

## **7.8 SAFEGUARDING EXISTING ALLOTMENT LAND**

**7.8.1** The purpose of this policy is to ensure the retention of allotment land or its alternative use as public open space has first priority. Allotments are predominantly found within or adjoining settlements for ease of access. They are often part of the established character and amenities of the area and need to be safeguarded from development pressures.

**POLICY RL.4** The Council will normally resist the loss of allotment land unless suitable alternative provision is to be made, or if surplus to requirements is to be first considered for general public open space or recreational use having regard to the character of the area and local deficiencies in such provision. Applications for the development of allotment land will be judged against the following criteria in regard to the alternative site to be provided:

- i. the horticultural value of the replacement site
- ii. the access and parking provision at the new site
- iii. the accessibility of the new site in locational terms.

## **7.9 INFORMAL RECREATION AND ACCESS IN THE COUNTRYSIDE**

**POLICY RL.4A** – Not Saved; Refer to Appendix 13.



## 7.10 NOISY SPORTS IN THE COUNTRYSIDE

7.10.1 An issue raised by the Sports Council (now Sport England) at the deposit stage of the plan was the omission of a policy dealing with noisy sports in the countryside. In the view of the Sports Council there was a clear demand for noisy sports in the area and where there was a clear demand the planning authority should seek to identify sites.

7.10.2 Recreation/sporting activities can take place for up to 28 days in any one year on open land not forming part of the curtilage of a building, other than motor sports where the limit is 14 days. Therefore, much of this activity takes place outside of the need for specific planning permission.

7.10.3 An analysis of planning applications in West Berkshire since 1991 for what may be termed 'noisy sports' does not show a significant level of demand or pressure, such as to justify the need for either site specific identification or allocation. Furthermore, no specific sites for such uses have been identified or suggested in the Local Plan consultation responses.

7.10.4 Between 1991 and the deposit of the plan the Council received some 25 applications for noisy sporting activities (generally on a small scale). These were for quad biking, flying model aircraft, water jet-skiing and clay pigeon shooting. A number of those applications related to the former Greenham Common Airbase site.

7.10.5 In the circumstances it was not considered necessary to recognise or identify any particular site or sites in West Berkshire for noisy sporting activities. In addition Structure Plan policy R3 and paragraph 12.14 set out the environmental factors against which such proposals in the countryside should be judged. The Council will therefore rely upon this policy should proposals for such development be made.

## 7.11 POLICY ON THE KENNET AND AVON CANAL

7.11.1 Policy E10 of the Structure Plan is concerned with protecting the character and setting of rivers, canals and streams. Particular attention will be paid to safeguarding the environment of the Kennet and Avon Canal and development likely to give rise to a significant increase in boating traffic will normally be resisted. It is therefore necessary for the Local Plan to set out the criteria which will be used in considering proposals for boating and moorings development along the Canal.

7.11.2 The following policy is based on policy KA7 from the 1993 District Local Plan. Extensions, additions and intensification of existing boating facilities will be judged against criteria (a), (b), (d) and (e) of Policy RL.5.

**POLICY RL.5** The Council will permit proposals for the provision of mooring basins on the Kennet and Avon Canal only where the moorings basin together with ancillary buildings, the access arrangements and other uses specifically related to the use and enjoyment of the canal are:

- (a) not located in an area or in a form which would demonstrably harm the character or landscape setting of the canal or adversely effect the intrinsic ecological value of the canal; and
- (b) are not intrusive into open countryside or prejudicial to the wider landscape character; and
- (c) are located within or on the edge of an existing settlement or other built up area; and
- (d) would not result in significant harm to the amenity of nearby residents; and
- (e) can be satisfactorily provided with services, access and parking; and
- (f) includes the provision of watering, sewerage and refuse/recycling collection facilities for boat users of the moorings and the Canal.

7.11.3 The Kennet and Avon Canal is recognised as an important recreation and leisure resource. Policy KA.7 from the NDLP (1993) set a limit of 300 new moorings on the West Berkshire section of the canal. The position in May 2002 was that there were 404 existing berths and commitments for a further 209 giving an overall total of 613 berths. The length of the canal in West Berkshire is 22 miles or 24% of the total canal length.

7.11.4 British Waterways has set out its intentions for the Kennet and Avon Canal in various documents . It considered there was a need for 1500 private boat moorings by the year 2000, compared to the current provision of 1300. The NDLP (1993) provisions figure (300 new mooring berths) was based on a total requirement of 1,500 permanent moorings (net 1,150) taken from the British Waterways Leisure Strategy of August 1987. It is therefore generally considered by the Council that adequate provision has been made for new moorings on the West Berkshire section of the Kennet and Avon Canal, and that any significant increase over and above these levels should be resisted.

## 7.12 THE RIVER THAMES

7.12.1 The River Thames is an asset of national significance in West Berkshire. Notwithstanding Policy EN10 in the BSP and ENV.14 in this plan, a specific policy on the future of recreation development on the Thames is needed;

**POLICY RL.5A** The Council recognise the recreational value of the Thames and the need to protect the particular environment and setting of the river within West Berkshire. It will permit proposals for recreational schemes only where it is not located in an area or proposed in a form which would:

- i. harm the character or landscape setting of the river
- ii. significantly increase use of the river by boats
- iii. harm the amenity and informal recreational value of the river, or
- iv. reduce or inhibit public access to the riverside or prejudice the Thames path

Permanent moorings will only be granted in appropriate off river locations specifically provided to replace existing permanent moorings in the main river channel.

## 7.13 THATCHAM MOORS

POLICY RL.6 – Not Saved; Refer to Appendix 13.

## 7.14 THE LOWER KENNET WATER PARK

POLICY RL.7 – Not Saved; Refer to Appendix 13.

## **CHAPTER EIGHT: IMPLEMENTATION, RESOURCES AND MONITORING**

## **CHAPTER EIGHT: IMPLEMENTATION, RESOURCES AND MONITORING**

### **8.1 INTRODUCTION**

**8.1.1** The Local Plan will be implemented through the Council acting as Local Planning Authority in the determination of planning applications in accordance with the approved Development Plan. The Council can also allocate public resources to particular community projects or programmes either on its own or in partnership with others.

**8.1.2** The objective is not only to control development which might be detrimental to the environment but also to encourage remedial action where damage has previously taken place or to promote positive measures to improve the local environment.

**8.1.3** The Local Plan will be monitored in line with Government guidance. The Government requires local planning authorities to keep under review matters which may be expected to affect the development and planning of their area. As far as possible, policies and proposals should be expressed in a form which will facilitate monitoring and review. The explanation and justification for each policy should include an indication of how monitoring and review are to be carried out, emphasising the critical features on which the Plan is based.

**8.1.4** There needs to be a consistent basis for monitoring whether the Plan is achieving what it sets out to achieve, and to subsequently identify where policies need to be either strengthened, maintained or changed.

**8.1.5** While there are no hard and fast rules on how often a plan should be reviewed the Secretary of State would normally expect plans to be reviewed at least once every five years. Whether to alter or replace existing plans will depend on local circumstances.

**8.1.6** It is the intention of the Council to monitor key policies on a regular basis while also taking into account changes in Government guidance and development trends and pressures. The Council already operates a system for monitoring planning applications and commitments which will be continued and enhanced in its operational performance.

### **8.2 MANAGEMENT AGREEMENTS**

**8.2.1** Under Section 106 of the Town and County Planning Act 1990 local planning authorities can enter into agreements with developers and landowners regarding arrangements for the purposes of restricting or regulating the development and use of land. In respect of particular development proposals it may be appropriate to seek and enter into such agreements depending on the circumstances of each case.

**8.2.2** The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 also allows local authorities to make management agreements for the general purpose of conserving or enhancing the natural beauty of the countryside or promoting its enjoyment by the public.

**8.2.3** Planning obligations may be invited and accepted from developers and landowners but which do not become operative until planning permission has been issued. In respect of a major development proposal this could set out the key matters to be resolved before planning permission will be granted. The scope of planning obligations is such that they must operate for a proper planning purpose.

## 8.3 IMPLEMENTING AGENCIES

8.3.1 The Council has the primary role in implementing the Local Plan along with developers involved with the main development allocations. There is also a close working relationship with neighbouring authorities, government agencies, the Parish Councils, business and community groups and other local bodies to secure the key aims and objectives of the Local Plan. The involvement of third parties will depend on the nature and circumstances of the case and its policy/resource implications. The Council is working with other partners in a number of key areas including:

- Countryside Management (Pang Valley and Kennet Areas)
- The Nature Conservation Strategy and Forum
- The Landscape Strategy and Forum
- The Environmental Forum
- Berkshire Heathlands Project
- Berkshire Woodlands Millennium Bid
- Kennet and Avon Canal restoration
- Town Centre Enhancement Schemes
- Newbury Town Centre Consultative Forum
- West Berkshire Rural Transport Partnership
- Reading Urban Area Partnership (RUAP)
- Cycleway Networks
- Thames Valley Economic Partnership/Berkshire Enterprise Agency/West Berkshire Training Consortium/Business Links/Live Wire awards
- Greenham Common Trust and EU Konver Bid for the proposed Enterprise Centre

## 8.4 COMMUNITY SERVICES AND FACILITIES

8.4.1 The quality and convenience of everyday life is greatly influenced by the nature and extent of community services and facilities. The provision and retention of services and facilities are important elements of this plan. Many organisations are involved in the planning, provision and running of community services and facilities. Structure Plan policy LD6 requires local planning authorities to be satisfied that infrastructure, services and amenities made necessary by a development are provided or will be provided at an appropriate time so as to ensure the proper planning of an area. In considering proposals for development, opportunities will be sought for securing environmental improvements and other community benefits (policy LD8).

8.4.2 The Local Plan seeks to provide a framework to safeguard and make the best use of existing community services and facilities and to promote the further provision of such facilities in relation to its development options and choices. In pursuit of this aim it is important to safeguard the amenities of residents and to ensure that any future development is well designed and of a high environmental standard.

## 8.5 RESOURCES

8.5.1 The proposals put forward in the Local Plan will need resources for their implementation. The two main resources are land and finance. The financial resources necessary will come from both the private and public sectors. In those cases where a proposal will be implemented by a public body, the necessary finance will have to be allocated in the relevant budget. In the case of schemes in excess of £5m these would be identified in the Local Transport Plan.

8.5.2 The basic tests for planning obligations set out in Circular 1/97 and Structure Plan Policy LD6 will apply in such cases. Circular 1/97 (January 1997) states that "The tests to apply for their use are that they should be necessary, relevant to planning, directly related to the proposed development, fairly and reasonably related in scale

and kind to the proposed development and reasonable in all other respects." They "have a positive role to play in the planning system. Used properly they can remedy genuine planning problems and enhance the quality of development".

## **8.6 MONITORING AND REVIEW**

**8.6.1** The Local Plan provides guide-lines for development within the Plan period until 2006. Progress on the implementation of the Plan will be monitored to ensure that it remains appropriate. The monitoring of the plan will take account of such factors as:

- (i) changes in legislation and planning guidance;
- (ii) the results of planning appeals;
- (iii) programmes and policies of other agencies;
- (iv) review of the Structure Plan.

**8.6.2** The Council will monitor those matters which will affect the planning and development of the Plan area. It will assess the performance of proposals to check whether they are effective; review the issues and assumptions on which the policies and proposals are based and check the Plan periodically to consider whether it is necessary to amend the Plan in part or review it completely.

## **8.7 SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING GUIDANCE**

**8.7.1** PPG12 refers to SPGs as being a useful way of providing advice on site specific or detailed matters not appropriate to the Plan itself. The Council has issued a number of SPGs see Appendix 1. These will need to be revised and others added in the context of the new Local Plan. To enhance their status these will be the subject of both public consultation and committee approval.

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