

ALDERMASTON PARISH COUNCIL – Comments on WBC Local Plan to 2036

Aldermaston Parish Council (APC) reviewed WBC's draft Local Plan when it met on 14th February 2023, and wish to make the following observations.

Typographic Error

We believe there is a typographic error in para 11.31, and that the reference to Policy RSA32 should be to Policy RSA24 (the quoted reference seems to be to the current Plan)

Misleading Text

We feel the current wording of the Policy referred to in para 11.31 is misleading as the growth at Old Stocks Farm has already been approved (Planning Application 22/00120/FUL refers). In the unlikely event that further expansion at Old Stocks Farm is proposed, we would comment that the site is very close to AWE(A), and we have been advised by the WBC Planners that the protection against nuclear radiation is less for a mobile home than for a normal residential home. APC would therefore probably oppose any such expansion

Housing Allocation

We note no new housing is proposed for the Parish of Aldermaston, due to its proximity to AWE (A). (Policies SP-4 and SP-12).

We are also pleased to note that Aldermaston is no longer classed as a Service Village due to its reduction in key services over the last 10 years (Appendix 5 to Review of Settlement Hierarchy Topic Paper mentioned in para 7.3 – Employment Land Review 2020)

Employment Land

Although no new Industrial land is proposed for the Parish of Aldermaston, (Policy SP-21) we are concerned that growth in our existing numerous industrial estates could lead to additional traffic on the already busy A340, which plays a key role in the evacuation route following an incident at AWE(A). APC will therefore continue its policy of Objecting to all developments that could increase HGV traffic on the A340 until our Conservation Area is bypassed. To that end, we are pleased to note that WBC has Refused planning application 22/02730/FULMAJ (expansion at Youngs Industrial Estate), stating in their Decision that "the proposal would represent an intensification of the commercial use of a site in a rural area" and that "There is insufficient information to demonstrate that the proposed development would not result in an increase in population within DEPZ. With no individual Emergency plan in place the proposal would have an adverse impact on the AWE Off-Site Emergency Plan due to distance meaning that evacuation after a period of shelter would be necessary, and in terms of recovery implications in the longer term."

Draft Policy SP-4 Atomic Weapons Establishment, Aldermaston & Burghfield

Under the current plan the advice is that AWE/Emergency Planning will likely advise against new residential development in the DEPZ.

Policy SP4 now states that AWE/ONR/Emergency Planning will likely advise against development that could lead to an increase in residential or non-residential populations within the DEPZ. Aldermaston Parish Council has long argued that WBC should maintain a low-density of people around AWE in the interest of public safety, and have been particularly concerned that Emergency Planning does not have a record of approximate worker numbers in the area (we believe the number of workers travelling into our Parish greatly exceeds the number of residents living in the Parish) . It is therefore our view that Emergency Planning could not reasonably assess whether any new commercial developments could have been safely accommodated within the Off-Site Emergency Plan. We have also recognised that AWE require that external access routes (such as the A340) are kept clear to allow emergency responders to be able to deal with any situation that arises.

The minutes from the AWE Local Liaison Committee meeting in November 2022 state: "AWE's position now is that it is very likely to object to any development inside the DEPZ which will increase the numbers of people or present a hazard or potential constraint on AWE. We are developing a process to make sure that we get to know all the planning applications and pre-apps which are coming into West Berkshire and the other local authorities. However, even if AWE/MoD does object, that doesn't mean that a planning application won't be granted. However, if we object along with WBC Emergency Planning and ONR then this is very possible the planning application will be refused."

Aldermaston Parish Council requests that WBC Planning and Enforcement Officers are made fully aware of AWE's revised position, and that any persons seeking advice from the Duty Planning Officer is given clear warning that development opportunity within the DEPZ is severely limited and that past approvals should not be seen as an indication that future consents can be achieved.

Apart from the above comments, Aldermaston Parish Council is supportive of the proposed Local Plan.