

Wiltshire Council

West Berkshire Local Plan Review 2022-2039 Proposed Submission

Thank you for consulting Wiltshire Council on the above plan.

Wiltshire is located to the west of West Berkshire and shares its eastern boundary. The shared boundary is wholly within the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

As recognised in paragraph 5.14 of your 'Interim Duty to Cooperate Statement' we have been engaging with you, alongside Swindon Borough Council, about a shortfall in employment land. It is noted that your criteria for engagement is local authorities within a one hours drive of Newbury and as such you are engaging with many other local planning authorities to discuss this issue also.

Wiltshire Council is at an advanced stage in preparing its Local Plan Review and we are moving towards our own Regulation 19 consultation later this year. In developing our plan, our focus is on ensuring that Wiltshire's needs can be met taking into consideration the constraints to development that we have in the county and the availability of land being promoted for employment use.

Section 7 of the West Berkshire Local Plan Review relating to economic growth contains two policies - Policies SP20 'Strategic approach to employment land' and SP21 'Sites Allocated for Employment Land'. Paragraphs 7.6 and 7.9 identify shortfalls in sites to meet the local need for office and industrial land, and elsewhere evidence points to the loss of offices to other uses. In such circumstances, it will be critically important to ensure that your planning policies robustly support the retention, intensification, and regeneration of existing sites/areas, as well as encouraging and facilitating windfall sites that could come forward over the plan period. Such a strategy alongside the positive identification of employment allocations will help ensure that employment delivery can be maximised over the plan period; and that people can live and work locally.

It is understood that your employment needs are of a local nature and as such it will be important for them to be provided locally, or in areas with settlements that are spatially well related to Newbury and other urban parts of the District. Such settlements are in the authorities in the South East, rather than to the west of the District in Wiltshire where the character of the area is largely AONB.

For the above reasons, at this stage it is considered that Wiltshire Council is unable to assist West Berkshire Council in meeting its shortfall but will continue to engage with you as appropriate under the Duty to Cooperate.

Spatial Planning
March 2023