

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comment, under Regulation 19, on the draft Local Plan Review 2022 – 2039. Speen Parish Council are extremely impressed with the level of detail provided and it is clear that a significant amount of work has gone into this draft. We would like to thank all the officers who were involved and the Planning Advisory Group for the time that they spent on this comprehensive strategic Plan.

Speen Parish Council have the following specific comments:

Brownfield Sites. We concur with the need to maximise the use of brownfield sites and believe that they should be a priority for developments. We note that the development at the old Sterling Cables site is an exemplar of brownfield development.

Policy SP1. We very much support the statement ‘The villages in the surrounding area [of Newbury and Thatcham] will retain their existing role and separate identity, with settlement boundaries and Policies SP8, DM1 and DM2 ensuring that physical separation is maintained’.

Policy SP7. We concur with the importance of ‘sense of place’, but feel that there is scope to be more ambitious in stating acceptable design quality. The term ‘high quality’ is used in this policy, but needs specific definition in order to enable enforcement. In addition, under paragraph 5.30 sub paragraph h, we feel that there needs to be specific mention of increased home working within the area of ‘functionality’

Policy SP8. We note and agree with the Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) that supports this Policy. In particular, the LCA supports no development west of the A34 in Speen Parish. The LCA states ‘Conserve the dispersed settled character along the ridge [B4000 from A34 to Stockcross]. Seek to avoid linear development and ensure settlements retain their distinct character and identities. Development should be in-keeping with existing settlement form and vernacular, and should respect the role wider rural landscape makes to Benham Park Conservation Area in particular’.

Policy SP19. This Policy states that ‘affordable homes will be built to net zero carbon standards to help meet objectives on sustainability and climate change’. There is a risk that this is interpreted as only being net zero during the building of the property; we believe that net zero should be the standard for the whole life of the structure and suggest that this section is reworded accordingly.

Policy SP24. The Policy includes a link to the Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP). The IDP, under ‘Health Centres/Improvements to address capacity and access’ states that ‘no costs identified at this stage’. We are content with the work that has gone into identifying other infrastructure requirements that are required, but feel that this specific topic must be addressed as a matter of urgency.

Policy RSA2. Speen Parish Council recognise that outline planning permission has been granted for this site, but remain extremely concerned about the location of the road access to the site on the A4 (Bath Road). The visibility splay is set at the absolute minimum and does not take into account several aggravating factors, including incline and nationally

recognised stopping distances. We will remain opposed to the current access plan as it introduces an increase risk to life.

Policy DM2. We support the requirement to provide separation of settlements. Based on the LCA, previously mentioned in our comment on SP8, we strongly believe that the area west of the A34 in Speen Parish should also be included in this Policy. Failure to do so risks development on a 'rural and wooded approach and gateway into Newbury' and, more importantly, the annexation of Stockcross into semi urban Newbury along with the potential loss of leisure facilities that promote health and wellbeing.

Policies DM9/10/11. We support these important Policies.