



11 September 2018

Sent by email: Programme.Officer@reading.gov.uk

Planning Policy

Development and Planning
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Dear Sir/Madam,

Reading Borough Council Local Plan Examination – Matters and Issues for Examination

Thank you for inviting West Berkshire District Council (WBDC) to submit statements in respect of the Inspector's matters and issues for the examination of the Reading Local Plan. We have the following comments in respect of Issue 1: Have the relevant procedural requirements been met, including the duty to co-operate?

Q1a. What are the key outcomes from the co-operation with neighbouring authorities, particularly relating to the shortfall of dwellings and Gypsy and Travellers and Travelling Showpeople accommodation identified within the Reading area, education provision and transport?

WBDC acknowledges the conclusions of the Gypsy and Traveller, Travelling Showpeople and Houseboat Dweller Accommodation Assessment commissioned by Reading Borough Council (RBC), ie. that Reading Borough, over the period to 2036, has an identified need of 10-17 permanent pitches for Gypsies and Travellers, 5 pitches for transit provision (with each pitch being able to accommodate two caravans) and 2 additional plots for Travelling Showpeople. No need was identified for additional residential moorings for houseboats.

WBDC agrees with this identified level of need.

WBDC further acknowledges that RBC has assessed the potential for provision within the borough.

Work on a comprehensive West Berkshire Roll Forward Local Plan review is underway which will amongst other things refine the Gypsy and Traveller accommodation requirement to 2036. We anticipate the adoption of this document towards the end of 2020. WBDC cannot say whether any of Reading's unmet need for Gypsy and Traveller provision can be met within West Berkshire as it has yet to determine its own level of need.

Given that West Berkshire district has considerable constraints to development; any new Gypsy and Traveller accommodation identified will be arrived at following additional work

which will consider the constraints to, and opportunities for, development and will be informed by collaborative work with other authorities, including Reading Borough Council.

Q1b. Is the housing market area and functional economic areas agreed with adjoining authorities, and are they suitably defined?

Yes.

There are successful joint working arrangements in place amongst the Berkshire authorities. Regular meetings of the Berkshire Development Plan Group (meetings with the policy team leaders/managers), Berkshire Heads of Planning, and Berkshire leaders are held. These successful joint working arrangements have resulted in a SHMA and FEMAs that the authorities agree on.

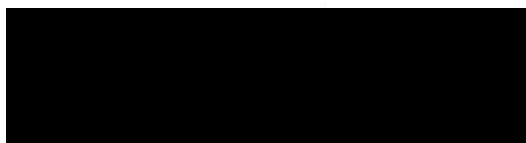
In respect of the SHMA and the housing market areas identified within the document, this is affirmed in the Memorandum of Understanding between the six Berkshire authorities signed in 2017, and a Member Reference Group that was originally formed to progress the SHMA, and which still meets today to discuss issues around housing needs and other strategic matters. Details of this are set out within the Reading Borough Local Plan Duty to Cooperate Statement dated March 2018.

Economic influences are particularly significant at a strategic level. West Berkshire is part of the Thames Valley Berkshire sub region which is recognised as the most dynamic and competitive sub-regional economy in the UK. This economic domination means that the most significant economic influences lie to the east, notably Reading, with economic linkages to the north, south and west of the District much less strong. Our strategic partnership working reflects this situation and we are a key player in the Thames Valley Berkshire Local Economic Partnership (TVB LEP). In partnership with the TVB LEP and the other unitary authorities across Berkshire, joint working has focused on the production of a Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) and the analysis of our Functional Economic Market Area (FEMA). Together, these studies provide the evidence needed to form the basis for future joint working on the distribution of homes and jobs across the Housing Market Areas

Whilst West Berkshire has its own FEMA, the urban area of Reading crosses the boundary with West Berkshire, and Arlington Business Park (one of the main business parks of the Reading market) lies within West Berkshire. As such WBDC and Reading Borough Council continue to cooperate on economic matters.

As a co-author of the West of Berkshire Housing Strategy, West Berkshire District Council agrees that the housing requirement of Reading, Bracknell Forest, Wokingham and West Berkshire should be met within this spatial area.

Yours faithfully,

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Bryan Lyttle
Planning and Transport Policy Manager