

## **Basingstoke and Deane Local Plan Proposed Main Modifications to the Submission Local Plan 2011-2029**

### **North Wessex Downs AONB Unit Issue 9 – Transport**

The AONB Unit has already responded in relation to policy SS11 that whilst the site to the North of Whitchurch Station was previously allocated in the current local plan for a car park this has never progressed. There remains a significant concern that if the site is again allocated for car parking but funding is not achieved then there will be pressure placed on this land to consider it for alternative uses, such as housing or other development. This concern has been brought to bear with the recent submission of an EIA Screening Opinion for the development of this site as a new business park and station car park. The development would seek permission for a range of business uses up to 13,000 sqm and also includes a 150 space station car park. The covering letter provided with the Screening request suggests that there is an existing business park in Whitchurch centred on Ardglen Road however this accommodation is dated and there is a lack of space for the businesses to grow. The applicants have put forward the scheme on the basis that the proposal would provide an important opportunity to facilitate delivery of the car park and to comprehensively plan the site. This sort of proposal is exactly the type of scheme which the AONB unit was concerned would result if the station car park allocation, set within the North Wessex Downs AONB remains in the Local Plan. The pressure which would result on the site for additional development to secure the car park provision is now clearly evident.

The allocation of this site for car parking within the AONB would encroach into the protected landscape and beyond the settlement boundary. The AONB unit does not concur with the LPA that because the site has been allocated in the plan previously that it must continue in perpetuity into the site allocations for the next local plan, particularly when the site is within the protected landscape of the AONB. Section 85 of the CRoW Act requires that relevant authorities should 'have regard' to the purpose of AONBs and paragraphs 115 and 116 of the NPPF are clear about the great weight that should be afforded to conserving landscape and scenic beauty in the AONB and that development within it should only be allowed in exceptional circumstances. It does not appear that there is an exceptional need for this development in this location.

It has been suggested by the Local Planning Authority within their responses to the Local Plan consultation process that no alternative sites have been made available. Land for employment use which is within the current local plan (St Cross) is proposed to be removed from the emerging local plan and the settlement boundary amended to exclude the site apparently on the basis that it was not delivered within the current local plan. It is relevant to note however that a planning application has recently been submitted to Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council 15/02912/OUT (Land off Evingar Road, Whitchurch). This is a hybrid outline planning proposal for a mixed use development comprising of a new access, erection of up to 70 new dwellings, up to 4200 sqm of B1 and B2 use, new station car park, open space, landscaping and associated works and a full application for the change of use of agricultural land to open space. The site is adjacent to the Ardglen Industrial Estate and is 500 metres away from the Railway Station. This provides further evidence to sustain the argument that there is insufficient justification for introducing development into the North Wessex Downs AONB when there is a proposal for development which includes car parking to serve the railway, and on land within the settlement boundary which is already allocated for development within the current local plan.

The AONB Unit requests that policy SS11 is removed from the plan or is amended to relate to land within the settlement boundary and outside of the North Wessex Downs AONB.

