

Basingstoke and Deane Local Plan 2011 to 2029 Public Examination Hearings

Issue 4: (Q7) Other Housing Matters Policy EM1 – Landscape

Further Submission by CPRE Hampshire

1. This further response is made by CPRE Hampshire at the invitation of the Inspector at the Public Examination Hearings, who asked for any specific policy wording changes which the council could then consider and respond to. First, it is significant that Landscape in this context is regarded as a sub set of Other Housing Matters at the Examination. CPRE regards Landscape as of fundamental importance, and believes that the wider public also considers it to be of substance.
2. Policy EM1 – Landscape reads well. Looking at it afresh it appears to be comprehensive in its wording. Despite this, a large number of developments have been approved in recent years that do not reflect these requirements. This may imply that the wording, as a development control policy, is far from perfect. Landscape seems to amount to very little when weight is attached to it in planning decisions. In some ways, 'landscape' should be one of the most important policy areas in the Plan. The role of 'mitigation' can be essential in planning, but its role is not directly acknowledged.
3. It has been a theme of the Examination that there is a need for more flexibility in some policies, as well as a need to strengthen others.
4. It should be a given that all development should make a positive contribution to the environment. It must also be borne in mind that any wording misapplied or defective could lead to judicial reviews. In the light of this, the whole policy wording as well as the explanatory text should be looked at again. It may be helpful to see Landscape policies as part of sustainable development, with its social and economic components. The European Landscape Convention (in force 2004) also considers these wider roles.

Policy and Text Wording

5. Landscapes have a fundamental role to play in maintaining and enhancing the character of the borough. This should be stated plainly, in support of other Plan objectives. The existence of particular landscape qualities should seek to have a prevailing effect in development management decisions. This approach should be reflected and recognised in the policy and subtext. The revisions are:

Insert after first sentence: 'The presence of particular landscape qualities may have an overriding effect in deciding the outcome of development proposals.'

Insert in second sentence after 'likely to be affected': 'either visually or physically'.

6. Policy EM1 is primarily concerned with the landscape impacts of development proposals. It appears to rely on assessments made by developers. The Plan should apply its own policy and approach to reflect and support the spatial objectives and overall strategy. The revision suggested above may help to achieve that objective.

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30 October 2015