

**EXAMINATION INTO THE SOUNDNESS OF THE BANES PMP**

**INSPECTOR'S MATTERS AND ISSUES FOR EXAMINATION AT  
HEARINGS**

**MATTER 2: OVERALL APPROACH**

**POSITION STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF**

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Date of Issue: August 2016





## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 This Position Statement sets out a brief response to the Inspector's questions in relation to Matter 2.
- 1.2 It should be read in conjunction with both the representors' submissions to the Submission Draft PMP, and their Position Statements relating to other matters identified by the Inspector for Examination.



## 2. Issue 1: Whether the changes to the CS are necessary and appropriate having regard to policies contained in the Placemaking Plan and its purpose

### Q1

- 2.1 The nature of the changes to the Policy B5 (Strategic policy for universities, private colleges and their impacts) and associated Core Strategy text would seem to invoke a material change to the strategic approach and strategy established in the CS. The firm Core Strategy commitment of the Council to seeking to enable the continued success of the city's Universities and the contribution they make to the city's identity and profile (CS, para. 2.36), has been deleted. It is replaced with a diluted undertaking to "*...enable, as far as possible, the continued success of The UoB and BSU and the contribution they make to the city's identity, profile and employment base, and their wider contribution to the UK skilled workforce and GVA*" (PMP, para. 226). This revised policy approach is substantiated further in paragraph 253 of the PMP:

*The overall strategy of the Development Plan is to enable the universities and private colleges to fulfil their ambitions, as far as possible, without those ambitions having a negative impact on the realisation of the Council's wider strategic planning requirements for the city, nor an unacceptable impact on the University campuses or their environs, or on the existing normal housing stock of the city. ...*

- 2.2 The commitment to a scale of student accommodation and academic space that can be developed on the Claverton Campus is deleted from Core Strategy Policy B5. It is not replaced within Policy SB19 which simply identifies development principles for different parts of the campus with reference to a Framework Plan. Both the Framework Plan and the development principles reflect the new emphasis on avoiding impacts on the University campuses or their environs by reducing the potential developable areas within the existing campus boundaries, for example, through the designation of the central 'Green Zone' and 'Clear Zones' around the campus peripheries.



- 2.3 In addition, Policy B5 is further amended not only to delete the firm strategic commitment to development quanta, but also to extend the restrictions in the Central and Enterprise Areas to teaching space as well as student accommodation. Given that the principal development opportunity sites are in those designated areas, the consequences of this additional restriction for the Universities being able to achieve their growth aspirations could be very significant indeed.
- 2.4 The combination of changes through both direct amendments to Policy B5 and the provisions of Policy SB19, are considered to be fundamental, and to change the strategic approach and strategy set out in the CS. They move away from a commitment to facilitating the delivery of the growth requirements of the Universities, to one which accentuates the subordination of university development to other development and environmental priorities. Given that the growth requirements of the Universities are greater than anticipated at the time of Examination and adoption of Core Strategy Policy B5, a more restrictive policy framework would be inconsistent with supporting the growth aspirations of the Universities and meeting in full objectively assessed needs, including for student accommodation.
- 2.5 For reasons set out in more detail in response to Matter 13, the above circumstances are considered to render the plan unsound. For the purposes of the current matter and issue, the revisions to Policy B5, coupled higher growth aspirations of the Universities and the more restrictive emphasis of the PMP, are considered to materially change the approach established in the CS.
- 2.6 A brief response to the specific changes cited by the Inspector is set out below.

### ***Policy RA1 and RA2***

- 2.7 These matters would seem predominantly within the Council's domain to respond to justify the changes that it has made.
- 2.8 The requirement for all RA1 villages to have a Primary School would seem to be onerous, and unrealistic. Providing there is reasonable accessibility to a Primary School, which are often supported by several villages, there would seem to be no reason why a village containing a reasonable level of community facilities should not be included in RA1. It



represents a material change from the CS in that it changes the qualification criteria and could potentially result in the re-categorisation of particular settlements.

- 2.9 The approach is inconsistent with national policy which, *inter alia*, promotes the retention and development of local services and community facilities in villages (NPPF, para. 28). Development of a scale appropriate at RA1 villages that does this, and may also contribute to supporting a school in a neighbouring village to which there is good accessibility, would be appropriate within the context of national policy.
- 2.10 'Limited residential development' is potentially restrictive of development to a scale below that commensurate with the scale and character of the village. It is neither necessary nor appropriate.

#### ***Policy B2 4(d)***

- 2.11 The hotel bedroom requirement in the CS should be construed as a minimum target. It is not prescribed as a maximum not to be exceeded, nor are specific land allocations made to the meet the requirement, it being largely for the industry to bring forward proposals.
- 2.12 The increase in number simply represents a revised projection of capacity and requirements. It will introduce beneficial flexibility into the policy for a sector that contributes importantly to the local economy.
- 2.13 It is in the domain of the Council to justify how it has arrived at the revised figure.

#### **Overall Strategy for Bath**

- 2.14 The text represents a change in approach to the CS spatial vision and strategy, particularly in relation to the strategy for the Universities (see paragraphs 2.1-2.5 above and response to Matter 13). It represents a move away from the strategy to support the growth ambitions of the Universities, to one of greater containment within existing campus limits and subordinates realisation of their ambitions to other development and environmental priorities.
- 2.15 For reasons set out in response to Matter 13, the PMP's approach to Bath's universities is not considered to be sound. It fails to give due regard to the importance of the Universities to the local economy, as both the second largest employer and contribution to GVA, and



therefore to reflect its status as an economic driver. Rather than being seen as separate from the provisions of the Plan for economic development, the Universities should be seen as integral to, and leading, them. The Plan requires major modification to reflect this, and to seek to meet the requirements of the Universities in full to render it sound.



### **3. Issue 2: Whether the overall requirements of the adopted CS would be achieved through the Placemaking Plan**

#### **Q1**

- 3.1 The PMP is unlikely to meet the overall housing requirement of about 13,000 dwellings.
- 3.2 Progress on bringing forward development opportunity sites in Bath identified in the plan has been slower than anticipated, and seems to have stalled on a number of them. Bath Quays North (SB4) and South (SB5) and South Bank (SB6), which between them are estimated to deliver a minimum of 240 dwellings, are understood to have stalled. Moreover, there is little evidence of progress on Green Park Station West and Sydenham Park (Policy SB7) that is to contribute over 500 units. The uncertainties of delivery owing to the complexity of site ownerships and leasehold interests, and having regard to the current fortunes of the retail industry in particular, would seem to be very high indeed.
- 3.3 For the above reasons, it would seem unlikely that the PMP will meet the overall housing requirement of about 13,000 dwellings. Moreover, the increase in competing requirements, for example for hotel accommodation and development associated with the Universities which must be accommodated and is less locationally footloose, means that additional housing land is likely to be required.
- 3.4 If, in her conclusions in relation to Matter 13, the Inspector concludes that the Plan is unsound since it does not seek to meet the objectively assessed needs for the Universities in full, then additional land beyond the campus boundaries is likely to be necessary to make the Plan sound. This will almost inevitably involve relaxation of the constraints on University-related development in the Central and Enterprise areas, to enable such development requirements to be met on development opportunity sites in appropriate locations that have good accessibility to the University campuses and sustainable transport hubs.

- 3.5 It is therefore concluded that the PMP will not meet the overall 'minimum' housing requirement of about 13,000 dwellings, and additional land needs to be identified to ensure that the objectively assessed need is met.

## Q2

- 3.6 The strategy for determining Housing Development Boundaries (HDBs) has not been positively prepared. Notwithstanding their age, there has been no comprehensive review, or indeed 'flexing', of HDBs to allow for sustainable development opportunities at relevant settlements or in response to settlement evolution since they were originally defined. A case in point relates to Farmborough and the adjustment promoted through representations made by Boystown Ltd (ID: 6453) which has not met with a positive response from the Council.
- 3.7 The use of HDBs is purely defensive, to tightly contain development within existing developed areas and gives very little scope for sustainable expansion of existing settlements. It is, in consequence, contrary to national planning policy guidance to deliver sustainable development and to, *inter alia*, 'boost significantly' the supply of housing. A positively prepared strategy ought to have involved the introduction of some flexibility into the policies to allow for development commensurate with a scale appropriate to RA1 and RA2 villages to come forward on sites of less than 10 dwellings, and therefore below the normal threshold for specific allocations. Absent such flexibility, the consequence for most rural settlements which have been developed to their limits is to render ineffective Policies RA1 and RA2 which encourage some development to sustain local communities and services.
- 3.8 The approach is particularly onerous and negative in the rural areas, where small settlements have largely been developed to their limits and specific site allocations are limited. For policies supporting economic growth in rural areas 'by taking a positive approach to sustainable development' (NPPF, para. 28) to be deliverable, HDBs should be used in a positive way to promote organic growth, rather than negatively to pull up the drawbridge.
- 3.9 The Council has failed to justify the 'defensive' use of HDBs against both the requirement to deliver modest growth in housing in smaller settlements, and the NPPF requirements to 'promote the retention and development of local services and community facilities in villages' (para. 28), and 'boost significantly' the supply of housing .



3.10 The strategy for determining HDBs is therefore not positively prepared, justified, or consistent with national policy.



