

CORE STRATEGY FOR CHILTERN DISTRICT - EXAMINATION

INSPECTOR'S AGENDA: HEARING, THURSDAY 14 APRIL (2nd session)

Main Matter 7

Participants should be available for a **1pm** start, but it may be a little later depending on the conclusion of the discussion on MM6 and the lunch adjournment.

This agenda draws on the main questions set out in the Main Matters and Questions 21 February. These are indicated thus (Q8.1). In the light of the Council's responses, not all of the previous questions need be explored further. Additional, follow-up questions and comments are shown in *italics*.

Overarching issue: Are the policies for employment and economic development justified by evidence, consistent with national policy and sufficiently flexible to address changing or site specific circumstances?

Background

Further to the discussion under Main Matter 1 of the appropriateness of the target for the strategic objective for employment, it would be helpful if the Council could clarify what are the intended outcomes in relation to the economy and employment, bearing in mind that the aim of "no loss of employment land" could be achieved with increasing vacancy levels and cleared employment sites.

Appendix 1 of the CS includes in its summary of the District Vision "achieve a better balance between the jobs available and the people to fill them". This is not in the Vision at paragraph 5.4 of the CS. Is this an anomaly which should be deleted? If not, how does the Council envisage achieving this outcome? What does it actually mean in practice?

Is the Council's strategy for the economy/employment consistent with the aims of the Ministerial Statement: "Planning for Growth" issued on 23 March 2011?

The Council has suggested a change to paragraph 12.6 regarding monitoring which states that the Council "may need to take action if vacancy levels and the number of cleared employment sites remain high as the economy picks-up". What action could the Council take and how long would it be before any action is considered necessary? Is this approach consistent with the recent Ministerial Statement? Could and should any such "action" be taken now? Without targets, how will the proposed monitoring indicators (including the suggested change) assist in identifying that "action" is required?

Policy CS16

Q8.1 What evidence indicates that the current portfolio of sites and premises is appropriate for current and future needs over the plan period?

Q8.2 Do the vacancy rates of premises, or number of cleared sites with planning permission for redevelopment not started suggest a lack of demand or unsuitability of some sites/premises? *Does the scale of vacant premises/cleared sites/outstanding planning permissions discourage new investment, given the limited demand?*

(Q8.5) How will the policy ensure compliance with PPS4 EC2.1 h) so as not to retain sites *if there is no reasonable prospect of a site being used for the allocated economic use?*

The Council's proposed footnote 45 in the CS (CDN117) confirms an intention to review in the Delivery DPD whether the E2 and E3 sites shown on the Proposals Map are fit for their allocated purposes. Is this change necessary for soundness? If so, should it be within the policy, since it might result in the loss of some employment land?

In response to my previous question (Q8.7) the Council suggests an intention to incorporate greater flexibility with changes to the policy. Is such greater flexibility required for soundness? Does the Council's change achieve what is required? Council to explain carefully what the reworded policy would mean in practice.

Q8.8 The policy allows for loss of employment premises to residential on upper floors within the District Centre, but resists the loss of any employment floorspace elsewhere. Is this a consistent and justified approach given the District (i.e. town) centres are a sequentially preferable location for office use?

Policy CS18

Q8.10 Does the policy contain adequate guidance for retail and other town centre uses? *I have not seen any evidence to suggest that it does not.*

Policy CS19

In response to my previous question (Q8.11), the Council indicates that policy CS19 applies only to proposals in the context of farm diversification and not more generally in relation to the reuse of buildings in the countryside. That is not what the policy says and the policy needs rewording to match the Council's intention. The supporting text could confirm how other proposals will be dealt with. Please provide an amended wording at the hearing.

In Q8.12 I sought to explore the realism of the several policy references to the availability of broadband services. Given the Council's response, how will it apply principle a) of Table 1 of CS4 which indicates that new development should be in locations provided with fast broadband services? Is this a realistic aspiration?

**Simon Emerson
INSPECTOR
31 March 2011**