

Revised schedule in relation to the Inspector's recommendations for the former Dow site at Letcombe Regis (pages 41-42 of the committee papers)

Policy H8 – Housing Sites in the Villages

For the former Dow site at Letcombe Regis (which is allocated for housing in the draft plan for an estimated 44 dwellings) the Inspector notes the application, which the Council had resolved to permit, was 'called in' for determination by the ODPM one reason being that the proposed density of 15 dwellings per hectare was about half that of the recommended minimum in PPG3. The Inspector concludes there is no justification for imposing a maximum density below that expected in PPG3 and policy H14. Although the Inspector supports the strategy of concentrating development in the main towns he acknowledges this does not mean that all new development must take place there with none at all elsewhere. Even though the site is not an early choice of location in the PPG3 search sequence it is previously developed land. He is aware that the site could be reused for employment purposes, possibly at an increased scale, without the need for planning permission, which might have a materially harmful effect on the village by virtue of noise and disturbance. A failure to find a new use would lead to further dereliction significantly harming the character and appearance of the village as a whole.

Given the well established landscape setting and the relationship of the site to the built up area of the village, the Inspector considers that "the removal of the existing structures and their replacement with a well designed new housing scheme at PPG3 minimum density would enhance rather than detract from the character and appearance of the conservation area and that of the village as a whole", and need not be materially harmful to the landscape of the AONB, the settings of listed buildings, the amenities of neighbours or the interests of highway safety. He acknowledges that the addition of around 100 new dwellings would be a very substantial addition to a small village, nevertheless he considers that the larger scheme is to be preferred not least because it would make best use of available previously developed land. He also notes that the lodge may be retained for community use and that some improvements to local bus services and walking and cycling links to Wantage, funded by the development, may be practical and realistic. He also notes that the provision of new public open space, the retention and enhancement of the Letcombe Brook corridor, existing trees and peripheral vegetation weigh strongly in favour of the scheme.

The Inspector also considers there is no justification for seeking to restrict the developable area of previously developed land particularly as nearly all that shown on the proposals map is presently covered by buildings and hardstandings. 100 new dwellings would still mean an overall reduction in the footprint of building on the site by about one third (paragraphs 8.20.33-8.20.50 of the Inspector's report).

**Inspector's recommendation (on page 211 of his report):
Delete policy and para 8.52. Add new policy as follows:**

The Inspector's recommendation for a new policy to allow the development of no more than 100 dwellings is disappointing given the previous extensive negotiations with the landowners and the parish council to find a mutually acceptable scheme for 44 dwellings. Nevertheless, he has thoroughly and carefully considered whether there is any justification for restricting the redevelopment of the site below the minimum PPG3 density and has concluded there is not. There would seem to be no flaw in his reasoning or any material factor that should have been taken into account but was not. The parish council and residents of the village will be disappointed by the Inspector's conclusion and may wish to retain the reference to 44 dwellings as in the deposit plan. However, local opposition is not of itself a sound reason for this Council not accepting the Inspector's recommendation.

Policy H8B as recommended by the Inspector imposes a maximum of 100 dwellings on the site following the removal of the employment structures. This provides a clear upper limit to the redevelopment potential of the site and will ensure the removal of the employment structures before the housing development can begin. The references to a comprehensive scheme for the whole site, the retention of open space and on and off site infrastructure and service requirements being met are sound and arguably give more protection in the development control context than the draft policy which simply named the site and gave an estimated number of dwellings.

Recommendation: Accept the Inspector's recommendation for the reasons given in paragraphs 8.20.33-8.20.50 of his report.

“H8A – LAND AT CHILTON FIELD FORMING PART OF THE HARWELL/CHILTON CAMPUS IS IDENTIFIED FOR HOUSING DEVELOPMENT RESULTING IN A NET INCREASE OF NO MORE THAN 75 DWELLINGS FOLLOWING THE DEMOLITION OF THE PRE-FABRICATED HOUSING.”

“H8B – LAND AT THE FORMER DOW SITE AT LETCOMBE REGIS IS IDENTIFIED FOR HOUSING DEVELOPMENT RESULTING IN A NET INCREASE OF NO MORE THAN 100 DWELLINGS FOLLOWING THE DEMOLITION OF THE FORMER EMPLOYMENT STRUCTURES. PROPOSALS WILL ONLY BE PERMITTED WHERE THEY ARE IN ACCORDANCE WITH A COMPREHENSIVE SCHEME FOR THE WHOLE SITE, INCLUDING LAND SHOWN ON THE PROPOSALS MAP TO BE RETAINED AS OPEN SPACE AND WHERE ALL NECESSARY ON SITE AND OFF SITE INFRASTRUCTURE AND SERVICE REQUIREMENTS ARE MET.”
