
Public Questions as specified in the Council's Procedure Rules of the Constitution

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Question (A)

Council Meeting on 28 November 2024

(A) Question not related to an item of business submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Highways by Alison May:

“West Berkshire District Council's current Waste PFI (Private Finance Initiative) contract with Veolia expires in 2032. As a consequence West Berkshire District Council will need to commission new service arrangements. Waste Contracts are complex and costly. In order to deliver a 'fit-for-purpose' and cost effective contract for West Berkshire citizens will the Council agree to develop and release a Waste Commissioning Strategy including an associated programme of activity which will influence and shape the forthcoming new arrangements?”

The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Highways answered:

The Council will robustly assess the range of options available to us when the existing contract expires. As part of the process, we will refer to good industry practice, learn lessons from other authority areas and engage with external advisors, as appropriate. Closer to the period for procuring the new service delivery option, the recommended approach will be suitably scrutinised by relevant Council governance bodies including the Procurement Board.



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Question (B)

Council Meeting on 28 November 2024

(B) Question not related to an item of business submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Highways by Alison May:

“Baroness Humphreys, a member of the House of Lords, has recently stated Conwy County Borough Council's (North Wales) switch to four-weekly collections of residual waste, resulted in an 11% spike in the tonnage of recyclables collected and a reduction of 12% residual waste. A Conwy Council member put this down to residents being incredibly motivated to recycle combined with the local and global benefits of recycling. West Berkshire citizens are equally motivated to ensure their valuable waste resources remain in circulation for as long as possible and wish to avoid them being incinerated. West Berkshire District Council's burning of waste continues to increase - in the reporting year 2014/15 - 30% of collected waste was incinerated, the reporting period 2022/23 resulted in 42% of waste being incinerated, this is a notable upward trend representing a 13% increase in less than 10 years.

These increases suggest WBDC are yet to implement the necessary changes to reflect their continued assertions about their overall recycling successes. Moving to a four-weekly collection is a small step for West Berkshire citizens and a wise leap for WBDC. Will WBDC's new administration reverse the previous administration's trend towards the increased incineration of waste and agree to implement four-weekly collections of residual waste?”

The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Highways answered:

Thanks for your question.

We continue to make improvements such as the introduction of separate food waste collections and expanding the types of materials we collect for recycling, whilst encouraging residents and businesses to minimise waste generation. It has to be noted that the general waste we currently send to energy from waste facilities could have ended up in landfill instead. For example, our use of landfilling has reduced from 66% in 2008 to just 4% of waste collected last year. According to the Waste Hierarchy, the use of energy from waste facilities is a preferable option compared to landfilling which is considerably more harmful for the environment. The Council recently conducted a public consultation on our draft Waste Management Strategy. The measures and service changes consulted on include a potential change to three-weekly collections for general waste. A four-weekly general waste collection approach is currently not under consideration. The results of the consultation will be carefully considered before decision makers settle on the final measures to be implemented. The new Strategy is expected to be published during spring 2025.



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Question (C)	Council Meeting on 28 November 2024
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(C) Question not related to an item of business submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Highways by Alison May:

“Local Wildlife Sites (LWS) are areas of known wildlife rich habitat designated as non-statutory protected sites. Proposed Local Wildlife Sites (pLWS) are sites identified as presenting comparable rich habitats to LWSs however are yet to benefit from the relevant professional ecological survey(s) and panel review assessment.

Will West Berkshire District Council join other environmentally responsible Councils and add pLWS to West Berkshire District Council's countryside portfolio and maps?”

The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Highways answered:

The Council is fully committed to protecting and enhancing wildlife habitats within the District. The Council declared an Ecological Emergency in October 2023, following the declaration of a Climate Emergency in summer 2019. Across the District, we continue to work with BBOWT, our wildlife partner to protect important areas for wildlife. Additional work continues within the community, sometimes led by community groups, and supported by organisations such as the Greenham Trust, to enhance nature corridors, canals and towpaths.

There are specific planning policies that address wildlife preservation, including:

West Berkshire Core Strategy existing policy CS17 (Biodiversity and Geodiversity) which requires all new development to maximise opportunities for net gain in biodiversity and create ecological enhancements, including wildlife corridors.

Emerging policy SP11 in the West Berkshire Local Plan Review also specifically provides protection for sites that meet the criteria for designation as a Local Wildlife Site (including proposed wildlife sites).

We would be happy to add the proposed local wildlife sites layer to our online mapping, this information is also publicly available from the Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre (TVERC).



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Question (D)	Council Meeting on 28 November 2024
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(D) Question related to item 10 submitted to the Deputy Leader of Council and Executive Portfolio Holder: Planning and Housing by Paula Saunderson:

“The Inspector required additional sites to be put forward as Site Allocations within the Plan and the dates to be changed from 2023-2041, yet nowhere in the Main Modifications & Calculations for the Housing Trajectory on pages 198-200 of the MM Document are these sites included:

- a. Newbury Gardens Day Nursery (5 Flats),*
- b. Kennet Centre (427 Flats) ,*
- c. Pound St. including Jewsons Yard (79 dwellings with 69 Flats),*
- d. Land East Of Newbury College at Monks Lane (75 Dwellings with 42 Flats)*

So why were these be considered as Windfall and not proper Site Allocations with their own Policies?”

The Deputy Leader of Council and Executive Portfolio Holder: Planning and Housing answered:

Thank you for your question.

The sites that are referred to are all located within the settlement boundary of Newbury, whereby the principle of development is already established. As the principle is already supported, the Local Plan Review does not allocate any sites for development on land inside settlement boundaries.

As far as the housing land supply position is concerned, the Inspector is clear that the base date should be 1 April 2023. Therefore, any planning permissions granted after April 2023 on unallocated sites are considered as windfalls. These permissions provide flexibility to the housing supply and help to make sure the minimum housing requirement can be met within the plan period.

The Chairman asked: *“Do you have a supplementary question arising directly out of the answer to your original question. A supplementary should be relevant to the original question and not introduce any new material?”*

Paula Saunderson asked the following supplementary question:

“Some sites allocated in the plan are within settlement boundaries, such as the ones in Lambourne, Hermitage, and Compton. Therefore, why is Newbury any different?”



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The Deputy Leader of Council and Executive Portfolio Holder: Planning and Housing answered:

I am not able to determine if the sites you mentioned were in settlement boundaries during this meeting. However, if a list of these could be provided, I will examine this point.



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Question (E)	Council Meeting on 28 November 2024
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(E) Question related to item 10 submitted to the Deputy Leader of Council and Executive Portfolio Holder: Planning and Housing by Paula Saunderson:

“Under MM31 Pgs 101-103 at the bottom of Pag 102 the modifications helpfully clarify the New Name for Bond Riverside and its positioning within the Plan, however the wording is still erroneous in its reference to the Title of the DEDICATED EMPLOYMENT AREA that it sits with, as the DEA is actually called the LONDON ROAD ESTATES as Listed in Appendix 4 of the Original Submission, so can this be rectified please?”

The Deputy Leader of Council and Executive Portfolio Holder: Planning and Housing answered:

Thank you for your question. You are right that there is discrepancy in the LPR as to how the Designated Employment Area (DEA) is referenced in the supporting text to policy SP20 and Appendix 4 of the LPR. We certainly get this rectified through a ‘minor’ modification to Appendix 4 to refer to the ‘London Road Industrial Estates’.

The Chairman asked: *“Do you have a supplementary question arising directly out of the answer to your original question. A supplementary should be relevant to the original question and not introduce any new material?”*

Paula Saunderson asked the following supplementary question:

“My understanding was that the ‘Industrial’ part did not apply to the broader land. This was previously referred to as the ‘London Road Estate’, whereas it was the Council land that was called the ‘London Road Industrial Estate’. Therefore, Appendix 4 should remain, but the word industrial should be removed from the pages I identified.

The Deputy Leader of Council and Executive Portfolio Holder: Planning and Housing answered:

I would be happy to look into that for you.



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Question (F)	Council Meeting on 28 November 2024
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(F) Question related to item 10 submitted to the Deputy Leader of Council and Executive Portfolio Holder: Planning and Housing by Paula Saunderson:

“With a large number of Newbury Settlement & Greenham Parish Planning Applications considered by WAPC in 2024 coming forward as FLATTED DEVELOPMENTS of increased Density does the Council feel it has adequate Policies within the LPR 2022-2038 submission and these Main Modifications to properly cover:

- a. *Design and Density of Tall Building Developments in terms of maximum densities and heights in line with the new National Model Design Code (NMDC?)*
- b. *A Policy covering Build To Rent similar to other Reg 19 Local Plans?*
- c. *Cumulative Impact of lack of provision for Public Open Spaces and not meeting the Natural England Doorstep and Neighbourhood Criteria for Access to Natural Green Spaces (ANGS)?*
- d. *How these Cumulative Numbers of Flats are reflective of the latest identified Housing Need and how will they be reflected in the Authority Monitoring Review?”*

The Deputy Leader of Council and Executive Portfolio Holder: Planning and Housing answered:

Thank you for the questions.

Yes, the Council is content that, in conjunction with national policy and guidance, the policies in the LPR set out a strategy for distributing development whilst protecting, conserving and enhancing the natural, built and historic environment.

- a) In relation to the specific issues raised in relation to tall buildings, I would refer in particular to Policies SP1, SP7.
- b) The LPR does not have a policy on every issue and that includes not having a specific policy on ‘build to rent’. If appropriate, such a policy could be considered as part of the next Local Plan. I would be happy to consider this for the future.
- c) In relation to public open space I would refer in particular to policies SP7, SP10, DM40.



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- d) Policy SP18 which deals with 'Housing Type and Mix' was informed by the updated Local Housing Need Assessment undertaken in 2022. The study looked at a range of statistics such as demographic projections and the profile of housing across the District in terms of size and tenure and made recommendations for the mix for future dwelling sizes by tenure required for market and affordable housing.

The Council does not currently monitor housing mix data as part of the AMR. It is hopeful however, that should resources be made available in the future, this could form part of our annual monitoring.

The Chairman asked: *“Do you have a supplementary question arising directly out of the answer to your original question. A supplementary should be relevant to the original question and not introduce any new material?”*

Paula Saunderson asked the following supplementary question:

“On point B, there was September 2018 guidance from Government which said that Local Plans should have a policy on ‘Build to Rent’ as there was a definition included in the National Planning Policy Framework. Did the Council accidentally miss this as it will be important moving forward. In addition, as several flats had been recently approved by planning committees, it would be nice to track that number in the AMR”.

The Deputy Leader of Council and Executive Portfolio Holder: Planning and Housing answered:

On your point about question B, at the time the Plan was written, that directive was not published. However, I would be happy to consider this for the future.

