

NOTE FOR INSPECTOR

RE: MATTERS CONCERNING PROPOSED ALLOCATION AT DALTON BARRACKS AND ABINGDON AIRFIELD RELATING TO GARDEN VILLAGE PRINCIPLES, VILLAGE BUFFERS, COUNTRY PARK AND COALESCENCE

22 AUGUST 2018

1. This note provides a commentary on four matters raised by the Planning Inspector relating to proposed development at Dalton Barracks and Abingdon Airfield following discussion at Local Plan Examination Hearings on 26th and 27th July 2018.

Garden Village Principles

2. The Part 2 plan makes reference to 'Garden Village' principles in the context of the Dalton Barracks proposal to help ensure the potential for highly sustainable and accessible development is fully realised.
3. The formal designation of Garden Villages or Towns lies with the Secretary of State. Government published a prospectus for new 'Garden villages, towns or cities' in 2016. It is understood that a large number of authorities submitted proposals; 10 Garden Towns and 14 Garden Villages were selected as receiving support including for Didcot Garden Town.
4. Government published guidance in 2016 to inform the competitive process described above. This document has since been withdrawn. It stated at Paragraph 14, that:

"The Garden Village must be a new discrete settlement, and not an extension of an existing town or village. This does not exclude proposals where there are already a few existing homes".
5. However, the document also stated at Paragraph 10, that:

"We do not consider that there is a single template for a garden village, town or city. It will be important for the new community to establish a clear and distinct sense of identity. We want to see local areas adopt innovative approaches and solutions to creating great places, rather than following a set of rules".
6. Government have since published new guidance relating to an opportunity for a new wave of 'Garden Communities' (referring to either Garden Towns or Garden Villages) in August 2018. This guidance replaces the now withdrawn 2016 guidance. The new 2018 guidance states at Paragraph 6, that:

"Proposals can be for a discrete new settlement or take the form of transformational development of an existing settlement, both in nature and in scale".

7. The Town and Country Planning Association (TCPA) also published guidance on Garden Towns and Villages in 2016, which they have since replaced in 2018. Their 2016 guidance stated that 'Garden Villages' should consist of:

"A new discrete settlement, and not an extension of an existing town or village. This does not exclude proposals where there are already a few existing homes".

8. The TCPA 2018 guidance, which replaces the 2016 guidance, states at Page 14 that:

"The TCPA defines a garden village as a new community that is designed, delivered and managed in accordance with the Garden City principles, but tailored for a smaller scale than new Garden Cities (which are likely to be more than 10,000 homes in size). It may be developed within existing settlements (as an urban village or suburb) or as a sustainable urban extension".

9. The Council also notes that the 2018 version of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), at Paragraph 72, states:

"The supply of large numbers of new homes can often be best achieved through planning for larger scale development, such as new settlements or significant extensions to existing villages and towns, provided they are well located and designed, and supported by the necessary infrastructure and facilities".

10. The criteria for Paragraph 72 includes reference to:

"Set clear expectations for the quality of the development and how this can be maintained (such as by following Garden City principles) and ensure that a variety of homes meet the needs of different groups in the community will be provided".

11. Furthermore, footnote 35, which accompanies Paragraph 72 states:

"The delivery of large scale developments may need to extend beyond an individual plan period, and the associated infrastructure requirements may not be capable of being identified fully at the outset. Anticipated rates of delivery and infrastructure requirements should, therefore, be kept under review and reflected as policies are updated".

12. Whilst the new NPPF is not a factor governing the Part 2 plan examination, it does demonstrate Government thinking that would inform any proposals for development at Dalton Barracks in the future.

13. On this basis, the Council is content that its proposals for Dalton Barracks, including reference to 'Garden Village' principles, are consistent with latest Government and TCPA Guidance on Garden Town, Cities and Villages and with the latest Government planning policy. The Council would be content to make an Additional Modification to update references within the Part 2 plan to Garden City principles to 2018 rather than 2016 documents.

Village Buffers

14. The Council understands that Wootton and St Helen's Without Parish Councils are proposing that a significant buffer is imposed within policy between the existing settlement at Shippon and proposed Development at Dalton Barracks and Abingdon Airfield.
15. The Council understands the importance of protecting the character and historic core of Shippon village and the Part 2 plan includes a number of policy criteria that seek to support this aim (listed below). However, the purpose of Core Policy 8b: Dalton Barracks Comprehensive Development Framework is to ensure the whole site is guided by a comprehensive approach. This will ensure that all matters, including for example master-planning, connectivity, accessibility, infrastructure, open space and other matters are considered for the site as a whole.
16. It has been established earlier in this note that both the 2018 TCPA and Government guidance for garden villages and the new NPPF all state that this form of development can form extensions to existing settlements. Sustainable Urban Extensions are a standard approach to planning for new development, as endorsed by national policy. The integration and connectivity of Sustainable Urban Extensions, including those that support Garden Village principles, form essential components of successful master-planning.
17. The Council is confident the commitment to a comprehensive framework approach to planning for the site as set out in Core Policy 8b, the commitment to prepare a Supplementary Planning Document, again set out in policy, and the policy criteria and requirements are sufficient to provide a balanced approach to protecting the character and historic core of Shippon, whilst allowing flexibility to master-plan the site comprehensively and successfully.
18. The Development proposal provides opportunities for enhancing the existing village of Shippon, for example reducing traffic using Barrow Road, and to ensure new development is sensitive to the setting of the village. This could include providing improved access to new services and facilities including community based or open space along with the following potential opportunities, which will be examined in more detail through the SPD process:
 - Establishing the first phase of development to the south, which will enable traffic to be routed around Barrow Road and the historic part of Shippon;
 - Re-establishing pedestrian and cycle routes to and from Shippon, which have been severed by the airfield;
 - Funding to improve cycle provision on the surrounding highways network;
 - Funding to increase the frequency and quality of bus services;
 - A new primary school, community building, destination space and play area in the first phase of development within a reasonable walking distance of the majority of housing in Shippon;

- A development offset and secure boundary to the rear gardens of modern housing at Rookery Close in the form of primary school grounds and playing fields;
- Housing set-back from Barrow Road and the historic part of Shippon with parkland and tree planting wrapping around the southern end of development;
- Retention of historic Barracks buildings and structures together with associated trees and open space; and
- Green corridors of open space, retention of important trees and new planting adjacent to military housing on Faringdon Road, Sycamore Close, Hawthorne Avenue, Cherry Tree Drive, Long Tow and Cholswell Road.

19. Example policy criteria and requirements include:

Core Policy 8b: Dalton Barracks Comprehensive Development Framework

- Criteria iv. proposals for buildings and structures (including their extensions) will not unacceptably harm the character and appearance of the surrounding area, taking into account their location, scale, bulk and height.

Site Development Template: Dalton Barracks

- Five 'Urban Design Principles' criteria including following a comprehensive development framework approach, giving consideration to the development potential of the entire site, ensuring the infrastructure requirements, including Green Infrastructure, are considered from the outset, that the overall development potential of the site will be informed by master-planning through the preparation of the Supplementary Planning Document.
- Two 'Landscape Consideration' criteria including that the development should be in accordance with and make necessary contributions to a comprehensive landscape plan for the whole site, informed by a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, and incorporating a Country park of at least 80 hectares to be located between Dry Sandford Pitt SSSI and the rest of the development.

Additional Modification AM4 (**CSD03**) states:

- The historic centre of Shippon lies to the south of Dalton Barracks. It remains relatively intact and still survives as a historic village with a rural approach from the west along Barrow Road. Development on the southern part of the site should respect the historic character of Shippon and its rural approach.

20. The masterplan SPD could include a development offset from Barrow Road and the historic part of Shippon. This is likely to include open space and playing fields for a primary school and a strip of parkland and parkland trees wrapping around part of the development.

Country Park

21. Core Policy 8b: Dalton Barracks Comprehensive Development Framework sets out a commitment to provide a Country Park of at least 80 hectares. The policy criteria and requirements include detail to guide 'landscape considerations' for 'Biodiversity and Green Infrastructure' and for 'Urban Design Principles'. Collectively, these provide detail to ensure the Country Park is planned appropriately giving consideration to the whole site and ensuring that mitigation for potential adverse ecological impact is adequate. The Supplementary Planning Document will provide an opportunity to provide further guidance in relation to buffers to areas of ecological importance and mitigation to off-set potential adverse effects.
22. Notwithstanding the adequacy of the provision of an 80 ha Country Park, the initial master-planning work made provision for a Country Park of over 100 hectares and on this basis, the Council would be content to support a proposed modification to change the Core Policy 8b commitment to deliver a Country Park of at least '100 hectares'.
23. Land uses and their distribution within The Country Park will be considered in the SPD however they are likely to include grassland, meadowland, trees and scrub, attenuation basins, ponds, footpaths and cycle paths, trim trails, community food growing areas, biodiversity and picnic areas. The Country Park would also include appropriately located grass sports pitches, a pavilion, allotments, a multi-use games area and neighbourhood equipped area for play.

Coalescence

24. The Green Belt study undertaken to assess the Dalton Barracks site and its environs (**NAT02.3**) identifies at Figure 5 the principal areas of separation between settlements.
25. The Council is content that the proposed development at Dalton Barracks and Abingdon Airfield, adjoining Shippon, would not lead to coalescence with the surrounding settlements. The existing Green Belt and separation between settlements would be maintained between Shippon and Abingdon and between the proposed development at Dalton Barracks and Whitecross.
26. The proposed Country Park would extend to the north of the site and include land between Wootton and the proposed development at Dalton Barracks, maintaining the separation between the proposed development area at Dalton Barracks and Wootton.
27. A significant area of Abingdon Airfield, the Country Park, is proposed to remain open and retained within, the Green Belt. The retention of at least 100 ha of open space within the Green Belt would thus protect, to a large extent, the openness of the Green Belt to the west of Dalton Barracks, furthermore, the Country Park is of an adequate depth to safeguard the surrounding countryside from encroachment.