



EARLEY TOWN COUNCIL

Comments on Reading Borough Council's Local Plan Partial Update Consultation on Scope and Content

General

Earley Town Council (ETC) welcomes the opportunity to comment on Reading Borough Council's Local Plan Partial Update Consultation on Scope and Content which sets out a strategy for how development takes place in Reading. The Town Council commends RBC's aspiration for achieving zero-carbon during the period covered by the plan.

Comments

The following comments provided are in relation to effects/impacts on Earley and its residents, as a neighbouring parish, therefore the Town Council has not responded to all 85 questions in the consultation document.

1. ETC notes that there are very few areas identified for development that border the area of Earley Town. This obviously reflects the already high density of mature urban development and limited opportunities for development.
2. ETC notes the comments on housing needs and the suggested figure of 800 dwellings per year, which is substantially ahead of the existing plan and below the "standard" calculation. Whilst it is noted that a "Memorandum" exists between adjacent Boroughs about being willing to absorb unmet needs, ETC is acutely aware of the difficulties that Wokingham Borough Council has in identifying areas for potential development to meet their own housing needs. As such, ETC would strongly oppose any overspill of development from Reading Borough into the Earley area to accommodate unmet needs.
3. ETC notes the comments about the development on the University of Reading campus and has significant concerns that any substantial increase in student numbers, without suitable and sustainable vehicle parking arrangements, would have a concomitant knock-on effect on random on-street parking across roads in Earley, which border the University. Significant problems already exist in Aldbourne Avenue, Falstaff Avenue and Hartsbourne Road.
4. If RBC considers that the current location of the Royal Berkshire Hospital is the best place for it, then RBH needs to deal with the current parking issues and lack of parking for both staff and visitors urgently. Many out-patients have mobility issues that mitigate against their use of public transport and/or may live in locations poorly served by public transport. ETC would further support RBH and RBC giving future consideration to an alternative site for the hospital.
5. ETC is concerned with comments under the draft infrastructure delivery schedule on page 101, which states there is "*unlikely to be a significant need for additional primary and secondary places*" without any evidence. Secondary schools in the eastern side of Reading are already heavily oversubscribed with students from the Reading Borough area being

accepted by schools in Wokingham Borough areas, displacing Earley resident's children eastwards, with attendant high transport costs and effects on afterschool activities.

In addition, the increase in students with Education, Health & Care Plans (EHCP) seems to be undergoing almost exponential growth.

6. ETC has previously commented on RBC's transport strategy related to the Third Thames Crossing and repeats the comment here. ETC believes the Third Thames Crossing needs to have proper links to avoid traffic flowing through Earley roads. If the route is linked to the A329M, then Earley Town Council would prefer it to be direct rather than via a stretch of the London Road.
7. ETC is in full agreement with the comments about housing types as discussed in section 8.20 onwards of the consultation document and would fully support a policy that places an emphasis on delivering family housing. Such housing must ideally be affordable and aimed at young families. Luxury developments of four bed plus detached houses should only be considered very carefully as part of a fully balanced mix of housing types.
8. ETC notes the comments related to Wildlife Corridors and Green Networks and requests that early engagement with adjacent Towns and Parishes is undertaken, so a fully integrated approach can be developed.

This concludes the comments of Earley Town Council

Dated: 19th January 2024