5 Our Environment and Surroundings

Responding to Climate Change

Policy SP5

Responding to Climate Change

The principles of climate change mitigation and adaptation will be required to be embedded into new development, improving the resilience of land, buildings and existing and future communities to the opportunities and impacts arising from climate change. All development should contribute to West Berkshire becoming and staying carbon neutral by 2030. Depending on the nature and scale of proposals, development will be expected to satisfy the following criteria:

a. To withstand predictable effects from climate change for its expected lifetime;
b. To take advantage of the latest low and zero carbon technologies and innovations, including digital;
c. To achieve net zero operational carbon development by applying the energy hierarchy, achieving the highest viable levels of energy efficiency, generating and supplying renewable, low and zero carbon energy, and as a last resort carbon offsetting in accordance with policy DM4;
d. To achieve the highest viable levels of energy efficiency;
e. To generate and supply renewable, low and zero carbon energy for its own use and/or local distribution networks in accordance with policy DM4;
f. To provide for sustainable forms of vehicular and personal transport to and from the site and reduce car use in accordance with policies SP19, DM44 and DM45;
g. To enable recycling and waste reduction both during construction and occupation;
h. To manage and conserve adequate water resources and avoid harming water quality and improve it where possible in accordance with policies DM7 and DM6;
i. To demonstrate that flood risk from all sources can be avoided or managed in accordance with policy SP6;
j. To use sustainable urban drainage systems in accordance with policy SP6;
k. To provide for green/blue infrastructure and open spaces within the layout for shading and cooling, to detain surface water run-off and absorb carbon dioxide emissions in accordance with policy SP10;
l. To improve wildlife habitat and species conservation and connectivity to allow for movement in response to climate change in accordance with policy SP11; and
m. To maintain the integrity of the historic environment and to respect the character and improve the environmental performance of heritage assets without compromising their significance in accordance with policy SP9. This necessitates taking a whole building approach informed by heritage expertise.

Proposals should be accompanied by a Sustainability Statement which demonstrates how these principles have been embedded into the development. The level of information provided should be proportionate to the scale and nature of the development proposed.

Supporting Text

5.1 Our climate is changing faster than it would otherwise due to our increased burning of fossil fuels for electricity, heating and powering transport as well as our consumption of products such as meat and milk from livestock that produce methane. The gases emitted such as carbon dioxide, methane and nitrous oxide have added to our atmosphere and the greenhouse 'blanket' accelerating global temperatures and affecting the climate in ways that could change how we live and our long term behaviours. The effects of climate change include shifts in our seasons, hotter drier summers, warmer wetter winters, rising sea levels and more extreme weather events such as droughts, flash floods, and strong winds.

5.2 National policy is leading the response to climate change but there are measures that can be taken through the Local Plan to incorporate climate impacts into local decision making that radically reduce our contributions to greenhouse gas emissions and adapt development to enable communities and infrastructure to be more resilient to the consequences of climate change. Both reducing the impacts of, and being less vulnerable to, climate change is an essential part of delivering the environmental element of sustainable development.

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5.3 Through the Climate Change Act 2008, the UK has committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions and to increase energy generation from renewable sources:

- a 100% (amended by Order in 2019) reduction in net greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 (from 1990 levels);
- sourcing 30-45% of its energy from renewable sources by 2030.

5.4 In the Environment Strategy 2020-2030 for West Berkshire[36], the District sets a target for carbon neutrality by 2030 being achieved by reducing carbon emissions to 350kt/annum and neutralising that amount by carbon sequestration, local energy and carbon offsetting projects.

5.5 The NPPF requires that local planning authorities adopt proactive strategies to mitigate and adapt to climate change.

5.6 Climate change mitigation means taking action to reduce the causes of climate change, primarily through reductions in greenhouse gas emissions. Designing and constructing developments that are extremely energy efficient and/or make the best use of renewable energy technologies are both ways of helping to mitigate further climate change.

5.7 Climate change adaptation means ways that a development can be adapted to deal with the weather related consequences of climate change. Using water more efficiently, reducing overheating and controlling high levels of rainwater run-off are all examples of adapting a development to respond to changes in our climate.

5.8 The principles of climate change adaptation and mitigation are embedded within this policy and supported by other policies in this Plan.

36 Environment Strategy 2020-2030 for West Berkshire: https://www.westberks.gov.uk/article/38774/Environment-Strategy-2020-to-2030