

## West Berkshire Local Plan Review 2023-2041 (adopted June 2025)

## 10 Development Management Policies: Our Environment and Surroundings

### Policy DM3

#### Health and Wellbeing

Development proposals will be required to promote, support and enhance positive mental and physical health and wellbeing and thus contribute to reducing health inequalities. Where any potential adverse impacts are identified, they will need to be addressed and mitigated in an appropriate manner.

Proposals for development should support healthy lifestyles, including through the use of active design principles. Where appropriate, the provision of new or improved health facilities will be required as part of new development, proportionate to the additional demand that they would generate.

Proposals for major development, or other development likely to have a potentially significant impact on the health and wellbeing of the local population or particular groups within it in relation to either the nature of the use proposed and/or its location in relation to other uses, should be accompanied by a fit for purpose Health Impact Assessment (HIA) in accordance with the current guidance<sup>(110)</sup> from Public Health England. The level of information required should be proportionate to the scale and nature of the development proposed. The purpose of the HIA is to assess any health impacts, positive or negative, that may arise from the proposed development and it should show how any potential health risks can be avoided or minimised, with particular emphasis on disadvantaged sections of communities that may be affected. Development proposals should demonstrate how the conclusions of the HIA have been taken into account in the design of the scheme.

Development that would have an unacceptable impact on the health or wellbeing of existing or new communities will not be permitted.

### Supporting Text

**10.1** It is essential that the decisions we make consider the health of our residents and contribute to reducing health inequality. The West Berkshire Vision 2036<sup>(111)</sup> highlights that mental health problems represent the largest single cause of disability in the District, affecting people of all ages. It also notes the significant health inequalities across West Berkshire, with a life expectancy gap of up to ten years in different areas. The District's mix of rural and urban settlements means that access to services can be varied.

**10.2** The Council's Leisure Strategy 2022-2032<sup>(112)</sup> notes that West Berkshire's existing leisure offering is very good, with a number of parks and open spaces, commons, woodland, public rights of way and leisure centres available for physical activity. There is also a range of water based opportunity through rivers such as the Thames, Enborne, Lambourn, Pang and Kennet, the Kennet & Avon Canal and lakes which are also enjoyed by residents and visitors alike. It quotes the percentage of physically active adults at 63.3%, just below the national average of 66.3%.

**10.3** A wide range of indoor and outdoor sports are played across the District. These opportunities and their associated health benefits, are reflected in West Berkshire's life expectancy, with those for both men and women being above regional and national averages. The District's cultural heritage is also integral to people's health and wellbeing. It increases academic attainment, provides a sense of place and identity and has a significant, positive impact on the local economy.

**10.4** Tackling health and wellbeing requires a multi-agency approach. The Berkshire West Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2021-2030, developed by the Reading, West Berkshire and Wokingham Health and Wellbeing Boards together with the Berkshire West Integrated Care Partnership is underpinned by a place based approach with its number one priority to reduce health inequalities.

110 Health Impact Assessment in spatial planning - a guide for local authority public health and planning teams (October 2020) Public Health England

111 West Berkshire Vision 2036: <https://www.westberks.gov.uk/policies>

112 Leisure Strategy 2022-2032: <https://www.westberks.gov.uk/article/40795/Strategies-policies-and-plans>

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**10.5** The Council recognises that the Local Plan has a crucial role to play in ensuring that opportunities exist for people to be able to make healthier lifestyle choices and address health inequalities. Health and environment are inextricably linked and the creation of attractive, safe and accessible places to live improves the quality of life and wellbeing of both individuals and communities as a whole.

**10.6** Policy SP7 sets out that development should be designed to encourage healthier lifestyles through the promotion of physical activity, the enhancement of social connections and the strengthening of mental health.

**10.7** This DM policy ensures that specific consideration is given to the potential overall impact of development on health, with individual proposals encouraged to maximise their overall contribution towards a healthier environment and healthier communities. Health Impact Assessments (HIA) will be an important tool for assessing any effect on health and in addressing health inequalities by protecting those who are vulnerable to the negative effects of development. The policy makes clear they will be required for all major development proposals or other development likely to have a potentially significant health impact in relation to either its use and/or location.

**10.8** When an HIA is required, it will:

- Consider the likelihood, significance and duration of both the potential positive and negative impacts of the development proposals on the health and wellbeing of different sectors of the community, taking into account that some people will be more vulnerable to negative impacts than others;
- Identify and take action to maximise positive impacts and minimise and mitigate any adverse impacts on health and wellbeing, having regard to the most affected sectors of the community; and
- Identify what will be monitored, how and by whom.

**10.9** It should also take into account the cumulative impact of development, i.e. where several developments are in progress within a particular area, as well as the potential over-concentration of uses in an area.

**10.10** The HIA may be a free-standing document or incorporated into a sustainability statement, an environmental impact assessment or other form of assessment or impact statement. If the HIA is not freestanding then a statement needs to be provided explaining how the requirements for an HIA are being met.

**10.11** The HIA should include reference to how the proposals for development have been discussed with health service providers regarding impacts on primary health care services. Developers are encouraged to engage with the NHS Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire Integrated Care Board (BOB-ICB) or other such appropriate body at the earliest opportunity in order to determine the health care requirements associated with new development.