

Newbury's New Housing

If not Sandford Park, then where?

Of the 10,500 (min.) new homes that West Berkshire needs to provide between 2006 and 2026 (the so-called Plan Period), Newbury¹ has to take approx. 5,400. **That is 'a given' – not for consultation now.**

We understand this is how these 5,400 have been allocated:

- 777 already completed by 31 March 2010
- 2,564 were “committed” (i.e. under construction or on sites with planning permission) by that date. These include 1500 at Newbury Racecourse.
- 1000 Sandford Park (i.e. only half the possible 2000 are actually needed in the plan period, the next 15 years)
- 1059 to be found in a selection of other sites, almost all of them ‘brownfield’ (i.e. on previously developed land or PDL). These sites will be identified in the next stage of the Local Development Framework process, known as the Site Allocations Development Plan Document (SADPD).

Before the SADPD is drafted, a review of the Employment Land requirement will be carried out². This is significant, because almost all remaining sites in Newbury with potential for taking more than about 5 new homes each are currently designated for ‘employment uses’. [There are few ‘garden grabbing’ sites left!] The Council has to prove that there is more than enough land for offices, factories, warehouses etc in Newbury, before it can release such land purely for housing.

So where could we find space for the 1000 homes allocated to Sandford Park?

We think that the Council has not considered redevelopment of sites with a **mixture** of housing and employment uses in its view of what can be done in the future although this seems to be the future of urban development. (Parkway is a classic example, as is the approved site of Faraday Plaza – facing Parkway across Victoria Park and the A339.)

A site has to be capable of taking at least 500 new homes to be ‘strategic’.

However it is possible to designate a ‘broad location’ (i.e. a group of sites, none of which need to be pin-pointed) as ‘strategic’. That is what the Council has done for the East of the District, where an area described as



¹ “Newbury” includes those parts of Greenham, Speen, Enborne, Shaw-cum-Donnington and Cold Ash parishes that lie within the current “settlement boundary” of Newbury.

² We say this is overdue. The Employment Land Assessment published in 2007 and used as evidence in the Core Strategy was based on secondary data collected prior to 2005 and local fieldwork/surveys in 2006. This was an entirely different economic era, which is not going to return until almost half-way into the Plan Period – if at all.

“the urban fringe of Reading, Theale and land between” are to take “about 500 homes”.

We want Newbury’s **Town Centre Periphery** to be considered as a strategic broad location for housing, so that there will be no need to designate Sandleford for housing at this time. We believe that, without losing any jobs from this area, we can redevelop a number of sites to provide at least 500 **more** in this area than the Council has taken account of.

Most of these sites are owned by the District Council. Many of them are in the flood-plain – but only another £110,000 is needed to ensure that a flood prevention scheme, already designed by the Environment Agency, can start next April and be finished within a year. We say the Council should put up this money, because it stands to gain millions of pounds in future rent and rates³ revenue by protecting its properties from flooding.



That leaves only 500 homes to be put elsewhere. We say that a significant proportion (perhaps 150) could be built in Compton, where the Institute of Animal Health vacates a large employment site in 2013. The rest could be in smaller extensions of the Newbury settlement boundary, defined by the SADPD.

We think Sandleford is the least appropriate or ‘sustainable’ of all possible urban extensions that could be made at this time – largely because South Newbury is already committed to the Racecourse’s 1500 homes. We have therefore carefully reassessed the “Sandleford vs. North Newbury” table in the revised Sustainability Appraisal / Strategic Environmental Assessment (SA/SEA), which the Council has been made to prepare for this consultation. The Council’s table is buried in Appendix 8 to “Strategic Sites Policy Paper”, itself an appendix to the SA/SEA – and not actually something that you are being asked to comment on!!



Please [compare our scoring of Sandleford & North Newbury with the Council's](#) – and draw your own conclusions. Then tell the Council what you think. They will have to pass your comments on to the independent Inspector.

Dr Tony Vickers MRICS
for ***Sandleford: the Wrong Solution***
(November 2011)

³ Although currently the Government takes all Business Rates revenue, the Coalition has said it will 'reward' Councils that secure additional new homes or "business growth" - £ for £!