

Appendix 8 - Ground Conditions, Contamination and Pollution

Ground Conditions, Contamination and Pollution

1) Development must not contribute to, be put at unacceptable risk from, or be adversely affected by unacceptable levels of ground, air, water, light or noise pollution, odour, vibration, disturbance or land instability. Where mitigation measures are required to avoid unacceptable impacts, details of these should accompany a planning application and these must be capable of being implemented and permanently maintained. Measures to protect and enhance water quality are provided in the Flood Risk and Water Resources policy.

2) Opportunities should be taken to improve local environmental conditions and/or to remediate or mitigate despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated or unstable land.

Ground Conditions

3) The Council will only grant planning permission for development on, or near to, former landfill sites or on land which is suspected to be contaminated or subject to land instability, where the Council is satisfied that:

- a) There will be no threat to future users or occupiers of the site or neighbouring land; and
- b) There will be no adverse impact on the quality of local groundwater or surface water quality.

Air Quality

4) Development will be permitted where it would not:

- a) Have an adverse impact on air pollution levels, particularly where it would adversely affect air quality in an Air Quality Management Area; or
- b) Give rise to, or be subject to unacceptable levels of air pollutants, odour or disturbance from existing pollutant sources.

Noise and Vibration

5) Development will be permitted where it would not:

- a) Have an unacceptable adverse impact on the indoor and outdoor acoustic environment of existing or planned development, or give rise to unacceptable vibration impacts;
- b) Have an unacceptable adverse impact on countryside areas of tranquillity which are important for wildlife and countryside recreation; or
- c) Be subject to unacceptable noise or vibration levels or disturbance from existing noise or vibration sources whether irregular or not.

6) Noise or vibration from proposed commercial, industrial, recreational or transport use should not cause any significant increase in the background noise or vibration level of nearby existing noise-sensitive premises such as dwellings, hospitals, residential institutions, nursing homes, hotels, guesthouses, schools and other educational establishments.

7) Proposals which have the potential to cause or exacerbate noise and vibration impacts on land uses or occupiers in the locality, or which may be affected by existing sources of noise or vibration, must fully assess such impacts.

Lighting

8) Development proposals which include external lighting should ensure that:

- a) Proposed lighting schemes are the minimum required for public safety and security;
- b) There are no unacceptable adverse impacts on neighbouring or nearby properties;
- c) There is no unacceptable adverse impact on the surrounding countryside;
- d) There is no dazzling or distraction to road users including cyclists, equestrians and pedestrians;
- e) Road and footway lighting meets the County Council's adopted standard;
- f) There is no unacceptable adverse impact on wildlife, habitats or habitat features;
- g) Light pollution will be minimised by following the latest guidance of the Institute of Lighting Professionals; and
- h) Appropriate technologies will be used to minimise the energy usage required and carbon generated. This may include the energy source, bulb, daylight or movement sensors, or timers and hours of illumination shall be controlled.

Reasoned justification

8.1 It is important that a site is suitable for its proposed use taking account of ground conditions, including land instability and contamination.

8.2 To protect the environment and quality of life it is also important that existing or new development is not adversely affected by or put at unacceptable risk from unacceptable levels of ground, air, water or noise pollution.

8.3 The District enjoys a generally high environmental standard. However, the minimisation of pollution and contamination remains a key local priority. We will therefore consider the possible polluting effects of a development proposal on aspects such as amenity and surrounding land-uses, and will take account of the agent of change principle

8.4 Where possible, we will require development proposals to take opportunities to improve local environmental conditions and to remediate or mitigate despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated or unstable land.

Pollution

8.5 Pollution can be in many forms and may include emissions to land, air or water including noise, light, vibration, smell, smoke and fumes, soot, ash, dust or grit which has a damaging effect on the environment and the public's enjoyment, health or amenity. The planning system has an important role to play in protecting the environment, biodiversity, local residents, businesses and the public in general from all forms of development that could give rise to pollution.

8.6 While in many cases pollution control regimes are governed by legislation outside of the planning process, the NPPF emphasises that planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural environment which includes consideration for pollution, land instability and contamination.

8.7 As part of this role, both existing and new development, including changes of use, should be protected from unacceptable levels of pollution or instability as required by this preferred policy. Measures to protect and enhance water quality are provided in Preferred Policy Option 15 (Flood Risk and Water Resources).

Ground Conditions

8.8 The Spatial Strategy for the District prioritises the use of previously developed brownfield land to deliver the growth needed in the District. However, the risk of pollution arising from contamination and the impact on human health, property and the wider environment also needs to be considered.

8.9 The Council maintains a register of contaminated land. The information stored on the formal register is that relating to regulatory action and remediation that has been undertaken at sites within the District. There are currently no sites listed on the Council's Contaminated Land Register.

8.10 Contamination is more likely to arise in former industrial areas but cannot be ruled out in other locations, including in the countryside. Some areas may be affected by the natural or background occurrence of potentially hazardous substances, such as radon, methane or elevated concentrations of metallic elements.

8.11 Land instability may also affect the suitability of a site to accommodate development, and proposals will need to demonstrate that any such sites are, or can be made safe.

8.12 Whether contamination or land instability affects a particular site can only be identified through a specific investigation. To establish the risks possessed by a site, it is necessary for applicants to use a competent and suitably experienced consultant to investigate and, where necessary, remediate contamination to mitigate the risk in accordance with best practice guidance.

8.13 Where an application relates to contaminated land or land which is suspected to be contaminated, applicants will need to submit details of an investigation of the site detailing any remedial measures that need to be carried out. The approved remedial measures will be secured through the use of planning conditions.

Air Quality

8.14 Air pollutants (including dust and odour) have been shown to have an adverse effect on health and the environment, and the 2008 Ambient Air Quality Directive sets legally binding limits for concentrations in outdoor air of major air pollutants that impact public health such as particulate matter (PM10 and PM2.5) and nitrogen dioxide (NO2).

8.15 The Council is also required to carry out a review and assessment of air quality across the District. This involves measuring air pollution and trying to predict how it will change in the next few years. The aim of the review is to make sure that the national air quality objectives are achieved by the relevant deadlines. These objectives have been put into place to protect public health and the environment. In locations where the objectives are not likely to be achieved, the Council will designate an Air Quality Management Area and will put together a plan to improve the air quality through a Local Air Quality Action Plan.

8.16 There are currently two Air Quality Management Areas (AQMA) within the District. The Chorleywood NO2 AQMA covers an area along the M25 south of Junction 18 to just north of where the motorway crosses the River Chess. The Chorleywood PM10 AQMA is a slightly narrower area from just north of Junction 18, along the M25 to just north of where the motorway crosses the River Chess.

8.17 However, to ensure that objectives can continue to be met in future and to secure improvements in air quality, emissions arising from any development including indirect emissions, such as those attributable to associated traffic generation, must therefore be considered in determining planning applications. Developments sensitive to air pollutants should also be located where future occupiers would not be subject to unacceptable levels of air pollutants from existing sources.

8.18 Applicants for development should have regard to any emissions arising from the proposed use/development, and seek to minimise those emissions to control any risks arising and prevent any adverse impact on local amenity. Environmental Health will be consulted on applications which may affect air quality.

8.19 Proposals that can raise issues of odour emissions, for example extraction systems for restaurants/takeaways, must be accompanied by details of the equipment to be installed including any odour abatement measures.

8.20 Where significant increases in emissions covered by the nationally prescribed air quality objectives are proposed, the applicant will need to assess the impact on local air quality by undertaking an appropriate modelling exercise to show that the national objectives will still be achieved.

Noise and Vibration

8.21 To support the health and quality of life of the community, it is important to ensure noise-sensitive developments are located away from existing sources of significant noise and that potentially noisy developments are located in areas where noise or vibrations will not give rise to adverse impacts on surrounding occupiers or the environment, or where impacts can be minimised and mitigated.

8.22 In considering noise and vibration impacts, the Council will have regard to the National Planning Practice Guidance and Explanatory Note of the Noise Policy Statement for England.

8.23 Where proposals may create or be subject to noise and/or vibration, applications will need to be supported by a noise and vibration assessment to consider impacts and any resulting requirement for mitigation. The scheme should aim to design out the exposure of noise-sensitive receptors to strategic traffic, using either or a combination of a landscape buffer and acoustic bund designed to shield the settlement from motorway noise. In accordance with the DfT Circular 02/2013 Annex A A1, all noise fences, screening and other structures must be erected on site, and far enough to enable maintenance to take place without encroachment onto highway land.

8.24 Proposals that can raise issues of noise, for example extraction systems for restaurants/takeaways, must be accompanied by details of the equipment to be installed including any noise abatement measures.

8.25 Necessary mitigation measures will need to be implemented and maintained in the long term and will be secured by condition.

Lighting

8.26 In common with all other built-up areas, artificial lighting is essential for safety and security within the District. There may also be some opportunities to add to the amenity of the built environment by highlighting buildings and open spaces of character. However, it is important to avoid insensitive lighting (light pollution) which can have a negative effect on the amenity of surrounding areas and have a negative impact on biodiversity by influencing plant and animal activity patterns. In particular, light pollution can be harmful to birds, bats, and other nocturnal species that avoid overly lit areas.

8.27 Under the agent of change principle, if new development or uses are to be introduced near a pre-existing business, such as a live music venue, or sports facility it is the responsibility of the developer to ensure solutions to address and mitigate noise and/or light are put forward as part of proposals.

8.28 Proposals incorporating new lighting may require a Lighting Impact Assessment to consider potential for impacts and any measures to mitigate these. Necessary mitigation measures will be secured by condition.