



**CHILTERN
CHAMBER**

**Chiltern Chamber of Commerce
Response to Local Plan 2014-2036
Consultation**

Introduction

Chiltern Chamber of Commerce welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the public consultation on the Joint Local Plan for Chiltern and South Bucks. Chesham (now Chiltern) Chamber of Commerce was founded in 1949, the first President being H.W. Carsberg. To date our main focus has been on the Chiltern District Council area in particular the Chesham area on Economic Development.

Chiltern Chamber of Commerce is a membership organisation see www.chilternchamber.org for a full list of members.

In the next period of consultation we hope to have gathered more views from organisations across both districts on issues around economic development and enterprise.

Chiltern Chamber exists primarily to listen, raise and deal with the concerns of our members. It also seeks to support businesses in meeting today's challenges and those of the future. Our membership base and local businesses will be further supported by developing strategic objectives aiming to improve economic development. We also recognise that economic development and business investment cannot progress in isolation and therefore our strategy is holistic and inclusive of a variety of areas such as community and the environment.

Our Mission - To serve as the Voice of Business committed to the enhancement of economic prosperity and quality of life in Chesham and Surrounds.

Key objectives -The Chamber has three key strategic objectives and a number of closely interlinked objectives:

1. Supporting our membership base

The Chamber would not exist without its members and therefore aims to enhance the members' success. We help members navigate and expand their businesses in a challenging marketplace. We do this by providing a suite of useful services and benefits for members

2. Supporting the local business community

The local business community is supported by identifying and developing strategies which will facilitate the growth of existing and future regional business and trade. We aim to provide a liaison and communication service to businesses, encourage major sustainable development of business and investment, and support business growth. We do this by identifying and undertaking tactical programmes for the benefit of business.

3. Economic development

We aim to promote the standard of living and economic health of Chesham and Amersham by championing positive quantitative and qualitative changes in the local economy. This

may include the development of human capital, infrastructure, regional competitiveness, environmental sustainability, social inclusion, health, safety, literacy, and other initiatives. We recognise that economic development is a policy intervention endeavour with aims of economic and social well-being of people and will therefore seek to work closely with local councils and UK authorities towards that end. Economic growth will be objective and a process of economic development. A longer term aspect of the economic development strategy will be to facilitate inward investment both from outside the region as well as overseas.

Our values

- Innovation
- Accountability
- Integrity
- Excellence
- Respect

Executive Summary

- Chiltern Chamber of Commerce welcome the opportunity to submit a response to the Local Plan Consultation.
- As a Chamber we call for an Economic Strategy to be developed across Chiltern and South Bucks that will determine the opportunities for the area in line with the HELAA/HEDNA/FEMA.
- This Economic Strategy will support the determination of appropriate sites for future business development and growth.
- Currently our focus is on Small & Medium Sized Enterprise (SME) development as opposed to larger business development as we do not foresee the possibility of an appropriate level of transport infrastructure to support larger scale industry.
- The Chamber is prepared to consider the release of existing business development land once there is a clearer understanding of the economic plan for the area.
- We are keen to be fully engaged with the Preferred Option Consultation (Oct/Nov 2016) and Draft Local Plan consultation (early 2017).
- We recognise that the absence of a dedicated Chamber of Commerce for South Bucks results in our response being very Chiltern/Chesham dominated.
- Furthermore as a result of the existing business profiles and the potential development opportunities in Chesham our response is very Chesham focused.

Events attended/organised by Chiltern Chamber in connection with this Consultation exercise

Chiltern District Council	20th January 2016
Amersham Town Council	9th February 2016
Chesham Chamber Where will our children live and work ?	10th February 2016
Chesham Society	17th February 2016
Chesham Town Council/Chesham Society/Chesham Chamber	25th February 2016
Chesham retailers	26th February 2016
Chesham Society/Chesham Town Council/Chiltern District Council/Chiltern Chamber	3rd March 2016

Response to Questions

Question 1: Do you have any comments on the definition of housing and functional economic market areas being used, on the draft Buckinghamshire HEDNA or on the needs assessment work planned during the next stages of the Joint Local Plan process?

Response:

1.1 From a Chamber perspective there is little dissent over the basic premise of the Joint Local Plan. If the area is to thrive over the next 20 years and beyond, it must tackle the big issues of housing, infrastructure, retention and growth of employment – all whilst seeking to safeguard our special heritage and environment. We recognise that this will be a difficult and challenging balance to achieve.

The Chamber would challenge conclusion 2.3 d) there is no significant market relationship between Chiltern/South Bucks and Hertfordshire. Decorum District has significant employment and economic areas suitable for development. However The Chamber also notes that Business rates paid in Hertfordshire have little economic benefit to Buckinghamshire.

1.2 The Chamber has considered how development can be matched by necessary infrastructure during a period of austerity and continuing cuts to spending. We recognise that our area is often not seen as a priority for investment with funds being channelled to other regions. Significant elements of infrastructure will rely on other agencies such as County Council and Buckinghamshire is facing a well-publicised drying up of Central Government funding. In practical terms therefore we recognise that some funding for

infrastructure will come from the uplift in housing as wealth generated from development. However it is worth noting that the ongoing contribution of business to funding of infrastructure will be paramount, making the retention and building of our business base a central concern for all involved in this plan.

1.3 The Chiltern Chamber is keen to see the retention of existing businesses and the growth of future business in the Chiltern and South Bucks areas. We recognise that not all current business sites are utilised fully and would welcome the opportunity to discuss how these sites may be reconfigured/expanded/released back for housing/recreated in other areas for the benefit of the small and medium enterprise businesses that exist in the Local Plan area.

1.4 It is almost impossible to comment further in this area without a clearer vision of the economic strategy for the Local Plan area. To this end we would fully support the development of an Economic Strategy for the Chiltern and South Bucks area and would be keen to work closely with both Councils to achieve this.

1.5 The Chamber has worked closely over the past year with the Chesham Society and fully support their vision for Chesham. This regeneration of Chesham Town would be a welcome springboard for the economy both in terms of the retail opportunities (space and employment) that the development would present and potential tourism and recreational opportunities that again would offer both employment opportunities and inward investment.

Question 2: Do you have any comments on the draft HELAA, particularly in relation to whether included sites are likely to be deliverable by 2036 and whether additional sites should be added?

Response:

2.1 The Chiltern Chamber of Commerce would welcome further Local Plan discussions on how the current business sites are located strategically and how these sites may be incorporated into the future local plan requirement. We would suggest that the Council gives consideration to employment zone development clustering around existing sites where appropriate. We note from the HEDNA that only 2 hectares of employment generating space is required in Chiltern District and there are currently a number of sites underutilised or not utilised.

New Business Units that have been developed recently have attracted business to them Chess Business Park, Sunnyside Road Development, far end of Asheridge Road.

Some sites have become outdated and either not utilised or underutilised these include Chesham in particular the Chamber could provide a much more extensive list but a few examples that have been highlighted in the consultation period listed below;

Location	Status	Other comments
90 Asheridge Road, Chesham	Vacant for past 15 years Planning permission for data centre high land usage low employment numbers no longer required as this facility. Meeting about future use 12 March 2016	Consultation on use of this site in progress as there is a residential potential for 150/160 houses with and enterprise/employment zone
Saxeway Business Park, Chartridge Lane, Chesham	Only partly occupied	Isolated off Chartridge Road
Springfield Road, Waterside, Chesham	Planning permission granted for mixed use development	Although access still through a residential road
McMinn/Decco site, Waterside, Chesham	Requires reconfiguration to free up space for other business units and more appropriate layout for existing use	Currently Green Belt and Flood risk
Chiltern House, Waterside Chesham.	Fully occupied with small businesses (22)	Flexible inclusive terms that are attractive to SME's
Site adjoining Jewsons, Hyde Heath	Not currently listed in 'Call for Sites'	Could be developed as a business development cluster at the back of the Jewson's site. Good road access in Greenbelt.

Sites we consider no longer fit for purpose e.g;

Location	Status	Other comments
Higham Mead (Top end) Site, Chesham	Currently occupied by Clarks of Amersham	Too small for requirement of existing business
Excel Motors, Bellingdon Road	Not suitable due to parking restrictions and surrounding residential units	Ideal for change of use into high density flats with underground car park
Old PowWow site acquired by Decco	Only partly used includes small lake	Discussion over providing new access to Latimer Road very attractive area. Flood risk.

Other sites for expansion consideration;

Location	Status	Other comments
Chess Business Park	New units good access mostly occupied	Could be expanded into the bottom end of Christmas

		Tree Farm (Greenbelt)
Various locations discussed	Development of an Enterprise Centre/Business/Incubator Hub	To encourage start up business small high tech/creative
Alma Road	Disused printing works large site	Easy access to Berkhamsted Road

Question 3: Are there existing uses/sites not currently identified in the HELAA and within the built-up areas that may be surplus to requirements or where the existing use could be consolidated or re-provided elsewhere such as open spaces, sports and leisure uses?

Response:

3.1 Allotments in Cameron Road, Chesham (move to Green Belt).

Consolidation of sporting facilities and greater use of School sports fields for community use e.g

- Little Spring playing field
- Chesham Grammar School Academy
- Chiltern Hills Academy
- Chesham United Football Field

3.2 The Chamber welcomes and supports the work The Chesham Society is engaged with and the vision for Chesham Town Centre. The plans are ambitious and imaginative but moreover achievable with the right strategic development plan. The Chesham Society has incorporated extensive detail in its submission to CDC

Benefits to the Local Plan provision being:

- Land freed up from increasing density of car parking space.
- Space created over St Mary's Way development of a destination town
- More high density residential units over existing car parking space
- Creation of more retail (employment generating) and community arts space, museum, library
- Development cost of this would be funded by joining residential development to community infrastructure provision
- Opportunity to improve flood management provision and sewage capacity within Chesham

Question 4: Do you agree with the approach to the Joint Local Plan Vision and Objectives and if not what changes or additions do you consider are needed? Please explain your reasoning for suggesting any alterations.

Response:

4.1 The Chamber of Commerce would welcome the re-structuring of employment space to make the space desirable to enterprises as currently we have a number of employment generating sites in the area that are not fit for purpose and have been inactive for a number of years.

4.2 The Chamber would recommend the provision of economic enterprise zone clusters on the edge of town areas with good road links.

- **Expansion of Chess Business Park into bottom end of Christmas Tree Farm with access from Amersham Road**
- **Expansion of site adjoining Jewsons at Hyde Heath, Missenden Road for businesses requiring access of HGV's**
- **Reconfiguration and new access to Decco/McMinn POWWOW site from Latimer Road. Site limited in size but underutilised.**
- **We would support development of sites off Ashley Green Road behind the new Bellcote Inn development. (A good example of change of use and relevant development) The Chamber noted that there were loud objections to a large scale development in this area for economic/enterprise use, although we do understand that is a proposed area of search rather than a proposed zone.**

4.3 In addition we call for the Local Plan Vision to have a clear Economic and Tourism strategy to support the potential employment and tourism opportunities to 2036. This should be underpinned by the wider Buckinghamshire Inward Investment plans and in South Bucks take account of the potential future relationship with East Berkshire.

Question 5: What spatial strategy option or options do you think the councils should consider and what should be the priority order? Are there any other spatial strategy options that the Joint Plan should consider and why?

Response:

5.1 The formation of an Economic and Tourism Strategy may yield other options or amendments to the existing options.

Question 6: Do you have comments on individual options generally or specific settlements/site options that could be part of these options?

Response:

6.1 Not at this time.

Question 7: Do you have comments on the suggested level of unmet needs in Chiltern/South Bucks?

Response:

7.1 Additional housing development is a catalyst for business growth and therefore if neighbouring districts are not prepared to build the shortfall in requirement of houses as identified in the HEDNA there will be a need to accommodate this shortfall within the two districts or other co-operative neighbouring districts. This supports our call for a proper Economic Strategy that will underpin the direction of travel over the next two decades.

Over the past few decades residential/economic development plans have not been driven by the need to achieve density particularly in housing. During this consultation period the issue of achieving housing density has become more pressing particularly in Town Centres.

If the Chesham Town Centre Vision forward thinking proposal is going to progress the cost of realising this vision would need to be achieved by accommodating a significant growth in housing development, the increase in economic development provision may help to achieve this in part, but Community Infrastructure Levy will predominantly need to come from residential development.

Question 8: Do you have any comments or suggestions on how the councils can meet its local affordable housing need?

Response:

8.1 In support of the Chesham Vision there may be significant opportunities to build affordable units, supported by developers in the Chesham area. From a business perspective the Chesham Vision makes a lot of sense in terms of regeneration of the Town and the potential employment opportunities with the increased retail and office space.

Question 9: Do you have any comments on the above options to meet the needs of Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Show people?

Response:

9.1 The Chamber of Commerce does not feel equipped to comment in this area but understands that the three groups listed will have differing requirements and therefore differing provision.

Question 10: How do you think the Joint Local Plan can best meet specialist elderly accommodation needs, both in term of general and affordable needs?

Response:

10.1 Relevant provision needs to be provided and included in proposed new developments as part of the social provision.

The Chamber would welcome a pilot scheme to incentivise older people with underused accommodation to move into accommodation more suited to their needs. Leaving this to market forces alone is not achieving particularly desirable outcomes.

Question 11: Do you have a view on the Heritage Strategy – for example views on our local heritage assets, how heritage contributes to quality of life and our sense of place and community.?

Response

11.1 We welcome the fact that there is a Heritage Strategy and organisations that conserve and protect our heritage in the area should be seen as an integral part of our educational and social provision.

The Chamber would welcome a wider discussion with our educational academies and authorities about Chiltern history and heritage.

Question 12: Are you aware of any currently unprotected local heritage assets that should be identified and if so why is the heritage asset important locally?

Response:

12.1 The Chamber of Commerce does not feel equipped to comment in this area.

Question 13: Local Green Space designations can be made as part of the Local Plan and so local residents, community groups and other local stakeholders are asked to identify areas that they would like to be considered. Importantly any nomination should include supporting evidence.

Response:

13.1 The Chamber of Commerce does not feel equipped to comment in this area.

Question 14: Do you have any nominations for Local Measures?

Response:

14.1 The Chesham Society Town Plan is an excellent proposal to make the centre of Chesham more attractive and commercially viable and we would fully support this.

Question 15: Do you have a view on the scope of policies proposed in Appendix 7.

Response:

15.1 No comment at this time.

Question 16: Do you have any comments on the Settlement Infrastructure Capacity Study, infrastructure needs or issues and CIL?

Response:

16.1 Infrastructure is an absolute priority. All development projects (of scale) must ensure they contribute to the built environment and be enshrined in the correct planning permissions. How CIL resources are charged and reinvested needs form a central and integral part of the next consultation phase.

The Chamber would welcome an early discussion about infrastructure planning and resourcing. All evidence suggests that infrastructure is an ABSOLUTE priority.

Assuming that there is no plan in the next 10 years to build new roads to relieve congestion through the districts there is a priority to improve traffic flows on the A416. We would urge that as part of this process a traffic survey is commissioned on the truck routes through the Districts. The air quality in Berkhamsted Road, Chesham is of particular concern which was raised on a number of occasions during this consultation process.

Question 17: Do you have any other points you would like the councils to take into account in the preparation of the Joint Local Plan? For example are there any challenges or opportunities you think the new Joint Local Plan will need to address?

Response:

17.1 The strategy for the economic development of Chiltern and South Bucks needs to be addressed as part of the next stage of the process.

17.2 Chesham Grammar School Multi Academy Trust (newly formed) is a major employer in HP5 and has land assets and buildings under its management. This includes the Chesham Grammar Academy site in White Hill and Ivingswood Academy (Formerly Little Spring) site in Greenway. Buckinghamshire County Council remains the land owner. It would seem likely that County Council assets could be considered in the local plan to give a greater educational, community, sporting and wellbeing benefits.

17.3 We would also encourage the District Council to include The Chiltern Chamber of Commerce involvement in the next steps of the Local Plan and next stage of the consultation process.

17.4 We suggest that in collaboration with the District Councils we engage with a greater number of SME's in the Local Plan area as part of the development of a local Economic Strategy.

17.5 The Chamber would like to thank all the people involved for contributing to this submission and for attending local meetings and events. We appreciate that you have given your time voluntarily to contribute to this important platform to help shape the future of this important plan.