

12th June 2025

Cllrs A Bermange & G Hill
Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead
Town Hall
St Ives Road
Maidenhead
SL6 1RF

Dear Councillors

Re: Consultation Response on Draft Ascot Placemaking SPD – Concerns Regarding Alignment with Policy QP1c

I write on behalf of the parish council, SPAE and the NPDG. We wish to provide feedback on the Draft Ascot Placemaking Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). As stated in the adopted Borough Local Plan (BLP) at 6.8.12, the purpose of an SPD is to expand on the policy QP1c and provide a more detailed framework to guide new development.

Whilst the draft SPD sets out a vision for the future of Ascot, it does not draw on the aims and vision underpinning the Neighbourhood Plan and Development Briefs (as specified in BLP 6.8.12) and we formally wish to raise concerns regarding:

1. Lack of Detail for the Civic and Community Centre and Public Open Space
2. Lack of a Robust Parking Strategy
3. Incoherent Approach to Active Travel
4. Absence of Coordinated Delivery Mechanisms
5. Inadequate Infrastructure Viability and Phasing Plan
6. Weak Green Infrastructure and Character Protection
7. Limited Integration of Climate Resilience and Sustainability

To add detail to these specific issues:

1. Civic and Community Centre and Public Open Space

Policy QP1c, specifically designates the Ascot centre for residential, retail, employment, community uses and public open space. The size of the community and civic space, and the public open space within AL16, is not clearly specified within the SPD.

To clarify, the proforma makes clear what should be included, specifically a community *building* (including cultural & leisure). Within this building, the Parish Council is expecting office space for 5 staff members, a purposed meeting room (for 16 councillors and 3 officers) to share with the community when not in use, alongside a community café/kitchen, large auditorium (accommodating 200 seated theatre style) and toilet facilities/pram parking/cycle racks. It also expects parking to be provided for staff and visitors.

We wish to remind you that a definition of a village square (overlooked by RBWM's briefing paper to the reference group) is *"a central open space or gathering place in a village, often serving as the heart of the community. It typically includes buildings like shops, restaurants, and sometimes a church or*

town hall, and may have features like fountains or monuments.” Specifically, we wish to incorporate a town clock, a flagpole and a civic office.

2. Lack of a Robust Parking Strategy

Policy QP1c calls for improved access and resolution of existing parking pressures. The SPD acknowledges future parking pressures but fails to quantify demand or provide a comprehensive strategy and solution for:

- Short-stay parking for new retail and cafés
- Long-stay commuter and employee parking
- Reprovision of kerbside spaces lost to public realm upgrades.

Parking is stated to be centred on a car park close to the station (currently in private ownership). This is 1km away, with a walk up a steep hill from the car park to the centre of Ascot. But this provision has not been secured by the SPD and is unrealistic in its position relative to Ascot centre.

There is a significant risk that the High Street will suffer from access and congestion issues, which will undermine the intended vibrancy and economic vitality of the new Ascot centre.

Please remember that Neighbourhood Plan consultation feedback (2011–2013) showed strong concern about traffic, parking, and road capacity.

In addition, Census and local data shows Ascot has a high level of car ownership and low public transport/cycle commute mode share. This, together with the current downgrading of bus timetables and public transport provision, is very unlikely to change.

3. Incoherent Approach to Active Travel

We need improved connectivity within the area, including overcoming transport and physical barriers (such as the railway line), so that the Ascot centre is connected by footpaths, cycle ways and public transport to existing and new residential communities and Ascot railway station.

Many of the access roads to Ascot are narrow and dangerous, especially for on-street cycling. Ascot's topography is also a real constraint because it includes steep gradients approaching the High Street from the south, east and west. As we have stated on several occasions, cycling east-to-centre-to-west will now have to be through the developments on the south side, and not along the High Street.

4. Absence of Coordinated Delivery Mechanisms

Although QP1c requires a “comprehensive and coordinated approach” to developing AL16, AL17, and AL18, the SPD does not include formal tools to:

- Secure joint phasing of infrastructure across land parcels,
- Equalise Section 106 or CIL contributions across sites,
- Ensure timely delivery of shared elements like the village square or key transport upgrades.

This introduces a real risk of piecemeal delivery, with infrastructure delayed or unfairly distributed.

5. Inadequate Infrastructure Viability and Phasing Plan

The SPD lists broad infrastructure priorities but lacks a viability narrative or costed delivery schedule. It is unclear how or when key infrastructure - such as public open space, parking, access and required drainage improvements - will be delivered in relation to the new development.

6. Weak Green Infrastructure and Character Protection

While the SPD gestures toward the 'green and leafy' character of Ascot, it does not provide enforceable targets for:

- Green space provision
- Public open space
- Tree retention and planting
- Biodiversity net gain

Without firm standards on green infrastructure, the new centre will lose the defining character which Policy QP1c seeks to protect.

7. Limited Integration of Climate Resilience and Sustainability

The SPD provides only high-level references to sustainability and does not mandate:

- Net-zero design standards
- Active decarbonisation measures
- Low-carbon transport solutions

Improved public transport delivery is not addressed. This misses a critical opportunity to future-proof the development and align with wider Borough climate policies.

If RBWM has existing SPDs covering these issues, then these should be referenced in the Ascot SPD, for clarity.

In summary, we recommend that the draft SPD be revised to include these details - for full compliance with Policy QP1c – to maximise the success of the new Ascot centre.

We all appreciate the Council's continued efforts to promote high-quality placemaking in Ascot and expect these points to be included in the final version of the SPD.

Yours sincerely



ALLISON SHARPE (Cllr Mrs)
Chairman

Electronic copies to:

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