

**SOUTH WILTSHIRE CORE
STRATEGY**

EXAMINATION IN PUBLIC

**Statement of Common Ground as
agreed between
Wiltshire Council, Porton Down
Organisations and Natural England**

19 FEBRUARY 2010

Plan reference: Core Policy 12, Strategic Objective 3

Representation Number:

Issues Raised

1. Structure and detailed wording of the policy does not appropriately reflect the strong emphasis on the business aspirations of the Porton Down site stakeholders set out in Strategic Objective 3.
2. There is no clear, initial statement that satisfactorily expresses the primacy of the economic and employment considerations that are at the forefront of the policy approach.
3. The proposed policy places too great an emphasis on ecological matters and, within that, the specific issue of the Stone Curlew. As presently drafted, the policy could be interpreted as one largely dealing with nature conservation.
4. Suggest policy is worded as follows:

The Council strongly supports the principle of the future development of the Porton Down Science Campus for research and development purposes and will work with the principal site stakeholders to build on the work already undertaken to facilitate their business aspirations in accordance with Strategic Objective 3 of the Core Strategy. This work will also ensure that the long term future of Porton Down is secured based on a coordinated approach.

One specific issue in relation to which coordination is required is wildlife management. The Council will thus work with all relevant interests to produce an [Integrated Business and Environmental Strategy \(IBEMS\)](#) ~~Wildlife Management Plan~~ for the Porton Down SAC, SPA and SSSI that could be adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document. This ~~plan~~ [IBEMS will be a series of documents which deal with the management of wildlife on both the designated and non designated areas of the Porton Down site and](#) will seek to balance the existing and future economic and scientific significance of the site with important nature conservation interests. Until that plan is approved individual developments will also need to demonstrate that an appropriate balance can be achieved in this regard.

Targets: % habitat at Porton Down in favourable condition. Specific species monitoring. Speed of processing of planning applications at Porton Down.

Monitoring and Review: AMR, ~~Wildlife Management Plan~~ [IBEMS](#) when approved

Delivery responsibility: Wiltshire Council, DSTL, HPA, PBTC Natural England, Species specific organisations e.g. RSPB, [BTO](#), [Plantlife](#), [Butterfly Conservation](#)

Policies replaced: None

Wiltshire Council Response

1. See suggested changes at bullet point (4) below.
2. The policy is about balancing nature conservation needs with the business aspirations of the Porton Down communities rather than one taking primacy over another. The Core Strategy in the preceding paragraphs (8.11-8.12) recognises the Master Plan and saves the employment allocation E8B.
3. The policy is written to specifically deal with ecological matters. Stone Curlews are not referred to in the policy, only in the preceding text at paragraph 8.12 which also refers to the chalk grassland habitat and population of butterflies. Paragraph 8.14 refers to stone curlews specifically, but changes are suggested to this paragraph (see Statement of Common Ground relating to Paragraph 8.14). Suggest addition of following wording to the policy after "Delivery Responsibility" - before "RSPB" insert the words "Species specific organisations e.g...."
4. As referred to above, the policy is designed to deal specifically with ecological matters and hence repetition of the Council's support of the Porton Down organisations is unnecessary in the policy. This support is made clear in Strategic Objective 3, and the preceding text to Core Policy 12. However, as a clear indication of the Council's firm support, then there appears no harm in agreeing to much of the revised policy drafting suggested in relation to enshrining support in the introduction of the policy by adding the first paragraph suggested. That is, by amending the policy to read as follows:

Core Policy 12 - Porton Down

The Council strongly supports the principle of the future development of the Porton Down Science Campus for research and development purposes and will work with the principal site stakeholders to build on the work already undertaken to facilitate their business aspirations in accordance with Strategic Objective 3 of the Core Strategy. This work will also ensure that the long term future of Porton Down is secured based on a coordinated approach.

One specific issue in relation to which coordination is required is wildlife management. The Council will thus work with all relevant interests to produce an Integrated Business and Environmental Strategy (IBEMS) for the Porton Down SAC, SPA and SSSI and the non designated areas of the site that will be adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document. The IBEMS will seek to balance the existing and future economic and scientific significance of the site with safeguarding important nature conservation interests, together with enhancing biodiversity across the Porton Down site. In order to facilitate future development, the IBEMS will identify future proposed development and when this will take place, the broad impacts of this development and how (if possible) these impacts can be mitigated.

Proposals submitted in advance of the IBEMS being adopted as SPD, and stand alone projects not addressed in the IBEMS will need to adequately demonstrate that either alone or in combination with other plans or projects, they do not have significant impact on the integrity of the Porton Down SPA, SAC or SSSI; or that if they do adequate mitigation will be provided to ensure no adverse effect on site integrity.

Targets: % habitat at Porton Down in favourable condition. Specific species monitoring. Percentage of planning applications granted on the Porton Down site which contribute to the objectives of the IBEMS (target 100%).

Monitoring and Review: AMR, IBEMS when approved

Delivery responsibility: Wiltshire Council, DSTL, HPA, PBTC, Natural England, Species specific

organisations e.g. RSPB, BTO, Plantlife, Butterfly Conservation

Policies replaced: None

Agreed Position

The Council strongly supports the principle of the future development of the Porton Down Science Campus for research and development purposes and will work with the principal site stakeholders to build on the work already undertaken to facilitate their business aspirations in accordance with Strategic Objective 3 of the Core Strategy. This work will also ensure that the long term future of Porton Down is secured based on a coordinated approach.

One specific issue in relation to which coordination is required is wildlife management. The Council will thus work with all relevant interests to produce an Integrated Business and Environmental Strategy (IBEMS) for the Porton Down SAC, SPA and SSSI and the non designated areas of the site that will be adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document. The IBEMs will seek to balance the existing and future economic and scientific significance of the site with safeguarding important nature conservation interests, together with enhancing biodiversity across the Porton Down site. In order to facilitate future development, the IBEM will identify future proposed development and when this will take place, the broad impacts of this development and how (if possible) these impacts can be mitigated.

Proposals submitted in advance of the IBEM being adopted as SPD, and stand alone projects not addressed in the IBEM will need to adequately demonstrate that either alone or in combination with other plans or projects, they do not have a significant impact on the integrity of the Porton Down SPA, SAC or SSSI; or that if they do adequate mitigation will be provided to ensure no adverse effect on site integrity.

Plan reference: Paragraph 8.14

Representation Number:

Issues Raised

- Concern that the presence of Stone Curlews at Porton Down has been over emphasised having regard to other important flora and fauna within the site and the need to establish a comprehensive, accurate information base in relation to all aspects of the site's biodiversity. The Porton stakeholders, led by Dstl and in association with the Council and other interested parties, have already commenced work on a comprehensive assessment of the whole of the Porton estate.
- Paragraph 8.14 should be redrafted to broaden the scope of nature conservation interests to be incorporated in the Wildlife Management Plan and to recognise the scope of the substantial work that the Porton stakeholders have already undertaken in this regard. Dstl's records and initial work have already established that there are threatened species of butterfly on site and threats to juniper plantations that require urgent action. Further work is already looking at invertebrates, bats and other small mammals. The WMP will be looking at the biodiversity of the whole estate and it is therefore essential that the objectives and policies of the Core Strategy recognise that there is a much wider wildlife interest than the current emphasis on the Stone Curlew would imply. The final WMP will need to identify the importance of realistic targets against the background of the stated objective of the Core Strategy to meet the business aspirations of the site stakeholders.

Wiltshire Council Response

Suggest that paragraph 8.14 is amended as follows:

The Council is working with the Porton Down scientific community, Natural England and appropriate conservation bodies to agree an IBEMS for the site. The Porton Down stakeholders have already undertaken substantial work towards this and continue to do so. DSTL's records and initial work have established that there are threatened species of butterfly on the site and enhancements required to juniper plantations that all require urgent action. Further work is currently underway examining invertebrates, bats and other small mammals. Once agreed, the IBEMS will provide a comprehensive evidence base about the biodiversity of the whole estate which can be used to inform the future development proposals of all three organisations. It will be used to identify avoidance and mitigation measures that can help prove that there are no significant effects on the Porton SPA/SAC or SSSI when proposals are considered at the application stage. This will ensure that the aspirations of the scientific community can be realised while at the same time enhancing the wildlife potential of the site. The IBEMS will also provide an opportunity to enhance the biodiversity of the site, irrespective of the SPA, SAC or SSSI.

Agreed Position

The Council is working with the Porton Down scientific community, Natural England and appropriate conservation bodies to agree a Wildlife Management Plan or an IBEM for the site. The Porton Down stakeholders have already undertaken substantial work towards this and continue to do so. DSTL's records and initial work have established that there are threatened species of butterfly on the site and enhancements required to juniper plantations that all require urgent action. Further work is currently underway examining invertebrates, bats and other small mammals. Once agreed, the IBEMS will provide a comprehensive evidence base about the biodiversity of the whole estate which can be used to inform the future development proposals of all three organisations. It will be used to identify avoidance and mitigation measures that can help prove that there are no significant effects on the Porton SPA/SAC or SSSI when proposals are considered at the application stage. This will ensure that the aspirations of the scientific community can be realised while at the same time enhancing the wildlife potential of the site. The IBEMS will also provide an opportunity to enhance the biodiversity of the site, irrespective of the SPA, SAC or SSSI.