



Thames Valley Chamber of Commerce Group
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For the attention of Andrew Hunter, Executive Director

Submitted via email: development.plan@bracknell-forest.gov.uk

Dear Andrew,

Bracknell Forest Local Plan (2020 – 2037) Proposed Main Modifications to the Pre-Submission version.

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the Council's consultation on the Local Plan.

We invite you to refer to most recent submissions made to the Council, in regard to the Bracknell Forest draft Economic Strategy (11/2023) and Local Plan Consultation and Jealott's Hill (12/2019), when considering the following comments which reflect selected engagement with key members of the Thames Valley Chamber of Commerce (TVCC), businesses located within Bracknell Forest Borough.

Most notably, and in general policy terms contained *in the draft Economic Strategy are references to, in the Introduction, a "business-friendly planning environment" and an "enterprise-friendly planning regime" at paragraph 7.1. We have stated we believe there is a lack of clarity as to how these aspirations, to establish a planning regime in Bracknell Forest to foster economic growth, will be promoted and implemented. There needs to be clarity of the type which the TVCC is proposing through amendments to the Bracknell Forest Local Plan Main Modifications to create a more favourable planning policy context at the Jealott's Hill International Research Centre as part of our response to the draft Economic Strategy.*

We echo these comments in regard the Local Plan and raise concern of the absence of a clear policy basis for economic growth at Syngenta's Jealott's Hill (hereafter JH) International Research Centre. As we outlined in the above consultations, JH is an international recognised and world class asset based within the Borough. TVCC wants to ensure Syngenta can continue, with confidence, to invest and develop its agritech research and development capabilities at JH.

Without such investment, we are concerned that one of the Borough's major employers, namely Syngenta, may disinvest in their JH asset, and world leading R&D capability, with potentially wider implications for their other facilities and operations in the UK. The gross added value that Syngenta, and the JH campus, brings to the local economy of Bracknell Forest, and wider Berkshire and UK economy is significant. This includes the many direct and indirect employment and associated supply chain benefits accruing from servicing the JH campus.



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TVCC wants to emphasise out strong support for the research that takes place at JH and enabling Syngenta to deliver its long-term employment and economic case for JH, including, most immediately, proposals for a planned BioSTAR project. Specifically, at the Global Investment Summit, last month, the Prime Minister pointed specifically to Agri-tech as a part of the UK economy through which innovation runs like a golden thread. He went onto to say that he wants to UK to be even more innovative and dynamic, and for business to see the UK as a dynamo for investment and growth.

TVCC understands why the Planning Inspector deleted the idea of a new community focused on JH, but this decision appears to have left somewhat of a planning policy vacuum, particularly where there is already an extensive area of buildings and hardstanding located within the Green Belt. From the modification to the Local Plan, we believe it is now unclear about what types and forms of employment/commercial job-related economic development would be allowed on the JH campus. For example, in addition to the R&D undertaken at JH, there appears to be an obvious opportunity for other forms of related employment to be located at the site to create a cluster set within a technology park of like-minded and inter-related businesses.

Against this background, and in the absence of some form of clear policy context for JH, for the reasons outlined above, TVCC raises its concerns over the effectiveness of the Local Plan as it is proposed to be modified. JH remains a key location for employment within the Borough, as well as being of national and international significance. We should be focused on ensuring is future and enabling investment.

To address the objection, may we offer one of two options for a proactive and flexible planning policy approach for, the first of which is our preferred option:

1. The removal from the Green Belt of the area already occupied by the extensive footprint of buildings and hardstanding and the JH campus formally identified in the Local Plan for employment purposes. We understand this could be readily achieved by a minor change to the proposals map and the inclusion of JH in the list of existing employment sites in Policy LP10. This would be a positive planning approach to adopt and would, we believe, create the conditions that would have the greatest chance of safeguarding the longer-term R&D facilities on the JH campus.
2. Less favourably, the proposal to retain the JH campus within the Green Belt but place a boundary 'established around' the extensive footprint of buildings and hardstanding. Within this boundary there should be greater scope, than existing Green Belt policies, to allow appropriate infilling and redevelopment to enable a greater intensification of the employment offer at JH. We understand a specific policy would be required in the Local Plan to enable this to occur.

For your attention, TVCC has recently published our key policy document – the [Business Manifesto](#) (2024). We draw your attention to the wider content as it relates to the business-led priorities of our membership. Ensuring the future competitiveness of the region is a key component.

We thank you for the opportunity to respond to your consultation.

Yours sincerely,



Paul Britton
Chief Executive