

# Wantage and Grove Campaign Group



## Vale of White Horse Local Plan Examination

### Matter 9 – Strategy for South East Vale Sub-Area (CP15 and CP16)

Submission from the Wantage and Grove Campaign Group.

#### Summary

1. The strategic housing allocations of Crab Hill, Grove Airfield and Monks Farm are not soundly based. They do not meet the requirements of paragraph 17 of the NPPF, are not aligned with employment growth and do not provide opportunities for living closer to places of work.
2. Furthermore the infrastructure required to support the 4,750 homes in addition to other windfall sites in the area is not phased appropriately alongside housing delivery.
3. We are unclear which are the identified and safeguarded employment sites listed in policy CP15, as none are shown on the Policy Map. No employment sites are safeguarded by this policy in Wantage Town Centre. Of those listed in CP15 in the Wantage and Grove area, only one is likely to expand in the plan period, a second has requested reallocation for residential use and other smaller employment sites are totally ignored.
4. This policy is therefore unsound.

#### Matter 9.1

*Other than in connection with AONB issues (considered in Matter 6) are the Strategic Housing Allocations listed in policy CP15 soundly based and deliverable?*

- (a) Crab Hill (site 14)
- (b) Grove Airfield (site H8 and a “saved” Local Plan 2011 policy)
- (c) Monks Farm (site 15)
- (d) Valley Park (site 11)
- (e) North-West of Valley Park (site 8)
- (f) East of Harwell Campus (site 13)
- (g) North-West of Harwell Campus (site 12)
- (h) West of Harwell (site 10)
- (i) Milton Heights (site 9)
- (j) East of Sutton Courtenay (site 5)

#### Core Policy 15

1. Core Policy 15 states:  
*“Our over-arching priority for this sub-area is to secure the aligned delivery of housing and employment growth together with the infrastructure required to achieve sustainable development. ...”*  
Local Plan Part 1 (LPP1) Policy 15 allocates an additional 4750 homes to Wantage and Grove yet no new employment sites. Existing employment sites are being lost as organisations are attracted by the benefits of the enterprise zone sites of Harwell, Milton Park, Culham and now, Didcot Garden Town. This is not aligned delivery and the policy is therefore unsound.
2. Paragraph 17 of the NPPF requires  
*“that planning should ... actively manage patterns of growth to make the fullest possible use of*

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*public transport, walking and cycling, and focus significant development in locations which are or can be made sustainable;”*

Yet when asked, in a stakeholder meeting held as part of the Consultation Process, if sufficient buses would be provided to allow the residents of the 4,750 new homes in Wantage and Grove to get to the employment centres of Harwell, Milton Park, and Culham, a council officer informed us that this was silly and people would use their cars. These employment centres are at least 8 miles from Wantage and 10 miles from Grove and therefore outside practical daily commuting by foot. Roads are close to capacity prior to development and are therefore total unsuitable for cyclists.

3. LPP1 does not “actively manage patterns of growth to make the fullest possible use of public transport, walking and cycling” when it allocates 4,750 dwellings on strategic sites in Wantage and Grove.
4. LPP1 Paragraph 5.59. states:  
*“The provision of new housing in this area will help to improve the self-sufficiency of the South East Vale Sub-Area overall and provide opportunities for living closer to places of work.”*  
Living closer than where? Of the homes built in the Vale recently, 75% are priced at over £350,000 and are therefore out of reach of most of the scientific community likely to be employed in the Science Vale. The people buying these homes are either retiring to the area or working further afield.
5. As the Planning Minister Nick Boles stated in the debate in Parliament on 24 October 2013:  
*“... we have attempted to make it clear that planning authorities can very reasonably say, “Yes, we’ll pass this planning application, yes, we will consent, but it can only go ahead and be built out once that infrastructure has been put in place.”*  
Without reference to the timing of infrastructure delivery in the policy we consider this policy to be unsound.

### Crab Hill (site 14)

6. Crab Hill was subject to an outline planning application in 2013, with a recommendation for approval from the Planning Committee in February 2014 and permission granted in July 2015. The site is currently for sale.
  - 6.1. The Section 106 Agreement requires the developer to build 480 affordable homes and to contribute to:
    - Strategic highways and transportation including a significant contribution towards the proposed Wantage Eastern Link Road
    - Education (including a new primary school)
    - Community infrastructure including a new Community Centre
    - Indoor and outdoor sports and leisure facilities
    - Green infrastructure
    - Local economic development support
    - Delivery costs.
7. With the exception of a primary school and small community hub, no employment sites are included on the Crab Hill site.

### Grove Airfield (site H8 and a “saved” Local Plan 2011 policy)

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8. Grove Airfield was subject to an outline planning application in 2012, with a recommendation for approval from the Planning Committee in December 2013 and the Section 106 agreement has still not been signed by at least one landowner.
  - 8.1. The draft section 106 agreement requires the developer build 800 affordable homes and to contribute:
    - A community hub, (which incorporates new library provision),
    - The Health & Wellbeing Centre (with the Extra Care Housing),
    - All the open space and associated facilities (e.g. pavilion, play areas, allotment, pitches and green infrastructure )
    - Indoor sports and leisure hub
    - Other community infrastructure
    - Education incorporating 3 sites for schools, two primary schools and a secondary school.
    - Strategic highways and transport including a significant contribution towards the proposed Wantage Eastern Link Road
    - Local labour and training scheme
    - District and County Council monitoring costs.
  - 8.2. With the exception of the schools and community hub, no employment sites are included on this site.
9. No mention is made of the Grove Northern Relief road which would stop the traffic moving north from the 2500 homes on this development through the Conservation area in the centre of the village to the A338. This road is only included in the LPP1 in paragraph 5.98.

[“In addition to the infrastructure identified within the Science Vale Area Strategy there is an existing requirement for a development road to serve the Local Plan 2011 allocation at Grove Airfield. This is known as the Grove Northern Link Road \(GNLR\) and is required to provide access to the Grove Airfield site from the A338.”](#)

It is not specifically included in any policy in the Plan.

### Monks Farm (site 15)

10. Monks Farm is a consolidation of smaller sites. We believe that because one site for 133 homes was the subject of an outline application in 2012 (approved in January 2014 and renewed in August 2015), this site was then excluded from the strategic allocation. The strategic allocation was then extended to include a further area to the west of the site, allowing it to join up with the Grove Airfield Site. So in reality this site incorporates plans for 883 dwellings.
11. A second phase of Monk’s farm for 75 homes has now been approved (outline permission recommended for approval Sept 2014 - granted April 2015) and a third phase is the subject of consultation.
12. This site is not being treated by the District Council as a single Strategic Site. Individual applications are being handled separately and there is no consistent plan developed for the Grove Northern Link Road and access to the A338.
13. The Policy places no requirement on developers to treat these strategic allocations as holistic units and therefore does not plan positively to shape and direct development in the area.
14. This site is close to the Williams F1 facility and we understand from initial public consultation by the developers that the development will include a hotel.

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### School Facilities

15. Local Plan Part 1 Paragraph 5.65. states:

*“Primary school places in Wantage and Grove are currently close to full capacity. Strategic growth at these settlements will provide additional capacity as part of a long term and sustainable strategy for education provision in the area. The additional school places to be provided across the sub-area will need to be phased appropriately alongside housing delivery.”*

15.1. The plan includes a primary school on Crab Hill which is to be completed by something like the occupation of the 525<sup>th</sup> dwelling on the site.

15.2. The first primary school on Grove airfield is proposed to be completed prior to the occupation of 400 homes and the land for the secondary school is likely to be made available to the County Council within 3 months of commencement of development of the site.

15.3. Neither Crab Hill nor Grove Airfield site has yet progressed to Reserved Matters and more than 525 other dwelling have been granted full permission (excluding retirement properties). It appears likely that more than 2000 homes will be built and occupied in Wantage and Grove prior to any new school being built. On this basis alone the plan is unsound.

### Matter 9.3

*Are the identified and safeguarded Employment sites listed in policy CP15 soundly based and deliverable. Are there other sites which would more appropriately meet the identified need for employment land?*

16. Employment sites shown in LPP1 Figure 5.4 are:

- B. Harwell campus
- C. Milton Park
- D. Didcot Power Station

17. Strategic employment sites listed in LPP1 Policy 15 are:

- Grove Technology Park
- Grove Road, Wantage
- Downsview Road, Grove
- Station Road, Grove
- Existing Business Premises around Didcot Power Station (not including vacant surplus land)
- Milton Park Site
- Harwell Campus.

18. DLP03b Policy Map South East Vale sub area shows no strategic employment sites in Policy 15.

19. LPP1 Figure 5.6a shows employment allocation at Monks farm – yet no employment land is shown on the Monks farm site in DLP03b Policy Map South East Vale sub area and no mention is made of this in CP15.

20. We are therefore unclear which employment sites should be included in the discussion of Matter 9.

### Grove Technology Park

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21. Grove Technology Park is an existing employment site shown on LPP1 Figure 5.6a as CP6 which we believe to be outside the Science Vale and outside the Enterprise Zone (although the maps are unclear in this regard). As far as we can identify, no further expansion of this site is envisaged within the plan period.

### Grove Road, Wantage

22. Grove Road, Wantage is another existing employment site shown on DLP03b Policy Map South East Vale sub area as CP6. This is a single occupancy site and as far as we know no further expansion of this site is envisaged within the plan period.
23. A further employment site at Elm Farm on Grove Road, which houses a number of small businesses, is not even mentioned in the plan.

### Downsview Road, Grove

24. Downsview Road, Grove is a single occupancy site owned by Crown Packaging UK Plc shown on DLP03b Policy Map South East Vale sub area as CP6. In a Regulation 19 submission, their agent stated that they had concluded around 10 years ago that they would need to relocate, and that the project would need to be self-funding. In December 2002, Crown wrote to VWHC explaining the position and requesting that, within the framework of the new Local Plan, the site be reallocated for residential use.

### Station Road, Grove

25. Station Road, Grove is the location of two of the larger employers in the Wantage and Grove area. These are Williams F1 and Bellingers, although the only site shown on DLP03b Policy Map South East Vale sub area as CP6 is Williams F1. This company has published plans to expand. Other small employers are located close to the reserved land for Grove Station. These are not included in LPP1.
26. In summary, of the strategic employment sites listed in CP15, in the Wantage and Grove area, only one is likely to expand in the plan period, a second has requested reallocation for residential use and other smaller employment sites are totally ignored.
27. If these sites are the basis for LPP1 paragraph 5.90:  
*"We are planning to focus most of our development within the South East Vale Sub-Area (around 75% of the proposed strategic growth). This is because the area is home to the largest of our significant employment sites and where the largest number of new jobs will be created. Locating the majority of the planned housing within this area, also provides the opportunity to promote and deliver sustainable transport options, allowing easy access between homes, employment and facilities."*  
Then the plan is unsound.
28. LPP1 paragraph 4.17. and 4.18 state:  
*"Further analysis of the economic forecasts prepared for the Oxfordshire Housing Market Area indicates that around 15,850 or almost 70% of the 23,000 new jobs forecast for the district to 2031 are likely to be located in the Science Vale area. New scientific and research jobs will principally be provided at the two Enterprise Zone sites at Harwell Campus and Milton Park. There will also be significant general business and indirect service sector employment growth that is likely to locate in the surrounding business locations such as Williams F1 in Grove and the Didcot A site, and in the main town centres including Wantage.*  
*4.18. It is the jobs being created in Science Vale that generate the need for a significant*

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*proportion of the houses required in the district. The majority (almost 75%) of our strategic housing growth is allocated within close proximity to these key Science Vale business locations. Our plans for significantly enhancing and delivering new infrastructure are also focused on the Science Vale area to enable our growth potential to be realised. This infrastructure cannot currently be delivered without the planned housing.*

29. No strategic employment sites have been identified in Wantage Town Centre so we are unclear how the significant general business and indirect service sector growth will be accommodated in the Town, given the conservation area, amount of residential development and lack of investment in the Town.