

Vale of White Horse Local Plan (Part 2) 2011-2031

Examination Hearings

**Statement by Oxfordshire County Council**

Matter 6

South East Vale Sub-Area

Tuesday morning 4 September 2018

## **Questions:**

6.1 Other than Harwell Campus (Matter 7), is the housing allocation listed in Policy 15a at Grove the most appropriate when considered against reasonable alternatives in the light of site constraints, infrastructure requirements and potential impacts? Is the estimate of site capacity justified? Is the expected timescale for development realistic? Are the site development template requirements – both general and site specific - justified?

6.2 Are the seven Didcot Garden Town Masterplan Principles justified and would they provide an appropriate basis for the future preparation of more detailed planning policies for the area?

6.3 Are the proposals to amend the safeguarded land for the Culham to Didcot Thames River Crossing justified? Would there be any adverse impacts?

6.4 Are the proposals to safeguard land for access from the A34 to Milton Park justified? Would there be any adverse impacts?

6.5 Are the proposals to safeguard land for a pedestrian/cycle bridge across the A34 at Milton Heights justified? Would there be any adverse impacts?

6.6 Are the proposals to extend the safeguarded land for reopening Grove Railway Station justified? Would there be any adverse impacts?

## **Response**

1. Question 6.1: The County Council commented in its Regulation 19 response on the site capacity and policy in respect of the North-West Grove site seeking that the full capacity be identified and that there be a requirement to comply with a comprehensive development framework (paragraphs 35-37, issues 7-8). At the time of writing a statement of common ground is being produced indicating that VOWHDC has no objection to a comprehensive approach to planning for Grove, consistent with the officer response to our comment in the summary of representations (ref 928610). However, VOWHDC has not proposed any modification to require compliance with a supplementary planning document, and it has not proposed any modification to indicate the full capacity of the site, with an argument that these are not needed for soundness.
2. Question 6.1 cont: The County Council considers that it is necessary to prepare a SPD prior to development of this site and that this requirement needs to be set out in the Plan. A key requirement is to set out the ultimate capacity of the site. Although the SHELAA indicates that the site has a capacity of some 700 dwellings, such a capacity is not suitable because it would necessarily involve housing in the far western edge of the site which would be remote from infrastructure and services, including bus services. Such a capacity would also indicate that a primary school would need to be

provided on site, but provision of a school site would, of course, reduce the amount of land available and therefore the capacity. As the housing trajectory indicates that development of this site won't start until late in the plan period, there should be sufficient time to complete the necessary work. Our views on what the modification could comprise of are as follows:

**Core Policy 15c: North-West Grove Comprehensive Development Framework**

All new development at North-West Grove will be guided by a comprehensive development framework.

The comprehensive development framework will cover the North-West Grove site and may also cover areas adjacent. The new development will be successfully integrated with that at Grove Airfield (Wellington Gate), Monks Farm and proposals for a new Grove Railway Station.

Proposals for development must demonstrate how they comply with the comprehensive development framework SPD and contribute to infrastructure in the manner set out in that framework which will require all phases of development to contribute fairly towards the joint responsibilities for transport, education, open space and other infrastructure.

The entire development of the site is anticipated not to exceed 500 houses or 400 houses plus other appropriate uses.

Development of the site will include provision for the Grove Northern Link Road connecting through to Grove Airfield and Monks Farm without impediment.

Bus services will be expected to use the Grove Northern Link Road, therefore development of housing would relate to that so that no houses are distant from bus stops.

The comprehensive development framework will address issues in respect of the adjacent railway line. These issues include the Brook Lane Denchworth Road bridge which may need to be signalised, and public rights of way.

3. Question 6.3: The Didcot to Culham River Crossing safeguarding is justified, it being in accordance with the Science Vale Strategy in LTP4 and identified as essential mitigation in the Evaluation of Transport Impacts. Work is progressing on this scheme which is included in the Didcot Garden Town HIF bid. The amendments since the safeguarding was confirmed in LPP1 exclude the Scheduled Ancient Monument areas from the two optional routes and tidy up the links with the safeguarding for the Clifton Hampden bypass.

4. Question 6.4. The proposal for safeguarding land to allow for future slips on the A34 directly serving Milton Park arose in the course of preparing the Local Plan and considering potential future options to address likely future problems at Milton Interchange. Our Regulation 19 response explained this and identified that there may be a need to amend the safeguarding (paragraph 60 and issue 14). Investigations and discussions with the owner of some of the land (Drayton Golf Club) have identified that it is desirable to reduce the area of the proposed safeguarding so that it does not adversely impact the golf club as this can be done while still safeguarding sufficient land to enable new slips. The District Council has therefore proposed a modification to the safeguarding (AM27) and we are supportive of that.
5. Question 6.5. As noted in our Regulation 19 response (paragraph 61), funding has been secured for the new pedestrian and cycle bridge across the A34 between Milton Heights and Milton Interchange. The safeguarding allows for continuation of the cycle link through to Backhill Lane tunnel, which has recently opened. The safeguarding is not expected to adversely affect opportunities to develop the sites as the relevant provision for pedestrians and cyclists can be made alongside any development as envisaged as part of planning permissions P14/V0087/FUL, P15/V2880/O and planning application P15/V2899/O.
6. Question 6.6. The current proposed areas of safeguarding for two options of where a future Grove Railway Station might be located are different from the adopted safeguarding in Local Plan Part 1 (Appendix E-8). Further work is underway to identify the best location for a future Grove Station as noted in our Regulation 19 response (paragraph 62 and issue 15). The proposed safeguarding has had regard to development proposals on the allocated Monks Farm site. We expect that an update will be available for the Inspector at the hearings.
7. Oxfordshire County Council is seeking to attend the hearing should the Inspector have any queries to direct to the County Council in respect of the Matter 6 questions.