

West Way Community Concern

Hearing Statement for the Stage2 Examination of the Vale of White Horse District Council Local Plan 2031 Part 1

Matter 8.4 (c) Is the policy relating to Botley Central Area (CP11) soundly based?

We maintain that this policy fails this test on a number of issues. These have been covered in our Representation Form, and the main points of our representation are summarised below.

Status of Botley as a centre

The Core Policy is unsound in that it is ambiguous in its terminology and its intentions for the area. Without such clarity, the policy will not deliver to the stated intentions of the VWHDC's sustainability objectives.

The policy fails to respond to objectively assessed local need and is not backed up by relevant evidence. It appears to be written specifically to support a proposed planning application, and to 'claw-back' spend from the neighbouring councils.

It references the Nathaniel Lichfield retail study. However, this study references a wider area than Botley Central Area itself, and therefore to use this as an indicator of needs for the local area is erroneous.

Boundary of Botley Central Area

The proposed area of 'Botley Central Area' is not logical or justified. It is not the area presented in the current local plan, but a much larger area. It includes one church, but not another. It includes sheltered housing which is separated from the shopping / commercial area by the excluded church. It does not include other retail and a public house which are adjacent. The area agrees exactly with the area proposed for redevelopment in a submitted planning application, and there is evidence that the policy has been unduly influenced by the intentions of developers and land-owners (including the Vale of White Horse District Council) rather than by due process.

Consideration of reasonable alternatives

The Sustainability Appraisal does not consider all reasonable alternatives, it simply considers two extremes; a minimal approach of refurbishment of the existing centre for retail use, and a comprehensive redevelopment of a much wider area. Partial redevelopment and a more comprehensive development within the *existing local plan boundary* should be considered as reasonable options.

The SA conclusions are not adequate in their consideration of the options against the sustainability objectives. They conclude that there is no significant effect on the provision of suitable homes – although the policy would allow demolition of 64 age-restricted homes and 10 general market homes.

The scores provided against the two options (Appendix 23 of the Sustainability Appraisal) are clearly weighted to promote comprehensive redevelopment. For example, in concluding that Option B provides more benefit in that it creates additional uses, it fails to recognise that these additional uses would result in greater number of visitors and hence have a negative impact of local road congestion and air, noise and light pollution.

Summary

In summary: we consider that Core Policy 31 is unsound.

- 1 It is ambiguous and contradictory in its definitions and intentions for Botley as a local centre;
- 2 It is not founded on sound facts and research, or on an objective assessment of local need;
- 3 The boundary of the area under consideration is not logical;
- 4 The sustainability appraisal fails to consider reasonable alternatives;
- 5 The sustainability appraisal fails properly to consider impacts of the alternatives against the sustainability objectives.

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6 January 2016