

VoWH Local Plan Part 2 Examination: Matters and Questions

Dandara Ltd Hearing Statement (Respondent ID: 758199)

Introduction

- 1.1 This Hearing Statement has been prepared by Dandara Ltd who are promoting land located to the West of Wantage for residential led, mixed-use development alongside the delivery of the West Wantage Link Road (WWLR), the route of which was safeguarded within the Local Plan Part 1 (LPP1). The site is not proposed for allocation within the Local Plan Part 2 (LPP2).
- 1.2 The Statement concisely addresses the relevant *'List of Matters and Questions'* (ID/3) and should be read alongside representations made by Dandara Ltd to the emerging LPP2 dated March 2017 and October 2017. As requested, a separate Hearing Statement has been prepared for each matter and question being addressed.

Matter 6 – South East Vale Sub-Area

Question 6.1 – Reasonable Alternatives

- 2.1 The Executive Summary for the LPP2 reads *"the Part 2 Plan also allocates some additional sites to deliver 1,400 homes within the Science Vale area to provide continuing support for economic growth, to support the delivery of strategic infrastructure and provide a bespoke mix of housing and tenures tailored towards the needs of key employers in the area"*. This 1,400 home Science Vale allocation is supported in principle. The delivery of the 1,400 homes comprises a proposed allocation for 1,000 dwellings within the AONB at Harwell as addressed within our Matter 7 Hearing Statement and 400 at North-West Grove.
- 2.2 Core Policy 3 of the LPP1 identifies Grove as a 'local service centre' which sits behind Wantage as a more sustainable 'market town' within the settlement hierarchy. The LPP1 allocates a total of 3,350 new homes at Grove with the LPP2 proposing a further 400 to the far north-west of the settlement giving a total of 3,750. In contrast Wantage, as the sequentially preferable 'market town' neighbour, benefits from only a single allocation across both the LPP1 and LPP2 of 1,500 homes at Crab Hill. Grove as a less sequentially preferable 'local service centre' is therefore to accommodate 2,250 homes more than Wantage.
- 2.3 The proposed allocation also fails the 'effective' test of soundness. The LPP2 recognises that *"it is however expected that housing development on the North-West of Grove site will not come forward until towards the end of the Plan period and much closer to 2031"* (para. 2.100). This is due to the inability of the site to come forward prior to the effective completion of the Grove Airfield and Monks Farm developments allocated within the LPP1. There is a significant risk that the site is unable to deliver new homes within the Plan period should Grove Airfield continue to be delayed and having regard to the number of new homes to be delivered within Grove as a 'local service centre' over the Plan period. To put this risk into perspective, the former Local Plan 2011 expected Grove Airfield to be developed over the period 2006-21 (para. 8.15) yet in 2018, not a single dwelling has been completed. It is inherently uncertain, given this demonstrable track-record, that homes on North-West Grove will be delivered within the Plan period.

- 2.4 The SA recognises that *“delivery is uncertain given the scale of committed growth at adjacent sites (Monks Farm and Grove Airfield) ...”* (pg. 90). This concern regarding delivery exacerbates soundness concerns associated with the LPP2 due to similar uncertainties regarding the deliverability of Dalton Barracks within the Plan period.
- 2.5 The proposed allocation at North-West Grove cannot therefore be considered to satisfy the ‘justified’ test of soundness when considered against reasonable alternatives. Land to the West of Wantage is located immediately adjacent to the higher order and more sustainable ‘market town’ of Wantage; its delivery is not reliant upon the completion of long-delayed LPP1 allocations; and it would deliver the LPP1 safeguarded WWLR which would result in a discernible benefit to the Science Vale not only in the form of additional, sustainably located housing but by significantly improving links between the Western Vale and Science Vale through the completion of an effective northern by-pass to Wantage alongside the WELR.

Question 6.6 – Grove Station

- 3.1 Dandara Ltd supports the safeguarding of land associated with the future reopening of Grove railway station. It is worth noting that the delivery of the WWLR would be imperative to facilitating travel from the Western Vale to access any future railway station at Grove.