

Dijksman Planning

35 Berkeley Road, Newbury, RG14 5JE

Proposed Draft Main Modifications **Consultation**

Local Plan 2031 Part 2

Representations on Behalf of **Gale & Binning**

Matter 9: South East Vale Sub Area

Objections are raised to the main modifications to core policy 15 A additional site allocations for South East Vale Sub Area.

This main modification, in association with deletions from the relevant maps and campus framework masterplan proposals, requires the deletion of the Harwell Campus residential allocation and the removal of 1000 new homes from the housing requirement within the South East Vale Sub Area.

As we understand it, the logic in deleting this allocation is that it does not reach the test required for major development within the AONB, namely that there must be exceptional justification; in other words, that there is no alternative site outside that designated landscape.

We wholeheartedly agree with this assessment on the basis that there is no exceptional justification for the allocation of a thousand houses on campus because there **is** an alternative site for these dwellings approximately two and kilometres to the north at Rowstock

Benefits of the proximity employment and residential

The logic of providing houses at the campus was strongly supported by the Vale of White Horse on the basis that the proximity between residential and commercial would be beneficial and highly sustainable. The creation of a live work community was considered a priority underpinned primarily by the close physical relationship and ease of travel between housing and the employment on campus.

Deletion of 1000 houses

Whilst the additional thousand houses are not strictly required to meet the objectively assessed need catered for within the 2031 local plan (as assessed at this point in time) it would clearly be beneficial and desirable for those houses to be provided. This is particularly the case bearing in mind the uncertainty surrounding the national economy. Infrastructure costs in particular are proving an impediment to early housing delivery on other sites within the Vale including Grove Airfield.

Highways Infrastructure

Rowstock Village provides an opportunity to deliver these houses in close proximity to the campus with no exceptional off-site infrastructure costs. The attached highways assessment indicates the wide range of specific infrastructure improvement that have occurred, or are in the pipeline, in the vicinity of the Harwell Campus that were programmed in advance of the expected housing allocation. In the absence of that allocation these highway improvements lend themselves equally to this Rowstock village proposal.

Landscape

In landscape terms the Harwell allocation was found unacceptable within the North Wessex Downs AONB. The attached landscape appraisal demonstrates quite clearly that Rowstock will have minimal impact upon the setting of this designated landscape, and it does not require special justification equivalent to the Harwell scheme. It is evident from the council's own landscape assessments that the landscape setting and context of Rowstock is not special or highly valued in District wide landscape terms. The landscaped impacts of this proposed new village are localised and do not adversely affect any wider landscape of high sensitivity or special quality.

Conclusion - Sustainability

Rowstock Village provides very easy access by alternative means of transport to all the most important major employment areas in the district. At the intersection of two strategic bus routes, within cycling distance of both Harwell and Milton Park. As such this is a highly sustainable location. It is particularly important to note that Rowstock is connected to the campus by a wide footpath/bridleway known as the Hungerford Road that would, when upgraded, enable residents to cycle to work within 15 minutes.

In the examination letter dated 30 October 2018; paragraph 7 emphasise that:

"In any event the pattern of development should minimise the need to travel overall"

We therefore ask that you reconsider this site as a logical alternative to the Harwell allocation, but outside the AONB, whilst benefiting from all the sustainability attributes and accessibility improvements that were predicated upon and previously applied to the Harwell proposal.

Deliverability

A2Dominion (A2D) is a residential property group with over 36,000 homes across London and the South East and is working with the landowners of this site to support the allocation and delivery of the Rowstock Village project. A2D is one of the UK's largest developers whilst also being a major charity whose primary reason for being is the delivery of affordable homes. As such this site potentially offers a robust level of viability and the provision of low-cost homes in close proximity to major employment. In addition, the site is capable of delivery within the first part of the plan period. Several sections of the site are well served by existing road frontages and can be developed without the need for upfront on-site infrastructure installation or expenditure. This coupled with the absence of major off-site infrastructure costs provide a highly deliverable and socially beneficial scheme.