

Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2031 Part 2

Statement of Common Ground

Between

Vale of White Horse District Council

and

Swindon Borough Council

February 2018

1. Introduction

- 1.1. This Statement of Common Ground (SoCG) has been prepared by Vale of White Horse District Council (VOWH) and Swindon Borough Council (SBC) hereafter referred to as “the parties”. It documents those matters agreed by the parties with regard to the Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2031 Part 2 and supporting documents to assist the Inspector during the Examination of the Local Plan.
- 1.2. This SoCG reflects and confirms the current position agreed by both parties with regard to the Duty to Cooperate, the Oxfordshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA), the Vale of White Horse apportionment of Oxford’s unmet housing need and strategic transport matters.
- 1.3. This statement is provided without prejudice to other matters of detail that the parties may wish to raise during the examination.

2. Background

- 2.1. VoWH and Swindon Borough Council have a long history of working effectively together and have been working closely together on a number of matters of strategic cross boundary importance in accordance with the Duty to Cooperate.
- 2.2. Through the preparation of Swindon’s Local Plan 2026 and Vale’s Local Plan 2031 Part 1, the parties have engaged on matters including the detailed planning of development proposed at the Swindon Eastern Villages and in the Western Vale sub area. This included a joined-up approach to considering the cumulative impact of growth on the A420 and supporting road network.

- 2.3. The parties have engaged on other strategic matters including the restoration of the Wilts and Berks Canal, and are members of the Wiltshire, Swindon and Oxfordshire Canal Partnership.

3. Matters on which the parties agree

Duty to Cooperate

- 3.1. Vale of White Horse District Council has continuously engaged with Swindon Borough Council through the evolution of the Local Plan 2031 Part 2 on a number of cross boundary issues, more information and details of this engagement can be found in Topic Paper 1: Duty to Cooperate.
- 3.2. It is agreed that the parties will continue to work together on cross boundary issues to ensure a coherent strategy that supports the delivery of proposals including appropriate mitigation.
- 3.3. The parties agree that Vale of White Horse District Council has discharged its duty to cooperate.

VoWH Objectively Assessed Need (OAN) and Housing Requirement

- 3.4. The parties agree that it is appropriate for VoWH to plan for the provision of 1,028 homes per year (20,560 homes in total) in the period 2011 to 2031 in order to meet its own identified housing needs as set out in the Oxfordshire SHMA (2014).
- 3.5. The parties agree that there is currently no evidence available to support the use of any alternative figure to that which has been tested and agreed through the Oxfordshire Growth Board (OGB) process.

Quantum of Oxford's 'unmet' housing need to be planned for

- 3.6. The parties agree that 15,000 homes is an appropriate figure to plan for within the Oxfordshire Housing Market Area (HMA) to contribute towards meeting Oxford's unmet housing need to 2031, pending further testing through the Oxford Local Plan review which is not intended to be submitted until late 2018.
- 3.7. 15,000 is the agreed 'working assumption' that has formed the basis of the joint evidence base and apportionment process to consider how the unmet need should be distributed across the Oxfordshire HMA.

Quantum of provision being made in Vale of White Horse for Oxford City's Unmet Housing Needs to 2031

- 3.8. The parties agree that it is appropriate for VoWH to progress its local plan on the basis of providing 2,200 homes to contribute to meeting the unmet housing needs of Oxford that are to be provided within the district.
- 3.9. 2,200 represents the outcome of a process which has been undertaken through the OGB to inform the apportionment of Oxford's unmet need across the Oxfordshire HMA. The parties agree that the joint working undertaken by the OGB has been objective and based on a proportionate evidence base.
- 3.10. The parties agree that there is currently no evidence available which demonstrates that the needs arising from the Vale of White Horse District including that apportionment of meeting Oxford's unmet need cannot reasonably be met within the Vale of White Horse District.

SBC Objectively Assessed Need (OAN) and Housing Requirement

- 3.11. Swindon Borough Local Plan 2026 was adopted on 26 March 2015. SBC have commenced work with Wiltshire Council on the preparation of a Joint Spatial Framework (JSF) which will guide the overall pattern of development across the wider area of the two councils, setting out a distribution of new jobs, homes and infrastructure. The JSF will provide evidence to inform the councils' individual local plan reviews.
- 3.12. SBC and Wiltshire Council have also commenced work on the review of their respective local plans, including an Issues and Options consultation which took place late in 2017. These will address growth in both areas up to 2036.
- 3.13. At this stage, no decisions have been made on the future locations for growth and development beyond that contained within the adopted Swindon Borough Local Plan 2026.
- 3.14. The parties agree that there is currently no evidence available which demonstrates that the needs arising from Swindon cannot reasonably be met within Swindon's own housing market area.

Strategic growth along the A420

- 3.15. Growth is planned to come forward in both VoWH and SBC along the A420 corridor. Within VoWH, the adopted Local Plan 2031 Part 1 allocates a number of strategic allocations at Shrivenham, Faringdon, Kingston Bagpuize with Southmoor and Stanford-in-the-Vale.

- 3.16. Swindon's adopted Local Plan 2026 allocates land to the east of Swindon, known as the "New Eastern Villages" which will deliver around 8,000 homes alongside 40 hectares of employment.
- 3.17. The matter of strategic growth along the A420 was discussed at length through the examination of Local Plan 2031 Part 1. At that time, the parties worked constructively with Oxfordshire County Council and Western Vale Villages on how best to address the issue of cumulative growth on the A420.
- 3.18. A Statement of Common Ground was agreed between the parties, Oxfordshire County Council and Western Vale Villages which resulted in a commitment from Oxfordshire County Council to prepare an A420 Route Strategy, following an agreed set of parameters¹. This strategy is now included as part of Local Transport Plan 4.
- 3.19. Local Plan 2031 Part 2 does not propose any additional allocations in the Western Vale sub-area, closest to Swindon. The Part 2 plan proposes a single allocation adjacent to the A420 in the Abingdon-on-Thames and Oxford Fringe sub-area, to the east of Kingston Bagpuize with Southmoor (in the parish of Fyfield and Tubney).
- 3.20. The proposed allocation is expected to contribute towards improvements to the transport infrastructure in the area, including a new link road between the A420 and A415 that will divert traffic away from the centre of Kingston Bagpuize with Southmoor.
- 3.21. The parties agree that planned growth in Local Plan 2031 Part 2 will make a positive contribution to highway improvements on the A420 at Kingston Bagpuize with Southmoor.
- 3.22. The parties agree that the A420 Route Strategy prepared by Oxfordshire County Council and set out in Local Transport Plan 4, remains the most effective approach to planning for this strategic corridor.

Wilts & Berks Canal

- 3.23. The parties share the historic route of the Wilts and Berks Canal. The canal ceased to function as a navigable route in 1914 and the Wilts and Berks Canal Trust is now working to a long-term vision towards the full restoration of the canal. Once completed, this will provide a new link between the Kennet

¹ The Statement of Common Ground between Vale of White Horse District Council, Oxfordshire County Council, Swindon Borough Council and Western Vale Villages informed the Examination in Public of Swindon's Local Plan 2026 and Vale's Local Plan 2031 Part 1. Please see document SCG25 of the Examination Library for Local Plan 2031 Part 1, available to view online at:
http://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/java/support/Main.jsp?MODULE=FolderView&ID=627981304&CODE=7BCD9C34D25A0782D410D5BB98570C99&NAME=Local%20Plan%202031%20Part%201%20Examination%20Library&REF=VALE_2031&REFERER_URL_IN=&SOVA_IN=VALE

and Avon Canal, near Melksham, and the River Thames near Abingdon-on-Thames.

- 3.24. Wiltshire, Swindon and Oxfordshire Canal Partnership has recently published its Restoration Strategy for the completion and future development of the Wilts and Berks Canal, with the aim to restore the route as a navigable waterway. This will deliver a significant community asset as well as a green infrastructure corridor, linking Wiltshire, Swindon and Oxfordshire.
- 3.25. The Local Plan 2031 Part 2 includes a development policy which supports the safeguarding of a route corridor for the restoration of the Wilts and Berks Canal using the historic line where possible.
- 3.26. The parties agree that Development Policy 32: Wilts and Berks Canal is soundly based and closely aligns itself with the comparable policy of Swindon's adopted Local Plan 2026, namely Policy EN11: Heritage Transport.

4. Conclusions

4.1. The parties agree that:

- They have a positive working relationship and a demonstrable track record of successful collaborative joint working with effective outcomes,
- Through regular meetings the authorities will continue to work cooperatively on matters of mutual interest and cross-boundary strategic importance, and
- Both authorities would welcome the adoption of the Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2031 Part 2 at the earliest opportunity.

Signatures

Signed on behalf of Vale of White Horse District Council



Adrian Duffield
Head of Planning

23 February 2018

Signed on behalf of Swindon Borough Council



Phil Smith
Service Manager – Planning Policy

20 February 2018