

Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2031 Part 2

Statement of Common Ground

Between

Vale of White Horse District Council

and

Oxford City 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 Oxford City Council hereafter referred to as “the parties”. This SoCG documents those matters agreed 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) and the Vale of White Horse apportionment of Oxford’s unmet housing need.
- 1.3. This statement is provided without prejudice to other matters or detail that the parties may wish to raise during the examination.

2. Background

- 2.1. VoWH and Oxford City Council have been working closely together on a number of matters of strategic cross boundary importance in accordance with the Duty to Cooperate.
- 2.2. At a strategic level the Councils are members of the Oxfordshire Growth Board (OGB) and its supporting Executive Officers Group established in 2014.
- 2.3. The purpose of the Growth Board is to:
 - facilitate and enable collaboration between local authorities on economic development, strategic planning and growth
 - to deliver cross boundary programmes of work, and
 - to bid for the allocation of resources to support growth.

- 2.4. Prior to the establishment of the OGB, the authorities were also members of the Oxfordshire Spatial Planning and Infrastructure Partnership (SPIP) which had begun the process of formal cooperation including for the Oxford and Oxfordshire City Deal and the Oxfordshire SHMA (2014).
- 2.5. At the strategic level, the authorities also collaborate on economic matters through the Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (OxLEP), which prepares the Strategic Economic Plan.
- 2.6. A particular focus of joint working has been on housing matters including the commissioning of the Oxfordshire SHMA (2014) as well as a series of different projects under what has been collectively referred to as the 'Post-SHMA process'. The Councils are both parties to the Oxfordshire Statement of Cooperation¹ which confirms the scope of the joint working arrangements.
- 2.7. In particular, both authorities have been consistently and actively engaged (including senior officers and members) in a programme of joint work to assess the level of unmet housing need from Oxford and how it should be apportioned. Both authorities have sought to ensure timely progress in the joint working so that the programme timelines agreed by the Oxfordshire Growth Board could be met.
- 2.8. The positive approach of both authorities and commitment to find a workable solution to such a difficult strategic issue is evidenced by the effective outcomes that have been reached. This was confirmed by the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding at the Oxfordshire Growth Board meeting on the 26th September 2016, which agreed the Vale's 'apportionment'.

3. Matters on which the parties agree

Duty to Cooperate

- 3.1. Vale of White Horse District Council has engaged with Oxford City Council through the evolution of the Local Plan 2031 Part 2 on a number of cross boundary issues.
- 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 the appropriate mitigation.
- 3.3. The parties have a positive working relationship and a track record of successful joint working outcomes.

¹<https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/sites/default/files/folders/documents/communityandliving/ourworkwithcommunities/oxfordshirepartnership/spatialplanninginfrastructure/OxfordshireStatementofCooperation.pdf>

VoWH Objectively Assessed Need (OAN) and Housing Requirement

- 3.4. Through the joint working with the Oxfordshire Growth Board the parties agreed 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), plus a quantum of unmet need for Oxford.

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

- 3.5. The parties agree that the working assumption of 15,000 homes is an appropriate figure to contribute towards meeting Oxford's unmet housing need to 2031.
- 3.6. 15,000 homes 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.
- 3.7. If the Oxford unmet need figure changes in the future the parties agree that the most appropriate mechanism for addressing such changes would be through a future Joint Statutory Spatial Plan (JSSP) for Oxfordshire that will inform future updates of the individual district councils Local Plans. However, on the basis of current evidence and joint working, the parties agree that 15,000 homes is an appropriate figure to plan for at the present time.
- 3.8. The Oxfordshire Housing Growth Deal with Government commits both parties to the submission of the JSSP by March 2020 and adoption by 2021.

The Process and Evidence for the Apportionment of Unmet housing need

- 3.9. The parties agree that the process which has been undertaken through the OGB to inform the apportionment of Oxford's unmet housing need has been objective and based on a proportionate evidence base which the parties have endorsed.
- 3.10. Joint working has been undertaken on the following matters:
- An understanding of the urban capacity of Oxford and the level of unmet housing need;
 - Green Belt study to assess the extent to which the land within the Oxford Green Belt performs against the purposes of Green Belts;
 - The sustainability testing of spatial options / areas of search to help inform the apportionment or distribution of unmet housing need to the district and city councils;
 - Transport assessment of the spatial options / areas of search

An education infrastructure assessment of the spatial options / areas of search

- 3.11. The parties agree that the joint working undertaken forms an appropriate basis upon which to determine the apportionment of unmet objectively assessed housing need from Oxford.
- 3.12. A Memorandum of Cooperation was considered at a meeting of the Oxfordshire Growth Board (OGB) on 26 September 2016. This identified an apportionment figure for each of the district councils and city council. The agreed apportionment of unmet housing need is shown in Table 1 below:

Table 1: Apportionment of Oxford's Unmet Housing Need to 2031

Authority	Proportion of unmet need apportioned
Cherwell DC	4,400
Oxford City Council	550
South Oxfordshire DC	4,950 ²
Vale of White Horse DC	2,200
West Oxfordshire DC	2,750
Total	14,850

- 3.13. The parties agree that the process by which the agreed apportionment has been established has been objective and based on a proportionate evidence base and provides a sound basis for the planning authorities to take forward and fully consider through their own local plan processes.
- 3.14. The parties agree that should any individual Oxfordshire authority not be able or willing to meet the Growth Board's apportionment of unmet need (following the completion of that authority's Local Plan) the implications would need to be considered on a joint and multi-lateral basis through the Oxfordshire Growth Board or the Joint Statutory Spatial Plan (JSSP).

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

- 3.15. 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 to be provided within the district by 2031, as identified by the Oxfordshire Growth Board process.

² South Oxfordshire District Council has not accepted its apportionment figure of 4,950 homes and is currently proposing to provide a reduced figure.

- 3.16. 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 joint OGB process.

VoWH's strategy/ approach for meeting unmet housing needs

- 3.17. The Abingdon-on-Thames and Oxford Fringe Sub-Area is close to and has the most frequent and reliable public transport linkages to Oxford thus offering a good spatial relationship to Oxford. For these reasons, the Vale's agreed quantum of unmet need for Oxford is allocated to this Sub-Area. This is set out in Core Policy 4a: Meeting our Housing Needs of Local Plan 2031 Part 2.
- 3.18. The unmet need is met by a combination of the Part 1 strategic allocations and the Part 2 additional allocations within the Abingdon-on-Thames and Oxford Fringe Sub-Area. At least 2,200 dwellings are provided for on sites that have a strong spatial relationship with Oxford being suitably close to and accessible to the city, and with the greatest potential for enhancements in the longer term, as per the table below:

Table 2: Sites which have or have potential to offer strong spatial relationship to Oxford City

Site	Allocation
North Abingdon-on-Thames (LPP1 allocation)	950 ³
North-West of Abingdon-on-Thames (LPP1 allocation)	200
North-West Radley (LPP1 allocation)	240
South of Kennington (Radley Parish; LPP1 allocation)	270
Dalton Barracks (LPP2 allocation)	1,200
Total	2,860

- 3.19. It is the case that whilst four of the five sites listed above are allocated within the Part 1 plan with the primary intention of meeting the Vale's own objectively assessed need for housing, the sites are also well located to provide for Oxford's unmet housing need.
- 3.20. The parties agree that VoWH District Council's proposed broad approach to meeting its apportionment of Oxford's unmet housing needs is appropriate.
- 3.21. The parties agree that VoWH's approach to allocating housing on sites within this Sub-Area represents an appropriate response to delivering housing in the district at locations which are well connected and accessible to Oxford.

³ The Part 1 Plan strategic allocation for North of Abingdon-on-Thames was for around 800 dwellings, however a planning application for 950 dwellings was approved at committee on 26 July 2017.

Timing of provision for Oxford's Unmet Housing Needs

- 3.22. The parties agree that provision should be made for Oxford's unmet housing need as soon as possible. It is recognised through the Memorandum of Cooperation (September 2016) that the statutory planning process and lead in times on large strategic sites mean that it is reasonable for local plan housing trajectories to assume delivery from 2021 onwards (although this does not preclude the possibility of earlier delivery where possible).
- 3.23. The parties agree that it is likely that sites allocated in Local Plan 2031 Part 1 in the Abingdon-on-Thames and Oxford Fringe Sub Area can come forward for development prior to 2021, speeding up the process of delivering Oxford's unmet housing need. In total, 1,510⁴ dwellings are allocated in the Part 1 plan on four sites closest to Oxford at Abingdon-on-Thames, Kennington (within Radley parish) and at Radley.
- 3.24. Good progress is already being made in relation to these sites. Outline planning permission has been granted for the allocation North of Abingdon-on-Thames for up to 900 dwellings and 50 retirement homes. At the time of preparing this statement, applications are being considered for the allocations North-West of Abingdon-on-Thames (up to 200 dwellings), North-West of Radley (up to 240 dwellings), and South of Kennington, in the parish of Radley (288 dwellings).
- 3.25. The delivery trajectory for the sites allocated in Local Plan 2031 Part 1 are published in the council's Housing Supply Statement ⁵.
- 3.26. In addition to the sites allocated in Local Plan 2031 Part 1, Dalton Barracks is located close to Oxford and provides the potential for a high quality sustainable Garden Village style development and can be made highly accessible to Oxford, Abingdon-on-Thames and the surrounding area by improved public transport and transport infrastructure investment. At least 1,200 dwellings are proposed at Dalton Barracks within the Part 2 plan, with the potential for higher growth in the longer term, subject to appropriate infrastructure being delivered.
- 3.27. The VoWH is committed to preparing a Comprehensive Framework Masterplan for Dalton Barracks through Core Policy 8b. This will be in the form of a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) which follows Garden Village principles to ensure the potential for highly sustainable and accessible

⁴ The Part 1 Plan strategic allocation for North of Abingdon-on-Thames was for around 800 dwellings, however a planning application for 950 dwellings was approved at committee on 26 July 2017.

⁵ Vale of White Horse District Council Housing Supply Statement (April 2017) is available to view and download from the following address: <http://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/services-and-advice/planning-and-building/planning-policy/housing-supply-statement>

development is fully realised, and provide excellent public transport, cycle links and footpath connections to both Oxford and Abingdon-on-Thames.

- 3.28. The VoWH has made a commitment to ensure Oxford is able to have a meaningful participation in the preparation of the Dalton Barracks Comprehensive Development Framework (SPD). The parties also agree to engage constructively on the planning decisions for the other sites listed in the table above. This will include engagement in the masterplanning process (where applicable), pre-application or early stage discussions particularly about how the schemes will support access to Oxford, and agreement of nomination rights for Oxford for the provision of an appropriate element of the on-site affordable housing at those sites.

Affordable housing provision

- 3.29. Core Policy 24 of Local Plan 2031 Part 1 seeks 35 % affordable housing on sites capable of a net gain of eleven dwellings or more. This has the potential to deliver sufficient affordable housing to address the district's own requirements and those of Oxford City where they are to be met within Vale of White Horse. This will be equivalent to the provision of 50% affordable housing (1,100 units) to meet Oxford's needs.
- 3.30. The parties agree that in relation to more detailed operational matters of tenure mix, unit-size, eligibility and nomination rights for the affordable housing, it is appropriate to consider these matters through a form of common framework eg. a memorandum of operation alongside the Local Plan process. The parties agree to take this forward through on-going discussions with a joint affordable housing delivery group comprising housing and planning officers from Vale of White Horse District Council and Oxford City Council in time for the start of the Examination.
- 3.31. The parties will have this framework agreed as a matter of urgency in order that it can inform the future master planning of the key strategic sites within the Abingdon-on-Thames and Oxford Fringe Sub-Area which as mentioned above either already have outline permission or have planning applications pending determination, as well as to guide future development proposals.

4. Conclusions

4.1. The parties agree that:

- They have a positive collaborative working relationship.
- Through regular meetings the authorities will continue to work cooperatively on matters of mutual interest and cross-boundary strategic importance, including implementing/ delivering the agreed apportionment of Oxford's unmet housing needs, 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

24/04/2018

Signed on behalf of Oxford City Council

Patsy Dell
Head of Planning & Regulatory

07/03/2018