



**Vale  
of White Horse**  
District Council

Publication Version  
November 2014



# Local Plan 2031

## Part 1

### Strategic Sites and Policies

## TOPIC PAPER 2

### Spatial Strategy

This paper is one of 9 topic papers, listed below, which form part of the evidence base in support of the draft Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2031 Part 1.

These topic papers have been produced to present a coordinated view of the evidence that has been considered in drafting the local plan. It is hoped that this will make it easier to understand how we have reached our conclusions.

The papers are all available from the council website:

[www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/evidencebase](http://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/evidencebase)

#### Topic Papers

1. Duty to cooperate and cross boundary issues
2. Spatial strategy
3. Strategic sites selection
4. Housing
5. Supporting economic prosperity
6. Transport and accessibility
7. Responding to climate change
8. The built and historic environment
9. The natural environment

## **Contents**

Introduction .....	3
Policy review - national policy .....	5
Policy Review - regional policy.....	6
Policy Review - local policy .....	10
Evidence .....	11
Summary of previous consultation stages and key issues.....	11
Issues (Challenges and Opportunities) .....	22
Strategic Policy Options .....	24
Recommendations .....	28
Appendices.....	29
List of Abbreviations/ Glossary.....	<a href="#">336</a>

## Introduction

- 1.1 This topic paper provides a brief summary of how we have developed our proposals for distributing future housing and employment growth across the Vale, which is known as the 'spatial strategy'.
- 1.2 The evidence summarised in this paper has helped to inform the preparation of the Publication Version of the Vale Local Plan 2031 Part 1 – Strategic Sites and Policies.
- 1.3 The Local Plan 2031 Part 1 sets the strategic priorities for the district to deliver sustainable development. It identifies the number of new homes and jobs to be provided in the area for the plan period up to 2031. It also makes appropriate provision for retail, leisure and commercial development and for the infrastructure needed to support them.
- 1.4 Significant work has been carried out to inform the Local Plan, starting in 2007, and several stages of consultation have been undertaken with the public and stakeholders over the last few years. These stages have informed the preparation of the Local Plan 2031 Part 1 and include:
  - Issues and Options (November 2007) – which identified a range of options for how we should plan for the Vale
  - Preferred Options (January 2009) – which outlined the council's preferred approach for planning for the Vale
  - Additional Consultation (January 2010) – which consulted on a few additional policies relating to specific issues
  - Draft Local Plan Consultation (February 2013) – which consulted on a complete draft of the Local Plan Part 1, and
  - Housing Delivery Update (February 2014) – which set out the updated housing target for the district and the strategic sites package needed to meet the new target
- 1.5 How we plan for the distribution of growth has historically been strongly influenced by Regional Strategies. In particular, these have set housing targets and often set sub-regional policies. In Oxfordshire, housing targets were previously set out in the South East Plan, which was adopted in 2009.
- 1.6 However, following the abolishment of the South East Plan in 2013, the responsibility for identifying housing targets and a suitable approach to the distribution of housing, falls much more to individual local authorities.

- 1.7 The purpose of this topic paper is to summarise key evidence that has informed the drafting of policies to be included in the Vale Local Plan 2031 Part 1 relating to the spatial strategy. Details of how we developed our housing target are set out in the Housing Topic Paper<sup>1</sup>.
- 1.8 It is important that the options we develop for policies are also tested through Sustainability Appraisal (SA). This is a legislative requirement of the plan making process<sup>2</sup> and has taken place alongside the preparation of the plan. The SA helps to identify a preferred policy option to inform the preparation of the plan.
- 1.9 This topic paper is arranged into the following sections:
- Section 2: Policy review** – a brief summary of how any national, regional and local policies should influence the preparation of the local plan
  - Section 3: Evidence** – a short summary of any key issues identified from previous stages of consultation; any key issues identified at a community level; and any other evidence that should inform plan preparation
  - Section 4: Issues (challenges and opportunities)** – a brief summary of any issues identified from Sections 2 and 3 of the paper that the Vale Local Plan 2031: Part 1 will need to respond to
  - Section 5: Policy options** – an overview of those policy options which have been tested for possible inclusion within the local plan
  - Section 6: Recommendations** – the key findings for how this topic area should be addressed in the local plan

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<sup>1</sup> The Housing Topic Paper is available from <http://whitehorsedc.gov.uk/evidence>

<sup>2</sup> For more information see the Sustainability Appraisal at [www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/evidence](http://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/evidence)

## **Policy review - national policy**

### ***National Planning Policy Framework 2012***

- 2.0 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out the government's planning policies for England and how they are expected to be applied. At its heart is the need to ensure planning contributes towards the delivery of sustainable development, which should encompass economic, social and environmental considerations in equal measure.
- 2.1 Local plans should be aspirational and realistic and should address the 'spatial' implications of economic, social and environmental change needed to ensure sustainable development can be delivered.
- 2.2 In particular, planning authorities should set 'strategic priorities' for their area and should seek to deliver:
- the homes and jobs needed in the area
  - the provision of retail, leisure and other commercial development
  - the provision of infrastructure for transport, telecommunications, waste management, water supply, waste water, flood risk and coastal change management, and the provision of minerals and energy (including heat)
  - the provision of health, security, community and cultural infrastructure and other local facilities, and
  - climate change mitigation and adaptation, conservation and enhancement of the natural and historic environment, including landscape<sup>3</sup>.
- 2.3 The NPPF sets out a number of 'core planning principles' which should underpin the preparation of the Local Plan 2031. These include:
- proactively driving and supporting sustainable economic development to deliver homes, business and industrial units, infrastructure and thriving local places
  - take account of the different roles and character of different areas, promoting the vitality of main urban areas, protecting the Green Belt, recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside and supporting thriving rural communities, and
  - actively managing patterns of growth to make the fullest possible use of public transport, walking and cycling, and to focus significant development in locations which can be made sustainable<sup>4</sup>.
- 2.4 The NPPF sets out detail for a number of topic areas to show how sustainable development can be delivered. This detail is discussed

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<sup>3</sup> National Planning Policy Framework (2012) Paragraph 156.

<sup>4</sup> National Planning Policy Framework (2012) Paragraph 16.

more fully in the topic papers we are publishing to support the Vale Local Plan 2031 Part 1 (refer to page 2 for further details).

- 2.5 Important considerations set out in the NPPF for informing our overarching strategy, include:
- setting criteria, or identifying strategic sites, for local and inward investment to match the strategy and to meet anticipated needs over the plan period, and
  - defining a network and hierarchy of centres that is resilient to anticipated future economic changes.

### ***National Planning Practice Guidance 2013***

- 2.6 The NPPG sets out planning guidance to support practitioners and complements the NPPF. However, strategic policy is mainly set out within the NPPF at a national level. Therefore, in relation to the 'spatial strategy' topic, it is the NPPF that is most relevant as described above. There are no additional national policy requirements relating to the spatial strategy topic not addressed by the NPPF.

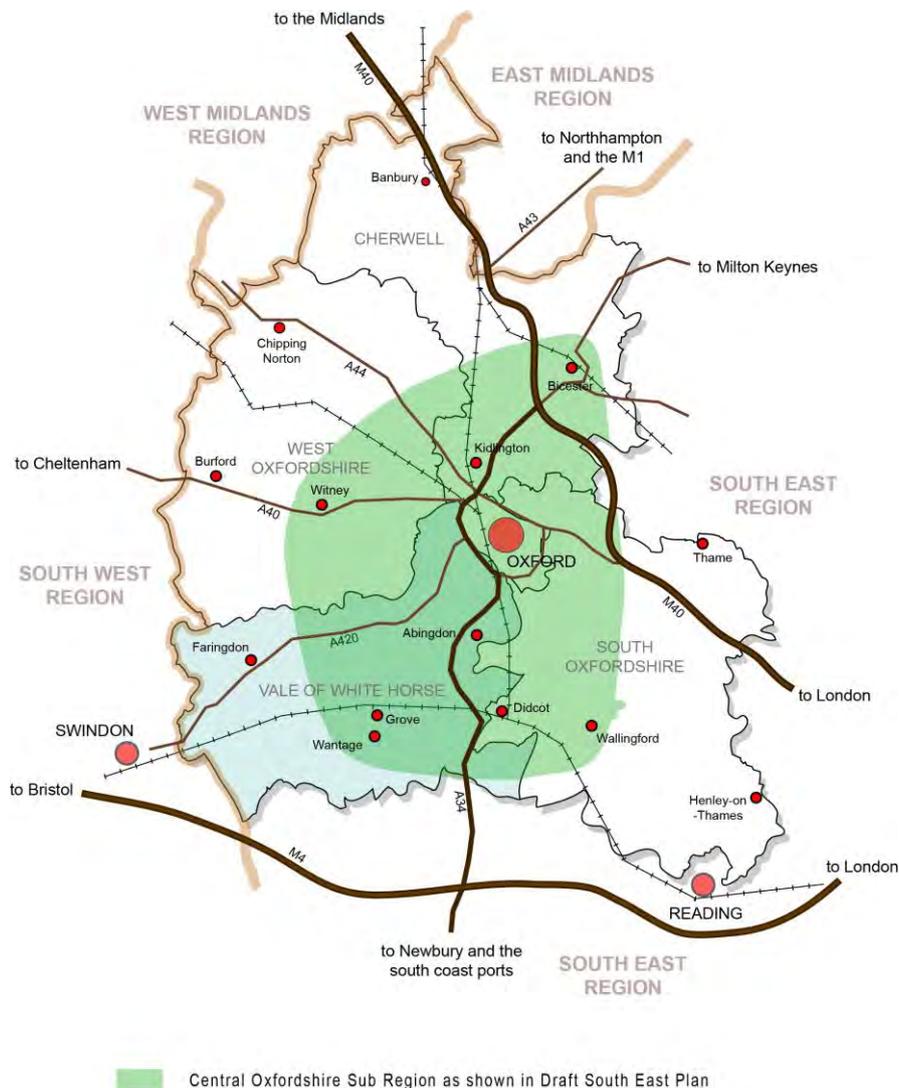
## **Policy Review - regional policy**

### ***South East Plan 2009***

- 2.7 Until 2013, the overarching policies for individual regions across the UK were set out within Regional Strategies, such as the South East Plan, which included Oxfordshire. These were used to inform local plans and set out how many homes and jobs needed to be provided in each local authority area.
- 2.8 Regional Strategies were abolished in 2013 and the responsibility for spatial planning now falls more fully with individual local authorities.
- 2.9 However, the South East Plan has still been an important influencing document during the preparation of early stages of the Vale Local Plan 2031 Part 1 and this section provides a brief overview of the key requirements it set out.
- 2.10 At the heart of the South East Plan was the aim to create a healthier region, which maintains a high quality of life and increases prosperity and opportunities for all, whilst nurturing and enhancing the region's environmental assets and increasing the efficiency with which we use resources.
- 2.11 The plan set out a spatial strategy, which identified nine sub-regions, each forming the focus of growth and regeneration across the south east, including one for 'Central Oxfordshire'. This included parts of all of the rural districts in Oxfordshire (Cherwell, South Oxfordshire, West

Oxfordshire and the eastern part of the Vale of White Horse – **Figure 2.1**) as well as Oxford City and was established for the following reasons:

- it corresponds to a city region with Oxford providing higher order services (retail, health, education etc) for the surrounding area
- it exhibits a high degree of coherence representing a relatively self-contained labour market area and a single Housing Market Area
- it faces a number of challenges, including the New Growth Points initiatives, that will require joint working across local authority boundaries, and
- it will facilitate the implementation of key regional policies by local authorities and other stakeholders



**Figure 2.1: Central Oxfordshire Strategy Area as defined by the South East Plan 2009**

- 2.12 Policy CO1 within the South East Plan set out the 'Core Strategy' for Central Oxfordshire, which is to strive to be a world leader in education, science and technology by building on the sub-region's economic strengths in ways which will:
- ensure the provision of infrastructure which is essential to the proper functioning and future development of the area
  - protect and enhance the environment and quality of life of the sub-region
  - protect the setting and character of Oxford
  - make best use of previously developed land within urban areas to reduce the need for greenfield development, and
  - concentrate development where the need to travel, particularly by single occupancy car use, can be reduced.
- 2.13 The Central Oxfordshire strategy focused growth primarily in Bicester, Didcot, and Wantage and Grove to improve their self-containment, and within and immediately adjacent to the built-up area of Oxford. More limited development would be directed elsewhere in order to support the social and economic well-being of local communities.
- 2.14 The South East Plan required 578 homes per annum to be provided across the Vale of White Horse District. Within this figure, it specified that 512 homes per annum should be directed towards the Central Oxfordshire sub-region, whilst the remainder should be provided in the rest of the Vale policy area, towards the west (**Figure 2.1**).
- 2.15 The strategy also specified a housing target for Didcot of 8,750 homes and stated that 2,750 of these new homes should be planned for within the Vale (within Harwell parish to the west of Didcot). This growth would help support Didcot's New Growth Point status for which additional funding opportunities were made available to deliver a range of infrastructure provision planned for the area.
- 2.16 Whilst the South East Plan is no longer relevant, it is still important that any policy detail that is included, and is still relevant, is not lost. For this reason and where appropriate, policies have been carried forward into the Vale Local Plan. An assessment has been carried out into the consistency of the South East Plan policies with the NPPF, and to consider if they should be incorporated into the Vale Local Plan 2031 Part 1 (Appendix 1).

## ***Oxfordshire Structure Plan 2016***

2.17 Although superseded by the South East Plan and no longer part of the Development Plan for the Vale, the Oxfordshire Structure Plan did influence the early development of the local plan.

2.18 The Structure Plan set out a strategy for Oxfordshire, which aimed to:

- provide for the development of new homes, jobs and services and facilities to meet the needs of Oxfordshire's people
- concentrate housing development in urban areas where it can be easily accessible to jobs, shops, services, community facilities and public transport
- provide for an increased number of affordable houses, including housing for key workers
- provide the framework to help sustain prosperity and develop Oxfordshire's economy
- protect the countryside, towns and villages and the landscape setting and character of the City of Oxford
- provide in rural areas for development to support the economic and social well being of communities
- ensure supporting infrastructure and services are provided to support development
- encourage the location and design of development to promote high quality environments, make efficient use of energy and other resources and to help reduce the need to travel, and
- provide the necessary raw materials, for example minerals, to enable development to take place.

2.19 Policy G1 set out the general principles for development and stated that:

“The general strategy is to provide a framework for development to sustain economic prosperity, meet housing and other requirements and guide the investment decisions of a range of organisations for the period to 2016 in ways which will:

- a) deliver the level of development required to meet the objectives of this plan while protecting and enhancing the environment, character and natural resources of the county
- b) concentrate development in locations where:
  - i) a reasonable range of services and community facilities exist or can be provided, and
  - ii) the need to travel, particularly by private car, can be reduced and walking, cycling and the use of public transport can be encouraged
- c) make the best use of previously developed land and buildings within areas to reduce the need for the development of greenfield sites, while not permitting development on important open spaces.

The larger urban areas will be the main focus for development.

In smaller towns and villages development will be of an appropriate scale and type to meet the social and economic needs of local communities”.<sup>5</sup>

## **Policy Review - local policy**

### ***Sustainable Communities Strategy 2008***

2.20 The Communities Strategy was developed by the Council in 2008 following consultation with the public and partnership working with key stakeholders including Oxfordshire County Council. The strategy has been important in helping to shape the early stages of the Vale Local Plan 2031 Part 1 and identified three priorities for action which were :

- social progress which recognises the needs of everyone
- maintenance of high and stable levels of economic growth and employment, and
- effective protection of the environment and wise use of natural resources.

### ***Vale Local Plan 2011***

2.21 The Vale Local Plan 2011 was adopted in 2006 and provides a policy framework to inform the day-to-day determination of planning applications across the Vale. It will be partly replaced by the Vale Local Plan 2031 Part 1 – Strategic Sites and Policies and partly by the Vale Local Plan 2031 Part 2 – Detailed Policies and Local Sites, which will be prepared once Part 1 has been adopted. Until Part 2 has been adopted, some policies from the existing Local Plan 2011 will continue to be saved, and will continue to be relied upon for decision-making.

2.22 For the reasons outlined above, and to help inform the preparation of the Vale Local Plan 2031 Part 1, it is important the Local Plan 2011 policies are reviewed. It is also important to check they are still fit for purpose, are consistent with the NPPF and whether they either need replacing or saving. An assessment of the Local Plan 2011 policies for their consistency with the NPPF is set out in **Appendix 2**.

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<sup>5</sup> Oxfordshire Structure Plan 2016 – Oxfordshire County Council (Policy G1 Page 17).

## Evidence

### *Summary of previous consultation stages and key issues*

- 3.0 The Council has completed a number of stages of consultation over the past few years as we have developed the Local Plan. The responses to each stage of consultation have been used to help inform the Vale Local Plan 2031 Part 1. The main stages of consultation completed to date include:
- Issues and Options 2007<sup>6</sup>
  - Preferred Options 2009<sup>7</sup>
  - Additional Consultation 2010<sup>8</sup>
  - Draft Local Plan Consultation 2013<sup>9</sup>
  - Housing Delivery Update 2014<sup>10</sup>
- 3.1 In addition to the public consultation activities listed above, a workshop was also conducted in early 2012, for elected district councillors. The workshop contributed to an 'internal review' process, which sought to update the housing targets for the Vale and to refine the emerging spatial strategy.
- 3.2 This section provides a brief summary of the options considered at each stage of consultation relating to the spatial strategy and outlines any key issues identified through the consultation responses. A full summary of the consultation material and the responses are available from the council website (see links at bottom of page). Each stage of consultation also considered possible sites for locating development. These are discussed within the Strategic Sites Selection Topic Paper<sup>11</sup>.

### *Issues and Options Consultation 2007*

- 3.3 The Issues and Options Consultation considered a number of options for how development should be distributed and described the main points for and against each option. It built on national and regional policy and aimed to:

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<sup>6</sup> **Issues and Options** - <http://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/services-and-advice/planning-and-building/planning-policy/local-development-framework/core-strateg-5>

<sup>7</sup> **Preferred Options** - <http://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/services-and-advice/planning-and-building/planning-policy/local-development-framework/core-strategy/preferred-options>

<sup>8</sup> **Additional Consultation** - <http://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/services-and-advice/planning-and-building/planning-policy/local-development-framework/core-strateg-2>

<sup>9</sup> Draft Local Plan - [http://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2013-03-14\\_FinalLocalPlanPartOneReduced.pdf](http://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2013-03-14_FinalLocalPlanPartOneReduced.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> Housing Delivery Update -

<http://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/sites/default/files/Local%20Plan%20housing%20delivery%20update%202014.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> **Strategic Sites Selection Topic Paper** – <http://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/evidence>

- create sustainable, balanced and thriving communities with necessary infrastructure and services
- help sustain the economic well-being of the district
- maintain the high quality and distinctive local environment, and
- best meet the wider range of Government policies

3.4 A wide range of options for distributing growth were considered. These were:

- A ) locate development within the existing towns and villages
- B ) locate development on brownfield or previously developed sites. This would include sites within towns and villages, but also in the countryside separate from existing communities
- C ) locate development as extensions to the edges of the main settlements of Abingdon-on-Thames, Botley, Faringdon, Grove, Wantage and within Harwell Parish to the west of Didcot
- D ) locate development as extensions to the edges of villages. This could vary from extensions to a small number of villages, to spreading development across most of the Vale's villages
- E ) locate development in a new settlement which could be based around an existing village or be entirely free standing, and
- F ) locate development in settlements along public transport routes with at least an hourly service.

3.5 The evaluation of the consultation responses concluded that it would not be appropriate to select only one of these options in isolation. Instead, it was considered that a combination of the most sustainable options would be more suitable.

3.6 Key responses to the consultation suggested that:

- it would not be appropriate to plan for a new settlement or simply focus new development along public transport routes
- on their own none of the options make a satisfactory strategy
- housing should be located close to jobs and services
- new development should be accessible by as many different types of travel as possible and measures should be taken to improve bus, train, cycling and walking facilities
- infrastructure is needed to support new development
- new employment should continue to be focused at Milton Park and Harwell Campus
- there should also be flexibility for job creation in the towns and larger villages near to where people live
- developing on previously developed land has advantages, and
- the character, services and facilities in town centres should be protected and improved.

3.7 Overall, options A, C and D were considered most appropriate as they would provide homes across a range of locations in settlements that

have the best range of services and facilities. It was therefore considered that a mixture of these three options would be necessary to ensure a sustainable pattern of development across the district.

- 3.8 This approach would also ensure the development proposed at the main settlements would be large enough to deliver key infrastructure (such as new roads or schools – i.e. option C) whilst also supporting development elsewhere in the district to help protect the vitality and viability of the wider district and rural communities (i.e. options A and D).
- 3.9 Several of the original options were rejected for the following reasons:
- option B (focussing development on previously developed land) as this could result in a scatter of new development in the countryside. It would not locate people close to a good range of services and facilities, would not enable the development of strong and cohesive communities, would harm the countryside and result in increased carbon emissions as people would be heavily dependent on private cars for most journeys
  - option E (focussing development in a new settlement) as it was considered there was no need or justification and that significant resource would be required to deliver it. The amount of development needed was not considered sufficient to make the delivery of a new settlement viable, and
  - option F (focussing development along public transport routes) as it would almost certainly damage village character, lead to ribbon development and it was considered likely that many people would still travel by car. Nevertheless, it was recognised that it would be good practice to locate development at settlements with good public transport.
- 3.10 Following the Issues and Options Consultation, a smaller number of hybrid options were assessed and published within the Preferred Options Consultation in 2009.

### ***Preferred Options Consultation 2009***

- 3.11 The Preferred Options Consultation presented two new options for how development could be distributed across the Vale, the preferred option and an alternative. These were based on the analysis of the Issues and Options Consultation described above and were:

A ) 'Urban Concentration' – which would look to:

- concentrate most housing development, including specialist housing and that for the elderly, at the main settlements of Abingdon-on-Thames, Botley, Faringdon, Grove, Wantage and within Harwell Parish to the west of Didcot. This would

involve identifying sites on the edges of these settlements for the new homes required

- concentrate new services, including shops, tourist related and community facilities, in the main centres to improve their vitality and ensure the services can be reached by as many people as possible
- promote the redevelopment and intensification of the sites at Milton Park and Harwell Campus for science based research and high-tech businesses, and encourage some limited new development to provide extra jobs at Grove, Wantage and Faringdon
- allow limited development within the villages or on suitable, brownfield sites next to them. The development of greenfield sites next to villages may be acceptable but only to provide affordable housing (not market housing) and facilities for the local community that cannot be met elsewhere, and
- limit development in the countryside to that needed to meet the specific needs of farming, forestry, equestrian centres or other rural enterprises, enable informal countryside recreation or the reuse of appropriate rural buildings.

B ) An alternative approach, known later as 'Urban Focus' - which was not favoured – would direct more development to the edges of villages. This alternative would be similar to Option A, but with:

- fewer developments on the edges of the main settlements (however, the approach would still need to follow the requirements set out in the South East Plan for 2,750 homes in Harwell Parish to the west of Didcot and 3,400 at Wantage and Grove)
- homes provided on greenfield sites on the edges of those villages with the best range of services and facilities, but not in villages surrounded by the Oxford Green Belt. This could involve:
  - new homes spread between greenfield sites on the edges of the Central Oxfordshire villages of Drayton, Sutton Courtenay, Steventon, Kingston Bagpuize with Southmoor, Milton, Harwell, Blewbury, East Hendred, Marcham, East Challow and East Hanney, and
  - additional new homes on greenfield sites on the edges of the five larger villages in the rest of the Vale district, which are Watchfield, Shrivenham, Stanford-in-the-Vale, Childrey and Uffington
- some limited expansion of the rural business sites, such as Kingston Bagpuize, Stanford-in-the-Vale and Shrivenham.

3.12 A large number of consultation responses were received in relation to the Preferred Options document and these provided both support for,

and opposition to, the proposed spatial strategy. Examples of supporting comments included:

- that the proposed spatial strategy accorded within the relevant Oxford Structure Plan and South East Plan policies
- that the approach would protect the character of the rural villages
- it ensured development would be focused where most facilities and good public transport services were already located
- that there would be less reliance on the private car
- the development could be better integrated with existing communities
- that larger sites were better able to deliver new facilities, and
- that infrastructure delivery would be more effective.

3.13 Examples of comments which opposed the proposed spatial strategy included:

- that the approach was too respectful of the Oxford Green Belt, but not sufficiently protective of the AONB
- that the proposed strategy did not adequately recognise the rural communities, which make up a significant part of the district
- reference was made to the Taylor Review 2008, which highlighted the importance of supporting some growth, both for housing and employment, in rural areas to help them maintain and improve their vitality and viability and to support rural economies more generally, and
- that there should be more development directed to the larger villages to support local services and facilities.

3.14 The SA completed at this relatively early stage of developing the Local Plan clearly indicated that the preferred approach was likely to result in more positive impacts than the alternative options being considered.

3.15 The consultation responses have been used to help inform the preparation of the Vale Local Plan 2031 Part 1. A full summary of the comments is available from the council website<sup>12</sup>.

### ***Additional Consultation 2010***

3.16 The Additional Consultation was published at the beginning of 2010 and consulted on a relatively narrow range of new policy proposals.

3.17 The consultation included proposed changes to the location of where new development should be located and proposed the addition of a strategic housing site development at Harwell Campus.

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<sup>12</sup> **Preferred Options** - <http://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/services-and-advice/planning-and-building/planning-policy/local-development-framework/core-strategy/preferred-options>

- 3.18 Although not a main settlement, Harwell Campus is the location of internationally significant research and innovation businesses and provides an expanding range of job opportunities. It also provides good and improving transport connectivity and local facilities equivalent to those of the more sustainable larger villages.
- 3.19 The Additional Consultation did not comment on the spatial strategy directly, apart from recommending an additional strategic housing site at Harwell Campus, and this is discussed further under the 'internal review' section below.
- 3.20 The process for selecting the proposed strategic sites is set out in the Strategic Sites Selection Topic Paper<sup>13</sup>.

### ***Internal Review 2011/2012***

- 3.21 An internal review process was conducted in the latter part of 2011 and the early part of 2012, which included a workshop for the Vale's elected district councillors.
- 3.22 The internal review was mainly focused on updating and refining the overall housing target for the Vale and reassessing the selection of proposed strategic development sites. The review was informed by the preceding stages of consultation and the wider evidence base supporting the preparation of the local plan.
- 3.23 However, the review also proposed some refinements to the emerging spatial strategy to reflect the responses to the Preferred Options Consultation and this has, in turn, informed the preparation of the Vale Local Plan 2031 Part 1. A Cabinet Report dated 9 March 2012 presented the re-expressed spatial strategy<sup>14</sup>.
- 3.24 The re-expressed spatial strategy, referred to as 'Building on our Strengths' combined elements of both the 'Urban Concentration' and 'Urban Focus' options, discussed above, to further improve the sustainability and deliverability of the strategy (this is shown below).
- 3.25 Some of the reasons outlined for re-expressing the spatial strategy through the internal review were:
- the name of the previously preferred spatial strategy 'Urban Concentration' did not appropriately reflect the location of proposed business development in the Vale. Business growth is proposed to be focused at the sites of Harwell Campus and Milton Park, which are not located in urban areas

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<sup>13</sup> **Strategic Sites Selection Topic Paper** – <http://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/evidence>

<sup>14</sup> Vale of White Horse District Council Cabinet Agenda 9 March 2012 – <http://whitehorsedc.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=507&MIId=1601&Ver=4>

- public consultation responses to the Preferred Options Consultation included a significant minority suggesting that some growth was appropriate in the larger villages to support their vitality and viability
- responses to the Preferred Options Consultation also included comments from the then Government Office for the South East who questioned how the focus of development at the main settlements would support the sustainability of the rural areas, and
- at the Additional Consultation stage, a further strategic housing site was proposed at Harwell Campus. Although Harwell Campus is identified as being a highly sustainable location for development and the focus of significant job creation, it is not located within one of the Vale's main settlements

A spatial strategy of **Building on our Strengths** would look to:

- promote, in partnership, Central Oxfordshire as a world-class location for science and technology-based enterprise and innovation primarily through the redevelopment and intensification for business purposes of land in the Science Vale UK area, especially the Enterprise Zone sites at Milton Park and Harwell Campus, and at the Didcot A Power Station site in the medium to longer term
- reinforce the Vale's network of market towns and main settlements of Abingdon-on-Thames, Botley, Faringdon, Grove and Wantage and Harwell parish to the west of Didcot by:
  - identifying sites within and on the edges of these settlements to accommodate **TBC** of the homes required, of which around **TBC** will be within the Science Vale UK area
  - concentrating larger shopping, tourism and community facilities in the main settlements to improve their vitality and ensure facilities are widely accessible including by alternatives to the private car
  - encouraging and identifying suitable locations for small to medium scale business development to provide additional local employment opportunities
- promote thriving villages and rural communities whilst safeguarding the countryside, village character and overall quality of life by enabling and encouraging
  - proportionate housing, service, community and business development in villages. This will include allocating development sites within and where appropriate on the edges of villages, including strategic housing sites for a combined total of **TBC** homes in the larger villages of **TBC**, and
  - appropriately scaled rural enterprise that meets the local rural business needs including farming, forestry and equestrian centres, or that enables informal countryside recreation and rural tourism.

**Figure 3.1: Re-expressed spatial strategy entitled 'Building on our Strengths' as proposed through the 'internal review' process.**

### ***Draft Plan Consultation 2013***

- 3.26 The Draft Plan published for consultation in February 2013 was the first time a complete draft of the local plan had been published. Although it was still based on the South East Plan housing target, it did include draft policies for all topic areas. It therefore provided an important opportunity for stakeholders and individuals to comment on the preparation of the plan.
- 3.27 Over four hundred responses were received to the consultation that broadly related to the spatial strategy. Whilst there was some concern over the scale of growth proposed there was broad support for the spatial strategy itself and recognition that it represented the most sustainable approach overall. In particular, it was recognised that the strategy would focus growth:
- at the larger and most sustainable settlements
  - where the majority of employment growth is proposed, and
  - also support the vitality and viability of the larger rural communities.
- 3.28 A number of consultation responses highlighted, correctly, the importance of the final version of the plan being informed by an up-to-date Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) and the likelihood that the housing target for the district would go up.
- 3.29 A minority of comments identified the potential for additional growth at a number of settlements including at Shrivenham, Abingdon-on-Thames and at several other larger villages within the Abingdon-on-Thames and Oxford Fringe Sub-Area. The potential for additional growth within the Vale but adjacent to Didcot was also highlighted.
- 3.30 A number responses to the consultation highlighted the opportunity for Neighbourhood Plans to allocate sites for housing, particularly within the villages, and suggested that the plan should be clearer about the role of Neighbourhood Plans.

### ***Housing Delivery Update 2014***

- 3.31 This consultation was focused on updating the housing target for the district, as identified in the up-to-date Oxfordshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) and setting out a series of additional strategic site proposals.
- 3.32 For the above reason, the majority of comments to this consultation were focused on the strategic site proposals and the new housing target. There were relatively few comments that related to the spatial strategy, although some comments objecting to the scale of growth, did suggest that the main focus of housing should be directed to the main settlements.

### **Key issues identified at a community level**

- 3.33 Local communities can produce their own plans for their villages or communities, including Community-Led Plans and Neighbourhood Plans. It is important that these documents also help to inform the preparation of the local plan to ensure it not only reflects national and district policy, but as far as possible, also reflects issues and priorities identified at a more local level.
- 3.34 A review has been conducted of any Community-Led Plans adopted across the Vale for any relevant issues. These are presented in each topic paper across the range of more detailed topic areas covered by the papers (refer to page 2 of this paper for details).
- 3.35 However, Community-Led Plans are, by their very nature, focused on quite specific and local matters and for this reason are less relevant to those matters that should be addressed in the spatial strategy for the Vale. For this topic area, the comments raised through our consultation stages are the best way to ensure local priorities have influenced the preparation of the plan (discussed in the preceding section).

### **Other relevant evidence**

#### ***Settlement Hierarchy***

- 3.36 The Vale contains a number of settlements, which range in size and character and include market towns and villages, of differing sizes and smaller rural communities.
- 3.37 It is important we consider the settlements across the Vale to identify the most sustainable locations for development and to provide protection against harmful development, where this may be needed.
- 3.38 The assessment of the settlements helps us to define the 'settlement hierarchy'. Each settlement is classified based on their facilities, characteristics and functional relationships with their surrounding areas. This allows us to define the type and scale of development appropriate to different types of settlement.
- 3.39 For example, it will usually be most sustainable for development to be directed to the larger settlements. This helps to ensure the delivery of sustainable development because:
- these settlements provide the best range of services and facilities and new development will help to support and enhance them
  - locating new homes in the communities with the best services and facilities will enable the residents in the new homes to access them by walking, cycling and public transport, so reducing the need to travel by car

- it enables more affordable homes to be built where there is most need, and
  - the main service providers including the Oxfordshire Primary Care Trust, the County Council as highway and education authorities and the emergency services, prefer this approach as it will help them to deliver their services more efficiently.
- 3.40 An assessment of Vale settlements was conducted in 2007 entitled ‘A Study of Village Facilities in the Vale’ and this has since been updated in 2011<sup>15</sup> and 2014<sup>16</sup>. The 2011 and 2014 updates included assessments of the larger settlements and have informed the settlement hierarchy set out in the Vale Local Plan 2031 Part 1.

### ***Employment and infrastructure***

- 3.41 The Local Plan is being informed by a wide range of evidence across a number of topic areas, which are set out in a series of topic papers and evidence bases studies (refer to page 2 of this paper for further details).
- 3.42 The additional work includes an updated Employment Land Review for the Vale (2014) and updated Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDPs) for the Vale.
- 3.43 This work identifies opportunities for wider job growth across the Vale, not just at, or within, the Science Vale area, but also at sites like the Didcot A Power Station site. This site consists of around 47 hectares and will become available for future uses from around 2017/ 2018. The site’s rail link and excellent road connectivity help to make it an attractive site for future job growth within the Vale and this should be reflected within the emerging spatial strategy.
- 3.44 The updated Employment Land Review and the responses to our previous consultation stages also highlights the importance of planning for strategic employment growth across other parts of the Vale including at Faringdon and Grove. This will help to deliver more jobs close to where people live and to complement those planned for at Milton Park and Harwell Campus.
- 3.45 Furthermore, the wider evidence base, including the IDP and national policy, demonstrates very clearly the importance of providing for effective infrastructure delivery alongside any planned housing and employment. This will help to ensure the plan delivers sustainable development overall. This should also be reflected in the updated spatial strategy.

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<sup>15</sup> Study of Village Facilities in the Vale: [www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/evidencebase](http://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/evidencebase)

<sup>16</sup> <http://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/services-and-advice/planning-and-building/planning-policy/local-development-framework/core-strateg-6>

### ***Oxfordshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment<sup>17</sup>***

- 3.46 An up-to-date SHMA was published for Oxfordshire in 2014, which identified an ‘objectively assessed need’ for housing for each of the Oxfordshire council areas including for the Vale of White Horse. This document has formed the basis of the housing target included within the Vale Local Plan 2031 Part 1.
- 3.47 As a result of the Oxfordshire SHMA, the housing target for the Vale has increased, in comparison to earlier versions of the Vale Local Plan and so more proposed strategic site allocations have also been added.
- 3.48 However, the approach overall is considered to be highly consistent with the spatial strategy and no further work has been carried out to refine the strategy further. Detailed work was undertaken to inform the selection of additional strategic site allocations, including conformity with the spatial strategy, and these are explained in detail in the Strategic Site Selection Topic Paper<sup>18</sup>.

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<sup>17</sup> <http://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/services-and-advice/planning-and-building/planning-policy/local-development-framework/core-strateg-6>

<sup>18</sup> <http://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/services-and-advice/planning-and-building/planning-policy/local-development-framework/core-strateg-6>

## **Issues (Challenges and Opportunities)**

- 4.0 It is important the Vale Local Plan 2031 Part 1 is informed by national, regional and local policy and by appropriate and up-to-date evidence, including the responses to each stage of our consultation processes.
- 4.1 This section provides a brief summary of those issues identified in Sections 2 and 3 relating to the policy review and evidence base, which the local plan should address.

### **Summary of Issues**

#### ***Policy Review – the local plan should:***

- reflect the requirements set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), including the need to contribute towards delivering sustainable development, supporting sustainable economic development, reflecting the different roles and characteristics of different areas, supporting thriving rural communities and making fullest use of public transport, walking and cycling
- reflect, where still relevant, the requirements of the Oxfordshire Structure Plan and the South East Plan. In particular, the sub regional strategy for Central Oxfordshire, which is to strive to be a world leader in education, science and technology by building on the sub-region's economic strengths and ensure the provision of infrastructure which is essential for the proper functioning of future development
- to reflect the Sustainable Communities Strategy and contribute to making: social progress which recognises the needs of everyone, maintaining high and stable levels of economic growth and employment, and providing effective protection of the environment and wise use of natural resources, and
- reflect, and where appropriate, update, the Vale Local Plan 2011 to ensure the Vale Local Plan 2031 Part 1 is up-to-date and fit-for-purpose. For example reflecting the flexibility provided by the NPPF for supporting rural communities and economies and ensuring the spatial strategy is not unduly restrictive where it may form a barrier to delivering sustainable development (such as unduly limiting development in larger or smaller villages to a specific number of dwellings).

***Evidence: previous consultation responses – the local plan should:***

- recognise that none of the original spatial strategy options would be appropriate in isolation
- that housing should be located close to jobs and services
- that development should be accessible by a range of modes of travel
- that infrastructure is needed to support new development
- that new employment should continue to be focused at the Enterprise Zone sites
- that flexibility is needed to support job creation in the towns and larger villages
- that the character, service and facilities in town centres should continue to be protected and improved, and
- that a hybrid option for the spatial strategy is needed which reflects the strengths of the options considered, the consultation responses and the internal review process. For example, the strategy should be re-expressed so the name reflects the emerging strategy, that it would continue to support the vitality and viability of the larger villages and rural communities and also reflects the proposed development at Harwell Campus.

***Other evidence: – the local plan should:***

- continue to reflect the principle of most development being directed towards the larger settlements, whilst also supporting the vitality and viability of the larger villages and rural communities
- reflect the updated settlement hierarchy, which should balance the delivery of sustainable development with supporting rural communities and also protecting against development where this would be inappropriate
- reflect the opportunities provided for job creation across the Vale, including, for example at the Didcot A Power Station site, and at the larger settlements outside the Science Vale area, and
- reflect the importance of effective infrastructure delivery alongside housing and employment ensuring the strategy contributes towards delivering sustainable development overall.

## Strategic Policy Options

- 5.0 The spatial strategy is crucial in identifying the pattern of growth that will occur over the plan period and forms the basis for the allocation of strategic sites across the district. It also helps to ensure that the housing and employment growth is supported by appropriate investment in the infrastructure needed to create sustainable communities.
- 5.1 A number of priorities have been identified for the spatial strategy, which the Vale Local Plan 2031 Part 1 should address and respond to (outlined in Sections 2 to 4 of this paper).
- 5.2 Much work has already been undertaken to develop a new spatial strategy and a range of options have already been published at earlier stages of consultation starting in 2007 (outlined in Section 3).
- 5.3 The spatial strategy has been refined following each stage of consultation and has been tested through Sustainability Appraisal<sup>3</sup>. This process resulted in the internal review, conducted towards the end of 2011 and beginning of 2012, recommending a re-expressed spatial strategy.
- 5.4 The spatial strategy was refined to reflect updated evidence to inform the Draft Plan Consultation 2013. For example, reflecting the wider needs to promote infrastructure delivery alongside housing and employment, to help deliver sustainable development and to reflect the opportunities for job growth across the Vale, including sites like the Didcot A Power Station and outside the Science Vale area. The updated draft wording of the spatial strategy is shown in **Figure 5.1**.
- 5.5 Finally, the spatial strategy was refined to reflect the new housing target for the Vale identified in the Oxfordshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) and the Draft Plan Consultation (2013) and Housing Delivery Update (2014) stages of consultation. The final proposed wording for the spatial strategy is shown in **Figure 5.2**.
- 5.6 The final spatial strategy includes the Council's final preferred location for strategic housing growth (refer to the Strategic Sites Selection Topic Paper for further details)<sup>19</sup>. The final sites package is designed to meet a higher housing target than set out in the earlier iterations of the plan. However, the spatial strategy itself is considered to be highly consistent and a clear refinement of 'Building on our Strengths'.
- 5.7 To inform the spatial strategy in the Vale Local Plan 2031 Part 1, the two main options considered at the Preferred Options Consultation

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<sup>19</sup> <http://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/services-and-advice/planning-and-building/planning-policy/local-development-framework/core-strateg-6>

stage, namely 'Urban Concentration' and 'Urban Focus', and the re-expressed spatial strategy, referred to as 'Building on our Strengths' have been further assessed and tested through Sustainability Appraisal.

- 5.8 **Appendix 3** summarises the findings of the assessment and SA.
- 5.9 Of the three options, 'Building on our Strengths' is considered to be the most appropriate and likely to deliver sustainable development overall.
- 5.10 The SA Report concludes that 'Urban Focus' and 'Building on our Strengths' should provide significant positive effects in terms of housing delivery. However, it is clear that 'Building on our Strengths' performs best overall as there are a number of likely significant positive effects associated with it, including the provision of services and facilities, reducing the need for travel, improving health and wellbeing, reducing inequality and supporting a strong economy. 'Urban Concentration' is considered to be the least sustainable.
- 5.11 However, despite the likely significant positive effects associated with the 'Building on our Strengths' option, there are also some potential negative effects, which will need to be addressed through policy to ensure the Local Plan helps to deliver sustainable development overall. These include possible impacts on the natural environment, cultural and heritage assets of the Vale and potentially increasing greenhouse gas emissions. These matters are addressed through a series of policies set out in the Vale Local Plan 2031 Part 1 (also refer to the other topic papers – see page 2 for further details).
- 5.12 The 'Building on our Strengths' option has been developed and informed by both the 'Urban Focus' and 'Urban Concentration' options following each stage of consultation, the internal review process and updated evidence and represents a re-expression of the spatial strategy to improve how it delivers sustainable development. On this basis, the SA outcome could be seen as validation of this process.
- 5.13 Building on our Strengths continues to focus growth within the Science Vale area. This area is a county-wide priority for housing, economic growth and infrastructure provision<sup>20</sup> and is one of three county-wide focal points for growth promoted by the Oxfordshire Local Economic Partnership (LEP). In addition to this Harwell Campus and Milton Park have been designated as Enterprise Zones.

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<sup>20</sup> Oxfordshire Local Investment Plan 2010

## **‘Building on our strengths’ – a sustainable strategy for the Vale of White Horse**

The strategy will support the delivery of sustainable growth through three key strands:

### **Focusing sustainable growth within the Science Vale UK area by:**

- promoting, in partnership, central Oxfordshire as a world-class location for science and technology-based enterprise and innovation primarily through the redevelopment and intensification of land in the Science Vale UK area, especially the Enterprise Zone sites at Milton Park and Harwell Oxford Campus
- allocating appropriate land for strategic housing growth to help improve the self-containment of the area. New homes will be delivered at three key locations: Wantage and Grove, in Harwell parish east of the A34, and at Harwell Oxford Campus
- providing a flexible framework for the medium to longer term redevelopment of surplus land at Didcot A Power Station for predominantly employment uses, and
- delivering a comprehensive package of strategic and local infrastructure and services alongside the housing and employment growth to ensure a balanced and sustainable mix of development. This will include significant investment in new roads and public transport to enable good access between Wantage and Grove, Harwell Oxford and Milton Park and Didcot.

### **Reinforcing the service centre roles of the main settlements across the district by:**

- establishing a policy framework which concentrates larger shopping, tourism and community facilities in the Market Towns and Local Service Centres of Abingdon on Thames, Botley, Faringdon, Grove and Wantage, to improve their vitality and ensure facilities are widely accessible including alternatives to the private car
- establishing a settlement hierarchy which focuses housing growth at the Market Towns; Local Service Centres and Larger Villages
- allocating strategic housing at Faringdon, in addition to the growth at the other settlements described above, to strengthen its service centre role, and
- allocating land for strategic employment growth at Faringdon and Grove, to complement the Science Vale UK sites and to provide jobs close to where people live.

### **Promote thriving villages and rural communities whilst safeguarding the countryside and village character by:**

- identifying appropriate housing requirements for the rural areas to inform community-led neighbourhood planning or site allocations in the Local Plan 2029 part 2
- ensuring the settlement hierarchy focuses development within the rural areas to the larger villages thus helping to maintain their vitality and the sustainability of local services, and
- supporting appropriate development in the villages to help meet the local needs of rural communities.

**Figure 5.1: Updated draft spatial strategy entitled ‘Building on our Strengths’ for inclusion in the Draft Plan Consultation (February 2013).**

**Figure 5.2: ‘Building on our strengths’- a sustainable strategy for the Vale of White Horse for inclusion in the final publication version of the plan (November 2014).**

The strategy will support the delivery of sustainable growth through three key strands:

<p><b>Focusing sustainable growth within the Science Vale area, by:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• promoting Science Vale as a world-class location for science and technology-based enterprise and innovation, especially the Enterprise Zone sites at Milton Park and Harwell Campus</li> <li>• allocating appropriate land for strategic housing growth to help improve the self-containment of the area. New homes will be delivered at five key locations:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Grove</li> <li>○ Harwell and Milton Parishes, east of the A34</li> <li>○ Harwell Campus</li> <li>○ Milton Parish, west of the A34</li> <li>○ Wantage</li> </ul> </li> <li>• supporting the redevelopment of surplus land at Didcot A Power Station</li> <li>• delivering a comprehensive package of strategic and local infrastructure and services alongside the housing and employment growth, and</li> <li>• working jointly with South Oxfordshire District Council to prepare a Joint Science Vale Area Action Plan to drive forward the delivery of high quality development and provision of enabling infrastructure .</li> </ul>	<p><b>Reinforcing the service centre roles of the main settlements across the district, by:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• concentrating larger shopping, tourism and community facilities at Abingdon-on-Thames, Botley, Faringdon, Grove and Wantage to improve their vitality and ensuring they are widely accessible</li> <li>• focusing housing growth at the market towns; local service centres and larger villages</li> <li>• allocating strategic housing growth at Abingdon-on-Thames and Faringdon, in addition to the growth within the Science Vale area, to strengthen their service centre roles, and</li> <li>• allocating land for strategic employment growth at Faringdon and Grove to complement the Science Vale sites and to provide jobs close to where people live.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Promoting thriving villages and rural communities whilst safeguarding the countryside and village character, by:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• allocating strategic housing growth at our larger villages of East Hanney, Harwell, Kingston Bagpuize with Southmoor, Radley, Shrivenham, Stanford-in-the-Vale and Sutton Courtenay to help maintain their vibrant communities</li> <li>• identifying appropriate housing requirements for the rural areas to inform neighbourhood plans or the Local Plan 2031 Part 2</li> <li>• focusing development within the rural areas on the larger villages thus helping to maintain their vitality and the sustainability of local services, and</li> <li>• supporting appropriate development in the smaller villages to help meet the local needs of rural communities.</li> </ul>
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## Recommendations

- 6.0 The spatial strategy is one of the most important parts of the Vale Local Plan 2031 Part 1 as it sets out our approach to how future housing and employment should be distributed.
- 6.1 The recommended spatial strategy has been developed following the refinement of options considered at each stage of consultation and by up-to-date evidence. The spatial strategy has been informed by Sustainability Appraisal at each of these stages and reflects national policy, including the NPPF.
- 6.2 The recommended spatial strategy, referred to as 'Building on our Strengths' is focused around three key strands (**Figure 5.2**), which are:
- focusing sustainable growth within the Science Vale area
  - reinforcing the service centre roles of the main settlements across the district, and
  - promoting thriving villages and rural communities whilst safeguarding the countryside.

## Appendix 1: A review of relevant South East Plan policies for their consistency with the NPPF.

Policy	Summary	Consistency with the NPPF	Identified Issues
SP1: Sub-Regions in the South East	This policy identifies nine sub-regions across the South East for focussing the delivery of growth and regeneration.	<b>Fully Consistent</b>	None
SP3: Urban Focus and Urban Renaissance	This policy seeks to concentrate development in urban areas, achieving at least 60 % of all new development on previously developed land.	<b>Partially Consistent</b> The NPPF provides greater flexibility to planning authorities for how they deliver sustainable development, including the promotion of sustainable development in rural areas (paragraph 55) and does not set a minimum target for development on previously developed land (paragraph 111).	This policy should be considered alongside the NPPF to help inform the policy development for the Vale Local Plan 2031 Part 1.
CO1: Core Strategy	This policy sets out the strategy for Central Oxfordshire to be a world leader in education, science and technology by building on the sub-regions strengths.  The policy includes criteria to ensure appropriate infrastructure delivery, protect and enhance the environment, and concentrate development where the need to travel can be reduced.	<b>Partially Consistent</b>	This policy is partially consistent with the NPPF and remains a valid and appropriate strategy to inform the Central Oxfordshire sub-region. It should inform policy development for the Vale Local Plan 2031 Part 1.

**Appendix 2: A review of relevant Vale Local Plan 2011 policies for their consistency with the NPPF.**

Policy	Summary	Consistency with the NPPF	Identified Issues
GS1: Development in Existing Settlements	<p>This policy ensures development is concentrated at the five settlements of Abingdon-on-Thames, Botley, Faringdon, Grove and Wantage within defined development boundaries.</p> <p>It provides support to development in Harwell parish, to the west of Didcot, and supports small scale development within the built areas of villages.</p>	<p><b>Consistent, in part, with the NPPF</b> This policy sets out a spatial strategy for development across the plan area ensuring development is located in the most sustainable locations in accordance with a plan led system. It is therefore consistent with the NPPF for housing development. However, policies H11, H12, and H13 are not considered consistent (discussed separately below) and so the policy is not consistent where there are references to these policies.</p>	<p>The spatial strategy itself is consistent with the NPPF and can inform policy development in the Vale Local Plan 2029 Part 1</p>
GS2: Development in the Countryside	<p>This policy concerns proposals for development outside the defined development limits of settlements which will not be permitted unless allocated in a local plan or consistent with other specific policies.</p>	<p><b>Consistent, in part, with the Framework</b> This policy supports Policy GS1 and ensures development across the plan area is located in the most sustainable locations in accordance with a plan led system. It is therefore consistent with the NPPF for housing development. It is not consistent in respect of references to policies H11, H12 and H13 (discussed separately below). The policy is also not consistent in respect of parts of paragraph 55 of the NPPF which define special circumstances where isolated dwellings in the countryside may be acceptable.</p>	<p>The broad principle of protecting the open countryside against development is consistent with the NPPF. Exceptions to where development may be acceptable in the open countryside are provided by the NPPF and need no further clarification in the Vale Local Plan 2031 Part 1.</p>

Policy	Summary	Consistency with the NPPF	Identified Issues
H10: Development in the Five Main Settlements	This policy provides support for development within the built areas of the settlements of Abingdon-on-Thames, Botley, Faringdon, Grove and Wantage providing the proposals would not result in the loss of facilities and make an efficient use of land.	<b>Fully Consistent</b> This policy provides additional detail to Policy GS1 and is fully consistent with the NPPF.	None
H11: Development in the Larger Villages	This policy provides detail to guide development in the Larger Villages and includes a limit of not more than 15 dwellings being permissible within each Larger Village.	<b>Not Consistent</b> The policy is not consistent with paragraphs 47 and 49 of the NPPF. The policy does not provide the basis for establishing a five year housing land supply.  Specifying a specific level of growth in Larger Villages may also provide a barrier to delivering sustainable development as set out in the NPPF.	The consistency of this policy with the NPPF is dependant on whether the Vale is able to demonstrate a five year housing land supply. This will be established once the Vale Local Plan 2031 Part 1 is adopted.  On this basis, the principle of this policy can inform policy development in the Vale Local Plan 2031 Part 1 if appropriate. However, consideration is needed for whether the new policy should specify a specific level of growth.
H12: Development in the smaller villages	This policy provides detail to guide development in the Smaller Villages and includes a limit of not more than 4 dwellings being permissible within each Smaller Village.	<b>Not Consistent</b> The policy is not consistent with paragraphs 47 and 49 of the NPPF. The policy does not provide the basis for establishing a five year housing land supply.  Specifying a specific level of growth in Smaller Villages may provide a barrier to delivering sustainable development as set out in the NPPF.	The consistency of this policy with the NPPF is dependant on whether the Vale is able to demonstrate a five year housing land supply. This will be established once the Vale Local Plan 2031 Part 1 is adopted.  On this basis, the principle of this policy can inform policy development in the Vale Local Plan 2031 Part 1 if appropriate. However, consideration is needed for whether the new policy should specify a specific level of growth.

Policy	Summary	Consistency with the NPPF	Identified Issues
H13: Development Elsewhere	This policy provides detail to guide development in areas outside the towns and villages.	<p><b>Consistent, in part, with the NPPF</b></p> <p>The policy is not consistent with paragraphs 47 and 49 of the NPPF. The policy does not provide the basis for establishing a five year housing land supply.</p> <p>However, it is consistent with paragraph 55 of the NPPF, which supports sustainable development in rural areas where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities.</p>	The broad principle of protecting the open countryside against development is consistent with the NPPF. Exceptions to where development may be acceptable in the open countryside are provided by the NPPF and need no further clarification in the Vale Local Plan 2031 Part 1.

**Appendix 3: Assessment of spatial strategy options for possible inclusion in the Vale Local Plan 2031: Part 1.**

Policy ID	Description of policy/ option	SA Outcome	Does the policy/ option conform to national policy?	Is the policy/ option deliverable and effective?	Does the policy option deliver local priorities?	Conclusion
A	<p><b>Urban Focus</b> - This option proposes greatest growth across the larger villages alongside urban extensions at the larger settlements</p>	<p>A generally sustainable option with two likely significant positive impacts identified for providing sufficient new homes and for reducing inequality. A likely significant negative impact is identified for reducing greenhouse gas emissions.</p>	<p>Consistent with the NPPF</p>	<p>The option is deliverable overall. However, development at the larger settlements will usually represent the most deliverable and sustainable locations for development and help to facilitate the greatest level of infrastructure delivery with the widest community benefit.</p>	<p>Whilst there is support for flexibility to permit development in the larger villages, where it supports their vitality and viability, this option may increase the scale of development to a level that would be unacceptable to many rural communities.</p>	<p>Although this option may help to deliver sustainable development and is consistent with the NPPF, it only partly addresses local priorities and does not represent the most sustainable option overall.</p> <p>This option is not recommended for inclusion in the Vale Local Plan 2031: Part 1.</p>

Policy ID	Description of policy/ option	SA Outcome	Does the policy/ option conform to national policy?	Is the policy/ option deliverable and effective?	Does the policy option deliver local priorities?	Conclusion
B	<b>Urban Concentration</b> – this option concentrates the vast majority of growth towards the urban areas	A generally sustainable option with a likely significant positive impact identified for reducing inequality. However, a likely minor negative impact is identified for six of the 11 SA objectives and this option is considered to be the least sustainable	Inconsistent with the NPPF. Focusing development solely at the larger settlements does not adequately support the vitality and viability of rural communities and their economies (including for example in providing affordable housing).	Housing supply is likely to be more deliverable overall if there is a balance between housing growth in both urban and rural areas.	This option does not meet local priorities. It does not meet the needs of the rural communities across the Vale and does not support the vitality and viability of rural communities.	This option is inconsistent with the NPPF, does not meet local priorities and may not help support sustainable development overall.  This option is not recommended for inclusion in the Vale Local Plan 2031: Part 1.

Policy ID	Description of policy/ option	SA Outcome	Does the policy/ option conform to national policy?	Is the policy/ option deliverable and effective?	Does the policy option deliver local priorities?	Conclusion
C	<b>Building on our Strengths</b> – this option recognises that whilst the urban areas will still take the bulk of the housing growth, the rural areas will also have significant, but proportionate housing and economic growth	This option is considered most sustainable overall and likely significant positive impacts are identified for 6 of the 11 options (for providing sufficient housing; ensuring the availability of services; reducing the need to travel; improving health and wellbeing; reducing inequality; and supporting a strong economy. No likely significant negative impacts are identified and minor negative impacts are identified for 5 of the 11 objectives.	Consistent with the NPPF	This option is thought to represent the most deliverable overall as it provides for greatest flexibility. It not only supports development being focused at the larger settlements, but also provides flexibility to support development in the larger villages	The spatial strategy needs to be flexible enough to permit sustainable development in the larger villages to support the vitality and viability of rural communities whilst also providing protection from inappropriate development. This approach is considered most consistent with local priorities.	This option is identified as most sustainable from the SA, is consistent with the NPPF and represents the most deliverable option, which is consistent with local priorities.  This option is recommended for inclusion within the Vale Local Plan 2031: Part 1.

## Appendix 4: List of Abbreviations/ Glossary

Term	Acronym	Explanation
Local Enterprise Partnership	LEP	A body, designated by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, established for the purpose of creating or improving the conditions for economic growth in an area.
Local Investment Plan	LIP	For more information please visit <a href="http://www.oxford.gov.uk/Direct/OxfordshireLocalInvestmentPlan.pdf">http://www.oxford.gov.uk/Direct/OxfordshireLocalInvestmentPlan.pdf</a>
Local Nature Partnerships	LNP	Partnership to help local area to manage the natural environment as a system and to embed its value in local decisions for the benefit of nature, people and the economy.
Local Plan Part 1	LPP1	This document contains long-term spatial vision and strategic policies that guide growth in the district.
Local Plan Part 2	LPP2	This document will contain the more detail development management policies and site allocations for non-strategic sites.
National Planning Policy Framework	The Framework or NPPF	This sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied at a local level.
Oxfordshire Nature Partnership	ONP	Local Nature Partnership for Oxfordshire. For more information see <a href="http://www.oncf.org.uk/support/support.html">http://www.oncf.org.uk/support/support.html</a>
Planning Advisory Service	PAS	PAS is part of the Local Government Association and is funded directly by the Department of Communities and Local Government. They provide consultancy and peer support, learning events and online resources to help local authorities understand and respond to planning reform.
Spatial Planning and Infrastructure Partnership	SPIP	A forum for liaison on spatial planning, economic development, housing, transport and infrastructure issues. The partnership is made up of Leaders or Cabinet/ Executive Members from each of the local authorities and the other organisations.
Sustainability Appraisal	SA	The process of assess the economic, social and environmental effects of a proposed plan. This process implements the requirements of the SEA Directive.
Science Vale	SV	An area of economic growth in southern central Oxfordshire that is defined by four points: Didcot (in South Oxfordshire), Harwell Campus, Milton Park and Grove (all in the Vale of White Horse District).

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