

Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2031 Part 1**Examination Hearings****Stage 2 – February 2016****Statement of Common Ground****Between****Vale of White Horse District Council****and****Highways England****and****Oxfordshire County Council****1. Introduction**

- 1.1 This Statement of Common Ground (SoCG) has been prepared by Vale of White Horse District Council (VOWHDC) Highways England (HE) and Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) to reflect the current position agreed by all parties with regard to the Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2031 and implications in relation to planning for the Strategic Road Network.
- 1.2 This Statement follows agreement to a SOCG between these parties at Stage 1 of the examination on strategic matters. It does not seek to replicate matters agreed at this stage, but does give an update on latest planning for scheme development in respect of the A34, of particular relevance to proposed development allocations in the South East Vale and Abingdon-on-Thames and Oxford Fringe sub areas.

2 Evidence Base and latest position on planning for Strategic Road Improvements

- 2.1 The 'Evaluation of Transport Impacts (ETI) Study' has identified a number of key strategic transport interventions seen as needing to come forward to support housing and employment growth outlined in the Local Plan. Interventions seen as particularly relevant to the strategic highway network and their current status is summarised as follows:
- Junction capacity improvements at the A34 Milton and Chilton Interchanges. These are under construction and due for completion by the end of 2016.¹ These schemes will improve transport accessibility in the South-East Vale sub area of the Local Plan.
 - Junction capacity improvements at the A34 Lodge Hill Interchange. The County Council is undertaking detailed engineering feasibility on this scheme, and it is included as one of a number of schemes prioritised as part of the Local Enterprise

¹ <https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/public-site/roads-and-transport>

Partnership Growth Deal for Oxfordshire. This scheme would improve transport accessibility in the Abingdon-on-Thames and Oxford Fringe sub-area of the Local Plan.²

- A proposed new road crossing of the Thames between Didcot and Culham Science Centre, linking to new road from the Science Centre to the B41015 towards Oxford. The County Council has undertaken initial feasibility work and identified two alternative options for this scheme, which would significantly improve transport accessibility across much the district and for surrounding areas.
- Ensuring that public transport improvements come forward in the plan period that will complement road improvements, and ensure that those living and working in the new growth areas have real choice about how they access jobs and services.

2.2 All parties agree that the package identified through the ETI work is a credible package of infrastructure improvements that will support delivery of housing and employment site allocations proposed within the Vale of White Horse Local Plan Part 1.

2.3 However, looking forward, it is recognised that the package of infrastructure improvements may not be sufficient to address development in excess of that proposed in the Local Plan Part 1. The A34 Milton Interchange, in particular, whilst able to accommodate the proposed quantum and pattern of growth in the submitted Local Plan, will require further comprehensive assessment should levels of development in the Didcot area increase further. This assessment would help determine requirements for any further improvements to the junction. It is also recognised that key strategic infrastructure, such as a new road crossing of the Thames, have wider implications and benefits that will need to be further understood and reviewed going forward. This will need to take account of updates in planning policy that may have an impact on movements on the strategic highway network, such as the proposed new South Oxfordshire Local Plan, currently in development stage.³

3. Agreement and actions going forward

3.1 As set out in the SOCG for Stage 1, all parties are committed to working together to plan positively for growth in the Vale of White Horse, including in relation to the development and delivery of highway infrastructure schemes that will improve sustainable transport access in the area. More specific work is outlined below:

3.2 The Vale of White Horse will continue to positively plan for housing and employment growth, particularly in the Science Vale growth area identified within the Oxfordshire Strategic Economic Plan.⁴ This will include taking forward a joint Vale/ South Oxfordshire planning document to support delivery of growth, which will give more detail on infrastructure requirements that will enable new homes and employment across the Science Vale area, and take account of the recent announcements for designation of the Didcot Garden Town and new Enterprise Zone to the north and west of Didcot.⁵

² <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/oxfordshire-growth-deal>

³ <http://www.southoxon.gov.uk/services-and-advice/planning-and-building/planning-policy/local-plan-2031>

⁴ <http://www.oxfordshirelep.org.uk/content/strategic-economic-plan>

⁵ <http://enterprisezones.communities.gov.uk/> and <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-garden-towns-to-create-thousands-of-new-homes>

3.3 Highways England and the Department for Transport will be undertaking a detailed study on options for improvements along the A34 through the district as part of the Oxford to Cambridge Expressway Study, due for completion in autumn 2016 and the County and District will positively input to this study work. It is expected that this study will appropriately assess and take into account the existing planned mitigation on this route, as well as plans for development in the sub-region. This will ensure that any recommendations for investment take account of wider strategic matters, and therefore all parties will need to remain flexible to understanding the outputs of this work and how it will help prioritise scheme investment in the next 10-15 years.

3.4 Oxfordshire County Council will continue to take the lead in planning and delivering major transport schemes within the Vale that support growth proposed within the Local Plan, and help deliver priorities set out in Local Transport Plan 4. Where these schemes have an impact on the strategic highways network, they will continue to work positively with Highways England to ensure that they are in agreement to all stages of scheme development and delivery.

3.5 All parties are supportive of the programme to seek much needed capacity improvements to the A34 and will seek to include a preferred approach in the next Road Investment Strategy review.

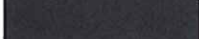
4. Conclusion

4.1 All parties would welcome the adoption of the new Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2031 Part 1 and will continue to work cooperatively on planning for necessary improvements to the strategic road network.

Signed on behalf of Vale of White Horse District Council



Vale Local Plan Subject Matter Advisor

Date: 

Signed on behalf of Highways Agency



Spatial Planning and Development Control Manager

Date: __18 January 2015__

Signed on behalf of Oxfordshire County Council



Deputy Director for Strategy and Infrastructure Planning

Date: __18 January 2016__