

# Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2031 Part 1

## Examination Hearings

Stage 1 - September 2015

### Statement of Common Ground

Between

Vale of White Horse District Council

and

Commercial Estates Group (CEG)

#### **1. Introduction**

- 1.1. This Statement of Common Ground (SoCG) has been prepared by the parties identified above ("the parties") to document matters agreed with regard to the Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2031 Part 1 and supporting documents to assist the Inspector during the Examination of the Local Plan.
- 1.2. This SoCG particularly relates to matters of principle concerning the allocation of North of Abingdon-on-Thames for the development of around 800 homes and supporting facilities, services and infrastructure.
- 1.3. VoWHDC proposes the site for allocation for strategic housing development in the Local Plan having considered reasonable alternatives including assessing the relevant evidence, and following consultation with stakeholders and the public.
- 1.4. The SoCG is provided without prejudice to other matters of detail that Commercial Estates Group, or appointed person(s) on its behalf, may wish to raise during the hearings. Insofar as Commercial Estates Group (CEG) has outstanding concerns relating to other aspects of the policy for this site allocation or other parts of the local plan, these matters are set out in their representations to the Local Plan.
- 1.5. A further Statement of Common Ground has also been prepared in respect of the allocation of around 800 dwellings at North of Abingdon-on-Thames, in respect of highway matters.

## **2. Background (factual matters)**

- 2.1. CEG is promoting the whole site allocation. Contracts have been exchanged with the two landowners of the land to the west of Oxford Road and there is an agreement in place for CEG to also promote land to the east of Oxford Road (currently owned by Radley College). Legal/contractual work to this effect is on-going.
- 2.2. CEG is a private company with strong financial backing that actively invests in a wide range of property assets across the UK. CEG has a strong track record in delivering planning permissions on strategic sites.
- 2.3. Land within the CEG Development portfolio ranges from urban to brownfield to greenfield and at present the strategic development land portfolio extends across 60 sites around the UK, with a completed development value of approximately £3 billion.
- 2.4. In the past year CEG achieved outline planning consents for around 4,500 dwellings and completed sales on over 2,500 plots with house building partners.
- 2.5. CEG will ensure finances are available to fully resource the preparation and submission of a planning application for the North of Abingdon-on-Thames allocation.
- 2.6. The consultant/technical team has been appointed and technical work is well advanced.
- 2.7. CEG has been engaging and meeting with the District Council since November 2014 to support the allocation, to progress site master planning and to address technical matters.
- 2.8. CEG has also met with County Council Highways Officers and the Highways Agency to progress transport related matters. As before, a separate SOCG has been prepared in respect of transport related matters.

## **3. Strategic Matters on which the parties agree (Stage One)**

- 3.1. That the Local Plan addresses in full the objectively assessed and evidenced housing needs arising in the Vale of White Horse as considered in the Oxfordshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment Final Report dated April 2014 (SHMA).
- 3.2. That the District has strong economic prospects and that there is a need for timely housing provision in both the long and short term to support forecast economic and employment growth.
- 3.3. That the Council should progress with the Local Plan (Part 1) without delay on the basis of meeting the District's own objectively assessed housing needs. There is no merit in delaying the progress of the Vale Local Plan until agreement has been reached over the apportionment of any unmet housing need from Oxford City (particularly given that it is likely to take some time to establish the level of unmet housing need arising from the City, and for discussions to conclude over the distribution of the unmet housing need between the surrounding Districts). Any additional housing development required in the Vale (to assist in accommodating

unmet housing needs from the City) can best be delivered through an early review of the Local Plan.

- 3.4. That the Council's Spatial Strategy, Sub-Area Strategies and Settlement Hierarchy which focus strategic housing growth at the three Market Towns (including Abingdon) comply with the Government's policies and aspirations for delivering sustainable development.
- 3.5. That there is a compelling case for the Green Belt boundary to be reviewed and amended through Local Plan 2031 Part 1 - to promote growth and enable the District Council to meet its objectively assessed housing needs in a sustainable manner.
- 3.6. That the release of Green Belt land at North Abingdon is fundamental to delivery of the Council's Spatial Strategy and its ability to meet its objectively assessed housing needs.
- 3.7. That the process of preparing the new Local Plan 2031 Part 1 provides the appropriate forum for considering whether there are exceptional circumstances that warrant alterations to the general extent of the Green Belt.
- 3.8. That the findings of the Council's Green Belt Review (and other relevant evidence base documents) and the need to provide for the District's housing needs in a sustainable way support the release of this site from the Green Belt.
- 3.9. That the findings of the Council's Landscape Studies support the allocation of this site in landscape and visual impact terms.

#### **4. Site Specific Matters on which the parties agree (Stage Two)**

- 4.1. That the site is a suitable and sustainable location for strategic housing growth, on the edge of the District's largest settlement.
- 4.2. That the site is a logical extension of Abingdon and that a clear, long term defensible edge to the town can be created.
- 4.3. That the site is in a highly accessible location with good links to services and facilities. That there are no insurmountable constraints to development and as far as the parties are aware, no technical, ownership or planning impediments to development.
- 4.4. That there is on-going technical work and liaison with stakeholders and infrastructure providers to address any issues arising.
- 4.5. That the site can be developed for around 800 dwellings in accordance with the Council's aspirations.
- 4.6. That an appropriate mix of housing types and sizes can be provided to meet the identified need.

4.7. That an appropriate density can be provided across the site to reflect local context and landscape character.

4.8. That the parties are committed to continuing to work together to ensure the timely delivery of a high quality development on land North of Abingdon-on-Thames.

## **5. Site delivery**

5.1. That the site can be delivered in accordance with the 'Housing Trajectory and 5 Year Housing Land Supply 2015/16 Forecast Including Local Plan Part 1 Sites' (Appendix 3 of Topic Paper 4; Housing) which indicates delivery of 180 dwellings between 2017-2020 and the remainder over the following 7 years with completion by 2026/27.

5.2. That the site is deliverable, on the basis of current infrastructure requirements in the Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP), the Draft CIL Charging Schedule and policy framework set out in the submitted Local Plan Part 1.

5.3. That the site allocation will facilitate the delivery of key infrastructure such as a primary school and improvements to the strategic road network (A34).

## **6. Promoter commitment**

6.1. CEG is the site promoter for the whole allocation.

6.2. CEG will fund all planning application and professional fee costs and finance is available to progress an outline application.

6.3. An outline application will be ready for submission following adoption of the Local Plan Part 1.

6.4. The site can deliver up to 180 dwellings within the 5 year period up to 2020.

## **7. Conclusion**

7.1. CEG supports the allocation of land North of Abingdon-on-Thames within Core Policy 8 and the parties agree that the site is suitable, available and deliverable for sustainable housing development, which is in compliance with the NPPF.

7.2. The parties are working jointly to enable delivery of the planned development at the earliest opportunity and will continue to work cooperatively on all matters of mutual interest.

## 8. Signatures

Signed on behalf of Vale of White Horse District Council

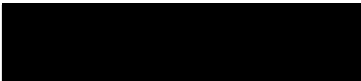


Adrian Duffield  
Head of Planning Service

21 August 2015

Date

Signed on behalf of Commercial Estates Group



Ian Gillespie  
Partner, Carter Jonas

21/08/15

Date

