

Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2031 Part 1 Stage 2 Examination February 2016

Statement of Common Ground between:

- **Vale of White Horse District Council (VoWHDC)**
- **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 Stage 2 Examination of the Local Plan.
- 1.2 This SoCG relates to matters concerning the strategic allocation of land North of Abingdon-on-Thames (also known as Housing Allocation 2) 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 2031 having considered reasonable alternatives including assessing the relevant evidence, and following consultation with stakeholders and the public.
- 1.4 A SoCG between the parties was also submitted at the Local Plan 2031 Stage 1 Examination. The Inspector is referred to its content which is not repeated here, other than to reiterate, in brief summary, that the parties agree that the site is suitable, available and deliverable for sustainable housing development and that they 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.
- 1.5 It is agreed 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 2017-2020 and the remainder over the following 7 years with completion by 2026/27.

2. Matters on which the parties agree

2.1 Green Belt alterations and exceptional circumstances

- 2.1.1 Work to identify strategic development sites began in 2007 and the Council's methodology for site selection has been refined and updated over time as the evidence base supporting the Local Plan Part 1 has developed.
- 2.1.2 The Council recognises the importance and status of the Oxford Green Belt. The Draft Local Plan (February 2013) retained the Oxford Green Belt without alteration. The land at North Abingdon-on-Thames was first proposed as a housing allocation in the 2014 Housing Delivery Update. This was following the publication of the Oxfordshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) when the Council took the decision that it needed to meet, in full, its objectively assessed needs if it proved possible to do so.

- 2.1.3 The decision to amend the Green Belt boundary and to allocate North Abingdon-on-Thames for housing development was informed by an extensive evidence base, having been originally strongly influenced by the need to meet the objectively assessed housing need and the need to deliver sustainable development. In respect of the latter, it is relevant that Abingdon-on-Thames is the largest settlement in the District, but is constrained not only by the Green Belt to the north, but by flooding and infrastructure constraints to the south.
- 2.1.4 The alteration of the Green Belt boundary and the allocation of North Abingdon-on-Thames is based on robust and evidence-based planning reasons including development viability, infrastructure requirements, flood risk, sustainability and heritage and landscape assessment.
- 2.1.5 CEG has carried out a fresh assessment of the impact of the North Abingdon-on-Thames allocation on the Green Belt (carried out by Define and to be appended to CEG's Hearing Statement in respect of Matter 5). This finds that there will be a degree of impact on the purposes of the Green Belt but that this will be low-medium overall. VoWHDC have reviewed this assessment and accept its findings.
- 2.1.6 There are exceptional circumstances for a review of the Green Belt and an alteration to its boundaries to include the allocation for 800 dwellings at North Abingdon-on-Thames as part of the Local Plan 2031 Part 1, taking into account harm to the Green Belt and any other harm and the benefits of securing the scale of housing proposed and the sustainability merits of the site.
- 2.1.7 It is not unreasonable to retain Green Belt land as part of the site allocation. The Development Framework Plan for North Abingdon-on-Thames (which is to be appended to CEG's Hearing Statement in respect of Matter 8) reflects national and local Green Belt policy by retaining the part of the site that remains within the Green Belt for agricultural use and sport and recreation. These are uses which are considered 'appropriate' in the Green Belt under the terms of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and draft Local Plan Policy CP13, and would not conflict with the purposes of the Green Belt.

2.2 Technical Site Constraints

- 2.2.1 Further detail of the technical work that has been completed to date, and which has underpinned the development of the site Development Framework/Masterplan is to be provided in CEG's "Delivery Document" which will be appended to CEG's Hearing Statement in respect of Matter 8.
- 2.2.2 The technical work has been subject to on-going discussions with both VoWDC and Oxfordshire County Council. CEG has been engaging and meeting with VoWHDC since November 2014 to support the allocation, to progress site masterplanning and to address technical matters.
- 2.2.3 No insurmountable technical constraints to development have been identified by the parties.

2.3 Landscape Impact

2.3.1 The site does not contain any landscape designations.

2.3.2 The Landscape Studies undertaken by the Council show that there is landscape capacity for development within this site.

2.3.3 The emerging Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment prepared by CEG has been prepared with input from VoWHDC, specifically with reference to selection of viewpoints.

2.4 The Development Framework Plan

2.4.1 The Development Framework Plan (to be appended to CEG's Hearing Statement for Matter 8) has evolved with on-going discussion and negotiation with VoWHDC and Oxfordshire County Council, in respect of the following matters in particular;

- Highways, accessibility, connectivity and access;
- Landscape and Visual Impact;
- Design and Layout;
- Education provision;
- Public Rights of Way;
- Green Infrastructure

2.4.2 This Framework Plan provides an acceptable framework on which to progress and establishes that at least 800 dwellings can be accommodated within the site in accordance with the requirements of the Site Development Templates at Appendix A to the Local Plan Part 1.

2.4.3 The provision of sports pitches and ancillary development within the part of the site which lies within the Green Belt is compliant with national and local policy, including policy CP13 of the Local Plan Part 1.

2.5 Transportation and Highways

2.5.1 CEG has engaged with, and met with, VoWHDC Officers, County Council Highways Officers and Highways England to progress transport related matters.

2.5.2 A Transport Assessment will be prepared to accompany the outline planning application, the extent of assessment and analysis to be undertaken as part of which will be completed in accordance with the methodologies set out within both the Transport Assessment Scoping Study and a series of subsequent Technical Notes, the content of which have been agreed with the County Council and where appropriate, Highways England.

2.5.3 In order to assess the impact of developing the site on the local and wider highway network, a study area has been identified, agreed and baseline traffic data recorded accordingly.

2.5.4 There are four strategic site allocations at or close to Abingdon, within the Abingdon-on-Thames and Oxford Fringe Sub-Area. The cumulative impact of these sites on the local

highway network will be assessed within the Transport Assessment. The wider implications on the strategic highway network have been appraised by the County Council.

2.5.5 CEG is committed to delivering any off-site highway works necessary to mitigate the impact of development at North Abingdon-on-Thames.

2.5.6 CEG is similarly committed to working with the District and County Councils and Highways England to deliver this site as allocated and to contribute towards the funding of the A34 slips.

2.5.7 The Development Framework Plan demonstrates that access would be achieved from Dunmore Road and Twelve Acre Drive via a series of junctions, the layouts of which have been agreed in principle by the County Council. No new vehicular accesses would be formed onto Oxford Road. This complies with the draft Site Development Template at Appendix A to the Local Plan Part 1.

2.5.8 Scope exists to materially enhance the level of public transport accessibility as well as enhance the foot and cycle network, benefitting not only future but also existing residents of north Abingdon, thereby further reinforcing the sustainability of the proposed allocation.

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Name: [Redacted]

Position: Agent – [Redacted]

Date: 25/01/16

Signed on behalf of VoWHDC

Name: [Redacted]

Position: [Redacted]

Date: [Redacted]