

Vale of White Horse Local Plan Stage 2 Examination

Statement of Common Ground

between:

Vale of White Horse District Council

and

Ptarmigan Ltd

in relation to the inspector's questions under Matter 6

January 2016

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This Statement of Common Ground has been prepared between Vale of White Horse District Council (the Council) and Ptarmigan Ltd, hereafter known as "the parties". This document identifies the matters agreed with regard to the Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2031 Part 1 and supporting documents to assist the Inspector during stage 2 of the Examination of the Local Plan.
- 1.2 This statement particularly relates to the allocation of Land to the East of Harwell Campus for the development of around 850 homes and supporting facilities. The agreed matters have been structured to help inform the Inspector through Stage 2 of the hearing sessions.
- 1.3 The Council 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.

2.0 Areas of agreement in relation to Local Plan Part 1

- 2.1 The Parties agree that Science Vale and Harwell Campus is demonstrably exceptional: it is a world renowned major UK Science and Technology Campus that benefits from over £1bn of science infrastructure, including the UK's national synchrotron facility the Diamond Light Source and ISIS Neutron facility, plus approximately 5,000 research and support staff spread across approximately 200 organisations.
- 2.2 Harwell Campus is at the core of the UK's strategy for growth and a pillar of strength for the UK economy. It is crucial for the future success of the site and for Harwell Campus to continue to compete on an international stage that housing is delivered adjacent to the site. Housing is necessary to ensure the site provides a world class environment to attract inward investment, commercial enterprise and a highly skilled workforce, to ensure the campus evolves from a science and innovation park to a world class campus environment offering a work-live-play community.
- 2.3 The parties agree that 'exceptional circumstances' exist to justify development at the East of Harwell Campus site. These exceptional circumstances have been clearly set out within the parties respective Hearing Statements and are not repeated here.

Harwell Innovation Village

- 2.4 The parties agree that the key to the continued international success of Harwell Campus is the creation of a Campus wide innovation village, which includes the existing employment area and the proposed housing allocations to the north and east. On this basis, Ptarmigan has prepared, as far as is possible, a Development Framework which encompasses all elements of development at and around the Campus. The parties agree that a comprehensive approach to the design of these schemes and the future of the Campus is the most appropriate, and any attempt to plan these developments in isolation could be harmful to the Campus' future success.
- 2.5 In their representations to the Inspector and throughout the Development Framework, Ptarmigan references the need to create an Innovation Village. This builds on advice from the Council's design and masterplanning consultants, IBI, and an influential and informative report by the Brookings Institute, a globally respected think-tank considering the growth of international Science and Innovation parks similar to Harwell.
- 2.6 The Innovation Village model is based on the creation of collaborative venues, social networking, product competitions, technical support and mentoring and will create:
- a mixed use campus environment with residential, commercial, retail, employment and leisure uses, alongside spaces for individuals to meet and collaborate both formally and informally;
 - a high quality built environment which respects the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and continues to attract high calibre staff and investors;
 - a mix of tenures including market and affordable housing and social and private rent, helping to meet the bespoke needs of Harwell Campus;
 - reasons for people to remain on and around Campus beyond the hours of work, increasing the opportunities for 'chance meetings' between professionals in different fields that would not normally meet in the work-place; and
 - a sustainable environment in which employees can safely and quickly travel to and from work on foot, by bike, or by bus.

Delivering the right type and tenure of accommodation

- 2.7 The parties agree that an appropriate type and tenure of accommodation is needed to help meet the bespoke needs of employees in this location. The fact that the land is not controlled by the Partnership does not prohibit land East of Harwell from delivering

this. Ptarmigan's Development Framework demonstrates a commitment to this, and the parties agree that a comprehensive stakeholder engagement strategy will help identify the types and tenure needed on the East of Harwell site.

- 2.8 The parties agree that guarantees over the type, tenure and phasing of accommodation can and will be secured at planning application stage through a combination of planning conditions and legal agreements (s106). These tenures will likely include market and affordable housing for sale, affordable rent, and private rent. A precise percentage for each tenure will be agreed at a later date and supported by robust stakeholder engagement.

East of Harwell Proposals

- 2.9 The parties agree that the proposed allocation at East Harwell Campus should contain an appropriate mix of homes and services to meet the unique requirements of Harwell Campus. Ptarmigan has made a commitment to ensure the development meets these requirements and consistent with the Draft Vale of White Horse Local Plan. These uses will be informed by partnership working with Harwell Campus, the Council, the community and other key stakeholders. The uses on site are likely to include:

- International apart-hotel
- Serviced apartments and houses
- Bars, shops and cafes, innovation centre and other community uses centrally located on the Newbury Road to maximise connections with the employment area on the Campus and to capture trade from through traffic.
- A range and mix of affordable and market homes to help meet the bespoke needs of Harwell Campus
- Communal electric bike points
- Car club initiative
- A programme of community initiatives, including sports clubs
- A residents' association to manage community assets
- Communal landscape that provides dedicated, safe and convenient pedestrian and cycle routes
- Communal productive landscapes of community gardens, orchards and allotments

Technical Evidence

2.10 Barton Willmore and Ptarmigan have prepared a suite of technical evidence studies to support their proposals for the East of Harwell Campus site. These studies support their Hearing Statement and confirm the sites suitability and deliverability. The studies include:

- Drainage
- Geotechnical
- Utilities
- Ecology
- Transport
- Heritage
- Education

2.11 In addition to the above evidence, Ptarmigan has produced a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment to support the Development Framework. This supports and complements the Council's own Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (NAT04). The parties agree that these studies do not conflict with each other and both demonstrate that the East of Harwell site has landscape capacity to accommodate the proposed allocation. These two consistent studies represent the most suitable and appropriate information for the Inspector to base his examination into the Local Plan upon.

2.12 Both studies conclude that the proposals are capable of successful integration into the landscape in the medium and long-term, that they will not lead to substantial harm to the AONB landscape, and are compatible with the North Wessex Downs AONB Management Plan.

3.0 ALTERNATIVES PROPOSED BY HARWELL CAMPUS PARTNERSHIP

3.1 The parties agree that the proposed alternative by the Harwell Campus partnership is unsound, would threaten the future growth of the Campus and undermine the delivery of essential infrastructure across Science Vale.

The loss of enterprise zone land

3.2 It is agreed that the proposals to include 1,400 homes on land to the north and northwest of Harwell Campus would result in the loss of 28ha of Science Vale Enterprise Zone land

(around a third of Harwell's EZ). Although employment uses could be located elsewhere on land within the Campus' control, the resultant loss in EZ land would result in diminished business rate returns for the LEP. These projected business rates have been forecasted (and in some cases committed through Local Investment Fund loans) to the delivery of the following strategic infrastructure needed to unlock Harwell's potential:

- Milton Interchange 'Hamburger' junction
- Chilton North-facing slips
- Harwell Link Road (B4493 to A417)
- Upgrade to Hagbourne Hill

- 3.3 The parties therefore agree that the loss of business rates from Harwell Campus would threaten the delivery of these projects, which are all focused on connecting Harwell to the strategic road network or rail network (via improved access to Didcot). The proposals by the Campus Partnership therefore undermine the premise on which Government Funding has been based.

4.0 CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1 The parties agree that the Local Plan allocation for the East of Harwell site for residential development is sound.
- 4.2 The parties agree that there are particular growth needs for Harwell Campus and that it needs to compete on a global scale. The need for residential development adjacent to the Campus is justified by the changing dynamic of international science parks which need to continue to attract high quality, creative individuals, who are drawn to such mixed use campuses. The parties agree that when considered against national planning guidance, 'exceptional circumstances' exist to justify development at the East of Harwell Campus site.
- 4.3 The parties agree that the proposed alternative by Harwell Campus is not sound. Should such an approach be taken, the parties agree that the loss of EZ land and associated infrastructure funding would demonstrably undermine several strategic infrastructure projects, key to Harwell's success.

Signed on behalf of Vale of White Horse District Council



28/1/16
Date

Signed on behalf of Ptarmigan Ltd



28/1/16
Date

