

VALE OF WHITE HORSE LOCAL PLAN 2031
(Part 1 Strategic Sites and Policies) EXAMINATION
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The Examination will take place in two stages. Stage 1 will consider the main strategic issues of the plan covered by the four Matters listed below. These primarily relate to elements of Core Policies 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 27).

If, following the Stage 1 hearing sessions, I conclude that in relation to these issues the plan is likely to be capable of being found sound Stage 2 will then commence. Stage 2 will consider all other matters relating to the plan – primarily Core Policies 1, 7 – 26 and 28 – 47).

STAGE 1 - MATTERS AND QUESTIONS

Matter 2 – Objectively Assessed Needs for Housing and Employment Land

2.1 Is the identified objectively-assessed need for housing of 20,560 new dwellings (an average of 1028 per year), as set out in policy CP4, soundly based and supported by robust and credible evidence?

In particular: (a) Are the SHMA's demographic adjustments to the 2011 CLG Household Projections soundly based?

There is no sound evidence to support these figures. They are based on a forecast of growth mainly in the Science Vale sector which relies on government funding. There is no evidence that the government will protect this spending as it addresses the national deficit. There is no evidence that local people and the environment will receive any benefit from the decision to locate this industry and research within this region rather than elsewhere in the UK.

There is no given evidence as to why this should all be supplied by new housing rather providing some additional capacity by allowing more flexibility for how existing development is used.

(b) Is it appropriate to include an allowance for addressing past shortfalls in the delivery of housing against the South East Plan housing requirements?

The need for housing now is whatever it is now!

(c) Is the SHMA's adjustment to take account of forecast economic growth as set out in the Cambridge Econometrics/SQW report soundly based?

The evidence is not convincing. There is no evidence in the plan that 10,500 jobs in Science Vale are needed or welcomed by local residents.

The figures are too reliant upon modelling, there is insufficient qualitative data. Growth in education economy is capped by agreement on student numbers between OCC and universities.

Sectors such as knowledge economy and publishing are a large part of employment in area, these are moving towards being cloud based and less reliant on employees living in geographical area.

No clear evidence why there is such large growth forecast in the finance sector

(i) Are the report's forecasts of employment growth in the District realistic?

If we continue to pursue growing the science, research and knowledge economies at an unsustainable rate then yes. But the plan does not give compelling evidence as to why we are pursuing this growth in employment in this area rather than elsewhere in the UK and why this will lead to a sustainable future for the Vale

(ii) Is there evidence that the forecast employment growth would give rise to demand for new housing within the Vale of White Horse district?

There is strong evidence that housing will be needed for working age population but no evidence that this is better supplied by building new family and executive housing which is what most present development is.

Plan should take measures to provide even more housing attractive to retired residents, some of whom may then choose to vacate existing family housing. The plan assumes that housing should continue to be built as individual units, rather than flats, maisonettes and other solutions. Consideration of the type of household has not been given sufficient consideration. There is a growing number of households of only one person who may not need such a large unit or a garden. It would be more sustainable to encourage smaller units and buildings that can be subdivided as needed, allowing flexibility for changing demographics in the medium and long term.

Due consideration has not been given to facilitating shared housing, community living, or self build. The Local Plan should include creating a register of persons interested in other types of housing. Large developments should include some provision for self build and co operative housing.

Planning policies in the Vale have also stifled creativity, and innovation which may improve sustainability . E.g. planning permission has been refused for changing roof pitches to accommodate solar panels. Or homes in conservation areas have not being allowed insulation not visible from outside.

The growth in demand is largely fuelled by a policy to increase employment in the science and research sector but ironically there is no encouragement in the plan to build innovative housing and trials of wholly sustainable housing to help find solutions to sustainability issues. The local plan should include a commitment for land to be reserved for trials of new types of housing.

(d) What are the implications of the 2012-based CLG Household Projections for the objectively-assessed need for housing?

These are based on what has happened rather than what is likely to happen. They are based on a different cost of home to wages ratio than we now have.

2.2 Is the identified need for 13 additional pitches for gypsies and travellers (CP27) soundly based and supported by robust and credible evidence?

Supporting this lifestyle is a political decision. Offering it may lead to demand. Supporting a range of alternative housing solutions is compatible with sustainability.

2.3 Is the identified need for 219 ha of land for future employment development (policy CP6) soundly based and supported by robust and credible evidence?

It did not convince me.

