

VALE OF WHITE HORSE LOCAL PLAN 2031
(Part 1 Strategic Sites and Policies)

EXAMINATION
HEARING STATEMENT

MATTER THREE:
Spatial Strategy and
Housing Supply Ring Fence

Respondent Nos: 874832/874516

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Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2031

Hearing Statement on Matter Three: Spatial Strategy and Housing Supply Ring Fence

Question 3.1

Is the proposed distribution of new housing and employment land (policies CP4 and CP6) soundly based? In particular:

- (a) Does the proposed distribution of housing set out in policy CP4 appropriately reflect the settlement hierarchy (policy CP3) and the core planning principle of the NPPF (para 17) to actively manage patterns of growth to make the fullest possible use of public transport, walking and cycling, and focus significant development in locations which are or can be made sustainable?*
- (b) Does the distribution appropriately reflect the role of Oxford in providing for employment and services for the residents of Vale of White Horse?*

Question 3.3

Is it feasible that a significantly different distribution of housing development from that proposed could be delivered?

Barwood broadly support the approach to the distribution of development set out in Core Policy 3 and 4. The settlement hierarchy follows an appropriate appraisal of existing settlements and Policy 4 seeks to distribute development having regard to this settlement hierarchy. Barwood support the strategic allocation of land for housing in East Hanney but consider that the village could support additional development to help meet housing needs in the District, and that land to the east of the village should be allocated.

The approach to distribution of development generally responds positively to the core planning principles set out at paragraph 17 of the NPPF. A key component of paragraph 17 (a matter that has been reinforced by Government through Ministerial Statements and Secretary of State's decisions) is the need to protect Green Belts. The protection of Green Belt is given great importance by the Government and changes to Green Belt should only be made in exceptional circumstances. Part of this, in accordance with the NPPF, means first utilising all available and sustainable non-Green Belt land for development before Green Belt land is released for development.

Barwood consider that the Council could utilise more non-Green Belt land in order to meet the housing requirements of the area in a sustainable way. In particular, land they are promoting for development at East Hanney is sustainable and deliverable and should be allocated for development.

East Hanney is not constrained by the Green Belt or by landscape designations such as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. It therefore compares favourably to other locations in the District where these constraints exist. These include Abingdon, Radley and South Kennington which are located in the Green Belt, and Harwell Campus which is an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Radley, for example, has a similar level of services and facilities but has an allocation of 240 dwellings notwithstanding its location within the Green Belt.

The NPPF is clear in giving these designations the highest status and it requires local planning authorities to have considered all available and suitable alternatives before utilising land in these areas. In this regard Barwood are not convinced that the Council have explored all sustainable alternatives before committing to the removal of land from the Green Belt.

Land east of East Hanney, which was proposed to be allocated in earlier stages of the Plan preparation, is clearly a suitable and sustainable location for growth which is not constrained by Green Belt or an Area of Outstanding Beauty designation. East Hanney also compares favourably to other locations in terms of its accessibility and connectivity to Oxford by a range of modes of transport, including direct and frequent daytime and evening bus services, with journey times of around half an hour to central Oxford.

Therefore, the distribution of development proposed by the Council's Spatial Strategy, which includes East Hanney, would play a direct role in supporting wider job and economic growth in the wider HMA, ensuring the opportunities and services provided by Oxford are accessible.