

Examination into the Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2031: Part 1, Stage 1
Hearing Statement for Matter 3

Peter Smith, 872752

19th August 2015

General comments on the plan (repeated for each Matter)

There are too many jobs in the district already, with a lot more in the pipeline. This is a major cause of high housing costs. It is recognised in paragraph 4.18 but in other places the plan has proposals for encouraging the creation of more jobs, which can only aggravate the situation.

Even if the plan's proposals for housing are accepted, the council cannot guarantee delivery of all of them within the required time-scale. Political and legal challenges are likely, particularly given the very strong feelings aroused by the suggested building on the Green Belt and on or near the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Any plan to build on open country will carry that risk to some extent. This opposition may render the plan's objectives undeliverable. One answer to this problem would be to show more flexibility over development, particularly in and around the smaller villages.

Matter 3 – Spatial Strategy and Housing Supply Ring Fence

Questions 3.1(b), 3.3 and 3.4: the basic idea of the Housing Supply Ring Fence is sound but should be applied flexibly. A significantly different distribution of housing development might be needed and could be achieved by allowing more housing development in the smaller villages and towns and the open land around them, which covers much of the area of the Vale. This would provide more flexibility, in particular for the 1900 houses mentioned in Core Policy 4, for which sites have not yet been allocated. Such flexibility should be clearly stated in the plan.

The restrictions in the plan inevitably force much development into settlements in protected areas, which may yet generate effective public opposition as described in my General Comments, above. These restrictions would tend to make the smaller communities even more expensive and exclusive than they already seem to be.

Permitting more housing and employment sites in the smaller villages, on open land if necessary, would help make housing more affordable; the employment would allow a more balanced community to develop. Also, it would support village shops and pubs indirectly by increasing the number of potential customers. A further benefit: keeping house prices down would make redevelopment of pub and shop buildings for housing less profitable.

Suggested modifications to the plan

Core policy 3, page 37: under “Smaller Villages”, delete “and primarily for local needs.”

Paragraph 4.8, page 36: replace “protects and enhances the services and facilities provided by Market Towns, Local Service Centres and our Larger Villages” with “gives priority to protecting...”; also add a final bullet point:

- “The plan does not rule out some development of housing, services and facilities in smaller communities, on open land if appropriate”.

Page 39: “Development of Smaller Villages”: development should NOT be restricted to infill sites and may be supported when it meets more than just local housing needs.