

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 3 – Spatial Strategy and Housing Supply Ring Fence

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?

There is more development happening in villages with poor access to poor public transport and local services than the local plan's policy suggests should happen. The Climate Change Act calls for a reduction of carbon emissions from transport but the plan is focused on road improvements rather than a mixed approach to transport. The new road building suggested does not seem to be an absolute commitment furthermore it seems to be using proposed new development to solve existing problems, this does not improve long term sustainability.

Commitments to improving facilities for cyclists need to be backed up by a clear indication as to what this would be. Routes that separate cyclists from vehicles should be a mandatory part of new developments.

A more determined commitment to opening stations at Grove, Steventon and other settlements should be included in the plan rather than a mere commitment not to prejudice future re opening of the rail line.

Science Vale should only be allowed to proceed once the new rail link is in and cycleways and bus routes are established to the area.

A commitment to a cycle and walking route between South Abingdon and Culham Station should be included as part of the plan as this part of Abingdon is poorly served by bus routes yet with a pedestrian and cycle river crossing could easily be linked with existing rail provision,

(b) Does the distribution appropriately reflect the role of Oxford in providing for employment and services for the residents of Vale of White Horse?

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

It is feasible that land could be zoned with employment land and housing land being provided next to each other. The policy of housing people in the Vale to then travel to Oxford, Milton Part and other employment areas does not offer the most sustainable solutions as we move to an economy less reliant on fossil fuels. It is not sustainable to expect roads that are already close to capacity to allow a significant increase in travel from residential areas to employment areas. The plan should have more mixed use areas to give the best long term chance of a sustainable economy. Local business hubs and small industrial or agricultural areas should be encouraged, possible using developer contributions. The planned development of Abingdon Town Centre as a supermarket led retail area has not succeeded and this area should be considered as a mixed use area. Settlements to the west of the Vale are likely to look to Swindon for higher order services.

3.4 Is the “housing supply ring fence” approach of policy CP5 to the delivery of housing in the Science Vale area

(a) adequately explained in terms of its practical operation, **No** (b) justified, (c) likely to be effective and (d) in accordance with national policy?