



Hearing Statement

On behalf of The Hendred Estate

Examination into the Vale of White Horse
Local Plan 2031 (Part 1 Strategic Sites and
Policies)

Stage 2 – Hearing Session

Matter 6

(also including comments on 9.2 in relation to the
alternative Harwell site)

January 2016

Introduction

1. This statement is submitted to the Examination into the Vale of White Horse District Local Plan 2011-2031: Part 1 on behalf of landowner the Hendred Estate (Hendred Estate is the trading name of landowner Mr ETI Eyston).
2. This statement responds to the issues raised by the Inspector in his Stage 2 - Matters and Questions (17 December 2015)

Matter 6 – Proposed Housing Sites in the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

6.1 *Having regard to the exceptional circumstances and public interest tests set out in para 116 of the NPPF, are the Strategic Housing Allocations (sites 12 and 13) proposed in the AONB soundly based? In particular:*

(a) What is the need for the housing development, including in terms of national considerations?

The NPPF requires local plans to meet their area's housing needs in full. The need is to be established by a SHMA (Strategic Housing Market Assessment) based on an objective assessment involving neighbouring authorities where a housing market area crosses administrative boundaries. The Oxfordshire SHMA has been accepted as identifying the objectively assessed need for the Oxfordshire Housing Market Area through the Inspector finding the Cherwell Local Plan sound; in relation to the SHMA the Inspector commented:

"I am fully satisfied that the methods used in, and the scenario outcomes arising from, the 2014 SHMA are consistent with the requirements of the NPPF and the PPG" (Cherwell Local Plan Inspector's Report, 2014, para 47).

The submitted plan seeks to meet the need identified for the Vale of White Horse district through the SHMA planning for at least 20,560 new dwellings for the plan period.

The SHMA is the only objectively assessed housing need for the area within

the requirements and terms of the NPPF, and consequently the only sound basis upon which the planned housing can be based.

Science Vale makes a significant contribution to the Government's (national) strategy for knowledge economy growth. This is reflected in a number of Government commitments. Significant investment into facilities on the publicly owned site at Harwell Campus has occurred and it is designated an Enterprise Zone and identified as the UK Space Gateway. The general local conditions have to be right for this area to flourish economically. One of the foundations of a sound economic base is to have appropriate levels of housing in the right locations. Significant employment growth results in the need for additional housing.

Given the national significance of the Harwell Campus it is considered that the NPPF (paragraph 116) 'test' for major developments in designated areas including AONBs that states that planning permission should be refused, except in exceptional circumstances and where it can be demonstrated that they are in the public interest would be passed as the Inspector should be able to satisfy himself that the circumstances are exceptional and the development in the public interest.

(b) What is the likely impact of permitting, or refusing, the housing development on the local economy?

The proposed housing allocation, particularly Site 12, in the AONB is considered to be a highly sustainable location for new housing. The new residential development would be closely related and integrated within existing and future employment development together with local services and facilities, thereby making a sustainable and inclusive community. The area is already recognised as being a vital economic area for Oxfordshire which also includes employment of international importance. The proposed allocation will ensure the required housing and community facilities are available to support the economic growth for the area, will ensure the provision of a sustainable and integrated mixed use community and will secure the provision of homes to help meet the future labour supply requirements of the local economy. Co-locating housing employment generating development will bring clear

sustainability and transport benefits (such as reduced commuting) and will add to the attractiveness of Science Vale as a place to work.

Not allowing the housing development to go ahead in the right location (i.e. close to the Campus) would jeopardise the achievement of a flourishing science based sustainable community and would undermine significantly the area's ability to attract new high science businesses to the employment/enterprise zone. And, furthermore, would damage the Council's ability to deliver its spatial vision and strategic objectives, especially for employment which would underpin a sustainable economy in the long-term and would have wider effect.

(c) Is there scope for providing for the housing development outside of the AONB?

The area of the Harwell campus and surrounding area, namely the tract of land south of the A417, is covered by the AONB designation. There are no opportunities to provide a housing development in proximity to the Harwell Campus site outside of the designation that would provide for the type of mixed-use community that would properly constitute a sustainable community. It is worthy to re-affirm that the Harwell Campus is a designated Enterprise Zone. This being the case, it follows that there needs to be a co-ordinated and holistic approach to the delivery of employment land and homes and in terms of the three dimensions of sustainable development, which are mutually dependent; allocation of this site would be appropriate to ensure development is appropriate in economic, environmental and social terms.

Supporting the transition to a low carbon future is a core planning principle (NPPF para 17). Providing homes in close proximity to the work places will allow people to walk and cycle to work. Managing patterns of growth to make fullest use of walking and cycling is also a core principle of sustainable development.

In our view providing the housing which is in essence generated by the proposed economic growth at Harwell outside the AONB would risk jeopardising the objectives of the plan to support tertiary sector job growth (big

science) and the interlinked benefits that that would bring to the wider area. Harwell Campus must be made to be a highly attractive place to live and work in order to achieve the aims of Government and those of the VOWHLP2031. As the centre of UK space technology people will be drawn to the area and will want to live in convenient and vibrant communities close to their place of work.

(d) What is the likely effect of the development on the environment, landscape and recreational opportunities having regard to the potential for moderation?

It is our view that site 12 would result in the least harm to the AONB whilst still offering excellent connectivity and sustainable development credentials. The site will be viewed in proximity to the Harwell Campus, thereby ensuring the environmental and landscape impacts are minimised.

The site is visually contained with limited public views, and this is also noted in the Council's Landscape Capacity Study of Contingency Housing Sites, Phase I Report, October 2014. The overall conclusion of the Capacity Study indicated that the site had medium landscape sensitivity and that part of the site could be considered as potential housing site on landscape and visual grounds.

With a detailed and comprehensive landscaping strategy, residential development on the site could successfully be assimilated into its receiving landscape and ensure a positive planned approach. The Hendred Estate own the land to the north and west of the proposed site allocation and can offer the potential for peripheral landscape and ecology enhancement, thereby ensuring a high quality and low impact development.

We note that the Harwell Campus is seeking to have land allocated south of site 12 instead of that proposed at Site 13 (the alternative proposal). There would be advantages in terms of landscape impact for that land to be developed alongside Site 12, noting the core planning principle that land of lesser environment value should be preferred- and especially where it has been previously developed. For economic and transport reasons development needs to take place adjacent to the Campus and we do not suggest that

development should be located outside the AONB.

6.2 *Would the alternatively proposed housing site at Harwell Campus:*

(this is also relevant to Matter/Subquestion 9.2)

(i) *Accord with the exceptional circumstances and public interest tests?*

Given that Harwell Campus is the intended focus of the UK's national space programme which will be beneficially supported by other related business and high science, it is considered the national significance of the site would mean that the exceptional circumstances test would be passed.

In addition given that the economy of the wider Vale of White Horse as a district will be heavily reliant on the continued success and growth of the Harwell Campus as an employment area, it is in the public interest for it to be a successful place to work. Our answers to other questions (and sub-questions) make clear why housing is considered essential to the success of the overall programme/objectives for Harwell Campus.

(ii) *More appropriately meet housing needs?*

Hendred Estate and Harwell Oxford Campus Partnership have agreed a basis which will enable Harwell to deliver a comprehensive development of the whole area. They are minded to work collaboratively, as encouraged under the proposed Local Plan. With this in mind, the Hendred Estate is supportive of the representations that have been made by Kemp & Kemp on behalf of The Harwell Campus Partnership (December 2014 and January 2016) which have been viewed by the Estate prior to it making these comments. Their detailed submission is endorsed and it is not considered necessary to repeat the salient points made in their submission. A good point does not become better the more it is repeated.

The masterplan (by Hawkins/Brown Dec 2015) which has been put forward demonstrates how well a successful and relatively compact development could be produced in association with Site 12.