

**Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2031: Part 1
Examination – Stage Two**

Written Statement Prepared by Environment Agency

January 2015

**Matter 8 - Strategy for Abingdon-on-Thames and Oxford Fringe Sub-
Area**

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This written statement has been produced by the Environment Agency (EA) to provide further clarity and assistance on the Matters and Questions raised by the Inspector dated 17 December 2015.

- 2 Issue 8.1 (e) – Is the Strategic Housing Allocation at South of East Hanney, listed in Policy CP8 (site 6), soundly based and deliverable?
- 2.1 In our representations on the submitted Local Plan, dated 19 December 2014, we raised concerns with the deliverability of the above site allocation.
- 2.2 We stated that the risk of detrimental impacts on the habitat and associated species of the Letcombe Brook would be inconsistent with the National Planning Policy Framework.
- 2.3 Since making our representation, a planning application for 200 dwellings was submitted (LPA ref. P15/V1616/FUL). We initially objected to this application because of the impacts on biodiversity. We were able to remove our objection, subject to appropriate conditions, following discussion and the submission of amended proposals.
- 2.4 Whilst the application was later refused, it does not appear that the reasons for refusal directly relate to the elements of the scheme that involved avoiding or mitigating impacts on the Letcombe Brook.
- 2.5 We are therefore of the opinion that, as far as our remit is concerned, there are no factors that prevent the deliverability of the site.
- 2.6 In order to provide clarity to the Local Plan, and make clear that there is ecological value, as well as landscape value, associated with the Letcombe Brook, we reiterate our recommendation for additional wording to site allocation policy.
- 2.7 As also stated in our previous representation to the Local Plan, we also recommend that the following point on flood risk is added in order to provide clarity and ensure consistency with the Sequential and Exceptions Test evidence base documents.

Suggested modification to Appendix 3, Land South of East Hanney, Biodiversity and Green Infrastructure (page 19)

Add the following paragraphs under additional bullet points:

- An appropriate 20 metre buffer zone, free from built development and managed for ecological benefit, to ensure no detrimental impact on the Letcombe Brook wildlife corridor and biodiversity associated with it.
- No development shall take place within Flood Zone 3 or 2.

3 Issue 8.4 – Upper Thames Reservoir

- 3.1 In our representations to the Local Plan, we provided information regarding an ongoing project at the EA to investigate the possibility of a flood alleviation scheme (FAS) to the west of Abingdon, which could reduce flooding within the town. A map identifying the area of interest was submitted with these representations and is provided in Appendix A to this statement.
- 3.2 The project is still ongoing, with flood modelling currently under way. This work will inform an appraisal of possible options for a scheme, which is expected to be completed by the end of 2016.
- 3.3 As development of the site could preclude the delivery of such a scheme, we reiterate our wish for the area to be safeguarded.
- 3.4 Our project team has liaised with the project team at Thames Water involved with the Upper Thames Reservoir. We believe that the potential FAS and reservoir projects do not preclude the delivery of one other.
- 3.5 As such we reiterate our request that a Core Policy within the Local Plan be included to safeguard land. Appendix A of this statement contains our suggested text and a plan of the land proposed for safeguarding.

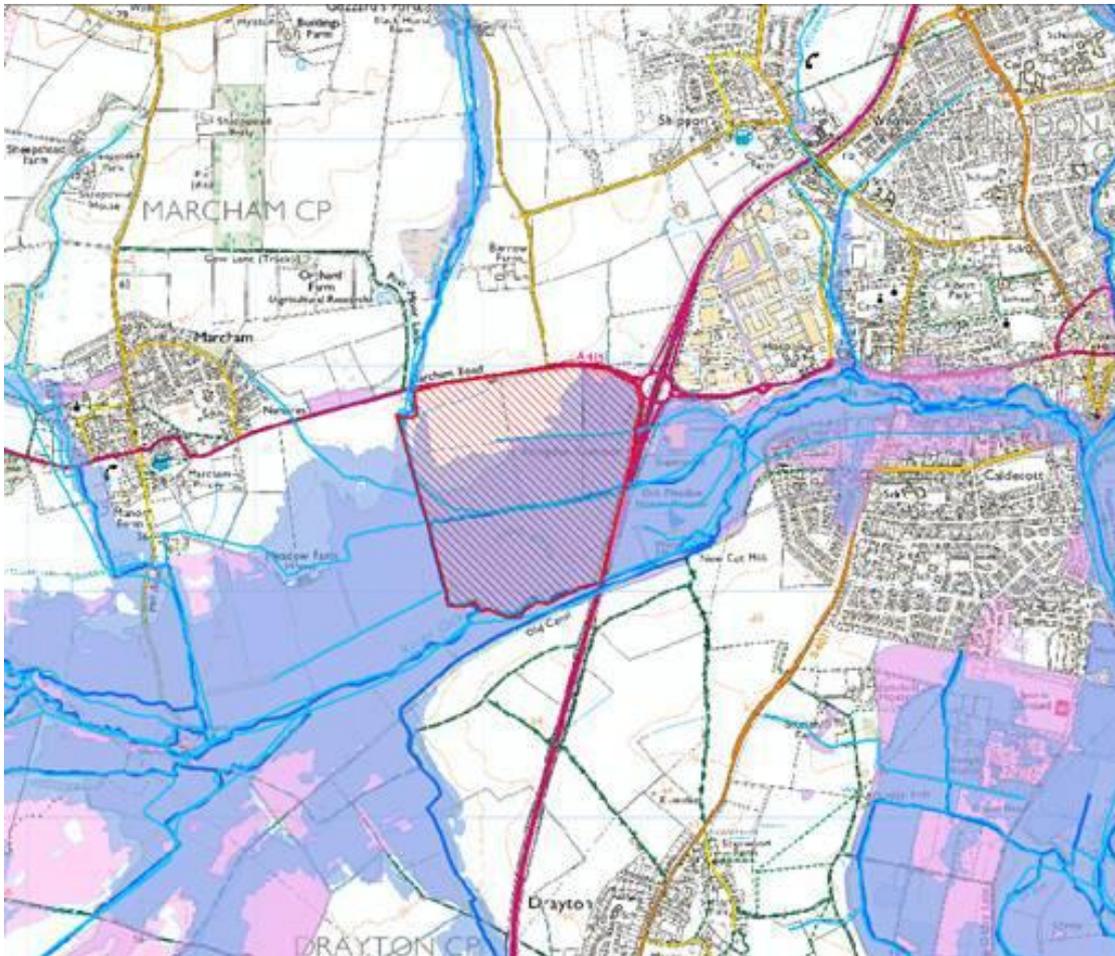
Appendix A

Core Policy XX: Abingdon Flood Risk Management Measures

Land is safeguarded for flood risk management measures to the west of A34 and south of Marcham Road on land known as Abingdon Common, as shown on Appendix XX.

Until it is determined by the Environment Agency that the area is not required for flood risk management measures, development that might prejudice the implementation of such measures, in this location, will be refused.

If flood risk management measures are brought forward in this location a comprehensive planning application will be submitted, and determined by the Vale of White Horse District Council.



Supporting Text

As part of the spatial planning approach set out within the Plan, the preferred policy approach above recognises investigations by the Environment Agency of comprehensive flood risk management measures to reduce flood risk in Abingdon.