

Matter 9 – Strategy for South East Vale Sub-Area

Strutt and Parker for Williams Grand Prix Engineering (“Williams”)

9.1 Other than in connection with A.O.N.B. issues (considered in Matter 6), are the Strategic Housing Allocations listed in policy CP15 soundly based and deliverable?

Our client owns and controls part of the Monks Farm site (site 15 under policy CP15). Williams supports the identification of land at Monks Farm (North Grove) as a high quality, sustainable and mixed use urban extension.

Williams has had regard to the Development Site Template for Monks Farm and Grove set out in Appendix A to the Plan.

The Inspector seeks assurance that the Strategic Housing Allocation is both soundly based and deliverable. The identification of Monks Farm as a Strategic Housing site within South East Vale Sub-Area emerges in a logical manner from the evidence base prepared by the Local Planning Authority. Grove is classified as a local service centre in the settlement hierarchy. A proposed urban extension to the north of Grove has the ability both to consolidate the development pattern south of the east-west railway line, linking in to the established settlement structure either side of the principal water course (Letcombe Brook) with the development of local movement linkages to ensure a full integration of the proposal with the existing settlement. The proposal at Monks Farm is also capable of delivering important new road infrastructure connections to support future reuse and redevelopment of the former Grove airfield.

Williams moved to Grove in the 1990s and has invested significant sums at Grove in capital equipment and site capabilities over the last 15 years, including two state of the art wind tunnels and most recently an £8m Advanced Engineering Centre, opened by the Prime Minister in July 2014. Williams wishes to build on the investment already made in Grove and has exciting aspirations and plans for a complete reconfiguration of their operational campus. These plans will enable the existing campus to be better utilised in terms of its layout and space. They have also considered how land that is surplus to their operational needs can be brought forward for development to provide the investment required. The strategic housing allocation is considered complimentary, providing enabling funding to further support their business expansion activity. Williams has recently submitted a proposal to the OxLEP to support their plans.

Williams will retain a significant area of land to facilitate its own commercial growth requirements, and the overall scheme at Monks Farm is well placed to deliver further employment growth which may well prove to be of a complementary nature. As such, it is well placed to provide for balanced employment and housing growth within the Science Vale Area.

Williams has been working closely with the other majority landownerships within the Monks Farm proposal to ensure a consistency of approach. Work is now well advanced on a Site Masterplan between the landowners and developers with an interest in this site, and this has been shared with the Local Planning Authority in draft form.

Turning now to the deliverability of the proposal, Williams make the following comments:

Landownership

The plan attached at Appendix 1 sets out the Williams landownership within the Monks Farm area. The main parties aside from Williams are the developers Messrs. Gallagher and Gleeson who, together with Williams, control a large majority of the overall site area and land necessary to deliver the key policy requirements, including:

- access,
- service provision
- employment land
- open space,
- mitigation for flood risk, ecology, etc.

Masterplan

As noted above, parties have been engaged in joint working to produce a scheme Masterplan which develops the general requirements and infrastructure requirements identified in the Draft Strategic Policy for the site. The discussions have extended to identifying a shared approach to infrastructure provision where appropriate. Williams together with their development partners are therefore confident that the proposal is capable of delivery of a minimum of 750 dwellings, together with appropriate employment opportunities. The site constraints have been properly investigated (including the presence of listed buildings at Monks Farm and Grove Wick Farm) and a full investigation of flood risk has been undertaken in conjunction with the Environment Agency to ensure that the Letcombe Brook is not compromised. Indeed, the proposals aim to provide a range of enhancements through an improved and managed public access, as well as wildlife management. The proposals are aimed at delivering affordable housing to the prevailing Local Plan requirement. The masterplan work is ongoing: an update can be provided at the Examination session.

Delivery

With Williams as an established owner / occupier and the development expertise provided by Messrs. Gleeson and Gallagher, strong assurances can be provided that delivery of this opportunity will be forthcoming, in a coordinated and acceptable manner. Indeed, planning permissions have already been granted for initial phases of this scheme and a current application is shortly to be determined on the Williams land to the east of the Letcombe Brook. Other applications will be forthcoming in due course, all informed by the overall strategic context established through the relevant policy. Again, an update can be provided at the Examination.

9.2 Are there other sites which would more appropriately meet the identified need for new housing?

Williams considers that the strategic site at Monks Farm is a robust and sustainable proposal and that there are no obvious, better alternatives available to the Local Planning Authority in order to meet housing need in the South East Vale Sub-Area. This includes Harwell Campus, which is within the AONB and therefore subject to assessment against NPPF paragraph 1.1.6.

9.3 Are the identified and safeguarded employment sites listed in Policy CP15 soundly based and deliverable? Are there other sites which would more appropriately meet the identified need for employment land?

Williams is content with the list of employment sites established in CP15 and notes that this list includes Grove Technology Park, Downsview Road Grove, Station Grove and nearby Grove Road, Wantage. All these sites provide the potential of balanced employment and housing growth in the locality. Furthermore, employment growth is anticipated through Williams' own operations and potentially on land at Monks Farm earmarked for further commercial development.

9.4 Is the policy relating to the Didcot A Power Station (CP16) soundly based?

The Representor does not wish to comment on this matter.



Key

Williams