

Matter 12 Lib Dem Group Stage 2 Jan 2016

Firstly, the policies are well intended and if kept to could do much good in maintaining the character of the area, especially in the Oxford fringes. Our difficulty is that these policies tend to be only one of the matters put into the balance when individual sites are considered in detail. This particularly applies to policy CP22 (housing mix). Additionally given that in future, Housing Association houses could end up on the open market, it is most likely that few sites will be put forward because land owners will be loath to free up land at agricultural value or less as has happened in the past (policy CP25, rural exception sites). This policy will therefore in all probability cease to be relevant.

In respect of all the policies covered by this matter there is a fundamental problem which the Plan does not (and indeed may not be able) to address. This is the fact that future developments of whatever kind cannot address past infrastructure deficiencies of any sort. The Vale has many historic infrastructure deficiencies, of which probably the most important is the lack of sufficient bridges to cross the Thames. The result is frequent gridlock on the local road system. The Plan as presently configured can only make this worse.

12.1.d Affordable housing CP24

Affordable housing is, probably after a need for relief on our over-capacity highways, the most pressing need in the Vale.

Now that government will require the sell-off of some social housing, Vale's policies and schemes need to define how we will build more. A one-built-for-every-one-sold scheme is promised by government, but we need to increase our affordable housing stock in addition to that replacement. It's a valid concern whether Vale can satisfy its commitments to replacement, let alone to providing more. There isn't anything about that in this Local Plan.

This section probably needs an update. Is our aim still 35% affordable housing on all sites with 3+ being built?

We also raise concerns about how in lieu financial contributions will be managed. Many sites are too small to accommodate one unit of affordable housing.

Now that Vale is broadening its interests into student accommodation (current Botley proposals, perhaps Harcourt Hill master plan, perhaps in Shrivenham?), it would be worthwhile to formulate policies to ensure new student accommodation isn't built at the expense of affordable housing in the area. No such policies exist at the moment. I don't see that this emerging Local Plan covers it; in fact, the last section of CP24 seems explicitly to discourage it.

It's probably good that section 6.13 promised more information in an Affordable Housing SPD. That hasn't happened yet though.

There is a grammar problem in section 6.12.