

Comment

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Event Name	Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2031 Part One - Publication
Comment by	Ms Anna Hoare
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Consultation Point	Core Policy 20: Spatial Strategy for Western Vale Sub-Area (View)
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Q1 Do you consider the Local Plan is Legally Compliant? No

Q2 Do you consider the Local Plan is Sound (positively prepared, effective and Justified) No

If your comment(s) relate to a specific site within a core policy please select this from the drop down list. N/A

If you think your comment relates to the DtC, this is about how we have worked with the Duty to Cooperate bodies (such as neighbouring planning authorities)

Q3 Do you consider the Local Plan complies with the Duty to Co-operate? No

Q4 Please give details of why you consider the Local Plan is not legally compliant or is unsound or fails to comply with the duty to co-operate. Please be as precise as possible. If you wish to support the legal compliance or soundness of the Local Plan or its compliance with the duty to co-operate, please also use this box to set out your comments.

In order to be effective, the policies regarding Faringdon need to be firmed up in respect of (1) the town's development boundary, (2) its relation to the A420, and (3) allocated/ safeguarded employment land, including Wicklesham Quarry.

(1) The A420 should continue to form the eastern development boundary of the town, to prevent further urban sprawl. It should be noted that all the projected housing growth at Faringdon is to the south and south-east. Some of this (200 houses) has colonised Great Coxwell Parish, and all of it represents damaging erosion of the green spaces & corridors between Faringdon and the Coxwells, yet villagers will have no opportunity to take part in the referendum on Faringdon Neighbourhood Plan (FNP). The housing at Fernham fields is separated from Little Coxwell by the width of the A420 and one small field, and all of the projected new housing is much closer to both villages than it is to the centre of Faringdon. This expressly goes against the stated wishes of Faringdon residents to preserve the green land between Faringdon and neighbouring villages, and to resist coalescence. The shape of the town as shown in the Local Plan is now extremely unbalanced, with a town 'centre' far to the north of the town. All of this now makes the clarity and firmness of Faringdon's eastern development boundary of critical importance to people in Faringdon, Great Coxwell and Little Coxwell, none of whom have played any role in the siting of the new housing.

(2) The built edge of Faringdon to the east MUST stop at the A420 if further damage to the spatial relation between Faringdon and neighbouring villages and the surrounding landscape is to be prevented.

(3) This means that the future of the old Wicklesham quarry (to the east of the A420) must be established once and for all, and this should mean complying with its existing planning conditions, which require it to be returned to agricultural land by 30th April 2015, in line with OCC policies. In 2008 the Vale rejected an application to develop the land as an industrial site. Since then the landowner has conducted a relentless public campaign to obtain support for development, using the offices of Faringdon Chamber of Commerce. Although gravel extraction ceased around 2010 he has failed to restore the land by repeated delaying tactics. Thus, although as a quarry it is strictly speaking (in planning terms) still agricultural land, Wicklesham has been 'safeguarded' for future employment development by FNP, in spite of the fact that 7.4 ha of employment land have been made available in FNP, meeting the Vale's target for Faringdon. The Vale's Preferred Options Report has also rejected the proposed industrial development of Wicklesham, stating that it was 'well in excess of what is needed to 2027', and would encourage migration of businesses from Faringdon. Furthermore, Wicklesham quarry was recently judged the least sustainable of ten employment land options impartially considered by the Sustainability Appraisal in Faringdon's Neighbourhood Plan process, on grounds of impacts under transport, health & well-being, land and soil, historic environment and landscape, and biodiversity and climate change. Therefore, its status of 'safeguarded employment land' should *not* be allowed to stand in the Local Plan, when it has been repeatedly rejected for sound planning reasons by a range of different planning authorities.

Furthermore, the objective importance of this site within the local landscape cannot be over-stated: it is a geological SSSI, judged 'one of Britain's richest paleontological localities' (Natural England). Besides many fossil species 'known to occur only at Faringdon', it has 11 rare plant species, 2 colonies of greater crested newts, and is one of very few sandy heath habitats in Oxfordshire. In all, it forms a unique aspect of Faringdon's green infrastructure which cries out to be restored and made accessible to local people, specialists and visitors. It has the potential to add to the unique attractiveness of Faringdon's historic landscape and to constitute a significant educational and visitor resource. With the landowner's co-operation there is huge potential for a country park at the site, connecting Faringdon to an exceptional historic landscape towards the Ridgeway and White Horse, and a network of well-used footpaths linking Faringdon to Wicklesham, Ringdale, Fernham and Little Coxwell.

Q5 Please set out what modification(s) you consider necessary to make the Local Plan legally compliant or sound, having regard to the test you have identified above where this relates to soundness. (NB Please note that any non-compliance with the duty to co-operate is incapable of modification at examination). You will need to say why this modification will make the Local Plan legally compliant or sound. It will be helpful if you are able to put forward your suggested revised wording of any policy or text. Please be as precise as possible.

As suggested, determine the limit of Faringdon's development boundary in keeping with policies set out in the Local Plan, and expunge 'safeguarded' employment land on the eastern side of the A420.

Please note your representation should cover succinctly all the information, evidence and supporting information necessary to support/justify the representation and the suggested modification, as there will not

normally be a subsequent opportunity to make further representations based on the original representation at publication stage.

After this stage, further submissions will be only at the request of the Inspector, based on the matters and issues he/she identifies for examination.

Q6 If your representation is seeking a modification, do you consider it necessary to participate at the oral part of the examination? Yes - I wish to participate at the oral examination