

Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2031 Part 2

Statement of Common Ground

Between

Vale of White Horse District Council

and

West Oxfordshire District Council

February 2018

1. Introduction

- 1.1. This Statement of Common Ground (SoCG) has been prepared by Vale of White Horse District Council (VOWH) and West Oxfordshire District Council (WODC) hereafter referred to as “the parties”. This SoCG documents those matters agreed with regard to the Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2031 Part 2 and supporting documents to assist the Inspector during the Examination of the Local Plan.
- 1.2. This SoCG reflects and confirms the current position agreed by both parties with regard to the Duty to Cooperate, the Oxfordshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA), the Vale of White Horse apportionment of Oxford’s unmet housing need, and strategic transport matters.
- 1.3. This statement is provided without prejudice to other matters of detail that the parties may wish to raise during the examination.

2. Background

- 2.1. VoWH and WODC have a long history of working effectively together and have been working closely together on a number of matters of strategic cross boundary importance in accordance with the Duty to Cooperate.
- 2.2. At a strategic level the Councils are members of the Oxfordshire Growth Board (OGB) and its supporting Executive Officers Group established in 2014.
- 2.3. The purpose of the Growth Board is to:
 - facilitate and enable collaboration between local authorities on economic development, strategic planning and growth
 - to deliver cross boundary programmes of work, and

- to bid for the allocation of resources to support growth.
- 2.4. Prior to the establishment of the OCG, the authorities were also members of the Oxfordshire Spatial Planning and Infrastructure Partnership (SPIP) which had begun the process of formal cooperation including for the Oxford and Oxfordshire City Deal and the Oxfordshire SHMA (2014).
 - 2.5. At the strategic level, the authorities also collaborate on economic matters through the Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (OxLEP), which prepares the Strategic Economic Plan.
 - 2.6. A particular focus of joint working has been on housing matters including the commissioning of the Oxfordshire SHMA (2014) as well as a series of different projects under what has been collectively referred to as the 'Post-SHMA process'. The Councils are both parties to the Oxfordshire Statement of Cooperation¹ which confirms the scope of the joint working arrangements.
 - 2.7. In particular, both authorities have been consistently and actively engaged (including senior officers and members) in a programme of joint work to assess the level of unmet housing need from Oxford and how it should be apportioned. Both authorities have sought to ensure timely progress in the joint working so that the programme timelines agreed by the Oxfordshire Growth Board could be met.
 - 2.8. The positive approach of both authorities and commitment to find a workable solution to such a difficult strategic issue is evidenced by the effective outcomes that have been reached.

3. Matters on which the parties agree

Duty to Cooperate

- 3.1. Vale of White Horse District Council has continuously engaged with West Oxfordshire District Council through the evolution of the Local Plan 2031: Part 2 on a number of cross boundary issues, more information and details of this engagement can be found in Topic Paper 1: Duty to Cooperate.
- 3.2. It is agreed that parties will continue to work together on cross boundary issues to ensure a coherent strategy that supports the delivery of proposals including the appropriate mitigation.
- 3.3. The parties agree that Vale of White Horse District Council has discharged its duty to cooperate.

¹<https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/sites/default/files/folders/documents/communityandliving/ourworkwithcommunities/oxfordshirepartnership/spatialplanninginfrastructure/OxfordshireStatementofCooperation.pdf>

VoWH Objectively Assessed Need (OAN) and Housing Requirement

- 3.4. The parties agree that it is appropriate for VoWH to plan for the provision of 1,028 homes per year (20,560 homes in total) in the period 2011 to 2031 in order to meet its own identified housing needs as set out in the Oxfordshire SHMA (2014).

Quantum of 'unmet' housing need to be planned for

- 3.5. The parties agree that 15,000 homes is an appropriate figure to plan for within the Oxfordshire Housing Market Area (HMA) to contribute towards meeting Oxford's unmet housing need to 2031, pending further testing through the Oxford Local Plan review which is not intended to be submitted until late 2018.
- 3.6. 15,000 is the agreed 'working assumption' that has formed the basis of the joint evidence base and apportionment process to consider how the unmet need should be distributed across the Oxfordshire HMA.

The Process and Evidence for the Apportionment of Unmet housing need

- 3.7. The parties agree that the process which has been undertaken through the OGB to inform the apportionment of Oxford's unmet need across the Oxfordshire HMA has been objective and based on a proportionate evidence base which the parties have endorsed.
- 3.8. A Memorandum of Cooperation was considered at a meeting of the OGB on 26 September 2016. This identified an apportionment figure for each of the district councils and city council. The agreed apportionment of unmet housing need across Oxfordshire HMA is shown in Table 1 below:

Table 1: Apportionment of Oxford City's Unmet Housing Need

Authority	Proportion of unmet need apportioned
Cherwell DC	4,400
Oxford City Council	550
South Oxfordshire DC	4,950 ²
Vale of White Horse DC	2,200
West Oxfordshire DC	2,750
Total	14,850

² South Oxfordshire District Council has not accepted its apportionment figure of 4,950 homes and is currently proposing to provide a reduced figure.

- 3.9. The parties agree that the process by which the agreed apportionment has been established has been objective and based on a proportionate evidence base and provides a sound basis for the planning authorities to take forward and fully consider through their own local plan processes.
- 3.10. The parties agree that should any individual Oxfordshire authority not be able or willing to meet the Growth Board's apportionment of unmet need (following the completion of that authority's Local Plan) the implications would need to be considered on a joint and multi-lateral basis through the Growth Board.

Quantum of provision being made in Vale of White Horse for Oxford City's Unmet Housing Needs to 2031

- 3.11. The parties agree that it is appropriate for VoWH to progress its local plan on the basis of providing 2,200 homes to contribute to meeting the unmet housing needs of Oxford to be provided within the district.
- 3.12. The parties agree that there is no evidence available at this point, prior to the Oxford Local Plan 2036 review, to support the use of any alternative figure to that which has been tested and agreed through the joint OGB processes.

VoWH's strategy/ approach for meeting unmet housing needs

- 3.13. The Abingdon-on-Thames and Oxford Fringe Sub-Area is closest to and has the most frequent and reliable public transport linkages to Oxford and for these reasons, the Vale's agreed quantum of unmet need for Oxford is allocated to this Sub-Area. This is set out in Core Policy 4a: Meeting our Housing Needs of Local Plan 2031 Part 2. The parties agree that in principle this sub-area represents a logical location in which to accommodate the Vale's agreed apportionment of Oxford's unmet housing need.
- 3.14. The unmet need is proposed to be met by a combination of four Local Plan Part 1 strategic allocations and one new Local Plan Part 2 allocation. Total anticipated delivery on these five sites is set out in the table below:

Table 2: Sites which are suitably close to and accessible to Oxford City

Site	Allocation
North Abingdon-on-Thames (LPP1 allocation)	950 ³
North-West of Abingdon-on-Thames (LPP1 allocation)	200
North-West Radley (LPP1 allocation)	240
South of Kennington (Radley Parish; LPP1 allocation)	270
Dalton Barracks (LPP2 allocation)	1,200
Total	2,860

- 3.15. The parties agree that whilst four of the five sites listed above were allocated within the Part 1 plan with the intention of meeting the Vale's own objectively assessed need for housing, their location is such that they are also suitable sites to provide for Oxford's unmet housing need.
- 3.16. Whilst the parties agree that the location of the sites is suitable in principle and that any housing on these sites would be just as much available to those people falling into the category of Oxford's need as to those of the Vale, West Oxfordshire District Council considers that the Part 2 Plan should more specifically identify and 'ring-fence' the sites (or parts of sites) that will contribute towards the additional unmet need of 2,200 homes. It is considered that this will facilitate monitoring of overall delivery against the unmet need requirement as well as the delivery of affordable housing more specifically.
- 3.17. The Vale of White Horse District Council does not consider such an approach to be necessary and instead consider that addressing Oxford's unmet need on a sub-area basis is more appropriate than on a site by site basis.

Timing of provision for Oxford's Unmet Housing Needs

- 3.18. The parties agree that provision should be made for Oxford's unmet housing need as soon as possible. It is recognised through the Memorandum of Cooperation (September 2016) that the statutory planning process and lead in times on large strategic sites mean that it is reasonable for local plan housing trajectories to assume delivery from 2021 onwards (although this does not preclude the possibility of earlier delivery where possible).
- 3.19. The parties agree that it is likely that sites allocated in Local Plan 2031 Part 1 in the Abingdon-on-Thames and Oxford Fringe Sub Area can come forward for development prior to 2021, speeding up the process of delivering Oxford's unmet housing need. In total, 1,510⁴ dwellings are allocated in the Part 1 plan

³ The Part 1 Plan strategic allocation for North of Abingdon-on-Thames was for around 800 dwellings, however a planning application for 950 dwellings was approved at committee on 26 July 2017.

⁴ The Part 1 Plan strategic allocation for North of Abingdon-on-Thames was for around 800 dwellings, however a planning application for 950 dwellings was approved at committee on 26 July 2017.

on four sites closest to Oxford at Abingdon-on-Thames, Kennington (within Radley parish) and at Radley.

- 3.20. Good progress is already being made in relation to these sites. Outline planning permission has been granted for the allocation North of Abingdon-on-Thames for up to 900 dwellings and 50 retirement homes. At the time of preparing this statement, applications are being considered for the allocations North-West of Abingdon-on-Thames (up to 200 dwellings), North-West of Radley (up to 240 dwellings), and South of Kennington, in the parish of Radley (288 dwellings).
- 3.21. The delivery trajectory for the sites allocated in Local Plan 2031 Part 1 are published in the council's Housing Supply Statement⁵.
- 3.22. In addition to the sites allocated in Local Plan 2031 Part 1, the parties agree that Dalton Barracks is located close to Oxford and provides the potential for a high quality sustainable Garden Village style development and can be made highly accessible to Oxford, Abingdon-on-Thames and the surrounding area by public transport. At least 1,200 dwellings are proposed at Dalton Barracks within the Part 2 plan, with the potential for higher growth in the longer term, subject to appropriate infrastructure being delivered. The parties agree that removal of the site from the Oxford Green Belt is appropriate and justified in line with national policy.

Monitoring Housing Delivery

- 3.23. VoWH monitors annually the delivery of housing at a district level, sub-area level (i.e. Abingdon-on-Thames and Oxford Fringe) and on a site-by-site basis. Core Policy 47a of Local Plan 2031 Part 2 identifies a number of appropriate actions which VoWH can implement should sites not deliver in a timely manner. This policy is supported by a Monitoring Framework which is set out in Appendix N of the Part 2 plan.
- 3.24. The Vale of White Horse District Council considers that this approach provides a sufficiently robust process in which to monitor housing delivery and supply for the district, including the agreed apportionment of un-met housing need for Oxford City.
- 3.25. West Oxfordshire District Council considers that the Vale Local Plan Part 2 and related monitoring framework should more specifically identify the sites (or parts of sites) that will contribute towards the additional unmet need of 2,200 homes to provide more clarity as to how and when this need is met, in particular in relation to affordable housing which underpins much of Oxford's housing need.

⁵ Vale of White Horse District Council Site Selection Topic Paper Addendum (February 2018) is available to view and download as part of the council's evidence informing Local Plan 2031 Part 2

Affordable housing provision

- 3.26. Core Policy 24 of Local Plan 2031 Part 1 seeks 35 % affordable housing on sites capable of a net gain of eleven dwellings or more. This will deliver sufficient affordable housing to address the district's own requirements and those of Oxford City where they are to be met within Vale of White Horse.
- 3.27. The parties agree that the allocation of affordable housing is a matter of housing policy rather than planning policy, and work is ongoing between the Housing Policy teams of VoWH and Oxford City Council on an agreed approach that will address this specific need.
- 3.28. However, West Oxfordshire District Council considers that greater clarity should be provided within the Vale Local Plan Part 2 in terms of which sites are contributing towards Oxford's unmet housing needs including affordable housing.

Strategic Transport Matters / A415

- 3.29. The parties agree that the cumulative impact of growth on the local and wider transport network remains an issue across Oxfordshire. The two districts share a common boundary along the River Thames, with a limited number of crossings providing strategic connections between key settlements and areas of economic growth.
- 3.30. The parties agree that the A415 represents a key route linking the settlements of Witney with Abingdon-on-Thames, as well as connecting other strategic corridors such as the A40, A420 and A34. The parties recognise there are a number of identified constraints along this route, including the single lane crossing at Newbridge.
- 3.31. The parties agree that it is necessary for growth along the A415 to contribute towards infrastructure improvements along the route, including contributing to enhancing public transport and any other necessary mitigation measures identified. This is a requirement for the proposed allocations East of Kingston Bagpuize with Southmoor (parish of Fyfield and Tubney) and South East of Marcham, which adjoin the A415⁶.
- 3.32. The parties agree to work constructively with Oxfordshire County Council, Highways England and other stakeholders to plan for future highway infrastructure improvements and to support the delivery of the Oxfordshire Local Transport Plan 4, which has been prepared to support jobs, housing growth and economic vitality across Oxfordshire.

⁶ Local Plan 2031 Part 2 – Appendix A: Site Development Templates (General Requirements for all Housing Site Allocations; and the Site Template for East of Kingston Bagpuize with Southmoor and South East of Marcham)

3.33. The parties agree that should other modifications to the Local Plan Part 2 be necessary, it would be appropriate to include additional reference to the need for potential improvements to the single lane crossing at Newbridge.

4. Conclusions

4.1. The parties agree that:

- They have a positive working relationship and a demonstrable track record of successful collaborative joint working with effective outcomes,
- Through regular meetings the authorities will continue to work cooperatively on matters of mutual interest and cross-boundary strategic importance, including implementing/delivering the agreed apportionment of Oxford's unmet housing needs,
- Should other modifications to the Local Plan Part 2 be necessary, it would be appropriate to include additional reference to the need for potential improvements to the single lane crossing at Newbridge; and
- Both authorities would welcome the adoption of the Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2031 Part 2 at the earliest opportunity.

Signatures

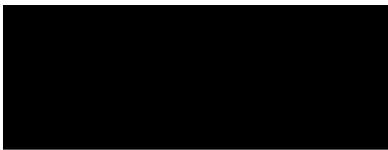
Signed on behalf of Vale of White Horse District Council



Adrian Duffield
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23/02/2018

Signed on behalf of West Oxfordshire District Council



Giles Hughes
Head of Planning and Strategic Housing

23/02/2018