

Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2031 Part 2

Statement of Common Ground

Between

**Vale of White Horse District Council and
Carter Jonas on behalf of
The Defence Infrastructure Organisation**

March 2018

1. Introduction

- 1.1. This Statement of Common Ground (SoCG) has been prepared by Vale of White Horse District Council (“the Council”) and Carter Jonas on behalf of the Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO) 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 particularly relates to the proposed allocation of land at Dalton Barracks within Core Policy 8a for the development of around 1,200 homes. The agreed matters have been structured to assist the Inspector through the examination process.
- 1.3. The Council proposes the site for allocation for strategic housing development in the Local Plan 2031 Part 2 having considered reasonable alternatives including assessing the relevant evidence, and following consultation with stakeholders and the public.

2. Background / Context

- 2.1. ‘A Better Defence Estate’ was published by Government in November 2016. This report identified 91 sites operated by the Ministry of Defence (MOD) to be released for development to deliver 55,000 homes as part of the Government’s wider housing policy. One of the sites identified for release, originally by 2029, is Dalton Barracks¹.

¹ Ministry of Defence (MoD) (2016) A Better Defence Estate, available at:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/better-defence-estate-strategy>

- 2.2. The site, including Abingdon Airfield, is located adjacent to the settlement of Shippon. The site measures approximately 288 hectares. It is predominantly bounded to the east and south by built development and some agricultural land, and to the south-west, west and north by further agricultural land. Cothill Fen SAC is in close proximity to the north-western corner of the site.
- 2.3. The site is currently located within the Oxford Green Belt. The market town of Abingdon-on-Thames lies to the south-east of the site, beyond the A34, and the larger villages of Wootton and Marcham are located to the north and south-west respectively. Oxford City lies approximately 3.5 miles to the north east of the site.
- 2.4. The site is proposed for allocation in the Local Plan 2031 Part 2. Dialogue between the DIO and the Council has identified an opportunity for the development of the site to begin in 2024, ahead of the release of the main barracks by 2029. The Council is satisfied that 1,200 homes can be delivered in the plan period up to 2031.
- 2.5. It is recognised that the longer-term potential for development is much greater than 1,200 dwellings, potentially in excess of 4,000 dwellings. Initial masterplanning indicates that the site could accommodate around 4,500 dwellings, subject to the provision of appropriate infrastructure. The site is expected to deliver a high quality new development that follows Garden Village principles, and will be guided by a comprehensive development framework. The site is expected to be delivered in accordance with Core Policy 8b and the general and site-specific requirements as set out in the Local Plan 2031 Part 2 Appendices.
- 2.6. The DIO will look to appoint a development partner prior to the military vacation of the site. This will be undertaken via a competitive procurement process enabling the DIO to appoint the most suitable developer/investor consortium to meet the site's specific development and regeneration objectives. This arrangement has been successfully deployed by the DIO on other strategic development opportunities around the UK, such as at Whitehill & Bordon².
- 2.7. Once appointed, the development partner will work with the DIO and the Council to ensure that the necessary detailed planning permissions are achieved to enable the implementation of a comprehensive scheme through its various development phases and to achieve garden village design principles on this strategically important brownfield site.
- 2.8. This approach will ensure that the site is able to deliver 1,200 dwellings in the plan period while also supporting the long-term development potential of the site beyond 2031. This approach reinforces the DIO's commitment that the release of this site can form an important part of the strategy for further

² See: <http://whitehillbordon.com/>

significant housing development to be provided when the main barracks is vacated in 2029, as set out in the Better Defence Estate Strategy.

- 2.9. The Council, Carter Jonas on behalf of the DIO and Oxfordshire County Council have positively engaged regarding the progression of this Site.

3. Agreed Matters

Spatial Strategy and Evidence Base

- 3.1. The proposed allocation at Dalton Barracks is in accordance with the Spatial Strategy of the Local Plan 2031. The parties agree that the Council's approach to delivering housing through Local Plan 2031 Part 2 represents an appropriate strategy, in accordance with national policy.
- 3.2. The parties agree that the site, located in the Abingdon-on-Thames and Oxford Fringe Sub-Area which is closest to and has the most frequent and reliable public transport linkages to Oxford, contributes to addressing the agreed quantum of Oxford's unmet need to be met within the Vale of White Horse.
- 3.3. The parties agree that the site has a strong spatial relationship with Oxford being suitably close to and accessible to the city and that accessibility to both Oxford and Abingdon-on-Thames will be improved in line with future transport infrastructure investment.
- 3.4. The parties agree that the site selection process, as set out in the Site Selection Topic Paper, is robust, soundly based, and supported by the Council's evidence base.

Core Policy 8b and the Comprehensive Development Framework (SPD)

- 3.5. The parties agree that this site can be delivered in accordance with the adopted policies of Local Plan 2031 Part 1 and the emerging policies of the Local Plan 2031 Part 2.
- 3.6. The parties agree that Core Policy 8b identifies an appropriate approach and ensures development of the site is planned for comprehensively. This includes a commitment to the preparation of a comprehensive development framework that will be published as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD).
- 3.7. The SPD will add further detail to Core Policy 8b and the development template for the site, as set out in the Local Plan 2031 Part 2. It will also address how Garden Village principles can be incorporated into the design of the site, including the creation of healthy communities; beautifully and imaginatively designed homes; net biodiversity gains; local employment opportunities; and walking, cycling and public transport designed to be the most attractive forms

of local transport. The Council have appointed consultants to undertake the preparation of the Dalton Barracks SPD which began at the start of 2018.

- 3.8. The parties agree to working positively together and with other key stakeholders to progress evidence that will inform the SPD.

Infrastructure

- 3.9. The parties agree that the site will deliver a high quality sustainable development with Garden Village principles incorporated into the design from the outset.
- 3.10. The parties agree that the site's proximity to Oxford and Abingdon-on-Thames creates the potential for sustainable modes of travel to be maximised through enhancements to the existing public transport service and improvements to walking and cycling networks to surrounding areas.
- 3.11. The parties are working positively with Oxfordshire County Council to ensure that infrastructure is planned to come forward in a timely manner for this site.

Green Belt

- 3.12. The parties agree that the decision by the DIO to release the site from their estate and offer the site for redevelopment represents a major change in circumstances which resulted in the Council revisiting the Green Belt review that informed Local Plan 2031 Part 1 as the site was not previously considered to be available.
- 3.13. The parties agree that the Green Belt Studies prepared to inform the Local Plan 2031 Part 2 (February 2017³, October 2017⁴) have been prepared in accordance with national policy and guidance.
- 3.14. The Green Belt Studies conclude that the majority of the site makes a limited contribution to the purposes of the Green Belt. The Studies state that the existing barracks can be redeveloped without harm to the aims and purposes of the Green Belt in accordance with national policy⁵ and that the airfield has some contribution to the overall aims and purposes of the Green Belt but that there is the potential for sensitive development within the airfield which would not cause significant harm to the wider Green Belt designation.
- 3.15. The parties agree that development of the site will make effective use of previously developed (brownfield) land, in accordance with national policy⁶.

³ Green Belt Study; Land Surrounding Dalton Barracks and associated appendices (Preferred Options)

⁴ Green Belt Study of Local Plan Part 2 Sites and associated appendices

⁵ National Planning Policy Framework. Paragraph 89

⁶ National Planning Policy Framework. Paragraph 111

Cothill Fen SAC

- 3.16. The Local Plan 2031 Part 2 has been informed by Sustainability Appraisal (SA) and Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA). Consultation with Natural England has raised queries regarding the potential for effects to occur on Cothill Fen Special Area of Conservation (SAC) as a result of hydrological pressures, recreational pressures and air quality issues.
- 3.17. The parties agree that redevelopment of the site will have particular regard to the sensitivities associated with Cothill Fen SAC, Dry Sanford Pit and Barrow Farm Fen Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), as set out in the site development template⁷. The parties agree that traffic movements should be optimised away from the Cothill Fen SAC.
- 3.18. The parties agree to work proactively with Natural England and Berks, Bucks and Oxon Wildlife Trust to fully investigate what impact, if any, redevelopment of the site may have on the SAC and SSSIs in the vicinity of the site, both in terms of air quality and recreational pressure. The parties agree that the site will be subject to a project-level HRA as more detail is developed. This will take account of information from traffic modelling and air quality modelling.
- 3.19. Should mitigation be required, the parties agree to work with Natural England to ensure such measures are delivered.

Housing Trajectory

- 3.20. The parties agree that the site is capable of delivering at least 1,200 dwellings in the plan period up to 2031, with the first dwellings expected to be delivered in 2024. The parties will continue to explore opportunities for maximising the delivery of housing on the site within the plan period, including the early release of land for development. The estimated development trajectory is as follows:

Total Dwellings	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	2030/31
1200	50	100	200	200	200	225	225

4. Conclusion

- 4.1. The DIO support the allocation of land at Dalton Barracks (Shippon) within Core Policy 8a, and the parties agree that the site is suitable, available and deliverable for sustainable housing development.

⁷ Appendix A of Local Plan 2031 Part 2. Site Development Template for Dalton Barracks. Section entitled 'Biodiversity and Green Infrastructure'.

- 4.2. The parties are working jointly to enable delivery of the planned residential development of 1,200 dwellings within the plan period and around 4,500 dwellings in the longer term as part of the comprehensive redevelopment of the site. The parties will continue to work cooperatively on all matters of mutual interest.

Signatures

Signed on behalf of Vale of White Horse District Council

Adrian Duffield
Head of Planning

24 April 2018

Signed by Carter Jonas on behalf of the Defence Infrastructure Organisation

Steven Sensecall
Partner



March 2018