

# *Dijksman* Planning

35 Berkeley Road, Newbury, RG14 5JE

## **Matter 7: Harwell Campus**

### **Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2031**

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#### **Local Plan 2031 Part 2**

## **Examination**

July – September 2018

#### **Representations on Behalf of**

#### **Gale & Binning**

## **Matter 7: Harwell Campus**

7.2 Given the exceptional circumstances and national interest tests in the NPPF for major development in the AONB, is the proposal for an Innovation Village justified by proportionate evidence in principle?

7.3 Is the use of employment land for the proposed Innovation Village compatible with the long term employment objectives for Harwell Campus and the Enterprise Zone?

I wish to object to the allocation of major open market residential development on land within the AONB and on an Enterprise Zone on the basis that it does not meet the exceptional circumstances and national interest tests in the NPPF for major development in the AONB and it is directly contrary to the explicit purposes of an enterprise zone designation.

The previous local plan Inspector considered the proposal for housing when it was allocated in the last preferred options Local Plan Part I. His attitude was fairly straightforward – namely that housing should not be built within the AONB unless there were ‘exceptional circumstances necessary’. (paragraph 122 Inspectors final report). He was also quite clear that to justify the building of housing and the creation of a ‘work live play community’ at Harwell, it would need to be demonstrated that *‘refusing such development would have an adverse effect on the local economy.’* There is no evidence for this contention.

Furthermore it is a simple fact that there is an alternative location, due south of the site, outside the AONB, that would be more suitable, more sustainable, better connected in terms of public transport and its relationship to nearby villages.

### **Inadequate Justification for the residential development of a significant proportion of Harwell Enterprise Zone**

One of the features of Enterprise Zones is the fact that they embrace innovation and change, but their primary purpose is the provision of employment opportunities. Within the body of enterprise zone literature is also the theme of longevity and looking to the future. It is important in the context of these submissions to emphasise that the future is not the life of the local plan. The enterprise zone will be important for economic development opportunities for many years to come.

The fact that the Harwell Enterprise Zone exists within the AONB is indicative of the fact that it was considered exceptionally important to facilitate the economic benefits to be derived from the Harwell Campus as an employment area. It is inconceivable that enterprise zone status would have been granted to the campus to facilitate open market residential development of up to 1000 houses.

Clearly because of the international nature of the campus, the provision

of on-site accommodation for visitors and employees is reasonable provided that accommodation is within the control of the businesses that require those workers or visitors. In that respect, the provision of some housing where the occupancy is restricted could conceivably comply with adopted local plan Core Policy 29, which refers to alternative uses be acceptable if they provide 'ancillary supporting services'. Considered in this context, up to 1000 open market houses within the AONB is not exceptionally justified. Where housing is needed specifically for visitors and contract workers then this may be acceptable but it should not be considered as part of the overall housing land supply necessary to meet Oxford's unmet need, but should be deemed restricted occupancy housing specifically for the purposes of the Harwell Campus.

### Rowstock Village

There is an alternative, that delivers the same essential benefits in terms of housing delivery and the creation of a new sustainably located community, due south of the campus outside the AONB. This site was excluded from the plan based on erroneous highways advice that failed to recognise the benefits of the intersection of two strategic bus routes and exceptional connectivity of Rowstock. It was also excluded on the basis of disingenuous and misleading landscape assessment that analysed the site in combination with a larger area of land. Notwithstanding the fact that it was identified in the Vales previous landscape study as a possible reserve housing site.

This proposal put for as a direct alternative to the Harwell campus allocation: namely to to expand the hamlet of Rowstock into a Village: enhancing the long term viability of the existing filling station and shop and providing a new School, Village Green, Community Building and opportunities for small employment or non-food retail.

- Rowstock is within a highly connected group of villages in a strategic location outside the AONB, see the Strategic Connectivity Location Plan.
- This site can accommodate a 2.1-hectare school site and a minimum of 750 houses.
- This site is strategically located at the heart of Science Vale, at the centre of an enhanced public transport and improved road network.
- Rowstock is equidistant between the two biggest Employment Sites in Oxfordshire: Milton Park & Harwell campus.
- The improved Chilton junction gives Rowstock full access to the A34, and there is future enhanced access to Milton Park via Featherbed Lane and direct to Didcot Station via the proposed new bypass to Harwell Village.
- Rowstock is one of the few strategic locations with excellent Road and Public Transport access that is capable of being expanded with limited

impact on the broader landscape. This is a naturally contained, unconstrained site, effectively screened from the AONB.

- This is an obviously sustainably location in employment and landscape terms, and it is demonstrably well located in relation to public and private transport connectivity and its local rights of way network.
- Rowstock is within a cluster of villages with local shops and other facilities which will be supported by the establishment of this expanded rural community.