

Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2031 Part 2

Statement of Common Ground

Between

Vale of White Horse District Council

and

Environment Agency

February 2018

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1. This Statement of Common Ground has been prepared jointly between the Vale of White Horse District Council (VoWH) and the Environment Agency, 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 more specifically it sets out the current position and matters of agreement relating to the Duty to Cooperate, the Water Cycle Study, the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment and the Safeguarding of Land for Strategic Highways Improvements, to assist the Inspector during the Examination of the Local Plan.
- 1.2 This Statement of Common Ground is principally intended to address the representations made by the Environment Agency through the Regulation 19 publicity period for Local Plan 2031: Part 2.
- 1.3 This statement is provided without prejudice to other matters or detail that the parties may wish to raise during the examination.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 VoWH has made every effort throughout the preparation of the Local Plan 2031 Part 2 to ensure the Plan provides a robust, strategic framework for the effective delivery of sustainable development. Throughout this process the council has continuously engaged with the Environment Agency including joint working on policy development, additional allocations and specific evidence base studies and ensuring the Plan implements national policy appropriately.
- 2.2 The parties have worked with Thames Water on key evidence base documents for the Local Plan, including the Water Cycle Study and Strategic Flood Risk Assessment. These studies reflect the most up to date position and consensus of these matters.

3.0 Matters relating to Local Plan 2031 Part 2

Duty to Cooperate / Collaborative Working

- 1.2. Vale of White Horse District Council has continuously engaged with the Environment Agency through the evolution of the Local Plan 2031: Part 2. More information and details of this engagement can be found in Topic Paper 1: Duty to Cooperate.
- 3.1 The parties agree, in relation to relevant strategic matters within the remits of both parties, that Vale of White Horse District Council has discharged its duty to cooperate for Local Plan 2031 Part 2.

Water Cycle Study Addendum (February 2018)

- 3.2 Vale of White Horse District Council published the Draft Water Cycle Study Addendum (September 2017) as part of the evidence supporting the Regulation 19 version of Local Plan 2031 Part 2. At that time, work was ongoing between the parties on some minor amendments to this piece of evidence, resulting in the completion of the Water Cycle Study (February 2018).
- 3.3 A representation was made by the Environment Agency in relation to Core Policy 4a and the proposed allocation of 90 dwellings on land South-East of Marcham. The parties agree that the Water Cycle Study (February 2018) sufficiently addresses the concerns raised by the Environment Agency in relation to the soundness of Core policy 4.
- 3.4 The parties agree the Water Cycle Study (February 2018) provides a robust, up to date evidence base assessing the environmental and physical demand of the proposed growth on water resources and supply and wastewater collection and treatment and identifies opportunities for more sustainable planning and improvements so proposals don't exceed the existing water cycle capacity.
- 3.5 The parties agree the Water Cycle Study should be reviewed as and when further information becomes available.

Level 1 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment Update (February 2018)

- 3.6 The parties agree the Level 1 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (February 2018) provides a robust, up to date evidence base of flood risk for the district.

Safeguarded Land for Strategic Highways Improvements

- 3.7 The Environment Agency submitted three representations which raise an issue of soundness for Core Policies 12a; 18a; and 19a. These specifically relate to three areas which are proposed to be safeguarded for future infrastructure improvements, and are listed as follows:

- Grove Station
- South Marcham Bypass
- Didcot-Culham River Crossing

- 3.8 The parties agree that a proposed additional modification to Local Plan 2031 Part 2, as set out in Appendix 1 of this statement provides sufficient clarity to address the concerns raised by the Environment Agency in relation to Core Policies 12a; 18a; and 19a.
- 3.9 The modification resolves the Environment Agency's comments regarding land safeguarded for strategic highways improvements where they are located in areas of Flood Zone 2 and/or Flood Zone 3.

Additional Modifications

- 3.10 The Environment Agency have requested a small number of additional modifications to Local Plan 2031 Part 2. These are set out in Appendix 2 of this statement. The parties agree that these modifications are principally intended to add clarity for specific sections of the plan, including:
- Additional site allocations for the Abingdon-on-Thames and Oxford Fringe Sub-Area;
 - Watercourses; and
 - Water Quality.

4.0 Conclusion

- 4.1 The representations made by the Environment Agency through the Regulation 19 publicity period of Local Plan 2031 Part 2 have been addressed through this Statement of Common Ground.
- 4.2 The Environment Agency agree that, subject to the modification set out in Appendix 1 of this statement, Local Plan 2031 Part 2 meets the tests of soundness and is supported by a robust evidence base.

Signatures

Signed on behalf of Vale of White Horse District Council



Holly Jones
Planning Policy Manager

8 March 2018

Signed on behalf of Environment Agency



Jeanne Capey
Environment Planning and Engagement Manager (Thames Area)

27 February 2018

Appendix 1: Additional Modification which addresses concerns of soundness raised by the Environment Agency

Insert the following text after paragraphs 2.83 and 2.133 as follows:

“AS THE OPTIONS FOR THE SCHEMES PROGRESS, THE IMPACT OF THE SCHEMES WILL BE SUBJECT TO THOROUGH ASSESSMENT, INCLUDING FULL ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT. WHERE SCHEMES ARE LOCATED IN AREAS OF FLOOD ZONES 2 AND 3, THE FLOOD RISK SEQUENTIAL TEST AND THE EXCEPTION TEST WILL BE UNDERTAKEN AS PART OF THE OPTION APPRAISAL PROCESS.”

Appendix 2: Additional Modifications which add clarity to various sections of Local Plan 2031 Part 2

Amend Paragraph 2.47 and include a footnote as follows:

“The larger villages of East Hanney and Marcham offer a good range of services and facilities and are relatively unconstrained, and **IN RELATION TO THE SITES PROPOSED FOR DEVELOPMENT** are not located within the Oxford Green Belt, or areas of floodplain, which are both particularly extensive in this Sub-Area. The provision of smaller site allocations within the plan is also important and necessary to ensure housing is delivered throughout the plan period.”

Amend Paragraph 3.184 as follows:

“The Water Framework Directive (WFD) requires that all ‘water bodies’ including rivers, lakes, estuaries, coastal waters and groundwater, achieve a good ecological status. Under the WFD, all water bodies are classified by current and future water quality, ecological **HYDROMORPHOLOGICAL** and chemical status. It is therefore important that future development, including the provision of supporting infrastructure, in the Vale is carefully planned to help achieve the objectives set out in the WFD.”

Inset new paragraph after 3.186 as follows:

“THE COUNCIL HAS WORKED WITH THE ENVIRONMENT AGENCY AND THAMES WATER TO PREPARE AN ADDENDUM TO THE WATER CYCLE STUDY WHICH IS AN UPDATE TO THE STUDY WHICH INFORMED THE PART 1 PLAN. THIS ASSESSES THE ENVIRONMENTAL AND PHYSICAL DEMAND OF GROWTH ON WATER RESOURCES AND SUPPLY AND WASTEWATER COLLECTION AND TREATMENT. IT IDENTIFIES OPPORTUNITIES FOR MORE SUSTAINABLE PLANNING AND IMPROVEMENTS SO PROPOSALS DON’T EXCEED THE EXISTING WATER CYCLE CAPACITY.”

Amend Paragraph 3.236 as follows:

The term watercourse refers to both main rivers, (larger rivers, brooks and streams **AS DEFINED AS THOSE PRESENT ON THE MAIN RIVER MAP FOR ENGLAND***) and ordinary watercourses (headwaters and smaller brooks and streams **AND DITCHES**)¹²². All types of watercourse **AND THEIR CORRIDORS** have a part to play in enhancing biodiversity across the district.”

Insert footnote (highlighted above by *) as follows:

“*[HTTPS://WWW.GOV.UK/GOVERNMENT/COLLECTIONS/MAIN-RIVER-MAP-FOR-ENGLAND-PROPOSED-CHANGES-AND-DECISIONS](https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/main-river-map-for-england-proposed-changes-and-decisions)”

Amend Paragraph 2.342 as follows:

“In line with these Part 1 policies, Part 2 sets out Development Policy ~~29~~**30**: Watercourse to ensure... Proposals should consider how access to watercourses can be improved for all users **(DEPENDING ON BIODIVERSITY SENSITIVITIES)** including provision for those with mobility impairments”

Amend Paragraph 3.244 as follows:

“Buffer zones are important along watercourses to give species and habitats protection from increased disturbances associated with development. The extent of the buffer is dependent on the size and nature of the development, but it should be a minimum of 10 metres wide, measured from the top of each bank, **AND REMAIN FREE OF ANY BUILT DEVELOPMENT. WHERE A WATERCOURSE FLOWS THROUGH A DEVELOPMENT, A BUFFER ZONE SHOULD BE PROVIDED ON BOTH SIDES OF THAT WATERCOURSE.** Larger developments should provide further buffering, and these additional areas can be used for informal recreation.”

Amend Paragraph 3.246 (bullet point 2) as follows:

“● **UNDEVELOPED** buffer zones are important as they can help to: