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EXAMINATION IN PUBLIC OF

**Vale of White Horse Local Plan**

**Hearing Statement in respect of Hearing Session for Matter 4**

On behalf of Merton College Oxford

## **Matter 4: Abingdon and Oxford Fringe Sub Area**

**Q4.1: Other than Dalton Barracks (Matter 5), are the housing allocations listed in Policy 8a the most appropriate when considered against reasonable alternatives in the light of site constraints, infrastructure requirements and potential impacts? Are the estimates of site capacity justified? Are the expected timescales for development realistic? Are the site development template requirements – both general and site specific – justified, consistent with national policy and would they be effective?**

- 1.1 We do not consider that all reasonable alternative sites have been fully and properly considered.
- 1.2 With direct reference to the land controlled by Merton College previously identified as 'Site 15 – Site West of Botley', immediately adjacent to the land safeguarded for a Park & Ride facility, this is considered a reasonable alternative that has particular advantages to meeting Oxford's unmet housing need. A key consideration in respect of the site is the benefits that it would offer over those set out in Policy 8a in terms of sustainability and transport given its close proximity to Oxford, where the unmet housing need arises.
- 1.3 In comparison to the land at Cumnor, or West of Botley, the other sites presented are located potentially much further from Oxford City Centre and / or with materially longer journey times along more congested routes into the City. The requirement to travel significantly greater distances to these sites would lead to higher overall environmental, economic and social costs associated with meeting Oxford's unmet housing need.
- 1.4 The Transport Study, prepared by WSP Parsons Brinckerhoff, submitted with our previous representations to the Preferred Options consultation in May 2017, concluded that the allocation of the site for strategic development would not only contribute to the Vale's apportioned quantum of housing to meet Oxford City's unmet need by 2031, but would also achieve broader transport objectives with regard to encouragement of further uptake of sustainable travel modes, thereby connecting communities with employment, education and leisure opportunities within both the Vale of White Horse and the rest of Oxfordshire.
- 1.5 In order for the proposed sites to be found sound, when considered against the reasonable alternatives, options closer to Oxford should have been assessed in greater detail. Where potential reasons for discounting sites in close proximity to Oxford have been identified, these factors should have been considered holistically and also balanced against the positive impacts of locating housing in such locations. This should have been considered alongside the externalities and costs arising from locating housing in locations close to Oxford and instead proposing such delivery of housing in locations much further from the City as appears to be the case.
- 1.6 It is clear that there are sites that represent excellent opportunities to deliver a meaningful supply of housing in the right location for Oxford within much closer proximity to where the demand actually arises, and with potential public benefits. This is contrast

to the sites that are located rather than much further away from Oxford itself, generating movements (in particular from Kingston Bagpuize) that will result in extended journey times and movements that pass the land and site owned by Merton College at Cumnor/West of Botley.

**Q4.3: Are the proposals to safeguard land for a Park and Ride site at Cumnor justified? Would there be any adverse impacts?**

**Are the proposals to safeguard land for a Park and Ride site at Cumnor justified?**

- 1.7 The proposed safeguarding of land for Strategic Highway Improvements within the Abingdon-on Thames and Oxford Fringe Sub Area is supported.
- 1.8 We have been in dialogue with the County regarding its Park & Ride proposals set out in the Oxford Park & Ride Future Strategy Development report dated 27 May 2016. This document identifies the same land that is proposed to be safeguarded by the Vale of White Horse consultation document (south of Cumnor Hill) as the most appropriate place to locate a Park & Ride along the A420. The Oxford Park & Ride Future Strategy Development Report sets out an indicative capacity for 1,200 vehicles, and an indicative delivery time frame between 2026 and 2031.
- 1.9 We recognise the transport challenges faced by the County, District Council and City Council, and agree that there is a need to deliver appropriate solutions and therefore welcome the proposed safeguarding of the Park & Ride site at Cumnor.
- 1.10 We further note that there would be clear benefits to the deliverability and operation of the Park & Ride by developing the land as part of a wider housing scheme to provide homes to meet the unmet needs of Oxford that would be sustainable, and support the overall service provided.
- 1.11 It is also recognised that the provision of a Park & Ride in this location may potentially lead to the part or total closure of Seacourt Park & Ride in the future which could in turn be repurposed to provide alternative development.
- 1.12 The Transport Study prepared by WSP | Parsons Brinckerhoff and submitted in support of this position at the Preferred Options stage provides further detail.
- 1.13 We have nonetheless queried the meaning of the west-east facing red arrow, originating at the safeguarded site and labelled 'Rapid Transit 2 (indicative)' on Figure 2.4 of the submitted Plan.

**Would there be any adverse impacts?**

- 1.14 We do not consider that the proposed Park & Ride at Cumnor would have material adverse impacts. It is, however, acknowledged that the site is potentially sensitive, and Landscape Matters were instructed at the Preferred Options stage to review potential

impacts on our behalf in respect of landscape considerations. The conclusion of that work was that proposals could be considered favourably.

- 1.15 It is not considered that there would be other adverse impacts and the safeguarding proposals for the Park & Ride facility at Cumnor are supported.