



## **Gladman Developments Ltd**

### **Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2031 Part 2**

#### **Examination Stage 1: Hearing Sessions**

#### **Matter 7: Harwell Campus**

##### **Questions:**

**1.1 Is the proposal in the LPP2 to allocate a site for 1,000 dwellings for an Innovation Village at Harwell Campus consistent with the strategy of the LPP1 for the district as a whole and the South East Vale Sub Area?**

1.1.1 Gladman has no comments to make on this question.

**1.2 Given the exceptional circumstances and national interest tests in the NPPF for major development in the AONB, is the proposal for an Innovation Village compatible with the long term employment objectives for Harwell Campus and the Enterprise Zone?**

1.2.1 In his report on the examination of the Vale of White Horse Part 1 Local Plan, Inspector Rivett unequivocally rejected the Council's proposals for two housing allocations totalling 1,400 dwellings on land adjacent to the Harwell Campus on the grounds that the exceptional circumstances necessary to justify such developments did not exist. Whilst the location of the proposed allocation for the Harwell Campus in the Part 2 Plan differs from those considered in the Part 1 Local Plan, the Inspector did consider an alternative proposal for the development of housing within the northern part of the Campus. In paragraph 121 of his report, the Inspector found that *"This would be significantly less harmful to the landscape of the AONB than the development of site 13 and would, in part, have the benefit of recycling previously-developed land. However, it would involve the development for housing of land recently designated as Enterprise Zone and would reduce the amount of employment land available at the campus. Moreover, and fundamentally, given that the need for*

*housing in the AONB has not been demonstrated I conclude that the exceptional circumstances necessary to approve such a development would also be unlikely to exist.”*

**1.3 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?**

- 1.3.1 The proposed allocation at the campus would significantly reduce the amount of land available for employment. The allocation extends to some 37 hectares of which 29 hectares are in the Enterprise Zone. It is likely that over the next ten years all available land at the Campus will be developed and the loss of the 37 hectares to residential development would lead to pressure for the release of further land in the AONB for employment development.

**1.4 Is the proposal for an Innovation Village appropriate when considered against reasonable alternatives (if any) in the light of site constraints, infrastructure requirements and potential impacts? Have these been adequately assessed? How would the Innovation Village be delivered and managed in the long term to ensure it meets its objectives? Are the detailed requirements in Core Policy 15b and the site development template requirements – both general and site specific – justified and would they provide an appropriate basis for the preparation of a Supplementary Planning Document for the site?**

- 1.4.1 In his report on the Local Plan Part 1 examination, Inspector Rivett found (in paragraph 119) that “Turning to alternative sites I recognise that the proposed “work-live-play community” at Harwell could not be delivered by development outside the AONB. However, this matters little given the lack of a demonstrated need for such a form of development. Nonetheless, the 1,400 dwellings are also intended to contribute towards the Science Vale’s element of the district’s objectively assessed need for housing. There is nothing to suggest that alternative sites for this housing outside the AONB but within/close to Science Vale, could not be found if necessary.” In paragraph 117 the Inspector also notes that “I have seen no convincing evidence to indicate that any existing or new employers at Harwell would, in the future, not be equally successful in attracting people to work there as long as there is sufficient, suitable housing within the Science Vale area generally.”
- 1.4.2 Gladman contends that the Inspector’s conclusions remain valid. There are reasonable alternative sites for housing development close to the Harwell campus but outside the AONB. By way of example, Gladman has provided details of one such site at Didcot Road, Harwell in its submissions to the Publication Plan. This site is in a very sustainable location with the capacity to deliver approximately 60 dwellings of which 35% would be affordable. The site benefits from good

transport links. It is on a bus service which provides direct links to Harwell Campus, Didcot railway station and Oxford at very regular intervals from early morning to evening Monday to Sunday. It is also within easy cycling distance of the Campus. Furthermore, the site is closer to the facilities and services within the village of Harwell including the primary school, newsagent, butchers, village hall, pub, playing fields and church.

**1.5 Are the detailed boundaries of the site justified and supported by proportionate evidence? Is the estimate of the site capacity justified? Is the expected timescale for development realistic?**

1.5.1 Gladman has no comments to make on this question.

**1.6 How would the proposal for the Innovation Village relate to the village of Harwell and other nearby settlements? What new services, facilities and infrastructure links would be provided and is this realistic? Is the proposal viable? Would it comprise sustainable development?**

1.6.1 Although the Local Plan allocation provides for a new primary school to be provided as part of the development, in reality the residents of the development would look to the village of Harwell for facilities and services such as shops, recreation and leisure facilities which would most likely involve a car journey. A far more sustainable approach would be to allocate sites for housing development at Harwell itself within walking or cycling distance of such facilities.