

Vale of White Horse Local Plan (Part 2) 2011-2031

Examination Hearings

Statement by Oxfordshire County Council

Matter 7

Harwell Campus

Tuesday afternoon 4 September 2018

Questions:

7.1 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?

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?

7.4 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?

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

7.6 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?

Response

1. Question 7.1: The land at Harwell Campus identified for 1,000 dwellings is land that is allocated in the Local Plan 2011 for employment. As the land has already been allocated, the County Council's interest has been primarily in whether 're-allocating it' for housing will prejudice the predicted employment growth at Harwell Campus. We noted in our Regulation 19 response a Statement of Common Ground with OxLEP and the Harwell Science and Innovation Campus Ltd and our understanding that the District had produced sufficient evidence to prove that predicted employment growth can still be accommodated.
2. Question 7.1 cont: The County Council is represented on the Council of Partners for the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. We referred to this in our Regulation 19 response (paragraph 34). In the Regulation 19 response from the North Wessex Downs AONB dated 22 November, there is an objection on the basis

that the allocation of Harwell Campus for housing causes the plan to be inconsistent with national policy and statutory objectives to protect nationally significant landscapes. We understand that this objection has not been resolved and is likely to be considered at the hearings.

3. Question 7.4: The County Council's Regulation 19 response sought an amendment to Policy 15b to ensure that the requirements of a comprehensive development framework SPD will be adhered to (paragraphs 32-33 and issue 6). Progress is being made on the preparation of a draft SPD. VOWHDC has indicated that it agrees to the principle of a modification and has proposed amended text to paragraph 2.115 in its proposal AM8 contained in the Schedule of Proposed Additional Modifications (held in the Library as one of the Core Submission Documents). The County Council prefers its own proposal to amend the policy as policies have particular weight in the NPPF. For completeness, the two versions, both of which are noted in a Statement of Common Ground on Sites being prepared by the parties are as follows:

County Council proposed modification:

Revision of the Core Policy 15b along the following lines: 'Proposals for development within the Campus must demonstrate how they ~~contribute towards a comprehensive approach to development~~ COMPLY WITH THE COMPREHENSIVE DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK SPD AND CONTRIBUTE TO INFRASTRUCTURE IN THE MANNER SET OUT IN THAT FRAMEWORK WHICH WILL REQUIRE ALL PHASES OF DEVELOPMENT TO CONTRIBUTE FAIRLY TOWARDS THE JOINT RESPONSIBILITIES FOR TRANSPORT, EDUCATION, OPEN SPACE AND OTHER INFRASTRUCTURE.

VOWHDC proposed modification AM 8 (para 2.115):

It is essential that both housing and future employment development at Harwell Campus is brought forward in line with a comprehensive development framework AND CONTRIBUTE TO INFRASTRUCTURE IN THE MANNER SET OUT IN THAT FRAMEWORK WHICH WILL REQUIRE ALL PHASES OF DEVELOPMENT TO CONTRIBUTE FAIRLY TOWARDS THE JOINT RESPONSIBILITIES FOR TRANSPORT, EDUCATION, OPEN SPACE AND OTHER INFRASTRUCTURE.

4. Question 7.6: The County Council is working with the District Council and the site owners and promoters to ensure that necessary services, facilities and infrastructure are identified and that they will be provided so that development at Harwell Campus is sustainable. Relevant needs include:
- Primary school provision – One primary school on a suitable site which meets County standards will be required.
 - Secondary school provision – A contribution to off-site secondary capacity is expected.

- Improvements to highways – The necessary improvements will need to be identified as part of the transport assessment for the site.
- Pedestrian and cycle links – A range of pedestrian and cycle links will be needed which may include, but are not limited to, walking and cycling routes that are integrated into the rest of Harwell campus site; appropriate connections with the enhanced walking and cycling network proposals identified in the Didcot Garden Town Delivery Plan and those in the Science Vale Cycle Strategy. Contributions to improving the public rights of way in the area will also be expected including improvements to the Icknield Way, and to the restricted byway connecting the Icknield Way with the A417.
- Improvements to public transport - The phasing of development and supporting infrastructure will need to be appropriate to facilitate commercially viable and attractive (i.e. frequent and direct) bus services connecting the site with Didcot, Wantage, Oxford, and other destinations within the Science Vale area.
- Suitable internal roads and links – Given the location of the residential development next to employment, attention will need to be paid to how the internal road, pedestrian and cycle networks will operate.

5. Oxfordshire County Council is seeking to attend the hearing should the Inspector have any queries to direct to the County Council in respect of the Matter 7 questions.