

Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2031 Part 2

Statement of Common Ground

Between

Vale of White Horse District Council

and

Oxfordshire County Council

June 2018

I. Objectively Assessed Need and Unmet Housing Need

Introduction

1. This statement has been prepared by Oxfordshire County Council (the County Council) and Vale of White Horse District Council (VOWH) to assist the Inspector during the Examination of the Submitted VOWH Local Plan 2031 Part 2: Detailed Policies and Additional Sites (referred to hereafter as the Part 2 plan). This statement focuses on the matters which are relevant to the County Council, particularly, those matters raised by the County Council in their response to the Publication (Regulation 19) plan.
2. This statement forms one of a series that cover the following matters:
 - I. Objectively Assessed Need and Unmet Housing Need
 - II. Transport and Safeguarding
 - III. Local Plan Sites
 - IV. Evidence
 - V. Misc
 - a. Education
 - b. Public Health
 - c. Minerals and Waste
 - d. Development Management Policies
 - e. Duty to Cooperate
3. This statement provides a background and context section to the Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal that provides context to the positive and collaborative approach to planning for Oxfordshire as a whole by the County Council and each of the Oxfordshire Local Planning Authorities.
4. Each statement includes the following sections:
 - a. Background
 - b. Key agreements or Agreed Common Ground
 - c. Proposed Changes
 - d. Signatures
5. This statement is provided without prejudice to matters that parties may wish to raise during the examination, separately, or through additional Statements of Common Ground.

Background and Context to the Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal

6. Oxfordshire is a thriving economy, strategically located within the South-East, close to London, and anchoring the Oxford-MK-Cambridge Growth corridor.
7. Cumulative growth in Oxfordshire has been around £22bn a year, meaning economic output per capita is among the highest in the UK and so the County makes a significant net contribution to the exchequer¹.
8. Success brings challenges, not least housing affordability, with Oxfordshire the 5th least affordable housing market in the country relative to earnings, but also for recruitment, transport congestion, and pressure on other physical and social infrastructure².
9. Oxfordshire's six local authorities, together with OxLEP, are working together on an ambitious, comprehensive and integrated approach to addressing our housing, infrastructure and economic challenges to deliver the potential of our world class knowledge economy and high quality sustainable development across the County.
10. A strong collaborative approach is at the heart of the Oxfordshire Growth Board: a joint committee of the six local authorities together with key strategic partners, including Oxfordshire's two universities and other representatives of OxLEP, set up to facilitate and enable joint working on economic development, strategic planning and growth, including housing.
11. The Oxfordshire Growth Board and OxLEP have prepared an ambitious Strategic Economic Plan, alongside consideration for all of the strategic infrastructure development required to support Oxfordshire's expected growth to 2040 as set out in the Oxfordshire Infrastructure Strategy (OXIS).
12. Following extensive engagement with Government which recognises both the challenges and opportunities faced by Oxfordshire, the Chancellor and then Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government announced on 22 November 2017 that Oxfordshire would receive up to £215m of new funding in order to support Oxfordshire's ambition to plan for and support the delivery of 100,000 homes by 2031.
13. The Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal³ was completed in March 2018 and includes a requirement for an Oxfordshire Joint Statutory Spatial Plan (JSSP), building on the existing Local Plans, the Oxfordshire Infrastructure Strategy and Oxfordshire Local Transport Plan.
14. The Growth Deal plans for and supports the delivery of 100,000 new homes between 2011- 2031, of which VOWH is currently proposing to contribute 24,748 homes, thus forming an essential and integral component of planning for Oxfordshire and the Growth Deal.
15. Both Councils have a history of working effectively together. At a strategic level both councils, together with the other Oxfordshire councils, are members of the Oxfordshire

^{1,2,3} <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/oxfordshire-housing-deal>

Growth Board and its Executive Officers Group established in 2014. The purpose of the Growth Board is to:

- Facilitate and enable collaboration between local authorities on economic development, strategic planning and growth
- To deliver cross boundary programmes of work, and
- To bid for the allocation of resources to support growth.

16. Prior to this, both councils were members of the Oxfordshire Spatial Planning and Infrastructure Partnership (SPIP). Through SPIP, the five Oxfordshire local planning authorities, supported by the County Council, jointly commissioned the Oxfordshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) 2014. In addition, all the Oxfordshire authorities signed up to a joint Oxfordshire Statement of Cooperation which outlines matters on which the authorities will continue to cooperate

Objectively Assessed Need

Background

17. The VOWH Local Plan 2031 Part 1: Strategic Sites and Policies sets out the Spatial Strategy and Strategic Policies for the district to deliver sustainable development. It supports the delivery of the Objectively Assessed Need (OAN) identified by the Oxfordshire SHMA 2014 of 20,560 homes (1,028 homes per year) in full.

18. The plan also supports significant economic growth of around 23,000 jobs focused on the Science Vale sites at Harwell Campus, Milton Park and Didcot and including two Enterprise Zones across multiple sites. This growth equates to around 27% of the total economic growth envisaged across Oxfordshire up to 2031.

19. The Planning Inspector presiding over the Part 1 plan Examination concluded in his Final Report:

“Having regard to the Council’s aspiration to support a significant, but realistic, growth in employment, 20,560 new dwellings (1,028 dpa) is a soundly-based figure for the objectively assessed need for housing in the Vale of White Horse in the period 2011-2031”.

20. The County Council confirmed its support for the Part 1 plan in the Statement of Common Ground between the County Council and VOWH published in September 2015, which stated, for example:

“The Councils agree that it is appropriate to focus high levels of employment and housing growth within Science Vale, aligned to the spatial strategy in the SEP”

“The Councils agree that the proposed distribution of housing based mainly in Science Vale and surrounding areas, including Abingdon-on-Thames, will ensure the fullest possible use of sustainable transport modes, particularly public transport, walking and cycling. Strategic sites allocated for development in this area are close to locations of employment growth such as in Didcot and Harwell parishes, encouraging walking and cycling for shorter distance trips. Those living in the new housing will also be able to

make use of an expanding public transport network, providing high quality bus services within and to Didcot, Wantage/ Grove and Abingdon-on-Thames, to and from Oxford, and providing access to the rail network particularly at Didcot Parkway”

“The County Council has supported the proposed development distribution in its LTP4”, and

“The Councils consider that the development pattern in the VOWH Local Plan appropriately reflects the role of Oxford. Many areas of growth will be well served by Park and Ride and Premium Bus Routes. Cycling into Oxford is also achievable from much of the area. It is recognised however, that the District Council has limited the amount of land it is seeking to remove from the Oxford Green Belt to meet its own housing needs. It is also recognised that a substantial portion of the growth identified for Vale needs should be located in parts of the District which are not close to Oxford in order to reflect employment growth and other needs in those areas”.

Key Agreement

21. The County Council and VOWH agree that 20,560 is an appropriate Objectively Assessed Need figure to plan for VOWH in the 2011-2031 period, as adopted in the Local Plan 2031 Part 1.

Oxford Unmet Housing Need

Background

22. The Statement of Common Ground (SOCG) between the County Council and VOWH signed August 2015 made it clear that Core Policy 2 of the Local Plan 2031 Part 1: Strategic Sites and Policies (the Part 1 plan) provided a commitment by the District Council to working effectively with all the other Oxfordshire councils in accordance with the Oxfordshire Statement of Cooperation to seek to jointly meet in full the need for economic and housing growth across the Oxfordshire market area.
23. The policy also contained a commitment by the District Council to working jointly with all the Oxfordshire councils to address any unmet housing need and to undertake a full or partial local plan review or to allocate sites through a DPD should it be agreed that an element of unmet need should be accommodated within the Vale. This reflects cross-authority commitment to consider housing need in the county and planning to deal with it.
24. The SOCG between the County Council and VOWH signed August 2015 includes a clear commitment to the approach provided by Core Policy 2, including the assertion that CP2 needs to provide a “firm commitment” to a timeframe for completing subsequent work to deal with unmet need. The proposed amendments to CP2, agreed by both parties, were consistent with approved changes to the Cherwell Local Plan and included the commitment for any plan review to be completed “within two years of adoption”.
25. The Planning Inspector presiding over the Part 1 plan Examination concluded:

“The (Part 1) plan sets out a soundly-based strategy for addressing unmet housing needs from other districts”.
26. The Inspector considered that two years to address the unmet need was appropriate and stated:

“The two year deadline is appropriate having regard to both the time it is likely to take to identify and fully assess the allocations necessary to meet Oxford’s housing needs and the fact that, in the meantime, the housing sites at Abingdon-on-Thames, Kennington and Radley would be available for development and suitable to meet some of the city’s unmet needs.”
27. The Inspector considered that any delay to the adoption of the Part 1 plan would be contrary to the Government’s aims for local plans and:

“Secondly, the plan as submitted, proposes revision to the Green Belt boundaries around Abingdon-on-Thames, Radley and Kennington for the allocation of more than 1,500 new dwellings. Whilst allocated with the primary intention of meeting the Vale’s own objectively-assessed need for housing, as discussed at the hearings, Oxford City Council consider these sites to be well-located to provide for their own unmet housing needs. Notwithstanding the primary purpose of their allocation, housing on these sites would be available just as much to people falling within the category of Oxford’s need as to those of the Vale. And in reality, it would be all but impossible to determine if a potential occupier of this housing represents a Vale or Oxford ‘housing need’”.

28. The County Council’s response to the Publication (Regulation 19) states:

“We welcome the District planning to allocate sufficient sites to fully accommodate its share of Oxford’s unmet housing need as agreed by the Oxfordshire Growth Board and in line with the Memorandum of Cooperation”

“We have no objection in principle to the District’s strategy of allocating the agreed share of Oxford’s unmet need to the Abingdon-on-Thames and Oxford Fringe Sub-Area and providing for it through a combination of strategic allocations from the adopted Local Plan Part 1 and new Part 2 allocations”

29. The Abingdon-on-Thames and Oxford Fringe Sub-Area is close to and has the most frequent and reliable public transport, walking and cycling linkages to Oxford and the greatest potential for future enhancements, thus offering a good spatial relationship to Oxford. For these reasons, the Vale’s agreed quantum of unmet need for Oxford is allocated to this Sub-Area. This is set out in Core Policy 4a: ‘Meeting our Housing Needs’ of Local Plan 2031 Part 2.

30. The unmet need is met by a combination of the Part 1 strategic allocations and the Part 2 additional allocations within the Abingdon-on-Thames and Oxford Fringe Sub-Area. At least 2,200 dwellings are provided for on sites, as per the table below, that have a strong spatial relationship with Oxford being suitably close to and accessible to the city and that will become more accessible during the Plan period subject to appropriate future transport infrastructure investment.

Table 1: VOWH Local Plan Part 1 and Part 2 sites that are demonstrably close and accessible to Oxford

Site	Allocation
North Abingdon-on-Thames (LPP1 allocation)	950*
North-West of Abingdon-on-Thames (LPP1 allocation)	200
North-West Radley (LPP1 allocation)	240
South of Kennington (Radley Parish; LPP1 allocation)	270
Dalton Barracks (LPP2 allocation)	1,200
Total	2,860

*The Part 1 Plan strategic allocation for North of Abingdon-on-Thames was for around 800 dwellings, however a planning application for 950 dwellings was approved at Planning Committee on 26 July 2017 and outline consent was issued on 30 October 2017.

31. It is the case that whilst four of the five sites listed above are allocated within the Part 1 plan with the primary intention of meeting the Vale’s own objectively assessed need for housing, the sites are also well located to provide for Oxford’s unmet housing need. Housing on these sites would be just as much available to those people falling into the category of Oxford’s need as to those of the Vale.

Agreed Common Ground

32. On the basis set out above the County Council and VOWH agree that 15,000 homes is an appropriate figure to plan for within the Oxfordshire Housing Market Area (HMA) to contribute towards meeting Oxford's unmet housing need to 2031, pending further testing through the Oxford Local Plan review which is not intended to be submitted until late 2018.
33. 15,000 is the agreed 'working assumption' that has formed the basis of the joint evidence base and the apportionment process to consider how the unmet need should be distributed across the Oxfordshire HMA.
34. If the Oxford unmet need figure changes in the future, the County Council and VOWH agree that the most appropriate mechanism for addressing such changes would be through a future Joint Statutory Spatial Plan for Oxfordshire that will inform future updates of the individual district councils Local Plans. However, on the basis of current evidence and joint working, the parties agree that 15,000 is an appropriate figure to plan for at the present time.
35. The County Council and VOWH agree that the process which has been undertaken through the Oxfordshire Growth Board to inform the apportionment of Oxford's unmet need across the Oxfordshire HMA has been objective and based on a proportionate evidence base which the parties have endorsed.
36. Joint working has been undertaken on the following matters:
 - An understanding of the urban capacity of Oxford and the level of unmet housing need
 - Green Belt study to assess the extent to which the land within the Oxford Green Belt performs against the purposes of the Green Belt
 - The sustainability testing of spatial options/ areas of search to help inform the apportionment or distribution of unmet housing need to the district and city councils, and
 - Transport assessment of the spatial options/ areas of search/ an education infrastructure assessment of the spatial options/ areas of search.
37. The County Council and VOWH agree that the joint working undertaken forms an appropriate basis upon which to determine the apportionment of unmet objectively assessed housing need from Oxford.
38. A Memorandum of Cooperation was considered at a meeting of the Oxfordshire Growth Board on 26 September 2016. This identified an apportionment figure for each of the district councils and city council. The agreed apportionment of unmet housing need across Oxfordshire HMA is shown in Table 2 over page.
39. An Additional Modification was proposed by the County Council and VOWH have included a Proposed Additional Modification to the Schedule to reflect this (see '2' in table below).

Table 2: Apportionment of Oxford City's Unmet Housing Need to 2031

Authority	Proportion of unmet need apportioned
Cherwell DC	4,400
Oxford City Council	550
South Oxfordshire DC	4,950*
Vale of White Horse DC	2,200
West Oxfordshire DC	2,750
Total	14,850

*South Oxfordshire District Council has not accepted its apportionment figure of 4,950 homes and is currently proposing to provide for a reduced figure.

40. The County Council and VOWH agree that it is appropriate for VOWH to progress its Part 2 plan on the basis of providing 2,200 homes to contribute to meeting the unmet housing needs of Oxford to be provided within the district by 2031, as identified by the Oxfordshire Growth Board process.
41. The County Council and VOWH agree that there is currently no evidence available to support the use of any alternative figure to that which has been tested and agreed through the joint Oxfordshire Growth Board process.
42. The parties agree that VOWH District Council's proposed approach to meeting its apportionment of Oxford's unmet housing needs is appropriate.
43. The parties agree that VOWH's approach to allocating housing on sites within the Abingdon-on-Thames and Oxford Fringe Sub-Area represents an appropriate response to delivering housing in the district at locations which are relatively well connected and accessible to Oxford.

Summary of substantive points and proposed changes raised by Oxfordshire County Council in response to the Publication (Regulation 19) version of the VOWH Local Plan 2031: Part 2 and VOWH response.

County Council Regulation 19 Comments	VOWH Response
<p>Soundness Issue 2. Supporting text in Paragraph 2.14 should be amended as follows:</p> <p>The Abingdon-on-Thames and Oxford Fringe Sub-Area is closest to and has the GREATEST POTENTIAL FOR FREQUENT AND RELIABLE PUBLIC TRANSPORT, CYCLING AND WALKING LINKAGES most frequent and reliable public transport linkages to Oxford...</p>	<p>VOWH agree to the principle of an additional modification.</p> <p>Additional Modification (AM2) proposed to amend Paragraph 2.14 as follows:</p> <p>'The Abingdon-on-Thames and Oxford Fringe Sub-Area is closest to and has the most frequent and reliable public transport linkages to Oxford AND THE GREATEST POTENTIAL FOR FUTURE ENHANCEMENTS'.</p>

Signatures

Signed on behalf of Vale of White Horse District Council

Adrian Duffield
Head of Planning

Date 11/6/18

Signed on behalf of Oxfordshire County Council

Susan Halliwell
Director for Planning & Place

Date 13 June 2018