

Vale of White Horse Local Plan Consultation

South East Vale Area

The draft Local Plan shows numerous development sites that are proposed in the vicinity of the A34 corridor, in particular those associated with the growth and development of the Science Vale area.

Fig 5.6c shows proposed improvements to the bus network within the Science Vale area, which includes an “At least 4 per hour link to/from Newbury. This would appear to match an aspirational primary bus route linking Newbury/Harwell Campus/Didcot/Oxford which is identified in the recently approved West Berkshire Local Transport Plan Passenger Transport Strategy, and improve connectivity where no such direct passenger transport link currently exists. It should be noted that discussions have taken place in recent years between West Berkshire, Oxfordshire CC and a local bus operator regarding proposals for a similar service as part of the (unsuccessful) West Berkshire bid to the Local Sustainable Transport Fund. This bid highlighted the possibility that following a period of initial pump priming, such a service could become commercially viable within a few years.

The large number of development sites identified in the South East Vale area is likely to generate significant additional travel demand on the A34. West Berkshire would not wish to see undesirable increases in traffic on unsuitable cross-boundary routes, in particular the A338 south of Wantage and the A417 east of Didcot through Streatley as an alternative to the A34/M4 towards Reading.

Core Policy 34: A34 Strategy

The Local Plan recognises the A34’s dual role as a nationally important strategic route as well as forming part of the local road network. The development sites and associated junction improvements identified in the Local Plan will undoubtedly increase traffic on the A34 corridor south of the Science Vale area, which are likely to generate significant additional demand for travel. The Downland section of the A34 in West Berkshire is a relatively unimproved section of dual carriageway which contains short slip roads from adjacent rural communities and steep inclines (in particular Gore Hill) that can slow down laden heavy goods vehicles. Even minor collisions have the ability to cause delays on this section, which can adversely impact on the connectivity between the Science Vale and the M4. The wider improvements considered for the A34 should show look beyond the Vale’s boundary down to the A34 at Chieveley.

Core Policy 35: Promoting public transport, cycling, and walking

The Council is supportive of this policy, which includes ensuring that new development is located close to, or along, existing public transport corridors, where bus services can be strengthened in response to increases in travel demand. This policy would appear to fit well with the aspirations for a strategic bus corridor linking Oxford, Didcot, Science Vale with Newbury outlined above. If such a service were developed it could be promoted as part of measures within residential and business Travel Plan initiatives to help encourage ridership (such as ‘faster’ tickets).