

Comment

Consultee	Dr Stephen King (830994)
Email Address	[REDACTED]
Address	unknown unknown unknown
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Comment by	Dr Stephen King
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Q1 Do you consider the Local Plan is Legally Compliant? Yes

Q2 Do you consider the Local Plan is Sound (positively prepared, effective and Justified) No

If your comment(s) relate to a specific site within a core policy please select this from the drop down list. East Harwell Campus (Harwell and Chilton Parishes)

If you think your comment relates to the DtC, this is about how we have worked with the Duty to Cooperate bodies (such as neighbouring planning authorities)

Q3 Do you consider the Local Plan complies with the Duty to Co-operate? Yes

Q4 Please give details of why you consider the Local Plan is not legally compliant or is unsound or fails to comply with the duty to co-operate. Please be as precise as possible. If you wish to support the legal compliance or soundness of the Local Plan or its compliance with the duty to co-operate, please also use this box to set out your comments.

Paragraph 4.43 states that infrastructure delivery is important to ensure new development is sustainable, particularly across the Science Vale. This is where ~70% of projected jobs and 75% of strategic housing is allocated.

The Local Plan correctly identifies that improvements to highway infrastructure in the Science Vale will be essential, and a number of piecemeal schemes are identified (A34 junction improvements at Milton and Chilton, the upgrading of Featherbed Lane at Rowstock, a proposed Wantage Relief Road, etc). However, these are needed to deal with current traffic densities , and indeed some are already funded or underway.

The proposed housing developments in the vicinity of the Harwell Oxford Campus contained in the Local Plan will merely exacerbate traffic problems. The Local Plan simply does not address the substantive highway improvements necessary to improve connections between the Science Vale and neighbouring areas if the growth opportunities identified are to be realised. It does not address these for two reasons: first, that to do so would be an admission that the Local Plan is fundamentally flawed and, second, because the improvements necessary are major capital infrastructure projects. Examples of the sort of highway improvements that are necessary, but not considered in the Local Plan, include: a major upgrade of the A338 between Wantage and the A420, a major upgrade (probably dualing) of the A417 between Wantage and the A34 and, in particular, a major upgrade of the A34 between East Ilsley and the M40 (nothing short of extra running lanes, refuges, new overbridges, and real-time driver information signs are required).

The A34 has already been identified in the SQW Report as a barrier to growth (source: http://www.sqw.co.uk/files/2613/8690/7243/Oxford_engine.pdf). The URS Strategic Analysis of the Local Plan Part 1 (Appendix 14, SA3) acknowledges that the A34 is known to be congested and operating over its designed capacity in peak periods. And the Science Transit and Bus Study into proposed dedicated bus routes between Didcot and the Harwell Oxford Campus acknowledges (Section 4.2) that traffic congestion at A34 crossing points will be a regular experience as residential and employment growth takes place.

Against this backdrop it is surely wholly premature to proceed with large scale housing development at the Harwell Oxford Campus until such time as the capacity issues with the A34 have been addressed, there is proven economic growth in the area, and the need to infringe the statutory protection granted to the North Wessex Downs AONB (by Paragraphs 115 & 116 of the National Planning Policy Framework) are demonstrated.

Q5 Please set out what modification(s) you consider necessary to make the Local Plan legally compliant or sound, having regard to the test you have identified above where this relates to soundness. (NB Please note that any non-compliance with the duty to co-operate is incapable of modification at examination). You will need to say why this modification will make the Local Plan legally compliant or sound. It will be helpful if you are able to put forward your suggested revised wording of any policy or text. Please be as precise as possible.

To make the Local Plan sound, legally compliant, and protect the North Wessex Downs AONB it is necessary to moderate threats to the tranquillity and character of the AONB from increased traffic (and its associated air, noise and light pollution).

This could be achieved by reallocating all housing proposed in the vicinity of the Harwell Oxford Campus (1000 homes) except that wholly contained within the perimeter of the Campus (400 homes) to other sites in the Vale of White Horse outside of the AONB (of which sites for 2490 homes have already been identified), or by reducing the SHMA for the Vale of White Horse district by 1000 homes.

The North Wessex Downs AONB should also be entirely removed from the Science Vale ?Ringfence? in order to protect it from future speculative development.

Please note your representation should cover succinctly all the information, evidence and supporting information necessary to support/justify the representation and the suggested modification, as there will not

normally be a subsequent opportunity to make further representations based on the original representation at publication stage.

After this stage, further submissions will be only at the request of the Inspector, based on the matters and issues he/she identifies for examination.

Q6 If your representation is seeking a modification, do you consider it necessary to participate at the oral part of the examination? No - I do not wish to participate at the oral examination