

Comment

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Event Name	Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2031 Part One - Publication
Comment by	Ms Angela MacKeith
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Files	VOWHDC Retail and Town Centre Study

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. North of Abingdon-on-Thames

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.

My comments concern the redevelopment of Botley Shopping Centre:

I think the Local Plan is unsound in this regard, as it seems to be too close to the recent proposal to demolish the centre and replace it with a huge superstore, student accommodation, hotel, cinema, etc - a vision which prompted over 1000 local objections, and the planning application for which was unanimously rejected by the Vale Planning Committee in December 2014. The justification for this vision is given as the 2013 VOWHDC Retail and Town Centre Study, which is concerned to stop expenditure 'leaking' from Botley into nearby Oxford (3.79). Botley is not a 'town centre' like Faringdon, so we don't expect it to perform like one. Sections 2.11 and 2.14 in the retail study support this view. The comparison with 'town centre' performance of Faringdon is therefore irrelevant. A decent supermarket would be a good addition, though less important to Botley than to the Vale, now that Waitrose and Aldi both have stores within 200 metres. However, a big supermarket will not stop people driving to Kidlington or Heyford Hill (our nearest big Sainsburys), as they both have petrol stations. Botley's petrol station, at Seacourt Retail Park, is shortly to close, leaving us without local petrol.

The retail study, completed in 2013 and adopted in 2014 is somewhat out of date now. It doesn't mention the large Waitrose store, currently under construction on the Botley Road and due to open in 2015, and it portrays Wantage as having large numbers of empty premises in the centre (3.25). In fact, Wantage has done such good work in attracting more shops to its centre, that it won the town centre category in the Great British High Street Awards in November 2014 (*Oxford Mail* 17/12/14). Neither does the study give due value to small independent traders, as it measures trading success by the numbers of national retailers doing business there. It also notes that on-line shopping is a growing trend, and this has certainly proved to be the case.

The retail study notes that entertainment facilities are limited in Botley, but also notes that a 4-6 screen cinema would amount to over-provision (5.5). So section 5.29 does not paint an appropriate picture of Botley's needs. The Vale's strategy, based on the retail study, to endeavour to prevent expenditure 'leaking' out of Botley into Oxford by providing competitive facilities in Botley is not a realistic one, as Botley Road retail park is just half a mile down the road, and the city centre just a mile and a half.

Section 5.31 suggests that Botley needs a hotel. It's not clear where this idea comes from, as I was unable to find a reference to a hotel in the retail study.

I am particularly concerned about Fig 5.3, the map of 'Botley central area'. This should be renamed Botley Shopping Centre, and the boundary line for development should stop at the western edge of the car park behind the church. There is no reason at all to include the vicarage and the sheltered housing for the elderly in the redevelopment plans, as this map suggests.

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.

5.29: Delete the first two sentences, and modify the third to say: "Local retail and leisure demand is largely met by services and facilities at the city of Oxford. In consequence the scope beyond the present retail offering on Botley is limited." Delete 'also' in the final sentence.

5.30 (opening sentence) - delete 'with the majority travelling into the city of Oxford' - Sainsburys in Kidlington is in Cherwell DC.

5.31. First sentence, delete 'hotel'.

Fig 5.3 Rename the map at Fig 5.3 'Botley Shopping Centre', both in the caption and on the map. Redraw the boundary of the shopping centre as shown, so that it stops at the western edge of the car park behind the church.

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? Yes - I wish to participate at the oral examination

Please note the Inspector will determine the most appropriate procedure to adopt to hear those who have indicated that they wish to participate at the oral part of the examination.

Q7 If you wish to participate at the oral part of the examination, please outline why you consider this to be necessary:

I am concerned that Botley's Neighbourhood Plan, currently being prepared, will conform with the Local Plan. But this means the VOWHDC Local Plan must take account of the view from Botley.

Please upload any supporting information

VOWHDC Retail and Town Centre Study