

Examination into the Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2031: Part 1, Stage 1
Hearing Statement for Matter 2

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General comments on the plan (repeated for each Matter)

There are too many jobs in the district already, with a lot more in the pipeline. This is a major cause of high housing costs. It is recognised in paragraph 4.18 but in other places the plan has proposals for encouraging the creation of more jobs, which can only aggravate the situation.

Even if the plan's proposals for housing are accepted, the council cannot guarantee delivery of all of them within the required time-scale. Political and legal challenges are likely, particularly given the very strong feelings aroused by the suggested building on the Green Belt and on or near the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Any plan to build on open country will carry that risk to some extent. This opposition may render the plan's objectives undeliverable. One answer to this problem would be to show more flexibility over development, particularly in and around the smaller towns and villages.

Matter 2 – Objectively Assessed Needs for Housing and Employment Land

Question 2.1(b): it is not only appropriate to include an allowance for past shortfalls in housing delivery, it is essential to do so. These shortfalls have been an important cause of shortages which need to be addressed.

Question 2.3: for the reasons given above, the council should not be promoting the growth of jobs, and should try to persuade the other Oxfordshire councils to adopt the same policy. Also, it should not encourage UK government to create jobs in the area. An approach like this would make the plan more sound by helping to restrain demand for housing. Despite this, I am NOT suggesting an attempt to restrain growth of jobs by restricting provision of employment land. Such a policy would not be reasonable: the plan is sound in encouraging supply of such land.

For jobs, the plan shows too much reliance on the visitor economy which is labour-intensive and so most of the jobs would be low-paid. This would not help the staff to pay the very high local housing costs. However, I endorse the intention to address the shortage of hotel accommodation (paragraph 6.43), particularly as some of the hotel work will be live-in.

Suggested modifications to the plan

Paragraph 2.10: under the section on **page 23** headed “Providing new employment land and supporting science and innovation”, keep the first sub-paragraph but delete the sub-paragraph which starts “Maximising the opportunity to nurture science, research...” and the following sub-paragraphs up to and including the one starting “Didcot Power Station A is a site...” at the end of the section. Next, delete the section on **page 25** headed “Promoting tourism” apart from the commitment to address the shortage of hotel accommodation.

Page 34: under “Focusing sustainable growth...”: delete the first bullet point (commencing “Promoting Science Vale as a world-class location....”).

Paragraph 5.50, page 66: add at the end: “these changes tend to aggravate the housing shortages in areas around Oxford, including the Vale”.

Paragraph 6.42, page 105: delete this (but keep paragraph 6.43).