
East of Harwell Campus

Response to the Inspector's Matters and Questions

Matter 7: Supporting Infrastructure and Services

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January 2016

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Supporting Infrastructure and Services

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. Ptarmigan Land Ltd has instructed Barton Willmore to respond on their behalf to the Planning Inspector's Stage 2 Matters and Questions for the Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2031 examination in public.
- 1.2. Ptarmigan has an interest in land to the East of Harwell Campus, a proposed allocation for 850 homes in the submission Local Plan. The scope of this Statement is therefore limited to the proposed allocations at Harwell campus.

6.1 DOES THE PLAN MAKE ADEQUATE AND SOUNDLY-BASED PROVISION FOR THE INFRASTRUCTURE AND SERVICES NECESSARY TO SUPPORT NEW DEVELOPMENT?

6.1.1 Ptarmigan consider the Local Plan's approach to the provision of infrastructure and services necessary to support new development to be sound. The following Statement is structured around the tests of soundness as outlined in paragraph 182 of the NPPF.

Positively prepared

6.1.2 As discussed in Ptarmigan's response to Matters 6 and 9, the Local Plan positively responds to the significant growth potential of its globally significant employment sites; notably Harwell Campus. The Local Plan's strategy follows other plans for growth at Harwell, including those of Government, the Local Enterprise Partnership and Harwell Campus. It represents a continuation of growth and investment at Harwell that has existed for many decades. The Local Plan's approach to infrastructure delivery merely supports this continued strategy.

6.1.3 The infrastructure policies within the Local Plan are primarily focused on delivering infrastructure within the Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) through Core Policy 7. The IDP has positively responded to a variety of strategies and investment for the area, including City Deal, the Strategic Economic Plan, Growing Places Fund, Local Sustainable Transport Fund, Growth Deal, and Local Pinch Point Funding.

6.1.4 The Council correctly seeks to safeguard Enterprise Zone land for employment uses to ensure that the infrastructure package can be delivered. The Council has secured a £20m loan from the Homes and Communities Agency to deliver infrastructure which is to be paid back using these retained business rates. The IDP identifies the following projects which are dependent / part dependent on EZ Business Rate funding:

- Science Vale Transport Package – Strategic Highway Works:
 - Milton Interchange improvements
 - Harwell Campus entrance improvements

- Chilton north facing slips onto the A34
- Harwell Link Road
- Upgrade to Hagbourne Hill
- Featherbed Lane and Steventon Junction

6.1.5 Some of these projects have already commenced and are based on future income from business rates. Should these business rates not be forthcoming then it is possible that the Council may need to redirect funding from other infrastructure projects to cover the cost of the Local Infrastructure Fund loan.

6.1.6 The infrastructure policies, in combination with policies safeguarding EZ land, seek to deliver the infrastructure necessary to unlock economic growth across the Vale. The proposed policies also correctly include flexibility for the delivery infrastructure to ensure that delivery of essential homes and jobs is not threatened by the requirement to provide unviable infrastructure.

6.1.7 It is for this reason, as set out in the Statement to Matter 6.2, that the loss of Enterprise Zone land to other non-commercial uses would be counter-productive the economic growth objectives of the Vale area.

Justified

6.1.8 The infrastructure policies and IDP are understood to be based on evidence derived from engagement with key stakeholders such as Oxfordshire County Council and respond to needs identified in the SEP and City Deal.

6.1.9 With regard to Highways, Oxfordshire County Council has produced an Evaluation of Transport Impact based on detailed and robust modelling of the proposed housing allocations in the Local Plan. This has demonstrated that the infrastructure package proposed by the Local Plan (and IDP) is currently the most appropriate to deliver growth potential.

6.1.10 Core Policy 7 correctly includes flexibility for the delivery of infrastructure to ensure that infrastructure requirements do not prevent the delivery of homes or jobs needed to deliver the growth strategy of the Local Plan (and other strategies). It will be appropriate to review the infrastructure contributions of each housing site

at the time of any planning application, which is allowed for in Core Policy 7 and is supported by Ptarmigan.

Effective

- 6.1.11 The Council and its partners have been successful in securing the funding needed to deliver the infrastructure identified in the IDP. The IDP documents a wide range of funding streams including developer contributions / CIL, Enterprise Zone Business Rates, City Deal, Local Growth Funds, and Local Pinch Point Funds. Ptarmigan understands that the Council has secured these monies and is therefore able to programme them into their IDP, leading to a deliverable infrastructure strategy across the plan period. The infrastructure programme and projects are therefore considered to be aligned to the economic strategies for the Vale area and will be effective in aiding and delivering the growth aspired to.
- 6.1.12 The Council has worked effectively with neighbouring South Oxfordshire District Council and Oxfordshire County Council to plan the delivery of infrastructure across Science Vale. The Council has also successfully communicated the needs for infrastructure to the LEP and Government, as demonstrated by the securing of infrastructure funding.

Consistent with National Policy

- 6.1.13 Paragraph 21 of the NPPF states that LPAs should address any barriers to investment, including a lack of infrastructure or housing. It goes on to state that the LPA should identify priority areas for infrastructure provision, which the proposed plan seeks to do through the delivery of a number of projects in the South East Vale Sub Area, to unlock the economic growth potential of Harwell and Milton Park. This includes the provision of housing and associated mixed uses at Harwell campus. The infrastructure projects which the IDP seeks to deliver will help support the projected growth and secure a sustainable form of development.
- 6.1.14 Paragraph 41 enables the safeguarding of land for infrastructure projects, which for the South East Vale area, the plan seeks to do so through Core Policy 18. Ptarmigan supports this policy and note that the proposals map doesn't show any land safeguarded on the East of Harwell site for strategic highway improvements.

- 6.1.15 Paragraph 116 of the NPPF requires LPAs to work with other authorities and providers to assess the quality and capacity of infrastructure and its ability to meet forecast demands. Ptarmigan understands that the Council has done so as far as is considered possible at this stage.
- 6.1.16 Paragraph 173 of the NPPF requires LPAs to enable 'competitive returns' to landowners and developers when placing requirements on development, including infrastructure contributions. Core Policy 7 enables this flexibility and is therefore consistent with Paragraph 173.
- 6.1.17 Paragraph 175 of the NPPF states that where practical, the CIL charges should be tested alongside the Local Plan. Ptarmigan notes that the Council has submitted its CIL charging schedule to the Planning Inspectorate, and the Examination will follow the Local Plan examination. Although broadly supportive, Ptarmigan has made separate comments on the proposals of the CIL which will be considered by the Inspector in his subsequent examination of the charging schedule.

CONCLUSION

- 6.1.18 Ptarmigan supports the proposed approach to infrastructure delivery in the Local Plan and consider it to be sound, as determined through the tests in paragraph 182 of the NPPF.
- 6.1.19 The infrastructure delivery is however dependent on the proposed safeguarding of Enterprise Zone land for employment uses, and therefore should this land be allocated for other uses (such as residential) Ptarmigan would have significant concerns over the deliverability of the infrastructure package set out within the IDP and elsewhere.

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(excludes introductory text and questions)

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