

**Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2031 Part 2 and
South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2033
Statement of Common Ground
Between**

**Vale of White Horse District Council
and
South Oxfordshire District Council**

February 2018

1. Introduction

- 1.1. This Statement of Common Ground (SoCG) has been prepared by Vale of White Horse District Council (VoWH) and South Oxfordshire District Council (SODC) hereafter referred to as “the parties”. This SoCG documents those matters agreed with regard to the Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2031 Part 2 and South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2033 and their respective supporting documents to assist the Inspectors during each of the Examinations of the Local Plans.
- 1.2. This SoCG reflects and confirms the current position agreed by both parties with regard to the Duty to Cooperate, the Oxfordshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) and the Vale of White Horse and South Oxfordshire apportionment of Oxford’s unmet housing need.
- 1.3. This statement is provided without prejudice to other matters or detail that the parties may wish to raise during the examination.

2. Background

- 2.1. VoWH and SODC have a long history of working effectively together. The two councils share a management team, including a shared Head of Planning. There are two planning policy teams which deal with their respective administrative areas but work closely together on all matters of strategic cross boundary importance.
- 2.2. At a strategic level the Councils are members of the Oxfordshire Growth Board (OGB) and its supporting Executive Officers Group established in 2014.
- 2.3. The purpose of the Growth Board is to:

- facilitate and enable collaboration between local authorities on economic development, strategic planning and growth
 - to deliver cross boundary programmes of work, and
 - to bid for the allocation of resources to support growth.
- 2.4. Prior to the establishment of the OCG, the authorities were also members of the Oxfordshire Spatial Planning and Infrastructure Partnership (SPIP) which had begun the process of formal cooperation including for the Oxford and Oxfordshire City Deal and the Oxfordshire SHMA (2014).
- 2.5. At the strategic level, the authorities also collaborate on economic matters through the Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (OxLEP), which prepares the Strategic Economic Plan.
- 2.6. A particular focus of joint working has been on housing matters including the commissioning of the Oxfordshire SHMA (2014) as well as a series of different projects under what has been collectively referred to as the 'Post-SHMA process'.
- 2.7. The Councils have to date been involved in the preparation/completion of the following important planning documents and studies:
- Didcot Garden Town Delivery Plan*
- 2.8. The Delivery Plan sets out a vision for Didcot, which was awarded Garden Town status by the government in December 2015. It contains a series of specific recommendations under different themes, a masterplan and a clear approach to delivering the proposals.
- Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Show People Needs Assessment update (2017)*
- 2.9. This update was prepared jointly with Cherwell District Council and Oxford City Council to ensure the evidence prepared to date was in line with a number of important key precedent cases set by local plan examinations and planning appeals elsewhere in the county.
- Joint Hotel Needs Assessment*
- 2.10. This needs assessment was prepared to ensure that in addition to the identification of the needs of both districts, there was also a strategic assessment of the need for hotels in Science Vale.
- Joint Green Infrastructure Strategy*
- 2.11. This strategy presents the Councils' vision and objectives for the future provision and management of Green Infrastructure for both districts up to 2031. This includes a Green Infrastructure network which has informed the Didcot Garden Town masterplan.

3. Matters on which the parties agree

Duty to Cooperate

- 3.1. Vale of White Horse District Council and South Oxfordshire District Council have continuously engaged with each other through the evolution of the Local Plan 2031 Part 2 and Local Plan 2033 on a number of cross boundary issues. Further information and details of this engagement can be found in the respective Topic Papers.
- 3.2. It is agreed that the parties will continue to work together on cross boundary issues to ensure a coherent strategy that supports the delivery of proposals including any appropriate mitigation.
- 3.3. The parties agree that Vale of White Horse District Council and South Oxfordshire Council have discharged their duty to cooperate for their respective plans.

Objectively Assessed Need (OAN) and Housing Requirement

- 3.4. The parties agree that it is appropriate for VoWH to plan for the provision of 1,028 homes per year (20,560 homes in total) in the period 2011 to 2031 in order to meet its own identified housing needs as set out in the Oxfordshire SHMA (2014). The above OAN figures have been adopted through Local Plan 2031 Part 1: Strategic Sites and Policies.
- 3.5. The parties agree that it is appropriate for SODC to plan for the provision of 775 homes per year (17,050 homes in total) in the period 2011 to 2033 in order to meet its own identified housing needs as set out in the Oxfordshire SHMA (2014). This represents the mid-point of the range set out in the SHMA.

VoWH's and SODC's strategy/ approach for meeting unmet housing needs

- 3.6. The parties agree that neither has approached the other to assist in meeting each other's housing need. Both parties agree that Oxford City will have difficulty in meeting its housing needs as set out in the SHMA (2014) in full.
- 3.7. The parties agree in the context of the SHMA (2014), that 15,000 is the 'working assumption' that has formed the basis of the joint evidence base and apportionment process to consider how the unmet need from Oxford City could be distributed across the Oxfordshire HMA.
- 3.8. At this point in time, it is acknowledged that Oxford City has yet to determine the precise level of unmet housing need. It is understood that Oxford City will be consulting on its Regulation 19 document in the summer of 2018 and intends to submit its Local Plan at the end of 2018. The extent of the unmet

housing need has yet to be tested as the Oxford City Local Plan has not yet advanced to its examination stage.

- 3.9. VoWH Local Plan 2031 Part 2 sets the strategy for how the agreed apportionment of unmet housing need for Oxford City is to be delivered in Vale of White Horse. 2,200 dwellings are provided for on sites that are suitably close to and accessible to Oxford, as per the table below:

Table 1: Sites which are suitably close to and accessible to South Oxfordshire District

Site	Allocation
North Abingdon-on-Thames (LPP1 allocation)	950 ¹
North-West of Abingdon-on-Thames (LPP1 allocation)	200
North-West Radley (LPP1 allocation)	240
South of Kennington (Radley Parish; LPP1 allocation)	270
Dalton Barracks (LPP2 allocation)	1,200
Total	2,860

- 3.10. The parties agree that VoWH's approach to allocating housing on sites within this Sub-Area represents the best opportunity for delivering housing in the district at locations which are well connected to Oxford.
- 3.11. SODC Local Plan 2033 sets the strategy for how unmet housing need for Oxford City is to be delivered by South Oxfordshire District Council. During the plan period, starting in the monitoring year 2021/22, provision will be made for around 3,750 homes to contribute towards Oxford City's unmet need. This is to be delivered in accordance with the spatial strategy which seeks to strengthen the heart of South Oxfordshire and the delivery of unmet housing need has not been specifically identified at any one site or location which provides greater flexibility to ensure that contributions can be delivered. SODC makes a commitment through Policy STRAT3 to undertake an early partial review of its Local Plan once the precise the level of unmet housing need for Oxford city has been determined through the examination of their plan, taking into account the most up-to-date evidence available at that time.
- 3.12. If the Oxford unmet housing need figure changes in the future, the parties agree that the most appropriate mechanism for addressing such changes would be through a future Joint Statutory Spatial Plan for Oxfordshire that will inform future updates of the individual district councils Local Plans.

¹ The Part 1 Plan strategic allocation for North of Abingdon-on-Thames was for around 800 dwellings, however a planning application for 950 dwellings was approved at committee on 26 July 2017.

Didcot Garden Town (DPD)

- 3.13. The designation of Didcot and the neighbouring parishes in the Vale of White Horse as a Garden Town is an exciting opportunity. The parties are working closely together in partnership with Oxfordshire County Council and other key stakeholders to develop a joined-up vision and delivery strategy for the area.
- 3.14. To support the successful implementation of the Garden Town initiative, seven high level principles have been developed and these are set out within the Local Plan 2031 Part 2. The delivery of these principles, for example in respect of design, will also be set out in a separate Development Plan Document (DPD) for the Didcot Garden Town area.
- 3.15. The parties agree that the preparation of a joint DPD is the most effective approach to ensure that the vision for Didcot Garden Town can be realised. Further detail on the timescales for delivering the Didcot Garden Town DPD is set out in the Local Development Schemes for both Councils.

Safeguarding of Land for Strategic Highways Improvements

- 3.16. The parties have worked with Oxfordshire County Council to identify a number of strategic highways improvements that will assist in delivering growth in the plan period for both districts. Many of these proposed improvements route across district boundaries, or have transport benefits to both districts, including the following schemes:
- A new Thames road crossing between Culham and Didcot Garden Town.
 - Didcot Science Bridge/ A4130 widening.
 - Didcot Northern Perimeter Road.
 - Didcot Central Corridor Improvements.
 - Harwell Strategic Link Road and Southern Didcot Spine Road
- 3.17. Several of these schemes already have safeguarded land as identified in the adopted Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2031 Part 1. Amendments to some of this safeguarded land is proposed in the Vale Local Plan 2031 Part 2, with new safeguarding areas also proposed in the new South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2033.
- 3.18. The parties agree that the proposed amendments to the Culham to Didcot Thames River Crossing in accordance with Vale Local Plan 2031 Part 2 Core Policy 18a appropriately addresses a number of historical constraints within the area.
- 3.19. The parties agree that the schemes identified in Vale Local Plan 2031 Part 2 Core Policy 18a: Safeguarding of Land for Strategic Highways Improvements within the South-East Vale Sub Area and Core Policy 19a: Re-opening of Grove Railway Station are a positive step to unlocking growth in Science Vale.

The parties agree that the schemes identified in South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2033 Policy TRANS3: Safeguarding Land for Strategic Transport Schemes are a positive step to unlocking growth in Science Vale and the wider district.

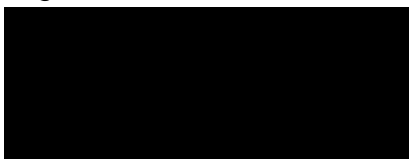
4. Conclusions

4.1. The parties agree that:

- They have a positive working relationship and a demonstrable track record of successful collaborative joint working with effective outcomes,
- Through regular meetings the authorities will continue to work cooperatively on matters of mutual interest and cross-boundary strategic importance, and
- Both authorities would welcome the adoption of VoWH Local Plan 2031 Part 2 and SODC Local Plan 2033 at the earliest opportunity.

Signatures

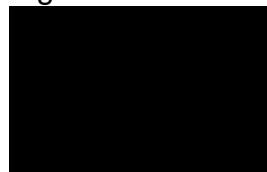
Signed on behalf of Vale of White Horse District Council



Andrew Maxted
Planning Policy Project Lead

22/02/2018

Signed on behalf of South Oxfordshire District Council



Holly Jones
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22/02/2018