

VWHDC Local Plan Part 2 - Objection

Ashbury Parish Council has serious reservations over the Local Plan Part 2 [LPP2] as currently presented for three reasons:

1. Some of the additional sites proposed in LPP2 undermine the spirit of LPP1, and arguably the very policies established when it was adopted;

Shippon is categorised as a “smaller village” within core policy 3 of LPP1, which is qualified as “. . . where any development should be modest and proportionate in scale and primarily be to meet local needs”. Fyfield is not classified at all being considered to form part of the ‘open countryside’ that core policy 44 deems inappropriate for development. And yet 600-new homes are scheduled to be built within the parish of Fyfield, and 1,200 immediately adjacent to Shippon, a development that would also envelop some of the ‘green belt’ in the vicinity of the village.

While the district planners may argue that such developments will include sufficient services & facilities to make them sustainable, and they do, the fact remains that the inclusion of such developments in LPP2 is a contradiction of the Spatial Strategy set out in LPP1, and if adopted would render the core of the Local Plan all but meaningless.

Added to this, commuter traffic from the proposed developments would feed onto trunk roads that are already heavily congested at peak times and yet at the LPP2 briefing held on 18th September, the district’s representatives accepted that any improvements that may be made to these roads would lag behind development of the actual sites and, at best, would on completion only achieve the status quo.

2. The need for some, if not all of the additional sites proposed in LPP2 are as a direct consequence of the City of Oxford not making existing vacant ‘brown field’ sites available for development.

At the LPP2 briefing the district’s representatives also accepted that one reason for further sites being proposed was because the City of Oxford had chosen not to utilise existing ‘brown field’ sites. That such an approach is considered acceptable when the consequence is that the county’s small villages & green belt are ‘concreted over’ suggests a total disregard for the impact on the rural communities affected, and by extension that residents in these communities are of lesser importance than their urban counterparts.

3. The publication of the Department of Communities & Local Government’s [DCLG] consultation on “Planning for the right homes in the right places” proposes a significant reduction in the required number of new dwellings within the VWHDC area and would, if adopted, obviate the need for LPP2 altogether.

At the outset it is perhaps worth highlighting that even the consultation title would appear to be undermined by the developments proposed in LPP2 . More importantly, the 'build-rates' at the core of the consultation show a reduction of 1/3rd on previous build targets that presumably are central to the supposed need for the additional sites being promoted by LPP2. As such a reduction would more than account for the dwellings that would be provided as a result of these additional sites, it essential that the proposals within LPP2 are not acted upon until the consultation process is complete, the outcome determined and the impact on build-rates fully understood..

In Summary:

Arguably the contradiction between the spirit of LPP1 & the very purpose of LPP2 [small print excepted] highlighted above should be sufficient for the examiner to question the credibility of the district planners' proposals, particularly given the existence of more appropriate brown-filed sites within the city of Oxford. However, given the recent publication of the DCLG's consultation document, it is surely essential that LPP2 be referred back to the district planners for further consideration, rather than see developments such as those referred to above imposed inappropriately on rural communities.

In a parish context, the imposition of such developments is of particular concern to Ashbury, and Ashbury village in particular, as within the HELAA Evidence Base a potential site [Site Ref: ASHB01] has been identified as being suitable for as many as 127-new dwellings.to be built within the next 5-years. Such a number equates to over 50% of the current number of dwellings in the entire parish, and would represent a total contradiction of what is deemed appropriate for such a small village in core policy 3 of LPP1.