

# Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2031 Part 2

## Publication Version

### Statement of Common Ground

#### Between

Vale of White Horse District Council,

Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and

Harwell Science and Innovation Campus Limited Partnership

October 2017

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 This Statement of Common Ground (SoCG) has been prepared by Vale of White Horse District Council (VoWHDC), Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (OxLEP) and Harwell Science and Innovation Campus Limited Partnership (HCP).
- 1.2 This Statement sets out the areas of agreement between the parties in relation to the Publication Version of the Local Plan 2031 Part 2 published on 11 October 2017, in particular the proposed strategic housing allocation at Harwell Campus.

## 2 Background

- 2.1 The Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (OxLEP) is responsible for championing and developing Oxfordshire's economy, and is working with businesses, academia and the public sector to drive economic development across the county. The OxLEP has produced the Oxfordshire Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) which provides a widely-owned "*economic route map*" focused on supporting the economic performance, potential and prospects of Oxfordshire, and managing the county's strong economic growth to ensure sustainability and inclusivity. The first SEP was published in 2014 with an updated SEP published in 2016. It has been informed by substantial engagement from the county's businesses, universities, research institutions, local authorities, voluntary and community sectors, and many of its residents
- 2.2 Oxfordshire is regularly cited amongst the top 10% of LEPs across the country and is focussed upon increasing business growth and productivity, supported by accelerated housing delivery, better integrated transport, and a better qualified workforce, which is underpinned by a quality of place that few locations can offer.

- 2.3 Harwell Science and Innovation Campus Limited Partnership (HCP) owns and manages Harwell Campus and is a joint venture between Harwell Oxford Developments Ltd, Science and Technology Facilities Council and the UK Atomic Energy Authority. The Partnership is determined to ensure that the Campus remains at the core of Oxfordshire's science and technology cluster and continues to support science related economic growth of the campus.
- 2.4 OxLEP fully supported the preparation of the Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2031: Part 1: Strategic Sites and policies that established an ambitious and soundly based strategy for fully meeting the objectively assessed housing need for the district, which is fundamental to support the economic growth potential identified in the Oxfordshire SEP at the Science Vale which forms the southernmost part of the "Oxfordshire Knowledge Spine"
- 2.5 The Science Vale locality is nationally and internationally exceptional. All parties recognise the unique characteristics of the Science Vale, in particular Harwell Campus as positively contributing to the United Kingdom economy through the knowledge-based economy.
- 2.6 Harwell Campus is a 710 acre science, innovation, technology and business campus. It is a world renowned major UK Science and Technology Campus that benefits from over £1bn of science infrastructure, including the UK's national synchrotron facility, the Diamond Light Source, and ISIS Neutron facility, plus approximately 5,000 research and support staff spread across approximately 200 organisations. These include Science & Technology Facilities Council, Medical Research Council, European Space Agency, Diamond Light Source, Public Health England, Element Six, Bluebird, Thales Group, Airbus, RAL Space, the Satellite Applications Catapult, and others in related fields.

### **3 Areas of Agreement**

- 3.1 OxLEP and HCP fully support the Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2031: Part 2, which complements the Part 1 plan. The Part 2 plan identifies additional site allocations to support a key strand of the Local Plan in focusing sustainable growth within the Science Vale area. The Part 2 plan proposes a site allocation at Harwell Campus, for a 1000 home 'Innovation Village'.
- 3.2 Harwell Campus is at the core of the UK's strategy for growth and a pillar of strength for the UK economy. All parties are working together to ensure that the campus can continue to compete at the global level. To do this it is vital that housing tailored to the needs of people who work at Harwell, is fully integrated into the existing campus. This is to ensure the site provides a world class environment to attract a high skilled workforce, inward investment, and commercial enterprise, ensuring the campus evolves from a global

science and innovation park to a globally competitive, world class campus environment offering a work-live-play community.

3.3 All parties agree the 'Harwell Exceptional Circumstances Report' produced by SQW provides up to date evidence regarding the need for an 'Innovation Village' at Harwell Campus and have all been involved in developing this evidence. All parties agree the Report demonstrates the exceptional circumstances required by the National Planning Policy Framework for development in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, regarding the following:

- The development of an Innovation Village at Harwell Campus is in the public interest to ensure the full potential of the scientific investment already made at Harwell is fully captured,
- The need for housing is key to recruitment and especially retention of staff, based on staff surveys and observations, to ensure the long term success of Campus occupants and the full exploitation of the investment already made in the science base,
- There are no other alternative sites at the Campus to provide the work-live-play community required. The alternative sites considered away from the Campus are not considered to meet the need of the Campus and have been demonstrated to not be as sustainable, and
- There would be no long term adverse effects of the 'Innovation Village' on the wider AONB and the proposals currently put forward would deliver a number of benefits to the AONB landscape (based on Hankinson Duckett Associates Landscape and Visual Assessment)

3.4 All parties agree the land required for the 'Innovation Village' on the Enterprise Zone does not adversely impact on achieving the employment growth at Harwell Campus, as set out in the Adopted Local Plan 2031 Part 1. The 'Harwell Exceptional Circumstances Report' demonstrates this.

3.5 All parties agree to continue to positively work together through the plan making process of Local Plan 2031 Part 2.

## Signatures

Signed on behalf of Vale of White Horse District Council



Name: Adrian Duffield

Date: 27<sup>th</sup> October 2017

Position: Head of Planning

Signed on behalf of Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership



Name: Nigel Tipple

Date: 16<sup>th</sup> October 2017

Position: Chief Executive

Signed on behalf of Harwell Campus



Name: Steven Sensecall

Date: 17<sup>th</sup> October 2017

Position: Partner, Head of Planning