

Planning Policy
Vale of White Horse District Council
135 Eastern Avenue
Milton Park
Abingdon
OX14 4SB



28 March 2019

Dear Sir/Madam,

Consultation Response: LPP2 2031, Schedule of Proposed Draft Main Modifications (SPDMM)

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the Schedule of Proposed Draft Main Modifications for the VWHDC Local Plan Part 2, 2031 (LPP2). This letter provides a personal response to this consultation, although it should be noted that I fully support the response submitted by the WSHWNP Steering Group.

I am very pleased to see that – for the short term at least – the scale of the proposed development has been reduced so that it is more in keeping with the size of the existing settlements in the vicinity of the proposed site. While there will no doubt be development pressure in the future that will be accommodated around the proposed site, to second-guess the level of that future development now in the absence of objectively assessed housing need would be premature. However, the Main Modifications do nothing to meet the expressly articulated needs and aspirations of the community.

My main sentiment at the current time, therefore, is one of utter dismay at the ways in which the VWHDC has squandered a rare and enticing opportunity to deliver an innovative, imaginative and creative new settlement that not only generated a showcase garden village of the highest standards of design and sustainability but that also reinstated the individuality and rurality of Shippon, met the needs of the current residents of existing settlements, engaged them proactively and meaningfully in the design work for the development, and both preserved and promoted the historic legacy of the military's presence in the area. Establishing the development as a new settlement, set apart from Shippon by a strategic green buffer, would simultaneously separate the settlements visually and physically and unite them through shared amenity green space. In turn, this would enhance Shippon's character and distinctiveness by reinstating a rural approach from the North as well as the South, and could have respected, preserved and promoted the historic relationship between the military and the civilian aspects of the area by establishing the new settlement of 'Dalton' set slightly apart from the village of Shippon in honour of the way in which Shippon has hosted Dalton Barracks as an *adjacent but distinct* entity since the military first arrived. Such a development would be far more in keeping with the environmental, historic and social character of the area than the unimaginative and undemocratic superimposition of a major development onto a small historic village currently enshrined in LPP2, which will despoil the area, enrage residents, undermine the VWHDC's own spatial strategy, and fail to deliver its proclaimed garden village.

There is something distinctly saddening about the uninspired 'dump them here' attitude that seems to have gripped the VWHDC planning department with respect to meeting Oxford's unmet housing need, and something deeply unsettling about the way in which the local authority has dissociated itself from residents and community representatives for whom it is responsible and to whom it is

accountable in order to bulldoze through this dumping of housing on top of Shippon despite fierce and consistently articulated local opposition to this proposal.

Consequently, while the opinions articulated in this final substantive paragraph are covered in the response of the WSHWNPSG, they are of such fundamental importance in highlighting the ways in which and the extent to which the VWHDC has undermined democracy that they warrant reiterating here. I have been appalled at the ways in which the consistently, robustly and expressly stated wishes of residents of both Wootton and St Helen Without parishes have been ignored, and in which the parish councils and steering group have been systematically and repeatedly excluded from the representative and participatory processes intended to ensure that communities are involved and that their voices are heard. Throughout the local planning and neighbourhood planning processes, the VWHDC has claimed to inform, involve and engage us (the NP steering group) as community representatives, yet nothing could be further from the truth. We have been misrepresented in the authority's application to the MHCLG for garden community funding; we still have not been informed about this application despite assurances that this would happen following the Cabinet meeting in November at which it was discussed; we were invited to a meeting that was described as informal despite the VWHDC inviting their legal counsel and for which no agenda or any indication as to the subject matter was provided despite repeated requests from us for such information; and our very minimal, simple and straightforward request for a buffer between the proposed development and the surrounding settlements has been obstinately ignored. The parish councils and steering group are populated by engaged, committed and highly capable individuals who would have welcomed and relished the opportunity to be meaningfully involved in the planning and design of a proper garden village, which would also have secured the aspirations and support of the community for this development. Unfortunately, the VWHDC has chosen to exclude rather than include the community and its representatives from this work, has chosen to ignore rather than incorporate their legitimate and clearly articulated needs, and has chosen to disregard and destroy rather than protect and enhance the historic character and rural setting of Shippon. These are not the actions of a local authority that supports neighbourhood planning, that protects the individuality of its settlements, that cares about its communities, or that delivers either sustainable development or democracy.

In conclusion, then, I consider the VWHDC to have acted shamefully towards local residents and community representatives in developing their proposals for development at Dalton Barracks and Abingdon Airfield, and I strongly encourage the Inspector to draw upon the proposals in the response from the WSHWNP Steering Group (establishing a buffer between Shippon and the new development, defining the development as a separate settlement, and retaining both Shippon and the buffer in the Green Belt) in order to remedy this dire situation. The proposals contained in LPP2 will devastate the local area in terms of its settlement and community character and its historic legacy, yet the possibility remains – through the closing stages of the examination process – for the Inspector to shape LPP2 in such a way that these entirely avoidable detrimental impacts are indeed entirely avoided.

Yours faithfully,

A solid black rectangular box used to redact the signature of Dr Janet Banfield.

Dr Janet Banfield