
Examination into the Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2031 Part 2: Detailed Policies and Additional Sites

Response of Barton Willmore
(on behalf of Radley College)

Hearing Statement

Matter 4: Abingdon and Oxford Fringe Sub Area

June 2018

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Detailed Policies and Additional Site**

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Project Ref:	21979/P1/A5	21979/P1c/A5
Status:	For client review	For issue to Programme Officer
Issue/Rev:	P1	P1b
Date:	11 th June 2018	12 th June 2018
Prepared By:	GC	GC
Checked By:	Client	Client
Authorised By:	Client	

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Ref: 21979/P1c/A5/GC/dw

Date: 12th June 2018

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**RESPONSES OF BARTON WILLMORE (ON BEHALF OF RADLEY COLLEGE) TO MATTER 4:
ABINGDON AND OXFORD FRINGE SUB AREA**

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This statement is submitted to the Examination into the Vale of White Horse District Local Plan 2031: Part 2 on behalf of Radley College (hereafter referred to as 'our client').
- 1.2 This statement responds to question 4.1 posed under 'Matter 4: Abingdon and Oxford Fringe Sub Area', as identified by the Inspector in his List of Matters and Questions.

MATTER 4: ABINGDON ON THAMES AND OXFORD FRINGE SUB AREA

4.1 Other than Dalton Barracks (Matter 5), are the housing allocations listed in Policy 8a the most appropriate when considered against reasonable alternatives in light of site constraints, infrastructure requirements and potential impacts? Are the estimates of site capacity justified? Are the expected timescales for development realistic? Are the site development template requirements – both general site specific – justified, consistent with national policy and would they be effective?

Our response to Matter 2 confirms that whilst our client does not wish to make specific comment in relation to the sustainability or suitability of the sites allocated under Policy 8a, we do question the reliance on these relatively large sites delivering such a high proportion of identified need and would suggest, given the role of LPP2 to deliver 'additional sites', that a number of smaller sites may be better placed to meet this need in the short to medium term. We consider this approach to be more consistent with the original aims of LPP1 and that the LPP2 can achieve improved flexibility by focusing on the scope for allocating a broader range of sites of varying scales, some of which can typically be brought forward sooner, with on-site completions achieved soon after commencement.

We note that there is no specific opportunity within the Inspectors Matters and Questions to discuss omission sites in any detail. However, in the context of exploring whether the housing allocations listed in Policy 8a are the most appropriate, we would draw attention to our client's sites at Gooseacre and North Radley, as well as the Triangular Field. As outlined in detail in previous submissions these are sites that can be sensitively developed to provide housing in the short to medium term with the added benefit of complimenting the strategic development at North West Radley.

We would invite the Inspector to consider adding specific sessions on Omission Sites. It is considered that these sessions could take place at the end of each Sub Area hearing. This would allow interested parties to put forward their case for development of smaller additional sites and would enable the Inspector to form a more informed view as to whether the current approach to LPP2 is indeed the most appropriate in the circumstances.

Gooseacre and North Radley

Our client is not proposing the wholesale release of North Radley or for any new housing on that site for the foreseeable future. However our client wishes, as part of the LPP2 process, to flag the potential of the site at Gooseacre for small scale development only to facilitate the delivery of enhanced community facilities at North Radley, to the benefit of the wider village.

As outlined in our representations to the Publication Version of the Plan (November 2017) Radley Village Hall currently occupies our client's land at Gooseacre. This is recognised as being in need for expansion/replacement and given the size constraints of Gooseacre there is concern that the village hall will be unable to be suitably expanded to accommodate the population increase. The current facility is also somewhat dated and could benefit from modernisation and enlargement to reflect the needs of a growing, modernised Radley Village.

Our client is keen to ensure opportunities for sustainable growth and change are fully maximised. As such our client aspires to deliver a new, enlarged and improved Village Hall, however it is considered that the current site is too constrained to accommodate the required new building. The College is also committed to working collaboratively with the County Council and key stakeholders to deliver an improved primary school solution for the Village, particularly given the College's commitment to educational provision within the village. It is considered that both new facilities could be successfully delivered as part of a holistic development, which delivers tangible community benefits to both new and existing residents.

Our submission to the consultation on the Publication Version of LP2 explained in detail and with a supporting conceptual plan how the proposed relocation could be achieved. The relocation will create a new 'Village Hub' and therefore an enlarged parking and drop-off section is also proposed. Moreover, siting the Village Hall, primary school and an element of public open space together in one location is considered a major benefit given the synergies and complimentary uses.

Our client considers that the release of the Gooseacre site to deliver small scale new housing and enhanced community facilities, is a logical and sustainable option that represents positive and proactive planning. Given the Green Belt designations of both sites, LPP2 is considered the appropriate mechanism to facilitate this strategy. Both sites

are representative of smaller scale sites near Oxford City that, coupled with other similar, readily available sites elsewhere in the Sub Area, could be viewed as preferable to the approach currently taken in Policy 8a.

Land off Radley Road, Abingdon-on-Thames - 'The Triangular Field'

'The Triangular Field' (ABIG05) is located on the eastern edge of the settlement of Abingdon-on-Thames and currently comprises a 1.85-hectare triangular arable field which is periodically used for planting crops. The field is currently fallow.

Our client has consistently supported the findings of the Green Belt Review that the Site currently fails to fulfil the NPPF objectives (paragraph 80 of the NPPF) of including land within the Green Belt and submits that there is a very clear and convincing case to justify release of the Site for small scale residential development in the context of the exceptional circumstances surrounding housing needs, both within the district and arising from the unmet needs of Oxford City. Our client submits that development of the site in the short term would represent a logical and sustainable extension to the existing Peachcroft Estate, and that new housing in this location, by the specific merits of the site and its natural containment, would have very limited impact upon the openness of the wider Green Belt.

The Green Belt in this area is principally designed to protect Oxford from merging with neighbouring towns. Abingdon-on-Thames is appropriately described as a market town and in this location it has little direct relationship with Oxford. The term 'town' is not a description which sits comfortably with the village of Radley, however it is noted that criterion 2 of Table 1.0 of the Green Belt Review (Assessment Criteria) notes that though most of the settlements in the Vale are villages rather than towns (including Radley), *'...the Vale would not wish to allow these settlements to merge.'*

We consider that the release of the Triangular Field (ABIG05) from the Green Belt and future development for housing would not decrease the gap between Abingdon-on-Thames and Radley either physically or psychologically.

Moreover, it is submitted that the current Green Belt designation is not truly reflective of the Site's location or spatial function and it cannot credibly be maintained that development of the Site would represent significant encroachment into open countryside, reinforced by the most recent Green Belt Study. There is a need for pragmatism in this

regard in the interests of good planning and in the interests of achieving the Council's objectives.

The Site does not fulfil any of the five purposes of including land within the Green Belt: the Green Belt designation is ineffective, and retention of the site within the Green Belt is not considered to represent positive and proactive planning as required by the NPPF. A review of Green Belt boundaries is entirely appropriate through the Local Plan process, and indeed as previously noted, in accordance with national planning policy. The Site is readily available, sustainable and deliverable, and would make a valuable contribution to housing delivery and the five-year housing supply within the short term. This is a particularly pertinent point when larger sites such as those currently proposed within the LPP2 can arguably take several years to come to fruition.

The location of site ABIG05 on the edge of the existing Peachcroft Estate means that the site would constitute a natural extension to the existing development. The site is devoid of any ecological merit, is flat, tree-less and environmentally unconstrained. The Site can be accessed satisfactorily, and can be designed to integrate with, and sympathetically to, its immediate surroundings.

The Council recognises that the Site does not fulfil a true Green Belt function and could be released from this designation to free up the potential for it to deliver small scale residential development in the short term. However, this has not been translated into LPP2, where the site continues to remain in the Green Belt despite the findings of the Green Belt Review and the clear conclusions drawn (coupled also with the comments made by the Inspector at paragraph 100 of his LPP1 Report).

Our client actively seeks the release of the Site from the Green Belt and submits that the Site is fully deliverable and could make a valuable contribution towards housing supply in the VoWH in the short term. It is a logical step forward representing proactive and pragmatic planning that is entirely congruous with national objectives. On this basis it is promoted as a suitable and sustainable site for small scale housing development in the region of 50 dwellings.