

Comment

Consultee	Mr Robert Thomas (830012)
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Event Name	Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2031 Part One - Publication
Comment by	Mr Robert Thomas
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Submission Type	Web
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Q1 Do you consider the Local Plan is Legally Compliant?	Yes
Q2 Do you consider the Local Plan is Sound (positively prepared, effective and Justified)	No
If your comment(s) relate to a specific site within a core policy please select this from the drop down list.	Valley Park, Harwell and Milton Parishes east of the A34 adjoining Didcot Town
If you think your comment relates to the DtC, this is about how we have worked with the Duty to Cooperate bodies (such as neighbouring planning authorities)	
Q3 Do you consider the Local Plan complies with the Duty to Co-operate?	Yes

Q4 Please give details of why you consider the Local Plan is not legally compliant or is unsound or fails to comply with the duty to co-operate. Please be as precise as possible. If you wish to support the legal compliance or soundness of the Local Plan or its compliance with the duty to co-operate, please also use this box to set out your comments.

The proposed 'Valley Park' and 'North West Valley Park' developments to the west of Didcot are incredibly excessive when existing and recent local developments are taken into account. Didcot has expanded immensely over recent years, with new housing built to the west at 'Great Western Park',

the North with the 'Ladygrove Estate', and possibly also with the proposed development of 'North East Didcot' (in South Oxfordshire District).

Combined with the proposed development at Milton Heights, and the existing Milton Park, unbroken development would more or less span from east Didcot all the way to the Milton A34 Interchange and Milton Heights.

The existing open land between Milton and Didcot creates a buffer zone for the villages of Milton, Harwell, and Steventon and beyond, from the urban character of Didcot. In developing this land the rural character of these villages will be compromised.

In the Vale of the White Horse 2011 Local Plan, this space is recognised as 'important open land'. The following is a quotation from paragraph 7.71 of the 2011 local plan:

iii) the areas identified as urban fringe around the western and northern edges of Didcot are considered vulnerable to development pressures. These fringe areas also serve as gaps which help to maintain the separate identities of Didcot and its surrounding village communities and to avoid the coalescence of development in the area in general. The area identified on the proposals map takes account of the significant major development proposed to the west of Didcot [Great Western Park].

I believe this is still relevant and should be adhered to.

Because of this potential coalescent development, the proposal for these two particular areas could also be considered unsound as they contradict the 'Spatial Strategy' (Chapter 4 of VoWH Local Plan 2031 Part 1, overview). The third strand of this is to 'promote thriving villages and rural communities whilst safeguarding the countryside and village character'.

Q5 Please set out what modification(s) you consider necessary to make the Local Plan legally compliant or sound, having regard to the test you have identified above where this relates to soundness. (NB Please note that any non-compliance with the duty to co-operate is incapable of modification at examination). You will need to say why this modification will make the Local Plan legally compliant or sound. It will be helpful if you are able to put forward your suggested revised wording of any policy or text. Please be as precise as possible.

To make the plan sound you should seek to maintain the separate identities of Didcot and its surrounding village communities by not allowing or significantly reducing development in the open space between Milton, Harwell and Didcot. It should be recognised as 'important open land', as per the 2011 local plan.

The housing targets currently allocated to 'Valley Park' and 'North West Valley Park' could be assigned elsewhere within the District where similar coalescence of developments would not occur, or be reduced.

Please note your representation should cover succinctly all the information, evidence and supporting information necessary to support/justify the representation and the suggested modification, as there will not normally be a subsequent opportunity to make further representations based on the original representation at publication stage.

After this stage, further submissions will be only at the request of the Inspector, based on the matters and issues he/she identifies for examination.

Q6 If your representation is seeking a modification, do you consider it necessary to participate at the oral part of the examination? No - I do not wish to participate at the oral examination