

Submission to Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2031 – Part One

1.0 Representations made on behalf of Minscombe Properties and Mays Properties, who together have interests in land at Milton Interchange south of the A4130 currently allocated as a site for Trunk Road Services (see saved Policy TR10).

2.0 Background:

- i) Site is very well located as Trunk Road Service area; midway between Chieveley Services to the south (Junction of A34/M4) and Peartree services, Oxford to the north (Junction of A34/A40/A44).
- ii) Services have been provided over a long time period in a rather piecemeal and un-coordinated manner, due to the historically separate land ownerships, which have hindered collaborative working to develop a comprehensive scheme for the location. Following the recent change of ownership of the land to the north of this area currently zoned for roadside services, the three landowners are now working together to prepare a comprehensive proposal in the form of a Master Plan.
- iii) In recent years the Services operation has been considerably updated:
 - a. The fuel operation has been rebuilt and expanded.
 - b. Overnight accommodation has been extended three times to provide 134 bedrooms.
 - c. The stand-alone drive-thru fast food operation has been refurbished.
 - d. The licensed restaurant has been refurbished and extended.
 - e. The internal road layout has been improved.
 - f. The view of undeveloped land from the A4130 has been greatly improved.
- iv) Improvements have taken place to the adjoining road layout with dualling of the A4130, upgrading of the junction to the Service Area and upgrading of Milton Interchange.
- v) Land opposite (to the north of the A4130), known as Milton Gate, is rapidly being developed in a mixed-use development of roadside

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services, sui generis and employment uses under the Milton Park Local Development Order.

- vi) Part of the site south of the A4130 has now been designated as part of the Milton Park Enterprise Zone – with a Local Development Order allowing a range of “B” class and sui generis, as well as Trunk Road Services uses.
- vii) The current landowners are now working together to produce a comprehensive Master Plan for the development of the area allocated for Trunk Road Services.
- viii) In early 2014 a joint planning application (P14/V0087/FUL) was submitted for the provision of a new junction on the A4130 together with an internal access road to serve the land under different ownerships. Permission was granted on 2nd May.
- ix) Central Government proposals for significant funding for both the Botley and Peartree Interchanges and for a new road between Oxford and Cambridge connecting into the A34 have recently been announced. This along with the proposed new “garden city” at Bicester will significantly increase the need for further expansion of roadside services at this location.

3.0 Commentary:

- i) Trunk Road Services in themselves are an important employment use.
- ii) There remains a considerable unmet demand for Trunk Road Services at this location on the A34.
- iii) The designation of part of the allocated Trunk Road Services site as part of the Enterprise Zone means that the site now has a mixed use of Trunk Road Services, “B” class employment and sui generis uses.

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- iv) The location should be considered in relation to its position within Science Vale UK and nearness to Didcot A (site of the former power station). Also in close proximity is the current development of Great Western Park (3300 homes), the forthcoming Valley Park residential development (2550 homes), the proposed new development at Milton Heights (400 homes), and the adjoining proposed development of North West of Valley Park (800 homes). Also within a 2km catchment area are the existing settlements of Milton, Milton Heights and Steventon.

4.0 Representations on draft Local Plan Spatial Strategy:

- i) Core Policy 6 relating to meeting business and employment needs. The Milton Interchange – Trunk Road Service Area should be included/listed as a mixed use allocation in Core Policy 6 (as are many other sites which are Saved from the Local Plan 2011).
- ii) Core Policy 7 states that infrastructure requirements will be delivered directly by the developer wherever possible. The Master Plan would provide the infrastructure to support future development.
- iii) Core Policy 28 relating to new employment development states that new employment development on unallocated sites (use classes B1, B2 or B8) will be supported. We are of the opinion that it is necessary to make special allocation for mixed use at the Milton Heights Services location in order to be clear about the nature of the uses that would be acceptable here. This view would be in line with the aspirations of the Local Enterprise Partnership which is very keen to see this particular land used to generate significant local employment and growth.
- iv) The focus of South East Vale Sub-Area Strategy is to ensure employment growth centred on the Enterprise Zone and Science Vale UK sites is delivered alongside strategic housing development. This site could contribute local infrastructure provision and employment development to deliver balanced and sustainable growth.

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- v) Measures to ensure that there are efficient and effective transport linkages between the major Science Vale UK employment sites and the planned housing growth require infrastructure improvements. Upgrading roads and road junctions in the location also includes improvements to the strategic cycle network. The proposals for the site would deliver improvements to the A34/A4130 at the Milton Interchange and improvement of the strategic cycle network. This would accord with Core Policy 35.
- vi) New visitor-related development for leisure and business purposes adjacent to Milton Park including ancillary business hotel and conference facilities, and development on service areas on the main transport corridors would also accord with Core Policy 31.
- vii) Core Policy 32 relating to retailing and other main town centre uses acknowledges that Local Plan policies that may support main town centre uses in other locations include Core Policy 31 (visitor-related development). Development which is ancillary and proportionate food, drink and convenience retailing within and primarily servicing the users of designated employment areas and the Trunk Road Services Area, would comply with these policies.
- viii) Core Policy 33 relates to promoting sustainable transport and accessibility. It encourages developments where the use of sustainable forms of transport such as cycling and walking are possible. The Trunk Road Services Area Master Plan would accord with this policy by providing infrastructure which would lead to employment development within very close proximity of a number of nearby settlements.
- ix) It should be noted that reliance on a single large site (Didcot A Power Station) to fulfil the employment land needs of the District poses a number of problems and risks:
 - i) control of the site is in a single ownership;

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- ii) any problems bringing forward the site could result in major delays which might have damaging impacts if few other new sites were available; and
 - iii) there would be a lack of choice and flexibility for prospective new businesses.
- x) The employment strategy should:
 - i) Identify a wide range of sites, both in terms of locations, tenures and sizes (this would provide choice and flexibility).
 - ii) Not be overly concerned with the total area of land to be identified, as experience shows that more choice and flexibility encourages greater self-containment and better rates of job creation. It is therefore a more sustainable approach.

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