

VALE OF WHITE HORSE DISTRICT COUNCIL
LOCAL PLAN 2031: PART 1 – STRATEGIC SITES AND POLICIES
REPRESENTATIONS ON BEHALF
OF
THE MANOR PREPARATORY SCHOOL



December 2014

INTRODUCTION

1. Kemp & Kemp on behalf of The Manor Preparatory School (“the Manor”) make this response to the Vale of White Horse Local Plan Part 1 Strategic Sites and Policies consultation.
2. The Manor is located in Shippon on the edge of Abingdon and is an independent preparatory school, which welcomes boys aged 2 to 7 and girls aged 2 to 11. The Manor’s landholding is edged red on the attached Plan and includes the main school site to the east of Faringdon Road and Church Farm to the west.
3. The Manor provides a high standard of education but if it is to continue to compete effectively with other preparatory schools in the area, it needs to be in a position to respond to changes in educational requirements and to be able to update and expand its facilities accordingly.
4. More specifically, The Manor has an urgent need for a dedicated sports hall: at present, indoor sports take place in the School hall, which is also used for assemblies and School production. The hall is not well suited to sport: a building lined with windows is not ideal for ball games; prominent radiators lining the walls can be a hazard; and the low ceiling is far from ideal for racket sports, especially badminton. In addition, the School lacks pupil and staff changing facilities.
5. The Manor would also like its own swimming pool: at present pupils have to use the pool at Abingdon School but access to that facility during the school day is difficult (understandably, Abingdon School pupils have priority). It is also inefficient to have to bus pupils from The Manor to Abingdon School. The journey back and forth eats in to the school day; it also creates additional coach journeys through the town.
6. The Manor is an established preparatory school, which in operational terms it would be impossible to move to another site. Operationally and logistically, the new facilities that the School needs have to be co-located with the existing school premises. This means making full and effective use of the main site and Church Farm.
7. The main school site lies within an area designated under adopted Local Plan Policy GS3 as an area where *inter alia* limited infilling between existing buildings is permitted; the Church Farm site is located in the Green Belt but outside the designated area.
8. The National Planning Policy Framework (“the Framework”) makes it clear that Local Planning Authorities should take a positive approach to education and should plan positively to meet infrastructure requirements and proposals aimed at health and well-being.
9. The Manor is seeking a policy framework in the emerging Local Plan that will allow it to meet its operational needs. The current draft does not do that. Moreover, and for the reasons set out below, The Manor’s view is that, as drafted, Policy CP3, and consequently the Plan, has not been **positively prepared**; is not **justified** or **effective**; and is not **consistent with national policy**. The way to remedy these defects is to make Shippon an “inset” village, which will allow the School to plan positively for the future having regard, of course, to the requirements of relevant development management policies.

CORE POLICY 13: THE OXFORD GREEN BELT

10. The Manor notes that adopted Local Plan Green Belt policies GS3 and GS 4 are not being 'saved'; Core Policy (CP) 13 is replacing them: The Oxford Green Belt. Policy CP13 states that limited infilling will be allowed in the villages of Shippon, South Hinksey, Wootton Old Village and Wytham. These villages are 'washed over' by Green Belt.
11. The Vale of White Horse Green Belt Review: Phase 2 Report looked at the Green Belt villages with a view to establishing whether they should continue to be "washed over" by the Green Belt or whether instead they should be "inset". The report has led to a proposal to make Farmoor an "inset" village. It has also resulted in proposals to develop Green Belt land on the northern edge of Abingdon; at Kennington; and at Radley.
12. In the report, "Shippon and the airfield" are identified as part of Land Parcel 9. Section 9 of the report provides an assessment of the inner edge of the land parcels "where they abut the main settlements of Oxford City, Abingdon, Appleford, Botley, Cumnor, Kennington, Radley and Wootton." In so far as Shippon and the airfield is concerned, the report concludes that the village should continue to be included in the Green Belt and that:

"Intensification and expansion of the built form would erode the fragile gap between Wootton and Abingdon and the sense of openness"

13. The Manor acknowledges that one of the purposes of the Green Belt is to prevent the coalescence of settlements. However, in relation to Shippon and the airfield, it is relevant to point to the existing extent of buildings on the southern edge of the village and on the northern edge of Abingdon; and to the impact of the A34, which is prominent, urbanising feature in this location. Shippon is contiguous with Abingdon. In this regard, it is informative to note that the Green Belt Review highlighted the need to protect the "fragile gap" between Wootton and Abingdon, not between Shippon and Abingdon, and that Shippon is characterised as a "medium sized village with a mix of MOD housing, estates, and properties with large gardens" whose "built form is more suburban, contrasting with the open character of the adjoining landscape".
14. The gap between Wootton and Abingdon can be protected by continuing to include the open land north and west of the Shippon in the Green Belt; the built-up area of Shippon does not contribute to openness and consequently, does not need to remain in the Green Belt.
15. It is also relevant to consider the proximity of Shippon to Abingdon in the context of sustainability. In this regard, paragraph 84 of the National Planning Policy Framework ("the Framework") states that:

"When drawing up or reviewing Green Belt boundaries local planning authorities should take account of the need to promote sustainable patterns of development."

16. The Council's Town and Village Facilities Study (Update February 2014) lists the key facilities found in the district's settlements and awards a score accordingly. One of the Plan's strategic objectives (SO 3) is to "direct growth to the most sustainable

locations in the district.” The afore-mentioned study forms part of the evidence base that underpins that objective.

17. In the Study, Shippon was awarded a score of 13 and is classed as a ‘Smaller Village’ where development should be modest and proportionate. However, a closer inspection of the study reveals that 29 smaller villages are identified and that Shippon achieves the highest score of 13 along with Ardington and Childrey. The study reveals also that a number of the “larger villages” with proposed strategic allocations achieve only marginally higher scores than Shippon. These are:

East Hanney – **14**

Harwell – **15**

Marcham – **15**

Stanford in the Vale – **15**

In short, Shippon is in a sustainable location.

18. Based on the foregoing, emerging Local Plan Policy CP3, and consequently the Plan, has not been **positively prepared**; is not **justified** or **effective**; and is not **consistent with national policy**.
19. The way to remedy these defects is to further amend the Green Belt boundary and make Shippon an “inset” village.

MODIFICATIONS REQUIRED TO MAKE THE PLAN SOUND

20. In order to make the Plan sound Policy CP3 should be amended so as to include Shippon in the list of “inset” villages.
21. It is for the Council to determine the precise boundaries of the village but in order to accommodate The Manor’s operational and educational needs the School would ask that the hatched area on the attached plan is included within the “inset”.