

Comment

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Event Name	Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2031 Part One - Publication
Comment by	Professor Basil Crowley
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Consultation Point	Core Policy 13: The Oxford Green Belt (View)
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Q1 Do you consider the Local Plan is Legally Compliant? No

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. N/A

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 Vale's uncritical acceptance of the SHMA figures as targets has led to the inappropriate allocation of sites within the Green Belt and North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) . The plan has identified 15 development sites, including 4 large sites, in the Green Belt and two large sites in the AONB, which threatens to undermine the rural character of the Vale.

A further 11 sites are proposed for removal from the Green Belt. I am concerned that once land is removed from the Green Belt it will be at imminent risk of development, even if not immediately identified as a strategic site.

Green Belt

The Plan is inconsistent with planning guidance and government policies on the protection of Green Belts. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) makes it very clear that a Green Belt boundary may be altered only in "exceptional circumstances".

Moreover, recent guidance (6 March 2014) states that: "Unmet housing need (including traveller sites) is unlikely to outweigh the harm to the Green Belt do not constitute the "very special circumstances" justifying inappropriate development on a site within the Green Belt."

The Government's position on Green Belt policy, therefore, is very clear. The fundamental aim remains to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open. Boundaries of Green Belts should only be changed in "exceptional circumstances", and unmet housing need is not an exceptional circumstance to justify taking land out of the Green Belt.

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.

Pending a properly conducted review of the Green Belt, all land in the existing Green Belt (prior to any recent ad hoc "review") should be removed from the list of proposed development sites.

Any proposals to develop the North Wessex Downs AONB should likewise be removed from the Plan. It is submitted that the SHMA overstates the housing requirement, which means that there may be no need to reinstate these sites elsewhere.

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