

Hearing Statement: Matter 2 (Objectively Assessed Needs for Housing and Employment Land)

This document comprises RPS's Hearing Statement for Matter 2 on behalf of the Valley Park Development Consortium, comprising of Hallam Land Management Limited, Taylor Wimpey PLC and Persimmon Homes PLC.

The proposed Valley Park allocation covers around 181 hectares of green field land between Didcot and the A34. The developer consortium has submitted an outline planning application for 4,450 homes on this site. That application is following the normal development control process. The scale of the development is representative of the full potential of Valley Park rather than the level of development that is expected to be provided within the plan period.

2.1 Is the identified objectively-assessed need for housing of 20,560 dwellings (an average of 1028 per year), as set out in policy CP4, soundly based and supported by robust and credible evidence?

We consider that this objectively assessed housing need is soundly based and supported by robust and credible evidence, that reflects the objectively assessed need for the Vale as identified by the up-to-date Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) for Oxfordshire. The SHMA is compliant with the requirements of both the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and Planning Practice Guidance on Housing and Economic Development Needs Assessments issued by Government in March 2014.

(a) Are the SHMA's demographic adjustments to the 2011 CLG Household Projections soundly based?

The Planning Practice Guidance states that *"the household projection-based estimate of housing need may require adjustment to reflect factors affecting local demography and household formation rates which are not captured in past trends"*.

The updating of the core demographic projections in this instance are soundly based in terms of assumptions on future migration and remodelling headship rates. In particular, the rates have been adjusted to take into account the importance of Science Vale UK as a significant generator of jobs and the need to deliver affordable housing.

(b) Is it appropriate to include an allowance for addressing past shortfalls in the delivery of housing against the South East Plan housing requirements?

The Planning Practice Guidance states that *"formation rates may have been suppressed historically by under-supply and worsening affordability of housing. The assessment will therefore need to reflect the consequences of past under delivery of housing. As*

household projections do not reflect unmet housing need, local planning authorities should take a view based on available evidence of the extent to which household formation rates are or have been constrained by supply”.

The SHMA indicates that market signals point towards a need for an upward adjustment to housing provision in the Vale of White Horse, taking into account delivery of South East Plan target between 2006/7 to 2010/11. The SHMA also recognises that making good a past shortfall in housing provision will support more affordable housing delivery and workforce growth.

It is there appropriate to include an allowance for addressing past shortfalls.

(c) Is the SHMA’s adjustment to take account of forecast economic growth as set out in the Cambridge Econometrics/SQW report soundly based? (i) Are the report’s forecasts of employment growth in the District realistic? (ii) Is there evidence that the forecast employment growth would give rise to demand for new housing within the Vale of White Horse district?

The Planning Practice Guidance states that in adjusting projections, issues might include migration levels that may be affected by changes in employment growth. It states: *“Plan makers should make an assessment of the likely change in job numbers based on past trends and/or economic forecasts as appropriate and also having regard to the growth of the working age population in the housing market area”.* In this context, the SHMA’s adjustment is soundly based.

The Cambridge Econometrics/SQW report’s forecasts of employment growth in the District are realistic, where its Planned Economic Growth forecast reflects policy influences on economic growth such as proposals relating to the Science Vale Enterprise Zone and other planned infrastructure investment. The Vale of White Horse Employment Land Review Addendum (August, 2014) describes the basis on which the creation of 23,000 jobs between 2011 and 2031 has been derived in this context.

(d) What are the implications of the 2012-based CLG Household Projections for the objectively-assessed need for housing?

The implications of using the 2012-based CLG Household Projections for the objectively-assessed need for housing are considered to be minimal, and are not felt to discredit the 2014 SHMA and its baseline modelling. The CLG 2012 Household Projections indicated growth of around 400 households per year (8,000 households). This is very closely aligned with the 2011 Interim Household Projections, which were one of the datasets taken into consideration by the 2014 SHMA, and which set out a projected growth rate of 388 households per annum

In terms of relating growth in households to need for homes a small allowance for vacant and second homes should be made. In RPS’ experience such an allowance based on the 2011 Census is usually between 3 and 5%. It is noted that the 2014 SHMA makes such an adjustment.

The Planning Practice Guidance states that, wherever possible, local needs assessments should be informed by the latest available information, and that the

National Planning Policy Framework is clear that Local Plans should be kept up-to-date. It states that *“a meaningful change in the housing situation should be considered in this context, but this does not automatically mean that housing assessments are rendered outdated every time new projections are issued”*.

RPS Planning & Development
20 August 2015