

Matter 3 – Spatial Strategy and Housing Supply Ring Fence

Is the proposed distribution of new housing and employment land (policies CP4 and CP6) soundly based?

No. More than 5,000 homes are planned for Wantage and Grove, but the only additional employment planned in the area is 500 jobs at Williams F1, and there is inadequate transport infrastructure between there and the major employment sites at Harwell Campus, Milton Park and Didcot.

Proposed improvements to cycleways have been dropped and the A338 and A417 roads are already at more than 95% capacity now before the planned dwellings have been built.

Public transport is limited to a half hour service which excludes the main commuter times between 7.45 and 8.53 (Monday to Friday) from Wantage to Harwell Campus and between 18.26 and 19.25 (Monday to Friday) from Harwell Campus to Wantage. The County Council states that *“A minimum of two buses per hour during the morning/evening peak travel periods is required to provide a credible level of service.”* This is not currently provided from Wantage and Grove.

Hospital services are provided from Oxford and public transport to get to/from hospital appointments takes an average of over 2 hours each way.

The Plan states *“It is important that growth across the district effectively addresses any highway constraints and helps to deliver a shift towards more sustainable modes of travel.”* There is no evidence that substantial contributions to public transport will be required from new developments and these are not currently included in the CIL schedule. In fact Oxfordshire County Council are currently consulting on a reduction in transport subsidies for the third time in three years.

The NPPF requirement to reduce carbon emissions from new and existing development will not be achieved for any of these homes and the main means of transport from these developments will be by private car.

The core planning principle of the NPPF to actively manage patterns of growth to make the fullest possible use of public transport, walking and cycling, and focus significant development in locations which are or can be made sustainable is ignored in the site assessments as they are based purely on where infrastructure exists not on its available capacity or potential for expansion.

The Strategic Housing Market Assessment [SHMA] expressly based a figure of “need” on the Local Enterprise Partnership [LEP] guess as to what might happen to the Oxfordshire economy. It confuses demands, requirements and needs. Importantly, neither the LEP nor the SHMA have taken into account the real difficulties in providing the infrastructure that would allow growth to take place without increasing congestion to levels which would make the area less sustainable for both new and existing residents and businesses.

Necessary improvements to the key infrastructure have not yet been identified, therefore the proposed distribution of housing would make the district less sustainable for both existing and new residents and businesses.

Furthermore, all potential sites that were identified as suitable in principle for housing were assessed for likely development viability. The viability assessment concluded that all sites assessed in the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment [SHLAA] were viable/achievable, yet many of these sites are shown in SHLAA Appendices as having landscape constraints which will reduce their viability and therefore reduce the overall scale of housing land available.

Is the “housing supply ring fence” approach of policy CP5 to the delivery of housing in the Science Vale area

- (a) adequately explained in terms of its practical operation,**
- (b) justified,**
- (c) likely to be effective and**
- (d) in accordance with national policy?**

No. The inclusion of Wantage, Grove and the adjacent villages within the ring fence when they are nearly 10 miles from the key employment centres in the Science Vale does not accord with National Policy in the following areas:

- *Contribute to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; and, as part of this, helping to improve biodiversity, use natural resources prudently, minimise waste and pollution, and mitigate and adapt to climate change including moving to a low carbon economy.*
- *Actively manage patterns of growth to make the fullest possible use of public transport, walking and cycling, and focus significant development in locations which are or can be made sustainable*
- *Identify and coordinate development requirements, including the provision of infrastructure*
- *Ensure developments that generate significant movement are located where the need to travel will be minimised and the use of sustainable transport modes can be maximised.*

The normal limit for commuting by cycle has been identified at approximately 5 miles in the Oxfordshire Strategic Transport Plan, the routes to the areas of key employment in the Science Vale are longer than that.

Public transport does not provide a credible level of service and the A417 is already over 95% capacity.

Much of the employment within the Science Vale requires the physical presence of staff to participate in the research, therefore private cars remain the only practical means of

transport. This does not help to move to a low carbon economy or use natural resources prudently.

The inclusion of Wantage, Grove and the adjacent villages within the ring fence does not currently meet these policies and no evidence exists in the Local Plan that demonstrates how the inclusion of these areas within the ring fence will minimise the need for travel or can be made sustainable.

The Ring Fence should be limited to those areas within sustainable commuting distance of the key employment centres.

Submitted by:

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