

Dijksman Planning
35 Berkeley Road, Newbury, RG14 5JE

dijksman@msn.com 07712135772

VALE OF WHITE HORSE LOCAL PLAN 2031 (Part 1 Strategic Sites and Policies)

EXAMINATION

STAGE 1 - MATTERS AND QUESTIONS

Matter 4 – Unmet Housing Needs

Is the approach to meeting within the District any housing needs which cannot be met elsewhere in Oxfordshire, asset out in policy CP2, soundly based and does it accord with national policy?

There seems to be little dispute about the inevitable need to accommodate some of Oxford's unmet housing need within this district. There is also explicit agreement that the Oxfordshire districts need to work together to establish the scale of that need and its apportionment. National planning policy does not suggest that the duty to cooperate should be subordinate to a hasty attempt to push forward a local plan. Therefore, the approach to meeting the as yet unquantified unmet need is not soundly based and does not accord with national policy because it is intended to follow rather than be part of the local plan, this is in the context of work which is likely to conclude early next year.

4.2 What is the likely timescale for agreement being reached between the relevant authorities on (i) the scale of unmet needs in Oxford City (and any other district) (ii) the most appropriate way of any unmet needs being provided for?

Work on this matter is current and a timeline has been established to decide the questions in relation to it housing need (see growth board meeting Agenda 30th of July 2015 and Vale of White Horse Cabinet report dated seventh of August 2015). It appears that the issue will be addressed in conclusions reached by mid-2016.

4.3 Is it likely that the spatial strategy, policies and allocations proposed by the plan to meet the district's own housing needs would need to be significantly altered if unmet needs from elsewhere in Oxfordshire are to be accommodated in the Vale of White Horse district?

The number of dwellings which will need to be accommodated by Oxfordshire authorities to accommodate Oxford's unmet need range from 2000 homes per annum to 4000 homes per annum subdivided between the districts in an unspecified way. Therefore at present difficult to predict just how significant the impact could be upon the Vale of White Horse. It is conceivable; bearing in mind the constraints upon all the Oxfordshire authorities in their ability to accommodate new dwellings in the context of green belt and AONB landscape designations that the Vale may need to accommodate a significant additional number. The current dispersed approach to housing land supply delivery has its limits, particularly in respect of the quality of life enjoyed by residents of existing expanding settlements and in relation to infrastructure delivery. Therefore, the spatial strategy, policies and allocations may well need to change depending upon the scale of additional housing to be allocated to the Vale of White horse.

4.4 If you contend that the approach set out in policy CP2 is not soundly based should the Local Plan be delayed pending agreement on 4.2 (i) and (ii) above or could modifications to the plan be made to make it sound?

It is my view that the Local Plan should be delayed because the changes necessary could go to the heart of the current strategy and additional infrastructure is likely to be required to deal with the additional housing. The best way to do this is to know what demands will be placed upon infrastructure, in what locations and when. A fragmented and disconnected approach to housing delivery and infrastructure provision do not comprise sound planning. Such a fragmented approach to accommodating the unmet housing need is unsound in that it minimises the likelihood of achieving social, economic or environmental benefits from that new development, particularly if the scale of that development is not understood when the policies are being drafted and strategy agreed.