

Examination into the Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2031: Part 1, Stage 1
Hearing Statement for Matter 4

Peter Smith, 872752

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General comments on the plan (repeated for each Matter)

There are too many jobs in the district already, with a lot more in the pipeline. This is a major cause of high housing costs. It is recognised in paragraph 4.18 but in other places the plan has proposals for encouraging the creation of more jobs, which can only aggravate the situation.

Even if the plan's proposals for housing are accepted, the council cannot guarantee delivery of all of them within the required time-scale. Political and legal challenges are likely, particularly given the very strong feelings aroused by the suggested building on the Green Belt and on or near the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Any plan to build on open country will carry that risk to some extent. This opposition may render the plan's objectives undeliverable. One answer to this problem would be to show more flexibility over development, particularly in and around the smaller villages.

Matter 4 – Unmet Housing Needs

Question 4.3: yes, the strategy etc. might well have to be altered to deal with unmet demand from the rest of the county. The Duty to Co-operate and Core Policy 2 recognise the need already, and it is also allowed for to some extent in Core Policy 4 (reference to 1900 homes remaining to be identified and to be allocated in Part 2 of the plan, through neighbourhood plans or from “windfalls”).

It would be helpful to build more flexibility into the plan now, and the changes I have proposed under Matter 3 are an attempt to do this. Allowing more development in the smaller villages would release houses closer to Oxford to remedy unmet need arising from developments in the city. Incidentally, paragraph 6.4 mentions low open-market demand for 1-bedroom homes: is this estimate soundly-based and will the demand stay low when interest rates rise? Revision to take account of contingencies should be considered. There is no mention of mobile home parks; perhaps these could be provided more quickly than ordinary houses and so help to alleviate the housing shortage.

Question 4.4: it is essential that the plan is NOT delayed, whatever the reason. Any delay would hold up the delivery of desperately needed housing.