

# Vale of White Horse Local Plan (Part 1) 2011-2031

## Examination Hearings

### Stage 1 - September 2015

#### Statement of Common Ground

#### Between

#### Vale of White Horse District Council

#### and

#### Oxfordshire County Council

### **1. Introduction**

- 1.1. This Statement has been prepared by Oxfordshire County Council (the County Council) and Vale of White Horse District Council (VOWH) to assist the Inspector during the examination of the Submitted VOWH Local Plan 2031 Part 1 (referred to hereafter as the Local Plan). This statement focuses on the matters which are relevant to the County Council identified for Stage 1 of the examination.
- 1.2 This statement is provided without prejudice to other matters of detail that parties may wish to raise during the examination.

### **2. Background**

- 2.1 Both Councils have a history of working effectively together. At a strategic level both councils, together with the other Oxfordshire councils, are members of the Oxfordshire Growth Board and its supporting Executive Officers Group established in 2014. The purpose of the Growth Board is to:
  - Facilitate and enable collaboration between local authorities on economic development, strategic planning and growth
  - To deliver cross boundary programmes of work
  - To bid for the allocation of resources to support growth
- 2.2 Prior to this both councils were members of the Oxfordshire Spatial Planning and Infrastructure Partnership (SPIP). Through SPIP, the five Oxfordshire local planning authorities, supported by the County Council, jointly commissioned the Oxfordshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) 2014. In addition all the Oxfordshire authorities signed up to a joint Oxfordshire Statement of Cooperation which outlines

matters on which the authorities will continue to cooperate. In particular the statement sets out how the authorities will manage the findings of the SHMA, should any of the local planning authorities be unable to accommodate their full objectively assessed housing need.

- 2.3 Policy CP2 of the Submission VOWH Local Plan provides a commitment by the District Council to working effectively with all the other Oxfordshire councils in accordance with the Oxfordshire Statement of Cooperation to seek to jointly meet in full the need for economic and housing growth across the Oxfordshire housing market area. The policy also contains a commitment by the district council to working jointly with all the Oxfordshire councils to address unmet housing need and to undertake a full or partial local plan review or to allocate sites through a DPD should it be agreed that an element of unmet need should be accommodated within the Vale. This reflects cross-authority commitment to considering housing need in the county and planning to deal with it. The changes proposed to the Policy detailed in Appendix 1 of this Statement do not change this fundamental intent.
- 2.4 The two councils are also members of the Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) which has prepared the Strategic Economic Plan 2030 (SEP) for Oxfordshire. The SEP seeks to accelerate economic growth in the county through innovative enterprise, people, place and connectivity. The SEP prioritises growth along the Oxfordshire Knowledge Spine, focussing on Science Vale, Oxford and Bicester. It proposes that significant employment growth in Science Vale should build on the extensive research infrastructure and designation of Harwell Campus as the home of the Satellite Applications catapult, the European Space Agency and Enterprise Zone.
- 2.5 Both Councils have worked closely on the development of the Oxford & Oxfordshire City Deal that has secured £55m in Government support for investment in innovation, skills and transport schemes to support the growth agenda and release £1.3bn in private sector and other investment. This includes investment in the Harwell link road; Hagbourne Hill upgrade; Featherbed Lane and Steventon lights; and Harwell Campus entrance.
- 2.6 The Councils have worked jointly on a number of other matters of shared interest as well as this Submitted Local Plan:
- i. Addressing infrastructure needs through preparation of the VOWH Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) and draft Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) documents;
  - ii. Transport modelling;
  - iv. Connecting Oxfordshire 2015 – 2031 - the new Local Transport Plan (LTP4);
  - v. The Oxfordshire County Council draft Minerals and Waste Local Plan Core Strategy;
  - vi. Masterplanning for key development sites.

### **3      Matter 1 – Duty to Co-operate and other Legal Requirements**

#### **Strategic Minerals and Waste Matters**

- 3.1      The County Council has prepared a revised Minerals and Waste Local Plan: Core Strategy. The Proposed Submission document was published in July 2015 and the period for making comments is from mid-August to the end of September 2015.
- 3.2      The County Council in written comments on the VOWH Submitted Local Plan sought a change to paragraph 6.107 in respect of the Minerals and Waste Local Plan. A minor modification was proposed by the District Council in response, but a further revised minor modification has been agreed which fully addresses the County Council's concerns and is included in Appendix 1.
- 3.3      The County Council is satisfied that VOWH has discharged its duty to cooperate in respect of minerals and waste.

#### **Strategic Housing Matters**

- 3.4      This matter is discussed in further detail later in this Statement in Section 6 in respect of Matter 4 on unmet housing needs.

#### **Leaving non-strategic site allocations to the Local Plan Part 2**

- 3.5      The County Council in its comments on the Submitted Local Plan noted its support for allocating smaller non-strategic sites up to 199 dwellings, through the Local Plan Part 2. This was on the proviso that the impact of any proposed growth on County Council infrastructure is understood and that the effects of growth can be mitigated.
- 3.6      There is a risk that small sites could unduly impact on transport infrastructure. However, it is recognised that the number of houses which are likely to be needed for the Local Plan Part 2 to meet the District Council's own need is relatively small. The County Council signed a Memorandum of Understanding with VOWH and South Oxfordshire District Councils in July 2015 in respect of arrangements for future working together on transport infrastructure. The Memorandum is attached as Appendix 2. Continued working together in accordance with the Memorandum and policies in the Local Plan should ensure that the choices made for further sites are appropriate in relation to transport infrastructure.

#### **4. Matter 2 Objectively Assessed Needs for Housing and Employment**

- 4.1 It is agreed by both Councils that the Local Plan should seek to meet an objectively assessed need for housing which seeks to support committed economic growth.
- 4.2 Along with the other Oxfordshire councils, the two councils signed off the consultant's methodology developed to produce the SHMA including the demographic adjustments to the 2011 CLG household projections underpinning the demographic forecasts and the allowances made for addressing past shortfalls in the delivery of housing against the South East Plan.
- 4.3 Both Councils agree that the SHMA adjustments to take account of forecast economic growth as set out in the Cambridge Econometrics/SQW report are soundly based.
- 4.4 The Councils, together with the other Oxfordshire Councils, have agreed that the economic forecasting work underpinning both the SHMA and the SEP should take account of policy influences such as the Enterprise Zone, City Deal and other infrastructure investment which will stimulate investment in employment.
- 4.5 The County Council agrees that the Local Plan should plan for forecast jobs growth, that the Vale Objectively Assessed Need (OAN) for new homes should be based on supporting employment growth and that the Local Plan should seek to meet its OAN in full.

#### **5. Matter 3 – Spatial Strategy and the Housing Supply Ring Fence**

##### **Distribution of new housing and employment land**

- 5.1 The Councils agree that it is appropriate to focus high levels of employment and housing growth within Science Vale, aligned to the spatial strategy in the SEP. Science Vale broadly covers the area around Didcot and Wantage incorporating the three major science, technology and innovation centres at Harwell Campus, Milton Park and Culham Science Centre. Both Harwell Campus and Milton Park have designated Enterprise Zone status over parts of their sites. Science Vale is one of the most successful areas of science-based industry in the country.
- 5.2 The Councils agree that the proposed distribution of housing based mainly in Science Vale and surrounding areas, including Abingdon, will ensure the fullest possible use of sustainable transport modes, particularly public transport, walking and cycling. Strategic sites allocated for development in this area are close to locations of employment growth such as in Didcot and Harwell parishes, encouraging walking and cycling for shorter distance trips. Those living in the new housing will also be able to make use of an expanding public transport network, providing high quality

bus services within and to Didcot, Wantage/Grove and Abingdon, to and from Oxford, and providing access to the rail network particularly at Didcot Parkway.

- 5.3 The County Council has supported the proposed development distribution in its LTP4. LTP4 was published in draft form in February 2015 and consultation closed on 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2015. Consultation responses (including those from VOWH Council) were considered and a revised document was approved by Oxfordshire County Council's Cabinet on 21<sup>st</sup> July 2015.
- 5.4 Of particular relevance to VOWH are the following proposals and strategies in LTP4:
- Proposed Park & Ride sites at Cumnor and Lodge Hill as part of the Oxford Transport Strategy
  - The Science Vale Area Strategy
  - The A420 Route Strategy
  - The Science Transit Strategy which links together proposals for increasing bus and rail use and cycling
  - The Cycle, Freight and Bus Strategies
- 5.5 The Councils have jointly commissioned transport impact assessment work. The work identifies the transport infrastructure priorities for supporting development as set out in the Local Plan. The current situation with the proposed transport improvements which are set out in policies CP12, CP17 and CP21 of the Local Plan, is listed in Appendix 3. Proposed modifications to the Local Plan that relate to LTP4 are listed in Appendix 1. These have been agreed by the parties and are deemed appropriate to provide further clarity.
- 5.6 The two Councils are actively engaged in joint working with Swindon Borough Council and the Western Vale Villages consortium in respect of the A420 Route Strategy. Swindon's Local Plan was adopted in March 2015 and provides for a significant growth of 8,000 houses on the eastern edge of Swindon bordering VOWH adjoining the A420. An A420 Working Group has been set up and is meeting regularly to discuss highway and access issues related to that corridor.
- 5.7 The Councils consider that the development pattern in the VOWH Local Plan appropriately reflects the role of Oxford. Many areas of growth will be well served by Park & Ride and Premium Bus Routes. Cycling into Oxford is also achievable from much of the area. It is recognised however, that the District Council has limited the amount of land it is seeking to remove from the Oxford Green Belt to meet its own housing needs. It is also recognised that a substantial portion of the growth identified for Vale needs should be located in parts of the District which are not close to Oxford in order to reflect employment growth and other needs in those areas.
- 5.8 Of some concern to the County Council is the potential for additional growth on sites not identified in the Local Plan and for significantly more growth on identified sites.

The former is an issue particularly while a 5 year housing supply is not identified and applications are made.

## **6     Matter 4 – Unmet Housing Needs**

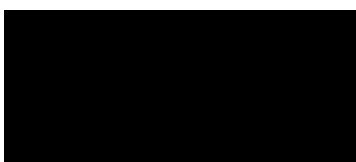
### **Agreement to Address Unmet Housing Needs**

- 6.1 All the Oxfordshire Councils are co-operatively engaged through the Oxfordshire Growth Board in a programme of joint work to address unmet need within the Oxfordshire Housing Market Area, specifically Oxford City.
- 6.2 At its meeting on 20<sup>th</sup> November 2014, the Growth Board agreed a set of principles, a process, milestones and key deliverables for this work. The agreed key principles are:
- ‘The district Local Plans are sovereign and all work should feed into Local Plans for them to determine the spatial future of the districts;
  - A recognition however that the work must be collaborative and joined up to provide a county wide spatial picture and strategy;
  - A recognition therefore that joint work on future spatial options, transport infrastructure and green belt will be required to feed into Local Plans;
  - Recognition that the City cannot fully meet its housing needs and there is a need to agree on the level of unmet need. However work on determining spatial options in Local Plans can commence alongside this;
  - A wish that the timescale for completing the Review is 12-18 months and that this should not hold up Local Plan timescales’
- 6.3 The report to the Growth Board of 30<sup>th</sup> July is attached in Appendix 4. It is expected that the up to date situation will be discussed at the Stage 1 Examination hearing sessions.
- 6.4 The County Council raised concerns in its written comments on the Submitted Local Plan about the need for an Oxfordshire wide approach to address unmet housing needs.
- 6.5 It is common ground between the two Councils that Oxford City is unable to provide in full for its own Objectively Assessed Need and the outcome of the post SHMA strategic joint work programme may result in some of that unmet need being distributed to VOWH. Although the matter of unmet need is important, the general principle of aiming to have this Local Plan adopted in advance of another Plan or Review of this Plan addressing the unmet need is agreed between the Councils and is consistent with the importance Government attaches to authorities getting up-to-date local plans in place as set out in the letter from the Minister Greg Clark to PINS July 2014.

- 6.6 The Councils agree that it is appropriate that Policy Core Policy 2 should set out how unmet housing need in Oxfordshire will be addressed. The words in Core Policy 2 also need to provide a firm commitment to a timeframe for completing subsequent work to deal with unmet need. Proposed amendments to CP2, agreed by both parties, are included within Appendix 1 and are consistent with approved changes to the Cherwell Local Plan as set out in the Planning Inspector's report into the Cherwell Local Plan.


### **Signatures**

Signed on behalf of Vale of White Horse District Council



Date: 20 August 2015

Signed on behalf of Oxfordshire County Council



Date: 20 August 2015

## Appendix 1 – Agreed Modifications between the Parties

### Amend Paragraph 6.107: (Minor change)

Oxfordshire County Council is responsible for determining planning applications for minerals and waste and producing the ~~Waste and Minerals Core Strategy~~ Minerals and Waste Local Plan which will safeguard mineral resources, ~~aggregates~~, aggregate rail depots, sites for recycled and secondary aggregate supply, other minerals infrastructure sites and sites for waste management. These areas will be marked on ~~the~~ this Plan's Adopted Policies Map for reference in future following adoption by the County Council. Should the district receive a planning application in any of these areas, the County Council will be consulted on the development. Applicants are advised to review the ~~Waste and Minerals Core Strategy~~ Minerals and Waste Local Plan prior to making a planning application.

### Amend Policy CP 2: (Substantive change)

Core Policy 2: Cooperation on Unmet Housing Need for Oxfordshire

The Council will continue to ~~fulfil its statutory work under the~~ 'duty-to-cooperate by working effectively with all the other Oxfordshire local authorities in on an ongoing basis to address ~~accordance with the Oxfordshire Statement of Cooperation to seek to jointly meet, in full~~ the objectively assessed need for ~~economic and housing growth~~ across the Oxfordshire housing market area and to meet joint commitments such as the Oxford and Oxfordshire City Deal (2014).

As a first step Vale of White Horse District Council has sought to accommodate the housing need for Vale of White Horse District in full in the Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2031 Part 1. The 2014 Oxfordshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) identifies a significant level of housing need in Oxfordshire. The Council recognises that Oxford City may not be able to accommodate the whole of its new housing requirement for the 2011-2031 period within its administrative boundary. At the time of preparing this Local Plan the urban capacity of Oxford is as yet unconfirmed.

~~Whilst the extent to which Oxford City can meet its own needs is robustly tested and agreed, the Council will first seek to meet its own housing needs in full, to help ensure that the needs of both the district and the housing market area as a whole are met as quickly as possible.~~

In tandem, the Council will continue to work jointly and proactively with all of the other Oxfordshire local authorities and through the Oxfordshire Growth Board to address any unmet housing need. This will include assessing all reasonable spatial options, including the release of brown field land, the potential for new settlements and a full strategic review of

the ~~whole~~ boundaries of the Oxford Green Belt. These issues are not for the Council to consider in isolation. These options will need to be undertaken in accordance with national policy, national guidance, the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) ~~Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes~~ Regulations, and the Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) to establish how and where any unmet need might best be accommodated within the Oxfordshire Housing Market Area.

~~If, following this joint work, it is identified and agreed, either through the Oxfordshire growth Board or through an adjoining local plan examination, that any unmet housing need is required to be accommodated within this district, the Council will either:~~

- ~~• undertake a full or focused partial review of the Local Plan 2031 or~~
- ~~• allocate appropriate housing sites through a subsequent development plan document in conformity with the Spatial Strategy set out in the Local Plan 2031.~~

~~The appropriate approach will depend on the scale of the unmet need to be accommodated.~~

Joint work will need to comprehensively consider how spatial options could be supported by necessary infrastructure to ensure an integrated approach to the delivery of housing, jobs and services. If this joint work reveals that Vale of White Horse and other Districts need to meet additional need for Oxford, this will trigger a partial review of the Local Plan, to be completed within two years of adoption, and taking the form of the preparation of a separate Development Plan Document for that part of the unmet need to be accommodated in the Vale of White Horse District. The Council will engage in joint working on supporting technical work such as countywide Sustainability Appraisal as required to support the identification of a sustainable approach to meeting agreed unmet need.

### **Amend Appendix E and related policies CP12 and CP17: (Substantive Changes)**

It is agreed that the Transport Safeguarding Maps need to be amended. The maps and details of the changes needed to update the Appendix will be identified in time for the Stage 2 Examination.

The list of items currently in Appendix E is as follows, and where they are referred to in Appendix 3 of this Statement, this is noted:

- A4130 Dualling (see Appendix 3: 5 - Science Bridge and Capacity Improvements to the A4130)
- Land for Backhill Lane Tunnel (see Appendix 3: 10 - Backhill Lane Tunnel and crossing on A4130)
- Harwell Strategic Link Road and Southern Didcot Bypass (see Appendix 3: 7 - Harwell Link Road (B4493 to A417) and 18 – Southern Didcot Spine Road)
- Land for Access to Strategic Network at Chilton Interchange (see Appendix 3: 2 - A34 Chilton Junction Improvements)
- Land for Upgrading Hagbourne Hill (see Appendix 3: 11 – Hagbourne Hill)

- Land for Improvements to Featherbed Lane and Steventon Junction (see Appendix 3: 12 – Featherbed Lane including Steventon Lights)
- New Science Bridge and Associated Developments (see Appendix 3: 5 - Science Bridge and Capacity Improvements to the A4130)
- Grove Station (see Appendix 3: 14 - Grove/Wantage Railway Station and Park & Ride)
- Wantage Eastern Link Road (see Appendix 3: 13 - Wantage Eastern Link Road)
- Land for Wantage Western Link Road (see Appendix 3: 17 – West Wantage Link Road)
- Harwell Campus Entrance (see Appendix 3: 9 – Harwell Campus)
- Land for Relief to Rowstock and Harwell to Didcot Busway (see Appendix 3: 8 - Rowstock and A417 Improvements)
- Land for Science Vale Thames Crossing (see Appendix 3: 6 - New Thames Crossing at Culham)
- Land at Lodge Hill (see Appendix 3: 4 - A34 Lodge Hill Interchange)
- Land for Abingdon Southern Bypass (see Appendix 3: 16 South Abingdon Bypass)
- Land for Improvements to Frilford Lights (see Appendix 3: 19 Frilford Lights)
- Gt Coxwell Road Junction (see Appendix 3: 15 - A420 Strategy)

#### **Amend 5.91 to 5.93 to update in relation to LTP4: (Minor Changes)**

5.91. Working jointly with key partners, including Oxfordshire County Council, we have investigated the impact of the proposed growth within this area and have identified a significant package of new infrastructure. This includes new roads and improvements to public transport, to ensure the development is sustainable. The identified package of measures complements and builds upon those ~~already~~ identified in the 'Science Vale Area Strategy' as set out in the Local Transport Plan 3 which was the relevant document up until July 2015. These were identified in Oxfordshire County Council's Local Transport Plan 3 (2011-2030)<sup>63</sup> as well as being tested and supported by the Inspector at South Oxfordshire's Core Strategy examination.

5.92. The main focus of these improvements is to ensure that there are efficient and effective transport linkages between the major Science Vale employment sites (as well as those within the Science Transit Arc) and the planned housing growth allowing for strategic public transport and road access to the area. The package includes improvements to the cycle and public transport network within, and to, the area, as well as necessary upgrades to roads and road junctions to allow for growth (Figures 5.6 a to c).

5.93. The measures are consistent with Local Transport Plan 4 which was approved by the Oxfordshire County Council Cabinet in July 2015. Of relevance to Vale of White Horse, Local Transport Plan 4 includes a Science Vale Area Strategy as well as a Science Transit Strategy and an A420 Strategy. There are also new Park and Ride sites identified, two of which are to be located in Vale of White Horse at Cumnor and Lodge Hill. In addition to the highway schemes identified in the LTP4 Science Vale Area Strategy (discussed above), we are the Local Plan also safeguarding land to deliver a West Wantage Link Road (WWLR) connecting

the A417 from Mably Way in Wantage to East Challow, a South Abingdon Bypass crossing the Thames and connecting with the A415 and some junction improvement schemes. ~~It is~~ These are safeguarded to ensure ~~its~~ their future delivery is not compromised, should ~~it~~ they be found to be needed later in the plan period, or beyond.

## **Appendix 2 – Memorandum of Understanding on Transport**

### **Memorandum of Understanding On the Planning and Delivery of Transport Infrastructure**

#### *Parties agreeing to memorandum*

Vale of White Horse District Council, South Oxfordshire District Council and Oxfordshire County Council.

#### *Introduction*

This memorandum demonstrates each council's continued commitment to ensuring that planning for strategic infrastructure is co-ordinated, appropriate policies are put in place, and allows for further development of the evidence base, where appropriate, to strengthen the transport case for individual schemes in the context of supporting planned growth across Oxfordshire.

#### *Policy*

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that:

*Local planning authorities should work collaboratively with other bodies to ensure that strategic priorities across local boundaries are properly co-ordinated and clearly reflected in individual Local Plans*

In the context of this national policy, the following undertakings are made:

South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse commit to develop policies for the safeguarding of land in their local plans to enable the future provision of agreed infrastructure schemes, including safeguarding designations for schemes that cross the district boundary.

South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse commit to continue to develop an Area Action Plan for Science Vale that will ensure a co-ordinated approach to the delivery of planned development and infrastructure in the area.

Oxfordshire County Council commits to continuing to develop plans for transport infrastructure in line with its emerging Local Transport Plan 4, and any future updates or replacement.

### *Funding for transport infrastructure*

All parties commit to working together, embracing a collaborative and partnership approach, to develop evidence and policy to assist delivery of the required transport infrastructure necessary to support growth. A number of strategic transport schemes, including several cross border schemes, have already been identified within local plan infrastructure delivery plans and Local Transport Plan 4. It is also recognised that other schemes could become priorities as further more detailed evidence emerges.

All parties commit to continuing to work on the development of business cases associated with securing funding for the transport improvements required to support growth.

All parties commit to continuing to positively input to the planning process for strategic development where this impacts on the funding and/or delivery of identified strategic transport infrastructure.

South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse commit to continuing to develop their Infrastructure Delivery Plans which indicate the funding required from all sources to deliver transport improvements. Oxfordshire County Council commits to assisting in the preparation of the Infrastructure Delivery Plans and CIL 123 lists. The district councils also commit to putting in place the mechanisms needed for transfer of funds from the Community Infrastructure Levy, when it comes into place, towards required transport schemes.

Signed for

Vale of White Horse District Council and South Oxfordshire District Council:

Anna Robinson, Strategic Director

Date: 20 July 2015

Signed for Oxfordshire County Council:

Sue Scane, Director for Environment and Economy

Date: 23 July 2015

## **Appendix 3 – Summary of Transport Infrastructure and Funding**

### **1. A34 Milton Interchange (CP17)**

- Works commenced in March 2015 to change the Milton Interchange into a 'hamburger style' roundabout in order to enable direct movement from Didcot north onto the A34. This work is funded in the current County Council capital programme and has secured Local Pinch Point Funding towards it.

### **2. A34 Chilton Junction Improvements (CP17)**

- Funding is confirmed in the County Council capital programme using Local Pinch Point Funding towards the construction of north-facing slip roads to connect the A34 with the A4185 Newbury Road and Hagbourne Hill at the Chilton Interchange. Work will start in August 2015.

### **3. Strategic Cycle Network Improvements (CP17)**

- Work has been undertaken on various strategic cycle network improvements over the last two years including improvements to cycling facilities along Wootton Road in Abingdon and the Brompton dock installed at Didcot station. Funding has been secured to upgrade the Winnaway near Harwell Campus from the LEP Growing Places fund. National cycle network improvements to existing Science Vale routes together with a cycle hire pilot scheme, a new Science Vale cycling map and signage improvements are to be paid for through the Local Sustainable Transport Fund. Local Growth Funding from the LEP has also been secured to further improve the Science Vale strategic cycle network over the next 3 years. A Science Vale Cycling Strategy is included in LTP4.

### **4. A34 Lodge Hill Interchange (CP12)**

- A match funding bid for Local Growth funding from the Oxfordshire LEP was made in May 2015. Funding for approximately two thirds of the cost is sought with the remainder to come from existing and future S106 contributions. The project involves new south facing slips at Lodge Hill interchange to support housing growth, improve connectivity to Science Vale, and relieve pressure at the A34 Marcham Interchange and through Abingdon-on-Thames. The option of a Park & Ride in this location as provided for in LTP4 is also identified. It is expected that the Park & Ride and a freight park will be considered as a separate phase, as further appraisal and approvals are required. An up to date safeguarding map will be included in the Local Plan.

5. Science Bridge and Capacity Improvements to the A4130 (CP17)

- A bid for Local Growth funding from the Oxfordshire LEP was made in May 2015. Funding for approximately 40% of the cost of the project is sought. A significant amount of match funding has been identified from future S106/CIL contributions and direct delivery of elements of the scheme. The project involves a new road bridge over the Great Western mainline railway from the proposed Valley Park development to the Didcot A site with connections on either side. The road will enable the A4130 to be diverted north through the Didcot A site, avoiding the currently congested junctions either side of Manor Bridge. Capacity improvements include the planned widening of the A4130 between Milton Interchange and Science Bridge to a dual carriageway. It is anticipated that this work will be carried out in conjunction with the Science Bridge project. The safeguarding maps will need to be amended to show the current scheme.

6. New Thames Crossing at Culham (CP17)

- A bid for Local Growth funding from the Oxfordshire LEP was made in May 2015 for phase 1 (B4015 to Culham Science Centre/A415 junction). Funding for approximately two thirds of the cost of a phase 1 route is sought with the remainder expected to come from future S106/CIL contributions. Phase 1 involves a new road from A415 to B4015 to provide improved access from the east of Culham Science Centre to Oxford. This route will enable traffic to avoid causing significant congestion through Clifton Hampden. Phase 2 is a new road and Thames river crossing between the B4016 north of Didcot and Culham Science Centre. This route will reduce congestion caused at the existing river crossings at Culham and Long Wittenham, and provide an alternative strategic north/south route to that provided by the A34. An up to date safeguarding map will be included in the Local Plan.

7. Harwell Link Road (B4493 to A417) (CP17)

- Planning permission has been granted for the Harwell Link Road between the B4493 and A417. This is to be funded through City Deal The project involves a new road between the B4493 and A417 to provide for trips between Didcot and Harwell Campus and congestion relief to the road network in Harwell Village and the Didcot area.

8. Rowstock and A417 Improvements (CP17)

- The Rowstock roundabout at the junction of the A417, A4185 and the A4130 sits on both the north/south axis between Harwell Campus and Milton Park and the

east/west axis between Wantage and Didcot. A scheme to alleviate congestion is being developed. Work is underway to identify potential improvements along the A417 from Wantage to Blewbury. The study includes improving access from the villages, enhancing access to bus services and improving the capacity of this route. Amendments to the safeguarding map will be identified.

9. Harwell Campus

- A scheme to improve the entrance at Thompson Ave, Harwell Campus, is funded through the City Deal. Consultation on the scheme closed in July 2015. This Thompson Ave scheme should be included on the Local Plan safeguarding maps. Further improvements will be required at Harwell Campus, such as at Curie Ave and Fermi Ave, to ensure the site can be accessed with future development.

10. Backhill Lane Tunnel and crossing on A4130 (CP17)

- Funding has been secured through the LEP Growing Places Fund for a cycle/pedestrian route upgrade at the Backhill Lane Tunnel under the railway line linking the Milton Park Enterprise Zone and land to the south; the scheme includes a new signalised junction with crossing point across the A4130, with new access to development to the south of the A4130.

11. Hagbourne Hill (CP17)

- The Hagbourne Hill road, near to the Chilton interchange, is to be upgraded utilising City Deal funding to improve the link between the A34 at Chilton and Didcot when paired with the Harwell Link Road. This work will start in September 2015.

12. Featherbed Lane including Steventon lights (CP17)

- Featherbed Lane, an upgrade including new junctions at either end, is funded through City Deal, will improve traffic flow along this narrow country lane and release pressure on Rowstock roundabout.. The traffic signals at Steventon will improve traffic flow along the A4130

13. Wantage Eastern Link Road (CP17)

- The Wantage Eastern Link Road from the A338 at Mably Way to the A417 is to be funded as a result of significant development in Wantage and Grove through S106 and direct delivery. The scheme will be delivered by the Crab Hill developers with kick start funding provided from the Local Transport Board. A S106 agreement has been signed with Crab Hill and the scheme should be forthcoming in due course.

14. Grove/Wantage Railway Station and Park & Ride (CP19)

- An ambition for a new railway station on the Great Western line north of Grove with associated car parking is included in LTP4, in accordance with the Strategic Economic Plan. This will help to serve and meet the needs of new development across western Vale area, and better connect Wantage and Grove with Didcot, Oxford, Swindon and beyond. This is an ambition for the period 2021-2031 and will need agreement with Network Rail and a proposal for train services stopping there. Further work on developing this project is planned for 2015/16.

15. A420 Strategy (CP21)

- LTP4 includes an A420 Strategy which recognises the need for various improved junctions on the A420 to improve access to main settlements including Faringdon and Shrivenham whilst maintaining its function as a strategic highway between Swindon and Oxford. Funding will primarily need to be secured through development. Additional funding may be sought jointly by the County Council, Swindon Borough and VOWH.

16. South Abingdon Bypass (CP12)

- The County Council supports the inclusion of a safeguarding policy which provides for a bypass to the south of Abingdon linking the A415 to the West and South East of the town. Such a bypass would include a new River Thames crossing. The scheme is not currently required, but it is safeguarded to ensure its future delivery is not compromised, should it be found to be needed later in the plan period or beyond.

17. West Wantage Link Road (CP17)

- The County Council supports the inclusion of a safeguarding policy which provides for a link road connecting the A417 from Mably Way in Wantage to East Challow. This scheme is not currently required, but it is safeguarded to ensure its future delivery is not compromised, should it be found to be needed later in the plan period or beyond.

18. Southern Didcot Spine Road

- The County Council supports the inclusion of a safeguarding policy which provides for a road to serve possible future development south of Didcot within South Oxfordshire. The part of the road within the Vale of White Horse would, if taken forward, commence on the Valley Park strategic site with the western junction on the Harwell Link Road between the B4493 and A417. The safeguarding policy and map will need to be amended to reflect the current scheme.

19. Frilford Junction

- The County Council supports the inclusion of a safeguarding policy which provides for changes to this junction on the A338 and A415. It is recognised that the current configuration of the lights in this location slows travel times. The land is safeguarded to ensure its future delivery should a scheme and funding be identified later in the plan period or beyond.

20. Bus Network Improvements (CP17)

- A new bus strategy is contained in LTP4. This envisages the development of rapid transit between Oxford and new Park & Ride sites as well as the development or upgrading of premium services where new development makes it feasible such as in Science Vale. Development of routes may include provision of priorities measures on existing roads, or through new development where appropriate. Several of the strategic highway schemes will open up new route options, such as between Didcot and Culham, as well as free up capacity on certain roads for potential bus priority. Maps are included in LTP4 defining the strategic routes.

## **Appendix 4 – Report of the Oxfordshire Growth Board 30 July 2015**

### **Post SHMA Strategic Work Programme**

#### **Recommendations**

That the Growth Board:

- (i) Confirm that the emphasis on the Sovereignty of Local Plans in the key principles for the Post SHMA Strategic Work Programme remains appropriate.
- (ii) Endorse the detailed work programme and revised timetable.
- (iii) Request a more frequent pattern of Growth Board Meetings aligned with the Strategic Work Programme.
- (iv) Request that the Partners adopt a Coordination and Communication Protocol.

#### **Purpose of the Report**

1. To provide a synopsis of the Post-SHMA Strategic Work Programme (the Programme) along with a revised timetable, provided as an appendix to this report.

#### **Background**

2. Public bodies have a Duty to Co-operate on planning issues that cross administrative boundaries. A key issue in Oxfordshire is the potential unmet housing need arising from Oxford City. The Programme has been developed to help the Oxfordshire Councils fulfil the duty on this issue.
3. The Growth Board considered a report on the Programme at its last meeting on 25 June 2015. It resolved that further consideration of the detailed Programme be deferred to a special meeting of the Growth Board to be held as soon as possible in July to enable the Executive Officer Group to produce a revised timetable, together with a synopsis of the work involved.

#### **Key Principles**

4. The Growth Board in November 2014 approved the key principles which should underpin the Programme. The principles as endorsed are set out below:
  - The district Local Plans are sovereign and all work should feed into Local Plans for them to determine the spatial future of the districts;
  - A recognition however that the work must be collaborative and joined up to provide a county wide spatial picture and strategy;
  - A recognition therefore that joint work on future spatial options, transport infrastructure and green belt will be required to feed into Local Plans;

- Recognition that the City cannot fully meet its housing needs and there is a need to agree on the level of unmet need. However work on determining spatial options in Local Plans can commence alongside this;
- A wish that the timescale for completing the Review is 12 – 18 months and that this should not hold up Local Plan timescales.

## **Synopsis of Strategic Work Programme**

### Defining Oxford's Unmet Need

5. An important element of the Programme is to clarify the extent of Oxford's housing need that can be accommodated in Oxford City itself. The Critical Friend, engaged to help the programme, has been asked to review the documentation on this issue and recommend a way forward. A single figure or narrower range is being sought around which hopefully the relevant authorities can coalesce, at least as a working assumption, in order to inform the assessment of Strategic Options.

### Development of Strategic Options

6. A range of Strategic Options will be developed for meeting Oxford's unmet housing need. The intention is that the Strategic Options will identify potential areas of search for additional housing, above a threshold of 500 dwellings which will then be used to help inform the future distribution of this unmet need between the various local authority areas.

### Green Belt Study

7. A study into the Oxfordshire Green Belt is underway. This will assess the contribution that different parts of the Green Belt make to the purposes of the Green Belt according to the 5 statutory criteria. This study will, in combination with the Strategic Options Assessment, help to identify the potential, or not, for development, and the case for additional areas to be added to the Green Belt. Local Planning Authorities will consider any changes to Green Belt boundaries through Local Plan Reviews.

### Strategic Options Assessment

8. A common set of criteria will be used to assess the Strategic Options. The assessment process will look at each of the Strategic Options and provide a high level sustainability assessment. It will also identify any strategic constraints on the scale of growth in Oxfordshire.

It has always been recognised that this is an informal process which does not form part of the statutory planning system but one that is intended to demonstrate compliance with the Duty to Co-operate without compromising the principle of individual local plans sovereignty. The assessment process itself will involve a two stage process with transport modelling restricted to a shortlist of Strategic Options owing to the significant costs involved with this element of the work.

### Infrastructure Delivery Planning

9. The County Council will prepare an Infrastructure Delivery Framework to set out the strategic infrastructure investments required to support growth. A draft framework will be prepared in parallel with the assessment of strategic options. This will allow the cumulative impact of growth to be properly considered alongside the identification of infrastructure priorities.

#### Housing Need Distribution

10. The outcomes of the Strategic Options Assessment will inform the distribution of Oxford's unmet need between the various district council areas. This will be set out in a Statement of Cooperation to be approved by the Board and which will feed into subsequent Local Plan Reviews. A package of background reports will be published documenting the process carried out and the technical evidence underpinning the Statement of Cooperation.

#### Local Plan Reviews

11. Local Planning Authorities will complete Local Plan Reviews, if required, to address the issue of Oxford's unmet housing need. This will involve detailed technical work at a sites level and will provide extensive opportunities for public and stakeholder engagement. Local Planning authorities will need to commission detailed evidence, and full Sustainability Appraisals to support their Local Plan Reviews. It will be for each Council to consider whether they adopt any of the Strategic Options assessed through the Strategic Work programme or whether they develop an alternative approach supported by their own evidence prepared in conjunction with local plan reviews.

#### **Revised Timetable**

12. Officers, through the Growth Board Executive Officer Group, have prepared a revised timetable and detailed work programme to reflect the current position. This is attached in Appendix 1.

13. The revised timetable shows that the partnership will not be in a position to reach a short list of strategic options until January 2016. It is now anticipated that the Statement of Cooperation will be published in May 2016 alongside a draft Infrastructure Delivery Framework and the background reports.

#### **Issues**

##### Local Plan Sovereignty and Robustness

14. The Strategic Work Programme exists to help Councils satisfy the Duty to Cooperate. It is not a formal planning process and its outputs will not be Statutory Planning Documents. It will help inform the future Local Plan Reviews of City and District Councils. The individual Local Plan Review processes will provide extensive opportunities for public and stakeholder engagement, and will formally test the outcomes of the Programme.

15. A more formal approach could be adopted for the Strategic Work Programme but this would, to some extent, constrain future Local Plan Reviews and undermine the sovereignty of Local Plans. The Growth Board could consider this aspect.

#### Governance

16. It is important that key stages of the Strategic Work Programme are reported to the Growth Board for agreement. Additional Growth Board meetings can be arranged to facilitate this. It is anticipated, for example, that the conclusions of the Critical Friend on the figure for Oxford's unmet need can be reported to the Growth Board in September.

#### Coordination and Communication

17. In order for the programme to be successfully completed it will require commitment and co-operation from the partners. A number of coordination mechanisms have been established. For example the Executive Officers Group and a Project Team. But the development of a Coordination and Communication Protocol could be useful given the complex nature of the issues being considered.

#### **Conclusions**

18. The Programme and timetable demonstrates the progress made to date but also recognises the slippage. Officers believe that the revised timetable is realistic, albeit challenging but acknowledge that it will not be achieved without the full continued commitment of all partners to the programme and ask the Growth Board to reaffirm that full commitment.