

Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2031 Part 1

Examination Hearings

Stage 1 - September 2015

Statement of Common Ground

Between

Vale of White Horse District Council

and

South Oxfordshire District Council

1. Introduction

1.1. This Statement has been prepared by Vale of White Horse District Council (VOWH) and South Oxfordshire District Council (SODC) (hereafter referred to jointly as ‘the Councils’) 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 South Oxfordshire District 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, including any matters informing Stage 2.

2. Background

2.1. Both Councils have a history of working effectively together at both councillor and officer Level. The two councils share a management team, including a shared head of planning and planning policy manager. There are two planning policy teams which deal with their respective administrative areas but work closely together on all matters of strategic importance.

2.2. 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. Prior to this both councils were members of the Oxfordshire Spatial Planning and Infrastructure Partnership (SPIP). The two councils

are also members of the Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) which has prepared the Strategic Economic Plan 2030 (**ECO10**) for Oxfordshire.

- 2.3. The Councils have to date been involved in the preparation/completion of the following important planning documents and studies:

Science Vale Area Action Plan

- 2.4. This development plan document (DPD) provides a catalyst for the strategic planning of Science Vale, which traverses the administrative boundary of both districts, up to 2031. It will seek to ensure that the development of more than 20,000 dwellings and a similar level of jobs for Science Vale is brought forward cohesively alongside the delivery of important infrastructure, facilities and services.
- 2.5. It will include a clear framework for the area, setting specific urban design principles and design briefs to inform and prepare masterplans for housing and employment sites, including Harwell Campus, Milton Park and Culham Science Centre. The Area Action Plan will include a framework for Didcot to ensure that all new development meets the needs and aspirations for this important hub. It will also develop a strategy for mixed use development and regeneration of large brownfield sites, such as the former power station site at Didcot A.
- 2.6. The Councils' consulted on the Science Vale Area Action Plan – Issues and Scope document (**LNP15**) earlier in 2015. The Local Development Schemes of the Councils' are also aligned with respect to the delivery of this important policy document.

*Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Show People Needs Assessment (**HOU07; HOU07.1; HOU08**)*

- 2.7. This needs assessment was prepared jointly with South Oxfordshire District Council and Oxford City Council. An update was produced in 2014 to ensure the evidence prepared to date was in line with a number of important key precedent cases set by local plan examinations and planning appeals elsewhere in the county.

*Joint Hotel Needs Assessment (**ECO08**)*

- 2.8. This needs assessment was prepared jointly with South Oxfordshire to ensure that, in addition to the identification of the needs of both districts, there was a strategic assessment of the need for hotels in Science Vale also.

Joint Green Infrastructure Strategy

- 2.9. This strategy is currently being prepared jointly with both councils. Its purpose is to develop an inclusive strategy for green infrastructure and species movement across South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse.

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

3.1. The following are matters agreed by the Councils for the purpose of Stage 1 of the Examination in Public for the Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2031 Part 1.

Duty to Co-operate

3.2. The Councils' agree that the duty to co-operate has been met in full with respect to matters of strategic importance between the two districts. The Councils' will continue to engage constructively on all matters of strategic importance at both member and officer levels.

Sustainability Appraisal and Habitats Regulation Assessment

3.3. The Councils' agree that the Sustainability Appraisal (SA) and Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA) have been completed in a satisfactory manner. The Councils' support the approach taken with respect to the testing of reasonable alternatives, as set out in the SA.

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 the objectively assessed needs (OAN) in full which seeks to support committed economic growth.

4.2. With respect to the OAN for housing, the Councils' also agree to the following:

- The Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA – **HOU01**) for Oxfordshire is a robust evidence base which sets the housing targets for both districts up to 2031.
- The methodology which informed the OAN, including the demographic adjustment to the 2011 CLG household projections and the allowances made for addressing past shortfalls in the delivery of housing against the South East Plan is soundly based.
- The adjustments made to the SHMA which take account of forecast economic growth as set out in the Cambridge Econometrics/SQW report are soundly based, and take account of policies influences such as the Enterprise Zone and City Deal which will stimulate investment in employment.

4.3. It is agreed that the objectively assessed housing needs for both districts can most sustainably be met at locations within their own respective administrative boundaries and there is no identified requirement of un-met housing need arising from either district which needs to be addressed.

- 4.4. Should the proposed strategy and level of growth for either Vale of White Horse or South Oxfordshire change, the Councils' will continue to discuss the most appropriate strategy moving forward with other relevant partners.

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.
- 5.2. The Councils' agree that the proposed distribution of housing and employment will make the fullest possible use of public transport, walking and cycling as set out by Oxfordshire County Council in its Local Transport Plan 4 (LTP4)¹. A Memorandum of Understanding (**DTC04**) has been agreed between Oxfordshire County Council, Vale of White Horse District Council and South Oxfordshire District Council on matters relating to transport.
- 5.3. The Councils' agree that, as per paragraph 6.18 of South Oxfordshire's adopted Core Strategy 2027 (**LNP17**), a cross boundary allocation of 6.5 hectares of land remains at Milton Park to meet the employment needs of residents in Didcot. The Councils' agree that this strategic growth across boundaries is delivered most effectively through the emerging Science Vale Area Action Plan.

Science Vale Housing Supply Ring Fence

- 5.4. The Councils' agree that the provision of a housing supply ring fence is the most appropriate strategy for delivering growth in the nationally and internationally significant Science Vale.
- 5.5. The Councils' agree that the provision of a ring fence in Science Vale, include that which already exists as part of the adopted South Oxfordshire Core Strategy 2027 (**LNP17**) is crucial to the effective delivery of the upcoming Science Vale Area Action Plan, and provides clarity for developers on the infrastructural requirements and contributions arising from strategic site allocations.

6. Matter 4 – Unmet Housing Needs

¹ For the most up-to-date position on Oxfordshire County Council's Local Transport Plan 4, see <https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/content/local-transport-plan-ltp4>

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 (HMA), specifically Oxford City. At its meeting on 20 November 2014 (**DTC05**), the Growth Board agreed a set of principles, a process, milestones and key deliverables for this work.
- 6.2. It is accepted between the two Councils that Oxford City is unable to provide in full for its own Objectively Assessed Need (OAN) 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 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 2015 (**LNP18**).
- 6.3. Core Policy 2 of Local Plan 2031 Part 1 provides commitment by the Vale of White Horse 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.
- 6.4. The policy also contains commitment by the district council to working jointly with all the Oxfordshire councils to address unmet housing need and to undertaking a full or partial local plan review or to allocating 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.
- 6.5. The Councils' agree that Core Policy 2 is the most effective approach for the Vale of White Horse District Council to commit to the process of dealing with unmet housing need in Oxfordshire, and that this will be addressed in tandem with the progression of the Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2031 Part 1.

7. Other Matters

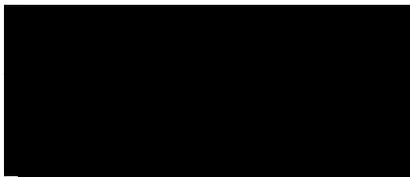
- 7.1. In regards to South Oxfordshire District Council's representations on the Publication Version of the Local Plan, the Councils' agree these representations have been adequately addressed in particular within the Regulation 22 Statement (**DLP09**), Regulation 22 Statement Addendum and within the Schedule of Proposed Minor

Changes (**DLP11**). Although a number of South Oxfordshire District Council's comments relate to Stage 2 of the Examination, they have been addressed below.

- The Councils' agree the Local Plan, as a whole, fully reflects the positive co-operation between partners in demonstrating co-operation as explained above.
- The Councils' agree the Local Plan appropriately addresses the need for housing and employment opportunities within Science Vale, within paragraphs 5.79-5.85.
- The Councils' agree the Memorandum of Understanding, as mentioned above, demonstrates a commitment to ensure close cooperation of the Councils' and Oxfordshire County Council to implement transport improvements.
- The Vale of White Horse District Council has proposed modifications in response to South Oxfordshire District Council's comments regarding specific key challenges and opportunities (**DLP11** - references 2.3 and 5.9).
- The Councils' agree the wording within the Submission Sustainability Appraisal in regards to consideration of sites within the Green Belt at paragraphs 11.3.10-11.4 is appropriate.
- Both Councils' agree to the principles of Core Policy 13: The Oxford Green Belt and Core Policy 16: Didcot A Power Station.

Signatures

Signed on behalf of Vale of White Horse District Council



Adrian Duffield, Head of Planning

Date: 21 August 2015

Signed on behalf of South Oxfordshire District Council



Anna Robinson, Strategic Director

Date: 21 August 2015