

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

Natural England

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This Statement of Common Ground has been prepared jointly between the Vale of White Horse District Council and Natural England, hereafter referred to as 'all parties'. It sets out confirmed matters of agreement in relation to Stage 1 of the Local Plan Examination, and more specifically it sets out the current position and matters of agreement relating to the Duty to Co-operate, the Sustainability Appraisal, and the Habitats Regulations Assessment. It also sets out clearly where areas of common ground remain outstanding for the purposes of Stage 1.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 The Council have made every effort throughout the preparation of the Local Plan Part 1 to ensure the Plan provides a robust, strategic framework for the effective delivery of sustainable development. Throughout this process the Council have continuously engaged with the Natural England on policy, strategic allocations and specific evidence base studies and ensuring the Plan implements national policy appropriately.

3.0 Duty to Cooperate / Collaborative Working

- 3.1 As evidenced within the Statement of Compliance with the Duty to Cooperate and the Duty to Cooperate Topic Paper, the Council have continuously engaged with Natural England. All parties are committed to continuous working on matters relating to the natural environment. This is essential to ensure these matters are taken into account as growth within the district proceeds.

4.0 Stage 1 Local Plan Examination Matters

- 4.1 *Duty to Co-operate*

- 4.2 All parties agree the Council has discharged its duty to co-operate with respect to the natural environment.
- 4.3 *Sustainability Appraisal (SA) of the Local Plan 2031 Part 1*
- 4.4 Natural England, in paragraph 25 of their representation to the Local Plan, proposed a minor change to Core Policy 46 in order to make the policy more effective. The Council has accommodated this change through its Schedule of Proposed Minor Changes¹ (**DLP11**). All parties agree to this minor modification which enhances the effectiveness of the policy as a whole.
- 4.5 *Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) of the Local Plan 2031 Part 1*
- 4.6 Natural England, in paragraphs 29 – 32 of their representation to the Local Plan, had concerns with respect to the conclusions for the Oxford Meadows SAC. Natural England have now seen the updated version of the HRA, dated February 2015, and agree with the conclusions of this more recent document that there will be no likely significant effects on Oxford Meadows SAC as a result of the planned growth.
- 4.7 *Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP)*
- 4.8 Paragraph 28 of Natural England's representation to the Local Plan notes that the IDP makes reference to Green Infrastructure as a subset of the Leisure category within the document. All parties agree with Natural England's minor modification to change the title of this section from "Leisure" to "Leisure and Green Infrastructure" would provide greater clarity to the document. While this matter does not impact upon the soundness of the Local Plan 2031 Part 1, the Council will ensure that future updates to the IDP will accommodate this change.
- 5.0 *Matters that Remain Outstanding*
- 5.1 Natural England still has concerns over the Harwell Campus allocation and the overall assessment of alternatives on the Vale of White Horse Local Plan. Landscape matters involving the North Wessex Downs AONB therefore remain an issue we wish to be examined in front of the inspector at the impending inquiry.

¹ Minor Change No.6.10, Schedule of Proposed Minor Changes, March 2015 (**DLP11**)

Signatures

Signed on behalf of Vale of White Horse District Council



20 August 2015

Adrian Duffield
Head of Planning

Date

Signed on behalf of Natural England



20th August 2015

Charlotte Frizzell
Lead Adviser

Date