

# **Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2031 Part 1**

## **Examination Hearings**

**February 2016**

### **Statement of Common Ground**

#### **Between**

**Vale of White Horse District Council, Oxfordshire County Council, Thames Travel/ Oxford Bus Company, and Stagecoach in Oxfordshire/  
Stagecoach West**

#### **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 This Statement relates to strategic public transport matters of common interest to all parties signatory to this statement. It is recognised that all parties have an interest and stake in policies and plans to support planned development within the Vale of White Horse, recognised as a focus for growth within the Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership Strategic Economic Plan.
- 1.2 The District Council is positively planning for growth through policies included within their Local Plan Part 1. The plan proposes allocation of significant new housing and employment at locations considered as having the potential for high quality public transport access, and specifically includes proposed policies that support delivery of improved public transport access to new development, including Core Policy 33: Promoting Sustainable Transport and Accessibility, and Core Policy 35: Promoting Public Transport, Cycling and Walking.
- 1.3 Oxfordshire County Council supports development and delivery of strategic transport improvements in line with policies within its Local Transport Plan 4. This includes plans for promotion of sustainable transport options in growth areas, including in Science Vale and through improvements in public transport, walking and cycling networks. A public transport strategy for Science Vale is included in the Local Transport Plan.
- 1.4 Thames Travel/Oxford Bus Company and Stagecoach in Oxfordshire/Stagecoach West are the commercial bus operators operating the very great majority of the current bus services in the Plan area, including the wider Science Vale. All the bus companies signatory to this statement recognise the need to continue to work positively with the Vale of White Horse and Oxfordshire County Council in the planning and delivery of bus services in the area, in particular seeking and taking advantage of opportunities to improve services and infrastructure through the planning and delivery of proposed new development set out in the Vale of White Horse Local Plan.
- 1.5 The signatories recognise that there is a key mutuality between the active management of patterns of growth to take advantage of the opportunities for sustainable transport, including existing and potential new and improved bus services, and the response of the bus companies to support the identification and delivery of those improvements, as far as possible.

## **2. Work on the Local Plan to date**

- 2.1 Development of the Local Plan Part 1 has required undertaking of transport modelling using the County Council Oxfordshire Strategic Transport (OSM) model, both to assist with site assessment, and to establish proposed transport mitigation. The results of this transport modelling are presented in evidence used to support the submission Local Plan Part 1 document.
- 2.2 The latest published work is the 'Evaluation of Transport Impacts (ETI) Study to inform the Vale of White Horse District Council Local Plan 2031: Part 1 Strategic Sites and Policies, November 2014.'
- 2.3 This report identifies the necessity of a number of strategic transport schemes in mitigating the impact of further transport demand arising from planned new development, and which will open up new opportunities for bus operations to and within Science Vale. These include:
- Improvements to the A4130 corridor around Didcot, including a new bridge and highway link over the railway which will link major new areas of employment and housing development
  - A proposed new crossing of the Thames between Didcot and Culham Science Centre, linking to a new road from the Science Centre to the B4015 towards Oxford.
- 2.4 The bus companies also note and recognise that other highways-based schemes identified in the Plan and supporting documents such as the Infrastructure Delivery Plan, will, by addressing key congestion problems within the network, help the companies achieve faster and more consistent journey times, which is of great assistance in helping achieve organic patronage growth.
- 2.5 The ETI specifically recognises the role that public transport and smarter choice measures can have in improving transport choice within the Vale of White Horse, particularly within the main areas of growth where investment in sustainable transport options can be prioritised. This will enable new residents and workers to travel more easily by public transport, cycling and walking, thereby helping to reduce pressure on the highway network by reducing demand for personal car journeys.
- 2.6 In addition to the transport modelling work, a study was also undertaken on the viability and feasibility of progressing an improved bus service corridor between Didcot and Harwell. This identified that delivery of infrastructure and service improvements on this corridor would encourage patronage growth in tandem with build out of development in Science Vale along this route.
- 2.7 Both studies are part of the background evidence for the Local Plan, Part 1.

## **3. Agreement and actions moving forward**

- 3.1 All parties recognise the need to plan positively for growth in homes and jobs in the Vale of White Horse, with the Local Plan Part 1 ensuring that this growth is planned for strategically, and ensuring that development is sustainably located. However, they recognise that given constraints on local authority budgets, public funding for bus service support is increasingly limited, meaning that the focus needs to be on planning and delivering a commercially sustainable bus network for the longer-term.



- 3.2 In light of the current situation regarding bus services and networks across the Vale, it is agreed that that further partnership-led study work is undertaken between the district, county and bus companies to understand constraints and opportunities for the development of an enhanced bus network in areas identified for major growth, that can be credibly expected to operate without external revenue support in the longer term. This will look to set out in more detail the proposed commercial bus network to 2031, particularly for Science Vale, and identify how planned development in the Vale and adjoining areas can assist delivery of public transport improvements. This will likely include further site masterplanning work, delivery of smarter choice measures, and where appropriate contributions towards pump-priming of service improvements.
- 3.3 Given the historic investment and existing commercial exposure of the bus companies to maintaining and growing their respective services, it is agreed that procurement and delivery strategies should also form a part of this work. The signatories recognise that the statutory tests in the Community Infrastructure Regulations 2010 at regulation 122 have a significant bearing on these matters, and that among those tests, those relating to proportionality and reasonableness require that as far as possible that the commercial strengths and skills of the incumbent operators are leveraged to ensure that those tests are met.
- 3.4 The bus companies will continue to advise the County Council and Vale officers regarding the optimum urban design parameters necessary to maximise the operational efficiency and attractiveness of bus services to and through proposed new developments. This will be via the County Council at pre-application stage, and with applicants' client teams as appropriate before and after submission, in dialogue with each Council's officers.
- 3.5 The signatories agree that achieving early consensus on these principles, and their consistent and robust application in shaping and determining development proposals, will be important in the short term, given a lot of the development proposed in the Plan is already either the subject of live applications, or, in several cases, has resolutions to grant in outline.
- 3.6 In particular the signatories recognise that the application of these principles will be of particular relevance, both at Outline and Reserved Matters stage, for those strategic-scale developments proposed within Science Vale.

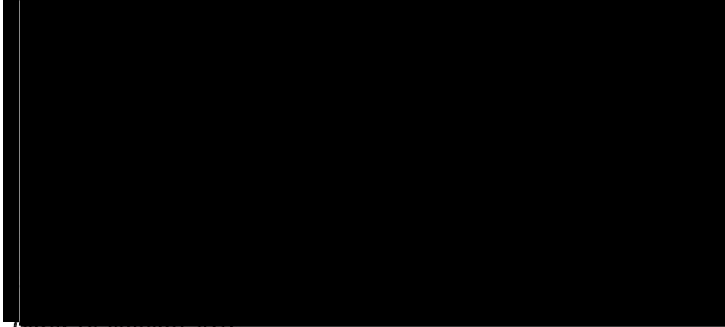
Signed on behalf of Vale of White Horse District Council

[Redacted Signature]

Vale Local Plan Subject Matter Advisor

Date: [Redacted]

Signed on behalf of Oxfordshire County Council



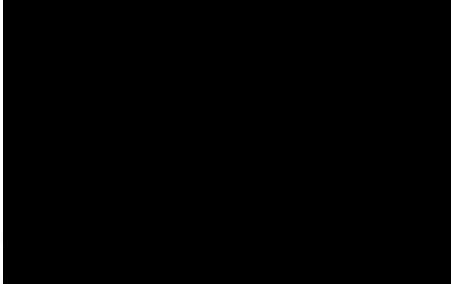
Date: 18 January 2016

Signed on behalf of Oxford Bus Company/Thames Travel



Date:

Signed on behalf of Stagecoach in Oxfordshire



Date:

Signed on behalf of Stagecoach West

