

Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2031 Part 1

Examination Hearings

February 2016

Statement of Common Ground

Between

Vale of White Horse District Council and Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP)

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This Statement of Common Ground (SoCG) has been prepared by Vale of White Horse District Council (VOWHDC) and the Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) to reflect the current position agreed by all parties with regard to the Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2031 and supporting evidence base.
- 1.2 The Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership is responsible for championing and developing Oxfordshire's economy, and is working with businesses, academia and the public sector to drive economic development across the county.
- 1.3 Oxfordshire is regularly cited amongst the top 10% of LEP's across the country and is focused upon increasing business growth and productivity supported by accelerated housing delivery, better integrated transport, a better qualified workforce, underpinned by a quality of place that few locations can offer.
- 1.4 Within the Vale of White Horse District, Science Vale forms the southernmost part of the "Oxfordshire Knowledge Spine" as articulated in the Strategic Economic Plan. The Science Vale locality is already nationally and internationally exceptional. The British Chancellor of the Exchequer, George Osborne MP, has said:

"The Science Vale Enterprise Zone will harness the region's unparalleled research and development base to create a wealth of innovative and high growth business. The region is home to some of the newest and fastest growing businesses in high performance engineering, biotechnology and medical instruments, and the Science Vale Enterprise Zone provides the opportunity to unlock the region's full potential".
- 1.5 The Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) sets a clear vision for the county and responds to the potential for economic growth. The Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2031 Part 1, informed by the agreed Oxfordshire SHMA, recognises the need to plan positively for the delivery of homes and employment growth, particularly focusing on the Science Vale locality.
- 1.6 Both Vale of White Horse District Council and the Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership recognise the unique characteristics of parts of the Vale, particularly around Science Vale as positively contributing to UK economy through knowledge-based economy at Harwell and Milton Park.

- 1.7 This Statement confirms areas of agreement regarding the proposed strategic allocations adjacent to Harwell Campus, the need to plan for sustainable economic growth and the delivery of essential infrastructure in the Local Plan 2031, and an agreed set of future actions.

2. Areas of agreement in relation to Local Plan, Part 1

- 2.1 The Oxfordshire LEP fully supports the Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2031 Part 1: Strategic Sites and Policies, which establishes an ambitious, yet deliverable strategy for fully meeting the objectively assessed housing need for the district, which is 'fundamental' to support economic growth potential identified in the Oxfordshire Strategic Economic Plan (SEP).
- 2.2 The Board recognises that 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.
- 2.3 In particular, the Oxfordshire LEP strongly supports the proposed strategic housing allocations located adjacent to Harwell Campus (East of Harwell Campus and North West of Harwell Campus).
- 2.4 Harwell Campus is at the core of the UK's strategy for growth and a pillar of strength for the UK economy. It is crucial for the future success of the site and for Harwell Campus to continue to compete on an international stage that housing is delivered adjacent to the site. Housing adjacent to and fully integrated to the campus, delivered alongside local services and facilities, is necessary to ensure the site provides a world class environment to attract inward investment, commercial enterprise and a high skilled workforce, to ensure the campus evolves from a science and innovation park to a world class campus environment offering a work-live-play community.
- 2.5 The Oxfordshire LEP therefore consider the allocation of housing adjacent to Harwell Campus is essential for its future success.
- 2.6 Furthermore, both parties consider that the construction of housing 'within' the Enterprise Zone at Harwell Campus, as proposed by the current management partnership for the campus, undermines the basis upon which the allocation was awarded and limits the economic potential of the zone, on that basis Housing construction within the zone would be unacceptable.
- 2.7 The Enterprise Zone has been allocated by Central Government to support economic growth in accordance with the government's growth agenda. Releasing a significant area of land for housing would harm economic growth in Oxfordshire, and the UK as a whole. This approach would also have a significantly detrimental impact on the generation of Business Rate income derived through development in the Enterprise Zone to assist the Oxfordshire LEP in securing the funding for essential infrastructure agreed through the Oxfordshire City Deal, thus jeopardising the whole strategy for growth in the district.
- 2.8 The Department for Communities and Local Government have made it clear that they do not support housing development within an Enterprise Zone as this is contrary to the purpose of Enterprise Zones and would be harmful to the national economy.

- 2.9 Ensuring that Enterprise Zone land is retained for employment growth is essential and is fully supported by the LEP and Vale of White Horse District Council.

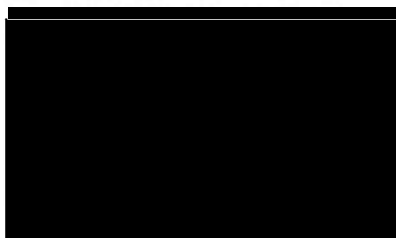
3. Agreement to actions going forward

- 3.1 Vale of White Horse District Council will continue to work positively in planning for bringing forward new employment and housing development in a sustainable manner whilst supporting the need to promote continued economic growth.
- 3.2 Vale of White Horse District Council will continue to work positively and constructively with the Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership to plan for the delivery of essential infrastructure and for sustainable economic growth.
- 3.3 All parties recognise the positive role that planning policy can have in coordinating the planning and delivery of essential infrastructure.

4. Conclusion

- 4.1 Having reviewed the proposed Local Plan allocations in respect of the Harwell site through the Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2031 Part 1: Strategic Sites and Policies submission the Board remain of the view that the integration of quality homes and employment at the Harwell site is essential.
- 4.2 In this regard, the proposed allocation of Housing within the Enterprise Zone would fetter our ability to work with the Vale of the White Horse Districts Council in maximising employment growth. For this reason we support the Vale of the White Horse District Councils proposed Housing allocation to the East of Harwell Campus and North West of Harwell Campus.

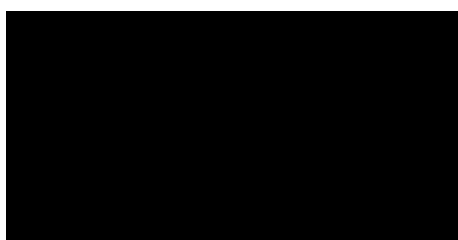
Signed on behalf of Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership



Chief Executive Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership

Date: 25/01/16

Signed on behalf of Vale of White Horse District Council



Vale Local Plan Subject Matter Advisor

Date: 26/01/16