

Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2031

Examination in Public Stage 2

Statement of Common Ground

between:

Vale of White Horse District Council

and

Valley Park Development Consortium (VPDC) comprising of:

Taylor Wimpey PLC

Persimmon Homes PLC

Hallam Land Management Limited

January 2016

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This Statement of Common Ground (SoCG) has been prepared between Vale of White Horse District Council and the Valley Park Development Consortium (VPDC) here after known as “the parties”. This document identifies the matters agreed with regard to the Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2031 Part 1 and supporting documents to assist the Inspector during the Examination of the Local Plan Stage 2.
- 1.2 This SoCG particularly relates to the allocation of Valley Park (Site 11) for the development of at least 2,550 homes, subject to masterplanning, and supporting facilities within the plan period (2011 to 2031). The agreed matters have been structured to help inform the Inspector through Stage 2 of the hearing sessions.
- 1.3 Vale of White Horse District Council proposes the site for allocation for strategic housing development in the Local Plan having considered reasonable alternatives including assessing the relevant evidence, and following consultation with stakeholders and the public.
- 1.4 The site is controlled by VPDC who have options and planning promotion agreements with the site’s owners.

2. Background / Context

2.1. Valley Park is located to the west of Didcot. Its proposed allocation in the submitted Vale Local Plan adjoins Great Western Park, an existing allocation in the adopted Vale of White Horse and South Oxfordshire Local Plans of 3,300 homes, currently under construction. The Great Western Park development is divided 2,700 dwellings in South Oxfordshire and 500 in the Vale. The proposed Valley Park allocation covers around 186 hectares of green field land between Didcot and the A34 and sits wholly within Vale.

2.2. The surrounding area consists of:

- The A4130 and the Great Western Mainline to the north, separating the site from Milton Park and the former Didcot A power station site;
- Great Western Park and Didcot to the east;
- North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and open countryside to the south;

- The A34 to the west, separating the site from Harwell Village;
- Another emerging housing allocation of at least 800 homes, subject to masterplanning, to the northwest (“North West of Valley Park”) that is currently open greenfield land.

2.3. The site presents an exciting opportunity to deliver a sustainable mixed use extension to the west of Didcot, containing primarily residential and retail development and associated public open space and leisure provision. This new neighbourhood will integrate with the existing town of Didcot and Great Western Park and surrounding employment sites, as well as taking advantage of good quality rail access to Oxford and London.

2.4. The developer consortium has submitted an outline planning application for 4,450 homes on this site. The application was registered on 4 February 2015. The application is following the normal development management process. The scale of the development is based on the comprehensive development of the entire Valley Park site rather than the level of development that can be provided within the plan period. The council intends to take the application to committee in spring 2016.

2.5. The development consortium has met with the council regularly to discuss the planning application since 2013, and on the policy context since 2008. This has been supplemented by four CABI design reviews and workshops, and regular meetings with the District and County councils. This has resulted in the enclosed draft Illustrative Masterplan (8106-0039-23), which has been agreed in principle by the parties and is well advanced, with a reduced capacity of 4,254 dwellings, based on a net residential density of 40 dwellings per hectare.

2.6. The parties agree that a positive determination of the application and execution of relevant S106s by spring 2016 would enable, after conditions discharge and reserved matters applications, the start of development on site during 2017 with circa 250 to 300 dwellings being delivered every calendar year.

3. Strategic Matters on which the parties agree

3.1. The council and the Consortium are in agreement on the following strategic statements:

- The full Objectively Assessed Need should be the housing target for the Local Plan 2031, as set out by the Oxfordshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment.
- The Vale, and the South East Vale Sub Area in particular, has strong economic prospects which needs to be supported by the timely provision of new homes to support forecast economic and employment growth.
- The district has a positive housing market outlook.
- The Vale needs a wide variety of sites, both in terms of scale and location across the district, and in particular for Science Vale, in order to meet the housing need in a timely manner, and to sustain a five year housing land supply throughout the plan period.
- The council's two part approach to the local plan is the most effective strategy, focusing part one on strategic sites and policies, while leaving detailed policies and non-strategic sites to part two. This approach will also assist in achieving the spatial vision for the district as well as for Science Vale, and optimise the delivery of sustainable development.
- The council's Sustainability Appraisal and Habitats Regulations Assessment have followed a robust methodology and have fulfilled the council's responsibilities under the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive and the Habitats Directive respectively.

4. Site Specific Matters on which the parties agree

- 4.1 Both parties agree that Valley Park is a sustainable, suitable, available and deliverable site.
- 4.2 There are no significant barriers to development and as far as the parties are aware there are no technical, ownership or planning impediments to development that cannot be satisfactorily and viably resolved.
- 4.3 Extensive capacity-testing through the current planning application, including the design review with CABE, has demonstrated that the site has capacity for significantly more than 2,550 dwellings over the lifetime of the development.

4.4 The Environmental Statement submitted with the current planning application assumes delivery of between 250 to 300 dwellings per year, working to the 4,254 units coming forward by 2031 as a worst-case scenario. From our experience elsewhere, the average delivery rate across the Plan period could be lower than this based on the availability of contractors and other factors such as infrastructure delivery. For the purposes of the Local Plan, the applicants suggest working to an assumption of between 200-250 dwellings per annum during the plan period.

4.5 Both parties agree that the development will provide:

- Two 2-form entry primary schools, one with potential for expansion.
- The strategic road infrastructure proposed by Oxfordshire County Council.
- The non-strategic north-south spine road through the development, designed to have an average speed limit of 30mph, with some areas of frontage access and other areas with bus priority.
- Informal open space, playing fields and play areas, the broad quantum of which is acceptable in principle and policy compliant. The informal open space will include 2 NEAPs and 4 LEAPs, 2 MUGAs and a mix of other sports pitches, a sports hall/leisure centre, changing facilities, a pavilion, tennis courts and skate park or similar and possibly a community facility. A management company will be set up by the VPDS to maintain public open space.

4.6 Both parties agree that a proposed boundary change with the North West of Valley Park allocation (Site 8) would add clarity to what land is controlled by the Valley Park allocation (Site 11). This change is set out in Appendix A of this SoCG and has already been requested as a minor modification to the Local Plan 2031 Part 1 by Vale of White Horse District Council.

5. Conclusion

5.1 The Consortium supports the allocation of Valley Park within Core Policy 4. All parties agree that the Valley Park site allocation is in a sustainable location for planned strategic growth.

5.2 The parties are working jointly to enable delivery of the planned development at the earliest opportunity and will continue to work cooperatively on all matters of mutual interest.

6. Areas Still to be Agreed

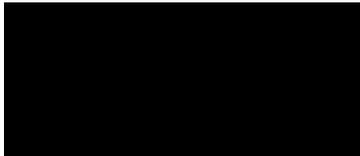
- 6.1 The parties are still to agree the quantum of affordable housing to be delivered with the development. The developer consortium considers the quantum should be determined having regard to the submitted Local Plan, i.e. 35%, whereas the Council considers it should be determined under the extant Local Plan, i.e. 40%.
- 6.2 The parties are also still to agree over the scale of transport infrastructure required to mitigate the development, in particular the extent of highway and junction improvements and provision of bus priority measures.

Signatures



Adrian Duffield
Head of Planning
Vale of White Horse District Council

22 January 2016
Date



Nick Laister
Senior Director
RPS Planning and Development
(On behalf of the Valley Park Development Consortium)

22 January 2016
Date

**Appendix A - Proposed boundary change with the adjacent Strategic Site Allocation
North West of Valley Park. Area shaded blue to form part of the Valley Park
Strategic Site Allocation.**

