

Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2031

Examination in Public Stage 2

Statement of Common Ground

between:

Vale of White Horse District Council

and

West Waddy ADP (representing Oxford Brookes University)

and

Harcourt Hill Estate Residents Association

with respect to

Harcourt Hill Campus (Core Policy 9)

April 2016

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This Statement of Common Ground (SoCG) has been prepared between Vale of White Horse District Council, West Waddy ADP (representing Oxford Brookes University) and Harcourt Hill Estate Residents Association here after known as “the parties”.
- 1.2 This SoCG identifies the matters agreed and not agreed by the parties, and is produced following discussions made on Thursday 4 February during the local plan examination hearing of Matter 8: Spatial Strategy for the Abingdon-on-Thames and Oxford Fringe Sub-Area.
- 1.3 This SoCG relates to Harcourt Hill Campus, and in particular Core Policy 9 of Local Plan 2031 Part 1.

2. Background / Context

2.1. Oxford Brookes University Harcourt Hill Campus

- 2.2. Harcourt Hill campus is one of three sites occupied by Oxford Brookes University, and provides teaching facilities, student accommodation and supporting uses including sports facilities. It is currently home to the Westminster Institute of Education.
- 2.3. The campus is located in a section of the Oxford Green Belt on the urban-rural fringe to the south of the settlement of Botley and west of the village of North Hinksey and the A34. Its curtilage falls within the setting of protected views of the countryside setting from Oxford and also the panoramic views of the city's famous towers and spires.
- 2.4. The University wishes to improve the quality of the campus and is reviewing its future role. Core Policy 9 aims to support the redevelopment of the Harcourt Hill Campus.

2.5. Local Plan 2031 Part 1 Examination in Public

- 2.6. Core Policy 9 was discussed at the Stage 2 hearings as part of Matter 8 – Strategy for Abingdon-on-Thames and Oxford Fringe Sub Area, which took place on Thursday 4 February 2016 in the afternoon session. Following discussions on the policy, the Inspector indicated that it could be beneficial for the council to work with Oxford Brookes University to consider a modification to the proposed policy to address the concerns of the University.

2.7. The Inspector also wished to keep the Harcourt Hill Estate Residents Association involved in these with the potential to address differences/issues, should he wish to proceed to a modifications consultation.

2.8. Since the completion of the Stage 2 examination hearings in public, the council has worked with the university and the residents association on discussing possible modifications to the policy. No final agreement has been reached by the parties on a suggested modification to address all the concerns raised during the Regulation 19 consultation and subsequent discussions at the hearing session.

2.9. While no final agreement has been reached by the parties, the council proposes a modification which ensures that a masterplan and any subsequent planning applications will need to address the key site issues identified in the policy. This is set out in **Appendix A** of this statement, and is included in the council's consolidated schedule of suggested modifications.

3. Matters on which the parties agree

3.1. The parties agree that the inclusion of a policy specific to Harcourt Hill Campus would assist in the future development of the site over the plan period.

4. Matters on which the parties disagree

4.1. Green Belt

4.2. Vale of White Horse District Council and Harcourt Hill Estate Residents Association agree that the current green belt designation should not be amended to exclude the Harcourt Hill Campus. The council and residents association agree that the campus is in a highly sensitive and visible location on the edge of Oxford and serves all of the purposes to which Green Belt designation applies. The council and residents association consider this to be consistent with the outputs of the council's Green Belt Review (NAT02).

4.3. The council and residents association agree that the exclusion of the built up area of the campus from the green belt would result in an isolated parcel of green belt land immediately to the north east. The council and residents association agree that the inclusion of a reference to the site's setting in the Green Belt within the policy adds clarity on this matter.

- 4.4. Oxford Brookes University, through their regulation 19 representation on Core Policy 13, wish to exclude the built up area of the Harcourt Hill Campus from the Oxford Green Belt. The university considers the campus does not merit designation within the Green Belt as it is built up and adjoined by existing residential development on two sides of the Campus. The university wishes to enable future expansion or more intensive use of the Campus and considers that development of the site would not be deliverable without this change. The university consequently seeks to remove reference to the site's setting in the Green Belt from Core Policy 9.
- 4.5. The university considers that the isolated area of Green Belt land to the north east could either remain as Green Belt, as it is in close proximity to other areas of Green Belt land, or alternatively could be designated as a Local Green Space, which has equivalent policy status to Green Belts as stated in paragraph 78 of the National Planning Policy Framework.
- 4.6. The requirement for a Masterplan**
- 4.7. Vale of White Horse District Council and the Harcourt Hill Estate Residents Association consider it appropriate to include reference to the requirement for a campus-wide masterplan in the policy. The council and residents association consider it important that future development on the campus is not carried out in a piecemeal fashion for the duration of the plan period, particularly given the site's sensitive location in the Green Belt on the edge of Oxford.
- 4.8. The council and residents association agree that, in addition to the criteria set out in Core Policy 9, the masterplan should be prepared in accordance with the requirements set out in Core Policy 38 *Design Strategies for Strategic and Major Development Sites* as proposals are likely to constitute major development (as defined by the Development Management Procedure Order 2010).
- 4.9. Oxford Brookes University seeks the removal of reference to the requirement for a masterplan in the policy, and replacing it with the requirement for a Development Brief. The university considers this modification would result in a more appropriate way forward for the site, given that the University's intentions for the Campus consist of mostly refurbishment; one new building and one extension. It would represent a step back from the detail of a masterplan, and would be a better starting point for addressing the key site issues. This suggested modification does not form part of the university's Regulation 19 representation to the Local Plan 2031 Part 1 but was

adopted by the University as a desirable amendment when suggested by Council officers as an amendment in the post Examination discussions.

4.10. The university states that it is not possible to know the precise circumstances of the campus and how it will evolve over the plan period. The University considers that it is unlikely that future proposals would fully accord with a masterplan should it be produced now.

4.11. The university considers that replacing the requirement for a masterplan with a development brief would better address the key site issues contained within the policy, rather than the preparation of a more detailed masterplan for the campus. The university also seeks greater flexibility in the policy, allowing for planning applications to be submitted without a requirement for a development brief to be agreed. This is provided that the planning applications identify and address the key site issues as stated in the policy.

4.12. The University considers that the requirements of Core Policy 38 are intended to apply to masterplans for strategic and major applications, as set out in paragraph 6.88 of the Local Plan and the Development Site Templates in Appendix A, not a University Masterplan/Development Brief which would be implemented over a 20 year period. The template imposes requirements such as for a Transport Assessment/utility assessments etc that would be unduly onerous and would not be feasible at the Masterplan/Development Brief stage.

4.13. The residents' association understands that the needs of the university might change during the course of the local plan period and therefore, in light of the university's uncertainty for development, consider it important that the necessary criteria for dealing with development on this site other than refurbishment are clearly defined by this policy.

4.14. The inclusion of a reference to a Supplementary Planning Document

4.15. Oxford Brookes University and Harcourt Hill Estate Residents Association agree to the inclusion of a reference for the development brief or masterplan to be prepared to a standard suitable for adoption as a supplementary planning document (SPD). This suggested modification does not form part of the university or residents association's Regulation 19 representation to the Local Plan 2031 Part 1.

- 4.16. The university and residents association consider this modification would set the standards upon which the document would be prepared and the process by which a masterplan should be agreed and adopted.
- 4.17. Vale of White Horse District Council do not consider it necessary for this to be included within the wording of the policy. The council contends that a masterplan can be progressed as an SPD for the Harcourt Hill Campus irrespective of whether or not such a reference is included within the policy.
- 4.18. The requirement for a comprehensive landscape, tree and planting strategy**
- 4.19. The Harcourt Hill Estate Residents Association considers that landscaping and tree planting should be addressed at the masterplanning stage. The residents association believe the masterplan should better inform more detailed landscape proposals accompanying future planning applications for the site. The residents association consider the impact of any form of redevelopment of the campus on the immediate and wider landscape to be a critical element which needs to be addressed in detail at the earliest possible stage.
- 4.20. The Harcourt Hill Estate Residents Association preference is to avoid use of the word "strategy" except where it is considered to represent a *framework* for detailed design to inform more detailed evidence supporting subsequent planning applications.
- 4.21. Vale of White Horse District Council and Oxford Brookes University support a suggested amendment to criterion ii which they consider would add clarity and would make the policy more effective with informing future planning applications. The suggested amendment requires a masterplan (or development brief in the case put forward by the university) to address the issue of integrating built form into the landscape. The amendment then requires any future planning application for the site to be accompanied by an appropriate landscape, tree and planting strategy.
- 4.22. The requirement for a transport assessment**
- 4.23. The residents association considers that, as per its regulation 19 representation on Core Policy 9, the policy should require a transport assessment to be prepared to inform the masterplan. The residents association considers that a requirement for a transport assessment would add clarity to the policy as to how key transport issues should inform the proposals for the scale and use of development to be proposed in the masterplan. The residents association believes that the masterplan should be

considered a proposal for a major development and therefore include a Transport Assessment in accordance with Core Policy 35 *Promoting Public Transport, Cycling and Walking*

4.24. Vale of White Horse District Council and Oxford Brookes University do not agree to the inclusion of this requirement in the policy, and consider the existing criterion iii is sufficiently worded to address issues relating to sustainable site access, public transport and the effective management of car trips and car parking demand to a level that can safely be accommodated on the local road network.

4.25. Oxford Brookes University considers that circumstances could change during the local plan period up to 2031. The university wishes to focus on refurbishment and relatively small scale development at the Campus and considers it important that unreasonable and costly requirements are not imposed on it.

4.26. The University considers that Core policy 35 relates to planning applications for major development as stated in paragraph 6.76 of the Local Plan and is not intended to apply to a Masterplan/Development Brief for a University Campus where the proposed works will comprise mostly refurbishment.

4.27. The requirement for a Strategic Environmental Assessment

4.28. The parties agree that should the masterplan (or development brief in the case of the university) be progressed as an SPD, a screening assessment will be undertaken by the council in accordance with regulation 9 of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 to determine whether a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is required.

4.29. If the policy does not require the masterplan to be prepared to a standard suitable for adoption as an SPD, the residents association seeks that the policy should require an SEA to be provided alongside a masterplan for the site. The residents association also seeks the masterplan to address issues relating to utilities and waste water treatment as a result of the scale of new growth. This requirement does not form part of the residents association's Regulation 19 representation to the Local Plan 2031 Part 1.

4.30. The residents association considers that an SEA would clarify any environmental constraints on the scale and intended uses of development proposed in the masterplan, and how those constraints, if any, should be addressed

4.31. Vale of White Horse District Council and Oxford Brookes University do not agree to the inclusion of this requirement in the policy. The council and university agree that it is unclear at this stage what scale and form of future development may come forward on the campus. As a result it is unclear whether proposals would have any significant environmental effects which would require the need for an SEA to be prepared.

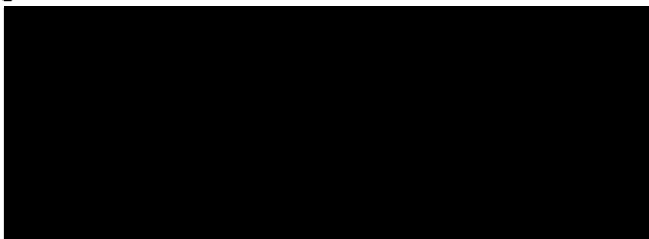
4.32. The university is currently looking to focus on refurbishment and relatively small scale development on the campus, and consider that environmental impacts are unlikely to be significant. The university therefore considers that a SEA may not be required at the SPD stage.

5. Suggested modifications to Core Policy 9

5.1. Following discussions between the parties, the council has proposed a modification which it considers enhances the effectiveness of the policy. This is set out in **Appendix A** below and is also included in the most recent consolidated schedule of suggested modifications.

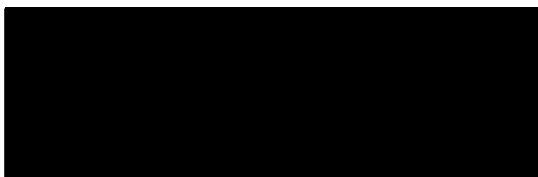
5.2. The council's proposed modification is not agreed with Oxford Brookes University or with the Harcourt Hill Estate Residents Association. They have put forward their own proposed modifications to the council for core policy 9. These are set out in **Appendix B and C** and reflect the areas of disagreement as set out in this statement of common ground.

Signatures



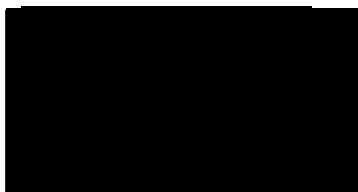
28 April 2016
Date

Trevor Saunders
Interim Planning Policy Project Lead
Vale of White Horse District Council



28 April 2016
Date

Sue Holmes
Director of Estates and Facilities Management
on behalf of Oxford Brookes University



28 April 2016
Date

on behalf of the Harcourt Hill Estate Residents Association

Appendix A – Vale of White Horse District Council suggested modifications to Core Policy 9 (as set out in the council’s updated schedule list of modifications, April 2016)

The Council will work proactively with Oxford Brookes University, Oxfordshire County Council, local residents and other appropriate stakeholders to help the university to develop a masterplan for the Harcourt Hill Campus site that meets the university’s longer term business needs for predominantly educational uses and in a manner that respects its Green Belt setting and urban-rural fringe context.

Proposals for the upgrading or redevelopment of the Harcourt Hill Campus will be supported in principle where **guided by an agreed masterplan brought forward through a site-wide masterplan** that sets a clear vision for the future use of the site. **The agreed masterplan and any subsequent proposals** should be prepared to ~~a standard suitable for submission as an outline planning application~~, clearly identifying and addressing key site issues, including but not limited to the following matters:

- i. the scale of development proposed and intended uses
- ii. the integration of built form into the landscape **which will include at the planning application stage including** a comprehensive landscape, tree and planting strategy
- iii. sustainable site access including by public transport, and the effective management of car trips and car parking demand to a level that can safely be accommodated on the local road network, and
- iv. the safeguarding of long distance views of the site from Oxford **AND** to ensure that new development does not detract from views of the existing spires by reason of its height or form.

Appendix B – Oxford Brookes University suggested modifications to Core Policy 9

The Council will work proactively with Oxford Brookes University, Oxfordshire County Council, local residents and other appropriate stakeholders to help the university to develop a ~~masterplan~~ **DEVELOPMENT BRIEF** for the Harcourt Hill Campus site that meets the university's longer term business needs for predominantly educational uses and in a manner that respects its ~~Green Belt setting and~~ urban-rural fringe context.

Proposals for the upgrading or redevelopment of the Harcourt Hill Campus will be ~~supported where~~ brought forward through a ~~site-wide masterplan~~ **DEVELOPMENT BRIEF** that sets a clear vision for the future use of the site. **THIS SHOULD BE PREPARED TO A STANDARD SUITABLE FOR ADOPTION AS A SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT.** ~~The masterplan should be prepared to a standard suitable for submission as an outline planning application, clearly identifying and~~ **BRIEF, AND/OR ANY PLANNING APPLICATIONS FOR THE CAMPUS WILL BE SUPPORTED WHERE THEY APPROPRIATELY** addressing key site issues including but not limited to the following matters:

- i. the scale of development proposed and intended uses
- ii. the integration of built form into the landscape **which will include at the planning application stage including** a comprehensive landscape, tree and planting strategy
- iii. sustainable site access including by public transport, and the effective management of car trips and car parking demand to a level that can safely be accommodated on the local road network, and
- iv. the safeguarding of long distance views of the site from Oxford **AND** to ensure that new development does not detract from views of the existing spires by reason of its height or form

Appendix C – Harcourt Hill Estate Residents Association suggested modifications to Core Policy 9

The Council will work proactively with Oxford Brookes University, Oxfordshire County Council, local residents and other appropriate stakeholders to help the university to develop a masterplan for the Harcourt Hill Campus site that meets the university's longer term business needs for predominantly educational uses and in a manner that respects its Green Belt setting and urban-rural fringe context.

Proposals for the upgrading or redevelopment of the Harcourt Hill Campus will be supported where brought forward through a site-wide masterplan that sets a clear vision for the future use of the site. The masterplan should be prepared to a standard suitable for ~~submission as an outline planning application~~ **ADOPTION AS A SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT**, clearly identifying and addressing key site issues including but not limited to the following matters:

- i. the scale of development proposed and intended uses
- ii. the integration of built form into the landscape **THROUGH APPROPRIATE LANDSCAPING AND TREE PLANTING** ~~including a comprehensive landscape, tree and planting strategy~~
- iii. sustainable site access including by public transport, and the effective management of car trips and car parking demand to a level that can safely be accommodated on the local road network **INCLUDING A TRANSPORT ASSESSMENT FOR THE SCALE OF DEVELOPMENT PROPOSED,**
- iv. the safeguarding of long distance views of the site from Oxford **AND** to ensure that new development does not detract from views of the existing spires by reason of its height or form; **AND**
V. A STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT, INCLUDING AN OVERVIEW OF UTILITIES AND FOUL SEWERAGE WORKS NEEDED FOR THE SCALE OF DEVELOPMENT PROPOSED