

Vale of White Horse Local Plan Part 1: Sustainability Appraisal Report

**Addendum
Non-technical summary**

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Addendum

Non-technical summary

REVISION SCHEDULE

Rev	Date	Details	Prepared by	Reviewed by	Approved by
1	July 2016	SA Report Addendum NTS to inform consideration of proposed Main Modifications to the VoWH Local Plan	Alex White Associate Director	Nick Chisholm Batten Principal Consultant	Mark Fessey Principal Consultant

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Introduction

Background

On Wednesday 18 March 2015, Vale of White Horse District Council (the 'Council') submitted the Local Plan 2031 Part 1: Strategic Sites and Policies (the Plan), and associated documents, for independent examination by a Planning Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State. One of the 'associated documents' submitted alongside the Plan was the Sustainability Appraisal (SA) Report.

Examination hearings were held from September 2015 – February 2016, subsequent to which the Council published a first draft of proposed modifications to the submitted plan. The Council has subsequently received the Inspector's Interim Findings on 7 June 2016 and will be publishing the proposed main modifications identified by the Inspector on 20 July 2016.

This SA Report Addendum

The aim of this SA Report Addendum is to present an appraisal of the main modifications, with a view to informing discussion of their merits and subsequent finalisation of the Plan.

First and foremost, this SA Report Addendum presents an appraisal of the main modifications, with a view to ascertaining whether they will result in any significant effects in terms of sustainability issues / objectives. Subsequently, consideration is given to the effects of 'the Plan as modified', i.e. consideration is given to whether the Plan, with the main modifications, would result in any changes to the SA of the Submission Plan.

Structure of the SA Report Addendum

This SA Report Addendum (as well as this Non-Technical Summary) answers the following four questions:

- What is the scope of the SA?
- What has plan-making / SA involved up to this point?
- What are the SA findings at this stage?
- What happens next?

What is the scope of the SA?

An important first step in the SA process involves establishing the 'scope', i.e. those sustainability issues and objectives which should be a focus of the SA, and those that should not.

The broad scope of SA work, with respect to the LPP1, is introduced within the SA Scoping Report published in 2012. Essentially, the scope is reflected in a list of sustainability topics and objectives, which collectively provide a methodological 'framework' for undertaking appraisal. The discussion within the SA Report explains that the scope was established following a review of the sustainability 'context' and 'baseline', as well as a period of consultation. The SA framework is shown below.

Sustainability objective	Sustainability issues	Appraisal Questions Does the policy appraisal...
1. Provide sufficient suitable homes including affordable homes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shortage of housing, including affordable, market and supported living • Need to preserve and enhance the quality of built environments • Pressure for development, particularly housing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ enough homes ○ of appropriate types ○ in appropriate locations ○ at the appropriate times • Provide enough affordable homes
2. Ensure the availability of high quality services and facilities in the Vale's towns and rural areas.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rural isolation and limited access to services • Deprivation in some parts of the Vale • Protection and provision of recreational facilities including natural greenspace 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ appropriate facilities and services; ○ in appropriate locations; ○ at the appropriate times • These should be well designed and inclusive and should include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ health; ○ education; ○ recreation and sport; ○ community, cultural and leisure; and ○ other essential services.
3. Reduce the need to travel and Improve provisions for walking, cycling and public transport and reduce road congestion.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Congestion on strategic and local road network • Lack of alternatives to the private car • Rural isolation and limited access to services • Need to mitigate/reduce effects of noise, air and light pollution 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce the need to travel through more sustainable patterns of land use and development • Encourage modal shift to more sustainable forms of travel • Enable key transport infrastructure improvements
4. Improve the health and well-being of Vale residents.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health of Vale residents • Deprivation in some parts of the Vale 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide and enhance the provision of community access to green infrastructure, in accordance with national standards • Reduce opportunities for crime and anti-social activities, and reduce fear of crime
5. Reduce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low levels of educational 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote regeneration of deprived areas

inequality, poverty and social exclusion in the Vale, and raise educational achievement and skills levels.

achievement

- Improve opportunities and facilities for all types of learning
- Encourage an available and skilled workforce which:
 - meets the needs of existing and future employers;
 - reduces skills inequalities;
 - helps address skills shortages.

6. Support a strong and sustainable economy within the Vale’s towns and rural areas.

- Provision of employment opportunities for residents
- Declining proportion of economically active population
- Low levels of educational achievement

- Promote economic growth and a diverse and resilient economy
- Provide opportunities for all employers to access:
 - different types and sizes of accommodation;
 - flexible employment space;
 - high quality communications infrastructure.
- Build on the knowledge-based and high tech economy in the Central Oxfordshire and Science Vale UK area, including the Science Vale UK Enterprise Zone
- Promote and support a strong network of towns and villages and the rural economy

7. Improve and protect the natural environment including biodiversity, water and soil quality

- Protection and improvement of biodiversity, particularly Special Areas of Conservation

- Protect and enhance natural habitats, wildlife, biodiversity and geodiversity
- Protect the integrity of European sites and other designated nature conservation sites
- Encourage the creation of new habitats and features for wildlife
- Prevent isolation/fragmentation and re-connect / de-fragment habitats
- Enhance water quality and help to meet the requirements of the Water Framework Directive
- Protect groundwater resources
- Minimise and reduce the potential for exposure of people to ground pollution

8. Protect the cultural heritage and provide a high quality townscape and landscape.

- Protection of valued landscapes
- Need to preserve and enhance the quality of built environments
- Protection and provision of recreational facilities including natural greenspace

- Protect and enhance archaeology and heritage assets, and areas of sensitive landscape including AONB and Green Belt.
- Improve access to, and enjoyment, understanding and use of cultural assets where this will not cause harm

9. Reduce air,

- Need to mitigate/reduce effects of

- Minimise and reduce the potential for

<p>noise and light pollution</p>	<p>noise, air and light pollution</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to reduce use of fossil fuels and encourage development of renewables 	<p>exposure of people to noise, air and light pollution.</p>
<p>10. Reduce greenhouse gas emissions and the use of resources and improve resource efficiency</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to reduce use of fossil fuels and encourage development of renewables • Action to mitigate the causes and adapt to the effects of climate change 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce greenhouse gas emissions • Re-use existing buildings • Promote development on previously developed land and minimise land use • Encourage sustainable, low carbon building practices and design • Reduce energy use • Promote renewable energy generation • Reduce water use • Provide adequate infrastructure to ensure the sustainable supply of water and disposal of sewerage • Maximise opportunities for reuse, recycling and minimising waste
<p>11. Increase resilience to climate change and flooding</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduction and prevention of flooding • Action to mitigate the causes and adapt to the effects of climate change 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimise and reduce flood risk to people and property • Respond to the likelihood of future warmer summers, wetter winters, and more extreme weather events • Minimise development on high quality agricultural land • Provide for local needs locally

What has plan-making / SA involved up to this point?

To date there have been seven main stages that have informed Local Plan 2031 Part 1 – three stages in the previous LDF/Core Strategy process; followed by a fourth and fifth Local Plan 2031 Part 1 consultation stage followed by an Examination in Public (EiP):

1. Issues and Options (2007);
2. Preferred Options (2009);
3. Additional Consultation (2009 but the additional consultation closed on 29/01/2010);
4. Local Plan 2031 Part 1 Consultation Draft (2013); and
5. Housing Delivery Update (2014)
6. Local Plan 2031 Part 1 Submission Version (November 2014)
7. Examination in Public (Q4 2015 / Q1 2016)

These documents and the EiP have explored a number of issues, setting out options and preferred options that the Council has made public over the last seven years.

What reasonable alternatives were considered?

The SA Report 2014 explains in detail how the Plan was developed subsequent to appraisal of reasonable alternatives. Specifically, it explains how alternatives were appraised for a range of policy issues, both area-wide/thematic, for specific geographical areas, and for the allocation of strategic sites. Providing this information in the SA Report is important, given regulatory requirements.

With regard to the main modifications concerning the removal of sites, it was considered that there was no scope for the consideration of reasonable alternatives. There are two reasons for this; first, if the sites were retained the Plan would likely be found 'unsound'; and second, there is no need for the Council to identify further sites for development as they are confident that a five year land supply can be demonstrated without them. Indeed the Inspector in his Interim Findings Report sets out that "*even without these sites the plan would provide for a five year supply of deliverable housing land, and sufficient dwellings district-wide for the plan period as a whole*". The Inspector goes on to state "*There would be little reason to delay adoption of the Part 1 plan by seeking to allocate replacement sites at this stage*" (Para 9.12). Therefore, no additional information on alternatives is presented in this report. It was recognised at an early stage, upon examining the policy issues that were set to be a focus of proposed modifications, that the potential for 'significant effects' was limited and hence formal alternatives appraisal would not be necessary or proportionate.

It is important to emphasise that this is an addendum to the 2014 SA Report, and hence the two should be read together. At the time of Plan adoption, an 'SA Adoption Statement' will be published that explains in full how the Plan (as modified) is justified on the basis of reasonable alternatives appraisal.

What are the SA findings at this stage?

Of the 81 proposed modifications the following have been 'screened in', i.e. should be a focus of appraisal:

- MM5: Removal of East Harwell Campus and North-West Harwell Campus allocations from the South East Vale Sub-Area in Core Policy 4 and associated site templates in Appendix A of the 'Strikethrough Plan' (i.e. the version of the Plan that has been modified).
- MM6: supporting text at Paragraphs 4.21 and 4.22 with regard to the Didcot 'ring-fence'
- MM12: removal of South of East Hanney allocation in CP8
- MM20: CP24 be modified to reflect the change in national policy
- MM22: deletion of criterion on Lifetime Homes

All other modifications are considered to be either not material or negligible with respect to the SA objectives such that appraisal would add little value (e.g. clarifications / re-numbering).

In appraising these modifications there were not significant to the appraisal of the submitted plan. IN some cases, minor effects were predicted:

Provide sufficient suitable homes including affordable homes.

Given that neither the amount of housing set to be delivered during the plan period, nor the spatial strategy have changed, the proposed modifications have no implications for the conclusions reached in 2014.

Ensure the availability of high quality services and facilities in the Vale's towns and rural areas.

Given that neither the amount of housing set to be delivered during the plan period, nor the spatial strategy have changed (and assuming that the services and facilities to be provided are linked to the scale of development and consequential contributions) the proposed modifications have no implications for the conclusions reached in 2014.

Reduce the need to travel and improve provisions for walking, cycling and public transport and reduce road congestion.

It is considered that the proposed main modifications to the Plan do not materially affect the outcome of the Plan policies or the findings of the SA. This is because many of the effects originally predicted through the SA were caused by development; ergo the lack of development on the omitted sites would result in no change to the baseline.

Improve the health and wellbeing of Vale residents.

It is considered that the proposed main modifications to the Plan do not materially affect the outcome of the Plan policies or the findings of the SA. This is because many of the effects originally predicted through the SA were caused by development; ergo the lack of development on the omitted sites would result in no change to the baseline.

Reduce inequality, poverty and social exclusion in the Vale, and raise educational achievement and skills levels.

It is considered that the proposed main modifications to the Plan do not materially affect the outcome of the Plan policies or the findings of the SA.

Support a strong and sustainable economy within the Vale's towns and rural areas.

It is considered that the proposed main modifications to the Plan do not materially affect the outcome of the Plan policies or the findings of the SA.

Improve and protect the natural environment including biodiversity, water and soil quality.

It is considered that the proposed main modifications to the Plan do not materially affect the outcome of the Plan policies or the findings of the SA.

Protect the cultural heritage and provide a high quality townscape and landscape.

It is considered that the proposed main modifications to the Plan do not materially affect the outcome of the Plan policies or the findings of the SA.

Reduce air, noise and light pollution

It is considered that the proposed main modifications to the Plan do not materially affect the outcome of the Plan policies or the findings of the SA.

Reduce greenhouse gas emissions and the use of resources and improve resource efficiency.

It is considered that the proposed main modifications to the Plan do not materially affect the outcome of the Plan policies or the findings of the SA.

Increase resilience to climate change and flooding.

It is considered that the proposed main modifications to the Plan do not materially affect the outcome of the Plan policies or the findings of the SA.

Conclusions

The overall conclusions of the 2014 SA Report were set out in Table 33.1 'Identified significant negative effects and mitigation measures'. There were two significant effects of the Plan identified, neither of which is relevant to the policies subject to appraisal in this SA Addendum. It is concluded that the main modifications have no effect on the conclusion of the 2014 SA Report.

Next steps

The next step is for the Inspector to consider the representations raised as part of the consultation, alongside this SA Report Addendum, before deciding whether he is in a position to write his report on the Plan's soundness.

Assuming that the Inspector is able to find the Plan 'sound', it will then be formally adopted by the Council. At the time of adoption an 'SA Adoption Statement' will be published that explains the process of plan-making / SA in full and presents 'measures decided concerning monitoring' for the Plan. There are no implications for monitoring related to the main modifications.

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