

# Scrutiny Paper

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## VOWH Local Plan 2031: Part 1 Main Modifications

### Purpose of briefing paper

1. To provide Scrutiny with details of the Inspector's proposed Main Modifications to Local Plan Part 1.
2. To set out the main implications and note next steps in taking the Local Plan 2031: Part 1 forward.

### Background

1. VOWH submitted the Local Plan 2031: Part 1 to the Secretary of State in March 2015. An independent Planning Inspector, Mr Malcom Rivett, was appointed to preside over the examination. Two examination hearing sessions have been held in September 2015 and February 2016. The Council received the Inspector's Interim Findings into the Local Plan 2031: Part 1 Examination on 25 May 2016 for fact checking purposes. The Inspector's Final Interim Findings Letter was published on 7 June 2016.
2. The Inspector's main finding is that, subject to modification, he is likely to be able to find the plan **sound**.
3. The Inspector's letter contained four questions to the Council, to which the Council has responded. The responses were discussed with the Cabinet Member for Planning Policy in June 2016 and are set out in the other report on the Scrutiny Committee Agenda, 6 July 2016.
4. The Inspector has subsequently provided some informal advice to the Council setting out those modifications that will be necessary to make the plan sound, these are referred to as 'Main Modifications'. This report summarises the proposed Main Modifications the Council will formally submit to the Inspector, subject to the agreement of the Cabinet Member for Planning Policy. Subject to

the Inspector's formal acceptance of these proposed Main Modifications, it is anticipated that public consultation will be conducted during the summer 2016.

## **Summary of Inspector's Main Modifications**

5. The Inspector has informally advised that a number of Main Modifications will be necessary to make the LPP1 document sound.
6. The Main Modifications proposed are set out in **Appendix 1** and are intended for publication for consultation alongside a strikethrough version of the LPP1 document once formally approved by the Planning Inspector.
7. The Council published its own revised, informal and suggested, modifications for consideration by the Inspector in April 2016. These were designed merely to assist the Inspector in his deliberations of whether the Local Plan document was likely to be found sound.
8. The Inspector has subsequently identified which of the informal and suggested modifications prepared by the Council should be considered to be 'Main Modifications' and has, in some instances, provided some informal advice as to whether these should be amended.
9. The remainder of changes identified by the Council in its April 2016 document will be classified as 'Additional' modifications (see below). These do not affect the plan's soundness and will not be considered further by the Planning Inspector.
10. The following section of this report summarises those Main Modifications that may be considered to be most important. The full schedule of Main Modifications is set out in **Appendix 1**.

### ***CP2: Cooperation on Unmet Housing Need for Oxfordshire***

11. The Inspector has informally suggested wording to ensure the supporting text and policy are consistent and to ensure the Council's approach to addressing unmet housing need for Oxfordshire is consistent with discussions held during the hearing sessions.
12. The Inspector's suggestion reflects that it is the Local Plan Part 2 plan making process that will determine the quantum of unmet housing need to be addressed within the Vale. His suggested change also ensures there is a time limit (two years) set in policy to provide sufficient incentive for the Local Plan Part 2 being progressed and adopted quickly. The key new paragraph states:

*"Whilst the Local Plan 2031: Part 2 is in preparation the Council's housing requirement will be 20,560 homes. However, if the Part 2 plan is not adopted within two years of the adoption of the Local Plan 2031: Part 1 then from that time until the adoption of the Part 2 plan the Council's housing requirement will be 20,560 homes plus the agreed quantum of Oxford's unmet housing need to be addressed within the Vale".*

13. It is considered that this wording provides helpful clarity.

**CP4: Meeting our Housing Needs**

14. It is proposed that this policy is amended simply to reflect the removal from the Plan of three strategic site allocations at East Hanney (South of East Hanney 200 dwellings); and Harwell Campus (East of Harwell Campus 850 dwellings and North-West of Harwell Campus 550 dwellings). This reflects the Inspector's Interim Findings as agreed our letter to the Planning Inspector dated 10 June 2016.

**CP5: Housing Supply Ring Fence**

15. The Inspector has informally advised that additional clarity is needed to CP5: Housing Supply Ring Fence to help with the policy's interpretation. The changes being suggested by the Inspector are intended to define more clearly what area will be considered to form the 'Ring-Fence' area and how the 'Ring-Fence' will operate for five year housing land supply purposes.

16. The key change to how the area is defined is the inclusion of the phrase 'sites and settlements immediately adjacent to it' as follows:

*"The ring-fence area encompasses the science vale geographical area, as shown on figure 4.3, and (to ensure appropriate flexibility in its operation) sites and settlements immediately adjacent to it".*

17. The following text has been provided by the Inspector to assist the understanding and operation of the 'Ring-Fence' for five year housing supply purposes:

*"The housing supply calculation will be undertaken on two separate areas: the ring-fence area as set out in this policy and the rest of the district, with each of the areas having its own housing target and monitoring approach. The respective housing targets: ring-fence 11,850 dwellings and rest of district 8,710 dwellings equate to the housing requirement for the whole district as identified within core policy 4, the approach taken to each of the supply areas, Liverpool\* for the ring-fence area and Sedgefield\*\* for the rest of district area, will ensure the delivery of housing within the science vale area is assessed over a longer period with the economic and housing needs coming forward in parallel. The Council is therefore ensuring there is a boost in housing supply whilst balance is struck in the delivery of economic and housing combined to provide a district wide calculation (add footnotes or similar to explain Liverpool and Sedgefield)."*

**CP11: Botley Central Area**

18. The Inspector has requested three Main Modifications to add clarity and improve consistency with the recently adopted Botley Central Area SPD. These relate to:

- I. The quantum of retail floorspace appropriate at Botley Central Area.
- II. Amending the Botley Central Area to include the bank and Church of St. Peter and St. Paul, to be consistent with the recently adopted Botley Centre SPD.
- III. Amending the policy (CP11) to confirm that any residential development within the defined Botley Central Area will either be retained or replaced.

### ***The Oxford Green Belt***

19. Modifications are proposed to CP13: The Oxford Green Belt and supporting text to reflect the Inspector's Interim Findings. These principally relate to deleting Farmoor from the list of inset villages and deleting text that previously referred to the release of land from the Green Belt that was not being allocated for development.
20. The modifications will also make clear that four sites are being released from the Green Belt (North Abingdon – 800 dwellings; North-West of Abingdon – 200 dwellings; North-West of Radley – 240 dwellings; and South of Kennington – 270 dwellings).

### ***Other matters***

21. The Main Modifications include a series of other changes that are not discussed in detail in this report. Other changes include, for example:
  - Deleting references to the formerly proposed (no longer being progressed) Science Vale Area Action Plan
  - Improved wording/ clarity to CP6: Meeting Business and Employment Needs
  - Inclusion of an alternative Strategic Water Storage Reservoir (at Longworth) – CP14: Strategic Water Storage Reservoirs
  - Improved wording/ clarity to CP16: Didcot A Power Station
  - Updating CP24: Affordable Housing to reflect national government policy that affordable housing requirements to not apply to developments of less than 11 units
  - Updating CP40: Sustainable Design and Construction to make it clear that the policy does not set any requirements on developers other than for water efficiency standards.

### **Additional Modifications**

22. The Council forwarded to the Inspector its informal and suggested modifications in April 2016 to assist the Inspector's deliberations of the plan. As explained above, the Inspector has advised those modifications that he considers to be 'Main' Modifications (i.e. those required to make the plan sound). The remainder of the suggested and informal modifications put forward by the Council are considered to be 'Additional' modifications. These include typos, minor corrections, grammatical corrections etc. They do not affect the soundness of the plan and will not be subject to consultation.

### **Implications and Timetable**

23. Several more stages of process remain to be completed before the Local Plan 2031: Part 1 can be adopted, which is currently expected to be early 2017. Further stages will include consultation on the 'Main' Modifications, which we expect to take place during summer 2016. If there is a requirement for a Stage 3 Hearing this may delay adoption of the Local Plan to later in 2017. An indicative timetable for the next stages of preparing the Local Plan are set out in the other report on the Scrutiny Committee Agenda, 6 July 2016.

## **Conclusion**

24. Scrutiny Committee Councillors are asked to feedback any comments on the Main Modifications to the Cabinet Member for Planning Policy.