

# Scrutiny Committee



Report of Head of Planning

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## **Local Plan 2031 Part 2: Detailed Policies and Additional Sites – Preferred Options Consultation Draft**

### **Recommendation**

1. The committee is invited to:

- Review and provide comments on the Preferred Options Consultation Draft of the Local Plan 2031 Part 2: Detailed Policies and Sites. These will be considered in refining the Local Plan 2031 Part 2 (publication version) to be consulted on in October/November 2017.

## **Purpose of Report**

1. To present to Scrunity Committee a summary of the purpose of the Local Plan 2031 Part 2: Detailed Policies and Additional Sites. This report is to be read alongside the Draft Local Plan 2031 Part 2.

## **Strategic Objectives**

2. The Local Plan 2031 Part 2 is central to the achievement of the Council's strategic objectives by supporting housing and infrastructure, and sustainable communities and wellbeing.
3. Public consultation is underway on the Local Plan 2031 Part 2 in accordance with the Council's Statement of Community Involvement. This consultation is extensive, maximising engagement with communities to ensure the Plan meets the Council's equality objectives.

## **Background**

4. The Council's Local Plan 2031: Part 1 was adopted in December 2016 and sets a strategic policy framework for the district for the plan period up to 2031. The Part 1 plan sets out a clear commitment to prepare a Part 2 document, following adoption of Part 1, and identifies the purpose of the Part 2 plan to include:
  - policies and locations for the Vale's proportion of Oxford City's unmet housing need up to 2031, which cannot be met within the City boundaries;
  - policies for the part of Didcot Garden Town that lies within the Vale of White Horse District;
  - detailed development management policies to complement Local Plan 2031 Part 1; and
  - allocate additional development sites for housing.
5. The plan has been prepared in accordance with national policy, guidance and legislation and complies with Regulation 18 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012. The Plan sets out how it complies with the 'tests of soundness' in regard to being positively prepared, justified, effective, and consistent with national policy and the 'duty-to-cooperate' (NPPF Paragraph 182). The plan has been informed by detailed evidence studies (listed below), and informal consultation with a range of stakeholders, including, for example, Oxfordshire County Council, Natural England and the Environment Agency.
6. The preparation of the Local Plan 2031: Part 2 has involved the testing of reasonable alternatives through Sustainability Appraisal (SA) that incorporates a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA). Both reports are published alongside the consultation document.

7. The Local Plan 2031 (Parts 1 and 2) seeks to fully meet the objectively addressed need for housing from the Vale of White Horse District (20,560 homes) and from neighbouring authorities (2,200 homes) and seeks to deliver an additional 1,400 homes within the South East Vale Sub-Area, subject to the plan making process. The Part 2 allocations are fully consistent with the 'spatial strategy' set out in the Part 1 plan and support the housing requirements identified for each part of the three Sub-Areas in the Part 1 plan.

## **Unmet Housing need for Oxford City**

8. The Council has worked with the other Oxfordshire Authorities to identify how the working assumption for Oxford City's unmet housing need should be apportioned between those authorities neighbouring the city of Oxford. This process was administered by the Oxfordshire Growth Board.
9. A 'Memorandum of Co-operation' between the local authorities in the Oxford Housing Market Area was signed by Leaders on 26 September 2016, which identified an agreed working assumption apportionment for the quantum of Oxford City's unmet housing need to be met within the Vale of White Horse as 2,200 dwellings for the plan period up to 2031, subject to the plan making process.
10. The Part 1 plan makes a clear policy commitment to address this agreed working assumption quantum of unmet need, as detailed in Core Policy 2.
11. The Part 1 plan allocates a number of sites close to Abingdon-on-Thames (North and North West of Abingdon-on-Thames, South of Kennington (within Radley parish) and North West Radley) that equate to 1,510 dwellings. Whilst these sites are allocated with the primary intention of meeting Vale's own housing need, they are well located to provide for Oxford City's unmet need. It is the case that housing on these sites would be just as much available to those people falling into the category of Oxford City's need as to those of the Vale.
12. Furthermore, the Planning Inspector's Report of the Examination into the Part 1 plan states:

"in reality, it would be all but impossible to determine if a potential occupier of this housing (Part 1 allocations) represents a Vale or Oxford housing need".
13. Whilst the Abingdon-on-Thames and Oxford Fringe Sub-Area is closest to and has the most frequent and reliable public transport linkages to Oxford, it is also the case that housing allocated within the South East Vale Sub-Area, for example at Valley Park, is accessible to Oxford via the fast and frequent rail service available from Didcot to Oxford.
14. The Part 2 plan apportions the current working assumption that is the agreed quantum of unmet housing need for Oxford City to be addressed within the Vale, between the following two Sub-Areas:

- Abingdon-on-Thames and Oxford Fringe Sub-Area - 80 % of the unmet need which equates to 1,760 dwellings; and
- South East Vale Sub-Area - 20 % of unmet need which equates to 440 dwellings.

Unmet need will be addressed through a combination of 'strategic' sites allocated within the Part 1 plan, and 'additional' sites allocated within the Part 2 plan.

15. The sites that are proposed for allocation within the Part 2 plan within the Abingdon-on-Thames and Oxford Fringe Sub-Area are as follows:

- |   |                 |
|---|-----------------|
| • Dalton Barracks:                          | 1,200 dwellings |
| • East of Kingston Bagpuize with Southmoor: | 600 dwellings   |
| • North East Marcham                        | 400 dwellings   |
| • East Marcham                              | 120 dwellings   |
| • North of East Hanney                      | 80 dwellings    |
| • East of East Hanney                       | 50 dwellings    |

16. Dalton Barracks is currently in use by the MOD and its release has been announced as part of the Government's wider commitment to deliver 55,000 homes on MOD sites across the Country. The site is a large and predominantly brownfield (previously developed) site close to Oxford. It was not considered by the Council through the preparation of the Part 1 plan, nor by the Oxfordshire Growth Board's process assessing how unmet need could be apportioned, as it was not considered to be available for development during these processes. It is now considered that the site will be available for development during the plan period.

17. The recent identification of this site for development is considered to be a 'major change in circumstances' to demonstrate an 'exceptional circumstance' to justify its release from the Oxford Green Belt. A site specific Green Belt Study has been undertaken to inform this plan and complement the Green Belt Review already prepared to inform the Part 1 plan and the Green Belt Study prepared to inform the work undertaken by the Oxford Growth Board. The release of the site will lead to only limited impact on the function of the Green Belt and is substantially brownfield (previously developed) land.

18. Development at Dalton Barracks provides an opportunity for a highly sustainable development of a new community providing for a range of services and facilities, including new schools, a local centre and opportunities for local employment. There are also significant opportunities for excellent public transport, cycling and walking connectivity between the site and Oxford and Abingdon-on-Thames. The Council will continue to work with Oxfordshire County Council to investigate how these opportunities can be maximised.

19. The Part 2 plan identifies a specific policy regarding development at Dalton Barracks to ensure the development is provided to an exemplar standard and follows 'Garden Village' principles. Therefore Core Policy 8b identifies a need for the development to be guided by a comprehensive development framework.

20. Kingston Bagpuize, Marcham and Kingston Bagpuize are all larger villages, offer a range of services and facilities and are relatively unconstrained for development. Kingston Bagpuize has excellent public transport connectivity, especially to Swindon and Oxford, and development provides the opportunity to re-route the A415 out of the existing village and provide a new primary school. The provision of these small sites will help ensure housing delivery throughout the plan period.

## **Didcot Garden Town**

21. Didcot was identified as a Garden Town by Government in December 2015 and includes areas that lie within the Vale of White Horse District. The Garden Town initiative will help to shape growth already identified through the Local Plan 2031: Part 1 within the Vale and that being identified within the emerging Local Plan 2033 for South Oxfordshire DC.

22. The Part 2 plan sets out a new policy to support the Didcot Garden Town initiative by embedding the Didcot Garden Town Masterplan principles into policy and ensuring they are used to inform development proposals coming forward. These principles are based on the following:

- Design
- Local Character
- Density and Tenure
- Transport and Movement
- Landscape and Green Infrastructure
- Social and Community Benefits

23. To assist with delivery of the Garden Town, further policy detail concerning the Garden Town will be set out in a future planning document, either a Development Plan Document or a Supplementary Planning Document.

## **Development Management Policies**

24. The development management policies provide more detailed guidance to assist day-to-day decision making on planning applications. They have been prepared following a review of extant Local Plan 2011 Saved Policies, which they replace. An assessment of whether any additional detail is required to support the implementation of the Part 1 plan, has also been undertaken. The Part 2 policies are structured into the four thematic areas as set out in the Part 1 plan of:

- Building healthy and sustainable communities
- Supporting economic prosperity
- Supporting sustainable transport and accessibility, and
- Protecting the environment and responding to climate change.

25. There are 38 draft development management policies covering a range of topics from Space Standards, protection of open space to change of use of retail parks.

## Additional Site Allocations

26. In addition to planning for the working assumption quantum of unmet housing need for Oxford City, to be addressed within the Vale, the Council is also allocating additional housing to support the Council's objective of supporting the Science Vale area. These additional housing allocations replace the two sites that were originally proposed for allocation in the Part 1 plan, but not included within the adopted document, at the east and north west of Harwell Campus.
27. 1,400 additional homes are allocated within the South East Vale Sub-Area. This will achieve the following:
- help to maintain a sustainable balance of housing and employment within the Science Vale area by ensuring that housing is located close to the provision of new jobs and accessible by sustainable modes of travel;
  - help to deliver the Science Vale Strategic Infrastructure Package through developer contributions by assisting further in the achievement of sustainable development within the Science Vale area;
  - support the Oxfordshire LEP priority for accelerating housing delivery within the Oxfordshire 'Knowledge Spine' growth corridor; and
  - deliver bespoke housing types and tenures tailored specifically to meet the identified need of the Campus and thus support housing supply within this Sub-Area.
28. Additional sites are proposed for allocation within the Part 2 plan within the South East Vale Sub-Area as follows:
- |                            |                 |
|----------------------------|-----------------|
| • Harwell Campus:          | 1,000 dwellings |
| • West of Harwell Village: | 100 dwellings   |
| • North West Grove:        | 300 dwellings   |
29. Development at Harwell Campus provides an opportunity to support the delivery of a highly sustainable 'innovation village' that meets the needs of the Campus and helps to unlock its unique potential as a world-class centre for innovation and research. The plan sets out the 'exceptional circumstances' to justify residential development at Harwell Campus within the existing site boundary being located in the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.
30. The Part 2 plan identifies a specific policy regarding development at Harwell Campus to ensure the development is provided to an exemplar standard and in the form of an 'Innovation Village' to unlock the potential for economic growth by the Campus. Therefore Core Policy 15b identifies a need for the development to be guided by a comprehensive development framework. The Council will work with Harwell Campus Partnership and other key stakeholders to prepare this framework which will be adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document.

31. The proposed allocation at north west Grove will assist with infrastructure delivery in this area, in particular the delivery of the North Grove Link Road, and ensure the masterplanning for this site can be considered alongside planning for Monks Farm and Grove Airfield, ensuring they are all fully integrated.
32. Harwell is a sustainable larger village located in the heart of the Science Vale area with good existing public transport, cycling and walking connections to employment. This site, alongside the other smaller sites, will help to ensure housing delivery is maintained throughout the plan period.
33. The quantum of housing identified for allocation within the Part 2 plan, as set out within the Part 1 plan in Core Policy 4, i.e. for 1,000 dwellings, is now subsumed by the additional allocations set out in the Part 2 plan that address unmet housing need for Oxford, and those that complement the 'spatial strategy' and support infrastructure delivery.

## **Other Policies**

34. The Part 2 plan also updates selected Core Policies, where new information has become available since preparing the Local Plan 2031: Part 1. These relate to the following:
  - Oxford Green Belt Policy reflecting the proposed inset at Dalton Barracks;
  - additional land safeguarded to support the delivery of strategic highway schemes; and
  - updating the area safeguarded for the potential Upper Thames Water Storage Reservoir.

## **Evidence Base Studies**

35. To inform the preparation of the Part 2 plan, a number of technical studies have been undertaken to inform the proposals and policies. In addition to these, six topic papers have been produced to provide a summary of how the technical studies and consultation has informed the draft plan. These topic papers are as follows:
  - Topic Paper 1: Duty to Cooperate
  - Topic Paper 2: Site Selection
  - Topic Paper 3: Building Healthy and Sustainable Communities
  - Topic Paper 4: Supporting Economic Prosperity
  - Topic Paper 5: Transport and Accessibility
  - Topic Paper 6: Protecting the Environment and Responding to Climate Change
36. These are in draft and will be finalised for the Publication Consultation.

## **Next Steps**

37. The next steps of the Local Plan 2031 Part 2 are as follows:

- The preferred options draft consultation will finish on the 4 May 2017
- The publication plan will go out to consultation in October/November 2017
- Submission of the plan to the Secretary of the State in February 2018\*
- Examination to take place in Summer 2018\*
- Adoption of the Plan in Winter 2018\*

\*subject to the planning inspector

## **Financial Implications**

38. The development proposed in this local plan could generate additional New Homes Bonus' subject to the lifespan and continuation of this scheme.

39. A Community Infrastructure Levy charging schedule is progressing through the examination process with Hearing Sessions arranged for the 19 and 20 April 2017. Once both are adopted, they will generate receipts for infrastructure funding.

## **Legal Implications**

40. It is a legal requirement for local planning authorities to produce a local plan and keep it up to date. Once adopted, the Part 2 plan will sit alongside the Part 1 plan and will replace the remaining saved policies of the Local Plan 2011.

41. The duty to cooperate on cross-boundary matters relevant to plan-making is a legal test that must be passed before a plan can proceed to examination.

## **Conclusion**

42. The draft Local Plan 2031 Part 2 identifies strategic site allocations and policies to help meet the Vale's proportion of Oxford City's Unmet Need and allocates additional development sites for housing. It also contains policies for the part of Didcot Garden Town that lies within the Vale of White Horse district and detailed development management policies to compliment Local Plan 2031 Part 1. The Part 2 plan will sit alongside the Part 1 plan and replace the remaining Saved Local Plan 2011 Policies. Scrutiny Committee's comments on the draft Part 2 plan will be taken into account in refining the Part 2 plan.

## **Background Papers**

- Local Plan 2031 Part 2: Detailed Policies and Additional Sites
- Local Plan 2031 Part 2: Appendices