



Statement of Common Ground

between

South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils

and

Oxfordshire County Council

in relation to the Joint South and Vale Local Plan 2041

December 2024

Introduction

1. This Statement of Common Ground (SOCG) has been prepared by South Oxfordshire District Council and Vale of White Horse District Council and Oxfordshire County Council (“the County Council”). Together, the three councils are referred to as “the Councils”.
2. The County Council is seeking modifications to the Regulation 19 South and Vale Joint Local Plan (“the JLP”) as set out in their Regulation 19 response. The Councils will continue to engage on modifications where appropriate through the examination of the JLP.
3. This SOCG summarises matters specifically addressed by the County Council. Other SOCGs also touch on these issues.
4. There are a large number of matters that require cooperation between the Councils. The County Council is the Highways Authority, the Lead Local Flood Authority and the Minerals & Waste Planning Authority. The County Council also has statutory and strategic responsibilities for Education and has lead roles in other areas such as Public Health and Social Care. Discussions have continued between the two councils for the duration of the preparation of the JLP, including sharing drafts of policies, making changes and discussing areas of difference. There has also been some joint working, in particular on transport modelling.
5. The County Council has also made comments on the JLP as a landowner. Those comments are not addressed in this SOCG, instead they will be addressed separately.
6. The County Council has also sought changes to the Infrastructure Delivery Plan. Those comments are not addressed in this SOCG, instead they will be addressed separately.
7. National Highways is a prescribed body, their key interest in the JLP relates to any potential impact on the operation of the strategic highway and associated highway that connects to it i.e. the A34 and M40 for South and Vale. Accordingly, the transport modelling outputs are of particular interest to National Highways. Owing to the joint working between the County Council and South and Vale in the development of the transport modelling work, it has been decided that a further collaborative SOCG between the three parties would be a suitable approach, i.e. a statement agreed between National Highways, South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse, and Oxfordshire County Council.

Climate Change

8. There is common ground around the Councils seeking to address the climate emergency. The County Council supports JLP Policy CE1 which emphasises that all new development should be designed to improve resilience to the anticipated effects of climate change. The County Council also supports JLP Policy CE2 which seeks to address the design performance gap, aligning with 'Pathways to a Zero Carbon Oxfordshire' (PAZCO) and the Oxfordshire Climate Action Plan. In respect of JLP Policy CE3, which seeks to develop the circular economy and reduce embodied carbon, the County Council seeks a commitment to a supplementary planning document being prepared. The County Council supports the JLP Policy CE4 requirements on sustainable retrofitting, which is a key initiative within the Oxfordshire Climate Action Plan and Oxfordshire Energy Statement. In respect of the JLP Policy CE5 on renewable energy, which is a priority within the Oxfordshire Energy Strategy and the Oxfordshire Climate Action Plan, the County Council seeks a commitment to preparing a supplementary planning document being prepared. The County Council supports JLP Policy CE7 which seeks that new development is designed to be water efficient. The modifications sought by the County Council in respect of climate change matters are aimed at advising how the policies could be made more effective. The County Council's suggested modifications are summarised in Appendix 1.
9. South and Vale state that they intend to produce a guidance document to assist the implementation of climate related policies in the Joint Local Plan in due course. South and Vale will collaborate with the County Council through liaison meetings as this guidance document is prepared.

Transport

10. There is common ground around the Councils seeking to address transport issues, having regard to Oxfordshire County Council's adopted 'Local Transport and Connectivity Plan' (LTCP). The County Council supports the JLP text at paragraphs 13.25-13.26 which record the critical importance the Housing Infrastructure Fund 1 (HIF1) safeguarded schemes, which are necessary to enabling the growth allocated in the JLP. The County Council has welcomed the various references to County documents including parking standards.
11. The County Council has sought rewording of the JLP vision as it could be taken to infer that zero-emission private cars might be as important as walking, cycling and public transport, which would be contrary to the accepted transport hierarchy. Other modifications are sought to update terminology and reflect transport projects being

undertaken by the County Council. The County has sought modifications for some additional references to documents and strategies.

12. The County Council's suggested modifications are summarised in Appendix 1.

Minerals & Waste

13. There is common ground between the Councils about recognising what are County Matters and the need to safeguard the mineral resources of the County, although the County Council has sought some minor clarifications to the JLP text, including CE5. The County Council welcomes the reference at Policy CE13 that it is to be consulted on all planning applications within a Minerals Consultation Area, but the supporting text should be amended for clarity. The County Council welcomes the recognition of the waste facility safeguarded at Culham. The County Council's suggested modifications are summarised in Appendix 1.

Public Health

14. There is common ground between the Councils about addressing public health and aiming to help communities to lead healthy and active lives. The Councils agree that South and Vale made amendments to the Regulation 18 Joint Local Plan in response to the County Council's representations.

15. The County Council is concerned about health inequalities and childhood obesity and seeks that the JLP includes an additional policy. The County Council welcomes the inclusion of policies HP1 to HP10 about healthy place shaping but seeks some amendments to ensure the requirements for Health Impact Assessments are applied appropriately. Some other amendments are sought to refer to relevant documents and internal air quality. The County Council's suggested modifications are summarised in Appendix 1.

16. South and Vale consider that amendments were made to Policy HP1 to address the County Council's suggestions at the previous Regulation 18 stage.

Flood Risk / Lead Local Flood Authority

17. There is common ground given that the Councils seek to manage flood risk and a Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) has been undertaken to support the JLP. However, the County Council is concerned that the SFRA Level 2 should have provided more detailed information and there is a need for policies to be clearer in relation to requiring assessments particularly in relation to sources of flooding other than fluvial flooding.

18. South and Vale's view is that Policy CE6 clearly states when site-specific flood risk assessments are required, including for sites in Flood Zone 1 that are subject to other forms of flood risk. Paragraph 3 of the policy makes it clear about the appropriate requirement for a flood risk assessment related to the sites listed in the County Council's suggested modification. The County Council's suggested modifications are summarised in Appendix 1.

Landscape

19. There is common ground given that the Councils seek to protect National Landscapes and other features of landscape importance. The County Council considers that some JLP policies need to be stronger or be clarified.

20. In relation to Policy CE11, South and Vale's view is that there is a guidance document entitled 'Dark Skies Lighting Design Guidance' accompanying the policy which provides information about what applicants should include in planning applications. The County Council's suggested modifications are summarised in Appendix 1.

Green Infrastructure

21. There is common ground given that the Councils seek improved green infrastructure. The County Council is leading on the Oxfordshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) and considers this, and its Tree Policy, should be referenced, and the Urban Greening Factor should be used as suggested in Natural England's Green Infrastructure Framework. The County Council has some queries about the Lowland Fen evidence report prepared for the JLP and considers the reference to it needs to be further explained in the supporting text. The County Council's suggested modifications are summarised in Appendix 1.

22. As the LNRS is close to being finalised, South and Vale's view is that there would be the potential for minor modifications to be explored during the examination of this matter. These could update the JLP references to the LNRS, but that this is not a soundness matter.

23. South and Vale will endeavour to produce a guidance note on the implementation of Policy NH1.

Education

24. There is common ground between the Councils about the need for additional school places as a result of population growth. Sites for new schools are identified

in the JLP. The County Council has prepared an Education Topic Paper to address school issues in detail. The modifications sought in the County response on the JLP cover minor matters which are summarised in Appendix 1.

Housing need and Social Care

25. There is common ground between the Councils about the need to address housing. Policy HOU1 explains the housing requirements of the JLP are in accordance with the current Standard Method figures, with an additional amount to cater for Oxford's unmet housing need as per the extant local plans. The County Council has inferred from Policy SP1, and the Oxford City webpage regarding nominations for affordable homes, that there are agreed sites close to Oxford which will cater for the agreed unmet housing needs of Oxford on suitable sites.
26. South and Vale agree that the nomination process is in place to accommodate those on Oxford's housing waiting list, but that this is not a JLP matter as the housing nominations process is an agreed working practice.
27. Policy HOU2 indicates that the expected housing supply over the plan period will exceed the housing requirement.
28. There is common ground that there is a need for affordable housing, including affordable extra care housing. Policy HOU3 requires percentages of development to be provided as affordable housing. Policy HOU5 requires developers to provide 'housing with care units' on certain sites. The County Council recommends a working agreement between the Councils as to how affordable extra care housing will be provided. South and Vale's view is that this is not a soundness matter for the Policy and that this working arrangement can continue to be engaged upon.
29. The County Council is concerned about Policy HOU5 requiring all extra care housing proposals to be delivered to M4(3) standards (i.e. for wheelchair users) and seeks a modification to reduce the standard so that developers are not discouraged from providing extra care housing. The County Council is willing to provide further detail on this matter in a separate statement for any examination hearings.
30. South and Vale's view is that any reduction of standards will be contrary to the evidence base supporting this policy, and the consequence of the suggested modification could impact on the ability to meet needs.
31. The County Council's suggested modifications are summarised in Appendix 1.

De-allocation of land

32. There is common ground between the Councils about not including the land at Bayswater Farm Field (Land at Sandhills) as an allocation. The County Council's Regulation 18 and 19 Joint Local Plan representations commented on the Chalgrove Airfield de-allocation.
33. The County Council will seek to be involved in any examination hearings on Bayswater Farm Field (Land at Sandhills) and Chalgrove Airfield.

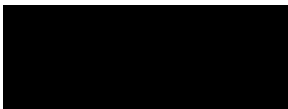
Strategic Reservoir

34. There is common ground between the Councils about the issues arising from Thames Water's proposal for a strategic reservoir. The proposal has been defined as a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) so will be considered through a process arranged by the Planning Inspectorate. The County Council will seek to be involved in any examination hearings regarding Policy IN7 and the safeguarding of the land for the reservoir.

Governance Agreement

35. This SOCG will be reviewed and updated as required, so that it reflects the most up-to-date position in terms of joint working. Both parties agree to work together to assist the Inspector during the examination.
36. At this stage, South and Vale do not consider that the modifications suggested and listed in Appendix 1 would specifically resolve soundness concerns and /or are minor in nature.

Signed on behalf of Oxfordshire County Council



Nicholas Perrins

Head of Strategic Planning

Date: 9 December 2024

Signed on behalf of South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils



Tim Oruye

Head of Policy and Programmes

Date: 9 December 2024

Appendix 1

Climate Change modifications

- Policy CE1 or the glossary - to define the waste and energy hierarchy.
- Policy CE2 – to define the design approach.

Transport modifications

- 3.4 of Vision - to ensure that the transport hierarchy is clear.
- Policy SP2 - to use the term 'liveable neighbourhoods'.
- Policy SP3, Policy SP4 and Policy IN1 - to update the references to area travel plans to reflect the latest proposals from the County Council.
- Policy SP4 and elsewhere - to refer to the development of mobility hubs.
- Policy SP9 - to support the proposed Wantage & Grove railway station project.
- Policy AS1 - to refer to required contributions for the A4074 corridor project.
- Policy AS2 – to clarify that Culham railway station should become a mobility hub.
- Policy AS3 and AS4 - so that the text is more explicit about the importance of the Cowley Branch Line, noting the need for a step change in public transport and active travel in the vicinity.
- Policy AS3, AS4 and AS8 - to clarify the contribution required to new cycle routes and green links.
- The glossary - to include a definition of green links which includes provision for walking and cycling with lighting and suitable surfacing.
- Policies AS3, AS10 and AS11 - to better control employment uses.
- The concept plan for AS11 - to show land safeguarded for a transport project.
- Text at 8.86 and elsewhere - to refer to the relevant Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs).
- Policies AS13 and AS14 - to make the policies consistent with one another in relation to garden village principles relating to walking, cycling and public transport.
- Policy AS16 – to require walking and cycling routes.
- Policy DE1 – to require streets to be designed so that they are safe and encourage walking and cycling.
- Infographic at paragraph 13.8 – to reference the source as the 2011 census as detailed in the 'Existing Transport Conditions' report.
- Policy IN1 – to add reference to the need for contributions to infrastructure even where the infrastructure has been forward funded.
- Policy IN3 – to add reference to the October 2024 reports by England's Economic Heartland (EEH) – 'Connecting Economies: Swindon-Didcot-Oxford' and 'Main Line Priorities Rail Study' and the rail priorities included, with specific reference to the Cowley Branch Line.

- Omission – to add a policy and text about financial contributions towards the Cowley Branch Line so that there is a consistent approach across the boundary with Oxford City Council.

Minerals & Waste modifications

- CE5 – to remove a sentence of the supporting text.
- Paragraph 4.74 supporting text to Policy CE13 and Policy DE7 - to correct the text about the Minerals and Waste Local Plan and County Matters.

Public Health modifications

- Omission - to add a policy restricting the location of hot food takeaways.
- Policy HP1 – to refine the requirements for Health Impact Assessments.
- Omission – to add reference to the ‘Oxfordshire Health & Wellbeing Strategy 2024-2030’.
- Policy CE9 – to add protection of internal air quality.

Flood Risk modifications

- Policy CE6 – to define where the need for flood risk assessments in Flood Zone 1 is triggered.
- Policies including Policies AS1, AS2, AS3, AS4, AS5, AS7, AS8, AS10 and AS11 - so that it is clear that a flood risk assessment is required which will include detailed flood risk modelling, and that even areas confirmed as being within Flood Zone 1 may be subject to limitations given groundwater conditions in the area.

Landscape modifications

- Policy CE11 – to clarify how this will limit light pollution as it is open to interpretation and may not be strong enough.
- Policy NH4 – to clarify how National Landscape Management Plans will be used and to require Landscape and Visual Impact Assessments for all developments.
- Policy NH5 – to clarify how the landscape character areas have been defined.
- Policy NH6 – to require appropriate landscape assessments.

Green Infrastructure modifications

- Policy HP6 – reference the ‘Tree Policy for Oxfordshire’ and the ‘Oxfordshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy’ and require use of the Urban Greening Factor.
- Supporting text to Policy NH1 – explain the use of the Lowland Fen evidence.
- Policy NH2 – improve the text to deliver habitat enhancement at county level.
- Policy NH3 – improve the text in relation to trees and hedgerow management and protection.

Education modifications

- The glossary - to define 'local education authority'.
- Policy AS1 - to clarify that no decision has yet been made about the future of the Abbey Woods Primary School.

Housing Need and Social Care modifications

- Policy HOU5 and related text - to require only a proportion of specialist housing to be built to M4(3) standards, with other specialist housing built to M4(2) standards for accessible and adaptable dwellings.