



Planning Inspectorate

Examination of the South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse Joint Local Plan 2041

Inspectors: Ms Caroline Mulloy BSc (Hons) DipTP MRTPI and

Dr Rachael A Bust BSc (Hons) MA MSc LLM PhD MIO L MCMi FGS MIE n v Sci MRTPI

Programme Officer: Mr Ian Kemp

Telephone: 07723 009166

Email: ian@localplanservices.co.uk

Address: PO Box 241, Droitwich, Worcestershire WR9 1DW

Website: [Joint Local Plan 2041 Examination - South Oxfordshire District Council and Vale of White Horse District Council](#)

22 April 2026

Dear [REDACTED],

Moving forwards with the examination process

1. Further to our previous letter [ID15] which followed the procedural meeting in February 2026, we would like to thank the Councils for the various materials submitted to date.
2. We have been exploring options to move forwards with the examination process. Taking account of the Councils' preferences and our existing commitments, an additional Inspector will be appointed to add resilience to the process. Further details will be set out in a separate letter.
3. In addition to this we will be looking to maximise the efficiency of the examination. This may include the use of written exchanges/representations where it would be fair to do so, and taking into account examination participants' right to be heard. If necessary, any further guidance on such procedures would be provided in due course. In the meantime, we would also like to hear the Councils' views on how we could introduce any further efficiencies into this examination process.
4. We anticipate the next set of hearings to be programmed for the week commencing 6 July. Further hearings to cover other aspects of the Plan could be scheduled for autumn 2026. We consider that staging the hearings in this way will allow for efficient progress of the examination. This is because it will

allow the Councils time to undertake any work that may be necessary as a result of discussions at the summer hearings, which would provide the strategic context for subsequent matters to be explored in the autumn sessions. We will correspond with the Councils through the PO regarding potential dates and venues.

5. As indicated in our previous letter [ID15], the next set of hearings would need to address changes in circumstances since the Stage 1 hearings in June 2025. The focus will be on updated or new information relevant to legal and procedural compliance, including the additional Sustainability Appraisal work, the Habitat Regulations Assessment Addendum, the national policy requirement for maintaining effective cooperation following the removal of the Duty to Cooperate, the housing requirement and potentially the employment requirement. We will prepare and publish some Matters, Issues and Questions (MIQs) on 18 May 2026 to inform the next set of hearings in July 2026.
6. Looking ahead to the remaining stages of the examination, should we find the Plan capable of being adopted, it appears unlikely that its adoption would take place by December 2026. As the Plan was submitted on 9 December 2024, this timeframe may have implications for the robustness of the supporting evidence base. Not least, and as you will be aware, the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) indicates that the local housing need calculations using the standard method may be relied upon for plan making for a period of 2 years from the time that the plan is submitted for examination.
7. Accordingly, at this stage and in advance of our MIQs for the next set of hearings in July 2026, we request the Councils prepare and submit the following 3 items by 5 May 2026:
 - i) In light of the PPG, a recalculation of the local housing need and therefore the housing requirement for the respective Districts.
 - ii) The Councils' view on the implications of the revised local housing need/requirement for other relevant parts of the evidence base – including, but not limited to, the Sustainability Appraisal and Habitats Regulations Assessment.
 - iii) An updated position relating to any newly arising unmet need from Oxford City and the extent to which this could be accommodated in the Plan.

A Revised Local Development Scheme will also be needed. However, this can be submitted separately to the above to take into account internal approval processes it may require.

8. We would be grateful for this letter to be added to the examination library with a link to it from the latest news webpage. We are not inviting any comments on this letter from any other parties at this stage. Other than the information specifically requested by us in this letter, no further representations, evidence or other written material should be submitted at this stage of the examination.

Yours sincerely

Caroline Mulloy and Rachael A Bust

Inspectors