

South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse Joint Local Plan 2041

Statement of Common Ground

Between

South Oxfordshire District Council and

Vale of White Horse District Council (as Local Planning Authority),

Homes England, Soha, South Oxfordshire

District Council (as a landowner)

February 2025

1. Introduction

- 1.1. This Statement of Common Ground (SOCG) has been prepared by South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils (“the councils”, as Local Planning Authority), Homes England, Soha and South Oxfordshire District Council (in their role as a landowner), hereafter referred to as “the parties”. This SOCG documents those matters agreed with regard to the South and Vale Joint Local Plan 2041 and supporting documents, to assist the Inspectors during the examination of the local plan.
- 1.2. This SOCG relates solely to the proposed allocation of land at Didcot Gateway within Policy AS7 for the development of approximately 200 new homes, visitor accommodation, new employment and ancillary retail or other service provision. The agreed matters have been structured to assist the Inspectors through the examination process.
- 1.3. The councils propose the site for allocation in the Joint Local Plan, having considered reasonable alternatives, including assessing the relevant evidence, and following consultation with stakeholders and the public.

2. Background / Context

- 2.1. The Didcot Gateway site, within Didcot Garden Town, is a parcel of land south of Didcot Parkway railway station. The proposed allocated area is owned by multiple parties and is currently in a range of uses, including employment, education, a pub and parking. The parking uses on site are temporary following

earlier demolition of previous uses, on the basis that the site will be redeveloped in accordance with previous and existing policy.

- 2.2. The site (shown in Figure 1) is currently allocated in South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2035 for 300 homes. The new Joint Local Plan allocation has reconsidered the capacity of the site for residential development and lowered the amount from 300 to 200 homes, taking account of the potential for the site to support a broader range of land uses.

Figure 1: Site Boundary for Didcot Gateway



- 2.3. The site is designated as being within Flood Zone 1 and as such is not located in an area of flood risk. The site borders the Didcot Station Road Conservation Area.
- 2.4. There have been several planning applications for redevelopment of part and/or all of the site historically. Most recently, South Oxfordshire District Council (as a landowner) and Homes England have submitted separate planning applications for their respective land parcels. Homes England has submitted a planning application for redevelopment for up to 144 dwellings, hard and soft landscaping, parking and all associated engineering works (ref [P22/S0491/O](#) – submitted 4 February 2022), and South Oxfordshire has submitted a planning application for a proposed new office building, together with associated development (ref [P23/S2621/FUL](#) – submitted 2 August 2023). Both applications are currently under consideration by the Local Planning Authority. It

is recognised that the remaining capacity will be utilised by the central section of the site, where an application is yet to be submitted.

- 2.5. The applications were accompanied by a masterplan that was prepared by Stantec on behalf of South Oxfordshire District Council (as a landowner), Homes England and Soha. The masterplan has regard to the wider site and was informed by information provided by other landowners, including proposals for a hotel on Greene King's land adjacent to the Prince of Wales Pub. It did not propose redevelopment of the pre-school on Oxfordshire County Council's land, as it was assumed this would remain in operation. The document outlines development principles, provides an overarching framework masterplan for the area and sets the context for individual planning applications but does not go into detail on individual buildings, with this intended to be dealt with through individual applications.
- 2.6. This partnership working to date sets the context for a collaborative approach to optimising redevelopment of the Didcot Gateway site as a brownfield site in a highly sustainable location.
- 2.7. The site is proposed to be allocated in the Joint Local Plan 2041 (Policy AS7 – Land at Didcot Gateway, Didcot) to deliver a mixed-use scheme comprising approximately 200 new homes, visitor accommodation, new employment and ancillary retail or other service provision to support the allocated site. (This includes up to 144 residential units on the site being considered under planning application [P22/S0491/O](#), the proposed new office building (together with associated development) under planning application [P23/S2621/FUL](#) and approximately 60 residential units and an office building on the central section of the site owned by Soha).
- 2.8. This SOCG outlines agreed matters between all parties and the councils related to the Joint Local Plan and Policy AS7.

3. Agreed Matters

- 3.1. The site is sustainably located and suitable for redevelopment, with large parts of the site available and deliverable in the short to medium term. The site is not subject to any insurmountable environmental, legal, ownership or technical constraints that would otherwise impede development in the short term in accordance with the proposed site allocation policy.

Spatial Strategy and Evidence Base

- 3.2. The parties agree that the allocation aligns with the Joint Local Plan spatial strategy to holistically plan new or regenerated settlements at Garden Community locations and support new development on well-located brownfield sites.

- 3.3. The site provides an opportunity to deliver high-quality new development in accordance with Policy SP3 – The Strategy for Didcot Garden Town. The parties support the inclusion of the Didcot Garden Town principles and requirements for development within the Didcot Garden Town Masterplan area in the Joint Local Plan, and the masterplan and planning applications to date have been prepared within the context of the Garden Town.
- 3.4. The site allocation appropriately reflects the settlement hierarchy with Didcot as a Tier 1 settlement, being able to support the most sustainable patterns of living through delivering new mixed-use development in a sustainable location with good accessibility and proximity to a full range of services and facilities and providing excellent access to public transport links. The parties support the presumption in favour of sustainable development within the built-up area of Tier 1 settlements.
- 3.5. The parties agree that the site is appropriate for delivering a mix of uses to support the allocation and local area, particularly benefitting the wider Garden Town, by creating an attractive gateway to Didcot for those arriving at Didcot Parkway railway station by train, bus or bicycle.
- 3.6. The masterplan prepared by Homes England, Soha and South Oxfordshire District Council (as a landowner) presents a mixed-use scheme of approximately 200 new homes, employment, overnight accommodation, retail and other ancillary uses which includes: up to 144 residential units on the site being considered under planning application [P22/S0491/O](#); the proposed new office building, together with associated development, under planning application [P23/S2621/FUL](#); and approximately 60 residential units on the central section of the site owned by Soha. On this basis, the parties agree with the allocated number of homes and mix of uses in Policy AS7 of the Joint Local Plan and believe this provides regeneration of the site within the context of other existing uses that are currently expected to remain in situ (such as the Lydalls Road Nursery and Prince of Wales pub). It is agreed that through detailed consideration of individual land parcels there may be opportunities for increased housing provision.

Policy AS7 and LS1

- 3.7. The preparation of a masterplan and work on the site to date aligns with the requirements of Policy LS1 – Proposals for Large Scale Major Development, and the parties agree that it is appropriate to demonstrate accordance with this policy for any future planning applications determined under the Joint Local Plan, subject to further work required to inform those applications.
- 3.8. The parties acknowledge that any future planning applications for the site determined after the adoption of the Joint Local Plan should, so far as they are relevant to the site and proposed development, demonstrate consistency with Policy AS7 design principles to:

- maximise walking, cycling and public transport connectivity
- incorporate active frontages
- graduate density to avoid impingement on neighbouring residential amenity
- include public amenity space and green infrastructure
- protect and enhance existing habitats
- include necessary infrastructure based on up-to-date evidence on the impact of the development
- deliver a mix of housing types, including housing with support for older people, unless site specific conditions make this impractical or unviable.

3.9. The Didcot Gateway masterplan (agreed between the landowners) outlines how the above have already been considered to inform existing proposals and planning applications for the site. Applications will consider the above further, informed by up-to-date evidence and negotiations on specific matters within the context of site-specific conditions, and may still be determined within the context of the adopted South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2035 (determination and Joint Local Plan adoption timescales permitting).

3.10. The parties support the need for development to be informed by an assessment of local factors and service networks, and any future applications will be informed by up-to-date evidence to justify proposals at the planning application stage.

3.11. Given the number and range of landowners and uses on the site, the parties agree that there is a need to take a pragmatic approach for delivery on the site. The intention is to deal with each parcel individually within the context of the wider masterplan, working collaboratively on matters that cross boundaries within and beyond the site.

4. Conclusion

4.1. All landowning parties support the allocation of land at Didcot Gateway within Policy AS7, and the parties agree that the site is suitable, available and deliverable for sustainable housing and mixed-use development.

4.2. The parties are working jointly to enable delivery of the planned residential development of approximately 200 homes which includes: up to 144 residential units on the site being considered under planning application [P22/S0491/O](#); the proposed new office building (together with associated development) under planning application [P23/S2621/FUL](#); and approximately 60 residential units on the central section of the site owned by Soha, along with other complementary uses suitable for the site's location in Didcot within the plan period, on this

highly sustainable brownfield site. It is agreed that through detailed consideration of individual land parcels there may be opportunities for increased housing provision. The parties will continue to work cooperatively on all matters of mutual interest.

Signatures

Signed on behalf of South Oxfordshire District Council and Vale of White Horse District Council (as the Local Planning Authority)



14.02.2025

Name – Tim Oruye

Job Title – Head of Policy and Programmes

Date

Signed on behalf of South Oxfordshire District Council (as landowner)



12.02.2025

Name - Andrew Busby

Job Title - Head of Development and Corporate Landlord

Date

Signed on behalf of Homes England



14.02.2025

Name Jonathan Turner

Job Title Head of Planning and Enabling

Date

Signed on behalf of Soha



12-Feb-2025 | 08:40 GMT

Name Craig Dransfield

Job Title Head of Development

Date