

**South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse Joint Local Plan 2041**

**Statement of Common Ground**

**Between**

**Vale of White Horse District Council,**

**South Oxfordshire District Council,**

**and**

**Chadwick Town Planning Limited on behalf of**

**Westminster College Oxford Trust**

**March 2026**

**1. Introduction**

- 1.1. This Statement of Common Ground (SOCG) has been prepared by Vale of White Horse District Council and South Oxfordshire District Council (“the councils”) and Chadwick Town Planning Limited (“CTPL”) on behalf of Westminster College Oxford Trust (“the Trust”), hereafter referred to as “the parties”. This SOCG documents those matters agreed with regard to the South and Vale Joint Local Plan 2041 (“Joint Local Plan”) and supporting documents, to assist the Inspectors during the examination of the local plan.
- 1.2. This SOCG particularly relates to the proposed allocation of land at Harcourt Hill Campus and ensuring any future development is delivered comprehensively and according to an agreed masterplan, as set out in Policy AS15 of the Joint Local Plan. The agreed matters have been structured to assist the Inspectors through the examination process.
- 1.3. The councils propose the site for allocation for predominantly educational uses in the Joint Local Plan, with the provision / retention of educational and sports facilities.
- 1.4. A previous SOCG was prepared for this site in April 2016 between Vale of White Horse District Council and West Waddy (representing Oxford Brookes University) and Harcourt Hill Estate Residents Association as part of the Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2031 process, which is available to view on the council’s

website<sup>1</sup>. This previous SOCG did not involve the Trust so this is referenced for historical context purposes only.

1.5. This SOCG initially sets out the background/context of the site and Section 3 then sets out the agreed matters.

## **2. Background / Context**

2.1. Harcourt Hill Campus is one of three main sites occupied by Oxford Brookes University, and provides teaching facilities, student accommodation and supporting uses, including sports facilities. This included theological education and teachers' training from 1959 to 2000 when Westminster College ceased independent operations under the Methodist Church and merged with Oxford Brookes University. From 2000 until 2025, the site became the Harcourt Hill Campus of Oxford Brookes University, hosting the Westminster Institute of Education, which continued teacher training and related studies until 2025.

2.2. The Campus is owned by the Methodist Church, who lease the site to Oxford Brookes University. The Trust is a registered charity (Charity No. 309672) that promotes higher education and training in the interests of the Methodist Church. The University commenced a 99-year lease on the site in 2017.

2.3. Harcourt Hill Campus is located in a partially wooded section of the Oxford Green Belt, on the urban-rural fringe to the south of the settlement of Botley and west of the village of North Hinksey and the A34. The Harcourt Hill Campus allocation is 22.72 hectares. The Raleigh Park Lowland Fen habitat crosses the north-eastern border of the site.

2.4. Oxford Brookes University is reviewing the future role of the campus. The University ceased all teaching activity at Harcourt Hill in 2025 and will now need to implement a strategy for the future of the site in consultation with Westminster College Oxford Trust.

### *Local Plans*

#### *Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2031 Part 1 (adopted 2016)*

2.5. This plan's Core Policy 9: Harcourt Hill Campus supports the development of a masterplan that sets a clear vision for the future use of the site, with Vale of White Horse District Council stating it will work proactively with Oxford Brookes University, Oxfordshire County Council, local residents and other appropriate stakeholders [which will include the owners of the campus] to help the University develop this.

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<sup>1</sup>[https://data.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/java/support/dynamic\\_serve.jsp?ID=910615862&CODE=40C6EAFE806D3A1558B3E8EF0CCDC046](https://data.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/java/support/dynamic_serve.jsp?ID=910615862&CODE=40C6EAFE806D3A1558B3E8EF0CCDC046)

*South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse Joint Local Plan 2041 (submitted December 2024)*

2.6. The Joint Local Plan 2041's Policy AS15 – Harcourt Hill Campus allocates the site and states that if proposing significant change, the landowner / leaseholder of the campus is required to work proactively with the council, Oxfordshire County Council, local residents and other appropriate stakeholders to develop a masterplan that meets the need for predominantly educational uses. Policy AS15 adds that proposals for the upgrading or redevelopment of the Harcourt Hill Campus will be supported in principle where guided by an agreed masterplan (or any approved updates to it) that sets a clear vision for the future use of the site.

*Vale of White Horse Playing Pitch Strategy (2024) and Vale of White Horse Leisure Facility Assessment and Strategy (2024)*

2.7. Harcourt Hill Campus has a number of sports pitches used for football, rugby, lacrosse and American football, as identified in the adopted Vale of White Horse Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS) (2024) ([examination library reference HPL06.2](#)). The site also has an activity hall, gym, studios and squash courts which are available for community use during extensive opening hours, as identified by the adopted Vale of White Horse Leisure Facilities Assessment and Strategy (LFAS) (2024) ([examination library reference HPL04.4](#)). There is also a swimming pool on site which has since closed as Oxford Brookes University did not identify a viable business case to support the new investment required to keep the facility in operation.

2.8. Both the PPS and LFAS advise that these facilities should be retained or enhanced as part of redevelopment unless an assessment has demonstrated that there is an excess of provision and they are surplus to requirements, or there is clear evidence to support their relocation.

*Neighbourhood Plan*

*North Hinksey Parish Neighbourhood Plan (made May 2021)*

2.9. The Harcourt Hill Campus site allocation sits within the North Hinksey Parish. The North Hinksey Parish Neighbourhood Development Plan (made May 2021) forms part of the Development Plan that is used to determine planning applications within the Neighbourhood Development Plan boundary.

2.10. The Neighbourhood Plan sets local policies for the Neighbourhood Plan area, which includes Botley and areas adjoining and within the Harcourt Hill Campus allocation. The Neighbourhood Plan contains Policy BU1: Oxford Brookes University Harcourt Hill Campus, alongside several other policies that relate directly to the site allocation, including those addressing transport, social infrastructure, utilities, green spaces and the natural environment.

### **3. Agreed Matters**

#### *Matters on which the Parties Agree*

- 3.1. The parties agree that the inclusion of a policy specific to Harcourt Hill Campus will assist in the future development or redevelopment of the site.
- 3.2. The parties agree that Policy AS15: Harcourt Hill Campus identifies an appropriate approach to ensuring any future development at the campus is delivered comprehensively and will be delivered in accordance with the requirements set out in the policy, and where appropriate, the policies of the made North Hinksey Parish Neighbourhood Development Plan.
- 3.3. The parties agree that the masterplan required by Policy AS15 can provide a level of certainty to assist the planning application process and should be used to inform any pre-application discussions and form the basis for future planning applications, both outline and reserved matters. Development proposals will need to be in accordance with the agreed masterplan.
- 3.4. The parties agree with the principle of the provision / retention of educational and sports facilities on site, as set out in Policy AS15.
- 3.5. The parties agree that Policy AS15 is robust and soundly based and is supported by the Councils' evidence base. The principle of allocation of this site has already been established through the current Core Policy 9 of the adopted Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2031.
- 3.6. The parties agree the general large scale major development requirements set out in Policy LS1 - Proposals for large scale major development, and the site-specific requirements set out in Policy AS15, identify the key requirements for this site to deliver.
- 3.7. The parties will work positively together to ensure there is adequate planning for infrastructure necessary to support any future development at Harcourt Hill Campus.
- 3.8. The parties are committed to continued partnership working to ensure the optimum outcome for the site.
- 3.9. The parties agree that any future development on this site can be delivered in accordance with the policies contained in the Joint Local Plan 2041.
- 3.10. The site is not subject to any insurmountable environmental, legal, ownership or technical constraints that would otherwise impede development.

### **4. Conclusion**

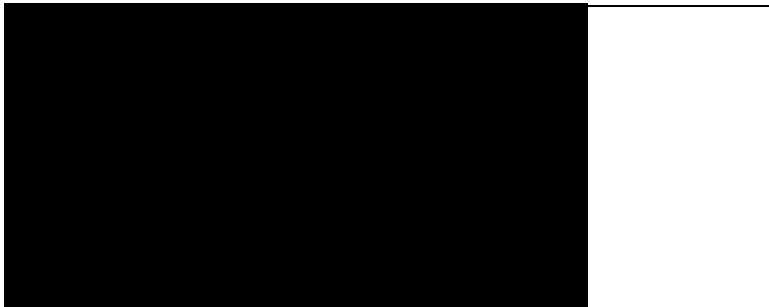
- 4.1. Westminster College Oxford Trust support the proposed approach to ensuring any future development at Harcourt Hill Campus is delivered comprehensively

and according to an agreed masterplan, as set out in Policy AS15 of the Joint Local Plan.

4.2. The parties are working jointly to ensure the optimum outcome for the site. The parties will continue to work cooperatively on all matters of mutual interest.

### **Signatures**

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

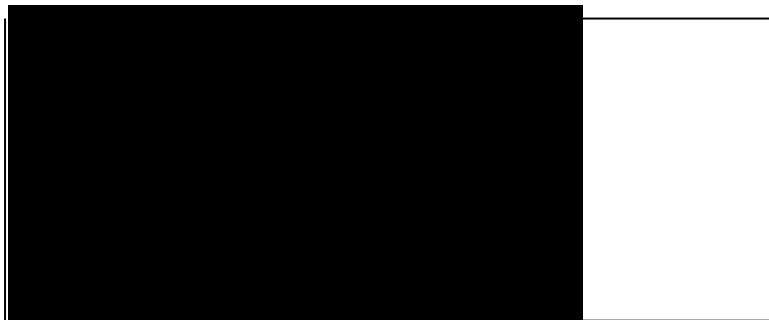
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Name: Tim Oruye

Job Title: Head of Policy and Programmes

Date: 26 March 2026

Signed by Chadwick Town Planning Limited on behalf of Westminster College Oxford Trust

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Name: Duncan Chadwick

Job Title: Managing Director

Date 26 March 2026