

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

Carter Jonas on behalf of

**Harwell Science and Innovation Campus Limited Partnership, UK Research
and Innovation and Science and Technology Facilities Council**

June 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 Carter Jonas LLP on behalf of Harwell Science and Innovation Campus Limited Partnership/UK Research and Innovation’s (UKRI) Science and Technology Facilities Council (STFC) (hereafter referred to as “the parties”).
- 1.2. This SOCG relates to Harwell Campus, the vast majority of which is controlled by the parties listed above.
- 1.3. 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.
- 1.4. This SOCG relates particularly to the proposed allocation of land at Harwell Campus within Policy AS12 for the development of approximately 93 hectares of employment land. The agreed matters have been structured to assist the Inspectors through the examination process.
- 1.5. The councils propose the site for allocation for employment land development having considered reasonable alternatives, including assessing the relevant evidence, and following consultation with stakeholders and the public.

- 1.6. A previous SOCG was prepared for this site as part of the Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2031 process, which is available to view on the council's website¹.

2. Background/Context

- 2.1. Harwell Campus is situated approximately 2.5 miles to the south west of Didcot and 4 miles to the east of Wantage.
- 2.2. Harwell Campus was originally created in 1946 as an Atomic Research Establishment on the site of RAF Harwell and has evolved into a world-renowned, 287 hectare major UK science and technology campus that benefits from over £1bn of science infrastructure, including the ISIS Neutron source, the Central Laser Facility and RAL Space, as well as more recent projects, such as the National Satellite Test Facility and Rosalind Franklin Institute and the National Quantum Computing Centre – located at Rutherford Appleton Laboratory (RAL), which itself covers 37 hectares of the wider site. The Harwell Campus Joint Local Plan allocation is for approximately 93 hectares of employment land.
- 2.3. Approximately 7,500 research and support staff are employed at Harwell Campus, working in more than 240 organisations. These include national facilities co-located with start-ups, scale-ups and established businesses, alongside numerous university researchers active on campus. This clustering is concentrated around space, health tech, energy, quantum computing and defence, enabling Harwell Campus to leverage its research talent, technology, facilities and investment to meet pressing global challenges. The campus forms a key part of Science Vale.
- 2.4. Harwell Campus is located within the North Wessex Downs National Landscape. The campus is mainly bounded by agricultural land, with the Chilton Field housing development to the south boundary and the village of Chilton to the south east.
- 2.5. The Harwell Nuclear Licensed Site (NLS) currently comprises around 84 hectares of land at the campus. Just over 25 hectares of Nuclear Licensed land has been decommissioned and released for reuse. Current activities undertaken at the NLS include decommissioning and demolition of redundant facilities, continuation of the current programme for transfer of nuclear materials and intermediate level waste, and regulatory permission in support of decommissioning and demolition activities.

¹https://data.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/java/support/dynamic_serve.jsp?ID=1954970239&CODE=68207DD042482103801B188FFCB213CB

Local Plans

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

- 2.6. Local Plan 2031 Part 1's Core Policy 15: Spatial Strategy for South East Vale Sub-Area and Core Policy 6: Meeting Business and Employment Needs allocated Harwell Campus as a strategic employment site (saved from the Local Plan 2011). The allocated available development land at the campus consisted of 93 hectares of Enterprise Zone land and 35 hectares of land outside the Enterprise Zone.

Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2031 Part 2 (adopted 2019)

- 2.7. Local Plan 2031 Part 2's Core Policy 15b: Harwell Campus Comprehensive Development Framework stated that:

“all new development at Harwell Campus will be guided by a comprehensive development framework. Development will come forward in accordance with Core Policies 15 and 15b. Sufficient land is made available at Harwell Campus for research, innovation and economic development to accommodate at least 3,500 net additional jobs in the plan period up to 2031 within the designated Enterprise Zone”.

- 2.8. Vale of White Horse District Council supported a comprehensive approach to development at the campus.

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

- 2.9. Joint Local Plan 2041 allocates the campus to deliver approximately 93 hectares of employment land through Policy AS12.
- 2.10. The development will be comprehensively planned - the policy explains that the site owners should work proactively with the council to develop a site masterplan (to be agreed with the Local Planning Authority in consultation with Oxfordshire County Council) that details the principles and parameters which facilitate the allocated growth.
- 2.11. The submitted plan confirms that Harwell Campus is a nationally and internationally significant centre for research and innovation and its continued development is crucial to both the success of the Oxford Economy and the national prospects for job growth associated with 'big science'. The councils want to continue to support the sustainable growth of this internationally important hub for science, innovation and research.

3. Agreed Matters

- 3.1. The parties agree that the councils are supporting a key objective of the Joint Local Plan in allocating sites that help plan for enough new jobs, a flourishing local economy, and a wide range of jobs, including in the science and innovation sector.
- 3.2. Recognising the groundbreaking research conducted at Harwell Campus, both parties acknowledge that this work is instrumental in unlocking the potential of Science Vale, which brings substantial benefits to the local, regional and national economies.
- 3.3. The site is sustainable, suitable, available and developable. Nuclear decommissioning and restoration services are underway for certain areas of the site. These areas will become available for development as the process completes.
- 3.4. The parties agree that development on this site can be delivered in general accordance with the policies contained in the Joint Local Plan 2041.
- 3.5. The parties agree that the site will deliver a high-quality, sustainable development comprising approximately 93 hectares of employment land.
- 3.6. The site allocation accords with the Spatial Strategy of the Local Plan as set out in Policy SP1 – Spatial Strategy.
- 3.7. The site will be delivered in accordance with Policy AS12: Harwell Campus and the large-scale major development requirements as set out in Policy LS1: Proposals for large scale major development.
- 3.8. The parties agree that in broad terms, Policy AS12: Harwell Campus identifies an appropriate approach to ensuring development at the campus is delivered comprehensively.
- 3.9. Both parties agree that the site selection process, as set out in the Site Selection Topic Paper, is robust and soundly based, and supported by the councils' evidence base, which includes the Employment Land Needs Assessment.
- 3.10. The parties agree that Policy AS12: Harwell Campus identifies the key requirements for this site to deliver, which include: sensitive master planning of the site; ensuring that proposals will not unacceptably harm the landscape and scenic beauty of the North Wessex Downs National Landscape; and proactive consultation with the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority and Nuclear Restoration Services for any development which abuts land within the nuclear licensed site.
- 3.11. The parties agree with the flood risk requirements set out in Policy CE6 (Flood Risk).

3.12. The parties are working positively together to ensure that there is adequate planning for infrastructure necessary to support further development at Harwell Campus and that appropriate infrastructure will be delivered as set out in the Infrastructure Delivery Plan. The site will contribute appropriately towards the delivery of necessary transport infrastructure to reduce reliance on the private car.

3.13. The parties are committed to continued partnership working, including regular meetings, to ensure the optimum outcome for the site that delivers new employment-generating development in a sustainable location.

4. Conclusion

4.1. Harwell Science and Innovation Campus Limited Partnership and UKRI/STFC support the allocation of land at Harwell Campus within Policy AS12, and the parties agree that the site is suitable, available and developable for employment development.

4.2. The parties are working jointly to enable delivery of the planned development of employment land within the plan period. 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



Name: Tim Oruye

Job Title: Director of Policy and Programmes

Date: 24 June 2026

Signed on behalf of Harwell Science and Innovation Campus Limited Partnership

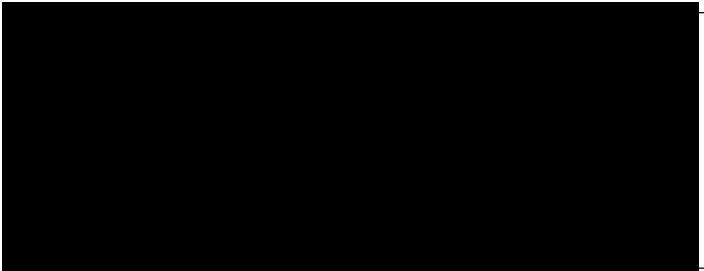


Name: Steven Sensecall

Job Title: Consultant (Carter Jonas LLP)

Date: 24 June 2026

Signed on behalf of UKRI/STFC



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