

[REDACTED]

Subject: FW: #11376 Emerging South Oxfordshire Local Plan: Proposed Main Modifications Consultation

From: Townend, Zoe [REDACTED]

Sent: 28 October 2020 20:56

To: Planning Policy Vale [REDACTED]

Cc: Planning SE [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Subject: #11376 Emerging South Oxfordshire Local Plan: Proposed Main Modifications Consultation

FAO: Planning Policy Team

Our Ref: #11376

RE: Emerging South Oxfordshire Local Plan: Proposed Main Modifications

Thank you for your email of 21 September 2020, formal notification of the above consultation.

Highways England has been appointed by the Secretary of State for Transport as strategic highway company under the provisions of the Infrastructure Act 2015 and is the highway authority, traffic authority and street authority for the strategic road network (SRN). The SRN is a critical national asset and as such Highways England works to ensure that it operates and is managed in the public interest, both in respect of current activities and needs as well as in providing effective stewardship of its long-term operation and integrity. We will therefore be concerned with proposals that have the potential to impact the safe and efficient operation of the SRN, in this case the A34 and M40.

Overall, in accordance with national policy, we look to South Oxfordshire District Council to promote strategies, policies and land allocations which will support alternatives to the car and the operation of a safe and reliable transport network. We would be concerned if any material increase in traffic were to occur on the SRN as a result of planned growth within South Oxfordshire District without careful consideration of mitigation measures. It is important that the Local Plan provides the planning policy framework to ensure development cannot progress without the appropriate infrastructure in place.

Thank you for consulting us on the following consultation documents:

- Schedule of Main Modifications
- Sustainability Appraisal Addendum

We have reviewed these documents and have the following comments:

Schedule of Proposed Main Modifications

Policy STRAT2 South Oxfordshire Housing and Employment Requirements MM5

We note that the minimum housing target has been revised from 17,835 to 18,600 dwellings to be delivered by 2035, an update from 2034 in the last consultation. The total housing requirement for the plan period has been revised from 22,775 to 23,550 homes.

Policy STRAT3: Didcot Garden Town MM6

We note the modification to include “iv) Focus on enhancing rail services to Didcot, complemented by measures to enhance Didcot Parkway station and improve access by sustainable modes of transport.” We are supportive of the aim to improve the use of rail as it will serve to reduce demand on the SRN. Trips on the SRN tend to be long distance and therefore rail is a viable alternative when compared against single occupancy vehicle SRN trips.

The reinforcement of the need for suitable strategic infrastructure funding is also identified in the main modifications, of which we are supportive. When considering proposals for growth, any impacts on the SRN will need to be identified and mitigated as far as reasonably possible. We will support proposals that consider sustainable measures which manage down demand and reduces the need to travel. Infrastructure improvements on the SRN should only be considered as a last resort. Proposed new growth will need to be considered in the context of the cumulative impact from already proposed development on the SRN. It is vital that the deliverability of any required infrastructure that proposed growth is reliant upon is fully assessed.

Policy STRAT10: Land at Berinsfield MM13

Point 2 vi provides additional text regarding sustainable transport and access required in order to deliver the site as a Garden Village. The sustainable transport hierarchy provides a method to minimise down demand on the SRN as per NPPF principles.

Policy TRANS1b: Supporting Strategic Transport Investment MM51

The proposed modification is clear in the specific sustainable transport requirements referenced, the A34 safety improvements at the Newbury to Oxford Enhancements. This was set out and detailed as ‘under construction’ in DfT Road Investment Strategy 2 (RIS2): 2020 – 2025. The scheme is comprised of a collection of safety improvements to the A34 in Oxfordshire and north Berkshire, including improved laybys.

Addendum to the Sustainability Appraisal Report of the Submission Version of the Local Plan – Appraisal of Proposed Main Modifications 2020

We remain supportive of the inclusion of “SA Objective 6 To improve travel choice and accessibility, reduce the need to travel by car and shorten the length and duration of journeys.”

The Didcot sites SA Objective 6 were found to be favourable and overall positive scores. The Local Plan draft policies are still assessed to be overwhelmingly positive which we are supportive of. In terms of Delivering New Homes, SA Objective 6 is somewhat positive too, in particular . Policies INF1 ‘Infrastructure Provision,’ TRANS4 ‘Transport Assessments, Transport Statements and Travel Plans.”

In terms of the built environment Policy DES1 sets out the requirement for high quality design which would directly contribute to this SA objective by ensuring new developments are well designed and easily accessible. This could result in improving travel choice. A significant positive effect is therefore identified. We support providing increased sustainable travel options for local residents, employees and visitors.

I hope that this response is helpful and we look forward to working with you as you develop the Local Plan.

Kind regards,

Zoe Townend, Area 3 Assistant Spatial Planner

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