

Agenda Item IMD2

INDIVIDUAL EXECUTIVE MEMBER DECISION REFERENCE IMD: 2017/02

TITLE	Wokingham Borough Council response to the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2011-2033 – Final Publication Plan
DECISION TO BE MADE BY	Executive Member for Strategic Planning and Highways, Cllr David Lee
DATE AND TIME	Wednesday 10 January 2018 – 9.10am
WARD	None specific
DIRECTOR	Interim Director of Environment, Josie Wragg; Director of Corporate Services, Graham Ebers

OUTCOME / BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY

To ensure that South Oxfordshire District Council's (SODC) Local Plan has minimal negative impacts upon Wokingham Borough and that any positive benefits are maximised.

RECOMMENDATION

The Executive Member for Strategic Planning and Highways agrees that Wokingham Borough Council submits the attached appendices as formal responses to the plan which:

- 1) Object to the plan on the basis of soundness in relation to:
 - a) The omission of a safeguarded route for a new Thames Crossing within the plan;
- 2) Support South Oxfordshire District Council's commitment to plan for its own housing need in full.
- 3) Support SODC's commitment to meeting a proportion of Oxford City Council's (OCC) unmet housing need as well as its commitment to an early review of this plan, which will ensure that the scale of OCC's unmet need, which will be quantified within a future local plan of its own, is fully met within the Housing Market Area.

SUMMARY OF REPORT

South Oxfordshire District Council (SODC) has published the Local Plan 2011-2033 Publication Version (the Plan), which is intended to be the last version of the plan that is consulted upon (Regulation 19) before it is submitted to the Secretary of State for examination. The consultation ran from 11 October to 30 November 2017. The Plan details the proposed policies and spatial vision for SODC.

SODC failed to notify Wokingham Borough Council (WBC) of the Plans publication. As WBC only became aware of the breach towards the end of the consultation period, an

objection to the Plan was submitted on the grounds that it had not been prepared in a legal compliant manner. WBC's response set out that it reserves the right to fully review the plan in adequate time and, upon a full reflection of the details of the plan, alter its position as necessary.

WBC has now been able to review the plan and this report with associated appendices outlines WBC's response to the planned housing provision within SODC and strategic transport schemes, in particular, a potential new crossing over the River Thames.

It is proposed that if SODC and the Planning Inspectorate are willing to accept the new representations as duly made, WBC would agree to the withdrawal of our objection on legal compliance.

Background:

South Oxfordshire District Council (SODC) published its Local Plan (2011-2033) Publication Version (hereafter referred to as the Plan) and invited representations between 11 October and 30 November 2017. This is a Regulation 19 consultation under the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012.

SODC failed to notify Wokingham Borough Council (WBC) of the publication of the Plan as required by Regulation. As WBC only became aware of the breach towards the end of the consultation period, an objection to the Plan was submitted on the grounds that it had not been prepared in a legal compliant manner.

Whilst the publication period and opportunity to submit representations on the Plan has closed, WBC has undertaken a review with view to assisting the examination process into the Plan defining any key areas of support or objection. It is proposed that if SODC and the Planning Inspectorate are willing to accept the new representations as duly made, WBC would agree to the withdrawal of our objection on legal compliance. While it is a fact that regulatory procedures were not followed in full, on acceptance of the new representations, WBC is content that this did not unduly compromise WBC.

Analysis of Issues

The publication version the Plan sets out the long term vision for the SODC, up until 2033 and includes proposed development management policies and proposed site allocations. SODC falls within the Oxfordshire Housing Market Area (HMA) along with Cherwell, Oxford, Vale of White Horse, and West Oxfordshire local authorities. All five authorities are working together to ensure that the Objectively Assessed Need (OAN) of the whole of the Oxfordshire HMA is delivered.

Housing need

The Plan sets out that SODC will deliver 17,050 additional homes to meet its own identified need to 2033, as well as a further 3,750 new homes to meet some of Oxford City Council's unmet need. The Oxfordshire County Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) identified a range in housing need for SODC from 14,500 to 16,500 new homes for the period 2011-2031 which equates to a range of 725 – 825 homes per annum, of which the midpoint is 775. SODC have considered it

appropriate to plan for this midpoint and therefore, rolling this SHMA requirement forward 2 additional years to match the plan period to 2033, this has led to the identified 17,050 homes required to meet the need arising within its own area. The plan sets out how this need will be met in full and WBC welcomes this commitment.

The SHMA also recommends a range of 24,000 to 32,000 new homes for the Oxford City Council administrative area. Oxford City Council will be unable to meet its own need in full and there is therefore an assumption that 15,000 new homes will need to be accommodated in the other Oxfordshire County local authority areas. SODC are proposing to accommodate 3,750 houses of this unmet need which, in line with other Oxfordshire local authorities, will be based on a stepped trajectory that begins provision in the monitoring year 2021/22. WBC notes that until such a time as Oxford City Council finalises its own local plan, a definitive unmet need figure will not be known. Additionally, as the different Oxfordshire local authorities are at different stages of their plan making process, there is no definitive Oxfordshire wide agreement about exactly how this unmet need will be apportioned between the remaining four HMA local authorities. SODC has committed to reviewing its own local plan at such a time as Oxford City Council adopts its plan and WBC considers this to be a pragmatic approach. WBC however takes this opportunity to emphasise that all of Oxford City's unmet housing need should be met in full within the Oxfordshire County HMA itself and that SODC, or other Oxfordshire local authorities, should not look to WBC to accommodate any unmet need. WBC considers the plan to be sound as regards provision of housing.

See Appendix 1 for the recommended response on housing issues.

Transport

WBC welcomes reference in Policy TRANS1 (Supporting Strategic Transport Investment) to a proposal for a new Thames crossing in the Reading area. This is a scheme of strategic importance that WBC considers would have positive transport implications for the borough. Though Wokingham Borough is mentioned in the plan's supporting Transport Topic Paper (TTP), the plan itself (and Policy TRANS1 in particular) does not specifically refer to Wokingham Borough. As is acknowledged in the TTP, a Strategic Outline Business Case has recently been produced for a new Thames crossing (in partnership between Thames Valley Berkshire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP), OxLEP, Oxfordshire County Council, SODC, Reading Borough Council and WBC). The Business Case outlines a potential new crossing route extending into Thames Valley Park within the administrative area of WBC. WBC would therefore express a preference for specific mention of Wokingham Borough to be included within the plan itself given the proposed route would directly affect Wokingham Borough.

WBC notes that Policy TRANS3 (Safeguarding of Land for Strategic transport Schemes) safeguards land for a number of strategic transport schemes. This policy does not safeguard any land for a potential new Thames crossing. Given the importance of delivering this scheme as soon as is practicable, WBC would expect SODC to make provision for land to be safeguarded for this purpose in Policy TRANS3. WBC therefore objects to the omission of any safeguarded land for this purpose in Policy TRANS3 and considers the policy to be unsound on the basis that it is not 'effective' as per the national guidance. WBC would expect this policy

wording to be altered and land to be safeguarded on the policies map which could reflect the broad alignment set out within the Strategic Outline Business Case (found on the WBC website here: <http://www.wokingham.gov.uk/parking-road-works-and-transport/transport-and-roads-guidance-and-plans/?categoryesctl91f252ff-550d-4cfa-a838-92ef2cb5f83c=10642>).

The delivery of a new Thames crossing would open up the potential for strategic cross boundary sustainable transport measures, in particular park and ride provision which could be coordinated with planned facilities within Wokingham Borough at Thames Valley Park. Policy TRANS1 currently has no reference to strategic cross boundary park and ride provision. WBC considers that the inclusion of cross boundary park and ride schemes within Policy TRANS1 would allow flexibility for mutually beneficial schemes to come forward in the future.

See Appendix 2 for the recommended response on transport issues.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

The Council faces severe financial challenges over the coming years as a result of the austerity measures implemented by the Government and subsequent reductions to public sector funding. It is estimated that Wokingham Borough Council will be required to make budget reductions in excess of £20m over the next three years and all Executive decisions should be made in this context.

	How much will it Cost/ (Save)	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Current Financial Year (Year 1)	Nil	Nil	Nil
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	Nil	Nil	Nil
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	Nil	Nil	Nil

Other financial information relevant to the Recommendation/Decision
None anticipated

Cross-Council Implications
Decisions in South Oxfordshire District Council on the location of sites for residential and other types of development could affect how the authority needs to resolve impacts on services such as transport, education, etc. within the borough.

SUMMARY OF CONSULTATION RESPONSES	
Director of Corporate Services	No comments received
Monitoring Officer	No comments
Leader of the Council	No comments received

List of Background Papers

Appendix 1 – WBC Housing Response South Oxon Publication LP

Appendix 2 – WBC Transport Response South Oxon Publication LP

Information published by South Oxfordshire District Council relating to the Draft Local Plan – see http://www.southoxon.gov.uk/services-and-advice/planning-and-building/planning-policy/emerging-local-plan

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