

Chalgrove Neighbourhood Development Plan

Initial comments of Independent Examiner

Prepared by

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Introduction

1. As you will be aware I have been appointed to carry out the examination of the Chalgrove Neighbourhood Plan. I am carrying out my initial assessment of the Plan and all the accompanying documents that I have been sent, following my site visit to the parish on 14th April 2018.
2. I have not yet come to a definitive view as to whether a public hearing will be required. I do have matters that I would appreciate hearing the views of the Parish Council and the Local Planning Authority which I set down below. Once I receive a response I will make a decision as to whether a public hearing will be required, which could involve invitations being extended to other parties.

Basis of the Housing Policies

3. The neighbourhood plan proposes a single housing allocation for 200 dwellings, which the plan text states will be a 17% increase in housing in the village. I understand that this figure emerged from the June 2016 version of the emerging Local Plan. However, the current version of the draft Local Plan, in Table 5f, has the figure of 248 for Chalgrove, which it states is the figure equivalent to a 15% growth. Clearly there is a disparity between the two percentage figures. Can I be confident that 248 represents a 15% growth figure?
4. Up until the recent South Oxfordshire District Council meeting held on 28th March 2018 this was not an issue, as there was not a housing target for the neighbourhood plan area, due to the inclusion of the Strategic Allocation of 3,000 homes on Chalgrove Airfield. However, I need to understand what the impact of the District Council's decision, removing the strategic housing allocation at Chalgrove Airfield, has on the housing figure for the village of Chalgrove. If the housing target figure is 248, it appears that the neighbourhood plan ought to be identifying land for at least an additional 32 homes, unless the commitments have changed.
5. This brings me on to the next point. Policy H1 is an allocation for exactly 200 dwellings. However, I am aware that the planning permission that exists on the site, P17/S00941/O is for **up to** 200 dwellings. Dependant on the final mix of units it could be that the development of the site could deliver a lower number and still comply with the terms of the outline. It would be surprising that the final figure delivered exactly 200 houses, but it could not deliver more. In which case, how would the plan be delivering its required housing numbers.

6. The existence of the planning consent of the land does raise the question, in my mind, as to the need for this policy and I would welcome views as to whether it should still be an allocation of the plan rather than a commitment.
7. This then leads me to consider if the plan ought to be now looking at delivering the higher number of 232 without the strategic allocation, which additional site/ sites should be included and on what basis should that choice be made and whether that site(s) should be the subject of public consultation. Also, would it require a change to the Sustainability Appraisal.

Defining the Built Up Area

8. Policy C1 defines the built-up area by way of a description of the boundaries. Would it not be clearer for landowners, and decision makers, who will be users of the plan in the future, to have the edge of the built-up area shown as a line on an Ordnance Survey included in the plan. Otherwise the policy is open to interpretation as to whether a site falls inside or outside the built-up area boundary. Would the Parish Council be able to provide a plan, if I requested it and would there be a need for any public consultation?

Employment Land

9. Policy EMP9 of the emerging Local Plan states” “In addition to the strategic allocation at Chalgrove Airfield, at least 2.25 hectares of employment land will be delivered at Chalgrove. This will be delivered through the Neighbourhood Development Plan.....” The policy goes on to cover the position if the neighbourhood plan is not progressed. The Neighbourhood Plan has not allocated any employment land. I would ask the Parish Council to explain its reasoning why the neighbourhood plan has chosen not to allocate any employment land nor set criteria for considering applications for employment uses. I note that the objective of the policy refers to supporting development of existing business parks for small business and I be provided with the details of the development at Jennings Monument Business Park. Would it be appropriate for this to be added as an allocation and would it cover 2.25 ha? Finally, would the LPA comment on whether that allocation set out in Policy EMP 9 is still relevant in the context of the removal of the strategic allocation at Chalgrove Airfield.

Important Green Spaces Map

10. I note that Appendix 2 identifies 22 Important Green Spaces on the map. What is the status of this designation and what policies are related to the areas shown green on this map?

Chalgrove Farm

11. Has the Parish Council and the LPA any views on the proposal for residential development at Chalgrove Farm submitted at the Regulation 16 stage on behalf of Vanderbilt Strategic. In particular, would there be any disagreement with their scoring of Chalgrove Farm?

Concluding Remarks

12. I would be grateful if a copy of this note and any subsequent responses be put on the relevant websites.

13. I would request a response from each party is sent to me electronically within the next 14 days if possible, so that I can decide whether I need to call a public hearing to explore these issues in greater depth.

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