



4 Arnold Way Thame Oxon OX9 2QA

t: 01844 214631 m: 07753 502955

email: jake@jcpc.org.uk

SOUTH OXFORDSHIRE LOCAL PLAN 2031 ISSUES AND SCOPE

REPORT TO THAME TOWN COUNCIL

JULY 2014

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Following publication of the Oxfordshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) in March 2014, which sets out evidence in respect of housing need to 2031, the District Council have commenced work on preparing the new Local Plan 2031. This will replace the Core Strategy, which was adopted in 2012 and deals with the period up to 2027, and will consider, amongst others, the distribution of housing growth, retail and employment development, together with community facilities and green infrastructure.
- 1.2 The Issues and Scope document is the first stage in this process and outlines a series of strategic issues and options in relation to housing, employment and retail growth across the District.
- 1.3 The purpose of this Report is to distill and summarise the information contained in the District Council's consultation document to allow for informed discussion at the Full Council meeting on 22nd July, prior to formally responding to the District Council in respect of the consultation document.
- 1.4 In view of the significance given to such in the consultation document, the Report firstly considers the position in respect of housing growth, before then referring to matters of employment, retail/town centres and other issues.

2.0 Issues and Scope

Housing Options

- 2.1 The SHMA has been the 'trigger' for issuing the consultation document given that it is suggesting the objectively assessed need for housing in the District is considerably greater than the rate of housing growth anticipated in the Core Strategy.
- 2.2 In this regard, whilst the assumptions that underpin the SHMA (such as the rate of employment growth) could be questioned, the results suggest a need, across South Oxfordshire, to plan for an additional 3,900 - 5,900 homes to 2031. That is, whilst 10,600 homes are already planned for in the Core Strategy for the period 2011-2027, the SHMA suggests the actual need in the period 2011-2031 is for between 14,500 and 16,500 homes, hence the additional requirements set out.
- 2.3 The consultation document contains eight 'strategic' options for the delivering the additional housing growth across the District, which are summarised in Table 1:

OPTION	DESCRIPTION
A	To continue the Distribution Strategy in the Core Strategy <ul style="list-style-type: none">This involved distributing 55% of homes to Didcot, with the remainder split 60% to market towns and 40% to Larger Villages.This (assuming the 'cap' at Henley is of the same proportion as the Core Strategy) and based on the growth range set out at 2.2, would mean a need to plan for somewhere between 430 and 650 additional dwellings in Thame.
B	Science Vale Focus Plus Sustainable Settlements <ul style="list-style-type: none">60% of housing to Science Vale (centred on Didcot) with the remainder split between the Market Towns and less constrained Larger Villages
C	All in Science Vale <ul style="list-style-type: none">Housing focus to Didcot
D	All Growth in a Single New Settlement

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To be sited outside the Green Belt and AONB, leaving a wedge-shaped search area with its 'point' at Benson and extending north-eastwards, with Thame on the north-eastern edge.
E	<p>Dispersal</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Land to be allocated in towns, larger and smaller villages with a more permissive approach to infill development in smallest villages.
F	<p>Next to Neighbouring Major Urban Area</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To deliver housing growth on either the edge of Oxford or Reading (or both)
G	<p>Raising Densities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To increase development densities above the Core Strategy minimum of 25 dwellings per hectare.
H	<p>Locating Development in Settlements to help fund Projects</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensuring sufficient development to facilitate particular local infrastructure projects.

Table 1: Housing Growth Options

2.4 Based on the various options outlined it is likely that Option A would result in the greatest additional growth in Thame¹, whilst Option C, would not result in any additional growth in Thame.

2.5 Whilst the potential growth set out in Table 1 in relation to Option A is based on a number of assumptions (most notably the ability to accommodate some development at Henley), it is appropriate for Councillors to consider each of these housing options having regard to the wider objectives that there may be for the town in terms of employment growth, the need to maintain local services and facilities, landscape, infrastructure and the viability of the town centre.

2.6 Inevitably, Councillors views in respect of the appropriateness and level of additional housing growth in the town has a material bearing on the responses to the various

¹ Subject to there being no large scale infrastructure project in Thame (Option H)

questions raised in the consultation document, and it is right and proper that this first be the subject of an open discussion. Once the conclusions of that discussion are known, and an option favoured (or an alternative one proposed), then appropriate responses can be formulated to the 'strategic-based' questions in the consultation document.

Employment Growth

2.7 Whilst assumptions as to the rate of employment growth form one of the components of the housing need figures calculated in the SHMA, the consultation document seeks views on if, where and how further employment opportunities should be created across the District.

2.8 In particular, it asks:

- Should further jobs be fostered in Science Vale Oxford?;
- Should more jobs be focussed to the existing employment areas and towns?;
- Should large businesses be 'directed' towards accessible locations?;
- Should provision be made for small businesses in the rural areas?; and
- Should policies resist the loss of employment buildings and land (acknowledging permitted development rights)?

2.9 To an extent, responses to these questions are inherently linked to the housing strategy options (and indeed the objectives in the town for economic development and employment should be considered as part of the housing strategy discussion). For example, if Option A in Table 1 was preferred, then it is to be expected that one would wish to see some commensurate employment growth/activity. Conversely, if housing growth was not supported (eg Option C) then an approach that focussed employment growth elsewhere would be appropriate.

2.10 Nevertheless, it is appropriate for Councillors, when considering the housing options, to also have regard to employment-related objectives and implications for Thame.

Retail Growth

2.11 The consultation document recognises that retail trends have changed since the base evidence was established for the related retail policies of the Core Strategy. The document therefore asks:

- What do you think we can do to improve our shopping and town centres?

2.12 Councillors should give consideration to such in the context of the overall strategy for Thame.

Other Matters

2.13 In addition to these issues, the consultation document also seeks comments on:

- Whether the boundaries of the Green Belt should be reviewed (either to take land out of the Green Belt, or add land in to the Green Belt);
- Whether any transport or infrastructure improvements are required;
- The location of extra pitches for the traveller community;
- Whether the Town Council are aware of any re-development opportunities within the town; and
- Whether there are any other Development Plan policies that need to be reviewed.

3.0 Discussion

- 3.1 In order to facilitate appropriate consideration of the consultation document at the Full Council meeting, it is suggested that discussion should first focus on the 'big ticket' issues of housing and employment need/growth. Consideration of such, and the conclusions in respect of the same, will dictate the nature of the response to a number of the questions in the consultation document.
- 3.2 Once conclusions have been reached in respect of these items, consideration can then be given to whether there are any specific issues that need to be raised in respect of retail and town centres, infrastructure (including community facilities), Green Belt, the traveller community and any other matters.