

David Perrow
Clerk
Tel. 07909176061 (mobile)
E-mail: draytonclerk@yahoo.co.uk

12 Loddon Close
Abingdon
Oxon
OX14 3TB

Drayton Parish Council's Comments on the VWHDC Draft Local Plan ("the Plan")

These representations are set out in the form of a discussion of the various topics (including some sources of relevant evidence) and concludes with the requested amendments before the Plan is placed on deposit.

The Housing Policy Guidance (HPG) adopted by Drayton Parish Council in December 2012 included a number of policies derived from an understanding of what sustainable development as described in the National Planning Policy Framework ("the Framework") would mean in the context of Drayton. These comments are based on discussions of the Neighbourhood Development Plan Sustainability Working Group and the Planning Committee of the Parish Council, as well as a meeting with other large villages in the area.

Sustainable Development

Policy CP1, is the core policy relating to the 'presumption in favour of sustainable development'. However, the text does not explain what sustainable development might be, but actually reads like a presumption in favour of any development. The caveat, that applications 'that accord with this Local Plan' will be approved, places a very great burden on all the Plan policies that must all achieve sustainable development. One aspect of the Plan that suggests not all of the policies do describe development that would be sustainable is the premise that Drayton, and other large villages, are sustainable locations for new residential development because they have more facilities than other smaller villages. This completely overlooks the fact that VWHDC regard Drayton as being car dependent. Nothing has changed from this position as described in para 8.56 and policy H11 of the 2011 Local Plan. The point should be made very strongly in the Plan that the 'presumption in favour of sustainable development' will not be met by any development in Drayton that does not contribute to increasing its sustainability as a location for new housing. CP2 can be supported where it says that development in larger villages 'will be limited to providing for local needs', but what reads like an invitation to propose additional development to 'support' services and facilities should be reworded to require 'enhancement' in order to make the location sustainable.

Para 4.11 should also be amended as it applies to larger villages to say, not that "sustainable development will be supported," but that new development in the larger villages would only be considered to be sustainable if it contributes to improvements to bus services, cycle lanes, and the facilities available in the villages. This would be consistent with the presumption in the Framework. This would also be consistent with the analysis at paras 4.32 to 4.38 and CP5 'Providing Supporting Infrastructure and Services'. For clarity, an additional paragraph could be included in CP5 explaining that for development to be, as the policy indicates, 'sustainably accommodated', schools, recreational facilities and other services including public transport of adequate capacity and quality are regarded as essential to the larger villages as sustainable locations for new development. Whilst Core Policy 5 makes the case for developer contributions to provide infrastructure and services when read with para 3.4 of the Infrastructure Delivery Plan, it is unclear that contributions from **all** development in the Larger Villages would be required to contribute to their sustainability.

It should be made clear in the Plan that building of sustainable communities not, as described in the IDP as 'preferable' but that in the case of villages, the infrastructure to make these locations sustainable is 'necessary'. 'Comparative' sustainability referred to in the Plan is not the same as the sustainability described in the Framework (e.g. based on the carbon targets in the Climate Change Act or the Committee

on Climate Change budget requiring zero carbon from transport by 2040 - see Government's *The Carbon Plan 2011*). To make the necessary improvements to the sustainability of the village, buildings should be zero carbon, low carbon transport alternatives need to be made more available and attractive, and local employment and recreation opportunities need to be improved. Importantly, the capacity of the school needs to keep up with village demand to maintain social inclusion and limit traffic joining the 'school run'.

Green Belt

The Plan does not propose any changes to the Oxford Green Belt. However, on the assumption that development closer to Oxford is more sustainable in transport terms than in the area to the south of Abingdon, there might be opportunities to operate a 'Green Belt swap' if there is a need for housing land in this sub-area [the Vale seem uncertain of the number required] resulting in the designation/protection of the land between Abingdon and Drayton.

Housing

Housing generally: Drayton Parish Council is concerned about lack of clarity on housing numbers. However, from the figure in Table 4.1 (housing delivery target in Abingdon and Oxford Fringe of 299 at April 2012) and the subsequent grant of permissions in this sub-area, there would not appear to be any need for the allocation of housing sites in Drayton. Core Policy 2, limits housing in the large villages "to providing for local needs" and the Parish Council assumes that the 'need' in Drayton to provide housing numbers to conform with the draft Plan can be as assessed in the preparation of the Neighbourhood Development Plan. The CP2 'support' for services and facilities should be amended to 'enhancement' to be consistent with the Framework presumption in favour of sustainable development and the approach being adopted by the Parish Council. In the absence of significant need it should be possible to give weight to the protection of the character of the village in considering housing developments (this was an approach agreed at the recent meeting with other parish councils that also saw Steventon as more logically being in the same sub-area on transport, employment grounds).

On the question of housing mix, Drayton Parish Council believes that housing developments in multiple units should be of one and two bedrooms but that individual houses might be larger. The Parish Council supports CP21 Housing Mix that says that dwelling types and sizes should meet local needs. The 2012 village needs survey indicated that this was nearly exclusively for one and two bedroomed dwellings – close to the 97% referred to in the 2011 Local Plan for the District as a whole. The VWHDC has been allowing incremental growth in the village almost all of which, with the Parish Council objecting, has been of larger dwellings. So, if anything, this Core Policy needs to be reinforced. This is an important policy in light of the scale of 'under-occupation' in the village (see ONS table QS408EW in respect of rooms and QS412EW in respect of bedrooms) and the issue of under-occupation and the problems that arise in terms of housing should be given express mention in the Plan.

CP21 could continue to say that in circumstances which justify larger dwellings, that these 'extra rooms' should be designed as potentially self-contained accommodation which would reduce the prospect and potential of under-occupation and maintain a 'mix' of households (one in three young men between 18 and 34 are living with their parents). Saved Local Plan policy H20 covers the need for annexes and there are good reasons (see DCLG Growth and Infrastructure Bill consultation on the GPDO relaxation) to actually encourage this form of accommodation as a variation to smaller dwellings.

The Plan should make a positive response to Para 50 of the Framework injunction 'deliver a choice in housing', which includes specific reference to 'self-building'. This is not just a way of delivering housing but, as implied by the Framework and made clear in numerous ministerial statements (and a Government £30 million grant for group self-building), self-building is a form of housing with material and beneficial aspects. Self-building could be justified on the affordability case alone, it being possible to provide one's house for about 2/3 of the market price to buy or rent. However, there are other material considerations of

providing employment, training and community building. Self-building has been delivering about 10% of new dwellings despite the apparent indifference of the planning system. With policies in accordance with the Framework, self-building could be made into an even more reliable way of securing delivery of housing than relying on the stuttering system of individual buyers borrowing to buy new houses from developers reluctant to build. The most important consideration for the VWHDC is to understand that self-building will not happen at scale (i.e. at a level of any public significance) without the positive support of the Plan. This can be achieved by requiring developers to make a proportion of any allocated or permitted site available for self-builders (with a cascade mechanism to alternative forms of development in cases where no demand materializes). There would be a strong case for the VWHDC to start and maintain a register of those wanting to self-build individually or in groups. The Plan would not be consistent with the Framework (i.e. deliver a choice etc.) if no self-build policy is included.

Co-housing, which can start with an element of self-building, is another form of housing that has particular planning advantages – many relating to the sustainability of housing in its building, performance and use. It is a ‘choice’ implied by para 50 of the Framework that is unlikely to be available without the assistance of local plan policy. The LPA should note the references to co-housing particularly in the literature relating to housing for the elderly (eg see The HAPPI Report *Housing our Ageing Population HCA and DH 2009, The Hanover@50 debate* and that 8% of over 50s in Denmark live in co-housing) that highlight the lack of attractive downsizing choices and the contribution this is making to the chronic levels of under-occupancy which the Plan should be addressing. Grosvenor and Bloor are just two of the private sector developers familiar with this form of development.

Co-housing implies the sharing of space and often the mix of uses (e.g. common-house, workshops, offices, garden areas) that do not fit within the existing definitions (see Use Classes Order). This is a powerful argument for the use of planning policy to bring proposals within the scope of the Plan and prevent them being treated with suspicion. The Plan could include a policy supporting other forms of housing which would be more ‘sustainable’ than the traditional models and policies could place the responsibility on developers to explore these alternatives as part of the preparation of planning applications.

Given the limited scale of development which is likely even in the larger villages (due to both the unsustainability of rural locations and the limited housing land requirement) it is important that the development which is permitted meets the local needs that arise throughout the 15 years of the Plan period. Whilst CP2 implies that housing in larger villages would be allowed to meet local needs, it is probably necessary for the need for ‘phasing’ of development on larger sites to be spelt out. The Upper Eden NDP is a precedent for phasing policies being appropriate in respect of rural and village development.

CP30 requires CSH 4 in respect of energy efficiency. The Plan is scheduled for adoption in 2014 to apply to the period to 2029. In 2016 all new residential development will have to be zero carbon. Para 6.105 implies that will be a result of a further upgrading of Part L of the Building Regulations. It would be more logical and more consistent with the presumption in the Framework if CP30 required CSH 5 (see Bicester expansion) or 6 (see Passivhaus development in Hereford and Bickleigh Down in Devon). No technological breakthroughs are expected or needed between now and 2016 to make zero carbon housing possible. It is true, as mentioned in para 6.106, that CSH 6 will not always be achievable, and there will be circumstances where it will be reasonable and necessary to refer to and require ‘allowable solutions’. If zero carbon is not required by the Plan until 2016, there will be 1000s more houses built emitting more carbon than would be the case than if the higher standard was introduced immediately, particularly in respect of the fabric that would be expensive and difficult if not impossible to upgrade.

Development that would foreseeably require ‘upgrading’ before 2050 to meet the targets in the Climate Change Act could not logically meet the Framework presumption in favour of sustainable development. The sooner the higher standards are required and achieved the sooner the skills and supply chains will build up the necessary capacity and capability. CP30 Sustainable Design and Construction should be amended accordingly or the title would have to be changed as CSH 4 is most definitely not a ‘sustainable’ standard. *The Carbon Plan* envisages the whole housing stock operating at almost zero carbon by 2050, but that will

not be the case while we continue to erect carbon emitting dwellings.

The performance gap (between design and completion) is currently being researched by the Zero Carbon Hub. However, this is a known phenomenon that could be addressed through rigorous and independent inspections of developments during construction. Post-occupancy evaluations are part of the higher Code levels (but which are not a requirement of Part L) and are another matter that should be required by conditions supported by policies in the Plan.

Housing Extensions: The impact that house extensions could have on the affordability, the scale of housing permitted in accordance with the Plan to meet housing 'need', and also on the energy efficiency (e.g. fabric and air tightness), justify the inclusion of a policy supporting the removal of permitted development rights (i.e. the need to make applications to maintain control) in the case of new village developments.

Transport

This section of the Plan seems to have been written with no firm policies as to how to achieve the same levels of accessibility for a larger population, and how to achieve more employment opportunities in an area where congestion is already at levels damaging to both the environment and the economy. The Plan does not seem to have taken account of the evidence that public transport now needs to be provided not just to attract drivers out of their car, but for those who cannot now rely on their car due to age or the ability to buy and maintain their personal vehicle. There is inadequate mention of the need for developer funding for improvements to the bus services. For example the frequency of the Oxford - Swindon service was doubled through developer funding and this has prompted increased demand justifying a further 50% improvement. There have been similar improvements to the 280 service from Oxford to Thame and Aylesbury.

Para 7.31 of the Transport topic paper says that "...the benefits of this growth would be undermined if the transport improvements were not secured. As a result, **all** development, "...in this area will be required to contribute to the Science Vale UK Integrated Transport Package." [emphasis added]. The Plan should repeat what is explained at para 6.54 of the topic paper that, on Premium Routes, this requires a 'turn up and go' frequency of around 15 minutes.

Given the rise in the popularity of car clubs both in the UK and the continent, the Plan should describe the alternative schemes and have policy guidance available to make these part of travel plans required of all significant developments (e.g. 10 houses or more and more than 250 sq. m of commercial floorspace). Plan para 6.90 should be reworded to also indicate that any additional car use from a site that significantly impacts local transport routes should be balanced by measures and initiatives to reduce car use from existing developments in the area – so for instance encouraging existing residents to use alternative modes of transport or open car clubs to those in the vicinity instead of just associated with the site.

There is a specific policy CP11 relating to the safeguarding of land for a road to the south of Abingdon [shown at Appendix E]. This Policy seems to be 'unsound'. The LPA say that it would need to be developer funded in a plan where there is no identified need for strategic development in the Abingdon area. In fact there is very little potential development land to the town side of the safeguarded line, being sports ground/restored rubbish tip, lake, ancient scheduled monument, flood plain and Tesco/hotel carpark. The only way development could fund the road as well as the new bridge(s), would appear to be through developing the land between Abingdon and Drayton. The road would be a scar on the landscape and housing development in this area would damage the character and setting of the village. The road line itself would go through a listed building (Stonehill Farmhouse). If the need for the road and enabling housing development were only to arise after 2029, there is no reason to safeguard this line in the 2029 Plan as there is no development potential, and applications to develop in this area to the south of the town can be refused permission on normal planning and policy grounds.

A shorter link from Drayton Road to the A34 junction might be welcomed by current car users and bus users on a decongested Drayton Road. The Plan should be emphasising measures to reduce car use (and increase

the use of bus and bicycle) that should make further road building unnecessary. Whilst the shift from car to low carbon modes is not without difficulty, these low carbon alternatives are actually needed now and are more consistent with the Framework presumption in favour of sustainable development, whereas the building of the southern bypass is very uncertain and inconsistent with the Committee on Climate Change target of zero carbon emissions from cars by 2040.

The A34 is almost entirely a matter for the Highways Agency. However, it is a major source of noise and it impacts on the air quality in the village. The capacity of the A34 is a matter of regional and local importance and this could be improved by introducing a lower speed limit that would reduce the frequency of RTAs (and the associated congestion and diversions through Drayton) as well as substantial reductions in noise from engines and tyres. Noise barriers, quiet road surfacing, bunds and thick/dense bands of planting (i.e. >30m) should be mentioned in the Plan so as to enable funding by developments responsible for increases in traffic noise.

There could be a policy in the Plan seeking to make more use of the two rail stations in the District at Radley and Appleford.

Food and Agriculture

The Plan should engage with the debate about local food production and seek to secure the opportunities for developments in the village fringe to support the growth of small farming enterprises providing local food and jobs in growing, processing and distribution (see Food footprinting, community support agriculture, permaculture, Ecological Land Coop and the writing of Prof. Tim Lang and Colin Tudge). The soundness of the Plan would be questionable without referring to this evidence base and coming to positive conclusions in respect of such an important subject for town and country planning

Although most of the District is in agricultural use there is little or no consideration given to food supply, processing and distribution. There is no analysis of or reference to the growing sources where low carbon and sustainable food supply issues are being discussed. The Plan should acknowledge the shortage of housing in locations and at prices that are suitable for use by new farmers. The Plan should consider the affordability of 'land' as it does (following a High Court case in the 1990s) the affordability of 'housing', as a material consideration. There is also evidence of the need for the agricultural industry to provide work for about 1 million new farmers. In this context the Plan should have a new policy that explains why the occupancy of one or two dwellings on any development of more than 5 houses on the edge of a village should be tied to somebody wholly or mainly employed in agriculture. The Plan could refer to cases where part time farming could meet the occupancy condition.

Where the applicant owns, or the previous owner still owns, land which could make a viable or even part time holding, this would be included in the application to be leased to or sold with the dwellings made subject to the 'ag tag' and possibly tied through a s106 Obligation. The Plan should also look to have buildings erected or converted as part of any scheme, suitably designed and located for food storage and processing. The Plan could refer to the mechanisms that could apply were the 'tie' to be inappropriate or breached. Although Housing Associations might not want to be involved there are other housing providers that might. Further research is warranted on this matter.

Policies designed to promote and deliver local food would be entirely consistent with the presumption in favour of sustainable development and would be consistent with policies on local employment and reduced transport impacts. 'Cultivate' is a social enterprise working to produce horticultural crops on between 5 and 10 ha but reflects the difficulty when local opportunities are not available. Such policies would also be a logical planned response to the individualistic attempts to build isolated dwellings in the open countryside where land is cheaper and more available than on the edges of built up areas but where there could be greater landscape impact and generally poor access to services.

The Plan should have policies designed to enhance the character, appearance and bio-diversity of the countryside. Such enhancements could be secured as part of new developments or from investing Community Infrastructure Levy (if that is introduced).

Energy

Energy Plans should be a requirement of development proposals (like travel plans) describing the energy efficiency of the buildings but also any on site and the need for off site generation.

Given the importance that both the supply and demand for energy will have over the period to 2029 there is every reason to include a policy requiring 'energy plans' from residential and commercial developments of any significant size – in the same way that the need for 'travel plans' has been normalised. These plans should calculate the demand for energy and how this would be reduced and could be reduced further (describing the building materials/fabric, smart metering, low energy appliances, energy champions etc.) and then explain where unmet needs would be fulfilled. The 'energy plan' would also identify and quantify on-site or off-site/local supplies.

The Plan should contain policy statements that maximise the energy generation capabilities of new developments. With paragraphs 6.110 and 6.111 noting that the land-fill gas energy generation from the VWHDC is falling and the national target for renewables, it is important that CP31 should maximise the south-facing roof aspects of all new developments to provide the best solar capture capabilities, either PV or solar thermal. To allow the VWHDC to meet its commitments to the national renewable energy targets there should also be a requirement on new developments to install appropriate solar capture as part of the build within CP33. A proliferation of solar farms would be unsightly and wasteful of agricultural land if roofs of new and existing buildings were not utilized.

The Plan should support the development of other forms of renewables e.g. EFW, wind (given suitable wind speeds and preferably low impact designs) as well as high efficiency systems such as natural gas fuel cells.

Water

As mentioned in 6.108 and 6.109 there is the need to manage water impacting on new developments within the VWHDC. 6.114 additionally mentions this. The Plan should include additional discussion of what are appropriate measures, essentially requiring new developments to have no adverse effect on the hydrological cycle, such that the built environment produces no more run-off than in its pre-developed state, that rain water and grey water should be used to minimise the demands of the development on the clean water supply and foul water drainage systems within the VWHDC and wider area.

Neighbourhood Planning

The Plan refers to the emerging Drayton NDP and says that NDPs will be used in decision-making. Drayton Parish Council believes that policies in an adopted neighbourhood plan should take precedence over policies in the Local Plan provided that any apparent divergence between the NDP and the Local Plan has been agreed to meet the test of 'general conformity' in the adoption process.

It should be possible for neighbourhood plans to be produced in general conformity with the Local Plan as both must be consistent with the Framework and, in particular, the presumption in favour of sustainable development. If CP1 is to remain as written, relying on the other Plan policies to secure the achievement of 'sustainable development', then this requires the other policies in the plan to rigorously cover all aspects of sustainability (as suggested in these representations). Drayton Parish Council believes that its approach to development in Drayton (and the large villages) is actually closer in spirit to the principles of sustainable development (as set out in the NPPF) than the present draft of the Local Plan.

Summary

The Plan is being produced at the same time as Drayton is preparing its neighbourhood development plan. Drayton Parish Council would like to see this draft move more in the direction of supporting sustainable development and preventing unsustainable development. This is the approach it has tried to adopt in its Housing Policy Guidance document, and which it hopes to pursue as it progresses its NDP through the preparation and adoption process.

Recommendations

- 1. That Core Policies CP1, 2 and 5 and the supporting text (eg paras 4.11 and 4.32 to 4.38 make it clear that larger villages (including Drayton) are not locations to benefit from the Framework presumption in favour of sustainable development and that contributions will be required to be made by all developments in order to substantially increase the sustainability of village locations.**
- 2. That Drayton is consulted and involved in the process of clarifying and updating the housing land supply figures (should Steventon be in the same sub-area?)**
- 3. That the Plan strongly supports the development of smaller (two bedroomed) dwellings and makes the building of larger dwellings the exception requiring justification. Incorporating a potential future subdivision into the original design of any larger dwellings could reduce under-occupation.**
- 4. The Plan should acknowledge the potential of and support self-building and co-housing.**
- 5. The Plan should provide policy support for conditions removing permitted development rights and maintaining control over extensions on grounds of energy conservation and housing mix.**
- 6. The Plan should not include the proposal for a southern bypass if this is a local scheme to be funded from development that is not required.**
- 7. The Plan should set out the GHG reduction targets for transport and the associated improvements to public transport that would be necessary and the potential benefits of car clubs and how these will be secured.**
- 8. The Plan should address the problems being caused by the A34 and how these could be reduced (speed limits, sound barriers/planting and low noise surface).**
- 9. Should Appleford and Radley be considered more sustainable locations based on their railway stations (implying a Green Belt swap)?**
- 10. The Plan should refer to the literature on Local Food and positively plan for affordable land and associated housing.**
- 11. The highest standards of energy efficiency from buildings (ie zero carbon) should be required so as to benefit from the presumption in the Framework and the Plan should also explain why inspections during and on completion of and use of buildings are necessary (and should be secured by condition).**
- 12. The Plan should make the submission of energy plans a requirement that could encompass matters in 11 above. These should maximize the use of roofs for solar energy (on site and**

off site through ‘allowable solutions). The Plan should address the issue of solar farms and other renewables including impacts of proliferation.

- 13. The Plan should require zero impact on the hydrological cycle.**

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