

# Policy & Programmes

HEAD OF SERVICE: Tim Oruye



By email:

[Redacted]

**CONTACT OFFICER:** [Redacted]

[Redacted]

Tel: 01235 422422

Textphone: 18001 01235 422422

Abbey House, Abbey Close, Abingdon,  
OXON, OX14 3JE

30 January 2024

Dear Reading Borough Council,

Thank you for inviting responses on your Partial Update Local Plan review regarding its Scope and Content. We have some comments and suggestions regarding some of the relevant policy intentions.

This letter comprises one joint consultation response from both South Oxfordshire District Council and Vale of White Horse District Council as we are currently preparing a Joint Local Plan, however the responses also refer to previous engagement on transport matters only from South Oxfordshire District Council.

## **Joint response**

### *Housing Need*

The Local Plan Partial Update presents a range of potential approaches to establishing Reading Borough Councils (RBC) housing needs to comment on. We jointly support the locally-based housing need assessment approach to calculating your housing need, with around 735 homes to be delivered per annum. Selecting this approach to establish your housing requirement gives Reading the best chance for the Local Plan to meet housing need, considering your estimated capabilities of delivering 800 homes per annum.

Conversely, the standard method plus 35% uplift (which is applied to the top 20 cities in England) would exceed the 800 homes per annum capability within the RBC boundary, increasing reliance on neighbouring authorities to accommodate any unmet need (or to rely on more significant support to meet that need).

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## *Climate Emergency*

In terms of addressing the Climate Emergency, the partial review highlights that RBC is targeting greater emission reduction targets and improved net zero targets over and above the minimum standards. We support this approach as well as the 'Standards for new housing' policy direction, which also seeks for a greater than minimum standards (Building regulations) target for energy efficiency, as well as considerations for embodied carbon, water efficiency, and renewable energy production.

## *Density*

The Local Plan partial review could consider revising the tall buildings policy (CR10) in order to support RBC's future housing needs by increasing the vertical capacity for increased housing density.

## *Unmet need*

We acknowledge that RBC has stated that it is likely to be available for unmet employment land from its neighbouring authorities, but based on our emerging Joint Local Plan we will have no employment or housing unmet needs.

## **South Oxfordshire District Council Responses**

### *Transport*

Updates for Policy TR1 are suggested to include objectives to align with the new Reading Local Transport Strategy (LTP), the objectives of the LTP we agree with and we support the updates. However, we feel that some of the identified schemes in the LTP do not support the objectives and do not appear to align with the climate emergency.

Notably this relates to inclusion of a new Caversham orbital road with a River Thames bridge crossing and the strategic scale park and ride sites.

The road and bridge falls entirely outside of RBC's boundary, and largely in South Oxfordshire. As previously advised, we would only support a scheme in this location for active travel and bus routeing, owing to anticipated induced demand from nearby motorways.

RBC's supporting materials for the proposed park and ride sites still promote large scale strategic car parks for bus interchange with cars only, as opposed to Oxfordshire County Council's new approach to mobility hubs. We would welcome a more considered approach which seeks to promote active travel and more sustainable use of land.

Furthermore, the partial review states that "only infrastructure needed to support sustainable growth has been identified within the following schedule" and provides a table of Infrastructure Delivery Plan schemes. The list includes the Cross Thames Travel scheme which is wholly outside of your local authority boundary, and as such should not be considered as a fundamental infrastructure requirement to deliver RBC's growth.

In summary, both South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse councils recommend that RBC progress with a locally-based housing requirement which would enable Reading's housing need to be accommodated as much as possible within Reading. We support the suggested climate change aspirations, we recommend a review of housing density capabilities, we do not currently have any emerging unmet employment need for Reading to consider and South Oxfordshire District Council continues to object to the transport infrastructure schemes sought in the LTP which fall outside of RBC.

Yours sincerely

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South Oxfordshire District Council and Vale of White Horse District Council