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Chris Hargraves  
Planning Policy Manager  
West Oxfordshire District Council

Our Ref:

PINS/D3125/429/7

Date:

26 May 2022

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Dear Mr Hargraves,

### **Examination of the Salt Cross Garden Village Area Action Plan (the AAP)**

We write following the pause in the Examination explained in my post hearing sessions note of 27 July 2021 [examination library<sup>1</sup> Ref INSP 15] and your reply dated 13 August 2021 [WODC EXAM 05].

Thank you for submitting the further work set out in that correspondence. Other participants in the Examination have now had an opportunity to comment on the work, alongside the Council's Note of Agreed Actions arising from the hearing sessions [WODC EXAM 06]. The comments have been taken into account as part of our decision on how to take the Examination forward.

Our conclusion on this matter is that, following the additions to the evidence base resulting from the further work, the Examination is now in a position to move forward to the Main Modifications and Reporting stage<sup>2</sup>.

### **Main Modifications and Reporting**

We are pleased to inform you that we are satisfied that the AAP meets the requirements of the Duty to Co-operate and that there are no other issues of fundamental legal compliance at this point.

However, we are not in a position to conclude that the AAP as currently drafted meets the tests of soundness in paragraph 35 of the National Planning Policy Framework. Notwithstanding this, the AAP can be made sound through Main Modification. As requested by you, we will recommend the Main Modifications which we consider are necessary for soundness.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.westoxon.gov.uk/media/zxyamzit/aap-examination-library.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> As set out in the Procedure Guide for Local Plan Examinations - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/examining-local-plans-procedural-practice/procedure-guide-for-local-plan-examinations>

An outline of the Main Modifications is set out in a separate note<sup>3</sup>. The note also provides some guidance on the nature and format of the Main Modifications that should be followed.

Our conclusions on the issues and the reasons for Main Modifications will be set out fully in our report and we will take account of consultation responses, updated sustainability appraisal and other relevant information before reaching a final conclusion. As such, any detailed reasoning for recommending a specific Main Modification is best left to our report.

Notwithstanding this, we anticipate that our conclusions in relation to Policy 2 (Net Zero Carbon Development) will come as a disappointment. As such, we will say at this stage that we are not satisfied that Policy 2 is either consistent with national policy or justified. As such, we are unable to conclude that the policy is sound. Our fuller reasoning on this matter will be set out in our report.

### **Next steps**

The process to be followed in relation to progressing the Main Modifications is set out in the note that we have produced. We will agree a timetable for taking that forward with you via the Programme Officer. We are not inviting or expecting comments on the document we have produced. There will be a full consultation exercise on the actual schedule of Main Modifications in due course.

In the meantime, if you require anything further, please contact us via the Programme Officer.

*Darren McCreery and David Spencer*

INSPECTORS

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<sup>3</sup> Insp 18