

Science Vale Area Action Plan Issues and Scope Representations Form



Science Vale is an area in southern Oxfordshire that will see significant change over the next 15 years. It is a focus for job growth primarily because it houses three large, very successful centres for science at Harwell Campus, Milton Park and Culham Science Centre. The research and development activity that takes place in these centres is world renowned, and the area is set to be home to 20,000 additional jobs in the period to 2031.

New homes and facilities will be needed for these people alongside our already growing population. Our existing and/or emerging local plans are proposing development sites, in locations accessible to the jobs, for over 20,000 new homes and the infrastructure needed to support them.

We need to manage the growth planned in Science Vale carefully. We are producing a Science Vale Area Action Plan to help make sure Science Vale grows successfully with the infrastructure it needs. The plan will support the implementation of the strategic policies in our adopted and emerging local plans and look at the specific detail of how these are delivered for Science Vale. Please review our consultation document before completing this response form. The consultation closes **5pm on 17 April 2015!**

Your post code

If you can ensure that you've provided your post code either on this form (if responding by hard copy) or as part of your online registration. We just want to make sure we get a good coverage of respondents from our districts.

Contact information

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The questions

- 1) Is the proposed Science Vale Area Action Plan boundary appropriate for the development of planning policies to support the economic growth in Science Vale?

Strangely, ever since the term was first used, the boundaries of the Science Vale have always been kept fuzzy so that SV is a marketing concept rather than a geographic designation.

It's not clear why the boundary doesn't extend to Abingdon. The extension to include the Williams F1 site in Grove also seems contrived. Is this site a key industrial component of Science Vale?

The designated area also includes a large amount of AONB area to the south. Consideration should be given to removing this area from the plan boundaries, and limiting SV to include only the Campus as land within the AONB.

Document is called issues and scope. There is no obvious narrative providing the scope and context of the SVAAP, unless it's a code word for the boundary.

- 2) What do you think about the issues we have identified at this early stage? Are there any additional issues that we have not covered?

The wording is poor. Assuming issues are meant to highlight problems and challenges to be addressed, all except Issue 2 are aspirations, without any clear definition of “an issue”.

Issue 1 talks about integrating new neighbourhoods with existing communities, but doesn't cover the challenge of establishing new communities. This will be relevant for strategic sites which are not close to existing communities (e.g. the proposed – and opposed – sites in the AONB). Also needs rewording to make sure integration doesn't mean coalescence.

Issue 3 could be expressed better. “Achieving more diversity” is a meaningless phrase, and, as noted is an aspiration not an issue. Surely the issue is the risk of having too diverse an employment base, when the SV should be focused on the knowledge economy. If we wait for the SVAAP to decide that we don't want SV to be full of warehouses, it will be too late. The policy needs to be in the local plan.

Issue 4 should be strengthened to highlight the specific problem that unchecked growth will threaten the identity of rural communities and villages such as Harwell. Focus should be on gradual and organic growth, rather than the imposition of new estates.

Additional issues

- Capacity of the A34, and steps should be outlined to provide capacity, or limit growth to a level that can be managed. Rail freight capacity should also be addressed.
- The assumption that people will live close to their work should be challenged and examined. If houses are being occupied by external migrants, and jobs taken by internal migrants, then housing numbers and integration with transport infrastructure (road, rail, bus etc.) needs appropriate planning. To include parking capacity at stations and park and ride locations.
- Housing requirements for international workers (weekly commuting, short term contracts) need to be catered for. Not just appropriate lease or letting arrangements, but the actual type of house. International workers may not accept the standard new “box” provided by volume developers and may look for a more contemporary and energy saving design.
- Conversely, the requirements for home working and collaborative working over a network should feature in the plan. Accommodation with distinct office space and high speed broadband maybe appropriate.
- No recognition of the need to take into account developer led developments which will have been permitted and built before this plan is finalised.
- The need for a co-ordinated strategy for recreation should also be added as an issue, ranging from sports and playing fields to cycle routes and footpaths.
- Need to review the road-scape, especially within existing villages. How to reclaim the streets so that they are safe for pedestrian and cyclists, as well as cars. (See Drayton Neighbourhood plan).
- No overt mention of healthcare and education

These issues must be reflected in the vision statements.

- 3) Are some issues more important than others? What might influence their relative importance over time?

Infrastructure is a key issue. Growth of Didcot and communities will be a longer term issue

- 4) Will our vision and objectives for the Science Vale Area Action Plan help to achieve the economic growth set out in our local plans? If not, what is missing?

The fundamental problem is that the growth targets set out in the Local Plan are based on untested assumptions and are unrealistically optimistic.

The Local Plan is NOT a plan for economic growth. That has been defined by the LEP and the documents which fed into the SHMA.

It is totally unclear what value the SVAAP will offer over and above the Local Plan. Indeed the SVAAP may obfuscate the clear vision and plan provided by the Local Plan and lead to more speculative development by developers.

All the Vision statements and Objective in the Issues and Scope Document should be part of the Local Plan.

The integration of a local business plan would be welcome and may be a real advantage for business, particularly if it is accompanied by funding however this plan appears to not provide that level of strategy.

- 5) Is the proposed scope of the plan, sufficient to adequately plan for and deliver the growth agenda for Science Vale?

No. See Q4.

Housing delivery is done by developers. Jobs come from employers. Infrastructure comes from the county (and other sources). This plan cannot DELIVER growth. It can only define the circumstances under which growth might be possible. The phrasing of the question implies more powers for the SVAAP than can ever be realised.

The plan should recognition these disparate development sources and define a way in which they can be integrated and delivered in a coherent way, not just for the benefit of the new workers and residents, but for the existing community.

Thank you for completing our response form. If completing a hard copy, these can be returned to Joint Projects, South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils, c/o Abbey House, Abingdon, Oxon, OX14 3JE or forms can be e-mailed through to science.vale@southandvale.gov.uk. Please bear in mind that all responses received will be available to the public to view. If completing online, you can save a draft of your response before responding.