

14th February 2019

Dear Sirs

Individual Response to South Oxfordshire District Council's Planning regarding the Local Plan 2034 with reference to STRAT 12 Northfield

We have viewed the documentation concerning the Local Plan 2034 ("the Plan") and spoken to your officers who attended the drop-in exhibition at Horspath Hub on 9th February. We object to the inclusion of the Northfield housing site in the Plan for the following reasons:-

1 We do not consider the Plan to be legally compliant

The Plan is in conflict with South Oxford District Council's policy on Green Belt, STRAT 6, and the National Planning Policy Framework ("NPPF") published by the Government in July 2018 which states that *"Green Belt boundaries should only be altered where exceptional circumstances are fully evidenced and justified, through the preparation or updating of plans.Before concluding that exceptional circumstances exist to justify changes to Green Belt boundaries, the strategic policy-making authority should be able to demonstrate that it has examined fully all other reasonable options for meeting its identified need for development"*.

We do not consider that Oxford City's claimed unmet housing needs constitute "exceptional circumstances" that justify SODC taking Northfield from the Green Belt. The Plan does not explain how the calculation of 4,950 dwellings, Oxford City Council's claimed unmet need, has been arrived at, nor why Oxford City says it cannot meet its own needs in its Local Plan. We therefore consider it premature to suggest that Northfield should be sacrificed to the claimed but unquantified needs of the City.

In our view, "exceptional circumstances" as described in the NPPF have not been evidenced by SODC. There has been no public consultation to explain to the residents of Horspath why SODC considers the claimed unmet housing need of Oxford City qualifies as an exceptional circumstance within the meaning of the NPPF, such as to justify SODC offering up its Green Belt Land to meet Oxford City's shortfall. At the very least we would need to be informed of what steps SODC has taken to investigate whether there are any alternative solutions Oxford City can take to resolve the situation itself, and the outcome of those investigations.

The Green Belt Assessment of Strategic Sites in South Oxfordshire (2018) commissioned by SODC states that moderate to high levels of harm would result if the Northfield site was removed from the Green Belt. Bearing this in mind, we would expect SODC to resist removing it unless dire need is demonstrated and there is detailed consultation with the public to explain the need in detail. As things stand at present, we feel that the decision by SODC to provide more houses than the number needed

in South Oxfordshire prioritises the need of Oxford City over those of its own residents. We find this disappointing.

If land can so easily and, as it seems, so casually, be removed from the Green Belt against Government policy and indeed against SODC'S own policy, our fear is that in years to come, further development will be permitted and the identity of Horspath as a village will be obliterated as it joins with Cowley, as has been the case with other villages in the area.

2 **We do not consider the Plan to be sound for the following reasons:-**

- Traffic Congestion – with the proposed developments at Grenoble Road and Northfield alone, there is potential for a further 7000 cars on the ring road at a rate of two cars per household. There is already extreme congestion on the road, which reaches almost gridlock conditions at certain times of the day. In addition, the villages of Wheatley, Horspath and Garsington are used as rat runs during peak hours. None of these villages have roads that are suitable for heavy traffic and each village has had to install traffic calming measures to safeguard its residents, but these have only limited success in the face of increasing traffic numbers.



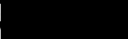
We note that a financial reserve has been made in the plan to contribute to infrastructure changes to roads to deal with transport problems. However, measures taken so far have not been effective and we are concerned that significant redevelopment of the road and public transport systems will be required to accommodate the increase in traffic. At best, this will lead to the increased urbanisation of the area, and at worst, if the measures taken are insufficient or unsuccessful, the traffic around Oxford will make it impossible to move around Oxford City with any degree of comfort or efficiency.

- Community facilities – we are concerned that there will be a considerable strain on local facilities such as schools and in particular on doctors' surgeries. We note that a contribution will be made to the local Clinical Commissioning Group, but with no new surgery proposed for the Northfield site and the already overburdened local surgeries, we are concerned that the situation will become unsustainable.

We do not wish to participate in the oral hearing parts of the legal examination in public in the Summer, but please could you add our details to your database for receiving further information about the Local Plan 2034.

Please acknowledge safe receipt of this letter.

Yours sincerely

 
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