

South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2034

Page 3: Part A - contact details

Q1. Are you responding as an:

Business / Organisation

Page 6: Business / organisation contact details

Q4. Due to the plan-making process including an independent examination, a name and means of contact is required for your comments to be considered:

Business / organisation name Culham Bus Club

Contact name Jonathan Alcantara

Address line 1 [REDACTED]

Address line 2 [REDACTED]

Address line 3 -

Postal town [REDACTED]

Postcode [REDACTED]

Telephone number [REDACTED]

Email address [REDACTED]

Page 7: Part B - your comments

Q5. For comments on the Local Plan, please provide the paragraph or policy to which your comments relates. You can view a list of policies here. If you wish to comment on one of the evidence documents or the policies maps, please state the document title as well as the paragraph or policy reference.

Document / Policy / Paragraph: Policy STRAT8: Culham Science Centre

Q6. Do you consider the Local Plan and supporting documents:

	Yes	No	Don't know	Not answered (OPTION HIDDEN FROM LIVE SURVEY)
are legally compliant?			X	
are sound?		X		
comply with the Duty to Co-operate?			X	

Q7. Please provide further information in relation to the previous question. e.g. why you do or do not consider the Local Plan to be legally compliant or sound.

The Bus Club is a voluntary organisation which provides school bus transportation (at present 8 routes) in cooperation with Oxfordshire County Council to area secondary schools, including the Europa School and schools in Abingdon and Didcot. At the current levels of housebuilding, the road system can no longer cope and traffic jams of up to 30 minutes to travel 1.5 miles (for example between Sutton Courtenay and Culham) have become normal. This blocks school bus travel and ensures that 160+ pupils are late to school daily.

The key bottlenecks are correctly addressed by the roadbuilding plans in the Local Plan, but these roads are needed now. The addition of so many houses in Culham, besides destroying the rural character of this area, will introduce a huge number of new cars that the transport infrastructure will not be able to absorb, even with the additional roads that reduce the current bottlenecking. The major arteries of this area remain the A415, the A34 and the A4074, which won't change much in throughput capacity. Adding so many new vehicles will undo the beneficial effects of the new bypasses. If a settlement needs to be built adjacent to the Culham Science Park, it needs to be much smaller. A huge number of cars already descend upon the Science Park and the Europa School each morning, in addition to cars heading towards Abingdon and Oxford. If these are joined by thousands of cars coming from the new settlement we will have gridlock on the A415 despite the new bypasses, which will need to be built ahead of any new houses.

In terms of the specific allocations on the site in question, some land adjacent to the school should be reserved for the school, which will need a bus bay and parking lot on the A415 side of the school. The current use of Thame Lane as the sole access to the school creates a further bottleneck as 850+ pupils enter and leave the site each day. Thame Lane should lead to an exit back out to the A415 on the other side of the school. Land adjacent to the school could be reserved for this and for a bus bay. Thame Lane also needs a traffic light or roundabout if it is to continue to be the entry point for cars to the school.

This policy represents simplistic thinking and does not take into account the reality of concentrated traffic coming into this area daily. The belief that people working at the Science Park or attending the Europa School will all move to this settlement is fanciful, or that they will all commute to London via rail; in reality they will be people who will get in their cars and drive to their various places of activity daily. And if the rail service becomes more frequent, this will only attract more commuters driving in their cars to the area.

I reiterate that the planned size of the settlement is too large and the traffic thus created will be unmanageable and contrary to interests of county residents commuting through the area, and school families in particular. Adding another secondary school to the area will increase school run traffic into the area. The current housebuilding in Didcot and in villages throughout this area presumably was approved via similar plans, and the reality is that the transport infrastructure is wholly inadequate for the numbers already added to the local population. This plan proposes to add far greater numbers while making only minor tweaks to the road system, bypasses which are in fact needed right now. Without these bypasses, cars and school buses alike experience morning journeys which are double or triple the length necessary, impacting on health, work time, school time, pollution and general well-being. The government should allocate its resources towards upgrading the existing road network for current populations, rather than investing in large concentrations of new housing in areas already experiencing traffic gridlock such as Culham. If new houses must be built, it would be better to distribute them in small settlements throughout the area, rather than concentrated into one large new settlement right in the middle of a problem traffic zone, irrevocably destroying green belt land in the process.

Q8. Please set out any modifications you consider necessary to make the Local Plan legally compliant or sound, having regard to your comments above. (NB - any non-compliance with the duty to co-operate is incapable of modification at examination). It will be helpful if you could put forward your suggested wording of any policy or text as precisely as possible.

Building a large settlement at Culham is a bad idea and Policy STRAT8 should be dropped entirely, due to adverse effects on traffic which will undo the beneficial effects of the proposed bypasses.

If STRAT8 must be implemented, it should be done at a much smaller scale, with no new secondary school, and some land should be allocated to Europa School for a new bus bay and car park to alleviate the already dire traffic and access situation for the school. A second outlet from Thame Lane to the A415 is needed, and traffic lights or roundabouts to enable access to and from the school. If a certain number of houses must be reached, it should be done via a large number of small settlements throughout the area, attached to existing villages, rather than in a large concentrated settlement which will add huge numbers of new cars to an area already strained in terms of road transport capacity and the number of peak hour vehicles daily.

Q10. Would you like to participate at the oral part of the examination, which takes place as part of the examination process?

No

Q11. Would you like to comment on another policy or paragraph?

No

Page 106: Future contact preferences

Q354. As explained in our data protection statement, in line with statutory regulations you will be contacted by the programme officer (and where necessary the council) with relevant updates on the Local Plan. South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils have a shared planning policy database. If you would like to be added to our database to receive updates on other planning policy consultations, please tick the relevant district box(es) below:

I would like to be added to the database to receive planning policy updates for South Oxfordshire

I would like to be added to the database to receive planning policy updates for Vale of White Horse