

18th August 2008

Mr. William Morrison
The Boundary Committee for England
Trevelyan House
Great Peter Street
London
SW1P 2HW

Also sent by email: wmorrison@electoralcommission.org.uk

Dear William,

BOUNDARY REVIEW – OXFORD CITY

We understand that you are seeking to develop a rolling programme of review work over the next three years under the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007.

Oxford City Council would like to request that a review is undertaken of Oxford City's administrative boundary, principally to the south of the City in order to accommodate the 'urban extension' which is planned as part of the emerging South East Plan. It is not requesting either an electoral or structural review. The principle reasons for this are set out below.

The City Council is aware that in considering a boundary review a considerable amount of sensitivity is required, as local loyalties will play a strong part. The City Council would wish to work with you and the local communities to ensure that the boundary review is undertaken in a sensitive and joined up manner.

As you will be aware, the area to the south of the City has been identified for a sustainable urban extension as part of the emerging South East Plan. As a brief history, the City Council promoted the urban extension as part of the Examination into the South East Plan. This was based on the huge housing need within the City and the fact that there are not sufficient opportunities for significant housing growth within the City's boundary.

The Panel report (August 2007) supported both a limited review of the Green Belt and the need for an urban extension, the Oxford Strategic Development Area, for at least 4,000 houses to be built by 2026, with options for further potential to be safeguarded as part of Green Belt review process.

Recently (July 2008) the Secretary of State has published proposed changes to the South East Plan following consideration of the Panel report. This includes the limited Green Belt review and the allowance for the 4,000 urban extension as

the South Oxford SDA. The Secretary of State also places emphasis on the importance of the SDA acting as a catalyst for the regeneration in the Leys area of the City.

The key issues now are around delivery / implementation of the urban extension and then, once the homes are built, how the new community will be integrated into the City on a day-to-day basis to make the urban extension sustainable. I will cover these two points briefly.

South Oxfordshire District Council has made no secret of the fact that it is still opposed to the urban extension. The City Council is concerned that it is not approaching the plan making now required in a collaborative way and it may slow down the delivery of the new housing. South Oxfordshire has recently, but reluctantly, included this proposal in its Preferred Options version of its Core Strategy. However it only considers the City Council to be a stakeholder rather than offering to work on a joint Area Action Plan. We consider the SDA would be best planned if it were to be within the City's administrative area as this is an urban extension to Oxford City, not an isolated housing site.

Secondly, the whole principal of urban extensions, as set out in Government policy on sustainable communities, is that they operate in a functional way as part of the existing urban area. In other words, for all their day-to-day needs the residents of the urban extension will look to Oxford to provide its services. The City Council is already planning to provide in its Core Strategy to regenerate the centre of Blackbird Leys to provide a scale of services appropriate not just for the immediate area but the forthcoming SDA as well. It therefore seems wholly appropriate that this area should form part of the City Council's administrative area sooner or later. This is what happened with the earlier urban extension at Greater Leys that was transferred from SODC to City Council administration.

Attached to this letter is a plan showing the area of land that the City Council principally would like to be considered as part of this review. It reflects the land recently highlighted by South Oxfordshire District Council as part of the Core Strategy consultation. It also indicates the lack of existing electorate within the proposed area to be disrupted by a change of administrative area.

Finally, I would like to thank you again for the invitation to contribute to the development of your rolling programme of review work and would welcome the opportunity to meet and show you the land in question.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Peter Sloman". The signature is written in a cursive style and is underlined with a single blue stroke.

Peter Sloman
Chief Executive
Oxford City Council

cc Archie Gall, Director, The Boundary Committee for England, Trevelyan House, Great Peter Street, London, SW1P 2HW