

# **Examination into the soundness of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2011-2034**

## **INSPECTOR'S MATTERS AND ISSUES**

### **Note**

The matters set out below relevant to the soundness of the plan; they cover key issues such as the spatial strategy, the housing requirement and Green Belt. I have included among these the Council's newly proposed sustainable design / carbon reduction policy, because it has been put forward since the plan's submission. It is very similar to a policy that was found sound in the Oxford City Local Plan.

The Council have already suggested changes to some policies in response to my initial questions and comments (see IC1A, IC2A, IC4A & IC5A). Representors should be aware of these when producing their statements. If the Council's revised wording appears sound, I will generally not discuss it at the hearings. Similarly, policy wording that is close to resolution will be dealt with in writing.

From my reading of the written evidence it appears that the Council has satisfied the Duty to Cooperate and that the plan has met the legal requirements in respect of compliance with the Local Development Scheme and the Statement of Community Involvement, Habitats Regulation Assessment and Appropriate Assessment. I have not therefore included these within the list of Matters and Issues. Any other legal requirements will be considered within the context of the specific matters and issues set out below.

A more detailed agenda and timetable will be produced about a week before the hearings.

### **Matters and Issues**

#### **1. Is the housing requirement soundly based?**

- a. The figure of 775 dpa comes from the Oxfordshire SHMA 2014; the local housing need (LHN) figure derived from the standard method is 627 dpa. Have appropriate factors been applied to reach the housing requirement figure?
- b. What are the implications of extending the plan period as proposed?
- c. Is there an appropriate component within the stated housing requirement for meeting the unmet needs arising from Oxford City, having regard to the findings of the Inspector's report into the submitted Oxford City Local Plan? What should that figure be?
- d. Does the plan provide for sufficient affordable housing?
- e. To conclude, and leaving aside (for the moment) the stepped trajectory, what average annual figure should constitute the housing requirement, and what would that figure be over the plan period?

**2. Is the housing trajectory deliverable, and what is the position with housing supply overall, and for a rolling 5 year period**

- a. What is the overall headroom – the figure for completions, commitments, allocations and windfalls, compared with the housing requirement?
- b. Is the stepped trajectory soundly based?
- c. Will it be robust in the light of any foreseeable variations in the start dates or delivery rates of the allocations and commitments? (At this stage only headline points should be made in respect of risks to the delivery trajectory; I will be looking at the timing of infrastructure and delivery rates when dealing with the individual site allocations.)

**3. Does the plan provide appropriately for the housing needs of everyone?**

- a. Older people and people with specialist needs
- b. Other groups of people

**4. Is the plan's approach towards development densities and the design of development sound?**

- a. Are the residential densities set out in Policy STRAT5 realistic, viable and implementable?
- b. Will these densities enable an adequate housing mix to be achieved that will allow the needs of a full range of different households to be met?
- c. Will these densities ensure that local character is protected?
- d. Does the plan make adequate provision for best practice urban design and masterplanning on the strategic allocations, including community involvement and design review?

**5. Is the spatial strategy sound?**

- a. Is the plan's spatial strategy an appropriate strategy for meeting housing, employment, community and other needs in the right places whilst protecting the environment?
- b. Are the strategic allocations well-chosen and in the right locations?
- c. Is the balance between the towns sound?
- d. Is the approach towards the settlement hierarchy appropriate?

**6. Does the plan take a sound approach towards Green Belt and other environmental constraints?**

- a. What are the strategic level exceptional circumstances for the release of this quantity of land from the Green Belt? (The local level circumstances will be dealt with under each of the strategic sites.)
- b. Have the Council adequately addressed the points in paragraph 137 of the NPPF in respect of the use of brownfield land, development density and inter-authority discussion?
- c. Does the plan adequately allow for compensatory improvements for the loss of Green Belt in line with NPPF paragraph 138?
- d. Do the presence of Green Belt and other environmental constraints indicate a need for a reduced housing requirement?

**7. Are the plan's infrastructure policies sound?**

- a. Highways
- b. Rail
- c. Sustainable transport modes
- d. Telecommunications
- e. Water resources

**8. Does the plan take a proactive approach to mitigating and adapting to climate change in respect of the following.**

- a. The location of development?
- b. The encouragement of sustainable transport choices?
- c. Sustainable design and construction? Note the Council's proposed new policy DES11. Should that be taken forward as a main modification?

**9. Does the plan make sufficient provision for employment development?**

**Are the strategic allocations sound?**

(NB the spatial strategy and selection of strategic sites will be dealt with under Matter 5)

**10. STRAT3: Didcot Garden Town**

- a. Does the plan adequately lay the framework for the sustainable development of Didcot Garden Town (please see the Council's suggested expanded Policy STRAT3).

**11: STRAT7: Chalgrove Airfield:**

- a. Does the plan adequately lay the framework for the sustainable development of this strategic site?
- b. What is the most up to date information on infrastructure delivery and funding?
- c. What is the position regarding the existing occupiers of the site and alternative provision for them?
- d. Are the densities, start dates, number of suggested outlets and build out rates, and hence the delivery trajectory, realistic?

**12: STRAT8 and STRAT9: Land at / adjacent to Culham Science Centre:**

- a. Are there local level exceptional circumstances justifying the release of this land from the Green Belt?
- b. Does the plan adequately lay the framework for the sustainable development of this strategic site?
- c. What are the impactson landscape, ecological and other environmental issues and how would they be addressed?

- d. What is the most up to date information on infrastructure delivery and funding?
- e. Is the delivery trajectory realistic?

### **13. STRAT11: Land south of Grenoble Road**

- a. Are there local level exceptional circumstances justifying the release of this land from the Green Belt?
- b. Does the plan adequately lay the framework for the sustainable development of this strategic site?
- c. What are the impacts on landscape, views, ecological and other environmental issues and how would they be addressed?
- d. What is the most up to date information on infrastructure delivery and funding?
- e. Is the delivery trajectory realistic?

### **14. STRAT12: Land at Northfield**

- a. Are there local level exceptional circumstances justifying the release of this land from the Green Belt?
- b. Does the plan adequately lay the framework for the sustainable development of this strategic site?
- c. Could the development realistically be linked to Oxford by attractive sustainable transport routes?
- d. What are the impacts on landscape, ecological and other environmental issues and how would they be addressed?
- e. What is the most up to date information on infrastructure delivery and funding?
- f. Is the delivery trajectory realistic?

### **15. STRAT10: Land at Berinsfield:**

- a. Are there local level exceptional circumstances justifying the release of this land from the Green Belt?
- b. Does the plan adequately lay the framework for the sustainable development of this strategic site?
- c. Will the plan achieve its stated aim of regenerating Berinsfield?
- d. What is the most up to date information on infrastructure delivery and funding?
- e. Is the delivery trajectory realistic?

### **16. STRAT13: Land north of Bayswater Brook**

- a. Are there local level exceptional circumstances justifying the release of this land from the Green Belt?
- b. Does the plan adequately lay the framework for the sustainable development of this strategic site?

- c. What are the impacts on landscape, the SSSIs, listed buildings and archaeology and other environmental matters and how would they be addressed?
- d. What is the most up to date information on infrastructure delivery and funding, notably the road accesses?
- e. Is the delivery trajectory realistic?

*Please note that there will be no hearing discussion for STRAT14: Wheatley Campus because planning permission has been granted for development.*

**Are the policies for Henley and Thames, Thame and Wallingford sound?**

**17. HEN1: Henley on Thames:** does the plan adequately lay the framework for sustainable development at Henley on Thames?

**18. TH1: Thame:** does the plan adequately lay the framework for sustainable development at Thame?

**19. WAL1: Wallingford:** does the plan adequately lay the framework for sustainable development at Wallingford?

Jonathan Bore

INSPECTOR

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