


Oxford Core Strategy Examination Statement of Oxford City Council		www.oxford.gov.uk  OXFORD CITY COUNCIL
C/M4/3	Matter 4 – Employment Issue 3 – Employment land supply	

i) Should the Core Strategy be more explicit about the quantitative provision for new employment land ?

The evidence base for the amount of employment land required for the future is set out in the Employment Land Study (CD14/27), prepared by Nathaniel Lichfield. The study sets out a series of alternative employment growth scenarios. Option 3 is a proactive policy approach, which reflects the ‘managed economic growth’ scenario. This relies on the delivery of the Northern Gateway, some provision in the West End, together with the protection and modernisation of key employment sites. This option is reflected in Policy CS28.

The study identifies a net additional requirement of at least 13.5 ha, and to allow some flexibility this could be up to 36.5 ha. The Northern Gateway is the only strategic employment site, which is suitable, available and viable, and amounts to some 16 ha, with the additional provision of a further 2ha in the West End. The supporting text to Policy CS.28 sets out the proposed quantitative provision of employment land.

ii) Should the Core Strategy more clearly show how that scale of provision is to be provided, along with an indication of the locational spread of new land/sites for employment ?

The spatial distribution of employment growth are set out in Section 3.5 of the Proposed Changes to the Submission Document, which describes Place shaping. Oxford’s opportunities for accommodating employment growth are in practice very limited, given the scarcity of land in the city and the demands from a competing range of uses.

Place-Shaping local areas of Oxford includes a table on page 53, which considers the broad spatial distribution within the city. The forecast employment growth in Class B jobs shows almost 45% to be located in the Summertown district area, but this comprises mainly the allocation of the Northern Gateway as a strategic site. Almost 44% is located in the established key protected employment areas in the southeast of Oxford within the Cowley / Blackbird Leys area. This potential growth relies on the modernisation of principal employment areas such as Oxford Business Park, Oxford

Science Park and County Trading Estate. Finally nearly 12% will be likely to take place in the City centre and in particular within the West End.

iii) How realistic is it that the Northern Gateway and West End areas will produce the required scale of employment development ?

The Northern Gateway is a deliverable site. The Consortium, comprising Goodman and Kier, has options for purchase with the present landowners of the key areas of potential development, principally the areas of land identified as 'safeguarded.' The quantum of development and the proposed phasing has been discussed with the Consortium to ensure the strategic allocation of this site is in a practical sense suitable, available and viable. The floor space figures proposed for the Class B uses will produce at least the amount of jobs envisaged (3,750), and depending on the density and proposed layout developed through the master planning stage of the Area Action Plan could potentially result in a higher number of jobs, (2,750 – 4,000).

The adopted West End Area Action Plan (CD7/5) has as one of its key aims to produce a mixed-use development, to include a range of uses to reflect its City centre location. The key to the West End renaissance is to create a vibrant, successful and sustainable community. As set out in section one of the AAP, this is not a simple housing or office-led redevelopment project. It is important that there are strong policies in place to ensure that the appropriate balance of uses is created in the West End.

AAP Policies WE21 and WE22 are based on the evidence provided by the Employment Land Study (CD14/27). It is appropriate to base a limit on new employment on evidence set out in this robust study. The limit set on offices is desirable both because the Employment Land Study suggests that while there is demand for new offices in the West End, that demand is relatively limited, and because of the broad mix of uses it is desired to create in the West End.

Policies WE21 and WE22 address two aspects of this sector that operate very differently. The 15,000m² of office space does not include public sector offices; these (with an indicative floor space requirement of 20,000m²) are in addition. The public sector office development is key to creating the West End vision, by creating a civic heart in the Oxpens area.

iv) Will these 2 strategic sites, together with the key employment sites, provide sufficient opportunity and scope to meet the continuing needs of all existing and future businesses ?

The City Council consider the Northern Gateway and the West End do offer the main opportunities to accommodate future employment growth. These principal new land allocations will be supported by the retention and modernisation of the

key protected employment sites. The protected employment sites do include a range of employment sites in Oxford. They comprise the larger industrial estates and business parks, together with a range of smaller sites. The smaller sites do play an important indirect role in local economies, and provide the services and businesses for the larger firms within Oxford.

v) Are there any other suitable opportunities to provide for future employment needs that should be indicated in the Core Strategy ?

The City Council considers that the Northern Gateway, West End and Protected Employment sites offer the principal opportunities to accommodate future employment growth in Oxford.

There is also some potential through the modernisation of existing office accommodation in the District centres. The amount and its condition will be subject to a detailed assessment through an appraisal to be carried out shortly to inform the Site Allocations DPD. The designation of a new District centre at Blackbird Leys for mixed-use development does recognise that some employment uses, in addition to retail would be considered appropriate to strengthen its role as a focus for the community. The City Council will bring forward a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) to guide the development of the Blackbird Leys district centre.

The only other potential options for providing further major additional growth rest with mainly the proposed 'urban extension' through the South Oxford SDA, but this lies outside the city's boundaries.

vi) Will a flexible, responsive supply of land be maintained over the period to 2026 ?

The proposed approach to land supply in Oxford should be sufficiently responsive to meet the forecast demand. It is considered that the land allocations comprising the Northern Gateway, West End and Protected Employment Sites, will provide the majority of land requirements up to 2021. This future employment land supply does include a range of different sized sites, which are spatially located in different parts of the city. For example the Protected Employment Sites comprise the larger industrial estates, business and science parks; together with some smaller sites. Whilst the value of protection of these sites is to safeguard and support existing firms in Oxford, it does also allow these firms to modernise their sites, and increase the density of development; making efficient use of the land and potentially to relocate on alternative sites within the City.

Towards the latter part of the Core Strategy period 2021 to 2026 the main opportunities for additional employment land are likely to be outside the city's administrative boundary.

vii) What is the evidence to support the retention of employment sites ?

The Employment Land Study (CD14/27) carried out a thorough assessment of the existing employment areas in Oxford together with a review of the protected employment sites. As part of this review the consultants recognised that part of the purpose of protecting these sites 'is the importance of ensuring a sustainable distribution of business premises and employment land within the city, so that a range of potential job opportunities exist throughout the Oxford urban area.' (para.6.9)

The Protected Employment Sites include a range of employment sites in Oxford. They comprise the larger industrial estates and business parks, together with a range of smaller sites. These smaller sites, whilst perhaps less economically important, do play an important indirect role in local economies. They includes services such as printing, small-scale distribution, and repair of vehicles that support the sustainable functioning of the local economy, and the efficient operation of larger firms within it. The study concludes that 'the more such sites are lost, with little scope to relocate occupants within the city, over time the local economy may start to function less efficiently, with fewer local services and key services having to be brought in from longer distances.' (Para.6.10)