


Oxford Core Strategy Examination		www.oxford.gov.uk	 OXFORD CITY COUNCIL
Statement of Oxford City Council			
C/M10/1	Matter 10 – The Natural and Built Environments		
	Issue 1 – The Natural Environment		

i) How does the plan meet its obligations in terms of its internationally protected habitats?

PPS9 (CD11/7) requires that a clear distinction in the hierarchy of designated sites is made clear. Policy CS13 makes clear the distinctions between the different levels of the hierarchy of internationally, nationally, regionally, and locally designated sites. For instance, Policy CS.13 also refers to the need to ensure that sites designated under the Habitat Regulations “must be protected”.

In accordance with paragraph 6 of PPS9, the Oxford meadows SAC does not have a specific policy within the Core Strategy, since it enjoys statutory protection under the Habitats Regulations. A Habitat Regulations Assessment has been carried out (CD4/4). The HRA concluded that the Core Strategy would have no adverse impact, alone or in combination with other plans or programmes, on the integrity of the Oxford Meadows SAC. It is likely that a fuller discussion with regard to the HRA has taken place with regard to the strategic site at the Northern Gateway.

Finally it is worth noting that Policy CS.13 has a very positive emphasis on the opportunities for biodiversity enhancement and habitat creation in Oxford.

ii) Is the plan’s approach appropriate and does it provide a realistic and sound basis to enable development to proceed without significant adverse effect upon the protected areas?

Oxford City Council considers that the approach taken in the Core Strategy to the Natural Environment (in particular to biodiversity) is appropriate. Advice from PPS12 at paragraph 4.30 states that, “the core strategy should not repeat or reformulate national or regional policy”. Paragraphs 4.31-4.33 expand on this advice and provide the reasons why. Because of this recent advice, the City Council has not simply repeated policy advice in either PPS9 or the recently adopted South East Plan (CD10/1). The South East Plan forms part of the development plan for an area by virtue of section 38(3) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. Policy CS13 provides a clear strategic approach to site protection in Oxford.

iii) Does the Core Strategy give proper and appropriate recognition to all the other important areas of nature conservation?

Although not specifically mentioned in the Core Strategy, Oxford City Council is continuing to protect Wildlife Corridors through policy NE.20 in the Adopted Oxford Local Plan 2005. Representations from the New Marston Wildlife Group have picked up on the fact that the Core Strategy does not update the saved policy NE.20 from the Adopted Oxford Local Plan 2005 (CD7/6). Wildlife corridors are an important part of Oxford's biodiversity network and will continue to be protected and identified on the Proposals Map. It is anticipated that the Wildlife Corridors Policy NE.20 in the Oxford Local Plan will be updated through the Development Management DPD.

The map on page 71 (subsequent to Policy CS13) is intended to be an indicative map of the main areas of biodiversity interest. It was originally included to make reference to the conservation target areas. The proposals map will continue make reference to all the nature conservation designations (including wildlife corridors).

iv) Should more sites be identified and included for protection?

Policy CS13 in the Core Strategy discusses the creation of a strategic habitat network. This network will include the local designation of Wildlife Corridors and will be further developed through the Development Management DPD. Work is currently ongoing with the Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre to review all the Local Wildlife Designations in Oxford City. This work will contribute to the evidence base for the Development Management DPD regarding local wildlife designations within Oxford City.

v) Is the approach of the Core Strategy to open space and recreation the most appropriate and does it recognise all those areas that should be protected?

The approach taken in the Core Strategy with regard to open space and recreation is the most appropriate to Oxford because it recognises the wide variations across the City. Policy CS22 seeks to ensure that the current level of public accessible open space per 1000 population is maintained. This figure is based upon an assessment of the open space in Oxford. Whilst the standard (for green spaces) is not applicable to new developments, Policy CS22 seeks to maintain a balance of open space and recreation facilities in Oxford.

A statement of common ground has been reached with the Southfield Golf Course in order to overcome the objections of Southfield Golf Club, Oxford City Golf Club, Oxford Ladies Golf Club and Mr RJ Davies. The Statement of Common ground proposes a minor wording change to Policy CS22. This thrust of the change is in order that strategic protection can be offered to green spaces, outdoor leisure and sports facilities. The additional sentence is to be included as follows:

"Green spaces, outdoor leisure and sports facilities are identified on the Proposals Map".

This additional wording to the policy adds weight and gives a more recognition to all areas that need to be protected. The Proposals Map will continue to identify green spaces, outdoor leisure sport facilities in Oxford City to be protected, including Southfield Golf Course, in accordance with PPS12 and PPG17.