



GOVERNMENT OFFICE
FOR THE SOUTH EAST

Representing Central Government in the South East

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29 June 2009

By post and email

Dear Mr Jaggard,

Oxford City Core Strategy and Relationship to the South East Plan

Thank you for your letter dated 22 June seeking clarification on a number of matters in relation to the Oxford City Core Strategy and the South East Plan.

Taking your queries in turn I would comment as follows:

1) Land at and in the vicinity of Peartree, Oxford

The Government, via the South East Plan, wishes the settlements of Central Oxfordshire to grow and develop in order to meet their own current and future needs but also to contribute to an appropriate degree to the needs of the wider sub region and region. In doing so a balance should be maintained in order to ensure that growth in one area does not inappropriately fetter growth in another area or lead to other unintended consequences.

The Government wishes Oxford to continue to evolve and grow to support the particular economic and other roles the city plays locally and nationally. The Secretary of State does not consider that the roles Oxford should play could be fulfilled via major economic development outside of the city, but equally its own growth should not be at the expense of other areas or initiatives: hence South East Plan para 22.9 states:

Land should not be released for employment to the north of Oxford that could adversely affect the future economic buoyancy of Bicester, Kidlington or Witney or undermine opportunities to integrate the south of Oxford urban extension into the wider southern area."

(In this context "land north of Oxford" is taken to mean land beyond the Oxford City administrative boundary.)

Based upon the evidence available to the Examination, the South East Plan Panel concluded, and the Secretary of State concurred, that land at and in the vicinity of Peartree at the northern edge of Oxford could contribute to the city's roles without adversely affecting other areas. However, the South East Plan does not allocate a specific site for development. Moreover because it is not site specific, while clearly a material consideration, it does not purport to fully demonstrate the exceptional circumstances required by national policy in PPG2 to amend Green Belt boundaries or designations. Hence South East Plan para 22.9 states that

"Options regarding the location, level and form of employment or other development, including the possible use of land at and in the immediate vicinity of the currently safeguarded land at Peartree, will be a matter for local determination."

Thus it will be a matter for the Oxford City Core Strategy Public Examination to consider whether the detailed evidence exists to support the Northern Gateway proposals in principle and set the framework for any subsequent more detailed planning for the area.

2) The respective roles of Oxford and Bicester

Their respective roles are, *inter alia*, set out in South East Plan paras 22.5 and 22.10. They state:

"... Oxford itself will be allowed to grow physically and economically in order to accommodate its own needs, contribute to those in the wider region and help maintain its world-class status."

"At Bicester every opportunity should be taken to promote the town, inter alia, as a new location for higher value and knowledge-based business, separately and in association with the Oxford to Cambridge Arc initiative."

On this basis while the two should not seek to compete with each other at the strategic level (ie Bicester should not aim to become another Oxford), this is not to say that at the individual development level there should not be any competition. Indeed, it is likely that in order to raise the profile of Bicester and help reduce out-commuting, development akin to that already within Oxford or likely to come forward over the plan period may occur. Consequently, the relevant authorities should work together and with others to ensure that in terms of the type, form, timing and marketing of development both towns are able to make the most of opportunities that arise to fulfil their respective roles.

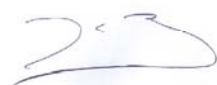
3) GOSE letter dated 15 May regarding the Revised Oxford City Core Strategy

I can confirm that the Secretary of State does not have any fundamental objections to the Revised Core Strategy, and that he is content for his previous written representations to stand as part of the Examination process.

It should be noted that the lack of a fundamental objection from the Secretary of State should not be taken as an endorsement that the Core Strategy is Sound, since this can only be determined by the independent Inspector who will be able to consider all the evidence and representations.

I trust that these clarifications are helpful, but if you have any further queries, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,



Kevin Bown
Senior Planning Manager

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BY POST & E-MAIL

Dear Kevin

Oxford Core Strategy and relationship to South East Plan

Thank you for our meeting on the 2nd June. We agreed that I would write to clarify a number of points we discussed in relation to the recently adopted South East Plan in respect of Oxford, and the Central Oxfordshire sub-region.

Paragraph 22.5 of the South East Plan (SEP) states that **'Oxford itself will be allowed to grow physically and economically in order to accommodate its own needs, contribute to those in the wider region and help maintain its world-class status.'**

This appears to relate to the matter of containment, as well as how employment development within the boundary of Oxford should be brought forward over the Plan period, focusing on serving the needs of Oxford and the Central Oxfordshire sub-region.

The Core Strategy Sustainability Appraisal identifies the Northern Gateway as the only strategic employment site to facilitate the South East Plan economic growth; quite literally, there are no other suitable sites.

Paragraph 22.9 of the SEP states that **'options regarding the location, level and form of employment or other development, including the possible use of land at and in the immediate vicinity of the currently safeguarded land at Peartree, will be a matter for local determination.'**

It seems that the RSS is generally supportive about the employment led proposals at the Northern Gateway, provided they are of an appropriate scale to the area. The allocation of the Northern Gateway, represents the principal opportunity to

meet the employment needs of Oxford, and assists employment growth in the Central Oxfordshire sub-region.

You were very clear that this relates to the safeguarded land at Peartree, and the land immediately adjoining it. You were clear that this would not include land as far as Kidlington. This clarification is very helpful, especially as this relates to green belt land. It is therefore my understanding that the SEP demonstrates the exceptional circumstances necessary to allow the Northern Gateway AAP to review the green belt boundaries of the surrounding land (within Oxford's administrative boundary).

Paragraph 22.9 continues to state that **'land should not be released for employment to the north of Oxford that could adversely affect the future economic buoyancy of Bicester, Kidlington or Witney.'**

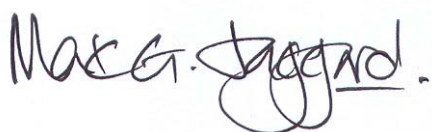
In the discussion you confirmed that this reference to the 'north of Oxford' refers to land outside the administrative boundary of Oxford, in Cherwell District. I would welcome your clarification on this matter so as to avoid any unnecessary debate at the Examination.

I understand that the South East Plan allows the County Towns, such as Bicester to grow, serve their own employment needs and to assist with economic growth of the sub-region. But this role, though within the Oxford and Central Oxfordshire Diamond for Investment and Growth, is subservient to the fundamental role played by Oxford, as the Regional Hub at the centre of the Diamond. Certainly my similar discussions with SEEDA have confirmed that their emphasis for Oxfordshire is Oxford, Science Vale, and Bicester, and that all three locations needed significant economic development, and that the type of development that would locate to Bicester is very different to that which would locate in Oxford and Science Vale.

Finally, my interpretation of your response to the Oxford Core Strategy Proposed Changes to the Submission Document in your letter to the City Council (Ref: GOSE/102/2/OXCITY/CS Rev Pub), dated 15 May 2009, that you have no fundamental objection to the Core Strategy. Please could you confirm this, as I believe that it would be helpful for the Inspector.

I look forward to hearing from you at your earliest convenience. It would certainly be helpful if you were able to provide this clarification prior to the commencement of the Core Strategy Examination on the 14th July 2009.

Yours sincerely,



Mark Jaggard
Spatial and Economic Development Manager