

Matter 6 – Infrastructure

Issue 1 – The infrastructure planning process

The Inspector encouraged the City Council and the County Council to work together to try to reach a joint position on changes to the Core Strategy in respect of primary school provision at Barton and the West End.

The City Council and County Council have discussed the wording and have been able to narrow our differences but felt we were unable to agree on the wording of the West End. We therefore present the Inspector with a version showing the City Council's proposed wording changes. We have done this in the form of extracts from the current plan (Proposed Changes to the Submission Core Strategy) to show how the new wording would fit in with the existing text. We include extracts from Section 3.4 (West End and Barton) and Section 5.3 (Education).

Section 3.4

West End

Vision

The aim is to transform this key part of the city centre, raising it to the standard that befits Oxford's reputation. The West End area of the city centre has significant opportunities for a mixed-use modern, economically and socially sustainable range of developments. The West End offers potential to re-establish high-quality urban living, with much-needed housing in a very sustainable location. The West End will provide new leisure, retail and cultural attractions. Some employment development will take place through the modernisation and redevelopment of existing previously developed land. To meet the opportunities for improvement, it is necessary to create an attractive environment, with good public spaces and high-quality design.

With careful design the many historic features in the West End will become well integrated into new developments, and the rich heritage of the area will be brought to life. Detailed policies and proposals for the transformation of the West End are set out in the Area Action Plan (adopted June 2008). Detailed development control will be informed by a Conservation Management Plan as part of the proposed Development Management DPD, which will provide specific impact assessment and guidance on heritage constraints and opportunities above and below ground.

Area Appraisal

The West End is in a key location and represents the south-west quarter of the city centre. As well as being within the city centre, the West End is also the gateway to Oxford for those who arrive by train or reach the city centre from the west. The West End forms a significant area of land and includes key city landmarks and facilities such as the railway station, the Westgate Shopping Centre, the Castle site, George Street, Gloucester Green and Oxford Town Hall.

However this area does not currently match Oxford's worldwide reputation or live up to its potential as a city-centre area of the highest quality.

Several busy and important routes through the West End are not attractive spaces for pedestrians, as they have narrow footways and a poor public realm. Particularly in the most highly trafficked streets, too little attention has been given to pedestrians. Oxpens Road is the only through-road available to connect the main northern and western routes into the city to the main southern route. The street was engineered for a higher volume of traffic than it carries, resulting in a wide street with no sense of human scale, where traffic is intimidating. The road bisects the heart of the West End, acting as a barrier to pedestrian movement. The ambience of Oxpens Road needs to be transformed as part of the West End renaissance.

The West End benefits from the highly sustainable nature of its location. It is ideally situated in terms of the PPS6 sequential test and in terms of transport, as it includes a mainline railway station and is serviced by local buses, park-and-ride buses and scheduled coaches. Also of benefit is the proximity of a wide range of city-centre services and amenities.

Relationship to the Spatial Strategy

The West End's regeneration is expected to be fundamental to the overall long-term success of Oxford. Clearly the uses in this area and the functions they perform are of great value to the city as a whole and to the wider area. The renaissance of the West End will be important to those who live or work in the area and also to those who visit from the rest of the city, the county and beyond.

The West End renaissance should be able to achieve important elements of the spatial strategy for Oxford. As well as providing new homes towards the city's overall target, it offers the only significant opportunity for city-centre employment and retail provision. The improvements to Oxford Rail Station and the city-centre movement network are important for development in the city as a whole. The West End also provides the focus for cultural and tourism development and additional short-stay accommodation.

For these reasons, the City Council identified the renaissance of the western quarter of the city centre as an urgent priority and produced the Area Action Plan in advance of the Core Strategy.

Key outputs

- o Provide around 700-800 new dwellings.
- o Provide additional student accommodation.
- o Provide up to 15,000 m² of private-sector office accommodation and around 20,000 m² of public-sector office accommodation.
- o Provide at least 37,000 m² additional retail floorspace within the Primary Shopping Area.
- o Provide new hotel accommodation, a new conference centre and a range of cultural and leisure facilities.
- o Improve the public realm and create new public spaces.
- o Expand the capability of Oxford Rail Station: including a new bay platform, better facilities and improved interchange with other sustainable modes of transport.
- o Enhance green spaces and the waterside environment, including the creation of a new linear park at Castle Mill Stream.
- o Provide a community-wide energy scheme.

- o Provide access for new residents to educational facilities ([see Section 5.3](#)) and primary healthcare facilities.

Policy CS5

West End

The West End is allocated as a strategic location which will deliver a mixed-use development.

Planning permission will be granted for development that includes:

- significant housing provision (approximately 700-800 dwellings);
- retail floorspace (at least 37,000m²);
- office space (15,000m² for the private sector and 20,000m² for the public sector);
- new leisure and cultural attractions; and
- a high-quality network of streets and public spaces.

Delivery and partnership

The West End Area Action Plan, adopted in June 2008, sets a detailed planning framework for the future development of this area, including a schedule of over 20 identified development sites with a list of indicative uses.

The West End Partnership (comprising the City Council, County Council and SEEDA) is firmly established and has been pivotal in driving forward the West End's renaissance thus far. The West End Executive, with its steering-group members, will continue to work towards fulfilling the vision. The City and County Councils will play important roles in the West End's renaissance. Both authorities own much land in the area and are committed to using their land holdings for the wider benefit of the area. They also play other roles in fulfilling the vision, including that of the County Council as the highway authority and local education authority, and the City Council as local planning authority. Other functions of both the Councils will also be important in the implementation of projects paid for by pooled contributions.

The West End Partnership is investigating how to accommodate primary school pupils coming to live in the area. The two broad options being considered are the enlargement or relocation of existing schools in the wider area, or a site within the West End. A new school within the West End (as part of a wider community facility) would offer much in terms of contributing towards the vision for the area. However, more work is required to inform the West End Partnership's decision on which option to pursue.

Stakeholder involvement has been crucial in developing the AAP, and the Partnership will continue to build on this by further involving and consulting on future aspects of the West End project.

Land at Barton

Vision

The vision for Land at Barton is to deliver 800-1,200 new homes, significantly helping to address the need for new housing within the city. These new houses will be of mixed size, type and tenure to create a strong and balanced community. The new community will have easy access to the range of services and facilities required to create an attractive and sustainable residential environment. The new community will be well integrated with the rest of the city and in particular with the neighbouring residential areas of Barton and Northway. Development of

Land at Barton will also help to stimulate regeneration of the neighbouring Barton and Northway estates.

Area Appraisal

The area referred to as Land at Barton lies immediately to the west of Barton estate. It consists mainly of agricultural grazing land, but also includes allotments, sports pitches and an electricity substation. The total site area is 36ha, of which some 23.5ha is likely to be developable once the allotments, public open space and an area of floodplain adjoining Bayswater Brook have been excluded. The land is owned by the City Council, apart from an area of approximately 3.7 hectares adjoining the substation, which is owned by Scottish and Southern Energy. Excluding the boundary with the Barton estate, the site is separated from the rest of Oxford by the A40 ring road. It will be a difficult challenge to integrate development on this site into the wider community because of the access issues and the 'severance' effect of the A40.

The Character Assessment of Oxford in its Landscape Setting noted that the area is important to the setting of Headington. However, it found that fragmentation of the area by the northern by-pass, the invisible course of the river and the lack of floodplain features means the integrity of the landscape has been lost and landscape quality is perceived as moderate.¹ While the comments about this area's rural character are noted, given the severe shortage of available land for development in Oxford, this is not considered to be of such intrinsic importance as to prevent any future development. The Barton area is known to have potential for prehistoric and Roman archaeology, which will require assessment.

An ecological report² identified some features within the site which would merit retention, enhancement or restoration as part of any development. These include Bayswater Brook on the northern boundary, which is designated as a SLINC. This would need protecting with an appropriate buffer zone, probably in the form of a linear nature park. However, the survey work did not find any major constraints on development.

The Strategic Flood Risk Assessment shows that 90% of the site is in Flood Zone 1, with approximately 10% (adjoining Bayswater Brook) in Flood Zone 3b (functional floodplain)³. The area in Flood Zone 3b could be set aside as a linear nature park, as suggested in the ecological report. A site-specific Flood Risk Assessment will be needed at a later stage.

Relationship to the spatial strategy

The delivery of 800-1,200 new homes on Land at Barton is a key element in the delivery of the spatial strategy. The update to the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment⁴ considered that Land at Barton was a developable site for years 5-10 of the assessment (2013-2019) and could provide around 1,000 houses. In the SHLAA the 1,000 houses projected for Land at Barton comprises some 65% of those identified for the period 2014-19. Without Land at Barton it would clearly be very difficult to find enough sites to accommodate the level of housing growth required for Oxford.

The location of this site adjoining the Barton estate and opposite the Northway estate, two of the City Council's priority areas for regeneration, presents an opportunity for

¹ A Character Assessment of Oxford in its Landscape Setting (2002)

² This report comprises an extended Phase 1 habitat survey of the site and detailed Phase 2 botanical surveys, bird surveys and various species surveys.

³ Oxford Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (2008)

⁴ Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment Update Report (Oxford City Council) April 2009

development to act as a catalyst for a wider estate renewal scheme in those areas. New development could help significantly in terms of the physical integration of the new development with the existing estate; the provision of new access routes and community facilities; and the potential for new residents to help sustain existing shops and services. In particular the sense that the existing Barton estate is isolated from the rest of the city could be reduced by providing a further new footbridge across the A40, or improvements to the existing underpass between Barton Village Road and the Headington borders, or both.

Key outputs

- o to deliver 800-1,200 new homes;
- o to deliver a balanced mix of housing in terms of the size, type and tenure of dwellings;
- o to deliver a new multi-purpose community building based around a new primary school:
- o to provide access for new residents to the appropriate services and facilities, to include in particular:
 - e ~~access to primary and secondary education (this is likely to require either expansion of at least two existing primary schools, or an additional school within the site itself);~~
 - o social and community facilities;
 - o new or extended bus services;
 - o green space enhancement;
 - o primary health-care facilities;
 - o to integrate development on this site into the wider community (this could include a new bridge over the A40, giving bus, cycle and pedestrian access into Northway and Headington);
- o to mitigate noise from the A40 to provide good-quality living conditions;
- o to protect Bayswater Brook (designated as a Site of Local Importance for Nature Conservation (SLINC)) and the adjoining area of floodplain;
- o to link the new development with the established estate. An area of public open space equivalent to the current area will be retained, even if such a link is taken through the existing area;
- o to retain the existing allotments;
- o to provide additional publicly accessible open space to reflect the needs of the new residents.

Policy CS7

Land at Barton

Land at Barton is allocated as a strategic location for a predominantly residential development. Planning permission will be granted for 800-1,200 dwellings, and infrastructure and amenities to support the new community (including a new primary school). Development will be required to deliver access improvements that integrate it into the wider community and stimulate regeneration in Barton and Northway.

Development proposals will be expected to retain the existing allotments and an area of public open space equivalent in area to what currently exists, and to incorporate additional publicly accessible open space and an appropriate buffer zone to Bayswater Brook and the A40.

Delivery and partnership

An Area Action Plan will bring this land forward. The Barton AAP will:

- facilitate detailed work with a range of different stakeholders and local residents;
- define the precise boundaries of the development site;
- set out the precise mix of uses to be provided and the form/layout of development;
- include measures to integrate the development with the existing Barton estate and the rest of Oxford;
- include measures to mitigate the potential impact of development on the strategic and local road network, particularly the A40;
- provide a detailed infrastructure plan;
- provide detail on matters of flood mitigation, green infrastructure and biodiversity; and
- consider how to use the development of the greenfield site to stimulate the regeneration of Barton and Northway estates and provide good links between them.

The City Council is working with the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA), which has indicated that it is keen to assist in bringing forward this site for a residential-led development.

5.3 Education

Education is a crucial part of people's lives; it includes early-years, primary and secondary learning, further and higher education, special educational learning, adult learning courses and extra-curricular activities. Access to all types of education is an important factor in achieving a high level of qualifications and skills.

It is important that residents of new housing developments have good access to education facilities and that existing facilities do not become oversubscribed. It is therefore appropriate for new residential development to contribute towards the cost of education provision, either towards the expansion of existing facilities, or in some cases towards the funding of a new school, in line with Policy CS18 and the Planning Obligations SPD.⁵ The most significant individual housing sites included in the Spatial Strategy are the West End, and Land at Barton. Land at Summertown may also come forward for residential development within the Core Strategy period. In terms of the West End, more work is required to inform the West End Partnership's decision on which option to pursue (the two broad options to emerge are the enlargement or relocation of existing schools in the area, or a site within the West End). Regarding land at Barton, the County Council indicate that this site would bring in enough new primary school pupils to trigger a need for ~~either a new 1.5 or 2 form entry primary school built within the site itself, or expansion to existing schools.~~ A new multi-purpose community facility including a primary school will be provided as part of the development.

In terms of secondary provision, enough overall capacity currently exists (or can be provided) for secondary school places in the areas of greatest housing growth, although issues of school transport and spatial proximity may need tackling.

The City Council will work with the County Council, as local education authority, to ensure that school places are made available to all new residents in appropriate locations and in a

⁵ Regular reviews of the Planning Obligations SPD will be undertaken to ensure that the contributions being sought are at the most appropriate levels

timely manner, including regular partnership reviews of where school places will be needed in the future. The need for new sites will be considered in the Site Allocations DPD and relevant AAPs and SPDs. Educational facilities will be expected to include provision for community use, for example through making multi-use facilities accessible to the wider community.

In the further education sector the Oxford and Cherwell Valley College has plans to significantly redevelop and improve the facilities on offer at both their City centre and Blackbird Leys campuses. Oxford Brookes University and the University of Oxford both have plans to improve facilities for the higher education sector within the city (see section 8.2).

The draft South East Plan⁶ seeks to maximise the opportunities arising from the economic dynamism and growth within central Oxfordshire, including training opportunities for less skilled workers, and to focus training and development activities in those areas and sectors experiencing the greatest recruitment and retention difficulties. Improved access to training opportunities is particularly important in the more deprived areas of Oxford, where income levels, and the proportion of skilled workers, are low. The City Council will work with local businesses and education services, and the Learning and Skills Council (Thames Valley), to improve access to training and skills development.

Policy CS17

Access to education

The City Council will work with the County Council and other agencies to improve access to all levels of education, through new or improved facilities, throughout Oxford, but particularly in areas of population growth.

~~The Strategic housing site development at Barton will include a new primary school, and potentially at Housing development at~~ Summertown, will make provision for or contribute towards appropriate primary education facilities, either on- or off-site. The need for new sites will be considered in the Site Allocations DPD.

Planning permission will only be granted for new education facilities in locations accessible by walking, cycling and public transport. Provision for community as well as educational use will be sought.

⁶ The Secretary of State's Proposed Changes to the Draft Regional Spatial Strategy for the South East (2008) GOSE