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Mr Mark Jaggard & Mr Adrian Roche
Oxford City Council
Ramsay House
10 St. Ebbe's Street
Oxford
OX1 1PT

Your Ref:

Our Ref: PINS/G3110/429/5

Date: 12 July 2010

Dear Messrs Jaggard & Roche,

OXFORD CORE STRATEGY - EXAMINATION RESUMPTION OF HEARING SESSIONS

As you know, the examination of the Oxford Core Strategy is currently suspended pending the resolution of the High Court challenges to the South of Oxford Strategic Development Area included in the former approved South-East Plan Regional Spatial Strategy (SEPRSS).

In my previous letter of 11 June 2010, I explained that, due to the uncertainty resulting from the Secretary of State's statement on 27 May 2010 about the forthcoming abolition of Regional Strategies¹, I considered it would be difficult to proceed with the resumed hearing sessions until further clarification had been made on the status of the RSS, the means by which it will be abolished, and how decisions on housing and planning will be returned to local planning authorities without a framework of regional numbers and plans. I also referred to the Ministerial statement made on 9 June 2010, announcing changes to housing policy relating to previously developed land (private residential gardens) and housing density².

On 6 July 2010, the Secretary of State made a further statement³, confirming that Regional Strategies (including the SEPRSS) had formally been revoked⁴ and no longer form part of the statutory development plan. Accompanying *Guidance for Local Planning Authorities*⁵ provides some clarification about the impact of this revocation and how planning authorities can continue to bring forward their Local Development Frameworks.

Now that the situation has been clarified and the status of the SEPRSS is clearer, I consider that the examination of the soundness of the Oxford Core Strategy can be continued. However, before the hearing sessions resume, I need some further information from the Council on the implications of the revocation of the SEPRSS.

¹ Letter from Rt Hon Eric Pickles MP (Secretary of State for Communities & Local Government) to all local authorities [dated 27 May 2010; DCLG]

² Statement of Greg Clark MP (Minister of State for Decentralisation) [dated 9 June 2010; DCLG]

³ Parliamentary statement by Rt Hon Eric Pickles MP (Secretary of State for Communities & Local Government) [dated 6 July 2010]

⁴ by powers under s79(6) of the Local Democracy, Economic Development & Construction Act 2009

⁵ Letter to Chief Planning Officers from Steve Quartermain (Chief Planner) [dated 6 July 2010] and associated *Guidance for Local Planning Authorities following the revocation of Regional Strategies* [DCLG; 6 July 2010]



Ideally, I would like the Council's views to be endorsed at both at senior officer and member level. I also invite any comments from any of those organisations and individuals who made representations on the original Core Strategy (September 2008), the amended Core Strategy (April 2009), and the latest proposed changes (April 2010). Comments should be limited to 1,000 words in total, to be received by the Programme Officer by 20 August 2010 at the latest.

I seek the views of the Council and other interested parties on the following matters:

- (1) Will the Council confirm that they wish me to proceed to complete the examination of the soundness of the Core Strategy (as currently submitted and amended, with the latest proposed changes) following the abolition of the SEPRSS?
- (2) What are the implications, if any, for the Oxford Core Strategy of the Secretary of State's announcement of 6 July 2010 confirming that the Regional Strategies (including the SEPRSS) have been formally revoked and no longer form part of the statutory development plan?
- (3) Do the Council intend to review or revise the Core Strategy, its policies and content following the revocation of the SEPRSS, and if so, what is the likely timescale for any review?
- (4) Do the Council intend to retain or review the overall level of housing provision proposed in the Core Strategy, and if so, what will be the basis for any existing or revised figures, particularly in terms of housing land supply (both in terms of 5-year and longer term provision)?
- (5) Do the Council intend to retain or review the overall level of employment land provision proposed in the Core Strategy, and if so, what will be the basis for any existing or revised figures of employment land supply?
- (6) Does the revocation of the SEPRSS have any other implications for the Core Strategy, including:
 - a. The sub-regional strategy for the Oxford area
 - b. The loss of the South of Oxford Strategic Development Area
 - c. The Northern Gateway proposed development area
 - d. The homes/jobs balance in Oxford
 - e. Green Belt
 - f. Transport
 - g. Hierarchy of centres, including town, local and other shopping centres
 - h. Regional policies on natural environment, flooding, climate change (including renewable and low-carbon energy)
 - i. Cross-boundary and sub-regional issues
 - j. Flexibility and contingency arrangements for the longer term
- (7) Does the previous Ministerial statement⁶ amending the status of private residential gardens in terms of previously developed land and abolishing the minimum density requirement (PPS3: Annex B & paragraph 47) have any implications for the Core Strategy, particularly in terms of projected housing land supply (including the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment)?

Subject to confirmation from the Council that they wish me to resume the hearing sessions and complete the examination of the Core Strategy, I would expect the hearing sessions to resume on 14 September 2010. I would be grateful if the Council could arrange a suitable venue so that the Programme Officer can notify participants. Consequently, this letter constitutes the formal announcement that the hearing sessions will be resumed on that date, unless circumstances dictate otherwise.

⁶ *Statement of Greg Clark MP (Minister of State for Decentralisation)* [dated 9 June 2010; DCLG]

I will give further details about the resumption of the hearings, including the agenda setting out the matters and issues for discussion, shortly before the hearings commence. It is not necessary for participants to make any further statements on their previous representations at any stage of the process. At this stage, I am only seeking answers from the Council on the specific questions set out, along with any relevant views from other interested parties, to be submitted to the Programme Officer no later than 20 August 2010.

Mr David Fenton, the assistant inspector, endorses this approach.

Yours sincerely,

Stephen J Pratt

Stephen J Pratt
Inspector