

## **OXFORD CORE STRATEGY**

### **NOTES OF THE PROCEDURAL MEETING HELD ON 9 FEBRUARY 2010<sup>1</sup>**

#### **1. Inspector's Introduction**

1.1 The Inspector, Stephen J Pratt BA(Hons) MRTPI opened the Procedural Meeting at 11.00am and introduced himself and the Programme Officer, Helen Wilson. He also asked the City Council to introduce their representatives, and confirmed the presence of other representatives and individuals around the table (List of those participating in the Meeting is appended).

#### **2. Procedural Matter**

2.1 Mr Feeney requested an adjournment on the basis that there had been a breach of statutory duty under the Disability Discrimination Act, by PINS and the City Council. This related to him having insufficient time to consider other parties' statements and the inability of the Council to provide him with adequate seating. The result was that his representation had been prejudiced, and the only remedy was an adjournment of the Meeting.

2.2 The Inspector ruled that he would not adjourn the Meeting, but in order to give Mr Feeney more time to consider all the statements, the Inspector would accept a further written statement, to be submitted by Friday 19 February.

#### **3. Purpose of the Meeting**

3.1 The Inspector explained that the Procedural Meeting was being held in public, but was not a "public Meeting" at which anyone could participate. Apart from Oxford City Council, only those people who had made duly made representations to the Core Strategy at publication or post-submission stages, or were previously involved in the examination or hearing sessions could participate. As set out in the Background Note (paras 2.1-2.3) the Inspector explained the purpose of the Meeting, and set out those matters which were not for discussion.

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<sup>1</sup> These notes are not intended as a record or minute, but to outline the general gist of the matters discussed

#### **4. Current Position of the Core Strategy Examination**

- 4.1 The Inspector summarised the current position, and confirmed that the examination of the Core Strategy was currently suspended. Although the hearing sessions had been completed, the examination was suspended pending the conclusion of the legal challenges to the South East Plan RSS, relating to the South of Oxford Strategic Development Area. The City Council confirmed that the current position was as set out in the Background Note at paragraphs 3.1-3.5.

#### **5. Legal Challenges to the South East Plan RSS**

- 5.1 The Inspector summarised the position on the legal challenges to the South East Plan RSS, as set out in the Background Note (paras 4.1-4.6). At present, we were waiting for the finalisation of the Consent Orders relating to the legal challenges and the agreement to any further work needed to be undertaken to the South East Plan RSS to rectify the procedural shortcomings, relating to the proposed South of Oxford Strategic Development Area. He confirmed that he had not seen any details of the legal challenges and was not aware of the precise state-of-play with the Consent Orders.
- 5.2 The **City Council** stated that they were not party to any correspondence relating to the legal challenges to the South East Plan RSS.
- 5.3 **GOSE** said that they had nothing to add to Mr Cheston's statement of 5 January 2010.
- 5.4 **South Oxfordshire District Council** (SODC) said that on 29 January 2010 the Treasury solicitor had written to the parties with a draft Consent Order. SODC had written back asking for reconsideration of some elements, and were waiting for a reply.
- 5.5 **CPRE** explained that the government had offered to withdraw certain parts of the RSS. CPRE had asked for further changes, and also wanted the 4000 houses removed from the totals; these issues were still being discussed. There is no time limit on the resolution of the legal challenges, but if there is no agreement there may be a need to go to the High Court, with some parties challenging, whilst others may have reached agreement. There is currently no indication if, and when the Consent Order would be agreed.
- 5.6 The Inspector understood that the Consent Order had to be agreed and confirmed, or it would be for a judge to determine the matter. The issue

would then be remitted to the Secretary of State to reconsider the Plan and make corrections. The tender for the Sustainability Appraisal and Habitats Regulations Assessment Plan Repair work was due for completion by the end of March. Then the proposed changes would be published, which could lead to a further EIP into the RSS.

- 5.7 **GOSE** agreed with the Inspector's understanding of the process and said that it could be some time before there was resolution of the matter.
- 5.8 **Magdalen College/Thames Water Property** (David Jackson), said that although the tender brief for the Repair work set out an appointment early in the New Year, the consultants had still not been appointed. PINS explanation was that they were waiting for the Consent Orders to be agreed. The end of March deadline was therefore unlikely to be met, as to date no consultants had been appointed.
- 5.9 The Inspector invited **Mr Evan Harris MP** to make his contributions to the debate (since he had to leave the Meeting). Mr Harris said there was too much doubt over the High Court Challenges (HCC) to progress the Core Strategy (CS). It would be inappropriate to confirm the CS ahead of the outcome of the legal challenges. He said that the housing needs of Oxford, in particular affordable housing were so great, that if there were any doubt about the South of Oxford Strategic Development Area (SOSDA) then other sites should be found. He also thought that the position on the employment figures was wholly unclear. There was inadequate consideration in the CS of neighbouring districts, who seemed to be competing for the same employment growth. He was concerned that a reference to the recession had been deleted from the final version of the notes of the Meeting between GOSE and the City Council on 23 October 2009. He asserted that until there were accurate figures, the CS could not determine the issue. (Mr Harris then left the Meeting).
- 5.10 The Inspector said that it was a very difficult decision he had to make. There was no indication when the matters on the legal challenges would be concluded. The SOSDA might be deleted, but it was not clear what other implications its deletion might have; for example, what would happen to the 4000 houses.
- 5.11 **CPRE** said that this was their concern, they were not confident that there were alternative strategic sites, and if there were any, on what basis they had been chosen. The Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) might be carried out on the wrong premise, making the whole South East Plan examination process flawed.

## **6. City Council's View on Making Progress with the Examination**

- 6.1 The City Council still thought that progress could be made, the SOSDA was outside the City and the 8000 housing target could be met and exceeded. The uncertainty of the South East Plan didn't critically affect the CS. It was critical for other proposed development in the City to have an adopted CS. The officers had taken internal legal advice on moving forward with the CS.
- 6.2 The Inspector said that if he did agree to proceed with further hearings, the worst possible outcome would be to have another legal challenge. He thought that the Council might like to consider seeking independent legal advice.
- 6.3 The City Council thought progress could be made. Their 2006 Preferred Options report was advanced prior to the Panel report on the RSS, and was consulted upon (ie without reference to SOSDA). The Council subsequently included reference to the SOSDA to reflect the recommendations of the RSS EIP Panel Report. Their aim was to integrate the urban extension into the City. The RSS set a housing allocation for Oxford, which was not affected by the legal challenges. The SOSDA was not in competition with other sites, and an alternative site within the City's administrative boundary was unlikely to come forward if the SOSDA was deleted, as the Council had explored all potential strategic sites during preparation of the CS. The housing/employment balance was debated at the CS examination. The Council felt that the deletion of the SOSDA had a limited impact on the housing/employment balance. Oxford's housing/employment balance was similar to other places in the South East. Housing and regeneration projects flowed from the CS, so it was important that the CS was adopted as soon as reasonable. The delivery of housing was a key issue in the City; the delay in the CS meant that there was a lack of overarching policies to bring forward the relevant AAPs.
- 6.4 The City Council said that their Local Plan ran from 2001-2016 and there was currently a 5 year housing land supply, although windfall sites would be needed to maintain a 10 year housing land supply. The RSS did not give a date when the SOSDA should come forward. The Council would like to progress the site on the basis of a joint AAP with SODC. SODC had suggested using an SPD for land in its administrative area only. Northern Gateway would progress with an AAP, adopting a holistic approach to the site.

- 6.5 The City Council summarised their views on why the deletion of the SOSDA would be of limited significance to the Core Strategy (statement dated 29 January 2010). They acknowledged that some statements had raised the issue of prematurity; however some districts had not adopted their CS ahead of the RSS. They were aware of the position in neighbouring districts and their progress on CSs. Oxford treated their 8000 allocation as a minimum and were keen to deliver as much housing as possible. In relation to Green Belt (GB), the Council's view was that the HCC wouldn't shed new light on the GB approach, there was only a small area of GB land at Northern Gateway (NG) being considered in the CS. In preparing their schedule of suggested changes, the Council felt that a minimum number of changes were needed.
- 6.6 The Inspector questioned the extent of further amendments that might be necessary. He asked whether a "what if" scenario, such as Magdalen College/ Thames Water Property had suggested should be included.
- 6.7 The Council thought it was too early to include a "what if" scenario. If the SOSDA were to be reinstated, there would be a need to look at possible wording to make sure it was integrated into the CS. As the SOSDA had been deleted from the RSS it seemed sensible to delete it from the CS. The Council had not included the phasing of the NG in the schedule of changes, as this would be set out in the AAP. When looking at employment low growth rate, Inspector Fenton thought that the housing/jobs balance would stay fairly level without the urban extension; it was improved with the SOSDA. However, the Council had not at this stage reconsidered phasing the NG, although it had been identified as a possible contingency arrangement.
- 6.8 CD16/53-CD16/55 had been submitted to Mr Fenton at his request. There would need to be some minor changes, and amendment to the tables to exclude the SOSDA. These would be included in the proposed changes if the examination were to progress. The Council felt that they could produce the further changes fairly quickly; they would need to advertise 6 weeks before the start of any hearings, so it would be at least 2 months before the hearings could take place.
- 6.9 The Council said that they would be guided by the Inspector, but as they had consulted previously, both with and without SOSDA, they did not think a full consultation on the proposed changes was necessary. If consultation were needed, it should be targeted to those who had previously made representations to the CS (at either stage) and those that had participated at the examination.

6.10 The Inspector felt that there might be a need for a full consultation, since deleting a policy could have implications for the housing/employment balance, and even for NG.

## **7. Views of Other Participants on Progress of the Examination**

7.1 **Engage** pointed out that in the notes of the Meeting with the City Council, GOSE had said that Oxford could progress housing schemes without the CS. Engage suggested that the Council should take legal advice and look at alternative sites. Engage felt that full consultation on the proposed changes was needed, and more detail was needed on NG. Comparisons with other towns, such as Reading were inappropriate; people in Oxford did not want their City to be like Reading.

7.2 **CPRE** asked that if the Council were saying that the deletion of the SOSDA did not affect their strategy, would its reinstatement? The Council had asked the Boundary Commission to extend the City boundary beyond the area included in the SOSDA.

7.3 **Rosemary Harris** commented that there had been so many revisions to the CS, that as an individual it was very hard to follow. She was concerned that different employment figures had been used by the Council for their evidence base.

7.4 **Nicola Blackwood** stated that employment sites should be held back, but housing sites were needed. Consideration should be given to the forthcoming general election when looking to hold any hearing sessions. As much detail as possible was needed, so that people knew clearly what they were being consulted upon.

7.5 **Wolvercote Commoners Committee** said that what consultation had previously been undertaken by the Council was difficult to understand. Whilst the Council may be aware of what was happening with adjoining districts, was there any joint working?

7.6 **Councillor Goddard** was concerned about housing, jobs and transport. The CS even with SOSDA did not adequately provide for housing. Any new sites in place of the SOSDA could have major transport implications. Housing at Barton could be progressed through an AAP ahead of the CS. Mere textual amendments to the CS, in relation to the deletion of the SOSDA was not good enough. The objections to the NG were not removed by SOSDA's deletion. More detail was needed on NG in any future consultation.

- 7.7 **Councillor McCready** gave Councillor Fooks' apologies for non-attendance, due to a County Budget Meeting. In Summertown residents would want to be consulted on any proposed changes to the CS.
- 7.8 **Mr Feeney** raised questions about possible Judicial Review, repeated his needs in terms of the Disability Discrimination Act, requested a hard copy of the Schedule of Suggested Changes and pointed out that the examination library was not available at the Meeting. The Inspector noted these points and explained that the reason the library was not available, was that the Meeting was only dealing with procedural matters.
- 7.9 **Councillor Young** supported the officers wish to move forward. There was an opportunity to look again at the West End/Westgate site, an alternative use to retail could be affordable housing. In the employment figures the Council had excluded NHS and university workers, who made up a large section of the workforce.
- 7.10 **Peter Thompson** said that the current Local Plan (LP) to 2016, was only adopted just over 4 years ago. The housing figure in the LP was 10% higher than that in the CS. Barton could proceed without the CS, so there was no need to rush into reconvening the hearing sessions.
- 7.11 **Elizabeth Gillespie** was concerned about the future of the 4,000 houses originally allocated to the SOSDA and explained that the policy within SODC was to develop the county towns.
- 7.12 **The City Council** said that at the RSS EiP they had argued strongly for additional housing, in the form of an urban extension to the south of Oxford. They felt that that there was a need to move on, if once adopted there was a need to amend the CS, then that is what they would do. The LDF planning system was supposed to be quicker, so that DPD's could be amended to reflect changes in circumstances. If a change to the RSS necessitated a major change to the CS, the Council would bring forward an early amendment. There was preparatory work that could be done on Barton, but for the AAP they needed an adopted CS.
- 7.13 In terms of consultation the Council were keen to limit the extent of this to the changes related to the SOSDA, it would be inappropriate to consult on issues that had already been dealt with at the examination.
- 7.14 The Council would be willing to seek independent legal advice from Counsel on moving forward.

- 7.15 The final notes of the Meeting with GOSE had been altered from the draft, as they could have been misinterpreted, as the breadth of the issues relating to the recession had not been discussed.
- 7.16 **GOSE** encouraged the Council to do all that they could to help the Inspector in order to progress the CS. It wasn't helpful to have the CS in limbo – the evidence base would become stale, and development needed to be brought forward. The Council must satisfy themselves regarding any legal requirements in terms of SEA Regulations; the plan should be legally "bombproof". CSs had been found sound in advance of an RSS, eg Horsham and Crawley. GOSE suggested proceeding with the best evidence base at the time, including contingencies if possible. If there were a seismic shift, then this would trigger an early review or alteration to the CS. They couldn't comment on NG, but the housing/employment balance was a matter of judgement for the Inspector.
- 7.17 **Peter Thompson** referred to an email from PINS to GOSE (received under FOI), which stated that CLG legal advice was that there were big risks involved. However the Council were still advocating progressing the CS.
- 7.18 Although the Inspector was aware of the email the City Council were not. (This email has subsequently been added to the list of core documents on the Council's website, at CD16/70)
- 7.19 **SEEPB** confirmed that the CS was in general conformity with the South East Plan RSS as finally approved. They also thought that deletion of references to the SOSDA from the CS would probably be in general conformity with the South East Plan. as amended following the legal challenges. SEEPB pointed out that in terms of general conformity, PPS11 talked of "significant harm" to the strategy of the RSS. The RSS allocated 8000 houses for Oxford and they were making provision for this. In terms of the housing/employment balance, the Inspector would need to look at this in terms of if it was "significant".
- 7.20 **Oxfordshire County Council** thought that the CS could progress. They had maintained that as the SOSDA was outside the City, the CS should limit its references to text. The County Council would be concerned about transport and infrastructure issues of any new strategic site. If there were to be additional housing at NG then there would be education capacity issues, and a possible need for a one-form entry primary school. The County had not undertaken any work on alternative sites.

- 7.21 **South Oxfordshire District Council** felt that the CS could be progressed, subject to all references to the SOSDA being deleted, this would then be consistent with the Consent Order. They didn't want a "What if" scenario included, as there could be many options. SODC would like to see a further examination of the housing/employment balance. They intended to take their draft CS to full Cabinet in April, there would be no reference to the SOSDA in the CS.
- 7.22 **The Vale of White Horse District Council** had concerns about the housing/employment balance, but felt that this could be discussed at the future hearing sessions.
- 7.23 **Northern Gateway Consortium** (NGC) said that the CS was in general conformity with the RSS and SEEPB had confirmed this. They agreed with GOSE that CSs could be adopted ahead of the RSS, they thought that 12 CSs had been adopted. An adopted SE Plan was not a requirement to advancing the CS. The question was, whether in deleting the SOSDA was the CS still in general conformity with the South East Plan. NGC believed that it was – it met the 8000 housing allocation; it delivered valued growth, and in terms of the housing/employment balance – low employment growth improved the balance slightly and high employment growth did nothing to worsen the situation. Would the delay lead to the CS being more or less sound, or just unsound? The implications for the delay for the NG would be that there would need to be a substantive update of the evidence base, there would be a policy and deliverability vacuum, local stakeholders wished to see certainty. If the hearings were resumed then the AAP would be in alignment with Access to Oxford Strategy, if there were further delays it could come out of alignment quite quickly, with infrastructure and investment difficulties. NGC thought there should be a full 6 week consultation. The further hearings should focus only on the proposed changes. SOSDA should be mentioned as possibly coming forward, as recommended by the Inspector examining the Ashford CS. Oxford City should not be committed to identifying alternatives to the SOSDA; there should be a cross-boundary study in the second half of the plan period post 2016. They acknowledged the legitimate public concerns about mix, quantum and phasing of NG, but CS did give sufficient detail, and more detail would be in the AAP. However the NGC might be able to bring more detail on how to improve the housing/employment balance to any future hearing.
- 7.24 **GOSE** cautioned about inserting a form of words, which put an onus on another local authority to a particular course of action.

- 7.25 The Inspector referred to the PINS Procedure Guidance and explained that substantive changes should not be made to a CS, as it could become a very different document to that originally proposed.
- 7.26 **Peter Thompson** stated that there was certainty in the adopted Local Plan; that progressing the CS could introduce risk, making things less certain. Phasing was an irrelevance, it was dependant on economics.
- 7.27 **Engage** didn't want the process hurried, but rather wanted it carried out properly. They urged the City Council to talk to the residents.
- 7.28 **Nicola Blackwood** said that no-one wanted an unsound CS. She asked that the Council come up with something that would help North Oxford, they should delete the NG, but if not deleted they should apply hard and fast rules on phasing. The Council should take the best legal advice that they could, so that they knew they were on a firm footing. The fullest consultation possible should be undertaken, in simple language. The South East Plan would be abolished if the Conservatives were elected.
- 7.29 **Magdalen College/Thames Water Property** said that there were significant uncertainties. The East of England plan was informative, for a "what if" scenario. The SOSDA could remain if there was an adequate SEA – but this is not known.
- 7.30 **SEEDA** agreed that the City Council should seek advice from Counsel.
- 7.31 **Southfield Golf Club** said that the Club acted as a green lung. There had been 3 years of exhaustive consultation and the opportunity was available to bring this to a close. Progress should be made, the CS should be found sound and an early review recommended. This would allow the Club to move forward, a Statement of Common Ground was agreed with the City prior to the examination.
- 7.32 The **Highways Agency** felt less positive as a result of discussions at the Meeting. There were so many imponderables. If the 4000 houses were to be small scale developments, near junctions, this could have a disproportionate impact on the network; figures on traffic generation should be included in the debate. "Too many imponderables on shifting sands".
- 7.33 **Mr Feeney** thought that there was no way forward, as the CS was fundamentally unsound. He also urged the Inspector to publish Inspector Fenton's report.

- 7.34 **Peter Thompson** said that there was a lack of transparency. Consultation included taking account of people's views. The Council were under pressure from NGC to progress as soon as possible. He was concerned about the way in which Mr Pratt would have regard to the findings of Mr Fenton. Mr Fenton's report should be made public.
- 7.35 The Inspector confirmed that he had not had any correspondence from the Treasury Solicitor. He said that any legal advice he may have received was privileged information and inconclusive. He confirmed that PINS had determined that "the public interest in the prompt and proper conclusion of the examination, with the report released once it had been fully completed, is considered to outweigh the public interest in disclosure of an incomplete report"; PINS had withheld the report prepared by Mr Fenton under Regulation 12(4)(d) of the Environmental Information Regulations 2004.
- 7.36 **Councillor Young** was dismayed not to see Mr Fenton's report. She thought that it was inappropriate for Oxford to be a diamond for investment and growth area. The NG should also be deleted, more housing was needed, not employment.
- 7.37 **Councillor Gotch** was concerned about the delays in deliverability of the strategy, not just for housing and NG. The issues of traffic should be dealt with, before any housing was allowed at NG. Consultation had been carried out by the Council, but it had been done badly, there was a need to inspire public participation.
- 7.38 **Councillor Goddard** thought that the omission of the SOSDA must be considered as significant, if it wasn't, why was there a risk of a legal challenge if the examination was progressed. It was very risky to deem the CS in general conformity; there was no up to date employment data, which took account of the recession. The NGC said that people were looking for certainty, however there had been no uncertainty prior to the NG proposal.
- 7.39 **Friends of Warneford Meadow** agreed with Peter Thompson and Councillor Goddard. Initially they had supported Headington and St Clements Residents' Association view, to await the outcome of the HCC. However they now thought that the CS should be declared unsound. There had been too many cumulative changes, which had resulted in the CS being a different document. Other reasons were - the legal challenges were a protracted process; there had been a lack of transparency; Mr Fenton's retirement had led to speculation and people did not understand the process.

- 7.40 **Headington and St Clements Residents' Association** were concerned that there was so much uncertainty about what could happen to the SOSDA and the 4000 houses, and the affect that this may have on the CS and those of the other districts. It was not just the housing/employment balance to be considered, but also the geographical balance. They were concerned that Cherwell District Council were not at the Meeting.
- 7.41 **Wolvercote Commoners Committee** also thought that given the proximity of NG to Bicester and Kidlington, Cherwell District Council should have attended the Meeting. There was also no-one present from the emergency services. There had been no consultation in the NG area. Housing was needed, but NG should be deleted.
- 7.42 **Horspath Parish Council** had sought legal advice, and had concluded that it was unsafe to proceed. They suggested a postponement until 1 June, so at least the outcome of the general election would be known, and what national planning policy was likely to be.
- 7.43 **Oxford Green Belt Network** (Mr Scargill) were not trying to block progress. Could the City Council give reassurances on 2 points – whether the CS could go ahead without SOSDA, with no pressure to revive interest in it, and that there would not be any extra pressure put on Green Belt land, or valued open space in the City. If they could not give these assurances then should not proceed.
- 7.44 **Oxfordshire Green Party** said that the Council control could change in May, and that there seemed to be an eagerness to push things through. Oxford should be considered as a small market town rather than a City. There were too many uncertainties to progress.
- 7.45 **Elizabeth Blackwood** (on behalf of Nicola Blackwood) wondered if the City Council had brought pressure on PINS not to release the Inspector's report.
- 7.46 **Rosemary Harris** said that it was unacceptable to wait until June for the reconvened sessions. She thought that the CS should be started from scratch, with proper consultation. The CS was currently unsound and should be withdrawn.
- 7.47 **ENGAGE** represented around 1000 people. They were keen to see the legal advice that Mr Fenton based his decision on to suspend the examination. Guidance from PINS said that CSs should look at critical issues, these had not been identified. Oxford Business Park was a

wasteland, it was owned by one of the members of the NGC, why was more employment development needed. There had been a failure in the consultation process; no use had been made of local knowledge. The officers were working towards a political vision for Oxford, but this was not the agenda for the people of Oxford. The process could continue with substantial changes, or it could be found unsound now. The Council should come back in September with a re-written CS, and carry out meaningful consultation.

7.48 **CPRE** asserted that the essence of a strategy was that it was an entirety, without bits taken out. The CS pre-dated the current economic climate. If it did wait until the conclusion of the legal challenges, then the evidence would be out of date, the CS had to be found unsound.

7.49 **Mr Feeney** said that Mr Fenton's report should be published, and it was incorrect to say that it was incomplete. He also raised questions about the validity of the Sustainability Appraisal.

7.50 The Inspector said that the City Council's view was that the deletion of the SOSDA wouldn't affect the strategy in the CS. In that context he thought the key issue was whether the deletion of SOSDA or its failure to come forward within the plan period would fundamentally affect the strategy in the CS, particularly in terms of –

1. The housing/employment balance (including the basis for the figures used);
2. The overall provision of housing/employment development;
3. The implications for the NG (possibly other sites) including the scale, nature, mix, extent and phasing of land-uses, particularly housing and employment ;
4. The implications on the regeneration and development of Blackbird Leys and Cowley Centre;
5. The issue of general conformity with the South East Plan RSS following the legal challenges;
6. In relation to the 4000 dwellings originally allocated to the SOSDA– what happens to them, where would they be accommodated;
7. Possible policy review to accommodate this housing in Central Oxfordshire, and the possible need to review the Green Belt around Oxford;
8. The need for any contingency arrangements to be included in the CS;
9. The issue of the need for any further consultation and sustainability work.

7.51 The Inspector did not want to recommend a course of action to the Council, but there were serious issues to consider before the examination

could proceed. There were strong views on the issue of consultation, Mr Fenton had taken a flexible approach and had allowed additional representations at the hearing sessions. There was work to be done by the Council, in the context of timely and efficient progress.

- 7.52 The **City Council** would want to reflect on the discussions at the Meeting, but there were two important issues: the SOSDA and employment. When looking at whether the CS was sound, it was necessary to consider the whole population of Oxford. The CS was the broad strategy for all of the issues facing Oxford. The CS was more than NG. Much work had been undertaken in preparing the evidence base, lots of good work had been done with communities; we should not forget there had been 4 years of hard work.
- 7.53 As regards employment, during the recession the unemployment claimants at Oxford Job Centre Plus had increased by almost 3,000, the Council were seeking to diversify Oxford's employment base. They thought that north of Oxford was a good location for a new employment site, as at the moment there is no significant employment land in this part of the City.
- 7.54 The Council's Consultation Statement set out the various stages of consultation that had been undertaken, including public Meetings in the localities.
- 7.55 Deleting the SOSDA still left the 4000 houses. The position would be clearer when the legal challenges to the South East Plan were concluded, but the Council wanted to progress the CS and could bring forward an amendment if necessary.
- 7.56 There were mechanisms for joint working with neighbouring authorities and Meetings were held with them.
- 7.57 The Council urged the Inspector not to hold up the examination process, the housing/employment balance could be subject for a future hearing. The extent and phasing of the NG, could also be discussed.
- 7.58 The deletion of the SOSDA would have implications for the regeneration of Blackbird Leys and Greater Leys, where the Council was hoping for benefits from SOSDA. However work was progressing on the regeneration of this area, including a Regeneration Action Plan. Cowley Centre was to be enhanced. SOSDA would have been a boost to these proposals and help to maximise its benefits to Oxford City.

- 7.59 SEEPB's comments had been helpful in relation to general conformity. Using GOSE's term of ratio, rather than balance, the Council felt in terms of housing/employment this could be maintained. There were yearly changes to the employment figures, but they had kept the same baseline to compare like with like.
- 7.60 At the examination, more than Class B1 use had been looked at; all employment across the City, including hospitals, the two universities and retail.
- 7.61 The Council asked that the Inspector consider all the information and look at the bigger picture, and said that it was very important to have an adopted CS, so the examination should be continued and completed.
- 7.62 They considered that there was no need for any new areas of work. They would seek counsel's advice, produce a list of changes and if there were any environmental impacts they would produce a statement to cover them. They thought that this could all be completed in a matter of weeks, rather than months.
- 7.63 The Inspector asked the City Council to provide a suggested timetable and programme, including any further work, by 19 February 2010, which he could consider when deciding whether to proceed with the examination.
- 7.64 The Inspector thanked all those that had attended and participated at the Meeting and closed the Meeting at 5.30pm.

**HW/SJP**

## Appendix 1

### List of Participants

Oxford City Council	Mark Jaggard and Adrian Roche
GOSE	David Paine
SEEPB	Sue Janota
Oxfordshire CC	Laura Peacock
South Oxfordshire DC	Gill Oliver
Vale of White Horse DC	Peter Williams
Northern Gateway Consortium	Kevin Dixon and Robin Moxon
Oxford Brookes University	John Ashton
Magdalen College/Thames Water Property	David Jackson
SEEDA	Jane Griffin
Highways Agency	Anthony Powell
Southfield Golf Club	Ray Davies
Elizabeth Gillespie (SODC Councillor)	
Sean Feeney	
Mike Gotch (Oxford City Councillor)	
Stuart McCready (Oxford City Councillor)	
John Goddard (Oxford City Councillor)	
Friends of Warneford Meadow	Sietske Boeles
Headington & St Clements Residents' Assoc.	Tony Joyce
Wolvercote Commoners Committee	Angie Goff
Horspath Parish Council	Martin Harris
Oxford Green Belt Network	Ian Scargill
Oxfordshire Green Party	Elise Benjamin
Nicola Blackwood	
Evan Harris MP	
ENGAGE	Jonathan Gittos
CPRE	Michael Tyce and Christopher Gowers
Peter Thompson	