

# FURTHER STATEMENT



## Examination into the soundness of the Oxford Local Plan 2036

### Further Statement on behalf of The Oxford Science Park in response to Matter 6: Specific Sites

7 November 2019

This Statement is submitted on behalf of The Oxford Science Park to request further changes to Policy SP10: The Oxford Science Park following changes to Policy SP10 published in the Main Modifications (October 2019). In accordance with the provisions of Section 20(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 1990 (as amended), The Oxford Science Park requests the Inspectors use their discretion<sup>1</sup> to accept and consider this Further Statement.

#### BACKGROUND

On 21 December 2018, Savills submitted representations to the Oxford Local Plan 2035 (the draft Plan) on behalf of The Oxford Science Park. These representations provide further information on the highly valuable contribution made by The Oxford Science Park to the Life Sciences Industrial Strategy and comprises the location of choice for life sciences in the City and arguably the County. It has a rich and diverse commercial ecosystem, with access to academia and purist research that is unrivalled in Oxford.

Over 2,700 people work at The Oxford Science Park in over 135 companies, ranging from start-ups to SMEs and multi-national organisations. Of these, 40% are bioscience companies, 30% are computer hardware and software companies, with support services and other sectors making up the remaining 30%. Occupiers are active across a range of therapeutic areas and technologies and several are experts in cancer treatment and artificial intelligence, with clusters in these areas developing on The Oxford Science Park.

A planning application for a 19,800sqm Class B1 office building on Plot 16, adjacent to the site of the future train station on the Cowley Branch Line, is currently pending determination by Oxford City Council and presents the latest phase in investment at The Oxford Science Park.

#### FURTHER STATEMENT

The Main Modifications provide the following change to Policy SP10 *“opportunities should be sought to enhance and promote more sustainable travel modes to and from the park”*.

The Oxford Science Park requests that the supporting paragraph 9.84 be changed as follows (additions in **bold** and deletions shown ~~struck-through~~):

*“Access to the site is heavily dependent upon the private car. **Opportunities to enhance transport links to the site to provide an alternatives from to the private car will be encouraged.** This will include ensuring that any opportunities to re-open the Cowley Branch Line is pursued and ~~supporting the County Council’s~~ **measures to improve bus services to the Eastern Arc.** These alternative transport opportunities will increase sustainability and reduce **the** need for cars.”*

The Oxford Science Park welcomes the removal of the policy requirement for a net reduction in parking, however the draft Plan remains unsound due to the definition of “more sustainable travel modes” provided in the supporting paragraph to the Policy.

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<sup>1</sup> Procedure Guide for Local Plan Examinations, June 2019

No evidence is provided in the draft Plan of the proposed design and timescale for delivery of either the Cowley Branch Line or Oxfordshire County Council's bus rapid transit service.

In the absence of this evidence, The Oxford Science Park has made a substantial capital investment into The Oxford Bus Company's PickMeUp (PMU) service and provides a voluntary subsidy to support the 3A bus service to provide immediate improvement to sustainable travel modes to and from The Oxford Science Park.

Oxford Bus Company (OBC) investigated the possibility of a conventional bus route advocated by Oxfordshire County Council, but concluded this is unlikely to achieve long term commercial viability due to the challenges in achieving an optimal mix between destinations, journey times and coverage. This led to OBC investigating the possibilities offered by a demand-responsive, flexible bus service and the establishment of PMU in response to an absence of there being any credible public transport solution for the Eastern Arc. OBC determined that PMU has the possibility of achieving commercial viability in the medium term, particularly with support from the business community. The Oxford Science Park is the inaugural major capital partner and has invested significant funds and resources to the promotion of PMU. TripAdvisor, Vaccitech, Sensyne Health and SFA Oxford are signed up to the service.

Oxford City Council support PMU. The role of PMU was acknowledged as meeting the objectives of the public transport obligations required by the s.106 Agreement for the Schrodinger Building (App Ref: 16/01945/FUL). Tom Bridgman wrote to The Oxford Science Park on 26 July 2019 and confirmed support for PMU stating:

*"The work you have done with regards to the Oxford Bus Company's demand responsive 'Pick Me Up' service is excellent. I also think it is a good example of us working together through the S106 process. I hope it can continue to be supported, but also think it has to be viewed as part of a suite of measures to help reduce single car journeys."*

Government recognises the role of on-demand bus services. Sajid Javid announced a pledge for a funding package of £220 million for public transport and buses, of which £20 million is for new "on demand" responsive measures cited as the future (30 September 2019). OBC hopes to secure DfT funding for PMU in due course, but the announcement from Government indicates the direction of travel and future role of on demand bus services. With The Oxford Science Park's support, OBC and PMU is at the vanguard of this.

We consider the amendment to paragraph 9.84 requested above is required for the Plan to achieve its objective of delivering sustainable development and to meet the requirements of NPPF paragraph 11a) for the Plan to meet the development needs of the area and be sufficiently flexible to adapt to rapid change. It is also wholly in accordance with NPPF paragraphs 102-104, by enabling a "*genuine choice of transport options*".

Without this requested change, development at The Oxford Science Park could be subject to delay given uncertainty on the delivery of the Cowley Branch Line and Oxfordshire County Council's bus rapid transit service. Such delay is contrary to the objectives of the Life Sciences Industrial Strategy and development plan policy to deliver sustainable economic development, but is a situation that has arisen on the current application at Plot 16 (referred to above).

The Oxford Science Park recognises the importance of the need to plan for climate change. Policy RE1 'Sustainable Design and Construction' requires all non-residential development to achieve BREEAM excellent standard (or recognised equivalent standard methodology) and at least a 40% reduction in carbon emissions. This Policy has significant implications for buildings at The Oxford Science Park, particularly where there are specialist building requirements.

The Oxford Science Park requests the Plan acknowledge this by requiring development determined under Policy SP10 to achieve at least a 35% reduction in carbon emissions. This target is consistent with planning policy elsewhere, including the consolidated draft London Plan (2019).

## REQUESTED CHANGES

The Oxford Science Park requests the Inspectors consider the following changes to the Local Plan (additions in **bold** and deletions shown ~~struck-through~~).

Policy SP10: The Oxford Science Park (Littlemore & Minchery Farm)

*“Planning permission will be granted for B1 employment uses that directly relate to Oxford’s key sectors of research led employment at Oxford Science Park. ~~Planning permission will not be granted for any other uses.~~ Development should be designed to enhance the external appearance of the science park and to optimise opportunities to enhance the landscape and provide attractive public open space for the occupants. The re-opening of the Cowley Branch Line will provide a realistic alternative to the private car for gaining access to the science park.*

*Opportunities should be sought to enhance and promote more sustainable travel modes to and from the park.*

***Development should be designed having regard to the design and construction principles set out at Policy RE1 Sustainable Design and Construction, subject to achieving at least a 35% reduction in carbon emissions compared with a 2013 Building Regulations (or future equivalent legislation) compliant base case or alternative base case.***

*A buffer should be retained along the railway corridor to allow for the movement of the protected species.*

*Development should not have an adverse impact upon the wildlife corridor or any archaeological remains.”*

Paragraph 9.84:

*“Access to the site is heavily dependent upon the private car. Opportunities to enhance transport links to the site to provide ~~an alternatives from~~ **to** the private car will be encouraged. This will include ensuring that any opportunities to re-open the Cowley Branch Line is pursued and ~~supporting the County Council’s~~ measures to improve bus services to the Eastern Arc. These alternative transport opportunities will increase sustainability and reduce ~~the~~ need for cars.”*

In relation to reduction in carbon emissions, the inclusion of an ‘alternative base case’ within the wording of Policy SP10 will allow future development at The Oxford Science Park to be assessed against a comprehensive site wide energy strategy. This strategy would encourage carbon emission reductions across The Oxford Science Park as it will consider projected emissions reductions based upon future carbon performance of fuel sources. This approach will enable a more representative appraisal of the sustainability performance of The Oxford Science Park as a whole instead of a static analysis of each new building within the Park in isolation against Policy RE1 at the design stage.

Savills, November 2019