

**Statement of Common Ground between Oxford City Council,
and Network Rail**

Submission Draft (Regulation 19) Oxford Local Plan 2045

May 2026

1.0 Introduction

1.1 This Statement of Common Ground (SoCG) has been prepared between Oxford City Council and Network Rail to support the production of the Oxford Local Plan 2045. The SoCG reflects and confirms the current position as agreed by the two parties in relation to issues of soundness and maintaining effective cooperation.

1.2 Oxford City Council is producing a new Local Plan covering the period 2025-2045. The SoCG reflects the latest position agreed by the parties and is provided without prejudice to other matters that the parties may wish to raise. The area covered by the Statement is Oxford, which is the area covered by the Oxford Local Plan 2045. Where matters arise that are cross-boundary, the Council is also working with its neighbouring local authorities and other SoCGs have been prepared on cross boundary matters.

2.0 Background and Maintaining Effective Cooperation

2.1 The Local Plan 2045 has been prepared within a changing strategic national context. The legal Duty to Cooperate test was revoked on 25 March 2026 and has been replaced by a policy test whereby plan-making authorities now should demonstrate “effective cooperation”.

2.2 Network Rail is a statutory undertaker responsible for maintaining and operating the country’s railway infrastructure and associated estate. Network Rail owns, operates, maintains and develops the main rail network. This includes the railway tracks, stations, signalling systems, bridges, tunnels, level crossings and viaducts. Network Rail are key stakeholders for the Council to work with, with regards to maintaining effective cooperation on the new Oxford Local Plan 2045.

2.3 Oxford City Council and Network Rail have been engaging throughout the formulation of the Local Plan 2045. Network Rail have provided feedback at key stages of the Local Plan preparation process, including the Preferred Options consultation (2025), and the Proposed Submission Draft Local Plan Regulation 19 consultation (2026). The relevant consultation summary reports detail summaries of this feedback. The parties have also engaged with each other at key points outside of the formal consultation cycle via virtual meetings to discuss the policy-shaping and supporting evidence, and to collaborate seeking to resolve areas of disagreement wherever possible.

2.4 The Proposed Submission Draft Local Plan Regulation 19 consultation (hereafter “*the Reg. 19 consultation*”) saw Oxford City Council publish its full Local Plan and supporting evidence base which it proposed to submit for examination to Central Government in June 2026. As per the relevant legislation/regulations, this version of the Oxford Local Plan 2045 was one that the City Council considered to be ‘sound’ for adoption, meeting the specific requirements for soundness as are outlined in the National Planning Policy Framework. In response to the Reg. 19 consultation, Network Rail provided

feedback on relevant strategic policies and site allocations, and key evidence base documents (including the Infrastructure Delivery Plan).

2.5 Following the end of the Reg. 19 consultation on 13 March 2026, Oxford City Council met Network Rail to discuss their response and to try and find a way forward in relation to the issues identified within the Local Plan and supporting evidence. This meeting took place on 30 March 2026.

2.6 At the meeting on 30 March 2026, officers from Oxford City Council and Network Rail discussed Network Rail's comments on the strategic policies and site allocations, with a view to finding common ground. Both parties agreed that while some minor modifications to some of the site allocations policies would be appropriate, Network Rail had no fundamental or significant concerns with either the plan itself or its supporting evidence, including the Infrastructure Delivery Plan.

3.0 Strategic matters

3.1 A range of comments and suggestions were put forward by Network Rail in relation to the policies of the Local Plan. Network Rail's comments could be broadly categorised into several themes, which included the Agent of Change principle, ensuring that an appropriate 'rail infrastructure narrative' was included within the plan, rail freight, and concerns about possible future policy conflicts between Oxford's environmental and heritage policies and the need to deliver rail infrastructure. Network Rail also made comments in relation to the East West Rail Safeguarding Direction (Policy I2 – Safeguarding Land for Infrastructure). The table presented at Appendix A sets out the specific feedback received against each policy and any proposed amendments the parties have agreed. Where no changes have been proposed to policies, Appendix B also sets out whether Network Rail, either agree, or disagree with each response.

3.2 Network Rail highlighted several site allocations proposing residential development located close to the Railway. Other site allocations containing residential development that are located near an existing noise source, cross-refer to Policy R8, which would apply in any case. In order to ensure a consistent approach within the plan, some minor amendments have been agreed to certain site allocation policies near the railway, to identify within the site allocation policies that Policy R8 would apply, and to set out what information would be required from landowners/developers.

3.3 Network Rail have confirmed that the SHLAA delivery schedule at Appendix A is correct with the caveat that delivery could potentially roll over into the next 5 year bracket.

4.0 Concluding remarks/ areas of agreement

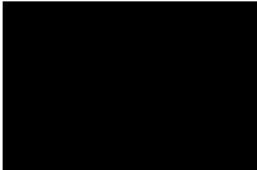
4.1 Oxford City Council and Network Rail have worked together throughout the Oxford Local Plan 2045 production process and when the parties met in March 2026. The discussions have been productive, and the City Council is appreciative of the feedback provided by Network Rail.

4.2 The two parties agree that the changes and responses set out in Appendix B address Network Rail's concerns and/or resolve any queries raised in relation to the strategic policies and site allocations of the Local Plan.

4.3 The parties agree to continue to work together to deliver a sound plan within the timescales available.

Signed on behalf of Network Rail

Colin Field

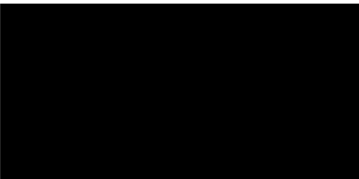


Title – Town Planning and Heritage Manager

Date: 21/05/26

Signed on behalf of Oxford City Council

David Butler



Title – Director of Planning and Regulation

Date: 22/05/2026

Appendix A – SHLAA Delivery Table for Policy SPCW9: Oxford Railway Station and Becket St Car Park

Site name	Oxford Railway Station and Becket Street Car Park			
Site allocation reference in OLP2045	SPCW9			
SHLAA reference	075a and 075b			
Minimum number of dwellings in OLP2045 policy (if applicable)	52			
Delivery estimate	Years 1-5 2025/26-2029/30	Years 6-10 2030/31- 2034/35	Years 11-15 2035/36- 2039/40	Years 16-20 2040+
	0	52		0
Current planning status	Existing (LP2036) and emerging (LP2045) site allocation			

Appendix B – Network Rail Reg 19 Feedback and Oxford City Council responses

Table B.1: Network Rail Reg. 19 representations and City Council responses

Policy/ para	Summary of Representation	Oxford City Council Response	Change proposed	Network Rail 's position
Policy S1: Spatial Strategy	<u>Support for Spatial Strategy</u> Network Rail supports the Local Plan Spatial Strategy, notably the reference that seeks to locate development in areas well served and close to public transport, including rail. <u>Detailed comments re: Criterion f)</u> Aimed criterion f) as follows: <i>f) Ensure new uses are in locations where they will not harm the amenity <u>or operation</u> of existing neighbouring uses.</i> This will help to ensure that development, including residential uses, close to the railway does not restrict existing or likely future operational rail requirements in line with the 'agent of change' principle established in Paragraph 200 of the NPPF.	<u>Support for Spatial Strategy</u> Support noted <u>Detailed comments re: Criterion f)</u> Paragraph 200 of the NPPF establishes the 'Agent of Change; principle. While Policy R8 - Amenity Impacts of Development and its supporting text does embody the Agent of Change principle within the plan itself, we do acknowledge that bullet point f) of the Spatial Strategy could also refer to the continued operation of existing neighbouring uses as well as their amenity. As such, a modification is proposed to criterion f) of Policy S1.	<u>Support for Spatial strategy</u> No change proposed <u>Detailed comments re: Criterion f)</u> Insert the following words into criterion f) <i>f) Ensure new uses are in locations where they will not harm the amenity <u>or continued operation</u> of existing neighbouring uses;</i>	<u>Support for Spatial Strategy</u> n/a - support <u>Detailed comments re: Criterion f)</u> <i>Common ground reached. This representation has been satisfactorily addressed.</i>
Policy S3: Infrastructure Delivery in New Development	<u>Support for Policy S3</u> We welcome the Plan's recognition of the critical role of rail in supporting sustainable growth, particularly through the	<u>Support for Policy S3</u> Support Noted <u>Rail infrastructure narrative within the Plan</u>	<u>Support for Policy S3</u> No change proposed <u>Rail infrastructure narrative within the Plan</u>	<u>Support for Policy S3</u> n/a - support

Policy/ para	Summary of Representation	Oxford City Council Response	Change proposed	Network Rail 's position
	safeguarding of land for East West Rail, improvements to Oxford Station, and the reopening of the Cowley Branch Line (Policy S3). Network Rail supports the intent of Policy S3 which outlines how the Council will work with infrastructure providers to support the delivery of infrastructure. <u>Rail infrastructure narrative within the Plan</u> A key concern is that the rail infrastructure narrative as set out within the Oxford Local Plan 2045 appears to stop at the completion of currently defined schemes (notably East West Rail Phase 2 and Cowley Plus), despite the Plan itself clearly anticipating continued population, employment and visitor growth beyond these interventions. The supporting text refers to longer-term growth pressures and endorses initiatives such as OxRail 2040, yet the implications of this ambition for rail infrastructure within Oxford are not fully articulated.	The (introductory) supporting text to the West End and Botley Road Area of Focus section of Chapter 8 (page 246, CSD001), highlights that the “transformation of Oxford Station is fundamental, not just to improve user experience, but to facilitate additional capacity to help deliver East West Rail and the re-opening of the Cowley Branch Line to passenger services”. Policy WEBRAOF bullet point k) in the infrastructure section of the policy includes a direct reference to OxRail 2040: Plan for Rail (see page 248, CSD001) While the Local Plan 2045 captures the most important rail infrastructure projects, the Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) includes a range of infrastructure projects that have been identified by stakeholders as being required to support the plan’s delivery. The IDP represents a snapshot in time and is updated	No change proposed <u>Supporting growth beyond the mid-2030s</u> No change proposed <u>Future enhancements</u> No change proposed	<u>Rail infrastructure narrative within the Plan</u> <i>Common ground reached. This representation has been satisfactorily addressed.</i> <u>Supporting growth beyond the mid-2030s</u> <i>Common ground reached. This representation has been satisfactorily addressed.</i> <u>Future enhancements</u> <i>Common ground reached. This representation has been satisfactorily addressed.</i>

Policy/ para	Summary of Representation	Oxford City Council Response	Change proposed	Network Rail 's position
	While it is understood that this Local Plan is not the appropriate document for detailed station masterplans or full route alignments, there is a notable absence of acknowledgement that further rail capacity enhancements within Oxford will be required beyond currently committed schemes. Given repeated engagement with both City and County Councils on the constraints of the existing rail corridor and station capacity, this omission risks creating a strategic disconnect between growth aspirations and infrastructure realism. We consider it important that the Plan explicitly recognises that: <u>Supporting growth beyond the mid-2030s</u> Supporting growth beyond the mid-2030s will require additional rail infrastructure interventions within Oxford itself, not solely at its periphery. <u>Future enhancements</u>	throughout the plan-making process. This is to ensure that it captures the most up-to-date infrastructure projects. If Network Rail considers there are any specific infrastructure projects that should be included and are not, these can be added to the delivery schedule when the IDP is next updated. <u>Supporting growth beyond mid-2030s</u> The County Council's adopted Rail Plan - OxRail 2040 supports wider rail-related growth in the county. Oxford's Local Plan 2045 makes appropriate references to OxRail 2040. There is no need to duplicate its contents. The City and County have worked and continue to work closely on rail-related plans. In the specific example, city and county colleagues worked closely to ensure an appropriate level of coverage commensurate to each respective document was contained within it. Discussions have been on-going since 2021 about re: the Oxford Station redevelopment and the city's		

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	• Future enhancements may necessitate changes to existing rail alignments, junctions, station layouts and operational land, some of which could have implications for land use, heritage assets and environmental designations. These requirements should be acknowledged now to avoid future conflicts with policies that otherwise seek to constrain development in sensitive locations.	Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) appropriately references known publicly available delivery timescales. <u>Future enhancements</u> Where future enhancements require planning permission, these will need to be assessed against, the Policies in the Plan as a whole. Finally, it is worth noting that (introductory) supporting text for the West End and Botley Road Area of Focus highlights that “there is likely to be a degree of tension in delivering development that protects and enhances Oxford’s iconic dreaming spires and the ambitions of delivering certain development types”.		
Policy WEBRAOF: West End and Botley Road Area of Focus	Network Rail supports the identification of the West End and Botley Road as an ‘Area of Focus’. However, we note that the Draft Local Plan no longer refers to the Area’s “significant opportunity to create high density urban living with good provision and access to open space and a vibrant mix of uses, and	The plan does refer to these aspects however, they are now set out as “key considerations for infrastructure and design across the wider Central and West Infrastructure Area, which contains two Areas of Focus – the University Areas North of the City Centre Area of Focus;	No change proposed	<i>Common ground reached. This representation has been satisfactorily addressed.</i>

Policy/ para	Summary of Representation	Oxford City Council Response	Change proposed	Network Rail 's position
	also to make a significant contribution to the knowledge economy." These qualities were previously set out as key reasons for designating this area as an Area of Focus, and we consider it important that future policy continues to acknowledge this potential and actively support the area in realising it.	and the West End and Botley Road Area of Focus. These exact phrases are now found in the (introductory) supporting text to the <i>Central and West Infrastructure Area</i> section of Chapter 8 of the Plan. (See page 242 of CSD001).		
Policy I2: Safeguarding Land for Infrastructure	<u>General comment</u> Policy I2 aims to safeguard the land required to deliver the specific strategic infrastructure schemes in the Plan to support their delivery. Notably, land has been safeguarded to deliver the East West Rail (Oxford) railway link. The East West Rail Safeguarding Directions (November 2025) confers specific requirements in relation to development proposals involving the land safeguarded for East West Rail (Oxford). <u>Latest operational requirements</u> Whilst the safeguarding of land is supported by Network Rail, the safeguarded boundary shown may not reflect the latest operational and construction requirements,	<u>General comment</u> General comment noted <u>Latest operational requirements</u> We have had separate discussions with EWR. We can update to inform the progression of EWR as the plan progresses. Any changes to the land contained within the EWR Project that take place while the Oxford Local Plan 2045 is being progressed can be updated. Policy I2 already sets out the following (bold text highlights future proofing within policy itself) <i>Planning permission involving land safeguarded for East West</i>	<u>General comment</u> No change proposed <u>Latest operational requirements</u> No change proposed <u>Re: construction compounds, etc.</u> No change proposed	<u>General comment</u> n/a - general comment <u>Latest operational requirements</u> <i>Common ground reached. This representation has been satisfactorily addressed.</i> <u>Re: construction compounds, etc.</u> <i>Common ground reached. This representation has been satisfactorily addressed.</i>

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	particularly given that East West Rail's safeguarding limits continue to evolve as the project progresses. <u>Re: construction compounds, etc.</u> The current safeguarding boundary may not fully account for temporary and permanent construction compounds, access arrangements, and ancillary infrastructure, and this is something that will need to be considered.	<i>Rail (Oxford) will not be granted until the East West Rail Company has been consulted and the procedure set out in the East West Rail Safeguarding Directions (or the requirements of any future equivalent or consenting legislation) has been followed.</i> <u>Re: construction compounds, etc.</u> We have consulted with EWR and they are content with the extent of the safeguarding.		
Policy 12 – Safeguarding Land for Infrastructure	There appears to be a potential land use conflict in the Oxford Parkway area, specifically involving agricultural land between the A34 and Oxford Parkway Station (postcode OX2 8JQ). The land is identified within the Plan as having development potential and is also understood to be of interest or potential importance to East West Rail for operational or construction-related purposes. Without clearer policy alignment, there is a risk that development proposals could come forward that	We have discussed the potential implications of site allocations within Oxford's administrative boundary which included land that is included within the provisions of the EWR Safeguarding Direction November 2025. In the area described in the representation from Network Rail, the nearest site allocation within Oxford city is SPN5 Pear Tree Farm. Where development sites that are allocated in Oxford city are impacted by the Safeguarding Direction, text has been	No change proposed	<i>Common ground reached. This representation has been satisfactorily addressed.</i>

Policy/ para	Summary of Representation	Oxford City Council Response	Change proposed	Network Rail 's position
	compromise rail infrastructure delivery, or that safeguarding requirements could undermine allocated development sites. This issue would benefit from clearer cross-referencing between site allocation policies and rail safeguarding policies to ensure consistency and certainty.	included both with Policy I2 and the relevant site allocation policy. It is worth noting that the Safeguarding Direction applies irrespective of whether there is a local development plan policy in place. It is also worth noting that policies contained within Oxford's Local Plan only apply within the city's administrative boundary.		
Policy WEBRAOF: West End and Botley Road Area of Focus	<u>Support for OxRail2040</u> The Plan's support for OxRail2040 is welcomed. <u>General comment</u> However, there is a possible conflict between the aspiration for OxRail2040 and some of the protections within the document. <u>Scale of service enhancement (OxRail 2040)</u> Delivering the scale of service enhancement associated with OxRail 2040 is likely to require increased railway land take in certain locations, potentially including areas currently within	<u>Support for OxRail2040</u> Support noted <u>General comment</u> General comment noted. <u>Scale of service enhancement (OxRail 2040)</u> OxRail 2040 recognises that the 'transformation' of Oxford Rail Station is a longer-term ambition (circa. 2037). Given the heritage significance of the location of the railway station, design considerations will be key to delivering a successful scheme	<u>Support for OxRail2040</u> No change proposed <u>General comment</u> No change proposed <u>Scale of service enhancement (OxRail 2040)</u> No change proposed	<u>Support for OxRail2040</u> n/a - support <u>General comment</u> n/a- general comment <u>Scale of service enhancement (OxRail 2040)</u> <i>Common ground reached. This representation has been satisfactorily addressed.</i>

Policy/ para	Summary of Representation	Oxford City Council Response	Change proposed	Network Rail 's position
	floodplain or protected environmental designations, as well as possible construction within Oxford's protected view cones including views of the historic skyline. While the protection of Oxford's landscape and heritage is fully recognised and supported, it is important that risk to future rail schemes necessary to deliver the Plan's growth and sustainability objectives are not conflicting with policy.	See response to Policy S3 for more details however it is important to re-iterate that where development proposals require planning permission, these will need to be assessed against, the Policies in the Plan as a whole.		
Omission Policy:	<u>Rail Freight</u> We strongly support a policy approach that protects existing rail freight facilities, infrastructure and operational capability within Oxford and its immediate areas. While the Plan safeguards land for East West Rail and other strategic infrastructure, it does not explicitly protect existing rail-served sites, sidings or rail freight access arrangements from being compromised by adjacent development.	<u>Rail Freight</u> Policy I2 specifically highlights infrastructure schemes which are delivered through consenting regimes that lie outside the Local Plan's jurisdiction. The purpose of the policy is not to safeguard existing facilities but rather to acknowledge that the two named infrastructure schemes (i.e., OFAS/ EWR Project) are coming forward in parallel with the Oxford Local Plan 2045. Any development proposals that are within 10m of existing	<u>Rail Freight</u> No change proposed	<u>Rail Freight</u> <i>Common ground reached. This representation has been satisfactorily addressed.</i>

Policy/ para	Summary of Representation	Oxford City Council Response	Change proposed	Network Rail 's position
	We recommend that the Plan acknowledges safeguarding of existing rail freight facilities and rail-served sites to ensure development does not prejudice their continued and future use.	railway infrastructure must consult NR and are advertised in a different way to standard planning applications. We consider these existing requirements to be sufficient.		
Policy SPCW9: Oxford Railway Station and Becket St Car Park	Network Rail are supportive of the works to Oxford Railway Station and proposed mixed use development for Becket Street Car Park with a number of residential, retail and commercial uses proposed. However, we believe the policy should also incorporate the need for education facilities and this should be reflected in the policy wording. Proposed Modifications to the first paragraph of Policy SPCW9 are set out below: <i>Planning permission will be granted for a new station and associated public realm alongside a mix of uses including residential and/ or student accommodation, employment and education uses (Use Class E), and complementary town centre uses including retail, cafés and evening economy uses, which activate ground floor frontages and help to create a vibrant city quarter.</i>	We do not accept the proposed inclusion of “education facilities” within the suite of named primary uses which are supported within this policy. Following a meeting with Network Rail and the City Council on 30 March 2026, Network Rail clarified that there may be an opportunity to bring forward some Use Class E(f) uses (e.g., day nursery), as complementary uses at the site. The City Council considers that the policy, as drafted, already enables complementary uses to come forward at the site. The final sentence in the third paragraph of the policy states: <i>“Other complementary uses will be assessed on their merits”.</i>	No change proposed	<i>Common ground reached. This representation has been satisfactorily addressed.</i>

Policy/ para	Summary of Representation	Oxford City Council Response	Change proposed	Network Rail 's position
		As such, there is no need to make a specific reference to Use Class E(f) uses within this policy.		
Policy SPCW2: Botley Road Sites around Cripsey Road including River Hotel and Westgate Hotel	With the potential inclusion of the western side of the station and the proposed allocations set out in SPCW2, consideration should be made for the subsequent impact of the proposals on one another. The proposal for residential development should consider the compatibility with the aspirations of the station's redevelopment.	The City Council acknowledges that this site is in close proximity to the railway and other potential noise sources. Given the site's location nearby to sources of noise, Policy R8 would apply. Where other sites are located near a potential noise source, this information is highlighted in other site allocation policies. Therefore, to ensure a consistent approach, a minor modification has been proposed (see "change proposed" column for details).	Create an additional heading in bold font under bullet point k) and then create an additional bullet point which states: <u>Additional requirements</u> <u>l) Due to the potential impacts of noise from a number of sources (including the railway), development proposals should be informed by an acoustic design statement that addresses the potential for significant environmental noise (Policy R8).</u>	<i>Common ground reached. This representation has been satisfactorily addressed.</i>
Policy SPCW7: Nuffield Sites	The parcel of land adjacent to Beckett Street which is identified within Policy SPCW7 lies opposite the station redevelopment allocation and can easily be impacted by the forthcoming proposals subject to what is proposed within the Nuffield site. Consideration within this policy should be made against the station redevelopment proposals.	The City Council acknowledges that part of the site (Land South of Frideswide Square) is in close proximity to the railway and other potential noise sources. Given the site's location nearby to sources of noise, Policy R8 would apply. Where other sites are located near a potential noise source, this information is	Create a new bullet point under the "additional requirements" heading which states: <u>r) Due to the potential impacts of noise from a number of sources (including the railway), development proposals should be informed by an</u>	<i>Common ground reached. This representation has been satisfactorily addressed.</i>

Policy/ para	Summary of Representation	Oxford City Council Response	Change proposed	Network Rail 's position
	The allocation allows a mix of uses across the three sites that delivers residential and/or student accommodation, employment uses, and appropriate other uses including retail, cafés/restaurants and other uses that support the evening economy. A minimum number of 59 dwellings (net gain) (or if delivered as student rooms, the equivalent number of rooms when the relevant ratio is applied). These could conflict with the Becket Street proposals on an amenity harm basis.	highlighted in other site allocation policies. Therefore, to ensure a consistent approach, a minor modification has been proposed (see “change proposed” column for details).	<u>acoustic design statement that addresses the potential for significant environmental noise (Policy R8).</u>	
Policy CBLOF: Cowley Branch Line Area of Focus	Network Rail welcomes the inclusion of the Cowley Branch proposal and policy to maximise development value in and around the two proposed stations. Network Rail supports the approach set out in this policy in favour of sustainable travel modes. NR notes that any offsite works will need to be promoted and delivered by the Local Authority. In order the proposed stations (as referenced in the policy) to be	Support noted.	No change proposed	n/a - support

Policy/ para	Summary of Representation	Oxford City Council Response	Change proposed	Network Rail 's position
	delivered, NR set out that Mallams footpath level crossing must be formally closed. It currently forms part of the PROW network, and the nearby Spring Lane Level Crossing requires upgrades as an alternative to Mallams (as part of the Cowley Branch project). The closure of these level crossings is acknowledged within the plan document which is supported by Network Rail.			