

The Local Plan 2045 will be used to ensure Oxford is a fairer, greener and healthier city

OXFORD LOCAL PLAN 2045

OXFORD CITY COUNCIL

Oxford City Council Response to Inspectors' Matters, Issues, and Questions

Matter 5: Site Allocations

Issue 4

Issue 4 – Northern Edge of Oxford Area of Focus

Q1 What is the justification for the suggested changes to Policy NEOAOF, as set out in Core Document CSD008? Why are they necessary for soundness?

Core Document CSD.008 is a list of minor (or additional) modifications that were identified at submission. These changes are of the nature of small typo and factual corrections. They are not changes necessary for soundness or that affect the application of policy in any way.

The criteria within Policy NEOAOF are considered to be both effective and consistent with national policy. However, the following modification is suggested to the supporting text for NEOAOF, to clarify that PR6c (Land at Frieze Farm) is not a housing site: It is reserved only for the potential construction of a golf course should this be required as the result of the residential development of Land to the West of Oxford Road under Policy PR6b (North Oxford Golf Course). This is not a soundness issue but a clarification, as follows:

The area adjoins several large housing allocation sites, which fall within Cherwell District (PR6a Land East of Oxford Road, and PR6b Land West of Oxford Road ~~and PR6c Land at Frieze Farm,~~) but nonetheless adjoin existing communities in Oxford...

A modification is also suggested to the policy wording of NEOAOF to clarify that any development within the AoF will be expected to support (and not undermine) the delivery of nearby sites PR6a, PR6b, PR7a and PR7b and not delay their delivery in meetings Oxford's housing needs. Amendment to bullet point f of Policy NEOAOF as follows:

f) Successful integration of new development into the existing built environment, consideration of longer-term potential for integration with unmet need sites in Cherwell (without harming their delivery) and enhanced facilities for both new and existing communities.

Both of these amends are to address queries raised by Cherwell District Council, see the Statement of Common Ground (COM.004). The addition to the text in criterion f is considered necessary for effectiveness.

A further modification is regarding criteria a) signposts a relevant document outside of the Local Plan: Oxfordshire County Council's Local Walking and Cycling Infrastructure Plan (LIV.009). To ensure that the plan is deliverable over the plan period, a modification is proposed to future-proof the plan and to ensure its effectiveness and ensure consistency with National Policy, the following modification is proposed to Policy NEOAOF:

Supporting active travel

a) Walking, cycling and wheeling infrastructure improvements ~~should be delivered in accordance with~~ should have regard to the requirements of the Oxford Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (or future equivalent).

Q2 Where reference is made to sites in Cherwell District, is it necessary for soundness to state that they are intended to help contribute towards Oxford's unmet housing needs (if that is the case)?

Oxford City Council has proactively engaged with Cherwell District Council through the preparation of the Oxford City Local Plan 2045 on relevant strategic cross boundary issues, including unmet housing need. We have an agreed position as set out in the Memorandum of Understanding (COM.003) that the Cherwell Local Plan includes site allocations which make provision for Oxford's Unmet Need. That MoU also states at paragraph 6.2 that "*Exactly how the unmet need is dealt with by the districts in new or emerging plans is a matter for each district…*" Whilst the Cherwell Local Plan is also currently at examination, the examination for the Oxford Local Plan is currently programmed to complete ahead of all the other Oxfordshire Local Plan examinations. Cherwell intends the PR sites which were adopted in their previous Local Plan Review to be saved through their emerging Local Plan Review. However at this time, the City Council considers that it has gone as far as is reasonable in our Local Plan in making the links with the emerging Cherwell Local Plan. There are numerous references to the Cherwell sites which lie just outside the city boundary for example to the need to consider physical links between them and the city so to ensure new residential communities form successful parts of Oxford.

The references to sites in Cherwell District contributing towards Oxford's unmet housing needs, is intended to highlight to landowners/developers that linkages with existing adjoining communities in Oxford are important. It is crucial to ensure good links and accessibility for people to move easily between these residential areas and the city, particularly as the homes will be helping to meet unmet housing needs from Oxford. Walking, cycling and wheeling improvements are essential to the success of the area to improve connectivity and permeability, to other parts of the city and/or to destinations in neighbouring districts of Cherwell.

In addition, the City Council has been engaging fully in the work to develop the emerging Cherwell Local Plan. Whilst the agreed position is that it is for the Cherwell Local Plan to consider exactly how the unmet need is dealt with, the City Council has an important voice in that debate and will continue to try and influence that process to secure the best outcome for the city and future residents of those homes.

SPN1 Diamond and Ewert Place

Q1 What is the current use of the site and how/when will it come forward for development? What evidence is there to indicate that the site is developable (as a whole) within the plan period for the uses proposed?

The site is in use as public car park, academic offices and a community centre. The site is currently allocated in the Oxford Local Plan 2036 as Policy SP6. The site is owned by Oxford City Council and University of Oxford, and the City Council retains an interest in developing the site for mixed-use, including residential. The site benefits from being in a sustainable district centre

location that is near to a range of amenities, and there are no insurmountable development constraints or infrastructure requirements (CAP.001).

The position as set out in HEA.008a (page 2) is substantively unchanged. Part of the site is in active use as examination halls and delivery timescales is dependent on the relocation of this. The landowners estimate delivery in period 2030/31 - 2034/35. The City Council's land may come forward before that in the University's ownership. The landowners University of Oxford and Oxford City Council re-confirmed intention to develop when contacted (2026) about site deliverability.

Q2 Is it sufficiently clear to users of the Plan what is required by criterion o), which states that "The City Council will seek to minimise public car parking on the site to a level that is reasonable to serve the area..."? Is the policy justified and effective?

The site includes a large amount of level open space, much of which is used as car parking to serve the shops on Banbury Road, the Ferry Leisure Centre and Ewert House. It is particularly busy in the daytime, with car movements in all directions making the place difficult to read and unpleasant to navigate. The car park is wholly owned and managed by the City Council. There are no indications that the site is surplus to requirements, and it is expected that car parking will be retained at some level post-development. The extant allocation policy includes similar requirements with respect to retaining a level of car parking on site as considered appropriate by the City Council – with wording very similar to what is contained in criterion o) of the policy in the 2045 Plan.

The policy does not include a minimum quantum of parking provision as determining this lies outside the remit of planning officers. A separate Council department sets the level of provision based on the assessed need depending on the location, and requirements for the provision at each individual car parking site is assessed based on their own metrics. They also make the determination as to whether surplus capacity exists. It is important that parking provision reflect the fact that there is excellent connectivity to the District Centre by public transport, walking and cycling, but it is also important that there are sufficient spaces that the vitality of the centre is not undermined.

Nevertheless, the current parking arrangements on the site are clearly inefficient, and re-development of the site provides an opportunity to reduce and better design parking more efficiently and safely within the site, in a sustainable district centre location that is already frequently served by public transport. The site allocation is for low car residential development and as such it is not expected that there would be additional parking or traffic pressure arising from a policy compliant scheme. It is also considered that the policy affords sufficient flexibility with respect to design that would allow a range of options to integrate on site public parking at a functional level.

A modification is suggested to add clarity about what is expected:

o) The City Council will seek to minimise public car parking on the site to a level that is reasonable to serve the area, bearing in mind the public transport connections and its location with a district centre. Supporting information justifying the proposed level of car parking spaces, including by demonstrating that it is set at a level reflective of the well-connected location, but that is sufficient to safeguard the vitality of the district centre, should accompany any application

SPN2 – Elsfield Hall

Q1 What is the current use of the site and how/when will it come forward for development? What evidence is there to indicate that the site is developable within the plan period for the uses proposed?

As set out in HEA.008a (page 3) the situation is substantively unchanged: The site is currently vacant having previously been in use as an office and gym. The landowner, Oxford City Council, estimates delivery in period 2030/31 - 2034/35. The landowner re-confirmed intention to develop when contacted (2026) about site deliverability.

SPN3 – Oxford North Remaining Phases

Q1 What is the latest position regarding development proposals for the site?

The position as set out in HEA.008a (page 4) is substantively unchanged: the site falls within the wider Oxford North area which benefits from the Hybrid Consent of 18/02065/OUTFUL. This parcel within the Oxford North area has outline planning permission for 161 homes. The landowner estimates delivery in period 2031/31 - 2034/35.

Q2 What evidence is there to indicate that the site is developable within the plan period for the uses proposed?

As above, the site falls within a wider area which already has hybrid consent. Parts of the wider area have already been built out or are currently under construction, by the same landowner as this site. The landowner has confirmed intention to build out this site as part of the wider scheme.

Q3 Does the allocation differ from the extant planning permission for the site, and if so, is Policy SPN3 justified?

The site falls within the wider Oxford North area which was subject to an AAP: The Northern Gateway AAP. As set out in response to Matter 1, the AAP is intended to be superseded by the 2045 Local Plan. Adjoining parcels within that wider area and within the hybrid planning permission, have already been built out in earlier phases by the same landowner. So those built out phases no longer need to be within the site allocation. In liaison with the landowner, the red line for the site allocation was re-drawn for LP2045 to only include the remaining phases.

A change is suggested to Policy SPN3 to clarify the relationship with the Oxford Meadows SAC, that the requirement for 15% open space (10% is standard) has been included in Policy SPN3 to ensure no adverse effects on the integrity of the Oxford Meadows SAC:

b) Planning permission will only be granted for developments that provide usable, well designed and good-quality publicly accessible green open space. At least 15% of the total site area must be provided as green public open space; this must be distributed so that at least 15% of any parcel proposed for residential development is green public open space. This is to ensure that there will be no adverse effects on the integrity of the Oxford Meadows SAC.

The following additional text could also be added to the 'Notable ecological features' section of policy box to make the policy more effective:

"Policy SPN3 requires 15% of any part of the site developed for housing to be delivered as publicly accessible green open space for the enjoyment and benefit of residents. This standard is slightly higher than the city-wide standard (10%) due to the size and location of the site and the importance of managing the recreational impact of new residents (and particularly their dogs) on the nearby protected habitat of the Oxford Meadows Special Area of Conservation (SAC). As such, a sufficient proportion of the green open space provided must be located within or directly adjoining areas of residential development and provide an attractive accessible alternative to the SAC for day-to-day recreational uses to mitigate potential pressure on that protected habitat."

SPN4 – Oxford University Press Sports Ground

Q1 Is the allocation justified and consistent with national planning policy, having particular regard to paragraph 104 of the Framework and the use of open space, sports and recreational buildings and land, including playing fields?

The site is an allocated site currently in the Oxford Local Plan 2036 as Policy SP52 (and was first allocated in the Oxford Sites and Housing Plan 2011-2026). Paragraph 104 of the NPPF protects from built development open space, sports and recreational buildings and land, including playing fields and formal play spaces unless either criterion a, b or c is met. Criterion a relates to the site being surplus, which is not applicable to this site at the current time, as is stated at criterion a of Policy SPN4. Criterion c relates to circumstances where alternative sports and recreation provision with benefits that outweigh the loss of the existing, which is also not reason to justify development of this site. The applicable criterion at this site is b) which requires that the loss resulting from proposed development would be replaced by equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity and quality at a suitable location.

Policy SPN4 is clear that any loss of the sports provision must be compensated for in accordance with Policy G1 prior to occupation of any residential development on site. The site includes a cricket pitch, and at the current time there is not a proposal for its replacement or any identified potential for enhancements of other facilities in the vicinity that would allow the current level of use to be transferred. Therefore, as is clear in the opening paragraph of Policy SPN4, the minimum number of 90 homes assumes retention of the cricket pitch on site. The other sports uses on the site are likely to be much easier to compensate for.

The approach of the allocation is therefore consistent with national policy and with Policy G1.

[It is noted that there is no question 2 for this site]

Q3 What evidence is there to indicate that the site is developable within the plan period for the uses proposed?

The Local Plan housing land supply template for this site (HEA.008a) shows expected delivery on this site in years 7-10. This intention was confirmed by the landowner in 2026. The landowner is willing and has confirmed an intended start date for delivery of 2034, and there is no blocker to this delivery in principle, in accordance with the Policy SPN4.

SPN5 – Pear Tree Farm

Q1 What is the latest position regarding development proposals for the site and how does the Plan envisage the parcel coming forward alongside land to the north (in Cherwell District)?

Pear Tree Farm site SPN5 refers to consideration of potential future cross-boundary connections with the adjoining parcel of land (under the same landowner) that falls within Cherwell District, and recognises that there may be benefits of the two parcels being brought forward together, however the site allocation is not dependent upon the development in Cherwell progressing.

The position as set out in HEA.008a (page 6) is substantively unchanged, the landowner estimates delivery across the periods 2030/31 - 2034/35 and 2035/36 - 39/40.

Suggest a modification to SPN5 as follows:

n) This area is of archaeological interest for potential prehistoric and Roman remains, which will require further investigation as part of any ~~sizable~~ redevelopment ***(Policy HD5)***.

Q2 What evidence is there to indicate that the site is developable within the plan period for the uses proposed?

As above. There are no identified constraints which would prevent this site coming forward as suggested by the landowner.

Q3 How will new walking, cycling and wheeling access through the site, over the footbridge across the railway line to Oxford Parkway Station be provided and by whom?

In recognition of the location of SPN5 on the administrative border with Cherwell District and close to sites in Cherwell which are intended to deliver Oxford's unmet housing need, SPN5

includes references to the need for connectivity not just inwards towards the city but also looking towards those potential new communities and transport connections in Cherwell as well.

Nearby Oxford Parkway rail station, in Cherwell District, provides a valuable link both into Oxford, but also directly into London. In addition it is due to provide access onto the new East West Rail service to Milton Keynes, and in time onto Cambridge, linking with several of the mainlines running north out of London. For these reasons improved access to Oxford Parkway by walking, cycling and wheeling provides an excellent opportunity for existing and future residents and employees in the area.

At present however it is poorly accessible by walking or cycling from Pear Tree Farm or other nearby residential areas in Oxford. As such SPN5 criterion (q) recognises that the layout and design of the site should facilitate and not compromise delivery of walking, cycling, and wheeling access through the site, over the footbridge across the railway line to Oxford Parkway station. There has long been an aspiration to deliver a footbridge across the railway line to improve those connections and capitalise on the opportunities for sustainable travel from Oxford Parkway, as recognised in the Northern Gateway Area Action Plan, which set out the original masterplan and development parameters for the broader Northern Gateway Area within which Pear Tree Farm falls.

The delivery of the footbridge is not yet at a stage of design, where it can be known whether the bridge will be delivered within Oxford or wholly within Cherwell's administrative boundary. As such, SPN5 requires that design and layout should be mindful of future pedestrian and cycle routes being needed towards the potential footbridge so as not to maximise the potential of this aspect and not prejudice delivery of the link.

SPN6 Red Barn Farm

Q1 What is the latest position regarding development proposals for the site?

The landowner has confirmed (October 2026) that the occupier: "TRAX" community facilities have been reprovided on a nearby site just outside of Oxford.

Q2 Does Policy SPN6 adequately reflect the most-up-to-date position regarding existing uses on site and is the requirement to re-provide community facilities justified?

To reflect the updated position about the reprovided community facilities, that requirement in the site allocation policy is now not needed and the existing uses referenced can be updated.

Suggest modification to SPN6 and supporting text as follows:

Site summary table in supporting text, update the Current Use to: *Former C~~c~~lassroom/workshop/office buildings and motorcross track*

Also amend wording within SPN6 to delete the following wording: ~~*The site currently provides an important community function by providing education and training to disadvantaged and*~~

~~*vulnerable young people, so any proposal will need to demonstrate that the facilities can be re-provided (Policy C3), which may be outside of the city.*~~