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FAO Katherine Makant
The Planning Inspectorate

Dear Katherine,

Examination of the Oxford Local Plan 2045
Stage 2: Matters, Issues and Questions

We write on behalf of Oxford University (OU) in relation to the Examination of the Oxford Local Plan 2045. OU have taken over from Oxford University Developments (OUD) in relation to matters concerning the Osney Mead site allocation and redevelopment site. In advance of the Stage 2 Hearings, the Inspector has directed that responses are invited from participants on the Stage 2 Matters, Issues and Questions ('MIQs') for Examination. The Inspector advises that the MIQs are based on the Main Issues identified by the Council and other relevant issues raised by representors.

Within the MIQs, specific questions are raised regarding the Osney Mead site allocation. We therefore seek to respond to these questions on behalf of OU.

This response follows on from previous representations (made by OUD) regarding the emerging Local Plan during the Regulation 18 and 19 Consultation process.

Matters, Issues and Questions

Within the MIQs the following questions are raised regarding the Osney Mead site allocation (Policy SPCW8).

- 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?

- Q2 Is the allocation justified, having particular regard to local and national planning policies concerning flood risk?

We have sought to address these questions in turn below.

<u>Question 1</u>

The current use of the Site is in line with what is stated within the draft site allocation (Policy SPCW8) – 'Industrial estate with a mix of uses including office, industrial, wholesale and trade retail, academic institutional uses, vacant buildings and hardstanding including surface level car parking. Electricity substation and pylons present on site'.

In terms of bringing forward Osney Mead for development, OU remains committed to the comprehensive redevelopment and transformation of Osney Mead over time and is actively engaging with key stakeholders and the local community on future development at the site. OU is now working, at pace, to accelerate development. This will build on existing masterplan strategy principles discussed with Oxford City Council, and feedback to date, and bring a new perspective to the potential the site has to offer. OU will share its updated aspirations for the overall site in due course.

One of the key elements that has restricted the ability to progress with development at Osney Mead has been uncertainty over the timing of Oxford Flood Alleviation Strategy (OFAS), this is a critical parameter for devising any sustainable investment. Increased confidence over the delivery of OFAS will reduce barriers to investment during the new Local Plan period (see response to Q2, below). A further favourable step change is the planned network upgrades and reinforcements by SSEN. These are expected to deliver additional power to Osney by the end of 2032, which removes a further constraint on investment at the site.

A key aspect to driving forward the masterplan will be the critical mass and momentum created by the tangible reality of the University's engineering research and teaching moving to Osney Mead. Consultation has been underway this year in relation to a new Engineering building to be located in the northeastern corner of the site, on a largely unconstrained plot. A planning application for this building will be submitted in 2027 with the aim of it being operational by the start of the 2031/32 academic year. This anchor development will act as a key attractor for other academic and commercial entities and thereby drive wider development at Osney Mead.

Question 2

The adopted site allocation and the West End & Osney Mead SPD envisage comprehensive mixed-use redevelopment of the site, recognising that flood risk is a fundamental site characteristic that should shape the overall masterplan. The emerging Local Plan continues to bring forward the site allocation for redevelopment and recognises that flooding will affect both the nature of development that can be accommodated and where it can be located and requires a comprehensive flood-risk management strategy to secure safe access and egress.

This is a strategic site and the flood issues on site are well recognised and understood, which is emphasised by adopted and emerging policy wording. Discussions have been progressing and are on-going with Oxford City Council, Oxfordshire County Council, and the Environment Agency (EA), and it is recognised that the EA maintain an objection to the inclusion of this site allocation in the emerging Local Plan, this is primarily related to the amount and type of development (SoCG, para 4.2). This is clearly a highly strategic and complicated site that will require an ongoing dialogue and a comprehensive, site-wide strategy to enable future development.

A comprehensive, site-wide strategy can be developed that can identify areas appropriate for built development, flood storage and compensation, water-compatible or less vulnerable uses, green-blue infrastructure, public open space and ecological enhancement. A coherent strategy for levels, drainage, safe pedestrian and vehicular access, emergency planning and the management of residual risk can also be established through a masterplanning exercise.

Future masterplan work will provide the framework for the overall development and support the detailed planning applications for individual phases as they come forward. The associated floodplain

compensation strategy will similarly be developed at a strategic level to demonstrate how floodplain storage requirements can be accommodated across the site.

As individual phases progress through the detailed planning design process, the masterplan and associated floodplain compensation proposals will be refined and updated to reflect the specific layout and design of each phase, while remaining consistent with the overarching development strategy. This iterative approach will ensure that floodplain compensation requirements are assessed and incorporated throughout the evolution of the scheme. Consequently, both the masterplan and the floodplain compensation strategy will become progressively more defined as the development advances through the planning, design and delivery stages.

It should also be recognised that Policy I2 (Safeguarding land for infrastructure) identifies OFAS as a critical priority infrastructure scheme that is to be brought forward, as set out above. The supporting text to emerging Policy G7 (Flood risk and flood risk assessments) anticipates that OFAS will commence within the plan period and reduce River Thames flood risk. The provision of OFAS is well progressed, committed, and will reduce flood risk to Osney Mead. The proposed bypass channel to the west will drive higher river volumes away from the Thames Stream that loops around Osney Mead. A flood embankment bund along the western edge of Ferry Hinksey Road is also being installed, which is intended to directly safeguard Osney Mead. Together with OFAS and a comprehensive site-wide strategy, including identified site wide flood mitigation / measures, Osney Mead is a deliverable site that will ptransform this part of Oxford to its residents benefit. Whilst discussions are still on going with the City Council and EA, it is considered a logical conclusion can be reached to allow the site to be brought forward and developed within the plan period.

The EA have acknowledged that the full benefits of OFAS can be taken into account once OFAS is operational, which will occur well in advance of the build-out for the majority of the masterplan. OU considers that the best strategy to ensure a successful and beneficial Osney Mead is to devise a masterplan that aligns with the delivery of this critical infrastructure.

Overall, the site allocation presents a significant development and regeneration opportunity to create a new district in Oxford. The existing site represents an underutilised brownfield site, in an accessible location (close proximity to Oxford train station), with buildings nearing the end of their lifespan. The site could accommodate a mix of uses, extending the City center westwards, creating a vibrant and sustainable new destination. The site offers a distinctive waterfront setting that can be utilized through redevelopment to enhance biodiversity and provide significant public benefits to Oxford and its residents.

We trust this response to questions raised regarding the Osney Mead site allocation within the MIQs will be taken into account by the Inspector.

Yours sincerely