Stage 2 Hearing Statement – Oxford Local Plan 2045 Examination – Firoka

Matter 5 – Site Allocations

Date: 10 November 2026

Introduction

1. This Hearing Statement is submitted in relation to the examination of the Oxford Local Plan 2045 (Draft Local Plan) by Prior + Partners on behalf of Firoka.

2. Firoka has significant land interests within the Oxford City Council (OCC) administrative boundary and is promoting a number of these for development, namely the Kassam Stadium (Policy SPS7) and the Overflow Car Park (Policy SPS11), alongside the Ozone Leisure Park (SPS13). Since the Reg 19 Consultation, an application (25/01588/FUL) at the Ozone Leisure Park was unanimously approved at committee.

3. Firoka welcomes the allocation of these sites and the ambition of the Local Plan to bring forward key strategic regeneration opportunities.

4. Firoka have appointed planning and masterplanning consultants alongside commercial advisors to prepare development capacity studies for the stadium and overflow car park sites that examine a viable balance of uses that responds to City, regional and National aspirations for the Cowley Branch Line Area of Focus. These studies will inform a comprehensive masterplanning exercise covering both the Kassam Stadium and Overflow Car Park sites to ensure an integrated, coordinated and balanced proposal in line with City policy.

5. This statement should be read alongside our Reg 19 Response and provides responses specifically in relation to the MIQs. Our comments are focused on a number of clarifications and proposed modifications considered necessary to ensure that the Draft Local Plan and the specific policies supporting the delivery of the allocations are sound and enable sustainable development to be brought forward.

6. Whilst the comments raised suggest modification for soundness reasons, they do not undermine the overall soundness of the proposed allocations and instead seek targeted modifications so that the three linked policies are clear, consistent and effective.

7. This Hearing Statement builds upon aspects of our Matter 3 Hearing Statement.

SPS7 – Kassam Stadium, SPS11 – Overflow Car Park at Kassam Stadium and SPS13 – Ozone Leisure Park

Q1 What is the latest position regarding the proposals for the new football stadium, and consequently, the redevelopment of the existing stadium, overflow car park and leisure site?

8. The replacement stadium is an approved development, with Cherwell District Council's Planning Committee resolving to to grant permission for Oxford United's 16,000-seat stadium at the Triangle, Kidlington, in August 2025 and issuing a decision notice in February 2026.

9. For awareness, the permission was subject to a judicial review claim in June 2026, although permission for this claim was refused on the papers, with the judge considering that none of the grounds were arguable. At the time of writing, it has been stated in the press that the appellant intends to appeal this decision. Despite this, the current position therefore remains that the removal of the existing stadium will be mitigated by replacement facilities in a suitable location. Therefore the Stadium site is available for allocation and will, in the near future, be subject to any necessary controls as part of the regular planning application process.

10. In line with the stance taken under the currently adopted Oxford Local Plan, the redevelopment of the Overflow car park would be acceptable where evidence is provided that it is no longer required to support ongoing Stadium uses. Redevelopment of the Kassam Stadium and Overflow Car Park sites will be a large scale multi-phase development and interdependent with the stadium replacement scheme. As a result, it is possible that certain new uses will be developed across the sites before the stadium use is relocated.

11. This reiterates the important nature of the requested masterplan, covered in more detail below.

12. As set out in the introduction, application (25/01588/FUL) has recently been supported by committee at the Ozone Leisure Park. Given the timings this is not considered as committed development for the Local Plan purposes, and the allocation should therefore remain as guidance.

13. The Council's housing land supply figures align with this trajectory and overall strategy.

Q2 What is required of the masterplan referred to by Policies SPS7, SPS11 and SPS13? Does the Plan require the sites to come forward as part of a single, comprehensive development?

14. Firoka strongly supports the masterplan-led, flexible approach to distributing uses across the linked sites. Single ownership means a coordinated masterplan is achievable, and early preparation has begun.

15. The masterplan will be an applicant led but co-produced document refined through pre-application discussions to demonstrate that the cumulative policy requirements of the three allocations can be met. This will be submitted as part of the first planning application and will demonstrate how the proposed phasing strategy or subsequent planning applications effectively coordinate development across multiple sites, phases and applications.

16. The plan does not, and should not, require a single development but appropriately defines the need for proposals to be effectively coordinated through a wider than allocation approach. The three allocations share a relationship based on their adjacency and need to consider their cumulative impact, but they are also independently deliverable and subject to different requirements and ultimate phasing. This reflects the historic approach taken to the sites under the currently adopted Local Plan and would allow for early delivery within the first five years of the plan (as set out in the trajectory), without being subject to the replacement stadium process which could risk this unnecessarily.

Q3 What evidence is there to indicate that the sites are developable within the plan period?

17. Firoka confirms the sites are available and achievable for the development proposed. The trajectory proposed is supported and the existing permissions support this.

18. As referenced in the Reg 19 Response and this Hearing Statement, Firoka have commissioned a team to begin the early preparation of the required masterplan.

Q4 Is it sufficiently clear what uses will be permitted across the sites? For example, Policy SPS7 refers to the 'precedent' for employment uses, which will be acceptable as a 'secondary' use on the site. Are the policies clear and effective?

19. Firoka raised inconsistencies and soundness issues with the plan as a whole related to controls on potential employment uses at the Reg 19 stage.

20. This principally relates to the potential conflict with approach in Policy E1, which encourages employment generating uses on the sites given its current uses, but also given Kassam Stadium and Ozone Leisure Park referenced under Policy E4 as envisaged to provide a material gain of employment.

21. Whilst we do not envisage it be required to set a specific target for employment uses on site to alleviate the soundness issues raised, we believe the policies require amendment to be clear and effective and clear for how a decision maker should apply the policy limbs. We believe "secondary" was intended to refer to the acceptability of employment uses after the proposed scale of housing is met, but that is a redundant requirement given the existing requirement for a minimum number of homes on the site.

22. We have suggested that the allocation retain the language of being residential-led and the reference to a minimum number of new homes, to align with the proposed plan strategy, but to remove the phrase "as a secondary use". This will allow the plan's requirements to be met, but the scale of employment uses to be subject to the masterplan process. Having reviewed the emerging Local Plan, this is the only instance of an allocation with this wording and could therefore be amended without consequential impact on the plan.

23. As raised under our Matter 3 statement, where it does not prevent the achievement of other policy ambitions or protections, to restrict employment development would be inconsistent with national policy.

Q5 What is the justification for requiring applicants to 'investigate' the potential for a restricted access for servicing and emergency vehicles to the overflow car park site in Policy SPS11? Is the policy clear and effective in relation to access arrangements?

24. As set out in our Reg 19 response, Firoka supports the approach to protecting, retaining and enhancing active travel routes with the site and wider Area of Focus. However, Policy SPS11 also identifies the potential for a restricted access from Priory Road. There are many potential design solutions for reducing the dominance of private vehicle circulation and impact and current design work has not been sufficiently progressed to evidence the need for a restricted access on site. Requiring a restricted access at this stage risks pre-empting the outcome of detailed transport strategy and masterplanning, which will be required to support future planning applications. The policy should therefore avoid over-prescribing the design approach, and should be limited to the key principles at the plan making stage.

Conclusion

25. Firoka would welcome the potential drafting of a Statement of Common Ground with the Council on the matters, in particular related to potential modifications to alleviate the soundness concerns raised, to set out in more detail the intended masterplan production process or to confirm the trajectory proposed.