Stephen Dance OBE MRICS

Representor ID 15

Written Statement to Oxford Local Plan 2045 Examination Inquiry Stage 1 Hearings 19th October 2026

I am Stephen William Dance. I live at [redacted] where I have been resident for 3 years. I have lived and/or worked in the greater Oxford area for 45 years. I am a chartered surveyor by profession and a recently retired civil servant. I am making this submission in an entirely personal capacity.

I agree with the strategic vision and objectives underlying the Local Plan 2045. I support the overarching threads and the general thrust of the spatial strategy and presumption in favour of development.

However, in key areas the proposed plan gives insufficient weight and regard to requirements and wellbeing of permanent city center residents and too much weight to the requirements of institutions, principally the University and Colleges and their contractors. The perceived experience of living in the center of Oxford is that there is a constant stream of development projects that are granted consent with insufficient consideration as to; i) the long term impact of the proposed uses on the balance of the city and its economy, and ii) the immediate impact of the demolition and construction process on residents and heritage assets.

The recent planning consent given to the University's development in Wellington Square is an example. Despite significant legitimate concerns raised about the scale, design and impact of this scheme, it appears that the council did not have the strength to insist on the changes to design, use, scale and construction that might have better balanced the needs of the local communities with those of the University.

I am not sufficiently familiar with the proposed Local Plan to set out comprehensive changes that might be needed to redress this balance across all its policy areas. I am specifically concerned that policies HD2 (efficient use of land) and HD3 (heritage assets) might be seen to conflict in the context of city centre developments and request that these policies are further strengthened to give greater weight to the importance of heritage assets and good design; especially in the context of Oxford's unique history and not merely in line with national guidance.

I respectfully ask the Inspector, when making his response to the policies proposed by the Council, to consider whether or not the Council has retained sufficient ability within all its policies to ensure that its strategic objectives and intentions will be properly translated into practice on the ground in the face of these institutional applicants.

I am requesting specific changes to Policies H8 (Student accommodation) and R2 (Embodied carbon in construction).

Policy H8

Students are part of the warp and weft of the city and it is entirely appropriate to plan for their accommodation. I have read and generally support the statement of common ground between the Universities and the Council on this matter. I have also read and support the Councils strategic policy objectives to maintain a balance between different uses in the city center, including for permanent residences and businesses.

Policy H8 as drafted does not provide sufficient protection for the maintaining of the correct balance of uses. It allocates the "city center" as a location for student accommodation on a general plan without any further consideration as to the suitability of any particular site for that use, the impact on city center residents, the maintenance of a balance of uses in the city center and/or the impact on local infrastructure.

Without further protection there is a significant risk that small infill and backland sites will continue to be developed (as has happened in St John Street) in an unplanned and uncontrolled way and without reference to strategic planning objectives. This will place unacceptable pressure on local infrastructure and unbalance the land uses within the center.

The policy plan and other plans delineating the city centre area need to be properly and clearly produced, digitally and physically, to enable clear reading. The current on line versions are impossible to read in detail in order to discern boundaries.

My proposal is to delete bullet point 2 ; "*In the city center or a district center*" from this policy and rely entirely on bullet points 1 and 3 to determine applications for further student accommodation, i.e. sites that are allocated in the plan, or adjacent to the institution in question.

If, on consideration, the Inspector is minded to retain bullet point 2 then I would request that it is amended to ensure that only suitable sites are permitted. My suggested amendment is;

"in the city centre or district centre *where the development has can be accommodated without detrimental effect to the local infrastructure and character of the area."*

Parking

There has been some recent debate about the extent to which student accommodation can attract resident visitor parking permits. The pressure on residents parking from permanent residents, contractors and visitors is already intense and this policy needs to ensure that student accommodation does not add to the pressure.

Sub paragraph d should be amended to ensure that; …residents should not park their *or their visitors* cars anywhere on the site *or on adjacent streets*"

Policy R2

The construction activity associated with development is clearly a critical consideration and I support the policy to give significant weight to carbon reduction in considering applications.

However, carbon reduction from the contractor perspective is not the only, nor necessarily the overriding, consideration and the experience of living with construction in the city centre is that the construction impact on citizens wellbeing and on the physical state of heritage assets (especially residential dwellings in the city streets) are largely ignored.

Policy R2 should be expanded to ensure that carbon is not the only consideration for construction and should not override citizens wellbeing and impact on heritage assets.

This could be achieved by replacing sub paragraph d as follows;

d) " *The ways that demolition and construction are undertaken, including the transport of materials and site operatives to and from the site, and the means by which resources are used and processed on site have been chosen to minimize carbon emissions, impact on the physical stability of other assets and the physical and mental wellbeing of residents and affected business users"*

I acknowledge that these changes would dilute the policy's focus on carbon reduction and make it hybrid. If the inspector is minded to accept the principles of the proposal I would, of course, be happy for them to be included in other policies that might be deemed more suitable.

I would be pleased to answer questions and expand upon my submission as required by the inspector.

Stephen Dance

19th October 2026.