

Supplementary Papers



Listening Learning Leading

Contact Officer: Steve Culliford
Tel: 01235 422522

FOR THE MEETING OF

Cabinet

held in the Meeting Room 1, 135 Eastern Avenue, Milton Park, Milton, OX14 4SB

on Thursday 3 October 2019 at 6.00 pm

Open to the public including the press

The reports marked 'to follow' on the agenda published on 25 September 2019 are attached. Please bring these with you to the meeting.

1 **Local Plan 2034; options to progress** (Pages 2 - 9)

Attached are further letters of representation from:

Cherwell Development Watch Alliance
Chalgrove Airfield Action Group
Graftongate (in respect of Didcot 'A' coal facility)

VIA EMAIL

Dear Mr Jenrick,

I chair an Alliance of organisations opposing the Cherwell Local Plan Review in Oxfordshire, which together represent a considerable number of local residents.

I am writing to you regarding your letter of 26th August 2019 addressed to Cllr. Sue Cooper, the leader of South Oxfordshire District Council (SODC), in which you state:

'The assessment for Oxford's unmet need and the corresponding assessment of capacity in Oxford City undertaken by the Oxfordshire Growth Board have been found sound at two plan examinations in Oxfordshire and were recently described as 'robust' by an Inspector in the examination of a third'.

This statement, which underpins your response to Cllr Cooper, is factually incorrect because Oxford's unmet need has *not* been examined at the three examinations that you mention. What has actually happened is that, because the Oxford City Plan is – extraordinarily - being examined *after* the plans of the three districts mentioned, the Inspectors of the district plans had perforce to take a view on Oxford's unmet need in order to allow them to continue their examinations. In doing so they inevitably focused on process rather than the accuracy or soundness of any estimates.

The Inspectors of the first two plans therefore accepted what was termed by the Growth Board a '*working assumption*' of Oxford's unmet need. The third Inspector has yet to report, having only issued a post-hearing advice note. This working assumption of unmet need is a crucial point which is particularly relevant to SODC, which council's Plan will be examined after the Oxford City plan. It makes a lot of sense to allow SODC to pause their local plan process until Oxford's unmet need has been fully and properly examined. This was a point acknowledged in the Cherwell Inspector's note when he says "*Indeed, it might be said that some means of looking at the housing and other needs of Oxford, and the surrounding Boroughs, simultaneously, in a strategic way, would be a good idea.*"

We also find it remarkable and contradictory that the District Councils are being pressured into proceeding with their plans on an unsubstantiated basis, while it seems to be acceptable that the preparation of the Oxfordshire-wide Joint

VIA EMAIL

Spatial Plan, also a condition of the Growth Deal, can be delayed for a whole year. Can you explain this?

In Cherwell, the council is pushing ahead with plans to build 4,400 homes *entirely* on the Oxford Green Belt and *solely* to meet the so-called unmet need of Oxford City. Yet Oxford`s unmet need is in fact neither credible, as was shown by new evidence from a major consultancy specialising in housing need assessments, nor has it been confirmed at examination.

In addition the City continues to understate its own capacity to build new homes within its boundaries. Oxford has been repeatedly criticised for not making use of brown field land and for reserving too much land for employment which could be used for housing. The local Conservative candidate James Fredrickson has recently written in the local press *'So why is Oxford City Council getting away with forcing housing into our countryside whilst significant plots of brown field sites in the City remain undeveloped?'*. This is a question many local people would like an answer to.

From a political point of view the impact of the local plans (and particularly the labour controlled Oxford City's unmet need) has had, and will continue to have, an adverse effect on support for the Conservative Party which lost many local councillors and which lost control of two district councils at the last local elections.

This was not a Brexit effect. It was due to a frustrated electorate voting to remove the Councillors who have supported the building of an excessive numbers of homes, many of them on Green Belt.

Yours sincerely,

Giles Lewis.

Chair, Cherwell Development Watch Alliance.



Chalgrove Airfield Action Group

Mr Adrian Duffield
South Oxfordshire District Council
135 Eastern Avenue
Milton Park
Milton
OX14 4SB

29th September 2019

Dear Mr Duffield,

I write in reference to the recent letter from Homes England sent to you on 23rd September, and included in the briefing pack for the Council's Scrutiny Committee as Appendix 19.

There have been many views as to the viability of including Chalgrove Airfield in the Local Plan, and as you are well aware, our view differs significantly to that of Homes England. Under normal circumstances, we would simply attend the various Council meetings and use our three minutes to put our case across. However, this extraordinary letter from Homes England demands a formal response which will allow us to counter some of the more fanciful claims made.

Firstly, in regard to the content of the letter itself, Homes England states that the investment addresses long standing highways issues in the villages of Watlington, Stadhampton, Chiselhampton and Cuxham. It makes no mention of Little Milton or Benson, which will be significantly affected.

Homes England has made the statement that they are able to start delivering homes within the first five years of the Local Plan. This statement of course ignores that fact that the only way that delivery can commence would be following a successful Compulsory Purchase of the protected lease enjoyed by the current tenant, Martin-Baker Aircraft Company Limited (MBACL)

The statement that Chalgrove is sustainable bears close examination. Unless the plan has changed significantly from the one submitted to the Local Plan, the idea that this development will reduce the need to travel is unproven, and fanciful. It relies on a belief that residents will live and work within the development, and not travel further afield. The location of the site, well away from other centres of employment, retail, entertainment etc. will definitely increase the need to travel significantly, and the local bus provider has also objected on the grounds that the route will be unsustainable once the initial "pump priming" money is withdrawn. The idea that a conurbation of almost 4500 houses (when the existing village is included) will not increase traffic defies rational belief.

With regard to suitability, Chalgrove is neither brownfield (as active airfields cannot be defined as brownfield), nor is it "underused", being the testing facility for a thriving and active business and the land between the runways being used for grazing. The statement that It will benefit the existing communities through the provision of "new essential services" overlooks the fact that no provision whatsoever has been made in regards to Police, Fire or Ambulance services, all of whom would need to access this site via a single B-road. There are no other essential services that the existing communities are lacking.

The conceit that this will provide a net gain in biodiversity would only hold true if this were to include domestic dogs and cats. The site is currently a green space, mostly grazed by sheep, and used for haymaking. The increase in street lighting alone will have a detrimental effect on biodiversity, including the many species of bats. Native deer, Muntjac deer, rabbits and hares will lose their grazing areas; mice, voles, hedgehogs and invertebrates will lose their foraging areas, and owls, buzzards, kestrels and kites will lose hunting grounds.

The suggestion that cycle routes and bus connections will be improved beyond the development is simply false, There have been no plans whatsoever put out for consultation that include any cycle routes beyond the development. There have already been a number of accidents and deaths of cyclists on the narrow roads around Chalgrove, and along the B480. Bus routes are limited to Oxford, and potentially Abingdon and Didcot, which do not help anyone who works beyond those areas. As stated above, even the Oxford route will be unviable once the initial funding is withdrawn.

The availability of Chalgrove is a highly contentious proposal. The view of Homes England that Martin-Baker can be accommodated within the development is absolutely refuted by Martin-Baker themselves. MBACL have provided detailed documentary evidence as to why this is the case, and have not had any of their concerns addressed. Homes England may be confident that there is no impediment, but surely the refutation of this by the company involved must carry more weight?

Homes England continues to misrepresent the situation between them and MBACL, by insisting that they want to negotiate MBACL has stated clearly that negotiations ceased almost two years ago, so it is not credible that negotiation is an option. The CPO referred to would need to meet strict criteria, including demonstrating public interest and necessity. While other sites remain in the Local Plan, necessity cannot be demonstrated. Regardless, MBACL have stated repeatedly that moving is not an option for them. I note that the only work that has been done by the panel of taxpayer-funded consultants is in regard to the runway itself; no mention is made of the explosives testing facility that will be adjacent to housing.

The purchase of additional land cannot be considered relevant. This is Greenfield land, and does not form any part of the proposal that is included in the Local Plan.

Deliverability is highly contentious. In order to meet deliverability criteria, the site must be capable of delivering housing – not just infrastructure, but housing – within the first five

years. While the outcome of a CPO is pending, Homes England cannot make this assertion.

With regard to the AECOM report, there are a number of elements that bear greater scrutiny.

1.3.2 – MBACLs assessment is based on earlier versions...which have since been subject to a number of design revisions. None of the publicly available design revisions bear any significant changes in regards to the MBACL site, unless there are revisions that have not yet been released to the public. Regardless, the MBACL assessment was based on the Masterplan submitted to SODC for inclusion in the Local Plan; if this has changed materially then it would require additional consultation.

1.3.3 Whilst the proposal is to build the areas to the north of the development last, it does not address the issues of noise for those residents.

1.4.5 None of the consultants listed is an expert in the field of military aircraft dispositions on a global scale. MBACL supports many air forces around the world, and it is facile to suggest that every single country and air force that MBACL supports will all change their mode of operation within the same time period. The statement regarding the MBACL business plan ignores the confidential nature of large parts of their business, which would make the publication of a business plan of this nature undesirable.

1.4.6 The aircraft that MBACL use have been selected for very precise characteristics, and are maintained by MBACL. The “pragmatic” solutions alluded to ignore the confidential nature of many of the customers of MBACL, which would be compromised by this development.

1.4.7 The homes at Marley Lane are irrelevant to this proposal. The homes are contiguous with the existing village boundary, and are actually further away from the runway and the line of the runway than the existing houses on the northern boundary of the village. The implication is that they are closer than other housing, which is simply false. This paragraph should be disregarded.

Part 2 The Ability to Accommodate a CAA Compliant Runway within the Safeguarded Land - The position of the new runway is relevant to this section. The Masterplan places buildings directly at the end of the runway, with no additional safety margins.

Part 3: The Ability to Accommodate the Existing and Future MBACL Operations on Site – this whole section fails to address two major issues. One is the explosives testing facility on the MBACL site, which is extremely noisy. The other is the potential expansion of MBACL business on the site. Homes England have stated that they have additional land available, one part of which is Historic Battlefield, and the other would be on the opposite side of any new runway.

Part 4: The Opportunity for MBACL Activities to be Undertaken Elsewhere – 1.4.16 suggests that MBACL could move to France. This would result in the loss of 80 highly skilled technical jobs from Chalgrove, and requiring the sole supplier of ejection seats to the RAF to test those seats in another country. The suggestion that Homes England could utilise land it has

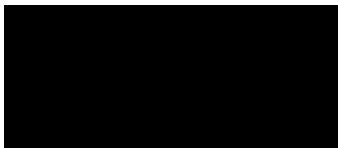
subsequently purchased outside of the original Masterplan would materially change their proposals, and would surely require additional planning permission for this Greenfield site. Regardless, the new land is outside of the proposal for the Local Plan, and would require separate consultation to be undertaken, as it is a significant departure from the original proposal. The suggestion that MBACL would relocate facilities from Denham to Chalgrove is pure speculation, and shows a complete disregard for their current business model and employees.

1.5.6 This statement is demonstrably false. The report takes no consideration of the explosives testing facility and the potential for noise complaints. It takes no consideration of the likelihood of noise complaints from new residents for the low level tests or the noise of the aircraft themselves. It further ignores the one true subject matter expert in this area – MBACL themselves.

I appreciate that Homes England have to make the best possible case for their proposals, and that this is a critical juncture in the decision making process. However, a high level report that includes no specific facts or figures, and confuses supposition with fact, should be treated with careful consideration, and I trust that you will treat it in this manner.

I would appreciate it if this letter could also be made available to Councillors in advance of the forthcoming Committee meetings.

Yours sincerely,



Chairman, Chalgrove Airfield Action Group

Contact Address for correspondence:



Ms S Cooper
Leader of The Council
South Oxfordshire District Council
135 Eastern Avenue
Milton Park
Milton
Abingdon
OX14 4SB

OPEN LETTER

19th September 2019

Dear Ms Cooper

RE: SOUTH OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

I am writing as owners of Didcot 'A' Coal Facility (CWC Group and Graftongate) a strategic redevelopment in Didcot, part of which lies in the South Oxfordshire District Council authority area.

We are currently remediating, plateauing and servicing the site following five years of planning negotiations with yourselves, Vale of White Horse and Oxfordshire County Council.

Our joint vision with you and the other cited colleagues has been to design and implement a first rate redevelopment to:

- Provide a sustainable 'Best in Class' mixed use community
- Enhance the bio diversity of the area
- Remediate a redundant eyesore
- Enable (and part fund) much needed public infrastructure to pass through the site, which will in turn alleviate congestion in Didcot

The last bullet point is the one upon which I would like to concentrate.

The proposed Science Bridge (and its link road) is to land on our site and we have agreed to:

- a) Transfer the land to Oxfordshire County Council
- b) Make a very significant financial contribution
- c) Construct the link road at our expense. On completion the road will be transferred to the relevant Highway Authority. This is on the understanding that HIF funding remains in place and that the wider road scheme will be implemented by Oxfordshire County Council.

We have a very significant inward investor transaction which depends on the public infrastructure being committed to by the public authorities.

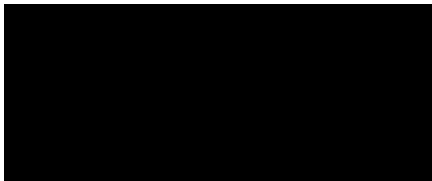
The user is a high-profile American technology company which will support and enhance businesses and residents in the local area. It is not a distribution company rather scientific.

The scale of their investment will be significantly over £100M but the actual number remains confidential.

Should the South Oxfordshire District Council Committee decide to revoke their commitment to the Local Plan, which then results in a withdrawal of HIF then our development at Didcot A will simply not proceed. This will be to the severe detriment of the whole community in terms of investment, public realm, infrastructure and ease of travel. Accordingly, I believe that it is essential that the South Oxfordshire District Council planning committee remain committed to the Local Plan.

I urge you to share this open letter with members of the Planning Committee and I would be very happy to present in an open forum.

Yours sincerely



DIRECTOR