

Council Members
South Oxfordshire District Council
135 Eastern Avenue
Milton Park
Milton
Abingdon OX14 4SB

26th March 2018

Dear Councillor,

SOUTH OXFORDSHIRE LOCAL PLAN - LAND AT WICK FARM, OXFORD

We would like to update you on our proposals for Wick Farm.

The site, adjoining Barton Park, was one of the options considered in earlier versions of your Local Plan and highly rated by the Oxfordshire Growth Board.

In view of the recent information from Martin-Baker and ongoing concerns about the sustainability of the Chalgrove site, we believe the District Council will need other sites in the Local Plan to ensure that the housing needs of the area can be delivered in full during the plan period, and demonstrate that the Local Plan's spatial strategy is the most sustainable option against the alternatives.

We think there are very compelling reasons why Wick Farm should form part of any revised Local Plan, and I thought it would be helpful to summarise them. While the land currently forms part of the Green Belt, there are exceptional circumstances that would justify development in this location. These include:

- **c. 1,400 homes of which 48% will be affordable** – in excess of SODC's current policy – in a highly sustainable location on the edge of Oxford to meet unmet housing need;
- **200 of these affordable homes reserved for NHS staff** of the John Radcliffe, Churchill, and Nuffield Hospitals where a lack of real affordable housing (to match the NHS salary bands) is leading to staff recruitment and retention issues;
- **250 beds for the planned Oxford College of Nursing and Midwifery** and a 100 bed rehabilitation & convalescence facility that will reduce bed blocking within the hospitals;
- **new community facilities and high quality open space for the existing community** in Barton;
- **a high proportion of trips by walking, cycling and public transport** due to the proximity to major centres of employment and services (a clear advantage of this location versus other alternatives such as the land at Harrington);
- **a long term parking facility** for the Headington hospitals which, together with a shuttle bus service, could reduce congestion;
- **public access and biodiversity improvements** on 80 acres of Green Belt land in the same ownership adjoining, but beyond, the proposed development;
- **and a badly needed new burial ground site** for South Oxfordshire and Oxford City.

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Technical Evidence and Engagement

We have now developed a technical evidence base, including infrastructure, ecological, heritage and landscape appraisals, as well as a concept masterplan for the site and the key information was submitted to the Council as part of the recent Regulation 19 Local Plan consultation in November 2017.

We have also progressed initial discussions with the County Council in relation to transport. We are confident that a sustainable access strategy can be agreed without the site needing the kind of complex and costly infrastructure required for the land at Chalgrove and Harrington.

In addition, we are continuing with technical work and engagement including considering the scope of a future Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA).

If the land were to be allocated in the Local Plan, we would follow a positive and collaborative masterplanning process working closely with SODC and other stakeholders. In this regard, the land could be delivered on its own or in conjunction with the adjacent land being promoted by Christ Church at Lower Elsfield which also proposes a high level of key working housing.

Delivery

The land at Wick Farm is controlled by Berkeley and we have an agreement with the landowner for the duration of the development. There will be no quick exit to maximise land receipts which differentiates us from almost all the other proposed strategic sites.

Berkeley itself has a proven track record of building communities and delivering high quality mixed use development. Should an allocation be forthcoming, we are absolutely committed to delivering the site in full during the Local Plan period.

Wick Farm is sustainable, deliverable and has a limited impact on the wider Oxfordshire landscape.

Against the alternatives, and particularly now that the Chalgrove site is unavailable, this land represents the best option for the Local Plan and will address the pressing issues facing Oxfordshire's hospitals.

I hope this information is helpful in relation to the Council's forthcoming decision-making and look forward to our future discussions.

Yours sincerely,



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CC.

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