

Agenda Item 6

Matthew Dovey
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Oxford, OX44

12 December 2018

To: Councillor David Turner
Chair, Scrutiny Committee
South Oxfordshire District Council

Cc: Councillor Will Hall, Vice-chair

Dear Cllr Turner,

I am writing to you in your capacity as chair of the Scrutiny Committee as regards a serious concern with the process in producing the current scrutiny version of the SODC Local Plan 2011 - 2033.

This version re-introduces a number of sites previously discounted in 2016 after the Public Consultation on Refined Options. Re-introducing these sites without re-running any of the Preferred Options consultations means that these sites have not been subject to the same level of public scrutiny and consultation (as outlined in the Local Development Scheme) compared to other aspects of the Local Plan and as a result denies sufficient public comment on SODC's reasoning behind ignoring its original grounds for discounting these sites, not least of all the results of the Refined Options consultation. This is against the spirit of localism implicit in the design of Local Plans and the purpose of the Local Development Scheme.

This is of especial concern as some of these sites require the permanent removal of significant areas from the Green Belt. According to the NPPF, such actions should only be undertaken for exceptional circumstances as it weakens the Green Belt's ability to meet its intended purpose and sets a dangerous precedent; if anything, this should require more public scrutiny than other aspects of the Local Plan, but certainly not less. As this has resulted from a very recent U-turn in SODC policy (and in contradiction to government policy) which had hitherto been to protect the green belt around Oxford city, the public will have had no opportunity to express their views via the traditional method of the ballot box as many of the district councillors would have been elected on a platform of protecting the Green Belt.

As such to accept these changes to this version of the Local Plan without making use of the full public consultation phases as described in the Local Development Scheme would undermine any democratic legitimacy and community acceptability of the Local Plan.

Yours sincerely,



Matthew Dovey