

Appendix F

Officer's response to Public Comments

- the City Council had originally sought 'exemption' for the Protected Employment Sites from the introduction of the present permitted development changes but was unsuccessful. The Government's refusal to allow an exemption does not preclude the use of an Article 4 Direction to be pursued by a Local Planning Authority. The overriding evidence submitted by the City Council to Government together with the changes that have since taken place in practice now make out an even more convincing case that significant harm to amenity and the economy is being caused, effecting both occupied and unoccupied office sites alike;
- there has been a material change in circumstances in Oxford that includes the signing of the City Deal and approval of the Strategic Economic Plan by Government and the SQW Report (Oxfordshire Engine for Growth – Realising the potential) which show the commitment of Oxford and agreement with Government to work in partnership with the County and Districts to deliver economic growth. An important element of Oxford's employment land supply includes the Protected Employment sites which are essential to the delivery of economic growth;
- The extent of the Article 4 Direction is not a 'blanket' order but is 'targeted' and 'site specific';
- Whilst the conversion of existing offices would create more housing this would be at the expense of the loss of these premises, which can generate employment. In addition some of these existing offices are poorly located and not ideally suited for residential use. The conversions that have taken place so far have resulted in a very poor standard of units mainly 1 and 2 bed units, with little or no garden areas or amenity facilities;
- The adopted Oxford Core Strategy 2026 promotes a policy of 'managed economic growth'. This policy seeks to secure the long-term future of its key sectors, whilst taking account of land supply constraints and the need to improve the balance between jobs and housing. This balanced approach to safeguard key protected employment sites but allow the release of non-protected sites for other uses such as residential was fully tested and supported by independent Inspectors at the two Local Plan Inquiries. The Inspectors found that the strategy was sound and struck the right balance between competing uses;

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