

Comments made at Area Committees

The following table sets out comments made, and the Officers' response, for the following Area Committees:

- South East Area Committee
- Cowley Area Committee
- North Area Committee
- Central South and West Area Committee
- North East Area Committee
- East Area Parliament

Additional comments made by Housing Scrutiny will be circulated at a later date, as a supplementary report, in advance of the Executive Board meeting on 18th June.

SE Area Committee (1/05/2007)	
Comment	Response
Cllr Turner considered that the findings from the 'traffic light' approach highlighting areas of greatest pressure seemed surprising and wondered whether officers were equally surprised.	Officers felt that whilst St. Margaret's did seem somewhat surprising as one of the areas of greatest pressure, East Oxford did not. Overall it showed that the majority of the city was under pressure, only Blackbird Leys seemed to experience less pressure particularly from conversions.
Cllr Turner said that in his experience some areas of the city, such as Lye Valley, are under considerable pressure from conversions.	Officers commented that the figures in the matrix related to conversions over a five year period. It did not include residential development, that produced small units resulting from new build. If these were included then the figures for Lye Valley would be higher.
Cllr Turner asked how the assessments of landscape character and other factors were determined.	Officers confirmed that the townscape assessment and sensitivity to change were based principally on assessments carried out by Land Use Consultants. The level of multiple occupation was assessed from information held by Environmental Health. The parking pressure was based on whether areas are within existing or proposed Residents Parking Zones.
Cllr Val Smith considered that all areas of the City experience pressure from both parking and conversions and therefore policy approach needs to be applied across the board.	Officers considered that the approach did recognise widespread pressure across the City. The only area where little pressure for conversions existed was in Blackbird Leys.
Cllr Val Smith confirmed that even in Blackbird Leys there is recent evidence of conversions taking place.	Officers noted the position but considered that as a proportion of the total amount of residential accommodation, the level of conversions was comparatively low.

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Cowley Area Committee (2/05/2007)	
Comment	Response
<p>Cllr Brian Keen considered that the Neighbourhood Areas should fit better with the South Area Committee boundary. In addition Cowley was felt to have its own community, which should be recognised, and identified as a Neighbourhood Area in its own right.</p> <p>Cllr Barbara Gatehouse welcomed support for 'family dwellings', and hoped that this SPD would provide guidance for the determination of future planning applications, particularly those relating to conversions.</p> <p>Cllr Sajjad Malik considered that the principal concern is the amount of housing being built which is insufficient to meet Oxford's needs. Therefore more land should be made available outside the City boundary, through an urban extension.</p>	<p>Officers explained the background to the concept of the 'urban village', which was determined on related to the geography of the area and how local communities operated. The Neighbourhood Areas relate very closely to these boundaries but are based on ward boundaries. They generally comprise groups of wards.</p> <p>Officers confirmed that the purpose of this SPD guidance is to ensure a balanced mix of dwelling types and sizes building on the adopted policy in the Local Plan. Following research carried out the particular concern is the lack of family housing being built and the number of conversions of family dwellings to smaller units. If this trend continues there would be an imbalance in housing provision.</p> <p>Whilst this comment was noted by officers this SPD can only relate to the use of land within the city boundaries. In this context it seeks to provide further advice on the mix of dwellings considered appropriate within Oxford. This document does however provide detailed advice on the strategic mix considered suitable for larger sites.</p>

North Area Committee (3/05/2007)	
Comment	Response
<p>Cllrs expressed their support for this document and then addressed their principal comments to the questions referred to at the end of the SPD where Cttees views are sought.</p> <p>Of all the questions members considered the most important to be for Oxford to have a local dimension to the allocation of a mix of housing types and sizes (Question 2).</p> <p>In answer to Question 1 Cllr.S. Roaf considered that other factors, such as water, energy and school places should be additional key indicators. Cllr.J. Fooks did not consider the indicators to be clear or correct. Cllr.J.Goddard took the view that the key indicators used by officers in this discussion document were correct and appropriate, and did not feel there was a need to add to those used.</p> <p>In relation to question 3 it was generally felt that there was a need for the SPD to have regard to City and District centres and in</p>	

<p>particular the densities considered appropriate within these areas. The mix of uses within the West End should be informed by the West End Area Action Plan.</p> <p>Question 4: Cllrs felt that there was a need to retain a proportion of the existing family dwelling stock.</p> <p>Question 5: Agreed that the advice in the SPD should respond to a range of different levels, ie. City, Neighbourhood areas and individual sites.</p> <p>Question 6: Agreed with the overall approach for assessments to include Neighbourhood Areas.</p> <p>Cllr.A Armitage considered that in some cases wards, such as Jericho and Osney, had different characters and could have a more sustainable relationship as a community to adjacent areas.</p>	<p>Officers explained that these areas were based on the 'urban village' concept used to identify local sustainable communities. These areas were then related to wards to produce 'Neighbourhood Areas.' In some cases these areas do comprise different characters.</p>
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Central South and West Area Committee (08/05/07)	
Comment	Response
<p>Cllr. R. Huzzey considered that this Draft SPD was an excellent, clever and thought provoking piece of work, which would help to improve the mix of dwellings in Oxford.</p>	<p>Noted.</p>
<p>Cllr. S. Dhall considered that the document should explain in more detail the impact of affordability following the point made in Para.5</p>	<p>Officers explained that the main purpose of the SPD is to build on adopted Local Plan Policy seeking to achieve a mix of dwelling types and sizes. Therefore its greatest impact will be on promoting choice within the housing market.</p>
<p>Cllr. S. Dhall asked what the SPD can do for healthy / poverty stricken single males to be able to afford housing accommodation.</p>	<p>Officers considered that the aims and objectives of the SPD are intended to improve the mix of dwelling types and sizes for all. The intention is still to provide some 1 and 2 bed units in new residential developments but as part of a mix, and not at the exclusion of family housing. In terms of affordability of housing whilst this is an important factor the degree to which the SPD can influence this is limited.</p>
<p>Cllr. S. Pressell considered that the first sentence in Para.1 should be amended to confirm that Oxford is experiencing a housing crisis, rather than 'on the brink'.</p>	<p>Officers accepted the comment made, and would make the necessary text change.</p>
<p>Cllr. Pressell referred to Para. 30 and considered that in her experience it was in</p>	<p>Officers would look again at the research undertaken to confirm the position, but it was accepted that some completions had taken</p>

<p>correct to say that there was 'no completions of 3 and 4 bed units.'</p> <p>Cllr. Pressell referred to Para.48 and commented that the use of 'amber' and 'yellow' signalling of local pressure was somewhat confusing and over complicated.</p> <p>Cllr. Pressell considered that Para.49 was confusing by referring to 'orange' instead of 'amber'.</p> <p>Cllr. Pressell asked whether the City Council stock of dwellings should be encouraged to retain 'family housing' rather than converted to smaller units.</p> <p>Cllr. Pressell considered that the reference in the matrix, Appendix 4 to the rate of conversions in Jericho and Osney as low did not reflect her experience.</p> <p>Cllr. Pressell asked whether the SPD could do anything to prevent the number of residential properties being bought up in blocks by letting agents.</p> <p>County Cllr. D. Glass Woodin asked whether this SPD would influence the level of affordable dwellings coming forward. Would there still be a required for 50% to be provided.</p> <p>County Cllr. D. Glass Woodin commented on the wider impact of housing pressure in the South East, which should be influenced at the regional and national levels.</p>	<p>place.</p> <p>Officers felt that the traffic light system was a useful way of highlighting the underlying pressures within the local Neighbourhood Areas.</p> <p>Officers accepted that the text should have referred to 'amber' and will be amended accordingly.</p> <p>The advice in the SPD seeks to influence the market, which at present seems to favouring smaller units at the expense of family housing. Officers will be discussing this SPD with other colleagues in the City Council but the aims and objectives of this advice should be taken into account.</p> <p>Officers confirmed that any conversions can only relate to those requiring planning permission.</p> <p>Officers confirmed that the SPD can only seek to achieve a balanced mix of dwelling types and sizes.</p> <p>Officers confirmed that further discussions would be undertaken with Housing and Neighbourhood Renewal to consider in detail the practical implications of this SPD on the delivery of affordable housing. However essentially this document seeks to influence the mix of market dwellings. The affordable housing SPD has already been adopted and would still provide the principal guidance for achieving the mix and delivery of affordable housing units.</p> <p>Officers recognised that there was a wider effect on housing numbers and distribution, which will be determined at the regional level through the South East Plan. The outcome of the Panel's Report following the Examination in Public is therefore awaited with interest.</p>
North East Area Committee (15/05/07)	
Comment	Response
<p>Comments from the floor:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We should seek to protect bungalows as many have been lost and elderly people don't necessarily want to live in flats. • Pleased that conversions will be limited. 	

- Appendix 4 – The whole of the table in Appendix 4 is suspect. Headington and Blackbird Leys should not have the same ‘sensitivity to change’ rating.
- Appendix 4 – The final score column gives the impression that there is such a variation between some areas (eg. St. Margaret’s and Headington) which is incorrect.
- Appendix 4 – 1-5 scale is too crude and rough
- Appendix 4 – is puzzling, Risinghurst figure in first column is inaccurate
- Appendix 5 – there are variations within wards / neighbourhood areas which are not represented.

Members views:

Cllr. Dee Sinclair asked whether the SPD can be applied now ?

This SPD is in draft form only at present and will be subject to consultation in July 2007. Therefore little weight can be attached to this document at this stage.

Cllr. Dee Sinclair asked what the definition of an ‘urban village’ is.

The Oxford Green Space Study (Feb 2007) provides a detailed definition of the ‘urban village’. At the local level these seek to include geographical areas reflecting physical and social barriers. It aims to show more accurately how communities work as opposed to artificially imposed political boundaries.

Cllr. Dee Sinclair would like the parish Council to be consulted during the Public Consultation process.

Parish Council’s would be formally consulted as part of the statutory consultation process.

Cllr. Dee Sinclair considered that Neighbourhood Areas should be smaller. Quarry figures would skew the Risinghurst figures and vice versa.

The difficulty is that the Neighbourhood Areas are intended to relate to the ‘urban village’ boundaries, which show how local communities operate in practise. There is at present a close relationship between these two areas, and positively includes ward boundaries. If these areas are split any further then it would loose its statistical basis and no longer relate to ward boundaries.

Cllr. Mary Clarkson considered that these Neighbourhood Areas should be smaller.

The difficulty would be that existing population and forecast projections could not be used to inform and monitor the SPD since these areas would not be ward related.

Cllr. Mary Clarkson suggested that School catchment areas should be included as an indicator of pressure.

Not clear how school catchment areas are calculated but does not appear to relate to the number of families or households in a particular area. Therefore consider this would not be that informative as an indicator.

<p>Cllr. Mary Clarkson considered that the average household size referred to in the document masks huge variations. Some ethnic minority families are large.</p>	<p>It is only an average household size and therefore clearly there are differences in family sizes. However if Neighbourhood Areas relate to wards as proposed this would allow future assessments of household size to be calculated and monitored.</p>
<p>Cllr. Joe McManners considered that Neighbourhood Areas should be smaller.</p>	<p>The difficulty would be that existing population and forecast projections could not be used to inform and monitor the SPD since these areas would not be ward related.</p>
<p>Cllr. Tony Gray asked what the difference is between the population figures quoted and the Census.</p>	<p>The Census is a statement of the population of Oxford as at 2001. The population and household forecasts seek to assess the anticipated growth in the future based on past trends and future household sizes.</p>
<p>Cllr. Tony Gray asked whether the population projections include students.</p>	<p>The figures do include students.</p>
<p>Cllr. Tony Gray asked whether the figures in Para.35 take into account the recommendations and findings of the Barker Report.</p>	<p>The figures referred to in Para.35 are County Council forecasts that include assumptions on future housing provision.</p>
<p>Cllr. David Rundle considered that some of the Neighbourhood Areas should be smaller. If it is time consuming, you could prioritise some Amber areas for first consideration because some parts of the Amber areas are likely to be within a 'red area' if separated off from the remainder of their Neighbourhood Area.</p>	<p>The difficulty would be that existing population and forecast projections could not be used to inform and monitor the SPD since these areas would not be ward related.</p>
<p>Cllr. David Rundle considered that the definition of a HMO is complex.</p>	<p>The definition is set out in the SPD but is based on the information collected by the Environmental Health section.</p>
<p>Cllr. David Rundle felt that Appendix 4 does include a level of judgement.</p>	<p>There are certain elements of this matrix that involve subjective assessments particularly those related to townscape and landscape character assessments since they are by their very nature subjective. But these assessments have been derived from detailed research undertaken by Land Use Consultants.</p>

East Area Committee (16/05/07)	
Comment	Response
<p>Cllr. Elise Benjamin supported the overall aims of this document and what it is trying to achieve. However questioned why the Core Strategy supports higher density and smaller units in the City centre and District centres,</p>	<p>There is support for a degree of family housing in the City / District centres. For example the West End AAP sets out a requirement for a minimum of 35% family housing. However the City and District</p>

<p>which are also sustainable locations for families to live.</p> <p>Cllr. Craig Simmons considered that there ought to be a link to population density and the effect this has on the 'supporting infrastructure'. This should be added to the matrix. Agreed with Cllr. EB about family housing in the City and District centres. Agreed that we should be protecting the existing stock of family housing.</p> <p>Supported the 'traffic light model' but thought that the East area should be more red than Cowley Marsh and St. Margaret's.</p> <p>Cllr. David Williams questioned the real demographics. How do we know about the quality and quantity.</p> <p>Cllr. Nuala Young raised the same point about the importance of family housing being provided in City and District centres. Support for retaining the a percentage of family housing.</p> <p>Comment from the audience (David) welcomed the document. There is a large number of houses with students and other HMO's, what can be done ? Should we support small units joined together to form one large unit if they are 'sub standard' ?</p> <p>Formal comments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Affordable housing, need to maintain a percentage of affordable housing. • The matrix should include population density as a key indicator. • Suggest removal of sensitivity to change if the number of criteria has to limited. • Enforcement, how to make it happen. • Need a specific policy for the 'red areas' consider p.64 needs to be expanded. • Family housing should be encouraged in the City and District centres to encourage a balanced communities. 	<p>centres do lend themselves to higher density / smaller units as they are highly sustainable locations and tend to be more suitable for blocks of flats.</p> <p>Questioned whether population density was the same issue as HMO's and I considered there was a potential for double counting.</p> <p>It does not matter whether other areas are also classed as 'red' this is a tool that will be used to then apply a stricter mix. The issue however really is whether the policy approach applied to the 'red' areas is appropriate.</p> <p>A number of sources had been used for the information, including the Census.</p> <p>There were separate policies that relate to HMO's in the Local Plan and it was not an issue to be resolved by this document. Furthermore there are additional policies in the Local Plan that seek to protect housing units and would not allow the loss of units of residential accommodation. The loss of a residential unit is a matter to be determined through a Section 54A application. However as a principle would not support a policy which supported</p>
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