

To: Council

Date: 26 January 2026

Report of: Director of Law, Governance and Strategy

Title of Report: Public addresses that relate to matters for decision – as submitted by the speakers and with written responses from Cabinet Members

Introduction

1. Addresses made by members of the public to the Council, and questions put to the Cabinet members or Leader, registered by the deadline in the Constitution, are below. Any written responses available are also below.
2. The text reproduces that sent in the speakers and represents the views of the speakers. This is not to be taken as statements by or on behalf of the Council
3. This report will be republished after the Council meeting as part of the minutes pack. This will list the full text of speeches delivered as submitted, summaries of speeches delivered which differ significantly from those submitted, and any further responses.

Addresses and questions to be taken in Part 1 of the agenda

1. Address from Deborah Glass Woodin
2. Address from Martin Reed

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1. Address from Deborah Glass Woodin

When I arrived in Oxford in the early '90's, one of the first campaigns I was involved in was to oppose the demolition of the dozens of houses on the south side of Botley Rd – you heard right: houses – to make way for the 'out-of-town' retail warehouses. Those very buildings are now being demolished, just 30 years on. To build much needed homes? No, to build tech labs.

Since then, we have seen the expansion of Blackbird Leys, the building of Barton Park. Proposals for or delivery of, housing on precious pockets of open space and local parks – Spindleberry in Blackbird Leys; Bertie Park and Redbridge Meadow in South Oxford and the Horse Fields in Iffley, to name but a few.

The Local Plan has stated clearly over the years that housing will be the priority for this Council. Have we come even close to solving the housing crisis? Hmm...

Yet, acres of brownfield are still identified in this Plan for employment. Maybe housing 'could' go there too. As the Scrutiny committee was told last week. But it should be designated for housing?

Because this City and this County, is not short of jobs, quite the opposite. And it is blessed with full employment.

It is short on housing. Homes fit for the future, at prices local residents can afford. It is also short on local parks, play spaces and nature.

The wealth inequalities in this City aren't because there are hundreds of people looking for work. They are because people don't earn enough in the jobs they do.

Because if you can't afford your rent or mortgage payments, or find somewhere affordable to live, everything else suffers. As it does if you can't easily access open green space and nature.

But just playing the housing numbers game won't solve this problem – as we've seen for the last 30 years. The building of 250 homes, for e.g., on the Wolvercote Paper Mill site was great – if you had upwards of £1/2m to spare to buy one. You're unlikely to find Oxford teachers, nurses and lab technicians living there.

And where is the data, that should be informing the discussion today:

- What is the proposed balance between new jobs (on the one hand) & new housing & green spaces in the city (on the other) & how has this been reached?

In particular, has any of the land previously identified for employment-use been firmly re-allocated for housing? This was a promised policy change around a common theme in many responses in previous consultations. If the plan continues to prioritise a huge increase in employment and economic growth over better provision for housing for the existing population's needs, then Oxford's housing crisis will continue to worsen, as will the related infrastructure issues including flooding, sewage, water scarcity, congestion, pollution and loss of green space.

How can the 'more of the same' strategy this Plan contains, that created and exacerbated these very real challenges we need to solve – result in anything other than more of the same?

- where is the summary report of responses to the last consultation, that should have informed this stage and the explanation of changes made in light of that consultation or the reasons for ignoring it. That information needs to be provided before the plan can properly be considered. The lack of its availability once again undermines democratic process in this City. It reinforces residents' feelings that 'there's no point in participating, no-one listens' and undermining the stated corporate priority to support thriving communities.

And finally, how can you possibly be expected to give full, due consideration to this 900 page document in the time given? The fact that the summary of the responses to the previous consultation is proving to also be very long is simply not a good enough reason not to provide it, but rather suggests more time and attention needs to be given to this entire process. What's the rush?

Be visionary. Be creative. Be courageous. It is in your gift to request more time, or dare I suggest, a different, more democratically-generated Plan, that is genuinely fit for the future this City and its current residents.

2. Address from Martin Reed

We are here to request that you remove Policy SPS8 Land at Meadow Lane from the draft new Local Plan and make the **full 2.5 acres** available as a local resource for outdoor education and nature connection, with the opportunity of a Heritage Lottery grant, to benefit children and young people and the future resilience of the city.

This ancient meadow is unsuitable for **any** housing:

It is now included in Oxfordshire's Local Nature Recovery Strategy and easily qualifies as a City Wildlife Site. It provides the beautiful rural setting for Iffley's Conservation Area and draws many residents and visitors along the quiet route for active travel bordering the meadow. The value it brings, environmentally, socially and economically, is reflected in the Council's own multifunctionality scoring system, where it would score 13 /17 and it should be protected as Core Green infrastructure.

This particularly sensitive site is identified by the Council's own surveys as unsustainable. With 15 constraints in the Sustainability Appraisal (which is an underestimate, given all the errors and omissions) is the most constrained of any SPS site in this Local Plan. In particular, the site policy fails to recognise that the meadow itself is an essential part of the rural Conservation area and any building here would cause significant harm to the Conservation Area and fail to meet the heritage requirements of the NPPF.

The reduction in the minimum housing number from 29 to effectively ZERO confirms the site is **wholly unsuitable for any housing**. Keeping SPS 8 risks the **soundness of the entire plan**.

The Council needs to get the balance right: the benefits of any housing here would be far outweighed by the multiple harms of any development on this irreplaceable site.

I was born in Iffley and have wonderful memories of childhood. I grew up surrounded by open fields.

I believe a Meadow School on the Horse Fields would bring all the things I enjoyed in my childhood. The teachers from local schools within walking distance of the Horse Fields say this too, with benefits to:

1. mental and physical health
2. learning, social and practical skills and job opportunities
3. Connection between children and communities of different background
4. A feeling of belonging in the local landscape

They also say that it would address the high levels of disadvantage of the children in their catchment areas.

I am who I am because of the childhood experiences I had in nature.

The fields allowed me to be a child, unjudged by adults. I made camps, climbed trees, played games, and explored. I saw birds' nests with eggs in, watched ants' nests. I ran freely racing and laughing with other children of all backgrounds. We appreciated nature and were healthy and happy. We weren't Vitamin D deficient!

As a result of enjoying the outside, I have made lifelong friends.

I attribute my health to early physical activity.

I return mentally to these places that no longer exist, when I need space and peace and wish to remember these lovely times.

I still get artistic inspiration from childhood visions of these places and from the birds and animals I saw, which formed my early imagination.

I became a professional gardener as a result of enjoying the outside.

I was lucky: virtually everything apart from the Horse Fields has now gone.

I feel every child should have the opportunities I did.

The size of the Horse Fields meadow is **just large enough** at 2.5 acres to take managed footfall while protecting and nurturing the wildlife here.

And now we have the support from the local wildlife trust to make this a reality.

BBOWT are leading the submission of Reconnecting Bernwood, Otmoor and the Ray (which we call RBOR), a £4.1 million National Lottery Heritage Fund bid with 12 partners across the landscape between Oxford, Bicester, Aylesbury. Our focus is nature, communities, and heritage, with a specific focus on reconnection, which aligns perfectly with the Meadow School Iffley proposal.

We are working with the organising committee of FOFI to pilot Meadow School sessions with Greyfriars Catholic School and draw up a proposal for working with them for our bid. Should our bid be successful, we can offer some funds to set-up and run the Meadow School, extra capacity, and expertise from our twelve partners and wider RBOR stakeholder network.

We are very excited to be involved in supporting the development of the meadow school, and are confident in FOFI's commitment and ability to develop a brilliant community resource that will last long after our five-year funding is up.