

COMMENTS ON LOCAL PLAN 2034 – FINAL PUBLICATION VERSION 2ND

STRAT14 – Land at Wheatley Campus, Oxford Brookes University (OBU)

1. In Appendix 1 Glossary the definition of a Strategic Allocation is “An allocation of land for housing or employment which has the potential for significant development that contributes to achieving the spatial vision of an area. In the context of the emerging SODC Local Plan, it refers to sites of 500+ dwellings.”

On the basis of this definition the OBU site should not be a strategic allocation unless there is a hidden agenda whereby the words “to deliver at least 300 new homes” really means 500+ dwellings.

The effect of including the site as a strategic allocation is that it is unable to be considered in any meaningful way by the Wheatley and Holton Neighbourhood Plan as the policies relating to this site are determined solely by SODC in this Local Plan.

2. The site is in Holton, not Wheatley, and its location is therefore incorrectly described throughout the document. This has the following implications:

2.1 The prescribed density of 45dph relates to Larger villages. The site is in Holton which is a Smaller village where the prescribed density is 40dph. This density in itself is nonsense because it would be totally inappropriate in the small rural village of Holton in which it is located.

2.2 In paragraph 4.122 it states “There are limited alternatives for accommodating additional development at Wheatley other than through Green Belt release.” As the site is in Holton, not Wheatley, the consideration of alternatives at Wheatley is irrelevant.

2.3 In paragraph 4.122 it states “The site is adjacent to the village of Wheatley which is already largely inset from the Green Belt.” The fact that Wheatley is already largely inset from the Green Belt is irrelevant to this site as it is in Holton which is washed over entirely by the Green Belt.

2.4 The site is not in Wheatley and would be an isolated settlement. One of the reasons for refusal by the SODC Planning Committee in December 2018 of an application for 500 houses (P17/S4254/O) was “In light of the lengthy walking distances between the development site and facilities in Wheatley, and the poor connectivity with Holton, the development would represent a detached and poorly integrated neighbourhood where future occupants would be highly reliant on private transport. The mitigation, in the form of pedestrian and cycle link improvements, would be insufficient to reduce distances to the extent that they would become attractive alternatives to private transport.”

3. STRAT14 paragraph 1 page 76 – “ Land within the strategic allocation at Wheatley Campus will be developed to deliver **at least** 300 new homes within the plan period.”

There is no reason to be non-specific about the number of new homes expected and indicates a lack of clarity by SODC Planning Policy team as to the developable area, either deliberate or not, and just keeps options open to permit any number above 300.

Of the seven strategic allocations within this Local Plan, this is the only one with a nebulous number. All the others which are much larger and therefore more difficult to estimate the number of dwellings refer to “approximately” or, in the case of Berinsfield, “around”.

A concept plan has been produced on page 76 which we are given to understand is not policy. Why is it not possible for this to be the policy and give definition to the words “development should be focused on the previously developed and eastern part of the site” and “in general, development on the undeveloped, western part of the site will not be considered appropriate” which currently mean nothing as there is no indicated line between the eastern and western part. This would define the developable area and with it the number of dwellings at the density relevant to this site.

4. The Local Plan proposes to inset the whole site from the Green Belt.

4.1 There is no reason to remove the whole site from the Green Belt. It is a partially developed site within the Green Belt and the already developed area with some minor adjustment can be redeveloped.

4.2 In paragraph 4.122 it states:

“The exceptional circumstances justifying a review of the Green Belt in this area are:”

- “There are opportunities for the site to be well connected to surrounding settlements, particularly the major urban area of Oxford City, by public transport and cycling.”

The site is already well connected to Oxford City by public transport and cycling. Removal from the Green Belt will not improve this. With regard to surrounding settlements, refer to the reasons for refusal of a recent application in 2.4 above.

- “To inset the site from the Green Belt will enable the most efficient use to be made of a partially developed site.”

There is no explanation of the term “efficient use”. These are just meaningless words which merely demonstrate SODC’s inability or unwillingness to decide on a developable area, an area which can easily be defined.

- “There are limited alternatives for accommodating additional development at Wheatley other than through Green Belt release.”

This circumstance is irrelevant as the site is not in Wheatley (see 2.2 above).

- The redevelopment of the site will provide new homes, helping to meet identified housing needs, including affordable housing needs.”

Holton Parish Council has always supported redevelopment of the previously developed part of the site for housing but object to the loss of Green Belt land and SODC’s lack of clarity about the developable area and the number of dwellings.

All of these are flimsy or irrelevant statements which are not exceptional circumstances for altering the Green Belt boundaries and are not “fully evidenced and justified”.

5. Paragraph 4.126 states “The development capacity of the site is constrained by primary education capacity in Wheatley. There is limited potential for primary school provision to be extended at present. Therefore, taking into consideration new homes that are likely to be delivered through the Wheatley Neighbourhood Development Plan, the number of new homes to come forward on the Wheatley Campus site will need to reflect available primary education capacity.”

These are SODC’s words so the inclusion of a strategic site with a plan for at least 300 new homes with limited or no potential for an increase in primary school provision is ludicrous, unsustainable and unacceptable.

6. STRAT14 paragraph 2(iv)c

What do the words “with **at least** emergency, pedestrian, cycle and bus access to the west” mean? Does it mean that the western access could also include vehicular access and, if so, why does it not say so?

7. Local Infrastructure

No attention has been paid to the effect of the proposal on the local road network. In view of its isolated location the majority of new homeowners will use their cars. Wheatley village is already used by many as a rat run to avoid the congestion at the Headington roundabout endangering the lives of children and parents walking to and from both the primary and secondary schools. A significant increase in the local population would exacerbate this. Any proposal for significant development should include provision for upgrading the local road network to cope with it and not just throw more vehicles onto already congested roads.