

SODC LOCAL PLAN 2034 – EXAMINATION IN PUBLIC

HEARING STATEMENT – Ginette Camps-Walsh

On behalf of

Beckley and Stowood Parish Council and Beckley and Stowood Neighbourhood Plan Steering Committee

Matter 7. Are the plan's infrastructure policies sound?

Issue a. Highways

The highway infrastructure plans have not been decided or properly costed and the impact assessments are considered to be completely inadequate. Most of the detailed work carried out was on the original sites from the previous version of the Plan. There has been no adequate assessment of the effect of the new strategic sites in the Green Belt around Oxford on the ring road, on other major roads and just as importantly on local roads. The Barton Park development of over 885 homes has yet to be completed and the effects on congestion and journey times have not been assessed for this either.

In the response to the Regulation 19 consultation by Oxfordshire County Council it is stated that the Headington Roundabout "*has capacity issues*" and that there are two possible solutions:

- Reconfiguring the Headington roundabout, or
- Building a new 'Link Road' from the Marston/Elsfield junction on the ring road through the site Land north of Bayswater Brook (LnBB) to the A40 between Sandhills and Forest Hill.

These have not been fully costed – the former, not at all and the latter – the 'Link Road' the costs are not considered correct and do not include many items including the acquisition of land. There is also no County Council funding and the developers have not agreed to fund it.

Even the most recent reports show no agreement between the developers (promoters of the sites) and the County Council.

There has been no consideration of how key workers and commuters from the parishes and villages adjacent to any of the sites around Oxford are to continue to get to work. There is no public transport into Oxford from these proposed strategic sites, and no cycleways, even if the distance was considered acceptable. It is certainly too far to walk, from most of the proposed strategic sites into the city. It is suggested that it is more likely to be quicker to commute into Oxford from villages along the A40 than from parishes and villages around Oxford near the proposed strategic sites.

Some of the site evaluations state that there is an assumption of zero car ownership. This is unrealistic, as cycling and walking are only possible for relatively short journeys and not in inclement weather and public transport uses the same road network as other vehicles, so journey times will be longer.

Therefore, the Local Plan is not considered to be sound. It has not been positively prepared in respect of highway infrastructure for some of the proposed site allocations, affecting the ability to deliver these sites within the plan period. As such the local plan fails to be consistent with National Policy.

Issue b. Rail

Three rail networks go into Oxford – GWR, Chiltern and Cross Country and the Oxford-Milton Keynes-Cambridge Arc will complete a rail link to Milton Keynes and eventually to Cambridge allowing sustainable commuting into Oxford from all the destinations along their routes. There is no evidence that SODC or Oxford City has had any discussions with LGAs covering these settlements to co-operate, but undoubtedly people will commute into Oxford along these routes.

The Cowley branch line has been included in the 2017 budget to give funding for a study. The East West Rail Consortium Board 30th January 2020 stated the report had been positive but did not discuss funding or a start date.¹

In summary, the local plan supports strategic transport investment (Policy TRANS 1b) but is not supported by a comprehensive package of improvements and funding. It is considered that there is too much emphasis on individual proposed allocation sites producing transport assessments or transport statements rather than a more strategic approach, which would certainly be required for rail infrastructure provision. This could well result in allocated sites unable to deliver the required improvements to avoid increased congestion or increased rail capacity.

As such the infrastructure policies are not considered to be sound. They have been neither positively prepared nor will they be effective within and beyond the plan period. This also means that the policies are not consistent with National Policy.

Issue c.

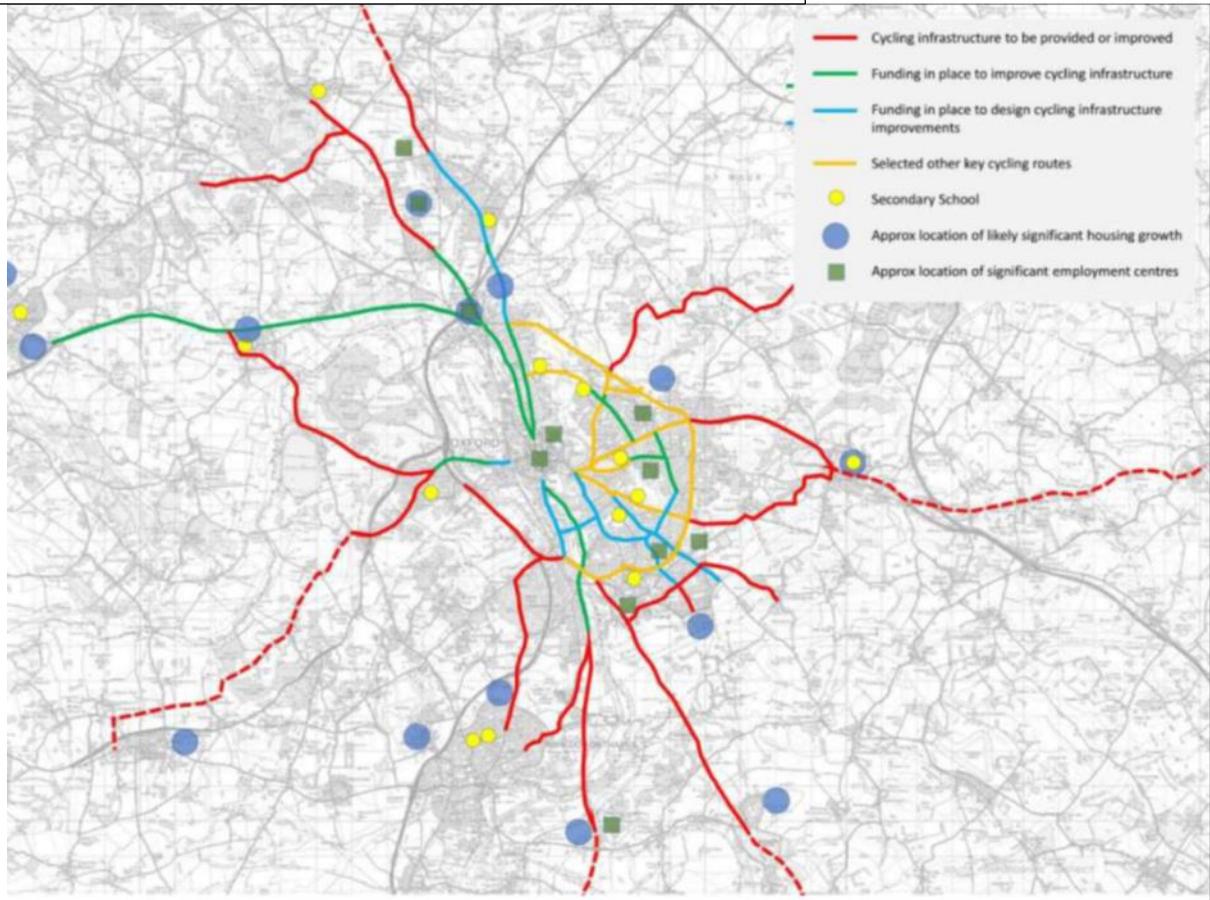
Sustainable transport modes

Cycleways

The Oxford Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan does not extend beyond the ring road and is improving infrastructure within Oxford. The Greenways Cycling project for Oxfordshire is similar to the one in Cambridge. It has no plans to extend cycleways to the east in the parishes of Beckley, Elsfield, Stanton St John or Forest Hill. It does however show a cycle route using the Elsfield Road, an existing cycleway along the A40 and others further south, which are to be provided or improved. There is currently no timetable or budget for this.

¹ Agenda Item 6: Oxfordshire Rail Corridor Study -

GREENWAYS PROJECT MAP – Oxfordshire County Council



The Local Plan policies for the provision of sustainable transport modes are not considered sound. In order to promote sustainable transport modes, making them an attractive and viable choice for people, such as cycling, routes would need to be established that are safe and avoid potential conflicts with other road users. Whilst there is an aspiration in the Local Plan to promote more sustainable transport modes there is no evidence that opportunities for routes or funding have been fully explored or assessed during the plan making process. For all the strategic sites it is the developer that is expected to provide the infrastructure provision, even where links cross other private land. This lack of co-ordination may lead to failure to deliver, which therefore means the policy is not effective or consistent with National Policy.