



Oxford's Core Strategy An update from the Chairman

Background note

In the lead article of *July 2007 Newsletter No 107* I outlined the City Council's moves towards the adoption of its **Core Strategy Document**. Once adopted, this will be a key component in the group of documents constituting the **Local Development Framework**. This will, in turn, supplement and eventually replace the **Local Plan** in controlling future development. Members may find it useful to refer back to *issue 107* (available at www.oxfordcivicsoc.org.uk see **Publications**) to check on the progress that is being made.

New developments

Following the completion of the Examination in Public of the draft South East Plan, the inspectors have recommended a number of changes which affect Oxford. These are principally:

- (a) A Strategic Development Area (SDA) on the southern edge of Oxford (Grenoble Road) – the **South Oxford SDA** – to allow an **urban extension** of at least 4,000 dwellings just beyond Oxford's boundary.
- (b) An **increased quota of housing** for Oxford.
- (c) Increased support for **economic growth** in the Central Oxfordshire sub-region, which includes Bicester, Witney, Abingdon, Didcot, Wallingford and Wantage.

The Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government is expected to publish her response in the next few months.

Since the city's Core Strategy must conform to the South East Plan, and in anticipation of the minister's response, the city is now consulting on possible revisions to the draft Core Strategy. Full details are available at Ramsay House, at the city's Public Libraries and are published on www.oxford.gov.uk/corestrategy.

The consultation period runs until 18th April, with a questionnaire which it is hoped will receive a wide response.

In addition, special **Exhibitions** have been organised and are running as follows:

Ramsay House: 24th – 28th March; 7th – 9th, 11th & 14 – 18th April

Blackbird Leys Community Centre: 31st March – 4th April

Westgate Centre: 10th April

There will be **Drop-in Sessions** at Blackbird Leys Community Centre on 31st March, 2 – 8pm, and at Oxford Town Hall on 15th April 5 – 8pm, when you can express your views in person to the appropriate officers.

Summary notes

In reaching their conclusions, the inspectors have argued that there is a serious shortage of housing to meet existing needs in Oxford, and that this could not be met within the city without putting unacceptable pressure on its remaining green spaces, and damaging Oxford's special character. In addition:

1. An urban extension south of **Grenoble Road** would of course require a review of the Green Belt there, and this would have to be highly focussed and selective to prevent other Green Belt erosion. It would also require particular agreement between the City and South Oxfordshire District Council.
2. With the housing target pressure within the existing boundaries somewhat reduced, the city's suggested revisions of the draft strategy include the dropping of **Southfield Golf Course** from the list of possible development sites, and the demotion of land at **Summertown** (near Summer Fields school) to contingency status – only to be developed for housing if no alternatives were available to meet unavoidable target demands.
3. The southerly shift in population distribution would justify an upgrade in the **Cowley Centre** to a new and more important Primary District Centre status, and **Blackbird Leys** would become a new District Centre, though the urban extension would have its own infrastructure also.

In conclusion

This is only a summary of proposals that will have far-reaching effects on the future development and character of the city.

I hope members will find time in the remaining weeks of consultation to study the details and register their opinions.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tony Joyce', with a long horizontal flourish underneath.

March 2008