SOUTH OXFORDSHIRE CORE STRATEGY
EXAMINATION IN PUBLIC

MATTER 12
THE ENVIRONMENT

STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF
MRS G CALLAWAY
MR DAVID SMITH
MRS SAMANTHA EARLE

JULY 2011
1. This submission is made on behalf of Mr G Callaway, Mr David Smith and Mrs Samantha Earle (“the Landowners”) and relates to Matter 12: The Environment (Chapter 14).

2. In formulating this submission, the Landowners have had regard to the various questions posed by the Inspector and have, where appropriate, sought to respond directly to those questions.

(A) **Green Belt Reviews: Is the CS proposal for local green belt reviews at Wheatley and Berinsfield (to be progressed in site-specific detail through the Site Allocations DPD) founded on evidence of clearly demonstrated ‘exceptional circumstances’?**

3. In seeking to respond to the above question, the starting point is paragraph 2.7 in PPG2, which states that where existing local plans are being revised and updated, as is the case here, “existing Green Belt boundaries should not be changed unless alterations to the Structure [development] Plan have been approved, or there are exceptional circumstances.”

4. The South East Plan (May 2009) is part of the development plan. Green Belts are dealt with at Policy SP5 under the ‘Spatial Strategy’ heading. Policy SP5 confirms that:

   “The existing broad extent of Green Belts in the region is appropriate and will be retained and supported…”

   It then goes on to confirm that:

   “In order to meet regional development needs in the most sustainable locations, selective reviews of Green Belt boundaries are required

   i. In the Metropolitan Green Belt to the north east of Guildford, and possibly to the south of Woking, and

   ii. In the Oxford Green Belt to the south of the City”.

   The policy states also that “smaller scale local reviews are likely to be required in other locations, including around Redhill-Reigate...” The possible need for those “small-scale reviews” is then confirmed in the Core Strategy policy in the London Fringe section of the RS.

5. The Oxford Green Belt is dealt with under Policy CO4 in the Central Oxfordshire section of the South East Plan. Policy CO4 confirms that a Green Belt will be maintained around Oxford and confirms the five purposes of that Green Belt. It states also that:

   “A selective review of Green Belt boundaries will take place on the southern edge of Oxford …”
And that the selective review:

“Will identify land to be removed from the Green Belt to facilitate sustainable urban extension to Oxford with minimal impact on village identity and the landscape setting of the City”.

6. In addition, the Policy CO4 confirms that:

“Development in the Green Belt will only be permitted if it maintains its openness and does not conflict with the purpose of the Green Belt or harm its visual amenities.

Policy CO4 does not make any reference to local reviews in South Oxfordshire or indeed any other Local Authority in Oxfordshire. In our submission, this is because no such reviews are contemplated in the RS.

7. Against this background, there is no basis in policy for “local reviews of the green belt” at Berinsfield and Wheatley. The next question is therefore whether there are any exceptional circumstances which justify these “local reviews.”

8. The Council’s position in this regard is set out paragraphs 7.19 and 7.20 in the Submission draft Core Strategy (CS) and 1.1 – 1.3 in SODC/3, the Council’s Response to Inspector’s Additional Questions (May 2011). Essentially, its arguments are that:

Wheatley

- It is a local service centre and needs to maintain this role
- Its employment provision is in an area constrained by the Green Belt
- Small, single digit reductions in school age children and economically active adults are predicted in the development plan period.

Berinsfield

- It is in need of regeneration
- Some further land may be needed to improve the mix of housing
- It is a local service centre

9. The landowners’ view is that the matters listed above do not amount to ‘exceptional circumstances’ sufficient to justify the proposed local green belt reviews. In particular, there is no evidence that Wheatley’s role as a local service centre is currently under threat; and there are other initiatives that can be explored to regenerate Berinsfield, if the existing housing mix needs to be improved.

10. In addition, it is clear from the Council’s SHLAA that the other less constrained larger villages such as Benson have the capacity between them to absorb the 740\(^1\) or 1066\(^2\) dwellings that are to be allocated to the larger villages through the Site Allocations DPD.

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\(^1\) CS, Table 7.3
\(^2\) Revised figure following Inspector’s conclusions regarding the Council’s reliance on windfalls

Submissions on behalf of Mr Callaway, Mr Smith & Mrs Earle
11. Having regard to the foregoing, the CS proposal for local green belt reviews at Wheatley and Berinsfield is not founded on evidence of clearly demonstrated ‘exceptional circumstances’. As drafted, Policy CSEN2 is therefore unsound.