Schedule of changes
Core Strategy
Guidance Note
February 2012
This guidance is designed to help you comment on the schedule of changes for South Oxfordshire’s submitted core strategy. This is not the standard response form. You can find this form on our website at www.southoxon.gov.uk/corestrategy or at the district council offices, libraries, one stop shops and town council offices.

Importantly, you need to be aware this consultation is more formal than in the previous stages of the strategy. Because of this, your comments should be on the proper form and sent in before the closing date. We will not be able to accept comments received after Friday 23 March 2012 by 4.30pm precisely. We are only accepting comments that relate to the changes identified in our schedule of main modifications. The schedule of ‘main modifications’ also contains grey shaded boxes. You do not need to submit comments relating to these shaded boxes, as they have already been previously consulted on. You will also see that the documents contain a schedule of ‘other modifications’. Again you do not need to submit comments relating to this schedule as they are only there for clarity and do not require publication.

The Planning Inspectorate sets out the structure of this process. This is an independent body that will examine/assess our strategy. We’ve provided a list of key words at the end of this document to help with any terms you’re not familiar with.

Submission comment forms

Part A: Contact information

You must complete all your contact details in the first part of the form. We use this to identify who has made the comment(s), so it is important you complete this fully. This section is also known as Part A and you will only need to complete this once. You will notice at the top of this page that there is a box starting with MM for you to put in your ‘main modifications’ reference code. You can also do this in Part B. Part B is the section where you will actually be making comments on our core strategy. It is important here that you use a separate sheet for each comment you want to make and keep your comments clear and concise.

Part B: Making a comment
If you are making a comment then it is important you refer to the paragraph number, policy reference or proposals map reference that you are commenting on. Here is an example:

Each comment that you make must relate to a Main Modification change reference, which is not shaded. If you would like to make more than one comment, you will need to use a separate sheet each time (Part B of the comment form).

Comments

Comments need to fall under two main areas, legal compliance or soundness (soundness is broken down further into three areas, explained later on).

On the comment form, it will look like this:

As a broad rule of thumb:
- If you are commenting on how we prepared the core strategy then the issue will be one of legal compliance.
- If it is the actual content of the strategy you wish to comment on or object to, then this relates to soundness.

Looking at legal compliance
If you think your comment is about legal compliance you need to consider answering the following questions:

- Is the core strategy consistent with the council’s production timetable known as a Local Development Scheme?

You can find a copy of our Local Development Scheme on our website by going to [www.southoxon.gov.uk/lds](http://www.southoxon.gov.uk/lds). See example of this document right.

- How has the community been involved in the process and has the council *failed* to meet the council’s Statement of Community Involvement?

The Statement of Community Involvement looks like this (see left). Use this to check what we are committed to do. You may have your own ideas about what we should have done, but an inspector will base his decision on the commitments we give in the Statement of Community Involvement. You can find this on our website by visiting: [www.southoxon.gov.uk/localdevelopmentframework](http://www.southoxon.gov.uk/localdevelopmentframework)

- Does the core strategy comply with the Town and County Planning (Local Development) (England Regulations) 2004 as amended 2008?

- Was a Sustainability Appraisal (SA) Report produced and how has it been carried out? (You can find copies of our Sustainability Appraisal from each of the stages we have published the core strategy, along with the most up to date version, which relate to March 2011 submission version and related schedule).

- Does the core strategy conform with national and regional policy?
With the changes emerging from national government, along with high court challenges in the courts, we have put together a few paragraphs to explain the council’s position in light of this.

‘In November a judicial review brought by CALA Homes against the revocation of the South East Plan by the Secretary of State was upheld. The decision of Mr Justice Sales was that Section 79 powers could not be used to
revoke Regional Spatial Strategies. However, the government responded by saying the revocation should be regarded as a material consideration and that the soon to be introduced Localism Bill would regularise the situation by returning decision making to local authorities. A follow up judicial review by CALA Homes brought about a ruling that local authorities could not consider this intention as a material consideration1.

The South East Plan is currently an on-going part of the Development Plan. However, it is the stated intention of the government to formally revoke the regional spatial strategies as part of the Localism Act. It can therefore be expected that before the core strategy is adopted the South East Plan will have ceased to exist and it will not exist for the duration of its life. Therefore, the submission core strategy remains drafted on the basis that the South East Plan does exist, while allowing scope for life outside of the South East Plan. Notwithstanding this, the scope of the changes made since the original revocation in July 2010 are such that the core strategy remains in general conformity with the South East Plan.

- Does the core strategy reflect our Sustainable Community Strategy? We have tried to ensure that the South Oxfordshire Strategic Partnership, who prepares the Sustainable Community Strategy, has been involved throughout the development of the core strategy. You can find this information by visiting www.southoxon.gov.uk/sop

1 Letter from CLG Steve Quartermain to Chief Planning Officers 10 November 2010
Looking at soundness

There are three areas to think about when looking at whether or not our Proposed Submission Core Strategy is sound.

1. Justified

Our core strategy must be set on a robust and credible evidence base. This includes:

- Proof of involving the local community and key stakeholders. The easiest way to look at this issue is to look at all of our previous consultation reports and summary comments, generated from all of the engagement activities we have undertaken. All this information is available on our website by visiting www.southoxon.gov.uk/corestrategy

- Making sure the choices made in our core strategy are backed up by solid facts and research. Our core strategy should be the best approach when considered against reasonable alternatives. These should all be realistic and have under-gone a sustainability appraisal process looking at the pros and cons of each option.

You can find out about all the studies that we have used to guide us in our decision making by visiting our evidence page on our website at www.southoxon.gov.uk/evidence. We have also produced a number of background papers on the different policy areas, which should help you understand the reasons for our choices, along with the sustainability appraisal report.

2. Effective

This means we must be able to foresee that the policies and proposals in our core strategy can actually happen and are deliverable. It should therefore include:

- Sound infrastructure delivery planning. Remember this document is a ‘live’ document. This means that it is continually being updated with new information, when this known.

- No barriers to delivery from regulations or through national planning policies

- We have maintained regular contact with Government Office for the South East throughout the development of our strategy. Please also see our previous national policy paragraph also.

- Delivery partners are on board and signed up. These are key organisations other than the developers, such as Oxfordshire County Council, who are responsible for Highways and Education
provision in our district. Alternatively this may also refer to Thames Water or the National Grid.

- Consistency with neighbouring authorities’ strategies. We have worked closely with the Vale of White Horse on key policy areas concerning Didcot and we have made sure to involve Aylesbury Vale, Reading, High Wycombe, Oxford City and Oxfordshire County Councils in the development of our strategy.

- Flexibility (although major changes may need a formal review).

- Monitoring (including, how and when proposals will happen) and how this is clearly shown in and linked to our annual monitoring report. The strategy itself contains an implementation chapter, which you may find useful to revisit before comment on this area.

3. Consistent with national policy

Our core strategy should be consistent with national policy. If however, you feel that there is a fully justified local need which means that we should depart from this, then make clear in your comments with the support of evidence, what the local circumstances are.

If you think that our core strategy is missing a policy, then before making your comments go through the following checklist;

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description of relevant area</th>
<th>Tick (✓) for yes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Is the issue which you are raising already covered specifically by any national planning policy or in the Regional Spatial Strategy?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is the issue which you are raising covered by any other policies in the core strategy or in any other Development Plan Documents (DPDs) in our Local Development Framework (LDF)?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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If you ticked any of the boxes then it is important to remember that there is no need to repeat national or regional policies, or policies in other documents we have produced.

If you are clear that a policy is missing then think about this;

- If the policy is not covered elsewhere, in what way is the core strategy unsound without the policy?
- If our strategy is unsound without the policy, what should the policy say?
Appearing at the examination

There is a section on the form, which allows you to indicate whether or not you would like to participate at the oral part of the public examination. Please remember that it is the inspector that decides who is heard at the examination. You may feel that that your written submission(s) is/are enough. This is also perfectly fine, as this is part of the examination process and all the representations will be submitted to the inspector. This section is here again, as the Inspector may decide that he would like to hold additional hearing dates.

Group responses

Where you are part of a group with a common view, then it would be helpful if the group could submit a single representation outlining their concerns, rather than submitting a large number of individual comments repeating the same points. The group should also make clear how many people it is representing and how it has been authorised.

General advice and information

- Make clear why you feel our strategy does/does not meet the legal compliance check and/or the three tests of soundness.
- Ensure you are clear and to the point.
- Ensure that you back up your points with clear evidence to justify your comments.
- If you are still having problems you can call the planning policy helpline 01491 823 823.
Key words

Here is a list of key words and definitions you may find useful:

**EiP or Examination in Public** - An examination in public is an independent assessment to make sure the plan satisfies the regulations for its preparation and is ‘sound’. On the comment form you will find a section where you can say whether you would like to appear at the examination.

**Greenfield neighbourhood** - Is a name change since the previous consultation stage and simply means houses built on a greenfield site.

**Implementation strategy** – This looks at how we will make sure the strategy happens and how we will check this.

**Infrastructure delivery plan** – This explains how infrastructure such as schools, water supply, etc will be provided using information supplied by the appropriate infrastructure providers.

**Live** - In this context a live document will continue to be updated with the latest information.

**Planning Inspector** - The Planning Inspector is an independent person from the Planning Inspectorate appointed to conduct the examination. You can find out more at www.planning-inspectorate.gov.uk

**Representations** - Are the formal comments submitted on the consultation document. In this case, we are asking for representations on the Core Strategy.

**Sound** - There is no specific definition for sound. However, it should demonstrate good judgment and be able to be trusted and based on credible evidence.
Other language versions and alternative formats of this publication are available on request. These include large print, Braille, audio cassette, computer disk and email. Please contact the Policy Team on 01491 823725 or email planning.policy@southoxon.gov.uk