

Nico Heslop

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Your reference:
Our reference:

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Dear Nico,

Thank you for your time last week. I write to update you on the progress of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan and provide a summary of the current position. Following the close of the Publication period, the Council was advised that the landowners, Homes England, of one of our strategic sites had been unable to reach agreement with their tenants, Martin Baker, to secure the land for housing. The site, Chalgrove Airfield, had been included in the draft Local Plan as a strategic allocation (3,000 homes), although it has been objected to by the County Council.

Given the position with the Chalgrove site, Council needed to review how best to proceed with the Local Plan. The landowners have confirmed that they will continue to seek to reach an agreement through commercial negotiations, but in the event this cannot be reached, they are prepared to make full use of their statutory powers, which includes Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) powers. Clearly though, the outcome of any CPO cannot be determined by Homes England.

The progress of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan was considered at a meeting of Council on 15 May, where Council resolved to;

- a) subject to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government confirming that submission of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan in January 2020 would not significantly impact on the Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal or the freedoms and flexibilities proposed as part of it, to ask officers to reassess all sites capable of forming a strategic allocation promoted through the Local Plan (to 2033) process up to the end of the Regulation 19 publication period (including all strategic sites proposed in the October 2017 Regulation 19 document) and to bring a draft Regulation 18/Regulation 19 document (as required) to Cabinet and Council to seek approval for publication for consultation; and
- b) in the event that such confirmation from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government is not forthcoming to the satisfaction of the Head of Partnership and Insight and the Head of Planning, in consultation with the Leader of the council and the Cabinet members for planning and partnership

and insight by no later than completion of the site filtering exercise (expected July 2018), to adopt Option 3, set out in the report of the Head of Planning to Cabinet on 10 May 2018, and to ask officers to bring the Regulation 19 (October 2017) document including proposed additional reserve site(s) to Cabinet and Council to seek approval for publication for consultation.

Officers have commenced work on the necessary review of sites which could be capable of providing a strategic allocation and will be reporting to Councillors in July the outcomes of that work. Whether the Plan includes new allocations or safeguarded sites, this site filtering exercise will need to be undertaken. I welcome the support offered from the Planning Inspectorate and the Planning Advisory Service offered to us and which has been taken up.

We are liaising closely with our partner authorities in Oxfordshire regarding the Growth Deal linked aspects of this matter and I will write to you again shortly to provide an update on our discussions. We will also provide more detail of the process we consider appropriate to progress the Local Plan to submission and be in a position to give a stronger indication on the most likely timescales for this.

We very much appreciate the suggestion of a meeting with yourselves, as we discussed during our recent telephone call, and I would be grateful to understand your availability to meet with myself and my planning team during W/C 9th July where we can fully update you on our proposed approach and exchange views on the best way forward.

Yours sincerely,

Mark Stone
Chief Executive