Members of the Public Correspondence

From: Member of the Public #1
Posted At: 17 June 2013 12:10
Posted To: planningpolicy@oxford.gov.uk
Conversation: West End development consultation comments
Subject: West End development consultation comments

Dear Planners,

Your consultation comment box will not take sufficient comments it is limited to 900ish

So here are my “other” comments

Southern End of Site

1. There does not seem to be any appreciation in the documentation, of the underground conditions under the Meadow, the ice rink and the coach park.
About 50-60 years ago this was the city council rubbish dump, what we would now call a land fill site.
As a child I can remember seeing the city council waste trucks driving in through the meadow gate with the birds wheeling overhead.
The area under the coach park was filled first, the Ice rink site followed next, following that the meadow.

Old railway sidings

2. What will be done about the brown field conditions of the old railway yard,

3. Ice Rink

I note there is a delay on using the ice rink site.
Please remember, it is not forgotten, that a large amount of money was raised by the public for this structure (tens of thousands of pounds) and thanks to Councilor Barbara Gatehouse, it was built.

The existing site should be worth a higher value than a south area site

The Developers of the site MUST be made to commission and build a replacement BEFORE Taking occupancy of the existing site.

As one of the elite cities in the world, the replacement should mirror the facilities at Nottingham and Sheffield, an Olympic sized (60 x 30) double pad with seating for 2000 spectators interlinked with an Olympic 50 metre pool and diving pool. Please note Southampton and Richmond councils promised replacements for their rinks in 1990 and they still have not been built.
A lack of trust now exists across the UK


I am concerned that the level of vehicle parking will reduce the value of the site. Most families have 2 cars. Students usually have a car these days, so the development will cause a pile of problems as the standards for parking do not reflect the actual use.

5. Bike Parking

Students who have bikes will not leave them outside. Preferring to take them inside the flats and obstruct the staircases with them.
Secure facilities must be provided at the rate of at least 1 bike per student.

Thank you for your time
Dear Sir or Madam,

There was very little space for comment in the Oxpens survey online, or in the postal version, so I have written my comments here.

Oxpens Development Survey

Flood risk:
Oxpens Meadow is a flood meadow, protecting the surrounding residential area from flood damage. This use was amply demonstrated this past winter. The suggested amphitheatre in the meadow will likely spend a portion of each year under water.
Significantly more attention needs to be given to the flooding implications of this development. As the environmental report says,

"There are sufficient uncertainties associated with the current representation of flooding at Oxpens to cast doubt on the EA's Flood Map. This means that the impact of development upon water levels and flood risk is not fully understood. As such the likelihood or geographical scale of the effect, its significance, permanence or reversibility cannot be predicted or evaluated."

I am concerned that development on this land will increase the water run-off into the Thames, and increase flooding problems downstream. Looking at the map provided with the leaflet, around half of the land they propose to build on is currently under grass and trees. Laying down tarmac and buildings is going to increase flooding problem. It would be helpful to have further public consultation after further evaluation of the flood impact has been conducted.

Amenities for residents:
The Royal Mail building, petrol station, and garage may not be particularly attractive buildings, but they are all extremely useful to existing local residents. Indeed, I have used all three in the last month. It would be a shame if redevelopment reduced amenities rather than increased them. Would there be some way of incorporating some of these amenities into the development?

Community space
It would be good to see this redevelopment incorporating some community space for residents to use.

Schooling
St Ebbe's primary school is already being expanded to cope with existing demand for primary school places in the area. How many additional spaces will be needed as a result of this development? What plans are in place to cope with this additional demand?

Transport links
The city centre already suffers from serious congestion at peak times. At present there does not seem to be an integrated review of the impact of the West End Development together with the Westgate development on local transport infrastructure, or an integrated plan to improve the situation. It would be useful for such information to be available to the public before further public consultation.
Dear Sir,

I have visited the exhibition and read a number of the supporting documents relating to the proposed Oxpens masterplan.
I have, however, been unable to find any statement as to what is to happen to the three main activities currently on the site, namely, the coach park, the small businesses and the PO sorting office. The consequences of moving these activities elsewhere is, in my view, far more significant in their potential impact on the city than the proposals in the masterplan, and I do not see how the council can agree the plan without having assessed these consequences.

1. The coach park is, as anyone can see, a major part of Oxford's visitor offering. In its present location, it is just about possible for people to walk to and from it to the city centre. I am not aware of any other similarly sized location within walking distance, so where will it go? There may be some that will argue that it is not the city's responsibility to provide such a park, and that coach companies should find their own solution, dropping off and picking up in the city centre (as some do already). The consequences of this could be serious - coaches parking in residential roads, additional journeys into the centre and so on. I should like to know what solution is to be offered and whether this is likely to cause additional unintended consequences for central Oxford.

2. The small businesses provide a valuable service to city dwellers, including a petrol station. Again, where could these be relocated, and has an assessment been made of the additional vehicular journeys this will entail if they have to move a significant distance from the city centre?

3. The PO sorting office provides an essential service in holding mail (parcels that cannot go through letterboxes, and those that require a signature or surcharge) for residents who are not at home when the delivery is made. With the growth of internet shopping, this is presumably a growing aspect of the office's work. Although not particularly central, the present office is at least within easy walking distance of the city centre. Where will this facility move to? Again, a sizeable area of land will be needed, and so sites are limited - an assessment needs to be made of the additional journeys that will be generated if this were to move out of the city centre.
It may be that I have missed the answers to these in the huge number of pages put forward in the consultation, but in any event I should like to know what the answers are, please.

Yours faithfully
There are only 300 characters of free text available to comment in the Oxpens SPD consultation, so I submit my comments here:

Notably, none of the images supplied show incorporation of the existing ice rink, which you state will be retained in the medium to long term. It would be good to see this accommodated, rather than ignored.

The development plan seems to have been drawn up by someone who doesn't know the area. Page 28 of the Oxpens SPD indicates that the bottom end of Oxpens Meadow floods only once every 25 years, which is incorrect; Oxpens Meadow floods every year (see photo 5 on p56), which is exactly what a floodplain is meant to do. The BRBR site was flooded throughout most of this winter following the clearance of all vegetation from the area, even when the Meadow was dry.

Sinking foundations into a floodplain displaces the water capacity it would otherwise hold and the floodwater will move elsewhere; this is why Oxford Ice Rink is suspended from masts, to reduce the requirement for deep foundations.

The design styles chosen in DP1 are unattractive and will date badly, leading in few decades to a situation seen elsewhere in the city where ugly 1960s architecture is being demolished.

Re: Q4; there are already bridge links to Grandpont and the nature reserve.

There is insufficient car/cycle parking provision available for residential units, particularly given the complete lack of bus routes along the Oxpens Road. There should be provision for individual transport.
Dear Sir/Madam,

Please find attached my response to the public consultation. You have restricted on-line responses to 300 characters which prevents any meaningful consultation.

1. Building in the floodplain must not endanger existing or new property. Building on this site should require full compliance with all recommendations of the Environment Agency and ideally a separate flood risk analysis done by the council working for the residents of Oxford - not the developers. The proper and regular maintenance of all flood channels forever to allow the rapid removal of water.

2. Thames Water to provide adequate sewerage removal for all new and existing housing. This currently doesn't work in St. Aldate’s and the Botley Road.

3. Student accommodation is not needed - Oxford Brookes has mothballed a student block.

4. A new health centre would be much more useful.

5. Don't use people as noise baffles - use proper noise baffles for the railway.

6. Woodchip central heating systems - the subsidy is being phased out since wood is being imported from N. America - hardly a carbon neutral option! Use proper building design to make the houses zero carbon e.g. Bedzed, etc. Make the housing something to be proud of - no more ugly, cramped, no private outdoor space developments like the awful OCHA flats in the Botley Road.

7. RIBA Case for Space - make the housing a suitable size for people to live in. No more rabbit hutches for landlords to exploit please.

8. Use restrictions on sub-letting in the freehold of family houses and flats to exclude buy-to-let landlords. This will reduce the market value of the properties creating 100% affordable housing for local people and new communities.

9. Specify passive house code 6 for any housing association housing - making the housing affordable for tenants to live in well into the future.

10. As many surfaces as possible - drives, gardens and minor access roads - would need to be kept permeable to reduce run-off. New street trees in existing and new communities to such up lots of water and provide shade in a hotter climate.

11. New council office accommodation would be better placed on north side of Thames Street to act as a baffle to residents against new shopping and proposed leisure facilities. Bus transport could then run between the offices and the shopping to separate noise and pollution from residential areas.

Please build something we can be proud of. Just refer to those OCHA flats in the Botley Road if you want to remember what not to build.

Yours sincerely
First of all I am very glad that you're developing that area of Oxford. I live in Abingdon, and so am frequently in Oxford, and my impression of the area south and west of the Westgate is that it's a bit run down and so doesn't correspond with the character of the city centre and colleges.

That said, honestly I don't know the area very well. Whether I've come into Oxford by bus from Abingdon/park&ride, or I've travelled into the train station or by coach into Gloucester Green, I've never found myself in the Oxpens area. Since reading about these developments I've hoped to take a look, but so far (in showing visiting friends around the city, for example) I haven't strayed beyond the centre. And that's going to be the core of my point.

I really like the twelve design principles laid out in the leaflet, but I feel like the design proposal misses the geographical situation of the project. You've got two significant boundaries - the river and the railway tracks, and the development is out of the city centre. I don't think you're going to have enough people going through it to sustain any economic activity there, such as shops and restaurants. And given the plans, I also don't think you're going to achieve sufficient population density of residents to sustain these things either.

I've seen plenty of places (even areas in well established cities) where, if there aren't enough people passing through, businesses don't survive. For all the good intentions, and for all the initial investment, those places decline. And that would be extremely unfortunate in this area.

Like I said, I like your design principles. I really like them, actually. And I think that the river could make this area very attractive. I just feel like there needs to be something significant enough to either attract people to it from out of the city centre, or that means that people tend to pass through it.

You're probably tired of hearing people suggest a transport hub at the Oxpens site, but the advantage of that would be people going through the area, and using the shops and restaurants (and the green spaces, which I think are very important in cities). If there's not going to be a transport hub there, what's going to lead people out of the city centre all the way over to the river? It'll need to be something good. People need a lot of persuading to not do the cheapest or most convenient thing.

The first thing that comes to mind is a multiplex cinema - a better one than the Odeon on George Street, which is quite unappealing. Whenever my wife and I want to see a film, given that we live in Abingdon we have two choices - go to Didcot, or go to the Vue at Kassam Stadium. If we're in Oxford it's really inconvenient to get to Kassam by public transport, and when we went to the George Street Odeon we were really disappointed by its quality. If there was a good multiplex at Oxpens we'd walk there and buy a couple of tickets. We'd probably get something to eat around there too. We could easily spend fifty pounds in that area with a movie and meal. Otherwise we'd probably just stay in the city centre, or head elsewhere.

My preference would be a transport hub, since I think that would make a huge difference to Oxford. However, if not that, my opinion is that there needs to be something compelling, otherwise the intentions of this development are just going to lead to sad decline.
Q9 - Supplementary Comments regarding the Opera Development plan.

The need for additional services e.g. schooling & community centres does not seem to be addressed in the plan. Many family services, especially schools & nurseries, are stretched to the limit currently. This area traditionally attracts families, with many occupying flats & smaller homes, as well as houses designed for families. Therefore, with many more homes being built, family or otherwise, I am surprised to hear that no extra educational facilities are being planned. This could exacerbate an already overstretched provision.

The plans seem to be mainly focussed...
on commercial, for profit, buildings, which, although necessary, do not build a cohesive community. I hope the need for "trendiness" does not trump the need for long-term usable space where businesses & residents would be encouraged to stay or nurture the new development.

I am pleased that the ice-rink is likely to remain in the medium to long-term. We value this amenity greatly. We work with the local residents, many of whom use the ice-ink. With the use of "bonus slice cards", it is an affordable place for young people to safely be entertained. Many youths are encouraged to have aspirations instead of just being bored & making trouble. Local children were competing internationally level recently, some achieving places on the podium. I attended
The recent nursery & toddler sessions & my daughter takes weekend lessons. It has just had a much-needed refurbishment & as a result we are using it much more now. I strongly feel that this healthy & fun amenity should not be removed. It also draws business from miles around. Many of the people we meet here are also actively involved in the life of the ice rink, although living some distance away. It could even be used for more activities, such as ice shows & competitions, drawing even more people to the area and attracting more income for the council.
I have looked at the plans for this site. I live in Rowland Hill Court on Osney Lane (facing the royal mail sorting office car park) and therefore have an active interest in this project. On the whole I like the look of the plans, but there are two major concerns for me:

1. **Traffic** – if you change the road layout on Becket Street this could drastically increase the traffic flow around the block of flats where I live. Whilst I have no particular issue with traffic coming to/from the facilities in the new development, I am worried that this road will be used as a major cut through for traffic going from the Cherwell Valley college direction to Botley Road and the City Centre – ie by-passing the main road. I am also concerned that buses will block up this road.

2. **Parking** – I am not entitled to any visitor’s parking permits therefore when people come to visit they have to fight for the extremely limited 1 and 2 hour bays outside where I live. The next closest places are some distance away. I think this is unacceptable anyway, but I imagine that the new development will reduce parking even further. I feel that this will become even worse if these plans go ahead, but if you could provide extra spaces for visitors of residents that live in the area then this would not be a problem. (I pay nearly £2000 in council tax a year and don’t think it is reasonable that every time someone comes to see me they cannot park).

Please convince me that these plans are not going to negatively affect my property, particularly with respect to traffic noise and parking.

Best regards
Oxpens Masterplan Supplementary Planning Document

This is a supplement to my response ID #233150 submitted on 28 July 2013

This document has a number of MAJOR faults, which call into question its usefulness in its present form:

1. At a time when there are two separate Masterplans being developed for adjacent areas of the City (the Westgate Development and the Rail Station) the Oxpens Masterplan pays little or no attention to coherence with either of these developments.

2. Although some alternative land uses for the site are listed in paragraph 6.51 and Appendix C, they are not examined, and no reasons are given for them being “thought not appropriate for this site”. This is a major omission for such an important strategic city-centre site, lying between the rail station and the city centre. Full justifications need to be given for rejecting any alternative land uses; they do not need to take up the whole of the site, leaving space to accommodate some of the already proposed land uses.

3. The potential for the Oxpens to make major contributions to the economy and infrastructure of the City and indeed the whole central Oxfordshire region is largely ignored.

4. There is little or no consideration of the likely needs of the City and the central Oxfordshire region in the future (e.g. Oxford as the centre of a knowledge-based science and technology economy stretching from Harwell to Milton Keynes), particularly in regards to public transport.

This document is myopic, more about what the surroundings can do for a small isolated area called the Oxpens, not what the Oxpens can do for its surroundings, or how it can fit in to their needs and those of the City as a whole. While the Oxpens SPD may fit in with the 2007-2016 West End AAP, the City and surrounding region have undergone major developments since it was written, and the AAP needs to be modified to take account of these.

Most of the Design Principles are self-evident, a bit like motherhood and apple pie. It would make no sense to propose a low-quality development.

As mentioned above, no account is taken of the neighbouring Masterplans being developed for the Station and the Westgate, yet they will both impact heavily upon it, and it is ludicrous for them not to be considered as one Masterplan. I thought this is what Planning was supposed to be all about.

There is a once-in-a-century opportunity to undertake a coherent development of a major area of the city, comprising the station area, the Oxpens and the Westgate development, to create a flagship development that could be as significant in city and architectural terms as its mediaeval buildings, which would also provide a badly-needed focus for the West End, which the West End AAP has so far failed to provide.

The Oxpens is simultaneously

(a) part of the West End, a part of the City that is largely composed of unrelated small developments and lacks any coherence or focus,

(b) a part of the City centre, which is itself a huge focus for employment and tourism, and should be an area of high development value,
(c) a part of Oxford City within the ring road, with all its services, industries and residential areas, and

(d) a part of the central Oxford region, which is focussed upon Oxford City, with some 40,000 commuters travelling daily from neighbouring towns and villages.

The Oxpens Supplementary Development Plan needs to reflect all of these, not just the first of them. Whereas there are other sites that could be used for housing, the unique and strategic position of the Oxpens needs to be developed to include its potential for a transport hub for rail, bus and cyclists, which will enhance the commercial value of its surroundings, producing a much higher economic return than the uses proposed in the Supplementary Development Plan. It is depressing to find that neither City nor County appear to be engaging effectively with Network Rail to achieve this synergistic outcome for the Station-Oxpens-Westgate area. Network Rail will inevitably concentrate on the rail needs of the station site, though initiatives such as Transport Minister Norman Baker’s “Door to Door” should be informing the need for excellent and comprehensive intermodal transfer between different forms of public transport. It is difficult to see how the existing station site, and in particular the proposed uptake of some of the existing inadequate forecourt space by Chiltern Railways’ platforms, can accommodate existing needs, let alone those of immediate increases in Chiltern Railways and East-West Rail passengers, and the predicted increases in rail passenger numbers over the next two or three decades.

**Oxpens including a Transport Hub**

Studies by Arup for Oxfordshire County Council in 2002-2004 showed that the Oxpens alternative to expansion of the rail station at the existing site (in each case with the four through platforms that Network Rail are seeking) was slightly more expensive. However, this was due to the cost of resignalling, which is now to be undertaken anyway as part of regular renewals. It took no account of the cost of disruption to traffic using the Botley Road during construction work, nor of the problems associated with construction work taking place alongside an operating railway, which would be largely avoided by constructing a new station on a new site. Arup also highlighted the advantages for the railway in operational flexibility associated with the Oxpens proposal.

Examination of Arup’s proposals shows that the tracks and platforms would take up little more than the space currently occupied by the Oxpens Business Centre; the rest of the site would therefore be available for the station buildings (including retail and other uses such as offices), other commercial, retail and residential development.

Moving the bus station from the station forecourt to a site alongside the Oxpens station site would allow more services to use it, allowing the restoration of some or all of the connectivity that has been lost over recent years (e.g. for services from North Oxford). The bus companies would be keen to include inter-town services at this site. Further advantages would include:

- removal of bus layover sites throughout Oxford (e.g. Magdalen Street East), improving the public realm,
- improved traffic flow through Frideswide Square (a) due to removal of the need for services using the existing station forecourt to cross east-west traffic, (b) due to separating the bus station function from the major crossroads (i.e. N-S and E-W) function of the Square, and (c) to reduction in the number of bus services using the Square
- the forecourt and parts of the existing station site could be potentially be developed commercially for other uses, just as was the old Rewley Road Station site.
- it might be possible to close the Gloucester Green bus station, which has poor connectivity, and is not liked by the bus companies, and carry out redevelopment or change of use.

A by no means insignificant advantage of having the railway station and the bus station alongside the railway tracks (as, e.g. in Chalon-sur-Saône in Burgundy) would be removing some or all of the need to use student accommodation as a noise barrier, as proposed (!!) in the Oxpens SPD.
A transport hub at this site would be closer to Carfax than the existing station, and would allow the
development of improved pedestrian access to the centre (maybe parallel to the Mill Stream),
avoiding the narrow pavements, noise and pollution of New Road and Hythe Bridge Street, and the
confusion of Frideswide Square for pedestrians and cyclists. Development of the station buildings,
together with hotel, business and retail accommodation, in the hands of a competent architect (?Sir
Nicholas Grimshaw) could provide Oxford with a flagship development that would give a sense of
arrival in a modern city, which is totally lacking at the present station site. This would be particularly
appropriate for Oxford’s new function as the centre of the Science Arc, which may be expected to
attract many more international businessmen and visitors, who will be well aware of the attractions
of competing university cities such as Freiburg im Breisgau (D), Montpellier (F), Singapore etc.
I fully support the idea of high quality development for Oxpens, but the devil will very much be in the detail. Oxpens Road is currently awful, and I understand that traffic pollution is unacceptably high at times. The road is likely to become even busier as a result of the Westgate development, and the suggested re-routing of coaches to and from Gloucester Green. The proposed buildings on the west side seem too tall and bulky, making more of a canyon of the road, and the envisaged Oxpens Square is just half a square which would be completely compromised as a public space by the continuous movement of traffic. I like the proposed water management feature illustrated on p. 55 of the masterplan. Roadside streams for drainage were very much a feature in St Thomas's, and, in Freiburg, Germany, for example, such streams today are a source of delight for people of all ages.

The student housing block envisaged beside the railway is likely to create another unwelcome trackside range of barrack-like buildings, obscuring enticing distant views of the city centre from Osney Lane footbridge. This space could surely be better used for offices and businesses, effectively upgrading the Osney Lane Business Centre.

The proposal assumes the eventual loss of the ice rink, and there are no cultural facilities which might attract people to the new area. A modern concert hall has long been wanted in central Oxford, and the Magnet Centre would sit here more happily than wedged against the castle mound. The Oxpens area in St Thomas's parish was very much part of Town rather than Gown, and it would be good to see space here for an Oxford City Heritage facility, financed in part perhaps by the Community Infrastructure Levy. For a city rich in heritage, Oxford's civic history is at present sadly neglected, rather indeed as Oxpens has been.

The West End Action Plan envisaged preserving the ecology of Osney Meadow, which is an important outlying portion of Osney Abbey's land. Old maps show a circuit of tree-lined riverside walks from the abbey to Castle Mill Stream and back through the Oxpens. This circuit was first sundered by the building of the railway line in the 1840s and much of it was then built over during the 20th century. The surviving section between the main railway bridge and Oxpens Road could, however, be reinstated, and proposals to build approaches to a new foot and cycle bridge and even a cafe in this area do scant justice to the history of the site. The former Gasworks Bridge link is, in any case, quite close to the meadow, and siting the cafe in the most low-lying and flood-prone part of the meadow seems very unwise. The Oxpens SPD seems to envisage converting the site into more of a performance space with terracing which would look highly artificial. The riverside parts of the meadow and former allotments on adjoining BR land must surely be the 'natural' level, higher ground elsewhere having been raised as necessary for railway or other developments. If extra flood prevention work is necessary, is there scope instead for re-creating in some form the channel between Castle Mill Stream and the main river which effectively made the southern portion of the meadow an island until the mid 20th century?
Oxpens masterplan consultation July 2013

Context:

1. Oxpens/St Ebbes was largely destroyed by City planning in the 1950s-70s, pointlessly, and has been a severely blighted and under-used area ever since, presenting a depressing and frustrating sight to residents and visitors alike. It is therefore particularly important that the planning process is successful this time around.

2. This site is up for development at a point in time when the Westgate, the railway station area and Frideswide Square are also up for discussion and redevelopment. It is very important that all of these are addressed in a thoroughly joined-up, integrated way as they are adjacent and share a number of issues notably flood risk, air pollution, access and traffic, the need for improved public realm and for social housing. It is not currently evident to the public/residents that there is any joined up thinking about these.

Flooding

3. It is not clear how the Westgate underground carpark is not going to impact by increasing flood risk in other nearby areas including Oxpens and Grandpont (where I live). It would be helpful to receive information on this.

4. I am concerned that the risk of flooding on Oxpens meadow may be increased by development of other parts of the Oxpens site, to the detriment to its use by residents and locals. Can the Council please clarify if this is the case?

Trees

5. Will all the existing trees on the Oxpens site be preserved? If not, which will not, and why? Will all the existing trees on Oxpens Meadow be preserved? If not, which will not, and why?

Motorised traffic

6. The Westgate development presupposes more car traffic from shoppers and more deliveries to the shops etc. How is this compatible with improving the already poor air quality in the Oxpens area and neighboring areas such as Frideswide Square and St Aldate’s? How will air quality in Oxpens Road – particularly when it has more traffic, is narrowing and bordered by tall buildings – be improved?

7. How will Oxpens Road and other roads be improved and ‘tamed’ for cyclists and pedestrians when there is more traffic? Why are improvements for cyclists and pedestrians treated in the plans as an ‘and also . . .’ rather than fundamentally integrated as much as providing for motorized transport? With more traffic (as predicated by the Westgate plans) and tall building along the road, it is likely to become more uncomfortable and intimidating for cyclists and pedestrians.

Cycling

8. A safe off-road cycling and pedestrian route from south Oxford/Grandpont to the railway station has long been an aspiration of residents, and this has been raised with the City and County Councils. Residents of south Oxford and Grandpont believe there is an undertaking to provide a safe route alongside the river (north side) and railway line (east side) as part of the development of
Oxpens. This route is not shown on the plans. Will provision of such a route be assured as an integral part of these plans? This is not a ‘leisure’ route; it is for commuters, residents, workers, families, visitors and travellers of all sorts.

9. The Castle Mill Stream route provides a direct safe off-road route for cyclists and pedestrians from south Oxford/Grandpont to the city centre, Jericho and many other places, which for many destinations is more convenient and preferred to the circuitous south Oxford cycle route with its difficult route and awkward, dangerous crossing of Oxpens Road/Thames St/Speedwell St. The Castle Mill stream route needs to be properly recognized and facilitated as a cycling and walking through route, including fully joining up the route along the millstream, and providing a crossing at Oxpens Road. Fully opening up the mill stream route has been an aspiration of residents and the city council for a very long time. This is not a ‘leisure’ route; it is an important off-road through route for workers, residents, students and visitors.

10. The Oxpens area needs to be fully accessible by cyclists and pedestrians from other parts of the city. This requires, among other things, sufficient east-west, as well as north-south, routes including across the Westgate site in a number of places (in addition to the north end (Queens St) and south end (Oxpens Rd/Thames St).

River crossing

11. There is already an excellent and attractive walking and cycling bridge over the Thames very close to Oxpens meadow – the old gasworks railway bridge. It seems overly luxurious to have an additional bridge so close to this. Where a bridge over the Thames is really needed is below Folly Bridge near the Four Pillars Hotel, which would provide an extremely valuable car-free cycle and pedestrian route between south Oxford and east Oxford and thence Headington and beyond.

Transport hub

12. Oxford needs a transport hub for rail, bus and coach interchange along with cycling and pedestrian provision, and fully designed and integrated with city centre and city-wide access, travel and transport planning and facilities. Since land at the railway station was sold for development, it is not clear that the railway station redevelopment in situ will adequately accommodate this. Is serious thought being given in the context of the Oxpens planning to the provision of this facility?

Public square and public realm

13. How will the proposed public square be designed to work successfully? A local milk and paper shop would be useful, but otherwise retail development seems unlikely to provide the key to success. There are already a number of under-used eating places in the Castle. Woodin’s Way unfortunately does not provide an example of successful public realm – the space (which I know well) is dismal and dead; please do not think that it is a model to follow. A sense of place is not provided by uniformity of materials, but by people and their activities and attitudes; good design is important, but there is much more to it than this.

Castle site and Paradise Square

14. How is Oxpens (and the Westgate) being planned in relation to the Castle site - which is magnificent but seriously under-used – to mutual benefit?

15. Inside the Oxpens development

Why is the opportunity not being taken to have a car-free development? This would be significant in developing a more genuinely sustainable area. Will the buildings have solar panels? How would a genuinely pedestrian and cycle priority area be assured. On-street parking is hazardous for cyclists. Will sufficient and convenient cycle parking be provided?