The Highway Agency

Thank you for your letter dated 14 June 2013 inviting the Highways Agency (HA) to comment on the Draft Oxpens Master Plan Supplementary Planning Document (SPD).

The HA is an executive agency of the Department for Transport (DfT). We are responsible for operating, maintaining and improving England’s Strategic Road Network (SRN) on behalf of the Secretary of State for Transport.

The HA will be concerned with proposals that have the potential to impact the safe and efficient operation of the SRN, which in this case is the A34 and M40. We have no comments to make on the SPD at this time, however we look forward to working in partnership with Oxford City Council and Oxfordshire County Council to identify potential transport requirements to deliver the Oxford West End proposals.

I hope this is helpful.

Yours sincerely
Thank you for consulting us on this matter. We received the letter on 17 June 2013 and we have the following comments.

Flood Risk

Flood risk is considered primarily in terms of fluvial (river) flooding. As a minimum and to comply with the requirements of national and local planning policy, the development of this site should be safe and not increase flood risk elsewhere.

We would welcome any opportunity to reduce flood risk through development where practicable. This could be achieved by providing an additional volume of floodplain storage when implementing mitigation measures, by implementing best practice design of sustainable drainage features, restricting surface runoff beyond existing greenfield rates or providing a degree of betterment for runoff generated by existing impermeable areas.

Section 6.94 of the SPD makes reference to potential to accommodate a cafe/restaurant on the edge of Oxpens Meadow. Any proposal for built development within the 1% plus climate change flood extent would need to be justified in terms of the Sequential Approach to development layout and appropriate and safe in line with table 3 of the NPPF Technical Guidance. It would also need to be designed to ensure that it was not at risk and did not increase flood risk elsewhere i.e. it needs be considered in the context of the floodplain compensation scheme.

We do not consider that raising the building (presumably on stilts) would justify its construction in this location and as a sole means of mitigation. To provide resilience against the impacts of flooding and should a cafe/restaurant be essentially within an area of flood risk, the building could be raised above the design flood level.

We are pleased to see that the SUDs section is included but we would advise that a reference to the SUDs management train and source is included. Please note: we would not want SUDs features to be located within the flood mitigation area so it may be more appropriate to focus on robust source and local control measures as referenced in the SPD.

We note that a bridge crossing over the Thames is being considered. This should be designed to minimise the impact on flood flows. The following general criteria should be considered:

- Bridges should be of clear span design.
- The abutments should be set back from brink of bank to allow for maintenance and improvement works and provide suitable space to allow mammals to pass.
- Hydraulic capacity should be at least consistent with the existing watercourse and able to accept a 1 in 100 year flood flows plus an assessment for climate change (an additional 20%).
- The Soffit level of the bridge should be set 600mm above the maximum flood water level to allow clearance from debris and wave action, and a further 300mm to allow for changes in water level due to climate change.
- The bridge should not cause flooding either at the site or upstream and downstream of the site.
- Afflux backwater effect should be kept to a minimum and in all cases must not exceed 75 mm.

Nature Conservation
We feel that the section titled Physical Sustainability: Ecological Assets (page 98) needs to be reworded.

Ecological assets, especially the landscape features in Oxpens Meadow, notably adjacent to the watercourses of the River Thames and Castle mill stream should be protected and where possible enhanced. The enhancement of such routes through Oxpens meadow will improve the visual and ecological landscape assets.

By improving existing, but also by adding new habitats, we can expect an increase in biodiversity in the area adding additional amenity value to the development.

Groundwater and Contaminated Land

We note that the only reference to contaminated land is in section 3.67, where is states “3.67 Land remediation or mitigation measures may be required. Site contamination and ground condition surveys will be required to inform any detailed design proposals.”

We advise that the following additional wording is included:

Add an additional bullet point to to DP3: A Sustainable Scheme - 5.15 “Facilitated the remediation of any contaminated ground”.

Add the following a paragraph on contamination to Physical Sustainability. possible along the lines of the following

“Development of the Oxpens site has the potential to facilitated the clean up of contamination which may have resulted from various contaminating activities and past industrial heritage. Providing long term benefits to the environment and protecting human health.”

Contaminated Land section 3.67 should be reworded to include a sentence recognising that past activities may have resulted in contamination.

3.67 Identified historical and current activities within the Oxpen area may have resulted in contamination. Land remediation or mitigation measures may be required. Site contamination and ground condition surveys will be required to inform any detailed design proposals.

Yours sincerely,
Thames Water Utilities Limited

Posted At: 23 July 2013 12:07
Posted To: planningpolicy@oxford.gov.uk
Subject: OXPENS MASTER PLAN SPD - RESPONSE ON BEHALF OF THAMES WATER UTILITIES LTD

Thames Water Utilities Ltd (Thames Water) Property Services function is now being delivered by Savills (UK) Limited as Thames Water’s appointed supplier. Savills are therefore pleased to respond to the above consultation on behalf of Thames Water.

Thames Water are the statutory water and sewerage undertaker for the District and are hence a "specific consultation body" in accordance with the Town & Country Planning (Local Planning) Regulations 2012.

It is unclear at this stage what the net increase in demand on our infrastructure will be as a result of the proposed development. Therefore the developer needs to consider the net increase in water and waste water demand to serve the development and also any impact the development may have off site further down the network, if no/low water pressure and internal/external sewage flooding of property is to be avoided.

It is also unclear at this stage as to how the building will be constructed, and therefore Thames Water is concerned that water mains and/or sewers immediately adjacent to the site may be affected by vibration as a result of piling, possibly leading to water main bursts and or sewer collapses.

We would therefore recommend that the developer considers the following.

The developments demand for water supply and network infrastructure both on and off site and can it be met
The developments demand for wewage network infrastructure both on and off site and can it be met
The surface water drainage requirements and flood risk of the development both on and off site and can it be met
Any piling methodology and will it adversely affect neighbouring utility services.

Should the developer wish to obtain information on the above issues they should contact our Developer Services department on 0845 850 2777

Thames Water support paragraph 3.60 and 3.61 on page 33 in its reference to Utilities Infrastructure, and would like to see this section remain within the SPD as it moves to adoption.

However in order to offer clarity and to strengthen the section paragraph 3.61 should also reference water supply. We suggest the below amendments.

3.61 Any development should not be commenced until the applicant can demonstrate how and when the required water and waste water infrastructure requirements will be addressed connected. Any required sewer network upgrades should be undertaken before or in line with the development to ensure there are no problems and that the water quality of the aquatic environment is protected. Thames Water should be contacted in relation to any development proposals to discuss available capacity.

I trust the above is satisfactory, but please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any queries.

Yours sincerely
This report sets out Oxfordshire County Council’s view on the proposal.

Annex 1 to the report contains officer advice and the comments of local members. Annex 2 contains a proposed amendment to the location and orientation of public space.

Overall view of Oxfordshire County Council:-

These comments are in response to Oxford City Council’s consultation on its draft Oxpens Masterplan Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). The County Council has commented informally on earlier drafts of the SPD and we are pleased to see that many of these comments have been used to inform this revision of the document.

The County Council continues to work closely with the City Council on several highly significant city centre projects, notably Oxford station & Frideswide Square, Oxpens, and the Westgate Centre. The redevelopment of the Oxpens site is of strategic importance to the regeneration of the West End and enhancement of the city centre. It is therefore imperative that this site is developed in such a way that it is an integral part of the City Centre. Strong physical linkages between the site and the City Centre need to be delivered both as part of any specific proposal on this site as well as being considered as part of other development proposals in the West End.

Oxpens Road is of strategic importance in the local transport network and at the same time is a potential barrier to integrating the Oxpens site with the City Centre. Whilst the County Council supports in principle the introduction of measures that reduce that barrier, any measures introduced to achieve it must not compromise the wider function of Oxpens Road in the transport network.

The County Council is updating its wider transport strategy for Oxford, working closely with the City Council, in order to take into account the infrastructure opportunities and challenges arising from development opportunities in the West End. This work is drawing upon a number of studies currently underway, with recommendations emerging in the autumn. The content of this SPD may need to be updated to reflect the outcome of that work.

Detailed comments on the SPD can be found at Annex 1 and a summary of the key issues is set out below:
1. General

The council welcomes the increased emphasis in the SPD on integrating development on the Oxpens site with other West End developments and on improving linkages with the city centre. However, the SPD must make it a requirement to ensure that any development proposal for this site delivers strong physical linkages between the redevelopment of the Westgate Centre, the station and the Oxpens site. The County Council is working closely with the City Council and the developers of the Westgate Centre to ensure that the layout and treatment of the area between Westgate & Oxpens supports delivery of this requirement.

We note that the SPD accommodates the potential to retain the ice rink while the rest of the Oxpens site is redeveloped. It is also noted that, should the ice rink become available in the longer term, the SPD establishes a framework that would allow for redevelopment of that site in phase 4.

The SPD must be explicit in setting out the County Council’s expectation that the costs of infrastructure and service improvements arising from specific proposals for this site are fully funded through developer contributions. For measures required “on-site” these will need to be secured through a S106 agreement. For measures that are required “off-site” these need to be secured either through a S106 agreement or through inclusion within the Community Infrastructure Levy “123” list. It is the County Council’s expectation that the costs of mitigation measures associated with any development proposal are fully accounted for within the development costs of the site.

2. Public realm

Despite our previous comments, the location and orientation of the proposed public square has not been amended in the SPD. As we set out in our response to the previous informal consultation, our preference remains that the public square should be located to the south east corner of the site, to have an aspect onto Oxpens Meadow and towards the Westgate development. Positioning a public square in the proposed location on Oxpens Road is a major missed opportunity.

We note that the City Council has not accepted the County Council’s position to date, because of the need for civic space which is not adjacent to green space, and because the ice rink site may not be released for redevelopment for some considerable time. However, we continue to be of the view that our preferred location would add value and build upon both the accessibility of the Oxpens Meadow as well as reinforcing the linkage between the Oxpens site and the rest of the City Centre, in particular the opportunities presented by the Westgate Development.

An alternative approach might be to use a phased approach to create two smaller public spaces rather than one large space. We attach a diagram (Annex 2) to our response which shows this alternative option. The northern space could be implemented in the first phase of the development to make a positive contribution to improving the public realm along Oxpens Road from the outset of the development by creating a small public area with trees and benches. The space on the south east corner could be created when the site for the ice rink is released for re-development, creating a sunny area with more attractive vistas which would enhance the links between the back of John Lewis, the Oxpens site and the river.
Improvement of the public realm linking the Oxpens site and the Westgate development is of key importance. This would have the added value of strengthening the “green lung” that runs along the Castle Mill stream from the town, through the Oxpens site, drawing people down to the river, linking the city with South Oxford and the Grandpont nature reserve.

The County Council supports the provision of a bridge in the SPD, which will improve pedestrian and cycling access for tourists and residents to other parts of the city and to the River Thames path.

The County Council supports the inclusion of a café on Oxpens Meadow as a facility for tourists and residents.

3. Resource management

The County Council supports a proposal for a Combined Heat and Power energy centre on the site and suggests that the centre is designed with the flexibility to link to other district wide heating systems in the future as they are developed across the city.

The development principles should encourage developers to facilitate recycling and composting through the provision of space and appropriate facilities for residents and non-residential/commercial land uses.

4. Transport

There will be a need to reduce the barrier which Oxpens Road currently presents between the Oxpens site and city centre. However, any measures introduced must not compromise the wider function of Oxpens Road within the transport network.

It would be beneficial to realign the north-south boulevard as shown in Annex 2, to make the cycle route through the site more direct and to move the Becket Street junction further away from the junction with Oxpens Road.

The County Council is undertaking transport modelling of the whole city centre network with a view to understanding the transport impacts of the proposed developments at Oxpens, the rail station and Frideswide Square. This work is drawing upon a number of studies currently underway, with recommendations emerging in the autumn. The content of this SPD may need to be updated to reflect the outcome of that work.

5. Economic offer

The County Council welcomes the revision to the SPD which proposes that small, local retail facilities would be appropriate on the Oxpens site, which is outside the city centre primary shopping frontage.

The proposed development of the West End provides an opportunity for local jobs in the construction, retail and customer services sectors. However, in order for that opportunity to be realised, the local population will need to have the necessary skill sets. It is recommended that the Oxfordshire Local Economic Partnership and Oxfordshire Skills Board are asked to commission a new study to assess the likely demand for construction,
retail and customer service skills for the proposed developments in the West End. Reference to this requirement should be made within the final version of the SPD.

6. Extra Care Housing

There is a requirement to cater for an elderly population in Oxfordshire. The provision of Extra Care Housing provision in Oxford, especially in the west and the north of the city, is inadequate. The cost of 50 units of extra care housing will need to be factored into the development of the site.
RESPONSE TO CONSULTATION ON THE FOLLOWING DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL

District: Oxford City
Proposal: Oxpens Masterplan SPD
Location: Oxford

TRANSPORT STRATEGY, FLOODING AND DRAINAGE

Strategy

The County Council appreciates the fact that previous transport responses to informal consultations have largely been taken on board.

The Oxpens site is of strategic importance in regenerating the West End and enhancing Oxford city centre. For these benefits to be maximised, it is vital that the Oxpens site is truly integrated - in terms of urban design and movement by all modes – with the rest of Oxford city centre and the city more broadly. The Oxpens masterplan needs to identify the wider movement and urban design linkages and strategic opportunities more overtly and demonstrate how the masterplan proposals help to enhance them. In particular, further consideration is needed of the links between the area at the back of John Lewis which is proposed to be developed with waterside cafes and restaurants, the Oxpens site and the river.

Figure 6.1

a. Despite our previous comments, the location and orientation of the proposed public square have not been amended in the masterplan. As we set out in our response to the previous informal consultation, our preference remains that the public square should be re-located to the south east corner of the site, to have an aspect onto Oxpens Meadow and the Westgate development. We note that the City Council has not accepted this to date, because of the need for civic space which is not adjacent to green space, and because the ice rink site may not be deliverable for some considerable time. An alternative option might therefore be to create two smaller spaces rather than one large space. We attach a diagram (Annex 2) to our response which shows another option for the location of public space. Two smaller spaces would make a positive contribution to improving the public realm along Oxpens Road and would be easier to „activate“ than a single large space. The space further south would also provide a sunnier space facing towards the Westgate centre, Castle Mill Stream and Oxpens Meadow. The alignment of the north-south boulevard cycle/ped route is much better and aligns well with the proposed Thames bridge. However it would be beneficial to realign the north-south boulevard as shown on our attached diagram, to make the cycle route through the site more direct and to move the junction with Becket Street further away from the junction with Oxpens Road;
b. The southernmost blue arrow (minor access point) should be shown in a different colour to show that it is not for vehicular access

c. To ensure connections with nearby sites and developments are clearly understood, figure 6.1 and other similar plans should have references, where relevant, to Westgate, Station and Frideswide.

Figure 6.4 – the character of frontages to Becket Street should be reconsidered – with more mixed use with greater commercial activity given the status of the road.

Figure 6.14 – this plan is inconsistent with Figure 6.1 – cycle/pedestrian routes to/from the bridge over the Thames should be more direct as shown in Figure 6.1

Figure 6.8 - The masterplan needs to consider the interface with the Westgate car park access junction in terms of public realm and movement. The master plan should show a similar public realm plan for the whole site, or at least the Becket Street extension to help define its character.

Para 6.85 – off-carriageway cycle facilities or “hybrid” cycle lanes should not be ruled out for Becket Street and Oxpens Road. The reference to cyclists being accommodated within the carriageway only is too prescriptive.

General – the County Council will be modelling the whole city centre network in August/September to determine the effects of proposed development at Oxpens, Westgate, the rail station and at Frideswide Square. This comprehensive assessment may identify some issues which any of these developments (including the Oxpens master plan) may need to mitigate and manage in the future and may result in changes which need to be made to the transport aspects of the plan.

Flooding

The proposals to change Oxpens road to a street scene will not help the City when flooding occurs in Botley Road and Abingdon Road because when these two roads are closed Oxpens road is the main route through from Banbury and Woodstock roads to the High Street. It is also the main route for the Fire and Ambulance service who would not appreciate the proposed street scene.
RESPONSE TO CONSULTATION ON THE FOLLOWING DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL

District: Oxford City
Proposal: Oxpens Masterplan SPD
Location: Oxford

TRANSPORT DEVELOPMENT CONTROL

A signal controlled option should be considered at the junction of the Becket Street extension and Oxpens Road –this could provide benefits for pedestrians and cyclists and could link into wider UTMC system (linked to Westgate car park and other signals along Thames Street) to smooth out congestion and prevent delays to express coaches. Both signals and roundabout options need to be considered when a detailed scheme is planned for the site.

The road to the south of the bend on the Becket Street extension will need to be designed and potentially physically restricted to discourage/prevent vehicular access; otherwise the residential side roads might be used as rat-runs.

The diversion of eastbound traffic through the site onto Becket Street potentially adds another barrier to pedestrians and cyclists (in addition to the continuation of Oxpens Road for northbound traffic). Emphasis needs to be stressed that these major links need to be designed to cope with major flows but also safe pedestrian and cycle facilities.

It is likely that most of the roads will be adopted as public highways. Parking controls will need to be in place from the outset of the development (even before adoption) to ensure new residents do not develop an expectation of being able to park on street. However some managed on-street parking can be engineered on a limited basis.

Streets should follow the principles of Manual for Streets – with narrow carriageway widths etc to reduce vehicle speeds. Some of the cross sections in the masterplan show up to 10 metres of carriageway, which may be too wide unless wide median strips or on-street parking are used to reduce speeds. However the total highway width must consider the need to accommodate utility equipment in the highway, so narrow carriageways may not necessarily mean narrow highways. The design must also consider the space taken by street lights and other street furniture.

Early pre-application discussion should be held with the county council to discuss emerging street layout and design proposals for any planning application.
RESPONSE TO CONSULTATION ON THE FOLLOWING DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL

District: Oxford City
Proposal: Oxpens Masterplan SPD
Location: Oxford

EXTRA CARE HOUSING

Key issues:

There is a requirement to cater for an elderly population in Oxfordshire. The provision of Extra Care Housing provision in Oxford, especially in the west and the north of the city, is inadequate and there is a requirement for a 50 unit ECH scheme (1.25 acre site ideally) on this site.
RESPONSE TO CONSULTATION ON THE FOLLOWING DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL

District: Oxford City
Proposal: Oxpens Masterplan SPD
Location: Oxford

ECOLOGY

Key issues:

If above ground SUDS are incorporated in the redevelopment (e.g. ponds or swales) then these should be designed to provide good wildlife habitats.

The stream and river corridor and to some extent the meadow are likely to be the most biodiverse parts of the site and probably support protected species. I support the masterplan showing these areas as being left undeveloped.

The enhanced crossing of the Thames that is proposed should be carefully designed to avoid harm to protected species and the functioning of the river as an important corridor for wildlife.

Enhancement of leisure routes through Oxpens Meadow to access landscape features, such as the watercourses, should also be carefully located to avoid harm to high quality habitats and protected species along the watercourses. Disturbance could reduce biodiversity value of these areas and their function as corridors within Oxfordshire.

It is very positive that the use of green roofs is being proposed. Features such as this and the use of soft landscaping, native tree planting and wildflower seeding would enhance the site for residents and wildlife, making the area a more attractive place to live and work.
RESPONSE TO CONSULTATION ON THE FOLLOWING DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL

District: Oxford City
Proposal: Oxpens Masterplan SPD
Location: Oxford

EDUCATION

Key issues:

The masterplan states that the development will include approximately 175 flats and 125 houses; this is assumed to be part of the 700-800 dwellings which Oxford City Council’s Core Strategy Policy CS5 states that the wider West End development will eventually provide. The full West End development is estimated to be likely to require an increase in primary school capacity approximately equivalent to a 1 form entry primary school. The Core Strategy (paragraph 3.4.20) states that “The West End partnership has a vision for a primary school at the heart of the West End community. This will require a suitable site and full funding. The partnership will seek to achieve this, with funding in the first place through developer contributions and through other appropriate sources.” The City Council is reminded of this commitment to make suitable provision for a primary school to meet the need generated by the total number of dwellings planned for the West End at a school in the West End community.

It has previously been agreed that a new school should not be provided within the Oxpens site; instead Oxford City Council’s Sites and Housing Plan allocates a site for a new school in New Hinksey at Bertie Place. It is expected that this would provide additional school capacity to allow the primary education needs of the Oxpens development to be met.

The Oxpens development should therefore expect to contribute towards the land acquisition and construction costs of a new school at Bertie Place at a rate proportionate to its impact. It will also need to contribute funding proportionately towards expanding secondary school and SEN school capacity.
RESPONSE TO CONSULTATION ON THE FOLLOWING DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL

District: Oxford City  
Proposal: Oxpens Masterplan SPD  
Location: Oxford

RIGHTS OF WAY

Key issues:

The County Council welcomes the approach the masterplan takes towards improving connections and the safety/attractiveness of the area for walkers and cyclists and for access to areas of greenspace. The new crossing of the Thames is to be welcomed as a way of enhancing connections and economic and social benefits, providing the surrounding network is of similar high quality. These measures will do a great deal to enhance the area for residents and visitors and benefitting the local economy.

However, given the comments in the SPD and the accessibility appendix about the poor quality of the Thames Towpath passing under the railway bridge and the value of the Thames Path to Oxford and this development site, the SPD should include a commitment to provide a significant contribution for the improvement of the towpath for walkers and cyclists, including measures to improve the access under the railway bridge - as the new crossing point will lead to an increase in the number of users accessing the Thames Path.
ENVIRONMENT, ENERGY & TRAVEL

Key issues:

The County Council supports the proposal for an energy centre as part of this development and suggests that it be designed with the flexibility to link into other heat networks as they are developed in the City.

Detailed Comments:


On this basis alone, Oxfordshire County Council welcomes the proposal to include a community energy scheme in the proposed Oxpens development.

Oxfordshire 2030 calls for a 50% reduction in carbon emissions by 2030. Whilst new developments will be built to increasingly higher energy performance standards, significant investment will be required to reduce the carbon emissions of existing buildings. Decentralised energy schemes with local heat networks have a key role to play in delivering these reductions, particularly in a densely packed city centre with a high concentration of listed buildings such as Oxford.

A recent seminar organised by Low Carbon Oxford and led by the Carbon Trust identified a number of potential heat networks within Oxford which could eventually form part of a city-wide network. The seminar also identified the need for energy master planning for the City.

In the absence of an energy master plan for the city, we would suggest that the proposed energy centre has the flexibility to link up to other heat networks as they are developed in the City to help lay the foundations of a City-wide scheme.
RESPONSE TO CONSULTATION ON THE FOLLOWING DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL

District: Oxford City
Proposal: Oxpens Masterplan SPD
Location: Oxford

ECONOMY, SKILLS & TRAINING

Key issues:

The proposals for Oxpens will result in a significant number of jobs being created both during construction stage and once the development is complete and operational.

The proposal will result in approximately 8,200 sq. m. of B1 office space creating around 820 new jobs, with a further 140 new jobs being created in the 4,400 sq. m. allocated for Research & Development.

This proposal is closely aligned to other proposals in Oxford city centre, including the redevelopment of the Westgate Centre, which in itself is expected to create 3,000 additional jobs in the retail and leisure sectors.

The successful implementation of the proposal during and after construction will rely on the local labour force having the right skills in place to take up the job opportunities on offer.

It is recommended that the Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership and the Oxfordshire Skills Board be asked to commission a study to assess the likely demand for construction, retail and customer service skills for the West End proposals coming forward, and how these demands could be met as far as possible within the local population. If such an approach is agreed, the strategy should be alluded to in the final Oxpens Masterplan, and in other plans associated with the related proposed developments such as the Westgate Centre.

Depending on the outcome of the proposed West End Skills Strategy, partners may seek S106 contributions during the detailed planning phase for partners to provide targeted vocational and other training, and other projects aimed at employers to fully maximise the employment opportunities for local people.

Detailed Comments:

Oxpens is just one of the opportunity sites and development proposals with the Oxford West End quarter including the redevelopment of:

- The Westgate Centre
- The Oxford Railway Station
• Proposed streetscape design and highways engineering schemes at Becket Street, Osney Lane and Frideswide Square.

The Oxpens Draft Masterplan follows on from the West End Area Action Plan that was adopted by Oxford City Council in 2008. Running parallel with this work the then West End Partnership commissioned the Oxford West End Skills Study which was published in October 2008. The Study investigated the likely impact of the West End project in terms of the demand for, and provision of, retail and customer service skills in Oxford. The recommendations of the Study were never implemented due to the economic downturn and its impact on delaying the plans for the West End.

The proposed redevelopment of Oxpens and other sites outlined above will bring a range of new commercial, shopping, cultural and leisure offers to the centre of Oxford and is likely to mean a step change in the demand for retail and customer service skills within Oxford. It may also result in increasing retail competition across Oxfordshire as a whole, and indeed in some surrounding areas such as Swindon, Reading and Milton Keynes.

The emerging plans for the West End mean that there is a need now to revisit the 2008 Study and develop a strategic approach to addressing retail and customer service skills within a changed policy environment. Local Enterprise Partnerships are now responsible for driving economic growth in their areas, and are being given devolved funding and in some cases powers to achieve their aims. Skills development is a priority of the Oxfordshire LEP and its aims for the local workforce of the future is being translated into various plans and strategies, including the emerging Oxfordshire EU Investment Strategy. This will set out a programme of activities on which to spend the £8 million European Social Fund (ESF) allocated to the LEP for the period 2014 to 2020. ESF is targeted specifically at skills development and social inclusion.

It is therefore recommended that the Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership and the Oxfordshire Skills Board be asked to commission a new study to assess the likely demand for construction, retail and customer service skills for the West End proposals coming forward, and how these demands could be met as far as possible within the local population.
RESPONSE TO CONSULTATION ON THE FOLLOWING DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL

**District:** Oxford City  
**Proposal:** Oxpens Masterplan SPD  
**Location:** Oxford

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**MINERALS & WASTE POLICY**

**Key issues:**

In general the document does not refer to making provision for waste management facilities. The development principles should encourage developers to facilitate recycling and composting through the provision of space and appropriate facilities for residents and non-residential/commercial land uses.

In relation to our role as Waste Disposal Authority we note that the proposed land uses include residential development. This will increase demand for recycling facilities at Redbridge Household Waste Recycling Centre (HWRC) which experiences capacity issues at peak times particularly at weekends and public holidays; further discussions will be needed to ensure that an appropriate level of contributions towards recycling facilities at Redbridge is made.

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Officer’s Name: Frankie Upton  
Officer’s Title: Waste Project Manager  
Date: 10 July 2013
MEMBER COMMENTS

I have read your draft and I think it's mostly very good. I shall be backing you on many points in my own comments to the City.

I must, however, take issue with you on the question of school places. Already families in the Mill Street area are being told that there is no room for their children in West Oxford School. There are dozens and dozens of little children in these streets and in Abbey Road, with a lot more family homes about to be built. Families are being sent to St Ebbe's School, which is not easy to get to and quite out of their area. This problem needs urgent attention and since West Oxford School can't expand, a city centre school is definitely needed.

I'm pleased to hear about the transport modelling of the whole city centre network that is about to begin. I look forward to hearing more.

Finally, I was interested to read Paul Harris's comments on the Thames towpath near this site. He is quite right -- it is horrid and we need to work together to make it better, including A2 Dominion, who run Gibbs Crescent.

As you might imagine I am broadly supportive of the Oxpens scheme. My doubt is that a shared use Oxpens Road, while nice for local residents, would not also be able to transfer people quickly to and from the enlarged Rail Station or the new Westgate shopping complex.
Annex 2

More direct north-south route; avoid junctions close together

Phased approach, creating two smaller spaces rather than a single large space

Phase 1 – Oxpens Road public space only

Phase 2 – further public space following redevelopment of ice rink site

Key area for architectural & public realm consultation & implementation

Oxpens Master Plan
SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT (SPD)

Figure 6.1
DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK PLAN

Oxpens meadow green open space
Flooded Trust (FIT) designation
Amphitheatre / event space
Key tree line/ street
Public square
Natural England

Posted At: 25 July 2013 19:18
Posted To: planningpolicy@oxford.gov.uk
Subject: 89268- Oxpens Masterplan SPD and SEA- NE response

Turn to next page
Dear Mr Jaggard

Draft Oxpens Masterplan Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)

Thank you for your consultation on the above SPD and associated Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) dated 14 June 2013.

Natural England is a non-departmental public body. Our statutory purpose is to ensure that the natural environment is conserved, enhanced, and managed for the benefit of present and future generations, thereby contributing to sustainable development.

Natural England is satisfied with the contents of the SPD and with the scope and conclusions of the SEA of the document. We note the reference to the HRA screening for the West End Area Action Plan which concluded that the plan would not have a likely significant effect upon Oxford Meadows Special Area of Conservation (SAC). As such we have no objections to the draft masterplan SPD in relation to the SAC.

Natural England pleased to note plans included in the SPD to include sustainable drainage systems and other measures to counteract flood risk. Measures such as this provide opportunities to enhance the biodiversity value of the area and can contribute to the green infrastructure resources of the development site. In addition, the retention of the Oxpens meadow area offers potential for biodiversity gain and sensitive management of habitats adjacent to the river. We would advise that measures to improve the value of the site for biodiversity should be implemented at detailed planning stage.

The comments we have made in this response are based on the information provided by you, and for the avoidance of doubt does not affect our obligation to advise on, and potentially object to any specific development proposal which may subsequently arise from this or later versions of the plan or program which is the subject of this consultation, and which may have adverse effects on the environment.

We would be happy to comment further should the need arise but if in the meantime you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact us. For any queries relating to the specific advice in this letter only please contact Sarah Armstrong-Stacey on 0300 060 2734. For any new consultations, or to provide further information on this consultation please send your correspondences to consultactions@naturalengland.org.uk.

We really value your feedback to help us improve the service we offer. We have attached a feedback form to this letter and welcome any comments you might have about our service.

Yours faithfully

Sarah Armstrong-Stacey
Land Use Operations- Winchester Team
Draft Oxpens Master Plan Supplementary Planning Document

Thank you for your letter of 17th June advising English Heritage of the consultation on the Draft Oxpens Master Plan SPD. We have the following comments:

Although some reference is made to the historic pattern of development on this site, English Heritage is very disappointed that no mention is made of understanding the significance of the site in accordance with English Heritage’s Conservation Principles (http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/conservationprinciples). Without this understanding there is no basis for the conservation and enhancement of the historic environment of the site and its contribution to the significance of the historic city of which it forms part.

As a minimum, David Lock Associates should be requested to include an assessment of the significance of the historic environment and work through how the proposed master plan would protect this significance and enhance it. This should be cross-referenced to the many studies which have been undertaken to provide an understanding of the significance of Oxford’s historic environment.

This assessment would demonstrate how significant the historic street pattern of the site is and whether it is an appropriate basis on which to base the design approach. On this point, although the Draft SPD suggests that the historic street pattern can inform the design approach, this is not mentioned under “site opportunities” later in the document, and whilst the idea of a local precedent in the historic urban morphology of narrow streets does reappear later, the indicative layouts include wider tree-lined streets. This indicates some confusion in what the masterplan is trying to achieve, and requirements for “high quality design” need to be grounded in an understanding of what this actually entails.

It is also very disappointing that there is no reference within the Vision for the site to recognising, respecting or contributing to the city’s famous architectural heritage – this point is made only in Design Principle 3. Even then, although DP3 rightly identifies sustaining the significance of the city’s historic environment as a component of sustainable development, the historic environment is not recognised in the section of the Draft SPD on “Integrating Sustainability”.

On page 18 and in Appendix D there are references to the other major development sites around the Oxpens site, but there is no indication of how the redevelopment of the latter would integrate with the redevelopment of these other sites in townscape terms. This failure to address the integration of development on this site with surrounding development is a serious flaw in the masterplan.

Although there is some mention of View Cones, there is no mention of the current study, nearing completion, which seeks to introduce a more sophisticated methodology for considering views, rather than the rather blunt tool of the ‘official ’ View Cones policy. This current study is to
understand the significance of the view so that the harm of any development proposal to this significance can be assessed and also opportunities taken to enhance.

This study will help inform the detailed requirements for the roofscape (both form and materials) of the proposed developments, which will be particularly important. Although the Draft SPD has a number of references to varied roof heights, the rather blunt indication of numbers of storeys and the visualisations reduce the scope for variation.

Overall, it is very disappointing that the opportunity does not appear to be being taken to create a contribution to Oxford’s built fabric and street pattern worthy of the importance of this site and Oxford’s architectural heritage.

I hope these comments are helpful. Please contact me if you have any queries.

Thank you again for consulting English Heritage on this Draft SPD.

Yours sincerely,
Dear Sir/Madam,

Network Rail has been consulted by Oxford City Council on the Draft Oxpens Master Plan Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). Thank you for providing us with this opportunity to comment on this Planning Policy document. This email forms the basis of our response to this consultation request.

Network Rail is a statutory undertaker responsible for maintaining and operating the country’s railway infrastructure and associated estate. Network Rail owns, operates, maintains and develops the main rail network. This includes the railway tracks, stations, signalling systems, bridges, tunnels, level crossings and viaducts. The preparation of development plan policy is important in relation to the protection and enhancement of Network Rail’s infrastructure. In this regard, please find our comments below.

The local Civic Society has been promoting the Oxpens site as a potential site for a new railway station. Network Rail has procured a masterplanning exercise jointly with Oxford City Council and Oxford Country Council to cover the existing station site. This masterplanning exercise will also address the feasibility of relocating the existing station to the Oxpens site based on information from a number of sources, including the Oxpens SPD. Clearly the SPD is not promoting use of the Oxpens site for a new railway station.

Network Rail supports the principle of a mixed use scheme on this site albeit has the following detailed comments to make:

- We note within the masterplan there is little mention of clear pedestrian/cycle linkages and signage to the station which we feel needs a strategy to deal particularly with potential future station redevelopment.

- With reference to proposed development promoting student housing bordering/adjacent to Network Rail’s boundary, we need to ensure that the railway infrastructure will not be compromised and be adequately protected, therefore in light of the above, we would request that Network Rail should be contacted for proposals within the area to ensure that:
  - That proposals do not impact upon the railway infrastructure / Network Rail land
  - Drainage works
  - Encroachment of land or air-space
  - Excavation works
  - Siting of structures/buildings less than 2m from the Network Rail boundary
  - Lighting impacting upon train drivers ability to perceive signals
  - Any piling works
  - Scaffolding works, any use of crane or plant
  - Any fencing works
  - Any demolition works
  - Access points are not impacted

- The applicant should note that Network Rail has a right of access through the site being promoted for student accommodation which is referred to and must continue to be provided for to enable the railway to be accessed for maintenance.

- It should also be noted that increased traffic on the Didcot to Oxford rail corridor could result in:
  - More noise from the Railway
The need to widen the rail formation to allow extra tracks and thus more capacity during future control periods.

Electrification of the railway through the area will help to mitigate noise impacts. The Oxpens Master Plan Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) should set a strategic context requiring developer contributions towards rail infrastructure and improvements where growth areas or significant housing allocations are identified close to existing rail infrastructure.

Many stations and routes are already operating close to capacity and a significant increase in patronage may create the need for upgrades to the existing infrastructure including improved signalling, passing loops, car parking, improved access arrangements or platform extensions.

As Network Rail is a publicly funded organisation with a regulated remit it would not be reasonable to require Network Rail to fund rail improvements necessitated by commercial development. It is therefore appropriate to require developer contributions to fund such improvements.

Specifically, we request that a Policy is included within the document which requires developers to fund any qualitative improvements required in relation to existing facilities and infrastructure as a direct result of increased patronage resulting from new development.

The likely impact and level of improvements required will be specific to each station and each development meaning standard charges and formulae may not be appropriate. Therefore in order to fully assess the potential impacts, and the level of developer contribution required, it is essential that where a Transport Assessment is submitted in support of a planning application that this quantifies in detail the likely impact on the rail network.

To ensure that developer contributions can delivery appropriate improvements to the rail network we would recommend that Developer Contributions should include provisions for rail and should include the following:

A requirement for development contributions to deliver improvements to the rail network where appropriate.
A requirement for Transport Assessments to take cognisance of impacts to existing rail infrastructure to allow any necessary developer contributions towards rail to be calculated.
A commitment to consult Network Rail where development may impact on the rail network and may require rail infrastructure improvements. In order to be reasonable these improvements would be restricted to a local level and would be necessary to make the development acceptable. We would not seek contributions towards major enhancement projects which are already programmed as part of Network Rail’s remit.

Reference is made regarding improvements to pedestrian links over the railway along Osney Lane. This is something that Network Rail would need full details of prior to any agreement being reached. We would need to monitor any proposals to enhance the pedestrian route.

Reference is made to the station SPD and the potential need for works sites to deliver the station scheme, which Network Rail would support. There may also be a requirement for temporary relocation of car parking if an MSCP is built on the Beckett Street car park.

If Network Rail is required to relocate the YHA on west side of the station Oxpens could provide an alternative relocation site.

We would appreciate the Council providing Network Rail with an opportunity to comment on any future planning applications should they be submitted for sites adjoining the railway, or within close proximity to the railway as we may have more specific comments to make (further to those above).

We trust these comments will be considered in your preparation of the forthcoming Oxpens Master Plan Supplementary Planning Document.