

Comments from: Oxford Green Belt Network

Section B

Oppose
Chap 22(8)

Section C

We are strongly opposed to the selective review of Green Belt boundaries as unnecessary and damaging to the setting of the city.

Section D1

One of the purposes of the Green Belt is to check the growth of Oxford as you recognize under (ii). This complements policies aimed at directing some of Oxford's growth potential to other parts of the county and cannot be reconciled with your policy of encouraging the growth of Oxford on which we have commented under Chap 22(3). You can't both check growth and encourage it. This is inconsistent and quite contrary to Green Belt policy .

The Oxford Green Belt was defined in the 1950s although its inner boundary was not finally approved until as recently as 1997. It was anticipated at that time that the boundary would enjoy a degree of permanence, an expectation that is incompatible with the present wish to carry out a selective review of its boundaries.

We have already stated in response to Chap 22(6) that the need for a Green Belt review was not established at the EIP since Oxford City anticipated land being available in the city in excess of that required for its allocation of 8,000 dwellings by 2026. This being the case, we do not believe that the suggested review of the Green Belt meets the conditions for a review set out in Part 2 of PPG.2

One of the purposes of a Green Belt, which you acknowledge, is to prevent the coalescence of settlements. The urban extension as proposed would bring the built-up area of Oxford close to a number of villages, notably Sandford-on-Thames, the Baldons, Garsington and possibly even Horspath, and would seriously compromise the existing Green Belt gap which enables these villages to retain a sense of separate identity. The impact of the proposed SDA will be such that impact on village identity cannot possibly be described as "minimal" as you say is your aim.

Although the review of the Green Belt is described as selective we believe that, by weakening the government's commitment to Green Belts, it will encourage further reviews. One need look no further than Oxford City's emerging Core Strategy for evidence in support of this fear since the Strategy Submission Document anticipates Green Belt reviews in association with the Northern Gateway development and in the Cherwell valley between Summertown and Marston. It is clear that once you weaken the concept of Green Belt permanence the whole Green Belt becomes vulnerable to further incursions and losses.

Further evidence of the vulnerability of the Green Belt lies in Oxford City's application to the Boundary Commission for a review that would extend the city's administrative boundary to take in the whole of the area south of Oxford that has been the subject of South Oxfordshire District Council's area of search for an SDA that you

instructed SODC to carry out. This area which the City wish to take in is some three times larger than would be needed for 4,000 dwellings. In its response to SODC's consultation on the area of search, the City Council sought to justify its land-grab by stating that "it is important to ensure that a review of the Green Belt boundary has the capacity to cope with longer-term development rather than limiting it to an area for 4,000 dwellings". Here is clear evidence of expansionist ambitions that will result in the development not just of an SDA of 4,000 dwellings but, in time, a much bigger set of developments that will lead to the loss of a far larger portion of the Green Belt than your "selective review" anticipates. Once the commitment to Green Belt is weakened, this is what follows.

Section D2

Delete the two sentences underlined, "A selective reviewsetting of the city."