

23 February 2021

Dr Carol Peaker

[REDACTED]
Wolvercote
Oxford
OX2 [REDACTED]

Dear Dr Peaker

Your letter dated 5 February 2021 to St John's College has been passed to me as Thomas White Oxford (TWO) is the College's development company. TWO is responsible for the Oxford North project.

Thank you for taking the time to write. I have read your letter and considered your points carefully.

Firstly, I'm sorry that there are a group of Wolvercote residents who are deeply concerned about the development project. Please be assured that we have been aware of many of these concerns as a result of the public consultation and public examination that have taken place in relation to this proposal over the last decade.

You raise points around Oxford North being a "heavily built-up area", "unnecessary" and "environmentally unsound." Also concerns around noise, light and air pollution and that for "out-of-town office and retail units", the "demand no longer exists." I would like to respond to your points and set out the project's initiatives.

Relevant to the issues you have raised, the planning application, as resolved to be approved by the City Council in December 2019, required an extensive Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA). The EIA assesses key technical matters including air quality, flood risk, traffic and views. In addition, the project is required to contribute a Community Infrastructure Levy, a proportion of which Oxford City Council collects and ring fences for infrastructure projects identified by the local community, including Wolvercote. The draft legal agreement is now publicly available on Oxford City Council's planning portal.

Also, we have been in discussions with Oxfordshire County Council to progress works that are necessary to improve the public highways. It is recognised that some infrastructure improvement works need to happen in advance of occupation. We have been working with the City, the County, and Highways England to ensure proposals meet policy, design and safety requirements.

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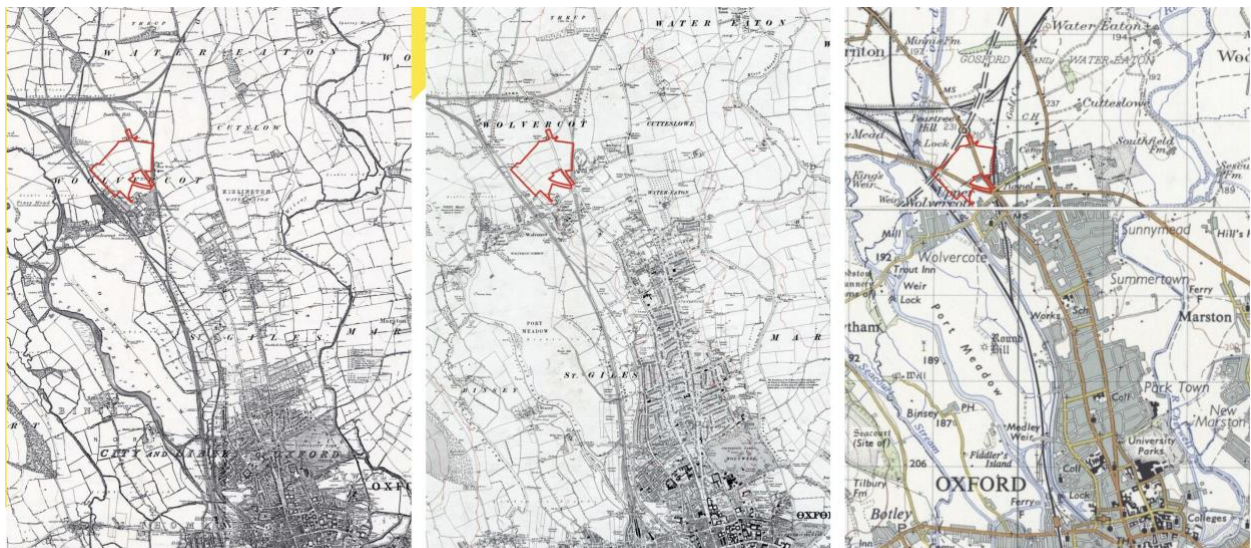
THOMAS WHITE OXFORD

TWO's proposals realise the vision defined for the site in the Oxford City Council's Area Action Plan. This vision is for Oxford North to be a new place for Oxford.

Oxford has grown northwards over the years as shown by the maps below in relation to Oxford North.

The vision is not for Oxford North to be "out of town office and retail units" or indeed a '9-to-5 business park'.

Oxford North will be a new district, a place where people can live, work, play and learn.



Oxford 1879-1887

Oxford 1911-1922

Oxford 1959-1960

In light of the pandemic, we have been revisiting our vision, our Environmental, Social and Corporate Governance strategy and how our social investment into Oxford North and what we will be curating, aligned to Oxford City Council's Area Action Plan, will benefit our future customers and importantly the local community.

Public spaces are essential to our social life, our health and part of the economic recovery. We believe that now, more than ever, Oxford North will be part of that economic recovery and a place where life happens.

For us, it is about investing in society, for society and seeking a return on that investment in a diversity of ways.

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Our vision is for Oxford North to be a:

- **facilitator of life-enhancing science and technology discoveries.** We have seen demand significantly increase from people needing office and laboratory space within and adjacent to Oxford: from those looking for innovation centre space to SMEs and big corporates. They all want to be in and around Oxford, thanks to the Universities and hospitals, the research community and commercial ecosystem
- **place that people want to visit**, which connects and enhances the local area physically, through open spaces, public art and culture, children's play areas, safer routes to school and immersive experiences
- **provider of much-needed homes for Oxford** as part of a connected and vibrant community
- **place for tomorrow's workforce:** ensuring and improving transport connectivity, people's health and wellbeing
- **sustainable community:** improving people's lives, air quality and the environment through our biodiversity initiatives
- **part of Oxford's knowledge and high value economy acceleration.** Oxford North is estimated to deliver a boost of circa £150 million into the economy.

Business demand

You raise the concern that "demand no longer exists" for out of town office and retail units.

Oxford North is to provide offices and laboratories to create circa 4,500 new jobs. Understandably, we have carried out, and continue to carry out, extensive market research into the current and future demand for such office and laboratory buildings.

Based on this research, we know that our future customers/occupiers will be from the following sectors:

- **Life sciences and biotech:** research companies, research institutions, teaching laboratory and clinical diagnostic laboratories
- **Technology:** product, service, machinery and tool innovators including battery development, Artificial Intelligence, health tech, data science and software/web development
- **Government:** health services, local authorities and departments
- **Foundations:** purely as an example, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

We are aware of companies that have been looking to Oxford for a number of years but for whatever reason, have not been able to establish themselves.

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The companies based at Oxford North will be specific to the science and technology sectors. Broadly speaking, these companies will be looking for connections to the City Centre, Headington's Global Health and Life Sciences District and part of the wider Science Vale cluster.

Homes

There will be 480 new homes for circa 1,500 people, of which 35%, the equivalent of 168, will be affordable. These much-needed new homes will be across the project, with the majority located on Canalside, closest to Joe White's Lane. These homes will be subject to a detailed planning application which will be brought forward by our residential development partner and on which you will have further opportunity to comment.

Small shops

The "retail units" you mention will be small shops totalling 2,500 sq m, supporting local businesses and other operators who wish to be part of the project.

They will be carefully curated so that people living at Oxford North and in Wolvercote, Summertown and beyond, will be able to enjoy the offer, whether that be small shops, restaurants, cafes or bars.

Nursery, hotel and performance space

Also, there will be a nursery with a safe outdoor space and secure drop-off and pick-up areas for babies to five-year olds, a hotel with up to 180 bed-spaces, and event and performance space to encourage, support and showcase arts and culture, reflecting the city's diverse communities.

We will be creating a place that promotes active lifestyles, in particular through the landscaping and public open spaces.

Three new parks

There will be circa 23 acres of open grassland spaces, the equivalent of 15 football pitches, including three new parks, with the main one, Central Park, a place for gathering, activity, immersive experiences and play with pop-up shops and events.

Energy loop system

An energy loop system will share energy between different uses avoiding waste.

In the first phase, this will mean:

- saving 21,000 tonnes CO2 per year in comparison to a conventional system
- 450 co-axial boreholes will mean that the closed-loop system will be sustainable and importantly, there will be no contamination of the artesian wells
- 66% whole life scheme reduction in carbon compared to gas-fired schemes
- 60,000 kWh per year zero carbon electricity generated by photovoltaic panels, the equivalent of powering 20 homes annually
- BREEAM Excellent energy performance, equivalent to the top 10% of buildings in the UK
- green corridors will run along the A40 and A44 with tree planting absorbing CO2 and providing a welcoming and attractive environment.

Air quality

A range of measures have been incorporated to minimise development impacts on air quality including:

- 100% electric buildings in first phase – no gas combustion
- extensive walking, cycling and public transport improvements to maximise access by these sustainable modes of transport
- installation of more than 850 electric car charging points, helping to meet Oxford City Council's ambitions
- providing circa 3,000 cycle parking spaces, significantly more than car parking supported by an ongoing travel and parking management strategy to actively limit traffic impacts and encourage access by sustainable transport modes.

An air quality assessment of the road transport emissions was undertaken to demonstrate air quality appropriate for new places of work and homes.

Rainwater and flood alleviation

Turning to your concerns about flooding at Port Meadow, Oxford North will include:

- significant new rainwater attenuation and storage which will be delivered in the first phase of development, including the provision of three large attenuation ponds that will ensure rainwater run-off rates for the full development are similar to green-field rates, even allowing for a 1 in 100 + climate change rainfall event
- sustainable drainage techniques which have been incorporated into the site design including swales, ditches and permeable surfaces
- water discharge into the Oxford canal east of the A40 crossing at a controlled rate to prevent flooding and will not affect Port Meadow.

Promoting biodiversity and ecological improvements

Across the project's masterplan, planting will form an important role in creating Oxford North's identity and character.

The site wide ecology strategy seeks to draw together the planting strategy with the SuDS, the Sustainable Drainage Strategy, which will attenuate and slowly release surface water run-off.

- Native hedgerow planting will create opportunities for wildlife food and shelter
- swales and ponds will form part of the site wide SuDS, creating further habitat and biodiversity opportunities, while creating an amenity for occupiers, residents and visitors
- across the site, planting will include bird, bat and insect friendly species that will contribute to the Oxfordshire Biodiversity Action Plan
- we will be retaining mature broad-leaved trees and supplementing with a range of broad-leaved species.

Noise and vibration

Assessments have been undertaken relating to surrounding potential transportation sources of noise and/or vibration impacting on the development including the railway line to the east and the A34 to the north.

We will be responding by adopting appropriate building design and materials and by building entirely commercial workspaces adjacent to the A34, helping to reduce road noise for the central community.

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Waste management

Recycling and waste services will be in one with Oxfordshire Environment Partnership's Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy, seeking to minimise the amount of waste produced, and maximise the amount reused, recycled and composted.

Materials

Where possible, building materials will be sourced locally. The use of cross laminated timber will be explored as a sustainable material that does not require the burning of fossil fuels during production and has high thermal insulation properties.

Better transport connectivity

As you point out in your letter, Oxford North has both the A40 and A44 running through it. Currently, these have the features of main, traffic dominated roads out of Oxford. The transformation of these into transitional corridors to create new streets includes significant improvements to the existing public transport, walking and cycling infrastructure as well as new tree planting. Some £30 million will be spent in improving the walking, cycling, bus and highway networks.

The scheme will deliver:

- extended in-bound bus lane on the A44, incorporating a dedicated bus lane exit from Peartree Park & Ride and lengthening the existing bus lane approach towards Wolvercote roundabout
- new out-bound bus lane on the A44 along the site frontage
- new in-bound separate bus lane along the A40 site frontage, complementing Oxfordshire County Council's proposals for an extended A40 in-bound bus lane from a new Park & Ride site at Eynsham
- two pairs of new bus stops on the A44 and one new pair of bus stops on the A40, incorporating modern bus shelters and real-time information
- new bus services for the Eastern arc area of Oxford
- new and extended cycle-lanes along the A40 and A44
- new wide footpaths either side of the A40 and A44
- new safer crossing points on the A40 and A44
- new pedestrian and cycle routes through the site
- safer routes to Wolvercote primary school through new crossings on Godstow Road and First Turn.

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Placemaking

We are developing our placemaking strategy, considering what people will need when they live, work and visit Oxford North.

It is not our intention to compete with what is already available locally.

We would like to involve the local community in this strategy planning and will be in touch to set out how you can have your say.

As an idea, we will be considering:

- **Main amenity:** ie amenity hub, market hall, events, crafts, food market destination, coffee van, conference and educational facilities, social space, outdoor furniture
- **Arts & culture:** local artist exhibitions, installations
- **Practical:** click and collect, safe storage
- **Community:** social enterprise initiatives, educational opportunities
- **Food and beverage**
- **Every day:** hair and beauty, small supermarket
- **Leisure:** boot camp, yoga, outdoor gym
- **Sustainability:** beehives, urban gardens
- **Family/children:** outdoor play, family activities
- **Mobility:** bike doctor, ebike hire

Our Head of Corporate Communications is Olivia Lane-Nott. She has been working for TWO since May 2017, so she knows the project well. She also lives locally and understands the importance for community engagement.

She is available to answer your questions. The best way to liaise with her is via info@oxfordnorth.com. If she doesn't know the answer immediately, she can always seek the answer from any member of our project team which consists of our project manager, architects, commercial agents, planners, engineers, designers, ecologists and more.

Subject to planning approval, Olivia is planning public engagement activities and will be in touch soon.

We do understand that this project is a significant change for people who live in Wolvercote and that people's feelings about it vary widely.

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What we can assure you of is that we are committed to investing in a new place that will enhance people's quality of life and delivery positive socio-economic impacts.

We have a responsibility to provide the necessary infrastructure to help facilitate Oxford's sustainable growth, addressing the local transport issues, supporting the future county planned developments and contributing to the whole Oxford to Cambridge Arc.

Oxford North will be helping the city by further connecting the region both locally and nationally and be a facilitator of life-changing discoveries by helping to connect academia and commerce to turn research into successful businesses to help change lives and provide much-needed new homes and improved transport connectivity.

We hope that the local community will work with us as we build a place that will enhance the area.

We share your request to make Oxford a safer and healthier place. We know that this starts with communication and we promise to keep communicating and to deliver a new sustainable place for Oxford.

Yours faithfully,



Director.

William Donger MA (Oxon) MRICS

Development Executive,
Thomas White Oxford Ltd

Cc: Councillor Paul Buckley, Councillor Stephen Goddard, Councillor Elizabeth Wade, Councillor Andrew Gant, Councillor Michael Gotch
Christopher Hardman, Wolvercote Neighbourhood Forum
Mary Brown, Wolvercote Commoners Committee
John Webb on behalf of the residents of Goose Green Close.

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