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Dear Sir/Madam,

OXFORD LOCAL PLAN 2040 CONSULTATION

REPRESENTATIONS ON BEHALF OF BREAKTHROUGH PROPERTIES

We write in relation to Oxford City Council's ('the Council') ongoing consultation on the Draft Oxford Local Plan 2040 Submission Draft (Regulation 19) dated November 2023 ("Draft Local Plan"), alongside a Community Infrastructure Levy ('CIL') Draft Charging Schedule. These representations, prepared by DP9 Limited ('DP9') on behalf of Breakthrough Properties UK ('Breakthrough'), relate to the Draft Local Plan; representations in relation to the proposed CIL Draft Charging Schedule have also been submitted under separate cover.

Breakthrough is a life science real estate development company that leverages cross-sector collaboration to deliver environments that foster innovation and scientific breakthroughs. It is a joint partnership between Tishman Speyer and Belco Capital that combines Tishman Speyer's decades of global real estate development experience with Belco Capital's industry-making biotechnology entrepreneurship to reimagine environments where companies can create life-changing therapies for patients.

Breakthrough's current portfolio comprises over 5 million square feet operating or under construction in prime life science clusters including Boston, San Diego, Oxford, Cambridge, and Amsterdam.

In October 2023 Breakthrough secured planning permission from the Council for the comprehensive re-development of Trinity House, John Smith Drive within the Oxford Business Park (also referred to as ARC Oxford) (ref. 22/03067/FUL). The Development consists of the demolition of existing vacant office building and the construction of a new life science building which will be of an exemplary architectural design.

In the context of bringing forward that development and exploring new opportunities within Oxford, Breakthrough has reviewed the Draft Local Plan in detail and is supportive of the vision and aspirations of the Local Plan, including the focus on delivering social value, local benefits, as well as positively tackling the climate emergency through sustainable development.

The following representations are made on specific points within the Draft Local Plan, and are set out in chronological order.



Chapter Three: A Fair and Prosperous City with a Globally Important Role in Learning, Knowledge and Innovation

Breakthrough has a particular interest in the approach to employment and innovation uses given their development interests and ARC Oxford's status as a Category 1 employment site and the role that it will play in the delivery of a significant quantum of commercial floorspace and employment provision for Oxford over the Local Plan period and beyond. Breakthrough support the intensification and modernisation of Category 1 and 2 employment sites, such as ARC Oxford.

More widely through a design led approach we would and encourage OCC to apply flexibility with regards to bulk, scale and massing of individual sites, taking into account their specific opportunities and constraints. Through this approach, the Council stands the best chance of intensifying certain sites in order to meet the identified employment land needs of 269,000 – 348,000 sqm over the Plan period.

Policy E3 expects development within specified sites to deliver affordable workspace. There is a requirement to submit details of the size, marketing, servicing and the management of the spaces within an affordable workspace strategy at planning application stage.

Within the 'Glossary', affordable workspace is defined as "*workspace to be delivered on commercial sites which would be available for **rent set at an agreed rate below the commercial rent (e.g. 50% of market rent)***". A 50% discount is set as an example, however it is not clear whether this is intended to be a blanket approach. Breakthrough are of the view that the level of discount should be determined on the basis of the size and scale of a specific building, taking into account level of demand and deliverability/viability considerations.

Breakthrough recognise the introduction of affordable workspace presents a good opportunity for start-ups and SMEs, and it is critical that the approach to this is proportionate to individual proposals and flexible enough to allow site specific outcomes. For example, occupiers/organisations in need of a 'HQ' building often require full control of a building for operational, security and efficiency reasons. It is important that a policy requirement for affordable workspace does not prohibit the socio-economic benefits that stem from a situation such as this.

Breakthrough supports the intent and principle of Community Employment Plans as set out in Policy E4. However, Breakthrough is concerned that some of the criteria and requirements listed sit outside of the scope of planning and go beyond the remit of a Local Plan (in the context of National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) paragraph 16). Several of the criteria listed will be wholly dependent on specific property ownership/lease structures and are commercial property matters that need to factored in.

Chapter Five: A City that utilises its resources with care, protects the air, water and soil and aims for net zero carbon

Breakthrough supports the delivery of exemplary sustainable development and targets for net zero carbon.

Policy R1 requires developments to be designed in accordance with the energy hierarchy. As a last resort, offsetting may be accepted to mitigate any remaining energy demand that cannot be sourced renewably either on site or through an identified offsite location through a legal agreement. The applicable amount (£ per tonne of CO₂), as supported by evidence, should be clarified in the event that off-setting is required and for transparency in in line with viability considerations set out in Policy S4.



Policy R1 sets out specific Energy Use Intensity (EUI) targets for both residential and non-residential uses at Part 2. This includes a target of 70kWh/m²/yr for non-residential developments. This policy should be updated to acknowledge the varying EUI requirements of different commercial uses. For example, an industrial use or Research and Development incorporating laboratory uses have higher EUI requirements than office or a retail development. This approach has been taken into account in the emerging Cambridge Local Plan Policy CC/NZ, which is a helpful example of the approach taken in a neighbouring Local Authority.

Policy R2 relates to expectations for the consideration of embodied carbon in the construction process and take actions to limit this as much as possible through careful design choices. Whilst we are supportive of the principle of this policy in order to meet Net Zero objectives, the policy needs to acknowledge that the feasibility of retaining existing buildings does not just relate to technical considerations such as structural limitations or operational requirements. Wider objectives of the Local Plan, including the planning requirements for the site, must also be an important consideration when considering any demolition. It must also acknowledge that sometimes demolition is the only route to achieve these objectives including strategic transformation and although there are higher embodied carbon costs associated with this route initially, it may derive larger carbon savings in the future, along with wider social and economic benefits. On this basis, it is crucial that any new policy focusses on consideration of retrofit/refurbishment-first as opposed to a retrofit/refurbishment-only policy, while having regard to the requirements for the site.

Chapter Six: A City that respects its heritage and fosters design of the highest quality

Policy HD8 relates to using context to determine the appropriate density for development proposals. The policy acknowledges that high-density development is expected in highly accessible locations in of the district centres, and in the city centre, where feasible in the context of heritage. This approach is welcomed in order to make the most efficient and best use of limited land within the city centre. We would encourage further guidance in relation to strategic site allocations and large areas which are planned for intensification and transformation, recognising that they must optimise density and will create a new context because of their size and scale.

The Plan should make reference to and recognise the fact that development at strategic sites need to acknowledge existing context and have regard to any visual relationships with areas of the City which are sensitive from a heritage perspective, whilst also recognising the opportunity to create new transformative neighbourhoods which have their own unique built form and sense of place.

Chapter Eight: Development Sites, Areas of Focus and Infrastructure

Breakthrough support the recognition that the South Infrastructure Area of Focus including ARC Oxford will see significant development over the plan period and have an influential role in meeting economic needs for Oxford.

Policy SPS1 states that planning permission will be granted for new development, modernisation and intensification for research and development, offices and light industrial uses (Class E) and general industrial (Class B2) employment uses at ARC Oxford, which is supported, as are the aspirations to improve cycle and pedestrian connections to and across the park. Breakthrough agree that within employment developments other new uses, such as residential (as set out in Policy E1), should not prejudice the function of employment areas.

In relation to the Cowley Branch Line, Breakthrough recognise the benefits that this will bring to the ARC Oxford Business Park, particularly its role in improving sustainable connections to the area for



future occupiers. Contributions towards this sought from development should be proportionate to the quantum and scale of development in the context of deliverability and viability, and clarity on how contributions are calculate should be provided.

Summary

As set out elsewhere in these representations Breakthrough are supportive of the direction of travel of the Draft Local Plan and the broad vision and aspirations set out within. It is recognised that the policies represent an evolution of existing Local Plan policies which seek to positively capture the benefits of large-scale development projects in particular. This approach is supported in principle, but a balance must be applied to ensure that these policies to not place undue burden on commercial development which inadvertently stifles its delivery. This is particularly of concern in the context of the draft CIL Charging Schedule which proposes a significant increase in the rate for Class E development, and separate representations have been submitted as part of that consultation.

We trust our comments will be taken on board in progressing the Draft Oxford Local Plan 2040 Submission Draft (Regulation 19) and we look forward to continuing to engage further with you in the future.

Yours sincerely,



DP9 Ltd on behalf of Breakthrough Properties