

Inspector Helen Hockenhull
C/O Louise St John Howe
Programme Officer
PO Services
PO Box 10965
Sudbury
Suffolk
CO10 3BF

**County Hall
New Road
Oxford
OX1 1ND**

By email:
louise@poservices.co.uk

13th June 2025

Dear Ms Hockenhull,

Salt Cross Area Action Plan Re-Opened Examination: Oxfordshire County Council Letter of Support for Proposed Changes to Policy 2 - Net Zero Carbon Development

I am writing on behalf of Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) to express our strong support for the proposed changes to Policy 2 of the Salt Cross Area Action Plan (AAP), as outlined in the document ED10.

The Council has reviewed the proposed modifications and believes that they represent a significant step forward in our collective efforts to achieve net zero.

Oxfordshire has been leading the way with regards to climate action since the [declaration of a climate emergency](#) in April 2019. Since then, OCC has identified a pathway towards net zero as soon as possible before 2050 in collaboration with its five districts. The [Pathway to a Zero Carbon Oxfordshire Route Map and Action Plan](#) sets a clear trajectory (the 'Oxfordshire Leading the Way' scenario) for the domestic energy sector which includes Passivhaus Premium standards for new homes, 80% of all new developments fitted with heat pumps, and no reliance on the gas grid for non-electricity fuel requirements. The Salt Cross Garden Village has the potential to act as an exemplar for the industry, which demonstrates the possibilities for delivering net zero housing, and OCC is supportive of the changes to Policy 2 which make this a reality for the development.

The government's national programme of new garden communities and settlements has been designed to be experimental and innovative, providing homes and developments fit for the future. The ambitions for a net zero carbon development at Salt Cross demonstrate these principles, creating a truly sustainable community that holistically considers the development's impact on the environment. Without innovation in new housing developments such as Salt Cross, there will be no change to the way our housing is built and no path towards net zero in the future. The Salt Cross AAP is also exemplary in many other ways, including its approach to Biodiversity Net Gain, mixed use development and many other key principles of sustainability, all of which have been approved by the Inspector. The inclusion of

the proposed amendments to Policy 2 is an extension of this same suite of sustainable development policies which are essential to the success of Salt Cross as a community of the future.

The garden community programme also stipulates the importance of community engagement; empowerment and the community voice have been a critical part of the development of the Salt Cross proposals. Community support for Policy 2 has been clear, as demonstrated by the legal challenge to the Inspector's original report. The role of local government is to represent the voices of their local communities, and therefore OCC strongly supports the inclusion of the proposed amendments to Policy 2.

The delivery timetable for the Salt Cross development is an important consideration in OCC's support for the amendments to Policy 2. The development is expected to be delivered between 2030 and 2043, therefore the policies which are being proposed now must be compatible with the requirements of the future. Permitting the building of developments without onsite energy generation and zero carbon heat sources will result in the need for a challenging and expensive retrofit programme further down the line. Ensuring a higher standard of building efficiency and net zero emissions from buildings in the development now will benefit future residents and will align with the necessary approach for the future of housing delivery in the UK. The efficiency standards proposed as part of the modifications to Policy 2, as well as the use of Energy Use Intensity rather than the Standard Assessment Procedure for measuring building efficiency, are in line with the Low Energy Transformation Initiative (LETI) methodology and the [Climate Emergency Design Guide](#). This is a recognised approach, and one that supports OCC's net zero target for the county.

Another important aspect of delivery is the supply chain that will be required to meet the needs of Salt Cross Garden Village, both in terms of materials and skills. The development offers an opportunity to showcase technologies and methods of infrastructure delivery which support net zero outcomes, which will be attractive to developers who are looking for the chance to differentiate from traditional approaches to development. OCC and other key partners, particularly in higher education, are investing significantly in the development of green skills to support the green economy as it develops. Developments such as Salt Cross will build the demand that is required for local people who have benefited from these skills training programmes to work within their local communities. Oxfordshire is also home to a thriving [Greentech network](#) which supports organisations that provide the technological solutions required to deliver on Policy 2 at Salt Cross, and the development could platform many of these new technologies at scale.

The precedent that the inclusion of the modifications in Policy 2 sets for sustainable development has implications for the future of house building not just in Oxfordshire, but for the whole of the UK. The Salt Cross AAP, with the inclusion of Policy 2, represents a groundbreaking approach which could be replicated across the delivery of the millions of homes proposed as part of the government's plans to tackle the housing crisis. Failure to make progress towards net zero development now will result in missed net zero targets in the future, and OCC is therefore

strongly in support of the principles within and execution of AAP Policy 2 at Salt Cross Garden Village.

Yours sincerely,

Robin Rogers, Corporate Director for Environment and Place

Oxfordshire County Council