

## Annex 1 – Consultation Questionnaire

**Please note, all responses to the consultation will be made public.**

**When answering questions, please continue writing on a separate sheet where necessary.**

### A. About you

What is your name? Daniel Lewis on behalf of the 'Output Area Classification User Group' (OACUG)

Which of the following best describes the organisation that you represent?

[please tick one box only]

- |  |                                     |                    |
|--|-------------------------------------|--------------------|
| No organisation (member of the public)   | <input type="checkbox"/>            | → Go to question 1 |
| Central government                       | <input type="checkbox"/>            |                    |
| Local government & partner organisations | <input type="checkbox"/>            |                    |
| Government statistical agency            | <input type="checkbox"/>            |                    |
| Neighbourhood renewal                    | <input type="checkbox"/>            |                    |
| Academia                                 | <input type="checkbox"/>            |                    |
| Commercial sector                        | <input type="checkbox"/>            |                    |
| Community group                          | <input type="checkbox"/>            |                    |
| Health sector                            | <input type="checkbox"/>            |                    |
| Other                                    | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | → Please specify   |

The OAC User Group (OACUG) was formed in late 2006 with the mission of promoting the use of the National Statistics Output Area Classification (OAC) and area classification in general. The user group is affiliated to the RSS' Statistics User Forum, and is comprised of members from academia, government and the private sector.

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What is the name of your organisation?

Output Area Classification User Group

Are you willing for ONS to contact you to explore your answers further?

Yes  No

If yes: Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

Email d.lewis@ucl.ac.uk

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**B. Policy and Design**

Please circle your response (1-5)

**1. The Requirement for Workplace Zones**

Please refer to the Topic Notes on page 21

- 1.1 There would be value in establishing a small area geography, by splitting and merging existing OAs, for reporting workplace data.

Disagree strongly -	1	2	3	4	5	- Agree strongly
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Please note any further comments including, if applicable, details of the benefits that such a geography would bring to you.

OACUG sees little requirement for workplace zones for users of OAC as such at the moment, but is happy for this new geography to be produced cost effectively for wider use.
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- 1.2 Are there any other factors (such as the industry classification of the workplace) that should be included in the design of a workplace geography?

No Views.
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- 1.3 On what variables (age, gender, qualification level, etc.) should a workplace geography report on? (details are included on page 21 of the Topic Notes)

No Views.
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- 1.4 Please list any factors that you feel may define the success or failure of a geography for workplace statistics.

No Views.

- 1.5 Please list any additional requirements you may have for a workplace geography such as those listed on page 21.

No Views.

## 2. The need for an Upper Layer Super Output Area

Please refer to the topic notes on page 22

- 2.1 There would be value in establishing a Nationally agreed set of Upper Layer SOAs.

Disagree strongly - 1 **2** 3 4 5 - Agree strongly

Please note any further comments including, if applicable, details of the benefits that a national set of Upper Layer SOAs would bring.

We disagree, in the context of OAC, that ULSOAs would have value. This is because OACUG interests are focussed on small area level geography, output and analysis.

- 2.2 There would be value in letting local authorities create their own Upper Layer SOAs to meet their own requirements.

Disagree strongly **1** 2 3 4 5 - Agree strongly

Please note any further comments.

If this were implemented it would seem that any comparative analysis would be rendered useless on the basis that the zones would be non-standard. Thus regional analyses would be limited.

- 2.3 If a national set of Upper Layer SOAs are produced, what considerations should ONS make when designing them?

No views.

### **3. Output Areas and Super Output Areas unfit for purpose**

Please refer to the Topic Notes on page 23.

- 3.1 Please provide details of any OAs/SOAs that meet the criteria outlined within the Topic Notes for being a candidate for redesign. Please provide, as a minimum, the OA/SOA code together with an explanation of why the OA/SOA cannot currently be used, and what statistical benefits of realigning the boundary would produce. Accompanying maps [on a separate sheet] and further details that may support an application are invited.

Please see response to section 4 (below).

#### 4. ONS Census Output Geography Policy

- 4.1 Please comment on any other aspects of 2011 Census Output policies outlined in Section 3. You may also use this opportunity to ask questions. (on a separate sheet if necessary)

OACUG generally welcomes the statement of policy and has the following comments:

##### (1) Stability of OAs:

The Output Area Classification (OAC), as a National Statistic is based on a UK wide set of small area statistics with users having the same breadth of interest, needs consistency and minimal variability in small area geography as a whole. The OACUG view is that the only modification of 2001 OAs should be amalgamation or subdivision where population change necessitates.

Although the 2001 OAs were not originally created for long term stability - no criteria were included for that purpose - they were created in an automated, objective and systematic way which significantly reduced variability previously inherent in Census Enumeration Districts and gave OAs their statistical value.

Our view is that it is unlikely that the 2001 methods could be replicated in a piecemeal way in response to what are likely to be selective and inconsistent local requests to modify 'under performing' OAs, and that there would be a definite risk of increasing between OA variability, which could be detrimental to national analyses such as OAC.

We also feel that too much emphasis is given to the 'naturalness' of OA boundaries. These, and the shapes of OAs, largely reflect the underlying physical pattern of residential addresses together with the layout of postcodes which are a fundamental aspect of the creation and use of OAs. There are no hard and fast means of deciding that an OA is 'unnatural', and any attempts to do so would further diminish objectivity.

OACUG is strongly in favour of minimal change in the interests of national consistency, maintaining statistical value, and of course usefulness for time series.

##### (2) Boundaries to remain freely available

OACUG has a core aim of promoting open geodemographic freely available to all, and strongly supports this policy as critically important.

### (3) Codes and links/lookups

An important recent development is the coding of ONS surveys by OAC to enable analysis of the survey data by the classification's categories and the communities and neighbourhoods they represent.

The data are linked by postcode to OA and hence to OAC categories, and we wish to underline the importance of files linking up to date postcodes to 2011 OAs, as well as to 2001 OAs, and for the information from the files to be freely available without any restrictive terms of charges.