Dear CPRE Member

We hope this email finds you well and managing in these challenging times.

This year has certainly shown what an amazing resource our countryside is for our health and well-being, and we hope that you have been able to enjoy it in some way.

As one of our local members, we wanted to take this opportunity to contact you about two relevant issues – the forthcoming examination of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan, and the postponement of our CPRE South Oxfordshire District Annual General Meeting.

**South Oxfordshire Local Plan: CPRE Oxfordshire will not give up fight for communities and countryside**

Despite the circumstances, planning and development shows no signs of any slow-down.

South Oxfordshire is now set to be one of the first authorities, if not *the* first, to have its Local Plan for development examined by a Planning Inspector via a set of online ‘virtual’ public hearings starting on 14 July 2020.

This controversial Plan is proceeding after Government Minister Robert Jenrick stepped in to force the District Council to press ahead with it.  It proposes 23,000 houses in the District, a 40% growth on current housing stock, with over 11,000 of those houses directed at the Oxford Green Belt.

**ADDENDUM**

Dear CPRE Member

Further to our previous email about the South Oxfordshire Local Plan, one of our members has raised a query about the numbers and we thought it would be helpful to issue a short note of clarification.

The housing requirement identified in the submitted Plan is for 23,000 houses, but in fact if you add up all the housing allocations proposed in the Plan it comes to 28,000 houses, which is quite some buffer!   In addition, the Council has now submitted an updated housing trajectory paper which extends the figures to 2035 but indicates the total will be 30,000 houses (of which 6,000 have already been built).

As you can see, it is a complicated picture.   However, the fundamental point is that all these figures are significantly above local need and as such will cause unnecessary loss of Green Belt and countryside.

With thanks

Professor Richard Harding

Chairman, CPRE South Oxfordshire District

Subject to the Inspector’s permission, CPRE Oxfordshire will appear at the hearings to make the case for the countryside.

We know this is a David and Goliath battle.  It is hard to see how we can have much impact when the Government Minister has already made it clear that his supposedly independent Inspector should find the Plan sound.  However, we will continue to make the argument at the hearings that the housing numbers are vastly in excess of our predicted population growth.   This means we are putting our countryside at risk, just when we know how vital it is for both climate change and for our health and well-being, especially given the impacts of Covid-19.

We’ll also be opposing Green Belt allocations, pushing for a robust policy on protecting the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, arguing for high quality, high density development to reduce overall land-take, and aiming for strong rural development policies.

*What can you do?*

1. *If you want to send additional info:* If you replied to the Pre-Submission consultation on the Draft Local Plan (the ‘Regulation 19’ consultation, in February 2019), you can submit hearing statements to the Inspector up until 26 June 2020. (The deadline for applying to speak at the hearings has passed.)  You can find more details via the District Council website [SODC Local Plan 2034](http://www.southoxon.gov.uk/services-and-advice/planning-and-building/planning-policy/local-plan-2034) and find our submissions on our website [CPRE Oxon Hearing Statements](http://www.cpreoxon.org.uk/news/current-news/item/2814-south-oxfordshire-local-plan-hearing-sessions)
2. *If you want to listen/watch:* We understand the Hearings will either be livestreamed online or recorded and made available through the Examination website to enable interested parties to observe the discussions.  The Examination Page is here: [SODC Local Plan 2034 Examination](http://www.southoxon.gov.uk/services-and-advice/planning-and-building/planning-policy/local-plan-2034/local-plan-2034-examinatio)
3. *If you want to raise concerns*:  If you have concerns about the way the hearings are being held, you can in the first instance contact the Programme Officer, Ian Kemp - E-mail: idkemp@icloud.com Post: PO Box 241, Droitwich, Worcestershire, WR9 1DW Telephone: 07723 009 166

If you have broader concerns about the Plan, you could contact

·      Your District Councillor

·      Your local MP

- John Howell MP (Henley) – E: HowellJM@parliament.uk

            - David Johnston (Wantage) – E: david.johnston.mp@parliament.uk

·      The Secretary of State for Housing, Communities & Local Government Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP – robert.jenrick@communities.gov.uk

**CPRE South Oxfordshire Annual General Meeting**

At our virtual committee meeting held on 9 June 2020, it was agreed that under the current special circumstances the AGM would be postponed until the autumn, in line with the district’s constitution.  The date & format of the AGM will be decided at a future district committee meeting.

Now more than ever I feel it is a great privilege to live in an area with such wonderful countryside and amazing rural communities.  Thank you for your support as we seek to protect and enhance these qualities for future generations.

Yours sincerely

Professor Richard Harding

Chairman, CPRE South Oxfordshire District

 

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