



Campaign to Protect
Rural England
OXFORDSHIRE

CPRE Oxfordshire Campaign Briefing May 2011

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CPRE has responded to the revised planning application submitted by P3Eco, A2Dominion and the consortium behind the NW Bicester Eco Development for the first 'Exemplar' phase of the project, expressing our concern that the first phase of the NW Bicester eco-town has advanced rapidly without an agreed Masterplan.

The Examination in Public on the South Oxfordshire Core Strategy will begin in July and CPRE Oxfordshire has been represented at the Pre-Hearing Meeting, where the Inspector focused on the issue of "soundness" and whether, despite not strictly conforming to the SE Plan, the Council's proposals were broadly acceptable.

Cherwell District Council has agreed to back growing opposition to the Government's high-speed rail project HS2. The Executive has agreed to make £50,000 of its reserves available for work on preparing objections to the proposals.

For more information about these and other issues see: [CPRE Oxfordshire website](#).

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CPRE Oxfordshire Campaigns:

1. Green Belt

-Access Road to be built between Begbroke and Yarnton in the Green Belt

Cherwell District Council has finally given consent to the University of Oxford to build an access road across Green Belt land between Begbroke and Yarnton, despite many years of strong opposition from CPRE and the Oxford Green Belt Network (OGBN).

The road will create a direct link between the science park at Begbroke and the A44 Woodstock Road, bringing to an end a five-year controversy about the best access route.

The university plans to move research groups out of the city to Begbroke as part of a long-term £1bn plan to expand and improve the university's science facilities. Work is set to begin in late July and should be completed by the end of this year.

The University has said it would be taking measures to mitigate the impact of the new road on local wildlife, with a badger tunnel and bat boxes being provided. Hedgerows will be planted alongside the road to screen it from view.

CPRE and OGBN strongly objected to this planning application since we believe the road will have a seriously adverse effect on the Green Belt, both in the short term by taking land out of accepted Green Belt use, and also in the longer term by inviting further forms of development because of the way that the road would carve up the land into developable plots.

The University challenged the proposed development at Grenoble Road in the South East Plan because its preference was to have it on its own land at Begbroke. The Inspector rejected that scheme, and it should not be revived on the back of this decision.

The whole area of land between the A44 and Kidlington is very vulnerable to development pressures, despite it serving as much valued open space for local residents and acting as an important wildlife corridor, and fulfilling the purposes for which the Green Belt was intended.

We will be urging the Council to protect this area and allow it to satisfy the purposes for which it was included in the Green Belt.

And we will be scrutinising future planning applications in this area and we will object to any development that we deem inappropriate.

- For more information see: ['Green Belt'](#) webpage.

- Northern Gateway

The Northern Gateway Area Action Plan, which is expected to include two parcels of Green

Belt land north of Oxford city, has been put on hold until the developers' contribution to the Barton Area Action Plan has been determined.

2. Energy

- Wind turbine at Cherwell Valley Services

The Committee date has yet to be set for Cherwell District Council to determine the planning application for an 87 metre wind turbine at Cherwell Valley Services on the M40, which CPRE Oxfordshire has objected to.

- Solar Farms

CPRE Oxfordshire has submitted a joint response with CPRE South Northamptonshire to an application submitted to Cherwell District Council for the installation of 122 solar PV panels on land at Upper Aynho Grounds, just across the Oxfordshire border in South Northamptonshire.

While we have not raised objections to this application, we have requested that three conditions be imposed to control the proposed use in accordance with Policy EV7 – Special Landscape Areas (South Northamptonshire Local Plan), namely: that the panels are coated in a non-reflecting material to minimise glare and visual impact; that the solar panels shall be screened from view by the presence of mature planting to the south, east and west of the site, appropriate to the character of the landscape; and that all equipment associated with the solar farm is removed and the land restored to agricultural use if the PV array use ceases.

CPRE is aware that increasing numbers of such proposals seem to be coming forward and we are concerned at the cumulative adverse impact on the countryside if a number were clustered together, since they are intrinsically an “alien” feature in the landscape.

- For a copy of the joint response contact: [Helena Whall](#).

Other Oxfordshire News:

1. Housing

NW Bicester Eco-Town

CPRE Bicester and Ploughley District has responded to the revised planning application submitted by P3Eco, A2Dominion and the consortium behind the NW Bicester Eco Development to Cherwell District Council for the first ‘Exemplar’ phase of the project.

We have expressed our concern that the first phase of the NW Bicester eco-town has advanced rapidly without an agreed Masterplan and recommending that a clear and robust Masterplan is adopted to guide the scheme in a coherent manner whilst ensuring that its intended eco-credentials are being met.

Cherwell District Council is expected to consider the revised application for 400 homes in the Exemplar scheme at the Council's Committee in June.

- For more information see: ['Housing - NW Bicester Eco-Town'](#) webpage.

2. Planning

EiP on South Oxfordshire Core Strategy

The Examination in Public on the South Oxfordshire Core Strategy will begin in July and CPRE Oxfordshire has been represented at the Pre-Hearing Meeting.

The Core Strategy includes plans to build more than 4,000 homes in South Oxfordshire during a period of 15 years. A site north east of Didcot could provide 2,030 houses, with about 300 more in the town centre.

The recommendations also include 400 homes at a site near Wallingford, 530 northwest of Thame and 400 near Henley-on-Thames. An additional 750 homes may be split across larger villages.

At the Pre-Hearing Meeting on 17 May, the Inspector focused on the issue of “soundness”. Because the District Council’s plans were largely consulted on and written at a time the South East Plan was thought “dead”, before being resurrected by the CALA Homes decision, they therefore do not strictly conform to the SE Plan, particularly, for example, in leaving almost 24% of housing development to unidentified windfalls, when the SE plan requires far more certainty.

As such, some time was spent on considering whether, despite not strictly conforming to the SE Plan, the Council’s proposals were in fact near enough to pass muster.

Since the Regional Strategies (including the SE Plan) are expected to be finally killed off by the Localism Bill in the Autumn, it is possible that the Inspector may postpone the EiP until the outcome of the Localism Bill is known.

- For more information see: [SODC](#) website.

3. Reservoir

Following the public inquiry last year, the Secretary of State has called for further technical work, including the option of a smaller reservoir, half the size of the original Abingdon proposal. DEFRA and the Environment Agency are now advising Thames Water on the work required to satisfactorily complete the 2009 Water Resources Management Plan (WRMP), the 2012 Annual Review and the 2013 WRMP.

In their further letter to Thames Water, DEFRA has suggested that TW should ascertain whether there may be feasible alternative locations to a 50M m³ reservoir at Abingdon.

Thames Water now needs to comply with DEFRA's long list of revisions. In the meantime CPRE shall continue to work closely with GARD to ensure Thames's revised plans result in minimum malign impact on the Oxfordshire countryside.

4. Transport

CDC backs campaign to oppose HS2

Cherwell District Council has agreed to back growing opposition to the Government's high-speed rail project HS2. The Executive has agreed to make £50,000 of its reserves available for work on preparing objections to the proposals. This will be done in conjunction with other concerned councils across the south-east and Midlands.

The money will help fund the technical and legal consultancy needed to make an effective, in-principle objection to the scheme and mount a campaign asking the Government to reconsider.

It will also pay for specialist consultancy to assist the Planning Committee in examining the landscaping and environmental measures that are needed in Cherwell should the scheme get the go-ahead.

The council's planning department will bring a report back to the Executive toward the end of the Government's consultation period so the council's formal response can be considered.

A total of 13 councils are already part of the campaign to oppose HS2, all of which have signed up to the following position statement:

"The authorities along the route have come together to oppose the proposals for high-speed rail as they are currently proposed.

"We do not believe that the business case stacks up and therefore cannot support the route suggested by Government and are actively working on a plan to strongly object to the proposals.

"We are opposed to the current high-speed rail proposals as they are presently outlined and do not believe that they are in the best interests of the UK as a whole in terms of the benefits claimed in the business case.

"We are not opposed to the need for higher-speed rail per se and fully acknowledge the need for strategic improvement to the national rail infrastructure but cannot agree with the current proposals as the economic and environmental benefits are not at all credible.

"We do not believe that all the other alternatives to achieve the transport capacity, regeneration and environmental benefits have been fully explored by the Government and with in excess of £30billion proposed to be invested, we owe it to the nation to ensure these are fully explored."

- For more information see: [CDC](#) website.

5. Waste

Ardley EfW legal challenge

Oxfordshire County Council has secured a High Court agreement for a speedy hearing of the legal challenge by campaign group Ardley Against the Incinerator to the Secretary of State's decision to allow the Ardley Energy from Waste (EfW) facility.

Ardley Against the Incinerator are claiming the decision-making process by minister Eric Pickles was flawed. Mr Pickles now has 21 days to respond to the legal papers. Jon O'Neill, Chairman of Ardley Against the Incinerator, said: "We have always believed, with good reason and evidence, that the granting of planning permission to develop a 300,000-tonne incinerator on the Ardley Fields Farm (quarry and landfill) site is wrong.

As Waste Disposal Authority, the County Council believes the challenge by the campaign group to be wholly without merit and a spoiling tactic which will ultimately waste several million pounds of public money.

The case is expected to be heard in the High Court in the autumn.

South East News

The May issue of the 'CPRE South East e-Bulletin' is now available.

CPRE National Office News

Localism Bill - update

The Localism Bill has now had its third reading in the House of Commons and will now be considered in the House of Lords.

On 17th and 18th May, MPs debated the Localism Bill and voted on amendments. CPRE National Office sent a briefing to more than 250 MPs, focusing on opposing a Government amendment to make financial considerations that are unrelated to the proposed development, such as the New Homes Bonus, a material consideration in planning decisions.

CPRE also promoted CPRE-led amendments to introduce a limited community right of appeal to the planning system, and to define 'sustainable development' in the Bill. Despite strong opposition from Labour MPs, including the Labour frontbench who quoted CPRE, and concern expressed by Lib Dem MPs, the New Homes Bonus amendment was added to the Bill. The community right of appeal amendment was not pressed to a vote. Debate now moves to the House of Lords, where the Second Reading will take place on Wednesday 7th June.

After there has been due consideration of any proposed amendments, the Bill could get Royal Assent in the summer of 2012.

Diary

Saturday 28 May, 10.00pm

CPRE Guided Walk along Oxford Green Belt Way

As part of Oxford Preservation Trust's 'Discovering Places 2011', David Godfrey, Rights of

Way Consultant to the Oxfordshire Branch of the CPRE, will be leading a 7-mile circular walk from Abingdon to Radley, via Radley Lakes.

Please meet at 10.00 am, at Abbey Close (Abbey Meadows) car park in Abingdon and bring a picnic to have at Radley Lakes.

Those who wish can leave at Radley and return to Abingdon by the no. 35 bus.

There will be a short guided tour of the lakes showing the restoration work that is being done by Friends of Radley Lakes and Earth Trust.

This event is free and booking is not necessary.

For more information contact [David Godfrey](#).

Sunday 29 May, 10.00am - 4.00pm

Discover Oxford's Green Spaces

As part of Oxford Preservation Trust's 'Discovering Places 2011', the CPRE City District, in association with the Friends of the Trap Grounds, the Friends of Warneford Meadow, and the Friends of Oxpens Meadow, will be manning information stalls and organising trails and other activities on the three sites to promote CPRE's Oxford Green Spaces Circular Walk, a nine-mile self-guided route that links the three open spaces.

This event is free and booking is not necessary.

For more information about this event contact [Michael Daniell](#).

If you would like to volunteer to help out on the day, please contact Michael Daniell.

CPRE Member's Events

Tuesday June 21st, 2.15pm

Visit to Ditchley Park, Enstone

This important house by James Gibbs with interiors by William Kent is now owned by the Ditchley Foundation and is not open to the general public. The visit will include a guided tour of the state rooms of the house and there will be access to the gardens and extensive park, plus tea and biscuits.

There is disabled access to the house.

Cost £9.00.

If you would like to book for this event please contact [Gill Salway](#).

Thursday 23 June, 2.30pm

Visit to Rousham House & Garden

Private guided tour of the Rousham House from 2.45pm to 3.30pm, with the opportunity afterwards to wander in the walled gardens, church and parkland by William Kent. Picnics welcome, but no dogs or children, please. For more information see: www.rousham.org

Please book early by sending £10 per head (plus SAE or email address; cheques made out to 'CPRE') to Hubert Beaumont, Taston Barn, Taston, Chipping Norton OX7 3JL. Tel: 01608 810232 or email [Hubert Beaumont](mailto:Hubert.Beaumont).

Please see: ['Events'](#) webpage for more details of CPRE Member's Events.

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