



Campaign to Protect  
Rural England  
OXFORDSHIRE

## CPRE Oxfordshire Campaign Briefing

**November 2011**

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*The Localism Bill received Royal Assent on Tuesday 15th November and so became the Localism Act 2011. But the National Office of CPRE has warned that the legislation may fail to deliver the power shift it promises if it is undermined by proposed changes to national planning policies outlined in the new National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).*

*The Examination in Public on South Oxfordshire District Council (SODC)'s Core Strategy ended on 11th November. CPRE Oxfordshire was represented at the hearings. The Inspector said that the 'brownfield first' rule when identifying housing sites should be a "given".*

*Waste Recycling Group (WRG) has amended their original application for an anaerobic digester at the Sutton Courtenay landfill site. The proposal, which will create renewable energy from crops grown on site, has been cut from a 30,000 tonnes-a-year capacity to one of 10,000 tonnes per year. CPRE Vale District will be considering the impact of the proposal on the local landscape and will be submitting its response shortly.*

*The contract awarded to Viridor Oxfordshire Ltd in March 2010 will now be implemented after a considerable delay and the construction of the incinerator at Ardley will begin in the next few weeks.*

*The first phase of the 5,000 home eco-development in NW Bicester could begin as early as February of next year after receiving financial backing from two real estate investors.*

*The CPRE Oxford District has launched its Oxford Green Spaces campaign to promote and protect the city's valued green spaces. Research has already been undertaken by members of the Committee to map the green infrastructure of Oxford.*

*CPRE National Office has this month published research on brownfield land entitled 'Building on a Small Island: why we still need brownfields first'. The research analyses the claims made about the existing 'brownfield first' policy in the Government's Impact Assessment of the draft National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).*

*Double your donations to CPRE in December! See below for more information.*

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

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**Double your donations with the Big Give on 5 - 7 December!**

From 10 am on Monday 5, Tuesday 6 or Wednesday 7 December all donations made to CPRE National Office on the Big Give website could be doubled!

The Garfield Weston Foundation has generously offered to match up to £40,000 of donations made to CPRE during the Big Give week. With donations doubled you could help us raise as much as £80,000 and with Gift Aid that could be even more.

But you must be quick, a proportion of the fund is released at 10am on 5, 6 and 7 December and once the daily fund is gone your donations cannot be matched.

To make sure you don't miss out on this opportunity to help us raise funds to protect the countryside sign up to CPRE's Big Give email reminders. CPRE will send you a reminder before and during the Big Give and bring you up-to-date with our Big Give fundraising news.

For more information and to register for CPRE email reminders go to the [CPRE National Office website](#).

**CPRE Oxfordshire Campaigns and News:**

**1. Planning**

**-National Planning Policy Framework**

The public consultation on the draft National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) closed on

17th October and Ministers are aiming to publish a final version of the NPPF before the end of March next year.

Between then and now it is vitally important that CPRE continues to apply pressure to ensure that the concerns we have been raising over the past few months are adequately addressed.

As a branch, we will continue to try and influence decision-makers at every level. Over the coming weeks and months we will be applying pressure to local authorities and local MPs through letters, meetings and local media work.

### **What you can do**

We would like CPRE members and members of the public to consider following up earlier engagement with MPs if they are unsatisfied with the response they received. To help inform that work CPRE has issued a 'NPPF: Frequently Asked Questions' Briefing.

See our ['Planning'](#) webpage for a copy of the 'NPPF: FAQs Briefing'.

### **-Vale of White Horse District Interim Housing Supply Policy**

The consultation on the Vale of White Horse District's Interim Housing Supply Policy (IHSP), which outlines the District Council's proposals to deal with a temporary shortfall in its five year housing supply, closed today (25th November).

In its response to the consultation, CPRE has strongly opposed the plan to open villages to what could be "injurious and undesirable development." In particular, CPRE has argued that "any policy to relax building constraints on greenfield sites should provide complete protection of the AONB, as well as the Green Belt."

The branch was represented at the Vale's workshop on the IHSP on 17th November, and it has held detailed discussions about the proposed policy with various parish councils across the District.

See: [CPRE Vale District Committee's consultation response](#) .

### **- Localism Bill - update**

The Localism Bill received Royal Assent on Tuesday 15th November and so became the Localism Act 2011.

But the National Office of CPRE has warned that the legislation may fail to deliver the power shift it promises if it is undermined by proposed changes to national planning policies outlined in the new National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

Adam Royle, Senior Parliamentary Officer for CPRE, said in a press release issued on 15th November: "The neighbourhood planning powers in the Localism Act promise to deliver positive outcomes for communities, by giving them a structure in which to make planning decisions for themselves. But if draft national planning policies which say there should be a default yes to development are unchanged, local communities will have their hands tied.

“This could leave developers, rather than local communities, in the driving seat. We are ready to celebrate giving local people more say on which direction to take their community, but not if all roads lead to excessive, damaging or inappropriate development.”

During the Localism Act's passage through Parliament the National Office of CPRE has argued for changes in three key areas:

- Existing legislation is clear that the purpose of planning is to achieve sustainable development - but the Government should define what it really means by this. The definition of sustainable development in the draft NPPF is insufficient and fails to recognise environmental limits.
- Where large-scale developments are approved that go against a locally-agreed plan, communities should have a right to appeal that decision. Government commitments to review appeal costs and to improve pre-application consultation need to deliver real progress.
- The New Homes Bonus and other financial incentives must not allow developers to buy and sell planning permissions. A badly worded clause in the Act could send the wrong message if its practical application is not clarified by the Government through guidance.

Although CPRE was not successful in securing a limited third party right of appeal through its work on the legislation, the Government did make some concessions on this issue. Most notably they stated they would review the award of costs Circular so that local planning authorities will be less likely to grant planning applications against their will due to the likely costs of going to appeal. We need to ensure this commitment is delivered.

CPRE is optimistic about elements of the Localism Act, but it believes the challenge for the Government now is to redraft its proposed national planning policies to give the new legislation the best possible chance of success.

CPRE intends to issue a detailed briefing about the planning section of this legislation before the end of the year to inform branches and district groups about its implications. A copy of this briefing will be posted on the CPRE Oxfordshire 'Planning' webpage.

For more information see: [Localism Act 2011](#).

See also the latest CPRE SE e-Bulletin which provides a short analysis of the Localism Act on the '[Planning](#)' page of our website.

## **2. Green Belt**

### **Examination in Public on SODC's Core Strategy**

The Examination in Public on South Oxfordshire District Council (SODC)'s Core Strategy ended on 11th November. CPRE Oxfordshire was represented at the hearings.

Serious concerns were raised at the hearings that the Core Strategy did not comply with the European Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Directive. As a result, SODC was given an extension within which to satisfy the Inspector that its SEA is sound.

Under the session on the 'Overall Housing Totals', the debate ranged from whether the totals should be higher (in line with emerging Government policy) or lower. CPRE argued that they should be no higher, due to the economic downturn. The Inspector concluded that windfalls would be excluded from the overall housing totals. However, since windfalls will nevertheless come along, the overall housing totals are bound to end up being higher.

The 60:40 split of new housing between houses and villages was discussed at considerable length. It was widely agreed that 60:40 was a good basis to start from, but CPRE argued that local conditions, for example, Green Belt and AONBs, and also land availability and need by location must override mathematical ratios. CPRE also said that 'brownfield first' should be the rule and the Inspector said this should be a "given". We believe this could make for an interesting time as 90% of the identified possible sites in the villages are greenfield (not to mention those villages in the AONB).

The District Council's proposals for an extension of Wheatley into the Green Belt, which had been provisionally defeated by CPRE and Parish representations at the July hearings, were raised again, as was the extension of Oxford south of Grenoble Road. We again argued against both of these. Unfortunately, the Inspector had provisionally agreed to a review of whether Berinsfield should be taken out of the Green Belt (against the apparent wishes of its residents). We argued that in that case the boundary for Review must be drawn tightly round the existing settlement. A developer's proposal that instead it should be extended to include another was strongly opposed by us, on the grounds that this would unreasonably presume an outcome, and that if an outcome were to be specified it must be our own proposal that that the boundary should be drawn tightly.

Inspectors are always fairly inscrutable and it is hard to predict their findings. Roy Foster, the Inspector in this case, has indicated that he will be requiring changes to the District Council's proposed strategy, and that he still requires further evidence that the Sustainability Appraisal has been properly done. It is expected that he will issue his report before the end of the year (which may require further consultations). The Council says it currently expects to publish a modified version of its Core Strategy by April 2012.

To find out more about the EiP on SODC's Core Strategy see: [SODC website](#).

### **3. Energy**

#### **Anaerobic Digester for Sutton Courtenay**

Waste Recycling Group (WRG) has amended their original application for an anaerobic digester at the Sutton Courtenay landfill site. The proposal, which will create renewable energy from crops grown on site, has been cut from a 30,000 tonnes-a-year capacity to one of 10,000 tonnes per year.

An exhibition of the new plans took place at the site on Wednesday, 23rd November.

The plant will initially process crops from neighbouring farms, with four or five deliveries a day, but will eventually only use crops grown on site. WRG plans to plant 40 hectares with forage maize.

WRG hopes to submit a planning application next month. The firm had a bid for a £20m waste treatment plant between Sutton Courtenay and Appleford rejected by Oxfordshire County Councillors in September.

CPRE Vale District will be attending the exhibition and will examine the planning application and its potential impact on the local landscape in due course.

#### **4. Waste**

##### **Construction of incinerator at Ardley to go ahead**

The contract awarded to Viridor Oxfordshire Ltd in March 2010 will now be implemented after a considerable delay and the construction of the incinerator (energy from waste (EfW) facility) at Ardley will begin in the next few weeks.

Under the contract Viridor will build a 300,000 tonne per year EfW facility at Ardley. This will treat at least 95% of Oxfordshire's residual municipal waste, which is waste that is remaining after recycling and composting. The facility will generate 24 mega watts of electricity, which is enough for 38,000 homes. The EfW will have capacity to treat much of Oxfordshire's commercial and industrial waste too, and the council will benefit from a share of income from this and the sale of electricity.

CPRE Oxfordshire objected to the proposed incinerator on the grounds that it would impact adversely on the local landscape.

#### **5. Housing**

##### **Work on eco-development at Bicester to start in February**

The first phase of the 5,000 home eco-development in NW Bicester could begin as early as February of next year after receiving financial backing from two real estate investors. Resolution Property and Altitude Real Estate LLP have bought the freehold to 80 acres of greenfield to the NW of Bicester, which already has planning permission for 393 homes, offices, a community centre, a pub and shops.

On 11th August, P3Eco (Bicester) Ltd, together with its development partner A2Dominion, announced that Cherwell District Council had resolved to grant detailed planning permission for 393 new homes and a renewable energy centre as part of the first 'Exemplar' phase of the NW Bicester Eco development masterplanned by leading architect-planners, Farrells with support from project engineering consultants Hyder Consulting.

The proposals, submitted by planning and design consultancy Barton Willmore on behalf of the partnership, also provide for outline consent for new employment, retail, social and community facilities, as well as a site for a primary school to form a local centre at the heart of a sustainable new "village".

The permission unlocked a £6m investment from the Homes and Communities Agency in the delivery of 119 affordable homes as part of this phase of development. The resolutions to grant permission are subject to completion of a legal agreement.

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

## **6. Landscape and Environment**

### **CPRE Wallingford District celebrates its 80th anniversary**

Earlier this month, a small group of local countryside champions braved the cold and misty autumnal weather to witness Mrs Anne Kelaart, President of CPRE Oxfordshire, plant an English oak in Wallingford Castle Meadows. The occasion was organised by the Wallingford District of CPRE to celebrate the 80th anniversary of the branch.

Those present included Mrs Ann Ducker, Leader of South Oxfordshire District Council, Mr Colin Dolton, the Mayor of Wallingford, Sir Colin Imray, the High Steward of Wallingford, and Lady Imray, Mrs Jane Manley, Acting Head of the Earth Trust, Mr Tony Rayner, Chair of Abingdon Naturalists Society and several members of the CPRE Branch Executive Committee, including Brian Wood, Chairman, and Bruce Tremayne, Vice-Chairman.

In a Press Release issued after the event, Arnold Grayson, Chairman of CPRE Wallingford District, said: “An English oak was chosen to mark our eightieth birthday in order to bolster the representation of oak in the Meadow, and because oaks are seen as a symbol of great strength and endurance.

“We hope that like the oak tree, the Wallingford District of the CPRE will continue to grow and flourish and remain an influential voice on countryside and planning matters in Wallingford and the surrounding villages for many years to come.”

### **What you can do**

There are eight CPRE District Committees in Oxfordshire which monitor local planning issues, organise events and campaign on local landscape concerns. If you have some time to spare and care about your local landscape and its future protection why not consider joining your local committee! If you are interested in joining one of our committees, or doing some voluntary work, in the first instance please contact [Becky](#) or see the 'CPRE District' page of our [website](#).

### **Oxford District launches Green Spaces campaign**

The many and varied green spaces in Oxford make the city one of the most desirable places to live and work. Yet they are under constant threat from housing and commercial development. Local communities are increasingly fighting to protect their much-loved and often little-known green spaces.

In July 2010, the CPRE Oxford District Committee, in association with the Friends of Warneford Meadow, the Friends of the Trap Grounds, the Friends of Oxpens Meadow and The Ramblers' Association created the Oxford Green Spaces Circular Walk. This was designed to increase awareness of Oxford's Green Spaces and the threats posed by development. Following the success of the Walk the District has recently launched the Oxford Green Spaces campaign.

The Oxford Green Spaces campaign is an initiative to further promote and protect the city's valued green spaces. Research has already been undertaken by members of the Committee to map the green infrastructure of Oxford. The result is a user-friendly map showing all the green spaces within the city, as well as the Green Belt. The map is based on the contours of the 16 'urban villages' and detailed maps showing the green spaces within each of the urban villages have also been created.

The map is designed to inform and advise residents of their local green spaces – where they are, what their designation is and whether or not they are under threat from development. The map has already proved invaluable to residential groups in formulating their responses to the City District's Sites and Housing Development Plan Document (DPD), which has allocated 100 sites around the city for future development. The DPD will go out for consultation next spring, to be followed by an Examination in Public scheduled for September 2012.

The District Committee is currently engaged with several residents' groups, giving them advice on how they can promote and protect their threatened green spaces.

Members of the District Committee will be promoting the campaign at their stall at the Green Fair in Oxford Town Hall on 3rd December.

### **What you can do**

To get your copy of the Oxford Green Spaces map (A3) and the detailed Urban Village maps (A4) please contact [Becky](#).

### **South East News**

See the latest issue of [CPRE South East e-bulletin](#).

### **CPRE National Office News**

#### **Building on a Small Island: why we still need brownfields first.**

Earlier this month CPRE published research on brownfield land entitled 'Building on a Small Island: why we still need brownfields first'.

The research analyses the claims made about the existing 'brownfield first' policy in the Government's Impact Assessment of the draft National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). Most notably the report found that rather than brownfield land running out, as the Government claims, there is sufficient brownfield land available and suitable for residential development in England for almost 1.5 million new dwellings. This is equivalent to around 6 years' supply at the building rates the Government believes are needed and a 10 year supply at 2009 building rates.

See: ['Building on a Small Island'](#) .

### **Diary**

**Saturday, December 3rd**, Oxford Green Fair, 10.00 am - 4.00 pm.

The annual Oxford Green Fair will be held on Saturday, December 3rd, at the Oxford Town Hall.

CPRE Oxfordshire will be manning a stall in the main hall. Please come along and say hello!

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