



Campaign to Protect  
Rural England  
OXFORDSHIRE

## **CPRE Oxfordshire News Release**

**Date**  
16.07.09

### **CPRE Oxfordshire welcomes Government's decision to drop Weston Otmoor from final eco-town shortlist**

The Housing Minister, John Healey, is today (16 July) publishing the final Eco-towns Planning Policy Statement (PPS) and announcing that Weston Otmoor in Oxfordshire has not made it onto the Government's list of eco-town sites. However, the alternative eco development of 5,000 homes at North West Bicester is being identified as a proposed location. [1]

This announcement follows consideration by the DCLG of the responses to the consultation on the draft Eco-towns Planning Policy Statement, which ended on 30 April 2009. [2]

The Oxfordshire Branch of the environmental campaign group, the Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE), [3] welcomes the Government's acceptance that Weston Otmoor is unsuitable for an eco-town.

Helena Whall, Campaign Manager for CPRE Oxfordshire, said:

"We have campaigned very hard on this issue and we are very pleased that the Government has at last seen sense on the total unsuitability of the Weston Otmoor proposals."

She continued:

"CPRE has always supported the general concept of greener, more eco-friendly developments and supports many of the sustainability principles in the final Planning Policy Statement.

As far as the 5,000 house alternative put forward by Cherwell District Council for North West Bicester is concerned, we are aware that Cherwell see potentially positive benefits for the town and the idea has had some Government support. Our view is that North West Bicester urban extension is much more in line with local planning policies as a concept but we are uncomfortable that more green fields will disappear and certainly the affected landowners and nearby villages

are most unhappy. Before commenting fully on the suitability of the site, we would like to see many more details and look very closely at the eco credentials. Cherwell have already stipulated ten important pre-conditions.

However, we will not support the proposal if the 5,000 new houses are treated as being over and above Cherwell's South East Plan target of 13,400. In other words, it must remain strictly within the Government's overall housing target for the District."

Helena Whall concluded:

"It is also absolutely essential that any eco-town plans are brought forward and properly assessed through the normal development planning process. This has been a contentious and fundamental issue all the way through the Government's lengthy consultations on the eco-towns. At last the DCLG seem to have accepted in this final Planning Policy Statement that the Government cannot bypass established democratic systems."

– END –

#### NOTES FOR EDITORS

1. See the CPRE Oxfordshire response to the eco-town consultation at: [http://www.cpreoxon.org.uk/campaigns/planning/housing/eco\\_towns.htm](http://www.cpreoxon.org.uk/campaigns/planning/housing/eco_towns.htm)
2. See the DCLG shortlist of eco-towns at: <http://www.communities.gov.uk/housing/housingsupply/ecotowns/>
3. CPRE Oxfordshire promotes the beauty, tranquillity and diversity of rural Oxfordshire by encouraging the sustainable use of land and other natural resources in town and country. We are part of the national CPRE charity. For more information see: [www.cpreoxon.org.uk](http://www.cpreoxon.org.uk)
4. A development consortium has recently been formed to take the North West Bicester scheme forward and develop its proposals for an eco settlement on the site "*within the context of an eco-led regeneration of Bicester as a whole.*"

#### For Further Information

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