



PRESS RELEASE

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CPRE Oxfordshire launches new campaign to Save the Oxford Green Belt and Protect Historic Oxford

CPRE Oxfordshire has launched a new campaign to Save the Oxford Green Belt and Protect Historic Oxford.

A number of wealthy landowners, including Magdalen College, are trying to build huge urban extensions out over the Oxford Green Belt.

The most immediate threat is to the south of the City at Grenoble Road, where a planning application for 3,500 houses is expected soon, with a further 3,500 also on the cards.

If successful, this could quickly lead to moves for further extensions to the north of the City, where there is a proposal for a further 3,500 houses, which would obliterate the 'Kidlington gap', and elsewhere around the Green Belt, including north of Abingdon and Wicks Farm.

Once attacked in this way, there will be little to stand in the way of the complete dismantling of the Oxford Green Belt.

Our Green Belt is under threat as never before and we need your help to protect it for future generations!

Support our new campaign – Save the Oxford Green Belt and Protect Historic Oxford: <http://www.cpreoxon.org.uk/campaigns>

NOTES TO EDITORS:

Background Statement

'Knives out for Oxford Green Belt' warns CPRE

Although over three quarters of Oxfordshire's residents, and overwhelming majorities of City and town people too, believe that even though the need for housing may be great the Green Belt should not be sacrificed to meet it, this is exactly what the people elected to represent us are proposing to do. [1]

From the Vale of White Horse District's decision to sacrifice 18 Green Belt sites in open countryside, to South Oxfordshire's inclusion, and therefore implicit acceptance, of three large Green Belt sites for urban extensions in their current Local Plan consultation, to Bob Price, City Leader's, long-term push for expansion of the City into a new Birmingham, [2] the Oxford Green Belt is suddenly under attack.

Although it is easy to see the Local Authorities as the assassins, they are in fact acting only on Government instructions. Whilst Government Ministers are forever weeping crocodile tears of undying support for the Green Belt, it is their Government which tore up the previous Planning System which had served us well, and created the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). It is the NPPF which instructs Local Councils to let developers and landowners decide how much development is needed through the unelected quangos called Local Enterprise Partnerships, and the Strategic Housing Market Assessments they generate, the bulk of which is based, not on any realistic local need, but on the twin assumptions that all of us want to be part of Growth Hubs, and want an unlimited influx of new workers – and therefore new houses to accommodate them – which may totally and unnecessarily destroy the character of our City, towns and villages.

What is more the Government takes away the powers of Councils who fail to get these houses built, and rewards them if they are. This forces them towards releasing not brownfield sites which it is less profitable to build on compared to green field, especially Green Belt sites, which are easy. And there is no shortage of willing sellers of land. Huge tracts of the Oxford Green Belt are owned by the Oxford colleges, who are some of the most predatory developers around.

Magdalen College, for instance, despite having more than £197.5 million in the bank, is behind the push to develop South of Grenoble Road and, to make its aims clear has formed a profit sharing agreement with minor landowners Thames Water and the Oxford City Council to do so. [3]

In Oxford's case it is a poisonous cocktail of the greed of landowners like Magdalen College, and of Government Policy, which has created the circumstances in which they and their ilk can run roughshod over the public's wish to preserve the Green Belt which prevents urban sprawl and provide Green Lungs of undeveloped land on City folk's doorsteps.

The threat to Grenoble Road which raises its head in South Oxfordshire's new "consultation" on its Local Plan epitomises the general threat the Green Belt faces. [4]

It includes a Government imposed housing forecast, generated by the unelected LEP's plan that Oxford will be allowed to grow its business – and therefore its population – unconstrained. It includes a predatory landowner Magdalen College, seeking profit to add to the £197.5 million in its already overflowing coffers. It includes a City Council which has for thirty years fretted against the Green Belt preventing it becoming another Birmingham, even though the City's medieval layout, network of rivers and floodplains and historic buildings make it entirely unsuitable for the role, a role which would, incidentally, also harm its actual economy which depends on tourism and being an attractive place for entrepreneurs and university people to live.

The public, on the other hand, town and country, house owners and non-house owners, overwhelmingly believe that the Green Belt, which is after all only 13% of Oxfordshire, should be left undeveloped for the benefit of us all, whatever the real – or notional – level of housing demand might be.

We speak out for them. The Green Belt is too important to be sliced up in a death of a thousand cuts.

It is time to speak out against the Perfect Storm of Growth at All Costs to the Environment that, with Government support, predatory developers and landowners are forcing on us, and in which our elected Councils are acquiescing.

[1]. CPRE Oxfordshire Green Belt Survey, March 2015: <http://bit.ly/29rsQGg>

[2]. See: '[Investing in Oxford's Future – Oxford Growth Strategy: Advocacy Statement](#)', Oxford City Council, January 2016.

[3]. See: '[South Oxford Garden Neighbourhood Environmental Impact Assessment Scoping Report](#)', Prepared by Savills for Magdalen Development Company and Thames Water Property, March 2016.

[4]. South Oxfordshire District Council has this month published the new 'Local Plan - Preferred Options Consultation': <http://bit.ly/29rsNdO>

END

RESOURCES:

CPRE Oxfordshire [Threats to the Oxford Green Belt Map](#)

CPRE Oxfordshire [Green Belt Survey](#) (March 2015)

CPRE Oxfordshire [Oxford Green Belt Key Facts](#)

CPRE Oxfordshire [Oxford Green Belt Q&A](#)

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The Campaign to Protect Rural England fights for the Oxfordshire countryside: to protect it from the threats it faces, and to positively shape its future – join us today and stand up for your countryside!

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