



Campaign to Protect
Rural England
OXFORDSHIRE

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CPRE Oxfordshire News Release

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Government's changes to planning system will undermine the purpose of the Oxford Green Belt

The Oxfordshire Branch of the Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) warns that the Government's proposed changes to the planning system could put 41 Oxfordshire villages at risk of development, leaving the Oxford Green Belt looking like a piece of Gruyere cheese, full of holes. [1]

Helena Whall, Campaigns Manager for CPRE Oxfordshire, said: "The government is wrong to say that its draft national planning policy framework (NPPF) will not undermine the Green Belt. [2] In fact, it will make it easier for developers to get permission to develop in villages currently protected by the Green Belt, meaning this precious planning tool will suffer the protracted death of a thousand cuts. The new planning guidance will undermine the whole purpose of the Green Belt and make it at the very best a shadow of its former self." [3]

Research undertaken by the Oxfordshire Branch of the CPRE and the Oxford Green Belt Network, [4] reveals that 41 villages in the Oxford Green Belt are at risk of development under the new proposals.

Helena Whall said: "A major worry is that villages currently "washed over" by the Green Belt, i.e. which are in every respect part of the Green Belt, will be taken out of the Green Belt altogether. This is because the NPPF states that a village whose character does not contribute to the "openness" of the Green Belt should be excluded from it." [5]

There are a total of 34 villages in Oxfordshire which are completely "washed over" by the Green Belt and therefore at risk of being excluded from the Green Belt, making them more vulnerable to development under the new proposals. These are:

West Oxfordshire:

Cassington.

Vale District:

Wytham, Farmoor, Eaton, Besselsleigh, Tubney, South Hinksey and Sunningwell.

Cherwell District:

Islip, Charlton-on-Otmoor, Oddington, Fencott, Murcott and Horton-cum-Studley.

South Oxfordshire:

Woodeaton, Elsfield, Beckley, Stanton St John, Forest Hill, Holton, Waterstock, Waterperry, Horspath, Cuddesdon, Garsington, Great Milton, Toot Baldon, Marsh Baldon, Culham, Clifton Hampden, Nuneham Courtenay, Berinsfield, Dorchester, and Drayton St Leonard.

Helena Whall continued: "We believe all villages in the Green Belt are at risk, but of the 41 villages, some are obviously more at risk than others, for example, Cassington, because of large scale development by Agrivert nearby; Holton, because of Wheatley Park School & Oxford Brookes University; or because they are closest to Oxford and have already experienced pressures, for example Horspath and Garsington; or because there is already a policy to exclude them, for example, Berinsfield." [6]

There are a further 7 villages in the county that are half in and half outside the Green Belt, and are vulnerable to being excluded for that reason. These are:

Cherwell District:

Weston-on-the-Green and Bletchingdon.

South Oxfordshire:

Warborough, Little Milton, Stadhampton and Newington.

West Oxfordshire:

Bladon.

CPRE Oxfordshire urges all residents who currently enjoy the benefits of village life in the Green Belt to consider carefully what the government's proposed planning changes might mean for them.

CPRE Oxfordshire is urging people to write to their local MP asking that any changes to the planning system take into account the needs of local people and the environment, not just developers.

People can also sign up for CPRE Oxfordshire campaign updates at: www.cpreoxon.org.uk

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NOTES FOR EDITORS

1. 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. Established in 1931, the charity is this year celebrating its 80th anniversary. We are part of the national CPRE charity. For more information see: www.cpreoxon.org.uk

2. Department of Communities and Local Government, Draft National Planning Policy Framework, 25 July 2011. <http://bit.ly/pNluxz>
3. The Oxford Green Belt was formally approved in 1975. The Green Belt around Oxford city covers 33,700 hectares, about 13% of the total area of the County. For more info. on the Oxford Green Belt see the CPRE Oxfordshire website: http://www.cpreoxon.org.uk/campaigns/green_belt/green_belt.htm
4. See: Oxford Green Belt Network Special Newsletter for September 2011: www.oxfordgreenbelt.net
5. At present a number of villages are excluded from the Oxford Green Belt. In technical terms they are called “inset villages”, i.e. they are inset in the Green Belt rather than being “washed over”.

These villages include: Kidlington, Yarnton and Begbroke in Cherwell District; Cumnor, Appleton, Wootton, Kennington and Radley in the Vale District; and Wheatley in South Oxfordshire District.

Once a village is excluded from the Green Belt and the protection that it currently offers, it will be much easier for developers to get permission to build in these villages. The “inset” villages are also vulnerable to having their inset extended. South Oxfordshire District Council is currently arguing at the Examination in Public of its draft Core Strategy that Wheatley should be developed into the Green Belt.

6. In its draft Core Strategy, South Oxfordshire District Council is proposing to exclude Berinsfield from the Green Belt so that it can be further developed.

For Further Information

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