



Campaign to Protect
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OXFORDSHIRE

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CPRE Oxfordshire News Release

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Silence of the plans risks building horror story for Oxfordshire

New research published by the Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) [1] shows that four out of five local authorities in Oxfordshire will be without a planning Core Strategy on 1 April 2012 when changes to the planning system are expected to take effect. [2] This means that when the presumption in favour of sustainable development is rolled out, more than half the county will be vulnerable to unplanned, poor quality development.

Helen Marshall, Director of the Oxfordshire Branch of CPRE, says: "This silence of the plans risks a real horror story for Oxfordshire's unprotected green spaces. When the reforms hit, any area without a local plan will be more or less up for grabs as opportunistic developers make use of the 'default yes to development', which will apply when no plan exists.

"All local authorities need to get their plans in place. But there also needs to be enough time and money available for them to do this and to consult with their local communities.

"We hope the Government will use this consultation period to listen to the widespread criticisms of their proposals in the draft NPPF. But they must also give councils enough time and resources to draw up quality local plans based on extensive consultation with local people."

The proposed changes to the planning system mean that wherever local plans are "absent, silent, indeterminate or where relevant policies are out of date" councils will be required to approve any development as long as developers can claim the adverse impacts will not "significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole". [3] In CPRE's view, the Framework "taken as a whole" provides little protection against sprawling, poor quality development in the countryside. Local authorities without an up to date plan in place will find it very hard to say 'no' to development.

The CPRE research found that only one local authority in Oxfordshire, namely Oxford City District Council, has a Core Strategy in place, but it is unlikely that the Core Strategy will be certified as conforming to the NPPF without a Sites and Housing Development Plan Document (DPD) in place – this allocates sites for development for housing, employment and other uses, as well as setting out detailed planning policies that planning applications for housing development will be judged against. Oxford City District is currently consulting on its Sites and Housing DPD, so it is unlikely to be in place before April 2012. [4]

There was some likelihood that South Oxfordshire District Council would have its Core Strategy in place before the new guidance comes into force on 1 April 2012. But it was very unlikely that the remaining three local authorities, namely West Oxfordshire, Vale of White Horse and Cherwell District Councils, would have their Core Strategies adopted before the end of 2012, let alone 1 April.

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NOTES TO 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. Data for Oxfordshire local authorities is detailed below. The Core Strategy is part of the Local Development Framework (LDF) - LDFs replace the old system of District Local Plans and County Structure Plans. The Core Strategy provides the overall strategy for how Districts will develop over the next 15 years (up to 2026) and will identify major sites for new homes, jobs and infrastructure such as roads and schools.

	Core Strategy already adopted	C.S. expected to be adopted BEFORE April 2012	C.S. expected to be adopted AFTER April 2012
South Oxfordshire District Council	No	Maybe	-
West Oxfordshire District Council	No	No	Yes (late 2012)
Vale of White Horse District Council	No	No	Yes (date unknown)
Oxford City District Council	Yes	-	-
Cherwell District Council	No	No	Yes (date unknown)

South Oxfordshire District Council has submitted its Core Strategy to the Secretary of State for independent examination. The Examination in Public began in July and will conclude in November 2011. The Inspector will subsequently issue a report setting out his findings. Following receipt of that report the council can adopt the Core Strategy, which is expected to take place in early 2012.

West Oxfordshire District Council published its Draft Core Strategy for consultation in early 2011. The Core Strategy is due to be finalised ready for consideration by the Council in October 2011. The Core Strategy will then be submitted to the Government ready for public examination in front of a Planning Inspector. Adoption is unlikely before late 2012.

Vale of White Horse District Council aims to decide by the autumn of 2011 how best to progress its Core Strategy. There will be further public consultation before the Core Strategy is submitted to the Government. It is unclear when the Core Strategy will finally be adopted.

Oxford District Council adopted its Core Strategy on 14 March 2011. The Council held its Sites and Housing Preferred Options Consultation during June/July 2011. It will now prepare the Proposed Submission document, which it aims to consult upon in January/February 2012.

Cherwell District Council consulted on its draft Core Strategy between February and April 2010. CDC was due to submit the draft Core Strategy to the Secretary of State in December 2010, with the Examination in Public to be held in May 2011 and the final adoption of the Core Strategy was expected to be in November 2011. This timetable no longer applies and it is uncertain when the Core Strategy will be adopted, although CDC anticipates consulting on a Revised Draft Core Strategy document, which will reflect the changes being introduced to the planning system, over the next few months.

Full data tables for England with individual local authority data can be downloaded here: <http://bit.ly/ofZN1F>

3. Paragraph 14 of the Draft National Planning Policy Framework. Published by the Department for Communities and Local Government, 25 July 2011: <http://bit.ly/q899PW>

4. The NPPF envisages that there will usually be a single Local Plan. Para 24 of the NPPF says, crucially, that Local Plans should: “allocate sites to promote development and flexible use of land”. Most Core Strategies only deal with the larger strategic locations for housing and employment. For housing, they rarely, if ever, allocate enough specific sites to meet their housing totals. These are allocated in the Site and Housing Allocations DPD.

For Further Information

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