



Campaign to Protect
Rural England
OXFORDSHIRE

CPRE Oxfordshire News Release

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Despite the High Court ruling, CPRE Oxfordshire remains convinced that the eco-town consultation process was deeply flawed.

In an oral judgment delivered on Tuesday 27 January, at the High Court, Mr Justice Walker ruled that the eco-town consultation on the Government's shortlist document: "Eco-towns Living a Greener Future" was lawful. [1]

Mr Justice Walker has announced that he considers the consultation process at the preliminary stage of the eco-town selection process was adequate. The BARD and Weston Front campaign groups are currently considering their position once the full judgement has been studied.

Responding to the judge's decision, Helena Whall, CPRE Oxfordshire's [2] Campaign Manager, said: "We are disappointed by the judge's ruling, since we certainly considered the early consultation process less than adequate and remain convinced that the whole approach by the government to eco-towns has been misconceived and badly managed. We continue to oppose the Weston Otmoor proposal which has nothing to recommend it."

The Weston Otmoor site is currently considered the worst (C rating), and this status is being strongly confirmed by a range of detailed individual consultants' reports that are just coming through. [3]

Helena Whall added:

"We now hope that the Government will accept the overwhelming evidence that the Weston Otmoor development is a bad idea and remove it from the shortlist which we understand the Secretary of State will be reviewing in April."

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NOTES FOR EDITORS

1. The Government announced a shortlist of 15 potential sites in April 2008 in their consultation document 'Eco-Towns: Living a Greener Future'. Among the shortlisted sites were Weston Otmoor, Oxfordshire and Middle Quinton, Warwickshire. Campaign group BARD, which is campaigning against Middle Quinton, launched an application for Judicial Review of the Government's eco-town programme in June 2008. The Judicial Review proceedings on the eco-town consultation process took place in the High Court in London between 22 and 26 January. Weston Front, which is

campaigning against Weston Otmoor, and which acted as an 'interested party', along with BARD claimed that the decision by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government made on 3 April 2008 to short list potential eco-town sites as contained in the public consultation document entitled "Eco Towns Living a Greener Future" was made without having undertaken adequate consultation in respect of the eco-towns concept. The Government contested this allegation on the basis that they carried out full consultation and the Government's procedures were reasonable and thorough.

2. 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

3. In an independent report by Arup Partners into the economic and social impact of creating a 15,000-home settlement near Weston-on-the-Green, published in January, Arup said the proposed Weston Otmoor eco-town would have a damaging impact on neighbouring towns if it were built. It said the eco-town would threaten the futures of both Bicester and Kidlington, draining away investment and putting at risk the prospect of growth. The report was commissioned by the Department for Communities and Local Government, Oxfordshire County Council, Cherwell District Council and the South East England Development Agency (Seeda).

For Further Information

Dr Helena Whall (Campaign Manager, CPRE Oxfordshire) - Mobile: 07766 624990/
Office: 01865 874780/ Email: campaign@cpreoxon.org.uk

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