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Oxfordshire County Council Conservative Group

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Low Taxes, Real Choice, Value for Money

CONSERVATIVES COUNCILLORS THROW OUT ECO-TOWN PLAN

The Government's plan for an ECO-town of up to 20,000 houses on open space and green belt have been loudly rejected by Oxfordshire County Council.

A motion at today's full council meeting by Conservative Councillor Timothy Hallchurch (Otmoor & Kirtlington) pointed out the impact of the proposed new town on the transport network, green belt and on the economy of Bicester, and questioned the Government's claim that the town would be environmentally sustainable.

Councillor Hallchurch deplored the Government's lack of consultation with all local authorities in deciding to shortlist the proposed site at Weston-Otmoor for development.

He said: "The plan is a mockery of the term 'sustainable development'." He pointed to the collective opinions of experts who have described the town as "a slum estate of the future", "a suburban nightmare" and "a threat to nationally important habitat."

During the debate, Conservative Councillor Norman Bolster (Bicester) added: "I am very concerned about the effect of this proposal on Bicester. The Government's brief for this ECO-Town is that it must be of benefit to Bicester, but there is none."

Another Bicester Conservative, Councillor, Michael Waine also expressed concerns about his town when he asked: "Will the ECO-town compromise the work that is being done and is planned to improve and develop Bicester? Will Bicester continue to exist as a commuter town, given the congestion that the new ECO-town would produce on local roads?"

A Banbury Conservative, Councillor Kieron Mallon commented: "The Government is trying to sell this blot on the landscape as if it was ecological and new. There is nothing ecological about building 20,000 houses on green fields when there are about 600,000 empty houses around the country."

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“This will be a waste of taxpayers’ money on the scale of the £30m farce at Bicester asylum centre.”

The Conservative motion gained the support of the majority of Council members but was vigorously opposed by the eight Labour members.

The Council’s motion to reject the ECO-Town will now go to the Cabinet for consideration on 24 June.