



Campaign to Protect
Rural England
OXFORDSHIRE

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It's a marathon inquiry of mammoth importance to Oxfordshire's countryside The public inquiry into the South East Plan for the period 2006 to 2026 begins today

27 November 2006: Embargoed until 00.01 hours 28 November 2006

Today, 28 November, is the first day of the four-month public inquiry into the draft South East Plan. [1] When the panel presents its report in July 2007, much of the future of the countryside in the south east will have been decided. CPRE [2] will be present throughout the inquiry, attending more sessions than any other non-government organisation. [3] CPRE Oxfordshire will be arguing that the county cannot sustain a higher level of house building than that already proposed in the South East Plan and that further expansion of the city of Oxford is not environmentally sustainable.

Brian Wood from CPRE Oxfordshire thinks there is cause for cautious optimism. "Let's be clear. The current draft of the South East Plan allows for more houses in Oxfordshire and the South East than most people concerned with the environment would like. Oxfordshire will struggle to take 2,360 homes a year for the next 20 years. It might just about achieve that without losing the rural character of the county, but only if there is adequate investment in infrastructure."

Brian continues "We'll be working hard at the public inquiry to ensure that the government does not impose yet larger housing numbers on the county as it clearly intends to try to do. That's the real danger. The Government Office of the South East is already suggesting that its wants to see much higher building levels. Under the current draft of the South East Plan, the county will have to find room for 47,200 homes, enough to build a town the size of Banbury. [4] Earlier this year a government report suggested that it wants another 30,000 houses on top of that. This would add a town the size of Bicester to the total." [5]

Mike Tyce of CPRE is concerned about Oxford's green belt. "Planners often talk about the green belt as a constraint holding back Oxford's economic success. That's not true. The green spaces within and outside the city help keep it a compact and attractive environment, and that helps entice many of the most innovative and skilled workers."

ENDS

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[1] Known formally as the Examination in Public (EiP), the inquiry will last four months. It will begin on 28 November in Woking and will move to Chichester, Maidstone and Reading. A panel of three government appointed planners will examine the draft South East Plan produced by the South East England Regional Assembly. The EiP is expected to end on 30 March 2007.

[2] CPRE Oxfordshire is a branch of the national CPRE charity. We have 2,000 supporters in the county, where we have been campaigning to promote the beauty, tranquillity and diversity of rural Oxfordshire for 75 years.

[3] CPRE will be speaking at 41 of the 52 sessions of the Examination in Public. Only the South East England Regional Assembly itself and the Government Office of the South East have been invited to more sessions. CPRE Oxfordshire will argue its case at 4 sessions:

- 8ei: Central Oxfordshire: Role and Economy (27 February 2007, morning)
- 8eii: Central Oxfordshire: Housing and Green Belt (27 February, afternoon)
- 8Eiii: Central Oxfordshire: Infrastructure and Implementation (28 February)
- 9c: The rest of Oxfordshire (1 March)

Other sessions of the EiP will be attended by representatives from CPRE South East and CPRE county branches.

[4] Housing levels in the draft South East Plan:

Planning District	Annual Average 2006–26	Total
Cherwell District	590	11,800
Oxford City	350	7,000
South Oxfordshire District	510	10,200
Vale of White Horse District	575	11,500
West Oxfordshire	335	6,700
Oxfordshire	2,360	47,200
South East	28,900	578,000

[5] A report to the Government Office of the South East by Roger Tym and Partners in June 2006 suggested that between 33,000 and 46,000 houses should be built each year in the South East during the SE Plan period (2006–2026). That would imply up to 340,000 extra homes in England's most built-up region over the next 20 years, over and above the 578,000 planned. This would translate into as many as 3,818 homes a year in Oxfordshire of which 2,914 would be in the centre part of the county (the Central Oxfordshire Subregion). Roger Tym report: <http://tinyurl.com/ye4c36>.