

# OXFORDSHIRE VOICE

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**A Joint Plan for Oxfordshire**  
CPRE's vision

**Oxfordshire housing and population**  
Where will all the people come from?

**Cherwell Local Plan**  
Nearly 4,000 houses in Green Belt?

# OXFORDSHIRE VOICE

Spring 2018

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## DIRECTORY

Views expressed in the *Voice* are not necessarily those of CPRE Oxfordshire, which welcomes independent comment.

Editor: Helena Whall

Cover: Public demonstration outside Cherwell Council offices, 26 February. Photo Kevin Bezant

Articles, letters, comments and suggestions for articles are welcome. Please contact the Branch Office below. Published May 2018

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## Chairman's voice



In greeting you and bringing you up-to-date, I can do no better than expand on the report I will be giving at our AGM on 21 July.

It's been a busy first year as Chairman, full of interest and challenging problems. I can touch on only a few of them here.

*The Government decision to develop a Growth Corridor from Oxford to Cambridge... was taken without real public engagement and scarcely any democratic involvement.*

The Government decision to develop a Growth Corridor from Oxford to Cambridge, involving the re-opening of a rail link and the introduction of a new 'Expressway' across swathes of cherished countryside, coupled with building a million houses, was taken without real public engagement and scarcely any democratic involvement. The enormous impact on so many residents' lives that would result demands Public Inquiry. However, CPRE Oxfordshire's call for Inquiries into the whole idea of such a Growth Corridor and Expressway, unlikely to produce, on good authority, truly affordable houses or relieve traffic congestion, was resisted by Chancellor Hammond and Transport Minister Grayling. CPRE Oxfordshire at time of writing is entangled with Highways England on the routing of the Expressway in our County, a poisoned chalice handed them by the National Infrastructure Commission. Serious impact on the Oxford Green Belt and environment in general is likely, and we welcome, inter alia, the commitment of CPRE National Office to consider a countrywide

campaign to support our own efforts.

District Local Plans across all the County's Districts, evolving in line with the Government's National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), have been a constant concern. We are currently working together with a number of local groups in campaigning against the construction of around 4,000 houses in the section of Green Belt in Cherwell District. The result would be the coalescence of Kidlington with Oxford. Thanks to untiring work by our District Committees of volunteers, wonderfully supported by the Director, Helen Marshall, and her team, we have also taken a major role in preventing land being unnecessarily removed from our Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). For example, CPRE and local campaign groups were instrumental in removing over 400 houses planned for the Cotswolds AONB from the West Oxfordshire Local Plan. We have also been working to transform the Plan's landscape and heritage policies, which should significantly improve good decision-making in the future.

*Just as we have all become accustomed to new planning rules and procedures, the goal posts are being moved again*

However, just as we have all become accustomed to new planning rules and procedures, the goal posts are being moved again. A revised NPPF, to make house-building easier, is at time of writing out for consultation, and we are working with CPRE National Office on the response. If only the revision was likely to produce genuinely affordable homes in the right places for local people in need!

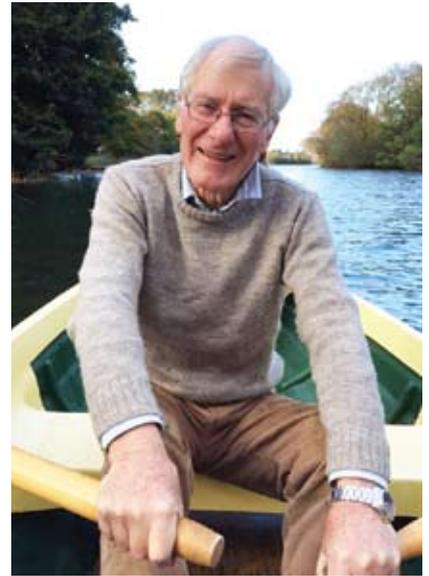
Although Government seems to have kicked the idea of a unitary authority for Oxfordshire into the long grass, joined-up County planning is becoming

# In memory – John Gordon

(6 July 1940 – 2 February 2018)

flavour of the year. The Growth Board which now fronts the organisations that approved the Oxfordshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) – the bane of our planning life over the last few years – is now signed up to a Joint Statutory Spatial Plan for the County. The idea is to have more joined-up decisions and action which used to be the prerogative of the regions. CPRE Oxfordshire accepts the logic of such a move, but only if full public engagement is written in from the start. Larger bodies can too often find themselves ignoring the proverbial men and women in the street; so, CPRE Oxfordshire is vigilant, yet hopeful, whilst coping with yet another set of initials – in this case JSSP.

We sadly have to report the death of John Gordon on 2 February, aged 78. John was a tireless campaigner and advocate for the environment. John moved to Oxfordshire 10 years ago, after a distinguished academic and diplomatic career. He was an active member of the Oxfordshire branch of CPRE, a founder member (and sponsor) of Need not Greed Oxfordshire and the founder and Chairman of South Oxfordshire Sustainability. His legacy will live on in these organisations striving for a more sustainable world. He is survived by his wife, Liz and sons, Tim and Alex.



Praise and thanks go to our Oxfordshire team, based in our Watlington Office, which has represented us countywide, whilst our Director, Helen Marshall, has been involved in national and regional meetings. Our ever-active volunteers, making up our Branch Executive and District Committees, rely on their help, advice and committed hard work. We are lucky that Becky Crockett, our Administrator, can now give us more time – no problem in filling that up!

However, it is with regret that we lose the services of Helena Whall who has been such an efficient and effective Campaign Manager over the last few years. Her exceptional service has, amongst many other activities, included editing our magazine, Voice, and acting as secretary of a coalition of organisations of which CPRE Oxfordshire is a leading member, working under the title: 'Need Not Greed Oxfordshire'. The coalition's success has been, to a great extent, due to the continual encouragement – and piles of papers! – she has given group members. We wish her happiness and success in her new career as a garden designer.

**Peter Collins,**  
Chairman  
pjcoll@maths.ox.ac.uk

## Walking the Bryson Line

If you happen to be beside the River Thames this July, you might spot a group of intrepid walkers from American/Anglo company Tanager Wealth. They are walking 569 miles from the north of Scotland to the south coast of England, along a notional line described in *The Road to Little Dribbling*, a book by former CPRE President Bill Bryson. The walk aims to raise £100k for charities, with a fifth going to support CPRE's work on landscapes. On 3 July, they will be walking the Thames Path from Oxford to Shillingford so will have plenty of opportunity to see the wonderful Oxfordshire countryside at first hand. [www.thebrysonline.com](http://www.thebrysonline.com)



After nearly four years as Campaign Manager for the branch, Helena Whall left CPRE at the end of March. She is to be replaced by a Communications Manager who will be in post from early April (the new email is: [comms@cprexon.org.uk](mailto:comms@cprexon.org.uk)). Helena will continue to be a member of the Vale Committee.

*Helena Whall at her farewell lunch.*



Helena Marshall

# The Oxford-Cambridge Growth Corridor and Expressway – Update

Although it is the Expressway that is getting all the headlines it is the forced housing and population growth that is by far the biggest threat to our presently rural County and which – if it goes ahead on anything like the scale Lord Adonis and his National Infrastructure team intended – will transform it forever. And not in a good way.

## The Growth Corridor scheme

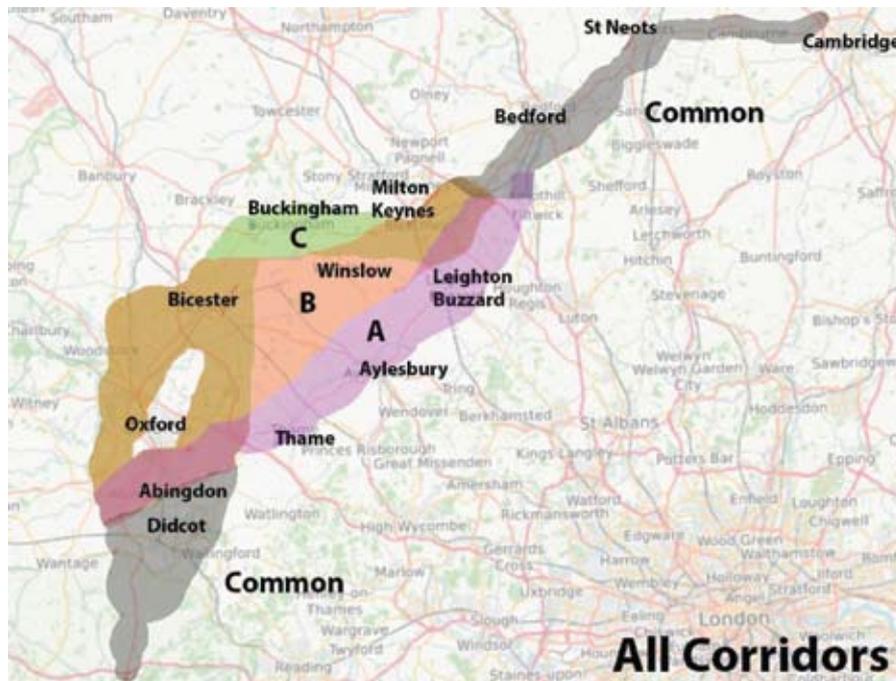
The plan is to force growth in housing stock, businesses and population through the Growth Corridor from Oxford to Cambridge.

In Oxfordshire's case to double our housing stock from 275,000 in 2016 to 560,000 by 2050, with an even greater increase in our population.

It is equivalent, for example, to every settlement in Oxfordshire more than doubling in size; six new cities the size of Oxford.

That is six times the growth rate of our local population, or any conceivable housing need they might have. Neither do we have any need for more employment when Oxfordshire's unemployment rate (currently at 3.6%) is below the national average.

Although marketed as a hi-tech corridor, this is just a slogan attempting to make it sound more acceptable. In fact, the National Infrastructure Commission themselves forecast that a quarter of the new houses throughout the Corridor will go to new London commuters. We think that will be a far higher proportion in Oxfordshire where new rail lines to London are being built.



The fact is that Oxfordshire is being planned, with the complicity of our own local authorities, to become an overspill commuter land, and a new giant industrial conurbation, when it is now the most rural County in the South East. CPRE Oxfordshire cannot and does not support this monstrous and environmentally catastrophic scheme, but more importantly no-one, not even our elected representatives, has asked the present residents of Oxfordshire whether this is their own vision for the future of their County, nor even outlined what they have in store for them. It is because of the appalling magnitude of what is being planned behind closed doors, the furtive way in which it is being done, and the irreversible damage it would do to our presently rural County and the settlements within it, that CPRE Oxfordshire say there should be public consultation before these plans go any further. What is more, the whole project should be the subject of a Public Inquiry where decisions can be made in the open rather than in secret quangos as they are now.

## The Expressway

Another integral element of the infrastructure planned for the Growth Corridor is the Expressway. This is mainly intended as an "outer M25" providing a new East West connection across England's mainly North South motorway system and enabling HGVs new higher speed routes for freight. Whilst some of this freight traffic could use rail, it lacks the flexibility of roads where lorries can go anywhere to pick up and deliver cargoes.

At present this function is provided by the A34/A43/A421/A428 route between the M4 and M11, but whilst much of it is at Expressway standard, equally much is not.

Although there is no public consultation about this either, Highways England has consulted with what it calls Stakeholder Groups on which "corridor" an Expressway should take through Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire to Milton Keynes.

Highways England's approach is to consider the choice of "corridor" – the broad direction the road would take –

first. Then, the “corridor” having been chosen, the detailed route of the road within it would be decided later.

After a year of keeping us in the dark and with only three weeks to respond to their questions, Highways England at last produced the map we have long been asking for, showing the corridors. (See Highways England map).

### CPRE’s View

Highways England has been briefed by the National Infrastructure Commission to determine the corridor past Oxford, on the basis of the amount of development the Local Authorities promises it will facilitate.

The Local Authorities, as well as CPRE Oxfordshire, are amongst the Stakeholders being asked to say which “Corridor” should be chosen and which should not, prior to Highways England deciding the corridor in the summer of this year.

This is a difficult dilemma for us because our core view is that building new roads or upgrading existing ones simply leads to more traffic and compounds problems rather than solving them. It is far more environmentally friendly to improve public transport than to build more roads.

CPRE Oxfordshire agrees with CPRE National Office that the preference for developing roads should be to use the line of present ones, and that ‘specially designated areas’, such as the Green Belt, should be avoided as much as possible. It is also reasonable to say that upgrading existing roads might bring benefits for their existing users

and that smoothing traffic flows would reduce pollution and noise at existing pinch points.

It is almost certain that the Local Authorities whose remit is to select the corridor which would most facilitate development, will prefer what we see as the most environmentally damaging corridors as these would open up the south and east of Oxford to development.

### What next?

It is important to remember that at this stage it is the corridor that is being chosen and we are calling for this decision to be made in the open at a Public Inquiry. However, Highways England are determined that they will choose it themselves behind closed doors.

By this summer the corridor will be chosen. Any formal opportunity to influence it has passed, but public uproar might just still have some sway.

Whichever corridor is chosen the next stage will be the identification of the actual route within it, when addressing local problems with measures such as sound barriers, detours or tunnelling will have to be considered.

This is not expected until 2020 or perhaps 2021 and then there will at last be public consultation and a Public Inquiry into the chosen route and its alternatives. But that will be too late to reverse the choice of corridor to be finalised this summer.

**Michael Tyce**  
*Trustee,*  
*CPRE Oxfordshire*

### TAKE ACTION:

CPRE Oxfordshire is campaigning to stop the Ox-Cam Growth Corridor and Expressway going ahead and to promote a smart growth approach that protects the countryside. In the first instance, we are calling for a Public Inquiry so that decisions are open and transparent.

You can find out how to support our campaign on our website at:  
<http://www.cpreoxon.org.uk/campaigns>

## Oxfordshire Local Plan round-up

### West Oxon

The main modifications to West Oxfordshire’s Local Plan have been published for consultation (the deadline was 9 April). These include substantial changes on policies on landscape and historic character, largely as a result of CPRE’s engagement. It also removes the four proposed strategic housing allocations in the Cotswolds AONB, recognising that these could not be justified on the basis of specific local need. However it still allows for nearly 800 houses in the Burford-Charlbury sub-Area.

See our response on our website at:  
<https://tinyurl.com/y6ugurk2>

### Vale of White Horse

Local Plan Part 2 has now been submitted to the Planning Inspectorate. The Examination in Public is expected to be held in July.

You can see our response to the Vale’s Local Plan Part 2: Detailed Policies and Additional Sites on our website at:  
<http://tinyurl.com/yd5khtp2>

### South Oxfordshire

South Oxfordshire has referred its Plan back to Cabinet. Two major housing developments have been identified in the Plan - one in Culham in the Green Belt, for 3,500 houses, and one at the former airbase at Chalgrove for 3,000 houses.

You can see our response to the Pre-Submission consultation on our website at:  
<http://tinyurl.com/yc2ex694>

### Oxford

We are still waiting for the next draft of Oxford City’s Local Plan 2036. A special Full Council will consider the City’s Proposed Submission in July and a consultation on the Proposed Submission document is expected to be held in September. The Plan is scheduled to be submitted in December with adoption mid to late 2019.

You can see our response to the City’s Preferred Options on our website at:  
<http://tinyurl.com/yaa28494>

### Cherwell

See p.10 for an update on the Cherwell Local Plan Part 1 Review.

# A Joint Plan for Oxfordshire

In a remarkable outbreak of co-operation, our six local councils (four districts, the city and county) have all agreed to work together to produce a Joint Statutory Spatial Plan (JSSP) for Oxfordshire.

Although the exact division of what it will or will not cover is not yet clear, it is intended to sit above the District and City Local Plans, looking at strategic development across the area in a similar way to the old County Structure Plan.

CPRE Oxfordshire has welcomed this move. In recent years, there has been no assessment of the cumulative environmental and social impacts of development. This, combined with a relaxation of planning rules, has led to a wave of speculative development which has put our landscape and rural communities at risk. The JSSP is a positive step towards a more strategic and coherent approach to identifying and guiding appropriate development.

**There is however one over-riding caveat. The JSSP must be based on full public engagement, including a say on overall growth targets.**

Without this, the whole process will be invalidated and could simply become another way of selling off Oxfordshire's scarce land resource to the highest bidder.

## What would a good Plan look like?

At CPRE Oxfordshire, we have been giving some thought to what we believe the JSSP should cover. Our vision for how it should deliver the right development in the right place is set out in the principles below.

- **Local people must be in the driving seat;** it is their needs that should take priority.
- **Housing numbers should be based on the Government's household projections,** which already allow for the natural growth of the existing population and a share of migration.

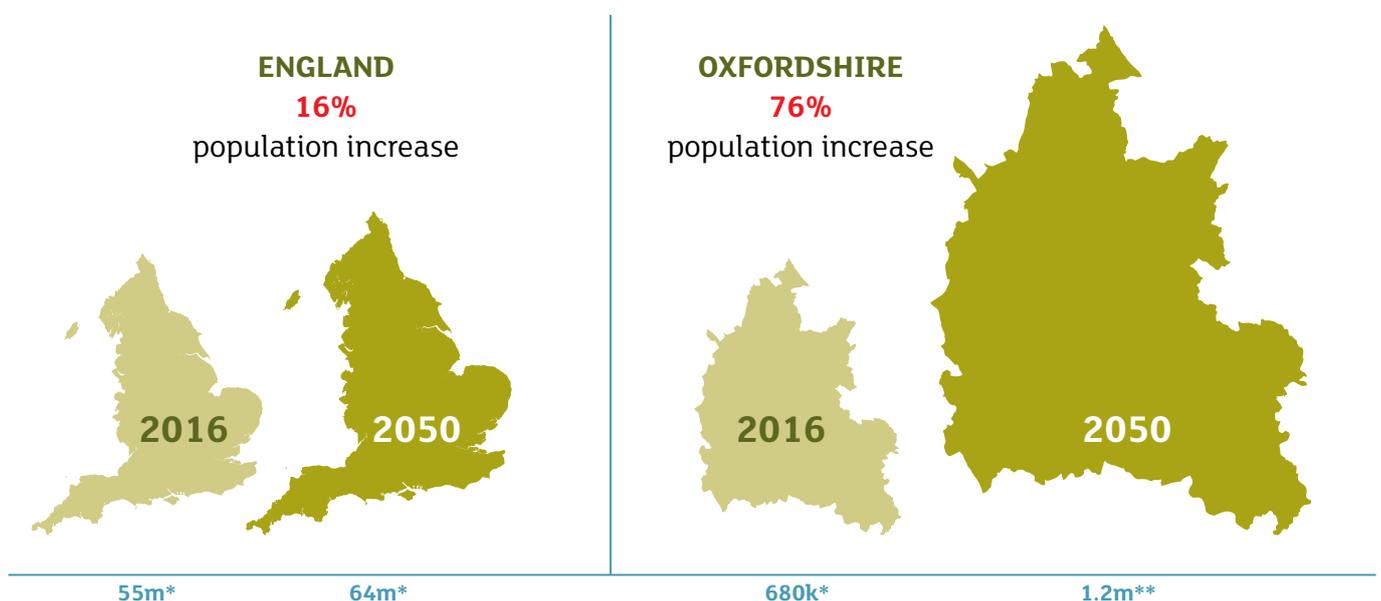
Arbitrary increases to reflect entirely notional and unwarranted growth targets are not acceptable.

- Genuinely **affordable housing**, available in perpetuity, is the critical need.
- There should be a clear **hierarchy for locating development**, putting urban, brownfield sites first. At the other end of the spectrum are our three Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the Oxford Green Belt, where development should only take place under genuinely exceptional circumstances.

The Oxford Green Belt's role as a constraint for development is more vital today than ever, helping to protect the setting and character of the city, which is fundamentally unsuitable to be a large-scale metropolis.

Outside designated areas, organic

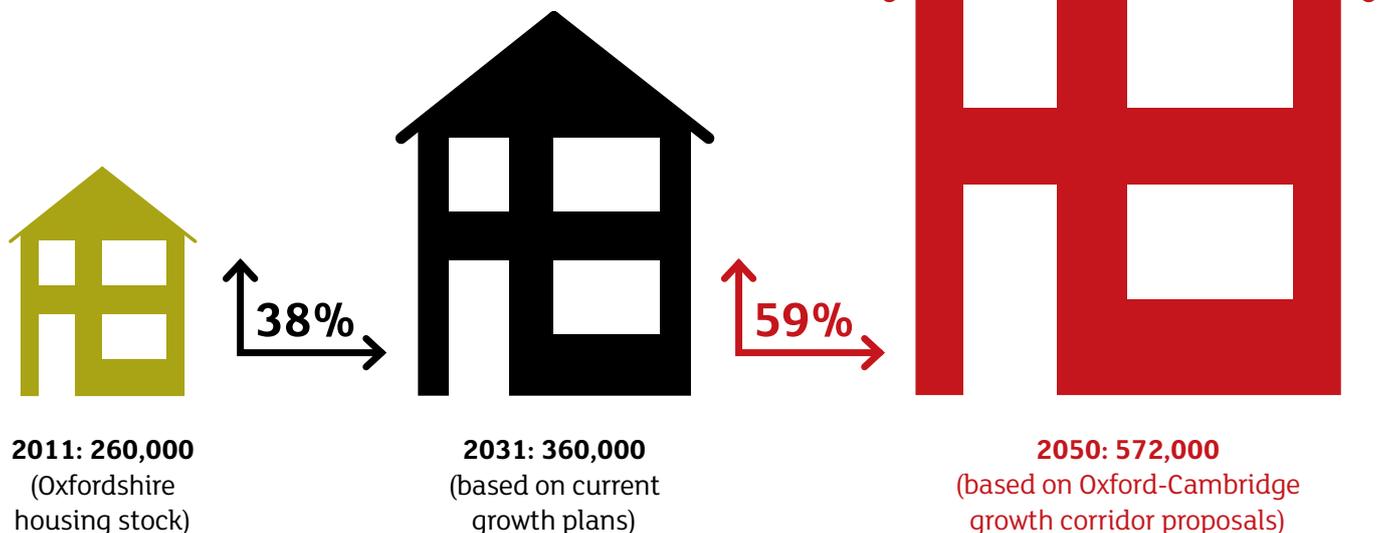
## Oxfordshire set to grow at 5 times the national rate



\*Office of National Statistics \*\* National Infrastructure Commission

# A building problem

## Oxfordshire housing growth 2011-2050



growth proportional to existing settlements is acceptable, provided that it is supported by adequate and timely infrastructure, including sustainable transport, and landscape impacts are minimised or mitigated.

New settlements may well play a role in the future, but they must be sustainably located and of sufficient size to be self-sustaining.

- **High quality, well-designed development** is vital if we are to add to Oxfordshire's heritage and character, not dismantle it.
- **Higher density development** generates more sustainable communities and encourages developers to build smaller, more affordable properties rather than large-scale executive homes for commuters. A target density of 70 dwellings per hectare should be introduced.
- It is vital that our rural county should be protected not just for its own sake but also for its economic value in attracting high quality businesses. The starting point for jobs should be the natural growth in Oxfordshire's population for which employment

might be needed, with the focus then on identifying **the right jobs in the right place** in order to reduce unsustainable commuting. (This is the reverse of current proposals which seek to maximise jobs and then look at what might be needed to support them, including facilitating a dramatic increase in long-distance commuting.)

- **Agriculture is a critical industry** for Oxfordshire and deserves greater priority in considering future plans and resources for the county.
- Our **natural resources and biodiversity** are currently in decline and the JSSP must outline how it will reverse this, especially when making decisions on further development. We welcome the Government's recent commitment to the 'environmental net gain' principle for development. Vital issues such as **landscape, tranquillity and dark skies** must form part of these considerations.
- Two thirds of our carbon dioxide emissions are from housing and transport. The JSSP must address this **climate change** challenge, in terms of the level, location and type of development that it proposes.

- **Oxfordshire's cultural capital** should be recognised, protected and enhanced, including its archaeological sites, historic buildings and the historic character of the landscape.

**Oxfordshire's rural character is at the heart of its environmental, economic and social well-being. This is the fundamental starting point from which decisions about the future development of the county should be made.**

### TAKE ACTION!

Over the summer and autumn, we will be running a number of public events to raise awareness of the Joint Statutory Spatial Plan process and encourage our decision-makers to engage properly with local communities. To register for more information E: administrator@cprexon.org.uk T: 01491 612079.

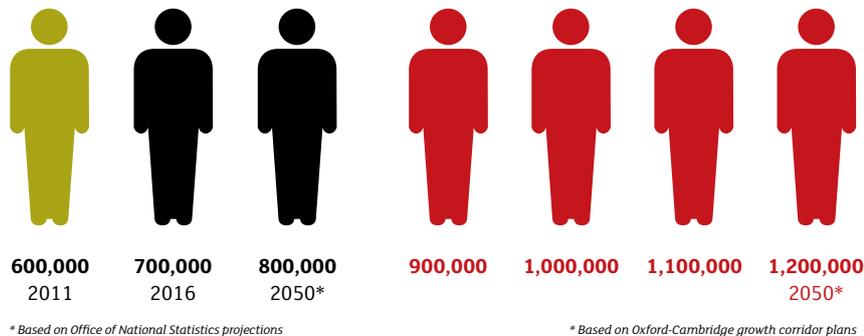
Meanwhile, please write to your local councillors telling them that the JSSP is important, but will only be successful if it genuinely engages with local people, *including a say on overall growth targets.*

# Oxfordshire's Housing and Population:

## *Where will all the people come from?*

### Natural or forced?

#### Oxfordshire population growth 2011-2050



### Where will 150,000 people come from?

Oxfordshire is planning to build 100,000 houses over the next 20 years (2011-2031), following the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) which allows for economic growth over and above natural growth. This strategy would house approximately 250,000 new people, a 40% increase in the population of Oxfordshire, bringing it to 900,000.

The Office of National Statistics (ONS) makes regular projections of population, based on recent trends in births, deaths and migration. Using their figures, the more realistic population of Oxfordshire in 2031 is likely to be 750,000, a rise of 15% or 100,000 people (although even this figure may be an over-exaggeration based on more recent, post-Brexit estimates).

However, our local authorities' growth plans mean that in the next 13 years we need to attract 150,000 people over and above those expected to migrate in. Without them, we will have built more than twice as many houses as can be filled, sacrificing valuable land.

### Housing the Homeless

But what of our homeless? According to Shelter 0.5% of the population is homeless or in temporary

accommodation. Evenly spread this would be 3,300 people across Oxfordshire – meaning it would take a mere 1,350 homes to house our homeless. We have overcrowded homes too; according to the SHMA this amounts to 3.3% or 8,500 houses in the county. Generously, we could provide another 8,500 so that each overcrowded house could decant to a second home. Thus, to house all our homeless and the overcrowded, we need 10,000 homes. Nearly 7,000 Oxfordshire homes lay empty in 2017 – a good start for matching the numbers needed.

Similarly, if homeowners were enabled to downsize to smaller houses without losing capital value from savings earned over a lifetime, more than 200,000 bedrooms could become available – 73% of homes in Oxfordshire have at least one spare bedroom.

### How many houses are actually needed?

So how many houses do we actually need to build? To accommodate our expected population in 2031, we need 40,000 new houses. 11,000 had already been built by 2016, so in the ensuing 15 years we need only another 29,000; not another 89,000.

### How would we fill the excess houses with 150,000 people?

Certainly there is an intention to turn

Oxfordshire into a commuter belt for London. The National Infrastructure Commission estimates that at least 25% of Oxfordshire's new houses will be for commuters (although this does not appear to be based on any robust evidence and the actual figure could be much higher).

However, in general, we must emphasise that these people simply will not exist – there are no surpluses of people elsewhere in the country. The extra people can only be brought into the county by depopulating other parts of the country, or by a massive immigration programme from abroad, counter to the express determination of our government.

### The trajectory beyond 2031

This housing growth trajectory from the SHMA is assumed to continue to 2040 by the Oxfordshire Infrastructure Strategy (OxIS) report of 2017; resulting in a further 46,000 houses in nine years.

Thereafter, the 'expressway' to be built between Oxford and Cambridge is intended to 'unlock' capacity for one million houses along its route [see page 4]. The road will run through three counties, so Oxfordshire could receive a third of these houses – but let us assume it will be a fifth (200,000 houses), in 20 years to 2050. (We'll even be generous and assume the OxIS figures in the para above are included in this 200,000, not additional, which is of course a possibility.)

The National Infrastructure Commission, which produced the report which promotes the Expressway, estimates an Oxfordshire population of just over 1.2million by 2050. However, this would be based on a very low occupancy rate.

If all the houses were to be built and occupied, at occupancy rates of 2.4

people per household (still reflecting the forecast decrease in household size due to an aging population), by 2050 there will be 1.4 million residents in Oxfordshire, against the ONS forecast population of 810,000. To get to this point, population growth would therefore need to be seven times greater than expected, and the overall population getting on for double what it is anticipated to be, or the county would be short of some 600,000 people.

### How can Oxfordshire grow?

It is the aspiration of our local authorities that Oxfordshire's economy, and hence built environment, should grow beyond what is normal or organic, competing with other counties and pulling in people from elsewhere. Could these people come from surrounding counties, from London, or from the North? This does not really work, since all counties have been obliged to set high housing growth targets, and across England there is a levelling off in population growth.

The trouble is that whatever the eventual reality, decisions on allocating valuable land resource are being taken now.

The disparities between the official population projections and Oxfordshire's plans are so great that it is clear our leaders are taking a huge risk with our communities, countryside and economy.

#### Dr Sue Roberts

*South Oxfordshire Sustainability*

#### Prof. Richard Harding

*Chair, CPRE South Oxfordshire District Committee*

Read the full version of this article at:  
<https://tinyurl.com/ya9f73xn>

#### TAKE ACTION!

Write to the Leader of your local District Council and ask for clarification on the disparities between the official population projections and Oxfordshire's growth plans.

# Water for 21st Century

## – Thames Water release their Five-Year Plan

**We have recently seen Cape Town running out of water – could it happen to London? Every five years the water companies have to publish a plan covering in detail the next five years and looking beyond to see what investments are likely to be needed in the coming decades. Thames Water have just released for consultation their draft plan – the Water Resources Management Plan 2019. The consultation closed on 29th April. The plan focuses on the next five years but sets out plans to supply a secure and sustainable water supply up until 2100.**

The plan projects that the population of the Thames Water region will increase from its current 10 million to 15 million by 2080. More water is also needed to improve the sustainability and resilience of supplies. Thames Water says this means we need an extra 860 million litres per day by 2100, a 40% increase on current supply. In the next five years Thames Water plan to reduce leakage by 15%, to reduce the daily usage to 125 litres per person (from a current 150+) and plan for new extraction at Teddington (compensated by increased release of treated sewerage). In the longer-term, they plan a new Upper Thames reservoir, to be located to the south of Abingdon between Hanney and Steventon, by 2045, a transfer of water from the River Severn to the upper Thames by 2060 and increased re-use of water in London.

Obviously, the prospect of a huge (six square miles) reservoir in the rural Vale is a considerable worry to CPRE Oxfordshire. We have been collaborating with local residents – Group Against Reservoir Development (GARD) ([www.abingdonreservoir.org.uk](http://www.abingdonreservoir.org.uk)) – to understand better the issues underlying Thames Water's plans. While we applaud Thames Water for its exhaustive long-term planning,

we have a number of reservations about their approach:

- **Thames Water's statistics for population increase are flawed.** In March, following pressure from CPRE and GARD, Thames Water reduced their figures for the latter part of the Century (from 16 to 14 million) – putting back the need for the reservoir by some years. However, their projections until 2045 still rely on Local Councils' estimates – which we know are exaggerated.
- **We are unhappy about the unambitious targets which Thames Water have for leakage reduction and water efficiency.**
- **A reservoir provides no new water and will not help if we have a three-year drought (such as is happening in Cape Town)**
- **We contend that desalination and river transfers would provide a much more resilient system for the future.**

You can see CPRE's consultation response on our website at:  
<https://tinyurl.com/yba7aghs>

#### Prof. Richard Harding

*Chair, CPRE South Oxfordshire District Committee*

# NEED not GREED OXON

The Need not Greed Oxfordshire (NNGO) coalition, which now has 35 member

organisations from across the County, has reconfirmed its commitment to fighting to restore a proper balance between local democracy and planning principles on the one hand and growth on the other. Recent work has included:

## Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal

In February, all six local authorities were asked to vote on the Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal, committing them to building 100,000 houses in the County by 2031 (far in excess of the Government's own assessment of Oxfordshire's need which is about 68,000 houses), in return for £215 million from central Government (£150m for infrastructure, £60m for affordable housing and £5m to support preparation of a new strategic plan).

Need not Greed Oxfordshire wrote to all councillors ahead of the vote, urging them to reject the Deal, but, disappointingly, it was waved through.

The coalition believes this Deal will unlock a totally inappropriate and damaging amount of new development that will be disastrous for the environment and quality of life in our County.

You can read the letter from the alliance on the 'News' page of the NNGO website.

## National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

The Government published its long-awaited consultation on proposals for altering the NPPF in early March – the Framework, published in 2012, sets out the government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied.

NNGO has long campaigned against various elements of the NPPF and this presented an important opportunity

for the alliance to lobby for appropriate changes, including an end to speculative development and a commitment to well-planned and affordable housing.

You can see the full consultation response on the 'News' page of the NNGO website.

## Oxfordshire Joint Spatial Plan (JSSP)

As part of the Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal, our six local planning authorities have all agreed to work together to produce a Joint Statutory Spatial Plan – the JSSP will provide a strategic framework for the long-term growth of Oxfordshire up to 2050. (See pp. 6-7)

NNGO believes the JSSP provides a potential opportunity to improve strategic planning across the county. However, it is also clear that if this is approached in the same fashion as previous Growth Board/OxLEP-driven plans, it could make an already bad situation far worse.

The alliance is lobbying our planning authorities to force proper democratic engagement, including the opportunity to question growth targets.

## Local elections – May '18

In the run up to the local elections in May, NNGO wrote to councillors standing for election (Cherwell, Oxford and West Oxfordshire), asking them to pledge support for NNGO campaign priorities.

On a day-to-day basis, the Secretariat, which is provided by CPRE Oxfordshire, continues to provide advice and support to its members, many of whom are fighting their own local battles against inappropriate development on Green Belt, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and green fields. If you are involved in a local action group concerned about development, please do consider joining as it is a great way to exchange information and to give small community groups a voice in the bigger debate.

Find out more about the work of NNGO at: [www.neednotgreedoxon.org.uk](http://www.neednotgreedoxon.org.uk)

# Cherwell's Plan goes to Planning Inspector

At a packed Full Council meeting on the evening of 26 February, Cherwell District councillors were asked to vote on whether or not the Council should submit the draft Local Plan Part 1 Review to the Government Planning Inspector.

The Plan contains proposals to build 3,900 houses on the Oxford Green Belt between North Oxford and Kidlington and between the villages of Begbroke and Yarnton.

Despite campaigners' best efforts to convince councillors to reject the Plan and go back to the drawing board, a majority decided to bat the issue into the long grass and renege on their responsibilities to their constituents by passing the buck to the Inspector.

A total of 26 councillors voted in favour of submitting the Plan to the Inspector, while 17 opposed and 2 abstained.

The Plan will now be examined by an Inspector who will judge whether or not it is 'sound'.

CPRE Oxfordshire, along with many other local campaign groups from the area spoke at the meeting, challenging the soundness of the Plan.

We will be presenting our case against the adoption of Cherwell's Plan in front of the Planning Inspector later this year and arguing that it is unsound.

Read CPRE's presentation at the Council Meeting at:

<https://bit.ly/2F0x5UR>

# The future for a 'healthy and harmonious' countryside?

Whether you are walking in the Cotswolds, enjoying the Chiltern Hills or appreciating the countryside elsewhere on your doorstep, it may be hard to imagine our landscapes changing much. Yet, with a new British agricultural policy being developed for after we leave the European Union (EU), the way the land in England is managed may soon alter too. In response, National CPRE is working hard to ensure our countryside is protected and enhanced, whilst developing a diverse agricultural sector.

The UK's departure from the EU presents a unique opportunity for CPRE to influence the first domestic agricultural policy for over 50 years. 70% of the land in England is farmed, with an even higher percentage (76%) in Oxfordshire – so changes to the way farmers are paid through the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and what they are rewarded for doing will be critical for how English

landscapes look, and how they work for years to come.

The first opportunity to influence the new agricultural policy is through the Government's latest

proposals set out in its Command paper – *Health and Harmony: the future for food, farming and the environment in a Green Brexit*. Public consultation closes on 8 May. National CPRE has in turn consulted with its network of groups and branches (including the Oxfordshire

branch), and it will respond both in its own right, and as a member of various partnerships, which can lend extra weight to some of our key messages.

CPRE is calling for:

- long-term public investment in the environment through farming;
- measures to create a dynamic and innovative farming sector, where new and smaller farm farmers are supported and to reverse the decline of small to medium-sized farms of recent decades; and
- 'landscape thinking' to be at the heart of a new Environmental Land Management scheme – this means that any actions farmers take to deliver a better environment should be planned in a holistic way to improve the health, quality and beauty of the countryside in multiple ways, as well as producing our food.

CPRE wants the future policy to work for our countryside and the farmers who will be so essential to looking after and improving it. After the EU referendum National CPRE called for financial support for farmers to deliver benefits for the public that the market does not reward. This is a major theme in the Health and Harmony consultation, so we are happy to see that the Government has listened. Yet, it seems the loss of farms (a fifth have gone in the past decade alone) is an issue we still need to persuade the Government to take on board properly. We know much more now of what the Government plans to do, but the new agricultural policy will take a long time to develop. An Agriculture Bill is due to follow in Autumn this year. During this critical time, CPRE will continue to be at the heart of these conversations. Watch this space.

#### **Alice Roberts**

*Graduate Officer, National CPRE*

#### **Graeme Willis**

*Senior Rural Policy Campaigner, National CPRE*

## CPRE Members' Events

### *Programme: 2018*

*The full details of the members' events programme for this year are included in the flyer sent out with the mailing of the Voice to all members.*

*Details will also be added to the CPRE Oxfordshire website under 'Events'. Non-members are generally welcome to these events, but priority for places will be given to CPRE members.*

### **Kingston Bagpuize House** **Wednesday August 22nd**

6.30pm £13.50

This is a special evening opening exclusively for CPRE members and their guests. The interior of the Georgian house will be open for you to visit from 6.30-7.30 pm and thereafter you will be free to wander until dusk in the lovely gardens. Light refreshments will be available.

### **Visit to Gill Mill Quarry** **Thursday June 28th**

2.00pm Free

This guided visit to the flagship quarry in Oxfordshire operated by Smiths of Bletchington will allow you to see gravel extraction and processing at close quarters and talk to members of Smiths' staff. We will also visit the adjacent area at Rushy Common, once quarried but now a nature reserve.

### **An all-day walk around lesser known parts of Oxford**

**Saturday 20 October**

10.30 – 3.30pm Free

An all-day walk around lesser known parts of Oxford, led by Isabella Underwood, a Blue Badge Guide and member of CPRE Oxford.

This tour of the city centre, which will be on foot, will bring to life the long and fascinating history of the city and its resident University, the oldest in the English-speaking world.



