

# NEED *not* GREED OXON

Planning for Real **NEED** not Speculator **GREED** in Oxfordshire

**PRESS RELEASE**

**Embargoed: Thursday 17 March 2016**

## **Only half of County's proposed housing to meet 'local needs' -**

### **Call for open debate on growth targets**

New research commissioned by the Need not Greed Oxfordshire coalition<sup>1</sup> has shown that only half of the new housing proposed in the County is needed for existing residents.

Local councils have committed Oxfordshire to providing 100,000 new houses by 2031, the equivalent of two new Oxfords.<sup>2</sup> However a new paper by a leading independent consultant, Alan Wenban-Smith<sup>3</sup>, suggests that, even allowing for a normal pattern of jobs growth, just 45,000 houses would be required over that time to meet 'local needs'.

Most of the remaining houses are linked to a 'committed growth' policy drawn up by the Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (OxLEP) and adopted by the Councils. This proposes to create 85,000 new jobs in a County which already has almost full employment.<sup>4</sup>

OxLEP is currently working on a 'refresh' of its Strategic Economic Plan<sup>5</sup>. However, it has said discussion of the overall targets is not negotiable as these have already been agreed by the local Councils.

Helen Marshall, Director, CPRE Oxfordshire said: "Let's be clear - we are not saying that Oxfordshire shouldn't grow. But we do think there should be an open public debate about the level of additional growth our Councils have signed up to, and the impact this may have on the County. Our main concern is that we do not destroy Oxfordshire's rural character, which is what makes it such a great place to live and work in the first place."

Colin Thomas, from SPADE (Sunningwell Parishioners Against Damage to the Environment), said: "These overall targets have never been subject to public consultation, so we are demanding that they should be part of the review now. We also object in principle to the

consultation being led by OxLEP, which is an unelected, un-transparent limited company, rather than by our elected Councils.

“These speculative jobs may or may not appear, but London commuters certainly will! Even the so-called affordable housing is well beyond the reach of most young Oxfordshire residents looking to find a home. So we are sacrificing our countryside, and putting our services and infrastructure under immense pressure, without meeting the real need.”

The Government requires Local Authorities to work to meet the Objectively Assessed Need for housing in their areas.<sup>6</sup> But Oxfordshire Authorities have chosen to go far beyond even the Government’s push for more housing, providing a Subjectively Guessed Explosion, rather than an Objectively Assessed Need.

The effect is that land which should never be allocated for housing, such as Green Belt, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and village edges, are being zoned for development to meet the quotas Councils have chosen to inflict on themselves, even overriding the Government’s own advice against doing so.

Our Local Authorities have been in flagrant breach of their duty to us all in creating the present SHMA. The Need not Greed Oxon campaign is calling on our Local Authorities to scale it back to being the Objectively Assessed Need the Government requires them to meet, and delete its aggressive and unfounded Growth Strategy.

**ENDS**

**NOTES FOR EDITORS:**

1. The Need not Greed Oxon campaign was launched in January 2016 by a coalition of more than 30 local organisations from across Oxfordshire.
2. [Oxfordshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2014](#)
3. See Alan Wenban-Smith’s **Note on ‘Local needs’ 2011-2031** attached to this email.

Alan Wenban-Smith M.A. MRTPI MSC is an independent consultant in urban and regional policy who has led regional and metropolitan planning for the West Midlands local authorities, was a special advisor to the Commons Select Committee Inquiry into SE Growth Areas and is a former visiting professor of planning at both Newcastle upon Tyne and Birmingham City universities, as well as being a member of the RTPI's Policy Committee.

See also: Alan Wenban-Smith report [Unsound & Unsustainable: Why the SHMA will increase greenfield use but not meet housing needs](#). A critique of GL Hearn's April

2014 Oxfordshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) Urban & Regional Policy, May 2014.

4. According to Nigel Tipple, Chief Executive, Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership, only 0.4% of working age population are on Job Seekers Allowance (JSA). This equals 1,841 people. Nigel Tipple, '[Introduction to the Strategic Economic Plan](#)', OxLEP SEP Refresh Workshops, March 2016.
5. OxLEP is conducting a 'refresh' of its Strategic Economic Plan, which will include an online consultation running from 21 April to 20 May. For further info [see the OxLEP website](#).
6. Paragraph 14 of the [National Planning Policy Framework](#).

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