'Cherwell District Council stands Green Belt policy on its head in revised Local Plan' warns CPRE

This week sees the publication of Cherwell's revised Local Plan for the period 2011-2031. The Council's recently adopted Local Plan has been reviewed in light of Oxford's 'unmet housing need'. [1] As its contribution, Cherwell is being asked to accommodate an additional 4,400 homes (over and above that allocated in its Local Plan).

The Plan proposes 4,400 houses for the District, with 3,990 to be built in the Oxford Green Belt. [2] The remainder are to be built at Woodstock on the edge of the Green Belt. (See CPRE's map of the proposed development sites below).

Government Policy requires development in the Green Belt to be the very last resort, only to be considered if there is no alternative. Cherwell has stood that Policy on its head by making building in the Green Belt its very first choice, rejecting what it accepts were reasonable alternatives.

Cherwell says that building as close to Oxford as possible trumps all other considerations. Since Oxford is surrounded by Green Belt, that has led them to select not just Green Belt sites, but the very closest Green Belt sites to the City, at the Kidlington Gap, where the Green Belt is most fragile, just a few fields wide.

It is those few fields the Council plans to build on, flatly contrary to Green Belt Policy, [3] and the known wishes of the overwhelming majority of its electorate. [4]

Responding to the publication of the draft Local Plan, CPRE Oxfordshire's Director, Helen Marshall said:

"If the Council gets away with this plan, it will also, again contrary to Green Belt Policy, cause the merger of Yarnton and Begbroke into Kidlington and expose Kidlington itself to being engulfed by the predatory City Council which has sought to subsume it for at least thirty years.

"And also, by declaring that proximity to Oxford is itself an exceptional reason to build on the Green Belt which surrounds the City, fundamentally undermine its very purpose, risking opening the whole Green Belt to development."

Helen Marshall continued:

"CPRE is opposed in principle to the release of Green Belt land – as is national planning Policy.

"A very strong case therefore has to be made to establish the exceptional circumstances required for the release of Green Belt land. The Cherwell Plan goes nowhere near making such a case; Cherwell's electorate strongly supports retention of Green Belt land, as does Government Policy.

"We believe there are a number of reasonable alternatives. The houses to satisfy Oxford's 'unmet need' targeted at the Cherwell Green Belt could not only, on the Council's own admission, be sustainably built elsewhere in the District on other sites, or by increasing the density of build on existing sites, but also, at least to a considerable extent, within the City itself.

"Failing that, if there were genuinely no available option other than release of Green Belt, national Policy indicates that Cherwell would be expected to decline to do so and require other Councils to co-operate in meeting the unmet need Cherwell itself cannot satisfy."

NOTES TO EDITORS:

[1] Cherwell District Council launched its Local Plan 2011-2031 (Part 1): Partial Review - Oxford's Unmet Housing Need on Monday 17 July. The consultation runs until 29 August.

[2] Cherwell District Council's Local Plan Part 1 Review proposes the allocation of 4,400 houses: 3,990 sites in the Oxford Green Belt and 400 at Woodstock.

North Oxford:
Policy PR6a – Land East of Oxford Road 650
Policy PR6b – Land West of Oxford Road 530
Policy PR6c – Land at Frieze Farm (reserved site for replacement Golf Course)
Kidlington:
Policy PR7a – Land South East of Kidlington 230
Policy PR7b – Land at Stratfield Farm 100
Begbroke:
Policy PR8 – Land East of the A44 1,950
Yarnton:
Policy PR9 – Land West of Yarnton 530
Woodstock:
Policy PR10 – Land South East of Woodstock 410

Total: 4,400 houses (3,390 in the Green Belt)

[3] Green Belts serve five purposes:

1. to check unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
2. to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;
3. to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;
4. to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and
5. to assist in urban regeneration by encouraging recycling of derelict and other urban land.

Source: 'Protecting Green Belt Land', para. 80, National Planning Policy Framework

[4] A CPRE Survey (April 2015) showed that three quarters of Oxfordshire residents think the Green Belt should not be built on. See: http://bit.ly/2u0KrhV

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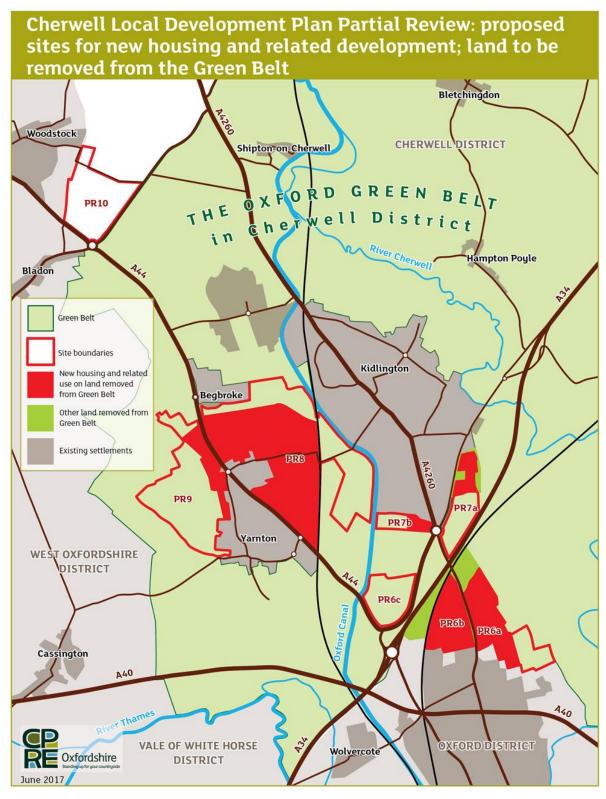**T: 01844 339274 / Mob: 07803 989583 / E:** tycehouse@gmail.com

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Cherwell Local Development Plan Partial Review: proposed sites for new housing and related development; land to be removed from the Green Belt

Bletchingdon

Woodstock

A4260

Shipton-on-Cherwell

CHERWELL DISTRICT

PR10

THE OXFORD GREEN BELT
in Cherwell District

River Cherwell

Hampton Poyle

Bladon

A44

A34

Legend:
- Green Belt
- Site boundaries
- New housing and related use on land removed from Green Belt
- Other land removed from Green Belt
- Existing settlements

Kidlington

Begbroke

PR8

A4260

PR7a

PR9

PR7b

Yarnton

PR6c

WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT

A44

Oxford Canal

PR6b PR6a

Cassington

A40

A34

CP
RE Oxfordshire
Standing up for your countryside

June 2017

River Thames

VALE OF WHITE HORSE DISTRICT

Wolvercote

OXFORD DISTRICT

A40

PROPOSED HOUSING FIGURES

North Oxford
PR6a – Land East of Oxford Road   650
PR6b – Land West of Oxford Road   530
PR6c – Land at Frieze Farm (reserved site for replacement Golf Course)

Kidlington
PR7a – Land South East of Kidlington 230
PR7b – Land at Stratfield Farm 100
Begbroke
PR8 – Land East of the A44 1,950
Yarnton
PR9 – Land West of Yarnton 530

Woodstock
PR10 – Land South East of Woodstock 410
(only site outside of Green Belt)

Total 4,400 (3,990 in the Green Gelt)