



## NEWS RELEASE

Embargoed: 00.01 Thursday 19 October, 2017

### Expressway madness -

### What the District Local Plans don't tell you...

The Local Plans for South Oxfordshire and the Vale of White Horse are out for consultation [1], giving the public a last chance to comment on how many houses should be built in the area over the next 15 years, and where they should go. But what the Plans fail to acknowledge in any detail is the **proposed Oxford to Cambridge Expressway and Growth Corridor** - by far the biggest planning proposal the Districts are likely to face in the time scale of the Plans, **potentially slicing through open countryside and imposing another 100,000 houses on Oxfordshire**. [2]

Although it is mentioned in passing in the Plans, the potential magnitude of the proposed Expressway Growth Corridor [3] is not indicated, nor its potential impact on the Oxford Green Belt, the environment or local communities. **(See attached CPRE map of proposed routes)**.

If the Expressway goes ahead, the National Infrastructure Commission says that 100,000 houses will have to be built in Oxfordshire to fund the scheme (two more cities the size of Oxford), some 10,000 houses per mile. The 100,000 houses appear to be over and above the targets proposed in the Local Plans, yet the public are not being consulted on whether or not they are needed or desirable for a county that boasts being the most rural in the South East.

Helen Marshall, Director of CPRE Oxfordshire said:

“Councillors and officers are well aware of this proposal, but there is a general conspiracy of silence throughout Oxfordshire – the opposite of Open Government – to keep the public in the dark about what is being planned to destroy their environment and amenity.

“We know there are lots of conversations going on behind closed doors, but we fear that by the time the public are consulted it will all be a done deal.

“It's vitally important that people understand now what a huge impact such a route could have across a vast swathe of Oxfordshire, not just in terms of the road but the massive development that it is intended to create alongside.

“It is time for the District Councils to come clean on what is being proposed.”

Helen Marshall concluded:

“CPRE is unconvinced of the need for, and is opposed to the Oxford to Cambridge Expressway. As recent CPRE research has shown, new roads have consistently failed to deliver the promised economic benefits or to reduce congestion. [4]

“We understand that the NIC will be issuing a final report in the late autumn, so we need action now whilst there is still time.”

CPRE Oxfordshire is calling for the District Councils to use the Local Plans to set out the magnitude of the proposed Expressway and associated growth, and the approach they will take to considering the issue.

CPRE Oxfordshire also remains concerned about the current level of housing proposed in the Local Plans, which is vastly *above* the level of need recently suggested by Government, and which will have a negative impact on our local environment without addressing affordable housing issues. [5]

For further information on CPRE Oxfordshire’s views on the South Oxfordshire Local Plan and the Vale of White Horse Local Plan Part 2, see [www.cpreoxon.org.uk](http://www.cpreoxon.org.uk)

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#### **NOTES TO EDITORS:**

**1.** The South Oxfordshire Local Plan Publication Version consultation runs from 11 October to 22 November: <http://www.southoxon.gov.uk/services-and-advice/planning-and-building/planning-policy/emerging-local-plan>

The Vale of White Horse Local Plan Publication Version consultation also runs from 11 October to 22 November: <http://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/services-and-advice/planning-and-building/planning-policy/local-plan-2031-part-2>

**2.** As part of the continued improvement of the Strategic Road Network in England, the UK government is proposing an Oxford to Cambridge Expressway to cut journey times in what is known as the ‘Brain Belt’ – where a concentration of high tech companies and their employees are based - and to unlock strategic growth sites along the Corridor. The proposal aims to establish this route by linking existing roads and building new ones. The full route of the Expressway would run from M4 Chieveley J13 to the Girton Interchange in Cambridge and will be taken forward during 2020-2025. The government has committed £27m in the Autumn Statement 2016, but the cost of the road is estimated to be up to 3.5bn.

The National Infrastructure Commission (NIC) is the Government body in charge of developing the concept. Its intention is that the scheme would be financed through the development of a million new houses, an average of 10,000 houses a mile, and associated employment, whichever route were chosen.

In March 2016, the National Infrastructure Commission was asked to consider how 'to maximise the potential of the Corridor' ... 'securing the homes and jobs that the area needs'. It published its findings in November 2016: <https://www.nic.org.uk/publications/national-infrastructure-commissions-interim-report-cambridge-milton-keynes-oxford-corridor/>

The NIC will issue a final report ahead of the Chancellor's 2017 Autumn Statement.

3. The case for the creation of the Expressway is examined in a strategic study published in November 2016: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/oxford-to-cambridge-expressway-strategic-study-stage-3-report>

Consultants have identified three options to complete the 'missing link' between the M1 and the M40:

- a northern option, roughly following the existing A421 to the south of Bicester and via Buckingham to the east of Milton Keynes
- a central option, following the east-west rail corridor; and
- a southern option via Aylesbury, linking to the M1 south of Milton Keynes.

Potential routes across Oxfordshire include the A34/A421 route, running from south of Abingdon to north of Bicester ( what is known as 'Oxford C Sub-Option S1' ) - the cheapest route, or two new routes cutting through the Vale of White Horse and South Oxfordshire's open countryside and the Green Belt, running from the A34 either north of Abingdon ( what is known as 'Oxford B Sub-Option S2' ) or south of Didcot ( what is known as 'Oxford A Sub-Option S4' ) across to the M40 near Wheatley and then either North to Bicester ( Route B ) east to Thame and Aylesbury ( Route A ).

4. See 'The end of the road? Challenging the road-building consensus' , CPRE, March 2017: <http://www.cpre.org.uk/resources/transport/roads/item/4543-the-end-of-the-road-challenging-the-road-building-consensus>

5. The Government is currently consulting on the new OAN (Objectively Assessed Need) methodology which will change the way housing targets are calculated: <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/planning-for-the-right-homes-in-the-right-places-consultation-proposals>

The Government's new housing figures for Oxfordshire are much lower than those originally predicted in the 2014 SHMA – the Strategic Housing Market Assessment. Extrapolated over the SHMA period of 20 years (2011 – 2031), the Oxfordshire-wide target would potentially come down to a far more realistic 68,300 (from 106,000), down by 32%.

In SODC's case, they are reduced by 20%, and in the Vale of White Horse, some 33%.

**MEDIA CONTACTS:**

**Helen Marshall**

**Director, Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE), Oxfordshire Branch**

**T: 01865 874780 / Mob: 07791 376365 / E: [director@cpreoxon.org.uk](mailto:director@cpreoxon.org.uk)**

**Michael Tyce**

**Trustee, Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) Oxfordshire Branch**

**T: 01844 339274 / Mob: 07803 989583 / E: [tycehouse@gmail.com](mailto:tycehouse@gmail.com)**

The Campaign to Protect Rural England fights for the Oxfordshire countryside: to protect it from the threats it faces, and to positively shape its future – join us today and stand up for your countryside!

CPRE Oxfordshire, 20 High Street, Watlington, OX49 5PY

[www.cpreoxon.org.uk](http://www.cpreoxon.org.uk) T: 01491 612079 E: [administrator@cpreoxon.org.uk](mailto:administrator@cpreoxon.org.uk)

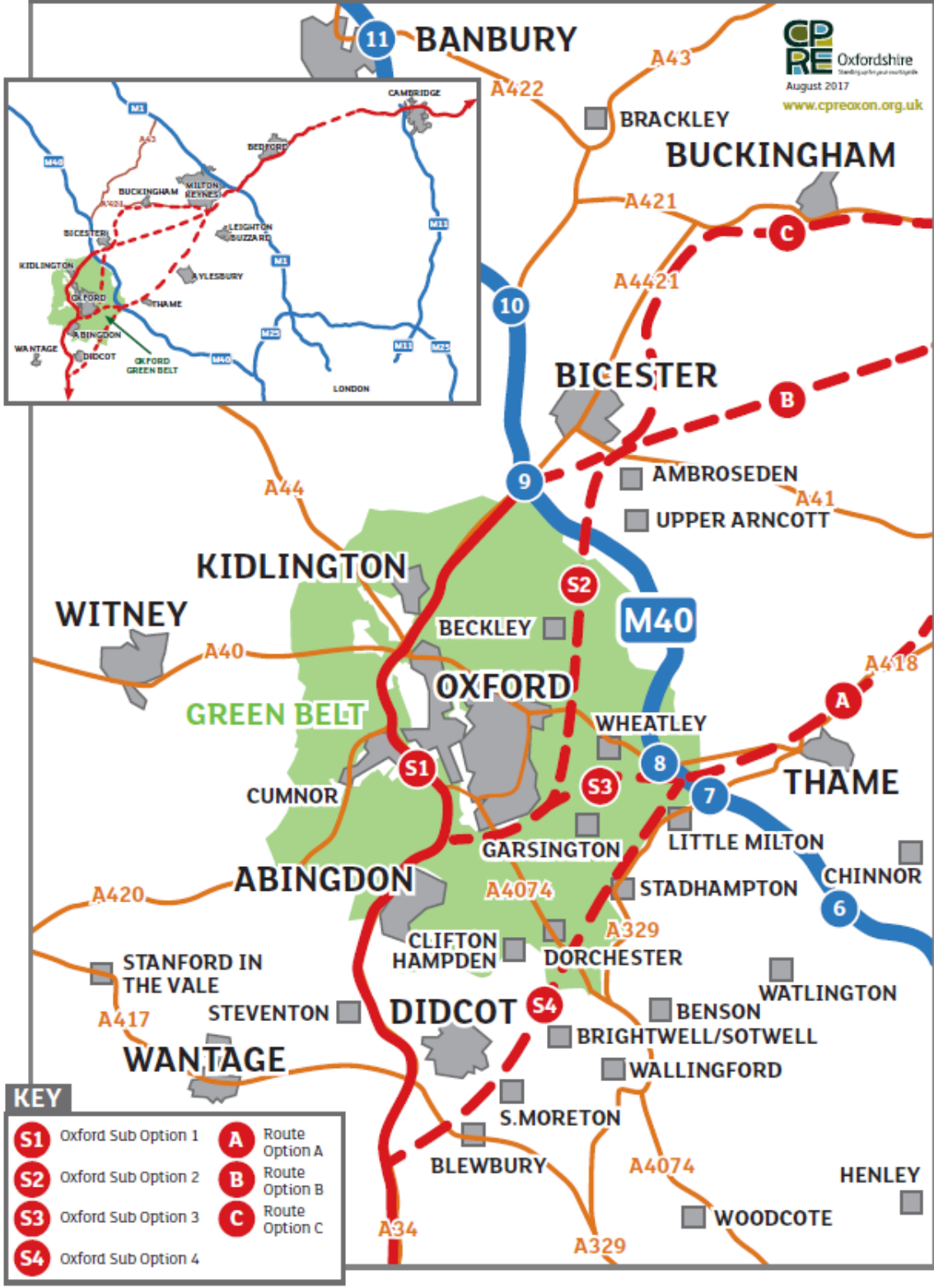
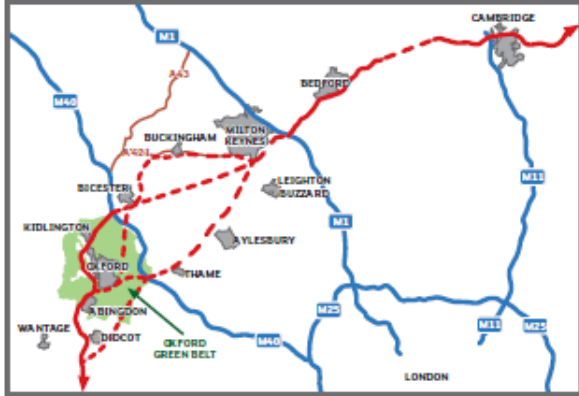
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# OXFORD TO CAMBRIDGE EXPRESSWAY POTENTIAL ROUTES

**CPRE** Oxfordshire  
 August 2017  
[www.cpreoxon.org.uk](http://www.cpreoxon.org.uk)



KEY	
<b>S1</b> Oxford Sub Option 1	<b>A</b> Route Option A
<b>S2</b> Oxford Sub Option 2	<b>B</b> Route Option B
<b>S3</b> Oxford Sub Option 3	<b>C</b> Route Option C
<b>S4</b> Oxford Sub Option 4	