



The countryside charity
Oxfordshire

Campaigning to protect our rural county

October 2023

CPRE Oxfordshire
20 High Street
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Oxfordshire OX49 5PY

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CPRE Oxfordshire Student Planning Ambassadors 2023-4

CPRE (Campaign to Protect Rural England) Oxfordshire is looking for four student planners to support our local volunteers in speaking up for the countryside and responding to development applications.

This is a fantastic volunteering opportunity to add to your CV, offering hands on experience of engaging with the planning system at a grassroots level, as well as supporting the work of a respected countryside charity.

Time commitment of approximately 1 day a month over the academic year. All expenses paid.

Background

CPRE Oxfordshire works through a network of District Committees, mirroring Oxfordshire's local authorities – Cherwell, South Oxfordshire, Vale of White Horse and West Oxfordshire. The committees are made up of volunteers who lead our work in that area, helping others to access, enjoy, improve and protect the countryside. As well as valuing the countryside in its own right, we believe it has a vital role to play in tackling our climate, nature and health emergencies.

A key part of our District Committees' work is to champion the countryside in local planning decisions. They monitor planning applications and, where development will impact the countryside and rural communities, they respond as appropriate – to object, comment or support.

With a rising number of applications, all our committees would now welcome some additional support, especially from someone with a working knowledge of the planning system. We are also keen to help planners of the future to understand what it feels like to engage with planning at this level and some of the challenges involved.

About the role

Each Student Planning Ambassador will be assigned to one of our four District Committees. They will be expected to work, in liaison with the District Chair, to produce a CPRE response to at least three planning applications over the academic year. This will involve a critical review of the information on the planning portal, assessment against CPRE policies, review of relevant national planning policy and local/ neighbourhood plans, and preparation of a draft response. *(See Appendix for examples)*



It may also include:

- Site visit
- Liaison with local parish council and/or other community groups or individuals
- Liaison with other relevant organisations e.g. environmental or heritage groups or statutory bodies
- Making written or verbal representations to the Councils' planning committee.

In addition, we would expect all Student Planning Ambassadors to:

- Attend an initial briefing and training workshop (approx. 4 hours, in-person – venue tbc)
- Participate in a monthly catch up (by phone/Zoom) with the District Chair and/or CPRE's Planning Co-ordinator
- Attend an end of year feedback session.

You would also be invited to attend District Committee meetings but these would be optional.

We estimate the time commitment to be approximately one day a month over the academic year. The role is initially for the academic year 2023-4 (although it may be possible to extend if both parties are willing).

What we can offer

A valuable addition to your CV and an opportunity to identify suitable dissertation topics
A supported experience of learning about and engaging with the planning system at grassroots level
A chance to put your knowledge and skills to use for the benefit of the countryside, contributing to tackling our climate, nature and health emergencies
Flexibility for volunteering around academic commitments
Expenses paid

About you

We are looking for Student Planning Ambassadors who have a working knowledge of the planning system but are keen to learn more. You will need to be:

- Reliable – turn up when you say you will and do what you say are going to do
- Good at communicating – in writing and speaking
- Able to get on with a wide mix of people
- Well organised and able to meet deadlines
- Able to be a positive ambassador for CPRE in the local community.

You will need to have access to internet and computer facilities.

For further information on CPRE Oxfordshire's work see: www.cpreoxon.org.uk



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Interested? Please send your CV & covering letter to:

Helen Marshall, Director CPRE Oxfordshire

E: director@cpreoxon.org.uk

DEADLINE FOR APPLICATIONS:

MONDAY 30 OCTOBER

CPRE Oxfordshire places high value on equality. We treat everyone with respect and consideration because we know it's the right thing to do. We also know that diverse teams make much better decisions, are more creative and more stimulating to work in. So, if you join us, you will be able to help us put equality, the environment and diversity at the centre of everything we do.



Appendix 1 – Examples of CPRE Oxfordshire planning responses

- a) **Housing** - [P22/S1381/O](#) – housing turned down at appeal, Chalgrove – on the grounds of conflict with development plan, landscape and visual impact and loss of agricultural land



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Nicola Smith – Case Officer
South Oxfordshire District Council
Via email: planning@southoxfordshire.gov.uk

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c/o CPRE Oxfordshire
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10th May 2022

**RE: P22/S1381/O - Outline planning application for the erection of up to 160 dwellings including affordable housing, with public open space, landscaping, sustainable drainage system (SuDS) and vehicular access. All matters reserved except for means of access.
Land off the B480 Chalgrove**

Dear Nicola Smith

The Committee of South Oxfordshire District of CPRE strongly object to this development. It is non-compliant with the local plan, and the proposed density makes very inefficient use of the land.

The proposal is contrary to Local Plan 2035 policies:

- H4 – development strategy for the larger villages with no further housing development (outside the strategic allocation) required for Chalgrove, and the Chalgrove Neighbourhood Plan.
- DES7: Efficient use of resources, para i) the efficient use of land, with densities in accordance with Policy STRATS Residential Densities. Proposals which seek to deliver higher quality and higher density development which minimises land take will be encouraged;
and
- vii) avoiding the development of the best and most versatile agricultural land, unless it is demonstrated to be the most sustainable choice from reasonable alternatives, by first using areas of poorer quality land in preference to that of a higher quality;

The development will result in ribbon development along the B480, next to a site that the inspector of the Appeal Decision APP/Q3115/W/17/3177448 noted was outside the village envelope. This development will extend the line of development into open countryside, on good agricultural land and will not integrate well with the rest of the village, the recently built adjacent development, nor the Strategic Allocation site of Chalgrove airfield. The distances to services are unlikely to be walkable with bags of shopping and the GP surgery is at the opposite end of the village.

The OCCG has noted that the local GP surgery does not have capacity to take on any more patients, and the recent school allocation numbers show very limited capacity at Chalgrove primary school, and none at other primary schools nearby. For secondary schools in South Oxfordshire there were no places available.

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Further to the submitted response of our Rights of Way consultant, the developer mentions the upgrading of the Public Footpath that runs across the site. It is not clear if the developer seeks to apply for a higher status route, such as a Bridleway or Restricted By-way or just a shared pedestrian/cycle route and whether this will apply to the whole length of the public right of way. The developer states that this public right of way will provide an important link to the village services, but it must remain unlit to protect wildlife & biodiversity from light pollution. We wonder whether this route will be attractive or perceived as safe to users (especially children walking to & from the primary school or the bus stop or the villages services) when daylight hours are short. It should also be noted that this route to the village may not always be passable due to flooding as noted by the inspector of the Appeal for the adjacent site:

“Appeal Decision APP/Q3115/W/17/3177448 - 19. Vehicular access to the site would be via a new roundabout junction onto the B480. I do not regard this access as leading out of the village, since it would also provide a second pedestrian link into the village via the northern end of Monument Road, past existing residential streets and properties. This would also offer an alternative access for pedestrians and cyclists into the village in the event of the footpath/cycleway along the south-west boundary being flooded from the Chalgrove Book to the west.”

From other developments on the outskirts of larger villages across South Oxfordshire, it has been observed that public footpaths that are linked to developments are used by cyclists, especially when the parts of a public footpath surface have been improved or designated as a shared footpath/cycleway as part of the development scheme.

The continued unplanned development across South Oxfordshire District is unsustainable, and there are no benefits to the district or community that will outweigh the harm this development will cause.

Yours sincerely

The Committee of South Oxfordshire District of CPRE



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b) **Green Belt / solar** - Large-scale solar industrial unit in the Oxford Green Belt

See: [P22/S0960/FUL](#)

This application was refused on the grounds of harm to the Green Belt and being contrary to South Oxfordshire Local Plan policy DES9.



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11th October 2022

RE: P22/S0960/FUL

Burcot Farm Burcot OX14 3GW-
Installation of a ground mounted solar photovoltaic array, co-located battery energy storage scheme (BES) together with associated infrastructure; security fencing; CCTV; access gate; on-site Biodiversity Net Gain at Burcot Farm, Burcot, Oxfordshire, OX14 3GW.

Dear Nicola Smith

We have reviewed the additional documents submitted for this application, and our objection remains for the reasons as set out in our previous submissions.

In summary, the NPPF paragraph 2 states “Planning law requires that applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the development plan², unless material considerations indicate otherwise³.” and paragraph 148 states “When considering any planning application, local planning authorities should ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt.”

Therefore, this application must only be assessed against Local Plan Policy DES9. The additional information provided regarding planting, the photomontage and the glint & glare study, do not mitigate against the harm this development will cause to the openness of the Green Belt, views from Wittenham Clumps nor the impact on users of the PRow.

As the pre-application planning advice states:

“Paragraph 79 of the Framework [NPPF] tells us that openness is an essential characteristic of the Green Belt. Openness is generally defined as the absence of built form. This does not depend on visibility; even if a site is well screened the impact on openness is the same. As a man-made imposition on the landscape, the proposed facility, fencing and infrastructure would obviously reduce openness, and this would add to the harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness.” Indeed, the council has now recognised that solar farm developments within the Green Belt are harmful to the openness of the Green Belt following its refusal of the recent application Nineveh Farm – P22/S1541/FUL.

The additional supporting information provided by the applicant is irrelevant as this application which must be judged against DES9. The benefit of renewable energy is weighed against harm in the policy itself, therefore the benefit for renewable energy cannot be used as a very special circumstance to go against the policy. This is also not a community driven development proposal therefore the Burcot Farm community investment offer is irrelevant.

Yours sincerely

The Committee of South Oxfordshire District of CPRE

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c) **Light pollution** – extension to club house (glazing), Caversham Golf Club

[P20/S1619/FUL](#)

Approved but with conditions requiring:

- a full lighting scheme for any external lighting to be submitted in advance for approval
- skylight units and glazing to be fitted with automatically closing blinds during hours of darkness.

Planning Dept,
SODC,
135 Eastern Avenue,
Milton Park,
Milton
OX14 4SB

and enhance a beautiful, thriving
countryside for everyone to value and
enjoy

10th June 2020

For the attention of Mr Tom Wyatt

Comments on P20/S1619/FUL Extension to existing clubhouse and minor
amendments to existing vehicular access.
Caversham Heath Golf Club RG4 7UT

Dear Mr Wyatt,

The Committee of South Oxfordshire District of CPRE has serious concerns about the negative environmental impacts of some of the proposals included in this application.

The clubhouse is situated on rising ground and, although visibility from PROWs is limited, it is in a prominent position in the landscape overlooking the golf course. This is well illustrated on pages 30 & 31 of the Design and Access Statement, and on page 8 of the Planning Statement reference is made to the tremendous views across the course from the terrace.

Although a golf course is a manufactured environment, it can be a haven for wildlife; at Caversham Heath Golf Course there is Ancient Woodland to E and SE and other areas of woodland and field hedgerows nearby. We note that Reading Golf Course is listed as a country wildlife site in Appendix 9, Designated Sites for Nature Conservation, of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2034.

The plans for the extension to the clubhouse contain a considerable increase in the amount of glazing, especially to the western façade which includes two 'piers' which will be fully glazed, with the glazing following the shape of the pitched roof at the top. This glazing has the potential for considerable light spillage over a wide area resulting in harm to nocturnal wildlife and damage to the dark skies of the Chilterns AONB. This is contrary to policies DP2(h) and DP8 of the Chilterns AONB Management Plan 2019-24. There is no mention of any measures to be taken to mitigate the problem in the documents accompanying this application. On the contrary, the Landscape and Visual Impact Appraisal does not recognize the problem but states, "In considering the night time effects, the location within the AONB is of importance. The proposed development of the club house is unlikely to result in any notable increase in night time effect impacts."



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The extended seating/restaurant terrace, according to p.26 of the Design and Access Statement, is to be equipped with down lighters and floor-standing heaters, presumably so that it can be used after dark and on cooler evenings. The former are undesirable and at the least should conform to the latest regulations regarding external lighting in order to minimize light spillage. The latter should not be permitted. It is no good fitting solar panels, etc. to save energy and then supplying outdoor heaters to exacerbate the climate emergency.

The management of the golf club is keen to increase its income-stream by hiring out the facilities as much as possible. This includes the loft space which has been provided with the two glazed piers, and a number of roof-lights which will add to the problem of light spillage. There is no indication of the hours this space, or the restaurant and function rooms, will be used but clearly many of the events will take place in the hours of darkness so that lighting from within the building will spill out into the night.

We hope that you will insist that the applicant take steps to prevent the harmful impacts of this application, paying special regard to the advice in the Chilterns Buildings Design Guide.

Finally, please note that our submission is in respect of the proposed development. While we have taken every effort to present accurate information for your consideration, as we are not a decision maker or statutory consultee, we cannot accept any responsibility for unintentional errors or omissions and you should satisfy yourselves on any facts before reaching your decision.

Yours sincerely,

The Committee of South Oxfordshire District of CPRE