

Clerk

From: Becky Crockett <administrator@cpreoxon.org.uk> on behalf of director@cpreoxon.org.uk
Sent: 23 September 2020 16:25
To: Becky Crockett
Subject: Don't Let the Government De-regulate Planning - Please act now to register your concerns

Dear CPRE Oxfordshire member

Proposed changes to the Planning System will reduce local democracy and put our countryside at risk - Please act now to register your concerns

As you may be aware, the Government is proposing radical changes to the planning system which we believe would have a detrimental long-term impact on rural Oxfordshire, our countryside, villages and market towns.

This briefing is intended to give you a quick summary of what is happening and why we are concerned. It also gives you some suggestions of how you can help, including signing the national CPRE petition: [Don't de-regulate planning](#)

With grateful thanks for all your support.

1. What's happening?

The Government is currently consulting on major changes to the planning system:

- a) [Changes to the Current Planning System](#) - this paper sets out proposed changes to the way local housing need will be calculated. Consultation runs until 1 October 2020.
- b) [Planning White Paper](#) - this paper describes the introduction of zoning of land (for growth, renewal or protection) and the 'streamlining' of local input, as well as proposals around design, infrastructure funding and digitisation of the planning system. Consultation runs until 29 October 2020.

2. Why is CPRE Oxfordshire concerned?

a) *The imposition of top-down housing numbers*

Instead of housing numbers being decided by our local representatives, on the basis of evidence, they are to be imposed nationally. The new calculation starts with a number, 300,000 houses a year + 10% contingency, and then uses a dubious algorithm to arrive at this figure.

Allocations to local authorities are to be based not on where future growth might be best located, or where need is greatest, but on relative house prices. The higher the house prices, the more houses you will have to build. But builders will only build what they can sell at current prices and are not about to devalue their own markets. Its only effect will be to bring more people to the area, not to address existing local need.

Calculations suggest that Oxfordshire would be required to build more or less the same number of houses as the current Oxfordshire Housing & Growth Deal, which the Government itself originally said was far greater than the number needed, all the time, every year, for ever, each time from a larger base.

b) *Loss of local democracy*

Apart from numbers being imposed with no local say, other issues include:

- Community engagement would be largely restricted to the Local Plan making stage (as it stands, just one six-week consultation!), with the public thereafter losing their ability to scrutinise most individual planning applications.
- The introduction of a zonal planning system also raises questions. Would the zoning have to take more account of the number of houses to be built than it would of the need to protect the environment? How could broad brush zoning work in a crowded island where environmental assets are mingled with development? How will it impact on broader plans such as Oxfordshire 2050? How will our Neighbourhood Plans be affected? None of these matters are addressed.
- Development management policies, which cover issues such as noise, air and light pollution, rights of way and heritage, would all be set centrally with no apparent scope for local place-based planning.
- New settlements, such as garden towns and villages, would be taken out of the Local Plan system and be considered under national infrastructure rules.

c) *Risks to our countryside & green spaces*

As proposed, the zonal planning system would weaken protection of green space designated for growth or renewal, and offer no additional safeguards for those earmarked for protection. ‘Protected’ areas as defined by the new proposals would be those with site designations such as the Oxford Green Belt, our three Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) and Conservation Areas, but there would be no consideration given to the importance of undesignated green spaces near to where people live. Under the proposed zonal system, and in combination with centralised, high housing targets, these green spaces will be under increased threat of becoming a free-for-all for development. The result of this will be the loss of the crucial functions that green space serves to local communities in terms of health and wellbeing, in addition to its role in mitigating the climate emergency.

3. What can you do? Here’s 5 things...

- Sign the national CPRE petition here - [Don’t de-regulate planning](#)
Over 30,000 people have signed - please add your voice too.
- Respond to the consultations - feel free to use the above info in your own words. We also hope to make sample responses available at www.cpreoxon.org.uk
- Write to your MP:
Banbury - Victoria Prentis MP (Con) - victoria.prentis.mp@parliament.uk
Oxford East - Anneliese Dodds MP (Lab) - anneliese.dodds.casework@parliament.uk
Oxford West & Abingdon - Layla Moran MP (Lib Dem) - layla.moran.mp@parliament.uk
Henley - John Howell MP (Con) - howelljm@parliament.uk
Wantage - David Johnston (Con) - david.johnston.mp@parliament.uk
Witney - Robert Courts MP (Con) - robert.courts.mp@parliament.uk
- Spread the word - please share with your friends, family and networks - look out for our tweets, Facebook posts and news alerts.
- Make a donation www.justgiving.com/cpreoxon

For further information: T: 01491 612079 E: campaign@cpreoxon.org.uk www.cpreoxon.org.uk

Thank you once again for your support.

Helen Marshall
Director



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