

Garsington and the Green Belt

Garsington Village Hall

Tuesday 15 January 2008

Purpose

To inform the village about the current
planning issues and

To invite villagers to make their views known

History(1)

- Examination in Public of the draft South East Plan (2006-2026)
- 28/11/06 - July 2007
- 47,200 homes for Oxfordshire
 - another town the size of Banbury
 - 7,000 homes in Oxford, 10,200 in S.Oxon

However.....

- A report to the government had recommended 70% more houses than SEERA had in plan
- Oxford City keen to attract more growth than in current draft
- Developers keen to develop land in Green Belt.
- EIP specifically reviewed potential for
 - Oxford to expand and
 - Green Belt to be “revised”

History(2)

- Specific proposals included
 - Littlemore to Toot Baldon(Thames Water/Magdalen)
 - Horspath to Garsington (Brasenose)
 - Grenoble Road to Greater Leys Farm (Oxford City)
- Colleges are Charities and are proposing “urban extensions”.
 - i.e.Commercial RATHER THAN Affordable

Where we are Now

- EIP recommended, in August, a selective review of the green belt, south of Oxford, for an “urban extension” including 4000 dwellings;
- Hazel Blears` amendments to the South East Plan to be published in early 2008;
- 12 weeks then allowed for sending in our responses;
- We expect that this “selective review” will be accepted by the minister.

What else do we know about the proposed “urban extension”

- From the Sewage Farm to the Watlington Rd.
- 4,000 (+) dwellings
- 40% of dwellings “affordable”
- With 4,000 dwellings, it must include a school.
- It will be a “mixed use” development, providing new jobs!!
- GOSE will probably force SODC to work with the City on an Area Action Plan for this proposed Strategic Development Area

Where we are Now

BUT

- Who will carry out the review?
- Can we contribute or comment ?
- Over what geographical area? - and
- According to what criteria (if not current guidelines)?

The Inspectors' report states:

- “Too much weight was given (in the draft South East Plan) to the views of existing residents (i.e. the consultation results) and not enough to demographic and economic factors”
- “We are confident that the local authorities will wish to involve representatives of the surrounding village communities in drawing up their proposals, so that they can contribute to the design of landscaping and green infrastructure to maintain their village identities. Although we sympathise with the fears of the Baldons PC and residents of Garsington, we have no reason to doubt that a satisfactory masterplanning solution could be achieved”
- *i.e. We may be asked for our opinions about some cosmetic details in the final stages of the Planning Application process,*

What we won't know, until a late stage in the Planning process

- How much of this “mixed-use urban extension” will be used for commercial, and industrial activity, so generating new jobs and more road traffic ?
- How the developers will solve the transport issues. This issue was highlighted as unresolved by the Inspectors
- What definition of “affordable housing” will be used by the developers?

What can we assume?

- This extension will set a precedent. Further reviews of the green belt will lead to further extensions
- Traffic from the new houses will cause serious congestion in Garsington and Wheatley, but also in the Leys, in East Oxford, and the city centre.
- Pollution and visual intrusion will impact the high quality of the rural environment of the nearest Oxford Green Belt villages.
- Resources available for pursuing and completing the existing County Council strategy will be reduced
- The government will use the Boundary Commission to take the proposed urban extension into Oxford City.

What can we reasonably anticipate (1)

- Magdalen College will want the best economic return on its assets, ie via commercial property development .
- The City may want to sell off some of its own land for commercial development . Surely not an “exceptional reason” for releasing this quantity of Green Belt land ?
- Council Tax payers will be required to foot some of the bill for moving the sewage treatment works under existing Ofwat rules.
- Transport infrastructure will be grossly inadequate, and
- Some premises and plots may stand empty for decades, as in some other Oxford business parks.

What can we reasonably anticipate (2)

- The high voltage electricity cables will produce long strips of undeveloped land, where no human activity can be recommended on grounds of the health hazard.
- These deserted ‘open spaces’ have been called green corridors in the developer`s plans. They are no substitute for providing real ‘green spaces’ for recreation, community use, or for protecting local biodiversity.
- Many of the new homes will be for people who will commute outwards from Oxford, through the Green Belt village ‘rat runs’ .

Consequences

- Revision of green belt will contribute to the eventual disappearance of Garsington as a village community
 - Temple Cowley, Headington Quarry, Botley
- Much higher traffic levels
- No sense of identity
- No wildlife/footpaths/views/mud
- No local democracy

If you have objections to the proposed urban extension what can you do about it?

- **NOW**
- Write to the Prime Minister, stating specific grounds for objecting to the plan and the process, and asking a written answer to your questions. Remind him of his statement
- “We will continue robustly to protect land designated as Green Belt” (July 2007)
- Release his replies to the Press and broadcast media by posting them on the OGBN website.
- (OGBN has published a draft on: www.oxfordgreenbelt.net)
- Write to Hazel Blears.

- Write to Boris Johnson MP for South Oxfordshire, to enlist David Cameron’s support to challenge the Prime Minister over Gordon Brown’s promise to protect the Green Belt.

If you have views on the proposed urban extension what can you do about it?

- **NOW**

- Register with SODC which is preparing a website to act as conduit and co-ordinator for a campaign .

The website is not yet fully live but - *before it is* - SODC want to get as many people as possible signed up to receive the campaign launch information.

So please would you take 30 seconds to visit the SODC Campaign website at: <http://handsoff.southoxon.gov.uk> , register your email address, and then **forward this web address to as many people as you can**, encouraging them to do the same.

- **SOON**

- Work together on a developing a coordinated PR campaign with the help of supporters in SODC (Leader of the Council, Anne Ducker), SEERA, and Oxfordshire County Council (SEERA Chairman and Leader of the County Council, Keith Mitchell.)

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