

Press Release

Cherwell Development Watch Alliance

18 October 2020

Legal Challenge to Cherwell`s Plan for Green Belt development

Cherwell Development Watch Alliance, an organisation of five local associations which has been opposing Cherwell District Council`s Local Plan (Part 1) Partial Review, has filed a claim in the High Court challenging its adoption by the Council.

Notice of the claim was served on Cherwell and the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities & Local Government last Friday 16th October, alleging that the decision on 7th September to adopt the Partial Review was unlawful.

Unless stayed by the court, the Partial Review will result in the development over the next ten years of 4,400 houses – all of them on Green Belt land – between north Oxford and the villages of Kidlington, Begbroke and Yarnton. The Plan was adopted by a majority vote in the Conservative-led Council despite five years of protest and in the face of widespread local opposition.

Cherwell Development Watch Alliance (CDWA), a coalition of the Begbroke & Yarnton Green Belt Campaign, GreenWayOxon, Harbord Road Area Residents Association, Kidlington Development Watch, and the Woodstock Action Group, is supported by all four local Parish Councils and Woodstock Town Council.

“The basis of our Claim is that the government`s Planning Inspector failed to take account of certain material considerations in concluding the Plan was sound, and that it is therefore unlawful as it stands”, said CDWA`s chair, Suzanne McIvor.

“In particular, we are alleging that the Inspector did not properly scrutinise all the evidence relating to Oxford City`s unmet housing need. Since meeting that need is the purpose of the whole Plan and is Cherwell`s primary justification for taking hundreds of hectares of land out of important Green Belt, our challenge on this ground goes to the very heart of this massive development”.

“Our members have been campaigning against the Plan for five long years,” continued Mrs. McIvor. *“We have raised many detailed, soundly-based objections and backed them up with independent, specialist expertise. We have presented them both verbally and in writing to Cherwell at every appropriate point but no-one has listened to us. So-called consultation has simply been a box-ticking exercise, despite an unprecedented number of objections. So we are driven finally to the courts.”*

Alan Lodwick, also a CDWA committee member, said: *"We have shown that what Oxford City Council calls its `unmet housing need` is not to meet local `need` at all but arises from a policy for massive growth that comes almost straight out of the Oxford Growth Board. It is the first part of a Government led project to build a million houses in the so-called Oxford-Cambridge Arc. This does not justify over-riding Government policy to protect the Green Belt which was re-stated by the Prime Minister himself at PMQs only a few weeks ago. The Government and Local Councils should listen to the residents of Begbroke, Cutteslowe, Gosford, Kidlington, and Yarnton who do not want the increased traffic congestion, polluted air, and transformation of their ancient community identities into a massive urban sprawl."*

In its legal suit, CDWA is also claiming that due account has not been taken of evidence showing that the provision for replacement land for the North Oxford Golf Course is inadequate. If the Plan goes ahead, this popular and accessible course, with its many thousands of trees, would be lost and the Green Belt land cleared for a development of 670 houses

Mrs. McIvor continued, *"We hope that a judge, independent of the vested interests in this plan will agree with us. Our main concern now is to ensure that we have the funds to follow through on our Claim if it passes its first hearing. We would like to take this opportunity to thank our generous supporters so far who have made this challenge possible."*

CDWA expects to hear within a few weeks whether their Claim for a statutory challenge will be permitted to go through to a second hearing.

CONTACTS

cherwelldwa@gmail.com

Website: <https://cdwa.jimdofree.com/>