

Caversham and District Residents Association (CADRA)

Comments on South Oxfordshire Local Plan Second Preferred Options Consultation April 17

CADRA welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Second Preferred Options Local Plan Consultation, April 17.

Housing Policy H10 Smaller Villages and Other Villages

We note that you have changed the definitions of village size since the last consultation, and have dropped the category of medium sized villages which had a target of up to 7.5% growth, and now propose a longer list of 'smaller villages', where the target has risen from 5% to 5-10%.

Some of these newly defined 'smaller villages' are very small, with few facilities – for example, Playhatch, Gallowstree Common, Kildmore End, Shiplake Cross and Rotherfield Peppard are now in this category.

We regret the loss of the 'medium sized' village category and would argue that it should be reintroduced, and that the currently proposed scale of growth in a shorter list of smaller villages should be reduced.

We welcome the policy of distinguishing these 'smaller villages' from 'other villages' - small settlements and hamlets, where 5-10% growth would not be expected, especially as a number of these 'other villages' are close to the Reading boundary with South Oxfordshire.

We have these concerns about the current proposals:

Whilst understanding the need for some additional housing in rural settlements to support local facilities and maintain vitality, we are concerned at the potential impact which new housing can have in small villages, where up to 5- 10% growth in the number of homes is proposed.

Growth of this scale could place significant strains on the provision of local services – indeed some of these smaller villages have few local facilities

We didn't find any reference to how growth might be phased over the proposed timescale of the Local Plan, and would argue that this warrants serious consideration

We would have concern about proposals which aimed to extend development beyond the existing boundaries of settlements

We would urge the inclusion of a policy which ensures that the size of each new home in the smaller villages should be such that they do not overwhelm the character of the village.

We note that the proposed growth in smaller villages is to be met by sites of 10 homes or less and by infill, and that sites will not be allocated by the local authority. In smaller villages new sites of 10 homes could easily be out of scale and out of character with the existing pattern of development. Smaller villages are unlikely to have the resources to prepare a neighbourhood plan, leaving them

with no formal way of protecting sites from development, or of choosing the best places for housing to go. Under the proposed policy we fear they could be vulnerable to speculative proposals for sites for up to 10 houses, with little chance of resisting development because of the national planning policy presumption in favour of 'sustainable development'.

We would argue that the size of individual sites should be for less than 10 homes within the smaller villages.

Development adjacent to the Reading Borough Council boundary.

We note that there are no proposals in your Draft Local Plan for development on the edge of Reading and we would look for strong policies to resist any proposals for development on the built edge of Caversham and Emmer Green.

CADRA has submitted strong objections to the current substantial application for housing adjacent to the Emmer Green boundary because of the pressure that would be placed on education, public transport and healthcare within Reading, together with the impact on already congested traffic routes.

Traffic

CADRA continues to be very concerned about the increase in traffic through Caversham which results from additional housing within South Oxfordshire.

We would predict that many trips from the southern end of South Oxfordshire would be via Caversham and the Reading Thames crossings. Individual new sites developed for housing might have a relatively small impact on the local road network. But the cumulative effect of a number of individually quite small developments becomes very significant and has already contributed to a significant worsening of traffic conditions in Caversham and Reading.

Recently Wokingham District Council, together with Reading Borough Council, Oxfordshire County Council and South Oxfordshire District Council, undertook a traffic modelling exercise to examine a possible 'Third' Reading Bridge over the Thames. We understand that this bridge could remove some of the South Oxfordshire 'through' traffic from Reading, Caversham, Sonning and (possibly) Henley Bridges.

Until the traffic modelling has been completed and the location of the Third Reading Bridge and connecting roads has been determined, we believe that, no further residential development should be permitted within the South Oxfordshire study area on the grounds that the cumulative effects of South Oxfordshire developments have contributed to a worsening of traffic congestion, pollution and quality of life in Caversham.

1 May 2017

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