

Kidlington Parish Council

Chair's report

August 2019

The partial review of the Cherwell Local Plan has moved forward a step, not necessarily to the advantage of Kidlington. In my last report I said that we had written to the Plan Inspector asking him to take account of the queries his colleague had recently raised about the housing needs calculation in the Oxford City Local Plan. The Cherwell Inspector has declined to do this, in his latest response on the Cherwell Local Plan, deciding, to my mind on rather weak grounds, to proceed on the basis of the Oxford figures, and therefore with the total of 4,400 houses as Cherwell's share to meet Oxford's housing need. But while he has accepted the majority of Cherwell's development proposals, he has rejected the plan for 410 dwellings on the Southern boundary of Woodstock, indicating that the numbers should either be distributed among the remaining sites, or preferably concentrated on the site West of Yarnton. The result may therefore be that the Kidlington allocations of 100 houses next to Stratfield Brake and 230 by the new cemetery is increased, though the Village is still unlikely to be much affected purely in terms of housing numbers. On the other hand there will be very significant impact through the increase in traffic volume and loss of Green Belt between us and Oxford. The Inspector acknowledged traffic would increase, but did not consider this a reason for changing the numbers.

Shortly after the Inspector published his response, Ian Middleton, Kidlington's Green District Councillor, supported by the other four Kidlington Councillors present, put a motion to Cherwell Council proposing that the local plan review should be paused to allow further consideration of the housing needs calculation. The Council rejected this.

In the longer term, however, these immediate issues may be less threatening than Highways England's current plans for an East-West Oxford to Cambridge Expressway. The proposed alternatives have been narrowed down to two, either a new road South of Oxford, or North of Oxford along the route of the A34. Clearly the Northern route, if adopted, will have a drastic impact on Kidlington, vastly increasing the volume of traffic, effectively removing the gap between us and Oxford, and bringing huge new housing developments: the plan envisages doubling the population of Oxfordshire.

The plan is supported by Cherwell and the County Council, but the Parish Council has joined the No Expressway Alliance, an active association of stakeholder groups: see their website at www.noexpresswayalliance.org. We are also working with a group of Parishes North and West of Oxford who oppose the Expressway as such, but not necessarily improvements to existing roads. We think, with the increasing prospect of climate change and the increasingly urgent requirement for all development to be sustainable, the case for a major new highway alongside the already-planned East-West Railway is highly questionable. We support our MP, Layla Moran, who is campaigning for a proper public consultation on whether there should be an Expressway at all.