



**KIDMORE END PARISH COUNCIL**  
OXFORDSHIRE

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**From: Ms S M Biggs**  
**Chairman of the Council**

13 June 2018

Dear Councillor Murphy

**EMERGING SOUTH OXFORDSHIRE LOCAL PLAN**

At a meeting held on June 6 2018, my Council authorised me to write to you and express our serious concerns as to the inclusion by South Oxfordshire District Council of two sites for potential major housing development in the Parish of Kidmore End.

I refer to the e-mail sent by Ms Emma Baker, on 25 May 2018, to town and parish councils, summarising a decision taken by your Council on 15 May 2018.

In that letter Ms Baker referred to the Council's decision to "do more work to determine the most suitable locations for strategic development before we submit the Local Plan".

Of the "15 potential sites for strategic allocations which meet the criteria for a strategic site", your Council has included Reading Golf Club and Palmer's Riding Stables, Emmer Green, Reading. My understanding is that neither of those sites has been, according to the letter from Ms Baker, "subject to the Local Plan consultation process previously". If they had been so subject, your Council would have had the benefit of informed comment as to their suitability for "strategic development". Yet your Council would appear to be drawing no distinction between sites put forward by developers and other sites which have had the benefit of such a local plan consultation process. The sites your Council has now identified in this Parish have never before been included in any previous local plan. Indeed, you will be familiar with the South Oxfordshire Core Strategy 3 hierarchy, in which the settlement of Chalkhouse Green has, as a matter of policy, been excluded from any requirement for housing and is classed as being "in open countryside for planning policy purposes".

Your Council has, however, decided that all 15 sites are to be subject to a desk-top assessment, even though no information is provided as to the criteria to be followed by officials. Moreover, while your Council is inviting comments from site promoters, developers and landowners, there is no process for inviting comments from this Council or, so far as we are aware, from Oxfordshire County Council, or Reading Borough Council. A desk-top assessment, with undisclosed criteria and input from only those likely to benefit financially from major housing development, is a most fragile and inadequate basis for determining which sites should go into the Local Plan.

What is particularly troubling, in the inclusion of those two sites, is some emerging policy on the part of your Council, again without any proper consultation, in which the countryside bordering Reading, and within the settlement of Chalkhouse Green and this Parish, is now to be considered as "fair game" for developers and useful in building up the numbers for your compliance with national policy guidelines. This is in marked contrast with your Council's decisions last year to refuse planning applications for what might be described as a major strategic development at Bryant's Farm, Emmer Green and a smaller development at the Elms in Tokers Green. Each of those decisions made sense - the protection of a rural area from being engulfed by a steady creep of urban development across the Reading boundary and into South Oxfordshire and towards the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

That policy, on which this Council and residents of the Parish have relied, now appears to be called into question by your approval of a desk-top study, drawing no distinction between those two sites and others in the 15.

My Council is seriously concerned at the processes that your Council has adopted and is now pressing ahead with. We note that you had to call for a vote, indicating that some of your colleagues were concerned as to the recommendation from Cabinet. Thus, with (i) no prior consultation as to the suitability of those two sites, (ii) no communication from your Council to my Council as to our views and the evolution of our own neighbourhood development plan, (iii) a resort to a desk-top study only with no provision for site visits by Council members, indeed (iv) an expressed exclusion of such visits, your Council has already begun a process which might lead to a rejection of all that we had been led to believe were your policies - to act as the bulwark against the destruction of the local countryside abutting the border with Reading and abandoning the boundary for the benefit of the local developers.

In these circumstances, my Council authorises me to ask your Council to reconsider, as matter of urgency, the inclusion of those sites, made without any regard to due process, and to withdraw them from the desk-top study forthwith.

Yours sincerely

Chairman

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