

Oxfordshire Rural Community Council

Policy Bulletin

January 2015



Where key elements of legislation, government bills, recently enacted legislation, news etc. are not noted, the information can be found in previous ORCC policy bulletins.

Contents

| | Page |
|--|-------------|
| Government Bills, Regulations and White Papers | 2 |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Open Public Services• High Speed Rail Hybrid Bill• Infrastructure Bill | |
| Latest News and Emerging Issues: National | 5 |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Welfare Reform• Personal Independence Payment (PIP) assessment | |
| Latest News and Emerging Issues: Regional and Local | 6 |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Local Development Frameworks | |
| Open Consultations: Regional and Local | 9 |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Marcham Air Quality• Cherwell District Council- joint working consultation• Oxfordshire County Council: Oxfordshire Children and Young People's Plan, 2015 – 2018• Oxfordshire County Council- Consultation on Care Home Fees from April 2015• Oxfordshire County Council: Big Plan - Oxfordshire's Learning Disability Strategy 2015 - 2018 | |
| Open Consultations: National | 12 |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Building more homes on brownfield land | |
| Consultation responses: National | 12 |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Proposal to use a legislative reform order to set up town and parish councils | |

Government Bills/ Regulations/ White Papers

Open Public Services

Open Public Services (OPS) is the government's reform programme for public services. We work with people across government, local government, the private sector and civil society to make sure that everyone has access to the best possible public services.

Cabinet Office, [Open Public Services](#).

Links:

- Open Public Services, [all documents relating to choice and opening up public services](#)
- Open Public Services, [2014 Progress Report](#). The report explores the following themes:
 - Increasing choice and control to deliver personalised services tailored to an individual service user's unique needs
 - Allowing local decision-making and decentralising power to the lowest appropriate level by empowering neighbourhoods and communities
 - Opening up public services to a range of providers through top class commissioning, social investment innovations and challenging the public sector to innovate in their business models
 - Giving everyone fair access to public services
 - Making public service providers accountable to users and taxpayers for the quality of service and the outcomes they achieve

High Speed Rail (London - West Midlands) Bill 2013-14

On 25 November 2013 the Government published the High Speed Rail (London-West Midlands) Bill. The Bill confers the powers required to construct phase 1 of the proposed HS2 scheme from London Euston to Birmingham Curzon Street with intermediate stations in West London (Old Oak Common) and at Birmingham Airport. It provides for a connection to the existing rail link to the Channel Tunnel (HS1) but not to Heathrow Airport: [High Speed Rail \(London - West Midlands\) Bill 2013-14](#)

Current Stage:

- The Bill has been committed to a select committee

Links:

- Bill documents, *see link above*

- [High Speed Rail \(London-West Midlands\) Bill 2013-14 - Commons Library Research Paper](#)
- [High Speed 2](#)
- [HS2 Action Alliance](#)

Latest comment:

[HS2 referendum debate to return after General Election](#). Stop HS2, 23/1/15

Today, (Friday 23rd January), MPs debated the concept of having a national referendum on the funding of HS2, in which only two MPs, the Minister and Shadow Minister for Transport, John Hayes and Lilian Greenwood were willing to stand up say HS2 is a good idea.

Whilst the HS2 Referendum Bill was proposed at the start of this session of Parliament, the fact it had ended up timetabled for today meant it could not possibly get through the system before the General Election without Government support, so after the debate Christchurch MP Christopher Chope withdrew the Bill, promising to bring it back after the election.

[Further financial help given to property owners affected by HS2](#). Gov.uk, 16/1/15

An extensive package of compensation and assistance for property owners along the London to Birmingham route of High Speed 2 (HS2) was introduced by Transport Secretary Patrick McLoughlin today (16 January 2015).

Infrastructure Bill 2014-15

Summary of bill:

- to make provision for strategic highways companies and the funding of transport services by land;
- to make provision for the control of invasive non-native species;
- to make provision about nationally significant infrastructure projects;
- to make provision about town and country planning;
- to make provision about the Homes and Communities Agency and Mayoral development corporations;
- to make provision about the Greater London Authority so far as it exercises functions for the purposes of housing and regeneration;
- to make provision about Her Majesty's Land Registry and local land charges;
- to make provision to enable building regulations to provide for off-site carbon abatement measures;
- to make provision for giving members of communities the right to buy stakes in local renewable electricity generation facilities;

- to make provision about maximising economic recovery of petroleum in the United Kingdom;
- to provide for a levy to be charged on holders of certain energy licences;
- to enable Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs to exercise functions in connection with the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative;
- to make provision for underground access to deep-level land for the purposes of exploiting petroleum or deep geothermal energy;
- to make provision about renewable heat incentives;
- to make provision about the reimbursement of persons who have paid for electricity connections; to make provision to enable the Public Works Loan Commissioners to be abolished; and for connected purposes.

Parliament.uk: [Infrastructure Bill](#)

Current Stage:

- Third Reading, House of Commons, 26/1/15

Links:

- Bill documents, *see link above*
- [Infrastructure Bill Briefing](#), Campaign to Protect Rural England: CPRE is concerned that the Infrastructure Bill would weaken necessary regulation as part of an ill-considered dash for infrastructure regardless of the wider impacts.

Latest comment:

[Fracking moratorium rejected by MPs](#). BBC News online, 26/1/15

MPs have overwhelmingly rejected a bid to suspend fracking for shale gas. But the government agreed to Labour proposals for 13 new conditions to be met before shale gas extraction can take place. During a Commons debate, ministers also pledged an "outright ban" on fracking in national parks. Earlier, a committee of MPs called for a moratorium on the practice on the grounds that it could derail efforts to tackle climate change.

The Environmental Audit Committee also warned that there were "huge uncertainties" about the environmental impact of fracking. Protests took place in Westminster as MPs gathered for a final Commons debate on fracking legislation in the government's Infrastructure Bill.

In the Commons, committee chair Joan Walley backed an amendment tabled by a cross-party group of MPs calling for fracking to be suspended for up to 30 months while an assessment is carried out.

Latest News and Emerging Issues: National

Welfare Reform

Latest news:

[Hidden impact of welfare reform concerns council.](#) **Berwick Advertiser, 28/1/15.**

Councillors have expressed concern over the hidden impacts of welfare reform in Northumberland. They have pledged to do whatever they can, within their powers, to help and support residents who are affected. The Government's ongoing reforms to the welfare system are the most fundamental change to the benefit system since World War Two and are intended to deliver multi-billion pound savings. However evidence shows that in Northumberland, workers on low incomes and people with a disability are likely to be most affected.

Personal Independence Payment (PIP) assessment: first independent review, published December 2014

On 10 April 2014, the Minister of State for Disabled People appointed Paul Gray to lead the first independent review of the Personal Independence Payment (PIP) assessment.

Summary of review:

- 1- The current Personal Independence Payment (PIP) process gives a disjointed experience for claimants. Some short term improvements are needed, for example to communications including decision letters. In the longer term, there should be a more integrated, digitally enabled claims process under common branding that would improve claimant experience and effectiveness.
- 2- 2. The way in which further evidence is collected can be clarified and improved. PIP is an assessment of functional impact yet it is widely perceived as a 'medical'. Health professionals other than General Practitioners (GPs) are often well placed to provide relevant further evidence. The potential for sharing information already held by the Department and across the wider public sector should be explored.
- 3- 3. It is too early to draw definitive conclusions about the overall effectiveness of the PIP assessment based on available published data. A rigorous evaluation strategy that will enable regular assessments of the fairness and consistency of award outcomes should be put in place, with priority given to the effectiveness of the assessment for people with a mental health condition or learning disability.

Links:

- [Review documentation and report](#)

Latest News and Emerging Issues: Regional and Local

Local Development Frameworks/ Local Plans

West Oxfordshire District Council

[WODC is] in the process of replacing the adopted Local Plan with a number of documents known collectively as the Local Development Framework (LDF). This will include the following:

- [Local Plan \(Part 1\)](#) which deals with strategic issues and sites and
- [Local Plan \(Part 2\)](#) which deals with more local issues and smaller sites

Local Plan housing consultation - 8 August to 19 September 2014 (now closed)

In response to the Oxfordshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) published in April 2014, West Oxfordshire District Council undertook a 6-week consultation on its emerging Local Plan – focused on housing issues including the number of homes needed, the overall strategy and potential housing sites, the type and mix of housing needed including affordable housing and how the housing needs of specific groups will be met.

The consultation closed on 19 September and in response the Council has received a large number of comments, some of which raise technical issues which will require further work, evaluation and discussion with relevant parties.

Given the timescales involved to enable this to happen it will not be possible to report the final draft Local Plan to Cabinet and Council in October 2014 which was the original intention and it will now be considered at a later date. Once the revised timetable has been confirmed, the website will be updated and stakeholders will be notified accordingly.

West Oxfordshire District Council, [Local Plan \(Part 1\)](#)

Links:

- WODC, [Local Development Framework pages](#)

Cherwell District Council

The Local Plan Hearing Sessions ended on Tuesday 23 December 2014.

Links:

- [Local Plan examination documentation and latest news](#)

South Oxfordshire District Council

A new study of housing need in Oxfordshire has indicated that more housing is needed than we've planned for in our current local plan (core strategy). A local plan contains policies that are used when determining planning applications, and identify key locations for where major new planned housing developments will take place. We need your involvement to make sure we develop the best local plan for our district. We are at the first stage of the plan making process looking at what issues we should address in our plan, which is why your comments are important. The consultation has closed but you can still view the consultation document.

SODC, [New Emerging Local Plan](#)

Links:

- Plan documentation- *see link above*

Vale of White Horse District Council

Vale of White Horse District Council invited comment on three consultation documents running from 7 November 2014 to 19 December 2014.

1, The Local Plan 2031 Part One: Strategic Sites and Policies looks at strategic planning across the Vale up until 2031. The plan provides guidance on the provision of land for 23,000 new jobs and plans for 20,560 new homes in the district from 2011 to 2031. Along with what infrastructure will be needed to support this growth. The plan focuses growth within Science Vale and reinforces the roles of the main towns, whilst promotes thriving villages and rural communities. This is the **final publication** of the plan before submission to the Secretary of State.

2. The Vale of White Horse Design Guide Review provides guidance to decision makers and those wishing to develop housing on the rules we will use to assess high quality, well designed homes and neighbourhoods in our district. This is so we create successful places that people want to live and work in. This document is a

Supplementary Planning Document that will form part of our suite of planning policy documents.

3. The Vale of White Horse Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) – Preliminary Draft Charging Schedule stage is the first of two consultations on the charging schedule. CIL is a mechanism that we can use to raise funds from new development to provide infrastructure which is required to support the new development across our district.

We are busy processing these [consultation responses] to make them viewable in our consultation system. The estimated timeframe for this is mid-February 2015. These comments will be sent alongside the Local Plan and will be considered by the planning inspector during a public examination later in 2015.

Links:

- [The New Local Plan 2031](#)- plan documentation
- You can subscribe to Local Plan updates at: localplan@whitehorsedc.gov.uk

Open Consultations: Regional and Local

Vale of White Horse- Marcham Air Quality Consultation 2015

Vale of White Horse District Council is consulting on measures to address poor air quality in Marcham.

We would like your views on:

- The conclusions of a recent air quality assessment for Marcham.
- Our proposal to create an Air Quality Management Area where we can target improvements
- Measures that can be taken to reduce emissions in the area

CONSULTATION ENDS 13 MARCH

Links:

- [Marcham Air Quality Consultation 2015](#)

Cherwell District Council- joint working consultation

All local authorities are facing an on-going reduction in their budgets. We expect the age of austerity to continue well into the next Parliament and as three local Councils [**Cherwell, South Northants and Stratford**] we expect there will be increasing pressure on our budgets as demand for services grows and income decreases. This means all three Councils will have to significantly reduce their expenditure in order to balance their budgets.

To help address the funding gap the three Councils are exploring various options which could help us save money by reducing our running costs. One of those options is joint working, which will involve the Councils sharing services to reduce expenditure.

The Councils have prepared a draft business case which sets out options for joint working and includes a variety of scenarios which assess different services that could be considered. These range from support or back office services to all services including frontline and customer facing. The business case also sets out options about how joint working could be organised. These options include shared service approaches which would likely include a number of shared senior management roles. As well as shared service approaches the draft business case also reviews alternative options such as outsourcing services, budget and staffing reductions and

establishing Council owned companies as potential ways to deliver the savings required.

CONSULTATION ENDS 6 FEBRUARY

Links:

- [Joint working consultation](#)

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| Oxfordshire County Council- Oxfordshire Children and Young People's Plan - 2015 - 2018 |
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We would like your views to find out if the Childrens Trust is on the right track, so it concentrates on the areas that are most important to you and the young people of Oxfordshire.

The Children and Young People's Plan drives the work of the Children's Trust and is jointly authored by all of the Trust's members. It is based on evidence from the Oxfordshire Children's Needs Analysis 2014.

The Children's Trust wants Oxfordshire to be the best place in England for children and young people to grow up in, by working with every child and young person to develop the skills, confidence and opportunities they need to achieve their full potential.

There are four areas that are important to the Trust and they are:

- Ensuring children have a healthy start in life and stay healthy into adulthood
- Narrowing the gap for our most disadvantaged and vulnerable groups
- Keeping children and young people safe
- Raising achievement for all children and young people

CONSULTATION ENDS 20 FEBRUARY

Links:

- [Consultation documentation](#)

Oxfordshire County Council- Consultation on Care Home Fees from April 2015

Oxfordshire County Council is undertaking a consultation on its proposals to make changes to the Target Banding Rates for residents that are funded in Care Homes by the Council. We have set out proposals that we are seeking your views on. The proposal is for these changes to be effective from April 2015. The consultation runs from 9th December 2014 until 8th February 2015. It is a public consultation aimed at care home providers, the general public, and voluntary and community organisations representing current and future care home residents and family members. We are writing to care homes separately with all the information and documents about this consultation.

CONSULTATION ENDS 8 FEBRUARY**Links:**

- [Consultation documentation](#)

Oxfordshire County Council: Big Plan - Oxfordshire's Learning Disability Strategy 2015 - 2018 - draft

Oxfordshire County Council is asking you about the draft Big Plan: Oxfordshire's Learning Disability Strategy 2015-2018. The plan sets out how services for people with learning disabilities will be delivered in the future.

CONSULTATION ENDS 9 FEBRUARY**Links:**

- [Consultation documentation](#)

Open Consultations: National

Building more homes on brownfield land

This consultation originates from measures announced in June 2014 to make it easier to build on brownfield land that is suitable for housing.

The consultation seeks views on the government's proposals for identifying suitable brownfield land and sharing data openly and transparently, and measuring progress towards the government's goal for local development orders granting permission for housing on brownfield land. Also, options to support authorities where additional action is needed in getting these permissions in place.

CONSULTATION ENDS 11 MARCH

Links:

- [Consultation information](#)

Consultation Responses: National

Proposal to use a legislative reform order to set up town and parish councils

Summary of consultation responses:

- **Comments relating to the proposal of lowering the threshold of signatures required to make a valid petition from 10 per cent to 7.5 per cent**

In response to these views, the Government believe that any perceived lack of engagement by some local people could not be viewed as an indication that they lacked any knowledge about the campaigners' proposal. The approach taken with this proposed measure is consistent with the principle applied to the majority of democratic processes, whereby active and affirmative engagement is weighted favourably because it is evidence of support. If campaigners can gain 7.5 per cent support from the local population this would represent a significant achievement and demonstrate sufficient support to trigger a review. However, this is still only the first step in the process and in no way a guarantee that a new council will be created

- **Comments relating to an increased likelihood of the creation, fragmentation and dissolution of new councils against the wishes of the local authority**

Whilst the Government is committed to supporting the establishment of town and parish councils, it strongly believes that councils should not be imposed on communities and only created where sufficient community support exists. Equally, the Government does not wish to see the break-up or dissolution of parish councils against the wishes of the majority of the local community. For this reason, the new measures will not erode the safeguards in the legislation or result in unsupported changes to communities. A local authority can reject a proposal for a new council, if it evidences there is insufficient support or other compelling factors that suggest a new council should not be formed. Similarly in terms of a change to an existing council, this will remain as it currently stands in the legislation, a decision for the local authority, following a governance review which will take into account the views of the local community.

- **Shortening the amount of time the local authority can take to complete a community governance review.**

The Government considers that the existing legislation already ensures that there is a requirement for local authority to conduct thorough and complete reviews.

- **Allowing Neighbourhood Forums to trigger a community governance review**

It is not possible based upon the limited detail provided by the respondent to provide a considered response, because it is unclear the reason for the respondent's objections held against this particular proposal. However, the Government would refer to the benefits related to this particular measure outlined under Section 2: Background to the Order and the Case for amendments to the legislation and reiterate the point that the forums will have already demonstrated an appropriate level of community support by having a plan successfully adopted after a referendum. The Government would maintain that enabling Neighbourhood Forums to bypass the need to complete a petition will not increase the number of vexatious reviews that the council must consider.

Links:

- [Consultation documents and government response](#)

Visit the ORCC website: www.oxonrcc.org.uk

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