

19. Local Government reorganisation response – 5 August 2026

As you will know, the decision by central government was to accept the three solutions for unitary councils in the area. This left Weston on the Green as one of 48 parishes pulled into the orbit of Oxford City – to using Green Belt for housing. A correction is usually made that this really means Grey Belt – of which we have a lack of clarity about exactly where that is. What was said by the leader of Oxford City at the on-line briefing we had a number of months ago was that housing of urban density and design should be expected as the need is great.

It is clear from the Oxfordshire Growth Commission's plan that most of this need will be created through an increase in commercial development – they have an aim to be a world class area in scientific development (labs etc), data management (data centres) with connectivity through the old Oxford Cambridge arc. We constantly hear the words: world class, unmet housing - little about water scarcity, huge demand for electricity through some of the scientific centres, infrastructure. I attended a briefing from the Chair of the Growth Commission to the Oxfordshire Neighbourhood Plans Alliance Executive. The discussion was positive about rural areas having distinct needs and character, that Neighbourhood Plans are essential to future planning and negotiation over land use. He listened to our concerns about a takeover rather than cooperation and respect and said he would take these concerns to those who needed to hear them – central government specifically.

We do need to find a way forward. We are in an environment of protest at the decision and this is represented by our MP, Callum Miller and Tim Bearder of OCC. Concerns range from this being a relatively small area with a very wide range of services needed and funding required for this to happen. I would add that we have gone through a period of intense mistrust with Oxford City, the old divide between it and the countryside.

My recommendation to the Parish Council is that we prepare a letter of concern having consulted with other villages. The Chair of Beckley and Stowood Parish Council has circulated a document which a number of PC's are refining to be clear about costs that we will not take on unless thorough consultation occurs i.e. Judicial Review. With your permission I'll draft a letter that reflects our Council and share with you for agreement.

Diane Bohm