

Objectors raise alarm over potential risk of floods on site

Decision on plan for 160 homes is put off

BAMPTON residents packed a council meeting to object to a proposal to build 160 homes on the edge of the village.

But West Oxfordshire district councillors decided on Monday to defer a decision until they have made a site visit.

The proposal, for land off New Road, north of the village, was recommended for approval by council planning officers.

Objectors in the village raised concerns about the risk of flooding on the site and its impact on the character of Bampton.

About 60 residents travelled to Witney for the meeting of the district council's lowlands planning sub-committee.

The chairman of the Society for the Protection of Bampton, Trevor Milne-Day, said: "We don't think there should be no development in Bampton, but don't think it should be at the expense of the village."

Bampton & Clanfield ward councillor Martin Barrett proposed the site visit. He

By Sophie Scott

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said: "This could lead to severe flooding problems, which would not only devastate future residents but current residents in the area. I have seen the site and know the site.

"I think we would be failing in our duty of due diligence if we do not give councillors the chance to see the site."

Danny Parkinson-Witte, of Richborough Estates, the developer behind the plan, said: "We are, of course, disappointed the decision has been deferred.

"We understand that questions have been raised with regards to flooding risk in the area by local residents.

"We fully appreciate these concerns and would like to reiterate that the proposed development and its drainage strategy will not increase flood risk."

The site visit is expected to happen ahead of the sub-committee's March meeting



WORRIED: Trevor Milne-Day and Lesley Campbell with campaigners at the council offices Picture: OX65391 Mark Hemsworth

Report says 13,200 houses could be needed by 2031

March 12th 2014

Housing quota leaps in new assessment

MORE than 13,000 new homes could be built in West Oxfordshire by 2031, according to a new report.

A revised version of the Oxfordshire strategic housing market assessment (SHMA), published last week, said 100,000 new homes would be needed in the county.

Councils are required by the Government to carry out regular assessments to make sure they are building enough homes.

Although West Oxfordshire's allocation, 13,200, was the lowest of the five districts, it would still require more than 600 new homes to be built each year for the next 17 years.

And the figure is more than double the 5,500 homes expected to be built by 2029 under the draft Local Plan.

West Oxfordshire District Council said the assessment

By Sophie Scott
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did not take into account key constraints on potential development, such as the capacity of roads.

Warwick Robinson, West Oxfordshire District Council's cabinet member for planning said: "The assessment is an important part of the evidence base for the Local Plan but does not of itself set the housing target.

"It does not take into account limitations on development which may be imposed as a result of environmental constraints or issues related to congestion and local infrastructure.

"These are also critical factors which need to be taken into account when setting a housing target having regard to how much development can be sustainably accommo-

dated and where it should be located. We are keen to move forward with our Local Plan, because it guides our future development including the provision of new homes.

"It was our intention to finalise the plan last year, but in light of national planning policy and the revocation of the South East regional plan it became evident that we would have to defer its publication to allow the findings of the SHMA to be taken into account."

He added: "Our next stage is to consider a revised timetable for completing the Local Plan, at our meeting on Wednesday, taking into account the findings of the assessment

"We will then further analyse the SHMA findings alongside other factors before identifying a new housing target.

"Further consultation on

that target and the strategy and sites for delivering it will take place in July before the plan is published and submitted to the Government later in the year."

● Today's meeting of the council cabinet will also discuss proposed changes to the structure of the board of Cottsway housing association, which currently has three councillors as members.

The cabinet will also discuss a package of aid for householders and businesses affected by the recent flooding and business rate relief for retailers.

The meeting, at the council's Woodgreen headquarters in Witney, starts at 2pm. Members of the public are welcome to attend.

● For more information about the Local Plan process, see westoxon.gov.uk/draftlocalplan

Housing is floods risk

Sir – In his letter (*Gazette*, February 5), councillor David Harvey says that: “Flood risk is now a major planning consideration for future developments”.

This will be of no comfort to the residents of Bampton and Brize Norton who face large estates being plonked down on their villages.

Why is this happening?

It's because West Oxfordshire District Council has failed to produce a Local Plan, leaving a legal loophole wide open for developers to exploit.

In 2007 more than 300 homes flooded in Bampton and Brize Norton. Climate change and increased rainfall run-off from new estates will mean more flooding in our area.

Our council can reduce the impact of flooding by working closely with residents and landowners, as well as the Environment Agency and only approving new houses when this does not increase the risk of flooding for existing residents.

LESLEY CAMPBELL

Buckland Road

Bampton

Feb 19th 2014

APRIL 2nd 2014

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witneygazette.co.uk/news

Deputy leader says figures do not look to be achievable

Councillor questions new housing targets

By Matt Oliver

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WEST Oxfordshire District Council's deputy leader has said he does not believe new housing targets are achievable.

And Bampton & Clanfield councillor Mark Booty said that he thought it made "more sense" for houses to be built in South Oxfordshire, because that was where future jobs would be.

More than 100,000 new homes are said to be needed across the county by 2031, including 13,200 in West Oxfordshire.

But Oxford City Council, which was allocated 28,000 of the total, estimated in a report released last month, called the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA), has said it cannot meet its target on its own.

The city council has suggested a 4,000-home development be built south of the city, on land close to the Kassam Stadium owned by the council and Magdalen College.

But it falls within the boundaries of South Oxfordshire District Council, whose leader, Ann Ducker, said: "The Grenoble Road site would be one of our last choices."

Mr Booty said: "In West Oxfordshire we do not have the infrastructure to support more large developments."

But, Mr Booty suggested, if the A40 between Witney and Oxford was improved, then things may be different.

He added: "If they want us to take more houses, then we need the proper transport links."

"But my gut feeling about the overall SHMA figures is that they are just not achievable."

"Oxford City Council is right to be concerned about its lack of suitable building areas."

Vale of White Horse District Council leader Matthew Barber said the city should not expect "special treatment".

He said: "We are dealing with our own housing needs at the moment and that's a big enough challenge already. We have an enshrined duty to co-operate with other councils, but not one to agree."