

SODC Monthly Report - June 2019

Cllr Caroline Newton

The new LibDem/Green administration at SODC is getting its feet under the table. The most immediate, urgent, and important matter of business is SODC's Local Plan which was submitted for independent inspection on 29 March.

The existing draft Local Plan is a strategy for building the volume of homes that South Oxfordshire has been assessed as needing over the next 15 years with an additional allowance for Oxford City's unmet need.

The Lib Dem/Green alliance is considering whether it wants to withdraw the plan and re-draw it with the hope of reducing substantially the number of homes it commits to building. Work is taking place on that right now.

At stake is the extra money central Govt committed to giving to Oxfordshire for infrastructure as part of the Growth Deal. All the planning authorities in Oxfordshire (which for us is SODC) agreed to take a share of 100,000 homes by 2034 in return for the £218 Growth Deal, and in addition the £215 Homes and Infrastructure Fund (HIF Bid). In essence, South Oxfordshire's share of that 100,000 came very close to the number we were already assessed as needing to identify in that period. Both pots of money were due to fund a new bridge over Culham, improvements at the Golden Balls roundabout, and roads around Didcot. There were also smaller schemes, like an edge street around Watlington. If the Local Plan is withdrawn all that funding will be lost.

Withdrawing the Local Plan also runs the risk that we will struggle to meet our existing targets for house building - known as the Five Year Land Supply. And if we lose our FYLS, we are much more vulnerable - once again - to speculative planning applications across the District which will be more likely to be accepted at Appeal whatever residents, the Planning Authority or Councillors believe, and will come without that considered, strategic infrastructural planning that is offered through the Local Plan.

The new leadership of the Council is considering what it wants to do with the Local Plan and I will report back what implications their decision may have for Little Milton.