Cherwell District Council - June 2026

Tritax and Albion Appeals, J10 Baynard's Green –from CDC executive

Last month, the planning Ctte members have received the email below.

I asked to speak to the Chief Executive who directed me to the Monitoring Officer.
It was a short meeting – "this matter is subject to a planning appeal and so further comment can't be made."
I have repeated my view that as members deserve a briefing, I would like to understand how this decision was made as it has not appeared on an Executive agenda, nor has the planning committee been consulted.

Also, I notice that our MP and the previous portfolio holder for planning have weighed in on this matter in the press.

The planning committee is quasi-judicial. The decisions of the planning committee are normally viewed as the decisions of the council. The planning committee also reflects the political balance of the council – it's LibDem heavy.

That the Executive at Cherwell isn't listening to its own members or its own planning committee sends a negative message as we move towards Local Government Reorganisation. LGR will bring a reduction in Local member numbers. Should LGR create "local committees" with Parish Council involvement to replace the connection that local Cllrs currently provide then this decision doesn't bode well for local views being heard or heeded.

The precedent this sets for other major planning applications is particularly concerning. Applicants now know that CDC will simply fold. The planning committee has been totally undermined.

I'm very grateful to the local parish councils for their considerable efforts in trying to get OCC and CDC to work together to consider the cumulative impact that all of this is going to have on us all and I'll mention designation in a moment.

Email sent to all councillors on behalf of Cllr Lesley McLean, Leader of the Council

Dear Members,

I am writing to update you on the Council's position on the ongoing planning appeals by Tritax and Albion.

Following a detailed review of the case, submission of the appeals and associated documentation the Council has taken legal and professional advice.

As a result, the Council has today notified the Planning Inspector that —subject to an acceptable planning obligation being secured— it does not intend to bring forward evidence to defend the reasons for refusal in respect of the planning applications for the Tritax and Albion developments.

The matter is now subject to a public inquiry. In light of this, and to preserve the integrity of the process, the Council is unable to provide further comment at this stage.

I want to reassure members that the Council arrived at this position based on sound expert and legal advice, which has strongly indicated that this is the Council's best option to mitigate further risk. I appreciate that this may be unwelcomed news – I would be happy to ask officers to set up a briefing for you, if that would be helpful?

Many thanks
Lesley

Councillor Lesley McLean
Cherwell District Council

Heyford and J10 Major Developments- initial stakeholder meeting

You should all have received the email below from OCC.

Following concerns voiced about development proposals in the Heyford and wider Bicester area, including the impact on infrastructure and other aspects of life within the villages and rural area, Oxfordshire County Council and Cherwell District Council would like to set up a Stakeholder Forum to provide a two-way communications channel over the coming months. At the first session we will discuss the Terms of Reference for the forum, including the frequency of meetings and the longevity of the group. The Forum will not be a decision-making body but a platform for discussing issues and coordinating information. Decisions will remain with CDC and OCC, but the group would receive:

- Updates on development proposals
- Feedback on infrastructure impacts and mitigations proposed
- Updates on transport studies and proposed upgrades
- Information on green infrastructure/leisure initiatives
- Updates on research/studies being planned or being undertaken by the councils, and
- Provide an opportunity to hear from local representatives in terms of their views.

This would not be a public meeting but would be for parish, district and county councillors, with invites also going to the two local MPs offices. There are a couple of local residents' groups that would get invited to specific meetings or for particular agenda items, depending on relevance, to keep discussions focussed. Meeting notes would be made available and attendees would be reminded to flag any elements that are confidential or could compromise planning decisions, so we remain compliant and protect sensitive information.

We will look for a suitable date for the first online session in the next 2-3 weeks and be in touch early next week to arrange that, and ahead of that first meeting we'll circulate draft Terms of Reference for discussion, along with the initial agenda items.

If you do not need to be invited to this please let me know, and likewise, if you feel we have missed someone please advise and we'll add them into the Group if appropriate.

I'll be attending as a local Cllr, I'm not aware of CDC officer or executive member involvement as yet.

Designation

Cherwell District Council has been designated by the Secretary of State (SoS) under Section 62A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 in relation to its handling of major planning applications.
This designation took effect from 15 June 2026 and will remain in place until it is formally withdrawn.
What this means:
The designation relates specifically to applications for major development (for example, larger housing schemes or commercial developments).
While the Council will continue to determine planning applications as normal, the designation introduces an additional option for applicants:

- Applicants for major development can continue to apply to Cherwell District Council, or
- They can choose to apply directly to the Planning Inspectorate (PINS) for a decision.

This does not remove the Council's planning powers, but it does provide an alternative route for determining certain types of application.

For applicants:
If you are considering submitting a major planning application, you should review the Government's guidance on how to apply directly to the Planning Inspectorate under Section 62A.
Applicants may wish to seek their own professional advice before deciding which route to take.

Link to the official notice
www.gov.uk/government/publications/cherwell-district-council-notice-of-designation

Email sent to all councillors on behalf of Ian Boll, Executive Director Place and Regeneration

Dear Councillors

I am writing to notify you that government has today designated Cherwell District Council under section 62A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 in respect of quality of decision-making for major planning applications.

The designation means the council no longer has exclusive decision-making powers in respect of major applications. Applicants can now choose to submit their application to the Council or go directly to the Planning Inspectorate for determination.

The designation is based on performance data from planning appeals for major developments for the period April 2023 to March 2025. Just over 11% of those decisions were overturned at appeal for that period, which is just above the government's threshold of 10%.

Since the 2023 to 2025 monitoring period, the council has been working with the Planning Advisory Service to improve performance, increase capacity, and strengthen governance, and has made significant improvements to the quality of decision-making for major developments.

These improvements are already having a positive impact. Our current performance figures indicate that major applications decisions are now within the government's thresholds for the coming year, demonstrating that the Council has been taking this matter seriously and acting positively to address it.

We will continue working with PAS and MHCLG, to ensure further improvement and to do everything we can to get the designation removed as soon as possible.

Please let me know if you have any queries about this.

Ian

Ian Boll
Executive Director Place & Regeneration, Cherwell District Council

The experience of designation

There are a few planning officers at CDC who have worked in designated councils and their previous experience (under a different government and different circumstances) is that most applicants continued to submit applications to the Local Planning Authority (LPA) rather than Planning Inspectorate (PINS).

If an applicant does go straight to PINS, then CDC will not receive the planning application fees but still have to do the preliminary work including Section 106 and then the entire, complete application goes to PINS.
The applicant's risk is that they lose the ability to appeal.
Puy du Fou and Dorchester Group will make their own determination on their best route forward.

How does CDC extract itself from designation?

CDC can submit a quarterly report and request for reconsideration. If the planning team and planning committee perform as desired then the SoS may bring us out of designation.

What does this mean for Neighbourhood Plans?

No officer at CDC is offering a clear view as the reality will only be discovered when PINS or the SoS make a determination at some future appeal hearing. Nothing has changed and yet everything is changing is the planning world.

On a brighter note, Bloxham Neighbourhood plan (as modified by the inspector) made it through CDC Executive last night and will now go to referendum.

Devolution

Email sent on behalf of Cllr Lesley McLean, Leader of the Council

I am writing to update you on the position regarding the proposed Thames Valley Foundation Strategic Authority (FSA).

As you will be aware, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) has made it clear that progression to an FSA requires consensus from all Council Leaders across Oxfordshire, Berkshire and Swindon on the proposed geography.

While views differed on the way forward on the Government proposal, both Cherwell and West Oxfordshire remain supportive of the benefits a Foundation Strategic Authority could hold for our districts. It would bring increased investment and provide that strategic scale to proactively tackle key issues like economic growth, transport, net zero and skills, and would support the ambitions we jointly hold as councils to improve our districts.

With significant change coming imminently through Local Government Reorganisation, we will be focusing on making sure that process delivers for our residents and we are ready to revisit the strategic authority conversation in future when it is right for our area.

Kind Regards,
Lesley

Oxfordshire Live report
Politicians from Oxfordshire have dramatically halted plans for a powerful new Thames Valley-wide strategic authority, pulling their support at a meeting in Reading today.
Leaders from across Oxfordshire, Berkshire and Swindon had gathered expecting to sign off on a shadow or 'Foundation' Strategic Authority (FSA), the interim step required before creating a Thames Valley Mayoral Strategic Authority with elections pencilled in for May 2028.
A potential mayor could bring jobs and development to Oxfordshire, West Berkshire, Reading, Slough, Wokingham, Bracknell Forest, Wokingham, Swindon and Maidenhead – but the joint plans of all these authorities are now on the line.
Participants at the meeting were tight-lipped on Wednesday about what happened but it is understood Oxfordshire's Liberal Democrat leadership abruptly withdrew support, effectively collapsing months of negotiations.
Lib Dem leaders from Berkshire were thought to remain broadly in favour, however a new authority could have the potential to invest in big projects like a third bridge across the Thames in Reading, and this may have put a spanner in the works.
Windsor and Maidenhead, which had been part of earlier discussions, was notably absent from today's talks. Oxfordshire, West Berkshire, Reading, Slough, Wokingham, Bracknell Forest, Swindon and others had been working towards a shared structure for the new body, with only the details still to be ironed out.
The proposed Thames Valley Strategic Authority would have covered a polycentric economic region of about 1.97 million people with a gross value added of £97.3 billion in 2023,

bringing together globally significant research hubs, innovation districts and major employers along the M4 and M40 corridors.

In an expression of interest sent to ministers on March 20, local leaders argued that a mayoral authority could unlock an extra £18.7 billion in annual GVA by 2040 and £7 billion a year in additional tax revenue by tackling fragmented labour markets, infrastructure gaps and housing constraints.

The letter to ministers Matthew Pennycook and Miatta Fahnbulleh stressed that the Thames Valley is the only one of the UK's top ten economies without a directly elected mayor and said "the economic case is made" for devolution.

Under the plans, the shadow authority and later Mayoral Strategic Authority would have taken on strategic functions over transport, housing and regeneration, skills, economic development, climate resilience and public safety, while day-to-day services remained with existing councils.

Central government was understood to be supportive of the scheme and ready to move quickly on approving an FSA once councils had agreed a governance model.

Local business leaders across the Thames Valley, who had backed the proposals as a way to secure clearer leadership on inward investment, skills and infrastructure, are now said to be alarmed that today's U-turn could put jobs and investment at risk.

The collapse of support in Oxfordshire leaves the future of Thames Valley devolution highly uncertain, with partner councils now needing to decide whether to attempt a revised deal without the county or to pause plans altogether.

Without the collaboration of local councils, the government could impose a plan with limited input from local partners.

Cllr David Rogers
Cherwell District Council