

Cllr Jo Robb

### **Levelling Up – Major Changes**

In early December the Secretary of State for Housing, Michael Gove, announced major changes to the Levelling Up Bill. The changes amount to a complete turnaround on many aspects of the Bill that local groups (and our Council) had opposed.

In a letter to all MPs, Mr Gove addresses any issues on which local authorities, environmental groups and local communities have been campaigning.

- Housing numbers will be advisory only and not mandatory and local authorities will be free to increase the proportion of affordable housing if they wish. “It will be up to local authorities, working with their communities, to determine how many homes can actually be built, taking into account what should be protected in each area.”
- Mr Gove wants to change the rule on the five year land supply and will end the obligation on local authorities to maintain a five year housing land supply where they have up to date local plans. That is, the “tilted balance,” which resulted in, for example, the development at Little Sparrows, will no longer apply. It is unclear how or when these changes will come into effect. “My changes will instruct the Planning Inspectorate that they should no longer override sensible local decision making, which is sensitive to and reflects local constraints and concerns.”
- New measures will be consulted on including allowing planning authorities to refuse applications from developers who have built slowly in the past and on making sure that local authorities who grant permissions are not then punished under the housing delivery test when developers fail to build out. He will also consult on financial penalties for developers who fail to build.

### **Full Council – December 2022**

Two major new policies were passed at the last Full Council meeting of 2022 – a new Housing Delivery Strategy a new CIL Charging Schedule.

**The Housing Delivery Strategy** will see the Council working with partners to deliver affordable housing and housing for social rent. While the District is building more homes and has strong policies around affordable housing, the calculations of affordability (80% of market rent) in an expensive area like South Oxfordshire means that even “affordable” housing is out of reach for many. Housing for social rent is typically priced at 45%-60% of market rent.

As a starting point, Council agreed to allocate up to £2m of Council funds to the purchase of housing to be used as housing for social rent, to help meet local need.

The strategy document makes for interesting reading:

<http://democratic.southoxon.gov.uk/documents/s28098/Report%2010112022%20Cabinet.pdf>

From January 2023, the new **CIL Charging Schedule** will come into force, updating the CIL policy to ensure new development delivers appropriate levels of infrastructure and investment for communities. The schedule is the result of extensive work by external consultants, and balances economic viability for new development with increasing the amount of CIL. The schedule was the subject of public consultation and independent examination with a key result being that, in addition to CIL being increased across the District, new proposals for aged care accommodation and assisted living of the type at Little Sparrows will be CIL liable for the first time. Another key change is the district has been divided into three “zones” with the southern parishes, where land values are highest, imposing the highest CIL.

<http://democratic.southoxon.gov.uk/documents/s28094/Report%2010112022%20Cabinet.pdf>

### **Flooding and Drainage**

Climate change is bringing longer periods of drought, followed by heavy rain leading to flooding.

Highways and flooding are County Council responsibilities but under a new agreement, the District Council is taking on delegated powers relating to ss23 and 25 of the Land Drainage Act. In particular, SODC will now be responsible for issuing notices requiring riparian land owners to carry out work to ensure their ditches and watercourses flow properly.

Where leaf debris is the cause of the problem, do let me know, we can arrange for a Biffa road sweep to ensure the leaves stay out of the drains.

Please report road flooding on Fix My Street and get in touch if a riparian land owner is not keeping their ditches clear.