

Don't let the developers grind you down – 'objector fatigue' is their friend

Central Government made a pact with communities: "If you agree to accept the number of houses we are going to impose upon you, we will let you decide where they go." And so the 'Neighbourhood Plan' (NP) was born and dedicated volunteers all over the country set to work, placing their trust in the pact.

In South Oxfordshire, this trust is now being sorely tested. An NP must be based on a 'Local Plan' (LP), and an LP must show that the Local Authority has identified a supply of land sufficient to accommodate the housing deemed necessary over the forthcoming five years. This is known as the 'Five-Year Housing Land Supply' (5YHLS). (Sorry about all these titles and acronyms!). Clever and expensive lawyers acting for developers have convinced Planning Inspectors that South Oxfordshire District Council (SODC) does not have a 5YHLS, and now SODC has rolled-over and accepted this. As a result, South Oxfordshire, including Shiplake, is facing a deluge of planning applications from developers hungry to tap into the rich profits to be found in the housing market in the area.

But all is not lost. The case of *Crane vs the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government* is taken by many to mean that an NP that has been 'made' (approved by referendum) can still stand even if the LP fails. (You will need to look this up on the Internet – there is not enough space here to explain.) And there are other reasons for refusal under national planning policy. Development sites should be 'sustainable'. In broad terms, this means that residents on new sites should have reasonable access to things like shops and schools on foot or by public transport. Anything that relies on a huge increase in car travel is not deemed sustainable. In our area, another valid objection is 'severe harm to rural character'. Urban-style, high-density housing estates can be deemed to be totally inappropriate. Highways safety issues are other reasons for refusal.

At the time of writing (12 November 2016), I am aware of the planning applications listed below that will impact on the rural character of our area. (And I know their are more to come!) It is for you to decide whether to oppose them or not, but if you do oppose them, please ensure you make your views known on the [planning applications section of the SODC website](#). If an application is recommended for approval by SODC officers, you can email members of the [SODC Planning Committee](#) before they make a decision.

P16/S2861/O Mount Ida Reading Road Lower Shiplake RG9 3PH

Outline planning application for the erection of 7 dwellings

P16/S3438/O Land to the east of Reading Road Lower Shiplake RG9 4BG

Outline application for the development of a retirement village (40-bed residential care home facility plus 66 units comprising apartments/cottages)

P16/S0970/O Thames Farm Reading Road Shiplake RG9 3PH

Outline Planning Application for up to 95 dwellings

(This was refused by the SODC Planning Committee in September, but the applicant has lodged an appeal – watch out for more news on this)

I urge that you steel yourself against 'objector fatigue' otherwise unwanted development could occur by default.

Cllr David Bartholomew