

***An open letter to Oxfordshire County Council:
Protect our countryside, our climate and our future***

The OCC Cabinet is shortly to vote to support a major new road scheme across South Oxfordshire. The road scheme will cost over £294Million and the Council will need to borrow at least £30Million – money that could and should be spent on better public services.

This will be the largest single project to be supported by the ‘Fair Deal Alliance’ that runs the Council but it is in direct conflict with two of their key policies.

The Council is committed to meeting the UK’s national zero carbon target by 2040 and their proposed new transport policy focuses on reducing traffic and making active transport the ‘natural first choice’. ***This plan undermines both these goals.***

- The road will cut through open countryside and includes a major new bridge over the Thames.
- Research repeatedly shows how new roads generate traffic. An independent assessment of this scheme shows how it will fail to tackle the traffic jams and congestion in the area.
- The Council states that they support the ‘Pathways to a Zero Carbon Oxfordshire’ plan (produced by Oxford University) which sets out the need for better transport policies rather than new roads. Construction will generate an estimated 154,000 tonnes of CO2 (c.12 times the County Council's own annual carbon emissions). Extra traffic will add to this burden.
- The council states that this road is ‘vital infrastructure’ to support new housing, but there has been no public discussion of alternative ways to deliver this support.

Despite these problems the Council is still proposing this new road scheme, which flies in the face of existing environmental commitments, and exposes the Council – and us as taxpayers - to significant financial risk. The increased CO2 emissions and air pollution resulting from this will be a step backwards for the work to create a clean and healthy county, while the inevitable impacts on nature along the route will also be a problem.

We know that many councillors are very unhappy about this. We know that this is a foolish and short-sighted proposal, first planned six years ago. Councils in other parts of the country are pulling back on plans for new roads. Oxfordshire should do the same.

We therefore call on Oxfordshire County Council to do the right thing - to withdraw this proposal and develop an infrastructure plan that meets the county’s needs for a safe and sustainable future.

Signed by:

Burcot & Clifton Hampden Parish Council