

**PUBLIC STATEMENT FROM BURCOT AND CLIFTON HAMPDEN PARISH COUNCIL ON THE
DECISION BY SOUTH OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL TO REJECT THE NEIGHBOURHOOD
DEVELOPMENT ORDER**

Date: 17th February 2025

On 13th February South Oxfordshire District Council met at the Civic Centre in Didcot to discuss the report of the Examiner into the Burcot and Clifton Hampden Neighbourhood Development Order. The Examiner had previously delivered his report to the council, recommending that it should be rejected on the grounds that it did not meet three of the seven basic conditions required. The NDO had already been discussed by the SODC Cabinet on 3rd February and they too decided to recommend rejection.

The three conditions on which the NDO failed, according to the Examiner, were as follows:

- Having regard to national policies and advice containing guidance issued by the Secretary of State it is appropriate to make the Order.
- The making of the Order contributes to the achievement of sustainable development.
- The making of the Order is in general conformity with the strategic policies contained in the development plan for the area.

In its report to the Council, the Cabinet noted that the NDO had generated a “significant level of comment” and that 96 representations had been received. It added: “They included detailed comments from the council, the County Council and several statutory bodies. The representations included comments from parishioners supporting the overall package of development proposed in the Order. In many cases, particular support was offered to the proposal for a replacement GP surgery”.

“The representations also included detailed comments from other residents objecting to the Order. In many cases such representations addressed the issue of the impact of the Order on the Green Belt. The Green Belt was also addressed in the representation from The Campaign to Protect Rural England (Oxfordshire).”

The Cabinet report noted that the examination process exposed significant differences between the parish council, the NDO Steering Group, landowners and developers and that there was “no local clarity on the package of measures which are to be included in the NDO.”

After an extensive examination, the Examiner concluded that the NDO did not meet the three basic conditions mentioned above and that it should be refused by the council. In discussing his report, the SODC Cabinet noted that it was “not satisfied that the Order provides sufficient clarity to conclude that it would be in general conformity with Policy STRAT6 on the Green Belt. In addition, the Order does not comply with Policy H9 (Affordable Housing).”

Under Section 4B of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 the district council must refuse the proposed NDO if it is not satisfied that the draft order meets the basic conditions already referred to. The Cabinet report adds: "As outlined in the reasons for the decision, there is a lack of clarity regarding the specifics of the Order, and no local clarity on the package of measures to be included within it. Given this uncertainty, the council is unable to determine whether the Order meets the required basic conditions or whether it could do so with modifications. Consequently, the council cannot be satisfied that the Order meets the basic conditions, and as such, the proposal must be refused."

The council's costs associated with providing advice and assistance during the preparation of the NDO are not eligible for central government funding and will be borne by the existing neighbourhood planning budget.

During the debate several councillors spoke, and parish councillor Nick Fielding was invited to address the meeting. Two parishioners had previously spoken in favour of the NDO at the beginning of the meeting. After a short debate, the motion was put to a vote and the NDO was rejected by a unanimous vote (there were approximately 27 councillors present).

Now that the Examiner's report has been voted on by SODC, that is likely to be the end of the matter. Of course, it still leaves the parish with many issues to resolve. It is known that the Gibbs estate wishes to withdraw from the village and liquidate its assets. There is no doubt that the Neighbourhood Plan, which was successfully adopted by referendum, will be vital in determining our next steps, particularly in relation to issues raised during the NDO discussions. At its next meeting the Parish Council, in tandem with interested parties, will begin the process of resolving issues such as improvements to the Village Hall, car parking in Clifton Hampden, the need for a new burial site and reinstatement of the allotments. Whether or not a much smaller housing development, based on affordable housing, can get off the ground is also an issue which the parish council will now investigate.

We are all aware of the fact that the NDO process has divided the parish. Now, in the light of the SODC decision, it is time to put that behind us and concentrate on improving facilities in the village. With work on the village by-pass due to start early in 2026, we will have plenty of issues to deal with. Flooding remains a major problem, and the expansion of Culham Site One, the start of the new housing at Culham and the siting of an AI hub will raise many planning issues, along with possible substantial governance changes at the District and County Council level.