

The Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP,
Secretary of State Housing, Communities
and Local Government
Ministry of Housing, Communities and
Local Government
2 Marsham Street
London
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**Councillor Sue Cooper
Leader of the Council**

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14 February 2020

Dear Mr Jenrick,

As you are no doubt aware, Oxfordshire County Council agreed on Tuesday to take on our emerging Local Plan 2034 (eLP2034), subject to financial guarantees, should you decide to offer it to them.

My [statement afterwards is attached](#). Also attached is my [speech to OCC](#), from which you will see that we intend to comply with providing extra housing honouring our duty to Oxford City and our wish to work with neighbouring councils for the good of South Oxfordshire residents.

Obviously I am concerned about the possible removal of eLP2034 from South Oxfordshire, not only because of the loss of local input for which we have a democratic mandate, but also for planning and financial reasons.

Dealing with eLP2034 is an expensive option for South Oxfordshire tax payers. Our planning officers know eLP2034. Sending it elsewhere will obviously cost a lot more. South Oxfordshire has a long history of good, compliant planning policy. I personally have been involved with creating the previous two Local Plans. We deliver well in terms of numbers of houses, % affordable, and wish to continue delivering the right houses of the right size in the right places for the right people.

There is much concern locally about removing land from the Green Belt. We would like to in future designate new Green Belt areas, as allowed in NPPF, to maintain and even strengthen the protection for Oxford.

We want “Building Beautiful, Building Better” in line with your stated aims. We are ambitious and would like our Local Plan to be at the forefront of the latest bold and far-reaching thinking on the climate emergency.

To do this in an economical fashion our preference as you know is to start a new plan, jointly with our neighbours, the Vale of White Horse District Council. This would almost halve their and our costs. However, they are not committed to working with us on a plan as they have already started and cannot wait for our uncertainty to be resolved. We would still want to start on data collection now, so that we are ready when your new bold environmental plans come into being.

On the understanding that you continue to view eLP2034 proceeding to inspection as the only possible way forward, it would help us if your officials could list some examples of the kinds of significant changes which would address our concerns that can be made as modifications during inspection, and also an indication of how we could go further on sustainability and climate change policies.

There is obviously a lot more detail that I could give you. But it would be very much better if we could meet so that I can explain how and where we wish to plan for really good, affordable, well designed, energy-efficient housing in sustainable locations, rather than the depressing, sprawling housing estates of over-priced units remote from locations where the occupants work which make such poor use of our very restricted land supply.

I look forward to speaking to you soon in accordance with the undertaking made in the House.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Susan Cooper". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Councillor Sue Cooper
Leader of the Council

CC: Mark Stone, Chief Executive South Oxfordshire District Council
CC: Emran Mian, Director General Decentralisation and Growth, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government