

The Rt. Hon Michael Gove, M.P.
Secretary of State for Levelling Up,
Housing and Communities
Department of Levelling Up, Housing and
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2 Marsham Street
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**Councillor David Rouane
Leader of the Council**

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18 October 2021

Dear Mr Gove,

I am writing on behalf of South Oxfordshire District Council in relation to the future of planning policy in England. We welcome the fact that the previously proposed reforms are being reconsidered and hope that this opportunity is used to create a system that is fit for purpose.

As a council, we would emphasise the need for proposals that address the climate emergency, protect and enhance the natural environment, and help to increase biodiversity. We are, therefore, calling upon HM Government to:

- Scrap the current proposals for planning reform.
- Maintain the current rights of local residents to engage and comment on individual planning applications.
- Transform the local planning process into one that assesses the climate fitness of a district and plans for growth within the environmental capacity of the area.
- Maintain the right of local people, through robust neighbourhood and local plan processes, to decide how their communities develop sustainably.
- Reverse the recently introduced permitted development rights which bypass local decision-making.
- Support councils in adopting strong local and strategic planning policies which seek to maximise protection for the environment, combat climate change, revitalise existing places and create strong, healthy and sustainable communities.

- Undertake a thorough review of both the current building regulations and the National Planning Policy Framework to require property developments to be built to net zero standards.

South Oxfordshire believes that only by taking decisive action in these areas will HM Government be able to make progress on its stated ambitions of building back better, reaching net zero and leaving the natural environment in a better state than in which it was found.

The council would also like to take this opportunity to reiterate our view that the 5 Year Housing Land Supply Measure is not fit for purpose. We do not believe that local authorities should be held accountable for the actions – or indeed lack of action – of developers when it comes to the delivery of housing on allocated or approved development sites. We, therefore, hope that HM Government will review the utility of this measure as a matter of urgency.

I look forward to receiving your response.

Yours sincerely



Councillor David Rouane
Leader of the Council