

STOP THE SPRAWL SAVE BURFORD'S SOUL



In the draft Local Plan, West Oxfordshire District Council and Burford Town Council have recommended a development of

70+ dwellings on Sheep Street.

We, as residents, believe this is not in the best interest of the town and call on everyone to object by 19 December 2025.

Our principal concerns:

1. Schools and surgery
2. AONB and historic site desecration
3. Increased traffic impact
4. Contradictory council
5. Where is the need?
6. Going against supporting evidence

Please help Burford survive as the world-famous medieval town that it is. We are not against needed housing, but against large-scale, unnecessary, and unsupported development dictated by greed.

Register comments on the WODC site:
www.westoxon.gov.uk/localplan2043

1. Schools and surgery over-subscribed.

- Both Burford Primary school and secondary turned away children this academic year. Many children from the Cotswold Gate cannot attend their local school. In addition, the primary school is on a constrained site which cannot expand.
- In 2023, BTC wrote:
‘Burford School, our Secondary School, is full to overflowing with a waiting list. Our Primary School is nearing maximum capacity. Neither has yet felt the impact of Cotswold Gate and the children it will generate when it comes fully on stream. Neither will be able to take the number of pupils generated by the applicant’s proposals [70 dwellings].’

What changed? Why is BTC now pushing a 70 dwellings site on Sheep St?

- According to OCC and WODC research, over-subscribed schools increase inequalities with children having to be bused to other location and destroying the feeling of community and inclusion.
- Planners tell us that new development financially contributes under Section 106 which pays for increasing capacity for local schools and surgery. It is not true. S106 only pays for infrastructure not for more doctors or nurses.

2. Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and Historic Site desecration.

- WODC planners do not understand the concept of AONB:
‘Situated to the west of the town, the preferred spatial option would be located in the Cotswolds National Landscape but due to the slope of the land, would be well contained within the local landscape’
- They mean that the site will not be seen from the A40. The Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty is not a view. It is an area which not only encompasses fields, slopes, or wooded areas, but also villages and historical settlements. As Cotswolds National Landscape highlights:
‘This desire for new houses has already compromised the internal and external form of many settlements.’ ‘Erosion of the special character of the edges of settlements is a particular problem, as towns and villages have become ‘suburbanised’ by development that is entirely inappropriate.’
- With no separation between the surgery and the new housing development, the edge of Burford would see a significant spread west.
- Building on Lands in the Cotswolds National Landscape is highly regulated and ‘planning permission should be refused for major developments except in exceptional circumstances and where it can be demonstrated to be in the public interest (paragraph 177 of the NPPF).’
- The proposed site covers the fields on Sheep Street, from the Surgery to the cemetery, where Battle Edge was fought in 752AD. Its historical importance is key to the area. This site should be celebrated not concreted over.
- The Priory land is listed as ancient woodlands. Any concreting of the area south of Sheep Street would result in the flooding and disappearance of this ancient landscape.

3. Increased traffic impact

- Traffic in Burford is horrendous and getting worse with an increase in the number of coaches. The constant traffic in Burford has resulted in a significant increase in air pollution due to cars and coaches idling.
- Sheep Street and Tanners Lane should be considered single lane roads. The site proposes adding roughly 150 cars on these two streets.
- In addition, the Town Council considered that this would be a perfect place to add a coach and car park.
- With no direct access to the A40, the development site and coach and car parks will exacerbate traffic jams on Sheep Street and Tanners Lane and ultimately the current ‘rat runs’ that Barns Lane, Pytts Lane and Witney Street have become.

4. Contradictory council

- BTC and WODC were vehemently against the 70 dwellings on Cole's Fields in January 2023 but are now pushing a site on the other side of town with the same limitations as Cole's Field. In 2023, they said:
 'BTC is as unanimously and robustly against this [Cole's Field] proposal as we have been against all previous applications. We regard it as a cynical attempt to batter Burford into submission knowing that we are a small community with limited resources. We shall, as your Council, be lodging strong objections'
- What changed? Are they now happy to support the 'incursion into the AONB? Do they care no more about the 'attack on the Burford Conservation Area'? Does access to the site no longer concern them? Have they decided the 'very real infrastructure problems' no longer exist?
- BTC also said:
 'There is no "need". A distinction must be drawn between those who would like to live in Burford and that who must.'
All their own words that they are happy to contradict for this new, Sheep Street site. Why, we ask?

5. Where is the need?

- Cotswold Gate has already increased Burford Population by 25% in the last 4 years. With 70 more dwellings, the overall increase would reach 34%. This is not a 'proportionate level of housing development'.
- This new site should be considered a major development and WODC must provide evidence that there is an exceptional need to do so, and such need cannot be that more houses are needed in West Oxfordshire.
- As of today, there are 55 properties in Burford listed as Airbnb and 24 homes for sale. 5 previously affordable houses are now for sale for £325-£435k and 8 of the homes for sale are at Cotswold Gate.
- Have planners proved that the new site of 70 dwellings is 'meeting an identified local housing needs'? and if they did where is their evidence?

6. Going against WODC supporting evidence

- Burford and Woodstock have been classified as 'two towns with a significant tourist role' in the 'Town Centre Strategy and Needs Assessment'. The 'service levels' of both Burford and Woodstock are directed at an economy driven by tourism, not residents.
- Burford's strength was identified as its charm and character. Footfall in Burford rose 31% from Jan 2023–Aug 2024, while Woodstock's fell 10%.
- The report highlights traffic and limited parking as Burford's main weaknesses.
- Turning Burford into a commuter town and adding a development plus coach and car park on West Sheep Street (without A40 access) would increase traffic and harm the town's appeal and economy.
- Why would we want to go against the report recommendations for a more vibrant economy in Burford?
- WODC is talking ad nauseam of the nearly unfeasible task the government forced on them: building 900 homes per year. But 900 homes are not 900 houses. As WODC is looking to increase affordable housing, they should build 3 storey houses where each floor is a flat. 900 homes would become 300 houses which could be spread over the county, most specifically in brown field sites, where housing is needed. Why always choose the most damaging solution for the environment?



For more information about the consultation, or to be part of the resident support group exploring the best options for Burford's future, please contact:

Visit us at www.SaveBurford.com

For people needing help in accessing the website, we offer a drop-in
at the Warwick Hall café
on Monday and Thursday from 3 to 4pm