

WODC Report Cllr Steve Cosier and Cllr Sandra Cosier Sep 26

West Oxfordshire Local Plan Consultation – 2043 (Cllr Steve and Sandra Cosier)

West Oxfordshire District Council's Draft Local Plan 2043 is currently out for its final Regulation 19 consultation. The consultation runs from **26 August 2026 until 9 October 2026**, after which the Plan will be submitted for independent examination. This is the final opportunity for Northmoor Parish Council and residents to influence the Plan before it is considered by a Planning Inspector.

Having reviewed the consultation documents and supporting evidence, we believe there are several issues that merit careful consideration by Northmoor Parish Council. These include whether the Plan is justified by evidence, supported by appropriate infrastructure and capable of being delivered over the Plan period to 2043.

A significant concern remains the impact of Local Government Reorganisation. West Oxfordshire District Council will cease to exist in 2028, yet the Local Plan extends until 2043. The Parish Council may therefore wish to seek assurances about how the Plan will align with the future planning strategy of the new Northern Oxfordshire unitary authority and whether an early review may ultimately be required.

Northmoor is identified within the proposed settlement hierarchy as a Tier 5 Village. While this classification recognises Northmoor's rural character and more limited level of services when compared with larger settlements, it is important that the Parish Council reviews whether the evidence supporting this designation accurately reflects local circumstances and future aspirations for the village. The settlement hierarchy will play an important role in determining the scale and location of future development across the district.

If the Parish Council is broadly supportive of Northmoor's Tier 5 designation, it may wish to make representations supporting the classification while seeking assurances that future development remains proportionate to local infrastructure capacity and respects the village's character, landscape setting, and environmental constraints. Equally, the Council may wish to highlight the need for investment in local infrastructure, digital connectivity, public transport, flood resilience, and community facilities to ensure the village remains sustainable in the longer term.

Given Northmoor's location within the Thames floodplain, particular attention should also be paid to policies relating to flood risk, climate resilience, water management, and infrastructure delivery. The Parish Council may wish to emphasise that any future development should be accompanied by demonstrated improvements to drainage, wastewater infrastructure, and flood mitigation measures.

We would encourage both the Parish Council and residents to review the consultation documents and submit comments before the consultation closes on **9 October 2026**, ensuring that Northmoor's priorities are properly represented throughout the examination process.

Community flood warden (Cllr Steve Cosier)

Since the last parish meeting, I have become a Flood Warden for Stanton Harcourt, Sutton, and Northmoor. This now means that all parishes in the ward; Standlake, Aston, Stanton Harcourt, Sutton, and Northmoor are now covered by volunteer Community Flood Warden. In this role I will be supported by Oxfordshire County Council Flood Risk Management Team, Joint Oxfordshire Resilience Team (JORT), Highways Team, and Volunteer Coordination Team, in partnership with the Environment Agency.

The role is designed to help local communities to understand their flood risks and that they all have a responsibility to look after themselves, their family and property before, during and after a flood. As a Flood warden I can monitor blocked drains and culverts, ditches in need of repair, tree branches or obstructions in rivers/watercourses, and anything else that may cause a flood risk and report them to the appropriate land, property owners, or local authority. Please let Steve know if you have issues to share relating to the above.

Mobile Connectivity and Digital Infrastructure (Cllr Sandra and Steve Cosier)

We are pleased to report that, following representations we made to Government regarding poor mobile coverage across the ward, we have now received a detailed response from the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology.

The Government acknowledges that residents and businesses across rural areas continue to experience significant mobile connectivity challenges. It has reaffirmed its ambition for all populated areas to have access to high-quality standalone 5G services by 2030, supported by substantial investment from mobile network operators. VodafoneThree has committed £11 billion to network upgrades, while EE and Virgin Media O2 are also investing heavily in expanding next-generation mobile coverage.

The Government has also confirmed that it is reviewing the mobile market and considering further planning reforms to remove barriers to the deployment of new telecommunications infrastructure. Alongside this, the Shared Rural Network programme continues to improve rural coverage, with 4G coverage from at least one operator now reaching 96% of the UK landmass and further improvements expected through to 2027.

While these national commitments are welcome, they do not provide specific assurances for villages within our parish. We have therefore made it clear that residents continue to experience unreliable mobile reception, poor indoor coverage, and areas with little or no usable signal.

We intend to continue pressing mobile network operators directly to identify whether upgrades are planned locally and to ensure that Northmoor and surrounding villages in the ward are not overlooked. We will also be encouraging residents to use Ofcom's "Map Your Mobile" service to report coverage issues and identify the strongest available networks.

The Government's response addressed 'some' concerns regarding the migration from traditional analogue landlines to digital telephone services. Ministers have confirmed that additional protections are now in place for vulnerable residents, including free battery backup units for eligible customers and enhanced support during the transition to digital services.

Given the continued reliance on landlines in areas with poor mobile reception, we will continue to monitor this issue closely and push for assurances that the needs of rural communities remain fully protected as the national telecoms network is modernised.

We will keep the Parish Council and residents informed of any further developments and continue to advocate for improved connectivity across our communities by the Government, and mobile operators.

Thank you

Cllr Steve Cosier & Cllr Sandra Cosier

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