

Councillor's Steve and Sandra Cosier

West Oxfordshire District Councillor's Report for Stanton Harcourt and Sutton – September 2026

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 the Standlake 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 Standlake 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.

West Oxfordshire District Council is proposing to allocate Land at the Downs, Standlake—currently a 29-hectare agricultural site—for a major new housing development. This would represent one of the largest single expansions of Standlake in decades. Around 10.5 hectares would be built on, with the remainder used for landscaping, drainage, and supporting infrastructure. The proposal, promoted by Mac and Mic, includes up to 200 new homes, 40% of which would be affordable housing, alongside a convenience retail store. While these elements may appear positive in isolation, the overall scale and impact of the development raise significant concerns for the village.

The council expects the scheme to be guided by a comprehensive masterplan involving local residents. However, even with such engagement, the development would fundamentally alter the rural character of Standlake. The proposal relies heavily on design principles intended to soften its impact, such as retaining hedgerows, reinforcing field patterns, and creating landscaped boundaries but these measures cannot fully mitigate the transformation of a large agricultural area into a substantial housing estate.

Transport and movement issues are central to residents' concerns. The primary access would come from Downs Road, a route already under pressure. Although the plan requires traffic mitigation, pedestrian and cycle links, and integration with public transport, the cumulative impact of 200 homes, increased vehicle movements, and construction traffic is likely to be significant. Many residents will understandably question whether Standlake's existing road network can safely and sustainably absorb this level of growth.

The proposal also places emphasis on heritage and landscape protection, requiring a heritage impact assessment and careful treatment of key views. While these safeguards are welcome, they highlight the sensitivity of the site and the risk that large-scale development could erode the historic and rural qualities that define Standlake and its surroundings.

Green infrastructure and biodiversity form another major part of the plan. The council expects measurable biodiversity net gain, ecological corridors, and SuDS features. Yet the need for

such extensive mitigation underscores the scale of environmental disruption that would accompany the loss of agricultural land, nearby habitats, and the proximity to wildlife sites and SSSIs.

There are further complications due to the site's designation as a Mineral Strategic Resource Area for sharp sand and gravel. The developer must demonstrate compliance with the Minerals and Waste Plan, including how mineral sterilisation will be addressed. This adds another layer of uncertainty and potential disruption for the community.

Infrastructure demands are substantial. The development would require upgrades to water, electricity, broadband, public transport, and rights of way. While these improvements may benefit some residents, they also indicate the strain the development would place on existing services and the extent of change required to accommodate it.

Finally, the council anticipates a phased build-out over 3 to 10 years. This means prolonged construction activity, ongoing disruption, and a gradual but irreversible shift in the scale and feel of Standlake.

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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