

Mobile Phone - Update

We have now received a response from the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT) which acknowledges the concerns raised by Sandra and I regarding poor mobile connectivity and digital resilience across the district. The department recognises that many communities and businesses continue to experience inadequate mobile coverage and accepts that reliable connectivity is essential for participation in the modern economy and for access to public services.

This response reflects the significant work undertaken by Sandra and me, working closely with West Oxfordshire District Council officers, to gather evidence from residents, identify areas of poor coverage, and escalate these concerns to both government and telecommunications providers. Together, we have highlighted the challenges faced by local communities, particularly in rural areas where mobile reception can be unreliable and where indoor coverage is often poor. We have also raised concerns about the implications of the national migration from analogue landlines to digital services in areas where mobile connectivity remains limited.

The letter confirms a number of issues that residents have consistently reported. These include persistent mobile “not-spots”, weak indoor coverage, concerns about communications during emergencies, and the potential impact of the PSTN switch-off on vulnerable residents who may rely on landline services. The Government also notes that decisions on where mobile infrastructure is deployed remain commercial decisions for network operators, creating uncertainty about when improvements may be delivered in some of the district’s most poorly served communities.

DSIT highlights substantial investment commitments from the telecommunications industry, including major network upgrades by VodafoneThree, BT/EE and Virgin Media O2, alongside continued delivery of the Shared Rural Network programme. The Government’s ambition remains to achieve high-quality standalone 5G coverage across all populated areas by 2030, while further work is being undertaken nationally to remove barriers to digital infrastructure deployment.

While these commitments are welcome, it is clear that challenges remain for many residents across West Oxfordshire. Sandra and I will therefore continue to work closely with WODC officers, residents, government departments and network operators to ensure that local concerns are properly understood and addressed. We remain committed to identifying coverage gaps, challenging service deficiencies, supporting residents affected by connectivity issues, and advocating for further infrastructure investment so that every community within the ward benefits from reliable and resilient digital connectivity in the years ahead.

West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2043 - update.

The statutory 6-week Regulation 19 public consultation for the West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2043 is confirmed to launch this August 2026. The West Oxfordshire District Council (WODC) Executive approved the pre-submission draft on July 15, 2026, paving

the way for immediate publication. The consultation will run through August until mid-September 2026.

Core Timeline & Next Steps

- August – Mid-September 2026: Statutory 6-week Regulation 19 public consultation window.
- December 2026: Formal submission of the plan (Regulation 22) to the Planning Inspectorate.
- 2027: Independent examination and expected formal adoption.

The government led plan mandates approximately 18,000 new homes across the district up to the year 2043. This target includes an increase of about 1,800 homes triggered by extending the plan's timeline to meet the 15-year post-adoption national standard.

Standlake has already seen significant developer interest, including separate consultations the Land at The Downs proposal (up to 200 homes and a convenience store). We have questioned officers over the STW in Standlake and pointed out that the plant frequently struggles to cope with excess flows, resulting in prolonged storm overflow spills, often causing pollution during heavy. Other considerations that residents should be considering are: habitat and biodiversity, roads, health provision, agriculture land usage.

We would like to reassure the parish council and residents that the outline application currently under review for outline permission for 200 houses and retail provision has no bearing on the consultation. The outline application currently under scrutiny does not mean that it will automatically be given permission for development. We are making sure of this!

We are sceptical that the emerging Local Plan 2043 will be able to deliver the essential services to keep in lockstep with house building. However, we urge residents and the parish council to engage with the consultation process.

Once the portal officially opens in August, residents and the parish council can submit representations about the plan's legal compliance and overall soundness directly via the West Oxfordshire District Council Planning Policy.

If you would like to discuss anything raised in this report, please contact us on:

Steve.cosier@westoxon.gov.uk
Sandra.cosier@westoxon.gov.uk

Best wishes
Steve and Sandra Cosier
West Oxfordshire District Councillors - SASH