

The Right Honourable Sajid Javid MP
Secretary of State
Ministry of Housing, Communities
& Local Government
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Dear Secretary of State,

Better Oxfordshire: Proposal for a new unitary council for Oxfordshire

I have watched with interest as movement has been made towards creating new unitary councils in Dorset, Buckinghamshire and now Northamptonshire.

As you will be aware you already have a proposal from Oxfordshire to create a single unitary to cover the county area with much detail in place on how the new authority would deal with such issues as the integration of local plans to ensure housing is still delivered as a priority.

These proposals have received a formal unanimous vote on a cross-party basis at my Council and has also been supported by Oxfordshire County Council and South Oxfordshire District Council as well as a number of key stakeholders.

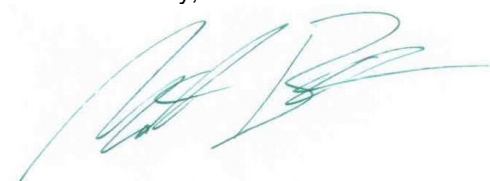
The agreement of the Oxfordshire Housing & Growth Deal recognises the county as a functional economic and housing area and shows that Oxfordshire can work collectively to deliver housing. This is an outcome which can only be strengthened by the creation of a unitary council. The agreement to create a Joint Statutory Spatial Plan also removes one of the fundamental objections raised by some districts who had previously objected to county-wide strategic planning.

The Government is also giving significant consideration to the governance arrangements around the Oxford-Cambridge growth corridor. The creation of an Oxfordshire unitary would be a strong move to address this issue and help simplify the governance of a significant part of the arc.

Events in Northamptonshire also creates an opportunity as the issue of shared services between Cherwell and South Northants must now be addressed. I am still of the view that the Better Oxfordshire proposal is stronger for maintaining the county boundary which also happens to be co-terminus with NHS governance and police forces. The creation of an Oxfordshire unitary as we have proposed, alongside whatever solution is arrived at for Northamptonshire would address this issue.

I am encouraged that progress has been made in Northamptonshire, Buckinghamshire and Dorset and as time has passed I believe the case for Oxfordshire has only strengthened. My Council remains committed to our own abolition in favour of a new council that can deliver improved and more efficient services for our residents and assist the Government in delivering its strategic objectives. I look forward to hear from you positively that Oxfordshire can move forward as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely,



Matthew Barber
Leader Vale of White Horse District Council