

Local people need a say in plans for ‘Britain’s Silicon Valley’

Countryside campaigners fear proposals to create a ‘Silicon Valley’ spanning Cambridge, Milton Keynes and Oxford will swallow up villages, destroy countryside and lead to massive ribbon development along the 80 mile stretch, without being subject to either democratic or independent scrutiny.

The Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) says these major developments in our countryside may be effectively imposed by the Government. A consultation exercise on the project has been undertaken by the National Infrastructure Commission. The NIC, which was set up to carry out independent assessments of our infrastructure needs, was briefed to look into plans to maximise the potential of the Cambridge-Milton Keynes-Oxford corridor over the next 30 years. The Government’s vision was to create a new Silicon Valley which could compete on the global stage. In its response to the consultation, CPRE says in practice the project is likely to be driven by unelected Local Enterprise Partnerships in collusion with developers.

“The NIC seems to have in mind some form of strategic body directing local authorities in the area” said CPRE’s Eastern Region Chairman, Michael Monk. “The worry is there may be some local authority - but no public or independent – participation. There is a real prospect of local communities being swamped in ribbon development all the way from Cambridge to Oxford.

“The proposal to create a fast "expressway" road between Oxford and Cambridge will almost certainly be used as a reason to locate more and more development along its route over and above the significant numbers of houses already being planned.

“CPRE supports strategic planning which can deliver regeneration, development and new infrastructure, especially in deprived areas, but there is a real danger here of swamping the already over-heated south-east and east of England. Instead the process should begin with local communities identifying their growth needs.”

ENDS

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