The clear message from this letter is that the Expressway project and its associated 1,000,000 new homes appear to be going ahead, with Government support.  Our local authorities have just been given 6 weeks until the 14th September to prepare and submit proposals for ‘new settlements’ along the OxCam Arc, to try and achieve the 1 million new homes target.  Oxfordshire’s ‘pro-rata’ share of this total would be around 300,000 more homes, effectively doubling the County’s population in just 20 - 30  years (this is on top of the 100,000 new homes already planned for construction in the current Local Plan by 2031).  These ‘new settlements’ would presumably also influence where the Expressway would go.

We believe this is both unachievable and undemocratic, since there won’t be time to consult Councillors on any plan which Council officers might prepare.  Any plans for a large or very large settlement should involve proper environmental, habitat, transport and services studies **before** a sensible decision on location and size could be made. Clearly they could not be carefully worked out in just 6 weeks  -  New Towns take years to plan, not weeks!

There would certainly not be time to ask all Oxfordshire residents if they want a New Town (or towns) built here, nor for any public debate on where it might go.

Many of our member parishes are in the South Oxfordshire District Council area, and we know that SODC full Council have voted and formally resolved that any Expressway route / corridor should run West of Oxford and via Bicester.  SODC and its officers should therefore oppose any large new settlements / towns in lands to the South of Oxford - but I would suggest that as many of us as possible write to them asking them to respect and conform with that Council resolution, and not to propose any new settlements there to the Minister.

For everyone: can I ask you to read the Minister’s letter, circulate it as widely as possible and write to your District and County Councillors, your MP and to the District and County Council leaders to express your surprise and great concern?

I will let everyone know more information as it becomes available.

With best regards

Peter Rutt / Co-ordinator, Expressway Action Group

PS There may be a piece on BBC Oxford TV tonight at 6:30 on all this ….