

Press Release |

For immediate release

CAMPAIGNERS CHALLENGE CONSERVATIVE CANDIDATE TO PLEDGE SUPPORT TO THEIR CAMPAIGN AFTER HE USES THEIR SIGN IN HIS CAMPAIGN MATERIALS

The leading campaign group opposing the construction of the Oxford to Cambridge Expressway and associated one million new homes – the ‘No Expressway Group’ (NEG) - has today written an open letter to John Howell, Conservative candidate in the Henley constituency regarding his unsanctioned use of NEG’s campaign sign, logo and website address in his campaign materials, as NEG does not support or endorse any candidate or party at this or any other political election.

Furthermore, NEG should not have been linked to a leaflet which risks both housing targets and the status of the expressway project being misinterpreted. The aspirational housing figure for the Arc of one million homes was re-stated by Robert Jenrick as the Government’s target in his role as Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government on 29th July in a letter to John Bercow. This target is to 2050 and is one reason why not all of these housing figures are in Local Plans, which only cover the period to the mid-2030s. It misrepresents the facts further to state “Expressway Halted” on the leaflet. A review has been announced, and Grant Shapps has been reported as saying the Government is “now tilted against the plan”. **Neither a review nor ‘tilting’** is the same as cancellation or halting of plans. Yes, we are in a period of purdah, however, the Government, after more than nine years in power, could have made an announcement before the purdah period, or the Conservative Party could have pledged to cancel it within its manifesto.

NEG spokesperson Olivia Field said, ‘whilst we appreciate John Howell’s recognition of NEG’s importance in the campaign against the expressway and housing targets, and for the work it has been doing to raise awareness across the arc, this is not a party-political issue. NEG works hard to stay a-political but John Howell’s “Election special” leaflet brings that into question and associates the group with a misrepresentation of the facts, at a time when voters need to know that both the facts and their concerns are genuinely being addressed. That’s why NEG is seeking the formal support for *NEG’s campaign* of all 98 candidates in the 20 constituencies along the arc. So far, 43 candidates from across all parties have pledged their support and only one has refused. John Howell has not yet pledged his support for our campaign or even responded to our letters to him requesting this support, first on the 15th November and then, as a reminder, on 1st December 2019.’

Ms Field added ‘I look forward to hearing if John Howell will pledge support to NEG’s campaign. The voters are waiting!’

Ends

For further information please contact the press office on
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NOTES TO THE EDITOR

The Oxford to Cambridge Expressway scheme is based on the idea of opening-up the countryside for development of an aspirational target of one million new homes by 2050. The National Infrastructure Commission 5th Studio Report shows a split by both region and type of housing across the Arc. The target includes 'unlocked' homes enabled by the Expressway, London commuter homes and those in Local Authority plans. We agree more housing is needed, but not >100% growth in Oxon & 65% growth in affected areas of Bucks by 2050 (compared with the 16% predicted for the nation as a whole, by the Office of National Statistics). All those homes need infrastructure: schools, clinics, hospitals, water and electricity supplies, waste and sewage disposal etc. e.g., one form entry primary school is required for every 800 new houses. That's 1,250 such schools across the Arc for those one million new houses by 2050. Developers. make only minimal contributions to the real cost of infrastructure, which is ultimately borne by the Government, or by tax- and rate-payers.

England has destroyed 97% of its wildflower meadows since the 1930s and more ancient woodlands in the forty years after WWII than in the previous 400 years. How much more destruction can our environment take without catastrophic declines in our life support systems?

NEG letter sent to John Howell on 5th December 2019.

John Howell
8 Gorwell
Watlington
OX49 5QE

NO EXPRESSWAY GROUP
noexpressway.org

Dear John Howell

Leaflet - "Election Special from John Howell"

The No Expressway Group (NEG) is pleased to see that you are taking your constituents' concerns about the proposed Oxford – Cambridge Expressway and aspirational target of one million houses seriously enough to produce an "Oxford – Cambridge Expressway" focused leaflet, which was delivered to us yesterday.

However, your use of a picture of one of the highly recognisable No Expressway Group signs, with our logo and website address, for which you did not seek permission, is of great concern to us. Whilst we appreciate that you clearly recognise the importance of NEG's campaign, and the work we've done to raise awareness on this issue, **we do not endorse or support any candidate or party** in this or any other political election. We work hard to be a-political, which you have brought into question with your leaflet. We would be grateful if you could make this clear by adding the following beneath any further use of our campaign posters in

NO EXPRESSWAY GROUP

your literature “*the No Expressway Group is a non-political community group and neither receives any funding from, nor endorses, any political party.*”

Instead, NEG is seeking the formal support for *our campaign* of all 98 candidates in the 20 constituencies along the arc. So far 43 candidates from across all parties have pledged their support, and only one has refused. Given your recent leaflet, I hope you will now sign our No Expressway Group pledge letter, first sent to you on 15th November and then again with a reminder, on 1st December 2019.

Furthermore, your leaflet misrepresents both housing targets and the status of the expressway. The aspirational housing target for the Arc of one million homes was re-stated by Robert Jenrick as the Government’s target in his role as Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government on 29th July in a letter to John Bercow. These targets are to 2050 and that is why not all of these housing figures are in Local Plans, which only cover the period to the mid-2030s. It misrepresents the facts further to state “Expressway Halted”. A review has been announced and Grant Shapps has been reported as saying the Government is “now tilted against the plan”. Neither a review nor ‘tilting’ is the same as cancellation or halting of plans. Yes, we are in a period of purdah, but the Government, after more than nine years in power, could have made an announcement before the purdah period or the Conservative Party could have pledged to cancel it within its manifesto.

I look forward to hearing back from you pledging your support for NEG’s campaign.

Your sincerely

Olivia Field

Chair, No Expressway Group
noexpresswaygroup@gmail.com

NO EXPRESSWAY GROUP
noexpressway.org



@no_expressway



noexpresswaygroup

The No Expressway Group (NEG) was established to raise awareness of the Oxford-Cambridge Expressway across the Arc. We are not affiliated with any political party and are run on a not-for-profit basis. We receive donations from our individual supporters but no funds from any group with commercial or other interests in the Arc proposals. In the last 12 months NEG has given talks and made presentations to villages across the Arc, from Sunningwell, West of Oxford, to Woburn Sands and Apsley Guise, Southeast of Milton Keynes. We have not found a single community in favour of the Arc proposals.