

District Councillor Update

5 July 2021

Jo Robb and Lorraine Hillier

Little Sparrows

The Council was bitterly disappointed by the Planning Inspector's decision in the Little Sparrows appeal, which overturned the Council's refusal of planning permission for 133 luxury retirement homes in a greenfield site in the AONB outside Sonning Common. The Council is actively reviewing its options with advice from our external lawyers. The Housing Land Supply statement, released last week, confirms that South Oxfordshire has a five-year Housing Land Supply of 5.33, not the 4.21 as found by the Inspector. Accordingly, our Local Plan policies remain in tact and up to date and all planning decisions will be made in line with that plan. We will keep you updated on this matter.

Extension of the Chilterns AONB

The Council welcomed Government proposals to create new protected landscapes and improve people's access to nature, including extending the Chilterns AONB. Natural England, the Government's advisor for the natural environment in England, has published a new Landscape Designation Programme including plans to explore a 'boundary extension' to the Chilterns AONB and consider new management and governance arrangements to support the improved protection and enhancement of the Chilterns landscape. We look forward to working with Natural England, the Chilterns Conservation Board and others to ensure the exceptional landscapes in our area are afforded the protection of AONB status.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/natural-england-announces-landmark-new-programme-for-protected-landscapes>

Oxfordshire 2050 Plan

The Oxfordshire 2050 Plan is a Joint Statutory Spatial Plan which once adopted will form part of the Development Plan for five councils in Oxfordshire (South Oxfordshire, Vale of the White Horse, Oxford City, Cherwell and West Oxfordshire). It will provide a long-term (30 years from 2020-2050) overarching and high-level planning framework for Oxfordshire. The numbers of new homes to be built across the County and the broad areas for housebuilding and "growth" will be determined in this process.

Recently the Plan has changed considerably for the better to respond to the climate emergency and environmental and ecological protection and recovery, thanks to input from current councillors and from other groups that have been consulted in the 'Open Thought' engagement the board created.

The Oxfordshire 2050 Plan (Regulation 18) is on track to go to the five councils for approval in July, prior to a **10-week public consultation expected to start at the end of July.**

Please do take the time to respond to this consultation. There are some very important ideas in it, including how many more houses should be built in Oxfordshire, over and above that required by government.

SODC Local Plan 2035

The council has received notification that the Court of Appeal has refused permission for Bioabundance CIC to appeal the recent High Court decision related to the Local Plan 2035. The appeal had come after the Community Interest Company's failed application for a judicial review against the Council's decision to adopt the Local Plan 2035. The application for a judicial review was refused by the High Court in April.

Planning Applications

There has been a big increase in planning applications, from householders as well as bigger ones, in the last few months. In May 2021 we received 390 applications, which is a 48% increase on May 2020. 61% of applications received were valid on receipt. As a result, the planning department is a few days behind on registering new applications.

Oxfordshire Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Strategy

The timeline for the county council's roll-out of the Oxfordshire-wide Park and Charge scheme has been extended, and we now expect it to launch in our Districts in late autumn or winter. This short delay is partly to ensure the newly launched pilot of the scheme in Bicester can go through sufficient real-world testing to ensure the best possible user experience.

Elections - Proposals for new Parliamentary constituency boundaries

The Boundary Commission for England (BCE) has published its initial proposals for new Parliamentary constituency boundaries and launched an eight-week consultation, which closes on 2 August 2021. People can comment on issues from where the boundary lines are to the names of the constituencies via the Boundary Commission website. In particular, we would draw your attention to numbers 28 and 41-45 which detail proposals for Oxfordshire.

These include: increasing the number of constituencies in Oxfordshire from six to seven; some parts of the District ward I represent will now be in the newly named Wantage & Didcot constituency and allowing Oxford city centre to be configured together in Oxford West and Abingdon, which will be made more compact by transferring two northern wards to the Bicester constituency

Grants and Finance

Total Covid19 Grant Payments processed through the District council since April 2020 total £42.8m. The Council carries out pre- and post- grant award checks to detect any fraud regarding any grant including the £500 isolation grant - an important part of what the finance team have been doing this last year.

SODC grounds maintenance and litter picking

The number of grass cuts has been reduced this year, but this is being kept under review. There are also more staff allocated for litter picking for the summer.

The future of sustainable construction workshop

On 14 July 2021, in partnership with Oxfordshire Greentech, the Development & Regeneration Team will hold a workshop discussing the sustainable construction industry with businesses in South and Vale. Speakers include:

- Annabel Gould, Associate Director of Faithful+Gould, will present on behalf of Constructing Excellence Oxford Club.
- Ian Pritchett of Greencore Construction will speak about their One Planet Living Global Leader developments.
- Ed Hayden of Scott Brownrigg, an international built environment design practice, will discuss how they increased biodiversity in the CABI International building in Wallingford.
- Jonathan Finnerty of Green Unit, based in Culham, will discuss the benefits of modular eco-buildings.

Tickets can be booked on Eventbrite: <https://bit.ly/3fPYvI5>