

SODC REPORT – January 2017

Planning Matters

Didcot Garden Town is a major part of our plan for development in the District, offering a significant number of jobs and home. Following the consultation, all comments from the website, events and conversations with community groups are being used to help prepare a draft masterplan for the Garden Town. This masterplan and vision for the area, supported by a Garden Town delivery plan setting out how this vision will become a reality, will be published in spring / summer 2017, at which point the community will have another opportunity to comment.

Neighbourhood Planning Up-date

During December, Minister For Housing Gavin Barwell MP, announced new ways Neighbourhood Plans will affect development. Our MP, John Howell summarises the new approach well in his blog and I have taken this quote from there.

‘The new rules mean that Neighbourhood Plans should not be considered ‘out-of-date’ where:

The Neighbourhood Plan is less than 2 years old or has been part of the local development plan for 2 years or less;

The Neighbourhood Plan allocates sites for housing; and,

The Local Planning Authority can demonstrate a 3 year supply of deliverable housing sites’

John’s full statement can be found at:

<http://www.johnhowellmp.com/news/neighbourhood-plan-update/917>

This has significant implications for existing and up and coming Neighbourhood Plans and emphasises the importance of keeping them up to date. I know that John is working hard to get this and other provisions onto the Statute Book as soon as possible. To get up-dates on his activities in this and other areas I do recommend you follow John’s Blog and sign up to his news letter.

Naturally, the developers are none too keen on this provision, which puts planning back in the hands of democratically elected representatives rather than their barristers and they are challenging the mInister’s decision with a Judicial Review.

South Local Plan 2033

- The Preferred Options Part II consultation is scheduled to commence in March 2017.
- The slight delay from the last update is to ensure we have the most robust evidence available to support the consultation – particularly for infrastructure. It is anticipated that this will now take the form of a full Draft Local Plan.
- Some of the evidence studies and their progress:
 - Housing & Economic Land Availability Assessment (HELAA): Updated draft expected mid-January
 - Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP): Useful stakeholder workshop held 14/12/2016. Draft ‘baseline’ report expected mid-January
 - Evaluation of Transport Impacts (ETI): Next interim report expected late January
 - Green Infrastructure Strategy: Received first detailed ‘pilot’ (for Abingdon) and expecting similar settlement level assessments for all towns and larger villages through the first half of 2017.
 - Sustainable transport study: Consultants (Steer Davies Gleave) appointed.

- Leisure Strategy: Brief published for tender
- Gypsy & Traveller Accommodation Assessment: Consultants (ORS) to be appointed before Christmas.
- Post SHMA work programme – Oxford City unmet need
 - We have appointed Cundall to undertake a critical appraisal of the HELAA which has been produced by Oxford City Council. Draft report expected mid January 2017.

Appeals

We have four upcoming public inquiries:

- East Hagbourne, land east of New Road, - opens on Tuesday 10 January 2017. Kim Langford has been working closely with the local action group Mind the Green Gap, the Parish Council and the Didcot Garden Town team.
- Tetsworth - this is for a traveller site of 12 pitches outside of the Green Belt and is scheduled for the second week of June. We've been working closely with the Parish.
- Thames Farm, Shiplake - this does not have a date yet but Kim and Paula have already met the Parish and we will be working closely with them.
- CABI, Crowmarsh – appeal recently lodged in respect of the scheme for new offices and residential development which was refused by Planning Committee in June. May be an inquiry or hearing.

Enforcement

- 46 new cases opened
- 30 cases closed
- Seven cases closed were more than six months old

Our six week performance was 96 per cent this month well above target. We are continuing to find success in persuading landowners to regularise breaches (voluntary compliance). Seven out of nine cases closed as 'not expedient to pursue' were householder issues relating to fences, decking and sheds. Four cases are progressing to formal action.

5YHLS update

Our position remains that we have 3.8 years housing land supply (target 5YHLS).

- We have updated the district-wide completions data which is being verified before we recalculate our 5YHLS
- Site B Wallingford (550) (Core Strategy strategic site) was approved subject to a S106 at Planning Committee on 19/10. We are expecting an application on Wallingford Site
- E (Winterbrook area) imminently and pre application advice is currently being sought on Site A (north of the Wantage Road) Wallingford.
- We have a current application for 245 homes at Emmer Green on the edge of Reading and applications on smaller sites around Benson, Sonning Common, Shiplake, Cholsey and Crowmarsh (all for circa 80 dwellings).

Monitoring Progress

Current performance is good but majors has dipped recently reflecting the rise in pre application advice requests (data as @ 14/12/2016).

1. Majors: 72% decided within 13 weeks against local target of 70% (national target 60%).
2. Minors: 85% decided within 8 weeks against local target 75% (national target 65%).
3. Others: 93% decided within 8 weeks against a local target of 90% (national target 80%).
4. Improving Planning Performance: 9% of majors decided within two year period (national target confirmed as 10% or less from 2018; which is back dated 2.5years, so we need to address our performance now)*
5. 59% appeals dismissed (20% performance increase on this time last year) local target 74% (average national position 60%)

New Neighbourhood Planning Officers

Last month we informed you that Ricardo Rios and Rachael Riach have joined the Team supporting Neighbourhood Plans and from the 1st January they are joined by Holly Jones.

We aim to support this team with further recruitment.

Other Matters

A competition for new businesses

Together with our partner Council, Vale of the White horse, we are sponsors of a new competition for businesses which are less than two years old.

Southern Oxfordshire New Business Competition 2017 (SONBC '17) is accepting applications from 1 January to 28 February. Judges are looking for the brightest rising stars in local business, whatever their trade or industry.

The winner will receive a serviced office rent-free for a year, plus a host of other great prizes to help boost their business including: expert branding and website advice, social media coaching, IT consultancy and support, accountancy services and a full programme of business mentoring. For more information and to download an application form go to www.sonbc.co.uk

Grants available to help get residents active

New funding from Sport England will be available to councils, community groups and sports clubs from January 2017. The funding is aimed at projects which reduce inactivity, increase volunteering and improve facilities. Please tell residents about the following funds:

- Community Asset Fund for capital projects to provide new or enhanced facilities, or new facilities in fields or unused buildings. Types of projects that could be eligible include renovating a sports pavillion, installing floodlighting or creating a new sports pitch. £5,000 - £150,000 is available.
- Inactivity Fund for revenue projects that increase activity levels in people aged 55 and over such as Walking Football or care home activities. Funding is anticipated to be between £250,000-£500,000.
- Volunteer Funding which targets under-represented groups and young people aged 10-20 years. Projects could include charities and organisations working with groups to promote volunteering opportunities for example matching volunteers to sports club volunteering roles.

For more information please contact Cath Dale, Participation Officer on 07801 203 551 or 01235 422222 or by email cath.dale@southandvale.gov.uk.

Evening for sports clubs

All sports club members are invited to attend the next sports club evening on Monday 23 January at 6.30pm at Tilsley Park, Abingdon. The event is for anyone involved in the running of a sports club who would like to learn more about:

- the council's community grants
- how the council can support you in applying for funding
- the projects delivered by the councils' participation team and how you can get involved
- Sport England's new funding streams

To find out more or to book a FREE place contact Cath Dale, Participation Officer on 07801 203 551 or 01235 422222 or by email cath.dale@southandvale.gov.uk.

Policing Matters

Questions about the response rates to 101 calls were raised with the Chief Constable at his Annual Report to SODC, and our District Representative on the Police And Crime Commissioner's Panel has canvassed other District Councillors to see how wide spread this problem is and raised it as an issue at the Panel on 16th December. There have been few reports of this as an issue as people would not naturally think of this as an issue councils can resolve.

We have summarised the responses received from Chief Constable Francis Habgood as;

1. There are robust monitoring systems in place, covering both 999 and 101 services.
2. The Chief Constable has been aware of this issue over the summer and autumn period.
3. A number of issues have been identified, including abnormal peaks in near simultaneous incidents on the M1/M4/M25/M40/A40/A34 roads in particular, an unexpectedly high turnover of staff and a general increase in reporting incidents over the period.
4. The 999 number is receiving a significant increase in multiple reports of incidents by mobile phone. As the increased load means that 101 line resources are retasked to cover the peak it does mean that the 101 service is reduced temporarily.
5. Steps have been taken to address the issue in the short term, but there has been a delay in getting to optimum levels. One reason is that it takes 9 months to train an operative to the required level.
6. To ensure that standards are maintained in the longer term, a number of initiatives are being looked at, including web chat and web reporting.

This will remain on the Panel's radar for review.

In addition to the normal PCC Panel work, we been involved in the scrutiny of the PCC's proposed budget to ensure that value for money is being obtained, and this piece of work will continue until the end of February.

Let us know about your local community blogs

We're always keen to reach as many people as possible across the district. Please let us know about any key community blogs and newsletters in your area that we might use to distribute our newsletters, press releases and other useful local information .

Please send any info to communications@southandvale.gov.uk

On that very subject, a quick reminder that we are keen to improve communications with residents and South News, the newsletter which includes information of interest to residents, is one of our initiatives. Please do encourage local residents to sign up for the newsletters which will be published every two months.

South News keeps residents in touch with news from the council, including the latest on planning and housing in South Oxfordshire, news on recycling collections and events at our leisure centres and Cornerstone Arts Centre in Didcot.

To receive South News visit www.southoxon.gov.uk/southnews

Thame And The Great British High Street Final

Thame has been named as one of the country's best high streets by being shortlisted in the Great British High Street competition.

It was one of the top 3 in the Small Market Town category and whilst it didn't win the ultimate accolade, it is a fantastic achievement to reach the last three! Well done Thame.

The Syrian Crisis And Refugees.

The plight of people in Syria is a tragedy and we, as a District are doing our bit. The Government's policy is to take refugees directly from the camps and we have signed up to take two of the families identified by the officials on the ground. The first of these families will arrive later this month and a home has been made available for them under the Government's scheme.

Cabinet Member Elizabeth Gillespie, who has taken responsibility for delivering this initiative says 'I am delighted that the program is finally underway and is going to plan to help provide a safe environment for these people until things in Syria are stable and they are able to return home.'

Councils' meet Food Standards Agency targets

The Food Standards Agency has recently published its report on local authority food law enforcement for the period 2015-16.

Out of the 323 English authorities that provided data, only 18 met the target to complete 100% of inspections scheduled for the year. Both South Oxfordshire and the Vale of White Horse are included within these 18, and are the only Oxfordshire authorities to have met this target. Both councils also achieved the national average of 93% for food premises that are 'broadly compliant' with food law.

You can read more in the full report which also includes details of enforcement action taken and activities such as food sampling at this link but you will need to cut and paste it!:

<http://southandvale.us8.list-manage.com/track/click?u=33bec1cf8b5523ad47c7183a0&id=08c4b424a5&e=eda6ce4f57>

Adverse weather plan

During the winter months waste collections might be disrupted by adverse weather conditions. Our Adverse Weather Plan sets out how the councils and Biffa will address the operational issues caused by snow and ice and flooding.

Adverse Weather Plan (South) is here and yes, it is another long link to cut and paste!:

<http://southandvale.us8.list-manage1.com/track/click?u=33bec1cf8b5523ad47c7183a0&id=2a8495f1e1&e=eda6ce4f57>

We will keep people up to date with disruption information through our websites, social media, the local press and media.

We will also use emails to keep you up to date. If you receive enquiries from residents as a result of any disruption refer them to the Biffa call centre on 03000 610 610.

For more information about waste collections during adverse weather contact 01235 422406 or email the Waste Team.