

Long Wittenham Parish Council meeting held on 15th February 2024

Present: Chairman Steve Brown, Cllr Steve Bolton, Cllr Peter Rose, Cllr Mark Thompson, Cllr Liz Yuille, RFO Clifford Bosley.

In attendance: Martin Elliff (clerk) and 2 members of the public.

The chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2024/020 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Cllr David Corney.

2024/021 ITEMS RAISED BY MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

- Several residents had asked if the recent excessive flooding of the road to Clifton Hampden might be caused by the boathouse development at The Maddy. It was agreed that this is unlikely as the Environment Agency would have done extensive research when the planning application was submitted and it has been unusually wet this Winter. Building inspectors will check that the planning application is implemented correctly.
- Wild Oxfordshire (WO) had asked for volunteers from the village to help with hedgerow planting at Lower Farm on 16th and 18th February. It had also asked if the PC's insurance could cover the session on the 18th. Cllr Yuille said that the PC's insurance company has said that this is only possible if it is a PC event, which this is not. WO has a contingency plan which Cllr Yuille will asked them to implement.

Actions:	Cllr Yuille to advise Wild Oxfordshire to implement their insurance contingency for the hedgerow planting session on 18th February.
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2024/022 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

None.

2024/023 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The Parish Council resolved to sign the minutes of the meeting held on 18th January 2024.

2024/024 MATTERS ARISING FROM MINUTES

- Resident Prew Bowtell had asked if was possible to have a bigger post box in the village. Cllr Yuille has approached Royal Mail which has responded asking for more information. Cllr Yuille will provide this.
- Cllr Corney had reported by email that the location for the speed survey at the eastern end of the village has been agreed with residents and the survey will be booked with OCC.
- In response to the council's request for a new councillor, resident Ian Burton was present to offer his services. Following discussion, and in the absence of any other candidates, it was agreed that he should be co-opted at the PC meeting in March.

2024/025 REPORT FROM DISTRICT COUNCILLOR

Cllr Casey-Rerhaye's report sent by email is attached in Appendix A.

Cllr Bolton expressed his concern that Cllr Casey-Rerhaye appears not to have put her full weight behind the Community Hub planning application. Following discussion, the council agreed that she should be asked to give her full support.

2024/026 REPORT FROM COUNTY COUNCILLOR

None.



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2024/027 PLANNING APPLICATIONS

P24/S0160/DIS Land to the north east of Didcot NRR
P24/S0421/DIS Land off Fieldside track Didcot Road LW NRR

2024/028 COMMUNITY HUB

Cllr Rose reported that the differences between Thomas Homes' Viability Assessment and that of SODC's consultants are still holding up the planning application. The Chairman and Cllr Rose have written to SODC's head of planning Adrian Duffield asking for his support – see Appendix B. Mr Duffield has yet to respond. An updated Viability Assessment has been sent to SODC's consultants. They have until 16th February to respond. If, by the end of February, SODC still refuses the application, then Thomas Homes will ask for it to go to an enquiry.

It was suggested that Cllr Sudbury should be urged to give all possible support to the application. The chairman will write to him.

Actions: Chairman to write to Cllr Sudbury asking for his support for the Community Hub planning application.

2024/029 CIL PROJECTS

- Acklings Playground:

Cllr Rose reported that Claire Michelis has asked Jupiter to redraw the plans. She has chased them but there has been no response to date.

The chairman suggested that, in advance of any upgrade to the playground, all the hedges on the boundary should be given a thorough cut back, including behind the Pump Track. Agreed. Cllr Bolton will contact Logs Unlimited to get this done.

- Allotments Water Supply:

A quotation had been obtained some time ago from Reading Asphalt to dig a well at the Acklings allotments. Cllr Bolton said that Logs Unlimited had also quoted but their price was significantly higher. The chairman will contact Reading Asphalt to ask for an updated quote.

Actions: Cllr Bolton to ask Logs Unlimited to cut back the boundary hedges at Acklings. Chairman to ask for an updated quotation for digging the allotments well.

2024/030 LONG WITTENHAM TO CLIFTON HAMPDEN CYCLE/PERMISSIVE PATH

Cllr Thompson reported that the Gibbs Estate has still not provided permission for the permissive path.

David Johnston MP has offered to support the project.

A second quotation for clearing the roadside vegetation and levelling the roadside footpath at the village end is still required. It was suggested that Steve Thatcher might be able to do it.

OCC's Rebecca Crowe had been contacted asking about the rumoured plans for a cycle path on the road. She is consulting with other members of her team and a response is awaited.

2024/031 JOINT LOCAL PLAN RESPONSE

Cllr Yuille had circulated a suggested council response before the meeting. Agreed. Clerk to send it to SODC.

Actions: Clerk to send the council's response to the Joint Local Plan.

2024/032 SPEED LIMIT EXTENSIONS

Following a request to OCC to extend the speed limits at the entrances to the village Jonathan Beale OCC's Senior Officer for Traffic & Road Safety has proposed the following:

Little Wittenham Road:

Buffer 30mph for 250 metres from the existing 20/National Speed limit signs towards Little Wittenham, past the entrance to the Nature Reserve car park.

High Street (between Long Wittenham and Clifton Hampden):

Extend the existing 30mph speed limit by 50 metres to allow for the proposed off road cycle track to join High Street within a 30mph speed limit, and to introduce a 40mph speed limit for the remaining section of road up to the existing 30mph speed limit near the Barley Mow car park.

£2,000 was approved to fund this at the February 2023 PC meeting. It was agreed that the chairman should ask OCC to proceed accordingly.

The chairman said that he doubted that OCC would suggest anything for the Didcot Road entrance, as the Community Hub plan includes a new roundabout at Saxons Heath which will slow down traffic entering the village from the south.

Actions: Chairman to ask OCC to proceed with the speed limit extensions.

2024/033 BOLLARDS DIDCOT RD / ELIVIA S278 AGREEMENT

OCC has provided the specifications for better bollards on the build-out on Didcot Road. The chairman has chased Elivia to replace the bollards accordingly and to complete all other outstanding works on Wessex Way.

2024/034 WESSEX WAY PLAY AREA

Some residents on Wessex Way have asked if the PC will check the play area when checking the other playgrounds in the village. Cllr Yuille explained that this is not possible as the checks at Acklings, Bodkins and Westfield are required by the terms of the council's insurance. As the council does not have an insurable interest in the Wessex Way playground, to carry out checks might put the council at risk should any incident occur. The council agreed that it should not carry out checks.

Residents had also asked if the waste bin on the play area could be emptied. SODC will not do it because the bin is on private land. The chairman is currently awaiting a quotation from Biffa for them to empty the bin at the Westfield Road play area. If this is acceptable, it may be possible to add the Wessex Way bin to the contract.

2024/035 REPORTS FROM MEMBERS ON OUTSIDE BODIES

None.

2024/036 ITEMS RAISED BY MEMBERS

- Emergency Plan: Cllr Yuille had amended the draft Emergency Plan to remove the 'Zone Co-ordinators' and it had been circulated before the meeting. Approved. It was suggested that a meeting be arranged for a 'table top' dry run of the plan to identify any problem areas so that OCC can be asked for their input.
- Cllr Bolton asked if the installation of a defibrillator at Sinodun Close had made any progress. The SOHA manager had refused permission for it to be installed on the walls of the building. The chairman will chase Cllr Casey-Rerhaye for the contact details of the chief executive of SOHA.
- It was suggested that the roots of the bushes that were removed from the Westfield Play Area are beginning to shoot and need to be dug out. It was also suggested

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that the two rear corners of the plot be turn over to wildflowers. Agreed. Cllr Bolton will ask Logs Unlimited to get this done.

- Cllr Corney had reported by email that the Community Speed Watch team has now been in place for 1 year. In that time the team has checked the speed of over 5,500 vehicles, and recorded 147 drivers speeding. The team has clocked up over 34 hours of roadside sessions during this year. It has also recorded details of the first likely illegal HGV. He asked about purchasing a movable speed monitor as used at Sire's Hill. It was agreed to defer this discussion to the next meeting when Cllr Corney is present.
- Cllr Rose has been in touch with the bursar of Headington School with a view to discussing community access to the new boathouse. The bursar, Richard Couzens, has offered to suggest some dates when councillors can have a tour of the boathouse and discuss access.

Actions: Chairman to ask Cllr Casey-Rerhaye for the SOHA executive contact details.
Cllr Bolton to ask Logs Unlimited to do the agreed work at the Westfield Road Play Area.

2024/037 MATTERS ARISING FROM CHAIRMAN

The chairman reported that he has had discussions with the PCC with a view to implementing a new management plan for Wards Field so that it can be identified as a biodiversity offset for the Community Hub.

The Woodland Adventure site at Acklings is littered with rubbish and broken items. He suggested that the Pre-School be asked to tidy the area as soon as possible.

Actions: Clerk to write to the Pre-School asking them to tidy the Woodland Adventure site.

2024/038 FINANCIAL REPORT

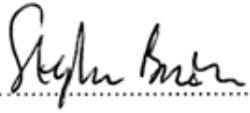
● Expenditure during January	
03/01/2024 Savills Inv 882105 (Acklings Rent)	£500.00
03/01/2024 Logs Unlimited Inv 230691	£535.74
03/01/2024 Elliff Expenses (Website Hosting)	£27.00
09/01/2024 Bosley Expenses (Payroll)	£193.00
09/01/2024 Bosley Expenses (Stationery)	£92.23
16/01/2024 Clerk's Salary January 2024	£360.15
23/01/2024 Xplosive Group Ltd Inv INV-11103 (Village Bonfire Night)	£2,375.00
January Expenditure Total	£4,083.12

2024/039 ANY MATTERS FOR FUTURE DISCUSSION

- Cllr Bolton invited members of the council to have a look at the improvements at the Athletic Club when they can. Several events are planned at the club for the Summer.

Meeting Closed at 9:20pm.

Date of next meeting: Thursday 21st March 2024

Signed: 

Date: 21/3/24

APPENDIX A

District Councillor Report February 2024 Sam Casey-Rerhaye

The next Joint Local Plan – consultation and low carbon housing

Planning is a key statutory responsibility for the district council and one of the main ways we can deliver our priorities on climate change, nature and biodiversity, truly affordable housing and provision of new infrastructure.

The Government's climate change adviser, the Committee on Climate Change, has assessed that all new buildings must be "zero carbon" by 2025 if the UK is to meet its legally binding decarbonisation targets.

In 2015, as part of "cutting the green crap," the government scrapped the zero-carbon homes standard which was due to come into force the following year. As a result, more than a million new homes have been built with poor energy efficiency standards and resulting higher bills.

We managed to ensure South Oxfordshire's existing Local Plan 2035, which passed inspection in 2020, imposes energy efficiency standards that are higher than those required by building regulations.

But in December, the government announced its new Future Homes Standard which disappointed many with its lack of ambition. The announcement included a condition that any local planning policy on energy efficiency that **goes beyond current or planned building regulations "should be rejected" by planning inspectors** unless it is supported by "well-reasoned and robustly costed rationale."

In our Council's draft Joint Local Plan 2041 we have some new policy proposals which include ambitious zero carbon standards for new developments, that go beyond the Future Homes Standard. It will be vital that the Council backs up these policies with robust evidence if they are to pass inspection.

The government is suggesting higher standards will limit the number of new homes built, but both can be achieved. Having high national building standards that align with the climate emergency can provide the homes people need *and* tackle the climate and cost of living crises. After all, sustainable homes are cheaper to run and less costly for our planet.

The consultation on the preferred options for the Joint Local Plan will run until **11.59pm on 26th February 2024**.

Please visit www.southandvale.gov.uk/JLP to find out more and have your say on these proposals which will have a lasting impact on our district.

New Grant for Infrastructure

We will soon be launching a new grant scheme called the **Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Grant Fund**.

The council collects CIL funding from some developments so fund the infrastructure required to support the impact of the developments. Through this pilot scheme, we're helping to fund local organisations to deliver infrastructure for their community required as a direct result of development.

Eligibility:

You can find more information about the Grant Fund and view the full eligibility criteria online, a few points to note:

- The fund is available to town and parish councils and not for profit community groups and organisations only.
- Proposed projects need to have a genuine focus on providing the infrastructure needed as a result of development and must be delivered in the South Oxfordshire District Council area.

- Proposed projects must adhere to the CIL spending requirements as set out in the regulations – the fund may only be used to support the actual delivery of physical infrastructure. It can be new infrastructure or improve or expand the reach of existing infrastructure. It is not able to cover costs for scoping or pre-planning of projects.
- We will prioritise projects that support our corporate priorities and other key criteria to ensure deliverability, sustainability, inclusivity and consideration towards the climate and ecological impacts.

How to apply:

Expression of Interests (EOI) will be open from **week commencing 19 February 2024**. The EOI stage will be open for six weeks and you can view the guidance materials now to help prepare. Following the EOI process, applicants whose projects meet the funding requirements will be invited to submit a full application.

If you have any questions, please send them to infrastructureobligations@southandvale.gov.uk.

Spring Clean

We are once again supporting the Keep Britain Tidy 'Great British Spring Clean' with litter pickers, high-viz jackets and bags available for loan to community litter picking groups and individuals, from Friday 15 March to Sunday 31 March.

Equipment is limited and it's first-come-first-served, so bookings should be made as soon as possible by completing and returning the booking form and declaration document available on South's litter picking webpage. We must receive completed forms at least two weeks before a litter pick takes place.

'Greening' your business

We're urging local businesses and organisations to take part in a survey to find how best to help them find new markets, make potential cost savings as well as becoming more environmentally-friendly.

If you can, please help us spread the word. The survey, created in partnership between the councils and Oxford Brookes Business School, takes just 15 minutes to complete. **Businesses, local groups, charities, town and parish councils, public sector, social enterprises and other organisations in South Oxfordshire are invited to have their say here.**

sam.casey-rerhaye@southoxon.gov.uk

01235 635566

APPENDIX B



Long Wittenham Parish Council

Planning Application P23/S1474/FUL

The erection of 45 residential dwellings, 355sqm Community Hub and 0.5 FE Primary School with 1.0 FE sized playing field.....

Dear Mr Duffield,

We are writing to you because this application has been designed in accordance with the key policies in our made NDP which was drafted with considerable input from your colleagues and was commended by the Planning Inspector who approved it. Our application has been with your team for approximately 9 months due to protracted negotiations with SODC and OCC. At this stage we feel we need your help to resolve this matter immediately.

Although we are the applicants for this planning application, our development partner Thomas Homes has attended all meetings on our behalf. Although we have worked closely with Thomas Homes over the last 9 years, we feel we have not personally had an opportunity to make the case for this application on behalf of our residents. We have lobbied our elected representatives to make the case for us, but our arguments seem to have been ignored by them. We are writing to you as Head of Planning, so that we have an opportunity to state our case to you in advance of the updated Aspinall Verdi report being received by your officers on the 16th February.

We understand that the final hurdle to achieving planning permission is the difference in the viability assessment between your consultants and ourselves. This has followed a lengthy negotiation (our application was submitted in May 2023) on several other areas of our application in responding to queries from your planning department and also officers from OCC. As we understand it, your consultants have stated that there is enough profitability in our plans to enable some affordable housing as part of the plan and this is a major sticking point.

Long Wittenham identified the need for a new school and village hall over ten years ago now. We have lobbied OCC about the need for a new school but without success. The school is well into its second century, has temporary classrooms from the 1960's, has none of the facilities expected of a modern school including a playing field that is well below the required size and has high heating and maintenance costs. In consequence we decided to try to find a way to build a school for ourselves, subsequently owned by OCC, so that the children of the village could benefit from buildings that will ensure a 21st century educational environment. Recently, Panorama on the BBC estimated that every Primary School in the country needs around £300K of work to bring it up to standard. Our school needs far more than this but we can provide a new school, built to the highest 21st century specification at no cost to the public purse.

When we started, we felt the first stage was to establish the principle of what we wanted to achieve through a Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP). We have now revised our first plan and together this process took eight years. We encountered all sorts of hurdles along the

way, in particular relating to the historical legacy of the village. The consultant who advised us said that our plan took much longer than any other she had supervised. This NDP was developed with significant input from your planning officers and has now been formally adopted by your Council as part of Planning Policy.

During this process we identified a suitable plot of land, but when SODC lost its 5 year land supply the developer we were working with went ahead with a planning application without any community facilities, but does include affordable housing. We were then fortunate that a benevolent local farmer (who had been a pupil at Long Wittenham School) stepped in with an offer of land. The land will be transferred at a value less than the minimum land value as set out in the SODC CIL methodology statement. It is only through this generosity that the plans have stood any chance of being viable.

We chose a development partner who prided themselves in high quality buildings. (Our NDP requires that only high quality development will be permitted to protect the village style) We worked hard with this partner, combined with our own research, to design houses which mirrored the eclectic architecture in Long Wittenham (which ranges from the second oldest house in Oxfordshire through houses built in nearly every century up to the present day). In addition we felt it essential that the houses are built to the highest specification to ensure that they contributed to improving our current global environmental catastrophe. The high quality and high environmental standards contribute to the overall cost of the development but is, in our view, the only way forward.

We feel in the light of the delays and objections that we have encountered, it is ironic that our NDP is held up as an exemplar in the current draft Local Plan, both in its desire to be innovative and provide community buildings as well as providing market housing which we are not required to do. We understand our NDP is often quoted as best practice by your officers at public meetings.

In summary we hope the SODC planning department will understand the situation we are in. Long Wittenham is a small village and as such is not required to provide any new housing. We are not against affordable housing per se and we have already accepted one development which includes affordable housing. Our current planning application for housing proposes community facilities including a new primary school rather than affordable housing. These are the priorities of Long Wittenham residents (as shown in our NDP surveys) and can only be achieved thanks to the generosity of a local farmer and the hard work of many Long Wittenham residents. The economic viability means that we cannot afford both.

I hope you will be convinced by these arguments and be able to represent our views and thus enable the planning officer to grant our planning application.

We would be happy to discuss and expand our point of view further with you, if you felt necessary.

Yours sincerely



Stephen Brown
Chair, Long Wittenham Parish Council



Peter Rose
Lead, Neighbourhood Development Plan
Long Wittenham Parish Council

