

District Councillor Report Haseley Brook ward

05 December 2023

CLlr Georgina Heritage



My meetings and activity

Meetings attended since my last report:

- 8th November Safeguarding training
- 17th Nov – Special Council meeting
- 23rd November – Planning Committee
- 4th December – Licensing Panel

It's been a good month for Neighbourhood Plans... SODC councillors were pleased to vote in favour of Chin-nor's Neighbourhood Plan Review on 17th November, especially as it was particularly time sensitive for the village.

Neighbourhood Plan referendums were held for Lewknor, Towersey and Wheatley on 23rd November, and it was a pleasure to attend the count for Lewknor that night. Lewknor's NP received a "Yes" by a huge majority of voters, which means it is now officially part of the development plan and will be used in the determination of planning applications in the area, which is hugely important for those who live there.

Having spoken with Peter Gardner and Kayti Foster who were part of the Lewknor Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group, I now appreciate just how much hard work goes into creating this document, and I give the group great credit for their dedication to the cause. The reward will be so very worth the time and effort; the NP carries weight in planning decisions and is the most meaningful way for residents to have a say in the future of their village.

Cornwell Solar Farm visit

On 13th November I had the opportunity to visit Cornwell solar farm site near Stoke Talmage. The operation was still at the piling stage and the panels themselves haven't yet been erected, but I thought it would be a useful visit, especially since the same company – Low Carbon Ltd - will be installing Harlesford solar farm. Cornwell solar farm will have the capacity to power over 15,000 buildings each year and, once finished, will offset 10,000 tonnes of CO2 emissions entering the atmosphere. The installation and subsequent ongoing observation and maintenance of the site were explained, and I found Low Carbon's team to be passionate about renewable energy and happy to engage with residents. I was pleased to see the mammal-friendly gates and fencing, so that native wildlife can continue to live and traverse as normal. I had a personal concern that there might be security lighting which could impact the area's night skies, and was reassured that this would not be the case. I hope to return in a few months once the panels have been installed, and I would encourage Haseley Brook residents to engage with Low Carbon Ltd if they have questions about this company's solar farm operations. I would be happy to ask questions on residents' behalf if they wish.

Joint Local Plan (and Chalgrove Airfield Deallocation)

South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils are preparing to launch the second round of consultation early next year to develop their new Joint Local Plan to 2041. The Joint Local Plan will help South and Vale determine planning applications, set out how and where new housing developments should take place, set standards for developments such as carbon and energy efficiency requirements, and guide what infrastructure is needed across the districts.

The next public consultation will ask for people's thoughts on proposed approaches across various policy areas, from reducing carbon emissions and nature recovery, to protecting and enhancing local heritage, meeting community infrastructure and transport needs, affordable housing, jobs and economic opportunities, and more. New policy areas which previous local plans haven't covered include policies to protect valued landscapes, tranquil places and dark skies.

The councils' proposals include reducing the number of new houses needed each year, improving minimum standards for water and energy efficiency, increasing biodiversity and the number of affordable houses developments need to deliver.

The next consultation is scheduled to launch to the public in January 2024, subject to review by both councils' cabinets, however you can view documents relating to the plan which were subject to Scrutiny in November:

<https://democratic.southoxon.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=341&MId=3240>

Please note item 9, Appendix 1, page 307-308 which describes how SODC/Vale propose to deallocate Chalgrove Airfield as a strategic site, and the reasons why.

Warm spaces

Residents needing a warm place this winter are welcome to use South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse leisure centres, which are opening up as Warm Spaces again this year. The leisure centres are available for people to have a warm drink and a friendly chat, and to charge their phones if needed.

South Oxfordshire centres are **Abbey Sports Centre** (Berinsfield), **Didcot Wave** (Didcot), **Henley Leisure Centre** (Henley), **Park Sports Centre** (Wheatley) and **Thame Leisure Centre** (Thame).

The Warm Spaces scheme will run from **9am-2pm on weekdays** in the café and communal areas of the centres. All the centres have been registered on the official **Warm Spaces website**.

Over £440,000 awarded to support swimming pools in South and Vale

As you may have seen in communications from SODC, swimming pools across South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse have been awarded a total of £441,542. SODC and Vale successfully secured this funding through Sport England to help finance the running of six of its Better UK swimming facilities. The funding is part of the government's Phase 1: Swimming Pool Support Fund (SPSF).

Day to day the centres are managed by the council's leisure contractor GLL. We know the positive impact swimming has on physical and mental wellbeing, but there has been huge increase in costs to manage the

pools over the last few years due to the rising energy costs and other financial pressures because of the Covid-19 pandemic. GLL will use this additional revenue to help finance the maintenance of the indoor swimming pools at leisure centres in South Oxfordshire and the Vale. South Oxfordshire Better UK swimming pools have been awarded £285,465, and £156,077 will be going to the Vale of White Horse facilities.

The councils are now in the process of applying for funding for the Phase 2 of the Swimming Pool Support Fund which will be used to improve the energy efficiency of its Better Leisure facilities across the two districts.