

SODC ward councillors' report

Shiplake – 16th December 2024

New NPPF and Standard Method

In the period ahead (up until Christmas) a new NPPF and Standard Method algorithm for setting “housing need” in each planning authority’s area is expected. (PS Now issued – verbal update.)

Local Government re-organisation

The new government have indicated that a White Paper on re-organisation of councils is expected before Christmas.

The speculation is that this will propose a national set of “Combined authorities”; these would cover a large “sub-regional” area and be responsible for national type infrastructure, industrial strategy and potentially high-level regional planning. Suggestions locally have been something like the ICB BOB – Oxfordshire plus Bucks and Berkshire (West). This is framed as “Devolution”.

It is also suggested that “unitary” councils may be proposed – where County and District powers are combined. This would either imply:-

- one monolithic unitary for Oxfordshire – possibly including West Berkshire – so c750k or 900k of population, or
- some sub-division of the above

We shall see!

Future Oxfordshire Partnership (FOP)

The FOP was renamed from the previous “Oxfordshire Growth Board”. It was originally set up as part of the Oxfordshire Growth Deal. That deal was inked to the Ox-Cam Arc notions and the idea of vast growth in new housing, population and jobs; it ran into a great deal of public opposition. Meetings included not only the leaders of the six councils (OCC, City and Districts), but also representatives of universities, the Local Enterprise Partnership (OxLEP - employers and companies), NHS and EA.

The FOP was renamed and it was previously agreed that it would become more a coalition of the willing. At a certain point it became clear that councils, whilst they had agreed an Oxfordshire Strategic Vision (<https://www.futureoxfordshirepartnership.org/a-vision-for-oxfordshire>) they could not agree on the extent of development that is desirable. Oxford City for example wanted a lot more – albeit in effect on the land of the districts!

Given that the OGD has now come to the end is expiring, the FOP meeting decided to disband FOP and its committee-groups going forwards. Instead, the council leaders agreed that they would meet to discuss and seek agreement on matters that cross borders and on which there is broad agreement as to need. The other organisations will no longer be part of the meeting, although consultation will continue as required.

Projects to go forward include work on :-

- a LAEP – Local Area Energy Plan. This considers the quantum shift of energy and in particular the electricity network required if gas and fossil fuels are to be phased out. Considerations will include generation including renewables (hydro, solar and wind), sub-stations, large battery capacity and pylons etc.
- Transition to net zero and adaptations
- the LNP - Local Nature Partnership
- Cross-border infrastructure – Digital/telecoms, utilities incl water, waste & recycling, transport
- Inclusive economy, skills and aspects of industrial strategy
- Considering devolution and local government re-organisation proposals

The terms of reference of the new arrangements have yet to be drafted and will be considered in January.

High-definition CCTV upgrade for Henley

16 new high-definition CCTV cameras have been installed in Henley-on-Thames town centre, to aid public safety.

The cameras directly replace the old analogue CCTV system and make the best use of digital transmission data cables which were installed to the control room in 2020, providing CCTV operators with much greater picture clarity to help support public safety and to assist the emergency services.

The cameras and control room upgrades, costing £29,000, have been funded by South Oxfordshire District Council which jointly runs the CCTV control room based in Abingdon that oversees town centre schemes across South Oxfordshire and the Vale of White Horse.

The new cameras are also more energy efficient than the analogue ones, playing a small part in helping the council to reduce its carbon emissions.

The service provides an important role in helping the police to keep people safe and detect crime in local town centres. Last year, CCTV operators monitored over 260 incidents in Henley and supported the police in making 19 arrests.

SODC provides 48 affordable new homes in Thame and Wheatley

The first of three new projects to provide 48 new, genuinely affordable and energy efficient homes in Thame and Wheatley to meet local needs* is now finished and has welcomed new tenants.

The homes are a combination of new builds and conversions and will include one-bed houses and flats at affordable rent or under a shared ownership scheme, as well as independent living accommodation for over 55 and 60-year-olds. (*A housing needs survey was conducted by the council in 2020 in Thame and is publicly available on our website as part of the project's planning application and planning permission.)

Brought to life through South Oxfordshire District Council's partnership work with Thame Community Land Trust and Thame & District Housing Association and Soha Housing, the homes are largely funded by Section 106 affordable housing grants from developer contributions.

In Thame, the first residents have moved into their new homes and are enjoying energy saving solar roof panels and ground source heat pumps which will help keep energy bills low, as well as access to EV charging points.

See what one resident, Tina, says about her home [in this video on YouTube](#).

A newly-built property in Wheatley of 12 one-bed apartments is also welcoming new tenants. The eco features mean the building will achieve zero carbon emissions

In addition, work is due to start on a third project of 31 affordable rent or shared ownership new-build houses and flats in Thame in 2025. The mix of new, affordable homes was established through a housing needs survey specific to Thame and will be available for people with a local connection to Thame.

Cllr Maggie Filipova-Rivers, Cabinet Member for Housing, South Oxfordshire District Council said: "Our partnership work with housing providers is one of the ways we're meeting the housing needs of our residents now and in the future. Providing these affordable homes built with high environmental standards and eco features to help keep bills low too will help ensure people on lower incomes can live and thrive here."

Craig Dransfield, Head of Development at Soha Housing, said: "This is an exciting community-led housing scheme Soha is looking forward to completing the homes - our second net zero carbon scheme - and letting them to residents, where we hope they'll be very happy. We hope to deliver many more in partnership with South Oxfordshire District Council."

The 48 properties will support the council's [Housing Delivery Strategy](#) to provide access to suitable, affordable homes for local people. This will help the council address a long-term issue of the availability of affordable housing for people in South Oxfordshire – which is an expensive area to rent or buy on the open market.

Don't let the weather leave you guessing!

Stay in the know - follow our new WhatsApp Channel and get bin collection updates and alerts, recycling tips and more sent directly to your phone which can be shared with your neighbours, friends, and family!

visit: [*South Oxfordshire Binfluencers!*](#)

Christmas waste and recycling

For all you need to know about waste collections over the Christmas and New Year period – including changes to collection dates, which bin you should put your Christmas rubbish in, what to do with your tree once the festivities are over and much more, please see our [*special Christmas waste page*](#).

Season's Greetings everyone!

Mike Giles & Leigh Rawlins

District Councillors