

SODC ward councillors' report

Shiplake – 8th June 2026

UK Gov to (virtually) abolish LPA Planning Committees

Using new powers under the Planning and Infrastructure Act 2025, UK Gov is to introduce a National Scheme of Delegation which will come into force on 31 October 2026 throughout England. The new National Scheme of Delegation restricts local LPA powers and Planning Committees by delegating most applications to council officers by default and capping committee sizes at 13 members.

These sweeping “reforms” will standardise a top-down diktat for all councils that have planning responsibilities. All applications will be classified into two schedules. The first will include householder developments, “minor” commercial and residential schemes (e.g., up to 9 dwellings), lawful development certificates, non-material amendments and “reserved matters” applications where the number of homes does not exceed 500 (for Outline permissions already agreed); these will all automatically be determined by Planning Officers without any other decision-making input – save for the right of applicants to appeals if any are refused. All other applications will fall under “Schedule 2”. These will also be determined by professional Planning Officers UNLESS both the Head of Planning and the Chair of the Planning Committee BOTH agree that a case should go to the residual Planning Committee. This is referred to as the “Gateway Test”. (Clearly in most cases the Head of Planning would not agree unless there were some special question that was in the nature of a new and uncertain policy question.)

The residual Planning Committee in each LPA:-

- Must not exceed 13 members. It is suggested that smaller may be better.
- Local councillors will no longer be allowed to press for Schedule 1 cases to be “called in”. Any other suggestions of a “call in” will be subject to the “Gateway Test”. Under this regime, there will of course be no powers for Town or parish council to “call in” any applications.
- No Planning Committee member may vote on an application unless they have completed mandatory planning training. (SODC have always required training.)

Separately the new higher “housing need” assessments via the “standard method” algorithm will continue to apply. Where housing delivery does not meet these numbers then the “tilted balance” will apply to reduce the power of policies under the Local Development Plan. (Subject to limited NP protections.) Presently most councils fail this test – which results in lots of speculative developments going forward in the wrong places, with the wrong mix and without complying to the policies in the Local Plan.

The presumption in “favour of development” will become something else - and with far less concerns about “sustainability”. Land Promoters will regard the new regime as a licence to print money. Actual builders will only build out those sites for which they believe lucrative demand exists.....

£75,000 Capital Grants Available for Community Projects

Town and parish councils and community organisations can now apply for funding through South Oxfordshire District Council's Capital Grant Scheme.

The scheme supports projects that improve quality of life across the district, including building improvements, play areas and other capital projects. Grants of up to £75,000 are available.

The deadline for applications is **Monday 20 July**. More information: southoxon.gov.uk/grants

Over £1.6 Million Invested in South Oxfordshire Infrastructure

South Oxfordshire District Council has transferred more than £1.6 million over the last six months to support local infrastructure projects delivered by the council, town and parish councils, and community organisations.

Funding has supported a range of initiatives including public art, youth services, sports facilities and environmental improvements.

Between 1 October 2025 and 31 March 2026, the council transferred:

- £1,016,390 in Section 106 (S106) funding
- £649,587 in Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding to eligible town and parish councils

A breakdown of approved and paid S106 funding and transferred CIL funding is available via the [council's website](#). For further information, contact the Infrastructure and Development Team.

Support Available for Households Struggling with Oil Heating Costs

The Community Hub is supporting residents who are struggling to afford household oil heating costs.

Financial assistance may be available through the Oxfordshire Crisis Support Scheme. Please help spread the word to anyone who may benefit.

More information is available on the Oxfordshire County Council website - <https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/council/help-rising-living-costs/residents-support-scheme>

Heritage Funding Opportunities Open

Three national heritage funding programmes have opened for Expressions of Interest, offering opportunities to restore and revitalise historic buildings and places.

The schemes, announced by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport and Historic England, include:

- Places of Worship Renewal Fund – supporting repairs, accessibility improvements and community facilities in listed places of worship.
- Heritage at Risk Capital Fund – helping to secure the future of at-risk heritage buildings.
- Heritage Revival Fund – supporting communities to bring neglected historic buildings back into use, including as arts venues, workspaces and affordable housing.

Further details are available on the Government website - <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/leaking-church-roofs-to-be-fixed-and-heritage-buildings-revitalised-as-applications-open-for-48-million-of-heritage-funding>

Binfluencers WhatsApp Channel and New BinDays App Launched

South Oxfordshire District Council has refreshed two services to help residents stay informed about waste and recycling. The **Binfluencers WhatsApp Channel** provides updates on collection changes, recycling advice and other service information directly to residents' phones.

More information: southoxon.gov.uk/Binfluencers

Residents who followed the previous Binfluencers channel will need to follow the new channel to continue receiving updates.

The council has also launched the **new BinDays web app**, replacing the Binzone app. Residents can check their next two bin collection dates and install the service on their mobile devices.

More information: southoxon.gov.uk/BinDays

Eye & Dunsden Neighbourhood Plan Update

The Eye and Dunsden Neighbourhood Plan is currently undergoing independent examination.

The examiner has issued a Clarification Note and a focused consultation is also taking place on amendments required following implementation of provisions within the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 (LURA). The consultation closes on **15th June**.

Further information is available on the Neighbourhood Plan webpage -

<https://www.southoxon.gov.uk/south-oxfordshire-district-council/planning-and-development/local-plan-and-planning-policies/neighbourhood-plans/emerging-neighbourhood-plans/eye-and-dunsden/>

Solar Energy Plans for Henley Leisure Centre

South Oxfordshire District Council's programme to decarbonise its leisure facilities continues to make progress.

Since being switched on a year ago on 20 May 2025, the 150 solar panels at Thame Leisure Centre have generated around 70,000 kWh of electricity—equivalent to the annual electricity use of approximately 26 average UK homes.

Plans are also being developed for solar panels and other energy-saving measures at Henley Leisure Centre.

Parish Councils Asked to Remove Historic Election Notices

Parish councils are being encouraged to review their websites and social media channels and remove historic election documents that are no longer required. Recent checks have found notices dating back to 2021 still appearing in search results. Documents such as Statements of Persons Nominated and Notices of Poll may contain candidates' home addresses and should **not** remain publicly accessible once an election period has ended.

Declarations of Results do not contain addresses and so may remain online.

Thames Farm

Sadly the Appeal Inspector agreed to allow the Taylor Wimpy appeal – subject to some extra planning conditions. This whole case has been highly regrettable and indicates a profoundly broken Planning system. In reality there is no effective scope for a Judicial Review. However it would be good to publicise this case. Peter Boros and the community have done an excellent job and deserved better.

More widely there are huge problems with the EA and Water Companies and the acceptance of high risk applications with systemic abuse of “Statutory Obligations”; not sustainable development!

[Mike Giles & Leigh Rawlins](#)

District Councillors