

REPORT TO SHIPLAKE PARISH COUNCIL **OCTOBER 2022**

FROM CLLR DAVID BARTHOLOMEW

GENERAL OCC REPORT

OCC SPENDS £30,000 ON 'SPACE INVADER'

This strange structure appeared in the car park in front of County Hall during August, taking up two valuable car parking spaces intended for visitors on county business. Apparently, it is a 'living wall' and the aim is to understand the impact of plants on air quality in the vicinity. It will stay in place for six months. The cost of the project to Council Tax payers is £30,000.



SECONDARY SCHOOL APPLICATION PROCESS OPENS IN OXFORDSHIRE

Parents and guardians can now apply for their Year 6 child to attend a secondary school for September 2023. Applications should be submitted online at:

www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/secondaryadmissions

OCC is encouraging parents and guardians to list four preferences on their application. This doesn't make it less likely that their first preference will be offered. But it does reduce the risk of all preferences being unsuccessful and children being allocated a place at a school that is not named on their list. The deadline for completed applications is 31 October 2022. Parents and guardians will then be contacted with the result to their application on national offer day, 1 March 2023. It is important to apply on time. Late applications will be processed later in the year and are far less likely to secure places at preferred schools.

TRAFFIC FILTER PLAN TO SPLIT OXFORD INTO FOUR SECTORS

Further measures to restrict car use in Oxford are out for consultation. 'Traffic filters' are to be introduced with the intention of creating four 'Sectors' within the city: North, South, West and East. When the traffic filters are operating, for cars without a permit, movement within each sector is unrestricted, but direct movement between sectors is not possible and requires use of the ring road. For example:

- County Hall, Westgate and Oxford station (all in West) will only be accessible via Botley Road, so if you were coming from North, East or South you would need to go via the A34 ring road and then Botley Road
- The area around St Giles & Gloucester Green will only be accessible via Banbury or Woodstock Road

Affected motorists will face much longer journey times and distances. The intention is to force a change in behaviour. The original project description of 'sectorisation' has been dropped as it is felt that 'traffic filters' is a far less controversial term. Leading traders' organisation Oxford Business Action Group has slammed the proposals saying in the Oxford Mail: "We are concerned that in their current design, the introduction of these six traffic filters will negatively impact many businesses, causing closure for many and catastrophically damaging countless others."

A423 KENNINGTON BRIDGE REPAIRS

The project will see the replacement of the existing Kennington rail bridge structure, allowing for a new eastbound bus lane and a shared use path on the north side for cycling and walking. It will also enable flood alleviation for the area as part of the Oxford Flood Alleviation Scheme (OFAS), to be delivered by the Environment Agency. Construction is expected to take place between late 2023 and 2026, with the bridge never being fully closed to traffic but being replaced one half at a time. Conservatives are asking about the combined impact of these proposed repairs and the traffic filter restrictions.

COMPLAINTS AGAINST OCC UP BY 60%

OCC was the subject of dozens of complaints and enquiries to the ombudsman about its actions last year, new figures show. The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman is responsible for investigating wrongdoing in local public services. If it finds that the council has acted in an unfair or unjust way, the ombudsman will offer recommendations on how to make things right. According to figures from the body, there were 64 complaints or enquiries made about OCC in the year to March – up from 40 the year before, a 60% increase since the new administration took over.

SEPTEMBER FULL COUNCIL MEETING DEFERRED UNTIL 7 OCTOBER

Due to the period of mourning, the September meeting of Full Council was deferred until 7 October with no change to the business to be considered.

LIBDEMS ATTEMPT TO MOVE A MOTION TO CUT VAT

The LibDems put forward a motion to Full Council in July stating Government should immediately introduce various subsidies and cut VAT to 17.5%. The motion was not debated due to lack of time, but is coming back to Full Council at the October meeting. Conservatives have pointed out that whatever the merits or not of the proposal, the administration is once again wasting council resources trying to get involved in central government issues way beyond the council's remit. Councillors are not junior MPs and they should focus on local matters. It is believed the motion has been centrally generated by LibDem HQ as almost identically worded motions have been debated at other LibDem councils.

LIBDEM/GREEN/LABOUR ADMINISTRATION RAMPS UP VEGANISM CAMPAIGN

The administration continues to push its vegan agenda. A new website promoted by Oxfordshire councils called Climate Action Oxfordshire features links to the Vegan Society. Pressure group the Countryside Alliance has responded by stating that the vegan policies which OCC has adopted should be dropped because they undermine British farmers. It argues that in order to make an environmental choice, it is more important for consumers to know where food comes from and how it is produced. At the OCC Full Council meeting in October, Conservatives will again try to reverse the imposition of vegan meals at council meetings. Conservative Councillor Yvonne Constance will ask members to reinstate meat and dairy on to the menu and to support local producers. She will move that: "This Council resolves to offer locally produced menus at Council-catered events, including meat, dairy and vegan options, or to make alternative provisions for members, staff and attendees to facilitate personal choice." Cllr David Bartholomew, who is seconding the motion, will say: "We are not opposed to vegan food, but we want to serve local food rather than flying in mangoes from abroad. And we want there to be a choice. It is not right to impose ideological dietary opinions on others."

SPECIFIC OCC REPORT FOR SHIPLAKE

POSSIBLE CLOSURE OF LEVEL CROSSING FOR RAILWAY MAINTENANCE WORKS

OCC officers have chased Network Rail for an update but have received no response to date.

MEMORIAL AVENUE/PLOUGH LANE SPEEDING ISSUES & FMS ENQ22924787: 'WIG-WAG' SIGN NEAR SHIPLAKE PRIMARY SCHOOL

I would be grateful an update on Cllr Head's meeting with OCC officer Jon Beale.

OBSTRUCTIONS UNDER RAILWAY BRIDGE OVER MILL LANE

OCC has put a notice on the objects under the railway bridge stating they must be removed by the owner, or OCC will remove them. Some of the obstructions have now been removed.

VANDALISM ON THAMES PATH

I previously reported the damaged footbridge to officers and have had reassurances the bridge will be made safe. I have chased again as no action has yet been taken.

RETIREMENT VILLAGE P21/S4102/RM

I have been in contact with OCC officers and they have confirmed there is a breach but seem reluctant to take any action. The officer comment is as follows:

Works on site and UU

- The works being carried out on site are considered to constitute commencement in terms of the UU with OCC*
- The developer has been formally advised that he is currently in breach of UU and that OCC will be following enforcement process in parallel with S278 agreement.*
- It is considered unlikely that the courts would grant OCC an injunction to halt works on the development site, given fact that developer is co-operating with S278 process and that all efforts are being made by both sides to put S278 agreement in place. To this end, the legal focus is upon moving the S278 agreement to engrossment stage as quickly as possible. If frustrations or complications from the developer side materialise OCC will pursue next stage of enforcement, which will entail seeking injunction against the developer to halt works.*

RETIREMENT VILLAGE P21/S4102/RM: SPEED LIMIT CHANGES

The consultation shows that 85% of respondents, including the police, oppose the change in speed limit from 40mph to 30mph. Despite this, officers are recommending the change goes ahead. The decision will be made by the Cabinet Member on Thursday. The PC needs to register by 9.00am tomorrow (Tuesday) to speak at the meeting (virtually or in person).

GENERAL SODC REPORT

SODC HQ MOVE

SODC has now moved out of Milton Park into temporary accommodation owned by VOWH DC in Abingdon. Conservatives are pressing that this move should be made permanent and the vanity project of building a brand-new HQ in Didcot should be abandoned.

SPECIFIC SODC REPORT FOR SHIPLAKE

SHIPLAKE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

This was approved at a special Full Council meeting last month.

‘THE BEECHES’ ENFORCEMENT INVESTIGATION

At the request of residents, I instigated an Enforcement investigation on 6th July. As previously advised, I was disappointed to discover the case wasn’t assigned to an officer until 12th August. This month, I expressed concerns to Enforcement about the trip hazards created by the unfinished footpath and entrance. I was advised the photographs I supplied had been added to the file. I had hoped for more decisive action.

‘POPLAR EYOT’ ENFORCEMENT INVESTIGATION

Officer engagement was this was very slow and it took eight months for an officer to be assigned to the case. Further site work is currently underway and officers advise a retrospective application is going to be submitted, so no enforcement action will be taken for the time being.

LAND ADJACENT THE TOWER HOUSE READING ROAD (IRIS HOUSE AND THE PINES)

SODC officers have apologised for failing to properly word the planning conditions, meaning that the houses can be sold and new residents move in prior to the access path to the village being completed.

P21/S4616/FUL ERECTION OF 11 DWELLINGS AT REAR OF CROSSWAYS

The Inspector has allowed the appeal. He was very critical of SODC’s failure to supply up to date Housing Land Supply figures at the hearing.

P21/S4271/RM WYEVALE 40 DWELLINGS

The developer has submitting an amended RM application and I am broadly supportive of the proposals. However, I strongly object to the plan to extend the 30mph limit towards Henley.

P21/S5382/FUL WYEVALE 55 DWELLINGS

I have again queried why the refusal notice has still not be issued.

P20/S2808/DIS: THAMES FARM

I am unaware of any progress relating to this site. After a meeting with TW and an extensive exchange of emails, the TW response to the request to commence tree replanting was as follows:

“We have been advised that in order for the tree planting to be successful the ground remediation within a certain proximity should be completed first. We are committed to the development and hope to start ground remediation as soon as we can and therefore commence the tree planting accordingly.”

I have said to the SODC Deputy Chief Executive that this response is unsatisfactory and that I don’t understand that if the highway is safe, why it isn’t safe to plant trees along the highway – planting within the site can wait. I have asked what action is SODC going to take as the community has already suffered this eyesore for years.