

Ian Middleton – Councillor report for parishes July 2022

As always my report covers all the areas I represent both as a District and County Councillor. Whilst some of it may not be in your immediate area I feel it's still worth all Parishes having an overview as many of the issues may effect other areas.

County and District County Meetings

I attended the AGMs of both the County and District Councils. This was mainly statutory business for both councils although a new Chair of OCC was elected in Cllr Susanna Pressel who will serve for a year.

On Cherwell we welcomed several new members and the Progressive Oxfordshire Grouping consisting of Independents, Greens and LibDems became the second largest group making them the official opposition, taking over from the Labour group. I am a member of the group and now deputy leader of the opposition. The Conservative majority on the council was cut to 2 as a result of the elections in May.

No other substantial business was transacted at either meeting.

OUFC Stratfield Brake

This is an ongoing issue and further meetings with stakeholders were held recently. The football club have now engaged a planning consultancy to further their proposals for the site and have sent round a leaflet explaining their position to addresses in Kidlington and Gosford. I have expressed concern that this was not what was promised at recent meetings and that we are still no further forward in terms of understanding what they are proposing for the site. My opinion is that the leaflet tells us nothing new and may just serve to confuse residents. I am pressing internally with OCC colleagues for more clarity on the situation.

Airport

I was unable to attend the last meeting of the Airport Advisory Committee and so do not have any feedback on this. It was notable however that the airport felt it appropriate to comment on the planning brief for the LPPR site PR7a (Bicester Road) suggesting that new residents should be made aware of the proximity of the airport. I spoke at the planning meeting considering the brief and commented that I was surprised that the airport had not made similar comments on areas that are far closer to the flightpath such as PR9 in Begbroke (Spring Hill).

Flooding – Yarnton and Begbroke

I have no further news on the plans for this site other than an email I received this morning (4th July) with a report from Merton's civil engineering consultant Dave Wooley. This proposes a new flood alleviation plan for the site, but I have not yet had time to read it in detail. I assume this report has been circulated to the areas affected, but if not let me know and I can send round a copy, assuming it's not confidential.

Some works have been done by various agencies (including OCC) to clear the drainage ditches along Rutten Lane. This is ongoing.

Campsfield House

There are government proposals to re-open Campsfield House to accommodate refugees that the government is seeking to send to Rwanda. Presumably the intention is to fly them out from Oxford

Airport but this is not clear. If this is the case this is likely to cause significant issues with protestors and security which may have an impact on local residents. We are currently awaiting further details on this from the Home Office.

Woodstock housing development

Blenheim Estates are seeking outline approval for houses on the site near the Woodstock Roundabout which was rejected by the planning inspector during the Local Plan Partial Review. These houses were subsequently added to sites in Kidlington to if they were now to go ahead in Woodstock anyway this would represent another significant betrayal of local residents by the District Council. It remains to be seen what the outcome of this will be, but I would strongly suspect that the application will be rejected as it is now outside the local plan (the area is just on the edge of Cherwell despite being in Woodstock). Blenheim may then appeal though so this could re-open this can or worms.

NB. This site is not in my County Division or District Ward but I thought it was important information for people within my areas as it's so close and will have a knock on effect.

Silver bins

There were some problems with the provision of the silver food caddies (both indoor and outdoor). I was contacted by several residents asking for help on this and most concerns were quickly remedied by CDC. If anyone is still experiencing problems contact your district councillor (this may not be me depending on which parish you are in but I'm happy to try to help if you don't know who that is).

Planning brief for PR7a (Bicester Road Kidlington)

I spoke on this matter as one of the District Councillors for the area. I highlighted the inconsistencies in terms of the concerns raised by the airport as well as other concerns such as flooding.

This site is mainly being developed by Barwood. Other issues raised were:

- Building heights on the development and their impact on existing residents
- The lack of an Environmental Impact Assessment along with Barwood's request to not have to commit to 10% biodiversity gains
- Provision of playing fields and access within the site
- Flooding
- Construction traffic and HGVs

I again raised concerns about the point of the development briefs as they are not enforceable and so many of the proposals made by local groups and residents are discounted.

A44 corridor works

Proposals for a bus lane from Cassington Roundabout to Loop Farm Roundabout were passed by the Cabinet Member at OCC despite concerns I raised about the way the consultation was handled. There was confusion about the provision and impact of the bus lane as well as a bus gate over the canal bridge. There are also worries about how residential access will be maintained as well as how new roads from local developments will feed on to the A44.

There will be a further briefing for local parish councils at 5pm on 6th July which I have asked for and which will cover the whole of the route from Kidlington to Woodstock. At this point it seems unclear as to who is responsible for all sections of this route.

Sandy Lane

The resurfacing works that were done by the 'Dragon patcher' last year have now almost entirely failed and I am pursuing a more substantial set of re-surfacing works which I hope will be done soon.

A meeting to discuss the closure of the level crossing was recently planned with Network Rail. This was instigated by Layla Moran but was subsequently cancelled when CDC didn't send a representative.

Bicester Road

I've raised the issue of the increasing number of potholes and the poor repairs that have been done recently. I'm assured that these will be dealt with soon. A top dressing is programmed in for the road soon and I have raised with officers that the potholes will need to be dealt with properly first.

Water Eaton Lane

I had a site meeting with councillors, the parish clerk and one of the highways officers about the proposals from GWEPC about yellow lining this road. There are concerns about access for farm vehicles and emergency services when there are cars and vans parked in WE Lane. We're also trying not to push these problems into Beagles Close.

There seems to be no alternative but to allow yellow lines on these stretches, although I remain concerned about the impact on residents. GEWPV will be contacting all addresses in WE Lane and Beagles Close to attend a meeting to discuss the proposals.

Kidlington Roundabout

Proposed works to the Kidlington Roundabout are being consulted on now although they have been the subject of considerable criticism by local walking and cycling groups. I have been raising many of their concerns about the redesign for nearly a year but it appears that not very much has changed in that time.

I and other concerned members are now challenging these designs internally.

Cycling

I had a meeting outside Parkway Station with officers and other OCC members (Including the cycling champion Cllr Dan Levy) and representatives from local cycling campaign groups to discuss alterations to the road layout in light of the death of a cyclist there earlier this year. We then had a further meeting in Summertown to discuss the implementation of 'Vision Zero' which aims to ensure there are no further deaths or injury for pedestrians or cyclists in the future. This was a productive meeting, although the subsequent criticism of the Kidlington roundabout proposals has somewhat soured that.

As always, if there are any issues arising out of the above or anything else I need to deal with, feel free to contact me.

Ian Middleton