

**District Council report
for
Somerton Parish Council
25 July 2023**

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Planning policy

The Council's Executive is now due to consider a consultation draft of the Cherwell Local Plan Review (the so-called 'Regulation 18' procedure) at its meeting on 4 September 2023.

The Cherwell Local Plan 2040 had initially gone to the Executive on 19 January 2023. Background reading for colleagues' benefit can be found [here](#) in case of interest. I would suggest that Parish Councillors with a particular interest in Planning do so.

Following extensive comments from the Council's Overview and Scrutiny ('O&S') committee on 11 January 2023 (further details of which can be found [here](#)) and owing to the proximity of the local elections, a sensible precautionary decision was taken by the Exec to delay consideration of the Regulation 18 process until the Summer.

Subject to the approval of the Executive, the Council is expected to launch a six-week public consultation (mid-September – end October/early November).

During the consultation, a series of public exhibitions and parish workshops will be held at dates to be confirmed.

The draft plan, when published, will then still be at the 'Regulation 18 stage'. Regulation 18 essentially means the initial stages of preparing a Council's local plan. It is where the Council is still developing its policies and proposals, and where it is looking to hear the views of local communities.

The Council's recent Parish Liaison meeting provided an update on this process and further information will be provided in the monthly parish newsletter updates, too.

Pre-notification emails will be sent to all Parish Councils ahead of the Executive meeting in September (please expect this during the week commencing either 28 August or 4 September 2023, if not before) with further details surrounding the public consultation.

Councillors, myself included, have made it very clear that Parish Councils must be properly consulted on the emerging plans. As ever, if colleagues wish to discuss any matters with me at all, they are welcome to do so.

Strategic Rail Freight Interchange (SRFI)

A number of parish colleagues have asked me where we are with the SRFI at Ardley. This is principally a matter for Oxfordshire County Council although I can advise that

the project remains on hold. The latest I have from the District Council's senior Planning officer is as follows:

“There is no new news. The promoter advised that they were having a pause and rethink and that is yet to emerge.”

The latest position from SRFI can be found on its website [here](#). A helpful summary from the Oxford Mail dated 27 April 2023 can also be found [here](#).

Rest assured, I have asked District Council Planning team to keep me abreast of any change as a priority, given how much of a concern this is for parishes across the Deddington ward.

Planning applications affecting the Deddington ward

I attach the weekly list of planning applications for the month covering 12 June and 14 July 2023 inclusive.

There are 25 applications affecting the Deddington ward although many not affecting the immediate parish. If there are any applications of particular concern, please let me know. I am happy to follow up.

I remain concerned about the resubmitted outline planning application (23/01503/OUT; further details [here](#)) affecting the Fringford and the Heyfords war. Comments were due back on 20 July 2023 and it remains to be seen how the application will progress. I will update colleagues as soon as I know more.

Chiltern Railways Engineering update

Unfortunately, we can expect some disruption on the Chiltern line over the coming months. I attach an update received from Chiltern Railways, which provides further detail, but please find below a quick summary of the dates where services are likely to be affected:

- Oxford Parkway to Oxford – 29 July to 6 August
- Bicester North to Banbury/Leamington Spa – 29 July to 4 August
- Aylesbury Vale Parkway to Amersham – 7 August to 18 August
- Aylesbury to Princes Risborough – 7 August to 30 October

Control of Cherwell District Council

In administrative terms, the Council continues to function well, despite being in ‘no overall control’. The Council is now run by a minority Conservative administration, which consults with other political groups as a matter of course, given the finely balanced membership of the Council, which breaks down as follows:

20 Conservative;
12 Labour;
10 Liberal Democrat;

3 Green; and
3 Independent.

Rationalisation of the Council's estate

The District Council continues to push on with an ambitious programme of rationalising its post-pandemic buildings, the broad thrust of which is to make better use of land in Banbury and Bicester, and to encourage more workers and more homes in our town centres.

I am strongly supportive of this approach, not least given the pressure that could otherwise be placed on our rural parishes in terms of new homes. My own view is that we can find significant room for new homes within our towns, especially Banbury. Getting salaries into our town centres, too, can only be a good thing and I hope to see the District Council relocated to Banbury town centre over the next 12-18 months.

Funding for Play Area and Allotment Project

I am exploring what, if any, Cherwell District Council (CDC) funds may be able to assist the parish with its plans. Alison and I are due to speak later this week on the project about the planning considerations, which I hope will be navigable.

My colleague on Oxfordshire County Council (OCC), Arash Fatemian, may be able to help with some funding from his Councillors' Priority Fund, which affords him £7,500.00 per financial year to distribute among his parishes.

Although not a huge amount in personal terms, there may also be avenues that he can explore from a community funding perspective unique to the County Council. Arash and I will keep in touch, and we will endeavour to report back as soon as we can.

Google Maps difficulties

Unfortunately, this is another one that substantially relates to OCC, rather than CDC. However, Arash or I will report back as soon as we have more information to pass on. It is a difficult one in policy terms for us to deal with as it ostensibly relates to a Highways matter (OCC) that results from a Planning application (CDC).

Ongoing casework

All parish councillors should feel free to get in touch anytime. Do, please, encourage residents to keep sending through any issues of concern to them, their neighbours or the wider parish, too.

The best means of getting in touch in the first instance is WhatsApp (07445 395 166). I am generally able to respond while at work and we can always firm up a time to speak on the phone later that day or week.

For more detailed enquiries, please email these through to eddie.reeves@cherwell-dc.gov.uk and I will do my best to respond within two clear working days.

Equally, residents who do not 'do' WhatsApp or email are welcome to give me a ring on my mobile although I may often be at work during the day. I am *always* happy to help.

I am keen also to be added to any village WhatsApp groups, if that could be arranged.

As ever, if you have any questions about this report or the District Council's work, do please let me know.

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