

Kidlington Parish Council

Chair's report

January 2020

This time of the year is a good moment to review progress on the Council's main agenda items.

The most significant new development, or non-development, is the conclusion of the recent review of the Oxford Local Plan (my July and December reports). The Parish Council objected to the Plan on the grounds that Oxford's calculation of housing need is excessive, with insufficient provision for house-building within the city. The same case was made eloquently, and with a much greater volume of supporting arguments, by Alan Lodwick and the Cherwell Development Watch. Kidlington residents owe much to Alan's efforts to protect the village Green Belt, but in this case, sadly, they were unavailing: at the end of the hearings the Inspector ruled immediately that the figures were sound. The last major objection to Cherwell's housing plans for our area has thus been removed, although we await the response to our objection on the allocation of an extra 200 houses around the Bicester Road cemetery.

The other major planning threat, the East-West Expressway (my August report), seems to have gone quiet for the moment. Many think that it will not happen: the proposed consultation period has not been fixed. But given the drastic implications for the area we live in, we should not yet be complacent.

Within Kidlington, discussions of the redevelopment of Exeter Close still await the tender for an options appraisal for the site. We are involved in this jointly with the County Council, who are interested in moving their library across the road to Exeter Close. Bringing more community facilities together on the site is something that we strongly support.

We have had discussions with senior Cherwell officers on the Kidlington Masterplan (my October report) for the development and enhancement of the village. The plan was commissioned by Cherwell, though with substantial Parish Council input, but further progress on revision and implementation requires staff time to be freed up in the District Council, and so far this has not happened. Similarly, we have had discussions on the High Street bollard (my September report) and have been assured that progress is being made. Residents will have noticed, however, that it often remains down.

Things can move slowly in local government. But in a significant new initiative Cherwell is developing, with our strong support, an important project to promote physical and psychological health in Kidlington through a range of activities and facilities. As for the matters that depend directly on us, the Bicester Road cemetery (my November report) remains sadly soggy after the recent rains, but so far nothing worse. We have now cleared the ditch along one side, and once the effect of this is known we will take further action with expert advice. And to end on a positive note, the new play area in Ron Groves Park was re-opened just before Christmas with greatly increased facilities, which we hope will be really enjoyed by young families.

DAVID ROBEY