

Kidlington Parish Council

Chair's report: July 2023

The Cherwell Local Plan for 2040 has resurfaced, after the last draft that I wrote about a few months ago was referred back for further discussion. The present version, which has yet to be formally approved, should go out for consultation in mid-September. Most significantly, it has retained the proposals that I highlighted previously: it “favours” the option to build 300 new houses North of The Moors as well as 450 South-East of Woodstock. You can find it at :
<https://modgov.cherwell.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=116&MId=3966&Ver=4>.

The Woodstock site was originally included in the revisions to the last Local Plan, but was rejected by the Inspector. It is on the outside edge of the Parish, immediately North of the Airport, and might not directly impact on the Village; but it would obviously add significantly to the traffic congestion that will already be increased by the new housing developments on either side of the A44.

The land North of the Moors is much more of an issue for us. It is the field, in the Green Belt, that runs along the backs of the existing houses from St Mary's Church most of the way to the Banbury Road—though it may be that the section next to the Church will be reserved for a cricket pitch. The option is intended to meet local housing needs, not those of Oxford City, but there are obvious questions about how this would work in practice. The current proposal is that only 30% of the total would be affordable housing.

All this is part of a Kidlington Area Strategy which in other respects seems to have much to recommend it in terms of enhancement of the Village Centre and the canal corridor. Once the draft is approved and the consultation period begins, the Parish Council will be scrutinizing all of it very carefully.

On other matters, we have been following up the Landlord Deposit Notice issued by the Branson family regarding their land North-East of Church Street. This is a legal procedure to which there is no process for responding; it is simply a matter of the landowner declaring that they do not intend to allow new rights of way to be created in the future. The existing right-of-way footpath from St Mary's Church to Mill End is not affected. The Sustrans cycle and pedestrian route from the end of Church Street to Hampton Poyle is different: it is a permissive route, in the sense that the family have agreed that it can be used for these purposes, and permissive use cannot constitute a case for establishing a right of way. While the landowner can withdraw the permission at any time, we have no reason to believe that the Branson family have plans to do so. We will seek to clarify the situation further.

Finally, our annual Gala Day was held on 22 July in Exeter Close. Despite pouring rain it attracted a large number of visitors and seems to have been a great success. And while we have remained in contact with Oxford United about their stadium plans, we have so far received no new details that might address the objections that I wrote about last month. We shall be deciding our final position on the matter at our meeting in early September.

DAVID ROBEY