

Kidlington Parish Council Chair's report October 2020

Since my last report, where I referred to the formal adoption of Cherwell's Partial Review of its Local Plan, the Council has agreed to support the application of the Cherwell Development Watch Alliance for a legal challenge to the plan based on two issues: that the calculation of Oxford's housing needs (4400 houses) is unsound, and should have been far lower; and that that proper provision was not made for a replacement of the North Oxford Golf Course in order to build houses on it. There are two stages to the process: first, obtaining permission to proceed to judicial review; second, if permission is given, the judicial review itself. At present we have agreed to support the first stage, and depending on the outcome, we will decide whether to support the second stage. Permission could be given to proceed on one issue, or both, or neither.

If the application is unsuccessful, what will Kidlington look like in ten years' time, when the proposed new housing has been completed? The Green Belt gap between us and Oxford will have been reduced to a narrow strip between the A34 and the railway line, after 1360 new houses have been built South of the railway. There will be 120 new houses at the South-West end of the village, by Stratfield Brake, and 430 around the Bicester Road cemetery. The size of Yarnton and Begbroke will be vastly increased, with 2490 new houses in the two villages, though we will be separated from the developments by a green gap between the railway line and the canal. All of this will be of limited value to Kidlington residents, since the affordable housing will be reserved for Oxford's needs

All of this makes the work that the Council is currently doing on environmental issues doubly important: not just as a response to global warming, but also to keep Kidlington as far as possible a green and pleasant place despite all the surrounding housing development. At the end of last year, along with many other councils, we declared a Climate Change Emergency, which means, among other things, that we are committed to try and make Council activities net-zero-carbon by 2030, and work with other partners to the same end. We have a Climate Emergency Working Party, which will involve local residents outside the Council, to develop and exchange new ideas for action. We are also developing new policies and initiatives on habitat restoration, rewilding, trees, cycling and walking, as well as an ambitious long-term scheme for a circular linear park or Green Ring around the village, a series of green spaces linked together by cycling and walking routes. We are looking at the provision of electrical charging points for cars around the village, and are about to instal solar lighting at the Orchard Recreational Ground, having already done so at Exeter Close and Ron Groves Recreation Ground.

All of this complements the work we are doing with Cherwell Council's K5 Better Together scheme to promote health and well-being in Kidlington and the surrounding parishes.

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