

Kidlington Parish Council

Chair's report: July 2022

Despite the dog-day feel of the season, three important planning issues are in the offing and will be considered Parish Council at its forthcoming meetings.

Earlier in the year we had discussions and made representations both on the Oxfordshire 2050 plan and on the Cherwell Local Plan Review for 2040. In the last few days, however, an announcement has been made by the five district councils involved that they “were unable to reach agreement on the approach to planning for future housing needs within the framework of the Oxfordshire Plan”, and that work on the Plan has therefore been abandoned. Whether this is a good thing or not we cannot yet say, but at least it makes clear where decisions on housing will be taken. Further consultations on this and other aspects of the Cherwell plan are due to take place in the coming months, and as before we shall continue to oppose further housing development in the area around us and press for the maintenance of Kidlington's identity as a “village set in a landscape”—despite the housing developments now in the pipeline, and regardless of whatever decision we may take on the future of Stratfield Brake.

A more recent and specific issue has come up that is closely connected to this. Readers will have seen the County Council's public consultation document on its plans for the development of the Kidlington roundabout opposite Sainsburys. There is no doubt that improvements to the roundabout are much needed, both to make it safer for cyclists and pedestrians and to cope with the significant increase in traffic volume that will come with the large new housing developments around us. But councillors and members of the public were very concerned that the proposals appeared to involve the removal of mature trees, which we are likely to oppose very strongly. Given the major reduction in the Kidlington green gap that is now imminent, this very attractive roundabout has and will have real iconic value as the entry-point to the village from the South. Discussions seem to have led to the County Council reconsidering its proposals, and we shall examine any new ones very carefully.

The other important issue is the Home Office's proposal to reopen Campsfield House at the North end for the village as an immigrant removal centre. Residents may well have differing views on the government's immigration policies, but the fact that many will find the presence of such a centre in the village offensive is one good reason for not wanting to have it here. The disruption that could be caused by protesters would also contribute further to the traffic congestion resulting from the very large new housing developments to the South of the site. We plan at any rate to meet with the Home Office Director of Detention and Escorting Services to see if there is more we can usefully find out on the matter.

Finally, however, the dog-day season has put a pause to the discussions with Oxford United on the future of Stratfield Brake, which are now due to restart in the autumn. Meanwhile, we continue to work on the best way of consulting residents about the Club's proposals once they are clearer and firmer.

DAVID ROBEY