

Abingdon for All Community Led Plan

Meeting 20th March 2018

Introduction

Cllr. Alice Badcock thanked everyone for coming and sent the apologies for the representative from the Environmental Agency.

Planning, Housing and Flooding

Invited representatives: Cllr Yvonne Constance OCC – Cabinet Member for the Environment

Cllr Matthew Barber – Leader, Vale of White Horse District Council

Cllr Yvonne Constance OCC – Cabinet Member for the Environment

Cllr Yvonne Constance's responses to the main issues raised in the "Abingdon for All" Community Led Plan Launch Survey.

Flood Management

- This is currently a big issue.
- The management of flood alleviation in Abingdon is seen to be at a disadvantage due to the flood alleviation scheme in Oxford.
 - This involves holding back the water before it reaches Oxford and to slowly release it through. NOT to rush the water through as commonly believed.
- The Vale is looking into flood alleviation schemes for the Ock, Stert and Thames.
- Both Councils are working with the Environmental Agency and know that it is very important.

Air Quality

- OCC know that this has an impact on peoples' health.
- Traffic congestion creates a big impact on this.
- Encouraging the move to electric cars.
- Oxford has signed up to the world's first zero emissions zone (ZEZ). The zone covers a small area of central Oxford (about the size of the Roysse Room) which can be monitored closely to be effective. Though the area is small it will expect all vehicles crossing the zone to emit zero emissions and those vehicles of course will travel to other areas and take zero emissions with them.
- Buses can be upgraded to electric vehicles fairly quickly.

- However taxis will be slower and are more likely to initially go to lower emissions vehicles.
- Lorries etc. will require a longer term agreement to be established and have their access hours limited.
- Villages like Marcham and Chipping Norton have a higher level of bad air quality.
- Highways England get 52% more funding for their roads. Councils get far less for the highways that they maintain.

Reservoir

- Thames water will be far better prepared for the planning process this time round.
- Thames waters previous application was based on the need to supply London and the new application must still reflect that London leakage is in a water supply under very busy streets.
- But also housing growth in Oxfordshire (100,000 by 2031) will require more water too.

Roadside Litter

- Agree with the survey comments.
- District Councils are responsible for clearing roadside litter, and some like Cherwell, manage it very well. The Vale has been encouraged to clear the A417 and started on the A420 that morning (20th March).

Planning and Housing Infrastructure

- The Councils do not plan to put in infrastructure before housing as the housing development pays for it as part of the development under section 106 funding.
- Any infrastructure is planned once funding is received.
- Section 106 funding is used to fund smaller local projects.

OCC's GROWTH DEAL: OCC's initiative for longer term finance for infrastructure;

- This deal signed with Oxford City and all four District Councils is for £215 million over five years. £150 million for infrastructure and £60 million for affordable housing.
- It will pay £30 million per year for five years for infrastructure projects on the OxIS (Oxfordshire Infrastructure Strategy) list, agreed with all the Councils that deliver houses in the County.
- Sites for the £60 million for low income housing are still to be agreed and are likely to focus on key worker and University staff housing.

Didcot Garden Town HIF (Housing Infrastructure Fund) Bid

- Oxfordshire County Council's competitive bid is in the second round of bidding for this funding, for up to £175 million government funds. This is for roads and

a Thames crossing at or near Culham to make it possible for 15,000 houses to be built in a garden town for Didcot. This bridge would also have a useful impact on traffic in and around Abingdon.

EWR (East/West Rail)

- Oxfordshire is leading the reopening of the Oxford to Cambridge railway. Phase 1 Oxford to Bicester is open
- Government has agreed £1 billion for Phase 2 to connect Bicester to Bletchley.
- A new group will extend the line from Bletchley to Cambridge. The Central Section
- The Eastern Section between Cambridge and Norwich, Ipswich joins onto this route but the existing line requires upgrading.
- Swindon also want to be included in this route network.

Oxford to Cambridge EXPRESSWAY: major new road through England's Economic Heartland to connect the brains in Oxford and Cambridge.

- There are three possible corridors being considered across Oxfordshire (from the A34 at some point)
- OCC and a Transport Advisory Group (that Yvonne Constance chairs) are responding with as much agreement as they are able.
- Oxfordshire County Council are against trying to run a new strategic road into any kind of extended local road (like A34 past Oxford, which doubles as Oxford City by pass and major local strategic route).

Government consultation about Major Roads Network (MRN)

- It's the Government intention to create a new funding stream for road projects for major roads maintained by County Councils. Highways England (HE) who manage the Strategic Road Network get 52% more funding for these types of roads than the County Councils.
- Oxfordshire County Council looks forward to receiving funding for smaller schemes between £20 million and £100 million (the average is expected to be about £50 million) for by-passes, safer junctions, roundabouts etc.

Housing

- Everyone wants affordable housing.
- Affordable housing is classed as housing which costs 80% of market value.
- The Vale insists on 35% of a housing development to be affordable housing.

Parking

- There is no more room to build car parks.

- People are going to have to learn to car pool and car share. Everyone must become more flexible.
- Oxford City are looking into demand.
- Work place charging is being considered.

Cllr Matthew Barber – Leader, Vale of White Horse District Council

Cllr Matthew Barber’s responses to the main issues raised in the “Abingdon for All” Community Led Plan Launch Survey.

Planning

- Vale Local Plan Part 1 has been adopted
 - Local plans set out the vision and framework for future development of the local area
 - All areas particularly rural areas suffered due to no plan being in place.
 - Speculative plans entered into the planning process were passed due to no local plan being in place. The Councils have less control over these plans/developments.
 - E.g. the Drayton Road development. This was objected to by both the Town and District but passed on appeal.
 - What is still being built are plans previously passed.
- Oxford City Council say they don’t have enough space to build their allocation so their neighbouring districts must accept part of their allocation.
 - The Vale has done ok with this re-allocation, having received the least number of the re-allocation.
 - The Vale is currently looking into possible locations for this allocation of houses.
 - This plan must be produced and adopted by the end of the year so the Vale can control development and no more estates like Drayton Road are passed.

Infrastructure

- The developer building the housing estate pays for local development.
- In Wantage the government has agreed to put up some of the money for the infrastructure development upfront.
- At Lodge Hill 300 houses can be built before the junction is built and opened.

Flood Development

- The Oxford flood alleviation scheme to bypass Oxford City has had a worrying effect on towns and villages downstream.
 - Water Resource Associates in Sutton Courtney has performed some analysis work to check the Environment Agency figures.

- They concur that the Environment Agency figures are correct and that Oxfor's flood alleviation scheme doesn't make downstream flooding any worse.
- When Oxford floods the whole county suffers. Traffic disruption etc.
- The Vale have received £4,000,000 towards a flood alleviation scheme for the River Ock It is to be a two part scheme jointly funded and constructed with the Environment Agency.
- Temporary barriers are stored at Osney Mead and Dalton Barracks to spread around the county as required.
- A flood retention scheme is planned at Abingdon Common. The field will be engineered to retain flood water which can be released slowly back into the river.

Housing

- Part 2 of the Local Plan is due by the end of the year.
- Affordable housing. This really depends on what is seen as affordable.
 - The Vale expects 35% of a development to be affordable.
 - A review determines the breakdown in sizes of affordable houses required in an area.
 - Affordable houses can be affordable to buy or to have affordable rent.
 - Currently the majority of the affordable housing is for the rental market
 - The Vale's delivery of these houses is pretty good.
 - The developer can appeal against supply these houses because
 - They are not affordable any longer.
 - It is no longer practical to fund them.
 - E.g. because of the cost of infrastructure.
 - The Vale hasn't seen many of these appeals
 - Affordable houses are often built first because the market for these already exists.
 - Problems occur when the developer is to deliver affordable housing off site. The developer gives the Council money for the houses and the Council then has to find somewhere to build the houses and someone to build them.
 - When a developer has justified that it is no longer viable to deliver affordable housing the Council can put this off site money into these developments. This is not an ideal solution.
- The Vale have some control over Market value housing but much less. They can encourage the developers to build the range of houses suitable for the area.
- Question: The Harcourt Way homes for the homeless didn't go ahead, has this caused any problems?

- The Vale uses Bed and Breakfast accommodation and hostels within the Vale and neighbouring districts and can find homeless families a bed.
- The Vale are managing homelessness better.
- Land not available for housing.
 - The Vale strongly advise against building in;
 - Flood Planes
 - Areas of Natural Beauty
 - North Green Belt

But it is still possible to.

- Environmental areas
- Areas of Special Scientific Interest
- The Local Plan outlines how many houses can be built up until 2031.
 - Of this target sites for all but 300 homes have been identified. This 300 will consist of individual homes being built.
 - Once all the planned houses have been built the red line has been reached and no more will be permitted.
- Question: Is it possible to subdivide existing housing into smaller units?
 - These will all require planning permission.
 - People and developers cannot be stopped from putting in planning applications.
 - Any planning application out of character with the surrounding area will be refused.
- Increase in housing density
 - There is a government drive to condense housing and increase density, as there is a need for more houses. However people do not want high density housing near them.
 - Villages do not want other towns/villages to encroach on them.
 - Existing home owners don't want to have new buildings built closer to their property.
 - Existing residents suggest that houses on new estates are built closer together and a bit higher.
 - There is no minimum size for a house however a bedroom must not be under 6.5 square metres. Legally no one can sleep in a bedroom smaller than this otherwise it is seen as overcrowding.
 - 15,500 new houses have been transferred from Oxford City's quota to neighbouring districts. If Oxford City had increased the housing density less would need to be transferred to neighbouring districts.

Litter

The Vale comes fourth in the Recycling, Reuse and Composting Rates league table of 2015/16 with a percentage of 64.8%. (South Oxfordshire is top with 66.6%).

- At the end of last year there were issues with the vehicles which have now been replaced.
- The system of collecting bins on alternative weeks is working.
 - Extra recycling waste is allowed.
 - Specific colours of bin bags has been introduced to enable the bin men to perform a quick check of the bin.
 - Clear bags only are allowed in the recycling bins (green bins)
 - This is because an entire lorry load can be rejected at the recycling site if the load is contaminated.
- There is a few years left to run on the current waste collection contract but the Vale do not expect any major changes when the contract is renewed. However there may be a few adjustments.
- Waste disposal.
 - All landfill waste is now burned.
 - OCC are finding that 60% of landfill waste could have been recycled.
 - OCC are planning to issue more information on what can be recycled.
 - The Vale are able to recycle pots, tubs and trays.
- Recycling plastic. There are currently no uses for plastic waste now China are no longer taking it. However the Councils are expecting the knowledge to be developed soon to recycle it in this country.
- Recycling Centres.
 - The tips are currently open until 2024
 - Drayton tip has no space to expand.
- The recycling of Electricals and Textiles. There has been a problem with Biffa not collecting these. There is a small electrical bank in the West St Helen's Street carpark.

Feedback from the Group discussions:

Group 1 – Hester Hand

The focus was on housing density.

- Encourage closer communities by more stringent supervision of properties. Agree/arrange this from the beginnings of the estate.
- Parking verses housing. Create underground parking so the development can be denser.
- Too many housing developments currently are too dense with no parking. For example in Abingdon Court 32 flatlets were built with only three parking spaces. It isn't possible to tell people that they cannot own a car therefore town carparks will be used.
- Developing Brown field sites;
 - Like the one on the Harwell site where houses have been boarded for 15-16 years. Why aren't they developed? It would be a perfect site for development.
 - Cllr Matthew Barber stated that these houses and this area of land are included in Part 2 of the Local Plan. There is a proposal

to build 1000 houses on the site. It is however in an area of natural beauty even though it is next to a large donut.

Permission was requested to build on the opposite side of the road but was refused. Permission for developing the opposite side is being attempted again but for a smaller development.

- Or the Wagon and Horses site.
 - This is in South Oxfordshire District Council's area so the Vale have no influence over.
- Compulsory Purchase of land or buildings is very expensive therefore it tends to be cost prohibitive largely due to legal costs. The land owner must be interested.
 - The Harwell site is in some form of public ownership however in sites like the Wagon and Horses they have to try and persuade the landowners.
 - Planning permission is being sought in Culham for 3,500 new houses with a river crossing.

Group 2 – David Pope

The focus was on environmentally friendly transport

- Electric trams circling the centre of Abingdon with link spurs to places like Milton Park, Culham, Harwell, and Oxford.
 - This will require the infrastructure to be built and funded in advance.
 - Electric busses are more flexible.
 - Culham and Harwell already have electric cars that go around the sites.
 - The Vale plans to be the first place to have autonomous vehicles on public roads. Starting on Milton Park, providing a shuttle running around the park and hopefully permission will be granted to run it to Didcot Rail Station.
 - Culham station (originally called Abingdon Station) to bring people into Abingdon.
- Have integrated ranks of bikes for hire similar to Boris bikes in London.
 - Abingdon Town Council have already written to four companies about sponsoring this.
- Better cycle routes around Abingdon and connecting them to other local towns/villages and work areas.

Group 3

- Why aren't solar panels installed on all new houses to make new houses more energy efficient.
 - If large numbers convert to using electric cars the increased electricity usage could cause blackouts.
 - The Vale already encourages all developments to be energy efficient.
 - The problem with solar panels is their setup cost and the length of time before a return on the investment is received. The Vale is looking into

this issue and there are very few places that the Vale will object to some being installed.

- Why isn't an underground water butt installed in every new property?

Group 4

Litter

- Include in the national curriculum for schools education on litter and rubbish and include them in litter collection around the town. Half a day a month.
- More frequent collection of public bins so they don't overflow.
 - People are reluctant to report.
 - It could be possible to have a unique code on each bin to which a message could be sent to alert Biffa that the bin requires emptying.
- More strategic placing of public bins e.g. a certain distance from a fast food place.
 - The Vale requested that information was sent to them if there were places where public bins should be sited. This is something that they can arrange.
- Prosecute litter offenders. This may cost more in the short term but would discourage others in the future.
- Install recycling bins next to the public bins.
 - Cllr Matthew Barber informed the meeting that a bin containing separate compartments for recycling and landfill waste was the default public bin now.
- Advertise how much is being spent on litter picking and vandalism around the town and how much of your council tax is being spent on these. Increase transparency.
- Reduce the amount of litter created by disposables from coffee shops etc.
 - Encourage coffee shops etc. to fill water containers for free.
 - Encourage the coffee shops to persuade their customers to bring their own takeaway container to be filled.
 - Encourage Abingdon to become a coffee cup free town.
 - A coffee cup or water bottle attached to every hand didn't happen in the past.
 - Fruit barrow in town.
 - Water fountains – Open up the old water pump and create a water fountain.

Agreed actions going forward

- 1 Survey of litter bins – locations to place bins and over flowing bins

Volunteer to lead – Ruth Weinberg

- Create a list of areas that could do with having litter bins, within grazing range of food suppliers.

- Create a list of bins that require more frequent emptying.
- 2 Display/advertise how much it costs to clear abandoned litter and fix vandalism.

Volunteer to lead – Abingdon Town Council

- Establish the costs spent on clearing litter and fixing vandalism around the town.
- Publish these costs on the town website and social media etc.
- Cllr Matthew Barber is to look into the Vale doing this as well.

This may take a few months to achieve due to collecting the data in the accounts.

- 3 Reduce the waste containing drinking bottles and cups by encouraging the use of reusable containers and the refilling of water bottles.

Volunteer to lead – Paul Townsend

- Encourage cafes/restaurants/shops to refill water bottles/containers
- Encourage outlets to persuade customers to use reusable drinks containers and to bring them back to be refilled for future purchases.

The Environment Agency is holding a drop in event on the 28th March 2018 from 2:30pm to 7:00pm in the Community Shop. A display will be in the window from 26th March to 1st April 2018.