

## District Councillor Report

Haseley Brook ward

5<sup>th</sup> November 2025

Cllr Georgina Heritage



### What I've been doing - Meetings and Council Activity

- The **Haseley Industrial Estate** planning application was heard at planning committee on Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> October, and you can find the agenda and draft minutes here: [Agenda for Planning Committee on Wednesday, 8 October 2025, 6.00 pm](#). This item was questioned and debated for approximately two hours before the application was approved with a list of strenuous conditions to address the concerns of surrounding villages.

I was pleased that all the nearby parish councils were given a full 5 minutes each to speak (as opposed to the usual slot of 5 minutes in total). As ward member my intention was to focus on Little Milton/A329 in my own speech. However I noticed on the speakers' list that no residents had registered to speak so I also listed as many other concerns as possible that people had raised with me in correspondence. I appreciate I didn't have time in my allotted slot to go into extended detail on every point, and the various parish council speakers went into further detail on their respective villages' behalf. However I hope I covered the main objections for residents. I think it's important to note that there is always a dedicated slot available for resident(s) objections at planning committee meetings should anyone wish to speak, though there is of course no obligation to do so. This is mentioned in the planning committee notice to those who have commented on an application, and residents are always very welcome to get in touch with me if they'd like any advice or support about speaking at council meetings.

As mentioned above, my own focus was on the unsuitability of the A329 through Little Milton. I had worked closely with County Councillor Judith Edwards and Freddie van Mierlo MP on this, which included meetings with both OCC Highways and SODC officers prior to the committee date as well as research into local freight policy. Freddie van Mierlo MP also spoke at the committee meeting to support Little Milton and surrounding villages in this concern. We were relieved that our collaborative work (alongside of course that of the diligent parish councils) bore fruit in terms of traffic conditions. A traffic plan has not yet been created but I will be watching this closely with SODC planning committee members, County Councillor and MP, all of whom agree that local village roads and communities must be protected in the plan.

You can read the draft minutes via my link above, and I'd like to draw attention particularly to the amended conditions covering **foul drainage, lighting** and **vehicle routing management plan** on page 5.

- The unauthorised **traveller site** in **Tetsworth** is now subject to a planning application which is live on SODC's website. I have requested that the application is called in to a planning committee hearing, should the planning officer be minded to approve it. My initial reasons for calling it to committee are the lack of flood risk assessment, the destruction of wildlife habitat / harm to the countryside, and unsuitability of the site as referenced in the previous appeal on the same site. If you would like to submit a comment on the application, the reference is P25/S2747/FUL, and the link is here: [Planning Application P25/S2747/FUL](#) I attended Tetsworth Parish Council's extraordinary meeting on this planning application and will continue to support Tetsworth's community.
- I have also called planning application P/25/S2784/FUL (Stadhampton) to committee. It is similar in nature to the Tetsworth situation in that it's a retrospective application in Stadhampton for a number of mobile home plots on privately owned land, and my reasons for calling it to committee are similar to those cited above. The link for this application is [Planning Application P25/S2784/FUL](#) and I will of course work with Stadhampton parish council and residents on this matter.
- I chaired the **Community Safety Partnership**, which is a statutory committee made up of a number of agencies to address crime and protect vulnerable people in our districts. We received updates from partners on domestic abuse, modern slavery and exploitation, serious violence and antisocial behaviour. I think it's important to comment that some forms of crime, violence and exploitation are more likely to hide under the radar in rural areas. If you know of someone who you think needs help, you are always welcome to get in touch with your local councillor for discreet and sensitive support.
- I represented SODC at a **Health & Wellbeing Board** workshop, which was the first step to discussing the priorities for Oxfordshire in light of the government's NHS 10 Year Plan.
- I attended **full council** on 23<sup>rd</sup> October which had a packed agenda, including three motions (all of which were passed). Due to the long agenda for this meeting, I will detail it separately below:

### **SODC Full Council Meeting**

- There was excellent news for Thame, with an approval of funding of £779,246 for Thame Town Council towards creating a new community and youth building and changing room at Southern Road Recreation Ground, funded through section 106 developer contributions.
- In [his Leader's Report](#), Cllr David Rouane reflected on the recent disappointing setback for the Joint Local Plan in light of the Inspectors asking the councils to consider withdrawing the plan in relation to our Duty to Cooperate with Oxford City Council.

Cllr Rouane offered a more reassuring perspective on what the current situation means for the district: "At this stage the plan has not been withdrawn and as such it still has some weight in determining planning applications, and there are no immediate changes to South Oxfordshire's Five Year Housing Land Supply position. We continue to have a valid adopted Local Plan with policies consistent with the National Planning Policy Framework. Of course, developers may try their hand with speculative applications (there is nothing to stop them doing so) but their position is no different now than it was one month ago."

“Interestingly, the Minister responsible for Housing and Planning has recently written to the Chief Executive of the Planning Inspectorate to ask them to consider being more flexible in how they approach ‘Duty to Cooperate’ issues, and we are actively investigating how this might apply to our Joint Local Plan.”

Cllr Rouane also praised the significant work has been undertaken by officers and councillors, including a recent meeting of the five council leaders and their chief executives, to develop the proposal for a two unitary model covering the area of Oxfordshire and West Berkshire. The Leader also highlighted the work carried out at the council to ensure everyone has the opportunity for a safe, stable, and secure home – recently underpinned by a new Joint Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy 2025–2028 which builds on South and Vale’s strong record in preventing homelessness.

Read the [full Leader’s report on the council’s news pages](#).

- Other agenda items included updates on the management of our investments, audit functions and partner committees. The award of the Waste Collection and Street Cleansing Contract and Haseley Trading Estate waste vehicle depot were considered in confidential sessions due to commercial and legal sensitivities.
- [Three motions](#) were considered and all were passed.

The first motion, proposed by Councillor Giles, focussed on protecting public privacy in light of the Government’s proposed Digital ID scheme for all UK residents. The motion called for the Council to formally oppose any Government mandatory Digital ID scheme and for the Leader to write to the Home Secretary and the Minister for Digital Infrastructure expressing our opposition. The council’s use of CCTV was also discussed and I requested that it was noted that the council currently uses it in a limited and appropriate way to assist the police in community safety and prevent antisocial behaviour.

Cllr Tim Bearder proposed a motion, raised the issue of a persistent problem of vehicles being left on double yellow lines and obstructing the carriageway on rural roads. The motion urged the council to apply to adopt powers from the DVLA and become a Devolved Power Partner (DPP), allowing it to take enforcement action against untaxed vehicles – working alongside Oxfordshire County Council and Thames Valley Police to share intelligence and coordinate enforcement.

Councillor Filipova-Rivers proposed a motion reaffirming the council’s commitment to fair treatment for all residents. The council unanimously resolved to condemn intimidation, violence or harassment of minority groups who have made South Oxfordshire their home. Council also agreed to challenge misinformation and the fear, suspicion, intolerance and discrimination it generates, alongside continuing to work with partners and support for the Oxfordshire Migration Partnership.

It was encouraging that this particular motion received a round of applause and unanimous cross-party support. I spoke in support of the motion during debate.

- Topics covered by questions included:
  - Exploring the potential to live-streaming and record Council meetings to aid Participation, Accessibility and Accountability;
  - Community Land Trusts – future funding for Community First Oxfordshire;
  - A call for the Cabinet Member for Finance to write to The Secretary of State at MHCLG to request a review of the way in which local government Treasury Management decisions are made.

## Joint Local Plan

South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils have written an open letter in which they have stated the Planning Inspectors' conclusions on their Joint Local Plan were unwarranted and lacking coherent explanation.

The open letter is in reply to a Planning Inspectors' letter, which recommended the councils withdraw their Joint Local Plan from the examination process based on a single issue – the 'duty to co-operate' with Oxford city.

In their response, the councils have defended the processes carried out to develop the plan. They go on to explain to the Inspectors that any decision on whether to withdraw the plan from examination would need to be taken at full Council meetings, in December at the earliest.

Here are some of the key issues the councils have raised in their response to the Inspectors:

- The letter contains errors, for example, the Inspectors referred to South and Vale being in the "Oxfordshire Housing Market Area" when deciding if there were strategic matters to engage with neighbours on. But housing market areas are no longer part of how housing need is calculated and haven't been for some years.
- The Inspectors said things that "could affect Oxford" count as a Strategic Matter. The law says a strategic matter that requires cooperation must have (or would have) a significant impact on two or more planning areas. The Inspectors did not explain what those significant impacts actually are (not just 'could' be) on Oxford and the areas of South and/or Vale arising from what the joint local plan proposes.
- The Inspectors relied on Oxford's (now withdrawn) Local Plan 2040, which had claimed there was a shortfall in housing supply. But that was before taking into account the 6,780 homes committed in the Joint Local Plan in South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse for Oxford's unmet need. Using the government's Standard Method for calculating housing numbers – which the Inspectors of Oxford's plan instructed Oxford to do – Oxford's need was already covered.
- The Inspectors appear to have misunderstood the housing numbers, saying "it should have been obvious" that there was a reasonable prospect of additional Oxford unmet need in later years. But the evidence showed the Joint Local Plan (and partners' plans) fully accommodated Oxford's unmet needs up to 2040.
- The Inspectors downplayed work led by Oxfordshire County Council in 2023 showing that Oxford's unmet need was fully addressed, favouring a note by Oxford City Council which said it wasn't.

Despite the significant concerns with the Inspectors' conclusions, the councils' leaders have both committed to take all reasonable steps to ensure that future development in the areas remains sustainable, appropriate and well-planned.

Cllr David Rouane, SODC leader, said "I'm dismayed that after several years of diligent, careful and collaborative hard work, our positive, innovative Joint Local Plan that works towards genuinely sustainable growth, could be undone by Inspectors' conclusions based on out-of-date policy and misinterpreted legislation. I am not aware of another emerging local plan in Oxfordshire that so encompasses and embraces the vision set out in the Oxfordshire Strategic Vision, which all our councils signed up to, as our Joint Local Plan."

the Councils issued a joint Press Release, available here: [South Oxfordshire](#) and [Vale of White Horse](#).

On 6 October the Councils wrote to the Planning Inspectors about their letter - the [letter is available to view on the Councils' website](#).

### **Councillor Community Grant**

Don't forget there's still time for non-profit groups to apply for funding to support community projects in South Oxfordshire! Each South Oxfordshire District Councillor has £7,500 with their Councillor Community Grant Scheme, and organisations can apply to multiple councillors or up to five wards should their project benefit a wider area in the district.

Our Councillor Community Grant goes to the heart of our towns and villages benefitting the people and environment in South Oxfordshire.

The deadline for applications is **midday Friday 5 December** and organisations can find out more on the [Council's website](#) or by contacting their local ward councillor directly. They can also contact the Council's Community Engagement team to ask any questions or get support with their application by emailing [grants@southandvale.gov.uk](mailto:grants@southandvale.gov.uk).

### **Breaking the cycle of homelessness**

Homelessness extends far beyond rough sleeping and can impact anyone and it is frequently hidden, such as sofa surfing, encompassing individuals living in insecure, inadequate, or unsanitary housing, as well as those affected by domestic abuse.

Proactive work to break the cycle of homelessness for vulnerable people and ensure support is accessible, effective and timely is the focus of a new council strategy. Following a public consultation held in May and June, a new Joint Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy has been put in place by South Oxfordshire and Vale of the White Horse district councils.

Despite the demand for homeless services increasing locally and nationally, the South Oxfordshire and Vale councils manage to keep homelessness levels low through working closely with every individual at risk of homelessness to help them find sustainable accommodation. Homeless prevention rates are currently at 79 per cent in South Oxfordshire and 70 per cent in the Vale compared to 52 per cent in the South East.

The councils continue to purchase property to be used as temporary accommodation, and this will lead to a reduction in the need for B&Bs. Latest figures (Q1 April – June 2025) show that in the South East more than 50 per cent of people registered as homeless stayed in nightly paid or B&B accommodation, whereas in South Oxfordshire the figure was 16 per cent and the Vale 12 per cent.

The strategy includes identifying issues early on such as 'hidden homelessness' and sofa surfing – as eviction by family and friends is the top reason for home loss in the districts.

The continued focus on early homelessness prevention, working closely with every individual at risk of homelessness to help them find sustainable accommodation has yielded high prevention rates.

The councils' outreach service will continue to proactively identify any rough sleepers without delay, ensuring that they receive specialist advice and support.

Please see the council's website for the new strategy and help with homelessness – [www.southoxon.gov.uk/housing](http://www.southoxon.gov.uk/housing)

### **Decarbonisation Update**

Preparations are under way at Park Sports Centre in Wheatley for construction work to install sustainable energy efficiency measures at the site which could make savings on energy bills and carbon emissions.

Work began on site in October, and part of the centre's car park was fenced off for construction traffic and plant to be stored there. As the sports centre shares its car park with neighbouring Wheatley Park School it was decided to put the fencing in place ahead of the start of the school term as a safety precaution.

Last year South Oxfordshire District Council successfully bid for government funding of nearly £1.5m towards installing solar panels and air source heat pumps to replace end of life gas-fired boilers at the leisure centre in Wheatley and at Didcot Wave. Park Sports Centre will also benefit from new insulation and roof replacement work, to improve energy efficiency.

Both South Oxfordshire District Council and Oxfordshire County Council – which has a joint use agreement at Parks Sports Centre – will put in the additional £1.5m to complete the required works by spring 2026.

When all the new renewable energy measures are added to both Park and Didcot Wave it is estimated it will save more than 200 tonnes in carbon emissions each year, which will reduce SODC's overall emissions by 6.9 per cent.

### **Summer at Riverside**

Over 22,000 visitors enjoyed the facilities at Riverside Park and Pools in Wallingford this summer! SODC and leisure provider GLL (who manage the site at Riverside Park and Pools on behalf of the council) saw a 45 per cent increase in visitors compared to 2024.

The pool remained a vibrant hub of activity throughout the summer, with a strong community of regular swimmers keeping the energy high even on rainy days and the splash pad, which was refurbished in 2023, was as popular as ever with young families.

Earlier this year a range of accessible improvements were made to the site, including the installation of Changes Places facilities and work was carried out on the existing access path, roadway, ramp and moorings to provide easy access for people with disabilities and to enhance the whole riverside site for visitors use and enjoy.

The summer season featured a variety of activities, including aqua aerobics and Summer Solstice Swim. Thanks to the dedication of staff and the enthusiasm of local residents, the pool was rarely empty, proving its value as a cherished community asset. The Better Leisure team hosted a First Aid and Water Safety Day, handing out information on water safety to raise awareness on the hidden dangers of swimming in the river.

The end of the season also saw the return of the very popular Dog Swims, building on last year's success.

The campsite also had another successful season, with consistently positive feedback from guests praising the cleanliness of the facilities and the smooth operation of the site. Occupancy remained strong throughout the summer, with most weekends fully booked.

A key highlight this year was the introduction of an additional camping plot, which allowed more visitors to use the site, while enhancing the overall layout and atmosphere.

As cabinet member for communities I'm delighted to see that this fabulous community hub continues to be such a success and now features better accessibility too.