

District Councillor Report

Haseley Brook ward

19th August 2026

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Local Matters and what I've been doing

Since most parish councils don't have meetings in August I didn't send a report earlier this month as I usually do, so this report is intended to cover a longer period, though I'll try not to make it a longer report! I'll continue to send out any relevant updates by email to parish councils before my next full report.

The past few weeks have been extremely busy with councillors and officers getting to grips with the upcoming **Local Government Reorganisation** and the various deadlines associated with responding to this, now that we know which proposal Government has opted for. As I mentioned in an email last month, both OCC and SODC are extremely disappointed by the decision to opt for Oxford City's 3UA proposal. In South Oxfordshire alone, 25 villages will be lost to Greater Oxford, while Cherwell and West Oxfordshire have been left with some real challenges for the future. This is certainly not the option of choice for most, and I'm especially disappointed that Oxford City's 3UA offer did not even seem to meet the criteria guidance set by Government. However, all councils are now working together to get on with the job and ensure a smooth transition for residents.

The full details of the three-unitary proposal can be found on 3councils.org and the three new councils in 2028 will be:

- Greater Oxford Council – covering Oxford and its immediate surroundings.
- Northern Oxfordshire Council – covering most of the existing Cherwell and West Oxfordshire districts.
- Ridgeway Council – covering most of the existing South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse districts, combined with West Berkshire.

For the Haseley Brook ward, **Lewknor, Tetworth and Great Haseley parishes will be in Ridgeway Council**, and **Great Milton, Little Milton and Stadhampton will be part of Greater Oxford**. According to Oxford City's proposal, I understand Great Milton will be part of the Wheatley ward, while Little Milton and Stadhampton will be part of Garsington.

Data gathering is now taking place for each proposed new ward. We have a seat at the table and have been inputting on councillor numbers and distribution for example, but we are not permitted to move boundaries or make changes to the proposal. Last week I attended a meeting led by Oxford City to introduce the Greater Oxford model to South & Vale councillors who have parishes that will become part of Greater Oxford. Amongst other points, councillors emphasised the importance of engaging parish councils as much as possible throughout the process. We also asked for more of these meetings to be scheduled as we know that we and our parishes will have a lot of questions.

In **local Planning matters**, I'm aware that residents of Little Milton are very keen to know what's happening with the Great Haseley traffic routing, in accordance with the planning condition. I received the following response today:

"The first pass of the routing information has been received and is being reviewed by officers before it goes to the planning officer. Once it is suitable for sharing it will be done, in line with the planning permission."

My understanding is that drivers will have route planners with set routes that will not be deviated from.

As I did recently in villages I represent for County, I will be joining Freddie van Mierlo MP's surgery in Little Milton on Friday to assist with any District related queries. If I can obtain any further details for residents and parish councillors on Haseley Industrial Estate for this session I will of course do so, though SODC officers are already aware that I'm regularly requesting information at the earliest opportunity.

Also in local planning, it was disappointing to learn last month that the appeal for up to 25 houses in Lewknor was successful. 2026 was the 70th anniversary of refusals on this particular site! I attended and spoke at the hearing in June, for which the Parish Council, the Neighbourhood Plan group and I did a lot of work in preparation. I left the hearing confident that we had raised every material consideration that an outline application allows. However it seems apparent that national housing need and the new NPPF tilted the balance. The inspector wrote:

40. As a result of these matters, I conclude that the proposed development conflicts with the development plan when considered as a whole, including the relevant policies of the Neighbourhood Plan. However, there are material considerations, notably the provisions of the Framework, that indicate that the decision should be taken other than in accordance with the development plan. The appeal is therefore allowed.

It's important to remember that this is Outline only, so it doesn't address the design or any other matters associated with the development. A Full application hasn't yet been submitted.

Finally in local planning, parish councillors and residents will no doubt be aware that there is a new planning application for the unauthorised site in Tetsworth. This is separate to the enforcement action, and it has been explained to me that as long as the application differs from the previous one, the applicant is entitled to submit it. The only circumstance when the council can refuse to determine an application is if it is exactly the same application as was previously refused. In this case, the applicant has provided new information in terms of flooding, noise, landscaping, so the council has to consider it.

At **Full Council** on 16th July I seconded two motions – one was proposed by Cllr Robin Bennett regarding the accessibility of cool spaces and climate resilience. The motion was passed, with action as follows:

Council requests that Cabinet considers:

- Ways to expand and promote the network of cool spaces locally, so that all our communities have access to cool spaces.
- Gathering information on the heatwave-readiness of social housing in the district, as part of regular engagement with housing providers
- Looking for viable opportunities as part of the budget setting process and working with partners to support and accelerate further climate adaptation, noting the council's financial position and likely financial constraints arising from local government reorganisation.

The other motion I seconded was proposed by Cllr Ed Sadler, and this followed some work that he and I have been doing to address vehicle noise pollution in our villages (mainly caused by off-road motorbikes and illegal exhausts) as I mentioned in my last report. This motion was also passed, with action as follows:

Council resolves that:

- The Leader of South Oxfordshire District Council writes to the Thames Valley Police and Crime Commissioner expressing the concerns of South Oxfordshire residents regarding excessive vehicle noise and requesting:
 - information on the number of reports received, enforcement action undertaken, and how vehicle-related anti-social behaviour is being addressed across South Oxfordshire;
 - Work with South Oxfordshire District Council, Oxfordshire County Council, and Town and Parish councils to develop an evidence-based understanding of recurring vehicle noise and anti-social driving hotspots, including using reporting data and hotspot mapping, and undertake targeted enforcement activity in response to identified problem areas;
 - improved public awareness and communication, led by Thames Valley Police, to encourage reporting of persistent vehicle noise and anti-social vehicle use, and improve understanding of available enforcement powers.

- The Leader of the Council shares the correspondence with local Members of Parliament, Oxfordshire County Council, and Town and Parish councils to raise awareness of the issue and support wider action to tackle excessive vehicle noise and anti-social vehicle use.
- South Oxfordshire District council uses existing council communication channels, where appropriate to:
 - clarify the respective responsibilities of South Oxfordshire District Council, Thames Valley Police and the Police and Crime Commissioner;
 - signpost residents to the appropriate reporting channels for vehicle noise concerns;
 - publicise any response received from the Police and Crime Commissioner.
- The Cabinet Member responsible for community wellbeing to monitor responses from relevant agencies and to provide an update to councillors within twelve months.

Minutes and agenda details can be found here:

<https://democratic.southoxon.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?Cld=122&Mid=3769>

On 22nd July I was delighted to attend, with my County colleague Cllr Judith Edwards, the **induction of the new Rector** for Great Milton with Little Milton and Great Haseley, Revd Lucie Spiers. It was a really special, happy and heartwarming service in a packed church, and I felt privileged to be part of the occasion. I really enjoyed talking to Revd Lucie afterwards, who was so kind, approachable and friendly, and I wish her great happiness and success in her new role. It was also lovely to talk with local residents and to chat with parish councillors outside of parish council meetings.

Council Matters

There's a huge amount happening in **Planning** at the moment, with a new Government NPPF, new reforms on planning committees, and of course more locally South & Vale's Joint Local Plan inspection. As I've mentioned previously, one of the reforms from the end of October is that elected ward members and parish councils will no longer be able to call applications in to planning committee – effectively removing a layer of local democracy and local knowledge from the planning process. SODC's statement on this is here:

[Councils express concerns on coming government changes to planning process - South Oxfordshire District Council](#)

As I've written in a previous email to parish councils, my summary of the planning committee changes as I understand them are as follows:

There will be two types of application - Schedule 1 and Schedule 2.

- Schedule 1 will be decided by officers;
- Schedule 2 will still be decided by officers as a default, but will be eligible for a call-in if the Chair of planning committee and the Head of Planning officer **BOTH** agree it should go to committee;
- Under schedule 2, ie those eligible for a committee call-in, we have **Full** applications of **over 10** (and **all Outline** applications, I believe);
- Reserved matters go automatically under schedule 1 unless over 500 (which is when they are eligible for call in if both the chair and head of planning agree).
- Given that a lot of large applications are outline first and reserved matters later, it essentially means that councillors will not have a say over the details, only the principle of the development.

There will be briefings on this for parish councils in the next few weeks.

On the **Government's new NPPF** I thought this link might be helpful to parish councils: [Creating a clear, rules-based planning system - GOV.UK](#)

We have also noted that the new NPPF indicates that **every** Neighbourhood Plan area should have a housing requirement/allocation unless there are compelling reasons not to do so, which will certainly affect our smaller villages, including all those in Haseley Brook ward.

Once again, I urge any parish that does not have a Neighbourhood Plan to look into developing one. Planning officers refer to them in decision making and with much Government reform, local policies will be more important than ever.

Separately and for reference while on the subject of planning, you might be interested to know that South and Vale have done well in the **Housing Delivery Test** - also published yesterday - [The latest Housing Delivery Test Results](#)

South is at 171% and Vale is at 192% so no action is needed by either South or Vale - ie we have met/exceeded the test. By way of contrast, this is well ahead of Cherwell at 134%, West Oxfordshire at 104% and in stark contrast to Oxford at 65%.

Our ever-popular **Councillor Community Grant Scheme** is now open again and is open to non-profit organisations including community and voluntary groups and town and parish councils.

Previous projects that have been supported with this grant have ranged from mental health support groups for children, sporting equipment, memorial benches and solar panels for community buildings. Out of all the grants we offer this one is personal for our council members. We're able to directly support organisations in our ward that we see make a difference to our communities every day.

Each district councillor is allocated £7,500 to award to projects and activities that offer community benefits in their ward area, budget permitting.

Organisations can apply for funding from £250 up to a maximum of £7,500 from their ward councillor or multiple councillors/wards should their project benefit a wider area or a ward where there are multiple council members and require a larger amount of funding.

The deadline for applications is midday Friday 4 December.

Last year the grant went up from £5,000 per councillor to £7,500, and we were still massively over-subscribed. Ward members had to make some hard decisions and it's important that applicants speak with their district councillor before submitting their application.

The **Performing Arts Grant** is also still open, so please share this with any organisations that could benefit.

More details about our grants, eligibility and how to apply can be found on the [South Oxfordshire District Council grants webpage](#).

We are delighted to announce the launch of the new **Community Led Housing Fund** for groups in South Oxfordshire, as we know that getting a community-led housing project off the ground can be challenging. Alongside the practical advice and support already available, this fund has been established to help groups overcome the financial barriers involved in developing their projects.

The Community Led Housing Fund is designed to support groups at different stages of their journey, from initial ideas through to project development. Please click on this link [Community Led Housing Fund - South Oxfordshire District Council](#) for further information.

If you would like to have an informal conversation with the Affordable Housing Team to discuss any prospective application, please email affordablehousingteam@southoxfordshire.gov.uk.

Finally, I'd like to share a **letter written by our leader Cllr Maggie Filipova-Rivers to the Government's Oxford Growth Commission**, which I fully support.

While welcoming the Commission's work on accelerating allocated housing sites and its recognition that Oxfordshire's biggest barriers to growth include infrastructure, utilities and skills, SODC's response argues that future growth must be balanced, sustainable and deliver real benefits for local communities.

The letter highlights the pressures many residents already experience, including congested roads, overstretched GP surgeries, pressure on wastewater infrastructure and utilities, and the shortage of genuinely affordable homes. It argues that new development should be matched by timely investment in the infrastructure and public services communities need.

South Oxfordshire has already allocated land for thousands of new homes through its adopted Local Plan. However, many of these homes are not being built because of factors outside the council's control, including wastewater capacity, infrastructure constraints, viability challenges and wider market conditions that have slowed developers' build-out rates.

Rather than continually identifying additional sites for development, the letter argues that the priority should be removing these barriers and accelerating the delivery of homes that have already been planned.

The letter also encourages the Commission to recognise South Oxfordshire's role in Oxfordshire's wider economy. It argues that supporting thriving market towns, villages and employment hubs across the district, investing in skills and improving transport connections will create stronger and more resilient economic growth than relying on development concentrated in a single location.

You can read the full letter here:

https://www.southandvale.gov.uk/app/uploads/sites/2/2026/06/Cllr-Filipova-Rivers_Neale-Coleman.pdf