

**MINUTES OF ASTON, COTE, SHIFFORD & CHIMNEY PARISH COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON
Thursday 7 September 2023 at the Village Hall, Aston, at 7.30pm**

Members R La Forte (Chair)
Present: R Anstee
B Lings
P Sparrowhawk
A Chapman

In Attendance: Elaine Anstee – Clerk
8 members of the public
Cllr Lysette Nicolls (WODC)
Cllr Charlie Maynard (WODC)
Cllr Dan Levy (OCC)
Nicky Mellings (Leisure and Projects Officer for WODC)

1. **Apologies from Members:** An apology was received from John Ordish and G Ball.
2. **Minutes of the previous meeting** of the Parish Council on 3rd August 2023 were agreed it was RESOLVED as proposed by R Anstee, seconded by P Sparrowhawk, with all in agreement, that the Chair signs them.
3. **Parish Councillors - Disclosure of interests on agenda items** – R La Forte declared an interest in agenda item 10, planning application 23/02139/HHD, and agenda item 13, Community Trust, as a trustee.
4. **Meeting Open for Public Participation** – None.
5. **WODC/OCC Matters**

OCC Councillor D Levy referred to his emailed report (Appendix 1) and asked that everyone avoid going through Yelford whilst the Aston Hills are closed. He reported that he had chased both OCC and WODC Planning about North Farm but only response it is 'all in hand'. Hopefully it will come to Parish Council first before any public announcement.

WODC Councillor L Nicholls referred to the Local plan consultation and the confirmation from Chris Hargreaves (WODC Planning) that everyone has the same weighting be they an individual or Parish Council. She encouraged the Parish Council to get as many responses as possible for the quantitative data to have the maximum value. Qualitatively the Parish Council response is valuable and should be constructive.

WODC Councillor C Maynard referred to his email report (Appendix 2) highlighting the learnings from Terra appeal and The Moors, Ducklington where though it has had 120 houses approved on appeal the Environment Agency (EA) are now rewriting the flood maps due to the flooding and this will have to be given to the potential land developers buying the site and future property buyers. This may negate the viability of developing this land.

6. Matters Arising from Previous Meetings

a) *Leisure and Projects Officer for WODC*

Nicky Melling introduced herself and the role of 'Leisure and Projects Officer'. This is a new role supporting communities with projects focusing on leisure and recreation, particularly the playing field strategy put in place by WODC in February 2022. The playing field strategy is to enhance and maintain existing pitches for football/rugby/bowls/ etc plus creating new facilities. In her role she is to help parishes to spend the S106 money correctly, be a conduit with national bodies such as Sports England, the Football Association, and other sports national bodies. The post is to ensure more direct engagement.

S106 funding from developments in the parish is mostly allocated to sports and recreation. Community trust MUGA is one of the major projects in Aston and the parish Council also has funding in reserve to support this project.

Agenda for next time to review S106 funds available and look at what they can be used for.

Item 13 brought forward to update on MUGA project from the Community Trust. Planning application went in to WODC and issues from Highways and Biodiversity with the lights were raised. This moved the MUGA by 6 metres and caused concerns to be raised by Sport England in relation to the grant from Football Association that had been given to Aston Football Club for the pitch regeneration.

Nicky has spoken the planning officer who has recommended a preliminary ecological appraisal plus a clearer definition on the actual lighting and MUGA design.

B Lings reported that there is someone in the village who is a bat expert and has done bat surveys for residents. B Ling to ask if they would do a survey and the cost for a written report.

The planning officer had also suggested a pre application meeting where everyone can come round the table which was seen as a positive action. The Community Trust have a year from the withdrawal for resubmission of planning.

b) *WODC Local Plan 2041 – Consultation*

Focused consultation on draft plan objectives, pattern of development and call for ideas, opportunities, and sites (Regulation 18): 30 August to 25 October 2023.

Planning officers have created the consultation but unlike previous consultations there is a group of 17 WODC councillors overseeing the process. The process once all consultations are completed is that the final draft of the Local Plan 2041 will go to the executive/full council/scrutiny committee then back to full council for sign off. There are lots of opportunities to review, consolidate and change before the plan is signed off and will go for independent examination. Final plan is due for delivery in summer 2025.

This is important as it affects all of us and future generations. It is not a referendum, and we need constructive comments.

Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on Thursday 7 September 2023

Future Pattern of Development in West Oxfordshire

The parish councillors debated on the section of the consultation focussing on 'Future Pattern of Development in West Oxfordshire'. Preferences for Scenario 3 - 'Witney Focus', Scenario 1 - 'Hierarchal approach' (current process), Scenario 8 – 'Public Transport Focus' and Scenario 7 – 'New Settlement' were all explained.

The Parish Council was unanimously against Scenario 5 – 'Dispersed Growth' and Scenario 6 – 'Village 'Clusters''.

Scenario 1 - 'Hierarchal approach' is the approach under pinning the current WODC Local Plan to 2031 and is not broken so why change it.

Scenario 5 – 'Dispersed growth' and Scenario 6 – 'Village 'Clusters'' both would further contribute to the loss of identity of the villages, cause more stressed to already overstretched local services. The planning system will look at a combined delivery and consider it as more sustainable.

Scenario 7 – 'New settlement' which appears to be providing all the relevant required infrastructure to support the new development would be more welcome than putting more and more smaller developments into communities whose infrastructure is limited and over stretched and would be expected to 'absorb' new development without major updating of infrastructure. This fits well with Scenario 8.

Scenario 8 – 'Public Transport' needs density and helps good public transport links.

Possible issues/questions that will need further debate and to be asked at meeting on 20th September 2023:

- What level of extra housing would be acceptable to keep the pub and shop/existing services going?
- Are there areas in the parish that residents would be content to see further development?
- North Farm – what contribution does this have to make?

The Parish Council will need to quantify the value of its responses and nuance accordingly.

The question of what is wrong with the current local plan was raised. There are several existing sites not being built and there is no legal muscle to make them happen.

This consultation exercise needs to redress the balance where local elected representatives need to be allowed to manage the planning process for the benefit of the people they represent.

c) *Neighbourhood Plan*

This has been discussed previously but thought that the Parish Council had missed the boat as two large planning applications had already gone through. The failure of the appeal against the TERRA application has highlighted that the failure of the local plan means we need something to help fight future speculative planning applications. South Leigh has a neighbourhood plan (NHP) and the chair has spoken to one of the authors.

Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on Thursday 7 September 2023

Advantages - NHP helps take back some control and it is considered both at planning determination and appeals. With a NHP the parish would receive get 25% in CIL from any building work.

Disadvantages – NHP would cost about £25k, it takes at least 12 months, it is difficult to time in relation to the new local plan, it is a lot of work and needs expert testimony on landscape, traffic, flood risk assessment.

The most important questions - is it worth it/does it work. Experience from South Leigh is Yes, for single dwellings, but not tested for large developments.

The NHP process is managed by WODC.

To be considered on the next agenda for decision and the chair will report further on background and potential grants.

d) Electronic Speed Signs

No update from OCC Highways as OCC purchasing have not yet finalised supplier.

e) Footpaths/Treescapes

No news this month.

f) Asset Review and War Memorial Reinstatement Valuation

A quote has been requested from Harris Stone Ltd.

g) Cote Chapel

No further news on the open day. As requested, the HCT has provided the latest audited accounts. These show that the repair and maintenance costs for Cote Chapel in 2022 were £4,042.

h) Anti-Social Behaviour

There has been a spate of parked car wing mirrors being damaged in Aston.

7. Planning

New planning applications

Reference	23/02139/HHD
Alternative Reference	PP-12366456
Application Validated	Fri 18 Aug 2023
Address	Carousel Cottage Bull Lane Aston Bampton OX18 2DN
Proposal	Construction of detached garage and office.
Status	Under consideration
No comment or objection.	

Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on Thursday 7 September 2023

Reference	23/01820/RES
Alternative Reference	21/0209/OUT
Application Validated	Tue 22 Aug 2023
Address	Land Parcel to The North of Aston, North Street, Aston
Proposal	Erection of an agricultural worker's dwelling.
Status	Under consideration
No comment	

Reference	23/01699/HHD
Alternative Reference	Not Available
Application Validated	Thu 3 Aug 2023
Address	1 St Joseph's Court, Bampton Road Aston, Bampton
Proposal	Erection of a summerhouse.
Status	Under consideration
No objection	

Oxfordshire County Council Planning Consultations all relating to the Children's Home, Back Lane, Aston. Links to planning portal emailed to councillors for perusal prior to the meeting.

OCC ref: R3.0106/23 - Application by Oxfordshire County Council, for: Non-material amendment to permission R3.0149/21 (Construction of a single storey dwelling for use as a Children's Home with associated external works to form a new access on to Back Lane, associated landscaping, boundary treatment and car parking.) without complying with condition 1, in order to reduce the size of bin store, change roof material of bin store, remove bin store near plant room and add additional fencing adjacent to hardstanding at Land at Home Farm, Back Lane, Aston, Bampton, OX18 2DQ.

OCC ref: R3.0105/23 - Details pursuant to Condition 10 (Travel Plan) of planning permission no. (R3.0149/21) at Land at Home Farm, Back Lane, Aston, Bampton, OX18 2DQ.

OCC ref: R3.0104/23 - Details pursuant to Condition 8 (Access and Parking) of planning permission no. (R3.0149/21) at Land at Home Farm, Back Lane, Aston, Bampton, OX18 2DQ.

OCC ref: R3.0103/23 - Details pursuant to Condition 7 (Landscaping) of planning permission no. (R3.0149/21) at Land at Home Farm, Back Lane, Aston, Bampton, OX18 2DQ.

OCC ref: R3.0102/23 - Details pursuant to Condition 4 (CCTV and External Lighting) of planning permission no. (R3.0149/21) at Land at Home Farm, Back Lane, Aston, Bampton, OX18 2DQ

There were no objection or comments on the above.

Update on Ongoing Planning Applications – For Information

- a) Terra – no further update but clerk to confirm with WODC Planning that the Paish Council will be consulted on the implementation of the conditions laid down in the appeal documentation.

Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on Thursday 7 September 2023

- b) North Farm – No update.
- c) **Hawthorns** – The concrete plinth has been broken up as of 7th September and the rubble is awaiting removal.
- d) **Marsh Furlong** – no news on adoption of pumping station by Thames Water.
- e) **Children's Home** – completion on target for end of October 2023. Back Lane is due to be closed from 4 to 22 September for utility installation.

Include water issue at St Joseph's Court on next agenda.

Update on Previous Planning Applications

Reference	23/01508/HHD
Alternative Reference	Not Available
Application Validated	Wed 05 Jul 2023
Address	21 Pound Field Road Aston OX18 2FR
Proposal	Proposed windows to ground floor and first floor, addition of garage door, erection of a greenhouse, replacement fencing and lighting lampposts (part retrospective)
Status	Decided
Decision	Approve
Decision Issued Date	Fri 18 Aug 2023

Reference	23/01155/HHD
Alternative Reference	Not Available
Application Validated	Fri 16 Jun 2023
Address	16 Cote Road Aston Bampton Oxfordshire OX18 2DX
Proposal	Proposed single storey rear extension.
Status	Decided
Decision	Approve
Decision Issued Date	Fri 04 Aug 2023

Reference	23/00948/FUL
Alternative Reference	PP-12061580
Application Validated	Tue 02 May 2023
Address	Playing Field Cote Road Aston OX18 2DU.
Proposal	Proposed floodlit Multi Use Games Area (MUGA) on land adjacent to an existing basketball practice area at the Aston and Cote Recreation Ground (revised plans)
Status	Withdrawn
Decision	Application Withdrawn
Decision Issued Date	Fri 18 Aug 2023

8. New Business

a) Grant Request – Citizen Advice Bureau

It was RESOLVED as proposed by R Anstee, seconded by P Sparrowhawk, with all in agreement to make a grant of £500 as budgeted, to eh Citizen Advice Bureau, Witney.

Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on Thursday 7 September 2023

b) OCC - EV Microhubs Expression of Interest

OCC has opened an 'Expressions of Interest' for grant funding of Electric Vehicle charging points. B Lings to look at locations in parish to include two points at the village hall on behalf of the Community Trust and submit form on behalf of the Parish Council.

c) Community Emergency Plan (CEP) – update for 2023

The draft document amendments were agreed and the clerk to finalise then send to OCC.

9. Governance – Policies for Review – None this month

10. Community Trust

The meeting in August as a maintenance evening.

11. Parish Infrastructure

The meeting discussed using South Central Probation unpaid work (community payback) to carry out some of the village maintenance such as clearing the weeds in the road gutters, cleaning signs, and cutting back vegetation. The clerk to investigate how this could be done with them providing supervision. The parish Council did not feel that it had the relevant skills to use this service without the supervision.

12. FINANCE

a) Account balances – noted.

b) Review of the Year-to-Date Financial Report – noted

c) It was RESOLVE as proposed by P Sparrowhawk, seconded by R Anstee, with all in agreement to approve the following payments for the period September 23.

	NET	VAT	Gross Amount
Clerk's expenses 692 x 7p/Microsoft £49.08/H&S Poster £11.99/Norton Renewal £64.99	153.49	21.01	174.50
D Johnson – Grass cutting and WM Maintenance/Bus shelter cleaning – Invoice - 2405	240.00		240.00
WODC –Grounds Maintenance Inv 33533273	369.01	73.80	442.81
WODC – Bin Emptying Inv 33532721	652.86	130.57	783.43
Citizen Advice Grant 2023	500.00		500.00
Total to be decided and approved	£1,914.37	£226.37	£2,140.74
Freeola (Domain Renewal) DD - 41064790	30.93	6.19	37.12
Total of already paid	£30.93	£6.19	£37.12
Monthly Standing Orders/DDs			
Clerk's Salary including WFH Allowance	412.41		412.41
HMRC PAYE	98.40		98.40
Total SDOs	£510.81	£0.00	£510.81
Total	£2,456.11	£232.56	£2,688.67

13. CONFIDENTIAL – Grounds Maintenance 2024-26

There were only two tenders received from the six companies approached to tender.

It was RESOLVED as proposed by R La Forte, seconded by R Anstee, with all in agreement to appoint Ubico Ltd to continue with the cutting of the verges and weed killing as per the specification for the period of March 2024 to November 2026.

It was RESOLVED as proposed by R La Forte, seconded by A Chapman, with all in agreement to appoint D Johnson to continue with the cutting of the maintenance of the War Memorial, Aston, and recreation ground at the village hall as per the specification for the period of March 2024 to November 2026.

14. Parish Councillors' reports from meetings attended since last meeting.

15. Matters arising since publication of agenda/ Matters which Councillors may wish to raise for inclusion on next agenda. (For discussion only)

16. Date of next meeting: Thursday 5th October 2023, 7.30pm the monthly meeting of Parish Council

Meeting closed at 21.39m.

Signed.....Dated.....

Appendix A

County Councillor Report, 4 September 2023

Dan Levy

I hope you have had a good summer, and that the disappointing weather wasn't too disruptive.

Notwithstanding people taking holidays, work at the County Council has carried on. Road maintenance There has been progress during the summer on fixing some of the worst bits of the roads. That includes the A40 carriageway near Cassington. The road between Aston and Ducklington will be re-laid in works scheduled to have commenced this week and to finish in about 7 weeks. During this much needed work, please note that there is signage of there being no through road through Yelford for motor traffic, as it is unsuitable for high traffic volumes.

Major projects.

National Rail. Botley Road in Oxford remains closed to cars at the railway bridge. It will reopen at the end of October, and work on the station will move away from the bridge area. The road will then reclose for another 6 months in the spring. As was predictable, the work isn't on schedule, as interesting architectural features have been found under the bridge. National Rail are now working 24 hours a day to get back on time.

HIF1 Didcot/Culham. As you may have heard, following the failure of the project to build a new road in the area of the old power station to get planning permission, partly because of objections from local parish councils, the Secretary of State has called in the application. It is a very odd situation and more will become clear over time. I am appalled by the attack – not for the first time – by the government on the ability of local authorities to decide things locally.

HIF2 A40 project. As expected, because of the funding being inadequate to cover the original plan put together a few years ago by the former County Council administration, the plans have been revised to be more modest. The A40 will remain largely untouched to the west of Eynsham (bar the new access arrangements for Salt Cross, West Eynsham and the Park & Ride). The bus lanes will be built as planned between Eynsham and Wolvercote. The bike lane on the south side of the A40 will be upgraded and there will be no bike lane on the north. The details of the revised plans are being put together and I will continue to work with officers to make the scheme as effective as it can be. Like my predecessor Charles Mathew, I have said from the start that I don't think the A40 changes will make things much better, but we will need to make the most of what we are being offered, not least because the P&R is well towards completion. In the meantime, we continue to make progress with the project to restore a railway between Carterton, Eynsham and Oxford – that would really make things better.

Shores Green. Approval has been given for making the Shores Green junction on the A40 (the one to the north of South Leigh) 4 way. This will relieve traffic in Witney. As part of the approval, there will be some new traffic calming measures in South Leigh, to prevent rat running. This will be combined with South Leigh's new 20 mph zone.

Schools. It is very nearly the start of term. There are a couple of schools in Oxfordshire, but not in our immediate area, that have had to close classrooms because of RACC issues.

The failure to invest in infrastructure – as shown also by the lamentable performance of Thames Water – will always lead to higher cost and disruption in the long run.

Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on Thursday 7 September 2023

Buses First and Last Mile, which links Stanton Harcourt to Standlake, Eynsham and Hanborough, is looking for volunteer drivers. If anyone can help it would be brilliant. And can I remind everyone that they are offering £2 fares, even though they are not reimbursed for the shortfall in income in the same way that the big bus companies like Stagecoach are.

As ever, I can be contacted at any time for issues and comment. dan.levy@oxfordshire.org.uk

Appendix 2

District Councillor update for Aston, Cote, Shifford & Chimney Parish Council meeting 7 Sept 2023

1. West Oxfordshire's Local Plan to 2041

This is the big one. WODC are asking for your views on how you think the district should develop. These inputs will contribute to the key document which will outline what development will happen where in the district over the next 18 years. Here's the link - <https://yourvoice.westoxon.gov.uk/en-GB/>. Please sign up, have a good read and get your views in ahead of 25th October.

For my part, I believe that we need a much lower housebuilding rate in West Oxfordshire than we currently have, which was set by the previous Conservative administration at more than 10,000 houses in just ten years. As you'll see in Scenario 8, the A40 is forecast to be 30 minutes slower by 2031 than it currently is. With a new railway line, I think we should be aiming for approximately half the current build rate, and we should be locating the great majority of those homes around rail stations. This approach has many advantages, including giving us a fast, reliable and clean transport solution along the A40 corridor; reducing pressure on housebuilding in villages such as Aston; and allowing us to use the homes to help fund the railway through land value capture. Whether you agree with me or not, I hope the above is a stimulus for you to go and look for yourself – and give your views.

2. Marsh Furlong / Thames Water

I met with Thames Water today to discuss Marsh Furlong as well as other issues. Please see the attached submission made at the Appeal (Appeal Ref: APP/D3125/W/23/3317512) highlighting the sewage concerns and the response below from the Inspector. I asked Thames Water today (for the third time) for their understanding of what they consider their statutory obligations to be with regard to network and works upgrades in view of the dire sewage situation in Aston. With these facts in hand, I will work with WODC Planning to get these upgrades included in the planning conditions, so that these obligations are clear to the developer at the outset and so that no occupancy is permitted prior to these conditions being met.

33. Thames Water have an obligation under the Water Industry Act to provide foul drainage connections and necessary capacity within the network to accommodate new development. I acknowledge the concern of residents regarding existing capacity issues, but it would not be reasonable to require this scheme to mitigate existing issues. Instead, it must be assumed that Thames Water will meet its statutory obligations and I am satisfied that a condition could be used to prevent occupation of the development until such time as capacity is available.

Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on Thursday 7 September 2023

More broadly, while there is some good progress being made on linking sewage requirements to planning, I left the meeting even more concerned that the government is clamping down on spending, will be seeking monies from customers rather than TW's shareholders and debtholders, and that important expansion work will be pushed out.

Sticking with Marsh Furlong, I had a discussion with your Chair two weeks ago regarding the performance of WODC Planning in the Marsh Furlong appeal and will be taking matters further.

3. The Moors, Ducklington

Finally, some good news. WODC refused planning permission to build 120 homes on The Moors in Ducklington. The site has a long and waist deep history of flooding and it would be dangerous to build houses on it. Notwithstanding that, the EA rezoned it out of the flood zone in 2010. Given this, the inspector consequently struck down the council's objection, giving the developer the go-ahead. Things looked very bleak, but we kept going. After a lot of work, we managed to persuade the EA to send an expert team to the site. On the back of that, WODC and the EA have just written a joint open letter to the landowners advising them that the flood risk to the site is to be re-evaluated. This will likely have a very material impact on whether and how many houses can be built there. We're not out of the woods yet, but we're getting there. I include this to show that sometimes things can work out. As per 2) above, we will keep going with what we can regarding Marsh Furlong.

Charlie Maynard (WODC).