

Wheatley Annual Parish Meeting Minutes Tuesday 27th April 2021

The virtual meeting was hosted by Cllr Alison Sercombe, Chairman of Wheatley Parish Council. The meeting started at 19:30.

The meeting was attended by Cllrs Sercombe (Chair), Gregory, Lawrence, Willmott, Harding, Street, Coxon and Newman. SODC Cllr Kantor and Guest Speakers J Fox and Dame Street, along with approximately 11 members of the public

1. Cllr Alison Sercombe welcomed the community to the meeting.
2. The minutes from the meeting from the Annual Meeting 2019 were approved and signed by the chair.
3. An update on council activities were shared with the audience, summarising achievements on how the parish council has served its community, its achievements, financial overview, how the council adapted to and supported the community during Covid-19 pandemic, how it has worked in partnership with others and its future plans. Cllr Sercombe thanked her fellow councillors for their hard work.
4. South Oxfordshire District Councillor was in attendance and gave a brief update on the work of the district council including financial support for community organisations and the wider community during covid-19 pandemic. The council have a new Corporate Plan.
5. Oxfordshire County Council Cllr Tim Bearder – had prepared and report ahead of the meeting, which was available to the community.
6. Questions were taken from the community that covered:
 - a. Wildflower area – confirming area to be seeded
 - b. Weed removal in the village – staff member has completed training and will be focusing on this when time allows
7. Wheatley Neighbourhood Plan. The Chair of the Wheatley Neighbourhood Plan Committee gave a brief overview and update. The community are now being asked to vote on whether the Plan should be adopted by SODC, at the elections on 6th May 2021.

Questions were taken from the audience that covered:

 - a. Clarification of Mill View as roads now confirmed as Ochre Close and Breame Oak Drive.
 - b. Confirmation that once adopted the enhancements that were removed can be reinstated as part of a timely review and the committee would work with the council on the replacement burial ground.
 - c. Clarification was asked on the referendum statement that has been issued. Although it appears to be the standard, legal wording.
8. Dame Sue Street – gave an insightful presentation on decision making with comparisons between delivering the London 2012 Olympic bid and parish councils and the community.

The chair closed the meeting by thanking all those who attended and closed the meeting at 20:48

Summary from Wheatley Parish Council

WHEATLEY PARISH COUNCIL REVIEW 2020-21

We have been working hard this year to support the community, to make improvements and to develop new services and facilities

SERVING THE COMMUNITY

Delivering its strategic plan

Undertaking its statutory duties

Managing and improving facilities and services

Supporting village organisations

Supporting businesses based in the village

Neighbourhood Plan referendum May 2021

ACHIEVEMENTS



New play area for Farm Close Road Rec and basket swings in Church Rd and Cullum Rd



Granted over £9,000 of to local organisations



Spent £9,000, following a traveller incursion



Supported new bus route that serves Wheatley & Littleworth



INCOME

Precept	£129,263
Grants & s106	£ 23,000
Newsletter	£ 15,000
OCC recharges	£ 2,958
Allotments	£ 127

A full financial statement will be available shortly and will be approved and submitted by the council in June 2021

EXPENDITURE

Staffing & Training	£52,500
Open Spaces	£50,800
Newsletter	£13,730
Grants & Community Support	£ 9,800
Office	£14,354
Unexpected expenditure	£ 8,070
Compliance	£ 4,500



COVID-19

During the pandemic the council has:

Moved to virtual council and committee meetings

Installed new IT systems

Supported the establishment of Wheatley Support Group

Continued to share communication through newsletters, website and social media

Maintained play areas and open spaces for community use.

WORKING WITH OTHERS

Improved relationships with TVP

Challenged planning applications that will have a negative impact on the community

Working with OCC to make our roads safer

Working to create a CIC with Wheatley Primary School and ODST



LOOKING AHEAD

- Delivering a Youth Council and Youth Club
- Creating a Wellbeing Committee to support the wider community
- Improvements to Church Road Rec play area
- Improvements to Village Square
- Wildflower verge on London Rd
- New interpretation board in Memorial Gardens
- Re-opening office and reestablishing parish surgeries

Created and distributed by Wheatley Parish Council www.wheatleyparishcouncil.gov.uk

Reports for Wheatley Annual Parish Meeting 27th April 2021

Wheatley has an enviable number of voluntary and community-based organisations supporting the village and wider community. For this year's reports contributors were asked to share three challenges or achievements within the last twelve months, along with three projects or challenges over the next twelve months. Those organisations that supplied reports have been included here:

1st Wheatley Guides

Achievements: Meeting Online We have been meeting online over the past year as we have been relying on online platforms to keep the Guiding Light burning. We start every meeting reflecting on what we feel grateful for - we all agree that staying connected is awesome. We have done more craft recently ranging from string art, rainbow pompom keyrings for the NHS and tea light pancakes. We were excited when Anneliese Dodds MP joined us online to talk about Equal Pay and treatment of keyworkers organised by our Rangers and Young Leader. We were delighted to welcome a journalist from BBC Radio Oxford who spoke to us about experiences as a young woman in the media and the reality of reporting the news. We have completed two virtual escape rooms and done an online dance class. For World Thinking Day we celebrated the World Guiding and Scouting Movement's recent nomination for the Nobel Peace Prize by focusing on how we can build peace in our own communities.

Camps One of our main highlights has been organising virtual weekend camps where we set up dens or tents at home and dial-in for a "campfire" sing along with our hot chocolate. These have been themed around festivals, space and being a Global Citizen.

Badges Guides have successfully worked towards a huge number of badges from home - upcycling, campaigning, and baking are the most popular. We have completed the Chocolate Factory Badge, Dove Body Image Myth - where we discussed perceptions and pressures around what we look like and we have also been fundraising for the NHS through our "Together at heart though far apart" badge. We have taken on a walking challenge badge to walk 100km each by the end of our Summer Term.

Looking forward to:

Hopefully, we can begin to make plans to meet again in person in line with all the relevant guidance including a campfire at Jubilee House in the summer and we are making plans for an in-person Harry Potter-themed camp at Macaroni Woods. We have not been able to purchase tents with our grant from Wheatley Parish Council (thank you!), but we hope we can organise this soon. We are looking forward to tasting all those bakes we have seen only in photos (leaders demand a repeat taste test!). In the meantime, we are proud of what we've achieved together as we live through a moment in history, we plan to mark with a time capsule.

Maple Tree info@mapletree.org.uk , www.facebook.com/TheMapleTreeWheatley and www.mapletree.org.uk , Tel: 01865 236700

C-19 has presented us with significant challenges to the way in which we have delivered our services over the past year, but also new opportunities to widen the way in which we offer support. As the latest lockdown is now gradually eased, we are excited about re-opening and re-building over the coming months.

Challenges: Surviving the virtual closure of Maple Tree premises and our usual programme. Apart from a short spell last autumn when we were able to offer some socially distanced groups, the Maple Tree building has been mostly closed for face-to-face sessions for the past 12 months. However, Covid-19 forced us to think creatively about the service that we could continue to provide and we adapted quickly with a virtual programme. Our staff have run regular interactive themed sessions via our Facebook page, with stories and songs, and numerous ideas for craft, play, experiments and cooking that families can follow at home.

Together with other local Children's Centres and professionals, we also created a Zoom group for parents of babies born during the lockdown, who did not have the usual access to professional advice or the opportunity to build a social network during the early days of parenting. During the latest lockdown, we have run our own Maple Tree Zoom groups and have been available for advice and support (or just a listening ear) on request by email or phone, or socially distanced 1:1.

We are very proud of the way that we have adapted to the closure of our face to face sessions and provided a full programme of online activities and support to families in our community.

Raising sufficient funds in a difficult year: Financially it has also been a challenging year for us, although we managed to raise sufficient money throughout the year to keep the Centre running. The lockdowns have caused substantial losses from the absence of subs from parents attending sessions, cancelled room lettings and the impossibility of raising funds from Centre-based or wider community events. However, we have managed to raise income through inventive online activities, such as sponsored events, quizzes and an online draw, together with sales of Christmas trees and craft boxes, plant sales, mask making and local appeals in the community. We also successfully applied for grant funding and received great support from Parish Councils and County and District Councillors.

Staff changes: During the past 12 months, we were sad to lose our Centre Co-ordinator and senior Family Support Worker, both of whom left the Maple Tree to pursue alternative career paths. This undermined our capacity to continue to run our programme. However, we used the opportunity to review our staffing needs and management structure, both during the pandemic and as we subsequently re-built our programme. We are delighted that we were able to recruit a new Centre Manager and senior Family Support Worker in the autumn. Both have a wealth of experience in Early Years development and have set about developing a new programme. We are excited that we have ended this year with a strong new staff team.

Plans/challenges for current year: Re-launch of our programme at the Maple Tree

We are delighted that we will be able to re-open the Maple Tree premises on 12th April and we will be offering a full programme of face to face sessions, whilst adhering to government guidance on social distancing. We will be running the following sessions:

- Messy Mondays: play and learn with sensory/creative activities (10.20-11.30am)
- Tuesday: "Once Upon a Rhyme Time" (10-11am)
- Wednesday: Well-Baby clinic (with Health Visitors) and Maple Babies (10-11am)
- Thursday: "Little Scientists" (10-11am)
- Friday: "Solitary Bee to Social Butterflies" – a new group for 1-3 year olds, who have missed key socialising activities during the pandemic (10.30-11.30am)
- Saturdays: Family Fun on 3rd Saturday of each month (10am-12pm)

As we re-build, we also aim to broaden the range of topics covered and offer workshops and courses in areas such as First Aid and Baby Massage.

We will use the knowledge and expertise that we have acquired over the past year to continue to run an online programme alongside our face-to-face sessions. Social distancing guidelines will limit the numbers that we can accommodate in the Centre in the short term at least and we now view online support as a vital service that we should provide even after lockdown to enable access by families in the wider community who are unable to physically attend at the Centre. As guidelines allow, we also aim to resume outreach activities in the wider community.

Increase our capacity to broaden our programme and revitalise our fundraising programme:

This year, we hope to grow by increasing the engagement and involvement of local community members, which will enable us to broaden the programme that we can offer and also give us more capacity to raise vital funds for the Centre.

We would welcome the involvement of more trustees, advisors and volunteers from the local area. We are especially keen to recruit trustees who have a particular skill set in business, accounting or fundraising and we are also seeking more volunteers to help with our sessions, working with young children alongside our dedicated staff team.

Once we are permitted to hold larger gatherings, we have planned an energetic programme of community-based fundraising events, hopefully starting in the summer. We are always keen to welcome members of the community to help with our fundraising plans or volunteer at an event.

Garden re-design: This year, we are planning to re-design the Maple Tree garden. For those not familiar with it, we currently have a small, flat paved play area and a fairly steep grassy slope up to the side wall of the Registration Office. Our aim is to create a space accessible for young children to play and learn confidently outdoors throughout the year. We would like to expand and re-surface the play area and to create a pathway up the slope to another play area at the top, together with a seating area for adults. Areas for growing and harvesting fruit and vegetables and wild growth areas will also provide hands-on opportunities for learning and developing a responsible and caring relationship with the natural world and the environment. We would also like to provide new play equipment and a playhouse. This is a significant challenge and we will need to raise sufficient funds in order to undertake it, in addition to fundraising for our general running costs for the year. We would also be very grateful to hear from anyone with relevant expertise or interest in gardening who would be interested in assisting with the project. The staff and trustees of the Maple Tree would like to extend a huge “thank you” to all the members of our local community who have supported us during the past 12 months. If you would like any more information, please contact us at

Sustainable Wheatley <https://sustainablewheatley.org>

Well, in 2020 the main challenge we had was to do anything during the pandemic. Our usual activities – running Swap shops and Fruit Picking and distribution – were particularly inappropriate in a time of social distancing.

One activity, however, was able to continue: a team from Sustainable Wheatley take water samples from the River Thames every Monday for analysis by the Centre for The Environment and Hydrology (CEH) at Wallingford. Over 20 years ago CEH set up a water quality monitoring programme of for all the tributaries of the River Thames including the River Thames. Four years ago, the funding for the programme was cut which meant that though CEH could analyse the samples but they could no longer afford to collect them. To ensure the work carries on for the River Thames, a team of Wheatley residents stepped in to carry on the sampling. The parameters measured include: Phosphorus and nitrogen, dissolved organic carbon, silicon, sediment, and pH/ Alkalinity. The work provides valuable information on the nature of the sources of pollution in the River Thames catchment, how pollution levels are changing through time and the impact of climate change on pollution. We had also hoped to have a tree-planting project, but this became a casualty of not just the pandemic but a lack of anybody with the time and expertise to manage it.

This last point had led to some soul-searching and before the pandemic struck, we were poised to have a strategic discussion of the role and purpose of the group for the future. Such a discussion does not lend itself to being done through online platforms such as Zoom (others are available) so has also been put on hold.

So, the main challenge for the next 12 months is to define the role and purpose of the group. While our Swap shops remain popular and successful, we recognise there are many areas where a group that calls itself Sustainable Wheatley could and should be involved.

These include (but are not limited to)

- Encouraging sustainability in local housing issues
- Reducing plastic usage
- Water and air pollution
- Food waste
- Electric vehicle promotion

Our group has about 20 active members but everybody in the group has plenty of other commitments, whether this is other voluntary work, paid work, family, or just plain Life.

To expand our activities, we probably need fresh input – people with knowledge, time, and enthusiasm to run and manage projects who could draw on our existing members (and others) for support and legwork.

This is, therefore, an appeal for anybody who would like to lead a project on any sustainability issue to make themselves known to us.

Wheatley Library wendy.stanton@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Our biggest challenge over the last year has been our temporary closure due to covid-19.

We managed to open for one week in December, we then had to close again.

We have now, however, re-opened with the following limited hours.

- Tuesday 2-5pm,
- Wednesday 9.30am-1pm
- Thursday 2-5pm,
- Friday 2-5pm.

We hope to return to longer opening hours in due course.

Our biggest success during the last year has been that despite the lock-down, it has still been possible to proceed with our much-anticipated refurbishment of the library. We have a lovely new layout which works well for social distancing purposes while allowing us to retain the same level of stock in the library. Our nearly new furniture which came from a temporary site elsewhere in the county looks great and we have a new colour scheme which creates an airy welcoming atmosphere. We have plenty of untouched stock as the library service continued to buy books for our libraries despite the limitations of 3 lockdowns. A big thank you to all those who contributed funds for this purpose, i.e., the parish council, the Friends of Wheatley library, developer money and the county council itself.

Thanks to a core of dedicated staff and volunteers we can still offer the level of customer service and care that our members value.

We are also fortunate enough to have had interest from further volunteers and they will be receiving their training in the upcoming weeks.

It has been an extraordinary absence from normality, but we are excited to be able to welcome customers and friends back into the library space.

Wheatley Neighbourhood Plan Committee

www.wheatleyneighbourhoodplan.co.uk

Examination of Plan Following the examination of the Wheatley Neighbourhood Plan, the Examiner issued his Report in February 2020. He required modifications to the original submission version of the WNP by altering the Enhancement proposals in Sections 10 and 11. On 2 April 2020, SODC accepted his modifications as unavoidable in view of the long delay in progressing South Oxfordshire's Local Plan [LP].

In the absence of a Local Plan, the Examiner used the South Oxfordshire Core Strategy 2012 document instead. Of the three elements in the Enhancement proposals, only that relating to potential *change of use* of a brownfield site in Littleworth was retained. The Examiner noted however that once the South Oxfordshire Local Plan had been adopted, some or all the work undertaken on the proposed Wheatley allocations for Enhancement could be consolidated and updated in a post-Referendum review of the neighbourhood Plan. The Examiner could not have anticipated the current 15-month delay between Examination (concluded February 2020) and the postponed Referendum (now due 6 May 2021) due mainly to the epidemic.

Oxford Brookes Development. The Examiner warned of a second issue beyond our control, beside the lack of an SODC Local Plan, namely the Secretary of State's response to the OBU Appeal for 500 houses.

In April 2020 this appeal was upheld, and outline planning permission granted. 'Among other reasons' cited for allowing the appeal, was that *'it helps maximise the potential of the Cambridge-MK-Oxford Arc.'* Today, (April 2021), no development timetable has been published for the OBU site. On 18 March 2021, the Dept of Transport announced the Oxford-

Cambridge Expressway project cancelled, as 'benefits were outweighed by costs ... [with] no cost-effective option for the taxpayer.'

Local Plan. The SODC Local Plan (LP 2035) was finally adopted in December 2020, 10 months after the WNP Examination. In January 2021, SODC began Consultation on a proposal to 'deviate' i.e., to reinstate the text and policies in Sections 10 and 11, which the Examiner had required to be deleted. After this Consultation, SODC *'took further interpretation of the regulations'* and decided that its agreement of 2 April 2020 that the WNP had been correctly examined at the time in the context of the South Oxfordshire Core Strategy 2012 *'cannot be revisited'*. The 'deviation' proposal was withdrawn. The WNP in its Examined form will go to Referendum with no reinstatement of those Enhancement proposals which the Examiner had deleted. After a positive Referendum vote, this will be reviewed in the normal Neighbourhood Plan Review procedure [Para. 2b), below].

Looking forward to the next 12-months...

Referendum. A positive Referendum result on 06 May will give the WNP its statutory planning role. Our Consultation Statement and Website show all our community consultations since 2016 and the Statement has been Examined. We have reported routinely and regularly to both Wheatley and Holton Parish Councils. Post-Referendum, WNP Committee 's major responsibility will be the WNP Review

Local Plan. The Local Plan 2035 adopted by SODC (December 2020) and a WNP hopefully approved at Referendum, the key Review of the neighbourhood Plan as advised by the Examiner can commence. In keeping with normal procedure for an NP Review, we will consult the community, including on the reinstatement of all the key Enhancement proposals. (LP2035 already sets out provisions for the WNP to make detailed amendments to the Green Belt.)

The Green Belt proposed to be released in the Enhancement proposals is at Ms Tombs' Field and the land around the Bungalows Community by ASDA.

Traffic and roads. The WNP Committee reminded SODC in January, that the latest village developments (OBU 500 homes and the Care Home on Park Hill), will increase traffic pressure on a village which WNP already calls 'a two-mile unofficial slip road to the M40 complex'. The Committee of 19 residents know their village and live here, one of the arguments for Neighbourhood Planning. Our two architects describe Committee work on the proposed Enhancements, as 'the luxury of 2-3 years of positive planning.' The whole Committee has learned from nearly six years of advanced listening. The WNP text highlights community concern over traffic, roads, noise, and air quality, and gives space to OCC Highways' own comments on the nearby motorway complex. The A40 dual carriageway forms a village boundary. Our website Evidence Bases also record in much detail community concerns about roads, traffic, and air quality.

In 2018, we spent two hours with OCC Highways – a meeting chaired by a WNP Committee member with an agenda of village concerns. That was over three years ago. At the end of the meeting, OCC said 'Come back when your Plan has been through Referendum.' If the WNP is approved by the Referendum, it will give the community the statutory voice with which to share its knowledge and ideas about local roads and traffic with OCC Highways in a sustained dialogue.

The WNP Committee has been proud to try to serve its community. In turn we all owe thanks to the 130+ Volunteers who so often delivered /collected leaflets / questionnaires, helped lay out displays, ran refreshments and encouraged us as a team by phone, email, irreverent humour and especially by turning out during those four hectic years before we submitted the WNP to the Examiner.

Wheatley Playing Field Trust

enquiries@wheatleyplayingfieldtrust.co.uk or www.wheatleyplayingfieldtrust.co.uk

The Wheatley Playing Field Trust seeks to advance the wellbeing of the inhabitants of Wheatley and the surrounding area by encouraging participation of all sections of the community in sport and recreation. To achieve this, the Trust will seek every opportunity to improve the current facilities.

By consulting with the community and reporting this feedback, the Trust aims to help develop new facilities to increase participation in sport and recreation.

March 2020 saw the country in lockdown and with schools closed. The Holton playing field and pavilions were shut to all users. Despite this, some groups still used the field for recreation and considerable damage was done to the portable football goal posts which had been locked up as well as to the tennis fencing.

The Trust had obtained a grant towards floodlighting of a netball court. The materials were purchased but, because of Covid restrictions, could not be installed until the easing of restrictions. The Trust also took this opportunity to replace and upgrade the switchgear and floodlight switches.

In June, the school reopened for some students and some use of the playing field was restored for them. Under strict government and national governing bodies' guidelines for sport, very restricted training resumed for football and rugby. Tennis nets were put up on 3 courts only and family use of them was allowed.

On Sunday 16th August at 8.pm, the Trust received a report that travellers had entered the field through a locked gate and set up camp around the rugby pitch. The police were immediately informed, and the Trust engaged the same bailiff company that were employed in the 2016 incursion. The Travellers were finally evicted from the field on Tuesday evening, 18th August. However, in that time, considerable damage was done to the field, the training pitch, tennis nets, the scrummaging machine and the rugby club container and contents. The gate and Heras fencing had also been damaged.

The Parish Council incurred considerable costs to evict the travellers, but the clear up cost afterwards was kept to a minimum thanks to the help from members of Wheatley Rugby Club with further offers of help from Wheatley FC.

In October, the government announced a second lockdown and all use of the field again stopped, apart from the school. This lockdown was lifted in early December only for a third lockdown to begin a month later.

During whole year, the Trust continued to carry out the necessary maintenance of the field. Because the Trust's income was greatly reduced, the maintenance costs were part funded by government Covid grants. The Trust received a further grant from SODC towards improving the security of the field. This included strengthening the gates and installation of concrete and anti-ram bollards and the installation of CCTV around the buildings.

Finally, as this report is being written, relaxation of the Covid regulations has seen a return of the users of the field. These include Junior football, women's' 30+ football, rugby and netball. Over the Easter holidays the tennis courts will be put up. As last year, the Trust is offering the courts, for residents of Wheatley and Holton, free of charge outside of school hours. The courts are available on a first come, first serve basis. Anyone wishing to use the courts must first complete the membership form and agree to the terms and conditions. This form is available on the Trust's website or can be collected from the Wheatley Parish Council office in the High Street. All users should register with the NHS covid app before and after play.

The Trust continues to work closely with Wheatley Parish Council in its project to replace the current pavilions. Although the project is funded by Wheatley Parish Council, the design and functions must be able to be maintained within the Trust's funding and objectives.

The trustees regularly meet with Wheatley Park School to ensure that all the facilities are available to enable the school to fulfil its Physical Education curriculum. The Trust, by working closely with the school, clubs and other users, encourages and nurtures the highest standards in sport and associated management of the facilities for the overall well-being and satisfaction of all who use the playing fields.

If anyone is interested in any of the above activities, whether as a player or volunteer, please get in touch.

Wheatley WI

Over the last twelve months we have successfully moved our monthly and committee meetings onto the Zoom platform, we have kept in touch with all members via monthly newsletter, quiz and telephone calls. In August we delivered afternoon tea in a bag to our members plus arranged delivery of Christmas and Easter goody bags, for them too.

Our future projects include

continuing to support a local Refuge; looking forward to a late celebration of our Centenary with a special afternoon tea; and looking forward to resuming face to face meetings to complete the exciting things we had planned for last year.

Report from OCC Cllr Tim Bearder

The Expressway has been cancelled.

Transport Secretary Grant Shapps announced the cancellation of the Oxford-Cambridge (Ox-Cam) expressway on 18 March 2021, after "analysis confirmed the proposed project was not cost-effective".

Whilst I believe this is tremendous news (albeit he seems to have based the decision entirely on the finances of the case), there have been several reports in the Oxford Times about the "Expressway by Stealth". Responses to recent FOI requests indicate that changes were made to the South Oxfordshire Local Plan at a late stage on the initiative of County Council officers with no councillor involvement - in particular the addition of a proposal to "improve" the B4015, the removal of the safeguarding plan for Stadhampton Bypass and the inclusion of possible M40 junction changes outside the District. All this gives support to the suspicion that a major new route through our area is being planned.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/oxford-to-cambridge-expressway-project-cancelled-as-transport-secretary-looks-to-alternative-plans-for-improving-transport-in-the-region>

Future housing

Government have announced an intention to establish a new single voice for the area - an Arc Growth Body - to drive and support economic growth

Already we have a wealth of bodies like England's Economic Heartland who are pushing for a very large number of new houses. I asked a question of the cabinet last month which revealed 862,000 new houses across the arc are expected - the National Infrastructure Commission recommended a million.

Either way that would represent continuous and unchecked housing delivery for the next 30 years at rates far in excess of anything seen in the last 20 - possibly ever!

A growth of 105% in Oxfordshire compared with the 16% predicted for the nation as a whole by the Office of National Statistics.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/oxford-to-cambridge-expressway-project-cancelled-as-transport-secretary-looks-to-alternative-plans-for-improving-transport-in-the-region>

Horspath Bridge

Oxfordshire County Council have contacted the Historical Railways Estate and advised that they are happy to work with them on the diversion associated with the refurb works.

The Historical Railways Estate consequently instructed their consultant to 'bin' the planning application relating to demolition. The ecologists have been told to plan for surveys relating

to refurbishment rather than demolition – they think they may only need summer bat surveys at the moment. So it may be ready to go earlier than expected.

So – fingers crossed... This is a vital piece of infrastructure that prevents large lorries accessing the Ladder Hill area of Wheatley and is a much loved historical landmark.

Parking contract

Mistakes made over the awarding of a parking contract have cost Oxfordshire County Council more than £1.6m.

This is incredibly disappointing because that is enough to pay for the rent on the Maple Tree Children's centre, which I've been part funding from my Councillor Allowance, for 160 years!

To make matters worse they spent £20,475 on an independent report to look at what went wrong and are now refusing to show that to councillors because it is confidential. There was a motion moved to end last month's full council meeting early because we'd had an emotional debate on domestic violence. That was the item before the Parking Contract was to be discussed. The Chair of the Council has decided that there should be an Extraordinary Meeting on the 7th to finish the meeting.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-oxfordshire-56187024>

Government has just published a National bus strategy

They are asking Local Transport Authorities to begin the process of establishing Enhanced Partnerships with bus operators across their entire area by the end of June, otherwise they will lose a lot of funding. This is a similar approach adopted for the Active Transport funds last summer. It led to some rushed decisions and lots of white lines being repainted. I will of course be pressing their feet to the fire on it and trying to get some long term funding for the Wheatley to Temple Cowley Bus and asking them to look at an enhanced Otmoor Flier set up as a proper bus service.

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/969205/DfT-Bus-Back-Better-national-bus-strategy-for-England.pdf

Local Plan

I've been actively involved in the preplanning exercise set up by Christchurch looking at the land north of Bayswater Brook and have held meetings with Brookes about the development site in Wheatley. It is essential that we are very closely involved in all these plans so that we can get the best for the community. It doesn't seem that the Planning Inspector has left us many levers to compel developers to improve cycle paths or develop car free plans but it is something I will be pushing for as hard as I can because the impact on the local infrastructure of these many thousand houses will be immense.