

Henley Town Council Planning Committee Report to the Annual Town Meeting, 1 April 2021

The Planning Committee's remit is to debate planning applications and send our observations to South Oxfordshire District Council (SODC), who are the Planning Authority. The Planning Committee also has the Neighbourhood Plan Committee, Climate Emergency 2030 Working Group and the Transport Strategy Group reporting to it.

The Planning Committee meets every 3 weeks, and expertly guided by HTC Planning Officer Jodie Rhymes have debated more than 250 planning applications. These are primarily for extensions, alterations and new builds. In general, our view is similar to the SODC Planning Department. If the Planning Committee feels that SODC's opinion may differ from ours, then we request that the application goes before their planning committee – the District Councillor 'calls in' the application. I would like to single out a single date: that of 2nd November 2020. This is the date the Planning Authority changed its Committee procedure to re-instate District Councillors debating AND voting on planning applications in their ward. This is the first change since 2006 – our thanks to Cllr Arlett for rightfully restoring democracy to the Planning Committee at SODC with his motion.

The Neighbourhood Plan Committee meets every 6-8 weeks to ensure the Joint Henley and Harpsden Neighbourhood Plan (JHHNP) is being adhered to. We are also carrying out a review of the JHHNP. This has to align with the SODC Local Plan 2035, which was delayed following the local elections in 2019 and intervention by Central Government. The Local Plan has now been adopted, the JHHNP is on a timeline to be presented for its first inspection by the end of this year (Covid allowing).

The Transport Strategy Group chaired by Cllr Gawrysiak, has successfully secured finance from SODC and OCC for environmental improvements to air quality in the town. Consultations have been carried out by OCC on crossings for Gravel Hill and Marlow Road. Councillor Gawrysiak is working very hard to deliver a weight limit on the Henley bridge. Cllr Gawrysiak will give an update of other highway work in his report.

The Climate Emergency 2030 Working Group is now firmly established after the Town Council unanimously voted to declare a climate emergency in early 2020. The group is continuing with its objectives which now includes housing and an EV charging point infrastructure for Henley.

I would take this opportunity to thank Councillors on the Planning Committee in the way they research information on planning applications before the meetings, plus all other aspects on the agendas. Thank you to members of the public who sit on the Neighbourhood Plan Committee, Transport Strategy Group and the Climate Emergency 2030 Working Group who give up their time voluntarily.

Finally, my thanks to the Deputy Clerk and Project Manager Cath Adams, Planning Officer Jodie Rhymes and Climate Emergency and Transport Study Officer Fiona Hewer, who are such a credit to our town.

Cllr Michelle Thomas

Chair, HTC Planning Committee; Member JHHNP