

Parish Council Newsletter - Autumn/Winter 2024

Welcome to the Parish Council Autumn/Winter Newsletter, an extremely damp autumn it has been so far and now we are moving into a colder period – unfortunately, the weather is not something the Parish Council (PC) is able to affect.

However, since the previous newsletter the PC has been active in many issues where it can make an impact.

As you may be aware there have been a number of speculative planning applications made for development in the parish and understandably these applications have raised many concerns among the parishioners. As a result, extra meetings have of both the PC and the Planning Committee have been held to allow residents to inform the PC of their views. We have been pleased to welcome an increase in the number of persons attending these meetings, not just to express their opinions about the development but also regarding other issues as well. The PC is always seeking parishioners' suggestions as to how the parish may develop and would encourage you to attend meetings if you have any questions or concerns that you may wish the PC to address.

Also, the Speed Indicator Devices (SIDs) have been installed by the PC in North Leigh, New Yatt, and East End. Indications from the data obtained so far suggest that these have contributed to raising drivers' awareness with regard to the speed limits in place.

Since the last newsletter, the PC has welcomed a new councillor, David Harris, who brings with him a considerable knowledge of planning applications and developments and we look forward to the addition of his expertise.

Lastly, I hope that many of you will be able to join us at the Tree Lighting event on Cuckamus Green to start your festive season.

Andy Clements

Chair



Speedwatch

The main news from the Speedwatch group is that since the previous newsletter the Speed Indication Devices (SIDs) have been installed by the Parish Council at 6 locations in the parish. These are located at the North and South ends of East End, and, in North Leigh village, on Common Road, Church Road and New Yatt Road.

Information that has been provided by these devices has indicated that the devices have had a beneficial effect by slowing down vehicles within the parish.

Overall, for East End, the data has shown the highest hourly number of vehicles occur between 15.00 and 18.00 at the south, coming into East End, and the highest hourly number of vehicles coming into East End at the north end occur between 07.00 and 10.00.

A sample of vehicles from the East End locations on Tuesday 24th September for those time period, shows the following:

Entering East End south end average speed = 30 mph

Entering East End north end average speed = 31.08 mph

Surveys without vs with SIDS

| | Total Vehicles | Vehicles +30mph | % | | Vehicles +35 MPH | % |
|--|----------------|-----------------|----|--|------------------|----|
| 202 3 29 Surveys - without SIDS | 1115 | 345 | 31 | | 120 | 11 |
| 202 4 4 Surveys - without SIDS | 212 | 59 | 28 | | 19 | 9 |
| 202 4 10 Surveys - with SIDS | 471 | 67 | 14 | | 11 | 2 |
| | | | | | | |

The two most recent Speedwatch survey results from sessions in East End are also very encouraging:

From a total of 149 vehicles only 14 were exceeding 30mph.

A shortage of volunteers means the Speedwatch Group is unable to conduct any surveys in North Leigh village. If you would like to assist with the Speedwatch surveys, please contact:

Councillor Kevin Swann: kevin.swann@northleighparishcouncil.gov.uk

or the Parish Clerk: parishclerk@northleighparishcouncil.gov.uk

Update from the North Leigh Parish Council Planning Committee

North Leigh has had considerable housing development in recent times, notwithstanding the best efforts of the residents and the Parish Council (PC).

In recent years, 181 new homes have been built in the parish and a further 122 have consented development but have yet to start.

The most recent major Appeal Decision was the Manor Oak Planning Appeal which was strongly opposed by both residents and the PC. A substantial number of letters of objection were received by the PC regarding the proposed development from the local residents and the PC would like to thank you all for this. It is important that if you object to any future planning applications, you raise your objection with the District Council or the Planning Inspectorate if it is an Appeal. The Manor Oaks appeal was strongly opposed by the PC and indeed, at the planning hearing, six Parish Councillors attended, including the current District Councillor, and voiced their objections along with a number of other residents who also voiced their opinion.

The questions that the residents will no doubt ask is why are developers targeting North Leigh?

Simply, because West Oxfordshire District Council (WODC) cannot meet its obligations in providing a 5 year housing supply. Planning applications should be determined in accordance with the WODC Local Plan and there are a number of policies that would normally restrict development. Unfortunately, with WODC being unable to meet its housing supply target figures, this tilts the balance in favour of development. It was quite clear in the Manor Oaks Appeal Decision that the Planning Inspector was of the view that this strongly tilted the balance in favour of granting permission for development. There has been some recent good news in that a Planning Appeal Decision for a property at the junction of Boddington Lane and Church Road has been refused by the Planning Inspectorate on appeal. The failure to meet the 5 year housing supply figure was an argument raised by the Appellants but in this case, the Inspector paid more regard to the Planning policies emphasising that development in a rural area will be limited to that which requires and is appropriate for rural locations. It is to be hoped that the Inspector's decision on this Appeal will assist us in any future Planning applications.

Update from the North Leigh Parish Council Planning Committee - continued

What can residents of North Leigh Parish do to try and help?

You should contact the Leader of WODC, Andy Graham voicing your concern and ask for an explanation as to why the 5 year housing supply figure cannot be met. You can contact your MP, Callum Miller and ask him to help.

The one positive to come from the recent Planning Permissions granted is that the Developer is required to enter into a Planning Agreement which invariably contains obligations to contribute monies to the locality. By way of example, the Manor Oak development requires a contribution of £50,000 to be made by the developer to be used for any play facilities around the village. Unfortunately, these contributions will not be received from the developer until the Planning Permissions are actually implemented and there is of course the current issue in the village as to foul sewer drainage and the recent Permissions granted cannot be implemented until such time as this issue has been resolved. At the recent Parish Council meeting of 17 September, which focused on the proposed Lion Court development, the PC did invite comments regarding the use of the monies that PC was going to receive and most requested were for sports facilities for young people, allotments, and traffic related issues. Moving forward, the Parish Council will continue to listen to you and do whatever they can to resist further development in North Leigh.

Neighbourhood Plan

Since the last newsletter, the Neighbourhood Plan Committee has had seven meetings and has made substantial progress with the work to create the Neighbourhood Plan (NP).

In June, the Neighbourhood Plan Survey was distributed by the committee members to all the households within the parish, as well as being available online. The response rate was very encouraging with 362 responses received. The breakdown of responses was as below:

North Leigh – 38% of households

East End – 61% of households

Wilcote – 12% of households.

The response rate was higher than normally expected – so thank you to all the residents that took the time to reply.

A public meeting took place in the Memorial Hall on 2nd November and 112 people attended.

At the meeting, the committee reported back to the parish the results of the survey in some detail and also the draft Vision and Policy Themes that have been created by the responses to the survey. It was encouraging to have such a good attendance, and the meeting was a lively and interactive event. The next step is for the parish to provide its views and feedback to the committee regarding the Vision and Policy Themes. No decisions will be made by the Parish Council regarding the definitive version of the Vision and Policy Themes until the committee has collated feedback and everyone who wishes to do so has made their viewpoint to the committee.

Neighbourhood Plan—continued

For those of you who were unable to attend the meeting, the draft VISION and potential POLICY THEMES of the Neighbourhood Plan are below:

Draft Vision:

To maintain the identity of our communities as a predominantly rural area where the three main settlements of Wilcote, East End, and North Leigh remain embedded within open countryside, and the boundaries of these settlements define the limits of future development and expansion.

To ensure any future development within the parish is focused on the needs of those communities and is limited in scope to prevent the coalescence of the parish with the surrounding parishes of Hailey, Long Hanborough, and Witney, and to retain the separate identities of the settlements within the parish of North Leigh, East End, and Wilcote.

To improve and enhance the community facilities, the sense of community, and the local infrastructure to ensure an exceptional quality of life for the current and future inhabitants.

Potential Policy Themes:

Development

Green Spaces and Rural Setting

Infrastructure and Facilities

Transportation

These documents and the survey results are available online at the Parish Council website, as well as the Feedback form.

You can also comment by emailing:

neighbourhoodplan@northleighparishcouncil.gov.uk

REPORT FROM DISTRICT COUNCILLOR, SARAH VEASEY

sarah.veasey@westoxon.gov.uk

Facebook: @CllrSarahVeasey

Mobile: 07798 730925

I am enjoying my role as your District Councillor and getting to know many residents around the Parish. Please do get in touch on the above email if you have any issues or concerns that I might be able to help you with.

WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL (WODC)

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)

A public consultation took place in August and September 2024 on the proposed Community Infrastructure Levy for West Oxfordshire. CIL is a form of developer contribution for smaller sites and operates alongside the current S106 system. If CIL money is collected from a development in North Leigh, it can be used anywhere across West Oxfordshire but 15% of the amount is retained for community use in North Leigh. That percentage rises to 25% if there is a Neighbourhood Plan. This is an added reason to get our Neighbourhood Plan in place in North Leigh as soon as possible and I was very pleased to hear, at the Neighbourhood Plan update meeting on 2nd November, about the excellent progress being made by the team to push the Plan forward.

Consultation on Polling

The consultation on “Polling Districts and Polling Places” ended on 4th November 2024 with results to be confirmed at the end of this month. It is unlikely that there will be any change to polling station arrangements in North Leigh. There is also an upcoming mandatory review of the District Council Ward sizes and election schedules by the Boundary Commission with outcomes scheduled for early 2025.

S106

S106 is the term for developer contributions on larger housing sites to be used to mitigate the effect locally of new housing development. I am working with WODC and North Leigh Parish Council to evaluate the exact S106 funding contributions that have been received to mitigate housing development to date in North Leigh and to clarify the purposes and timescales within which these funds must be used. Feedback from the recent Neighbourhood Plan survey showed that residents are keen to use some of the funds for additional recreation facilities especially for older children in the village and I and the Parish Council will be exploring this and consulting further with the Parish in coming months.

PLANNING

Manor Oak application, New Yatt Road

It was very disappointing that despite strong opposition by a team comprising myself, previous district councillor Harry St John, parish councillors and residents, that the Appeal Inspector overturned the WODC decision to refuse this planning application and so the 43 house development will go ahead at this site adjacent to Breakspear Way on New Yatt Road. This scheme has many “harms” including the coalescence of North Leigh and New Yatt but the Inspector on balance put most weight on WODC’s inability to demonstrate a 5 year Housing Land Supply and so allowed the application. The full statement by the inspector is here:

https://publicaccess.westoxon.gov.uk/online-applications/files/6D69DEE69F7CB104F49B26560420EFA0/pdf/23_00794_OUT-APPEAL_DECISION-1363142.pdf

The application will in due course contribute £50,000 in S106 funding for North Leigh which will be able to be used for any play facility around North Leigh.

Lioncourt Strategic Land proposal, Common Road

In September 2024 Lioncourt sent out mailings and set up a website regarding a proposed application for 116 houses on a site west of Common Road. Lioncourt has now submitted a screening request to WODC asking for an assessment of the environmental impact of such a proposal. This proposal has been passed to Oxfordshire County Council for comment on the traffic implications. A planning application has not at this stage been submitted to WODC, but the Planning Committee of North Leigh Parish Council remains vigilant and will assess this application at a public meeting in due course. Please sign up to the mailing list on the North Leigh Parish Council website for updates.

West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2041 (WOLP 2041)

The new administration at Westminster has announced that housing targets for West Oxfordshire will be increased from 549 to 889 houses per year. The new WOLP 2041 which is currently under development will need to consider these new targets which has resulted in delays to the timeline. Shortlisting of sites put forward under WOLP 2041 will now be moved from Autumn 2024 to Spring 2025. I will continue to monitor this and report back in due course.

RURAL CRIME FARMING CONFERENCE

I attended a very interesting Rural Crime conference at Blenheim on the 6th of November, emphasising the importance of keeping tools, machinery and vehicles marked with ID and/or tracking devices. The police recover many stolen items, but they cannot be returned if they cannot be identified.

More information at:

<https://www.thamesvalley.police.uk/advice/advice-and-information/rc/rural-crime/rural-crime-prevention/>

REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY SERVICE

The poignant and moving Remembrance Sunday service, led by Rev. Margaret Dixon at St. Mary's Church, was very well attended with representation and laying of wreaths by Guiding and Scouting groups, Royal British Legion, Parish Council, Women's Institute, current and past members of our Armed Forces and Police and others. It was an honour to lay a wreath on behalf of West Oxfordshire District Council.

THAMES WATER SEWER ISSUES

The very heavy rainfall at the end of September led to rainwater infiltration of the sewer network in North Leigh. This resulted in a number of flooding and sewage spilling incidents around the village. I collated reports from residents in the village and reported a full list to Thames Water asking them to come and rectify the situation in each location. Please continue to report any sewer manhole leakage concerns to me directly so that I can include these locations on the list.

Comment from Liam Walker, Oxfordshire County Councillor

Oxfordshire County Council must prioritise pothole repairs, improved road surfaces, and more effective drainage management to ensure safer and more reliable infrastructure for its residents. These issues not only pose significant safety risks but also affect the economic well-being and quality of life in the county. Potholes are a frequent complaint in Oxfordshire, and their presence on roads causes substantial damage to vehicles, increases the risk of accidents, and reduces overall road safety. Poor road conditions lead to higher vehicle maintenance costs for residents and businesses, ultimately harming the local economy. Moreover, these hazards particularly affect cyclists and pedestrians, contributing to injuries and discouraging more sustainable forms of transport, which the council aims to promote. Repairing potholes and maintaining smooth road surfaces is essential not only for public safety but also to improve traffic flow and reduce congestion. Roads in good condition reduce wear and tear on vehicles, lower fuel consumption, and enhance the overall travel experience for commuters, tourists, and delivery services.

In the long term, investing in road repairs can also lower future maintenance costs by preventing more extensive damage from developing. Flooding has also become an increasing concern in Oxfordshire due to heavy rainfall and the county's growth with housing. Many roads are prone to flooding because of inadequate drainage systems, which can lead to road closures, traffic disruptions, and increased risks for motorists. In particular, blocked or poorly maintained drains contribute to surface water flooding, further damaging the road infrastructure and exacerbating existing problems such as potholes. By allocating more resources to clearing drains and improving drainage infrastructure, Oxfordshire County Council can mitigate the impacts of flooding, protect properties, and ensure that roads remain passable during severe weather. This is particularly important given the potential for climate change to increase the frequency and intensity of rainfall events. A robust drainage system will help the council avoid costly flood-related repairs and maintain road usability year-round. Investing in pothole repairs, better road surfaces, and effective drainage systems is not just a matter of infrastructure maintenance; it is essential for public safety, economic vitality, and climate resilience. Oxfordshire County Council must prioritise these efforts to reduce the financial burden on residents, ensure safe and efficient transport, and protect its communities from the growing risks of flooding. Focusing on these areas will help foster a more sustainable and prosperous future for the county.

Parish Housekeeping

Upkeep and maintenance of various items and areas of the village is the responsibility of the PC, and these areas include the Children's Playground, the Adventure Playground, the Cemetery, bus shelters and a number of trees within the parish.

Unfortunately, there have been a number of incidents of vandalism of the bus shelters in North Leigh as well as damage to the fencing at the Children's Playground

The repairing of the damage is a costly exercise, and the PC would appreciate residents' vigilance in trying to reduce these incidents.

The parish salt bins have been checked and are all operational.

The Parish Council does monitor the areas for which it is responsible, and it would be a significant help to all if, when out and about in the parish, you spot something that needs attention, you would contact the Parish Clerk Allison Leigh with the relevant information via email at:

parishclerk@northleighparishcouncil.gov.uk

Potholes

As Councillor Walker has pointed out in his comment, potholes are a concern to many within the county and parish.

Potholes can be reported using "Fixmystreet"

<https://fixmystreet.oxfordshire.gov.uk/>

If you are interested in becoming a Fixmystreet superuser the link below will guide you:

[Volunteer for highways and your community | Oxfordshire County Council](#)

The PC would remind all dog walkers to pick up any mess left by your dog when out walking.

A litter pick in North Leigh village is being planned for the 9th March 2025.

Patrick Power

The Parish Council has learnt of the passing of Patrick Power.

Patrick Power served King and Country in the latter stages of WW2 in the army and then in the Thames Valley Police. After he retired from policing, he worked for many years as the secretary to the National Federation of Builders until he retired.

Patrick then took on the role of Clerk to the North Leigh Parish Council and served the community in that role for 26 years until he stood down in 2011.

Patrick and Diana, his wife, were for many years stalwarts of village life in North Leigh - involved in many organisations and activities of our community - not least the funding and building of the new Memorial Hall.

The Parish Council extends its condolences to Patrick's wife and family at this sad time.

Parish Council Tree Lighting Event

North Leigh Parish Council's first ever tree lighting will take place on Saturday the 7th of December on Cuckamus Green.

Please join us starting at 6:30pm for festive music and refreshments and Cheer! Carols around the tree will start prior to the tree lighting at 7pm.

We hope to see you there!

