

Eye & Dunsden Parish Council

Chairman's report for 2016–17

The year's most significant event has been a planning application for 245 new houses in the parish made by Gladman developments. If approved it would be the single biggest change to the parish since the construction of Caversham Park Village in the early 1970s. Following the council's recommendation SODC refuse the scheme, I have been active in www.cagedunsden.org, an alliance of ten local parishes and residents' groups that are opposed to the scheme. The application is expected to go to planning committee in late May or June 2017. Council meetings have remained convivial and constructive.

POLICY MATTERS

The parish council welcomed an accord between County and District for the formation of a cost saving unitary, and discussions continue on implementation.

OCC Councillor David Bartholomew continues to represent us on an inter-county group examining the case for a new river crossing. Like E&DPC, OCC remains sceptical about the viability of the scheme.

www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/content/minerals-and-waste-core-strategy lists a significant further extension to gravel extraction towards Shiplake. The parish council has a history of opposing all such extensions.

www.southoxon.gov.uk/newlocalplan sets out preferred options for future development in the District. The Gladman site is not in any SODC plan, but the disarray is SODC's housing planning means that there is a presumption in favour of development. A Neighbourhood Plan would be a means to protect the parish from unwanted applications of this nature. Considerable work would be involved and informal discussions have been opened about joint working with neighbouring parishes.

PLANNING APPLICATIONS

Some 29 planning applications were made in the parish in the year to date. They have included changes to the Mill at Sonning theatre, which will ensure its future viability, and the successful installation of a hydropower scheme at Sonning weir, both of which received the support of the parish council. A number of planning applications for alterations to houses in Dunsden, Playhatch and Sonning Eye were commented on by the parish council, often with approval. The council continues to welcome residents who wish to address its meetings about planning applications. An application was also received for a temporary car park for the Coppa Club at Frizer's Farm, made after a scheme for the mill island was withdrawn in response to feedback.

ROADS & PATHS

OCC has continued to seek funding for road raising of up to 90cm on the Playhatch Road. Some early design work on raising between the French Horn and the Sonning Eye mini-roundabout met with strong criticism from residents, and as a result the parish council withdrew its support from the scheme until more suitable design proposals are made. The Furleigh footpath still needs resurfacing. The council hopes to install bollards beside the re-seeded land beside the telephone kiosk at Playhatch.

ALLOTMENTS & OPEN SPACES

Allotment sites at Sonning Eye and Playhatch are flourishing. The parish open spaces at Dunsden Green and Furleigh bank are in good condition thanks to our contractor. The war

memorial on Dunsden Green has finally been restored with new concrete steps after it proved too difficult to source grants for stone steps.

WEBSITE

A new website has been launched and populated with a mailing list of several hundred receiving periodic bulletins. Sign-up on the site for news.

ASSOCIATED ORGANISATIONS

Dunsden Owen Association was involved in All Saints Dunsden's Snowdrop Sunday in February 2017 and is beginning to make plans for the 2018 centenary of the end of WW1. More details at www.owenindunsden.org and on Facebook and Twitter.

Richard Berkley and I represented the parish at meetings of the **Tarmac Quarry Liaison Group** which has met again this year. Preparations have begun for the start of gravel extraction at Sonning Eye later this year (vigorously opposed by the parish council) and a local liaison contact has been appointed to deal with queries.

The **Community Orchard** has suffered tree losses and vandalism but is being prepared for an open day as part of the Chelsea Fringe Garden Festival on 3 June 2017. More information at <http://orchard.blogspirit.com>.

The **village hall** has been preparing for the start, in the summer of 2017, of the most important building programme to take place there since its original construction. A number of grants have been made by local organisations including around £200k from SODC and £100k from the Phillimore Trust. £30k remains to be found. Please support the auction of promises at <https://auctionofpromises.com/DunsdenVillageHall>

AONB enlargement: parishes' pressure group I have continued to represent the parish. Frustratingly, no progress made.

CHARITIES

I have represented the parish council on the Sonning Education & Welfare Trust which has made a number of small grants to people in need. Applications from Eye & Dunsden are welcomed. I am also a Trustee of the Robert Palmer Almshouses in Sonning which have continued to be well-run with a vacancy currently available to people living in Eye & Dunsden.

REPRESENTATIVES FROM DISTRICT AND COUNTY

District Councillor, **Paul Harrison**, and County Councillor **David Bartholomew** are thanked for their much appreciated support on any number of local issues.

Especially thanks once again to our highly capable Clerk, **Mandy Sermon**, for all her dedicated work during the year. She can be contacted on 0149 141 2908 or by email at clerk@eyedunsden.org.

The public continue to be most welcome at all our meetings which are usually held on the third Tuesday of the month: a full schedule is available on our noticeboards and shortly on our new website, www.eyedunsden.org.

David Woodward, 2.5.17