

The government acknowledges that the application of the presumption in favour of sustainable development when policies are out of date has been effective, but is also a blunt tool and has had some negative effects on local planning, including: neighbourhood plans being undermined, by leaving them vulnerable to speculative applications.

Where communities plan for housing (by making housing allocations) through a neighbourhood plan, these plans should not be deemed out-of-date unless there is a significant lack (3 years or less) of land supply for housing in the wider local authority area. This provision strengthens the role of neighbourhood plans and seeks to restore confidence in the plan led system.

If we plan positively for housing, the housing supply policies in our neighbourhood plan will be deemed up-to-date (for up to two years) even if the district council cannot demonstrate a 5 year housing land supply.

To make the most from the above, we should progress our neighbourhood plan as quickly as possible and keep it up-to-date.

What happens if we don't include a site allocation in our plan?

We will not benefit from recent actions from the government to strengthen neighbourhood plans if ours does not allocate a site. We could see our plan undermined by speculative applications.

Communities nearby, such as Long Wittenham which has 325 houses, did not include a site allocation in their popular (91% support at referendum) NP. This resulted in their plan having little influence on a planning application for 36 houses. The application, which the local community considered to be contrary to the neighbourhood plan, was approved at appeal. They are now quickly reviewing their plan because they realise that without a site allocation, their Plan is not influencing planning decisions

In summary.....

The NP is the result of 30+ months of assessment, research, consultation and consensus building. Once in place, the NP will become the starting point for making planning decisions in our Parish. Moving swiftly ahead with our NP is the best option for our village now and for the future.

We will keep you informed and thank you for your support.

Report to Parish Councils March 2018

OCC STEPS UP POTHOLE WORK AS WINTER HITS THE ROADS

Repeated cycles of ice, thaws and snow have created the worst possible weather conditions for roads over the last few months leading to a rise in reports on Fix My Street from 3,000 pre-Christmas to 7,000 during January. OCC has drafted in more staff to carry out inspections and contractors Skanska are sending out more teams to carry out repairs. An additional Dragon-Patcher is now in action on the road network travelling round on an 'inspect and fix' basis on the rural network. Almost £1m in extra funding from the Dept for Transport will be spent on road patching later this year as that will give longer lasting benefits and better value for money. Defects that make roads hazardous will be dealt with within 24 hours as usual. Remember, if a defect has paint markings around it then it has already been scheduled for repair and does not need a new report.

OXFORDSHIRE'S LIBRARIES ARE THRIVING – NOT JUST SURVIVING

I was delighted to welcome Libraries Minister Michael Ellis MP to the official opening of the Oxfordshire County Library on 22nd February. The newly refitted facility at the entrance to the Westgate Centre welcomed more than 100 guests Mr Ellis toured the library and spoke with staff and volunteers about its transformation and wider network of Oxfordshire branches. He said: "This is a wonderful example of a library that is an integral part of the community. We want to see libraries thrive - not just survive - and this is a classic example of a thriving library. Libraries are still greatly valued by many people."

Among the guests was Philip Pullman, author of the famous His Dark Materials Trilogy who signed autographs and said, "I'm very impressed with what I have seen. I knew the old library very well and used to use it regularly, and now it's looking absolutely splendid." Since reopening just before Christmas the library has signed up 2,000 new members.

CARE QUALITY COMMISSION (CQC) REVIEW IN OXFORDSHIRE

The CQC report, published on Monday 12 February says: "People were treated with kindness when they moved between health and social care services. Frontline staff were dedicated and provided person centred care, going the extra mile for people they cared for." Across all areas of health and social care, an above-average proportion of services achieve a 'good' or 'outstanding' CQC rating in Oxfordshire, compared to the national average. CQC inspectors found the problems of recruiting care staff in Oxfordshire were holding back improvements.

Cllr Lorraine Lindsay-Gale