

Open meeting regarding the threats to the Parish held on the 22nd July 2019 in the Mortimer Hall at 7pm.

Attendance: approximately 140

Duncan Hatfield (Chairman of Old Marston Parish Council) opened the meeting by saying that, at the Annual Parishioners meeting, it was asked if the Parish Council could hold more open meetings so that people could be more informed of local issues and make their views known to the Parish Council.

Peter Williams gave a brief talk about the anxiety of potential developments in and around the Parish, how important it is for the community to give their views, not only to the Parish council but to the County and City Councils. There seems to be a lack of central planning with developments making things disjointed and lacking sense or logic.

Alistair Morris gave a brief talk about the threat to the environment, the record rise in temperature across the world. The importance of doing things locally, however small it may seem, together local communities can make a difference.

It was then opened-up to the people in the hall.

Volume of Traffic- there is a need to control speed on our roads, this for the safety of both pedestrians and cyclists. Cars were increasingly looking for routes to avoid congestion. Favoured routes included Oxford Rd, Elsfield Rd and Elms Drive despite these roads being 'Access only'. Cars and lorries frequently mounted the pavement and several near misses have been reported. Additional traffic calming measures were suggested for Elsfield Road such as a sleeping policeman. More emphasis needed to be given to the 'Access Only' condition, though it was acknowledged this was difficult to enforce. Tourist buses were also using our roads in an inappropriate way and this needed to be stopped.

Parking- an issue throughout the parish. Is it time for residents parking? Cars were being left and their occupants taking public transport or bikes into the city. Are our streets becoming parking lots?

Speed humps would stop speeding vehicles; may not be popular with delivery vehicles or buses but would cut the speed (through the village as well as Elms Drive).

With the car park in Marsh Lane (OXSRAD) becoming pay and display, JR Hospital vehicles now parking in front of the Mortimer Hall and Oxford Road. Add the school traffic dropping off and collecting children and it can only get worse once the Swan School opens.

Village is a conservation area which needs preserving and should be turned into a cycle route.

With Access to Headington roadworks Cherwell Drive is a nightmare, difficult getting out of people's driveway. Solution was to stop buses using Cherwell Drive.

What is happening with residents Controlled Parking Zone (CPZ).

Duncan Hatfield advised that the last the Parish Council heard was that the County Council was still looking at the options.

Loss of Parish facilities- Village shop, more recently Post Office and GP surgery. All missed and an encouragement to use cars. Parish Council should work together with the City Council to reinstate these.

Impact of planned extra homes- While social/ affordable housing was needed for city workers, what was planned emphasised more expensive, 'executive' properties suited more to the London commuter. There appeared to be no joined up thinking about how many houses, what sort of houses and where would be suitable sites. For Old Marston an additional burden of cars that new housing would generate particularly north of the Ring Road would be unwelcome and potentially dangerous. Ambulances use our roads and further congestion would cause unacceptable delays in transporting people to the J.R.

Parish Council needs to work with other councils and organisations with housing, needed affordable housing, for local people. Existing infrastructure already at capacity.

Peter Williams pointed out that the Parish Council have been working with Elsfeld and making links with the newly constituted South Oxfordshire District Council. Generally believed from this that the housing needs have been greatly inflated.

Mick Haines reported that he had met with Ian Hudspeth, leader of the Oxfordshire County Council, to tell him that the Access to Headington project needed sorting out. He was also working on the Post Office.

What is the Parish Council doing about the housing developments in the Parish?

Duncan Hatfield advised that the Parish Council's powers are limited, in fact the yellow notifications which the City Council put out is no longer a legal requirement. However, by law the Parish Council must be consulted on any planning application within the Parish. Hence why any development within the Parish is discussed at Parish Council meetings.

As money for Swan School came from Central Government the Parish Council should be speaking to them.

The Parish Council should inform the community of consultations and planning issues and give advice on how to influence.

Has the Parish Council considered a Neighbourhood Plan?

Peter Williams advised that this was looked at a few years ago but is a very lengthy process, probably taking several years, and was thought to be not needed at the time. However, this is something which the Council should look at again.

Lisa Buchan from Elsfield said that there was dialogue with new councillors in the South Oxfordshire District Council. However, there are two fortresses in this area; Oxford City Council - who need to be told to listen to us or we will vote you out, and the University - who Parish Councils need to talk to.

Planning never looks at the whole picture; very disjointed, County and City Councils do not work together. Oxford City Council has not yet stated what size it wants to be.

Houses being used more as short-lets, B&B and rentals meaning more cars used in one house, gardens being converted into parking areas or just don't get maintained.

Cyclists- safety concerns predominated as well as an absence of bike racks outside shops. The Swan School built on the premise most pupils would reach its gates on cycles has a potential safety issue with the large number of cars using the streets nearby. Even the existing cycle lane from Summertown needs to be policed to avoid accidents because of vehicles crossing the cycle path.

Shops in Cherwell Drive need racks for cycles, also there are no cycle racks in front of St Nicholas School which may encourage more people to use bikes rather than cars.

Peter Williams suggested those who wished to be kept informed of future events etc. should give their email address to the Clerk and he will do just that. Regarding talking to Central Government that would no doubt prove very difficult.

Duncan Hatfield advised that the Parish Council use the Marston Times, Twitter, Facebook and has its own website.

Pollution- more cars means more pollution and with three schools in the parish the risk to children's health could be significant. In fact, the environmental impact of more cars and more building within and outside the parish has, so far, been inadequately addressed. There is also the issue of noise pollution. Rather than cars

converging on the schools in the area, had school buses been considered? Also, the northern arch of the ring road with its heavy traffic ought to have a lower speed limit to reduce particulate matter and poisonous gases. Should it not be brought in line with the speed set in other stretches of the ring road?

Noise pollution is increasing affecting everyone causing illness and early deaths.

The 50mph speed limit is rarely kept to along the ring road between Headington & Old Marston.

When the schools are closed traffic and parking issues greatly reduced. Solution was to go back to school buses.

Court Place Farm Allotments would appreciate a grant from the Parish Council.

Climate change- as a country we are poorly prepared for the rise in temperature and carbon dioxide. Individually we could do more, but we should also as a parish plant more trees and stop the erosion of gardens in houses that give the space over to cars. We need to enhance the use of our allotments and encourage self-sufficiency amongst our residents.

Duncan Hatfield told the meeting that the Parish Council has been working with other agencies; like the Environment Agency and college to clear Marston Brook.

Peter Williams told the meeting that the Parish Council's powers are not enormous, but it will listen and act for the benefit of the Parish. He urged individuals to contact their local City and County Councillors and MP with their issues and concerns.

Flooding- this poses a real additional risk in areas fed by Bayswater Brook. No environmental impact study has been done to establish whether building new homes below Elsfield will exacerbate this.

Meeting Closed 8:05