

Ockley Parish Council Chairmans Report 2025 dated 28th May 2025

Written by Amanda Barclay, read by JL-S, acting as interim Chair.

Another year has sped by and Ockley Parish Council continues to work hard for the village. Our 2024 AGM was held on May 24th and it was agreed by all councillors that AB should continue as chair for the coming year.

Planning:

A significant amount of the OPC's workload has been in relation to planning matters during the year.

This is as expected because, after significant delays, MVDC's Local Plan was adopted in the Autumn of 2024. The Local Plan details the planning policies for the District for the period to 2039. There were a lot of discussions on the increase in the housing target numbers for the village, and general concern by parishioners at the increase.

It should be noted that there was a further update to the National Planning Policy Framework in 2024, which means that MVDC is likely to be required to review upwards its housing numbers in 2 years time.

The Local Plan allocated 3 larger sites in Ockley. These are:

The 60 unit site at Coles Lane, following the grant of outline planning permission on appeal in 2023. The site is now in the hands of a new developer. OPC continue to monitor this application very closely alongside Capel Parish Council. Several applications have been made by the developer to vary or remove conditions set by the appeal committee who granted the application on appeal after MVDC refused it. It has been good to engage with Capel and work alongside them in this regard. Our thanks to Councillor Wright who has been in communication with Capel and is instrumental in handling this application.

The 23 unit site adjacent to Prideaux Gardens was granted in 2023 subject to the signing of a S106 agreement, OPC are monitoring this site as it progresses.

A planning application for the 20 unit site at Elmers Field was submitted in February 2024 and caused great concern among nearby residents, who voiced their concerns at many of our meetings. OPC councillors came to a split decision on whether to support or object to this particular application. Ultimately, the decision was not for OPC but for the planning committee at MVDC, who in October granted permission subject to the signing of a S106 agreement, OPC are monitoring this site as it progresses.

There are 2 other larger sites, not allocated in the Local Plan, which have had appeals dismissed during the year.

An appeal on the proposed development of land behind Elderslie was heard and dismissed by MVDC in July. Similarly the Hawksmoor development at the southern end of the village was also appealed by the developers and dismissed by MVDC.

Ockley Neighbourhood Development Plan update: The parish council had prepared a draft plan to be put forward for public consultation a few years ago but then was stalled on District Councillor recommendation to wait for the Local Plan to be adopted.

Now that the Local Plan has been adopted, the Parish Council needs to complete the NDP. The main benefits are twofold.

Firstly, in order to maximise the financial benefits from the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). Once an NDP is in place, the neighbourhood becomes eligible to receive **25% of CIL receipts** from new developments in their area—**compared to just 15% without an NDP** (and this lower

rate is also capped). This increased funding can be directly invested in local priorities such as infrastructure, community facilities, green spaces, and transport improvements.

Secondly, to give the community greater influence over planning decisions, ensuring future development aligns with local needs and values.

Randhawa Farm:

The activities at Randhawa Farm have been a cause for concern for some time with many parishioners reporting great volumes of lorries entering and exiting the farm.

OPC has been in communication with MVDC planning enforcement for some time but it seemed with little effect. Suddenly, in the late summer, the Environment Agency made contact with OPC to advise they would be blockading the site having discovered it was being used as an illegal waste site. The EA confirmed several hundred tons of waste had been deposited on the land. Last September a court order was sought and obtained by the EA preventing any vehicular access to the land and the EA began a full investigation. The injunction was extended in February 2025. For now, OPC remains in contact with the EA who will advise the outcome of their investigations in due course. Needless to say the environmental impact of the huge waste dump is devastating for our village. It remains to be seen how the clean up of the site will be tackled.

Other topics this year:

The flooding at the southern end of the village on the A29 remains an issue. After discussion with the SCC we are advised that plans to improve the drainage will be included in the councils next financial year.

Flooding at the northern end of the village on the A29 remains an issue. SCC similarly advise they have ongoing works to manage the drainage issues.

The play area has been improved with new child safe railings being installed in March 2025. This was predominantly paid for with a grant from Your Fund Surrey obtained by Councillor Ward. It is our hope that we will be able to secure further funding to improve and update the play equipment in the near future.

The expansion of Gatwick Airport remains an important local issue. We are updated on this subject regularly by GAAC and continue to monitor this matter closely.

The council elections due in May were postponed. A huge restructure of district councils in Surrey has begun and it was deemed an unsuitable time to hold local elections given the changes that are afoot. Not a great deal is known at this time about how Surrey will merge and restructure all affected councils. For now things continue to operate as before but over the coming months there will be many changes in our local councils operating procedures. We wait with baited breath to see if the changes bring more efficiency.

The old school buildings have a new proposed use as an early years education and play centre. The plans are still in their infancy and OPC await further updates from the committee following their discussions with the Diocese. OPC will provide an update to parishioners later in the year. A petition representing the collective voice of its 646 signatories in support of the education and play centre proposal serves as both a record of public support and a call to leadership to acknowledge the will of the Parish to move forward with this proposal

A29 Traffic

As ever the traffic on using the A29 continues to be an issue for the village. We would like to thank the Community Speed watch Team for their continued efforts to monitor and report speeding in Ockley. They do so with great accuracy and now cover 6 out of 7 days a week with their patrols.

There has been a little more police presence in the village which has been welcome, but of course we would always like to see more.

Community work:

Councillor Clark has been working hard in our community this past year, and has arranged for the Surrey Community Fridge to visit the village each Wednesday in timing with the coffee morning in the cricket pavilion. The Surrey community fridge are a volunteer association who work to prevent food waste in Surrey. Their weekly visit has been greatly appreciated by many residents.

WOOF magazine:

This bi-monthly publication is a staple of our village life and we were pleased to be able to support their work this year by obtaining a grant towards their running costs from Your Fund Surrey. Our thanks to the OPC Clerk for handling this great application.

Summary:

After another busy year as Chair I'm afraid it became clear to me through the course of year that I am unable to continue serving OPC. Personal and work commitments have been hard to juggle with the volume of work needed as a parish councillor. Matters came to a head for me in April and I have now resigned from the parish council. Councillor Lee-Steere, having been the vice chair for my tenure, has stepped in as acting interim Chair for the final few weeks of this year and a new chair will be chosen during the meeting following this AGM.

I hope that as Chair for the last 2 years , and a councillor for 4 years prior, I have served the council well and that the council are now more engaged with our community. I depart knowing that OPC will continue to work hard for the community in every way that it can.

Amanda Barclay – recently retired Chairman, Ockley Parish Council