

Drayton (Abingdon) Parish Council



Annual Report 2013-2014

Highlights from the Last Year

- A full complement of 11 Councillors
- Submission of the Drayton Neighbourhood Plan 2013-2029 for Local Consultation
- The Parish Council Logo created (see above)
- The URL - www.DraytonPC.org created, and website maintained and updated
- Defibrillator purchased and due for installation outside the Village Hall
- 40mph Speed Limit along the Milton Road agreed and funded
- Blue Plaque for Rev FE Robinson agreed and funded – to be installed at St Peters Church
- Grants totalling £8,364 given to 3 Drayton & 4 other local organisations
- Grass cut throughout summer months
- Litter removed from the village throughout the year
- Footpaths maintained by cutting back hedges
- 36 Planning Applications considered
- Allotments – supervised by wardens and rents collected
- Burial ground administered and maintained

Chairman's Report

(includes items as Chair of Leisure & General Purposes Working Group)

This time last April, Daniel Scharf, the then Chairman of the Parish Council, stood before you and declared that the previous year had been dominated by planning issues. I will say more about Daniel later on, but I have to report now that the year just gone has been equally dominated by planning matters. What is more, and for better or worse, it looks as though this establishes a pattern which may continue for years to come. I will do my best to explain where Drayton fits into current developments regarding planning, and I hope you will bear with me if I attempt to do this by filling in some background. I promise I will also give a round-up of some of the many other activities the Parish Council has been engaged in.

I'm sure you will all be aware that central government is pressurising local authorities all over the UK to build more houses, and build them quickly. The reason for this is clear enough: it is that for the last thirty years or more, this country has failed to build enough houses to keep pace with demand. The result has been a severe housing shortage, which in turn has pushed prices up to levels which make the prospect of owning one's own home, at least in the south of England, all but unattainable for many people, but especially the young and first-time buyers. It appears that the government are now intent on making up the shortfall and compensating for past under-supply, hence the current housing drive.

The National Planning Policy Framework, or NPPF, demands that all local authorities must demonstrate a land supply sufficient to meet their housing needs for five, in some cases six, years ahead. If they cannot do this, and if they do not have a current Local Plan in place, they are vulnerable to speculative developer-led housing applications in places which might otherwise be deemed inappropriate. Why do so many local authorities across the UK, including the Vale, not have an up to date Local Plan? It is a good question, but in fairness, the answer probably has much to do with timing. At the general election in 2010, it was widely forecast there would be a change of government, and it was understood that the new government wished to introduce a Localism Act and to simplify the planning regulations. There was an understandable reluctance for local authorities to commit resources to updating their Local Plans when their efforts might then be wrong-footed by changes in national policy. So, caution prevailed, but at the cost of causing long delays in the preparation of updated Plans.

Anticipating problems from speculative development, the Vale introduced, 2 years

ago, what they called their Interim Housing Supply Policy, or IHSP. This was intended to relax some of the constraints on building in the larger villages within the Vale, allowing them to expand and take up some of the slack caused by the inability of very large strategic sites, such as Grove Airfield, to deliver the expected numbers of new houses. You will recall that in Drayton, this had the effect of opening the floodgates, with a large number of screening applications for sites in and around the village being submitted by local landowners. Had all these expressions of interest resulted in formal planning applications, we would have been looking at an additional 550 houses in Drayton. At this point, alarm bells rang, and, taking advantage of the new powers conferred by the Localism Act of 2011, Drayton Parish Council attempted to take some control over this process for itself by embarking on a Neighbourhood Development Plan, to be known as Drayton 2020. Meanwhile, the IHSP was abandoned by the Vale, for precisely the reason that it was no longer deemed compatible with national policy.

Drayton's NDP was launched at a very successful event here in the Village Hall in September 2012, our so-called 'Curry Night', which attracted some 200 people. Since last April, we have now held a further two major public consultation events. The first of these was in May 2013 at Drayton School on a Sunday afternoon, where tea and home-made cakes were served by a team of volunteers. This was a lively workshop-type meeting which attracted approx 90 people. The third and most recent consultation was held last October, again in the Village Hall. Radio Oxford were invited to attend this Friday event as part of their 'Big Tour' of local communities, and in a three hour programme they interviewed Drayton residents about a variety of subjects, and also featured our Neighbourhood Plan as a item of discussion.

The main event followed in the form of a 'Chilli Evening' – another opportunity for presentation and discussion of the Plan so far, accompanied by food. Whatever else can be said about our village consultations, they haven't left those attending hungry! Around the hall was a display, of professional quality, of plans of all the possible housing sites in the village, plus a statistical breakdown of the results from our summer questionnaire. The display continued all day Saturday. The questionnaire itself deserves a special mention. It was distributed by a team of about 30 volunteers towards the end of July to all householders in the village. The overall success of the enterprise is demonstrated by the fact that, of over a thousand questionnaires delivered, 617 were returned, i.e. a return rate of 60%, which is more than double the usual response to this type of exercise, a result achieved largely due to the diligence and persistence of the team in collecting the filled-out

forms. The village was commended for its efforts by ORCC (Oxfordshire Rural Community Council) who processed the results, and also by Ed Vaizey, our local MP, who presented the prizes for the Questionnaire lottery.

The Steering Group of Drayton 2020 has been meeting regularly every fortnight on Friday evenings since the autumn of 2012, and all of these meetings have been open to the public. The minutes of every Steering Group and Parish Council meeting are available on the village website, as are many other documents relating to the NDP, and there are archive copies of the Drayton Chronicle dating back to 2004. Laurence Zipson, David Perrow and Derek Pooley have been particularly helpful in getting all this information onto the website, and in sorting out technical gremlins. Between them, they have assembled what I think must be one of the best and most frequently updated village websites in the county. More recently, all Drayton residents have had the opportunity, over a 6 week consultation period, to comment on the first draft of the Neighbourhood Development Plan, and the Parish Council would like to thank all those who took the trouble to do so. That draft is also on the website.

It is worth highlighting some of the limitations of a Neighbourhood Development Plan. An NDP cannot be used to block development, so even if Drayton had never gone down this path, it would not have prevented new housing from coming to the village: development would have happened in any case. Most of you will be aware that Drayton 2020 is currently negotiating on three housing sites within the village. They are: south of the High Street; Manor Farm, and north of Barrow Road. It's important to appreciate that these sites were not selected by Drayton 2020 or the Parish Council. They are the sites so far put forward by landowners and developers. If other sites were to come forward in the future, we have no powers of veto over them. Some residents have voiced concern that plans on these three sites seem to be well advanced, and that building work could even begin as early as the spring of 2015. These dates are not firm; only indicative. But they are possible. All that can be said is that, were it not for the NDP, formal planning applications would almost certainly have already been submitted for these sites, and perhaps for others also. By allowing us to talk to developers, the NDP has delayed the date at which work might commence; not accelerated it. In addition, it has enabled us to discuss the type and size of houses which might be built, and issues such as landscaping, parking and access arrangements and overall design, in ways that wouldn't have been possible otherwise. In short, we have been as much concerned with the quality of the eventual development as with upfront numbers.

Which brings us back to the latest policy changes by the Vale. In the continuing absence of their completed Local Plan, the problem of speculative development has not gone away. You all know about the proposed development in South Abingdon, but this is just the tip of the iceberg. There are plans to build large numbers of houses in villages like Marcham and Kingston Bagpuize, which are arguably more car-dependent than Drayton, and thus, even less 'sustainable' as locations; and just up the road in Sutton Courtenay there are applications to build 34 houses and 70 houses in two sites just off the Milton Road.

To pre-empt the speculators, the Vale has now identified 21 new 'strategic' sites of its own, each of which must provide a minimum of 200 new homes. It is hoped that, being smaller than the mega-sites like Great Western Park, these new sites will be able to deliver the housing more quickly. The Vale's stated ambition is to build 4000 new homes in the Vale in the next 5 years, i.e. by 2019. Passing over whether this objective is either desirable or achievable, what should concern us here in Drayton is the proposal to make the site south of the High Street one of these strategic sites. This decision by the Vale effectively doubles the number of houses we had envisaged on this site, and throws out all our calculations for the total number of houses we had anticipated across the three sites. It tramples all over our Neighbourhood Plan in a way which is infuriating, given that the Vale planners have been working closely alongside us up to this point. We cannot undo the negotiations we have been having with the two other sites, which together will produce around 110 houses. If the Vale then insist that south of the High Street takes 200 houses, this will obviously add up to 300 plus new homes, or 33% growth in a village of 900 houses, which is totally unacceptable, not just in terms of absolute numbers but in the practical effects on services and the local road network. The good news is that since these announcements, we have met with the Vale planners and they have indicated there is room for flexibility on numbers. Hopefully, the responses they receive in the wider consultation process will cause them to think again on the numbers issue for the whole of the Vale.

For the first time in many years, the Parish Council has a full complement of councillors, i.e. 11, and this is so even despite the resignation of Daniel Scharf as Chairman last December. This seems the right point at which to pay tribute to Daniel's past service to the PC and to this village. Daniel spent around 10 years on the Parish Council in total, most of them as Chairman, and in that time he has been an assiduous worker on behalf of the village and a true believer in the value of local

democracy. Daniel always made a point of putting himself about in the village, and getting involved in as many of its activities as possible. He has been an exemplary Chairman, and his expertise on planning matters (as a professional planner himself) was invaluable to the Parish Council. Hopefully, it still is, as Daniel continues to assist the PC in various ways, including as our Public Transport Rep. On behalf of the whole Parish Council I would like to thank him here for his contribution to the village over many years.

Thanks are also due to Steve Sadler for his work over the past year as Village Caretaker. Steve's duties include clearing up litter and keeping muddy footpaths free of fallen trees and overhanging branches – tasks which have seemed lately like a losing battle, in the face of weather conditions such as we've recently experienced. But Steve also repaints benches around the village, looks after the Lockway playground and generally keeps the village in trim, carrying out many jobs on his own initiative. On the subject of playgrounds, we hope that a further upgrade of the equipment at Lockway may be on the cards, and as part of the Neighbourhood Plan we would like to see children's play areas on the new housing sites.

As part of trying to raise the Parish Council's profile, a new logo has been developed. This was mainly the work of Laurence Zipson, with some assistance from David Perrow, the Parish Clerk. The logo is in the shape of a shield and features the white horse motif, plus an ox (representing Oxfordshire). The largest segment features eight bells- representing St Peter's Church and its ring of eight bells- an unusual number for a parish church. The logo is already being used on the PC's official communications, and should appear soon on items belonging to the Parish Council, such as noticeboards, the bus shelters on the Green, and so on. The church bells may indirectly receive another kind of recognition. A past vicar of this parish - the Rev FE Robinson, augmented the ring of bells from six to eight in the year 1880, and was himself an enthusiastic bell-ringer. The Rev is to this day apparently a well-known name in bell-ringing circles and for this reason, when we were approached by the Blue Plaque Society for some names of local notables, the Rev Robinson was suggested. We've had some problems with the location of the plaque, due to the unwillingness of the diocese to let it be displayed on the church tower, but we hope that a new place has been found for it on the wall of the adjacent church meeting room.

As part of the upcoming commemorative events for the centenary of the 1st World War, the government announced that a special paving stone would be produced in

honour of any members of HM armed forces awarded the Victoria Cross in that conflict. As it happens, just such a person, one Edward John Mott, was born in Drayton and so qualifies for a stone. Mott Cottages, on the west side of Steventon Road just south of the Wheatsheaf, are named after Edward John. The Parish Council has applied for the stone to be presented to Drayton and it is hoped to install it in the pavement outside the lych gate at St Peter's Church, as part of a special ceremony. The lych gate is also the village's war memorial, so it seemed an appropriate spot. The ceremony will take place later in the summer, possibly in August, but no details are available as yet.

Parents of school-age children will be aware that Oxfordshire's Home to School Transport policy is once again in jeopardy, following a further round of cuts to local authorities by central government. The Parish Council responded to the consultation process urging that free bus transport be retained from Drayton, but the cuts were fairly draconian, and although it appears that children's centres will be saved, it doesn't look as though the free transport will survive.

A better outcome may be achieved concerning a speed limit on Milton Road. Despite four deaths and a number of lesser accidents on this road in recent years, the county has declared itself unable to introduce a 40mph speed limit, mainly due to the Highways Dept having zero budget available to carry out either the consultation required, or the installation of the necessary signs. The road therefore remains unrestricted. Although this is an OCC responsibility, instead of just deploring their lack of action, Richard Webber took it on himself to do something positive, and to raise the necessary funds in other ways. As a result of his efforts, Milton Park have agreed to stump up £2000 towards the cost of the project, Richard has contributed £1000 from his own community budget, and Drayton Parish Council have contributed £500. Milton Parish Council (a smaller council) has donated £200. With any luck, a 40 mph speed limit will be in place sometime in the near future.

The Parish Council continues to make grants to worthy local projects. Each year it gives £3000 to the Damascus youth project and a similar amount has just gone to the Village Hall for improvements to its windows and kitchen. Notwithstanding any refurbishment of the Village Hall which may take place in connection with the Neighbourhood Plan, it was felt these improvements are needed now, as the health of future lettings may depend on them. The Football Club were helped with a large water bill, and £ 1000 was donated to the South & Vale Citizens Advice Bureau, which has had much of its other funding cut. The Parish Council were also in receipt

of two very important grants to help cover the costs of our Neighbourhood Plan. These were, a grant of £10,000 from the Vale, and one of £7000 from Locality, the successor to the Design Council, and central government's nominated conduit for the channelling of money to NDPs. We are extremely grateful to both organisations for this much needed injection of cash. However, it should be added that, from the start, Drayton 2020 has kept the fees paid to professional consultants to a bare minimum, and the vast bulk of the time put in on Drayton's NDP (which runs into many hundreds of hours) has been given freely by volunteers.

Last, but far from least, the Parish Council has invested in a village defibrillator, which it has purchased from the Heartbeat Community Trust charity. In due course, it's planned to locate this at the Village Hall, and although training is available and will be given, we understand that the operation of the defibrillator is so straightforward, and the instructions so clear, that it is possible to use it in perfect safety with no training at all. We'll probably make its installation something of a local event, in order to publicise its existence.

Keeping the Parish Council show on the road have been David Perrow, our tireless Parish Clerk, and his very able assistant, Chris Price, our new Deputy Clerk. Chris was appointed to take on some of the workload that David could no longer manage within his allotted hours, due to the considerable amounts of time he is now spending dealing with Drayton 2020 and our Neighbourhood Development Plan. Can I thank both of these two and all of the parish councillors – those I've named already and those I haven't, for their hard work throughout the year and for their support. Finally, I'd like to thank all residents for contributing to the life of the village and for your interest in and engagement with the Neighbourhood Development Plan. And I would reiterate Daniel's oft repeated plea for you to consider joining the Parish Council. There may be no vacancies at present, but people's busy lives mean that this happy situation won't last forever. In this centenary year of 1914 then, let me paraphrase Lord Kitchener and say 'Your Parish Council needs you'.

Richard Williams (Chairman, Drayton Parish Council and the L&GP Working Group)

Planning Committee

The Planning statistics for 2013-2014 for Drayton were that we received 36 planning applications – 8 more than last year. Of these the Parish Council fully approved of 6 and objected to 4, with no objections to the remainder, although we did set out concerns we had about them and/or suggested conditions or amendments that should be made. Of these 36 applications, 2 were withdrawn, 6 are still pending a

decision by the Vale of White Horse District Council. The VWHDC permitted 21 and refused 3 applications.

Rights of Way & Conservation Working Group

Most recently in late winter and early spring we have experienced similar issues to last year, where the wet weather has made some footpaths rather heavy going with the mud. In particular the southern end of the Sustrans No.5 path was flooded and as good as impassable. Similarly there were problems from time to time with the footpath/cyclepath towards Oday Hill, where runoff from the field on the east side flooded the verge and the road itself. Gully emptying activities here finally seem to have lessened the problem.

There have been a few issues with keeping footpaths clear and safe for users. Adjoining owners have been requested to ensure that collapsing fences, errant barbed wire, and growth of shrubbery are dealt with, and in most cases people have been good enough to co operate. We are particularly grateful to Steve Sadler, Village Caretaker, for his constant efforts in keeping footpaths free of vegetation and clearing fallen vegetation. In one particular case the Parish Council liaised with OCC to get a dangerous fence repaired. This is an ongoing problem; the Parish Council has from time to time taken direct action, and will continue to deliver a polite reminder at the appropriate time and place. Meanwhile we would take the opportunity to ask all whose property adjoins footpaths and rights of way to continue to give consideration to the condition of boundary hedges and fencing.

There was an incident of a vehicle that had attempted a passage along a right of way, which had then become stranded causing some damage in the process. This took some time to resolve in discussion with TVP and OCC, and we hope that this will not occur too often. Some of the rights of way may at one time have been used by vehicles, but they are definitely no longer passable.

Graham Webb (Chairman, ROW&C Working Group)

Press & Public Relations Working Group

Assisted in the delivery of a detailed press release concerning the proposed new London Airport which has once again been dismissed and will hopefully now never come back to the table which seems very likely given the latest round of talks concerning expansion of Heathrow and Gatwick.

Continue to work closely with the Drayton Community Trust to ensure the smooth running of the village website. Thanks must be extended at this time to Jules Meredith who has kindly stepped in to provide additional technical assistance following the stepping down of our original webmaster Alastair Grundy who due to work and family commitments felt unable to carry on his involvement with the site

but without whom we would not have the excellent template we now have which most people agree is a credit to the Village and far superior to most village websites.

The Chair of PR & Press also agreed to act as Village Broadband Champion with respect to the Oxon County Council scheme although this is now a somewhat redundant role as the village has access to Superfast Broadband if people choose to pay the additional subscription fees of their Internet Service Provider.

The Chair also worked with the Drayton Twinning Group in editing and delivering more detailed content about the twinning group and its activities.

Laurence Zipson (Chairman, P&PR Working Group)

Finance Report

Comparison: 2012-13 Outturn with 2013-14 & 2014-15 budgets

Income (VAT excluded)	2012-13 Outturn	2013-14 budget	2014-15 budget
Precept	£40,000	£40,000	£40,000
VWHDC Income	Nil		£1,730
Locality Neighbourhood Plan Grant	Nil		£700
Allotments	£495.45	£500	£500
Burial Ground/Memorials	£3,075.00	£2,000	£1,500
Interest	£205.85	£50	£50
Other Income	£106.31	£0	£0
VAT Refund	£1,177.57		
TOTAL INCOME	£45,060.18	£42,550	£44,480
Earmark from Reserves			£18,000
Total	£45,060.18	£42,550	£62,480
Expenditure (VAT reclaims excluded)			
Administration	£10,756.56	£11,500	£12,000
Chairman's Expenses	£0	£0	£50
Grants and Donations S19	£5888.22	£14,000	£12,000
S137	£1806.20	£1,500	£1,000
S142	£1,000.00	£1,000	£1,000
Burial Ground/Allotments	£1,831.68	£2,200	£2,250
Play/Recreation	£1,909.19	£2,300	£2,350
Public Amenities/Open Spaces	£6,381.42	£5,800	£5,900
Press & Public Relations	£0		£500
ROW	£626.08	£1,200	£1,230
Miscellaneous	£1,172.00	£0	£500
Drayton2020 Administration	£4,085.48	£3,000	£3,700
Projects	Nil	Nil	£20,000
VAT Paid	£1,684.29		
TOTAL	£37,141.12	£42,500	£62,480

Grants 2013-2014

DAMASCUS Youth Project (s19)	£3,000
Drayton Village Hall (s19)	£3,280
Homestart Southern Oxfordshire (s137)	£200
Drayton Football Club (s19)	£134
South & Vale CAB (s142)	£1,000
Abingdon Bridge Youth Centre (s137)	£550
Trinity Learning (s137)	£200
Total Grants	£8,364

Drayton Parish Council – ACCOUNT FOR THE YEAR 2012-2013 (ENDING 31/3/2013)

RECEIPTS 2012/2013		RECEIPTS 2011/2012
£32,000.00	Precept	£40,000.00
£488.75	Allotment Rents	£495.45
£2,155.00	Burial Ground/Memorials Income	£3,075.00
£7.16	Bank Interest	£205.85
£0.00	Borrowings	£0.00
£0.00	Grants & Donations	£0.00
£0.00	Public Amenities/Open Spaces	£0.00
£1,164.05	Other income	£106.31
£4,794.93	VAT refund	£1,177.57
£40,609.89	Total	£45,060.18
PAYMENTS 2011/2012		PAYMENTS 2012/2013
£6,977.33	Staff Costs	£5,914.65
£0.00	Loan Interest	£0.00
£2,965.07	Other admin. costs	£4,059.25
£1,240.42	Insurance	£782.66
£9,010.00	Grants	£8,694.42
£6,660.00	Grants S.19	£5,888.22
£1,350.00	Grants S. 137	£1,806.20
£1,000.00	Grants S.142	£1,000.00
£1,834.11	Burial Grounds/Allotments	£1,831.68
£1,928.90	Play/Recreation Gds	£1,909.19
£5,812.57	Public Amenities/Open Spaces	£6,381.42
£705.24	Rights of Way/Conservation	£626.08
£21,019.58	Miscellaneous costs	£1,172.00
£0.00	Drayton2020	£4,085.48
£4,867.31	VAT paid	£1,684.29
£56,360.53	Total	£37,141.12
£37,239.33	Bal b/f	£21,488.69
£40,609.89	Add total receipts	£45,060.18
£77,849.22		£66,548.87
£56,360.53	Less total payments	£37,141.12
£21,488.69	Balance c/f 31st March 2013	£29,407.75
BALANCES REPRESENTED BY:		
£4,032.34	Current Account	£9,965.73
£19,187.15	NS&I Account	£19,382.02
£23,219.49		£29,347.75
£1,730.80	Less unrepresented cheques	£20.00
£0.00	Plus unrepresented credit	£80.00
£21,488.69		£29,407.75