

## **SODC Councillor's Monthly Report September 2020**

### **EIP (Examination in Public) of the SODC Local Plan.**

The Inspector has published his initial report which makes very few changes to the Local Plan which The Secretary of State insisted went to the Examination in Public (EIP). From a Chalgrove Airfield point of view he has kept it in the plan but noted the doubts over the situation between Martin Baker Aircraft Company and Homes England concerning the lease which the Martin Baker Aircraft Company holds and have said they will not relinquish without a legal fight. The inspector's report is very disappointing for us all. He has also confirmed all the Green Belt sites will remain in the plan. The preliminary report can be viewed at the following link:

<http://www.southoxon.gov.uk/sites/default/files/IC12%20-%20Inspector's%20Preliminary%20Conclusions%20Letter%20280820.pdf>

### **Homes England Planning Application Chalgrove Airfield P20/S2134/O.**

Thank you to all those Parish Councils, Parish Meetings, organisations and individuals who have sent SODC objections to the Homes England plan for Chalgrove Airfield which they submitted just before the EIP. We have to now concentrate on trying to get the planning application refused on the grounds which we have discussed for the last few years. We must not give in but be resilient in our efforts to get the planning application refused by SODC.

### **New Emergency Assistance Grant funding.**

We have £45,373 to distribute to voluntary and community groups to help people who are struggling to afford food and other essential provisions as a result of Covid-19.

From today, groups can apply for grants of up to £5,000 to go to:

- projects directly helping vulnerable people affected by the effects of COVID-19, such as providing access to food and other essentials e.g. toiletries;
- existing schemes supporting people struggling to afford food and other essentials, and where the need is greatest;
- projects advising and providing information to people to help them access longer term support they might need, such as benefits;
- projects that provide targeted support in areas of greatest need and deprivation, including rural areas.

We will be assessing applications on a rolling fortnightly basis. The first deadline for applications is therefore midnight on Tuesday 15 September.

There's more information on the SODC website

The cash comes from £63 million of emergency assistance funding from the government for local authorities to support people who are affected by Covid-19.

### **Business Grants.**

Across both districts (South Oxfordshire and the Vale of the White Horse we have given out well over £1.5 million in Discretionary Business Grants.

Last Friday was the deadline for applications to the fund and we're pleased to say we've now paid out to all of the successful applicants. The fund was provided to us by the government to help support small and micro-businesses affected by Covid-19, particularly those not eligible for other business grants. Over the last four months colleagues in Economic Development and a number of other departments have worked incredibly hard to process the applications and make the final payments quickly. In South Oxfordshire 107 micro and small businesses each received a £10,000 grant, making it a total of £1,070,000 that we were able to give out. In the Vale of White Horse - 55 micro and small businesses each received a £10,000 grant – a total of £550,000. We're now looking into what options there are to distribute the remaining funds.

### **Websites are live.**

At the end of last week, we published our new council websites to gather public feedback. When anyone visits our normal website home pages they will be given the option to try out the new sites and let us know what they think, or they can simply carry on with the old sites. As time goes by, we'll make the prompt to try out the new sites more prominent. Thanks again to everyone who has provided feedback so far. We will continue to update and improve the new sites while they're live so please do keep sending through your feedback – the best way to do so is using the feedback form, which you can on the website.

### **Scam emails**

This is an important reminder to please be on the lookout for potential scam emails – particularly ones pretending to be from a fellow councillor asking for gift vouchers or gift cards, like iTunes or Amazon vouchers. They are made to look like they've been sent by one of our councillors (the latest ones pretended to be from Cllrs Sue Cooper and Emily Smith) but they are in fact from scammers. If you ever receive an email from another councillor or an officer that contains a strange request, do not reply to it or click any links in it. Contact the individual by phone to check to see if the request is genuine. Report any email that seems slightly strange to the IT helpdesk at SODC.

### **Oxfordshire Investment Plan.**

OxLEP (Oxfordshire Local Economic Partnership) has finalised its Oxfordshire Investment Plan, which – among other things – promises to deliver 24,500 new jobs to the county. The Investment Plan takes forward some of the ideas set out in the Local Industrial Strategy and turns them into a programme of actions until the year 2030.

The portfolio promises to deliver at least:

- 24,500 new jobs (gross fulltime equivalents);
- 344,400m<sup>2</sup> of new commercial and innovation floorspace;
- 29,400 new homes (based on existing local plans and the Oxfordshire Housing & Growth Deal);
- 2,700 qualifications (NVQ4+ and Apprenticeships); and
- support for over 41,000 adult and young learners.

OxLEP will now engage with Ministers and officials as part of Government's preparations for the forthcoming Comprehensive Spending Review and development activity in support of the Oxford-Cambridge Arc programme.

The Arc is very controversial and I think this process has a long way to go yet.

### **Exhibition about new homes in Thame.**

A Community Benefit Society in Thame is holding a **public exhibition** on plans for 31 new homes on land to the west of Windmill Road, Thame. The group's aim is that they will be genuinely affordable and meet the needs of local people. The public exhibition will be held at Thame Town Hall on Friday 4 September (2pm to 7pm) and Saturday 5 September (10am to 2pm). More information on the plans and the exhibition is in the attached press release.

### **Mobile Covid Testing Unit in Thame this week.**

The Department of Health & Social Care (DHSC) is using a military Mobile Testing Unit (MTU) as part of the continued expansion of the coronavirus testing programme. It will be at **Chinnor Rugby Club, Rectory Pavilion, Kingsey Road, Thame - OX9 3JL** on **Friday 4 September** for up to **2 days**. Bookings for this testing site will be managed in line with current [DHSC guidance](#) – anybody with Covid-19 symptoms can book a test using the government website <https://www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test>

David Turner

SODC Councillor (Chalgrove Ward)

September 2<sup>nd</sup> 2020