

## **Ockley Parish Council Chairman's Report May 2026**

Written by Jason Wright

Another year has sped by and Ockley Parish Council continues to work hard for the village. Our 2025 Annual Meeting was held on May 28th when I was appointed as Chairman. Following resignations during 2025 I am delighted to welcome Vernon Trefry and Garry Swindle as councillors, leaving us one vacancy on the parish council. I would like to take the opportunity to thank Zoe Biassuzi and L-J Clarke for the work they did on behalf of the parish during their time as councillors. Last but not least it is with great delight I welcome Amanda Barclay, former councillor and chair, back to our fold as Clerk to OPC. A temporary new structure sees Lesley Fletcher; who has so gallantly stepped up since the resignation of our previous Clerk and organised us so well over the past months, to remain with us during a handover period when she will also manage the financial aspect of the council.

### **Planning and planning applications**

Once again, a significant amount of the OPC's workload has been in relation to planning matters during the year – despite MVDC's Local Plan which was adopted in the Autumn of 2024. The Local Plan details the planning policies for the District for the period to 2039.

Changes had occurred with some parish boundaries over the past few years and are due to occur with local councils (Local Government Re-organisation).

There still remains a lot of discussion on the increase in the housing target numbers for the village, and general concern by parishioners at the potential increase affecting school places, Dr's and general utility supply.

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

The 60 unit site at Coles Lane, now reduced to 53 due to ongoing concerns of all those involved, following the granting 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 PC and work alongside them in this regard.

The 23 unit site adjacent to Prideaux Gardens was granted planning permission 2023 subject to the signing of a S106 agreement, OPC will monitor 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

granted permission. OPC will monitor this site as it progresses. It should be noted that feelings locally still run deep.

### **Ockley Neighbourhood Development Plan update**

First to address the history

The parish council had prepared a draft plan to be put forward for public consultation a few years ago but then was stalled on MVDC Planning Officer 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). Although the LGR may mean changes to allocation of CIL. This funding can be directly invested in local priorities such as infrastructure, community facilities, green spaces, and transport improvements. Secondly, and crucially, the NDP will give the community greater influence over planning decisions, ensuring future development aligns with local needs and values and the village aesthetic.

It is the priority of the PC to finalise and complete the NDP once and for all and it is with huge thanks I commend Charles Calvert for his work in leading this work. The NDP will need local help to complete in terms of a steering group and we are actively seeking volunteers from the village community to assist us.

A consultation programme has started in WOOF magazine and posters are being placed around the village to get the right cross section of the community to develop the future for the village.

### **Randhawa Farm at the south end of the village on the A29**

The activities at Randhawa Farm have been a cause for concern for many years and continue with many parishioners reporting issues both with vehicle parking / unknown persons on site.

We thank MVDC, the Environment Agency and residents for supporting further action to make sure the site remains closed to vehicle access, the council will support any court cases and brace for the next attempt to have the restriction removed through local process.

OPC has been in communication with MVDC planning enforcement for some time but in 2025/26 they have been of great assistance although limited in what they can and cannot do. The Environment Agency remain in contact with OPC. 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 2026. 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.

OPC will respond to an appeal of a planning enforcement notice in relation to this site and the matter as a whole will remain on our agenda until a resolution is found.

### **Flooding and Drainage on the A29**

The flooding at the southern end of the village on the A29 remains an issue. After discussion with SCC and representation from SCC Councillor Helyn Clack we are advised that plans to improve the drainage have started. The issue with the kerbs are also on highways agenda.

Flooding at the northern end of the village on the A29 have been resolved and once again we thank SCC for their efforts in this resolution.

### **Play Area**

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 SCC, after an application for funding had been submitted by OPC. It is our hope that we will be able to secure further funding to improve and update the play equipment in the near future.

### **Gatwick Expansion**

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.

### **MV Councillor Elections 2026**

The council elections due in May 2025 were postponed. A huge restructure of district councils in Surrey has begun with somewhat hurried elections just gone. 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. We wait with baited breath to see if the changes bring more efficiency.

### **School Buildings**

The old school buildings remain a high priority for the residents of Ockley. James Lee-Steere has been in discussions with all interested parties. Due to the complexity of this he will give a separate update.

## **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**

The Surrey Community Fridge continues to visit the village each Wednesday in timing with the coffee morning in the cricket pavilion. Their weekly visit continues to be greatly appreciated by many residents.

Thanks to Ockley Cricket Club for making the pavilion available for various events. I have attended Dementia Days there which I have found very good fun.

Ockley Dramatic Society also works hard to provide special entertainment. The Village Hall provides a good venue for their performances and other village activities.

Ockley Society continue to work hard organising well attended events in the village.

## **Village Green (Gateway to the Surrey Hills)**

A considerable amount of work has been done between James Lee-Steere and the cricket club to establish a plan and thus a mowing/strimming regime which we hope now works for all concerned and keeps our village looking good.

We also went to great length to prune the trees correctly and allow further access for mowing along the rougher areas. Work is now underway to top the football pitch.

We will as a parish council continue to support this and are in the process of identifying areas where further improvement can be made in 2026/2027.

## **Pubs**

I am thankful to the Landlord of the Cricketers Arms for their support to the community especially the various events in each week, quiz nights, poker nights, the Sunday meat raffle and providing a fantastic and vibrant place to hold private parties.

Inn on the Green – Many people have asked for an update on this which I will ask James Lee-Steere separately to address.

### **WOOF magazine**

This bi-monthly publication is a staple of our village life and we were pleased to be able to support their work again this year.

### **Facebook and websites**

I would also like to thank those who keep parishioners up to date with Ockley news through various Facebook pages, websites and many other forms of news updates.

### **Finally**

My year as chair has certainly been challenging but OPC looks forward to the coming year with a refreshed team who will continue to work hard for the village and parishioners.