

## MCNP Report

I am CM and I speak also for Helen Macbeth, regarding our involvement in the Mid-Cherwell Neighbourhood Plan forum, which I'll refer to as the MCNP.

For those who need reminding, the MCNP originated in 2014, with an invitation from Dorchester Living, the main developer of housing on what had been the Upper Heyford airbase, to each of the surrounding parish councils, asking if they would like to join in a group to discuss planning in relationship with this development. Kirtlington Parish Council agreed and chose Helen and I to represent KPC from the start. Of course, it was both in the developers' and in the parishes' interest to liaise and I was impressed by their whole approach to community and cooperation. I happen also to know that as part of Dorchester's commitment to develop the new community of Heyford Park, they converted the officers' mess to a secondary school and renovated what had been a large concrete sports arena to a very modern sports centre BEFORE they had sold enough houses to pay for all this! It was Dorchester that first suggested that this group work together to form a new neighbourhood plan, covering 11 parishes, the largest such group in the country.

Later that year, the organisation was formalised with a Forum, Chair, Treasurer, Secretary and Executive Officers elected from the village members of this Forum, as well as special representation by Dorchester and by what was then called the Heyford Park Residents' Association (only in 2019 to become Heyford Park Parish Council). The process for the Neighbourhood Plan to be legally 'made' took five more years, but was achieved in May 2019.

Since then, the MCNP has been an excellent example of cooperation between villages, and in turn is regarded as a statutory consultee with regard to planning matters, for the benefit of the partner villages and Heyford Park. This has been important over recent years.

Of significance this year, is that CDC had started on a process to revise their Local Plan, and when this happens, neighbourhood plans also must be revised; so, the MCNP forum started this process. Initially the CDC's revised Local Plan recommended a large number of new houses in each of Steeple Aston and Kirtlington, and the MCNP realised the importance of taking control of identifying suitable housing sites by surveying all land contiguous with the previously identified settlement boundaries of these two villages, rather than having sites imposed upon the villages by CDC. Indeed, the surveys in each village decided on lower numbers than those originally suggested by CDC. Then CDC scrapped that draft plan and the subsequent draft Local Plan (with consultation closing in November 2023) left the level of housing allocation unrecorded. The next version of CDC's plan is still awaited. So their housing allocation could be anything (between zero and 60), but since then meetings between CDC officers and MCNP members agreed that a closer working relationship be developed.

Meanwhile, Heyford Park Parish Council resigned from the MCNP forum in November 2023. This in itself did not affect the geographic coverage of the MCNP however, earlier this year that parish council discussed with CDC in forming their own neighbourhood plan area. As a place cannot be in two neighbourhood plan areas, this does affect and has delayed the ongoing review process of the MCNP. CDC will not decide on the Heyford Park request to become a separate neighbourhood plan area until 10 June. Despite this delay we wish to thank all those who engaged in the Reg 14 NP consultation process back in February, including attendance at the presentations.

At the most recent meeting of the MCNP forum on 20<sup>th</sup> March, significant issues included Dorchester's outline for its future proposals:

1. A car-processing plant in Heyford Park
2. A solar farm with wind turbines, argued as for the benefit of Heyford Park and surrounding villages.
3. **To build 6,000 more homes** additional to those already with planning permission and in contrast to the draft CDC local plan which suggests only 1,235 more.

Please consider how such developments will affect the traffic through Kirtlington, which is not only on the shortest route to Oxford, but is also the logical route to south or west, using our main road, misnamed with an **A**-route number ... (*Well, how would you drive from Heyford to Burford or Gloucester???*) This suggests increased traffic; so, let me again emphasise the value of us participating in the MCNP which has a statutory profile in planning discussions greater than the individual villages.

Also at that meeting Dorchester informed the MCNP forum that it had paid its S106 money to Oxfordshire County Council for local traffic-calming work in surrounding villages, but OCC has still not released these funds; amounts have been mentioned, but nothing is yet definite nor received by Kirtlington Parish Council.