



Abingdon-on-Thames Town Council

Planning Committee

Report to the Annual Parish Meeting 2026

Planning Committee

The Town Council Planning Committee has had another very busy year, commenting on the regular flow of planning applications and public consultations within our town boundaries together with any large scale projects that could affect Abingdon.

Our aim is to comment within planning regulations, to ensure our and residents' concerns are taken into account when the final decision is made. Quite often the Town Council can be in favour of an application in principle, but feel it would benefit from some modifications, so we object on that basis, listing the areas for modification and why.

A good example of that process this year has been the Bury Street Precinct redevelopment, which went to Vale Planning Committee for decision following our initial comments. The points made were that the Public art suggested wasn't Abingdon specific, new plants in the scheme might die if not well maintained and there were also concerns over poor lighting at night, as the area involved is known to suffer from anti-social behaviour issues. Removal of one of the two existing trees already there was objected to but without a tree preservation order it couldn't be retained.

The District Council approved the application but with additional conditions following our comments:

- 10-year period for replacement of any planting that dies,
- approval of a detailed care management plan to look after the planting,
- detailed lighting plan and liaison with Thames Valley Police on anti-social behaviour,
- improved public art offering by working with Town Council and Planners.

These changes are very welcome and serve as a really good example of what we try and achieve on town resident's behalf.

The Committee welcomes residents attending or submitting written statements regarding items on each of our Agendas and this year we've been pleased to welcome residents to several of our meetings.

They presented concerns on nearby applications and listened to the Committee's debate and decision on our comments to be made to the District Council's Planning Officers. On both occasions they had very valid concerns, which the Committee included within our response. One application was withdrawn and a decision on a second one is currently awaited

Committee members also note any comments if already made by Vale or County Council Technical Officers on applications when considering our response. Drainage, Highways and Heritage teams have the technical expertise, so we refer to this in our responses, for instance Listed Building applications often carry 'No objections subject to Heritage Officer's approval' or similar, to ensure proposed work is correctly and sympathetically planned and delivered for the building and the local area.

Sustainable drainage, loss of off-road parking provisions and overdevelopment are also very common areas for comment.

Applications we review vary in complexity and as reported last year typically cover:

- adding a garden office
- replacing windows, gutters or roofing on a historic building
- change of business use on retail and commercial buildings
- home extensions
- conversion of property to flats or houses of multiple occupation
- smaller infill plot developments, e.g. 2 houses, 4 or 6 flats
- major applications e.g. north Abingdon strategic sites, Lodge Hill slips, Culham Science Village and Dalton Barracks developments

As reported last year, to review and reply within required timescales the Committee meets every 3 weeks, the most frequent of any Committee, meaning to date this Council year there have been:

- 15 meetings
- 123 applications reviewed, most with no objections but the Committee has objected with reasons where required on valid grounds
- 2 or 3 amendments to applications, a similar number of Lawful and Permitted development applications plus Planning Condition discharge notices are also noted at each meeting
- Committee members have again spoken at or submitted comments to the Vale of White Horse District Council Planning Committee on applications they called in for decision.
- Consultations ranging from parking changes, street trade permits, Dalton Barracks redevelopment and the South East Strategic Reservoir Option. The latter generating detailed replies to the statutory public consultation prior to Thames Water submitting their Development Consent Order.
- Ongoing monitoring of all the activities on the Dunmore Road and Twelve Acre Drive developments, attending developer liaison and site meetings organized by the District Council.

Traffic Advisory Committee

Abingdon's Traffic Advisory Committee reports to the Planning Committee and meets 3 times a year taking questions submitted in writing or person from residents, business or Councillors to see how we can best address traffic management and safety within our increasingly busy town.

Very pleasingly this year, several longer standing items like agreeing lane markings for the Wootton Road roundabout with Copenhagen Drive and Dunmore Road have been agreed. This frees the Committee of all levels of Abingdon Councillors, Highways and Thames Valley Police representatives to move to agree actions where necessary on some newer issues that have been reported.

My thanks to Cllr Elio Astone for taking the Chair on behalf of Abingdon Town Council this year.

Neighbourhood Plan

Following public comment last year, the plan has transferred from the original Steering Committee to the Town Council to progress to the next regulation stage for those comments, together with guidance from the Vale of White Horse Neighbourhood Plans Team, to be incorporated, prior to the being reviewed by an independent Inspector.

This work is ongoing to add an Executive Summary, any relevant appendices and reflect any updated Government plan requirements and progress is updated at each Committee meeting.

I'd like to thank the original Steering Committee and their Chair, Simon Hills for the significant amount of time and effort made to reach this stage and to our Town Clerk who is overseeing these next stages.

Summary

The Planning Committee's very full schedule during the year plus related external meetings and consultation events and planning changes, places a continuous workload on Councillors and Officers which is likely to stay that way for the foreseeable future.

I want to sincerely thank all involved for their hard work and help during a very busy year, especially to our Committee Clerk, Jo Blackmore and Councillor Lorraine Oates, who has given long and consistent service serving the committee.

Councillor Mark Giddins,
Chair of the Planning Committee
Abingdon Town Council