

Title	District Councillors' Report
Councillors	Cllr Anne-Marie Simpson & Cllr Crispin Topping
Parish	Moulsford Parish Council
Date	9 October 2025

[Booking link](#) for planning surgeries for town and parish councils

Councils to take positive steps to represent communities despite concerns with Inspectors' Local Plan decision

South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils have written an open letter in which they have stated the Planning Inspectors' conclusions on their Joint Local Plan were unwarranted and lacking coherent explanation.

The open letter is in reply to a Planning Inspectors' letter published last week, which recommended the councils withdraw their Joint Local Plan from the examination process based on a single issue – the 'duty to co-operate' with Oxford city.

In their response, the councils have defended the processes carried out to develop the plan. They go on to explain to the Inspectors that any decision on whether to withdraw the plan from examination would need to be taken at full Council meetings, in December at the earliest.

Here are some of the key issues the councils have raised in their response to the Inspectors:

- The letter contains errors, for example, the Inspectors referred to South and Vale being in the "Oxfordshire Housing Market Area" when deciding if there were strategic matters to engage with neighbours on. But housing market areas are no longer part of how housing need is calculated and haven't been for some years.
- The Inspectors said things that "could affect Oxford" count as a Strategic Matter. The law says a strategic matter that requires cooperation must have (or would have) a significant impact on two or more planning areas. The Inspectors did not explain what those significant impacts actually are (not just 'could' be) on Oxford and the areas of South and/or Vale arising from what the joint local plan proposes.
- The Inspectors relied on Oxford's (now withdrawn) Local Plan 2040, which had claimed there was a shortfall in housing supply. But that was before taking into account the 6,780 homes committed in the Joint Local Plan in South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse for Oxford's unmet need. Using the government's Standard Method for calculating housing numbers – which the Inspectors of Oxford's plan instructed Oxford to do – Oxford's need was already covered.
- The Inspectors appear to have misunderstood the housing numbers, saying "it should have been obvious" that there was a reasonable prospect of additional Oxford unmet need in later years. But the evidence showed the Joint Local Plan (and partners' plans) fully accommodated Oxford's unmet needs up to 2040.
- The Inspectors downplayed work led by Oxfordshire County Council in 2023 showing that Oxford's unmet need was fully addressed, favouring a note by Oxford City Council which said it wasn't.

Despite the significant concerns with the Inspectors' conclusions, the councils' leaders have both committed to take all reasonable steps to ensure that future development in the areas remains sustainable, appropriate and well-planned.

Cllr David Rouane, Leader of South Oxfordshire District Council, said: "I'm dismayed that after several years of diligent, careful and collaborative hard work, our positive, innovative Joint Local Plan that works towards genuinely sustainable growth, could be undone by Inspectors' conclusions based on out-of-date policy and misinterpreted legislation. I am not aware of another emerging local plan in Oxfordshire that so encompasses and embraces the vision set out in the Oxfordshire Strategic Vision, which all our councils signed up to, as our Joint Local Plan."

Cllr Bethia Thomas, Leader of Vale of White Horse District Council, said: "It's very disappointing that positive and constructive approaches to planning development could be undermined by the Inspectors' letter. We will consider very carefully the many implications of the different options ahead of us, and it will be for all Members of both councils to decide which next step is in the best interests of our residents and our districts – they will be at the heart of whatever we decide."

Joint Local Plan background information

Over the past four years, South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse district councils have worked tirelessly together to prepare new planning policies in an innovative, forward-looking Joint Local Plan to guide sustainable development across both districts.

The Joint Local Plan was developed through extensive consultation and deep engagement with our residents, community groups, neighbouring authorities, developers, infrastructure providers and government agencies. It gained unanimous cross-party support at both councils before submission for examination in December 2024, a rare level of political alignment that demonstrated shared commitment to a plan-led future for South and Vale's communities.

Despite this, the Inspectors examining the Joint Local Plan wrote to South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils on 26 September 2025 following Stage 1 of the Joint Local Plan Examination Hearing Sessions. This letter advised the councils withdraw the plan from examination, citing a single technical matter, the Duty to Cooperate, specifically with Oxford City Council. Their letter is available in the Examination Library ([ID10](#)). On 1 October the Councils issued a joint Press Release, available here: [South Oxfordshire](#) and [Vale of White Horse](#).

On 6 October the Councils wrote to the Planning Inspectors about their letter - the [letter is available to view on the Councils' website](#).

Food and Warmth Grant Scheme launched to support residents this winter

South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils have launched a Food and Warmth Grant Scheme to help local organisations who are directly supporting residents struggling with the rising cost of living.

The scheme will distribute grants to local not-for-profit organisations delivering projects that improve access to food and help people keep their homes warm. It is funded through the Government's Household Support Fund which is allocated via Oxfordshire County Council.

Grants are available for a six-week application window with the scheme closing for applications midday 6 November 2025. Local groups can apply for up to £2,000 if un-constituted, £2,000–£5,000 if constituted, and up to £10,000 for collaborations between three or more not-for-profit organisations led by a constituted group.

The funding can support a wide range of initiatives, including:

- Supplying food and essential household items such as toiletries (including period products) and cleaning products
- Providing warm equipment like blankets, hot water bottles and energy-efficient cooking equipment
- Covering costs linked to running Warm Welcome Spaces
- Purchasing equipment to support food and warmth projects such as cooking or gardening clubs
- Short-term staffing, venue or fuel costs to deliver projects
- Educational activities that promote healthy eating, energy saving, budgeting and household resilience

Who can apply?

Eligible applicants include constituted and un-constituted not-for-profit groups, voluntary and community organisations, Community Interest Companies (CICs), preschools and PTAs (for non-statutory items), parish and town councils, food banks, community fridges and redistribution groups.

Organisations can apply through the councils' websites: [South Oxfordshire District Council](#) and [Vale of White Horse District Council](#).

For queries, organisations can contact the Community Hub Team at communityconnectors@southandvale.gov.uk or call 01235 422 600 (option 3).

The funding is part of the wider Household Support Fund, which also includes targeted support to address period poverty.

About the Community Hub:

The Community Hub was first set up to support residents through the Covid-19 pandemic and has since become a permanent service providing advice, practical help and funding to those most in need. It plays a vital role in the councils' work with refugees and asylum seekers, and partners with local organisations to deliver programmes that reduce inequality. The Hub is also central to providing cost-of-living support for residents under financial pressure.

If you need help or advice, our Community Hub Team is here for you. Call 01235 422600 (option 3) during office hours or email communitysupport@southandvale.gov.uk.

Brown bin permit holders can have extra garden waste collected this Autumn
Residents who have purchased a permit for the district council brown bin garden waste collection service in South Oxfordshire or the Vale of White Horse can have extra garden waste collected for free, on their normal scheduled collection day only, between 27 October and 7 November.

Permit holders can put out a maximum of four additional sacks of garden waste, per brown bin subscription, next to their brown bin.

To be eligible for a collection, please follow this guidance:

- Only present natural garden waste, such as cut grass, plants or small branches.
- Please use standard sized (60L) black refuse-style sacks or boxes / containers which combined total no more than a standard bin full.
- Please DO NOT use bags larger than 60L (including one tonne builders' type waste bags) – our crews will not collect any garden waste from these, as they are too heavy to lift and empty into the vehicle.
- Bags and containers must be left open so crews can easily empty them into the rear of the vehicle and be able to check there are not contaminants.

All the garden waste collected will be taken to a facility near Wallingford where it is composted. The compost is then sold on to local farmers for use on their farmland as a soil conditioner.

More information about garden waste collections, including how to buy a permit, can be found on the [South Oxfordshire garden waste page](#) or the [Vale garden waste page](#).

New garden waste permit scheme a big success thanks to residents' support

Residents in South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse have embraced a new garden waste permit scheme this year – with an almost 5 per cent rise in collections from the previous year.

Six months on from the launch of the new garden waste permit scheme, over 67,100 permits have been purchased in South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse districts, compared to a combined 63,900 bins paid for under the old direct debit scheme.

South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils introduced the new permit scheme in the spring 2025. Customers now receive a sticker permit for their bins which they affix to the lid to identify them as fully paid-up garden waste customers, which they can choose to renew each year.

The majority of residents (91 per cent) purchased their permits through the Councils' online portal – with the rest supported by the Councils' Customer Services staff.

The new scheme also included the option to use a new online account system (called MyAccount) which will also make things easier when people need to renew in 2026 and those customers will receive a prompt when it's time to renew. To date almost 30,000 customers have signed up to a MyAccount.

Now, 95 per cent of all garden waste customers can now be reached by email, compared to 64 per cent the previous year, which means the Councils can also quickly keep them up to date with any known service changes.

There is good news for permit holders this month as well. With all the autumn garden waste, customers will be able to have additional garden waste collected on their normal collection day only, between 27 October and 7 November. For more details visit the garden waste pages below.

People can find out more about the service and sign-up for a garden waste permit online at:

- [South Oxfordshire garden waste](#)

- [Vale of White Horse garden waste](#)

Enjoy an action-packed half-term across South Oxfordshire and the Vale

From theatre shows and craft workshops to outdoor adventure challenges and family fun days – there's something for everyone this October half-term!

Families across South Oxfordshire and the Vale of White Horse can look forward to an exciting week of free and low-cost activities from 25 October to 1 November.

Free and low-cost outdoor activities, creativity and theatrical fun

The week includes:

- Saturday 25 and Sunday 26 October – **'Spot's Birthday Party'** at Cornerstone, Didcot – a lively show full of songs, dancing, party hats and a meet-and-greet with Spot after the performance.
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- Monday 27 October – take part and enjoy a variety of free activities at the **Thame Leisure Centre Fun Day**, run in partnership with Better Leisure.
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- Tuesday 28 and Wednesday 29 October – join the **Xplorer navigation challenge**. Explore a local park to find the markers, it's educational and gives children a sense of adventure!
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- Thursday 30 October – come along to Cornerstone in Didcot to **meet the cast of this year's pantomime 'Beauty and the Beast'**. At The Beacon in Wantage, young children can enjoy **'Playtime with The Last Baguette Theatre Company'**, with **free** sessions as part of the Wantage Literary Festival, and also get hands-on and crafty at the **Halloween Hand Puppet Workshop** with local artist Eden Fay.
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- Saturday 1 November – illustrator **Nick Sharratt's Picture Book Drawalong** wraps the week up at Cornerstone when children can learn to draw favourite characters from his books and discover new tips, games and techniques.

For more information, including details on how to reserve your place or book tickets, visit southandvale.gov.uk/holidayactivities

Licensing consultation

We're planning to make a few changes to our policy which determines how we make licensing decisions and how licensed premises can operate in our districts. Our proposed updated Licensing Act Policy includes new references to: Martyn's Law, the Ask for Angela scheme and promoting initiatives for women and girls' safety; and updated guidance on staff training about safeguarding and evacuation and emergency procedures.

You can find out more and have your say via [our consultation page](#). Comments are open until 16 October 2025.