

**MINUTES OF DUCKLINGTON PARISH COUNCIL MEETING
HELD ON WEDNESDAY 3 SEPTEMBER 2025
in the Lilac Room, Village Hall commencing at 7.30 pm**

102.25 Parish Councillors Present: David Duthie (Chairman)
Matthew Barker (Vice Chairman)
John Dunsdon
Jo George
Paul Lishman
Sarah Varnom

In Attendance: Steve Smith (Clerk)
Cllr Adrian Walsh (WODC)
Cllr Thomas Ashby (OCC)
Reverend Andrea Colbrook (until 7.45 pm)
Sue Fenn (until 7.45 pm)
Martin Dines (until 7.45 pm)
Trish Hughes (until 7.45 pm)
Jane Dines (until 7.45 pm)
John Hughes (until 7.45 pm)
Dennis West (until 8.00 pm)
Richard West (until 8.00 pm)
Chris Woodward (until 8.00 pm)
Ray Coles (until 8.30 pm)
Lyn Webster (until 8.30 pm)
Teresa Shillam (until 8.30 pm)
Shelley Ivory (until 8.30 pm)

103.25 Parish Councillors' Apologies: Peter Almgill
Richard Border

104.25 Public Participation

Ducklington Cemetery

Reverend Andrea Colbrook addressed councillors regarding item 10) e) on the agenda :
Ducklington Cemetery - Proposed Legal Agreement.

1. Background

- Long-standing informal arrangement between Parish Council & St Bartholomew's (Incumbent and PCC)
- Covered administration of burials, memorial approvals, and receipt of fees
- Informal agreements risk lack of clarity, disputes and blurred responsibilities
- Draft formal agreement prepared by diocese after 3+ years of chasing

2. Summary of Agreement

Responsibilities of Incumbent & PCC

- Permit burials, interments, memorials and inscriptions
- Sign rights of burial, maintain burial registers
- Collect and account for all fees (Church of England rates)
- Apply Diocese of Oxford Churchyard Regulations

Responsibilities of Parish Council

- Insurance, repair and maintenance of cemetery
- Maintain cemetery plan and registers
- Grant/extend/terminate exclusive rights of burial
- Remove unauthorised memorials, maintain graves
- Handle non-diocese regulation applications
- Grant rights to Commonwealth War Graves Commission

3. Rights of Burial

- **Automatic rights** (if space available)
 1. Parishioners (including those dying in the parish)
 2. Those on St Bartholomew's electoral roll at death
- **Others** require Parish Council consent

4. Reserving a Plot

- Parish Council grants/extends/terminates exclusive rights of burial
- Incumbent signs the right of burial
- Fees set according to Church of England parochial fee structure (PCC receives these fees)

5. Fees

- Based on **Church of England Parochial Fees** (updated annually)
- Two components :
 1. Diocese of Oxford (stipends, pensions) - £18 to £127
 2. St Bartholomew's PCC (maintenance, admin, certificates) - £146 to £357
- Same fees as in Church of England churchyards (not municipal cemeteries)

6. Way Forward

- Diocese has produced a **template agreement** for similar cases
- Diocese unlikely to accept material changes (esp. fees & responsibilities)
- St Bartholomew's PCC supports signing the agreement as drafted
- If Council seeks changes:
 1. Must negotiate directly with Diocese
 2. Diocese's negotiation costs would fall to Parish Council
 3. Current informal arrangement would be terminated immediately
 4. Parish Council would assume **full responsibility** under the 1977 Order until agreement is reached

Reverend Andrea Colbrook answered questions from councillors.

Allotments

Chris Woodward addressed councillors regarding various incidents of damage and vandalism at the allotments. He said nearly all damage has been aimed at Chris Woodward, Dennis West and Richard West, details as follows:

October 2023

Chris Woodward

3 Cold Frames Glass broken by Greenhouse

May 2024

Chris Woodward

Weedkiller used in Greenhouse on Tomato Plants and Flowers

June 2024

Chris Woodward

Raised Strawberry beds 8 feet long tipped over

Took 3 of us to lift it back up

Autumn 2024

General Allotment Theft

Tomatoes and Cucumbers taken

March 2025

Richard West

Greenhouse from home brought to Allotments, Richard damaged 10 panes when taking it down. He bought another Greenhouse as it was a cheaper way to get replacement glass. About a month later we went to erect the original greenhouse and found that most of the new greenhouse glass had been stolen, this was stored behind a locked gate.

April 2025

Richard West

Poly Tunnel burnt to the ground, Items stored inside Mower petrol drained, Canes, Stakes, Posts, plastic Trays Wooden Table. There was nothing kept inside that would ignite to cause a fire. The Fire Officer told us it was Arson.

June 2025

General Allotment Damage

Strimmer taken from a locked shed and shed locked up again after. This we were told later was only Strimmer Line ?

July 2025

Richard West

Top water tank emptied Losing 1000ltrs

The Gate was locked

We braced the gate as we thought people might be getting in that way.

July 2025

Dennis West

Water Tank by Apple Tree was slashed with a sharp object (Possibly a knife) causing a slit about 3 inches long going across the bottom of the tank. So again we lost 1000lts of water.

16th August 2025

Chris Woodward

I parked my car at the allotment at 07.45 and at 08.00 I went with Dennis and Richard to Flower and veg show at Milton U Wychwood and then to a Flower and veg show at Minster Lovell where we were judges. We got back to the allotment at 13.00. I walked to my car and could see that the car had been keyed, the scratch was about 8 inches long under the rear light. Car only 2 months old (25 plate) cost to repair £355.

Possible Solution

What we would like to propose is having 2 Cameras positioned to cover the Allotments which would be solar powered.

The cameras would be placed high up out of anybody's reach. These type of cameras are approximately £450 to £500 from Amazon. We would be prepared to fund half of this cost with the council funding the other half. We believe this would either catch the person or persons responsible or would deter them from further damage.

Chris Woodward answered questions from councillors.

Application No: 25/00423/OUT - Land to the South of Standlake Rd, Ducklington

Ray Coles addressed councillors regarding item 8) e) on the agenda : Outline planning application for up to 36 dwellings with creation of new vehicular access off Standlake Road and provision of public open space with associated infrastructure and earthworks. All matters reserved except access (Amended Description).

He outlined his four main concerns, namely:

- Suitability of the Site for Housing
- Effect on the Character and Appearance of the Area
- Access details
- Risk of Flooding

1. Suitability of the Site for Housing

Ducklington constitutes a 'village' in the context of the development plan and the application site comprises undeveloped land.

Policy H2 of the West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2031 sets out the circumstances in which new dwellings will be permitted within or adjoining the built-up area of a 'village', being distinct from those circumstances in which new dwellings would be permitted in 'small villages, hamlets and open countryside'.

- The application site has still not been allocated for housing development within

the local plan or within a neighbourhood plan.

- The site does not comprise previously developed land.
- The site is still not within the built up area of Ducklington.
- The site is still not adjoining the built up area of Ducklington.

The Inspector who determined the appeal against the Council's decision on the previous application (18/02260/OUT) found that:

"The site is located in the open countryside in the context of Policy H2 of the Local Plan. The proposal would not accord with the requirements of this policy in that the development would not be for an essential or other specific local need, would not be ancillary to existing dwellings and would not re-use or replace existing buildings".
(Appeal Decision APP/D3125/W/18/3219269, Paragraph 11)

"The proposed development would conflict with Policy H2 of the Local Plan which seeks to restrict development within the countryside. Furthermore, and for the same reasons, the proposal would not accord with paragraphs 127 and 170 of the Framework (Now paragraphs 135 and 187 of the NPPF 2024) which, amongst other matters, seek to ensure that development is well related to the existing surrounding rural environment and respects the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside." (Appeal Decision APP/D3125/W/18/3219269, Paragraph 12)

The Inspector's findings in respect of the location of the development and the conflict with Policy H2 still applies to the current proposal in the same way as the previous one.

2. Effect on the Character and Appearance of the Area

Policy OS2 of the Local Plan establishes that villages, including Ducklington, are suitable for limited development which respects the village character and local distinctiveness and would help to maintain the vitality of such communities.

The Inspector who determined the appeal against the Council's decision on the previous application (18/02260/OUT) held the view that:

"The proposal would introduce a separate housing estate at the very edge of the village and in combination with the proposed removal of a section of hedgerow which makes a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the area, would appear as an urban feature which extends into the countryside. The more open character to the southeast of the village would be compromised by the depth and spread of the proposed development which would not reflect the linear nature of the four outlying dwellings that are located adjacent to the north eastern section of the appeal site."
(Appeal Decision APP/D3125/W/18/3219269, Paragraph 15)

He concluded that the *"The proposal would not accord with the provisions of Policy OS2 of the Local Plan with regards to matters of character and appearance"*. (Paragraph 16)

The revised 'Coloured Concept Schematic Site Plan' – Drawing No. 3833.102 Rev. B

continues to show a separate housing estate at the edge of the village.

The revised Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment (Ref. R2662_BNG_c) mentions “*the loss of over half of the northern hedgerow (H4) to allow for visibility splays*” (paragraph 5.4.1).

The revised illustrative layout, titled ‘Concept Schematic Site Plan’ – Drawing No. 3833.101 Rev. AB, continues to show a cramped form of development with small plot sizes in stark contrast to the adjoining four dwellings. For many of the plots, the amount of private outdoor amenity space is still less than the footprint of the proposed dwellings. The West Oxfordshire Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (section 11.11) states “*Rear gardens should be **at least** as large as the ground floor footprint of the dwelling...*”.

The Design Guide also states that resident and visitor car parking should be well integrated so that it does not dominate the street, located close to people’s homes, and “*With the exception of apartment typologies, rear parking courtyards are generally unacceptable*” (section 11.14). The revised illustrative layout shows, upon entering the site, a clear line of sixteen car parking spaces that will dominate the view at the rear of the apartment buildings. Twelve of those spaces are distant from the plots that they serve (plots 31-36), which accommodate houses rather than apartments.

Therefore, it has still not been demonstrated that the site can accommodate the proposed number of dwellings in a manner that respects the character and appearance of the local area. The reduction in the total number of dwellings from 38 to 36 is simply a token gesture.

The proposal fails to accord with the provisions of Policy OS2 of the Local Plan, Section 11 of the West Oxfordshire Design Guide SPD, Paragraph 135 of the NPPF and Sections C1, M3 and H2 of the National Design Guide. It should be refused in accordance with Paragraph 139 of the NPPF.

3. Access Details

Access means “...*the accessibility to and within the site, for vehicles, cycles and pedestrians in terms of the positioning and treatment of access and circulation routes and how these fit into the surrounding access network*”. (Article 2(1) of The Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015)

The proposed access arrangements are shown on the ‘Amended Access Strategy’ – Drawing No. 0007 Rev. P3 and are described in the agent’s covering letter dated 26 August 2025.

The drawing shows a proposed footway on the north side of Standlake Road, from the Philip Dennis western access to the east side of the Philip Dennis eastern access, and a crossing point to a proposed footway alongside the proposed vehicular access on the south side of the road. The drawing shows relocation of the Witney-bound bus stop from its current location, in front of ‘Ashbrook’, to a new position 120m east alongside

the proposed vehicular access. Existing residents will be required to walk 120m further, along an unlit road, and cross a second access into business premises used by a high number of HGVs, to access bus services to Witney or return home having used services from Abingdon or Carterton. Thus the proposal is considered to be less safe and less attractive for people to use public transport than the existing arrangements.

The drawing also shows traffic calming measures on Standlake Road in the form of narrowing, by a kerb build-out, and priority arrangement for eastbound traffic leaving Ducklington. In combination with the accompanying signs, lines and lighting that will be needed, the proposed build-out will introduce urban features harmful to the rural character and appearance of the area.

Of additional concern is the impact that the proposed build-out will have on surface water drainage. The Environment Agency's Flood map for planning shows this part of Standlake Road at high risk of surface water flooding. Indeed, surface water flooding is already a regular occurrence in this location following periods of heavy rainfall. Photographs of typical flooding accompanied the representations I made on the previous application (18/02260/OUT). Occasionally, more severe flooding occurs, which includes both the carriageway and the footway in front of Fritillary Mews houses.

It is disconcerting to read (in the Technical Note 2 Version 3 by Jubb, dated 28 July 2025) that the proposed build-out has been requested by the County Council as Local Highway Authority, when the same body as Lead Local Flood Authority should be fully aware of the high risk of surface water flooding. A physical obstruction placed on the carriageway in this location is most likely to divert the flow of surface water and increase the risk of surface water flooding elsewhere.

My third concern with the proposed build-out is the impact it will have on the ability for visitors, including delivery drivers and professional tradesmen, to park on the north side of Standlake Road. Parking in this location is currently restricted on weekdays between the hours of 8.30 am and 6.00 pm by a Traffic Regulation Order. However, parking is available during the evenings and at weekends. The proposed build-out and priority arrangement will effectively prohibit parking at all times with no alternative provision having been made.

In my view, it has still not been demonstrated that safe and suitable access to the development will be provided for all people in accordance with Policy T2 of the Local Plan.

4. Risk of Flooding

The application continues to rely upon a 'Phase 1 Desk Study Report' (Ref. 23320-JCE-XX-XX-RP-GE-001-P2) containing comments on hydrology (section 3.7) and a 'Flood Risk Assessment & Drainage Strategy' (Ref. 23320-FRADS-01_v2). The Phase 1 report states:

"The desk study indicates that the site is not within an area at risk of surface flooding. A high surface water flood risk area is present beyond the northwest boundary, associated

with the lower lying area of the western field, ... Elevated risks are also associated with the A415 to the south, and over areas of hardstanding to the north associated with the Ducklington Mill commercial units, as well as a field 100m to the north. Surface water run-off from the site will likely flow offsite and pond in lower lying areas,... and either flow via overland flow into the drain beyond the western boundary and into nearby tributaries of the River Windrush, or infiltrate the permeable gravels and feed the river via baseflow. It is understood that a programme of ditch clearing was undertaken at the site in 2017 and that no records of surface water flooding has been noted since this time."

As stated previously, surface water flooding of this part of Standlake Road occurred on multiple occasions in 2024 following periods of heavy rainfall. Flooding was particularly severe on 24 November 2024, which included both the carriageway and the footway in front of Fritillary Mews houses, during 'Storm Bert'. The flooding was reported by residents to Oxfordshire County Council at that time.

The Flood Risk Assessment & Drainage Strategy describes the existing drainage ditches surrounding the site (in paragraphs 3.4.9 and 3.4.10) as follows:

"The existing ditch is shown running immediately to the west of the site along the boundary with the neighbouring sports fields. The ditch is culverted beneath the existing gravel access track immediately to the northwest of the site, before running parallel to the site along Standlake Road until it is culverted beneath highway adjacent to the residential property of Touchwood.

The ditch then continues as an open channel in an easterly direction on the northern side of Standlake Road, before heading in a northerly direction and converging with the River Windrush."

Paragraphs 4.2.2–4.2.12 consider the risk of surface water flooding in the vicinity of the site. The assessment makes sweeping assumptions about the adequacy of the existing network of ditches and their ongoing maintenance to alleviate the risk of flooding beyond the site boundaries. Recent flood events would tend to suggest that the existing culvert beneath Standlake Road has insufficient capacity for the conveyance of flows and/or that overgrown vegetation, debris or blockages are not being regularly cleared from the ditch.

The current state of the four gullies in Standlake Road [is poor]...grates [are] covered by leaves, vegetation and cuttings, as well as concrete kerbs from the gully surrounds, which are knocked over and not reinstated by the contractor every time the verge is cut. [There are] four broken outlet pipes that still await repair.

The proposed surface water drainage strategy includes an attenuation basin in the eastern part of the site and a storage tank in the western part of the site, which will discharge at a controlled rate into the existing ditch on Standlake Road. The revised 'Preliminary Drainage Strategy' (Drawing No. 500 Rev. P3) continues to show the proposed outfall near the existing culvert beneath Standlake Road. No details have been provided to show the design of the proposed outfall or for the management and maintenance of the ditch.

The application has still not satisfactorily addressed surface water flooding and measures to manage or reduce its impact, contrary to Policy EH7 of the Local Plan 2031.

Conclusion

The revised plans, drawings and documents have still not demonstrated that the proposed development is acceptable in principle. The site cannot accommodate up to 36 dwellings without causing harm to the character and appearance of the area. The proposed access strategy will make the use of public transport less safe and less attractive for existing residents and introduce inappropriate traffic calming measures that will exacerbate existing surface water drainage problems. Therefore, I continue to request that the Local Planning Authority **REFUSE** to grant planning permission for the development proposed in this application.

Lyn Webster added that residents had experienced more flooding in recent years.

Shelley Ivory said that if planning permission was granted this could lead to infill development in the future.

Teresa Shillam raised concerns about invasion of privacy and overbearance.

All speakers endorsed and fully supported the statement made by Ray Coles.

Councillors answered questions and invited the speakers to send written comments to the Clerk.

105.25 To approve the Minutes of the Parish Council meeting of 2 July 2025:

Cllr Barker proposed and Cllr Duthie seconded and the Council **RESOLVED** to accept the minutes as a true record of the meeting.

106.25 To approve the Minutes of the Parish Council Urgency Committee meeting of 6 August 2025:

Cllr Duthie proposed and Cllr Barker seconded and the Council **RESOLVED** to accept the minutes as a true record of the meeting.

107.25 County Council (OCC) / District Council (WODC) Matters:

Cllr Thomas Ashby (OCC) reported:

OXFORD CONGESTION CHARGE UPDATE

At the Overview and Scrutiny Meeting on 27th August, the committee heard from members of the public about the negative effects that the proposed congestion zone will have on their livelihoods.

Over the summer, over 66% of those who responded to the public consultation said that there shouldn't be a charge, with over 73% of respondents stating that the charge would negatively impact their lives. The Oxfordshire Alliance continues to oppose the Oxford Congestion Zone.

Oxfordshire County Council Officers have recommended that the Cabinet APPROVES the Oxford Congestion Charge Zone. Cabinet Members will decide whether to approve the congestion zone on 10th September.

OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL CUTS THE NUMBER OF BEDS AVAILABLE FOR HOMELESS PEOPLE LEAVING CARE

Oxfordshire County Council has approved plans to reduce the number of beds by 20% and reducing the age whereby people are eligible for the service from 25-21. This happens after the council chose to make changes to the Young People's Supported Accommodation Services Programme. This aim of the programme was to support leavers of the care system with supported accommodation, to allow them to gain life skills and either pursue further education or employment.

£500,000 ALLOCATED TO COMMUNITY FLOOD PROJECTS ACROSS OXFORDSHIRE

Oxfordshire County Council have allocated £500,000 towards 39 flood prevention schemes across the county. Areas include; Abingdon, Bicester, Witney, Oxford, Chinnor, Wheatley, Culham, Bucknell, Caulcott, Clifton Hampden, Sunningwell, Buscot, Hook Norton, Waterstock, Yarnton, Whitchurch, Fewcott, Wendlebury, Adderbury, Bloxham, East Hanney, West Hanney, Hailey, Kidlington, Hornton, Swalcliffe, Kelmscott and Bampton.

Projects include surface drainage improvements; natural flood management schemes; ditch clearances and ditch construction; culvert inspections; water pumps; track repairs to reduce surface water flooding; the installation of timber dams; and flood sensors.

Further information can be found here:

<https://news.oxfordshire.gov.uk/community-flood-projects-share-500000-of-funding/>

ELECTRIC BLANKET TESTING IS BACK THIS AUTUMN

Oxfordshire Trading Standards Team will be hosting sessions throughout the county for residents to get their electric blankets checked ahead of the winter. In 2024, 734 blankets were tested with 30% failing electrical safety checks. Safety checks are happening in Witney on 9th October.

Spots can be prebooked by calling 01865 51900 (option 4) or by emailing:

duty.officer@oxfordshire.gov.uk

or by booking online: <https://service.oxfordshire.gov.uk/blankettesting>

COUNCILLOR PRIORITY FUND IS BACK

At the start of this new Municipal Year the Councillor Priority Fund is back allowing Councillors to grant local groups funding. £10,000 has been allocated to each councillor between May 2025-May 2027.

Organisations/Councils (Parish and Towns ONLY) should consult me prior to submitting a bid – bids can be submitted by following:

<https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/residents/communities/councillor-priority-fund>

This fund is open until November 2026.

GULLY CLEANING

Gully clearance across Oxfordshire is currently in the process of clearing all the drainage gullies across the County.

A schedule for gully clearance can be found here:

<https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/transport-and-travel/roadworks/planned-road-maintenance>

Gullies that need cleared can be reported to FixMyStreet here:

https://fixmystreet.oxfordshire.gov.uk/?utm_source=FURL-1&utm_medium=reporting&utm_term=nil&utm_content=&utm_campaign=reporting

SALT BINS

The County Council will soon be considering new locations for salt/grit bins in the area. If you have any suggestions, please do let me know.

Cllr Adrian Walsh (WODC) reported :

The Moors

WODC has allowed the developer a further extension to end-October to respond to the comments from the Environment Agency.

WODC position remains that the application is unacceptable on flood risk grounds.

Holiday Absence

Cllr Thomas Ashby has agreed to cover for Cllr Adrian Walsh while he is away on holiday. Cllr Ashby is also a district councillor so is well placed to report on district council matters.

108.25 Parish Councillors - Disclosure of interests on agenda items

Cllr Varnom declared a personal interest in item 10) e) on the agenda as a member of St Bartholomew's Church.

109.25 PLANNING

- a) Planning Permission No: **MW.0165/23** - Gill Mill Quarry, Standlake Road, Ducklington OX29 7PP - Details pursuant to Condition 15 (Working Scheme for Phase 9)

Applicant: Smiths & Sons (Bletchington) Limited

Town and Country Planning Act (as amended)

Councillors were generally supportive of the applicant's proposals.

- b) Planning Permission No: **MW.0165/23** - Gill Mill Quarry, Standlake Road, Ducklington OX29 7PP - Details pursuant to Condition 16 (Restoration Scheme for Phase 9)

Applicant: Smiths & Sons (Bletchington) Limited

Town and Country Planning Act (as amended)

Councillors were generally supportive of the applicant's proposals.

- c) Planning Permission No: **MW.0165/23** - Gill Mill Quarry, Standlake Road, Ducklington OX29 7PP - Details pursuant to Condition 17 (Aftercare Scheme for Phase 9)

Applicant: Smiths & Sons (Bletchington) Limited

Town and Country Planning Act (as amended)

Councillors were generally supportive of the applicant's proposals.

- d) Planning Application No: **MW.0057/24** - Land North West of Gill Mill Quarry, Standlake Road, Ducklington OX29 7UD

PROPOSAL: North-Western Extension to Gill Mill Quarry involving Mineral extraction including conveyor link to processing plant with restoration to lakes including amenity and conservation afteruses with permanent diversion of Windrush path and network of additional footpaths upon restoration

NOTICE of Submission of Further Information in relation to Application for Planning Permission Accompanied by an Environmental Statement (Regulation 25 of the Town

and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 as Amended)

APPLICANT: Smiths & Sons (Bletchington) Limited

Town and Country Planning Act (as amended)

Councillors noted the submission of further information and the accompanying Environment Statement.

Cllr Barker reminded members that the council had previously made comments to the planning authority about residents' concerns over the dust/noise during the extraction process and concerns have also been raised regarding the proximity of future public rights of way to some residents' land.

Cllr Duthie will ask Andy Dixon to submit water level data throughout the dig.

e) Application No: **25/00423/OUT** - Land to the South of Standlake Rd, Ducklington -

PROPOSAL: Outline planning application for up to 36 dwellings with creation of new vehicular access off Standlake Road and provision of public open space with associated infrastructure and earthworks. All matters reserved except access (amended Description)

Applicant: Jenny Hutchings

Town and Country Planning Act

Councillors noted the amendments to the outline application, including a reduction in unit numbers from 38 to 36 homes allowing "improvements" to the layout, the relocation of the bus stop on the south side of Standlake Road from outside the existing bungalows to further east near the proposed access, and the inclusion of a single build out west of the site to assist with traffic calming into the village. The applicant has also stated they will not be providing a LAP (Local Area for Play) on site and will instead make a financial contribution towards existing facilities.

Councillors had a number of questions, including :

- whether the intention was to provide ecology land to the west; and open space to the east, or has this approach changed?
- What is the main reason for the reduction to numbers / how has this improved layout?

Councillors reiterated their previous comments, i.e. that: (i) the proposed application is contrary to policy, (ii) a previous application in respect of the site had been refused and the reasons for that decision are still applicable, and (iii) concerns made in response to the original application still apply.

Cllr Lishman agreed to draft a response on behalf of Ducklington Parish Council.

The Clerk was asked to write to West Oxfordshire District Council to formally request a two week extension of time in which to respond to the consultation.

f) Neighbourhood Plan

Cllr Lishman gave a brief update and reported that he is due to meet with Tom McCulloch (Community First) on Friday this week and will be able to provide a full update at the next meeting.

110.25 Matters Arising from Previous Meetings

a) Hotel

Cllr Varnom reported that there are currently 253 residents in the hotel. She continues to attend meetings of the support group. The next meeting is scheduled for tomorrow (4th September).

Local organisations, voluntary groups and council officers have shown empathy to the plight of the families staying in the hotel for short periods while their asylum applications are processed. It has been a good collaborative effort across public sector partners to support the hotel and make sure those staying there are supported as well as local communities.

The issue of asylum hotels has had particular media attention in recent weeks due to protests outside The Bell Hotel in Epping, Essex. They followed a temporary injunction granted to Epping Forest District Council in August saying they could move migrants out of the hotel, a decision which was later overturned by the Court of Appeal. As it currently stands WODC has no intention of pursuing any planning enforcement against the hotel in Ducklington.

b) Village Hall

Cllr George reported that an energy efficiency survey had been carried out on Monday, 18th August. She is currently awaiting a copy of the report including recommendations, which she hoped could be used to support future grant applications.

Cllr Varnom reported that a new website is being developed by Jenny Greenway. She is a Ducklington resident and her professional work covers website building and web design.

New chairs have been bought and are being used this evening.

The Ducklington and Hardwick Village Hall Annual General Meeting will take place at 6.30pm on Tuesday, 7th October 2025. All villagers are welcome to attend.

Adrian Colbrook has declared his intention to resign from the post of Chair for personal reasons. The post of Chair and all other committee posts will be open for any interested person to apply for and will be elected at the meeting.

c) **CCTV Camera Log**

The Clerk reported there had been no incidents on the CCTV log this month, so far as he is aware.

d) **Village Newsletter**

The Clerk reminded councillors that the deadline for articles to be published in the October/November Village Newsletter is 12 September 2025.

Articles should be submitted to Emma Buckard: newsletter@ducklingtonparishcouncil.gov.uk

Cllr Duthie suggested that each parish councillor should submit a photograph and pen portrait.

The Photograph

The photograph should be a professional headshot. Please ensure it is:

- High-quality and high-resolution: A clear image is essential for both print and digital use.
- A recent photo: The photo should accurately represent your current appearance.
- Appropriate and professional: A simple, plain background is recommended to keep the focus on you.

The Pen Portrait

A pen portrait is a short, written summary of who you are and what you stand for as a councillor. It should be concise and engaging, giving constituents a sense of your personality and priorities. Please keep it to a maximum of 150 words and consider including the following:

- Your background: Briefly mention your professional or personal background and how it informs your role as a councillor.
- Your motivations: Why did you decide to become a councillor? What are you passionate about?
- Your key priorities: What specific issues or projects are you focused on?
- A personal touch: Feel free to include a brief detail about your interests or what you enjoy about the community to make the portrait more relatable.

e) **Projects Committee**

Cllr George reported on ongoing projects for the Art Trail:

The Cotswold Artist, Natasha Housego continues to work on her sculpture at Bartholomew Close Open Area. It is hoped that local schoolchildren will have an opportunity to observe the artist at work when the new school term starts.

Cllr George has procured quotations for two new picnic benches. Councillors discussed the purchase of benches. Cllr Duthie proposed and Cllr Barker seconded and councillors unanimously **RESOLVED** to accept the quotation from NBB Recycled Furniture for two Wheelchair Access Octagonal Tables, One Wheelchair space 2000 x 2000mm (brown) and Concrete Fixing Kit for Recycled Plastic Furniture x 4, at a total cost of £1472.50 plus VAT

Cllr Duthie agreed to issue instructions to the Clerk for the issue of the purchase order.

Cllr Barker and Cllr Duthie provided further updates on other projects associated with the Art Trail.

Cllr Barker reported that work will soon begin on the sensory garden at Chalcroft. This should be ready for planting sometime towards the end of October. An event is being organised involving “a tea tent and Jim Shakell with his steam engine”. Anyone who would like to be involved in planting up this exciting garden, which measures about 20m x 6m, should get in touch with Cllr Barker (matthew.barker@ducklingtonparishcouncil.gov.uk)

Cllr Varnom reported that the new village planters are prepped and ready to be fixed in their new locations. **Action** : Cllr Varnom to send details to Cllr Barker to allow him to progress with the fixing of the planters as soon as possible. Since the plan is to plant them with spring-flowering bulbs, it's important to proceed as quickly as possible.

f) **Nature Plan**

Cllr George updated members on the small rewilding project in Starnham Road. There are large prickly hedge plants and their roots growing on the site, possibly birch or elder? Cllr George proposes to ask the council's grass cutting contractor if he could remove these and then mow the complete area. Hopefully any small wild flowers will have self seeded. The plan is to do the same again next year and see what grows and add some plugins.

g) **Village Events Committee**

Cllr Barker reported that the village event to commemorate the 80th anniversary of Victory over Japan Day (VJ Day) on Friday, 15th August 2025 was very well supported, with approximately 45 people in attendance.

Cllr Barker requested on behalf of the Village Events Committee that the council agree to release funds from the earmarked reserve, Parish Celebration Group for a village calendar. Depending upon which supplier is selected it is expected the cost will not exceed £560 for the purchase of 200 calendars. It is hoped to make profits of approx. £1500, assuming a sale price of £8 - £9 each. The committee would like any profits from the sales to be divided amongst some of the village charities and organisations. The plan is to place the order by 23rd September with the aim of launching the calendar at this year's Apple Pressing Day on 12th October 2025.

After a discussion, Cllr Dunsdon proposed and Cllr Lishman seconded and the council unanimously **RESOLVED** to agree to fund the purchase of 200 calendars from the earmarked reserve, Parish Celebration Group at a cost of approx. £560.

The Clerk reported that the current balance held in reserves is £830.15.

h) **Parish Boundaries**

Councillors noted the Clerk's report in the Briefing Pack, in particular that Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) would be happy to support enhancing the current village signs, but not the placing of remote parish boundary signs.

Cllr Thomas Ashby offered to contact James Wright, Senior Officer (WODC Area), Central Programme Delivery, Traffic & Road Safety, Environment & Place, Oxfordshire County Council to try and persuade him to change his mind.

i) **Wild Ducks**

Cllr George reported that Marilyn Morris was looking to organise a get-together sometime in September / October for a communal litter pick and planting in the car park border.

Marilyn is also proposing to draw up an action plan to enhance the verges and other communal areas in the village, and anyone interested in contributing to this would be most welcome. Please contact Marilyn directly - email: mhighcroft@gmail.com or mobile: 07850 967928

As a first step, Marilyn has been given a number of primrose plants, which she thought could be planted under the stand of trees near the Memorial, since they would do best in a not-too-dry, slightly shady position. Marilyn has said if anyone else is thinning out their primroses and would like to contribute, please bring them along or drop them off with Marilyn (contact details above).

j) **Training on Storing and Sharing files in Google Drive**

In Cllr Algmill's absence this item was deferred to the next meeting.

k) **Provision of Outside Electric Socket at Village Hall**

Cllr Duthie reported that the Ducklington and Hardwick Village Hall Management Committee supported the idea of installing a double socket on the outside wall of the Village Hall to facilitate power supply to stalls / equipment etc during village events on the Village Green. The committee is looking to combine this with the installation of a defibrillator and is presently seeking quotes. Cllr Duthie is liaising with one of the trustees, Peter Godwin regarding both matters. Cllr Duthie is of the view that the parish council should fund the defibrillator, as it has funded the other two defibrillators in the village, as well as the provision of the new outside double socket.

l) **EV Microhubs**

The Clerk reported that the Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure tender, and with it the EV Microhubs programme, should be concluding very soon.

Having identified the preferred supplier for the contract Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) are now reaching the end of the standstill period whereafter OCC will be able to announce who has won the contract.

Once OCC has the go-ahead, OCC will need to proceed with the supplier contract signing process. It is hoped the Charge Point Operator (CPO) will be willing and able to start engaging with the project work, including Ducklington Parish Council, as microhub pilot sites in good faith whilst this is ongoing.

m) **Neighbourhood Policing**

Councillors noted the Clerk's report in the Briefing Pack. Following up on the comments made to the council by the allotment holders, the Clerk was instructed to contact PC Josh Bennet and PC Katherine Giles with a view to arranging a meeting with Chris Woodward and Cllr Dunsdon, for crime prevention advice.

n) **Local Government Reorganisation - Best Option for Ducklington?**

Councillors noted the Clerk's report in the Briefing Pack. After a brief discussion councillors decided to adopt a "wait and see" policy to see which option emerges in November.

111.25 New Business

a) **Caring for our Rivers and Streams**

Cllr Barker reported that he had met with Ben Morrell Allen to discuss the state of our local rivers and streams as Ben is in contact with the Cotswold Waterways Trust. They are keen to take this forward with some "citizen science" to gather data to support the need for a clean up. Cllr Barker requested that the council consider supporting this endeavour. After a short discussion, councillors agreed this was a commendable idea and would support this initiative.

b) **Connecting the Sensory Garden to a Water Source**

Cllr Barker stated that he is keen to investigate the possibility / cost of having a mains water connection (and lockable tap) to the proposed Sensory Garden. If this proves to be unviable then, Cllr Barker would like the council to look into a bore hole and solar powered pump option, similar to the one installed at the allotments by the church.

Cllr Barker agreed to draft a letter for the Clerk to send to the trustees of the Feilden Trust on behalf of the council.

c) **Parish Council Elections - 7 May 2026**

Councillors noted the Clerk's report in the Briefing Pack and the information therein contained.

d) **Grit-Salt Bins - Winter Preparedness 2025-26**

Councillors noted the Clerk's report in the Briefing Pack.

Councillors decided it was unnecessary to order any bulk bags of salt for the village's Grit-Salt Bins this year, recognising that the salt in the bins may well have formed a crust, however, if the crust is broken up, the salt below should, again, be perfectly ok for use.

e) **Ducklington Cemetery - Proposed Legal Agreement**

Councillors briefly discussed the options available to the council, either to accept the proposals outlined by Reverend Andrea Colbrook earlier in the meeting or the Council would have to assume full responsibility for the duties outlined in the Local Authorities' Cemeteries Order, 1977. Cllr Duthie agreed to write an options appraisal for consideration by councillors.

f) **Ducklington Solar Farm**

Councillors noted the Clerk's report in the Briefing Pack, in particular that the site is expected to be finished and energised in April 2026. However, the traffic and all potentially noise generating activities should have ended, or be minimal, by the end of October this year.

The Clerk was instructed to write to Innova to inquire when the community benefit payment agreed with Ducklington Solar Limited would be paid to the council.

g) **Christmas Tree Sponsorship**

Cllr Barker reported that now that the long Summer months are coming to an end, and the children are returning to school, it was time to consider seeking sponsorship to help cover the costs of the provision of a Christmas Tree this year. Last year the cost of the tree was £200. In addition, the sponsorship banner cost £75. On this basis it was suggested a sponsorship of £275 should be sought.

The Clerk reported that he had provisionally approached S&T Cotswold Plumbing and Heating Ltd to ask if they would be willing to sponsor the tree again this year. They were very enthusiastic and keen to do so, Jason joking "when can I put up the sign again?". The sign used last year is currently stored in his garage.

After a discussion, Cllr Barker proposed and Cllr Varnom seconded, and councillors unanimously **RESOLVED** to instruct the Clerk to formally approach S&T Cotswold Plumbing

and Heating Ltd to ask if they would be willing to sponsor the village Christmas Tree in the sum of £200, assuming last year's banner is fit to be re-used and does not need to be replaced.

h) Witney Infrastructure Neighbourhood Group (WING)

Councillors noted the Clerk's report in the Briefing Pack. Councillors discussed their response to the email from Mark McCappin and decided that at present the council cannot say whether it fundamentally opposes or supports the North Witney Development or opposes or supports large-scale development to support infrastructure improvements, without more detail.

112.25 Playgrounds, Litter, Open Spaces, Sports Pavilion, Sports Field, Allotments

a) Playgrounds - RoSPA Annual Report

Councillors noted the Clerk's report in the Briefing Pack and considered what action(s) to take, if any. It was noted that nothing had been identified as High Risk requiring immediate attention, but there are some items which are identified as Medium Risk. After a discussion, councillors decided to take no action at the present time.

b) Playgrounds - Inspection Reports

Councillors noted the Clerk's report in the Briefing Pack and were disappointed to learn that John Nixon has resigned as playground inspector having secured a full time position with a local company.

Cllr Barker asked the Clerk to wish John all the best on behalf of councillors and to thank him for the work he has done for the council.

Cllr Duthie mentioned that he has someone in mind who may be willing to take over from John. The person concerned is a young man, lives in the village and would probably need to undertake some basic training before assuming the role.

c) Chalcroft Play Area - Black Rubber Surfacing

Councillors noted the Clerk's report in the Briefing Pack, and in particular John Nixon's advice. After a short discussion, councillors decided to take no further action.

d) Chalcroft Play Area - New Playground Equipment

No time to discuss. Item deferred to next meeting.

e) **Litter Picker's Report**

Councillors noted the Litter Picker's report in the Briefing Pack.

f) **School/Village Car Park / DSC's Parking Spaces - Drainage Issues**

Cllr Duthie reported that on his instruction the council's contractor had used concrete to fill holes in the parking layby to stop puddles from forming as a temporary measure. Puddles in a parking layby is a sign of underlying issues. These can include:

Rutting: Depressions or indentations in the surface caused by frequent vehicle traffic.

Poor Drainage: The area may not have been installed with a proper slope to allow water to run off, or the drainage system itself may be clogged or inadequate.

Subgrade Issues: The ground underneath the surface may have settled, causing the surface to collapse in certain areas.

While pouring concrete into holes might provide a short-term fix by filling the low spots, it doesn't always address the root cause of the problem. A more permanent solution would involve a full repair or reconstruction of the area, which could include:

Regrading or Resurfacing: Repaving the layby to ensure a proper slope for water runoff.

Improving Drainage: Installing new or improving existing drainage channels to handle water more effectively.

Pothole Repair: Sealing and repairing potholes to prevent water from penetrating the subgrade and causing further damage.

Whilst filling the holes with concrete is a quick and cost-effective way to mitigate a safety hazard and improve the functionality of the layby, if the underlying issues are not addressed, new puddles may form elsewhere or the concrete patches themselves may fail over time.

Cllr Duthie offered to submit proposals (including a specification and drawings) for the necessary works for councillors to consider at the next meeting

g) **Village Green - Apple Pressing Day**

Cllr Barker reported that plans were well in hand for next month's Apple Pressing Day.

The Clerk reported that an application for a temporary road closure order had been submitted to West Oxfordshire District Council.

Following a discussion about a potential apple crop shortfall caused by the prolonged summer heat, Cllr Dunsdon proposed and Cllr Lishman seconded and councillors unanimously

RESOLVED to reimburse Jim Shackell for the cost of any apples he purchases for apple pressing up to the value of £150.

h) **Sports Pavilion - Advertisement Banner**

Councillors noted the Clerk's recommendation in the Briefing Pack. After a brief discussion, Cllr Duthie proposed and Cllr Varnom seconded, and councillors unanimously **RESOLVED** to approve Ducklington Sports Club's request and to instruct the Clerk to issue consent accordingly

i) **Allotments**

The council agreed to carry out an allotment plots review:

Action: Cllr Duthie and Cllr Dunsdon will meet to verify the numbering of the allotment plots and match each plot with the correct tenant.

Action: Cllr Dunsdon will provide the Clerk with a list of all current allotment holders. This list will include the following for each tenant: plot number(s), full name, address, email address, and both mobile and landline numbers.

Cllr Lishman agreed to write an article for the next village newsletter highlighting the vandalism and deliberate damage that has occurred at the allotments and outlining possible solutions, e.g. CCTV cameras.

The Clerk was instructed to investigate whether the council could apply for crime prevention funding from Matthew Barber's (Police & Crime Commissioner for Thames Valley) Community Fund, which provides community groups with an opportunity to support ongoing policing priorities.

The Community Fund is jointly managed by the Police & Crime Commissioner and Chief Constable, Thames Valley Police, and its purpose is to help to prevent crime and keep communities safe. Money for the scheme is created from the proceeds from the sale of items seized from criminals that cannot be returned to their rightful owners.

Funding requests up to a total value of £10,000 will be considered, with funding awards limited to once every 12 months for any organisation. The closing date for the current round of applications is 12pm (noon) on Monday 22 September 2025.

113.25 FINANCE

a) Account Balances, Debts due to Council and Bank Reconciliation

Account Balances

The Clerk advised members that the sum currently held in the Unity Trust Bank Current T1 account is £37,747.34 (as at 31 August 2025) and in the Unity Trust Bank Instant Access account is £20,322.95 (as at 31 August 2025).

Debts due to Council

The Clerk reported he had received a payment of £217.00 from the Treasurer of Creditor 1 on 28 August 2025 to reduce the outstanding balance to £2,821.00.

Bank Reconciliation

The Clerk circulated a Bank Reconciliation to councillors at the meeting which was signed by the chairman.

b) Invoices due for payment

Councillors considered the schedule of proposed payments set out in the Briefing Pack and **RESOLVED** that all be paid. Cllr Duthie, Cllr Barker or Cllr Almgill to authorise the payments.

114.25 Other comments/Matters for next Agenda

- a) Cllr Lishman reported that this year's Annual Village Show had been a great success, with over 900 people attending. The superb weather certainly helped and a good time was had by all.
- b) The Clerk urged councillors to 'encourage' Ducklington Sports Club to apply for capital project funding from the Football Foundation. The 'goal' (excuse the pun) is to improve the pavilion's facilities, which was the main reason a long-term lease was granted to the club by the parish council. The Clerk called this "the final piece of the jigsaw" in what has been a long and, at times, difficult negotiation. In response, Cllr George said the club has "big plans" and expressed confidence that Eddie Todd and his colleagues would deliver.

115.25 Date of Next Meeting: Parish Council Meeting, Wednesday, 1 October 2025 - 7.30 pm, Lilac Room, Village Hall.

The meeting closed at 10.20 pm.

Signeddated.....2025
Chairman

Draft