

Friends of Iffley Village

website: www.friendsofiffley.org



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Chair: Martin Reed
Newsletter Editor: Juliette Gammon

Autumn Newsletter 2025

Chair's introduction

At a time when many residents are away on holiday, the Council launched two major consultations in August on proposed construction sites in Iffley. In our last print newsletter, we had asked members to request, in response to the Council's 'Early Engagement Survey' for Local Plan 2042 (LP2042), that the Horse Fields are designated Local Green Space. The Council's summary reports a total of 185 responses to this survey and 50 emails about the Horse Fields! We've asked them to confirm that the Horse Fields meet the criteria for the Local Green Space designation.

FOIV has just submitted a detailed response to the 2nd ("Regulation 18") LP2042 consultation - a summary of our stance in relation to the Horse Fields (p 2). You will see that this refers to the Council's new policy releasing some of the land previously reserved for employment for housing – we think this change is long overdue.

FOIV has also been reviewing the outline planning application by the County Council to put 90 homes on the former Iffley Mead Playing Field. In the context of the City Council's intended release of employment land for housing we think that Oxford's remaining greenfield sites, including Iffley Mead, should be spared. We contacted the planning office about missing biodiversity data which has now been added with an extension of the consultation deadline until 2 September. Again, a summary of FOIV's stance is included in this newsletter (p3).

Other items include a round-up of highways issues, nature notes, and a feature on the local Mobile Library Service (p4). Given all this activity, the Committee has decided to defer the FOIV event, pencilled in for 28 September, and hope that you'll support the Music Society's concert in the Church that afternoon.

MartinReed, chair@friendsofiffley.org

Nature Notes

August, the holiday month, often also feels a month of lazy dormancy for wildlife. Birds have generally raised the year's broods and have fallen largely silent as they concentrate on stocking up for their migratory marathons or the nearing winter. However, the late summer butterflies, gatekeepers especially, maintain the ever-changing guard in the meadows and hedges. The hedgerow bounty is in full swing and the mature cherry plum in the Horse Fields hedge gives off a heady aroma; passers-by have been using long-handled contraptions to get at the higher ripe fruit!

Please keep our narrow lanes safe - we encourage you to check that vegetation from your plot is not overhanging pavements and roadways.

FOR YOUR 2025 DIARY

Tues, 9 Sept	7.30pm	Church Hall	Film	<i>The Teachers' Lounge</i> , German
Sat, 13 Sept	3pm	Church Hall	FOSM*	AGM and Annual Lecture
Sun, 14 Sept	2.30-4.30	Church, Hall, Glebe	Open Doors	Guided tours, trails including Court Place Gardens. FREE
Tues, 23 Sept	1.30-3.30pm	Mansion House	Barhale tunnel clearance	Drop-in session: Q&A and one-off opportunity to see the renovated Mansion House and explore Court Place Gardens.
Sun, 28 Sept	3pm	Church	Music	Peter Sheppard Skærved & Morgan Goff - Violin and Viola; LeFanu –1 st performance dedicated to 'twin' Daniel Parker instruments.
Sun, 12 Oct	3pm	Church Hall	Music	Trio Lalique: trios for piano, violin and 'cello by Beethoven (opus 1 no. 1) and Smetana.
Tues, 21 Oct	7.30pm	Church Hall	History	Dr. Stephen Wass: 'Digging up Stowe: archaeological studies at one of our finest gardens.'
Tues, 14 Oct	7.30pm	Church Hall	Film	<i>The Grand Budapest Hotel</i> , USA
Tues, 11 Nov	7.30pm	Church Hall	Film	Alcarras, Spanish
Tues, 18 Nov	7.30pm	Church Hall	History	David Wiles, historian of the theatre, author and local resident 'Democracy as Theatre'.
Tues, 2 Dec	7.30pm	Church Hall	FOSM*	John Harris: 'An introduction to tasting Scotch Malt Whiskies'.
Tues, 9 Dec	7.30pm	Church Hall	Film	<i>The Shop Around the Corner</i> , USA
Sun, 14 Dec	3pm	Church Hall	Music	Rossetti String Trio: Mozart Divertimento, Sibelius string trio, Beethoven C minor string trio
Tues, 16 Dec	7.30pm	Church Hall	History	Tim Healey, prolific author, broadcaster and musician 'A Seventeenth Century Christmas'.

*Friends of St Mary's ** Friends of Iffley Village

Horse Fields

Many of you may have heard that the Horse Fields ('Land at Meadow Lane') has been carried forward to the draft Oxford Local Plan 2042 (LP2042). Thank you to those who have already put in responses to the Early Engagement Survey and the recent Preferred Options Consultation outlining why the Horse Fields allocation for housing should be dropped from the new plan and protected by designation as 'Local Green Space' and an 'Oxford Urban Wildlife Site.'

Since the last Local Plan 2036 (LP 2036), there have been significant changes in context, which makes the re-allocation of the Horse Fields even more inappropriate.

- The Council now have the results of the expert surveys and more 1000 consultation responses (public and statutory consultees) that demonstrate the harms building here would bring to:
 - the high biodiversity of this meadow, the rural Iffley Conservation Area, flooding risk and sewage plans
 - the enjoyment and safety of the Principal Quiet Route for Active Travel by locals and visitors from site access

But these findings since the LP (2036) are not reflected in the new Site Assessment of Land at Meadow Lane, which has multiple serious factual errors and omissions.
- New availability of land for housing:
 - new policies on building housing on employment sites in LP 2042 support the Council's policy to 'seek to protect the green infrastructure network' in the city (particularly very biodiverse sites like The Horse Fields) by proposing: 'as much housing need as possible should be met in sustainable locations on employment sites' (Policy E1)

'prioritising housing across the city and by allowing an element of housing on all employment sites if suitable' (Policy H1)

- plans for expansion of the city as Greater Oxford which would greatly increase the amount of less biodiverse land available for housing.

3. Increasing risks of heat stress flooding in the city:

Global heating has increased the frequency of extreme weather events e.g. flooding and urban heat. The Horse Fields are partly on the flood plain. They reduce the heat island effect for thousands of travellers on the designated Principal Quiet Route for Active Travel.



In the meantime, since Oxford City Council has again failed in their responsibility to manage green sites appropriately and for the 3rd year running, haven't arranged the annual hay cut of Memorial Field (not allocated) and the Horse Fields, that is required to manage the biodiversity here, the community has again taken the matter in their own hands, in scything the fields.



We're pleased to report that Luna (our rare leucistic badger – all white fur, dark eyes and nose) and her clan are all still flourishing in their long-established sett. The Horse Fields provide ideal conditions for wildlife, with connections to surrounding green space for animals to forage, and closeness to the river for hydration. Glimpsing them in flower-filled meadows brings joy to every passerby as well as Iffley residents. Long may they flourish.

Iffley Mead outline planning application

We suggest that members (and indeed all residents) take time to consider the plans and raise any issues of concern or that require clarity from the applicant. Following a query from FOIV, the deadline for a response on the City Planning Portal has been extended to 2 September. Our own initial investigations have determined a number of matters that we think need to be resolved in order for this development to be acceptable to FOIV, as follows;

- There are errors and omissions in the baseline studies, with important trees and boundary vegetation missed and apparent errors in the submitted biodiversity assessment.
- The 'shadowing assessment' is important given that parts of this development will be at least three storeys high. However, we think the shadowing assessment supplied by the applicant is opaque and potentially misleading. It is not clear why earlier and later hours of the day have not been plotted/assessed and it is not clear what time of year has been assessed.
- The indicative masterplan appears to break the self-imposed design rules of the scheme in building too close to neighbouring properties and failing to retain (or record) important boundary vegetation. Unaccountably one of the properties on Meadow Lane has no buffer zone to preserve its amenity. There are also concerns about the sufficiency of open space.
- Issues remain around access/traffic and the enforcement of a 'no car' policy that will bear heavily on residents of the Augustine Way area in particular. We think that many residents will need to own cars, for example key workers who need transport for shift work, and there seems to be a lack of joined up thinking on this.
- We are disappointed that the City and the County have not collaborated to maximize the amount of affordable housing intended to be delivered on this site.
- Further detail is needed to confirm that there will be no river pollution or increased flood risk

Highways Speeding: committee members met with Cllr Baines and council officers to discuss next steps following speeding surveys that showed that many cars break the speed limit in the village; unfortunately, we found the meeting inconclusive, with the Council citing lack of money to implement safety measures. We will be following up. **No motor vehicle signs:** we have been informed that red (but not blue) signs would be enforced by the police and at our request the County Council are looking at enforceable restrictions for motor vehicles/scooters at the existing modal filter locations at Eastchurch, Tree Lane, and Meadow Lane. **Towpath safety:** we met on the Towpath with Cllr Baines and officers to discuss these issues and solutions. The County's current preferred proposal is to paint

'pedestrian priority' markings on the surface of the towpath at regular intervals. The final design of these markings is subject to their legal advice and guidance. These markings are proposed to be painted between the Ring Road and Folly Bridge. The Council is, however, looking at more regular maintenance of vegetation, which is acknowledged to be an issue. **Street lighting:** we are still following up with the Council on their use of harsh white lighting in Iffley.

The Home Library Service

Would you like to borrow library books but can't get to the library, or know someone in that position? the Home Library Service is here to help. The is run by Oxfordshire County Council and currently serves 850 customers across the county. With the help of volunteers, it looks after and delivers books and audio-visual items to those who struggle to visit a library due to their personal circumstances. The service is free of charge to customers, many of whom are elderly or housebound, and it can also be used on a short-term basis following illness or hospitalisation. Carers are also welcome to apply.



Contact us to discuss the kind of books, large print/regular print, DVDs, audio books and music on CD or DVDs, that you like to read or enjoy. We can then arrange for a library volunteer to deliver to your home.

Our volunteers are DBS checked, wear an identification badge and provide a helpful and friendly service. Whenever possible, we try and arrange for the same volunteer to visit you each time. Your library materials will be delivered and collected every three weeks. HLS is free and there's no charge for requests or late returns. In a recent survey 87.25% of users rated HLS as Very Good or Excellent.

"It helps support me as I feel I have some independence back rather than rely on my family all the time"

"Without this wonderful service I would have gone under and been unable to cope with my life as it is. The audio books are a lifesaver."

"I look forward to bag change day to see what surprises I'll get and to see and speak to a human face. I'm lucky if I get to see one person a week." Thank you!"

To register for this service or for more information call your local library or telephone the Home Library Service on 01865 810259 or email homelibraryservice@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Members of Friends of Iffley Village

Membership of FOIV is via an annual subscription.

This subscription gives the committee a mandate to act on FOIV's two founding aims, namely to conserve Iffley's unique character and to foster community spirit.

It also allows you to vote for committee members at the AGM.

However, our newsletters and events are for everyone, member or not.

Our collective influence matters in this time of threats to the local environment and we would love to welcome you as a member

How to pay your annual subscription

The subscription for calendar year 2025 is £5 per person. There are four ways to pay:

1. Online with your debit or credit card, either by scanning this QR code or by following the link on our website (www.friendsofiffley.org)



2. Bank transfer (with your address for reference) to our HSBC community account 'The Friends of Iffley Village' sort code 40-35-34, account 52056216.

3. Standing order to the same bank account.

4. Cash in an envelope with your name and address on it and marked 'Membership FOIV'. Please hand it in at the village shop and ask for it to be put in the box marked 'FOIV membership' at the till.

Have I paid my membership for 2025?: Please email membership@friendsofiffley.org to check.

E-newsletters: If you are not currently receiving our up-to-the-moment e-newsletters, please ping your email address to membership@friendsofiffley.org & we will add you to the next mailing.

