

The Parish Council has been made aware of a petition that has been created in the village regarding current issues that the Parish Council is dealing with. It is absolutely right and welcome that parishioners should scrutinise how the Parish Council spends the money entrusted to it. But there are some fundamental inaccuracies in the petition which need correcting so that people are not under any misapprehensions.

The petition seems to confuse two completely separate plans being progressed locally at the moment.

The South Oxfordshire District Council Local Plan was compiled by the last SODC administration and is being forced through by central government despite the current SODC administration's objections. This was recently examined publicly by an inspector and SSJ Parish Councillor Andrew Clerk represented us. The plan (strat.13) will lead to a new housing estate of 1100 houses on Green Belt land just north of Bayswater Brook. Our concerns are that it will adversely affect Bayswater Rd inhabitants, the traffic on the Bayswater Rd, the environment including Sydlings Copse and it resurrects the idea of a northern link road between the Marsh Lane junction and Shotover through our parish. SSJPC contributed to a fund with Beckley, Elsfield, Forest Hill and Sandhills' Councils to pay for advice as we knew we were up against much larger vested interests. We spent £314.50 which was unanimously approved in council with no public objection.

The second plan is the Neighbourhood Plan. Neighbourhood Plans were introduced via the 2011 Localism Act. Councils are encouraged to create a plan for the future of their community. This involves a huge amount of community consultation and eventually a referendum. The Parish Council have always been wary as although it gives more control over local planning it involves a lot of expense and work. We have made no decision on going ahead but if we were to, we could receive a grant for the cost. This could not be spent on alternative projects contrary to what the petition suggests. *The grant can only be spent on a Neighbourhood Plan.*

Meanwhile the Parish Council is trying to embrace traffic matters in the village, and it has recently issued a survey from which the responses are being looked at (please still respond if you have not yet). In due course it will be approaching the Oxfordshire County Council (who are responsible for highways in the village) to prioritise those items common in villagers' responses and look to undertake as many as it can rightfully afford within its own authority. Please understand however that with a budget of just over £20000 per annum, the Parish Council would probably not have enough funds to satisfy the demands in the petition, some of which would require very expensive engineering.

We hope this allays any concerns raised by the petition. The council is open and transparent and minutes and agendas can be found at <http://www.parish-council.com/stantonstjohn/>. If you would like to know more please get in touch at [stantonstjohnpc@gmail.com](mailto:stantonstjohnpc@gmail.com) or contact any of your Parish Councillors.