

District Councillor's Report – December 2022

General

I'd like to thank all the volunteers, the organisers and Parish Council for organising the Christmas Lights Celebration on the 27th November. The 'turning on' of the lights is always the start of Christmas for me and this year, I was glad not to be at the top of a ladder, trying to hear the crowd counting down, before switching on one half of the lights.

More than anything, after two years of Covid and despite the economic gloom, it's fantastic to be looking forward, to a normal Christmas. I would therefore, like to wish you and yours a very Merry Christmas!

Pavements and Roads Update

Many of you will be aware that I have been trying to get our worst pavements and roads fixed, particularly around Springfield Close and the Osiers in Buckden, where the pavements seriously impacting disabled and aging residents' ability to leave their homes. Roads and pavements are not my direct responsibility as they fall under the County's remit. A recently met with Cllr Billington, our County Councillor who is working with me to lobby the County Council.

IF YOU HAVE WONDERED WHY SOME PAVEMENTS GET FIXED WHEN WORSE ONES ARE LEFT TO DETERIORATE FURTHER, I NOW KNOW THE ANSWER!

Our Local Highways Officer informs me that the County's maintenance strategy adopted for carriageways and footways, targets investing a greater proportion of the available budget to treat assets in the early stages of deterioration. This is opposed to a 'worst first' approach which targets investment towards those assets that are at the end of their life and are in a poorer condition.

This preventative approach being adopted means that, in some cases, roads or footways which appear to be in poor condition might wait longer for repair, while roads which appear in better condition are treated to arrest their deterioration. The asset management approach has increased the quantity of surface treatments carried out each year (e.g. surface dressing), and decreased the amount spent on traditional resurfacing, whereby the old surface is completely removed and replaced.

I find the above strategy extremely disappointing as it means that, despite reporting the worst pavements and roads in the village, it appears that the policy means that they will not be fixed first.

To add further disappointment to the above statement I have been informed By County that, despite the identified areas of pavement being marked up by the Local Highways Officer, that the following timeline applies:

- Springfield close, the footpath and junction surfacing works are scheduled for 23/24 financial year.
- The footpath adjacent to Lucks Lane is awaiting approval from District Highways Manager.
- The footpaths over The Osiers have been forwarded for slurry seal treatment, which possibly will be carried out FY 24/25.

My view is that considering the efforts from residents and your councillors that this response and strategy is not acceptable in the above cases. I am deeply unhappy and will continue to escalate!!

New Local Plan – Engagement Starting Early Next Year

Huntingdonshire District Council is required by law to update its plan so that it remains current. Engagement Phase 1 will commence with the aim of understanding, which areas of the current local Plan need updating. In addition, it will seek to identify potential sites for allocation across all use types – circa June 2023. Sites put forward can include open spaces and nature conservation areas as well as other uses.

The current Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036 was adopted 15th May 2019:

- Sets a strategy for development of at least 20,100 new homes and 14,400 new jobs
- Identified two strategic expansion locations:
 - Alconbury Weald - 5,000 new homes and 150 ha of employment land
 - St Neots East - 3,800 new homes and 22 ha of employment land
- Four spatial planning areas with 4,914 homes and 14.4 ha of employment land
- Seven key service centres with 1,655 homes and 4.5 ha employment land
- 73 Small Settlements with no allocations but policies to shape planning applications

I encourage residents, landowners, businesses and the Parish Councils to get involved where possible. Local Plans and Neighbourhood Plans do shape what happens in our area from a planning perspective significantly so it's important that we engage.

Wishing you all a Happy and Prosperous New Year!

Martin

Martin Hassall

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