

## **Civic Pride Article – November 2022**

### **Infrastructure Projects – by Hester Hand**

As, hopefully, we emerge from the pandemic period which put so much normal activity on hold, it will be interesting to see what progress will now be made on the various projects which have been launched to improve the quality of life in our town.

Work is proceeding apace on the new housing estates at the north of the town – and in nearby Radley and Kennington - but there is no sign yet of the additional infrastructure to support them, in particular the “Local centre” with a shop, school, surgery etc and the additional slip roads at Lodge Hill although I understand that the planning application for the latter has just been submitted. There is a limit to how many houses can be built before this infrastructure is in place, but life will not be very pleasant for either new or existing residents in the area until it is.

Another cause of frustration has been the one-way system on Abingdon Bridge which has been in place for well over a year, while we wait for essential repairs to be done. These were due to start in October, but that has not happened.

Following pressure from residents and the Civic Society, the District Council have required the leaseholders of the Upper Reaches site to make some improvements to the appearance of the site and to take steps to reduce the vandalism and antisocial behaviour there. There is no sign of a longer-term solution: the leaseholder says he is preparing a planning application, but it has not appeared yet. It is to be hoped that either he will come up with an acceptable proposal or surrender the lease so someone else can develop this key site.

More positively, the District Council Economic Development team is looking at ways to revitalise the Vale’s three market towns and work continues on the “Central Abingdon Regeneration Framework” (CARF) which will set out principles against which future development plans for the Town Centre will be judged. CARF is mainly focusing on sites belonging to the District Council - the Charter, shopping centre, Abbey House council offices and the Upper Reaches. There was a public consultation about this in the summer and it will be interesting to see what emerges.

Another ongoing project is the Abingdon Neighbourhood Plan: this will link in to the CARF for the Town Centre but also lay down policies and identify projects for the whole town including the residential areas. There should be another opportunity for public comment shortly.

None of these council initiatives represent actual projects with funding attached, but they will give an indication as to what they will support. They are working with private developers on CARF and seeking to access government funding schemes. Both Town and District Councils also have “CIL” money from the developers of the new estates which should help with some projects.

Let us hope that we hear good news about some or all of these projects before too long.