

Sonning Parish Council Newsletter April 2026



From the Chairman

Welcome to our first Sonning Parish Council (SPC) newsletter for some time. It has been a very busy time of late for the SPC and priority has had to be given to other projects along the way.

Let me start by thanking your Parish Clerk and Councillors for the tremendous amount of work that they put in behind the scenes. It has always amazed me how much needs to be done, even for a relatively small parish such as Sonning.

Let me introduce everyone

Lesley Bates, whom many of you will know, has been our Parish Clerk for many more years than she would like me to mention.

I would also like to say a big Thank You to Andy Halliday. Andy has recently left the SPC after many years of duty as Councillor for Highways.

Sports Pavillion

Most of you will have noticed that our sports pavilion on King George V field was refurbished last year. A lot of planning and building work went into the project and we now have a pavilion to be really proud of. I would like to put on record our great appreciation of the help that we received from members of the Sonning Cricket Club in this venture.

Our work

Your Parish Council continues with its day-to-day work of scrutinising planning applications, checking on road safety, looking after our green spaces etc. and ensuring that we have sufficient finances in place for these endeavours.

If you have any concerns or comments that the SPC might help you with, please feel free to contact me [Trefor Fisher – trefor.fisher@sonning-pc.gov.uk – 07789 880072] or Lesley, our Parish Clerk. [clerk@sonning-pc.gov.uk]

AND, if you have read this far, you should probably consider filling one of the vacancies that we presently have on the Sonning Parish Council!

In alphabetical order, our current Councillors (and their responsibilities) are:

Chris John	IT & Website
Jackie Ruffle	Planning
Richard Draper	Highways
Sanjeev Bhardwaj	IT & Recreation
Trudi Flanagan	IT & Finance

Please see individual reports below.

I also acknowledge the tremendous support given to the SPC by our three Borough Councillors, in alphabetical order, Katrin Harding, Sam Akhtar and Wayne Smith.

Katrin.Harding@wokingham.gov.uk

Sam.Akhtar@wokingham.gov.uk

Wayne.Smith@wokingham.gov.uk

Sonning Neighbourhood Plan (SNP)

For the last 6 years or so, a band of dedicated volunteers has been working hard on the SNP. Mike Hart (Chair of the Sonning & Sonning Eye Society), Jeremy Gilmore (Chair of the SNP Steering Group) are to be commended for the amount of work put in over those years. All being well, Sonning residents will very soon have the chance to vote in a Referendum on the SNP. If adopted, the SNP will be used in planning decisions in Sonning until the year 2040.

[Sonning NP Submission Plan - Oct 2025.pdf](#)



Recreation Update

Spring is here, and King George V Field is looking in excellent shape ahead of the new cricket season. Following the appointment of our new landscape contractor, the first cut of the season took place in March, and the results speak for themselves — the field is well-prepared and ready for play.

We are also pleased to share that the Parish Council has agreed to install a flagpole at King George V Field, situated close to the cricket pavilion. This will be a welcome addition to the site and will enhance the atmosphere for community events held there in the future.

Sanjeev Bhardwaj (Parish Councillor (Recreation)): sanjeev.bhardwaj@sonning-pc.gov.uk

Planning Overview

Decisions on planning development are based on national and local planning policy. Wokingham Borough Council (WBC) note that approximately 90% of householder applications and 60% of new housing developments in the borough are approved. It is

We are also looking at improvements to the play areas, where we are evaluating with the repair and replacement of several pieces of equipment, including the zip wire. We appreciate this has taken longer than we originally hoped — sourcing a suitably qualified contractor for this specialist work proved more challenging than anticipated — and we are grateful for your patience. We remain committed to getting the equipment back in full working order as soon as possible. As always, if you have any questions, ideas, or feedback on recreation facilities in the parish, we would love to hear from you.

important to us all that there is the opportunity for engagement in the process and aid appropriate evaluation on planning matters. Sonning Parish Council (SPC) welcome parishioners input to assist in our response, as a consultee, to relevant applications.

What do SPC review

We receive copies of planning applications submitted to WBC that relate to Sonning and some from adjoining Parishes where the development is close to the Sonning boundary. An allocated Councillor will try to visit the site, ensure neighbours are aware and give opportunity to discuss the proposals. Comments, recommendations and observations are brought to either main parish council meeting or possibly separate planning

committee meeting, if required. These are then conveyed, in the same way as an individual resident, and all can be viewed on the relevant 'View Plans and Documents' page for each application on WBC website. SPC do not make the planning decision, but we can help to confirm no objection to plans, identify areas for consideration and flag issues which may be looked into further by the planning officer and/or WBC planning committee.



Where to find information

Applicants are encouraged to speak to neighbours and post an application notice at the property boundary, however there is no requirement to do either. WBC will notify immediate neighbours of an application by postcard, noting the consultation period. This can be quite short (usually 21 days for householder application) and so if you are

interested you can keep an eye on these via the existing applications interactive map <https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/d7dbd7abe271468ba132402bbbd0f53b> Just type in your postcode and applications nearby can be seen on the map. To get access to all related documentation you just click on the blue 'Details' text in the pop-up.

How can you get involved?

If you have a view on an existing planning application, you can :-

- Attend the Parish Council meeting to convey your thoughts
 - Council meetings usually 2nd Tuesday in the month and held at King George V Pavillion, Pound Lane, Sonning
- Make an online comment on the relevant planning application on WBC portal [Wokingham Borough Council Online Planning](#)

[Residents who want to submit photographs or other supporting documentation related to comments made on an existing application can do so directly to WBC using the email:

planning.enquiries@wokingham.gov.uk.

It is best to note the planning application number in the subject heading.]

If you want to discuss a planning application with Sonning Parish Councillors feel free to contact:

Jackie Ruffle (Parish Councillor (Planning)): jackie.ruffle@sonning-pc.gov.uk

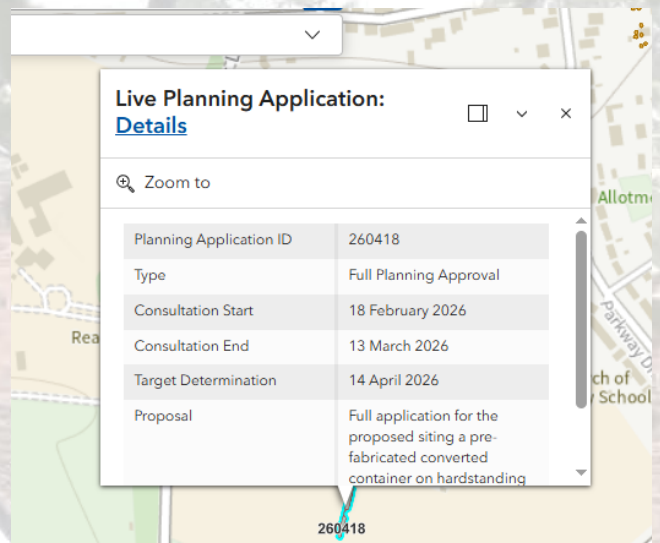
Or Trefor Fisher (Chair SPC): trefor.fisher@sonning-pc.gov.uk

We will be happy to arrange a time to speak on the phone or to visit you to hear your thoughts and relay back through appropriate channels.

Highways Update

Hello everyone, I would like to take this opportunity to introduce myself. My name is Richard, I have lived in Sonning village for nearly five years, and I have two children attending the local primary school. I would like to thank Trefor for introducing me to the parish council.

I am very pleased to now be serving as a councillor, and I will be taking on responsibility for highways — an area that is particularly important to me, especially as I live in the centre of the village.





I'm pleased to share a few updates:

Speed Checks on Charvil Lane

Over the past few months, police have carried out speed checks on Charvil Lane on several occasions. This is a welcome development and, I hope, will act as a deterrent to those who regularly exceed the village speed limits.

Safer Streets Initiative

We have been working with Wokingham Borough Council as part of their Safer Streets initiative, which is reviewing speed limits across the borough. We have submitted a report requesting speed limit reductions in key areas, including:

- Charvil Lane, due to recent accidents
- An extension of the 20 mph zone on Pound Lane up to the A4
- Sonning Lane (particularly outside Blue Coat School)
- Old Bath Road
- Holmemoor Drive

Road Resurfacing Works

Resurfacing has recently been completed on Sonning Lane and Pound Lane. These improvements were much needed and have helped make these roads safer, particularly outside Sonning Primary School.

Residents are encouraged to engage with the consultation and share their views directly with the council. I have shared a link below.



[Engage - Members of the public](#)

Get in Touch

I would really value hearing from you. If you have any thoughts, concerns, or suggestions regarding highways in and around Sonning, please don't hesitate to get in touch.

Richard Draper (Parish Councillor (Highways)): richard.draper@sonning-pc.gov.uk

IT & Website update

Sonning Parish Council is committed to serving our community with transparency, responsiveness and a clear focus on the things that matter to our Parishioners. As part of this we are working to develop our parish council website into a useful, accessible hub for residents. This will provide up to date information on local services, council decisions, meetings, and community events.

We are focused on strengthening community wellbeing, supporting local groups, and improving communication between the council and residents.

This past year much of our focus was on migrating our domain for web and email services to a new registrar. This was necessary to meet UK Government Central and Digital Data Office rules intended to enhance the security, resilience, and authenticity of



government digital services. This is no small feat for a small Parish Council and thanks go out to Jeremy Gilmore for his support and expertise in helping us complete this migration.

Looking ahead, we want to make better use of our website and other channels such as social media to keep you informed and involved. We are looking at ways to provide more timely notifications about local issues, events, and

Your input will help shape how we communicate and work together as a community. Please do get in touch and share your thoughts, we look forward to hearing from you.

Chris John (Parish Councillor (IT & Website)): chris.john@sonning-pc.gov.uk

consultations. The aim is to reach more residents, hear a wider range of views and respond more effectively to community needs.

We would greatly value your feedback on this. What would you like to see included on the parish website? How would you prefer to receive information from the council? Are there features or information that would make it more useful to you?