



FIRST ANNUAL REPORT: HOW ARE MCNP POLICIES WORKING?

Good practice requires us to review on an annual basis whether our Neighbourhood Plan policies are working, so that we can decide in due course whether they might need clarifying, modifying, or perhaps more drastic action. MCNP was “made” in May 2019 but for several months beforehand its draft policies were deemed to have “substantial weight” in determining planning applications alongside national and Local Plan policies. After May, they have had “equal weight”, according to Government regulations.

As a member of the Oxfordshire Neighbourhood Plans Alliance (one of only two such umbrella organisations in the country), we know that neighbourhood plan (NP) policies are applied more consistently in some Local Planning Authorities than in others. For example, numerous NPs in the area of South Oxfordshire District Council (of which there are 19 made plans) are unhappy with the performance of planning officers in this respect, and are having difficulty getting support from the leadership there to address the problem. To make matters worse, the Council there has agreed, as an emergency Covid measure, to allow nearly all planning applications to be decided by officers, reducing Committee decisions (which of course permit a democratic process in decision-taking) to a minimum.

So we are fortunate that in Cherwell (with only 4 “made” NPs, including ours), we appear – so far – to have planning officers who, although hard-pressed, have been largely diligent and amenable to the role of NPs. The evidence of that to date is shown in the table below, based on MCNP Forum’s agreed submissions in response to significant planning applications since early 2019.

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Chair, MCNP Forum

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PARISH	REF.	DATE	APPLICATION	PARISH VIEW	MCNP SUBMISSION	CDC OFFICER VIEW	OUTCOME
1 Ardley w Fewcott	19/00676/F	5/19	Single new dwelling	none	Proposed modifications	refuse	refusal
2 Ardley w Fewcott	18/00672/OUT	5/19	New industry, Baynards Gn.	object	object	refuse	Refusal Appeal: dismissed
3 Ardley w Fewcott	18/01881/F	1/19	13 new affordable houses	support	Proposed modifications	Support; officer report redrafted after MCNP policies overlooked.	Application revised to include footpath, then approved by Committee.
4 Duns Tew	20/00574/F	3/20	Solar array	support	support	support	approval
5 Fritwell	19/00616/OUT	2/20	CALA homes, 23 new dwellings	support	support	support	approval
6 Fritwell	20/00938/F	5/20	Kings Head - change of use	object	object	refuse	Refusal
7 Heyford Park	18/00825/hybrid	4/20	Masterplan		Support with modifications	support	Approval; working group involving MCNPF to resolve traffic issues
8 Kirtlington	19/02888/F	5/20	Shop – change of use	none	object	refuse	refusal
9 Lower Heyford	20/01374/OUT	7/20	6 new houses, Caulcott	object	object	refuse	refusal
10 Middle Aston	20/01127/F	7/20	New business park, Hatch End	object	object	Not given	withdrawn
11 Middleton Stoney	19/01709/CDC	11/19	2 new bungalows		Support with modifications	support	Committee approval and modifications agreed
12 North Aston	20/01278/F	5/20	Godwins Farm – change of use	none	support	Refuse (revised to support)	approval
13 Somerton	19/02279/F	2/20	Cattery – new dwelling	support	support	refuse	Committee approval
14 Steeple Aston	19/02948/F	12/19	South Side – 10 new houses	support	Support with modifications	refuse	Committee approval
15 Steeple Aston	20/00964/OUT	4/20	The Beeches – 10 new houses	support	object	refuse	refusal
16 Upper Heyford	18/01436/F	2/19	3 new houses, Camp Road	object	object	refuse	Refusal Appeal: dismissed
17 (Chesterton)		1/20	Great Wolf Leisure Park	object	object	refuse	Committee refusal; appeal pending
18 (Enstone/ WODC)		12/19	Mullin Motor Museum	object	object	refuse	Approval by WODC

Main findings:

1. Over the period, every member parish had at least one planning application in its area to which MCNP Forum submitted written comments. There were of course many other applications to which MCNP Forum did not respond. Nevertheless, it is clear that Cherwell DC officers applied MCNP policies to most of these, where they were relevant, alongside its own (and national policies) and that in some cases these influenced the outcome. They are however too numerous to analyse. There was one early case (3 above) where our policies were ignored, and only subsequently addressed after we complained.

2. The “success rate” of outcomes that aligned with MCNP policies in those that were analysed above was 89%.

3. There were 7 cases (out of 18) where it would appear that MCNP’s submission changed the outcome from that recommended by CDC officers, or changed the proposals submitted by the applicant, or both.

In addition, it is instructive to see which of MCNP’s 18 policies have been used in making our submissions, and/or that have been referenced in CDC’s reports. and to what extent they have influenced the outcome:

MCNP Policy	Relevant MCNP policies	Outcome
PD1: DEVELOPMENT AT CATEGORY A VILLAGES	5, 14, 15	All successful
PD2: DEVELOPMENT AT CATEGORY B VILLAGES	10, 12	Pending
PD3: DEVELOPMENT ADJACENT TO HEYFORD PARK		
PD4: PROTECTION OF IMPORTANT VIEWS AND VISTAS	1, 3, 5, 6, 7, 11, 13, 14, 15	Mostly successful
PD5: BUILDING AND SITE DESIGN	1, 3, 5, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15	All successful
PD6: CONTROL OF LIGHT POLLUTION	3, 5, 7, 10, 14	Mostly successful
PD7: DESIGNATION OF LOCAL GREEN SPACES		
PH1: OPEN MARKET HOUSING SCHEMES	5, 9, 11, 14, 15	All successful
PH2: AFFORDABLE HOUSING ON RURAL EXCEPTION SITES	3, 11	All successful
PH3: ADAPTABLE HOUSING	1, 3, 5, 7, 11, 12, 14	Partly successful
PH4: EXTRA-CARE HOUSING	7	
PH5: PARKING AND GARAGING PROVISION	3, 6, 11, 14, 15	Seemingly unnecessary
PH6: PARKING FACILITIES FOR EXISTING DWELLINGS	1, 9, 13	All successful
PC1: LOCAL EMPLOYMENT	6, 7, 8, 10	Successful and pending
PC2: HEALTH FACILITY	5, 7	Pending
PC3: NEW CEMETERY	7	Unsuccessful so far