



## Woodstock Town Council OWL Extension Bulletin

Dear Member

You will recall that the Town Council has committed to keeping you informed of any developments on this project and this bulletin is written with that purpose.

Following the Forum meeting on 27<sup>th</sup> April 2013 the views of members were made known to the Town Council and were discussed at the full meeting of the Council on 14<sup>th</sup> May. Primarily members were objecting to the whole scheme and several members had written to the Council expressing their concerns. In particular these concerns related to privacy and the possibility of anti social behaviour. The possible closure of the footpath by Verenia Court residents in nine years time (when the agreement ends) was felt by some to make the project a waste of money. There was some concern about the disruption to wildlife that the creation of a path would cause.

The Council was made aware of the strength of feeling among forum members.

The Council in its considerations also took account of its legal obligation under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 2004 whereby:

The Owner [of the embankment land] is bound by covenants entered into by previous owners as part of the section 106 agreement:

- 1) To manage the lands "for ecological and public interest" according to the plan.
- 2) To construct the footpath including steps into the embankment and allow public access to the land for 20 years [from 1999]

Because of these obligations, doing nothing is not an option for the Town Council.

The purpose of the Forum is stated in the constitution agreed at the first meeting in January 2013 as follows:

Its purpose shall be to facilitate communication between the council and residents of properties bordering upon the OWL Extension with a view to:-

- i) Keeping residents fully and timely informed of the council's plans and programme for the management and maintenance of the extension land as a nature reserve, with due attention to its duties as landowner for health and safety and for implementation of the management plan required by its Section 106 agreement with Oxfordshire County Council;
- ii) Making the council aware of any concerns of residents about the council's management of the land and other issues arising; and

iii) Discussing any matters affecting the OWL extension raised by other members of the wider Woodstock community;

With these matters in mind the Council agreed the following motion:

*[WTC] confirms the council's intention to create a pedestrian pathway mainly at ground level on the south-east side of the embankment between the access from Shipton Road and the Budds Close access, adjusting the exact route as necessary to accommodate the local topography.*

When agreeing this motion members of the Council were also considering the views of the whole community of Woodstock who will benefit from this amenity.

The Council also took note of the legal advice given by its solicitors regarding the boundary at Verenia Court which has been disputed. The Council's solicitors have provided a document (attached) showing the boundary as registered with the land registry at the time of the land transfer to Verenia Court management company. Woodstock Town Council is the legal freehold owner of the area coloured red. However we hope further disagreement can now be avoided as the clearance of the undergrowth has revealed that the steps are set well back from the boundary and are not on the disputed area.

Members of the OWL working group continue to consider the views of forum members and where possible we are amending the details of this project to accommodate your concerns. The exact location of the path is currently being discussed with contractors to determine the options available. When these discussions have been completed members of the OWL working group will offer to meet residents on site to discuss the proposals.

In the meantime the previously agreed fencing behind numbers 50 to 58 Shipton Road is due to be erected on 27<sup>th</sup> May. At present school children cross the embankment at this point to get to Marlborough School. We propose to erect the attached sign at this point to alert them to the fact that they will no longer be able to do this.

Cllr Peter Jay