

WNC Councillors Report

Braunston & Crick Ward

To:	Barby & Onley Parish Council Meeting
Date:	14 th July 2025
From:	Cllr Rosie Humphreys Cllr Andrew Simpson

1. WNC Matters

a.) DOGE Initiative

WNC had a recent visit from Zia Yusef, former Chair of Reform UK who is now leading the DOGE UK team to identify spending cuts in councils the party now controls. It was a preliminary meeting, and no actual DOGE work has started at WNC, work which will be carried out by volunteer software engineers, data analysts and forensic auditors.

While WNC's Chief Executive has commented that "there is no better time than now" for DOGE's visit as plans for the next budget begin, our concerns are that DOGE could be in conflict with the current council governance arrangements and data protection legislation. In addition, giving access to individuals appointed by a political party who are not accountable to WNC officers and residents seems very questionable. These issues were raised by opposition members at the meeting of the full council.

One initiative that was about bringing all council staff back to work from the council offices has been dropped with the administration agreeing to continue with the current set up of hybrid and remote working for some teams.

b.) Full Council Meeting (26th June)

This is where all 76 Councillors meet to consider motions and to question the Council's Cabinet on issues.

At the meeting Rosie proposed a motion to promote the **Belonging Charter**, guidance developed by the Children's Trust to enable children's homes to be fully integrated in their communities and for the children living there to thrive.

The motion also highlighted the profiteering in the private sector with Private Equity Firms operating some care homes and having recorded £95 million in profit in the past 3 years. Therefore called on the council to continue to invest to save by building/acquiring own property for provision of care homes. The motion was unanimously supported.

The Belonging Charter came from the experience of neighbours living next to a children's home in Daventry who contacted Rosie two years ago became a case study which informed many of the principles of the Charter. Children's home providers are invited to sign up to the Charter and both planning officers and councillors need to be better informed about its significance. Planning applications for change of use will not be supported by the Children's Trust or the police if the provider declines to sign up. While most children's homes are located in towns providers are also seeking permission in villages also, including in this ward.

In addition, at the meeting the Council agreed:

- In the absence of a manifesto that the new administration will adopt the previous Conservative administration's 'One West Northants' **Corporate Plan**.
- To amend the **Flag Protocol** to remove the previous inclusion of community flags and instead to limit flags flown to the Union, St Georges and West Northants Council flags. With the addition of some flags such as Northamptonshire and Armed Forces Day flags if included in the calendar of events (agreed by Chair and Council leader).
- Councillors rejected a recommendation from the Independent panel to apply an inflationary increase to **Councillor allowances** and so they remain frozen at 2024/25 levels (backbench Councillors currently receive an allowance of £16,053 pa).

- c.) **Consultation on draft Grand Union and Oxford Canal Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan** – this runs until 27th July and details can be found here [Conservation areas | West Northamptonshire Council](#) A hard copy is available which we can bring along to the meeting.
- d.) **Draft Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) for West Northamptonshire Council's Planning Service** – the council is consulting as to how people can engage with the planning service so that anybody with an interest can be involved. The consultation commences on Tuesday 1st July and will close at 23.59pm on Monday 25th August 2025. You can take part here: [Have your say on how people are involved in local planning - West Northamptonshire Council - Citizen Space](#)

2. Local Issues

Planning Application: 2023/5783/MAF – Cadman Sporting Barby Lane Barby West Northamptonshire CV23 8UX – update - *the application is still undetermined and that the agents are still actively engaged in assembling information for further submission to the Council. The agents have indicated that this will be forthcoming in next 4 weeks. Upon receipt further consultations will be undertaken.* Rosie has asked the case officer for more details, both as to why the applicant has had so much time to provide information and also why there will be a further consultation.

Rugby Local Plan Consultation

Both Rosie and Andrew made representations to the WNC Planning Policy Committee on 18th June and as a result the response from WNC is being enhanced to include concerns raised by Barby and Olney Parish Council over the Lodge Farm area, greater protection for the Rainsbrook Valley and the need to include improving cycleways and pathways from Kilsby, Crick and other villages to the new Rugby Parkway Station.

The updated submission is now as follows:

Whilst raising no general objections to the spatial strategy presented through the Regulation 18 plan nor to the plans strategic policies, vision and objectives does raise observations in respect of some of the housing allocations proposed under Policy S6 (Residential Allocations) which need to be further considered in respect of their possible impact on the highway network and the character and functioning of an area of West Northamptonshire that is rural in nature, character and appearance in addition to impacts on its residents who access Rugby as their nearest town and contribute to its functioning as a successful market town.

Specifically, these allocations are:

- Allocation ref. 40 – East of Kilsby Road, Hillmorton (125 units)
- Allocation ref. 334 – Land off Barby Lane, Hillmorton (380 units)
- Allocation ref. 338 – South of Crick Road, Houlton (250 units)

The Council notes the presence of initial transport work as part of the evidence base supporting the Preferred Options Plan but strongly encourages further work to be undertaken and thoroughly considered prior to the plan progressing beyond Regulation 18 stage, with any impacts identified needing to be fully mitigated.

*We would also urge that the representations of residents and parish councils in settlements adjoining Rugby are taken into consideration as the plan **progresses both in relation to their observations on the draft plan and also unallocated Site 73 (Lodge Farm) which the Council is pleased to see is not proposed for allocation as it would have a significant impact on the area (as raised previously when this was initially proposed, in a smaller form, in the 2019 plan).***

The Council would also welcome the inclusion and recognition of the qualities and sensitivities of the Rainsbrook Valley within the local plan as set out in the 2017 landscape sensitivity study, and that this should inform any policies /proposals for this area.

Finally, whilst Policy I5 and the provision of new sustainable transport modes is supported we would ask that the potential wider benefits of the Rugby Parkway station are recognised beyond those to Rugby Borough and that efforts are made to improve connectivity and sustainable travel routes between the station and the nearby villages of West Northamptonshire.

As previously stated, we are committed to continue to engage with you as part of the Duty to Cooperate.

Proposed 140-acre Solar Farm at land west of Ashby St Ledgers, following a public exhibition on 17th June we are now expecting a full planning application for this from the developers Elgin in the next few weeks. Ashby St Ledgers is a conservation village with a number of local designated heritage sites as well as a national site with the Manor. There is considerable concern in the village about the impact of the proposed solar farm on this.

Planning Application: 2024/4492 Developments at Ashtree Farm, Kilsby Road, Barby

Concerns have been raised about 'creeping' development on this site as retrospective permission has been granted for change of use of an agricultural yard to a construction training area (Use Class F1) and temporary permission for 5 Years for a building associated with the training use (Use Class F1). This has been taken up with the Planning Dept and a response awaited.

Barby Lane & Daventry Road

Following a recent meeting with Sam Simons, who is Highways Service Manager at WNC, which included your Chair – we have requested a re-inspection of both of these roads to establish a clearer priority for them in the work plan for reinstatement. Costs were quoted in the meeting for Barby Lane which was just under £500K.

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