



Help us set 'The Way Ahead' for South Oxfordshire

SUMMARY REPORT

A review of the feedback received to the proposed priority themes for South Oxfordshire plan 2024 to 2028.

JULY 2024

If you require this report in an alternative format (for example large print, Braille, audio, email, Easy Read and alternative languages) please email jointheconversation@southandvale.gov.uk or call 01235 422425.

Note: When stating percentages in the analysis, we are referring to the percentage of respondents that answered the specific question, rather than the total number of responses to the overall survey. Response percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding up over .5 and rounding down under .5. Words that appear in italics are quotes taken from comments received.

To analyse the wide range of free text comments received, the comments have been coded and may not add up to 100%. These can be found in the tables under each theme.

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The appendices are available to view in a separate document on [previous consultation website page](#):

APPENDIX A – BACKGROUND TO THE ENGAGEMENT

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APPENDIX E – FULL LIST OF COMMENTS RECEIVED

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report has been produced by council officers to analyse the feedback received to the five priority themes to help us set 'The Way Ahead' for South Oxfordshire plan. It's very important to us that the plan reflects the priorities and aspirations of local residents, businesses and community groups. Therefore, we discussed these plans with our local communities to ensure we understood what they value and what areas they would like us to focus on. The plan is updated every four years and our current plan will be replaced by this one.

We ran a public engagement exercise and asked for feedback on the five priority themes that are being proposed to deliver the plan. A survey was open to all those living and working in South Oxfordshire. We asked for feedback on the following themes:

- Theme 1: Action on climate change and nature recovery,
- Theme 2: Inclusion, Accessibility and Accountability,
- Theme 3: Thriving and healthy communities,
- Theme 4: Homes and infrastructure that meet local needs a
- Theme 5: Financial Stability and Innovative Transformation.

The survey also asked questions about how we currently report on our processes to find out if the current approach is useful and effective.

The engagement ran for four weeks between 16 April until 14 May 2024. In total 130 responses were received from a variety of residents, businesses, organisations and community groups, specifically 127 online submissions and 3 postal responses.

Key findings:

Theme 1: Action on climate change and nature recovery - 80% of respondents expressed agreement with theme 1 forming part of the plan, 56% stating they strongly agree and 24% selecting they agree.

Theme 2: Inclusion, Accessibility and Accountability - 76% of respondents expressed agreement with theme 2 forming part of the plan, including 43% strongly agreeing and 33% agreeing.

Theme 3: Thriving and healthy communities - 87% of respondents agree with theme 3 forming part of the plan, 47% stating they strongly agree and 40% selecting they agree.

Theme 4: Homes and infrastructure that meet local needs - 82% of respondents agree with theme 4 forming part of our plan. 47% stating they strongly agree and 40% selecting they agree.

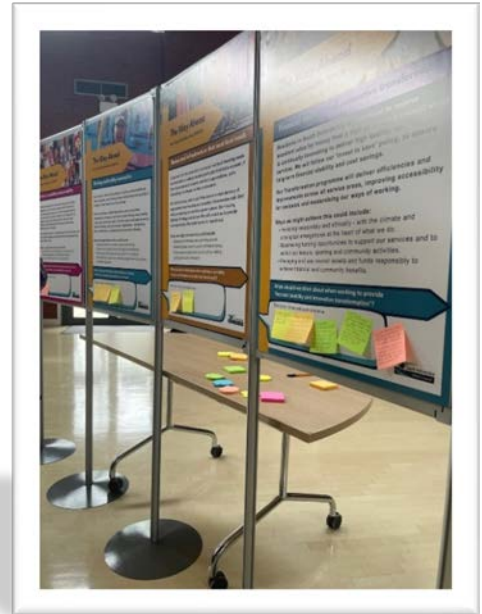
Theme 5: Financial Stability and Innovative Transformation - 73% of respondents expressed agreement with including theme 5 within our plan. 39% selecting they strongly agree and 34% selecting they agree.



ENGAGEMENT METHODOLOGY

A total of 954 **emails** and 189 **letters** notified a wide range of stakeholders, including residents and business/organisations on the council's consultation database along with a link to a survey and details on how to comment. **171** voluntary organisations and community groups representing seldom heard communities were also contacted. A copy of the engagement communication can be found at Appendix C.

A joint South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse community event was held for community groups and businesses/organisations on Thursday 18 April 2024 at Didcot Civic Hall. The session took place from 1:30 until 3pm and offered community groups and businesses the opportunity to express their views openly, or by sharing their thoughts on the exhibition boards displayed in the room. A British Sign Language Interpreter attended to support the session. 11 representatives attended the session and the feedback received can be viewed under each theme in this report.



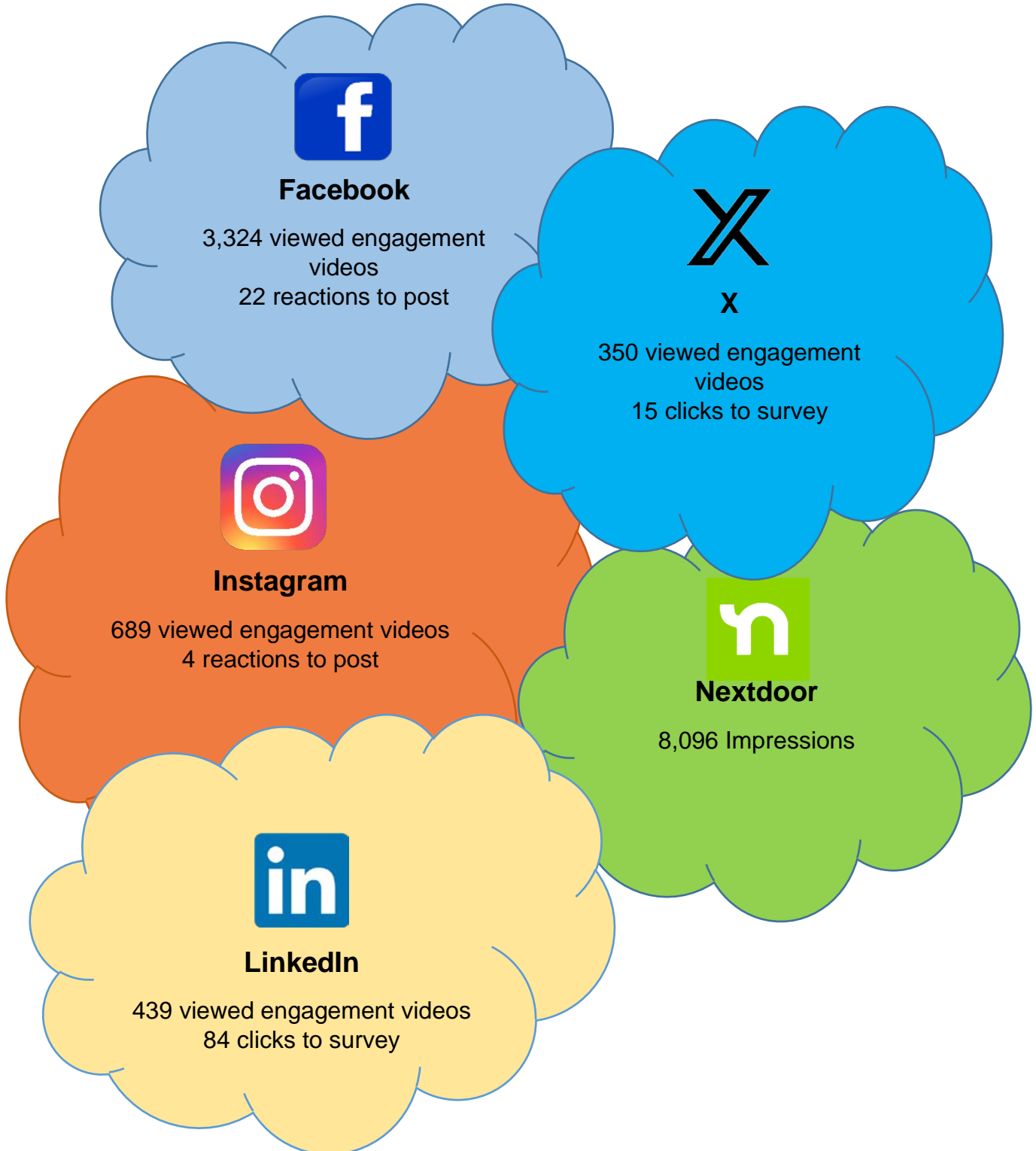
A public drop-in event for residents was held at Didcot Civic Hall on the same day from 3:30pm until 5:30pm to give residents the opportunity to find out more on our upcoming plans for both districts and discuss their priorities with council officers. 11 members of the public attended. **Information boards** about the priority themes and leaflets including a link to the survey were displayed at Abbey House and the Cornerstone for residents that may not have access to the internet or couldn't attend the drop-in event. A [virtual interactive exhibition](#) was also available to view.

Information packs were issued to local councillors to provide them with the materials to help encourage communities to take part in the consultation. The information packs included an overview about the consultation, paper comment forms for residents that may be digitally excluded, postcards, and posters to display in community facilities to help spread the word.

Paper copies of the poster and postcards were displayed in all libraires to help promote engagement.

Residents aged 18 to 25 had the opportunity to win a £25 high street voucher if they provided their feedback to the online survey.

Social media campaigns ran throughout the consultation period across the following channels: X, Facebook, Instagram, Nextdoor and LinkedIn. The statistics are provided below.



Reporting methodology

Help us set 'The Way Ahead' for South Oxfordshire, July 2024

A summary of the comments to the consultation is included in this report. Any personal information supplied to us within the comments that could identify anyone has been redacted and will not be shared or published in the report. Further information on data protection is available in our general consultation's [privacy statement on our website](#).

The following postcodes have been excluded from the postcode map in appendix D as they are invalid: "O", "RG", "N/A". The total number of postcodes plotted are 120 out of 123.

Some spelling, grammatical and punctual errors in the original comments raised were corrected in the main body of this report; a full list of unedited comments can be found in Appendix E.

THEME 1: ACTION ON CLIMATE CHANGE AND NATURE RECOVERY

Preparing and adapting our communities for the impact of climate change, improving resilience, and restoring our natural environment are effective ways of responding to the climate and ecological crises facing us all.

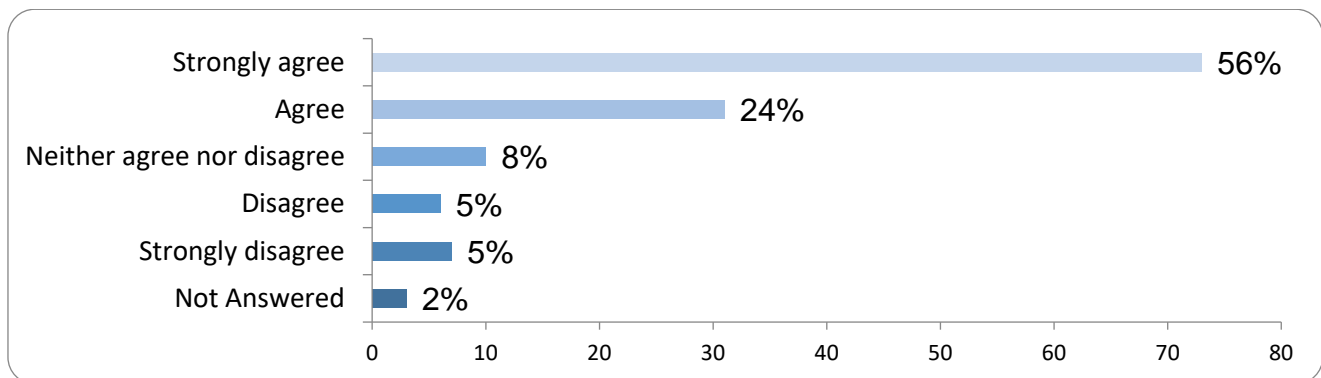


We can show leadership by reducing our own carbon emissions, by providing support for local projects and by setting policies that ensure development makes a positive contribution to our environment. Our priorities will be detailed in the forthcoming new Climate and Nature Recovery Action plan which is being developed in tandem with 'The Way Ahead' plan for South Oxfordshire.

Ways we might achieve this could include:

- Promoting the "circular economy" (reduce, reuse, recycle)
- Mitigate climate change through planning and land use
- Enhance biodiversity on our own land
- Work towards producing and enabling the production of more local renewable energy

We asked respondents to what extent they agree or disagree that "action on climate change and nature recovery" should be included as a theme in our plan. Most respondents (80%) expressed agreement, with 56% stating they strongly agree and 24% selecting they agree, whilst 10% disagree - an equal percentage selected disagree (5%) and strongly disagree (5%).



We received 166 comments on a wide variety of topics. A summary of the comments is provided below alongside a table of frequency. The full list of comments can be viewed in Appendix E.

The consultation revealed a high level of agreement with the proposed theme, with 65% of the comments expressing clear support. In the additional comments section, 13% of comments stated this theme was a priority and 12% emphasised the critical and overarching importance of addressing climate change and environmental sustainability. Some also highlighted the existential threat posed by climate change and the need for it to be a central theme in all initiatives.

Comments included the need for comprehensive approaches to adaptation and mitigation, reducing carbon emissions, and taking immediate action. Some highlighted the importance of behavioural change; others questioned the urgency or legitimacy of the climate crisis. Additionally, the potential economic benefits of local climate actions were noted.

Biodiversity emerged as a significant concern, with various comments (7%) focusing on the protection, retention, and enhancement of biodiversity. Issues of biodiversity loss, crisis through development, and the protection of trees and hedgerows were emphasised. Specific suggestions included balancing housing development with environmental protection and reversing biodiversity loss.

Council guidance and leadership were seen as crucial by 5% of the comments, who emphasised the role of the council in helping individuals act and providing clear guidance. Community support and working in partnership with businesses and residents were also highlighted as essential for effective action.

Renewable energy was a key topic, with 4% of the comments advocating for it and suggesting its mandatory implementation in new housing developments. Energy efficiency and retrofitting were also discussed as important measures to reduce carbon footprints.

There was notable concern for appropriate infrastructure, mentioned by 4% of the comments. Within this category, connected greenways and climate considerations were highlighted, as well as a lack of investment in infrastructure. The role of new development in generating renewable energy, building to zero carbon standards, and avoiding construction on fields was also raised by respondents.

Other comments that were received to this question have been summarised below. The full list of comments can be viewed in appendix E.

Summary of comments	Number of comments
Priority	21
Climate change	20
Biodiversity	12
Council guidance/leadership	9
Global issue	8
Little influence	7
Renewable energy	7
Appropriate infrastructure	7
District performance	6
Health and wellbeing	6
Work in partnership	5
Not priority	5
Transport/ Active travel / public transport	5
Education	5
New development / should generate renewable energy	5
Open/green space/access	4
Waste of money	4
Trees / planting	3
Transport/Car use/anti car	3
Energy efficiency/retrofitting	3

Outside remit	3
Cost of living	2
Flood risk	3
Nature recovery	2
Recycling	2
Sewage discharge/pollution	2
Sustainable development	2
Children and young people	1
Community support	1
Enforcement	1
Circular economy	1
Unfair	1
Other/ control insecticides on farms	1
Other/ new council office needed?	1
Protection/retention/ protect national and valued landscapes	1
Total	166

What matters most to you under this theme?

We received 170 comments on a wide variety of topics. A summary of the comments is provided below alongside a table of frequency. The full list of comments can be viewed in Appendix E.

Biodiversity was a key concern, with 10% of comments highlighting its importance. This included a desire for biodiversity increase (7%), protection (4%), and a focus on reversing biodiversity loss (1%). The integration of biodiversity enhancement in planning policies was seen as crucial.

The consultation findings indicate a strong emphasis on the protection and enhancement of the environment, highlighted by 10% of comments. The responses emphasise the critical need to protect the environment, prioritising clean air, reducing vehicular traffic, and enhancing flood prevention measures. Sustainability, biodiversity, and the preservation of green spaces, local farmland, and natural landscapes are deemed essential. Respondents stressed the importance of preventing overdevelopment, while still addressing housing needs.

Reducing carbon emissions was a priority for 7% of comments. Climate change mitigation and adaptation were also highlighted, accounting for 2% of comments, emphasising the necessity for comprehensive strategies to address climate change and its impacts.

Building and planning policies were mentioned, with 5% of comments focusing on the need for appropriate infrastructure. Concerns about over or inappropriate development were raised by 4%, suggesting a need for careful planning to balance development with environmental preservation and the provision of appropriate infrastructure.

Renewable energy and energy efficiency were important themes, with 4% of comments advocating for renewable energy initiatives and 2% emphasising energy efficiency and retrofitting. These measures were viewed as essential for reducing carbon footprints and promoting sustainability.

Flood risk and mitigation were concerns raised by 3% of comments. Effective waste management, including recycling and reducing fly-tipping, was also highlighted, with 6% of comments focusing on these issues.

Active travel was mentioned by 3% of comments, indicating support for sustainable transport options. Public transport and car use reduction were also highlighted (2% and 2% respectively), reflecting concerns about emissions and the need for efficient, low-carbon transport solutions.

Other comments that were received to this question have been summarised below. The full list of comments can be viewed in appendix E.

Summary of comments	Number of comments
Biodiversity	17
Environment - protection / enhancement	17
Reduce carbon emissions	12
Building and planning policies	9
Open/green space	8
Over/inappropriate development	8
Renewable energy generation	8
Recycling	7
Flood risk	7
Active travel	5
Car use reduction	4
Climate Change / Mitigation/adaptation	4
Energy efficiency/retrofitting	4
Food and farming	4
Work in partnership	4
Waste of money	3
Health and wellbeing	3
Priority	3
Public transport	3
Reduce use of fossil fuels	3
Appropriate infrastructure	2
Behaviour change	2
Costs	2
Community safety	2
Education	2
Little influence	2
Technology	2
Sewage discharge/pollution	2
Sustainability	2
Waste	2
Accessibility	1
Affordable housing	1
Circular economy	1
Council Guidance/leadership	1
Democracy, transparency and accountability	1

Equality/diversity	1
Leisure, culture, the arts and sports	1
National government	1
Other	1
Not a priority	1
Proportionality	1
Rational thinking	1
Reduce fly-tipping	1
Rural communities / Enhance low carbon lives	1
Traffic /speed/ HGVs	1
Trees	1
Total	170

What should we think about when working on taking 'action on climate change and nature recovery' in your area?

We received 185 comments on a wide variety of topics. A summary of the comments is provided below alongside a table of frequency. The full list of comments can be viewed in Appendix E.

Environmental protection and enhancement emerged as the most significant concern (15%). This underscores a widespread commitment to safeguarding natural habitats, preserving green spaces, and improving environmental quality.

Building and planning policies were highlighted by 12% of the comments. Specific concerns about over or inappropriate development (2%) indicate a strong desire for thoughtful and sustainable planning that balances growth with environmental conservation.

Active travel was a key topic for 8% of the comments, demonstrating support for sustainable travel options, such as walking and cycling, to reduce reliance on cars and promote healthier lifestyles.

Local renewable energy generation accounted for 6% of the responses, reflecting a robust community interest in sustainable energy solutions to reduce carbon emissions and foster energy independence.

Working in partnership was mentioned in 6% of the comments, emphasising the importance of collaboration between the council, community groups, and businesses to achieve shared environmental and developmental goals.

Flood risk was another significant issue, mentioned in 5% of the comments, some highlighting concerns about the lack of dredging of riverbeds and others the impacts of climate change and the need for effective flood mitigation measures.

Public transport was a concern for 4% of comments, indicating a need for improved and more efficient public transport systems to support sustainable travel and reduce traffic congestion.

Food and farming accounted for 4% of the comments, suggesting an interest in sustainable agricultural practices and local food production to support environmental health and food security.

Democracy, transparency, and accountability were mentioned in 3% of the comments, reflecting a desire for clear, open, and accountable governance in decision-making processes.

Education was highlighted in 3% of the comments, indicating the community's recognition of the importance of environmental education and awareness in fostering sustainable behaviour.

Sewage discharge and air/light pollution were mentioned in 4% of the comments, indicating a need for better waste management and pollution control measures to protect water quality and public health.

Other comments that were received to this question have been summarised below. The full list of comments can be viewed in appendix E.

Summary of comments	Number of comments
Environment - protection and enhancement	28
Building and planning policies	22
Active travel	14
Local renewable energy generation	12
Working in partnership	11
Flood risk	9
Public transport	8
Farming and food	7
Democracy/transparency/accountability	5
Education	5
Sewage discharge/pollution	5
Over/inappropriate development	4
Energy efficiency/retrofitting	4
Waste	4
Green/open space	4
Appropriate infrastructure	3
Recycling	3
Other	3
Reduce carbon emissions	3
Accessibility	2
Behaviour change	3
Car use reduction	2
Council guidance and leadership	2
Maintenance	2
Pollution - air/light	2
Parking	2
Biodiversity/ loss	1
Circular economy	1
Costs	1
Enforcement	1
Global issue	1
Health and wellbeing	1

Little influence	1
Nothing	1
Small practical steps	1
Population growth	1
Priority/ not a priority	1
Proportionality	1
Traffic /speed/ HGVs	1
Trees	1
Value for money	1
Waste of money	1
Total	185

Feedback was also gathered from the Community Event on Thursday 18 April. Attendees had the opportunity to provide their thoughts on theme 1 via the exhibition boards presented at the event. A snapshot of the discussion points are provided below.

Support nature groups in smaller villages

Get bathing water designation at other sites in South Oxfordshire

Encourage working / public transport use.

Low carbon hub – If you can provide fully funded building energy assessments to community organisation, social enterprise and charities they can save money on energy year after year.

Working with existing landscape scale recovery projects and learning from other e.g Long Mead Meadow Conservation project – truly community led volunteers and broad in scope.

Engage with local experts like Fautt Trust to Communicate (difficult to read writing here) about the urgency of the climate change problem.

District council shouldn't be doing climate stuff.

The community event session also included an opportunity for community groups and businesses/organisations to share their thoughts or expand on the points included on the exhibition boards. A snapshot of the discussion points are provided below.

- What can we do to support (not do) community action.
- Just remove the barriers – the enthusiasm is there.
- We don't need large scale solutions to everything – lean on local experts.
- Community led climate and sustainability group do work.
- Community enablement teams to support.
- Unconstituted local groups have the enthusiasm and expertise.
- There is only so much a district council can do – green spaces are largely T&P (town and parish) – enable them to undertake ecological assessment so they can achieve what we all want.
- Celebrating and encouraging people to take part in what we do.
- Helping and encouraging people to replicate existing good work.

THEME 2: INCLUSION, ACCESSIBILITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

We remain committed to robust governance and complete transparency in our decision-making and focused on ensuring equality of access to all the services provided by the council.



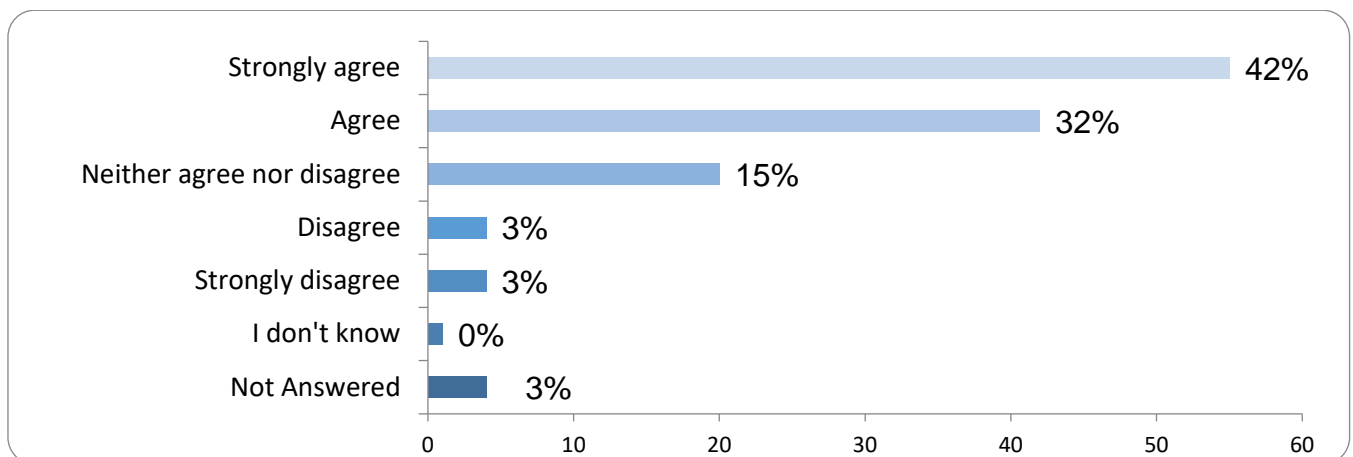
We aim to be a “Council in the Community” by engaging openly with Town and Parish Councils, local voluntary organisations and other groups representing different sectors of society.

We will foster a culture of inclusion both within the Council and with external contacts, celebrating diversity and championing lesser-heard voices.

Ways we might achieve this could include:

- Through good governance and transparency in everything we do.
- Increase engagement in all consultation projects.
- Use plain English in our communications.

Respondents were asked to what extent they agree or disagree that "Inclusion, Accessibility and Accountability" should be included as a theme in our plan. 74% expressed agreement to this theme, of which 42% strongly agree and 32% agree. A total of 6% expressed disapproval to this statement, more specifically, 3% disagree and 3% strongly disagree.



To what extent do you agree or disagree that "Inclusion, Accessibility and Accountability" should be included as a theme in our plan? You can use this space to tell us why or add any comments you have on the proposed theme:

61 comments were received to this question.

18% of the comments mentioned the need to improve community engagement, cohesion and communications (transparency). Some of the comments received were:

- *If more people feel their views are wanted the better the cohesion of the community.*
- *Good communication is paramount as is using accessible language*
- *listen to what people want and why. If things are not possible, explain why. Be prepared to change if there are better ways forward. Listen to suggestions and consider them*

17% mentioned that this theme could result in positive discrimination, digital exclusion and marginalised communities. Comments received included:

- *Equal opportunities is important, but shouldn't promote racial bias in favour of selecting candidates of certain ethnic groups to hit target percentages*
- *Do more to help those who are uncomfortable using digital methods.*

12% raised points about having good governance (accountable/open/inclusivity/leadership), *'being open and inclusive leads to more stable political environments, making long-term progress possible.'*

Other comments that were received to this question have been summarised below. The full list of comments can be viewed in appendix E.

Summary of comments	Number of comments
Improve community engagement, cohesion and communications (transparency)	11
Theme could result in positive discrimination, digital exclusion and marginalised communities	10
Good governance (accountable/open/inclusivity/leadership)	7
Theme requires more explanation/ not clear	7
Other	6
Issues with accessibility in the districts	5
Theme is not an issue/not as important as other themes	5
Improve governance processes	3
Make council communication materials more accessible/simple	3
Inclusivity can't be forced	2
This theme should apply to all work streams	2
Action is required from the councils	1
Positive feedback about community engagement	1
Total	63

Theme 2: Inclusion, Accessibility and Accountability: What matters most to you under this theme?

74 comments were received to this question.

49% of the comments relate to inclusion (improve accessibility). For instance:

- *Inclusion for all - not to the detriment of the majority*
- *There is a huge difference in this area between the haves and the have nots. A fairer system needs to be in place so that everyone feels included*
- *Don't assume everyone has digital access. Make sure Council is aware of who they need to contact and how and keep this reviewed by regular asking and consulting*

23% feel there is a need to improve community engagement, cohesion and communications (open and transparent). For instance, having a *visible presence* and *having transparency of what you're doing and why*.

23% said good governance is what matters most to them under this theme, examples of comments include:

- *Good governance to ensure integrity is at the heart of the organisation*
- *Good governance is so key so that money is spent on the right things and any procurement is done well*

Other comments that were received to this question have been summarised below. the full list of comments can be viewed in appendix E.

Summary of comments	Quantity
Inclusion (improve accessibility)	36
Improve community engagement, cohesion and communications (open and transparent)	17
Good governance	17
Parish Council	3
Theme requires more explanation/ not clear	1
Other	1
Total	75

What and who should we think about when working on ensuring 'inclusion, accessibility and accountability' in your area?

71 comments were received to this question.

Over half of the comments received (65%) mentioned the need to engage with all local residents, communities and neighbouring stakeholders. Some of the comments specifically focused on the inclusion of marginalised communities (50%), whilst the remaining 50% focused on the need to engage with all.

7% commented on the need to review channels of communication/standard, for example *'Physical access is obviously high on our priority list. But access needs such as hearing loops, braille, translations of written information to different languages and 'easy read' formats for information also shouldn't be overlooked' and 'How are your communications working? Are they reaching everyone? Are simple things - like the website which tells you about bin collections - clear, simple, easy to navigate. Disability access including things like screen-reader compatibility.'*

Other comments that were received to this question have been summarised below. the full list of comments can be viewed in appendix E.

Summary of comments	Quantity
Engagement with all local residents/communities/neighbouring stakeholders	46
Review channels of communications/standard	5
Good governance/ transparency	3
Transport	3
Accessibility/safety in the districts	2
Resolve current issues within the district first	2
Theme requires more explanation/ not clear	2
Good governance/ transparency	2
Support for communities	2
Affordable housing	1
Avoid positive discrimination	1
Barriers communities face	1
Climate change	1
Consideration for parish councils	1
Good planning design	1
Networking ideas	1
Cost	1
Police presence	1
Networking ideas	1
Promote the benefits of this theme	1
Waste services	1
Total	78

Feedback was also gathered from the Community Event on Thursday 18 April. Attendees had the opportunity to provide their thoughts on theme 2 via the exhibition boards displayed at the event. A snapshot of the discussion points are provided below.

Access to services (inclusion) – Consider structural barriers that will prevent access regardless of existence of a service offer – e.g transport provision often a limiting factor.

Catalyse the formation of stakeholder groups on key topic areas e.g active travel / sustainable travel, children’s play, environment, leisure facilities etc

THEME 3: THRIVING AND HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

Our vision for South Oxfordshire is built on shared wellbeing and prosperity, with thriving, active communities and equality of access to local resources and services.



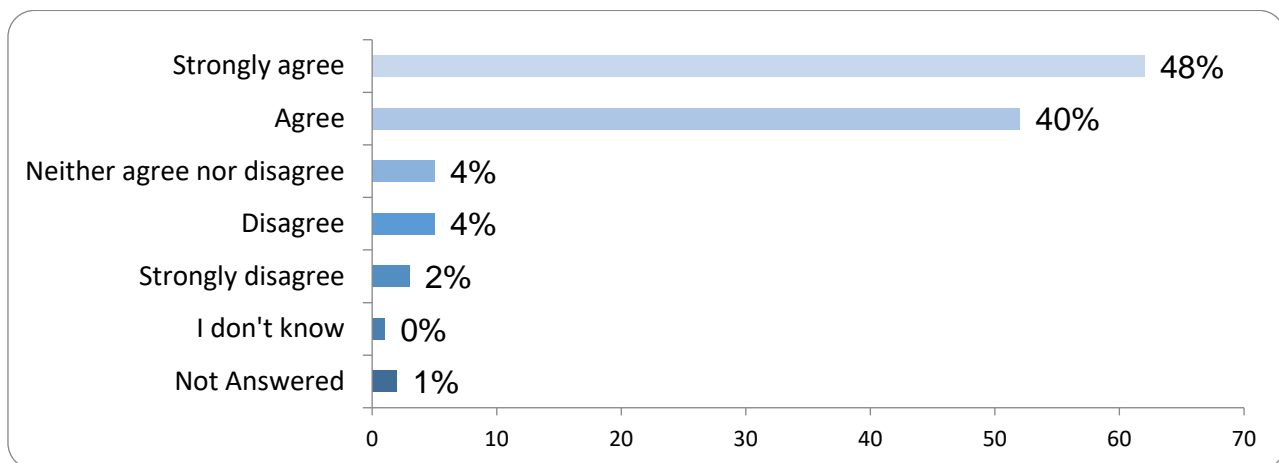
We will continue to offer information, advice and direct intervention on issues such as the cost-of-living crisis, healthy living and community safety. We will ensure equitable access to leisure facilities, arts and cultural programmes, recognising their contribution to wellbeing and community cohesion.

We want to regenerate Didcot and Berinsfield, bringing employment opportunities, spaces for nature, new homes, community facilities and active travel infrastructure. We will continue to work with thousands of local employers to enhance skills, access funding and facilitate peer networking to enhance South Oxfordshire as an exciting place to live, work and prosper.

Ways we might achieve this could include:

- Provide advice on access to grants and training.
- Help local businesses to build agility and resilience.
- Enhancing and developing arts and culture in the district.
- Strengthen support and wellbeing programmes for our more vulnerable residents.

The survey asked respondents to what extent they agree or disagree that "Thriving and healthy communities" should be included as a theme in our plan. The majority of respondents (88%) agree with this theme, 48% stating they strongly agree and 40% selecting they agree, whilst 6% disagree with 4% stating they disagree and 2% that strongly disagree.



To what extent do you agree or disagree that this theme should be included in the Corporate Plan? Further comments.

112 comments were received in responses to this question. A summary of the comments is provided below, alongside a table of frequency. The full list of comments can be viewed in Appendix E.

18% of comments emphasised that the theme thriving and healthy communities should be a priority.

Comments noted that infrastructure delivery (11%) is key to thriving and healthy communities, particularly before building more homes.

10% of comments questioned whether this should be a priority for South, or whether other authorities and organisations should take responsibility for health, arts and leisure.

Specific mention was made to the need for Local Services, facilities and amenities (9%), including parks, schools, libraries, local shops, green and open space, town and parish events, Heritage Sites, and the arts.

The provision for the health service (9%), GPs and dentists, was also included in comments.

People's individual health and wellbeing (9%) was noted as being a priority, as supporting individuals means our communities can thrive. Specific mention was also made to educating people and supporting those with mental health illnesses.

Climate change and nature recovery (8%) was raised by some as having an impact on communities, and health and wellbeing.

Some comments specified Planning (5%) as having a role in delivering thriving and healthy communities.

Support businesses and the economy (4%) was included in comments.

Comments also included that we should support the many and not the few (4%).

Improved public transport (4%) was a key point for some, as well as safe active travel (4%) routes.

Summary of comments	Number of comments
Should be a priority	20
Infrastructure delivery	12
Questioned whether this should be a priority over other issues	11
Local Services, Facilities & Amenities	10
Health service	10
Health and wellbeing	10
Climate change and nature recovery	6
Diverse and inclusive	6
Planning	5
Public transport	4
Active travel	4
Support businesses and economy	4
Support the many not the few	4

Support on local issues	2
Theme title and plans are vague	2
Support the most vulnerable	2
Do we mean human health or health of the community?	1
Wallingford should be a focus	1
Other places need support (Not just Didcot/ Berinsfield)	1
Query around what we mean	1
Sustainable Didcot is a good initiative	1
Wallingford should be a focus	1
Affordable housing is needed in Goring	1
Total	119

What matters most to you under this theme?

95 comments were received to this question. A summary of the comments is provided below, alongside a table of frequency. The full list of comments can be viewed in Appendix E.

16% of comments were about the need for access to health services, GPs and dentist as being most important under this theme.

13% of comments were related to access to local services, facilities and amenities, including village hall or equivalent, and green and open space.

10% of comments mentioned Infrastructure, including roads, public footpaths to nature, shops etc.

Also, 9% mentioned being inclusive in our communities and tackling isolation.

Supporting local businesses was highlighted in comments (8%).

Comments also included the need to support our vulnerable (8%) residents.

7% of comments mentioned health and wellbeing.

5% of comments raised that employment and jobs are most important to them for thriving communities.

Engaging and listening (5%) with partners and our residents matters most for some. Allowing people to share experiences in a positive environment.

Other comments received were about environment (climate and nature recovery), good planning, a sense of pride in a local area, and spending our money well on this theme.

Summary of comments	Number of comments
Health services	15
Local services, facilities and amenities	12
Infrastructure	10
Inclusive	9
Support local businesses	8
Vulnerable	8
Health and wellbeing	7
Employment	5

Engaging and listening	5
Enhancing and developing arts and culture	4
Information	3
Active travel	3
Environment - climate and nature recovery	2
Planning	1
Community support	1
Pride in local area	1
Money well spent	1
Total	95

What should we think about when working on creating 'thriving and healthy communities' in your area?

140 comments were received to this question. A summary of the comments is provided below, alongside a table of frequency. The full list of comments can be viewed in Appendix E.

The most frequently received comments were around the need to think about appropriate infrastructure (22%) to support our communities, including mention to potholes, drainage, traffic management, schools, and fibre broadband.

15% of comments were related to local services, facilities and amenities. Many mentioned the need for shops, leisure facilities including health classes, employment, open and green space, allotments, playing fields, pubs, bars and restaurants, community hubs and youth clubs – for bringing the community together.

Some comments were about engagement with residents and community groups (11%). To listen to the communities' needs and supporting existing council partners through funding and grants. This engagement could also promote the positive message of living in our district and encouraging local pride. Comments on engagement also included: raise awareness of areas for sports, ways to break down social isolation and healthy food outlets.

There were comments (10%) on health services including the provision GPs and dentists.

Several noted communities need to be accessible, diverse, and inclusive (7%).

Connecting communities via active travel improvements (5%), through well maintained and safe cycle lanes and footpaths, and bike storage was raised in comments.

Some comments (4%) suggested we consider the demographic (age) of the area. Specific mention was made to teaching young people to exercise, support young families, and prevent isolation in the elderly.

4% also mentioned it is important to support businesses to provide for local need and encourage new local businesses.

Comments on travel and connecting communities also included the need for improved public transport (4%). Comments (3%) also included the need for good planning, consulting on new housing and infrastructure, identifying and allocating new sites for leisure.

Some comments (3%) included preventing overdevelopment.

Comments highlighted the cost (3%) of living and need for low cost and free activities.

Environment – protection and enhancement (3%) was a focus around cleaning up our rivers, and access to renewable energy.

Other responses included comments on the Historic environment, Grants/funding, Community safety, DPH annual report 2024, Social Progress Index, and to prevent smoke through regulations on log burners and BBQs.

Summary of comments	Number of comments
Appropriate infrastructure	31
Local Services, Facilities & Amenities	21
Engagement with residents and community groups	16
Health service	14
Accessible, diverse and inclusive	10
Active travel improvements	7
Demographic (age)	6
Supporting local businesses and economy	5
Planning	4
Preventing overdevelopment	4
Costs	4
Environment - protection and enhancement	3
Improved public transport	3
Waste of money	3
Historic environment	2
Grants/funding	2
Not much	1
Community safety	1
DPH annual report 2024	1
Social Progress Index	1
Prevent smoke from log burners and BBQs	1
Total	140

Feedback was also gathered from the Community Event on Thursday 18 April. Attendees had the opportunity to openly provide their thoughts on theme 3 via the exhibition boards displayed at the event. A snapshot of the discussion points are provided below.

Better litter bins and street cleaning services

Leisure/ experience equipment – focus on football pitches (not outside exercise equipment – Edmunds Park)

It would be great to get support to offer services in a target way to the most in need and less supported. This advocacy is hard for us as a small charity – we'd love local authority support

More funding for arts (Kenton theatre)

Youth Council – more widely advertise in 'their' places e.g social media.

Events / Groups need to be thought through about the older generation as a lot are becoming isolated and lonely)

Bridge the gap in community – young adults, teens, elderly (younger person and

Better public transport supports communities.

The community event session also included a chance for community groups and businesses/organisations to openly share their thoughts or expand on the points included on the exhibition boards. A summary of the discussion point mentioned are provided below.

- Support is needed at the hyper local level.
- The council needs to amplify local voices.
- People feel that they are just talk to, rather than consulted. Today was different.
- Align all grants to corporate objectives.
- Micro grants are critical and have a big impact.
- Small councillor funds are very valuable.
- Map community network channels.
- Amplify local businesses in council communications.

THEME 4: HOMES AND INFRASTRUCTURE THAT MEET LOCAL NEEDS

A key role for the council is to ensure that local housing needs are met with a strategic development plan that takes account of the needs of current and future generations, while minimising the impact on the environment.



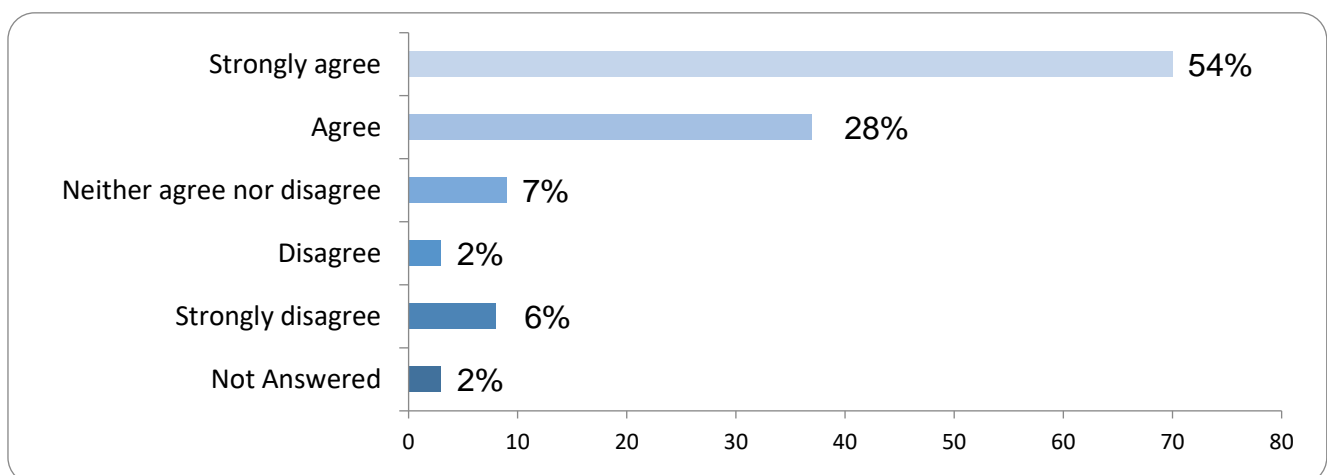
Our forthcoming Joint Local Plan aims to ensure delivery of appropriate new housing and essential infrastructure until 2041 while protecting our precious green spaces and to encourage more sustainable lifestyles. Our Housing Delivery Strategy and Action Plan will enable us to provide more genuinely affordable homes for social rent, complementing those delivered by commercial housing developers as required by our planning policies.

We will use infrastructure levy funds received from developers to build much-needed facilities to enhance quality of life and wellbeing, with a particular focus on fair distribution and equality of access.

Ways we might achieve this could include:

- Develop ambitious new planning policies.
- Deliver new council owned affordable homes.
- Encourage sustainable travel such as walking, cycling and public transport.

Respondents were asked to what extent they agree or disagree that "Homes and infrastructure that meet local needs" should be included as a theme in our plan. The majority of respondents (82%) agree with this theme forming part of our plan. 54% stating they strongly agree and 28% selecting they agree, whilst 8%, strongly disagree (6%) and disagree (2%).



We received 167 comments on a wide variety of topics. A summary of the comments is provided below alongside a table of frequency. The full list of comments can be viewed in Appendix E.

Around a third of all the responses (32%) highlighted the lack of appropriate infrastructure within South Oxfordshire. They requested that meaningful action was taken to address the problems being faced by current residents before any new housing was built. Further, if additional development was to occur, then amenities, services and facilities such as dentists, GP surgeries and public transport must be delivered simultaneously.

16% of comments mentioned building and planning policies. These comments covered a range of issues, incorporating other themes as well – but many emphasised the need for a holistic approach in the Local Plan, including the need for more specific building requirements for developers around housing mix and affordability. Concerns about over or inappropriate development were expressed by 5% of comments. Sustainability and environmental protection were identified as a priority for 5% of comments.

15% of comments received highlighted the topic of affordability. They emphasised that more needed to be done to ensure that people (especially those from the local area and/or earning average salaries) were able to purchase homes within the district. Concerns were raised that many of the recent housing developments within South Oxfordshire did not cater for existing residents.

11% of comments mentioned Active Travel, with many comments raising the need for new developments to include cycling and footpath infrastructure and others mentioning the need for more public transport. Whilst some comments regarding cycle paths were negative, most comments called for an increased availability of active travel options. 6% of comments expressed support for use and improvements to public transport.

Summary of comments	Number of comments
Appropriate infrastructure	28
Building and planning policies	27
Affordable housing	25
Active travel	18
Public transport	10
Over/inappropriate development	9
Other	8
Sustainability and Environmental Standards/protection	8
Build quality	4
Brownfield	3
Flooding	3
Open/green spaces	3
Car use	3
Energy efficiency/retrofitting	3
Children and young people	2
Health and wellbeing	2
Food and farming	2
Local employment	1
Local connection	1
Older people	1

Open green spaces	1
Sewage	1
Agree	1
Local renewable energy generation	1
Crime and Safety	1
Appropriate infrastructure	1
Total	167

What matters most to you under this theme?

We received 160 comments on a wide variety of topics. A summary of the comments is provided below alongside a table of frequency. The full list of comments can be viewed in Appendix E.

A quarter of participants (15%) highlighted the topic of affordability. They wanted to see the increased provision of genuinely affordable houses – preferably for local residents. Respondents were concerned that people were unable to get on the housing ladder, were being priced out of the area or being forced into expensive, sub-optimal private rented accommodation.

12% of respondents raised the issue of infrastructure. They highlighted existing issues in relation to the provision of school places and GP surgeries etc, as well as specifically commenting on the pressures being placed on the district’s roads. Replies stressed the need for this infrastructure deficit to be alleviated as a matter of urgency – ideally before any major new housing developments were delivered. If new homes are to be built, commentators emphasised the importance of the concurrent provision of schools, GP surgeries etc. Health and wellbeing were a concern for 4% of respondents.

A number of comments (11%) cited the need for improved building and planning policies, to ensure that new development is located in more desirable locations and retain green spaces including the gaps between settlements. The importance of preserving open and green spaces was mentioned by 4% of comments, emphasising the value of these areas for recreation and environmental health. Build quality and flood risk were each mentioned by 6% of comments, suggesting these are notable concerns. Concerns about over or inappropriate development were expressed by 2% of comments. 9% of comments raised the issue of public transport, with most comments highlighting the need for improved bus infrastructure and sustainable forms of travel being built into new developments. Active travel, including walking and cycling, was highlighted by 7% of comments, reflecting the importance of creating safe and convenient routes and reducing reliance on cars where possible.

Summary of comments	Number of comments
Affordable housing	24
Appropriate infrastructure	20
Building and planning policies	18
Public transport	14
Active travel	12
Open/green spaces	7
Health and wellbeing	7
Other	5

Flood risk	5
Better engagement with communities/transparency	4
Over/inappropriate development	4
Build Quality	3
Energy efficiency/retrofitting	3
Anti/waste of money	2
Build quality	2
Children and young people	2
Education	2
Sustainability and Environmental Standards/protection	2
Traffic	2
Parking	2
Affordable housing	2
Food and farming	2
Leisure, the arts, culture and sports	2
Sewage	1
Families	1
Sewage	1
Local renewable energy generation	1
Performance	1
Biodiversity	1
Rural communities	1
Car use	1
Connected	1
Character	1
Community	1
Local energy generation	1
Accessibility	1
Equality	1
Total	160

What should we think about when working on 'providing the homes people need' in your area?

We received 154 comments on a wide variety of topics. A summary of the comments is provided below alongside a table of frequency. The full list of comments can be viewed in Appendix E.

The highest priority for respondents was appropriate infrastructure, with 19% highlighting that the council should be thinking about infrastructure when working on “providing the homes people need”. They highlighted the need for improved roads, more dentists and doctors, new schools and community facilities etc and emphasised that these needed to be co-delivered alongside any new housing developments. They also stressed the importance of addressing the existing infrastructure deficit before any more homes were built.

14% highlighted the importance of affordability. Comments mentioned they wanted to see more genuinely, affordable homes being provided for people across the district. Concerns were

expressed that the current housing situation was pricing young people, key workers and low-paid employees out of the district.

8% of the comments emphasised the significance of the climate and the environment. People wanted to see homes that were low/zero carbon, were well-insulated with solar panels and/or heat pumps as standard. They should also have gardens and/or be close to accessible green spaces. Further, new developments should be wildlife friendly, be well-connected to important amenities and facilities and should not infringe on the countryside. Energy efficiency and retrofitting were priorities for 2% of comments, reflecting a commitment to improving the energy performance of buildings and/or reducing carbon emissions.

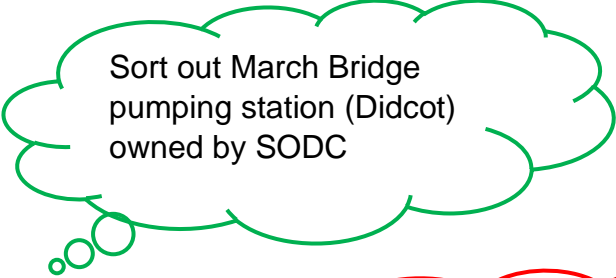
Building and planning policies were significant for 6% of comments, reflecting the need for comprehensive policies that guide sustainable development and meet the community's needs. Build quality was a concern for 3% of comments, highlighting the importance of ensuring high construction standards in new developments. Development of brownfield sites was mentioned by 2% of comments, indicating support for redeveloping previously used land to minimise the impact on greenfield areas. Concerns about over or inappropriate development were noted by 2% of comments.

Other concerns include improvements to public transport (4%), encouraging or facilitating active travel, such as walking and cycling (3%). Health and wellbeing were priorities for 4% of comments, indicating the importance of creating environments that support both physical and mental health. Better engagement with communities and transparency were concerns for 3% of comments. Flood risk was a concern for 2% of comments, underscoring the need for effective flood management and mitigation strategies.


Summary of comments	Number of comments
Appropriate infrastructure	30
Affordable housing	21
Sustainability and Environmental protection/ Standards	12
Building and planning policies	10
Other	8
Public transport	6
Health and wellbeing	6
Better engagement with communities/transparency	5
Build quality	5
Active travel	5
Flood risk	4
Energy efficiency/retrofitting	4
Over/inappropriate development	3
Brownfield	3
Local renewable energy generation	2
Food and farming	2
Long-term planning	2
Sewage	2
Parking	2
Employment/Working from home	2
Housing needs	2

Local facilities/amenities	2
Housing needs/mix	1
Local connection	1
Character	1
Work in partnership	1
Housing mix	1
Brownfield	1
Pollution - air/light	1
Open/green space	1
Recycling	1
open/green spaces	1
Deprivation	1
Car use	1
Flood risk	1
working in partnership	1
Housing need	1
Housing need	1
Total	154


Feedback was also gathered from the Community Event on Thursday 18 April. Attendees had the opportunity to openly provide their thoughts on theme 3 via the exhibition boards displayed at the event. A snapshot of some comments received verbatim is provided below.



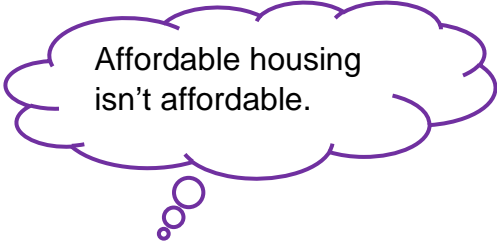
Sort out March Bridge pumping station (Didcot) owned by SODC



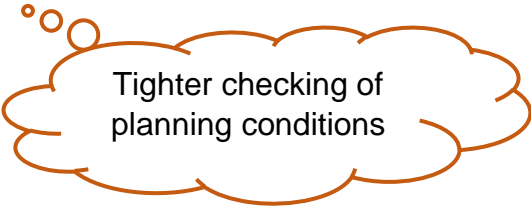
Affordable housing in more 'ready' places – with schools, gps and transport



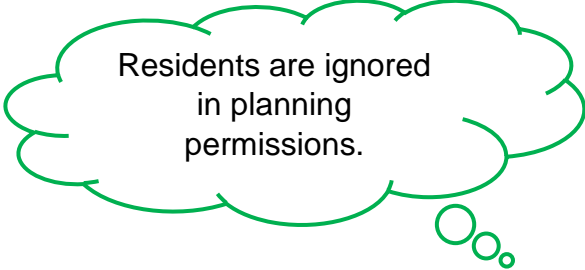
Ensure housing developments commit to public transport and support infrastructure.



Affordable housing isn't affordable.



Tighter checking of planning conditions



Residents are ignored in planning permissions.

THEME 5: FINANCIAL STABILITY AND INNOVATIVE TRANSFORMATION

Residents in South Oxfordshire will continue to receive excellent value for money from a high performing council which is continually innovating to deliver high quality, user-friendly services. We will follow our “invest to save” policy, particularly to ensure long-term financial stability, cost savings and reduced carbon emissions.



Our Transformation programme will deliver efficiencies and improvements across all service areas, improving accessibility for residents and modernising our ways of working. We will achieve this by exploring options to bring more services in-house and refreshing our technology platforms to make them fit-for-purpose and adaptable as our services evolve.

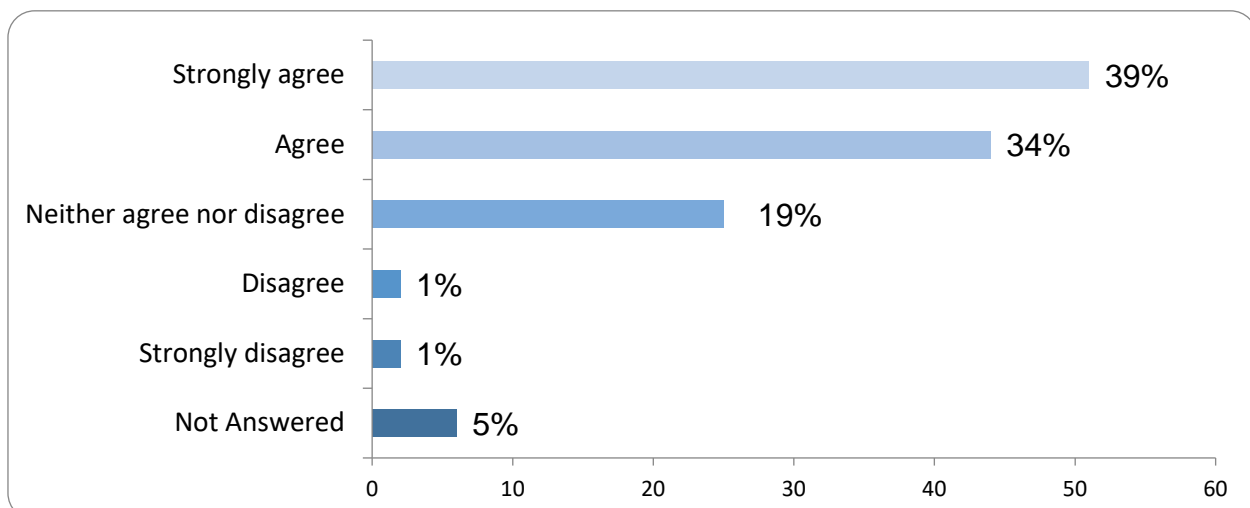
Our recent success in securing external funding for new programmes will continue to protect our financial viability, and we will continue to exercise strong and responsible stewardship over all public funds held by the council.

Financial stability and innovative transformation

Ways we might achieve this could include:

- Invest responsibly and ethically - with the climate and ecological emergencies at the heart of what we do.
- Maximise funding opportunities to support our services and to enrich our leisure, sporting and community activities.
- Manage and use council assets and funds responsibly to achieve financial and community benefits.

The survey asked respondents to what extent they agree or disagree that "Financial Stability and Innovative Transformation" should be included as a theme in our plan. 73% of respondents expressed agreement with including this theme within our plan. 39% selecting they strongly agree and 34% selecting they agree, whilst 2% disagree, 1% stating they disagree and 1% indicating they strongly disagree.



To what extent do you agree or disagree that "Financial Stability and Innovative Transformation" should be included as a theme in our plan?

The majority of respondents (73%) either agree or strongly agree that financial stability and innovative transformation should be included as a theme in South Oxfordshire's Corporate Plan.

55 additional comments were received in relation to this question.

31% of the comments argued that healthy finances were the key bedrock on which all the council's other functions and activities depended while a small minority of comments (6%) questioned why such a theme was necessary stating that the council should be taking the necessary actions in this area as a matter of course and, consequently, there was no need for it to have a specific section within the Corporate Plan.

19% of participants highlighted the issues of waste and value for money. Some mentioned that local government is particularly spendthrift – using taxpayers' money on pointless and ineffective projects and policies – and wished to see a greater focus on efficiency and cost effectiveness.

8% of the comments made specific mention of insourcing. They were all in agreement that this would give the council greater control over the design, structure and costs of its activities.

What matters most to you under this theme?

60 comments were received in relation to this question. A summary of the comments received are provided below and the full list of comments can be viewed in appendix E.

A quarter of respondents (25%) highlighted the importance of the council continuing to provide high-quality services. They wished to see South Oxfordshire continue to invest in and support its existing activities while exploring innovative approaches to make sure that the council remains fit for the future.

24% of the comments stressed the importance of reducing waste and inefficiencies. Contributors wanted South Oxfordshire to review/consider how it operates in order to bear down on unnecessary and ineffective processes and expenditure.

19% of comments underlined the need for the council to provide value for money. They stressed the importance of South Oxfordshire using money in an effective manner.

15% of comments emphasised the importance of financial stability. They regarded this as the foundation on which all the council's activities rely. It was, therefore, vital that South Oxfordshire continued to manage its finances in a responsible and prudent manner.

12% of comments also raised the issue of the council's stewardship of its existing assets. Respondents wanted to see these managed in a cost effective, responsible and sustainable way which ensured that they continued to be of benefit to the local community.

What should we think about when working to provide 'financial stability and innovative transformation'?

54 comments were received in relation to this question. A summary of the comments received are provided below and the full list of comments can be viewed in appendix E.

34% of comments highlighted the need for South Oxfordshire to provide value for money in its services and activities. They were concerned that the council was not using money efficiently and effectively and wanted reassurance that it was being spent wisely and on things that made a real difference.

21% of comments raised the issue of waste. They believed that the council should focus on providing the services that really matter to residents (waste, planning etc) rather than what they regarded as additional or unnecessary activities. Respondents were very keen to highlight that ultimately it is taxpayer's money that the council is spending and, therefore, it should be used on the priorities of residents. They also highlighted the issue of increased efficiency in their responses.

13% of comments mentioned the possibility of the council adopting more innovative ways of working. Suggestions were raised about the greater use of technology to reduce inefficiencies and provide better services. In addition, proposals were put forward for the potential opportunities afforded by the use of novel funding streams.

11% of comments emphasised the need for openness and accountability when it came to the council's finances. They suggested that South Oxfordshire should do more to inform residents about how and where money was being spent.

8% of comments highlighted the need for South Oxfordshire to think in strategic terms about its finances. They argued that greater consideration should be given to the longer-term impacts of decisions, rather than focusing on the immediate future.

Feedback was also gathered from the Community Event on Thursday 18 April. Attendees had the opportunity to provide their thoughts on theme 5 via the interactive exhibition boards displayed at the event. A snapshot of the discussion points are provided below.

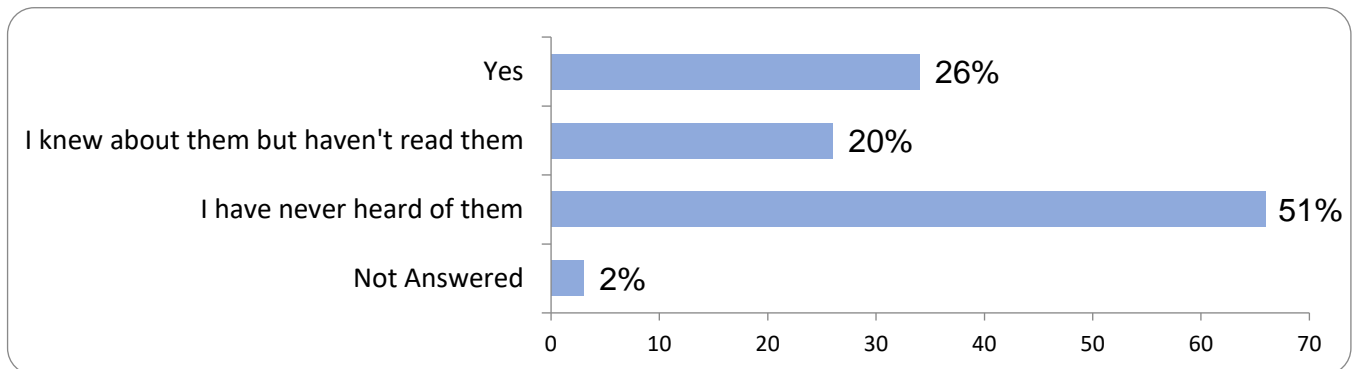


REPORTING ON OUR PROGRESS

We're committed to being transparent and accountable, so for the past four years we have been reporting every three months on our progress against our existing Corporate Plan.

We're keen to continue this but want to make sure we're doing so in a way that is useful and effective. You can read our [previous quarterly reports on our website](#).

Respondents were asked if they have read the previous quarterly reports on the current Corporate Plan and how they would like to be kept informed about the council's progress on achieving our aims set out in this plan. Over half of respondents (51%) have never heard of the quarterly reports on the current Corporate Plan, whilst 26% have. 20% knew about the reports but haven't read them.



How would you like us to keep you informed about our progress achieving our aims set out in this plan?

135 comments were received to this question. A summary of the comments is provided below alongside a table of frequency. The full list of comments can be viewed in Appendix E.

Some comments included the method they would like to be updated with, while others focussed on the type of information they would want to see and how frequently they would want to receive updates.

The most frequent response was by email (31%), followed by using our website (9%), and social media (8%). Some comments stated they would want to receive updates in the post (6%), by letter or newsletter.

6% of comments stated that we should publish progress and work.

5% of comments included the quarterly updates and reports (5%), suggesting they would like to be informed and able to read these.

Similarly, comments included people would like to receive regular updates (5%).

Others would prefer updates via their town or parish council (5%), via councillors (4%), or local press – magazines, local paper or newsletter (3%).

4% of comments asked for updates to include links to view further information.

Comments also noted that progress updates should be digestible and easy to understand (2%). Other comments can be seen in the table below.

Summary of comment	Number of comments
Email	42
Website	12
Social media (2 Facebook, 1 Linked in)	11
Post	8
Publish progress and work	8
Quarterly updates/ reports	7
Regular updates	7
Via town/ parish councils	7
Via councillors	6
Local press (magazines/ paper/ newsletter)	5
Include links to view further information	4
Digestible and easy to understand	3
Don't update on progress	3
Performance metrics	2
Facebook group	2
Plain language	1
Narrative not just metrics	1
E-newsletter	1
Webinar	1
Q&A sessions	1
6-monthly	1
Stop talking about things outside our control	1
Request for Innovation and Cost Efficiency Updates.	1
Total	135

ANYTHING ELSE

If you have any additional comments, please provide them below.

45 responses were received to this question. A wide range of comments were submitted, with many people addressing multiple issues. Comments were broadly classified into a series of topics. Although there was a variation in the detail and content of the answers, certain topics recurred throughout. A summary of the comments received are provided below and the full list of comments can be viewed in appendix E.

22% of respondents raised the importance of climate change and the environment. They wanted to see firm action being taken on delivering tangible projects/schemes which would help to reduce carbon emissions, improve the environment and help nature recovery.

18% of the comments received were additional information on the topic of overdevelopment/unnecessary development. Many of the comments received emphasised the level of new housing development in the area and how this was leading to the loss of green spaces and the destruction of the unique beauty of the district and the Green Belt.

18% of comments emphasised the importance of accountability. They did not believe that there were mechanisms in place to scrutinise the council and/or assumed that their opinions would be ignored.

16% of comments raised concerns around deliverability – there was a notable degree of cynicism about the council's ability to meet its ambitions.

FURTHER INFORMATION

If you would like more information about this consultation and the results presented in this report, or you require this report in an alternative format (for example large print, Braille, audio, email, Easy Read and alternative languages) please contact:

Consultation and Community Engagement Team

South Oxfordshire District Council

01235 422 425

jointheconversation@southoxfordshire.gov.uk

To enquire about the council's work on the South Oxfordshire Corporate Plan, please contact:

Insight and Policy Team

South Oxfordshire District Council

01235 422 422

END.