



South Oxfordshire
District Council



Vale of White Horse
District Council



Join the Conversation

**Consultation and Engagement
Annual Report
2024/25**



- Information in this report is organised in five sections
- You can skip between sections by clicking on the hyperlinks on this page, or on the tabs at the top of each page in the consultations, surveys and feedback form section

Table of content

- ❖ [Introduction](#)
- ❖ [Some highlights](#)
- ❖ [Key consultation projects in 2024/25](#)
- ❖ [Demographic data](#)
- ❖ [Consultations, surveys and feedback forms](#)



Introduction

This report provides an overview of all the projects that the Consultation and Community Engagement team delivered between 1 April 2024 and 31 March 2025. It also includes a brief summary of the results and how the councils have used these to support decision-making or shape programmes and action plans.



Over the last financial year, we launched, 22 consultations/surveys and 12 feedback or sign-up forms. Consultations are projects we must do to fulfil our statutory duty while other forms of engagements help to involve people in a collaborative process that shapes decisions and services. We supported the neighbourhood planning team to review and launch neighbourhood plan consultations, while also providing support and advice to teams across the Councils to help them develop consultation projects that were commissioned externally and not managed in-house by our team.



We have continued our work on monitoring equality and diversity data obtained through our consultations and engagements to assess how representative they are of the districts' demographics. You can find the data we have collected so far on this at the end of this report.

This year, we've focused on finding innovative ways to increase public engagement in our consultations and engagements. One of our key strategies has been the use of short, engaging videos embedded at the beginning of email notifications or introduced at the start of surveys. These videos are designed to quickly capture the respondent's attention with a brief summary of the project. Our aim has been to deliver key information that's both informative and visually appealing, making the engagement process more accessible and inviting.

Key highlights



In 2024/25 we ran **22 consultations**: 4 in South, 5 in Vale and 13 joint ones



In addition to consultations, we produced **12 feedback forms** and sign-up forms



We launched **5 neighbourhood plans**: 3 in South and 2 in Vale

On average over all consultations, **52%** of respondents identified as female, **42%** as male, **6%** preferred not to say



Those between **45-74** years old made up **57%** of all respondents. The under 45 made up **19%** and the over 75 made up **14%**



85% of respondents identified as White British and **8%** as White-other. Minority ethnic groups made up **2%** of the total, while **5%** preferred not to say



71% of respondents said they are not affected by disability or long-term illness. **17%** were affected and **11%** preferred not to say



30%

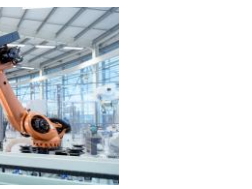
This is the average response rate to all consultations in 2024/25 (compared to the numbers we invited)

1,655

Responses to the Healthy Didcot Survey

908

This is the number of people who responded to the Housing Allocation Policy consultation



Key consultations in 2024/25

At the Heart of the Vale - Our Plan for 2024-28

- ❖ 106 responses were received from residents, businesses, organisations and community groups.
- ❖ Overall respondents agree with the inclusion of the priority themes - providing the homes people need (64 per cent), supporting climate and nature recovery (82 per cent) and creating healthy, sustainable and inclusive communities – (73 per cent).
- ❖ The feedback was incorporated into the new council plan, informing the main themes. The Council Plan for 2025-2029 was adopted by the council in early 2025. All objectives will be monitored via delivery plans from Autumn 2025.

Help us set 'The Way Ahead' for South Oxfordshire

- ❖ 130 responses were received, with 82 per cent from members of the public.
- ❖ Clear agreement was shown towards all five themes that form the core of the 2024-25 plan for South Oxfordshire.
- ❖ The feedback was incorporated into the new council plan, informing the five themes. The Council Plan for 2025-2029 was adopted by the council in early 2025. All objectives will be monitored via delivery plans from Autumn 2025.

Joint Local Plan 2041 Publication Stage

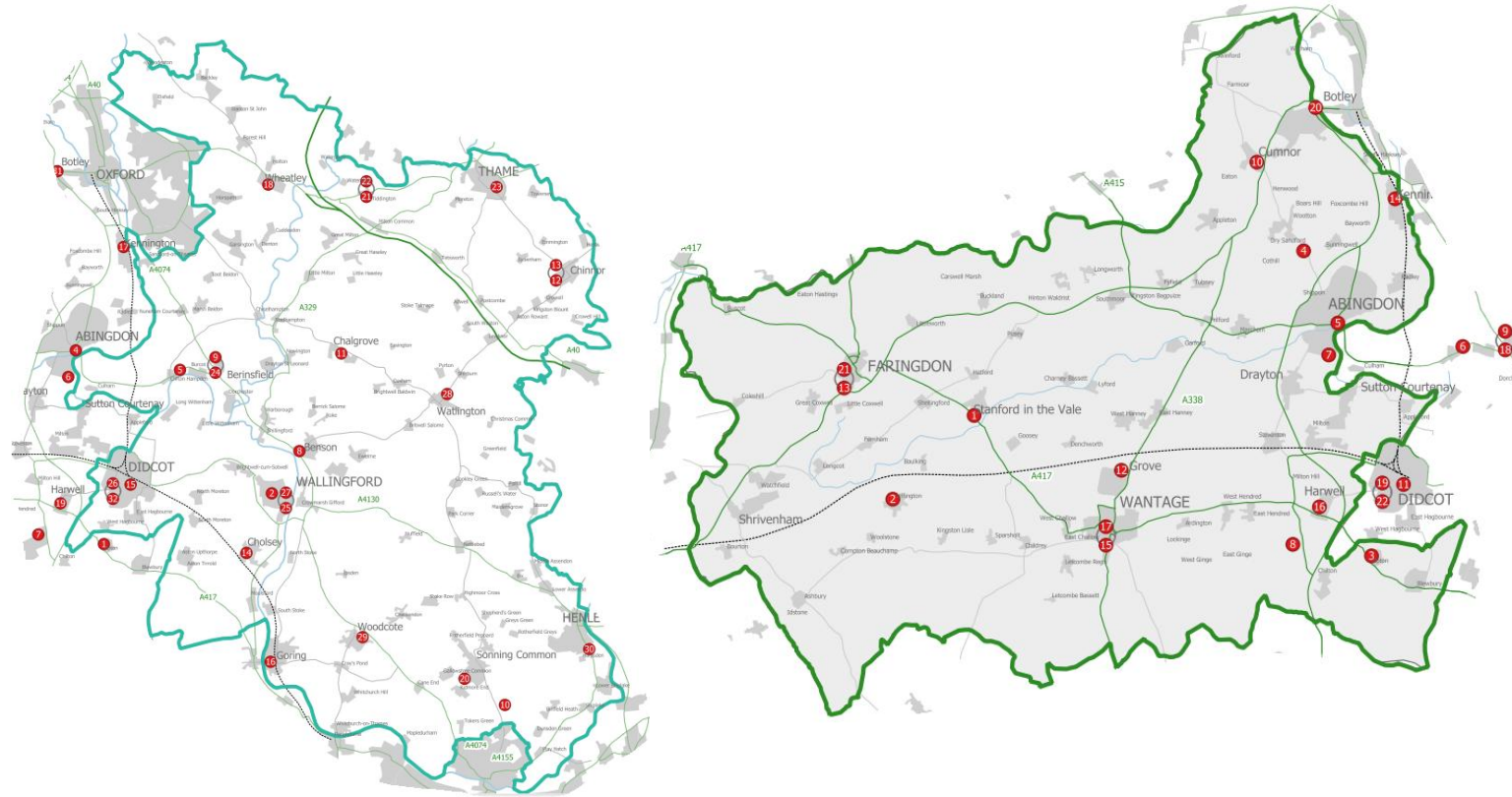
- ❖ 4,420 representations from 560 respondents during the pre-submission period. Of them, the largest respondent groups were members of the public and agent, developers, and landowners.
- ❖ A detailed breakdown of the key issues raised during the consultation period can be found in this report.
- ❖ The council submitted the plan to the secretary of state for independent examination. The Inspector will undertake an initial assessment of the plan, which will include checking all procedural requirements have been followed and organising public hearing sessions. The Inspector will determine the scope and format of these sessions, and will invite participants to respond to key matters, issues and questions.

Engagement with young people

Our progress

In 2022/23 we started collecting data on gender, age, ethnicity and disability of respondents. This helps us understand if we are reaching all groups in our communities and see where we need to increase participation and representation.

Carrying on from our work in 22/23, we are continuing to work hard and engage with all demographic groups in our communities, especially those that we've historically failed to reach, like young people and some minority groups to try and ensure that the responses we get are representative of the whole population.



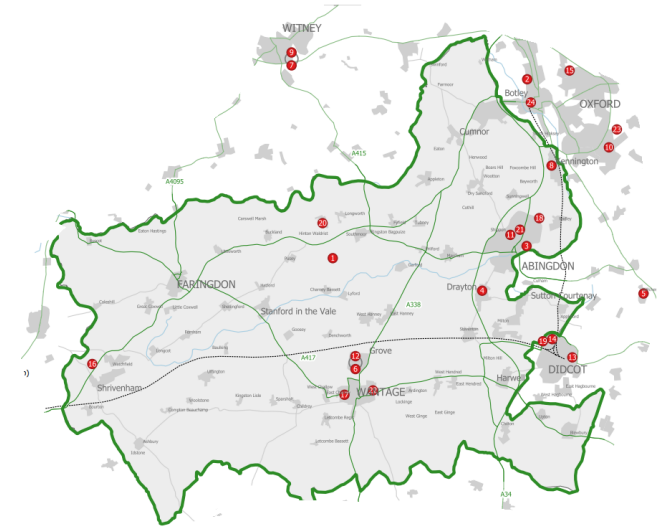
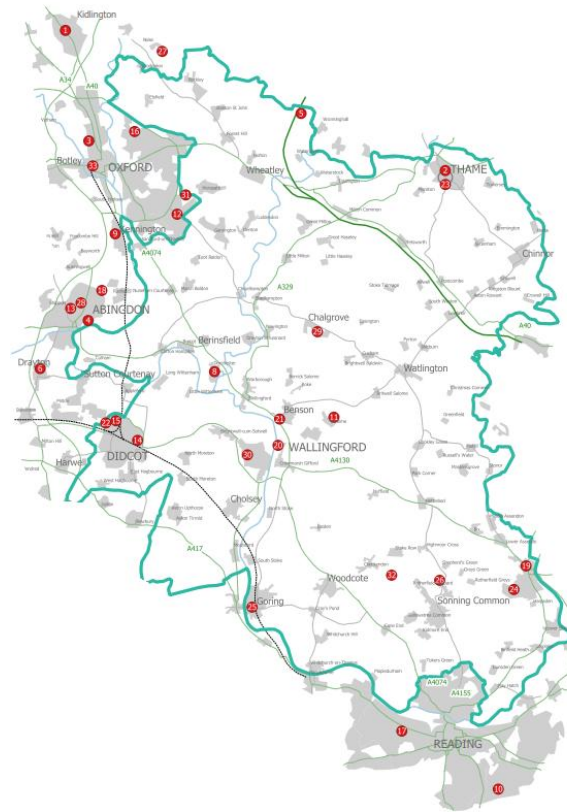
Engagement with disability groups

Our progress

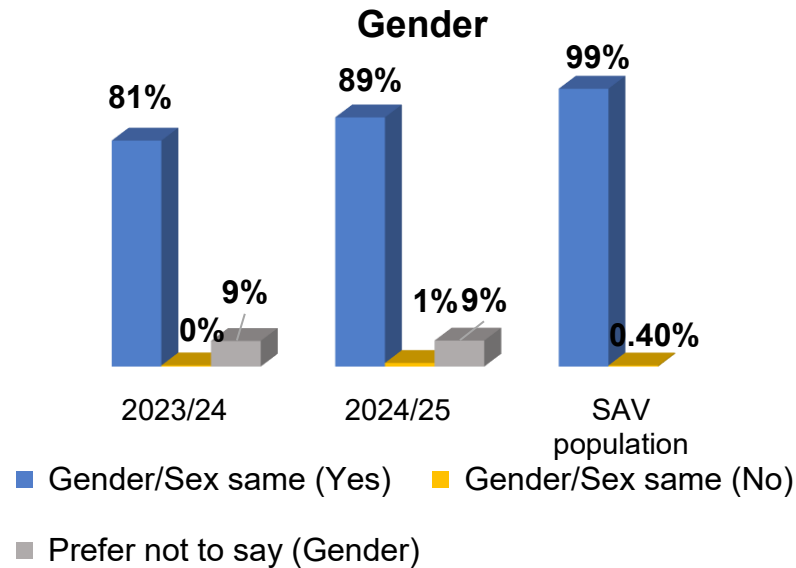
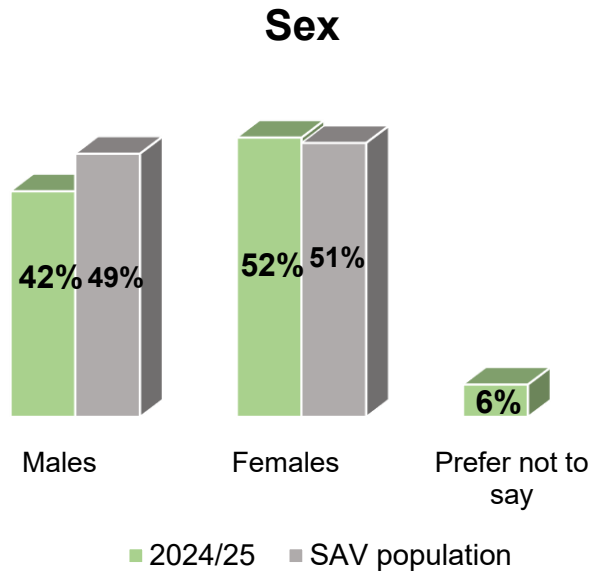
We have been continuing our work from 22/23 on establishing an Equality and Diversity database, which will allow us to share our consultations and engagements with local groups, charities and organisations that relate to the following protected characteristics: age; gender reassignment; being married, in a civil partnership, pregnant or on maternity leave; disability; race including colour, ethnic or national origin; religion or belief; sex; and sexual orientation.

During the year covered by this report, we began routinely monitoring how representative our consultations and engagements are in relation to the demographic in South and Vale. This information is helping us identify where there are gaps and develop a strategy to encourage participation from all demographic groups in our communities. You can find the data we have collected so far on this at the end of this report.

The Equality and Diversity database has enabled us to invite groups to two in-person events: South and Vale Future Plans and the Joint Local Plan. It has also given them the chance to express their views on key projects impacting South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse, as well as provided an opportunity to connect with other groups in the districts.



Sex & Gender



On average, 91 per cent of all respondents answered yes to the question “is the gender you identify with the same as your sex registered at birth”. This represents a 10 per cent increase over 2023/24, when 81 per cent said their gender was the same as their sex registered at birth. Within the South and Vale population, this group make up 95 per cent of the total.

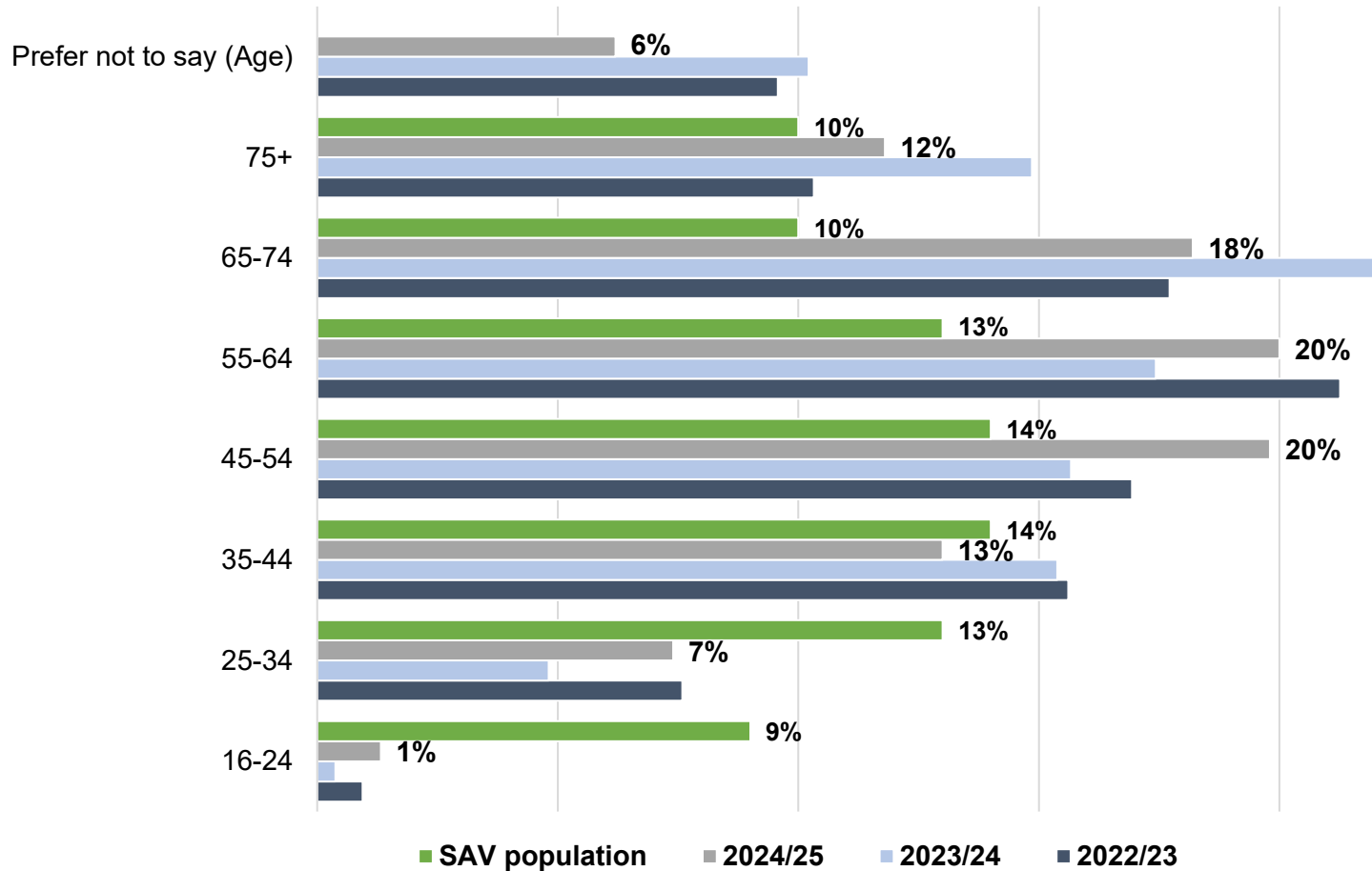
One per cent said their gender isn’t the same as their sex registered at birth. This represents an increase from 0 per cent in 2023/24 and compares to 0.4 per cent in the real population.

The proportion of those preferring not to answer stayed the same in 2023/24 and 2024/25.

For the year 2024/25, on average among all engagements and consultations, 52% of respondents were females and 42% were males. The female population for South and Vale makes up 51% of the total, so it was well represented in our engagement activities, whilst males make up 49% of the population, therefore were slightly underrepresented.

* Actual population data for gender, age group and ethnicity is drawn from the Census 2021 and downloaded from Local Insight.

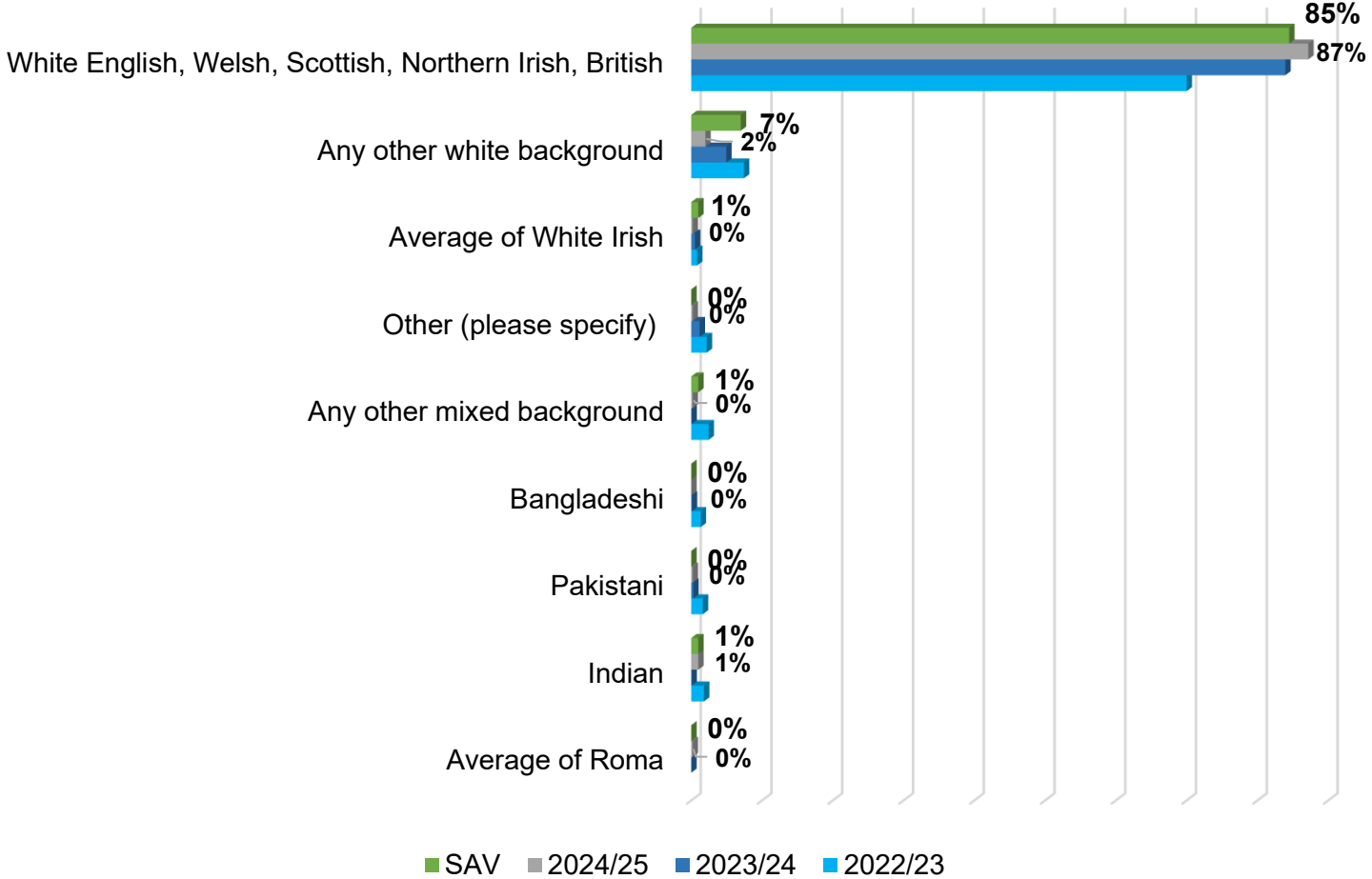
Age



Younger age cohorts took part in our engagements or consultations in smaller numbers relative to older age groups and their share of the districts' population. More specifically, the 16-24-years-olds made up only 1 per cent of total respondents, whilst representing 9 per cent of the districts' population.

Conversely, respondents between 45 and 74-years-olds made up over half of total respondents and participated in much larger numbers relative to their share of the real population.

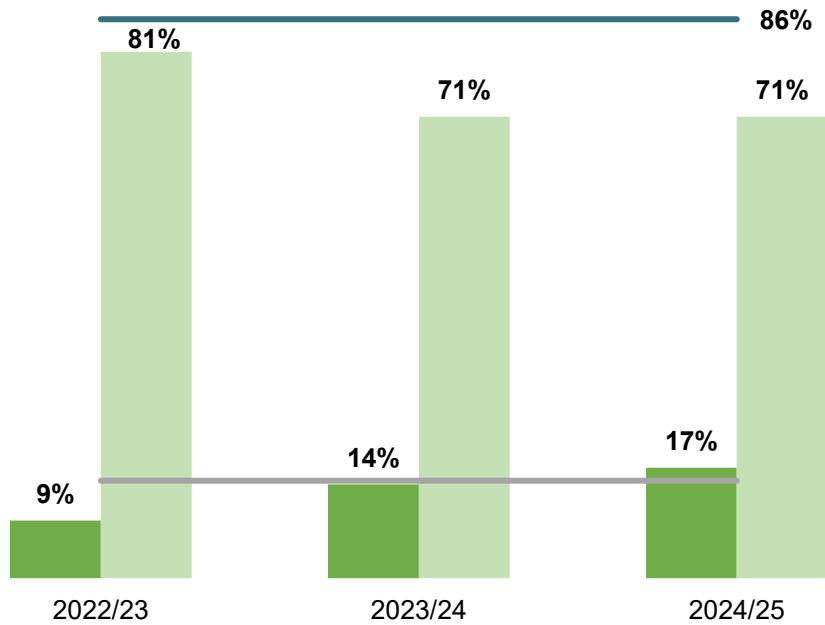
Ethnicity



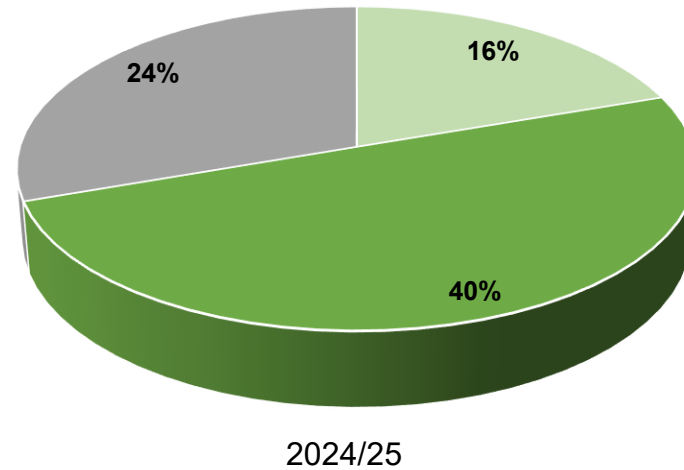
Most respondents are White English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish or British (87 per cent). This proportion well represents them, since the group makes up 85 per cent of the population in South and Vale. People of Indian origin are also represented in our engagement activities, making up 1 per cent of total respondents and 1 per cent of the districts’ population. White Roma, and those who belong to ‘other ethnic groups’, all making up less than .5 per cent of the districts’ population and participating in similar proportions.

Conversely, Chinese, other Asian ethnic groups, White and Asian, White and Black Caribbeans, Africans and other mixed or multiple ethnic groups are not so well represented since they make up 1 per cent of the population but participate in much smaller numbers if at all.

Disability



- Physical/mental health condition/illness lasting over 1 year
- No physical/mental health condition/illness lasting over 1 year
- Disability (SAV population)
- No disability (SAV population)



- Ability to carry out daily activities not at all reduced
- Ability to carry out daily activities somewhat reduced
- Ability to carry out daily activities significantly reduced

In 2024/25, those with an illness or condition lasting over one year represented 17 per cent of total respondents, compared to 15 per cent in the real population, which means this group is well represented in our engagement activities.

Of them, 16 per cent said their disability or illness did not impact on their ability to carry out daily activities at all; 40 per cent said the impact was little, and 24 per cent said the ability to carry out daily activities was significantly reduced.

(*) This figure is the average for both districts. The individual proportions of people with disability are 13.7% for South Oxfordshire and 14.3% for the Vale of White Horse. Data is from [Census 2021](#)



At the Heart of the Vale - Our Plan for 2024-28

We asked

We ran a public engagement exercise that asked for feedback on three priority themes being proposed to deliver the plan and was open to all those living and working in Vale of White Horse. We asked for feedback on the following themes:

- Providing the homes people need.
- Supporting climate and nature recovery.
- Creating healthy, sustainable & inclusive communities.

The survey also asked questions about values and ways of working.

You said

106 completed responses were received.

Theme 1: Providing the homes people need – **64%** of respondents agreed that this theme should be included in our plan.

Theme 2: Supporting climate and nature recovery – **82%** of respondents agreed that this theme should be included in our plan.

Theme 3: Creating healthy, sustainable and inclusive communities – **73%** of respondents agreed that this theme should be included in our plan.



We did

The responses we received were compiled into a report which was provided to council members and officers to consider when drafting the new council plan, informing the main themes. The Council Plan for 2025-2029 was adopted by the council in early 2025, incorporating the feedback we received. All objectives will be monitored via detailed delivery plans from Autumn 2025.



April

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Help us set 'The Way Ahead' for South Oxfordshire

We asked

Local residents, businesses and community groups in South Oxfordshire to provide feedback on the five priority themes of the 2024-25 plan, to help us set “The Way Ahead” for the district. It is very important to us that the plan reflects the priorities and aspirations of the local community.

We did

The responses we received were compiled into a report which was provided to council members and officers to consider when drafting the new council plan, informing the main themes. The Council Plan for 2025-2029 was adopted by the council in early 2025, incorporating the feedback we received.

You said

130 completed responses were submitted. **82** per cent of respondents were members of the public. The vast majority of them agreed or strongly agreed with all five themes that form the core of the 2024-25 plan for South Oxfordshire. These themes are:

- Action on climate change and nature recovery.
- Inclusion, Accessibility and Accountability.
- Thriving and healthy communities.
- Homes and infrastructure that meet local needs.
- Financial Stability and Innovative Transformation.



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Planning Service - Your Feedback

We asked members of the public, businesses/organisations and agents for their views on the service received by the planning department following a decision on a planning application, to help the councils understand what we can improve on in the future.

The feedback forms begin by asking respondents about their initial point of contact, then proceed to gather more details about the application and explore their experience with the service. **170** completed comment forms were received and were analysed by the registration team.



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Chelsea's Story and Crashing Questionnaire

We asked

The Community Safety Team appointed Narrative Alchemy (one of the UK's leading Social Change Theatre & Film production companies) to perform live performances to eight secondary schools within South and Vale called: Chelsea's Story and Crashing. All students in year eight or above were shown the performance to raise awareness of the threats of Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) and how to spot the signs.

We gathered feedback via a questionnaire which aimed to see how much the school students already knew about the topics discussed in the performance and provide the students with further knowledge and understanding on the potential risks and signs of child sexual exploitation and online grooming. **622** responses were received. The feedback was reviewed by the Community Safety Team and shared with the Community Safety Partnership. Further details are available in [Child Sexual Exploitation Evaluation Report](#).



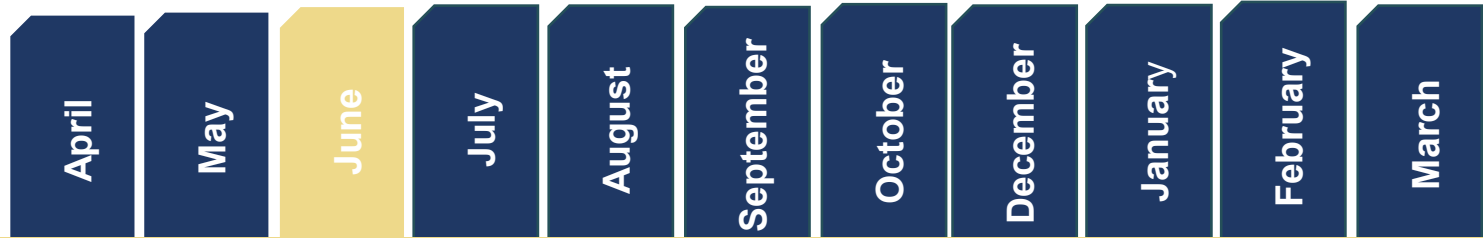
You said

622 completed questionnaire were received.

8 schools watched the Chelsea's story performance or crashing.

Before watching the performance **46%** knew a little bit (42%) or nothing (4%) about what child sexual exploitation is.

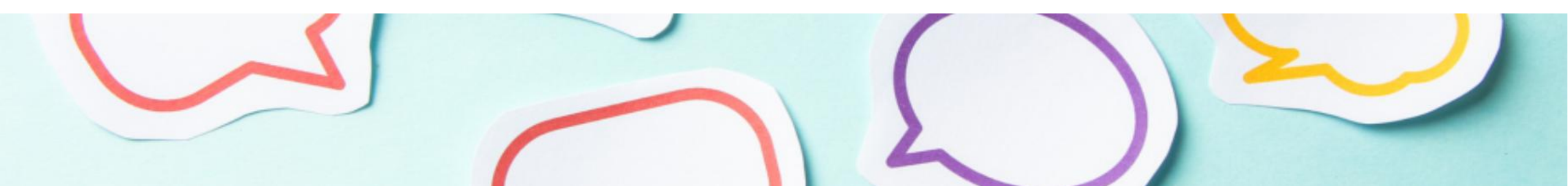
Now that the pupils watched the performance, **72%** would be able to recognise the signs of child sexual exploitation, whilst 23% think they would and 4% wouldn't.



Compliments and Comments Feedback Form

We set up an ongoing feedback form for residents to provide their views on our services and welcome any comments which can help us to continue to improve the service we provide at the district council. We also ask for any compliments about our service such as providing praise to a particular member of staff or service team.

This feedback form is ongoing and is available on our websites. The data received is reported anonymously to senior management and councillors.





Wallingford Neighbourhood Plan Review: Submission Consultation

We asked

110 stakeholders, including businesses, organisations and the Town Council about the Wallingford Neighbourhood Plan Review from Thursday 13 June until 11:59pm on Thursday 25 July 2024. We also promoted the consultation using the following methods:

- Providing Wallingford Town Council with engagement materials and information required to promote the publicity period via their own networks.
- Provided paper copies of all relevant materials, including the Neighbourhood Plan Review, supporting documents and response forms, in Abbey House and Wallingford Library.
- Produced 20 posters which the Town Council agreed to place around the town (in the Town Council's Noticeboards, in the window display of the Town Information Centre at the Town Hall, in the Town Council office window) to help raise awareness of the publicity period. These contained a link to the website and a QR code which linked through to the public consultation portal to allow them to directly submit comments.

You said

21 completed responses were received. [The list of comments received during the publicity period can be viewed on our website.](#)

We did

Following the publicity period, the draft Wallingford Neighbourhood Plan Review was submitted for examination. An examiner was appointed by the district council to consider the responses received during the publicity period, make recommendations on modifications to the draft Plan Review, and on whether it should proceed to referendum. The district council made the decision that the Plan Review should proceed to a referendum. The Wallingford Neighbourhood Plan Review became part of the Development Plan upon passing a referendum on 6 February 2025. You can find out more about the [Wallingford Neighbourhood Plan Review](#) and view the 'made' plan on our webpage.



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Thame Neighbourhood Plan Review: Submission Consultation

We asked

173 stakeholders, including businesses, organisations and the town council about the Thame Neighbourhood Plan Review from 13 June until 11:59pm on 25 July 2024. We also promoted the consultation using the following methods:

- Providing Thame Town Council with the engagement materials and information required to promote the publicity period via their own networks.
- Provided paper copies of all relevant materials, including the Neighbourhood Plan, supporting documents and response forms, in Abbey House and Thame Library.
- Produced 10 posters which the Town Council agreed to place around the town to help raise awareness of the publicity period. These contained a link to the website and a QR code which linked through to the public consultation portal to allow them to directly submit comments.

You said

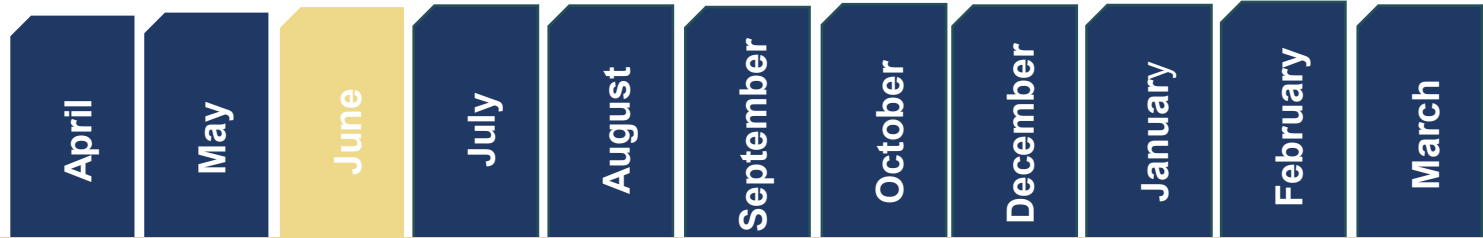
63 completed responses were received. The [list of comments received during the publicity period](#) can be viewed on our website.

We did

Following the publicity period, the draft Thame Neighbourhood Plan 2 was submitted for examination. Andrew Ashcroft was appointed by the District Council to carry out the examination. The examiner's role was to consider responses received during the publicity period and make recommendations on modifications to the draft plan review and to ultimately recommend if the Plan should proceed to referendum. The District Council then made a decision on each of the examiner's recommended modifications and made the decision that the Plan should proceed to a referendum.

The Thame Neighbourhood Plan 2 became part of the Development Plan upon passing a referendum on 6 February 2025 and carries full weight in the determination of planning applications within the Neighbourhood Plan Area. You can find out more about the [Thame Neighbourhood Plan 2 and view the 'made' plan on our webpage](#).





Fyfield and Tubney Neighbourhood Plan 2024

We asked

48 stakeholders, including businesses, organisations and the parish council, were contacted about the consultation for Fyfield and Tubney Area Designation, from 25 June until 11:59pm on 6 August 2024. We also promoted the consultation using the following methods:

- Fyfield and Tubney Neighbourhood Planning group (Fyfield and Tubney Parish Council) helped promote the consultation via their networks.
- Provided paper copy consultation materials in Abbey House. We also sent the materials to the parish councils to agree to show them by appointment.
- Produced 3 posters which the Parish Council agreed to place around the town (on the parish notice boards) to help raise awareness of the publicity period. These contained a link to the website and a QR code which linked through to the public consultation portal to allow them to directly submit comments.

You said

1 completed response was received.

We did

Following the consultation period, the Fyfield and Tubney Neighbourhood Area was formally designated on 4 September 2024. You can find out more about [Fyfield and Tubney's area designation on our webpage](#).



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Crosslands Drive Recreation Ground: Consultation

We asked

Residents adjacent to the play area (users and non-users), residents living in Abingdon (users and non-users), interested member of the public/individual outside of Abingdon and district, town/parish council representative for their views.

The council is responsible for several play areas across the Vale of White Horse district which are open at all times. The Crosslands Drive Recreation Ground had been locked for many years between dusk and dawn between Monday and Saturday, and all day on Sunday. We proposed the gates be unlocked at all times. This consultation ran from Tuesday 13 August until 11:59pm on Tuesday 10 September 2024.

Letters were delivered to 37 properties adjacent to and surrounding Crosslands Drive Recreation Ground, posters were displayed in and around the play area to inform regular users and the survey was shared with 13 key stakeholders, such as the local town council and ward members. The council also promoted the consultation via the council's social media accounts (e.g. Facebook, X, Instagram) and via the Nextdoor.



You said

A total of **27** responses were received, with **41** per cent of responses received from residents who identified as 'adjacent to the to the recreational ground, and a user'.

70 per cent agree with the proposal for Crosslands Drive Recreation Ground to be open at all times, whilst **22** per cent disagree.

We did

Based on the feedback received, the councils decided to no longer lock the play areas, and Crosslands Drive Recreation Ground will be open at all times. We will monitor the situation for any issues raised by this decision. [You can view the report of the results here.](#)



Berrycroft Play Area Consultation

We asked

Residents adjacent to the play area (users and non-users), residents living in Abingdon (users and non-users), interested member of the public/individual outside of Abingdon and district, town/parish council representative for their views.

The district council is responsible for several play areas across the Vale of White Horse district which are open at all times. The Berrycroft Play Area had been locked for many years between dusk and dawn between Monday and Saturday, and all day on Sunday. We proposed the gates be unlocked at all times. This consultation ran from Tuesday 13 August until 11:59pm on Tuesday 10 September 2024.

Letters were delivered to 41 properties adjacent to and surrounding Berrycroft Play Area, posters were displayed in and around the play area to inform regular users and the survey was shared with 14 key stakeholders, such as the local town council and ward members. The council also promoted the consultation via the council’s social media accounts (e.g. Facebook, X, Instagram) and via the Nextdoor.



You said

A total of **34** responses were received, with **32** per cent of responses received from residents who identified as ‘adjacent to the play area, and a user’ of the play area.

56 per cent agree with the proposal for Berrycroft Play Area to be open at all times, whilst **32** per cent disagree.

We did

Based on the feedback received, the councils decided to no longer lock the play areas, and Berrycroft play area will be open at all times. We will monitor the situation for any issues raised by this decision. [You can view the report of the results here.](#)



Healthy Didcot – Your Feedback

We asked

Residents in Didcot and the surrounding villages for their views on health and wellbeing, with the aim of getting a better understanding of what additional support may be needed.



You said

We received **1655** responses to our survey. 99 per cent were members of the public, with 80 per cent living in Didcot. Most responses (57 per cent) came from Didcot South.

What People Value: Top 3 things residents like about Didcot include:

- Access to local services (**30** per cent).
- Being near family and friends (**29** per cent).
- Green spaces (**25** per cent).

Community & Communication:

- **31** per cent feel part of a local community (vs. **24** per cent who don't)
- **59** per cent don't feel involved in local decision-making.

Health & Wellbeing:

- **61** per cent rate their physical health as good; **74** per cent say the same for mental health.
- **75** per cent say spending time outdoors helps them stay well.
- Key challenges include motivation (**50** per cent), affordability (**42** per cent), and lack of local services (**34** per cent).



Healthy Didcot – Your Feedback (Continued)

Loneliness:

- **61** per cent rarely or never feel lonely.
- **32** per cent of people who do feel lonely say that more social activities could help.

Lifestyle Habits:

- Most don't smoke or vape (**93** per cent), use illegal drugs (98 per cent), or drink excessively (**75** per cent).
- Of those who do smoke, vape, use illegal drugs, or drink excessively, **14** per cent want professional help to quit and **10** per cent would like community support.

Support for Organisations:

- Community groups say funding is their biggest challenge (**80** per cent).
- Businesses struggle most with recruiting staff and volunteers (**67** per cent).

We did

The results of the survey were [compiled into a report](#). This report, together with data provided by Public Health at Oxfordshire County Council, will be considered by a new, local Steering Group, which will work to create an Action Plan to address the issues and barriers identified. [The report will be available on our website.](#)





Cotman Close Play Area Consultation

We asked

The council secured funding to replace or revamp the play equipment in Cotman Close Play Area. We asked for residents adjacent to the play area (users and non-users), residents living in Abingdon, interested member of the public/individual, district, town/parish council and businesses / organisations for their feedback. The consultation ran for a four-week period from Thursday 11 July until 11.59pm on Thursday 8 August.

A leaflet was delivered to 83 properties adjacent to the play area, posters were displayed in the park as well as around the play area to inform regular users and a survey was shared with 12 key stakeholders, such as the local town council, ward members and Thameside Primary School. The councils' Equalities and Arts officers also shared details of the survey to contacts that may have an interest in the topic. Additionally, the consultation was shared via social media and on the Nextdoor app.

You said

71 responses were received to the consultation, with **58** per cent being from residents that live in Abingdon and are users of the play area, and a considerable number from residents adjacent to the play area, and a user (**27** per cent).

58 per cent live in Abingdon and are a user of the play area.

42 per cent feel the range of play equipment provided is poor (**28** per cent) and very poor (**14** per cent).

80 per cent feel the condition of the equipment provided is poor (**55** per cent) and very poor (**25** per cent).

Other pieces of play equipment residents would like to see in the play area is climbing frame (**25** per cent), equipment for toddlers (**21** per cent), monkey bars (**18** per cent), swings (**27** per cent), trampoline (**24** per cent), zip wire (**14** per cent) and slide (**15** per cent).

We did

Following the close of the consultation, all feedback was carefully reviewed and used to inform the decisions regarding the new play equipment. The [full report detailing the results is available to view here](#).

Construction of the new play park began in March 2025 and opened to the public in April 2025. The park features nature-themed surface graphics designed to create an inviting atmosphere for visitors of all ages, three types of swings catering to various age groups and abilities, a trampoline, a climbing structure with an integrated slide, a zip wire, a roundabout, and several other engaging play elements. The councils arts officer worked with local school children to design bespoke signage, adding a personal and creative touch to the space.





Working the General Elections Feedback Form

We asked

In May 2024, the general elections took place in the UK. The Elections Team wanted to gather feedback from staff who worked during this period to help them improve project planning for the next elections.

How we are using the results

The feedback collected is used by the Elections team to identify any performance areas where staff may need further support or guidance to better conduct their roles in a polling station, as well as identify any potential issues with the venues used as polling stations.

You said

We received 364 responses to this feedback form. The largest groups of respondents were poll clerks (39 per cent) and presiding officers (31 per cent). Of them, 64 per cent were satisfied with the training received; 31 per cent were satisfied with the ease of the ballot box collection and 27 per cent were satisfied with the ease of the ballot drop off. Most poll clerks and presiding officers were satisfied with the cleanliness of the venue (61 per cent) and with the MEA online system (52 per cent). Most of them felt comfortable implementing Voter ID checks.





Berinsfield Neighbourhood Plan: Submission Consultation

We asked

35 stakeholders, including businesses, organisations and the town council about the Berinsfield Neighbourhood Plan from Thursday 25 July until 11:59pm on Thursday 12 September 2024. We also promoted the consultation using the following methods:

- Provided Berinsfield Parish Council with the materials and information required to promote the publicity period via their own networks.
- Provided paper copies of all relevant materials, including the Neighbourhood Plan, supporting documents and response forms, in Abbey House and Berinsfield Library.
- Produced 6 posters which the Town Council agreed to place around the town (Parish Notice board, Library, Social Club) to help raise awareness of the publicity period. These contained a link to the website and a QR code which linked through to the public consultation portal to allow them to directly submit comments.

You said

8 completed responses were received. The [list of comments received during the publicity period can be viewed on our website](#).

We did

Following the publicity period, the draft Berinsfield Neighbourhood Plan was submitted for examination. Andrew Ashcroft was appointed by the District Council to carry out the examination. The examiner's role was to consider responses received during the publicity period and make recommendations on modifications to the draft plan review and to ultimately recommend if the Plan should proceed to referendum. The District Council then made a decision on each of the examiner's recommended modifications and made the decision that the Plan should proceed to a referendum.

The Berinsfield Neighbourhood Plan became part of the Development Plan upon passing a referendum on 6 February 2025 and carries full weight in the determination of planning applications within the Neighbourhood Plan Area. You can find out more about the [Berinsfield Neighbourhood Plan and view the 'made' plan on our webpage](#).



Litter Bug Detective Trail: Your Feedback

The Litter Bug Detective Trail is an annual interactive event held during the summer holidays, designed for children of all ages to enjoy while learning about waste and recycling. Participants in the Litter Bug Trail were asked to share feedback on their overall experience and suggest areas for improvement. This included comments on the trail's length, promotion, complexity, and whether it was age appropriate. A total of 8 completed responses were received and reviewed by the Waste Team to help inform and enhance future trails.

Litterbug Bin Trails Abingdon - Abbey Gardens and Meadows



April

May

June

July

August

September

October

December

January

February

March

Have Your Say on our Gambling Policy

We asked

Members of the public and businesses/organisations for their views on the councils joint South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse Statement of Licensing Principles, otherwise known as our Gambling Policy. The consultation ran from 2 August until 11:59pm Friday 30 August 2024.

This policy details how we deal with applications for gambling activities whilst being consistent with the three licensing objectives to prevent gambling from being associated with crime and disorder, ensuring gambling is fair and open and protecting children and other vulnerable persons from harm or exploitation. There is a legal requirement for the councils to review the gambling policy every three years. The only amendments made to the policy are essential changes to dates and to correct minor errors, as there have been no relevant legislative changes or issues which would indicate that we should make more substantial changes.

You said

We received one response to the consultation, but the submission was a blank response.

We did

Our Licensing Acts Committee considered the final draft of the policy in November 2024 prior to it being adopted by the Council in December. The new document took effect on 31 January 2025 and can be viewed on our websites: [South Oxfordshire](#) and [Vale of White Horse](#).



South Oxfordshire Polling Districts and Places Review Consultation

We asked

Members of the public, town/parish councils and district councillors for their comments on polling districts and places within South Oxfordshire from the 13 September until 25 October 2024.

As a local authority, we had a statutory duty to review the polling districts and places for UK parliamentary consultations at least once every five years.

You said

We received **120** responses to this consultation.

98 per cent of respondents were members of the public.

The most selected polling place was Henley Leisure Centre (**29** per cent).

You can read all comments received in our [consultation summary report](#).

We did

The feedback received was reviewed and presented to the Community Governance and Electoral Issues Committee on 18 November 2024. The committee agreed to all the changes which were included in our [final recommendation](#). Most proposals made in the consultation have been adopted, apart from a few exceptions which are detailed within the [consultation summary report](#). The Elections Team have proceeded to implement the agreed changes which were actioned to take effect before the next election in May 2025.



Vale of White Horse Polling Districts and Places Review Consultation

We asked

Members of the public, town/parish councils and district councillors for their comments on polling districts and places within Vale of White Horse from the 13 September until 25 October 2024.

As a local authority, we had a statutory duty to review the polling districts and places for UK parliamentary consultations at least once every five years.

You said

We received **78** responses to this consultation.

97 per cent of respondents were members of the public.

66 per cent of respondents chose to comment on the Corn Exchange in Faringdon, whilst 10 per cent of respondents commented on The Beacon in Wantage and Shellingford Community Hall making them the second most selected polling places.

You can read all comments received in our [consultation summary report](#).

We did

The feedback received was reviewed and presented to the Community Governance and Electoral Issues Committee on 13 November 2024. The committee agreed to all changes which were included in [our final recommendation](#). Most proposals made in the consultation have been adopted, apart from a few exceptions which are detailed within the [consultation summary report](#).

The Elections Team have proceeded to implement the agreed changes which were actioned to take effect before the next election in May 2025.



Joint Local Plan 2041 Publication Stage

We asked

Residents, businesses, organisations, community groups, key stakeholders and statutory consultees for their views on the Regulation 19 publication stage of the Joint Local Plan. After three years of preparation, this stage of the process was a technical one focused on ensuring that the plan meets all relevant requirements. The consultation period was from Tuesday 1 October until Tuesday 12 November 2024 at 11.59pm.



You said

We received a total of **4,420** representations from **560** respondents during the Pre-submission Publication Period. The largest respondent groups were members of the public and agents, developers, and landowners. We identified the main issues raised through representations, which can be found in the [Joint Local Plan Consultation Statement](#) (page 14-16). A detailed breakdown of key issues by chapter of the Joint Local Plan can also be found in [Appendix H of the Consultation Statement](#).

We did

We submitted the Joint Local Plan in December 2024 to the Secretary of State, for independent examination. You can read full details of this on [our examination page](#).

Inspectors R A Bust and C Mulloy were appointed to undertake an independent examination of the Joint Local Plan.

The Inspectors undertook an initial assessment of the plan, which included checking all procedural requirements had been followed and organising public hearing sessions. The Inspectors invited participants to respond to key matters, issues and questions - and Stage 1 Hearing Sessions took place from 3 - 5 June 2025 at Bee House, 140 Eastern Avenue, Milton, Abingdon.

The Inspectors may produce a report that determines whether the plan should be adopted with changes called 'main modifications'. If so, there will be a final opportunity for representations through a public consultation on the main modifications.

We also consulted the public on a Joint Local Plan 2041: [Technical Addendum](#) to support the Sustainability Appraisal from 6 December until 17 January 2025. You can [view the responses we received here](#). These were provided to the Inspectors carrying out the Examination.

Proposed changes to the additional Council Tax charge for long-term empty properties SODC

We asked

Residents on the council’s contacts database who own an empty property, town and parish councils, and residents on social media for their views on proposed changes to additional council tax charges for long-term empty properties. The consultation was launched on 15 October and closed at 11.59pm on 26 November 2024.



You said

We received **97** responses to this consultation, with **99** per cent of respondents were members of the public.

The majority of respondents agreed with the proposal set out in this consultation, which would reduce the amount of time before an empty property can be charged a Council Tax premium from 24 months to 12 months (57 per cent).

Respondents who did not agree with the proposal were asked for their opinion on an appropriate amount of time before empty properties can incur a Council Tax premium. No clear majority emerged among respondents. However, just under half (48 per cent) selected ‘more than 24 months’, thus expressing a preference for a longer amount of time than what is allowed currently and longer than the proposed time. An additional 39 per cent said ‘24 months’, thus indicating a preference to retain the current policy.

We did

Your feedback has been reviewed and helped us shape our final proposal, which is included in the Cabinet Report written by the Head of Finance. Based on the results of this consultation, from 1st April 2026 the following amendments will be made to the council’s long-term empty property premiums:

- (a) to reduce the current empty property duration allowed, prior to a council tax LTEPP commencing, down from two years to one year. This change is provided for within the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023.
- (b) adopting all LTEPP exceptions laid out within the Council Tax (Prescribed Classes of Dwellings and Consequential Amendments) (England) Regulations 2024, published on 1 November 2024 and listed below.

[You can read the full report here.](#)

Proposed changes to the additional Council Tax charge for long-term empty properties VOWH

We asked

Residents on the council’s contacts database who own an empty property, town and parish councils, and residents on social media for their views on proposed changes to additional council tax charges for long-term empty properties. The consultation was launched on 15 October and closed at 11.59pm on 26 November 2024.



You said

We received 59 responses to this consultation. 88 per cent of respondents were members of the public. 71 per cent did not own an empty property in the Vale of White Horse, whilst 29 per cent did so.

The majority of respondents agreed with the proposal set out in this consultation, which would reduce the amount of time before an empty property can be charged a Council Tax premium from 24 months to 12 months (59 per cent).

Respondents who did not agree with the proposal were asked what, in their opinion, is an appropriate amount of time after which empty properties can be charged a Council Tax premium. No clear majority emerged, however, the largest groups of respondents selected ‘24 months (no change to current policy)’ and ‘more than 24 months’ - 48 per cent each. These results highlight a preference for retaining the current policy or even extending the current timeframe to more than 24 months.

We did

Your feedback has been reviewed and helped us shape our final proposal, which is included in the Cabinet Report written by the Head of Finance. Based on the results of this consultation, from 1st April 2026 the following amendments will be made to the council’s long-term empty property premiums:

- (a) to reduce the current empty property duration allowed, prior to a council tax LTEPP commencing, down from two years to one year. This change is provided for within the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023.
- (b) adopting all LTEPP exceptions laid out within the Council Tax (Prescribed Classes of Dwellings and Consequential Amendments) (England) Regulations 2024, published on 1 November 2024 and listed below.

[You can read the full report here.](#)



Review of Street Trading Policy Survey

We asked

Street traders/businesses, district, county and town/parish councils, councillors, officers and members of the public for their views on our proposed amends to the Joint Street Trading Policy, which was last reviewed in 2011. Since the policy was last reviewed, street trading has become more popular in the districts, which in turn, identified gaps within the policy. The amendments included updates to community and charity events, markets and single-use plastic. We also proposed to include advice we currently give to applicants who wish to trade from multiple sites.

The consultation ran for a six-week period until Tuesday 26 November 2024.

You said

We received **49** responses to the survey.

- Most responses (**88 per cent**) were received from members of the public.
- **2** per cent of responses were received from a street trader/business.
- **71** per cent of respondents expressed agreement with the proposed changes to the decision-making section of the policy.

You can view all the key findings in our [consultation summary report](#), along with an officer response to the comments received.

We did

The results of the consultation were presented to the council’s General Licensing Committees in February 2025. The committee reports included details of changes made to the proposed policy following feedback from the consultation. The Committees considered the results of the consultation and the proposed policy and agreed to approve it to take effect from 1 April 2025.





Wantage Neighbourhood Plan: Submission Consultation

We asked

176 stakeholders, including businesses, organisations and the town council about the Wantage Neighbourhood Plan from 10 October until 11:59pm on 21 November 2024. We also promoted the consultation using the following methods:

- Provided Wantage Town Council with the engagement materials and information required to promote the publicity period via their own networks.
- Provided paper copies of all relevant materials, including the Neighbourhood Plan, supporting documents and response forms, in Abbey House and Wantage Town Council offices at The Beacon.
- Produced 6 posters which the Town Council agreed to place around the town to help raise awareness of the publicity period. These contained a link to the website and a QR code which linked through to the public consultation portal to allow them to directly submit comments.

You said

14 completed responses were received. The [list of comments received during the publicity period can be viewed on our website](#).



We did

Following the publicity period, the draft Wantage Neighbourhood Plan was submitted for examination. Andrew Ashcroft was appointed by the District Council to carry out the examination. The examiner's role was to consider responses received during the publicity period and make recommendations on modifications to the draft plan review and to ultimately recommend if the plan should proceed to referendum. The District Council then made a decision on each of the examiner's recommended modifications and made the decision that the Plan should proceed to a referendum.

The Wantage Neighbourhood Plan became part of the Development Plan upon passing a referendum on 1 May 2025 and carries full weight in the determination of planning applications within the Neighbourhood Plan Area. You can find out more about [the Wantage Neighbourhood Plan](#) and view the 'made' plan on our [webpage](#).

April

May

June

July

August

September

October

December

January

February

March

Reduce, Reuse and Recycle Festive Quiz

We asked

We asked everyone living in South Oxfordshire or the Vale of White Horse to take our short quiz to learn ways to reduce the amount of waste that is generated and thrown away at Christmas. We want to enable people to reuse, repair, refill and rehome items as much as possible.

You said

136 completed responses were received. Most questions about recycling, reusing and reducing waste were answered correctly by a large majority of respondents.

We did

Results are used by the Waste & Recycling team to improve information about recycling. [You can read the full report here.](#)



April

May

June

July

August

September

October


December

January

February

March

Household Support Voucher Scheme - Referral Agency Feedback



We asked voluntary and community organisations, G.P surgeries and schools in South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse for their views on the councils' Household Support Voucher Scheme which ran from July to September 2024. The councils want to ensure the process is working smoothly and any feedback could be rectified before the next round of funding in early 2025.

30 completed responses were received, and the results were reviewed by the Community Hub team before making any required amends to the scheme.

April

May

June

July

August

September

October

December

January

February

March

Your views on the Berinsfield Regeneration Strategy

We asked

People living or working in Berinsfield, businesses/organisations, community and interest groups, district, county and town/parish councils for their views on the Berinsfield Regeneration Strategy.

You said

102 completed responses were received. **92** per cent of respondents were local residents. According to respondents, the most important theme of the regeneration strategy was 'Community Infrastructure', which was followed very closely by 'Health'. The least relevant theme for respondents was 'Design and Implementation'.

For all themes except three, Affordable Housing, Design and Implementation, and Management of Facilities and Open Spaces, the majority of respondents would like their relative projects to be delivered before new homes are built at Mount Farm. This is particularly the case for Community Infrastructure (**75** per cent), Community Development (**64** per cent) and Education, Skills and Employment (**60** per cent).

We did

The findings of this consultation will help us guide and inform regeneration opportunities in Berinsfield and as part of Land at Mount Farm, to ensure they are maximised and deliver real improvement for the existing village. The comments received will contribute to the Berinsfield Regeneration Strategy, which in turn will seek to encourage, through the planning process, the investment of funding from the development of Mount Farm in residents' priorities to achieve the change they require in Berinsfield.

The Berinsfield Regeneration Strategy is due to be presented to Cabinet in Autumn 2025 and formally adopted following the outcome of the council's Joint Local Plan 2041 Examination. You can view [the consultation summary report here](#).



April

May

June

July

August

September

October

December

January

February

March

Mobile Home Park Rules Proposed Changes

We asked

We asked mobile home park owners for their comments on our proposed joint Mobile Home Park Rules, Appendix 2 ("Definition of a mobile home") and Appendix 3 ("Tackling anti-social behaviour") as the council has a duty to ensure that acceptable standards are maintained on the site for the general benefit of occupiers and to promote community cohesion. The consultation was open for four weeks from Thursday 27 March until 11.59pm on Monday 28 April 2025.

You said

7 completed responses were received to the consultation. Once the consultation closed, we reviewed the feedback and produced a Consultation Response Document which was shared with mobile homeowners alongside the finalised proposed changes to the Mobile Home Park Rules.

We did

As we did not receive any objections to the Mobile Home Park Rules, the new site's rules were deposited to the Local Authority in August 2025, and the new rules came into effect 21 days after the deposit notification.



April

May

June

July

August

September

October

December

January

February

March

South and Vale Building Control Annual Customer Satisfaction Survey

We asked residents, developers, builders, architects, designers and businesses who have used the Building Control service, for their feedback. The feedback is collected annually to help the team understand what they can do better to ensure they maintain their ISO accreditation - a formal award that shows we are meeting international standards for the service we provide. The survey was open for six weeks from February until March 2025. 23 completed responses were received.



April

May

June

July

August

September

October

December

January

February

March

Housing Allocations Policy

We asked

Members of the public, residents on the housing register, businesses/organisations, and district, county and town/parish councils for their views on proposed changes to our joint Housing Allocations Policy. The policy required updating to reflect housing priorities in the districts. You can read the [full proposed Housing Allocations Policy here](#).

You said

We received **908** completed responses, of which **76** per cent were from members of the public on the housing register. Most respondents agreed with all of the four key proposals made by the Housing Allocation Policy Review:

- **57** per cent of respondents agreed with increasing the income and savings threshold from £60,000 to £80,000.
- **62** per cent of respondents agree with increasing the level of rent arrears from £500 to £1,000.
- **67** per cent of respondents agree with amending the list of exclusions that relate to unacceptable behaviour.
- **72** per cent agree with increasing the priority banding for homeless households in temporary accommodation from “significant need for housing” to “urgent need for housing”.

We did

Once the consultation closed, we reviewed and considered all the comments raised. A consultation summary report was produced and is available to view [here](#). This report was shared with both South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Council Cabinets alongside recommendations from council officers - the policy was adopted in July 2025.



April

May

June

July

August

September

October

December

January

February

March

Sex Establishments Licensing Policy

We asked

We asked business/organisations, town/parish councillors and members of the public for their views on our joint licensing policy for sex establishments in South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse. The original policy, which was introduced in 2011, was due a review and update. The proposed policy included updates to legislation and expansion to various sections to provide further detail and to add more clarity.

You said

3 completed responses were received to this consultation. All feedback (**100** per cent) was received from district, county or town/parish councillors. **67** per cent of respondents which is the equivalent of 2 respondents disagree with the proposed Sex Establishments Policy, whilst **33** per cent (1) expressed agreement. The respondents disagreed with the section of the policy which stated 'nil' is an appropriate number of licences to be granted in South Oxfordshire and the Vale of White Horse.

The council responded to the feedback to explain that a nil policy is an early indication to an applicant that, having considered the local factors, the nature of our market towns and surrounding areas, the council has determined that 'nil' is an appropriate number of licences that may be granted. However, having a nil policy does not mean the council can reject the submission of an application out of hand. All applications will still need to be determined on their own merits, having regard to the criteria set out within the policy. If an applicant makes a valid application and provides all of the documentation set out in the policy, it will then be up to the licensing panel to determine it in line with that policy taking into account factors such as the character of the locality, the use of other premises in the vicinity and the layout and character of the proposed premises.

We did

The results of the consultation were presented to the council's General Licensing Committees in July 2025. The Committees considered the results of the consultation including the qualitative comments and approved the proposed policy to take effect from 1 August 2025. [You can read the comments received in our consultation summary report.](#)



April

May

June

July

August

September

October

November

December

January

February

March

Charity Collections Policy

We asked

Members of the public, registered charities and charity collectors, businesses/organisations, and district, county and town/parish councils for their views on our new joint policy on charity collections. The proposed policy is aimed at safeguarding donors and beneficiaries, ensuring fair access to collection opportunities and preventing unlicensed fundraising. [You can read the full proposed Charity Collection Policy here.](#)



You said

We received **95** completed responses for this consultation. Most respondents agreed with all the proposals made in the Charity Collection Policy, in relation to both house-to-house collections and street collections.

More specifically, with regards to house-to-house collections:

- **89** per cent agree with the proposed amends for applicants to provide detailed supporting material about their charity.
- **69** per cent agree with the proposed amends to restrict where collections can take place to prevent blanket district-wide collections.
- **86** per cent agree with the proposal that a minimum of 80 per cent of money donated during house-to-house collections should go to the charitable cause.
- **86** per cent agree with the proposed amends to set grounds for which an application may be refused

With regards to street collections:

- **75** per cent agree with the proposed amends for any one charity/group be allocated a maximum of four collections per year, to provide equal access to all who wish to collect.
- **87** per cent agree with the proposed amendments to set the grounds on which an application may be refused.

We did

A report with the results of the consultation was presented to the council's General Licensing Committees in July 2025. The committee reports included details of changes made to the proposed policy as a result of feedback from the consultation. The Committees discussed the results of the consultation, and a number of the comments received and approved the proposed policy to take effect from 1 August 2025. You can read the comments received in our [consultation summary report](#) and [appendix](#).

Parking Machines Trial 2025: South and Vale

We asked

We asked members of the public for their feedback on the trial parking machines—touch screen and keypad—located in Civic Car Park (Abingdon), Cattle Market (Wallingford), Goldsmith Lane (Wallingford) and West St Helen’s Street (Abingdon) from Wednesday 9 April until 11:59pm Monday 26 May 2025. The survey was promoted via posters located alongside the car park machines.



You said

We received **36** completed responses. **44** per cent of them used the Civic Car park machine in Abingdon followed by Goldsmiths Lane in Wallingford and West St Helen Street which both had **19** per cent each and Cattle Street in Wallingford with **17** per cent.

Touch screen machines

- Of the **61** per cent (22 respondents) that used the touch screen machines, **50** per cent agree that the instructions were easy to follow.
- **82** per cent agree that the machine was easy to input vehicle registration details
- **45** per cent felt the machine processed their payment quickly, **23** per cent did not.
- **50** per cent are happy to have an electronic ticket rather than a ticket to go on their dashboard, whilst **40** per cent are not.

Keypad machines

- Of the **28** per cent (10 respondents) that used the keypad machines, **60** per cent agree that the instructions were easy to follow.
- **80** per cent said it was easy to input their vehicle registration details.
- **40** per cent of respondents disagree that the machine processed their payment quickly, whilst **30** per cent agreed.
- **50** per cent disagree with having electronic ticket rather than a ticket to go on their dashboard, whilst **30** per cent are.

We did

The results have been reviewed and will be presented to council members at a full council meeting in Autumn 2025. If approved, the most appropriate car parking machine will be purchased and installed across all council-owned car parks in South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse. You can read the full [Parking Machines Trial Report here](#).

April

May

June

July

August

September

October

November

December

January

February

March

Empty Homes Survey

We asked

We asked owners of, and people responsible for empty properties in South Oxfordshire and the Vale of White Horse to provide information to understand why their property is empty and how we can help to bring it back into use.

You said

200 completed responses were received, of which **123** were submitted online and **77** via email and post. Most respondents were owners of one or more empty property (**59** per cent), whilst **28** per cent were responsible for them. With respect to the type and state of the empty property, the reason for buying it and for it being empty, and the length of time it has been empty, the most common responses provided were:

- **22** per cent declared a detached property and **33** per cent said their property had five or more rooms.
- **36** per cent of properties were in need of major renovation.
- **33** per cent of properties were bought as primary residence.
- **37** per cent of properties have been empty for 1-2 years
- In **26** per cent of cases the relevant proprietor of the property had died.



We did

Respondents to the survey have been offered help and advice to bring their properties back into use, or they have been considered for further monitoring. Empty property owners who did not respond to the survey will be contacted again on a regular basis. [Click on this link to read more about the findings of this survey.](#)