

Address to Council by Elaine Bennett

The declining standards of Sewerage and Drainage Provision since the Government introduced Localism and Decentralisation and passed their Control over to Oxford City Councillors to hold the Statutory responsibility for considering proposals for Development.

Good evening Oxford City Councillors. My name is Elaine Bennett. I was born and still reside in Marston.

Oxford benefits from being vibrant and multicultural. It is popular because of its worldwide reputation as a seat of Learning and new discoveries. It is a beautiful City and close to London. Therefore everyone wants to invest and develop here.

Oxford is prone to flooding and requires open spaces near its waterways to accommodate excess water. This means that there are only a few areas available for development. Proposed plans must be carefully considered so that each build and alteration is positive and will balance and enhance its local community.

It is only fair that the people who wish to change our neighbourhoods, whether the change is a small extension or large development, must bear the full cost of providing and installing underground drainage and paying towards the upgrades necessary for their connection into the sewerage network.

This will not cause hardship or stop builds because all development reaps huge profits through the sale or rental of every property in Oxford.

The Government introduced Localism and Decentralisation so that Oxford City Councillors have a statutory responsibility for considering proposals for development. Councillors have a duty to their Constituents.

In the Oxford Mail on 1st November 2013 Cllr Roy Darke (Chairman of East Oxford Area Planning Committee) admitted that Thames Waters network system is antiquated and past its sell by date, causing flooding in the streets and in peoples gardens.

Huge development has exceeded the demand for service provision. Oxford City Council has known about this for a long time. Their complacency is not acceptable

Councillors were provided with the power to impose additional planning conditions on every planning application, so that service provision kept pace with the increases in demand.

If Councillors had worries and concerns regarding a lack of control they held regarding service provision. Then they had plenty of opportunity to liaise with other planning authorities, and also involve the public. So that Government Ministers could be approached and encouraged to strengthen the legislation conditions to ensure the continuing health and wellbeing of their Constituents.

Why did EOAPC Councillors allow Thames Water to install inferior provision at Marston and Northway to cope with the expansion they had agreed?

This includes student accommodation, School expansions, JR Hospital extensions,

Many excessive builds on small pieces of land, this includes selling Council owned facilities and garages for private development, home extensions or rebuilds to create flats.

Thames Waters underground sewerage storage tanks that were installed are not fit for purpose. They are designed to pump sewerage to Sandford to be treated, when the sewers are quiet. However the tanks are not maintained. They regularly break down and need to be emptied so are effectively cess pits. They cannot be suitable for long term use, as a replacement for new sewers and more treatment facilities. Solutions need to be found now to fix Thames Water and the Environment Agencies underdeveloped services.

Common sense should dictate that both underground drainage and ponds and swales are necessary for flash flooding and prolonged periods of rainfall in our densely populated areas.

Since decentralisation, Democracy has been lost. Each Planning Application is treated in isolation and so the impact of many developments in a community, are not taken into account. Local knowledge is not valued. Community Hub Meetings were stopped when Locals raised concerns over flooding, sewerage, development, traffic and the Friar.

Constituents have no information regarding local planning applications. Yellow A4 sheets are mainly ignored. They are difficult to understand. The original sheets are often replaced with new details after a build has started! So something which may originally have been refused has now been passed and happens anyway!

Planning information online is often unavailable and people don't have endless free time or access to search and keep up with the details of new proposals. Most builds are not monitored or inspected by Council Officers. Constituents become disillusioned.

I believe the shortcomings I have raised need to be investigated and resolved. Shortages should not be occurring especially in a popular affluent influential City like Oxford.

An increasing population also means more money for services. I am concerned about the Future for our Children