

Bourton Parish Council Elections – 4 May

Statement from Nial Ledingham

As a parish councillor of several years standing, I have always taken the view that we all come here to live because we like the village for what it is, not for what it could be made into, and that the primary role of the Parish Council is therefore to preserve the character of the village, and where appropriate to enhance it. Bourton remains one of the nicest and most unspoilt villages for miles around, and one of only two conservation area villages in the Vale. I see this as the Parish Council's continuing focus.

Planning will always be the greatest threat to the village; the pressure to build houses grows relentlessly, as will be apparent from the massive Eastern Villages development over the border in Swindon, and the seemingly unstoppable expansion of Shrivenham. I think the most important contribution I can bring to the Parish Council is my experience, as a solicitor, of property development and associated planning issues. That gives me an insight into and an understanding of the planning process that allows us to keep on top of planning issues, identify where we might be able to fend them off, and to decide on damage limitation strategies where we might not. As a result of our representations on the VOWHDC Local Plan, Bourton is designated as being within the lowland Vale, which means that any new development, outside of the existing village boundaries, is prohibited. We are probably one of the most aware parish councils in relation to planning, even though we are one of the smallest.

The pressure from housing development is likely to mean that the village roads are increasingly used for rat running. We identified that as a concern some time ago and have been proactive in addressing them. As a result, we have the build out on the Bishopstone Road (kindly paid for by Pinewood), our new 20/30 mph limit, and our "Unsuitable for HGV" signage. I see our roads as being another area where the Parish Council should continue to focus its efforts.

I must say that I have found the present parish councillors a real pleasure to work with; discussion is open and effective, views from villagers are welcome, actions are followed up and decisions are made and acted upon. Our effectiveness is due, in no small part, to Maggie Brown, our energetic and organised Parish Clerk!

On a more personal level, you may sometimes see me doing one of my regular litter picks along the Wharf and the Avenue, on behalf of the PC or, online, continuing my campaign to keep lorries out of the village!

Nial Ledingham

There are six candidates standing for five council positions:

Carolyn Francis

Simon French

Fiona Ryan

Andy Knapp

Nial Ledingham

David Swann