

West Oxfordshire District Councillor's Report: October
2026 Cllr Steve & Sandra Cosier

Thames Water Meeting:

As the District Councillors for Aston, Standlake, Northmoor, Sutton and Stanton Harcourt, we have seen the distress caused by sewage infrastructure failures firsthand. In September we meet with Simon Britton (Head of Waste Operations), Andrew Hagen (Systems Modelling), and Katherine Lovering (Asset Planning). At Thames Water.

Our approach was collaborative, but firm. We reminded Thames Water that the current state of our infrastructure in the ward is unacceptable. We discussed accountability and clear timelines for updating infrastructure to ensure our villages are no longer left swimming in sewage.

We discussed the "43-day rain" event of the previous season highlighting the critical vulnerability in our village's network, and the sewage failures being caused by unwanted flow.

With 25 houses for Aston, 200 for Standlake in the West Oxfordshire Pre-Submission Draft Local Plan 2043, we challenged Thames Water on how they plan to accommodate this growth. We were informed that Thames Water utilises a robust internal planning framework known as the SOLAR process to forecast growth and size upgrades. They explained that they maintain a "10-year headroom" policy.

We pushed Thames Water for strategic Infrastructure commitments and timetables. The following table summarises the specific commitments secured for our ward:

Location	Infrastructure Commitment	Target Completion/Status
Bampton Sewage Treatment Works	Over 50% capacity expansion based on flow.	Completion due to Spring (currently in design phase).
Bampton Network	3km sewer pipelining to prevent infiltration.	Implementation 2025. Note: Liners cannot be installed in high groundwater as it deforms the material.

Standlake Network	9km sewer lining. Data Note: While perceived as the "worst," Standlake averages 60-70 spills/year (the lowest of the three locations), though this remains a priority.	Targeted completion by 2030.
S t a n t o n H a r c o u r t	Phosphorus (Nutrient) removal scheme to protect effluent quality and local flora/fauna.	Fully operational.
Ward-wide	Categorized as "High-Priority Sites" under WINEP due to environmental sensitivity.	Ongoing under 2021 Environment Act mandates.

We have been able to ask for a plan to mitigate El Niño risks for the current season, Thames Water are now implementing several "Incremental Step Changes":

- Fleet Expansion: 30 additional contractor vehicles secured via Lanes for Drains to increase tankering capacity.
- Proactive Maintenance: Planned network cleaning and debris removal completed ahead of wet weather.
- Real-Time Technology: Installation of sewer depth sensors to provide early warnings of rising levels.
- Improved Communication: A new "Hydraulic Overload Customer Journey" has been launched. This replaces automated text closures with detailed status information for residents during crisis events.

We have also been able to create a direct operational liaison with the Head of Waste Operations. This gives us a direct line to leadership when we feel our most vulnerable residents, and villages during storm events are under threat. We will continue to work for transparency, including regular updates and the continued publication of the "Groundwater Infiltration System Management Plan" for the ward.

West Oxfordshire Pre-Submission Draft Local Plan 2043

Since the launch of the West Oxfordshire Pre-Submission Draft Local Plan 2043, we have been actively working to ensure that all residents in the ward are aware of the proposals in the Consultation. Using Facebook, delivering leaflets, and Instagram we have encouraged all residents throughout the ward to add their comments. As District Councillors, we remain highly skeptical about the proposed infrastructure, and the number of houses being propounded in the ward, especially in Standlake and Aston. The high-level development goals in the plan (905 homes per year in West Oxfordshire) do not align with the realistic, on-the-ground capacity of the ward's existing local service. The new local plan seems to be promising new roads, schools, healthcare facilities, and utilities, but the actual delivery of these upgrades can frequently lag the construction of new housing or commercial spaces. We also remain doubtful about the Local Plan's Biodiversity targets. The Local Plan promotes Biodiversity Net Gain and Nature Recovery but has not assessed how the proposed scale of development would affect biodiversity intactness across West Oxfordshire. There is little evidence that the cumulative effect of the plan will maintain or improve biodiversity intactness at a district-wide scale. The West Oxfordshire District Council (WODC) is scheduled to discuss the Local Plan 2043 at upcoming meetings on December 9, 2026, for both the Executive and the Full Council.

Council Considers Motion on UK Food Resilience and Security (Cllr Steve Cosier)

At a recent Council meeting, councillors from all parties supported my motion addressing the UK's increasingly fragile food system. The UK currently imports 40% of its food, including 80% of its fruit and vegetables, leaving the nation vulnerable to extreme weather and international supply disruptions.

My motion explained that the UK has lacked a national civilian food stockpile since the Cold War. Operating on a "just-in-time" supply chain leaves food distribution exposed to climate shocks and cyber breakdowns. Extreme weather drove a third of 2023 food price inflation and contributed to three of the UK's five worst cereal harvests on record this decade. Today, 18% of households with children experience food insecurity.

I argued that to build long-term resilience, experts advocate providing financial support to farmers to increase arable crop production, which could free an area nearly the size of Scotland for growing food. Restoring natural ecosystems and strengthening biosecurity were commended to the council as essential, prudent measures to protect future food supplies. The Council agreed to request that the Leader writes to the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and West Oxfordshire's

Members of Parliament calling for a comprehensive National Food Security Strategy. As well as requesting that the Leader writes to the Cabinet Office and the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology urging enhanced cyber resilience for the UK's food distribution and cold-chain networks, including consideration of their designation as Critical National Infrastructure where appropriate, and asking the Executive to work with local farmers, businesses and community organizations to identify opportunities to strengthen local food resilience and support sustainable food production across West Oxfordshire.

If you would like to discuss anything in this report, please contact us.

Best wishes

Cllr Steve & Sandra Cosier

steve.cosier@westoxon.gov.uk

Sandra.cosier@westoxon.gov.uk