ED VAIZEY WRITES...

I gather the Anson Trust will be re-presenting its proposals shortly. I am sorry that I cannot be at the meeting, but it is mid-week and I will therefore be in Westminster. I have asked to be kept informed, and if necessary I will chair a further meeting to debate the proposals.

Planning issues are once again dominating my postbag, and therefore dominating my agenda. While they may not be relevant to all my constituents, they are big issues in all the main towns and villages. Wallingford is concerned at plans to build 750 houses in the town. Not only is the number deemed too large (something like a 30 per cent increase in the town's size) but there is also concern about the fact that the homes are to be built on one site. Similarly, In Wantage there is concern at plans for 1500 houses, on top of the 2500 planned for Grove. Again, a massive increase, and all in specific areas. Didcot is set to grow by about 5,000 houses. Faringdon has fewer concerns about housing - there the issue is a proposed new Tesco on the outskirts of the town, which could affect local businesses. And finally, the expansion of Swindon to the east remains a threat though this is receding. Add to this the on-going battle over an incinerator at Sutton Courtenay and the proposed reservoir at Steventon, and you can see there are a whole range of big planning issues affecting almost every community.

What do all these issues have in common? First, although there is consultation, local people do not feel that they are really being consulted. Rather, they are being presented with options, none of which they really like, and asked to choose the least worst. Second, there is the feeling that these developments are being carried out by developers and companies that have no connection with the local area, who hold the upper hand, who will build their houses and then disappear. Third, there is a feeling that these developments are taking place piecemeal. There is no real overarching discussion taking place about how the Vale and South Oxfordshire should grow. No one disputes that we need more houses, particularly for young people. But what about a discussion about where it should go? For example, if every village in the area took another five or ten houses, much of the housing need would be met, and those villages would benefit from having new people.

One of the arguments in favour of large-scale development is the so called 106 agreements, whereby developers pay for infrastructure improvements. Without large-scale development, it is argued, we wouldn't get the infrastructure we need. This is easily solved by levying a tax on every new home built, and ring-fencing the proceeds for affordable housing and infrastructure improvements.

In March (probably by the time you have read this) I am holding a meeting with the distinguished architect Sir Terry Farrell, in Wallingford, to look at these kind of issues. Sir Terry is a master-planner, and has worked on a lot of projects in Kent, including the Thames Gateway. Sir Terry argues we no longer do planning in this country, only development control. We need to seize back power from developers and put it back into the power of the community.

In Parliament, I called a debate on the pernicious effects of the Criminal Records Bureau, and how it is affecting my constituents. The CRB takes so long to carry out checks that often people lose the jobs which they have been offered. Also, too many people are subject to multiple CRB checks which is time consuming and expensive. As usual, the debate and all my other parliamentary work can be read on my website at www.vaizey.com

ED VAIZEY, MP Wantage and Didcot (Con)

MP'S SURGERY WTH ED VAIZEY

5.30-7.00pm, unless stated otherwise

19 Mar	**Wallingford**, Town Hall
9 Apr	**Faringdon**, Pump House
23 April	**Grove,** Old Mill Hall, Old School Lane

MARCHAM PRE-SCHOOL NEWS

Over the last term we have explored 'We're going on a Bear Hunt' by making caves, painting footprints as well as tracking across the room and the outdoor area, squelching in the mud, swirling in the snow, and splashing in the puddles!! At Marcham Pre-school we also closely follow the children's interests and adapt our provision in response to these. So, when one child talked about drawing around his body..... that's what we all did - with some brilliant results! after the adults started this activity the children took over and had a marvellous time (see photo). Many thanks to those parents who donated their leftover wallpaper rolls, we couldn't have done it without you!! If you would like to see our displays or some of the other things we get up to at Marcham Pre-school please do contact us to arrange a visit. marcham-preschool@hotmail.co.uk or 07749 245313.

MARION, NICKY AND KATHARINE.

COMMUNITY SUPPORT FUND

Oxfordshire County Council's "Community Support Fund" is a valuable source of funding each year for about 30 organisations. The purpose of the grants is to increase the capacity of small voluntary groups; especially those complementing our aims and objectives: to support and promote strong communities so that people can live their lives as successfully and independently as possible and to provide effective and efficient support to the most vulnerable.

Groups can apply for amounts up to £800 and priority is often given to those with limited funds.

Contact Community Development Officer Brian Conroy 01993 704004 or brian.conroy@oxfordshire.gov.uk for more information

mostly books presents

John Gribbin

Science Fiction, Science Fact, Time Travel and the Multiverse?

March 11 2010 @ 7.30pm

at Abbey Hall, Abingdon Guildhall

Come and spend an evening in the company of John Gribbin, one of the foremost and most influential of popular science writers, as he takes us 'In Search of the Multiverse', examining the most fundamental questions in science.

Tickets £7 (with £5 off the book on the night)

Available from mostly books, 36 Stert Street

01235 525880 www.mostly-books.co.uk/events

Abingdon Quilting Groups

QUILTING EXHIBITION

Sewell Centre Gallery, Radley College, Abingdon

Sat 27th & Sun 28th March 10am - 4pm

Entry £2 or Entry & Talk £5 (children free)

Raffle in aid of The Abingdon Alzheimers Club

Linda Seward talk in Silk Hall 2pm Sat, £5

Mason's Fabrics & K&L Sewing Machines on Sat

Clare Kingslake demonstrating Appliqué 11-3 Sun

Mostly Books with Quilting & Craft Books Sat & Sun

Showcase Exhibition of Olga Norris's Work

Sales Table

Further information from Judy Harris 01235 543053

Excellent Refreshments in aid of Flexicare