

Minutes of a meeting held on Tuesday 11th November at 6.30pm in the recreation ground pavilion, closed to the public at the request of VWHDC

Present: Mr D Marsh Mr S Lilly Mr J Fisher Mr G Taylor
 Mr F Treml Mr D Hayter Mr M Ricketts Mrs D Boughton-Waite
 Mrs K Beswick Mr R Thomas Mrs M Turner (Dist Cllr)
 Mr R Waite (Dist Cllr)

The meeting had been requested by VWHDC, represented by Ms K Barrett and Mr N Burroughs, to discuss future plans for development in the Vale area. Following thanks from Mr Marsh, Ms Barrett addressed the meeting.

VWHDC has adopted a new Local Development Framework to replace the Local Plan 2011, dealing with future development of the district and presenting a view of what the district may be like by 2026; as part of this, a Preferred Options Document has been prepared outlining policies relating to and showing preferred sites for development.

Following the recommendations contained in the South East Plan, VWHDC has to site 11,560 new homes in the district by 2026. Some of these have already been built or have been given planning permission (eg Great Western Park), but 8750 further homes have to be sited in Didcot, 2300 of which have to be within the VWHDC area.

At a meeting in January 2007, a VWHDC committee recommended building these new homes in the area west of Great Western Park, up to the A34, ie within Harwell parish. Ms Barrett displayed a map showing the area concerned. The largest site has been labelled area "A", and runs from the A4130 in the north, along the western edge of Great Western Park and the A34, to the B4493 Didcot Road in the south; a smaller area "B" carries on from south of the B4493 roughly following the existing parish boundary in the east and south, and along the A34 in the west. (Hopefully a map will be provided by VWHDC shortly). Area "B" would be used in the event that Area "A" was not sufficiently large to take all the housing.

A transport study has been commissioned by OCC to address traffic concerns; the report has concluded that major investment in roads will be required. A new road has been suggested linking the A4130 with the B4493, and hopefully a further link to the Chilton A34 junction, but the Highways Agency is insistent that there will be no improvements to the A34 within the lifetime of the South East Plan. Rowstock roundabout is likely to become extremely congested, and a southern bypass has been suggested, creating a loop from the A417.

VWHDC hopes to write conditions into future planning permissions demanding that new roads must be constructed for each stage of a development (eg 1 new road per certain number of homes built). There are no plans by Network Rail to re-open any local stations (although it was not made clear when negotiations were instigated, as Railtrack was mentioned, a body which does not now exist). The transport study is available on OCC's website; it was undertaken by Halcrow as the Southern Central Oxfordshire Transport Strategy (SCOTS).

HPC members were extremely concerned at the way in which the decision concerning future development was taken, and at the lack of communication at PC level, particularly with regard to information released to affected parishes.

Ms Barrett promised to look out documents recording the decision, and send them to the clerk. She stressed that items discussed at this evening's meeting are not to be made public until VWHDC releases the information on 26 November.

Following further thanks from Mr Marsh, Ms Barrett and Mr Burroughs left at 7.30pm.