

David Marsh

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Sent: 04 April 2014 15:32
To: 'planning.policy@whitehorsedc.gov.uk'
Cc: Stephanie Taylor (clerk@harwellparish.co.uk)
Subject: Harwell Parish Council Response to Vale Local Plan Update consultation

At its meeting on March 11th 2014 Harwell parish council delegated to the Chairman the preparation and submission of the parish council response to the consultation; response to be consistent with the proposed outline. This is that response. As allowed for on page 5 of the consultation document, the PC comments are submitted by email only because a) they should be read in its entirety and not broken into separate sections to fit the structure of the consultation website, and b) no comments are visible on the website, leaving doubt as to whether the process is working

Introduction

Harwell is in a beautiful part of England. The parish council welcomes the prospect of good employment opportunities, but wants to ensure that all the things that make this part of the Vale such an attractive place to live in are not destroyed. (see #4.38)

The current housing proposals will see the end of Harwell village as a rural community and it will effectively be merged with Didcot.

- 45% of parish land that is currently farmland or open countryside will be concreted over.
- 80% of the current parish boundary will have housing or other buildings on one or both sides.
- There is nothing proposed which will solve the traffic problems and the village will be gridlocked at peak hours. (ETI appendix B part 1 Figure 3).

Housing and employment forecast credibility.

The increase in housing numbers in the plan is driven almost entirely by forecast employment. The housing number is put forward in just one place in the supporting documents (Vale SHMA summary #5.2 fig 4) and none of the supporting evidence has yet been published. It is just not clear what the evidence is to support the claim for so many houses based on so many jobs.

The employment numbers are justified in a paper (Oxfordshire Economic Indicators - OEI) published after the consultation started. This again is a document based on so many assumptions that no great credibility can be attached to the conclusions. It is almost impossible to find any job forecast in this document which correlates to the consultation document. For example OEI paper page 117 forecasts 5,400 new jobs for the Harwell Campus. Page 117 also claims that up to 20 ha is available for development - not mentioned in the consultation document.

Further confusion and ambiguity arises from the 2013 LIP page 38 Campus projections. This document claims (p16, table 3) for SVUK 14,419 houses and 19,000 new jobs (p36 16,000). This paper seems to call for many more jobs, yet needs less houses. What is to be believed?

Infrastructure

The conclusions from the Evaluation of Transport Impacts appendix B Figs B3, B7 and B8 are that the transport infrastructure will become gridlocked, and that there are no obvious extra schemes that can be put forward, and hence the number of houses proposed is unsustainable.

Harwell Campus East

The parish council is opposed to the 1,400 houses put forward for the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The arguments in #4.40 are not sufficiently strong to outweigh the protection given to AONB's in NPPF #115.

Harwell West

The parish council response is to object to the proposal for the NW Harwell village site but to offer to work with the

Vale to review the possible sites and agree others that might be more suitable (or rather, less unsuitable). Detailed papers released with the plan update show that the Vale considered at least 10 sites around the village, but did not see fit to consult the parish council in reviewing these sites for suitability. This proposal for 200 houses is difficult because of the problems with traffic access both to the north of the village and also to Grove Rd.

Appendix A Site Templates

Rather than comment in detail now, the parish council requests a meeting with Vale planners to review the policies supporting each strategic site in the parish. Many of the policies appear to be generic and need to be reviewed and tailored to the specifics of the site, using local knowledge.

This meeting could be direct between planners and representatives of Harwell parish council, or a revival of the Harwell/Didcot working party that contributed to the 2013 plan draft, or even a wider meeting of the parishes surrounding Harwell. The objectives of this meeting would be, regardless of whether or not the site is considered suitable and sustainable, to ensure that the policies put forward in the submission draft of the plan are adequately tailored to the local needs of each site.

David

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