

Harwell Parish Council

Comments on South Oxford District Council Local Development Framework. Core Strategy: Preferred Option.

Harwell Parish Council

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Context

Harwell Parish lies on the east of the Vale of White Horse DC, and directly borders the SODC, and specifically Didcot. Although the SODC plans concern areas outside our Parish, they will have a significant impact on Harwell Village. We will however, limit our comments to issues of a direct concern to Harwell.

Comments

Our substantive comments are:

- The document needs to take into account the impact of the additional housing planned by the Vale for the West of Didcot with administrative changes to ensure that ALL the new housing is seen as part of Didcot.
- The traffic studies from the SCOTS report, which are included in the document are **insufficient** and **unacceptable** to Harwell Parish. We propose additional schemes for consideration.

Infrastructure – Page 99, Sections 13.22 and 13.23

These sections outline the conclusions of the SCOTS report, which are **insufficient** and **unacceptable** to us, because of the consequent increase in traffic on the A417 Reading Road through Harwell Village.

There is mention in the SCOTS report of an A417 link to Chilton (via Hagbourne Hill). We have identified other options for connecting the defined Harwell by-pass to the employment source at Harwell Innovation Centre, and southbound, to the A34. Additionally we have identified options for an alternative by-pass route north of Harwell Village.

You note in your section 12.23 that the SCOTS report recommends a by-pass to the Rowstock roundabout as opposed to Featherbed Lane and the Chilton Link as greater benefits are brought to the Rowstock junction through this option. However, we see this option as unwelcome because of the increase in traffic on the A417 through Harwell Village.

We request that the existing options, and these new options are modelled by the consultants for the SCOTS report. This modelling must include traffic levels on the A417 in Harwell Village, in addition to the Grove Road figures used at the moment. More details at the end of this document.

Preferred Strategy for Didcot – Page 101 after 13.29,

With 600 houses in Great Western Park being built in Harwell Parish, there will be administrative problems for the residents and ambiguity about whether they are part of Didcot and SODC, or Harwell and the Vale. 2300 more houses will increase this confusion.

We request that the Core Strategy clarifies the position by proposing a formal boundary change, or an administrative arrangement whereby Didcot West residents are unambiguously part of Didcot/SODC. The Core

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Strategy should define the terms for that boundary, for example that it should be outside of all new housing, but that a buffer zone east of the A34 should be retained as being within Harwell Parish/Vale with the objective of defining the westerly limit of Didcot expansion.

We would like to see much greater commitment to working with Vale to ensure the proper integration of these new houses into Didcot and Great Western Park. Unless the existing plans for GWP are reviewed there is a risk that Didcot will develop like an onion, with a well defined boundary between GWP and Didcot West housing prohibiting the easy movement of people and traffic into Didcot centre.

Furthermore, the infrastructure (page 99) and the green infrastructure (page 101) aspects of the strategy for Didcot must realise the need to support all the housing in Great Western Park/Didcot West, including the housing that is formally part of the Vale.

Views on Option A+ or option E – Page 104, 13.36

We are against option E because it adds to the westward spread of Didcot with the loss of rural gap between Didcot and its surrounding villages, and increase in traffic pressure on those villages, including Harwell. If E is selected, Map 13.2 indicates that it would lie outside an area of Natural Greenspace. We note, and agree with, all the disadvantages of this option which you outline in Section 13.35 on Page 103.

Minor points

Proposed Premium and Second Tier bus route network – Page 38, Map 5.1

We are puzzled about why Harwell is shown in isolation with a south pointing blue arrow – Second Tier Bus route – in the vague direction of Berkshire, with no connections shown to Didcot.

We urge

- a) in general, a greater consensus between the SCOTS conclusion and the Vale transport strategy, and
- b) specifically, the integration of Harwell (both the Village, and the employment centre at HIC) into the bus route network outlined in Map 5.1.

Preferred Housing Sites and other options – Page 98, Map 13.2

Please explain the background to the New/Enhance Greenways outlined on this map.

One is clearly shown as being in the Vale of White Horse, and yet does not feature in any of the Vale District plans that we have seen. Specifically there is a route crossing the A34 at Cow Lane which then follows a footpath round the edge of Harwell Village. We are aware of no plans, nor of any consultation for such a route.

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Traffic Options and the SCOTS report

The SCOTS report defines a Harwell by-pass connecting the A4130 to the A417. This in itself is insufficient and unacceptable to us, because of the consequent increase in traffic on the A417 Reading Road through Harwell Village.

There is mention in the SCOTS report of an A417 link to Chilton (via Hagbourne Hill). We have identified two other options for connecting the defined Harwell by-pass to the employment sources at Harwell Innovation Centre, and southbound, to the A34. Additionally we have identified an alternative by-pass route north of Harwell Village.

We request that all options are modelled by the consultants for the SCOTS report. This modelling should include traffic levels on the A417 in Harwell Village, in addition to the Grove Road figures used at the moment.

If modelling has to be limited, we request that consideration is given to our preferred options, which are:

- A Harwell North Road, or
- Link from the A417 south to the Harwell Innovation Centre

A map of the options follows. Notes and comments are:

Harwell By-pass A4130 to A417 (blue)

This is defined in the SCOTS report. The other options are extensions to this.

Harwell North Road, linking to the SCOTS Harwell by-pass (green)

This is our preferred route to bring traffic direct from Great Western Park and the Didcot west development onto the A4130. The route shown on the map is indicative only, and there is flexibility for where it crosses the A34, and where it joins to other roads at its east and west ends.

Although a new/upgraded bridge will be required, it (and other roads) will be shorter than any of the southern extension routes. So it may well be the cheaper option. We urge that it is properly costed and not dismissed as “too expensive because it requires a bridge”.

The route on the map implies a new bridge over the A34, but we would be happy if a route could be found utilising the existing Cow Lane bridge.

Alternatively the route could start from the existing bridge where the B4493 crosses the A34. Like the “Big” Rowstock bypass, this comes very close to existing houses in the village, and so should only be considered if the other north road, or the southern A417 extension to HIC are not viable. It would also need to avoid the recently installed water main.

At the east end it would connect to the Harwell by-pass, which in turn will be shorter because it connects only to the proposed southern perimeter road (if required), and not to the A417.

This route needs early planning to ensure that it is integrated into the road plans for Great Western Park.

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Careful route planning is also needed to minimise the impact on existing dwellings in the B4493 Harwell to Didcot road. The advantage of this North route is that the new road need not follow the A34 and could join the B4493 further east, nearer to Didcot without destroying any existing housing.

The Rowstock junction and/or Featherbed Lane would still need upgrading to resolve the North/South v East/West rush hour traffic conflicts.

A417 to Harwell Innovation Centre (HIC) extension (orange)

This is our preferred southern extension. We recommend that it should follow the line of the A34 for as long as possible to minimise the impact on the AONB.

Routes which we do not support

Possible A417 Chilton extension via Hagbourne Hill (purple)

Also defined in SCOTS report. We share the anticipated concern from Chilton Village that this route passes too many entrances/exits from Chilton Village and other junctions on either side of the A34, and are not in favour of it.

We understand from the exhibition on March 13, that the route joining the existing road (shown in purple on the map) has been rejected partly because the road would be too steep. The new route under consideration follows closer to the A34, straight up to the reservoir. We are not convinced that this would not also be too steep. However, it would still follow the same route through Chilton as shown, and hence the concerns remain.

“Big” Rowstock by-pass (red)

We recognise that this route might find favour with other local councils. However, we feel it passes too close to houses on the southern edge of the village and would have a major impact on the open area south of the village, an AONB much used by residents for walking. This aspect is important because of the potential loss of walking paths to Great Western Park and the Didcot west development, and the inaccessibility of the orchard land north of the village.

Map of transport options for modelling and inclusion in the SCOTS process.



Key

Blue: Harwell By-pass A4130 to A417 as defined in the Core Strategy and the SCOTS report

Preferred routes

Green: Harwell North Road, linking to the SCOTS Harwell by-pass

Orange: Southern Extension. A417 to Harwell Innovation Centre (HIC)

Routes not supported

Purple: Possible A417 Chilton extension via Hagbourne Hill

Red: "Big" Rowstock by-pass