

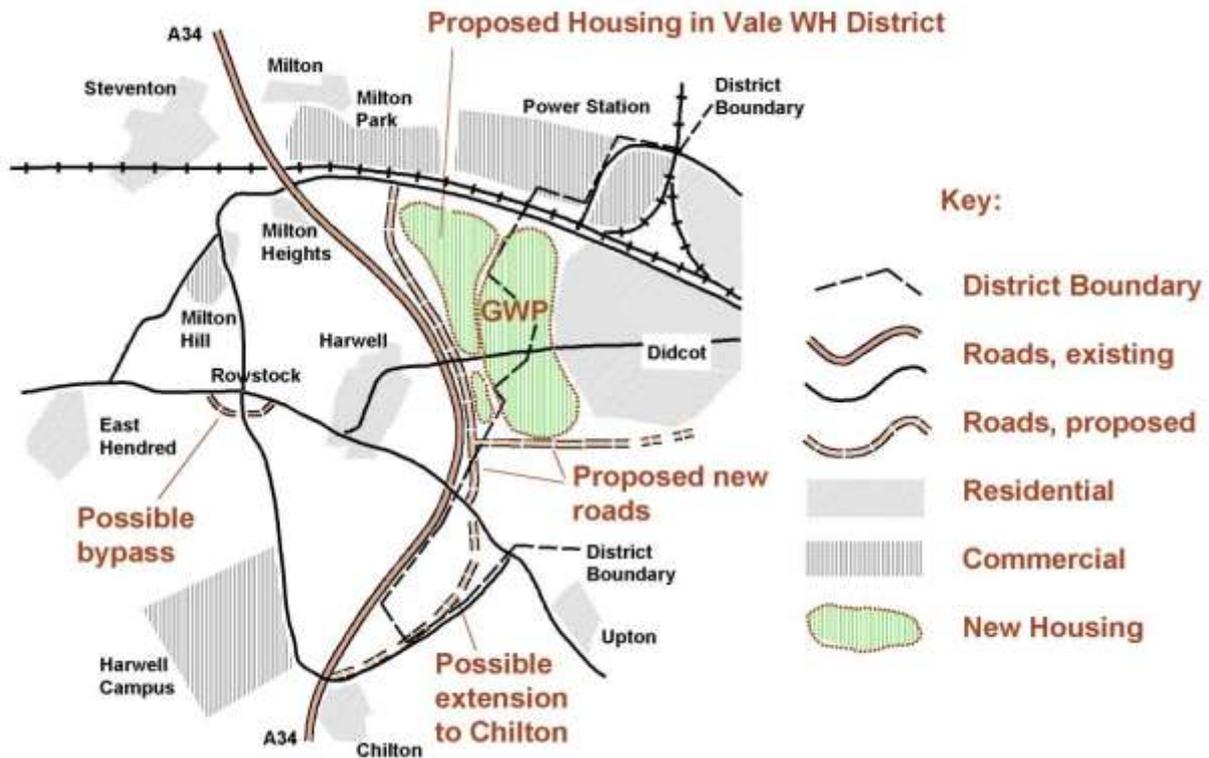
Great Western Park...

is on hold, but it will happen one day, providing 600 new homes in Harwell Parish.

The Vale of White Horse...

has published plans for the further expansion of Didcot with another **2300 homes in Harwell Parish**.

So, an extra 2,900 houses in the Parish in the next twenty years!



Map adapted from Vale's Core Strategy, preferred options report, page 61, section 5.9.

See the report, or visit the exhibition for more detail.

Many people don't realise that the Parish boundary stretches all the way from the "Harwell Campus" in the south to Milton Park on the north. The boundary crosses the A34 and includes a significant portion of the proposed Great Western Park.

Although all the development will be on the other side of the A34 it will have an impact on the village, regardless of whether it's part of Harwell or Didcot, or within the Vale of White Horse or South Oxford District Council.

What does this mean for us?

These pages, prepared by a working party of the Parish Council and representatives from Keep Harwell Rural, are designed to alert you to these plans and to describe some of the issues.

We encourage you to **visit the exhibition in the Village Hall on Friday February 6th** and make your views known to the planners before their deadline of February 27th.

Some things which will have an impact on everyone in the village:

Traffic

Traffic levels through Harwell at peak times are predicted to increase by about 50% when Great Western Park (3,200 houses) is built. Adding a further 4,500 houses to the west of Didcot by 2026 will surely at least double the levels if nothing is done. The proposed 'Harwell Bypass' would take traffic off the B4493 (High Street) through the village, but it is diverted to the A417 (Reading Road), unless a link to Chilton or the Harwell Campus is also built.

By-pass

Harwell will need a by-pass. So will West Hagbourne. You will see a statement in the leaflet being distributed by the Vale that "The Council will require the new roads identified in the draft ... Transport Strategy. In the Vale these currently include: A new road to the east of the A34 linking the A4130 with the A417 to relieve congestion ... through Harwell village."

This statement only occurs in the leaflet. There is no commitment in the current draft of the plans that the Council will require such a road. At the exhibition ask to see the commitment in the plans (it may be there and we've missed it), and write to the Vale to insist that any development must be linked to a scheme to relieve traffic in Harwell.

Tell them that a link to the Kingswell is no solution – if it is to be built it must take traffic completely away from the village, preferably with a Chilton Link all the way to the A34.

By-pass alternatives

If the new plans extend housing all the way from Great Western Park to the A34 there is another option for a by-pass. Take it north of the village, over the A34 north of Cow Lane, through to the A4130 at the end of Grove Road. Is this a better idea? – if you think so, tell the planners.

Transport

At the exhibition, look for cycle ways. Look for commitment to public transport. At the moment the X32 bus is partly funded to support workers at Harwell getting to their homes, or to Didcot station. If there is a village by-pass, how do we make sure that the buses don't also by-pass the village?

Think about your own transport. With all this development, how much longer will it take you to get to your doctor, to the station, to the Post Office, and to anywhere east of Didcot.

Don't forget that a by-pass, which takes traffic away from the village, will also reduce the passing trade which is so important for our village shops.

Rural Gap

Another statement in the Vale's leaflet is that the Council will retain open gaps between new development and the nearby villages. Ask to see where the gap is between our village and the expanded Didcot. Our suspicion is that there will be a ribbon of development (and roundabouts and other junctions) all the way from Harwell to Didcot. The A34 is not a rural gap!

Services – doctors, school

One of the problems with developments like this is that facilities always lag behind the building of the actual houses. So the people who move in first have no new schools or doctors surgeries to go to, and put huge pressure on the existing services. The surgeries in Didcot saw this when Ladygrove was built, and we can anticipate a large increase in demand for places at the Harwell School, with the risk that when they have the space and the teachers to cope with that demand, a new school opens in Didcot, and gradually our school is left with the cost of the new facilities, but less pupils. For sure, growth this large will put strain on all services, and this will impact everyone in the village.

Loss of agricultural land

Let's not forget that Great Western Park is being built on good quality agricultural land which the planning inspector thought should be preserved – he was overruled. We may

need that land for future generations if forecasts of rising sea levels come true and ruin some of the UK's best agricultural land in places such as East Anglia. Ask about the amount of good quality inland agricultural land that will be lost to this new scheme.

Affordable Housing

The new plans state that 40% of the new houses will be affordable (for Great Western Park it's 30%). Given this volume of affordable housing in the Parish boundary it becomes increasingly hard to justify building specific affordable units within the village. This would be a shame if there are people hoping to take advantage of housing in the village allocated to people with direct village connections. The affordable housing in the new scheme will be allocated to people in the Vale as a whole, without any specific allocations for the village – even though they are being built on land in the parish.

What can we do? This means you, and the village collectively, through the Parish Council and the Keep Harwell Rural campaign

Well, one option is do nothing.

But the Parish Plan, put together in 2003 included a survey which was responded to by 79% of the village. Most of those who responded rated the westward expansion of Didcot as their biggest concern. Although at the time the threat was Great Western Park, the Parish Council will take this as a mandate to continue resisting the new plans, or, if resistance is futile, to press for the best outcome for the village.

But we need your help.

The Vale's Preferred Options are published for public consultation to find out what people think. There is a six week period for people to make their comments by 27th February. There will be public exhibitions, at various locations, including Harwell Village. There is a leaflet summarising the plans, which will be available at the exhibition. If you can't make the exhibition, the Parish Clerk (820006) and the Chairman (835430) have a few.

Please come to the Village Hall on Friday Feb 6

from 3 to 7pm, plus an evening workshop from 7 to 9 pm.

Take a look at the plans, and tell the planners what you think. **Set aside time for the workshop**, when the Vale will be holding open discussions about the plans and their impact on our village.

Submit your comments, suggestions and objections to the Vale Planning Department by the deadline of Feb 27th

E-mail: planning.policy@whitehorsedc.gov.uk
Letter: Vale of W.H.D.C., Abbey House, OX14 3JE

Tell your Councillors what you think, so they can take your views into account when they make their formal response to the Vale. There will be a Parish Councillor at the exhibition on Feb 6th all the time. Details of your District and County Councillors can be found in this newsletter, and on the Parish website.

Write to the press

Some of you may have seen John Fisher's recent letter about Great Western Park. If you are also concerned with the impact of these plans on your life, or your children's life, in the village, please make your views heard.

Over the last four years KHR has opposed the further expansion of Didcot at every stage, largely because of stress on the area's infrastructure, but also because of the further loss of quality agricultural land and the erosion of rural gaps. We have particularly opposed the Vale's acceptance of half the extra houses in Harwell Parish. It's not too late to have your say on these proposals – the plans may be advanced and seem fixed, but they are not yet done and dusted. If Didcot expands as in these plans local traffic will increase. Are the road improvements adequate? We don't think they are – less peak hour traffic on the High Street is fine, but if it's diverted to the Reading Road there's still a problem. Will the roads and facilities be ready in time, with firm commitments? Look at the plans, ask your questions, and make your points while you have the chance!

Tony Hughes
Chairman, Keep Harwell Rural Campaign)

Now is the time to make your views known – in a few weeks it will be too late, and these houses will, inevitably, come to Harwell.

By now you should be aware that there are plans for many more houses in Harwell Parish, and that these plans will affect everyone in the village over the next twenty years. NOW is the time to respond and have some influence on those plans while they are still only a proposal. Please visit the exhibition in the Village Hall on Friday Feb 6th, and if you can, attend the workshops. It will be the best, and maybe the only, opportunity you have for making your views known direct to the planners.

David Marsh
Chairman, Harwell Parish Council

