

Blewbury Parish Council (BPC): Annual Planning Report, April 2022

Planning in Blewbury

There have been 45 applications for planning permission or listed building consent since the last Annual Planning Report in April 2021 (compared to 36 applications in the previous year). 12 applications are awaiting determination by the local authority; one was refused (Blewbury Service Station); the rest were granted.

BPC assesses planning applications primarily by email. Contentious applications are then discussed and agreed at monthly council meetings. Note that BPC is only a consultee: we do not make planning decisions.

BPC scrutinises applications on the basis of the policies in the village's Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP), along with the Vale's planning policies. If an application conforms to both the NDP and the Vale's local plan policies, 'material considerations' are the only other means we may use to object to an application. Planning law does not define material considerations – they are derived from case law, but can include:

- Overlooking and loss of privacy
- Overshadowing and loss of light
- Local circumstances (local knowledge from the PC is key here)
- History of a site e.g. if contaminated
- Local knowledge of drainage or other possible problems with services
- Noise, disturbance, smells
- Traffic and highway issues
- Scale of development
- Over-dominance
- Public view across the land
- Loss of important open spaces
- Landscaping
- Design, appearance, layout and materials
- Retention of important physical features
- Conservation of buildings etc.
- Impact on surroundings e.g. whether it affects the character or an area
- Emerging planning policy, depending on what stage it's at.

They cannot include:

- Morals or motives of the developer
- Effect on the value of a property
- Private property rights such as boundary or access disputes
- Possible future development not included in the application
- Comparison with other previously approved schemes on the site
- Matters covered by laws such as alcohol or gaming licences, or Building Regs.

Those interested in planning applications should first of all consult the Vale's website*. BPC encourages parishioners to email the Vale's planning office, either in support of or against an application – the more voices that are heard, the better.

[*https://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/vale-of-white-horse-district-council/planning-and-development/](https://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/vale-of-white-horse-district-council/planning-and-development/)

Blewbury's Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP)

The presumption in favour of 'sustainable development' remains enshrined in the National Planning Policy Framework – this effectively means that the job of planners at the Vale is to enable (rather than block) planning applications which meet the correct criteria.

Blewbury NDP is a helpful addition to the local plan. However, it was adopted in November 2016 and is fast becoming out of date, a situation exacerbated by the fact that the Vale of White Horse is perilously close to being unable to prove a 5-year housing supply. As soon as this marker is passed, larger-scale developers will begin to look for opportunities again in the village. A surgical review of our NDP – even the insertion of a new design code and some updates of our policies – could reset the 3-year protective clock offered by our NDP. This is something the PC will consider addressing soon.

Conservation Area Appraisal

The PC has used funds remaining from the NDP process to commission a conservation area appraisal for the village. This should have been done by the LPA, but they lack resources. We used an agreed template and one of the Vale's recommended consultants to do the work, so are hopeful the document will be adopted without delay. Apart from offering much better information about the historic environment so that those with unlisted buildings in the conservation area can make informed decisions on alterations, it is hoped the document will help protect the green spaces and views valued by villagers. It contains various recommendations, including a small extension to the north of the current designated conservation area. The document will be subject to consultation before it is adopted as part of the local plan.

Planning in the Vale of White Horse DC

South Oxfordshire DC and the Vale are working together on a joint local plan beyond 2031. Plans for Didcot Garden Town carry on developing – we continue to monitor these.

The Oxfordshire Growth Deal and the Joint Strategic Spatial Plan (JSSP) 2050

The former *Oxfordshire Growth Board* is now *The Future Oxfordshire Partnership*. This body remains responsible for delivering the Joint Strategic Spatial Plan (JSSP) for the whole county, guiding strategic development in Oxfordshire up to the year 2050. (This was part of the Oxfordshire Growth Deal signed in 2018, which awarded the county a £215m infrastructure fund in exchange for the delivery of 100,000 houses by the mid-2030s.) In December 2021 officers said there would be a Regulation 19 consultation on the draft JSSP in Spring 2022, and that each Oxfordshire LPA would adopt (or not) the plan policies in July 2022. There has been no Reg 19 consultation yet, so it would appear the schedule is slipping (this seems to be at least partly due to

debate about the level of housing numbers supported by the Oxfordshire Growth Needs Assessment (OGNA)).

Oxford-Cambridge Arc

Following abandonment of the proposed Oxford to Cambridge 'Expressway', central government appears to have dropped the strategic economic priority of intensively developing the area between Oxford and Cambridge. The assumption now is that individual LPAs in the arc will take development plans forward.

Lydia Inglis

Blewbury Parish Council